

SPRING 2026

OUR PLACE WYE



WHAT'S INSIDE

2 - Virtual Lunch. Tim Sutcliffe on the importance of music for young minds

4 - Wye Abroad. In Congo and Gabon with Amos Courage

6 - Carers' Support Group one year on

7 - A Cuppa With.. fiction writer Jodie Chapman

8 - What makes Wye Wye. The Devil's Kneading Trough

Send your articles to admin@ourplacewye.org.uk

VIRTUAL LUNCH

Tim Sutcliffe, founder of Musika and local musician

Please tell us a bit about yourself, and what brought you and your family to the area

I was born in Ashford and have always lived in the area except for 4 years away at University. At secondary school, I had a great group of friends, and one of them, Laura, is now my wife. We've been together for 25 years, married for 18 years and have 2 children at secondary school. While Willesborough is our home, Wye is literally only a 10 minute drive away, so we seem to be there quite a lot, either heading to one of the pubs, Perry Court or going for walks up on the downs.

What inspired you to start Musika?

After studying music at uni, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do and after several jobs and a bit of soul searching I decided to look for work in childcare as I had enjoyed a couple of nursery work experience placements I had had at school. I got a job working at a nursery and while I was there I saw an advert for Kindermusik classes which were being run by Kent Music School. I thought that sounded like the perfect combination of my two interests and I ended up training in Colourstrings Music Kindergarten and working for Kent Music for 6 years leading children's music classes all around Kent. In 2010, I decided to set up on my own and started Musika. In the 21 years I have been teaching, the ethos of my classes has always remained the same. The voice is the first instrument, and the quality and simplicity of the songs I use is really important. I don't use microphones,



Tim pictured in one of his popular music classes

distracting backing tracks or loads of different noisy instruments. The classes are tailored to age groups, structured and, above all, fun. I run classes for 0-2s, 2-3s, and 3-4 years as well as an after-school class.

What role does music play in a child's development?

Music has such an important role to play in a child's development. Zoltan Kodály, the Hungarian composer and music educator stated that "music education should start 9 months before the birth of the mother". It really is never too early to start introducing your child to music. The way we communicate with babies is music itself, we speak to them in a very singsong way, exaggerating the pitch. We bounce them along to a nursery rhyme, giving them the pulse or beat of the rhyme. Studies have shown that music can help to improve speech and language skills as well as motor skills, and emotional development. This is before we even look into the benefits of music in terms of creativity, and self-confidence.

What is your proudest achievement?

It was exciting doing projects in London with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and *In Harmony Lambeth* where we delivered music sessions in schools and nurseries and worked with professional orchestra musicians.

That was right at the start of my teaching career and taught me so much. I suppose having the courage to set up on my own at a time when the banking crisis was still very much in the headlines and we had a newborn is something I should be proud of, especially as you would want a lot of stability at that point in your life.

Who is your favourite musical artist and who has inspired you the most?

I suppose the Beatles have to be up there as one of my first loves. I was a teenager in the 90s so Britpop was big for me, especially Pulp (Jarvis was an icon for the lanky, quite shy spectacle wearing 16 year old me). Then at Uni I was introduced to so many artists, Steely Dan, Nick Drake, Tom Waits, Scott Walker, Kate Bush, Miles Davis, Joni Mitchell, Charles Mingus, the list is endless! In terms of who has inspired me I think probably it has been all the music teachers I've had in my life.

What are you having for lunch?

I'm at home for lunch today and we need to go shopping so it looks like a bagel with the last slice of ham!

How do you see AI affecting the music industry?

Like most things to do with AI there are positives and negatives. I think if musicians and composers can use it as a tool to aid the creative process then I can see that could be positive. However, there are already AI artists featured on Spotify such as 'The Velvet Sundown' where the creators claim they are an artistic/intellectual experiment. If this sort of music is popular then the music industry executives will push it. It will come down to money, I guess. That's why it's called the music industry.

For more information on classes please visit: www.musikaclass.co.uk



SMART DECLUTTERING THIS SPRING!

Julie Barry from Smart Decluttering Solutions shares the benefits of keeping a tidy home

Let's be honest—life gets messy. Between work, family, and the endless stream of "stuff" that somehow sneaks into our homes, it's easy to feel buried. But here's the thing: decluttering isn't just about making your place look nice. It can actually do wonders for your mental health.

1. Less Mess, Less Stress

When your space is overflowing, your brain has to process all that visual chaos. It's like having too many browser tabs open—you feel frazzled and distracted. Clearing out the excess gives your mind room to breathe, helping you feel calmer



Above : Spring time for some naturally brings with it motivation to clear away from a long winter

and often more focused.

2. A Little Control Goes a Long Way

Life can throw curveballs, but your home is one place you can take charge. Tidying up—even just one drawer—can give you a quick win and a sense of control. That small boost can ripple into other parts of your day.

3. Letting Go Feels Good

Some things we keep aren't just taking up space—they're holding onto old emotions. Donating or tossing items tied to bad memories can feel like lifting a weight off

your shoulders. It's a quiet way of saying, "I'm ready to move forward."

4. Mindfulness in Action

Decluttering makes you stop and think: Do I really need this? Do I even like it? That kind of intentional decision-making can help you be more mindful in other areas of life too.

A tidy space isn't about perfection—it's about creating a place where you can relax, recharge, and just be. So if your home is feeling a little too full, maybe it's time to take control and start fresh.

Smart Decluttering Solutions are here to provide professional, practical and empathetic support, to declutter one space or your whole home.

If you would like some help to take the first step on your decluttering journey, call Julie on 07885 911877, or visit our website:

www.smartdeclutteringsolutions.co.uk

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH - KEEPING OUR VILLAGE SAFE TOGETHER

Peter New, Kent Police Volunteer & Community Neighbourhood Watch officer

Can Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) keep you crime free and, as importantly, free from the fear of being a victim of crime?

NHW works on this basic principle

- Can we prevent crimes in the first instance with quality crime prevention advice?
- Can we prevent further crimes nearby or in the area by swift alerts to the community if a crime has occurred?
- Can we assist the police investigations with evidence and especially CCTV from our NHW members?



Above : Peter joined the Wye meeting with MP Sojan Joseph in early February briefing him on crime in the local area.

Prevention is the critical part and key to the work. You are vulnerable to the following: thefts from vehicles, vans, garages, sheds, barns, stables and any outbuildings; thefts of internet parcels from doorsteps; bogus callers, rogue traders, SCAMS of every type 365 days a year 24 hours a day on all our devices, by mail and even face-to-face.

There are also other crimes that can blight a community: e-scooters, catapults, anti-social behaviour, dangerous dogs, fly tipping and needless criminal damage, rural crimes and attacks on livestock. I also focus on more national issues like drugs, knives, weapons

and violence against women and girls. The latter is now receiving more backing from national government and high-profile celebrities and prominent people on TV.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

By joining the ever-growing Neighbourhood Watch in this area. Don't put it off, please contact me. We have a very strong Neighbourhood Watch membership in the area to help prevent crime please help me make it even stronger!

To join or get more details please email: peternew1@aol.com or phone him on 07768437422



WYE ABROAD - FROM KENT TO CONGO

Local resident Amos Courage tells us about his conservation work past and present

I grew up in Howletts Wild Animal Park. From an early age, I was surrounded by gorillas because my mother hand-raised several orphaned gorilla babies. If you've ever seen one up close you'll understand why I am completely smitten by them. They are impossibly endearing.

That early connection set me on my life's path. I spent six years working in Central Africa, initially for the legendary wildlife filmmaker Alan Root, an old-school, fearless Africa hand and gifted storyteller whose films earned two Oscars. He joked that he wanted to call his memoir Bits Missing, because of the various encounters with wildlife that had left their mark.

After that, I moved to the Republic of Congo, where I spent four years helping to care for orphaned gorillas and running the world's only gorilla reintroduction programme. The aim was simple but ambitious: to take young gorillas rescued from the illegal



Above and bottom right; Gorillas in the Congo

trade, raise and rehabilitate them, and return them to the wild. Today that programme has released close to 100 gorillas back into protected forests in Congo and neighbouring Gabon. The best news is that they are breeding successfully, a sign that the populations are becoming established.

Lowland gorillas are now classified as *Critically Endangered*, mainly due to habitat loss, poaching and the illegal wildlife trade. Infant gorillas are orphaned when their families are killed for food. Our projects in Congo and Gabon provide a place for these youngsters to be cared for and prepared for life back in the wild. Having somewhere for rescued animals to go also allows local authorities to enforce wildlife laws more effectively.

There has been real progress. In the early years, large numbers of orphan gorillas arrived each year. Today the numbers are much lower, thanks to

better enforcement and growing public awareness about the damage caused by the trade.

Reintroduction involves slow, careful work carried out over many years and in partnership with local communities and governments. But it works. Gorillas are surviving, forming natural social groups, and raising young in the wild. Conservation often sounds distant, sometimes worthy but my path has a direct link to Kent and a childhood romping around with these loveable animals.



Above: Amos pictured with Gorillas at Howletts where he grew up as a child



If you have worked abroad and would like to share your story please email: admin@ourplacewye.org.uk

We are grateful for the support of the following local business sponsors: Canterbury Cider, Meade Home Improvement, Sawyers, Sealey Cleaning, Spacemaker Architects, Ticketyboo, Tickled Trout, Musika, Wye Beauty, Wye Farmers' Market, Hobbs Parker, The Vault Hair and Beauty, Genesis Landscaping, Wye Coffee Shop, Not Just Travel, Smart Decluttering Services and The Bowl Inn Hastingleigh.

If you would like to become a sponsor please contact admin@ourplacewye.org.uk

Thanks to Our Place Wye funders:



The Frank Brake
Community Fund



EVENTS AND LISTINGS

Find out what's happening in Wye and surrounding areas over the coming months.

MARCH - JUNE

- 15 March, 10:00am, Mothering Sunday service, Wye
- 16 March, 7:00-7:30pm start, Wye Arts - Etienne Pradier
Large Village Hall
- 21 March, 4:45pm-6:00pm, visiting bell ringers, Wye
- 29 March, 10:30am, Palm Sunday service, Wye
- 2 April, 7:00pm, Maundy Thursday service, Brook
- 3 April, 11:00am, Good Friday - Not the 10 am service, Wye
- 3 April, 2:00pm-3:00pm, Stations of the Cross, Wye
- 5 April, 10:00am, Easter Sunday service, Wye
- 5 April, 2.30pm, The Hub, Easter egg hunt
- 20 April, 7:00-7:30pm start, Wye Arts, Andrew Ashton, Large Village Hall
- 2 May, 10:00am-2:30pm, The Hub, Spring Market
- 16 May, Wye and Brook India Trust Plant Sale, Wye Church
- 16 May, 8.00-4:00pm, Football Field, Wye Juniors
Tournament
- 17 May, 3:00-5:00pm, Wye Village Hall, Celebration of
Volunteers
- 18 May, 7:00-7:30pm start, Wye Arts, Jane Wentworth-Blain,
Large Village Hall
- 15 June, 7:00-7:30pm start, Wye Arts, Constant Lark Theatre
Company 'Short' Shakespeare: 'Twelfth Night'
- 20 June, Pilgrims Way Walking Challenge (Wye finish)
- 23- 29 June, 10-2pm, Art Show, Wye Church
- 19-21 June, Stour Music first weekend, Boughton Aluph
- 26-28 June, Stour Music second weekend, Boughton Aluph

OUR PLACE WYE CARERS' SUPPORT GROUP

Held at Brambles Care Home, this group is open to all unpaid family and friends who care for someone:

Tuesday 3 March - 11am, Tues 7 April - 11am
Tues 5 May - 11am, Tues 2 June - 11am

email: admin@ourplacewye.org.uk for more info

- **Wye Farmers' Market** will take place as usual on the first and third Saturdays of the month.
- The **Options Club** meet in Wye Church every Monday for board games, chat and coffee.
- **Wye Community Choir** meets every Tuesday, 7.30 pm in the small village hall.

EVENTS AT LUCKLEY HOUSE

Little Chequers, Wye, TN25 5DY

Open to all Wye Residents:

Mon 2-4pm - Knit and Natter

Tues 2-4pm - Darts and Board Games Group

Weds 10-11am - Coffee Morning

Weds 7-9pm - Bingo

Thurs 8:30 am - Breakfast Club

Sun 10-11 am - Coffee Morning

Contact [01233 812665](tel:01233812665) or drop in for further info

OUR PLACE WYE COMMUNITY LUNCH

Wye Village Hall, £5 for two courses, tea, coffee and biscuits. 12:15 for 12:30 serving. To book message or ring: 07395433939. Please do this before the day of the actual lunch.

Open to all Wye Residents:

April 1, 15, 29

May 13, 27

June 10, 24

July 8, 22



Please make use of the pink bin at every Farmers' Market! This is the place to recycle all your old electrical equipment - computers, toasters, lights, kitchen gadgets etc!

If you have any upcoming events or articles you wish to be added to our next Newsletter please email: admin@ourplacewye.org.uk

BUS TIMETABLE:

WYE, LITTLE BURTON, ASHFORD

Mondays to Fridays except public holidays

Wye Church	1040	1140	1240	1340
Little Burton Clarke Crescent	1048	1148	1248	1348
Sainsbury's Bybrook Retail Park	1056	1156	1256	1356
Ashford Park Street	1104	1204	1304	1404

ASHFORD, LITTLE BURTON, WYE

Ashford Park Street Stop C	1014	1114	1214	1314
Sainsbury's Bybrook Retail Park	1022	1122	1222	1322
Little Burton Clarke Crescent	1030	1130	1230	1330
Wye Church	1038	1138	1238	1338

CARERS GROUP, ONE YEAR ON Mary Stewart

The newly formed Carers Support Group established by Our Place Wye has now been up and running for over a year and it is a good time to reflect on what this means for Wye and the surrounding area.

Caring for a loved one can be rewarding, but it can also be isolating and emotionally demanding. This group recognises that carers often put their wellbeing last and aims to provide a friendly, welcoming atmosphere where people can talk openly with others who understand the challenges they face.

The group meets on the first Tuesday of every month at 11 am at Brambles Care Home and is open to anyone in the village and surrounding areas who cares for a family member or friend informally.

The sessions are informal and relaxed with time for conversation over a cup of tea and a biscuit, as well as providing an



Brambles Care Home cares for the person while the Carer can have a much needed break

opportunity to share advice and coping strategies.

Guest speakers and themed discussion points are often planned to give further guidance from professionals themselves and the staff at Brambles are on hand to help care for the person while you are in the group and provide a safe venue for all involved.

The aim of the group is not only to offer practical advice and support but to remind carers that they are not alone and that their contribution is recognised by the wider community.

For further information please email admin@ourplacewye.org.uk

WE NEED YOUR HELP

At Our Place Wye we rely on our wonderful volunteers to hand-deliver each newsletter. Without them it would not be accessible to everyone in the village. We are currently looking for anyone who could deliver to the following areas and ease the load slightly: Orchard Drive, Brook, Amage Road and Upper Bridge Street. **If you are able to help please email: admin@ourplacewye.org.uk**



The Big Plastic Count is the UK's biggest people powered investigation into plastic waste. This March, thousands of people from schools, households and communities across the UK will be counting every piece of plastic packaging they throw away. We'll then use this evidence to keep pushing the government to take urgent action to tackle the plastics crisis. We're not just counting plastic. We're counting on the government to act.

RISE OF THE WILDCATS...

Women's football is soaring high and Wye Juniors have something for all ages

At Wye Juniors FC, football is for everyone – from age 6 right up to 100! Our girls and women's sessions, from fun Wildcats and youth teams to relaxed adult kickabouts, are welcoming, inclusive and built around enjoyment, skill and confidence. Whether you're trying football for the first time or returning after years away, there's a place for you on the pitch.

Football has seen huge growth across the UK, with more girls than

Play like a Girl - No Limits, Just Goals

 <p style="font-size: small;">Ages 6-11</p> 	 <p style="font-size: small;">Ages 12-15</p> 	 <p style="font-size: small;">Ages 16-100</p> 
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Scan the codes for more information and to book your place

or email catherine.bradley@kentdowns.org.uk

ever playing, coaching and refereeing. This helps build confidence, teamwork and community at every age and ability. Come play, make friends and be part of the beautiful game!

For more information contact Wye Juniors FC or email: Catherine.bradley@kentdowns.org.uk

THOSE DARN POTHOLES!

Pat Marsh

From all accounts, the number of drivers who haven't had to have a new tyre and/or expensive repair because they landed in a pothole must be very small. There are certainly plenty of potholes in Wye and the wider parish to avoid and they don't seem to be getting fixed. That's probably because Kent County Council don't know about them. So if there's one outside your house or nearby, or on a road you often use, please help all drivers and cyclists in our community and go on the KCC website.

Search Kent County Council - report a pothole. It's really easy - you just choose one of the pictures to show the size of the pothole and then locate it on a map. They will repair a big one very quickly and undertake to fix them all within 28 days.

Thank you on behalf of us all!

HAND CRAFTED COMMUNITY

AJ, Founder of Hand Crafted Events

The Handcrafted Community Market (HCM) was created in April 2024. I saw an opportunity and wanted to bring a collection of amazingly talented artisans together once a month in Wye Village Hall. This allows locals to have access to amazing goods without having to travel. The idea is to have a location that is easily accessible to all by walking, train,



Above: Handcrafted Market in full swing! bus and car. We now have quite a few monthly regulars at the markets and we also have hot and cold drinks available and a place to relax. Each year I choose two charities to fundraise for at our Christmas and Easter events. Last year was Dementia UK and McMillian.

We also have Santa Sam on board to be our local Santa on the same week he does the sleigh ride around the village. There are colouring competitions throughout the year to involve all ages and to bring people together. We look forward to seeing you at the next Market!

- Sunday 8 March (Wye village hall)
- Sunday 19 April (Wye village hall)
- Saturday 9 May (Wye village hall)

10am - 2pm

Follow us on our Facebook and Instagram: [Handcrafted Community Market](#) or email: handcraftedcommunitykent@gmail.com.

A CUPPA WITH...

Jodie Chapman, Author, Adult Fiction

What inspired you to become a writer?

I spent hours in my room as a kid hammering out stories on a typewriter or ancient PC. A childhood spent obsessively consuming books and films meant I naturally absorbed story structure. At Highworth Grammar School in Ashford, I did most of my homework on the way to class, but English or Drama I completed as soon as it came in. Writing was always my first love and after spending over a decade as a photographer, I decided to try and write a novel. I was very fortunate to receive seven agent offers and secured an overnight offer from Penguin for my first novel, *Another Life*. It's been a wild ride. It all started with those stories in my bedroom and it still feels like play. I think what a child chooses to do when left to their own devices will naturally inform their strengths when they grow up.

Where do you write and do you have any particular routines?

I am very lucky to have a study at home where I lock the door and hide from couriers and my kids. Coffee. Incense. A heavy dose of Max Richter or silence. I wish I could write in a cafe but I get



Jodie's first book *'Another Life'* was set in Ashford distracted by people watching. When writing a first draft, I don't get up from the chair until I've written at least a thousand words. Creativity thrives with structure and boundaries, and the muse is a muscle you have to train. Turn up for work each day and it will happen.

Do your surroundings influence your writing?

I took direct influence from my surroundings with my debut novel *Another Life* as I set it in my hometown of Ashford! Even closer to home, it's important to "fill the well" before embarking on a creative project through books, films or research trips. You have to soak everything up before you start. Seek out the inspiration. But I avoid reading novels when actually writing as it's so easy to slip into another's voice if you're not listening properly to your own.

What can people expect from your next novel?

California Gold is a multi-generational story of great loves, messy families, beautiful

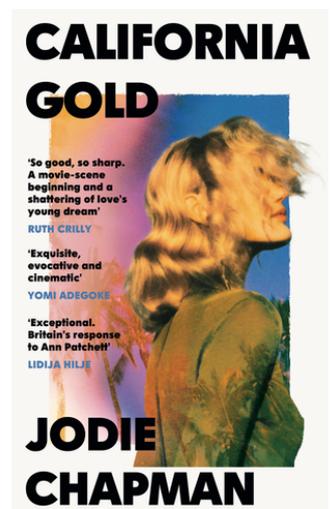
people and broken hearts, as well as the many things that make us human and the tiny cuts of life that, somehow, we survive. It's partly set in 1970s' California and has a dash of mid-century modern, Elvis Presley, jukeboxes and the American Dream.

What advice would you give someone who dreams of becoming a writer?

Read, read, read. It's everything. Soak up story structure and how great writers explore character. Learn to identify good writing from bad. Two excellent books are Stephen King's *On Writing* and John Yorke's *Into the Woods*.

What's your favourite tippie?

I'm a cocktail girl (it's a party in a glass!) and will always opt for a whiskey sour.



You can purchase *California Gold* from March 19th:

www.penguin.co.uk/books/448285/california-gold-by-chapman-jodie/9780241562383

COMMUNITY CORNER

Capturing local sights, special moments and the charm of our village in pictures from the Our Place Wye Facebook Page:

Below: Wye and Hamstreet Woods Nature Reserve set out on their final volunteer tasks before Christmas by finishing the shrub cutting on the Milstone banks ready for the upcoming grazing. Big thank you to them.



Right: Wye Walkers visting Kings Wood in January and then popping to Perry Court for tea and cake after!



Above: Liz Muggeridge shares the first sunset of 2026



Above: The 2025 Wye Christmas Street party in full swing. The weather did not dampen everyone's community spirit and over £1000 was raised to help facilitate next years party and other local projects. Thank you to all who bought tickets, Alice who did a wonderful job organising and to all the local businesses who donated prizes for the raffle! See you all again Devenber!



Above: Kevin Fleman sharing the snowdrops at the old college.

WHAT MAKES WYE WYE - THE DEVILS KNEADING TROUGH!

Looking down on our village of Wye, there is a dramatic chalk hollow known as the Devil's Kneading Trough which has inspired many to seek it out and been the source of tales for generations. Today it is part of the Wye Nature Reserve, but its devilish name hints at a much older and more imaginative past.

Local folklore claimed that the trough was created by the devil himself. According to legend, he came to the Downs in a rage, kneading and gouging the earth like bread dough, leaving behind the trough like shape we see today. In some versions of the tale, he was disturbed at dawn by the sound of the Church bells from Wye, meaning he fled before he could finish his work. The Landscape has long since been associated with unsettling experiences.



Above: The trough-like shape in the downs

The mist can roll in over the steep sides of the valley very quickly and walkers over the years have spoken of sudden chills, echos and a sense of unease after dark. These can nowadays be explained by the weather and the terrain but they once fed rumours of shadowy figures and ghostly lights appearing in the trough.

The Kneading Trough appears in Russell Hoban's nove, *Riddley Walker* as 'Mr Clevver's Roaling Place' described as a haunting landmark in a future Kent shaped by myth and memory.

The Wye Downs were acquired as part of the National Nature Reserve in the mid 20th-Century to protect their unique chalk grassland and biodiversity, including more than 20 species of orchids and a rich array of insects and birds.

Today, however, whether it is visited for its wildlife, views or history, the Devil's Kneading Trough remains a place where natural beauty and old superstition sit side-by-side.



Above: The viewpoint offers views across Kent

- Sources:
- [Wye Parish Council – Wye National Nature Reserve](#)
 - [Discovering Britain \(Royal Geographical Society\) – Devil's Kneading Trough, Wye](#)
 - [Kent Downs AONB information pages](#)
 - [Russell Hoban, Riddley Walker](#)