



150 pairs of show tickets to be won

Page 10



Pupils celebrate record results

PAGE 10 and 11

Fresh bid to tackle wartime shipwreck

Petition to deal with explosives

Report by **Jim Palmer**

jim.palmer@KRNmedia.co.uk

A PETITION has been launched urging the Government to remove the wreck of the SS Richard Montgomery or make it safe.

The American Liberty ship was sunk off the coast of Sheerness on August 20, 1944 with 1,400 tonnes of explosives on board, and many still believe it poses a threat to people living on the island.

Optimistic

Semi-retired electrical engineer Ron Angel created an e-petition which he hopes people will sign.

While he is not optimistic his campaign will attract the 100,000 signatures necessary to force a debate on the issue in the House of Commons, he hopes to move



Unsafe? The SS Richard Montgomery sank with 1,400 tonnes of explosives on board in 1944

the debate about the ship forward. Londoner Mr Angel said: "If we get 20,000 signatures then it will show something needs to be done about it."

He added: "I want to get something done about the thing before it is too late. No one is doing anything about it and everybody is just hoping it will go away, but it is not."

"This has been going on 67 years. It has been sitting there and it could go off at any time."

Mr Angel has been researching the ship for 20 years and runs a website - www.ssrichardmontgomery.com - dedicated to it.

He said that in order to move the wreck or to make it safe, an

Turn to **page 3**



First past the post: Riders compete in the Isle of Sheppey Round Table's donkey derby

Picture by Tony Butler GIB20110828E-076_C

And they're off in the donkey derby

YOU would have hit the jackpot if you bet on a great day out on Sunday, as more than 1,800 people trotted along to the Donkey Derby.

Eight races were fiercely fought with crowds spurring the young jockeys on, and £2,500 was raised for charity.

Full coverage on **page 4**

Top stories

Maths genius

A 10-YEAR-OLD was among the youngest in the country to pass his maths GCSE.

Daniel Dawson from Eastchurch sat the exam six years early after teachers at the village school noticed his amazing mathematical potential.

Find out more on **page 3**

Vet vouchers

STAFFORDSHIRE bull terriers are being put down because homes cannot be found for them.

To halt the increase in the number being abandoned, the RSPCA is offering owners a cut-price neutering voucher.

Full story **page 5**

Lost at sea



ACTOR Timothy Spall was all at sea when he had to be rescued after getting lost on The River Medway, not far from Iwade.

The RNLI came to his aid after his night-time navigation skills let him down.

Full story **page 7**

Turbine views

WIND turbine manufacturer Vestas wants people's opinions on its plans to build a factory in Sheerness.

Up to 2,000 jobs could be created if the firm comes to the island and it is holding a series of roadshow events.

Full story **page 7**

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Maths genius passes GCSE six years early

10-year-old Daniel is delighted with his B grade



Clever boy: Eastchurch Primary pupil Daniel Dawson, 10, made parents Anne and Steven proud with his maths GCSE

GIPM20110829L-005_C

Report by **Jim Palmer**

jim.palmer@KRNmedia.co.uk

A MATHS whizz is one of the youngest in Kent to have gained a top grade in the GCSE exam, aged just 10.

While most boys his age prefer their Pi with mash, Chelsea fan Daniel Dawson sat his maths exam six years early.

On Thursday Daniel, of Anne Boleyn Close in Eastchurch, joined more than 300 teenagers at Sheppey Academy to pick up his results and got a B – better than a lot of 16-year-olds.

The result was a welcome present for his mum, Anne, whose birthday was on results day.

She said: "I am really proud of him. He has always shown ability from a very early age. He has something explained to him and he can just do it. There is no grey area."

Neither Anne nor Daniel's father, Steven, who manages Cains Amusements in Leysdown, lay claim to the maths genes, Anne said.

When he is not a school, his parents said Daniel is just like any boy his age.

Normal

Anne said: "He loves football and plays for Range Rovers under-11s. He does maths when he is at school and apart from that he is a normal 10-year-old boy, which is important for us as a family."

Last November, Eastchurch Primary School head teacher Pauline Shipley arranged for him to take maths lessons at the academy.

Anne, herself a qualified teacher who manages the nursery at the Warden Road school, said the staff had been "fantastic" with her son, after identifying him as a gifted pupil while he was still in reception class, aged just 5.

She said: "They had everything in place for him. It was really helpful. It meant I could relax. I didn't have to fight to get what was right for my son, which was nice."

"You hear about families that have had to do it all by themselves but we have been really lucky. Mrs Shipley and the staff have always looked to do the best for Daniel."

Next term Daniel, who aspires to be an accountant, will leave his old classmates behind and become a fully-fledged Sheppey Academy pupil a year early, in Shurland school.

Anne said: "He is above average in all subjects and hopefully he can thrive with the right support."

■ **For more GCSE results coverage turn to pages 10 and 11**

Man crushed by boats

A MAN was taken to hospital after he was crushed between two boats.

The 57-year-old man was manoeuvring his boat at Queenborough all-tide landing when he slipped into the water between two boats at 10.10am on Monday.

The Coastguard and the ambulance were called and the man was taken to hospital to be checked over, but was thought to have suffered only bruising.

Meanwhile, four sailors had to swim ashore after their boat started taking on water off Leysdown.

The coastguard was called at 1.20pm on Monday but the crew managed to swim safely to shore on their own. The coastguard helped to recover the boat when the tide receded.

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Petition over explosives on war wreck

From front page

enclosure known as a cofferdam would need to be built around the ship and the water drained out.

In addition to the expense of the major operation, Mr Angel said the risk of exposing the explosives to the air would mean Sheppey would need to be evacuated throughout the three months he thinks it would take.

A spokesman for the Department for Transport, which is responsible for the wreck, said: "Our current management regime is one of monitoring and non-intervention, together with frequent surveys of the wreck and the surrounding seabed."

Zone

"Consequently protection of the wreck is maintained by a no-entry

exclusion zone and by marking the location of the wreck as a hazard to shipping.

"It also continues to be monitored 24 hours a day by radar, and is regularly surveyed to establish the current state of the wreck and the surrounding area."

"In addition, the need for future limited intervention measures is kept under review."

■ **You can put your name on the petition by going to <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/13021>. A talk about the SS Richard Montgomery, called **The Wreck**, will take place from 7.30pm on Friday, September 9 at Blue Town Heritage Centre, as part of the Sheerness Promenade festival. For more information or to book tickets call 01795 662981.**

GAZETTE GOSSIP
by Gazetteer

SOUNDS filled the air over Swale as noisy activities took place during the bank holiday weekend.

The roar of engines was heard in and around Sittingbourne on Monday as hundreds of classic cars and bikes made their way to the Kent Chrome and Cruisers show. Roads around Central Park Stadium were chock-a-block with the vehicles as proud owners steered their pride and joy into the venue.

Down the road, at Murston Old Church, a completely different soundtrack was created as a four-part harmony drifted from the glassless window of the derelict building.

Sittingbourne folk band Los Salvadores had been given permission to hold a photoshoot inside the beautiful building and took the opportunity to experiment with its fantastic acoustics.

The impromptu concert, which stopped passers-by in their tracks, could have been a taste of things to come at the site, which artists hope to transform into an arts centre.

The patter of footsteps livened up the airwaves on Sheppey as budding young dancers took to the stage in preparation for an exciting project. Dancers from Akademi taught Indian dance to 11-to-18-year-olds in the seaside town on Saturday and will perform there themselves on September 10 and 11, inspired by the area's beauty and a poem about heaven.

If all this noise is too much, read next week's *Gazette* when our reporter spends an evening with Swale Council's environmental enforcement officers, getting tough on noisy neighbours.

your views

A disgraceful policy of fear

I WAS appalled to read the latest attack by the Conservative section of our current government on our hardworking public servants.

The latest policy development is to instil fear of job losses into teachers, doctors, nurses, policemen and other public sectors employees.

Tory ministers feel that someone in fear of losing their job is more productive than someone who isn't. Never mind that all studies show that employees who are happy, secure and well rewarded are more productive than any other.

This is another crude and callous attempt by this government to blame the public sector for the recession caused by their friends in the banking world.

The minister in charge of this policy, Oliver Letwin, makes around £2 million per year as a banker. I would be interested to hear our MP's views on this disgraceful policy.

**Martin McCusker,
Lloyd Drive, Sittingbourne**

Landfill in our precious pit

THE chalk pit quarry off Woodstock Road was once the environmental jewel in the crown of the consortium behind the plans to expand the Kent Science Park.

They were to offer this already valuable environmental asset as

some kind of public country park.

Yes, it was always questionable that the quarry could somehow offer compensation for the extensive loss of surrounding countryside, but at least they were not going to destroy what is now, in the minds of many, a very precious and sensitive nature reserve.

However, now the light is dimming on any prospect of the Kent Science Park expanding, the owners of the quarry – the Doubleday family – have decided to put forward this site for landfill.

As any large landowner should be aware, there is a difficult balance between running a day-to-day business and being guardians of the countryside. Given that the area concerned is relatively small and has always been entirely unsuitable for farming and that the very same landowners as part of the Kent Science Park consortium once extolled the environmental virtues of this site, isn't this just a tad hypocritical?

**Andy Hudson,
Bapchild**

Mr Morgan's excellent idea

PETER Morgan is to be congratulated on his ambitious plan to acquire the former magistrates' court in Park Road, Sittingbourne, for transformation into a centrally placed heritage museum (*East Kent Gazette*, August 17).

This is not the first time Mr Morgan has striven for this. Sadly, previous plans came to nothing.

This is exactly the sort of thing Sittingbourne needs – a beating heart at its centre. It has been shown by the existing small museum in East Street and the shop unit in The Forum that there is an interest and, more importantly, support for a heritage museum. Most towns in Britain have one – why not Sittingbourne?

But, as usually happens in this crazy town, I expect the site will be flattened and flats built thereon. When will the council realise, given the way our ailing high street is going, that we do not need more houses and flats? They only bring more people to live in our town, a town that cannot sustain or accommodate them.

I wish Mr Morgan all the best in trying to acquire the funding to buy this building. He has my full support and, I hope, also that of the corporate bodies he approaches. Just for once I hope he will get all the support he deserves.

Finally, while many will remember that the magistrates' court was formerly the police station, how many know it was also once the fire station as well? When the town's fire brigade was first formed, it shared the building with the police.

At the side of the building you can still see where the hoses were once hung to dry. So you see what a historic building it is.

**John Clancy,
Woodside Gardens, Sittingbourne**

We should all back this plan

PETER Morgan's suggestion of converting the disused magistrates' court into a museum is a wonderful idea and should be supported by everyone in Sittingbourne, including local politicians.

With the large number of people who are without work, I wonder how many will offer their services to help to construct and run the museum. Which is a better answer in a job interview to the question, "What have you been doing since your last job?" – unemployed, or working, albeit unpaid, at the museum?

At present, Faversham has one of the biggest museums outside London. Sheppey has about six museums around the island. Sittingbourne has only two very small ones, open only a couple of hours a week.

The council should help with money, either through direct contributions, or with grants.

Mr Morgan has spent most of his life trying to take the "H" out of the town's name. I am not so sure about the supermarkets, with their expensive mad plans to redevelop the centre of the town.

**Sheikh Mihand (aka Jackie Davidson),
Sittingbourne Loonies.**

Warm welcome for Vestas' plan

I WAS pleased to read in the national press that Vestas proposes to create a wind turbine factory in Sheerness.

As the Green MEP for the south-east region, I welcome Vestas' plans. Not only would this be a step forward for our environment in the south-east, it is also good news for our economy and could provide up to 2,000 much-needed jobs.

I was involved in campaigning to save the Vestas factory in the Isle of Wight, which was forced to close back in 2009 due to a lack of government subsidies.

Now, just two years on, this company's progress is remarkable and the proposed new factory

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could be built within a year. Renewable energy contributes to our short-term reduction targets to prevent runaway climate change, is safe, unlike nuclear power, and provides local jobs.

Keith Taylor (Green MEP for south-east England)

In praise of our A-level pupils

MAY I, through your columns, congratulate all those who got their A-level results last week.

Swale's schools did a brilliant job in preparing our young people for these important examinations and the students rose to the challenge, often exceeding expectations.

I wish everyone the best, whatever their future may hold.

**Mike Whiting,
KCC member, Swale Central**

Mr Henderson's railway silence

I READ with great interest the proposals put forward by Councillor Mike Whiting to use the potential of the railway system in Sittingbourne better and I welcome the idea he has put forward.

However, at a time when families are struggling, high fuel prices are pricing people off the road, and commuters' wages are being frozen or cut, the environment is a growing concern and unemployment is an increasing problem in Sittingbourne and Sheppey, this Government – which Mr Whiting's party is leading – has decided to pursue a rail fare policy that will bring an eight per cent increase in prices this year (up to 13 per cent on peak London fares) potentially reaching a total of 28 per cent by 2015.

Commuters travelling to work every day have no realistic alternative to rail travel and will have to lower their standard of living to remain in employment. The unemployed will have restricted access to job opportunities.

Given that the economy has flattened for nine months because of this Government's austerity measures (which our MP has voted for) and given the importance of the railways to the economy, isn't it clear that pushing train fares up by such ridiculous sums is totally the wrong approach?

Other Kent and south-east MPs have been extremely vocal about their constituents' concerns over the impact of the rising costs of train travel. Why hasn't Mr Henderson done the same?

**Ashley Wise,
Shortlands Road, Sittingbourne.**

Give our young people a chance

OVER the years we have watched helplessly as Sheerness and the island continually declines – due, in my opinion, to the apathy and negative attitude of some people.

They seem always to oppose any developments and changes, without specifying what it is they consider best for Sheppey and its people. We must stop always thinking of ourselves.

The people I feel most sorry for are those leaving school. Where do they go? What do they do? There are no jobs for them.

Permit me to run through just some of the employers on Sheppey from yesteryear. The Army barracks; RAF Eastchurch; the Royal Navy with its HM Dockyard and jobs for 3,000 men. We had the Olau line, Pilkington Glass, Johnson Potteries, local authorities all

employing their own staff, and good, reputable builders in all trades. These are just some of our lost jobs – replaced by what? Nothing.

We should grasp the opportunity of an airport, with work for all, for years to come. The whole area would be regenerated by the wealth and jobs brought to this area and Sheppey would be brought back into the 21st century.

Give our young people the chances we had – a job, pride and independence.

**George Bowes,
Scarborough Drive, Minster**

Danger on the shipping lane

GW Bowes (Letters, August 10) is right, the authorities should do something about the wreck of the SS Richard Montgomery, but no one wants to take any responsibility for it.

It has more than 10,000 bombs of different sizes on board, together with 1,249 cases of phosphorus, and 2,297 cases of cluster bombs. This is about 3,500 tons of bombs which equates to 1,400 tons of TNT, as approximated by the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency.

It may be unlikely that it will explode by itself, but there is a great danger that it could be hit by another ship which could then detonate the wreck's cargo of TNT, especially as it is right next door to the Medway shipping lane.

When the wreck starts to rust apart, it could spill 10,000 bombs on to the sea bed and spill phosphorus – which floats and could be washed up on the beaches.

Derek Wyatt has said he was shocked when he found out about the amount of munitions still left in the wreck and warned that sooner rather than later action should be taken to deal with the problem.

The Maritime Coastguard Agency seems to be hiding information about the ship's present state. The last report on its condition was five years ago. I have written to them twice, but got no response.

For more links, videos, text, photos and a link to the Kent's History forum, see my Facebook site SS Richard Montgomery (The Wreck).

**Tim Bell,
Scrapgate Road, Minster**

Still searching for a lost cat

IT IS now a year since I lost my beloved tabby cat and I have had no word or trace of her.

She was let out early on August 25, 2010, a very windy morning, and although we searched and searched, we have not found her.

This is not a letter to preach to anyone, but to urge them to have their animal chipped. In my case, she was to be done on her next booster in September. How I wish I had not put it off.

In my case – and many more – if a body is never found, it doesn't help. But if one is found, even a year of two later, they can be reunited with their owner, saving the heartache.

Was she killed by a dog, or hit by a car, or something else? If so, why was her body picked up? I know she didn't go far from home.

It's not too late to do the right thing and come forward and tell the *Sheppey Gazette* where her body was put, or call me on 01795 669135.

**C Snody,
Marine Parade, Sheerness.**

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