

# Benenden Magazine

December 2018





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# Editorial



It seems we approach the end of the year under a cloud of considerable uncertainty - both nationally and locally. To avoid anyone choking on their turkey I'll refrain from adding more to the Brexit debate, but closer to home we really do have to address the problem of future development in our village. A huge amount of work had gone into preparing the Neighbourhood Development Plan which is now approaching draft stage. The final document will be put to a plebiscite (I hesitate to use the "R" word) of residents and then will have to be approved by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. But, as was starkly outlined in last month's magazine, the type of development being considered is some distance removed from that envisaged by the Parish Plan - and, indeed, by the NDP's own mission statement on its website ([www.benendenneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.benendenneighbourhoodplan.org)).

This issue of the magazine carries a lively debate on the pros and cons of the development likely to be recommended by the NDP. It needs to be carefully considered because YOU are going to have to vote on it, and your choice may be between accepting an uncomfortable compromise or ending up with no deal at all. Now, where have we heard that before?

Let's hope for some respite from all politics over the Christmas period. All at the Benenden Magazine wish you Season's Greetings and Good Cheer for the New Year.

Kent Barker, Co-Editor

The Benenden Magazine is published monthly as a joint venture by Benenden Parish Council and St George's Parochial Church Council. It is distributed free to all residents of the parish. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the publishers. Responsibility for accuracy of information rests with contributors and advertisers. Neither the publishers nor the editors shall be held responsible for or endorse any opinions, products or services printed in the magazine or directory.

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# 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: Julia 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 or would like a visit or home communion.

Sunday 2 December	8am Communion	10am All-age Communion and Sunday School	5pm Advent Carol Service: Service of Light
Sunday 9 December	8am 1662 Communion	10am Morning Worship	5pm Evening Prayer at Mission Church
Wednesday 12 December		2pm Primary School Nativity	
Friday 14 December		5pm Saint Ronan's School Carol Service	
Sunday 16 December	8am Communion	10am Sung Eucharist	
Wednesday 19 December			7.30pm Parish Carol Service
Sunday 23 December	8am Communion	10am Morning Worship	
Christmas Eve		3pm Crib Service	11.30pm Communion
Christmas Day	8am Communion	10am Family Service 10.45am Communion	
Sunday 30 December	8am Benefice Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst	10am Benefice All-age Communion	

## Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Every Tuesday 10am Communion

## Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

## The Roman Catholic Chapel TN17 4EL

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

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

## From the Parish Registers

Funerals	5 November	John Arthur "Art" Cowling	Funeral Kent and Sussex Crematorium
	7 November	Else Elliott	Interment
	16 November	Ann Wickham	Funeral Kent and Sussex Crematorium
	17 November	Ann Wickham	Thanksgiving Service
	21 November	Daisy and John Walsh	Interment

# Rector's Letter



## Learning from the past

“Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom.” (James 3:13)  
Read to us on Sunday evening as we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the end of the “war to end all wars”, by Barnabas, a boy not much younger than some who signed up. Four years, three months and two weeks of a bloody, horrific and tragic event in world history that cost men, boys - whole families and communities - their lives.

To say that that war was wrong, would take away the value of the millions of individual lives that were lost and the millions of lives affected by loved ones killed, gassed or injured. On the eve of the Armistice, 10 November 1918, a sermon was preached by Revd T.A. Lacey, Canon of Worcester; in it he said that war, “is the fruit of the folly and the sin of men.” But sometimes it is right to stand up and maintain important principles. It is right to stand up against dictators or terrorism or extremism, even though there might be a huge cost. But ‘principles’ can be very costly, and lead us to make decisions which, if we were to look back on them and analyse them, we can often think, “How did we get here?” Sound familiar?

So how do we see the folly of doing something, ‘whatever the cost’, before it’s too late? That is wisdom. Wisdom is knowing when to make a stand, when it is right to fight; and when it is right to, ‘let it go’. Wisdom comes from looking back and learning from the past and applying it.

If we believe that God is the God of creation, he is the God of all creation. That means he is the God of those whom we might find ourselves fighting against or disputing with as we stand up for a principle. Both sides in the Great War were, predominantly, Christian societies. Both sides would have been praying to God for victory - to the same God! Both sides had much in common.

If wisdom is about applying to life what we learn in life, when are we going to grow in wisdom and learn from Jesus when he was asked, “Which commandment is the most important?” He replied, “Love the Lord your God. And love your neighbour as yourself.” However, loving your neighbour as yourself is not an easy thing to learn; and certainly is not an easy thing to put into practice! That, though, is what God hopes we will all eventually learn.

Whilst there are times when we have to stand by a principle, perhaps the world would be better if all humanity could stand by a higher principle: with all learning to live together loving our neighbour as ourselves. Until that day, God still cries at what His creation does to one another, as both sides in a conflict suffer. As we celebrate again the birth of Jesus this Christmas time, let us remember the wisdom that baby brought to us.

Revd David Commander, Rector

# Village Calendar

## December

Saturday 1	Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra, St George's Church, 7.30pm	p.11
Saturday 1	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Club, 8.30pm	
Sunday 2	Advent Carol Service: The Service of Light, St George's Church, 5pm	p.9
Monday 3	Advent: Windows of Opportunity, Revd Rosemary Kobus van Wengen, St George's Church, 2pm	p.9
Friday 7	Woodland Wide Games, Iden Green Congregational Church, 7pm	
Tuesday 4	Christmas Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.21
Monday 10	Parish Council Meeting, Memorial Hall, 7pm	
Wednesday 12	Benenden Primary School Nativity Service, St George's Church, 2pm	
Saturday 15	Christmas Wreath Making, Blue Hen Flowers, 10.30am	p.11
Saturday 15	Christmas Party and Meat Raffle Draw, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 18	Merry and Bright, Christmas Party, Memorial Hall, 3pm	
Wednesday 19	Preparing the Church for Christmas, St George's Church, 10am	
Wednesday 19	Parish Carol Service by Candlelight, St George's Church, 7.30pm	
Saturday 22	Christmas Draw, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Christmas Eve	The Crib Service, St George's Church, 3pm	p.17
Christmas Day	Christmas Lunch, Memorial Hall, 12.30pm-4.30pm	p.9
Monday 31	New Year's Eve Party, St George's Club, 8.15pm	

## Benenden Youth Club/Streetcruizer, age 11+

Tuesdays at Benenden Village Hall, 6.30-8.30pm

## Coffee Shop

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-12noon

## Benenden Bowls Club

Thursdays on the recreation field, practice night, 6.30pm

## Cakes & Chaos: Cafe and Toddler Group

Fridays during term time in St George's Church, 9-11.30am

## Refuse Lorry Collections

Saturday 1 December for Garden/Compostable Waste

Benenden, Village Hall layby, 8-9.20am and Iden Green, crossroads, 9.40-11am

Saturday 15 December for Domestic Waste

Benenden, Village Hall layby, 8-9.20am and Iden Green, crossroads, 9.40-11am

# Parish Council



Thank you to all who volunteered at our autumn village clean - we had another successful morning with around 30 volunteers happy to give their time to keep Benenden tidy. As always a large number of sacks were filled with rubbish, most of which was not gathered from the village centre, but from the busy main roads around it. Thank you also to all who take time to pick up rubbish regularly throughout the rest of the year - your contribution is very much appreciated.

I am going to call on your community spirit again, this time to ask for volunteers to help resurrect our Speedwatch group. We share the cost of the equipment needed with other local parishes, but have not been active participants for some time now. If you would like to offer your time to help gather information for the police using our Speedwatch equipment (training will be given), please contact Gregg Stapley ([gregg1.stapley@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:gregg1.stapley@hotmail.co.uk)), who has kindly offered to head up the group of volunteers required.

Opinions and views on the progress of our NDP are always welcome and it's only human nature that it can sometimes be self-interest that motivates these opinions. This is perfectly understandable from homeowners concerned about the possibility of development nearby.

We need to listen to these views and take into account their concerns, while ensuring nobody is seeking to influence the progress of the plan for their own ends. Read the debate on page 18 and make up your own mind.

Sadly the NDP is not an opportunity for Benenden to write its own letter to Santa Claus. If only it was as simple as that! It is about preparing a cohesive, workable and above all deliverable planning document for the village.

I hope you all have a very happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair  
01580 240364 [nic.jthomas@btinternet.com](mailto:nic.jthomas@btinternet.com)

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  
Monday 10 December 2018,  
Memorial Hall, 7pm



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# Just a Thought



## Venture into the attic

Entering the attic is an action that often produces very mixed feelings. It may be that you are collecting something you know is there or you may be desperately entering it as a last resort for the location of a missing item. But whatever the reason, this is a world like no other. It provides a strange snapshot of the various phases of yours and others' lives and you don't know whether to explore it or leave well alone.

We have lived and worked in many places over the globe and this has necessitated clearing the house and storing some of the contents in the attic. One time we made the mistake of putting all the boxes of books, of which we had rather too many, neatly into just one part of the attic. The subsequent crack in the ceiling below was rather unfortunate. Inevitably there was never enough room and we had to persuade our parents to accept some items into their loft. This action came home to roost when our own children subsequently presented us with their treasures. We could hardly refuse.

Despite every intention of being organised, the contents of the attic take on the look of the first delivery of donated items for the village fete. There is grandma's beautiful possibly antique chair; a set of DIY shelves put by for when we have time; a defunct fan; bits of carpet (that might be useful); framed pictures of forgotten origin; the remains of a wasp nest and an inordinate number of boxes and suitcases of every size and design imaginable.

Delving in to any one of the boxes is bound to evoke memories of one kind or another. Old documents, letters, school reports, 'projects', detailed dissection drawings of dogfish, a draft university thesis, outdated flying licence, madrigal group concert tour programmes ... an endless source for emotions from appalled, through nostalgia, to amazed. The suitcases present their own problems. Some contain long-forgotten clothes probably now most suitable for the grandchildren's dressing-up box, whilst others are full of yet more suitcases in a manner that gives Russian doll sets a run for their money. And now there is a more practical challenge - the hatch space, through which all must enter and leave, is now smaller than it was. This is due to the installation of a modern folding ladder to replace the unwieldy step-ladder of the past. The truth must be faced that some items will never leave the world of the attic in the form in which they arrived!

For many years this attic world was explored with the help of a torch but finally an electric light was installed, thus replacing the hazardous business of managing the flashlight whilst negotiating the water tanks, avoiding stepping on flimsy boards between the beams, and carrying whatever was being extracted whilst bent nearly double.

All I went up for this time was our box of favourite Christmas decorations, lights, the realistic robin, the fat fairy and too much tinsel!

Sue Fisher

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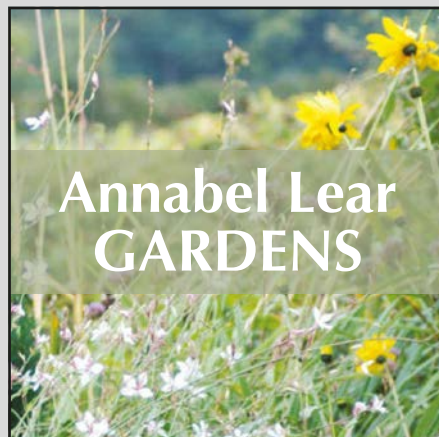
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# News and Events

## Alone on Christmas Day?

Please come and join us at the Memorial Hall for a lovely lunch, great company, a word from Her Majesty at 3pm and bonhomie of the highest order. The menu is simple, freshly produced and delicious. Salmon blinis and sausage rolls to start with as we meet and mingle from 12.30pm, then we sit down for turkey with all the trimmings, Christmas pudding or fruit salad, cheese, coffee and mince pies.

From 1 November, please sign up at the village shop. There is no charge, but if you would like to make a donation, it would be gratefully received on the day. Any profit and leftover food will go to Catching Lives ([www.catchinglives.org](http://www.catchinglives.org)).

Please advise any eating allergies/vegetarian/vegan/gluten free etc when booking. Any offers of food donations for the lunch, please contact: Tracy Claridge 240454 [maisonsicheluk@tlclaridge.co.uk](mailto:maisonsicheluk@tlclaridge.co.uk)

## Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal

In this year of Special Commemoration, the Benenden branch of the Royal British Legion has received a record amount from its Poppy Appeal. It included very generous church collections in both the morning and evening of Remembrance Sunday. We had a substantial contribution from the showing of 'Oh! What a Lovely War', and also from several particularly generous donors. We are most grateful to those who contributed so unselfishly, and to the many who gave their time to undertake the task of house-to-house collection. The interim total for the appeal in Benenden has reached £5,961.

Jane Dalton Holmes, Poppy Appeal Organiser

## ADVENT CAROL SERVICE

### The Service of Light

St George's Church  
Sunday 2 December  
5pm



## WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY



### REFLECTIONS FOR ADVENT

Led by Rosemary Kobus van Wengen

St George's Church, Benenden    Monday 3 December at 2pm  
Refreshments available    All are welcome!

## Distributing a thank you

The only reason your Benenden Magazine arrives at your door each month is because of the hard work of a dedicated team of distributors who battle through the wind and rain and just occasionally some sunshine. They do it for nothing except the satisfaction of getting it done. So everyone at the magazine and, I am sure, the whole village says a big thank you to all involved, not least Dick and Marilyn Hill who have the unenviable task of sorting the bundles and organizing the roster.

KB



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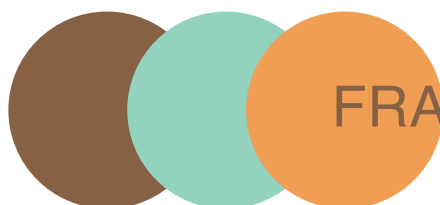
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**Beethoven:**  
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**Sibelius:**  
Andante Festivo

Tickets : Via the CSO website: [www.thecso.org.uk](http://www.thecso.org.uk)  
or Benenden Community Shop: Adults - £10, Students - £5  
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Charity Commission registration no. 1053542 



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## Accommodating organ repairs

We always seek to keep the fine organ at St George's in good condition. In 2014 a small breakage put one set of pipes or 'stop' out of action. The repair would have meant dismantling the instrument at some cost, so it was felt it would make sense to wait until this could be combined with other work to justify the expense. To this end we sought the advice of David Flood, the diocesan organ adviser, who was most helpful and encouraging.

Some improvements had been suggested, particularly the electrification of the action, but this was quickly rejected on account of the cost and being of benefit mostly to recitalists. However one enhancement recommended was to rehang the shutters to face down the nave to improve the sound effect.

Ultimately we selected Bower & Co from Norwich to carry out the work. One feature of their quote was to contain travel costs by asking us to find accommodation locally for their staff during the work.

So we are urgently seeking the following B&B accommodation: two people for the nights of 7 and 8 January, 21 and 22 January and probably 23 January. Also B&B for one person on 28 January. The PCC will pay for this but hope some kind parishioners may be able to help. If you are able to help please contact:  
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## Local Christmas tree business

Hole Park is gearing up for another major rush of Christmas tree sales. Between now and Christmas Eve they expect to sell 14,000 trees to individual customers and retailers in Kent and the South East. They have around 50 acres under cultivation around Benenden, mainly Norway, Norman and Blue spruce which take about ten years to reach six feet. It's an important local business, employing five full time woodmen, and ten seasonal workers. The Christmas tree business was started by the present owner Edward Barham's father around 60 years ago, as a by-product of estate forestry.  
**KB**

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### Just The Ticket Memory Café ~ Every Friday

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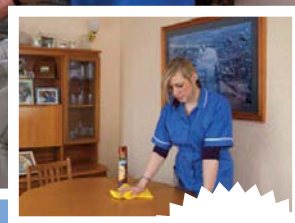
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## Benenden bonfire and fireworks

What an evening was had by those attending the annual bonfire and fireworks on Saturday 3 November. The oohs and aahs preceding the applause at the end of another fantastic display, once again provided by local company Wizard, made it all worthwhile for those on the committee.

We have again been supported by Benenden Hospital Trust, Tate Fencing, Lucy and Mark at The Bull and this year Cranden Diamond products also assisted. Harvey's Brewery, Shepherd Neame and Jubilee Hire were also particularly generous.

There were a lot of challenges leading up to - and on the day of - the event which will be discussed by the committee. Overall the feedback has been incredibly positive which indicates there is an appetite for the event to continue and in that vein, we are keen for new members to join the committee. If interested, please contact us by email address below.

My thanks go personally to the committee members who make the event as seamless as possible and to the 70-plus volunteers who helped during the day or on the evening itself. The aim of Benenden Bonfire Society is to distribute monies to youth groups and/or causes within the Parish, so thanks also go to all those that attend, thereby creating the opportunity to make a profit that can be distributed. Thanks also to Nick Penny for the excellent photographs of the event.

A breakdown of expenditure and income will be in next month's magazine as well as the application process to enable groups and projects to apply for funds from the profits made.

Grant Matthews

Chair, Benenden Bonfire Society  
[info@benendenfireworks.co.uk](mailto:info@benendenfireworks.co.uk)



## Benenden Bell Ringers

Thousands of towers across the country rang out on the very special Armistice 100 on 11 November. Benenden was no exception; we began with our normal Remembrance Sunday half-muffled ringing, the traditional mark of respect in which the bells strike alternately at full volume and a muffled stroke. The muffles were then taken off for some joyful open ringing at 12.30pm in celebration of peace; and we rang again for the lighting of the beacon in the evening, on this occasion being able to ring the full 12 bells.

It has been a demanding year with a number of new ringers to train, all of whom are coming along well. We always need more though - maintaining a local band capable of ringing 12 bells in a village remains a huge challenge and we invite anyone who would like to look at this unique musical art to join us in the tower any Wednesday evening or on Sunday - or contact me or Karen.

Next year is a very special one in the long history of our church - it will be 300 years since the bells were hung in the tower, and there is still one survivor of that original 1719 ring of six bells.

Rod Lebon 240083



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## Panto news

A damn fine show in store!

Mid November and rehearsals are in full swing in the village hall. I can never really tell what inspires our writer Bev Beveridge's bursts of creative lunacy, but occasionally I catch a glimpse. Ant and Dec in the news clearly brought to mind Ant & Geck in 'Raiders...' last year; the highwayman poster in The Bull prompted thoughts of Dick Turpin; and as for Donny Trumpo, the less said the better.

Ideas start flowing during panto season. Once Bev has got a theme in mind and the beginnings of a plot, she buries herself away over summer to write, write and rewrite. There are certain elements that you need: at least one dame, a baddie we can all boo and hiss, young love thwarted, a little bit of magic, some local and topical jokes, and lots of singing and dancing. We need a script and cast list ready by early September and auditions, after which there is always a certain amount of tweaking.

Once the cast have spent some time rehearsing then they start to own the show, creating and building their own characters. As director, Bev's focus moves towards co-ordinating the cast and keeping the whole show on track. There is more time to spend with the rest of the production team; have we got the blend of songs and dance (especially as we now have a great choreographer in Fiona Boorman); managing the cast's ego problems over costume decisions, and working with stage management to create the right set design.

Over December and into January, Bev can focus more on the technical side. Our sound engineer comes equipped with an extensive library of effects and the technical know-how and kit to ensure you can all hear the show. Lighting is the next big area for us to tackle; it can make a very real difference to the atmosphere and drama of

Everyone is invited to ...

The Crib service  
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on Christmas Eve  
at 3pm



It would be lovely if everyone - young and not so young - could come along dressed as a character from the Nativity story: Mary, Joseph, Shepherd, Inn Keeper, Wise-men, Angel, Star, Cow, Sheep, Donkey ... anything appropriate you can think of! This will enable us to bring to life the story of the nativity in a way that will be meaningful and fun for all.

We look forward to seeing you as we create the nativity tableau together.

*David and Helen Commander*

a show. Steve Boorman works wonders with the hotchpotch of equipment we have, but we will need to upgrade the lights over the next few years.

And about this time of year I start to worry again. What is going on in Bev's head right now? We've seen a couple of royal weddings and a baby or two, endless Brexit shenanigans, North Korea, #metoo ...

I write this just after The Trench Foot Revue, our chance to contribute to the village WWI centenary commemorations. I hope we just about managed to hit the right note. Thank you to all the volunteers in the cast, the crew behind the scenes, and you, our lovely audience who, as ever, came, saw, giggled and remembered. We're still tallying up the takings but we have managed to generate a fine total of cash for ABF The Soldiers' Charity.

Finally, tickets go on sale on Monday 3 December for The Legend of King Arthur, online and at our pop-up box office in the community shop. Come along for jesters, goblins, a pantomime parrot, knights, witches and dames. See the ad in this issue for all the details.

*Nancy Tolhurst*

## Debate: Outside the Ticky-Tacky Box

Last month Paul Tolhurst, Chair of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) Steering Committee outlined their current thinking and asked for alternative suggestions and constructive solutions. Here Kent Barker who has a site under consideration by the NDP asks him to comment on a couple.

**KB** Paul, I know you've worked incredibly hard on the Plan, but I was rather alarmed to hear you say "we are considering a few medium sized sites containing 20-50 dwellings." I don't believe this is what the village said it wanted in the Parish Plan nor what people told me they want in the five years I was on the Parish Council. If we are likely to have to accept more than 100 homes as decreed by TWBC, I believe there remains a clear wish for them to be scattered around the 30 or so 'dens' of Benenden on small sites, each with probably no more than half a dozen units. I realise this could look like special pleading from someone who could possibly gain financially from the adoption of small sites - but please believe me my motivation is only for the future of the village.

**PT** I fully understand your point of view. When I became involved in the NDP a spread of small developments around the Parish seemed the best approach to me. However, the latest National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) tries to ensure deliverability. This means allocated sites must be available, commercially viable and sustainable - where sustainable means close to existing settlements. I should also point out small groups of five to six houses will not provide affordable housing, just executive homes. Our Parish Plan 2015 actually says "Further development in the countryside away from the main settlements should be avoided ..." It also says "The LBD should be maintained but should include some key sites within the village envelope". (LBD: Limit of Built Development)

**KB** Yes, a few sites within the village envelope with a couple of houses on each would be fine. But don't forget that with East End and Iden Green we actually have three 'envelopes'. Plus there are already substantial developments at Dingledden and Goddards Green. And there are places like Eaglesden where I've offered some land for three or four affordable live-work homes. My point is that we don't need, or in





my view want, estates of tacky-tacky box houses built by developers. It was clearly commercially viable for English Rural Housing to build the six affordable homes at Vyvyan Cottages in Iden Green a couple of years back. If offered sites, how many other Housing Associations might step up to the plate?

PT I wouldn't describe Goddards Green or Dingleton as substantial developments. NDPs are obliged to create a plan that will deliver sustainable housing of all types to meet a range of needs. That means our plan must be commercially viable. The exception site at Vyvyan Cottages was made possible because the land was offered at a massively discounted price. In the view of the NDP Steering Group, the way to deliver a range of housing types including affordable units is not to hope that landowners will donate land for almost nothing, but to offer mixed developments of 12 or more where 30-35% of homes will be affordable and where the developer is obliged to provide financial support for infrastructure.

KB With respect I don't think the Vyvyan Cottages site was 'massively' discounted by the Harmsworth Memorial Trust - and similar land might anyway be available elsewhere for Housing Associations like English Rural. Have we

approached any to ask? But the point really is that people I have spoken to feel that the NDP is in danger of putting the cart before the horse. I thought the Plan was all about localism ie US saying what WE wanted as a village and then the planners had to take cognisance of it. There seems a danger that you are doing the planners job for them and offering specific sites and saying we accept TWBC guidelines and we'll agree to large developer-led estates. I think we should stand up and say NO - we don't want that type of development for Benenden. There are other ways of fulfilling our responsibilities and we MUST fight for them. Otherwise I fear there's a real danger of having the Neighbourhood Development Plan that you worked so hard on - rejected by the village. And that would leave us truly exposed.

PT The Localism Act gives NDPs and Parish Councils significant influence, but it does not give power to make demands which run counter to National or Borough Policy. You advocate that we fight the planners, I believe it's better to influence them, gaining their support for our Plan. We are also working on site-specific policies covering the types of housing, the design, and how best to ensure they fit within our rural environment.

Do write to the Benenden Magazine with your views on this important topic.

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## Wellbeing in the Weald

Wellbeing is important to us all. It's not just about healthy eating and regular exercise. Wellbeing is more to do with feeling good about ourselves, getting the most out of our lives and feeling connected to other people. It enables us to cope when life gets tough, circumstances change or our health suffers.

'Wellbeing in the Weald' has been formed by a group representing a cross section of the community including a local GP, Dr Dineli Charlesworth.

Our aim is to organise new and promote existing wellbeing activities in the Weald including community walks, lunch clubs, choirs, volunteering and other social activities that bring people together on a regular basis.

Our first project in the New Year will be a variety of Wellness Walks on different days, terrain and distance to suit people of all levels of health or disability. We are in the process of setting up a community choir in January (no singing talent required, just a sense of fun!) - more details to follow once a venue has been confirmed.

We can all feel lost at times - wondering what it's all about, what we're good at or what we enjoy. Yet there are many local people with skills they would love to share with others. We're hoping this project might fill that gap in our community.

Do you attend or would like to lead an activity that promotes wellbeing?

Want to register your interest? We would love to hear from anyone aged 16-106 years.

Do email [wellbeingintheweald@gmail.com](mailto:wellbeingintheweald@gmail.com) or follow us on Facebook / Instagram [#wellbeingintheweald](https://www.instagram.com/wellbeingintheweald)

## Benenden Pre-School news

So far this term the Pre-School themes have covered Guy Fawkes, Diwali - the Hindu Festival of Lights - and autumn. The children have been fully immersed in arts and crafts that help them learn and celebrate the topics. We have seen some fantastic fireworks paintings and pumpkin carvings over recent weeks.

Despite the cold the children have also spent much of their time outside too. As the saying goes 'there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes' and with everyone suited and booted they always have a great time practising their ball skills, playing hide and seek, and making obstacle courses around the garden.

To find out more about Benenden Pre-School, please email: [supervisor@benendenpre-school.co.uk](mailto:supervisor@benendenpre-school.co.uk)

## Village Lunch

Tuesday 4 December, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm

All are welcome. It's just £5 a head. If you need a lift please let us know and we can arrange it. Please call Sheila on 01580 240838, preferably by Friday 30 November, if you haven't already put your name down but would like to come. We would be very grateful if anyone coming to the lunch is able to pick up anyone who needs collecting.

## No sale of Woodcock

The Woodcock Inn at Iden Green remains unsold after several months on the market with an asking price of £445,000 for the freehold. Fleurets, the London estate agents handling the sale, told the Benenden Magazine that there had been 'interest' in the pub but that it was still available.

KB

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Christmas Day: Shop closed

Boxing Day: Shop closed

Thursday 27, Friday 28, Saturday 29:  
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Sunday 30: Shop, Post Office and Café open 9am-1pm

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From Wednesday 2 January onwards, normal opening hours

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## Talking Shop

### Christmas Cheer at the Shop

The many volunteers at Benenden's shop will be celebrating the coming festive season together, at an evening event very soon. This is an opportunity to say thank you to them for giving up their time and efforts to help support our wonderful shop. They will be offered, amongst other things, a glass or two of mulled wine which will be made from items purchased - where else - from the village shop!

Your shop will be open for business right up until Christmas Eve and the volunteers will be giving up their time despite the pressures on family life. So do please support Benenden's over the Christmas period. The Christmas and New Year opening hours will be available on the shop website as usual.

[www.benendens.co.uk](http://www.benendens.co.uk)

Why not make a New Year's resolution to join the volunteer team in 2019? You would be made very welcome and would help to keep our lovely village shop in good heart.

We offer you the recipe for this delectably traditional Christmas drink and pass on our very good wishes for a Happy Christmas.

### MULLED WINE

Mulled wine is thought to have originated in classical times. In the Roman era its popularity spread across their empire and the regions they traded with.

- 1 litre red wine
- 1 litre water
- 1 cinnamon stick
- ½ level tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ level tsp ground nutmeg
- 3 cloves
- 1 orange, thinly sliced
- 1 lemon, thinly sliced
- 120ml unsweetened orange juice
- 120ml brandy
- 4tblsp sugar or runny honey, quantity to taste

### METHOD

- Put all ingredients except the wine and brandy into a large saucepan and heat gently until the sugar is dissolved.
  - Then bring to the saucepan to a moderate boil for about 15mins.
  - Add wine and brandy and heat through but do not boil. Adjust sugar or honey to taste.
- Serve!

Sally Ann Marks

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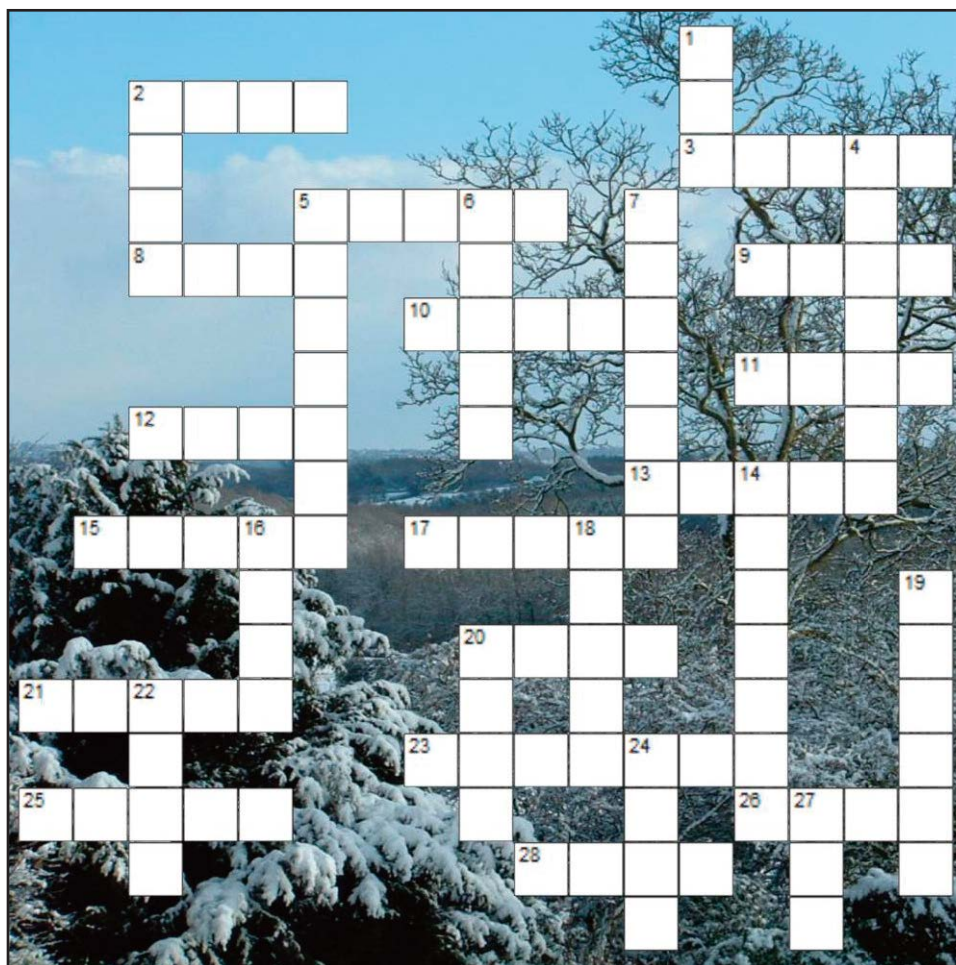
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# The Three Kings Cross Word Association By ASCII

5D	
2A	
19D	
3A	
6D	
25A	
21A	
5A	
27D	
16D	
20D	
11A	
18D	
15A	
24D	
28A	
14D	
7D	
13A	
4D	
1D	
9A	
8A	
2D	
20A	
10A	
22D	
26A	
12A	
23A	
17A	



The completed answers for this puzzle should read like a round of word association. The answers are two-word phrases that fill in two answer spaces.

For example, for **Across 2 and 19D**, the first word of the phrase goes in **2 Across** and the second in **19 Down**. This word will then be the first in another two-word phrase, found by solving the clue at **19 Down**, the second word of this phrase being written in the spaces for **3 Across**. And so it goes on ...

Some clues are cryptic, others much less so.

If you write your answer in the grid to the left of the puzzle, the word association will become clear.

## Across

- 2 and 19D** Cannabis destroyer? (4)  
**3 and 6D** Whelk, Sarah? Hardly! (5)  
**5 and 27D** Refuse date (5)  
**8 and 2D** Fisherman's friend? (4)  
**9 and 8** Ben, a mole, turns to improve 7 and 13A (4)  
**10 and 22D** TV or radio experts display boards? (5)  
**11 and 18D** Go too far (4)  
**12 and 23** Who let rocks mess up overalls? (4)  
**13 and 4D** Bright but untested superhero? (5)  
**15 and 24D** Second pint and full match is 100% more (5)  
**17 and 5D** Steed covering sounds a bit rough (5)  
**20 and 10** Oo! Lewd Pan makes wainscoting, perhaps? (4)  
**21 and 5** Not painting but papering (5)  
**23 and 17** Put washing in the stable? (7)  
**25 and 21** Not for sticking your jaw together (5)  
**26 and 12** Better than commuting? Not for kids! (4)  
**28 and 14D** Cholesterol packed! (4)

## Down

- 1 and 9A** Talk and revise or Samson's club (3)  
**2 and 20A** Bitter but possibly worse if put about (4)  
**4 and 1** Hapsburg feature (7)  
**5 and 2A** Total weakling infesting pond (7)  
**6 and 25A** Jacket pattern (5)  
**7 and 13A** Settlement recycling scheme? (7)  
**14 and 7** Benenden (7)  
**16 and 20** Pavement for crabs? (7)  
**18 and 15A** How pandas eat their bamboo? (5)  
**19 and 3A** Cora's a mixed up mammal (6)  
**20 and 11A** Amble to an easy win (4)  
**22 and 26A** Big enough to put on a performance? (4)  
**24 and 28A** Glass is a little on the bright side (4)  
**27 and 16** Why the ref hates the driving seat (3)



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## News from Benenden School

Half term involved the usual array of adventures, with many of the girls visiting fascinating places through a variety of school trips, including Germany, the United States and the Azores.

Closer to home, Model United Nations and Duke of Edinburgh's groups were representing Benenden in Surrey and Wales respectively and our equestrian team returned to school as National Dressage Champions. This is an exceptional achievement and we are incredibly proud of the girls involved.

The girls were straight back into the thick of things after half term. The Fourth spent four days in Stratford-upon-Avon as part of their Benenden Diploma learning, the upper years visited Parliament, and our company performed a wonderful 30-minute interpretation of Hamlet at the Shakespeare Schools Festival in Tunbridge Wells.

Remembrance Sunday, of course, represented a significant milestone, commemorating 100 years since the end of the First World War. Benenden marked the occasion with a special whole school service that evening, while earlier in the day our Combined Cadet Force paraded and laid a wreath at the village war memorial. It goes without saying that we are honoured to pay our respects and to continually remind the younger generations of how much we all owe to these brave men and women. On a more personal note, I thoroughly enjoyed the evening of the First World War memories in the village hall which I attended with my son and mother-in-law. It showcased everything that is truly special about the spirit of the village, with fine acting, music, dance, recitals and an excellent bar. Thank you so much to all involved.

I would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and I look forward to updating you on school events in the New Year: 2019 will be an exciting year for us, with the start of construction work on our new school hall and music school.

Samantha Price, Headmistress

### JUNIOR TENNIS COACHING

Iden Green Tennis Club is now offering tennis coaching for Junior Members on Fridays during Term Time.



Who: Club Members of 6-18 years



Where: Floodlit Courts at Benenden School



When: Friday Term Time groups from 4.30pm onwards



How much: £4 per session until Easter 2019



Contact for further details:  
[eleanor.cochrane@btinternet.com](mailto:eleanor.cochrane@btinternet.com)

Iden Green Tennis Club junior membership is £20 per year.

## The Benenden Village Trust

The BVT is currently working through a repair and maintenance programme for St George's Building, which includes separating out the electrical supply to the three parts of the property, establishing a common fire alarm system and providing an outside tap to give the Pre-School a water supply in their playground.

The Trust has had useful discussions with the Benenden Players about upgrading the stage lighting in the village hall. A new digital lighting board will be provided by the Trust for use of hirers and Players alike. There will be basic stage lighting for everyday users of the village hall, but anyone wanting more sophisticated stage lighting will be able to arrange it with the Players for an additional charge.

In conjunction with the Parish Council and Play Benenden, the Trust is still considering the best options for the new play area on the recreation ground in Benenden. The donation of a memorial bench for the play area in Iden Green has been gratefully accepted.

Proposals are being drawn up for all residents of Benenden to apply to become members of the Trust and to have a say in electing trustees and at the Annual General Meeting which is likely to be in September 2019.

David Harmsworth

# MEET YOUR MP Helen Grant

Helen Grant, MP for Maidstone and the Weald, holds regular surgeries around the constituency. If you would like to arrange an appointment to discuss an issue of concern to you, please e-mail Helen at [helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk) or telephone **020 7219 7107**.

[www.helengrant.org](http://www.helengrant.org)

Produced by Helen Grant MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA



1:1

Tuition

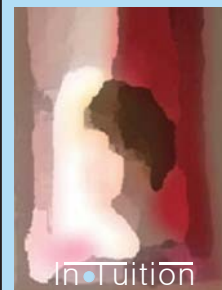
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## Village Hall highlights

Season's greetings to one and all from the trustees and staff of Benenden Village Hall.

You may have noticed an unfamiliar face around the hall in the past couple of weeks. Don't be alarmed, it is a new member of staff, Karen Saunders, who is our caretaker. She will meet and greet you if you have a party or event at the hall. She will also oversee the day-to-day maintenance of the hall.

I will be solely concentrating on the administration, bookings and publicity side of things, so I may be round the hall a bit less - unless I'm partaking in a fitness class or two!

The Christmas tree is now up at the hall and looking very festive. The lovely Carianne Smith-Hamilton from the Friends of Benenden CEP organised the delivery, courtesy of Hole Park Estate. A huge thank you to the Primary School for donating the tree to us again this year. And I have to say a thank you to all those who kindly offered their time helping to put it in place - never an easy task!

Until next month, take care, and enjoy the festive period.

For further information on events and classes check out either our Facebook page @benendenvillagehall or go to:

[www.benendenvillagehall.org](http://www.benendenvillagehall.org)

Lorraine Jones 243123

[enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org](mailto:enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org)

## Iden Green and Benenden WI

We thoroughly enjoyed our lovely annual Christmas party in November with an array of beautiful food. Thank you so much to all who contributed so generously.

We look forward to 2019 and the prospect of more highly enjoyable outings and excellent speakers to listen to.

Date to remember:

Tuesday 15 January, Members' Meeting,  
Memorial Hall, 2-4 pm

Shirley Fidler, President 752232

## Hospice in the Weald

Sweet music for the Hospice

In September, the pianist Daniel Grimwood gave a lovely recital of music by Chopin, Field, Grieg, Tchaikovsky and Henselt, as the latest event in the Richard Beattie Davis Sandhurst Musical series for Hospice in the Weald. It was a beautiful day and we were able to enjoy refreshments out in the garden. Thanks to the generosity of the audience, we raised an amazing £450 after expenses, which brings the final total for 2018 to £1,455 and the grand total to well over £11,000 since Richard departed. In addition we have heard some world-class performances.

Gillian Davis 850384

## Answers

Across: 2 Weed, 3 Whale, 5 Brush, 8 Meal, 9 Bone,  
10 Panel, 11 Over, 12 Work, 13 Green, 15 First,  
17 Horse, 20 Wood, 21 Paste, 23 Clothes, 25 Tooth,  
26 Home, 28 Full

Down: 1 Jaw, 2 Worm, 4 Lantern, 5 Blanket, 6 Shark,  
7 Village, 14 English, 16 Side, 18 Shoot, 19 Killer,  
20 Walk, 22 Show, 24 Half, 27 Off

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## Carol chronicle: In the Bleak Midwinter

Published posthumously in 1904, ten years after the death of Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), the poem *In the Bleak Mid-Winter* would two years later become a plaintive and haunting Christmas carol. Written by Rossetti sometime before 1872, it was not intended as a carol or hymn, but as a Christmas poem at the behest of *Scribner's Monthly*, an American literary magazine.

Rossetti was one of the few hymn writers of her day who garnered a reputation as a poet. She was highly supported by an educated and artistic family. Her father came to England as an Italian patriot and refugee who would become a professor at King's College in London. Her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), was also a poet although he earned greater distinction as a Pre-Raphaelite artist. Possessed of exceptional beauty, Christina often posed as a model for her brother and other contemporary artists. Sadly she was also known to have suffered her own pain and disappointment, some of which registered as sombre verse in the manner of Emily Dickinson, the reclusive American poet.

Gustav Holst (1874-1934), a long-time friend of the celebrated Ralph Vaughan Williams, had a keen interest in Rossetti's works. Best-known for his classical pieces, notably his orchestral masterpiece *The Planets*, Holst elevates *In the Bleak Midwinter* with a hymn-like musical setting that was published in the 1906 *English Hymnal*.

Another popular setting for Rossetti's contemplative poem was produced in 1909 by the English composer, Harold Edwin Darke (1888-1976), while he was a student at the Royal College of Music. His version has been favored by cathedral choirs over the years and it is often featured as part of the *Nine Lessons and Carols*, the annual Christmas radio broadcast by the King's College Choir of Cambridge.

Despite England's long tradition of producing and publishing exceptional carols, *In the Bleak Midwinter* was voted the greatest Christmas carol of all time in a 2008 poll of English choral experts and choirmasters. This is not at all



surprising if your tastes prefer superb Christmas choral singing. Listen closely to the plaintive tune and imagine the gripping scene first depicted in Rossetti's poem: snow falling on a bitterly cold night, the bleakness of winter, the meagre environment attended by farm animals and heavenly angels, and lastly a lone poor woman humbly offering her heart, the most precious of gifts, to the new-born baby Jesus.  
©Ronald Clancy [www.christmasclassics.com](http://www.christmasclassics.com)

## New red altar frontal and chasuble at St George's

Our existing Victorian red altar frontal has become very fragile, to the point where it could not be used without permanent damage being caused to it. We are very lucky that a new red frontal has been designed by Sam Caddick and then created by Pauline Dean. It was used for the first time on Sunday 4 November. We would like to thank Sam and Pauline for their creativity, skills and time in producing the altar frontal for us. It has been joined by an 'off the peg' red chasuble which Valerie Stubbin has kindly shortened for us. Our grateful thanks to all concerned.

Julia Collard, Churchwarden



As you carry your extortionately expensive Christmas tree into the house and contemplate dragging it out again in a few weeks time (minus most of its needles which will by now be clogging up your Hoover) you might, with some reason, curse Prince Albert. For, if legend is to be believed, it was Queen Victoria's hubby who introduced from his native Germany around 1840 the odd tradition of cutting down perfectly good fir trees and covering them with decorations in the front room.

But who was it that gave us the image of Father Christmas that has become so ubiquitous? The portly person with furry red robe, full white beard and that silly Santa hat. Surely the originator should be reviled up and down the land for super-gluing the cloying image in the mind of every child - and most adults too.

Well in fact it was another German, by the name of Thomas Nast. Putting cynicism aside for a second, Nast's story is an interesting one. He was born in Landau, Bavaria, in 1840 and emigrated with his family to America six years later. His talent for drawing was soon apparent and at

15 he got a job as an illustrator on Leslie's, a news magazine in New York, at four dollars a week.

He subsequently fell for, and later married, an English woman - Sarah Edwards - moved over to the New York Illustrated News and promptly embarked for Europe.

Here he covered Garibaldi's campaign to unify Italy and returned home just in time to start

## Ho, Ho, Ho

Kent Barker wonders  
who was Father Christmas' father?



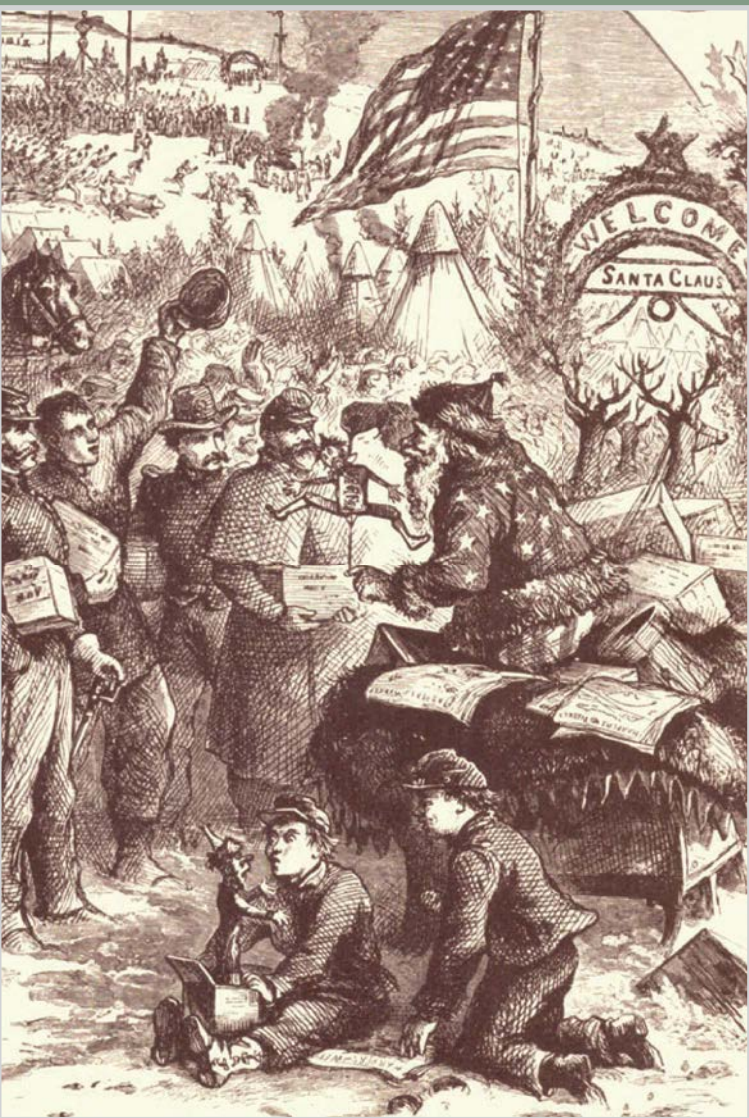


providing drawings of the American Civil War. Which seems an unusual apprenticeship for the man who was to 'invent' Father Christmas. It seems Nast drew for his inspiration on a fairly awful and thoroughly sentimental poem by fellow New Yorker, Clement Clarke Moore. This was 'A Visit from St Nicholas' - more usually known by its first line 'The Night Before Christmas'. Perhaps because of its sentimentality it became extraordinarily popular in America in the 1850s, and was to provide the first indication of what 'our' Santa looked like:

As I drew in my head, and was turning around,  
Down the chimney St Nicholas came with a bound.  
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,  
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot;  
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,  
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.  
His eyes - how they twinkled! his dimples, how merry!  
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!  
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,  
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow ...

Thomas Nast would clearly have known this poem well and a few years later we find him in the midst of the Civil War, covering the conflict for the Unionist-supporting Harper's Magazine. Interspersed with grim illustrations of battlefields he provides occasional inspirational prints to cheer up those at home. Thus his 'Christmas in Camp' shows a Santa on his sleigh dispensing gifts to the troops. He is wearing a rather partisan jacket emblazoned with the stars of the Northern US flag and striped trousers, and has more than a little resemblance to the gnome-like Pelz Nicol of German legend - sidekick to St Nicholas. Nonetheless this is the first visualization of today's Santa.

From this small beginning, Nast went on to create almost single-handedly the Father Christmas that we know so well today. Year after year he peppered Harper's with drawings of the kindly rotund gentleman complete with beard and pipe and floppy red night-cap hat, laden with presents, forever parking his sleigh on snowy roofs before popping down chimneys. In 1890 the illustrations were consolidated into a slim volume, Thomas Nast's 'Christmas Drawings for the Human Race'. So the next time you are prevailed upon to don a Santa suit and bellow Ho, Ho, Ho at the top of your voice, you'll know who to blame. From around 150 years ago, a rather fine New York artist and illustrator. By all accounts Thomas Nast was a thoroughly decent man who could perhaps be called the father of Father Christmas.



clockwise from opposite top left, all by Thomas Nast:  
The Civil War; detail; the first image of Santa Claus;

Santa inspired by Clement Clarke Moore;

The Civil War drawing that started it all;

Santa evolves over the years;

Witty illustration for 'Christmas Drawings'.

## Food & Drink

### Burnt wine, double distilled, twice the pleasure

As Christmas lunch passes the pudding stage, many of us will turn to the Cognac bottle for a final 'digestif' sip of the meal. Here our wine expert Tracy Claridge charts the history of this venerable spirit.

The wines of Poitou, La Rochelle and Angouleme - among France's finest at the time - were shipped by boat to northern Europe as early as the 13th century, where they were much appreciated by the English, Dutch and Scandinavians. Starting in the 17th century, these wines were distilled into brandwijn (Dutch) or 'burnt wine' - the origin of the English word 'brandy' - and aged in oak barrels. This marked the beginning of Cognac as we know it today, as well as the rise of the city of Cognac, which went on to become a thriving centre of international trade.

The basic difference between Cognac and Armagnac is that Cognac is double distilled and Armagnac is a single continuous distillation. Double distillation was first practised in the early 17th century, enabling the grape spirit to travel in an absolutely stable and much more concentrated form than wine. The first alembic stills used by the Dutch were gradually modified over time, and the Charentais in turn grew to master the distilling process and improved upon it by introducing double distillation. Let's jump to the 19th century.

A number of Cognac houses were established in the mid-19th century and began shipping Cognac in bottle rather than in barrel. This new form of trade gave rise to related industries; glassmaking (Claude Boucher mechanised bottlemaking at his factory in St-Martin de Cognac in 1885), the production of wooden cases and corks, as well as printing. The vineyard area covered 280,000 hectares (691,600 acres) at that time. However phylloxera appeared in the Charentes region, just to the north of Bordeaux, circa 1875. This pernicious plant louse



destroyed most of the vineyards, to the extent the area under vine shrank to just 40,000 hectares in 1893. The reconstitution of the vineyards took a long time and was made possible by the grafting of American root stock.

Somewhat weakened by grafting, the traditional grape varieties (Colombard, Folle Blanche) were largely replaced with the more robust Ugni Blanc, which now accounts for over 90% of all vines in Cognac. The Cognac region of production was delimited by law on 1 May 1909 and Cognac has had its own Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée since 1936. During WWII a bureau to "oversee the distribution of wines and grape spirits" was created to manage stocks. After the war this was replaced by the BNIC (Bureau National Interprofessionnel du Cognac), to which the viticultural station was attached in 1948. Every stage of Cognac production is now subject to rules and regulations that protect the quality of a product whose fame continues to spread worldwide.

**The crus** The Cognac appellation has six different crus: Grande Champagne, Petite Champagne, Borderies, Fins Bois, Bons Bois and Bois à Terroirs or Bois Ordinaires. There is a separate appellation that is not a cru, namely Fine Champagne, which is a blend of Grande and Petite Champagne, with at least 50% of the former.

**The region** The Cognac appellation covers a large part of the Charente department as well as that of Charente-Maritime and a few communes in Deux-Sevres. The temperate oceanic climate is fairly homogeneous, with the average annual temperature at 13C and fairly mild winters.

**When to drink** Traditionally we drink Cognac at the end of a meal. It is best appreciated on its own in a tulip-shaped glass (preferably) or a balloon snifter. Be sure to take time to discover the rich aromas and subtle flavours. It is traditionally accepted that Cognac, by virtue of being distilled twice, is a smoother and more refined spirit than Armagnac, sometimes described as “rustic”. Chaqu’un a son gout, or as Del Boy would have said: “Mange tout, mange tout!”

There are hundreds of Cognac houses exporting some 200 million bottles worldwide, with more plantations applied for to keep up with demand. Besides Martell, Courvoisier and Hennessy, my favourites are Hine, Baron Otard, Monnet, Godet, Hardy, Frapin, Prunier, Camus, Bisquit, and last but not least Chateau d’Orignac in the Fins Bois. Not only does this chateau produce excellent Cognac, it also brings us one of the world’s finest Pineau de Charentes, the perfect match for Christmas pudding, Dundee cake, roast chestnuts, blue cheese, oranges, apricots, figs and mangos. To unfermented Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot grape juice is added five-year-old Cognac, with the whole aged for a further five years in oak casks. The result is 18% alc/vol, with a subtle nose of Cognac and caramel, sweet with good acidity and very moreish. A very limited supply is available in our community shop.

Santé.

Once-a-year foods provide the wine drinker with a headache at Christmas. What to marry with a Brussels sprout. How to satisfy a plum duff. And many more. This guide may help steer you through the festive minefield. In our house we start at a respectable hour of the morning with fizz. The Wine Society’s

Champagne brut non-vintage from the house of Alfred Gratien is citrussy but full and flavoursome with nibbles and such like. It’s a cut above the supermarket specials and available at £144 for a case of six (£24 a bottle, which is a steal). Alternatively, Benenden’s has the British equivalent, Biddenden’s Gribble Bridge sparkling (£18.95), and the crowd-pleasing rose Malbec Bubbles from Gouguenheim of Argentina at a snip of £12.95.

After a suitable pause during present opening, it’s on to smoked salmon. A lot of people advise Sauvignon Blanc for these slices of oily brain food, but I’m a great believer in youngish Chardonnay, maybe a lightly oaked Chablis, in a tamer price bracket Gouguenheim’s Valle Escondido, or I may experiment with the keenly priced Carlomagno Fiano from Puglia (£8.95).

Then turkey. Properly baconed and basted, its juicy blend of light and dark meat lends itself perfectly to a Pinot Noir that’s crucially full-flavoured enough not to be overwhelmed by the chipolatas, stuffing and so on. This year we’ve gone for the Blank Canvas 2015 from Marlborough in New Zealand, at £25.50 from Vinorium (well, it is Christmas), the old pop-up shop that has sadly gone from the Hartley Dyke car park but is still thriving at its HQ in Lenham. Slightly easier on the wallet is another Kiwi offering, Kate Radburnd’s silky, herby and cherryfied Vine Velvet from the Pask Winery in Hawke’s Bay, at £15.25 from Benenden’s.

Alternatively, and following the lead of my brother-in-law - “whatever the question, claret is the answer” - try our shop’s Chateau Argadens, recently very favourably reviewed by the sainted Jancis Robinson (“round with lots of fruit and pleasure ... good quality old oak on sweet fruit”) and available at £12.95.

For pudding, to which half of our clan are devoted and half practically allergic, the obvious route is a full-throttle sticky like Tracy’s beloved Chateau d’Orignac Pineau des Charentes. It’s the one time of year when I don’t advise you to drink responsibly - just enjoy.

Peter Thomas

## In Your Garden

Food for thought

Christmas is fast approaching and quite a number of us will be caught up with festive preparations, present buying, wreath making and the like. In the garden, however, things are very different. At this time of year, if you belong to the plant kingdom and are deciduous, you will be

dormant. For the gardener, this poses something of a dilemma: do you leave everything 'in situ' to gracefully collapse over the winter months, or do you have a total blitz, raise the borders to the ground, cover the lot with a thick mulch and sensibly retreat indoors?

The former sounds charming and, indeed, if it is well-orchestrated, it most certainly is quite a beautiful sight. It also hugely benefits the food chain in your garden - overwintering habitats for the insects, seeds and bits for the birds, bacteria growing exponentially in the undisturbed soil to mention but a few. The latter, however, is what most of us would probably do. So, this year I shall carry out a trial in a lovely country garden belonging to one of my clients, in Brenchley, to be precise.

It is quite a large garden (about an acre) and here I will carry out my experiment to



see how long I can bear to look at a mass of dead sticks. I have tidied the front of the borders, clipped the lawn edges and taken out (most of) the weeds. I have tried to create as artistic a picture as I can, using the various forms of the dormant plants, their brown, straw and silvery tones, and anything evergreen which becomes a valuable backdrop.

So far so good, but we are only at the end of November. I will return to it with a critical eye but I am guessing that by the end of January, if I am not fed up with it then my client most certainly will be - after all, she is the one who has to look at it every day. However, I shall persevere and press her to look at it from a different perspective and to embrace the frosted canvas I have artfully nurtured from September onwards.

The only problems I envisage are tramping over very damp ground in February to clear it all up (not good for the soil) and avoid any emerging bulbs. I shall post a report on progress in the new year. In the meantime, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas, and enjoy your garden, whatever the weather.

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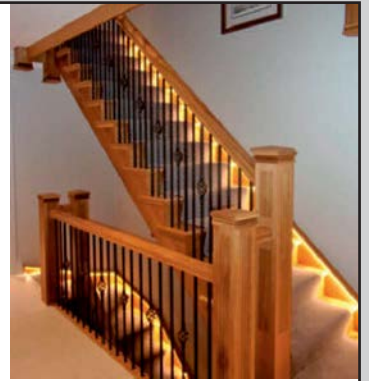
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Above: Memorable displays: Benenden School and John Wallis Academy Combined Cadet Force mark Remembrance Day; Benenden Bonfire and Fireworks, photographs: Nick Penny  
Front cover: Hole Park Christmas trees await harvest. Photograph: Kent Barker