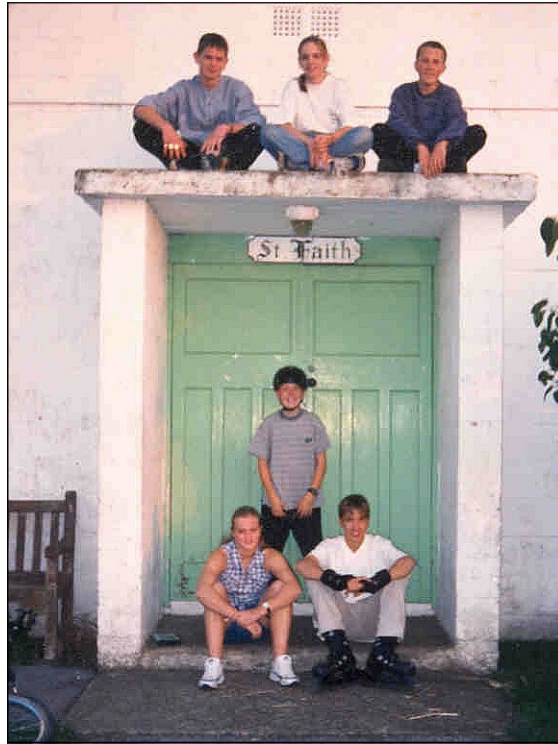




With a little help from his old friend Lucy Maple, James Smith (left), now a 25 year-

old public relations executive living in London, reveals what he and the other local kids got up to in the long summer holidays and offers some top tips for today's teenagers...



Keeping an eye out for parents on the warpath...

Members of the nineties gang: James Smith (bottom right) with Kelly Allen and Matt Sackett and, on the roof, Lucy Maple with David Ainsley and visiting friend Kevin.

10 ways to have fun this summer (if you're 16 or under)

THE LONG HOT days of summer on New House Lane - a child's paradise? Or a desperately tedious routine of sitting around waiting for something to happen.

We were lucky, we hailed from the vintage years of '85-'95 and with a little imagination and good friends, summer could always be a lot of fun. The first day of the holidays was a time to celebrate: school work could be forgotten until September, new adventures were just around the corner, routines of summers gone-by resurrected and friendships rekindled. Indeed, the romantic relations of New House Close were more like something out of *EastEnders*.

So, if you're young and you find yourself stuck for something to do this summer, here's our top ten list:

Explore the countryside: Rumour has it that there's more to Kent than Thanington Without. Highlights include the fords of Bridge, hills of Petham, bike trails of Chartham Hatch and the slopes of Tankerton.

British Bull Dog: What better use of the front lawn at the hall?

Man Hunt: Rules are passed down from generation to generation (just ask around).

Bike rides to The Bon-Bon: You'll appreciate the sweets all the more for having cycled there.

Combine harvesters: Great fun! Never get too close, but the hay bales provide countless opportunities for inventions of new games (just don't let the farmer catch you!).

Rounders: The corn has been harvested - you have a whole new playing surface!

Romantic liaisons: With six weeks to spend in each other's pockets it's bound to happen to one or two of your friends. The trouble starts when one of those friends ends up preferring another friend and decides to swap halfway through the summer.

Video, sleepover nights: It's every parent's duty to host (and fund) a summer video night. Whether they have a decision in choosing what you watch is down to your own negotiating skills.

Misadventures: This one comes with a heavy health warning and usually doesn't involve any real planning. These are the activities that end up being a little too adventurous and result in your elderly neighbour complaining to your parents.

The Post Bus: It won't get you far, but the Royal Mail bus can at least help you escape from New House Lane for a few hours.