

Hastings Independent

265 22 NOVEMBER 2024 THE FREE & INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR HASTINGS

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



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Something
Bizarre



Skates Off!

Ice Rink and Markets Pulled from Pier
as Leaseholders Depart

HUGH SULLIVAN

An ice skating rink and “covered and heated” Christmas markets, which were due to be opened today (Friday) on Hastings Pier, have been shelved.

Leaseholders Piertown had promised on Facebook and other social media “a wonderful selection of festive treats”, and were selling advance bookings over several

weeks for timed ice skating sessions (at £10 per adult, £7 per child plus further sums for skate hire) via ticketing partners Skiddle.

But it emerged last weekend that Piertown directors Mark Dickson and Damien Fell have given notice of termination of their lease to Max Wolf, director of The HPier Limited, which holds a superior lease of the whole of the pier premises. They also filed last week a notice at the Companies Registry applying to

dissolve their events company Hastings Pier Events Limited.

In a formal statement released on social media at the beginning of this week, they explained that their aim from the beginning of their lease in early 2023 was “to rekindle the musical heritage of the pier with bigger and better shows planned for each year...Unfortunately the overhead costs involved became too onerous and too costly for us to continue any longer.”

In the wake of their departure, both the ice rink and the Christmas markets promised alongside have been cancelled. The booking system at Skiddle has been suspended (though it still seemed on Monday morning to be selling tickets for sessions on Christmas Eve).

Skiddle's terms and conditions inform ticket holders that if their event is cancelled and not rescheduled, they are entitled to receive a refund of the face value of their tick-

ets, and Piertown's statement indicates that the ticket-seller will contact them “in the next few days” to arrange this. However, Skiddle's terms and conditions limit its own liability to cases where it continues to hold the funds at the time that the refund is due. If it has passed them on to the event promoter, i.e. Piertown, customers will presumably have to look to the latter for reimbursement.

It is not known at the time of going to press how many

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EDITOR'S NOTE

As you'd expect from a truly local paper, this edition of HIP has lots of news from in and around the town.

Not least that Southern Water has announced a multi-million-pound investment plan to update and repair the utilities infrastructure they've neglected for years. Although welcome, the phrase 'bolting the stable door after the horse has bolted' springs to mind. Meanwhile, the many travails of the pier continue like a dystopian soap opera and the (previous) government is slated by the National Audit Office for squandering taxpayers' cash on nearby Northeye camp.

On a more positive note, Hastings' considerably better organised local community-based initiatives include a new assembly on housing and green spaces, the HEART information hub – open and providing advice in the town centre and the Library of Things – who suggest we borrow rather than purchase during national Buy Nothing New month.

In the Arts section you'll find a host of evocative and inspirational black & white photographic images, along with a preview of the various performances associated with the forthcoming Poet Town project.

Meanwhile, in rejuvenated St Andrews Mews, there's something bizarre going on... Find out more in the Community pages.

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News

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advance tickets were sold. Quite apart from the financial risk, the likelihood of adverse weather conditions on the pier on any given day in winter might surely have caused even the most enthusiastic skater to hesitate in committing to a set day and time more than a short time ahead.

The news of the abandonment of the enterprise is likely to be even more disappointing to prospective vendors from the sheds and other outlets on the pier: they, it seems, were being enticed to stock up in expectation of increased footfall during this period. Over the past weeks of mostly leaden skies, the pier has become – with the waves lapping beneath – a virtual ghost ship.

LICENCE AMENDMENTS CHALLENGED

In a separate development, Hastings Borough Council (HBC) has revealed that Mr Wolf, the Designated Premises Supervisor (DPS) under the events licence granted to the pier, is making a formal legal appeal against the council's decisions to remove him and to modify the licence conditions. At its meet-

ing on 2 September HBC's licensing sub-committee, chaired by Cllr Andy Batsford, heard a series of complaints raised by SECAmb (the South East Coast Ambulance Service) that events were being held at the pier which regularly breached public safety conditions. They upheld these complaints, many of which were admitted by the barrister representing Mr Wolf and the freehold owner Sheikh Gulzar, and issued a revised set of conditions. However, Mr Wolf's appeal to Hastings Magistrates seems to have been accepted by the council as putting on hold both his removal as DPS and the implementation of all new conditions.

On further enquiry to HBC's legal services department, it was revealed that, due to a backlog in the processes of the Hastings court, appeals of this sort "can currently take up to 12 months for an initial administrative hearing." Even the receipt of an automated response takes, in HBC's experience, "a wait of approximately two months before the correspondence will be looked at." In the meantime, the council has not even been fur-

nished with the grounds of appeal.

PLANNING APPLICATION STALLED

Not only is the licensing issue on hold; the application by Sheikh Abid Gulzar, owner of the pier, for fresh listed building consent and planning permission, issued two months ago, has also stalled.

His plan to erect a new pavilion building on the eastern (left-hand) side to match the block on the western (right-hand) side, which currently accommodates the Casa de Pier restaurant at the front of the pier, had the support in principle of HBC's Conservation Officer, Steve Tyson.

However, in a document lodged on the planning file last month, Mr Tyson pointed to numerous errors in the drawings submitted on Mr Gulzar's behalf which would have to be corrected. He also observed that the five-year permissions given respectively for 12 kiosks erected in 2016 and for five more Skinners sheds installed in March 2019 have both expired, that they are thus now unauthorised, and should all be removed. Failure to remove them should be referred to HBC's enforcement department unless a retrospective application is made to retain them.

Mr Tyson also clearly opposed Mr Gulzar's proposal to festoon the pier entrance and the twin pavilions with gold paint, describing it as "at odds with the local colour palette...[there was] no clear and convincing justification for introducing such an ostentatious and uncharacteristic colour". A plan to introduce solar panels to the roof slopes of the pavilions was also opposed as having "a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the wider conservation area".

The Council for British Archaeology subsequently lodged comments echoing those of Mr Tyson. Dr Alison Edwards, listed buildings caseworker, concluded: "In its current form, the application does not provide sufficient information to demonstrate that the required 'great weight' has been given to the heritage asset's conservation...If revised documents are not provided, we recommend that this application is refused".

Last Monday (18 November) the planning application was marked on HBC's online file as "Decided – Non Determination". The inference must be that Mr Gulzar was persuaded to withdraw it in its current form before it was rejected outright.

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR A PREMISES LICENSE UNDER THE GAMBLING ACT 2005

Notice is hereby given that **Coastal Amusements Limited** of the following address: **Rotunda House, Unit H Concept Court, Shearway Business Park, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 4RG** is applying for a Bingo Premises License under section 159 of the Gambling Act 2005.

The application relates to the following premises:
The Deluxe, 2-6 Pelham Place, Hastings, TN34 3AD

The application has been made to: **Hastings Borough Council, Licensing Department, Muriel Matters House,**

Breeds PI, Hastings, TN34 3UY.

Information about the application is available from the licensing authority, including the arrangements for viewing the details of the application. Any of the following persons may make representations in writing to the licensing authority about the application:

- A person who lives sufficiently close to the premises to be likely to be affected by the authorised activities
- A person who has business interests that might be

affected by the authorised activities

- A person who represents someone in any of the above two categories.

Anyone who wishes to make representations regarding this application must give notice in writing to: Hastings Borough Council, Licensing Department, Muriel Matters House, Breeds PI, Hastings, TN34 3UY or by email to: licensing@hastings.gov.uk

Representations must be received no later than **02/12/2024.**

HASTINGS TIDES

DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON
FRI 22 NOV	H 2:57am	L 9:52am	H 3:28pm	L 10:22pm	7:25	4:01	
SAT 23 NOV	H 3:53am	L 10:53am	H 4:38pm	L 11:28pm	7:26	4:00	THIRD
SUN 24 NOV	H 5:01am	L 12:06pm	H 6:03pm		7:28	4:00	
MON 25 NOV	L 0:43am	H 6:19am	L 1:19pm	H 7:13pm	7:30	3:59	
TUES 26 NOV	L 1:49am	H 7:26am	L 2:19pm	H 8:07pm	7:31	3:58	
WED 27 NOV	L 2:44am	H 8:18am	L 3:09pm	H 8:53pm	7:32	3:57	
THURS 28 NOV	L 3:30am	H 9:02am	L 3:52pm	H 9:31pm	7:34	3:56	
FRI 29 NOV	L 4:11am	H 9:43am	L 4:31pm	H 10:06pm	7:35	3:56	
SAT 30 NOV	L 4:52am	H 10:17am	L 5:10pm	H 10:39pm	7:37	3:55	
SUN 1 DEC	L 5:29am	H 10:49am	L 5:46pm	H 11:09pm	7:38	3:54	NEW
MON 2 DEC	L 6:06am	H 11:20am	L 6:22pm	H 11:43pm	7:39	3:54	
TUES 3 DEC	L 6:41am	H 11:54am	L 6:55pm		7:41	3:53	
WED 4 DEC	H 0:19am	L 7:16am	H 12:31pm	L 7:29pm	7:42	3:53	
THURS 5 DEC	H 1:00am	L 7:51am	H 1:14pm	L 8:06pm	7:43	3:52	

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



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Southern Water Plans for Hastings Evoke Sceptical Response

BY PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

In the week when Southern Water unveiled “ambitious, multi-million pound investment plans” to upgrade water infrastructure and quality across Hastings, Moody’s, the global rating agency, downgraded the privatised water company’s credit rating to “junk”, citing a “history of material operational and financial underperformance”, pushing the heavily indebted utility to the verge of default.

The two announcements highlight the contrasting views of Southern Water. On one side, a company

that consistently promises significant service improvements, while on the other, the all-too-familiar reality of poor service delivery and financial fragility.

Southern Water is controlled by the Australian-based Macquarie Asset Management. It is among the UK’s most indebted water companies, having accrued debts of more than £6bn since it was privatised debt-free in 1989. On the other hand its CEO, Lawrence Gosden, draws an annual salary of close to half a million pounds, topped up with a bonus of £183,000, which with other benefits and pension contributions saw him pocket over £700,000 last year.

Meanwhile its disastrous performance in Hastings over recent years has been catalogued regularly in HIP: two major floods of the town centre; continual sewage discharges into the sea, as well as into people’s homes and gardens, and water outages leaving thousands of residents having to rely on bottled water for several days at a time.

RESILIENCE

A £40m “resilience case” has been put to Ofwat, the water regulator. The plan aims to improve service levels in all three key areas of recent default: water cleanliness and sewage; flooding; and water outages. The proposals include improvements to water supply works at Beauport and Brede, refurbishment of reservoir pumps and valves at the Darwell site, and upgrades to the main water supply pipe which connects it to Brede. They will also include a new reservoir at Newgate and installation of 25km of new water mains and associated pressure management technology in the Hastings area, along with the refurbishment of 500 metres of critical sewers, with planned upgrades of Rock-a-Nore and Galley Hill pumping stations, plus actions to better manage surface water chal-

lenges at Alexandra Park to lessen risk of flooding. There are to be ongoing works to improve bathing water quality with accelerated investment plans to improve storm overflow performance in Bexhill and Hastings.

PUBLIC MEETING

The company held a public meeting in Muriel Matters House last Monday (11 November), attended by Southern Water’s senior management team, to unveil these plans. Making the key presentation, Mr Gosden promised that they would “transform water quality over the coming decades”. He said his company has been working closely with the local community, Hastings Borough Council and other partners, in putting together “this important action plan”, adding that he was “confident that it will live up to our customers’ expectations.”

But councillors who turned up to the presentation were far from placated. Former Council Leader Paul Barnett dismissed the investment plan as nothing more than a “shopping list of what was affordable and realistic”, failing to address “what investment Hastings actually needs.” Cllr Helen Kay expressed her concerns that much of the work

to improve storm overflows was not due to begin until 2027. Cllr Sorrell Marlow-Eastwood suggested that Southern Water’s priority to install smart meters was for the benefit of the company, while deflecting resources away from making improvement to the wider infrastructure of the town.

Councillors from across the party political spectrum criticised the company for failing to offer adequate compensation to citizens who have been negatively impacted. Cllr John Cannan captured the mood of the meeting when he said there was a widespread lack of trust, with the company repeatedly claiming to have fixed major problems whilst walking away with its fingers crossed hoping the solutions work.

Southern Water’s plans for Hastings are in fact dependent on Ofwat approving its 2025-30 business plan, which proposes that a £7.8bn investment be funded by a sharp rise in bills for consumers. A decision by the water regulator is due on 19 December, and its approval is by no means guaranteed. The Labour Government has made it clear it wants Ofwat to be much tougher with the water companies than it has been in previous years.

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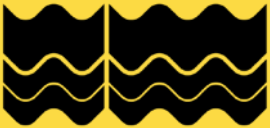
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Home Office Slated Over Northeye Purchase

HUGH SULLIVAN

A year ago we reported (in HIP 239: £9m Private Profit Revealed) that when the Home Office bought the former prison site of Northeye on the edge of Bexhill in September 2023 it paid £15.3m to the vendors, a Bexhill-based private finance enterprise. Only 13 months previously, this outfit, Brockwell Group Bexhill LLP (BGB), had themselves bought it for £6.31m from the UAE government (who had been using it for some unexplained military training purposes until around five years ago). The onward sale to the Home Office thus netted BGB a profit of virtually £9m with no outlay.

Last week a report released by the National Audit Office, having made internal investigations into the Home Office's procedures, concluded that

its purchase was made after "cutting corners", and "mak[ing] a series of poor decisions. This resulted in it purchasing a site that was unsuitable for [its] original purpose, and it paying more for it than it needed to."

The NAO report refers to "established processes" being dispensed with, and to failure to undertake a full assessment of necessary remediation, despite awareness of the risk of contamination both to the existing buildings and to the surrounding ground from asbestos-containing materials on the site.

WHATEVER THE COST

An initial Planning Appraisal completed in February 2023 had highlighted this contamination risk and recommended supplementary investigation. However, it seems that the Home Office was by that stage determined to go ahead, whatever the cost. In December 2022, prime

minister Rishi Sunak told Parliament that the government was working to end the use of hotels for the housing of asylum seekers "as quickly as possible". And in January 2023 a group of civil servants and Conservative ministers, including Robert Jenrick – then immigration minister, more recently losing rival to Kemi Badenoch for leadership of the party – decided to fast-track the Northeye purchase as one of a number of sites to be used for their alternative accommodation.

In March 2023 it was Mr Jenrick who publicly announced the intention to develop the site for this purpose.

Initially it was suggested that no detention would be involved, with up to 1,200 adult male residents who had arrived on small boats from across the Channel free to come and go. The plan sparked vigorous protests both from local resident groups opposing the accommodation of asy-



Former Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick with Rishi Sunak

lum seekers on principle and from *Stand Up To Racism* campaigners who regard the site as wholly unfit for any human habitation. By May, the Home Office were saying that it would be used as a detention centre. However, although the purchase was completed in September 2023, no remedial work went ahead, and there was subsequent silence from Suella Braverman's Home Office team, as they pursued (to no ultimate avail) their Rwanda deportation scheme.

The change of government in July has brought no clarity to the site's future. Newly appointed Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced on 21 August "a major surge in immigration enforcement and returns activity" and stated that this would entail "increased

detention capacity". However, no indication was given that this either would or wouldn't include renewal of plans for accommodation at Northeye.

The fact is that, notwithstanding the shortcomings exposed by the NAO in the purchase process, the Home Office retains the responsibility to use the site for public benefit. Rother District Council's Local Plan of 2019 allocated it for the development of 140 homes, 30% of which were to be affordable housing, along with sports fields and a children's play area. That doesn't seem to have taken account of ground contamination either. But £15.3m is a lot to have paid from the public purse for a site that remains in wholesale dereliction.

SEASON OF AWARDS



Trustees of RHNHR Friends

KING'S AWARD

It has been announced from Buckingham Palace that the *Friends of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve* have been honoured with a King's Award for Voluntary Service.

The Harbour Nature Reserve is managed by the Sussex Wildlife Trust (SWT), but the award recognises the outstanding contribution that the Friends have made in supporting and developing the Reserve and its wildlife for the benefit of local and wider interests.

Over recent years they have helped to improve visitor access and facilities, including raising a generous contribution of £1.5million towards the award-winning Discovery Centre that opened in 2021. Acting in concert with the SWT, they made other significant contributions including supporting the purchase of Castle Water, transforming it from a gravel-dredging site to a wildlife-rich reed bed, funding five wheelchair-accessible bird hides at the reserve and delivering a variety of talks, walks and events. Visitor numbers have risen over the past 20 years from

100,000 to 400,000 per year.

Chris Corrigan, CEO of SWT said: "We are thrilled that the Friends have been selected for this well-earned and prestigious Award. They are an exceptional group of volunteers who have given an extraordinary amount of time and financial support over many years to the management of the reserve."

Equivalent to an MBE, the King's Award is the highest given to local voluntary groups in the UK, and it is awarded for life.

A local award ceremony will take place early next year, with the Lord-Lieutenant for East Sussex, the King's representative, presenting the Friends with a certificate and a commemorative crystal.

MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION AWARD

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery has won a Best Small Museum Project Award for its partnership project with the Refugee Buddy Project, *Illuminating Invisible Histories: Flavours Without Borders*.

The project sought to raise awareness of refugee experiences in Hastings and St Leonards. Two dinner parties took place at the museum, where 20 participants brought homemade food and personal objects. Through food and facilitated conversation, an inter-generational and multinational community shared their untold stories of their culture and life in Hastings. Their insights were captured on film for viewing during Refugee Week in the summer. Alongside the film screening, the guests' objects were displayed at the

museum along with testimony about their journeys as told through their personal objects.

The project will continue to develop through 2024/25 with two 20-day placements by members of the community, working with museum staff on reinterpreting the gallery's permanent display about life in Hastings.

Fiona Slater, Head of Access and Equity at London's Science Museum, one of the four judges, said: "We absolutely loved this inspiring project – it worked with Refugee Buddy Project to bring people together to tell their stories of migration over shared food...to highlight, as they so beautifully put it, that we have more in common than divides us."

Alice Roberts-Pratt, Museum & Collections Manager at Hastings Museum, said: "We're immensely proud to have won this prestigious award, it really reflects the hard work the team have put in to ensure Hastings Museum & Art Gallery is a welcoming place for everyone. Our work with the Refugee Buddy Project is incredibly valuable, and we are so grateful to Rossana Leal, her team, and the participants for sharing their personal stories with us and being so open to collaboration."

GOOD FOOD AWARD

La Bella Vista restaurant on St Leonards seafront has won a Blue Ribbon award from the national Good Food Award website. Awards are bestowed according to customer feedback, online reviews and voting on nominated establishments.

Restaurateur Aldo Esposito opened *La Bella Vista* in 2015.

Community Assembly on Housing And Green Spaces

CHARMIAN KENNER

Standing Up For Nature (SU4N) Hastings & Rother, a network of local nature groups, is holding a Community Assembly on *How Can Hastings Housing Policy Protect the Environment?* The event is free and open to all, on Saturday 1 December at Central Hall from 2 pm to 5 pm.

The Assembly follows on from SU4N's October event *Protect Our Green Spaces*, which provided information on biodiversity surveys, opposing planning applications, and alternatives to new-build housing. Jane Ripley of SU4N said: "Julia Hilton, Leader of the Council, has asked us to suggest creative solutions to address Hastings' desperate housing shortage whilst preserving green spaces. We decided to hold a Community Assembly where everyone can have their say."

The Assembly will focus on the Hastings Local Plan currently being formulated, which sets out Council policies on building development and land use for the next 20 years. Among sites earmarked for new-build housing in the Plan is an area of ancient woodland at Sandrock Bends on the Ridge. Another site scheduled for development is Horntye Sports Fields, which, according to Sarah Ward

of campaign group Save Horntye is a key wildlife corridor and part of Hastings green infrastructure. The area around Summerfields Leisure Centre is designated for a mixed-use residential development, but Jo Howell of SU4N commented: "Not only does this site include green space with many trees, but it would involve moving the ambulance station as well as the Leisure Centre."

Hastings Housing Alliance and local housing campaigners have been invited to the Assembly to engage in joined-up thinking about alternative ways of providing more housing. Grace Lally of Housing Rebellion said: "New-build housing is presented as more energy-efficient, but that ignores the carbon emissions from construction. If the council is committed to a Local Plan that tackles climate change then it needs to prioritise refurbishing existing buildings to make them warm, dry and low-energy."

One area for debate at the Assembly will be whether empty offices and retail space in the town centre can be repurposed for housing. This could revive Hastings whilst saving green spaces vital for nature, health and wellbeing.

Registration for the Assembly is on Eventbrite or email UNITE4nature@proton.me.

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

✉Letter

NUCLEAR WASTE FROM DUNGENESS

Dear HIP

I write in response to your lead story in HIP 264 *New Nuclear for Dungeness?* In my food business career I have had some experience of nuclear waste problems and it may help to share them here.

In 1970 I had a macrobiotic restaurant called 'Seed' in London near Paddington Station. Every other week, Howell's, a department store in Cardiff, would send by rail freshly-harvested 'laver' seaweed which we used to replace 'nori', the Japanese seaweed we had previously imported from Japan for various dishes. Then the deliveries suddenly stopped and I called up Howells to find out why. "Oh, the men from the Ministry said we had to stop selling it because it was contaminated with radioactive waste from Sellafield." That waste had accumulated on the floor of the Irish Sea, and Irish fishermen had been complaining about weird mutations in the fish they were landing. The seaweed had the same problem with 'radionuclides', which is the general term for the radioactive bits in nuclear power station waste-dumping that break down. Altogether there are an estimated 70,000 tonnes of radionuclide-rich nuclear waste in the seas surrounding the UK that we have dumped there in our quest for cheap energy since the 1950s. One of them, Radon-222, is the second leading cause of lung cancer.

In 1986 we were concerned about radionuclides in hazelnuts from Turkey after we saw a map of how the waste from Chernobyl was carried southwards by the wind. (My Whole Earth nut butter business used Turkish hazelnuts in our '3 Nut Butter,' along with peanuts and almonds). We bought the necessary testing equipment and found that samples of hazel nuts exceeded the EU safe limit for imports of 600 becquerels per kilo. We also found that there were much higher levels on north-facing hillsides in Turkey and much lower levels on south-facing hillsides. So the levels of radionuclides were much higher on the nuts from the hills that caught the full impact of radioactive rain from Chernobyl. The simple solution was to mix the high level nuts with low level nuts to get down to the 'safe' limit. At that point we found an-

other source for hazelnuts but I cannot speak for other companies who used Turkish nuts.

I still have the equipment that I used to measure radionuclides but there is now more modern, less cumbersome equipment that can do the job. At one stage I considered testing fish from Rye Bay but just decided to personally avoid bottom-dwellers like flounder and sole. Until the London Dumping Convention, which banned all sea dumping from 2006, there was no guarantee that nuclear waste would not end up in the sea and in its products. Given the long life of nuclear waste, it will be centuries before the seas see a reduction in nucleotide levels.

Before a renaissance of new nuclear at Dungeness proceeds, it might be a good idea to see how much waste is buried in Romney Marsh and what the radionuclide levels are in Rye Bay and the adjoining waters reaching into the English Channel. What's the point of giving up smoking to avoid lung cancer if you can get it from going for a swim or having fish and chips? If the local authorities would like to borrow my equipment to measure this, they are welcome. No more nuclear until existing safety concerns are properly addressed.

Craig Sams

✉Letter

HASTINGS COMMONS – A RESPONSE

Dear HIP

We are writing in response to Paul McLaughlin's article *Town Deal boost for Hastings Commons* in HIP 263. It quotes Philip Oakley as saying "The Observer Building has already received £5m of Town Deal money".

We recognise and welcome scrutiny and questioning, but the facts do matter and we need to clarify these:

Hastings Commons was awarded a total of £4M, not £5M as quoted, from the Town Deal involving three buildings - Eagle House, 12 Claremont and the Observer Building. In the four years since the original submission, and the two since approval, a lot has happened.

This first development phase included the Ground Floor and Mezzanine at The Observer Building, now complete. It included developing a residential shell and

services for the 2nd and 3rd floor, but did not include funding for final fit out, which is needed to make homes.

12 Claremont and Eagle House are under renovation and will be completed in spring 2025 as planned. The majority of the Towns Fund money is going into 12 Claremont, a property held by Hastings Commons Community Land Trust on a long lease from East Sussex County Council.

Twelve new homes are now being developed in the Observer Building with support from the Town Living Fund. At least eight will go to people moving out of temporary accommodation, nominated by Hastings Borough Council. The rest will be allocated to people who have a genuine need for an affordable home and are at risk of ending up in temporary accommodation. We don't ask for wage slips or guarantors, our rents are set at 33% of median local income and capped so that they only rise with inflation. The headline states a "boost for Hastings Commons" - this is importantly a boost for affordable town centre housing in a time of acute need. Hastings Commons' proposal was the only one on the table.

We have a FAQs page on our website which answers questions that come up, is regularly updated, and includes details about the Town Living Fund award.

We hold public Q & A events, twice-yearly events for anyone to ask questions or find out more about us. We welcome readers to come along. Further information is also on the FAQs page.

All of our work is overseen by an elected trustee board, independent audits and reported at our annual shareholder AGM. Hastings Commons CLT has over 600 shareholders from the local community in and around Hastings. Every member has a say in the continued stewardship of the Commons with the shared goal of bringing neglected buildings into working community assets. You can become a shareholder and have your say for as little as £1.

We look forward to working with our shareholders to continue the physical regeneration of buildings in a neglected area of the town centre and to providing programmes which meet under-served needs across diverse communities in Hastings.

Hastings Commons Board of Trustees

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UK Disability History Month

PENNY PEPPER

As I write, I wonder how many of you know that, by the time you read this piece, it will be UK Disability History Month (UKDHM – 14 Nov-20 Dec). It makes me, and other disabled activists, very sad, if not frustrated, that it is still so unknown and that we are so underrepresented as a marginalised group.

Yet I am pleased to announce that on 3 December, myself, friends and allies are running an event at Hastings Museum and Art Gallery (HMAG), to celebrate UKDHM and to coincide with the UN International Day of Disabled People, which takes place on the same date.

UKDHM has been around since 2010, under the guidance of leading international disability advocate Richard Rieser. We were near neighbours once, and he's good friends with Jeremy Corbyn. Jeremy, of course, is a great advocate for disability equality, and one of the few politicians who understands the liberating Social Model of Disability (for more understanding of this check out my article *Who the Hell are the Disabled?* – my first column in Byline Times). This model takes inspiration from other marginalised groups that have fought for equality in the past – and present – campaigning for barriers to be removed and negative stereotypes challenged.

The theme of this year's UKDHM is Disability Livelihood and Employment, looking at the many untruths that target us as scroungers and benefit cheats, while in fact throughout history, disabled people have always found ways to thrive and to beat those stereotypes. With this event, we hope to remind our

non-disabled friends and allies that everyone has value outside of their economic productiveness. Needs and autonomy must come above perceived ideas of 'ability'.

UKDHM brings focus to the many challenges we face, but it is also a month to celebrate our history in general. Our town is not short of great allies for its disabled people. We have fantastic organisations, such as Project Art Works (a collective of neurodiverse artists and activists, shortlisted for the Turner Prize in 2021), Arts on Prescription (community engagement for mental wellbeing and social engagement) inclusive community dance group, Dance Hastings and the fabulous Eggtooth, 'the South Coast's leading creative wellbeing [mental health] service for children, young people, parents, and professionals'.

However, as I've said in previous columns, the town may struggle to reach decent levels of access and inclusivity for disabled people, but there is a growing willingness for this to change. The presence of dis-

abled people within Hastings and St Leonards naturally goes back a long way – we have always been here. From Poor Law and census records detailing the 'infirm and lame' to the Victorian house in the street where I live, revealed as one of the first co-ed schools for disabled children in a 1921 census project. Better known are the chronically ill consumptives who came for the restorative seaside air in their thousands, with one friend discovering that a young man who once lived in her Victorian-era terraced house was an 'invalid chair driver'.

The disability experience is everywhere – and we, along with others, believe we must all work together respectfully to improve the position of disabled people from all communities in our town.

Look out for more details of our HMAG event released soon across all social media platforms and beyond, to celebrate with us and raise the profile of our month, and our day.



JJ WALLER



ALEX HEDGER



HONA MCGARRY



ALEX HEDGER

Something Bizarre at St Andrews Mews

ROD WEBB

It's not often that my daughter tells me what I should visit, but she was insistent. "You must go and see 'Bizarre BUT True!'. It's so good, and the kids really enjoyed it," she said. So I popped down to St Andrews Mews, off Queen's Road.

The Mews itself seemed to have had a makeover since I was last there about a year ago, more of a sense of coherence. But then I met Liam outside, playing the 'Barker' in a three-cornered hat, and I was dragged into the weird world of

Alex Hedger, owner and mastermind of the 'Bizarre BUT True! Oddities Museum & Bizarre Bar.

I learned about how Alex, previously a psychotherapist, had been collecting strange objects and artefacts for many years with the idea that one day he could open a themed attraction to display them. The opportunity to rent space and make the dream a reality had presented itself with the opening of Owen's in the town centre, but that, as we know, ended in tears for so many of those involved (see *Owens Out, Attractions Withdrawn* HIP Issue 225).

With the museum being left

homeless after the venue's closure, a totally different, but in the end much more suitable, site presented itself. With a lot of hard work and the help of Liam, the museum was rebuilt, bigger and better, at its new home in St Andrews Mews.

I came back with my wife to enjoy the whole bizarre experience in the context of the Mews at night. Good choice. We had a chance to grab some delicious food at 3 Souls in a Bowl before setting off for the unexpected.

And it was - utterly unexpected. Such museums can sometimes come across as a bit tacky, but this had been lovingly put together with

great expertise and an understanding of the audience. Straight off, you were engaged with a choice of which 'incongruous' hat Alex (or sometimes Liam) should wear as the 'master of ceremonies'.

Fully primed, amongst other things, to choose our favourite exhibit, we set off in search of the weird and wonderful. I won't describe the exhibits, only say that they were arranged in a way to keep attention throughout and engage any age or interest. We travelled through themed areas such as a Tropical Jungle, a Space Capsule and even an Ancient Egyptian Mummy's Tomb!

We often hear how the modern-day online 'assault' on the senses can't replace studying real things, and I was struck by how our encounters with the bizarre real objects connected with people, places and momentous events and created a whole new dimension and a truly

'immersive' experience involving sounds, smells and even a laser-based simulated game.

The tour of the museum is just the right length. But then, downstairs again, you can buy a drink and browse a whole new section. In December they are also launching their 'Curious Cocktail' evenings on Friday and Saturday nights, where unusual cocktail creations will theatrically come to life with smoke, fire, real explosives and even a severed toe being featured amongst the unusual performances that accompany the drinks.

'Bizarre BUT True!' is apparently number two of 'Things To Do' on the TripAdvisor review platform – second only to Hastings Old Town. No mean feat for such a short space of time! They're generally open Thursdays – Sundays and I'm told their website will launch soon, together with a range of new and exciting things to come.

Christopher Maxwell-Stewart Saved St Leonards

An abridged version of BERNARD MCGINLEY's tribute of Christopher Maxwell-Stewart in Hastings Online Times

The 1960s zeitgeist was for demolition. Old was boring. New was better. Neophiliacs were in charge. In St Leonards-on-Sea, Christopher Maxwell-Stewart, who has died aged 88, saw it differently.

London lost the Euston Arch and the Coal Exchange. St Leonards lost Quarry House, built by James Burton in 1830. Other parts of pre-Victorian St Leonards were also damaged and threatened.

The short-termism and short-sightedness of this was clear to CMS, who advocated a 'long life, loose fit' approach to the reuse of old buildings. As a boy he had seen the bombed ruins of St Leonard's

church on the seafront, another James Burton building.

In 1945, however, his widowed mother started a guest house at 5 The Mount, once lived in by Herbert Spencer, the Victorian social theorist who coined 'survival of the fittest'. He was also able to attend the Uplands County Secondary Technical School nearby (also known as Archery Villas, facing the Archery Ground).

He went on to Hastings Grammar School and then to Queen Mary College, London University, on a scholarship to study civil engineering. There he became Vice-President of the Students Union. As a qualified civil engineer he worked on post-war



DAVE BRUCE

reconstruction at London County Council. He developed his appreciation of architecture in classes at Goldsmiths College, London University.

From the LCC he joined [Ove] Arup & Partners. When the French-Swiss architect Le Corbusier came to lunch, Christopher Maxwell-Stewart was constructively at the table too as a French-speaking builder.

Several times Ove Arup sent him to Nigeria to work on projects including bridges and roads and cocoa sheds. By then he was married to the highly accomplished artist Prue Theobalds and there were young children to consider. Conditions were poor and the family was sent home. CMS joined them when civil war broke out in Nigeria 1967.

Back home, the damage to St Leonards was continuing. The authorities were *blasé* about demolition of distinguished old buildings. Rosemount at the top of Archery Road was flattened. The Archery

Ground had a College of Arts and Technology plonked on it.

Threats to the heart of St Leonards led Christopher to be part of the foundation of The Mount Preservation Society. Soon this became the Burtons' St Leonards Society. In 1968 he created a 'Let's Save Burtons' St Leonards' Exhibition, with co-founder Cecil Bacon, the nationally known illustrator.

Publicity brought results. With a quiet but determined manner, Christopher was willing and able to enrol some big names in support of the defence of St Leonards.

The consensus grew that St Leonards-on-Sea was an unusual and exceptional place, a purpose-built resort of national importance. Christopher and supporters dealt with threats to Allegria (Quarry Hill) and Gloucester Lodge (St Leonard's Gardens) from Hastings Borough Council. He was also involved in saving Manor House in Bexhill Old Town and found the energy and time to do an MSc at City University.

In the 2000s, CMS was involved with STAG (Save the Archery Ground). In the campaign for conservation of the Burton Tomb, he provided drawings and specifications. He was also involved in restoration work in the East Colonnade

at Philpot's department store.

Always conscious of the less fortunate, CMS worked to help the local homeless through the Snowflake Trust. He was also involved with the Emmaus charity and supported Warming Up The Homeless. He was of the firm view that he did not want thanks for what he had done. Even so, it remains incontestable that Christopher Maxwell-Stewart was a major benefactor of St Leonards, its people and buildings, its past and future.

However busy he was, his knowledge of St Leonards only seemed to grow: in writing for instance on James Haliburton the Egyptologist (the son of James Burton), or in advising the Decimus Burton Society on its formation, and contributing to its journal too. He stood down as chair of the Burtons' St Leonards Society only in 2023, for the second time. In October 2024 he attended his wife's talk at the Royal Victoria Hotel on the wreck of the *Amsterdam* at Bulverhythe and seemed quite well. At the end of the month Christopher Maxwell-Stewart died unexpectedly, at home in St Leonards, in the presence of his wife and family.

For full tribute visit hastingsonline-times.co.uk.

A Drop-In Service with a HEART

HEART's Community Info Hub is slap bang in the middle of town in what used to be Hastings' courthouse and now the Town Hall, still with its public gallery and, it is rumoured, cells underneath. The Info hub grew in response to a need for a place where people could find information about support and services – plus actually talk to a 'real person'.

One of the first things HEART did when they took over was to re-vamp the space make it warm and friendly so people felt comfortable. The volunteers helped paint the lofty walls, new carpets were laid – and then laid again after the floods – plants were bought and there is a sofa area as well as the information desks. When you walk in now you get a sense of being welcome and at ease.

WHAT IS THE HUB?

Firstly, it's a place where people can find information about support and services available in Hastings. This could be advice about energy bills, housing issues or coping with debt, but people also might pop in because they need a bustimetable printed off, a leaflet about hearing-aid maintenance drop-ins or

just to look at the social activities noticeboard.

The hub is a drop-in service so you don't need an appointment, and as things increasingly go digital it can help with that too, whether it's looking up stuff online, filling in forms, resetting passwords or using the computers and free WiFi.

Secondly, it's home to lots of other organisations and services. Macmillan has built their first community space (in the country!) where you can find out about cancer support with their volunteers, the eclectic Library of Things offers you the chance to borrow useful stuff and the invaluable Citizens Advice 1066 run a drop-in once a week. Plus, One You East Sussex runs free health and lifestyle coaching twice a week and Women's Voice and Care for the Carers run pop-up drop-in sessions.

A COMMUNITY RESOURCE

The Info Hub also has affordable, hireable spaces for community services and events. For example, the consultation rooms have been hired by ESRA (East Sussex Recovery Alliance), used for NHS Health checks and for 1-2-1 meetings by Afri-Co-Lab.



SHELLEY FELDMAN

Most importantly, the space is a resource for the people of Hastings, somewhere to get that 'in person' connection, take the weight off and have a cup of tea (if you're lucky). Community Info Hub Manager Maria says: "We can be the person that can chat to someone when they need it. The human element of it – being at the centre of the community."

And last but certainly not least, you can become an Info Hub volunteer. The Info Hub team are so dedicated, industrious and passionate about what they do – reflecting the spirit of Hastings.

The Community Info Hub is open Wednesday to Friday 10am-4pm and Saturday 10am-1pm. HEART stands for Hastings Emergency Response Action Team. Check out the HEART website at hastingsheart.com

st michael's hospice

Lights of Love

Remember a loved one this December.

Dedicate a star and watch the tree lights shine bright.

Sunday 1st - Sunday 8th December

For more information call 01424 456396 or visit stmichaelshospice.com/event/lights

Registered charity number 288462

Remembering Glenys

WoH! members and the Wishing Tree House Writers' group share their thoughts about Glenys Jacques who died on 6 November: artist, writer, craftswoman, teacher, musician and founder of Women of Hastings!

Glenys was the inspiration behind creating a group of women writers who would work collaboratively to write articles for and about women. She had a formidable intellect and a wide, sensitive understanding of the issues facing women, both in the current world and in previous generations, and how these issues inform the day-to-day experiences of women.

Glenys was funny and irreverent and did not suffer fools gladly, but also had a depth of compassion which was evident in the way she stood up for women everywhere. She will be missed but never forgotten for her passionate voice and creative talent. What a woman! – *Gill*

A powerhouse: an inspirational leader from the moment I met her when she founded the Women of Hastings page in HIP. She put a call out for novice writers, and I attended. She was a charismatic and passionate woman who stood up for causes close to her heart. She had many interests and talents. A pioneer and a funny one at that! She was so likeable and determined. Her passing is a huge loss for all those who knew her and have been inspired by her. She most certainly left a legacy. – *Angie*



Funny and fierce, talented and clever. Knowing Glenys was an experience. I only knew her for a few months, but her impact will be long-lasting. Entering her wild and beautiful garden was to be in a different space, a different land... books abound in her house full of interesting objects, art, musical notation and fluffy dogs. Most of all, I will miss her energy which infused

every conversation. Always interesting, always challenging...

Glenys Jacques... unforgettable. – *Annie*

I first met Glenys several years ago and found her resolve and energy inspiring but a little scary: she insisted on teaching me to play the drums – one of her many talents. Her home was a chaotic, but welcoming space – where so many peo-

ple went to talk, laugh or cry: full of dogs, wheelbarrows, people, plants, books, art and music.

I ditched my dreams of becoming a drummer, but I came to understand Glenys better over the years. Everything she did was driven by a longing for women to discover their voices and creativity, helping them develop the confidence to express themselves and be more visible in a world largely dominated by male narratives. – *Fiona*

During our far-too-short friendship she brought multiple opportunities for me to grow and expand and 'face my demons'. Some were intentional, others unintentional; some were professional, personal or creative, others psychological and spiritual. Glenys was an artist and craftswoman many times over, from fine woodwork, gardening and adding a storey on her own house, to writing, filmmaking, painting and playing music and writing songs. A formidable foe but a fearless friend – I don't expect to meet many more like her. – *Emily*

The Wishing Tree House women's workshops were a nurturing space, created purely to give women a platform to explore their creativity. Glenys knew how to hold this space with almost tangible encouragement and kindness; her gift to local women, which undoubtedly changed lives. – *Julia*

When she listened and gave feedback on my writing, Glenys offered encouragement and would challenge me. I think this is a defining feature of Wishing Tree House and the atmosphere she created: giving

nurture and motivation without treading lightly.

We went to a writing festival where she spoke out, asked important questions and was cheered by the audience. That was Glenys. I'm glad I got to spend time talking, thinking and writing with her. – *Claire*

I was grateful to have met and worked with Glenys earlier this year on her Wishing Tree House project – an amazing and supportive place – and I met some lovely people in the summer. My heart goes out to those closest to Glenys. What I felt Glenys supported in people wholeheartedly was that your voice is the most important thing for yourself and for others, so use it! – *Samantha*

Many would covet Glenys' innate skill: the knack of gathering people, to do things for one cause or another. Over coffee at Fika, I agreed to help with the caveat that it wouldn't be until next month. Clear? Yes – but somehow the following week, I was at her table doing what I couldn't yet accommodate!

Glenys gathered writers at various stages of literary confidence for the Wishing Tree House Writers' group. She and other facilitators shared expertise, and we shared our work, often for the first time publicly. These supportive Sunday sessions included quirkiness, realisations, humour – and trauma; followed by an encouraging demand to continue writing!

A special memory was the mini 'salon' in the hospice room, with her tapping an improvised drum whilst berating musician friends for not practising enough! Glenys: an abiding 'force of nature'. – *Laurelle*

Think Lend Not Spend this November

November is National Buy Nothing Month and Umbrella Sussex is ready to help with practical alternatives to buying new, writes **SHELLEY FELDMAN**

Umbrella Sussex is a community group whose volunteers run Hastings Library of Things and Make and Mend Bexhill and Beyond, co-aligned projects that promote Lending and Mending.

Hastings Library of Things is a subscription library for stuff: for a small annual fee members can borrow over 100 things for free, includ-

ing power tools, camping equipment, even a trombone! Make and Mend fights against built in obsolescence with weekly *Fixing Fridays*.

Founder and fixer-in-chief Christine says: "We might not put money into peoples' pockets, but we definitely help keep it there. We have mended toasters, printers, even a seriously clogged up vacuum clean-

er, all things otherwise headed for landfill." Make and Mend is a skills share project and will try to get you involved in your repair, especially if it's a sewing-based fix!

Kerry, Hastings born and bred, has been involved in several grassroots projects over the years and with Hastings Library of Things for just over two and is now the group's Delivery Service coordinator. "You may have seen our e-cargo bike around town, carrying all kinds of unlikely loads, including gazebos and a wheelchair," she says. The bike is also used to deliver the Hastings Independent on alternate Thursdays and is itself available for hire.

The team is based in HEART's Community Info Hub at the old Town Hall, opposite Priory Meadow Shopping Centre. They're open 12pm-4pm Fridays for borrowing and fixing, and 10am-1pm Saturdays for borrowing.

As a grand finale to *Buy Nothing New Month*, Umbrella Sussex are hosting a *Festive Free Shop*. Opening on Friday 29 November (Black Friday), this is our sixth *Free Shop* and the first in its new home at the Town Hall. We look forward to welcoming old and new free shoppers alike.



Shoppers are asked to bring things they don't want that are of gift giving quality and take whatever they can use or re-gift. There is a maximum donation of one bag per person, but people are welcome whether or not they have anything to bring. Alongside the *Free Shop* there is a small *Free Cafe* with hot

drinks for tired shoppers.



Full details of *Festive Free Shop* and other information can be found on our website at umbrellasussex.org.uk/freeshop.

Counselling Minus

HUGH SULLIVAN reports on how NHS cuts are set to deplete another mental health service

In HIP 263 we reported on the withdrawal of NHS funding from the Eggtooth Project, which provides mental health services to children and youths. It has now emerged that the adult and youth (16+) mental health agency Counselling Plus Community (CPC), which has been offering a wide range of therapeutic interventions to residents of Hastings and Rother over the past 32 years, faces a similar funding cut.

CPC is the largest counselling service in the area, receiving around 800 referrals for individual clients in 2023. It is currently staffed by three administrators, four clinical team members, 12 employed counsellors (all part-time) and 18 volunteers. It receives referrals from GPs, from Health in Mind (the NHS Talking Therapies service), from CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) and many local support services, as well as taking direct cases (word of mouth).

CEO, Verra Papaspyrou, says that the ethos of CPC since 1992 has been to provide its counselling therapies on the basis of need “regardless of the client’s ability to pay for the service they receive”. Clients have always paid what they feel they could afford which “can be as low as zero where required”.

INCOME SOURCES

In the current year 2024-25 the service received a grant of just under £65,000 from the Sussex ICB (Integrated Care Board), which now administers NHS funding throughout Sussex. Short-term grants from the Police & Crime Commissioner, Children in Need, the Big Lottery, The People’s Postcode Society, the Henry Smith Charity and other sources for particular projects have regularly boosted the service’s budget in recent years by more than 200%. However, many of these are dependent on showing evidence of continued funding from the ICB and are directed to specific problem areas – for instance, survivors of suicide and those who are feeling suicidal, survivors of rape, sexual and/or domestic abuse, and those bereaved by suicide. For those afflicted with more general traumas that don’t fit into these categories, the ICB funds are crucial.

In July this year Ms Papaspyrou says she received an email, “out of the blue” from the Head of Strategic Commissioning (Mental Health) at

NHS Sussex. He informed her that the ICB was “exploring what the impact would be” if it discontinued its current level of annual funding.

“No decisions have yet been taken,” he wrote, though he suggested that, as the service has low infrastructure costs (cheaply rented premises in Cambridge Gardens) that “hopefully Counselling Plus would be in a position to continue operating, albeit with lower levels of capacity to deliver activity than before”. He pointed out that there had been no formal funding contract between the ICB and the charity, hence no stipulated notice period for making changes. However, he warned that any anticipated change of budget might have “an effective date of 1 October 2024”.

RESPONSE TO ICB

Ms Papaspyrou arranged an immediate meeting and responded within 11 days with her own impact assessment. She pointed out that, in the short term, many clients were already on their course of therapeutic treatment or on waiting lists expecting to proceed via ICB funding. Furthermore, as soon as ICB core funding was lost, further external support based on this funding may be put at risk.

In the longer term, all clients whose problems did not fall within a specific area covered by project funding would have to pay the full cost. Obviously, many would simply be unable to afford it and would be unable to access professional therapy.

She also pointed out that 18 voluntary counsellors would lose their current placements, thus (at best) delaying their qualification timetable. “Counsellors are able to progress within the profession due to CPC placements which provide exceptional diversity and client presentation which is unachievable elsewhere.”

None of these arguments seem to have held sway with the ICB, save that it was accepted that existing funding should only be withdrawn on six months notice. Then there will be no phased reduction, but a total cut-off. And that seems to be that. Whilst there are ongoing consultations in the county for savings proposals related to Adult Social Care, there has been none of any substance for cuts to mental health funding, despite well-publicised rises in demand across the country.



ALEX GREEN-PEXELS

APPEAL TO MP

Getting no positive response from the ICB, Ms Papaspyrou wrote last month to Hastings & Rye MP Helena Dollimore. She pointed out not only the breadth of services offered by CPC but also its comparative cost effectiveness. Use of ICB funds in 2023 enabled a block of ten sessions for individual clients to be charged at an average of £118 all in. By comparison, she wrote, one session of private counselling locally has an average charge of £50-70.

Ms Dollimore has not as yet made any response, and indeed it’s difficult to see what influence she can bring to bear as an individual MP. The Sussex ICB covers constituencies across Sussex, and all areas are facing apparently unprecedented financial strain. Two weeks ago, Ms Papaspyrou received final confirmation that NHS funding will be terminated at the end of the financial year next March.

Ms Papaspyrou says that CPC is determined to survive the funding

cuts, and that changes have already been implemented to ensure its continuation. It will be looking in the future for private donations as well as larger grants from existing sources.

Recently an ex-client came in to hand over a cheque for a substantial amount. He had had four or five counselling sessions in 2019 and wanted to offer thanks. “If I hadn’t had those sessions with you,” he told Ms Papaspyrou, “I wouldn’t be here any more.”



Friday 29th Nov
12-2
Info Hub Town Hall,
Priory Meadow
Entrance



Festive ReGift



- Bring giftable things you don’t want, take giftable things you can use, drink tea
- All Welcome
- visit website for FAQs, accessibility info, or to offer help



WWW.UMBRELLASUSSEX.ORG.UK/FREESHOP

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF ROD MORRIS

Photohastings is a loose collective – a network of photographers who exhibit together and jointly publish their work. Supporting each other this way, they can take on bigger spaces, share costs, and extend publicity. They have recently held a series of shows at St Andrew's Mews, off Queen Street near the New Town.

One of this talented group is quietly-spoken, articulate Rod Morris, whom I spoke to in his studio on the top floor of a Georgian terraced cottage in West Street, a lesser-known area of the Old Town just behind the seafront. "This is a lovely street," he enthuses. "Do you know it has its own newspaper, *The West Street Chronicle*?" Indeed it has a flamboyant history of smugglers, suffragettes, fascists, druids and Pre-Raphaelites, not necessarily in that order.

It is appropriate that Morris's studio has this diverse and fascinating background, given the exceptional variety and quality of his work. It's small, warm, quaint, and well-organised, and I was privileged to look over past and recent photographs while we talked. He is currently gathering a collection of prints for a show in a London gallery. While he makes his living from film-making, his exceptional collection of personal works covers a huge range of subjects from everywhere – a continuing life history.

"This picture got me started in my career," he told me, showing me the memorable photograph of a bus driver in Egypt. "I won a competition with it, and the prize was a return plane ticket to anywhere in the world and a camera, which I sold." All his photographs are in black and white – "I've had this same Pentax for about 30 years," he goes on, showing me a traditional, non-digital camera. "I use digital for film and commercial jobs, but I

see this as more my personal work, pictures that have stayed with me and still have meaning."

We talk a little about the difference between photojournalism and the art of photography. "I studied photojournalism and just as I'd finished, this guy came in and said 'Objectivity is dead, and subjectivity is everything.' A lot of people were really angry. But I thought, I totally get this. We're affected by our experiences, and to ignore that is madness. Journalism is all about the specifics. But a good enough image that suggests things to the viewer will live longer in the memory."

Supporting this idea, he shows me a series where "We don't know who the subject is, but we can make all sorts of assumptions and can see different stories. I've always liked to ask questions, rather than provide answers." So a poster-sized print of four guys in suits, who look like they might belong to the Yakuza or Cosa Nostra, was taken in San Francisco. They could merely be four businessmen out for a walk on Russian Hill. With the current collection (*Still Films*) he is, though, unusually, submitting written narratives along with the photographs. He shows me the photo with the little girl at the centre, taken in the house of a German musician in Venezuela, and tells me the story.

"I wondered why there was this quality of musician living in that remote place. It turned out that he had had a brief relationship there while travelling, but some time later the woman wrote to him and said that she had become pregnant but wasn't expecting anything of him, just letting him know. He thought long and hard then went out there. They all lived together and they set up this jazz club, but then the woman (now his wife) passed away when the child was still very young.

"I asked whether he had wanted to go back to Germany, and his fam-



Art, Angles, Adventure

VICTORIA KINGHAM talks to photographer and documentary filmmaker Rod Morris

ily. But he said no, he could never leave this house because of the presence of his wife. As we walked into this room, his daughter sat in the hammock, and the light entered the room and suddenly her mother was there. A second later the light had gone, and she was gone as well." There are similar poignant histories relating to a range of photographs taken variously in (for ex-

ample) Venezuela, Cuba, Egypt, San Francisco, England, and New York.

There's a certain angularity of composition, a careful geometry, that seems characteristic of all his work: "Some people say that I have the same shapes in all my pictures" he remarks. One of the dozens of photos I am privileged to see is taken from the middle of the Millennium Bridge, looking towards St



←The award-winning photograph that launched Morris's photographic career, taken on a bus in Luxor
→After The Storm: Seafront, St Leonards



Paul's. A man in a wheelchair has his back to the camera, and the line of his head is centred exactly between the converging lines of the bridge to the centre of St Paul's dome. It's a fine, memorable shot. Asked about the constraints of making a living from photography, he is definitive. "I've always made a living. Most people on my course (photojournalism at UAL: London College of Communication) went on



to do conflict photography. Some of them died. I stayed in London for my final show and happened to knock on the door of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. They were on my doorstep, a little way away from the college." The orchestra liked his photos so much that they exhibited them and had them made into cards. They are still on his client list. After the advent of digital photography, he taught himself how to edit film, and gradually his commissions changed from reportage stills to reportage documentary film-making. Though Morris has lived and worked in Rye, he and his partner lived in East London for some years with their triplets, who shared one room until they were fourteen. They moved down here to give them more individual space, but since then he hasn't looked back. Like many other residents he really appreciates the amount of creative support there is here, especially from the photography community. His background is eccentrically

artistic: his father worked as an architect who, to make life interesting, would add a Gothic chimney to a design for a factory, but was also able to play entire piano concertos from memory and play the violin. He also developed a serious understanding of photography. His love of music transmitted to his children; Morris always works to a musical accompaniment, which he feels has an effect on the ultimate product. Hastings and St Leonards, he suggests, "punch above their weight" in terms of creative production. I doubt anyone would disagree that his work adds strength to that punch. See more details at roadfactoryfilms.com/studio-info, and [roadfactoryfilms](https://www.instagram.com/roadfactoryfilms) on Instagram. For the Elliott Gallery exhibition, see elliott.gallery/rod-morris. Also at Photopia.co.uk and Photohastings.org



An Operatic Salon for the Modern Age

VICTORIA KINGHAM

The derivation of the word 'opera' is from the Latin *opus* – work, art-work, creation, realisation. This is indeed what local inspired company, Barefoot Opera, continue to achieve. Having developed from modest beginnings, they are now a significant and unique musical force, emanating from here but spreading their wings to London and throughout the South East.

In a quiet corner of leafy Decimus Burton country in deepest St Leonards stands an enviable house which must once have been a centre of local social occasions – balls, soirees, salons. In the enormous ballroom, atmospherically lit with a chandelier (holding real candles!) an actual salon was held, to mark the end of one successful season and the beginning of the next Barefoot year and new plans. "It's so lovely" said one eager attendee, admitting she was not as a rule an Opera fan, "to hear this beautiful singing in such an informal atmosphere."

Many of the guests were Trustees or Friends of Barefoot, which is set up as a charity and survives through donations, Trustee contributions, annual Friends contributions and (comparatively small, but very necessary) grants from the Arts Council and other public organisations.

There was a decidedly salon atmosphere. The ballroom was crowded with friendly excited visitors and two or three convivial dogs. The invited singers clearly blossomed in front of this kind of audience, and their brilliance was surprising. They had been carefully invited (by Jenny Miller, opera singer, Barefoot founder and owner of the house) not only for their vocal ranges but for their ability to render well known, extremely challenging arias, requiring either expressive romanticism or the rare vocal dexterity given to relatively few singers. So it was that fiery soprano Katerina Oikonomou daringly performed the famous passage from Mozart's *Magic Flute* in which the Queen of the Night denounces her daughter – very high, very fast, very brilliant – you'd know it if you heard it. Egor Zhuravskii sang Tosti's *Ser-*



Left to right: Satoshi Kumo, piano; Katerina Oikonomu, soprano; Jenny Miller, Director; Kristina Nikiforova, soprano; Egor Zhuravskii, tenor

enata with great feeling, serenading his distant sleeping lover with an exceptionally pure tenor voice. Zhuravskii and the other soprano, Kristina Nikiforova, are now local residents (and husband and wife).

Anthony Flaum, himself a banker-turned-singer who additionally runs his own opera company, Prolog Opera, is also now Artistic Director of Barefoot. He was the evening's genial host, outlining past activities

and future plans for the company.

Very striking was the evening's feeling of inclusivity; members of the Board of Trustees handed out food and drink themselves, and effortlessly managed to address most of the guests personally. This unstudied informality is perhaps part of the success of the organisation; they intentionally challenge the notion that opera is elitist, by producing work that remains of the highest quality (vocally and dramatically) and simultaneously provides contemporary versions of opera classics that reach new audiences. They do, they work, they create, they realise; they define and redefine opera year by year.

Next year's principal production will be *Lucia Di Lammermoor*, Donizetti's 1835 musical rendering of Walter Scott's original *Bride of Lammermoor*, written in 1819 but set in 17th century Scotland. Find out more about Barefoot Opera here: barefootopera.com/upcoming-events

Sweating, Rocking, Tender Moments

JUDE MONTAGUE

Amy Rigby, US singer-songwriter, visits Hastings for her first ever local gig with husband and sometime-duo partner, Wreckless Eric. Eric (Goulden) is local, from Peacehaven. Amy was raised in Pittsburgh and became, retrospectively, the girl from Eric's hit single *The Whole Wide World* (Stiff Records 1977), a case of life imitating art.

Amy's songwriting is incredibly personal, and documents the journey of a fully active participant in the touring rock and roll and independent music-making scene. She is a deeply instinctive lyricist, with musical roots in rock and folk. Like Joni Mitchell, she makes her own comment on her current life events and how they make her feel. She converts her honest reflections into personal and witty song statements.

Schooled in late 70s lower Manhattan, Amy formed the pre-Americana country band Last Roundup and Richard Hell's favourite girl group The Shams in NYC's East Village, before launching a solo career with 90s classic album *Diary Of A Mod Housewife*.

I first came across her work in her 2018 album *The Old Guys*, which is literally about 'old guys' of rock and roll, including Bob Dylan, Amy's friend and mentor. She's part

of the rock and roll resistance - fun, mischievous, with jangly guitars and thumping drums. Eric and Amy have been working their individual albums in tandem over the past few years, both scratching our consciousness with a gritty poet's pen, in their own style.

Amy is touring her new album *Hang In There With Me* (Tapete Records) which Rock 'n' Reel calls "Afascinating and profound roller coaster ride in the life and music of one of the most intelligent and inspired true American troubadours of the last half a century." The record includes odes to Bob Dylan, Joey Ramone, and Julie Christie, as

well as chat boxes, bricks and rainbows. I think she's one of the finest songwriters of this generation, one of my favourite American-raised lyricists. Her memoir *Girl to City* follows her progress from Elton John fan in the Pittsburgh suburbs to Manhattan art student, and on again to a cult singer-songwriter who caused a sensation in the mid-1990s. It's full of screw-ups and charmed moments and shares the story of how it was to create an identity as an artist back in a time when female musician role models were rare. It's a struggle to make a life of what you love through temp jobs and motherhood, but Amy did it.

During lockdown, in a conversation with Alex Smith at BMI, she imagined life once the enforced separation was over: "I want to play a show that has it all: sweating, rocking, tender moments: anger and joy shared with a crowd, and just hugging everybody."

Amy Rigby, with Wreckless Eric and Ian Button, plays *The Pig*, Hastings on 28 November 2024



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BOOKBUSTER REVIEW

Oil Be Damned: Part Four
Overshoot:
How the World
Surrendered
to Climate
Breakdown

By Andreas Malm & Wim Carton
Published by Verso, 2024, rrp £25
REVIEW BY TIM BARTON

On Monday 11 November, COP29 Azerbaijan began, in an authoritarian oil-state that is effectively a branch of BP's oil empire, with the Azerbaijani government hilariously claiming green credentials. Their website claims that 'Azerbaijan is committed to developing its renewable energy potential, which is an important part of the country's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2050. The country intends to increase renewable power capacity to 30% by 2030 and diversify its existing energy system to become a leader in green energy'. Meanwhile the minister nominated to preside over COP29 is an ex-executive of SOCAR, the state oil company. There is definitely an unhealthy stink emanating from the cheerful propaganda. Which makes it not dissimilar to the previous rounds of the UN's 'climate change' conferences, the last also having been hosted by oil-states.

Which brings us to Andreas Malm's new book, co-written with Wim Carton, both of whom are associate professors at Sweden's Lund University. Malm wrote the best-selling *How to Blow Up a Pipe-*

line. His ire is quite rightly raised by the greenwashing industry, dominated by climate-change denialists and fossil-fuel corporations. In this latest book he shows in detail how these bad-faith actors have far from addressing, for example, CO2 emissions to try and lower them, in fact pressed the accelerator to the floor.

'Overshoot' in this case refers to our CO2 targets in regard to a tipping point at which global average temperatures shoot past the 'must not go higher than' targets and start to snowball, or should we not say 'fireball'? The latest reports indicate that we are already at the tipping point and that the current rate of emissions is looking likely to lock us in to an unavoidable whopping 3.2 degrees average global temperature rise. And to think we were worried about a 2.5 degree rise, which was deemed to be a point of no return.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Malm and Carton dig deep into the

way in which the capitalist and state fossil-fuel industries have propagandised, spreading disinformation and lies across every media outlet they can buy off or manipulate. As the world, especially our youth, migrated online in even greater

tric vehicle obsessed auto-industry, as they accelerate lithium extraction from the seabed. Meanwhile, here in the UK, Johnson, Truss, Sunak, and now Starmer, promote and open new 'free trade' economic low-tax zones, one of which includes Dartmoor national park. The restriction of a traditional right-to-roam, coupled with the presence of lithium and other metals in the granite uplands there, may fit into a jigsaw puzzle alongside low-regulation freeports – how can one not conclude that extraction is planned, albeit perhaps not immanently?

Malm & Carton concentrate on the fossil-fuel industry in *Overshoot*, but are not blind to the fact that this is just one aspect of the global failure to curb climate, and biodiversity, breakdown. They regard the world as having surrendered to this, and give a blow-by-blow account of the failures of the last three years. As Jello Biafra once put it, there is, in effect at least, an attitude under capitalist consumerism of 'give me convenience or give me death'. No-one wants to give up their slice of pie to achieve necessary targets. But the su-

per-rich could set an example, as none of them can eat their vast portion of pie in their lifetime, in fact they could feed whole countries with it. In a childish game of 'no, you first', closing the poverty gap and punishing overweening wealth may be the only way to avert the

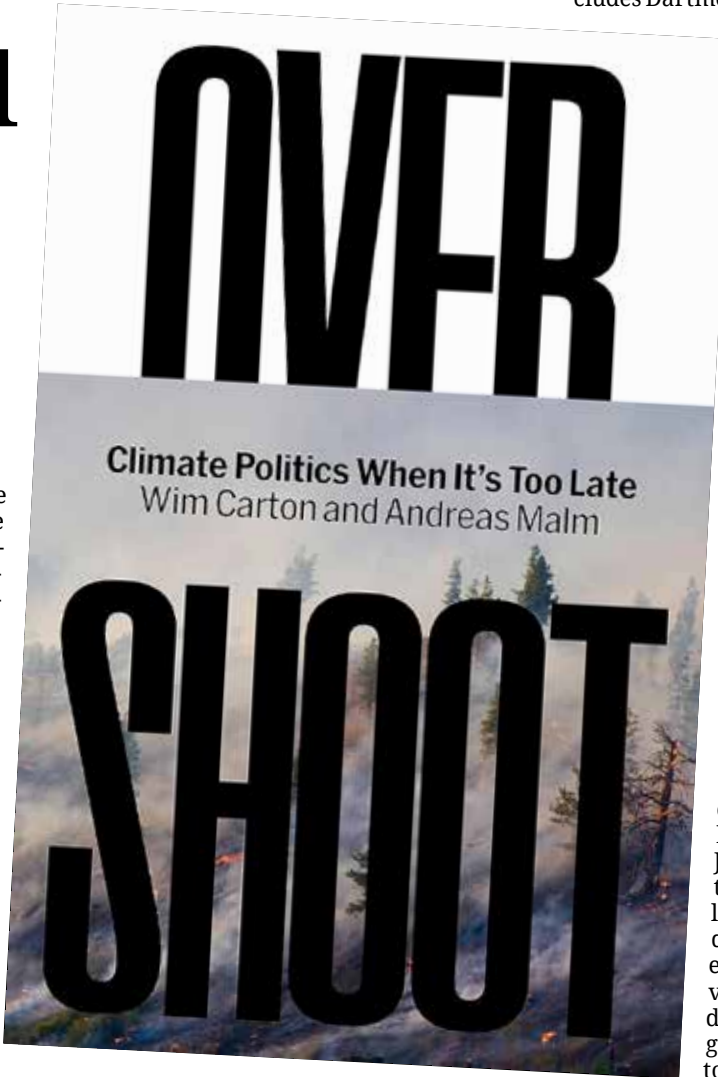
'no-win' situation written into the rules of the game.

THERE IS NO PLANET B

The authors note that CO₂ emissions dropped during Covid. They, and many others, hoped that this would prompt the world leaders to see reduction as a doable mission. Yet, as they put it, 'like an arsonist briefly interrupted by the sound of voices in the building, fossil capital resumed its work'. And, not only did CO₂ emissions rebound, but in fact 'went way beyond the levels preceding the pandemic', in fact 'emissions rose by 6%, or two gigatonnes, giving overall the highest per annum emissions increase in history. They go on to analyse 'the rise of overshoot ideology', and given a Marxian analysis of 'asset stranding' and the role of capital and 'value' in this overshoot. It is a sobering but necessary read. They plan to follow the book up soon with one on 'climate politics when it's too late'.

The gist is, of course, that it is already too late, we are pretty much in the early stages of overshoot. There are few, in any, realistic ways to avert the crisis. But mitigation is urgently required, meaning hard choices. The lack of will to make these choices on the left leaves the field open for capitalist industry, investors and the neo-right to define mitigation strategies. That, needless to say, will be a complete disaster for the 'have-nots', amongst whom there inevitably will be millions of Britons – we'll all burn together, and there is no Planet B. Unless... what?

Overshoot: How the World Surrendered to Climate Breakdown is available from Bookbuster, 39 Queens Road, Hastings TN34 1RE On World Climate Day, Sunday 8th December, the Electric Palace hosts DIVEST! The Climate Movement on Tour: Governmental response to climate change goes under the microscope in this powerful documentary, plus short films and post-film discussion from Divest East Sussex. Info & tickets: www.electricpalacecinema.com



numbers over lockdown, a trend that has only very partially reversed, those enriching themselves by spreading doubt about climate change found it ever easy to succeed, and have doubled-down on their mission to avert shareholder losses regardless of the long-term effects.

The US election result ensures yet more oil, coal, and gas extraction, and is unlikely to curb the rape of formerly pristine marine environments of the Pacific by an elec-

CROSSWORD CORNER

Across

- 1. Saint ventilates steps (6)
- 3. E.g. back rich person and dismount (3,3)
- 4. Part is rewritten for nocturnal animals (6)

Down

- 1. Peg starting price I got (6)
- 2. Eats it all and mocks (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 5 of The HIP List

1					2
3					
4					

POETRY CORNER

DISORIENTATION
OLI SPLEEN

Disorientation descends
A confusion midst euphoria
And when this haze-cloud ends
My focus forms to flesh

Absurdity of skin and sinew
Perceiving from a lens, organic
Specific to my mind's own bias
Unable to encompass all

We deaden down to nothingness
Spreading ourselves thin
For nothing is closer to everything
Than anything between

Tackling Business Fraud

ROSIE MURPHY

It is my intense love for crime fiction and detective dramas that first made me interested in fighting crime, and it turns out that my skills in accountancy are actually very useful in detecting and preventing fraud. After realising that this may be a good way to spice up my accountancy career (Who can blame me? I signed up for qualification in forensic accountancy, the equivalent of a master's degree, which I completed last month.

Although I learnt exciting things, like interviewing techniques and the legalities around searching for evidence in a suspect's trash, I spent a huge amount of time being taught how we can protect ourselves from



becoming victims of fraud, and it opened my eyes to the huge extent of the problem faced by businesses in the UK.

In fact, a study carried out by Portsmouth University, Crowe UK and Peters & Peters solicitors estimated that fraud losses in the UK

could be as high as £219 billion annually. A staggering proportion of those losses (£157.7bn) is from private sector businesses as opposed to individuals and public sector bodies.

When I started mentioning this to people, I was constantly presented with anecdotal evidence backing up the extent of this problem. The sad thing is that businesses are not always able to recover from these losses. Things like: "Our bookkeeper stole £15k from a business I worked at." or "One of my volunteers would regularly pinch £10 or £20 from petty cash."

I have questioned clients about a transaction, to be told "Oh, that £5,000 was taken out of my bank account because I was a victim of fraud. They said they were from the bank, and I needed to transfer my money to keep it safe."

Interestingly, we are advised to regularly change our passwords and be safe online, and this is good advice seeing that 72% of businesses had experienced cybercrime between January 2021 and January 2023.

However, internal staff-related fraud accounts for over a third of small

business fraud, which begs the question of why employees are stealing from their employers, and what we can do to prevent this happening. It's also interesting that these incidents are under-reported, with businesses deciding to deal with it themselves rather than go to the police. Are we too soft on these sorts of criminals, perhaps?

There are three factors that must be present for a fraud to occur, and this is a good starting point in the bid to learn how we can protect ourselves. These factors are, 'Opportunity' to commit fraud; 'Pressure' applied to the individual committing the fraud; and the 'Justification' of the fraudster for committing the fraud. These factors are collectively known as 'The fraud triangle.'

Consider a virtual assistant who is such a time-saving asset that she is given more and more responsibility and gets on well with the business owner who has never questioned the VA's trustworthiness.

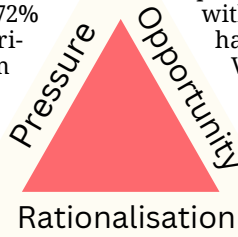
One day the VA discovers that her husband has run up gambling debts and their home is at risk of being repossessed. This

one change can shift the 'pressure' and 'justification' side of the fraud triangle. The VA, under financial pressure, can rationalise committing fraud because, 'the business is thriving; it won't even be missed.' In this case, if the opportunity is there due to lack of controls, the business is almost certain to suffer a loss.

Fraud is a serious problem in the UK, accounting for 40% of all crime, and business owners need to proactively protect themselves from this risk. The first step in doing this is to educate yourself further about the risk areas and common weaknesses in business systems.



Rosie Murphy is the director of RDM Accountancy Services. The company can offer one-to-one support and group sessions to assist in reducing the 'opportunity' for people to steal from your business by helping with risk assessments and implementing procedures to combat the risk. For more information visit rdmaccountancy.co.uk. You can also visit her YouTube channel for more tips on business accounting.



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SPORTS ADMINISTRATION



Takeover at Rye Sports Centre

Rye Sports Centre, including its swimming pool, will be run from next April by a newly formed charity, Rye Recreation & Wellbeing CIO (RRW). Governed by six trustees who have roots in the local community – chair Barry Nealon is also a trustee of the Memorial Hospital – the charity will take over from current corporate operators Freedom Leisure under a new 20-year lease of the site granted by East Sussex County Council to Rye Town Council.

This follows the closure of the

swimming pool two years ago as a result of the spike in energy costs. Local residents protested at this decision; Mayor Cllr Andi Rivett called a public meeting, and a group of volunteers then got together to create the RRW charity with the aim of running the centre on an alternative management model. The pool was reopened in September 2023, still operated by Freedom Leisure, and last month Rother District Council approved the use of £650,000 Levelling Up Partnership (LUP) funds to ‘rejuvenate’

both the pool and the other parts of the centre.

It is understood that there will be much greater use of volunteer staff at the centre, though the existing employees of Freedom Leisure will presumably retain TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment) rights at the handover.

RRW’s vision clearly goes well beyond the provision of sporting facilities. Its business plan, according to co-trustee Rebekah Gilbert, involves “close working with other stakeholders, so that this becomes not just a leisure centre but one that can offer outreach facilities in terms of health and wellbeing, by working closely with social prescribers, healthcare professionals, GPs etc.” The effect in terms of future provision for particular sports is still under discussion.

FOOTBALL

United Struggle Against League Pace-Setters

9 November:
Wingate & Finchley 2,
Hastings Utd 1
12 November:
Hastings Utd 2,
Deal Town 0
16 November:
Hastings Utd 0,
Cray Valley PM 1

The ‘U’s came up against two of the Isthmian League’s form sides, Wingate & Finchley and Cray Valley Paper Mills, over the last two Saturdays. In both games they defended valiantly and kept their opponents goalless past the three-quarter mark, with goalkeeper

er Louis Rogers their stand-out performer. But both ended in disappointing defeats, which leave them once again close to the relegation zone. In between, a midweek win against South East Division side Deal Town in the third round of the Velocity (league cup) Trophy gave some solace but, ironically, the draw for the fourth round pitches them back into a return match with Cray Valley on 3 December.

Against Wingate & Finchley, Hastings stayed well in contention during the first half but missed chances to score past last season’s goalkeeper Charlie Grainger, who moved there following the return

of Rogers. After the interval the North London side took control, scored from a penalty, and doubled their lead two minutes later. Substitute Fin Chapman scored a 90th minute consolation goal for the ‘U’s.

The match against Cray Valley last Saturday – bizarrely, United’s first home league fixture on a Saturday since August – attracted a crowd of over 1,300 to Pilot Field. Unfortunately, there was little for ‘U’s supporters to enthuse over as the visitors, currently lying second in the table, dominated throughout. A string of saves by Louis Rogers kept them at bay until the 70th minute, when another smart stop was netted on the rebound.

The Hastings team will have been in Sussex Senior Cup action on Tuesday of this week against Bognor Regis Town, then make another long away trip to Hendon tomorrow (Saturday) before two home league matches – against Carshalton Athletic next Tuesday (26th) and Dartford (30th). There’s surely enough talent in the side to arrest their slide down the league table, but interim manager Sean Ray will be keenly aware that they need to start showing it.

BAR BILLIARDS

Marathon Session Supports MacMillan

Concerned about the number of local players and their partners being affected by cancer and related illnesses, the Hastings Bar Billiards League came together on Monday 28 October to undertake a marathon one-day event to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Using the table at the Jenny Lind pub in the Old Town in continuous session from opening time at 12 noon until closing time 11pm, the aim was to reach a target of 150,000 points amassed between all players. At each successive frame one player paid for the table and the other three players put a contribution in the charity box. The pub supported the event by donating the table money, a percentage of the takings, a free first drink for each player and a running buffet. Sixteen players, including representatives of all six teams in the Hastings League – two teams from the Jenny Lind itself, two from The Cutter, one each from The Ashburnham and the OKJ (Old King John) – took part.

After 32 frames ending just before 11, the cumulative points total fell agonisingly short, at 147,080.

But the event raised £1,051.83, far in excess of what was expected, with many people contributing money on the day at the Jenny Lind, and collections also being made at The Cutter and The Stag (whose table has been moved to The Cutter following a change of management); the OKJ gave a team donation.

The winter league season is now in full swing, matches being played on Wednesday nights on tables at one or more of the four pub venues. After three rounds the OKJ, last year’s winners, lead narrowly from Jenny Lind B.

Fresh players or teams are welcome so as to expand the league, either by joining existing teams, by forming additional teams at the OKJ or the Ashburnham, or even by setting up their own table at a new location. Landlords benefit by accommodating a minimum of ten people in their pub each Wednesday evening throughout the winter, while the game requires far less space to be set aside than for a pool table.

For further reports and info, see HastingsBarBilliards.co.uk.

RUGBY

Gravesend Double for H&B

9 November:
Old Gravesendians 7,
Hastings & Bexhill 15
16 November:
Hastings & Bexhill 17
Gravesend II 5

Hastings & Bexhill notched two wins in the Kent League on successive Saturdays, both against opposition from Gravesend.

Away wins in this league are always precious, and the victory in north Kent against the old boys team on 9 November was won by “unbelievable grit and determination”, according to H & B coach Ben Petty. The team took advantage of a considerable slope in the first half and built up a 15-0 lead with tries from Matt Stringer and Jacob McDonagh; the first was converted by Tom Hirst, who also kicked a penalty.

In the second half, playing up the

hill, they set up a solid and resilient defence, conceding only a single try. There were good performances throughout the side, especially from two of the younger players in the back row of the scrum, Matt Shepherd and Wes Lorman; the tackling of the backs was excellent, with Hudson Wales and Joe Field putting in some great hits.

A week later H & B entertained bottom-of-the-league Gravesend 2nd XV at their Ark Alexandra ground, with former players gathering at the clubhouse as part of the club’s centenary celebrations. A home victory was duly recorded. However, they’ll need to play rather better tomorrow (Saturday) when they travel again, this time to Tunbridge Wells. Their hosts will be another 2nd XV, but these are league leaders, having won seven matches out of eight so far this season.

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