

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



**HASTINGS
BEATLES DAY**
WHITE ROCK THEATRE SUNDAY 6TH APRIL 2025

**International
Fundraiser**

10 →

**Fran
& Flora**

7 →

How Many Die On Our Streets?

**Homeless
in Hastings**

The most visible manifestations of homelessness in Hastings are from those who have been sleeping rough – piles of blankets and sleeping bags left in seafront shelters or makeshift tents at the top of the beach or in doorways. Monitoring rough sleeping is a clear priority for the council with outreach teams visit-

ing anyone they can identify. In the most recent count at the beginning of March there were 16 people sleeping 'out', slightly down from last year's count of 20. The council, however, reports some success in that only two of them are still on the streets from a year ago. All others have been found shel-

ter – either temporary or permanent – though that does mean that new rough sleepers are appearing as others are helped with shelter. And this year the outreach workers have found that half of all rough sleepers are sheltering in some sort of vehicle. "Every year the government talks about a targeted priority group," says

Glenn Haffenden, the council's deputy leader and Housing and Community Wellbeing portfolio holder. "It's a horrible word to describe the number of rough sleepers who are most entrenched, who have been on the street longest in Hastings." But there is central government money available to help the homeless who don't

even have a roof over their head. This winter Hastings received £345,962 to ease 'rough sleeping winter pressures'. This enables the council to maintain the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol designed to prevent deaths among rough sleepers. However success in that specific area is extremely

2 →



Lightning Fibre

Hyperfast Broadband

Full Fibre Broadband
All 24 month packages now

£20*
per month





YOUR DESIGN, OUR COVER
Let's see your seagull on our cover!
Details from design@yourhip.co.uk

EDITOR'S NOTE

In this edition, HIP takes an in-depth look at homelessness. While the lack of affordable accommodation is an inexorably growing national problem, Hastings and St Leonards struggle with additional housing issues common to many seaside towns - not least the scourge of holiday lets and second homes.

In the News, Community and Literature pages we examine the support available to street sleepers, the disastrous sell-off of council housing stock and the soaring cost of private rented property. Visit 'The Pantry' food support charity and relate 'Tales from a Tent-Dweller'. On other pages, our MP, Helena Doolimore, considers the horrendous public spending cuts proposed by East Sussex County Council and - given the possible creation of a new unitary authority - we ponder the future of ESCC itself.

For some much-needed R&R, turn to the Arts section and such fascinating topics as Transylvanian Rhapsodies, a celebrity patron for the acclaimed International Piano Festival and - we're nothing if not eclectic at HIP - a punk poetry event.

Should you like celebrating, how about the fifth successive victory of the Hasting and Bexhill rugby team, reported on the Sports page.

Contact

Editorial Enquiries & Submissions info@
Sales Director Ian Lydon-James advertising@
Newsletter Editor Ben Bruges, Melitsa Nicolaou, Zakir Mohiyuddin info@
Social Media Editors Kayla Power and Erin Ward via our Instagram page
Content Coordinator #272 Dave Young
News Coordinator #272 Kent Barker newsdesk@
design@
yourhip.co.uk

Art Director Jason Ellis

Section Editors

Chris Connelly community@
Kent Barker opinion@
Susan McFie hande@
Ben Bruges, Serena Ferrari features@
Nadine Keats, Hugh Sullivan,
Harry Hawkins, Merlin Betts, listings@
Melitsa Nicolaou, Owen Prachar arts@
Victoria Kingham literature@
Pete Donohue food@
Edwina Hughes business@
Jorden Connelly sport@
Hugh Sullivan yourhip.co.uk

Sub Editors

Rod Webb, Fiona McGarry, Gill Goldenberg,
Linda Thomas, Celia Partridge

Contributors

Tim Barton|Helena Doolimore|Tim Barlow
Paul McLaughlin|Ferdusara Begum Ali
Tony Collins|Maizin-Al-Jumaili| Peter Knight
Simon Anthony Hobson|Tony Collins
EBM Humphreys|Duncan Reekie

Have Your Say

letters@
yourhip.co.uk

Telephone

01424 559085

Hastings Independent Press CIC
57 Linton Road Hastings TN34 1TN

News



JASON ELLIS

1 ← hard to monitor, and accurate statistics almost impossible to come by. Government figures suggest that 90 homeless people died in the Southeast region in 2021, and extrapolations suggest this would equate to seven in Hastings itself. But it seems no distinction is made between rough sleepers and other homeless people – those in temporary accommodation or briefly staying in other people's homes.

53 year Norman Hardwick, who tragically died in Sedlescombe Road St Leonards just before Christmas, was known to be homeless. And two other deaths among homeless or rough sleepers have been confirmed by Hastings County Coun-

cillor Godfrey Daniel.

The council says it is grateful for funding from central government to help rough sleepers, but there are major problems with its allocation. “We’ve just recently been given a tranche of funding which came out of nowhere,” says Cllr Haffenden, but we’ve been given very little time to spend the money so it’s not enabled our housing team to really think about the best strategic way to allocate it – and we don’t know if we will get it again.”

One thing that it now makes possible is the appointment of a ‘Rough Sleeper Navigator’ to work with those who are most entrenched on the street, to encourage them to come indoors and to help them once there.

The advertisement for the post is currently on Hastings BC’s website.

There is also government money available to provide temporary accommodation for rough sleepers. The councils has a number of pro-

jects starting in the next few months including a seven bed HMO (House in Multiple Occupation) in Sedlescombe Road South and the conversion of Astec House near Asda into seven flats along with former office buildings in Cambridge Gardens. “We recognise there isn’t enough settled accommodation for people having to rough sleep, but there will be more coming online; and our partners at Seaview are developing their potential accommodations well which is fantastic,” says Glenn.

Certainly the council needs its own buildings. A major anomaly of the rules means that central government subsidises them, but not temporary accommodation provided by the private sector. This has to be entirely funded by the council and accounts for a major proportion of Hastings BC’s annual budget. Plus it gives rise to the absurd situation that it costs them more to take rough sleepers off the street and house them in private temporary homes. Nevertheless, getting them shelter does save money for other agencies like the health service. “If it’s our own accommodation we can recover the costs from central government,” says Glenn Haffenden, “so it’s cost neutral for us and a win-win on all counts.” And he is insistent that no one should ever forget the moral aspect to homelessness and rough sleeping which, he says, tends to get buried under statistics and protocols.

SITE NOTICE FOR APPLICATION FOR A PREMISES LICENCE

This notice is to advise that on **5th day of March 2025** an application was made to Hastings Borough Council by **Wavey Bar Ltd (t/a Bistro Albo) 1 St Paul’s Place St Leonards, TN37 6HG**

To obtain a premises licence for the premise known as **Bistro Albo 29 London Road St Leonards, TN37 6AJ**

In the following respects

Wed 1200 – 2100
Thurs 1200 – 2100
Fri 1200 – 2200
Sat 1200 – 2200
Sun 1200 – 1700

Any person wishing to make representations about this application should write to Hastings Borough Council, Head of Environment & Place, Muriel Matters House, Breeds Place, Hastings, TN34 3UY, or email Licensing@hastings.gov.uk within twenty eight consecutive days from the date

of the application shown above.

The application can be viewed by pre-arranged appointment at our offices, during office hours. It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application & a person is liable to a fine of up to a maximum of £5,000 on summary conviction for the offence.

Dated this **7th** day of **March 2025**

SITE NOTICE FOR APPLICATION FOR A PREMISES LICENCE

This notice is to advise that on **10th day of March 2025** an application for a Premises Licence was made to Hastings Borough Council for the premises known as **CopperPot Distilleries LTD, 15 Battle crescent, Hastings, TN37 7AW**

Was made by: **Dionne Tester** For the following licensable activities or proposed variation

Sale of Alcohol by Retail (on and off the premises via website) sale of alcohol online to be 24hours. 00:01 – 00:00

Monday to Sunday to sell alcohol on and off the premises between the hours of 09:00 and 23:00 – the shop opening times will vary on demand and time of year but they will not exceed the application timings. **Opening Hours** 09:00 to 11:00 Monday to Sunday

Any person wishing to make representations about this application should write to Hastings Borough Council, Head of Environment & Place, Muriel Matters House, Breeds Place, Hastings, TN34 3UY,

or email Licensing@hastings.gov.uk within twenty eight consecutive days from the date of the application shown above.

The application can be viewed by pre-arranged appointment at our offices, during office hours. It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application & a person is liable to a fine of up to a maximum of £5,000 on summary conviction for the offence.

Dated this **10th** day of **March 2025**

HASTINGS TIDES									
DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON		
FRI 14 MAR	L 6:11am	H 11:29am	L 6:26pm	H 11:40pm	6:13	6:01	FULL		
SAT 15 MAR	L 6:41am	H 11:57am	L 6:52pm		6:11	6:02			
SUN 16 MAR	H 0:07am	L 7:04am	H 12:23pm	L 7:10pm	6:09	6:04			
MON 17 MAR	H 0:32am	L 7:23am	H 12:45pm	L 7:28pm	6:06	6:06			
TUES 18 MAR	H 0:55am	L 7:44am	H 1:08pm	L 7:54pm	6:04	6:07			
WEDS 19 MAR	H 1:19am	L 8:10am	H 1:33pm	L 8:22pm	6:02	6:09			
THURS 20 MAR	H 1:46am	L 8:41am	H 2:02pm	L 8:55pm	6:00	6:10			
FRI 21 MAR	H 2:18am	L 9:17am	H 2:37pm	L 9:36pm	5:57	6:12			
SAT 22 MAR	H 2:58am	L 10:05am	H 3:24pm	L 10:34pm	5:55	6:14	THIRD		
SUN 23 MAR	H 4:00am	L 11:14am	H 5:09pm	L 11:55pm	5:53	6:15			
MON 24 MAR	H 6:19am	L 12:40am	H 7:01pm		5:51	6:17			
TUES 25 MAR	L 1@23am	H 7:37am	L 2:06am	H 8:04pm	5:48	6:19			
WEDS 26 MAR	L 2:45am	H 8:33am	L 3:21pm	H 8:53pm	5:46	6:20			
THURS 27 MAR	L 3:52am	H 9:18am	L 4:20pm	H 9:36pm	5:44	6:22			

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



Rental Boom, Housing Crisis

PAUL McLAUGHLIN

Hastings has experienced a substantial rental boom in the last few years due to its growing popularity. But a shortage of private rental properties coupled with a sharp rise in demand has led to steep increases in rents. For those on benefits this is a disaster as the LHA – Local Housing Allowance – or the amount the government pays in housing benefit – has failed to keep up.

Figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) show rents across Hastings rose by more than 5% over the last year, with an average monthly amount of £963 in December 2024 – a £47 rise over the previous 12 months.

According to the council it is now ‘almost impossible’ to secure a private rental sector tenancy at LHA levels.

Their figures show that, although the LHA did get an uplift in April 2024, only three out of 334 one-bedroom properties advertised on Zoopla in Hastings came within the LHA rate that year. The figures are similarly stark for two- and three-bedroom properties.

The gap between what landlords charge and what tenants on benefits can pay results in high levels of evictions. There were 323 possession claims in 2023, nearly three times as many as two years previously.

The problem for the council is that when a tenant is evicted and they can’t afford anywhere else to live, they become homeless – and



the council then has a statutory duty to find them accommodation if they are in ‘priority need’ and not intentionally homeless.

Two other factors increase the problem. The town’s growing popularity means there is more competition for private rental properties – which simply forces rents up. Secondly the rental market in Hastings is affected by its popularity as a destination for weekend and holiday visitors. Websites like Airbnb have made it much easier for landlords to manage and advertise their properties and there is a vibrant short-term rental market where they can make big returns on holiday lets. There were 615 listings on Airbnb in September 2024, with a median occupancy rate of 60% and an aver-

age daily rate of £96. This translates to an average annual gross revenue of £21,035 for hosts and means that ever more properties are unavailable for long-term rental.

This has inevitably led to increased homelessness and a spike in the numbers needing temporary accommodation. There were 568 households living in temporary accommodation (TA) across Hastings as of last September, with some 1,500 households on the waiting list for affordable settled housing. Hastings Borough Council has to pay for anyone in private rental accommodation – by far the majority – and the budget for TA now takes up 40% of all Hastings Borough Council spending.

The new Labour Government has started to tackle some of the under-

lying causes of the crisis. The need to strengthen tenant protections is being addressed by the Renters’ Rights Bill, which is progressing through Parliament. This will ban no-fault evictions by abolishing Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, which currently allows landlords to evict tenants without reason.

The Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, has also pledged to invest up to £5bn on housing in 2025-26, plus she has announced an increase in the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate, ending the previous Government’s four-year freeze. Whilst the increase in the benefit will be welcomed by tenants, the Chancellor indicated that she plans no further adjustments going forward.

The Government also plans to reduce Right to Buy discounts and to allow local authorities to retain and reinvest the earnings from council housing sales.

A key plank of the Government’s housing strategy is to build 1.5 million new homes within the next five years. This includes increasing the supply of affordable housing. There is already a lively debate between the Green-led Hastings BC and the local Labour MP as to whether the Government’s ambitious housing targets are achievable.



Why we Have a Housing Crisis

KENT BARKER

Less than 50 years ago, a third of all homes in Britain were owned and rented by local councils – about 6.5 million of them. Today councils own only around 2 million. Even considering those run by Housing Associations, we have still lost more than 2 million social homes during a time when the population has risen by 12 million people.

And the reason why so many fewer people live in social housing today? Margaret Thatcher’s ‘Right to Buy’ policy of 1980. Two million people bought their council house or flat with discounts of up to 70%. Worse still, councils were prohibited from using the money to build new council accommodation and were forced to hand the remainder of their stock to Housing Associations or ‘Arms Length Management Organisations’.

Then further Tory legislation in 1988 abolished controlled rents and rent tribunals in the private sector and introduced Assured Shorthold Tenancies, providing less security for tenants. This gave a major boost

to landlords who, in addition, could now be paid housing benefit directly. The private rental sector increased from 14% of all homes in Britain to 20%. In 1996 John Major’s government introduced the right for tenants to acquire their Housing Association properties, further reducing the availability of rented social housing.

Buy-to-Let mortgages temporarily eased the shortage of private rental accommodation, but another Conservative government in 2015 cut tax relief on mortgages for property investors, dramatically reducing incentives for private landlords to enter the market.

Meanwhile the overall level of house construction has declined. In 1980 a quarter of a million were built. In 2014 it was down 44% to 140,000; it has only recently risen but was still fewer than 190,000 last year.

It is what some have dubbed a ‘perfect storm’. The social housing sector is decimated while private landlords are disincentivised. The number of new-builds are reduced as the growing population grows. Rent controls are removed allowing the market free reign. As the supply diminishes, simple economics dic-



tates rents will rise.

Is there a solution? Many housing experts argue, first, give local authorities the resources – and the obligation – to return the provision of social ‘council’ housing for anyone who wants it and abolish the right to buy. Second, reform the 1988 Housing Act to create secure long-term private tenancies and re-establish rent controls and tribunals. And third, alongside the second, reintroduce mortgage interest tax relief for rental properties.

Finally, of course, we HAVE to build more homes – but not estates of expensive executive houses. What people need to get onto the property ladder are cheap and cheerful starter homes and flats.

ST. LEONARDS CHURCH WEEKEND MARKET



Arts, Crafts, Antiques & Collectibles
Vintage Chic, Clothes & Jewellery
Coffee, Food Court & Licensed Bar!
EVERY SATURDAY & SUNDAY 10 to 4
London Road (corner of Pevensey Rd)
Saint Leonards-on-Sea TN37 6AS
stall hire + info - stleoschurch.co.uk



Battle for a Home

FERDUSARA BEGUM ALI meets a local woman who lost her home, became a rough sleeper and then endured a year-long battle to be granted accommodation

A Hastings woman, once vibrant and socially active, has had her life changed by the harsh realities of homelessness. She moved from a stable job, permanent home, and a supportive social circle to sleeping in a tent by the sea in St. Leonards. Her journey is a poignant reminder of how quickly life can unravel. Since May 2024, she has navigated the unforgiving landscape of rough sleeping and temporary accommodations, battling not only the elements, but also the indifference found in a system designed to help her. Her story is one of loss, courage, and the unwavering hope for a brighter future in the midst of adversity.

SUDDEN CHANGE

She has asked us not to use her real name so we'll call her Pat, but she was happy to share her story. Having moved from London, she lived with a relative in Hastings for a number of years. However, after a family dispute, she was forced to leave. Now homeless, she approached Hastings Borough Council (HBC) a few days later.

During her initial interview in January 2024, she was surprised

when the council deemed her not to be homeless, perhaps due to her well-dressed appearance. This dismissal left her feeling frustrated and overlooked – she had never faced such a situation before.

Fortunately, the community was far more helpful than the system. But this help came with a time limit. Pat approached the Hastings and Bexhill organisation Warming Up the Homeless and she says she was able to stay at a place called Gizmo's. There, the charity provided her with meals and essential support when the weather turned extreme. But she says that four days was the maximum she was allowed in emergency accommodation. After that, she was forced to live out on the streets.

SAFE SPACE

On her first night she asked local homeless people where was 'safe' for a woman to pitch her tent and was advised that a good place would be on the promenade along the seafront. However, she was unaware of the rising tide. Much to her despair, the next morning, her tent was swept away, leaving her distraught and disheartened. Despite these challenges, she continued to

contest her case with the council.

After being faced with 'rejection upon rejection' from HBC as a homeless person, she found temporary relief by sofa surfing with friends, but this brought its own challenges. During one stay, she experienced financial abuse, being asked to cover utilities despite her precarious situation. Another home turned dangerous when she was attacked by a male friend while asleep, forcing her to leave that night.

From January to May 2024, she faced a relentless cycle of sofa surfing and sleeping rough. Each time she approached the council for assistance, she was met with suggestions to relocate back to London or move to Bexhill, Eastbourne, or Brighton, despite her deep connection to Hastings, where she had previously volunteered for the Hastings Herring Fair Festival, had built a rapport with the community and had been featured in the local newspaper.

FINDING HOPE

She says that just when she was about to give in to despair, a small voice within her urged her to persist in Hastings. She continued moving from place to place, spending a few nights sofa surfing at a friend's place, and spending one night a week at Gizmo's. There Pat met a nurse who worked for the Rough Sleepers Initiative in Hastings. This woman, her 'saving grace', became her advocate, and helped her navigate the complex system, ultimately leading to a phone call from the council in May 2024, offering her temporary accommodation in an HMO (House of Multiple Occupation).

Even after securing this she faced new challenges. Living with other tenants often led to conflicts over minor issues, further straining her mental health. And, she says, HBC continued to question her eligibility for permanent re-housing, describing it as 'invalid'. The ongoing



correspondence from the local authority added to her anxiety, and she felt constantly scrutinised. When she tried to appeal, she was told her case would be reviewed by an external organisation in London, which would assess her situation on behalf of HBC. Unfortunately their decision echoed the same concerns and dismissals she had faced before, leaving her feeling trapped and unheard. However, with renewed strength and improved mental health, she compiled the necessary evidence, which she says ultimately

ly contributed to the council recognising her situation.

In November 2024, after nearly a year of struggle, she finally received confirmation from HBC that they would provide full temporary accommodation until they could find her permanent housing.

Looking back, Pat feels her long and arduous journey highlights the systemic challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness, as well as the resilience and determination needed to navigate such a difficult chapter in life.



County Cuts Slam Hastings

PAUL McLAUGHLIN

East Sussex County Council has confirmed plans to cut almost £4m from Adult Social Care and Health services next year. Julia Hilton, the Leader of Hastings Borough Council, said she was shocked at the scale of the cuts and warned that the 88% cuts to the countywide housing floating support contract and 100% of funding to two supported housing

services within Hastings, would lead to "more evictions" across the town with "more people pushed into rough sleeping."

Cllr Hilton said these services work closely with Hastings Borough Council officers on preventing homelessness. The floating support services prevented the homelessness of 240 households in Hastings last year, and the supported accommodation provides supported homes to 31 Hastings residents who would otherwise be homeless. Without these

services, she said it could cost Hastings Borough Council £15m in additional temporary accommodation costs over the next four years.

The Council Leader said that whilst she recognised the financial plight the county council was facing, its response to seek short-term savings was "short-sighted and would create far more cost in future years."

Labour's Trevor Webb, who like Cllr Hilton is both a county and borough councillor, strongly opposes the cuts to the housing-related floating support. As a former Hastings Borough Council housing portfolio holder, he says he "knows just how important it is and how much fellow councillors, officers and housing and health professionals value the service and the trust that has been built up over years from the vulnerable clients who use the service."

The decision to cut funding will be reviewed at the ESCC People's Scrutiny Committee on 17 March.



What Can I Do?

The scale of the problem of homelessness can seem so overwhelming that many people simply don't know what they can do to help. Well, the first thing is a simple one – speak up. Living on the streets puts an enormous strain on mental health, with long hours of loneliness, isolation and sleep deprivation. A smile and a friendly hello can make all the difference. Talk with kindness. Ask about their situation with simple questions such as 'how are you feeling?' and show interest in the

reply. If you feel comfortable, ask if there is anything you can do or if there is anything that's needed.

You may want to help financially. Think carefully about giving money. Many street homeless have addiction problems and once you give money, you cannot control how it is spent.

A better alternative may be a warm blanket or some food. Ask at a nearby café to see if you can pay for a hot drink and a sandwich, which can be collected later.

Ask about people's engagement with outreach services and offer to notify local support services. Listen to what people have to say and always respect their wishes.

Once you begin to engage, they cease to be just another anonymous street sleeper but a person that you come to know and see about the town. Someone you talk to and someone who gives you a different perspective on the life you lead.

All it takes is a moment to stop and say hello.

Homeless in Hastings

Unitary Authority Will Bigger be Better?

Hastings Borough Council (HBC) will lose its responsibility for helping the homeless under the current plans to replace it with a Unitary Authority in around two years' time. So far it is not known what area the new local government body will cover, nor which existing councils will be subsumed into it. However it is all but certain that East Sussex County Council will also disappear to be replaced with a single-tier Sussex-wide council probably combined with a newly formed mayoralty.

The Hastings Independent asked both HBC's Head of Housing Chris Hancock, and Housing Portfolio holder and Deputy Leader Glenn Haffenden, how they thought the local government reforms would be likely to affect homelessness services in the borough.

Councillor Haffenden: "There's a part of me that thinks things could potentially be better because you may be able to streamline services and I guess get more expertise under one council. But that's pretty much the only nice thing I can say. Realistically, putting four or five broke councils together, I'm not sure how you are going to get any savings. Rother, Hastings and Eastbourne have huge temporary accommodation issues and problems with their budgets. So putting coun-

cils that have all the same issues with not much available land, not much money and temporary accommodation problems together with County Councils who have been slashing their budgets, and then adding adult social care and child social care to temporary accommodation, it seems to me you are going to end up with one bankrupt council instead of four."

Chris Hancock: "We already do quite a lot with the County Council: we are the lead county-wide authority on rough sleeping so we already have good experience of working together. Previously I have worked with combined authorities in other parts of the country and actually they do have more control over housing and homelessness. Things like Homes England – the capital grants money that comes in for affordable housing gets allocated on a local level – I think that would be beneficial.

I think the current proposals will be Sussex-wide and a mayoral authority across Sussex would be able to allocate the Affordable Homes Grant on a wider local level, which be positive. Not having a two-tier authority would be beneficial and get over things like we have just seen with the [ESCC] cuts where one organisation is making savings at the expense of another.

Homeless in Hastings

Return of the Council House?

A key element in tackling homelessness is the provision of social housing. And a major problem for providers of social housing is that most tenants have the right to buy their homes – often at a generous dis-

count. This may be fine for those individuals, but it does remove social housing units from the overall stock causing massive shortages. This time last year there were more than 1.3 million people on local authority registers – or waiting lists.

Following Margaret Thatcher's 1980 Housing act, Hastings was forced to transfer all of its council housing stock to the 1066 Housing Association – which later became Optivo and is now subsumed into Southern Housing. Only in the past three years has HBC started to build new 'council' houses of its own.

But the right to buy continues to be a major problem for them. Hastings BC's Housing portfolio holder and Green Party member Glenn Haffenden believes the Labour Government is moving in the right direction: "The government has just closed a consultation on the right to buy and the rumour is that it will be suspended for new build council properties. We're hoping Angela



You would hope that with one organisation there would be more well-rounded thinking ... if you make a cut here it's just going to cost us more over there. And we need to work better with health and social care, and being part of the same organisation will inevitably help with that."

Glenn Haffenden: 'Unfortunately there's not going to be any fewer people in temporary accommodation or fewer people in need of housing in these areas so can you really find efficiencies and merge that across five authorities?'

HIP: Thank you both very much.

Rayner will help us out with that ... and if that gets agreed then we will be safe with what we were building."

Another major contributor to the problem of homelessness is insecurity for renters. If a tenancy is ended by a private landlord, it can be extremely difficult to find new accommodation in Hastings [See Page 3]. So Cllr Haffenden wants Labour to go further: "Rent controls would be another thing that the government could look at – we could actually have caps on how much landlords can increase rents in an area ... and we need to get more grants so that we as a council can actually build more housing ourselves."

Rent controls and Fair Rent Tribunals were abolished in Britain in 1988, so if those reforms were to go through, they would reverse more than 40 years of housing policy – which many believe has greatly contributed to the current problem of homelessness in Hastings and the country at large.

Round table conversations

Presentations

Workshops

Display & Demonstrations

Market Stalls

THE GOOD FUTURE EVENT 2025

Bringing business, organisations and community groups into one space to talk about public realm & biodiversity, the future for housing and a plan for active travel.

East Sussex College, Hastings Campus

Thursday 3rd April, 9-4pm
East Sussex College Students

Saturday 5th April, 10.30-3.30pm
Hastings Residents

EAST SUSSEX COLLEGE

Homeless in Hastings

Helping Helpers

PAUL McLAUGHLIN

With so many voluntary agencies set up to help the homeless, the long term aim of actually eliminating homelessness may sometimes get lost. And that's where Citadel Hastings comes in. It's a relatively new player, set up by Housing Justice, a small yet highly influential national charity inspired by christian principles. It gets some of its funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as part of an 18-month Test and Learn project.

This is run under the auspices of the 'Centre for Homelessness Impact' to evidence what works to reduce and, ultimately, eliminate homelessness. Citadel was established in Wales five years ago and its prevention programme is focused on recruiting, training and supporting volunteers to work with those with a history of homelessness or rough sleeping.

Nichola d'Urso, the local coordinator, took up her role last October at the launch of the programme in Hastings. She has more than 20 years experience working in the homelessness sector, most recently with the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative.

Citadel provides specific and tailored help to connect to local sup-

port groups, such as Seaview and Warming up the Homeless and to ensure that correct benefits are being claimed and that rent and utility bills are up to date.

Nichola is keen to stress that Citadel works in partnership with other local homeless charities rather than competing with them and is now part of the 'homeless ecosystem' in Hastings.

The Test and Learn project still has a year to run, but Nichola says early results suggest the approach in Hastings is on course to match the success achieved in Wales, where some 90% of those who were given support were still engaged in the project, with 95% of clients sustaining their tenancies for at least 12 months after seeking support.

Citadel is open to referrals and is widely being promoted across the town. It needs more local volunteers to work with clients and to promote its homeless prevention programme. Once volunteers have been trained and DBS checked, Housing Justice will match them with a person in need of support.



To find out more about becoming a Citadel Hastings volunteer click on the Q Code or visit the Citadel – Housing Justice website.

'Suffragettes' Ejected from Shopping Centre

Three people trying to publicise an International Women's Day event and to drum up support for rounders in Hastings were ejected from the Priory Meadow Shopping Centre earlier this month. As hundreds of people were assembling at the Observer Building for a Women's Voice event, three organisers of Hastings Rounders went to the shopping centre dressed as Suffragettes carrying placards saying "Rounders For Women" paraphrasing the famous century-old slogan 'Votes For Women'.

However, shortly after peacefully handing out leaflets for the International Women's Day event – and publicising their rounders' matches – the three, Rebecca Hall, Sarah Bragoli and Amy Walker, were told to "get out" and were 'walked to the door' by Priory Meadows security. "Apparently a man had complained protesters were disturbing his shopping," said Hastings Rounders Chair Amy,



AMY WALKER

"which was a bit bizarre as we were simply carrying placards promoting our sport and not protesting about anything. We certainly weren't chaining ourselves to M&S, and we would never want to stop a man shopping!"

More than 200 local people each

year join in the free rounders games on the sea front, at local sports centres, and in Alexandra Park. "Everyone is welcome," says Amy Walker, "even men".

See the HIP List for details of Rounders matches.

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

✉Letter

DEVELOPMENT CONSULTATION NEEDED

Dear HIP

Local residents read, with a mixture of concern and disappointment, the latest titbits of information to leak out about the future of the Horntye Sports Centre and Park (HIP, Issue 268)

There was plenty of positive spin about the potential for new facilities and the hopes of the Horntye Park Management Company to lodge yet another speculative planning application with Hastings Borough Council, but very little else.

Frustratingly, these titbits are all that the local community ever hear from the Management Co or HBC Planning Dept until someone happens to spot a small yellow sign taped to a local lamppost – the only indication that a large and complex planning application has been submitted on a significant area of greenfield land right in the heart of our town, and slap bang next to a designated nature reserve, wildlife site and ancient woodland.

Other developments of signifi-

cance – Queensbury House, St Leonards bathing pool, Sandrock Bends – have a period of community consultation in the pre-application process, to ensure it benefits the users of the site, and those who will be impacted by the development, now and in the future.

But not at Horntye. If another planning application is forthcoming, it will be the FIFTH in recent years, all of which land on the local community without prior warning. This lack of consultation with local people, volunteer groups and agencies leads to distrust, frustration and anger. It also seems to indicate a wilful disregard by the Management Co to the wider impact its actions have on the people of Hastings and St Leonards.

You can't pave over just under five hectares of woodland and fields and build 104 (or 96, 65, 50 or however many it is this time) houses and not have a huge impact on the local community. It's worth remembering that the land, along with a large public grant from HBC, was gifted to the charity to "improve the conditions and life of the people of Hastings and St Leonards". Is it any wonder that the last two applications on the site have failed, with

hundreds of objections lodged, including from Sport England, local campaign groups and HBC conservation officers.

The current push from the Labour government may be to "build baby, build", but even they emphasise the need for a brownfield first strategy that includes local community engagement and revitalises town centres. Hastings is stuffed full of empty buildings and large derelict sites just begging for redevelopment.

I think we would all gladly support 'another sporting dawn at Horntye' but the solutions must come from local community engagement and benefit everyone who lives in Hastings and St Leonards.

The Save Horntye Community Campaign

HIP Sport Editor writes: According to the management company promoting the latest development, it would not involve paving over any significant area of woodland or fields. And the number of potential dwellings would be reduced from more than 100 to between 50 and 65.

NUMBERS FROM HASTINGS BOROUGH COUNCIL

40	rough sleepers one night last November
16	rough sleepers identified March 2025
£6.5m	temporary accommodation cost to council
£730,000	temporary accommodation cost in 2019
1,500	households on the waiting list for affordable settled housing
£172.50	weekly Housing Allowance benefit
£250.00	median weekly cost of a rental flat
131	council rehoused households 2023/4
615	people the council has statutory duty to re-house
323	people evicted from private rented accommodation (2023)
537	active rentals through Airbnb/other online sites (2024)

We would love to hear from you.

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

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

Homeless in Hastings



Meet Trudy, Homeless Charity Boss

TONY COLLINS, the Green councillor for Central St Leonards, and Chair of the Foreshore Trust, talks to Trudy Hampton-Hodges, Chief Executive of Warming Up the Homeless (WUTH)

It's rotten being homeless, but Trudy Hampton-Hodges is doing something about it.

WUTH, based in Bexhill, works in towns along the south coast. Temporary accommodation is better than a tent, but frequently provides the barest minimum, sometimes not even carpets. WUTH offers a Homestart service, which can supply sleeping bags, ground sheets, survival sheets, blankets, clothing, food and toiletries, even

cookers and other appliances.

They also aim to improve the individual's welfare through emotional support, even if it's just a smile or signposting them to other services. They act as a trusted intermediary to access emergency and similar services since many of their clients are deeply suspicious of all expressions of government.

Trudy and her team support 1,400 people a week across the range of their operation. They also feed

people, big time, processing 15 tons of food and preparing 3,000 meals a week.

If you are experiencing homelessness it can be hard to open a bank account. WUTH supports clients with this too, vouching for their identity so they can open accounts with Nationwide.

In Hastings, WUTH runs a well set-up day centre at Gizmo House on Priory Street, where clients can get a decent meal, a shower and wash their clothes. They can also access nursing, podiatry and mental health care, and find support with substance abuse, women's issues and domestic abuse.

There is even an accredited street vet service as many homeless people have pets. There are other more surprising services too, including storytelling.

"I was there one afternoon as some rough sleepers listened to the tale of Goldilocks and the three bears," remembers Trudy. "They loved it. None of them had ever heard the story."

The WUTH distribution centre in Bexhill also operates one of their three charity shops. When I walked in to meet Trudy, the lady at the counter grinned. "She's lovely," she told me. "She's so kind. She really looks after her people."

Trudy is proud of her team. WUTH has a number of paid staff, but it also has 430 volunteers, some of whom are neurodiverse. Working there is a stepping stone for some and a home from home for others. Trudy spoke gently to one young lad, who was agitated to meet someone new. "He's made so much progress," she told me. "He's autistic. When he first came to us he had a full time carer. Now he can dress himself, catch the bus by himself, and make a contribution. Before he would never look at you. We've taught him how to shake hands. He loves it here."

Money is a constant challenge and Trudy spends a good deal of time raising funds. Most of WUTH's resources, financial and material, come from the local community, but they also get support from the National Lottery, Nationwide, the Lloyds Foundation and the National Health Service.

Significant funds also come from the three WUTH shops but 'when retail sales fall, we can't feed so many people,' observes Trudy.

I asked Trudy what encourages her.

"To be honest," she says, "I am probably most encouraged by the positive attitude of the local councils. Their housing strategies address all kinds of needs and are working hard to get things right. The Rough Sleeper Initiative – in Hastings, and through East Sussex – makes a big difference too."

Warming Up the Homeless always needs more volunteers! To get in touch, for whatever reason, call 07367 060708 or email hello@wuth.org.

Homeless in Hastings

Support the Grumpy Cook and Make Someone Happy

MAZIN AL-JUMAILI, one of the founders of the men's health charity, Mr Hastings and St Leonards, talks to Barry Ashley of The Grumpy Cook

Barry Ashley moved to Hastings and started up two pay-it-forward cafes, one in the heart of the town centre.

Over the last eighteen months or so, The Grumpy Cook on Robertson Street, a near neighbour of the former Debenhams, has been a lifeline and salvation for individuals and families struggling to put food on the table.

When asked about his mission, Barry says: "We are providing disadvantaged people with cooked meals for free" and, whilst to all outward appearances the Grumpy Cook looks like a pretty standard coffee shop, it is a social business that encourages those customers able to do so to 'pay forward', effectively sponsoring a drink or a meal for those less able to pay.

"I want to help people feed people but without any stigma, and when

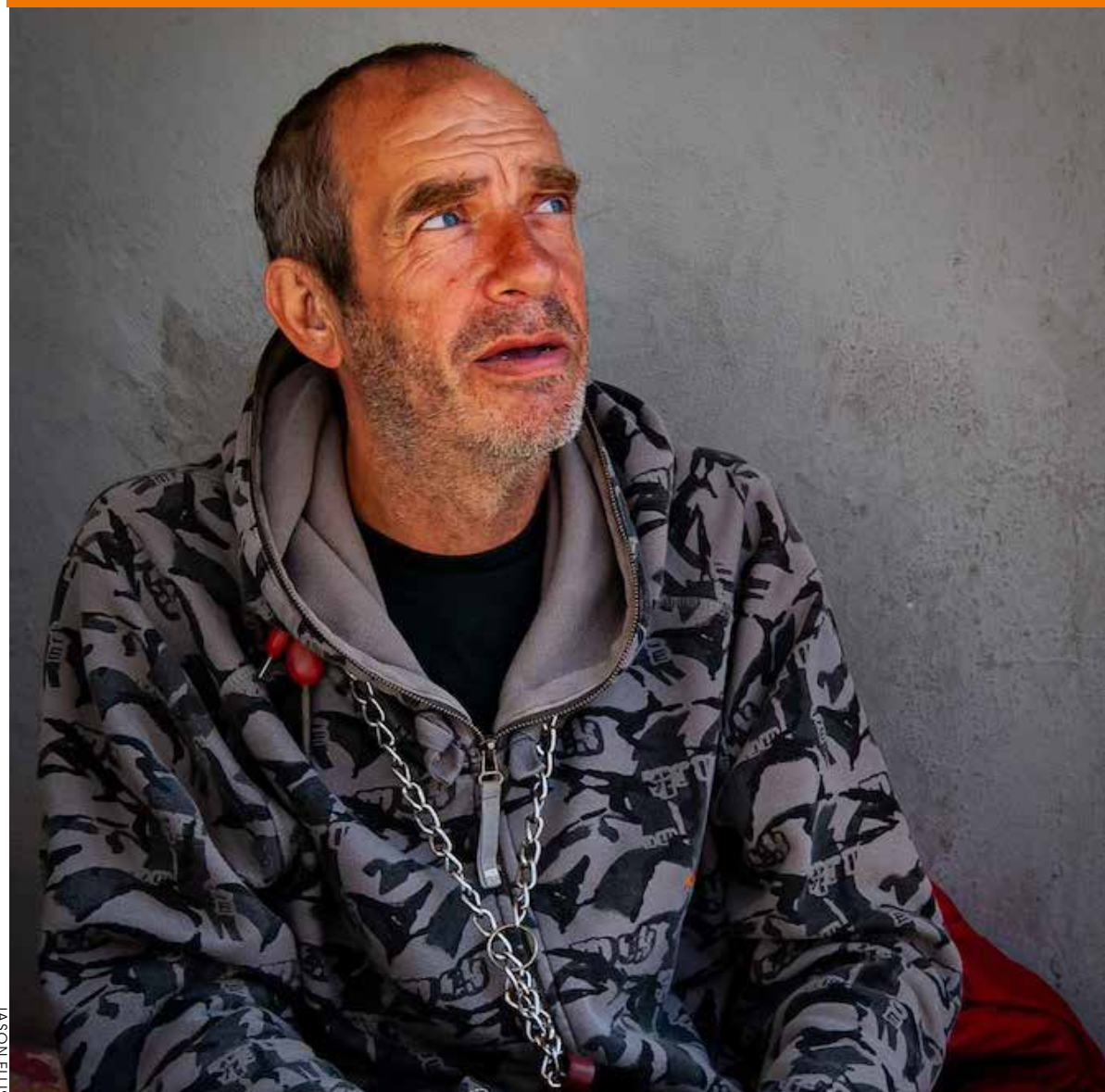
people come in here they would never know whether someone is eating cheaply, free or paying full price," Barry tells us.

He has experimented with targeted events such as an over 65s afternoon, with great success, providing a regular space for seniors to meet each week over a cup of tea and cake.

He has expanded this to start a men's meal group, saying, "I will try and mirror what I did with the over 65s and just say that we've got a male only get-together with free food and free drink. The only condition is that people come round and are happy to meet new people – who often become friends."

The Grumpy Cook is at 1a Robertson Street, Hastings. Go to table88.co.uk/the-grumpy-club for more information about Grumpy Men's Club.





JASON ELLIS

Meet Matt: Tales from the Tent

CHRIS CONNELLEY

It's a radiant Sunday morning – after months of greyness, spring has finally sprung – and Matt is in fine fettle.

For the last six years, he's been living in a tent in and around the Morrisons store on Queens Road, where he has developed something of a reputation as a local character. He's a born communicator and reaches out to anyone passing by and, over his time in the area, has got to know many residents, traders and shoppers, often by name. In the time we were chatting, pretty much everyone who passes greets him by name, often following up with a check in to see how he is.

Matt, who is in his mid-fifties, is a Londoner by birth – a Wandsworth boy – but has been living in

Hastings since he was 11. He went to William Parker School and, on leaving, got married, spent some time in the army and worked as a car mechanic for 15 years.

His world fell apart in 2010, when his son took his life at the age of 22, catapulting him into a cycle of depression and decline involving acute anxiety and PTSD that eventually led to him walking out of his family home in 2016.

Since then, he has lived on the streets pretty much continuously, with a couple of spells in temporary accommodation and a period when he left the town to live in Weymouth. That didn't last long and when he returned to Hastings, he set up his camp on the edge of the Morrisons supermarket, where he became a regular fixture.

That's how I first got to know him, when I began to chat to him on my daily trips into town through

the park via the Morrisons tunnel.

Despite the generally warm welcome, Matt tells me a couple of people complained and he was moved on, pitching up further along Queens Road near Cornwallis Street. This location proved less successful, however, with some incidents of harassment and abuse from groups of youths.

Last July, he moved back down to the pavement outside the Morrisons drive-in point, which has reunited him with some of his established 'regulars' and introduced him to a new audience on the main road itself.

Matt expressed relief that the long, hard winter months have passed, which this year were made even more challenging by the death of a best friend in December and mentioned that he is currently getting some targeted support, with the prospect of a room of his own if certain points of detail can be agreed.

Which gives him reason to feel positive.

"I hope for a better future, and if I get myself forward, the future is going to be better than the past."

Good luck with that.



Food Redistribution Charities in Hastings – Spotlight on The Pantry



EDWINA HUGHES
and ERIN WARD

In Britain's current cost of living crisis, many families struggle to afford the basics including food. This has meant that, over the past 15 years, we have seen a huge rise in the number of food banks operating in the UK. In 2010, for example, the Trussell Trust, which runs the Hastings Food Bank, had 35 food banks, whereas now they run over 1,700 food banks, with a further 1,200 running independently.

There are a number of food redistribution organisations currently operating in Hastings, including Hastings Food Bank, Dom's Food Mission and Surviving the Streets.

I spoke to Kirsten Dunham, manager of the Pantry, to find out more about their work.

The Pantry is a food redistribution charity that runs on a membership model. It serves people living in food poverty in Hastings and St Leonards. To join, you need to visit in person on a Tuesday or Friday between 10am and 1pm, bringing proof of address with you as well as proof of benefits or proof of low income. To activate your membership, you are asked to make a £3 donation.

Kirsten and the team are often dealing with a waiting list of potential beneficiaries, but they will do their best to help you the same day so that you can walk out with a food parcel. In an average week, The Pantry will serve between 60-70 people.

This might include someone who has become unemployed, whose life circumstances have suddenly changed or who simply needs a bit of support with their household food needs.

Once you are a member, your £3 donation gets you a food package that includes all the basics – longlife items like tinned pulses, veg and meat, toiletries like shower gel or shampoo, fresh fruit and veg and bread. Kirsten estimates the food package is worth at least £15.

Many of us don't expect to need the services of these organisations, but when we do, they are there. In terms of the difference it makes, Kirsten put it perfectly:

"When you see someone come in, and maybe they've just lost their job and they feel ashamed, there is no judgement here; it's a happy place to visit, they are delighted. To see that change in a person – it makes me glow."

If you want to help The Pantry, you can donate items like longlife food and toiletries to them. You can do this at Morrisons or ESK (just ask at the till where to put your purchased donations) or you can bring your donations directly to The Pantry on a Tuesday, Thursday or Friday 10am-1pm. If you want to make a donation but are unsure what to give, Kirsten tells me the items most in demand are nappies, tinned corned beef and toiletries.

For more information about The Pantry visit etcSussex.weebly.com/the-pantry.html

Address for donations: Dorset Pl, Hastings TN34 1LG

 **Homeless
in Hastings**

Our Broken Housing System

HELENA DOLLIMORE, MP for
Hastings, Rye and the Villages

Everyone deserves a safe and secure place to call home. But for too many people in our town, this is not the case.

Hastings has the highest rate of children growing up homeless of anywhere in England outside London, with the equivalent of one child in every classroom living in temporary accommodation. This is nothing short of a disgrace.

I am angry every time I think about how our broken housing system has failed all these children and everyone else in our town who finds themselves homeless or

sleeping rough.

When I was elected as our MP, tackling our local housing crisis was one of my top priorities. The previous government relied on sticking plaster measures, while the situation continued to spiral. We are now facing the worst housing crisis in living memory, and urgent drastic action is needed.

As an immediate first step, the Labour Government pledged millions to break the cycle of homelessness in Hastings. This money will directly fund critical services to prevent homelessness and support

people into secure, stable housing—helping those at risk of homelessness to pay deposits and negotiate with landlords. This means that we will now be better equipped to step in early to stop households becoming homeless in the first place.

A key part of this picture is the new Renters’ Rights Bill. Across the country, no-fault evictions are one of the leading causes of homelessness. This legislation will finally ban this cruel practice that allows families to be uprooted from their home with little notice and mini-

mal justification. The Bill will also make sure that landlords act on issues like damp and mould within a specified timeframe and ban them from discriminating against tenants with children or pets. I was proud to vote for this landmark piece of legislation which will affirm rights for thousands of renters in Hastings and help tackle our local housing crisis.

In the long run, we need to tackle the problem at its root and build the additional homes we desperately need. With record levels of home-

lessness, there’s no shying away from the housing crisis we have inherited. Over the past decade, the rate of house building in this country plummeted, as house prices continued to rise.

This Labour Government is reversing that trend.

We have begun to reform our broken planning system to deliver the biggest expansion of affordable and social housing in a generation. Our town is full of brownfield sites that could easily be turned into homes for local people. It is essential that we get these homes built, to make sure that everyone has a secure place to live, and we can bring down the long waitlists for social housing which leave families in limbo for years on end.

The Labour Government is reforming the planning system so that we can get spades in the ground, instead of delaying decisions and wasting the time of councillors and applicants which only delay good outcomes for our community. It is vital that the voice listened to in planning meetings is not that of the blockers, but that of the hundreds of homeless children in our town who need a safe and secure place to live. Our responsibility should always be to them.



 **MORE BUS LESS FUSS**

 **Funded by
UK Government**

 **East Sussex
County Council**

single fares for just

£1, £2 or £3

on buses in East Sussex

find out more:

[eastsussex.gov.uk
/bus-fares](https://eastsussex.gov.uk/bus-fares)





TOBY SHAW PHOTOS

Victoria and the American *intelligentsia*. So though Fairlight Hall isn't quite a *salon*, the situation was comparable. And actually the first short piece, *Automne*, sounded kind of familiar. Chaminade's music is gracious and elegant and deserves more attention than it has had since WWII. Though Hough is of the opinion that 'music is gender-free' and of course he's right, but the culture that surrounds its publicity, performance, and dissemination, is not.

THE LOVELINESS OF MOMPOU

After the towering Chopin, Hough played as an encore a short piece by Frederic Mompou, another lesser-known composer, born in the very late nineteenth century. Such beautiful, pared-down music, influenced by Fauré and Debussy. This piece was *Jeune Filles Au Jardin*, the middle of which harbours a little ghost of a tune that came back with me as an earworm. I've been listening to recordings of works by that composer since then, wondering why I haven't before.

So, a triumph and an honour for Hastings International Piano Concerto's new season. Sir Stephen has twice seriously considered the monastic life, and is a devout Catholic convert. He maintains a gruelling tour schedule – this concert was between dates in Bristol and Leeds, then he is off to Texas, Oregon, Hawaii, Canada, London, Tokyo, and Sydney before the end of May. I asked him how he managed this. "I think it's just a matter of taking every day as it comes, trying to eat sensibly and sleep enough. There are certainly times when it is overwhelming but also I'm conscious of what a wonderful privilege it is to play for people all over the world and bring this music of joy to them", was his answer.

I hope he doesn't mind if I also add that he is charming, scrupulously polite, and dimples when he smiles.

The funds raised will also go towards Hastings International Piano Concerto's educational work in local schools. Hastings International Piano: hastingsinternationalpiano.org Additional funds are being raised through a fantastic silent auction, see hastingsinternationalpiano.org/2025/02/28/hastings-international-piano-auction-for-details Sir Stephen Hough: stephenhough.com

International Piano Fundraiser

VICTORIA KINGHAM

Sir Stephen Hough has been called one of twenty living polymaths: a brilliant piano soloist, he also composes and teaches music, has published poetry, novels and memoirs, and is a professor at various leading music colleges here and in the US. He has also recorded about 50 albums of glorious piano music, mostly of the acknowledged greatest composers but also intentionally to promote the music of lesser known composers.

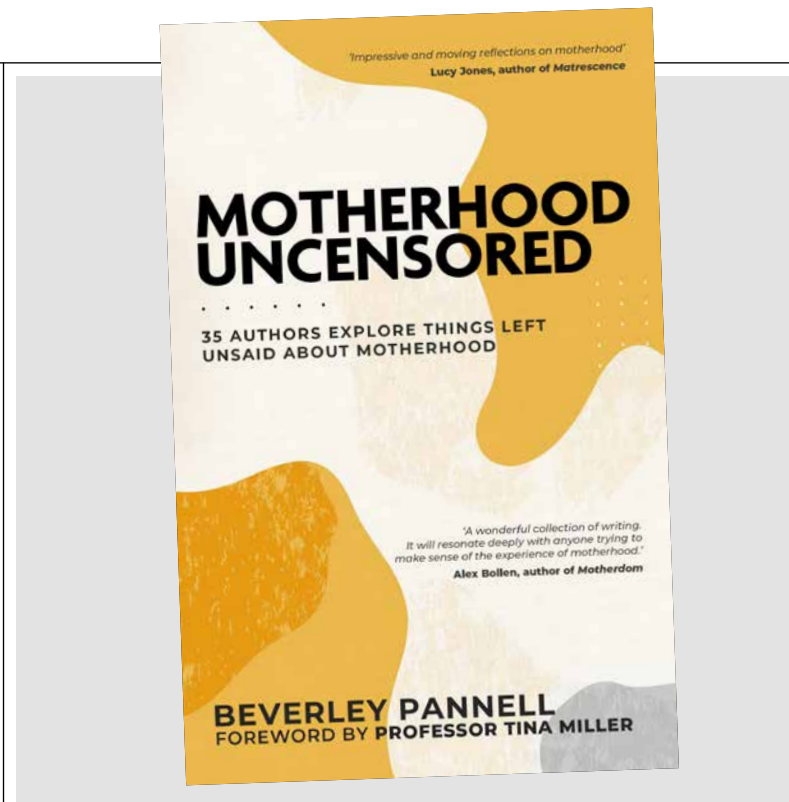
So it is with justifiable pride that the director of Hastings International Piano Concerto Competition, Vanessa Latache, could announce that he is this season's Patron. Accordingly, as a fundraiser, he gave a recital for 100 people in the opulent Fairlight Hall on 1 March.

WORLDS WITHIN WORLDS

It's almost impossible to describe how a truly great performer can make an already-magnificent piece

of music into something more: into something almost solid and tangible that is a world in and of itself. He and others refer to the 'architecture' of a piece of music. I can only compare looking into any great painting and seeing it for what it is, as a world in itself. He played two of Chopin's *Nocturnes*, a *Scherzo* and a *Sonata*, as though they had been born within him rather than the result of lifelong pianistic practice. His interpretation of Chopin is dazzling, muscular, fast, yet every nuance of phrase, every elegant decoration, every beautiful sustained Chopinesque chord, is given full attention during the mini-second that it occurs. This approach was fully realised when he played, impeccably, Chopin's challenging later work, the B-minor Sonata.

The first section of the recital was given to works by Cécile Chaminade. You may not have heard of this composer – I hadn't – but during her lifetime (born 1857, died 1944) she was in popular demand as both pianist and composer, highly rated in salons everywhere, loved by Queen



Motherhood: The Real Story

Simon Anthony Hobson

MU Books is proud to announce the release of *Motherhood Uncensored: 35 Authors Explore Things Left Unsaid About Motherhood*, a powerful and thought-provoking anthology curated by Beverley Pannell, with a foreword by renowned sociologist Professor Tina Miller. This essential new book will be available in stores and online from 17 March 2025 and can be pre-ordered now from retailers.

In 2024, motherhood-uncensored.org launched a bold writing competition, inviting voices from all walks of life to share untold truths about motherhood. The response was overwhelming, with hundreds of entries and thousands of readers voting on which stories resonated most deeply. The result is this striking collection of essays and reflections, tackling subjects often shrouded in silence – fertility struggles, loss, inequality, the impact of motherhood on identity, work and relationships,

and the moments of joy that emerge amidst the challenges.

The anthology not only shares diverse and compelling perspectives but also challenges the enduring myths and inequalities that shape the experience of motherhood. "It's easy to see why each of the entries included in *Motherhood Uncensored* would be left unsaid. Each took courage to write and share. But each describes an experience that is more real and more common than the motherhood fairy tale. Each opens a conversation rather than shutting it down. Collectively they make more space for others to say what they've left unsaid. That's why I wanted to run this competition. Words are powerful. They help us clarify what we think, what is true and who we are," said Beverley Pannell, editor of *Motherhood Uncensored*.

From a personal point of view, I appear to be the only male author to be among those that made it to the last 35. Isn't that bizarre? We ALL have mothers, have friends who are mothers, encounter mothers everywhere and there are so many dynamics at play between a man and his mother (and vice versa). I feel privileged to be that lone male voice.



Motherhood Uncensored: 35 Authors Explore Things Left Unsaid About Motherhood (MU Books, 2025, ed. Beverley Pannell) www.motherhood-uncensored.org [instagram: uncensored_motherhood_stories/](https://www.instagram.com/uncensored_motherhood_stories/) Contact: hello@motherhood-uncensored.org





Top: Cellist Francesca Ter-Berg, below: Violinist Flora Curzon

Fran And Flora: Transylvanian Rhapsodies

VICTORIA KINGHAM

They have just returned from a trip to Transylvania, but there's nothing remotely Gothic about Fran and Flora, the duo who played at Crown House on 27 February. They are fascinated by the music of Eastern Europe: specifically Klezmer, that originated in the many Jewish communities of Transylvania lost or destroyed in World War II. But if you have the impression that Klezmer is a slightly limited form, only associated with dancing rabbis at Jewish weddings in upper Manhattan, you couldn't be more wrong.

There's something of a general revival and 'rediscovery' of the soul-

ful and distinctive sound of a string orchestra (traditionally string because in sixteenth-century Europe Jews were legally allowed only to play 'soft' instruments, and not brass instruments or drums). Though it is indeed strongly linked to the Jewish wedding ceremony, the musical style incorporates both Jewish and non-Jewish melodies, secular and synagogue music. The vocal style is heavily ornamented, in the style of cantors in a synagogue.

LOST AND FOUND AGAIN

The language of the songs is Yiddish. Before World War II that language was spoken across the many Jewish communities living and working in Eastern Europe. It is derived mainly from middle German, but with

Hebrew, Slavic, and Romance additions, and written in Hebrew script.

In Israel it became known as the language of the ghetto, and its use was discouraged; nevertheless there is now a school of Yiddish in the university at Tel Aviv, with a number of distinguished centres for its study. And Universities offer Yiddish Studies as part of Slavic or Oriental Language departments (despite its European origins). UNESCO still classifies it as an 'endangered' language, though there has been an increase in the number of speakers. Fran and Flora mentioned the orthodox Haredi Jewish community in Stoke Newington who have Yiddish as their mother tongue, and if you've ever travelled on the 253 bus between Hackney and Stamford Hill, you'll have heard it spoken a great deal.

So whether the Klezmer revival has spurred the Yiddish revival, or vice-versa, singers like Fran and Flora must be leaders in its promotion. While they use traditional language and instruments (Flora on violin, Fran on cello) they make full use of modern instrumentation (reverb, synth, looping) and plenty of instrumental and vocal amplification.

FAULTLESS

It's all to the good. What they present is unexpected, faultless, interesting, varied, and unclassifiable. Their arrangements are as varied as their choice of song: they use the cello as much as the violin for the melodic lead and both instruments as rhythm during the numbers. No written music stands between them and the audience, and they have a musical relationship of some fifteen years. Francesca's singing is honed and improved through careful study but seems completely natural. Her voice is straight, pure, high – she decorates and augments the melodies in a wonderfully authentic way. Flora's voice is lower, sweet – they both sing in

Yiddish as though they were born to it, which is probably just one result of their years of research. Some of the numbers are their own originals, but in the traditional style – fantastic stuff. Most of the numbers they presented this evening can be found on their album, *Precious Collection*, and the performance they gave was quite as polished as on the album.

Small, intimate, and relaxed, Crown House in St Leonards is the ideal venue for the concerts planned by Holly Harman in her Sounds St Leonards series. White Rock Studio, only recently restored as an intimate venue, is another. Tonight's audience was lively, responsive, and enthusiastic. Classically trained on the violin, but with a consuming interest in world folk sounds, Holly is bringing to Hastings and St Leonards some extremely eclectic, extremely beautiful musical experiences. These will include a performance by her own ensemble which will coincide with the release of her first album. Another source of the high-quality music that goes towards making Hastings and St Leonards a truly exciting locality.



'The music of Fran and Flora sits in two camps, both steeped in tradition, with material drawn directly from archival recordings, recovered manuscripts and years of study with traditional music masters, whilst simultaneously garnering a contemporary and avant-garde aesthetic, speaking to the more classical and experimental listener.' (sleeve notes, *Precious Collection* on Piccadilly Records
More details: hiddennotes.co.uk/fran-flora Sounds St Leonards: sounds-stleonards.co.uk



An awful lot can happen in a single day

Mayfly

A PLAY BY JOE WHITE · DIRECTED BY JEFF GRAVES

Tuesday 18 to Saturday 22 March

Tickets £13.50; £8.50 members/concs

STABLES THEATRE AND ARTS CENTRE, HASTINGS TN34 3BD

Box office: 01424 423221

For booking information and seating plan visit www.stablestheatre.co.uk





Barschak and William

**Excerpt from Aaron Barschak, *The I-Crowd*
(Thoughts from Trafalgar Square 03/05/2023)**

What good is acreage of National Trust
If the people's bed clothes are sheets of rain
Or blanket icy gusts? This is insane
In 21st century Britain
Housing for all is a must!
Starting that would bolster flagging national trust

Oh William so many of your Dad's subjects are lacking
Shelter
They need backing
In the roofless surreal estate welter
With house prices rising helter-skelter
Where an English person's home should be their castle
But where homelessness is accepted as part and parcel
Of a thriving property market
The housing secretary ignoring
Targets
With voters snoring in flagstone supported sleeping bags
In a land whose Capital houses capital of funny moneybags
But where some sleep in rags
Under cardboard and packing material
Striving In conditions neither palatial nor imperial
More unshielded from the cold
Than packages in a depot owned leasehold
By the Royal Mail.

Yet there are no freehold
Sales of parcels of land owned
By another Royal Male
To fund the building of homes
For those crapitalism forces to beg and roam.

Funny Money
TIM BARLOW

John Cooper Clarke
Of 'punk poet laureate' renown
is advertising fragrances by Molton Brown.
He's not the first to sell us down
The river; Roger Daltrey of The Who
Promoted American Express to you.
David Bowie made a tv ad for Pepsi.
We thought John Lydon
Could be relied on
but he came back from the dead
In ads, telling you to spread
Country Life on your butter knife.
And now Oasis provide tracks
to advertise The Halifax.

And so the rebels fall
Surrendering, in thrall
To the greenbacked bribes of marketing teams
Killing the dreams
Of those of us who thought our heroes pure,
Above the lure of filthy lucre.

And yet, and yet... who are we to talk?
The highest bidders buy our work
We trade our time and talent for wages
To buy whatever tat will engage us.

We silence the rebellious spirit of youth
By stuffing cash into its mouth.
We compromise with commerce
We abandon our defiant stance
And like mountain streams, meander
along paths of least resistance.

We brand our bodies with logos like cattle.
We become humanoid billboards,
surrendering the battle.
We are advertising and consuming hordes.
Rebellion was to no avail:
our very selves are up for sale.

John Cooper Clarke is having a lark
plugging Molton Brown.
Who are we to put him down?

Poets, protest, and Pepsi-Cola

VICTORIA KINGHAM

What did punk mean? And what does it still mean? Is it a term that transcends time, or was it a movement peculiar to its 1970s moment? 'One of its main tenets is a rejection of mainstream, corporate mass culture and its values' states the Wiki entry, which is relatively up to date and has been heavily honed since 2007 by various interested (mostly American) parties.

Dean Stalham's *Stretched Lips* punk poetry evening at 74 Norman Road was a kind of retrospective, a comparatively staid event. Not much in the way of moshing, spitting, or safety pins, but a lot of fun all the same. And a wildly enthusiastic audience for what was in fact an excellent evening of declamatory poetry.

Declamatory is the operative word here. A poem to me is something that I look at carefully on a page then read it about ten times and then begin to understand – or not-what the poet is talking about. The mere fact of its appearance and shape in print often features in the cumulative meaning of a text. Think about the small, bare works of William Carlos Williams, and the whimsical patterns of E E Cummings, for example, whose poems are concerned with the physical as well as the philosophical.

Aaron Barschak (remember him, the guy who gatecrashed prince William's 21st birthday party in Bin Laden fancy dress?) was instructive. "There's two kinds of poetry, and poems that are to be performed are entirely different from the ones that are written down" he remarked. Though he is moderately well-known as a performer, none of his own poems has ever been published, probably due to his semi-notoriety, anti-establishment thoroughness and general over-the-top bonkersness. "His style of stunt-comedy often borders on the deeply offensive" wrote Alison Roberts in the *Evening Standard* in 2012, and of course, that's the point. Given that he appeared noisily in a fuschia evening dress over a fat suit, with an ill-concealed and ridiculous pair of false titties bursting out of the top, an old-fashioned policeman's helmet with a sandcastle Union Jack sticking out of the dome, a St George flag on the back of a satin jacket, and waving a cut-out placard of Prince Andrew, this reputation was conclusively reinforced. So you could call him an avant-garde comedy performer rather than a poet, but the poetry is meaningful enough. A section of his long performance poem is reproduced on this page, appropriately for this homelessness special edition.

Barschak's long work is also about wealth distribution and, in

part, about business: while he takes a stand against homelessness, he mentions that he makes a living as a landlord. Sad, but true – Mammon usually wins out and it's a courageous person who takes a lifelong stand against that particular son of Lucifer. A poor one too. Or a rich one: 'Why not phone up Robin Hood/ And ask him for some wealth distribution?' sang The Clash in 1978. 'The new groups are not concerned/ With what there is to be learned/ They got Burton suits, huh, you think it's funny/ Turning rebellion into money'.

I'm grateful to one of the evening's early performers, Tim Barlow, for that particular insight into what has changed and *plus c'est la même chose* in 2025. Spear-headed by Barlow's tellingly laconic poem (also reprinted here) which explores – the death of punk? Or its clever, cynical, commercial institutionalisation? – most of the evening's poems expressed protest of one kind or another. They addressed current issues: class, race, sex, gender, religion, political aggression. One divine fresh-faced and rosy punk poet, Syd, stood out, carefully-lacquered blond/green mohawk and ear flesh tunnels proudly prominent. His poetic performance was about the challenges and individualism of Queerness, but also about suicidal depression – he seemed quite cheerful about all of it, however.

Essentially, it's refreshing to find social protest alive and well and living in St. Leonards: a post-punk 'rejection of mainstream, corporate mass culture' however ruefully, or necessarily, diluted by the vicissitudes of earning a living.



Folk, Baroque, and Beyond

Since launching Sounds St Leonards in 2024, Holly Harman has brought a fascinating variety of eclectic, folk-influenced, but unique music to the town; the duo Fran and Flora (see page 11) is just one example.

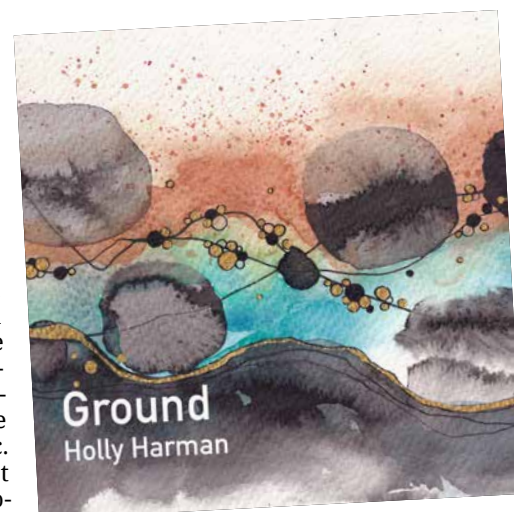
Holly is herself a distinguished violinist, with a deep connection to the music of the Baroque period. Her fascination with historical performance practices led her to specialise at The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama with Andrea Jones and Rachel Podger. She has toured and recorded with some of Europe's premier orchestras and ensembles.

Equally passionate about exploring the intersection of Baroque and folk traditions, Holly often incorporates folk elements into her performances. After beginning on the London folk scene, she released a critically acclaimed disc with her band, The Twisted Twenty. To do this, she created her own record label, Penny Fiddle Records, dedicated to multi-genre, unclassifiable

and unexplored string music.

Holly's new album, *Ground*, is a unique blend of the historic with the contemporary, and captures the expressive qualities of both the baroque and traditional folk music. The title represents not only the Baroque compositional technique of ground bass, but is also a reference to feeling 'grounded', and at times, a nod to feeling generally 'ground down'.

Featuring intricate works by early Baroque composers, the album also dives into traditional folk music, including the lyrical tune *The Fairy Queen* by Irish harpist and composer Turlough O'Carolan. A modern folk piece by Sid Goldsmith infuses a soulful, earthy quality to the album. The centerpiece is a fresh commission by composer (and wonderful singer) Alice Zawadzki,



known for her emotive and genre-blending style. Zawadzki's piece, *Get Thee To The Trees*, adds a modern voice to the album, exploring a new palette of textures and emotions, fusing past and present.

Ground was made with the support of Arts Council England National Lottery project grants, and the generous support of family and friends through crowdfunding.

Launch Concert: 29th April 2025, St John's Church, Pevensey Road, St Leonards-on-Sea

Life, Rhymes, and a Lot of Hats



EBM HUMPHREYS

Billed as 'like Kafka, but funnier', I had high hopes for *The Life and Rhymes of Archy and Mehitabel*, after days of abysmal technology failures and endless loops at work, for which Archy's name was the only solace, I wasn't disappointed.

Neither written as a play nor intended to be one, this illusion of a play is created by one-man-show actor and director Patrick Kealey, who draws from a substantial body of humorous and biting satirical tales of underground living during New York's jazz age.

Born a cockroach circa 1916, protagonist Archy was the brainchild

of Don Marquis (appearing in his daily column *The Sun Dial* for the New York Sun), although he claims to be the reincarnation of an unappreciated human free-verse poet. Most of Archy's gutter-based companions and potential predators are also, fortunately, vessels for elevated human souls who speak English.

ANIMAL SPIRITS

Archy and his (mostly) friend Mehitabel, a sassy alley cat who has decided she was formerly Cleopatra, form the backbone of this stage adaptation, with many others peppering the narrative. As it says in the introduction to Archy's written work: "It is an era of belief in communications from the spirit land." Archy impersonates each character

— donning cleverly-chosen headgear to indicate who is speaking. But Kealey's accents and the vivid expression and distinction he manages to give each character in turn are enough, and one of the highlights of the performance. He seems almost himself as the old theatre-cat Tom, whose words seem written for him.

The scale of *The Stables* stage perfectly suits the intimacy of this work (as Kealey himself says in an interview on soundcloud) where the more-than-human characters, by turns, preen, argue and bare their souls. From Freddy the rat to an aggressive tarantula that arrived from South America in a bunch of bananas, each anecdote dazzles with craziness and wit, blotting out my own mind in exactly the way I like.

The fun Kealey has had in composing this piece is evident, as is the love with which Marquis created this community of unfortunate ex-people. And if you missed it, fear not, because the beautifully presented 1927 compilation *Archy and Mehitabel* remains in print today (and it's free to download — go to digital-commons.unl.edu/zeabook/ and search 'archy'). Kealey is pretty prolific too, recently directing *After Miss Julie*, and now adding 'author' to his list of roles. His first novel *Bog Boy* is coming out later this year.



The Life and Rhymes of Archy and Mehitabel is performed by Patrick Kealey at *The Stables* Theatre, Hastings, on 26 February. stablestheatre.co.uk/patrickkealey.com



WHITE ROCK STUDIO x SOUNDS ST LEONARDS PRESENTS

AWARD-WINNING SITAR VIRTUOSO

JASDEEP SINGH DEGUN

WED 26TH MARCH

WHITE ROCK STUDIO, HASTINGS



Tickets & Info

www.whiterocktheatre.org.uk
www.sounds-stleonards.co.uk

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
Funded by UK Government

Doors 7pm
Tickets £17.50 adv

BOOKBUSTER REVIEW

Renters Unite!

By Jacob Stringer

Published by Pluto Books, 2025,
rrp £14.99

REVIEW BY TIM BARTON

Hastings, and indeed many places in England, is experiencing a significant rise in rental prices, 'driven by demand' as there is way too little property available to rent. Much property that could be made available to renters is in fact only available as holiday lets, a more lucrative option for landlords than rental. The excessive cost of mortgages is kettling many of us into long-term, often life-time rental, exacerbated by the banks, which, despite the fact that rent is usually cheaper than a mortgage on a similar or often even a bigger property, will not lend to low-income applicants.

I put 'driven by demand' in quotes as it needs unpacking. Despite special pleading by certain landlords and lettings agencies around costs to them, which of course are real and often not negligible, it is not 'costs' that result in rent increases; nor is it 'demand'. It is linked more closely to 'what the market will bear'. This is another way of saying that it is based on greed and usury. Of course it is 'Not all landlords!', but it is only ever landlords, to borrow from the #MeToo movement. My own landlord is not a greedhead, and as she lets to me without an agency involved, she is not constantly pressured to raise my rent to the 'market value'. If she did, I'd have been homeless years ago.

A HOUSING CRISIS DRIVEN BY GREED AND USURY

But I know that I am very lucky in this. Almost everyone I know that rents has experienced year-on-year rent increases. £50 a month extra for a few years in a row, equating to

CROSSWORD CORNER

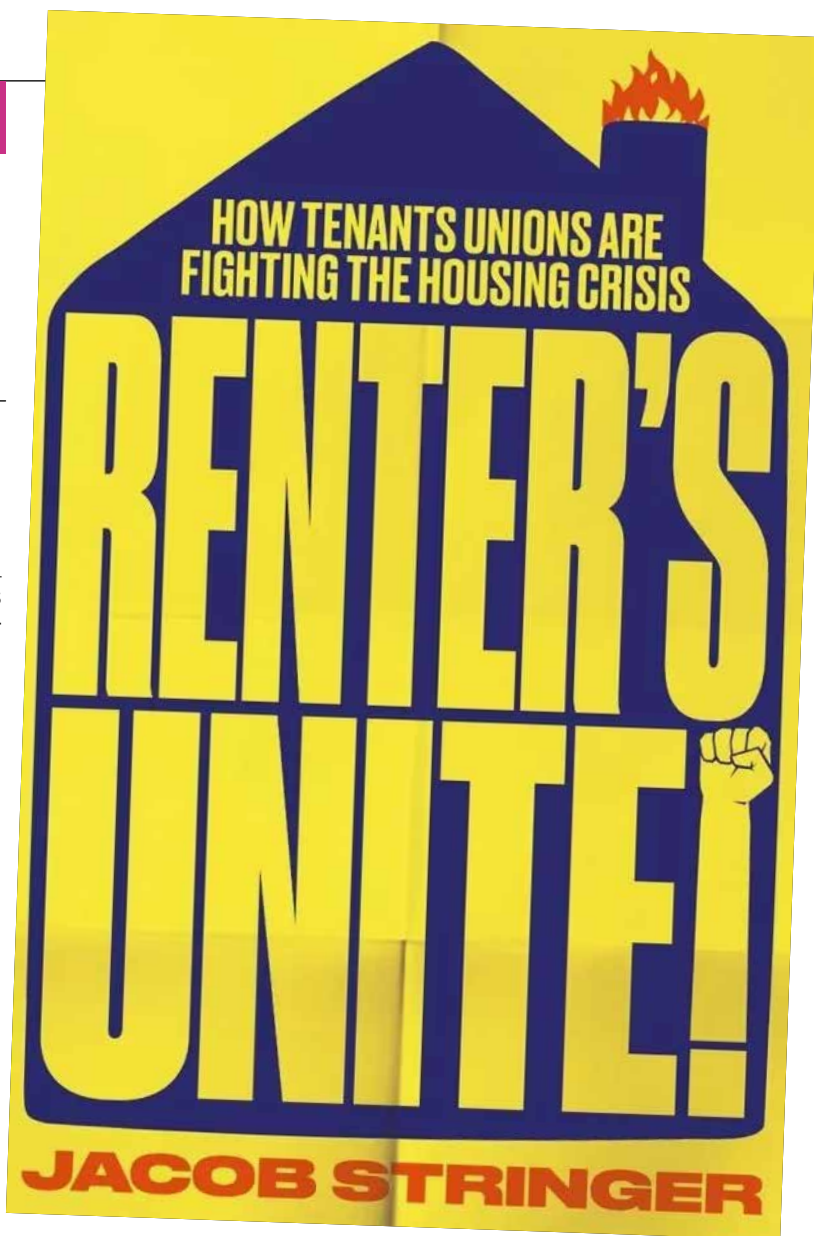
Across

1. Old man cracked nut (6)
3. Raided vehicle Edward boarded (6)
4. Struggle in biggest river (6)

Down

1. Covers for some pal I bistro fed (6)
2. Red dug about unearthing menial (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 5 of The HIP List



£600 extra a year over a decade, for example, has literally doubled and more than doubled some of my friends' rental costs. And these are not the worst cases by far. Add the hateful Section 21 eviction orders to, for example, push someone out only to put the flat straight back on the market at double the rent or as Airbnb (you know who you are), and we have a real housing crisis driven by greed and usury.

And this unveils a fundamental set of facts. OUR EARNINGS become THEIR INCOME. Of course, this is true of any transaction in a market economy. But rent is in almost every case, by a large margin, a person's greatest expenditure, and one that too often needs to supplant

appropriate heating and nutritional needs, especially as ‘the cost-of-living crisis’ increases (mostly more greed and usury – witness our water, electrics, supermarket bills increase mapped against insane profit increases for suppliers and their stockholders). And yet our ‘rights’ regarding this excessive expense are often rather less protected than consumer rights on, say, a new kettle. I am of the opinion that a roof over one’s head should be seen as a fundamental right, along with sufficient food and warmth, but our globalised market economy sees that as anathema, a threat to profits to be stamped out. In Trumpian terms, ‘communism’ (try not to laugh, or cry).

A FIGHTBACK TODAY IS A HARDER TASK

Now, obviously, as certain landlords may have pointed out in these pages, such costs add to a landlord's costs too. This is, up to a point, a legitimate complaint. But only up to a point. As we all must be aware by now, surely, 'trickledown' is only ever a tiny drip from the billions hoarded by the super-rich, and in a failing economy like ours it becomes a torrent fountaining upwards with no trickledown at all. This sucks yet more energy from the economic base, deepening the crisis. Current government policy seems no better than the austerity-obsessed Tory government policies.

How do we deal with this? Since the removal of rent tribunals and rent controls in the 1980s things have generally become worse for those of us trapped in a rent economy. Before that we had a rich tapestry of community-based organisations, not only in housing, fighting for tenants' rights and squatters rights, but across the whole of 'working class' society. A fightback today is a harder task, as rebuilding always takes far more energy than destruction.

But... Renters can Unite! Stringer's book covers a global perspec-

tive on the fight for our rights, and the revival of the fight here too. His focus in the chapters on the UK are based around his experience with tenants unions such as 'London Renters Union', of which he is a member, and associated unions such as ACORN, who have a presence here in Hastings. Read this book from an in-depth analysis of how such unions work, and how they succeed. Many examples include a firm political stance, others are much less concerned with context, fighting instead each battle as it comes. There is a good argument for looking at wider issues and uniting across larger areas, for long-term success, but national policy is harder to influence than it is to appeal to your peers in your home town: thus, both approaches (and others) can work. However, which path you choose, 'stronger together' applies, and you ARE NOT ALONE!

If you are interested in joining ACORN, or just learning more about tenant unions, you can contact Hastings branch by emailing Naomi Gann at naomi.gann@acorntheunion.org.uk

*Renters Unite! Is available from
Bookbuster, 39 Queens Road,
Hastings TN34 1RE*

£15 off Your First Treatment
when you bring this Ad!

New from

Essential Massage The Gua Sha & Facial Cupping Lymphatic Drainage Facial

A Deeply Soothing Restorative Treatment. Sculpt, Lift, Nourish & De-Puff skin, giving you a naturally more glowing youthful look

Mothers Day 30th
March Gift Vouchers
Available

Two stylish studios to choose from Sea Breeze Pilates in St Leonards & Edmund Road near the Old Town

To book this highly effective age management treatment, or a choice of other pampering therapies, just scan here



essentialmassagehastings.com
Enquiries and bookings Text 07713 743205

FOOTBALL

Lifeline Victory For Battling ‘U’s

1 March:
Cray Valley PM 1,
Hastings Utd 1

4 March:
Chatham Town 2,
Hastings Utd 0

8 March:
Hastings Utd 2,
Hendon 0

HUGH SULLIVAN

Hastings United chalked up their first victory in eleven Isthmian Premier League games when they beat Hendon 2-0 at the Pilot Field last Saturday. The win still leaves them mired in the drop zone, seven points adrift of 18th place (or better) that they need to finish in to keep their status. But with none of the other eight lowest-placed teams winning, and only Dulwich Hamlet managing to draw, it was a good day all round for manager Danny Searle’s men. The previous Saturday they had come away from promotion-chasing

Cray Valley PM with a creditable draw, having led for much of the second half. Harvard graduate Tanner Dogan scored the opener on his debut for the ‘U’s. The Kent side equalised ten minutes from time and pressed strongly for a winner, but Searle said afterwards that he felt Hastings had fully deserved their point and might well have come away with all three. They got none three days later, however, when they were beaten 2-0 at Chatham, the home team scoring a goal in each half. Hendon arrived in Hastings on an even worse run of results than their hosts. They had won the reverse fixture in North London on 23 November by a 9-0 scoreline when Sean Ray was at the helm as the ‘U’s’ interim manager, and followed that annihilation with a further victory over Whitehawk three days later. But they hadn’t recorded a single league victory since, suffering 12 defeats and achieving just five draws in the following 17 matches as they plummeted down the table to 19th position, one above Hastings. If either of the teams was



Davide Rodari on the ball for Hastings in earlier game

Black reprised their recent partnership in central defence and gave very solid performances; new recruits Reece Grant and Dogan, both playing their first games at the Pilot Field, added strength in midfield, and Si Ligendza showed adventure in attack that’s been too often missing this season. Rodari scored early, a poacher’s goal bundled in from a corner. For the rest of the half, Hendon had more of the ball and territory, but Rogers made a couple of smart saves to keep Hastings ahead. After the interval, it was Ligendza’s sparkling run down the right and cutback from the deadball line which enabled Grant to score from close in. From there on it wasn’t pretty, but the visitors were held at bay fairly comfortably. The attendance figure was a little disappointing – less than 800 compared to the season’s average of over 1,000, despite the fine weather and importance of the game – but the team received fervent support throughout from their committed followers behind the goal. With six of United’s last ten matches to be played at home, more of that will be required.

The ‘U’s were due to host Wingate & Finchley on Tuesday evening after this newspaper went to press. They’ll play away at second-placed Dartford tomorrow (Saturday) before two further home games against Chichester City on 22 March and, crucially, 18th-placed Canvey Island on the 25th.

to halt their slide, this was surely the game to do it in. **PHYSICAL BATTLE** On a dried out pitch where the ball bounced high, bobbling and wobbling, Searle picked a team that was

up for the physical battle. Of the players in the United line-up for that November defeat, only keeper Louis Rogers, full-back George Walker, midfielder Adam Lovatt and forward Davide Rodari retained their places. Teddy Perkins and Ollie

RUGBY

H&B Rampant as they Extend Winning Run

Hastings & Bexhill–68,
Tunbridge Wells 2nd XV–5

PETER KNIGHT

In totally dominating this game at their Ark Alexandra ground last Saturday, Hastings & Bexhill recorded their fifth successive victory – a hat-trick of away wins, a home walk-over, and now a rampant display against the team from Tunbridge Wells. They matched a big opposition in the scrum, and their backs tore the visitors’ defence apart, scoring ten tries and converting nine. Fielding a XV that showed only one change from the previous game at Gravesend, H&B ran up a 21-point lead by half time. Tries came from skipper Harry Walker, full back Hudson Wales and second row

Suphanat Cramp. All three were converted by Tom Hirst, who has become a more than reliable kicker. Cramp was then replaced by Matt Stringer, and Quin McManus by Vinnie Harrison. Almost from the kick-off, Harrison marked his return with a well-taken try. This was quickly followed by further tries from Joe Whitehill James, Blake Dixon and Tom Hirst, who added three more conversions. Sam Surridge then replaced Hirst; he himself crossed the whitewash three times more and converted two. Tunbridge Wells scored a consolation try late on. This victory puts H&B up to fourth in the Kent 3 Counties league table with an outside chance of finishing in second place and thus gaining league promotion. That’s a tall order: in order to do so, they would have to bridge the eight-point gap between themselves and Beck-

enham 2nds over the final two fixtures of the season. But at the next round on 22 March Beckenham have to play away at Tunbridge Wells – who are likely to field a distinctly stronger side at home than at Hastings – while H&B will have a rather easier task, at least on pa-

per, away at Whitstable. If these results both go H&B’s way, then there’s the prospect of a final match on 5 April in which Beckenham will play host to H&B with the runners-up spot still at issue. Whatever the final outcome, the recent successes are a tribute to the

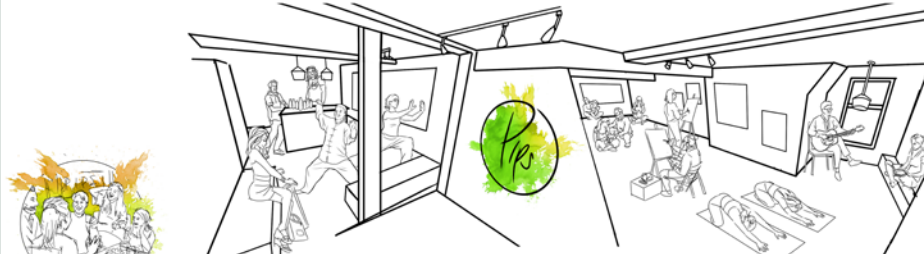
commitment of the squad and their coaches Bruce Steadman and Ben Petty, assisted by Steve McManus who drills the forwards. *On 12 April H&B will entertain a Sussex Martlets XV as part of the club’s centenary celebrations.*

COMING SOON!



STUDIO AND THERAPY ROOM AVAILABLE FOR HIRE

We are inviting local teachers, facilitators and artists to offer a range of weekly classes, workshops and intimate events. Let’s build community together.



Looking for a space to hold your next class or event? Join us!

EMAIL : pipshastings@gmail.com

SCAN ME



EXPERIENCE THE TIMELESS MAGIC OF THE BEATLES
80 LOCAL BANDS
ONE INCREDIBLE DAY OF ICONIC COVERS



HASTINGS BEATLES DAY

WHITE ROCK THEATRE SUNDAY 6TH APRIL 2025 11.30 AM - 10.30 PM

MAIN TICKET £18 UNDER 16s £10 UNDER 11s FREE

