

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



A Very Special Moment

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

Royalty and world leaders may have topped the guest list, but it was the schoolchildren from Hastings who stole the spotlight at last Wednesday's historic unveiling of the Bayeux Tapestry at the British Museum. As the King and Queen, Prime Minister Andy Burnham, and French President Emmanuel Macron looked on, pupils from Mulberry West St Leonards Primary Academy, the Mulberry Academy Hastings, and Claverham Community College became the true stars as the 1,000-year-old artefact, on loan from France, was unveiled.

Labour MP Helena Dollimore, who led the campaign to secure free priority exhibition tickets for local school groups – along with complimentary train travel from South-eastern Railway for 1,066 students, – joined the children at the ceremony. Her campaign was backed by broadcaster and 1066 Country resident David Dimbleby and historian Dan Snow, who co-signed her letter to British Museum Chairman George Osborne last year calling for the scheme after the exhibition was announced.

Helena Dollimore told HIP: "Everyone is so excited about the



Bayeux Tapestry returning to our shores for the first time in nearly 1,000 years, and it is only right that children from Hastings and 1066 Country are at the heart of this national moment." She added: "Hastings has often been at the centre of historical events, but we have not always felt the benefits, and we currently rank in the bottom 10 places nationally for social mobility."

For the pupils of Mulberry West St Leonards Primary Academy, the visit to the British Museum was a history lesson brought vividly to life. Imari marvelled at the intricate craftsmanship of the tapestry, while fellow pupil Lottie was awestruck by its "immaculate preservation". Thomas said watching the King address the crowd in both French and English helped everyone grasp the event's significance and made him realise "how lucky we are that the tapestry is still intact". Polly was full of praise for the museum staff, saying they were "kind and professional and made us all feel very welcome".

Ms Dollimore said she was "so proud to represent Hastings and to introduce local children to His Majesty the King and Queen, President Macron, and the Prime Minister. It was a very special moment and they did us proud."



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Great to see good news on the front page of HIP, with a heartwarming story of local schoolchildren's up-close encounter with the Bayeux Tapestry. Further positivity comes from a resurgence of community spirit in Hollington with grassroots tenants' action to provide play spaces and pocket parks.

Back to grim reality with a bump for commuters and Conquest Hospital visitors, whose journeys along the always busy Ridge B2093 road seem likely to be disrupted by gas main works for two frustrating years.

No need to peer through the keyhole; over 20 varied venues will be opening their doors to visitors for Hastings Heritage open days between 11-20 September, while Bexhill's de la Warr Pavilion is also running architecturally themed activities. Details of both are in our Spotlight pages.

Among many art exhibitions, Grace Lau entertains with fashion and fetish at Solaris Print, Cabaret Franglais brings chanteuse style-celebrations to the Stables, and Photo Hastings 26 (the clue is in the name) is at the Electro Studios.

After an alfresco summer, we celebrate a favourite eatery of locals and visitors alike: the boho Goat Ledge cafe on St Leonards seafront as well as 'nomadic dining' from Crafted at Powdermills. Read the full story in our food section.

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News

Government
Pauses Council
Reform

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

Government plans for the reform of local government across Sussex have been put on hold. Angela Rayner, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, told MPs in Parliament on Monday (7 September) that she had launched a review of the reorganisation proposals "to satisfy myself firstly that the right process is in place, that it is robust, and of course complies with the law." She added: "I want to fully test whether our proposals for local government reorganisation meet the priorities of a new administration and a new prime minister, and any additional considerations."

The decision means that the immediate threat of abolition hanging over Hastings Borough Council in 2028 is lifted. It may also mean that Hastings will not hold local elections next May, as those ballots were scheduled for the new East Hastings Unitary Authority.

Council Leader Glenn Haffenden condemned the government's decision as an "absolute shambles".

LOCAL PLAN UPDATE
Cllr Haffenden was speaking just hours after the government announcement when he chaired the council Cabinet, which was meeting to recommend approval of a new Local Plan that will shape the town's development over the next 15 years.

The draft plan sets out a vision of how Hastings will grow and change in the period up to 2041. It addresses some of the most significant challenges facing the borough, including the need for more homes, the urgency of tackling climate change, the importance of protecting green spaces and historic character, and the need to strengthen the local economy.

The Cabinet unanimously approved that the draft Local Plan goes before the Full Council on 23 September for debate and a formal vote before a final stage of public consultation.

HOUSING CRISIS
The Cabinet discussion on the Local Plan focussed on the town's housing crisis. In his foreword to the draft plan consultation in February, Council Leader Glenn Haffenden, said: "Housing remains one of the most pressing issues for our community." The push for a new plan comes against a backdrop of a severe housing shortage. The government's nationally calculated housing need for Hastings currently stands at 686 net new homes per year – more than three times the rate planned for under the current 2014 Local Plan, which made provision for just 200 homes annually.

Over the full period of the Plan, this would equate to a need for 12,348 new homes. However, the council's capacity-led approach has identified land for a little under 3,300 net new homes – just 27% of the identified need.



Cllr Glenn Haffenden

The council insists it has left "no stone unturned" in identifying all suitable, available and deliverable sites across the borough.

The proposed plan adopts an "at least" housing target, which is set 10% lower than the current housing land supply figure. Council officers argue this provides necessary contingency given potential complexities around site delivery, land ownership and the impact of housing renewal schemes.

EXTENSIVE CONSULTATION
The Local Plan has been developed through two rounds of public consultation under Regulation 18, with the most recent exercise between February and April 2026 generating over 2,300 comments from more than 540 individuals and organisations. Five public drop-in events and six targeted special interest group sessions were held across the town.

Feedback has informed a range of changes to policies and site allocations, including the removal of some sites, the addition of three new sites and revisions to indicative housing yields. The former Convent of the Holy Child Jesus on Magdalen Road is now proposed as a housing-led, mixed-use allocation, while Four Courts on Stonehouse Drive has received its own site allocation policy.

EMPLOYMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES
The plan also grapples with significant shortfalls in employment land. A review has reduced available employment land supply to approximately 15,000 sqm, against a requirement of 70,400 sqm – a shortfall of around 75%. The council's approach is to promote densification of existing employment areas and resist the loss of existing employment land and premises.

Infrastructure delivery is a key component, with ongoing engagement with East Sussex County Council on transport, flood risk and education, alongside discussions with the NHS and utility providers including Southern Water.

education, alongside discussions with the NHS and utility providers including Southern Water.

PUBLIC CONCERNS
At Monday evening's Cabinet meeting, concerns were raised about the draft plan, criticising the housing targets as too modest and the densification assumptions as overly cautious. Unease also centred on the fact that only one part of the densification study had been published beforehand. In response, Cllr Mark Etherington, the Planning, Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder, said: "We place no cap on density," adding that there needs to be an "intelligent look at densification levels."

It is also worth noting that the recent refusal of planning permission for new homes next to Sandrock Bends – combined with the highly unusual decision being taken by council officers rather than elected members – raised serious questions about planning transparency.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT
Subject to Full Council approval on 23 September, the six-week Regulation 19 consultation will be the final opportunity for the public to comment on the plan before it is submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination. However, representations must relate to legal compliance or soundness – specifically whether the plan is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

A further report will be presented to Full Council in December 2026, summarising issues raised and seeking authority to submit the plan for examination before the government's 31 December deadline. Council officers warn that failure to progress the Local Plan would leave the authority vulnerable to speculative development, reduce local influence over where growth occurs, and potentially expose the council to government intervention.

HASTINGS TIDES						
DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES			SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON
FRI 11 SEPT	L 6:50	H 12:06	L 19:12	6:27	19:21	NEW
SAT 12 SEPT	H 0:30	L 7:32	H 12:42	L 19:52	6:28	19:19
SUN 13 SEPT	H 1:03	L 8:09	H 13:15	L 20:27	6:30	19:17
MON 14 SEPT	H 1:35	L 8:40	H 13:47	L 20:56	6:31	19:14
TUES 15 SEPT	H 2:05	L 9:04	H 14:18	L 21:19	6:33	19:12
WEDS 16 SEPT	H 2:35	L 9:26	H 14:49	L 21:43	6:34	19:10
THURS 17 SEPT	H 3:05	L 9:53	H 15:21	L 22:14	6:36	19:08
FRI 18 SEPT	H 3:39	L 10:30	H 15:59	L 22:55	6:37	19:05
SAT 19 SEPT	H 4:23	L 11:19	H 17:05	L 23:52	6:39	19:03
SUN 20 SEPT	H 6:13	L 12:26	H 19:07	6:40	19:01	
MON 21 SEPT	L 1:06	H 7:48	L 13:47	H 20:26	6:42	18:59
TUES 22 SEPT	L 2:30	H 8:56	L 15:14	H 21:26	6:44	18:56
WEDS 23 SEPT	L 3:54	H 9:47	L 16:26	H 22:10	6:45	18:54
THURS 24 SEPT	L 4:52	H 10:25	L 17:15	H 22:44	6:47	18:52

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NAZ MONTAG

PHOTOS: MULBERRY WEST ST LEONARDS



Principal Dominic O'Regan and pupils with Helena Dollimore at the British Museum

The Future is being shaped in St Leonards and Hastings

DOMINIC O'REGAN
PRINCIPAL, MULBERRY WEST ST
LEONARDS PRIMARY

History is often something children read about in textbooks: distant, untouchable and confined to the past. But at Mulberry West St Leonards Primary, we believe education must transcend the four walls of a classroom. We believe in placing our children directly into the narrative of our world. This past week, our pupils did not merely study history; they stood shoulder to shoulder with the figures shaping it today.

As the Headteacher of our vibrant school on Harley Shute Road, I have always held a fiercely ambitious vision for our children: no room is too grand for them, and no stage is too large. This belief was brought vividly to life this week when our students were invited to the British Museum for a momentous occasion: the unveiling of the Bayeux Tapestry, temporarily loaned to the UK.

Our first visit on Wednesday is now permanently woven into the fabric of our school's 148-year leg-

ship, with former Prime Ministers and our local MP, Helena Dollimore, who was instrumental in ensuring Hastings pupils were present, also in attendance for this exhibition of a generation.

Yet, amidst these global leaders, it was our pupils who shone brightest. Standing with quiet dignity and an unmistakable sense of belonging, they realised the message we impart every day: your voice matters, and your place is alongside the decision makers of our time. It reinforced that the character and confidence, instilled through our POW (Pride of West St Leonards) values, enables them to be change makers. The children spoke with remarkable respect and confidence to both royalty and world leaders. Her Majesty The Queen was particularly generous with her time, sharing a lovely connection with our Sussex pupils as she grew up in the county.

acy. Imagine the profound impact on a young mind, standing mere metres away as His Majesty The King, Her Majesty The Queen, French President Emmanuel Macron, and the Prime Minister unveiled an eleventh century masterpiece deeply connected to our 1066 Country. The room was a living tapestry of modern global leader-



With Radio 4 Presenter, Nick Robinson

Our extraordinary week did not end with the Royal premiere. The following morning, our children returned to the British Museum for an exclusive, private tour. Stripped of the bustling press and grand pageantry, the children were granted the rare privilege of intimately examining the intricate, 950-year-old stitches that depict the very origins of our local heritage.

The pinnacle of this second visit came when three of our pupils were invited to speak live to the nation on BBC Radio 4's Today programme alongside Nick Robinson, Chairman of the British Museum George Osborne, Poet Laureate Simon Armitage, and distinguished experts. Interviewed about seeing the Battle of Hastings brought to life, they articulated their thoughts with breathtaking confidence, eloquence and profound insight. They didn't just represent our school; they represented the limitless potential of every child in Hastings and St Leonards. Listening to them speak brilliantly on national radio filled me with immense pride.

This is the standard of opportunity we strive for. We do not settle for the ordinary; we are fiercely committed to broadening horizons and providing a genuinely trans-

formational education.

The legacy for our school community will be creating an embroidery in the style of the Bayeux Tapestry, involving every pupil, parent, and the wider community. Culminating in the Summer of 2028 to mark our 150-year anniversary, it will be unveiled at our fifth summer festival, WestFest 5. We will undoubtedly take inspiration from the 1966 Hastings Embroidery currently on display in the Town Hall. Looking ahead, my next great ambition is to take our children across the Channel to Bayeux when the tapestry returns; if there is a benefactor who shares our bold vision and would like to help make this dream a reality, I would be delighted to hear from you.

Our week in London was a declaration of our school's ambition. We are shaping confident, articulate, deeply inspired young people ready to take on the world. History was on display at the British Museum, but looking at our remarkable pupils, I am certain the future is being shaped right here in St Leonards and Hastings in 2026. As His Majesty The King said on Wednesday: "These seventy metres of memory and artistry remind us, therefore, that our two Nations have been bound together for almost a millennium."

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Gridlock misery for The Ridge until 2028

Drivers have been warned to expect more than two years of gridlock along The Ridge, as SGN (formerly Scotia Gas Networks) begins a marathon gas-pipe replacement project. The work – part of a 30-year national programme – will start on Tuesday 22 September. It will be rolled out in six phases with completion expected by August 2028.

SGN insists the work is vital and cannot be postponed. The project will replace the old cast iron and wrought iron gas mains which were laid over 100 years ago with new, more durable polyethylene plastic pipes, which have a lifespan of up to 80 years. The company is confident that once the upgrade project is complete, residents and businesses will benefit from a safe and reliable gas supply for many years to come.

Temporary traffic lights will be installed along The Ridge to manage traffic flow and maintain public safety. These will be manually operated to keep traffic moving smoothly throughout the works.

A spokesperson for SGN said: “We will do everything we can to keep traffic moving, but we strongly advise motorists to plan ahead, use alternative routes where possible and allow significantly more time for their journeys while the lights are in operation.”

Drivers need no further warning about delays along The Ridge. The road is a notorious bottleneck at the best of times, and these works will cause major disruption, especially for those heading to the Conquest Hospital.

TIMELINE OF ROAD CHAOS

Phase 1 (22 September – 11 December 2026): Grange Road to Stonestile Lane (1,500m of pipe replacement and upgrading 30 services to adjoining properties); **Phase 2** (4 January – 5 April 2027): Stonestile Lane to Elphinstone Road (650m of replacement and upgrading seven services to adjoining properties); **Phase 3** (28 June – 13 September 2027): Elphinstone Road to Norcross Close (700m of pipe replacement and upgrading 11 services to adjoining properties); **Phase 4** (16 October – 31 October 2027): Grange Road to Stonestile Lane (28m of pipe replacement); **Phase 5** (3 January – 28 February 2028): Maitland Close to Conquest Hospital roundabout (425m of pipe replacement and upgrading 38 services to adjoining properties); **Phase 6** (26 June – 21 August 2028): Norcross Close to Pine Avenue – 450m of pipe replacement).



East Sussex Highways Robbery

The Independent Hastings Borough Councillor, Andy Batsford, has launched a campaign calling for East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to disclose how it allocates the nearly £1 million in lane rental fees it charges utility companies for road closures across Hastings.

Cllr Batsford, who represents the St Helens ward, uncovered the “staggering figure” through a Freedom of Information (FoI) request,

submitted to establish precisely how much revenue is generated by roadworks in the town.

Under the current system, utility firms can be charged up to £2,000 per day for occupying road space – a fee intended to encourage faster completion of works and minimise disruption to the public.

Cllr Batsford said he was “shocked” to learn that ESCC has collected £1,469,650 in lane rental income since the scheme began, with £948,100 of that total stemming specifically from works in the Hastings area.

He is now pressing for answers on where the money has gone and whether any portion is being reinvested in the town’s roads and infrastructure. Arguing that residents endure the full impact of closures and blockages with little tangible benefit, he said: “We all know the frustration caused when roads are dug up, traffic lights appear and

journeys that should take minutes suddenly take much longer.”

The Councillor is calling on ESCC to publish a transparent breakdown of the income and to confirm whether the funds are ringfenced for local infrastructure. “Hastings residents have to put up with the congestion, delays and disruption caused by roadworks. If nearly £1 million has been generated from those works, they deserve to know where that money has gone,” he added. “You would like to think that money raised from the disruption caused by digging up our roads would be reinvested in improving them.”

Cllr Batsford is specifically urging ESCC to state whether any of the funds will be directed towards repairing the town’s notoriously poor roads and pavements, insisting: “If Hastings is generating the revenue, Hastings residents should see the benefit.”



Town Centre to Lose Yates Pub

Yates pub and sports bar, which straddles Robertson Street and Havelock Road in Hastings Town Centre will close permanently from this Sunday 13 September. The lease of the premises is being terminated by mutual agreement with the landlord. Over 20 staff are believed to be losing their jobs.

The pub was renowned as offering good value meals and drinks, multiple TV screens for watching live football and other sports, and karaoke evenings.

A spokesperson for the Stonegate Group, which owns the business, said that the hospitality sector “continues to face significant challenges. After careful consideration and despite our best efforts the site is no longer commercially viable... We would like to thank our hard-working team for their commitment and dedication. We would also like to thank our guests and the local community for their support over the years.”

The spokesperson made no comment on the suggestion that the Havelock pub, two doors down, which Stonegate also owns, is under threat of closure as well.

GULZAR ACQUITTED OF KNIFE CRIME

Sheikh Gulzar, owner of Hastings pier, emerged triumphant from a hearing before Brighton Magistrates last week after being cleared of unlawful possession of an eight-inch knife blade.

The 80-year-old had been stopped by a police patrol when driving a Ford van in the early hours of a Sunday morning in May 2025. He told officers that he needed medication, which was in the glove compartment of the vehicle. When the police searched for it there, they found the knife.

In an interview at the police station Gulzar explained that he had been fishing in his private lake at Pevensey that morning, and that

the knife was used for cutting up fish. The van contained net poles, folding chairs and other equipment for his fishing expeditions.

He was charged with possessing a bladed article in a public place. But 16 months on, he was acquitted. District Judge Amanda Kelly told him: “I am just about persuaded that at the time you had a good reason for having that knife in your car.”

Gulzar faces another court trial in November, this time in Lewes Crown Court, on unrelated fraud charges in a private prosecution brought by water supplier Castle Water Limited.

He indicated last year that he was inviting bids for purchase of Hastings pier. However, the asset has been frozen as security by the court pending the trial.

Huge boost to Tackle Hastings Homelessness

Local homelessness charity Seaview has been awarded a £200k funding boost to support their vital work in getting people off the streets. The funding, from the government's £8.4 million Ending Homelessness in Communities Fund, will help ensure that everyone sleeping rough in Hastings will be offered a route off the streets this winter if they need it.

Hastings Borough Council will also receive £2 million to help address local homelessness and to offer practical help with housing, health and other needs. Under a £442 million total package, areas like Hastings will get the largest share of support as part of Prime Minister Andy Burnham's drive to get people out of the cold this winter and to give people facing long-term

homelessness a settled home and the support to keep it.

Helena Dollimore MP welcomed the bold initiative, saying: "Our area is at the sharp end of the housing crisis. I have long campaigned for funding to support local people to leave the streets behind, move into secure homes and get the support they need to rebuild their lives. The Labour Government has already strengthened rights for renters, including ending no-fault evictions which were a huge driver of homelessness in our area.

"We have also boosted our support for the East Sussex Veterans' Hub who do fantastic work supporting our former service men and women find housing. It is great that a portion of this funding will go towards supporting local organisa-



Helena Dollimore visits Seaview

tion Seaview who do hugely important work tackling homelessness in Hastings."

As well as off the street provision, the funding will help local areas deliver more than 1,000 settled homes over the next three years, alongside intensive wraparound support to help people rebuild their

lives. Areas facing the greatest pressures, like Hastings, will receive the largest share of support.

Alongside funding allocations, the Government is publishing guidance to help local areas mobilise quickly and deliver a consistent route off the street this winter. The guidance will make clear the need

to ensure adequate and accessible provision for women experiencing rough sleeping, recognising that women are often underrepresented in official statistics and may be at greater risk of violence, abuse, and exploitation.

Guidance encourages local areas to consider single-sex accommodation with specialist, intensive and trauma informed support for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. This will support the government's commitment to halve violence against women and girls in the next ten years.

Charities, faith groups and community organisations are at the heart of efforts to end homelessness. This is why, in addition to holding a first of its kind national summit bringing together leaders across society with a role to play, the government is specifically allocating £8.4 million of the new funding to the Ending Homelessness in Communities Fund.

This takes total funding allocations for 100 different projects to £47 million over three years, helping small and medium-sized organisations provide life-changing support to people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness.



CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Free School Meals Opt-in

As children across Hastings return to the classroom after the summer holidays, Local MP Helena Dollimore has urged all parents to check their eligibility for free school meals after the "significant expansion" of the programme.

From 1 September, an additional 5,500 children in Hastings and Rye will qualify for free pre-school meals under the new Labour gov-

ernment policy, a change the MP said was made "because we don't want children to go hungry." She also confirmed that local schools are rolling out free breakfast clubs starting this term.

In a further boost for families, Ms Dollimore reminded parents that rules regarding school uniforms have been updated. She said the government has acted to restrict the number of branded items schools can require, aiming to reduce the financial burden on families.



Parents will have to opt-in to the free school meals programme and they can check to see if their child is eligible by clicking on: gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

✉ Letter

FOOD WASTE ROLLOUT

Dear HIP

I welcomed Hastings Borough Council's food waste rollout with open arms and the earnest hope of a true eco-warrior. I was ready to save the planet, one potato peel at a time.

Unfortunately, local fauna didn't get the memo. Boris the Badger, Freddy the Fox, and Gerald the Gull have formed an unholy coalition, treating our supposedly lockable caddies like a tactical puzzle box designed by MI6. When a collection round is mysteriously skipped, the council-supplied starter bags dissolve into a fragrant bio-hazard soup that looks and smells like a biochemistry experiment gone catastrophically wrong.

Hoping for a shred of practical advice, I wrote to Waste Services. What I received was not a conversation, but a masterclass in municipal déjà vu: a stiff lecture on the statutory nuances of the Environment Act 2021. When I replied and politely asked a basic, operational question about whether I could purchase a thicker, certified compostable liner to stop the

leaks, the council sent me the exact same word-for-word boilerplate macro a second time. They literally double-tapped me with a copy-paste loop.

It is a magnificent irony. We are living in the age of advanced artificial intelligence, machine learning, and dynamic digital tools capable of parsing complex queries in milliseconds. Yet Hastings Borough Council's waste department appears to be powered by a single, exhausted hamster trapped inside a photocopier, churning out legal disclaimers instead of thinking. Rather than engaging with human feedback, they cheerfully suggest that if a rotting mess coats your bin, you should simply "rinse out the container ready for its next use"—evidently imagining local residents joyfully pressure-washing 23-litre caddies over their morning cornflakes.

I genuinely want this municipal scheme to succeed. But if the council insists on treating resident feedback with robotic stonewalling while local wildlife hosts all-night tasting menus in our back alleys, my vegetable peelings will have no choice but to migrate back into the standard general refuse bin. Even

badgers have standards, after all.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Julian Patrick Keogh

✉ Letter

WHOSE FREE SPEECH

Dear HIP

Gabriel Carlyle has criticised our MP, Helena Dollimore, for "her" policy on Israel and Gaza (*Whose Free Speech?* in HIP 309). But an MP to observe party policy and the Labour manifesto, and to support the leader and Prime Minister, is not a matter of her individual position. I suggest it is a waste of energy and time to bombard Helena with criticism for "her" policy on whatever Mr Carlyle is campaigning on at the time. Save your breath and your energy for campaigning against government policy, by all means—I may well join you. Better still, campaign (with others) against the Israeli regime's actions. One-man campaigns against another individual never look that convincing.

Bea Rogers

We would love to hear from you.

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Community Garden Calls for Volunteers – and Visitors

HELENA JONES

Bexhill Community Garden is encouraging people to visit and discover what it has to offer – whether they want to volunteer, learn how to grow food or simply spend time outdoors.

The garden, in Preston Road, Bexhill, forms part of Bexhill Family Collective, which also includes Dragonflies Nursery and a community pantry at Sidley Family Hub. The 0.8-acre garden grows fruit and vegetables for a local community pantry and provides space for activities, workshops and events for all ages.

Richard Best, garden manager at Bexhill Community Garden, says: “We want people just to come down and enjoy being here. There’s no obligation to work, but if you want to do some gardening, or if you want to learn and you’ve never done it before, you can come and we can teach.”

Despite the sloping site, the garden includes polytunnels, sheds, a yurt, pond, amphitheatre and grow-

ing beds. Richard emphasises that its purpose goes beyond producing food. “Bexhill Community Garden is an allotment space for growing fruit and vegetables in order to feed our local pantry,” he explains, “but the garden also provides a space for holding activities and workshops for all ages.”

There is a particular emphasis on encouraging children and young people to connect with nature through gardening and creative activities. Previous events have included pumpkin carving, Christmas wreath-making and creating head-dresses for Jack in the Green in Hastings. Produce is also used in cooking activities; last year, cherries from the garden were turned into jam on site.

During August, the Collective started running *Give an Hour, Grow a Garden* sessions on Tuesday mornings to allow people to try volunteering without making a regular commitment. Volunteer coordinator Leanne Dedman is keen to welcome more volunteers: “It might be to pop down to do a bit of watering, help us



Harvesting Potatoes in the Community Garden

with a bigger project, do something regularly or just donate a day or a few hours of your time,” she says.

Families with young children can also attend *Little Hands, Big Help* sessions on Tuesdays from 9.30am to 11am. Children and their grown-ups can help with small gardening jobs or simply enjoy the outdoor

space, which includes a pond and mud kitchen.

Leanne stresses that the aim is for local people to see the garden as their own community space. Richard adds: “You can come and take part, or you can come and volunteer. You just come and use the garden as you want.”



For activities or volunteering, visit the Collective Facebook page: facebook.com/BexhillFamilyCollectiveCIC. For volunteering enquiries, email leanne.dedman@bexhillfamilycollective.org.uk.

A Close Shave for Emmaus

Residents and staff from homelessness charity Emmaus Hastings & Rother have shaved their heads in a powerful show of support for a much-loved counsellor who has helped many people in the community and is currently undergoing cancer treatment. The group also took on the fundraising challenge to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Five volunteers took part in the head shave at the Emmaus superstore in St Leonards, with residents and colleagues cheering each other on. The head shaves were kindly carried out free of charge by local hairdresser Sue, from Hair and Beyond, who wanted to donate her skills and time to the cause.

Zoe, the former counsellor whose cancer diagnosis motivated many of the group to take part, came along to support and watch the head shaves take place in person.



Staff member Janine with Zoe

Some of the residents who took part have experienced homelessness and wanted to give something back to others facing difficulties. Cancer is a cause close to their hearts, and the group felt strongly about supporting those affected by it.

Janine Woodland, Support Lead at Emmaus Hastings & Rother and one of the brave participants, says: “One of the most important aspects of the Emmaus ethos is solidarity – standing alongside people who are vulnerable or facing difficult circumstances. Through solidarity projects, we work with charities, causes and community initiatives to help make a positive difference to people’s lives.”

“Zoe was a counsellor to our residents here at Emmaus Hastings & Rother. She’s recently been diagnosed with cancer and said she didn’t mind what they did to her; she just didn’t want to lose her hair. We wanted to raise money in acknowledgement of what she, and so many others, face every day.”

The group set out to raise £250 and has already smashed this target, raising over three times their goal. They are now hoping to reach £1,000 in donations.



Supporters can still donate via the group’s Macmillan fundraising page at bravetheshave.macmillan.org.uk/shavers/62eb638a-3e84-45fa-889c-dc95e601446a

New DAB licence for Seahaven FM

Residents of Hastings, St Leonards and Bexhill can now tune in to a new local radio station from 1 September. Seahaven FM, already broadcasting to East Sussex for more than 16 years, is extending into the area via its new DAB (Digital Audio Broadcasting) licence, adding to the many coastal towns already receiving the station on FM.

Listeners can hear its signature mix of hit music, join in with the daily quizzes, including the *Mystery Tune* and *Bird-Plant-Fish*, and receive vital local information, particularly during travel disruption and adverse weather.

Nick Mallinson, founder of Seahaven FM, says: “We’re excited to be bringing our unique music selection of eight decades of hits to Hastings, St Leonards and Bexhill. Our music, local news, weather, sport, travel and local personality features have been enjoyed by listeners from Saltdean to Pevensey Bay for many years. We’re pleased to be increasing our coverage to

welcome a new audience.”

David Crozier, Managing Director of Seahaven FM, adds: “As a not-for-profit organisation, mainly powered by local volunteers, we’re proud to bring our service to people in our new DAB area. We play a vital role in promoting local charities and community organisations and their events, as well as providing affordable radio advertising opportunities for local businesses.”

The station’s website seahavenfm.radio has details of Seahaven FM’s programmes, presenters and the station’s free events listing. As it extends its footprint, Seahaven FM welcomes new advertisers and sponsors.

You can hear Seahaven FM on DAB+ (you may need to re-scan or re-tune your DAB+ radio). All programmes are also available online, on smart speakers and by using your free mobile apps (iOS and Android). Further details on how to listen can be found on the station’s website.



Marjorie with Hannah, lifestyle lead at Heathfield Court

Marjorie's Grand Day Out

Four generations of one family enjoyed a special day beside the seaside when aptly-named, 104 year-old Marjorie Seaman took a trip to Hastings. Marjorie, the oldest resident at Heathfield Court Care Home in Erith, Kent, enjoyed the trip to Hastings with her daughter, granddaughter and great-granddaughter, all organised by the home's activities lead.

As well as spending time by the sea, the family paid a visit to the aquarium and sampled some traditional fish and chips..

Seaside trips have long held happy memories for Marjorie, as her frequent visits were accompanied by her late husband Albert.

Linda, Marjorie's daughter, explained: "Once Mum and Dad re-

tired, they would often head out for weekend trips to the coast. Southend was the closest for them as they lived in East London at the time, but they would visit different beaches around Kent and Sussex too, including Hastings.

"If they fancied a trip to the seaside they would pack up the car and go, whatever the weather, so it wasn't unheard of for them to be sat on the beach in their coats with a windbreak around them eating their fish and chips on a cold and windy day!"

The Hastings trip was made particularly special by the presence of Marjorie's 15-year-old great-grand-



Four generations enjoy making memories

daughter April. Although April spends time with her great-grandmother, it was the first time the pair had enjoyed a proper day out together.

The two shared a particularly special moment at the aquarium, with April pointing out the different fish to Marjorie as they explored. She repeatedly commented on how wonderful it was to be able to see creatures she would otherwise never have had the opportunity to encounter. She particularly enjoyed the brightly coloured tropical fish, which she'd never seen before, as well as being treated to a special display

from an octopus which slid across the tank directly in front of her.

Talking about what a lovely day out she'd had, she said: "It's amazing that we can get so many of these things here for us to see because we'd never get the chance to see them otherwise."

For Linda, having four generations together for the day made it especially meaningful. "It was such a memorable day. It's something I wouldn't have been able to organise and do with Mum myself, so we're incredibly grateful to Hannah and everyone at Heathfield Court for making it possible. It was particularly special for April to have her first proper day out with her great-grandmother."

Hannah Tribe, lifestyle lead at Heathfield Court, said: "Bringing four generations of the family together made this trip incredibly special, and seeing Marjorie and April enjoying the aquarium together was a lovely moment."

"Days out like this are about so much more than simply going somewhere different. They give our residents the opportunity to revisit happy memories while continuing to have new experiences and make new memories with the people they love".

Full of Life: Celebrating Older People

More than 100 events across the county will help celebrate ageing in East Sussex and mark a national Older People's Day. Nordic walking, New Age Kurling, coffee mornings, gardening drop-ins, and cookery workshops are among a range of activities on offer during this year's Full of Life Festival, which runs through September and October.

The programme of events has been created by East Sussex County Council, in collaboration with East Sussex Seniors Association and seven local senior forums, to celebrate the contribution of older people and change the way people think about ageing.

Cllr Mark Estcourt, East Sussex County Council's lead member for adult social care and health, describes the festival as: "a great opportunity for anyone over 50 to try

a new activity, learn a new skill, get active and meet new people. He points out that it showcases the range of activities on offer across the county and all the benefits they can bring to people's health and wellbeing, and with many of the activities free and not requiring booking, "it's the perfect time to give a new hobby a go and meet new people."

With more events on offer than ever, the festival promises to offer something for everyone over the age

of 50, with events and activities available in every district and borough.



A full programme of events and more information about the festival is available: eastsussex.gov.uk/community/over-50s/full-of-life-events. The Full of Life Festival brochure can also be picked up from libraries, leisure centres, and council offices.



CAKE & COFFEE MORNING

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Everyone welcome!

Let's raise a mug and make a difference.

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE DAY:

HOMEMADE CAKES, TEA & COFFEE Cake, coffee, good company & more!	VISIT FROM A THERAPY DOG Say hello to our furry friend!	HAND MESSAGES Take time to relax	MACMILLAN BENEFITS ADVICE Information and support	TOMBOLA Great prizes to be won!	RAFFLE Fantastic prizes up for grabs!
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THURSDAY 24TH SEPTEMBER 11AM – 1PM

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 Queens Road, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 1QR

EVERYONE WELCOME!

Join us for cake, conversation, and community – all in support of Macmillan Cancer Support.

Hollington Community Spirit

CHRIS WATKINS

Back at the start of this long, hot Summer, at The Bowl Play Park on Wishing Tree North, Hollington celebrated itself. The Hollington Community Spirit group worked with Tornado Twirl Stars, Hastings 1st Scouts Hollington, Women's Voice, Gozmina's Circus Skills and Just Jam/Ark in the Park to programme a day of play activities, the like of which many residents reported not having seen since the early 2000s.

Volunteers from Craig's Cabin cooked up free food for the crowds, and community organiser Andrea Cowhig explained how Hollington had come out in their masses to celebrate the community and speak up for their play spaces and how they feel about them. Families that remembered using the play parks when they were better maintained talked about what they would like to see from their housing associations and the local council.

Andrea emphasises that as well as raising local spirit and community connection, the event was intended to highlight how resources are spent locally. "Most were aware that

there has been a big grant given from the government for new play provisions and are hopeful that we'll see some of that here in Hollington and Wishing Tree including The Bowl, Blackman Avenue, Kent Road and Willingdon Avenue. There was also discussion of more sports and activities being put on in the area, like other areas have in their parks."

Andrea and her mother experienced a long-running disagreement with Southern Housing over the condition of their accommodation and, a couple of years ago, joined with other residents to form Hastings Area Southern Housing Tenants Association to better organise, pressure and work to improve conditions in local housing.

After a significant medical diagnosis, Andrea says stepping up as a community organiser provided her with a new confidence and motivation. "I know what it's like to struggle, and it's better to struggle together than alone. Especially working in a community that is struggling with things like loneliness, the cost of living, addictions, disability and a massive housing crisis. Standing up for myself gave me my voice again. I've always been someone who stood up for the underdog and been very



Andrea Cowhig

passionate about what's right."

In the face of significant socio-economic challenges in the Hollington area, Andrea argues that problems like antisocial behaviour are best addressed by involving residents in regular activities and developing a shared sense of community responsibility. She formed Hollington Community Spirit group to organise events and, following the release of significant Government funding for community development, the group has recently applied for a *Pride in Place* grant.

As well as hoping to organise meetings, craft days for young people and community events several times a year, the grant application includes a plan for an ongoing six-week cookery course to help families learn more about healthy eating, budgeting and gain confidence

making fresh food. Each course would end with a community meal, shared with family and friends of the participants.

Andrea says: "There's pocket parks in Hollington which have been closed down – little parks which were intended for the roads around them, and we're hoping to open one of those up to grow fruit and vegetables which will eventually be used to provide ingredients."

Whilst recognising the danger of anti-social behaviour, Andrea is positive that involving often under-employed young people in community projects can create better community ownership. Since 2022, one of these 'pocket parks' has already been successfully developed into Craig's Cabin, a community garden created within a small patch of fenced and otherwise unused

land off Tile Barn Road.

Granted a lease by Southern Housing but otherwise run by volunteers, this charitable venture serves as a wellbeing garden, runs foraging walks, hosts men's support meetings, regular social activities for children and monthly Community Spirit meetings.

Both groups are involved in the second part of the *Pride in Place* application, hoping to establish a location where young people can be taught practical trade skills and vegetable gardening to increase their resilience, community engagement and self-belief.

Andrea is not currently keen to repeat her recent unsuccessful run at the recent local elections. "I'd rather be out there caring about the community. I think I can get more done *not* being a councillor."

Ukrainian Independence Day

KHRYSTYNA MASHCHENSKA

The 35th anniversary of Ukraine's Independence was marked with separate events in Hastings, Rye and Bexhill, bringing Ukrainians together with local residents, civic representatives and friends of Ukraine.

The celebrations began in Hastings on 22 August, as part of the Hastings Multicultural Festival at The Stade. Members of the local Ukrainian community took to the stage to speak about Ukraine's Independence Day and its significance. The programme also included a Ukrainian national song, introducing the wider festival audience to another part of Ukrainian culture.

Throughout the day, the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain (AUGB), Hastings and Rother District Branch hosted a Ukrainian Community Stall. Visitors were able to meet and talk to local Ukrainians

and learn more about Ukrainian culture and traditions.

Two days later, on 24 August – Ukraine's Independence Day itself – Rye held its own ceremony. Rye Town Crier Paul Edward Goring delivered a specially prepared proclamation in Ukrainian. Colonel Anthony Kimber MBE was also involved in the event, alongside representatives of Rye Town Council, including the Deputy Mayor.

For Ukrainians attending, hearing the Town Crier deliver his proclamation in their own language was a particularly moving gesture. They were also touched by the thought and care that had gone into the ceremony and by the warm welcome from the local community.

Among the Ukrainian symbols brought to the ceremony was a flag covered with handwritten messages and signatures collected during the years of war. Many of the signatures belong to Ukrainian servicemen – some of the soldiers who signed the flag have since lost their lives.

Bexhill also marked the Independence Day on 24 August, with Ukrainians gathering alongside residents and community representatives. Rother Voluntary Action (RVA), which supports the Ukrainian community across Rother, was also represented at the event.

Lieutenant Colonel Peter Swanson MBE, who has longstanding connections with the Armed Forces and veterans' community, addressed those gathered and delivered a speech in Ukrainian.

Although the events in Hastings, Rye and Bexhill were organised separately and were very different in character, they all highlighted how Ukrainian people have found a place within local communities across Hastings and Rother.

This year marks 35 years since Ukraine restored its independence in 1991. For Ukrainians, however, the anniversary represents a much longer history, culture and national identity – something that was reflected in the celebrations across all three towns.

Across Hastings, Rye and Bexhill, that celebration was shared with the communities around them – sometimes, quite literally, in the Ukrainian words spoken by their neighbours.



Halyna Pohriada performing a Ukrainian song at the multicultural festival in Hastings

PHOTOS: CHRISTINE SANDERSON



Aladdin's Cave on the Ridge

CHRISTINE SANDERSON

What's the link between the tragic fields of Flanders in WWI and an unusual shop on The Ridge? Well, built around 1920, that iconic building was a workshop for Burslem Memorials, which provided many WWI monuments, perhaps most famous of which are at the Menin Gate in Belgium: the 350 handcrafted name panels commemorating 54,585 British and Commonwealth soldiers missing in the Ypres Salient. For dec-

ades the premises remained a stone-masonry, selling mainly headstones; then in 2014, there was an abrupt change of character.

Now it is called Two3Two and is not at all the kind of shop you might expect on a leafy, suburban road next to the cemetery. Large statues from the Far East flank the doors when the shop is open (Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 12 to 6 pm) and, if you peer through the windows, all manner of unusual objects can be seen. After some years of wondering, I finally couldn't resist the temptation to look inside and was

astonished by what I found.

There was no pressure to buy, and I was free to wander around looking at things as I wished. My personal interest was mainly in the abundant wooden tribal artefacts, but I was also dazzled by old valuable pottery, all sorts of jewellery, Javanese shadow puppets, hand-crafted bags—and the list goes on. Intriguingly, there is a surprising diversity: alongside the exotica, I spotted homely items like teapots and, through the back window revealing a spacious yard, I was amused to notice a two-metre-high metal Tyrannosaurus Rex.

I've since learnt that there are other amazing things out there too, most notably many large Buddhas. In fact, the emporium includes a wide range of Buddhas and Ganeshs, from miniature size to 2.4 meters tall. Only when you enter the shop can you realise the scope and variety. It's surprisingly spacious, with a mezzanine

and an upper floor, as well as the backyard with huge garden sculptures and architectural carvings. There are a large range of masks from all over the world, as well as bronze, wood and ceramic sculptures of all sizes. In addition, there is furniture, all of it unique, including chairs, sofas, tables and even beautiful large teak cabinets. All of it is accessible to visitors.

There are many surprising items, but the owner, Mick Smee, is always happy to explain the provenance of anything on display. As a photographer and cameraman, he travelled extensively around Asia, and he gradually built up a personal collection. He spent a lot of time in the many islands of Indonesia, which particularly fascinated him with their varying cultures and artefacts.

Buying this spacious stone building has provided him with the perfect place to store, display and build on his collection. But currently Mick

is working towards clearing stock, so his prices are all negotiable. He plans to eventually sell the premises and continue his travelling.

He hopes to spend his winters in South America and South-east Asia, where "swimming in warm waters and pursuing esoteric medicines" should help with his recovery from spinal injuries sustained when he fell 80 metres while free-climbing Fairlight cliffs. Refusing to allow that accident to restrict his life, he is now an avid swimmer and determined to continue his travels.

Meanwhile, the treasures of this Aladdin's Cave are available to view in what could be described as an iconic building. Stone statues from the Far East now stand in the yard where once a massive framesaw, built on-site, cut through large blocks of stone to provide WWI memorials all over the world. Over a hundred years later, 232 The Ridge remains a remarkable place.




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Women, Work, and the Weight of Expectation

ANTHEA CARLING

The Trouble With Women opens as part of Coastal Currents Festival on 5-6 and 12-13 September in the artist's own home in Hastings Old Town.

We're told we can have it all – but at what cost? If you have children, you're expected to sacrifice but also to bounce back. If you don't, people question why. If you work full time you feel guilty for not being there enough. If you stay home you're asked when you'll get back to work. Whatever choices you make, someone always has an opinion, as if your worth is up for debate.

That question sits at the centre of *The Trouble With Women*, a new body of work by documentary photographer Lauren Joy Kennett. Over the past year, across Hastings, she has photographed women in their own homes. Each figure is then hand-cut from the print and collaged back into the room she came from – altered, distorted, displaced. Her life, but not as it should be.

Each woman was asked a single question: "What has been hardest to hold together?" Their answers are written by hand, in gold pen, directly onto their own portraits. The women who took part include single mothers, women who have lost pregnancies, women who have chosen to remain childless, those who have ended toxic relationships.



Writing troubles on a photo

Kennett herself lost an unplanned pregnancy during the making of the work. "The women in this project were so brave," she says. "To let a stranger into their home, to sit in front of a camera and write their own truth on a photograph of themselves."

A woman's peak earning years are the same years she is expected to have children, but even in these times, society isn't built to support either. Whether she's raising a child, longing for one, or choosing a different path entirely, the weight of expectation follows her everywhere.

The work is shown in the artist's home so visitors stand inside the subject matter rather than looking at it from a distance.

Exhibition shows 12-13 September at 6 Old Humphrey Avenue, 11am-6pm. Lauren Joy Kennett, photography and handcut collage.

Afrit Nebula: What Next?

An Afrit is a powerful demon in Arabian myths. A Nebula is an interstellar cloud of dust...

Local band Afrit Nebula have been gigging mainly around Hastings, St Leonards and Brighton (but also as far afield as the Czech Republic) for 12 years. They have worked with dancers and film-makers, most recently composing the original music for *Sleepwalk: The Dream of Lady Macbeth*, a dance performance film by Mark French. *What Next?* is the band's fourth release, and the second with the present lineup.

They are known for their eclecticism: the improvisatory tracks are



inspired by Japanese Noh flute, mediaeval Hispanic (Muslim/Christian/Jewish) folk tunes, Middle Eastern popular music, African landscapes, Monteverdi, and the blues.

This is true World Music – not just a marketing tag but three human beings' original response to the world.



What Next? was recorded in 2026 by Aram Zarikian at RavenFish. Orders and enquiries: ken@realitystreet.co.uk 07706 18/9253. Limited free streaming/download: afritnebula.bandcamp.com/album/what-next

Colouring to Heal

East Sussex-based author, artist and trauma-informed practitioner, Corina Stupu Thomas, has recently published *We Tell Many Stories: A Therapeutic Colouring Book and Reflection Journal for Women's Healing and Self-Discovery*.

The book combines original artwork, colouring pages and reflection prompts. The idea grew from Thomas' professional experience supporting people through trauma and difficult life transitions, as well as from her understanding that creativity can be a way of processing experiences that are difficult to articulate.

Although its main relevance is to women going through challenging times, it may also be useful to



COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

therapists, coaches, wellbeing practitioners and community organisations supporting people affected by anxiety, trauma, burnout, bereavement, workplace upheaval or crea-

tive block. The book has particular significance at a time when many people are struggling with stress, isolation, and/or constant digital stimulation.



Cliff Crawford, Inside Out

COURTESY OF CLIFF CRAWFORD

and personal work; stills, moving image and film.

As a highlight exhibition, PhotoHastings are privileged to welcome the celebrated artist Tom Hunter (Saatchi Gallery, Purdy Hicks, V&A), known for his reimaginings of classical paintings, many of which are works of social and political commentary. He was the first photographer to have a one-man show at the National Gallery.

A curated show, *Tom Hunter – A Dialogue*, will form a response to his large piece, *Greg: Powdermill*, itself created in reference to the work in the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery Collection, *Harmony Cattle Watering, Pevensey, East Sussex* by Sidney Dennant Moss (1885–1946). Tom will also give a talk about his work and a review of the resulting exhibition.

At Solaris Gallery, St Leonards, Grace Lau (V&A, Tate Britain, Tom Blau, Arts Council, gracelau.co.uk) will exhibit her journey through the world of sexuality, gender identity and sado-masochistic sub-culture in *Adults in Wonderland* (see opposite page here for full details and interview).

Editorial and advertising photographer Tim E White will curate *As Above, So Below* at Hastings Arts Forum, to showcase further the richly diverse talents of the members of PhotoHastings.

A group show, *Flux*, will occupy Barnaby's Lounge for two weeks. The trademark *Photology* series of talks and discussion, organised by Alexander Brattell and featuring celebrated practitioners, is also in the planning stage.

All exhibitions are free. Exhibition spaces are Electro Studios Project Space, Seaside Road, Solaris Print, 76 Norman Road, Hastings Arts Forum, 20 Marine Court, and Barnaby's Lounge, 46 Robertson Street. More details: 2025 festival, photohastings.org. Instagram: [photohastings](https://www.instagram.com/photohastings)

PhotoHastings '26

GARY WILLIS

PhotoHastings' collective of photographers aims to inspire an appreciation of contemporary photographic art through its annual festival programme. It is directed by Tracy Jones and Neale Willis, with talks, exhibitions, workshops and mentoring throughout the year.

2026 sees PhotoHastings celebrate 16 years of exhibitions and activities throughout October and November. This year's show includes over 60 photographers, seven exhibitions and two internationally-known star exhibitors.

The exhibition programme is centred at Electro Studios, with group and solo shows in the main gallery and upstairs 'Landing Gallery'; it's a heady mixture of themed



Club Scene

PHOTOS: GRACE LAU, SOLARIS GALLERY



Grace Lau in gear

Fetish & Fantasy – Grace Lau

VICTORIA KINGHAM

Since the early 1980s, Grace Lau's photographic journey through sexuality, gender identity and sado-masochistic subculture has explored a world largely hidden from mainstream view. *Fetish Stories* brings together a selection of works

from a ten-year period in which Lau immersed herself in these subcultures, from her earliest male nudes and documentation of 'Skin Two' events and dominatrices' dungeons, to later work exploring cross-dressing and changing ideas around sexuality and identity.

"That period was an extraordinary journey into the subversive world of fetishism, when I visited

specialised clubs and dominatrix dungeons and entered the private lives of ordinary people to document their performative fantasies. *Fetish Stories* is a small selection of what I observed and participated in with my camera," she writes.

"I never actually took part myself, although I dressed up because it's easier to get in with the people when you're dressed up. I did six-inch high heeled shoes, leather gear. It looked fine," she told me. The "scene" she photographed was during the 1980s and 1990s, and she doesn't think that it's the same now as it was. "There were clubs, underground clubs, all throughout London and most of the bigger cities – Bristol, Manchester. They had

annual balls. I think they still have parties where people dress up, because a friend of mine gets paid money to make latex suits and fancy dresses, particularly for men."

About the nature of their resulting fantasies Grace says: "The sex part wasn't so important. What was in their heads wasn't to do with sex, it was to do with their roles, their fantasies, and how they looked as a woman." She interviewed many of them for (what was) her BA thesis, and "they didn't mind as long as I didn't reveal their identity, but they always wore masks anyway." Some of them were prominent people – bankers, judges, teachers, police. They called themselves transvestites. Significantly, one banker "said he enjoyed the punishment in his public school more than anything else."

Like her recent *Chinese Studio* series, this was a 20-year project. After 10 years she got her photography degree then continued, "because the photographs were won-

derful." Also, she made a living, because people paid her to come to the studio and have photos of themselves taken, dressed up. "It was mostly men ... the routine, the ritual of getting transformed into a woman was the actual turn on bit." And at the time (before mobile phones or digital cameras) there was no easier way of recording their fetish. Because she could do it, she was accepted on the scene as a photographer – "also, I think because I was non-threatening as a small, Chinese, middle-aged woman."

The dominatrix dungeons too, Lau found fairly revealing. "A lot of men liked to shed their responsibilities and their daily routines, their 'real life', and act out fantasies of being enslaved by beautiful women." She has dominatrices and 'dungeons' in this show, but not too many as she didn't want the exhibition to be "just salacious." And it was, Lau goes on, "99 per cent men."

Small and non-threatening she may be, but Lau's esoteric and courageous documentary work has been exhibited widely, including at Tate Britain, the National Portrait Gallery, Turner Contemporary, the Museum of London and Towner Gallery. Recent exhibitions include *The 80s: Photographing Britain* at Tate Britain (2024–25), which included some of the works featured in this exhibition. All the works are for sale – some uniquely, as the negatives have been lost in the mists of time.



This article appears with acknowledgement to Grace Lau's bio at gracelau.co.uk.

The exhibition runs until 31 October at Solaris Print, 76 Norman Road St Leonards, open Wednesdays-Saturdays.

Tom Hunter: From Squat to Saatchi

VICTORIA KINGHAM

Hackney in East London (nowadays a boho-arty des-res area, affordable only to higher-paid professionals) had a bad reputation in 1997. A number of its 1960s-built tower blocks were structurally unsound, in addition to the associated widespread socio-economic issues in the area.

I first saw Tom Hunter's work in about 1998 when a couple of tower



Greg, Powdermill Photo Print

© TOM HUNTER

blocks in Holly Street (off the Queensbridge Road, and quite incidentally, the childhood home of Idris Elba) were due for demolition. As the residents were moved out or moved on, the units were closed and barred with thick metal prison-type doors, and the blocks even-

tually demolished in 2001. His exhibition was held in one of these derelict units on the 19th floor: brilliant photographs of departing residents *in situ*, six feet high, were placed all around the walls, and the dilapidated bath was filled with bottles of Beck's.

The work was telling, powerful, and familiar to any long-term resident of the area. I felt at the time how significant it was – I suppose the Beck's helped a bit – and it does seem to me now to have taken place at a kind of sociological turning point, of which it formed a part. Charles Saatchi bought all of it. Subsequently Hunter posed people from his squatters' community as echoes of old Masters, and his work *Woman Reading a Possession Order*, composed after a Vermeer painting, brought him national and international acclaim.

This September, seven years after his last visit, he is coming here under the auspices of PhotoHastings. Most of his show is currently under wraps, but one will be *Tom Hunter – A Dialogue*. This will consist of responses to his large piece,



HASTINGS MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

Greg: Powdermill, which was created in reference to a Victorian work in the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery Collection, *Harmony Cattle Watering, Pevensey, East Sussex* by Sidney Dennatt Moss. Dr Hunter will give a talk about his work, chaired by photographer Alexander Brattell, and will also review the resulting exhibition.



The talk will be held at Electro Studios Seaside Road St Leonards Saturday on the 24 October. For full details check photohastings.com.



Fell: The Horror

ELIZABETH ALLEN

Fell, 'freely adapted' from Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, is a dramatic work which challenges both the audience and the actors. Writer and director Frances Viner has cut away the novel's softening social satire and emotional tenderness to concentrate on its core: the horrors of the marriage of the ide-

alistic and optimistic Helen to the deprived, alcoholic Huntingdon.

This is a short play, running only for fifty minutes, but it demands concentration for every one of those minutes. The language does not pretend to be plausibly 'realistic' but is rich, dense with metaphor. The weight and colour of the costumes, put on and cast off, are significant. The movements of the players as they dance, embrace, witness or refuse to witness, are stylised and call for a high level of collaboration among the actors.

The enclosed space of the Stables Studio enhances the intensity. Years of attending plays in the back rooms of pubs make me no stranger to the up-close-and-personal possibilities

of theatre. I remember handfuls of tripe thrown into my lap. And in the more Establishment setting of Stratford's Other Place, a *King Lear* in which a sexy Edmund stroked the faces of young women in the front row. Well, it was the 1970s. But in *Fell* the violence of Huntingdon to Helen, while stylised, was deeply disturbing and to be taken seriously. The other characters refused to witness, turned their faces to the wall. The point was made.

Language and movement make great demands on the cast too and their commitment and accomplishment were outstanding. The servants, significantly titled 'housekeepers', have an important level of narrative control. Ginny Beaumont, Kaye Gabriel, Pauleen McLaughlin, Sophie Schoenkrech and Lou Whalan, with Lawry Rhodes as butler, frame the story, negotiating introduction and epilogue, witness and comment. Richard van Zyl's violin music added to the emotional charge. Milo Ward as Helen, packed into layer upon layer of confining wedding clothes, demonstrated in her movements the terrible shift from lightness and love to terror and repulsion. First impressions suggested that Henry Smalldon looked too young and innocent to convey Huntingdon's cruelty and depravity but by the end he certainly frightened me. Which, of course, makes another serious point.



Helen Black as Hannah



Seth Ringrose

Hastings' Hidden Stories – and Pizza

On 18 September, Spun Glass Theatre launches *Pizza & Plays* – a new theatre night inspired by Hastings' history, and created in partnership with Hastings Museum & Art Gallery. The series will bring together playwrights, museum archives, and local food and community celebration.

The project (with support from Arts Council England) challenges three writers to immerse themselves in the stories, folklore and forgotten histories of Hastings, before writing an entirely new short play. Rather than responding to a set theme, each writer has complete

freedom to discover the stories that inspire them. Once completed, each play is rehearsed in just five days before being performed live.

Each evening then continues with pizza from local favourites Duke Harper Pizza, with a post-show party hosted by Remi Vibesman (Hidden Beach), transforming a theatre visit into a social event that reflects the character of Hastings itself.

Creative Director Ross Drury says: "*Pizza & Plays* combines my three favourite things: plays, pizza and parties. But underneath that is a much bigger idea. We wanted to create something that reflects Hastings and the people who live here. Theatre shouldn't feel like something separate from the community – it should be somewhere people come together, share food, have conversations and discover something about the place they call home."

The first writer in the series, Chloë Lawrence-Taylor, is Spun Glass Theatre's new playwright-on-attachment. Her previous work has been developed with the National Theatre and Hampstead Theatre. Her new play, *Hannah, Jack and Tomorrow Too*, follows two young people returning home to Hastings, drawing inspiration from festival mythology and local history. It raises questions about ambition, sacrifice and belonging. Lawrence-Taylor spent time exploring Hastings' stories, from pioneering women doctors and Fairlight Glen to Jack in the Green and Hannah the Witch. "What interested me most," she says, was "how history still echoes in young people's lives today." Actors are Helen Black and Seth Ringrose.

Each evening of *Pizza & Plays* features a different playwright responding to a different aspect of Hastings' identity.

Spun Glass Theatre has designed *Pizza & Plays* to be as accessible as possible. Tickets are offered on a Pay What You Can basis (£5, £10 or £15), ensuring cost is not a barrier to attending. Dates (all at the Stadel Hall) and writers are: Friday 18 September – Chloë Lawrence-Taylor; Friday 30 October – Anna Atkinson; and Saturday 5 December – Elijah W. Harris

Cabaret Franglais Comes to The Stables

BallyBest theatre production company is delighted to bring *Café Franglais* to The Stables. It's a café-chantant celebration of French and English popular songs, with vocalists Tamara Leggett and Neil Sellman, and musical director David Manners

Café Franglais runs for just two nights: on 30 September and 1 October you can enjoy a generous menu degustation of songs from Novello and Schwartz to Piaf and Trenet – with all manner of tuneful crumpets and croissants in between.

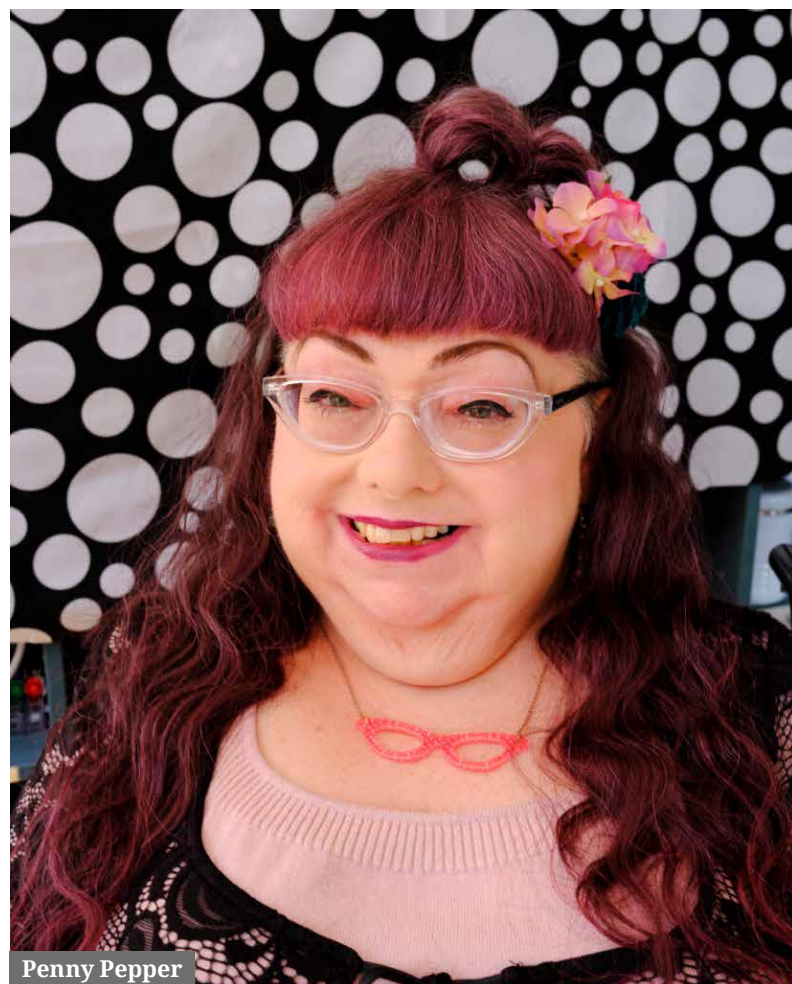
BallyBest's previous productions at The Stables have included *Picture Perfect*, performed by Olivier

Award-winning Liza Sadovy and signed to producers Beckman Unicorn for a film. *Here at Last is Love*, directed by Jason Morel, won the 2022 NODA Southeast Best New Show. *Kabarett*, also produced by David Manners, is a Weimar-inspired night of music, satire and surprise, and was brought back by popular demand for a second sell-out production.



Details: stables-theatre.co.uk/cafe-franglais
review of *Kabarett*: tinyurl.com/5ep-m47k5





Penny Pepper

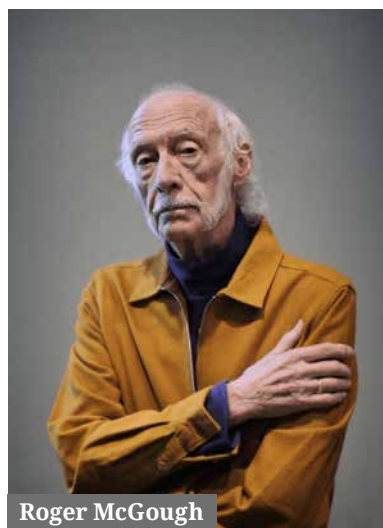
Roger McGough with Penny Pepper at White Rock

St Leonards' own writer, poet, and disabled activist Penny Pepper, hot from the world premiere of the *D-Punk* documentary film, is excited to be the support for legend Roger McGough as part of the Book Festival this year. Hastings Book Festival is an annual celebration of writers, readers and storytellers across East Sussex. Featuring workshops, keynotes, book fairs and live performances, the festival brings world-class literary talent and local voices together.

D-Punk, part of the *We Crip* film festival at the British Film Institute,

was the closing feature on 19 July. Local resident Penny played a key role in this powerful exploration of the early disability punk movement and is often called its 'spiritual matriarch'. The film also featured commentary from others with a local connection, including the daughter of punk icon Poly Styrene (former resident of St Leonards) and Jemima Dury (Hastings resident), daughter of mighty punk legend, disabled activist and influencer, Ian Dury.

Penny's performance at The White Rock Theatre will bring audiences a 15-minute set of her sig-



Roger McGough

nature blend of performance poetry with bite, provocation, humour and unique insight.

Penny has featured as part of the Book Festival on several occasions. She appears in the anthology, *Poet Town: The Poetry of Hastings & Thereabouts*. Penny is the first poet in the book, represented among several other locally and nationally well-known poets. She has also performed alongside Salena Godden at The Royal Albert Hall, and more recently at The Print Works, Hastings, at the Refugee Buddy Project fundraiser. As a performer at many Hastings events as a spoken-word poet, speaker and mentor, she has been proud to call this area her home since 2010.

Headliner for the event, Roger McGough CBE, is president of the Poetry Society and former host of BBC Radio 4's *Poetry Please*, and remains one of the UK's most beloved literary figures.

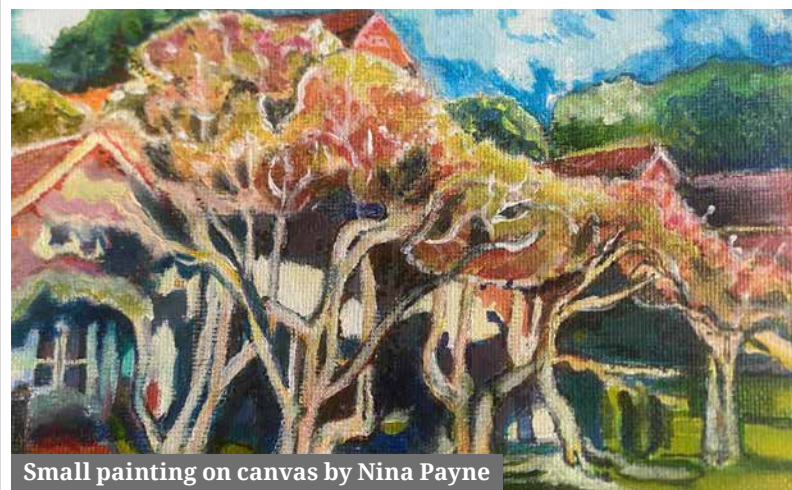


Penny Pepper:
pennypepper.co.uk;
Hastings Book Festival: hastings-bookfest.org/our-events Sunday, 13 September, 4:45 – 6:00pm, Studio 27, White Rock Theatre. Single Session and All-Afternoon Passes available at: hastingsbookfest.org/events/roger-mcgough. Studio 27 and the main foyer feature level, step-free access, dedicated wheelchair spaces, accessible restrooms, and hearing loop systems. Features as part 3 of the Poets in Performance event.

They are working towards building a confident group of singers who can share their voices harmoniously and with heart. No perfection is required, just a love of singing. They recommend registering your interest early, as limited places are available.



Workshop details:
Creative Chill: 19 September, 1.30-4.30pm;
Naulettes Community Choir: 24 September, 7.00-8.30pm. **Afri-Co-Lab:** afri-co-lab.org



Small painting on canvas by Nina Payne

Arts Forum News

Hastings Arts Forum, the long-standing quality arts collective, is staging two new exhibitions this month. The first, *Smalls! HAF Small Works* is on until 19 September, and reflects its title. Illustrated here is a small painting by Nina Payne.

The second exhibition is *Gathered Earth*, showing between 16 and 27 September, with an open evening on 18 September. This is a collective exhibition by women ceramicists

from East Sussex, with exhibiting artists Annika Aril, Fiona Dean, Sheila Hay, Izumi Maeda, Lorri Scott and Marina Wade.



Details can be found at hastingsartsforum.co.uk/category/exhibitions. Hastings Arts Forum gallery is at 20 Marine Court, St Leonards

In the Circle

A BI-WEEKLY THERAPY GROUP FOR LGBTQ+ ADULTS

HASTINGS & ST LEONARDS

A confidential, therapist-facilitated space for LGBTQ+ adults exploring identity, relationships, belonging, grief and living authentically.

For people seeking deeper connection, reflection and personal growth.

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10.00–11.30AM

Sean Kelly

Integrative Psychotherapist MBACP

sean@seankelly.org.uk

07798 740 830

seankelly.org.uk

FIND OUT MORE



SCAN THE QR CODE TO FIND OUT MORE

Afri-Co-Lab September Events

On Saturday 19 September, for the next instalment of Creative Chill, their series of creative workshops, Afri-Co-Lab will welcome back local artist Elaine Mullings for a workshop called *Care In Repair: Visible Mending*. This will be a calming experience that creates space for caring, repairing and breathing new life into your well-worn and well-loved clothing.

No sewing or creative experience is required, as Elaine guides you. You leave with a little stitch reminder document and a lovingly repaired item of clothing.

On Thursday 24 September, Led by local musical talent Deanne Naula, Afri-Co-Lab's community choir *The Naulettes* is ready for new voices to join.



A Taste of the Outdoors

CALEB GEARTY

This year, the UK has experienced the most days over 30 degrees in its recorded history. With five near-continuous heatwaves that decided to concentrate most of their wrath on the south-east, dining al-fresco became more of a need than a want for many restaurant-goers during the summer months. And, as more and more chairs were hauled out of restaurants onto curbsides, and parasols hastily assembled above melting mains, what it meant to 'go out to eat' changed across the country.

Most of Hastings has been turned inside out this summer. Cosy pubs have turned into sprawled gatherings and the guts of restaurants have crept out from cramped kitchens into vacant interiors to give sweltering chefs relief from the inferno of ovens at midday. But for one restaurant, whose identity has always lain more on the exposed promenade and rocky outcrops beside it, this outward shift has represented a more internal, identity-based change.

St Leonard's Goat Ledge may have been the town's most popular restaurant regardless of its menu

this summer. Having opened on the Warrior Square seafront nearly 10 years ago, Goat Ledge has spent most of its existence as a cafe-type joint, serving deliciously smashed breakfast baps in the morning, before giving way to fresh fish sandwiches, booze, and a host of incredible, obscure music in the afternoons and early evenings.

Often operating in view of the worst waves, and in the midst of the very worst weather, eating on their Balamory-coloured outside benches, rain or shine, has arguably been the defining part of the Goat-Ledge experience up until now.

But this year, as fine dining filled the pavements of King's Road and George Street, Goat Ledge decided that the seafront wasn't to be without an upscale kitchen of its own, and so was born Fire on the Beach. Serving the type of food that makes your mouth drip reading the menu (wood-fired prawns; skate wing with sobrasada and peppers; baked feta and cucumber salad), Goat Ledge has transformed from a place to go for lunch to the place to be for dinner.

And it's not just the perfectly slow-cooked pigs' cheeks that have done this; it's the authenticity of being and eating outside at a place created with that in mind. The Fire on the Beach kitchen spills from a

small wooden hut onto the promenade itself. Benches are stacked tightly with chairs dotted loosely around their ends. People sit in sprawling groups next to people they only half know, and food comes out in bowls designed for sharing; with their normal kitchen operating just feet away, sitting at Fire on the Beach feels like you're being secretly treated to off-menu hits before they go mainstream. Every night is a dinner among friends, even if you've just stopped by on your own.

This spirit of being outside has crept from the seafront, through the town's high streets and back up the hills towards our country pubs and towns. In Battle's Crafted at Powdermills, nomadic dining became the defining feature of their summertime offerings. Evenings with featured guest chefs weren't hosted in their restaurant, pub, or bar, but on sprawling tables set for 50 or more, at the edge of their lakeside woodland.

These candlelit evenings culminated in an appearance from hash-brown aficionado and Masterchef semi-finalist James Sharp, whose menu of perfectly grilled mackerel, cannons of sirloin, and charred allium salads turned a patch of woodland into the type of restaurant you dream about for a long time after. Served on large sharing platters, passed down the table family-style, the evening was just as much about food as it was about getting to know those around you, and smiling at the stranger who offered you the last, perfectly cooked piece of sirloin.

The feast was finished in the most delicate way, with a gently charred swiss meringue, made under the light of iphone torches as the sun set over the lake. Bought over in single servings by the team of waitstaff who had floodlit their creation, the little meringue felt like a microcosm of what these evenings were really about: people coming together.

So clear was this feeling, that people stayed on as summer sun turned to a first set of candlelight and then another when they had burned out. A small speech from the chef about how being part of an evening like this was really what his (and his teams) jobs were all about, put a neat bow on the evening, and Crafted's 'Forest Feast' itself.

As the heat begins to relent and tables slowly creep closer to the doors of restaurants with each passing day, it'll be easy to forget how the simple joys of summer dining can make any meal into a shared experience with place and people. So now, whether it's sandwiches at Rock a Nore, spritz at The Selkie, or Sobrasada at Goat Ledge, make sure to enjoy the last embers of our scorching summer on dry chairs outside.

Or, if you want to bring some summer joy to your own home, here's a showstopper BBQ recipe by The Crown's Jody for fire-cooked pulled lamb flatbreads with roasted pepper sauce. This one is definitely for a special occasion!



PHOTOS: GOAT LEDGE

Fire-Charred Pulled Lamb Flatbreads

A RECIPE BY JODY MORTON

Smoky pulled lamb shoulder in a charred roasted pepper sauce, served in charcoal-cooked flatbreads. Expect something between a slow-cooked lamb stew and an enormous, gloriously messy kebab.

INGREDIENTS

For the lamb

- 1.5kg boneless lamb shoulder
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 1.5 tsp ground cumin
- 1 tsp paprika
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- For the sauce
- 5 garlic cloves
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- 3 tomatoes
- 2 red peppers
- 1 large onion, peeled and halved
- 1-2 red chillies
- 1 tbsp tomato puree
- 300ml chicken or lamb stock
- 1 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp pomegranate molasses
- Handful flat-leaf parsley, chopped
- Handful mint, chopped

For the flatbreads

- 500g strong white bread flour
- 7g fast-action dried yeast
- 1 tsp sugar
- 10g salt

METHOD

1. Light fire: Light charcoal, ideally in a chimney starter, (15-20 min), then place the hot coals on the bbq, concentrating most of them on one side, giving a hot side for grilling and a cooler side for slow cooking.
2. Make dough: Mix the flour, yeast, sugar and salt, then stir in 325ml warm water and 2 tbsp olive oil, combining to form a soft dough. Knead for 8 minutes, then cover and prove in a warm cupboard for 60-90 minutes.

3. Sear lamb: Cut lamb shoulder into 2-3 large pieces. Mix all the other ingredients (under *For the lamb*) as well as 2tsp fine salt, 0.5tsp black pepper, 1tbsp vegetable oil and an optional 1tbsp pomegranate molasses, in a bowl. Rub the mixture over the lamb, then sear in a casserole dish over the hottest coals for 3-4 minutes per side until well charred (not cooked through). Transfer lamb to a plate.
4. Char vegetables: Grill the tomatoes, peppers, onion and chillies over the hot coals, turning, until blackened and softened. Allow to cool slightly then peel most of the pepper skin, and roughly chop.
5. Make sauce: In a cast-iron casserole over the fire, combine the charred vegetables with the garlic, tomato purée, ground coriander and ground cumin. Cook for a few minutes, then add the stock, red wine vinegar and pomegranate molasses; season and bring to a simmer.
6. Slow-cook lamb: Add lamb to the casserole pot, cover, and move to the cool side of the fire (roughly 150-170°C). Cook for 2½-3 hours, turning occasionally and topping up liquid or charcoal as needed, until the meat is fork-tender.
7. Pull and finish: Rest the lamb for 10 minutes while the uncovered sauce reduces over stronger heat. Pull the lamb into rough chunks and return it into the thickened sauce with the chopped parsley and mint, adjust seasoning.
8. Cook flatbreads: Divide the dough into 8 pieces, roll into rough circles, and cook on a hot griddle over the fire, about 60-90 seconds per side, until puffed and charred. Keep warm under a tea towel.
9. Serve: Pile warm flatbreads with pulled lamb and sauce. Top with extra herbs to serve, with yoghurt on the side if you like. Fold and enjoy!



Uduak Victor Robert slides in to score at Brighton

BASEBALL

Pirates Play-off Bound

JAMES YOUNG

Next Saturday the players and coaches of Hastings Pirates baseball club will wake up to some unfamiliar feelings. Nerves. Adrenalin. Excitement not just at playing a game, but at what it means.

That's because at 12 noon the Pirates will play their first post-season game since the current version of the club was born in 2023, away to the Guildford Millers in the British Baseball Federation (BBF) Division 5 play-offs.

"I'm pumped up and nervous at the same time," says star pitcher Uduak Victor Robert. "It's the biggest game since I joined the club."

"We started the season hoping to win more games than we lost, so to be in a play-off game is pretty amazing," agrees second baseman Tim Whittlesea.

Post-season play represents uncharted waters for the Pirates, who have endured hard times in recent years, with a shortage of players and little success on the field. Three years ago they went an entire season without a win.

This year's turnaround has been remarkable, with a 12-3 win away against Brighton Jets on 16 August clinching the Division 5 South division title. The win was led by another stellar pitching performance from Robert, who finished the season with an 8-0 record (in baseball a pitcher

is credited with a win when his team is victorious), and some impressive hitting from Whittlesea, who knocked in four runs.

Although the Pirates lost the second game of their double-header against Brighton, they went on to sweep the Kent Mariners in their final two home fixtures of the season the following week. Those games were a terrific advert for British baseball, with strong pitching, sure-handed fielding, and crisp, timely hitting. Both victories came on 'walk-off' hits (when the home team bats in the final inning, a go-ahead run ends the game) – the first when veteran slugger Frank Cooper brought home third baseman Liam Drane, the second when short-stop Lloyd Knight scored Robert.

Those victories gave the Pirates a record of 13 wins and five losses for the season, well clear of nearest rivals Tonbridge Bobcats, and sent the club off to the play-offs with wind in its sails.

FAR BEYOND THE TARGET

"Winning the division was far beyond the target we set ourselves, but it wasn't down to luck," says Robert. "It's a product of belief, determination and fighting spirit from every member of the team and management."

"We have a really cohesive team that trusts each other in every aspect of the game," adds Tim Whittlesea. "Everybody has contributed to being top of the table."

Guildford, who finished the season with 20 wins and four losses on their way to the Division 5 Central title, will represent stiff opposition. The Pirates are confident, though, that if they play to their strengths, victory – and a place in the BBF semi-finals and finals weekend at the National Baseball & Softball Complex at Farnham Park later this month – is within their grasp.

"Guildford are a good team, but I fancy our chances," says Robert. "We go into every game with the belief we can win."

CRICKET

The Great Escape

Priory win by two runs to retain Premier status

29 August	
Hastings & St Leonards Priory	
Three Bridges rained off	
5 September	
Priory	251 for 8
Preston Nomads	249 for 9

HUGH SULLIVAN

In September 2024 the Hastings & St Leonards Priory team were relegated from the Sussex Premier League when, in fading light at Horntye Park, the last Horsham pair hit eight runs off the final over of the final match to defeat them by one wicket.

Fast forward two years to another season's finale last Saturday evening at Fulkington on the fringes of Brighton. Home team Preston Nomads, needing 252 to win in their allotted 50 overs, are batting with apparent serenity towards a victory which will doom Priory to a repeat relegation after one topsy-turvy summer back in the Premiership.

At 215 for three in the 42nd over, the Nomads need only another 37 runs off 43 balls with seven wickets in hand. Their fourth wicket partnership has accumulated 128 runs with opener Zan Copleston 104 not out and his partner Rudy Northcott on 56. Priory skipper Harry Scowen has rotated seven bowlers to no avail.

But all season the Sussex Premier League has been a contest of fine margins and surprise turnarounds. Priory spinner Troy Henry, who has been bowling well without good fortune, finally has Copleston caught at the wicket by Joe Billings. Next ball, the start of the 43rd over, Adam Pye dismisses Northcott in

the same manner. Unexpectedly the game is on again, with two new batsmen at the crease and bowlers with their tails up.

OVER AND OUT

Pye takes the sixth wicket in the 45th over, caught by Henry. But the seventh wicket pair Harry Eastman and Nav Patel scramble seven runs off the latter's next over, so only 22 runs are now required off 24 balls. Pye limits them to a single run off his tenth and final over, which leaves 18 balls to be bowled – 12 by Henry, six by the dependable Adam Barton.

It's actually another bowler who makes the breakthrough: Adam Page runs out Patel as he goes for a second run off Henry. Four balls later Henry clean bowls Eastman. And, with the first ball of the following over, Barton likewise hits the stumps.

Somehow Priory have gained the ascendancy. The batting side is now down to their last pair, needing 17 runs to win, or 16 to tie, off the last 11 balls.

Four runs come off the last five balls of Barton's over, and just three singles off the first three of Henry's last. Ten off the last three is surely too much. But the fourth ball is clouted to the boundary, and the next one adjudged a wide by the umpire, so there are still two more to bowl. The batsmen manage a single off each, but that's not enough: Priory have won by two runs.

The drama of the ending has naturally eclipsed proceedings earlier in the day. Priory's top order, sent in to bat by their hosts, started nervously, but were hugely indebted to opener Billings who carried his bat through the innings, reaching an unbeaten century (102 not out) in the final over. Scowen (23), Henry



Joe Billings 102 not out v Preston Nomads

(23) and Caleb Laloo (34) all gave him useful support, and the final score of 251 for eight felt, if not a winning total, a competitive one. Just how competitive was soon to be revealed.

The final league table shows Priory ninth out of ten teams, which would have resulted in their relegation in previous seasons. They are beneficiaries of a somewhat dubious decision of the Sussex Cricket League made last autumn to limit promotion and relegation between the Premiership and Division 2 to just a single team. The aim, according to league chair Gary Stanley, was to improve the overall quality of the Premier division. That's unconvincing, given that the team that came up in second place from Division 2 in 2025, West Chiltington and Thakeham, has just finished third in the Premier this year.

However, nobody at Priory will be arguing against the ruling right now. They have survived against the odds, and are entitled to celebrate their fortune. 2026 will surely be remembered here as the year of the Great Escape.

SUSSEX PREMIER LEAGUE - FINAL TABLE SEPTEMBER 2026

	P	W	D	L	T	A	BAT	BOWL	PTS
ROFFEY	18	10	3	3	0	2	48	26	408
MIDDLETON	18	10	2	4	0	2	34	30	398
W CHILTINGTON & THAKEHAM	18	7	3	6	0	2	57	43	348
PRESTON NOMADS	18	6	1	6	0	2	57	58	329
THREE BRIDGES	18	9	1	6	0	2	45	23	318
HORSHAM	18	5	3	7	1	2	55	39	288
BOGNOR REGIS	18	5	3	8	0	2	64	40	283
HAYWARDS HEATH	18	5	2	9	0	2	58	46	283
HASTINGS & ST LEONARDS PRIORY	18	4	4	7	1	2	64	50	278
CUCKFIELD	18	4	2	10	0	2	65	57	266

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