

# Benenden Magazine

## June 2020



Benenden  
Magazine  
April 2020



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ADVERTISERS

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Benenden Magazine  
May 2020



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# Editorial



Without wishing to alarm you, this month's magazine contains an article comparing the coronavirus crisis to the Black Death (see page 29), which ripped through the Kent countryside in 1348 on its way from China to who knows where, killing a "third of humanity in the process" and destroying the economic certainties of a nation. Fear not. Latest forecasts suggest we're a little way off plague proportions with our COVID-19 crisis, but there's no doubt there will be sea changes to the way we live our lives, so we have to make sure they're for the better.

Certainly in our village there has already been a noticeable sense of growing goodwill as we endeavour to function as a joined-up community. The Benenden Action Team is still ministering to the vulnerable and the isolated, although neighbours are informally stepping into the breach, as neighbours should; VE Day brought with it a flag-waving sense of defiance and joyfulness; and at least we've had the chance to enjoy the late spring sunshine in our gardens. Long may all this continue, even when the passing of the virus makes it less essential.

At the magazine, we have been kept afloat by the best efforts of Wealden Print, who have gone beyond the call to ensure production has been seamless, allowing us to bring you advice on how to start your own allotment (page 30) and track down gorillas in Uganda (page 26). Personally, I cleared out my shed in a bewildering first week of furloughing, only for the suspension of the civic amenity vehicle to leave me with a pile of junk on the lawn rather than in the shed. Still, it could be worse, it could be 1348.

Peter Thomas, Co-Editor

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A vertical strip of stained glass windows runs down the left side of the page, featuring various religious figures and patterns in vibrant colors like red, blue, green, and gold.

# Church Calendar

## St George's Church

Rector: Revd David Commander 240658 [revdavidcommander@gmail.com](mailto:revdavidcommander@gmail.com) (day off: Thursday)

Churchwarden: Tracy Claridge 240454 [maisonsicheluk@tlclaridge.co.uk](mailto:maisonsicheluk@tlclaridge.co.uk)

Churchwarden: David Collard 241944 [julia.collard@btinternet.com](mailto:julia.collard@btinternet.com)

[www.benendenchurch.org](http://www.benendenchurch.org) 850849 [benendenchurch@gmail.com](mailto:benendenchurch@gmail.com)

Please inform the Rector or Churchwardens if you, or anyone else, is ill.

Although the church building is closed and public worship suspended, the church is very much alive.

### Online Sunday services

Assuming these restrictions are still in place throughout June, there will be a service available online every Sunday morning. The video of the service and a service sheet can be found on the Home Page of the church website. ([www.benendenchurch.org](http://www.benendenchurch.org)) Please 'join' the rest of the church family, online, at 10am each Sunday. The service will be accessible until the following Saturday.

If public worship in the church recommences, then we will revert to the normal 8am and 10am service pattern each Sunday.

## Mission Church, Sandhurst

Rector: Revd David Commander 240658 [revdavidcommander@gmail.com](mailto:revdavidcommander@gmail.com) (day off: Thursday)

## Iden Green Congregational Church

Elder: Tobin Bird 240027 [www.idengreen.org.uk](http://www.idengreen.org.uk)

## The Roman Catholic Chapel TN17 4EL

Fr Barry Grant 713364 [www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org](http://www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org)

## From the Parish Registers

Funeral	29 April	Cicely Collins	Committal Kent and Sussex Crematorium
	26 May	Margaret Sampson	Burial

# Rector's Letter



## Keep on praying

I can honestly say, I've had enough of this lockdown! This last week, I have to admit, it's got to me a bit. So I've tried to remember the advice I gave here last month, in the reading about anxiety and prayer: "The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God ... and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." I hope you have tried putting that piece of scripture from Philippians into practice too.

Thank you to all the volunteers from the wonderful Benenden Action Team for continuing your great work to help others. Thank you also to our wonderful local shops and businesses for your incredible efforts to keep the village supplied with the things we all need. When this is all over, we'll have a great community party on the Green. Meanwhile, if you are experiencing difficulties, please, please, please do seek out some help - it is there for you. Give the BAT coordinator, the churchwarden or myself a call. Please.

Now for a bit of good news: the church building has been closed (but the church has been very much alive) for many, many weeks, but it can now reopen, although only partially at the moment. The church will not open for public worship or for private prayer by individuals until the beginning of July at the earliest, and I'm really sorry about that, but the restrictions have been eased a little, allowing one person to access the church building for: the Daily Office (i.e. prayer by the priest or lay-person); the recording of services; a priest taking Communion on behalf of the community; and checking on the state of the building.

After discussion with the churchwardens in the two parishes, we have decided that Morning Prayer will be conducted from St George's church (at 8am) by myself, and I will also start recording our weekly Communion services from the sanctuary in St George's church. I know this is still not what many people will want, but as our Bishop said when sending out the new guidelines: "In making this decision, remember that the virus has not changed - it remains highly contagious and, although many are mildly affected by it, others can become seriously ill. Please do not take unnecessary risks."

One day, we will return to worshipping in our church. If you have missed it, I would be interested to hear what it is that you have missed. Have a look at these three questions and let me know:

- What have we learned in this period of being away from our church building?
- What would we like to retain, when we return?
- What should we let go of? That is, what is it that is really important to you about the church building being there?

In the meantime, "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God". Keep praying.

Revd David Commander, Rector



# Village Calendar

The Village Calendar may look a little light for the foreseeable future. Coronavirus and the Prime Minister's lockdown of the entire country have rather put a crimp in our social lives and dates have been cancelled left, right and centre. Even the civic amenity vehicle won't be around for a while.

These will be trying weeks for us all as we negotiate a new landscape of self-isolation and social distancing. To that end, David Commander has come up with a list of guiding principles to steer us all through the confusion. We hope they may be a help until normal service is resumed.

## Guiding principles

Our approach to making decisions about specific events, services or issues can be guided by these principles:

**Be calm and trust** the advice given by relevant authorities.

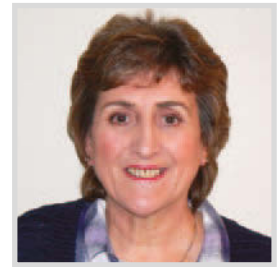
**Protect the vulnerable.** It's not just your health, but the health of others who may be more vulnerable.

**Continue to love our neighbour.** Respect their needs and concerns as much as your own - but safely. If you have a neighbour living alone and isolated they would appreciate a call.

**Be transparent and open** with one another, sharing accurate and up to date information.

**Be creative** when making decisions - "how can we do this differently in these circumstances".

# Parish Council



As I write this it is nine weeks since the start of lockdown, and eight weeks that we have applauded NHS frontline and all other key workers from our doorsteps. One of my weekly highlights during this time has been a Saturday morning trip to our wonderful village shop to pick up regular orders for my neighbours. I reckon there are many worse places to queue than outside Benenden's.

Hopefully we are now past the peak of this pandemic and are cautiously working our way towards whatever the new 'normal' will be. For most of us, this will mean being able to spend time in the company of family and friends, rather than meeting virtually via the internet on phones, tablets or laptops. What would it have been like without this technology, having to endure this long separation from loved ones?

The available conferencing technology has enabled the parish council to hold its meetings in spite of the lockdown and distancing rules. The first one in April turned out to be a success, with all parish, borough and county councillors in attendance. The minutes of last month's meeting and all meetings of the BPC are to be found on our website, which I recommend everyone takes time to have a look at, as it contains links to Benenden Action Team, the village magazine, planning information, the village directory and much, much more.

Finally, the scourge of fly-tipping is now a national disgrace, exacerbated by the closure of council tips and limited refuse collections during the present crisis. Hopefully, this problem will recede as council tips are now opening up. On this note we are, as you know, overdue for the spring village litter picking. We expect to be in a position to reorganise this as soon as we get the go ahead from TWBC, at which time the litter pick will be widely advertised in the hope of getting a good turnout to help clean up the parish.

Julie Lewis, BPC Vice Chair

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk

01580 240371 [clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org](mailto:clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org)

For more information see our website [www.benendenparishcouncil.org](http://www.benendenparishcouncil.org) or find us on facebook

**Parish Council Meeting**

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7pm - details tbc

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# Just a Thought



## What day is it?

Apparently the seven-day week originates from the calendar of the Babylonians, which in turn is based on a Sumerian calendar dating to the 21st century BC. Seven days corresponds to phases of the moon, although they had to add a day or two at the end of every few weeks to keep in step. Jewish tradition also observes a seven-day week. The book of Genesis was likely written around 500 BC, during the Jewish exile to Babylon, and some experts have suggested that the Jews inherited the cycle of seven days from the Babylonian calendar.

Why all this interest in the origin of the week? Well, my appreciation of time in the grander sense has taken a bit of a knock during 'lockdown'. When we finally retired it took me a while (as it probably does others) to adjust to the loss of structure to my daily life. Being in education, either teaching children or training teachers, this is particularly obvious. One knows whether it is holiday or term time; how many weeks to half term; weekend or weekday; days of the week: Monday, spellings (and dinner money collection); Wednesday, science and sport; and Friday, tables tests and special assemblies or visiting trainee teachers.

I settled down and got involved with village societies, church and school committees, which in themselves provided a framework - more free and flexible but a framework nonetheless - and at least I knew which day it was. Sunday church service; Tuesday choral society; Thursday serve in shop; Friday church choir practice and so on. The more flexible routine allowed time for camping holidays or family visits at the weekend.

Now 'lockdown' and all the time in the world. It's not wondering what to do that is the problem, as I can happily occupy myself without resorting to excessive housework. It is the strange feeling that it doesn't really make a difference what day of the week it is or when things are done.

Luckily, help is at hand as the field next to us has finally been given up to become a building site and they don't work at weekends. This has also meant that one of my interests has turned into watching and photographing (for my youngest, absent grandchildren) all the stages that are required to change the green, bumpy field into a driveway off which there will be three houses and gardens. It is amazing the different kinds of machinery required. My favourite is a sort of long-armed digger that the operator manipulates with such precise skill that it behaves like an enormous extension of his own arm and hand. Then there is the way huge delivery lorries negotiate our narrow lane. The reversing technique of the drivers is something to behold, especially those with double trailers.

However, I hope that there will not be many more phases of the moon before my horizons extend beyond the neighbouring building site and I will again care what day it is.

Sue Fisher

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## Benenden Action Team news

Benenden's community spirit during the lockdown has been just amazing. Many friends, family, neighbours and Benenden Action Team (BAT) volunteers have been helping those who are shielded and isolating with prescription collections, food deliveries and telephone calls.

And it's not just medication and shopping. In May the call went out on the BAT network to ask for donations of buttons, fabric and elastic to keep the wonderful village sewers making headbands and now face masks. The response was immediate.

BAT has been working closely with the parish council to act quickly on requests from vulnerable people in the village and to source topical information for the BAT website [www.benendenaction.co.uk](http://www.benendenaction.co.uk). The site is regularly updated with useful contacts, information and guidance and hopefully many of you will have seen the signs around the village promoting this useful resource. For example, we have posted information about what you can and cannot do under the new government guidelines which came into effect on 13 May on the website with a link to the Government's 50-page roadmap for how and when the UK will adjust its response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Don't forget, if you need assistance because you are ill or shielded then please contact your local BAT co-ordinator (see above right).

Once all this is over, I know that we will have a village communication and support network that will be stronger than ever and one that will hopefully continue to play an important role long into the future.

Guy Hagan, BAT co-ordinator

07515 275150 [guy@rawfellconstruction.co.uk](mailto:guy@rawfellconstruction.co.uk)

## BAT CO-ORDINATORS

Village centre Olivia Collier 07587 418635

Walkhurst Road Mary Cruse 240395

New Pond Road Abigail Barbier 07540 725577

Iden Green Sheila Hume 240838

Dingleden Georgina Toynbee 07872 960846

Standen Street Jane Stephen 07941 52514

East End Graham Beveridge 07850 718416

Cranbrook Road Peter Thomas 07766 420254

## Poets corner

Shirley Gooseman, who is compiling a book showcasing the talents of budding local poets in aid of the NHS, would like to remind all prospective writers that the cut-off date for contributions will be Sunday 31 May. She will be delighted to receive any more poems until then at [shirleygooseman123@btinternet.com](mailto:shirleygooseman123@btinternet.com). The response to this very worthy cause has been excellent and Shirley would like to thank everyone who has so far participated.



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## Lockdown fun and games in Horton's Close

People living in Horton's Close have been busy since the beginning of lockdown by keeping in touch chatting, dancing, singing, praying and playing from their doorsteps and at a safe distance on the close green. The residents in the 12 houses are linked via WhatsApp and many meet daily for coffee and a distanced chat at 11am and tea at 4pm and join to clap the NHS and care workers every Thursday. Glenda Marshall runs 'Stay on Your Drive Bingo' and every national event has been marked. They joined to sing Happy Birthday to the Queen and Colonel Tom Moore and marked VE Day in style with lots of bunting made by the children, afternoon tea, more singing and dancing. The whole close was decorated in red, white and blue and the sun shone (see photographs on back cover).

Several people living in the close have praised, in particular, the wonderful efforts of Sarah Mills who has kept the children occupied daily with science experiments, forest school (helped by father-in-law Martin), arts and craft and more. After a short Sunday church service conducted by Rickie on the green, Sarah holds an outdoor quiz and the children show off the dance moves she taught them during the week, complete with fancy dress. Sarah's mother-in-law Bev works on a COVID-19 ward at the Conquest Hospital and her sister-in-law Danielle is an Associate Ambulance Practitioner and the residents recently raised £110 between them to buy soft drinks for the frontline workers.

"I never feel lonely", says Bonny Sullivan. "I'm surrounded by wonderful neighbours and just need to stand at my door, and I'm connected. No matter what there is always someone doing something to help someone else. There really is no place like Hortons."

"We've been busy since the beginning," says Sarah. "We are very lucky to have such a lovely group of people living here."

## Waste and recycling centres to reopen

From 15 May KCC's Household Waste and Recycling Centres will open to the public from 9am-3pm and will accept all types of waste including chargeable items. From 13 May you can book a slot to use one online or by phone and you can only book one trip in any four-week period to allow all residents to have fair and safe access.

They ask that you do not visit if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or are part of a household isolating or if you are someone in the shielded category. When arriving at the site please bring your proof of booking email (printed or on your phone) or, if booked over the phone, your reference number. Please keep windows closed when showing this to staff. Please attend the site within your booking slot. Staff will not be able to assist you unload and dispose of items.

In addition, kerbside collections will be fully reinstated so garden waste will also be collected from 18 May.

For more info and booking:

[www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk)

## St George Club news

Although the St George Club is closed, it is doing what it can to help residents during lockdown. We have loaned our cornhole tossing equipment to Iden Manor Nursing Home in Staplehurst for residents to enjoy, our giant outdoor Jenga game to children to play with in Horton's Close where our bingo machine is used to play 'Door Stop Bingo' every week. We look forward to welcoming members back to the club once lockdown is over.

Glenda Marshall

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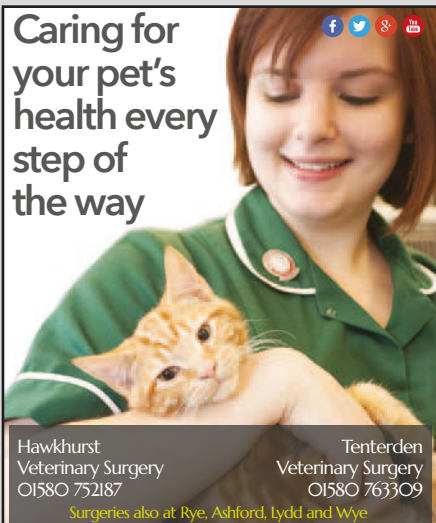


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## Benenden School news

Despite no pupils being able to be here physically at Benenden, we continue to run a full timetable of lessons remotely and I have to say that we have been really impressed by the overall level of engagement that the girls have shown since term started, particularly with the amount of time they are spending on their screens. Last week we ran a survey for girls and for staff to gauge their views on the remote learning; there was some very useful feedback and there are some adaptations that we feel we can make to improve everyone's experience.

I have been delighted with the sheer variety of activities the staff have provided for the girls to ensure they remain active and engaged in every aspect of school life. As well as lessons, which have included virtual dissections and live presentations of research topics, girls are being offered daily fitness routines to follow, one-to-one music tuition through Microsoft Teams and a whole array of fun challenges, including the task of climbing the equivalent height of mountain peaks using only their stairs - one Sixth Former has her sights firmly set on virtually scaling Everest before the end of May!

The Thursday before the bank holiday marked the last day of GCSE and A Level teaching for the Year 11 and Year 13 girls; for the Year 13s this is of course momentous, as their teaching has now officially come to an end. However, both year groups have now started their new post GCSE and A Level courses and both have a really diverse and interesting programme of study, together with wider academic and life skills options which they have already signed up for. Activities include archaeology, cookery and Excel skills. All things considered, I feel quite envious of them having this opportunity to enjoy a completely new aspect to their studies.

At the time of writing, we are keenly awaiting further information from the Government about their plan for reopening schools. In the meantime, there has been significant planning going on behind the scenes

at school to prepare for what a return might look like if we were able to re-open in some capacity in June.

I know that the girls are keen to get back to school to see their friends and enjoy the site, which is looking absolutely stunning, as those of you who have been exercising in the grounds will undoubtedly agree.

Samantha Price, Headmistress

## Benenden Hospital news

Historically the matron was a figure to be feared, as we saw in many films, but that is certainly not the case today. At Benenden Hospital, the matron is key to the delivery of quality care and an excellent patient experience.

Matrons have considerable healthcare experience, usually spending at least ten years rising through the nursing ranks. They are experienced and clinically credible leaders who, in my view, need to be easily recognised by patients and visitors which is why I asked them to wear hats! Here at Benenden Hospital we have two matrons: Zoe Andrews - Surgical Services, and Ali Curtis - Out-patients, Diagnostics and Therapeutics.

Zoe and Ali focus on excellent standards of care across all clinical areas but ensure this is delivered efficiently and cost-effectively. High quality care is at the heart of everything we do for all patients and by having visible experts readily available it ensures the hospital strives to deliver the very best experience possible. On the ward Zoe conducts a daily ward round visiting every patient, so she meets everyone, and they know her. The assurance and confidence that this gives patients is often mentioned to me. It isn't only patients and visitors who appreciate having the matron role at the hospital but consultants and all clinical staff value having visible leaders readily available to help and support them on a day-to-day basis. It is a role that is here to stay.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director



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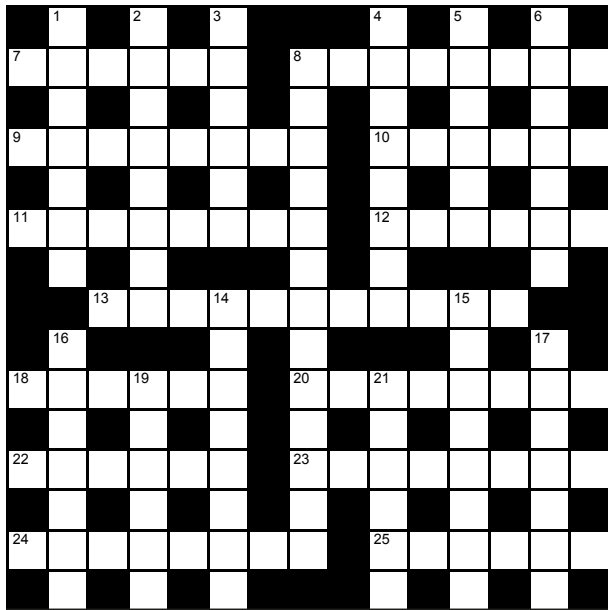
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# MINDBENENDERS By ASCII

## CROSSWORD No21 (Difficult)



### Across

- 7 Pensioner wrongly gaoled (3,3)
- 8 Bookie's offer to loan identity. Glorious! (8)
- 9 Conrad is mockingly cynical (8)
- 10 Currency in N's nerve cell (6)
- 11 Without HIV, devious Machiavelli flowers in Spring (8)
- 12 Misused umlaut in common ownership (6)
- 13 Irritated owner of smoke-shop bacon, cost it (11)
- 18 Secret code-name will annoy M badly (6)
- 20 Lie in bed awkwardly, unable to digest (8)
- 22 He's tested half a score of those chocolates with his teeth! (6)
- 23 Resent asking of Dickensian simpleton (8)
- 24 Protect eyes from deadly virus, son (3,5)
- 25 Luggin' rotten sticks (6)

### Down

- 1 Comprehensive calendar north of Crimean battlefield currently (7)
- 2 St David agonised terribly on US coast (3,5)
- 3 Follet and Deighton back in the doghouse? (6)
- 4 Grand Wizard down from the Isle of Skye? (8)
- 5 The Elephant Man without John? Fine (6)
- 6 Manic depressive with a magnetic personality? (7)
- 8 Mme Alfred Carriere intent on increasing status? (6,7)
- 14 Simon had no right to rebuke (8)
- 15 Injured Mister Sulu given encouragement to leave the ER (8)
- 16 Jealous of the awful Soviet Union? No, not I (7)
- 17 Individual from 5, given gravity in lieu of the acid test, turned out well (7)
- 19 Lloyd-Webber musical heads up north to where it came from (6)
- 21 Take on bad egg with severe additional educational needs (6)

## SUDOKU

		2			7	1		9
3	8							
		1			4		8	
8	6							
	4				9		2	
				7			6	3
9								
5					9	1	3	
	1				3		7	8

Each column, row and block **must** contain numbers 1 to 9 in any order. Each number can be used only **once** in each column, row or block.

## CODEWORD No21 (Tricky)

12	25	15	26		20	12	26	20	6	1	2	2
16		5		24		26		1		7		4
14	12	3	23	15	26	5		20	1	25	15	13
6		23		16		26		6		24		8
26	23	15	19	25		18	1	25	3	24	12	
25				26		25				26		7
26	23	26	10	7	24		26	10	22	25	23	26
7		9				19		26				14
	9	13	3	21	26	5		15	13	7	17	25
16		16		26		1		12		26		26
11	16	18	1	19		20	12	26	16	15	4	25
16		4		20		12		14		1		26
5	26	26	20	12	1	26	7		24	19	13	7

1	2	3	4	5	R	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	P	16	17	18		19	20	21	22	23	24	25	Y

Each number represents a letter. Break the code and complete the grid. Three letters have been given to help you. Heavy lines denote a new word.

## FOURWORD

1	2	3	4
2			
3			
4			

In the grid, place all of these letters to make the same four words across and down. Four clues are given to help you.

AAAAAAGGGGGMMORR

- 1 Lightweight grandparent?
- 2 Right oven for Indian music
- 3 Silver's own goal? Astounded!
- 4 Trump's initial boast

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## Iden Green and Benenden WI

It's been such fun speaking to WI members at length on the telephone and finding out so much more about their fascinating and interesting lives - every one different although somehow a pattern emerges. We are all looking forward to getting back to normal but somehow wish we could retain some of the neighbourliness, quieter roads and the peace of lockdown.

All of us managed to follow WI guidelines to stay in touch, learn a new skill or teach one, tackle the to-do list, revel in nature, restrict what you watch and read, ensure you maintain healthy habits, express yourself creatively and accentuate the positive.

Some people said it was the routine of their lives that made lockdown easier. Mornings might start with a greeting from the Quarantine Club online at 8am; then 9am with the Green Goddess on the BBC. Afterwards a variety of activities such as housework, patchwork, gardening, reading, completing jigsaws, knitting, poetry writing and the like, kept everyone occupied during the day. Also, one member delved into her memory box to bring all her keepsakes together to form a memento for her grandchildren and another played croquet in the garden.

In the evenings whilst most might tune in to the TV or radio, one member received online pilates classes; one had a regular quiz sent to her and one extended her culinary skills. Plus, of course, our favourite WI poet has been compiling a book of submitted poems reflecting these unusual times, and our shepherdess continues to flourish with her new lambs and flock.

On a personal note, having lived in the village in the same house for 42 years and brought up three sons who all went to the primary school, we were due to celebrate our golden wedding anniversary on 20 June with strawberry teas and special cakes in the church and shop, but unfortunately we have to cancel the festivities.

Jackie Liffen 240358 WI@daisystar.co.uk

## Letter to the Editor

Please write to the Editor,  
c/o Community Office, Benenden Village Hall,  
Benenden TN17 4DY or email  
benendenparishmagazine@gmail.com

### THE BIRDMAN OF IDEN GREEN

I am writing in support of Charles Trollope's article in last month's magazine, "Spotting birds through your kitchen window", in which he encourages readers to join the British Trust for Ornithology's Garden BirdWatch survey.

As someone who did just that many years ago and completed 15 years of record keeping, I would encourage everyone who feeds their garden birds to take part. I found it a fascinating exercise, learning a great deal about recognising different species and their habits, not to mention the main object of recording their numbers. Over time I observed the rise and decline of different species, especially greenfinches when they were struck by disease. I was also surprised by my nuthatches spurning the feeder containing nuts and devouring the black sunflower seeds.

On the practical side it is not difficult completing the weekly returns. I expect it can all be done online now. For those without computers I feel sure that you can still fill in the forms by hand as I used to do. The staff at the BTO are delightful and always ready to help with queries. They are based in Thetford in Norfolk, where I once had the pleasure of visiting them.

Taking part in the survey brought me immense pleasure. Every one of the birds illustrated in Charles's article has visited my garden. My grandchildren were fascinated by Grandma's hobby and loved helping her to count the different birds while learning to recognise them for themselves.

I would like to thank Charles for his excellent monthly articles and illustrations. He must spend a great deal of time preparing them. I know how much of his time he gives to helping the church and community and it is very much appreciated.

Aurea Gregory

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## Yoga by Zoom

Before lockdown I was teaching beginners yoga courses at the Benenden Memorial Hall, so that the parish now has 18 new yoga practitioners, all of them finding the benefit of slowing down, stretching the body to shift energy, building strength and stamina and focusing on the breath to find a little pause and calm.

Now, more than ever, yoga, and in particular breathwork practices, can be of benefit to help turn off our 'fight or flight' mode and instead engage the 'rest and relax' parasympathetic nervous system to bring us back into equilibrium.

If this sounds just what you need then please join Wild Orange Yoga for free breathwork and meditation classes every Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, 8.45-9am via Zoom. No experience required.

I am also teaching three yoga classes a week (slow-paced, anatomically sound) and a four-week Yoga for Beginners course is planned for start in June - date to be confirmed, all via Zoom. One-to-one or one-to-two classes are also available. Please email me to join the breathwork circle or for more information on the classes.

Sally Dernie [info@wildorangeyoga.co.uk](mailto:info@wildorangeyoga.co.uk)

## Christian Aid week

Sadly COVID-19 put paid to door-to-door collections this year but a JustGiving site was set up - with some trepidation, I might add - and donations flowed in. Some people had trouble logging on to the site, but David Commander set up a link and QR code on the St George's website and that seemed to help. Some people preferred the old method of cash and cheques, which were all very acceptable, and by 20 May we had raised just over £2,000, which is a remarkable amount and a great effort. A huge vote of thanks goes out to all who donated.

For me this is a much better way of receiving donations and I would like to hope that we can repeat the exercise next year, but with better advertising to make people aware of the JustGiving site. Stay safe.

Tracy Claridge, local Christian Aid Organiser  
240454 [Christianaid@tlclaridge.co.uk](mailto:Christianaid@tlclaridge.co.uk)

**FOURWORD**  
1 GRAM, 2 RAGA, 3 AGOG, 4 MAGA

4	5	2	8	6	7	1	3	9
3	8	7	9	1	2	6	5	4
6	9	1	3	5	4	7	8	2
8	6	3	1	2	5	4	9	7
7	4	5	6	3	9	8	2	1
1	2	9	4	7	8	5	6	3
9	3	4	7	8	6	2	1	5
5	7	8	2	9	1	3	4	6
2	1	6	5	4	3	9	7	8

**SUDOKO**

14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
W	P	A	G	B	T	C	V	Z	M	S	Y	E
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
O	F	I	L	R	K	D	X	Q	N	J	H	U

**CODWORD No1**

Across: 7 Old age, 8 Splendid, 9 Sardonic, 10 Neuron, 11 Camellia, 12 Mutual, 13 Tobacconist, 18 Anonym, 20 Inedible, 22 Bitten, 23 Begrudge, 24 Sun visor, 25 Gluing  
Down: 1 Almanac, 2 San Diego, 3 Kennel, 4 Clansman, 5 Unhurt, 6 Bipolar, 8 Social climber, 14 Admonish, 15 Stimulus, 16 Envious, 17 Elegant, 19 Native, 21 Engage

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# The Story of our Shop

## How a once struggling business has become the heart of the village

This month heralds a very special anniversary for Benenden's, five years on from the day it came into being as a community shop, although in that time it has become such a major part of the village that it feels as if it has been operating for much longer. Indeed, it was a shop for many years before, but not in its present guise, and in other ways it still has a delightful glossy newness about it which belies its age. Here we have attempted to recount how it came about, how it operates and how we hope the future for this wonderful venture will pan out.

Bev Beveridge



### HOW THE ADVENTURE UNFOLDED NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2014

Benenden Girls' School needs more accommodation for its staff, while there is a real possibility of the village losing its shop as it is failing to sustain itself. Faced with these two problems, Martin Pexton and Steve Simmonds discuss a great solution with Sam Price, headmistress of the school. The school buys the building and a newly formed community shop leases the commercial space.

### FEBRUARY

2015 The start-up committee of ten dedicated people is formed, under the leadership of Martin. The committee engages the services of the Plunkett Foundation, whose support and guidance is invaluable when setting up a rural community enterprise.



FEBRUARY-APRIL 2015 Convoluted negotiations ensue as the school purchases the premises and the start-up committee struggles with the complex task of learning how to set up shop. Various grants are applied for but more costs become apparent as the building requires significant restoration work. The committee decides to offer shares in the venture to the villagers.

29 APRIL 2015 A well-attended meeting in the village hall yields £70,000 from generous, enthusiastic residents. Each share costs £10 and everyone who buys shares is an equal shareholder, regardless of how many they buy.

JUNE 2015 Benenden School now owns the premises and the old shop closes. A substantial fit-out is needed so a temporary site, the Kitty Fisher, is found for the new shop, thanks to the generosity of Mark and Lucy Barron-Reid, landlords of the Bull. The village turns out in force, complete with TV coverage, to move everything from the old building to the temporary one across the road. →





➔ **JUNE 2015-JANUARY 2016** The shop operates from the Kitty Fisher for longer than anticipated due to previously unseen, expensive complications with the fit-out. More funds need to be raised so a second share issue produces a further £15,000 and with extra grant money Benenden's is finally completed. Back come the eager volunteers to cart all the stock across the road to the new shop again.



**DECEMBER 2016** By December the average monthly turnover in the shop is about £32,000. The shop and café account for 80% and 20% of the sales respectively, but the profit margin in the café is higher and this is the vital factor in making Benenden's viable as a business.





## WHERE WE ARE NOW

**THE SHOP** Under the competent leadership of Mel Harris and her managers Sue Butchers (who was with us from the very beginning until she retired last month), Nicola Jaffray-Dann and Nikki Stables, it has continued to go from strength to strength. Together with loyal volunteers, they provide an excellent service with a friendly approach and gradually Benenden's has become a much treasured hub of the village. There are many regular customers as well as a fair amount of passing trade and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

**VOLUNTEERS** There are around 50 volunteers registered to help in the shop and café at present. Many of them have a regular slot when they come in and support the managers and without these people Benenden's would simply not be able to exist. They are hugely appreciated but we're always looking for more. We hold regular volunteer evenings where we get together socially and have some fun. Many of us have found this a great way to get to know new people in the village and to learn new skills. All are welcome to volunteer and from personal experience, I can say that it really is incredibly rewarding.



**LOCAL SUPPLIERS** Benenden's seeks to support local suppliers as much as possible, which accounts for the great quality of our goods and the reduction of our carbon footprint. A small selection of our local suppliers includes Hinxden Farm and Curd and Cure for our dairy products, Biddenden Vineyard for wines and cider, Cranbrook Bakery for bread and cakes, Old Dairy and Harvey's for beers and Korkers for frozen sausages and burgers. —>

**THE CAFÉ** Run by skilled managers Lorraine Charsley and Penny Roberts, with a stoic bunch of volunteers who can now call themselves qualified baristas, the café has developed in a way which has exceeded so many expectations. The menu, although not extensive due to space limitations, is high quality and the café has consistently been awarded the top rating of five stars from the Food Standards Agency.



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→ **LOCKDOWN SERVICES** During the recent restrictions, this little shop has sought to remain open to serve the local community and it has done so with amazing success and good humour from the staff. These are comments taken from a variety of emails and cards sent to the shop:

- \* With thanks for all that you do. We are so lucky to live where we do and so lucky to have you!
- \* Thank you for keeping the terrific service of the shop going for Benenden.
- \* Just wanted to say a big thank you to all of you. I have been into the shop this afternoon for some essentials. You all made me feel so welcome and I will be taking you up on your offer to phone through a shopping list in the week and pay over the phone so that I don't have to come into the shop. Once again thank you for making what was a very nervous trip into a much more relaxed experience than I imagined.
- \* Thank you for being so brave in ensuring the village is stocked and fed, at great personal risk to yourselves. This village/parish will owe you guys a big debt and I would personally like to help to thank/reward you all.
- \* The amazing team and all the wonderful volunteers behind the scenes give so much time to make our village shop such a wonderful meeting place for so many people. Thank you all for keeping Benenden's going for us all ... remember that what you are all doing is so appreciated.



## The long road to financial stability

The shop's financial position has changed remarkably since we started trading in June 2015. At that point we had raised about £70,000 in share capital and had hopes from some grant applications, but the costs of the fit-out for the shop were uncertain and we faced making an operating loss until we could open the café.

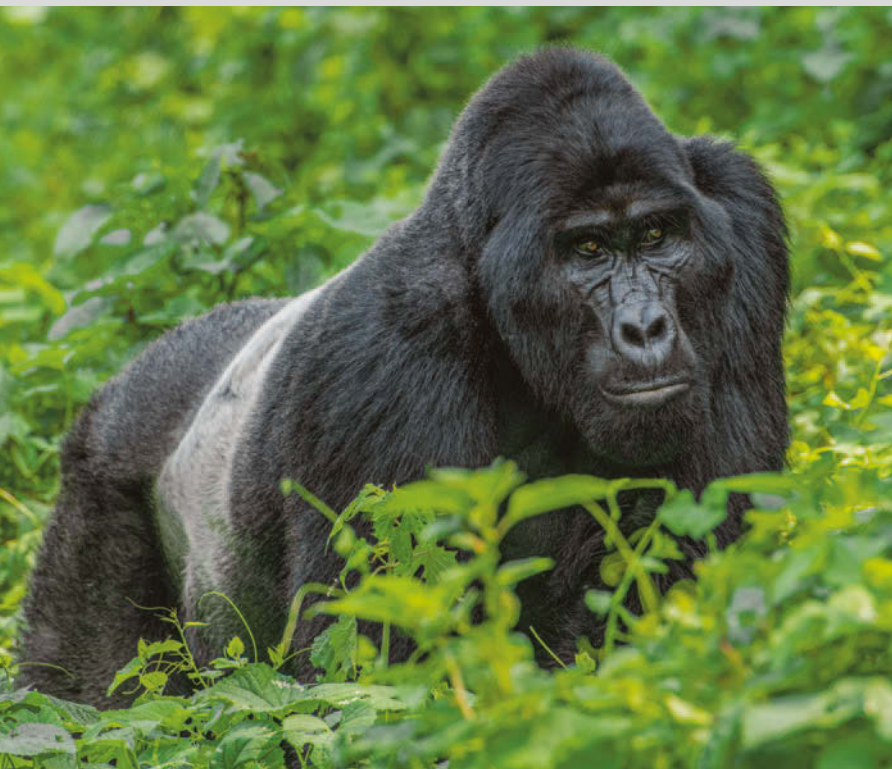
As expected, we lost money in our first year, but we had sufficient resources to see us through - in total we raised over £100,000 in shares and grants in 2015-16. Because finances were so tight we also took out a £19,000 loan and we will always be grateful to those who helped us in those difficult times, including Mark and Lucy who let us use the old Kitty Fisher rent free.

Once the café was up and running we could see our way to financial stability. In our second year, turnover surged to £400,000 and we just scraped a profit. Since then we have slowly edged up to about £450,000 and have been steadily profitable. This is thanks to Mel's sourcing of a good product range and careful management of margins, with the support of a great team of managers and a small army of volunteers.

Being financially healthy has enabled us to pay off our loan and to reinvest in better equipment for the shop and café. When we launched we said that if we made surpluses (then a distant dream) one use would be to give to good causes in our community. It has therefore been great to be able to do this. In 2018-19 we gave over £5,000 towards the new Benenden village playground and in 2019-20 we donated £20,000 - £10,000 towards the new Iden Green playground and £10,000 to the village hardship fund.

Are we surviving financially in these difficult times? The loss of income and profit from the café for an indefinite period is clearly a concern, and if this had arisen in our early years we would have been in trouble. However, we have reached a level of sales in the shop which covers most of our cash overheads and we have healthy cash reserves, so we have every reason to be optimistic and grateful.

Martin Pexton



## Face to face with a giant of the jungle

How wildlife photographer Nick Penny left the village to meet Uganda's endangered mountain gorillas

As we all know by now, danger can take many and unexpected forms, but one of the most obvious comes in the shape of a 180kg mountain gorilla. It's a peril rarely sighted in Benenden, but when Nick Penny ventured out of the village on a conservation project to the depths of Uganda, he came face



to face with one of the most unnerving sights in the animal kingdom.

It started with a mischievous youngster who had a penchant for sneaking up on people and grabbing their trousers, but the situation escalated when a huge and protective 'silverback' lost patience with the team of conservationists our man was working with and decided to warn them that their observation time was up.

"He was quite tolerant but when he'd had enough, he'd had enough and he'd let you know it," says Nick, "and one day he full-on charged me and one of the trackers. He got up, standing taller than me and with huge bulk, beat his chest a few times then ran right up to us, stood there

on all fours about a metre away with his teeth showing, and you could feel the brute force coming off him. You can't run because that invites a chase you're not going to win, so you have to stand strong.

"It felt like forever but it was probably only ten seconds before he'd made his point and turned round and walked off. My hands were shaking for 20 minutes."

For many of us it would have been a trauma too far, but for 20-year-old Nick it was an integral part of the childhood dream that had begun while he was growing up in Benenden - his grandfather Gordon had been the village doctor for three decades - with "hugely supportive" parents Adam and Sue, who had nurtured his interest in photography using a manual Pentax film camera. "I can't

remember a time when I didn't want to be a wildlife photographer and film maker," he recalls, and when he ended his time at the village pre-school and primary school, followed by secondary education at Uplands in Wadhurst, he made the leap to a course in Marine and Natural History Photography at Falmouth University.

An early fascination with Attenborough documentaries and Big Cat Diaries metamorphosed into undersea

encounters with aggressive spider crabs in Cornwall, as well as dolphins, sharks and eagle rays in Egypt, and the course of his life was set. He became involved with The Fox Project in Tunbridge Wells, spent last summer working for Jubilee Hire to save up for a state-of-the-art Nikon camera, set about planning his final-year project in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest





National Park - with the help of an organisation called Conservation Through Public Health - and with a one-month research permit, headed deep into the rainforest for a privileged encounter with

one of the world's most significant populations of the endangered mountain gorilla.

He'd already been given exclusive access by the Aspinall Foundation to photograph the gorillas at Port Lympne in Kent, but this conservation research was a different experience entirely. "I went with the advance tracker team, setting off an hour before the tourists," he explains, "making first contact with the gorillas, seeing if they were okay, if they were all together, if there had been any fights, and that's when I took quite a lot of my images, when they weren't completely aware we were there and I could get some really natural shots and footage of the young gorillas grooming and playing in the trees. The tourists came for an hour - in fact, the researchers were mostly looking into gorilla stress levels when tourists arrived - and then we'd stay on for another few hours to monitor them, sit back and let them move on.

"I did about 20 gorilla treks and every day I had to pinch myself at how amazing it all was and remind myself not to take any of it for granted. They're so human and you get to learn their personalities and the group dynamic, and every day you'd learn a little bit more about all the individuals."

University life down in Falmouth has finished (rather abruptly) for Nick



([www.nickpennyphotography.com](http://www.nickpennyphotography.com), @nickp.pics) but now he has his sights firmly set on a career in wildlife photography. "The absolute dream is to be a commissioned Nat Geo photographer, but that's like becoming an actor and wanting to be a Hollywood star," he says. For the time being he is, like the rest of us, locked down in the area where he once belonged to the Benenden Scouts and played for Sissinghurst FC.

As soon as restrictions are lifted, however, he'll be off again in search of adventure. "It was a relief to get back in one piece when the coronavirus situation was just starting, and it's always nice to come back to Benenden," he explains, "but once you go to Africa you're hooked - and I'm hooked."

Peter Thomas



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## Another pandemic in a different world

Borough and county councillor Seán Holden, who in 1998 made a Meridian ITV film on the Black Death, studies the parallels with the coronavirus outbreak

When life turns upon us, snarling, as it has now, unexpected fellow feelings may bloom across the world and across time. A friend forged such generational links with our distant ancestors when his 'lockdown' dog walk took in a 'Black Death church', looming like a tombstone among fields and trees, a memorial to another pandemic in the same landscape as ours.

The ordeal of 1348, though, was fiercer. Foreshadowing today's financial worries, gradual economic destruction rather than instant pandemic devastation left many churches standing sentinel above grassed-over settlements. People freed from feudalism's hold in a dramatically altered economy, moved away. Villages, like economic certainties, fell in upon themselves.

The Black Death began in China in 1346. It struck Iceland in 1350, killing in passing perhaps a third of humanity. Chronicles show the exact day, 24 June 1348, it found England. A Gascon ship docked with dying and dead crewmen at Melcombe Regis, in Dorset. Plague-carrying fleas sprang from ship's rats and infection invaded hamlet, town and city until half the English were dead.

Few villages were wholly destroyed because 'herd immunity' took effect. Genetic chance spared about a third infected by flea-borne bubonic and septicaemic plague but the pneumonic variant, spread by coughs and sneezes, invariably killed. Unlike COVID-19, this plague ravaged youngsters worst.

Self-isolation saved one privileged 14th-century practitioner. Pope Clement VI kept to Avignon Palace, continually burning incense, which may have kept rats socially distant. How his incense, loo-roll equivalent and food suppliers fared is unknown. Brutally mixing isolation and social distancing did cut deaths in Milan - families were boarded up instantly one 'tested positive'. Plague doctors' famous, scary personal protective equipment - broad-brimmed hats, gowns and bird-beaked masks holding anti-plague herbs - however, are 17th-century not 14th.

We understand what causes our pestilence. Our ancestors only saw a wrathful god or, in Europe, 'well-poisoning' Jews, duly massacred in their thousands. Today, theories of divine vengeance for unbelief, gay marriage and the like - and Jews (again) - are updated by conspiracy maniacs burning G5 phone masts. We understand but, like our ancestors, haven't a cure. Ironically, plague is curable - unless antibiotics fail.

Respecting sadly those lost in 2020 we, fortunately, won't know the scale of horror endured 20 generations ago, so bleakly chronicled: "No bells tolled; nobody wept, no matter what his loss, because everyone expected death and said, and believed, 'this is the end of the world'."





## My allotment adventure

Nancy Tolhurst started growing vegetables just three years ago and embarked on an adventure that has proved extremely satisfying and tasty, despite a glut of courgettes and runner beans! As I watched the great toilet-roll-buying crisis one thing gave me comfort: the runner-bean glut of summer 2019.

It's a fleeting moment of satisfaction that most amateur allotment-eers will have experienced at some point. I knew I had a good

supply of home-grown runners and broad beans hoarded safe in my freezer. No matter how bad the lockdown might become, at least we would have some vitamins.

Thanks to a friend with more green space than



green fingers I have managed to construct a veg plot. She watched and helped as I built first four, then a further two raised beds, and filled them with topsoil. Said friend has now twisted my arm to write an article for those wondering if 'grow your own' is a good response to long days staying at home and wanting to stay home and stay safe.

Crop selection is important. I had to try asparagus of course. This meant waiting three



years to get a sensible crop, and dedicating one whole bed to just one crop, but so far it's been pretty simple. I bought the dormant plants ('crowns') in the early spring, dug a trench, added some well-rotted manure to the bottom of the trench, some of the soil, and then built a little ridge along which I planted the crowns. I kept them watered, protected them from wind damage, and fed them in the spring and, while my three-year-old asparagus is a little wonky, it's tasty, and delivers that inner glow of self-

satisfaction that is the true reward of amateur gardeners.

Tomatoes were much less of a success. Having the plot a mile or so away during a very hot and dry summer just meant frequent, sometimes daily,



trips to water the plants. They are now returned to a pot on the patio at home. You do need to think about how looking after the veg will fit in with daily life.

Garlic has proved prolific, easy to grow and usefully easy to freeze and store. With a strong smell it's difficult to confuse with any other plant or weed. Useful if, like me, your pen isn't rain-proof, so another tip: label your plants and beds.



Grow things you like to eat. Swiss chard is striking with fabulous white, yellow and red stems; kale plants are big and impressive. While we like both, I did begin to resent trying to come up with meals to go with the veg. And one truly crucial hint: you only need one courgette plant for two people. Four was a big mistake!

Potatoes are delight. You bury them, then you get leaves, you mound up the earth around the leaves ('earthing up'), and then harvest.



They may appear complicated at the garden centre, but first earlies can be planted and harvested first (late March), then second earlies (early April), then maincrop (late April). Once you've had a firtle

around to check if they are ready (earlies from mid-summer once the flowers open, maincrops once the leaves turn yellow), you have the joy of lifting lovely plump spuds. You can grow them in pots as well.

My favourite has been beetroot. Nice large seeds that are easy to plant, distinctive seedlings that are therefore easy to weed, and once they are big enough to eat you can leave them in the bed until you need beetroot or



they flower. Sowing little and often ('succession sowing') will result in several waves of beetroot to roast, mash, grate into salads, make into borscht, and also works well to help you reduce gluts of carrots, lettuce, radishes, and all sorts of other crops.

Finally, I'd recommend you grow a treat for the gardener. I have lots of raspberry plants. While planting and weeding, pruning, watering and picking are quite hard work, somehow not many actual raspberries ever made it home.



If you fancy growing veg at home, remember it will involve effort, thought and some planning. Don't expect to be able to fully feed yourself and your family but do enjoy the minor triumphs and

disasters. You'll be outside watching nature at work, learning how to combat pests (watch out for bugs and birds), and nurturing your crops. There are loads of really helpful websites and magazines with tips and suggestions, and crucially for us newbies, 'what to do when' gardening calendars. I started with the RHS and Gardener's World, but most garden centres and seed companies have resources that will help too.



## Grow your own meadow

I have been trying to persuade a client of mine to let some areas of his lawn grow long. This has been a challenge I have yet to win. His lawn is immaculately mown every week by a lovely chap called Bryan (found him on Twitter) and I suspect Bryan is part of the problem as he, naturally, is also fond of a 'putting green sward'. I therefore suspect that they are working in cahoots.

My angle is that first and foremost it will provide a nectar-rich area in the garden - a safe haven for all manner of wildlife to hide and run - not to mention increase its biodiversity. This can only be a good thing. There are a number of very beautiful trees which I have suggested would fit the bill for this experiment: a huge catalpa and an ancient crab apple, with areas of long grass and wild flowers swaying gently nearby it would look breathtaking. But no, he is not convinced.

He doesn't mind the 'meadow-effect' per se, it's the bit afterwards in July when you have to mow it all down - "it makes the lawn look all brown and yellow for too long". Bryan is sucking in his cheeks at this point too. And

therein lies the problem: it does make the lawn look unsightly, but as it is in so many other areas of our gardens, we have to experiment, move our gardens forward and try new things. I know that the lawn will soon green-up; I know that if it is cut at the right time the seed will drop and next year's area of rough grass will be even better than the last; I know that if it doesn't work then there is no need to repeat the exercise the following year.

I don't know how many of you were aware of #SayNoMow - or possibly the slogan 'No mow in May'. These were two messages sent out during the early days of the lockdown and it was really a call to gather momentum, leave areas of our gardens untouched and allow the wildlife to settle. Actually I think it went quite a long way to convince many of us that our gardens are not entirely ours to behold, and leaving lawned areas to grow long is hopefully a lightbulb moment for many of us that we should tend our garden alongside, and ultimately share it with, the natural world.

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