

July 19 2001

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DOCTOR OF LETTERS: Tom Wilkinson
32/9049E/01

**Honour
for Full
Monty
actor**

ACTOR Tom Wilkinson, star of *The Full Monty* and *Shakespeare in Love*, recalled his days in Canterbury when he received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Kent University at Canterbury Cathedral.

Mr Wilkinson, who studied English and American literature at the university in the 1960s, said he had an 'absolutely great time'.

"I came from a different background and to suddenly find myself in this comfortable, middle class, city was a real eye opener," he said.

"It was wonderful. When I came here in 1967 it was the first year the university had a full complement of students so we were very much pioneers."

Mr Wilkinson said most of his energy was spent performing plays. More licence was given to extra-curricular activities at that time than possibly now because they wanted to get the drama side up and running.

"The thrill of doing something you loved was great."

He did not know what effect being at the university had had on his acting career but he had retained a great number of friends and if that was anything to go by, then the university had played a huge part in his life.

Mr Wilkinson said he was 'absolutely flabbergasted' to have received an honorary degree.

Strategic

"I have just been doing my job for 30 years and some things have worked out and some haven't," he said. "To suddenly find myself wearing this fetching red outfit is really something."

He had not been asked to come back to the university but if he was at some future date it would certainly be something he would consider.

At the moment, however, he was making a film and this would be followed by a holiday with his wife and two daughters.

Asked whether his fellow actors who lifted their hats from a strategic part of their bodies in the final scene of *The Full Monty* were actually naked, he replied: "Yes they were. All of them."

Another honorary degree went to Ann Savours Shirley, from Bridge, one of the most respected polar scholars in the country, who became a Doctor of Letters.

She holds one of the finest private specialist libraries in existence on polar matters and has more than 86 publications to her name.

Cartoonist Wally Fawkes, who was behind the long-running *Flook* cartoons in the *Daily Mail* and is co-founder of the *Humphrey Lyttleton Band*, was also made a Doctor of Letters.

Mr Fawkes now draws political cartoons for the *Sunday Telegraph*.

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Alun's a man of tradition

"THIS is probably going to be a wand to turn a frog back into a person.

"Yesterday I made a wand for turning people into frogs. Better make the antidote," said Bridge chairmaker Alun Heslop.

Mr Heslop has been working as a chairmaker for the past seven-and-a-half-years.

He uses traditional methods to turn lumps of coppiced ash into chairs or goblets or spoons, or in this case, rattles.

At the show he demonstrated to people the various skills he uses. Chairs would have taken too long to make, but rattles take about 45 minutes, allowing spectators to see the finished product.

Mr Heslop chooses all his own timber from local and sustainable sources.

The important aspect in his craft was in choosing the right wood and finding a reliable forester. The most difficult things to make are goblets or long thin whippy objects.

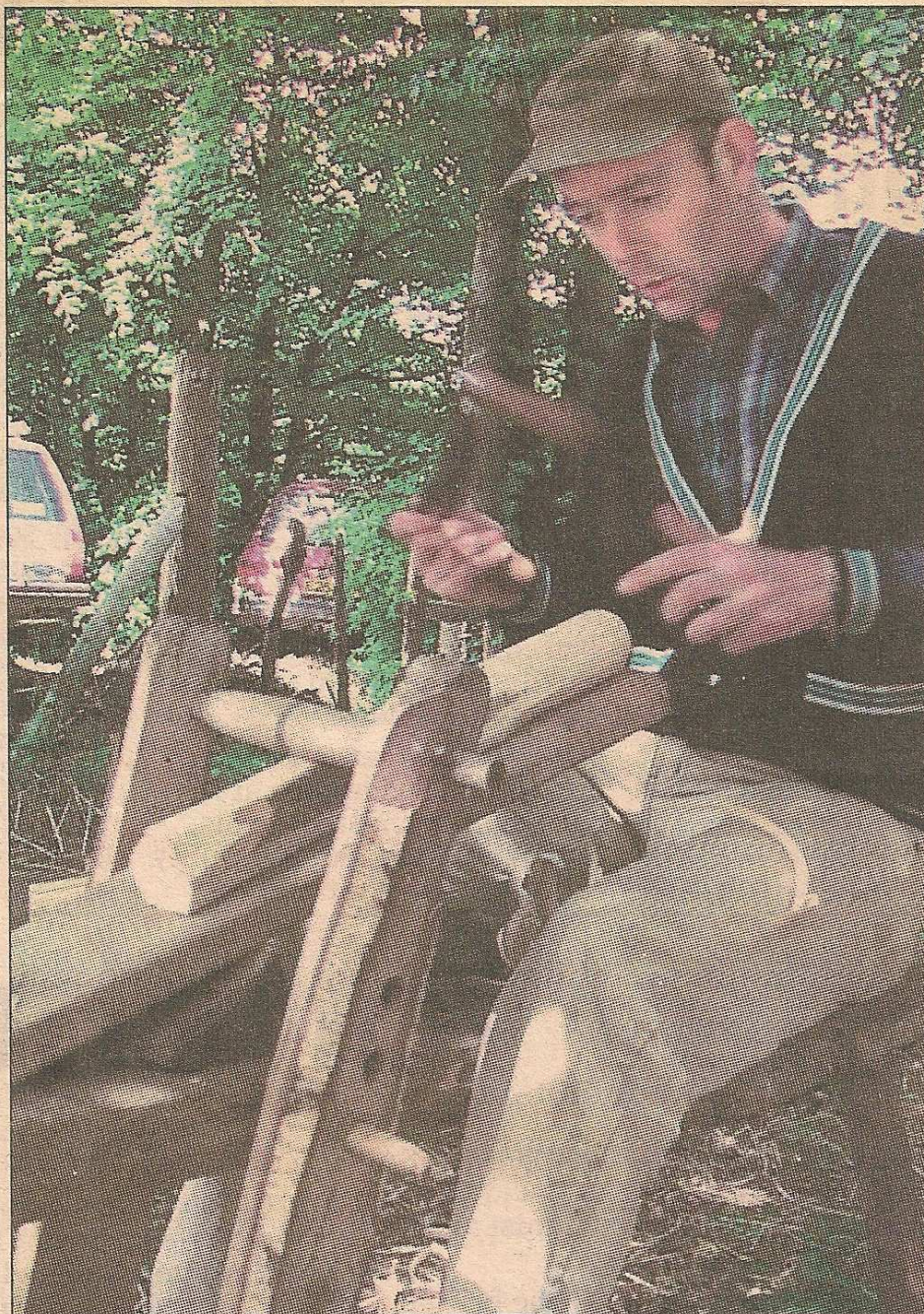
"You are more likely to deal with the same forester than the same forest," he said.

He finds the show, the fourth he had attended, exhausting and time-consuming, but it does sometimes result in new orders for chairs.

He still regards himself as learning his craft.

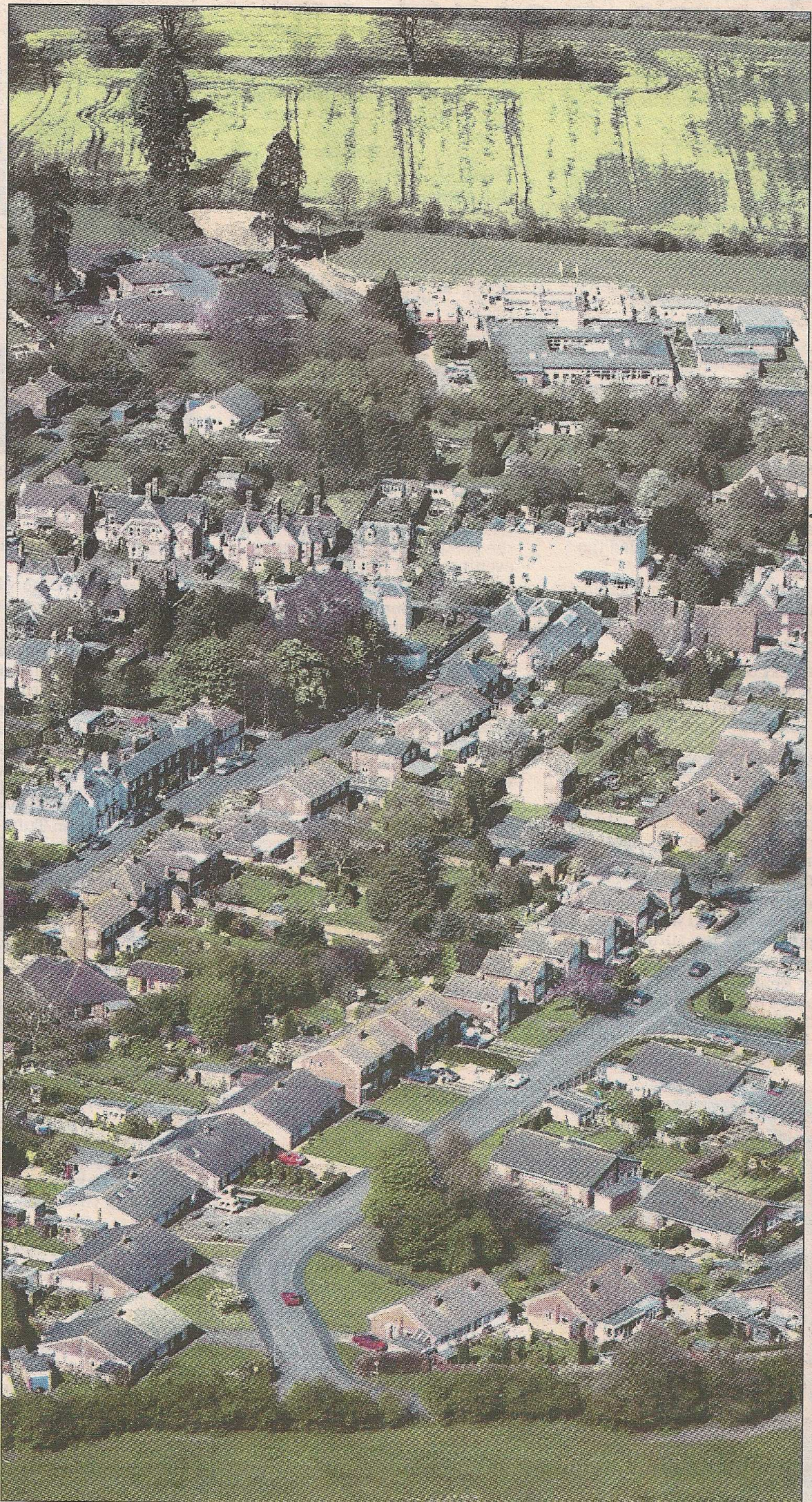
"If you say I've learned everything you are probably being a bit conceited.

"It's a technical knowledge you only get from experience," he said.



WOOD CRAFT: Chairmaker Alun Heslop from Bridge uses traditional methods

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October 25 2001 KG

Art show in village hall



ART EXHIBITION: Emily Shirley, Wendy Corfield and Simon Hopkins hang some of the paintings in Bridge village hall 11/5377E/01

THE open exhibition to display the work of artists living and working in Bridge was held in the village hall and declared a success.

There were 144 entries from 66 artists, all demonstrating a high degree of ability.

Some of those involved hope it will become an annual event, not only by increasing the catchment area to include other villages but also to include other skills such as handicrafts.

This event was organised for the Bridge Village Hall disabled access

fund.

The final amount raised will be announced later on the receipt of donations from the sales of work.

Cllr John Corfield and his team of workers helped make it a success for the village.

WETTEST YEAR FOR A CENTURY PROMPTS DECISION TO SET UP NEW SCRUTINY GROUP

Watchdog aims to stop flooding

A FLOODING watchdog is to be set up by the city council to keep a weather eye on future problems.

The scrutiny panel of councillors is being formed as a direct response to flooding problems across the district over the past year.

The Millennium was recorded as being the wettest 12 months for more than 100 years.

It left Chestfield and parts of the Stour and Nailbourne under feet of water.

The city centre was also on red alert after the Stour burst its banks.

Thousands of pounds worth of damage was caused when homes, garages and gardens were flooded.

by Amanda Wills

At a policy committee on Monday it will be agreed that the new flooding scrutiny panel will consist of eight city councillors – three each from the Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups and two from Labour.

One of the key roles of the new panel will be to make sure that organisations such as the Environment Agency, and Southern Water, along with the county council, parish councils, the emergency services and all members of the city council, work together.

Members will hold investigations into specific flooding problems and review the coun-

cil's policies, strategies, emergency plan and operational procedures to consider what changes are needed.

In the meantime, following a request from Bekesbourne with Patricbourne Parish Council for a Nailbourne "ombudsman", the city's chief executive, Colin Carmichael, has agreed to act as a flood co-ordinator.

Mr Carmichael will investigate whether effective action can be taken in the short-term to relieve flooding to homes in Patricbourne, working with the Environment Agency and the county council.

Once the scrutiny panel is formed the chairman of that will take over the role of flood co-ordinator.



THE flooding in Bridge continues, as this photograph of Brewery Lane shows. The photo was taken by Audrey Lindsay, of Union Road, Bridge, last week

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CLASS OF YESTERYEAR



VICTORIAN TIMES: Pupils at Bishopsbourne School in 1890

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SCHOOLDAYS: This photograph, taken in 1924, shows a class with the head teacher, Miss Castle

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Natural craft uses beauty of timber

by Mary Louis

HOMEGROWN timber and talent have combined for a unique exhibition.

About 30 Kent craftsmen and women are showing off products they have made from wood grown in the county.

The exhibition has been arranged by a European Union-funded project co-ordinated by Kent County Council.

The aim is to promote products made from timber grown in Kent and the Nord-Pas de Calais under the EU Transfrontier programme.

Among those exhibiting are Alun Heslop, from Bridge, and Barry Feldman, from Staple.

Items on show are also for sale and they range from decorative to functional and are ideal gifts. All are a tribute to the skills of their creators and their raw material.

For under £10, there are garlic chopping boards, kitchen utensils, pens, mallets, hurdles, whistles, brooms, charcoal, logs, baskets, pea and bean poles and wooden mushrooms.

Trugs, chopping boards, bowls, trellises and mirrors have price tags of between £10 and £100.

Beautiful wooden rocking

horses, a prowling wolf in walnut, chairs, garden seats, lamps and panelled screens can be bought for three figures or more.

A top priced item at £4,045, is Once Upon A Time, an oversize throne chair by Mr Heslop, of Creative Sense.

Silver birch, chestnut, ash, cherry, sycamore, willow, burr elm, cedar, oak, walnut, beech, hornbeam and hazel are all used for the sculptures and other items on show.

Many of the craftsmen and women are available for commissions.

Cllr Mike Harrison, chairman of KCC's environmental management board, launched the exhibition.

He said: "This is an excellent project because it is raising awareness of the full range of high-quality products being made with Kentish timber.

"It is also supporting the many small-scale businesses, often just one person, which are successfully operating and contributing to Kent's rural economy."

The exhibition and sale are at the National Trust visitor centre, Langdon Cliffs, Dover, and are open daily from 11am to 4pm until the end of the month.



WOOD DESIGN: Barry Feldman in a treliflex arch 3/6821E/01



CRAFTSMAN: Alun Heslop from Bridge 17/6820E/01

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Mar 22 2001



SURFACE WATER: A field at Littlebourne offers a deceptively tranquil perspective on flooding problems

Picture: GERRY WARREN

Villages join to fight for flood action

FLOOD-HIT villages are joining forces to form an action plan aimed at preventing future disasters.

Many homeowners and businesses along the Nailbourne valley and beside the Little Stour are still pumping out and mopping up as water levels refuse to fall.

Parish councils, disillusioned with how the authorities have dealt with the problem, are banding together to create a united pressure group.

At a meeting at Littlebourne village hall chaired by county councillor Martin Vye representatives from seven parish councils produced a joint plan of action.

Cllr Vye said: "It was an opportunity for flood victims to share their experiences, assess the damage and formulate a strategy to try to ensure it doesn't happen again.

"We are treating this matter with some urgency because it is not an issue that can be ducked.

"By working together we hope to bring pressure to bear in the right areas and with the authorities responsible."

But he is furious that the county council has not backed flood defences with the full funding requested by the Environment

by Gerry Warren

Agency. Instead of a 22 per cent increase asked for by the agency, the county council voted for a 12 per cent rise.

Cllr Vye said: "I have calculated that the full 22 per cent increase would have cost Kent householders just another 15p a month but raised an extra £900,000 and levered a further £1 million out of the Government.

"Another 15p a month on the average council tax bill is a derisory amount to us all and the county council's decision is indefensible."

Each parish council will produce an action plan for its area, reporting on river and culvert blockages as well as silt and obstructions.

They include Barham, Kingston, Bishopsbourne, Patrixbourne, Bekesbourne, Wickhambreaux and Littlebourne.

Littlebourne parish councillor Mick Giles has already produced a report on the situation in his village which may well serve as a model for other villages.

Malcolm Mitchell, chairman of Bishopsbourne parish council said: "By working together we can apply far more pressure than we are able to as individual parishes."

Flooding omission gaffe

THE chairman of a Kent County Council committee has been criticised for not knowing parts of Canterbury were flooded during last October's heavy rain.

County Cllr Anne Darlow, who represents Herne Bay West, said she was surprised to find that neither Herne Bay nor Canterbury had been mentioned in a social services committee report on outstanding flood issues.

"I brought the matter to the notice of the committee's chairman, Cllr Keith Ferrin, and he admitted he was not aware there had been a flood problem in either area," she said.

Cllr Darlow said it was clear that neither officers, nor Cllr Ferrin, were aware of the horrendous flooding homes in the area had suffered in the past six months.

"I feel it is a disgrace these areas have not been included in the report and if the chairman and officer were not aware of the situation before, they certainly are now."

Cllr Darlow admitted Cllr Ferrin had apologised for the omission. "I have now asked officers to rectify the mistake," she added.

Cllr Ferrin said Cllr Darlow's criticism was justified. "There was clearly an oversight," he added.

Village task force set up to fight flooding

VILLAGERS in Barham are setting up a task force to tackle flooding from the swollen Nailbourne.

At an emergency meeting on Saturday, most agreed that the key to combating future flooding lay in preparation.

Around 120 people met in the Methodist Chapel to discuss what could be done to minimise disaster in future.

Ward city councillor Martin Vye, who co-chaired the meeting, said afterwards: "What was apparent was a keen desire to see a co-ordinated effort along the Nailbourne.

"People want one group to shoulder responsibility for flood defence.

"We decided to form an action group made up of those residents most affected by the floods, the parish council and myself. The group will co-ordinate a number of preventative measures discussed at the meeting."

Short-term targets include contacting the county council about clearing debris from under bridges and from culverts.

In time the group would also look into possibility of digging out the riverbed itself.

by Chris Pragnell

Another major area of concern raised at the meeting was the fact that the Environment Agency shuns responsibility of the Nailbourne beyond Bishopsbourne.

"People seemed quite annoyed that once the river runs through Barham and into the Elham Valley beyond, no one agency seems responsible," said Cllr Vye.

"We will be asking MP Julian Brazier to agitate in Parliament on our behalf to see if these rules can't be changed."

A third target was to keep villagers informed of flood risks.

The action group proposed to set up an information hotline so that villagers could be in constant communication at times of flood risks.

Linda Davies, chairman of the Barham Parish Council, was positive about the achievements of the meeting.

"We had a fantastic turn out which shows the level of concern about the flooding," she said.

"Ultimately we would like to see a whole chain of co-ordination groups established along the Nailbourne."

Sewage runs into homes



FED-UP: Littlebourne resident Ken Shaw

HOMES in Littlebourne have been flooded with sewage after emergency pumps repeatedly broke down.

Villagers have protested to Southern Water.

Those living in Nargate Street have faced a continual threat of flooding from the Stour since December.

Emergency pumps have to contain the floodwaters that have risen through drains but Nargate Street resident Ken Shaw said the pumps, installed last October, have proved unreliable.

Mr Shaw, who owns a car-repair workshop on the street, says that despite sandbags he and others were powerless to stop sewage overflowing from drains and household toilets.

"Since December 8 they've been breaking down two or three times a day. We get sewage coming into the houses," he said.

Also affected are Geoff and Betty Welch, who have a grade two listed cottage.

"We've had floodwater mixed with sewage up to four inches in the house.

"The carpets are ruined and we lost the electricity. We're worried about diseases," said Mrs Welch.

The faulty pump was taken away on Tuesday but its replacement subsequently broke down yesterday (Wednesday) morning.

Southern Water say flooding caused by the Stour is not its responsibility, and that the drains in the area cannot cope with the volume of floodwater.

A spokesperson said: "The pumps have to be mobile to be of any use, but sometimes we have problems with them. We've got a crew looking at them at the moment.

"These are emergency measures and we sympathise with those affected but we're doing all we can."

Residents affected by flooding inside homes should contact the Southern Water emergency floodline on 0845 2780845 for information or to request a clean-up crew.



YES MINISTER: Elliot Morley MP, left, in flooded Barham, with Viv Pritchard of Canterbury City Council

Minister with clout

I REFER to your comment column (February 15) – “Deserved better”. Your dismissive and unkind reference to Elliot Morley MP as a B-list minister failed to recognise the significant fact that he is the government minister with specific responsibility for flood defence.

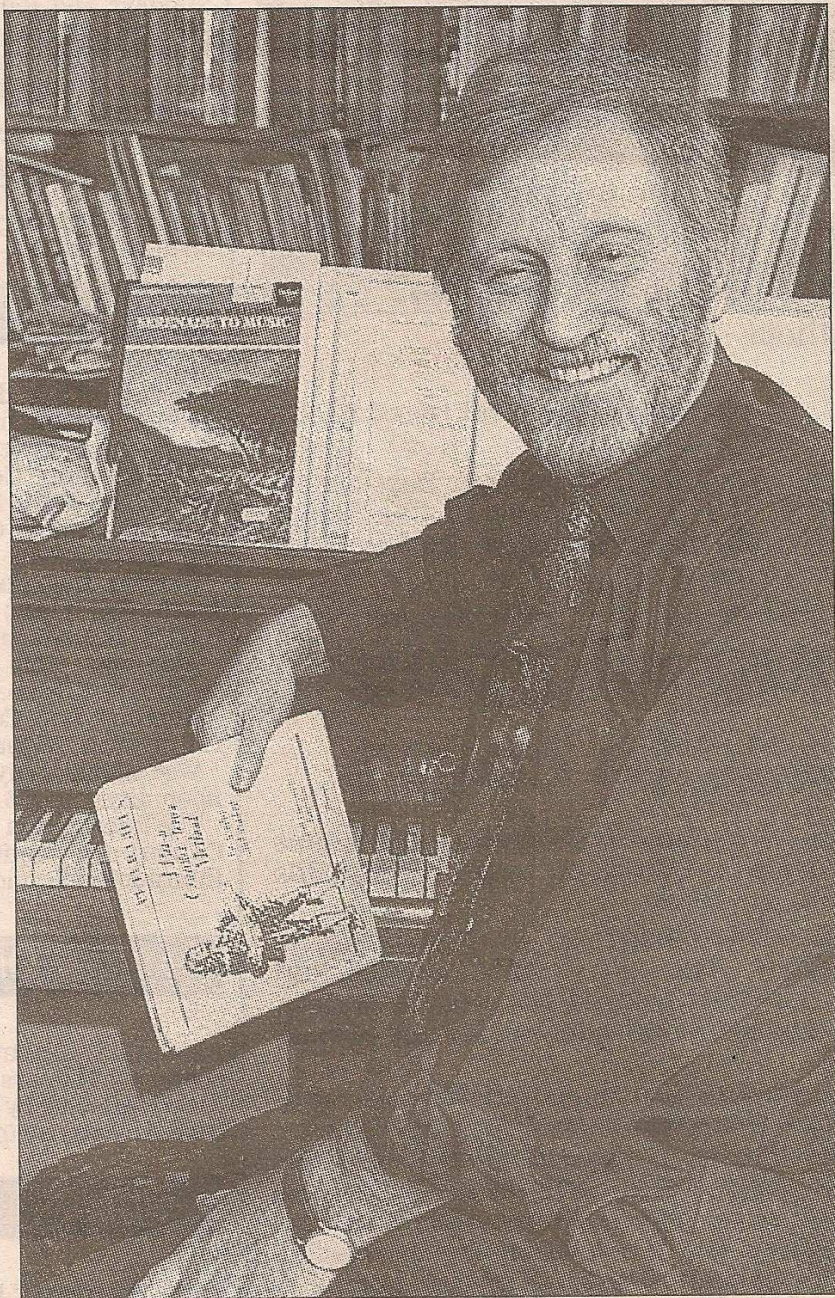
He may not have the high public profile of, say, Prince Charles, but as the person who has control over flood defence funding, he is in a good position to influence the allocation of

national government funds.

We hope his visit will have opened his eyes to the plight suffered by many people in this district as a result of flooding. I suspect that, ultimately, extra government funding to relieve flooding problems in the future will be at least as much practical use as sympathy from a major national figure.

V. Pritchard, Head of Transportation and Engineering, Canterbury City Council.

High point of career



ACHIEVEMENT OF NOTE: Peter Giles has gained a doctorate in the male high voice 9A/7253E/01

SINGER Peter Giles has gained a doctorate in the male high voice after half-a-lifetime of involvement in the subject.

Mr Giles, of Filmer Road, Bridge, has been awarded a PhD in published works at Middlesex University.

He is a trained artist, professional musician, writer of fiction and non-fiction and a teacher. But he is best known for his work on the counter-tenor voice.

The doctorate is a research degree associated with his four books on the subject – the only full-length works on the history and technique of the male high voice.

Also assessed were his articles, lectures, recordings, CDs, notes, broadcasts and his own singing in this country and abroad. He also had to write an analytical theses and undergo interrogation by three examiners.

Mr Giles started his career as a boy chorister. While at art college he began training privately in London as a counter-tenor and an organist. A graduate art qualification led to exhibiting and teaching.

His singing career intensified and he was a lay-clerk at Ely, Lichfield and finally at Canterbury. He left this post in 1994 after 27 years, 16 of them as senior lay clerk.

Mr Giles, who is choirmaster and organist at Bridge Church, is also musical director of the choral group Canzonet. He is kept busy with vocal research and writing, including a published novel and two more in the wings, singing with the much-travelled male trio Canterbury Clerkes and has toured North America and Europe.

His diploma in White's Technique has expanded his teaching, both for singing and speech.

School life spans the generations

ALFRID Minter still remembers his first day at Bishopsbourne School in the 1920s.

"I was a bit frightened," he said, "but as I remember, I settled quite well."

Mr Minter, 84, of Nailbourne Court, Lyminge, started at the school in April, 1924, having moved around east Kent in his first few years as his father changed jobs.

He began his schooling at St Nicholas at Wade, Thanet, at the age of five, but two years later the family moved to Bishopsbourne, where they stayed for 15 years.

These old photographs were uncovered when his niece was clearing out his sister's effects.

Amazingly one, taken in 1890, showed his father, who is seventh from the left of the row of children seated on the school wall.

When Mr Minter started at the school in 1924, he and his younger brother did not know a soul. "It was a bit traumatic," he recalled.

The school's headmistress was Miss Castle, who was able to keep children of varying ages under control

by **Jeremy Dunning**

in one room. "She was a very good teacher," he said. "She was a very strong influence with all the children."

He soon settled into village and school life and remembered the antics of one of his former classmates, Chris Clements.

"He was a terribly clumsy chap. We always used to call him Ellie because he would get his foot hooked in a chair," he said.

Mr Clements' brother, Ron, married Mr Minter's sister, Phyllis, in 1940.

The second photo, from 1924, shows the happy days at school. Mr Minter is in the third row, third from the right and next to his brother, Norman, next to whom is the redoubtable Miss Castle. Mr Minter remembers most of the people in the photo.

In the back row, from the left, are John Cooper, John's sister, Albert Knight, Betty Lane and Chris Clements.

Pictured in the third row are Robert Gardiner, Vernon Spaul, Marjorie Cox, Kathy Francis, Marjorie Austin and Daisy Gardiner, as well as Alfred and his brother.

In the second row are Minnie Austin, a girl whose name he has forgotten, Rosie Gardiner, Phyllis Minter, and Jackie Birchett.

In the front, sitting down are Arthur and Ron Clements and someone else.

The third photo was taken on Empire Day in 1926.

Mr Minter remembered that after assembly on Empire Day the children would parade in the school playground led by the two oldest boys carrying Union Jack flags.

They would also sing Land of Hope and Glory and other patriotic songs in the playground.

Miss Castle's sister, whom pupils referred to as Little Miss Castle because of her diminutive height, played the piano. Mr Minter and Chris Clements are pictured holding the flags and both have medals.

Among the names remembered are Vernon Spaul, Kathy Francis, Marjorie Austin, Phyllis Honey, Dorothy Miller, Norman Minter, Nora Honey, Marjorie Cox, Phyllis Minter, Renie Hammond, Minnie Austin, Margaret Webb, Arthur Clements, Humphrey Brown and Ron Clements.



PATRIOTIC DAY: The school celebrates Empire Day

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KG Feb.22 2001