

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



Getting Greener

New Council Leader and Mayor Elected by Hastings Council

At the Annual Full Council meeting of Hastings Borough Council last Wednesday (15 May), Julia Hilton stepped down as leader, to be replaced by Glenn Haffenden. She will remain in the cabinet as his deputy.

Becca Horn, their Green party colleague, was elected mayor for the next 12 months, replacing Labour's Judy Rogers.

Both Cllrs Haffenden and Horn were each elected to their respective posts at the meeting without challenge, even though the Green party councillors remain a minority in the chamber – only 12 out of 32. The five Conservative members and six Hastings Independents Group (HIG) all joined them in voting for Cllr Horn as mayor; ten of the same eleven also voted in favour of the appointment of Cllr Haffenden as leader – only Cllr Batsford (HIG) voted against.

The Labour party, who have appointed Helen Kay as their leader in place of Margi O'Callaghan, abstained en bloc in both votes.

Becca Horn's election as mayor is significant, since past convention has been for the previous year's deputy mayor to step up to the role. No public statement was issued by last year's deputy David Whitehill or by his party, Labour, as to whether he had wanted to be elevated (or not). But, since the conduct of Cllr Margi O'Callaghan as mayor in 2023-24, the position has clearly been recognised for its potential political power as well as its ceremonial function. Both in her influence on the agenda of council meetings and in her delivery of some crucial casting votes on issues where the chamber was equally divided, Cllr O'Callaghan had shown how the political power of the mayoralty could be exercised. A year ago, the Greens accepted her deputy Judy Rogers, also Labour, as heir to the role in an effort to reach out across the political spectrum. This time round they put forward Cllr Horn, knowing that none of the other parties would be



Residents of Vicarage Road have come together to weed the pavement to avoid council Glyphosate usage



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Wars of words - and worse - feature prominently in HIP's lead pages as local horror at the paucity of humanitarian aid for Gaza reflects national debates, and a dispute over music volume at the Carib de l'Afrique restaurant continues to escalate.

All change at Hastings Borough Council, as cabinet roles are reshuffled, or perhaps just the same political actors exchanging roles? Read our news coverage to help decide for yourself.

Get your diaries out: The town will shortly host its first ever Comic Con, welcome the return of the Bottle Alley Art Market for a third successive year and after an overlong hiatus witness the renaissance of the Hastings Prom with, we're promised, "plenty of chances to sing along".

In the Arts section, aficionados of unlikely juxtapositions can ponder the links between Marlene Dietrich and James Burton- the founder of St Leonards, along with the 1930-era jazz of the Hot Club de France with Hastings' own contemporary quintet.

If you'd rather be outside in the sun, the Food page explains Edible Open Gardens Weekend, or watch cricket, covered in the Sport section.

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News



Green party councillors pose after May 2024 election: Cllr Haffenden tallest in the centre; Cllr Horn shortest on right

likely to combine in supporting an alternative candidate, and both she and others of her party spoke of their great pride in her appointment as Hastings' "first Green Mayor".

Following her election, Cllr Horn, dressed in a yellow jumpsuit that seemed to mark a very conscious departure in style from any of her recent predecessors, took over the chairing of the meeting. While assisted in the formal process by Chief Legal Officer Mary Kilner seated alongside, she was quick to assert her authority on proceedings. She reprimanded Cllr Mike Edwards, who has taken on the leadership of the Conservative group of councillors – again without any public statement from his party–for making apparently discriminatory remarks in the chamber about “people who don’t have English as their mother tongue”. She also told Cllr Batsford that his criticisms of Cllr Haffenden’s speech introducing his programme for the forthcoming year were “really verging on the personal – once I get more comfortable in this seat, I can assure you that I won’t be putting up with any of those personal [attacks].”

Cllr Haffenden informed the

meeting that the cabinet would continue to consist of the same eight members, all Greens, as had served under Cllr Hilton, though with some reorganisation of roles. In particular, Cllr Hilton will focus on the anticipated local government reorganisation that involves the election of a county-wide mayor in 2026 and thereafter the probability of amalgamation of existing district and borough councils (including of Hastings) into a new unitary authority. Cllr Haffenden will retain his existing housing portfolio.

There was then an appointment process for representation on council committees. Most of the committee places had already been allocated by a prior negotiation between the four political parties, based on proportionate seats held. However, in a further significant vote, Green councillor Yunis Smith was elected as chair of the planning committee by a majority over Conservative Matthew Beaver to extend his party’s dominance further.

Cllr Haffenden went on to set out a very generalised programme for the year, emphasising the stability which Cllr Hilton’s administration had brought to the Council’s financ-

es and covering the range of council services, with particular focus on housing and homelessness.

Cllr Kay, for Labour, accepted that these were core challenges but referred to the town’s poor education provision, to the environmental degradation of the town centre, to its “appalling roads and pavements” and to other service failures – she urged the adoption of her party’s proposal for a unitary coastal authority to address these problems.

Former council leader Paul Barnett, for the HIG group, congratulated Cllr Haffenden on his election but pointed to the diminishing terms of office served by successive Council leaders over the past two decades. Jeremy Birch had been leader for ten years, Peter Chowney for five, Kim Forward for a little over two, he himself for less than two, Julia Hilton just over a year. He described the debate hitherto as “depressing...fiddling while Rome burns”, and wondered how long the new incumbent would last, as the threat of takeover by a unitary Sussex authority loomed. He described the Greens’ response to the prospective reorganisation hitherto as “too timid, too slow and too polite”. This

was the only issue, he argued, that mattered for the sake of the future of the town and its residents.

Nevertheless, when Cllr Haffenden’s programme came to be voted upon, it was supported universally by the Green, Conservative and (with some show of hesitation) HIG blocs. Labour councillors again abstained.

Following the meeting, Cllr Hilton issued a statement: “True leadership is about enabling others to step up into leadership roles and find their own style of leadership. Glenn [Haffenden] and I have worked closely together in a co-leadership style over the last year and I look forward to supporting him as he takes on this new role. In a few years’ time, with a new council structure on the horizon, it is even more important that as many people as possible have the opportunity to take on leadership roles so the new council has a strong team to call on to face the challenges ahead.”

Cllr Haffenden said: “I am delighted to carry on the great work Julia [Hilton] has done establishing new ways of collaborative working right across the council and honoured to have the opportunity to lead the council over the coming year.”

HASTINGS TIDES						
DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET MOON
FRI 23 MAY	L 2:27am	H 8:13am	L 3:00pm	H 8:35pm	4:57	8:51
SAT 24 MAY	L 3:33am	H 9:07am	L 4:03pm	H 9:28pm	4:56	8:52
SUN 25 MAY	L 4:34am	H 9:58am	L 5:01pm	H 10:19	4:55	8:54
MON 26 MAY	L 5:30am	H 10:48am	L 5:55pm	H 11:10	4:54	8:55
TUES 27 MAY	L 6:22	H 11:39am	L 6:47		4:53	8:56 NEW
WEDS 28 MAY	H 0:02am	L 7:13am	H 12:30pm	L 7:36pm	4:52	8:57
THURS 29 MAY	H 0:55am	L 8:01am	H 1:22pm	L 8:23pm	4:51	8:58
FRI 30 MAY	H 1:48am	L 8:47am	H 2:14pm	L 9:09pm	4:50	9:00
SAT 31 MAY	H 2:42am	L 9:33am	H 3:06pm	L 9:56pm	4:49	9:01
SUN 1 JUNE	H 3:36am	L 10:19am	H 3:59pm	L 10:45pm	4:49	9:02
MON 2 JUNE	H 4:32am	L 11:09am	H 4:55pm	L 11:38pm	4:48	9:03
TUES 3 JUNE	H 5:30am	L 12:03pm	H 5:54pm		4:47	9:04 QUARTER
WEDS 4 JUNE	L 0:36am	H 6:30am	L 1:03pm	H 6:54pm	4:47	9:05
THURS 5 JUNE	L 1:37am	H 7:31am	L 2:04pm	H 7:53pm	4:46	9:06

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

COUNCIL TURNS DOWN RESTAURANT LICENCE APPLICATION

Hastings BC’s Licensing Committee has rejected a new premises licence application from the Ocean Spice Indian restaurant, located on Hastings seafront. The decision followed a recommendation from Sussex Police, who opposed the application due to the restaurant’s “repeated breaches” of licensing regulations over the past seven years.

The restaurant is owned and managed by the Rahman family and employs several family members. In 2018 it was recognised as being the best Indian restaurant in East Sussex at the Curry Life Awards.

The application for the new licence was submitted in March by Fawjia Ltd, a company owned by Fawjia Rahman, the daughter of Siddiqui Rahman, who Sussex Police believe remains the true owner

and decision-maker behind the restaurant.

In their objection to the application, Sussex Police highlighted Mr Rahman’s “significant failures in the management of the premises” over several years. These included “the employment of illegal workers and involvement in criminal activities.” They also gave details of a series of violent incidents involving members of the Rahman family, which led to serious injuries to members of the public and resulted in custodial sentences for three of the brothers. Additionally, they noted that the family had failed to pay nearly £100,000 in outstanding fines stemming from previous Immigration enforcement actions.

Police also warned that the three Rahman brothers, currently serving prison sentences, were expected to rejoin the family business upon their release.

Naz Montague

PHOTOS: PETRO BUDNYK



Ukrainian Celebration in Hastings

FERDUSARA BEGUM ALI

The vibrant spirit of the Ukrainian community was on show at the Hastings Concordia Hall last Sunday as locals gathered to celebrate Vyshyvanka Day. This special occasion is dedicated to the traditional Ukrainian embroidered shirt known as the ‘vyshyvanka,’ a garment that transcends fashion to embody a profound connection to the nation’s history and culture. The art of embroidery has been lovingly passed down through generations, with each intricate stitch telling a unique story and representing the rich cultural heritage of various Ukrainian regions. This day not only showcases the beauty of these garments but also reflects the cultural identity and national

pride of the Ukrainian people. The hall was adorned with an array of colours and intricate embroidery. The colours and patterns chosen often reflect the wearer’s regional roots, family heritage, and personal beliefs. Every design element is steeped in tradition, conveying messages of love, protection, and harmony, making Vyshyvanka Day a heartfelt expression of the Ukrainian spirit, enriched by traditions and a profound sense of community. As part of the festivities, a well-rounded array of traditional Ukrainian dishes, snacks and sweets were on offer. Platters of varenyky (dumplings) and sweet treats such as syrniki (cheese pancakes) brimmed with flavour and cultural significance. The programme was centred on a concert hosted by Khrystyna Maschenska and David Shewry.



They welcomed guests on stage, introducing a series of music and dance performances that served as a poignant reminder of Ukraine’s resilience and cultural pride. In light of Ukraine’s complex history — including the ongoing war with Russia and recent U.S.-Ukraine resource agreements — the event took on an even deeper significance, resonating with the attendees’ sentiments and reflections on these pressing issues. Expressing his concerns, host David Shewry remarked, “Seeing what’s going on in Ukraine is horrible, as well as what’s happening in other parts of the world: my heart goes out to all those who are suffering conflict. I guess I’m feeling that I want to show solidarity where I can, do whatever I can make people who are coming here feel safe and welcomed.” When asked about the implications of the Trump administration’s relations with President Zelensky and the associated ‘resource deals,’ Shewry said: “[Donald Trump] is in an array of people right now who are looking to make profit out of this war. But there’s a human cost to it which they don’t seem to care about. Anyone who is trying to profit from suffering, they don’t have any compassion.” Through heartfelt expressions and shared experiences, Vyshyvanka Day at Hastings emerged not only as a celebration of cultural identity but also as a rallying point for solidarity and support for Ukraine during these challenging times, a testament to the enduring spirit of a nation proud of its past and hopeful for its future. The event also provided a vital opportunity for fundraising, aimed at aiding those who support soldiers affected by the war.

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KATY WEITZ



Local War of Words Escalates over Gaza Killings

HUGH SULLIVAN

News reports of Israel's blockade of humanitarian relief to Gaza and of the renewed military assault upon its citizens have provoked fresh passions amongst local citizens, whether sympathetic to the Palestinian cause or otherwise.

The Hastings & District Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), having realised that the St Leonards factory of the US arms manufacturer General Dynamics (GD) is leased from Hastings Borough Council, has demanded that the Council take action to prevent it manufacturing components of bombs being used "in the commission of an ongoing genocide." Local PSC secretary Laurie Holden has pointed to evidence that 2,000lb MK-84 bombs made by GD were dropped on the tented camp at al-Mawasi, which has direct friendship links with Hastings. In February he wrote to then Council leader Julia Hilton, arguing that the lease could be revoked if the premises were being used for "illegal or immoral" purposes, which would include engaging in conduct ancillary to genocide.

In a written response sent on 28 April, Cllr Hilton said that the Council had plans to introduce an ethical policy "to guide all future lettings", but that "manufacturing components" was a permitted use within the terms of GD's lease. The Council's Legal Officer had advised her that there were "no legal grounds" to end the lease.

On 9 May Hastings & Rye Liberal Democrats issued a public letter addressed to constituency MP He-

lena Dollimore demanding that she, along with prime minister Sir Keir Starmer, speak out unequivocally against Israel's "serious violations of international and humanitarian law" in Gaza.

On the same day flyposters appeared across Hastings showing an image of the MP headed "WANTED: A Straight Answer...Do You Condemn Israel's Genocide in Gaza?" Underneath, it stated: "We have been asking this question of Ms Dollimore for months. 60,000+ Palestinians murdered and [she] has no response?"

Cllr Glenn Haffenden, about to be elected as leader of Hastings Borough Council, immediately dissociated the Green party from this personal targeting. On 10 May he posted on Facebook that "while we absolutely condemn the ongoing genocide in Gaza and have been consistently calling for a ceasefire, we also absolutely condemn such personal attacks on Helena and distance ourselves from any organisation which chooses to go down this route as part of their campaign tactics."

PARLIAMENTARY INTERVENTION

Ms Dollimore did in fact intervene in a Parliamentary debate last Wednesday to question the Minister for the Middle East, Hamish Falconer MP, saying: "The situation is intolerable with one in five Gazans facing starvation; the use of aid as a weapon of war by Israel is inexcusable. The continued firing of rockets by Hamas and detention of hostages are also inexcusable, and it all must end. I welcome the UK, with our international allies, calling an urgent briefing on the situation at the UN Security Council.

There, the UN humanitarian chief was clear in his warning about the dire consequences of the situation continuing. What steps are this Labour Government taking to get more aid in, get the hostages out and bring about the ceasefire and two-state solution that we all in this House desperately want to see?"

Notwithstanding this expression of Ms Dollimore's views, the national *Jewish Chronicle* weighed in with a claim that local Jewish residents were outraged by the poster. A Facebook page hosted by the Hastings Jewish Community Limited described its message as "misguided, vicious, misogynistic and bullying", and called upon local councillors and political parties to cut all ties with the Hastings PSC, including a boycott of their marches and public platforms."

In response, a spokesperson for the PSC pointed out that this company (HJCL) has "one named officer [former Hastings BC councillor Dany Louise] who has been smearing our organisation for many years. We are unaware who else it represents, but it is not 'the' Jewish community...Many of our members are part of the Jewish community, our chair is Jewish and we have been jointly holding protests against the Israeli genocide in Gaza with Hastings Jews for Justice, a large and active group which stands with the Palestinians in their struggle for liberation."

A spokesperson for HJCL told the *Jewish Chronicle* in turn that "[we have] over 75 members...We are proudly Jewish, and believe wholeheartedly in Israel's right to exist and to defend itself from terrorist armies."

In the meantime, Ms Dollimore spoke to HIP about "both the humanitarian situation in Gaza and rising levels of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia closer to home. We all want this war to end, and I am always happy to engage respectfully with constituents on these issues. However, I will not tolerate abuse or harassment towards my staff or myself, and anyone engaging in this cannot expect a response."

Carib Owner Claims Intimidation

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

Adebayo Olujobi (Bayo), the owner of the *Carib de L'Afrique* restaurant in the heart of Hastings town centre, has shared his experiences of ongoing harassment he and his staff have endured in the wake of a recent petition alleging noise at his restaurant. HIP reported the story *Not Feeling the Vibes* in issue 276.

Bayo claims that his restaurant has been the "target of a sustained campaign of harassment" since he began playing distinctive reggae and jazz music throughout the day. He says they have been "inundated with malicious and misleading reviews" intended to harm its reputation. In addition, his car has been repeatedly vandalised with a vile swear word scratched into the bonnet, the wing mirror completely torn off and a brick left on the windscreen.

He believes the attacks on his car and the spiteful online reviews are not random, but rather "a targeted effort to intimidate". He remains defiant, however. To protect himself and his staff, he says he has installed CCTV and other security measures and reports every incident to the police.

Despite the recent unpleasantness, Bayo says he wants to focus on what truly matters – "community, resilience, and respect." He says "we remain proud of Carib de L'Afrique. It is more than just a restaurant; it is a celebration of culture, heritage, and community spirit. We are a learning centre educating people on a variety of African foods as well as many different countries of this vast continent. We are com-



PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

mitted to continuing our mission to offer warm hospitality, joyful energy, and delicious food to everyone who walks through our doors. We thank our loyal customers and neighbours who have stood by us. Hate has no place in Hastings, and we believe that kindness and unity will always prevail."

The online Change.org petition *Stop Excessive Noise Pollution from Carib De L'Afrique* has so far gathered over 200 signatures. The petition author, self-styled as 'Concerned Citizen', believes the increased pressure it has created has resulted in "things being a lot quieter lately", adding that "the response has been staggering and the council must take note, there is power in coming together with a shared goal, that is the essence of community."

NEWS IN BRIEF

CAFÉ ON THE HILL

Troika Projects, the local consortium appointed by Hastings BC to develop the West Hill Cafe and Castle Project, have applied for planning permission to set up and run a "mobile food and beverage kiosk" on the site.

In addition to selling food and

drinks, the kiosk will provide a point of contact for the pending development of the new visitor centre that will be built in place of the now closed West Hill Cafe. The temporary prefabricated kiosk will operate only until the new visitor centre is completed, at which point it will be integrated into the visitor centre's café.

SUSPENDED PRISON FOR SHOPKEEPER

At a hearing on 24 April Hastings Magistrates sentenced the owner of the Castle Street shop Delboys, Lhon Karimi, to 12 weeks imprisonment, suspended for 12 months, after he pleaded guilty to nine offences of selling illegal tobacco and cigarettes and of making alcohol and vape sales to under-age customers.

East Sussex Trading Standards investigated the premises after what they called a "child test purchaser" was sold a can of cider and an adult a packet of illegal cigarettes in 2023, and another "test" child bought an over-capacity vape in April 2024.

Karimi at first pleaded not guilty to the charges but changed his pleas at the start of his trial last December. All illegal stock was ordered to be forfeited and destroyed.

No Favours from Rother DC for Colonnade Traders

HUGH SULLIVAN

The Bexhill Colonnade, which accommodates a parade of independent shops and cafes along the seafront promenade immediately below the De La Warr Pavilion, is to undergo extensive renovation and refurbishment from September.

The whole parade, an Edwardian structure which pre-dates the Pavilion, is suffering from structural problems, including water ingress from above in various places, and it's universally accepted that this work is overdue. Rother District Council (RDC), who own the freehold, propose to undertake it over the 2025-26 winter months at a projected cost in the region of £650,000, and have served termination notices on all the retail outlets in order to gain possession for this purpose.

The traders—a mix of small craft-based emporia such as the Pebble

People, the Bag Lady, Rachel's Glass Store and Eleven@Colonnade plus Hughies Café—have sought assurances that they will be welcomed back once the works are completed, and that future rents will not be significantly increased. RDC is giving none.

Some have operated there for up to 13 years. However, their respective leases run for only one- or two-year terms at most, without (it is understood) automatic rights of renewal. Only the main licensed bar at the eastern end, the Colonnade Café, which has a lease with substantial years still to run, will retain any legal rights to return.

'BEST VALUE'

A council spokesperson told HIP: "Once the work is complete, we will openly market the available units, and any businesses will be welcome to apply. As a local authority we have a responsibility to demonstrate best value, meaning we must

conduct a fair process for all prospective tenants rather than offering guarantees to any specific business...We are regrettably unable to guarantee that existing tenants can return, as we do not yet know what interest there may be from others in taking on the Colonnade."

RDC's approach is based (the spokesperson said) on a Service and Asset Devolution Framework agreed by its Cabinet in March under which the council's assets and services are to be protected and sustained "by empowering local partners and ensuring financial and operational sustainability". That "will enable us to secure assets and services for future community benefit and place decision-making and accountability at a truly local level."

Not local enough, it seems, to include the existing traders. Rachel Hoad, who sells her own glassware artefacts from the Glass Store, commented: "Rother keep saying that we can re-apply for tenancies so that



we have a chance to get our premises back. But they're also talking of devolving the whole site, so they won't be in charge any longer."

Sonia Valentini, who has been making jewellery and selling it along with crystals, clothing, cosmetics and accessories at No. Eleven since 2012, confirmed that Rother will neither guarantee to re-offer a tenancy to her, nor indicate what rent would be charged if they did. She has initiated a collective change.org petition on behalf of the traders, seeking the promise of more favourable treatment. It has attracted over 2,000 signatures.

They are fully supported by Bexhill Chamber of Commerce, according to its President Howard Martin. "It's a unique set of businesses right at the heart of the community—a

mini-Covent Garden selling craft-based artefacts right on our seafront", he said. "They've proved by their longevity that they're the right businesses in the right place. But without help and support these entrepreneurs, whom the council professes to support, may go to the wall."

"We would like the council to step forward with a package of measures that will keep them together."

Martin added that the Chamber of Commerce is in discussion with RDC "to ensure that the businesses have a future and are adequately compensated for disruption". The RDC spokesperson gave a less positive summation: the council has "developed a package of support for those businesses impacted and will continue to work with our tenants over the coming months."

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

✉#Letter

WHAT THE TOWN NEEDS

Dear HIP

The Azur is not the name: it is the Marina Pavilion. That ridiculous Teddy's Bar they built on top should be demolished and the Marina Pavilion brought back to its former glory. Thirty years ago it was lovely going to the bar, then going on the beach. It was great. The Marina Jazz Club formed by Stan Lodder and Michael Monk started at the Pavilion in 1992. It is now called 1066 Jazz Club and is held at the Bowling Club in Bexhill. Not a patch on what it once was, though.

An all-weather Olympic-sized swimming pool, heated by solar power or whatever means of heating allowed year-round usage, would be very beneficial to this town. Where it should be built is the question. We need this for the health of our people, old and young. It would help in keeping people away from the GP surgery and hospital, I am sure. Swimming is a sport you can carry on with to the grave. Walking not so. I have asked Southern Water

if they'd pay for it, since they've polluted our sea with sewage.

A tidal pool in the sea is not practical because people are getting sick from swimming and doing water sports in the sea, including our rivers, from dumped sewage. Too many people on the planet: that's the problem with all the sewage. Only wars seem to cure that (to a degree).

Verna Lodder

✉#Letter

NATURE VERSUS DEVELOPMENT

Dear HIP

Nature and development aren't opposing forces — they are two sides of the same coin, each vital to our collective future. Thriving ecosystems provide us with clean water, flood protection, and the pollution essential for agriculture; damage them, and we sabotage our own economic stability. Community wellbeing flourishes when people have access to green spaces that heal and inspire, reducing stress and fostering a sense of be-

longing. Sustainable development isn't just about meeting housing targets — it's about creating spaces that respect and enhance nature, ensuring that the places we build today don't become the environmental crises of tomorrow. To frame nature as a barrier to progress is to miss the point entirely; true progress means building in harmony with the natural world, not at its expense.

Caroline Wiechmann

✉#From our website

HOW A UNITARY COUNCIL CAN WORK

My response to *HIGs to Oppose Reform Proposals* (HIP 276): if every Hastings councillor is a unitary councillor and they all meet half the time in front of the public in Hastings, as the Borough Council does now, and half the time in the new Authority's centre - they'll be embedded and accountable locally and able to represent all Hastings' concerns to their Authority fellow councillors.

Anna Sabin

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

Hastings Comic Con is Coming Up

There's just under a month to go until the White Rock Theatre opens its doors for the first ever Hastings Comic Con on Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 June. Billed as "a spectacular comic extravaganza" the event comes from the Guildhall Trust, the registered charity and operators of the White Rock for the last year, and producers of Portsmouth Comic Con.

It promises a packed programme of activities and attractions for grown-up geeks and kids of all ages.

The event organisers have revealed the final addition to the star-studded line-up: celebrated actress Sophia Myles, best known for her roles as Lady Penelope in *Thunderbirds*, Erika in *Underworld*, and Madame de Pompadour in the *Doctor Who* episode "The Girl in the Fireplace".

Sophia will be making a special appearance at the event, making Hastings Comic Con home to Britain's biggest *Doctor Who* gathering in 2025. The previously announced *Doctor Who* stars joining Sophia are Sylvester McCoy, the seventh Doctor

in *Doctor Who* and Radagast the Brown in *The Hobbit* film trilogy; Peter Davison, best known for his tenure as the fifth Doctor; as well as being one of Britain's most recognisable actors (appearing Saturday 14 June only); Colin Baker, the flamboyant sixth incarnation of The Doctor (appearing Sunday 15 June only); and Nicola Bryant, who played Peri Brown, companion to both the fifth and sixth Doctors. The stars will offer exclusive meet-and-greet opportunities and autograph sessions to the Con's visitors.

Other attractions over the Hastings Comic Con weekend include Artists Alley, where visitors will be able to meet with renowned comic artists and writers from all over the world who have worked on legendary titles such as *The Beano* and *The Dandy*, and for DC and Marvel Comics, with unique merchandise and artwork on offer. There will also be a range of panels and workshops, offering interactive sessions with the comic guests, covering a range of pop culture topics, plus comic drawing workshops de-

signed to appeal to the town's many budding artists.

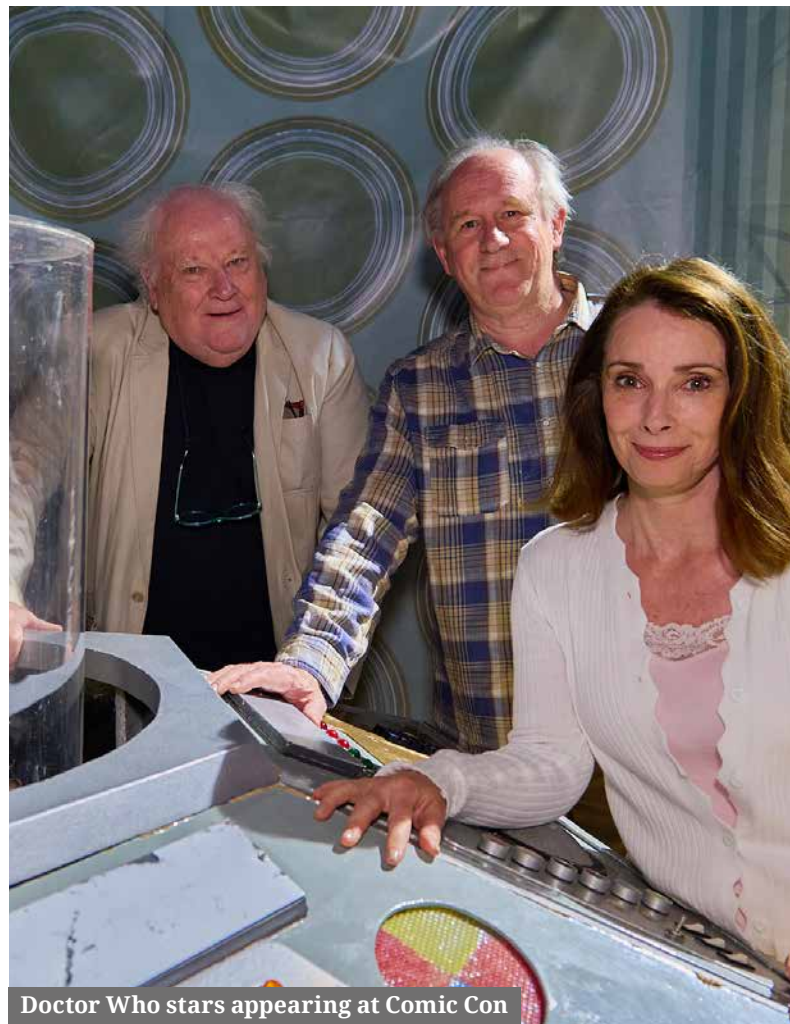
And that's not all. There will be an opportunity for visitors to participate in a wand battle workshop with actor Jon Campling, who played a Death Eater in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1* and Part 2. Workshop attendees can create their own sonic screwdriver and Harry Potter wand out of recycled materials, with Lawn of the Dead.

In the Cosplay zone, Sussex Cosplay Alliance will encourage visitors to join in the daily children and adult cosplay parades to celebrate fans' creativity, while immersive *Star Wars* and *Ghostbuster* experiences will allow visitors to immerse themselves in both film franchises with a host of props and characters.

At the 'Paint & Take' workshop, attendees will be able to paint miniature mystical figurines with Everstromn Hobbies, and there's retro gaming galore with Game Over's classic arcade games like *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders*, *Ninja Turtles*, and *Street Fighter*.

Tickets are on sale now, priced between £1 and £14, with concessions available, and each day features timed entry sessions to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable experience for all.

For more information and bookings, go to hastingscomiccon.com



VERNON NASH

Doctor Who stars appearing at Comic Con



DV8 Students outside the Electric palace cinema

Lights, Camera, Action: Dv8 Sussex College Students Make Their Own Movies

Dv8 Sussex is a small, specialist, creative digital college with sites in Brighton and Bexhill that provides courses for 16-18 year-olds in Creative Digital Media, Music Production and Performance, and Games Design and Development.

Some of its Media Production students have been out and about in Hastings over recent weeks, filming at the much loved Electric Palace Cinema in Hastings Old Town for their end-of-year film projects. Level 3 students are completing a series

of ten-minute films that range from a RedHood Film in production (an offshoot of Batman), an original screenplay based on the end of the world and war in Europe, to an ancient Samurai animation/film crossover. There is also a ghost hunting drama and a satirical horror based around an auction for indirect suicide, whereby avant garde murderers are assigned to put the rich out of their misery.

The Electric Palace Cinema has enjoyed welcoming the cast and

crews, and introducing a new generation of movie lovers to the world of independent film. Julia Clifford Andrew, the cinema's Creative Director commented, "We are proud to be a film location for Dv8 young filmmakers and loved hosting their film shoot in our auditorium! The Electric Palace welcomes young audiences with our special £6 under-21 tickets and we hope more will discover and enjoy our eclectic programme and friendly vibe. We want students to use the cinema with opportunities for young programmers and monthly film Fright Night, Wolf Gang Presents and B Movie Fan Club"



Go to dv8sussex.com and @dv8sussex on social media platforms for details of the annual End of Year show held in June, where the films will be screened alongside other student work which will be exhibited.



JULIE GIDLOW

Christ Church celebrates its 150th year anniversary

150 and Not Out

Christ Church, in Silchester Road, celebrated its 150th birthday last week, with an open weekend programme of music, verse, tours, services and family activities to mark this very special occasion. The church, established by Lady St John

as a site where everyone could worship for free during a period when pew rates were widely charged, was built by celebrated architect Arthur Blomfield. It is Grade II* listed by Historic England, and continues to offer a space for worship, reflection and community, whilst also developing a growing reputation as a venue for hosting musical events, including the regular concert series organised by acclaimed musician and local resident, Max Baillie.

VE DAY: HIP JOINS THE PARTY

After a last-minute call on Thursday 8 May from Bannow Retirement Home in St Leonards, HIP turned up to photograph the residents and staff as they celebrated VE Day. Unbeknown to us, the phone call had come from one of the residents, Julian Oxley, rather than the manager David Brown. We are always delighted to find HIP reaching a wide audience and that we stimulate readers of all ages.



ROD WEBB



Team members at a recent event

Time to Start the Conversation

HIP has partnered with suicide prevention group Hastings Baton of Hope to spread the word about this national campaign which arrives in town on 23 September

The UK's largest ever suicide prevention initiative is coming to Hastings this autumn as part of a 20-stop UK tour, when the Baton of Hope will be carried through Hastings by 48 local Baton Bearers on a full day tour with events along the way to raise awareness of suicide prevention and to spread the message of hope.

The Baton of Hope was founded by former broadcast journalist Mike McCarthy in response to the suicide of his son Ross. It is a charity and campaign group that aims to raise awareness and to generate better support for those affected, and ultimately, to prevent suicide.

Jacy Kilvert, who works for Hastings Voluntary Action and is the Baton of Hope project lead for Hastings, said, "The Baton of Hope will bring about change in how we approach suicide, how we talk about it and how we support those affected by it. I am sure it will be an emo-

tional and meaningful day for all involved and we are so honoured that Hastings is part of a growing movement aspiring to a zero-suicide society; supporting the shared vision of hope where suicide is openly discussed, and together we will inspire hope through action."

Baton Bearers are the focus of the tour and Travis Mains-Marten, a spokesperson for Men's Room - Hastings and St Leonards (MRHSL), the group leading on the initiative, commented, "We are inspired that Hastings has 48 Baton Bearers who will be carrying the Baton across the borough. Each Baton Bearer will have their own reasons and motivations for their involvement and this is a unique opportunity to honour lives lost, raise awareness and help spark conversations. When carrying the Baton, you become part of a nationwide movement dedicated to breaking the

stigma and spreading hope."

Becky De Niro, a team member and baton bearer said, "I am taking part in the Baton of Hope because I am a survivor of suicide, and I know the power of finding light in the darkest moments. I want to share that message of hope with others, reminding them they are never alone."

Over the last few months, organisers have been out and about explaining the Baton of Hope concept and gathering a diverse team of volunteers who will support the live event, and they are now in full 'planning' mode, finalising the baton route and setting up a full programme of activities in the lead up to the tour. Establishing partnerships has been a priority and the team has invested time connecting with many local organisations and businesses with a shared interest and wanting to be involved. One of those groups is the Samaritans, the suicide prevention charity and local service, and a local Samaritan who attended a recent planning session said, "I just wanted to say what an inspiring, exciting and moving evening it was yesterday. Things are snowballing and gathering momentum with creativity and enthusiasm and really reflecting the community we have here in Hastings."

The Baton team are currently collecting stories from local people impacted by suicide, and producer and film maker, Francis Saunders, observed that "shooting the stories of hope has been inspirational, they are very powerful and moving and they really send out the message that there is always hope." This view

is echoed by community worker, Su Barnicoat, from Hastings Voluntary Action, who expressed her commitment as follows, "I am involved with Baton of Hope because I have known people who have taken their own lives and also know people who struggle daily to stay positive. Being a part of this initiative is enabling me to spread hope."

There will be a host of activities happening over the spring and summer, including flag making and storytelling workshops, an auction of promises, plays and music sessions. The team will also be launching their very own 'Staying Alive' flashmob.

Awareness and training are key and the Baton of Hope Hastings team have linked up with Grassroots Suicide Prevention to deliver two Real Talk webinars for local residents. The one-hour introduction to suicide awareness sessions explore a simple framework for conversations with people who may be having thoughts of suicide and ideal for those coming new to the topic of suicide and those looking to update their knowledge and refresh their skills. All key team members are having Mental Health First Aid training that is being delivered by Soundcastle in partnership with the Macmillan Hastings project.

Reaching out to schools is underway and activity packs are being sent to local schools with an invitation for them to send messages of hope that will form part of a larger creative installation of local stories and messages. The group are also gathering celebrity endorsements, including national treasure, comedian Jo Brand, who has posted a short video in which she says, "I wanted to say what a fantastic idea the Baton of Hope tour is and encourage people in Hastings to get involved."

All funding for the Baton of Hope needs to be locally generated and the team is calling for help and offering opportunities for local businesses to sponsor and support Baton of Hope Hastings.

Local Tesco stores are already on board, and their Community Champions are fundraising for the day, and the Baton of Hope team is inviting other retailers and businesses to connect with them to find out more and get active.



To find out more, and to offer support, visit the Men's Room website mensroom.community or contact jkilvert@

batonofhopeuk.org

Hastings Big Flea!



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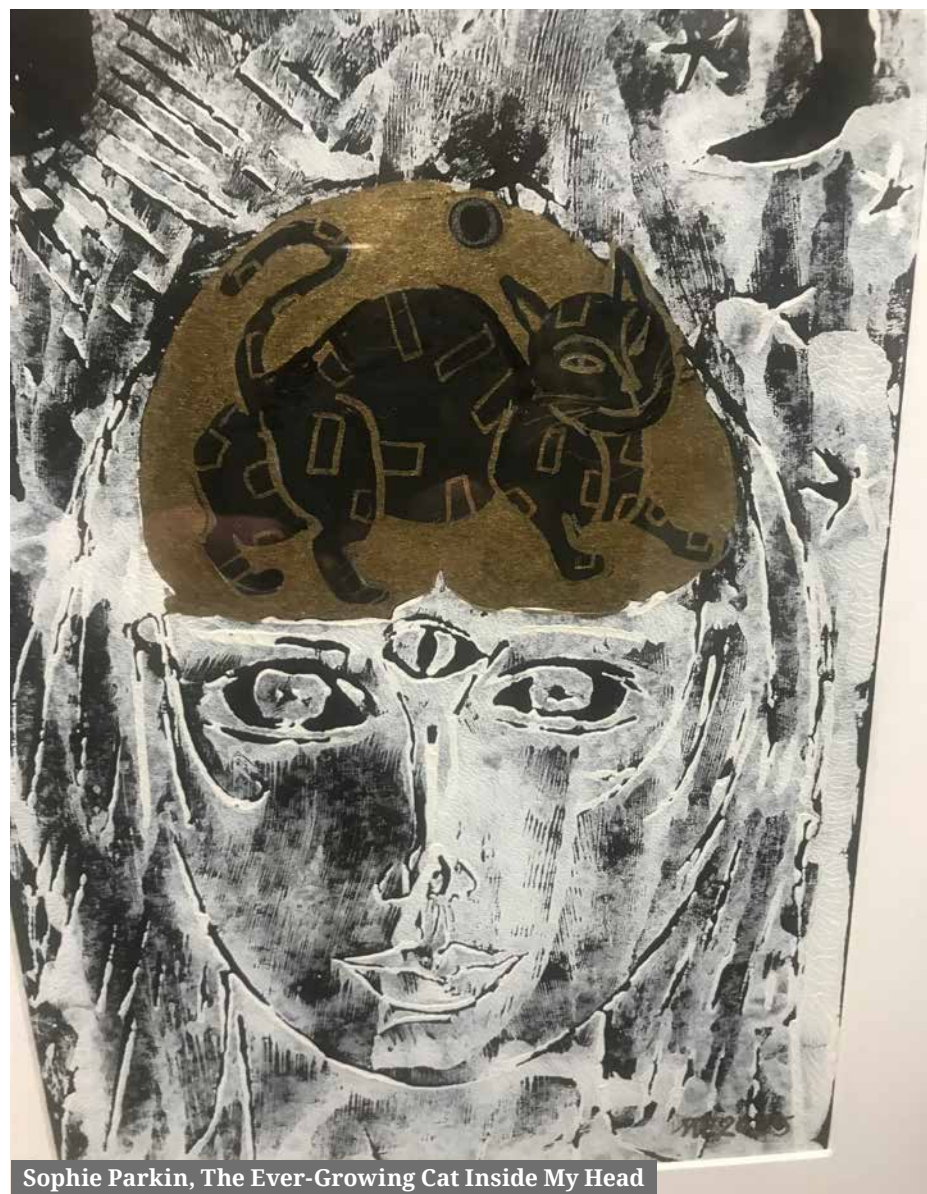
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Sophie Parkin, The Ever-Growing Cat Inside My Head

Apples From the Bohemia Tree

HELEN MURPHY & NICK PELLING
take a look at a dynastic exhibition

The current exhibition at the marvellous Rogue Gallery on Norman Road brings us three separate, quite different artists who are nevertheless tied together by one extraordinary fact: they are mother, daughter and granddaughter. And though we do not really think artiness trickles through our bloodlines, there is something curious going on in this exhibition in that all three women seem to have inherited a Bohemianism of the soul and indeed, of the wardrobe. All three have said, 'up yours' to bourgeois bondage and lived their lives with the colour control turned up to eleven.

TEASING TULIPS

The original fountainhead of all this paint-splattered rebellion is Molly Parkin. Molly exploded on to the London fashion scene in the 1960s,

becoming a fashion editor with a mission to "tease the edges of taste",



Molly Parkin, Black Tulips

as Dennis Hackett put it. But she was so much more: a painter, novelist, controversialist and fab hat maker. She caused a storm of self-righteous indignation in the seventies when her novel *Up Tight* appeared with a cover showing a French model in see-through knickers. Her paintings in the show revel in colour. Molly's works enjoy a bit of a mess and she makes the hues dance and rebound off each other. *Black Tulips*, in particular, has a perfect tension between exotic pattern and splodge.

The work of her daughter, Sophie Parkin, heads off in other directions. Some of it is underpinned by mythological themes such as *Persephone Returns* and *Hoisted by the Ancients*, and yet there are whispers of other ideas and appetites at work. *Oranges Are the Only Fruit* has a muscular sort of force to it. Control edges out mum's messiness. Sophie's monoprints are very striking; we particularly liked *The Ever Growing Cat Inside My Head*. Like her mother, she has somehow invented multiple versions of herself: she is a novelist, poet, painter, journalist and even a social historian. Her book on Bohemian Soho did much to illuminate that lost world.

sions of herself: she is a novelist, poet, painter, journalist and even a social historian. Her book on Bohemian Soho did much to illuminate that lost world.

MAGICAL RETURNS

The youngest of this trio is Carson Parkin-Fairley. Her work revolves around the notion that 'we are all icons,' and we all have an inherent tendency to imbue people and objects with meaning that go beyond the mere mundane. She exploits the fact that image-making is also a kind of magic. As one of her intriguing titles puts it, *Magical Things Happen Here*. Fittingly, the granddaughter uses an image of the young Molly, in her lurid flapper look, as an obvious almost silver-screen icon. In that image there is a strange return to the well-spring. Perhaps.

It is impossible to do justice to the unique vision of each of these powerful women, and yet to grasp that somehow they are bound by some brilliant bohemian thread. In a sense, much of the aesthetic of this show seems connected to Molly Parkin's original, fabulous advice on dressing, "just fling on any old thing, so long as it's clashy."

The Parkin Lot continues until 15 June



Jude Montague, Girl

Sex and Success in Sussex

JUDE MONTAGUE

A group exhibition brought together by friends, beneath this controversial but playful title, follows last year's *Spirit of Invention* show which responded to John Logie Baird's inventiveness. These multi-artist extravaganzas build on a collective arts community that exhibited together in London in underground car parks throughout the 2010s and at the Venice Biennale fringe, an experimental group practice curated by Vanya Balogh, and here in Hastings by Danny Pockets.

Some of the artists participating in this strange and far-reaching expressive show include Leah Germann (many of whose paintings dramatically interpret domestic situations, and who will be exhibiting with the group for the first time) and Jim Roseveare, who had an in-depth exhibition in 2022 at the blackShed Gallery and whose work is monumental and playful. He works with materials drawing on his own vocational life in arboriculture.

The theme allows artists to ex-

plore ideas of culture, identity, satire, and the overwhelming representations and arguments of modern life, in a personal, non-political context. Joyful and colourful pieces crowd together in a contemporary salon, and the hang of forty artists draws on the jostle of the Royal Academy Exhibitions. A great freedom is offered to the artists, although there is minimal audio-visual and performance, encouraging conversations around the 2D and 3D works.

Caroline Gregory and Julia Maddison are two key artists who have been working as part of the team from the beginning, and who are now based in St Leonards. Julia Maddison adapts found pieces and is often looking back, dealing with loss and absence, but she has a humour that makes even her vulnerable pieces somewhat robust. She has been looking at women of old Sussex and some of their more taboo life experiences, with images of castration and prostitution.

The title is a tongue-catcher and obviously also a little titillating. It should move artists outside their comfort zone and enable them to embrace new aspects of their own work. The show should build community in the Arts and help those of us driven apart in lockdown to reconvene in a positively-charged group show, together expressing ourselves through our work.

Everyone is invited to the open event on Friday 30 May, 6pm-8pm. Electro Studios Project Space, Friday 30 May – Sun 1 June

Womanhood at The Stables Theatre

EBM HUMPHREYS

Kicking off the upcoming *Scene & Heard* festival at the Stables theatre, which this year is led by women, two short but important plays go back-to-back for four days. Opening the festival on Thursday 5 June, *The Cagebirds* by master of absurdism David Campton and *White Lead* by Jessica Siân bring powerful themes of womanhood, creativity, expression and oppression to our local stage.

The Cagebirds was first performed seventy years ago, yet remains a perfect allegory for our contemporary lives, where we hold freedoms and constraints in an uneasy daily balance. Directed by Vanessa Coatz, this absurdist play evokes Plato's allegory of the cave, where people who have only known

moving shadows come to confuse them with the real people who cast them and are not interested in having their 'reality' revealed as a mistake. *The Cagebirds* is an encounter with the effect of female stereotyping through the eyes of six characters, whom it describes: "They are women. They are birds. They are prisoners of the Mistress. Self-absorbed and insular, they exist in isolation and are reduced to caricatures to be feared and ridiculed ... The status quo is questioned and disrupted by the new addition of 'The Wild One' but will that be enough to help them break free?"

Directed here by Jane Midwinter, *White Lead* was written by Jessica Siân and first performed at Hampstead Theatre, London, in November 2016, as part of the *Women Centre Stage* festival, which was Sphinx Theatre's demonstration of

"the range, depth and richness of women's writing for the stage". This impactful short play explores the "expectations and responsibilities of being an artist and a woman," about which the singularly talented Georgia O'Keefe once said "I've settled it for myself, so flattery and criticism go down the same drain."

In *White Lead*, however, "power and vulnerability collide, as three women share their innermost thoughts over dinner ... that no-one actually eats!" According to the Tate, only five percent of London galleries represent an equal number of male and female artists (with seventy-eight percent representing more men), suggesting that despite the welcome trend in 'rediscovering' the work of wonderful women who have excelled in all areas but have been sidelined or ignored, there is still a great deal to be done in the mainstream art world to level the playing field for living women artists.



Double-bill performances take place on 5, 6, & 7 June at 7.30pm, and on 8 June at 2.30pm. Tickets: stablestheatre.co.uk/double-bill-cagebirds-white-lead



James Burton Meets Marlene Dietrich



Patricia Hartshorne

of 1834. So it's the perfect place for a few songs from a Hollywood legend!"

Patricia moved to St Leonards in 2016, from her previous base in Manchester city centre. The following year she took her full show, *DOPPEL DIETRICH*, to Kino-Teatr on Norman Road, returning to this historic venue in 2018 with *DARK DEEDS*, her comic and dark cabaret about love, murder and crimes of passion. Between 2019 and 2023, she appeared at venues in Eastbourne, Tunbridge Wells and Brighton. Finishing her memoir in 2024, she launched it at the Hastings Book Fair last September:

"That took a bit of *swagger*" she says. "When I arrived to set up my stall, my books had still not arrived from the printer! I'd already decided it would make a good talking point, if nothing else. However, half an hour before the public made their appearance, two hundred and fifty copies of my memoir made theirs, and I breathed a sigh of relief ..."

Performance will include an interval – and a bar. Patricia enjoys interacting with her audience, so bring along your own *swagger*!

8pm Friday 20 June Doors/Bar open 7.30pm The Regency Rooms @ Crown House, 57 Marina St Leonards TN38 0BE £10 cash or card. Reservations: 07957 839045



A Reunion to Remember Hastings Prom Returns After Five Years

After a five-year break, one of Hastings' most cherished musical traditions is making its grand return. The Hastings Prom will take centre stage once again at the Hastings Beer and Music Festival (HBMF) on 3 July 2025, promising an evening of uplifting music, nostalgia and community spirit.

First launched in 2010, the Hastings Prom ran for ten remarkable years, becoming a highlight of the town's cultural calendar. Now, the Reunion Prom brings it back in style, with the same magic that made it a local favourite – described by the organisers as "just as good as it's always been."

This year's show features over 100 singers in the Hastings Big Choir, alongside Hastings Male Voices. There is a 30-piece band, with guitar, bass, drums, harp, and Soprano soloist, all led by the acclaimed Roger Wilcock. The programme blends traditional Proms anthems with iconic pop and film favourites in a vibrant, electric atmosphere.

Musical Highlights include Proms classics: *Rule Britannia*, *Jerusalem*, *Land of Hope and Glory*, popular hits of artists such as Queen, Toto, Stevie Wonder, Elton John, The Proclaimers, and Nina Simone, memorable film music from *The Greatest Showman* and *The Sound of Music*, and a show-stopping *Nessun Dorma*.

There will be plenty of opportunities to sing along, with lyrics provided in the programme.

Audience members are encouraged to bring a picnic, blanket, chair, and soft drinks or a flask of tea, or simply enjoy refreshments and alcohol available for purchase on-site. Don't forget your Union Jack for the full Proms experience!



The Hastings Prom is part of the Hastings Beer and Music Festival, proudly organised by the Hastings Round Table. Proceeds go to local charities and community causes Date: Thursday, July 3, 2025, Venue: The Oval, Hastings. Gates open: 5:00 pm, music starts: 7:00 pm. Tickets available now: selling fast. Book yours at hbmf.co.uk/ box-office.



An Improvised Exchange

EBM HUMPHREYS
& CHARLIE HAWLEY

“Could be chaotic or sublime, but guaranteed to massage the synapses” said the call-out on Hastings Creatives for a new mix-up night of visual art and musical improvisation. On Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 May, down at Electro Studios on Seaside Road, a collective called Exchange hosted an audio-visual event unlike any other.

A small crowd gathered in the evening to find a screen partitioning the space. On one side was an array of instruments – some familiar (guitars, pianos, turntables etc.) and some more random (springs stuck to metal plates, scrap wood, toast racks with wires affixed). On the other side, separated by the screen, was a low table where three young artists, hunched over a single pad, were preparing paints, pens, inks and watercolours.

When the music began, it was somehow projected onto the central screen, where shifting light and an emerging constellation of vague white spots formed images. Although the musicians were still partly obscured, they were now represented by these loose forms, and in response, the huddled artists converted the nebulous blobs into their own work, which also

appeared on the screen, visible to both audience and musicians. Brightly-coloured lines appeared out of nowhere, and abstract faces and formless paths were drawn before our eyes – all of which began to feel like it was prompted by the music and in turn, was influencing them.

Whenever the music swelled, images sparkled and seemed to melt before us, and for thirty minutes at a time we witnessed a kind of dance between two mediums: always the same formula, always unexpected results, created by the real-human-beings and clever software. The absence of structure or message was surprisingly calming, allowing the brain to shut down various mental processes which would ordinarily take you out of your sensory experience.

On Sunday the space was beautifully held by Charlie and artist Lea Monachon as a drop-in for making sounds and pictures ourselves with the same set-up. It was pretty quiet, what with the scorching sunshine in competition, but our visit was blissful and inspiring. Exchange have connections with the best artists in the genre from London and Brighton, and are now getting local bands like Warrior Squares involved. They are planning to run the event again, so keep your ears peeled and your eyes to the ground.



Bottle Alley Art Market

The Biggest Beach-Side Art Event in the UK

The 2025 edition of BAAM will once again fill the historic and iconic lower deck prom bridging at Hastings and St. Leonards, Bottle Alley, with 60+ artists showing and selling their work. There'll be live performances, live drawing, live music and DJs creating a unique experience in a unique location. We are back on the August Bank Holiday Saturday, between 10am

and 6pm, in order to give maximum exposure and footfall to all taking part.

The Open Call is now live until the end of May with 60 spots available and up to 10 free spaces being offered to younger low/no-income artists, in support of the town's ever evolving creative community. This year we'd very much like to focus and give a platform to local fine

artists. There are plenty of craft and makers' markets throughout the year, but the Art Market's mission is to give space to those whose work explores the traditions and boundaries of fine art practice outside of the gallery system. The market is also a great way for artists to meet their buyers face to face, and to talk about their work in a supportive environment.

We're very pleased to announce that local artist, educator and film maker Lorna Hamilton Brown MBE will be joining this year's curation team. There will be more announcements in the coming weeks about what will be happening over the BAAM weekend.

LAST YEAR'S VERDICTS

“It was really great to see and connect with other artists and so many buyers!”

“It was a massive boost both financially and in confidence for me after months of not selling any work. I thought the event was incredibly well organised and had a very positive vibe.”

“I think it was a wonderful event for local artists. The crowd response was lovely.” “Over all, I really enjoyed it. The location was amazing, I sold more than enough to make it all worthwhile, and the fellow artists and organisers were all lovely to deal with.”

“BAAM is a wonderful event and brings together artists, art lovers and buyers.” “Great vibe and it was a lovely experience.”

“Unique! Incredible footfall all day long.”

“Really great venue with a constant flow of people! A good art market rather than art and crafts/makers.”

Bottle Alley Art Market Open Call operates until the end of May. The market will open in Bottle Alley on Saturday 23 August

**TUES
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PAOLO PANDOLFO

with
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Fred Thomas
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TUESDAY 3RD JUNE 7:30PM
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www.STLCONCERTS.co.uk



Hotting It Up at Henry Ward Hall

VICTORIA KINGHAM

The name of the Hot Club de France is well known to most jazz lovers. It's associated with such quintessential geniuses as Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grapelli, whose regular Quintette du Hot Club de France invented the style that has now come to be known as gypsy jazz. It's a very recognisable sound, which probably accounts for its continuing wide popularity. Frequently new music that sounds off the wall when first heard, later becomes a familiar, sometimes reassuring, cultural reference point.

Having begun in America as something sometimes considered scandalous and promiscuous, jazz grew in popularity globally, changing and developing in style. The 1930s was a key decade for its popular dissemination: the Hot Club de France flourished as an organisation dedicated to what we would now call 'traditional' jazz, and included or defined jazz musicians on the basis of their musical 'authenticity'.

During World War II The Hot Club was actively subversive – while the Nazis regarded jazz (and a lot of other music) as degenerate, the Club was able to maintain a presence by listing

the music with literal translations – so, for example, the street-inspired Saint Louis Blues became 'La Tristesse de St Louis', lending a saint a Christian-sounding sadness, which somehow maintained Nazi approval. At around that time, the club's premises became a location for *Resistance* activities and for the exchange of coded information, until 1943 when its founders were arrested and imprisoned, one (Madeleine Germaine) was later killed in a German gas chamber. The Club disbanded as an organisation some time in the 1980s; its impact, however, remains far reaching.

HOT CLUB HASTINGS ALIVE AND WELL

There's a great deal more history surrounding this notable and influential organisation. However, the musical style of Django Reinhardt's Quintette probably remains its most enduring, best-known and best-imitated souvenir. Here in Hastings we have our own *Quintette*, led by Benoît Viélfon, dedicated to its continuing appeal.

Viélfon himself specialises in 1920s, 30s and 40s music. He has been a regular at Ronnie Scott's Upstairs and the band has also appeared in Hollywood films, TV and radio productions, and on the jazz

stage at Glastonbury. He has occasionally performed in front of VIPs like Madonna, or the late Queen. The band's performances celebrate the excitement generated by the 1930s gypsy bands, but also the romanticism of some of the finest French numbers. This line up will feature the guitars of Viélfon and Jarrod Elks (also vocals), Jack Garside on double bass, Magic Mike Henry on cornet and trumpet, and Bjorn Dhalberg on clarinet and tenor sax.

Benoît has been resident in St Leonards since 2017 and his partner Yuka runs a café in St Leonards, *Arigato*. The concert will take place in the Henry Ward Hall, that has a mission to provide a safe space for Hastings residents and visitors through music, theatre and other community events, and has some of the best acoustics in the UK. Some of the profits will go to His Place, the attached church, café, and community hub in Robertson Street.

Viélfon says "although I play some Django and gypsy classics, I play a lot of American standards, French chanson, Napolitan music, Eastern European folk and Latin music. It's like listening to world radio in the '30s and '40s!" He tells us that the audience sometimes sings along. This is certain to be a feel-good concert, to be enjoyed by the whole family.



Concert: 31 May 2025 at Henry Ward Hall. Tickets: benoit-vielfon-live.designmynight.com Information: benoitvielfon.com



COURTESY OF ELLIE WESTBROOK

TUFT: the Strange, the Magical and the Messy

CHARLOTTE TINGLEY

Bold new performance company TUFT, who brought you Concert At The Castle and Concert In The Caves, is thrilled to announce the launch of a new ongoing series of multidisciplinary performance events. Each one is themed, exploratory, and rooted in TUFT's core values of vitality, vulnerability, collaboration and participatory audience engagement. They create rigorous, raw, playful and participatory work in unexpected spaces. They believe in the power of failure, the strange, the magical and the messy.

These events will take place every other month in reimagined and unconventional spaces across Hastings and are set to become a regular platform for artists and audiences alike to play, create, connect, and collide.

The first in the series, Belief Sys-

tems - Magic, will take place on 11 June at Hatton's Yard (Joyful Roots) in St Leonards-On-Sea, inviting audiences to step into a realm of conjuring, illusion, and wonder. With a curated line-up of experimental performance, music, song, and conversation, this opening night will explore magic and magicians – real, deceptive, playful and/or profound.

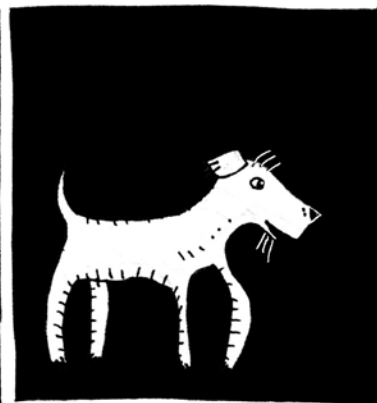
Audiences are encouraged to bring their own magical stories, tricks or talismans to contribute to the evening's unfolding. Whether dressed as a wizard, a starry night or a vague and ungraspable interpretation of enchantment – everyone is welcomed as both participant and spectator.

Our goal is to support a community of curious makers and to offer space for the wonderful, the imperfect, and the experimental. Future themes in the Belief Systems series will explore an expanding range of ideas, from language to technology, risk and history, all offering material for creative adventure and discussion.

Featured artists are: Eleanor Westbrook, Artistic Director of TUFT and creator of beautiful weirdness, Tullis Rennie, composer and musical improviser, Jess Mabel Jones, joy-driven multidisciplinary art-maker, and Spirit Doll, gender-expansive artist and performer.



billetto.co.uk/e/belief-systems-magic-11-06-25-tickets-1272090
Instagram: @tuft-arts



BOOKBUSTER REVIEW

Vassal State

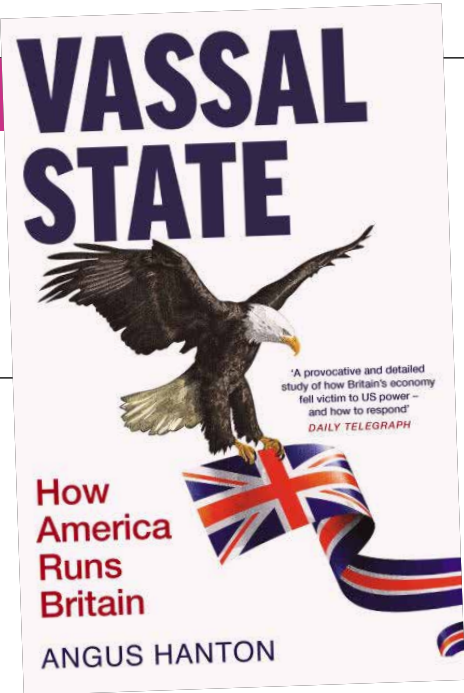
by Angus Hanton
Published by Swift Press,
2025, rrp £12.99
REVIEW BY TIM BARTON

In the 1880s, chief Concomly, of the Native American Chinook tribe, “tried [...] to develop a system of equitable and peaceful trade between tribes and white merchants. He was confounded by the necessity for profit that underlay the whites’ system of trade. And he could never fathom the reason for funneling profits to distant owners, people who were not part of the economy”, said Barry Lopez in his monumental work, *Horizon*. Lopez later points out that “The hedge fund manager who amasses material wealth with no thought for the fate of the pensioner he cheats ruins lives. He is a kind of suicide bomber.”

In *Vassal State*, Hanton demonstrates the degree to which ‘America runs Britain’. Make no mistake, whilst two centuries past England was the world leader in exporting exceptionalist mayhem and terror for profit, America has fulfilled that role since at least 1945, and now they are coming for us, suicide-bombing our economy.

HANDS AROUND THE UK ECONOMY’S THROAT

Those who regularly read my reviews here will already know I’m a tad cynical and, as people so often do, mistake my realism for pessimism. However, this important book, which I picked up ‘knowing’ whereof it spoke, still managed to shock me. We all know American corporations carve up companies the world over, undertake large-scale mergers and acquisitions, asset-strip, and walk away with a country’s material and financial wealth in the name of ‘free’ markets, and happily back the IMF and



World Bank in imposing neoliberal ‘structural adjustment’ conditions on bail-outs and loans, which further hollow-out developing and failing economies.

But few are fully aware of how deeply they have plunged their hands around the UK economy’s throat, how hard they are squeezing. I have known since school in the late ‘70s the USA to be the greatest threat to world peace. Now it’s getting real for us here too, ‘ally’ or not. In essence we are owned by the USA. UK assets held by American corporations exceed the total of US assets in the whole of the rest of Europe, and the majority of taxation on their profits is evaded by registering for tax in Ireland and Luxembourg, Switzerland and Holland. Estimates are that monies shipped abroad work out at over £2100 per annum for every British household. More than a quarter of the top 350 British listed companies are US-owned. US companies’ share of ‘our’ assets is equivalent to a stonking £53,000 per UK household, a significant proportion of it acquired from 2019 onwards. By some measures it is estimated that the US share of UK assets increased by one-third in 2023 alone. The 2008 crash, Brexit, and the pandemic have all fed this beast.

The US plans long-term, the UK investor culture has a ‘very short-term focus’: basically, shareholders want money now and damn the consequences. Yes, that’s right –

much of this is self-inflicted. Countries such as France and Germany have rules restricting foreign ownership, but we are having a jumble-sale. US private equity control “Morrisons, Travelodge, the AA, Alton Towers, Gatwick Airport, Biffa, Center Parcs, and Burger King”. “Our high streets are hosting many American-owned chains, such as Pizza Hut, McDonald’s, KFC, Gail’s Bakery, Majestic Wine, Taco Bell, Nike, Gap, TK Maxx, Abercrombie & Fitch, Timberland, Foot Locker, Levi’s, Costco, Subway, Hotel Chocolat, Waterstones, Ralph Lauren and Sweaty Betty,” to name but a few. Under post-2008 ‘Universal Credit’ rules, self-employed small businesses are eviscerated, and with the last tranche transferred from WTC to UC

last year, many more will disappear over the next year as we hit the wall created by cynical UC rules. Only the large chains will benefit, and the US will have an eye to taking over yet more of those.

A SLAVE NATION

The book also covers ‘big tech’, subscription services, the drive on the part of Visa, Mastercard, Worldpay, PayPal and others to push all financial transactions online where American firms take a cut of every pound we spend. Every credit card machine, every cash-machine, every Amazon, eBay or AirBnB sale gives a cut of UK financial assets to America. Usuriously out-of-control credit card rates, set by companies such as Visa, are dumping our nation into ever deeper debt like never before. As Hanton puts it, we are indeed a ‘vassal state’ of the USA. Further, a slave nation. Yet still we bang on about the ‘special relationship’. In reality, we are an annoying yappy terrier running round the Big Apple’s legs, and after getting the occasional kick enthusiastically coming back for more abuse.

The idea that Starmer, and his City handler Rachel Reeves, are anything but continuity neoliberal ‘safe hands’ is deranged. As Hanton puts it, “it is clear that the invitation to buy up Britain, first extended by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s and reiterated by every prime minister since, has been enthusiastically ac-

cepted by Americans”, who just loved Johnson, Sunak and Truss. The so-called (parliamentary) ‘Labour Party’ today certainly follows in their footsteps. As Cameron put it, we are ‘open for business’, and it’s a garage sale.

The much-sought unicorn, a ‘Brexit bonus’, doesn’t exist for the voters who erroneously thought they were ‘getting their country back’. Nope, only private equity, City traders, including Farage and his henchmen, the cynical rich, including Hannon and Banks and the others who paid for the Brexit they wanted, and foreign powers (principally the USA) are ‘getting our country’. Jeremy Hunt, recently knighted for his crimes against the British people, and his ‘Labour’ successor Wes Streeting, know that the NHS is ‘on the table’ in any ‘deal’ with America and both are in the pocket of US health insurance providers. Not to put too fine a point on it, these people have committed massive treason against this country and its people.

RESTRICTIONS ON PROTEST

Is there any hope? Hanton suggests a few options. Stop the sell-offs; actively support home-based innovations, especially in tech; invest in people, the opposite of government

policy; increase our autonomy from these globalising tyrants; radically transform our tax regime; learn from European structures, attitudes and values – especially acting to reverse our demented ‘bonfire of the regulations’, our refusal to address monopolies, anti-competitive foreign corporate behaviours, and curbing the overweening dominance of US culture in the UK. These options may be too little. And impossible to impose without deposing our City, Establishment, and public-school elites with extreme prejudice – after-all they are the main indigenous engine of off-shoring and rule-breaking, it’s why they lied to us all and paid for the ‘Brexit’ they wanted: one in which we dodge Europe’s attempts to rein in all the ‘torrent-out’ asset-stripping, which can only impoverish the majority of us even further.

And they know we are coming for them, sooner or later, as witnessed by the entirely paranoid increasing restrictions on protest. If we are not vigilant, next it will be restrictions on unsanctioned assembly everywhere.

Vassal State is available from Bookbuster, 39 Queens Road, Hastings TN34 1RE.



BUS STOP STUDIOS – CREATIVE CLASSES & SUPPLIES

Mondays

11am: Intermediate French Course with Olivier Jarrié
7pm: Evening Crochet Course with Katie Jones

Tuesday

2pm: Hand Embroidery Afternoon Course with Lady B Embroidery
7pm: ‘Embroider Your Own Clothes’ Course with Lady B Embroidery

Wednesday

11am: French for Beginners with Olivier Jarrié
2pm: Crochet Afternoon Course with Katie Jones

Thursday

10am: Stitch Social Group
1:30pm: Intro to Drawing & Painting Course with James MacKinnon

Weekends

27th May: Wonderful Wings Kids Workshop with Nicolette Tabram
28th May: Believe in Yourself Kids Art Workshop with Sanders DeRoepers
29th May: Magical Masks Kids Workshop with Nicolette Tabram
30th May: Decorate the Deck Kids Collage Workshop with Ways of Seeing
30th May: Dye a Bucket Hat Teens Workshop with Tara Macdonald
31st May: Contemporary Quilting Wall-Hanging with Kasia Hamilton
7th June: Creative Watercolour Course with Alice Stevenson
22nd June: Hastings’ ‘Pride’ Mackerel Embroidery with Becky Hogg
28th June: Beginners Machine Sewing Workshop with Sew Cosy Patterns
28th June: Improvers Machine Sewing Workshop with Sew Cosy Patterns

BSS Summer School - July - August

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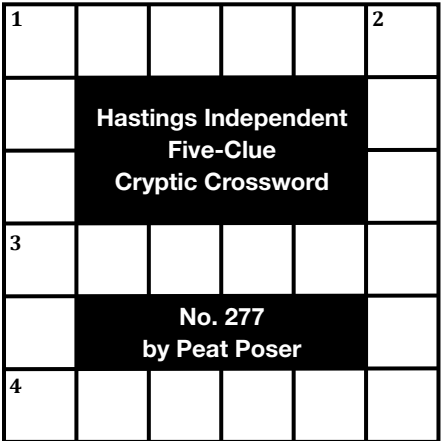
Across

- Rowling and Charles are flippant (6)
- Partly work out set list beginning (6)
- Let bus change be delicate (6)

Down

- Our JR’s verdict deciders (6)
- Man the French see as kind (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 5 of The HIP List





EDWINA HUGHES

Last month we featured a story on the allotments of Hastings, this month we are delighted to share news of an upcoming weekend that focuses on edible gardens across the town.

On 28 and 29 June 2025, local food

growers will open up their gardens and spaces to visitors. Edible Open Gardens brings together local food growers and curious visitors for a weekend of inspiration and knowledge-sharing. Funded by The Chalk Cliff Trust and organised by Town Grown, this year's event will highlight the creativity and resilience of food growers in and around Hastings and St Leonards.

Edible Open Gardens Weekend: A Celebration of Local Food Growing

Edible Open Gardens showcases everything from compact domestic plots to thriving commercial enterprises with people from across Hastings opening up spaces including guerilla gardens, front & back gardens, allotments, community gardens and small-holdings to the general public. The weekend provides a rare opportunity to meet local growers, explore diverse gardening techniques and discover how even the smallest space can yield an abundance of fresh produce. For those of you with plans to grow your own

food, you'll find inspiration and advice on how others have made it work on small scraps of land, gardens and allotments.

Launched in 2022 in response to rising food costs and environmental concerns, Town Grown has been working to support food sovereignty and biodiversity through talks, workshops, and community networking. As Anna Locke, permaculture author and founding member, explains: "Town Grown is about sharing our collective knowledge and passion to empower more

people to grow their own food."

The Edible Open Gardens event will kick off with a launch event on the evening of Friday 13 June at The Compound. On the evening you will be able to pick up a handy map of the Hastings gardens and spaces taking part. Food and drink from local producers will be on sale, and guests are welcome to bring a bottle.



Launch event:
Friday 13 June, 6.00 – 8.30pm The Compound, 161 Bexhill Rd, Hastings, St Leonards-on-sea TN38 8BG Edible Open Gardens Weekend 28 29 June. For more info, attend the launch event or visit towngrown.co.uk. Alternatively, pick up a free map from Wonderfill, 35 King's Road, St. Leonards.



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CRICKET

Priory's Spinners Regain Control

10 May	
Hastings & St Leonards Priory	251-7
Preston Nomads 2nds	252-5
17 May	
Brighton & Hove Priory	181-182-4

HUGH SULLIVAN

The cricketers of Hastings & St Leonards Priory began their Division 2 season with a five-wicket defeat by Preston Nomads 2nd team – due warning that, after relegation from the Sussex Premier League in 2024, they are not going to get themselves back up without a struggle. Last Saturday, however, entertaining Brighton & Hove at Horntye, Harry

Scowen's men were able to exercise control from the start, and completed a six-wicket win with more than 11 overs to spare.

In this dry and sunny May the pitches have been baked unseasonably hard and, with quick outfields, batsmen have been able to hoist high scores throughout the leagues. Batting first against Preston at Henfield, Priory were probably pleased with their overall total of 251 off 45 overs. Caleb Laloo (67), Scowen (28), Iden McCleave (42), Greg Devlin (31) and Freddie Hulbert (32) all made solid contributions as the scoring rate was gradually accelerated.

But, in reply, Preston got off to a flier as Priory's frontline seam bowler, John Morgan, suffered an embarrassing afternoon, conceding 48 runs off four overs, including 18 wides and two no-balls. A first wicket partnership of 79 was ended by



Ryan Hoadley, recalled to Priory 1st XI

Shawn Johnson dismissing both openers in his first over, and the home side struggled for a time to keep up with the required run rate, but Joe Mustoe, batting at three,

eventually took command, scoring 80 not out off 76 balls with none of Priory's bowlers able to contain him.

A week later, spinners Adam Page and Jed O'Brien replaced seam-

ers Morgan and Seaver Cowley in the Priory bowling attack against Brighton & Hove. Ryan Hoadley was also recalled to the side after scoring 88 not out for the 2nd team in his first knock of the season.

The visitors elected to bat first on another dry wicket, and made a bright start, but were pegged back by the steady loss of wickets. Page took 3 for 41 off his nine overs and O'Brien 2 for 26, while Johnson (2 for 30), Jason Finch (2 for 29) and Hulbert (only 14 runs conceded off his five overs) gave valuable support. Brighton reached an eventual total of 181, before being bowled out in the final (45th) over.

That score seemed under par in the conditions, and so it proved. Laloo and Johnson fell early to lbw decisions, but Scowen was in aggressive mood, scoring 71 off 72 balls, including 13 fours. McCleave (21) played second fiddle in a third wicket partnership with him of 81. After both were removed, Hoadley (24 not out) and Devlin (also 24 not out) eased to the target.

Next up (tomorrow, Saturday) is an away game at Buxted Park, who have lost both their contests so far. Then, on 31 May, they'll play host to Mayfield at Horntye.

321

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