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March 2022



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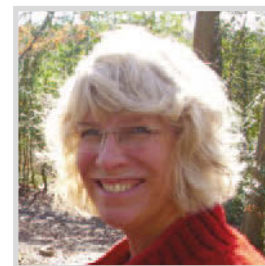
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# Editorial



I'm writing this the day after Storm Eunice has wreaked havoc, including felling a much-loved tree in my garden and a fence that had seen better days and whose days were numbered anyway. The roads are littered with trees and branches and many houses in the parish are still without power, which prompted many to take solace and hot food and drinks in the pubs and community café. The stoicism of parishioners was very much in evidence as everyone swapped weather-induced tales with good humour. We are, overall, an optimistic bunch and most of those I encounter out and about while walking or volunteering in the café, continue to celebrate the positives while weathering the slings and arrows of outrageous weather.

We have lots to look forward to this month, alongside all the encouraging signs of spring and, at last after two years, the steady lessening of Covid's impact on everyday life. A Grand Charity Auction in the village hall promises a fun evening mixing treasures and music (page 9); Italian wines will be explored at the village wine tasting alongside glorious Italian food at Benenden Girls' School (page 31); and the brilliant Benenden Panto (yes, I am involved!) takes place at the end of March (page 11). Meanwhile, I'm optimistically growing seeds, planting vegetables, brushing the cobwebs off my bicycle, and even booking a holiday overseas.

Finally, thank you to all those who contribute to this magazine and suggest content ideas to the editors. We are very fortunate in this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to be rich in walks and last month published our first route illustrated with handy signpost photos and highlighting items of interest along the way. More are planned and we welcome your contribution to this series, which will eventually be gathered together in a booklet for visitors.

Ruth Clark, 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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# Village Calendar

## March

Saturday 5	Skittles, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Saturday 12	Cribbage and Dominoes Knockout, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 15	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.13
Tuesday 15	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Bruges - it's more than just chocolate, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.21
Saturday 19	England v France Rugby, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Monday 21	Parish Council Meeting, Memorial Hall, 7pm	
Tuesday 22	Merry and Bright, Memorial Hall, 2pm	
Friday 25	Wines from Italy, Benenden School Café, 7pm	p.31
Saturday 26	Grand Charity Auction, Benenden Village Hall, 7pm	p.9
Saturday 26	Bingo, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Thursday 31	The Comicals of Narna, Benenden Players Panto First Night, Benenden Village Hall, 7.30pm	p.11

## Iden Green Toddler Group

Tuesdays during term time in Iden Green Congregational Church, 9-11.30am

## Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-11.30am

## Benenden Bowls Club

Thursdays, April-September, on the recreation field, practice night, 6.30pm

## Cakes & Chaos: Cafe and Toddler Group

Fridays during term time in St George's Church, 9-11.15am

# Parish Council



If you haven't heard the news already, our Neighbourhood Development Plan was navigated through to the successful referendum held on 3 February, where we were delighted that it gained a decisive majority, with the official result standing at 665 YES votes (80.5%) to 161 NO votes (19.5%). This alongside a 56.4% turnout was a strong reflection of the local engagement with our plan.

The referendum result was followed by ratification of the plan by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council on 23 February. The Full Council members voted to support our plan by a very large majority, so a resounding affirmation of what the Independent Examiner concluded is a plan that is "locally distinctive ... robust and objective ... strongly influenced by the stated desire of the local community ... making best use of brownfield sites, minimising the use of greenfield sites, protecting the landscape and the parish's fine views".

In summary, our plan will give us the affordable housing required and requested by parishioners, while also welcoming new residents and families to help maintain our vibrant community. At the same time the NDP will protect our green fields, precious views, wildlife sites and dark skies.

We understand change can be hard to adapt to, and our focus now will be on building bridges with residents who are affected by these changes. Open communication and discussion will be the key, along with the reassurance that we have secured mitigation against the impact of development on all four sites, delivering cohesive, appropriate and attractive new housing in the parish.

Thanks go to all of you who have engaged with us, and those of you who turned out to vote on the day. Very special thanks must go to Paul Tolhurst and all the NDP volunteers, supporters and my fellow councillors, and also to Peter Davies, sadly no longer with us, who set our NDP in motion over four years ago. Peter, you can look down at your beloved Benenden and know that it is has all been worth it. Our parish, our plan, we got there in the end.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair  
[nicolat@benendenparishcouncil.org](mailto:nicolat@benendenparishcouncil.org)

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 21 March 2022,  
Memorial Hall, 7pm



# Church Calendar

## St George's Church

Rector: Revd David Commander 240658 [revdavidcommander@gmail.com](mailto:revdavidcommander@gmail.com) (day off: Thursday)  
Curate: Revd Ylva Blid-Mackenzie 01233 820100 [rev.ylva@gmail.com](mailto:rev.ylva@gmail.com) (Sunday, Monday and Tuesday)  
Churchwarden: David Collard 241944 [julia.collard@btinternet.com](mailto:julia.collard@btinternet.com)  
Churchwarden: Sue Fisher 241907 [sue@undaunted.co.uk](mailto:sue@undaunted.co.uk)  
[www.benendenchurch.org](http://www.benendenchurch.org) 850849 [benendenchurch@gmail.com](mailto:benendenchurch@gmail.com)  
Please inform the Rector, Curate or Churchwardens if you, or anyone else, is ill.

Wednesday 2 February

7.30pm Ash Wednesday  
Service

Saturday 5 February

4pm Connect Four  
at Mission Church, Sandhurst

Sunday 6 February	8am Communion	10am All-age Communion	5pm Choral Evensong
Sunday 13 February	8am BCP Communion	10am Morning Worship	
Sunday 20 February	8am Communion	10am Sung Eucharist	
Sunday 27 February	8am Communion	10am Morning Worship	
Morning Prayer	8am Mondays and Fridays		

## Mission Church, Sandhurst

Rector: Revd David Commander 240658 [revdavidcommander@gmail.com](mailto:revdavidcommander@gmail.com) (day off: Thursday)  
Morning Prayer 8am Tuesdays and Wednesdays  
Mid-week Communion 10am Tuesdays

## Iden Green Congregational Church

Pastor: Tobin Bird 240027 [www.idengreen.org.uk](http://www.idengreen.org.uk)  
Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship  
The 10am Morning Worship is broadcast on our YouTube channel: search 'Iden Green Congregational Church'.

## The Roman Catholic Chapel of Our Lady and St Joseph TN17 4EL

Fr Barry Grant 713364 [www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org](http://www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org)  
Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

## From the Parish Registers

Baptisms 6 February Mirabelle Cox  
28 February Marley Sculley

Funerals 7 February Adrian Penny Funeral and burial  
12 February Lesley Attwood Thanksgiving Service  
14 February Penny Crawford Funeral and burial  
19 February John Hare Funeral and burial  
23 February Marie Orson Funeral, and committal Kent and Sussex Crematorium  
24 February Colin Morrison Burial

# Rector's Letter



## Playing Connect Four with God

Well, I must be getting older. Time is definitely flying by faster; here we are already through the first two months of 2022 and 1 March is upon us; and this year it coincides with Shrove Tuesday. Hopefully, that means there is a plate of pancakes for you on Tuesday. The following day, Wednesday 2 March, in the church year is Ash Wednesday and marks the beginning of Lent.

The characteristic of Lent is as a time of self-examination, penitence, self-denial (hence getting in the pancakes before Lent starts), and preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence; penitence being 'the action of feeling or showing sorrow and regret for having done wrong', with everyone recognising that we all get things wrong and need to repent (repent meaning 'turning' from the things we do that are wrong). From the Middle Ages it became the custom for Christians to begin Lent by being marked in ash with the sign of the cross. The ash comes from the burning of last year's palm crosses (so, if it's not too late, please return your palm cross to me). On Shrove Tuesday, I will be following the tradition of burning the old palm crosses to make the ash ready for the imposition at the evening service at St George's on Ash Wednesday. The liturgy of this penitence is very powerful; if you've not experienced it before, you'd be very welcome to come along. It marks a time, rather like New Year I guess, of saying, "I'm going to try and do better from now on".

Towards the end of Lent, the beginning of Holy Week, we celebrate Palm Sunday once again. This year it is on 10 April. In Benenden there will be a service at 8am and a service at 10am. In between these services, breakfast will be served in the Memorial Hall from 9am. Again, you'd be very welcome to join us for breakfast, get your new palm cross and join in a walk up the Green to St George's for the 10am service.

Between now and then we are starting a new event/gathering/service aimed specifically for families: Connect Four begins on Saturday 5 March. It is a very, very informal service in the Mission Church, Sandhurst, where we'll gather at 4pm, hence the 'Four', and join together in some fellowship, chat, a Bible story, a craft activity, a simple talk (rather like a school assembly/worship) to help us think about the story, along with a bit of singing. All of it is about helping us to connect. Connect with one another; connect with the Bible story; and connect with God. Helping us to make God relevant in our lives today. Cake, biscuits, juice, tea and coffee will be on the go throughout. Come along; give Connect Four a go.

Revd David Commander, Rector



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# Talking Point



## Slowly but surely, it's getting safer to cycle

It is a sad, but true, statistic that only 2% of children travel to school by bike. It's a figure which has changed little over the past 25 years. Cycling, rather like walking, is seen as a dangerous way to travel, particularly in rural areas. But locally it would be a huge benefit for the whole community for children to be able to cycle to school.

It's pretty much the same for me as an adult. I live on the edge of the parish and would welcome the chance to walk safely from my house to the shop or the pub, without having to take my life in my hands. I do cycle, however, balancing out the risk with the health benefits.

I suppose I grew up in an age where cycling was less of a pastime and more a basic means of getting around. For me it was one of my first real freedoms. Cycling was how I went to school, scouts, choir practice and much more. I didn't have cycling clothes - apart from a voluminous yellow cycling cape - I rode in whatever I happened to be wearing at the time.

Even today it is still seen as a means of transport, rather than a hobby, in some of the more developed nations such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, and Belgium. What they all have in common that makes cycling a safer everyday activity is, in part, a road safety system that places greater responsibility on drivers for the safety of cyclists and pedestrians.

Let's be clear, they have a lot of other stuff too; better cycling infrastructure; national cycling education, skills and promotion programs; and widespread traffic calming, including lower speed limits (30km/hr) in urban areas. But as the saying goes "even the longest journey begins with a single step".

At last, though, it seems as though the UK is set to join that group of countries. The end of January saw the publication of the latest version of the Highway Code, which brought in a set of rules designed to improve the safety of people walking, cycling and riding horses. The new rules introduce a hierarchy of road users, giving greater protection to those most at risk in the event of a collision. It does not, the Department for Transport stresses, remove the need for everyone to behave responsibly.

There are eight changes to The Highway Code in total. None of which seems terribly revolutionary. In fact, I suspect you will be surprised that many of the changes weren't already part of it. You can see for yourself: [www.gov.uk/government/news/the-highway-code-8-changes-you-need-to-know-from-29-january-2022](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-highway-code-8-changes-you-need-to-know-from-29-january-2022)

Giles Clark

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## Grand Charity Auction

St George's Church invites you to a fun evening hosted by our very own TV celebrity antiques expert Raj Bisram in the village hall at 7pm on Saturday 26 March.

Raj will entertain us and auction an interesting variety of donated antiques and objets de vertu, and all the funds raised will go to the church. During the evening we will be entertained by the wonderful Benenden Jazz. The auction lots will be on view in the village hall earlier on the day between 2.30-4.30pm, when you can also leave bids with the organisers.

Tickets cost just £15 and include a light supper. There will be a bar and a raffle to try your luck. To book a seat or table and/or donate an item for the auction please contact me.  
Sally-Ann Marks 243141 or 07990 585753  
sallymarks100@hotmail.com

## Let's get walking again

At this time of year, we start to think about the mud drying up and getting out to walk in the beautiful English countryside again, but where to find new and interesting walks?

### Walking in Kent

([www.walkinginengland.co.uk/kent](http://www.walkinginengland.co.uk/kent)) has hundreds of walks to download and print, free; it also has books of walks, details of all the walking groups in the county and much more. Whether you want to walk on your own or with a group, all the information is there in one place.

There is so much walking information online but it is difficult to find. Walking in Kent has brought it together in one place, so whether you are walking from home, or away on holiday, you will be able to find a walk suitable for you, from half a mile to 12 miles-plus and a note of suitability for pushchairs and wheelchairs.

Check out the websites and get walking.

John Harris [john@walkinginengland.co.uk](mailto:john@walkinginengland.co.uk)

## GRAND CHARITY AUCTION of Antiques and Objets de Vertu



An evening  
hosted by  
Raj Bisram

**SATURDAY 26  
MARCH AT 7PM**

in Benenden  
Village Hall

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will go to St George's Church.  
Auction lots will be on view in the  
village hall between 2.30-4.30pm  
on the day.  
Bids may be left with organisers.

## Local pilgrimages

The ancient and much-loved church of St Nicholas in Sandhurst sits on a high point in open country with far-reaching views in all directions. Its setting has inspired us to think of new and exciting ways to connect people and landscape, the spirit and the earth.

Starting and ending at the church, we will offer a series of guided walks of differing length and complexity through the beautiful and tranquil countryside. All the walks will offer ample opportunities to stop, contemplate and connect with our deepest selves and with the natural world and the universe. We will do this via poetry, short readings, silence and other creative and imaginative invitations to discover something new or unexpected.

We start with a 4.5-mile morning walk on Saturday 21 May 2022, meeting at St Nicholas church at 9.45 for 10am, taking in hop fields and vineyards, as well as a windmill, and finishing with coffee, tea, cake and your own packed lunches in the churchyard at around 1pm. The pace will be leisurely, but some of the ground might be uneven. Stout footwear, a good coat and a small folding chair/shooting stick, if you are in need of support while stopping for a rest, is all that is needed.

We would love to walk with you.

Lyn Hayes and Revd Ylva Blid-Mackenzie  
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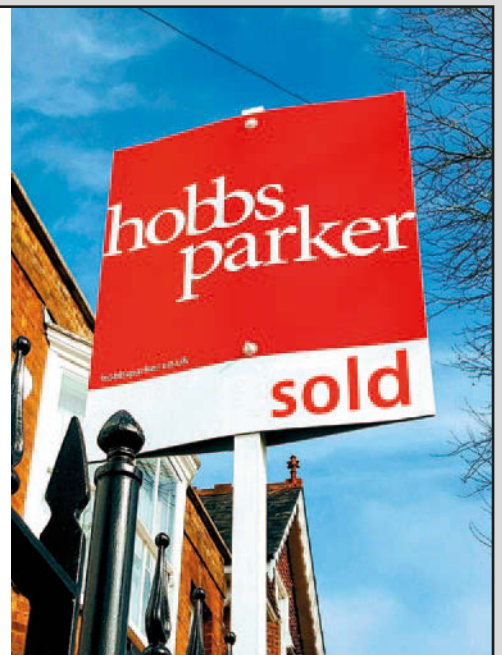
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LEVEL 2 TECHNICIAN



## Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

We've been focusing on encouraging more parents and community members to sign up for free to the platform [easyfundraising.org](https://easyfundraising.org), which gives our PTFA an automatic donation kickback at no cost to you as the user. We awarded the class with the most parent sign ups with a colourful treat.

Within the spirit of Saint Valentine's we enjoyed delighting each of our close to 210 children with a small wooden pocket hug. It was important to us to give a meaningful token of appreciation to them and show our love with a hug ready to hold in their pocket anytime it's needed.

Before the half-term break, we sent the children home with a packet of raisins and encouraged them to enjoy the healthy treat and then by 22/2/2022 return it filled with any coin with a '2'. Many of the children were busy doing jobs and challenges over half-term to raise donations from friends and families to fill their raisin packet. These funds will go towards new play equipment for their outdoor learning area.

We soon will kick off plans for the Benenden village fete. Start keeping any great toys, children's games or costumes aside to donate to our famous Kids' Cave.

For more details on any initiatives, please scan QR code or visit our website

[www.tinyurl.com/2bpyw54h](http://www.tinyurl.com/2bpyw54h)

Astrid Miller, Benenden CEP, PTFA Chair



## Village lunch

The village lunch will take place on Tuesday 15 March in the village hall at 12.30pm. £5 each and all welcome. Please could you let me know if you would like to come by Thursday 10 March, so we can plan and shop, as well as cook.

Sheila Hume 854627

## Primary School

This term we are delighted to welcome Miss Day to our leadership team and I know that she will bring extra talents and strengths. Miss Day is assistant headteacher across the Federation, alongside her role as head of personal development and wellbeing/senco and will be based at Goudhurst. Mrs Brook is also assistant headteacher across the Federation, remains head of behaviour and attitudes/senco and will be based in Benenden.

As a consequence of this change, Mr Goodman has been appointed acting head of schools alongside his role as head of quality of education, assessment and research.

At the end of January, I had a super morning visiting Year 6 at Bowles. It was cold and crisp but the children were very keen to tell me all about their fantastic week. Indeed, I was delighted to be able to spend time with all the groups; high ropes, leap of faith, kayaking in the pool, rock climbing and bouldering, which was amazing. One of the instructors told me how impressed the staff at the centre were with the children's behaviour. Well done Year 6 and a huge thank you to Mrs Dignan, Mrs Walsh and Mrs Kerr for accompanying the children.

During the first week of February, there was great excitement in school as we prepared for our Christingle Service in St George's Church. The children were very sensible and responsible, especially when we lit the real candles! Thank you to Revd David and his team for leading the service.

This term Year 3 and 5 have returned to the woods for forest school sessions and we were delighted once again to take part in the Hockey Festival at Dulwich Prep. It was more of a 'try it out' type of festival but Benenden won two, lost two and drew one. Well done to all the children who took part and a big thank you to Mrs Mileham for organising the event and Miss Timmins for accompanying the children, and of course to those parents who came in support.

Lindsay Roberts, Executive Headteacher  
240565 [office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk)  
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## Benenden School

I am writing this while feeling particularly buoyant, having thoroughly enjoyed the past few days of Benenden's performing arts excellence.

Firstly, the Fourth and Upper Fourth play, Wendy and Peter Pan, made me incredibly proud; the pupils performed beautifully, and we were delighted to welcome parents, grandparents and some of our friends from Saint Ronan's School to enjoy the performances. This was followed on Sunday by a joint Evensong with Tonbridge in their chapel, which was an occasion to remember.

We are all relieved that the Government has confirmed that public exams will be proceeding in person this summer. We welcome the level of certainty that we have all been given and we have urged the students to do everything they can to disregard the challenges of the past two years and to put their energy into concentrating on preparing fully for their public exams.

Finally, we were honoured to launch - in the presence of HRH The Princess Royal - our Be the Change initiative, which during its initial phase aims to triple the number of bursaries we can offer while also broadening our partnerships work. At Benenden we have always been proud of our commitment to bursaries and partnerships - and we are determined to do even more. More details are at [www.benenden.school/bethechange](http://www.benenden.school/bethechange)  
Samantha Price, Headmistress

## Sustainability accolade

Many congratulations to parish resident Barry Bassett, whose camera rental firm VMI.TV recently received the 'Hero of Net Zero' national climate award from the UK Government for its work on sustainability.

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## Benenden Pre-School

The daffodils planted in the Pre-School garden by parents and staff are starting to unfold into flower. The miniature ones nod just a few centimetres above the soil, fascinating the children with their perfect small flowers. The taller ones amaze us with their graceful long leaves and bright yellow trumpeting blaze. We have purple and pink primulas, pale yellow primroses and we are looking forward to the tulips.

We like to have a vase of daffodils inside the school, too. Children comment on them and are able to observe them closely. We believe it is really important for children's play environments to be aesthetically beautiful: the physical environment can determine wellbeing and the best approaches to early years education recognise the environment as the third teacher. Spring flowers play their significant, colourful and important part.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor  
[supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk](mailto:supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk)



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# Helen Grant

## MP for Maidstone and the Weald

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## Platinum Jubilee

Although the actual day celebrating the Queen's Accession 70 years ago was on 7 February, the celebrations for her platinum jubilee will take place over four days (2-5 June), which two days of bank holiday. The highlights of the celebrations in Benenden are below and further details will be added in the coming months.

### THURSDAY 2 JUNE

#### ST GEORGE'S CHURCH

**8.30pm** A celebration of a life in service.

Readings and singing to celebrate those whose lives are dedicated to the service of others.

Come in uniform, wearing medals, badges or other items showing the service you are associated with. Listen out for the church bells.

**9.30pm** Lighting of the beacon. We are looking for a bagpipe player for this event, which is supported by the Parish Council and the Bonfire Society and is part of a nationwide network of beacons being lit in celebration.

### SATURDAY 4 JUNE

#### BENENDEN VILLAGE HALL

**7.30pm** Right Royal Variety Performance hosted by the Benenden Players. Alongside your old favourites, we'd love to feature new talent in the village. The theme is 'Through the Decades', so this is your chance to dig out your bell-bottom flares, winklepickers, loon pants, pixie boots, bouffant hair, safety pins, fingerless gloves or goth gear and plan your performance.

This will be a ticketed event. Email or message Nancy with your proposed act.

07711 139218 [nancy.tolhurst@btinternet.com](mailto:nancy.tolhurst@btinternet.com)

### SUNDAY 5 JUNE

#### ST GEORGE'S CHURCH

**8am** Service for Pentecost

**11am** Jubilee Service

#### THE GREEN AND BENENDEN VILLAGE HALL

**12.15pm** Village Sharing Lunch. Bring what you would eat and add it to the collective festive feast.

Peter Ellis [peteralanellis@aol.com](mailto:peteralanellis@aol.com)

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## Village Hall

The Benenden Players are gearing up for their highly anticipated panto on the first weekend of April. Having made the disappointing decision to postpone their January show, and after the Covid cancellation of the previous year, we now all have the joy of a spring panto.

The hall is very busy with lots of other activities, but we do have a few windows of availability for anyone who might be thinking of starting something new, particularly on a Friday afternoon or the middle of the day on Wednesday or Thursday.

Holly Clayson, Manager 07419 989830  
[enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org](mailto:enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org)  
[www.benendenvillagehall.org](http://www.benendenvillagehall.org)

## Become a Dementia Friend

If you would like to learn how dementia affects a person and what you can do to make a difference, then why not become a Dementia Friend by attending a free one-hour session in Cranbrook Library at 2.30pm on 11 March. Anyone of any age can become a part of this Alzheimer's Society initiative. The session is being run by Wellbeing in the Weald but spaces are limited. To book a place email or call:  
07961 669575 [hello@wellbeingintheweald](mailto:hello@wellbeingintheweald)



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## Topical health

Organ donation is not a usual topic of conversation for most people, that is until you know someone who needs a transplant when it becomes the most important thing in the world. Organ donation transforms lives and represents one of the most selfless acts one human being can do for another.

Many people can donate a number of organs to help others and in so doing transform not only the recipients lives, but also those of their family and friends. On [www.organdonation.nhs.uk](http://www.organdonation.nhs.uk), you can choose to register which of your organs and tissues you are willing to donate. These can include heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, pancreas, corneas, tissue and small bowel.

Contrary to what some believe, the donor must be confirmed dead before donation can proceed and only the organs and tissues which the donor has agreed can be harvested. As the UK operates an opt out system, hospital staff are compelled to ask families what their loved one would want when they are dying. It is important therefore to have the conversation with your loved ones so they know, in advance, what your wishes are. This is also a selfless conversation because where a family have had this discussion it makes everything easier at a most challenging time as well as bringing positivity where there was tragedy.

If you have been affected by transplantation and want to give something back while you are alive, some healthy people can register to be living donors. This might include donating a kidney, part of a liver, bone or placental tissue. Over 1,000 people a year are living donors, donating to a friend, relative or a total stranger.

If you haven't already done so, have the conversation, it may mean you save up to nine lives and transform many others.

Peter Ellis

## Benenden Hospital

Week commencing 14 March is Healthcare science week. The aim of this week is to share with the local community and other health professionals how science and technology is vital in modern patient care and how it is changing lives for the better.

Healthcare scientists help prevent, diagnose and treat illness using their knowledge of science and their technical skills. They also work in more than 50 specialist fields that can be classified into four groups: laboratory sciences, physiological sciences, medical physics and clinical engineering and bioinformatics.

Did you know there are over 50,000 healthcare scientists who work for the NHS and public health services? They provide essential scientific services and they contribute to 80% of all patient diagnoses.

I am proud that we have careers related to health science at Benenden Hospital. We do urodynamic tests on patients as part of our continence care service. Urodynamic science is the investigation of urinary-related difficulties. As a healthcare scientist in urodynamic science, you'll help to diagnose problems and plan the treatment of patients with urinary-related conditions.

Audiology is the science of hearing, balance, and related disorders. "Audiologists are Allied Healthcare providers that cover hearing aids and diagnostic hearing tests. At Benenden Hospital we provide diagnostic tests to support our ENT consultants," says Jenny Rose, our hospital's audiologist.

"This normally entails checking the patients' ears for wax or infections, air and bone conduction hearing tests and tympanometry. These tests support the consultant's examination and help to provide a confident diagnosis of the patient's problem."

Getting involved in healthcare science week is easy and there are many ways you can take part by visiting the NHS website; also keep an eye on the health news section of our website for more information.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

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## Iden Green and Benenden WI

Our speaker in February, Anna Astin, gave an interesting talk on the history of women and flying. She told us about the pioneering women who braved the skies in very flimsy planes. We're now trying to guess how anything could be more tempting than chocolate and are looking forward to being enlightened on 15 March, when our visitor will entertain us with a talk entitled 'Bruges - it's more than just chocolate'. Many of us will also be thinking about International Women's Day on 8 March.

Although our subs will be due in April, our AGM is on 17 May, when the usual plant and produce exchange, plus a bring-and-buy sale, will be held.

Meanwhile, our hard-working committee have been formulating plans to celebrate our centenary, and in addition to the expected celebratory cake and drink at our garden party on 21 June, we are going to stimulate our olfactory and artistic senses by visiting Pashley Manor when the roses are blooming on 29 June. We shall also demonstrate our activities and illustrate the last 100 years by displaying our special tablecloth, artefacts and archives at the village fete on 18 June.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

## Planning Matters

For full details of the Parish Council's comment please see minutes of meetings.

- 22/00160/FULL and 22/00161/LBC Flat, The Kitty Fisher, The Street. Remove the existing single-storey rear extension and replace with a new two-storey pitched roof rear extension; Erection of a single storey rear flat roof extension with lantern light over.
- 22/00173/FULL and 22/00174/LBC Eaton Cottage, Goddards Green Road. Demolition of existing single storey rear lean to; Erection of 1.5 storey side extension and single storey rear extension.

## Benenden Village Fete

This year's fete will have a royal flavour to celebrate the Queen's anniversary, so watch this space for more details. As always, the not-so-secret ingredient that makes this event run so smoothly is all the brilliant volunteers who get involved in the run-up to the day and on the day itself. So please do get in touch and add your name to the list - the more the merrier.

It's a great way to get involved in a community event that raises much-needed funds for lots of good causes. Our book tent, for example, is very popular and a team of people spend many hours sorting the donations in the weeks before. However, this year we do need a bookworm to oversee the tent and coordinate the team on the day please.

Athena Cripps athenacripps@gmail.com

## Cornhole tossing

Following the Six Nations Rugby televised in St George's Club recently, we held a cornhole tossing tournament. There was an excellent turnout, with nine teams of two taking part, with the object of the game being to get the corn bag (aka beanbag) into a hole on a sloped wooden frame. The strongest team on the night (coming last) were Paul and Angela Gregory, who were presented with some scented tea lights. The Champion Tossers (winners) were Kevin and Julie Tester, who held off a brave challenge from John and Glenda Marshall.

John Marshall





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We have recommenced our regular monthly  
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# Benenden Village Trust



Jonathan Strong opens Iden Green playground

citizenship, but it is not as well known in the community as it might be. This may be due partly to its youth: the trust was only formed in 2018, when the assets of the Harmsworth Memorial Trust, the most amazing legacy from bequests in the 1920s by Viscount Rothermere, were transferred to the BVT from the parish council.

Over the past two years, our work has been severely hampered by Covid, but we are now moving ahead with initiatives to make an

## The Village Trust, playing a vital community role

Question: what do all these have in common?

Two-year-olds playing in the sandpit at the pre-school; children scaling the climbing frames at the playgrounds; dance classes, wedding receptions, parties, the annual Benenden Players' panto; tennis and bowling; summer evenings of jazz; the social club and affordable housing units.

Answer: they all involve buildings or land owned by Benenden Village Trust (BVT), a charity dedicated to providing recreational and educational facilities for parish residents of all ages. The trust owns Benenden village hall and the Iden Green Pavilion, the recreation and children's playgrounds in both villages, St George's Hall at the Benenden crossroads - home of the pre-school and St George's social club - as well as land on which sit the Bowls Club, the Iden Green Tennis Club and the housing at Woodcock Lane.

The BVT, working quietly in the background, plays an important role in the life of residents, from infancy all the way through to senior

even bigger contribution to village life. Before I describe our plans for the next few years, though, I would like to emphasise two important points about the trust. First, we are keen for more people in the community to get involved. Second, our facilities should not be taken for granted, since they are not cost-free to provide.

Take our most important asset, Benenden village hall, one of the best equipped in Kent. Like most village halls across England, it is not financially self-supporting, even though hirers pay fees to use it. Running costs significantly outweigh income, but unlike other village halls, it does not receive funding through the precept from the parish council. For the hall to keep functioning, and playing such a central role in the community, it requires a continuing subsidy from the BVT. Happily, the trust's reserves are currently equal to the task. But they need to be carefully husbanded to ensure that future generations of Benenden and Iden Green villagers enjoy the same, or even better, facilities.

The people responsible for ensuring a bright future are the BVT's trustees, who oversee the →





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# Benenden Village Trust



→ management team responsible for day-to-day activities, and the BVT's members, to whom the trustees are accountable in turn. We have 80 members and would love to have more. Membership is open to all residents living in the parish and is free. We would like members to get more involved in the work of the trust, be it as sources of fresh ideas, expertise or volunteering. We are also on the lookout for new trustees (who don't have to live in the parish) with skills to strengthen our board. We were disappointed that only five or so members (excluding trustees) attended our annual general meeting last October, although Covid was almost certainly a factor.

A recent example of the community working together to great effect was the planning and building of Iden Green's wonderful new playground. A group of villagers formed a working party to decide on the most useful equipment, obtained quotes from equipment suppliers, helped with fund-raising, and oversaw construction. So, what are our plans for the next few years? They include the possible extension of the village hall to provide more facilities; helping the pre-school move to more appropriate premises; looking at the best ways to use St George's Hall; the repurposing of the public lavatories, moving the toilets inside the village hall to create a small office and meeting room complex (we are about to start detailed investigations and feasibility studies); and the creation of an all-weather path from the village hall car park to the Benenden playground.

We are also keen to see changes for the underused football pitch - maybe a smaller all-weather surface for a variety of sports?

At the same time, we want to communicate with members more effectively, giving timely feedback on what we are doing. Our AGM will be in the summer and will be more of a celebration.

We want members' thoughts on what else we could be doing to support leisure facilities in the village. Should we be aiming to work more closely with other village institutions - such as the parish council, the church and the primary school - for the greater good of the community? Doing more to encourage the use of our facilities? Seeking volunteers for working parties from time to time - for example for cleaning the playgrounds in spring and autumn; hedging, tree planting, minor repairs to building or fencing work?



Benenden has long been a vibrant, active and community-minded village. We want to play our part in ensuring it remains so for residents of all ages, now and for generations to come. There is much to do and the trustees are committed to making things happen, but we need more help.

If you are interested in becoming part of the BVT, please get in touch in the first instance with Caroline Levett, our manager, at [bvttrust@gmail.com](mailto:bvttrust@gmail.com). Details about eligibility and rules for membership can be found on the Trust's website at [benendenvillagetrust.org/membership-info](http://benendenvillagetrust.org/membership-info).

Jonathan Strong, Chair, BVT

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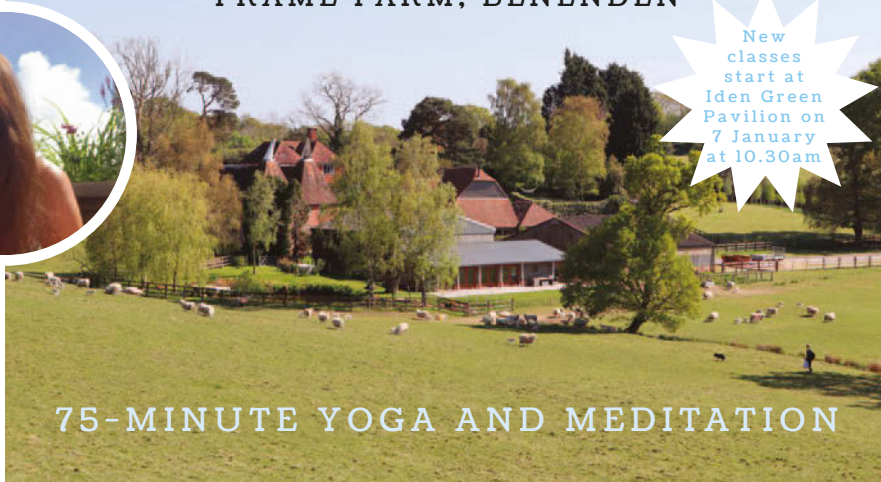


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# History

## When the bells toll

For centuries church bells have sounded across English villages to let locals know of important events, invasion, deaths, weddings and even Pancake Day. On 1 March it will be Shrove Tuesday, a day that all sweet-toothed Benenden residents look forward to as a chance to indulge.

Shrove Tuesday was, in years gone by, a half-holiday and apprentices were given the afternoon off to celebrate the start of Lent. Festivities and fairs were common and a church bell was rung at 11am to signify the end of work and the start of celebrations. This was the day that people made pancakes to use up foods that may be given up for Lent and the well-known pancake race tradition was started.

The first ever pancake race supposedly occurred when a housewife, cooking pancakes in the Buckinghamshire village of Olney, was reminded by the 11am Shroving Bell that she should be at church. She rushed down the high street in her apron, still clutching her frying pan complete with pancake, and Olney still celebrates this occurrence

with a race started, of course, by the sound of the pancake bell from the church tower.

Another possible origin of the race, which I personally prefer, is that the pancakes were a bribe for the bell ringers to sound the bell early, thereby getting the apprentices off work and the holiday started ahead of time. Maybe we should resurrect the pancake bell in Benenden? Of course, as a Benenden bell ringer I would be very much in favour of this!

For hundreds of years, it was traditional to ring when a person was dying in order to

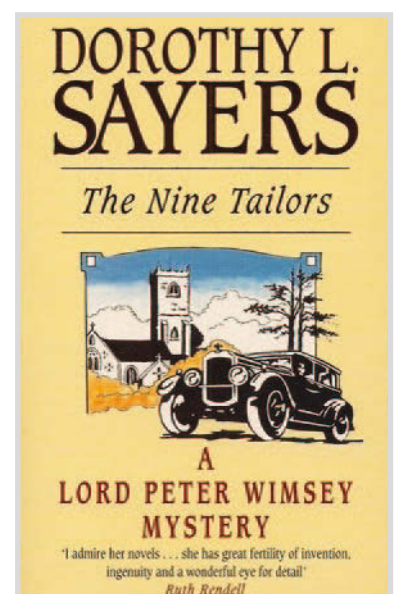


protect the soul from the devil or evil spirits while on its journey. This was known as the 'Passing Bell'. Later it seems that the tradition changed slightly, so that

the tolling took place after death. Communities would be able to tell who had died by the number of times the bell was tolled: nine times, in three groups of three, for a man; or six times, in two groups of three, for a woman. These six or nine 'tellers' would be followed by further tolls totalling the age of the deceased. This tolling was known as the 'Nine Tailors', a name probably corrupted from 'Nine Tellers', or maybe 'tollers'.

The tolling of a bell signifying a death was made famous by Ernest Hemingway in 'For Whom the Bell Tolls', although Dorothy L Sayers beat Hemingway to it with her Lord Peter Wimsey novel, written in 1934, and still the best and most accurate work of fiction

based in the ringing world. If you haven't done so already, please do read his adventures, but don't let the murder weapon put you off coming along to the Benenden Ringing Room in St George's Church at 7.30pm on a Wednesday evening.  
Rebecca Steele





# Benenden History



Fig. 1

## The start of a lifetime of digging up the past

Neil Aldridge remembers his early archaeological explorations with local historian Cecily Lebon

I first met Cecily Lebon, the local historian of Benenden at the time, in the early 1980s, when I was starting out in amateur field archaeology and seeking some practical experience, having joined the Kent Archaeological Society a few years before.

Cecily, who lived at the house known as 'Limes', had previously undertaken archaeological fieldwork at Cranbrook in the 1950s and at Benenden School, and another amateur archaeologist from Biddenden, Alec Miles, said that I should contact her, at a time when she was working on a small excavation at the site of the stone-paved Roman ford at Stream Farm, Benenden.

The ford was on the line of the Roman Road from Rochester to Hastings, where it crossed a watercourse in a valley, or 'gill'. As the route descends the hill, a public footpath has been rerouted alongside, as it has become deeply sunken. In recent years I have noticed that iron slag metallurgy - the waste material from Roman iron working sites that was used locally to form road surfaces - is present in the field alongside it, but the road has become worn down with centuries of later use.

The site was first identified by Mr OGS Crawford, a pioneering field archaeologist in the

1930s, and a picture taken by him (Fig.1, c1930) shows the paved area together with a hundred boundary stone set within it. However, by the early 1980s many of the stones, of paludina or 'Bethersden marble', seen in the photograph had gone, probably taken for other uses on local farms.

The Roman ford site is a scheduled archaeological monument and special permission had to be obtained by Cecily from the then Inspector of Ancient Monuments to undertake recording work on the site. This had been arranged as there was evidence of damage being



Fig. 2



caused to the remains of the stone slab paving by mature trees, together with some slabs slipping down into the stream. My picture (Fig.2) taken in 1983 shows our excavation with the boundary stone.

During the course of summer seasons between 1980-83, a layer of 'iron pan' was recorded, underlying the area where some stones had been removed, as the picture shows. This may well have been the Roman road surface, although the routeway here had continued in use long after the Romans had left (Fig.3).

When working on the ford site, it was possible for those with a sense of the past, to imagine others passing along this ancient road, including possibly King Harold and his army on the way to Senlac - as it was at that time one of the main north-south routes - and then, much later, Queen Elizabeth and her entourage on her progress from Hemsted, now Benenden School, to Northiam and Rye on 11 August 1573. (The site report for the Iden Green site is available to read for free on the Kent Archaeological Society website, with all volumes of *Archaeologia Cantiana* now online: Arch Cant C1,1984, 69-81.)

The other archaeological site where I worked with Cecily was the former site of St Mary's Church, Ebony, near Reading Street, Tenterden. Excavations took place here between 1977 and 1987 with help from the Tenterden Museum group, together with Kent Archaeological Society members, including myself.

The site, known today as Chapel Bank, is a deserted medieval village on what was formerly an island with an overgrown graveyard, within which is the site of the church. The original church had been damaged by fire around 1560 and later rebuilt as a smaller building within the footprint of the original one.

The hilltop site is very exposed to wind and weather and during the work, one of the few trees on the site was brought down, resulting in a 'bodystone' being dislodged, which we had to move back (Fig.4, Neil Aldridge, 1986).



Fig.3

The excavations uncovered a large part of the earlier church, the finds are in Tenterden Museum and the work was published, again in *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 110, 1992, and reproduced in the book 'Searching for Ebony', KAS 2018. The smaller church was removed stone by stone to Reading Street in 1858.



Fig.4

I have gone on, since those early days, to undertake further archaeological fieldwork of my own in the Weald, most of which has been published in some form, including in Ernie Pollard's 'History of Benenden', available online. However, I do remember way back in the 1980s, when working with Cecily made archaeology enjoyable as well as educational. I have found out in more recent years that my maternal grandfather, Harry Sharp, was born at Pullington Farm in Benenden and baptised in St George's Church, and that one of my mother's ancestors was married in Ebony church before it was moved down to Reading Street.





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## Branch out with breakfast in a woody wonderland

Peter Thomas visits Birchwood at Flimwell Park

You know where you are the minute you step into the lobby at Birchwood. You're in a silver birch forest - you know this because there's a silver birch tree growing up through the floor - about to enter into a woody wonderland of uncompromisingly solid wooden beams and tables and 46 acres of birch woods peeking in through the rear windows.

It has the feel of a robustly Scandinavian ski chalet - with all the 'hygge' you can handle - although in reality it's in a small artisan industrial estate near Hawkhurst, in what's called a sustainable mixed-use environment. You can enjoy a reinvigorating spa experience here in the eco-community known as Flimwell Park, charge your Tesla here or even live here, but we decided just to have breakfast, which may not come cheap but it won't involve taking out a mortgage.

In fairness, it's something of a no-risk choice, given that this is the third restaurant in the small stable of chef Will Devlin, already proprietor of the Michelin-starred Small Holding in Kilndown and the lovely Curlew in Bodiam. With that kind of pedigree - and Devlin's knack for finding top-class staff with no attitude problems - there's little chance of leaving disappointed.

As I say, this is no 'greasy spoon', although all the breakfast basics are there in slightly more evolved form. They don't actually call it a 'full English' - this term may be illegal now, for all I know - but they do understand what you mean when you ask for one, and they bring you a fully-laden plate of Paley Farm bacon (from Cranbrook), sausage, black pudding, fried egg (on a slice of chewy sourdough toast), mushrooms and potato hash, which is hard to find fault with and only possible to finish if you've been for a ten-mile hike in the woods beforehand - or are just plain greedy.

My companions (as they say in the best Sunday supplement restaurant reviews) seemed to get equal pleasure from their 'Cured trout,

brown bread, scrambled egg, dill and caviar', and 'Pancakes, blueberry compote, yoghurt, mint'; the blueberry, honey and oat smoothie tasted like a bowl of sweet, milky porridge with a health-giving fruit injection; in fact, the only thing on the menu I wouldn't venture again was the 'AM Boost', consisting of a brutal shot of apple, ginger and turmeric that I think may have sheared off several taste buds on its way down. I guess being healthy wasn't meant to be easy.

Espresso? Piping hot and very good, although drinking it from a small (piping hot) bowl may remind you that handles were invented for a reason. Milk? Full fat from Hinxden Dairy. Service? Excellent, of course. Atmosphere? Busy but mellow and woody. In fact, everything you'd expect from Mr Devlin.

It made me consider going on a long walk and staying for lunch. But I went home and had a nap instead.

[birchwoodrestaurant.com](http://birchwoodrestaurant.com)

## ITALIAN TASTING

There are still tickets available for the next village wine tasting, which will explore some of the best Italy has to offer. There will be complimentary wines on arrival, followed by at least eight wines to taste, from Piedmont to Puglia, from Gavi to Sangiovese, and a top-class supper, all for the bargain price of £20. Buy tickets in cash from the community shop.

Tracy Claridge, Alfred Nicol and Peter Thomas at Benenden School Café



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## ‘A role model in kindness, respect and empathy’

Heather Trollope

18 September 1951 -  
30 December 2021

A tribute to Heather,  
from the eulogy written  
and delivered by her sons  
Richard and Henry

Mum was born on the 18th of Hopping in 1951. Her parents were hop-growers, and the month of Hopping was also called September. She was the second child and daughter of Francis Hall, better known as Son or Sonny, and his wife Muriel. Mum was christened Penelope Heather Ann, was universally known as Heather, but often affectionately called Pheth, Phethy or Feather. She was a younger sister to Rosemary and later an older sister to John and Douglas.

In her younger years she developed a love that never waned for Hammer Mill Farm in Biddenden, which was such a beautiful place to grow up. There, she embraced her mother's passion for gardening and the opportunity to connect with the important animals of her youth, such as Roulette, her horse, and Crash, the giant, but soft, English mastiff. She had a special affinity for Clematis, with well over a dozen in the back garden at Chaucer Cottage in Iden Green - in fact the running joke at home was that one should not stand still too long anywhere outside as there was a high probability a Clematis would be planted and trained up you.

At the age of five, Mum went to Penderel school



in Tenterden, where her lively spirit, fierce intelligence, mischievousness and fluent ‘verbal reasoning skills’ were not always welcomed by some of the more old-fashioned teachers. After that, she followed another passion and attended the Legat School of Ballet at Finchcocks in Goudhurst, but although she had great ability she was let down, both physically and metaphorically, by her ankle tendons. In a way, though, the ballet years never really left her,

in that she always moved with grace, be it on horseback or snow.

Mum then attended Maidstone Technical College and at 16 started her first job at the Land Registry in Tunbridge Wells for two years before an opportunity to re-engage her ‘green fingers’ as a gardener at Mereworth Castle at the age of 19. These were happy days living in the famous ‘bothy’ within the grounds, to which the boys of a bachelor’s pad nearby were invited over for a party to meet the new girl - and a certain Charles Trollope, now the ‘bird

correspondent’ of this magazine, was introduced to her, leading quickly to a deep and lasting connectivity.

Mum and Dad were married on 2 September 1972 at Biddenden Church and spent their honeymoon in Scotland. Thankfully this was not her first initiation into



the Trollope world of mountain holidays and associated inclement weather, as given the incessant rain it may have been the last. She was never happier than faithfully following Dad up some peak on a path he clearly stated was on the map but was rarely there in reality.

The year after Mum and Dad married, Richard arrived on the scene after a difficult birth due to pre-eclampsia, and nearly four years later, Henry arrived after a frankly life-threatening birth. Two years later, we all moved to Lincolnshire, where we had a very happy seven years and Mum quickly made the dearest of friends, including the Houghtons, the eldest son of whom, Jona, was often referred to as Mum and Dad's 'adopted son'.

After a brief year in Blackburn, the family returned 'home', to Kent and Chaucer Cottage, where we were joined by our beloved black Labrador, Bonnie. Christmas there was always such a special occasion, and I think Mum measured our happiness by the size of the joints of meat she would prepare for the family, but she would always have elderly or lonely neighbours join us on Christmas Eve for the festivities.

Once motherhood was no longer her daily job, Mum returned to work, initially as a clerk for a local magazine and then back into horticulture, where she enjoyed many years working at Highbanks nursery near Hawkhurst. She also served for four or five years as secretary to the parochial church council, from 2013 until she first became ill.

In retirement, travel destinations were chosen with a focus on combining Mum and Dad's shared love of the natural world. The peak was

a sensational cruise of the Antarctic, but for all their wonder, none of these was Mum's true spiritual happy place, which remained the Highlands of Scotland.

In the years that followed, Richard married Verity and gave Mum two grandchildren, Isabel and James, while Henry married Katie, giving her two further granddaughters, Zoe and Emily. She took great care to build very special relationships with her grandchildren, and one Christmas a few years ago the children sat at the piano and played and sang carols together.

Tears of joy flowed.

Mum was kind; also thoughtful, unselfish, empathetic, self-effacing, caring, understanding and big-hearted, as we were assured by the many cards and messages we received. She always put others before herself; even as a schoolchild she purposely befriended those that felt left-out, and later in life she gardened at the hospice, collected for the Red Cross and British Legion, helped her sister with riding for the disabled, assisted youngsters in learning to read and took Cranbrook school children



to and fro from school to hospital with various injuries and ailments. Many of those children, now adults, have come up to us at school reunions and thanked us for my Mum's kindness and, interestingly, her advice and counsel.

I think Jona put it best: "Heather is a reference point on how I lead my life; in thinking of others first and how to treat all people with respect and empathy - in that regard she is a role model."

That is so true. Mum, you will always be in our hearts and the biggest compliment we can give you is that whenever we or Dad have a moral dilemma or difficult decision, we will always think: 'What would Mum do?'



## Satellites solve mysteries of incredible journeys

For nearly a hundred years, Cuckoos were regularly ringed in an attempt to discover where they spent the winter, but in all these years only a single bird was recovered, having been found dead in Cameroon. Thanks to satellite tagging we now know our birds overwinter in the Congo, using Cameroon only as a staging post.

Following the success of this tagging, Cuckoos were tagged near Beijing. The wintering areas of birds from China was a total mystery: was it south-east Asia, India or elsewhere? Amazingly, the birds were discovered to fly south to avoid the Himalayas before turning west to fly over/through India and then make the long crossing of the Indian Ocean to Somalia and then south to East Africa.

Tagging solved one of the great migration mysteries: how do Bar-tailed Godwits reach their wintering quarters in New Zealand from North America? What route do the birds take? Scientists had thought it impossible for the birds to carry enough fat reserves to make the 8,000-mile journey, but the scientists had got it wrong and the birds, indeed, complete the journey without stopping.

Tagging can also be used for purposes other than determining migration routes and wintering quarters. When I retired in the early 2000s I worked professionally for the British Trust for Ornithology, carrying out field work to help conserve farmland birds. When this project finished I was offered the chance to carry out field work in Scotland to learn more about why the Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*, was in decline. The thought of being paid to walk the hills in Scotland for three months seemed very attractive, but sadly I had to decline due to many other commitments. A few years later, the BTO launched an appeal for funds to tag these birds, to which I gladly signed up, and every now and then I get progress reports.

The idea was to learn where the birds spend their time so that conservation plans could be put in place. The Short-eared Owl is one of the most widely distributed birds in the world, only absent in Antarctica and Australasia. Traditionally, birds in the UK were considered to be mostly partial migrants, leaving the highlands to winter in the southern UK, Southern Europe and North Africa but the new tracking data is showing that their movements are much more complex and variable. They are ground nesters, usually laying four to seven eggs, and sometimes more in high vole years. Their life span can be up to 12 years, though the new tracking data show that it is typically much less.

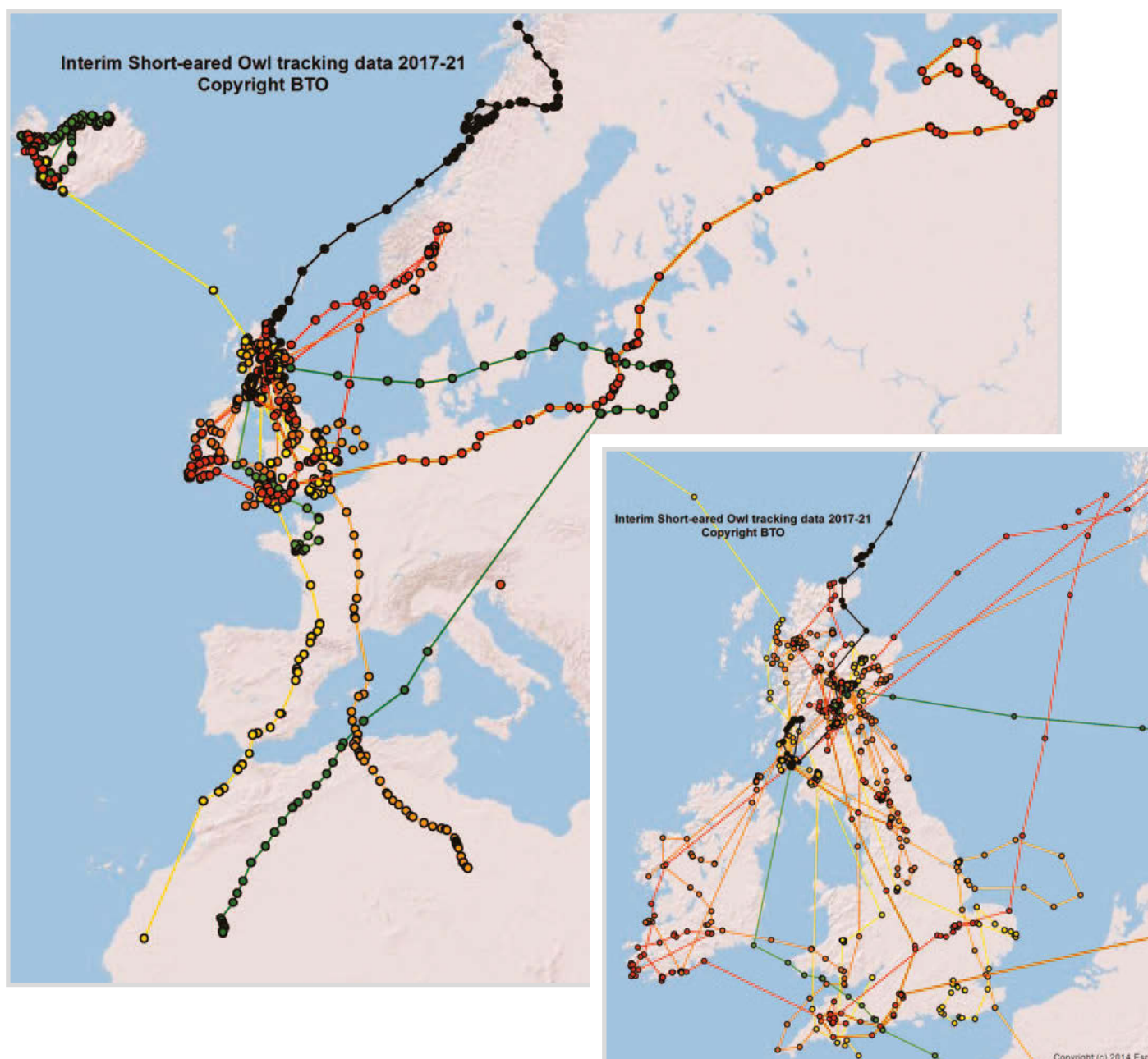
There have been two or three occasions in winter where I have seen them along the Rother valley near Newenden. Around the Kent coast in winter estuaries, a favoured habitat, there are usually between 30 and 90 birds recorded. The Isle of Sheppey is the best place to see them and in 2019 a pair remained to breed there.

The tagging of these birds has led to the discovery of some extraordinary and incredible journeys that these birds undertake. In 2018 a pair bred near Stirling in Scotland, and before the young were independent, the female left her mate to look after the chicks and flew to Norway to breed with another male. She returned to winter in Britain, initially to Ireland then Cornwall and finally Norfolk. In the spring of 2019, she flew in the direction of Norway but perished over the North Sea.

In Scotland she bred in mountain grassland and in Norway it was dwarf scrubland. The owls' main food supply is small rodents, particularly short-tailed voles, but they will also take birds. In June 2020, two adult female birds were tagged on their nests on the Isle of Arran; one spent the subsequent winter in south-west England and in April/May of this year it travelled to the Pechora Delta in Northern Russia, 3,100km away, to breed. I wonder if this a world record for the greatest distance between breeding sites for any species?

Another adult female, tagged only kilometre away on Arran in the same year, travelled to Norway to breed the following year. In all, 25 birds have been tagged, most at their nest, and the closest that any of these birds has nested in the following season is 40km. The tracking of these birds has also revealed that they winter further south in Africa, reaching the depths of the desert of Western Sahara. When this project was initiated to try and determine where these owls bred and wintered, and then draw up some conservation measures, the researchers could never have realised how complex and wide-ranging the problem would be.

Charles Trollope 240821 cetetal@btinternet.com





# In Your Garden

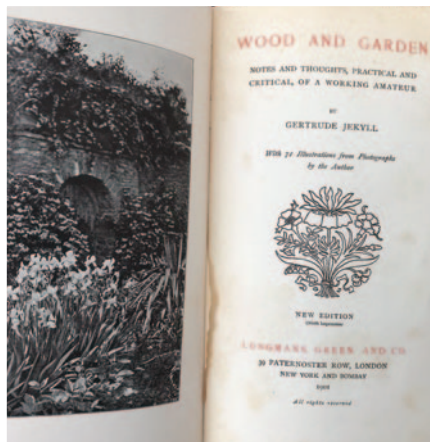


## Waking up to woodland in springtime

I have a treasured book in my possession entitled *Wood and Garden* by Gertrude Jekyll. Its subtitle reads: 'Notes and thoughts, practical and critical, of a working amateur.' The book belonged to my paternal grandmother and

was published in 1901 - apart from it being an hilarious read (on most pages, I might add, although I am sure this was not the intention) I like it for the pure comfort and joy of reading prose through a gardener's eye.

This particular book, as the title implies, concentrates on the woodland and copse in Jekyll's garden but regularly brims over into the more ornamental areas. Her entry for March describes the "wealth of blue" that a woodland floor of scilla and



chionodoxa gives, along with the white carpet of wood anemones and dog tooth violets. The idea that plants can naturalise so freely is one of the most charming elements of woodland gardening; that and the fact that they are mostly opportunists, grabbing all the daylight hours on offer until the upper storey above them comes fully into leaf. Then there are the summer



months, when a woodland floor retreats and becomes a shady, cool oasis, before it shifts slowly into autumn, ending the year, with Jekyll writing "how endlessly beautiful is woodland in winter".

Any area in a garden that has one or two trees, with a few shrubs for lower-level interest, will have partial shade where all sorts of

treasures can be planted. If you wish to plant bulbs on the perimeter edges, such as snowdrops, hellebores and crocus, I would introduce small numbers to start with to see if they naturalise. If the conditions are suitable, they will and you will need to do little in subsequent years to maintain the area, as it will largely look after itself.

Young woodlands plants such as ferns, epidemiums and Solomon's seal will need a starting hand with clearing any encroaching weeds, particularly perennials such as nettle and ground elder. If your area is large enough, then these weeds can be left to colonise and provide essential habitats and you can at least delight in knowing that if nettles are growing, at least the soil is good and healthy.

For shrubs in partially shady parts of the garden, there are many free-flowering varieties to have: witch hazels and

corylopsis, ribes, daphnes, sarcococcas, followed by deciduous viburnums, amelanchiers and rhododendrons. Many of these are scented, which in the stillness of early spring air seems to drift across the garden, and it's always worth cutting a branch or two to bring indoors. If planting any carefully chosen shrubs, it is worth digging as generous a planting pit as you can; woodland floors are notoriously 'rooty', so you may have to also scale down on pot sizes. If you can spare some leaf mould or garden compost, then a thick mulch after watering-in will keep it in good stead for its first year of establishment. And check back on it from time to time to clear away any encroaching weeds.

As your garden wakes up to spring, then choose this time of year to enhance any shady, woodland areas. By this time next year, if all goes to plan, the results will be worth it.

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Above: Looking to the future: Barry Bassett receiving the 'Hero of Net Zero' national climate award from the UK Government; HRH The Princess Royal at the launch of Benenden School's Be the Change initiative with Samantha Price  
 Front cover: *Heralding spring*. Photograph: Ruth Clark