

Spring 2025



Possible View of Harbour Car Park development from The Stade in perhaps 25 years

www.gofolkestone.org.uk

Go Folkestone Quiz

BY TONY QUARRINGTON

- 1 Where was the first telephone box in Folkestone?
- 2 What did the 2007 earthquake measure on the Richter Scale?
- 3 In 1861 Thomas Hart was the first resident of which establishment?
- 4 In what year was the first Folkestone Triennial held?
- 5 Which novel did Charles Dickens work on during his three month stay in Albion Villas 1855?
- 6 What was the name of the TV sitcom character played by Arthur Brough, who put on plays at the Leas Pavilion between 1929 and 1969?
- 7 How many rooms does the Grand Burstin have?
- 8 In what year was Bouverie Place Shopping Centre opened?
- 9 What was the name of the prestigious foreign owned hotel at 33-35 Castle Hill Avenue, opened in 1886 and demolished in 1983?
- 10 Which comedian has a poem in the time capsule placed in the heart of the White Horse on Cheriton Down in 2004?

Answers on page 31

Go Folkestone Membership Subscription/Renewal 2025/26

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Editorial Committee

David Noble
Richard Wallace
Sheila Palmer

Artworker

Alan Reed



Editorial

Well, despite more help, I am still editor and David Noble is still chair, and we still have some entertaining and sensible articles; one person's obvious fact can be seen by another as biased opinion. But on the Harbour Go Folkestone members remain mostly realistic rather than happy as Sir Roger already has outline permission for a huge development. Our cover pic maybe slightly out of date but Pages 5-6 are what we cadged from the architects. But if you compare the town with Dover, Margate or even Ramsgate you have to conclude that he has done a lot of good for Folkestone. Subject to committee and members, we will probably concentrate on trying to make sure his development doesn't badly affect the historic station and the beaches, affecting of course his reputation.

Students seeking journalistic experience are encouraged, and animal lovers, Invicta FC, theatre reviews and vicars are within. For our next issue please send articles to info@gofolkestone.org.uk. Suggestions: Is the New Man a waste of space; Is Assisted Dying a morality free zone; What happened when I found my natural parents; Where I would put new houses in Folkestone?

We had little space for a discussion of the impending translation of Kent into three to four unitary councils of a target 500,000 pop including East Kent (Us, Canterbury, Dover, Thanet and Ashford, maybe Swale). It will happen in 2026-7, with the Kent Mayor elected later. But Go Folkestone still wants something done SOON with Folca and Grace Hill. The May KCC elections NOW take place as normal, but GF don't really get too party political; our members don't want it. I've never known an election since 1974 that's actually an Unpopularity contest.

Richard Wallace

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors, unless stated to be those of the Go Folkestone committee or organisation.

Leas Lift Scheduled to Open Spring 2026: Work has Started

Floortje Hoette, CEO of the Leas Lift Company writes: Since receiving a grant of £4.9 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund in November 2023, Folkestone Leas Lift CIO has made considerable progress on its £6.9 million project to restore the Grade II listed funicular Leas Lift and re-open it to the public.

With the capital works being highly complex in nature, encompassing restoration, construction and specialised civil engineering works, 2024 focused on surveys, finalising technical designs, and an extensive tender process before appointing main contractor **APEX Contractors**, offering best value for money within an acceptable timeframe.

Besides preparing for the capital works, the fledgling operational team has also made considerable headway in setting up its operational infrastructure. Ticket income has been modelled based on seasonality, capacity and past sales. The Lift's pricing system anticipates discounted rates to Folkestone residents.

Besides income through ticket sales, revenue will be generated by the newly built café and kiosk, physical and online retail, and income from events and commercial hires, to ensure the Lift's financial sustainability once the restoration comes to an end. Works have now started and will take all year, encompassing six overlapping stages:

- **Lifting the carriages off the tracks:** to inspect their state and repair needs. Both carriages will be fully refurbished with an intercom fitted inside each as well as a fold-up seat for wheelchair users.
- **Cliff excavation and soil nailing:** A technique to secure the excavated cliff side and make space for the new café.
- **Works to the upper station and water tanks:** A sloping ramp will be built at the top station to make the Lift fully accessible and the water tanks will be repaired.
- **Specialist engineering works to the tracks, carriages and the pump room,** as well as the installation of a new sheave wheel.
- **Restoration of the existing buildings:** and developing them into a waiting room where people can learn more about the Leas Lift, and a community art space with temporary exhibitions co-created with the community.
- **Construction of a new café:** a modern [Ed: attractive, slightly oast house] design in-keeping with the heritage building, seating 35+ visitors with an outside terrace.

The Leas Lift CIO will keep the community updated through its website, social media channels and a regular newsletter which you can subscribe to through the website.

Regular talks will take place and the popular heritage walks around the Lift will resume this Spring. The temporary Lift café in the container near the lower Lift station will be able to update you, and serve you an excellent cup of coffee, too!



Auntie Pat (born 1926 in Folkestone) – The War Years

BY PATRICIA PERKINS

Listening to the wireless, Neville Chamberlain said if there was no answer from Hitler we would be at war and of course there was no answer. I was 13 and never went to school again, everyone was scared about what was going to happen. My brother Bert joined the Marines and my brother Ted stayed, working with Dad. Ted and Dad decided we should move to safety to a house in Sutton Valence, near Maidstone. There was hardly any furniture, and I had to sleep on the floor but thought it was fun. I did get homesick but felt better when Dad and Ted came every weekend to stay.



Mum's sister, Margie, and her three daughters joined us when her husband, Bill, joined the Army. The girls attended the village school and I got a job earning £1 a week in the local general store selling tin kettles, household things and groceries. Bananas and oranges were rare and kept under the counter. Nearly everyone grew vegetables and fruit, and Mum kept chickens. Mum and Margie went fruit and potato picking to earn extra money. I gave Mum seventeen shillings, leaving me enough to pay my insurance, tally-man and a florin for the bus into Maidstone to go to the pictures, fish and chips, cup of tea and still a little bit over. I picked strawberries for extra money and saved enough to buy shoes and a new bike.

Bert married Yvonne in a small wedding in the local church. We dressed in our Sunday best: Yvonne wore a lovely, lacy dress and was so pretty and happy. She was soon pregnant, the family was growing. Ted was called up to the Army, Dad was alone in Folkestone. One weekend he went back home and the front door was gone, a bomb had blown it up the stairs. He went upstairs and calmly brushed the broken glass off and climbed into bed.

The soldiers made a difference to the four local pubs in Sutton Valence. They would gather in the road and sing lovely songs. There were dances with plenty of Army food. It was delightful and as my life turned out I am glad I grabbed the chance of happiness. I got married at 18 to a soldier, going to Maidstone and back by bus. We had [fish] paste and cheese sandwiches, jelly and a home-made fruit cake. After that he was sent abroad.

The German secret weapon of the doodlebug came in 1944, two years after The Blitz got a bit calmer just when we thought we were safe. We knew if the doodlebug engine stopped it would fall there and then, the window black outs fell down and houses shook. Our planes used to shoot them down so they fell in safer places. I was watching this from the shop doorway and the blast blew me across the shop floor. I was frightened because I was pregnant but we were both OK. I never saw the really horrible V2s.

June 1944: Nothing lasts forever and the village woke to silence. The soldiers had gone without warning as they had been sworn to secrecy, so the dance the night before was the last. It seems they were to take part in the Normandy Landings. Once the nuclear bomb was dropped on Hiroshima the war ended. It was received with relief of course, but not too much celebrating in Sutton Valence because it was a quiet little village without the soldiers.

My baby was three months old when we were brought back to Folkestone, and we shared a bedroom with my granny. Ted came out of the Army and prepared to get married and live with us. We were all starting a new venture in our lives.

News from the Planning Front: The Harbour

BY RICHARD WALLACE AND TONY HILL

Sir Roger De Haan appears to have had some success in pushing the details of his seafront development through, despite Folkestone and Hythe Council planning committee turning down “reserved matters”. In a close call, the planning officers recommended the 410 flat development on the enormous Harbour car park for detailed approval, because it was within the long approved outline planning permission, didn’t affect listed buildings etc. The committee of councillors turned it down, but by only one vote. A second rejection is unlikely if a De Haan appeal is likely to be successful, as officers warned, because the costs of fighting it would be considerable. However the cllrs refused for things that they *may* get further movement on: inadequate parking, height, and the effect on the historic railway platform snaking through the proposed flats. Agreement will keep the Harbour Arm open to the public.

Savills, Sir Roger’s surveyors, immediately put in quite minor amendments after the refusal, with slightly more daylight let into the apartments. 405 flats are now proposed in a cluster of 5 blocks, much circa eight storey but less in the block by the inner harbour, which GF had asked for, and with Ground and First floors mainly commercial. This shows what a strong hand Sir Roger probably feels he has – only going down five flats. It is, let’s face it, unlikely that the 405 flats would be refused. Politics-wise the UK government, the effective arbiter, is, per Rachel Reeves, wanting 1.5 million dwellings in this Parliament. Precedent-wise every large South Coast town has large blocks of sea-viewed flats along its seafront. Folkestone was a working passenger port from 1850-1990, postponing seaside apartments...until now. Planning wise the historic Folkestone Harbour railway deserves more survivals, although the route and bed are still there. BUT it isn’t listed, and the Steer Case apparently doesn’t support refusal due to “non-designated heritage assets”. The nearest actually listed edifice is the unaffected Swing-bridge (it is fixed, and as un-swinging as Leo Sayer, since ca 1935.)



Tony Hill, one of our vice-chairs writes, with a plea on the size and the historic railway particularly:

“Having spent a great deal of time researching the “life” of Folkestone’s Harbour now known as “The Harbour Arm”, not a name I personally like, and looking closely at the proposed development I have come to this conclusion:

We live in a coastal seaside town that has grown from, according to a Victorian observer, “a grotty little fishing village”. We have become an important entrance to Continental Europe, due to the arrival of the railways and the boom back in the 1840’s and in recent times the Channel Tunnel. The “morphing” from a fishing village to a strategic front in two world wars is important. This has left the town’s Heritage in an enviable position as the town that helped change the face of the United Kingdom and in fact it still is (only from a different Channel Tunnel perspective) now.

This Heritage has now grown to be very important as those two conflicts move into the dim and distant collective memory. Folkestone’s history on those two subjects shouldn’t really be left to fade and be covered in concrete. Life and lifestyles move on as is evident in the history of our town BUT, and this is a big BUT, should we really denigrate the histories and sacrifices of so many who left these shores from our Harbour to fight for us and these hallowed Isles never to return?

We, that’s Go Folkestone, have discussed the recent updated planning proposals to develop the Harbour area, “we” apparently, in broad terms accept these proposals. That we should accept those proposals in my view tramples all over the memories of those who paid the **ultimate price**. The development proposals pay little attention **our** Heritage. Why couldn’t the architects take a snap shot of say the Stade and develop that idea with low rise structures that were sympathetic to our heritage as a fishing town and more importantly a war front with Europe. We are not an International City as the current designs reflect but a small and important seaside town. With a BIG heritage and hopefully a Bigger Heart.

This piece has been written by a guy who was born here and lived here all his life and who has lived here all his life and who loves his home town and its rich and beautiful **heritage**.”

A recent GF meeting decided that , as we had a “line” to Sir Roger , we would keep saying that we wanted to see the threatened and almost ruinous Princess Royal saved, as he promised ; keep saying that we didn’t like the Harbour flats as much as the live white crescents already approved along the Marine Crescent beach from the built Block B , designed by Acme Architects ; keep saying that we were very anxious about parking pressures, although parking has been increased a lot; and keep saying that, above all , long term sea pollution could ruin Folkestone’s beaches if Sir Roger didn’t agree to perhaps expensive solutions . The ‘blue flag’ survey for 2024-5 advised recently that people should not bathe at Dymchurch or Greatstone, but Folkestone was “acceptable”. But Cllr Jackie Meade and others have advised that Sunny Sands very nearly failed. We need the beaches. Join us.

GF have pressed the developers and they say: “I can confirm that Southern Water conducted a hydraulic modelling study of the existing foul water network and confirmed that the local foul water network had adequate capacity to accommodate the flows from the Folkestone Seafront Masterplan, meaning no offsite reinforcement would be necessary.”

This is positive, but the Shoreline block that has actually been built had more troubles with Southern Water than any other aspect, and GF members do report sewage smells in the area. Many locals remain unhappy and hope also to see more of the Harbour Railway Station preserved. The developers said to us, in a way that demands more questions:

“Regarding The Princess Royal we are still evaluating the project, meeting with potential contractors and operators with the intention of creating a sustainable future for the site.”

The Harbour flats proposed, in a “hand” of five blocks, one circular, are significantly less ugly and knobbly than the “avant garde”, or as we said “avant a laugh” Flintstone Blocks proposed in 2022-3. It may be a home from home for DFLs, as they now recall contemporary London apartment blocks.

Marketwise, good sources say about 32 of Block B are being sold, out of 80 odd, after nearly two years. 500 flats at even 20 sales per year would be 25 years. At the very least there are years and years for changes of detail. Sir Roger, now in his mid seventies did say that he hoped to see much built but was increasingly uncertain that he would. He could conceivably sell up, if p p is finalised.

The Harbour will probably not be a *fait accompli* for a decade, because the five white crescents along the beach are supposed to be built first. 110 flat Block C is scheduled next unless they think that too bullish and go for the 13 flat single point block at the very end of the promenade, where the Boardwalk starts. This is similar to the existing built one, but because it is in front of Marine Crescent it is split in the middle in order to preserve some sea views, and should have a shop. But some of us wonder if the closure of the Road of Remembrance, which does affect the Shoreline end worst, will lead to some early work on the harbour car park. The Road of Remembrance will have expensive bolting work done, similar to the Lift (see Page 2), to try and prevent subsidence. Spring 2026 is the alleged re-opening.



Volunteers Wanted

Go Folkestone always needs volunteers for **Saturday electrical recycling in Sandgate Road opposite Boots**. You don't have to be a member, although new members are always welcome. It makes it easier to put forward bright ideas at info@gofolkestone.org.uk or at our meetings at Wards Hotel at 6.45pm on the second Wednesday in the month. Please email us or introduce yourself at the stall. Although we open from 10 to 2 every Saturday you may cover as little as an hour, but two is best. We are friendly!

Since October we have collected two tons, 312 stone or 2000 kg of pure recycling plus sending nearly 200 items to charity shops, repair workshops and other charities such as Sunflower. We never discourage people from using the Ross Way tip, but cars can get close to us via Pound Way. GoFo does try hard to spot re-use and repair possibilities, including with computers, which vary a lot in what can be done with them. We do hope our town centre position encourages donation, as may the free chocolate. Someone tried for some chocolate without recycling anything. She didn't get it.

Incidentally, we had a meeting with FHDC which covered other matters including its waste policy. Did you know they can no longer recycle Tetra-paks, oily cardboard or heavy glass e.g. thick glass mugs? But this does mean most of it goes somewhere.

Is Reading Important in Your Life?

Nationally, 26% of 11 year-olds are assessed with a reading age below their chronological age. In Kent, grammar schools take 31%, and so the remaining secondary schools, including the Turner Free School, where we help, have 40%+ poor readers. To get good GCSEs, a reading age of 14-16 years is needed. This is why many of the children in UK leave school without qualifications, get into gangs and petty crime. 57% of the prison population have reading ages below 11 years.

These children aren't stupid. They learnt to decode perfectly in primary schools but Folkestone has areas where there is multi-generational poverty. These children have never had bedtime stories, which is where you learn how books work and what our society's values are. There are often no books in the home: after all, what has reading ever done for these families? These students need individual help.

A team of volunteers goes into The Turner School in Tile Kiln Road, on two mornings a week, (9.00-9.30am) and read with one child at a time – laughing at the funny bits and sharing anecdotes, asking them to remember what they read and predict what might happen next. In 15 months we have raised reading ages from seven years to 16 years. It works!

Contact info@gofolkestone.org.uk in the first instance. Could you help save a life?

Jenny Carter

Go Folkestone Litter Pick Volunteering, Leas Arch at the top of Road of Remembrance, last Friday in the month, 2pm – (latest) 4pm with the Pattyvator. equipment provided by Veolia and FHDC all welcome.

PK

Folkestone Community Players get New Venue

BY ALISON WHITE

Folkestone Community Players is an all-ability, inclusive orchestra which meets every Tuesday evening for rehearsals and puts on free concerts at the end of every academic term for family and friends in aid of local charities.

It was started in September 2023 by Floriane Peycelon, well-known in the area for leading the Folkestone Symphony Orchestra. Flo had a dream to start an all-ability orchestra for adults of all ages, welcoming a range of abilities and instruments.

The first rehearsal saw an assortment of 21 players tackling Purcell's Rondeau and Copland's 'Hoedown' with much enthusiasm. Remembering that first rehearsal, in the wonderful Green Room at the Grand, it is hard to believe that we were performance ready by December. But under Flo's expert guidance and joy of making and sharing music, we made it!

It is a mark of how enjoyable the rehearsals are that it seems like a new player is joining every week. Friends are telling their friends all about it. We are now up to 57 players, with a unique composition, including eight clarinets, a bass guitar, trombones and tuba as well as the usual selection of strings, woodwind and brass.

We have now given four concerts, each with music from a range of genres, including classical, popular and themes from the shows. The final concert of 2024, our 'Spooktacular', had the audience shivering to 'Dance Macabre', delighting to Phantom of the Opera, and singing along to Christmas Carols under Flo's baton. Each concert has been in aid of a local charity important to one of the members of the orchestra, with this final Christmas concert raising over £1000 for the Rainbow Centre.

We also took part in the Light Event in the Leas Cliff Hall during last year's Music in May, which was a thrilling carousel of creative and musical experiences. We collaborated with Shepway Voices in a rendition of the Largo from Dvorak's New World and played Mars and Jupiter from Holst's Planets Suite in our first exciting performance on a grand stage.

We have rehearsed and performed in a couple of venues since we started, but believe we have now found our 'home' at the Folkestone Baptist Church on Hill Road, rehearsing every Tuesday evening between 7.30pm and 9.30pm. If you play an instrument, can read music, and would like to get together with others in a friendly, relaxed group to have fun making wonderful music, email Flo at flopeycelon@gmail.com. The music is arranged for different abilities so the orchestra is very inclusive. We would love to recruit some Horn or Double Bass players especially, but anyone wishing to join will be made most welcome!



Photo: Florian Peycelon

We are also always looking for sponsorship to bolster our funds. If you are a business interested in sponsoring us, please get in touch.

Checkout the Folkestone Community Players Facebook page for more information and to see some videos of the orchestra in action.

I Chased a 'Flasher'

BY KATE NOBLE

I have been the victim of indecent exposure a few times but this time it was different.

On this occasion I was jogging between Hythe and Folkestone. It was an early afternoon run shoe-horned into my day before the school run. I was in the final stages as I approached a man walking towards me. After looking me directly in the eye (I was about to nod or say Hi) he dropped his trousers and exposed himself, for several seconds. The prom was deserted so he had no need to hide and he sauntered past me as if nothing untoward had happened. Initially blindsided I continued to run for a few paces but as it sunk in and I thought of the sinister risk he might pose in the future I turned, enraged, and made chase. As soon as he realised, he took flight. In the blink of an eye my run had turned into a full-on pursuit. I kept chasing for 500m and somehow managed to make the 999 call before I frustratingly lost sight of him.

From a very young age society taught me to laugh about indecent exposure. The stereotypical 'oddball' hiding in bushes and 'flashing' unsuspecting women and children was perceived as comical. The perpetrator was deemed as a 'weirdo', but not a real threat.

It's happened to me several times and each time, frightened, I have fled. Yet I still retold the tale as a laughable and amusing scenario.

This perception masks the serious trajectory that a person who commits these offences could be on. A study from the US* found that up to 25% of those who committed indecent exposure offences went on to carry out further or more serious crimes. Wayne Couzens, the Met police officer, had committed several indecent exposure offences (in the Dover area) before he went on to murder Sarah Everard in March 2021.

Back to the chase, the response from the police was immediate and impressive; they caught a man very near to where he slipped out of my sight. Unknown to me this was not the first offence the 'Hythe flasher' had committed; in the 10 days before this there were several similar incidents, so the police were on high alert. He was arrested and bailed on the same day.

Afterwards I messaged my run club (on their large WhatsApp group) to warn lone, female runners to be cautious. There were a lot of messages of gratitude but also a couple of puerile jokes. Perhaps these men were not yet enlightened about the serious risks highlighted above. One took it further and asked me to stick to running rather than scaremongering. A particularly upsetting response when I was already feeling vulnerable and was only trying to be helpful. Eventually another member held him to account, and he apologised and removed his message.

Since then, I had to attend an ID procedure. My assumption was that it would be like the films; that I would pace up and down scrutinising the faces of the suspects in line-up. This was outdated, it was all online. I was asked to scroll through the suspects who were staring at me through screens before turning left and right for the profile shot. After scrutinizing 9 faces that resembled each other I nervously opted for the one I thought I recognised.

Unfortunately, the police later informed me that the man they apprehended so quickly wasn't even wearing the same clothes as described, and his phone data confirmed he hadn't been walking along the seafront. As a result, everything that followed was essentially a futile exercise. Despite this, no further incidents have been reported. Perhaps the shock of the chase was enough to break the momentum of his escalating behaviour.

I thought about it a lot for a month or so afterwards and even avoided running for a while. I reflected that whilst chasing him gave a satisfying shift in the power dynamic it also made the whole incident more impactful. The following involvement with the police, ID procedure and commitment to go to court did affect my behaviour and sense of safety.

So, I ask that, before our prudish national urge to make light of everything kicks in that we think twice. We need to move on and stop trivialising indecent exposure as 'flashing'. It is a serious sexual offence and the ramifications of minimising its significance could be horrific.

PS I do not recommend that anyone do what I did. I was in a very open space, but it might not be the most sensible thing to have done.

Information and support for anyone affected by rape or sexual abuse issues is available from [Rape Crisis](https://www.nhs.uk/sexual-health/sexual-assault/) on 0808 500 2222

*Statistic taken from this article: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/may/02/police-consider-rethink-on-indecent-exposure-after-wayne-couzens-scandal>

A Visit to the Local Theatre

Plays and Book Review

By Sheila Palmer

One of Folkestone's less publicised attractions is our very talented theatre group, FHODS (Folkestone-Hythe Operatic & Dramatic Society) at the Tower Theatre. For just two days in February they presented three of Alan Bennett's "Talking Heads" which were first aired on TV in 1988. Despite the 36 years in between, these monologues raised problematic social situations still relevant today, especially those of loneliness and isolation.

In *Bed Among the Lentils*, long-standing FHODS member, Clair Ellerby, played Susan, the wife of an attractive and popular vicar. It soon becomes apparent that she is an alcoholic: the Communion wine has disappeared (to be replaced by cough mixture). Despite the sadness, there's much humour in her story, brilliantly played by Clair with a wry and sharp delivery. In the original series, Alan Bennett took the role of Graham, in *A Chip in the Sugar*. Here, Anthony Leyton-Thomas was first-class as this quiet gentle man who has suffered mental health troubles, and lives with his mother. Graham's world starts to fall apart when mum meets an old friend and begins dating. Anthony portrayed him with great empathy, and I doubt I was the only one in the audience who couldn't choose between laughter and tears!

The programme ended with Leigh Chambers playing Miss Ruddock in *A Lady of Letters*. Miss R, lives alone, and takes great interest in local matters, especially the new neighbours across the street who seem to be neglecting their child. It transpires that Miss Ruddock has a history of writing nuisance letters, and has already been in trouble with the Police. Leigh's performance was terrific: you could feel the emptiness in her character's life, at the same time chuckling at her comic delivery. Her final word summoned up the feeling in the audience as we left the theatre: "Happy"

Congratulations to the cast, Director Robert Emptage, Producer Julie Morrow, and everyone else involved. Visit towertheatrefolkestone.co.uk for details of future productions. They're performing the tear-jerking *Steel Magnolias* in March – should be well worth a visit.

And Alan Bennett has published a new book:

Although the location is unspecified, anyone who has worked in, or visited, a retirement home will find something familiar in Hill Topp* House ("a superior Council home for the elderly). This is the setting for Alan Bennett's new novella, *Killing Time*. The story opens with a confused conversation when one of the residents answers the office telephone, which is strictly forbidden, and there follows a series of muddles as the various characters are introduced. There's Mrs McBryde, who is in charge, and enjoys collecting things. Not, however, those found by Mr Peckover, however. "I think I've just found the Holy Grail", he says, and Mrs McBryde responds "Well don't bring it in. Wash it first".

There's the unpleasant Mr Woodruff, who refuses to acknowledge his own son. Miss Rathbone, who loves jigsaws but tends to misplace pieces "I just wish I could put my hand on the Duke of Edinburgh's leg..." "It's blue with a bit of purple". Gus, the window cleaner, has a moneymaking side-line in the shed, and new resident Mrs Foss plans a bric-a-brac sale. Then along comes Covid...

This is a short book (only 105 pages), but it is packed with fascinating characters, recognisable misunderstandings, and great humour. A great read from one of our best writers.

Killing Time by Alan Bennett, published by Faber & Faber, £10.00

*definitely two ps!



Clair Ellerby as Susan.
(Julie Morrow/FHODS)

Making History at St Eanswythe's

BY THE REVD CHRISTOPHER JOHNSON

It's fair to say that my first month at St Eanswythe's was extraordinary in every sense of the word. Having been licensed on 11th October, on Sunday 17th November we 'translated' (moved) the relics (bones) of St Eanswythe, Patron Saint of our town and parish church. They returned to their resting place in the Sanctuary area of the church, following a number of years of investigation, discovery and scientific analysis.



For a Church of England church to host the relics of its patron saint is a rarity in itself; to have the task of translating their relics is almost without precedent in recent centuries. So it was that we set about creating a service to honour St Eanswythe, to celebrate her life, and to gather people together not only from the parish and town but around the UK and the world. Some even made the journey in person from the USA (!) whilst hundreds joined in via the special livestream.

In the midst of a very traditional CofE service of Choral Evensong, with a church that was very nearly full, children from St Eanswythe's School acted out the story and legends of St Eanswythe before the relics were borne in procession to the shrine at the east end of the church. The relics having been placed in the shrine niche by Dr Andrew Richardson and Jan Clarke, prayers were offered by civic and ecumenical guests and the door to the shrine was closed.

The question for us now is, 'what next?' One of the stand-out features of St Eanswythe's life and legend was her care and compassion for the people of the town of Folkestone and a challenge for the parish church which bears her name is how we live up to that example in our own time. At what is still the beginning of a new ministry for me in this town, how we hold together Eanswythe's example of life and faith alongside God's calling for us in the present day is an important consideration in our daily life and work as a parish church. Moreover, the building has tremendous potential through doing more of what it already does: speaking physically of God's presence, gathering people and community, as well as encapsulating and celebrating our history as a town and a parish. I very much look forward to working and ministering in our town and welcome opportunities to meet with you and to share in whatever the future may hold!



My contact details, a recording of the service, and an online album of photographs by Mark Hourahane are still available via our website: stmaryandsteanswythe.org

Photo credits: Mark Hourahane.

February 2025 – What’s the big picture with house prices in Folkestone and Hythe?

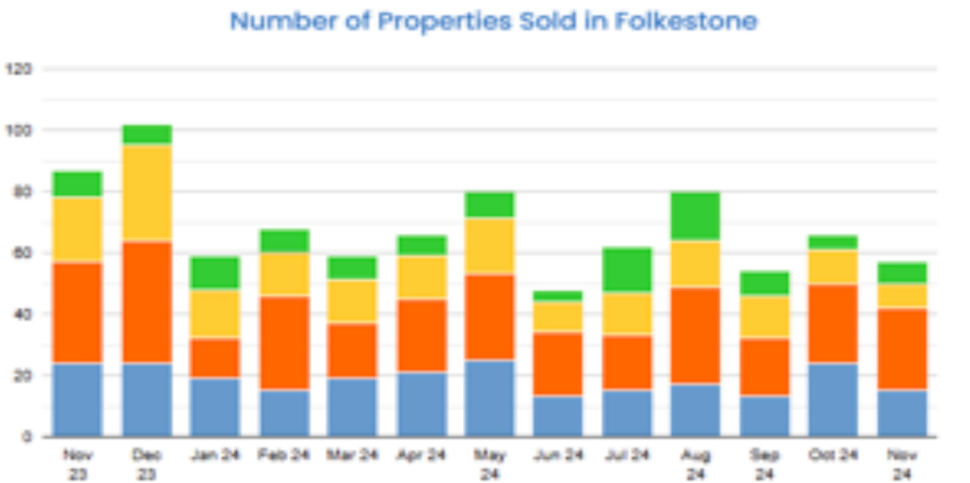
BY KRIS FOSTER OF MOTIS ESTATES

The momentum in sales market activity over 2024 has spilled over into 2025 despite concerns over mortgage rates drifting higher and some softening in consumer confidence over the economic outlook.

The number of homes for sale is 10% higher than this time last year with the average estate agent branch having 31 homes for sale – the highest January total for seven years. More sellers means more buyers too, with demand 13% higher than this time last year and 26% higher than at the start of 2023. Sales agreed are up 12% as some buyers attempt to beat the reduced stamp duty deadline at the end of March.

UK house price inflation stood at +2% at the end of December 2024, up from -0.9% a year ago and the fastest growth rate since April 2023.

Source - Zoopla Property Insight January 2025



	Nov 2023	Nov 2024	Change
Detached	9	7	-22%
Semi	21	8	-62%
Terraced	33	27	-18%
Flat	24	15	-38%

Note: The sold house prices for Folkestone were calculated by averaging over all properties sold, as recorded by the Land Registry, within 3 miles of the centre of Folkestone – trend lines may be erratic.

The lettings market in Folkestone is still buoyant with demand very high from local residents and also people moving into the area, most notably from the capital due to the increase in working from home. Although demand is outweighing supply and there is a scarcity of properties coming to the market:

Property Rents in Folkestone by Number of Bedrooms

	No. of properties	Average rent	Median rent
One bedroom	20	£1,009 pcm	£800 pcm
Two bedrooms	31	£1,155 pcm	£1,200 pcm
Three bedrooms	7	£1,428 pcm	£1,400 pcm
Four bedrooms	5	£2,419 pcm	£2,195 pcm
Five bedrooms	2	£1,900 pcm	£1,900 pcm

There have been a few transactions in the town centre with a number of shops remaining on the market for a substantial period including the former **Job Centre Plus** and **Wilko** however we understand that both are under offer. We can confirm that Wilko is under offer to an emporium which will be using the space for a indoor market for local traders.

There are a number of shops which have moved into the town including **Grape Tree** into the former H Samuel however **Shoezone** have indicated that they will be leaving the town with the shop now on the market.

Hospitality continues to struggle in January and February with the **MS Restaurant** and **Taco Bell** announcing their closure however the latter was not empty for long with a new restaurant moving into the premises in Q2 2025.

The serviced office centre has started to decline with a number of businesses evaluating their requirements. **Bouverie House Business Centre** in Bouverie Place and the **Folkestone Business Hub** in West Terrace have both become ideal start up spaces for businesses in the town centre Other serviced offices at **Basepoint**, the **Workshop** and **Motis Business Centre** all remain at good levels of occupancy but have space available therefore if you are interested in space from one person to 20 persons then please don't hesitate to contact Motis.

Great News

Go Folkestone has received a Community Champion Award from the Mayor of Folkestone, Councillor Abena Akuffo-Kelley, for its work in the **Electrical Recycling** project in the purple tent opposite Boots. Join Us. Incidentally we are looking for contacts who repair stuff. Also enthusiasts who collect some of our usable but virtually unsaleable objects such as electric typewriters, Cine 8, jig-saws.

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Saving Grace: the Battle for a Community Library

Do you remember the smell, the multi-coloured spines on the shelves and the library assistant welcoming you with a smile? I do remember walking in Grace Hill library the first time to sign for my library card. I had just arrived in Folkestone.

There is a lot to be said about browsing and discovering books for yourself which is not the same as going online when you log on to find a specific book. It is not the same as seeing the cover, turn to the back resumé, flick through some of the pages and see if it grabs you.

I was lucky to live that experience throughout my childhood. It is very unfair to deprive today's children of the opportunities of trying different types of stories and of firing their imagination therefore we need to keep the Save Grace Hill campaign going.

Marie-Hélène Hunter

Jon O'Connor, a member of the campaign team writes.....

Like many of us, I realise as I get older, I should have looked after myself better, kept in good shape, to be fit for the modern world. And much the same goes for Grace Hill Library.

The decline of this historic gift to the community is rooted in decisions by Kent County Council 15 years ago to end planned maintenance to keep buildings in good condition: schools, youth clubs, care homes... and libraries.

Along with the funding, property management expertise and experience were also lost.



Much has been made of allegations that seagulls were the culprits: failure to remove nests, guano and detritus blocked downpipes and led to water ingress.

With 400 public assets and a total repairs backlog heading for £200m, KCC decided in December 2022 that Grace Hill could no longer function as a library. For the lack of a nail...

The battle of Grace Hill has sought to persuade KCC to think differently to save our Library. It's been a long, drawn-out battle to save not just a building, but a community asset.

That phrase embraces the experiences, memories and opportunities of local people as well as the hard-nosed reality of the capital replacement value of many millions of pounds.

For over two years, our community has stayed constant to the idea that this iconic building can still serve local people. The Save Our Library campaign (SOL) has been a loose coalition of community groups, trade union members, councillors, artists and families.

Our first meeting early in 2023 unified over 30 civic groups in opposition to the closure. In July 2023, our threat of legal action produced a face to face meeting to exchange views: SOL first put forward the idea of working in partnership – an obvious idea.





Our street petition pulled in 3500 signatures. Former librarians filed Freedom Of Information requests, firing off salvoes of well-informed irritation. Press and media picked up interest; we used print, social media and partnership to build up the campaign. The 2024 KCC consultation saw a majority reject proposals to relocate the library service.

On January 22nd, KCC published the consultation report and identified two ways forward: along with a commitment to explore the community partnership proposal, they will explore options for a second, temporary library location

somewhere near the town centre.

Our 'community partnership' proposal reimagines the building as an Arts, Learning and Community space, with building and finance management by Creative Folkestone. In recent weeks, KCC officers have finally met with Creative Folkestone to discuss this proposal, part of a wider plan for investment in creative arts opportunity for Folkestone Regeneration.

The concept of regeneration is all about renewal, thinking differently, finding a way of melding our history into our future. All it requires is imagination, commitment, detailed planning and above all a commitment to community partnership.

On St Valentine's Day, we will be meeting to discuss a 'roadmap' of the way ahead.

This took place as planned. This is what Jon said:

"The meeting today with KCC was positive, cordial, realistic and constructive - and produced agreement to continue working together to explore the possibilities offered by the community partnership proposal."



Local Books

Vice-chair Tony Hill, who has a fine historical photo collection, and national pier expert Martin Easdown, have written a new book inspired by the Go Folkestone pier project (Page 18) called *Rediscovering Folkestone's Victoria Pier*. It is available for £15 hardback (red cover, limited edition) and £10 green softback via GF or FLHS.

Vince Williams, well known local historian, is writing a book about the local Baptists for their 275th anniversary in Sept and if anyone wishes to preorder a copy, contact halloweenvince@aol.co.uk. They've moved around, so check re your point of interest.

Getting to know 'Supervet' Noel Fitzpatrick

BY PAM KEELING

We have a large, clumsy, nervous Red Fox Labrador with an exceptionally loud bark, called Bonny, who had an operation in November 2023 on his right elbow.

He appeared to be getting better but gradually started deteriorating and each month was given a pain-killing injection as well as Metacam. Owners will recognise that the latter is not a problem to administer as most dogs love it. By December 2024, our boy could not bear weight, and although excited to go for a walk invariably did his business and then either stood still or sat. We asked if the vet could give us a referral to Noel Fitzpatrick, which they did, but told us it would be unlikely that we saw Noel.

We received a phone call to go to Godalming on the 17th December and yes, we would be seeing Noel. They told us that Noel planned to do X-rays and an MRI scan, but we could take Bonny home that day. When we got to the practice (which is extremely impressive) we were told to wait outside.

Another dog owner chatted. She had a five-year-old terrier which Noel had just operated on, a great success as it turned out. She told us of her first dealings with Noel. He approached her as she sat in her car, and he wanted to ask her about her dog. The strange part was that Noel was doing all sorts of stretches etc., and at times was almost upside down to her. He explained that he had just come out of 10 hours surgery and was stiff. Noel has a unique way with everyone. Dogs and humans obey him. He spoke to the lady and said, 'Mum walk over there' which of course she did. To her dog Noel said, 'Hamilton follow Mum', which of course he did. Noel wanted to see how Hamilton was moving naturally.

When Noel saw Bonny, he said that he looked much older than his years! He told us that he would be keeping him overnight as he needed to do biopsies as well as the MRI's and X-rays and we should return the following day. The next day was quite unusual as prior to collecting Bonny, we were asked whether we were partners or married? I replied married, the next question was even odder: how long had we been married? I told him 48 years and he responded with 'that is wonderful' and promptly we got the first of many hugs for Dan and me when we saw him. Not something one would normally expect from a vet!

The next part was far worse as Noel explained his concerns that Bonny may have a very serious infection. He told us that as soon as the biopsy results were back, he would call us. When Noel called us, he had been proved correct. Bonny had a staph infection, a sort of a canine MRSA, which had eaten into his bones and tissue. The infection would eventually kill him, and we had two alternatives, euthanasia or two major operations. We of course chose surgery, and as Noel said this could not wait until after Christmas, the operation to remove the dead bone and tissue took place on December 23rd. Bonny spent Christmas with Noel at the surgery and Noel called me around 10.00pm on the day, again on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Bonny could not have been in better hands. He came back to us with a brace screwed into his leg and a cone, which he hates, plus seven lots of medication.

Noel even took the time to give our granddaughter, who wants to be a vet, a guided tour of his practice and talked to her about how she should phrase her personal statement for universities in order that they would wish to interview her. Noel designed a special implant, a prototype, for Bonny and the operation was successfully carried out on the 29th January. He used Bonny's own stem cells to, hopefully, prevent his body rejecting it. Now safely home and in recovery.

Noel is exactly the person you see on the TV, a truly remarkable man.

Victoria Pleasure Pier Information Board

A FURTHER INSIGHT BY TONY HILL

Well what a roller-coaster of a ride (pun intended) the Info board has and is being. The Council Officers have given us/me overall approval for the info board and where it is to be placed...but there are so many hoops to jump through from here on. I need not bore you with the detail because if I find it boring I'm absolutely sure you will.

The idea of the board is to inform the public, obviously, with little snippets or nuggets of information about the lost pier. This it seems has almost disappeared from the public's memory as we grow older and the younger generation take on and make our history by "our" (I mean Folkestone's) history and heritage.

Talking to people down at the end (western) of the boardwalk there is little knowledge of the existence of a pier and residents and visitors alike were fascinated to hear of its existence. They asked about the large stone up on the path above. When this was explained the penny seemed to drop and with mouths wide open they asked more questions, so the information board is truly needed.

Sections on the board deal with different subjects being attractions around the landward end of the pier, personalities of the day who appeared in the lavish pavilion at the end of the pier, and the role it played through the Second World War.

As for personalities one can mention the many famous Victorian and Edwardian entertainers of the day thought a good idea to be seen performing in Folkestone, which you may or may not recall was the epicentre for the well to do's life, when taking their holidays by staying in opulent luxury in beautiful Hotels and grand houses.

One such performer was the rather flamboyant entertainer Marie Lloyd who upset the locals rather convincingly by singing a song written for her about the "snobby" Folkestonians.

This song and the sheet music has been rediscovered and we at Go Folkestone have had it performed and recorded for us by some local talented people namely:



Marie Lloyd, Queen of the Halls

Katie Bishop (singer) and Mick Bishop (pianist)

(Thanks go to fellow committee member Marie-Hélène Hunter for organising this).

This has been added to the QR code that will be present on the Info Board. By clicking on the code the viewer/reader will be taken to a more in-depth panel/page via the Go Folkestone Website: gofolkestone.org.uk

Martin Easdown and I have been rewriting Martin's long out-of-print book on the pier which is due out this year. It will have a limited print run and Titled "**Rediscovering Folkestone's Victoria Pier**" and will contain **some not seen before photographs**.

NB: *There were photos of the pier in the telescopes at the entrance to the Coastal Park near the Leas Lift, but unfortunately these pictures seem to have disappeared. SP*

Here is that song sung by Marie Lloyd

FOLKESTONE FOR THE DAY.
 Written by EDGAR BATEMAN. Composed by GEORGE LE BRUNN.
 Sung by Miss MARIE LLOYD.

Key G.
 1. Two - ty in - dex, I was - on of 'em, All the - men on har - ing a - gree, Went to Folke - stone for a 'bit - a - day,
 Deluded our best - size by the sea; In a 'glass where sea - lions ad - dand go - -
 Look on us as love - - - - - Stuck - up bet, you know - - - I said, "Come, girls,
 Well up - set the shore, - - - for off we start, ad for the day, With all our blazes in tow - - -
 And they 'ave'n't got over it yet, you bet, We 'ave - - - - - up - - - - - the town, - - - - - the point - all Folke - stone
 Look - a - bit red, And came back love - ly brown - - - The night - be - - - - - they said - no more - - -
 2. In the water we were paddling,
 Up to town, a 'wing a - spool,
 My old gaffer went a - waddling
 Like a porpoise, wing a - wadd!
 We got dilly, and wanted some of such - -
 "Wadd!" all our blazes - -
 "Dilly!" is so such - -
 Looked up - on the private bar, and started the attack.
 Chorus.
 And they 'ave'n't got over it yet, you bet,
 We dressed up the town,
 We painted Folkestone beautiful red,
 Add came back lovely brown;
 The herald got lost - "no more,"
 And the dance there was to pay.
 Oh! didn't we 'ave a pantomime
 At Folkestone for the day!
 3. Roundabouts we wouldn't see any,
 "Dance there wasn't a sign of a man,
 Only Lord and Lady Thingummy
 La - de - dah - daing round the place
 I goes up when I see a grinning "slop,"
 And sez, "D'yer know a shop - -"
 A sort of threepenny hop - -"
 He sez, "No," so on the beach we stopped,
 And forty voice let it go, "A little bit off the top!"
 This Song may be sung in public without Fee or License, except at Theatres and Music Halls.
 London: FRANCIS, DAY & HUNTER, 142, Charing Cross Road (Oxford Street end).
 New York: T. B. HARMS & CO., 18, East 22nd Street.
 Copyright 1900/01 in the United States of America by Francis, Day & Hunter.
 ARTHUR W. LONDON

If you can't see the reproduction, here are two verses which reflect Londoner's view of Folkestone then:

Roundabouts we didn't see any
 Swings there wasn't a trace
 Only Lord and Lady Thingummy
 La-de-dah-daing round the place
 I goes up when I see a grinning "slop"
 And sez "D'yer know a shop
 Some kind of threepenny hop"
 He says "No" so on the beach we stopped,

And forty voice let it go "A little bit off the top"(!)
 And they 'ave'n't got over it yet, you bet
 We painted Folkestone beautiful red,
 And came back lovely brown;
 All our petticoats bust the strings,
 But still we jigged away
 Didn't we 'ave a pantomime
 In Folkestone for the day.

Padel, what's the all the Racquet about?

BY KATE NOBLE

As a fan of racquet sports, I was extremely excited to hear that one of the most rapidly growing sports around was coming to my local sports venue, Three Hills Sports Park.

Padel uses a solid, stringless racquets on smaller tennis style courts, includes use of the surrounding walls for bounce shots, is normally played as doubles and puts a strong emphasis on fun.

It is an incredibly inclusive and welcoming sport that is immediately rewarding for all standards and ages from total beginners who haven't played sport for years to the more dedicated athletes! The social mix in session could not have been more friendly and fun.

The combination of these elements along with the fact that its new to many brings a level playing field and is what gives the game such an exciting buzz.

Whether you need to drag yourself off the tennis court or off the sofa it is worth it!

PadelStars at Folkestone offers a fantastic free introductory session which teaches the basic rules and techniques.

Padel Stars Folkestone is run by Centre Manager and experienced coach Sammy. <https://padelstars.co.uk/padelstars-folkestone/>



Family game at Christmas with ages spanning across five different decades!

Openings and Closings

BY RICHARD WALLACE

Wilkinsons in Sandgate Road is being fixed up for an indoor market of over a hundred stalls, on two floors, run by the people behind Ramsgate Emporium. We know the latter as a well-established pot pourri of antiques and collectable stalls in an old roller-skating rink and warehouse in Dumpton Rd, Ramsgate. There £50? per week licensed stalls are normally unmanned, and the cash taken and ingress and egress controlled near the quirky entrance by a minimal common staff. GF members like the idea, despite shoplifting worries. Cameras should work. GF members had wanted a Folca market .

Motis Surveyors have let the former H Samuel to **Grape Tree**, nuts and health food, with branches already at Tenterden and Whitstable. Posh Folkestone !?! In Cheriton the **Green Papaya** café is brand new in the former Dawn's. Proprietor Sita ran Folkestone Rugby Club catering for many years and is now trying a **Dawn's Mark 2** with breakfasts, Sunday lunches etc. She should know what she is doing after all those rugby appetites. At the Morehall end Mark has turned Basils into the licensed **Brunch and Barrel** with his normal competence.

The District Council is working toward repurposing Folca 2, the Art Deco bit of Debenhams, but it's up in the air, what with Kent Council re-org and lack of demand. Talks involving Creative Folkestone, KCC and FHDC about renovating the Grace Hill Library to provide the long-trailed ground floor library, first floor creative businesses and possible basement community uses are unresolved. The building didn't receive a Council Repairs Notice, so is not too bad. And it is listed Grade II with all concerned saying the building itself is safe. But the project, which GF back, needs cash. KCC have massive debts, due mainly to the escalating demands of adult social care, and seem to prefer a Sandgate Road location. The stretched FHDC have said they won't buy Grace Hill. It looks iffy, although some Govt money has just been pledged nationally for libraries. Cllrs Meade, Blakemore, Jeffries and Jon are working hard.

At least the word is that the closures of many Lloyd's Bank branches, which will be announced soon, should not include the Grade II listed Sandgate Road Lloyds, a splendidly rusticated (look it up) former Victorian hotel. But the **Halifax**, part of the Lloyds group is closing/merging. This is also a listed (1930's) building. It used to be the old Gas Showroom and has a beautiful staircase.

Please note that the **Beacon Café** at the Folkestone end of Cheriton Road continues to be a very good value café run by teenagers connected to Beacon School, AND to sell artisan bread the equal of any in town. Of course many locals now go to **Rachels** in the Old High Street for cakes, and to **Dockers** for a wider range of seven breads including rye, baked in their newish premises. Dockers moved from the Riverside IE in West Hythe in August to a small group of factory shops on two closes in Kingsmead, the road by MacDonalds on Park Farm which goes down to the Folkestone Academy car park. There's a very good lighting shop there as well. SURELY the town proper can now support a full bakery of quality.



Dockers in Kingsmead Bakery

Adopting an Older Cat in Folkestone and Hythe

BY PATTY KEY

This area has been a magnet for people who want to settle here for various reasons: to be near family, to live in a quiet area after a life spent in the bustle of a big city, the attraction of nearby France, the lure of the seaside, the availability of accommodation, working from home, and so on. These people can usually find suitable places to live, settle down, discover various activities and places to visit but one thing is missing – an animal. This story is about cats and especially older ones. A kitten is delightful and fun but when one is retired or perhaps on your own, or if you are younger but don't want a cat for 15 years, the joy of having an older four-legged friend makes life so much more enjoyable. A face and a purr to welcome you is a comforting experience (even though it's food they're after); a cuddle with a cat beside you who appreciates the relative peace and quiet of the room is a happy experience, and an older cat is unlikely to wander off in search of adventures elsewhere.

The advantages of having an older cat are that they are more appreciative of what's on offer and what is especially important is that you are giving an older cat a second chance. They appreciate somewhere warm and soft, can sleep 23 hours a day, are relatively quiet but can have "manic moments" where they'll dash around and pretend they're kittens! The downside is that they may get sick or have a bit of arthritis and need to see a vet but the same can happen with a kitten. Also if you adopt an older cat they won't be with you forever (which can be less worrying if you are older), but the time spent with them is always rewarding even if they are asleep and purring contentedly.



Rescue centres may not know the full background of a cat that is under their care so it's important to check if there are pre-existing problems and any medication and also if the cat is overweight and has been seen by the vet for the rescue centre. Donations are de rigueur, but way short of three figures unless you want to help more.

Cats Protection south-east Kent 0345 260 1253

Rhodes Minnis Cat Sanctuary, Green Lane, Rhodes Minnis CT4 6XU.

(Cats) 01303 862243 rminniscats@gmail.com Has events. Open afternoons

Last Chance Animal Rescue, Ashford Road, New Romney TN28 8TH (Cats, dogs) 01797 366620. lastchanceanimalrescue.co.uk Cafe, events.

Lord Whisky Animal Sanctuary, Gate Lane, Park House, Stelling Minnis CT4 6AN 01303 862622 www.lordwhisky.co.uk Cafe. Events. (Cats, dogs, etc)

Dogs Trust Canterbury, Radfell Road, Chestfield CT5 3ER
0303 003 0000 Info@dogstrust.org.uk Events.No cats!!!

News in Brief

Application 25/0035/FH Earlscliffe Mews

Go Folkestone complained to the Council and tree officer, as did NFS, about the six flat, three storey plain block behind the new terrace next to Earlscliffe School in Shornccliffe Road. This is resubmitted by Griggs Builders. It failed only on bedroom size, so regrettably it will get thro now. **But we have written asking for full protection re drainage etc for the nearby Beech and protected Sycamore.**

White Cliffs Countryside Project has a website and needs conservation volunteers especially now Spring has sprung. Meet locally on Weds 10am at Warren, or third Thursday in the month at Dungeness and Folkestone Downs. Phone 01304 241806 for exact meeting pt. Primroses are out on Castle Hill, along the fp from Castle Hill to Holywell. Protected snowdrops were in Seabrook Valley on St Martin's Plain, Military Road.

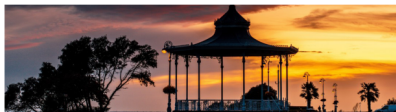
Go Folkestone has repeatedly attacked the owners of The White Lion next to the Library in Cheriton, for letting it fall down. We are pleased that hard pressure by the District Councillors through repair notices and visits have led to Nick Brown repairing the roof properly, after many years, and moving to apply for permission to convert it to a café and three floors (including basement) of supported living accommodation...Class (C2) at lower ground, first and second floor, erection of three storey side extension and single storey rear extension, installation of photovoltaic panels and roof light to roof, alteration to ground floor front and side openings, erection of covered parking area with photovoltaic panels to roof, laying of hardstanding to rear, alteration to existing vehicular access onto Chilham Road!!! Hooray. About time.

Aspects of Folkestone 2025 CALENDAR

THIS YEAR'S CALENDAR WAS OUR 9th AND ARGUABLY THE MOST SUCCESSFUL WITH THE MOST SALES TO RAISE FUNDS FOR OUR CURRENT AND FUTURE PROJECTS **SO THANK YOU.....**

PHOTOGRAPHERS FOR ALLOWING US TO USE YOUR BRILLIANT PHOTOGRAPHS, AND PLEASE REMEMBER SPRING IS ALREADY UPON US SO GET BUSY SHOOTING, WE ARE HAPPY TO ACCEPT YOUR SHOTS FOR 2026 AS SOON AS YOU LIKE TO SUBMIT THEM.

AND COLLEAGUES AND LOCAL SHOPKEEPERS WHO GO TO SUCH LENGTHS TO HELP US DISTRIBUTE THE CALENDARS; IN PARTICULAR, COUNTY FAYRE, THE OLD HIGH ST. COUNTY HARDWARE SHOP, CHERITON HIGH ST. SEYMOUR HARRISON'S CAMERA SHOP, TONTINE ST & MARRIN'S BOOKSHOP, SANDGATE RD.



Beyond Binoculars: Seeing Newington Thermally

The first thing you realize after using a thermal imager outdoors, is that almost everywhere you go has more going on than you expected. They interpret the world through heat signatures and do not rely on light at all. Whether it's day or night, you are going to spot more hidden wildlife by viewing the world thermally.

From walking the bridleways, trails, meadows and woodlands around Folkestone, locals have recorded rare mammals including (adorable) hazel dormice, several species of bat and voles, moles, hares and shrews. With a thermal, spotting mammals becomes very commonplace – you'll see birds roosting in dense foliage, small mammals meandering or darting through the undergrowth, and even the lingering signs of an animal that just passed by, still radiating warmth. What was once just a quiet hedgerow might suddenly reveal significant bustling activity – mice scurrying, foxes stalking, or an owl watching from above.

While back visiting Folkestone for Christmas, my dad and I chose Newington for a late-evening walk to see what we could find. I came equipped with a Infrayr UH35 monocular I bought for my ecological work, which set me back £1400. We found that walking a bridleway like the Elham Valley Way, which personally I would not usually find very interesting, shows how thermal imaging can provide a new way to experience the local landscape.

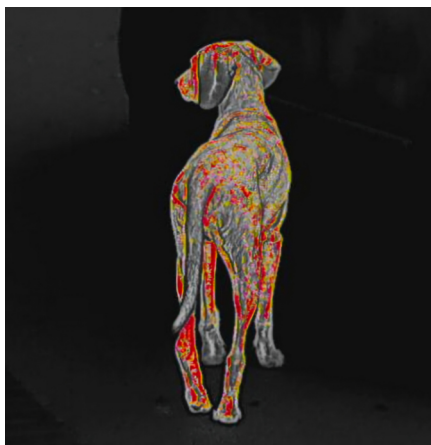


This stretch north of Newington, accessed via a small car park past the Railway Museum, proved unexpectedly rich in wildlife activity in circumstances where the naked eye could see absolutely nothing except a metre of pathway ahead. The canopies of trees on either side were full of sleeping birds, as well as one very awake bird of prey. Underneath was a domestic cat

far from its house, making no sound as it prowled. There were rabbits or hares, hedgehogs and small rodents. Probably the best find of that night was a very brightly glowing heat signature in a small tree cavity. I was careful not to disturb it in case it was a hibernating bat, but it was a wedged in Blue or Great Tit. I've read about how useful cavities and veteran trees are as microhabitats, but it was brilliant to see the evidence first-hand.

From the concrete lane past the old Elham Valley Railway bridge piers, walkers can either follow the footpaths toward Etchinghill or cross the road to skirt the Channel Tunnel. Our route along the former revealed how much nocturnal activity occurs in these everyday spaces we usually only visit during daylight.

Thermal imaging, thankfully now accessible for use outside of military ops, has become a very attractive device for wildlife enthusiasts. I seem to always find a use for it, whether that is observing inflammation in my dog's broken leg (see picture), inflammation in horses, helping to find a stranger's lost dog, or looking for radiator imbalances at home. It essentially lets you see the world in shades of warmth. ADRW



Buses Users' Group: A Personal View

BY RICHARD WALLACE

The Bus Users' Group and the Focus Group with Stagecoach and KCC, set up by the parties, mainly through the efforts of hard-working Cllr Polly Blakemore, proved a useful if sometimes disappointing channel of concern in the meeting at the very end of February. We found out that the Bus Station redevelopment is starting straight away in March, with the set of five bus stops along Shellons being worked on before most of the work in Bouverie Square. There will be an onsite and internet PR/Contact to tell people what's going on, at least during the day.

I had the chance to ask about waiting buses, which GF were very worried about. At least we know that there will be two stacking/waiting places, one on the separate sixth bus stop which is just around the corner from the motorbike shop, and one by Lidl. See the details (but not on the station building) by going on Folkestone and Hythe Planning Applications and typing in Bus Station or 24/1650/FH. So in the next couple of months there will be a line of five bus stops along the main road to Guildhall Street, and a big bus layby with a very big electric signboard between the main road and Bouverie Square. The area in front of the bus station building will be a garden and play area, and there will therefore be no bus turning in the Square. Final answer as far as Council is concerned.

The majority of Go Folkestone seemed to think that the original bus station just needed modernisation, but there have been improvements in the scheme. Best of all we believe the actual bus station building is safe; there was talk of demolition. Members always like the look of it despite the unfashionable age (Jenners 1954 rather than Sir Christopher Wren, per committee member Tony Hill). It should be a café with a Stagecoach room or two attached, which we had suggested in a submission. But firstly there are negotiations to be had with the Radnor Estate which has a covenant over the Square from when Lord Radnor owned it. In the fifties he only allowed that the Square be used as either a bus station or a garden. That was quite philanthropic. Apparently Lord Radnor is ok with a commercial café. Secondly GF members Elizabeth and Jen helped get the big sign, and Braille on the layby at the northern side of the Square. Originally there were to be electronics just on each shelter. This should still be. But for those who don't want to walk 300m more, the central sign will have a lot of info. Feedback got a double bus shelter for the popular Cheriton services.

Following feedback at our monthly meetings over months, we will write to the crucial councillors asking that firstly the garden have proper monitoring to prevent litter and rough sleeping; perhaps even being controlled by a café tenant. Members feel that a characterless but central patch will possibly be a drug dealing and sleeping bag spot. We will push for a showpiece tree or two and not just weedy, easily chopped Silver Birch; the popular London Plane outside Rootes and Alliot should have a sister. Sadly the scheme is pretty fixed now and the Council may be pressured by Police to have weedy trees because they don't obscure CCTV, but we must pursue this.

Thirdly we want a clean and tidy recycling facility of some sort in the Square, and possibly a little office and store. WE KNOW from storing our recycling tent every week that storage in the town centre, SO UNGLAMOROUS BUT SO USEFUL , is profoundly lacking . We back Cllr Walker in wanting a mobility scooter store if the idea is practical.

Fifthly and most importantly Elizabeth , Linda and many others want there to be a Post Implementation Review of the bus operation and the traffic movement with a reserve budget of worthwhile dimensions to carry it out and to cope with teething problems . Many members believe that more work will be necessary to prevent snarl ups at certain points in the new traffic system. We will confirm this shopping list at our March meeting which has moved to the Burlington Hotel. Come along: it was nice to get 25 at the last ordinary meeting.

Members of GF have been involved in the Folkestone and Hythe Bus Users' Group which tries to inform local policy on buses via committed councillor partners such as Jackie Meade, Polly Blakemore, Dylan Jeffery, Rory Love, and member Belinda Walker. We made a pitch for several changes, notably a partial reintroduction of the No 76, taken away in April 2024. This was suggested primarily but not only by GF member Bob Hyslop. If you agree, write to your local councillor. Bob wrote that the lost service had served Creteway Down, the big 1950s council estate stretching up to the hills from Canterbury Rd and Hill Road behind the small Fleming Way shopping parade..."Like the lady two NHS sticks and two wheelchair folks who caught it, plus all the regulars including mums with pushchairs, one with a type of pram, and school kids".

Bob feels these areas include some people who can't use the new routes , and that the stops often had queues. "one lady is now trapped in her home in Joyes Close. She was like others, a regular user of 76. She, like others, looks forward to going out, not being at home all day every day ".

But sadly, at the end of the Feb meeting, it was made clear that KCC and Stagecoach have identified a new record in the number of uncommercial bus routes . There are 65 routes that KCC believe need subsidy just to keep going, newly including the Service 10 Folkestone to Ashford! We have to be a little cynical but everyone can see that some people made other choices during Covid and have never come back. So no new bus service in the foreseeable future. We did get more bus stops promised for a huge $\frac{3}{4}$ mile formerly rural stretch in West Road and Hospital Hill; they looked and said yes. Also more now designed signage at Central Station to end the confusion over which bus stop to use for the Town: Tattoo Parlour or Co-op!! Co-op it is: official.

Churchwise

It's fairly quiet, although the little old Non-conformist church on Cheriton Road opposite Millfield is very soon going to be converted to two (permitted) houses. St Joseph's RC in Cheriton is still, unofficially, not going to reopen, and the magnificent main Our Lady of Christians and St Aloysius Church in Guildhall Street has ample space. But the St Joseph's church hall is apparently safe, and for hire for local meetings.

Use it please.

Ruby Red: Moving down to Folkestone

As an interior designer at Ruby Red Interiors, relocating to Folkestone has been my smartest business move yet! In recent years the town has witnessed a remarkable revamp, and with it being less than an hour from the capital, the town is tempting Londoners down to the coast in their droves with a desire to make their new property as perfect as their new location.

Folkestone offers its dwellers so much, from the fabulous beaches and funky art scene to the culinary delights and beautiful architecture (especially its recent addition, The Shoreline development). Since moving my family to the Kent coast from West London 11 years ago, the changes in this coastal town have been enormous and the town just keeps on getting better and better!

But what brought me to this amazing town in the first place? Well, I have my brother to thank for that. In 2011 and in search of more space for his young family, he moved down from London with his partner, a Folkestone native. I too was looking to move my young family out of London and after weekends visiting them and seeing all that the town had to offer, two years later, I too, decided to make Folkestone my home.

Today, I spend my working life travelling around Kent from my base in Folkestone, creating beautiful interiors for an array of clients and in my spare time I can be found enjoying the town's many bars and eateries (The Harbour Arm is a particularly good spot for all things food and drink) as well as soaking up the art and culture in The Creative Quarter.

As much as I love the hustle and bustle of London, there's no nicer feeling than boarding the train at St Pancras, safe in the knowledge that in 55 minutes, I'll be hearing the waves splash against those glorious pebbles.

Politics: Here Comes East Kent Council

Proposals to change some more urban English counties into unitary authorities each supposed to be of about 500k population, more like London boroughs, have been debated for years. Kent will have a mayor and a good budget but no county council and FHDC will be an ex-parrot. The mayor may deal with some strategic issues, police perhaps, and promotion of the area, posb helping decide where things nobody wants get sited e.g. waste disposal sites, and maybe defending Kent agin London!!! Currently, broadly speaking, Counties cover many social services, and district councils are often agents for the counties, and cover most planning and building etc. But recently a lot of big areas have become much more independent of councils e.g. many former County schools are self-governing academies, Kent Police have commissioners, the national Highway Authority is more important...

So there will be three to four unitary councils. Probably West Kent will be T.Wells, Tonbridge and Malling, Sevenoaks and Maidstone. North Kent will almost certainly see Medway augmented by Dartford and Gravesham. Probably Folkestone and Hythe will join Canterbury, Thanet, Dover and Ashford. Swale is a problem, and so is Rother which is a Sussex rural authority than comes right up to Tunbridge Wells town. But the point is that these unitary authorities will do almost everything in practical terms. Elections are postponed to 2028 or 9, so say 2030, just when we all get electric cars.

Councillors will be fewer: perhaps 12 for the FHDC patch. The Kent Mayor will be decisive aka less democratic, because they won't have separate county councillors. More technocrats as Boris had in London. Folkestone Town Council will therefore become more important in the general democratic mix as a 'complainer in chief', but it will continue to have little actual power.

Recently an attempt to do this splitting up of Kent quickly was defeated. So now, although the reorganisation will take place in 2026-7, there will still be KCC elections in May 2025, the mayor won't be elected until 2028, and the old councils will be shadows, keeping their "stuff" such as Folca, for a time, but not running the show. Kent, 450ad under brother chiefs Hengist and Horsa to...when?

What's On

Just a few tips for Spring, not comprehensive but maybe you hadn't heard...

March 1, 8, 15, 22 Quilt-making course – Folkestone Bookshop, Tontine Street

15 Kyan Quartet – The Green Room, The Grand

20 Sacconi Quartet [Fab] and Simon Haram – Kollektiv, 69 Old High Street

27 Dr Strangelove, National Theatre live – Quarterhouse and Silver Screen

28 Go Folkestone litter picking, Leas Arch. 2pm .Equipment supplied

April 5 Alfie Brown, Jake Steer – Folkestone Comedy Club

5 Archaeology Masterclass – Folkestone Museum

9 Go Folkestone Meeting: NOW THE BURLINGTON 6.45PM

18-21 Easter Weekend

25 Go Folkestone litter picking: Leas Arch 2pm, equipment provided

26 James Gilchrist and Anna Tibbrook – The Green Room, the Grand

May 1st KCC Elections

3 Bobby Mair, Maureen Younger – Folkestone Comedy Club

5 May Day holiday

14 Go Folkestone Meeting NOW THE BURLINGTON 6.45PM

17 VW Beetles and Campervans - The Harbour Arm

17 Sandling Park Open Day for Pilgrims Hospice

16-18 Saccone Quartet Chamber Music Festival sacconi.com

26 Spring Bank Holiday

30 Go Folkestone Litter Picking: Leas Arch 2pm Equipment provided.

And regularly:

Saturdays Electrical Recycling – Go Folkestone Opposite Boots 10 – 2

Sundays Sunday Writing Hangout – The Folkestone Bookshop, Tontine Street

3rd Sunday – Folkestone Repairs Together at Holy Trinity Church Hall 12.30 – 14.30

4th Sunday – Folkestone Repairs Together at Wood Avenue Library 12.30 – 14.30

Please see the Go Folkestone website for updates on What's On.

Music In May is back!! the community festival started in 2022 by the Folkestone Music Town CIC ! Folkestone will be alive with music of all genres throughout May – as befits the world's first Music Town. Last year, over 20,000 people attended 168 gigs performed by 140 artists at 35 venues. This year's Music In May will be bigger and better!

Folkestone Music Town CIC encourages town venues to put on as many events as possible during May. These will be promoted in a glossy, full colour programme that will be distributed throughout Folkestone and in neighbouring towns and also on the Folkestone Music Town web site that is now getting 10,000 unique hits a month.

The first big event, the **Grand Opening Party** – takes place at The Quarterhouse, Sunday 4th May 2pm. Sixteen of Folkestone's stars will perform songs for all the family, accompanied by an eight-piece band. This is followed at 4pm by a party with fabulous DJ Dolly Doowop playing the tunes we all know and love, with special guests and surprises.

On each Saturday in May, there will be a curated busking programme on four spots throughout the centre of the town. 40 buskers will take part, representing different musical genres and communities within Folkestone.

On Sunday 18th May 4pm, Grand Burstin Ballroom, nine choirs will perform '**Choir-oke**'. There will be very young people on stage with those who could be their grandparents! The Aronde choir from Lille are returning alongside Folkestone's own Ukrainian choir.

20 free music workshops will be run during May – from songwriting to music production. We are also this year working with Turner Schools, delivering projects for Secondary and Primary school children.

The famous **Saccone Chamber Music Festival** takes place from May 16th-18th with five great concerts - and Folkestone New Music, the Grand Arts CIC and kollektiv are also offering a diverse range of classical concerts throughout May.

There will be a sensational end of the festival on the Bandstand – with eight local bands battling it out on 31st (Sat), for the chance to perform at t' Blue Reef Festival. On Sunday 1st **The Source of Sounds** will present international DJs offering a range of genres.

Go to **www.folkestonemusic.com** for ALL that is happening on Music In May 2025.

Planning and Building Updates

Folkestone Sports' Centre

News on FSC is very hopeful , but surely needs investment. Essentially the FSC was an unusual stand-alone charity which went broke due to rocketing energy charges for a swimming pool, and an unfortunate lack of grants from councils which were struggling to keep their own buildings open; Tides in Deal has also suffered. But fortunately, a sports' centre for 100,000 people turns out to be marketable! Witness Dover's Whitfield sports' centre which seems a success. The liquidators Opus re-marketed FSC and new operators are very interested, subject to terms, including perhaps redeveloping an ancillary bldg, such as the sensory garden building, for residential. All up for complex discussion, complex because The Folkestone Estate of Lord Radnor, the original donor/owner does have covenants over some of this land, controlling building.

Middelberg House aka Saga in the town centre

This was SOLD in Feb 2025 , subj to contract . The old Saga block is likely to be reduced to a skeleton and then rebuilt straightforwardly as flats, overlooking Bouverie Square.

The elegant Saga at Sandgate is empty. It has planning permission for conversion to 60 odd flats but could it revert to offices? Working from home is not so popular now

Friends of The Leas Pavilion have told a GF committee member that work should restart at that troubled development under developer Ant Yapi in May. Hopefully! We are going to keep asking about the historic tiles etc being kept in storage. But the old, pale green Saga call centre, for sale in the dead end of Cheriton High St is pretty dead.

William Marcus Brown, the most active independent builder, finished the stylish 76a Shorncliffe Road next to the old convent and went straight to Early Victorian 45 Augusta Gardens. There are five apartments in 45 Augusta Gardens for rent, and they have been very popular so far. This address was infamous in the 2000s when Shepway investigated compulsory purchase, and Michael Howard inspected, because it had an Indian, mainly absentee, owner and was literally stairless. All's well that ends well.

Strangely the most active current building sites are quite hidden away! Firstly, at the end of Cheriton High Street next to **Motis House** on the flat land that was rough parking for the Channel Tunnel, Motis are getting on with a really high quality, big lorry park, with refreshment and security buildings. This could be quite a feature of Business Folkestone in a year's time.

Secondly developers are busy putting in services at the **Biggin's Wood Site** at the end of Caesar's Lane, next to the **Crosskey's** bus depot, after it was sold. This will be a street of industrial units plus a single street of social dwellings at 90 deg to the end of Caesar's Way.



45 Augusta Gardens

Folkestone Rock 'n' Roll Wall of Fame

BY BRYAN RYLANDS AND JOE RANGER

The Wall of Fame is a remembrance of musicians past and present, who have plied their trade in the world's first music town. It was unveiled on August 10 2024. The commemorative wall on No 1 The Leas block, near MacDonalds, acknowledges both famous acts, and, as importantly, local bands who have enriched the town.

The Wall was inspired by the one which is on The Cavern Club in Liverpool. After a visit to Liverpool, Joe Ranger the lead singer in the popular local band, The Transients, felt musicians locally ought to be recognised as it is they who have made Folkestone the world's first music town. But before the wall came the blue plaques.

The blue plaques were inspired by Joe Ranger's discovery that Jimi Hendrix had played in Folkestone, in the mid to late 60s. Joe set out about knocking on doors of former venues and talking to the owners requesting permission. All of the venue owners have been receptive to the idea of commemorating the rich musical heritage of the town.

At present there are nine blue plaques on such locations as Bottoms (The Carlton Hotel), The Odeon (site of Boots), The Metronome (Grace Hill) and Tofts [Mark 2] (Grace Hill) with a tenth to be placed on what was Stones, then Pipers now The Works, in Tontine Street. This will commemorate Reginald Dwight (Elton John) who played at Stones in Bluesology in the late 60s, and Toyah Wilcox who played Pipers in the mid 80s, along with other national and internationally known musicians.

Joe Ranger initially put his hand in his own pocket to make the blue plaques happen, as there was little appetite by the community to fund them. "I couldn't understand why such an idea didn't resonate with the community, so I decided if you want something doing, do it...."

"The money to make the Rock'n'roll wall of fame and some of the plaques happen came about over coffee with a long time friend. After listening to my thoughts he told me he knew "which doors to knock on.". Within days he'd managed to tease over £1,300 from three separate donors. Then it was a matter of getting names together for the Rock'n'roll Wall of Fame. That's when both of us as fellow musicians reached out to other musicians, who then began putting names our way. The criteria to get on the list was very simple. First the band had to have played in Folkestone, and second, they had to have written their own original songs: we were not looking for cover bands.



The Jimi Hendrix Experience, with local musician Noel Redding pictured left

Within weeks we were in the hundreds, partly because Folkestone was often a venue before or after the Continent. Each of the bands had to be researched and have it verified that they complied with the simple criteria.

However, at this time there was no wall for the Rock'n'roll wall of fame. I and the man behind the money searched for one for over a year. We spoke to many owners of many properties asking them if we could have a wall, and all to often we ran into a brick one! Eventually through a chance conversation with the property management team of No 1 the Leas – LH Property Management – we had our wall and the project could progress beyond blue plaques.

On the 10 August 2024, the first fifty brick slips were unveiled along with a blue plaque commemorating bands past and present who have played in Folkestone, along with a brick for the first donor – rock fans Quinn Homes. Since then a further 25 names have been added, with another 125 to go on the wall in the next year to eighteen months.

“Music.” as Beethoven said “can change the world” If you'd like to change the world and can think of a band deserving of going on the Folkestone Rock'n'roll wall of Fame then send a message to the Folke of The Stone Facebook page, stating why you think your nominated band, who must meet the criteria, should be on the wall. Or if you wish to donate to the growth of the wall please do the same, after all “Rock'n'roll aint gonna die”.



Folkestone Quiz Answers

1. Outside The Grand (mainly for liquor orders from 134 Sandgate Road as The Grand opened without a liquor licence)
2. 4.3 on the Richter Scale
3. The town gaol in the Town Hall basement
4. 2008 A success
5. Little Dorrit, but he had writers' block and output was limited
6. Mr Grainger (Are You Being Served?)
7. 550 beds, a large and vital tourism boost.
8. Opened late 2007 just before recession
9. Hotel Continental Wampach, Magnificent as was
10. Spike Milligan, who was active in the project.

Ade Yusuff returns to Folkestone Invicta

by Richard Murrill, Folkestone Invicta FC

Striker Ade Yusuff has returned to Folkestone Invicta and is now targeting the club's all-time senior goalscoring record which is currently held by Ian Draycott (150 goals).

Yusuff returned to Invicta from Hornchurch for a third spell with the club during January 2025 with 105 goals from 195 appearances for the Folkestone club to his name. He has since gone past the 200 appearance mark and scored five goals in his first seven appearances upon his return, including a hat-trick at home to Canvey Island. It was his third hat-trick for the Folkestone club but his first in front of the jubilant home supporters at Cheriton Road – the other two had been in a F A Cup tie away to Ashford Town (Middlesex) in 2021-22 and away to Corinthian-Casuals at Leatherhead in 2022-23.



Yusuff's previous Invicta goal had been at home to Hornchurch in February 2023 just before he signed for the Essex club where he won the Isthmian League Premier Division title in 2023-24.

"I want to come back and help the team and I want to contribute in the way that I have done here in the past," Yusuff told Invicta TV. "I'm happy to be back and there is a really good squad here now and hopefully I can be an important piece in the jigsaw. There's obviously a goalscoring record to chase but my first goal is to do something positive for the team and push for promotion. We've been close a couple of times and not got over the line but things feel different now and we have a good squad here and not just a starting X1. I have some really close personal friends at the club here also. I'm really looking forward to being back and scoring in front of the fans here and hearing my name sung again."

Invicta manager Andy Drury was pleased to get his man: "I am delighted to have him back here. I played with Ade probably ten years ago when he was on trial at Ipswich Town and then again here and against him when he was at Hornchurch. In my opinion he has been one of the best centre forwards at this level for the past five or six years. I know he's going to be good for the team and he's a real handful for defenders at this level."

Yusuff originally joined Folkestone Invicta during 2017 and was top goalscorer during 2017-18 with 30 in all competitions and again during 2018-19 with 21. At the end of the 2018-19 season he joined Dulwich Hamlet before returning to Invicta in April 2021.

Visit the club's website
www.folkestoneinvictafc.co.uk

Folkestone Invicta's Top 20 All-Time Senior Goalscorers (as at February 22, 2025)

Ian Draycott 150

James Dryden 141

Ade Yusuff 110

Paul Chambers 88

Steve Lawrence 86

Johan Ter Horst 75

James Everitt 70

Nicky Dent 68

Ricky Reina 65

Frankie Chappell 56

David Smith 56

Ira Jackson 53

Stuart King 52

Dave Arter 51

Josh Vincent 48

Joe Taylor 47

Allan Tait 44

John Ayling 42

Paul Booth 42

Scott Heard 42

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