

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



War on Waste

Labour and Greens trade complaints over seafront rubbish

HUGH SULLIVAN

Earlier this month the Labour group of councillors on Hastings Borough Council delivered a formal complaint that the council's Green administration was failing to provide adequate rubbish collection services in the town during the summer season.

After a hot weekend (12/13 July) attracted high visitor numbers, Labour leader Cllr Helen Kay described a scene of overflowing bins along the seafront and rubbish sacks left uncollected with their contents scattered by marauding seagulls. The provision of a few additional litter bins had been ineffective, she claimed, because they

were not signposted or marked as available for general (as opposed to commercial) use.

"Tourism is vital to our local economy", said Cllr Kay. "But this is the kind of thing that will make people stay away. We need better provision and better signage to keep our seafront clean... What should have been a high point for local tourism was turned into an environmental disaster."

The Green party hit back, complaining in a Facebook post that Labour were combining "performative outrage" with "zero action" and "a refusal to work with others for the good of our town".

A council spokesperson stated that its street cleaning service is enhanced in the summer months by the inclusion of an



Cllr Tony Collins cuts the cord to reopen Pelham Beach playground - see page 5



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EDITOR'S NOTE

At last, it's the summer holidays, and as crowds flock to the seafront, HIP reports a ruckus about rubbish bins. One thing's certain: there are street cleaning job vacancies at HBC.

Meanwhile, due to poor water quality, beaches are repeatedly closed to tourists and local swimmers alike, while unaccountable utility bosses continue to pocket substantial pay packets.

On the sunny side, there's a new children's playground and a campaign to reduce traffic speeds in Springfield Road. Many towns have adopted 20mph zones; East Sussex County Council refuses to do so in Hastings, but then they don't even mend the potholes.

In the Arts pages, we consider current and future exhibitions at Hastings Contemporary and interview the new director, Kathleen Soriano, who has innovative plans to widen the gallery's audience. There's also an enthusiastic review of Dany Horn's recent packed-out gig at The Crown, plus 'The Turn of the Screw' at the Stables, and Spun Glass Theatre at the Stade.

Put on a few pounds over the summer? Perhaps you should check out Man v Fat football, on the Sports page...

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News



Friends of Al-Mawasi pictured outside Muriel Matters House before council debate

Council Approves Palestinian Friendship Link – But No Funding

HUGH SULLIVAN

After an impassioned debate on 16 July at which a large number of councillors spoke, Hastings Borough Council approved a resolution to recognise and support the friendship link between the town and the Gazan district of Al-Mawasi. The resolution called for a ceasefire and return of all hostages, and urged the Prime Minister to immediately

cease all arms sales and military support to the state of Israel, while backing UN-supported delivery of humanitarian aid and reconstruction assistance.

The friendship link is to include working with the existing group Hastings Friends of Al-Mawasi, (see adjacent columns), to organise exchange trips (when feasible) and other forms of contact. It was noted explicitly, however, that the link will have “no budgetary implications” for the Council – “activities

will be self-funded and organised by participants.”

The debate was the first held in the council chamber on a motion concerning Gaza despite previous attempts by councillors representing the Greens and the Independent (ex-Labour) group to table one. On these past occasions the topic is believed to have been blocked from appearing on the agenda by a combination of council officers (chief legal officer and/or CEO) and mayor (successive Labour party incumbents Cllrs Margi O’Callaghan and Judy Rogers), who deemed it beyond the council’s constitutional remit. However, Green leader Glenn Hafenden now has a Green mayor Beca Horn to endorse agenda items promoted by their party.

‘NO DUE DILIGENCE’

This time round, Labour leader Cllr Helen Kay continued to maintain that the council should confine itself to addressing matters of local, regional or national policy, that the debate would serve to “create further tensions” between communi-

ties of Hastings, and that it risked bringing the council into disrepute. She argued that there was no realistic mechanism for the council to exercise due diligence in guaranteeing that no funds, resources or communications would be “mis-used”. It might result in individual councillors “inadvertently supporting [Hamas], a proscribed organisation”.

A number of Conservative and Labour councillors went on to criticise the motion for its lack of even-handedness. Cllr Paul Foster wondered why no community in Israel was being offered equal terms. Cllr Marlow-Eastwood suggested that any support should be offered through the UN and the Red Cross.

Cllr Tony Collins (Green) said that he had indeed previously asked the Jewish community in Hastings to propose a community in Israel to twin with, and that no response was forthcoming. Nevertheless, he broke ranks with his party colleagues by concluding that, given that the Israeli assault was matched by an ideological mission of Hamas “to wipe out Jews from Israel”, he couldn’t find it in himself “to prefer one side over the other”.

‘NOT DIVISIVE’

Other Greens and Independents argued passionately in favour of the motion. Former leader Julia Hilton argued that its impulse was for dialogue and contact – it was not divisive. She compared it to the friendship link previously created with Sierra Leone that arose out of the civil war there. Cllr Simon Willis, who seconded the motion, brought warmest applause from a crowded public gallery by referring to his Jewish ancestry: in sympathising with the victims of genocide in Gaza, he said he stood “by the memory of my ancestors”.

Closing the debate, Mayor Horn thanked the public “for so politely and respectfully listening and watching the debate, and allowing the councillors to have their say”.

In the vote which followed, all Greens except Cllr Collins, and all Independents, approved the motion. All Labour party councillors abstained. Three Conservatives voted against; two abstained.

Katy Colley, representing the PSC, was asked subsequently how practical benefits to the population of Al-Mawasi will be enhanced by the council resolution, given that it comes with express denial of monetary assistance. She said that the official recognition of the existing friendship and connection with them demonstrated that the people of Hastings recognise their humanity, their rights and their righteous struggle for freedom and justice. She also hoped that the official link would bring some more awareness to the efforts of the PSC and to the people in Gaza. Fundraising efforts were ongoing, and they had raised £4,300 last weekend from a ‘Walk the Seafront for Gaza’ family promotion.

HASTINGS TIDES						
DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET MOON
FRI 1 AUG	H 4:33	L 11:09	H 16:52	L 23:37	5:24	20:43 FIRST
SAT 2 AUG	H 5:21	L 11:55	H 17:49		5:26	20:41
SUN 3 AUG	L 0:28	H 6:32	L 12:54	H 19:07	5:27	20:40
MON 4 AUG	L 1:31	H 7:52	L 14:02	H 20:25	5:28	20:38
TUES 5 AUG	L 2:39	H 9:03	L 15:13	H 21:30	5:30	20:36
WEDS 6 AUG	L 3:48	H 10:01	L 16:21	H 22:23	5:31	20:35
THURS 7 AUG	L 4:52	H 10:47	L 17:21	H 23:07	5:33	20:33
FRI 8 AUG	L 5:46	H 11:26	L 18:12	H 23:44	5:34	20:31
SAT 9 AUG	L 6:33	H 12:01	L 18:56		5:36	20:29 FULL
SUN 10 AUG	H 0:20	L 7:16	H 12:36	L 19:38	5:38	20:28
MON 11 AUG	H 0:55	L 7:57	H 13:11	L 20:18	5:39	20:26
TUES 12 AUG	H 1:31	L 8:35	H 13:47	L 20:55	5:41	20:24
WEDS 13 AUG	H 2:48	L 9:10	H 14:25	L 31:31	5:42	20:22
THURS 14 AUG	H 2:48	L 9:45	H 15:06	L 22:07	5:44	20:20

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



Fund-raising walk on Sunday 21 July

The Link with Al-Mawasi

HUGH SULLIVAN

Al-Mawasi is an area 14 kilometres long and one kilometre wide on the Mediterranean coast, at the southern end of the Gaza strip. Prior to October 2023, it was a mix of agriculture and sand dunes, home to a fishing and farming community of around 9,000 people.

In December 2023, after the invasion by the Israel Defence Force (IDF), Al-Mawasi was designated as one of a small number of 'safe areas' which would not suffer bombardment or other military incursion. Hundreds of thousands of Gazans fled there, mostly into tented encampments, although food, water, sanitation and electricity resources are wholly inadequate for these numbers. In fact the area has been bombed and

shelled by the IDF on numerous occasions during their ongoing assaults on the strip, with hundreds of men, women and children reported killed.

Hastings Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) began a friendship link with Al-Mawasi in 2021 – the first between a town in the UK and a community in Gaza. The PSC's leaders approached the British Palestine Friendship and Twinning Network to initiate a connection with Palestinians in a seaside area, which would make for common ground between them. The Network introduced the Culture and Free Thought Association (CFTA), an organisation set up by a group of women in southern Gaza who were wanting to create a safe, caring environment for children. After an initial online meeting in August 2021, the PSC was put in touch with a Committee for Enhancement of

Community Resilience at Al-Mawasi. They had built their own basic community centre consisting of three rooms on a donated piece of land in a rural area where there were very limited public services and were using it as a 'safe space' for various charitable organisations to provide talks, training and health awareness events; also for after-school clubs for children and mutual support groups for adults.

The Resilience Committee is not a council, not part of the government structure, and if any strings are pulled within it by Hamas, the governing political party in Gaza which the UK government has proscribed as a "terrorist organisation", it's not apparent.

FRIENDS GROUP FORMED

The first Zoom meeting between Hastings and Al-Mawasi was in October 2021. Hastings Friends of Al-Mawasi was then formed by members of the local PSC and by a number of others. Funds were raised to install an internet connection and screen at the Al-Mawasi community centre, allowing regular contact to be initiated in the form

of English language WhatsApp chat sessions. These have enabled teachers in Hastings to assist Gazan graduates and teachers of the language and to discuss English literature and poetry.

The link was not intended initially as a fund-raising project, rather as a twinning and friendship vehicle. However, two years ago the Friends were in the process of organising a fundraiser to help women who had suffered domestic violence become financially independent by setting up a shop on the seafront. The Al-Mawasi Resilience Committee had been running workshops teaching women to make handmade craft items such as baskets, chocolate and soap. These initiatives came to an abrupt halt after October 2023, as the community centre became a refuge for displaced families, and the committee organised food, tents and other support for them.

Money has been raised by the Hastings Friends since October 2023 in conjunction with the PSC, several local unions (UNITE, UNISON, the NEU and the local Trades Council), Hastings Mosque and Hastings Jews

for Justice. A Friends of Al-Mawasi (HFOAM) Facebook page has been formed which, they say, has had "wonderful support and engagement from the wider Hastings community". More than £56,000 has been donated, transferred to the Resilience Committee, and thousands of pounds more by people running separate fundraisers for people met through the friendship link. These funds have been reported as enabling the Resilience Committee to finance a community bakery where local people can bring their food to be cooked; to install solar panels that operate a well; to buy food; and to provide other direct support.

Internet connections are now limited, though Whatsapp messaging between the Resilience Committee and members of the PSC continues.

DEAD AND INJURED

Many Al-Mawasi residents known to Friends through Zoom meetings have been injured and/or have lost close family relatives. One man is reported to have been shot dead after going out fishing on the sea.

After the IDF bombed Al-Mawasi on 9 September 2024, reportedly killing at least 19 people, Al Jazeera's Sanad analysed footage of the bomb site. It revealed that a 2,000-pound MK-84 bomb had been deployed, its manufacture traceable back to the US company, General Dynamics which has two factories in Hastings. It's not suggested that the bomb was assembled at either of these, nevertheless Hastings Friends are uncomfortably aware of the connection.

The immediate hope is for a ceasefire; in the longer term, for permanent peace, safety and the ability to promote mutual visits between Al-Mawasi and Hastings. In the meantime the Friends report that for the Gazans they speak with through Zoom meetings, despite malnourishment, exhaustion and trauma, "knowing people on the other side of the world care about them gives them the strength to carry on."

Hastings Friends of Al-Mawasi has the use of a webpage of the PSC website, as well as its own Facebook page, and can be contacted by email at hastingsalmawasi@gmail.com

Conflict Spills onto Local Streets

A female supporter of Hastings Friends of Al-Mawasi (HFOAM) was physically attacked outside the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill on Sunday 20 July as she waited to greet

the arrival of fundraising walkers from Hastings. An unidentified man approached her without warning, grabbed at the keffiyah (traditional Palestinian scarf) she was wearing, called her a "terrorist", and a violent assault ensued, which police are investigating.

The attack was condemned by Hastings Women's Voice and by Hastings Mosque, both of which issued statements deploring the assault, and by Hastings mayor Cllr Becca Horn, who said that she personally hoped to attend the next HFOAM fundraising walk planned for Sunday 10 August.

A number of local business

owners have also reported being targeted with stickers accusing them of Hamas sympathies and of anti-semitism in response to their advertising of community events such as the *Oh Big Blue* poetry exhibition by children in Gaza. One of them, Steph Warren, owner of the Stella Dore gallery, said: "I hope many more people will join me on the fundraising walk on the 10th, and show that these cowardly bullies are the minority who will never silence the vast majority of our town who stand for peace and justice."

On the other side, Hastings Jewish Community (HJC), which repre-

sents local Jews who are broadly supportive of Israel's actions in Gaza, complain of what they see as a disturbing increase in antisemitic behaviour in Hastings, particularly among younger age groups. "Most of our members live in a constant state of unease and fear, with parts of town, businesses and people they avoid, while we all search out safe spaces in our daily lives. Many are reluctant to openly express that they are Jewish", said Dany Louise, HJC director.

One correspondent on the HJC Facebook page wrote recently that he has encountered Holocaust deniers, seen Hitler glorified in casual

conversation, been verbally and physically threatened in public, and had to cut off friendships due to overt antisemitic comments. On one occasion, "after a brief mention of Israel", he says he was heckled with chants of "Free Palestine" and, later that evening, his hair was deliberately set on fire in a pub, which had to be evacuated. On another occasion he says he was threatened with being thrown over a wall and had to leave a public space for his own safety. HJC blames "constant anti-Israel activity by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and their associated groups, including Friends of Al Mawasi".

‘Safe, Settled and Affordable’ Homes for All

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

Hastings Borough Council has unveiled a new strategic plan aimed at tackling the housing and homelessness crisis engulfing the town. Council Leader Glenn Haffenden was in the Priory Meadow shopping centre last Friday (25 July) to present the Draft Housing Strategy 2025-2030 to residents, and to hear the views and experiences of those directly impacted by what he said was “our broken housing system.”

Hastings BC has been driven to the brink of bankruptcy in recent years, in large part by the spiralling costs of providing temporary accommodation. The record numbers of families trapped in expensive, short-term lets, with many more housed in poor living conditions, paying rents they can barely afford, is evidence of the scale of what is becoming a housing emergency. The number of rough sleepers around the town is also a visible sign of a deepening crisis.

The new Housing Strategy was developed by a Council-led steering group, which included residents, private landlords, and representatives from local community groups, public sector agencies, and voluntary organisations. The group was tasked with setting the vision and priorities for the strategy and to focus on the needs of the whole bor-

ough, with an inclusive concern for all residents, especially those facing the most barriers to securing a decent home.

The draft Housing Strategy they have developed sets out a “long-term vision for housing” with clear “objectives, targets, and policies for how to manage and deliver our housing responsibilities.” The strategy provides “the overarching aims and ambitions through which the Council and our partners will seek to make Hastings a place where everyone has a safe, settled, and affordable home.”

FIVE KEY PRIORITIES ARE OUTLINED:

1. Increasing the supply of affordable housing. The Council aims to take advantage of significant new funding announced by the Government to build new affordable homes with housing associations and private developers. The Council also plans to acquire and manage more than 200 homes by 2026-27 to provide temporary accommodation, and will also support community-led housing and empty home conversion schemes.
2. Prevention of homelessness and an end rough sleeping. The Council aims to reduce its reliance on costly private temporary accommodation, by expanding the Housing First approach to rough sleeping. This

gives people who have experienced homelessness and chronic health and social care needs a stable home from which to rebuild their lives, with access to support services to help them stay off the streets.

3. Improvement of the private rented sector, by cracking down on sub-standard housing through stricter enforcement, creating a Private Landlords Charter to raise standards, and campaigning for urgent implementation of the Renters Rights Bill.
4. Expansion of Disabled Facilities Grants and development of specialist accommodation for vulnerable residents.
5. Reduction of carbon emissions by retrofitting homes to boost energy efficiency and combat fuel poverty.

Cllr Haffenden said the draft Strategy represents a “blueprint for change” and, along with other Council initiatives, such as the Local Plan, Climate Change Strategy, and Health and Wellbeing priorities, sets out a roadmap to deliver safer, more affordable homes and foster a stronger, more inclusive community. “By working with partners and residents, we aim to ensure everyone in Hastings has a safe, secure, and affordable home.”

Public consultation on the document will be open until 31 August, with the final Housing Strategy expected to be put to full Council in November.

 Click on the Q-code to comment on the Housing Strategy: forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=VvjiD-z8urE-VCHmBFUlxo1QuzWlb4pFM-lujlMt_HrxUMFJXQTE0QTBYRL-RaS1FPRkrJQ1dTMFU5VC4u

Swimmers Warned off Beaches Following Heavy Rain

The Environment Agency (EA) advised members of the public not to swim off any of the beaches at Hastings, St Leonards or Bexhill last week following the heavy rainfall over the previous weekend.

Southern Water previously announced that they were investing £9.3m across a number of sites in Hastings and Bexhill in a programme started in January 2023 and due to be completed this summer “to improve the sewage network and the way it operates”. However, the company openly acknowledges that its waste water systems still cannot cope with heavy downpours without discharging polluted overflows into

the sea. EA monitors, who carry out standard testing throughout the bathing season, confirmed that the water quality on these seafronts had been “temporarily reduced”.

A spokesperson for Hastings Borough Council said that the no-swim advice was lifted by the EA after three days and has not been re-issued.

It was, nevertheless, an inopportune week in which to release news that CEO of Southern Water, Lawrence Gosden, has been offered a £690,000 increase on his basic salary. This was despite the outlawing of bonus payments being made to senior executives of water companies who have presided over poor performances, enacted by the government

under the Water (Special Measures) Act less than two months ago.

The payment to Mr Gosden was said to be justified by reference to company targets complying with previous OFWAT stipulations, and was thus not subject to the bonus ban. However, Hastings & Rye MP Helena Dollimore has co-ordinated a letter signed by herself and 19 other MPs representing constituencies served by Southern Water, urging him to decline this increase. She said: “There is no justification for Southern Water hiking up their CEO’s pay cheque after the Labour Government banned his bonus. He has repeatedly failed his customers and left the company in a mess. This is a slap in the face to my constituents who have had to suffer the consequences of flooding, water outages, and sewage being pumped into our sea and into our homes.”

Steve Reed, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), described the payment in Parliament as “outrageous”.

NEWS IN BRIEF



Sea view from OB rooftop

UP ON THE ROOF

Hastings Commons will be unveiling a pop-up bar on the rooftop of the seven-storey Observer Building in Cambridge Road for five weeks from Saturday 9 August. The bar will open on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays between 12 noon and 10pm, combining ‘seasonal’ street food, craft cocktails and live music, and offering café seating with panoramic views over Hastings and the Channel.

The venue will also be available for private hires, collaborations and pop-up cultural programming.

All profits will go directly to fund Hastings Youth Commons (see Can’t Run On Empty in HIP 280).

DE-RAILED

Hastings rail users will suffer double disruption over the autumn half term week as services both to Tunbridge Wells and to Bexhill are suspended for engineering works. Rail replacement buses will operate on both routes between Saturday 25 October and Sunday 2 November.

Southern will operate a shuttle rail service between Hastings and Ashford during the week but also replace trains with buses on this route on both weekends.

Network Rail will be carrying out repairs and upgrades to some stretches of track, to the Bo Peep and Hastings tunnels and to some signalling equipment, as well as strengthening some embankments

and cutting back vegetation. West St Leonards footbridge will be refurbished.

David Davidson, CEO of South Eastern Railway, said: “Getting work done over consecutive days allows us to do more work, more efficiently.”

KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES

Signage of the former WH Smith retail store in Priory Meadow has been removed in favour of its new identity as T G Jones – one of 480 shops across Britain’s high streets thus re-branded following mass sale earlier this year.

A spokesperson for the purchasing company, Modella Capital, explained that the Jones name has no factual connection with the on-going business but “carries the same sense of family and reflects these stores being at the heart of everyone’s high street.”

DYING ON THE VINE

Carr Taylor Wine Limited, the Sedlescombe vineyard which has been growing grapes since the 1970s, has gone bust. Insolvency accountants Moorfields have told creditors that the company will be wound up on 4 August. No information as to the current state of the company’s finances has been released at the time of going to press, but the company accounts for July last year valued unsold stock at in excess of £880,000.

1 additional litter bin round supported by a larger HGV, additional seasonal bins, and “one or two” additional beach cleaners “depending on staff availability”. Residents and visitors are encouraged to report any problems of rubbish left scattered on streets or beaches through the My Hastings website portal.

It was admitted that the overall waste collection service has been reduced over recent years “due to increasing pressure on the budget, and that there are currently “vacancies within the team which is making it more difficult to respond to additional work requests”. However, the Foreshore Trust, which is responsible for the upkeep of beaches and seafront promenades, is funding one extra beach cleaner, now in post.

The spokesperson added: “Seagulls and wildlife getting into rubbish sacks is not a new problem. Unfortunately many of the properties in Hastings were not designed for rubbish collection as it is now carried out. This is particularly the case in areas with high numbers of houses in multiple occupation, which produce more rubbish than single homes would. In the fortnightly collection areas, we offer bins for residents to put their rubbish; and, in areas where there are

DAVE YOUNG



weekly collections, we offer seagull-proof sacks to help contain the rubbish. Many areas have limited space for wheeled bins, and we have to consider safety—for example, seagull sacks on the seafront where it is windy could be blown into the road, which causes a hazard. Residents who have seagull sacks are reminded not to leave these out on the street all week between collections. They should be kept inside the property until collection day.

“We also ask residents not to put their rubbish out until the morning of collection to reduce the chances of seagulls and wildlife getting into the bags. The teams that collect the rubbish will clear up what they can on the day of collection, but their time is focused on collecting the rubbish. In our weekly collection areas, we try to work the street-cleaning rotas so that streets are cleaned on the day following rubbish or recycling collection to keep them as clean

as possible, but this is not always possible due to staff limitations.”

The condition of the seafront last Sunday morning – now in prime summer season, though admittedly the previous Saturday afternoon had not been particularly warm or sunny—suggests that the council has raised its game. From Rock-a-Nore through to West St Leonards, rubbish bins had been emptied, there was virtually no litter blowing loose, the beached looked pristine.

Play Area Reopened

The foreshore facilities have in the meantime been enhanced by the reopening of the Pelham Beach playground following a major upgrade in its play equipment at a cost of £250,000, funded by the Foreshore Trust. The sand pit area has been improved by the addition of a fenced area, more seating, and ramped access between upper and lower levels. There is more age-appropriate equipment for toddlers, including new swings and other playground equipment.

Cllr Tony Collins, chair of the council’s Charity Committee, presided over a special re-launch event last Thursday morning at which children enjoyed a range of giveaways and entertainment, including face-painting sponsored by works contractors Eibe Play and 100 free Whippy Ice Cream vouchers donated by Hastings Adventure Golf. Other senior councillors and Hastings & Rye MP Helena Dollimore also attended.

WHAT’S ON YOUR MIND?

✉Letter

MP UNAPPROACHABLE?

Dear HIP
St. Leonards Festival has come and gone for another year and what a fantastic day it was! I’d like to express my sincere thanks to all who organised and participated in this wonderful event.

I was helping on a stall throughout the day and all my encounters were heartwarming and positive, except for one. Our MP, Helena Dollimore, made a lovely speech to open the festival and then did a tour of the stalls, stopping to chat and have her photo taken. As she walked in our direction I stepped forward, tin of pastries in hand, and asked her “Would you like a Palestinian pastry, Ms Dollimore?” (they were vegan pastries made by a local baker from a Palestinian recipe). Without making eye contact Ms Dollimore marched off in a wide detour, avoiding our stall and the CND stall next to us.

Although it has become clear over the past year that Ms. Dollimore is not keen to engage with her

constituents other than in staged photo opportunities, I was still shocked by her rudeness during this encounter. Has the “Absent Councillor for Merton” become the “Unapproachable MP for Hastings”?

Patricia Sheerin

✉From our website

PARKINSON’S PROVISION

Great to see the article by Mary Upton, *Local Push for Parkinson’s Hub*, in last week’s HIP. The project she is planning looks exciting and should prove to be of real benefit to people with Parkinson’s in the local area.

I feel I must point out, however, that it reads as if there is currently no provision locally to support people with Parkinson’s, their carers and families, apart from that provided by the local Health Authority; this is far from true.

Exercise groups take place in Ore and Bexhill for people over the whole area. There are currently three drop-in “cafes”—in Little

Common (the Wheatsheaf), Battle and, for people of working age with Parkinson’s, at the Cooden Beach Hotel; and there is ParkinSongsters, a singing and voice therapy group that meets weekly in St Leonards—their annual summer concert takes place on 28 July.

All of these groups are run by volunteers, and some are funded by the remnants of the, sadly now defunct, Bexhill, Hastings and Rother branch of Parkinson’s UK. Some are free to attend, while some make a nominal charge to cover costs. All are open to people in the areas of Hastings, Bexhill and Rother.

More details of these activities can be found on the Parkinson’s UK website at localsupport.parkinsons.org.uk/support by typing in your postcode.

As Mary’s project for a Hasting Hub progresses, I wish her and her fellow project planners well, and hope that some of these groups may come to play an integral part in future provision for people with Parkinson’s.

Mrs Diane O Baker

Hastings Multicultural Festival

Saturday 16th August 2025
The Stade, Old Town, Hastings TN34 3FJ
11.30pm - 6pm

- * DJ & Live music
DJ Lululupo / DJ Akee / DJ Emboko
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- * Dance displays
Chinese Dragon Dance / Sri Lankan drummers & dancers
- * Community stalls
- * International food

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We would love to hear from you.

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

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Facing the Challenge

As more and more Hastings women tackle the cross-channel swim, ANITA KELSEY follows two recent success stories



Sarah Branson



Clare Kedwell

Two women from Hastings, Clare Kedwell and Sarah Branson, have completed a challenge that tested the limits of friendship, endurance and sheer willpower, swimming the English Channel as part of two separate relay teams in support of the children's charity SwimTayka.

In a feat they never imagined themselves capable of just a year ago, the two friends joined relay teams Blue Tide and Riptide Racers to brave one of the world's most demanding open water crossings. Battling strong tides, jellyfish, seasickness, fear and exhaustion, they swam from Samphire Hoe in Dover to Cap Gris-Nez, France, powered by an unwavering commitment to making a difference.

Clare's team, Blue Tide, which also included Ruben Martinez Arriaga, S.J. Makepeace, Rachel Picknell and Sarah Lesting, set off under the glow of July's Buck Moon at 11:34pm on 10 July, reaching French shores in 16 hours and 15 minutes.

Three nights later, on 13 July, Riptide Racers, with Sarah Branson, alongside Ellie Bull, Jane Symonds, Sarah Hedley, Jane Fryatt and Shin Yi Huang, embarked on their own moonlit journey, landing in France 17 hours and 34 minutes later.

Each swimmer took on one-hour stints, plunging into dark, unpredictable waters from their aptly named support boat, High Hopes, guided by their boat crew, Simon Ellis and Marilyn Critchley.

For Sarah Branson, the swim was a particular triumph. "A year ago I could barely swim a length of front crawl," she said. "I tore my meniscus a few years ago and wanted to show that however old, however broken, we can do hard things. Swimming the Channel isn't just about the

physical challenge, but the mental belief that we can do this. It's so powerful to realise that we can do hard things whatever our age."

For Clare Kedwell, the feeling of arriving in France under her own steam was unforgettable: "Standing on French land, knowing that we'd got there just by the power of swimming felt incredible. When our families met us back at Dover, it was a big emotional moment too. Looking out to sea now and realising I swam out there, past the horizon, with huge ships passing, gives me a huge sense of pride in what we achieved together."

What began as an impulsive decision turned into months of dedication, early morning sea dips, endurance training and ice-cold plunges. Their friendship kept them going as they inspired one another to push harder, swim further and believe in what they could achieve.

The two teams have already raised more than £28,000 for world charity SwimTayka, who provide free swimming lessons and environmental education to underprivileged children living along rivers, lakes and oceans.

Not content with their achievement, the Riptide Racers have already signed up for a full-length swim of Lake Coniston and are even contemplating the North Channel, from Scotland to Ireland.

As the waves settle and the salt washes off, the story remains, proof that with self-belief, teamwork – and a little bravery – ordinary people can achieve the extraordinary.

To donate, go to justgiving.com/search and search Clare Kedwell or Sarah Branson.



Cllr Jobson with residents of Springfield Road

Hastings at Speed

CLLR TONY COLLINS advocates thinking differently about car use

Emma Benfield was getting worried. "I am writing to express my growing concern," she wrote to Cllr Amanda Jobson, "about the speeding vehicles and increasing number of accidents on Springfield Road. As a resident, I am deeply troubled by the safety risks these issues pose to the community."

Cllr Jobson has written to East Sussex County Council's lead member on transport, Claire Dowling, to ask for clearer signage and, if possible, for a 20mph zone on the road. "Cars regularly collide with the traffic islands in Springfield Road," she explains. "We've seen people swerving round them on the wrong side... There have been lots of collisions. Two years ago an old man was killed."

Terry Mahindraker MBE moved to Springfield Road six years ago

and has seen a crash on this road every year. "Residents want to walk safely and cross safely," she says. "Vehicles are going too fast."

In October 2022, Hastings Borough Council passed a resolution – proposed by Cllr Jobson – calling on ESCC to introduce a 20mph zone in residential areas of the town and other roads where speed was a particular concern. The county council ignored the request.

Since then, the move to introduce such zones has rapidly developed countrywide. In 2023, a 20mph limit was introduced across Wales in residential and built-up areas, in the face of stiff opposition. Recently the results of the first year have been announced: lower speeds have led to 678 (28%) fewer casualties on 20/30mph roads, compared with the

previous year, including 10 fewer deaths. Insurance claims have dropped by 20%, and premiums for Welsh drivers have fallen.

Councils across the country are paying attention, and consultations and zone introductions have recently been announced in regions as far afield as Bournemouth and Cumbria. Cornwall Council began a programme of reducing speed limits to 20mph in urban areas in 2022.

A petition calling for the introduction of a 20mph limit in traffic hotspots went to ESCC in July 2023 with over 1,500 signatures from Hastings residents, mostly collected at school gates. Again it was summarily refused.

Under plans for local government reorganisation both Hastings Borough Council and East Sussex County Council are set to disappear. This will mean a lot of new councillors and new staff, and every likelihood that the 2022 resolution and the voices calling for speed reduction are going to be overlooked.

"It's frustrating," says Amanda. "All that hard work, simply ignored. But we won't give up... Kids on Springfield Road are in danger. Parents are scared. The existing traffic calming measures simply aren't sufficient."

The challenge is to get legislators to think differently. In 2023, the Guardian reported on the concept called 'motonormativity', an idea devised by Ian Walker, professor of environmental psychology at Swansea University, that people are commonly unable to think beyond car use as it is so pervasive. He argues that people implicitly accept deaths and injuries on the roads as this is seen as essentially random, and so in a curious way almost fair.

Perhaps we should be grateful for the ubiquitous potholes, at least they slow down the traffic.

Breaking Down Barriers

Hastings White Rock has announced the launch of its *Tickets for the Community* initiative as part of the venue's commitment to making arts and entertainment accessible to all.

The scheme will offer free or heavily subsidised tickets to a wide range of live cultural events at the venue, including comedy, pantomime, classical music, rock and pop concerts. Through this initiative, the White Rock will provide access to its live entertainment programme to socially and economically disadvantaged communities within Hastings and the wider area.

"Our goal is to break down barriers to cultural engagement," says Nadine Passley, Venue Director at the White Rock. "We're excited to connect with community groups and offer opportunities to those who

might not otherwise get the chance to see some of the incredible comedy, music and entertainment we have at the venue."

The *Tickets for the Community* scheme will allocate tickets through a ballot system. Shows eligible for the scheme will be identified throughout the year, and selected community groups will be notified when tickets are available. To join the programme, interested groups must have a senior director or manager register interest by completing a simple application form. If successful, groups will receive updates about available events and further details about the ticket ballot process.

The venue is currently accepting applications, with the scheme starting for selected groups in September.



ber, and benefits lasting for one year. The closing date for applications for this first cycle of the scheme is Friday 22 August 2025.



For more information about Tickets for the Community or to apply, visit whiterocktheatre.org.uk or contact box.office@whiterocktheatre.org.uk / 01424 462280.

Ready, Set, Stroll!

HANNAH-LOUISE SAMPSON
finds out how one local woman
got involved with The Pram Race

I've walked the same street twice now, confusion mounting as I scrutinise house numbers. I'm sure I'll be on the next Neighbourhood Watch meeting agenda: "Have you seen this person?" Just then, Emily Ellis's voice calls from across the road: "Are you Hannah?" She waves me over, her hair slightly tousled from a morning spent looking after children. Dressed in a soft beige top and trousers, with a wisp of hair escaping her ponytail, she greets me with a warm smile – and a slight air of tiredness.

We pause in the narrow entryway – a scene of gentle anarchy. A blue bicycle perches by a cupboard; beside me, the rusted spine of a Victorian bed frame is stacked against the wall, and beneath it, a brass rubbing of Sir Roger of Trumpington peeks out. It's a house that favours untidi-

ness for personality, history and family adventures. Emily apologises for the mess, as we walk down the stairs into the garden.

Every August, Hastings' Old Town Carnival Week gathers the community for events brimming with excitement, but few more anticipated than the Pram Race. Teams in outlandish costumes hurtle through narrow streets collecting donations for their chosen charities and pausing just long enough at each pub for a drink.

We settle at the picnic table in the well-maintained garden; a gentle breeze carrying the scent of flowers and sounds of summer. Emily is a self-described "newbie" to the Pram Race, joining in the fun for the first time having previously watched eagerly from the sidelines. For mother-of-three Emily, it's a chance for her



sen for its ease and creative range; Emily painted a Twister board on one side of the pram, others contributed a variety of games to go atop a borrowed silver Victorian pram. With a touch of excitement in her voice, Emily says, "It's something I've always really wanted to do... turning 50 has given me that excuse to really go for it."

With each team choosing a charity to fundraise for, Emily's team chose the Friends of Ore Station, a community-led group transforming Ore Station into a greener, friendlier space for everyone. After asking what outfit she might wear, we ended up brainstorming together. She originally contemplated becoming a walking Twister board before settling on DIY-ing a Primark dress. "I thought I might be really hot and sweaty," she giggles, "so I went off that idea."

Her advice for future first-time pram racers? "Start earlier than you need to... be organised and have a clear vision." She adds, "Anyone can do it. Anybody can make a pram and join in."

In a world so often gated by paywalls and rules, Emily and the carnival remind us that 'adventures' are still open to us all if you're willing to join in the fun and let life get a bit messy.

group of "busy mums" to gather together and have a laugh with "a good excuse for a nice drink" – husbands watching after the kids. She throws her head back, laughing: "It's for the pram, darling!"

She tells me how much they've enjoyed the preparation, "We started planning it in February," Emily reveals, explaining how well they've been working as a team. "Their theme, board games, was cho-

A graphic advertisement for bus fares in East Sussex. It features large, colorful numbers "321" in pink, orange, and yellow. Below them are three silver coins: a one-pound coin, a two-pound coin, and a three-pound coin. The word "save" is written in large, pink, stylized letters at the bottom.



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A Park to be Proud of

ROD WEBB

It's easy to take some of the great things in this town for granted and not think about their long-term future. Alexandra Park is one such treasure that brings enormous pleasure to the people of the town, not least because it's free and has something for everyone. Fortunately, it now has friends to keep an eye on it.

And here's your chance to have your say about its future or join the re-launched Friends of Alexandra Park (FOAP) to actively participate in it. FOAP will be holding their first Annual General Meeting at the park's greenhouse on Tuesday 12 August so there's plenty of time to organise your diary as well as think about what its future should look like.

The park was originally called St Andrew's Gardens when it opened in 1864, growing in increments to become the present 109 acres, stretching 2.5 miles from the town centre out to residential areas. It became Alexandra Park when formally opened by Alexandra, Princess of Wales with her husband Prince Edward in 1882.

During 1998, the lower portion of this Grade II listed park was closed for a storm drain project but, fortunately, lawns and entrances were

returned to their original state after a regeneration scheme costing £3.46m. The park was officially reopened in 2004 by Charlie Dimmock (how things have changed). It received its first Green Flag Award in 2005 which it has retained ever since.

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) who organise a weekly walk around the park (along with others in the area) describe the walk as follows: "A beautiful combination of the formally managed area and a woody patch with a series of fabulous expanses of water. Look out for kingfishers, cormorants and many, many ducks." What better introduction than a guided walk.

The AGM will run on 12 August, 6.30pm–7.30pm at the site off St Helens Road, near the Pumphouse Café and Deli.

For more guided walks from TCV go to 123walks.org/rother-hastings

Engaging with Hastings Voluntary Sector

The Directors Briefing event will tell you all you need to know about the Hasting Voluntary sector.

If you are new in post in a voluntary organisation or keen to find out more, this workshop is for you. Led by Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA) Director Steve Manwaring, it will include a briefing about the scale

and contribution of the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) in Hastings. There will be information on services that HVA provides as well as how it supports other voluntary organisations in the town (two key functions of the charity). It will be an opportunity to hear about and discuss the key issues affecting the sector.

Two other key functions of HVA are to develop effective networks and collaboration within the sector and work together in strategic partnership. Those new to volunteering will be able to make a start by meeting others in a similar position. A final main function of HVA is to enable the voluntary and community sector views to be represented in an effective and accountable way, something that attendees will no doubt be keen to learn.

One of the key values of HVA is that "Priority should be given to

working with people whose full participation in society is limited by economic, political and social disadvantage." Hopefully that will encourage a broad range of interest.

For those not familiar with HVA, its overall purpose is "to enhance the quality of life of people in the Hastings area by promoting the principle and practice of voluntary action by both individuals and organised groups, and by supporting the development of local initiatives to meet community needs". As such, it clearly plays an important part in the running of the town.



The event will take place on 15 September, 2pm–3pm, at Jackson Hall, so time to check your diaries and register at hastingsvoluntaryaction.org.uk/events.



Last year's production of Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory

White Rock Youth Project

This year, the White Rock's Summer Youth Project will perform *The Addams Family*, a dark musical comedy celebrating the quirks and chaos of family life. This full-scale production will take centre stage at Hastings White Rock from 14–16 August, brought to life by a talented cast of local young performers.

Now in its 22nd year, the *White Rock Summer Youth Project* continues its tradition of staging high-quality theatrical productions, combining the energy and enthusiasm of 100 young performers with the guidance of a professional creative team. Featuring a live band, professional lighting, sound, sets and costumes, this summer's pro-

duction promises to be a great experience for the whole family.

Learning and Participation Manager, Laura Bateman, who produces the project explains: "The Summer Youth Project is truly one of the highlights of the year at the venue. It's an amazing opportunity for young people to work alongside a professional creative team and bring a first-class musical to life on the main stage.

"Beyond the performance itself, the project helps build confidence, self-esteem, and lifelong friendships. It's about much more than just putting on a show. If you've never seen one of our Summer Youth Productions before, I urge you to come along. You'll be blown away by the talent and the sheer joy these young performers bring to the stage."



Thursday 14 – Saturday 16 August 2025
Performances at 7pm, and 2pm (Fri & Sat only) Tickets available now at whiterocktheatre.org.uk or via the Box Office on 01424 462280.

International Culture at the Stade

Hastings hosts a culturally diverse array of events but, on 16 August, it is set to host its first multicultural festival at the Stade. The festival will feature great local talent from different ethnic communities, workshops that invite you into different cultural experiences, stalls to showcase national products and plenty of opportunities to widen social contact.

There will be plenty of music – and dancing – to provide a festive atmosphere, both from DJs and live acts. Participants are encouraged to come in their national costumes, so expect colourful displays.

The event is being organised by Angela Harris, the Labour Party

Global Ethnic officer (GEM) – formally known as BAME. She says the event will be "showcasing Hastings as a vibrant ethnically diverse town where we can achieve anything if we work together."

There's still time to register for your own stall so don't miss out on this opportunity to celebrate and share your cultural heritage with the town.



People wishing to participate or to book a stall should contact Angela via email at elithuk@live.co.uk



HASTINGS

WHITE ROCK

By Special Arrangement with Elephant Eye Theatrical

WHITE ROCK SUMMER YOUTH PROJECT PRESENTS

The Addams Family

A NEW MUSICAL COMEDY



14TH ~ 16TH AUGUST 2025

whiterocktheatre.org.uk

Book by MARSHALL BRICKMAN and RICK ELICE
Music and lyrics by ANDREW LIPPA
Based on Characters Created by Charles Addams

"THE ADDAMS FAMILY" is presented through special arrangement
with all authorised performance materials supplied by Theatrical Rights
Worldwide (TRW), www.theatricalrights.co.uk

Walking Home to Watch the Football

JOSHUA GEER grew up in Hastings and now lives in London working as a financial journalist. He also writes about walking, adventure and psychogeography

I have two homes: Hastings and London. The latter I chose, the former I didn't. My fondness for both is equal.

Linking these places of my heart on foot has always been a desire. Whenever I make the journey by car or train, I wonder what it would be like to traverse the unkempt nature and neat suburbia that lingers

in between.

So, when my dad asked if I wanted to watch Hastings United play at home one January afternoon, it seemed like the perfect excuse to finally make the pilgrimage. I asked one of my oldest friends to join me. Max, who grew up in nearby Stonegate, is not only one of my best mates, he's also brilliantly available.



Joshua in Wareham during a walk around Poole Harbour

Originally, we planned to go 'door to door' from Hackney to Hastings. But 65 miles over three days was a stretch with only a day and a half to spare. So, we trimmed the route to 43 miles, starting at Orpington (the edge of London).

We arrived just before 09.00, dodging angry commuters in BMWs and Range Rovers as we crossed the A224. Soon we veered off-road, cutting across a golf course and into open fields. The sun was bright, the January air mild. With city stress behind us, we revelled in the simple task ahead: just walk.

Optimism was short-lived. Caught in a thorn bush outside a Ministry of Defence lab, we had to sneak through someone's back garden to escape. Thankfully, their guard dog was a yappy Chihuahua, not an XL Bully.

Crossing the M25, we climbed a steep hill to Sevenoaks. Here sits Knowle House, a fifteenth-century estate nestled just 25 minutes from London. We were in red trouser territory now.

Skirting Knowle's grounds, we asked directions from an elderly couple on a power walk. Clad in carbon poles and streamlined specs, they looked Everest-ready but kindly pointed us the right way.

To save miles, we endured road stretches. Particularly hellish was the sliver of pavement between Sevenoaks and Tonbridge, where lorries screamed past - inches from our heads. If one hit us, we'd be roadkill before we knew it.

Arriving in Tonbridge around 13.00, we searched for lunch. Tonbridge is a sprawling blob of houses that make up the breadth of English society. In the space of a couple of miles, you can walk from the streets of upper-middle-class commuters to areas of deep poverty. This is harshly represented by Iceland and Waitrose, which share a carpark in the town centre. Not fancying a frozen lunch, we opted for Waitrose and ate outside the town's thirteenth-century castle ruins, basking in the sun.

The school rush hit like a wave, with shrieking children, honking cars and parents on a mission. Three miles from Frant, darkness fell with startling speed. Ten miles of woods ahead made retreat seem wise. We cheated and hopped on the train to Stonegate.

Back on foot, we had a final three-mile stretch to Burwash, lit only by one bike torch and a full moon. Angry barks from a nearby farm spurred us on. In the next field, eyes blinked back at us... probably sheep, we hoped.

Eventually, the glow of Burwash appeared.

After a short walk down its sleepy eighteenth-century high street, we stumbled upon our pub-meets-motel accommodation. The air inside the inn was thick with the aroma of wood smoke and ale, a comforting warmth against the



At the base of the Matterhorn

crisp night. The interior was an odd mix of old-fashioned charm and budget updates, a bit rough around the edges, but in the flickering glow of the fireplace, it was undeniably cosy.

A fresh-faced barkeep, still in his teens, led us to our accommodation out back.

The motel-style room, a miniature echo of American roadside motels, was undeniably a bit shabby. The peeling wallpaper whispered tales of forgotten guests and budget constraints, the kind of setting that wouldn't be out of place in a horror flick.

But after a 30-mile trek, the threat of fictional slashers paled in comparison to the very real need for a hot shower and a soft bed.

Suitably refreshed, we emerged back into the inn, which was buzzing with the energy of locals enjoying pints and playing darts. During the day, we had fantasised about regaling the patrons with tales of our walk. But awkwardness and exhaustion conspired to keep us quiet and by 22.00, our eyelids were drooping.

The sun bled rudely through the curtains the next morning. My feet throbbed! Three large blisters punished me for poor footwear choices. We patched up and hobbled on. The fresh air cleared our heads.

The second day (13 miles) was hillier but gentler. We wound through villages and quiet lanes. Yesterday's sprawling suburbs gave way to quaint cottages and muddy hedges.

Lycra-clad cyclists zipped past with weekend-warrior energy; horse riders trotted along, aloof and composed.

By now, conversation had dwindled. Energy was low, coffee elusive. But then, a familiar sight: Battle Abbey.

Once the site of the Battle of Hastings—and, more importantly, my first job. I remembered the tourists, the hedge trimmers and the haughty stares from private school kids. Reaching Battle felt like a strange full circle. We'd reversed William the Conqueror's path. We refuelled at Costa, unlike William, and pushed on.

As we neared the end, one thought stuck with me: the incredible cost-to-adventure ratio. For the price of a train ticket and some sandwiches, we'd had something extraordinary. A helpful reminder of what can be found right on our doorstep.

The Hastings sign brought wide smiles. Dad and his mate were waiting, and soon we were lost in the roar of the football match. Kids mimicked memories of my own youth; the same familiar faces jeered and joked from the stands.

To the casual observer, our arrival was just another Saturday afternoon. No trumpets, no red carpets, just a quiet satisfaction that resonated deep within. The game itself, with Hastings United cruising to a win was a fitting end to our walk.

The train journey back was a more frustrating exercise than the walk itself, thanks to a two-hour delay. But even that couldn't dampen my spirits. A walk with a mate, blisters and all, had been an adventure that far surpassed the £20 train ride. And that, as they say, is priceless.

Contemporary Vocals at Uplands

TOM BRUGES

While pirates descended upon Hastings, at Uplands in St Leonards a very different event, *Contemporary Vocal Sunds*, was taking place. After a reception with tea and cake, contemporary vocalist and interdisciplinary performer duo Eleanor Westbrook and Oscar McCarthy were joined by pianist Ben Smith for a varied programme of experimental music, ranging from an electronic re-imagining of Rameau's *Les Indes galantes* by Nico Bentley to John Cage's infamous graphic score *Aria* (1958).

Every moment was skilfully choreographed. Set in the intimate venue of a manor house music room, the theatrical elements of the performance became far more viscer-

al. A highlight of the programme was Westbrook's performance of Aperghis' *Recitations no.11* (1977). The performer made the risky decision to provide the ornate score to the audience, so that those following along would have noted not just the precision of the performance, but also what was omitted. The latter was an invention of Westbrook's: a dramatic caricaturesque choreography of an iteratively unfolding stream of consciousness. Another highlight of the programme was McCarthy's performance of Xenakis' *Pour Maurice* (1982). McCarthy successfully gave this physically demanding piece a far more theatrical tone than it is often afforded, and Smith's piano playing went beyond mere accompaniment in his virtuosic precision.

Elsewhere in the world, the famous festival of experimental mu-

sic, *Darmstädter Ferienkurse* is in full swing, begging the question: why do we not have more contemporary music in Hastings? Certainly, with projects like *Sonics Hastings* carving through, and now, with this launching of the *Contemporary Vocal Sunds* it seems that a new interest in experimental music might be growing. Future concert organisers will have to navigate the famously conservative British palate. Westbrook and McCarthy did so today by bringing out the wit and humour of the music, to ease the tension British listeners face when confronted by music of such intensity. This première of the trio's project was a resounding success, and leaves us wanting more.



Ellie Westbrook and Oscar McCarthy, *Contemporary Vocal Sunds*, performed at 6 Uplands, St Leonards on 20 July. [instagram.com/contemporaryvocalsunds](https://www.instagram.com/contemporaryvocalsunds) [alternativeclassical.co.uk/concerts-calendar/contemporary-vocal-sunds-sussex](https://www.alternativeclassical.co.uk/concerts-calendar/contemporary-vocal-sunds-sussex)



Gazanias opening up to the sun

Shining Evening at The Beacon

VERA BELL

The Beacon was recently host to an evening of sound; a select but appreciative audience came to listen to the music concrète of Jury Service, Moore and Moore, and the songs of Tim Hoyte.

Jury Service (Keith Rodway and Simon Charterton) advertise themselves as 'improvised electronic noise makers' – so what comes out is more or less what it says on the (electronic) tin. Sonic wizardry, enhanced this evening by Duncan Reekie's projections on the screen above their heads: Reekie showed an extended sequence of gazanias, gladioli, and other garden favourites opening up to the sun, in responses to the sonic waves coming through a pair of really excellent speakers.

Charterton has a background in drums and composition in the more avant-garde bands of the post-punk era (The Alex Harvey Band and now, Simon & The Pope). Polymath Rodway has been variously a film teacher, a festival promoter, a documentary filmmaker, a multi-instrumentalist, a composer, and a multimedia improviser. Duncan Reekie's name you may know from our cartoon strip *Lola & Bill*; he also holds a PhD in Underground Cinema and has directed, written, produced, or acted in over 40 different experimental film and multimedia projects world-wide. All luminaries, and local residents.

THE SOUND OF THE C

"Don't take me seriously, as I have had a drink or two," sang Tim Hoy-

te. Just "take me out tonight to a bar where everyone is as kind as you." His enunciation of his own wistful and intelligent lyrics is clear, his voice good, and his finger-style guitar accompaniment and various open tunings, in a slightly nostalgic folk-rock-revival style, are original. He acknowledges a love for the small but perfect output of tragic Nick Drake (d. 1974) whose songs were once a cult but are now acknowledged even on Radio 2.

Anthony Moore was founding professor of electronic music at Cologne University, and worked on various Pink Floyd albums in their heyday. Richard Moore (no relation) is a notable classical and avant-garde violinist and teacher. This evening Richard played a handmade electric skeleton violin which produced all the sounds of the last section of the evening. These were simultaneously augmented, distorted, amplified, and transformed, courtesy of a piece of intricate vintage music software, CSound (not Sea but C, the programming language) operated by Moore. Moore and Moore (no relation) have together produced a digital album called – CSound & Violin. Reekie's projections were again in evidence – this time his powerful, non-vintage vMix software allowed him to use, transform, and overlay several classic films onto the screen. Mesmerising.

This was a unique evening, as much for the venue as for the sounds and the software. The Beacon is kind of secret, needing another resident to point out to you its special evenings, and indeed its entrance. But the wine is good, and there's always pizza. It's a Hastings thing.



The Launch and Death of Lucy

ROD WEBB

After a successful Chicago tour, Danny Horn returned to Hastings to record his third album *The Death of Lucy*. Last week a packed Crown House audience came to hear it live.

The evening kicked off with Gabriel Moreno who sang songs combining intimacy, rebellion, intensity, pathos, humour and unrequited love, beautifully accompanied on acoustic guitar. A perfect warm-up.

Danny, with four Shared Myths, quickly followed, blasting straight into the first track, *Pretenders*. Danny's acoustic guitar worked perfect-

ly with Richard Moore's violin, and warm notes from Matt Armstrong's double bass provided a solid anchor. The percussive drive of the guitar did away with the need for a drummer, but light-touch percussion was supplied by Megan Leigh Mason, along with great backing vocals.

It's a skilfully compiled album. For Danny, the words tell a story. In fact one album review has commented "it could easily translate into a stage show." The central character is Danny's 'Muse', Lucy, a character who symbolises loss, inner conflict and bad relationships, and whose death is foretold in the album title..

Although the songs work both musically and lyrically, there's a wide variation of genres and influences. One song reminded me of Three Dog Night's *Mama Told Me Not to Come* and another was initially reminiscent of Tom Waits, then morphed into something resembling Bob Dylan's *Hurricane*. You also sense the influence of Irish rhythms, and storytelling. Whatever the magic ingredient, the whole performance held the rapt attention of the audience.

During the performance, Danny commented on his first Hastings gig two years ago: "Three people came – but now the project's working", thus highlighting the precarious nature of the music and theatre scene. He also admitted: "I'm from London; I didn't know what community was" – a tribute to this town's enthusiasm for music and performance of every kind.

Enthusiastic applause at the end of the show brought the band back for the bitterly dramatic *Jericho* as an encore. As Horn almost spat out the final line, "[they] tell you that they love you as they rip you off and strip you of your soul," I can't help hoping that Lucy is no longer a threat.



Full article on our website, [hastingsindependentpress.co.uk](https://www.hastingsindependentpress.co.uk). Album reviews available on [folkandtumble.com](https://www.folkandtumble.com), [americana-uk.com](https://www.americana-uk.com), and [folking.com](https://www.folking.com), among others. You can see Danny Horn in *Sunny Afternoon* at the Brighton Dome at the end of the year.



Paul Delvaux, *Siren in the Moonlight*, 1940. Oil on panel, 111.9x180. On loan from Southampton City Art Gallery

Marine Life in Hastings Contemporary

VICTORIA KINGHAM

Odd how music that was cult-radical in the 1960s and 70s has become today's café muzak; the institutionalisation of the ex-radical. So, sitting in Hastings Contemporary's new café, Coquina, I hear subdued rounded sounds that were once the drug-fuelled, outlandish dreams of Jefferson Airplane, Kevin Ayers, and Lou Reed.

This demonstrates a process that I have always found very interesting, and sometimes a little bit sad. I rarely go to see re-formed bands that I revered years ago, for precisely that reason – a youth culture by definition wants to differentiate itself from its immediate ancestors' generations, to go where they didn't, to like the hitherto unlikeable, admit the hitherto inadmissible. An act defined in this way by my own generation's youth culture has to search for a *raison d'être* in today's world. Those irresistible searing

singing voices have often degenerated into caricatures of themselves, some of the legendary guitar riffs are by now more than a little archaic, and 'sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll' is a granddad cliché. Does this happen with Art? There are visual artists who find one innovative style very lucrative and are condemned to repeat it to the point of moribundity.

THREE SHOWS

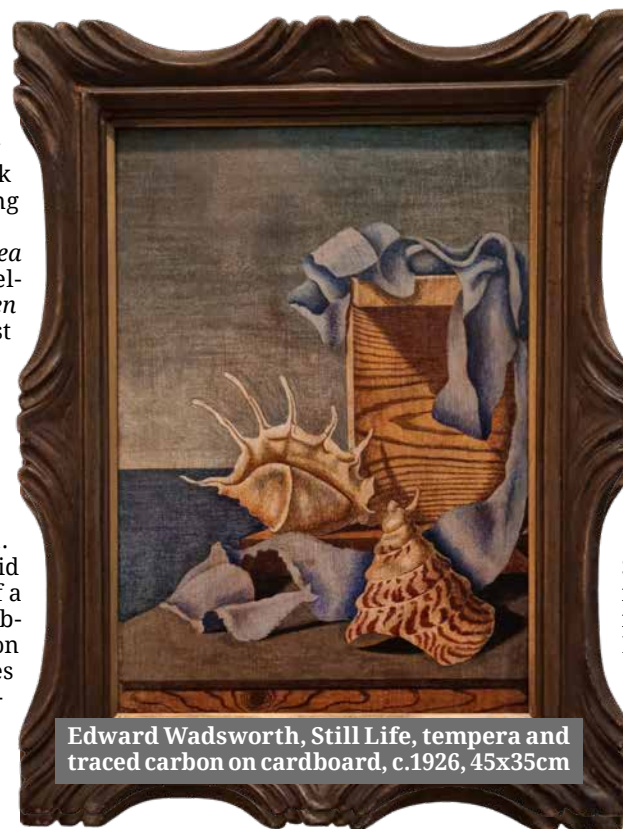
By contrast, there is nothing moribund about this art gallery. In spite of its 14-year existence Hastings Contemporary still doesn't command quite the reputation that it deserves, but it's getting there. It's a unique building, designed beautifully to fit in with the surrounding black wooden fishing huts. It commands an excellent view of the beach, with the carefully maintained fishing boats (only about ten of them still go out to sea) aligned along the water's margin. That view from the upstairs window is always surprising: it's so pictorial that it

inevitably becomes part of the show. The current show actually consists of three different exhibitions.

Hence *The Sun Feeds the Wind*, an exhibition curated by the Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society, is a whole room devoted to moving images and reminiscing voices of Hastings fishermen, their past lives and hopes (if any) for the future. *Art For Your Oceans* is prompted by the use of Ocean Ink© – the first ever show of sustainable work made with a new, seaweed-based ink. The leading work for this is by Anthony Gormley – an ink wash of a body swirling under water.

The excellent *Undersea* exhibition displays Delvaux's magnificent *Siren in Full Moonlight*, amongst abundant world-wide representations (contemporary and ancient) of mermaids and mermen in all kinds of unusual situations, often mythological, sometimes dream-induced. Conversely, there is a vivid 300-year old painting of a reluctant-looking red lobster waiting to be eaten (on a Delft dish) by Charles Collins. Among a plethora of other sea creatures, there's also a heartrendingly perfect little mod-

ernist *Still Life* by Edward Wadsworth, featuring a grainy wooden upturned boat and beautifully patterned, elegantly placed conch shells in harmonic design nearby. There are also many sometimes funny, but often beautiful and intricate, modern paintings: Nicola Bealing's *Cowrie Rock with Teeth* is very special.



Edward Wadsworth, *Still Life*, tempera and traced carbon on cardboard, c.1926, 45x35cm

It's hard to tell where one exhibition ends and the next begins, but as they're all about the sea anyway that doesn't seem to matter much. Outside the café, Laura Ford's sculptural tribute to ocean wildlife – a big huggable velvet seal draped over an old velvet *chaise longue* – examines you dolefully as you pass by. And it's Pirate Day too, so there are hundreds of families and dogs, wearing bandannas, tricornes and eye patches, milling about on the Stade, and they all crowd in when it starts to rain.

NEW DIRECTOR, NEW EXHIBITIONS

This current exhibition has involved input by the gallery's new Director, Kathleen Soriano, though much of it was planned before her arrival. Her latest book is *Madam & Eve: Women Portraying Women*. Women artists, representing themselves or other women, often intentionally subvert our long, culturally-ingrained archetype of Woman as Object of the male gaze. Notably this copiously-illustrated and carefully produced book contains comparatively few works presenting women as beautiful, stylish, decorative or desirable in the expected sense.

I wondered if Soriano saw part of her role as promoting women's art particularly. "I'm more interested in making sure that it's [the Gallery's] a more fully diversified offer," she told me. "Always having the issue of representation in your head when you're putting the programme together, rather than just the women versus men thing." Nevertheless the proportion of work by women on the gallery walls is unusually high.

The next exhibition, which begins in September, is Soriano's own initiative, featuring work by three very individual artists, two of whom are local residents. Sophie Barber makes work that uses text and painting to reflect the environment and its detritus; Isabel Rock's

work also demonstrates an intense interest in climate change. Soriano describes it as "highly colourful, surreally joyful, filled with giant wedding cakes and crocodiles in a swirling sea of spaghetti Bolognese...quite loud, provocative, disruptive."

The third artist, Michael Landy, is famous for once disposing of his entire 7,227 possessions (including a flashy red Saab) over the course of two weeks, via a giant conveyor belt and dumpsters, in the window of the recently defunct C&A store in London's Oxford Street. In contrast to this flamboyant performance, for this new exhibition Landy, a Royal Academician, has created a series of large, beautiful, quiet etchings of ordinary wild plants, called *Nourishment*.



Nicola Bealing, *Cowrie Rock With Teeth*, 2020. Oil on linen, 120x91 cm.

COMMUNITY PLANS

Soriano already has extensive plans for the future of Hastings Contemporary. She is particularly keen on community involvement, and I asked her about the unique community of Hastings with its many Festivals.

“We’re busy trying to reimagine what a gallery can be. It’s partly being in Hastings and on the beach that allows us to do this,” she tells me. “We’ve got a mobile studio that looks like a fishing hut. It’s parked on the Stade but it will travel around Hastings and beyond to other communities and to festivals. Other Arts organisations can also borrow it. So we’re busy working out how we can use that with the festivals. I’ve also got way bigger ideas about what we could be doing outside of the Gallery building. As you can imagine there are lots of areas around us which we could activate beautifully, and powerfully, for the area. All the staff live in Hastings and are really embedded in the community, and know the festival organisers.”

She is extremely enthusiastic about her working environment. “It’s been so rewarding working with the team—it’s a really fabulous team of people at Hastings Contemporary, and I think we’re all really excited about the new vision. We’ve

had a conversation this afternoon about how we would describe it, what the values are. I think it’s given all of us a big boost of energy and excitement.”

CONTINUAL GROWTH

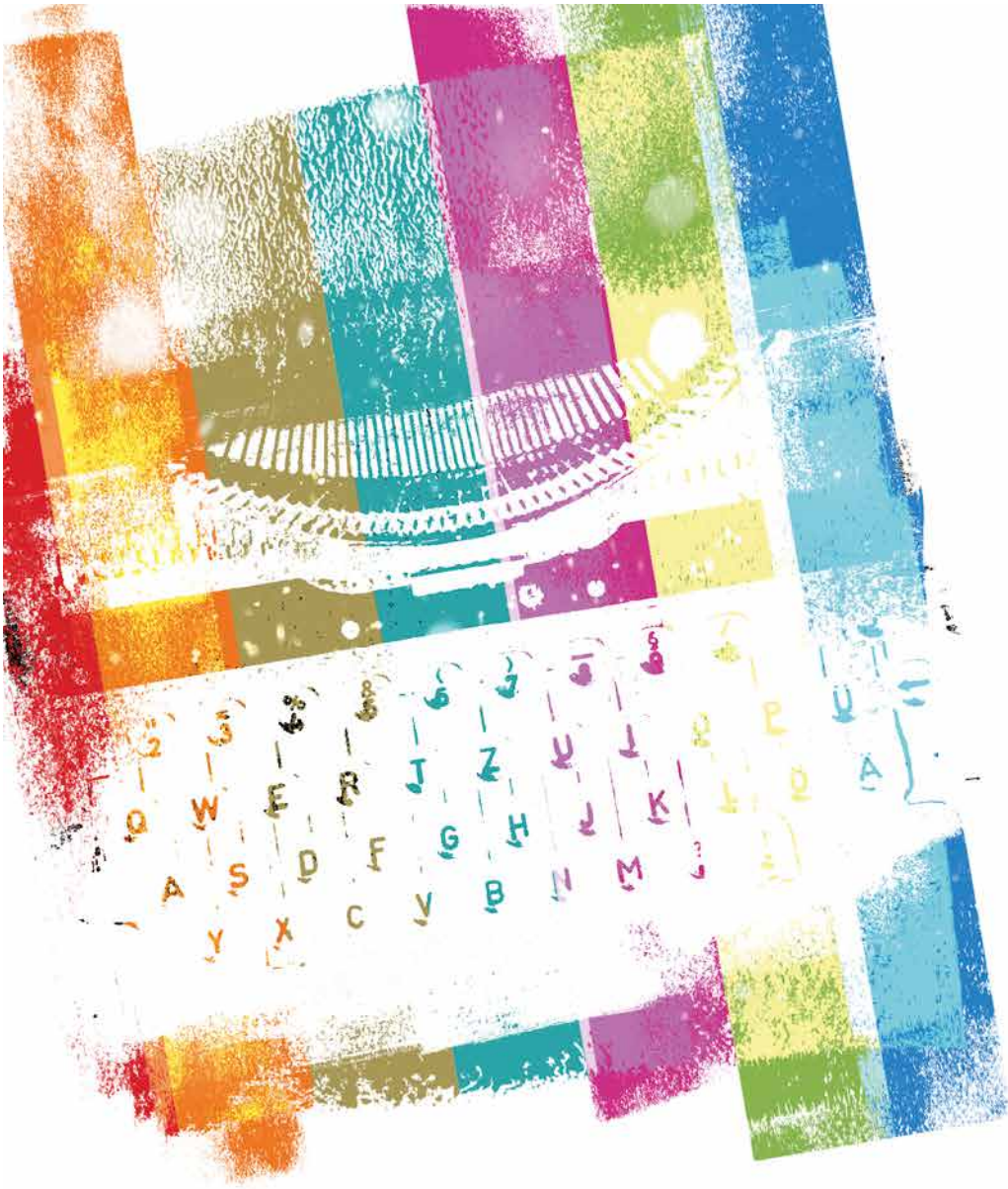
Soriano has had years in her chosen field, and clearly her established reputation will have an effect on how the work of the gallery is able to develop. “The Art world is very small,” she says, “and when you’ve worked somewhere there’s always a bit of you that’s still connected with it.” She is involved in various large projects – programmes for Sky Arts, strategic involvement with various other galleries (the Royal Academy, for example) and museums and Arts organisations, and an organisation called the Touring Exhibitions Group. “I’ve been in the business for a long time. What that means is that I have a broad network. So I can text the Director of the British Museum and say how are we going to work together on the Bayeux Tapestry, for example. So it allows us to operate at a slightly different level.” This different level has prompted her to organise (with Jo Myles) the well-established Sussex Open, which for the first time will be shown, next year, here at Hastings Contemporary.

Every plan, of course, depends “a hundred per cent” on raising funds. “As a director of an organisation you need to show how you will pay for exhibitions – all the things need to be income generating. We’ve just launched a new patrons’ scheme called The 1066 Club, that will allow artists’ studio visits to its members. I have access to artists – these are opportunities that money can’t buy. So we have a mixed income model. And it’s one of the reasons we’re trying to work further in advance. It’s only by working long-term with various funding bodies that we can get these things into place.”

Although Soriano plans to move to Hastings to live, she currently lives a peripatetic life: “I’m down now for a six-week run, and then I’m back again for all of October/ November/ December. Then in between I’m on Zoom.” she goes on. How does she have the energy? I wondered. “I have to say that this year has been absolutely crazy, and I feel great! I think it’s just my natural way.”



hastingscontemporary.org/events and for more information visit wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathleen_Soriano



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Karen Mann, Edie Davis, and Ed Nash

The Knowing Charm of the Eternally Ambiguous

ELIZABETH ALLEN

“Ambiguity is essential to *The Turn of the Screw*: that’s why people find it attractive.” So says Tim Blackwell, writer and director of the latest adaptation of Henry James’ novella premiered at the Stables. Ever since its 1898 publication, its meaning has been passionately debated.

A young governess is convinced that two children in her charge, beautiful and precocious, are being corrupted by the ghosts of former valet and governess, Peter Quint and Miss Jessel. But the text leaves it open for us to see the narrator as either courageous and protective or sexually repressed and delusional: victim or violator? The debate has continued in literary criticism, more than a dozen films and a Britten opera.

How, then, when the malevolent

dead appear directly, can a stage production manage to maintain the ambiguity of the original? Certainly at The Stables, the shock of Quint’s appearance at the window provoked screams from the audience. He is unarguably a presence. But of what kind? An innovation of this production, also, is a gender shift: not a governess but a male tutor who demonstrates extreme vulnerability, is oppressed by guilt, insecure in his efforts to establish appropriate relations with the children and housekeeper Mrs Grose. This is a man experiencing projections of his own disturbed internal state. That attractive ambiguity remains.

What is in no doubt is the high standard of this production. A mood of tight-strung nervousness and threat is established in the initial interview with his uncle of the tutor, Giddens, in which actor Steven

Walsh conveys a suspect and bullying *bonhomie*. This standard is superbly maintained in the two demanding major roles of Giddens and Mrs Grose, taken by professional actors Ed Nash and Karen Mann, whose interaction builds on the tension and its flare-up into tragedy. The children, Flora and Miles, played by Edie Davis and Xander Doe, convincingly evoke audience suspicion about what underlies their knowing charm. The producer declared himself amazed by the creative ideas which they brought to rehearsal. And while the ambiguity of language is maintained, author-director Tim Blackwell pays tribute to the energy of James’ speech rhythms.

The set, too, constructs this unsettling atmosphere. Avoiding the cliché of a creepy Gothic mansion, Tim Blackwell and production designer Luka Wellman chose the aesthetic of German Expressionism, an art movement in which the visual expresses theories of madness and societal anxiety. In this production, bright walls are hung with shifting images of martyrdom and violence, making for an original and surprisingly appropriate *mise-en-scène*.

 *The Turn of the Screw* played at The Stables Theatre, Old London Road from 16 July to 2 August. Details at stablestheatre.co.uk/turn-of-the-screw.



Susannah Austin, Darcey O’Rourke, Harriet Gandy & Ross Drury at Stade Hall

Spun Glass Theatre

EBM HUMPHREYS

Since January last year, the Stade Hall has been managed by local theatre company Spun Glass Theatre, who have been working hard to improve it with a new booking process, branding, social media, a new website and most importantly – a new programme. Their self-proclaimed mission is to bring “the magic of live performance to Stade Hall, making it an open and affordable theatre for everyone.”

Eighteen months into their time at the hall, Spun Glass Theatre, known for “brilliant, immersive, moving ... theatrical experience which impacts everyone involved, children and adults alike” have excitedly announced their first ever show custom-made for the venue. The world premiere of *Pebble Road and the Pond People* is showing in early August, supported by funding from Arts Council England.

Alongside the show, which is recommended for everyone aged five and over, is an Early Years installation, A Pond Picnic, which will invite younger audiences aged up to four years old “to explore and play in a freshwater paradise.” Sounds fantastic.

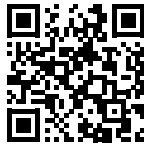
Making up the three-strong cast for *Pebble Road* are two Sussex performers Susannah Austin and Harriet Gandy, who worked with Spun Glass on their much-loved 2023 show *Christmas Spirits*, and Darcey O’Rourke from touring company Half A String. They are collaborating on the story with local

writer Wally Jiagoo, who has experience writing for children’s television, including *Malory Towers*, *Phoenix Rise* and *The Dumping Ground*.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION AND MORE

Spun Glass’s projects aren’t limited to performances. They also include workshops, treasure hunts, home art packs, escape rooms or audio-based story adventures. They have a special interest in “placing our audiences as co-creators in the act of make-believe” and have been working for years to include young children in the magic of live performance at their Mini Playhouse on the seafront.

Other shows are coming later in the year too. Wild weaves together stories from over seventy people to create “a journey of emotions from exhilarating fear to childlike joy.” *Fatherhood* by Altered Skin presents a highly physical and laugh-out-loud take on fatherhood across generations, cultures and languages. And Farnham Maltings bring *All For Your Delight* in which the fabulous Brightcoats will bring “top-tier entertainment right to your doorstep for the whole family to enjoy!” Ex citing times ahead.

 *Pebble Road and the Pond People* is on at 2.30 and 5pm for ages 5 upwards at Stade Hall on 7, 8, and 9 August. A Pond Picnic is on at 11am for ages 0-4. Tickets: stadehall.com. Spun Glass: spunglasstheatre.com.

CROSSWORD CORNER

- Across**
- Middle of world energy run service starts to cut grass (6)
 - His age changed this artistic hostess (6)
 - Begins with start of some open pastries (6)
- Down**
- Find flies in humid gestation (6)
 - Fish for odds with vermin (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 5 of The HIP List

1						2
3						
4						

FOOTBALL

JOSHUA BUTTERWORTH



A Shrinking Game With AFC Hastings

HUGH SULLIVAN

Football coach Dan Pascoe comes to every Friday evening training session at St Leonards Academy with a heavy bag. It doesn't contain footballs, boots or other playing gear; from it he pulls out a state-of-the-art weighing machine. As each player arrives in the dressing room to change for a six-a-side game on the astroturf pitch outside, Dan measures his weight, tracked against previous weekly records. Points are scored if there's been a healthy reduction.

Welcome to the world of Man v Fat football, where weight loss and goals scored are equally celebrated and equally competitive. Teams win by combining goals scored and kilos shed. And if your team doesn't win on the night, you can still come away knowing that your BMI (body mass index) is moving into credit.

Hastings has accommodated a Man v Fat football programme for the past seven years under a nationwide scheme focused on improving men's physical and mental health. Some of its participants have been recommended to take part by their GPs; others have found it from social media posts or by old-fashioned word-of-mouth. Upwards of 50 local men – the youngest in their 20s, the oldest in mid-50s – are enrolled to play sessions, which are now held at St Leonards every Friday, and there are always enough to contest two successive six- or seven-a-side matches over the evening as part of a series of league and cup tournaments.

And, from earlier this year,

they've branched into an 11-a-side team, AFC Hastings. It was founded by Robin Clifford and Daniel Cookson with assistance from committee members Steve Groombridge and Mathew Denness, and is, sponsored by local business Kiley's Carpets. The team entered a competition branded as the Southern Development League, which arranges Sunday morning matches between participating Man v Fat clubs – and became league champions in their first season.

The league is based in Kent, which involves the Hastings contingent in long away trips including to Margate and Chatham, but these are team-building experiences that serve to unite the players as only shared sporting endeavours can do.

The Friday night session reveals that some players have wider girths than others, and that some bring more skills – in several cases remembered from past footballing careers when they were younger and slimmer. But all show they're competitive enough to want to win, and many (talking before and afterwards) endorse the friendships and team spirit that they've gained from joining the group.

"Football is the anchor," says Robin, resplendent in his all-orange goalkeeper kit sponsored by Kiley's. "But we can do so much more."

Man v Fat six- or seven-a-side matches take place at St Leonards Academy every Friday evening between 7 and 9pm. AFC Hastings train at Bexhill College on Sundays 9-11am. New recruits are very welcome, of whatever age, footballing skill and size of stomach.

CRICKET

Bad Day, Good Day for Priory Bowlers

19 July

Hastings & St Leonards Priory	154 for 9
Brighton & Hove	155 for 3

26 July

Priory	233 for 9
Buxted Park	151

HUGH SULLIVAN

Hastings & St Leonards Priory fell to their third defeat of the season at Hove on 19 July in a game reduced by heavy morning rainfall to 20 overs per team. They scored what they must have thought was a defensible total of 154, Shawn Johnson top-scoring with a rapid 35, Seaver Cowley (29) holding the middle order together, and stand-in captain Freddie Hulbert providing a late flourish with 24 not out off 26 balls.

In reply, hosts Brighton & Hove lost their opener caught at the wicket off Seaver Cowley's second ball of the innings. But a century stand for the second wicket put them in control, and they marched on to victory with seven wickets and nearly four overs to spare. Hulbert had six front-line Priory bowlers to call upon (Cowley, Adam Barton, Johnson, himself, Adam Page and Iden McCleave) but

none could stem the flow of runs.

The only consolation for the Hastings side was that neither of their immediate rivals at the top of Division 2 of the Sussex League managed a victory on the day. West Chiltington & Thakeham were held to a draw by bottom-of-the-table Roffey 2nds, while St James's Montefiore and Eastbourne had their respective fixtures cancelled because of the rain.

A week later, with captain Harry Scowen restored to the team after recovering from injury, Priory sought to make amends at Horntye against Buxted Park. Caleb Laloo

(62) and Scowen (25) made a patient start and Cowley upped the tempo with a swashbuckling innings of 56 off 60 balls. Perhaps concerned at the performance in the field at Hove, Scowen held off a declaration for the full 53 overs.

The target of 234 was always going to be a tall order for the visitors. They started in similar fashion to Brighton and Hove, losing an opener in Adam Barton's first over, then putting together a century stand for the second wicket. They were behind the clock, however, in the face of disciplined seam bowling from Hulbert, Barton and Cowley.

The advent of Priory's spinners wasn't immediately effective, Page being roughly treated in a brief spell, but Shawn Johnson made the breakthrough in the 25th over from the pavilion end, and he and Barton – returning to find lift and turn with left-arm spinners from the far end – ran through the middle order and tail. Johnson took six wickets for 42 runs, five of his victims clean-bowled; Barton took the other four for 36. Priory won by 82 runs with more than six overs to spare.



Shawn Johnson celebrates six-wicket haul

TENNIS

Old Guard Hold Sway at The Green

The Green club of St Leonards held their annual closed tournament on Saturday 19 July after earlier rounds were played on fine evenings through the previous week. There was a barbecue with drinks from the bar, and all titles went to multiple winners of past years.

Coach Joe Adams won his tenth men's singles title, beating Chris Grief 7-5, 6-2. Amanda Ruck won the women's singles for the twelfth time, beating Emma Candy 6-0, 6-1.



Women's doubles finalists at The Green

Rod Pavek beat Richard Bailey 7-5, 7-6 in the over-45s singles.

During the finals afternoon there was a presentation to Adams on his Sussex county award as LTA Coach of the Year.

NEW BLOOD AT AMHERST

By contrast, the Amherst club has been infused with younger players this year, particularly on the male side. Josh Craig, Stefan Le Breuilly, Bright Temba and teenagers Zach Read and Ollie Bearcroft have all produced notable performances in National League or Sussex Summer Doubles contests as the top men's teams have held their own in both competitions.

The women's first team, with Jada Ani unavailable, has been more reliant on established talent: Debi Ani, Nikki Crowhurst, Karen Cunnington, Pearl Hare, Anita Pearce and Barbara Fentiman have rotated appearances, winning enough to protect their standing in Division 3 of the Summer Doubles.



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