



# Erith Town & Around

Erith Town Forum Newsletter

Issue 23

Winter 2010

## Note from the Chair

Welcome to the Winter 2010 edition of *Town and Around*. We are really pleased to be able to bring you *Town and Around* again. This year has been difficult for us with funding issues clouding the horizon and preventing some of our previous activities. However Erith Town Forum never gives up and here we are with sufficient funding to allow us to produce our newsletter once again.

Despite the scarcity of funds we have continued to hold our regular bi-monthly meetings to discuss local issues and events within the Erith community. We organised our seaside outing for the more senior members of the Erith community and our Christmas Party for this group will take place on Monday 13th December in Christ Church Hall as usual.

We are pleased to see the new shops in the Riverside Shopping Centre and we are looking forward to seeing the old Woolworths premises opened up again, perhaps in time for Christmas. We also hope the new Police offices will be operational soon thus giving Pier Road a more attractive appearance.

Regeneration continues in Erith and plans for a new Bexley College building on the old Tramshed site in Walnut Tree Road have been welcomed by the Forum. We also continue to press the Council to look for a viable community use for the Carnegie Library building.

Currently we are trying to ensure Erith has its share of Christmas decorations this year despite the fact that Bexley Council have decided not to provide any lights to town centres apart from Bexleyheath. Once again it is up to the local community and businesses to try to find the money to give us some Christmas cheer. Frogmore the company who run the Riverside Shopping Centre however are stepping into the breach to provide lights both inside their centre and the surrounding area, and we are organising a special "switching-on" ceremony to kick off the Christmas celebrations.

Finally let me once again extend a welcome to all to attend our meetings. Dates and details are on the back page of this newsletter.

**Doreen Ives**

## Erith Yacht Club Gets New Clubhouse



The amazing transformation of Erith Yacht Club, now that the building of our new Clubhouse has been completed, has been truly fantastic. More people are visiting the Club and consequently applications for membership have also increased. Without our new building we would never have been able to cope as regards numbers and the variety of individuals in the general public.

These latter people tend to view yachting as an elitist sport, this is far from the truth. E.Y.C. members come from all walks of life. You only buy a boat that is within your means, including running costs, as you would a car or caravan. Erith Yacht Club offers courses in both sailing and power boating. All our instructors are fully trained having been on relevant courses run by the Royal Yachting Association, and we also employ a full time professional coach.

Tuition is given afloat and ashore, the latter in the Clubhouse class rooms.

Yacht and dinghy sailing events are well catered for by a variety of races and cruises for those who wish to participate. Our Social Committee runs, to a certain extent, in conjunction with the sailing events, but organizes social evenings for the members and their guests.

Learn to sail, among future friends, at Erith Yacht Club.

**F. Finck**



## Erith Safer Neighbourhood Panel

The Erith Safer Neighbourhood Panel has been set up for Erith residents to set policing priorities within the ward and to air any concerns they may have with regard to anti-social behaviour and criminal activities. Erith is a great town to live and work in, but like all towns, has its share of social problems. Our Panel is looking for a cross section of residents, regardless of race, creed or gender who are prepared to attend meetings held four times a year with our partners Bexley Council and the Safer

Neighbourhood Team from Bexley Police. The meetings normally last for 2 hours and priority policing matters are agreed for the following three months. If you are interested in becoming a Panel Member, please email me at [j-martin@sky.com](mailto:j-martin@sky.com) or visit our Safer Neighbourhood Team for details of our next meeting. "Let's make Erith a safer and nicer place to live and work in".

**Jerry Martin**  
Erith Panel Chair

## What Do You Know About the Erith Rowing Club?

Being a riverside town, Erith has always had a close affinity with rowing, from the wherries who used to unload ships in the Middle Ages, through to Erith Rowing Club's racing activities of the present day. Many older residents of the town can remember the Erith Town Regatta, which started in the 1890s and was held each August Bank Holiday until the 1950s. Local social clubs, pubs and firms from the area would race each other regularly at weekends.

Over the years several rowing clubs were founded but by 1940 only one or two remained and in 1943 Erith Rowing Club was founded. It is the only rowing club on the Thames between Greenwich and Gravesend and has always been open to people from all walks of life and all levels of society. The Club has taught and trained many people from very diverse backgrounds and occupations to row and race with considerable success. For many years the Club organised an annual August Bank Holiday Regatta, initially on the Thames at Erith as part of the Town's August Bank Holiday celebrations, and latterly on Danson Lake (the

'Danson Dashes'), which we hope to reinstate, where clubs from all over the country have competed.

The Club has had several homes over the years and currently we are in the Old Police Station on Erith High Street. Our smart, modern Clubhouse is where winter land training takes place on several evenings a week as well as numerous social events throughout the year.

We have been regularly competing successfully in rowing (where participants use one oar each) and sculling (two oars each) events since 1943. The Club has always competed across the country in different regattas and head races and is a regular supporter of events in the surrounding area – particularly on the Medway at Maidstone where it has had many successes. However, it also takes part in events as far afield as Chester and the upper Thames, and has entered crews at Henley Royal Regatta.

There is an excellent fleet of boats catering for people from 11 upwards of both sexes, all shapes, sizes and ages and all levels of expertise from beginners to the very highest

(a former member previously won at Henley Royal Regatta and represented Australia in the Olympics in 1976). The Club has qualified coaches and uses Danson Lake in Danson Park, just off the A2 at Bexleyheath, on Tuesday evenings in the summer and Saturday mornings all year round to teach people to row before they can take to the Thames at Erith, where you may see us out on the water on Thursday evenings (summer only) and Sunday mornings, weather permitting.

Our "Learn to row" courses are popular and have been fully booked from May to August, but there are still places available on Courses 5 and 6 (September and October). For details, please see our website [www.erithrowingclub.co.uk](http://www.erithrowingclub.co.uk) and click on the 'Rowing Courses' tab. Alternatively, you can contact the Club Captain, Alison Fisher, on her mobile 07969 102140.



## Some celebrity connections – Did you know?

**Sheila Hancock's** mother worked at Mitchell's;

**Elton John's** grandfather worked at Callendar's and his father was born in Erith;

**Malcolm Allison** played for Erith and Belvedere before being signed by Charlton Athletic in 1945;

**Len Goodman** began dancing at the Erith School of Dancing;

**Comedienne Linda Smith**, born in Erith, once (in)famously commented that whilst not twinned with anywhere, Erith did have a suicide pact with Dagenham.

**Do you know of any others? Let us know.**

## Erith Police Panel Meeting

On Wednesday 7th July I attended the Erith Police Panel AGM at Carrack House. I found it a very interesting meeting and would encourage other members of the Erith community to attend these meetings, which take place every three months.

Priority issues for the local police team's particular attention are decided on at each meeting and reports are given on how the previously identified priorities have been addressed.

Our Police Sergeant James Coomber is now on secondment to another area but his place has been taken by Sergeant Caroline Roberts who has promised to carry on the good work presently being done. The date of the next meeting is 6th October at 7pm in the community room at Carrack House.

**Rena Papa**

# Erith Riverside Festival



The Erith Riverside Festival took place on Sunday the 6th June 2010 on the Riverside Gardens. As it was the anniversary of D-Day, there was a "Forties" theme and in the arena DJ Jeff "Two-Tone" Boogie and the Erith Old Timers showed off their "forties" dance skills.

Also appearing in the arena were our old friends the Temesvikings, Micky the Magician, the Europa Gym Club, the "Friendship" Russian Dancers and the Riverside Reflections Dance Group.

New this year were the Nemesis Gym club who

proved very popular with their display of martial arts.

Joining in the fun of the day Erith Playhouse were open for back stage tours and the Erith Rowing Club were also open to the public showing the Film Club's production on Erith's history and a film about rowing and sailing.

Other activities included the Bexley Archaeological Group with a stall on the Flagpole area showing their finds from their on-going site. There was a large model of the Titanic and The Medway Queen Preservation Society brought along their travelling exhibition and replica boat.

Orbit South Housing Association's tent was a hive of activity for young children and fun competitions and the "hands-on" workshops given by the Erith Drum Club proved very popular.

The stalls were a mixture of local charities, local young people's groups, alternative therapies, crafts, jewellery, handbags, glitter tattoos and information.

**Joan McCarthy**  
**Vice Chair**  
**Erith Riverside Festival**  
**Committee**  
**Photographs by**  
**Graig Semplis**



*Nemesis Gym display*

## Oh, I Do Like To Be Beside the Seaside!!

On 16th June our seniors went on the annual Erith Forum trip to the seaside. Forty-eight pensioners went this year on a beautiful summer's day to enjoy the sea air and Eastbourne's pleasant scenery.

Many of those going are quite familiar with Eastbourne and know well the special Fish and Chip restaurant just opposite J Hughes the Department

Store in the town where many bargains are to be found. The Fish and chips in this restaurant are pretty special as is shown by the number of holidaymakers who regularly frequent it. Later in the afternoon if you feel like it J Hughes sell very good afternoon tea so you don't have to wander too far after lunch, just down to the beach and then back again for your afternoon snack.

Alternatively some of our guests took the train that runs the length of the promenade to see the shops and the sea front. Those with more energy walked around the gardens on the promenade and sat to "people watch" whilst enjoying the traditional seaside ice cream cornet. I don't think anyone ventured into the water for an afternoon dip!!

After an enjoyable day out, all joined the coach again for the journey home. The coach driver was very good, giving us all a smooth safe journey and many guests asked that we say a special "thankyou" to him for the way he helped everyone off and on the coach and was particularly helpful to those with walking aids or motorised scooters. Roll on next year's outing!!

**Rena Papa**

## Erith Town Forum future meetings:

24th November 2010  
26th January 2011  
30th March 2011  
18th May 2011 (AGM)

Venue: Erith Vets Club,  
Park Crescent (corner  
Glebe Way) Erith

Time: 7pm – 9pm

## Senior Citizens Christmas Social

Date: Monday 13th  
December

Venue: Christ Church Hall,  
Glebe Way

Time: 2pm – 5pm

Contact: Doreen Ives  
01322 345406 to reserve  
a place

## Erith Christmas Tree Festival

Date: 10th, 11th, 12th  
December

Venue: Christ Church Erith,  
Victoria Road. 75 beautifully  
decorated and lit Christmas  
Trees in our grade 2\* listed  
church building. Come  
along and experience the  
wonder and awe of  
Christmas. Closing Carol  
Service on 12th December  
6 pm.

If you have any news or dates for events to be included in the next newsletter, please contact [erithtownforum@hotmail.com](mailto:erithtownforum@hotmail.com)

## Festival Charities Fair

Date: Saturday 11th  
December

Venue: Christ Church Hall,  
Glebe Way

Time: 10 am – 4.30pm

## Erith Safer Neighbourhoods Policing Team – Surgeries In Mcdonalds, James Watt Way

Saturday 30th October  
3pm – 4pm

Saturday 20th November  
3pm – 4pm

Saturday 11th December  
3pm – 4pm

Discuss any concerns you  
have about crime and  
disorder in the area

## Erith Town Centre Christmas Lights Switch-On

Date: Friday 19th  
November

Place: Pier Road, Erith

Time: 4.30pm

(Information correct when  
going to press but look out  
for updates in News  
Shopper and in the shops)

# Looking forward to a Selkirk Summer 2011

Most people know of Daniel Defoe's novel Robinson Crusoe, but not as many know that this 'first novel in English' was based on the adventures of a man named Alexander Selkirk. This Scottish sailor disembarked at Erith on 14th October 1711, following his 4 year isolation.



But why Erith? A small working group, led by Maggie O'Neill, a longstanding local resident and councillor and me, Robyn Drummond, has formed hoping to use the 300th anniversary of this event as a vehicle to raise consciousness of the unique contribution of Erith and the Thames to local, national and international history.

We are planning to hold a commemorative event on Saturday 15th October 2011. The focus for that day is likely to be a staged landing with opportunities to celebrate 18th century culture, fashion, sea and river history, mythology, songs and literature, etc, although it is also the group's intention to link this with a series of community and school based events and projects

throughout 2011, mostly through a nautically themed Selkirk Summer, based close to the river in Erith, Slade Green, and Belvedere.

These events will hopefully include participation in the Erith Riverside and Danson Festivals, both in June, and local and national history societies, forums, libraries, theatres and operatic societies, museums, rowing clubs, scouts, and literary groups will be invited to participate or support these events.

Other possibilities include a creative partnership between artists and local schools, street parties for roads with related names such as Friday and Crusoe Roads, children's activity days, and having costumed actors in conjunction with written or guided tours for all ages.

Contact email address:  
[SelkirkSummer2011@hotmail.com](mailto:SelkirkSummer2011@hotmail.com)

Website:  
[www.selkirksummer.110mb.com](http://www.selkirksummer.110mb.com)

## Erith Vet's Club

We exist to provide older ladies and gentlemen with social and physical activities. Minimum age is 55 with the requirement that to be eligible for membership one has to live in the Borough or to have worked in it at some point in one's life, although the Council are relaxed about us taking members from without.

We have bowls, snooker, singers, line dancing, rambling, table tennis, darts, cards and various board games.



Other groups using our premises provide local history, digital photography, keep fit for the elderly etc. etc. There is also a social club on most Monday afternoons.

For further information contact  
John Rogers on 01322 438013