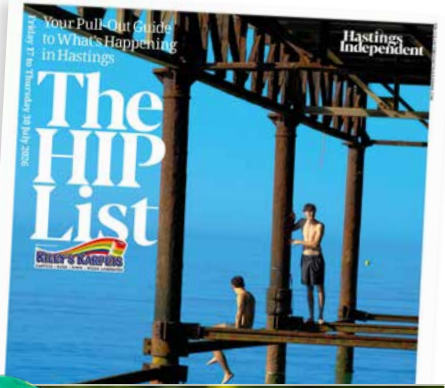


Inside:
Your Pull Out
Guide to What
is Happening
in and Around
Hastings





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A Sign of Things to Come



9 →



15 →

Pirates Sail on



1066 Country Rides Again

KENT BARKER

Hastings is expected to rejoin the 1066 Country marketing partnership in the near future. Deputy Council leader Julia Hilton told HIP that they had been in discussions with the group “over the past few weeks” over rejoining “in particular for their excellent work promoting

the area to the overseas market.” The move follows pressure from the town’s MP and Labour members of the council to rejoin the local tourism board which promotes the 378 square miles of East Sussex from Pevensey Bay to Camber Sands and back to the Kent border.

In February 2023 the council, then controlled by Labour, withdrew its support for 1066 Country saying the £50,000 a year cost was

unaffordable. Councillor Andy Batsford said at the time: “Hastings is a really strong brand in its own right and we feel we can go it alone and actually push hard on the new businesses, the new investment, the new cultural buzz that is happening in the town.”

However, Mr Batsford along with council leader Paul Barnett and four other members resigned from the Labour Party later that year to sit

as independents. Earlier this month the three remaining Labour councillors called for the council to rejoin the tourism and marketing initiative. Councillor Billie Barnes tabled a motion at full council supporting the idea, saying “The Bayeux Tapestry returning to Britain represents an exceptional, once-in-a-generation opportunity for the area. It is vital to put on a united effort as ‘one 1066 Country’ to max-

imise regional tourism opportunities and profile”. 1066 Country Marketing describes itself as a ‘thriving public and private sector partnership, bringing together Rother District Council, Wealden District Council, Tourism South East, National Trust and English Heritage alongside scores of private businesses.’

Local MP Helena Dalli-
more supported the call for



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Following an avoidable fire at the derelict St Leonards convent, local people could be forgiven for worrying about other neglected buildings. Part of George Street has already been lost, while St Mary in the Castle and The Azur present potential fire risks during this exceptionally hot summer. Read more in the News pages, which also contain an in-depth report on antisocial behaviour facing workers, shoppers and residents of Wellington Place.

Who knew that Fisherman Paul Joy, a familiar and respected face around Old Town, was once an extremely successful amateur boxer? Writer and photographer John Cole tells his story.

Three Arts stories demonstrate the breadth of our town's international connections: Iran miniatures at project 78, a poignant look at how music education is somehow rising from the rubble of Gaza and Hastings writers contributing to an anti-Trump anthology.

One unexpected outcome of our climate-change-warmed seas is an increase in the number of octopuses. Paul McLaughlin investigates how this has affected fisherman, marine ecology and the Pett Level Rescue Boat.

Finally, if hitting balls with sticks in the searing sun is your thing, turn to the Sport section for cricket and baseball reports.

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News

1 ← Hastings to rejoin, saying many local businesses who rely on tourism “want Hastings to return to the 1066 Country Tourism partnership. ... with Hastings Council receiving a record funding settlement from the Labour Government this year, now is the time to return to this important partnership and I hope councillors will support this.”

Cllr Julia Hilton remained tight-lipped about the cost of rejoining. “I won’t comment on the financial contribution we will be making for that

work as that is still being finalised,” she told HIP. As a result of the decision, she said: “The motion that the Labour group was intending to bring has therefore been rejected as the work to rejoin is already in progress.”

John Bownas, business improvement manager for the Love Hastings marketing group said he was positive “the majority of leisure and tourism businesses – in fact probably all businesses in the borough – will wholeheartedly welcome the call to reinstate Hastings’ funding for 1066 Country Marketing”.

NEWS IN BRIEF

HOMES FOR HASTINGS

Hastings Council leader Glenn Hafenden has welcomed new affordable houses coming on stream with the first residents moving into new homes at Orbit’s Levett View development in Harrow Lane, St Leonards.

The council says that in June alone, 24 affordable rented homes were tenanted. A total of 140 homes will be delivered at Levett View, with 86 of these for affordable rent or social rent. These homes are capped at Local Housing Allowance rates – the amount likely to be paid in housing benefit. The remaining homes are available for purchase through Shared Ownership to help local people take their first step onto the property ladder. Cllr Hafenden said “The mix of affordable housing will help meet local housing needs and give more people the opportunity to access a safe, secure and affordable home. I welcome Orbit’s continued investment in the town and the positive impact this development will have for local residents.” However, according to the council’s own Housing Strategy report from January this year, Hastings faces “acute housing challenges, including relatively high levels

of deprivation, low household incomes, and a shortage of truly affordable homes.”

GEORGE STREET ACTION

The long delayed work to improve the derelict appearance of 39-41 George Street in The Old Town following an extensive fire in January 2023 has continued after discussions between council officers and the private developers and contractors. The council says this has included cutting back vegetation, stabilising the side fencing and covering the exposed side walls, which is due to be completed by next Tuesday. There has also been a “site-wide general tidy up”.

New gates and information boards have been ordered, and will be installed “when they have been delivered”. Council officers say they will continue to monitor progress closely and remain in direct contact with the contractor. The aim is to secure visible improvements as quickly as possible while the legal agreement linked to the wider redevelopment is completed. Local residents and traders have previously criticised ‘inordinate’ delays over action to improve the appearance of the highly visible site at the

Mr Bownas pointed out that the decision to withhold the £50,000 contribution to the partnership and replace it with a local budget of £15,000 meant Hastings had ‘lost a seat at the table where strategic tourism marketing happens. This has left our local businesses immensely frustrated, feeling that their individual membership fees are perhaps being spent to the benefit of other towns in the wider region.’ He estimated the regional visitor economy to be worth in the region of £665 million which means

that the overall saving to the council of £35,000 was disproportionate as the potential return on investment is enormous. Tourists don’t plan their holidays around local authority borders, he said: “When visitors come to the South East, they see Hastings, Battle, and Rye as one interconnected destination. Trying to market Hastings in a hyper-local silo not only duplicates administrative effort, but it actively confuses consumers and forces our attractions to compete rather than collaborate.”

end of an important and busy pedestrian and tourist street. At the close of last year the council promised swift action which has taken more than half a year to materialise.

CUSTODY VISITS PRAISED

The Sussex Police Commission headed by Katy Bourne has been “recognised nationally for the outstanding quality of its work” for its independent custody visiting scheme (ICV). Under the Scheme, trained volunteers from local communities make regular, unannounced visits to police custody suites across Sussex to check on the welfare and dignity of detainees. Their findings are reported to Commissioner Katy Bourne who, the Commission says, uses this “independent scrutiny information to hold Sussex Police to account and help ensure that those detained are treated fairly and respectfully by custody officers and staff.”

A number of protesters arrested in the Hastings area have previously complained to HIP about long delays and unnecessary bureaucracy over their detention, as well as “heavy handed” actions by police in arresting them in the first place.

PROGRESS ON CASTLE VISITOR CENTRE

Planning permission has been granted for a landmark new visitor centre at the West Hill Café site, which, according to the council, marks a significant milestone in the delivery of the Government-funded Hastings Town Deal project.

Approved by Hastings Borough Council’s Planning Committee on 8 July, the proposals will see the exist-

ing West Hill Café replaced with a modern visitor centre, café and restaurant. The development will improve the visitor experience while supporting the long-term conservation and sustainable future of one of Hastings’ most important historic landmarks. The new visitor centre will become a key part of the experience of visiting the West Hill, Hastings Castle and the West Hill Lift.

According to deputy council leader Julia Hilton: “It will help safeguard one of our most important heritage assets and put it back at the heart of our history as a town as well as attracting more visitors to enjoy everything Hastings has to offer.”

KNIFE CRIME REDUCTION

The number of knife-enabled crimes committed in Sussex dropped by 15 per cent last year and almost £3million of funding was secured to tackle the issue, according to a report to Sussex’s Police and Crime Panel. Sussex Crime Commission Chief executive Mark Streater acknowledged that a lot of offences are underreported, but he said the Violent Reduction Partnership Board has dedicated analysts and looks at things like the National Crime Survey to get a clearer picture of the issue and that the partnership board worked closely with the NHS to capture incidents where possible victims or offenders have attended hospital with injuries. Concerns were raised by the Panel that knife-enabled crime statistics did not include online knife crime where weapons are brandished to intimidate and cause fear, and they remained concerned about the bigger picture of knife related crime.

SECTION 17 LICENSING ACT 2003: APPLICATION FOR A NEW PREMISES LICENCE

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Forever Food Mart,
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England TN341JA

Licensable activities and
accompanying hours. Applied
for are: **Supply of Alcohol for**
Off-Premises consumption:
Mon-Sun (10:00-21:00). Any

person who wishes to make
a presentation in relation to
this application must give
notice in writing of his/her
representation by: **24 June**
2026 stating 21 July ending
the grounds for making said
representation to: Hastings
Borough Council, Head of
Environmental Services,
Aquila House, Breeds Place,
Hastings TN34 3UY OR email:
licensing@hastings.gov.uk The
application may be viewed in

the Register held at the above
offices or online on www.
hastings.gov.uk.
It is an offence, under
section 158 of the Licensing
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make a false statement
in connection with an
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CHRIS OSTWALD



Convent Arson

KENT BARKER

The future of the former Convent of Holy Child Jesus in St Leonards is in serious doubt following a fire which destroyed a large area of buildings.

The blaze is being treated as arson and Police said they had arrested two boys aged 13 and 14 on suspicion of deliberately starting the fire.

A total of eight fire appliances fought the flames after calls to the emergency services around 5.00 pm on Wednesday 9 July. Firefighters, who had come from as far away as Eastbourne and Heathfield, remained on the scene overnight to continue monitoring and damping down hotspots.

Roads in the area were closed and residents advised to shut doors and windows because of billowing smoke. The fire service said they were seeking specialist advice from the UK Health Security Agency due to ash on cars and buildings following the fire.

The Convent of Holy Child Jesus has been in the centre of a long-standing row over responsibility for securing the empty site and preventing vandalism. Less than a

month before the fire, Hastings Borough council threatened to take enforcement action against the owners of the buildings. The move followed numerous incidents of trespass and vandalism. One video posted on social media showed a man destroying a window frame in the curtilage of a listed building with a hammer. Photos collected by the pressure group Save The Convent demonstrated widespread damage in numerous rooms.

After the convent nuns relocated to Mayfield in the 1970s the site was operated as a summer language school until it was sold to private investors. As reported in the last issue of HIP, the registered owners of the 15-acre estate are DKSS Holdings Limited, who paid £3.9 million for it in 2021. Company documents show that they borrowed nearly the entire sum from a Luxembourg-registered company Creo 12. The accrued interest on the loan rose to more £1m before the lender appointed a firm of receivers, Kroll Advisory Ltd, to attempt to recover their money. Hastings Borough Council (HBC) said they had repeatedly tried but failed to engage the owners to secure the site and limit damage to what they termed “this

important heritage site that includes a Grade 2* listed chapel”.

However, within weeks of the deputy leader of HBC, Julia Hilton, threatening enforcement action, a significant portion of the buildings appear to have been deliberately destroyed by the fire.

Hastings MP Helena Dollimore called for a full investigation of the circumstances of the fire. She said it was “infuriating that this has happened after so many of us have repeatedly warned the site is not secure and urged the site manager and the local council to do all in their power to protect it.”

HBC reiterated that the former convent site is privately owned and is not owned or managed by the Council. “Responsibility for securing the site and maintaining the buildings rests with the owners. The council will carry on pursuing all action available to us to ensure the owner fulfils their responsibilities”.

It remains unclear, however, as to exactly who such action would be taken against. DKSS Holdings appear to be technically insolvent, their creditor is a foreign company not named as an owner by the Land Registry and the receivers Kroll deny financial responsibility saying the ‘lender’, ie Creo 12, would be required to ‘fund any necessary works’.

The community group Save the Convent told HIP they were ‘ap-

palled’ by the fire and that the Grade 2* listed building – the Pugin Chapel which seems to have survived intact – needs urgent protection. They reiterated that they wanted to find a community-based solution “We are eager to work with the council on restoring the building and creating a community village space, with co-op housing, community arts centre, community gardens, museum, community cafe and micro business space, all of which are ideally suited to this beautiful site.” However they have not said if

they have any potential backers to finance their scheme.

Thus the immediate future of the damaged buildings remains unclear. It is not known whether they were insured nor whether any insurance company would pay up, given the longstanding problems with lax security as well as the allegations of arson against two minors. Some observers believe that the most likely outcome will now inevitably be a heavily discounted ‘fire sale’ to a property developer who will put forward a scheme for market housing.



CHRIS OSTWALD



William Conquers Hastings

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

The Prince of Wales paid a whirlwind visit to Hastings on 9 July, spending the day meeting local fishermen, playing crazy golf and being inducted into the Winkle Club as an honorary member. The visit was designed to highlight the vital work of local youth organisations and community-driven groups.

The royal visit began with Prince William descending from the East Hill funicular railway where he was greeted by a crowd of well-wishers. His first official stop was with local fishermen where he climbed aboard the *Senlac Jack* and chatted with crew members about the struggles of the town's historic beach-launched boats. He listened attentively as skipper Roland Kelly told him about the problems of overfishing by large EU

trawlers, the complexities of fishing quotas, and the impact of warming sea temperatures on the fishing industry. He later toured the iconic wooden net shops.

On a lighter note, the Prince was inducted into the Winkle Club as an honorary member. The local charitable organisation was founded by fishermen in 1900 to support families in need, and past members include his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen Mother, Sir Winston Churchill, and Field Marshal Lord Montgomery.

Prince William was given a silver winkle as a token of his lifetime membership and was told that members of the club, known as 'Winklers' must carry their shell at all times and that failure to present it on demand when challenged to "Winkle Up" would result in a fine. He accepted the responsibility with a smile and promised to "take good care of my winkle".

The next stop was a visit to Eagle House, where the Prince chatted with young people and volunteers who use the space as a youth club and gathering place. The building is owned by Hastings Commons which aims to transform some of the town's historic and neglected buildings by turning them into



shared homes, workspaces and hubs of social support that are owned and run by the community.

Later in the day, William headed to the Hastings Adventure Miniature Golf, meeting young people supported by the local youth char-

ity XTrax and enjoyed a round of crazy golf. At almost exactly the same time Prince Harry, the Duke of Sussex – William's estranged brother and his family – were meeting their father, the King, 160 miles away at Highgrove



WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

✉Letter

ABOUT HORISING

Dear Editor
I was interested to read the article by Peter Grey about Norman horses and how they were shipped across the sea. The image on the Bayeux tapestry clearly shows the Norman sailors lowering the horses off the ship using the mast as a hoist to lower the horse over the side of the ship safely. One sailor is lowering the mast while one man is steadying the boat with a pole secured in the beach. Another man is using the rope to lower the horse while another man is in the sea guiding the horse to the ground. The horses do not appear to be jumping off the boat! Mast of a Viking style ship had a pulley at the top used to hoist up the sail and the mast can be lowered when they are being rowed or moored. These kind of ships were well used by the Saxons and the Normans and can be seen in Viking ship museums in Oslo and Roskilde in Norway and Denmark. The nuns sewing the tapestry have not shown leather slings that would have been used to support the horse while they are being lowered. I am sure when Hastings visit the British Museum to see the tapestry they can see it for themselves.

Regarding Roger's invasion of Sicily, the chroniclers at the time mention a date of 1061 and not 1038!

Paul Reed



✉From our website

SYD'S LAST STAND

Fun though Nick Tucker's preview of 'Syd's Last Stand' (HIP 305) is, he's arguably too much of a fan boy to be objective.

LSD, sometimes enjoyable, other times curdling your karma, does not automatically confer wisdom. Consequently, Syd's solo albums were merely whimsical, fitfully entertaining and thankfully less pretentious and overlong than Pink Floyd's later LPs.

Floorboards are not iconic; they simply stop you from falling through the ceiling. A more interesting question to ask when analysing the album cover might be why an unacknowledged woman is adopting such an uncomfortable pose in the background? I'm sure her nudity was essential to the ar-

tistic message, yet Syd, for some reason lost to rock history, retains his clothes...

TK Bedford

✉From our website

BETTY IMPORTANT

I enjoyed the Betty Parsons exhibition last year. I agree the title was a misnomer, but as a researcher who's written about a number of mid-twentieth century women artists, I found it very interesting to see the work from Betty Parsons, who supported women artists at a time when macho personalities dominated the world of abstract expressionism while ignoring the women. She was important.

Susan Gilbert

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My Antisocial Town Centre

In this special investigative report, new HIP writer JAMES ARNOLD-HO presents a detailed picture of the acute problems facing businesses and their employees in Hastings' busy town centre throughfare, Wellington Place

Hastings police stand accused of 'lacking enforcement' over aggressive begging and antisocial behaviour in the Wellington Place area of the town centre, while the council confirms an increase in disruptive incidents involving groups of young people.

Local shop workers, managers and owners have told HIP of numerous incidents including fist-fights and other disturbances which, they say, often involve street sleepers and people with alcohol and drug dependency problems.

A spokesperson for Hastings Borough Council (HBC) told us: "East Sussex County Council's Youth Offending Service and Early Help teams have been working alongside Sussex Police to identify the ringleaders and ensure that serious offenders are appropriately dealt with, while also seeking opportunities to divert young people away from offending behaviour through early intervention."

One employee at the local McDonald's in Wellington Place witnessed a fight breaking out in the fast-food outlet during his evening shift. "It wasn't clear who started it," he said, "but it was between a middle-aged man and three teenage boys. Fortunately, no weapons were involved, but the scuffle resulted in blood being spilt onto the shop floor. It was extremely intimidating."

IMPROBABLE EXPERIENCE

These firsthand experiences from locals and workers are evidence that contradict the idea of a family-friendly atmosphere in Wellington Place. In daytime, the experiences seem improbable; police are patrolling, and the Hastings community is enjoying the heat, in the hotter than average 2026 summer. Yet the area shows many symptoms of decline; shops on the brink of closure are running emergency sales. Litter wafts along the gutters and remnants of rough sleeping camps – mattresses and sleeping bags – are present for all to see. Shops' corrugated shutters are scrawled with graffiti. According to local workers, by evening there are insufficient police on the beat –

which is when instances of antisocial behaviour rear their head.

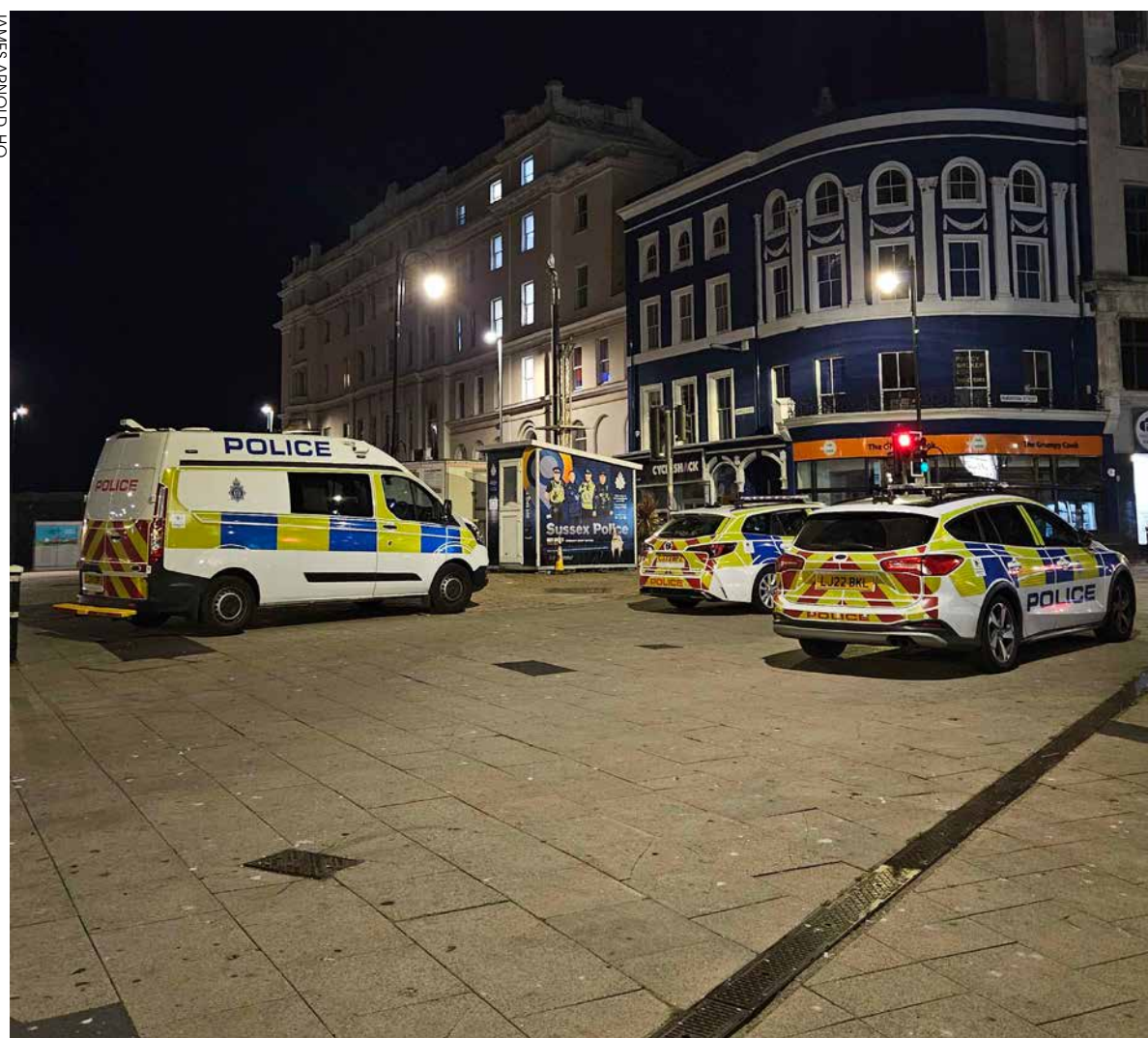
The problems are far from new. A senior manager at Kokoro, which serves East Asian cuisine, said they petitioned Sally-Ann Hart during her time as Hastings MP between 2019 and 2025. After six meetings with her and Police Commissioners, they finally got a Police Pod installed two years ago. This is a portable or temporary policing hub – effectively a miniature police station – with CCTV coverage of the surrounding area.

Kokoro cited an incident where local boys had thrown a cup of McDonald's coca-cola at their front counter, resulting in the damages of store Point-Of-Sale (POS) equipment. Since then, they have banned groups of young boys from using their outside seating.

On the topic of repeated antisocial behaviour from local young people, a council spokesman has said: "We are aware of concerns about antisocial behaviour in Hastings town centre. Over the past couple of months there has been an increase in incidents involving groups of young people, and the Safer Hastings Partnership has been closely monitoring the situation and coordinating a multi-agency response. East Sussex County Council's Youth Offending Service and Early Help teams have been working alongside Sussex Police to identify the ringleaders and ensure that serious offenders are appropriately dealt with, while also seeking opportunities to divert young people away from offending behaviour through early intervention."

ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

The council says the partnership has funded youth outreach services to patrol some of the more secluded locations where young people tend to gather during the warmer months and that this work is continuing, with additional support from Active Hastings and Hastings Commons. All of which "helps to engage young people in the wide range of positive diversionary activities available across the town".



However employees at both Millets and Kamsons Pharmacy say there is an 'increasing trend' towards unprevented, street-based antisocial behaviour, often worsening towards the evening. One argued that the decision of JD Sports to actively prosecute shoplifters acts as a far greater deterrent than the patchy police presence.

Besides commenting on actions taken against young people, the HBC spokesperson said: "The council and its partners recognise the impact that antisocial behaviour can have on residents, businesses and visitors. Tackling these issues remains a priority. The Antisocial Behaviour Public Spaces Protection Order (ASB PSPO) is an important enforcement tool, helping agencies tackle a wide range of antisocial behaviour and manage alcohol consumption in public places."

INCREASED SHOPLIFTING

According to Sussex police data, overall crime in the area has declined slightly between May 2025 and 2026, particularly antisocial crime – yet shoplifting has proportionally increased. The solar-powered Pod, which cost around £12,000 to install as part of a £1.4 million county-wide investment, has previously been attributed to a 14% decline in hotspot area crime.

HBC told us that they recognise the importance of a visible police presence in the town centre, particularly during busy periods and in warmer weather, and "partners

continue to work closely with Sussex Police to respond to emerging issues and community concerns."

However HIP's investigation showed a marked discrepancy between official police initiatives and the actual experiences and sentiments felt by Wellington Place visitors and employees on the ground.

A senior staff member at Vape & Mobile, who along with most people we spoke to asked to remain anonymous, expressed their grievances at the persistent presence of "local pissheads, drug addicts and pushy beggars". They recalled their experience of rough sleepers at their shop windows, which would trigger security sensors in product display windows and deter potential customers. They said that many of these antisocial individuals "tended to be the same faces", and observed that whilst the police showed presence, this presence lacked enforcement of aggressive begging in the area.

Several people pointed to the presence of Change Grow Live, a CGL-managed Alcohol and Drugs rehabilitation centre, stationed based in Wellington Place as contributing to the problems in the area. The Kokoro restaurant say they "hit a stone wall" in trying to get this moved to a new location following discussions with Sally-Ann Hart and the police.

EXTENSIVE DRUG SUPPORT

Not everyone thinks that moving the service would solve the area's problems. According to the Change Grow

Live website their drugs team provides essential support for people who use a wide range of drugs including opiates, cocaine, cannabis, ketamine, MDMA and steroids. They also provide a needle exchange and "recovery-focused counselling, detox and rehab programmes". One Hastings Resident told HIP that closing or moving a valuable resource like that could exacerbate addiction related problems of antisocial behaviour. And, anyway, it was wrong to blame people with addiction and possible mental health issues for all the problems in Wellington Place.

The council says that The Safer Hastings Partnership works closely with housing services, substance misuse services, health partners and voluntary organisations such as Seaview to address the complex issues that can contribute to antisocial behaviour. Recognising that antisocial behaviour is often a symptom of more complex personal circumstances, the partnership aims to balance enforcement with appropriate support and intervention.

Hastings is the third most deprived authority district in East Sussex, making it more likely that individuals can fall into difficult circumstances. The existence of support centres is essential to the community, for if people involved in antisocial behaviour as a cause of drug or alcohol addiction have no support in rebuilding their lives there seems every likelihood they will continue to cause harm to themselves or other

Welcome to the House of Fun

RACHEL ATTFIELD

Walking along my road in Hastings recently, I found myself delighting in the abundance of plants growing through the cracks in the pavement. Dandelions, grasses, tiny flowers, plants I couldn't name were everywhere. This change is due to a local petition many, including my partner, had signed asking the council to stop using weedkiller on the streets. Now I could see how that small act had made space for nature to bloom everywhere. Not planted, not designed, not officially invited, but there anyway.

As a basket maker and craft forager, these pockets of wild mean I can find plants that become materials in my work. What some people see as weeds, I see as possibilities, and this made me think about culture in Hastings.

So much of what makes this town interesting does not wait for permission. It happens in the gaps: in pubs, kitchens, gardens, streets, shared buildings, community rooms, studios, workshops, campaigns, conversations and acts of neighbourliness. Hastings is not a town that waits politely for culture to be delivered to it. People here make things happen, often with

very little money, a lot of invention, and a strong feeling that places belong to the people who use them.

Culture is fluid. It constantly changes through our interactions with others: family, friends, neighbours and people we may only just be meeting. It's something we make together. That's why Hastings feels like such a natural place for Fun Palaces.

Fun Palaces is a UK-wide movement supporting people to create their own local cultural events. Each October, people across the country make Fun Palaces in the places where they already live, work and gather: libraries, parks, pubs, schools, streets, cafés, museums, community centres and homes. No big budget, no professionals and no permanent building required. It might begin with a recipe, a walk, a story, a song, craft making, a game, a piece of local knowledge, a repair skill, a conversation or an activity. It's about people sharing what they love, creating something local with and for the people around them.

The theatre director Joan Littlewood was the inspiration behind Fun Palaces. She recognised something radical: people don't need to be taught how to be creative, or to be given culture, because they already have it.

Along with architect Cedric Price,



to become UK Town of Culture 2028, I hope this breadth of culture is part of the story too: the grassroots, generous custom of people sharing what they know, making things happen together and inviting others in. Not because institutional culture doesn't matter, but because culture exists in many forms, and we sometimes need reminding to place greater value on the things people are already doing themselves and with others.

When hundreds of these things happen across the country at the same time, with thousands of people taking part, something remarkable begins to emerge. It becomes a collective shout. It reminds us that we are connected to other people and places and that small local acts can become powerful when they are part of something shared.

I would love to see many Fun Palaces happen across Hastings, because the town is so full of cultural activities that are worth shouting about. For me, the power of Fun Palaces lies in recognising what is already here: the knowledge, humour, skills, memories, passions and care that exist in every place.

Like the plants in the pavement cracks, perhaps the work is partly to notice what's already growing, and make more space for it.

That feels like Hastings to me. And it feels like a good place to begin.

she imagined the Fun Palace in the 1960s as a 'laboratory of fun' and a 'university of the streets'. It was never built, but the idea behind it remains relevant. Joan believed that creativity did not belong to experts

or institutions alone. She believed that everyone had something to contribute. Perhaps that's why her famous phrase, "Everyone an artist or a scientist", still resonates today.

As Hastings looks towards its bid

If you like the idea of making a Fun Palace in Hastings or want to talk through what it could look like, I'd love to hear from you: rachel@funpalaces.co.uk. You can also find out more at funpalaces.co.uk

Read to the Beat

TOBY BULA-EDGE

The ever-popular Summer Reading Challenge returns this month for children aged four to eleven. This year the theme is *Read to the Beat* and explores the connection between music and storytelling. The Challenge – to read six books during July and August – aims to ignite imagination and creativity. It will also be great preparation for the under-16 social media ban.

The Challenge, organised by The Reading Agency, is backed by Universal Music Group UK. There will be activities in libraries across the county that celebrate the connection between storytelling and sound, including African drumming, making instruments from recycled materials, producing stop-motion animation and soundtracks, and interactive storytelling sessions.

There will also be claymation filmmaking sessions guided by experts from Press Play Films, as well as a chance to take part in set designing.

The Challenge is free to enter.

Children taking part can read any library book of their choice, including fiction, non-fiction, picture books, or books they share with parents and carers. If your child struggles to not look at a screen for five seconds, don't worry, because eBooks, eAudiobooks and CD books – if they know what a CD is! – also count.

Those taking part will receive special stickers and other rewards. Those who complete six books in the timeframe will earn a certificate and a medal.

East Sussex County Council's Councillor Peter Griffiths says: "I have been an avid reader all my life and there are so many benefits to children being encouraged to read: from building their knowledge and their communication and language skills; to developing self-confidence – not to mention the immense enjoyment that can be experienced whilst getting stuck into a really good book."

Entry is free. Booking is required for activities running between Saturday 4 July and Saturday 5 September. Children can sign up at their nearest East Sussex library or visit eastsussex.gov.uk/src

Umbrella Sussex Needs Your Help!

TOBY BULA-EDGE

A new Community Eco Hub is the next aim of Umbrella Sussex – the group behind the Library of Things, Make and Mend, and Save the Convent Campaign. They are currently crowdfunding for the project and are looking for help from the community. The hub would combine climate action and anti-poverty work, focused on their well-established mending and lending schemes.

The building would provide space for the established Hastings Library of Things and Make and Mend, and would also play host to new initiatives like Hack Space – a shared community workshop for fixers, makers and inventors, and that would repair items, collaborate and develop new



ideas, and tackle waste.

From Shore to Shed would combine beach cleaning with creative reuse. Materials collected from local beaches will be sorted and made available to schools, artists, community groups and makers. From these safe and renewable waste materials, creative projects can be born.

Providing affordable meeting rooms, a community kitchen and fully accessible facilities are also central to the building's conception.

To ensure that the building is never sold and always available to the people of Hastings, Umbrella Sussex plans to put the building into a trust. It would be retrofitted to high environmental standards, to

tie in with the group's aim to tackle the climate crisis – as well as to inspire local residents and businesses to do their part.

Christine, spokesperson for Umbrella Sussex, says: "I started Make and Mend in 2019, and we've always struggled with space. Our two regular volunteers work incredibly hard to keep up with demand, but we simply can't fit in any more volunteers. I'm so excited that, with control over our own space, we'll be able to open every day and welcome many more people to get involved."

To find out more or to donate, visit: crowdfunder.co.uk/p/community-eco-hub

Gamechanging Futures

TOBY BULA-EDGE

As we sweat our way through the third heatwave of the year, it's impossible to ignore that the climate is changing. That's why Hastings United FC and Bexhill United FC are part of *Gamechanging Futures*, a National Lottery-funded project to help six English sports clubs adapt to the new climate.

The effects of the climate on sport are already apparent. Wimbledon has faced delays due to extreme heat, while at the World Cup, players are taking hydration breaks mid-game due to the heat, much to the consternation of the crowd (arguably an absurdity, because in this heat most people can't even move off the sofa). The hydration breaks, however, do seem to be a flash of common sense from FIFA in a World Cup that is expected to be the most polluting yet.

On the smaller stage, the effect

is perhaps more widely felt. Across England climate-related damage and disruptions to grassroots sport have produced a financial toll estimated at £320 million. These disruptions have a knock-on effect for communities, with pitches and sports areas being unavailable for local groups and clubs.

It isn't just heat that has an impact. Geoff Martin, Media Manager at Bexhill United FC, highlights that: "Pitch irrigation and wildly fluctuating wet and dry spells leave us on a knife-edge with cancellations." A third of community pitches across England are unplayable for up to two months of the season due to flooding and waterlogging.

Gamechanging Futures aims to help clubs adapt to these changes and help limit their impact on the environment. It's a three-year project – supported by £1.5 million of National Lottery funding – being led by environmental charities Climate Outreach and Pledgeball. There are



six participating clubs across the country, including local Hastings United FC and Bexhill United FC.

Hastings United FC will launch *Play It Forward*. This will keep football boots and kits in play through donation, repair, exchange and redistribution. Sally Greig, Director at Hastings United FC, says that this aims to "reduce sports kit waste, make football more affordable, and ensure that no player is left out of the game because they lack the right equipment" – as well as contribut-

ing, even in a small way, to a more eco-friendly approach.

Just down the road, Bexhill United FC plan to install LED footlights, cutting energy usage in the future as part of their bid to reduce further climate damage.

Rachel Orr, CEO of Climate Outreach, says: "Fans and players of grassroots sport are already feeling the effects of our changing climate. But they are also at the forefront of driving possible change. From installing solar panels to bringing

down bills to creating accessible low carbon clubhouses, clubs are taking action to lower emissions and build community pride. We're really excited to be working with these clubs to see what more we can achieve together."

A recent report by the Climate Change Committee said that adaptation cannot wait – as evidenced in part by the struggles sports clubs face. That's why they're taking action now to change the game for future generations.



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Leaves of Love

TOBY BULA-EDGE

Hastings Court Care Home aims to plant a lasting legacy. They will plant a tree in memory of every resident who dies to create a legacy of past generations – all the while protecting the environment for future generations.

The initiative is called *Leaves of Love* and is being led by Head of Hospitality Emma Gosling and Hastings Court's six-member Green Team. The initiative is one in a series of environmental initiatives by the group which have included litter picks, Christmas toy and food appeals, sustainability markets, clothes swaps and wildlife gardening projects.

The elements to start the initiative are almost all in place. They will pay for, plant and maintain the trees. But that's if they can find somewhere to grow them. Hastings Court Care Home are looking for places to plant them and are appeal-

ing to the community to find land to grow the legacy of trees.

Emma says: "We wanted to create something that reflects our values of love, care, respect and sustainability. Every resident leaves their mark on our home and becomes part of our family. Planting a tree in their memory means their legacy will continue to grow for generations to come.

"We're not asking anyone to pay for anything. We simply hope that if someone has land available, or knows someone who does, they'll consider allowing us to plant one or more native British trees."

The Care Home will work with landowners to choose tree species appropriate and beneficial to the local wildlife.

This is not the only way that families can remember their loved ones. They will also have the option of taking a memorial tree home to plant in their own gardens.

But the main aim of Emma and the Green Team is to find land to start planting a lasting legacy.

Emma adds: "This is about remembering the wonderful people we've had the privilege to care for while creating something positive for the future. We hope the community will help us make that happen."



Counselling Plus Community Relocates to St Leonards

TOBY BULA-EDGE

Local mental health charity Counselling Plus Community (CPC) will be relocating to the St Nicholas Centre from 1 September. The collaborative move was announced by long

running charity the Fellowship of St Nicholas (FSN).

The relocation will bring together the two well-established and crucial charities, strengthening the support services FSN delivers to children, young people and families.

CPC was established in 1992 and provides affordable counselling for

people aged 16 and over who are on benefits or low income. They will continue to provide this service from their new home and hope the move will help improve their ability to deliver it.

Verra Papaspyrou, CPC's CEO, and FSN's CEO Angelica McMilan both expressed excitement about the move. "Our roots lie in recognising the urgent need for affordable therapy within an area of significant deprivation," says Verra, "and I believe this ethos will be enhanced and further developed by working closely with FSN."

"We have been building towards combining our respective strengths at the St Nicholas Centre over the past few months," says Angelica. "It's such a great opportunity to enhance the support available to children, young people and families across our local communities. Creating greater access to dedicated mental health services and a more joined-up approach to wellbeing is so needed. We have listened to our community, and this collaboration is another step forward into ensuring families' journeys in life are happier, one step at a time."

To find out more about the work of CPC and FSN go to: counsellingplus.org or fsncharity.co.uk



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Pett Level Rescue Octopus Team

Octopus Rescue: A Sign of Things to Come

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

The Pett Level Rescue Boat team, usually tasked with helping distressed swimmers and vessels, found themselves in uncharted waters on Saturday 4 July when they responded to an alert regarding an unusual casualty: a live octopus, marooned in the sand by the receding tide. Steve Hill, the Chair of the Launch Authority, told HIP that his members carefully recovered the creature before safely returning it to the sea. Another successful, albeit unusual mission, for the team of valued community volunteers.

While the sighting of this eight-armed cephalopod may still feel like a novelty for beachgoers, its presence is likely to signal the onset of a serious ecological upheaval in local waters. For the fishermen of Hastings, however, it represents a

potential threat to their livelihoods. The sightings of octopuses are becoming more common along the South Coast, particularly off Cornwall. Marine biologists explain that the sudden surge in sightings – a phenomenon known as a ‘bloom’ – is driven by environmental factors, such as a mild winter followed by a warm breeding season, supercharged by the long-term warming of our seas due to global warming.

The warm-water creatures make their way here from much hotter southern waters as sea temperatures rise. This migration is driven not only by the current marine heat-wave, but also by longer-term climatic trends that are pushing sea surface temperatures 4–5°C above average in parts of the English Channel. So-called ‘heat domes’ exacerbate the problem by trapping the hot air to drive record-breaking air temperatures.

In the short term, some of us may

bask in the tropical conditions and enjoy lazy afternoons on the beach. Yet it is becoming increasingly clear that the ecological shift scientists have long warned about is no longer a distant forecast but a present-day reality.

The rising sea temperatures along the Kent and Sussex coastline are already impacting traditional marine habitats, the very staples of the historic, shore-launched Hastings fishing fleet. The numbers of cod, Dover sole, plaice, herring, mackerel and skate fished locally are declining, as these species move further north to find colder waters. Seagrasses and kelp forests are also disappearing rapidly from around the English Channel.

The rise in octopus numbers is now beginning to have an impact on shellfish stocks, too. Octopuses are voracious predators of crustaceans, and as their population is set to explode, stocks of crab and lobsters are likely to be decimated. This will impact shellfish potters who use specialised baited traps (known as ‘pots’) to catch their quarry which are highly prized.

The octopus threat is only the latest blow to an already battered fishing fleet, which has seen the number of active beach-launched boats that make up the historic fleet in Hastings reduced to almost single figures.

Roland Kelly, skipper of the *Sen-*

lac Jack, has witnessed first-hand the dramatic decline in Hastings’ fishing fleet over his 40-year career. When he first put to sea in 1986, he says the waters off the Sussex coast were teeming with cod, Dover sole and plaice, but those abundant hauls are “now a fading memory”. He blames the steady encroachment of large EU trawlers, “even within the post-Brexit six-mile limit,” of over-fishing and of stripping the inshore grounds of mature fish. As a result, “catches today barely cover costs” he says.

Add to that the bureaucratic nature of fishing quotas, whose rigid inflexibility makes them virtually impossible to meet, along with the prospect of extended Marine Protection Zones – a conservation initiative he supports for safeguarding critical habitats, yet whose expansion he fears will impose even greater constraints.

Mr Kelly believes fishing is a passion but “a passion too few young people seem to share today”. The restrictions have simply become too onerous and he asks is it any wonder “given the difficult working conditions, the financial uncertainty, and the bureaucracy why any young person would want to work the boats anymore.”

He acknowledges an ecological shift is under way in the English Channel with sea temperatures rising and traditional fish stocks depleting. He also believes the threat posed by the rise in octopus numbers, whilst real, is not the most immediate concern of local fishermen.

The longer-term shift in marine life will inevitably present opportunities, as new species arrive in local waters. Increasing numbers of octopus and blue fin tuna could, in time, he says, provide lucrative markets. But, he adds, there is no certainty that the octopus will stay if their supply of crustaceans disappears. New equipment will also be needed along with new skills, and new supply chains – all at considerable cost, and it remains to be seen whether these gains will outweigh the losses already being felt across the local fleet.

The rescue of the octopus in Pett Level was undoubtedly an act of kindness, but it also serves as a stark warning. Increasing numbers of octopus are a visible sign that global warming is real and that an increase in sea temperatures will have a massive impact on our town and on the very future of our historic fishing fleet.





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Town Plans and Money Plans

The 410 pages of Hastings Council's Draft Local Plan on the future of the town till 2041 attracted many criticisms earlier this year, and the Council meeting on 23 September will be discussing possible changes. This is a serious business, but two of the most important 'local plans' in the history of the town were implemented many centuries before Hastings Council existed as it is today, as STEVE PEAK explains.

The first of these large-scale changes in the shape of the town was the reconstruction of the Old Town after the hurricane of 1287; the second was the attempt, around 1580, to build a harbour in the Priory Valley which laid out the town centre as it is today.

At both these times the government of the town was carried out by a bailiff, assisted by 12 jurors, normally referred to as 'the brethren', who were basically the leading members of the local establishment. The bailiff represented the Crown, imposing any necessary taxes, and generally 'looking after' the town in a limited semi-formal way.

As Hastings had a population of many hundreds of people, rather than the tens of thousands that there are today, the bailiff and brethren should usually have been able to find a consensus agreement of the chief residents about what to do in serious matters.

Until 1287 most of the Old Town was laid out further south than today, and the East and West Hills extended further to seaward. But a series of damaging storms from the 1250s, culminating in February 1287, brought major destruction to much of the southern coast of England. Whole areas of the coastline were then redrawn, with estuaries silting up and cliffs collapsing.

The most famous victim of the 1287 hurricane was the original town of Winchelsea, which until then stood on a massive shingle bank that protected the confluence of the estuaries of the Rivers Brede, Rother and Tillingham, and provided a sheltered anchorage called the Camber. After the Norman Conquest, Winchelsea was of great importance in cross-Channel trade (acting especially as an entrepôt for London) and as a naval base. By

seen in the 1746 map. These were cut into the slopes of the West and East Hills respectively.

This encroachment required high pavements to be constructed on which the houses could be built. The houses could not have been built prior to the pavements, and no buildings in the Old Town today date from before the late 13th century storms.

But it was different, two centuries later, when the local 'ruling class' decided unilaterally that they wanted to turn the Priory Valley into a harbour. The Priory Valley in Roman and Anglo-Saxon times was one of only a handful of English harbours available for cross-Channel traffic. This was probably the main reason the town of Hastings had been created in the 9th century, as a new national economy had begun to emerge, based on increased cross-Channel trading and transport. The town itself was on top of White Rock, mostly on the section that has now been lost to the sea.

But in the 12th century, the harbour mouth silted up and the town gradually moved into the Bourne Valley, where the West Hill provided some shelter for a port at the mouth of the Bourne Stream. This was largely destroyed by the 1287 hurricane, so for the next 300 years a succession of wooden harbour arms was built roughly where the west end of West Street is today. These provided some shelter for fishing boats and the small commercial vessels operating off the beach in front of the Bourne Valley.

By the late 16th century, England was increasingly becoming an international trader, buying and selling goods around the world. In 1578 leading members of the Hastings establishment decided this would be a good time to restore the Priory Valley as the harbour it had been

long ago. A petition was sent from the 'townspeople' of Hastings to Queen Elizabeth asking for a grant of £4,000 (many millions of pound today) to turn the valley into a "very good haven for the arriving and safeguard of ships, barks and boats, to the great relief of the inhabitants and all merchants and travellers sailing along the narrow seas [the English Channel]".

A 'haven' is a closed-in dock, like a marina, rather than a harbour arm projecting into the open sea. Queen Elizabeth gave her blessing, authorising the local establishment to start collecting funding for the scheme, so work began. Within a year £2,000 had been spent. But then the rest of the money that the local businessmen had obtained went missing and construction had to stop. Historian William Camden wrote in 1586 that "the contribution was quickly converted into private purses, and the publicke good neglected".

It seems that in about 1580 a sea-wall of soil, and possibly rock, had been built across the Valley near the sea where Cambridge Road is today. This may have been put on top of an already-existing trackway across the valley which is likely to have been formed by people travelling along the coast once the Priory Valley had partly filled with shingle and silt.

Parallel to the c1580 sea-wall across the valley, there appears to have been another wall further inland, where South Terrace is now. These two walls and the hillsides to east and west of them would have formed the deep-water haven where the Priory Meadow shopping centre is today.

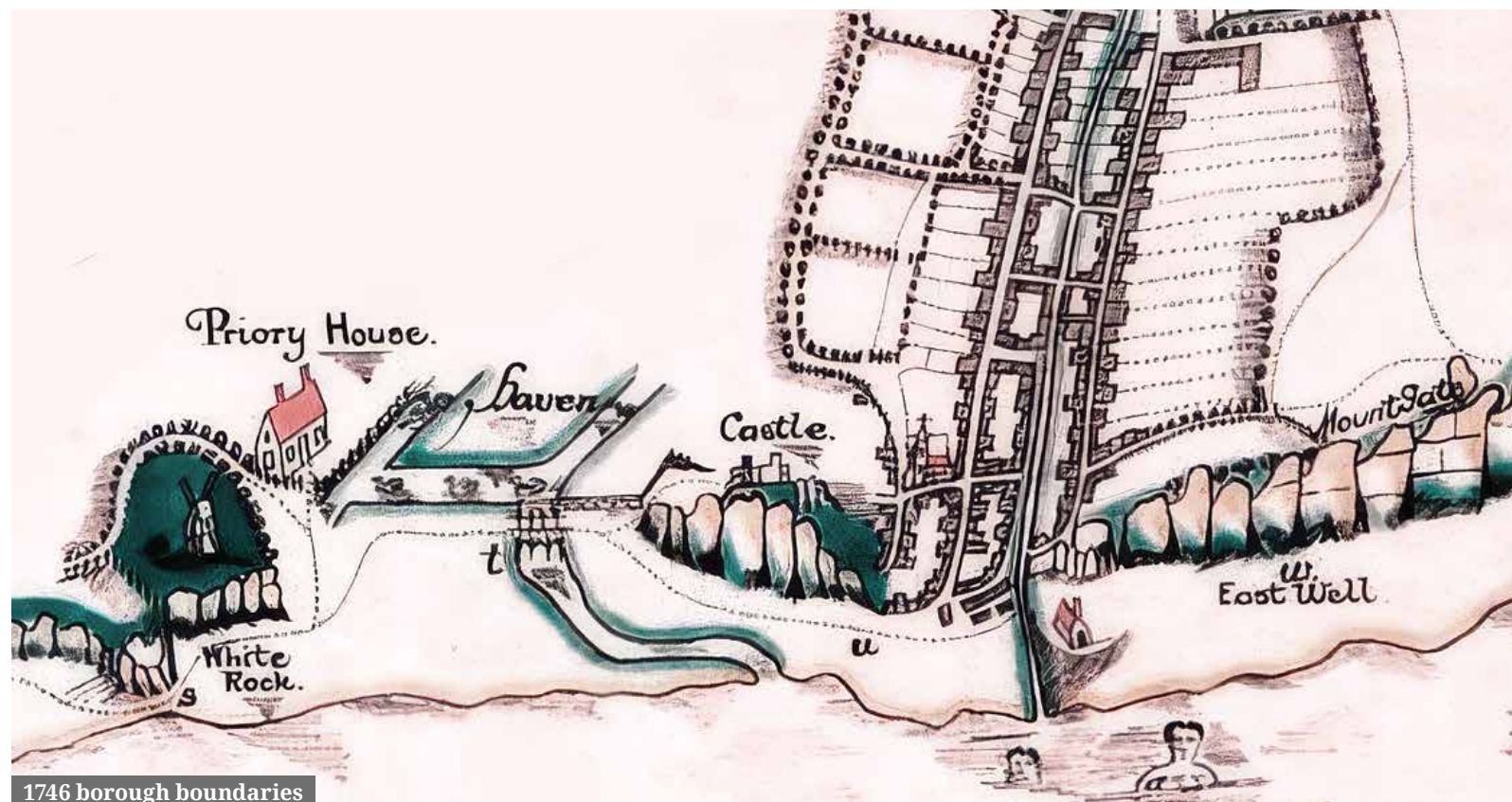
But the haven was never completed, instead it became a large wet marshland in the middle of the valley. In the mid-18th century it could

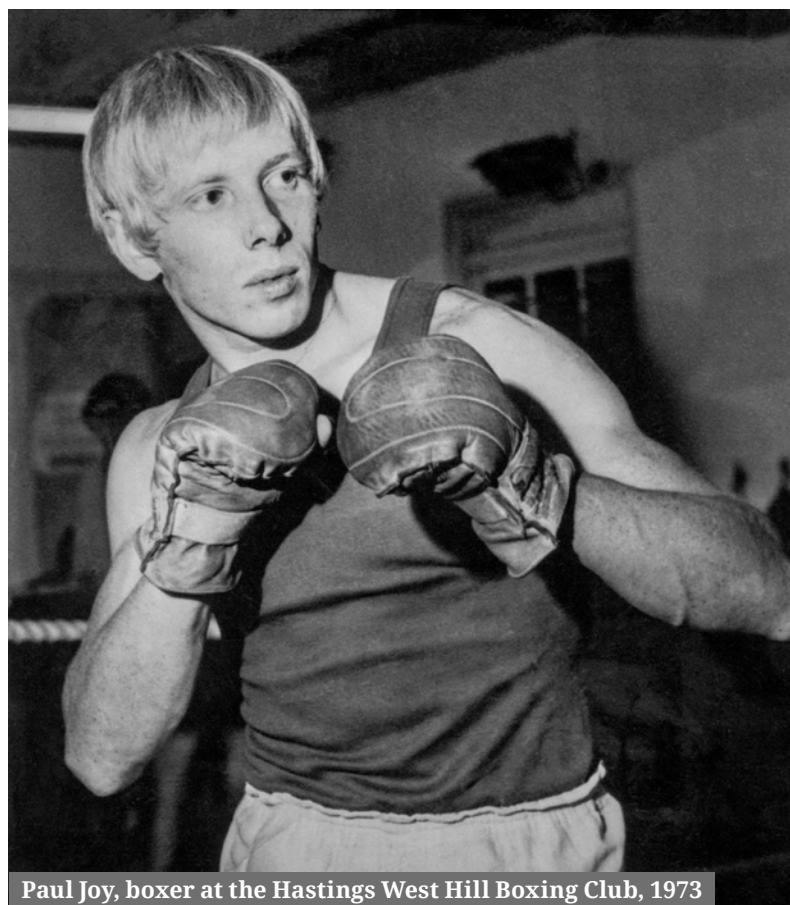
still be seen on ground in outline, as shown in the 1746 map. In the southern corner of the haven was the outlet to the sea of the Priory Stream, over which a succession of bridges was built. As the town expanded westward in the 1830s, the bridge site became the heart of the town, where the Albert Memorial clocktower was built in 1863.

The 1580's trickery by the leading Hastings businessmen which halted the haven scheme was probably the key factor in the setting up by the Crown in 1588 of a commission of inquiry into the mismanagement of the town of Hastings. To regularise the controversial situation, a 'charter of incorporation' (usually referred to as the 'Elizabethan Charter') was passed in February 1589. The elusive, self-perpetuating cartel which had been running the town for many years was replaced by a new governing body, described as the 'Mayor, Jurats and Commonalty of the town and port of Hastings'.

This was essentially the old self-interested ruling group by another name. But from 1589 it was a new legally-defined corporate body – Hastings Corporation – which had specific rights and responsibilities. There were many similar local government corporations around the country, most of which were run by members who re-elected themselves or friends, and who were suspected of becoming rich at the expense of the town's inhabitants.

This became so widespread that the Whig government in 1833 set up a royal commission to investigate the working of 285 local authorities. This resulted in the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act which established the principle of local councils elected by ratepayers, which had to publish audited financial accounts. Hastings Council was born.





Paul Joy, boxer at the Hastings West Hill Boxing Club, 1973

Paul Joy: A Boxer Who Went to Sea

JOHN COLE

The name Paul Joy is well known in Hastings, especially in the Old Town. Paul has been a fisherman here for most of his adult life and he has been chair of the Hastings Fishermen's Association since 1977. However, what most people don't know is that a young Paul Joy was a very keen amateur boxer who had dozens of fights, most of which he won.

"In 1970, inspired by watching the fights of Muhammad Ali on TV, I first went to the Hastings West Hill Boxing Club with absolutely no experience," said Paul.

"The training was pretty serious. We'd run and sprint from the gym to Battle, before returning to the gym in Hastings to spar for three rounds. Other times, we'd jog along the beach, holding up heavy weights to get our muscles used to keeping our hands up. I loved it!"

"As an amateur, we fought three, three-minute rounds. I found out early that I could hit and knock out opponents with a good right hand. You could say my style was like a bouncer. I fought as a light welterweight (140 pounds or 10 stone/7) and occasionally, I'd fight as a lightweight (up to 135 pounds), and sometimes I'd fight opponents considerably heavier and more experienced than me because I had a reputation of knocking out opponents early.

"My very first fight was against a Royal Marine in a Chichester hotel, where a ring was set up in the middle of the dining room. Before the fight, the Marine came into the dressing

room to taunt me, looking me up and down and sneeringly saying, 'No problem'. I KO'd him in the first thirty seconds of the first round! And in my next few fights, I KO'd opponents with my right hand cross."

"In 1974 I fought Clinton McKenzie, who was an up and coming star in the amateur circuit. I knocked him down in the third round, but lost on points. In fact, McKenzie went on to become the professional British light welterweight champion."

"As an amateur, we weren't allowed to be paid cash prizes, so my promoter would arrange prizes, such as bath towels and bathroom scales."

"One time, the Club set up a boxing ring on the shingle beach, where the Ferris wheel now is. It felt more like a fairground than a proper boxing arena. Anyone was invited to step into the ring with me, but most of my opponents were totally useless, sometimes even pissed, so I had to hold back so I didn't hurt them."

"I've never been knocked out, but I have been knocked down several times. One time there was boxing on Hastings Pier, and my opponent, Johnny Farnbry, didn't show up on time, so while I was waiting for him, I had a few beers too many. When Farnbry eventually did show up he knocked me down. I got up, but lost on points. Lesson learned!"

"I boxed for almost six years, until 1977. All my family were in the fishing industry, and eventually I followed. Also, it wasn't fair to my wife and two children to be disappearing days on end to fight abroad."

"Just before I 'retired' from the ring, I had a few unofficial, under the radar fights. For about a year, I worked on a building site as a hod carrier... and a boxer! After our mid

day dinner break, I'd put down my hod and put on the gloves and box. There was no ring or ropes, we just fought on a square patch of concrete floor. I mostly sparred with the sub-contractor, Terry Haddon. And I got £10 a day for doing both, which was good money then!"

"In another unofficial fight, I fought a Frenchman in the Hotel de France on Jersey Island. He was two weight classes heavier than me and I injured my hand when I hit him. As I was then fighting one-handed, they stopped the fight. The best bit about boxing in Jersey was that for a few days after the fights we were given freedom of the city and got free drinks in all the pubs."

Two of my most memorable 'under the radar' fights were against a fighter called Ripley, King of the Gypsies, in Canterbury. I beat Ripley in our first fight, but what was most memorable was that in the first round, ten and twenty pound notes started appearing all over the canvas. Ripley didn't trust his promoter, so instead of keeping his pay in his locker, he stuffed the money into his socks and as the fight progressed, the pound notes started falling out onto the ring."

"In our second fight, I knocked Ripley down, but instead of getting

up to finish the fight, he jumped out of the ring to attack an obnoxious spectator who was heckling him. It really was like the Wild West!"

I ask Paul what he thinks of boxing today. "With all the different sanctioning bodies, who are only interested in profits rather than their fighters' welfare, professional boxing has become a bit of a circus. But I still think amateur boxing is still very important for young men, as well as women, giving them a community to belong to, and to help them focus their energies positively."

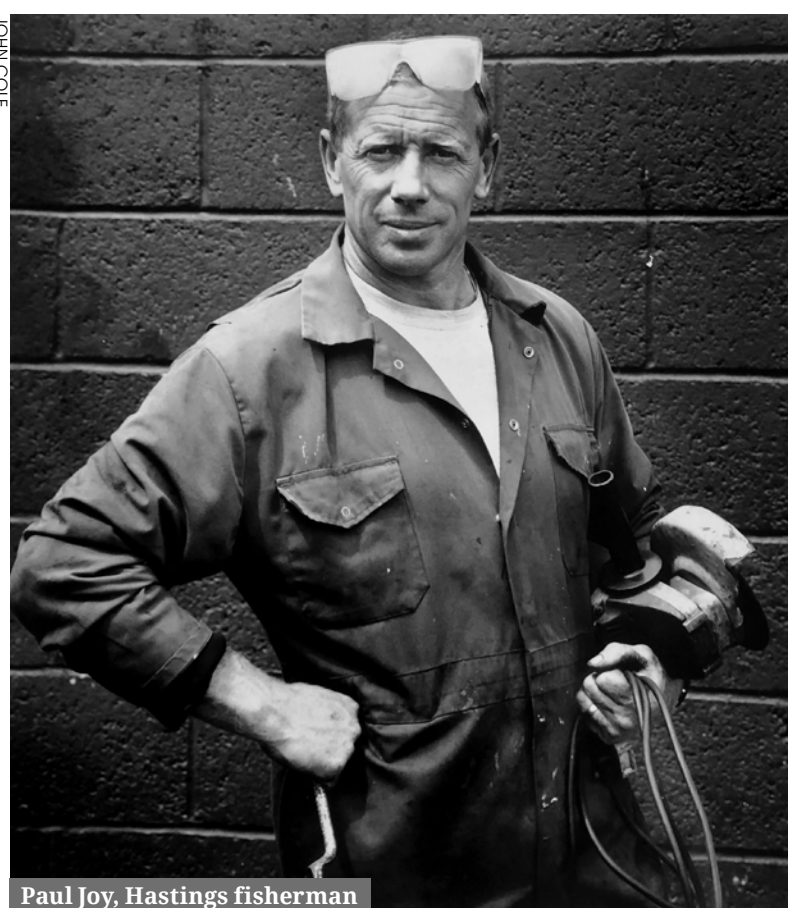
Does Paul have any regrets about his boxing career?

"No regrets, it was a fantastic time!"

"In fact," Paul continues, "I genuinely think that the skills I learned as a boxer – resilience, determination and the ability to pick myself up off the canvas and keep fighting – have been invaluable in my role as chair of Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society, fighting for the rights of our fishing community."



John Cole has been photographing the Hastings Fishing Community since 1991. Visit his site at johncole.co.uk



Paul Joy, Hastings fisherman

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Multilayered Meanings in Iranian Art

MARK SPELMAN on his new exhibition at Project 78

I first recall seeing what you could broadly call 'Persian Miniatures' when I was installing a show in Dammam, KSA. I still go back and forth to install artwork there. It's an important place to me, for many reasons.

When I told people I was going to the Middle East to work I was met with a typical response, laced with prejudice and an underlying sense of Western superiority. In spite of more global cultural exposure, this remains. To me it was an opportunity to see art to which I would not ordinarily have access. The discovery of the miniatures was a part of this.

The miniatures are deceitfully tricky: the ornately painted borders seem to exist only for themselves

— a skilful patterning and rendering of cloth butting up against wonky angles and lack of reliably straight lines. The flattening-out of perspective brought to mind dried flowers pressed in the pages of an old book. They elicit a joy for drawing, for looking, for seeing and trying to replicate things, especially natural objects. Above all, I liked the idea that these are a collaboration between skilled artisans: the guy who would do the flowers perhaps working on one border with the pattern guy waiting next to him, and the lad who draws the trousers sitting in the corner.

They were intended as illuminations for manuscripts, drawn and painted just to be bound and kept hidden; stacked on darkened



shelves with the pages slowly discolouring from the edges inwards. At first I thought them unsophisticated, but I realised quickly that this wasn't the case. They had been excised from manuscripts, mounted and framed for a gallery, but that didn't mute their narrative, even if you had to work harder to understand it.

They also felt proletarian, in spite of the subject matter of historical moments: battles, conflicts, celebrations of stature and the rise of great

figures (I've always disliked the idea of the heroic or the Saviour in art).

JUXTAPOSITIONS, CONTEXTS, AND ENQUIRIES

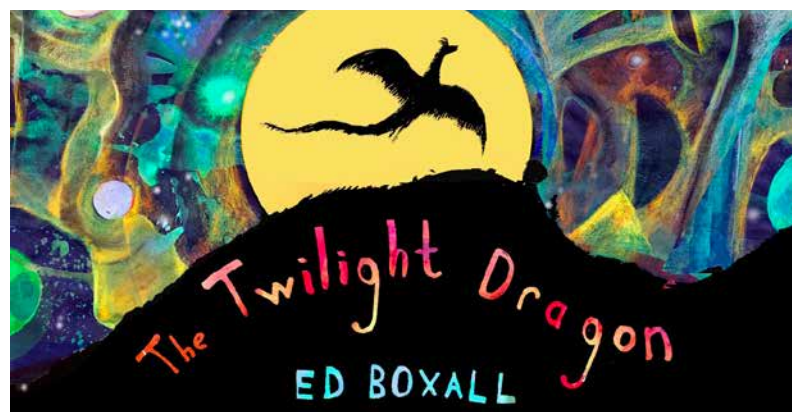
Frivolously, perhaps, I thought that it would be fun to copy them, but in doing so also to represent scenes of the life and people I was working with. That new art horizon was in its own way a kind of battle or land-grab; the importation of a cultural idea that was unrelated to its

environment, and often in contradiction to it. These contradictions are the foundation of these drawings. At what point does celebration become appropriation? And does that really matter if you're borrowing an aesthetic from an ironic culture that elevates Jeff Koons' disco rabbits to an obscene value quite unrelated to their physical or artistic merit?

My drawings are essentially juxtapositions of environments, subjects and objects. They are about things that shouldn't be there, and are an enquiry as to why they are. They are about the oil-and-water effect of cultural tension that can only exist in certain quarters, the navigation of new territories, politically, culturally and artistically. Mostly they are love stories; for a place, an idea and for people. They are narrative works that speak of moments soon lost to time, much like a page removed from a book and shorn from its original context.

There is heroism in them, but like all the best heroes they are the unwitting and unwilling, the smaller voices that don't vie for attention but instead pass by without fanfare, making life more bearable by existing, rather than by a leading example.

Mark Spelman's exhibition *You Weren't There* is showing at Project 78 Gallery, Norman Road until 25 July



Jamboranja Jamboram

ED BOXALL

Do you have an imaginary friend? Or do you think you might be someone's imaginary friend?

Imaginary friends make our worlds bigger, wilder and full of new possibilities. We can ask them things we are afraid to ask anyone else. We can tell them our secrets. They tend to be good listeners and can often take us to enchanted places beyond our troubles.

Several imaginary friends are joining me as I tour libraries in Sussex and Kent this Summer. I'll be introducing audiences to characters

such as Wendy Wildwood, The Twilight Dragon and my favourite imaginary friend Jamboranja Jamboram, the wild crow-man from my book *We the Wild Ones*.

I'm also delighted to be getting to know some imaginary friends through collaborations with two brilliant local writers. These began with a performance at Hastings Library by David Quantick, celebrating his book *Imagine a Friend*. The novella explores the theme of imaginary friends in a way that deals poignantly with loss and separation, while also succeeding as an addictive page-turner. Locals will probably find themselves seeing a version of Alexandra Park as they read.

The theme of imaginary friends is clearly in the air as Brian Moses' new verse-novel is *I am Ray's Imaginary Friend*, described as: A spell-binding illustrated verse story for 7+ year olds... Thought-provoking, heart-warming and beautifully written, an outstanding book to share with KS2 children." (School Reading List)

Brian Moses and I will be performing together at Hastings library at 11.00am on 29 July. Brian will be introducing *I am Ray's Imaginary Friend*, but can no doubt also be persuaded to share some of his classic, beloved poems, such as *Walking My Iguana*, that I had the pleasure of illustrating a few years ago.

At the event, I'll be sharing my new picture book *The Twilight Dragon*. In my story, the soft colours of sunset become a dragon that carries a worried child to an endless world inside a cloud. Once safely in The Twilight Dragon's world, she can wander freely, talk openly... and dance like no one is watching. I'll be telling the story with the large original illustrations I made for the book.

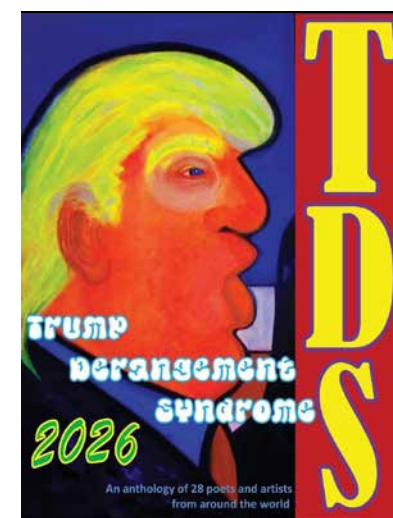
Following our joint event on 29 July, I'll be going solo, visiting libraries throughout the area with East Sussex Library Service. All performances will be full of stories, poems, pictures, music and joining in.

Please visit edboxall.co.uk, facebook, Instagram or the library service for details. All events are free and all ages are welcome. Bring your friends- both real and imaginary!

Hastings writers contribute to anti-Trump anthology

'Art is not a form of propaganda; it is a form of truth': words uttered by John F. Kennedy in 1963.

TDS [Trump Derangement Syndrome] 2026 is an anthology of poetry and art from around the world. 28 contributors confront the catastrophic stupidity, cruelty, corruption, racism and murder precipitated by the disastrous Trump administration. Many people are incensed, horrified and driven to extremes of language by this – a condition that has been weaponised by the orange lunatic and his cronies against their opponents, to suggest that they are not capable of rational thought (as opposed to Trumpian policies that are of course cohesive, progressive and well thought-out!). This is a historical record for today and future times.



From the 28 contributions in the anthology, readings from which featured as part of Nottingham Poetry Festival, only two from England are included – the others are from around the world: USA, Canada, India, Europe and one from Scotland. Both artists live and work in Hastings and St Leonards. Felicity Stephen is a poet, writer and educator – she runs a series of workshops here, *Hastings Writers for Wellbeing*, and facilitates speaking and writing workshops for refugees.

Lee Allane is a poet, artist and illustrator, also living in Hastings.

TDS 2026, Poetry Global Network Publishing UK, ed. Mark Fishbein and Ray Whitaker. On sale on Amazon, Barnes & Noble and at all good bookshops.

Hastings Arts Forum Two Seaside Exhibitions

Arts Forum at 20 Marine Court has been showing consistently good-quality art here since 2006, and this summer's shows are no exception.

GREENHEAD'S GULLS

Local Hastings artist Bill Greenhead invites you into the mind of a seagull. Imagine a universe where Earth is not dominated by humans, but by avian creatures that call themselves "Sea Gulls". What films would they make? What God would they worship? Do they even eat cereal?

All these questions and more will be answered in the fabulously quirky one man show at the Hastings



Bill Greenhead, *IceScream*



Deborah Timmins, *The Seagull Shanty Singers Finale*

Arts Forum in St Leonards on Sea.

A two-week show was launched on 10 July. Bill sported a brand new, never seen before, seagull T shirt designed and hand painted by the artist himself. Prepare to be amazed.

SMILEY FISH, ETC

Soon after that sees the return of the show *Smiley Fish and Cheerful Things*, which was such a success last year. A great line-up of seven local artists is gathered to show

work which aims to be bright, family-friendly and joyous – something for everyone and for every room in the house. The show will house paintings, prints, ceramics and the occasional 'curiosity', using inspiration from coastal themes, the local area, recognisable characters and folklore.

The artists are: Dawn Timmins, Judith Douglas, Fiona Granelli, Alex Leadbeater, Darren Baxter, Kate Winterton Dyer and Ed Boxall (who will also be presenting free storytelling events in his unique, inimitable, universally-appealing style.)



Bill Greenhead's exhibition runs until 19 July at 20 Marine Court, St. Leonards. TN38 0DX. Smiley Fish

runs 5-16 August. Wednesdays-Sundays. Open evening 7 August, 6-8 pm, storytelling 16 August 3-4 pm. All welcome. Visit hastingsartsforum.co.uk/category/exhibition for more information.



Cover art from *Sea Views Soft Rains*

BOO – Love, Loss, and Redemption

VICTORIA KINGHAM

BOO – (Battery Operated Orchestra) make "highly charged electronica with incredibly addictive melodies" and are an independent act now based in St Leonards. Their new album *Sea Views Soft Rains*, was made during the year in which they moved here from Newhaven. It's out on stream now, and is to be released on CD in early August.

For everyone but the fortunate few who can survive solely on the quality of their music, their notoriety, or their retrospectively nostalgic appeal, sale of a modern album is much more than the simple laying down of ten or twelve qual-

ity music tracks. This – BOO's eighth studio product – is, like many contemporary outputs, a concept album, based around pictures of an

apparently fading seaside town.

For your £17 album price you get not only twelve carefully-synthesised songs, a box lovingly folded with their own hands, but also 15 photographs. The whole package is intentionally fadeable, mutable, easily-damaged. It's based around themes of love, loss, and redemption, 'refracted through rain-streaked windows, empty promenades and abandoned ballrooms.'

This is a sophisticated collection of impeccably-produced, wholly electronic tracks. The voices are part of the digital whole – controlled, measured, pitch-constant; the beat is crystal clear, decibel-sharp, bpm-consistent. What in other genres we might regard as the normal ebb and flow of musical engagement – natural variations in rhythm, pace, volume, pitch, sustain, and a lot of other things that imbue music with emotion, become secondary to a pinpoint-sharp, other-worldly exactitude. Why not? We live in a world dominated by these kind of images, where the medium is, definitively, the message.

BOO are Brigitte Rose, born in Tasmania, and Chris Black, from Scotland, who now live here. Album release is 3 August.

Coven Club at the Carlisle Female-Led Live Rock Music Night Returns

The Coven Club, a fabulous new live music night to showcase femme-fuelled rock, punk and metal bands, returns to The Carlisle Rock Bar in Hastings in July this year. The night has already lived up to its aim of promoting up-and-coming talent, with April's headliners Vampyra having since secured a coveted slot at this year's Bloodstock heavy metal festival.

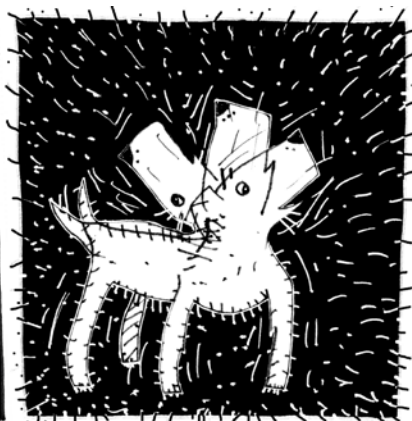
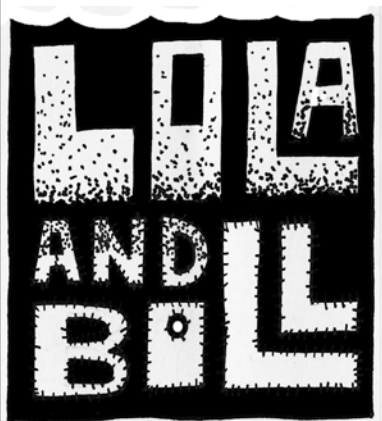
Vampyra, the feisty Kent-based horror punks who headlined The Coven Club just weeks after debuting their revamped line-up [pun intended!], have gone on to win the

regional Metal 2 the Masses competition, securing them a place on the New Blood stage at Bloodstock.

The Coven Club is run by vocalist Amanda Brooks-Byron and bassist Steph Bennion of Hastings rock band Ditch the Demon. Both are keen to do more to support women who want to forge their own path in the male-dominated world of heavy rock. Hastings already punches above its weight in terms of its music scene and Amanda and Steph see the potential for something a bit different in town. All the big names in rock music started life in grassroots venues like The Carlisle. Vampyra are but one success story and The Coven Club will undoubtedly see more.

The Coven Club runs quarterly at The Carlisle Rock Bar in Hastings, with at least one local act appearing on each bill. The next event on Friday 24 July will feature: Key Change Electric, Deity and Devilry, and headliners Kindred Spirit Band, prog/folk-rock.

Tickets for 24 July (£5) are on sale from The Carlisle, online at Skiddle and will also be available on the door. Money raised through ticket sales will go directly to the bands, supporting original music.





Cafes, Castles and Community: How Bunka transformed Hastings' high-up spaces

ELLA LOWDEN

In 2024 the Hastings Independent met with Josh Levy, Tad MacDonald and Celia Farrar to discuss the beginning of Bunka, a collaboration delivering restaurant pop-ups across Hastings and St Leonards. Jump forward a couple of years to today and you'll find Bunka's Rooftop Bar on top of the Observer Building, their Kiosk perched on the West Hill and Hastings Castle filled with people, music and food. They've come far since that initial article but are still just at the beginning, with plans for a restaurant and visitor centre on The West Hill Café site.

Under the banner of Troika Projects, the team set up Bunka Restaurant, bringing a wealth of expertise from each of their varied backgrounds. When Josh first met Celia he got her picking sticky labels off tubs, mistaking her for someone with no kitchen experience. Meanwhile Celia was writing her recipe book *Poke: Hawaiian Inspired Sushi Bowls* and founding one of the UK's first poke eateries. Josh himself has worked in Michelin Star institutions, beginning his career with

Gennaro Contaldo and Jamie Oliver before working as Sous Chef at Thomas Kerridge's renowned restaurant in the Corinthia Hotel.

Tad, who you've probably encountered smiling out the hatch of the Kiosk or flying over the rooftop bar with drinks and pizzas in tow, has over 15 years of experience managing high-performing hospitality venues, ranging from Flat Iron and Caravan in London, to Heist, Boatyard and Farmyard in St Leonards.

After a successful pop-up last year, Bunka has permanently opened a rooftop bar on top of The Observer Building. It is a treat to see Hastings from a different perspective, the views scan over the higgledy-piggledy rooftops of the new town, reaching their limit at the sea's edge. Pizzas, British charcuterie from Curing Rebels, and English wine from Hennes vineyard make up their simple but delicious menu. The pizza flavours offer twists on classics like pepperoni with hot honey or nduja on a white base with mussels. The atmosphere is relaxed, with an indoor area as well as the open rooftop, offering panoramic views whatever the weather.

In addition to their rooftop bar,



The team behind Bunka

the trio run The Kiosk, a hugely popular café positioned on top of the West Hill. Although the Kiosk is a temporary set-up, it has become a much-loved spot for breathless hill hikers, toastie-lovers and Hastings' entire population of dogs. With delicious coffee from Nelson Coffee Co. in Eastbourne, sourdough from Poppysseed Bakery and beers from Three Legs Brewery in Bexhill, the Kiosk highlights the incredible community of local food and drink suppliers we have available in Sussex.

The Kiosk was initially built as an interim offering while the team developed the site of the West Hill Café and Hastings Castle, as planned for The West Hill Project. With funding from The Hastings Town Deal Programme, Troika Projects are working alongside Hastings Borough Council to build a new restaurant, café and visitor centre. The project is a wonderful opportunity for visitors and locals to engage and connect with the castle's fascinating history.

Hastings Castle site pre-dates 1066, with a record of humans settling there for at least 8,000 years. Running a castle was never a childhood dream for the trio but it seems fitting that the space is deeply connected with human history, as people

and community are at the core of Troika Projects' ethos. In their designs for the project, the team placed emphasis on the significance of the site in terms of its history, culture and community. Speaking on their goals, Celia Farrar stated that their main aim for the castle site was 'to realise its potential as a community asset'.

With their combined knowledge and experiences in designing and operating hospitality spaces, Josh, Tad and Celia are well-placed to transform the West Hill site. The transformation will begin with an array of family-friendly events, performances, and workshops, connecting visitors with the space by taking inspiration from its rich history and natural surroundings.

In July, Hastings Castle will be host to yoga mornings, sunset singing sessions and The Handlebards, a cycling theatre company, performing a hilarious production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. There will also be storytelling workshops on weekends and Wednesdays with Su Austin, taking inspiration from found objects around the Castle. On Pirate Day weekend, there will be a Castle Sundowner event, with guest DJs from Catch My Drift and a BBQ and



GEORGINA COOK

bar from Bunka.

Location plays a significant part in each of their ventures, with the high-up, outside spaces offering incredible views and front row seats to the constantly changing and often dramatic coastline weather we experience in Hastings. This positioning pairs well with the interesting and changing menus and events that Bunka are becoming known for.

With so much accomplished in such a short amount of time, the team at Bunka have a lot to be proud of. When asked about their biggest achievements, Josh, Tad and Celia agreed that the community they had built from businesses and suppliers to colleagues and customers was their strongest asset. Alongside Troika Projects, Josh Levy also works as a Chef Educator with Prept Foundation, going into local schools and community spaces to deliver cooking sessions. By sharing their expert knowledge, skills and experiences, the team at Bunka are committed to local collaboration, creating employment opportunities and bringing people together over excellent food and drink.

Coming up at the Castle: hastings-castle.org.uk/whats-on

CRICKET

First Win in Eight For Priory

4 July	
Hastings & St Leonards Priory	267 all out
Preston Nomads	216 for 7
11 July	
Cuckfield	152 all out
Hastings & St Leonards Priory	156 for 5

HUGH SULLIVAN

The cricketers of Hastings & St Leonards Priory started this month at the foot of the Sussex Premier League table, without a win since 16 May. But in two successive home games against top-half opposition they have emerged with the best of a draw against Preston Nomads followed by a comfortable win over Cuckfield. Only 21 points now separate fifth from tenth, and the stage is set for a tight contest between all the league sides over the second half of the season.

On 4 July, hosting the Nomads, captain Harry Scowen won the toss, opted to bat first, and made hay under sunny skies. Hitting a masterful 117 off 136 balls, he shared an opening century partnership with the more circumspect Alfie Hunter (26), then enjoyed another rampant pairing with Joe Billings (50). From a score of 206 for one after 43 overs, a total of over 300 looked on the cards. The last 15 overs produced only 61 more runs for the loss of all nine remaining wickets, however. Freddie Hulbert took a couple of

early wickets when the Nomads replied, and the visitors remained well behind the required run rate as Adam Barton and Troy Henry, bowling with accuracy on a pitch that favoured spin, kept tight control. Scowen maintained an attacking field with close catchers around the bat, inviting the batsmen to accelerate towards their target with some cheap boundaries. But Nomads were not tempted, seeming to decide rather early that this was beyond them, and the game petered to a draw with seven wickets down and over 50 runs still to get.

A week later against Cuckfield, Hulbert again struck early, clean-bowling first Joe Cambridge, then Omais Yousuf with only 16 on the board. As this pair had hit 244 runs between them in the corresponding fixture between the sides when they played at Cuckfield in



Caleb Laloo, finding his best form against Cuckfield

SUSSEX CRICKET LEAGUE - DIVISION 2 TABLE

	P	W	D	L	A	BAT	BOWL	PTS
ROFFEY	10	7	2	0	1	20	8	255
MIDDLETON	10	6	1	2	1	21	13	231
THREE BRIDGES	10	6	0	3	1	20	11	223
PRESTON NOMADS	10	3	3	3	1	38	31	176
CUCKFIELD	10	3	1	5	1	35	23	160
HASTINGS & ST LEONARDS PRIORY	10	2	3	4	1	43	33	153
WEST CHILTINGTON & THAKEHAM	10	1	3	5	1	53	42	151
HORSHAM	10	3	2	4	1	28	16	151
BOGNOR REGIS	10	2	3	4	1	49	24	150
HAYWARDS HEATH	10	2	2	5	1	36	26	139

BASEBALL

Pirates Sail On

JAMES YOUNG

Hastings Pirates baseball club continued their blistering form last Sunday (5 July), with two impressive on-the-road triumphs over the Brighton Jets. The wins gave the Pirates a record of 12 victories and only two defeats for the season, stretching their lead at the top of British Baseball Federation Division 5 South to two games.

The victories showcased many of the strengths of this year's Pi-



Uduak Victor Robert pitches for Pirates

rates. In the first game, a 17-3 drubbing, eight early runs came with two outs (in baseball, three outs ends an inning), demonstrating

both discipline and patience at the plate. Pitcher Robert Uduak Victor once again dominated on the mound, giving up only six hits and three ‘walks’ (a free pass to first base awarded when a pitcher misses the strike zone four times), and striking out five – sparkling statistics at any level of baseball.

The Pirates, meanwhile, rattled out eleven hits against the Brighton pitchers, who also coughed up fourteen walks. Such impressive hitting meant there was only minor disappointment when slugger Marhil Romano’s thumping hit to left field was spectacularly caught in the third inning, robbing him of a fourth home run of the season.

Although the second game was closer, with the Pirates only narrowly ahead late on, four unanswered runs in the fifth and final inning brought a comfortable 11-5 win. Once again a balance of timely hitting and strong pitching was

key, the latter courtesy of Romano and veteran Frank Cooper, who between them held Brighton to seven hits and five walks. The win stretched the Pirates’ unbeaten run to seven games.

Such form means the thoughts of Pirates’ players and staff are naturally turning to the possibility of qualification for the post-season play-offs for the first time in the club’s nine-year history, which would put the team well ahead of its aims for the year.

“As a club we set out a goal of achieving post-season games in 2027, with the primary target for this year to build on last season,” says general manager Clive Raines. “To find ourselves top of the table and with talk of the play-offs on the players’ lips is testament to the hard work put in by the entire squad.”

To make the play-offs – and ultimately reach September’s Division 5 semi-finals and finals weekend

at the National Baseball & Softball Complex at Farnham Park – the Pirates will have to fend off stiff competition from within their division, with a pair of crunch fixtures away to Tonbridge looming this Sunday, 19 July.

“We’re not taking anything for granted,” says Raines. “Our opponents have all experienced this situation before, and are more than capable of catching us. But whatever happens between now and the end of August we’re going from strength to strength, and looking towards the future.”



The Hastings Pirates play their home games at Claremont Prep School on Sunday afternoons. First pitch is at 12noon; attendance is free. For more info follow [instagram.com/hastingspiratesbaseball](https://www.instagram.com/hastingspiratesbaseball)

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