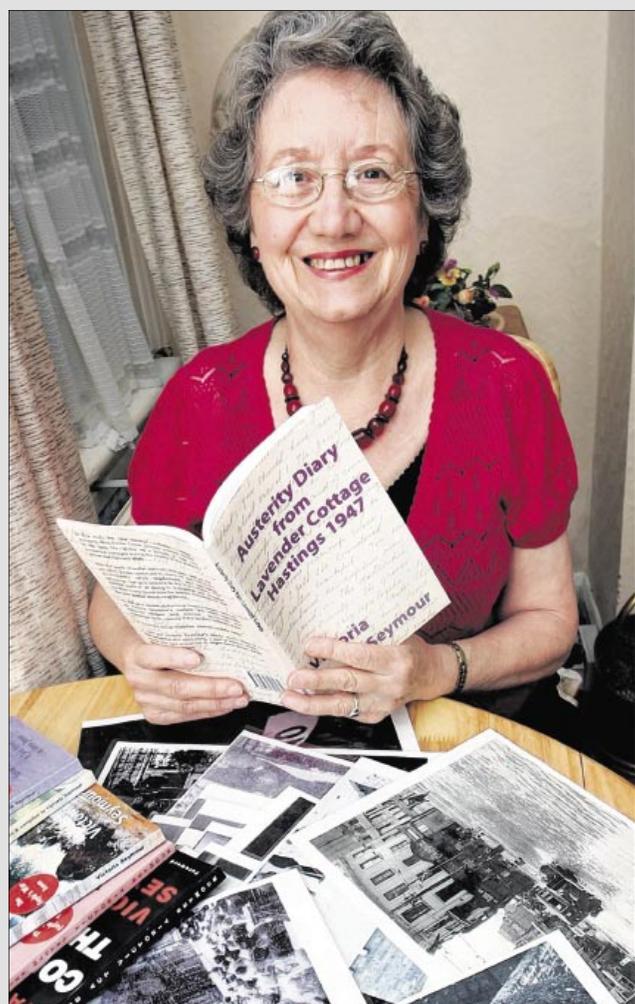


**BUNDLE OF HISTORY FOUND AT AUCTION**

# Treasure trove of letters records couple's romance



Victoria Seymour was given the letters found at an auction near Hastings

**EXCLUSIVE**

by Rachel Hovenden  
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A SERIES of love letters uncovered at a small village auction has sparked a search for a north Kent couple who enjoyed a long-distance romance after the Second World War.

The heartfelt letters were spotted bundled in a cardboard strawberry basket at an auction in Guestling Village Hall near Hastings, almost three years ago.

They are now in the hands of author Victoria Seymour, whose son purchased them for her as a gift, because of her passion for the exchange of letters.

Ms Seymour, who has also published books on the subject, is now keen to learn more about the original owners of the letters in her possession and the path that their romance took.

The hand-written notes were sent in the early 1950s by a man called Maurice Nash, who according to the address lived in Carlton Avenue, Horns Cross near Greenhithe.

Their recipient was a young Peggy Cockrill who came from Gravesend.

According to Maurice's writing, he appears to have met Peggy at the former Royal Oak pub on Gravesend's South Hill Road where she worked as a part-time barmaid. The pub no longer exists, having closed in 1958. The exchange begins in 1954, when Maurice, who is understood to have served in the army during the war, left north Kent for work around the country repairing buildings damaged by war-time bombing.

Through the 34 letters the couple's relationship blossoms from friendship into romance and eventually marriage, confirmed by a marriage certificate the author has traced, which shows the couple wed in July 1957 at St John's Roman Catholic Church in Parrock Street, Gravesend.



The Royal Oak pub, South Hill Road, Gravesend



The envelope of one of the letters to Peggy

According to the records Peggy was 36 and her new husband 38. They would now be 89 and 91. The letters end four days before the couple walk down the aisle.

She said: "I would love to find out more about Peggy and Maurice and about how the letters came to be at an auction so far from Gravesend."

"They show Peggy to be a lovely person and it is wonderful to see their relationship develop."

Do you know or remember Peggy or Maurice Nash? Phone the Messenger on 01474 564327, email gravesendmessenger@thekmgroupp.co.uk or dartfordmessenger@thekmgroupp.co.uk or write to 7 High Street, Gravesend, DA11 0BQ.

## Value depends on the contents

LETTERS, like those once belonging to Peggy Cockrill and Maurice Nash, do not often come before auction houses according to Bob Atkinson, of store Stamps and Hobbies.

Ms Seymour does not know how much her son paid for the bundle of romance, as it was a gift, but Mr Atkinson, whose shop is in Gravesend High Street, said prices for letters can range from £10 to thousands depending on a number of factors.

He explained: "The value of letters depends on their contents - whether they include historical information and who sent them and received them."

"It also depends on external factors such as whether they were in a post box damaged during the Blitz and had been damaged themselves."

Some expensive love letters to have previously sold at auction:

■ Napoleon's wife, Josephine de Beauharnais, sent her husband 50 handwritten love letters before they married in

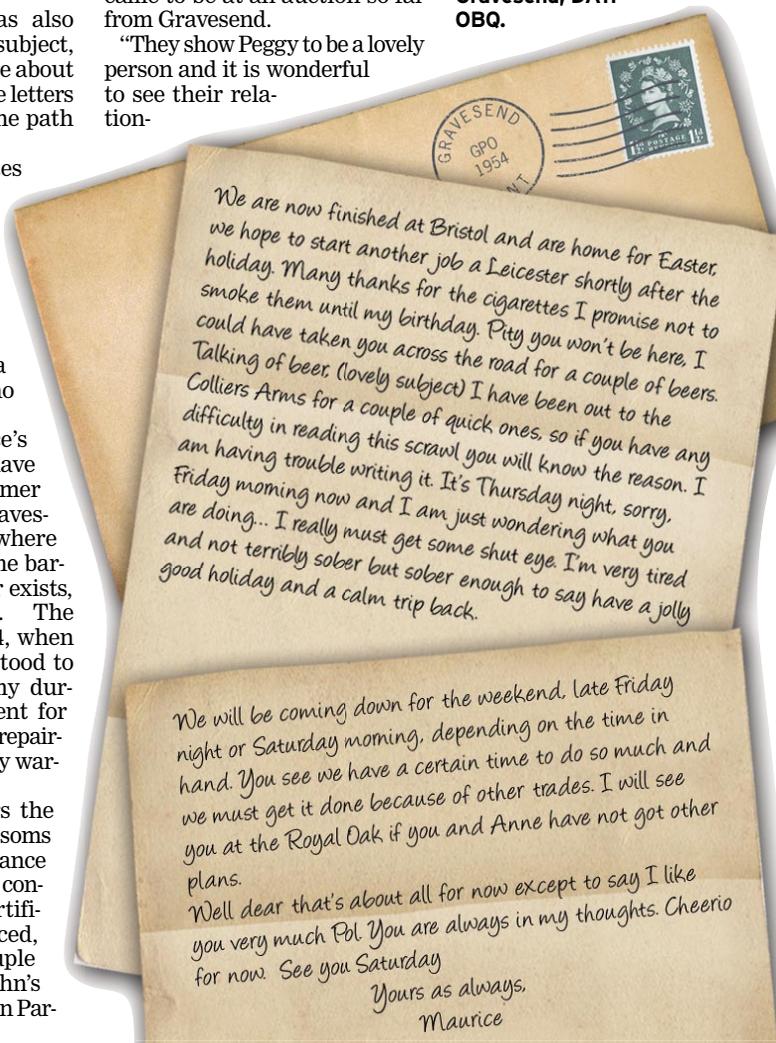


John F. Kennedy's letter sold for \$115,537

1796. The letters were sold for £500,000.

■ John F. Kennedy's love letters to Gunilla von Post, a Swedish woman with whom he had a relationship, were sold for \$115,537 in March this year.

■ Poet Dylan Thomas' earliest love letter to his wife Caitlin Macnamara was sold in New York for £12,000 (\$22,800). The letter dated back to 1936. Another love letter from May 1937 shortly before the couple married was sold for £10,000 (\$17,919).



## Find out what KCC spends £2bn on

DETAILS of how millions of pounds of taxpayers' money is spent, including the pay and perks of senior officers, are to go online as part of what is being hailed as a transparency revolution at County Hall.

Kent County Council is to embark on a radical programme of opening its books to public inspection under a series of measures it believes will improve trust and understanding among residents.

Many of the proposals are in line with government moves to compel councils to be much more open about how they spend public money.

County councillors backed the initiative at a cabinet meeting on Monday.

Under its Transparency Programme, the council, which spends more than £2bn each year, is to publish a monthly list of all transactions of more than £500.

And in a major departure, the council is to disclose the details of the pay and perks of all top officers, along with any hospitality they have received and their declarations of interest.

### Regulations

The authority has previously refused to identify the specific remuneration of its most senior staff but was forced to do so for the first time this year under new government regulations.

In a cabinet report, the council says: "KCC views transparency as a fundamental principle of how we do business."

Staff throughout KCC must understand that the public has a right to know how taxpayers' money is spent and how effectively it is used."

Cllr Roger Gough (Con) KCC cabinet member for corporate services, said: "It is going to go much further than we have in the past and we hope it will mean a much more direct relationship with the citizen and encourage them to get involved in what we do."

He acknowledged the council would need to consider carefully how it presented some of the details.

"People may struggle to understand if we publish just raw data and there may be cases where we have to give context."

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