



# Tonbridge Civic Society

## October 2023

### OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

#### Chairman's note



**TCS Chair**  
**Tom Freke**

It was traffic jams in Tonbridge that indirectly led to the creation of the Civic Society 60 years ago. And traffic remains an issue, even though over the decades we have gained a bypass, an upgraded Cannon Lane and various other changes to the town's roads. (Though not the scheme to link London Road to the A26!)

Last week temporary traffic lights on Vale Road, set up because of roadworks, caused greater-than-ever snarl ups around the town. This has happened while Hartlake Road is shut (until Oct. 12), and London Road will again see temporary traffic lights on the road to Hildenborough. (For details of roadworks, the Kent County Council website has a [useful map](#).)

There are no easy solutions here, not least because of the constraints on land in the town. (But no more historic buildings knocked down please!). Certainly there could be more coordination and prioritization around timing and location of roadworks, as well as greater urgency given to clearing sites on key roads as quickly as possible. There are also many complaints around the timing of the traffic lights outside the station.

On the demand side, as a resident of a road with multiple schools I wonder if during school times doing something to help get kids out of parents' cars might help. And having recently ridden a modern ebike for the first time – a revelation! – I wonder how much of a difference they could make with the right infrastructure.

Speaking of which, I read that a petition for a cycle path into Hadlow was "well received" by Kent County Council and a preferred off-road route has been identified (though not yet publicized). The next step is a report on funding.



**Traffic building up on Tonbridge High Street**



## News

It's the [Tonbridge Half Marathon](#) on Sunday (Oct. 1). The event also includes a 10k and 5k, and kicks off at 9am on closed roads starting at Judd School on Brook Street. Runners then head northwest on a loop north of Leigh. It's organized jointly by the Rotary Club and Tonbridge Lions.

Representatives from the Post Office joined the latest Tonbridge Forum meeting and said they were working with an unnamed retailer to establish a new Post Office in the centre of the town. Watch this space!

Congratulations to The Nelson Arms in Cramer Street, Barden, for winning CAMRA's Kent Pub of the Year, 2023.

The Tonbridge Memorial Garden will be closed for a few days next week while the paving is being fixed.

Works are moving forward on the project to raise the height of the Leigh flood barrier. The development, which is due to run until 2025 and is designed to protect 1,400 homes from the risk of flooding, will also see the construction of an embankment in Hildenborough.

Artspring Gallery is inviting artists to submit work for their Transformation exhibition in January.

## Events

Walk Tonbridge is wrapping up its latest Walk Tonbridge Festival, which comprised two weeks of guided walks and community events. This includes a [pop-up exhibition](#) 'Walk Tonbridge: A Photographic Exhibition' on Sept. 30-Oct. 1 at The Tunnel Gallery, Tonbridge School.



The Civic Society is considering a pre-Christmas event, similar to the evenings we arranged last year in the Old Fire Station. We'll send out a special alert if and when this is confirmed.

- Oct. 8: TN Charity Dog Walk – Old Fire Station
- Oct. 13-14: Oktoberfest Tonbridge – Racecourse Sports-ground
- Oct 22: Tonbridge Castle Artisan Market
- Nov. 5: Tonbridge Charity Fireworks – Racecourse Sportsground
- Nov. 19: Christmas Artisan Market – Tonbridge Castle
- Nov. 26: Tonbridge Rotary Christmas Festival – High Street
- Nov. 26: Illuminate – Tonbridge Castle

## INTRODUCING ... Tonbridge Lions

The Tonbridge Lions probably need no introduction given the amount they do to organize events throughout the town. But with the Tonbridge Half Marathon coming up this weekend I decided to find out a little more. Thanks to John Ruck and Gordon Hill for their assistance.

### What's the history of the Lions in Tonbridge?

Lions International began as a dream of a Chicago insurance man, Melvin Jones, who formed the first Lions club in 1917. Many other Lions Clubs quickly followed across the United States. The first 'International' club was in Windsor, Ontario, Canada Lions Club in 1920. By 1927, just 10 years after starting, membership stood at 60,000 across 1,183 clubs. Today there are 1.4 million Lions in more than 200 countries.

The summer of 1949 saw the beginnings of Tonbridge Lions Club. During the war Tonbridge hairdresser Charles W H Addy kept in touch with servicemen from the USA and Canada who told him stories about the Lions in North America. He decided to organize a club in Tonbridge and wrote to the headquarters office of Lions International in Chicago for advice. By 1949 he was in contact with enough interested people in Tonbridge to form a Lions Club, which would be the UK's first.

The official formation of Tonbridge Lions Club followed in February 1950, though it had been operating as a club for some months prior to that date. The club was then able to sponsor clubs in neighbouring districts, which in turn helped start other new clubs. Our "descendant list" now totals 32 clubs.

### What kind of events are the Lions involved with today?

Our events are divided into activities and social. Within activities we have fund raising, community service, while our social events range from a formal annual Charter Anniversary Dinner to a summer picnic barbeque. Major events like the Tonbridge Triathlon in May each year not only raise funds for our charitable trust but the competitors' sponsorships also generate funds for a wide



**The annual Dragon Boat Race on the River Medway is organised by Tonbridge Lions Club**

range of local and national charities. Similarly, the joint event with Tonbridge Rotary Club, the Tonbridge Half Marathon, generates funds for a variety of causes.



### The Tonbridge Lions 'It's a Knockout' competition at the Angel Centre

Other big events include the Classic Car Tour in July, the Community Fête and Fun Dog Show at Tonbridge Castle and the Dragon Boat Racing on the Medway. Our longest-running fund raiser is the Christmas Barrel Organ Collection which started in 1952. We provide festive music whilst making our collecting tins accessible in the High Street, at the Farmers' Market and outside local supermarkets for nine days during December.

In the early days the proceeds of the collection were used to provide gifts – two hundredweight of coal and two bushels of logs for the elderly! Nowadays, we make up close to 100 food hampers which are distributed to those in need via local charities, schools, clubs and agencies. Our monthly old newspaper collection fills our skip two or three times a year and that is sold to the recycling industry thus generating funds in a green way.

In the category of community service we have held concerts with refreshments for the elderly who live alone, a charity walk, planned and marshalled by us but for other groups to take part in and raise money for their causes by sponsorship, health events like diabetes screening, and Musical Memories, a fortnightly sing-along for those with memory difficulties.

On Lions Day we give a treat or trip out for those that we feel deserve a break like young carers, Ukrainian refugees, elderly or disabled for example. We collect, via local opticians, old pairs of glasses which are sent to Chichester Lions who sort and recycle to parts of the world where need is greatest. For local Junior Schools we hold a choir concert for them to show their vocal capabilities to an audience of over 250.

It's a Knockout is for young people who have learning and physical disabilities. In the sports hall at The Angel Centre, teams compete in games and also in a competition for the best designed 'Joker'. We also give help to individuals in exceptional need and direct them to other sources of assistance.

### What's the best thing about being in the Lions?

We get enjoyment and fun from our social gatherings and meetings, both as a club and in small committees planning our activities and events. But undoubtedly seeing the enjoyment and gratitude of those we have been able to help tops the bill. It gives direct feedback to us as to how our efforts have been successful and valued. Helping with the games at It's a Knockout gives us direct involvement, seeing the fun and enjoyment. The appreciation response is face to face and very gratifying.

### How do people find out more?

More information is available on our website [www.tonbridgelions.org](http://www.tonbridgelions.org). Our international site is at [www.lions-clubs.org](http://www.lions-clubs.org). You can follow us on Facebook at [TonbridgeLionsClub](https://www.facebook.com/TonbridgeLionsClub) or on X (formerly Twitter) [@TonbridgeLions](https://twitter.com/TonbridgeLions).

To be added to the circulation list for our quarterly newsletter please send your name, organisation and email address to [tonbridgelionsnewsletter@btinternet.com](mailto:tonbridgelionsnewsletter@btinternet.com)

If you would like to join the Lions or become a Friend of Tonbridge Lions or a sponsor let us know by e-mail to [info@tonbridgelions.org](mailto:info@tonbridgelions.org)



**The annual Dragon Boat Race**

Tonbridge Civic Society 2023  
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