ASHFORD YOU

Issue 13 | Summer 2021

YOUR BOROUGH, YOUR MAGAZINE



FULL STEAM AHEAD

Focus on tourism and leisure

TOWN CENTRES BOUNCE BACK

WAR ON LITTER

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Welcome



The front cover headline in the last edition – A Brighter Tomorrow – optimistically looked ahead to the lifting of lockdown restrictions, and as we went to press with this issue, that certainly looks like our direction of travel in Ashford and across the UK.

The sacrifices and hardships we have all endured during the pandemic, adhering to the rules to keep each other safe and tragically in some cases losing loved ones, is mercifully coming to an end. But while our country's hugely successful vaccinations programme has opened the door to a brighter tomorrow, we must all continue to play our part to ensure that future cases are kept to a minimum.

This edition certainly helps to lift the spirits that better times are ahead. There's an eight page focus on our burgeoning cultural and leisure scene across the borough, with the spotlight on great places to go and things to do and enjoy this summer. This includes a packed programme of events at Revelation and the reopening of a new-look Stour Centre.

Our town centres are springing back to life, with an innovative new virtual shopping guide launched in Ashford and Tenterden, and many new restaurants and retail businesses opening their doors for the first time. This confidence to invest in our borough is hugely encouraging and provides hope that our local economy can bounce back.

Finally, more than 570 entries were received for our two competitions in the spring edition. Thank you for your continued support and good luck to all those entering the competitions in this issue.

Tracey Kerly

Tracey Kerly
Chief executive, Ashford Borough Council

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Design
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Printed by
William Gibbons & Sons Ltd.
Front cover image courtesy of Kent and East Sussex Railway

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Find your borough councillor: **www.ashford.gov.uk/councillors**

Please note: For current information on the Civic Centre opening hours and face-to-face appointments please visit: **www.ashford.gov.uk/contact-us/get-in-touch-another-way**

Heritage Plaque Scheme launched



In a previous edition of *Ashford for You* we revealed plans for an Ashford Borough Heritage Plaque Scheme. We are pleased to announce that despite the setbacks posed by the pandemic we have now launched a digital version of the scheme.

Similar to the national blue plaque scheme but featuring green plaques with the borough's crest, the scheme celebrates the existence of noteworthy individuals and buildings from Ashford's past that are not widely known or formally recognised across the borough.

The web pages include images and a short biography of the individuals as well as an interactive map giving users the chance to view the current building associated with them, walk the trail and learn more about Ashford's history and heritage along the way.

Initially the scheme will feature four noteworthy individuals, as well as three individuals of the South Eastern & Chatham Railway that contributed significantly to the development of the railways, both here in Ashford and nationally:

- Dr John Wallis (1616-1703), mathematician who contributed substantially to the origins of calculus;
- Ellen Terry (1847-1928), actress who became one of the most popular stage performers in Britain and North America;
- Sir John Fogge (c.1417-1490), local philanthropist, courtier and soldier;
- Sir Norton Knatchbull (1569-1636), Member of Parliament for Kent and founder of Ashford Grammar School;
- James Stirling (1835 – 1917), Superintendent;
- Robert Riddell Surtees (1855 -1919), Chief Draughtsman;
- Richard Edward Lloyd Maunsell (1868 -1944), Chief Mechanical Engineer

There are plans to award a further ten virtual plaques to some of the many other famous faces that have lived and been associated with the Ashford borough. And residents too, will have their own opportunity to nominate individuals that meet the scheme's criteria.

To find out more details and how to submit nominations, visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/heritage-plaque-scheme** or contact **david.robinson@ashford.gov.uk**

Remembering HMS Albacore

During World War II our community adopted the warship, HMS Albacore. The borough joined forces to raise funds for their chosen warship, and staged a successful week of fundraising and events in February 1942 to raise money and awareness for the war effort. This was called "Warship Week".

Fundraising events included a dance night in The Corn Exchange, which was broadcast on BBC radio to the crew on HMS Albacore. It was attended by the ship commander's wife as well as other dignitaries – reports say it was quite an event!

On 16 June 1942, HMS Albacore was officially adopted by the Ashford community with the forming of the Sea Cadet Unit in June 1942, the unit being formally affiliated to HMS Albacore. Our ship held a number of battle honours, including North Africa 1942 - 1943, Sicily 1943, Salerno 1943 and Anzio 1944, and was mainly used for mine-laying duties.

There are plans to mark the 80th anniversary of Ashford adopting HMS Albacore in 2022. Watch out for more details in our next edition.



Competition winners

More than 570 entries were received for our two competitions in the spring edition. David Hill won a country inn break and winery tour and tasting at Hush Heath, while Sarah Rees won a bumper bundle of goodies supplied by The Beehive. Congratulations to our winners and thanks to everyone who took part. See page 22 for our latest fabulous competitions.



Port Health website live

As *Ashford For You* went to print a new Ashford Port Health website went live - **www.ashfordporthealth.gov.uk**. The website allows hauliers and freight companies to obtain the necessary advice and customs checks they need.

The Port Health service is being introduced in a phased approach with document checks initially taking place before physical checks are undertaken on the site in Sevington in due course.

Welcome investment

BizSpace, the UK's largest regional flexible workspace provider, has given a vote of confidence in Ashford by investing in building new office space at Eureka Park, alongside M20 J9. BizSpace has expanded its national network by creating The Cobalt Building, which has 70 offices ranging in size from 170 to 424 square feet.

The centre has high-speed internet and there is a communal breakout area, free parking, kitchen and shower facilities. Office prices start from £142 per desk, per month on flexible, three-month rolling licence agreements. Visit **www.bizspace.co.uk/spaces/ashford**

As this edition of *Ashford For You* went to press, the country was due to come out of lockdown on 21 June, with no restrictions on outdoor events and gatherings. If you are planning to attend any of the events promoted in this issue please check before travelling.

Join the growing conversation at Nextdoor

Did you know that we're on Nextdoor? Sign up now so you don't miss community discussions that are happening in your area. You'll also be able see important updates from our communications team and participate in polls that affect your neighbourhood. Visit **www.nextdoor.co.uk**

nextdoor

Calling all environment enthusiasts

Do you have ideas that you think could help shape the way our borough approaches sustainability, recycling and encouraging others to reduce their carbon footprint?

We have launched a private digital Facebook group to gather like-minded people for discussion on environmental topics. As part of the group, we will be sharing some of our upcoming campaign ideas and giving you the chance to get involved in how we develop them going forward.

If this sounds like something you'd like to be part of, you can apply to join here: **www.ashford.gov.uk/green-agenda-focus-group-form**



E-newsletter sign-up

Want all the latest council news delivered straight to your inbox? In response to public demand to receive our news by email, our mailing list is live and growing every week. If you'd like updates on news, events, safety information and other exclusives, visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/contact-us** and click 'Get updates from the council' to sign up.

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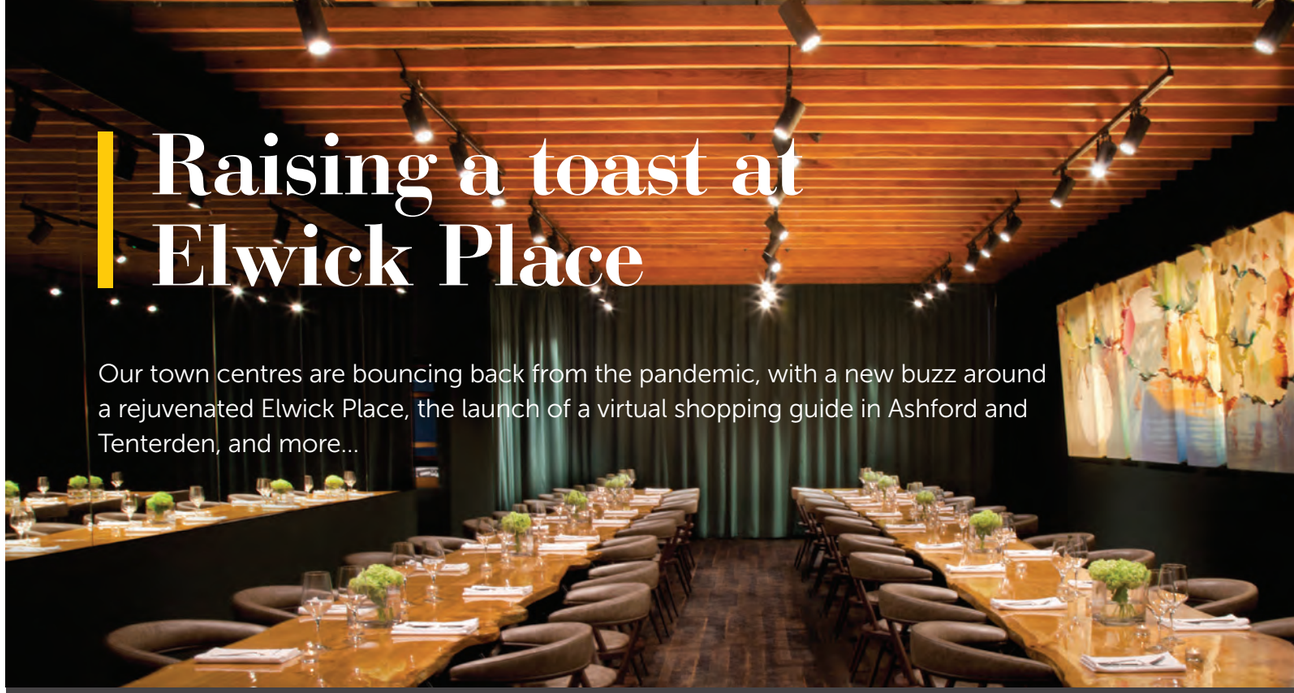
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Raising a toast at Elwick Place

Our town centres are bouncing back from the pandemic, with a new buzz around a rejuvenated Elwick Place, the launch of a virtual shopping guide in Ashford and Tenterden, and more...

As the end of lockdown restrictions on the hospitality sector are celebrated across the borough, there are even more reasons to raise a glass at Elwick Place. The cinema, hotel and leisure complex in the heart of Ashford town centre is now almost fully let, with new restaurants throwing open their doors to eager customers.

The first phase of the council-owned 100,000 sq ft development was launched in December 2018, with a six-screen Picturehouse cinema and a 58-bedroom Travelodge hotel as its anchor tenants. Efforts to fill the remaining eight units continued against a backdrop of uncertainty caused by Brexit, a decline in high street retail and the pandemic that has thrown the UK economy into turmoil.

Despite this, a number of businesses did open at Elwick Place, including food hall and restaurant operator Macknade and Snap Fitness gym. Now a host of new tenants have joined them. They include three restaurants – The Gastronomist with its open-flamed parilla (grill), family-friendly Italian restaurant Unita 4, and Matches Sports Bar, Grill & Social – heralded as the 'ultimate sports bar experience'.

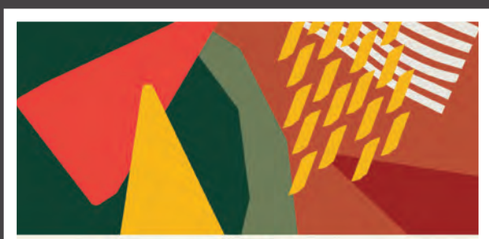
Since they were announced in March, all have been chomping at the bit to fully open their doors to customers once Coronavirus trading restrictions permit, although Unita 4 was able to operate an outside terrace from mid-April.

Not to be outshone by the newcomers, Macknade has recently expanded into an adjoining unit, after a successful first 18 months trading at Elwick Place. And Snap Fitness reopened in May once restrictions allowed.

Paul McKenner, Head of Corporate Property and Projects at Ashford Borough Council, said the news that nearly all the units are let is remarkable when considering the unparalleled events of the past couple of years, including the collapse in the retail shopping market, the impact of Brexit and the devastating Coronavirus pandemic.

Paul said: "There's no denying that it's been a challenge to fill the units due to these extraordinary events. But from the outset we were confident that all the space would be filled in time and now, thanks to our team's hard work and professionalism, we are delighted that Elwick Place is embarking on an exciting new future."

Other new tenants were preparing to announce details of their businesses at Elwick Place as we went to press. For the latest information visit **www.elwickplace.com**.





Shop local to earn rewards



With the high streets and shops now reopened, if you shop in Ashford or Tenterden, you can earn rewards through Local Rewards.

More than 50 councils and shopping centres across the country already use the platform, which doesn't require any apps to be downloaded and is completely free for shoppers to use. It helps shoppers connect with local businesses nearby and select relevant offers which they can then use in store.

Those spends are then converted into rewards points through the Local Rewards platform, which can then be used against other offers with other local businesses.

Olivia Ealham from Liv2Dance Studios in Ashford town centre said: "It is a fantastic opportunity for businesses to use Maybe*. As a business owner I am excited to see the huge benefits. As the town starts to re-open in the coming months this will be a brilliant boost for all business types and will raise awareness within the local community of what's available, right in the heart of Ashford."

Virginia Hodge from Tenterden's Old Dairy Brewery said: "We are delighted and very excited to start using our Maybe* account. As a brewery, we have become very aware that people's shopping habits have changed, particularly in the last year.

"There is a desire to shop local but also to buy more online. We have had to adapt to this change very quickly and increase our digital presence, so to be involved with the Maybe* Local Rewards scheme is fantastic and offers us an opportunity to better showcase our beers to our customers and promote to a much wider audience. We are very much looking forward to being a part of the Maybe* Local Rewards Scheme and working with other businesses to promote local."

To help the borough's businesses get back on their feet after the pandemic, Ashford Borough Council is sponsoring 1,000 Ashford and Tenterden businesses to sign up with Maybe*, who run Local Rewards. To find out more visit localrewards.chat and click 'sign up my business'. Firms who sign up will be able to access tools and training to help them increase revenue through social media.

You can find out about Local Rewards at **www.localrewards.chat**

County Square welcomes new faces

As shopping centres evolve to meet the needs of their communities, County Square does too. It is pleased to welcome the opening of a temporary Job Centre Plus, which houses new Work Coaches who form part of the government programme to expand employment support in response to the pandemic to help jobseekers find their next role and get back on track.

During the past year people have become more aware of sustainable fashion, recycling and upcycling so with YMCA opening in the centre, the oldest and largest youth charity in the world, shoppers can donate or purchase pre-loved items helping the YMCA to support more than 228,000 young people each year by giving them an opportunity to belong, contribute and thrive.

Finally have you tried the new On Pizza near Main Square? They add an extra mix to the food and beverage operators in County Square with freshly hand-made pizzas available by the slice.



Summer fun at The Coachworks

Fans of mouth-watering cocktails, delicious street food and live music are in for a treat this summer at The Coachworks in Dover Place, Ashford.

The vibrant co-working space and events venue re-opened in April, with extensive outdoor seating for table service drinks, a new cocktail menu from the Yard Bar and a variety of fantastic music events planned. Staff at The Coachworks worked hard during lockdown to improve the site and offering to make it a fun and safe place to visit.

Located close to Ashford International station, The Coachworks is family and dog friendly – to find out more visit coach-works.co.uk

Tenterden shows the way



Throughout the pandemic, Tenterden has been particularly active in supporting its local retailers, and now a major survey of 1,000 shopping locations across the UK, has ranked the town at number three, ahead of all other destinations in Kent, Sussex and Surrey.

The HDH Vitality Ranking survey, compiled by retail analysts Harper Dennis Hobbs, researches the health of high streets and shopping centres, including vacancy rates and suitability to local consumers' demands. The report notes that commuter-belt towns such as Tenterden "have outperformed city centre destinations as consumers' shopping habits have become very localised as a result of the pandemic".

And that entrepreneurial spirit is very much in evidence in Tenterden. Here are two examples...

Faced with a collapse in the demand for wedding photography, mother-of-two Hannah Lamprell lost her studio, had to let her assistant go, and struggled to cover her bills. "But what gave me so much joy was seeing the creative small businesses popping up around me in Tenterden, started by people in the same situation as I was," she said.

So Hannah launched **Little Local Boxy** from her kitchen, self-care gift boxes to send to loved ones, containing items such as candles, chocolates, hand creams and bath bombs – eco-friendly products, all made locally. Hannah makes a donation from each sale to charity, and said: "I am so grateful for the overwhelming support I have received."

Sisters Hannah and Megan Longworth (pictured above) have launched **Vicki's Bridal Boutique** in Tenterden High Street after coming to the conclusion that – despite all the challenges of the pandemic – "if we don't do it now, we never will", and funded the start-up capital from their own savings.

Selling custom-made wedding dresses from £350 to £3,000, the sisters, who have a background in the fashion and retail sectors, are carrying on a family tradition: their grandmother Vicki was a wedding dress designer.



If you're in Tenterden, why not head down to the Old Dairy Brewery in Station Road and try a pint or two straight from the source? The beer garden is situated right outside the brewery. Opening hours are online at olddairybrewery.com

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Bringing the borough together

The new Mayor of Ashford, Councillor Callum Knowles, introduces himself and answers our questions...

What made you decide to become Mayor?

It is an enormous privilege to become the Mayor of Ashford and the decision was one I did not take lightly. The mayoral role takes dedication as it can consume large amounts of your time. However, I love the Ashford area having lived in Tenterden for 16 years, and I am equally as eager to be more actively involved with the community and the people across the borough.

What are your aims as Mayor?

We are hopefully coming out of one of the most challenging periods that we have faced in modern times and I believe that the borough is emerging from this crisis as a stronger and more vibrant place. There are many people and organisations that have played important roles in keeping the 'wheels turning' during the pandemic and I would like to highlight some of these and to signpost people to organisations that are providing the help that many still need out in our communities.



How will you engage with the community during your year?

I hope to take an active role by getting out and about in the local community. Ashford is a large borough with a rich tapestry of people and places, and I hope to cover as much of the area as possible meeting people and attending events. The diversity of Ashford is one of its most important assets and I believe that community cohesion will help people to get back to the lives that they were leading pre-pandemic.

I hope to engage with many community groups and to shine a light on all the good work that is going on so that people can see what is happening and understand the assistance and activities that are open to them.

Which charity or charities are you supporting in your mayoral year? What are their key aims?

I have selected a programme of specific projects across the Ashford borough through Live Well Kent, who are administered through the excellent Shaw Trust charity. There are many amazing charities and although I have selected Live Well Kent Ashford projects, I also wish to actively support other local charities. This is an opportunity for me to promote all the great work they do.

The key aims of Live Well Kent are delivering much-needed support services. They assist in supporting people suffering from mental health issues, which I am passionate about and I would like to help to bring better awareness. It also runs several core programmes alongside other organisations such as Mind, Ashford and Tenterden Umbrella, Take Off and Speakup CIC, Clarion Housing, JR Counselling and The Marchwood Project CIC. Through the Shaw Trust they offer further support in volunteering and employment support projects.

shaw trust

Live well Kent
Community wellbeing

How are you planning to support this charity?

I will work with them on raising awareness of all the great work they do. I plan to organise networking gatherings to get our citizens, businesses and organisations talking and helping one another. I would like to host fundraising events, however, as there are still restrictions on how we can get together this may not be able to take place in person as much as I would like, but there are always virtual meetings. I will spend time with the charity meeting key people and taking part where possible with some of its projects.

Photographers of Ashford

Biffa

To celebrate the acquisition of the new fleet of Biffa trucks we're hosting a competition in partnership with Aspire Landscape Management to celebrate biodiversity in the borough.

aspire

We want you to submit your photographs of wildlife in the borough and the top three images will be put onto the sides of one of the trucks for all of Ashford to see, we'll even give you the option of placing your social media handle on the side.

From birds to insects or anything in between no wild animal is too big or small to be featured. Submit your entries to **wildlifecomp@ashford.gov.uk** and make sure to include where you took the shot, full name, address and contact number. Please make sure your images are as high a resolution as possible and sent to us in a JPEG or EPS format. Deadline for entries is 30 June so get snapping.



Calling all tree lovers

Would you like to champion local trees and have a role helping us monitor, care and protect them? We planted more than 6,000 trees last year and with many other biodiversity and carbon absorption projects in the pipeline we're going to need some additional eyes on the prize! So, we're setting up a new Tree Warden scheme for volunteers.

Interested in training to be a tree warden? Please visit our website **www.ashford.gov.uk/tree-warden-scheme** for further information on how to volunteer.

aspire

Final call for Ashford in Bloom 2021

Ashford in Bloom 2021

Have you entered Ashford in Bloom yet? There are even more categories to choose from this year so everyone can be in with a chance to win no matter how big or small your space.

- Best front or back garden
- Most environmentally friendly garden
- Best communal garden
- Best balcony
- Best window box
- Best indoor garden
- Best young gardener U-14



Submit your entries alongside a few words about your space to **ashfordinbloom@ashford.gov.uk** by **4 July.**
Please include the name of the category you want to enter in the subject line and name, address and contact number.



Be a litter hero

We love Ashford, but we hate litter. We're on a mission to stop people being lazy and chucking their litter on the floor. But we can't do this alone, we need **YOUR** help.



It's a fact that tidy streets and parks have a positive impact on people's wellbeing and messy streets attract even more mess and negatively impact the community.

'Don't be a Lazy Chucker' is our brand new litter campaign aimed at those inconsiderate people who bring it but don't bin it.

The campaign will be starting in four major 'hotspot' litter locations in the borough then expand to cover other areas. Locations have been selected based on data including the local environmental quality survey, fly-tips removed, litter tonnages and reporting.

Want to organise your own litter pick? Check out these FAQ's and tips.

Can I borrow litter picking equipment from the council?
YES. You can loan equipment off the council such as litter pickers and hi-vis vests but stock is limited. If you wish to loan out equipment or register a litter pick please complete the community litter pick form on our webpage: **www.ashford.gov.uk/community-litter-pick/**

Can I leave litter pick bags next to my wheelie bin for collection?
We ask that you either put the bags in your bin once it has been emptied or take them to your local Household Waste and Recycling Centre. For one-off litter picks, where larger quantities of litter are likely to be collected, the council can supply bags and arrange for the litter to be collected and disposed of after the event.

What do I do if I find evidence of where litter may have come from or witness someone dropping litter?
Please report this information to the council's Street Scene Team via the Your Ashford app or our website **www.ashford.gov.uk/report**. They will follow up your report, and will take action depending on the strength of the evidence available.

Remember to

- Re-use supermarket carrier bags, or similar, to collect litter, as this does not involve an additional cost to supply bags and it is environmentally friendly to re-use these bags. It also ensures that the volumes of litter collected are manageable to handle.
- Report items that are possibly dangerous such as unknown liquids in containers, building materials, and asbestos. Drug related litter/hypodermics, or fly-tipping should not be moved by volunteers. Note the location and report to the council for specialist removal. If there is any doubt about an item, leave it, and let the council know.
- Follow the appropriate government guidance in regards to COVID-19.



Visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/litterfreeashford** for more information on how to be a litter hero

Cut out contamination

A big **thank you** to all our residents for ensuring our recycling service remains the best in Kent. Check out this handy guide on what can and can't be recycled and help us continue to stay number one.

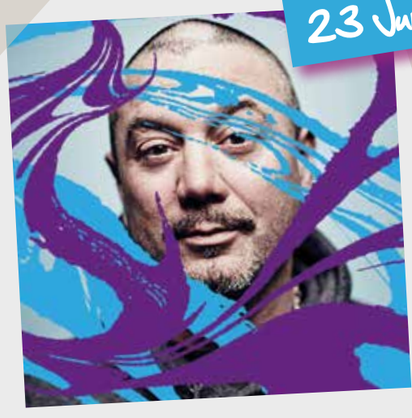


Not sure how to dispose of something? We can help, visit our page for an A- Z guide on what can and can't be put in your recycling bin **www.ashford.gov.uk/how-do-i-dispose-of/**

We are back and



WE ARE TEN





revelation

Here at Revelation, we're delighted to finally be re-opening this summer and celebrating our 10th birthday! Join us for hot ticket birthday events (supported by Create Festival) with **Huey Morgan's NYC Block Party** on 23 June and **Toploader** on 25 June – it will be a party week to remember...

The last year has been tough, but our close-knit team have risen to the challenge with enterprising ways to spread a little joy and inspire creativity. Like many organisations, we've been adapting to working online and trying to capture some of the magic of live events while everyone is at home.

Being able to get involved in creative opportunities has been a lifeline for many over the last year, so we've been running creative writing workshops with local people (and as far afield as USA!) who've been producing short stories and releasing podcasts. For our younger communities we've been busy adapting our schools programme so children can still experience exciting creative opportunities – 374 children made work for our Carol of the Sea Swallows virtual reality installation, on a theme of climate change.

Embracing live-streamed concerts featuring national and local artists, we've partnered with Macknade to provide delicious deli boxes while you watch from your sofa. And since shopping has also become a challenge, we launched an online shop selling gifts designed by artists. It's been great to create unique merchandise and support artists in the process.

When restrictions allowed we hosted live events, with low-cost family films and 10 free concerts at Ashford Bandstand. It's been important for us to provide accessible events, workshops and activities at this difficult time and the wonderful feedback from people who joined in has made it all worthwhile.

While all that's been going on, we've been frantically rescheduling all the brilliant shows we had lined up for 2020! So we're back with a jam-packed autumn season, job opportunities coming up, memberships re-opening, and a variety of new ways to connect with us. We're looking forward to meeting old and new audiences alike – coming out of lockdown has never been such fun!

BACK WITH A BANG

Date	Event
9 June, 1pm	Gerald Dickens – The Day Dickens Nearly Died
9 June, 7:45pm	Gerald Dickens: Great Expectations
23 June, 7:30pm	Huey Morgan NYC Block Party
25 June, 7:30pm	Toploader
4 Sep, 7:45pm	Dad's Army Radio Show
7 Sep, 7:45pm	Only Fools and Boycie – an intimate evening with Only Fools and Horses actor John Challis
18 Sep, 7:30pm	Coda: A Tribute to Led Zeppelin
25 Sep, 7:45pm	An Evening with Christopher Biggins
8 Oct, 7:45pm	Spiers and Boden
16 Oct, 7:30pm	The George Michael Story
21 Oct, 7:45pm	Scott Matthews
23 Oct, 8pm	Rich Hall's Hoedown Deluxe
30 Oct, 7:45pm	Hannah James & Toby Kuhn
5 Nov, 7:45pm	King Charles
6 Nov, 7:30pm	Gordon Hendricks as Elvis
20 Nov, 7:45pm	Clearwater Creedance Revival
3 Dec, 7:30pm	Everything Bublé Christmas Show
4 Dec, 8pm	Michael Spicer – The Room Next Tour
10 Dec, 7:45pm	Maddy Prior and the Carnival Band

Book tickets at www.revelationashford.co.uk

Competition! Exclusive to Ashford For You readers – two pairs of tickets to win!

We're giving away a pair of tickets to Huey Morgan's NYC Block Party on 23 June, and another pair for Toploader on 25 June.

To enter simply answer the following question: What birthday is Revelation celebrating in 2021?

Send your answer and your phone number to **marketing@revelationashford.co.uk** with either Huey or Toploader in the subject line.

Entries close at midnight on 19 June 2021 and winners will be selected at random and notified on 20 June 2021.

Only one entry per household.

For full terms and conditions see page 22.

Good luck!

Summer loving

With lockdown restrictions ending and improved facilities opening it's set to be a Summer of Sport for leisure and fitness enthusiasts...

New Clip and Climb



New Soft Play



Revamped Stour Centre set to open

The Stour Centre is ready to open its doors in June as a £7.5m investment has been unveiled. The major refurbishment significantly improves the leisure and fitness offer with the new-look centre including:

- a refurbished gym with new equipment
- a new soft play and clip and climb centre
- an additional exercise studio
- improved changing rooms
- revamped reception and café area
- new catering offer including Costa Coffee

The Julie Rose Stadium gym offer is also being refurbished this year whilst the Stour Centre pools require further work so will need to remain closed - further details to follow.

freedomleisure where you matter

www.julierosestadium.co.uk
www.thestourcentre.co.uk

Tenterden makeover

Tenterden Leisure Centre is also having some improvements, with a new roof and pool air-handling unit being introduced this autumn.

Teenage Kicks

Brand new facilities at Bromley Green Sports Club Pavilion opened in June thanks to a grant from the Football Foundation, funding from the council and money raised by local club Bromley Green.

The sports hub in South Willesborough includes a lobby area, four brand new football changing rooms, an officials' changing room and a fully accessible changing room and toilet.

Improved facilities at Bromley Green and Pitchside



Pitchside facilities upgrade

The floodlights on the 3G and the grass pitch at Pitchside on Stanhope have also been replaced as well as new goals, resurfacing, landscaping, fencing and a new boiler installed in the changing rooms. The £100,000 investment took place in spring.

You can call **01233 330232** to book the new facilities at Pitchside and Courtside. Tennis bookings can be made online. Visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/things-to-do/active-ashford/** and click through to the LTA Rally website. Online bookings for other facilities will be available later in the year.



Getting back to normal in Victoria Park

Activities have continued in Victoria Park over the last three months albeit on a much reduced scale. Have your say for a chance to win £20 shopping vouchers.

Our partners at Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership ran a successful Easter trail in April. More than 200 pupils from Ashford Oaks Primary School and Victoria Road Primary School decorated eggs as part of a competition where three winners were selected to receive chocolate prizes and a bird box each. More than 60 young people and their families took part in an Easter trail, finding our facts about our birdlife and receiving an activity pack and chocolate prizes for their work.

Our youth council continues to grow with young people attending monthly zoom calls to be consulted on project activities. More members are welcome and any young people aged between 12-25 years old should contact **nicola.priest@ashford.gov.uk** or visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/victoria-park** for more information and an application form. Meetings currently take place on the last Friday of every month.

Moving forward with the project, volunteering activity is relaunching following the easing of restrictions. There are a variety of roles available including virtual tour guides, YouTube contributors, our wonderful conservation volunteers and event roles supporting events as we start to meet more in person. Roles have training where necessary, further details can be found on the website.

There will also be some wonderful summer activities happening including the return of Barklife, our dog show, and Kids' Takeover Week, a week of online and in-park activities designed and run by young people. Keep up with our activities and the plan for the park at **www.ashford.gov.uk/victoria-park.**



Finally, the project would like to hear from park users and collect their views on the current park environment. We are running a visitor survey to get as many thoughts on Victoria Park and its facilities as possible. To thank you for your time, participants can opt into a draw for a £20 shopping voucher. **To fill in the survey, please scan the QR code.**

SCAN ME

HERITAGE FUND



For more information on the project and upcoming events visit **www.ashford.gov.uk/victoria-park** or Follow on Twitter @VictoriaParkABC, Facebook @VictoriaParkABC and Instagram @VictoriaParkAshford. @victoriaparkashford or search for Victoria Park Ashford on YouTube.

Explore the Royal Military Canal

Running for 28 miles from Seabrook near Hythe through Romney Marsh to Cliff End in East Sussex, the Royal Military Canal is not only an important heritage site and a haven for wildlife but a beautiful scenic walk and cycle route too with some great places to visit, eat and stay in the local area – perfect if you're planning a staycation this year.

Walking or cycling along the canal

There are a number of footpaths that link to the canal so you could plan a circular route using these but if you prefer to stay close to the canal you'll need to factor in a return journey so bear this in mind (you might prefer to do the route in stages).

Along the canal you'll discover picturesque villages set amidst farmland that stretches out to the horizon, where you'll inevitably spot grazing cattle, sheep and, depending on the time of year, lambs gambolling around the fields. Kent has a fantastic climate for growing grapes that rivals the wines of our neighbours across the Channel in France so look out for the spectacular vineyards of Gusbourne Estate.

There are also a number of information boards on the history and wildlife of the canal along the way. If you want to take a rest you'll find picnic tables and benches at intervals (but remember to take your litter home with you).

Download the individual maps from **www.explorekent.org/activities/royal-military-canal/**

The history of the canal

The Royal Military Canal was created as a major military defence during the Napoleonic Wars in the early 19th century and is universally recognised as an important component of the county's heritage.

After Hadrian's Wall and Offa's Dyke, it is the third longest defensive structure in the UK. As Romney Marsh was considered to be the most likely target of a French invasion the canal aimed to cut off the marsh from the land beyond. Starting in 1804 the canal took around five years to construct and at its peak there were around 1,500 men working on it – all by hand using picks and shovels. As you walk along you may notice 'kinks' in the canal which were created to allow soldiers to cover the waterway with their guns. You'll also spot many Second World War pillboxes – small re-enforced concrete or brick buildings – designed to house either infantry, anti-tank guns or field artillery.



Royal Military Canal

Find out more about the canal's history at **www.rmcp.co.uk/the-royal-military-canal/**

Wildlife spotting

An ideal location for amateur photographers with an eye for nature, the Royal Military Canal has an abundance of wildlife, including the marsh frog, emperor dragonflies, kingfishers and the majestic mute swan.

If you're lucky you might even spot the endangered water vole as the banks and ditches of the canal form their ideal habitat. The mink is a mammal that isn't actually native to this country (it was introduced in the 1930s) but has made its home here, being an excellent swimmer. If you're walking along in the early evening, look out for badgers heading out at dusk to feed.

Depending on how far along the canal you travel, you may find yourself spying more exotic creatures as the path passes by Port Lympne Reserve!

Plan your visit

Why not combine your trip with a visit to a nearby attraction or eaterie or extend the day by staying locally?

Places to visit

- Port Lympne Reserve
- Rare Breeds Centre
- Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway
- Romney Marsh Wools
- Woodchurch Village Life Museum

Places to eat

- Miss Mollett's Tea Room
- Black Lion, Appledore
- The Cosy Kettle, Hamstreet
- The Ferry Inn, Stone in Oxney
- Woolpack Inn, Warehorne

Vineyard tours and tastings

- Gusbourne Estate
- Oxney Organic Estate
- Woodchurch Wine

Places to stay

Check out **www.experienceashfordandtenterden.co.uk** for inspirational ideas on where to stay locally and for places to visit too.

visitashtent **@visitashtent**

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Royal Military Canal


Gusbourne Estate



The Black Lion, Appledore


Romney Marsh Shepherd's Huts

Looking back, moving forward



Photo from the 2018 Community Arts Project



It's 'all aboard' for an art extravaganza next month as the Tenterden Schools Trust's annual Community Art Project takes over the town from 3 to 16 July - and it's bigger and better than ever with a touch of Mr Doodle magic!

The annual project is pulling out all the stops to celebrate both the 60th anniversary of the preserved Kent & East Sussex Railway and the reopening of Tenterden High Street after a year like no other.

St Mildred's July Extravaganza!

Come along to St Mildred's Church on 9, 10 or 11 July to enjoy a Festival of Flowers, accompanied by craft stalls, the Tenterden Schools Trust Art Exhibition and a light evening music recital. It is hoped that on Sunday 11 July there will be Songs of Praise services and the chance to sing your hearts out. More information will be available online nearer the time. Visit www.tenterdencofe.co.uk.

Free exhibitions and an art trail

Students from all the Trust's schools and community groups have spent the last few months creating hundreds of unique artworks – including portrait work in primary classes, year 6 children working with Mr Doodle, and Homewood students' art and community groups' painted flower pot displays. These will be showcased in three free art exhibitions across the town – St Mildred's Church, Tenterden Railway Station (which will feature the installation designed by Mr Doodle) and the High Street itself.

Tenterden Town Museum will also feature work from Homewood School students, alongside its summer exhibition Our Ever-Changing High Street, looking at the evolution of the High Street right up to the present day.

The healing power of art

This year's theme – Looking back, moving forward: all aboard the Tenterden Community Train – not only reflects the heritage railway's milestone but also how the Tenterden community, like so many others, are coming to terms with the last 12 months and moving positively into the future as a thriving High Street for businesses and visitors.

Samantha Crinnion, Executive Headteacher of the Tenterden Primary Federation, who is leading this year's project, said: "Our community art project has never been more important than it is this year. The last 12 months have been incredibly difficult for everyone. It has particularly impacted on the mental health and wellbeing of our children and those older members of the community who have felt isolated or been shielding. Art has an amazing healing power for both individuals and the community. Using it as a medium to connect us and bring joy to all locally and visitors has always been at the heart of the project since the start in 2018."

Students who have struggled to readjust to being back at school have been particularly involved with making the hanging flower planters - from painting them with friendly faces to growing from seed the plants that will form their hair. So make a date to 'get on board the Tenterden Community Train' and visit Tenterden between 3 and 16 July. Find out more at **www.tenterden-schools-trust.com/CommunityArtProject**

Back on track

As the Kent and East Sussex Railway (KESR) celebrates its 60th anniversary and lockdown eases, there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy the history and heritage of the railway, which was lovingly preserved for the benefit of future generations in 1961.

New for this year, in celebration of the anniversary, there will be a series of on-board activities, which centre around the diverse wildlife which can be seen from the train. As a non-pedestrian corridor through the Weald and Rother valley, there is an enormous variety of mammals, butterflies, water birds, birds of prey and much more for passengers to spot from the comfort of their carriages.

In September, KESR will be focusing on sharing the history of hop picking and agricultural transport along the railways. Many Londoners enjoyed their visits to Kent and Sussex to harvest the hops which would end up in their local pubs. The railway will host its popular 1940s event along the line on 11 and 12 September.

There will also be Saturday and Sunday lunch dining specials aboard the Wealden Pullman, providing guests with the opportunity to dress up and enjoy the golden age of steam and silver service. Summer evenings will also see the return of some specials, including Fish and Chips trains and Real Ale and Cider trains.

For more information and to book visit kesr.org.uk



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Go to ashforddesigneroutlet.com/shoppingexperience

Ashford Designer Outlet

Kent's original vineyard, Biddenden, is offering one lucky winner the chance to win a "Best of Both" Biddenden wine box along with a tour and tasting at Biddenden Vineyards for up to six people with your own personal tour guide.

Producing an award-winning range of still and sparkling wines, Biddenden Vineyards has remained family owned and run, drawing on three generations and over 50 years of expertise. The vineyards span 23 acres of gentle, south facing slopes with 11 grape varieties grown on the estate.

As part of your private guided tour, your guide will escort you around the vineyard, telling you more about Biddenden's history and winemaking techniques, before offering tastings of four selected wines. The prize also includes a "Best of Both" wine box, including three bottles of sparkling wine and three bottles of still wine, so you can enjoy Biddenden at home too!

Biddenden Vineyards is open throughout the year, visit our website for current opening times at www.biddendenvineyards.com

The private guided tour must be pre-booked by contacting Biddenden Vineyards direct on 01580 291726.
The "Best of Both" box may be collected at the time of the tour, or delivered to one address within the UK.



WIN

Mixed case of Biddenden wine & private vineyard tour for six

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ENGLAND

To enter your name in our prize draw either:

* Email the editorial team at **competition@ashford.gov.uk** – put Biddenden Competition Entry in the subject heading and include your full name, postal address and email. Please include a contact phone number.
* Send a postcard or sealed envelope with your name, address, email and contact phone number to: *Ashford For You* magazine, Communications, Ashford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford TN23 1PL. Write Biddenden Competition Entry on the card.

We will contact the winner to request consent to provide your contact details to Biddenden to enable you to claim your prize.

Terms & conditions: 1. The competition is open to UK residents aged 18 years or older except employees of the Promoter, their families, agents or any third party associated with the competition. 2. The closing date of the competition is **5pm on Tuesday 29 June 2021**. Entries received after this time will not be included. The prizes are non-transferable and non-refundable. There are no cash alternatives. 3. By accepting the prize you also agree to be bound by standard terms and conditions specified by the prize providers. Only one entry per person. Editor's decision is final.

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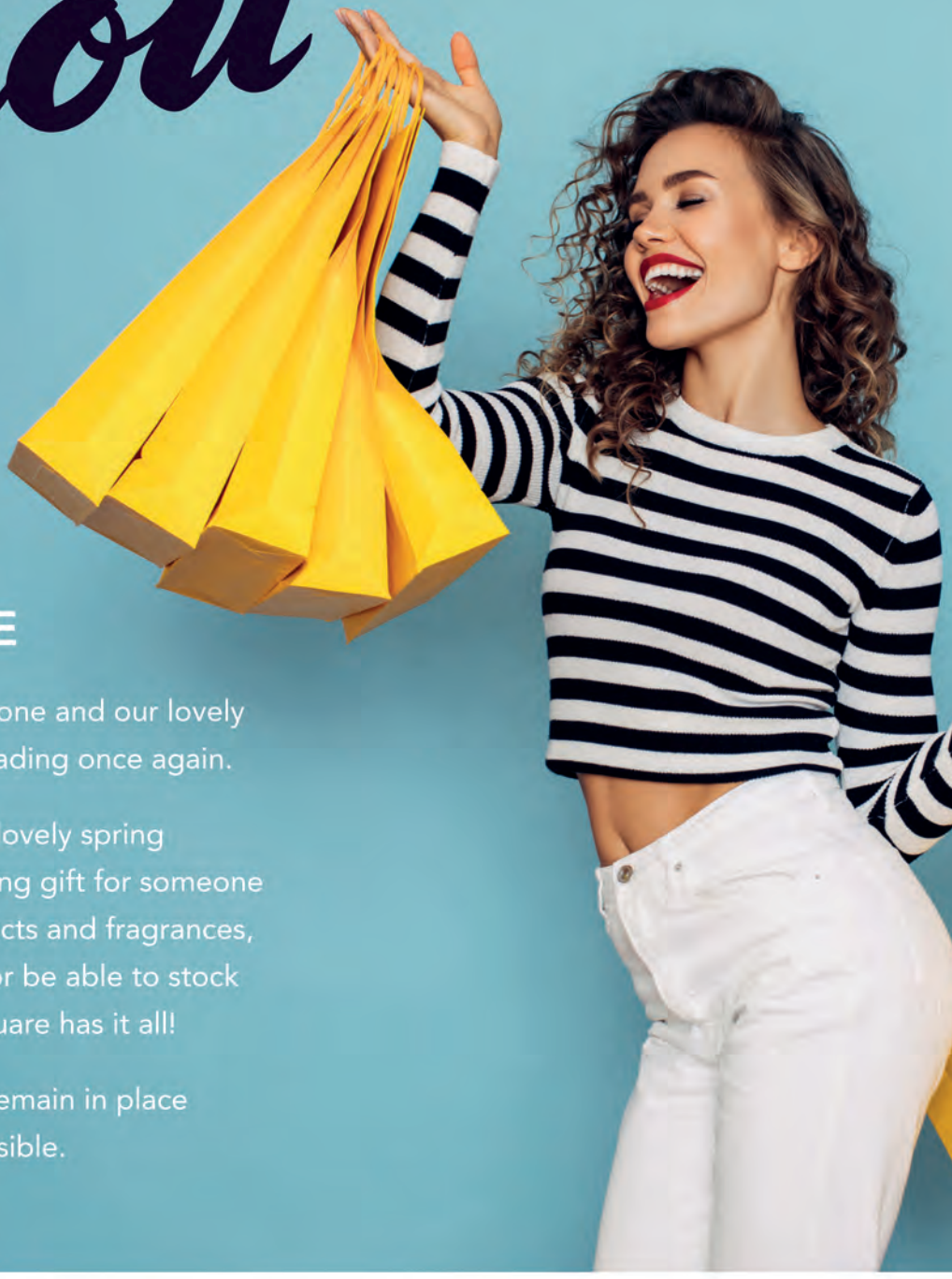
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