

# CANTERBURY MATTERS

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE HOPE NOT HATE CAMPAIGN

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## HEROES OF KENT!

**OVER 1,218 bags of litter collected! 100 large objects removed! Ninety-one volunteers! These are the amazing numbers achieved by The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership as they have cleaned up the River Stour and other waterways in Kent. A huge thank you to everyone working to make a difference for us all.**

And in that spirit we want to celebrate all the inspiring work being done in Canterbury and across the country. In May this year community and faith groups, plus charities big and small, will come together to celebrate and inspire **A Million Acts of Hope** across Britain.

**LEARN MORE ON PAGE 2&8**

**SEE PAGE 7 FOR THE RIVER CLEAN STORY**



**INSIDE**



**P4 CUBS AND BEAVERS WIN BIG**



**P6 OVER-50S STAY ACTIVE**

**Hope**  
happens here.

**P8 FREE POSTER FOR HOPE!**

# CANTERBURY MATTERS

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

**Watching the news or looking at your social-media feed, it's easy to believe that the UK is more divided than ever. The voices of those who seek to spread hate, harm our communities and separate us are loud.**

But the reality is that millions of people across the UK show up for each other, their neighbours and their communities every single day. From litter-picking in parks to donating stuff to food banks, coaching our kids' football teams to working together to make our streets safer – acts of hope and kindness happen all the time.

These stories are too often left untold. So, in May 2026, community and faith groups, plus charities big and small, will come together to celebrate and inspire A Million Acts of Hope across Britain. There is far more that connects us than divides us.

We hope you'll join us.

**Scan here for a digital copy of your local HOPE not hate paper**



**Email us:**  
**campaigns@hopenothate.org.uk**

# PUB BANTER THAT BUILT A COMMUNITY CHARTHAM MEN'S SHED



**THE IDEA of Chartham Men's Shed originally came to life as a bit of pub banter, as a way to combat men's loneliness.**

"We've been really lucky, because at the start it was a pub conversation," says Henry Bufford, one of the founders of Chartham Men's Shed. "We thought we should have a men's shed... literally. "It was just four or five random blokes with an idea."

The Men's Shed, based at the old Chartham Paper Mill, brings local men together with carpentry and crafts, with plenty of cups of tea and bacon rolls



along the way.

"It's been a big group effort," says Henry. "We wanted to replicate that pub culture, where you'd just pop in and chat with friends."

The group has helped retired men combat loneliness.

"A lot of the men worked with a group of other men in the trades, and they miss that sort of banter and chat with people," Henry says.

But Chartham Men's Shed is as much about the carpentry as it is the banter.

As a part of the initiative, they teach each other practical skills, getting everyone involved while recycling old pallets to build bird boxes, insect hotels, and even boats.

The tools they use were donated by other Men's Sheds and members of the community, and now, they've got a workshop, a craft room, a model railway room, and a garden.

Chartham Men's Shed is open on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 9:30am to 12:30pm and Thursdays 6pm to 8pm.

"If you're on your own, it's quite hard to go somewhere new. So people come along to the shed and they'll be welcomed," Henry says.

**■ To get involved, check out the Facebook group, Chartham Men's Shed.**



# COURTENAY OF CANTERBURY

## THE MAN BEHIND ENGLAND'S LAST BATTLE



**THE 31st of May is the 188th anniversary of the Battle of Bossenden Wood. The battle, which took the lives of eleven people, is often described as the last battle on English soil.**

The battle's anniversary will be commemorated by an afternoon of live music, crafts, and traditional blacksmith demonstrations at Mount Ephraim Gardens on the 31st of May. The commemorative event will also see a one-act performance of the story of the battle.

The battle was fought between the controversial

politician Sir William Courtenay and his supporters and a group of soldiers who were sent from Canterbury to arrest him. Although the battle was brief, eleven men, including Sir Courtenay himself, lost their lives.

John Nichols Tom, known to his followers as Sir William Courtenay, the self-proclaimed Knight of Malta, arrived in Canterbury in September 1832. Some believed that he was a messiah; others, that he was a madman. He made such an impression with his speeches that he was asked to stand as a

candidate for Canterbury in the 1832 election.

After losing the election, he shifted his attention to publishing a newspaper called *The Lion*, in which he highlighted social issues, and backed them up with scriptures. His words resonated with Kent's farm labourers, who had faced hardship thanks to the new Poor Law, which cut financial aid to those in poverty.

The so-called Knight of Malta's charismatic promises of a better life had attracted a following in the areas of Hernhill, Boughton,

and Dunkirk. He boasted that he would give land to those who followed him, and borrowed money from already struggling farmers with the false promise that every shilling they gave him would come back to them as a pound.

Courtenay's influence came to a head when, after a local magistrate issued a warrant for his arrest, a battle erupted in Bossenden Wood. Despite only lasting a few minutes, the battle took a devastating toll on Courtenay's supporters, and left eight of them dead.

HJS, who wrote the one-act performance that will be performed at the battle's anniversary event, said that the play will serve as both a

warning and a lament.

"It has always interested me that ordinary men and women have sought comfort from poverty and powerlessness through the promise of a better life offered by – often self-serving – populists and leaders," she says.

The play, titled *...to carry the weight*, tells the story of the battle through three workers who witness the impact Courtenay has on the community. It was directed by Jo Andrews and stars Dan Rafferty, Emma Brooks, and Desmond Crilly.

**■ To find out more, visit: [eventbrite.com/e/swing-riots-and-bossenden-rising-festival-tickets-1987322733794](https://eventbrite.com/e/swing-riots-and-bossenden-rising-festival-tickets-1987322733794)**



## A YEAR AS SHERIFF

**STEPH JUPE became Canterbury's Sheriff in May 2025, but it is a position that has existed since 1461. It is one of Canterbury's oldest civic roles, and was historically responsible for tax collection, law enforcement, and arranging public executions. Today, it is a ceremonial position supporting the local community. Here, Sheriff Steph reflects on her first year in the position:**

"Canterbury has had a Sheriff since 1461, and that has been my privilege to hold for the last year. "I love attending events run by the community. I've got two kids



and I've brought them up around Canterbury. So events like Pride, like the Medieval Pageant, it's all a lot of fun.

"There have been some lovely

small events. The Royal British Legion always have the best tea and cakes. That's actually a really good part of the role, the food people give you."

The last 12 months have been eventful for Steph, not least because of the appointment of Sarah Mullally, the first female Archbishop of Canterbury.

"The Archbishop's installation was mega," Steph says. "I got to sit in the front row of the nave of Canterbury Cathedral as the Archbishop was enthroned. It was such a privilege."

Out of all the events Steph has attended, she has found it difficult to pick a favourite.

"I loved leading Pride," she says. "However, last summer, I unveiled a bench dedicated to an old

member of my community in Blean Forest, and that was pretty special because he's done a lot, and I could see how much it meant to him."

Balancing her work as Sheriff with her full-time job, Steph says that the civic team has been vital in making sure everything runs smoothly.

"You can't really do it without the team," she says.

"It's bizarre, at times, when you think 'who am I, doing all this stuff?' And it's a huge privilege. I mean, people will open doors for you. They'll ask if you need anything. And I'm like, well, I'm just somebody wearing an outfit.

"With any luck, I'll be voted to do it again next year, because I really enjoy it."

# CUBS AND BEAVERS WIN BIG WILDER KENT AWARD



**LOCAL CUBS and Beavers have been awarded for their outstanding work in protecting the environment at the Kent Wildlife Trust's Wilder Kent Awards.**

The 2nd Whitstable Cubs and Beavers scooped a Bronze Wilder Kent Award after rolling up their sleeves to protect the environment and give back to their community.

The group have been busy learning all about recycling and getting stuck into litter-picks

And they didn't stop there. In addition to litter-picking,



the Cubs and Beavers also planted 300 trees over the course of one weekend, and built bird and bat boxes with the help of Blean's RSPB group.

The Awards saw 90 organisations shortlisted. Together, their efforts restored or improved the equivalent of 70 rugby fields of habitat for wildlife.

2nd Whitstable Cubs and Beavers are a part of the 2nd Whitstable Sea Scouts, and were formed in 2024 because of the long waiting lists for other scouting



groups in the area. The group is run entirely by volunteers and has grown to include 20 Beavers and 24 Cubs.

The Cubs and Beavers have also engaged with the community by collecting and putting together food parcels for the local food bank, and visited the local mosque to learn more about their neighbours.

■ **To get involved go to [scouts.org.uk/volunteer](https://scouts.org.uk/volunteer).**

## REFORMING ENERGY? KER-CHING!



**By DALE VINCE OBE, GREEN INDUSTRIALIST**

**WE NEED to reform our energy market: it's out of date, out of purpose, and every time there's**

**a global crisis, it's out of control.**

Before privatisation it served the nation, now it serves a handful of large companies, mostly foreign-owned, too often based in tax havens.

There are **three big but simple** changes we could make to restore the public service ethos.

■ The first is to "Break the Link"

– the pointless link between the price of gas and the price of electricity made from our own wind and sun. History is repeating itself with the Iran war sparking the latest energy crisis – and it won't be our last. In the last five years breaking the link could have saved us £9 billion a year and a grand total of £43.5 billion. **Ker-Ching!**

■ The second is to "Protect the North Sea" – using a tried and tested green energy mechanism to fix prices and protect jobs and investments

as our North Sea fossil fuel industry completes its decline (which started in 1999). Over the last five years this could have knocked almost £10 billion a year from our bills on average and a grand total of £48.5 billion. **Ker-Ching!**

■ The third is to "Control the Networks" – the almost completely foreign-owned networks of pipes and cables that deliver energy from the national grid to our homes and businesses. **Ker-Ching!**

These total monopolies, with captive customers and guaranteed profits, despite being regulated, make massive 40% profit margins and ship billions of our cash out of our economy every year – while failing to invest

enough in our networks, and then jacking our bills to pay for that. Over the last five years this could have knocked approaching £5 billion a year off our energy bills, or £25 billion in total. **Ker-Ching!**

These are serious sums of money that we could have, in our pockets and in our economy. The wider economic impact we modelled, just from breaking the link, would be three times bigger if we do all three things.

And there would be no fiscal "black hole". We can fill it in, boost our economy and nail our energy bills to the floor.

**Ker-Ching!**

■ **Follow Dale Vince, publisher of Babelfish News, at: [www.babelfish.news](https://www.babelfish.news)**

# BEHIND THE SCENES AT CANTERBURY'S BIGGEST EVENTS



**FROM PRIDE to the Medieval Pageant, there's always something going on in Canterbury. But have you ever thought about how these events come to be?**

Behind Canterbury's happenings is Canterbury BID, a not-for-profit initiative which works with businesses to put on events for everyone in the city to enjoy. "There are things that you see at the actual event, the people that are booked, like the performers or the vendors," says a member of

the BID team. "But behind that, there are months and months of planning."

Sponsorship is vital to securing the funding so that events can be held free of charge and open to everyone, and the process of looking for sponsorship can take months. Canterbury Festival, for example, which will kick off in the middle of October, has more than thirty sponsors.

When planning an event, it's all about space. The BID works with Canterbury City

Council and Kent County Council for permissions to use spaces and close roads in the city. Now that the council's Connected Canterbury projects have come to an end, the BID is able to make the most of areas like Westgate Square and Dane John Gardens. The BID's work couldn't be done without the volunteers that make sure all the celebrations all over the city go as smoothly as possible. It's all a big team effort!



## WHAT'S COMING UP IN CANTERBURY THIS SUMMER

- **15-16 May** – Canterbury Wine Festival (Westgate Hall Canterbury)
- **22-24 May** – Canterbury City Orienteering Race (Canterbury City Centre)
- **24 May** – Canterbury Unlocked (Dane John Gardens, Westgate Street, High Street)
- **6 June** – Pride Canterbury (Canterbury City Centre)
- **20 June** – Afro KANTAB (Dane John Gardens)
- **4 July** – Canterbury's Medieval Family Trail (Canterbury City Centre)



## CANTERBURY UNLOCKED FESTIVAL CELEBRATES THE COMPLETION OF CANTERBURY'S LEVELLING UP PROJECTS

**A BRAND NEW festival featuring live music, Morris dancing and craft workshops will be held in Canterbury at the end of May.**

The festival will be free, and will allow everyone in the city, tourist or resident, to enjoy live music from local bands such as The Native Oysters Band

and Hullabaloo, as well as food markets, craft workshops, and so much more.

There will also be a procession of Folk Lore Kent's Mayhem Fair, where the huge May Giant will bring in the summer, accompanied by Morris dancers, and a "Beast Herding" performance by

Trudgepig Folk Theatre.

Canterbury Unlocked is marking the end of the Connected Canterbury project, which revamped public spaces all over the city using the £19.9m Levelling Up funding from the government, and it will be held on Sunday 24 May.



Photo: Acabashi / wikimedia.org

The Levelling Up funding also went toward the restoration of historic sites, such as the Poor Priests' Hospital and Canterbury Castle, and building a new playground at Greyfriars Gardens.

# CANTERBURY CEMETERY HIDES ONE OF THE UK'S RAREST TREES

**A 20-MINUTE walk from the city centre is Canterbury Cemetery, the final resting place of novelist Joseph Conrad, and the home of one of Canterbury's most exciting environmental campaigns.**

Behind the conservation efforts are the Canterbury Cemetery Friends, a volunteer group of around 60 members dedicated to boosting biodiversity across the site.

One of the cemetery's most remarkable features is the Wollemi pine, a rare species that dates back millions of years, which is one of only three in the UK.

The idea for the Canterbury Cemetery Friends was originally instigated by the cemetery manager Jonathon Kreffer, and the group was officially formed in August 2025.

The group's conservation efforts reach beyond the cemetery gates. Recently, the cemetery joined a seed bank to share seeds from drought-resistant trees with gardens and green spaces elsewhere, in order to support wider climate resilience efforts.

Visitors can explore the site through a self-guided



Photo by Larry Ray Photography

tree walk, with maps available at the main entrance. "It isn't just a cemetery," says the group's interim secretary Mary Adams. "People walk through, some sketch the trees. There's lots of seats, too,

so people just go to have a think." Having just received a biodiversity grant from Canterbury City Council, there are big things to come in the future from the Canterbury Cemetery Friends.

## UPCOMING EVENTS AT CANTERBURY CEMETERY

- **12 September** – Annual General Meeting
  - **20 September** – Cemetery Heritage Day
  - **14 November** – Cemetery Interfaith Walk with teas and cakes.
  - **5 December** – Friends and Family Christmas Celebration
- [canterburycemeteryfriends.org](http://canterburycemeteryfriends.org)



Photo © Copyright Chris Heaton

# CHARTHAM BELLS ARE STILL RINGING LOUD AFTER FOUR CENTURIES

**HAVE YOU heard the bells ring from St Mary's in Chartham on a Friday evening?**

The sounds of the bells are just the bell-ringers hard at work practicing! The group meets most Friday evenings from 7:30pm to 9pm to practice on the church's historic bells.

The 13th-century church is home to six bells, including a tenor bell weighing almost

700kg – about as heavy as a grand piano.

Several of the bells have hung in the tower for more than 420 years and, despite their age, are said to sound just as impressive today as when they were first installed.

■ **Interested in having a go? Just email [bellringing@stmaryschartham.org](mailto:bellringing@stmaryschartham.org) and they can show you the ropes!**

# FREE STRENGTH AND BALANCE CLASSES HELPING OVER-50S STAY ACTIVE IN KENT

**OVER 50s across Kent are being encouraged to take part in a free 12-week strength and balance programme aimed at improving mobility, confidence and independence.**

The initiative, run by Active Life, focuses on helping older adults stay active, reducing the risk of falls, and improving their overall wellbeing through guided exercise sessions.

But organisers say the program offers more than

just physical benefits. Alongside fitness and balance training, the classes are helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation by creating a supportive community space where participants can connect with others. Many of those attending have experienced isolation due to long-term health conditions, and the sessions are designed to help people rebuild confidence in both their health and social lives.

"If it wasn't for the space, some of them may have just given up," says Claire Bode, the programme coordinator

As well as the Over 50s sessions, Active Life also has an Exercise on Referral scheme in Canterbury, which is open to adults living with long-term health conditions. This scheme is designed to manage conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, stroke recovery, COPD, and mental health



conditions. Claire recently won a Revival Community Award in recognition of her outstanding commitment and dedication to supporting the community for

her work with Active Life.

■ **To get involved in the programme, fill in this self referral form: [fusion-lifestyle-news.com/p/SC6-1CZU/self-referral-form-active-life](https://fusion-lifestyle-news.com/p/SC6-1CZU/self-referral-form-active-life)**

# THE HEROES CLEANING KENT'S RIVERS



**IN 2025, a local group of volunteers removed 1,218 bags of litter from the River Stour and its tributaries**

The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership works on local countryside management, river restoration, and educating children and young people on the environment. It holds volunteer-led litter-picks once a month.

In addition to the bags of litter, the volunteers also removed 100 large items from the river and riverbanks in Canterbury, Ashford and Wye. These large items included shopping trolleys, bikes, and scooters.

Litter they see often on the riverbanks includes vapes, drink containers and food wrappers.

The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership are conscious of the biodiversity of the river, and only litter-pick along the riverbanks from November to June, so that they do not disturb spawning fish or nesting birds. From July to October, the volunteers wade in the river channel removing litter which has entered the river.

They have also worked with local schools and colleges, and hosted two litter-picks for local colleges in 2025, giving the students the opportunity to make a positive impact on their local community.

Ninety-one volunteers are committed to cleaning the River Stour, and the group is always looking for more people to help out.

**■ To get involved, email [stour@kent.gov.uk](mailto:stour@kent.gov.uk)**



# 'SWIM OLD GITS' PROVE THAT AGE IS JUST A NUMBER

**FIVE FRIENDS from Herne Bay have completed a momentous 5k charity swim, raising over £3,000 for Cancer Research UK and Marie Curie Cancer Care.**

All five swimmers, who call themselves the Swim Old Gits, met when they started swimming at Herons Leisure Centre with Active Life. Each member of the team also suffers from a health condition, which made the swim even more challenging.

Team captain Tony Smith, 66, lives with high blood pressure and lost an eye following an accident in his youth. Fellow swimmer Kevin Parker, 70, has previously suffered a stroke and is currently battling anxiety while awaiting a knee replacement. Simon Martin, 56, lives with terminal heart failure and chronic kidney disease, while



Mark Wootten, 63, also suffers from heart failure and lost an eye in an accident. Gerry Prendergast, 70, completed the challenge despite acute arthritis in his back and knees.

The team began swimming in Herons Leisure Centre in 2025, and became friends when they discovered they were all from a construction background. Their friendship has helped them juggle their medical conditions.

"Meeting and exercising together at Herons Leisure Centre has changed our lives and given us a real sense of community," captain Tony Smith told Community Leisure UK.

"Who would have thought a year ago that five old gits like us would have completed a swimathon and raised £3000 for charity?" said Simon.

#MillionActsofHope

# HOPE

## happens here.

### 13th-20th MAY: THE WEEK THAT HOPE BUILT

Hundreds of charities, communities and faith groups have come together to launch **A Million Acts of Hope** – a campaign to bring hope out into the open.

We want to thank all the people who prove our communities can be healthier and happier if we pull together, not apart.

Thank you. For rolling up your sleeves. For getting stuck in.  
For not giving up.

You are the beating hearts of our villages, towns and cities.  
And because hate can seem louder than hope these days,  
we have never needed you more.



Could your community group take part and  
create an Act of Hope?

**Go to [millionactsofhope.org](https://millionactsofhope.org) to sign up.**

And put this poster in your window!

Get involved ↘

