

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



10
YEARS OF
INDEPENDENT
JOURNALISM



Pett Rescue

Privilege



New Nuclear for Dungeness?

KAYLA POWER AND KENT BARKER

Nuclear power generation could restart at Dungeness under plans being considered by the new Labour government. Both the outgoing MP for Folkestone and Hythe, Damian Collins, and his Labour successor, Tony Vaughan, are campaigning for new nuclear generators to be built

on the site of the former A and B reactors. However the local council leader, a Green Party member, is decidedly lukewarm about the idea. In an exclusive interview for HIP, Cllr Jim Martin, leader of Folkestone and Hythe District Council said “nuclear waste is a problem, and it’s a problem that hasn’t been solved”.

The first nuclear reactor, Dungeness A, was a Magnox power station which started producing energy in 1965 and was decommissioned near-

ly forty years later. It was replaced in 1983 by Dungeness B, an early advanced gas-cooled reactor (AGR) which was beset by a number of safety issues. One of the dual reactors was shut down in March 2009 and remained offline for eighteen months following “unexpected problems”. The plant was ungraded in 2015 and was planned to operate until 2028. However both units were shut down ten years early for scheduled maintenance when the operator EDF en-

countered “significant and ongoing technical challenges”. It led to their permanent closure on 7 June 2021.

The former Conservative MP for the area, Damian Collins, campaigned for a series of new Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) to be built on the site, arguing they would bring jobs and economic benefits to the area.

In the election in July this year he lost his seat to Labour’s Tony Vaughan who has since been busy

lobbying the Energy Secretary Ed Milliband for a return of nuclear generation to the area. Shortly after the July election he told Parliament “Dungeness has the land, infrastructure, grid connections and local expertise that make it well placed for new nuclear.” He called for a meeting with the minister “to discuss how we can harness Dungeness’s potential for the local area and the regional community”. To which the secretary of **2 →**



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the latest issue, where, in addition to our customary comprehensive coverage of all that's hip and happening locally, we've a few unusual stories to share.

Not least our front-page lead about possible new nuclear generators at Dungeness. Not in Hastings you say? Well, considering the power station is built on a spit jutting out into the channel, perhaps uncomfortably close.

The Community section tells of the Pett Level independent rescue boat. A service usually associated with the revered RNLI, there are an amazing 75 similar lifeboats stationed around the UK.

After the recent wet autumn, damp affecting homes will be on the mind of many residents. On our Health & Environment page, an expert (of whom you can never have enough) explains why it's a particular problem for Hastings' many old seaside buildings.

For a different take on Remembrance Day, we've a fascinating feature about a local first war world veteran, 'reluctant tommy' and conscientious objector, Ronald Skirth.

And for those who can't get enough politics, an interview with the new Labour MP, Helen Dollimore, who reveals she's hit the ground running - on sorting out a large volume of constituent's problems.

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News



Hastings Clean Water Action: (l-r) Becca Horn, Esther Inwood and Maggie Alders joined the Clean Water march in London on 3 November

1 state replied that a ‘potential nuclear programme’ was important to the government.

During the election campaign Tony Vaughn tweeted: “Small Modular Reactors will play an important role in helping the UK achieve energy security and clean power. We desperately need Labour’s Great British Energy company to bring back power generation to Dungeness, for our energy security and to safeguard the hundreds of jobs based here”.

Leader of the local council, Jim Martin, agrees that job retention for residents is of utmost importance but believes that they can be provided through any type of renewable, carbon free energy generation, including, wind, tidal, or solar. When asked about the possibility of SMRs at Dungeness, he told HIP it would be unwise to pin hopes on an unproven technology and that, in any case, SMRs ‘will not aid in achieving the government’s goal of net zero by 2030’. There is also concern about multinational involvement. It’s understood that the site owner, EDF, is in discussions with various foreign companies about SMRs at Dungeness. As Cllr Martin points out they could end up with “EDF, the French company, with Canadian consultants and Japanese kit”.

Folkestone and Hythe council has been under no overall control since 2019. Following the 2023 election, a minority administration of the Green Party and Liberal Democrats formed to run the council, led by the Green’s Jim Martin. Although nominally the planning authority they have no say over development of ‘strategic sites’ like Dungeness.

The government has said it is committed to nuclear energy and its new organisation GB Energy is considering various sites for the construction of the new SMR mini-reactors.

HASTINGS						
DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET MOON
FRI 8 NOV	H 2:25am	L 9:23am	H 2:52pm	L 9:50pm	7:02	4:20
SAT 9 NOV	H 3:34am	L 10:25am	H 4:21pm	L 11:01pm	7:03	4:18 FIRST
SUN 10 NOV	H 4:59am	L 11:44am	H 5:52pm		7:05	4:17
MON 11 NOV	L 0:27am	H 6:21am	L 1:10pm	H 7:06pm	7:07	4:15
TUES 12 NOV	L 1:44am	H 7:28am	L 2:18pm	H 8:03pm	7:09	4:14
WEDS 13 NOV	L 2:45am	H 8:22am	L 3:16pm	H 8:53pm	7:10	4:12
THURS 14 NOV	L 3:38am	H 9:10am	L 4:07pm	H 9:38pm	7:12	4:11
FRI 15 NOV	L 4:28am	H 9:55am	L 4:58pm	H 10:23pm	7:14	4:10 FULL
SAT 16 NOV	L 5:16am	H 10:41am	L 5:46pm	H 11:09pm	7:15	4:08
SUN 17 NOV	L 6:04am	H 11:26am	L 6:33pm	H 11:56pm	7:17	4:07
MON 18 NOV	L 6:50am	H 12:12pm	L 7:18pm		7:19	4:06
TUES 19 NOV	H 0:41am	L 7:34am	H 12:57pm	L 8:01pm	7:20	4:05
WEDS 20 NOV	H 1:25am	L 8:19am	H 1:44pm	L 8:44pm	7:22	4:04
THURS 21 NOV	H 2:09am	L 9:03am	H 2:33pm	L 9:28pm	7:23	4:02

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

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Budgeting for Broken Public Services

PAUL McLAUGHLIN analyses how the budget will affect the people of Hastings and tries to garner local political reaction

Local Labour MP Helena Dollimore has welcomed the Chancellor’s plans to inject billions of pounds to “rebuild broken public services and fix the foundations of our country” after Rachel Reeves delivered her long-awaited Budget last Wednesday (30 October) amid the usual media frenzy and hyperbole.

On one level, the Budget is all about numbers. It can be a dry, tedious affair. An accounting pro-

cess setting out how much the government takes in taxation, set against how much it spends on public services. The Budget is also a political battle. It is the defining opportunity for the governing party to set the agenda for the year and years ahead. In this respect words are important, and a lot of energy is spent coming up with new ways of describing old concepts. Last week, for example, Labour did not talk about govern-

ment spending, which has bad connotations, but spoke about making investments in the country’s future.

In regard to ‘spending’, the Chancellor announced a number of key investments which will benefit the people of Hastings. One of the most important was the 6.7% increase in the national minimum wage. Full-time workers will now receive £12.21 per hour, whilst those aged between 18 and 20-years old will get £10 per hour.

Local drivers will benefit from extending the freeze in the fuel duty levy for a year and continuing with the last government’s 5p cut in the fuel duty rate. Although the bus fare cap has been renewed, the current £2 fare has been increased to £3. This will hit many of the poorest in the town who depend on this form of public transport.

Education was one of the big winners in this year’s Budget. The Department for Education will receive £6.7bn of capital investment, a 19% real-terms increase. This includes £1.4bn to rebuild more than 500 schools in the greatest need. In addition, the schools budget will increase by £2.3bn to support the hiring of teachers, free breakfast clubs and mental health support for

children. There will be £2.1bn for school maintenance, a £300m increase. There will also be a £1bn increase in funding for special educational needs and another £300m for higher education.

The NHS will see a massive £22.6bn increase in the day-to-day health budget as part of the government initiative to help cut waiting times. This includes a £3.1bn increase in the capital budget, of which £1bn is for repairs and upgrades, and £1.5bn is for new beds in hospitals and testing capacity.

The importance the government attaches to housing was reflected in £5bn of investment in 2025-26, including increasing the supply of affordable housing. The Chancellor also announced plans to reduce Right-to-Buy discounts and to allow local councils to retain and invest income from council house sales. As part of its determination to accelerate housebuilding, the Chancellor unveiled details to hire hundreds of new local authority planning officers.

There will be £1.3bn of additional grant funding for local government, including £600m for social care, something which East Sussex CC has been calling for in recent weeks. However, the devil will be

in the detail, which will be revealed in next month’s local government finance settlement.

In an exclusive interview for HIP, Helena Dollimore MP said the Budget “signalled the start of the change the country voted resoundingly for in the summer. this new economic approach will see extra investment in schools, the NHS and working people and ensure those with the broadest shoulders contribute the most.”

Whilst Labour was keen to tell voters that they had kept to manifesto promises not to increase taxes on working people, the party could not disguise that there were tax increases in employers’ National Insurance contributions, the impact of which is yet to be fully understood both at a national and local level. There will also be sharp rises in capital gains and inheritance tax and a hike in stamp duty on second homes of which there are many in Hastings.

HIP Contacted other local political parties including the Greens, the Hastings Independent Group and the Conservatives but none responded to our requests for comments.

Housing Targets Row

PAUL McLAUGHLIN

The simmering row between the Green-led council and the local Labour MP resurfaced this week after Hastings Borough Council (HBC) formally responded to the Government’s plans to change the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The proposed changes are designed to encourage new housing developments across the country.

Under the plans, a new national formula for calculating local housing need will be introduced, requiring all councils to set ambitious targets to build new homes. The proposals will see the annual housing target for Hastings increase from 490 to 722 houses each year.

Cllr Mark Etherington, HBC’s lead councillor for Planning, Infrastructure and Active Travel, believes the new targets are “completely out of reach.” He said Hastings could not meet its current target let alone any new ones “given that the town is built with the sea on one side and protected landscapes to the west, north and east”.

He also indicated that HBC believed any changes to the NPPF



should “mandate high quality zero-carbon buildings” because at present “there is no compulsion on developers to hit zero carbon standards”. In addition, he said HBC “needed access to sufficient funding to support the delivery of new homes for social rent and further support for employment and tourism, opportunities which would allow us to deliver jobs and growth in line with new homes”.

Local Labour MP Helena Dollimore dismissed the criticism, saying “This government was elected to tackle the housing crisis with a mandate to build the homes our community desperately needs, including the biggest expansion of

social housing in a generation. It is not a zero-sum game between building the homes we need and protecting the environment; our town is full of brownfield sites that could be homes for local people but have been sitting derelict.”

She also insisted that “golden rules will apply to ensure we build the homes and local infrastructure (including sewage pipes) and public services that we need while protecting the environment.” She said she was proud that the Labour government “is getting on with this vital work as well as banning Section 21 no-fault evictions to affirm renters’ rights – something the Conservatives avoided doing for 14 years in power.”



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Privilege to Serve

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

The Labour Government has held power for just over 100 days, experiencing a remarkable rollercoaster of highs and lows as new ministers navigate the intense scrutiny of a largely critical mainstream media. Among those elected to Parliament for the first time in July was Helena Dollimore, the new MP for Hastings and Rye and the villages.

In an exclusive interview with the Hastings Independent Press she reflected on the emotion and pride she felt when it was clear she was going to win, the compassion on a human level she felt towards her defeated rival Sally Ann Hart and the sheer relief of her supporters at Labour's victory.

Unlike in 1997 when Tony Blair's New Labour promised Britain a new dawn, Sir Kier Starmer's pitch to voters back in July was much simpler and more prosaic. In essence, it was "we are sensible and trustworthy, whilst the Tories are not." The public broadly agreed, and Labour secured a massive majority, albeit with just 34% of the national vote.

ELECTION DAY NERVES

The scale of the Labour victory was not apparent on polling day as party workers were anxiously canvassing across the town amid reports of a low turn-out, and Labour's soon-to-be MP was seen hastily picking up a sandwich at Morrisons in Queen's Road before heading back out to knock on more doors.

Nerves were calmed at 10pm, when the BBC, ITN and Sky reported news of the exit poll which predicted a massive Labour majority. In the early hours of the morning, as the vote was being counted in the Hornsby Park Sports Centre and it was apparent that Labour was set to win the seat, it began to dawn on the 30-year-old Dollimore what lay ahead of her. Her first emotion was one of pride, that as a local girl who attended the local Heathfield Community College, she was to be the local MP. She said it was a "great honour", but one which carried "great responsibility to deliver the change people had voted for".

Within days of her election, Helena was caught up in the whirlwind of life as a new MP. There were the parliamentary introductions, personal security briefings, IT presentations and the swearing of the Oath of Allegiance. There was also a new dress code to observe – no trainers, only proper shoes, which made finding her way around (or not) the labyrinthine corridors of the Palace of Westminster a more uncomfortable experience than she was expecting.

CASEWORK CHALLENGE

Constituency casework did not stop because of the election, and the new MP had to take over responsibility for all the ongoing cases when she woke up on that first Friday morning. Over the course of the summer, she has pulled together a small team both in Westminster and in Hastings to tackle the workload. She said she was grateful to Sally Ann Hart for doing a proper hand-over of on-

going casework and also paid tribute to Michael Foster and Amber Rudd who have been "really generous" with their advice.

She has received over 5,000 live cases since July and, despite being initially overwhelmed, her team have managed to successfully resolve and close over 1,200 of these. Among them was a pensioner who had been unable to get his full pension for over six years but, after liaising with the Department for Work and Pensions, the full pension was back-dated and paid in full.

Cases dealing with life and death emergencies obviously take precedence, as do problems which can separate families, such as passport issues. She is confident that as her team come to terms with the scale and breadth of the casework, she will respond to problems more quickly and "begin to earn the trust of local constituents".

The majority of casework relates to housing, and Ms Dollimore believes "here is simply not enough affordable housing available to meet the needs of the town." This is coupled with the poor quality of some of the accommodation that local residents have to live in. The MP has already met three times with the chief executive of Southern Housing, one of the biggest housing providers, to review the most serious cases.

HOUSING AND PLANNING PRIORITIES

She is clear that what is desperately needed is more housing. She is a strong supporter of the Government's plans to change the planning rules and to build more new homes in the town. She says she gets frustrated with the Green-led Hastings

BC who argue that there is no room to build the new homes without harming the environment. "Our town is full of brownfield sites that could be homes for local people but have been sitting derelict."

Ms Dollimore says she is also proud that the Labour government is moving ahead with plans to ban Section 21 no-fault evictions to affirm renters' rights. She believes this will give tenants more security and confidence in their tenancies.

Another big issue is Southern Water. The problems relate not just to sewage, but to flooding and water outages. Ms Dollimore has been appointed to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee and she is keen to look at all the water-related issues in a systematic way, including the increasing number of landslips which are blighting areas along the south coast. In addition to the problems with water, the select committee is also responsible for looking at the fishing industry, and she says she is determined to raise the concerns of the local fishing community which are so important for the town.

The failings within the local education system are also on her radar. She says parents sending their 11-year-old children to schools in Hastings have a choice of three schools rated as "inadequate". This is "simply not good enough." In addition, she says she is determined to hold to account the University of Brighton Academies Trust (UBAT) and their allocation of funds for back-office costs rather than using them for frontline teaching for the benefit of pupils. She has been raising her UBAT concerns with the Education Secretary and is pushing the University of Brighton to take responsibility for the academy chain they have set up as "it is their name and reputation at stake, and they need to do more to resolve the problems."

FAILING SCHOOLS AND UBAT CONCERNS

She fully endorses Labour's plans to end the tax breaks that private schools enjoy and to use that money to "deliver better and rising standards, in every school for every child". In this respect, her experience at St Hilda's College, Oxford had a profound impact. The privilege and expectation of some of the privately educated students contrasted sharp-

ly with her own comprehensive schooling and was, she recalls, "an eyes-wide-open experience" which left her determined to close the gap which exists between the standards and expectations of state schools and those in the private sector.

Ms Dollimore acknowledged the criticism of Labour's decision not to scrap the two-child benefit cap. However, she said the Government was taking action to tackle child poverty and pointed to the establishment of a cross-government taskforce to look at the issue holistically. She also welcomed measures in the Budget to set up school breakfast clubs, the £1 billion Housing Support Fund grant and the rise in the minimum wage as evidence of Labour's determination to support working people and eliminate poverty for all.

It has been a busy and hectic few months for the town's new MP. There have been many challenges, but Helena Dollimore says it is a privilege to be able to help people, and she is determined to deliver on what matters most to them.

- Helena Dollimore was born in 1994 and was educated at Heathfield Community College in East Sussex.
- Aged 17 she spoke at the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool. She attended St Hilda's College, Oxford, and was the chair of the Oxford University Labour Club.
- After university, Dollimore worked for Save the Children, in environments from refugee camps in Bangladesh to the civil war in Yemen
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dollimore trained as a vaccinator with the St John Ambulance, volunteering at a pharmacy in Hastings. She has also served as an Army Reservist.
- Dollimore was elected as a councillor for the St Helier ward in the London Borough of Merton in 2021. In 2024, after the general election was called, she resigned her council seat to stand as the Labour parliamentary candidate for Hastings and Rye. She won the seat in July with an 8,653 majority.

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?



PHOTO COURTESY OF HBC

It is the developer's insurance that needs to address this issue, and the insurers of individual owners. If the developer isn't insured or hasn't made the requisite land survey or hasn't erected the proper foundations for the type of soil, they are responsible. Normally all owners are insured too. I feel for them, but it is the personal responsibility of everyone to do proper surveys before buying a property.

T Gillham

✉ Letter

✉ Letter

NOT COUNCIL'S RESPONSIBILITY

Dear HIP

Your article in HIP 263 *A Landslide for Local Democracy?* about the Old Roar Gill makes no sense. If, as you say, the land on which the affected buildings are standing doesn't belong to Hastings Borough Council (HBC), and the footpath belongs to East Sussex County Council (ESCC) then HBC isn't responsible for the damage. The developer who built the houses is responsible, because it was his land and he should have done the stress tests on it. Since there are several streams that discharge into Alexandra Park, that is a mandatory precaution.

If the surveyors from the insurance companies have concluded that the developer is responsible because the foundations were not good enough for the terrain, then it will be the developer who needs to repair, and to compensate the owners for the landslides. The footpath is ESCC's responsibility, not HBC's. But a footpath itself can't be responsible for a landslide as it is only for walkers – unless residents were using any kind of heavy vehicles on the footpath. I am sure the residents are very upset, but I don't see why the taxpayer in Hastings is expected to compensate anyone since this is a development on private land.

OLD ROAR GILL WATER OVERLOAD

Whilst I fully understand the Hastings Borough Council decision of a straightforward 50/50 split on the proposed investigative costs in this matter, this only identifies the land ownership rather than the causes of the slips. Having observed the water running through the ghyll and the attendant development around and above it for over 30 years, it is clear there has been a lack of maintenance within the ghyll itself in order to ensure good water flow.

What has not so far been mentioned in determining responsibility is the huge increase in water load into the stream. There has been continued small-scale infill along Old Roar Road itself which has no drainage - in heavy rain large amounts of water can be seen issuing over the road edge into the ghyll. There is also the much larger development to the north in the Little Ridge area and the Conquest Hospital. This was added over many years without considering what the effects might be on the sides of the ghyll at a steep narrow section.

Culpability in this sorry tale must therefore also lie with the owners of Old Roar Road and with Southern Water, who added substantial flow into the stream as an easy and low-cost solution rather than doing the thorough engineering job that was needed.

Ken Davis

NEWS IN BRIEF

SEA CHANGE SUSSEX



The Sussex Exchange

COUNCIL HACKED

Hastings Borough Council has been hit by a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack resulting in its website becoming unavailable for a day. Deputy Leader of Hastings Borough Council, Cllr Glenn Haffenden said: "The council's web team has worked with our web provider to restore use, and the website is now available again. No personal information was able to be accessed during this incident but we apologise for any inconvenience this outage has caused." DDoS attacks cause disruption by preventing users from accessing online services by overloading the server. The council says they are relatively low in sophistication and impact. HBC was one of a number of councils affected.

ROCK LANE HOUSING APPROVED

A 26-house development on a green-field site at Rock Lane on the fringe of Ore has been unanimously approved by the planning committee of Hastings Borough Council. Meeting on 24 October, the committee heard that, although the land in question is within the High Weald AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), it was already zoned for housing. A previous proposal put forward by Chichester-based house builders Jerboa Homes Ltd to build 29 units was refused in 2020 because of environmental concerns, but Jerboa's revised proposals, at a lower density and offering 10 of the units as 'affordable' housing, were regarded as acceptable.

Local objectors had stressed in written submissions that the site was a natural habitat for local wildlife including badgers, foxes, mice and a host of birds; that there were already serious traffic and drainage

issues in Rock Lane which this development would exacerbate; and that Ore's existing infrastructure is already overburdened, lacking doctors' and dentists' surgeries, school places and public transport. None of these objections were given any weight in the committee discussion as against the pressing needs of the borough to reach its overall house building target: 481 homes per year, and to increase the supply of those that are 'affordable'.

The planning committee was chaired by Green councillor Tony Collins and included representatives of all four political parties with seats on the council – Green, Labour, the (ex-Labour) Independent Group and Conservative.

MONEY EXCHANGE

Sea Change Sussex has revealed it is seeking £1.2 million for the hospitality venue it developed on the outskirts of Hastings on the Queensway South link road. The previous tenants of The Sussex Exchange ran it as a restaurant, bar, conference centre and cinema but became insolvent and went into administration earlier this year. The owners describe it as a "striking, contemporary, eco-friendly building on a 1.6-acre site in a countryside setting with parking for 67 vehicles". If you don't have the readies to buy the 999 year lease, you could rent the space for £100,000 a year - all sums plus VAT, naturally.

NO EXCHANGE

Sea Change Sussex is having problems with another of its properties - the Azur Marina Pavilion on St Leonards seafront. Despite claims by property agents, it has not been sold nor has an operator been found. The agent Fleurets' website says the Azur

has been "sold subject to contract", but according to the head lessees Sea Change Sussex, despite "a good level of interest" it has not been sold.

One reason for the delay is believed to be serious maintenance issues at the premises – including dilapidated fabric and peeling decoration plus problems relating to drainage and power supply. These are being addressed by both Sea Change and by the estates department of Hastings Borough Council, who own the freehold and retain responsibility for the power generator in a room at the western end of the property.

The council has no active involvement in the marketing of the property, though as freeholder it says it will "require information that shows the proposed underlessee is able to perform the obligations (financial etc) set out in the lease".

The pavilion closed in January after its former lessee and operator, Azur Events Ltd, ran into financial trouble.

DRY POWDER?

The Powdermill Hotel in Battle has closed, its staff made redundant and its entire contents are due to be sold as new owners consider their options. Although the closure is said to be temporary, the company that bought the hotel in July, Powdermills Prop Co UK Ltd, says reopening will only occur "once we are confident the business can operate viably".

A post on social media said people whose weddings were cancelled received no apologies. Simon Sinden posted "Thank you Powdermill's new owners for cancelling my wedding and making it more stressful for us." An application to alter the Grade II listed building which dates from the 17th century has been received by Rother District Council.

We would love to hear from you.

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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

ADVERTORIAL

Hastings Designer Maker Fair – Christmas Edition

On Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 November, the Observer Building is hosting a Designer Maker Fair curated by James Thomas.

James has worked within the retail and hospitality sector for over 25 years, leading teams, creating marketing, product ranges and event campaigns. He is keen to share his promotional skills locally and has become more involved with businesses and designer makers in Kent and Sussex.

This year is the first of a series of Christmas fairs planned over the next five years at the Observer building. There are 45+ designer makers participating in the fair, and products on offer include textiles, clothing, stationary, ceramics, and other gifts and Christmas-related products.

The majority of those taking part in the fair are women. James says: "Working in retail, hospitality, and

the arts sector, I have been fortunate to have worked with incredible, entrepreneurial women in business. I hope, within East Sussex, we can start to recognise the energy and spirit these women bring to the area's commerce and creativity and look to support them to further their ambitions."

Local social enterprise Let's do Business Group, which encourages Hastings' women to get involved with business, is also supporting the event through their work on the RISE project working with Hastings Borough Council.

Business Manager Emily Wright explains: "The RISE project, funded by the UK Governments Shared Prosperity Fund ensures that Hastings residents who are either looking to start or are already operating a business can access free and vital support, advice, and training to achieve their aspirations. We are



CATLIN LOCK

also delighted to be offering dedicated start-up support to female entrepreneurs across Sussex and Kent through our Her Biz programme, funded by NatWest Bank. This 4-day workshop programme provides female business leaders all the knowledge and skills needed to get started, as well as introducing them to a network of like minded people, setting them on the right path for success."

The event is also endorsed by local MP, Helena Dollimore, who says: "It's great to see community events like this celebrating the creative spirit of Hastings, Rye, and the villages in the run up to Christmas. It's so important to showcase our local talent and support small local

businesses. This is a wonderful opportunity for the community to come together during the festive season and celebrate the artists, designers, and makers in our area."

Designer Makers will include Hannah Adams of Simply Garden, who will have festive plants, and a range of Christmas Trees and door wreaths for pre-ordering. Keira Rathbone will be creating LIVE Christmas cards using her unique skill of creating images of people on a vintage typewriter.

Elevate Creates of Hawkhurst, will be offering a range of products, including T-shirts, mugs, pots and prints. They offer services for adults with learning disabilities, including creative workshops and training in

life skills. Young designer makers will be selling products developed during their time at Bexhill college - using the latest technology to create gifts from upcycled products.

Some of the other makers include The Mudworks ceramics, Modern Goods Accessories, Maku Fashion, Milk & Hustle Designs, South Coast Soap Company and Julie Tucker Williams Jewellery.

Imogen Andrews from Radiator Arts will be this year's Christmas Elf, with an oversized characterful costume, giving away children's books - donated by The Hastings Book Festival. All this alongside mulled wine and cool Christmas decorations and music.

This Designer Maker Fair takes place several days before White Ribbon Day [see Violence

Against Women – A Men's Issue in HIP 263]. This is something close to James' heart: "We will be promoting this year's campaign: It starts with men," he says, "and will be encouraging men and women to sign up with a QR code."



Find out more about the White Ribbon Campaign here, or chat to someone at the Designer Maker Fair.

IT STARTS WITH MEN
White Ribbon Day 25th Nov 2024

The Great Big Cultural Survey



how many people work in and contribute to the creative sector locally. This covers those living and working in TN postcodes and looks into what they do, what they need and how they feel.

She's really keen to get responses, "even if you just fill in the first few questions!" She also points out that while the survey can be completed anonymously, she would prefer names attached as "the ability to follow up with each of you in future is helpful".

Surveys have a bad rap these days as everyone and their aunt seems to want us to complete them - for no obvious benefit. But this one has a clear purpose: the more that's known about the sector, the more it can be represented to create change. Tina would like you to share with as many people as you can, by email or on socials "as the data isn't reliable unless we get a swell of thousands filling it in, not just a select few!"

Tina Morris is probably best known in Hastings as the director of Coastal Currents, the annual festival that she's been running since 2017. But she's been involved in the creative scene since 2014, since setting up Sweet and Dandy, an events marketing agency, and Audiotrope in 2020, supporting young and early career musicians to live stream their music.

Tina feels that the Hastings creative sector is being underestimated in terms of size, income generation, employment and tourism contribution. To change that, she is carrying out her own survey to get a more accurate understanding of



Scan the QR code if you would like to be part of the Big Culture Survey, or go the Coastal Currents website

Sanctuary Comedy Special 2024

ROHAN JAYASEKERA

The untold experiences of refugees who seek safety in England are many. The darkest, most hidden ones are the experiences of torture. Hundreds, maybe thousands of our newest arrivals bear the physical and mental scars of brutal abuse at the hands of others, acting with impunity, outside the law, let alone decent human behaviour.

Hastings Community of Sanctuary (HCoS) is a local volunteer-run charity committed to building a culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary in our town. Freedom from Torture (FFT) stands with survivors, providing therapy and support and fighting for change together. Natural partners in care, the two are joining forces again for another joint charity fundraiser this month.

Hastings Museum in Bohemia Road is the venue for a fundraising comedy night for HCoS and the East

Sussex FFT Support Group, in partnership with Hastings' comedy kings Kamikaze Comedy. Expect lots of laughs and an auction of fantastic promises, all under the expert eye of MC Tim B'vard, from the legendary Bavard Bar, on Friday 22 November from 7.00pm.

Tickets are available online for £16.96, which includes the Eventbrite booking fee. The acts include Alvin Liu, who has wowed audiences with his cheeky humour and cultural observations from Shanghai to London; William Stone, BBC New Comedy Award finalist; and Jessica Fostekew, from hit sitcom *Motherland* and star of BBC Radio 4's *Sturdy Girl Club*.

Torture causes long-lasting mental and physical pain. It can take many years for someone to recover from it. Freedom from Torture's aim is to help people come to terms with their experiences and enjoy lives that are as full and happy as possible. Their specialists offer one-to-one therapy, group activities and other support including treatment

for lasting physical pain.

FFT supporters - and crucially, the survivors themselves - are activists for change as well. As part of their recovery, survivors can share and use their stories to fight for change. Like HCoS, FFT supports a wide range of activist and creative groups, led by survivors and refugees, that raise public awareness and influence decision-makers about torture and its impact.

Both groups are supporting a campaign led by Detention Action to end the UK's practice of allowing indefinite immigration detention, the only country in Europe to do so. Thousands are detained indefinitely in prison-like conditions while their immigration or asylum claim is processed, sometimes for years at a time.

Local activists will be sharing information about the campaign between Friday's acts at Hastings Museum, and asking supporters to write to East Sussex MPs, including Hastings' new MP, Helena Dollimore, to express their concerns over this ongoing situation and to call for a more humane system. Please join them, on the night and on the campaign.



For tickets go to: eventbrite.co.uk/e/sanctuary-comedy-special-2024-tickets-1016262276827 also bit.ly/3N16e65

The Independent Rescue Boat

JO O'HARA introduces Pett Level Independent Rescue Boat (PLIRB) - which provides a similar service to the RNLI but without the same level of funding or support

PLIRB was formed in 1970 to support the local fishing community and has grown ever since. Our mission as a lifesaving service is the preservation of life and the promotion of safety at sea on the foreshore and in inland waters. We serve the coastline between Hastings and Rye, although we can be called as far as Bexhill. We operate all year round and are on call 24/7. EVERYONE at PLIRB is a volunteer – from our talented boat and shore crew, to our brilliant support team. We are not affiliated with RNLI or

HM Coastguard but work closely with their local units as well as other emergency services. Like RNLI, we receive our taskings from UK Coastguard and are extremely proud that our average launch time is 15-20 minutes from the time of paging – all thanks to our on-call volunteers. As one of approximately 75 independent lifeboat stations across the UK, we are entirely self-managed and self-funded. We receive no public or centralised funding – we raise funds through donations, fundrais-



ing activities, grant applications and our sea shanty group – The Pett Slip Buoys. We work hard to secure funds for all operational costs, development projects and boat/vehicle assets. All volunteers receive rigorous training and can undertake professional qualifications (radio licence, powerboat courses, sea survival, casualty care and first aid). Volunteers can decide how they contribute – boat crew, shore crew, events, fundraising or administrative. We also welcome Duke of Edinburgh scheme volunteers, who spend several months training with us to learn vital skills, gain experience and build confidence. Our taskings are varied and can be complex multi-agency incidents, including: attending Mayday calls to vessels in critical danger; assisting vessels in difficulty – pleasure crafts suffering engine failure, motorboats running low on fuel or yachts taking on water; assisting swimmers, paddle-boarders, kayakers or even walkers in difficulty; searching for missing (often vulnerable) persons; locating and retrieving hazardous debris and providing medical or casualty care. What makes PLIRB unique is that we strive to be a valuable community asset by:

- supporting local events – whether providing the BBQ, erecting/dismantling safety barriers or marquees for concerts, delivering first aid or demonstrating our boat and encouraging youth involvement
- hosting school/youth and other local groups for boathouse and facility tours, beach safety and education sessions
- helping keep the local area clean and hazard-free – this includes moving hazardous or large objects from the beach, clearing fallen trees or debris and plac-

ing safety marker buoys to ensure people's safety

- supporting the release of seals in the area
- assisting with beach cleans
- providing ash scattering services at sea and installing commemorative benches.

egy includes the development of the boathouse footprint (2025-2026) and the replacement of the rescue boat (2027) – both of which are in response to the increasing demands on the service.

PLIRB is appealing for donations to help fund either campaign. For more information go to plirb.org or facebook.com/PettLevelRescueBoat Email: info@plirb.org

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A New Way of Learning Which is Right Up Your Street



Geometric patchwork cushion workshop with tutor Ruth

ERICA SMITH

Hastings Commons is currently running a programme of courses tailored to suit people who have never felt comfortable in formal learning situations.

The Alley Way Learning programme is a series of one hour and 30-minute introductory courses in venues across Hastings. The programme takes its ethos, and the inspiration for its name, from the successful Australian Laneway Learning project. Courses are designed to make learning accessible to everyone within the local community.

The initiative aims to provide affordable and varied learning opportunities, with classes taught by those from the community: whether that's local experts and business owners or just people who want to share their knowledge, skills, and/or cultural heritage with others. The programme of courses was developed after asking people across the town what they wanted to learn – and what skills they would be happy to share with others. Neither the tutors or students are from traditional educational backgrounds.

So far, the workshops have in-

cluded Chinese calligraphy, chess for women, preserving foods, Colombian dance and local history. Classes have been held in the Observer Building in Cambridge Road, the Grumpy Cook cafe in Robertson Street and the Board Games café in Hastings Old Town.

There is no set fee – you are asked to pay what you can, with a suggested £4 fee per class. If you can't afford to pay anything, that's not a barrier to you attending the class. And if you are able to pay more than £4 then you are welcome to 'pay it forward' to help others access the courses.

The next three courses programmed are:

- An English Language Conversation Cafe on Wednesday 13 November at 12pm
- Self Portraits via Collage on Thursday 14 November at 12pm
- The History of Palmistry on Thursday 21 November 2 at 7pm

The courses cover five strands of teaching and learning styles which create environments that accommodate different access needs. For example, some classes take place in relaxed and sensory friendly environments, taking into consideration different learning styles and providing a supportive environment

for those whose first language isn't English. Learning will vary from traditional hands-on workshops to movement activities and digital learning (online workshops).

Alley Way Learning coordinator Santi Sorrenti says, "In any community learning environment, it is important to create an enriching learning experience for people where the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and skills transcends financial, physical, and social barriers. Through this, we build confidence in people, create dynamic community cohesion, and instill feelings of self-worth, resilience, and confidence. We are lucky to have a plethora of creatives and makers in Hastings, and this project looks to connect with people who have not had a platform, or the right opportunity to deliver their knowledge and to broaden the spectrum and breadth of events in the town."



All sessions are introductory/beginner. Visit the website to see venues and the full range of courses that are available between now and December: hastingscommons.com/programmes/alley-way-learning

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Health & Environment

9



Living With Damp and Mould

KEN DAVIS, a retired architect, a director of Energise Sussex Coast and member of the Hastings Urban Design Group and Transition Towns explains why so many Hastings houses are damp

I originally came across the problems of damp and mould at the age of seven when my parents bought their first house, a five-storey Victorian pile backing on to Portobello Road in West London. It cost £1,150, and five of us lived in the bottom two floors including a semi-basement with plenty of damp. Dad soon installed a bathroom in what was probably once a scullery. Although he used thick corrugated cardboard impregnated with bitumen, the damp was coming through again three years later when we moved. The top floor had a strange isolated section of damp in a wall under a window which tenants used to climb out to hang up their washing. Wet wooden steps placed against the wall stopped it ever drying out.

It is strange that, almost 70 years on, damp and mould are still so prevalent in our housing. At least it is now recognised that they lead to serious health issues. What is rare-

ly identified is that damp or wet building fabric - walls, floors or roofs - have a significant effect on the thermal efficiency of a building because water conducts temperature difference much more. The highest risk is to timber because it is so absorbent. In the second house my parents bought, the ground floor was covered in dry rot. My dad ripped out the rotten wood, treated all walls and installed new joists and floor-boards. Although he had learnt the lesson of maintaining good underfloor ventilation, some bright spark had blocked all the air vents. This was before insulation became commonplace, so boy was that house cold!

RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES

Mould growth inside homes is a serious issue with well-known harmful effects on respiratory illnesses and allergies. A study in the British Medical Journal pinpoints the need

for us to move to cleaner energy not only to save the planet but also because: "air pollution causes systemic inflammation and oxidative stress, leading to deterioration of cardiovascular and respiratory health and adverse effects on nervous systems, metabolism, and mental and reproductive health".

Certain groups are particularly vulnerable, and lowering our carbon emissions reduces our energy bills and would make us a healthier nation. Some people think that technology like solar panels, heat pumps, wind turbines etc., will save us from global warming. Yet they do nothing to insulate our buildings to reduce energy consumption - or prevent damp penetration and mould.

Damp is caused by water penetrating different elements of buildings and being trapped there. Mould grows where there is excessive condensation. Modern life tends to produce lots of moisture: bathing, cooking, washing, tumble drying, and breathing - probably a necessity! Poor ventilation promotes condensation-driven mould growth, but then who wants the windows open on a really cold day? Moreover, many modern so-called damp treatments only treat the symptoms, cover them up, or provide short term fixes.

Here we come up against a modern myth about damp: 'We never had these problems years ago because old buildings were built to 'breathe', letting moisture in and out again as the rain, sun and air pressure changed. Buildings were 'vapour permeable'.

The reality, however, is that old buildings were built by traditional, long-established methods and were not purposefully 'breathable'. It

could be argued that no properly constructed, specified and detailed building should be inherently damp. But then what is the definition of 'properly constructed'?

QUICK FIX

This is exacerbated because many older buildings have been extended or laden with cheap and quick fixes, often by people who do not understand the root issues or are stuck in the belief that the old ways must be right. It is easy to say that older buildings, perhaps pre-Edwardian, are very different to 'modern' houses but innovation in building has been going on for centuries. It really began to take hold from the early 19th Century when much more iron, steel and glass was used and, of course, one of the main causes of damp, Portland cement, was invented by Joseph Aspin in 1824. Cement is responsible for many building failures in Hastings, particularly because it has been used to re-point soft sandstone walls, and also as a so-called 'waterproof render' on many external brick walls. Modern plastic-based paints are another criminal offender. If walls are to breathe, then finishes such as lime or mineral-based paints - widely used on the continent - should be used. Modern paints - latex, acrylic resin, polyurethane etc - came into use in the 1920s and were rapidly followed by other plastic and artificial rubber sheet materials which were intended to keep moisture out but invariably either failed, were installed incorrectly, or locked moisture in! Moreover, the introduction of new services into building often penetrates water barriers.

There had been various experiments with cavity wall construction

in the late Victorian period though they were not always functional - cheap metal wall ties only came into popular use after about 1910. But cavities themselves are not a fail-safe means of keeping walls dry.

Ranking alongside Portland cement comes the widespread use of plastic gutters - often poorly installed and fundamentally of poor design. Maintenance is difficult due to lack of access. How many of us go outside in heavy rain to watch the water flood over the gutters onto our exposed walls? Gutters made of galvanised steel or extruded aluminium are much better, but of course more expensive, than plastic.

The first step in any thermal upgrade of a building should be to ensure that its head and feet are dry. Energy-sapping water will run down and also be driven up by osmosis and ground water pressure. And water, say from a broken cast iron downpipe outside, could also run sideways if internal timber or services assist its journey.

Many things can go wrong with roofs but common failures are back or parapet gutters and where party or gable end walls rise above the general roof level. Chimney stacks also push up through roofs without effective damp proof courses, and cross ventilation of roof voids is often poor or blocked altogether by the introduction of insulants. Any flat insulated roof older than perhaps 30 years is unlikely to have a cross-ventilated void, leading to wet rot and damp penetration. Loft conversions, particularly those with flat-roofed dormers, are a classic case of early failure, damp and mould, let alone massive heat loss and are usually very hard to remedy without a complete rebuild.

DRY FEET

Keeping a building's feet dry should be easier than dealing with roofs, simply because of accessibility. I am constantly amazed by how many houses I visit have hard impermeable surfaces, not only right up to the face of a building, but quite often even level with or above the internal floor. This is a recipe for disaster which will sometimes be accompanied by merrily splashing water against the wall every time the sink is emptied. External ground levels should be kept, where possible, at least 150mm - 6 inches - below internal floor level and should be of permeable materials such as soil or gravel. Thankfully, there are now some easy-to-use means of installing damp-proof courses into external walls and good tanking systems to apply to the inside of damp walls. Every situation is different though and requires close examination.

However, once damp penetration has been solved, insulation of the correct type is key to keeping the building dry, provided internal moisture can be controlled, and this is best done with a mechanical ventilation and heat recovery unit or units in the areas which produce most moisture.

A Time to Remember: WW1 and a Local 'Conchie'

CHRIS SANDERSON recounts coming across 'The Reluctant Tommy' by Ronald Skirth (edited by Duncan Barrett), an autobiography of a local man who volunteered for WW1 and survived as a pacifist

Some years ago, I read a review of this autobiography and was intrigued by the idea of an active soldier who not only survived World War One but survived it as a pacifist. I agreed with Ian Hislop's front page comment: "Surprising, uncomfortable and very memorable". But over and above what most people love about this book, there was another aspect that took me by surprise and ensured that it became compulsive reading: Ronald Skirth, the reluctant Tommy himself, was local to our area!

Ronald Skirth won a rare scholarship to a grammar school. He recounts: "My new school was at Rye and to get there required a rail jour-

ney on two different companies' lines, seventeen miles in each direction. To a train-mad youngster like me, the unlimited free rail travel my season tickets entitled me to was a magnificent bonus". Going home from his last day at school (early summer 1916), he stopped off at Hastings to enrol for the army because Bexhill had already turned him down twice: "This time I was going to enrol in the army even if it meant a false declaration of age. The Hastings Enrolment Officer wasn't quite as thorough as his Bexhill counterpart with the result that, fifteen minutes after, I walked out as a soldier." His call-up would come when he had completed his

apprentice teaching training.

In those days before television and radio, people made their own music and performed together. On one musical evening in July 1916 he was introduced to fifteen year old Ella. Both were talented pianists who enjoyed singing and they met as often as they could. They sang duets together and he accompanied her as pianist when she sang solo, often in performances. The book also recalls how they went together to concerts and explains: "A crescent shaped concert hall had been constructed by hollowing out the low cliff which overhung our promenade."

Neither of them could have suspected that this was the start of what Skirth calls a fairy-tale love story, continuing through censored letters and giving him the strength to survive unthinkable horror. Their courtship lasted only a few weeks because his call-up came for 2 October. He had requested to be

sent to Cooden for his 24 weeks of training but was sent 300 miles away to Catterick. There, tests showed him to be an extremely good mathematician, so he was given the rank of corporal and trained to be a Battery Commander's Assistant. This involved using information from various sources and working out the necessary coordinates, a skilful and responsible role. It even involved deciphering code because meteorological details were sent daily in code. At the end of his training he spent barely a week at home in Bexhill before he was sent to Flanders on active service.

Though relying on his papers (chiefly the diary, now lost) which might have been scribbled hastily, he wrote skilfully, for example re-constructing dialogue. When describing scenes of war, he combines vivid description with the reactions of a 19-year-old soldier about how he escaped death at Passchendaele after witnessing friends killed horrifically

"I was desperately afraid. I am not ashamed to admit it. As the daylight waned and the mists grew thicker my imagination ran riot. It was my loneliness as much as my fear that made me see those ghastly swollen parts of bodies somehow assembling themselves into horrific evil beings. Evil things about to take revenge on me for what had happened to them... It seemed impossible that I could be the only living human being when, within five miles, there were thousands of concealed men of both armies, all as silent as the dead."

He wrote with humour and wit at times, particularly when recalling the ineptitude and pomposity of senior officers. I particularly enjoyed a section he called 'How to lose a stripe' which recreates the dialogue between himself, responsible for working out the coordinates for firing the cannon, and a visiting senior officer who needed to advance his career by being able to say he had served in a battle zone and acted as a competent gunnery officer. No doubt the officer was embarrassed by his obvious lack of experience. His officious manner provoked young Roland, who was having difficulties obeying orders from an officer who didn't really know what orders to give but had merely scribbled a mark on a map for him to use to set up the gun. As politely as he could, the teenager pointed out that he could not work with the map that he had been given because it was in metric, and they worked in yards.

Then what do you propose to do about it?

'Nothing Sir. I am under your orders.'

'There was a sudden silence then, very meekly, I said that I could make conversions but it would take time. 'Shall I go ahead Sir?'

'For God's sake get on with it!'

Having dutifully made all the calculations, Skirth finished by checking the target through binoc-

ulars. He was shocked to find the target so randomly chosen by the officer was a church. Again politely, he tried to point out that it was against orders to shoot a consecrated building.

'Are you a bloody conchie?..... Listen Corporal, I am your superior officer. What you think has nothing to do with it.... I shall report your insolence to your Commanding Officer. If you add insubordination to insolence, you'll bloody well wish you'd never been born. Hand me those figures. That is an order.'

The following day he found he had been demoted and, worse, his leave delayed. He had some consolation though, in knowing that no explosives had landed anywhere near the church. 'My calculations must have been very inaccurate!' he comments wryly.

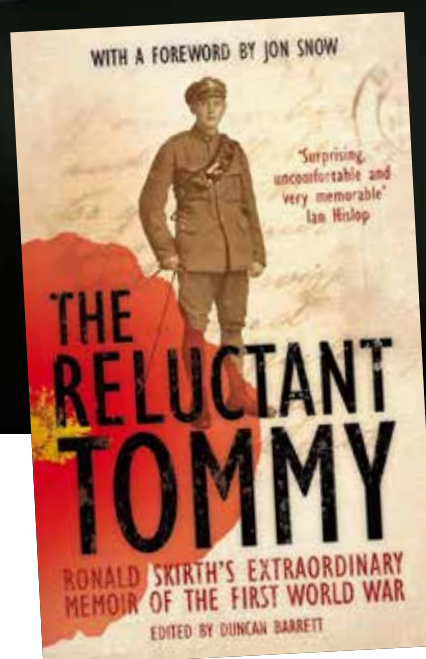
Ronald Skirth was willing to defy authority if he considered it to be acting in an immoral way, and was able to defend his principles. But his decision to become an affirmed pacifist (conscientious objector, hence "conchie") came later when he encountered the body of a German about his own age, clutching a photo of a girl who bore a strong resemblance to his own sweetheart, Ella.

Not long after, he was badly injured and had a lengthy period of convalescence and memory loss, but did not return to England until after his next placement in Northern Italy. What shocked me was a dramatic and fatal 'mistake' that was reported as a victory and earned honours for officers who were really the culprits.

The Reluctant Tommy was published in 2010, over 90 years after the events it describes, and being written by an ordinary soldier, gives a rare insight into a war that is more widely documented by high-ranking officers. Skirth organised and transcribed his old diaries and letters and notes as an old man in his seventies. His intention was to write about his love story; the true story of how a teenage love affair lasted and withstood separation. However, once he started to gather his papers together, the monumental story of war intruded because it was their love, kept alive by censored letters, that gave him the will to survive the horrors he endured. That hugely traumatic experience could not be ignored.

He didn't plan for his writings to be published but, after his death, his daughter realised their historical worth and passed them onto the Imperial War Museum. Eventually Duncan Barrett heard about them and set himself the huge task of editing the masses of information. What he has put together is an amazing biography, well worthy of the praise heaped on it by people such as Ian Hislop and Jon Snow.

The Reluctant Tommy is truly a remarkable story, an important witness account of The Great War through the experiences of an ordinary but extremely intelligent man. I recommend it most highly.



Sometimes it's Nice to Be In Danger, With Friends

MERLIN BETTS gets in Harm's Way

Below the cliffs beyond Rock-A-Nore, it's late afternoon and a boulder tumbles down the hillside, rolling into the sea. There are three people walking along the pebble shore between the encroaching waves and the sandstone rock. One of them harangues the hillside in a rhyming volley of verse, arms flailing to the gods. Another crouches some distance away, close to the sea, peers over a rock pool, petting a small crab. It clambors over his hand and walks across his shoulders. The last lounges on a slab of stone despite the light and heat being lost behind the cliff, perfectly framed by the little shade his silicate perch provides, as though sunbathing.

I've always been a bit of a mirror, so I'm somewhere between them,

taking a knee, fondling a shapely stone and a piece of seaweed, occasionally mumbling to myself. The sea is getting closer, and we won't be back in time. We knew this setting off, choosing not to fold back into the country park, safe behind the edge of the land, because what fun would that be? What kind of person walks back exactly the way they came? No, we must make the circle, or perhaps the spiral, and so the waves push up and the land pushes down.

MEANWHILE, BACK...

This is roughly how I'd describe the work of this group of artists: Oli Spleen, Wolfgang Dubieniec and Mark Walter. Three friends cutting across the space where one world ends and another begins. I reviewed

the first part of *In Harm's Way* last autumn, when they were in the Landing Gallery (where this year *Ouroboros* will be showing). This time they'll have a larger, more exposed space, and include a live music performance on the night of the private view, featuring some of our moodier favourites from Oli's solo albums.

While there is a degree of separation from *Ouroboros* upstairs, the creators there are also friends. Trusted with use of the space, Mark wanted to help curate a show of work from artists who get fewer chances to exhibit, or haven't shown before. From this, *Ouroboros* evolved, a talented all-female group who match the sometimes strange and other-worldly energy emanating from *In Harm's Way*.

CONNECTIONS

There's a thematic connection here, because there's vulnerability involved in presenting to others that which you've created. And there's often a peculiar mix of anxiety and celebration in the knowledge that most of the art we make now is built from, and based in, everything that came before – the snake eating itself, constantly growing so it must eat more.

In the need to communicate something to the world through art, something that could be an essential part of the way you view this existence, or maybe something that



L to R Oli Spleen, Wolfgang Dubieniec and Mark Walter

could stem from personal trauma, there's often a duality. It's masochism and sadism. As much as art is a kind of therapy and a pleasure, it can also be an assault on yourself and on the minds of others. This may reflect something of the viewer's, or art collector's, desire to find the emotional extremes a work invokes. It should celebrate or commiserate, it should affirm or terrify. We want art to do something to us, don't we? It can't all be left to office hallways and starkly-lit beige cafes,

or for that matter, collectors' vaults. And so you are invited, dear reader, to put yourself at risk. Join a deliciously bedlam whirl of artistic contemplation: new work from those you know, and those you don't.

In Harm's Way II shows from 15-17 November at Electro Studios, TN38 0A1, along with *Ouroboros*, a show of new work from emerging artists. Private view for both, 15 November, 18.00-21.00. Other days open 11.00-17.00.

Get Rich or Try Sharing

MERLIN BETTS

About four years ago, as the covid pandemic was spreading its wings, people started seeing eggs. On walls, on bridges, prominently displayed in locations across London and the South East. Four-limbed like a clover, tinged with political imagery (CND, anarchy). A few people initially thought they represented a new mover in street art. And then they started showing up on trains, even covering whole cars. In the world of graffiti writing this is serious business, not something your average Brick Lane spray master would even imagine doing.

Eggs had arrived with a capital "E" and was probably one of the most prolific graffiti writers of 2020. Respected by his peers, his simple but effective message also resonated with a fair chunk of the public. Not your usual black and white throw up, Eggs offered some-



Graffiti by Eggs

thing more playful: freshly sprayed eggs every morning, sunny side up, and a decent turn of phrase to get you thinking, like "Get Rich or Try Sharing."

As time passed, he only reached greater heights, and four years on, he's got an exhibition of original work and documentation at Stella Dore, running until Saturday 30 November. The gallery is open for

walk-ins on Saturdays from 12.00-18.00, otherwise viewings are by appointment, but don't let that stop you – Steph's usually at work in the space or somewhere nearby.

Stella Dore gallery proprietor and curator Steph Warren, is at 64 Norman Road, St Leonards, TN38 0EJ. Details and images: stelladore-store.com



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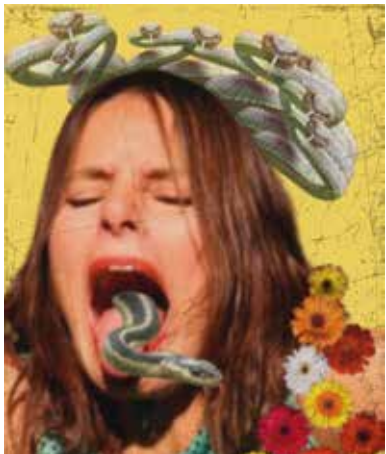
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Killer Herbs

EMILY HUMPHRIES at Hastings Museum

During the Hastings Storytelling Festival I treated myself to a spell-binding performance, *Plants that Kill or Cure*, at the museum. Two storytellers, plus local duo Wild Poets, honed their usually-individ-

ual creations to weave a full-blooded vision of the timeless human relationship with plants and the natural world. In this magical space (the Durbar Hall adorned with medicinal herbs) reeds become musi-

cal, Medusa is obsessed with a golden apple, an unfortunate Persephone is tempted by a pomegranate... and the audience examine precious herbs from Dubai, traditionally blended for refreshing a woman's nookiest of nooks. All were divinely dressed; a costume change half-way effectively doubled the cast.

I asked lead storyteller Xanthe Gresham-Knight how this collaboration came about, besides being a theme of her latest book *Herba Mythica* (also a collaboration – of thirty storytellers!). In large part, the answer is '18 Hours'. *18 Hours* is an education and events crew based in Bexhill, whose director Mandy Curtis apparently has a magic touch with artists' development, inspiring Gresham-Knight to turn corners in her practice.

"We storytellers are a wandering

breed," she says, "darting around the world looking for new stories." Lockdown put the brakes on this, and many started thinking about working locally: "It was about wanting to be rooted in the community", she continues. Before, she might finish a show and move on to something new, but Mandy "sees potential to evolve, roll-out, develop and collaborate." *Plants that Kill*, and indeed the festival itself, are testaments to this.

From St Leonards Festival to the 1066 Country Walk, 18 Hours are behind many local initiatives, making art accessible in the service of community and global citizenship. The ability to value our own corner of the world, they believe, underpins our ability to be curious about other cultures and traditions. What creates common ground, Gresham-Knight says, is our capacity for

wonder. That moment when we all come together and share an experience that's an essence of geographical community. I felt that wonder filling the Durbar Hall.

You can catch Wild Poets Debra Watson and Katie Taylor, if you're lucky, at the uniquely sumptuous Poetry Brothel Hastings: (Eventbrite.co.uk/cc/the-poetry-brothel-hastings-1788899). Gresham-Knight's books Herba Mythica and Sussex Folktales for Children are widely available; her Youtube channel is a feast – from Buddha Babies, a poignant exploration of the 'bio-illogical' clock, which many childless women will relate to, to the mighty Goddess Lounge, an empowering series of six collaborations made in 2021 and funded by the Arts Council.

Billy Childish Album Launch



ROD WEBB

Hot on the heels of Sister Suzie's Preview Album launch at the Henry Ward Hall (See HIP Issue 263, *Sister Suzie Honesty in Mid-Life*) comes the launch of two LPs from Billy Childish at the same venue on 23 November, *Cape Trafalgar* and *The Speech of Karatakus*.

Billy Childish is a painter, author, poet, photographer, film maker, singer and guitarist. He has had a prolific output in each area since

the 1970s, releasing more than 100 albums on the musical side. *Clash* magazine describes his live performances as "a force of nature" from "someone who has distilled garage punk down to a fine essence across a seemingly endless parade of terrific albums".

Before performing in Hastings last year, he acknowledged, in an interview with Hastings OnLine Times: "I'm playing in five groups and releasing something in the order of six LP records a year (we did 21 LP records over lockdown)", and then commented: "it gets a bit

strange listing what I do as it seems too much."

ETERNAL ANACHRONISM

The launch gig is billed as an evening of poetry, folk and blues, and Billy Childish will be accompanied by The Chatham Singers and The North Kent Folkways Revival, who perform with him on both albums. Their previous single, *Medway Wheelers*, is unique: not so much a folk revival, more of an overheard, very local, conversation. The existential angst of *This Wound'rous Day* is thoroughly contemporary, full of ironic quasi-tragedy – 'to the gods of the air, I declare my love of despair'. The idea of 'The Chatham Singers' on the other hand may put you in mind of a local choir but, fronted by Childish, they are in fact a kind of post-punk blues outfit. Childish is described on the *damaged goods* website as 'an anachronism who is forever influencing the world of contemporary art and music', and the new album is pretty sure to reflect this description.

The Hastings album launch is preceded by one at Medway Little Theatre six days earlier. That one is already sold out, so you'd better grab your tickets for the Hastings gig while you can on ticketsource.co.uk – free A4 stamped and signed poster with your ticket! This promises to be a great evening of music and poetry 'distilled' to its fine essence.

Cape Trafalgar and The Speech of Karatakus will be released on Hangman Records on 18 November 2024 and thereafter available to purchase online from L-13.org



Tuesday Grows Fat Again

Hastings Fat Tuesday Music Festival will return in its full form in 2025, running from 28 February to 4 March.

The full five days of music and mayhem will launch with the Grand Mardi Gras Ball with early bird tickets already on sale from The White Rock Theatre. The Ball takes place on Friday 28 February 2025, with an array of musical delights, so dust off your beads and boas and get dressed to impress!

Opening the night are festival favourites Ríoghnach Connolly and Honeyfeet with their eclectic taste for musical adventure. Together, they drive a broad terrain of musical textures, with foot-tapping and floor-thumping dance rhythms. Then don't miss the much-anticipated return of the extraordinary Mr Wilson's Second-Liners, a must-been band that looks like the cover of Sergeant Pepper's, uses a traditional instrumental New Orleans line-up, simultaneously paying musical homage to the diehard days of the Hacienda and 90s club culture.

Keep on dancing to tracks spun by two legendary dance DJs Justin Robertson and Jon Carter. And new for 2025: join the late night party in the White Rock Theatre Studio

where Civil Partners (in Crime) Lemur Beats will take you on a genre-blurring, time-hopping journey through House, Techno, Afro-disco, Twisted Global Funk and more.

BEST DRESSED

Make sure, too, that you're suitably dressed to enter the Best Dressed Competition!

While we're pleased to announce that some funding has been secured to support the delivery of the full festival, we still need some extra help to allow us to keep the main elements free for all, including our community and school umbrella workshops, our family parade, and the main music tours on the Saturday and Tuesday.

Please consider adding a donation on to your ball ticket [whiterock-theatre.org.uk/whats-on/event/mardi-gras-ball-2025/] or you can support us through our Crowdfunder [crowdfunder.co.uk/p/hastings-fat-tuesday-music-festival-2025] to ensure we can keep all these elements, and the musicians, free.



HIP BOOK REVIEW

My Battle of Hastings

By Xiaolu Guo
Published by Chatto & Windus.
£18.99
REVIEW BY HUGH SULLIVAN

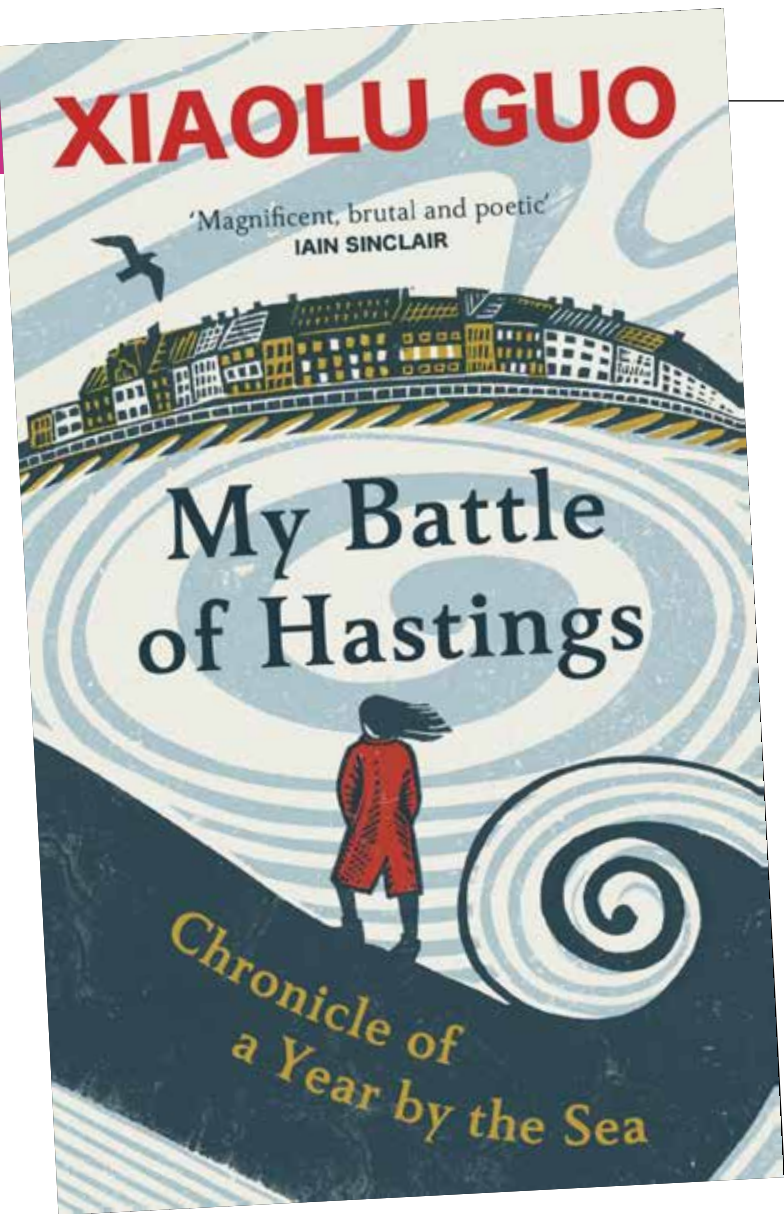
Xiaolu Guo, an award-winning writer and film-maker, spent the year 2022 living alone in a small one-bedroom flat on St Leonards sea-front. She had been residing in London with her partner Steve and their daughter Moon, but she wanted her own room ‘just to write and to think by myself’. London was too expensive for that: hence Hastings. This book is a diary of her thoughts and impressions through the year.

A month into Xiaolu’s stay, the Russians invade Ukraine. She decides that, in a period of contemporary war, she will focus on a war of nearly 1,000 years ago: the Norman invasion of England. It seems to her an apposite time, as well as place, to pick the bones – figuratively and almost literally – of the Battle of Hastings.

But her method is not that of a standard Western historian nor of a professional journalist. The clue is in the title: it’s her battle, not anyone else’s. She introduces herself as an immigrant (from China), an artist and a woman, and makes it clear that these are the credentials that she is here to apply.

PECULIARLY INTROSPECTIVE

She laboriously reads up the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles for the years in question; examines the statue of King Harold and Edith Swan-neck in West Marina Gardens; drops in on the Hastings Museum where a local enthusiast lists for her the human make-up of each army, their



respective clothing, weaponry and accessories; and eventually she takes Steve and Moon to watch a modern re-enactment of the battle. But her research is, for most of the diary’s pages, peculiarly introspective, projecting her own thoughts and feelings onto her surroundings rather than offering objective descriptions, and rarely interesting herself in how the modern population of Hastings and St Leonards are living their lives around her.

Xiaolu does hire a local builder Andy to replace the windows in her flat, and reports his diatribes about Poles and migrant refugees. She hangs about the Bluetits group of out-of-season swimmers on the beach below. And it’s gratifying to read in the closing acknowledge-

ments that, during her research, she “loved reading the local paper, the *Hastings Independent*, a constant source of anecdotes and information”. But one can’t help wondering whether she might have sourced more from closer engagement with her neighbours.

WILFULLY COUNTERFACTUAL

This is, though, to misunderstand the genre. Many Western travel writers have travelled to the locations of past civilisations – Egypt or Sumeria or Mexico, as the case may be – to spend time examining ancient stones, archaeological finds or abstruse artistic records. They hope to draw inspiration from the local scenery, which may or may not re-

tain elements of the former age they are researching. Of the people who live there now, they often report little or nothing except in their passing roles as tour guides or hospitality providers. Xiaolu is in similar terrain even if coming from an opposite direction.

It renders hers a somewhat unreliable witness as far as contemporary Hastings is concerned. Her topography appears at times wilfully counterfactual: “Starting from the pier, I took a long walk towards the White Rock Theatre...” “The museum is a century-old red-brick building in the hilly part of town” (where exactly is the non-hilly part?). She refers to a local paper as the *Hastings Daily*.

DISTANCE BETWEEN THE HAPPENING AND REPORTING

Her political observations also seem under-informed and over-judgmental. She takes the side of the Saxon *Haestingas* as the oppressed victims of the invasion, but doesn’t consider whether their forefathers inflicted similar depredations on the Celts who inhabited the shores of Sussex before them. She tells the legend of Canute as if he was surprised by the refusal of the waves to obey his commands, whereas the story all English schoolchildren learn is that he was demonstrating to his courtiers the limits of kingly power.

As to modern British politics she describes the news – including the war in Ukraine, the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the removal and accession of three successive prime ministers (Johnson, Truss, Sunak) – as “ever-maddening”, and complains that its reportage by modern chroniclers is undertaken “with eagerness, participation and a sense of confusion. There is no distance between the reporting and the happening”.

Xiaolu intends, on the contrary, to put plenty of distance between the happening and reporting, retaining through her diary pages her self-proclaimed alien status as cover for any lack of comprehension.

IT FLOWS EASILY

My Battle of Hastings follows two previous memoirs of hers, *Once Upon a Time in the East* and *Radical: A Life of My Own*, both of which have received high praise in literary circles. So has this: the front cover of the book quotes Iain Sinclair, poet, essayist (and, as it happens, owner of a neighbouring flat in Marine Court): “Magnificent, brutal and poetic”. Lauren Elkin, Franco-American cultural critic, tells us on the back: “This is urgent, compelling, but also delightful writing, a book about war unlike any you’ll ever read”.

So don’t let me put you off. It flows easily, though the £18.99 price tag for a rather skimpy 180-odd pages confirms that, while Hastings is the shoot location, it’s not the target audience.

CROSSWORD CORNER

Across

1. Jumps over the arches (6)

3. 1935 film part of monopoly (3,3)

4. Shouter sounds cowardly (6)

Down

1. Give power over railway to church office (6)

2. Fish on the one hand found on ice (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 5 of The HIP List

1					2
3					
4					

POETRY CORNER

HOLLOW MOON

OLI SPLEEN

I gaze upon a hollow moon
And doubt all I held dear
A dark cloud is descending
And this world is filled with fear

We’re set adrift upon a sea
Of everybody else
And who of us knows how to play
The cards that we’ve been dealt

So could it be this is the flood
These are the final days
We dredge the remnants from the mud
Of what hope may remain

The failings of the fathers
Soon will suffocate our sons
Oh let the deluge wash and cleanse
The earth of all we’ve done

The hate and fears of all the years
Spread like a blood disease
Hate to divide and conquer
Fear to bring us to our knees

No end to this creeping terror
People fighting fear with fear
No finest hour, just gravest error
All hope slowly disappears

As we manifest this misery
And make all hell break loose
Oh lead me to the hanging tree
And fasten round the noose

The Secret Barista Visits Dovetail Cafe



Seeking further enlightenment on my coffee quest, where better to go than Bohemia? Sauntering up London Road, I was rewarded by bucolic views of the pockets of nature along the route.

On the corner of Bohemia Road and North Road, I came upon Dove-

tail Café. Named after a dovetail joint - an intricate way of connecting two pieces of wood. A sign outside declares, “Sweets, Sandwiches, Drinks, Design, Garden and Building Talk.” Intrigued, I stepped inside.

Owners Leo and Pamela arrived in St Leonards intending to get in-

volved with creating homes and spaces in the local community but, according to Leo, a trained barista, “Everyone asked for good coffee.” So, they tackled that first. As experts on building restoration as well as coffee, Leo and Pamela run training courses on both subjects.

Leo works in a ‘commanding’ position with a panoramic view of Bohemia Road. He has an exacting, scientific approach to coffee-making and is happy to give tutorials to customers, including me.

He has a creative, unconventional streak and wears a ‘Bohemian’ badge that evokes the young jazz & blues Beatniks who hung out in coffee bars in Soho in 50s and 60s Britain. Too young to drink in pubs, the coffee bars gave younger, arty types somewhere different to go - with juke boxes or even live bands.

Post-war Italian migrants set up these cafés and brought with them the espresso method of making coffee. The Brits particularly appreciated the way the new espresso machines were able to foam milk - so the “Cappuccino Bars” took off.

Dovetail serves all kinds of coffees - including a ‘cortado’ (half espresso, half milk) which, according to one customer, is better than any you find in Spain.

Speaking to Leo, I learn that he and Pam carefully research and test every ingredient that goes into their drinks. They favour a ‘classic’ four-blend Italian espresso. In other words, one that you can “chuck a load of milk at” and still taste the coffee. He explains, “If you drink a dou-

ble espresso of single-origin coffee, you’re hit by one thing after another. That’s lovely, but do you need that? So, for our house coffee we chose something more ‘everyday’, not lacking subtlety, but not taking you on a weird flavour trip through the forest.”

I drank an aromatically fruitful cup and chatted with Leo and his ‘regulars’. I realised that just like the four-blend Italian espresso, intricate connections are always happening at Dovetail Café.



PHOTOS: SECRET BARISTA

Sunday Lunch at The Marina Fountain

MEL HUGHES

On an unusually warm and bright October Sunday, with the hum and sight of drones and hang gliders over St Leonards Gardens, I wended my way to The Marina Fountain on my continuing quest to find the best local roast lunch.

I was greeted warmly upon entering, and nothing was too much trouble. We asked to move tables to avoid the direct sunlight beaming into my friend’s eyes. We were offered a cosy booth, but a minimal shift to the nearby table sufficed. My straw became blocked while I was drinking my aperitif and was quickly swapped for a new one. This Bloody Mary was spicy, in a tumbler garnished with crushed chilli flakes and a slice of lemon, not drowning in ice and, at £6.50, more reasonably priced than many venues. A slight change to the vegetable selection for my friend was also accommodated with a smile. JJ is truly ‘Master of the House’.

The roast menu offered a great selection, including a vegetarian Butternut Squash, Feta and Spinach Wellington and a vegan option, at

£16. We opted for chicken and beef (the latter was promised to be ‘banging’ and it was). Both were beautifully presented, piled high, and accompanied by a medley of roast vegetables (carrots, parsnips, beetroot, potatoes), a substantial Yorkshire Pudding and red wine gravy on the side. Stuffing (sausage meat cubes) was optional at £2.00. Everything was deliciously flavoursome: my chicken was tender with a nice crisp, and the beef was ample and well sliced. My only moderate disappointment - not a huge problem - was that my stuffing was not quite hot enough and I found the lardons in the cabbage a tad salty. However, nothing warranted leaving any on the plate!

We weren’t offered a wine list but, to be fair, I was still savouring my Bloody Mary. Swiftly rectified, once mentioned, JJ listed the dry white wine offered by the glass and the chosen French Chardonnay was the perfect crisp accompaniment.

Another pleasing accompaniment was the fantastic musical



soundtrack - not too loud - including vintage Louis Armstrong’s What a Wonderful World and Billie (Lady Day) Holiday’s All of Me.

From the front of the pub, we had a bird’s eye view of lunch service and appreciated that each guest was welcomed by the friendly new landlords, JJ and Paulina Wintle. I think I’ve found the best Sunday Roast and will be returning soon. And, though personally I never think about the ‘end of year C word’ until the beginning of December, I made sure to take a copy of their festive lunch menu too!”

For more information and bookings, see marinafountain.com

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FOOTBALL

United Manager Sacked After Cup Defeat

HUGH SULLIVAN

Danny Bloor, appointed as Hastings United manager on a two-year contract from last May, has been dismissed. On 26 October the team were defeated 4-3 in an FA Trophy tie at Hadley, the winning goal coming in the 87th minute from a penalty. Twenty-four hours later, according to Bloor, he received a call “out of the blue” from club director Ben White informing him that his five-month stint at the helm was over.

The club put out a formal statement: “We have mutually agreed to part company [with Bloor] with immediate effect. The club wishes Danny all the best for the future and would like to thank him for all of his hard work and dedication... Sean Ray and Bobbi Deegan [current assistant manager and first team coach] will take temporary charge of first team affairs until further notice.”

Bloor had told HIP in an interview only five days before that his relationship with the club’s board was “absolutely superb” and that “they give me full backing”. He had also praised Hastings fans as “great - the best in Sussex”. The feeling doesn’t seem to have been reciprocated.

Chris Laverick, long-time ‘U’s fan and podcaster on Sussex non-league football channel Sussex By The Sea, said: “Hastings is a big passionate fan base, and not one of them was surprised by Bloor’s departure”.

Laverick has no inside knowledge of the management of the club, but feels that Bloor had “lost the dressing room” and that players looked “under-drilled and under-coached”. League statistics show that only two sides (out of 22) have scored less than Hastings’ total of 12 goals in 11 matches this season. The podcaster is, however, more critical of the team’s defensive set-up. “We were far too open as a side: it was a case of when and not if anyone we’ve played this season had a gilt edge chance; if not for [goalkeeper] Louis Rogers, our precarious situation would be worse than it is.”

‘SOME HEADS WILL ROLL’
Bloor’s managerial tenure certainly had its ups and downs. The season began with two league wins and FA Cup advancement but then went into reverse. After a cup defeat at Cray in September, Bloor had blamed his team’s attitude, warning that “some heads will roll and some players won’t be playing for Hastings United any longer”. However,



last month who share past connections with Hastings – striker Callum Barlow and defender Finn O’Mara. He described Barlow, a former product of the United Academy, as “an old-fashioned centre forward, six foot four, scored a lot of goals for Eastbourne United last season ... He should be able to hold the ball up front and take some pressure off Davide Rodari.” O’Mara, who was in Gary Elphick’s league-winning team of 2022, should slot into central defence enabling Jack Dixon to push forward into his more accustomed midfield role.

Ironically, Barlow was ‘cup-tied’, and thus not eligible to play in the game at Hadley. So it remains to be seen whether this last throw of Bloor’s dice will prove a productive one for the ‘U’s as they renew their season under fresh management.

So what should happen now? “The club has a tough ask to get the right appointment in,” Laverick says. “Bloor’s appointment had the feeling of being rushed, and it didn’t take long for the wheels to come off ... Let’s not do that again.”

The ‘U’s had no game last Saturday - their scheduled opponents Horsham were playing in the First Round of the FA Cup - but were due to host Whitehawk on Tuesday (after this newspaper went to press), then travel to Wingate & Finchley tomorrow (Saturday).

the line-up for the following match against Chatham Town showed none of them omitted, save for a substitute Tyrese Briscoe (who did subsequently depart).

Against Chatham, long-time fan favourite Sam Cruttwell was brought in to shore up the defence despite being still clearly unfit after spending early season on the sidelines with a knee injury. Cruttwell played superbly (in what has turned out to be United’s only league victory since August), but with obviously increasing discomfort: he hob-

bled off late in the game and has failed to regain fitness since.

Bloor signed two new recruits

ISTHMIAN PREMIER LEAGUE (BOTTOM FIVE AS AT 3 NOVEMBER)

		P	W	D	F	A	GD	PTS
18	Cray Wanderers	12	3	3	11	17	-6	12
19	Hastings United	11	3	3	12	19	-7	12
20	Whitehawk	12	3	3	10	19	-9	12
21	Hashtag United	11	3	1	16	23	-7	10
22	Bognor Regis Town	12	2	2	15	26	-11	8

A New Network for Aspiring Young Sports Coaches

Active Hastings is calling for young people with ambition and enthusiasm for sports coaching to join their coaching network.

Have you always had a passion for sports? Are you aiming for a career as a sports coach? If this applies to you, and you are aged between 16 and 25 years old, join Active Hastings #NextGen Coaching Network, in partnership with StreetGames.

According to Active Hastings, this is a unique opportunity to be part of a network that supports young coaches. As part of this community, you will be sent regular free training resources including articles, videos, podcasts, and webinars, providing you with the specialist skills and information you need to be an effective coach. Plus, you can

collaborate, meet, and share knowledge with other aspiring coaches, giving you a sense of camaraderie and support from like-minded individuals on your coaching journey.

As a member of the network, you’ll also have the chance to volunteer with the Active Hastings team. Whether you’re looking to gain hands-on experience through regular volunteering or just want to give a helping hand at events, they offer a wide variety of opportunities to get involved.

This network is ideal for those already volunteering with a sports club or community organisation and are looking to benefit from expert knowledge and expand your skills, taking your coaching to the next level. As a member, you’ll receive regu-

lar updates on training, volunteering, and work opportunities. Active Hastings offers free training courses throughout the year on topics such as: child safeguarding, first aid and mental health, youth work, and inclusive activity training. Sport-specific courses like multi-sports and football are also available.

Lead councillor for housing and wellbeing at Hastings Borough Council, Glenn Haffenden, said: “This is a great opportunity for young people who want to enhance their skills and gain valuable experience in the coaching field. We are committed to developing young people in our town, and the StreetGames Programme is a great way for young people to develop their skills.”

Active Hastings is hosted by Hastings Borough Council, in partnership with East Sussex County Council, and brings together a wide range of local and national partners to ensure and encourage everyone in Hastings to get active.

Sign up by completing the quick and easy online form at www.hastings.gov.uk/nextgen

RUGBY

H & B Disappoint in Home Defeat

Hastings & Bexhill 12 Brockleians 19

Hastings & Bexhill suffered their first home defeat of the season on 19 October when losing to Brockleians in a Kent 3 fixture. Previous home games against Beckenham II and Old Dunstonians had been won convincingly, and H&B will have started this one with confidence. But, on a day of drizzling rain, they made too many handling errors and gave away too many penalties. Brockleians were 9-0 up at half time, after successively punishing three off-side infringements with kicks between the posts, and a fourth kick for the same offence followed early in the second half.

Joe Field did eventually burst through the visitors’ defence to score a try for H & B, converted by Jackson Coulter, but they then immediately conceded one at the other end after some sloppy defending, and a second touch down by Isaac Wales came too late.

After a rest day last weekend they travel tomorrow (Saturday) to play Old Gravesendians, followed by a home game on 16 November hosting Gravesend II. On that occasion there will be a Reunion gathering for former players from 12 noon onwards as part of the club’s centenary celebrations. Anyone interested in participating should email hastingsandbexhill-events@gmail.com.

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