



Celebrating taking part: Primary school entries to the art competition judged at the village fete, and out on a school trip; volunteers at Benenden Hospital; Diccon Gray won bronze in the mixed doubles (over 60) at the World Masters Table Tennis Championships, and lifted the men's over 60s doubles title at the Veteran English Table Tennis Society National Championships
 Front cover: Community on show: A fabulous village fete. Photograph: Beth Ansell



Benenden Magazine

July 2026

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Editorial



Benenden certainly knows how to put on a show! After months of sweat, tears, laughter, planning and sorting by an army of amazing villagers the fete came to life on a glorious sunny day.

It's the tireless enthusiasm and sheer grit of so many that results in what has become a fabulous village festival that raises impressive funds for so many good causes. I read in the news recently that many of the country's festivals are suffering and closing due to lack of ticket sales. So far this year 20 have cancelled or postponed. Last year it was 43 and 78 in 2024! No ticket required for our fete - just a determination to have fun!

Although I didn't spend much time exploring the event (remind myself to do better next year) I did manage to buy a rather majestic Myrtle (who can say no to Charlotte Molesworth when she said I HAD to have it) or the little silver frog brooch on the jewellery stall, a rather smart top at The Wardrobe, and an ancient but fabulous billhook and hand sickle on the Tools stall (on second thoughts perhaps I shouldn't spend more time exploring). An unintended by-product of working with the book stall team and heaving boxes of books in and out of cars and in and out of the Memorial Hall is that I have developed muscles Popeye would be proud of!

The many photos in this issue give just a flavour and please forgive us if you are missing. Our marvellous roving fete paparazzi Beth Ansell and David Sarton snapped loads. If you would like me to send you any just email us at benendenparishmagazine@gmail.com.

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

July

Saturday 4	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	
Saturday 4	Summer Barbecue, Bangers and Beans, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 5	Summer Teas, Memorial Hall, 2-4pm	p.13
Saturday 11	Flower & Produce Annual Show, Iden Green Pavilion, 1pm	p.13
Saturday 11	Social Evening, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 12	Summer Teas, Memorial Hall, 2-4pm	p.13
Tuesday 14	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 14	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Saturday 18	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 19	Open Garden, Little Walkhurst, Benenden, 12.30-4.30pm	p.15
Sunday 19	Summer Teas, Memorial Hall, 2-4pm	p.13
Monday 20	Parish Council Meeting, Memorial Hall, 7pm	
Tues 21-Sun 26	Benenden Tennis Tournament, Benenden School	p.9
Tuesday 21	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Simon Drake: Walking the Camino de Santiago, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.15
Saturday 25	Social Evening, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 26	The Angry Whelk Fresh Fish Stall, Benenden Village Hall, 12-2pm	
Sunday 26	Open Garden, Little Walkhurst, Benenden, 12.30-4.30pm	p.15
Sunday 26	Summer Teas, Memorial Hall, 2-4pm	p.13
Tuesday 28	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 28	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 28	Merry and Bright, Visit to Tenterden Museum and a chip shop, Memorial Hall, 1.45pm	p.17

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

Cakes & Chaos: Toddler Group

Wednesdays and Fridays during term time at the Mission Church, Sandhurst, 9-11am

Benenden Bowls Club

Thursdays, April-September, on the recreation field, practice night, 6pm

Parish Council



Over the last month or so we have received quite the plethora of correspondence from our residents - it must be something in the (lack of) water! Here is some guidance on various issues raised:

Parking charges at Hemsted Forest Forestry England have introduced charges for parking. Details of their membership scheme can be found online forestryengland.uk/hemsted-forest, which allows you to park at any of Forestry England's sites nationally, including Bedgebury. You can register up to two vehicles for each membership.

Overgrown hedges obstructing pavements Report online to Kent County Council Highways kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-or-track-a-problem-on-the-road-or-pavement. Alternatively, have a quiet word with your neighbour if it is their hedge.

Public right of way/footpath issues, including broken stiles, overgrown vegetation or fallen trees, damaged path surfaces, damaged or missing signposts. Please report online to Kent County Council kent.gov.uk/environment-waste-and-planning/public-rights-of-way/report-a-problem-on-a-right-of-way.

Dog fouling Often people being nearby is enough to shame dog owners to clear up, so please be vigilant and practise a bit of eye-to-eye contact. If this doesn't work then report the issue online to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council tunbridgewells.gov.uk/environment/dogs-and-animals/report-dog-fouling

We find that residents reporting issues to the formal channels is the most effective way of getting these dealt with.

Finally, we currently have a vacancy on the parish council, so please do get in touch if you would like to join our friendly team.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair
nicola.thomas@benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk
07593 226462 clerk@benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk

For more information see our website benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk or find us on Facebook

Parish Council Meeting

Monday 20 July,
Memorial Hall, 7pm

Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

Associate Priest: Revd Dr Rosemary Kobus van Wengen 764857 rosemaryvanwengen@gmail.com

Churchwarden: Sue Fisher 241907 sue@undaunted.co.uk

Churchwarden: Cathy Presgrave 07500 119189 cathy.presgrave@gmail.com

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com

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

8am and 5pm services will be in the chancel of St George's Church, accessed through the Bishop's Door to the east end of the church

10am services will take place in the hall of Benenden Primary School

Sunday 5 July	8am Communion	10am All-age Communion	5pm Evening Prayer
Sunday 12 July	8am BCP Communion	10am Morning Worship	
Sunday 19 July	8am Communion	10am Sung Eucharist	5pm Songs of Praise at St Nicholas, Sandhurst
Saturday 25 July			4pm Connect Four at Mission Church, Sandhurst
Sunday 26 July	8am Communion	10am Morning Worship	
Morning Prayer	8am Mondays and Fridays at The Rectory, Benenden		

Mission Church, Sandhurst

Rector: Revd David Commander 240658 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

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

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Wedding 6 June Megan Clube and Robert Murch, at St Nicholas, Sandhurst

Church Letter



Community shines again on a day of sun and fun

Wow, what an amazing day! The Benenden village fete, in support of St George's Church, showed once again how fortunate we are to live in such a great village. So many people from the community were involved in a wonderful event and it was a real joy to see The Green bustling with so many people having fun. And the weather could not have been kinder to us: 21/22°C, sunshine and a gentle breeze, compared to the previous Saturday's 40mph winds and heavy rain.

These great community events do not just happen, though; they take a huge amount of organising and manpower to run. So as a community we should say a collective thank you to: the fete committee who pulled it all together and made it happen; to all the leaders of the various stalls for organising their teams and their stock; and to all those who manned the stalls on the day. The committee would also like to thank those who came along on the Friday and the Saturday morning to help set up, and to those who stayed behind and got involved in clearing away afterwards.

Despite the church building being closed for our Restore, Renew, Rejoice project, church teas went ahead, served from gazebos along the north wall of the church, and seating in the churchyard with a great view down the whole Green. Entrance to the nave of the church, the ringing chamber and the tower was still possible. In the church progress on the heating phase of the Restore, Renew, Rejoice project was visible. There was also a display of build-progress photographs, a selection of artifacts unearthed during the floor work, and some of the Jura floor tile samples in place. There was an opportunity to sponsor a floor tile (800 in total), and have your name documented in a record. If you missed this, please get in touch: www.stgeorgeschurchbenenden.co.uk

Apart from being a wonderful community event, we also raise money for the running and the work of St George's Church. I think it's going to be another good amount.

Save the date for next year's fete: Saturday 12 June. If you'd like to get involved and help in any way, please drop me an email. As I've already said, these events do not just happen - it needs lots of people to get involved to bring it all together so that we can have a fun village day.

Revd David Commander, Rector



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Talking Point



We all need more poetry

You may not have noticed, but at the moment poetry is having, well, a moment. The Financial Times recently suggested that poetry sustains us in times of strife, while a young poet in The Guardian argued that his performance poetry offered young men a healthy alternative to toxic masculinity. Poetry open mic nights are thriving, and poetry podcasts are proliferating.

So it's good to be able to report that Benenden can hold its head high on the poetry front. For the past four years about a dozen of us have been meeting to enjoy reading poems. Not our poems, but the poetry of the greats: Shakespeare, Keats, Hardy, Heaney, Auden, Plath, Armitage et al. We've celebrated the centenary of The Wasteland, got bogged down in the Beat Poets, and hosted a young contemporary poet who helped us see why TV evangelists and video games are perfectly good things for poets to write about.

We're not at all an erudite group. Mr Google is our closest friend. If we come across something that's hard to understand, we try to puzzle it out, but mainly we just share the many pleasures that poems have to offer. I think I'm right in saying that these regular poetry evenings have enriched all our lives with shared laughter, memories, emotions and reflections.

Because poetry is, in so many ways, the distilled essence of life. It can make us take more notice of everyday things, like Wendy Cope's marvellous poem about a lunchtime orange. Or help us feel less alone - anyone who has lain awake at night will relate to Philip Larkin's wonderful 'Aubade'. It can stir our emotions, like Wilfred Owen's wrenching wartime poem about meeting the man he killed, or hold up a mirror to our times. We all know a national leader who should reflect on Shelley's 'Ozymandias': "Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair.."

So it's a shame that, for so many of us, poetry remains something we 'did' at school, then never thought about again, until perhaps a wedding or a funeral dragged it to our attention. But there are plenty of ways we can bring poetry in our lives. We can dip into a bedside anthology, listen to poetry on the radio, or sign up for a 'poem a day' to be delivered to our computers.

And if poetry ever seems remote from modern life, consider how this brief poem by the Palestinian poet Marwan Makhoul arrows straight into the troubled heart of our turbulent times:

"In order for me to write poetry
that isn't political
I must listen to the birds,
and in order to hear the birds,
the warplanes must be silent."

Hilary Wilce

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Parish Councillor vacancy

Following the uncontested election and the resignation of Cllr Russell Cruse, the parish council is able to fill a current vacancy by co-option. Local councillors are the community champions who invest time in local projects and issues that benefit the neighbourhood. Parish councillors, in collaboration with the county and borough councils, help make decisions on local needs, services and facilities, comment on planning applications, manage budgets, and represent the views of residents.

To qualify you must be at least 18 years old and a British citizen, qualifying Commonwealth citizen or citizen of the Republic of Ireland, and meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Registered as a local government elector for the parish
- During the preceding 12 months occupied, as owner or tenant, any land or premises in the parish
- Principal or only place of work during the 12 months is in the parish
- During the preceding 12 months resided in the parish or within 4.8km

No previous experience is required, just a genuine interest in the community, a willingness to work as part of a team, and time to attend meetings and support council activities. Benenden Parish Council encourages applications from all sections of the community and welcomes anyone who is passionate about supporting the parish.

If you are interested in being considered, please submit an expression of interest outlining: why you would like to join us; what skills or experience you could bring to the role; and confirmation that you meet at least one of the eligibility criteria above.

Email written submissions to the clerk (clerk@benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk) or post to the Community Office, Benenden Village Hall, Benenden, Cranbrook, Kent, TN17 4DE to be received by 10 July 2026. The parish council will consider applications at its meeting on 20 July.

For more information contact:

Nicola Thomas, Chair,
nicola.thomas@benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk

BENENDEN TENNIS TOURNAMENT

JUNIOR TOURNAMENT

Tuesday 21 July | Junior Singles
**Wednesday 22 July | Junior Boys Doubles
& Junior Girls Doubles**
Thursday 23 July | Junior Mixed Doubles

NEW 2 GENERATION TOURNAMENT

Friday 24 July

ADULT TOURNAMENT

**Saturday 26 July | Adult Men Doubles
& Adult Ladies Doubles**
Sunday 27 July | Adult Mixed Doubles

www.benendentennistournament.com

Benenden Tennis Tournament

The tournament runs from Tuesday 21 July to Sunday 26 July offering fun, competitive tennis for adults and children of all standards while raising money for local charities. Run entirely by volunteers, almost all money raised is donated.

We are very grateful to Benenden School for hosting the event, and to our local business sponsors who include Burfields House Wealth Management, Harpers & Hurlingham, Fridays, Mudwall, Cranbrook Farm Shop, Hotshotz and Jubilee Hire.

Junior days include much more than tennis, with a tea tent serving home-baked cakes and strawberries, a sweet shop, raffle, coffee and drinks stand, sports stall and a barbecue from Wow Cooking during junior doubles. Families are welcome to bring picnics and watch the action.

In 2025, a record 150 juniors and 100 adults took part. Children as young as seven compete, with enjoyment, good sportsmanship and participation at the heart of the event. Thanks to players, families, sponsors and volunteers, over £10,000 was donated last year to local charities.

Entry is £25 per person per event, and a new two-generation tournament on Friday invites juniors to team up with parents, grandparents or older family members.

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Village lunch

There is no lunch in July but normal service will be resumed on Tuesday 11 August in the village hall. Please contact me if you would like to come but have not yet signed up. In order to give the cooks time to shop please let me know by Thursday 6 August latest.

Genevieve Greenwood 240526

Flower & Produce Annual Show

Not long now until the Benenden Gardening Club Flower & Produce Annual Show. Hopefully the sun and rain has nurtured your entries nicely. We are extremely grateful to RHS Gold Medal winner David Sarton, as well as Sheila Hume of Blue Hen Flowers, for agreeing to judge the entries. Event details are above.

The classes to enter (£1 per entry) are:

FLOWERS

- Single bloom
- Display of garden flowers
- Arrangement of flowers in a standard size teacup

VEGETABLES

- Four of any one vegetable (as near same size)
- Four potatoes (as near same size)
- Display of at least four types of vegetables, arranged for artistic effect

FRUIT

- Display of any other soft fruit (could be mixed), arranged for artistic effect

CHILDREN'S CLASS (12 years and under - category has FREE entry)

- Anything grown by themselves

MISCELLANEOUS

- The ugliest/funniest vegetable

BEST IN SHOW AWARD

- Awarded by the judges for the best overall entry

Flower & Produce Annual Show

SATURDAY 11 JULY
IDEN GREEN PAVILION

SHOW ENTRIES - deliver these between 10am-12noon on the day.

PUBLIC VIEWING - doors open 1-3pm. Refreshments will be served throughout.

PRIZES - awarded at 2.30pm.

For further information email Pippa Sarton on sph147@aol.com

Summer Teas return

Although St George's Church is temporarily closed for the Restore, Renew, Rejoice project, we will be going ahead with the summer teas on Sundays throughout July and August (2-4pm from 5 July-30 August). We will meet in the Memorial Hall at the bottom of The Green. Come and join us for a cup of tea and piece of cake and a natter with your friends. As before, donations are welcomed and all proceeds will go towards St George's Church.

Helen Commander

Benenden Bowls Club

The first internal competition of the summer at Benenden Bowls Club, the Bambridge Trophy, was won by Martyn Ward, who was presented with the trophy by Ray Cheeseman. Ray also presented the cup to Peter Field, the winner of the second competition, the Pop Horton Cup.

New members/players are welcome to come and try on a Thursday evening from 6pm, and anyone is welcome to come and watch our friendly matches or competitions at the weekend.

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Benenden Primary School

Nobody likes change - do they? It's a challenge that requires bravery and courage to progress through effectively, but can lead to exciting things. The children have been working hard in this final term to ensure that they are ready for the transition over the summer to a new classroom, new teacher, new Key Stage and for our Year 6s a step into a new school. Our aim is to give every child the tools they need to manage this transition effectively.

By the end of the school year, Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 will have performed their incredible version of Peter Pan, the Year 3 children will have slept over in the classrooms for the first time, and the Year 4 children will have camped out - some for the first time - ready for their Year 5 residential in September.

We also had an amazing day in June when every child from our other Federation School, Goudhurst and Kilndown Church of England Primary School, came to visit for the day - doubling our numbers. It was a great opportunity for the children to make new friends - a skill in itself.

As the school year comes to an end, I would like to thank the staff and everyone from the community who has supported the school in any way - it is very much appreciated and makes our school all that it is. Our school vision, based on John 10, is 'To be a learning community that enables everyone to live life in all its fullness in a changing world', and I believe that being part of this school community enables us to live life in all its fullness.

Finally, I would like to wish my Year 6 children all the very best for their next steps into secondary school. They are all ready, prepared and equipped for the next challenges, and I am very proud of each and every individual in that class. They will be sorely missed.

Alison Brook, Headteacher 240565
office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk
www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk

LITTLE WALKHURST OPEN GARDEN	<p>This year we are fund raising for Hospice in the Weald again and opening our six-acre garden on 19 & 26 July and 2 August from 12.30-4.30pm.</p> <p>Come and enjoy at our 18th century house our cottage-style garden, woodland walk, wildflower meadow, summer and orchid houses, wildlife ponds and waterfalls. See Peter's new project and my art studio will be open too.</p> <p>Dogs on leads please. Entry is £5 for adults and includes refreshments. Sara Rowan</p> <p>Little Walkhurst, Walkhurst Road, Benenden TN17 4DT</p>
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Iden Green and Benenden WI

We all had a wonderful time at our garden party when Shirley, our ex-president, was presented with a token of thanks for her many years of hard work; a friend and inspiration to all our members.

Our visit to Benenden School proved to be of special interest and we are grateful for their hospitality. The speaker in July will be Simon Drake talking about his walk along the Camino de Santiago in France. This will be on 21 July in the Memorial Hall at 2pm. Our meeting on 18 August will be in Iden Green Pavilion. We always love to meet new people so do come along.

Jackie Liffen WI@daisystar.co.uk

Gibbon and Buckland grants

Gibbon and Buckland grants are available for anyone under the age of 25 who is resident in, and has been resident in, the parish of Benenden for not less than three years and either in further education or in other ways getting prepared for working life. Trustees will also give consideration to applications for grants for gap year projects of educational worth. If you could benefit, or know someone who could, please ask for an application form at the village shop, or from the clerk to the charity at gibbonandbuckland@gmail.com. Latest date for applications is 30 September.

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Classic cars

What a successful turnout: 30 classic cars assembled at the top of The Green, ranging from a sedate Rolls Royce to a fun beach buggy. A lot of interest was shown as people mingled among the cars and many memories were exchanged. "I used to own one of those!" was a popular refrain. In particular Rosemary van Wengen recalled her time in Africa in an MGA roadster in her 20s, getting totally covered in dust on a trip out. A couple of us did an informal judging and declared that our best car of the show was the lovingly restored Bristol 403, closely followed by the little 1929 Austin 7 Mulliner fabric saloon. We look forward to an equally stunning turnout next year.

Richard Stubbings

Merry and Bright

Our May meeting was very interesting after having to be changed as the arranged speaker could not make it. Neil Manser so very kindly stepped in, followed by our Victorian tea.

For 16 years Neil has been running supported holidays for adults with autism spectrum disorder and other disabilities. He has started his own business called Hand in Hand, which gives the disabled a chance to go on a memorable holiday that they will never forget. He provides one-to-one care tailored to individual needs. Neil has travelled to Egypt, Morocco, Disneyland and many more places, helping families get respite or just a break. It takes a very loyal, dedicated and trustworthy person to do this wonderful work. Anyone reading this who thinks they could do with a helping hand contact Neil I am sure he would love to hear from you. His email is Neil@handinhandholidays.com

Our next meeting on Tuesday 28 July is to Tenterden Museum and a chip shop. Contact me for more information.

Laraine Penny, Chair 241763



Friends of Benenden Primary School

The PTFA were proud to attend and host a number of stalls at the village fete, and a heartfelt thank you goes to every single volunteer who gave up their Saturday to help. From bottle tombolas to sweetie jars, lollipop stands, candy floss, Hook-a-Duck to air dry clay, there was something for everyone.

Particular thanks goes to Mrs Brook, Mrs Bryan, Mrs Kellie-Vickers and Miss Sanchez, as well as the wider school team and PTFA committee, whose tireless work in the lead up to the fete and on the day itself made it all happen.

The school's stalls raised a record-breaking £2,136 and every penny will go towards enriching the experiences of the children at the school. Whether you came along to support our stalls, donated a prize, volunteered your time, or simply popped by, you played a part in making this such a memorable and successful day.

Here's to another wonderful year ahead, and to seeing you all again at the next community event.

Alex Mochrie

friends@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk

www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk/PTFA/



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We play non-league, friendly fixtures every weekend throughout the summer and are always keen to welcome new players, young and old. Some great games recently have featured youngsters starring alongside dads who have been coaxed out of retirement. So come down to a game and say hi or contact our vice-chairman:

Peter Newman 07810 658981
pcslnewman@yahoo.co.uk
benendenc.play-cricket.com

Benenden Pre-School

Our lease in the St George's building will be ending in July 2027 and so the trustees have been busy looking at suitable new premises within the village where we can relocate our outstanding pre-school. We're pleased to say that an exciting opportunity has arisen to purchase a premises in the heart of the village which would not only be a fantastic new location for us but also a sustainable asset for our future. The pre-school has been in the village for almost 60 years and generations of the same families attend it. It is an integral and vital service to the youngest members of our community and their families so we absolutely want to safeguard its future.

We are currently negotiating the way forward to obtain the building, ensuring its safety and suitability for the children. We hope that a move in date will be possible at some point between January and July 2027, but there is much to be done and we will update the community on the progress of this project. Fundraising is key and we have an important date for you to save to your diaries. The Benenden Pre-School Charity Ball will take place on 26 September in Hemsted Park, including a three course dinner, jazz band and charity auction (see advert opposite). Please do buy tickets.

We will keep the community fully aware of the progress of our move as we value your involvement in any way. If you have any ideas or can offer any support to our fundraising, we would love to hear from you.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor
supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

26 SEPTEMBER 2026

BENENDEN PRE-SCHOOL

Charity Ball

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The concert starts at 7pm and tickets cost £13. Scan the QR code to buy online in advance or buy on the door. Refreshments available.

All hands on deck. We look forward to welcoming you!

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Gray's table tennis gold

Diccon Gray, founder of the Weald Table Tennis Club based in the village hall, lifted the men's over 60s doubles title at the VETTS (Veteran English Table Tennis Society) National Championships recently.

With Steve Brunskill (Cleveland), they knocked out top seeds Tim Dyson (Yorkshire) and Ritchie Venner (Sussex) in three close games, 13-11, 11-9, 11-8 in the quarter finals, and after a tough five game semi-final, they found themselves two games down in the final, before pulling through 9-11, 6-11, 11-6, 11-9, 11-8, over Paul Giles (Devon) and Adrian Pilgrim (Warwickshire) to take the title. He then went to South Korea to compete in the World Masters Table Tennis Championships. He made it to the last eight in the singles (over 65) and won bronze in the mixed doubles (over 60).

The Weald TT Club welcomes newcomers to its Thursday evening club session (7-9pm), Sunday junior coaching (5.30-6.30pm) and evening club (6.30-8.30pm) sessions.

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Benenden School

As I write we are in the midst of public exam season at Benenden, with all the hard work and study that entails, but while looking ahead to August's exam results is important, it's equally vital that our girls challenge themselves away from the classroom and beyond their usual comfort zones - and have fun doing so.

It was pleasing to receive congratulations from the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards, coinciding with Volunteers' Week in June, which concluded the volunteering efforts of Benenden girls, amounting to more than 1,400 hours this year. Our DofE girls have helped out with younger students in their boarding houses, supported local primary schools and visited care homes, making a difference both at school and in the wider community.

We are also celebrating the release of Benenden Chapel Choir's latest commercial recording, a collaboration with the James Taylor Quartet, of which we are incredibly proud. The unique recording, available to stream as well as on CD and vinyl, sets the ancient fourth-century Christian text 'Te Deum' to intense jazz funk.

This second half of the summer term is always full of activity, and we have begun the last few weeks of the academic year as we mean to go on. The Royal Navy branch of our Combined Cadet Force have been getting to grips with water sports in Rye and our drama scholars have been rehearsing for their production of *As She Likes It*. And of course, for our Year 13s, their time with us is sadly coming to an end, and so we are preparing to celebrate them in time-honoured Benenden fashion - with our annual speech day.

Looking ahead to September, we will be launching a new weekly musical theatre club, for children aged 11-18. *Curtain Call* will be run by Molly Kennett, who holds a degree in musical theatre and helps out with school productions. The club is open to boys and girls and we welcome local children who do not attend Benenden. To find out more, email Molly at mke@benenden.school.

Rachel Bailey, Headmistress



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Benenden Hospital

The hospital has been a hive of community spirit with our tombola stand at the village fete, charity cake sale organised by our Social Club, and a cream tea to mark Volunteers' Week. Our volunteers play a valued role. They give their time generously, supporting patients and visitors at what can often be an anxious or uncertain time, offering reassurance, and kindness that makes a real difference.

At tea in our café and, over the week, I spoke to all our volunteers to understand what inspires them. Here are a couple of their reflections:

Nicholas Marshall: "I enjoy volunteering as I feel I am making a contribution to an excellent facility that has helped me significantly as a patient." I also spoke with Dominic Plomer-Roberts, one of our meet-and-greet volunteers: "I work from home Monday to Thursday and was looking for something fulfilling and rewarding to do on my day off. When I saw that the hospital was looking for volunteers, I was delighted to be offered a meet-and-greet role, which I absolutely love. The environment is welcoming, the staff are incredibly supportive, and although I'm only there a few hours each week, I truly feel like a valued part of the team. Volunteering has given me a real sense of purpose and satisfaction, and I would encourage anyone with a little spare time to consider getting involved."

Claire Harley, Hospital Director

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Mick Moore



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Talking shop

There are few activities more rewarding than being part of a motivated, happy team who are doing something meaningful while having fun. The people working to create and run the village fete prove testament to this. Likewise, the Benenden Bonfire and Benenden Players inspire a likeminded team to come together and create something they can be proud of. So it is with volunteering at Benenden's.

Benenden's is a much-loved hub as well as being a source of provisions and a place to chill, eat and socialise. Like many other businesses, it is doing all it can to survive a trying time and cut costs by keeping paid staff to a minimum. Its success, and indeed survival, depends on attracting as many volunteers as possible to lighten the load and offer all the services it can. Our hard-working, dedicated staff and brilliant volunteers work hard to keep things going but we always need more.

Volunteering does not mean doing it regularly, although a regular slot is reliable and practical. We have a very useful WhatsApp group where pleas for help can be put out and responded to if anyone is available. There's no pressure and we are grateful for any time you are able to give. Some are reticent about the use of the till - volunteering doesn't have to mean you do that. There are often large deliveries and many hands make light work in unpacking them and putting stock on the shelves. Just helping with that task makes such a difference and is so much appreciated. Learning to do other tasks in the shop and café can be assimilated over time and we are all happy to help new volunteers learn. We are lucky to have customers who are friendly and patient and grateful for what we do.

If you are thinking about offering us some of your time, please come forward and let us know in the shop. You will receive a very warm welcome and make so many new friends.

Bev Beveridge info@benendens.co.uk
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Volunteer Transport Group

If you have a medical appointment that you are unable to get to because you do not have access to a vehicle and public transport is not a viable option, contact me and I will see if one of our volunteer drivers can assist you.

The group has responded to more than 100 requests for assistance since being re-formed, but to keep up with demand we would always welcome new volunteers to sign up and help out. There is no minimum time commitment, so if you are interested, do please get in touch with me.

Mick Moore 240755
m.moore131156@gmail.com

Planning Matters

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

- 26/01014/FULL 1-6 Feoffee Cottages, Walkhurst Road. Construction of outbuilding.
- 26/01015/LBC 1-6 Feoffee Cottages, Walkhurst Road. Removal of three sheds and greenhouse.
- 26/01193/FULL Communication Station & Premises, Rolvenden Road. Part removal of fence & posts and extension of chainlink fence; installation of generator and replacement cabinet, rectifiers & battery strings; concrete duct collar.
- 26/01073/FULL 1 Laurel Cottages, The Street. Replacement shed with concrete base.

More planning matters at:
benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk

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Not a level playing field in the vineyard

One of my favourite things to do in the summer is to visit many of our fantastic local wineries here in the Weald, but just like many of our farms, pubs and independent shops, our vineyards are being squeezed by red tape, high taxes and rising production costs, pushing up prices, making it harder for our producers to compete.

I recently went to a friend's wedding in France, and driving around Provence the following day, I popped into a little vineyard and bought a nice bottle of white for €18, roughly what you might spend on, say, a bottle of Biddenden Ortega (£15.95, about €18.50). But these two vineyards are not competing on even playing fields.

While the French wine producer and the Kentish one are both paying sales tax (VAT in the UK) of 20%, our vineyards are also paying another 18% - nearly £3 on a £16 bottle - in alcohol duty. The equivalent tax in France? Just three euro cents. So the vineyard here needs to charge almost a third more per bottle to make the same profit.

Over the last few months, I've written to every vineyard across the Weald and taken their concerns to HM Treasury. The new duty system is far too complicated, and it's often smaller vineyards that are hit hardest. The Government must do more to help English wine producers.

The future of British wine, though, remains incredibly bright, so why not spend an afternoon exploring one of our local vineyards and perhaps treat yourself to a bottle.

On a related note, nominations are now open for my Weald of Kent Awards 2026. If there's a local hero, independent shop, business, farmer, grower, producer, pub, cafe or restaurant that deserves recognition, I'd love to hear from you. You can find out more and submit a nomination (by 5pm on 13 July) here: www.katieforkent.com/weald-of-kent-awards
Katie Lam, MP Weald of Kent

Bowls Day

As England head to Glasgow to compete at the Commonwealth Games, Biddenden Bowls Club is hosting its very own Commonwealth Games Bowls Day on Saturday 25 July. We're looking for teams of three to compete against each other in short-format, quick-fire round-robin games. If you have more in your team, no problem, you can substitute players in and out.

Never bowled before? Don't worry, a briefing and short practice session will be provided. It's a fun day where everyone can have a go. Full details, including how to register your team can be found on our website: www.biddendenbowlsclub.org

Hospice in the Weald music

I am pleased to report a fantastic result from the recent RBD Hospital recital in Sandhurst. It was an extra event in June because the greatest Liszt pianist honoured us with a visit. The Steinway sounded like two pianos when Leslie Howard laid his hands on the keys. In addition to this, Florian Verweij joined Leslie in two beautiful Henselt duets. The result of all this seemingly effortless hard work resulted in wonderful music as we relaxed in the house and garden. We raised £655 for Hospice in the Weald, breaking the £21,000 mark in 19 years of concerts. I thank everyone for their generosity.

Daniel Grimwood will be playing for the garden party at 3pm on Saturday 25 July. Half the tickets are already sold, so if you are interested, please call me. Minimum donation £24.

On Wednesday 9 September at 3pm Florian Verweij will return for his recital, featuring an extra duet with Leslie Howard.

Gillian Davis 850384

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Benenden Fete



A fabulous day

If ever there was an argument for weather having a positive impact, then Saturday 13 June, 2026, on Benenden village green, certainly made its case. But, in fact, every year the fete is an utter joy - rain, wind or sunshine. We are fortunate to live in a community who see the positive impact of 'doing' and being part of something, and it's this that stands out every year. Coming together is something Benenden does superbly, whether it's the fete, bonfire, special services in St George's, or standing shoulder-to-shoulder at the Bull bar, and I am very proud to call this home. We look forward to sharing with you where all the money raised has gone.

To the 2026 Committee - Revd David Commander, Alison Brook, Ruth Clark, Deborah Jenkins, Helen Jewsbury, Liz Kirby, Tim Maw, Cathy Presgrave and Pippa Sarton - without all of our volunteers the fete wouldn't exist, but to you, the stalwarts, who put in hours (and hours) of heart, mind and muscle, we the village and community thank you. Another job very well done. Only 11 months to go ...

Athena Cripps
Chair, Benenden Fete



Benenden Fete





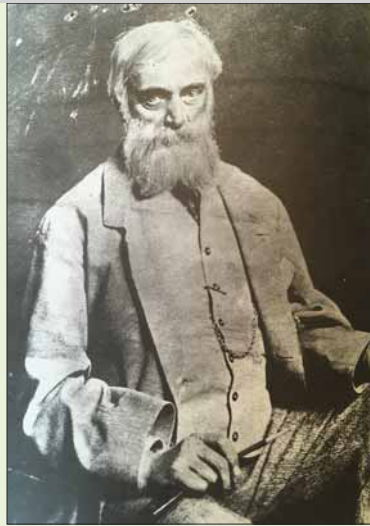
So many thanks because the fete would not exist without all of you. Simply the best.



Local History

The man who defined the look of Benenden: George Devey 1820-1886

Coinciding with an exhibition at Cranbrook Museum, Hazel Strouts examines the impact Victorian architect George Devey had on our village. A quiet, modest man, born in London of Swiss extraction, George Devey was remembered by his fellow architects as someone who combined his gifts and accomplishments as an architect with basic decency as a human being. Both personally and professionally, his large and expressive eyes saw more than most, and he saw it in the context of a deep reverence for, and delight in, the world around him.



'Nostalgia,' I suppose, sums the feeling up nicely.

Hired by Gathorne Hardy - who had recently purchased the Hemsted estate and, with it, virtually the entire village - Devey was referred to by Hardy as his "cottage architect". He designed a few larger buildings, but his focus in Benenden was on cottages,

both on the estate and in the village. He designed the exterior of the Bull Inn and possibly its stables. He designed the vicarage and possibly its coach house (this was funded not by Hardy but by a particularly magnanimous vicar). He built the beautiful, buttressed stone wall along the



Courtesy of the Kent Archives

churchyard (also not funded by Hardy) and he built the second of the two cottages adjacent to, and north-west of, the church (Fig Tree Cottage). He built the village school (the crown jewel of all his work in Benenden), and Ashlawn (again not funded by Hardy). All these buildings are round the Green, so the defining image which most of us have of the village was one created by Devey, generally with the help of Hardy.



Gardener's

This man was the single Victorian architect who made Benenden the village that it is today. Victorian? What does the word mean? In this particular case, it means a style which expresses a love for the past, a love shared by many at the time. Victorians were coping with the effects of the all-devouring industrial revolution which was, inch by inch, destroying the old way of life. Those old ways were much missed, including by Devey.



The village school building today

Apart from the houses round the Green, Devey built the St George's Club at the crossroads and parts of the old manor house. He designed its quaint and inviting entrance walkway, the tiled shelter and the cottagey-looking entrance gate. Within the grounds of Benenden School you find a

whole array of Devey gems. Most obvious are the two gatehouses, or entrance lodges, one on the Cranbrook Road and one on New Pond Road. Ever the environmentalist, on the plans for one

Courtesy of RIBA



Devey had hoped, as a young man, to become a water-colour artist, but, for practical reasons, he settled instead for architecture. He never lost sight of his first calling though, and this is why many of his plans are delightful works of art in themselves, using

attractive washes of pale green, grey and pink. Many of his designs survive to this day, although the final buildings may not appear exactly as suggested in earlier plans.

I believe Devey was searching for a style which was local. He did not want to simply echo the medieval

ecclesiastical world or the world of ancient Rome, two styles which were tremendously popular in Victorian England. He could build in those styles if required, but his preference was for something close to home, and in this preference he was, I believe, the first architect in Britain to set out on a path which led to the Arts and Crafts movement.

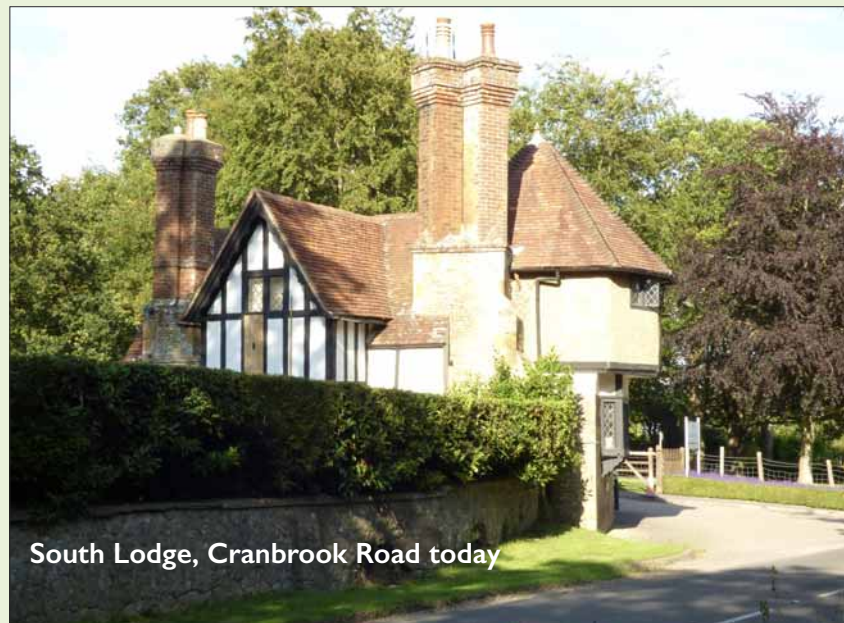
Speaking of firsts, the first ever exhibition of Devey's work in Benenden, or possibly even of his work at all, is, until the end of August, on show at the Cranbrook Museum. Come and join us!

of these Devey gives specific instructions that the existing holly hedge is to be carefully preserved. He built the cottages opposite what is now the exit from the school

grounds; he built the exquisite, romantic gardener's cottage by the school's walled garden; and he built a rustic fairytale of a gamekeeper's cottage, now Park House. But this is not a comprehensive list.

There are several other houses in the village which he designed, some known, some not known.

You might like to identify these by checking for architectural features characteristic of Devey's work. These include: tall brick chimneys set at right angles to their base (see the school plan); the frequent use of diaper-patterned brick or tilework (dark bricks or tiles set to form repeated diamond shapes); eight-sided panes in multi-paned glass windows (see the Bull); projecting windows set on wooden brackets; rounded bread-ovens with rounded or gabled tiled roofs, which appear next to chimneys on the outside of a cottage; Tudoresque decorative black and white timber work combined with brickwork, with stone often used for foundations and buttresses; and Rapunzel-style towers such as the one you see on the lodge on Cranbrook Road.



Food and Drink

Cook like a caveman: flaming July is the time to fire up the barbie

As summer kicks into gear, Peter Thomas expounds on the delights of outdoor feasting

I hope it's not just a function of age, but the seasons seem to whizz by, don't they? And if you like your food, it's all the more noticeable. Foraging for wild garlic is now but a distant memory.

Asparagus, likewise, is a thing of the past, for the time being. That's the thing with food in a temperate climate: it goes away quite quickly, but it always comes back again, and in the meantime there's something else following on behind.

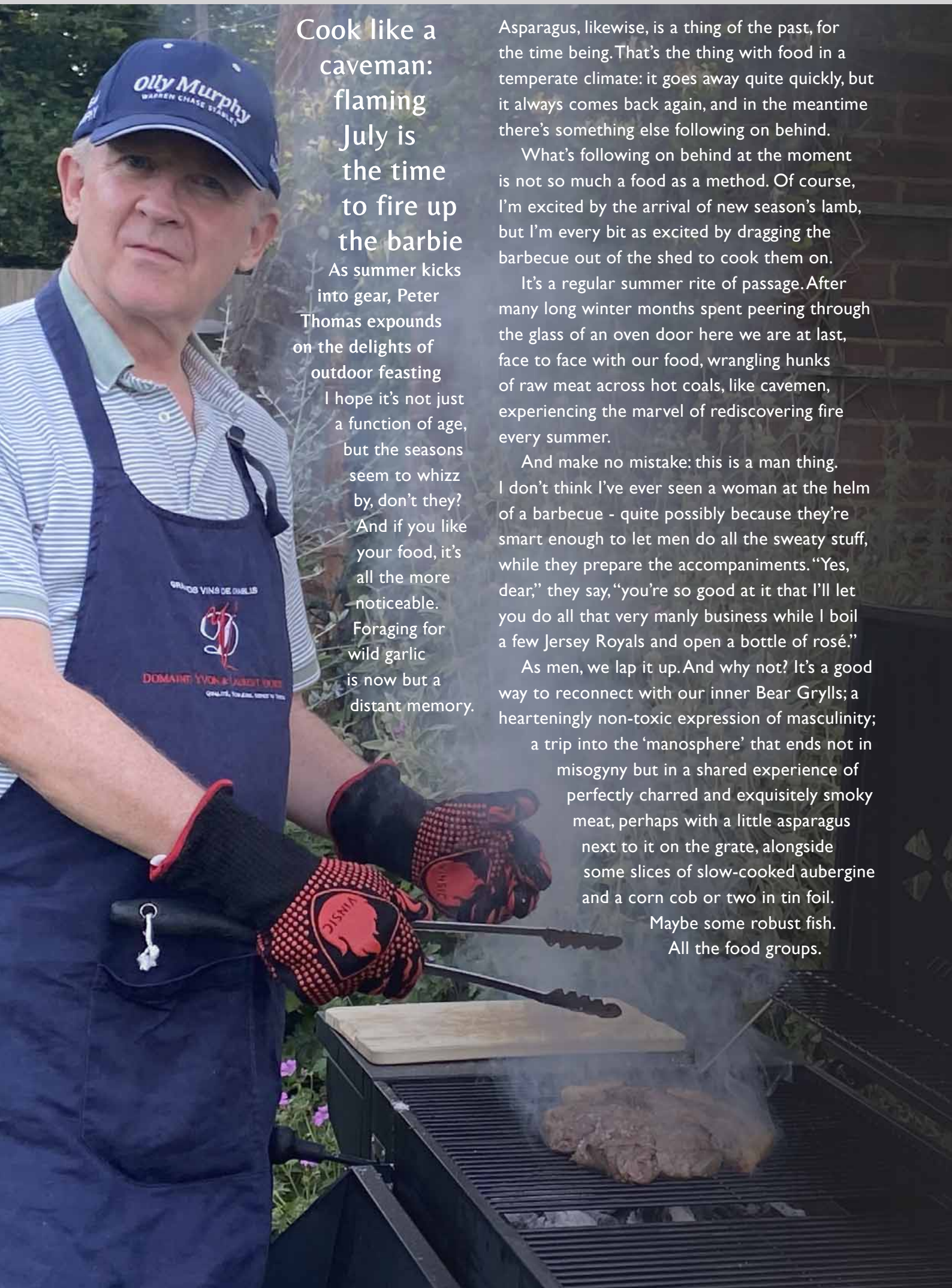
What's following on behind at the moment is not so much a food as a method. Of course, I'm excited by the arrival of new season's lamb, but I'm every bit as excited by dragging the barbecue out of the shed to cook them on.

It's a regular summer rite of passage. After many long winter months spent peering through the glass of an oven door here we are at last, face to face with our food, wrangling hunks of raw meat across hot coals, like cavemen, experiencing the marvel of rediscovering fire every summer.

And make no mistake: this is a man thing. I don't think I've ever seen a woman at the helm of a barbecue - quite possibly because they're smart enough to let men do all the sweaty stuff, while they prepare the accompaniments. "Yes, dear," they say, "you're so good at it that I'll let you do all that very manly business while I boil a few Jersey Royals and open a bottle of rosé."

As men, we lap it up. And why not? It's a good way to reconnect with our inner Bear Grylls; a hearteningly non-toxic expression of masculinity; a trip into the 'manosphere' that ends not in misogyny but in a shared experience of perfectly charred and exquisitely smoky meat, perhaps with a little asparagus next to it on the grate, alongside some slices of slow-cooked aubergine and a corn cob or two in tin foil.

Maybe some robust fish.
All the food groups.



The set-up

To start with, you need the right hardware. Barbecuing is very much a blokeish, kit-related thing, so you need stuff that does you justice.

First rule: Only a charcoal barbie will do. A gas barbie is just a cooker you've for some unknown reason dragged into the garden.

Second rule: Size is not important, although I've recently graduated from the Tennessee Broiler XXL to a Charles Bentley Gold Coast, which must be an XXXL at the very least. Just saying.

Third rule: You need tools. Tongs, big spatula, fork, meat thermometer, fish-holder, basting brush, German goalkeeper-style gloves, and a tube of Savlon antiseptic cream for minor burns and puncture wounds.

Fourth rule: A hat. It stops your hair smelling of meat. I favour a baseball cap and used to have a very smart red one until my wife decided it was a bit too MAGA and disposed of it. Also get yourself an apron, but not one of those frilly ones, and nothing by Orla Kiely.

Fifth rule: A beer. Hopefully your grill will have those handy shelves at either end where you can stand a glass of foaming ale (just the one, for the purpose of rehydration).

After that, it's a matter of trial and error, veering from still mooing to practically cremated until you get the hang of it.

The meat

If you can cook it in the oven, you can barbecue it. I'm told a ceramic Big Green Egg is the way to go if you want long, slow, temperature-controlled cooking for hours on end, but the idea of paying £1,500 for the privilege of pulled pork is beyond both my comprehension and my wallet.

My current meat of choice is rump steak, as recommended by Simon, the highly knowledgeable butcher at Block, on the Spratsbourne estate near Goudhurst.

"Isn't rump a bit chewy and in need of a lot of cooking?" I suggested.

"It is if you buy bad rump," he said, trying not to sound exasperated.

I bought a slab of Block's home-reared rump, seared it and then cooked it for four and a half

minutes per side (I also added my personal touch of scoring and salting the lovely layer of fat before cooking, which takes the flavour and texture up a notch), and it's the best bbq beef I've ever had, cheaper than fillet, ribeye or sirloin, tender but toothsome and full of flavour, ideal for Saturday supper and Sunday sandwiches.

The wine

We recently held a village tasting of wines from the Argentinian producer Zuccardi. The last five bottles were all red, all malbec, none overly robust, but they had the body and the structure to make them proper bbq-friendly bottles, with the value pick being, luckily, the cheapest, the Uvas del Sol, from the highlands of Mendoza.

It's full of dark fruits and spices, soft and smooth but with enough silky tannins to stand up to gorgeous grilled lamb or beef. Such good value, in fact, that we're now stocking it in Benenden's community shop at a very sensible £13.65.

Alternatively, either of our two Bordeaux reds - the Argadens Rouge (£12.80) or the Moulin de Mallet (£12.65) - while I'm partial to the lush Portuguese Quinta da Extrema from Colinas do Douro at an attractive £13.50.

Your guests

While you're showing off your 'pit boss' skills, they'll need something to sip while they're admiring you - and this is the time of year when rosé comes into its own.

I have friends who look down on 'pink wine', for being not 'serious wine', but for three summer months, rosé is as much a part of the English summer as hay fever tablets and low water pressure. Luckily, we have several examples in the shop. There's a pale Provencal one called Soleil des Alpes (£13.95); a bright northern Spanish example, Pleno (£9.80); and my favourite, from Domaine de Pellehaut in Gascony (£9.85), which I always say reminds me of strawberries and cream on the lawn on a summer afternoon.

If you don't think pink, then we have a Zuccardi white called Vida Organica (£12.30), very fruity and enticing, which will keep them happy while you achieve barbecue nirvana.

Enjoy the summer.

In Your Garden

Does King's Rose wear the midsummer crown?

I had two prompts to write about roses this month: the first is a client of mine in the village who has a beautiful collection of roses, elevating the garden to something out of a catalogue at this time of year; the second was my thoughts on 'The King's Rose'.

My client in Benenden very much includes her roses in a mixed border layout. Climbers tend to have clematis growing through them too - I find a pale blue or purple clematis that flowers at the same time as the roses (so a Group 2) will work well. All plants are fed early each spring with a slow-release fertiliser and mulched every winter, and newly planted roses will have their mulches topped up.

While we like the roses mingling with plants next to each other, it's best not to allow too much integration - a bit of circulation is a good thing to ward off fungal issues. Tender salvias, or the hardier types, border geraniums and nepeta all loosely hang around the base of roses without overtaking, alchemilla, artemisia or stachys are very pretty lower at the front. Good husbandry with surrounding plants goes a long way to keep everything looking fresh.

We have R. 'Boscobel' grown as standards, then shrub roses such as R. 'Desdemona', 'The Shepherdess', 'Olivia Rose Austin', 'Queen of Sweden', 'Gertrude Jekyll', 'Emma Bridgewater' and 'For Your Eyes Only'. Climbers are 'Iceberg', 'Compassion', 'Clare Austin' and the very beautiful 'Crown Princess Margareta', and there is a 'Rambling Rector' scrambling up a tree.

Whether to buy bare-rooted plants or potted? I have done both, and whilst the purists will press to buy bare roots, if a plant is container-grown and in good health, is planted deeply, mulched and heavily watered, then it can be a very good way of having something in place which instantly gives grace and definition to a space. I do find sometimes with bare rooted plants that their growth in the first year



can be quite leggy as they race away in their new quarters - consequently flowerheads can droop until it is time for generous dead-heading, which can allow you to cut quite a way down the stem. This seems to

do the trick and growth is slower and steadier afterwards.

Whichever way you go, I cannot stress enough the need to water well in the first year of establishment. When planting, it is a whole ten-

litre can per plant. Thereafter almost a whole ten litres at each watering, or at least get it to puddle, then I tend to top up the mulch. A lot of cossetting goes a long way in its first year.

Another client, who has a completely different garden - long terrace in central Tenterden - bought three bare-rooted specimens of 'The King's Rose'. They look wonderful in her garden, but for me it just does not work in a large country garden. The vivid pink and white colouring seems to get lost, whereas in a smaller, more bijoux style of garden it looks great.

Bi-coloured roses are not new - my mother has old rose catalogues dating back to the 1970s with plenty of pink, red and white stripes, so I would say in the right space it works fine and the pink colouring is very pretty too. However, I'm not sure I would ever purchase a rose called 'Sir David Beckham'.

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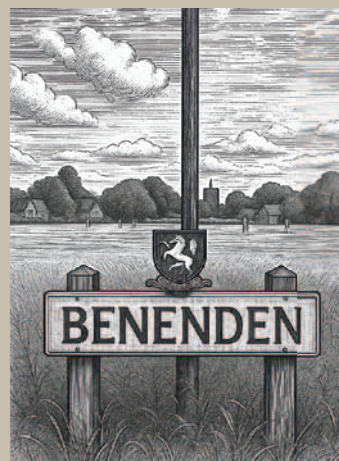
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