

LenARA

LEN VALLEY ACTIVE RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER – September 2025

ISSUE 180

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Hello everybody. These newsletters sure seem to come around quickly. Our monthly August meeting was the games afternoon. Fortunately we were lucky with the weather so the outside games were also able to go ahead in what proved to be ideal conditions. There was a total of 10 games in all and approximately 40 members took part. The winner for the day was David Humphrey, second Alistair Walmsley and third Neil McGowan. Well done to all of them. I would also like to thank everyone who helped with the games and everyone who took part.

During August we had yet another good lunch, this time at The Swan, Little Chart. Regarding the lunches, as we have been unable to find any additional members to become involved with organising a lunch these will now be on a bi monthly basis, so there is no lunch in October. Our next lunch will be in November and details will follow in due course. These are really enjoyable occasions, consider trying them if you don't already go.

There are still a few places left for the Christmas lunch on the 3rd December and anyone who wants to go and have not booked should contact Julia as soon as possible. Her email is - elliottjulia342@gmail.com.

LENARA CHRISTMAS LUNCH

DEC 3rd 2025 12-15 until 16-30

LEDIAN GARDENS

UPPER STREET LEEDS

MAIDSTONE ME17 1RZ

3 COURSE FESTIVE LUNCH

FESTIVE MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT BY

NIGHT FEVER VIDEO DISCO & KARAOKE

COST £38

Future Events

There are also two further trips to look forward to this year-

Our next coach trip is to **Brooklands Museum** on the 6th October. This is now fully booked but we are taking names on a reserve list so please contact John Edwards if you would like to be included (edwardsjohn19@sky.com or 07831 408597).

New Arlesford and the Watercress Line. On the 28th October we are organising a trip to the Watercress Line in Hampshire with a trip on the train included. Depending on numbers the cost will be around £45 per person. It should prove to be a good day out. Please email John or ring him as above if you would like to put your name down. Places are proving popular so please book as soon as possible if you would like to go.

Enjoy a trip at the Watercress Line FROM 1865 TO THE PRESENT DAY!



(photo courtesy of The Mid Hants Railway Watercress Line)

The Mid-Hants line was promoted by local interests as the Alton, Alresford & Winchester Railway and received its Act of Parliament in 1861. The first chairman was Edward Knight of Chawton, nephew of Jane Austen. The new line was intended to connect the existing lines at Alton and Winchester and provide an alternative route between London and Southampton. A further Act of 1864 renamed the company the Mid-Hants Railway and the line opened in October 1865.

The new railway ran for 17 miles through an agricultural area. The only town of any size on the route was Alresford but stations were also provided at Ropley, Itchen Abbas and (from August 1868) Medstead. Between Alton and Ropley the line crosses the watershed between the Thames and Itchen basins and the lengthy 1 in 60 gradients either side of the summit at Medstead meant that this section was known to railwaymen as “the Alps”.

Train services were operated from the start by the London and South Western Railway (LSWR). In 1880 the LSWR took a 999 year lease of the line and in 1884 purchased it outright. The line duly passed to the Southern Railway in 1923 and to British Railways Southern Region in 1948. In 1937 the line from London Waterloo to Alton was electrified and through trains from Waterloo ceased. From this date a local service of steam “pull-push” trains ran between Alton and Eastleigh. In 1957 this was replaced by an hourly service of diesel-electric trains from Alton to Southampton Terminus. Passenger numbers virtually doubled overnight!

The line was extensively used as a diversionary route during electrification work on the London to Southampton main line in the 1960s. However, goods traffic ceased in June 1964 and the local passenger service was increasingly unviable. In December 1967 closure notices were published. John Taylor, deputy clerk of Winchester Rural District Council, led a major local campaign to retain the line. Despite objections and arguments about the economics, the line eventually closed in February 1973.

Part of the route, from Alresford to Alton, was subsequently purchased from British Railways by the Watercress Line and, through the hard work of volunteers, steam trains ran again from Alresford to Ropley from 30 April 1977. Services were extended to Medstead & Four Marks in May 1983 and to Alton in May 1985.



The Watercress Line has now operated the remaining section of the line as a heritage railway for longer than its life under British Railways (1948-73). The railway is operated by Mid-Hants Railway Ltd, whose major shareholder is the Watercress Line Heritage Railway Trust (WLHRT), a registered charity. Many of the locomotives now operating on the line were rescued from a scrapyard in Barry, South Wales, and have been restored to their former glory by our staff and volunteers.

(photo courtesy of The Mid Hants Railway Watercress Line)

The **West Country Buffet** can be found on the platform at Alresford serving delicious hot and cold food, snacks and drinks.

Our main gift shop can also be found at Alresford station in the Old Goods Shed.
Refreshments and gifts can also be obtained at Ropley and Alton on most operating days.

Petanque- Peter and Jackie are continuing to work very hard to increase the use of our petanque area so I have repeated the details for members to consider. Come along and have a go!

PETANQUE

Want to get a bit of extra exercise but fed up with walking?

TRY PETANQUE

A set of Petanque takes about an hour.

Why Petanque?

It's like bowls but with no fancy outfits

It's Fun

You can play on a simple surface

Easy rules

We can provide the equipment

It's cheap – the first few sessions are free – see if you like it.

Just turn up and play – Sturdy shoes please



KentARA Short Mat Bowls Competition

Some of our members represented Lenara in the Kentara Short Mat Bowls Competition. I hear they had an enjoyable day but I understand we do not have to make any room in the cabinet for more trophies. This year, as last year's winners, it fell to Lenara to organise the competition. I believe this



turned out to be a bit stressful but congratulations to John Edwards and anyone else involved for making what I hear was a great success of it. There were 20 teams taking part and the winners this year were MarshARA.



The winning team with Mandy from Dunwood Travel and Ian the KentARA Chairman

Our next meeting is Wednesday 24th September when we have Jasmine Gardener singing for us "Songs from the 60's Divas". Something different which should prove an enjoyable afternoon.

Mobile phone numbers and Emergency Contact Details At our recent committee meetings we have been considering the necessity for recording the “In case of Emergency - ICE” details for our members. We would like to have a note of firstly, your mobile phone number and secondly details of who to contact if an emergency arises. It is important for you to carry ICE details on you when you are on one of our trips, holidays or activities and not just on your mobile as they are often locked so that the information cannot be accessed. It is also useful to keep the details on you of any medications you are taking so that the emergency services have knowledge of them. I am sure many of you do this already but if you would like to make use of the form I have attached to this email– fill it in, fold it up and keep it in your wallet or purse.

The mobile phone numbers would help when we are out and about so that help can be given in an emergency. The party leader would also have a note of your mobile number in case you are lost or late back to the coach etc.

Please could you email Chris with this information – rrgodden@btinternet.com. Be assured it will all be kept according to the Data Protection Policy and no data will be shared outside the LenARA organisation.

Our weekly events –

Short Mat Bowls	Tuesday	2.00pm to 4.00pm	£4 per session	Phil Gooda 01622 851217
Zumba	Wednesday	9.30am to 10.30am	£7 per session	Barbara Kyprianou 01622 850468
Line Dancing	Wednesday	7.30pm to 9.00pm	£4.50 per session	Ann Rolfe 01622 859725
Petanque – weather permitting	Thursday Saturday	10.00am to 12.00pm	£3.00 per session	Peter 07831 147656 Jackie 07734 566896

SEPTEMBER

10 th September 2025	Ten Pin Bowling at Ashford	11.00am	£7.50 for two games	Pat Highsted 01622 743658
Wednesday 24 th September 2025	Jasmine Gardener sings “Songs from the 60’s Divas”	2.00pm	Lenham Community Centre	

OCTOBER

8 th October 2025	Ten Pin Bowling	11.00am	£7.50 for two games	Pat Highsted 01622 743658
Wednesday 22 nd October 2025	Phil’s Film	2.00pm	Lenham Community Centre	

NOVEMBER

12 th November 2025	Ten Pin Bowling	11.00am	£7.50 for two games	Pat Highsted 01622 743658
Wednesday 26 th November 2025	Islands of the Medway Estuary – Adam Taylor	2.00pm	Lenham Community Centre	

Best wishes
Roger