

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



Massive Council Losses

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN reports that ‘bewildering’ housing decisions by the former council will cost Hastings residents dear.

Hastings Borough Council is facing losses of hundreds of thousands of pounds on property investments. At last Monday’s Cabinet meeting (22 July), the new Green leadership of HBC disclosed details of commercial deals signed off by the previous Labour administration. Legal action is being taken to recover debts of more than £400,000 from the Hastings Housing Company, while the council faces the loss of more than £200,000 on a property in Wellington square, bought to provide temporary accommodation.

The Hastings Housing Company (HHC) was set up in 2017, wholly owned by the council to buy and sell properties and to manage them on

its behalf. HHC purchased several properties across Hastings with capital loans from HBC. These included mixed residential and retail units and houses in multiple occupation. The council also extended revenue loans to the company to enable it to establish itself and pay running costs while the business got up and running. In total, HBC allocated over £5,489,398 to the company.

On the surface, the investment has been successful. The current portfolio value of £6,518,600 shows a healthy profit of over £1 million. However, it was reported that the HHC has fallen behind on interest payments due to HBC and that the letting agent – Lets2share





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EDITOR'S NOTE

Like most local authorities, Hastings Borough Council has suffered a deficit of central government revenue support funding over many years - contributing significantly to its currently parlous financial situation. However, the previous administration appears to have made matters worse with its handling of the housing budget - see our News section for the disquieting story. Among other news stories you'll also discover disquiet over rules relating to dogs on the beach, grassroots suggestions to save St Marys and a potential threat to the pier's entertainment licence.

In the Arts section, music fans will find an interview with jazz piano great, Monty Alexander, playing the Rye Jazz & Blues Festival in mid-August, a review of multi-instrumentalist Tymon Dogg, a contemporary of Jimmy Page who also taught Joe Strummer to play guitar, and live in-store gigs at two of the town's record shops.

Elsewhere, look out for the Food page special on where to find proper coffee, while if you're a fan of cats (moggies not the musical) there's a fascinating feature from feline behaviourist Anita Kelsey on how to cope when your beloved pet dies.

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News

Social Housing Protest

Housing campaigners have occupied a four-bedroom house in Hastings in an attempt to prevent it being sold at auction by social housing landlord, Southern Housing.

Housing Rebellion said that the housing provider withdrew another family home from auction earlier this year after a similar protest by its members.

They are demanding that Southern Housing stop selling off homes and instead rent this house to one of the hundreds of homeless families

in temporary accommodation or the hundreds more on the waiting list for social housing in the town.

Felix Lozano, from Housing Rebellion, said that due to the severe shortage of social housing, Hastings Council currently spends a quarter of the council's budget on subsidising temporary accommodation for homeless people in private sector accommodation, including hotels and caravan parks: "The vast majority of Southern Housing's properties in Hastings were originally built with public money as council housing. They have no right to flog off these valuable community assets when they are so desperately needed. We need more social housing, not less!"

The group says that only 189 social homes in Hastings were let last year, while there were 1,547 households on the waiting list.



1 ← - is currently in arrears to the tune of £422,405.

The Cabinet was told that the level of debt owed has been growing steadily despite regular engagement with the letting agent, who was due to make monthly payments of £22,875 to HHC; however this money had "rarely been received". Councillor Glen Haffenden, the Deputy Leader and Housing and Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, told the meeting that the letting agent had received rents from residents but had failed to pass this money on to HHC - and ultimately to HBC.

In view of the problems with the letting agent, in June this year HHC decided not to renew the leases but to give them back to the council. HBC's Legal Department is now pursuing the debt owed.

Paul Barnett, who is no longer a member of the Cabinet but was Council Leader from 2022 when the arrears were mounting, said there was a clear conflict of interest between the council and the housing

company, with councillors and council officers having both a public duty to HBC whilst also having a fiduciary responsibility as company directors of HHC. It was, he said, an example of how not to do things. He believed it would be in the best interest of HBC to wind up the housing company with the properties sold and the money paid back to cover outstanding loans.

Cllr Haffenden was critical of the poor management of HHC, but said he was reluctant to call for its abolition as the sale of properties could leave vulnerable residents homeless. He welcomed the Cabinet's adoption of a recommendation for a review of the housing company, with regular financial reports on its performance.

22 WELLINGTON SQUARE
The Cabinet went on to discuss the purchase of 22 Wellington Square in February 2019. The Grade 2 listed building was bought for £612,000 for use as temporary accommodation, amid ambitious plans to in-

clude its renovation as part of the Town Deal programme.

The price paid by the council at the time was above market value, but the purchase went ahead on the basis that it was worth more to HBC due to the potential savings that would be made to the temporary accommodation budget, given that the council already had residents living in the property.

It soon became clear that the plans for the building were unrealistic. The intended renovation as a Town Deal project was shelved due to the complexities of balancing the restrictions associated with listed buildings with the requirements for social housing at a value for money price. Without the investment, the property, already in a poor state of repair, continued to deteriorate. It is no longer being used for temporary accommodation and now requires significant refurbishment works just to bring it up to the council's 'Fit to Let' standard.

The council is currently spending over £30,000 per year simply to maintain the building, and a further £794,000 would have to be found to retrofit the property. In addition, there would be ongoing salary and property management costs to incur before the building could be re-let.

Councillor Darren Mackenzie, the Finance, Assets, Risk and ICT Portfolio Holder, argued that it was not cost-effective nor feasible for the council to fund the repairs and the on-going maintenance costs and that therefore the property should be sold. He said initial advice from auctioneers suggested the property would sell for between £410,000-£420,000. This sum, if realised, would result in the council losing over a quarter of a million pounds on its initial investment.

Council Leader Julia Hilton was 'bewildered' at the original decision to buy the property in 2019. She said it was costing HBC a lot of money, and its disposal would divest the council of on-going maintenance liability. She hoped the council

would learn lessons from the experience, and that income from the sale would be better invested in more accessible, higher quality and cost-effective accommodation to meet local housing needs.

Whilst years of chronic underfunding and rising demand for services have left councils across the country struggling with severe financial pressures, it is argued that decisions such as these helped to push HBC to the verge of bankruptcy.

HOUSING STATISTICS

BAD NEWS
Out of 73 local authorities in South East England, Hastings rates as the 16th 'worst' for households on the Housing waiting list, according to construction firm Mobile Annex. Their figures, based on the 'Local Authority Housing Statistics dataset,' show that there are currently 1,294 households in the borough on the housing waiting list. Across the entire South East, the figure is 118,000.

GOOD NEWS
Of all local authorities in the South East, Hastings comes third in a table of new housebuilding. Unfortunately, the table only charts the percentage *increase* in the number of new build house completions. But on that basis, the borough saw a magnificent 100% increase in housing construction. However, the increase was from the very low base of just 10 last year to a pretty unimpressive 20 this. If the table were for the actual *number* of completions, Hastings would come almost bottom. Canterbury, Dartford and Tunbridge Wells managed 600 or more new homes, while the front runner appears to be Arun with 930. A full 910 more houses than Hastings achieved

HASTINGS TIDES									
DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON		
FRI 2 AUG	L 4:53am	H 10:30am	L 5:18pm	H 10:54pm	05:25	08:40			
SAT 3 AUG	L 5:55am	H 11:20am	L 6:13pm	H 11:42pm	05:27	08:39			
SUN 4 AUG	L 6:46am	H 12:01pm	L 7:00pm		05:28	08:37	NEW		
MON 5 AUG	H 0:21am	L 7:28am	H 12:38pm	L 7:40pm	05:30	08:35			
TUES 6 AUG	H 0:57am	L 8:02am	H 1:13pm	L 8:13pm	05:31	08:34			
WEDS 7 AUG	H 1:31am	L 8:28am	H 1:47pm	L 8:43pm	05:33	08:32			
THURS 8 AUG	H 2:04am	L 8:52am	H 2:20pm	L 9:12pm	05:34	08:30			
FRI 9 AUG	H 2:34am	L 9:18am	H 2:50pm	L 9:42pm	05:36	08:28			
SAT 10 AUG	H 3:02am	L 9:47am	H 3:17pm	L 10:13pm	05:38	08:26			
SUN 11 AUG	H 3:30am	L 10:19am	H 3:45pm	L 10:46pm	05:39	08:25			
MON 12 AUG	H 4:05am	L 10:55am	H 4:22pm	L 11:25pm	05:41	08:23	FIRST		
TUES 13 AUG	H 4:50am	L 11:40am	H 5:17pm		05:42	08:21			
WEDS 14 AUG	L 0:16am	H 5:53am	L 12:43pm	H 6:30pm	05:44	08:19			
THURS 15 AUG	L 1:26am	H 7:21am	L 2:08pm	H 8:02pm	05:45	08:17			

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

Pier Licence Under Review

KENT BARKER

The Entertainment licence for the Hastings Pier is under review following safety concerns raised by the South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SECamb).

The Trust has submitted evidence to Hastings Borough Council's Licensing Committee through SAG – the local Safety Advisory Group. A spokesperson for the (SECamb) said “we have outlined concerns on behalf of the SAG, which include appropriate levels of medical cover for events at the venue and are awaiting the outcome of the formal licensing review by the council's licensing committee.”

Hastings Borough Council (HBC) has invited submissions from “other relevant authorities and members of the public”. A spokesperson said the consultation allows for people to produce their own representation which could be the same or different to the one already made. However neither the council nor SECamb were prepared to disclose exactly what the concerns about medical cover were.

The Hastings Safety Advisory group is made up of representatives from emergency services, NHS and health services, Hastings Borough Council and East Sussex County Council services to ensure that risk to public safety is minimised for anyone attending or working at an event.

The current licence holder had been given a copy of the representation, but it is not clear exactly who that is. The management of Hastings Pier is somewhat opaque following

the liquidation of pier owner Abid Gulzar's company Lions Hastings Pier Limited which was put into voluntary liquidation in August 2023 with debts of more than £113,000.

Mr Gulzar did not respond to HIP's request for further information about the licensing review. There are nine major ticketed events planned on the pier between now and mid-September which could be affected by a decision of HBC's licensing committee.



KENT BARKER

Paws for Shores

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

Hastings Borough Council is to review the controversial ban of dogs on public beaches which came into force in March. The decision follows a concerted campaign by dog owners against the exclusion areas and restrictions, particularly at Rock-a-Nore and the Stade beaches.

The updated ‘dog control public space protection order’ (PSPO) banned dogs on all beaches from the east of Rock-a-Nore almost up to Hastings Pier and from the west end of Bottle Alley to opposite the Royal Victoria Hotel from 1 April to 30 September. Dogs must also be on a lead along the whole promenade. Offending owners could receive an on-the-spot fine of up to £100 or be prosecuted and fined up to £1,000.

Anne Pottle of ‘Paws for Shores’ led the campaign against the extension of the beach ban saying dog owners in the Old Town have been particularly affected by the exclusion. They can now only walk their dogs on the East or West Hills or a small section of beach at the pier. The old and disabled struggle to comply with the new rules.

She set up a social media campaign and organised a demonstration on the beach in April during the local election campaign. The strength of feeling about the ban was apparent when more than 200 people gathered with their pets at the Stade Open Space in the Old Town. Labour and the Greens became embroiled in a heated campaign spat, with online allegations and election leaflets challenging the veracity of claims and counter-claims about who was responsible for issuing the order.

The level of support has prompted the new Green administration to re-examine the dog control PSPO. Glen Haffenden, the Green Party Deputy Leader, said the order could not simply be overturned but would require a new public consultation



KENT BARKER

with stakeholders and interested parties. The details of the consultation are still being finalised but it is expected to begin by mid-August. Council Leader Julia Hilton said it would have to balance the views of dog owners with the views of people who don't have dogs and want to enjoy the beach. Anne Pottle said she agreed with this sentiment adding that she was confident a compromise would be reached.

New Bid to Save St Mary

CHRISTOPHER CORMACK

A new initiative has been launched to try to save St Mary in the Castle, Hastings' iconic concert and meetings venue. A panel of local activists convened a community meeting to explore a way forward for the council-owned building which has been closed since its last tenants moved out in November 2022.

As part of a public consultation, the panel, led by Dr Jess Steele, held an open public consultation starting with a tour of St Mary in the Castle (SMITC) and continuing at the Stade Hall. It was attended by Council Leader Julia Hilton and a number of other HBC Members. Dr Steele, who heads the Hastings Commons

Community Land Trust, has an impressive track record in saving and renovating historic Hastings sites including Rock House and the adjacent Observer building.

The meeting heard that community action was needed on SMITC as the council had not been able to find either funding or a new tenant, and, although they were ‘doing their best’ to maintain the building, it continues to deteriorate. Jess Steele said that in her experience, successful fundraising depended on finding a clear objective for the building's future. The panel suggested that “red-lines were needed” to determine exactly what was required to be retained within the Grade II listed building built by Architect Joseph Kay in 1828. Cllr Julia Hilton was clear that any rescuer would need ‘deep pockets’ but she did not comment on the possibility of changes to the structure or use of the building.

The meeting concluded with a call for volunteers to continue to explore a future for SMITC. They should contact: heritage@hastingscommons.com.

COMMENTARY

Embracing Change

KEN DAVIS

Hastings stands at a turning point, change is in the air. We must now be bold and innovative. We all know ours is a seaside town; however, this is not just any seaside town, but rather a unique one which has not hitherto taken advantage of that special status. 2066 is approaching, so we not only have 1066 to celebrate, but also a future to look forward to.

Bureaucracies are notoriously poor at taking risks and thus move forward incrementally, if at all, and so it has been in Hastings. We have, within a stone's throw, three valuable and scarce resources: St. Mary in the Castle (SMIC), the Castle itself – its ruins anyway – and the oft forgotten Smugglers' Caves. I am suggesting that the sum of these three could be greater than the parts alone. The key action with historic buildings is to keep them in use rather than just preserved, and the key word with conserved buildings is ‘significance’. The great significance of SMIC is two-fold: its close relationship with the cliff and castle, and its prospect towards the sea. These both need to be reinforced. The first by an easier modern connection, and the second by removing the car park (and there are alternative solutions to both of those).

Almost 100 years ago, a creative engineer had a vision of the sort of

modern seaside that would serve future visitors; we now need an even bolder vision to take the town into the next 100 years. We all know of a long-held desire for a 1066 Centre and the determination to bring back that little piece of tapestry!

If the three locations and buildings were promoted, converted and operated as one, then Hastings would have a truly unique attraction. What I am suggesting is an inclined travelator type of underground connection between the three, along which different activities could take place, from virtual reality to interactive robotic exhibits. SMIC could contain a 3D cinema with articulated seating, the castle could hold a small amphitheatre with a stage and tiered seating ‘Ladies Parlour’; and the café site (a local architect has produced an amazing design for a new café), could carry a tension structure linked to the funicular with a range of robotic figures from past to future.

Combine all this with perhaps some mythical sea creature on the harbour arm and short term, removable holiday cabins in the unused spaces under the promenade with sculptural small wind turbines and solar panels above the prom, and no other seaside town could compete.

Hastings is full of creatives, so who would like to make a film with me to market this idea and stimulate interest?...or even set up a CIC and do it ourselves! Contact Ken Davis at: kgdavis129@gmail.com

Travellers Moved On

HUGH SULLIVAN reports on what police call a ‘proportionate response’ to travellers in St Leonards, while the Council fails to progress a search for legal sites

On Monday 22 July a convoy of Travellers arrived in West St Leonards, parking around 30 vehicles in an unauthorised encampment on the kempt lawns of Grosvenor Gardens. Two days later they attempted to move a few hundred yards west to the rougher terrain of the Old Bathing Pool site (OBP), where a similar group had set up for two weeks in June/July last year, somehow bypassing a bollard at the south-east corner designed to prevent entry.

Last summer, police and councils were criticised for slow responses, while local residents complained of shoplifting and anti-social behaviour on the part of the visitors. This year, Sussex Police took much speedier action. Acting on what they described as “numerous reports of anti-social behaviour, theft and damage”, they issued notices under Section 61 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act to members of the convoy as they drove into the OBP. Such notices empower the police to remove trespassers and their vehicles from any land without a court order. Failure to comply, or return to the identified location within three months, carries criminal sanctions.

The Travellers then moved further west to Freshfields at the top of Bulverhythe playing fields, allegedly forcing locks and damaging planters placed there by the Friends of Combe Valley. Sussex Police then served a fresh Section 61 notice, and by the following day (Thursday 25 July) all vehicles had departed.

Inspector Lauren Buck commented: “We would like to thank the public for their patience while this incident was ongoing. Police instigated an efficient and proportionate response to ensure the safety and security of local residents whilst taking into consideration the rights of the group members involved.”

Under the national Planning Policy for Traveller Sites issued by the Government in 2015, local councils are required to “assess the accommodation needs” of gypsies and travellers within their area, set pitch targets “which address permanent need”, and identify a supply of “deliverable” sites. This requirement is essentially on a par with a council’s responsibility to meet accommodation needs of all people living in their area, though the definition of the group – partly ethnic, partly social/cultural – is fraught with legal difficulty.

In 2021-22 an Accommodation Needs Assessment delivered by consultants appointed by joint local authorities across East Sussex concluded that Hastings would need 12 new permanent residential pitches (each suitable for a mobile home and touring caravan plus parking space and an amenity block) over the next 15 years to meet local demand. Following this, Hastings Borough Council issued a call last autumn for landowners to submit potential sites, wholly or at least in part within the borough. The closing date for submission was in January this year, but the council has not published any outcome – nor has it offered any comment on the recent unauthorised encampments on its own land.

Overall, the Assessment concluded East Sussex required more than two hundred more pitches. The county council currently provides just four permanent sites with provision for 33 families.

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Previous brushes with police

Town Plan Stalled

PAUL McLAUGHLIN

Ambitious plans for the regeneration of the town centre in Hastings have been put on hold. Hastings BC and the Hastings Board were only notified last Friday (19 July) that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government had suspended the submission date for funding bids until further notice. HBC was advised not to publish or submit the long-term plan for Hastings, which Council officers said was almost completed and would have been ready ahead of the 31 July deadline.

At last Monday’s meeting of the Cabinet, Council Leader Julia Hilton expressed her “disappointment” and “frustration” at the decision

and thanked Council officers who, she said, had worked flat-out in recent weeks to get the plan ready for submission.

Under the original plans, which were announced in March, Hastings was one of 75 towns across the country selected by the Government to receive up to £20 million of Long-Term Plan funding to support regeneration in the town as part of its levelling-up agenda. The funding was to be delivered over ten years, with the aim of creating an endowment-style funding plan to support, invest and deliver change beyond the first ten years.

The plan envisaged the creation of a Hastings Board to set and coordinate the ten-year vision, with a three-year investment plan and to drive forward its delivery. Rebecca

Conroy, the Chief Executive Officer and Principal for the East Sussex College Group, was appointed Chair and Scott Marshall was appointed by HBC on behalf of the Board to help develop the long-term plan and 3-year vision.

Some £200,000 of capacity funding was set aside to consult with local groups and communities who have not been engaged with before. HBC has already incurred costs in setting up the Hastings Conversation, and the council has still not received any money from the Government for this purpose.

Cllr Hilton acknowledged that the new Labour Government had a responsibility to review the spending plans of the previous administration, but she hoped the uncertainty would be quickly resolved. To that end, the Cabinet agreed to push forward with preparations for the Long Term Plan and keep things under review.

WHAT’S ON YOUR MIND?

✉Letter

PLAY FAIR

Dear HIP

My name is Juniper. I am 9 years old, and I live in Hastings. I am writing to you about the playgrounds in our town. When our play equipment breaks and gets taken away it doesn’t come back. My local park doesn’t even have swings anymore!

None of our playgrounds are even that good. Most playgrounds are better than ours, for example Bexhill’s or Battle’s or Rye’s. Bexhill has Egerton Park which has amazing play equipment for all ages. Battle has a H U G E castle you can climb around in. Last but not least, Rye has really fun and unusual play equipment like the big spinner.

I want the council to give us better playgrounds because if we don’t fix this now everyone out of



Hastings will think that we have bad play equipment and people won’t come and stay in our hotels or come and visit. And that is bad for the town’s economy.

Don’t Hastings kids deserve to have fun too?

Yours faithfully,
Juniper

We would love to hear from you.

- ✉ letters@hastingsindependentpress.co.uk
- 📘 facebook.com/hastingsindependent
- 📷 instagram.com/hastingsindependent

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

Happiness in Mind

ROD WEBB

Happiness in Mind is one of several services provided by the Education & Training Consortium under the general slogan of ‘helping to improve the lives of local people’. It offers older people, including those with dementia, the chance to enjoy some new activities away from home. It offers support and a wide range of different things to do within a comfortable environment.

Visiting the St Leonards premises of the charity on the second floor of Marlborough House, I was struck by the calm and relaxed atmosphere and pleasant, open surroundings. As I sat in the café/recreation area waiting to talk to the manager, Alison, I had a chance to take it all in, serenaded by a young man playing the guitar in the background (young to me and others there at least).

Alison has been involved in social care for many years and has been the manager of Happiness in Mind since 2018 (and even came up with the new name in collaboration with staff and visitors). She was extremely accommodating and friendly when I dropped by unannounced, no doubt a major contributory factor to the relaxed and helpful atmosphere I’d experienced on arrival. Our wide-ranging discussion was of the kind that would reassure any carer looking for a break, that their loved one was in safe hands.

She pointed out how the staff are all specially trained so visitors can sit back and enjoy their time while allowing their carers to have a much-needed break. But it’s not just about relaxing; there is a clear recognition of the importance of physical and mental activity as we age, so staff are on hand to encourage participation in the entertainment provided. Alison described the service as “a place for people to feel safe and stimulated, but essentially, to have a good day”.

There are a range of activities to choose from during the sessions, including socialising, arts & crafts, games and quizzes, gentle exercise, music, singing and dancing – as well as organised outings. There are also activities that are tailored to provide specialist support for people with dementia, which are managed by qualified and trained staff.

Sessions run from Monday to Friday at Marlborough House, 23-29 Warrior Square, St Leonards-on-Sea and Tuesday and Thursday at Magdala House, Ferry Road, Rye, TN31 7DN

Visitors can attend for a whole day or a three-hour morning or afternoon session. Lunch is available, as well as help with transport. Charges vary according to the needs of the client. Funding may be available through social care directly.

For more information visit etcsussex.weebly.com/older-peoples-services.html



A bit of light exercise.



DAVE YOUNG

Pride Reprieved

As HIP goes to press it seems hopeful that the Hastings Pride Festival at the Oval and LGBTIQ+ parade through town on 25 August will go ahead after an 11th hour reprieve. The Pride organisers had announced it was “cancelled in its entirety” because of “a considerable funding and sponsorship deficit,” in a surprise social media post.

However, local taxi firm 247247

has stepped up to provide full financial backing, “if they (Pride) can resolve all necessary arrangements for it to proceed.” 247 Transport Solutions directors, Chris Vale and Tony Rose, told HIP: “We are sponsoring Pride; it has to go ahead... 247 Taxis and Coaches and all our drivers and staff firmly believe that Hastings Pride is one of the most important events in our town, fostering inclu-

sivity and celebrating diversity in our community. Our sponsorship aims to support the continuation of this event and its positive impact on our local community.”

Vale and Rose, who also support other community initiatives, “want to get more involved” to help Pride organisers grow contacts with local businesses and ensure future funding.

Hastings Pride is among many similar events in the UK and internationally to have suffered financial and political difficulties or been cancelled during 2024.

OPEN DAILY
from 8am

GOAT LEDGE

SUPPORTING LOCAL
SUPPLIERS
SINCE
2017

FRESH FISH

BEACH BAR

COFFEE

ICE CREAM

WOH!

womenofhastings@gmail.com

A regular space to bring ideas and reflections. We discuss and write together to create awareness & encourage positive change for women and girls.

WOMAN OF THE DAY

Mary Putnam Jacobi MD
31 August 1842 -
10 June 1906 (age 63)

During the 1800s, it was an accepted notion that women should be confined to bed during menstruation and that consequently, they were not suitable for education. Mary Putnam Jacobi challenged these prejudices by doing experiments to test this belief. Finding no evidence of change in energy levels during menstruation, her work supported the move to give women access to education.



Educating Ourselves About Health

There is still a dismissive attitude to women's health – Frequently women hear contemptuous comments from male GPs. Someone in our group was told, "I'd put all women from 16 to 60 on the pill" to solve their 'mood swings'.

Even more worryingly, this trivialisation extends to those in pain

with various gynaecological issues. We are hearing that more women are not getting the GP or hospital appointments they need or are attending smear tests and feeling exasperated at a lack of GP follow-up care. Another of our group was told she had arthritis by a female GP and had to fight for a year

to get a scan – which found late-diagnosis ovarian cancer. When women experience such dismissal and neglect from practitioners, it is institutional misogyny.

Some women wait too long or give up and don't complain, resulting in late diagnosis of many chronic conditions. Women GPs are reluctant to call out unethical practice, and "first do no harm" attributed to the Hippocratic oath seems to have ended with the 20th century. How can women take back control of their health and ensure efficient and respectful treatment? It's exhausting to have to keep 'pestering' for appointments and investigation – and worse when you already feel ill.

The Advocacy service (0330 440 9000) is set up to support patients who are experiencing neglect or bad practice. Call them if you are not satisfied with your treatment. It is vital to submit complaints for records and statistics.

Some women we spoke to turn to the internet for advice. Mothers, anxious to 'get it right', look outwards for advice instead of trusting their instincts. There are a concerning number of women overusing antibiotics to treat minor ailments or anti-depressants to 'fit in' and conform to social expectations. It's not helped by the fact that, for drug companies, 'depression is fantastic news!' Something that they cashed in on post-war when women had to put down their tools and get back in the kitchen.

Menstrual conditions and perimenopausal symptoms are still regarded as an embarrassing 'problem', especially in work settings, where women hide their discomfort for fear of humiliation or of losing their job. The increase of hormone-based drugs for perimenopause, an entirely natural life transition, is concerning because the side effects are not clear. In later life, stroke and heart failure are likely consequences, although pharmaceutical companies have no compensation plans for those adversely affected by their drugs.

So how can we support women in need without constantly going

down the pathologising route of medication? Joining local support groups is a vital way of connecting with other women and finding alternative ways to stay well: it can be empowering and reconnect us to valuable knowledge we have lost. It's also a way out of the isolation that exacerbates depression.

The area we need to explore is what is really happening in perimenopause, both psychologically and physiologically. This is a transition into female power and maturity which begins with learning to put your needs first, deciding what you really want, taking steps to take time and agency for yourself – and no longer people pleasing.

Often women have come through years of caring for relatives and children, bosses or customers, and being the one who mops up. This stops with menopause. The symptoms of perimenopause can be very difficult as the body goes into some rebellion of its own. Fatigue and emotional turmoil are common: this is the preparation for breaking out.

There is ancient wisdom, and a collective theory developing among mature, modern women, that the more you stand up for yourself in life, the less severe your symptoms in perimenopause will be. Are there correlating patterns in your life, changes that need to be made? How do you take up space and demand support instead of suffering in silence? When did you last ask for help, and was it given? These are questions worth exploring before taking hormone medication, which can delay the transition considerably. We want to hear your experiences.

What we ask of the new government is to make women's health a priority in the coming revision of the NHS. We want our Hastings community to be a place of support, creativity, care and diversity. We also want to raise our expectations for a better quality of life for women – which directly affects families and children. If mothers are well and happy, children have a better start in life.

New Green Gym at Conquest Hospital

National conservation volunteering charity, The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) is marking 65 years of connecting people and green spaces this year by launching a new project at the Conquest Hospital.

The project, titled Green Gym, is run by Carrie Edmonds of TCV and involves health-focussed conservation volunteering activities, helping people to get more exercise and connect with nature whilst improving local green spaces.

"We've started with clearing some of the reedmace in the lake,"

says Carrie. "It's really satisfying to see the progress as the water opens up again. If anyone wants to join us, please do just get in touch. It is so good for both physical and mental health to be outdoors, being active and doing something good for the environment."

The Conquest Green Gym is every Wednesday morning from 10am to 1pm. It's free to take part and people can get a lift in the minibus from the TCV office on Fearon Road (near Alexandra Park) or arrange to meet the group on site.

TCV is a national conservation volunteering charity marking 65 years of connecting people and green spaces this year. The local office is in Hastings on Fearon Road and there are conservation and walking activities every day of the week across East Sussex. The *Health Walks* programme offers free one hour group walks with four every week in the Hastings area. Both projects are funded by East Sussex County Council as part of the public health programme.

For more information on health walks or the Green Gym, visit tinyurl.com/eastsussexhealthwalks or contact Carrie Edmonds carrie.edmonds@tcv.org.uk / 07764 655609 Lorna Neville lorna.neville@tcv.org.uk / 07740 899559



Carrie Edmonds and team make a start clearing reedmace

Women's Cohousing: an Interview with HOWCH

JANIS JEFFERIES talks to Hastings Older Women's Cohousing (HOWCH) about why such initiatives are still needed

One of the most celebrated social reformers in social housing, Octavia Hill (1838-1912) brought decent housing to 3,000 of London's poorest communities. In 1866, with financial investment from her friend and benefactor John Ruskin, Octavia bought several homes for those in need to rent at affordable rates.

Octavia believed that your home was more than a shelter: it was also a space for community. Over a century later, women still experience severe housing shortages because, on average, women have lower incomes and less capital than men. This means access to housing is very limited and largely determined by an increasingly volatile market and regional variations.

Housing affordability, whether rented or purchased, is one of the biggest contemporary public policy issues in the UK. From 2022 to 2023, rent in Hastings alone increased by 11.7% – more than double the average UK rise. House prices have doubled in ten years, one of the biggest spikes in England.

According to the charity Age Concern, loneliness and isolation is set to increase among the over 50s with half of those aged 75 and over living alone – 70% of these are women. The Labour Party, now in government, has pledged to put social and council housing at the heart of Labour's 'secure homes' plan. At the same time, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, is on record as stating that the biggest impact that she can make to the lives of ordinary women, is to close the gender pay gap once and for all.

Whilst promising she would ensure more nursery places and free school breakfast clubs within the first year of government, the link between financial support and models of social or cohousing that emphasises the needs of older women, from diverse communities has yet to be made.

The local Hastings Older Women's Cohousing initiative (HOWCH) was set up to meet this need by developing homes for affordable cohousing: communities created and



HOWCH organising committee posing in homage to Lunch atop a skyscraper.



HOWCH chair, Kate Moran.

run by their residents with local accountability.

WHEN WAS HOWCH FORMED AND WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?

Inspired by the New Ground High Barnet scheme, an innovative project that took 19 years of planning, providing a purpose-built development of 25 flats for women over 50 with communal areas and mutual support, a group of women from Hastings and St Leonards came together in 2017 to establish a similar model for affordable and safe cohousing. The idea is to have 75% affordable rent and 25% affordable leases.

WILL YOU COLLABORATE WITH THE NEWLY FORMED HASTINGS AND RYE COUNCIL AND OTHER AGENCIES?

To achieve HOWCH's aims, the Community Land Trust (CLT) was formed in 2019. This means that land and buildings can be legally secured and retained meeting the needs of older women defined by the local authority. Grants and other

kinds of investments can be secured.

WHAT KINDS OF SUITABLE PROPERTIES CAN YOU FIND IN THE HASTINGS AND ST LEONARDS?

With one potential site already identified, our first pilot cohousing scheme is to develop a *model for cohousing* that will be useful for different groups of people.

WHAT SUPPORT SERVICES DO YOU THINK YOU CAN PROVIDE IN YOUR MODEL FOR COHOUSING?

The aim is to build self-resilience and sustainability. Expectations do have to be managed as cohousing has often been misunderstood as being a care home. This is not the case. In a *cohousing* setup, members live in self-contained units but share many other facilities such as gardens, kitchens, laundries, parking, and a shared car scheme.

For more information visit howch.org or email info@howch.org.

Southern Water: Apologies, Promises and Rebukes

Four senior officers of Southern Water, including Chief Executive Lawrence Gosden, came to Hastings on Tuesday 23 July to address all 32 members of the full borough council; they also answer questions from both councillors and members of the public. In the meeting Mr Gosden acknowledged that Hastings has endured "unacceptable performance" on the part of the company over the past three years, for which he apologised. He then presented a business plan which proposed £7.8bn investment across the company's network over the next five

years (reduced after Ofwat scrutiny to £6.9m). He claimed this would ensure a reliable supply of water, avoid any repeat of recent flooding, and reducing overall pollution by 50%.

Locally, a survey of the Alexandra Park stream would be delivered by the end of August and a full detailed investment plan for Hastings by October.

Hastings' mayor Judy Rogers, who chaired the meeting, said that more than 150 questions had been filed by local residents in advance of the meeting. There followed a near two-

hour session in which a selection of these were put to the Southern Water team, with particular focus on compensation claims relating both to the town centre floods of October 2023 and January this year and to the water outage over the May bank holiday weekend.

Responses on behalf of the company referred to compensation paid to hospitality venues, to discounts applied to residential water bills and to the figure of £120,000 pledged for festivals and community events impacted by the May outage. Further individual cases, including those of residents and businesses who were now finding their buildings uninsurable, would be "looked into". But no general offer of redress was made.

Council leader Julia Hilton thanked the Southern Water team for presenting themselves, but issued a statement in the aftermath saying: "We as a council are united. We shall

continue to hold Southern Water to account. [What they have promised] is a start – but much more is needed. We must have reassurance that they understand their own system, that they know where potential issues are and that they have a detailed plan to shore up our town against future flooding, outages and devastating sewage pollution."

Former council leader Paul Barnett was less emollient. He also thanked Mr Gosden for coming but dismissed the presentation as a "PR exercise... which doesn't allay any of the fears that either councillors or residents of Hastings have about your ability as a company to actually put Hastings back where it needs to be. You've let this town down for years".

The Labour party's new leader Margi O'Callaghan said of Mr Gosden's apology that she "didn't feel like it was that heartfelt, given the fact that your five-year business

plan is going to put the bills of our residents up by 73 per cent. I recently read that you got a bonus of £183,000. That is not acceptable. Why should they suffer? Why should they pay? How can you justify that?"

INCIDENTS AFFECTING HASTINGS OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS

- Five wastewater bursts in Bulverhythe between 2021 and 2023
- Beach closure following a power outage in Bexhill in summer 2022
- Town centre flooding January 2023
- Town centre flooding October 2023
- Water outage May 2024
- High number of storm overflow (CSO) releases



A Tale of Two Sectors

KENT BARKER reports on the apparently growing divide over the environment between large- and small-scale farmers in France

A striking image for anyone travelling through France this summer is the inversion of village and town names. Apparently unobserved, someone has been undoing the bolts on the backs of signs, turning them upside-down, and re-fixing them. And, perhaps most extraordinary of all, no one seems in any hurry whatsoever to turn them back again – despite the obvious insult to local civic pride.

It started off in the Tarn area of the Languedoc last winter and has now spread throughout most of the country. And the people behind this latest craze appear to be angry farmers. Agricultural protests are by no means new in France, but this latest round is pitting large agribusinesses against small farmers and, effectively, against an EU environmental initiative – the Green Deal.

Jean-Marie Rimbert, a 60 year old vigneron from the small village of Berlou in the Languedoc, says no one actually knows who is putting the signs on their head and that people generally don't know what the protest is about. But he thinks that local mayors support small producers and so are content to leave the signs be.

The Green Deal is a multi-faceted programme which seeks to use subsidies from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to 'tackle climate change, protect natural resources and enhance biodiversity in the EU'. One aspect of this is to develop a more sustainable system of agriculture in European Union countries,



Jean-Marie Rimbert

including an upcoming requirement to leave 4% of farmland fallow and to restore hedges – which are almost entirely missing over large parts of the French landscape. Coupled with moves to reduce food price inflation, improve animal welfare and reduce pesticides, it has angered the intensely powerful French farming lobby and unions.

France's biggest farmers' union FENSA (Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles) has enormous influence within the country's political establishment as well as a formidable lobbying presence in Brussels. It has persuaded the Macron government to accept policies known as 'Agricultural Exceptionalism', seeking derogation



St Chinian Market

from some EU rules. According to the monitoring group Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) FENSA 'did not utter a word on the need for CAP subsidies to be spent on supporting farmers towards more environmentally friendly practices' and that it 'opposes any hard, binding environmental measure at the EU level that would be tied to CAP subsidies, hoping it can sufficiently influence France's own Strategic Plan'.

Faustine Bas-Defossez of the European Environmental bureau regards this as a threat to European democracy. "French farmers are trying to ride the wave of anti-EU sentiment – although they are the EU Common Agricultural Policy's biggest beneficiaries," she says. "They are making the EU's Green Deal, which is supposed to ensure a transition toward a more sustainable society, a scapegoat, even though the deal has yet to have any concrete impact on the agricultural sector."

The farmers' perceived anti-democratic tactics of blockading the roads around Paris with tractors and threatening to 'starve the capital' earlier in the year led to government payments of €400 million (around £340 million) to address farmers' grievances along with concessions on environmental measures.

Somewhat surprisingly, environmental groups in France have been anxious to be seen to support the farmers. Following the Paris 'blockade' a joint statement released by more than 50 green organisations

– including Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, and Extinction Rebellion – said they "refuse to be labelled as enemies of the farmers", arguing "environmental standards should not be attacked indiscriminately, but should be financed in such a way as to maintain incomes and make their application compatible with farming practices." Sandy Olivar Calvo, agriculture and food campaigner at Greenpeace France went even further: "The anger of farmers is just and legitimate, and we share it," he said, while backing demands for a ban on the sale of agricultural products at prices below production cost, minimum prices for imported food and strict controls on how much profit supermarkets can make on produce among other measures.

All this seems to be at the expense of smaller farming enterprises. France and Britain have similar populations of around 67 million people. But, according to respective government statistics, France has 456,000 farms compared with the UK's 216,000. However, France has lost almost 300,000 farms in the past two decades and many blame the unions in general, and FENSA in particular, for protecting the big agribusinesses at the expense of small farmers. The huge cereals producers of Northern France are seen to dominate FENSA, leading it to oppose any major moves away from acreage-based subsidies – just what's needed by small acreage farms elsewhere.

Jean-Marie Rimbert farms around 45 hectares of organic vines on the hilly and stony 'schiste' ground around Berlou – within the Saint-Chinian appellation. His annual production is around 80,000 bottles, half of which he exports – mainly to Canada as well as North and South America. He says he has no particular gripe with the EU or the Green Deal – though the latter mainly benefits arable and livestock farmers in the north. "The CAP is proportional and therefore seems fair," he says. But he is intensely frustrated by the huge bureaucracy involved in getting even simple things like agricultural diesel subsidies: "After a long day in the fields the last thing I want to do is to go online and deal with logins and passwords and complex forms." When he retires in five years' time, he thinks his wine 'domaine' will shut and the vines will return to nature – following the trend of small farms closing across the country.

And yet, when you visit the vibrant weekly markets in most French towns, you get a rather different picture. Thousands of 'producteurs' appear to survive by selling seasonal fruit and vegetables as well as cheese and meat on a small local scale – and much of it is organic as they venerate and protect their environment. They seem far removed from the huge tractor protesting farmers of the north and their union representatives whose attitude to the Green Deal appears decidedly negative.

On Pet Grief and How to Cope

ANITA KELSEY is based in Hastings and runs a vet referral service dedicated strictly to the diagnosis and treatment of behaviour problems in cats. She is the author of 3 books: *Claws*, *Let's Talk About Cats*, and her latest book, *The Little Book Of Extraordinary Cats*

Recently, I answered a phone call from a friend whose cat had just been killed in a road traffic accident. I felt helpless as my friend howled down the phone like a wounded animal, knowing she would never see her furry companion again. I know that pain we feel, as I've felt it with previous cats I've lost, but my pain then was slightly different. I had time to say goodbye and to make arrangements for a kinder death with a vet who offered home euthanasia (my cat was ill with advanced kidney disease). Even with that knowledge, the grief was real and it came in waves, drowning a little more of my heart. Whatever the circumstances, pet guardians understand other owners' grief and know, however strange this may sound, that it can be a worse feeling than experiencing the death of a human friend.

I have shared my life with two Norwegian Forest cats for 15 years now. I've been married for 23 years and my husband and I became Kiki and Zaza's guardians after five years of marriage, so, it very much feels like they are our children. We think of them every day, we see them every day, we schedule our daily routines around them and they see us both on good and bad days. Unlike some adult friends, our pets are a constant.

Most of us also have a deep connection with our pets. They do not talk to us in human language and therefore there is no paranoia, misunderstanding or offence taken – ever! There are no human expectations or any moments where we may feel the need to mask our true feelings.

When we lose our pets, our homes suddenly do not feel so welcoming. Why would they? Every day, the presence and life of our chosen pet has brightened our homes and brought meaning to them, which in return has made us far more excited to come home to them. In grief, we feel alone and the silence that infiltrates us as we walk through our front door, only to receive no greeting from our pet,



Anita

breaks our hearts and leaves a gaping wound.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

Grief is a very personal thing and no two people will feel the same or experience the journey of grief in the same way. Unfortunately sometimes grief can tap into angry feelings and we look for someone to blame. Sometimes, this may be the vet or, in the majority of cases, we blame ourselves.

But the grieving process must begin with clearing one's mind, to release any thoughts of guilt or blame. Death is a part of us all. No one escapes it and no one can avoid freak accidents. I know the majority of us as pet guardians give our pets the best possible life. I too have suffered that little voice that comes to us all in the dead of night... "Did you give Figgy the best life? Did you hang on for too long, putting your own selfish needs over hers?"

LET IT GO

Nothing good comes from these thoughts. Spend the time remembering lovely moments with your pet instead and the love you shared on this earth. Those memories are



PATRICK BOYD

Gone but not forgotten: Zaza who passed away in September 2023

priceless and we should feel blessed to have shared them with our pets.

TALK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS

There's no shame in feeling at rock bottom when we are grieving. The effects of pet loss can be devastating and the process of talking about your feelings should be encouraged at every opportunity.

There are many pet bereavement practitioners who offer a support service. Talking to someone else helps us let go of pent-up emotions that are making us feel depressed and tense. It's also nice to spend time talking about the pets we have lost and what they meant to us. It's the start of the journey to accepting how depressed their passing has made us feel. Only by opening up and talking aloud can the journey of healing and acceptance begin.

Talking about what you are feeling could be internal too. It is very cathartic to write down thoughts – a short paragraph or two that could be offered up for friends to read or an article offered to a magazine to help others with their feelings of loss.

Writing a letter to your pet can

also be very soothing. If you didn't get the chance to say goodbye, write your pet a letter with all the things they did that made your heart soar and what they meant to you. And then burn the letter to release the emotions. Maybe ask some friends around to help with the process of saying goodbye. Have a little ceremony or celebration of their life. It's a lovely thing to do.

My friend (who I mentioned above) had a ceremony for her cat, which they held at sunrise by the sea. It was a beautiful calm morning and a few of us sat silently in his memory watching a perfect sunrise from the horizon. We then read poems as we each said our goodbyes and paid our respects in our own way. As friends, we were able to hold hands literally and spiritually as she said her personal goodbyes. It was a very special moment and our tears felt genuine and bonded us in that moment.

When the time feels right, you may wish to find a new furry friend to love and nurture. This really does help with the grieving process and many of us tell ourselves that this is what our previous pet would have wanted – for us to offer love, hope

and kindness to another pet. I tell myself this and I tell other friends and clients who have lost their pets, not because it's the thing to say, but because I truly believe in the healing power of nurturing something outside of ourselves.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER ARE:

- Clear one's mind for acceptance
- Talk or write about your feelings
- Accept that grief is a process
- Don't feel embarrassed by your depth of grief
- Ask for help and in time, consider a new pet to love and be loved by

Various recommended pet bereavement services:

- Theralphsite.com
- Bluecross.org.uk/pet-bereavement-and-pet-loss
- Supportline.org.uk/problems/pet-bereavement
- Rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/pets/bereavement
- Samaritans.org

Jazz, Jamaica, Joy

VICTORIA KINGHAM talks to legendary jazz pianist Monty Alexander



Monty Alexander in the 1970s

Monty Alexander has lived and played in the US for more than sixty years, since being discovered as a young pianist in a bar. Despite this he has never lost the Jamaican lilt to his voice or his whimsical expression. His pianism, however, is pure jazz, hence one could say, pure American. Except, like all great jazz, its sources are universal.

That said, he was brought up in a Jamaica that was still under British rule. "I'm pleased to come to Rye" he says, "and I'd like to go to Hastings too." He was sent to a boarding school. "The teachers made sure they would tell you British History, William the Conqueror and all of that. Some of the teachers were from England."

He recalls that interacting with the instrument gave him joy. "I was able to pick out melodies from 3 and 4 years old, and just have fun. I stopped having fun when my mother tried to get me to go to a piano teacher. Fun has been part of my playing music. When Louis Armstrong came on to the stage, he brought enjoyment." His family weren't exceptionally musical – his mother sang in the church choir, had a yen to acquire an old piano, and took a few lessons. There were always popular songs on the radio. He doesn't talk about his father.

"It wasn't just - this kind of song, that kind of song. It was – I don't know the word – a banquet. Country and Western or Mantovani or Rachmaninoff or Chopin, and the piano sounded heavenly, and I just loved the sound, and tried to emulate it. And the other thing was rhythm. Pulsating, swinging jazz – Armstrong and Nat King Cole. They came to Jamaica to perform. I saw Satchmo. I shook his hand. I was ten years old and I shook his hand!

Then there was Jamaican folk music, calypso, mento." [If you don't know what mento is, try listening to Old Lady You Mash Me Toe, by Hubert Porter, and you'll get the kind of thing].

He mentions hearing pianists Billy Kyle (who played early piano for Louis Armstrong's vocals) and Eddie Heywood, who recorded with Billie Holiday, Ben Webster, many others. And listening to their piano styles, I can hear them now in Monty Alexander's. Honed, adapted, overlaid, but there nevertheless. There's an available track of Heywood playing a beautiful solo version of Hey There (You with the Stars in your Eyes). "Then I heard a lot of rhythm and blues – Louis Jordan, all this kind of music. But a big moment for me was hearing Errol Garner, and Ahmad Jamal, who later became my friend, and he recorded my song on his album."

NO PREJUDICES

If you want to hear more of these classic jazz musicians there are countless on-line ways of listening. They were magnificent, and the point is, that Alexander absorbed them all. "Any time I saw somebody play the piano I was drawn to it. I loved to hear classical music that was so intricate, and passionate. I had no prejudices, I heard it all."

"I never write anything down. Just about everything I do with music is coming from the air, from the sky! I didn't want instruction, because I was already enjoying it. Even with jazz, teachers were saying do it like this, do it like that. But I was in the company of the elders, and they would tell stories about the music. Forty years ago, Ella Fitzgerald's manager (Nor-



Monty Alexander

man Grant) asked me if I would work with her. But how could I work with somebody so incredible when I would have to struggle through a piece of paper? So I had to say, thank you for this honour, but I can't do it. So I just kept on doing what I do – come to play a concert, come to

musical arrangements for the trio. "We don't talk about it, we don't rehearse" he laughs. I believe him. "Drummer Jason Brown, he's been with me six, seven years, very open-minded. And another wonderful young man, [bass player] Luke Sellick. They just follow me, my

hatred. That's what that album is about. There's a story, a reason for doing it. Jazz musicians, that's how we are as people." In June, this became a new No. 1 on the JazzWeek charts.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

He talks of his exposure to the New York scene. "I was this odd guy on the side, and they were all very kind to me. Frank Sinatra said something like, 'you're really swinging, you should come to New York'. So I started playing at this club Jilly's, a night club. I was playing at the piano bar, and Judy Garland was sitting at the bar." Did you play for her? "No – I

hate to say this, but she had a little too much alcohol to be singing. But Sinatra would end up ordering more drinks at 3 in the morning, and I'd play till 5 a.m."

The owner of Jilly's was Jilly [Ermenegildo] Rizzo, long time very close friend of Sinatra. "A gangster bar, really. Jilly was a

"I took delight in it, and my whole musical journey has just been one wonderful accident after another."

Ronnie Scott's - through time, one accident after another."

What he plays is, I would say, jazz at its purest and most inventive. "Jazz musicians, we always want to play something different, something new." He is bringing a drummer and bass player over with him, and I wonder how he approaches

music, whatever route I go down."

His latest album, released a few months ago, is called D-Day. "The very day I was born. That's why I'm Monty, Montgomery" named after the WW2 field-marshal. "On that album I describe the fear of war that's about to happen, and say something about aggression and



JEAN-BAPTISTE MILLOT

my homesickness was evident. So I simplified what I was doing. Jamaican music is not how much you know, but how you play.”

Characteristic of this period is Alexander’s discovery of how the sound of the steel drum resonated with the sound of the piano, to produce a “cathedral” effect. He had a significant association with the jazz steel pan player Othello Molineaux, a steel-pan genius who did know the music of Coltrane and Parker, who afterwards played for several years in a combo with gifted, troubled bass player Jaco Pastorius. Othello’s technical skill and invention contributed to the unique sound of that band of the 1980s, the Invitation line-up. But before that, Molineaux recorded with Monty Alexander, and also on two later albums after the death of Pastorius in 1987.

Monty’s story of that combo – and his store of musical anecdotes is endless – is that it was inspired by an album recorded in 1968 by the great Winifred Atwell called Ivory and Steel. Indeed, listening to her play Gershwin’s Rhapsody In Blue with the Pan Am North Stars Steel Orchestra is something to marvel at, the full ‘cathedral sound’. He loved it, so the band he formed with Molineaux, and their first album, was called Ivory & Steel in honour of Atwell.

THE CHARCOAL THAT BECAME A DIAMOND

Some of his best albums are the ones made at Montreux and in Tokyo. I ask him why he thinks so many great live jazz albums come out of those two places. “American people take jazz for granted, it gets labelled as ‘popular music.’ This great Art form happened in America, this charcoal from blues, from slaves, from Africa, that became a diamond. The Bible says, a prophet is without honour in his own country.

But if you go to France or Japan or the UK there is a more passionate sense of appreciation. A musician feels that, and it encourages them to reach for a higher level.”

He has made 75 albums, featured on many more, and to each of them, he brings a characteristic joyful originality. A tune like Stevie Wonder’s Sunshine of My Life for example doesn’t necessarily have the kind of chords that make a classic jazz standard like, say, Tangerine. Stevie Wonder is a virtuoso, tireless activist and wonderful songwriter but not known on the whole as a jazz musician. Monty’s version takes Sunshine of My Life through a heavily romantic, near-schmaltzy, introduction into a brilliant double-time fantasy and back again, and I love it. Monty has to remind me, though, that we are talking about fifty years ago! One of the best things about Spotify is that finding tracks ignores time, and the best tracks don’t date.

And indeed, neither does Monty Alexander. The performance, in legendary St Mary’s at Rye, promises greatness. He will be flying in from the Nice Jazz Festival. Rye Festival is fortunate to have acquired an equally legendary, committed, lucid, endlessly inventive, joyous musician, considered by many to be one of the best jazz pianists in the world. It was a privilege to speak to him, and it will be an honour to see him play.

Monty Alexander will play at St. Mary’s Church, Rye, as part of the Rye Jazz and Blues Festival, on Sunday 25 August from 3-5 p.m. Full details of the Festival, which runs from 22-26 August, can be found at ryejazz.com where tickets can also be purchased. Copious information about Alexander, his life, and his music at montyalexander.com.



Back cover of Ivory & Steel, showing Trinidadian steel drum master Othello Molineaux, Jamaican musicians, and diverse jazz and classical numbers indicating Alexander’s true lack of ‘prejudice’

tough-guy type of guy. You learned to behave yourself, mind your business. Jilly Rizzo got killed in a horrible traffic collision in the early 90s. In my opinion that was the day that Sinatra started losing his love for the music of life. So I made the album (Echoes of Jilly’s) and I got back a letter from Frank Sinatra to say thanks for remembering my dear friend.”

CARIBBEAN ROOTS

In the early 90s Alexander became disenchanted with the music around him, “what musicians were thinking and feeling, the apathy. Some of my heroes were dying, too. So I went back to Jamaica where I grew up, to do human music. Hanging out with my Jamaican friends. They don’t know about Charlie Parker or John Coltrane. It’s a whole different, Afro-centric culture, with the ganja and everything, and Bob Marley was a great exponent of all of that. I started meeting younger people and playing with them, the reggae beat, and

The Last Princess

ELLEN ALPSTEN anticipates publication of her latest novel

Following my *Tsarina* series, which sold in 20 languages and was nominated for numerous awards, my new novel *The Last Princess* is to be published on 7 November 2024.

The last Princess is Gytha, the daughter of Harold II, who gives a feminine take on 1066. She flees the Normans, becomes a Viking slave, and is caught up in a lethal conflict of Faith and superstition, until a passionate love story lets her create the Empire of All the Russias - no less. Her story is about us, albeit an utterly surprising, shocking, seductive and hitherto unknown us. The novel’s accuracy touches on Janina Ramirez’ *Femina*, the epic sweep on Samantha Shannon’s *Priory* works. Also, the book’s themes of loss, displacement, and betrayal are as zeitgeist as Gytha’s quest for trust, love and friendship.

The Last Princess is local, since a lot of the early action takes place between Bosham and Battle. It is also very topical: there is a huge



William/Harold TV-Series in the making and for the first time ever, women marched alongside men at the Shetland Fire Festival in Feb 2024, proudly celebrating their Norse and Anglo-Saxon heritage.



Sinead Smith, The Foundation Upon Which I Stand: quilt

Work by the unFOLD group on the theme of ‘Raft: a Place of Safety and Survival’ will be exhibited at Hastings Arts Forum gallery from Tuesday 6 August to Sunday 18 August (closed Mondays), with an

opportunity to meet the artists between 2 and 4pm on Sunday 18 August.

unfoldtextiles.com
Insta: @unfold_textiles

Look Out, Cratediggers!

HARRY HAWKINS recounts a musical banquet to be had in just two of the town's several record shops, Tough Love Records and Dayglo Studios

Crammed in the front of thankfully aircooled Tough Love Records, totemic speaker cabs and a decorated drum kit stand proud. These were the tools at the disposal of The Mystic Shed, a punk blues whirlwind once in action. Their riffs dodge and weave through so many movements and rhythmic flourishes that you'd think drummer Kit and guitarist Tom have had brain implants. Throttling between spitting guitar stabs and mellower improvising, they undercut the progressive blast of their sound with plenty of irreverence. See song titles like

"Enormous Duck" and a tune dedicated to railway ax-man Lord Beeching, before which they tried to flog a can of petrol with each CD.

This was just one of the many in-store shows put on by shop owner Anja Petito, who put the Shed on for Tough Love's second birthday celebration (cake included). Whilst there's plenty of moshing fare to be found on Tough Love's racks, and local metal magicians Wytch Pycknyck have also played there, there's no rock-ist pigeonholing. Konnaruchi, a solo singer-songwriter who recently moved to Hastings



CHARLES DAVIES

Borough Council at DayGlo Records

from New Zealand, made the shop his first UK show. Anja makes a point of displaying a variety of local artists (rapidly expanding) and is a fount of musical knowledge, global and local. An upcoming show is to come all the way from Mexico - shoegazers Mirror Revelations, who contacted the shop, where their records proved popular.

BOROUGH COUNCIL PLUG AND PLAY

Dayglo Studios is another record shop where I managed to catch two bands. The first was soul band Starchild. Despite it being their inaugural gig, they seemed at ease. Not just luck, as the band formed through a note in the shop asking for musicians, and they have subsequently

used it to rehearse their low-key Stax records-style grooves. Their relaxed confidence was evident as even their soundcheck drew applause. After came Borough Council, a rising Hastings-based trio who have concocted and rehearsed song ideas at Dayglo. They brought their singular sound, a knitting of Tom's hypnotic drumbeats and Joe's dubby bass with Joe's brother Hayden, playing a dynamic and at times ambient guitar. Each song morphs abstractly, moving from the slacker riffs and vocals of "Casino" to the clenched-teeth propulsion of "Prescribed". Given that the band is set to play shows across the UK and France a few weeks from now, it's a stroke of luck to see them here, in a more intimate venue.

Dayglo Studios has been around for more than 2 years now. Owner Steve Sullivan sees the shop as an outlet for all kinds of creatives, and the walls boast visual treats like Cuban film posters as well as the necessary vinyl. He's looking to develop it as a small gallery for visual artists and has plenty of musical equipment to enable bands to plug and play.

To find dates for upcoming record store shows Instagram - @dayglostudios, @toughlovestleonsards.

Legendary Musician to Play Rare Electric Palace Gig

DAVID BRUMLEY reviews the career of Tymon Dogg, who appears in a one-off local performance at the Electric Palace



SUSAN DEMUTH

Tymon Dogg's career has spanned several decades. He initially recorded a single at the age of 17 with Jimmy Page and John Paul Jones prior to their forming Led Zeppelin. This led Tymon to a recording contract with Apple Records and recordings with Paul McCartney on piano and James Taylor on guitar. At the age of 19, he toured and wrote with The Moody Blues, supporting them at the Albert Hall.

A multi-instrumentalist singer-songwriter with a unique style, Dogg was a close friend and long-time collaborator of the late great Joe Strummer. They met in the early 70's in a Wood Green squat nicknamed Vomit Heights. Dogg taught Strummer to play the guitar and they played together in the mid 70's in the band The 101ers, which included a support slot for the Sex Pistols before Strummer left to join The Clash. Dogg also wrote and performed lead vocals on the classic folk punk song "Lose this Skin" on the Clash Sandinista! album and later played with The Mescaleros (Joe Strummer's band).

Dogg has released numerous solo albums, including Battle of Wills in 1982 and a self-titled solo album in 1975, to critical acclaim. In recent years he has split his time between England and Spain recording with the band The Dacots and producers Youth and Jose Sanchez.

This is a rare opportunity to see Tymon Dogg in his adopted home town. For tickets please go to Electricpalacecinema.com. Show is 2 August at 7.30 pm

Cowell at The Crown

Painter Ruth Cowell is the latest to be displayed at The Crown, which continues to provide vital exhibition support to artists. She has drawn and painted for as long as she can remember and has been fortunate to be able to continue to pursue her passion. She works in her home studio, looking out onto fields and wooded hills. Her surroundings, whether flowers in the garden, trees in the nearby woods or fruit on the table, have always inspired her. On recent holidays, Greece and France have been a source of inspiration, but Influences range from seventeenth-century Spanish still life through to Edward Hopper, then David Hockney.

Ruth Cowell studied at Goldsmiths College and Wimbledon School of



Eve By the Sea at Sivota, Greece (2018)

Art, then won a French government scholarship to study painting and print-making in Montpellier. Here she discovered the light and colour of the South of France, which have remained with her. Later she worked as a researcher at the Wallace Collection, which gave her a further interest in French nineteenth-century Orientalist painting.

She has exhibited in London and the South of England, France and the U.S.A. Her work is in private collections in the United Kingdom, France, Greece, Australia, South America, the Philippines and the USA.

ruth@ruthcowell.com
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APOLOGY

Many of you will have realised that this picture, printed in 'Focus on Folk' in the last issue, is not in fact Martin Carthy but Martin Wyndham-Read, who will be appearing at The Cove in Fairlight on 1 September at 6pm. We apologise for the mislabelling and hope you will enjoy the performance.



BOOKBUSTER REVIEW

The Petroleum Papers

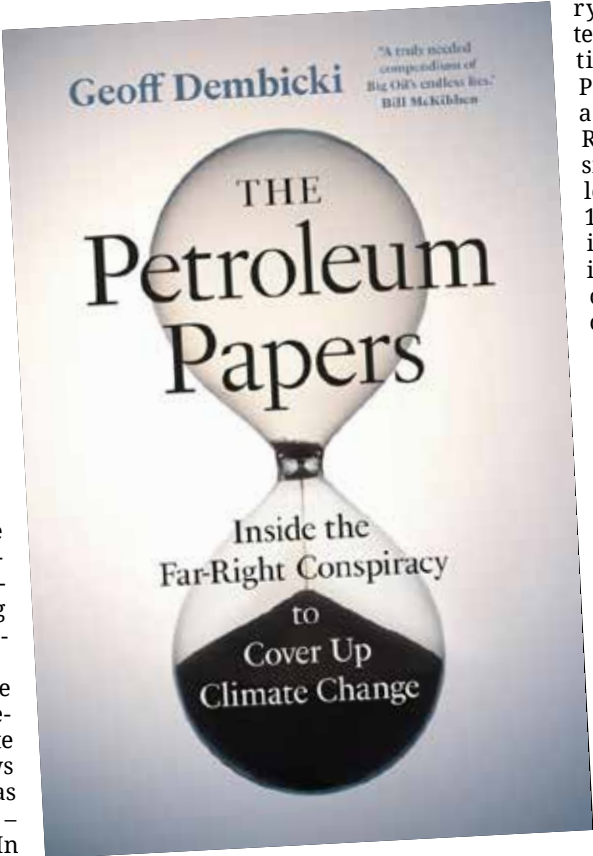
By Geoff Dembicki
Published by Greystone
Books, £10.99
REVIEW BY TIM BARTON

The website for Left Foot Forward recently analysed data on far-right party funding, and reported that “climate disinformation database DeSmog” had found “that all of Reform Party’s funders in 2023 had oil and gas investments or ties to climate science denial, totalling £135,000”. They note that “the party holds a vocal anti-net zero stance, seemingly reflected in its funding [...], [donors include] Panther Securities, [...] First Corporate, who gave £100,000 in June 2023, a consultants firm owned by Terence Mordant, director of the UK’s leading climate science denial group, Global Warming Policy Foundation”.

Additionally, “Richard Tice, the current leader of Reform has previously denied there is a climate crisis, airing his anti-net zero views on GB News – who’s co-owner has invested billions in fossil fuels – where he is a regular presenter. In a scientifically debunked video, he called CO2 ‘plant food’ in an attempt to challenge climate change facts”. They are far from alone, all major parties take bribes, sorry, ‘donations’ from fossil-fuel industry lobbyists.

This is not a new phenomenon, although the traction for such views has increased considerably during and since the lockdown year, as more people, trapped at home, absorbed huge amounts of dubious ‘news’ via the Trollosphere. Geoff Dembicki, a contributor to DeSmog, in his new book *The Petroleum Papers* traces the deep roots of what he describes as ‘the far-right conspiracy to cover-up climate change’.

GREENWASHING AND DENIALIST
The tragedy here is that the fossil-fuel extractive industries have been



aware of their role in anthropogenic climate-change for many decades, but systematically not only suppressed internal reports, but frighteningly successfully propagandised against external agencies that have sought to blow the whistle on these issues. And now, decades later, and despite the environmental activists succeeding in pressuring industry to, in public, admit they are responsible, but whilst they less publicly fund a greenwashing and denialist propaganda machine to the tunes of millions of pounds, we have begun to reach limits many fear will lead to a synergy between various ecological drivers that will accelerate beyond any hope of successful human intervention.

The facts of ‘greenhouse gasses’ were first theorised and laborato-

ry-tested in the nineteenth-century by scientists such as Fourier, Pouillet, Foote, Tyndall, and Arrhenius. The Royal Institution website notes that “Guy Callendar, [...] showed in 1938 that human activity was responsible for increasing carbon dioxide levels, and hence of potential climate change”.

A RUNAWAY WARMING EVENT VERY SOON
Of course, CO2 is by no means the only greenhouse gas, a fact the disinformation crowd make much of, deliberately misrepresenting the situation. Methane is a major contributor, for example, which is one of a number of reasons many advocate a reduction in numbers of farm-bred cattle, who to put it bluntly fart too much. James Lovelock invented the electron capture detector and became the first to detect the presence of greenhouse gases of the chlorofluorocarbon family in the atmosphere. Lovelock wrote many articles and books warning of the consequences of the ‘greenhouse effect’. The reality is that, whilst not the worst gas per volume in climate change, CO2 remains the most copious by a very large degree. As Lawrence Krauss noted in his book *The Physics of Climate Change*, over the last 150 years we have burnt through probably the majority of easily reached fossil fuels: oils, gasses and shales laid down over millions of years. He notes the difference between natural average annual CO2 emission and absorption, and contemporary emissions and absorption. And that our oceans

are reaching their capacity to absorb heat & CO2, whilst our forests are fast disappearing, thus reducing the capacity of land-based mechanisms to absorb even ‘normal’ CO2 emissions. This augers a runaway warming event very soon.

Dembicki’s book traces the denial industry, it’s nefarious suppression of data, and it’s funding of those spreading disinformation. Unsurprisingly, giant corporations such as Shell, British Petroleum, Koch Industries, and Exxon have not only known of the problems their industrial pollution causes for many decades, but have and are actively suppressing, misrepresenting and frankly lying about it too. Their natural allies, of course, are in the agriculture industry, the construction industry, the transport industry, and the supermarkets. Productivist capitalism, and state-capitalist supposedly ‘left-wing’ nations, also seek to at best deliberately sideline attempts to curb emissions. Hence the rampant failures of our much-touted international conventions to agree limits.

IT WILL BE BITTER
Given the impacts of reining in the fossil-fuel industry, reducing livestock, reducing the use of artificial fertilisers, limiting private transport, trying to source materials and products more locally instead of shipping them from the Far East, moving away from out-of-town megastores and shopping centres, et cetera, it is no surprise to find the right-wing neoliberal globalists in bed with far-right populists who will blow any old dog whistle they can in order to suppress the effort to save us from a runaway climate emergency. It is no accident the Trollosphere has radicalised so many people against ULEZ, the climate justice movement, and those seeking a more decentralised and localist economy. The latter are allied with the movement to found ‘fifteen-minute cities’, a particular focus for over-weening and irrational hatred from the populist right-wingers. The paranoia they spread will likely be the final straw.

It is ironic that Reform UK Party supporters are so cognitively dissonant, and unable to see through the dangerous spiv, Nigel Farage’s nonsense – on the one hand ‘we got our country back’, on the other he takes cash from those most inclined to push a globalist capitalist agenda and puts more fossil-fuel extraction right there in his Top 5 policies.

“If oil executives had actually taken seriously the climate warnings given by their own scientists” from at least the 1980s onwards, “we wouldn’t be experiencing the climate crisis.” And we are experiencing it, in its early but accelerating stages, right now, not in some far-off future. But of course, Essex Man wants his car, just as much as the oil barons want to keep the black gold flowing until the bitter end – and it will be bitter.

The Petroleum papers is available from Bookbuster, 39 Queens Road, Hastings TN34 1RE

POETRY CORNER

THE MIRROR
OLI SPLEEN

If you were me
And could see what I have seen
Then you would know the longing
And the heartache
And the listless lonely days
I had a dream
I’d meet someone like you
Someone who would not blame me
Who’d save me
Who’d let my soul renew
Now you are here
Unafraid to hold my heart
In spite of all my failings
My feeling
That I am not enough
And cannot be
You make me feel complete
Oh lover let me hold you
And behold you
Tell me that you won’t leave

But then if I could be you
If I knew all that you knew
If I could walk within your shoes
And wear your skin
I taste your suffering
It mirrors mine
Oh let our lives entwine
And hold me lover, hold me
Unfold me
And wrap your heart in mine

CROSSWORD CORNER

- Across**
- 1. Op list somehow included a weapon (6)
 - 3. Seldom in office do you find a block with spots (6)
 - 4. Many around here found this man invasive (6)
- Down**
- 1. Drop an arrangement – what was that? (6)
 - 2. No gal returns with love for a watery body (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 5 of The HIP List

1					2
3					
4					



Caffeine Scene

A 'speciality coffee' bar has opened in St Leonards. TESSA BOASE meets the man behind Chucky's Baristro

Cagri 'Chucky' Turan is a busy man, fielding calls from equatorial coffee farmers, zipping between roasteries in Wiltshire and Lewes and obsessively polishing coffee machines in outlets on the Sussex coast. "I'm starting at four o'clock every morning. I'm finishing at eight o'clock every evening. The hours are not enough for me," he says, briskly swirling my 'house blend' around a fine, ceramic cup before adding Northiam Dairy milk in velvety laps. I'm in Chucky's Baristro on King's Road – his latest, most anticipated venture.

Bexhill and Brighton came first, but a £10k rent hike in Brighton pushed this irrepressible entrepreneur further east. After circling for three years, he swooped on Kings Road: a pocket-sized coffee bar with a DJ playing tunes, perfect for day trippers and locals alike. But does Kings Road need yet another coffee outlet?

Walk in, and you'll see that Chucky's Baristro is different. There are tasting notes on the two coffee mills, with a seasonally changing offer ('rum raisin, hazelnut, marmalade, peach, nougat, Fanta, black tea...'). You can read about the Peruvian or Colombian farm that produced the beans, its altitude, the process. "It was upsetting me that everybody was getting good coffee in London, in big cities," says Chucky. "Why not in small towns? I knew I was the right person to

show everyone what really good coffee tastes like."

The door swings open. "Two vanilla lattes to go," says a woman. Chucky suppresses a small shudder. "It's just business for me," he shrugs. "But I know this person doesn't understand coffee." All this is about to change. "I'm here to take people on a journey. I'm going to be introducing you to different tastes, to the coffees next in season." Some customers will visit just once for a vanilla latte, others – locals? – will get on board for the journey.

Chucky's unique offer is 'speciality coffee', a product he controls from cherry to cup. His beans are grown by small producers in Brazil,

Peru, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Colombia, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Uganda. "I follow the season cycle of the farmers, who play a big part in our coffee story," he tells me. The beans are treated to different processes, such as the limited edition 'Juicy Berries', created by a 24-year-old coffee farmer in Colombia who ferments the fruits for 72 hours. It has an intriguing flavour: tart with red berries, sweet with a hint of white chocolate, no syrups added.

How did his passion for coffee start? Chucky was born in Hamburg in 1985 to German-Turkish parents who ran a food store that came with a roaster. One day a customer came in and pointed out that, rather than nuts, the machine in the corner was meant for roasting coffee beans. Chucky, nine years old, was listening. He started experimenting, first with Turkish coffee, then Italian. Moving to London in 2009 "for love", (Petra, a Slovakian, is now his wife), he opened his first small outlet in Fulham.

But he still didn't understand speciality coffee, serving instead Lavazza, Illi & co, the strong, roast-

ed Italian flavours we associate with coffee. Then Chucky met a professional, a Swedish woman who gave him "a juicy, nutty coffee from El Salvador," complete with its story of origin. It was his moment of epiphany. "There – then – that was the moment I understood coffee."

Five years later, and he's running a company built entirely around speciality coffee. It's a one-stop-shop, offering everything from superb blends to the best equipment, barista training to masterclasses in latte art. "If your coffee is bad, latte art doesn't mean anything!" he exclaims. Alex, his

Kings Road barista, agrees. "I've learned so much," she says. "I used to overheat the milk. Now I know to test the heat on the palm of my hand, spin the coffee in the cup, spin the milk to make it shiny, tap the jug to get rid of the bubbles. Before, I'd never given a thought to what I was serving. Now I'm trying to learn about coffee production."

At 39, Chucky is also still learning. "Coffee is a craft," he explains. "It's always changing." Now we can join him on that journey.

Chucky's Baristro, 57 Kings Road, St Leonards on Sea TN37 6DY, 6am-4pm. @chuckysbaristro



What Makes a Great Coffee Shop?

FIONA MCGARRY

I toyed with the idea of a list of the HIP team's top 10 coffee shops in Hastings and St Leonards, but I've witnessed the angry responses this can provoke. And since I would inevitably miss out many worthy contenders or reveal a bias towards local establishments, I decided to focus on five features of a great coffee shop instead.

The coffee: nothing worse than a weak, tasteless coffee – too milky, too 'thin', too hot; although a mean and bitter cup is almost as bad. For an almost 'chocolatey' latte try the South American blends at Cumbia Kitchen or the lovingly prepared cups at Stooze Coffee (the 18-hour cold brew coffee is recommended)

A meeting place: The place with the most vibrant atmosphere might be Goat Ledge – but surely that's no longer primarily a coffee venue? Barista and the Shack is an alternative just further along the prom where coffee remains a top priority. A good place to meet up with friends is Hanushka (or bury yourself in their library of books if you want to be alone).

A relaxing vibe: a chilled place with a wonderful view of the sea is

Dark Circles (also sublime music) or Starsky and Hatch if you prefer the open air. A cosy and welcoming atmosphere can also be found at Sugar Pie Honey Buns – which feels very different: more like a Canadian coffee house than something in a seaside town.

The service: where do you go when you want some personal attention or want to feel part of the local community? There's always a smiling welcome at Bullet Coffee House, where it's easy to be cajoled into ordering a large piece of vegan-friendly cake. Or go to Dove Café for a latte and end up staying for a serving of their delicious Makloubah (Palestinian upside-down rice dish). For a friendly chat as you watch the world go by, Folks Coffee in London Road is perfect – and good value.

Handiness: it's important to have a place that gives you a great cup of coffee when you're in a hurry and everywhere else is shut (Goodmans Barbers in my case.)

I like my coffee fast – so I've left out places where I might enjoy a cup but visit primarily for food – a flat white with a vegan breakfast (the best) at Dandelion for example. I've left out 'Cleanliness' too... but maybe that's one of your Top 5? Let us know what you think is vital for a great coffee shop!



CRICKET

Priory Fighting Tight Relegation Battle

6 July
Horsham 85 for 2
v Hastings Priory (match rained off)
13 July:
Roffey 225 for 7;
Hastings Priory 216 for 8
20 July:
East Grinstead 151 all out;
Hastings Priory 152 for 3
27 July:
Hastings Priory 229 for 9;
Cuckfield 233 for 8

HUGH SULLIVAN

July was a month of mixed fortunes for the cricketers of Hastings & St Leonards Priory, with four matches resulting in one victory, one defeat, one draw and one abandonment to rain. It has left them in the Sussex Premier League's relegation zone, ninth position out of ten, but still in touch with three other sides above them. With six games to go, there's certainly everything still to play for.

The match at Horsham on 6 July was a wash-out waiting to happen. Hastings skipper Harry Scowen asked the home side to bat first:

they started brightly in the hope of making a quick score, Adam Barton took a couple of wickets, then the predicted rain descended - and that was that.

The following week, Horsham neighbours Roffey came to Horntye. They started with an opening partnership of 115, and reached 175 for one with star batsman Theodore Rivers going on to score a century, but disciplined bowling and fielding on the part of Priory kept the scoring rate in check. Wickets tumbled late on, as Charlie Francis and John Morgan took a brace apiece. The visitors declared at 225 for seven in the middle of the 56th over, perhaps not wishing to allow Priory further bowling points.

That left the Hastings side 54 overs to overhaul them. They lost talisman Scowen immediately for a duck, but Alex Osborne (72 not out) held the innings together whilst successive partners Dylan Woolley (17), Tom Gillespie (25) and Greg Devlin (17) gradually increased the run rate. At 118 for five, when Seaver Cowley was dismissed cheaply, the target looked a long way off, but breezy knocks by Iden McCleave (25) and



John Morgan: 7 for 49 against East Grinstead

Morgan (25 off 20 balls) kept the Hastings side in the hunt. Eventually they finished 10 runs short with two wickets outstanding to leave the match drawn, though Roffey took 14 bonus points to Priory's ten.

VICTORY AT EAST GRINSTEAD
On 20 July the Priory side travelled to East Grinstead, asked the home side to bat first, and enjoyed their best afternoon in the field since early May, dismissing the home side for 151 in less than 33 overs. Their attack was without Barton, Adam Page or Satchi Mahendran, but Mor-

gan, bowling unchanged throughout, returned impressive figures of seven wickets for 49. Supporting bowlers Dan Pascall, Cowley and Osborne took one each.

In reply it was Scowen who held the Priory innings together on this occasion, scoring an unbeaten 78 in partnerships with Caleb Laloo (23), Woolley (20), Osborne (6) and Adam Keane (18 not out). The target was reached in the 37th over for a seven wicket win.

Last Saturday, high-flying Cuckfield - last season's champions and in the mix to repeat their triumph this season - came to Horntye. Scowen again won the toss, and somewhat surprisingly (in view of previous victories batting second) opted to take the first knock, in the hope that the wicket would deteriorate over the course of the afternoon. He himself made a confident 29, then Laloo (52) and Woolley (25) batted sensibly to push the score along, and there were later useful contributions from Keane (18) and Greg Devlin (21). But the middle order found it hard to move the score along quickly and it was left to Page (22 not out off 14 balls including two sixes) to hoist the score to 229 for nine off the maximum 58 overs.

Cuckfield hit off more than half the deficit with yet another century

opening partnership - the fifth scored against Priory in 12 matches this season - but once this was broken, wickets tumbled to a combination of pace from Barton (four for 52) and slow guile from Page (three for 81). When Cowley ran out the ninth batsman Sam Hardwicke in the 46th over, the West Sussex side were still 30 runs short with only two wickets in hand, and Priory seemed on course to chalk up a famous victory. But it was not to be: ninth wicket partners Bradley Gayler and Sam Candfield plundered 23 runs off Page in ten balls to see their side home.

A glance at the league table after this narrow defeat shows that Worthing (played 12, lost 12) are virtually certain to be relegated, even though there are still six matches to play. One of the four sides above them - in ascending order, Priory, East Grinstead, Roffey and Bognor Regis, who have each won four matches so far - is likely to accompany them back down to Division 2. There's good reason for Priory to feel that, in the shape they're in, it need not be them.

Tomorrow (Saturday) Hastings & St Leonards Priory travel to Middleton, then on 10 August will entertain Three Bridges at Horntye.

SUSSEX PREMIER LEAGUE TABLE (BOTTOM FIVE)

	P	W	D	L	A	BAT	BOWL	PTS
BOGNOR REGIS	12	4	1	6	1	30	40	200
ROFFEY	12	4	2	5	1	38	30	198
EAST GRINSTEAD	12	4	1	5	2	20	30	190
HASTINGS & ST L PRIORY	12	4	1	6	1	42	17	179
WORTHING	12	0	0	12	0	49	23	82

FOOTBALL

United Gear Up For New Season

HUGH SULLIVAN

Hastings United kick off a new season of the Isthmian Premier League at the Pilot Field next Saturday 10 August. Their first opponents will be Horsham, play-off semi-finalists three months ago, who beat the 'U's in three successive games earlier this year - 2-0 in Hastings in February, 2-1 at Horsham in March, and 3-0 in the Sussex Senior Cup Final at the Amex Stadium in May.

Incoming Hastings manager Danny Bloor is unlikely to be fazed by that recent history. He seems to have succeeded in retaining the majority of last season's first team squad, as was his stated intention on appointment, and they have embarked on a series of friendly match-

es across Kent and Sussex since the middle of July to prepare.

Davide Rodari will continue to lead the attack, with a strong midfield behind him including Adam Lovatt, Jack Dixon, Sam Cruttwell and Kian Moynes. They will miss winger John Ufuah, who both scored and created a large number of goals in Chris Agutter's team of last year, but has signed for National League side Slough Town. They have also lost the services of defender and long throw specialist Ollie Black, who has been recruited by Agutter in his new managerial role at Worthing. The teenage mainstay of last season's defence, Sam Gale, who was on loan from Gillingham, will also be gone, no doubt hoping for opportunities in more elevated company with his parent club.

Coming in are a left-footed at-



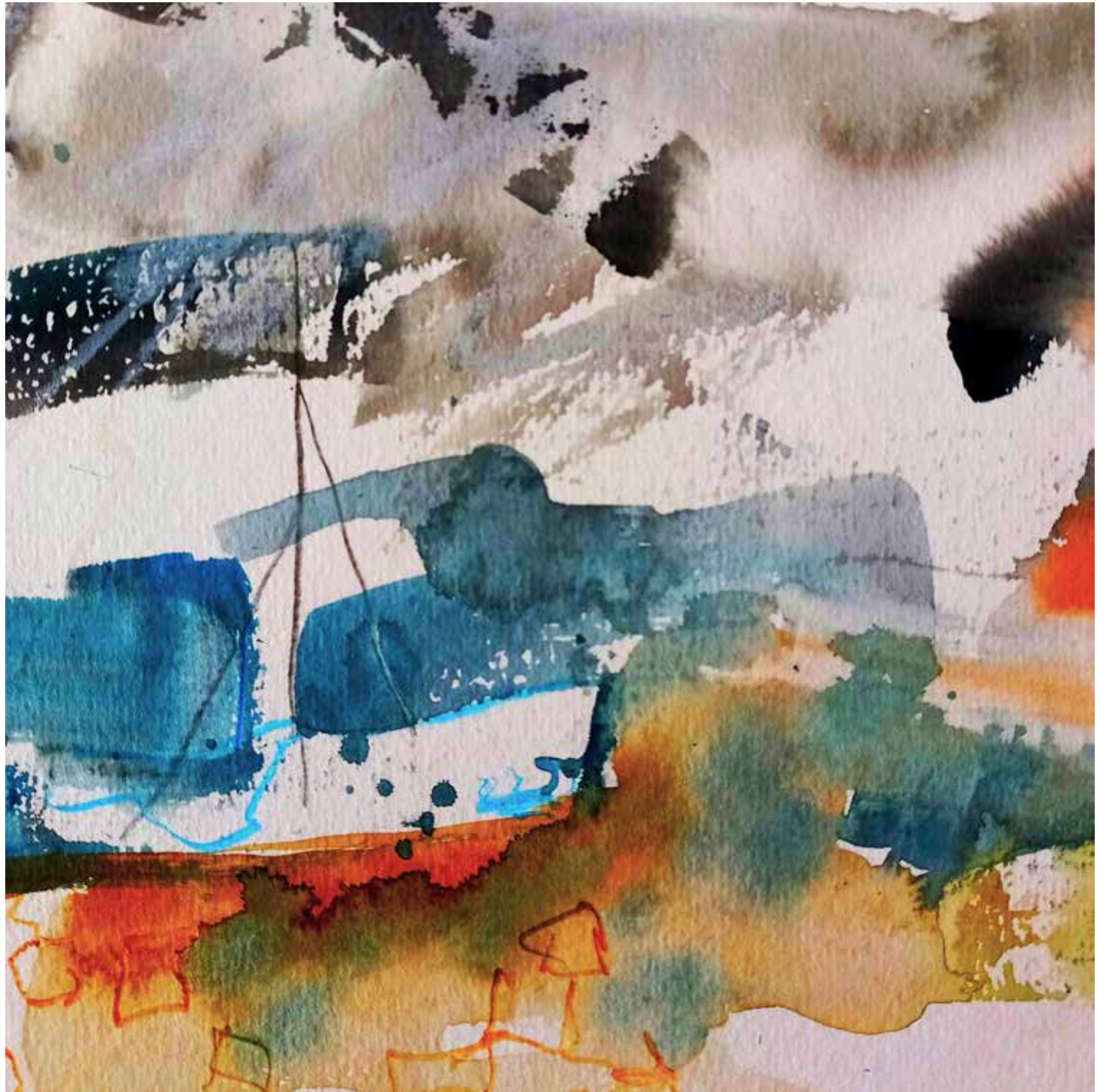
Sean Ray, new United head coach, in his playing days

tacker Tom Edwards, who was with Bloor at Eastbourne Borough, and Kane Penn, returning for a second spell in Hastings after performing well at full-back in Gary Elphick's

ber him as a stalwart over many seasons in central defence, making more than 350 appearances in a Hastings shirt, including participation in the famous FA Cup run of 2013. Now 43, he went on playing with Hollington United until four years ago, when he retired as a result of ongoing knee problems, but continued to coach at the academy.

So what style of football will the new management team engender? Supporters may hope for a team that plays a little quicker and more expansively than those coached by Agutter. The Southgate formula of passing sideways and backwards out of defence certainly had its critics on the international stage this summer, and Bloor indicated at a fans forum a couple of months ago that he would direct his players to "adapt" to the conditions they will be playing under.

We'll see what that means soon enough. Following the opener against Horsham, further league fixtures come rapidly: away to Whitehawk on the evening of Tuesday 13 August; home to Bognor Regis Town on Saturday 20th; away to Potters Bar Town on Saturday 24th, and home again to Folkestone Invicta on Bank Holiday Monday.



Mel McCleary
Anchored.
Watercolour and
pencil, 20 x 20 cm.

ANCHORED IN EAST SUSSEX

In 2013, after many years of working in wigs and make-up for the Royal Opera House and the Royal Shakespeare Company, Mel made the move south to Hastings Old Town. She had felt intensely drawn to the area and fell in love with this part of Sussex. Mel had successfully shown acrylic landscapes and textile work in London, both in open studios and private exhibits and she returned to the visual arts when the pandemic hit and theatre dissolved temporarily.

After starting to explore her family history online, she discovered that three generations of (previously unknown) direct relatives had lived here in the 19th century, working as coastguards in Ecclesbourne Glen and occupying one of eight Martello towers situated on the beach at Pett Level in the 1850s.

“Suddenly it all made sense to me - the strong impulse to paint the sea and landscapes, focusing mostly on the Pett Level marshes and areas surrounding Rye. I’d like to believe that we can hold genetic memories of place, because I finally feel truly at home here.”

This Coastal Currents exhibition features Pett Level, Winchelsea and Ecclesbourne Glen, where these members of the Coastal Blockade, later to become the Coastguards, spent an unusual and almost reclusive life. “It seems that they were not encouraged to associate with the wider communities around them.

“This discovery has informed my life and creativity in ways I could never have imagined and the existence of my ancestors here has truly ‘anchored’ me in place. The future feels exciting - there are still many gaps to fill in this story, but I have a

feeling more will reveal itself!”

Anchored is a multi-media response to these discoveries, as she wanted to explore new processes in addition to her painting.

“I’m trying to blend the knowledge I have about my family with the strong emotions these landscapes bring out in me. I’m keen to use new forms, so I’m incorporating sound for the first time and also experimenting with cyanotypes.”

Mel’s mixed media paintings will be on show and for sale.

“She also has plans to develop the use of natural sounds in future installations on the same theme and perhaps a short film. “I think this amazing discovery will be the inspiration for my work for some time to come.”

‘Anchored’ is at Winchelsea New Hall, as part of Coastal Currents 2024, on 31 August and 1 September