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Magazine  
April 2022

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# Editorial



It almost goes against the grain at the moment to be feeling good about life. The daffodils are out, the spring lambs are on their way, the wild garlic is almost ready to be picked and the asparagus is looming with seasonal inevitability; and yet less than a continent away there are people being displaced, maimed or killed, in a fashion that had barely crossed our minds little more than a month ago.

These are people dubbed 'refugees', but who might, more pertinently, be called 'people', normal people, people just like us, who have had the misfortune to be caught up in a conflict caused by the machinations of a sick mind.

We know they've been deprived of the right to live in peace in their home towns and villages, the same as us, and that's why we feel their pain so deeply; but it's also why it's so important that we make the most of our freedom; the freedom not just to help the victims of unjust wars, but also to carry on with our own lives, as normal, except with a heightened appreciation of what we have.

The Benenden Spring Clean-Up may not be an event of earth-shaking importance, but when we go out as a team to de-litter the verges, we'll be fulfilling a little bit of our democratic duty (that's a polite call for volunteers: Saturday 30 April, from 9am at the community shop); going to the panto on the first weekend of the month may not stop Putin in his tracks, but it will stick two fingers up at the idea that anybody can interfere with our democratic right to do bizarre things in our own village.

It may all sound quite parochial, even flippant, but it's what living in a place like Benenden is all about. Yes, we should donate what we can and house who we can, but we shouldn't forget that democracy is mostly about the little pleasures and the tiny obligations.

Peter Thomas, 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.

Editors: Ruth Clark, Peter Thomas

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Contributions to: [benendenparishmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:benendenparishmagazine@gmail.com) by the 10th of the preceding month.

Advertising orders or queries to: [advertising.benendenmag@gmail.com](mailto:advertising.benendenmag@gmail.com).

Distribution queries to: [dd.rhill@btinternet.com](mailto:dd.rhill@btinternet.com).

Postal address: c/o Community Office, Benenden Village Hall, Benenden, TN17 4DY 01580 240371

Printed by The Wealden Advertiser Ltd, Cowdens Close, Hawkhurst, Kent



# Church Calendar

## St George's Church

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

Saturday 2 April

4pm Connect Four  
at Mission Church, Sandhurst  
5pm Choral Evensong

Sunday 3 April

8am Communion

10am All-age Communion

Palm Sunday 10 April

8am BCP Communion

10am Morning Worship

followed by breakfast, Memorial Hall

Monday 11 April

7.30pm Reflective Service  
at Mission Church, Sandhurst

Tuesday 12 April

7.30pm Reflective Service

Wednesday 13 April

7.30pm Reflective Service

at Mission Church, Sandhurst

Maundy Thursday 14 April

7.30pm Reflective Service

Good Friday 15 April

10am An Hour at the Cross

Holy Saturday 16 April

7.30pm Reflective Service

Easter Sunday 17 April

5.45am Sunrise Service

at St Nicholas Church, Sandhurst followed by breakfast, Mission Church

8am Communion

10am Sung Eucharist

Sunday 24 April

8am Communion

10am Morning Worship

Morning Prayer

8am Mondays and Fridays

## Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Morning Prayer

8am Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Mid-week Communion

10am Tuesdays

## Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services

10am Morning Worship

5.30pm Evening Worship

The 10am Morning Worship is broadcast on our YouTube channel: search 'Iden Green Congregational Church'.

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

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

Masses

9am Sundays

7.30pm Holy Days

## From the Parish Registers

Funerals

11 March Catharina Conway-Lemmens Funeral and burial

2

28 March Peter Hopkisson Funeral

29 March Elsie Matthey Funeral



# Rector's Letter



## How can I help our Ukrainian brothers and sisters?

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the war started by the evil actions of one man have certainly turned the normal lives of Ukrainians on their head. Ordinary people, all going about their normal lives just a few weeks ago, now find themselves fleeing their homes, their villages, towns and cities, and their country. Jobs and businesses left behind. Loved ones left behind. Ordinary people, taking up arms, making petrol bombs, learning how to handle assault rifles. Totally unbelievable for them, I'm sure, and frightening.

The majority of us probably feel helpless, not knowing the best way to help fellow brothers and sisters. We can't fight to help Ukraine, but we can give financial support to aid agencies who, in turn, can help. We can't stop the war, but some might feel they are able to provide a home to a Ukrainian family. This must be a very personal decision depending upon your own circumstances. However, we can all pray; pray for peace; for a change of heart; for families whose lives have been turned on their head. We can also pray for the priests and chaplains serving God in that country: Orthodox priests and some Church of England priests serving in Ukraine and in Russia, as their lives and ministry have also been turned on their head. In addition, we can pray for ourselves, as world peace - which we have taken for granted for many years - is also threatened.

The idea of 'just praying' may not seem enough for some people. In which case, and looking ahead, Canterbury Diocese is expecting Ukrainian families arriving in Kent via the Ukraine Family Scheme route in the coming days and weeks. This scheme allows family members of British nationals, UK settled persons and certain others to come to or stay in the UK. The Diocese will be registering offers of support from churches and members of congregations who would like to be involved in welcoming them. Specifically, they would like to hear from those who:

- are Ukrainian/English speakers
- have teaching experience
- are work coaches or can help with employment links
- have a working knowledge of the benefit system
- are interested in befriending
- are interested in providing homework support
- can help sourcing emergency supplies

Do you feel you can help in any of these ways? If so, please get in touch, letting me know your contact details and how you think you might be able to help. I will coordinate this and pass the information on to the Diocese.

With all the uncertainty that is going on around us and in our lives, I encourage you to draw closer to God through the celebrations of all our services in Holy Week and Easter this month, and to use the church for private prayer. God bless.

Revd David Commander, Rector



# Village Calendar

## April

Fri 1-Sun 3	The Comicals of Narna, Benenden Players Panto, Benenden Village Hall	p.9
Saturday 2	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	
Saturday 2	Cherry Ingram Garden Open, The Grange, Benenden, 11.30-3pm	p.9
Saturday 2	Quiz Night, St George's Club, 8.20pm	
Saturday 9	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Club, 8.20pm	
Friday 15	Easter Egg Draw, St George's Club, 8.20pm	
Saturday 16	Darts Knockout, St George's Club, 8.20pm	
Tuesday 19	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.11
Tuesday 19	Iden Green and Benenden WI, The Hungry Writer, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.17
Saturday 23	Spring Barbecue and Quoits, St George's Club, 8.20pm	
Monday 25	Parish Council Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Tuesday 26	Merry and Bright, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.19
Friday 29	Wines from the portfolio of Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, Benenden School Café, 7pm	p.31
Saturday 30	Spring Village Clean, Benenden's Shop, 9am	p.1
Saturday 30	Music Quiz, St George's Club, 8.20pm	

## Iden Green Toddler Group

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

## Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-11.30am

## Benenden Bowls Club

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

## Cakes & Chaos: Cafe and Toddler Group

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

# Parish Council



On travelling around our parish, it is sad to see the devastation caused by the recent storms, with many trees uprooted, especially in Hemsted Forest. I would encourage everyone who has a garden to plant a tree. This will not only help the climate but also provide future nesting opportunities for our native birds. The parish council has recently planted two wild service trees on Iden Green recreation ground, and obtained 25 saplings, which have been planted by the Benenden Village Trust as part of the Queen's Green Canopy Platinum Jubilee initiative.

There have been several complaints to the parish council about Benenden Hospital and Benenden School polluting the night sky with excessive lighting. We are setting up a working group to see what can be done to mitigate the situation. All lighting for future development will be restricted by the Dark Skies Policy in our newly 'made' Benenden Neighbourhood Development Plan (BNDP), and although existing planning permissions and developments cannot be retrospectively ordered to reduce their light output, we can monitor when the lights are switched off, and by close coordination with these bodies, it may be possible for some modification to the existing lighting scheme to be carried out.

If you are considering installing or changing any of your outside lighting, please be aware that we have a Dark Skies Policy (Reference: BD5) set out in the BNDP, with which you need to comply.

Further to recent news about plans to restore the parish's two wells, we have now set up a fundraising page to help raise another £20,000 that will be required to complete the work. Please give generously at [www.wonderful.org/fundraisers/502](http://www.wonderful.org/fundraisers/502).

Graham Beveridge, Parish Councillor

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk

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

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

## Parish Council Meeting

Monday 25 April 2022,

Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm





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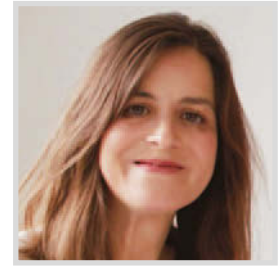
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# Talking Point



## You can't go wrong getting strong

I moved to beautiful Benenden last summer and I consider it an act of great self-control that it has taken me nine months to ask if I could write here about the many benefits of strength training. I've been passionate about spreading the word since changing my career from barrister to personal trainer in 2017.

Strength training is physical activity designed to improve muscular strength and endurance, and build muscle mass using resistance from our own bodyweight, free weights (dumbbells, kettlebells etc), weight machines or bands. Progressively loading the muscles allows neuromuscular adaptations to occur and stimulates muscle growth. Over time, we become stronger.

I'm intrigued by how many people are fearful of strength training in case they get 'too bulky'. In truth, gaining significant muscle mass is hard to achieve, whereas loss of muscle comes very naturally with age. We reach our peak values between 25-35 years old, after which we can lose 3-5% of our muscle mass per decade - unless we work to counteract this through physical activity and nutrition.

What about the risk of injury in training? Strength training helps to improve range of motion and mobility, reinforcing strength around the joints, and making us more resilient to injury. In fact, not strength training carries a much higher risk as we get older. A loss of muscle strength in advancing age is the primary limiting factor for functional independence. Improving strength and stability reduces the likelihood of falls, which are a major cause of fractures and mortality in older age. Lifting weights also benefits grip strength, which not only makes daily activities easier, but is correlated with a reduced risk of several diseases, including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, heart attack and stroke.

Our bones also reap the benefits of strength training. We build bone mass up to roughly the age of 30-35, at which time our bone mass peaks and after which we break down more bone than we build. For women in particular, the drop in oestrogen levels as we pass menopause can lead to a swift decline in our bone mass; up to 20% in the five to seven years following menopause, bringing an increased risk of osteoporosis. Alarmingly, approximately one in two women over the age of 50 will break a bone because of osteoporosis. The good news is that bones are living tissue and respond to the physical stress of strength training, which stimulates extra deposits of calcium, poking the cells which build bone into action.

Don't just take my word for it, though. The World Health Organization's physical activity guidelines recommend that adults (18-64) and older adults (65+) do muscle strengthening activities at moderate or greater intensity, involving all major muscle groups, on two or more days a week.

The value of maintaining our muscle mass and strength really cannot be overstated. Let's not be passive bystanders, waving our bone mass, muscle mass and strength goodbye. We can't go wrong getting strong.

Elizabeth Davies



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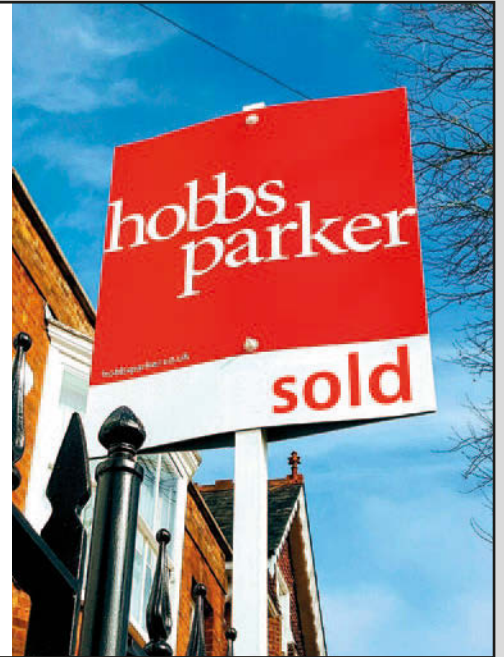
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## The Grange open gardens

Saturday 2 April, The Grange, Benenden,  
11.30-3pm

After two years without an 'open gardens' due to Covid, we at The Grange are excited to be returning. This is one of our largest charity events of the year and all proceeds go towards providing enriched, fulfilled and happy lives to adults with learning disabilities.

The Grange garden was carefully cultivated by Collingwood Ingram, nicknamed 'Cherry' due to his dedication to ornamental cherry trees. Cherry was responsible for reintroducing the great white flowering cherry tree, 'Taihaku', back to Japan, where it had previously died out.

The tree he used for this still stands proudly in our garden today, along with a number of other fascinating specimens, including his original hybrid cherry, 'Kursar', an Atlas cedar taken as a seedling from the Atlas Mountains and a yakushimanum rhododendron.

We take advice from cherry experts about when to host the open gardens, but we cannot guarantee the amount of blossom you will see during your visit, although we hope that the weather is kind in the lead up to the event so you can enjoy the trees at their best.

In a change to previous years, we are limiting admissions: 30 tickets will be available at 30-minute intervals to ensure the safety of the people we support, our visitors and volunteers. Tickets are £5 for adults and £1 for under 16s. We are also offering a VIP £15 ticket to include a guided tour with Chris Lane. It is listed on the booking page.

Please note that there is no onsite parking, but Benenden Primary School have been kind enough to allow us use of their car park. Please access the gardens at the entrance from The Green, TN17 4DN.

<https://fundraising.qef.org.uk/event/grange-open-garden>

Sarah Edwards



## Volunteer drivers needed

For many years a small team of wonderful Benenden volunteers have helped take those who can't drive and who don't have friends or family on hand to attend a medical appointment. New coordinators have been recruited, but the team of drivers is dwindling so we are urgently looking for more volunteers to join the group and keep this very useful service going to help parishioners who need a helping hand, every now and again. The more drivers the better, meaning you will only be asked to help every now and again.

Please email me for more information, to add your name to the list, or to confirm you are happy to continue. Your help is very much appreciated.

Revd David Commander  
[revdavidcommander@gmail.com](mailto:revdavidcommander@gmail.com)

# BAT

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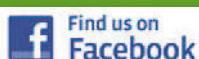
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## Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

For all those that may not know, Benenden Primary School's PTFA is an official registered charity run primarily by parents and staff yet also community volunteers who work hard to raise much-needed funds for our school. All money raised goes towards helping enrich our children and further advance their education by investing in equipment, resources, outdoor learnings and life skills.

Some examples of how we've been able to dedicate our past raised funds are gardening tools for the school children, science kits for enhanced STEM learning and first aid courses to give them life skills. We also funded hero medals to appreciate heroic efforts during lockdown and book tokens to inspire them to read more. We also enabled fun experiential events such as animal experiences for our youngest and oldest and carousel magic at the Christmas market. Giving £200 to each of our seven classes due to the success of the village fete stalls we tirelessly organised and ran made us very proud. Classes used this money towards drama workshops, outings or music and instrument sessions.

We are currently seeking support from the community to help us fundraise towards outdoor learning resources such as playground markings. There is also other outdoor equipment we aspire to fund for our wonderful school and any amount you can donate via our charity donations page would be wholeheartedly appreciated. Thank you.  
[www.wonderful.co.uk/pay?ref=1042725](http://www.wonderful.co.uk/pay?ref=1042725)  
Astrid Miller, Benenden CEP, PTFA Chair

## Village lunch

The village lunch will take place on Tuesday 19 April in the village hall at 12.30pm. £5 each and all welcome. Please could you let me know if you would like to come by Thursday 14 April, so we can plan and shop, as well as cook.  
Genevieve Greenwood 240526



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Thank you  
Tracy Claridge



## Primary School

We were visited by Ofsted during the first week back after the half term and the inspector was extremely positive about many areas of our school, including how well the children behaved and their enjoyment of learning. I'll share the full report with you as soon as it is published.

Huge congratulations to Oscar Lau (one of our Year 6 pupils), who took part in the Southern Region Sportshall Athletics Decathlon during half term. Kent competed against many other counties at the Triangle Leisure Centre in Burgess Hill and were very successful, with a gold medal for the girl's team and bronze from the boys. Oscar jumped a personal best in the standing long jump and ran brilliantly in his relays.

The girls of the 10:10 Primary Federation took part in the nationwide #LetGirlsPlay Biggest Ever Football Session at the school. We had 34 girls from Year 1 to Year 6 working in mixed age groups on skills, drills, small-sided games and full-sized games. Three wonderful dads came along and led groups, sharing their expertise, experience and excitement for the game. A few of the older girls have West Kent Football trials coming up soon and the extra training will have helped with their confidence.  
Lindsay Roberts, Executive Headteacher  
240565 [office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk)  
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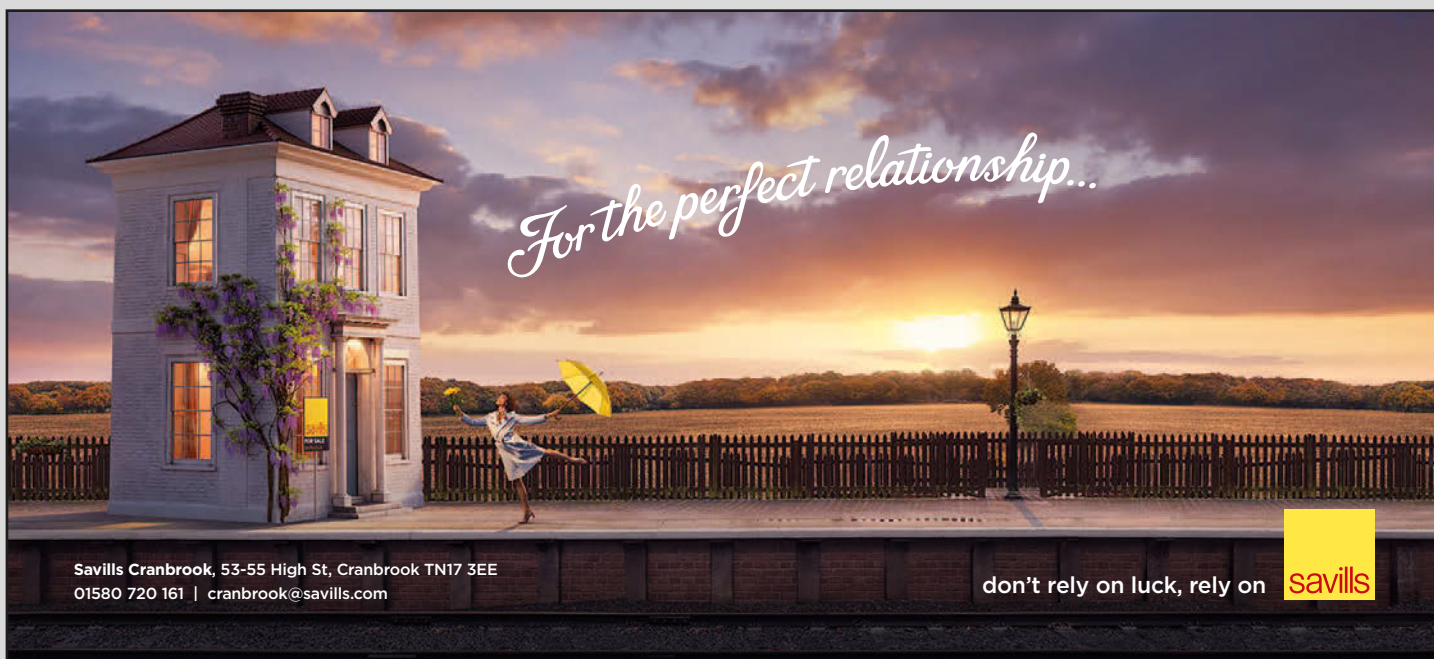
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## Benenden School

We were pleased that the school site survived the high winds during half-term with nothing more than a few boughs breaking off around the grounds, although I spent time in Wales, where I experienced the strange sight of an unfortunate neighbour's stable becoming lodged in a tree!

In Prayers on our first day back, one of our Sixth Formers shared her ARTiculation competition talk, which was very well received and which was followed by the prefects handing out daffodils to every pupil and staff member in honour of the Random Acts of Kindness Week.

While it is probably a stretch to suggest the Upper Fifth saw their mocks as an act of kindness, it has of course helped them to focus their minds on their forthcoming GCSEs. In other academic news, our Benenden STEM Month is well underway, with several events and guest speakers, including tech billionaire Roshni Nadar and Baroness Dido Harding, who oversaw the pandemic Test and Trace programme.

Away from STEM Month, we were also delighted to welcome Shaun Wallace from ITV's The Chase for an in-person talk before he put his skills to the test against a team of students in a fun quiz challenge!

*Samantha Price, Headmistress*

## Local Pilgrimages

We're getting excited as nature is waking up to a new season, and our spirits are raised by longer days and warmer sunshine. Soon it's time to come together and experience the first of our Local Pilgrimages, led by Lyn Hayes and Revd Ylva Blid-Mackenzie.

Save the date: Saturday 21 May at 9.45am for a 10am start. We will start and finish at St Nicholas Church, Sandhurst. The walk is around three hours and we aim to finish with our packed lunches, tea/coffee and cake around 1pm. If you would like more information, please contact: Revd Ylva 07766 711957 rev.ylva@gmail.com



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We have organised a growing number of our toys and resources onto Montessori-inspired trays. Organising activities and play by means of trays fosters independent thinking and choice in a child. They are encouraged to choose the tray that interests them the most at the time. This leads to more engagement and focus as they are making their own decisions about what to play with.

A new element of statutory early years provision is specifically the promotion of good oral health among the youngest members of our community. To this end we have created a dental-themed tray, which holds a toothbrush, toothpaste and a model set of teeth that open wide. This has proved to be fascinating for many children and they have already got through several tubes of toothpaste, brushing the false teeth enthusiastically up and down, back and front and equally enjoying washing it all off again in the sink.

Staff are introducing new vocabulary, such as 'gums', 'cavities' and 'floss' and, of course, relating the children's new interest to our ever-present topic of healthy eating. Healthy smiles all round.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor  
supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk



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## Talking Shop

Now that the remnants of the scaffolding, which has hugged Benenden's for the past few weeks, is down, we can finally appreciate the new spruced up building, and as we gradually emerge from our winter of Covid discontent, it is evident that you are returning to our shop and café.

We are delighted to announce that as a result of book sales and the proceeds of the Christmas hamper raffle, we have been able to donate over £350 towards a defibrillator for the Mounts Hill area of the parish. We are always pleased to be able to give to charitable causes and this is largely due to the fact that our team of volunteers help to keep our running costs as low as possible. Together with our excellent regular staff, they provide a warm welcome to our customers and an input without which the shop could not function effectively.

We have a scheme which might be just the ticket for Mother's Day or for Easter: you can now buy vouchers for £10 to spend in the shop or café. Just ask at the counter. We can't compete with the supermarkets for Easter egg sales but we do have alternatives like Goupie products, which are locally made, chocolates and a selection of excellent wines. Hannah's beautiful flowers are also available.

We are very happy to have welcomed some great new volunteers recently but we always need more, particularly if you are willing to sign up for a regular time each week. Please don't be afraid to help in the café; if you've ever fancied being a barista, you can learn on our coffee machine at our expense. It's very gratifying to produce a satisfyingly fluffy cappuccino even if, like me, it takes you several attempts to begin with.

Sadly, Covid is still around and although it is no longer legally required to isolate yourself if you are positive, we do ask that our volunteers do not come into the shop if infected. Some of our staff, volunteers and customers are vulnerable and we still need to protect them.

Bev Beveridge [info@benendens.co.uk](mailto:info@benendens.co.uk)  
[www.benendens.co.uk](http://www.benendens.co.uk)

## Village Hall

With the warmer weather and longer days, now that we're well into spring, I thought this would be a good moment to draw attention to the gorgeous outdoor spaces around the hall. The field between the hall and the school is available to hire for all kinds of exciting events. With Easter just around the corner, why not make use of the school holidays and sunshine, and get the kids together for a party? Why not try hunts, arts and crafts, and of course lots of chocolate treats, to make great use of the hall both inside and out.

We have a fabulous set of changing rooms with showers and available storage for anyone who might be considering starting a weekly sports practice session. We could even accommodate post-match teas indoors with the use of our well-equipped kitchen.

Or how about a film club? There is plenty of space and ample parking, we've got a great sound system and facilities for refreshments. We'd love to hear your ideas and welcome you to the hall.

Holly Clayson, Manager 07419 989830  
[enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org](mailto:enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org)  
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## Planning Matters

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

- 22/00555/FULL Pypmne Manor Farm, Pypmne Road. Erection of a glasshouse in the garden of Pypmne Manor.
- 22/00469/LBC The Old Livery Stables, The Green. Listed Building Consent - Installation of an electric car charging point, mounted on the side of the wall.
- 22/00536/FULL The Parsonage, Cranbrook Road. Variation of Condition 2 of 21/01503/FULL - Raise side extension's ceiling height by raising the parapet roof by 225mm.

More planning matters at:  
[benendenparishcouncil.org](http://benendenparishcouncil.org)

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## Benenden Village Fete

With spring in the air, our thoughts turn to spring cleaning and finding pre-loved, but now unwanted, clothes, bric-a-brac, books, jewellery, and tools in good condition to donate to the fete on Saturday 18 June. Once again, the donation point will be the Scout Hut, opposite the community shop, from 18 April (not before please). Please separate out children's toys, books, games and costumes and leave in the designated area.

Also, do you have a gazebo or marquee that you could provide for use by one of the stalls on the day? We would be very grateful and will ensure it is carefully put up and taken down by our lovely team of fete volunteers.

Athena Cripps athenacripps@gmail.com

## Benenden Bell Ringers

One of the many pleasures of the art of ringing is the ability to visit other towers and sample the huge variety of bells, as well as the churches they hang in - a pleasure denied to us for over two years of the pandemic. It was therefore with even more than usual pleasure that we were able recently, at last, to hold our winter outing of local towers, reinforced by ringers from Frittenden and Staplehurst, ringing at Sandhurst, Rolvenden, Tenterden, Stone-in-Oxney and Appledore, a wide variety of very different bells sometimes more challenging than our own, which are notable for their ease of handling.

We are grateful for the welcome by all who allowed us to ring their bells. We would like to draw readers' attention to our Facebook page - Benenden Bell Ringers - admirably kept up to date by Richard Steele, which gives a more detailed account. Our current learners, both youth and adult, are coming on well and we are preparing for a busy wedding season from April, eagerly anticipated especially by younger members of the band for its contributions to their pocket money, as wedding ringing is the only time ringers get paid for their efforts!

Rod Lebon



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Please join us to raise money for this amazing charity. This is very dear to our hearts as a very special young lady has been battling bone cancer this past year and Bone Cancer Trust has been wonderful.

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## Iden Green and Benenden WI

International Women's Day was celebrated in a number of ways, including a park run in Maidstone and a celebration by the Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra. On the WI Wanderers website, it seemed very fitting to remember the difficulties women have suffered in the past and to pray for the refugees from Ukraine.

The latest WI Life magazine contains several interesting articles as diverse as 'the 2020-21 Annual Review' and a knitting pattern for a platinum jubilee corgi. Bruges is only famous for its chocolate? Not according to Melanie Gibson-Barton, who gave an enlightening talk about the many other exquisite attractions the city has to offer, including the lace industry, the enticing restaurants, ancient churches, art galleries and beautifully decorated buildings.

We are looking forward to hearing a talk about The Hungry Writer at our meeting in the Memorial Hall on 19 April. I wonder what he is hungry for - possibly not food! Plus, another educational and blooming wonderful time is planned for 5 May, when we are arranging to visit Petals Garden Centre.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk



## Topical health

Bowel cancer is one of the least talked about of the cancers, despite it being diagnosed at the rate of 120 new cases a day, making it the fourth most prevalent cancer in the UK and the second leading cause of cancer deaths. The incidence of bowel cancer is higher the older one gets, which explains the targeting of the NHS bowel cancer screening programme.

As well as advancing years, other risks for bowel cancer include a low-fibre diet, eating processed meat, being overweight, smoking, alcohol use and physical inactivity. It stands to reason, therefore, that the best ways to avoid cancer of the bowel are to eat healthily, don't smoke, limit alcohol consumption and take some exercise.

It is a widely ignored fact that over 90% of people found to have bowel cancer have one or more of the following symptoms: a persistent change in their bowel habit, e.g. more frequent, runnier stools; blood in the stool in the absence of piles, and abdominal pain associated with eating. It is worthwhile, therefore, to not ignore such signs and symptoms. The presence of blood is also the reason for the NHS screening programme, which looks for the presence of hidden (occult) blood in the supplied stool sample, every two years from the age of 60 to 74, as well as at 56. If you are over 75 you can ask for a screening kit every two years from the NHS.

Of course, not all bowel symptoms are cancer related, but fear that they are is not a good reason to avoid your GP. Caught early and treated, survival is as high as 90% at five years, with more than half of people diagnosed with bowel cancer surviving more than ten years after diagnosis. These are all good reasons why you should not ignore the NHS bowel screening kit when it drops on your mat.

Peter Ellis

## Benenden Hospital

This year's Community Garden Week will take place from 4-10 April and it is a chance for us all to celebrate the beautiful community gardens across the UK. These gardens come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but they all have one thing in common: they connect, inspire and promote healing through the power of nature.

A community garden is a way of bringing together a group of people who grow fruit, vegetable, flowers and plants on allotments or in dedicated gardens. This is beneficial for the environment as well as having a positive effect on your physical and emotional wellbeing. For example did you know that gardening is an excellent form of aerobic exercise, as you can burn 300-400 calories an hour when digging or mowing the lawn?

At Benenden Hospital, we have a sensory garden called Edna's Retreat. The garden was named in honour of Edna Winter, a member of Benenden Healthcare for many years, who also sat on the governing body, the Committee of Management, who gave a generous donation so the garden could be created. She worked with the hospital grounds team to design a sensory garden to stimulate our five senses: sight, smell, sound, touch and taste. Our Garland rose, created specially for our centenary, takes pride of place during the summer months.

Being only a stone's throw from our hospital, Edna's Retreat overlooks the rolling landscape of the Kent countryside. Its brick pathways are lined with a series of raised flower beds and generous seating areas that lead through an archway to additional benches. Our wheelchair accessible garden is a place for patients and visitors to relax, for staff to chat with colleagues on their breaks, for you to reflect during this community garden week.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

## Letter to the Editor

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

### A GOOD WALK IMPROVED

It was a good pick for Peter Massey's first 'Local Walk' in the February issue of the magazine, but I would like to correct a reference to marl pits or bomb craters. Those are pits dug to extract 'mine' (ferrous carbonate) for making wrought iron in clay bloomeries, the closest being near the culverted bridge on the High Weald Way that branches off from the track going to the bridge in Woodcock Lane. The wood or ghyll has the unlikely name of Strawberry Ghyll. A less likely wood you will ever find to have ever had wild strawberries growing in it!

I'm a member of The Wealden Iron Research Group (WIRG [www.wealdeniron.org.uk](http://www.wealdeniron.org.uk)) and we have noticed strawberries pop up quite often with sites associated with making iron. The reason is not known, but there is a lot of iron-coloured water in the streams, which may be why. The nearest Anglo-Romano bloomery is at the top of Mounts Lane, looking down across towards the Newmill Channel. Search 'Rolvenden Layne' on the WIRG website to find the map coordinates.

There are two more sites by the wood boundary below Broom Hill and hundreds of other mine pits are dotted across the landscape. Sadly, there are a lot of bloomery sites still to find and that will remain so, unless there is a rekindled interest in this area of historical interest. Our on-the-ground knowledge will soon be lost as those with the knowledge are passing on increasingly rapidly.  
Victor Kellett

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## Merry and Bright Club

After last year we didn't know what 2022 would bring. The number of people coming along had dropped and we had to decide if we could continue. Happily, we decided to keep going and are pleased to have already welcomed some new members to the club, which meets once a month in the Memorial Hall. We have planned some interesting visitors over the year and arranged fun activities. For example, we decorated Easter hats at our March get together and in April we will be making flowers in an unusual way.

Everyone is welcome to come along, join the group and enjoy afternoon tea and homemade cakes. Our next meeting is 26 April at 2pm.

Lorraine Penny 241763

## Spring

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# Clubs, Sports and Recreation

## Hall of happy memories which is ready for more

There are a surprising number of halls and meeting rooms of various sizes in this area, but there is something special about the Memorial Hall that faces The Green in Benenden. The hall was built by public subscription in 1908 in memory of Gathorne Hardy, a prominent British Conservative politician, who became the 1st Earl of Cranbrook and rebuilt the Tudor building, Hemsted, which later became Benenden School. He became very involved in developing the village.

Here are a few memories of villagers who used the hall in the early days:

**Barbara Barham** "There was a wooden stage with a wooden folding screen and in the big room were wooden tables and chairs. I remember that there was a sort of library at the back of the small room on the raised part. I used to cycle to the hall with my dad from Goddard's Green. There were whist drives run by Bill Reece, for the people of the village and the people who came from the Casualty Clearing Station at Cleveland House, and there were also the soldiers from Benenden School. There was a youth club which was run by Mrs Pett from the sweet shop - there were games and talks and dances. Pop Horton used to run the dancing with his wind-up gramophone and in the 1940s the village people and the soldiers used to come and dance."

**Certhia Harden** "I have records for the very first meeting of the Cubs on February 20, 1931. There were 16 boys; I became leader of the Cub Pack when I was only 18. During the war we had evacuee Cubs join us. We were



often given jobs to do to help with the war effort. The meetings were in the hall, but I used to take them out as much as possible as there was no heating. One of my other memories of the Memorial Hall is of singing with the village choral society during the early 1930s. It was organised and conducted by Mr Rollings."

During the summer, the hall becomes a cricket pavilion - in fact, Benenden CC played a significant part in its restoration. By the beginning of the 1980s the interior had seriously deteriorated. The Trustees decided to modernise the hall and an appeal was made to raise funds.

The Cricket Club's contribution was to arrange a special match, in which two Kent County players, Derek Underwood and Alan Ealham, joined a team to take on an XI from

Benenden. The proceeds from the match, around £700, were donated to the appeal and the club president at the time, David Edwards, donated and had fitted the false ceiling.

Throughout its varied history, the hall has been used for entertainments, public meetings, school clubs, social gatherings, children's parties, art exhibitions, WI, the Women's Club, coffee mornings, luncheons and business meetings. It is hoped that this will continue. Please look on the St George's Church website (calendars) to see our vacancies and email Jackie Liffen

on [Memhall@daisystar.co.uk](mailto:Memhall@daisystar.co.uk) for more information.

Sue Fisher



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# Clubs, Sports and Recreation

## How cricket in Benenden grew from Kentish roots

Benenden, with its beautiful church overlooking the cricket square, is a glorious setting for cricket, but few people know that the game has



a rich history in the village, with evidence that it has been played here since at least 1798.

Andrew 'Gully' Morrison is a long-standing member of Benenden CC, who is also a

demon leg-spin bowler and the first player ever to have taken 1000 wickets for the club. He has written a fascinating account of the history of the club in three parts.

The terminology of cricket comes from sheep farming, which is synonymous with the High Weald: the post of a gate is called a stump, and the latch that goes over the top, tethering the gate to the stump, is called a bail. The gate itself is a wicket (originally, a cricket wicket was two stumps covered by a single bail). The Kentish dialect word for a shepherd's crook is the same word as that for a walking stick: it's a bat. These are the roots of the game in Kent.

The earliest known recording of Benenden Cricket Club was in the September edition of The Sporting Magazine in 1798, which reported "on Tuesday, August 28, was played a return match between the Gentlemen of Benenden & Wittersham played at Benenden", listing the

batting scorecards (bowling analyses didn't exist at that time). The match resulted in a victory for Wittersham by two wickets. As it happens, Wittersham returns to the fixture card this season for the first time in many years, so a return fixture next year would mark the 225th anniversary.

It's likely that the club was in rude health as early as 1740 and there is a strong possibility that a famous Kent bowler in the Weald from that period, John Mills, is the John Mills born in Boughton Malherbe in 1826, who came to Benenden at the age of four and was buried in St George's church in 1809. It would go some way to explain how a village club, miles away from a city or large town, could produce, two to three generations later, a side that could hold its own against any town side in the country.

Indeed, in 1830, Benenden offered to play any town in England for £100-a-side. William Clarke (founder of the All England XI professional club team) accepted the challenge on behalf of Nottingham but would not agree to Benenden

being the venue, so the match fell through.

In total, 11 first-class cricketers have been christened in St George's (or St Margaret's chapel), albeit only one, Aidan Merivale Crawley, who played after the distinction 'first class' had been formally created in 1894 (it was retrospectively applied to earlier matches deemed to be of high standard but with the proviso that a copy of the scorecard had to be still in existence).

Part 2 will appear next month

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## Keep your hair on! 'Wiggie' Katy Lewis survives Covid drama

When the first Covid lockdown hit in 2020, the show definitely didn't go on for 34-year-old Katy Lewis. She had been working in the wig department for Upstart Crow when, 90 minutes before curtain up, they were told the show had to close. "I went from working six days a week to an immediate full stop staying at home with my husband Robert, who was able to work from home.

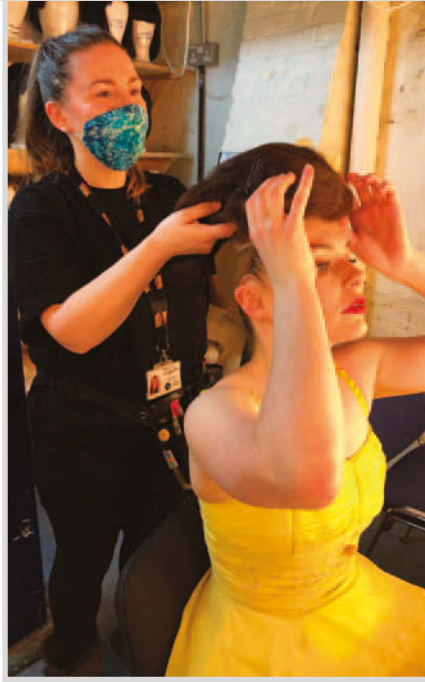
"I had to quickly change track and did a couple of jobs locally before becoming a maternity leave cover receptionist at Benenden Girls' School. After ten years working evenings

and weekends on shows it was a total change of pace and I loved it." It was familiar home

ground for Katy, who grew up in Iden Green and is the daughter of Bill and Julie Lewis, one of our parish councillors.

Katy had set her heart on a career in the theatre since she was very young. A degree in Theatre Studies at Lancaster University sparked a particular focus on special effects make-up and prosthetics. On graduation she juggled four jobs locally for 18 months to save the £8,000 needed for the intensive three-month Delamar Academy Make-up and Hair course at Ealing Studios.

While getting work experience wherever she could, Katy sent her CV to all the West End shows, and her perseverance paid off when she



was offered the post of full-time wig assistant on Shrek: "That started my particular focus on theatrical wigs."

From Shrek, Katy moved to Phantom of the Opera, where she stayed for two and half years. "Most contracts are a year but can be extended if you would like to and the show offers you an extension," explains Katy. "It means you can choose variety if you wish, which is why I then joined Mathew Bourne's Sleeping Beauty, touring the UK for

six months before performing in Singapore, South Korea, Japan and China." She then worked on Half a Sixpence before travelling the UK, Asia and America with Bourne's Cinderella.

"It was so exciting when the West End started to open up again last year," says Katy, who is currently head of the wig department for Back to the Future: The Musical at the Adelphi Theatre.

"There are eight shows over six days a week, which is wonderful but I only get Tuesdays off, so it plays havoc with my work/life balance." Katy, her deputy and two assistants (all called 'wiggies' in the business) look after 124 wigs, using 65 for each show. All are busy quick-changing the cast into different wigs and make up in dressing rooms, substage and in the wings. "It's my first head of department contract in West End, a huge challenge and, at 50 hours a week, the hardest thing I've ever done but it's an incredible experience."

Next time you see a show - spare a thought for those hard working 'wiggies' backstage.

Ruth Clark







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## ‘Moving here was such a brilliant decision’

Tom Dawlings, Benenden resident who became Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, on the pleasures the village can bring to an ‘incomer’ - especially if you get involved

Back in 2006, my family and I determined to have a lifestyle change - to get away from the daily commute on the Central Line and move to the countryside. Our wants were not very detailed; a house with some land, not too far from London, and a good school for our then seven-year-old daughter - and my Swiss wife Martine insisted the countryside must not be too flat!

We arranged a weekend in Kent, booked a room at the Bull, made appointments to see Marlborough House and Saint Ronan’s schools and explored the area. Driving home, we reflected on our weekend and decided we wanted to live in Benenden.

It was such a brilliant decision. We moved to Swaylands Barn in July 2007 and fitting in around work on our smallholding, I involved myself in some activities in the village, as clerk to the governors in the old primary school, in preparing and auditing the accounts of the Parish Council and the Harmsworth Memorial Trust (HMT), and I covered as bursar at Cranbrook School for a year.

I was involved with the production of the Benenden Parish Plan and the early stages of planning to establish a community shop. I was a founding trustee of the Benenden Village Trust (the successor to the HMT). I stood for election to the Borough Council to represent

this community in 2014. I never expected to end up as Leader, but this does help me help this community.

For Benenden, the key improvements in the last few years have been the building of a new primary school - this after many years

of lobbying by so many Benenden residents; Benenden’s (the shop and café) emerged through the Parish Plan process - Benenden School wanted staff accommodation and the village needed a shop; the church magazine evolved into the monthly publication of this parish magazine; the Benenden Village Trust was formed and has delivered new play areas in both recreation grounds.

The successful

Neighbourhood Development Plan has set out the three brownfield sites where limited housing growth will be provided. Some housing growth is needed to keep our community and community activities refreshed and the Benenden Almshouse Trust is developing the fourth allocated site, providing more social housing for residents.

The Covid pandemic and the work of the Benenden Action Team in coordinating support for the vulnerable and shielded have shown the strength of community spirit - a spirit which was so evident at the fete last September, and we are about to welcome back the Benenden Players pantomime. There is so much to love about Benenden.





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## The Wealden Group: hot off the press and straight to Benenden

Ruth Clark meets the team who brings the parish magazine to our parish

I thought it was about time that we recognised the print team at Wealden

Group in Hawkhurst who play a very important role in producing this magazine. When Camilla sends them the digital file each month, they have just two days in which to print, fold, trim and deliver 900-plus copies to Dick and Marilyn in Iden Green, who then bundle up ready for distribution around the parish by our amazing 29 volunteers. And it's not just this village magazine that they print - they also handle 23 other village magazines across Kent and Sussex. Just imagine the depth of their local knowledge (if they read them all, of course!).

While many other activities across the parish had to stop when Covid first hit, this magazine continued to be published. We were very grateful that the company put together a skeleton crew who continued to man the presses for five days a month to ensure every village received their magazines - not only a useful way to share useful local information, but also a comfort to many during a difficult time.

The Wealden Group is a combined publishing and print firm with business partners Marc O'Hare looking after the publishing side, and Rob Mitham the print side. They not only print and publish 30,000 copies of the iconic



Wealden Advertiser every week, but also the monthly magazine North Downs Ad (33,000 copies) and Town and Country Post (28,000 copies). The latest addition to the stable of titles is the biannual Eat, Drink, Dine.

The print facility not only produces Benenden's parish magazine, it also comes up with the signage and programme for our annual panto and fete. Rob showed me around the well-equipped print room, which turns out a huge variety of products, including stationery, business cards, folders and carrier bags. Signage is printed by its partner company down in Eastbourne.

There is no denying that the pandemic was a difficult time for the company, "but we quickly adapted and have come out of it leaner and stronger than ever," says Marc. "The market changes all the time and we have learned to flex with it. Being optimistic helps, along with being in tune with how businesses and the local community changes. While we compete with online advertising, there will always be a place for printed magazines and, of course, all our publications are online, too. The launch of Eat, Drink, Dine three years ago was very successful and that's an area that is growing quickly."

Parish magazine numbers are also growing as villages have been asked to add new housing. This is something that Steve Yates has discovered as he drops them off and chats to customers: "As I drive around, I see more house-building on fields and this is already having a knock-on effect on print runs."

Running a print and publishing business is certainly a challenge, but the happy team at the Wealden Group clearly love what they do - and it shows.

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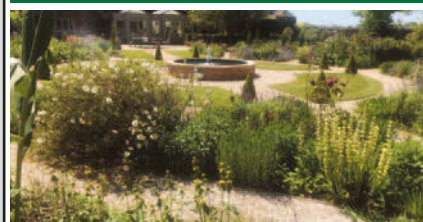
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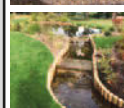
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## Remembrance of beers past sparks idea for a night out

Like almost everybody else, I haven't read Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* (it's about 4,000 pages, after all, and life is short), but I do know about Proust's madeleines. They're very famous little cakes: the hero of the book dunks one in a cup of tea and the sensation of tasting it involuntarily summons up memories of his childhood.

Now, I'm not as sophisticated as dear old Marcel - I'd take a nice jam doughnut over a madeleine any day of the week - but I confess to having the self-same feelings of revisited youth whenever I walk past a brewery. It happened in Lewes the other day, when I parked opposite the Harvey's plant and the wind was in the right direction, and all of a sudden I was drifting back through my younger days, to the Monday mornings on my way to work at the Sporting Life offices in New Fetter Lane, when I'd wander down to Denmark Hill station, which housed the Phoenix and Firkin brew pub.

From there, I was transported by the power of hops to my days of gulping down Harvey's Best in pubs across Kent and Sussex, incorporating many feckless and often forgotten adventures that Proust would no doubt have scratched from his book for lowering the tone.

But from there, the journey took an unexpected turn, steering me back towards my time in Benenden, visiting the Old Dairy brewery site - in the days at Hole Park when it still smelt very much of cow pats - and from there to Christmases at home with a polypin of Red Top and bottles of Gold Top from the community shop.

Which brings me in a roundabout way to the point of this piece, which is to mention a conversation I had with another fan of fine, local ales - in The Bull on an enthusiastic Friday night - who suggested that as an adjunct to the hugely successful village wine tastings, we should consider a memorable tasting of local beers.

What's not to like? Good beer can be every bit as wonderful and complex and interesting

as good wine, so with a little expert guidance, to steer us through the brewing process and the intricacies of barley, yeast, Fuggles and Challenger, the microbrew revolution and hops



from around the world - not to mention new-fangled craft beer in cans - we could have ourselves a proper evening.

So, I'm canvassing opinion. If you fancy a night of beer-related education and entertainment - not to mention drinking - stop me in The Street and say so, or drop me a line. If enough of you are keen, we could even find ourselves a friendly local brewer.

## Premium tasting news

In the meantime, we at the grandly titled Benenden Wine Committee have managed to organise a premium wine tasting as our next event at Benenden School, on Friday 29 April. And when we say 'premium' we really do mean premium. It'll feature wines from the portfolio of luxury goods firm LVMH, including top-class champagne, world-renowned whites from Cloudy Bay and some reds (Ao Yun and Numanthia) out of the top drawer. This will be a select evening, with numbers strictly limited to 30 and tickets priced accordingly at £35 (the aim is to raise funds for the Porchlight charity), with high quality food included. If you're interested, please contact me at the email address below.

Peter Thomas

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‘Brave, kind, funny and an irreplaceable friend’

## John Hare

December 1934 - January 2022

A tribute to John by his long-time friend  
Christopher Neve

John Hare was born in Sussex into a family of colourful empire and church characters, administrators and soldiers. His father had a wooden leg after being machine-gunned during the attack on Fricourt on the first day of the Somme. John's first brush with adventure was when he and his sister, Audrey, were evacuated to Canada as children. The ship in front of them was torpedoed and half-drowned sailors, rescued from the water, were laid out on deck.

He grew up reading about the empire and lost cities and by the age of 12 had chosen to be an explorer. It was the time of National Service and he and a friend decided to volunteer for the West African Frontier Force, where they shared a house and a horse. His family wanted to turn him into a tea planter and he went as a ‘creeper’ (trainee) for six

months to his godfather's estate in Ceylon, but found it too tame.

In London there was an attempt to recruit him as a spy, but he turned it down and instead the Overseas Civil Service sent him to the Mambilla plateau in Northern Nigeria as the last District Officer before independence. It was 1957 and he was 22. It was just him and 83,000 tribesmen; there was cannibalism, insurrections, fevers and murder; he delineated boundaries, settled feuds and segregated lepers. These, to him, were the happiest years of his life. More than 50 horsemen rode with him to the edge of the escarpment to see him off in 1963.

Back in London he worked for a short time for the BBC's World Service in Bush House, using his Nigerian dialects. In 1966 he married Pippa Dunnett, whose father was an expert on Shackleton, and they had three daughters: Charlotte, Hetta and Emily. He was sent by Macmillan Education Publishers to set up a branch in Nigeria. Between times, to pay school fees, he wrote children's adventure stories under the pen name Dan Fulani. These, like the Famous Five stories but with a group of African children, were translated into several languages and used in schools. The 20 books were highly successful (and are still in print) but caused amusing copyright problems when his identity emerged.

John then spent seven years in Kenya working for the UN Environmental Programme but, infuriated by bureaucracy, set up a photographic competition to expose environmental disasters hushed up by big business. He took this around Europe and then to Moscow. There, in 1993, he wangled his way onto a Russian/Mongolian expedition in the Gobi as a wild camel expert and his great wild camel adventure began.

Over the next 25 years he led many explorations into the hostile Xinjiang province of Lop Nur, five of them on domestic Bactrian camels. He defined his life as a conservationist when he entered a Chinese ex-nuclear test zone and found pitifully small numbers of wild



Bactrian camels, which had been decimated by poachers and illegal miners and had adapted to survive on salt water. He set up his Wild Camel Protection Foundation and eventually an extensive reserve and a breeding centre which, against all odds, protects the camel in China and Mongolia from extinction. For rescuing the wild camels, he was awarded an OBE.

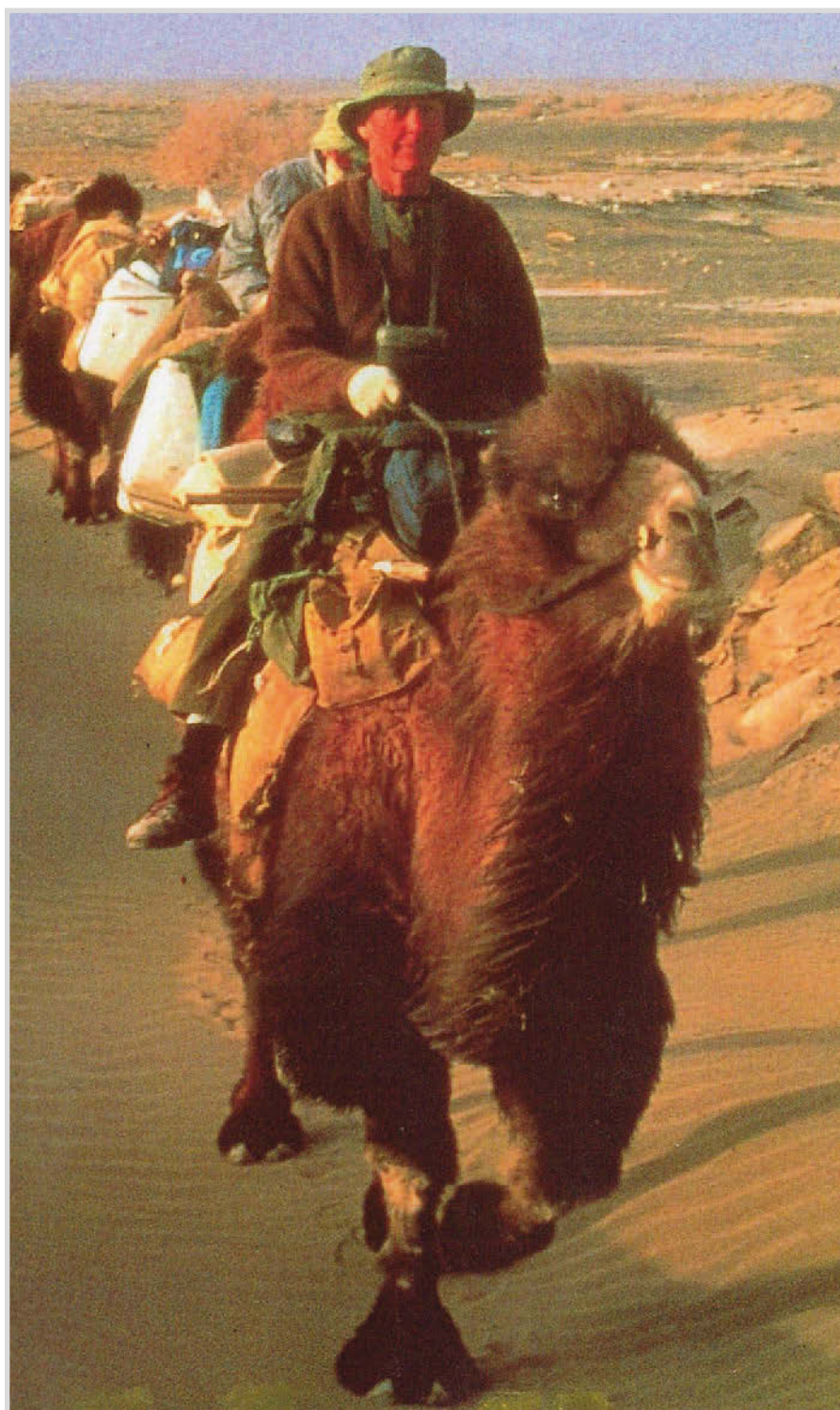
Meanwhile he was extending his African expeditions, principally with a 1,462-mile crossing of the Sahara by camel, south to north. There were also the extremely hazardous circumnavigation of Lake Turkana by camel, during which he had problems with bandits. These adventures and many others, involving a lost ancient city and a valley of creatures that had never encountered man, made terrific copy and were duly written up by him in six vivid and compelling books. He also became fascinated by his travels in Moldova and kept up his riding in Spain.

The camel reserve, and hay, had to be paid for and he instigated a long series of entertaining fundraising events, including biennial camel-race days in England, and riding a camel on stage at the Royal Opera House. To publicise a race at Hole Park he reversed a two-man pantomime camel into the cheese counter in a Tenterden supermarket, which resulted in a four-mile traffic jam on race day. He rode his last camel race, at Chilham, in 2016.

Having sold his house, he lived in a ger (yurt) equipped with an Aga at School Farm in Benenden, going up to the Reform Club in London every ten days to have a bath. In his ex-milking parlour, he created a billiard room full of stuffed animals, tribal sculpture, poison-tipped arrows and artefacts collected on his travels. In the great lecture theatre of the Royal Geographical Society, of which he was a Fellow, he could hold an enormous audience spellbound in the palm of his hand. During the winter he

lectured on ships to earn hay money and gave many hundreds of talks to delighted prep-school children all over England.

When he knew he was dying he rang up friends to tell them that his camel was saddled and he was setting off on his last expedition. Over 250 people came to his funeral and a huntsman blew 'Gone to earth' as he was lowered into the ground. He leaves five grandchildren, whom he taught his magic tricks. He was brave, kind, funny and an irreplaceable friend.

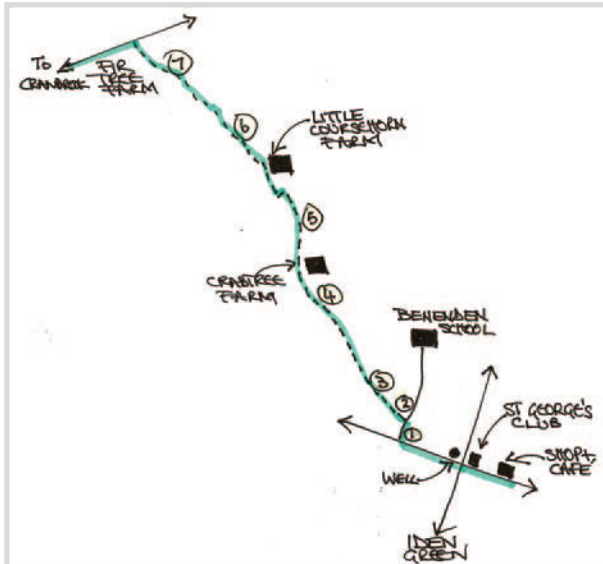


## Walking from point to point

### WALK 2: BENENDEN TO CRANBROOK

(2.5-3hrs return)

This walk is a great point-to-point from Benenden to Cranbrook.



#### SUMMARY

Starting in Benenden, walk across Benenden School and Friday's Farm fields via Crabtree Farm, Little Coursehorn Farm and Fir Tree Farm on the Golford Rd, and into Cranbrook for a well-earned drink.

#### LET'S GO WALKING

Starting in Benenden, walk west down The Street to the crossroads opposite Wards the butchers, at the St George's Club and the Victorian Well at the site of the old toll house. The Well was given to the village by Lord Cranbrook (sic) for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

St George's Club was originally provided for use by the village as a Working Man's Institute complete with library. It was built in 1881 by George Devey, Lord Cranbrook's architect, who was responsible for many buildings around the parish, including the old primary school, Fig Tree Cottage and Ashlawn all on the west side of the Green; and the South Lodge at the Benenden School gates, where you turn right on this walk after following the pavement west along Cranbrook Road.

Don't miss a glimpse of the Old Manor House behind the well, believed to be one of the three oldest in the parish, dating back to the late 1300s. In the 15th and early 16th centuries, some 60 hall houses were built in the parish as many yeomen became wealthy and independent through the woollen cloth trade.



Fig.1

Turning right off the Cranbrook Road at the South Lodge (Fig.1), go past the hi-tech school barrier, you'll see a footpath sign and map (Fig.2). Turn left there to carry on west along the fence at the back of the games fields. There's a rickety gate to go through part way, just keep going with the fence on your left. Ignore the turn off left for a footpath to Mounts Farm and go through



Fig.2



Fig.3

the gate towards the long jump pit (Fig.3). By the pit take the gate on the right and descend through a short path and brambles into the fields beyond the school.

The school was formerly Hemsted Estate. As we see it today, it was created by Gathorne Hardy, an MP from a wealthy industrial Bradford family. He bought it in 1857 and died there in 1906. He was made Lord Cranbrook in 1878 and was inter alia Secretary of State for India.



The Guldeford family owned Hemsted from around the 1380s. In the 1480s they were important supporters of Henry Tudor and even appear in Shakespeare's *Richard III*: "In Kent my liege the Guilfords are in armes." Once Tudor became Henry VII their fortunes were made and the family held the estate until it was sold to Sir John Norris in 1710. He enclosed the park land and laid out the grounds as we see them now.

You'll see the worn route down into the field keeping the trees just to your left. It'll take you into the woods eventually at the bottom of the field. At some point here you will have crossed the route of the north-south Roman road, and on your right at the top of the hill was once a settlement of that period, excavated during the 1950s.

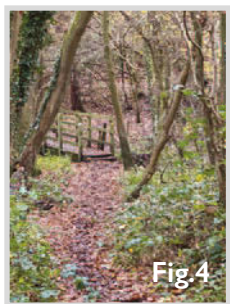


Fig.4

At the bottom of the field, go through a marked gate and you'll then descend steeply into the gill in the woods, clambering over a footbridge (Fig.4) and up the other side to a gate into the field. Follow the route across the field. You're following the old route of Simmonden Lane, aka Crabtree Lane, as designated on the Hodskinson's 1777 map of the parish. This was the main route north before the turnpike New Pond Road was built.

A short track takes you into the Grade II listed, late 16th-century Crabtree Farm, with the house and a pond on your right and stables on your left. It was known as Holding Farm on the 1777 map. The track becomes a muddy road and continues for some distance between fences and then downhill (Fig.5) to another late



Fig.5

15th-century house, Little Coursehorn. See the listed barn ahead of you and the old farmhouse to the right. At the barn the signs will take you left and right to zigzag the barn. Behind the barn there are muddy steps and rail to take you down into the gill and then over a footbridge straight into the cultivated fields of Friday's Farm.

Go straight ahead on the tramped route heading towards the corner of the trees on the other side. When you reach them, progress down the edge of the field with trees continuing on your left side.

At the corner of the field drop into the woods and ponds again. Wobble over another footbridge (Fig.6) and up some cut steps to a gate into the next open field. Keep the hedge on

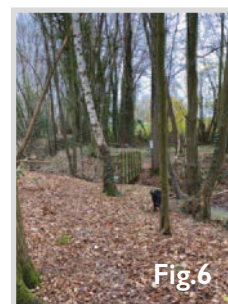


Fig.6

your immediate left until you come to the marked foot gate and five-bar metal gate. This allows you to swap sides of the hedge but keep going in the same direction, now keeping the hedge on your right.

You'll come to another gate and then go at a slight diagonal, following the trodden route, to yet further gates along the route. The third one (Fig.7) brings you into a narrow path beside the orchard on your left at Fir Tree Farm. At the end of this you are onto the Galford Road. Turn left and follow the grass cum pavement into

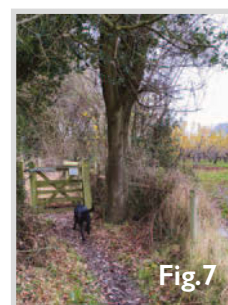


Fig.7

Cranbrook a short distance away. You'll cross Tilsden Lane and Dorothy Avenue and pass Union Windmill before reaching Stone Street in the centre of town.

Many thanks to Ernie Pollard whose local historical facts and trail notes have been included in this walk. More information: [www.benendenvillage.co.uk/trails](http://www.benendenvillage.co.uk/trails) and [www.historicengland.org.uk](http://www.historicengland.org.uk)

Peter Massey



# In Your Garden



## Easy hacks for growing edibles

There are many of us who enjoy the simple, unhurried pleasures of growing something good to eat during the warmer months, and April is the perfect month to get started.

I am fortunate to have a small area of about 25 square metres in which to

grow some vegetables, plus the use of an unheated greenhouse where I grow tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and aubergines. Check on seed packets that you are buying varieties that can be grown outdoors and you can negate the need for growing under cover.

I grow a cucumber variety called 'Tasty Green', which I sow into 9cm pots and leave to germinate on a warm windowsill anytime from mid-March onwards. By then, there is enough light for germination and it is not too long before planting out in frost-free May. They are then transplanted into larger pots on the terrace or placed in my greenhouse.

The same goes for tomatoes - the only danger for growing these outdoors is catching the dreaded blight, which is largely unavoidable in our area, so undercover is the safest place for them. I always grow 'Sungold' and 'Sweet Million', which are both cherry varieties, and a successful beefsteak called 'Costoluto Fiorentino', which sounds adventurous but

reliably crops every year and is no trouble.

I use 'brush' sticks to support my peas - twiggy hazel branches are good for this, cut off in late winter and left to die back in a pile until they are needed. You could gather these on a walk if you have none in your own garden. Push them into the ground as closely as possible to

form a thicket and grow your peas up them.

Courgettes are easy but need a lot of space to scramble along the ground. Again, you could grow one plant per large container, but as with all container-grown plants, edible or ornamental, it is critical to have a generous

saucer underneath each pot to act as a water reservoir and use a fine bark mulch on the soil surface (try Gardenscape for their 'Mini Chipped Bark') to keep moisture in and ease water evaporation. It also keeps the roots cooler.

Try grouping pots into a large tray. I use a grow-bag tray, which is a useful and space-saving way to stage

them. I also grow spring onions and carrots very successfully in pots, as they like the depth and uniformity of the growing medium. Most of my herbs are grown in pots, too - sowing basil, coriander, parsley and dill is a doddle, while thyme, sage, rosemary, oregano and lemon verbena I tend to buy in small 9cm or 1 litre pots from a plant nursery. Herbs prefer a pea shingle or fine gravel mulch, as this not only conserves moisture but helps to absorb heat from the sun.

My final tip for growing in pots is to keep them tidy and looking good. Edibles can quickly grow into a tangled mess, so take time to pick off dead foliage and keep feeding weekly with a liquid seaweed fertiliser.

I use YouTube for lots of useful information on growing edibles: Huw Richards, Charles Dowding and Carol Klein are three favourites. They offer lots of advice on healthy soil, which is paramount for growing your own food, as well as crop protection, feeding and plot maintenance. Above all, growing your own food to eat should be a pleasure, not a chore, so enjoy the process and reap the rewards later.

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Above: Havens for reflection: St George's Church; Edna's Retreat at Benenden Hospital

Front cover: Ringing constancy through the centuries: the belfry at St George's Church. Photograph: Rebecca Steele