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is Happening
in and Around
Hastings



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Express Rail Service Gets Peak Time Pricing

HUGH SULLIVAN

South Eastern Railway (SER) announced with considerable fanfare earlier this month a new weekday express service between Hastings and London Charing Cross. From 14 December one train per day each way – the 8.05 from Hastings and the 16.11 from Charing Cross – will stop only at St Leonards Warrior Square, Battle, Tunbridge Wells, London Bridge and Waterloo East.

The journey time between Hastings and London Bridge will be cut on these services to 1 hour 18 minutes, with a further ten minutes to and from Charing Cross – about 14 minutes quicker than the fastest current journey.

The new trains will have just four coaches, arrayed with 2-plus-2 seating and tables “to facilitate a productive journey”.

Helena Dollimore, MP for Hastings and Rye, acclaimed this initiative as “brilliant for our area... Securing a faster train service for our town has been one of my top priorities as our local MP. This new service is great news for our commuters and for our local shops, hotels, pubs, and restaurants that rely on tourists coming down to visit us.”

What neither the rail company nor Ms Dollimore has been so eager to publicise is that the morning express train will be classed as a peak service – and charged accordingly.

At present the 8.15 train from Hastings on the Charing Cross line (arriving at 10.07) is treated as off-peak, and a return ticket to London stations costs £45.20 whether bought at the station or online. Railcards will reduce that fare by a third.

By contrast, travel to London by the express 8.05 will be charged at peak rate, currently £44 for a single or £82.20 for a round

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JASON ELLIS

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EDITOR'S NOTE

If, as a novelist claimed, “The measure of a town is how quickly one might leave it,” then good tidings, Hastings has a new, fast(ish) rail link to The Smoke.

Also in News: as a Labour lord joins their board, local people plan a Conquest Hospital demo against Palantir’s presence in the NHS, and an office block rises from the ashes in the hope of rejuvenating local businesses, just as Source Park plunges into bankruptcy for a second time...

Our Community pages laud the work of the unjustly maligned RNLI, offer a glimmer of hope with a Shabbat meal to raise funds for a Gazan poet and feature a knitted version of the East Hill lift.

In the Arts section, we celebrate the sadly curtailed life of Andy Neate, a guitarist’s guitarist, easily the equal of many more famous virtuosos and central to the town’s music scene for a generation. Irreplaceable.

Continuing a melodic focus, we’ve the Hastings Jazz festival schedule and in-depth previews, or for something completely different, Vietnamese music

Our book reviewer provides a clever pastiche of Netherwood, the latest, Hastings-set, novel from Jake Arnott, a speaker at the recent, highly successful book festival.

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Demonstration To Challenge Palantir Tie-Up With NHS

HUGH SULLIVAN

NHS terminate their data processing contract with US tech company Palantir.

The demo is part of a National Day of Action led by the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) Movement, which seeks to combat Israel

A group demonstration outside the Conquest Hospital next Thursday (1 October) will demand that the

HASTINGS TIDES							
DATE	HIGH AND LOW TIDES				SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON
FRI 25 SEPT	L 5:36	H 10:57	L 17:56	H 23:15	6:48	18:49	
SAT 26 SEPT	L 6:14	H 11:26	L 18:33	H 23:45	6:50	18:47	FULL
SUN 27 SEPT	L 6:50	H 11:58	L 19:09		6:51	18:45	
MON 28 SEPT	H 0:17	L 7:25	H 12:37	L 19:43	6:53	18:43	
TUES 29 SEPT	H 0:52	L 7:58	H 13:08	L 20:49	6:56	18:38	
WEDS 30 SEPT	H 1:29	L 8:29	H 13:47	L 20:49	6:56	18:38	
THURS 1 OCT	H 2:08	L 9:02	H 14:28	L 21:25	6:58	18:36	
FRI 2 OCT	H 2:51	L 9:41	H 15:15	L 22:08	6:59	18:34	
SAT 3 OCT	H 3:42	L 10:31	H 16:16	L 23:08	7:01	18:32	THIRD
SUN 4 OCT	H 4:58	L 11:43	H 17:57		7:02	18:29	
MON 5 OCT	L 0:31	H 6:47	L 13:16	H 19:36	7:04	18:27	
TUES 6 OCT	L 2:09	H 8:14	L 14:55	H 20:59	7:06	18:25	
WEDS 7 OCT	L 3:43	H 9:26	L 16:18	H 22:03	7:07	18:23	
THURS 8 OCT	L 4:50	H 10:21	L 17:16	H 22:51	7:09	18:21	

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li oppression of Palestinians. Upwards of 30 similar events are being co-ordinated on that day across the country, supported by Amnesty International as well as the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and other pro-Palestine groups.

Local campaigners, styling themselves as Palantir Out Of East Sussex (POOES), describe Palantir as “a US spyware company that provides the AI tech to militaries, police and security agencies to commit gross human rights abuses”. Palantir’s clients include ICE in America and the Israel military.

In July this year the UK parliament’s Health and Social Care Committee raised serious concerns about Palantir’s ‘Federated Data Platform’ (FDP) contract with the NHS: they highlighted a lack of data sovereignty, criticised the efficacy of Palantir’s software, claiming that up to a third of NHS Trusts using the company’s software, are now doing fewer operations, and pointed out the availability of alternative UK tech solutions. The existing contract contains a break clause allowing the NHS to terminate it from February next year.

‘REMOVE NOW’

However, according to POOES, Palantir “is being rolled out right now in East Sussex, giving it unlimited access to our data without the consent of NHS patients... we need to remove Palantir now to safeguard patient data, remove the danger of ‘vendor lock in’, and restore trust in public services.”

They have circulated online a letter for signature by individually named patients of East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT) denying consent for their private medical data to be accessed by Palantir. Hundreds, according to POOES, have signed.

Hastings & Districts Trades Union Council and Hastings Jews for Justice have endorsed the campaign, as has Hastings Green Party. Cllr

Becca Horn, Community Safety Lead at Hastings Borough Council and also East Sussex County Councillor, says: “I was sickened when I learnt that East Sussex NHS Trust is already using Palantir’s systems. I absolutely do not trust them with our data. This goes right to the very root of our integrity as a country – do we want our Government to uphold human rights? Or are we happy for them to get into bed with this genocide-backing, migrant-terrorising spy-tech firm? Our NHS should not be for sale, to anyone – and certainly not to the likes of Palantir.”

TRUST RESPONSE

In July, Jayne Black, Chief Executive of ESHT, responded in a letter to POOES that she “recognise[s] the strength of feeling expressed and the importance of providing clear, factual information about how the Trust is approaching [the FDP] programme...[It] brings together data already held within NHS systems to provide clinicians and operational teams with a more complete, near real-time view of patient pathways, capacity and demand. In practical terms, this supports improvements in areas such as waiting list management, theatre scheduling, discharge planning and the overall flow of patients through hospital services.

“It does not introduce new categories of data collection, and it does not change who controls patient information. The Trust remains the data controller for all patient data used within the platform. All use of data is governed by UK data protection legislation and established NHS information governance standards. Palantir provides the underlying software under a national NHS England contract but acts strictly as a data processor under robust contractual and regulatory controls. Patient data remains within NHS control and is used to support direct care and the effective running of services, not for commercial purposes.”

1 trip. A spokesperson for SER told HIP: “This is an additional train – the fastest service we can run between Hastings and London and at the earliest possible time. It will give our customers a choice between a fast ‘peak’ train at 8.05 taking 74 minutes between Hastings and London Bridge or a slower ‘off peak’ train at 8.15.”

The company has stated that it is “trailing these new services to assess their demand and benefit to customers”. In a similar vein, Ms Dollimore refers to them as “a pilot service. If we want it to stay, we all must use it to show the demand.”

However, Mark Sullivan, a transport consultant who has studied the southeastern network over a long period, questions whether the new service will target the right market.

“The number of daily commuters to London has declined as more people work from home two or three days a week,” he says. “But off-peak travel is growing. I would advise

Southeastern to schedule the new faster morning train to depart from Hastings 30 to 40 minutes later, so it arrives at Charing Cross after 10.00, charge it at off-peak rates, and market it for the day-visitor to London.”

A footnote: older travellers may recall some peak-time trains in the pre-Covid era which achieved comparable times to the new service by not calling at London Bridge and making a first/last stop out of London at High Brooms.

TAPESTRY TICKETING

Last month SER offered 1,066 free tickets for schoolchildren in Hastings to visit the Bayeux Tapestry exhibition at the British Museum, following another initiative of Ms Dollimore. A company spokesperson has told HIP that, as of last week, 800 of these have been allocated. Schools that wish to take advantage need to show a reservation at the museum before booking.

JASON ELLIS



Source Park Future Under Wraps as BMX Company Crashes

HUGH SULLIVAN

In July, Hastings Borough Council announced that the Source Park skatepark on the seafront was closed “until further notice” due to health and safety concerns following water ingress through the concrete structures of the promenade above. Two months on, the company which traded from the underground venue, Source BMX Limited, has gone into insolvent liquidation.

The company’s Statement of Affairs, filed by its liquidator Chris Knott earlier this month, shows an overall deficit of over £1.5m, including almost £700,000 owed to a Taiwan logistics corporation A & A Worldwide and nearly £400,000 in UK tax.

This is the second major insolvency of the Source BMX business in three years.

In September 2023, two previous companies, The Source (Hastings) Limited and The Source (Hastings) Holdings Limited were put into administration owing debts of over £10m. Their directors and share-

holders, local entrepreneurs Rich and Marc Moore, bought back the business assets, including the lease of the skatepark, putting them into new companies Source BMX Limited and Wheels of Steel Holdings Limited (WoSH). Losses were largely confined to HSBC bank and another large financial investor. Trade suppliers were largely or wholly repaid from the phoenix companies in order to maintain goodwill. Employees (over 70 of them) had their contracts transferred.

The cause of the 2023 crash was put down to the after-effects of the Covid pandemic on supply chains from factories in Taiwan and mainland China, coupled with a reversal of consumer confidence as the Ukraine war took hold.

Now, three years on, Source BMX Limited has itself been forced into liquidation, this time with much wider-spread effects, including substantial losses for a number of suppliers and inevitable staff redundancies.

Rich Moore says that the company’s US arm was significantly hit by President Trump’s increased tariffs. The sudden closure of the skatepark

has also resulted in significant additional costs and the loss of an important source of revenue. However, more generally, the Moores have admitted that they had overreached: “Ultimately we were carrying a cost base built for a much larger market than exists today.”

Other cycle businesses have been suffering similar financial upheavals. Major UK distributor Saddleback went into administration in May. Leading European manufacturer Accell, based in the Netherlands, filed for insolvency last month.

THE FUTURE

The Moores seem nevertheless determined to carry on. What remains of the retail business, focussed on the UK rather than internationally, has been transferred to their associate company, WoSH, which remains solvent.

“It’s obviously been a very difficult period,” says Rich, “particularly given Source’s long association with Hastings and the impact on staff, suppliers and others connected with the business. Our focus now is becoming a smaller BMX business and putting it onto a sustainable footing for the future.”

“As to the skatepark, it remains closed, and the Foreshore Trust [who are the freehold owners] have the required works out to tender. We expect to open, and renew our Battle of Hastings event, in 2027.”

“We’re excited about new plans, which have been in place for some time but are dependent on the works taking place to make the structure safe.”

Both the Moores and Hastings Borough Council (representing the Trust) are currently tight-lipped about their mutual contractual arrangements.

The Statement of Affairs of Source BMX shows the council as owed £33,575, but they have declined to explain what this debt represents, (whether unpaid council tax, unpaid rent or other liability). A spokesperson for the council said last week: “This is a live situation involving sensitive commercial conversations. As and when there is something we can update with, we will issue a press release or statement updating.”

Other than confirming that the Foreshore Trust is legally responsible for the structure of the skatepark and the required structural repairs, Rich Moore is equally reticent. However, he does affirm that the hospitality businesses of the Courtyard are separate from the Source BMX operation and “are not part of the liquidation”.

Within the Courtyard, the bars and restaurants may have yet to feel the full effect of the skatepark closure. One owner said last week that his business had continued to expand over the warm and dry summer, but admitted that winter will bring different trading conditions. In any event the shut-down was “a huge loss to the town”.

‘High-spec’ Office Space Renewed at Havelock Place

REBECCA BROOKER



Deputy Mayor Amanda Jobson cuts tape at Grand Reopening

HUGH SULLIVAN

Havelock Place, the six-storey office building in Havelock Street which suffered a major fire in July 2023, has been refurbished and is available for let to fresh commercial tenants. Owners AD2DAN Limited bought it at auction in May this year and, after extensive work using an array of local tradesmen, are marketing it as “a flagship development of ultra-modern high-spec office space to rent in the heart of Hastings”.

A Grand Reopening was held on the morning of 7 September, with local movers and shakers in the business community invited along to make a tour. Local companies involved in the refurbishment, including heating engineers and plumbers SJ Feist, electrical contractors Hanington-Gilbert & Co and Sussex Lifts, were represented. Hastings deputy mayor Cllr Amanda Jobson was present to cut the official tape.

The building offers 24,500 square feet over six floors, including spectacular views from the top two floors over the roofs of Hastings town centre to Hastings Castle, West Hill and out to sea. The street it’s in, Havelock Road, is about to be re-surfaced under the Public Realm and Green Connections Project funded from the Hastings Town Deal.

Building director Paul Orkin says that the revitalised premises provide “credible ‘luxury’ space with a contemporary feel – high ceilings and airy”. Offered at competitive rates per square foot, they will be among the cheapest in the region. Their Head of Marketing, Gemma Dearman, is confident that they will attract substantial corporate interest, as the trend for large companies to summon their workforce back into office attendance gathers pace.

If so, it will be a welcome reversal, from the perspective of others doing business in Hastings town centre, of historical trends of longer duration.

DECADE OF NEGLECT

The Hastings Business Quarter, sandwiched between Havelock Road and Priory Street, has suffered a decade of neglect and disappointment. Its set of concrete-and-glass buildings, initially developed with public money by regeneration company Sea Space and taken over by its successor Sea Change Sussex, promised competitively priced corporate office space alongside a vibrant student campus for an expanded University of Brighton. But the University pulled out; some office space was leased to insurance providers Saga and then to the Department of Work and Pensions, but Saga departed again, and the DWP – previous leaseholders of Havelock Place – have reduced their continued occupancy to the nextdoor building, Lacuna Place.

Moreover, Sea Change Sussex have in the meantime been turning their attention to developing what might be seen as rival office space out of town in the Bexhill Enterprise Park, and in the Innovation Parks at North Queensway, St Leonards, and Sovereign Harbour, Eastbourne. The offers of each of these are of easy traffic access, on-site parking and brand new buildings overlooking green countryside or seascapes.

The Havelock Place team are confident, however, that their building ticks all the boxes. The two-minute walk from Hastings railway station, multiple bus links and nearby multi-storey car parks, together with the promised greening of the town centre, will in their opinion provide more than sufficient counter-attraction.



Cabinet votes to Extend Dog Control Order

PAUL MCLAUGHLIN

Hastings Borough Council's Cabinet has agreed to renew its controversial Dog Control Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for another three years. The order bans dogs from some beaches over the summer and restricts where dogs can be released off lead in parks and open spaces.

The Cabinet agreed to extend the order along with the addition of two new amendments aimed at improving responsible dog ownership and expanding access to local heritage sites.

The first change will require any person in control of a dog to carry a suitable receptacle or other means for removing dog faeces at all times, unless they can demonstrate a reasonable excuse. Failure to produce a receptacle when requested by an authorised officer will be deemed an offence and result in a fine.

The second amendment will allow dogs on the Hastings Castle site provided they remain on a lead at all times. This site is managed by Troika Projects, the local consortium appointed to run and redevelop parts of the Castle and West Hill. They requested that dogs be allowed on the Castle grounds, arguing that a dog-friendly policy could benefit the historic site, attracting a wider range of visitors, increasing visitor numbers, and encouraging longer stays.

The existing PSPO was introduced in November 2023. It provoked anger among some local dog owners, who felt it restricted their access to key walking routes along the beach. The backlash led to ongoing friction and petitions, and prompted the council to amend the order in 2025 to adjust portions of the beach exclusion areas.

This summer's consultation proved less acrimonious than previously. Public feedback was broadly supportive, with most respondents backing extending the PSPO for another three years. There was also public support for requiring dog walkers to carry means to clean up fouling, along with the proposal to allow dogs on leads within the Hastings Castle site.

The new requirement for owners to carry a suitable receptacle to clean up dog mess stands in stark contrast to the fact that the council has not hitherto issued a single fine for dog fouling, despite nearly 1,000 reported incidents since May 2024. This fact was uncovered by Labour councillors through a Freedom of Information request.

Cllr Helen Kay, Leader of the Labour Group, said: "The idea that the council would fine anyone walking a dog without a poo bag is plainly ludicrous. The same officers who issue parking fines should also be able to issue fines for dog fouling. The Greens need to focus on actually cracking down on this issue, not on performative policies that will never be properly enforced."

High Demand for Pride in Place Funding

More than 270 applications have been submitted by individual residents, community groups and organisations across Hastings in the first round of Pride in Place (PiP) funding.

The PiP Board has announced that these applications represent "over £11 million of ideas" to improve neighbourhoods, strengthen communities and enhance public spaces throughout the town.

However, only £342,000 is available in this year's funding round. The applications will be assessed by a panel of residents on the Board, who will review proposals and assess which projects are to receive priority support.

Kevin Boorman, Independent Chair of the Board, says: "Thank you to everyone who took the time to apply. Behind every application is a great deal of effort, thought and commitment from people who care deeply about where they live, and we are incredibly grateful for the response we've received."

"While we know we'll not be able

to support every worthwhile project this year, Pride in Place is a long-term programme, and we are keen to explore opportunities for strong applications that are not successful this year to be considered as part of future funding rounds."

Helena Dollimore, MP for Hastings adds: "Pride in Place is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change our streets, neighbourhoods and town for the better. It is fantastic that so many local organisations and community groups applied for this funding, all with a drive to make our town an even better place to live. I will keep pushing for as many residents as possible to have their say, so please keep sending in your ideas on how we should spend this money for our town."

Funding decisions are expected to be made in October.

Residents can stay up to date with the latest Pride in Place news, funding opportunities and community updates by following the programme's social media channels.

PIP PROGRAMME

Hastings was one of 75 areas selected by the government's Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to receive up to £20m of extra funding through Phase 1 of its Pride in Place programme over a ten-year period. In March this year the Hastings PiP Board obtained government approval of its plan to spend this money through three distinct programmes:

- **Pride in Our Streets** – up to £250,000 a year for public realm improvements such as bins, bus shelters, benches and murals
- **Pride in Our Neighbourhoods** – up to £500,000 a year for projects such as improvements to community centres, sports facilities and youth activities
- **Pride in Our Town** – up to £1 million a year (from year 2 of the programme) for heritage projects, infrastructure, town centre or seafront improvements



For more information please visit: hastings.gov.uk/regeneration/pride-in-place

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

✉ Letter

FOOD BINS OF THE PAST

Dear HIP

In reference to Dr Keogh's great letter in HIP 310 (*Food Waste Roll-out*), the compostable bags for lining individual caddies are £3.75 for a roll of 25 – lasts a while, but still an added cost for cash-strapped families.

Also, our block has three wings, each with their own entrance, own refuse and own recycling bins. But I have just learnt that our wing is the only one to receive a communal bin and caddies – the other wings got nothing.

I was born in 1939. When we returned to Hastings after the war, rationing was still in force. Every street had its 'pig bin' for edible waste, and the farmer came round weekly in an old green lorry to collect it. I'm pretty sure we never put animal products in it – just vegeta-

ble matter – and no orange peel. But I can't forget the horror of being sent over in summer and having to dodge swarms of fruit flies and the dreaded wasps, not to mention the smell! No compostable bags in those days, and fewer urban foxes.

I'm wondering if the present day wildlife is eating the bags along with the food, and how good or bad it is for them. Plenty to think about!

Rowanna Web

✉ Letter

HOLDING TO ACCOUNT

Dear HIP

Bea Rogers objects to my attempting to hold Helena Dollimore MP to account for her voting record, arguing, effectively, that Ms Dollimore was just following orders ("to support the leader and Prime Minister, is not a matter of her individual position", Letters, HIP 310).

It is a matter of public record that Ms Dollimore has repeatedly chosen to back positions – and, where called upon, vote with the government to support them – that many of her constituents strongly oppose.

For example: supporting government attacks on migrants, the disabled, free speech and the right to protest; backing the continued supply of UK arms to Israel; and failing to challenge the use of UK bases for Donald Trump's illegal war on Iran or to oppose new climate-busting oil and gas extraction in the North Sea.

Moreover, in every one of these cases, at least some Labour MPs have taken a principled stand and opposed the government.

Unless voters know what their political representatives are actually up to, they cannot make informed decisions at election time.

That is democracy 101.

Gabriel Carlyle

We would love to hear from you.

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HIP does not endorse the views on the Letters page. They are solely those of the writer. Please be aware we may need to edit letters for reasons of space and we will only withhold names if this is necessary for the protection of the writer.



Shelley Feldman and Katy Colley - food is at the heart of Judaism

Shabbat Meal Fundraiser for Palestinian Poet

Hastings Jews for Justice is hosting a traditional Shabbat meal to raise funds for Hala Mdukh, a young poet and trainee nurse in Gaza.

A traditional four-course meal will be served, alongside first-class local entertainment. Although meat, especially chicken, is traditionally central to the Sabbath meal, the group has adapted every dish to be vegan, kosher and halal.

According to Katy Colley: "Food has always been at the heart of Judaism. Many of us were brought up eating these dishes every Friday night, from chicken soup with lok-

shen and kneidlach to challah and chopped liver. It also represents the warmth and love of our community, and that's why we're keen to share them with our community in Hastings."

Funds raised will help support Hala's health, family needs and university education. Shelley Feldman says: "Oftentimes, it feels like we can do so little, for the many people suffering in Gaza, and worldwide, but, as it is written, 'To save one life, is to save the entire world'."

Hala's extraordinary gift was first recognised through the British

education charity Hands Up Project, where she performed in online 'remote theatre' productions. Her poem *Friend* appeared in the 2023 book *Moon Tell Me Truth*, and she is today part of the Palestine Writers Workshop, a mentoring programme supported by SOAS. Last year, a collection of her poems, *Hala*, was published.

But Hala has lived through nearly three years of genocide, she suffers from serious health issues, and her family have no means of supporting her. Previous fundraising enabled her to begin university, and Hastings Jews for Justice hopes to help her continue.

She says: "I grew up in a place that taught me how to be strong in silence, and how to keep my dreams alive despite everything that tries to extinguish them. I believe that a person is known by their depth, not by their noise, and by their impact, not by their words."

Katy comments: "Many of us have been moved by Hala's poetry, and we know that if she were born anywhere else in the world, she would be collecting prizes for her astonishing work. But Hala lives in Gaza, where survival is not guaranteed, where futures are shredded and hopes crushed.

"One of her poems, *Hell in Bottle*, expresses this despair, opening with the line 'How do I tell the world I'm drowning on dry land?' We are hoping that through these efforts, we can send out a lifeline to help her to fulfil her immense potential."



Tickets cost £32. The event begins at 6.00pm on Friday 2 October at The Printworks. ticketlab.app/event/39519-Friday-Night-Fundraiser-tickets/#/ For more info on Hastings Jews for Justice visit hastingsjewsforjustice.org

The People's Emergency Briefing in Battle

The opportunity to hear directly from the experts is coming to Battle on Sunday 27 September, when *The People's Emergency Briefing* film will be shown three times at Battle Memorial Hall as part of Battle's Big Green Day.

Presented by Chris Packham, the film brings together leading scientists and specialists to share evidence about the climate change challenges facing Britain, from food and health to extreme weather and the economy. It also explores the choices, solutions and opportunities available to us, giving audiences a chance to understand the bigger picture and consider what a positive response could look like.

The documentary grew out of the National Emergency Briefing held at Westminster in November 2025, where experts presented their findings to an audience drawn from politics, business, culture, faith, sport and the media. It is now being shared through organised screenings across the country, making Battle's three showings a valuable local opportunity to experience the film and be part of a wider national conversation.

BIGGER PICTURE TO LOCAL ACTION

The screenings are hosted by Battle Solar Town as part of Battle's Big Green Day, a free community event celebrating practical ideas for a greener Battle.

While the documentary explores the national and global picture, Battle's Big Green Day brings the conversation closer to home. Visitors can meet local community groups, charities, businesses and organisations, explore exhibition stands, attend short talks and discover practical ideas for their homes, gardens and communities. There will also be children's activities.

It is not the aim to tell people what they should think or do, but to give them access to information, introduce them to people doing interesting things locally and leave them feeling better equipped to make their own choices.

Three free screenings will take place on Sunday 27 September. Visitors are encouraged to allow time before or after their screening to explore the whole event.



Screening times: 11:30, 12:45, 14:00.

Free advance booking: buytickets.at/battlememorialhall Battle's Big

Green Day takes place on Sunday 27 September at Battle Memorial Hall from 11.00am to 3.00pm. Upcoming showings of *The People's Emergency Briefing* in Hastings 26 September at Christ Church, Old London Road, Ore 1.30pm (doors) 10 October at White Rock Hotel as part of Hastings Eco-Conference 2026

Hastings RNLI – A Highly Qualified Crew

Hastings RNLI lifeboat station celebrated a wonderful weekend recently, with seven crew receiving new qualifications.

Paul, already the coxswain of the station's all weather Shannon lifeboat, qualified as a helm on the inshore lifeboat; Sam, Hector and Harry qualified as 'Tier 2' (higher grade) inshore lifeboat crew; Dan qualified as Tier 1 inshore lifeboat crew; and Lucy and Vikki qualified

KEVIN BOORMAN



as inshore lifeboat shore crew.

Hastings RNLI lifeboat operations manager Jo Mayne said: "What a wonderful weekend this has been for the station, marking the culmination of many months of intensive training and commitment from our volunteer

crew. It's a fantastic achievement, further strengthening our operational capability and resilience.

"I would also like to thank the rest of the crew who turned out this weekend, giving up their time to make these achievements possible."

FREE INHERITANCE TAX INFORMATION SESSION

St Michael's Hospice is inviting Hastings and Rother residents to join them at their next free will-writing information session, which focuses on inheritance tax and how to plan confidently for the future.

The session will take place from 10.00am-12.00pm on Wednesday 30 September at the Arthur Easton Centre, St Michael's Hospice, TN38 0LB, and will be led by Rhiannon Gossedge-Jones, Wealth Management Partner at True Potential Wealth Management.

Designed for those who have already written a will or are beginning to think about what they want to leave behind, the session aims to provide straightforward guidance on what can often feel like a complex and daunting subject. Attendees will gain practical information on:

- Inheritance Tax thresholds
- Upcoming changes relating to pensions

- Lifetime gifting
- Inheritance Tax rules, including what may need to be paid and when

There will also be an opportunity for attendees to ask questions following the presentation.

Perdita Chamberlain, Individual Giving Manager at the Hospice, says: "Inheritance Tax can be a difficult topic to navigate, but understanding the basics can make a real difference when planning for the future. This free session will provide clear, accessible information to help people make informed decisions and better understand their options."



The event is free to attend, but booking in advance is required: stmichaels-hospice.com/giftsinwills or call 01424 456396.

Exploring Activism in the Vaults

FIONA MCGARRY

An unusual museum has recently opened in Hastings: *The Before and After Vaults* – unusual because its subject is modern activism.

Located in the vaults of the Observe Building, the museum explores major activism moments of recent times across Hastings, the UK and internationally. Its opening coincided with the start of Coastal Currents and the landmark hearing of former student activist Joshua Wong.

Appropriately situated 'underground' in an atmospheric space, it includes posters, photography and film from various campaigns, including a film by Sudanese peace campaigner Mazin Urso. There are also oral histories and artefacts from historic actions on themes ranging from anti-racism to freedom of expression and assembly and an immersive escape room challenge, *Fight or Flight*, where visitors can test themselves as activists.

The museum has also quietly been staging ticketed events, the first showcasing Gen Z activism on 12 September. The evening featured anti-racism change-makers Sophia Bailey and Hemlata Pant

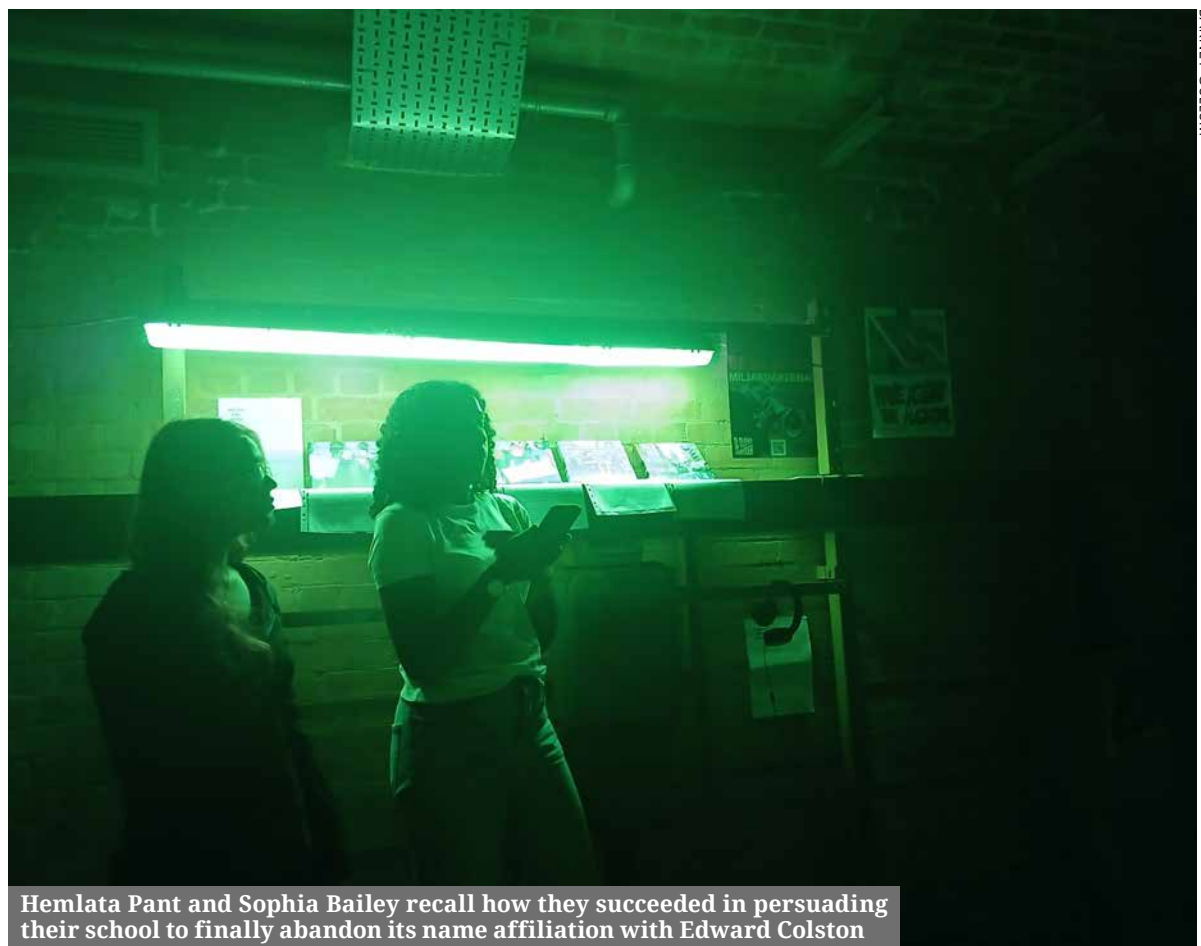
and 'Lily', the inspirational 17-year-old founder of generation.1.5 degrees – a youth-led climate justice action group.

Uncomfortable that their school in Bristol was named after slave trader Edward Colston, Sophia and Hemlata spoke movingly about how they organised reasoned debate and set up a successful consultation process to change its name from Colston Girls School to Montpelier High School.

Lily also revealed some fascinating facts about Gen Z activism – including information on the *No New Workers* campaign, which is successfully targeting insurance companies (essential to fossil fuel expansion projects) and making it harder for them to recruit young people.

The second event on 17 September highlighted local activism; it featured committed activists Jane Ripley of Unite for Nature and Grace Lally of Housing Rebellion discussing *DIY social and environmental change in Hastings*.

If you missed these, it's not too late to catch the third event on 4 October, which delves into international activism. The speakers will be Mazin Urso, Hong Kong freedom/pro-democracy campaigners Finn Lau and Clara Cheung and Liberty Investi-



Hemlata Pant and Sophia Bailey recall how they succeeded in persuading their school to finally abandon its name affiliation with Edward Colston

gates journalist Aaron Walawalkar.

Curator of *The Before and After Vaults* is writer and activist Barney Cullum, who has reported as a journalist from over 20 countries and whose book, *Making a Movement*, details his quest to find out how 'disruptors' around the world are fighting for a better future. Barney is currently uncertain whether the museum will remain in Hastings

or go on tour "as a pop-up museum".

For now, the focus is on expanding the exhibits collection in the hope that the museum and people's awareness of how we can affect our own futures. Barney says: "Our event speakers bring with them new artefacts from their actions and campaigns that will together serve to illuminate an array of contemporary approaches to realising positive so-

cial and environmental change."



Next talk on 4 October at 7.00pm
Is there still space for resistance?
Struggles, solidarity and solutions spanning Hong Kong, Russia, Sudan and the UK. Information and tickets at: beforeandaftervaults.org

HVA Volunteer Awards 2026

Hastings Voluntary Action's annual Volunteer Award Nominations are now open! Nominations are invited for people who either live or volunteer in Hastings. The categories are:

- **Award for Individual Excellence in Volunteering** – this is an open category, and HVA welcomes your nominations for volunteers who you think have gone above and beyond to make a difference to an individual or their community.
- **Young Volunteer Award (18 and under)** – it's sometimes difficult for younger people to volunteer, due to academic commitments or money constraints, but many still step up to the challenge. Nominate your young

volunteers here, to say thanks for their commitment to supporting others.

- **Long Service Award** – do you have a volunteer who has been with you for as long as you can remember? Nominate them here, tell us their story, and let us know what their long-running support has meant to you and your organisation.
- **Green Volunteer Award** – nominate volunteers who work tirelessly so we can all benefit from our town's wonderful green (and blue!) spaces and projects.
- **Terrific Trustee** – would you like to recognise a trustee whose expertise or long-standing commitment has made a massive difference to your charity? Tell us about it here!



Nominations should be made online by 4.00pm on Thursday 8 October: docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScQv8rWyG3JQfX1ID-Qu1-iNf611AAK3N_1pEv20Wx-d6ENM-5w/viewform Awards will be presented to the winners on the morning of Friday 6 November.

Last Chance to Catch Seaside Yarn Trail

The handcrafted yarn creations which have delighted residents and visitors while on display throughout Hastings Old Town are now on show together at St Michael's Hospice, St Leonards.

The exhibition offers a last opportunity for the public to see the colourful seaside-themed artworks before they are sold through the group's online auction. The collection can be viewed daily from 10.00am to 4.00pm, excluding Thursdays, until Saturday 27 September, when the auction closes.

Each unique creation has been crafted by talented members of the Yarnbombers for St Michael's Hos-



Yarn Trail - 'Going Up'



Yarn Trail - Knitorious Pirates

pice group and forms part of a fundraising initiative supporting the work of the hospice. All 18 pieces are available to bid on through the online auction, and every bid will contribute directly to the hospice's ongoing work supporting patients and families across Hastings and Rother.

Linda Revill from the Fundraising team at St Michael's hopes people will take this opportunity to see this unique collection, choose their favourite and go on to place a bid, "knowing that every pound raised will help support the care provided

by St Michael's Hospice".

Whether visitors have followed the trail through Hastings Old Town from the beginning or are discovering the creations for the first time, this is a last chance to see the collection before the artworks go.



To view the exhibition or to place a bid in the online auction: jumblebee.co.uk/bringhomeapie-ceoftheseasidetraill

Who Pays the Costs of War?

Ahead of a public meeting organised by Hastings Stop the War, RICHARD WISTREICH considers the dangers of armed conflict and invites us to participate in the debate

Our leaders would have us believe we are hurtling towards an inevitable war with Russia or China or Iran or some other 'enemy' – and very soon. The UK military budget is already the fifth largest in the world (£74 billion a year), considerably more than Israel, Ukraine or Saudi Arabia, all currently at war. Yet our forces are apparently so woefully run-down and ill-equipped that there's no option but to spend vast amounts more on the

latest hi-tech ships, drones, planes, missiles, cyber, etc. – the target is a staggering £120 billion by 2035. All this money will, of course, be poured into the coffers of international arms companies.

The message being pumped out every day is that war is unavoidable, and that there's no alternative to this spending frenzy. This means cutting back on education, housing, health and social resilience. It also means less money for dealing with



the catastrophe towards which we and our children are heading at breakneck speed unless we take serious action very soon: climate breakdown.

As part of this warmongering, the government now has to persuade many more young people to join the military machine. Their answer? £70 million this year to fund school cadet forces; hundreds of 'fun' visits to primary and sec-

ondary schools by BAE Systems in partnership with the armed forces; and an £18 million marketing campaign, all targeted towards disadvantaged communities places like Hastings, where unemployment is among the highest in the South-East.

Britain is the only European country that takes recruits as young as 16: a quarter of army recruits are children under 18. They may well believe that this is their best chance

of a secure future, but they are the ones who, as ever throughout history, would end up fighting on the front lines, likely suffering physical or mental injuries, possibly having to kill, and even paying with their young lives.

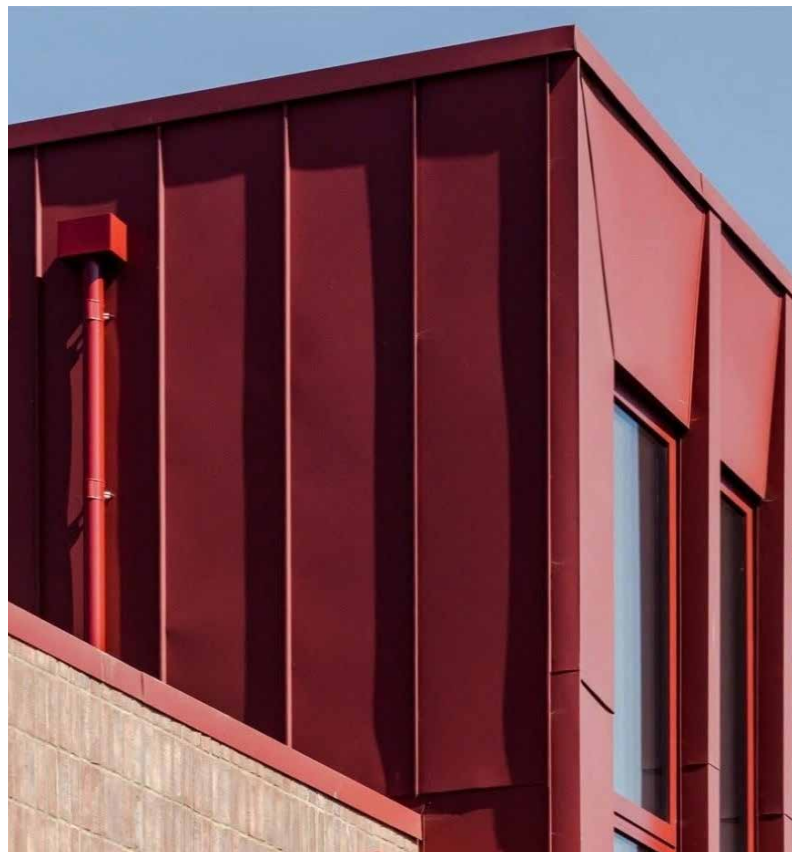
Whatever your views on balancing UK defence needs with its other priorities or how the current drive to war is likely to affect you, our community, and especially young people, you are warmly invited to a meeting and open discussion organised by Hastings Stop the War on Sunday 4 October from 5.00-7.00pm at the Isabel Blackman Centre, 3 Winding Street, Hastings, TN34 3AT.

Speakers include Dr Stuart Griffiths, who joined the Paras aged 16 and served in Belfast during The Troubles; Roxi Farhadi, a student at the Brighton University; and Felix Krekow Rojas, a leader of the School Strike Movement Against Conscription in Germany.



Entrance is free, but please register for tickets at eventbrite.co.uk/e/who-pays-the-costs-of-war-tickets-1999154397619

Revamped Youth Hub in Hollington



RX ARCHITECTS

Cllr Victoria Carson, East Sussex County Council's lead member for children and families, says: "The youth hub has gone from an underused and dated building to a wonderful facility offering more young people a range of activities, guidance and support."

She explains that this is a long-term investment in the future of young people, families and the wider Hastings community and will enable partners, voluntary organisations and council services to work together to improve outcomes for many local residents.

A team of youth workers will provide support and guidance, helping young people build confidence, develop life skills and realise their potential.

Funded by the Government's Levelling Up Fund, the hub will run arts and crafts, sport and physical activities, music and creative programmes, and social and recreational sessions.

Although its main purpose is to support young people, the building will also host Family Hub services for parents and carers of children under five. Partner agencies and voluntary and community organisations will be able to use meeting and consultation spaces, while a dedicated NHS health suite will improve access to local health and wellbeing services.

Finishing touches are being made to the refurbished Hollington Youth Hub in Hastings ahead of its grand opening this week.

The £3.3 million refurbishment will allow the hub to support 160

young people each week, doubling its previous capacity. The modern, multipurpose building features a café, training kitchen, arts and chill-out spaces, music room, sports hall, gym area and sensory room.



Find out more about the hub and sessions available at Hollington Youth Hub: familyhubs.eastsussex.gov.uk/find-youth-hub/hollington-youth

Held in Loss, Moving in Life

WEEKLY THERAPY GROUP FOR GRIEF AND LOSS

Grief can change the shape of life. This weekly therapy group offers a confidential, therapist-facilitated space to explore loss alongside others who are also finding a way forward.

WHEN

Tuesdays, 6:00–7:30pm
12 weekly sessions
6–8 people

FORMAT

A contained, ongoing group experience that develops over 12 sessions, with attendance required throughout.

To find out more, including fees and lower-cost places, please contact me:

Email: sean@seankelly.org.uk
Phone: 07798 740 830
Website: seankelly.org.uk

SATURDAY
OCTOBER 3RD
2026



ONE DAY FOUR STAGES OVER 100 MUSICIANS



PASSES, TICKETS
& DETAILS HERE:

[HASTINGSJAZZFESTIVAL.COM](https://hastingsjazzfestival.com)

WITH THANKS
TO OUR LOVELY
SPONSORS:



WHAT'S HAPPENING AND WHERE

VENUE 1

PRINTWORKS

FLISS GORST BAND +
GROUNDED MOVEMENT
16:00 - 16:45

SOFT MACHINE
18:15 - 19:15

BUKKY LEO &
BLACK EGYPT
21:15 - 22:45

VENUE 3

BARNABY'S

LIANE CARROLL'S JAZZ
BRUNCH
10:00 - 11:50

WILL BARRY TRIO
13:45 - 14:30

SIMON SPILLET QUARTET
14:45 - 15:45

POPPY DANIELS
18:15 - 19:00

JIM MULLEN ORGAN TRIO
20:15 - 21:15

VENUE 2

HENRY WARD HALL

RORY INGHAM'S
TROMBONE ASSEMBLY
12:35 - 13:35

SAMAKI +
BARNABY'S BIG BAND
16:50 - 18:05

SOWETO KINCH TRIO
19:30 - 20:45

VENUE 4

NUR RESTAURANT

STOLEN MOMENTS TRIO
13:00 - 14:00

TRINITY QUARTET
14:30 - 15:15

ALL DAY JAZZ JAM
12:00 - 19:30



HWH
HENRY WARD HALL

+

Barnaby's
Lounge

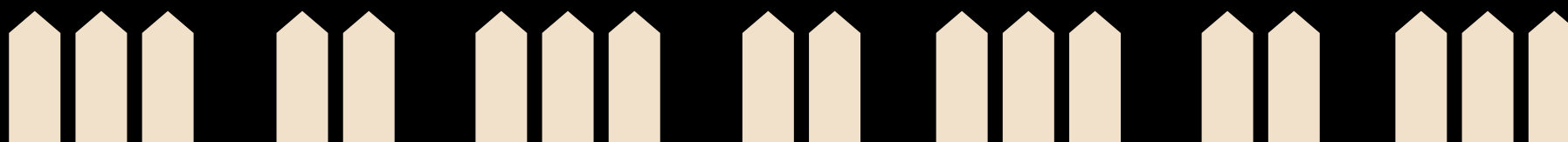
+

THE PRINTWORKS
HASTINGS

**SATURDAY
OCTOBER 3RD
2026**

PASSES, TICKETS
& DETAILS HERE:

[HASTINGSJAZZFESTIVAL.COM](https://hastingsjazzfestival.com)



A Medieval Thrill on the Hill

HELEN MURPHY & NICK PELLING
are conquered by castle drama

As you no doubt know, the Tapestry has come 'home'. But you might think there is nothing new to be said about 1066. William and his Norman blokes came over and killed Harold and stole the English throne. End of story, surely.

The team at Hastings Castle, however, think that we might need to try to rethink the event that is – rightly or wrongly – forever associated with this ancient town. (Let's not get into the mere detail that the battle was not in Hastings and The Tapestry is not a tapestry.) The fresh thinking has given rise to the first ever theatrical production in the grounds of our castle, entitled *Beyond Bayeux*. We were a bit sceptical about a musical show dwelling on what is, after all, England's biggest defeat; but the production was, to be frank, utterly amazing.

STRANGE TIMES

The jagged ruins of the old castle, stuck atop a wind-blasted West Hill in the gathering darkness proved to be the most haunting of settings.

As night fell the tapestry seemed to come to life in the form of eery animated projections rolling across the cobblestones. And then there was the music. Somehow Lucy Treacher's angular, modernist music captured a sense of the times, deeply out of joint. And oddly, it melded perfectly with the authentic Old English folk music of the remarkable singer, Muco.

Perhaps the dominant insight in the whole re-think is that the narrative is all a bit of a chest-thumping cartoon-strip of macho medievalists. Apparently, there are 93 penises in the whole triumphal tea towel (although it should be admitted 88 of them belong to horses.) And there is the startling point that of the 626 characters in the tapestry, only three are women. Given these facts, it's perhaps not such a surprise that *Beyond Bayeux* is, in many ways, a satire on the self-importance of power-hungry men. (Contemporary parallels with the Will and Harry saga did not go unremarked.)



Ellie Westbrook as the Court Jester

WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

Inverting the past, the show was largely powered by female energy. At the heart of it all was the extraordinary Ellie Westbrook. She starred as a sharp-tongued Jester whose side comments on the pronouncements of the pompous Bishop Odo – played by the delightfully uber-male James Purefoy – punctured the whole aggrandising theatre of imperial snatch-and-grab-

bery. Her performance was in many ways the central dynamo, fizzing up the whole production. It should be added that she also co-wrote the piece, with Vanessa Farinha, and directed much of the music.

Having said all of that, ultimately, we were most impressed by the sheer talent of the entire ensemble, from site managers, lighting technicians, and incredible musicians,

right up to the director, Cathy Brady. The historian David Musgrove gave the show some serious factual underpinning but above all, perhaps, the old, tired and windswept castle came into its own as a fantastical stage on which to give some fresh life to the mysteries of Albion's beguiling realm.

On this evidence, the town has discovered a powerful and spiritual platform for all our stories

Bronson: Man Behind the Myth

Francis Saunders in a powerful new drama

Bronson is a new one-man stage production coming to the Kino-Teatr in St Leonards. We caught up with the team who will bring the production to life in a play that explores the nature of the man behind one of Britain's most notorious names. Born Michael Gordon Peterson in 1952, arch-criminal Charles Bronson borrowed his pseudonym from the Hollywood star. He was first jailed in 1974 for armed robbery and spent nearly 50 years behind bars due to repeated violent outbursts, rooftop protests, and hostage-taking. He later changed his name to Charles Salvador, and became known for his prison artwork.

Local actor Francis Saunders, whose performance as *Gangster No. 1* was so powerful a couple of years ago, will no doubt bring the same Tony-Soprano-like ambiguity to the Bronson character. "There's so

much more to explore than the image people immediately have in their heads. Everyone knows the name Bronson – the violence, the prison stories, the larger-than-life personality," he says. "But as an actor, I'm interested in what's underneath all of that. What happens to a man after decades within the prison system? Where does the man end and the character of 'Bronson' begin?"

Being alone on stage is for him one of the biggest challenges of the part. "There's nowhere to hide. You have to hold that audience on your own. It's physically and mentally demanding." But he's excited about that responsibility.

THE TEAM

Director Sean Broughton worked as a special effects artist/director for many years with a variety of inter-



COURTESY OF FRANCIS SAUNDERS

nationally famous directors. He has been directing his own plays for almost 30 years, and has known Francis for 25 of those, and they have collaborated before. "There's something both terrifyingly dark and deeply moving in this script, and I knew immediately that Francis has the ability to make this a truly memorable performance."

He has found the rehearsals extremely rewarding: "There's something about theatre, being able to rehearse and finesse, that you don't always get in film. The smallest of inflections, the briefest of looks. The nuance of the performance, and

watching Bronson's character surface and blossom."

Dean Stalham has the role of Assistant Director: "It's been a privilege to contribute to the production and to learn from Sean's approach. His direction, vision and ability to handle difficult material with focus and sensitivity have been inspirational."

Music is also an important part of *Bronson*. There's original music by De Crâne, a local, post-punk, alternative band – they have four numbers on Bandcamp which certainly elicit the right kind of rather menacing atmosphere. Saunders feels that the music helps to create the isolation,

tension, and occasional sadness of being inside the cell, that it becomes "part of Bronson's internal world. There are moments where the music can say something that I don't need to say as an actor." De Crâne's score, he feels, projects both the darkness and the humanity of the piece.

De Crâne also created sound effects. "We've had to create pieces that suited and conveyed an overall feeling. If it hasn't been the right feel, then the team has had no problem telling us so, and that's what we wanted. Making the sound effects was comical at times – recording yourself urinating in a metal bucket..."

The producer of *Bronson*, Jo Morgan, has stepped back into producing here in the UK after some years working at Smoke&Mirrors, a US special effects company. She says she has found the whole process, the commitment, creativity and collaboration, hugely inspiring.

Asked about the Bronson character, Sean Broughton says: "It's theatre. We're exploring identity, punishment, isolation, masculinity and what happens to somebody after spending so much of their life within an institution. I don't want to tell an audience what they're supposed to think."

Tickets: kino-teatr.co.uk. Performances: Kino-Teatr, St Leonards, 15-16 October



Textile artist Antonia Chitty with crochet creations

Strands of Sustainability

East Sussex artists Antonia Chitty and Julie Gurr present *STRANDS* at DEPO Hastings as part of the Coastal Currents Arts Festival 2026. The exhibition brings together contemporary fibre art and sculptural work shaped by traditional craft and sustainable practice. *STRANDS* invites visitors to see traditional techniques and natural materials afresh as Chitty and Gurr transform fibre and willow into contemporary sculptural forms.

Antonia Chitty is a textile and freeform fibre artist based in East Sussex. Her work brings together memory and landscape along with the tactile possibilities of yarn. She draws inspiration from the sea, the countryside, and personal histories held within places and families. Using traditional crochet techniques and rich textural experimentation, she builds three-dimensional surfaces of ridges, waves, bobbles and open stitches that echo natural forms and layered personal stories.

Her choice of yarn is central to the process: hand-dyed local wool, leftover fibres, unusual textures and small remnants become part of the narrative, reflecting her interest in slow craft and the beauty that emerges when materials guide the making.

After years of making traditional functional baskets, Julie Gurr now experiments with innovative sculptural pieces. Her fluid forms and hangings draw on traditional basketry techniques, adapted to suit each design and material. Julie grows or forages all her materials, including willow cultivated, without chemicals, on land at the edge of Romney Marsh.

Growing varieties and colours that are not available commercially gives her an intimate connection to the material, through yearly cycles of cultivation and harvest. Her work is inspired by the natural colours of willow and by basketry traditions from around the world.

Suzan Aral, Director of MAKU UK, says: “MAKU’s aim from the start has been to ‘make use, not waste’ and to encourage others to do the same. Our Hastings headquarters, DEPO, is both a workspace and a venue where people with shared values can host events. To date, DEPO has hosted pop-up sales, sewing groups, art classes, and exhibitions, all with sustainability at their core.”



DEPO, 2A Elphinstone Road, Hastings TN34 2EE. Exhibition open 12-13 and 26-27 September, 11.00am–4.00pm. Instagram @antoniachitty, antoniachitty.co.uk



RIP to a Local Legend

JUDE MONTAGUE

Andy Neate died suddenly, sending a shock through the Hastings music community. A regular at the Jenny Lind pub with his Balearic chill band, Los Twangueros, and more recently the blues band Just Landed, he was a part of the town’s musical landscape.

With Jason Wilson (double bass), James Gulliver (percussion/drums), and Brendan O’Connell (guitar), along with the addition of Jem Turpin (harmonica) for the blues department of Los Twangueros, the

band were exceedingly active, playing at many venues such as along the seafront at Starsky and Hatch and at the Goat Ledge music stage.

Jason Wilson, longtime band member of Los Twangueros, told me what fun it was to work with him and that it felt like a musical family. The sounds seemed to be getting better and better. At Andy’s last gig, he was on a real high, feeling that they were really getting to where they wanted to be.

Los Twangueros was its own close, entertaining community, full of jokes and fun. Jason recalls the time they had together when they shared a house on Tackleway, which

they called ‘Fuck Wit Mansions’. Andy had an inventive schoolboy humour. He commissioned an original invention from Justin Ellis called the ‘Twang-O-Matic’, an ‘advanced hydration system’ for replenishing his beer glass automatically while on stage.

It’s hard to overestimate the influence that Andy has had on our acclaimed music scene: The many gigs he played, his teaching, his delightful projects. He lived close by the Jenny Lind – a pub that cherished him, and in there, we are really going to miss him. Simon Kennedy says “He was a fierce supporter of the Jenny and our music ethos, as well as being a champion of Hastings live music in general. It’s been our honour to be able to support his two exceptional bands. He was a truly outstanding musician. And friend.”

Many a toast will be raised. Legendary.





Rory Ingham's Trombone Assembly

Behind the Scenes at the Jazz Festival

VICTORIA KINGHAM talks to the organisers behind this year's event

Last year, the first year of Hastings' newest jazz venture, the Festival was very much a home-grown enterprise. Not at all a bad thing – it was supported and enjoyed by 600 people. The big name, Osibisa, gave a performance in Henry Ward Hall (with its splendid acoustics) that had people dancing in the aisles.

This year's is a more ambitious venture. The indefatigable promoter and musician Mike Willis, Barnaby Davies, and Simon Hersh have united their various skills to present a nationally-gathered programme of wonderfully-varied, top quality jazz artists. The musicians have universal appeal: to ardent fans of mainstream UK jazz, to lovers of radical free improvisation, to modern dance-oriented aficionados, through to blues fans and people who just like a good tune.

What does it take, though, to organise this kind of festival? First the three of them have an impressive range of connections in the business, and all of them are multiskilled. Their dearest wish is to be able to pay the musicians proper fees and hopefully, at the end of everything, to at least break even: "to make sure, critically, that at our festival, everybody gets paid right away," adds Simon Hersh, a jazz drummer, entrepreneur, and financial organiser.

He also points out that an important part of the business is sponsorship. "We have several organisations putting money in ... it's a cool thing to be associated with, a respected art form. And they get their logos mentioned." So money is im-

portant, but for all the right reasons.

Barnaby Davies (local trombonist and owner of Barnaby's Jazz Lounge) concurs: "Simon's role is crucial. Without sponsorship and finance, there'd be no festival." Barnaby's connections go far and wide, from Trinity College of Music to Ronnie Scott's. He's also responsible for bringing the amazing Trombone Assembly down here, led by the internationally acclaimed Rory Ingham. "They're brass royalty, the finest trombone players in the UK."

All three promoters are anxious to emphasise the value of the bands they have assembled – and how it's a challenge when Hastings offers such a wealth of music every day. "I could reel off 50 world-class musicians who already live in Hastings," says Barnaby. And you have to wonder why that is, and why Jazz Hastings has been successful for 18 years. The three promoters together, with their talents and connections, make a very powerful team.

PLANS FOR EXPANSION?

At the moment the maximum capacity for Barnaby's Jazz Lounge is about 55. Their ambition is to connect Hastings to the wider jazz world, taking people to backstage New York, to the Blue Note, to New Orleans. So "yes, expanding, but not physically in the building" continues Davies. At least, not yet. But there are possible plans for an evening starting earlier: two 75-minute sets with a break in between (Ronnie Scott's, like many of the New York clubs, now does this). This would



Trumpeter Poppy Daniels, who will appear with her quintet

retain the intimacy of a small venue while packing in more punters.

"What I like about Mike [Willis]," continues Davies, "is that he's the crossover connector. He speaks to an audience that doesn't even know they like jazz!" And that's part of the challenge: getting audiences to realise the skill and quality of the bands that have been hired.

Willis (whom you may know as a prime mover for all kinds of local music events) came to jazz later than most, via his own songwriting, plus blues and Americana. He admits to his taste being on the 'fun party' side of jazz: Jimmy Smith, Ramsey Lewis. His contribution to the musical life of this town, his initiative and enthusiasm, and indeed his provision of his house as a venue, are invaluable and far-reaching. His local connections are extensive and instant, via all kinds of social media.

Jazz musicians' pay is always an issue – a performer of 20 years' experience may get £50 an hour for a 3-hour gig, which is in no way commensurate with the years and years they have put in just to be there. Which is why this triumvirate is keen that people appreciate the worth of the people playing the festival. Indeed it's a truly wonderful lineup – you can catch the details on the website (links below) or their flyers and advertisements; and clips of most of the bands are further available on YouTube.

The team tell me that Brighton Jazz Festival felt it had to cancel their whole event this year after losing Arts Council sponsorship. I'd like to think that, with the enthusiasm of these promoters, the wild love of music endemic to Hastings and St Leonards, and the brilliance of the people they've been able to hire, this could never happen here.



Date: Saturday 3 October, all day.
Venues: various.
Full listing and tickets: hastings-jazzfestival.com.
Most artists can be found on YouTube via a search on their name. Barnaby's: barnabyslounge.co.uk. Tickets and lineup also at Mike's Place: mikeslist.uk.

Titans of Text

CHRIS CONNELLEY listens and learns from two literary legends

The Hastings Book Festival returned in rude good health this year (its 9th, can you believe it?) with a beefed-up committee, a new set of venues and a supersized programme of 40-plus events, involving a cast of 80 across its 11 days.

There was a strong poetry strand, too, and a focus on showcasing home-grown practitioners, in a town that has seen a flood of writers flock to our beaches over recent years. Poets appeared alongside old favourites and festival staples like the Book Fair, cult film night, and big-name signings in the form of this year's headliners, David Olu-soga and Kate Mosse.

The Festival has also developed a tradition of celebrating legends and heroes, in a local literary equivalent of the Sunday afternoon golden oldie slot at Glastonbury. The first weekend delivered rich pickings in this regard, as two elder statesmen took to the stage to talk about, and read from, their rich, diverse and extensive back catalogues.

SPORTS WRITER AND POLYMATH

First up was a late addition to the programme, Thomas Hauser, the 80-year old American polymath A-lister, who has authored in excess of 50 books. His writing takes on deeply diverse subjects from Dickens to global politics – with a particular focus on sport, and especially boxing. In 2019, he was inaugurated into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, the sport's highest honour, having been hailed by former world heavyweight champion Lennox Lewis as boxing's major chronicler.

In a reflective early evening conversation with Festival Director Dr Tola Dabiri, the soft-spoken Hauser explored his practice. Citing his exhaustive research as the most beloved element of his work, he noted that when that phase stops, the writing starts easily: his characters come alive on the page.

He went on to claim that his latest work, *Sherlock Holmes and Mrs Rutledge*, enveloped him so completely that he was literally talking to his main characters every day to develop the narrative. Though that phase has now passed, he admitted he "still missed them", though not for long, as they'll be back occupying his head space soon enough, given his intention to produce a sequel.

Hauser beguiled the audience with a series of pitch-perfect anecdotes about his sports writing, identifying his time working with boxing sensation Mohammed Ali – "a genuinely lovely, lovely man" – as his "most joyful experience". He re-



Roger McGough at Hastings Book Festival

ferred to Ali's deep self-awareness, his understanding of his own presence, and of his desire when he met fans for that to be the most memorable and positive experience possible for them. Hauser also referenced Ali's assiduous study of the Qu'ran, which went as far as copying passages from it, and talked about his own commitment, when writing Ali's biography, to recognise the man's flaws alongside the heroism.

POET CONTINUES TO PLEASE

Sunday's showstopper, poet and broadcaster Roger McGough, clocked in at almost a decade older than Hauser, and is still working, with a new book in preparation to mark his 90th birthday next year. A lithe and lively Liverpudlian, his stellar resumé includes authoring over 100 books, a stint as a musician in cult band Scaffold, and a quarter century of service as presenter of *Poetry Please* on Radio 4.

Admitting this was his first visit to Hastings, he concluded an afternoon of verse with a bravura hour-long performance mingling his greatest hits with some new work, in effect tracking the story of his life from his early years as a war baby in the Blitz, to becoming a national treasure, taking in family, work, changing times, nostalgia, tech and, of course, ageing. Often funny, sometimes sad, and always thought provoking, McGough's high energy set demonstrated why he is held in such high esteem by so many, and how he manages to reach out far beyond the usual suspects to enchant audiences of all ages.

So, two men with long lives and compelling stories justifiably celebrated in what organisers are describing as the most ambitious and well-attended Book Festival season yet.



Wot Italian? Forcione and Graffoe

After 20 years, award-winning comedian Boothby Graffoe and Italian guitar legend Antonio Forcione are reuniting for *Wot Italian?*, a new tour that brings high art and high comedy together on one stage.

Graffoe draws audiences in with relatable, oddly surreal stories, which are perfectly complemented by Forcione's jaw dropping musical mastery. Seamlessly weaving perfectly crafted comic songs, unforgettable banter, and tender ballads into

one spontaneous and deeply refined experience, *Wot Italian?* promises an eclectic evening. Audiences can see two masters – of world-class acoustic music and alternative comedy – together in an exceptional show.

Boothby Graffoe is a multi-award-winning British comedian, writer, and performer known for his intelligent wordplay, surreal humour, and unpredictable stage presence. A staple of the alternative comedy circuit and a frequent con-

tributor to radio and TV, Graffoe blurs the line between stand-up and theatrical storytelling, drawing audiences into narratives that are as thoughtful as they are hilarious.

Born in Italy, Antonio Forcione is an internationally-lauded guitarist and composer. With a career spanning global tours and over 20 albums, he has spent decades developing a unique, genre-defying musical language that incorporates jazz, classical, flamenco, and world music. He is widely recognised as one of the most innovative and expressive acoustic guitarists of his generation.



The show is part of a 27-venue UK tour running throughout September, October, and November. Full dates and bookings are available at wotitalian.com.

Exploring Vietnamese Music in Hastings

JUDE MONTAGUE

Van Nguyen, Jude Montague and MaryAnn Royse have been exploring Vietnamese music from the mid-twentieth century and will be presenting some of this emotional and moving music at Groundbreakers, led by Andrew Croft, at Henry Ward Hall next month. *Suối Mơ*, by Phạm Duy and Văn Cao, is a study of the sweetness of the natural world, a lilting tune to a gentle stream.

In the West we may be familiar with songs about Vietnam protesting

the US involvement in the war with aggressive rock and roll roots like Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Fortunate Son*, but in Vietnam protest happened with a more melancholy approach. Rather than compose patriotic pieces, Chế Linh, a composer from the Cham ethnic group – but whose music is more in the tradition of *Tứ trụ nhạc vàng* (Vietnamese bolero music) – wrote the haunting ballad *Đêm buồn tỉnh lẻ* when he met a friend serving in the war.

This young man was unhappy, being far from home and missing his girlfriend. The alienation and everyday heartbreak of a soldier

who wonders if he will ever see his love again are emphasised by the poignant melody and introspective poetry. Chế Linh's songs were placed on the forbidden list by the South Vietnamese government in 1972, and he was jailed as a reactionary, but later released. His Spanish-influenced songs, composed with guitar while drawing on Vietnamese folk music, are still popular at home and abroad.

Van Nguyen, Jude Montague and MaryAnn Royse will interpret these songs and present some original studies of nature in the environment of St Leonards using piano, oboe, violin and voice. Other performers will each present three original pieces as part of the regular Groundbreakers programme.

Henry Ward Hall, Sunday 4 October, 3.00 pm



Before It Was Water

GEORGE MINGOZZI-MARSH

Before It Was Water is a new body of work by Miroslava Večeřová exploring the ocean as a shared, more-than-human home, and the porous relationships between human bodies and the ecosystems that sustain them.

Moving between land, water and air, the exhibition brings together new sculpture, drawing and sound to consider breath, deep time and the interconnected material systems through which human and

non-human life coexist.

The exhibition includes an immersive sound installation created in collaboration with sound artist Dr Isobel Anderson, diffused across a custom-built sound system designed by Tony D Birch as part of this year's XMTR Audio Arts Festival.

On Saturday 26 September, Miroslava and Isobel will come together at Amici Studio for a special XMTR event exploring the ideas, processes and collaboration behind their work.

Exhibition: Amici Studio, Claremont, runs until 17 October 2026

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BOOKBUSTER REVIEW

An Accursed Witch Read?

NETHERWOOD BY JAKE ARNOTT
PUBLISHED BY TITAN, 2026, RRP £18.99
REVIEW BY TIM BARTON

Unlocking the bookshop one morning in June, the door lodged against something. It was dark and hard to see, but I guessed it must be a package dropped through the letterbox. Pushing harder, but gently, I squeezed in and retrieved from the floor a book. An ‘uncorrected bound proof’, said the cover. A folk-horror novel, apparently. The blurb said that ‘Justine and Adam’ had moved from London to Hastings, ‘after personal trauma and professional failure’. I knew the feeling.

They had moved to ‘a fisherman’s cottage’ backing onto a cave, wherein lay a witch bottle. The blurb mentions Crowley, the ‘Great Beast’. And the book? Named after his residence on the Ridge, *Netherwood*. By Jake Arnott, an established thriller writer, whose ‘The Long Firm’ had been televised.

I put the book aside by the printer, and opened up, thinking to myself, this is one to review, seeing as it has a local angle. Life was busy, I forgot all about it.

RAMBLINGS OF A MADMAN
Some weeks later a dishevelled man came, nervously it seemed, to the counter. ‘Did you get my book? A friend said he’d drop it by for you. *Netherwood*?’

‘Oh, yes’, I said, ‘but I haven’t gotten around to reading it’

‘Don’t, please. Don’t!’, he said rather emphatically. ‘Why ever not?’

‘Just... please don’t. It’s cursed!’

‘Cursed? Cursed how?’, I said in a tone that he clearly interpreted as indicating I was unlikely to pay attention to such foolishness.

So, he hesitantly went further: ‘Three reviewers were found dead next to copies of the book... it’s cursed, I say!’

And with that, he stumbled from the store. Naturally, he was right to think I would see his tale as the ramblings of a madman, and shrug off the supposed deaths as at worst, coincidence and, more likely, imagined. I, of course, resolved to take a peek. Standing at the counter I began to read. Nice short chapters, snappy prose, building a growing spooky atmosphere. Early on, the protagonists begin to hear voices and crying sounds from beyond the padlocked door to the cave. And Adam has taken the witch bottle and, unbeknown to Justine, opened it. I was quite taken by the events unfolding, so closed up at



and unexpected burst of superstition, I remembered the warning from the strange man – perhaps a gap had opened up into a smugglers network laced through the hill, connecting with the cottages of the terrace above? I tried to remind myself that *Netherwood* was only a work of fiction. But fear gripped me anyway. Petrifying fear, that grew and grew as the noises became darker and darker – indeed, occult, in character.

CURSES BE DAMNED
I left the shop hastily, and ran blindly through the precinct. I was almost as far as Primark, unconsciously heading for the station, when a hand gripped my shoulder from behind. I whirled around to face my assailant. It was the man who’d warned me off reading the book.

‘How far did you read? How far!?’ he shouted into my face.

‘About... about... halfway’, I gasped.

He sighed. ‘You may be OK, I’m not sure’, he said, ‘Here, take this!’ – he shoved a stone into my hand, a stone with a hole in it. ‘It’s a hagstone. To break Crowley’s curse. Leave, if you can, it may not be too late!’

‘Who are you? Who the hell are you?’, I cried.

‘The author, of course!’, he said, ‘Jake Arnott! Now go, for heaven’s sake!’

I turned and ran. But, passing the Sea Dog, tripped, the stone falling from my hand. It rolled, hit a drain, ‘tink... tink tink’ across the cold iron slats, and dropped into the abyss. The sky seemed to darken behind me, thunder rolled, voices – in my head? – grew louder... I turned, panicked. Jake was still standing down the slope. He looked ashen. ‘Too late,’ he said, ‘too late!’ and turned and ran.

I decided all bets were off, I’d return to the shop and finish the book, curses be damned. Back at the counter, the book lay where I’d left it. The witch bottle on the cover was dark and filled with bones, shells, pins, ichor... *Netherwood*, by Jake Arnott...

Available from Bookbuster, 39 Queens Road, Hastings TN34 1RE

POETRY CORNER

THE SUNKEN FOREST
HENRY NORMAL

In a time before humans could write here, they looked down from their caves onto the tops of trees

Then the mere movement of liquid slowly wore away this raised sandstone flooding the woodland below

As fresh water turned to salt oak, birch and hazel bore their last leaves

Now, at the lowest tide when storms have stirred the sediment if you spy beyond the shingle

in amongst the rockpools ancient roots and saplings seek the sky once more

five as usual but stayed in the now dark shop, at the back counter, and read on.

It was now late, I’d lost track of time. But was dragged back to reality by a chill air from the kitchen, and whisperings in the dark. The shop is not well insulated and people live upstairs, so I thought nothing of it... at first. But when entering the kitchen to get a coffee, the chill increased and the noises

got louder. The cold emanated from the dark space below the sink, on the back wall, behind which were the lower reaches of the castle hill. It occurred to me to wonder where the cottage in the story actually was. The geography was vague, but it felt to me as if it must be off the terrace backing onto the castle by Castle Hill Road. An entirely different chill gripped me. In a sudden

CROSSWORD CORNER

Across

1. Riving changed its unspoiled nature (6)

3. Building protected from D tiles (6)

4. Believes in (with ink spillage) (6)

Down

1. Live to rearrange a small flower (6)

2. Restaurant chain opening nightly and not doing open signs (6)

Crossword Solution: Answers on page 3 of The HIP List

1					2
3					
4					

MINIGOLF

Open Championship Returns to Hastings

The annual British Open Minigolf Tournament will once again be held on the Pirate Course at Hastings Adventure Golf this weekend.

England's Adam Kelly returns to defend the title he won last year, when he shot an astonishing 70-under-par aggregate to win by ten shots from Sweden's Erik Hjalmarsson.

Reigning World Crazy Golf champion, Rocky Bullin, and internationally-renowned PGA golf coach and podcast creator, Peter Finch, are among the field of around 70 contestants. With 836,000 subscribers and 237 million views racked up on Youtube, Peter will be laying his reputation on the line when he competes in the mini format.

There will also, as usual, be a cast of international competitors. As well as from home nations, players from Germany, Austria, Hungary and even New Zealand have enrolled to take part.

The total cash prize fund is likely to exceed £1,000, and the overall winner will gain automatic entry into the World Adventure Golf Tour Final taking place in Czechia next year.



CRICKET



Harry Scowen: "I am incredibly proud of the group"

Priory in the Premier: a Retrospective

HUGH SULLIVAN

The club cricket season finished nearly three weeks ago, but in such breathless fashion for the Hastings & St Leonards Priory team – winning their final game by two runs to stave off relegation from the Sussex Premier division – that some reflection on the overall campaign still seems called for.

The league contest was tight from start to finish, with only 22 points (roughly the value of a single win net of losing bonus points) separating the five teams at the lower end of the final table. Priory won only four matches, compared to six when they were relegated in 2024; on the other

hand they lost only seven, with four drawn, one tied and two rained off.

Three of the four victories were against top-half teams, including a particularly strong showing away to runners-up Middleton; several of the draws were hard-fought contests that could have gone either way; the last two completed matches (ignoring a wash-out in between) produced a tie and a two-run differential. Fine margins indeed.

On the batting front, the team leant heavily on the performances of Joe Billings, captain Harry Scowen and Alfie Hunter. Billings, returning to Priory after several summers away, amassed 582 runs at an average of nearly 50. Once set, he was a pillar of strength with two centuries and four 50s in 14 innings,

including a crucial 102 not out in the final match against Preston Nomads. Opening partner Hunter, imported from Buxted Park, was less prolific, but he and Scowen each scored over 400 runs.

Caleb Laloo, generally batting down the order, enjoyed another satisfactory campaign. But other middle-order batsmen found the quality of Premier Division bowling difficult to master: Eddy Finch, Shawn Johnson, Iden McCleave and Greg Devlin all struggled to replicate their 2025 tallies, scoring then against Division 2 bowlers. It was newcomer Troy Henry and old stager Freddie Hulbert who tended to be more resilient in boosting a flagging innings.

Priory's bowlers were never likely to repeat the dominance they had shown in the lower division, particularly in the dry and batsman-friendly conditions that held sway for most of this summer. Hulbert performed creditably again as an accurate and occasionally hostile opening seamer, but had limited stamina. After his initial spell, supported with the new ball by Johnson or Adam Barton, Scowen would find himself having to rotate a quartet of spinners – Hunter, Henry, Adam Page and Barton – who sometimes lacked the variety or penetration needed to halt well-set batsmen in full flow. The alternative offerings of medium-pace Adam Pye, however, proved invaluable in the closing matches.

In the field the team generally held their catches and rarely wilted under pressure. Johnson may have disappointed with bat and ball, but he was again outstanding in the field. Billings kept wicket with commendable focus and agility.

Scowen summed up after the Preston game: "Whilst we were all optimistic at the start of the season, we knew it would be difficult throughout, and it proved to be that way. We played a lot of really good cricket but struggled to maintain those standards for long enough and in some real key moments.

"Saying that, we also managed to draw games in that middle period against strong opposition and found ourselves losing well and picking up our bonus points a lot of the time, proving in the end to be really crucial. Last Saturday against Preston, it was our fighting spirit and 'never-give-up' attitude that prevailed.

"I am incredibly proud of the group for the achievement. Most of us are home grown through the Priory junior set up, without an overseas pro to help us through and with some injuries to key players at key times.

"That last hour of cricket on Saturday is one of the most special periods I have been involved in – and will live long in my memory.

"Hopefully we can now build on this year and look to strengthen and develop our younger players to become key contributors – and protect my blood pressure levels come the first weekend of September next year!"

BASEBALL

Pirates Run Aground

JAMES YOUNG

The Hastings Pirates' baseball season came to a disappointing end on Saturday 12 September when the team was knocked out of the league play-offs by Guildford Millers.

The final score of 11-4 was a fair reflection of events on the field, with a strong Millers side, playing with home advantage, jumping out to an 8-2 lead after three innings.

Though the Pirates tried valiantly to get back into the contest, notably through third baseman Liam Drane, who notched two hits, a trio of Guildford pitchers largely shut down the Hastings bats, so potent in the team's charge to the BBF Division 5 South title.

Despite the disappointment the Pirates have much to be proud of in securing the division title and run to the play-offs. The challenge now will be to match the club's heightened expectations in 2027.

"The experience has given us the desire to get back to the postseason every year," general manager Clive Raines says. "We want to keep growing and build a future for baseball in Hastings."

The Pirates' 2027 pre-season training and open try-outs will begin early next year. For more information, follow them at [instagram.com/hastingspirates-baseball](https://www.instagram.com/hastingspirates-baseball)

FOOTBALL

Walsh at the Double

12 September	
Hastings Utd	1
Bognor Regis Town	1
(won 6-5 on penalties)	
19 September	
Hastings Utd	3
Merstham	0

Hastings United were back on top of the South East Division of the Isthmian League after last Saturday's matches, as they eased past Merstham at the Pilot Field.

A crowd of 861 spectators saw Max Walsh net a fierce shot from the edge of the penalty area in the first half and do it again in the first minute of the second. Kesna Clarke scored a third within four minutes of being brought on as a substitute. The visitors had their moments, but the United defence held firm.

The previous Saturday the 'U's progressed through another qualifying round of the FA Trophy by defeating Bognor Regis 6-5 on penalties after a 1-1 draw. They will play a third successive home tie in the competition this Saturday (26th) against Isthmian Premier team Dulwich Hamlet.

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