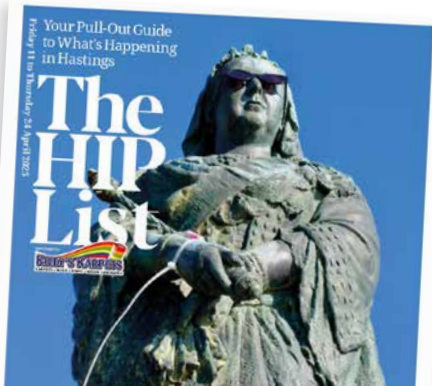


Inside:
Your Pull Out
Guide to What
is Happening
in and Around
Hastings



Become a Friend of
Hastings Independent Press

Half
Marathon
reset

5 →

Away
with
the
faries

10 →

MP and Charities Collide Over Cuts

Hastings MP describes benefit changes as ‘new social contract’; local charities warn of ‘catastrophic impact’ – FERDUSARA ALI reports

Hastings & Rye MP Helena Doolittle is on collision course with local charities over the government’s recent announcement of cuts to the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) programme administered by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). PIPs support individuals of working age who suffer from long term disabilities and chronic health conditions. Liz Kendall, the Secretary of State at the DWP, is proposing alter-

ations to this programme that include a narrower set of eligibility requirements and lower payment rates. Kendall has admitted that a principal aim is to reduce overall spending within the welfare system, and some estimates suggest that these cuts could result in a £5 billion reduction in the overall annual payout of disability benefits. However, the programme is framed within the government’s wider policy of reducing economic inactivity

3 →



This overnight tagging of a family-owned fishing boat attracted a mainly negative reaction on social media. Could the culprits be those who also mar Bottle Alley? HIP is preparing a forthcoming feature on graffiti in the town, share your views at info@yourhip.co.uk

JASON ELLIS



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

Easter is coming and, as we report in our News pages, the A21/link road junction 'improvements' - slated by East Sussex Council for completion last Xmas - drag on. One possible reason is that when HIP visited, there were no workers on site.

In other stories, our new(ish) MP's honeymoon period may be over as she clashes with charities about government-planned cuts to PIP. Meanwhile Hastings Council has U-turned on banning van-dwellers - at least they took notice of the public outcry.

Our Community pages tell of an NHS covid booster jab campaign, 5,000 free bus rides on offer in April and the return of the Kings Road market.

The Arts section is away with the fairies this issue, considering their supernatural, psychological and photographic links to our imaginations. Also updates on new exhibitions at Hastings Contemporary and Hastings History House, new albums from Chantel McGregor and Hayley Savage and a chance to nominate a female hero.

Small-scale entrepreneurs wanting to reduce their running costs should turn to the Business page to see how successful sharing premises has proved for local firms.

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 #274 Dave Young
News Coordinator #274 Hugh Sullivan
newsdesk@
design@
yourhip.co.uk

Art Director Jason Ellis

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

Sub Editors
Rod Webb, Fiona McGarry, Gill Goldenberg,
Celia Partridge

Contributors
Ferdusara Ali|Sadie Pitcher|EBM Humphreys
Nigel Caple|Vera Bell|Tony Collins
Christopher Dodwell|John Rankin
Jude Montague

Have Your Say letters@
yourhip.co.uk

Telephone 01424 559085

Hastings Independent Press CIC
57 Linton Road Hastings TN34 1TN

News



DAVE YOUNG

Council Lane Rental Scheme Ignores A21 Disruption

HUGH SULLIVAN

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has announced that it will impose a Lane Rental Scheme on contractors and utility companies undertaking future work on the busiest roads in the county during peak traffic hours.

Claire Dowling, the council's lead member for transport and environment said that the scheme will encourage shorter durations of work

on the roads, help improve planning and coordination and "encourage companies to get it right first time". It will also generate surplus money which will be made available for highway improvements "to limit disruption and congestion".

Ms Dowling made no mention of the still onerous traffic disruption related to the Queensway Gateway junction works.

In August last year ESCC and its contractor Balfour Beatty Living Places took over the job of completing this road link, originally sched-

uled to be in place by November 2016, from Sea Change Sussex. They indicated then that they expected to complete it by the end of the year.

Since commencement in September, the consequence of the works has been long daily queues in both directions of the A21, and a series of disruptive deviation routes. Seven months later that's still the case. At 10.15 am on Monday morning, as this report was being finalised, the northbound queue out of Hastings stretched from the Ridge back to the bottom of Harrow Road. The new junction appeared 90% complete, but the contractors' machines were parked up with no workers at all on site.

In December the council explained that work had been delayed

"due to significant remedial works" and a burst water main that had by then been fixed. In February they referred to "a challenging diversion of a water pipe in the A21 embankment" but claimed to be "continuing to work with our delivery partners on options to accelerate construction, including night time working".

Asked last week for a further explanation, a council spokesperson replied that "utility assets [presumably the water pipes] had not been correctly shown on official plans. New surveys had to be carried out and some surveys redone where legal ownership prevented us from using the originals. We appreciate the disruption these works are causing and are doing everything we can to complete them as quickly as possible."

This reference to third party legal ownership sounds like a veiled reference to Sea Change. ESCC have previously declined to use Sea Change's design plans, even though the company indicated willingness to license them to save any additional cost and time of redesigning from scratch.

As to the cost, £2.5 million was allocated a year ago from funds offered by the then Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to Hastings Borough Council and Rother District Council for their "priority projects". But the spokesperson for county council is now describing this sum only as a "contribution" towards the expense of the overall scheme. Whatever the balance of cost may be, it will presumably appear in due course as an item within ESCC's own budget.

West Marina Development Plans to be Unveiled

An exhibition of what developers West Marina St Leonards Limited (WMSLL) call their "initial proposals" for the regeneration of the former bathing pool site in West St Leonards will be held on Tuesday 29 April between 3pm and 7pm at the Electric Studios in Seaside Road. It will show the work carried out over the last three and a half years since Hastings Borough Council granted a lease for the development, together with WMSLL's proposals to create, in the words of their director Amanda Vint, "a sustainable, dynamic and thriving community that integrates housing, work, leisure and culture."

The exhibition is part of a pre-planning public consultation at which the developers' plans can be discussed and questions asked. "We are committed," said Ms Vint last week, "to listening and responding to the views of residents and stakeholders to ensure the creation of a

sensitively-designed scheme which delivers tangible community benefits."

No mention has been made by WMSLL of the exhibition and workshop already mounted in January, by local design and community groups West St Leonards Forum, Hastings Urban Design and Save Our Bathing Site (SOBS), at which extensive local ideas and opinions of the potential development were put forward, nor of the West Marina Partnership (WMP) which has been formed as an umbrella organisation for those clubs and community members involved.

They remain at present wholly in the dark as to what plans WMSLL may unveil. However, there will be a community meeting held two days before, in the lobby of Marina Park in Seaside Road, according to WMP member Bryan Fisher, "to discuss and determine our community's approach to the development".

HASTINGS TIDES									
DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON		
FRI 11 APR	L 6:04am	H 11:27am	L 6:21pm	H 11:38pm	6:10	7:46			
SAT 12 APR	L 6:38am	H 11:57am	L 6:51pm		6:08	7:48			
SUN 13 APR	H 0:07am	L 7:05am	H 12:24pm	L 7:15pm	6:06	7:49	FULL		
MON 14 APR	H 0:34am	L 7:27am	H 12:49pm	L 7:34pm	6:04	7:51			
TUES 15 APR	H 0:59am	L 7:48am	H 1:12pm	L 7:58pm	6:02	7:53			
WEDS 16 APR	H 1:23	L 8:13am	H 1:36pm	L 8:26pm	6:00	7:54			
THURS 17 APR	H 1:49am	L 8:43am	H 2:02pm	L 8:58pm	5:58	7:56			
FRI 18 APR	H 2:19am	L 9:15am	H 2:35pm	L 9:33pm	5:55	7:57			
SAT 19 APR	H 2:53am	L 9:53am	H 3:13pm	L 10:14pm	5:53	7:59			
SUN 20 APR	H 3:37am	L 10:40am	H 4:04pm	L 11:09pm	5:51	8:01			
MON 21 APR	H 4:43am	L 11:43am	H 5:36pm		5:49	8:02	THIRD		
TUES 22 APR	L 0:22am	H 6:40am	L 1:05pm	H 7:18pm	5:47	8:04			
WEDS 23 APR	L 1:48am	H 7:57am	L 2:29pm	H 8:22pm	5:45	8:06			
THURS 24 APR	L 3:08am	H 8:53am	L 3:43pm	H 9:14pm	5:43	8:07			

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

by confronting the statistical fact that nearly three million adults in the UK are currently signed off work due to poor health.

Last month 36 backbench Labour MPs, including Hastings & Rye member Helena Dollimore, calling themselves the *Get Britain Working Group*, signed a joint letter to Kendall calling for “fundamental change to our welfare system to support work”. It effectively endorsed the direction, if not necessarily the fine details, of her approach.

“Everyone who is capable of working deserves the security, dignity and agency that employment offers,” the letter declared. “Of course there are some people who are not able to work and they must be treated with compassion and respect. But for those who can, we must restore the pathways to opportunity which are currently so sparse for millions of people.”

This was the chance to “forge a new approach that offers support to help people find work and paves the way to employment, security and independence. One that helps disabled people and those on health-related benefits who can work find good, fulfilling jobs”.

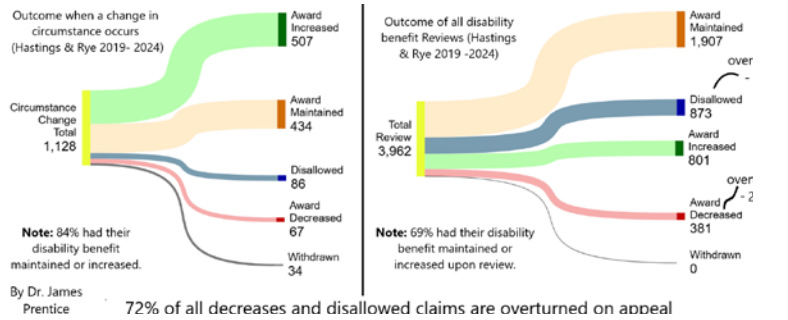
The letter concluded by referring to “a new social contract” that “requires hard choices to be made” and said: “We welcome the work that has begun to rebuild our welfare system, and we are fully supportive of it.”

CHARITIES CONDEMNATION

The vocal response to Kendall’s intended programme within Hastings has been anything but supportive. Energise Sussex Coast has joined over 120 charities such as Scope, Citizens Advice, and Help for Heroes, to condemn in strong terms the planned cuts to disability benefits.

In an open letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves,

PIP APPEALS IN HASTINGS & RYE 2019-24



whom they see as the principal government minister driving the policy, they have pointed to an extreme effect upon those relying on PIPs to maintain their independence and quality of life. “Life costs more for disabled people,” they wrote. “Disabled people often require more energy for essential needs, from powering medical equipment to heating their homes – cuts to their support will make this even harder. Slashing these benefits would have a catastrophic impact, pushing even more disabled households into poverty.”

James Taylor of Scope estimates that at least 250,000 people with learning disability, cancer, mental health conditions and/or autism will be pushed into poverty: “these cuts are a catastrophe”, he says.

IMPACT ON HASTINGS

Local data collated by Sussex University political scientist Dr James Prentice indicate that Hastings is likely to be hit particularly hard. The unemployment rate here is 5.2% compared to 4.4% across the UK as a whole. The proportion of working-age adults on PIP is also significantly higher in the constituency of Hastings & Rye, 13.5% compared to the national average of 10.2%. Mental health issues are the principal cause in 38.7% of cases and

musculoskeletal disabilities 31.1% (see the adjacent statistical table for 2022), while NHS treatments for these and other pathologies lag months or years behind.

Dr Prentice’s research also indicates that, contrary to some media commentaries, there is no evidence of a recent surge in PIP claimants. The number within the constituency in 2020 was 7,586; in 2022, 7,613; in 2024 7,607.

Looking further back, the proportion of claims that are accepted appears the same – 53% in 2016 as in 2024. On the other hand, 72% of all decreases and disallowed claims decided between 2019 and 2024 were overturned on appeal: see adjacent infographic. That suggests that the DWP will have to radically alter their eligibility criteria in order to push the pay-out figures downwards.

One HIP reader has described Dollimore as “actively supporting drastic cuts to the sickest and most vulnerable in society despite her refusal to provide any evidence of impact reports”. However, when asked to comment, the MP was unabashed in her response:

“After 14 years of failure, the Conservative government left our welfare system in a woeful state – especially for those who are disabled or have a long-term illness, and espe-

PIP RECIPIENTS IN HASTINGS & RYE 2022

PRINCIPAL REASON FOR PIP	NO.	PERCENTAGE
1 PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS	2,945	38.70%
2 MUSCULOSKELETAL DISEASE (ALL)	2,367	31.10%
3 NEUROLOGICAL DISEASE	897	11.80%
4 RESPIRATORY DISEASE	348	4.60%
5 MALIGNANT DISEASE	220	2.90%
6 CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE	189	2.50%
7 ENDOCRINE DISEASE	131	1.70%
8 VISUAL DISEASE	104	1.40%
9 GASTRO-INTESTINAL DISEASE	83	1.10%
10 GENITO-URINARY DISEASE	58	0.80%
11 HEARING DISORDERS	55	0.70%
12 SKIN DISEASE	46	0.60%
OTHERS	170	2.10%

Source: The DWP website.

cially for people who want to work but who feel locked out of it. We have implemented the first ever above-inflation rise to universal credit, and introduced an additional premium for people with severe lifelong conditions who will never work to give them financial security.

“Those with a severe lifelong disability will also no longer face dis-

treasing benefit reassessments, as they currently do... These reforms are about protecting the most vulnerable and supporting more people back into work. We need to stop people being written off by a broken system and ensure that our welfare state is financially sustainable to keep providing for those who need it the most.”

Fat Tuesday Directors Announce Succession Plans

Co-founder of the Hastings Fat Tuesday (HFT) Festival, Adam Daly, has announced that he will be resigning as director later this year. So will his co-director for the last 11 years, Sally Lampitt.

Their succession plan is for a new generation to take their places. Stepping up as HFT directors will be Trevor Deeble, who facilitates the Fat Tuesday Club weekly music-making sessions for young people; his wife, Hannah Deeble, who already has the role of General Manager; and Sally’s son, Elliot Lampitt, who is Festival Co-ordinator.

The organisation will see some further changes as James Weaver, joined by William Bunch, takes the

Sonics strand in a new direction as an independent enterprise.

HFT has burgeoned over 16 years from a one-nighter on Mardi Gras evening, not only to a five-day musical showcase that brings in huge crowds of both residents and visitors but also to a year-round programme that champions local talent. By making its main offerings free, HFT has ensured that everyone can join in celebrating their shared musical heritage regardless of financial status. As Sally observed in a closing commentary, the festival has become a reflection of the town – “a diverse and eclectic mix of talent and culture”.

She and Adam added: “It has



Sally Lampitt and Adam Daly

been a tremendous privilege to play a part in the growth and evolution of HFT. While we will certainly miss the energy and excitement of orchestrating the festival and the year-round activities, we believe that now is the right time to pass the torch to a new team that can carry it forward into the future.”

BORN & BRED IN THIS TOWN

@booyah_vitality
booyahvitality.co.uk

TASTE THE HEALTH
BOO YAH
FERMENTED SPARKLING TEA
KOMBUCHA
Lemon & Ginger
ENERGY BOOST

great taste PRODUCER

Taste the Health, Feel the Health.

USE CODE: HIP15 AT CHECKOUT FOR 15% OFF

BOO YAH

Local Pioneers of Kombucha since 2020
Lead by Nutritional Therapy
Award Winning & Family Founded



Vehicle Sleeping Ban Proposal Withdrawn

KENT BARKER

Hastings Borough Council has staged an about-turn over plans to make sleeping in vehicles illegal in the town. The move follows swingeing criticism from the Independents group on the council and concerns expressed by other members.

The suggestion was contained in recommendations from officers debated at the council's Cabinet meeting last week following reports of numerous complaints being received about sleeping in vehicles and caravans in roads such as St Helens Road, Cinque Ports Way, Sedlescombe Road North and Napier Road. Residents and stakeholders were to be asked, as part of a consultation into revision of the council's Public Spaces Protection policy: "We are

proposing to include a ban on sleeping in vehicles across the borough. Do you agree that this should be included in the Anti-social Behaviour public space protection order?"

Before the meeting, the Independents group of former Labour Councillors issued a strongly worded press release, erroneously suggesting this was settled council policy and describing it as "a shocking new proposal from the Green Party-led council" which was "disgusting" and "detached from reality". It would, they said, "criminalise rough sleepers" and "punish" homeless people.

Following nearly two hours of discussion at the meeting of the Cabinet – consisting solely of members of the Green Party but with other councillors invited to speak – the proposal was agreed to be included in the consultation. The next

morning, however, the Deputy Leader and holder of the Housing Portfolio, Glenn Haffenden announced that it had been removed from the Public Spaces consultation. In a press release a council spokesperson stated: "We have decided that as this is a complex issue we think it is more appropriate to consider our approach to people having to sleep in vehicles across the borough as part of the upcoming Housing Strategy consultation. This will also give key stakeholders such as those having to sleep in vehicles themselves, homelessness charities and a wide range of the public more time to respond and submit their views as part of the consultation."

The original consultation on Housing Strategy is due to be completed by the end of May but does not include questions about sleeping in vehicles. These, according to the council's website, will be discussed "later on in the development of the Strategy".

As was reported in HIP 272, half of all those living on the streets of Hastings sleep in vans or other vehicles – with numbers of rough sleepers ranging from 16 to 40 depending on the time of year. As was also detailed, three homeless people are reported to have died over the last winter.

Ask Me Another

The Hastings Borough Council cabinet debate over the issue of sleeping in vehicles arose from the need to renew the council's current Anti-Social Behaviour Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), which was set for three years in 2022 and expires in July. Online consultation with residents on other proposed changes to the terms of the PSPO is going ahead, open until 2 May.

The council is suggesting that

public areas where drinking of alcohol is banned, which currently encompass a length of the seafront, the area around Warrior Square and the Town Centre, should be extended to include Falaise Gardens and the bowling green at White Rock, Linton Gardens, and the area around Wallinger's Walk below Hastings Castle.

Similar online consultation is being promoted on the council's web-

site regarding a proposal to install CCTV cameras along Bottle Alley.

Residents are also being asked to give their opinions on housing in Hastings as the council aims to create a new Housing Strategy. Its survey asks five questions which can be responded to anonymously, starting with: "Tell us about your experiences with having a decent place to live in Hastings." The closing date is 30 May.

See hastings.gov.uk/my-council/consultations in order to participate in any of these initiatives.

Park-and-Sleep: One councillor's view

CLLR TONY COLLINS

Hastings is home to a number of van dwellers, and battered vans and caravans are familiar sights. In addition, a fair few tourists during the summer take up residence in campervans, often along the shore or at the country park, leaving behind them evidence of late-night parties. The council receives many complaints about both the van dwellers and the campervans – from our MP as well as residents.

In Rother, the District Council has effectively banned park-and-sleep anywhere in its jurisdiction. Should Hastings Borough Council do the same?

At the cabinet meeting on 31 March, Cllr John Cannan, who works for Seaview, said that such a proposal stigmatised and potentially criminalised the poor. Van dwellers – and, even more acutely, those living in cars – exist on the margins, and could certainly not pay any resulting fines. The measure risked driving the vulnerable from vans to tents. Cllr Paul Barnett observed that the matter should more properly be regarded as a housing issue, and should be referred to the housing task force.

The Green Group on council was also divided. Cllr Becca Horn expressed her concern to colleagues that it was unwise to lump the issues together, and underlined a point made in the meeting that inclusion of such a measure in the PSPO would not mean the vans would disappear overnight: removing vehicles, even if abandoned, is a slow process. Cllr Paula Warne – who has been homeless and has slept rough herself – predicted that the only result would be fruitless administration and wasted court time.

The Cabinet members listened and changed course. There remain, however, strong objections from residents to scruffy vehicles cluttering our attractive town: who wants to come to a tourist destination where people are forced to live on the streets?

In many parts of America there are RV (Recreational Vehicle) parks, where those living in vans can access showers and laundry services, empty toilets, recharge batteries and top up water. Is it time for such a facility in Hastings?

Cllr Tony Collins is a Green councillor for Central St Leonards. He can be reached on cllr.tony.collins@hastings.gov.uk.

A View from the Street

I am in my 50s, own a small sea-front flat in Hastings and a van. Other than a smattering of unreliable freelance work, my main source of income is the rent I get from letting the flat as an Airbnb – usually at weekends – in which case I have to sleep somewhere else. I have friends who will give me a bed, but in summer when it's reasonably warm, I often sleep in the van.

My favourite parking place for this purpose used to be Cooden Beach on the edge of the shingle. There were no residences nearby, and I felt a sense of freedom – not being legislated for. Other people, mostly single blokes (very often the consequence of failed relationships), used to sleep in vehicles there too.

There are no public toilets there, but there was one at the railway station round the corner, or I would use the Cooden Beach Hotel (they also usefully had wifi). I was careful not to leave any

litter and don't think I was a nuisance to anyone.

But in 2023 Rother District Council put up signs in the car park prohibiting overnight sleeping and threatening fines if this prohibition was disobeyed. Since then, I have on occasion slept overnight in my parked van around West Marina Gardens or St Leonards Gardens.

It would be a lot easier if there were designated areas where people in my situation could park and sleep. I understand there is a concern that, if many sleepers congregate in a particular place, there could be an issue with noise, litter and anti-social behaviour. It is a risk, but in my experience the vast majority of van dwellers are very respectful. Singly, I don't create any public nuisance, and I certainly don't think the innocuous act of sleeping in a vehicle should be made a crime.

The writer is a Hastings resident who prefers not to be identified.

Half Marathon to be run in October

HUGH SULLIVAN

The 2025 Hastings Half Marathon, which was cancelled on the eve of its intended run on Sunday 23 March, has been rescheduled for Sunday 5 October.

Nice Work, professional organisers of the event on behalf of the Hastings Lions Club, announced the new date last week. They confirmed that all runners enrolled for the original run will have their entries automatically transferred to the new date, while alternative options are being offered to those who cannot participate then. These include deferral to the following year's race (on 22 March 2026) and/or recognition (subject to proof) of informal alternative half marathon routes which were completed by many runners in lieu of the official event in order to fulfil sponsorship pledges.

Both Nice Work and Hastings Lions Club have extended their "heartfelt gratitude" to the running

community for their patience and unwavering support in response to the late cancellation. Race director Rachael Wood said: "Seeing so many runners take on their own half marathons in the days following the cancellation was truly inspiring. This event has always been about more than just the race – it's about community, resilience and the incredible causes our runners support. We can't wait to welcome everyone back to the start line in October."

Ms Wood has taken personal responsibility for the decision to cancel on the Saturday evening in response to the major incident involving the risk of exploding chemicals found a couple of days before in a house on Marina near the start and finish of the race.

She said last week that she and her team were extremely aware of all the sponsor pledges and many training hours put in by the prospective runners, and understood that cancellation would have a huge financial impact on the charities involved. She waited throughout the

NICE WORK



morning and afternoon of the Saturday hoping to hear from the police that the cordon of prohibition was being released or reduced.

Sussex Police waited, in turn, for what they called "the controlled burning of some desensitised chemicals" to be carried out by a specialist Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team in consultation with members of the multi-agency Sussex Resilience Forum (SRF), including the Environment Agency and UK Health Security. The police have insisted that the disposal via this method posed no risk to public health, and that they informed the race organisers that they should expect the cordon to be reduced on the Satur-

day evening following the controlled burn and a subsequent assessment of risk. At around 8pm the SRF duly confirmed that the cordon could be reduced.

However, by then it was too late. Around 6.30 pm (an hour and a half before) Ms Wood had decided she couldn't wait any longer. Some runners were coming from a considerable distance. There were also in the region of 200 volunteers involved on the day who needed to be alerted. Since she could not at that point guarantee that the race could go ahead, she pulled the plug.

Asked why the race could not have been curtailed or otherwise re-routed, Ms Wood has emphasised the

regulatory requirements of a race licensed by England Athletics. The official half marathon course is accurately measured for purposes of the 'Power of 10' – the digitised UK Athletics rankings website which tabulates all results and rankings for such events. Licences require courses to be fully risk-assessed and supervised by fully-briefed marshalls. "The paperwork and planning takes months, and there simply wasn't time," she said.

At the time of this report it is understood that the 28-year-old man arrested in connection with the find of the explosive chemicals on 20 March remains detained under the Mental Health Act.

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

✉ Letter

COMMUNITY HUB AT ASHDOWN HOUSE

Dear HIP

With reference to your report *Developers Seek to Shed Community Centre* in HIP 273, Chartway's claim that it cannot find anyone to run a community centre at the Ashdown House site seems a very lame excuse to us. Surely, once it is built, the residents of the Baldslow/Ashdown area can hold a public meeting and set up a committee to manage the building.

My parents moved to Harrow Lane in 1975 and the area still had a 'village' feel. Since then, more homes have been built and now there are more than 500 homes being built at the northern end of Harrow Lane. This means there will be thousands more people living here with no focal point for many of their activities.

We think the Baldslow Memorial Hall, at the northern end of Harrow Lane, while being very attractive, will be too small to cater for the

needs of this growing community.

We urge local residents to contact their borough councillors and our local MP, Helena Dollimore, to ensure that this community centre plan is not dropped. Baldslow and the surrounding area need a community hub.

Lynda and Colin Foy

✉ Letter

CANCELLED ELECTIONS IN EAST SUSSEX

Dear HIP

Of the eight county councillors representing wards in Hastings, only Phil Scott (Labour, Hollington & Wishing Tree) has been asked if he would be prepared to stand down and force a by-election. Although he voted against the decision to recommend cancellation of elections, he was not prepared to put his money where his mouth is, and will remain in place after his mandate expires on 1 May, citing the cost of the poll – which would have been incurred anyhow had

the Government declined to accept East Sussex into its pilot scheme for devolution and local government reorganisation.

I would like to invite all residents of Hastings to write to their respective county councillor and demand that they stand down and force by-elections across our town. Regardless of political affiliation, they should stand up for the rights of the people who elected them in the first place to choose their representatives, however brief the municipal interregnum will be, for we will remember it when the time comes to elect the new unitary bodies.

Nicholas Davies

✉ From our website

A POLITICAL CHOICE

It is very worrying to read our council leader say (in *The Biggest Change in Local Government in Fifty Years*, HIP 273) that "There is no additional government funding for this complex reorganisation, we have to self-fund, including if nec-

essary, selling off assets."

This reorganisation is a political choice by the national government, so it's not 'necessary' in any real sense, is it? Why does the council not refuse to allocate a single hour of officer time to this without the additional funding to do so? Why would the council decide to sell off our public assets to pay for a scheme we don't think is necessary? Why don't the councillors try to use their elected positions to refuse, obstruct and denounce the government for putting them in this position rather than meekly going along with it?

The main reason I would like to see us keep our local council is so that we have elected politicians close to home who we can hold accountable for acting and speaking out on our behalf – not just acting like government functionaries. I can only imagine this technocratic approach to implementing top-down instructions from government will just get worse if our elected councils are even further removed from localities.

Politicians must remember they are not employees being line-man-

aged by council officers – they are elected to represent and have a duty to act in what they think is the best interests of their constituents. Is it really in our best interests to sell our assets or spend a penny of public money on this sham process where the outcome seems predetermined?

If the government steps in and forces the changes through anyway, it would be no worse than what they are doing now (asking councillors to do their dirty work for them), but at least we would know which politicians would best fight for us when the elections for a new unitary council come around. Maybe a bit of resistance from a local council might even prompt some other district councils to take a stand too. And maybe we could even see a serious fight against the real government agenda behind unitarisation, which is just cost-cutting and creating even less democratic accountability over ever-reducing budgets for our local public services. I live in hope...

Grace Lally

We would love to hear from you.

✉ letters@hastingsindependentpress.co.uk
 f 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



Tina doing a roaring trade on her cake stall

Sun Shines for First Kings Road Market

Warmer weather heralds the return of the Kings Road Market, now entering its 12th year. And the sun shone for its 2025 season opener on April 5th, attracting a big turnout of locals and weekend visitors interested in checking out the offer on the usual club mix of stalls. The new season sees a return of old friends and new traders, including Hastings Pottery and Wobbly Pots and Tina and Sons Cake Shop, both returning for their second year.

Market founder and manager, Anton Burton-Windsor, from social enterprise Sussex Concepts, commented: "It's so great to be back outdoors, showcasing the amazing Kings Road, now one of the best shopping and food streets on the South Coast. It's changed a lot over the years we've been running, but its independent spirit lives on as an example of what can be done with passion and imagination."

"The Kings Road Market has be-

come a bit of an institution over the last few years and is about more than the trading, though that's important. At heart, it is an integral part of our stellar St Leonards community."

HIP also joined the street party on the community table, where team members distributed the current edition and encouraged people to sign up as Friends for just £3 a month (or more for those who can afford it), bringing your favourite local paper a valuable regular income.

The Kings Road market runs from 10am until 4pm on the first Saturday of the month until October, with an extra July market to support the St Leonards Festival. The season concludes with the fabled Frost Fair finale on 29 November.

To find out more, enquire about a pitch, or offer to volunteer, contact suss.concepts@gmail.com



Joel Mitchell launches stagecoach spring promotion

Stagecoach Launches Free Bus Ride Offer

Bus operator Stagecoach is giving away 5,000 free bus rides on its South East network in April in what its managing director, Joel Mitchell, described as "possibly the most massive give-away of free travel that any commercial transport provider has ever done."

Mr Mitchell described the promotion as "an invitation for people to try the bus" that he hopes will help "build back trust" after a "tough time" for bus transport in recent years.

Overall passenger numbers on Britain's bus services are still lower

than they were before the pandemic, and the last few years have been a challenging period for the sector, which has had problems filling vacancies for drivers and skilled engineers whilst facing rising operating costs.

Mr Mitchell admits these "have affected our ability to deliver the quality of service that we know our communities deserve." However, Stagecoach reckon things are now on the mend, with punctuality at a two year high, cancelled bus journeys at their lowest level for 18 months and passenger satisfaction

ratings hitting 80% or more for cleanliness, friendliness and reliability.

Mr Mitchell praised its staff, saying "our local teams have worked incredibly hard and we're now performing better across a range of measures than we have since the lockdown periods ended four years ago."

"This initiative is our opportunity to say thank you for bearing with us and to give something back to the community. We want people to come and try the bus, and what better way to do that than to offer a free ride."

To claim a free ticket, which is available to anyone using a Stagecoach bus in Kent and East Sussex, passengers will need to use the Stagecoach Bus App and tap in the discount code '5000FREE' when purchasing a single ticket. There are 5,000 free rides up for grabs and the offer is limited to one free ride per customer.

NHS Launches Spring Covid-19 Booster Campaign

The NHS is promoting local uptake of the Spring Covid-19 booster campaign. People with weakened immune systems, those aged over 75 or anyone living in a care home for older adults is eligible. Booking is simple. You can either book online

at www.nhs.uk/bookcovid or use the NHS app.

Currently, five sites in the town are also offering walk-in vaccinations. These are the pharmacies at Station Plaza, Clarity Pharmacy on Kings Road in St Leonards, Wellcare

Pharmacy in Malvern Way, Laycock Chemists in Ore Village and Hollington Pharmacy on Battle Road, Hollington.

Anyone without the NHS app or struggling to book online can also get help by visiting the HEART Community Information Hub in Hastings Town Hall, opposite Priory Meadow shopping centre. The Hub is open from Wednesday to Friday from 10am to 4pm and on Saturdays from 10am to 1pm. No appointment is required. Just turn up during opening times.

Visit: nhs.uk/conditions/covid-19



Become
a Friend of
Hastings
Independent
Press

Visit hastingsindependentpress.co.uk/become-a-friend
To support independent Local Journalism

Follow the Money

CHRISTOPHER DODWELL

Over the past 50 years, changes in local government financing have significantly reduced the ability of local councils to make independent financial decisions reflecting the needs of their communities. As statutory obligations consume available funds, councils struggle to allocate resources to essential services. In Hastings, available funds are dedicated to emergency housing, leaving other vital services underfunded. Meanwhile, central government money is increasingly distributed through grant schemes managed by special bodies, such as Town Deal boards, Economic Development Agencies and, in future, through Freeports and Special Economic Zones. These operate with minimal oversight, creating a democratic deficit undermining local accountability and fairness.

This has led to inefficient and inequitable resource allocation which, as a small building firm owner in Hastings, I have witnessed at first

hand through two recent projects in which I was the main contractor—the redevelopment of Debenhams into the Owens entertainment centre in the town centre in 2022 and the construction of a new facility in St Leonards for Hastings & Bexhill Mencap, which supports adults with learning disabilities.

The Owens entertainment centre was a commercial venture backed by a Russian billionaire, Lubov Chernukhin, a major donor to the Conservative Party. Despite her vast wealth, including a private jet, yacht, and multiple luxury properties, the Hastings Town Deal Fund awarded an unconditional grant of £150,000 to Owens and also £250,000 to the London based freeholders of the building. The business is now in administration, leaving unsightly boarded-up shopfronts.

In contrast, Hastings & Bexhill Mencap invested £1.5 million of its own money to develop new facilities, yet received no financial assistance from Hastings Borough Council, East Sussex County Council, or Whitehall and was excluded from the Town Deal Fund due to geo-



OWENS boarded up

graphic constraints. This charity employs over 50 local people, supports hundreds of adults and families, and significantly contributes to the town's economic, cultural, and social well-being. The Frimley Centre has been developed particularly for those with complex needs,

with new disability-accessible features, a teaching kitchen, a sensory classroom, an arts & crafts room and a large rehearsal space. Mencap still lacks the £150,000 needed to complete external landscaping and decoration.

It is astonishing that a billionaire

with no connection to Hastings received a huge grant and disappeared with the money, while a crucial local organisation that profoundly benefits the community has received nothing.

See: hastings-bexhill-mencap.org



Academies Disaster

JOHN RANKIN

Academy schools in Hastings have been a disaster since they were first introduced - an idea imported from the United States and used by New Labour to address 'failing schools'.

Subsequent Conservative Governments rolled out the Academy project across the whole education landscape with questionable academic results. Half of all children in Hastings & St Leonards now leave school without a qualification in English and Maths.

These outcomes stem from the

1990s and school league tables. The best schools form a 'premier league' at the expense of others who drop into lower divisions. As a result, those children who are in the most need of a decent education find themselves in the worst performing schools. Similarly young teachers coming out of teacher training try to get into the best schools, compounding the problem.

But what's so bad about academies? The answer: money. They are run as a business rather than as an educational establishment. We've seen in Hastings vast sums being syphoned away from schools and into wider trust administrative costs and salaries.

This can have a very negative effect on the quality of education and ultimately the outcomes for children, because the profit-based business model leads to a restricted curriculum. This results in demotivated, stressed teachers and children who feel anxious, frustrated and uninspired.

An uninspiring curriculum with an over-emphasis on basic subjects can have a devastating effect on children, especially if combined with a demotivated and stressed teaching staff.

So, what's the solution? We often see reports of tragic violence in classrooms, with knife crime, racism and misogyny becoming 'normalised' on social media platforms. Are these unfortunate and very concerning problems anything to do with Academies or the symptom of a wider malaise in society? Certainly, to avoid any further disasters, there must be change.

SOUNDS ST LEONARDS PRESENTS
THRILLING FOLK VIOLIN & GUITAR DUO

OWEN SPAFFORD & LOUIS CAMPBELL

THURS 17TH APRIL

THE CROWN HOUSE, MARINA, ST LEONARDS

www.sounds-stleonards.co.uk

Tickets & Info

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Funded by UK Government

Doors 7pm
Tickets £15 adv



A Lost Transport of Delight

Thanks to 1950s Nimbys, St Leonards lost its miniature electric trams after just one glorious summer season. DAVE YOUNG tells the sorry tale.

Many Hastings seaside attractions have sadly proved ephemeral: St Leonards pier, the marvellous modernist bathing pool, an abortive plan for an airport. Thankfully the miniature steam railway remains with us.

Little if at all remembered, is the brief presence of a small electric tramway in West St Leonards. During the 1951 summer season, it ran from the now demolished lido (constructed by 'concrete king' Sydney Little for the 1933 Empire Games) along the seaward side of Grosvenor Gardens.

The tramway originated in London, where, during the late 1940s, an innovative engineer, Claude Lane, ran a company in Barnet manufacturing *Lecar* electric milk floats; very 'environmentally friendly', a description which wouldn't enter common currency for another half-century.

The business was so successful that Lane had time to pursue his lifelong hobby. He spent a summer driving (electric) trams in Blackpool and was subsequently inspired to build a smaller replica, a fully functioning tram based on number 23

of the Welsh Llandudno & Colwyn Bay system.

Lane started from scratch, employing considerable engineering ingenuity and assisted by a young tram enthusiast, Allan Gardner – who chanced by Lane's factory one day and was offered a job on the spot. They soon built a scaled-down tramway layout complete with rails, points and a battery power supply.

This successfully toured local fetes in north London and Hertfordshire and, pleased by the enthusiastic public reception, Lane searched for somewhere to permanently locate his creation. An opportunity presented itself in St Leonards-on-Sea, a town that had unwisely dispensed with a full-size public tramway network stretching from Ore to Bexhill, back in 1929.

This was because the miniature railway, 'The Bathing Pool Express' originally located at West St Leonards, had recently been relocated to Rock-a-Nore. This mini steam railway, built by Capt J E P Howey – who also constructed the legendary Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch line – had not found favour with nearby residents. By all accounts,



Tram 12 heading south on the Seaton Tramway

they were a rather snooty and 'superior' lot who moaned about engine noise, whistles and 'shrieking children'. Following council debates and protest petitions, the little iron horses were evicted in 1947 and relocated to the opposite end of the seafront the following year.

The remaining track bed and engine shed proved an ideal foundation for Lane's (hopefully) quieter electric tramcars, and a deal was struck between him and the council for a one-year trial season. A large amount of equipment was transported from London, and track, points, and a passenger platform were constructed along the promenade. "When viewed from the bathing pool it looked as if the traction poles stretched into infinity," observed an admiring local at the time. When pursuing a lifelong obsession – at his request, Lane's nanny had taken him to view trams as a toddler – it helps to have your own skilled workforce and vehicle fleet to hand...

Everything was set for the grand

opening ceremony on Whitsun Weekend. As is traditional for English bank holidays, the weather on the preceding Friday was atrocious. Luckily on the great day it "turned out nice again", car 23's test run passed without incident and Lord Mayor Alderman J D Cooper, switched on the tramway at 2.30pm, Saturday 12th May 1951.

A noticeboard proclaimed it the "world's smallest public tramway," with the price of a ticket 3d for a single journey and 6d for a return. During that summer, the two tramcars – one open-topped, the other a diminutive double-decker, almost impossible for adults to enter – gained a positive reception from visitors, locals and nearby traders, bringing increased footfall to the

MODERN TRAMWAYS
THE WORLD'S SMALLEST
PASSENGER-CARRYING TRAM
PROMENADE - ST. LEONARDS
DAILY SERVICE
at frequent intervals between
BATHING POOL and MARINA

British didn't really like young people. Plus ça change.

The debate continued at a further meeting in November. No matter there were also petitions, including local shopkeepers, wanting the tram to remain – it's been claimed those far outnumbered those against five to one. An alderman (as councillors were called in those days) supporting the tram's case to stay sagely pointed out that just across the adjacent main road (where TK Maxx is currently situated) was a railway wagon marshalling yard and full-size steam engines working 24 hours a day.

There were thinly veiled allegations the council's eventual decision was a foregone conclusion. If so 'outraged of West St Leonards' was clearly well connected. The experiment ended, the lease was not renewed and hopes of the little trams providing a lucrative tourist attraction for years to come were dashed.

Claude Lane sought alternative locations in other coastal resorts and hearing that a miniature steam railway had ceased operating at a fairground in Rhyl he negotiated a two-year lease. The trams ran there for five seasons from 1952 before once again relocating – this time back to East Sussex.

The Eastbourne Electric Tramway ran successfully between Princes Park and the Crumbles for several years, but by the mid-1960s, sprawling urban development threatened its existence, and it closed in 1969.

Seeking a secure home, Lane discovered the former Seaton Town branch line in East Devon, recently closed amid Dr Beeching's draconian and disastrous cuts to British Rail infrastructure. Despite initial public concerns about noise and environmental impact (sound familiar?), a Light Railway Order was granted in 1969, and the tramway reopened in August, 1970. Operating from a new station, over a dozen colourful trams currently run on a three-mile route through wetland nature reserves next to the River Axe. Sadly, Claude Lane died of a heart attack in 1971 and his work was completed by his protegee, Allan J. Gardner, MBE. The little trams have now been running for 55 years – but not in St Leonards...

Want to know more? The excellent, anonymously written, *tram23.co.uk* website has a wealth of background history and good black and white images of the construction and operation of the St Leonards electric tramway.



You'll find a grainy video of the trams in action at Eastbourne on Youtube. It's rumoured the prototype Car 23 was filmed by British Movietone News when at a north London fete. Thanks to Seaton Electric Tramway in East Devon – well worth a visit-for supplying the pictures. tram.co.uk

New Queers on the Block

EBM HUMPHREYS

As a big fan of local performance-art powerhouse, Home Live Art, I was delighted to learn that their latest venture *Giddy Up* is being curated by independent producer Hannah Rose Fox – whose face you might know from Queer History Collective events at the museum. Fox, who started with HLA in 2022 as project manager for community-based initiative *Good Stuff*, agreed to talk to us about her vision for the new programme.

Giddy Up is the latest iteration of *New Queers on the Block*, a fifteen-year collaboration between Marlborough Productions and HLA. It is intentionally about long-term programming. Organised from five towns, NQOTB opens pathways for new queer artists, sidestepping barriers to mainstream participation and bringing fresh perspectives to mainstream audiences. Independent producers from each hub form a peer-group whose support is of immense value to Fox, helping her “to take risks in trusting [her] own intuition.”

Accessibility is a key focus for Fox, whose role with *Good Stuff* was to make sure groups had what they needed. Having curatorial control on an arts programme for the first time, she has placed *Giddy Up* firmly at the intersection of stage-based and Queer performance. While there is much to love about grassroots performance in unlikely places, the theatre space is an age-old, well-loved medium, so Fox is keen to see it embraced by queer and

radical artists. She is on a mission to “normalise the pathways to staging performance” so that exceptional work is not confined to London locations.

“Queer performers often end up at less-accessible venues, because the barriers to proving a show is commercially profitable can be great.” Venues are increasingly concerned to value economic viability over experimentation, whereas what funders care about is well-being, especially for under-represented communities. Historically, queer social spaces have been night-life-led, inevitably featuring alcohol and other substances, excluding those whose disabilities make physical access difficult.

Fox studied events management and later worked with Impact Community Hub for social entrepreneurs. But, “missing the design element,” she made her way to Brooklyn, NY for an MA in Trans-Disciplinary Design. Here, arts practice paired with social justice issues, and Fox cut her teeth in community engagement. She focussed on Brooklyn Library, where staff were doing a lot of grassroots work at community level, without recognition. Fox designed innovative ways to engage with interviewees, seamlessly combining research with intervention – something reflected in her priorities for *Giddy Up*.

The project has three elements: first, the programming, through which Fox “can build up relationships with venues and their teams and find my curatorial footing.” Second, she wants to bring together the many volunteers involved at venues in the many LGBTQIA+



Lucy McCormick

groups who make things happen in our town, *with the art itself*. Community becomes a route to audiences. *Giddy Up* especially seeks to serve Global Majority, LGBTQIA+, and Disabled audiences, which brings us to the third element: Evaluation. “It’s about learning what makes going to the theatre for a show feel like a normal and accessible experience, hence reducing barriers to participation in the arts, not just from the stage but from the stalls.” What are people seeing when they come to shows, are they looked after, do they feel safe?

Another challenge is finding venues willing to stage community productions, so it’s great that as well as working with The Stables theatre, Fox notes that the White Rock Theatre Studio has become “a really flexible black-box studio space, which offers so much more potential for creative programming than it has in the past.” The stage was taken out, a better sound system has

been introduced, and there is now a ground-level front door.

GIDDY UP – WHAT’S ON!

So what’s actually happening? Well first up, we have the genuinely exceptional, “bold, brash and out there” Lucy McCormick, a woman I find it hard not to idolise. Equally at home with *bonafide* Shakespeare or raunchy, immersive pop-spectacular, for her live show *Triple Threat*, which showed at Printworks, Lucy sang, danced, covered herself in mayonnaise and glitter, wailed to make an Irish funeral-keener proud, and crowd-surfed. For the faint-hearted who might consider mayonnaise and glitter a bit over the top, worry not, because *Lucy and Friends* is a very different show.

Fox is equally excited for Stacey Makishi, whose genuinely innovative ‘show’ *Walking Each Other Home*, combines performance, ritual, interactivity – and party. However it is a contemplative work, fo-

cussed on grief and grieving, and promises to be a memorable and deeply reflective experience.

The third big splash for year one will be *Wet Mess*, an award-winning artist working across drag, theatre and live art, whose ‘gender-punk’ shows have been described by The Guardian as “not only thrilling and wild but somehow sweet and life enhancing.” For Trans Pride, *Wet Mess* will perform ‘TES-TO’, a show about “the messiness of life with teeth and one chin hair; exploring transitions, testosterone ... and the magical in the mundane.”

That’s not all – there is also a scratch night for local Queer artists to join a paid artist-residency scheme to test ideas, take risks and develop their work, culminating in a performance at *Tried and Tested* in September. The call-out is already open, so if this sounds like you, check it out now.

“IT’S THEATRE, BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT”

Under this strapline, at its heart, *Giddy Up* is all about collaboration – curators with community groups, venues, funders and Trans Pride; and HLA and Marlborough whose collaboration birthed *New Queers*. Fox’s vision is to incorporate learnings from working creatively with the community into top-quality arts-programming, which expands audiences and fosters integration between groups with different social and cultural backgrounds and expectations. And it really has something for everyone ... so giddy up!

Hannah Rose Fox launches *Giddy Up*, a new three-year programme of performance from LGBTQIA+ artists taking over the stages of Hastings, this month

For all Home Live Art events, check out homeliveart.com/ For details of Stacy Makishi, see stacymakishi.co.uk Lucy McCormick: lucymccormick.com

Topographical Prints at Hastings History House

VERA BELL

This unique exhibition is accompanied by a beautifully produced catalogue/booklet, designed by Annie Lawson, in which this picture caught my eye. Pelham Arcade was built between 1823 and 1825 by Joseph Kay, at 1–12 Pelham Crescent. It is believed to be one of the UK’s oldest shopping arcades, and was intended to mimic the style of Burlington Arcade in London, in par-

ticular, with the use of arches between shops. The Arcade and the Crescent are named after Thomas Pelham, 2nd Earl of Chichester, who built terraced houses in the area in the early 19th century, and also owned Hastings Castle.

At that time, the arcade contained around 30 shops, including coffee shops, cigar shops, a library, French china shops, jewellery shops and shops selling foreign wines. The arcade also contained assembly rooms, and had evening performances for one shilling.

A fantasy, perhaps, but I like to think of Hastings and St Leonards as they were then – elegant and se-date small seaside towns with fishing and markets. There’s a lovely tinted engraving of Hastings Castle as well, and views of a serene Wellington Square, and Marine Parade from across the water. There’s Hollington church, standing alone in a little glade, and Old London Road with a view of All Saints’ Church where people are actually walking down the middle of the street, arm-in-arm, to enter Hastings. And depicting the sea, an engraving of a dramatic Turner painting of a shipwreck just off a cliff that has probably since eroded into the sea.

Well worth checking out.

Exhibition runs at Hastings History House, 21 Courthouse Street TN34 3AU, 10-19 April. Opening hours 11am to 4pm, Thursday to Saturday.



Pelham Place

Print of Estella Canziani, *The Piper of Dreams*, 1915

Away With the Fairies?

VERA BELL

During the forty years or so surrounding the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, there was an upsurge of interest in fairies, magic, mysticism, and the supernatural, possibly instigated by the fairy pictures of Richard Dadd (*The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke*, 1864). Interest in the 'spirit world' also flourished around then, with many Victorian parlour gatherings madly rocking tables under Ouija boards,

convinced that they were summoning messages from the dead.

Simultaneously there was the emergence of popular photography, with the lure of the darkroom and the capacity to experiment. This produced the famous Cottingley Fairies, supposedly genuine photographs taken by Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths near Bradford in 1917. These were highly prized by Arthur Conan Doyle, who interpreted them as clear proof of the supernatural. (Yet Sherlock Holmes would surely have had a rational explanation for them? Conan Doyle is known

to have wanted to kill Holmes off to concentrate on more serious historical novels, but his publishers were willing to pay him silly money to keep that character alive.) It wasn't until the two cousins were in their 70s that they admitted they had used cut-out images from a scrap book and superimposed them while developing the photograph.

FAIRIES AS WAR MASCOTS

We recently had a request from a Hastings resident, Bridget Griffin, for our newspaper to reproduce this picture, which her late grandmother always had on display and which she says has always "calmed people down". She tells me they called him 'Yodel'. It turns out that it's a print of a 1915 painting by Estella Canziani called *The Piper of Dreams*, which became very popular amongst troops and their families

COURTESY BRIDGET GRIFFIN



The Cottingley Fairies, 1917, Photograph by Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths



Christie Cassisa, Hastings, *Handsome Elf*, 2013



Richard Dadd, *The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke*, 1855-1864

during World War I. It was the best-known of Canziani's work, although she painted several other scenes that included fairies. At that time, troops also often had with them a slim volume of poetry – universal literacy was fairly recent, the Education Act of 1902 having permitted local authorities to create secondary schools. And books, having hitherto only been available to the more prosperous classes, had become cheaper through modernised production techniques.

Hard to imagine what today's soldiers would take with them to the front line, but it's unlikely that it would be either poetry or a fairy picture. An X-Box? Times change.

AND YET...

There's a well-documented eye condition called Charles Bonnet Syndrome (documented first by Bonnet in 1760) during which sufferers often hallucinate lines of little people which feel real, though usually the sufferer is aware of their unreality. A loss of vision, such as macular degeneration in the eyes of the elderly, causes the brain to 'fill in the gaps', and the manifestation therefore varies from brain to brain, psyche to psyche. "They will frequently describe humanoid entities (sometimes cartoon-like) that appear, usually fleetingly, in what remains of their peripheral vision" remarked Neil Rushton in an interview.

As a rule, the more severe the

sight loss, the more complex the visuals. There is no cure and it goes away by itself after a year or so. There are a great number of attempts to represent the syndrome through art, too, which can be seen in an internet search.

Also in print, is a book by Marjorie T Johnson and Simon Young called *Seeing Fairies*, a collection of about 400 fairy reports from people in all walks of life, all around the world, from the archives of the Fairy Investigation Society. There's a Kindle edition at £6.99, if you're interested, which will bring you fairies through the ether, or at least the internet. There's a reason that cabled wired network cables are called ethernet. Our world is now governed, and largely functions, through millions of infinitesimally small clusters of electronic impulses, coded representations of reality. So the Kindle book is already that kind of representation of a real book, which is itself a representation of anecdotal and photographic representations of phenomena: they might have been fairies, or psycho-visual hallucinations, or beings from a 'parallel universe'.

So we already live in a complex fairytale, and AI is the next level: thousands of people are currently employed extracting and crafting fair copy from whatever's out there, and sooner or later nobody will know what to believe or whether it matters, and nobody will care whether fairies are real or not.

Nominate a Female Hero

The first of The Stables' *Scene & Heard* festivals brings together a programme of work centred around stories driven by women. The festival runs from 5-21 June 2025, offering three weeks of art, theatre and creatively designed workshops to be enjoyed by everyone.

A celebratory exhibition entitled *Female Heroes* was launched on International Women's Day – Saturday 8 March. People are invited to nominate their female hero through online submissions until Saturday 19 April, so there's still time.

A social gathering with wine and cheese on 5 June at 7.00pm will open the festival, revealing the *Female Heroes* winning nominations. This will be followed by performances of *Cagebirds*, directed by Vanessa Coatz, and *White Lead*, directed by Jane Midwinter. These one-act plays explore themes of stereotypes and oppression and the expectations and responsibilities of being an artist and a woman.

Workshops for all will be led by local female creatives and continue throughout the festival. They include script-writing, poetry, improvisation, themed storytelling, art, song-writing, voice, dance, drama, and playful connection and spontaneity through clowning!

Along with these workshops will be a number of one-night performances: plays, play reading, music and song. Details and booking information for both workshops and performances will be published on The Stables website and social media platforms.

Work generated throughout the festival will be showcased in a final presentation on Saturday 21 June.



stablestheatre.co.uk/the-stables-theatre-scene-heard-festival-2025instagram.com/jane_midwinter/p/DHp2uZ8oomv

Chantel McGregor Announces New Album

Broken Heartless Liar is the first single from Chantel's upcoming third studio album *The Healing* due to be released on 23 May

Over the last 15 years, the Yorkshire-born guitarist, singer and songwriter has carved a reliable presence on the British gig circuit, traversing the length and breadth of the country and appearing at some of our biggest festivals. It would be easy to presume that we know what makes her tick. However, *The Healing* is set to blow such preconceptions clean out of the water, revealing a whole new side to Chantel McGregor in both a musical and emotional sense.

The Healing is the next logical step of McGregor's journey. "This is definitely a rock album – not a blues album," stresses Chantel. "It's heavy and dark and it introduces elements

of prog-rock, which is a form of music I absolutely love"

The first single, *Broken Heartless Liar* is a raw, defiant rock anthem about finally seeing the truth and taking back your power. Chantel says about the track: "It captures the moment you realise the person you loved never really valued you, just took what they could while giving nothing in return. With a driving riff, a blistering guitar solo, and a chorus that sticks in your mind, *Broken Heartless Liar* will connect with anyone who has ever had to fight their way out of a bad relationship and come out stronger on the other side.

The album features McGregor's regular band-mates Colin Sutton on bass and Thom Gardner on drums, players with whom she has developed a form of musical tele-



HEATHER ELLIOTT

kinesis. Noted UK guitarist Oli Brown is co-producer. To celebrate the album's arrival on May 23, the band will play a special launch show at legendary venue The 100 Club in London's Oxford Street on the same day.



Broken Heartless Liar OUT NOW on all digital platforms
Pre-orders for the new album, *The Healing*, are live at chantelmccgregor.com Watch the video here youtu.be/eqnJQ3sXxuY
Chantel McGregor plays at The Carlisle, Hastings on Sunday 1 June. Tickets: tinyurl.com/yhvtumac





chartered accountants and tax advisors

Accountants for Creatives

If you'd like a proactive and responsive accountant who can help you in all areas of bookkeeping, VAT, payroll, accounts, saving tax, improving profit and more, then look no further.

Helping you adjust to the new normal by being refreshingly different.

01424 730000 or info@mcpersons.co.uk

Contact us for a free consultation

Sun and Sea at the Contemporary

SADIE PITCHER

The building of Hastings Contemporary was just one of many challenges facing the Hastings fishing fleet in its 1,000-year history. In view of the gallery's proximity and architectural sensitivity to the fishing community, it is now playing its part in preserving the town's history of fishing.

Until 14 September, Hastings Contemporary is exhibiting a project which chronicles the stories and tradition of fishing in Hastings, in collaboration with the Fishermen's Protection Society and local artist Mary Hooper. *The Sun Feeds The Wind* is part of a season of events that celebrate the fleet's generational knowledge, and highlights skills and practices that are now under threat not only from climate change but also from new post-Brexit legislation.

HARSH REALITY

Over ten years working alongside the Society, Mary Hooper has fostered collaboration, partnership, and trust. Using sound, in projects and commissions that engage with environment and community, she creates work that centres on her collaborators. As an artist she wishes to be invisible, so that the stories of the fishermen speak for themselves and become the work.

Images of this community at work, battling against the elements, expertly weaving nets and hauling boats up the shingle beach, are projected onto woven fishing nets and sheer

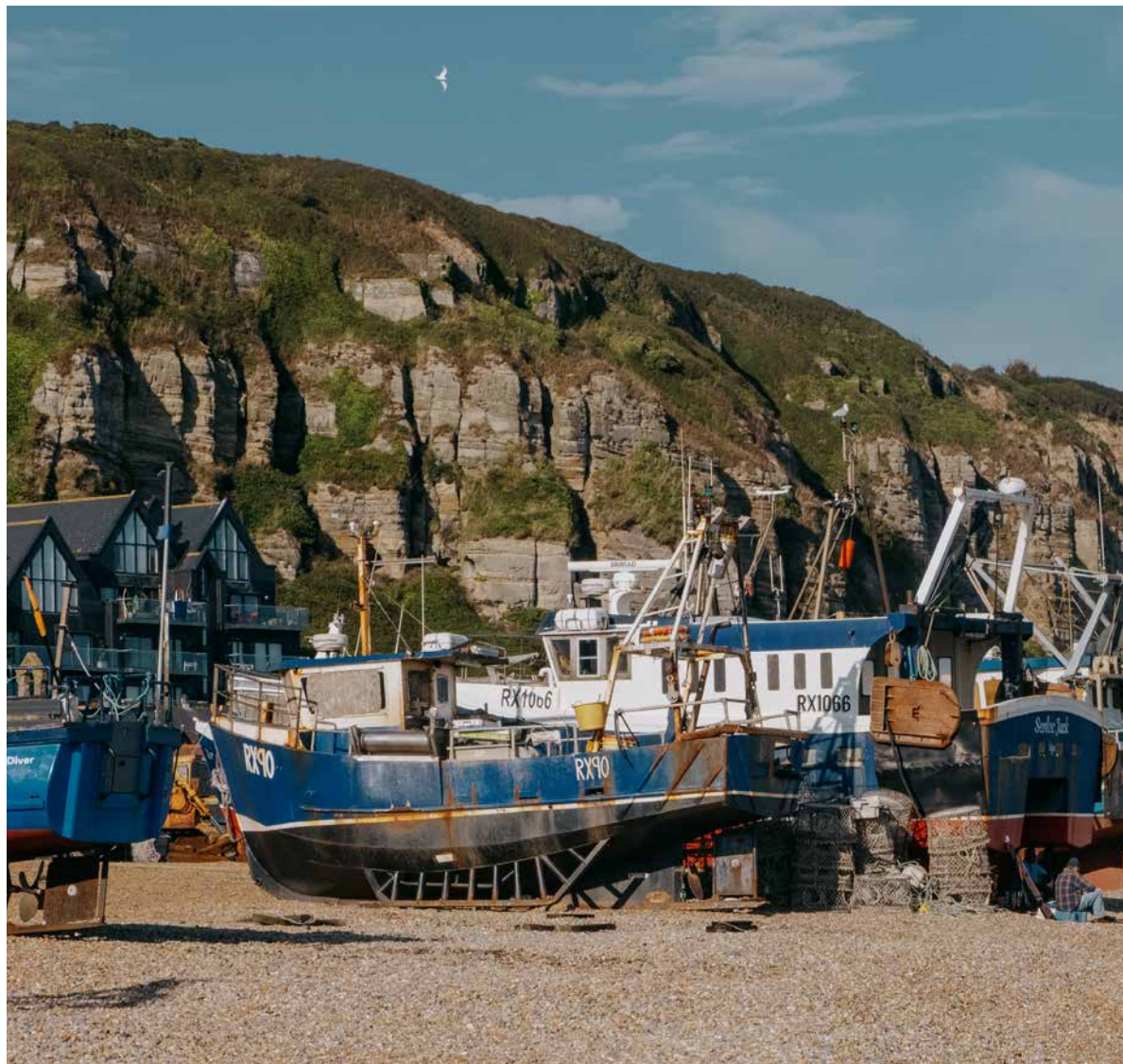
fabrics, suspended in wooden frames made by fishermen. Ships' hulls rise from the floor like washed up remnants from a shipwreck, against a map of the Stade that occupies the entire back wall of the gallery.

The fishermen's stories, carefully gathered by Mary and punctuated by the squawks of seagulls, tell of the harsh, laborious reality of being at the mercy of the elements at sea. One man speaks of his first fishing experiences, relying on the time, a compass, and landmarks to make it safely back to shore. Another speaks of embarking in the dark of the morning in still, calm conditions, only for the weather to turn with the rising of the sun. Hence the title for the project, *The Sun Feeds the Wind*.

HFPS was formed in 1831 to preserve the fishing community's medieval right to work from the stone beach. Chairman Paul Joy says "As custodians of the sea, we connect our town to its history, with traditions which pre-date 1066, and to its future - offering answers to the challenges facing our oceans and coastal communities." The Hastings fleet currently has twenty-six boats, active daily. Joy is hopeful that this will increase as more of the younger generation join the industry. He continues "We are excited to share our stories and preserve them for future generations."

UNDERSEA MYSTERIES

Similarly, *Undersea*, an exhibition which accompanies *The Sun Feeds the Wind*, explores the connective nature of the ocean and its shared mysteries and mythologies. Works



on view include a depiction of a Japanese sea-woman diving for food and grappling with an octopus, Venus resting in her shell awaiting her birth, and Sirens luring Ulysses and his sailors to land, delaying their long-awaited homecoming.

In *Undersea*, Art historian and curator James Russell has gathered over 75 artworks that span four

centuries and a range of cultures, in a strange display that reveals the magnetic pull of the sea. "One of the main themes is this sense of a shared connection to the ocean and the sea, shared mythologies, shared creatures", he explains. Leah Cross, Director of Programmes, adds: "The works on display cross borders, traditions, and histories, and celebrate

the pleasures of difference." *Undersea* is the final instalment of Russell's aquatic exhibition trilogy, following *Seaside Modern* (2021) and *Seafaring* (2022).

Also still on view at the gallery until September is *Pearls of the Sea*, made in collaboration with eight local primary schools.

The Two Faces of Mickey

EBM HUMPHREYS

In Bong Joon Ho's latest screwball sci-fi adventure, the eponymous Mickey has unwittingly signed up to be an 'expendable' – an employee on a space mission whose job is literally to die whenever it's considered helpful, by 'science', for him to do so. He doesn't get sent on especially dangerous errands. Rather, he's a living lab-rat, deliberately exposed to every threat that the science team on his interstellar mission can think of, to be reproduced every time ... for the greater good. The human-duplication technology making this possible is at the heart

of the story, and its philosophical implications underpin the narrative, as they always do in the genre.

But this is also wildly entertaining satirical comedy. Robert Pattinson has gone down famously with critics for this performance as the unluckiest man 'alive', and it's easy to see why. When Mickey is accidentally doubled, his double doubles down on opposing his personality because he discovers that he dislikes his former self. This gives Pattinson perhaps his most entertaining role ever: arguing and fighting with himself, and in doing so attempting to create the most different possible versions of the same person. Way more fun than twins.

Provided that you're not too



squeamish, this is all-round solid (15+) family fun. Nothing feels overdone or gratuitous, although the film is hardly spare on the detail, and along the way we are treated to some violently funny dialogue.

Mickey 17 is based on a book by

Edward Ashton, but Bong has significantly altered the narrative to expand the roles of Mickey's friends. And there is a slice of ethical wrangling here which returns us to *Okja*, another Bong hit exploring the deep friendship between a young girl and

a kind of giant super-pig; here, though, it's the indigenous population of Niflheim that calls the human conscience into question.

This movie is a circus-ensemble of villains, cops, religion, exploitation and colonisation – almost too much at times. But in this bonkers future, being sentenced to death for being alive easily brings the serious edge needed to balance it all out. If you've enjoyed the insanely daft *Snowpiercer*, the tender-hearted *Okja*, or the 2006 monster epic *The Host* (or *Starship Troopers*), you'll love this film. If you only know 2019's *Parasite*, be aware this is a very different monster – you'll recognise elements that made that film great, but this is the work of an altogether more light-headed Bong Joon Ho.

Independent cinema Kino-Teatr screened *Mickey 17* on April 5th & 6th (Saturday & Sunday). Book at kino-teatr.co.uk and find them at 49 Norman Road, St Leonards.

HIP REVIEW

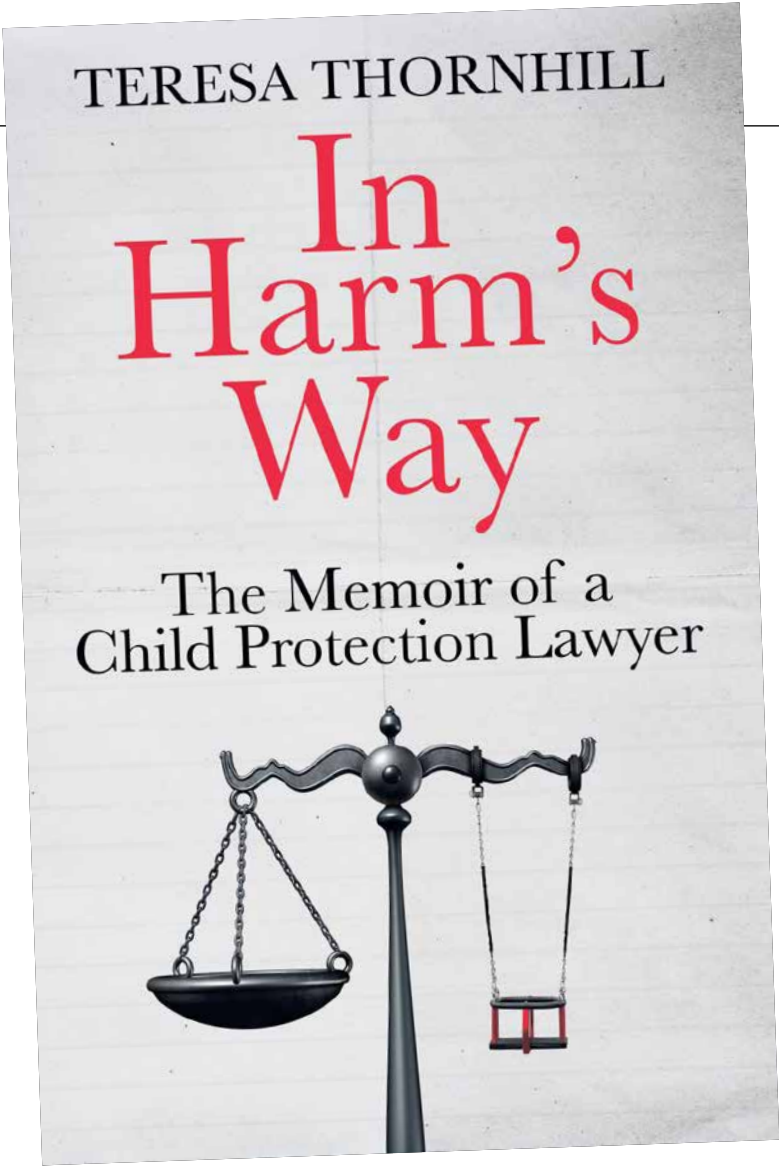
In Harm's Way

By Teresa Thornhill
Published by Harper Collins, 2024
£10.99 (paperback)
REVIEW BY HUGH SULLIVAN

This book is subtitled *The Memoir of a Child Protection Lawyer*. The writer lives locally, having recently retired from practice as a barrister specialising in care proceedings. Without sensationalising, soft-peddalling or patronising, she paints at first hand a devastating picture of the legal process that ensues when local authorities intervene in situations of family trauma.

Lawyers, like doctors, are bound by strict rules of confidentiality that aren't relaxed by time or distance. Ms Thornhill is barred not only from citing the true names of the adults and children involved but also from providing any physical descriptions, including of courtroom or council locations, that would allow readers to guess identities. She tells us at the outset, therefore, that the cases which she will recount in compelling detail are "fictitious creations... I've combined, for example, elements of the background of real family A with elements of the trauma suffered by the child or children of family B with a little of the courtroom experience of real client C". Names, ethnicities, ages, genders of both children and adults have been altered accordingly.

That does create a problem for a literal-minded reader. Given the artificial construction of both the characters and their circumstances, how can we judge the verisimilitude of the events she narrates? Wouldn't it be cleaner to embrace the fictional elements whole-heartedly and



turn the reportage into an autobiographical novel?

POTENTIALLY HEARTBREAKING

On the other hand, Ms Thornhill's experience as a jobbing barrister also limits the extent of her narrative. She is called in, often at no more than an evening's notice, to present a case for a mother or father whose children are at risk of being put into care, whether for fostering or for outright adoption. She may have no previous knowledge of the client and will have no ongoing responsibility for what happens after the court has made its decision.

Subject to these limitations, however, Ms Thornhill describes both with admirable clarity and with human feeling the issues which the court has to deal with, and how the different actors – parents, guardi-

ans, social workers, lawyers, judges – present their points of view or react to others. The process of any court in action is intrinsically dramatic, and the subject matter – the future lives of traumatised and vulnerable children – is potentially heartbreaking. Ms Thornhill enhances the intimacy of her professional experience by counterpointing it with scenes from her own private life, having to balance her legal career against her own responsibility as single mother of a son who moves through adolescence to adulthood through the course of the book.

In the background, but having increasing impact as the years of economic austerity turn into the experience of Covid-19 lockdown and beyond, is the sense of mounting pressure on local authorities and their financially squeezed social services departments to cope with the ever-rising tide of family break-

down. In the book's grimmest chapter, 'Locum', Ms Thornhill takes a temporary job as the senior in-house lawyer in a local authority child care team, required to progress multiple casework in a hot-desking open plan office under oppressive strip-lighting with a recently digitalised case management system that keeps going down. Most of the social workers around her are fellow locums. Reading her account, you have to wonder how children whose lives lack above all the ingredients of stability and reliability are going to be satisfactorily served by this chaotic environment. The potential for more child victims like Victoria Climbié or Baby P is palpable.

ENGROSSING, INSTRUCTIVE AND ENTERTAINING

There is a bigger question, though, which Ms Thornhill only faces up to in her epilogue: how could any child protection system, however well funded and professionally staffed, cope with the extent of family breakdown which is now occurring. She notes that the number of children in care in England increased by 30% between 2010 and 2023 (and at a still higher rate in Wales). She adds: "A lot of the children who come before the Family Court in public law cases are being raised by lone mothers, who could parent better if they weren't constantly struggling to keep a roof over their children's heads, food on their plates and money for heating in the pre-payment meter. Many of these women are struggling with their mental health and it's not hard to see why."

She suggests that better support for families living in poverty plus better children's social care would end up not only reducing human

misery but saving the higher social and economic costs incurred in dealing with the fall-out: prevention would be cheaper than the cure.

That may be so. What she doesn't comment upon is the prevalence of lone mothering in the first place. A recent statistic: 50% of first-born children in this country are no longer living with their two original parents by the age of 14. That's not to say that lone parents cannot bring up healthy, functioning and well-adjusted children. Not only was Ms Thornhill raising her own son in the absence of his father; her own parents too, she relates, had a "troubled" marriage which ended in a long-drawn-out divorce overshadowing her own childhood. But she perhaps feels that she's not in a position to endorse the virtues of joint parenting in a single household. None of her sample cases exhibit such a set-up.

On the other hand, she rightly laments the absence of properly conducted research into outcomes of care decisions, including adoptions. However unpromising the prospects of a child being left within the household of a drug-addicted, abusive or otherwise feckless parent, what's the evidence that being shuffled in and out of a local authority care system has better long-term consequences?

Ms Thornhill writes that at the start of her career as a barrister she felt "like an imposter in the legal world", wondering whether she shouldn't have pursued a career as a writer or activist instead. Fortunately, she seems to have kept these alternatives primed for eventual deployment. Her book is engrossing, both instructive and entertaining, and should appeal both to other professionals within the system and to the general reader.

POETRY CORNER

SAINT EANSWYTHE
JUDE MONTAGUE

Old, old bones
What have you got to say?
Nothing, you can't talk.
You're old, old bones.
Maybe you'd say, 'You're stupid.'
Or 'We're not stupid,
why do they think we're stupid?'
Maybe we shouldn't have kept you,
Old, old bones.
But one time you were special
and you walked about in flesh and blood
then we couldn't get over the fact
that you died.
Now you can't walk, you can't talk
and things have changed
so much we can't deal with it.
Old, old bones
though you can't see or smell it
the blossom and lambs are here again
we're getting a glorious spring.
Old, old bones
don't dance, don't sing.
Do what you do best,
lie in your box
and make us think.

CROSSWORD CORNER

Across

- 1. Soft drinks used for blending? (6)
- 3. Ten in Y calculated this number (6)
- 4. Singer on the radio might hit this note (6)

Down

- 1. Journal on fishing equipment is attractive (6)
- 2. Killer relays confusion (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 5 of The HIP List

1					2
3					
4					

Shared Spaces

JORDAN CONNELLEY

With looming tariffs, trade wars, and increased economic uncertainty, HIP investigates the growing trend of shared commercial spaces in Hastings and the positive effects of this new business model.

Running a business is hard. ONS statistics released in November last year show that only 39.4% of businesses survive for their hard-earned five-year anniversary. And the South-East has a low growth ratio of just 9.9% of new business registrations – compared with London's top rating of 12.6%. Indeed, growth only outstrips the rate of businesses who cease operations in the area by 0.1%.

It's not hard to see why the statistical prognosis is bad, as the cost of running a business has skyrocketed in recent years, the High Street has been on its last legs for as long as anyone can remember, and the initial outlay for a new small business can be an expensive risk for a first-time entrepreneur.

But the news isn't all bad. In recent years, businesses across Hastings have been experimenting with a novel way of minimising the dangers of the start-up by banding together and sharing space. This new trend is in vogue, with informal incubation centres for start-ups popping up across Hastings, from larger scale enterprises such as Heist, which hosts several smaller concessions in a big building, allowing emerging food purveyors to test and develop their concept and menu in a shared space, to smaller agreements between like-minded business folk.

One excellent example of a local success story is Mark Plummer of The Wine Room, who in an interview with HIP described the birth of his business in 2020, during the onset of covid. Mark admits "I must have been mad" to go live then. But the success of The Wine Room and its partnership with popular home-ware store Shop of Norman Road in St Leonards, where Mark runs a concession, speaks for itself.

Mark can now celebrate being one of the 39% of businesses that

have survived the five-year mark, and, what's more, can point to a growth in his turnover, with The Wine Room currently offering over 300 wines, compared to the 70 or so he started with.

Mark is wholly positive about the benefits of shared spaces, acknowledging that his partnership with Shop has helped him avoid high initial outlays whilst also offering him low overheads to kickstart his wine business. However, he counsels caution and suggests that new initiatives should be careful about who they partner with. No two businesses are alike, and Mark stresses that a shared space is about much more than merely saving costs. Success requires synergy and, for Mark, a shared space will only work if businesses offer products or services that complement each other and cater to a similar clientele.

Another recent positive story shows how premises can be shared across time, in this case day and evening, demonstrating how unused or underutilised space can be turned into a mutually beneficial business arrangement. Sleeper, opened by Nick Clark, and now celebrating their third year on Kings Road in St Leonards, has recently partnered with Wermut, turning



Mark Plummer in his wine vault

Sleeper, a New-York style bagel shop and foodie's dream, into a stylish cocktail bar in the evenings serving up pre-dinner drinks.

Speaking to Nick and the team at Sleeper, it's clear he shares Mark's passion for shared spaces and has hosted various pop-ups over the years including two-weeks with the chic Cambridge restaurant, Vanderlyle. He's especially pleased that Wermut could utilise the shop, saying "we usually run out of bagels at

around 2.30pm; now the space has become revitalised as a popular watering hole in evenings too."

Deriving additional income has helped Nick to support his team of four bakers and baristas. It's clear he sees the potential for this growing trend in Hastings and St Leonards as like-minded creative and energetic people work together to generate new business concepts in a tough, but definitely not unbeatable, market.

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

Not All Kombucha is Created Equally



Lisa and the Booyah team

Booyah Vitality began its journey in the Driver family garage during the pandemic when kombucha was barely on the radar. Its founder, Lisa Driver, had been dedicated to improving local health since 1995 through her work in the health and fitness industry and says that she "didn't start Booyah because it was trendy or to make a quick buck, but because she genuinely cares," with her understanding of nutrition and

wellbeing used in every bottle being brewed.

Whilst laying the groundwork in Booyah's early stages, it is clear that Lisa really came to see and appreciate how her customers had come to 'feel the health' of her product, as the Booyah team like to say. This early momentum kickstarted their health drinks business, allowing Booyah to expand into larger premises whilst realising its tangible

potential to increase the health and vitality of the community. Indeed, Lisa confesses it has always been her mission to help people feel better, and Booyah is merely an extension of that lifelong passion.

Speaking to Lisa, it is clear that she is very grounded in her local Hastings community and takes pride in the fact that every bottle sold supports jobs and business in the town. She sees Booyah as a "community-driven vision for better health" and is clear that the momentum is not slowing down, saying "We've spent years helping people feel healthy, and we're not stopping now." In a world where kombucha, and the health drinks market as a whole, is as Lisa puts it "popping off left, right, and centre", she is keen to point out that Booyah stands apart from the rest, asserting that "we're not just about fizz and flavour; we're about function."

Booyah are keen to point out that, unlike mass-produced brands focused on shelf-life over substance, Booyah prioritises health benefits at every stage to support gut health, immunity, and vitality with Booyah carefully fermenting their kombucha for approximately 40% longer than many other brands.

From the fermentation process to their choice of packaging, Booyah do things differently.



For more information you can visit booyahvitality.co.uk where you can learn more on gut health, inflammation and their local stockists near you. Or get in touch with them via: @booyah_vitality info@booyahvitality.co.uk

RUGBY

FOOTBALL



H & B End League Season On A High

Hastings & Bexhill ended their Kent 3 league season in triumphant style, winning 25-19 away last Saturday against the league runners-up Beckenham 2nd XV. Their hosts may have not been in fully competitive mode, lying far adrift of league winners Tonbridge Juddians but also safe from being overtaken from below. Nevertheless, H&B's victory—their seventh successive win, including five away from home – was a sterling effort against a squad of big, fast opponents in an end-to-end contest, featuring brave tackling and hard-fought scrums.

Joe Stinson returned to the side after a three-month lay-off with a hamstring injury. Harry Walker, Frazer McManus, Joe Field, Calvin Crosby-Clarke and Sam Surridge all played prominent roles.

Tries were scored by Joe Whitehill James and by Walker (two), with two conversions and two penalties kicked by Surridge.

The win elevated H & B to third place in the final league table, having conceded less points than any other team in the league over the course of the season—a tribute to excellent defensive organisation.

Next week, as part of the club's centenary celebrations, H & B entertain a Sussex Martlets XV at their Ark Alexandra ground, kick off 3pm. All are invited to support.

LONDON & SE - COUNTIES 3 KENT LEAGUE TABLE (TOP SIX)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	B	PTS
TONBRIDGE JUDDIANS II	20	17	1	2	706	320	386	18	89
BECKENHAM II	20	14	0	6	760	362	398	17	73
HASTINGS & BEXHILL	20	14	0	6	430	271	159	10	67
BROCKLEIANS	20	14	1	5	559	326	233	12	66

HOCKEY

South Saxons Women Clinch League Title

South Saxons women have matched their male counterparts in the club by winning the 2024-25 Sussex Martlets league championship. On 29 March, playing at Bexhill Academy, they squeezed past Brighton & Hove 3rds 2-1 whilst nearest challengers East Grinstead went down 3-2 at home to mid-Sussex. The victory of the Hastings side secured the title with a game to spare, and they were perhaps still over-celebrating when they travelled away to third-placed Lewes 2nds last

Saturday to be thumped 6-1.

South Saxons men had already sealed their own Martlets title a couple of weeks before, but continued in winning vein for their last two matches, crushing Eastbourne 2nds 9-2 on 29 March at Horntye, then overcoming Hailsham 2-1 away last Saturday.

The men's second team retained status, finishing 9th out of 12 sides in the same Martlets division, despite a 2-0 loss on the final Saturday against Lewes 2nds.



Searle Out, United Not Quite Down

25 March
Hastings Utd 1
Canvey Island 1

29 March
Hastings Utd 1
Billericay Town 5

5 April
Bowers & Pitsea 0
Hastings Utd 2

HUGH SULLIVAN

urday, club chair Dean White put himself in charge, brought back teenager Joe Clifford from a loan spell with Little Common and sent out a team that retained only five of the players – goalkeeper Louis Rogers, defenders Ollie Black and George Walker, and forwards Davide Rodari and Si Ligendza – who were in the starting line-up against Billericay.

Charlie Scarles, another under-18 player, was given his league debut, while the substitutes bench contained five more youth players, though none in the end appeared on the pitch.

Back on 25 March, Canvey Island came to the Pilot Field for the first of two proximate matches between the sides – the return fixture in Essex will be played tomorrow (Saturday). Both teams, and their respective supporters, were well aware that Hastings would need to win all six points at stake over the three-week double-header if they were to overhaul the Islanders.

With four matches still to play in this season's Isthmian Premier League, Hastings United are still mathematically able to escape relegation. But after the men in claret-and-blue failed to beat fellow strugglers Canvey Island in a Tuesday evening match at the Pilot Field, and were then overrun four days later by promotion challengers Billericay Town, the United board acknowledged that a great escape under manager Danny Searle was no longer a realistic prospect.

They acted swiftly: Searle departed on the Monday, "by mutual agreement" according to the statement put out by the club. And within a couple of days, six senior players whom Searle had brought in during his four-month tenure were also released. Defenders Teddy Perkins and Alex Kpakpe, midfielders Ben Wells and Taner Dogan, and forwards Reece Grant and Reuel Powell-Downey have all been thanked for their services but had their registrations cancelled.

For the game against already relegated Bowers & Pitsea last Saturday, club chair Dean White put himself in charge, brought back teenager Joe Clifford from a loan spell with Little Common and sent out a team that retained only five of the players – goalkeeper Louis Rogers, defenders Ollie Black and George Walker, and forwards Davide Rodari and Si Ligendza – who were in the starting line-up against Billericay.

Charlie Scarles, another under-18 player, was given his league debut, while the substitutes bench contained five more youth players, though none in the end appeared on the pitch.

Back on 25 March, Canvey Island came to the Pilot Field for the first of two proximate matches between the sides – the return fixture in Essex will be played tomorrow (Saturday). Both teams, and their respective supporters, were well aware that Hastings would need to win all six points at stake over the three-week double-header if they were to overhaul the Islanders.

engendered a foul in the visitor's penalty box: Rodari dispatched the penalty without fuss. But the second half was marked by a flurry of yellow cards as both sides lost discipline in increasingly frantic exchanges. In the 83rd minute the visitors equalised, then the yellow cards became red – two for the Islanders, one for United's Kpakpe – and the match ended in a 1-1 draw.

Against Billericay, United conceded an early goal, equalised through Rodari, but were brushed aside thereafter, with four more goals chalked up by the Essex side before halftime to emphasise the gap in both class and confidence between the respective teams.

Last Saturday's opponents Bowers & Pitsea had lost their last ten games, and were indeed without a win since their 4-2 victory over the 'U's at the Pilot Field before Christmas. It took another penalty, converted by Rodari on the stroke of halftime after a foul on Ligendza, to put Hastings ahead. A second goal, also by Rodari – his 22nd of the season – 15 minutes from time secured the points.

Given the 'U's gaping goal difference compared to the sides above them, relegation will still be effectively confirmed if Hastings lose to Canvey Island tomorrow and Dulwich Hamlet get a draw or better away to Bognor Regis Town. But in any event, Dean White's depleted and now very youthful squad should look forward rather than back. It's a new era.

ISTHMIAN PREMIER LEAGUE TABLE (BOTTOM SIX)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	PTS
CANVEY ISLAND	38	12	4	22	46	61	-15	40
DULWICH HAMLET	38	11	7	20	53	71	18	40
HENDON	38	8	11	19	50	66	-16	35
HASTINGS UNITED	38	8	8	22	34	70	-36	32
BOGNOR REGIS TOWN	38	7	8	23	47	88	-41	29
BOWERS & PITSEA	38	5	4	29	29	82	-53	19



PHOTO COURTESY OF NIGEL CAPLE

SHIRASUKA NIGEL CAPLE

Now I am living here on the coast again, perhaps it is appropriate that I have returned to a subject that relates to the sea and a coastal route called the Tokaido (Eastern Sea Road). This route developed in significance over a time that dates back to the start of Japan's Edo Period (1603-1868). I first became aware of the Tokaido after seeing a selection of woodblock prints by the Japanese artist Utagawa Hiroshige.

I grew curious to know what remained of this road and wondered how the locations would look

now. I then travelled on the Tokaido Road in Japan and produced paintings based upon similar views to those once chosen by Hiroshige in the early 1830s. Some of Hiroshige's studies of these areas were transferred into a set of woodblock prints known as *The 53 Stations of the Tokaido Road*.

After a time, I realised that Hiroshige's images of the Tokaido were as much about an imaginative journey as about a physical one. It is, perhaps, on this level of the imagination that I feel most empathy

with many of the artists that have made this journey before me. Some locations within the modern face of the Tokaido had a desolate and abandoned atmosphere, while other places were full of travellers, noise and hospitality. I imagined that this would have been more reminiscent of the road in Hiroshige's time. Hiroshige used the Tokaido as a source of creativity for many years. I have just started. The way I express my experience of the Tokaido is encoded in the paintings.