

Hopes for church to become home

The Church of New Jerusalem in Snodland High Street, which has been allowed to fall into a state of disrepair and has been the subject of many rumours about its future, may be converted into a home.

Paul Titterton and Maxine Gent, from Essex, paid £185,000 for the building at auction – and they want to live in it.

Lion TV has included the church, which was built in 1882, in its “Homes under the hammer” series which will appear on BBC television next year. The crew will return to record how Paul and Maxine have progressed.

Maxine told *Town Talk* that she fell in love with the church when she saw it.



Maxine & Paul

“As soon as I walked inside I thought it was the sleeping beauty’s castle,” she said. “It has a lovely feel about it.”

The interior of the building is grade 2 listed and as many of the original features as possible will have to be retained.

Paul, an electrical contractor, said they will be talking to

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and its conservation department. They will start by clearing the trees and shrubbery, tidying the site and making the building secure.

They have still not been to the top of the tower.

The couple have allocated £60,000 towards the work, but they will carry out a lot themselves. They hope to move in within a year.

What happens if they do not obtain planning permission for the conversion?

“I dread to think it is going to happen,” said Paul. “We will just have to keep pushing.”

He added that the Saracens keep fit and weight lifting club which meets in the hall in the grounds, will be able to continue to do so for the time being.



Lion TV cameraman, Mark Moreue, filming the church watched by, from l to r, Joan O’Connell, Claire O’Sullivan and Sarah Fisher.

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WE WANT OUR TROPHY BACK!

Local runners are hoping to reclaim their winner's trophy in the sixth Snodland 10k Challenge on 2nd October.

Jose Schmitt from French twin-town Moyeuve-Grande set a new course record to win the race last year.

All four previous challenges were won by Snodland's Andrew Keeley.

The race starts at 10.30am at the community centre and is open to residents of Snodland and surrounding villages, as well as Moyeuve-Grande.

Details and an entry form are available from race secretary, Neil Miners on 01634 242604.

SHOEBOX APPEAL TO HELP ORPHANS

The target for the Snodland Shoebox Appeal for Romanian orphans has been set at 1000 this year, according to organiser, Alison Tomsett.

Last year 800 boxes were filled with Christmas goodies and were part of a consignment of 20,291 shoeboxes sent to Romania from Kent.

"We're aiming to reach the 1000 mark this time," said Alison. We have already begun to plan and we hope that even more people will be moved to act this year."

"These boxes do make a difference"

Nicki Archer, the area co-ordinator for Samaritan's Purse, the charity which organises the project each year, visited Romania and told of the difference the boxes made to the lives of the children who receive them.

A stall was held at Snodland Carnival giving details of Operation Christmas Child and leaflets are being sent to homes asking for donations.

The shoeboxes should be taken to Christ Church Hall, Malling Road on 19th November.

Due to regulations all goods should be new or nearly new and suggested gifts are cuddly toys, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, notepads, colouring books, picture books, pencils, pens, crayons small balls, puzzles cards, sweets and toys.

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Local boy lands 19½lb carp

Holmesdale Technology College student, Matt Pearson, has landed a 19.5lb carp at Kingfisher Lake, Paddlesworth, Snodland.

Matt, aged 15, who lives at Simpson Road, took 45 minutes to haul in the fish.

“It nearly pulled my arms off,” he said, “but you get such an adrenalin rush, it keeps you going. You don’t just reel it in, you give it what it wants until it is worn out.”



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Matt was introduced to fishing by his friend, Philip Hayes, who took him to the Mill Stream, where he caught his first fish.

Brother, Kevin, bought him a small rod for his birthday and he fished in the lake at Nevill Park before signing up for Kingfisher Lake last year.

His next ambition – to land a 25lb carp! *Town Talk* wishes Matt good luck.



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Need company?

Lonely mums are invited to join a club to make new friends and help improve their quality of life. Snodland curate, Elaine Northern, said there are mothers who are on their own all day long after their children go to school.

The local mums group is open to people with children at school or under school age, who are bored with housework and need company or who are shy and find it difficult to meet new people.

They are invited to a meeting at Christ Church Hall, Malling Road at 10am on 22nd September. Elaine said the club, which meets on Thursday mornings, has a crèche run by qualified child minders and runs courses on a variety of subjects.

“We are having an open morning for people to come and meet us all,” she explained. “It is good to meet with other mums and make new friends.”

The club is also open to fathers who stay at home to look after their children.

An unholy mess!

PLEA TO CLEAR CHURCH GRAVEYARD

A woman who cares for six graves at Christ Church, Snodland has organised a petition demanding the upkeep of the graveyard and the installation of a water tap.

“Pidge” McShane, formerly of Snodland and who now lives at Garner Drive, East Malling, looks after the graves of her father, son, grandmother, two uncles and two cousins.

She said the graveyard was so overgrown she took photographs to back up her petition, which has

more than 150 signatures.

But, she said, after she started the petition she returned from holiday to find part of the site had been cleared.

“It was a disgrace,” she said. “I have to bring my own lawnmower to cut the grass round the graves and plastic bottles full of water because there is not a tap here.

“Since the clearance people have started looking after the graves again. I can now see



The graveyard before it was partially cleared



The graveyard since the clearance

graves I did not know existed.”

Pidge will present the petition to Snodland Town Council.

“No policy for clearing the graveyard”

Town Talk found Mrs Noreen Stanford of Rainham tending the graves of her son and husband, which are near the church.

She said another son and her husband’s mother were buried at the bottom of the graveyard, but she could not see where they are.

She added that there used to be a tap outside the church but she now had to bring water in bottles.

Helen Comber, a member of the parochial church council, said there was no

policy for clearing the graveyard, and the church could not afford to pay for it to be done.

She said that, in the past, prisoners on day release and unemployed young people from the community services department of Kent County Council, had done some clearance work.

Once a year a working party of members of the church spend a day clearing the site. There is not a tap because of the problems of vandals turning it on and leaving water running and there used to be a water butt but people used to dump dead flowers in it.

“You can’t expect church members to do the clearance every two weeks, which is what is needed,” said Helen. “I don’t know what we can do. It is a nightmare.”



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STARA walk for charity

Four members of STARA - Snodland Town Active Retirement Association - have raised £400 for the Arthritis Research Campaign.

Chairman, Alan Elphick, wife Marion, Les Searing and Sally Clark, walked the 13 miles round Bewl Water Reservoir in four hours, after which Alan cycled round in one hour 20 minutes.

Marriage celebrated in garden

A Snodland couple held a "celebration of their marriage" in the garden of their home in Waghorn Road.



Nigel and Michaela Hayes were married at Maidstone Register Office but two days later, Gill Gribbin, a retired registrar who is the mother of bridesmaid, Anna, performed the celebration in front of family and friends at their home.

Gill explained that it was not legal to hold wedding ceremonies at people's houses, but she acted as a civil celebrant in conducting the celebration of the marriage.

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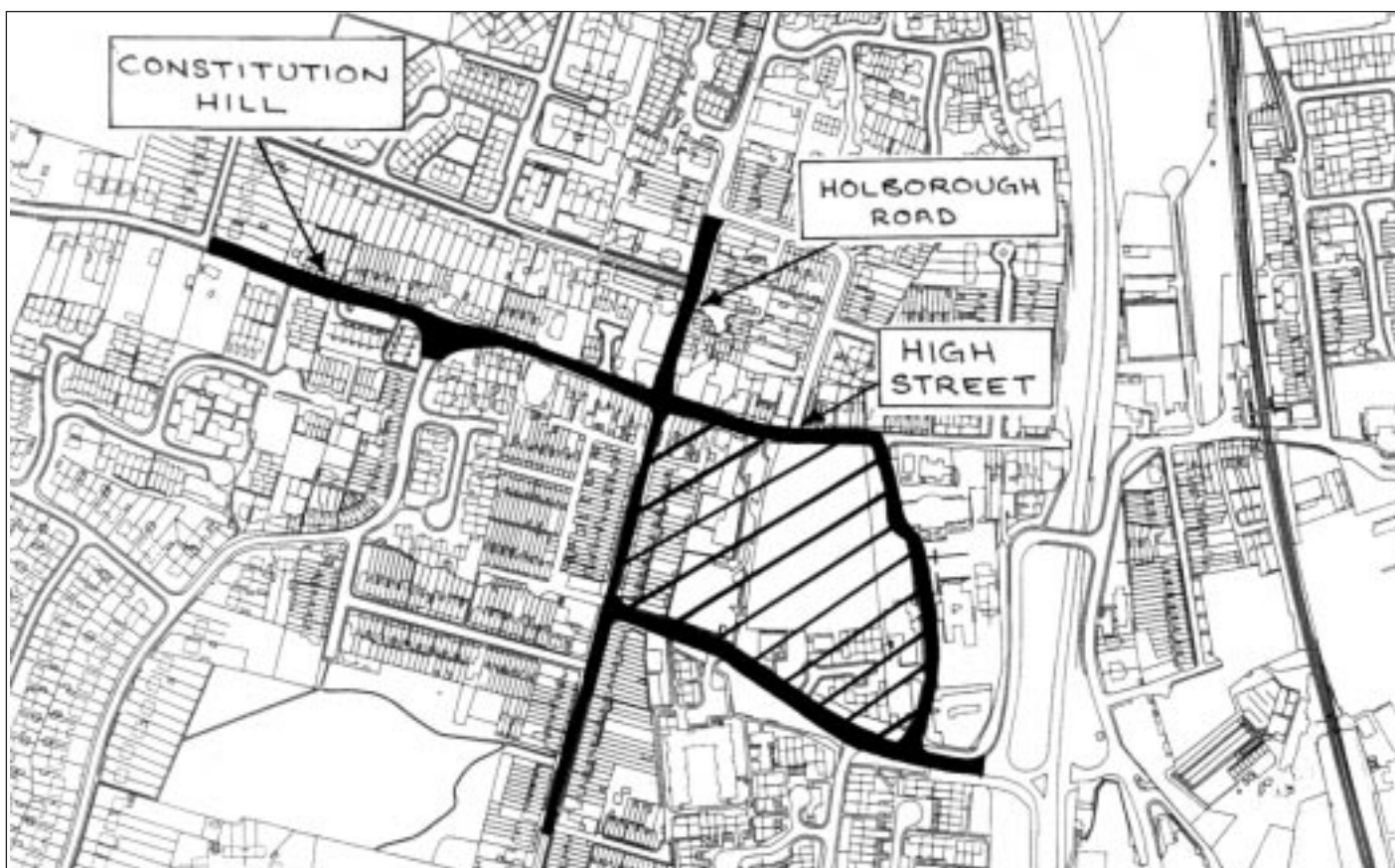
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POLICE

Red Zone gets go-ahead

It will be illegal to drink alcohol in Snodland town centre after Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council approved the setting up of a Red Zone.



As reported in the last issue of *Town Talk*, police applied for the area to be designated as a result of concerns expressed by members of the public.

The area covered is Holborough Road from its junction with Queens Avenue, Malling Road to the Oxford Street junction, the High Street and Constitution Hill as far as Cemetery Lane, the High Street area including the

car park, cricket meadow, pavilion and clinic and Rocfort Road.

At the time Sgt Damien Hutton said: "The police will have the power of seizure towards those who consume alcohol in public and behave in a manner which is anti-social."

He added that it was a very small element in the community that caused a disturbance to others.

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