





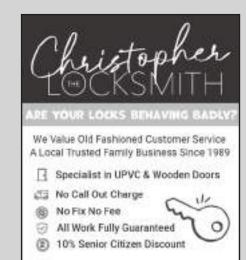
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Editorial



It's always my turn to write this editorial in the post-fete issue and I always run the danger of using the same superlatives about the magical event that brings together so many villagers on The Green gathering treasures, setting up, manning stalls, breaking down and generally having a ball. They say a photo speaks a thousand words and those we picked (pages 26-27) taken by the intrepid David Sarton and Beth Ansell (plus a few others - thank you all) speak volumes! These are just a tip of the iceberg and it's so hard selecting them. So many apologies if we have left any gaping holes.

In their contributions to this edition David Commander and Nicola Thomas have said it all so I can relax, but I do have a few standout memories to add to the mix. I was involved with the team organising book sales in the Memorial Hall and was rather chuffed that our first sale was to The Duchess of Edinburgh when she popped in the day before the fete. Let's not forget the children who love it so much, and a huge thank you to those of them who got stuck in and helped. Be sure you'll be first in line to be recruited to join the fete committee when the current bunch are retired and happy simply sitting around the Hop Inn!

I'll never forget walking into the church to be greeted by a sea of balloons down the aisle - the same balloons that were stuffed into the Matador and finally set free at the end of the fete to be gathered up by youngsters and lone adult, I know who you are! (See the front cover). Finally, by 7pm all that was left on The Green was a few wisps of hay from the arena bales (thank you farmer Arthur) and the gentle sound of celebratory chatting and clinking of glasses wafting over the grass from the Bull.

Last year's star raffle prize was a wing walk and we covered Beth Ansell's aerial adventure last month. The tale of another adventurous woman continues in this issue (page 32) with Louise recounting her trip across the Channel alongside the historic Dunkirk Small Ships. Hats off to all those adventurous women out there.

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

Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Hug in a Mug, Benenden's Community Shop, 10am	p. 15
Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	
Cornhole Tossing, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Hemsted Park, Moana 2, Outdoor Cinema Screening,	
Benenden School Rose Garden, 2pm	
Summer Teas, St George's Church, 2-4pm	p. I 3
Hemsted Park, Top Gun, Outdoor Cinema Screening,	
Benenden School Rose Garden, 7pm	
Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.17
Flower & Produce Show, Iden Green Pavilion, Ipm	p.9
Ladder Toss, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Summer Teas, St George's Church, 2-4pm	p.13
Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Iden Green and Benenden WI, Margot Clarkson-Bennett: Make-up for the	
Older Woman, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p. I 7
Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Open Garden, Little Walkhurst, Benenden, 12.30-4.30pm	p. I 3
Summer Teas, St George's Church, 2-4pm	p. I 3
Parish Council Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Merry and Bright, Croquet Afternoon, Penny and Phil's, Benenden, 2pm	p. I 7
Benenden Tennis Tournament, Benenden School	p.9
Summer Barbecue, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
The Angry Whelk Fresh Fish Stall, Benenden Village Hall, 12-2pm	
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Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
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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, 6pm

Cakes & Chaos: Café and Toddler Group

Fridays during term time in St George's Church, 9-11am

Parish Council



All of us who live in Benenden are aware that it is a special place, and during my work on the parish council I am often asked what makes our village community work so well. Without hesitation my answer is always "the volunteers". We are blessed with residents who care about our community and are willing to give their time freely for the good of our village. One of many examples is the success of our village fete - completely run by volunteers.

Happily, each year the parish council can present an award organised by the Kent Association of Local Councils, which recognises individuals or groups who have significantly contributed to their local community. This year we agreed unanimously that the award should go to the Benenden Village Lunch Club organisers and volunteers, who work so hard every month to pull together these occasions, bringing an invaluable sense of community, a free lift and a lovely meal into the lives of so many grateful souls.

The award was presented to Sheila Hume and the team at our meeting on 16 June, and I hope their well-deserved celebrations in the pub afterwards were good and rowdy!

With the perennial problem of speeding through our village, there has been interest expressed in reviving the Community Speedwatch group and the parish council is currently looking into the cost and logistics of purchasing the equipment required for this. Speedwatch is a national initiative where communities engage the support and supervision of the local police to record details of speeding vehicles, using approved detection devices. If you are interested in volunteering for this group, please do get in touch with our clerk.

It is with great pleasure that we welcome a new member to the parish council. We are very happy that Debbie Ham is joining us to complete our team. Debbie works at Benenden Hospital and lives close by in East End, so is ideally placed to keep an eye on the current development at the old hospital site. She is also very supportive of the need for more social and affordable housing throughout the Southeast, and this very much aligns with our policies. Welcome, Debbie.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair nicolat@benendenparishcouncil.org

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk
07593 226462 clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org
For more information see our website www.benendenparishcouncil.org or find us on Facebook

Parish Council Meeting Monday 21 July, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm

Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

Associate Priest: Revd Ylva Blid-Mackenzie 01233 820100 rev.ylva@gmail.com

Churchwarden: David Collard 241944 d.collard49@btinternet.com

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

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com

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

Sunday 6 July 8am Communion 10am All-age 5pm Choral Evensong

Communion

Sunday 13 July 8am BCP Communion 10am Morning Worship Sunday 20 July 8am Communion 10am Sung Eucharist

Saturday 26 July 4pm Connect Four

at Mission Church, Sandhurst

Sunday 27 July 8am Communion 10am Morning Worship

Morning Prayer 8am Mondays and Fridays (not 21, 25 and 28 July or 1 August)

Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Morning Prayer 8am Tuesdays and Wednesdays (not 22, 23, 29 and 30 July)

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 I0am 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

Weddings 27 June Melanie Barnard and Mark Bridges

28 June Catherine Chisholm and Beau Archer

Funeral 30 June Paul Gregory Funeral and Thanksgiving Service

Church Letter



A special week in the life of St George's

Very occasionally, those weeks come along that are very special and will remain in the memory for a long time. This last week has been one of those. It has been special not just for the church right now, but for the future of the parish church; it has also been special for the whole community of Benenden.

The first thing to say is a huge thank you to everyone involved in making the 'Village Fete in support of St George's Church' such a huge success this year. Whether that be on the fete organising committee, as a stall-leader, those working on any of the stalls, those working to help set up on Friday or break down on Saturday afternoon/evening (The Green was completely clear by 7pm - three hours after the fete closed!), or whether you came along and supported the fete by participating in many of the activities or supporting the various stalls. This was Benenden community spirit at its best. The number of people who came was terrific, the weather was perfect and the whole event had a wonderful buzz about it. Thank you.

The financial support of everyone is also hugely appreciated. Your parish church is here seven days a week, 365 days a year; the ever-increasing cost of living affects the church just as much as it does our own homes and personal budgets; as a church, we also recognise the increasing needs of many charities; and part of our mission is to support others in need. Your efforts on fete day look like bringing a profit approaching £20k this year. That is phenomenal. The church will send approximately half that amount to local, national and international charities- as we have done in previous years. (You will see articles in past and future editions of the magazine featuring the charities that are supported.) Thank you for your contribution to this total. Now save the date for next year's fete: Saturday 13 June 2026.

The other two pieces of wonderful news, of which there will be greater detail in a future issue, are:

- We have now, after many years of work and negotiation (some of which has been quite frustrating) been granted our Faculty. This is the legal document that allows us to proceed with the 'Restore. Renew. Rejoice' project to evolve St George's Church for the next phase of its life. Having a Faculty also means that we can now begin the work of major grant applications and the serious business of fundraising. More detail on this next month. Or we can run one fete every week for a whole year! Anyone up for that?
- We now have royal support for the project. Having visited St George's the day before the fete, The Duchess of Edinburgh has agreed to be patron, which will help hugely with our grant applications, and with a potential major fundraising event.

Again, more details in a future edition of the magazine. Quite a week in the life and history of your parish church.

Revd David Commander, Rector and Area Dean

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Talking Point



The power of kindness: how giving benefits the giver

I was struck by Sara Tidy's article in last month's edition about the erosion of courtesy in society, yet observing myself so many acts of kindness around the village: elderly people brought out to mix and chat despite their wheelchairs; others taking groceries and sweets to people who can't get out of the house; so many hospital lifts given freely by an excellent group of helpers.

In a world often shadowed by conflict, uncertainty and rapid change, one quiet force continues to shine: kindness. Though often seen as a gift to others, acts of kindness carry immense benefits for the giver, especially in today's turbulent times. Amid headlines dominated by division and stress, choosing to act kindly is a powerful way to restore balance, purpose, and hope within ourselves. It certainly beats reading the news!

Scientific studies increasingly affirm what ancient wisdom has long known: being kind benefits the mind and body of the one who gives. Performing kind acts - whether helping a neighbour, offering a compliment, or volunteering time - releases chemicals in the brain like oxytocin and dopamine. These natural 'feelgood' hormones reduce stress, lower blood pressure and increase overall life satisfaction. In other words, kindness is not just a moral act, it's a wellness practice.

Kindness fosters a sense of agency. In a time when global issues can feel overwhelming, kind acts ground us in what we can do. We may not be able to solve every crisis, but we can uplift someone's day. This shift from helplessness to helpfulness can be empowering and deeply fulfilling.

The ripple effect is also profound. One kind gesture often inspires another, creating a chain of positivity that travels farther than we can see. While the world may be facing significant challenges, each act of generosity and care contributes to a cultural current of compassion.

In times of stress or sorrow, turning to kindness can be a transformative act - not just for others but for ourselves. It reconnects us with our humanity, strengthens our resilience, and reminds us of the beauty still present in everyday life.

Kindness, it turns out, is not just what the world needs - it's what we need, too.

Peter Massey

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News and Events

Tennis Tournament

The Benenden Tennis Tournament (23-27 July) is fast approaching so please do get registered if you would like to play in either the adults or children's competition (divisions for all levels). It is a great few days and all money raised goes to local charities - this year we will be supporting the Caldecott Foundation, the Sam West Foundation, Catching Lives, the Kent Autistic Trust and many more.

The event is kindly hosted at Benenden School in their beautiful grounds and we are also supported by Hotshotz Tennis, Burfields House, Harpers & Hurlingham, Friday's and Jubilee Hire, who all help with set-up and running costs, ensuring all money raised can go to charity.

The junior tennis tournament, from seven years up, offers a fun and friendly atmosphere to play with friends. For younger players we have smaller courts, age appropriate balls and umpires to ensure maximum enjoyment - all levels welcome. The singles are filling up fast and we are sure to have some excellent tennis in the older age groups, so please do get signed up. As always we will be having a tea tent on all days with our barbecue and photo company coming on the Thursday, along with the infamous children's raffle.

Please register at:

www.benendentennistournament.com. Any queries or any offers of cakes or raffle prizes will be greatly appreciated. If you can help please contact me at

Juniorbenendentennistournament@gmail.com or call on 07368 467322.

Georgina Wixley



Flower & Produce Show

Details above and the classes are:

FLOWERS

- Single rose
- Display of roses
- Display of sweet peas
- Any other single bloom
- Display of garden flowers
- Arrangement of flowers in a standard teacup
- Any succulent or cacti display in a pot

VEGETABLES

- Four onions (as near same size)
- Four potatoes (as near same size)
- Display of vegetables (at least four types for artistic effect)

FRUIT

- Six strawberries (as near same size)
- Six raspberries (as near same size)
- Display of any other soft fruit for artistic effect (could be mixed)

CHILDREN'S CLASS (12 years and under)

An exotic animal or bird (imaginary or not) made from fruit and/or vegetables

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Summer teas in St George's

Once again we are planning to offer tea and coffee with cake in St George's Church every Sunday throughout July and August between 2-4pm. You are invited to pop in and enjoy some refreshments and spend time in our village church. There's no charge, but any donations will go towards the upkeep of this beautiful building.

Helen Commander

Benenden Village Trust

BVT's annual general meeting takes place on Monday 28 July, 6pm, at Iden Green Pavilion. Trustees would be delighted to see as many members as possible at the meeting. This is your chance to ask questions about the work of the Trust and to vote on motions at the meeting. Anyone wishing to become a member should email the trust manager, Caroline Levett, byttrust@gmail.com. Any resident of Benenden and Iden Green aged 18 or over is eligible for membership, at the discretion of the trustees.

St George's Church

'Restore, Renew, Rejoice'. St George's Church has just received notice of approval from the church authorities to go ahead with their planned improvement works. With the planning permission from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council it is now 'full steam ahead' to offer the first contract and undertake the extensive fund raising necessary. This is really great news - it has been a hard battle at times convincing various statutory consultees that ours are the right plans, but perseverance has paid off.

Richard Stubbings, Chairman, Project Progress Group

VALKHURSI **Open garde**n

Last year a record 450 people attended and raised £2,500 for Hospice in the Weald. This year we are opening again our six-acre garden to the public on 20 & 27 July and 3 August from 12.30-4.30pm.

Come and enjoy at our 18th century house our cottage-style garden, woodland walk, wildflower meadow, orchid house and wildlife ponds.

My art studio will be open with a 30% discount going to Hospice in the Weald. Dogs on leads please. Entry is £5 for adults and includes refreshments. Sara Rowan

Little Walkhurst, Walkhurst Road, Benenden TN17 4DT

Grief talks

Coming to terms with the loss of a loved one can be one of the hardest things we have to do. When someone has died, while we may feel our loved one is at peace, it can still leave us with hugely mixed emotions.

From 10am-12noon on Saturday 12 July in the Mission Church, Back Road, Sandhurst TN18 5JU, we are offering a morning to explore our grief through conversation, readings and crafting together. It will be a safe space to come to talk and share what has been going on for you. Talking to others who have been through similar experiences can be helpful or just knowing that someone is there to listen.

For more information and to book this free workshop please contact:

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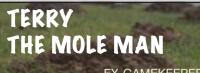
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Talking shop

July is a great month for local produce and Benenden's offers some of the best fruit around. Apart from a wide selection, we have delicious local strawberries, raspberries and cherries.

We also offer a great new range of smoothies (strawberry and banana, strawberry with mango, kiwi and pineapple and a berry mix) and milk shakes (vanilla, chocolate and strawberry), as well as iced coffees. Give these a try - they're thick, creamy and utterly yummy.

Please do have a think about whether you would be willing to join the shop committee. We are looking for two new members: one who has the skills to look after the electrical and DIY aspects of the shop, as Ken Anderson, after many years on the committee, has decided to take a very well-earned retirement but is happy to advise and support anyone who takes on the role; and we are also looking for someone with IT skills. Please do let us know if you, or anyone you know, can assist with either of these tasks. We are very friendly and try not to meet too often. It's a great way to support our local community shop and café.

Another great way to support our shop is to buy some shares in it. Just £10 will buy a share and make you a shareholder with a vote at the annual general meeting and a right to stand for the management committee. Our first share offer raised enough cash, along with grants, to allow us to set up the shop which has become such an integral part of the village. That was ten years ago and we have come to a time when equipment is beginning to wear out and needs replacing and some redecoration is needed. Any new residents who missed the earlier share offers would be warmly welcomed into the Community Benefit Society. This share offer ends on 16 July. Please do give it some consideration as Benenden's future depends very much on the goodwill of the community.

Bev Beveridge info@benendens.co.uk www.benendens.co.uk



Benenden Pre-School

How fast does sand pour through a funnel? How can I fit a triangle, a square and a trapezium together when constructing with magnetic shapes? And how much twine do I need to cut in order to make a pasta necklace?

These were some of the challenges the Preschool children worked on during our annual Grandparents Mornings. We welcomed 30 grandparents to the setting over two mornings and celebrated this special relationship between the generations. A variety of activities were enjoyed both inside and in the garden before children and grandparents sat down together for snack: tea and cake for the adults and banana muffins for the children, which they had made themselves the previous day.

We finished the morning with some singing before the children said a fond farewell to their grandparents. On departure one grandfather declared that he had enjoyed himself far more than he had expected to. That is a true measure of success.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk





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Customer Notice

Please be advised that our Sunday Carvery will be taking a break during the warmer summer months, returning in the autumn.

In the meantime, on Sundays, we will open as usual at 12pm for drinks, nibbles and a dusting of music.

Thank you.

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Friends of Benenden Primary School

Wow! What a day we had at the fete. We had some much-loved stalls return this year, including the sweetie jar and bottle tombola. The sweets were so popular we ran out and swapped in a lucky dip to keep us going. The tombola attracted queues and lots of people returned to see what bottle they could claim. Our new additions were well received, with a forest school set up led by our wonderful Mrs Brooks. With some trusted helpers she offered roasted marshmallows and s'mores as well as mandala stone painting.

We were also so fortunate to be able to host a football shoot-out, organised by Charlie Mason from Southeast Elite football team. The children absolutely loved this and kept coming back again and again.

We all enjoyed a wonderful day. A huge thank you to everyone who helped on the PTFA stalls. Your support means the world to us.

Evie Banfield and Jane Mason friends@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk/PTFA/

Merry and Bright

We all enjoyed our meeting at Sheila Hume's garden, starting with a walk around to see all the flowers she grows. Sheila showed us how to make up a display of flowers in a box, explaining her process and pointing out the qualities of the plants. Then a lucky member won the display in a raffle! Our thanks to Sheila for giving us a lovely afternoon, including a nice tea.

We would also like to thank Ruth and Alistair for their hospitality when we visited their garden.

On 22 July we will be visiting Penny and Phil for another game of croquet.

We have had a few more new members join us. Everyone is welcome. Transport can be arranged.

Laraine Penny 241763 Julia Collard 241944



Village lunch

All Benenden villagers are invited to join us for lunch in the village hall at 12.30pm on Tuesday 8 July. If you would like to come and haven't written your name down already, then please ring me by Thursday 3 July. It costs just £5 and lifts can be arranged. In August there will be no village lunch as many of the cooks are unavailable, but we will be back in force in September.

Minnie Garnier 240506

Iden Green and Benenden WI

Our garden party once again proved to be a very successful event which everyone enjoyed. Thank you to all concerned. King John's Nursery, café, garden and shop was an education as there was so much to see and enjoy. We all had a good time.

Activities on offer via West Kent Federation include water sports at Mote Park, art and craft at Ditton and a Broderie Perse workshop. Please peruse the WI West Kent News for further details. We are looking forward to welcoming new members on 15 July at 2pm in the Memorial Hall, when Margot Clarkson-Bennett will be demonstrating 'Make-up for the Older Woman', which may prove to be quite enlightening! We are also pleased to say that we have a new secretary. Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

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Sherlock Holmes: The Hunt For Moriarty 10 & 11 October

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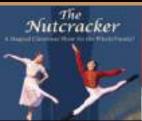
Blazin' Fiddles

9 November











The BBC Big Band

Lost in Music

The Nutcracker

Faulty Towers

22 November

11 December

Jess Gillam

12 December

13 December

Dining Experience 13 & 14 December











Christmas Brass Concert 19 December

NT Live

25 January

The Nat King Cole Story 13 February

Ben Fogle

23 February

Attention All Shipping 26 February





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Grants for students and school-leavers

The Gibbon and Buckland Charity, which started in 1602 with the gift of the schoolhouse at the foot of The Green, still gives some support to the primary school, but uses most of its income to give student grants. These are available for any young person 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 is 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 community shop, or from the clerk to the charity at gibbonandbuckland@gmail.com. Latest date for applications is 30 September.

Rowena Hagell

Benenden School

The school is buzzing once again, following a half-term break which offered a valuable opportunity for students - particularly those preparing for external exams - to pause, reset and return refreshed. Our beautiful surroundings play a vital role in supporting student wellbeing during this busy period; the site is absolutely stunning at this time of year.

Shortly before the break, we were privileged to host a celebration of the life of Gillian duCharme, who served as Benenden's headmistress from 1985 to 2000, and whom many of you will remember. The service was both uplifting and moving, and it was wonderful to welcome so many seniors and friends of Gillian back to school to honour her memory. A highlight of the event was a beautiful choral performance from our students - an element I know Gillian would have especially appreciated. Once again I am reminded of the enduring spirit of our school community.

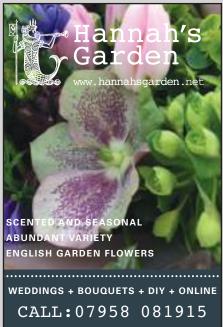


Rude Mechanical Theatre

The Rude Mechanical Theatre Company's outdoor tour of 'Gentle Harry's Farm' comes back to Sandhurst on Thursday 17 July. Doors open at 6pm, curtain up at 7.30pm, with one interval, and the play ends at around 10pm. Bring your own shoulder-high folding chairs (standard folding camping chairs are ideal), blankets and picnics. Parking and toilets are on the site, accessed via Marsh Quarter Lane. Please book tickets (from £10 to £24) online as soon as possible (see advert above).

The 'Rudes' are a talented company of actors and multi-instrumentalists and their shows involve lots of comedy, mime, knockabout action, performed in white face make-up and specially made colourful wigs and costumes, and with original music. While it's aimed at adult audiences, older children love the wild physicality of the show.

Shirley Wiggs 850108 shirleywiggs60@gmail.com



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Weald Table Tennis Club

Our own Diccon Gray has been busy over the last few months! In May he won the men's over 50s doubles in the Veterans' English National Championships and in June he journeyed to Germany to the International Veterans Table Tennis Competition which draws seasoned players from across the globe for four intense days of high-spirited play and friendly rivalry.

Among the standout performers was our club's Diccon Gray, who brought home a trio of impressive results. Gray clinched the title in the Over 50s Mixed Doubles and earned runner-up spots in the Over 60s Men's Doubles - teaming up with local favourite Martin Gardner - and in the fiercely contested Over 60s Men's Singles. A special mention must go to Diccon's wife, Helen, who nobly endured four full days of table tennis - an achievement of patience and endurance in its own right!

For more information about the club, contact:

Ken Muhr 752676 ken.muhr@btinternet.com www.wealdtabletennisclub.com



Looking to store equipment

Benenden Cricket Club continue to enjoy great cooperation from Stuart and Olivia Collier for our equipment storage, but we need to look for a new home near The Green by September.

If you have any ideas, or know anyone who might be able to help, please contact:

Peter Newman, Vice-Chairman 07810 658981 pcslnewman@yahoo.co.uk

Beating Retreat

Hole Park is delighted to be hosting the ABF Kent Branch Annual Beating Retreat ceremony on 8 July. This historic ceremony would have been a frequent event in the military of old. It is now a special event and we are delighted to welcome the Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas, joining the Cranbrook Town Band, who will play during the reception. The salute will be taken by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, the Lady Colgrain.

Wine and canapés will be served during a reception at 6.30pm followed by Beating Retreat and the Last Post flag-lowering ceremony ending the event at 8.45pm. Tickets (adult £25/child £10) are available now at www.holepark.com/events/beating-retreat. Prebooking is essential.

Benenden Cricket Club

The club strives to maintain the tradition of 200-plus years of cricket on The Green but we need more players. All abilities, ages and sexes are welcome. We enjoy a great tradition of involving fathers and sons, too.

Sadly, we have had to cancel some games through lack of players but we recently enjoyed a win at Staplehurst with Tom Mawhinney just missing a maiden 100 with 93.

Our next home games will be: Saturday 5 July vs Bilsington at 1.30pm Saturday 26 July vs Castle Hill at 1.30pm

Do buy yourself a beer from the Bull and come along to show your support.

Peter Newman, Vice-Chairman 07810 658981 pcslnewman@yahoo.co.uk

Benenden Hospital

On behalf of all of us at the hospital, I would like to wish the NHS a very happy 76th birthday. On 5 July we mark 76 dedicated years of providing free healthcare to the public. The care, compassion and resilience shown by NHS staff while facing huge challenges over recent years has been nothing short of inspirational. As part of the Independent Healthcare Provider Network (IHPN) we continue to support the NHS waiting lists through the NHS Partnership Agreement.

Thank You Day is also celebrated in July, and it is always wonderful to see the gratitude and recognition of our staff either internally via our intranet, where staff post messages thanking colleagues for their hard work and dedication, or externally through our patient surveys and Doctify, which is a healthcare provider review platform. With over 8,000 reviews and a trust score rating of 4.86 it really gives our team morale a boost when people take the time to share their experience.

I want to say a big thank you to our imaging team, who have adapted so well this year to the installation of our new MRI machine, developed by Siemens Healthineers. Working in a temporary mobile scanner unit to accommodate patients whilst installation took place, it was really important that we ensured that disruption for our patients was kept to a minimum. Our new MRI machine suite is now complete, with additional comforts to ensure our patient experience is as calming as possible.

Whether it's saying thank you to a friend for their support or writing a positive review of a place you've recently visited, with small or big gestures, let's all take gratitude forward with us this summer.

Claire Harley, Hospital Director

Benenden Primary School

Many congratulations to our Year 6 children who have taken their SATS. They have certainly demonstrated a determination to achieve personal excellence and we look forward to sharing their results with you at the end of the summer term. Thank you to Mr Emmett and Mrs Walsh, supported by lots of the staff team for providing a hearty breakfast for them every day. The next exciting step for the Year 6s is to create the school production. All children in Key Stage 2 will be involved and this year they are performing 'Wonderland' (a take on Alice in Wonderland).

We are moving towards the term where we have campfire evenings and sleepovers planned. This year we are offering a campfire activity to every class. These activities also enable the children to gently build their confidence in different settings, ready for their Year 5 camp, Year 6 residentials, and ultimately their move to secondary school.

Our school vision (and our name) focuses on John 10:10, where it talks about living life to the full. Indeed, Ephesians 3 says: "Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong." The support we provide all members of the community with their wellbeing enables the children to grow and live life to the full.

The first week back after half term we held our sports day. Well done to all the children who took part. A huge thank you to Mrs Mileham and the staff for their amazing organisation of the event and of course to the parents for their support. As a result of our dedication to PE and sport we have again been awarded our Gold Games Kite Mark. The School Games Mark is a government-led award scheme which rewards schools for their commitment to the development of competition across their school and into the community. We are delighted to have been recognised for our success.

Lindsay Roberts, Executive Headteacher 240565 office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk

Hospice in the Weald musical dates

The 17th annual concert events in Sandhurst will begin with Daniel Grimwood playing Rachmaninov, Widor and Henselt on Saturday 26 July at 3pm. The second recital is earlier than usual, on Wednesday 27 August, when Florian Verweij will be coming from Holland to make his Kent debut playing Schubert, Prokofiev, Henselt and Brahms. As a special event the international pianist, Leslie Howard will be joining Florian in a duet by Glazunov.

Tickets, minimum donation £22, are available from me. Advance bookings only. Gillian Davis 850384

Sissinghurst Scouts

We meet outside throughout the summer term, rain or shine. The Cubs (8-10) been learning to light fires and grow plants. They are now doing their cycling badge and were camping in June. Their final meetings this term will be on the water and playing with water. We hope the weather stays fine.

The Scouts (10-14) have also been practising fire lighting and they will be at a big international camp this summer. The Squirrels (4-5) are working towards their Chef badge. They will also be cooking over the campfire. They need to learn to collect dry wood first. They are camping at the beginning of July.

Unfortunately Beavers (6-7) is still not running because we need a new volunteer team. We'd love for you to volunteer with us. We need trustees, helpers, team members and team leaders. There's training and it's all free. You learn new skills and bring your own skills to help others.

Email Arun: enquiries@SissinghurstScouts.org.uk Jan Ashley

Summer concert

Sutton Valence Choral Society under conductor Bryan Gipps, together with young musicians supported by the Kent and Medway Young Musicians Trust, will be performing popular choral favourites at Sutton Valence School, ME17 3HL, on Saturday 5 July 2025 at 7pm. Don't miss a summer's evening of enjoyable and entertaining music for all the family.

Tickets £15 (including a glass of wine).
Accompanied children free. Tickets will be available on the door or from:
Pamela Hipkins 01622 861313
pamela.hipkins@btinternet.com

Hospice Run

The annual Hospice Run takes place on Sunday 21 September. Now in its 19th year, the run has something for everyone and raises muchneeded funds for Hospice in the Weald.

You can sign up for the following routes:

- Family Fun Run: suitable for all ages and abilities. Children are encouraged to dress up as their favourite hero.
- 5k: for runners starting off on their fitness journey.
- 10k: for regular runners who like a challenge, taking in Tunbridge Wells landmarks.
- Half marathon: our ultimate challenge and suitable for experienced athletes or those wanting to practise their first half marathon distance.

Sign up now to avoid missing out on one of the most hotly anticipated closed-road routes in the South East. Visit the events section of our website for more information and to register:

www.hospiceintheweald.org.uk/events/hospicerun-2025/. Or call Hospice in the Weald on 01892 820533.

Richard.Moxham@hospiceintheweald.org.uk

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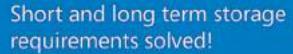
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St George's Church Fund Raising

Charity may begin at home but it reaches far and wide

The annual village church fete is the main fundraising event for St George's Church and, thanks to the effort of so many people and the involvement of the community, we usually raise a significant sum of money on the day. But what happens to that money?

As you can imagine, looking after and maintaining an 800-year-old building, the organ, the churchyard and bells does not come without a cost. Nor does having a full-time parish priest in the benefice; nor maintaining the weekly worship within the parish church, a building that costs around £8,500 per month to maintain and run. That's nearly £300 per day - albeit a lot less than the £30k per day it costs for keep Canterbury Cathedral open!

Despite these ever-increasing running costs, we are committed to supporting others and last year we allocated just over £9,000 to support the work of 14 charities, local, national and international. Here and in coming editions of the magazine we will cover these different charities and the work they do.

Revd David Commander revdavidcommander@gmail.com

severely impacting the ability of a parent to cope; a feeling of being inadequate or suffering from some post-natal depression or illness.

I remember being told about a young mother who had been abandoned by her partner and who had had poor parenting herself. She was at a loss to know how to cope. A volunteer helped her get her four-year old up, ready and breakfasted and to school on time and later showed her how to make nutritious and economic meals ready for their return. She had never previously been shown basic hygiene or its importance. After a few weeks of the volunteer helping her, she was proud of her achievements and social services did not see the need to intervene.

Home-Start is so successful that it can reduce referrals to social services and also finds that many of those helped by a volunteer do themselves go on to become volunteers some years later. Home-Start Tunbridge Wells oversees the volunteers and can support families here in Benenden.

For more information and to volunteer contact the Tunbridge Wells Office: 01892 524916. contact@home-startswk.org.uk Sally-Ann Marks

Home-Start

Home-Start is a nationwide organisation helping families with children up to five years old by offering help, in the home, to support them through difficult times. Highly trained volunteers are matched with a young family who need help in day-to-day tasks as a result of loss, crisis or sudden negative events in their lives.

Taking the place of a near, caring relative, the volunteers can help to get parents back on track after a difficult period so that they can learn new skills or just have a supportive shoulder to lean on. Examples might be a single mother or father with a baby or young child with a difficult diagnosis and finding that they are living miles away from any family support; a sudden bereavement in the family which is

Hospice support

St George's gives donations to the Hospice in the Weald and the Demelza Hospice Care for Children, which both provide care completely free of charge to patients with a terminal illness and to those important to them. Most people, these days, know of someone either in their own family or within their community who have been supported at one time or another by a hospice.

They will also know that hospice care or 'palliative care' as it is often known, is offered not only to terminally ill patients in the hospice itself but also at home, where many patients prefer to remain with support. The Hospice in the Weald also cares for the families of those who are poorly, or indeed after they have died, through bereavement support.

St George's Church Fund Raising

Many patients choose to spend a short time in the hospice itself for respite care, either allowing their families some time to gain strength at what can be a very difficult time or allowing the nursing staff to rebalance or alter the drugs and therapies to ease pain and suffering. Sometimes, the patients also need respite from their carers, for whom they feel they must keep optimistic and upbeat. This can be traumatic for all.

The Demelza Hospice for Children in Kent offers a very specialist service to children and young people with life-limiting or extremely challenging and complex health needs, again offering respite care where appropriate. Each child has access to their own bedroom and bathroom and families are welcome also to stay in the family accommodation.

Most people know that hospices depend on the general public for fund-raising, legacies and their charity shop income for the vast majority of their funding. What is less widely known is that the Hospice in the Weald gets just 13% of all its funding from the central government, so the challenge to find the remaining 87% is enormous.

For more information please see www.hospiceintheweald.org.uk and www.demelza.org.uk Sally-Ann Marks

Let the Children Live

About 30 years ago we heard from a friend of Fr Peter Walters about the street children of Medellín in Colombia. Our church decided to send a donation to help support his work and has been doing so ever since. This year we sent £300. This is an extract from their latest letter to us:

"Life for these boys and girls - some of whom are only six years of age - is a constant struggle, and they are exposed to great dangers. Although the level of violence in Medellín has fallen considerably in recent years, the numbers of children who are at risk in the streets and shantytowns are as great as ever.

"The majority of our children come from the hundreds of shantytowns that surround Medellín and these children have to work in the street. They survive by begging, by prostitution or by sorting through rubbish to find things that can be recycled. We try to resolve the family and economic problems that are forcing them to work and then try to make it possible for them to go to school and leave all its dangers behind. They too come to Casa Walshingham to have a meal, a wash, do homework, take part in artistic and recreational activities, or to see our psychologists or social workers. The building is frequently filled with song as all our children are given the opportunity to sing, and our award-winning choir can often be heard practising its repertoire."

Let the Children Live! is a charity of last resort and offers these children the chance to know love, care, safety and the chance for a future.

Julia Collard

Médecins Sans Frontières

When I was working in The Gambia a few years ago I had a message from my son in Sierra Leone asking if I could offer one of the members of the Médecins Sans Frontières a few days respite at my house. The man needed a break after the intensity of the charity's work in that war zone. He didn't want to go all the way back to Britain for just a few days away from it all, to recharge.

Médecins Sans Frontières (doctors without borders) is an international, independent, medical humanitarian organisation which endeavours to save lives and ease the suffering of people in crisis situations. This means they provide medical assistance to people affected by conflict, epidemics, disasters, or exclusion from healthcare. At present they operate in 70 countries worldwide. They are working on the

front line, and their teams are made up of tens of thousands of health professionals, logistic and administrative staff - most of them hired locally.

They are particularly keen that it should be understood that their actions are guided entirely by medical ethics and the principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality. However, attacks against medical facilities and health workers, whether deliberate or indiscriminate, are part of generalised violence and atrocities committed against civilians in armed conflict. Natural disasters, epidemics, mass migrations and other situations present different challenges. My visitor didn't say much about his work but after a few days was ready to face the challenge again. www.msf.org

Sue Fisher

Sightsavers

Many of us take our sight for granted. However, in the developing world there are many people who suffer from debilitating conditions, from cataracts to disease, which can cause blindness. Sightsavers is the UK's leading charity working in the developing world to prevent and cure blindness, support people with visual impairments and campaign for social equality for people with disabilities, as well as to promote and support the social inclusion of blind children and adults, changing lives for the long term.

Operating globally over the last 75 years in 30 countries across Africa and Asia, its aim is to eliminate avoidable blindness and support people with visual impairments to live independently. It helps to train health workers, provide eye operations, support people with disabilities, improve women's health and much more.

Sightsavers' vision is of a world where no one is blind from avoidable causes and where everyone can participate equally in their community. Sightsavers treats conditions such as cataracts and provides support and

assistance to tackle debilitating diseases, many of which cause sight loss. In order to achieve this goal, the charity works closely with governments and local, national and international partners to carry out eye operations and distribute treatments where they are most needed. Through very straightforward interventions, Sightsavers is helping to save sight, bringing light into lives which have been in darkness, or helping children to feel free to play in local rivers without the risk of becoming blind. Chris Parkinson

The Salvation Army

I remember when, as a child, I used to visit the park and listen to the Salvation Army band. They also marched and played in our annual town parade when I was on a float dressed as a pirate, but I haven't seen much of them since. However, they are still going strong and are very active in less obvious ways.

The Salvation Army, founded in 1865 by William Booth, is a Protestant Christian church, and now an international charitable organisation headquartered in London. It is aligned with the Wesleyan Holiness movement. The organisation consists of soldiers, officers, and adherents who are collectively known as salvationists. Its founders sought to bring salvation to the poor, destitute, and hungry by meeting both their "physical and spiritual needs".

With 650 churches and community centres across the UK and Ireland, it offers practical help, friendship and support to some of the most disadvantaged people and is to be found working in the heart of the community. This work includes supporting victims of modern slavery, operating shelters for the homeless, running feeding centres and adult rehabilitation centres and giving financial advice. They also have charity shops in many towns and cities. salvationarmy.org.uk

Sue Fisher

Spotlight



The day we sailed from Blighty to Dunkirk to pay tribute with the Little Ships

This year's 85th anniversary of the evacuation of Dunkirk saw 70 of the original heroic 'Little Ships' cross the English Channel on 21 May in memory of and tribute to Operation Dynamo. Iden Green couple Louise and Mark Simpson took part in the event on their own (more modern) small boat and here Louise looks back at their adventure.

And we're off! After weeks of cleaning, polishing and servicing our boat, and months and months of planning for our trip, we were on our way to Ramsgate.

In World War II, Britain planned Operation Dynamo to rescue its allied forces from the beaches of Dunkirk. Its naval ships were unable to get close enough to the shore to make a rescue feasible, so many small privatelyowned vessels were commandeered to bring the men home. This year, 70 original Little Ships, alongside 100 supporting craft, including our boat, returned there.

We arrived in
Ramsgate from our
mooring on the Medway
after a windy and bouncy
trip, but the sun was
shining and Ramsgate
had pulled out all the

stops to host the historic occasion. In the harbour, the Little Ships were starting to arrive, and they looked glorious, the teak varnished, the brass shining and flags of every colour waving to us in the windy conditions. You could feel the excitement in the town.

The Royal Temple Yachting Club was our host for the weekend and the organiser Chris Cox was invaluable with his organisation - not an easy task when a total of 170 boats were making the crossing, including the Royal Navy, RNLI and various news channels. We had a wonderful weekend, with military parades, a service of remembrance, the world premiere of the Little Ships choir, 1940s music, free cinema viewing of the Dunkirk films, and a flyover with a Spitfire, Hurricane and Swordfish.

After a 'rum tot' couple of days, we finally prepared for the crossing with 13 of the supporting craft, including us, heading to Dunkirk a day early in preparation for the Little Ships journey the following day. The winds dropped a little and we headed out to foreign climes. This was our first trip across the channel but we were in convoy with several other boats so felt secure.

Arriving at Dunkirk marina three hours later,



we were met by harbour master Sophie, who showed us where to moor. As they were accommodating so many boats, we had to raft together, which caused a bit of a hoo ha, but finally we got ourselves sorted. Dunkirk is similar to Ramsgate as the town and the marina are connected. It makes a difference to boaters, as we rely on feet or buses to visit local sites.

The following day, the Little Ships and other supporting craft arrived, blasting out Rule Britania from their speakers and getting a funny look from our French neighbours. The calm seas were great news, as the Little Ships, which are at least 90 years old, left before 8am and travelled for around ten hours to get to Dunkirk. It had taken only three hours in our modern fibreglass boat in rough seas the previous day.

The excitement continued the next day. Prince Michael of Kent inspected the Royal Navy, and UK enthusiasts in their WWII vehicles and authentic uniforms toured the Dunkirk streets. There was even a Chelsea Pensioner, Mike, who came over in the WWII boat 'Watchful'.

A remembrance service was held the following afternoon at the Dunkirk War Graves Cemetery. The service was sombre but the graveyard was beautiful - impeccably kempt with English flowers growing amongst the headstones. A perfect memorial for the lads that didn't make it home.

On Sunday, the British Navy held their own religious service alongside the Little Ships moored in the harbour. They looked resplendent in their uniform and the dock was crowded



with French and British who were there to pay their respects.

The final celebration was organised by Dunkirk town itself. A variety of bands playing 1940s music marched throughout the town, and interspersed between the musicians were veteran vehicles and locals dressed up in period costumes. Actors re-enacted the Dunkirk story. The crowd mourned Dunkirk's invasion, applauded the Resistance, celebrated the Allied Forces and cheered for France's liberation. Then finally it was over and the streets became quiet again.

Over the next couple of days we started preparing for our own evacuation, getting food and fuel and sorting out passport stamps, and then we left, following the Little Ships flotilla home across a calm sea, with blue skies, back to Blighty.

During Operation Dynamo 26 May - 4 June 1940

The RAF flew 2,739 fighter sorties, 651 bombing raids and 171 reconnaissance flights.

Fighter Command claimed 262 enemy aircraft, losing

Approximately 850 private boats sailed from Ramsgate - over 250 were lost

Churchill and Admiral Ramsey hoped to rescue between 30,000 and 40,000 troops.

The combined efforts of RAF, Navy and the Little Ships rescued 39,848.

The people of Ramsgate mobilised to help the rescued soldiers and over 40,000 fish and chip suppers were provided to injured men.





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Local Enterprise

Kino: from women's wrestling to the UK's first digital cinema

When Mr Henry Maynard opened the Victoria Hall in 1875 as a lecture hall for 'the good of the people of Hawkhurst', he could little have



imagined that his gift would be used as a venue for women's wrestling (1960s) and become Kino, the UK's first digital cinema. So, not only

has Hawkhurst brought the world the Oxo cube, it's also a pioneer in national film technology. Not bad for a village with a population of 4,000.

The idea of a 'super cinema' in the Grade II listed building first came about when an Australian couple who'd migrated to Kent - and had seen how popular cinemas that focused on an experience and the community were down under - decided to bring that idea to sunny Hawkhurst.

If you've never been to Kino, it's the cinema you'd invent if you designed it yourself: gin and



tonic on the way in; local food and cakes; large, comfy seats like you'd find in business class; all the big films without a 15-mile hike to a 'picknmixtastic'

multiplex; cosy (91 seats) and stylish.

When setting up the business 20 years ago, the owners realised that you didn't need a projector that used humongous, wheel-sized, metal film reels, unless you had a penchant for weightlifting. Instead, film is supplied digitally encrypted using

the sorcery of WiFi. A state-of-the-art digital projector and Dolby sound system then creates the magic.

Impressively, while many high streets and multiplexes are on the decline, Kino is successfully bucking the trend by creating an offering relevant to 2025 and to our rural locality - something Managing Director Matt Breckon has worked hard to achieve.

To cater for all tastes and ages,
Kino shows a varied diet of
blockbusters, arthouse films,
documentaries and children's
movies - often in the same
week. Providing appealing
options to as many sectors of
the local population as possible.
It's even one of the few venues with
the rights to stream the Royal Ballet and
Opera and the National Theatre live.

Central to Matt's vision is that Kino is rooted in the community and remains relevant to its priorities and preferences. The food and drinks it serves as part of its all-day offering are sourced from local providers and it puts on special screenings of foreign language syllabus films to support local schools' needs. It's also been specially designed to cater for people with wheelchairs and disabilities, who often meet there and socialise on Thursday mornings.



The community commitment also extends to pricing: tickets are cheaper than multiplexes, seats are cheaper on Mondays and there are

discounts for students and the over 60s every day.

So, 150 years on, I think Henry Maynard would be very happy that Kino is still very much a gift to the people of Hawkhurst - and beyond. www.kinodigital.co.uk

Mark Hollander

Benenden Nature



Great secret that lies beneath the surface of our village ponds

Benenden remains a key stronghold of the Great Crested Newt, but where will you find them and what is their future? Sarah Harrington-James goes pond-gazing in the parish

You may have noticed on your travels around the parish that there are a lot of ponds. Many of these are very old, historic ponds which appear on the 1st edition OS map of 1871 and were an integral part of village life. They may have been dug originally to water livestock and to serve local farmsteads, but others are likely to have been extractive pits to remove local clay and sandstone - perhaps even iron ore.

These ponds are like a snapshot in time, as the silt layers within will hold a lot of information about the environment at that point (also known as paleobotany) and carbon dating core samples could even give an exact age to the pond. Of course this is all interesting stuff,



but it's what's living in the pond that interests me as a naturalist with a Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence and a UCert Biological Recording & Species Identification.

Benenden is a stronghold for this European protected native species, which has been unfairly in the news for 'holding up development'. The

fact is, according to charity Froglife, the UK has lost 50% of its ponds in the 20th century and 80% of the remaining ones are in a poor state.

Great Crested Newts, which are black with warty skin and have a yellow and black spotty belly, are our largest native newt. Let's say they are rather particular about where they like to hang out, unlike our other native Smooth and Palmate newts, who are happy with a small garden pond. Large and deep farmland or edge of woodland ponds are the Great Crested's favourite and both the High Weald and Low Weald offer this habitat in abundance.

However, it doesn't mean that every old pond is in good order. Plenty have been left to succession and are now heavily silted up or are shaded by mature trees, meaning pond plants are unlikely to grow which newts need to lay their eggs on. Other ponds have been backfilled and lost, especially those now within arable fields.

Unfortunately, habitat loss coupled with a lack of suitable large, fish-free ponds means that our Great Crested Newt friends are now much rarer. So if you find one of these charismatic newts in your garden or see them using your pond, you're one of the lucky ones.

They can live up to 18 years and travel up to 500m a night during breeding season. It is the males that sport a jagged dragon-like crest and silver tail stripe during this time, but it is the females with a yellow tail stripe that are often larger and can be as long as your hand.

Like all species of newt, the males use both courtship behaviour and pheromones to attract a female, and their 'dance' can be seen in the shallows of open water, mainly at night. Once the egg has hatched, the larvae can take up to ten weeks to mature before they absorb their gills and leave the water. where they will stay locally. Perhaps you've found one under some logs or a pile of bricks? It can take up to three years for them to mature from juvenile to adult, then they will return to the ponds to breed each year onwards.

If you plan on visiting



Charlotte and Donald Molesworth's enchanting Balmoral Cottage topiary garden in Benenden as part of the National Gardens scheme, please do spend some time pondgazing here, as this is a favoured spot for the local 'Cresties'. Watch out for them coming up for air in the open water, or hanging out in the marginal vegetation. Hopefully like me, it will fill you with wonder.

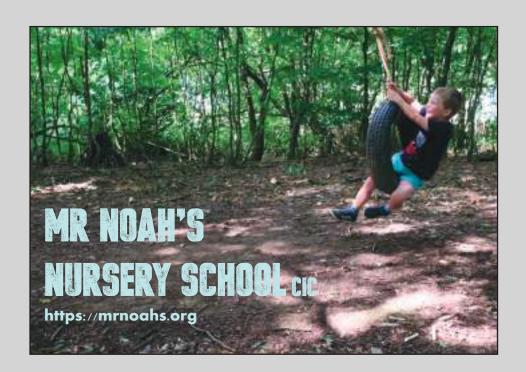


The Cranbrook and District Probus Club

PROBUS is a local, national, and international association of retired people who come together in non-political, non-sectarian, non-profit, autonomous clubs which provide regular opportunities for members to meet others in similar circumstances, with similar levels of interest, make new friends, and maintain and expand their interests.

We have recommenced our regular monthly lunchtime meetings at The Bull, Benenden.

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Food and Drink

Let's forgive and forget and enjoy these wines

Life can be unfair sometimes to those whose youthful misdemeanours, while understandable, are never quite forgiven. There are some wines that receive the same treatment.

Australian Chardonnays are the prime example, the ones that travelled over here in the early days of the British wine experience. Big and fat, brash and buttery, overrun by oak, they were distinctive enough to gain themselves a following, but as people's drinking became a little more educated, they were left behind. Tastes moved towards fruit, dryness and minerality, and the unsophisticated Aussie wines were derided in the same way as the stereotypical Bruce with corks hanging from his hat.

In fact, you may find that the grape en bloc, with all its variety, is dismissed with that most ridiculous of generalised put-downs: ABC.

Anything but chardonnay.

The Germans haven't had it easy, either. Remember the dominant days of Blue Nun in the 1970s? This medium-sweet Liebfraumilch found itself ridiculed, eventually became the drink of choice of Alan Partridge, and all the country's wines, unmistakable in their distinctive 'flute' bottles, were tarred with the same brush. The Alsace region suffered the same way, despite being French.

And then there were the Greeks. Ask anybody who holidayed in Greece in the bad old days and they'll tell you about their nights on Retsina, the local white that doubled up as paint stripper, with distinctive tasting notes of pine-fresh toilet cleaner. For many, the scars remain and any wine with an obviously Greek-sounding name finds itself passed over.

These are curiosities I've noticed when trying to stock wines for the village shop - more specifically, when trying to sell them.

By way of example, there's a bottle of Alsace Riesling that's been lurking around for what seems like ages, to the point where it seems like an old friend. We had six of them originally. I think I bought two, because I think Alsace Rieslings are some of the best wines you'll find anywhere,

but I think my old pal is let down by the aforementioned bad reputation of anything that sounds Germanic, comes in a tall, tapered bottle and has an unintelligible label. The Germans really should make their wine-grading system less weird, but that's no reason to ignore their wines.

Greek wine? We've had a few and they've been excellent - the young-vine Xinomavro from Apostolos Thymiopoulos was a bright red gem, but it took a long while to shift because, I think, people aren't prepared to spend more

than a fiver on stuff they associate with disinfectant.

And the Chardonnays? We have a proper range, from a lovely white Burgundy (a Macon-Vergisson called Les Courthelongs from Domaine Simonin), through an appley South African made by Mellasat on the Cape, to a lush Kiwi bottle from Pask. Not a fat and flabby one in sight.

Perhaps it's time to forgive youthful indiscretions and give a chance to some wines that really deserve a break.

In the pink

I'm delighted to announce that, after an unavoidable break, our suppliers have managed to get hold of some stocks of my favourite summer wine, the delightful pink rosé from Domaine Pellehaut in Gascony.

I always say it reminds me of eating strawberries and cream on a summer lawn, and I've missed it these past couple of hot weekends. Hopefully by the time you read this, it'll be back on our shelves. Peter Thomas

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In Your Garden

A gardener's thoughts on the pros and cons of Chelsea

I was fortunate enough to have attended Chelsea Flower Show this year for the first time since 2019 and, despite the hefty price tag on the tickets (£85 for entry after 3pm as non-RHS members) it was still a grand day out. I made some interesting comparisons to my previous visit but I was pleased to see that the bar is being raised on promoting awareness of working in horticulture, despite the very heavy lean towards garden design.

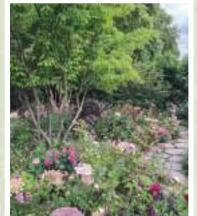
It's very much a chicken-and-egg syndrome here, as one couldn't design a garden without plant knowledge - not to mention an appreciation of soils, rainfall and the wider landscape surrounding the plot. However, it is possible to pull together a team of knowledgeable folk and

be known as a design studio, so then it becomes very much a collaborative affair. Having seen the design possibilities at Chelsea available to clients with deep pockets, then a design-led team approach rather than a lone-wolf concern is probably a good idea.

The RHS has come under some scrutiny this year for not making its shows, in particular Chelsea, more accessible to a wider range of budgets. Having

seen stand after stand of inexorably expensive garden sculptures, greenhouses, furniture and parasols, one can be left thinking how inaccessible this all is to most of us, but I do think it is a good thing to be able to dream and 'wow' at perfection.

Besides, Chelsea is where new beginnings happen for many fashions, trends and, indeed, new practices for the hard landscaping and non-plant elements of our gardens. Newly-bred plant varieties are introduced, meaning that as



consumers and good gardeners we have a better, healthier plant to put in our borders, perhaps more suited to our climate or smaller outside spaces.

Many of the show gardens and even trade stands offer multiple ways to plant our

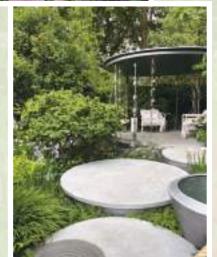
borders using a mixture of small trees, shrubs and flowering plants, along with a dazzling choice of colour palettes.

Jo Thompson's 'The Glasshouse Garden' had a beautiful palette of reds, pinks and apricots, using lots

of roses with multi-stemmed trees and strong foliage; Aviva's 'Rainforest Garden' highlighted the need to create moisture-loving shady gardens with lots of varieties of ferns and mosses as an antidote to our increasingly warm, dry summers; and the Boodles 'Raindance Garden' had a very feminine pink and white palette beautifully executed by designer Catherine MacDonald to mark the 25th anniversary of their iconic Raindance jewellery collection.

My one disappointment was the Floral Marquee. It felt slightly empty this year and I think that a number of the smaller plant nurseries perhaps could not justify the cost of putting on a display at Chelsea this time. I could also have done without the vast number of stands selling garden wares. I would far rather have a packed-out marquee full of inspirational plant combinations and a chance to talk to growers than 50 varieties of pink gardening gloves!

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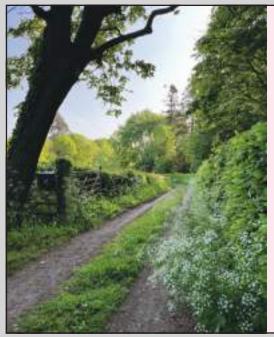
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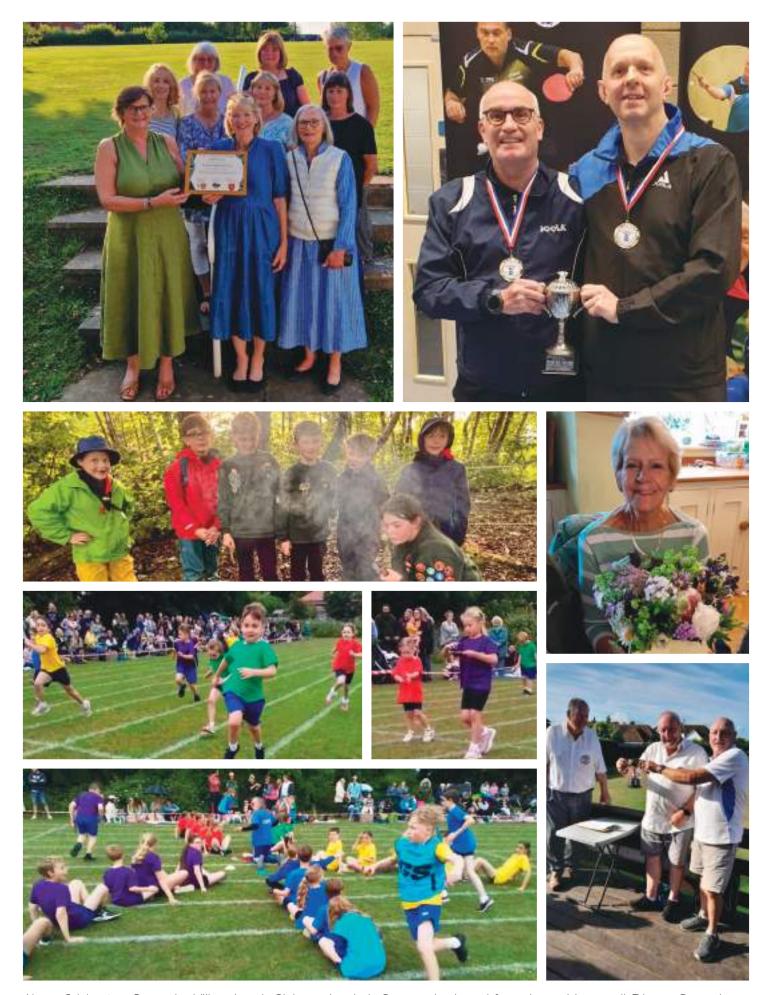


VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Chalkdown Riding for the Disabled, Staplehurst, are currently looking for volunteers to help with their therapeutic riding sessions on Wednesday and Thursday mornings in term time. If you have equine experience, enjoy being part of a team and would like to help our riders discover the healing powers of horses then please get in touch.

All volunteers will need to provide two references and will be DBS checked.

Email staplehurstrda@gmail.com for more information Or download an application form from chalkdownstaplehurst-rda.co.uk



Above: Celebrations: Benenden Village Lunch Club receive their Community Award from the parish council; Diccon Gray wins the National Over 50 men's doubles; Sissinghurst Scout group hone outdoor skills; the winner of the Merry and Bright raffle; primary school pupils compete on sports day; John Marshall and Dave Homewood win The Fred Reid Pairs Front cover: Capturing the vibrancy of the village fete: Balloons are released from the Matador. Photograph: David Sarton