

June 2009

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TOWN SUNDAY

28th June 2009

Mayor making ceremony at the Town Cross
St Mary and St Eanswythe's Church, the Bayle Folkestone.

Followed by a service in the Church at 11am.

Followed in the afternoon by

THE BLESSING OF THE FISHERIES

By the Bishop of Pontefract the Rt. Rev'd Tony Robinson
Folkestone honours its Fishing Community in this historic and
Picturesque harbourside ceremony.

3.00pm Procession leaves St Peters Church,

The Durlocks, East Cliff Gardens.

3.15pm Ceremony of the blessing of the Fisheries at the Stade

Editorial

As the front cover of this quarter's magazine suggests, the recession is biting hard. It covers local markets and small businesses, plus it shows how the press is also suffering through lack of advertising.

People are chasing hard to come by allotments to make ends meet by growing their own. Read the suggestion to turn gardens into allotments.

The sensitive issue of Lydd Airport is on going. See the letter in reply to an article in the March issue.

Crime is down in the District, says Chief Inspector Martin Bradley. Read the projected figures to reduce crime even further in 2009/10.

A reader was prompted to write:

What ever happened to freedom of Speech? With an apology in advance.

There's information on Derelict buildings, planning issues, along with an update on Folkestone Sports Centre. Also included is an interesting Link with the past.

We invite our readers to write in with issues, and articles that they feel would contribute to the well being of the town of Folkestone.

We also look forward to reader's letters in response to articles in the Magazine, which we are happy to consider.

We reserve the right to edit.

Ann Berry.

Chair Go Folkestone

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The fight for survival for the farmers market means more than just beating the recession

Stalling success?

By Terry Begent

Is the story of the Farmer's, Fishermen's and Artists market in the harbour typical of the problems faced by all the small businesses in Folkestone?

There's no doubting that we are in a recession, it was anticipated years ago by those that keep an eye on such things. What came as a bit of a shock, though, was the feeding frenzy from the media which seemed to vie with each other to find the direst news and paint the bleakest picture.

This hit the market just as much as it did all the other retail outlets in town and it hit at a time which coincided with the normal "kipper" season, as market traders call it, which covers the period between Christmas and Easter.

But, where scores of local shops have shut, the market has survived – just – and the quality of the goods on sale means that it can't be because people are looking for the cheaper options that markets used to be able to offer in the past.

The market's strength is derived from all the battles it has fought in the past, the battles it is still fighting and the

battles that are yet to come. It faces the same struggles as almost every business in town and is, therefore, a good representation of the hurdles that lie ahead for all of them.

The market sprang from an idea of Roger De Haan in 2006 to put something on the old Ark Site that would improve footfall in the area and help with the regeneration of that part of town. Anything that got more people into the area would obviously benefit all the local traders but, instead of welcoming it with open arms, they turned on it with a vengeance to the point of threatening violence and worst towards both the traders and the market managers. In the face of such open hostility, a number of traders (particularly those selling food or fish) left the market rather than risk life and limb.

It might be expected that other, local traders might feel a bit aggrieved if they were suddenly faced with a new competitor but, for some reason, a whole range of people (including representatives of the local residents association) descended on the market and thought that they somehow had the right to dictate what stalls could be included and the goods they could sell. Strange that, 'cos nothing similar has happened in the town centre market!

In order to ensure the safety of people coming to the market, the County Council issued a road closure order for Beach Street to keep traffic out of the area whilst the market was open. This happens all over the country on market day but not in Folkestone. In Folkestone local traders, drivers and visitors blamed the market manager for the actions of the County Council and either threatened him with violence or smashed their way through the signs put out to warn them of the closure.

This orchestrated campaign of complaint to the town and district council continues to this day.

Whilst the market may on its own in its battles in its own area, it shares the same fate as others in its dealings with the District Council over rates.

The market isn't really a business in the usual sense of the word, since Harbourmart, the company that runs it, was set up as a community interest company, which is sort of half-way between a business and a charity.

Whatever income the market generates is directed back towards the community in one way or another. This contribution has been in the way of a number of grants towards local community groups but is currently being used to re-open and run the Tourist information office in Tram Road.

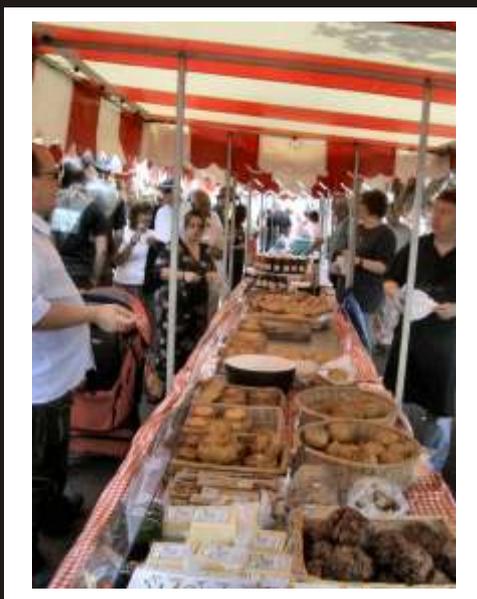
The acquisition of that office, though, meant that the company was no longer eligible for small business relief on its rates.

Instead, and in view of the fact that all its income was being invested in the community, the company asked for the discretionary relief that is outlined later in this edition.

Shepway District Council took more than a year to make up its mind before turning us down.

In the meantime, the Valuation office had carried out a revaluation exercise so, by the time the decision arrived, it was accompanied by a demand for the full rates for the period while we were waiting for a decision, together with two further demands for the following year.

It is these further, increased demands in December that have sent so many local shops to the wall. In March, too late to save those shops that had



already closed, the government published the details of the "Business Rate Deferral Scheme", which would allow businesses to put off paying their increases until next year i.e. After the elections in June 2009.

So what future for the market and other local retailers?

The same media that talked up the recession is now beginning to use phrases like "green shoots of recovery" and giving dates for the end of it.

The fittest have survived the worst of it and can look forward to a good tourist year now that boarding an aircraft to fly anywhere makes you a social pariah and/or people can't afford foreign holidays anymore.

That, and the run up to Christmas and the promised recovery beyond, suggests a healthy future for the market and those shops that are still open.

Growth? Now that's another matter...

sliding into an abyss?

Who better to ask than our own Philip Carter, the chair of the Shepway Economic Regeneration Partnership?

Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of Folkestone?

The future of the town can be both; it just depends on the attitude of the people of the town.

On the positive side we can look forward to the benefits offered by the high-speed train; the work that Roger De Haan is doing - both in the creative quarter and down on the seafront; the growth of SAGA - 300 jobs coming now and more in the future; and an emerging regional airport, bringing with it jobs, tourism and industry, Folkestone University with all its young people, and of course our famous lower costal park.

On the downside, we have an inbuilt resistance to change by the people of the town, particularly from an aging population, which often (it appears ONLY!) speaks out when it wants to oppose anything but is rarely active in support of anything.

This aging population has a disproportionate effect on local politics. If it hadn't complained so much about this and that, half of the seafront and marina could have built by now, the new Lydd airport terminal, runway extension, hotel/conference centre could have been opened and Nicholls Quarry, with

much needed affordable housing and sports centre with swimming pool could be finished!

People are so ready to complain and the council is so ready to react to those complaints that nothing gets done. People have to realise that they may be being selfish by complaining so much, and it makes young people so uncomfortable, not wanted with all the NIMBY negativity, that they just can't wait to leave the area.

If this were a vibrant thriving, healthy community, people would be more likely to put their own self interest second. It's just like someone who has depression, they concentrate on nothing but their own problems and it's the same with a town. Folkestone may not be as depressed as it was when Go Folkestone was set up, but it often looks and seems like it!

If it doesn't have that thriving vibrant atmosphere people are more likely to complain.

A typical example is the night-time economy, which is a key component to keeping young people in town. Instead of seeing a vibrant, thriving community, all that some people concentrate on is the noise that naturally goes with young people enjoying themselves. Can we afford this attitude?

How will we encourage our young people to stay in the town?

We have to generate the impression of a young feeling (up for it!), regenerating vibrant town. They have to feel that it is going forward...a future. If they feel that it is standing - still, in effect slipping backwards behind the times they will continue to leave.

They want action, excitement, an "it's all happening here" feel about the town. The university will help with that a little but it's not the only solution.

You really have to ask them what they really want and that is the problem nobody is really asking them - they have no actual (official) voice at the moment

There is a whole raft of organisations looking at the regeneration and the future of the town but virtually none of them have young people on board, partly, I suppose, because as soon as you talk about "young people" the phrase is synonymous with "teenagers" but it is the generation that is emerging from education, the 20 to 30 year olds that can have the greatest impact on our future. We say that the young are the future, which they obviously are, so they must be involved with the planning of that very future.

What else is holding back the regeneration?

The overbearing, unrealistic and bureaucratic attitude of parts of the council. The profile of the Folkestone is improving and most people know where it is but you can't say the same about Shepway. The first question that many businesses looking to relocate ask is "Where is it?"

The council is trying, but unfortunately is still not proactive and welcoming enough to businesses/companies looking to relocate to the area. Many tell us the find only negativity, lack of vision, and planning/environment barriers in their way.

When they go out to do their market research, they see what has happened to others in the same position and they just walk away. We must all be "*can do, will do!*"

The council is concentrating so much on increasing its revenue at the moment that it is missing out on the wider picture. There is not enough joined up thinking.

Instead of putting up parking charges, for example, they should reduce them to encourage people to shop in the town which, in turn, will lead to an increase in their revenues further down the line.

So where does SERPS fit in?

Well, in the same way that Go Folkestone was formed to give the people of the town a community spirit and voice, SERPS was created to give local business community a voice to help it to influence what the council is thinking and does.

But we also appreciate that the council and its officers are trying to push forward regeneration and do sometimes have to make difficult, unpopular decisions so we are also there to support them and to give them the confidence to make those tough forward thinking decisions. Being a Councillor is not easy though! Believe me I know, I was one for many years.

Of course the council has a duty to actively encourage regeneration, and in many ways is, but at the same time, it appears reluctant to accept change and many of the good ideas that come forward quickly get bogged down in bureaucracy and problems referred to earlier.

Part of the problem is that there are too many "visions" for the future developed at district, county and regional levels. How can the council move ahead with any clarity and, more importantly, how can the man in the street link into them or take part or have ownership of them?

That brings us back to having a "voice" that enables you to influence what goes on. Giving people that voice is what Go Folkestone, SERPS and even the Folkestone Youth Project, are all about. Giving people a voice is key to lifting the air of depression surrounding the town.

Lifting that perhaps returning depression, increases community spirit; increasing community spirit reduces complaints; reducing complaints accelerates change; accelerating change increases community spirit and so on. It's all tied in together.

Continued on page 28



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Drop the dead donkey!

It's not just shops. As the recession bites into advertising revenue, the local papers also feel the pinch

There was a time when it was said that you only bought a local paper to see a picture of yourself, friends or relatives; which is why local papers always seemed to include lots of pictures of football, cricket or athletic teams etc.

Falling advertising revenues coupled with the threats posed by the growing trend to get information from the internet mean that a number of local papers around the country are going under and there is no reason to suppose that the two local papers that serve our town are any less immune to the threat than any others.

Advertising revenue itself is dependent on readership. Readership is a fickle thing and some editors may feel tempted to try any trick they can to keep people interested.

Some may go for the "sensational" approach featured in the television programme at title. Whilst this may be fine for so-called "celebrities", it doesn't go down too well with prominent local people and is more likely to drive people away from the local press than it is to attract new readership. After all, it is more likely that the older generations will buy a local paper than the younger ones currently feeding off the "celebrity" frenzy.

Gossip and scandal are great in small doses, but a daily drip-feed will result

in the kind of addiction that some display towards so-called "reality" TV programmes.

Readers will also be turned off local newspapers that become predictable or biased, where either can be the result of laziness or lack of integrity. A newspaper must surely be on a downward spiral if its readers start to wonder if one of its reporters lives in a

certain area because there is always an article about the goings-on or the farmers market held in a certain

village. To readers, it can almost appear to be the latest instalment in a local soap-opera.

Gone are the days when the local press had an army of reporters impartially seeking out stories and now they find it easier to rely on freelance journalists/photographers and/or members of the public sending bits and pieces in – a process made so much more simple by the advent of modern technology. The is a danger that a local paper could be hijacked by either a particularly active political party or any other single agenda group. It would take a strong-willed editor to ignore the feast of information they submit in favour of the snacks available from everyone else.

The local press is an important guardian of local democracy and its demise would be a serious loss to any community, People need information and history has show that they will always turn to a trusted source to find it. If a local paper loses that trust and its advertising revenue as well, it will surely fail.

Are the warning signs are already there and is it, perhaps, those signs that have led to the rapid growth in the numbers and popularity of community publications, like this one, in the local area?

Wendy van Halderen-Moss explains how the introduction of a brand new festival shows that the town isn't dying on its feet



HG
wells

Many people are already aware of the rich tapestry of literary and artistic figures that have lived in Folkestone, Sandgate and Hythe.

Amongst them of course is HG Wells who, whilst living in Spade House in Sandgate, wrote many of his most famous books.

Sentiments querying the lack of a celebration for such a noteworthy resident were addressed during a meeting late last year at Chimaera Gallery in Tontine Street, at which a handful of equally impressive local residents, for example, Reg Turnill, President of the Sandgate Society, Nicholas Reed, Art Historian and Editor of Folkestone Creative, and Mary Mather of the Folkestone Artists' Cooperative, decided to do something about this omission.

Following further meetings held at The Grand, and the development of an 'HG Wells Festival' committee, the foundation of what will be the inaugural festival enfolded.

It was decided that the festival will take place to coincide with the birthday of HG Wells in September. In 2009, the festival will be held over the weekend of the 19th and 20th of September.

The official Press Launch took place on 20th March to a 'standing room only audience' and was well received by the enthusiastic attendees who were given a brief account of the proposed events and were able to view an impressive collection of some rare first edition HG Wells books very kindly provided by Patrick Marrin of Marrin's Bookshop.

Central to the festival is the Short Story Competition which attracts a prize of

Opposite: Mary Mather of the Folkestone Artists' Cooperative dresses the part at an exhibition of rare HG Wells books at the festival launch in March

£1000 for the talented winner. This annual competition was the innovative concept proposed by Reg Turnill, in order to encourage literacy amongst the students in the area. Reg and Margaret Turnill are very generously providing the funds for the annual award for this and subsequent Short Story competitions.

The competition rules require the entrants to submit a short story of 1000 words to be handwritten in the style of Wells' writing. Anyone who is in either full or part-time education is eligible to enter.

The deadline for submissions is the 20th July and the short-listed nominees will be announced on 20th August. The finalist will be revealed on 20th September as the finale of the Festival.

Also to be featured as part of the HG Wells Festival, is a short film based on an HG Wells short story, currently being filmed by Zachary Cooke of the Folkestone Film Factory.

In addition, there will be commissioned art works and art exhibitions will be held at The Grand on the Leas, Chimaera Gallery and the Neville Pundole Gallery, both on Tontine Street, and the Christos Gallery in Sandgate. There will also be a short play and guided walks amongst other events and activities.

All these events will draw on the burgeoning population of talented artists, film-makers and actors resident in Folkestone, Sandgate and Hythe.

Further details and an application form available from: www.wellsfestival.com.

Alternatively, if you have any ideas for festival events or would like to take part in one of the festival activities, please contact me on 07515 879322 or email me on wendyvhmoss@aol.com

A simple challenge to the district council brings dividends to the Sunday farmers' market in the harbour

If you don't ask, you won't get

By Terry Begent

HarbourMart, the Community Interest Company formed by Go Folkestone members to administer the Sunday farmers' market in the harbour, was hoping to get some relief from business rates when it took on the old tourist office in Tram Road and recruited volunteers to run it on behalf of the community.

Shepway District Council had, it must be said, already given a good deal on the level of rent that it would be charging for the building but the amount of business rates that the company would be expected to pay was not entirely in the council's hands.

The start of the process lies in the local Valuation Office, a totally separate organisation. They set a "rateable value" on the business and send this to the council. The council, in turn, multiply that valuation by the business rate (about 50p per £1 of the valuation) and send out a rate demand accordingly.

Since 2005, if its rateable value is less than £5,000, a business would be eligible to "Small Business Rate Relief" of 50% on that rate demand unless, and herein lies the problem faced by HarbourMart, it has two or more business properties.

The presence of Tram Road between the market site and the tourist office meant that the company had two premises and lost its entitlement to this relief.

The Local Government Finance Act 1988 still allowed the council to grant "Discretionary Relief" if it felt that the company deserved it for some reason and the company duly applied for it in November 2007.

There are, by the way, a whole range of other organizations granted "mandatory relief" of 80% by the same act. These include

- Charities
- Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that have registered with the Inland Revenue
- Other organisations or institutions that are not established for profit and whose main objects are charitable or otherwise philanthropic or religious or concerned with education, social welfare, science, literature or the fine arts

They, too, can apply for "Discretionary Relief" to have the remaining 20% set aside by the local council.

Anyway, back to HarbourMart.

It took more than a year for the district council to decide that they wouldn't give this relief to the market and the letter explaining this came attached to a rate demand for several year's payment all in one.

Our own Philip Carter (the company chairman) asked them why and subsequently discovered that the council didn't actually have a policy for



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making these decisions – such things appear to have been done on a whim!

As a result, the council has now produced a policy document and will, no doubt, send you one if you ask. It's a complex document that lays down the types of local organisations that would be eligible for relief (too many to list here) but it's still a bit difficult to find the actual policy except the two criteria:

- Do the organisations aims link with existing Council policies and strategies?
- Does the organisation have direct benefit to Shepway residents?

As well as the "Discretionary Relief", the policy document also outlines the criteria for "Hardship Relief" which covers those organisations providing an essential service for the community but which are too poor to pay their rates.

If you are involved in a local community group that pays Non-Domestic Rates it might be worth investigating if you are entitled to some assistance from this document.

Go Folkestone

In 2001, Folkestone faced a bleak future. A once proud and thriving seaside resort faced a slow decline as a minor part of the "Shepway" local authority – even its name seemed to have disappeared!

However, the feelings of the townspeople would not be ignored and over 800 of them turned up to a meeting arranged by the Folkestone Lions Club at the Leas Cliff Hall to discuss the town's future.

The silent majority spoke from the heart and gave voice to a civic pride long-since thought to be extinct and that pride led to the creation of "Go Folkestone" - a non-profit making, politically-independent, community action group.

Since its inception, the group has been at the forefront of the regeneration of the town and led the campaign for the return of the town council. Its role was redefined earlier this year and its mission statement now is:

"To provide a voice to the community and a structure to enable its citizens to more fully participate in the regeneration of our town"

New members are always welcome, whatever the level of commitment they want to make, whether they want to be an active committee worker or just to be kept up to date with what is going on in our town.

Membership form inside back cover.

Dear Editor

Regional Director
RSPB South East England

I was concerned to read in your December 2008 issue (Ticket to nowhere) that the objections being raised to the expansion of Lydd Airport was described as “nimbys” fighting to protect the wildlife in a puddle next to the runway.

The truth of the matter is rather different. Lydd Airport is next to one of the top wildlife sites in Europe and that wildlife is protected by law.

It is entirely appropriate that the airport's plans are properly scrutinised before any planning permission is granted. The concerns raised by objectors to the expansion plans are based on this legal protection and only if the plans are approved should the expansion plans be allowed to proceed.

The RSPB believes that airport expansion in such an environmentally sensitive area is entirely inappropriate. The law protecting the wildlife means that the airport developers must prove that their plans will not be detrimental to the natural environment.

Unless the developers can prove that the airport's plans will not cause any damage, the RSPB and others, will maintain their objection to any expansion proposals.

The RSPB is not opposed to economic regeneration but any development should be appropriate to the area. There are opportunities for regeneration in the Romney Marsh area, perhaps focussing on the tourism that already attracts large numbers of people to the area.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Corrigan

Readers may recall that the paragraph used in the Christmas edition actually said:

“Just look at the time, effort and money that the owners of Lydd Airport have had to waste in defending their plans for the economic regeneration of New Romney against the ‘nimbys’ engaged in a life and death struggle to protect the wildlife in a puddle next to the runway.”

No mention of the RSPB but we're pleased to hear from them anyway.

The point here is that wildlife is just one of the many issues that have to be put into the balance and weighed against all the other issues involved.

Those issues, too, are governed by laws, as are the democratic processes involved in selecting the people who actually have to make the decisions in the end.

The trouble with single agenda groups like the RSPB is that they seem to assume that their issue is more important than anyone else's.

As the original article said, and this letter confirms they immediately turn on anyone who dares to disagree.

They are just as entitled to lobby and persuade as the rest of us but that's the extent of it. They are not engaged in some holy campaign to the exclusion of everything else.

I am, though, curious about whether Mr Corrigan has actually been given a mandate by his members to lobby on their behalf that the best way to regenerate the area is by tourism.

I thought the RSPB's job was to protect our feathered friends.

Terry Begent

Dear Editor

Although I have never lived in Folkestone, I was born in the Royal Victoria Hospital in 1946 and attended the Harvey Grammar School 1957 – 63 and worshipped there 1973 – 82 and again since 1999, and am a regular reader of “Go Folkestone”

I was interested to read in the current edition of the lack of standards for deciding after the Great War, whose names should be included on War Memorials.

Clearly, the situation had not improved 30 years later, at the end of the last war.

An uncle of mine, lost when his ship was sunk en route to Russia as part of the infamous Russian convoys, has his name on no less than 3 War memorials – one in Hythe and two in Ashford.

I used to think that maybe he was unique. Having read your article I’m now not so sure.

Yours faithfully,

*Rodney Wolfe Coe,
Ashford.*

At least he’s on a memorial. There is no proper commemoration of individual WWII dead on the Folkestone memorial and even less recognition of our service personnel who have died in any of the conflicts since.

Ed

Dear Editor

Some time ago we spoke about the concrete buildings halfway down the Road of Remembrance. I told you that a NZ friend of mine was stationed during

the Second World War and I would try to find out more information for you.

I have finally received a letter from her and she states:

“The tunnel in Remembrance Hill is or was a Naval Establishment.

There was a naval officer and a small staff of Wrens and ATS to man the teleprinters and the telephone exchange in there.

In the first instance for communications and weather reports. Around the time of the D Day landings it was used as a base for communication re PLUTO (pipeline under the ocean) which kept the forces supplied with petrol.

When hostilities ceased the ATS based there worked on the liberation Army -troops returning from Europe by Ferry for R & R arriving in Folkestone and sometimes staying overnight then travelling to London by train.”

Her name is Vera Parsons and she was stationed in Folkestone during the war.

She met her husband Don who had returned to Britain after being a prisoner of war, he was a New Zealander and they married at the end of the war and moved back to New Zealand.

As I told you when they visited us about 1990 I telephoned the Shepway Council and explained about the building and asked if it would be possible for her to have a look inside.

A gentleman turned up with the key and we had a good look around.

I hope this is of some interest to you.

Jan Kirby

Most of the comments made about the Liberal Democrat issue are unprintable but this letter sums it all up quite nicely

I'll apologise in advance...

By Allison Esson

...because this article is bound to offend someone, somewhere.

Which brings me to the point really – when did we, this great, proud British nation, the Bulldog Breed - adopt this national obsession based on taking offence at everything – no matter how trivial?

Didn't we fight them on the beaches to preserve our freedom of speech and expression? Surely our great history hasn't led us to this "*Blame Culture*" which seems so depressingly prevalent in society.

Back in 2006, a report, *We're (Nearly) All Victims Now*, by the socially conservative think- tank Civitas, warned that a "*Victimocracy*" was on the increase, undermining democracy because people are no longer considered equal under law.

"We have become a nation of victims," it said. "Victimhood today is a political status that is sought after because of the advantages it brings, including preferential treatment in the workplace, the possibility of using police power to silence unwelcome critics, and financial compensation.

To be classified as a victim is to be given a special political status, which

has no necessary connection with real hardship or oppression."

Or to put it bluntly - "*The real genius of democracy? The voters are to blame!*"

It seems that we live in constant fear of upsetting Joe / Joanne / Johann / et al – put a foot in the wrong mouth and the Sword of Damocles embodied by the ever-expanding army of grasping and ideological human rights lawyers threatens to descend with alarming speed.

Bring on the litigators – no job too small! This has given rise to the compensation culture of human rights – the defining ethos of the EU encouraging "*Victimocracy*" and its use to make money out of their own desire to control the lives and thoughts of other people.

An example of this is summed up by the Liberal Democrats taking exception to an article published in this magazine some time ago which I'm fairly sure was last week's chip paper before they decided to drive it to the top of some unknown agenda.

Apologies to anyone who doesn't eat chips by the way – I have no intention of offending or excluding you from this debate.

I'm sorry. I'm very sorry, but I simply don't accept the mitigation of the offending article published in the last Go Folkestone magazine.

In fact I found it offensive that non political individuals like myself were excluded from the explanation – discrimination isn't it?

I take exception to the fact that someone took exception to someone having an opinion – and then Go Folkestone was threatened with legal action – what is the world coming to?

I am deeply offended by the subsequent insincere flannel aimed at a political party from which the vast majority of Folkestone's population are excluded - from a bunch of middle-aged, middle class individuals regurgitating nonsense to appease those who should be big enough to take it on the chin.

And I'm sorry if that offends small people – sorry – vertically challenged people, or those without chins. I apologise if my previous remarks offend the middle aged – or those who are not middle aged any more.

And of course those who are not middle class any more.

And the use of the work regurgitating is sure to offend someone with a debilitating illness – so sorry.

Perhaps this attempt to pacify overinflated egos could have been a bit more convincing and dramatic to satisfy the bloodlust which seems to be emerging by our "*Victimocracy*"?

A spot of self flagellation maybe? Or perhaps public flogging or at the very least we could have brought back stocks for the occasion and the perpetrator of this heinous crime of having an opinion could be chained up on a Saturday morning just outside Debenhams with a basket of rotten fruit nearby.

Apologies of course to any members of Opus Dei, any number of senior public figures and the patrons of some of Folkestone's less salubrious nightspots.

I apologise to anyone who may have found my finding the need for this vacuous apology offensive, offensive.

Whatever happened to freedom of speech? I apologise of course to those with limited or no speech. Having an opinion is a dangerous pastime by all

accounts – when did every bandwagon jumper (apologies to people with limited mobility) become hyper sensitive to the mere suggestion of criticism – and surely being criticised is in the job description of the politically inclined?

When did people start to use the role of "*Professional Victim*" as a *raison d'etre*?

I apologise for the use of the phrase "*raison d'etre*" which is almost certainly going to be considered elitist and offensive to people who do not speak French. Or English. (Will this article be available in other languages? Just wondered.)

Unless I'm mistaken (and it has been known) the very foundations of this once great country are based on liberty and the overall principle that everything is permitted unless it is expressly forbidden.

I would hate to think we are looking at a future where everything will be forbidden unless it is expressly permitted.

Of course discrimination and prejudice are wrong. But the "*Victimocracy*" and it's spiteful younger sibling, the Taking Offence Culture are chipping away at the foundations of truth, liberty and justice, and establishing in their place a truly victimising tyranny of the self.

This emerging eagerness to be affronted and insistence on apology is not about equality or fairness, but about intolerance, self obsession, delusions of grandeur and ultimately of sheer lack of humility.

Just to end on a high note – have you heard the one about the socially disenfranchised, partially sighted, ethnic minority person with restricted mobility who happens to be a gravedigger? No? Thought not.

Public perception of crime differs from what we are told, so we decided to talk to the man who ought to know.

Crime down in area

By Ann Berry

Go Folkestone invited The District Commander for Shepway, Chief Inspector Martin Bradley accompanied by Sergeant John Meritt from the Community Safety Unit to a meeting at Wards Hotel to give an update about crime in the area and to take questions from concerned residents.

Some of the questions asked were about the length of time it takes for police to turn up to reported crimes, and suspicion of likely crime. Obviously it takes time to process each complaint and all the information has to be recorded accurately and then prioritised as to the seriousness of the problem being reported. It was conceded that there was always room for improvement.

With regard to Night Time Economy, the discussion was on licensed premises where problems occur. Premises are visited by the licensing team, which includes: the police licensing officer and anti-social behaviour officers. Joint licensing enforcement takes place with colleagues from Shepway District Council and use is made of FAPAC banning notices. Patrols in red route areas leading from the NTE areas, plus follow up on illegal sale of alcohol to young people.



Go Folkestone Chair Ann Berry and Chief Inspector Martin Bradley

Neighbourhood Policing. Locally based dedicated resources are in place to deal with local problems, ward's have a community support police officer supported by a NH Constable. Each ward has partnership and community together meetings to set priorities for their area and feed back results to the community.

Neighbourhood task teams consist of a Sergeant and five Constables, which support the NH PCSO's and PC's by providing resources to deal with emerging problems. By September 2009 there should be one task team in each district.

Community Communication, quarterly newsletters will commence in May this year, you can also visit the Kent Police website on www.kent.police.uk for your Ward data.

Crime is down on last year - District wide for 2009/10 by 9%

Criminal damage / anti social behaviour by 10% in focus areas.

Burglary from dwellings by 5%, Vehicle crime by 9% and Violent crime by 10%

As the waiting list for an allotment in Folkestone grows ever longer, we look at the alternatives.

Turn your garden into an allotment

By Terry Begent

As the so-called "credit-crunch" bites deeper, more and more people believe that growing your own food is one answer to rising food prices and lowering incomes.

As a result, there has been an exponential growth in the number of people applying for an allotment from the town council.

So great is the demand, people joining the list can expect to have to wait at least 10 years before they can get one.

The town's Allotment Manager, Ian Bishop, estimates that, in order to clear the current backlog of 140 people on the waiting list within ten years we would have to have 14 people giving up their plots each year, which is just not the case.

Some people give up their plots within months of taking them on when they discover just how much work is involved in cultivating it but the others, once they have got into the swing of things stay for 10, 20 or even 30 years.

Once scheme that is growing in popularity is that of sharing a garden.

With the passage of the years, some people find that they can no longer maintain their own front and back gardens. What was once a passion

and a pride, becomes a burden and an embarrassment as the weeds and brambles take over.

It's an almost alien concept to the British, who cherish their own little bit of England, that they should allow someone else, and a complete stranger at that, to come into their garden and do their own thing but that is exactly what the garden share scheme entails.

In return for being allowed to dig your garden and cultivate their own crops, the incoming green-fingers usually agree to hand over some of their crops to the householder.

Everybody gains. The gardener gets a plot of land to work and the householder gets a tidy garden again.

The actual agreement between the two parties is a matter of negotiation between the two but experience from other parts of the country has shown that, after a cautious start, enduring friendships have been formed between the two.

Householders can go from a reluctant participation, because they can see no other way of keeping their garden in good order, to the enjoyment of regular contact with a new friend - a friend who can keep an eye on the householder as well.

The gardener, on the other hand, can be confident that someone is keeping an eye on their crops, which are, as a result, a lot more secure than they would be on an allotment. They may even be offered the occasional cup of tea while they work.

If you might be able to offer your garden to someone on the allotment waiting list, why not give Ian Bishop, the town council's Allotment Manager, a call (01303 257946) to find out how the scheme might work for you.

It was once only found on scenic picture postcards, but now an old seaside phrase gets a new meaning.

Greetings from Folkestone

By Terry Begent

Discover Folkestone is working in partnership with the District Council to create the “Folkestone Greeters”, modelled on the “Thanet Greeters”, which in turn were modelled on the original group set up in New York .

Founded in 1992 as the first “welcome visitor” program of its kind in the United States, the idea grew from friendly exchanges Founder Lynn Brooks had with people she met on her own vacation travels around the world.

She realized that New York City suffered from an image problem: almost everyone she spoke to wanted to visit New York City, but thought the city was too dangerous, expensive and overwhelming.

Lynn wanted the world to know New York City as she did: a great big small town with diverse neighbourhoods, mom-and-pop stores, fun places to dine, and friendly residents who go out of their way to help an out-of-towner feel welcome.

The scheme has now grown into a Global Greeter Network, a voluntary association of independent welcoming programs around the world. All the

programs are free, offer greeter services as an individual or small group experience, and are characterized by enthusiastic, local residents who love their home city and volunteer to conduct these visits.

Cities in the Greeter network include Houston, Texas; Chicago, Illinois; Toronto, Canada; Melbourne and Adelaide, Australia; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Paris and Nantes, France; and Thanet, Kent, England; and the City of The Hague, Netherlands.

So what is a Greeter?

A Greeter is a local volunteer that loves their area and wants to share their passion, knowledge and experiences with visitors and, by doing so, improving their visit.

They do this by meeting the visitor and, for example:

- Showing them sights and giving them facts that they wouldn't have found by themselves
- Answering questions and helping them become orientated with the area
- Explaining the public transport system
- Advising on attractions, restaurants and places of entertainment

Greeters, who meet their visitors regardless of the weather, are unpaid and do not offer tours and there are no set itineraries

Once our local scheme gets off the ground a team of volunteers will be needed. If you are interested, watch the local press for details

The recession is also having an effect on the environment as landlords can't find the money to maintain their buildings

Derelict buildings

By Richard Wallace

The recession is here with several derelict buildings still left to shame the town despite years of good times during which more pressure could have been put on the owners to look after them or sell them on to someone who would.

Three examples are shown on the following pages. What can be done ?

Well in the case of 45 Augusta Gardens plans are drawn up for compulsory purchase. Just paper ? Well the purchase seems to have Michael Howard's backing in a letter to me, and funds from the special No Use Empty campaign.

Iain Cobby the Empty Homes Officer has slowed things, and worried Go Folkestone, by issuing notices for the owners to repair.

However this does save Shepway significant money since if these are not complied with then the purchase will be on the basis of 100% of the property value and not 110% as it is nowadays if an ordinary person has their house purchased for, say, a road scheme.

Shepway has compulsorily purchased 2 properties in the last 5 years and we live in hope that this will proceed.

1 Manor Road is, I think you will agree, a disgrace, particularly as it is next to the Christchurch Tower (itself unrepaired and threatened by proposed safety fencing) and the Garden of Remembrance.

Here things have been slowed down by an owner trying to get planning permission for five rather than four flats, and eventually failing.

Go Folkestone has been advised by Shepway for over a year that it's repairing organisation has taken the job in hand. If you see scaffolding up by the time this is out then the property is being fixed up by Shepway to be let out for a set number of years as affordable housing before being handed back to the owner.

If not, go through your councillors to the Chief Executive and let's get it looking decent by Remembrance Day.

Unique Engineering, next to the Red Cow in Foord Road has a certain dilapidated charm. It should perhaps be a destination for the artists of Folkestone, looking as



1 Manor Road

it does like a Vincent Van Gogh painting of the Rue Lepic in Montmartre.

But buildings like this have been wasted for many years. Planning permission is in place for house conversion but no notices are served or action taken to get it done.

An afternoon cuppa uncovers a personal link to one of the things that made Folkestone a great place for a day at the seaside.

A link with the past

By Ann Berry

On being invited to afternoon tea with Father Horace Sinclair, I was surprised to learn that his great grandfather was the owner of the Folkestone Switchback, which was situated on the north shore of the seafront. Here is what he told me of his knowledge of that time.

Although the principles of switchback had for some time been utilised in America and elsewhere (e.g. Russia) for commercial transport, the first switchback specially designed for pleasure purposes was launched in America in 1881.

The idea caught on and soon spread to Britain, where in the ensuing decade 'fun' Switchbacks were installed in many holiday resorts.

In Folkestone, my great grandfather Tom Sinclair, clearly a man of enterprise, obtained permission from Lord Radnor to erect a switchback on the foreshore beneath the promenade near to where the present lift ends.

The prospect was greeted by many in Folkestone with great enthusiasm, but with horror by many others, who wanted to keep Folkestone as a 'superior' resort.

However, as soon as it opened on Friday 17th August 1888, it proved very



popular with both townspeople and visitors. We are told that for the first hour of its launch the rides were free!

Although of course I am not aware of any personal contact with my great grandfather, my father and grandfather often spoke of their predecessor's pride in his switchback and of his pleasure in recalling celebrities whom he entertained on it.

These included the then Prince of Wales and the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith.

The switchback however fell into disuse and deteriorated during the 1914-1918 war and was demolished in 1921.

To add interest to this link with the past, I asked local historian Alan Taylor if he had any photos of the Switchback that we could use for this piece.

To my amazement he told me that he had got both a picture of the switchback and the owner Tom Sinclair.

Alan also said he had been given the pictures by a relative of father Horace Sinclair, a Mrs Hills, who as a young child was bridesmaid to father Horace, who more astonishingly I was to find, lives in the same road as myself.

The Creative Foundation based the old town's regeneration on arts. How are the fledgling businesses it supported faring?

The art of survival

Our business correspondent

The Chimera gallery in Tontine Street is typical of the small local businesses providing a retail outlet to local artists.

We asked Lynne Smith, one of the partners running the place if they felt threatened by the recession.

"Yes, of course, we are struggling to make it pay but our takings have fallen by 30% in the past four months and it wouldn't take much for us to go under."

What is the effect of a falling income on a business like yours?

"We are being squeezed between, on one hand a fluctuating and declining income and, on the other, totally inflexible overheads."

Art gallery incomes are particularly vulnerable because we have a very slow turnover of higher priced, quality works of art. We try to balance this out with a high turn-over, cheaper range of cards and jewellery."

Can't you just lower your prices like any other shop?

That's the thing about art - it's the artist that sets the price, not the gallery. Artists, generally, are more interested in making art than they are

in selling it but they are learning to set prices at what the market will bear"

Who are your customers?

"We get a smattering of people down from London, trade was good during the Triennial, but we are also getting an increasing amount of passing trade, it seems that locals are getting bolder - they no longer feel intimidated about coming in. We sell an attractive range of reasonably-priced jewellery, which we put in the window to pull them in."

Why don't you just advertise?

"We'd love to advertise but marketing costs money so, as profit margins shrink, we just don't have the money that we need to spend to get more money."

Well, if you can't improve your income why don't you cut your overheads?

SDC was very helpful in getting us small business relief on the rates but our rent is fixed and energy costs have risen uncontrollably. We go without lighting and heating as much as possible but our pictures need to be displayed in the best possible light. Customers are also reluctant to stand around in a cold gallery whilst deciding to buy a picture. We've cut as much as we can."

Are you optimistic about the future?

"Strangely enough sales of quality art are steady if not rising. People are now more confident of investing in art than they are of banks. Art is recession proof and we get together with other local traders to help each other out to keep things upbeat - yes, we are hopeful that we are over the worst."

One event that is bucking the trend and doesn't appear to be suffering from recession is the annual....

Euromilitaire 2009

By Charles Davis

The third weekend of September will again find Folkestone the global centre of attention in the military modelling world as Euromilitaire takes centre stage.

With visitors from around the world converging on the Town's famous Leas Cliff Hall to view and buy the latest offerings from the leading manufacturers of models and accessories and also to enter the world famous competitions, the town will, once again, be inundated with modellers.

The show, which has now been going for almost a quarter of a century, has seen some of the greatest figure painters enter the competition and, each year, one of them will walk off with, perhaps, the most prestigious prize of the military modelling world, the Euromilitaire Best of Show.

These days, the term 'military modelling' is somewhat of a misnomer as the competition has been thrown open to include civilian subjects as well as the increasingly popular fantasy themes.

Indeed, many of the world's top figure makers and painters are turning to this genre as it allows them greater freedom to exercise their talents.

This year, the 'outside events' will include at least two tanks from Rex Cadman's famous collection and a number of other military vehicles.

It is also hoped that a Spitfire will give a display on the Sunday.

Meanwhile, Chris Shaw and his 95th Rifles re-enacting unit will be 'On Parade' throughout the weekend, while also agreeing to dress the stage.

In the Club Room, modelling clubs from around the world have agreed to attend with their models, while some of the leading modellers will give demonstrations of their work

Be they adult and children, Euromilitaire will have something to 'Wow' the senses, be it the amount of detail incorporated on the models or just the incredible standard of painting of these magnificent miniatures.

For a fabulous day out, Pencil in the 19th and 20th September for a visit to Euromilitaire, you certainly won't regret it!



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If people no longer have the money to go out as much as they used to, will it stop them going to the gym as well as the pub?

***Use it & lose it!**

Tessa Strickland

Folkestone Sports Centre Trust, an independent registered charity, operating sports facilities, open to the community, is constantly looking for new initiatives to combat the effects of the “credit crunch”.

Towards the end of 2008, the local authority had to pull out their pledged financial support to the regeneration proposals, as the global financial was so uncertain.

So the Trust is having to actively seek alternative means to move forward with the regeneration without the requirement of local authority support.

The cost of utilities, however, has had a massive effect on the costs incurred by the Trust, in the day to day operation of the facilities.

The cost of heating the pools, jacuzzi and domestic hot water, along with lighting has, as with many other thousands of businesses put extra strain on the resources available.

However, the Trust has a determination not to increase prices to the user.

The NHS, Primary Care Trust has put up funding from their Health and Well-Being project, to support the work of the Trust in helping the community to be fit and healthy.

Families, Over 60's and Under 16's, who feel that they do not currently take exercise, or who have been referred by health or social professionals, can apply for free places on this scheme.

The new toboggan slope and the Under 16's B-Fit gym, are proving to be hugely popular, with thousands of young people – and the young at heart – enjoying the fun exercise.

Take up the challenges set in the Gym! Row the Channel – Climb Everest - Beat the Dance Mats.

The Skate park is as popular as ever – but there are a few issues around some element of the community who still feel that they have the right to break in and use the facilities for free.

This has to stop, or the Skate park will be closed – and we really don't want that to happen.

We appeal therefore, to the parents of those young people who insist on trespassing, to put a stop to this, for the sake of the young people who have respect for the sports equipment and activities.

The “*Friends of Folkestone Sports Centre*” are currently raising funds to purchase a mini bus, to help the Trust to provide transport for those in need, to access the facilities.

If you feel that you can help – join the ‘Friends’; raise some money; or offer yourself up as a volunteer driver, when we get the bus up and running.

Those who feel that a bus could help their community to access the Centre, please make contact with Tessa at the Sports Centre.

Keep on keeping healthy!

** That bulging waistline, of course*

Ed

Ann Berry reports on her work to improve the provisions in the local National Health Service

NHS roadshow

By Ann Berry

On Wednesday the 25th February I attended a NHS Road Show At the East Cliff Pavilion (I sent details to Barbara Bradley to send out to all East Folkestone Community Partnership Board members, around 5 or 6 turned up including Barbara).

The Strategy of the PCT (patient care trust) is and I quote:

- "1. To listen to local communities to improve health and well – being.*
- 2. To Commission a broad range of high quality, responsive and efficient services to each community it serves, within allocated resources, across all service sectors.*
- 3. To directly provide high quality, responsive and efficient services which offer value for money."*

This was an ideal time to meet some of the people who are responsible for services, and to listen to concerns of the people in this area.

My only regret was, that not more members of the general public there. Although it was well supported by representatives of services and groups.

Hopefully we will get feed back once all the information is collated, if so I will pass it on.

More recently I have been in touch with: Chris Hurley, Head of Estates, East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust.

Firstly to Find out about the new proposed Hospital at Ashford, which will be a private Hospital to be built near the William Harvey Hospital, some time in the future.

An also the parking problems, that people have, when visiting the WHO. We are assured that there will be 100 additional spaces in the next couple of weeks.

I have also discussed the problems with parking at the Royal Victoria Hospital and the probability of parking metres being imposed which will make the parking for people attending the: Walk In Centre, Derry unit, Gray dept, plus other services very difficult as patients do not know, just how long they will be in the hospital.

My Suggestion to Chris Hurley was, to make some parking available at the rear of the RAH for as long as the RAH remains unsold or new plans for it come to fruition. This would relieve a good deal of misery for those attending the hospital. I await his reply.

Chris later replied:

"I presume the new hospital you refer to is the General Healthcare proposal for a private hospital on land adjacent the William Harvey Hospital.

I have no definitive information, however, I understand (through an informed source) that the development is unlikely to proceed in the near future due to the economic climate.

This must be regarded with caution because, as yet, I have had no direct communication from General Healthcare."

Heritage tourism offers the potential for Interreg funding as :*

Step - short goes european

The “Step-short” project to commemorate the centenary of the outbreak of the first World War is gathering speed as its various sub-committees start to get to grips with the massive amount of work involved.

The project has two main objects: firstly, to arrange suitable events to commemorate the centenary and, secondly, to carry out works of improvement around the war-memorial and the Road of Remembrance that will help with the ongoing regeneration of our local tourism industry.

These works include turning the bunker on the Road of Remembrance into a museum and rebuilding the wartime canteen that used to be on the harbour mole. It served up the last “doorstep and cuppa” that millions of troops had in this country as they waited to board the ferry to France.

One of the members on the project team is local historian Charles Fair,



who conducts a number of battlefield tours to France every year. He has noticed the steep rise in the number of people researching their family histories after the popularity of television programmes like “Who do you think your are?”

Many of them are keen to follow in the footsteps of their forebears and to visit the actual places where they fought and fell, and may even be buried.

As a result, the “Step-short” team is seeking partners in Europe that will help in the creation of a “heritage trail”



th
 at will
 make it easier
 and more enjoyable
 for families to follow in their
 forebear's footsteps.

Each of these partners would be encouraged to start their own local projects to both commemorate the centenary and improve their tourist facilities.

A number of French towns already have well-established tourist industries based on the Great War battlefields.

What has been missing thus far is any sort of collaboration/coordination between the two ends of the trail and we should not forget that the descendants of the 65,000 Belgian refugees that came to Folkestone could also be encouraged to pay us a visit.

This kind of partnership working is just what the Interreg funding programme was set up for. As with all such government or EU schemes, the

paperwork is horrendous but it will be worth it if we can get the kind of mega-funding that we need to do what the Step-short project is planning.

* Interreg IVA is an EU funding programme which aims to promote joint working and cross-border co-operation between partner organisations on either side of a European land or maritime border. Interreg is part of the European Regional Development Fund.

Development is slowing down, but I still see buildings we have been involved with progressing.

Planning news

By Richard Wallace

A bungalow at 57 Bouverie Road West has gone and is being replaced with a small block of flats, as much in keeping with the Victorian surroundings as we are going to get.

An object lesson to the purchasers of 14 Cherry Garden Avenue who are determined to replace a popular 1930s house, nicely filling it's plot, with another block. We have objected

In Ship Street the massive works currently proceeding are only to decontaminate the old gasworks site, digging out the chemically polluted soil. There are plans around for dense, though only 2-3 storey housing but no planning applications yet.

In The Stade the Oddfellows/ Euphoria /Nostalgia / Three Mackerel, the most renamed Folkestone pub in recent history has finally bitten the dust and is likely to become 4 flats. Recent landlords included Tim and Season Prater the local councillors.

The EB Group is gathering money to repair and repaint the ornate, former, 1904 electricity service pillar in Bathurst Road which we managed to get listed on the eve of destruction.

Please come along to any upcoming St Mary's Playing Fields Boot Fair and buy something at the stall or just donate cheques to Go Folkestone!

The cutting down of the Elm tree in Beachborough Road by KCC Highways was an instant decision solely because it was lifting the tarmac, after only one complaint from the public, which apparently requested only pruning.

We have complained about this trigger-happy attitude to Michael Howard, as this was an historic tree which ironically SDC spent money saving from Dutch Elm disease in the 1970s. The Shepway tree officer was not informed and would not have approved, but sadly if you are in the right job you can just say:

"Abracadabra, we could get sued"

Sliding into an Abyss - from page 4

So when will Folkestone turn the corner?

Folkestone has turned the corner but it may, once again, have done it too late to get the maximum benefits. As I said earlier if people hadn't complained and opposed so much the regeneration would be well under way and we would have been well very placed to weather the storm.

What SERPS is doing is to encourage the council to hold the regeneration line and not allow the town to slip too far behind in the race for "costal" regeneration. If it does, we will emerge more quickly than other towns, if it doesn't we could start to sink pretty quickly.

Remember, you can't sell a product if you don't believe in it and it's just the same with a town but it's not just down to the council. President Jack Kennedy said "don't ask what America can do for you, ask what you can do for America! We all have to a part to play.

We can still be on the way up. We just have to maintain our confidence and not accept second best of anything.

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