

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



10
YEARS OF
INDEPENDENT
JOURNALISM



County Council Set to Slash Social Care Spending

The cabinet of East Sussex County Council (ESCC) were due to meet on Thursday this week to discuss savings proposals on next year's budget, which at present is predicted to result in a £55 million shortfall.

An internal financial report states that the council's expected budget gap over the next three years to 2027/28 is £83.6m, "the most difficult financial outlook" it has ever faced. The adverse figures are blamed upon the "substantial and growing gap between the costs of delivering essential services to meet the needs of East Sussex residents and the income we expect to have to fund [them] in future years".

Cabinet members will be told that the council has already taken action to minimise day-to-day expenditure where possible, is carefully considering recruitment to vacant posts, and has reduced office space. With concerns that any delay would worsen the council's financial position, further immediate proposals for savings totalling around £4m will focus on discretionary and non-statutory preventative services – both directly provided services and support services and back-office functions – and on income generation.

But as 48% of the total net budget is spent on adult so-

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Any post-election optimism that a change of government might improve the lot of ordinary people in this socially and economically deprived town has already faded like a mirage. Ensconced a safe distance away, East Sussex County Council has announced a further programme of savage cuts to an already stretched social care budget.

In the centre of Hastings, two striking and iconic buildings from very different eras, former Saga HQ No 1 Priory Square and the long-empty Central Post Office are both on the market and likely to change use in this piecemeal 'developed' ghost area.

Other changes to the built environment are more hopeful. Congratulations to all involved in the 10-year refurbishment of the timber-framed Alexandra Park greenhouse, while over in West St Leonards, on opposite sides of the old lido site you'll discover several uplifting new murals.

This issue also has a review of a new book by Caroline Lucas (former Brighton MP and Green party leader), one of many inspiring speakers at the recent, highly successful Hastings Book Festival, now in its fifth year and with a diverse range of participants reflecting the changing demographics of our town.

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News

1 < cial care, “significant savings will need to be found in this area”. Proposals presented in the report include the closure of two day services for older people and two day centres, community support services and Steps to Work training for people with learning disabilities. There are also proposals to halt on-site support in supported accommodation for vulnerable adults and adults with mental health needs, to significantly reduce funding for housing-related support services, and to decline to renew contracts for drug and alcohol recovery services.

Cabinet will also be asked to agree a public consultation on the introduction of a booking system for the council’s household waste recycling sites, a system already in place in neighbouring authorities.

GLAZIER CITES ‘GREATER NEEDS’
Council leader Keith Glazier told BBC Radio Sussex last week that the county has made £140m of savings since 2012, but commented that “the severity of people who come into social care now, their needs are much greater than they were years ago.” He also said that East Sussex

Council is transporting 5,000 children to and from school every day, which represents an overspend of around £4m on £28m already budgeted – most of it on increased numbers of children who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. That compares with a total of £48m spent by the council on maintenance of roads, drains and pathways, though Cllr Glazier commented that the cost of fixing all of the roads in the county “to a standard we would all find acceptable” would be £300m.

The council has been lobbying Sir Keir Starmer’s government to record the “unsustainable situation faced by the county council, and the specific needs of East Sussex”.

A spokesperson for the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (the ‘Levelling Up’ label was dropped in July) previously told the BBC that it would “get councils back on their feet by getting the basics right”.

The department said it would provide “more stability through multi-year funding settlements, and competitive bidding for pots of money, and reform the local audit system”. A draft financial statement was to be made “in December”.



Aldi store in Ore -tenth anniversary in November

Market Forces

Aldi versus Jempson in Competition for Rye Shoppers

HUGH SULLIVAN

The only supermarket of any size currently trading in Rye is Jempsons, opposite the railway station. Operating in tandem with its twin store in Peasmarch, four miles to the north, it is a family business which has dominated local grocery shopping in this corner of East Sussex for several decades. That seems likely to change.

In June Aldi, the German supermarket giant, lodged a planning application with Rother District Council to develop a new supermarket on the A259 (Winchelsea Road) at the western edge of the town. The premises at issue are understood to be still owned, as it happens, by a different branch of the Jempson family involved in the haulage industry.

Aldi’s entry and expansion in Hastings over the past ten years – it opened its Ore supermarket in November 2014 and followed up with a second in Bexhill Road from September 2020 – were conducted in a distinctly competitive environment. Those stores have had to compete for market share with a range of alternative major providers already in place across Hastings and St Leonards: Tesco, Sainsburys, Morrisons, Asda and Lidl, as well as several branches of the Co-op and a host of corner stores.

But although, in May this year, Jempsons belatedly teamed up with Morrisons to offer the latter’s own products at keener prices through its stores, the Rye locality has until now been rather less competitive. The nearest mainstream supermarket alternatives are Aldi in Ore, ten miles away, or Tesco or Waitrose in Tenterden, more than 12. Many Rye shoppers feel – and have expressed their view both in formal comments within the planning process and

generally on social media – that for a long time Jempsons have got away with charging higher prices than they could or should have because of their comparative monopoly.

PLANNING OPPOSITION
Be that as it may, Jempsons (with Morrisons) have not been slow to oppose the planning application. In a formally lodged objection statement, they have claimed that their current store “plays a key role in drawing shoppers into [Rye] Town Centre”, whereas Aldi’s “out-of-centre” proposal “will have a significantly adverse impact on the vitality and viability of Rye Town Centre”. A major reduction in Jempsons turnover “would almost certainly bring about [its] closure” and “would also lead to a significant decline in the number of shoppers visiting the rest of the Town Centre.”

In a Facebook post on 11 September, Jempsons seemed to retract their closure prediction, saying: “We would like to add, if the Aldi store does go ahead, we don’t plan to close but can’t deny there will be some impact on our business.” However, in a more recent interview on BBC Radio Sussex, managing director Stephen Jempson suggested that post office services, currently hosted within the store, would be at risk.

There are two associated planning applications for residential developments to be built alongside. Permission for 16 two-, three- and four-bedroomed homes is sought by local company Decimus Property, while national retirement property specialists McCarthy Stone are promoting the building of 44 ‘retirement apartments’.

The District Council planning committee was due to consider all three applications next month, but National Highways has lodged a response seeking more time to analyse potential traffic implications for the A259 road.

HASTINGS TIDES									
DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON		
FRI 27 SEPT	L 1:45am	H 7:37am	L 2:34pm	H 8:36pm	06:52	06:43			
SAT 28 SEPT	L 3:27am	H 9:04am	L 3:59pm	H 9:48pm	06:53	06:41			
SUN 29 SEPT	L 4:34am	H 10:00am	L 4:56pm	H 10:36pm	06:55	06:39			
MON 30 SEPT	L 5:24am	H 10:41am	L 5:40pm	H 11:10pm	06:57	06:36			
TUES 1 OCT	L 6:04am	H 11:16am	L 6:17pm	H 11:39pm	06:58	06:34			
WEDS 2 OCT	L 6:36am	H 11:48am	L 6:47pm		07:00	06:32	NEW		
THURS 3 OCT	H 0:06am	L 7:01am	H 12:18pm	L 7:14pm	07:01	06:30			
FRI 4 OCT	H 0:34am	L 7:24am	H 12:47pm	L 7:42pm	07:03	06:28			
SAT 5 OCT	H 0:59am	L 7:51am	H 1:11pm	L 8:10pm	07:05	06:25			
SUN 6 OCT	H 1:22am	L 8:21am	H 1:32pm	L 8:40pm	07:06	06:23			
MON 7 OCT	H 1:45am	L 8:50am	H 1:55pm	L 9:07pm	07:08	06:21			
TUES 8 OCT	H 2:12am	L 9:18am	H 2:24pm	L 9:35pm	07:09	06:19			
WEDS 9 OCT	H 2:45am	L 9:49am	H 2:59pm	L 10:10pm	07:11	06:17			
THURS 10 OCT	H 3:28am	L 10:32am	H 3:51pm	L 11:03pm	07:13	06:15	FIRST		

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

Former University Building Under Hammer



The six-storey University of Brighton building at Priory Square was due to be auctioned on Wednesday this week by London agent Allsop. The building consists of the former main Hastings post office, built in the 1930s with its façade fronting Cambridge Road, which was extended outwards and upwards in 2013 to overlook Priory Square. The development, managed by regeneration company Sea Change Sussex, took a substantial proportion of the sum of £12m public funds invested in the Hastings campus of the University

CHANGE OF USE

There is now planning permission for change of use to 41 residential flats, plus some commercial space on the lower ground and raised ground floors which previously accommodated a 160-seat auditorium and and Laboratory space. Ocean House in St Leonards recently changed from offices to flats.

The post office closed in March 2014; the decision of the University to close the campus was revealed in March 2016 and took effect in 2019. The building was marketed for sale in 2020 at a guide price of £3million, but attracted no buyer. The guide price at this week's auction is £2.2m.

HBC AUCTION RESULTS

The auction on 16 September by agents Clive Emson of two freehold properties owned by Hastings Borough Council (see *HBC Auction Bargains* in HIP 259) brought mixed results.

The residential property at 22 Wellington Square attracted competitive bids and was sold eventually for £536,000, which was £126,000 above the guide price. That still represented an overall capital loss to the council but, given its intermediary use as temporary accommodation for homeless families, may be regarded as having been a profitable short term investment.

An argument along those lines was indeed put forward at the full council meeting last week by Cllr Andy Batsford, former lead member for housing in Cllr Peter Chowney's Labour cabinet. Cllr Glenn Haffenden, current housing and community wellbeing lead in Cllr Julia Hilton's cabinet, accepted it to an extent but pointed out that a better selected investment property might have been more profitable.

The mixed commercial and residential property 57 York Buildings did not sell, however, with the highest bid of £942,000 falling £8,000 short of the guide price.



Green space under threat at Sandrock Bends

Protect Our Green Spaces

CHARMIAN KENNER

Standing Up For Nature (SU4N) Hastings & Rother is holding an event for everyone concerned about losing our precious green spaces to building development. *Protect Our Green Spaces* will take place on Saturday 5 October at the White Rock

Hotel from 10am to 3pm. The event is free, with refreshments and light lunch provided, thanks to a grant from Hastings Voluntary Action's Making It Happen scheme.

Yee Chuan Mayhew from SU4N said: 'The Leader of Hastings Council, Julia Hilton, and the Housing portfolio holder, Glenn Haffenden, have both stated their concern about government pressure on councils to build housing, since

Hastings has very little land left apart from our few green spaces. Councillor Hilton has emphasised the need to refurbish empty homes instead.

"*Protect Our Green Spaces* will examine this different approach to housing, as well as how to survey biodiversity on a site and successfully oppose a planning application."

The day will consist of talks and discussion, with speakers sharing their knowledge to upskill participants in each area. Local housing campaigner Grace Lally will cover alternatives to new-build. Ben Bennett, consultant ecologist, will explain how the public can engage with biodiversity surveys. Alice Brown, architect, will spell out the key factors that determine whether or not a planning application is passed.

Mary Dawson from SU4N said: "We recently attended an event called Wild Wanderings, about protecting the Sandrock Bends area of ancient bluebell woodland from a potential development of 140 houses. We all need to support those working so hard to save these essential green spaces."

Sarah Ward from the campaign to prevent housing being built on Horntye Sports Fields said: "We know Horntye will be under threat again in the future, so we welcome this opportunity for local people to get together and learn how to stand firm against the developers."

Spaces at the event are limited. They can be booked on Eventbrite or by email to UNITE4nature@proton.me.

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Hastings Independent

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF HASTINGS



Northeye: Back in the Frame for Detaining Would-Be Migrants?

HUGH SULLIVAN

Amidst a flurry of news about cross-channel migration, including stepped-up border security and multiple drownings, there has been no word from Sir Keir Starmer's government about the future of Northeye - the former prison premises outside Bexhill which the Home Office purchased last year for the stated intention of detaining illegal immigrants.

Progress towards this prospective usage seemed to have stalled under previous Home Secretary James Cleverly while Rishi Sunak put all his energies into pursuing the policy of deportations to Rwanda. Sir Keir made it quite clear on his accession as prime minister that the Rwanda scheme had been abandoned. It has been replaced, at least in the new government's rhetoric, by the launch of a new Border Security Command which will enrol "hundreds of new specialist investigators" and use counter-terror powers "to smash criminal boat gangs".

However, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced on 21 August "a major surge in immigration enforcement and returns activity", claiming that the government has new plans for the next six months "to achieve

the highest rate of removals of those with no right to be here, including failed asylum seekers, for five years (since 2018)". This will entail "increased detention capacity", according to Ms Cooper, as well as an increase in the rate of determination of asylum claims and negotiation of agreements with foreign governments to accept returns.

EXPANSION OF DETENTION CAPACITY

In her speech she identified the reopening of two former detention centres, one at Campsfield House in Oxfordshire, the other at Haslar outside Gosport, to serve her immediate purpose as Immigration Removal Centres. Together these would accommodate an additional 290 detainees on top of the current capacity across the country of approximately 2,300. But with over 23,000 would-be immigrants arriving by small boats across the Channel this year as of 15 September - a slightly higher rate than the total of 29,437 (according to Home Office figures) over the whole of 2023 - the government is also reported to be "studying options" for further expansions of detention capacity.

With regard to Campsfield, closed since 2019, a Home Office spokesperson said they "have held discussions with local councillors and other stakeholders to ensure

the impact of the plans on the local community and environment is fully taken into account". However, newly elected Liberal Democrat MP for Bicester & Woodstock, Calum Miller, and leaders of both Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council all publicly oppose the plans to reopen. Councillors on Cherwell District Council, which is the local planning authority, have complained in a letter sent to the Home Secretary of "a complete lack of parliamentary scrutiny".

The plan to reopen the Haslar site seems, on the other hand, to meet with the approval of at least local Conservative MP, Dame Caroline Dinenage. AVID, a national network of visitor groups to people in immigration detention, has pointed out that it was closed in 2015 after numerous reports of mistreatment and inhumane conditions. But Dame Dinenage praised the removal of asbestos from the site during the period of closure, and earlier this year welcomed the plan, describing the refurbishment as "high quality" and remarking positively on "the 200 jobs" which reopening would bring.

OPPOSITION TO NORTHEYE

Asbestos has been identified as a problem at Northeye too. And the local MP (Dr Kieran Mullen, newly elected in July) is also a Conservative, unlikely in principle to oppose the government's detention programme. However, at the beginning of August he was reported by the BBC to have called on the government to "let people know what is going on", and to have stated that "bringing in hundreds and hundreds of people" into "a quiet residential road in a town that's already struggling with infrastructure" wouldn't be "the right decision".

In this view he aligns with his Bexhill constituents who opposed the use of the site for migrant accommodation and/or detention

purposes in demonstrations and counter-demonstrations last year - from the Stand Up To Racism pro-asylum activists on the political left to No to Northeye local residents concerned at threats to indigenous security and property values on the political right. Any Home Office move to revive the original plan will no doubt be responded to with a dusting out of respective placards and renewed marches. Another local campaigner Jeff Newnham, who raised nearly £20,000 from a crowdfunder appeal to bring a legal case for judicial review, has indicated that he still intends to proceed with it in this circumstance.

On the other hand, newly elected MP for Hastings & Rye Helena Doolimore endorses Labour's policy as committed to restore order to the system so that it is "swift, firm and fair - with the rules properly enforced". The new Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill announced in the King's Speech in July, she said, "will bring in new replacement arrangements, including fast track decisions and returns to safe countries".

And the Home Office is indeed reported to have signed new return agreements with Vietnam, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Serbia and Georgia to follow a previous fast-track removal deal with Albania. But the fact is that the majority of illegal entrants, at least those arriving in small boats crossing the

Channel, are from countries which can hardly be described as "safe" - apart from Vietnam, the five most common nations of origin being Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey (highly oppressive and discriminatory as far as many Kurds are concerned), Eritrea and Iraq. How is Ms Cooper going to negotiate safe return for dissident nationals from these?

AMNESTY CRITIQUE

Steve Valdez-Symons, refugee and migrant rights programme director at Amnesty commented: "It's dismaying to see the new government reheating the last government's rhetoric over 'border security' and 'smashing gangs' even while neglecting the pressing need to provide safe asylum routes and a clear guarantee of asylum to refugees arriving here."

"People in urgent need - including those fleeing war and persecution in places like Sudan, Afghanistan, Syria and Iran - will keep coming to the UK and other countries, and the government needs to establish safe routes that reduce the perils of dangerous border crossings and the risk of exploitation by ruthless smuggling gangs."

"This 'securitised' approach to asylum and immigration will simply deter and punish many of the people most in need of crossing borders, people who are therefore often most vulnerable to criminal exploitation."

Council's Energy Costs and Greenhouse Emissions

According to a survey published in *The Times* last week following Freedom of Information Requests, Hastings Borough Council (HBC) paid 66.2 pence per kilowatt-hour for electricity in the year to March 2024 - the highest price paid by any local authority in England and Wales, and more than three and a half times the lowest (Rushcliffe BC paid 18p per kWh).

A spokesperson for the council explained last week: "Unfortunately, our electricity contract ended at the peak of the energy crisis, which meant we had to pay high prices for our electricity for the year to March 2024. We only agreed a one-year contract, which meant we were able to re-tender last year and agree significantly lower prices for our contract until 2026. With the new contract we will be paying around the same price we were paying in 2021."

In the meantime, HBC leader Cllr

Julia Hilton has signed a pledge for Hastings to join the UK100 network of councils committing the council to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and work with residents and businesses to bring down their emissions as soon as possible.

Cllr Hilton said: "Joining this network of councils across the country is part of our work to make sure that climate change is part of every decision made by the council. By joining together with other councils, we will have more lobbying power to ask for funding and support from the new government. We are committed to doing all we can to reduce our emissions and using our convening power to work with other key stakeholders, residents and businesses to create a joint plan to achieve our very ambitious and challenging goal of together becoming a town with net zero carbon emissions by 2030."

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

✉ From our website

TOO MANY ROUNDABOUTS

Although I have been aware of this project for years (*Finally, a Road to Somewhere* in HIP 259), I have only recently taken an interest in it. It seems to me that the new road will solve some problems but in most cases will make no difference or, indeed, make traffic flow more complicated.

East Sussex County Council say that there will be “better connectivity between Bexhill and Hastings.” It would be more accurate to say better connectivity between Bexhill and the A21 to the north of Hastings.

Apart from that, the route between The Ridge and the A21 (both directions) will be more complicated. Instead of, at present, traffic having to negotiate two junctions, there will be The Ridge/Queensway mini-roundabout, the Queensway/Queensway Gateway roundabout, the Queensway Gateway/Whitworth Road roundabout and a new roundabout at the junction of Whitworth Road and the A21. Four roundabouts within about half a mile does not seem wise. I am thinking that southbound drivers from The Ridge (hospital direction) will use Harrow Lane instead.

Why close Junction Road completely to traffic? Closing one road at the same time as opening one new road just means the traffic is moved from one place to another. Already The Ridge/Queensway junction gets congested. Leaving Junction Road open to left-turning traffic only would spread the load.

David Stevenson

✉ Letter

SHARING CARING

Dear HIP

I enjoyed *Educating Ourselves About Health* in HIP 257, though was sorry I couldn't find to whom the very thoughtful piece was credited. The author's reflections on perimenopause were particularly powerful.

If our Hastings community is indeed to be a place of support and care, that surely starts right from early life: making sure that girls aren't raised to accept as their inevitable lot in life the sole, onerous responsibility for caregiving.

Sharing that burden more equitably with others in the first place might avoid the decades-long build-up of fatigue and self-denial that may make menopausal symptoms more severe

than they might otherwise be.

Katharine Manning

✉ Letter

A GOOD SAMARITAN ON EAST HILL

Dear HIP

Friday 13th is a date to avoid for some, but for us it was a reminder of the good nature that still exists in people, and we would like to use your pages to thank the person or people who found my husband's smartphone and handed it to the Police.

We were walking on East Hill, and feared the worst when we realised it had been left behind on a bench and subsequently disappeared. As a minimum we would be faced with the inconvenience of numerous bank and store card cancellations, plus having to recreate the on-line world that we all live in these days and of course the cost of purchasing a replacement device. At worst we feared the possible consequences of criminal activity should it have fallen into the wrong hands. A frantic search ensued until we were finally able to obtain an answer (my husband has his device permanently on “do not disturb” of course!) from some-

one who, to our great delight, turned out to be a police officer.

We were hugely relieved to find out that it had been handed in, and the whole episode was over and done with in less than two hours. The Good Samaritan in this story did not leave their name but, if they are reading this, we would like to offer them our grateful thanks - and to the staff at Hastings Police Station who were also incredibly pleasant and helpful.

With much gratitude to all concerned.

Steve & Jacky Wolton

✉ Letter

DON'T BELIEVE THE DAILY MAIL

Dear HIP

Was I alone in rubbing my eyes in disbelief to read recently in the Daily Mail (13 September) that Hastings was ranked among “Britain's best high streets”?

Featuring a large photo of the “arty” George Street, the piece went on to praise the High Street and talked of “upmarket homeware shops and artisan bakeries”, saying it “was all about vintage stores”.

Well, maybe, but I hardly know anyone who shops in the Old Town.

“Too expensive; just for visitors” is the common refrain.

But this year the visitors have not been coming, and many traders report footfall and takings are up to 30 per cent down on last year.

George Street is eerily quiet from 6pm on a Sunday evening right through until tea-time Thursday when the DFLs arrive with their suitcases on wheels. Some shops and pubs do not even bother to open on a Monday.

Coach parties from Eastbourne are dropped off at the Stade, and after covering our three famous streets, these elderly folk often ask “Excuse me, which way is the New Town?” To which I have developed a rather dispiriting reply:

“Go straight ahead to the burned-out night club site; turn right past the street sleepers, abandoned shopping trolleys, boarded-up shops and graffiti-covered walls until you come to the underpass. When you find yourself stepping on litter from Sports Direct, Costa Coffee and McDonalds, you have arrived. And mind the scores of mobility scooters and kids on electric bikes.”

Hastings one of Britain's best high streets? Someone is having a laugh.

Michael Collinson

We would love to hear from you.

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

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Paediatric GP Service for Broomgrove

Independent councillor for Baird, MIKE TURNER, highlights the new child-focused health provision in Broomgrove and the need for a greater investment

Baird Ward has statistically the highest levels of deprivation in the whole of East Sussex. Absolute child poverty in Broomgrove and Linley Drive has continued to rise sharply over the last decade. As we know, people living in deprivation invariably suffer poor physical and mental health. To compound the situation, Baird ward has never had a GP Surgery.

Throughout my tenure as its ward councillor I have persistently lobbied the former Hastings and Rother Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) along with senior individuals and NHS providers across the county to establish a GP practice in Baird, but to no avail. Despite this, I continued to fight on, enlisting the support of Cllr Andy Bats-

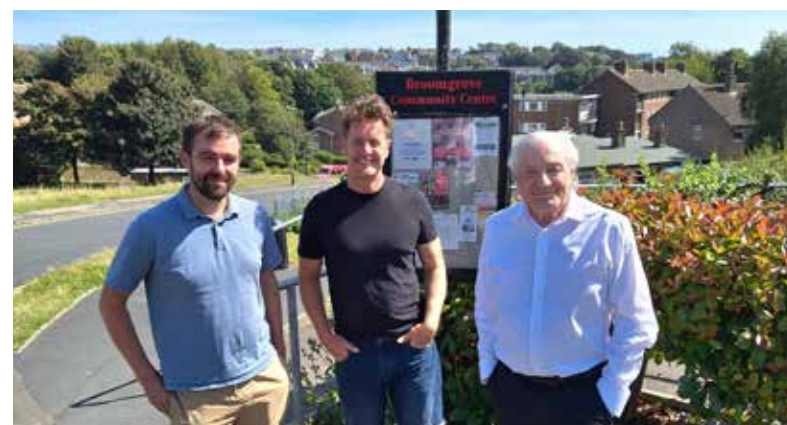
ford when he became Hastings Borough Council's portfolio holder for Health.

After a decade of lobbying there was still no progress on the Medical Centre that was supposed to have been built on the land in Ore Valley Road. Cllr Batsford and I therefore considered alternative premises and focused on Broomgrove, where there is the greatest need for health provision and which has been benefiting from a ring-fenced £1million prosperity fund.

We were fortunate in finding a sympathetic GP, Dr David Fox, who acknowledged the health problems among young people in Broomgrove, especially children, and was willing to work with us to find suitable premises in which to deliver paediatric services.

This service is now up and running twice a week in the Childrens Centre in Chiltern Drive.

Dr Fox said: “Local practices who are under daily pressure recognise a need to find time to proactively see children who otherwise would not routinely access their practice. We can also include smoking and housing support, when needed, under one roof. The aim is improve asthma control for those diagnosed



Dr Fox with Cllrs Batsford and Turner at Broomgrove

plus find new cases based on previous records.

“We hope this targeted activity for respiratory conditions in children can become a long-term way of working and potentially in other areas of the town. The team aim to take referrals from the local school and pharmacy. Patients can also be referred in from their own practice. The need to target children with the worst asthma control before winter is important.”

I have spoken to many parents who are full of praise for this initiative and have found it to be very

helpful in diagnosing and treating their children with conditions such as asthma and other paediatric problems.

But this can only be the first step of providing full time GP and primary healthcare services in this part of Hastings. There is a historical lack of investment, imagination and willingness by the NHS to move resources, staff and hard cash into Baird ward, and that has resulted in generations of poor health, the highest A+E attendance numbers and a miserable mortality rate. This can't be allowed to continue.

Come on Hastings, Ramp it Up!



PENNY PEPPER

I've lived in Hastings for 15-and-a-half years. I love my town, I love the diversity and the quirky, creative people, not to mention the incomparable sense of community.

But I cannot lie. It often lets disabled people down. There's a vein of unintentional hypocrisy when it comes to access that shocks me every time I confront it. We are so community-minded, after all – what's gone wrong when it comes to disabled people? After 15 years, I've heard all the arguments alongside joining initiatives and just

meeting people – from those in the disabled community who struggle, to local politicians who seem unable to unravel this conundrum. Yes, we live with a hilly landscape, in properties built on multiple levels that would sometimes be comical if they were not so frustrating; but there are solutions.

Let me introduce you to the concept of A RAMP. I have my own, and a few years ago, a group of us formed a loosely defined collective, HAVE (Hastings Access to Venues and Events), to attempt a collaborative process to improve access. We have several ramps, now gathering dust in a friend's office space. We also had a newsletter for a while, but, as is the way of these things, run entirely on a voluntary basis by those of us already facing barriers, the project has largely stalled.

A ramp is not one simple thing that resolves obstacles faced by some homogenised notion of a wheelchair user. There are many types, big and

small. They remove barriers not only for wheelchair users, but also for those who have mobility impairments that may not be obvious; and they help visually impaired people to avoid trip hazards. Elderly citizens benefit by avoiding painful stairs, and parents don't need the hazard of dragging up baby buggies. As always, this is about inclusion, rather than solving issues at an individual 'special needs' level.

I recently encountered a situation where confusion over use of a ramp went horribly wrong. The ramp was in place for some time, and I was really pleased, as were many friends. Recently, returning to the venue, I entered the building unaware that the ramp had disappeared. Instead, there was a significant, and unexpected, drop down that almost led to me falling from my wheelchair and painfully shocking my bones. I was lucky, but truly believe others *would* have fallen.

I'm staggered – again – that very

few people realise there are guidelines about such things, *and* legalities. While the Equality Act 2010 is weak on disability, it's still covered and, intrinsically, it's illegal to not offer disabled people an equal service. Technically, I can sue you if you don't deliver that – another column, perhaps, on why that's not straightforward.

I will end on a happy note that backs up my love of my hometown. Some small indie businesses have taken it upon themselves to simply buy a basic ramp, particularly after informal discussions with myself or HAVE. Naturally, the more stairs there are, the less likely this will work, and I also know venues can face uncooperative planning outcomes even when they've tried to find their own solutions.

I'd like to encourage readers to think about how you access our town. Small adaptations can result in big changes, please consider that – but also, do talk to us!

Vexatious Vegetation

ROD WEBB

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) is reminding people that “most roadside hedges are the responsibility of the landowner and need regular trimming to keep them within property boundaries”.

Having recently been almost run off the road by a car avoiding a bush that was growing into the road, I'm very aware of how important this is. So when Cllr Claire Dowling, lead member for transport and environment at East Sussex County Council, says: “Overgrown trees and hedges can be dangerous for both road users and pedestrians,” I can wholeheartedly agree. As she goes on: “Motorists and cyclists can be forced into the centre of the road to avoid an obstruction,” and she adds that “pedestrians may have to step off the pavement in order to pass overgrown vegetation.”

I'm also aware how we criticise others while not dealing with things ourselves, and that we all need reminding. I regularly prune overhanging brambles from the gardens of others on the way to my allotment, while neglecting those from my own garden. Having said that, I have now dealt with my hedges by cutting everything right back rather than just trimming the brambles, as they seem to grow several metres per day.

The obstruction that nearly led to my accident was the responsibility of a local housing development. Feeling that alerting them would lead nowhere and disinclined to alert the council, I eventually tackled the growth myself, risking 'life and limb'.



It's not easy these days: organisations who are responsible for tackling the hedges are often unreachable. Overstretched councils are overwhelmed and individual homeowners may be confused by regulations – like those which prohibit disturbing birds' habitats during the nesting season. But it's worth thinking about.

According to ESCC, “September to February is the best time to prune hedges and tree branches, to avoid disturbing nesting birds. Vegetation should be a minimum of 50 cm from the edge of the road, and pavements

should be kept completely clear.”

If a hedge is putting people at risk, you can report it to the council. They may request that it is cut back, even during the bird nesting season, as long as care is taken not to disturb any nests.



For all concerns about trees and vegetation (including reporting problems) visit: live.eastsussexhighways.com/services/services-vegetation



Help Keep Shipwreck Afloat

ROD WEBB

The popular Shipwreck Museum in Rock-a-Nore Road, Hastings, is on the lookout for more volunteers to work in the museum and shop. And, according to Tim McDonald, chair of the trustees of the Nautical Museums Trust that runs the museum, they “desperately need you”.

“We're an incredibly popular small museum, with around 70,000 visitors a year,” he explains. We rely very much on our dedicated band of volunteers to staff the museum and shop. We have a great collection of shipwreck artefacts, recently joined by the two lifeboats, the Priscilla MacBean and the Cyril and Lilian Bishop.”

Until recently, these were on display in Old London Road and The Bourne.

For those interested in life on Earth, there are also exhibits of fossils found in the local area. Catering for a wide audience, it is a multi-sensory museum with sound, touch and smell – and is fully accessible for wheelchair users.

Admission is free, so visitors can spend their money on the wide variety of maritime and fossil gifts, with a wide range of souvenirs, artefacts, toys, cards, prints and hand-icrafts, many made by local artisans – and keep volunteers busy!



Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Tim on at tim@timmc-donald.co.uk for an informal chat. To advertise for volunteers or find other opportunities, you can visit hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk/service/volunteering

PHOTOS: COLIN FOY



Alexandra Park Greenhouse Fully Restored After 10 Years

Volunteers have celebrated 10 years of progress at a Hastings community hub with a surprise presentation to its chairman.

Chairman Linda Pearson, the main driving force behind the restoration of Alexandra Park Green-

house, was given an album of photos charting the hard work of volunteers and the results of generous public donations over the last decade. The album was compiled by greenhouse photographer Colin Foy and presented to her at the Her-



Linda Pearson receives a presentation album from Linda Foy

itage Open Day (HOD) held on 8 September at the greenhouse, a national community-led festival of England's history and culture.

Visitors to the 1930's teak and cast-iron greenhouse bought indoor and outdoor plants, apples, notebooks, greetings cards and other items. The HOD event, together with the usual open day on the Saturday, raised £800 for greenhouse funds. About 130 people visited the greenhouse over the weekend.

Linda said that Alexandra Park Greenhouse trustees and volunteers were pleased to welcome the community to view the fully restored greenhouse. "We hope it will now become a thriving horticultural hub, enabling us all to grow together. I think the HOD success was an acknowledgement of all the work the volunteers and the community have contributed to the restoration."

Professional photographer Dave Bruce has been commissioned by East Sussex County Council to take pictures of volunteer teams and their work in the area. His photos of the restored greenhouse and its volunteers will be added to a dossier to illustrate to funders the vital work done by local projects and charities.

But work on the restored greenhouse has not ended. There are plans to put in a grey water filter system so that its wastewater can be treated at source. Volunteers are also planning to have a double sink and electric water heater installed in the propagation area for hand-washing hygiene and pot washing.

More details about the greenhouse project from our-greenhouse.org

OPEN WEEKEND WITH FREEDOM LEISURE

If you fancy trying a new sport or want to improve your technique, Freedom Leisure centres in Hastings and Rother will be opening their doors to allow local people to have-a-go at one of their open weekends on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 September.

The centres involved are Summerfields Leisure Centre and Falaise Fitness Centre (operated in partnership with Hastings Borough Council), Rye Sports Centre and Bexhill Leisure Centre & Bexhill Leisure Pool (operated in partnership with Rother District Council).

Toby Reed, Freedom Leisure Area Manager for Hastings & Rother says: "Four of our Freedom Leisure centres across Hastings & Rother are participating in the open weekend, each offering different facilities and activities. Our friendly staff and instructors will be on hand to offer support and guidance to everyone, whether you're a gym regular or have never set foot in a gym before."

"We look forward to welcoming everyone into our sites; especially new visitors, to take advantage of

the free and discounted activities taking place within our community leisure centres. We hope this encourages people into leading more healthy lifestyles, and becoming more active, more often."

With free gym use, free taster aerobics classes and free soft play sessions all weekend, it's a good opportunity to kick start a fitness regime, enjoy some family fun and find out more about what there is on offer at these local leisure centres.

The leisure centre teams have put together a programme of fun activities including 'Introduction to Spin (indoor cycling)', Fitness Pilates & Zumba, as well as 'Beat the Instructor' gym challenges.

As well as the fitness offering, Freedom Leisure are encouraging families to come and spend time in the pool with the kids at Summerfields (Hastings), with discounted swimming sessions and the chance to try out the interactive climbing and gaming wall.

To celebrate the open weekend, there are also membership offers available. For further information visit: freedom-leisure.co.uk/open-weekend-at-freedom-leisure-hastings-and-rother/

DUNNING-KREUGER ENTERTAINMENTS

Presents a night of

KAMIKAZE KOMEY

Starring



JOSEPHINE LACEY
STEVE BOWDITCH
TAZ LONG

special guest poet Luther Towart and DJ Archie Lauchlan

FRIDAY OCTOBER 25TH
THE PRINTWORKS
14 CLAREMONT, HASTINGS TN34 1HA
DOORS OPEN 7PM
ONLINE TICKETS: tinyurl.com/yc3bnhr7

Throw the Fascists in the Sea

Protester FLO GRAHAM outlines the dangers of ‘groupthink’ perpetuating the very problems the protest is about

Having attended the counter-right protest in Hastings recently, I felt a swollen sense of conflict in relation to the rhetoric: chants and general ideologies that were being expressed by those standing with banners by my side. The anger and hate towards groups of ‘fascists’ felt unjust because ultimately it is only exaggerating a division between the two sides. Money is the great divider. Standing with familiar faces I see on the streets, I felt at odds about my place at this event.

Now, don’t get me wrong, I will stand in solidarity with anyone seeking humanity, kindness and safety.

However I do not feel comfortable targeting a group of individuals who have likely been the product of the great wealth divide. People are not born with hearts full of hate, they did not grow up with an instinctive hate for the ‘other’, they likely grew up without love and as part of a system that allowed them to slip through the fingers of safety. Impoverished parents who had little time for their children, who may have escaped their own difficulties with substance abuse, in over-saturated classrooms where teachers were forced to remove ‘obstructive’ children as opposed to seeking out the

reasons for their behaviour, who were likely only seeking attention and love because they lacked it at home. These individuals are searching for their community, for their people, and found that in radicalised groups who also want to blame someone for their lack of opportunity and perhaps subconsciously their lack of understanding.

There is a reason why politics, economics, sociology, anthropology and psychology are not properly taught in schools. There is a reason we learn history based on the achievements of the British as opposed to the atrocities we enacted.

To know all these things would fuel a divide between the working classes and the ruling classes as opposed to a divide between races, sexes, genders and religions. With community, with care, with safety and love we would not fall at hurdles such as these, but to watch my fellow educated peer protesters shout about throwing people in the sea I couldn’t help but feel the dangers of mob mentality and although it was an excellent show of solidarity, it was also a dangerous exhibition of how we came to be standing where we were. Groupthink can act as quick as wildfire.

There is a quote from Orwell’s 1984: “the proles stayed human.” The ‘proles’, proletariat, the under-class, working class, and now middle class. If there is hope, it lies with us, because to be human is to have love, to understand, to look at life from the perspective of others. If we can understand why a refugee has ended up seeking kindness on our shores, then we must also try to understand why swathes of the British populace feel belittled, ostracised and forgotten about and therefore feel the need to take out that anger on the ‘other’. The victim becomes the bully.



ASPIRING JOURNALISTS

THE HASTINGS INDEPENDENT PRESS (HIP) IS OFFERING TWO INTERNSHIPS FROM OCTOBER 2024. SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES WILL GAIN EXPERIENCE IN ALL ASPECTS OF PRODUCING A FORTNIGHTLY NEWSPAPER – IN PRINT AND ONLINE.

Initial training and ongoing mentoring will be given on reporting, news and feature writing, subbing, fact-checking, photography and design. There will be opportunities to gain experience working across some ten different sections in the paper. The internship will last for 6 months but there will be ongoing opportunities to work on the paper afterwards. The Hastings Independent is a community newspaper run by volunteers. So there are no funds to pay interns, though there could be external grants or bursaries available.

We are looking for a minimum commitment of around 30 hours a fortnight, though those hours will be flexible.

In the first instance please apply to info@hastingsindependentpress.co.uk telling us about yourself, why you are interested, and any relevant experience. We envisage this will be of interest to young people over 18,

Hastings Independent

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF HASTINGS

HIP does not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

DAVID DENNIS



Historic Revelations at the Edith Festival

A couple of years ago, HIP published DAVID DENNIS' article on the life of 'Edith the Swan Neck'. He introduces another Edith Festival coming to Hastings soon.

Everyone loves a mystery, and this is a big one. Since 2022 I have been researching the controversial claims in historian B.W. Flint's book: *Edith the Fair – The Visionary of Walsingham* (Gracewing, 2006). Edith the Fair (c.1025-c.1086), popularly known as Edith Swan Neck, or Edith the Graceful Swan will be celebrated in the Edith Festival, White Rock Hotel, Hastings 19 October 2024, 12.30 – 7pm. Roman Catholic historian Bill Flint's book puts forward his personal theory that Danish woman Edith the Fair was a visionary who in 1061, was spirited to Nazareth to the site of the Annunciation, where Archangel Gabriel had revealed to Mary that God was going to make her pregnant in a sinless conception. The Walsingham visionary saw the original small wooden house that Our Lady was in and made a replica of it in Norfolk so that pilgrims did not have to travel to the Holy Land to see it. Flint therefore says that the founder of England's greatest Marian Shrine at Walsingham in Norfolk was Earl Harold's wife, Edith the Fair.

My research thus far does not support his theories. Every medieval

historian does their best to assess often incomplete primary sources and rather than say nothing, they put forward ideas that others may test. My conclusion is that Flint has made too many errors. However, there is another possibility that will meet the facts and reveal the planning behind the vision story.

Flint's key aim was to show that a multi-versed poem or song by an unknown composer, known as the Pynson Ballad, was written just after 1086, the year that William the Conqueror left England only to die in Normandy a year later. The unique copy of the ballad at Cambridge University is so called because it bears the printer's mark of Richard Pynson who was official state printer to Kings Henry VII and VIII. Pynson was born in Normandy, went to the University of Paris, came to England and was naturalised as English, took over the print works of well-known printer William de Machlinia and went into competition with another famous medieval printer, Wynkyn de Worde.

Flint, who passed away in 2014, was an honourable man. He was the Research Fellow for the Maryvale

Institute (Birmingham) and the Parish Catechist at St Mary-on-Quay, Bristol. He aimed to show that much of the history concerning Edith that is advocated to us by noted English historians is wrong. His ideas have caused changes to many websites, especially Wikipedia. But is he right? For example, he states that Harold and Edith were married in an English Christian ceremony, not one involving Danish handfasting (more danico) i.e. according to Danish custom. He claims that Edith was the daughter of the notorious Jomsviking Thorkell the Tall (before 986-c.1039), whose drunken warriors chained up the Archbishop of Canterbury, dragged him around southern England, then beat him to death with a cattle bone. Extraordinarily, he claims that Edith was called 'Rychold', not Edith, Edeva or Edeva puella, as she is certainly known in the Domesday Book as the owner of lands in other parts of England, (Cambridgeshire for example). He claims that even though the Pynson Ballad mentions that the visionary of 1061 was a 'widow' in two separate verses, the ballad writer only wrote this because King Harold was killed in 1066. Most telling for me is the claim by Flint that 'Harold's brothers fled to Ireland' whereas fans of the Battle of Hastings know full well that one of his brothers, Sweyn, died on the way back from Jerusalem, one, Wulfnoth, was kept as a hostage in Normandy, another, Tostig, was killed at the Battle of Stamford Bridge and the others, Gyrth and Leofwine were killed by storming

Norman knights while standing fast to the last with Harold around the 'The Fighting Man Banner' (Feohtend Mann/ Fightandi Maðr), at so-called Senlac, wherever that was.

Most importantly, Bill Flint claims that the Walsingham Shrine authorities, and the Professor of Medieval History at Bristol University, Dr J. C. Dickinson (1911-1984) made a huge mistake in claiming that the visionary of Walsingham was not Edith the Fair but instead was a woman called Richeldis de Favareches (the rich and fair woman of Favareches in Normandy).

Dr Henrietta Leyser, Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and Emeritus Professor of Medieval History at St Peter's College, Oxford University, says flatly that Favareches does not appear in the Domesday Book of 1086 at all, even in the Norfolk part of it. However, she confirms that a rich landowning woman called Richeldis de Favareches does appear in the financial records of the Norfolk Pipe Roll for 1130/1, exactly one hundred years after the specified date in the Pynson Ballad.

So why does verse 1 of the Pynson Ballad say 1061 and verse 14 state that the ballad was written 'four hundred years or more' after the vision in 1061? Why does the ballad

mention King Edward the Confessor as being alive when the vision occurred? Who wrote the Ballad that Pynson printed? Why does the author of the book, *The History and Spirituality of Walsingham*, Carmelite Sister Elizabeth Ruth Obbard say, when dismissing Flint's theory – 'Serious historians do not countenance 1061 as factual?' Why the great difference between Flint's view and the view of the Walsingham Shrine authorities? Where might all the other copies of the Pynson Ballad be hiding? All will be revealed by me at the Edith Festival – so don't delay – book today!

**WHITE ROCK HOTEL
HASTINGS SEA FRONT
19TH OCTOBER 2024**

13.00 to 14.30 – Professor Christopher Scull FSA – Rendlesham and the East Anglian Kingdom
15.00 to 16.30 – David EP Dennis AFRHS - The History of Old Winchelsea – and the Mystery of Edith the Fair and Pynson Ballad
17.00 to 18.30 – Dr James Wright FSA – Historic Building Myth-busting

Book via Eventbrite or friendsofedith.org.uk



Read all about it

Hastings Book Festival gets off to a stellar start: CHRIS CONNELLEY reviews

This year's Hastings Book Festival got off to a blistering start with a sold out launch event at the Observer Building on Friday 13 September, when the rapt audience was treated to a linguistic tour de force by poet, writer, cultural commentator and all-round 'national treasure', *Michael Rosen*. He entertained them on the nature of language - the theme of his new book, *Rosen's Almanac*. Rosen covered a vast amount of territory in a pacy, perceptive and participative hour, generating a massive ovation and a rush-hour long queue to buy his book.

Saturday opened with two lively children's sessions at Hastings Library, where *Alex Milway* and *Patrice Lawrence* wowed tomorrow's bookworms (and their parents) with song, dance, drawing and stories. Meanwhile, the Observer Building hosted a busy book fair, with over 30 text-related exhibitors, and the ever popular open mic session, hosted by Book Festival patron, *Henry Normal*.

The first weekend Sunday was

given over to workshops on creating polished comedy, writing about nature and perfecting the art of the short story, concluding with a showing of the cult 1980s movie, *For Queen and Country*, followed by a Q and A with its Hastings-based director *Trix Worrell*.

The festival returned on Thursday 19th, with a celebration of independent publishing at an evening salon. This brought together readers, writers, and publishers for an exploration of the craft of writing, the business of producing books and the encouragement of diverse voices, showcasing the work of three independent publishers and a selection of their authors.

Epoque press editor-in-chief *Sean Campbell* introduced two novelists, *Lisa Fransson* and *Effie Black*, who read from recent works. Book Festival organising group member *Dr Tola Dabiri* interviewed author *Pearl Olsen* (also Pros Publishing). *Nina Herve* from *Rough Trade Books* (an offshoot of the eponymous cult record label and stores) led a three-



Patrice Milway with attendees at the Children's Library

way conversation with local artist, musician and author *Richard Phoenix* and translator and novelist *Jen Calleja*.

The evening opened with a five-minute opening pitch by St Leonards based researcher *Dr James Prentice* for his current book tracking gentrification in our own backyard.

Reflecting back on the start of this year's Festival, Director Wayne Berkeley commented, "We are delighted with the positive reactions to our first week's programming, which clearly demonstrates the strong interest in writing and reading in the town, and the appetite for hearing distinctive and new voices. It was great to see old friends and to welcome new audiences."

Open Call Reminder

CHARLOTTE CHW

Inner Nature is an invitation to explore the reflection of the human psyche through the natural world. The exhibition will be curated by Cerebellum, curatorial platform of artist Charlotte CHW, and is part of PhotoHastings Festival 2024. It will run from 17-24 October. This is a UK-wide open call - any photographer may enter.

Experiencing nature from the outside can be revelatory in itself, but this is an invitation to explore how the natural world might reflect or complement our inner worlds - from darkness and complexity to freedom and ecstasy. Could nature reflect and acknowledge a moment of feeling, acting as a mirror to our-

selves, or provide a link back to our inner world when we have lost touch with it? In what forms does the natural environment enter our dreams?

Works that incorporate photography alongside other mediums are also invited, as are moving image creations, provided you can provide your own display equipment.

Key deadlines: Entry: midnight, Sunday 29 September. Notification: Tuesday 1 October. Installaton: Wednesday 16 October. Opening event: Saturday 19 October from 6pm. Exhibition run: Thursday 17-Sunday 27 October (Open Thurs-Sun) Take-down: Monday 28 October.

Artists will be asked to frame or provide hanging infrastructure for their own work and, ideally, to invigilate the show for half a day during the eight days' run. If selected, artists will be asked to contribute

£12 to PhotoHastings, unless this presents a significant barrier - if so, email info@photohastings.org.

Please note: the exhibition will be on the upper floor of St Andrew's Mews, which, regrettably, is not fully accessible at present. If the space is not accessible for you, but you would like to exhibit, please contact us to discuss.

Up to three works per artist can be submitted. Files should be no larger than 2MB, via email or wetransfer.com. Feel free to get in touch with me with questions at: cerebellum.platform@gmail.com. A PDF of the open call can be downloaded or viewed online.

Curated by Cerebellum @charlottechw_art (curatorial platform of Charlotte CHW). Also see instagram.com/cerebellum_arts/

For further details of how to enter, see artsjobs.org.uk/events/49544



PETER MOULD

The Last Five Years

EBM HUMPHREYS on the intricacies of a new play

Romance, especially failed romance, is a universal story, but the form of *The Last Five Years* is unusual and interesting. These literally star-crossed lovers are portrayed travelling in opposite directions through time. An aspiring performer, Cathy, tells her story from the end backwards while a newly successful writer, Jamie, tells his version from the beginning. They join mid-show as their stories cross at a single point in time.

The decision to be formally inventive makes sense when offering a boy-meets-girl, and it works well to convey the unexpected when we finally get to the root of the tensions from both sides. On this point the form absolutely pays off. I couldn't take my eyes off the lovers, because of their charm yes, but just as much because of my intense curiosity.

And just as equally importantly, the songs were enjoyable in their own right: my companion followed the tricky plot less than me, but was of the firm opinion that it doesn't matter if the music is great, which it was. The live musicians were a joy and even became amusingly drawn into the action. The two singers were completely game, revealing no opening-night nerves, and gave their all for a relatively small audience. Creating chemistry, when you are rare-

ly allowed to be together on stage and are singing about events years apart, is no mean feat. Aided by their crucial central meeting, it was passionate singing that fleshed out a deftly stripped-back drama and convinced us they were in love.

But I'm going to be honest and say I'm not sure I could have figured out what was going on without being told. Even supported by simple, clever staging and props, I still felt some of the songs, especially Jamie's opener and Cathy's closer, needed to be more obvious to communicate this ambitious twist. I felt I was working to make Jamie's first song about their new romance.

Yet romance is the beginning and end of this story, via the pitfalls of creative ambition, success and struggle. It hurt to watch these two find in one another everything they ever wanted, while simultaneously losing one another irretrievably - twice over! Waiting for confirmation that you haven't got it all wrong postpones your emotions while they intensify. As the young man behind me put it "I'm wrecked."

The Last Five Years, A musical by Jason Robert Brown, directed by Hugo Trebels, was performed at The Stables Theatre 17-21 September 2024



The Stimming Pool

SADIE PITCHER on a film created by a neurodivergent collective

The camera moves, gets distracted, and moves again, becoming its own character in *The Stimming Pool*. The eye of the camera captures recognisable Hastings sites, including the Electric Palace Cinema, The St Leonards Public House and The Observer Building.

Created by five neurodiverse artists, *The Stimming Pool* is a film about being. As John Knowles, a filmmaker and father of Robin Elliott-Knowles (one of the five directors) explains. "The film presents a collective of thoughts around the idea of what it is like to be autistic. The idea behind the film was not to try and explain autism at all, but to allow the filmmakers and the directors to essentially be, and to create their own vision."

The film is to be shown as part of the London Film Festival at the

ICA Gallery and then at the BFI Southbank and has been shown in Copenhagen, Iceland, Maine, Sidney, Cork and Florence, with more destinations in the pipeline.

The film is directed by the Neurocultures Collective: Sam Chown-Ahern, Georgia Bradburn, Benjamin Brown, Robin Elliott-Knowles and Lucy Walker. It reflects each director's experience of being autistic through their individual creative approaches.

"It's really important we creep out of the 'Oh well we have a film about autistic people' thing. This is a film by autistic people and that makes a huge difference. All the creativity, in it has come out of their creativity" John Knowles continues.

Alongside the film is a travelling exhibition titled *Stim Cinema*, which explores the experience of



stimming through excerpts from the film. Stimming, or self-stimulatory behaviour, is something that autistic people do to channel and manage excess energy and to self-soothe. "There are a couple of sequences in the film where somebody is having a really difficult time and stimming extraordinarily, but as the camera isn't voyeur-

istic or prying it feels almost magical," John explains.

While Hastings appears on screen, the town's influence stretches further than the visuals. Produced by Chloe White, a Hastings local, and directed by two former Project Art Works members, Robin and Lucy, the film is a testament to the creativity and the supportive nature of the

Hastings' community. Project Art Works is a Hastings-based organisation supporting people with complex support needs, combining art and care.

The Stimming Pool will be coming to Hastings in March as part of an autistic season at the Electric Palace Cinema.

Top Khat

BEN THOMPSON describes a unique, apt ensemble



Although I have never chewed the leaves of the flowering plant khat, I can testify to the addictive qualities of the band of the same name, having been lucky enough to see them rock a packed house at Dalston's Cafe Oto. "A stimulant causing greater sociability, excitement and mild euphoria" would be a reasonable descriptive starting point for El Khat's urgent, surging reboot of music from a far-off ancestral homeland they are not at liberty to visit, but the playful DIY filter they apply to their olde world source material gives it a genuinely psychedelic twist.

If you look up 'El Khat' on YouTube, one of the first things you'll come across is a combined travelogue and instructional video dubbed an "objects collecting tour," in which frontman Eyal el Wahab tours the streets of Jaffa (the original Arabic name for part of what is now the metropolis of Tel Aviv) picking up the raw materials (plastic bottles, wire

etc) for the home-made instruments which give the band's melodious clatter some of its bespoke character. Now based in Berlin, the core El Khat trio of multi-instrumentalist el Wahab, percussionist Lotan Yaish and organist Yefet Hasan are introduced by the former as "Arab Jews whose families were forced to leave Yemen". And if their music sounds like an attempt to wrestle some sense from the carnage which has beset their corner of the world, that's probably because that's exactly what it is.

"It all started back in 2017", el Wahab has explained, "when I received a beautiful compilation record of Yemeni tunes [the Dust to Digital label's *Qat, Coffee & Qambus: Raw 45s from Yemen*]. Those were very old and low quality recordings. Songs that were performed with one person singing along with the Oud or accompanied with a Darbuka, sometimes singing accompanied only with a metal plate. But nothing

was missing, the soul was there. I first started making instruments as a mission of recreating sounds of the Yemeni street, focusing on using only what's around you... finding usefulness in every thrown out thing to make music".

When El Khat talk about "the ability to create music from what used to be a piece of junk", that seems like it could be both a practical strategy and also a metaphor for making the best of difficult circumstances. And their current third album, *Mute*, addresses the "constant muting of the other" for which both Israel and the band's new adopted homeland of Germany have become notorious. Hear them make a joyful noise at The Piper on Monday 14 October, with support from spry avant-gardener Anthony Moore and free-jazz debutants PIP.

Piper, 14 October. Tickets £10 + bkg on Dice or £12.50 OTD.



Beatrice and Anton [Les Biologistes Marins - a duo that create ambient improvised music] lead a workshop encouraging participants to listen to immediate environmental sounds - sea, footsteps on pebbles, birds, the gentle waft of the wind, the odd talkative passer-by - and meditate about their musical formations. Insightful and interesting - one workshop out of many unique events coming up courtesy of Sono-Electro at Electro Studios

Two Worlds Collide

FRAN PAINTER-FLEMING on Harmeet Rahal's *Contraband Zindabad*

Shorelines are habitats constantly in flux. Simultaneously advancing and receding, these malleable borders have a muddy temporal atmosphere. Rolling tides act as aquatic metronomes, stirring a punctuation of the present whilst opening up a sense of deep history. Port cities take these environments as their homes, with dockyards carrying traces of mercantile customs and social history.

In this body of work, Harmeet Rahal looks into two ports, Bombay and Bexhill, digging into their echoing histories of smuggling to raise wider questions around legitimacy, legality and power. *Contraband Zindabad*

is composed of a collection of found objects, pasted prints, textiles, and a film in six acts. Tinkering with the visual languages of dockyards, flea markets and domestic spaces, the installation troubles the dynamics of a traditional white cube setting, instantly raising questions surrounding authorship and control.

Within the video-work, Rahal inhabits the role of the trickster, layering cinematic footage with animation, stills of paintings, sound and fictional monologues. Slippages between reality and fiction continually surface, as Rahal binds anecdotes from his characters with fragments of history and contem-

porary news. When building this collage, Rahal uses sheets of plastic as additive lenses between the footage and his camera. The grainy quality conjures a sense of retrieval, as if this content is being literally unearthed, dug up from cultural memory. Specks of dust pepper the tableaux, mixing with the pixels of animation. Like cargo taking on lint during shipping, the film carries material traces of its making.

Narratives from different epochs and geographies are brought together in the film. We hear testimonies from Haji Mastran, a 1970s Mumbai 'smuggling lord' and film producer. Basant Singh, a contemporary freedom fighter taking part in the Indian Farmer's protests is also brought into the fold. 'Viceroy', a Sussex border patrol officer, adds a callous voice to the mix, and poetic stanzas dig into the lineage of a popular Bombay fish dish. In total, six different voices guide audiences through the space, each meditating on ideas of authority, liberation and belonging.

Acting as a merchant of stories, Rahal sources lost tales and imaginary conversations within *Contraband Zindabad*. By binding these personal accounts with historical



Rahal installation at Flatlands Studios

moments, contemporary media and Bollywood cinema, Rahal uncovers the artifice and fragility of various dogmas. Just as any blockbuster film has a director at its helm, so too do international laws, trade routes and cultural narratives.

As panic around borders continues to plague contemporary politics, Rahal reminds us that these margins are also fabrication, cultivated and policed by those in power. Using the sea as a bridging container between Bombay and Bexhill, this work urges us to question doctrines seemingly set in stone and to make space for stories lost to the deep.

Contraband Zindabad shows at Flatland Projects, 20 Beeching Road, Bexhill, until 22 September. Visit Saturday & Sundays 12-4pm.



Left to right: Menelaus by Hero32 Peregrine Falcon by David Speed

More Murals Help to Transform Town

TINA MORRIS

With one more mural to come, and a selection of BT Boxes appearing, Coastal Currents has been leaving street art wherever they appeared in 2024. The Old Bathing Pool site at Seaside Road in St Leonards has been transformed by three world class artists so far, with one side still to come.

David Speed has chosen to reflect the visiting Peregrine Falcon on the

road-facing side, giving the old electric box a real sense of self, as the neon wings welcome you, and wrap themselves around you as you turn on to Seaside Road from the main road. Somehow this gives this decaying electricity substation a feeling of place, an identity. It begins to mark the spot as significant, loved and looked after.

On the East Face sits Menelaus by Hero32, an imposing but grounding figure you can see from the other side of the grass plateau. The scale is an important part of the

curation, and seats the electric box as a 'piece' in its own right: to take up the space it deserves, and to shine to be architecturally appreciated rather than ignored.

The sea-facing side, by REQ, uses a CMY process to build transparent paints into a swimmer, harking back to the original use of the site, and its most beloved incarnation as a swimming pool. Local people would talk fondly of its history even while it was being painted. Other murals this year include: Ed Boxall - West Hill Playground shelter mural, and REQ - White Rock Theatre Basement, West Street. Old Town still to come - Mark Daniels.

See the murals on youtube: youtube.com/embed/14ZBjx-2o6AQ?si=q5rQZRy-4fMX4jt7K See Ed Boxall's mural on Instagram: instagram.com/ed_boxall/reel/C-nwoGwIsBx/



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BOOKBUSTER REVIEW

Another England

By Caroline Lucas
Published by Hutchinson
Heinemann, £22
REVIEW BY TIM BARTON

Ex-Green MP Caroline Lucas sets out, in her new book, to suggest ‘how to reclaim our national story’. Reclaim it from what? Well, from ‘exceptionalism and imperial nostalgia’, which, however you cut it, has predictably led to the rise of dark forces claiming a rather toxic form of ‘patriotism’. She quotes Nigerian poet and novelist Ben Okri, who says that ‘nations and peoples are largely the stories that feed themselves. If they tell themselves stories that are lies, they will suffer the future consequences of those lies.’ Lucas sets herself the task of suggesting a new narrative, a ‘coherent story’ to help us ‘thrive and prosper’.

Her focus is on England, and she sees a real possibility of Wales and Scotland gaining independence in the future, though by no means inevitably. She voices some serious questions about what a break-up of the Union might mean for us, whilst still seeking to place us squarely in the context of a ‘united’ kingdom, because both contexts are possible and ‘Englishness’ needs a more open culture than the current narratives offer. At a minimum, she suggests we push for an English Parliament, and offer a federated Britain as a solution to the centrifugal tendencies that risk tearing GB apart.

HEALING THESE DIVISIONS
Years of populist genuflection under increasingly philistine govern-

ment have resulted in what Henry Sussman pithily calls a ‘cultural demolition derby’. I have not seen our country so riven by division and misdirected ire since the late 1970s, the 80s miners’ strikes, and poll tax riots. The rise of a disinvesting neoliberal elite that sell our country’s assets down the river whilst gaslighting the public about how damaging actual solutions

to the right the ‘Overton window’ has shifted. This concept was designed to ‘define the spectrum of acceptability of governmental policies’, but in fact constrains the spectrum to a tightly controlled range that disables most of the policies we most require.

It is our job to break the Overton window’s frame, and get a more cohesive and inclusive narrative to the fore. ‘The stakes could not be

higher: the Right have come to revel in chaos.’ At a minimum, Lucas says, ‘if we are ever to have a chance of healing these divisions, the progressives have got to work together’.

WE ARE NOT ‘ONE ENGLAND’

The book begins with an overview of the country’s history, under the rubric ‘stories of England’. Since the second world war, at least, we have, as our empire crumbled, embraced a myth of Gloriana, and of a halcyon vision of Britain that sees us all living in a Powell & Pressburger ministry of (dis)information that grants us a utopian past wherein all us ordinary folk lived out our days happily in nice cottages with roses round the doors. We hark back to a non-existent time when every Englishman’s home was his castle. This is what Jello Biafra of The Dead Kennedys called ‘nostalgia for an age that never existed’.

There are real divisions within our country, causing anger and alienation. At present, the Right are dominating the story fed to the people, but their ‘solutions’ require more social breakdown. It is, of course, not accidental that they pursue a more divided Britain. A united community, inevitably running along class lines to some extent, is a danger to those weaponising intra-class hate to preserve their wealth at the expense of the masses.

such as a wealth tax or a universal basic income may be, mean the ‘right-wing’ have no ‘solutions’ to offer that won’t make things worse. A dwindling number of ‘one-nation’ uniting conservatives has led to an elitist and sociopathic government somewhat to the right, on many issues, even of Margaret Thatcher, though a few voices still exist, once deemed enemies but now, without having softened, sounding comparatively like the ‘voice of reason’.

Which just goes to show how far

Misdirection of our energies, and a narrative that tars empathy and compassion as a ‘politics of envy’ (though only when they operate to rein in the Right) only serves to worsen conditions for millions of us. A socially and economically democratic political culture is heralded loudly as ‘communist’ and/or ‘woke’. Yet that is the only path that can save us. We are not ‘one England’ and we do not own our own country – Lucas declares that ‘the most powerful way to rebalance the interests of private owners and the common good is by shifting the focus towards taxes on wealth’, something the current ‘Labour’ government are too scared by the tabloid media to contemplate.

‘OUR SHARED HUMANITY’

Naturally, as a Green socialist, Lucas also discusses ‘the climate and nature emergencies’, which cannot be addressed without ‘another England’. She compares a reparative project to the ‘post-war settlement’, saying that ‘we need an equivalent collective story that equips us to respond to the climate emergency’. Yet she understands that the horse must come before the cart, and fixing our broken country with a more inclusive narrative to create a stable platform from which to launch

a compassionate response to crises the world faces is a necessity. She book-ends her story with ‘Rule Britannia’ and ‘Jerusalem’. It is a Jerusalem for All that we need. A new ‘national story’, a peoples’ England, that challenges our elites without fear, and to positive ends, must emerge. The ‘right-wing’ offerings from the likes of ReformUK seek an exclusive and toxic anti-establishment story, only a leftist such story can offer actual solutions. The alternative is a narrative that scapegoats and ‘others’ powerless minorities, and we all know where that leads.

Lucas rounds off her concluding chapter with a discussion of John Donne’s 17th Meditation; you know, the one that begins ‘No man is an island, entire of itself; everyman is a piece of the continent, a part of the main’. His expression of ‘our shared humanity’ is as relevant today as the day that, 400 years ago, it was penned. It is this England, and that of the Chartists, the Suffragettes, the Diggers, and of the Charter of the Forest, that we must channel if we are to thrive.

Another England is available from Bookbuster, 39 Queens Road, Hastings TN34 1RE

POETRY CORNER

Harbour Trip Sequence
JOHN R PARSONS

humming
in underpass echoes off
paintings of whales

below Castle Hill
one legged gulls
on mast tops]

harbour walk
I sit on polystyrene for warmth
beside nylon nets

beach front
fleet of toddlers gathers
in yellow oilskins

sunlight on a gull's
wings slides invisibly
into sea

looking back at
Old Town above black hulks
atmosphere from beyond

sea front mini golf
toddler stares into a giant
skull's plastic sockets

above beach walk
man on the cliff top
does hand stands

CROSSWORD CORNER

Across

- 1. Exits from a tree (6)
- 3. Dreary songs formed ridges (6)
- 4. Sound T mixed into sweet rings (6)

Down

- 1. Gentry back on terra firma? (6)
- 2. Spies turn to the South getting blood disease (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 5 of The HIP List

1					2
3					
4					

14

Food



Coffee Culture in Hastings & St Leonards

HIP introduces a new regular column by THE SECRET BARISTA, who has been touring some local coffee shops to find out more about the arcane art of making coffee



I must confess I am a bit of a coffee addict; I brew my own at home with an obsessive concentration on trying to get the most flavour I can out of the coffee beans.

It started 15 years ago when I was in my early 40s. Unusually, I hadn't drunk a cup of instant coffee in my life as I hated that powdery after-taste. But while visiting Amsterdam and hanging out in the cafes, I smelt the wonderful flavours emanating from the strong, Dutch coffee blends that my partner was drinking – so I tried a few. The unique hit of energy from the caffeine combined with a multitude of flavours had me intrigued.

Black and strong is where my obsession started, and that's how I continued. When I got home, I brewed cafetières with ground coffee blends. I was excited by the potential to do better, so I moved on to using a 'stove-top' percolator, experimenting with grinding different single-source coffees from around the world. I then got a Gaggia Classic espresso machine and went deep into 'home brewing'.



But recently, while I've been out and about in the cafes of Hastings and St. Leonards, I noticed the huge variety of great coffee you can get in this town.

I decided I wanted to find out more – about the coffee itself, about how to make a good brew and about how to create the right mood and atmosphere. Every good coffee shop needs a coffee obsessive leading the way, so I plan to talk to some of our local coffee artisans to see what it takes to get a great cup of coffee.



PHOTOS: SECRET BARISTA



Barista and the Shack

Where better to start the journey than at Barista and the Shack on the St Leonards promenade, run by Jeremy and Justine. So I asked them what you have to do to make a nice cup of coffee.

Jeremy says: "We have to ensure that the roaster's recipe is followed exactly: to make sure the yield, the extraction rate and the weight of the coffee are all within the margins recommended for the best flavour. Which essentially means that in the morning we flush out the machine and run it through to make sure the timing is perfect – in our case it should be around 30 seconds."

When the machine takes 30 seconds to make the coffee, Jeremy and Justine know it's going to be 'perfect'. The beans need to be ground more finely if it's too fast, or coarse-

ly if it's slower. External factors such as the atmospheric conditions make a big difference, so they need to check and make small adjustments throughout the day.

Justine adds that it's also important to ensure the coffee is evenly distributed and tampered properly. "Otherwise, you can get channels where the water runs through the coffee too quickly and you just get hot water coming through."

Jeremy emphasises that making good coffee means paying close attention to the process and also to the machine itself – cleaning it and flushing it through so the old grinds don't build up and affect the flavour. "People don't see it – but it's constant."

What about the coffee? They tried out different roasts but final-

ly decided on the full-bodied Perky Blenders Forest blend, which comes from Minas Gerais, Brazil. They've been using this for the last five years, not only because they like the taste, but also because of the ethos of the company: "These roasters were thinking about sustainability before it became a popular thing to do – reinvesting their profits in the community where the coffee is grown."

Lastly, what's the secret of latte art? "Our customers really value consistency," Jeremy says. He's calculated that over five years he's made about 350,000 cups of coffee and has developed a good sense of how everything should be – he can hear from the slurping sound it makes and see when the texture of the milk is just right: "Smooth and silky so it glistens. It's all about catching the air correctly in the wand – breaking the milk strands but not making it too thick, bubbly, or thin so it drops."

The scene is then set to sit and relax with a perfect cup of coffee and equally impressive sea views.

CRICKET

The Royals' First Season

HUGH SULLIVAN

The Sussex Cricket League, whose 2024 season ended earlier this month, spreads over 39 Divisions, accommodating over 370 teams between Bosham in the west and Rye in the east. There are just four teams based in Hastings: Hastings & St Leonards Priory first, second and third elevens – and Royal Hastings. The Priory first team played this year at Horntye Park in the Premier League, which may or may not be available to them again when they return to Division 2 in 2025. It is currently the subject of a planning application to be turned into housing. The second team played at Claremont School (which is outside the borough), gaining promotion from Division 5 East to Division 4. The third team played at Sandhurst Recreation Ground on the Ridge in Division 11 South-East alternating use of the pitch there with Royal Hastings, a quite distinct team of newcomers. The Royals were formed less than a year ago from a nucleus of friends and work colleagues of South Asian origin employed as doctors and nurses at the Conquest Hospital and other local medical practices. Recruited into the NHS from Kerala, Sri Lanka and other parts of the

Indian sub-continent, they found they shared a cricket education in common. They started playing casually at the Oval park on Bohemia Road with a tennis ball, which was in most cases the only kind of cricket they'd previously experienced as kids in school. Some of them then joined the Crowhurst Park club to experience proper hard-ball cricket in the Sussex League. By last autumn, they realised they had enough players – most, though not all, with medical backgrounds – to form a separate league team in their own right, and they found that the Sandhurst pitch was available to be shared on alternate Saturdays with Priory thirds. They applied to join the league on this basis. In January the original chairman Sanju Sukamaran, who had laid the foundations of the club, suffered a fatal cardiac arrest – ironically surrounded by other medics – while playing indoor cricket for Crowhurst. But his former colleagues went ahead nonetheless, entering the league in the same Division 11 as Priory and finishing three places above them in third place, narrowly missing out on a promotion play-off place. Club secretary Dr Chris Mathew says that the Royals actually have 35 players signed up to participate. But most are medical employees



Royal Hastings - first season in the Sussex Cricket League

on changing shifts that may include nights or weekends, who cannot make themselves regularly free to play Saturday afternoon games. Availability for the next fixture has to be signalled on the Monday or Tuesday of the week in question, then the team is selected accordingly. Although the summer league ended on 7 September, the club will enter the local indoor league this winter, playing at Horntye along with teams from Priory, Crowhurst and Bexhill. In the meantime, the summer season's awards for outstanding contributions to the club's victories have just been voted on by popular ballot – to Sachin Gopinath

as Best Batsman, Nikhil Jose as Best Bowler and Dr Mathew as Best All-Rounder, reflecting highest runs scored and most wickets taken. The Royal Hastings name might suggest some patronage in high places, but Dr Mathew says that, on the contrary, they have no sponsorship nor other financial support from anywhere, and are entirely self-financing. Why Royals? "Hastings is linked, of course, to the famous battle, and the name reflects the regal heritage which the town holds dear". Once upon a time, a leading local hospital might have provided facilities or equipment to a team in their name, as teaching hospitals in Lon-

don and elsewhere still do. No such privilege is on offer from the Conquest or any other local institution – to be fair, none has been sought. Ground fees, bats, balls, protective equipment and travel costs all have to be funded by the members themselves. But they clearly enjoy their status as an independent cricketing stronghold. Dr Mathew wonders whether they might soon need to form a fifth team in Hastings: the Royals 2nd XI. *New players from all backgrounds – they needn't be either medics or of South Asian origin – are welcome to join the Royal Hastings club: see their website royalhastingscc.co.uk*

FOOTBALL

United Concede Late in Draw with Lewes

14 September:
Hastings Utd 1, Harefield Utd 0
21 September:
Lewes 1, Hastings Utd 1

Hastings United led Isthmian Premier League leaders Lewes for most of their match at the Dripping Pan stadium last Saturday, before having to settle for a 1-1 draw. Playing in front of a crowd of over 1,400, many having made the short trip over to support the 'U's, they took the lead in the fourth minute through Billy Vigar – the striker's first league goal of the season – and kept it till the 82nd, when the home side equalised.

The previous Saturday at the Pilot Field, the 'U's had to wait till the fifth minute of added time to score the only goal of their FA Cup tie with Combined Counties team Harefield United. Davide Rodari swept a low right-foot shot into the bottom corner from a free-kick inside the 'D'. Their reward is an away fixture in the third qualifying round against fellow Isthmian Premier side Cray Wanderers to be contested tomorrow. The home league match against Chatham Town previously scheduled for that day will be played next Tuesday evening (1 October).

RUGBY

H & B Juniors Impress

Hastings & Bexhill U12s 20
Eastbourne U12s 20

Hastings & Bexhill U12s kicked off their season earlier this month at Ark Alexandra Academy with a thrilling friendly against their counterparts of Eastbourne. Having enough players to field two teams, H&B showcased their depth. Despite making wholesale changes at half time there was no drop in quality. Overall, team cohesion, developing character and a sprinkle of individual brilliance bode well for the season to come. The match ebbed and flowed throughout – a physical and exciting



contest in which strong running was met with equally strong tackles. H&B took an almost immediate lead through Aubrey Tyson, and went on to enjoy the majority of possession and territory, yet found themselves four tries to one behind with ten minutes left. They never gave up, and late tries by Lucas Ridley and Dexter Baker brought them back into contention. A final comeback try, scored again by Tyson, showcased their aggressive running into contact, support play and rucking.

Players of the match (as awarded by their opponents) were Tadhg Pitts and Baker. The team will play their league matches in the Sussex Waterfalls League Pool D, with a first match at home to Bognor on 20 October. *New players are welcome to join the team. Training takes place at Ark Alexandra on Wednesday evenings (6.45-8pm) and Sunday mornings (11.30am-1pm). For more information see hastingsrugby.org*



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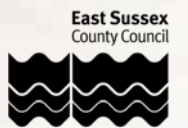
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