



Above: A most welcome Christmas Day lunch; Louise King, head of marketing and guardian of the Freedom to Speak Up initiative at Benenden Hospital; Kat Drummond, clinical governance and IPC lead visited the primary school during International Infection Prevention Week; Revd Ylva Blid-Mackenzie after her graduation ceremony in Durham Cathedral  
Front cover: A Great Spotted Woodpecker. Illustration: Stephen Message





Benenden  
Magazine  
February 2024





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# **Exhibition: Benenden School in the Community**

**Celebrating 100 years of Benenden School  
and Benenden Community at St George's Church**

From 1 to 13 February, there will be an exhibition celebrating the links between the school and local community. Come and find out more at St George's, Benenden



# Editorial



If you've recently come in from the garden after a half-hour search for your shed roof, I apologise for what I am about to say. Storm Isha was, there's no doubt about it, another bit of weather we could have done without, but I maintain there are good bits of this time of year that outweigh the bad.

I've just heard from my horsey friends that the point-to-points at Charing are back on this year, and the missus and I will be trotting along on February 4 to watch excellent sport while enjoying a wintry picnic from the back of somebody's 4x4 and a nip or two of sloe gin to wash it down. It's a British institution that's clinging on for dear life and it gets my full support.

All this depends, of course, on how the previous night goes. I'm due to make my debut at the Benenden Players' annual panto, and I confess I'm trepidatious. Having avoided all panto since seeing one so long ago that Twankey wasn't even a widow, I was due to review the village's most bonkers affair for this magazine a couple of years ago, only to succumb to the most timely bout of Covid you could have wished for.

I knew I couldn't fight the inevitable, though, so here I am, bracing myself for OZ - what I imagine will be an outburst of lunacy based barely at all on the Wizard of Oz, directed by the incorrigible and wonderful Bev Beveridge and writer James Conny. It will not conform to any modern standards of appropriateness, I'm sure, and I dread to think who's playing the dog, but I'll be there and you may even be able to snaffle one of the few remaining tickets (2-4 February).

So, seasonal bounty is out there in the depths of Kent and the village hall of Benenden, and even if you can't find your shed roof, at least there's plenty to take your mind off its departure.

Peter Thomas, Co-Editor

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# Church Calendar

## St George's Church

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

Associate Priest: Revd Ylva Blid-Mackenzie 01233 820100 [rev.ylva@gmail.com](mailto:rev.ylva@gmail.com)

Churchwarden: David Collard 241944 [d.collard49@btinternet.com](mailto:d.collard49@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, Associate Priest or Churchwardens if you, or anyone else, is ill.

Sunday 4 February	8am Communion	10am All-age Communion	5pm Choral Evensong
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Sunday 11 February	8am BCP Communion	10am Morning Worship	
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Wednesday 14 February			7.30pm Ash Wednesday Service
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Sunday 18 February	8am Communion	10am Sung Eucharist	
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Saturday 24 February			4pm Connect Four at Mission Church, Sandhurst
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Sunday 25 February	8am Communion	10am Morning Worship	
Morning Prayer	8am Mondays and Fridays		

## Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Morning Prayer 8am Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Mid-week Communion 10am Tuesdays

## Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

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

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

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

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

## From the Parish Registers

Funerals	5 January Robert Cyster Funeral and burial
	9 January Jean Paige Funeral, and committal Tunbridge Wells Crematorium
	12 January Michael Goodsell Committal Charing Crematorium and Memorial Service St George's
2	29 January Helen Cuthbert Interment of ashes

# Church Letter



## A time for Valentines, Ash and Shrivings

Mention 14 February and most people will think of Valentine's Day. This year, though, it is also Ash Wednesday, which is a moveable feast because it is linked to the date of Easter Sunday, which also moves. And, of course, the day before Ash Wednesday is Shrove Tuesday, with the tradition of all those lovely pancakes (or Mardi Gras - Fat Tuesday - marked in some other countries). There is a real mishmash of ancient, secular and religious things occurring on 14 February this year.

St Valentine (there was more than one) was a priest of Rome who was imprisoned for giving aid to persecuted Christians. He became a convert himself and is reported to have restored the sight of his jailer's blind daughter, but he was clubbed to death circa 270AD! Another Valentine was the Bishop of Terni in Italy, who was martyred (probably beheaded) for his Christian faith a few years later. He is also, apparently, the patron saint of asthma, beekeepers, and epilepsy! Then there is the ancient custom of choosing 'Valentines', which has only accidental relation to these saints.

Valentines may have been related to the Lupercal cave in Rome, the spot where Romulus and Remus were suckled by the wolf; or it may come from its association with the mating season of birds at this time of year. All very romantic. Nowadays it is marked by the giving and receiving of cards, with cupids and hearts, to a loved one.

Shrove Tuesday is associated with 'shriving' - presenting oneself to the priest for confession, penance and absolution of one's sins before the beginning of Lent. It's also associated with using up the fat before the lean, penitential period of Lent, with its tradition of abstinence, of 'giving something up'. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday but the calculation of the 40-day period has varied considerably through Christian history. Currently in the West it is 40 days before Easter, not counting Sundays. Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence and from the Middle Ages it became the custom to begin Lent by being marked in ash with the sign of the cross.

So, we will continue with the tradition and the ancient rite in Benenden. I for one will be enjoying home-made pancakes on Shrove Tuesday using my Gran's old cast-iron frying pan. We will then meet in St George's Church (at 7.30pm) for the rite of Ash Wednesday, and the imposition of a cross on the forehead with the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return. Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ," and we will share communion together. And so begins another period of Lent.

Oh, and I'd better remember Valentine's Day too, otherwise I'll be in trouble!

Revd David Commander, Rector and Area Dean



# Village Calendar

## February

Thurs 1-Tues 13	Benenden School in the Community Exhibition, St George's Church, 9am-4pm	p.17
Friday 2	OZ, Benenden Players Panto First Night, Benenden Village Hall, 7.30pm	p.9
Saturday 3	Skittles, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Saturday 10	Ladder Toss, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 13	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 13	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Friday 16	Benenden Literary Event, Sarah Gristwood in Conversation, Memorial Hall, 7pm	p.6
Saturday 17	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.30pm	
Monday 19	Parish Council Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Tuesday 20	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.9
Tuesday 20	Iden Green and Benenden WI, A Year of Beekeeping, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.13
Saturday 24	Board Games Evening, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 27	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 27	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 27	Merry and Bright, Wealden Hall Houses Talk, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.17
Wednesday 28	Benenden Gardening Club, AGM and Seed Swap, Benenden Hospital Quinlan Centre, 6.30pm	p.13

## 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: Café and Toddler Group

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

# Parish Council



A planning application has been submitted for the largest housing development ever seen in the parish, located at the redundant former Benenden Hospital site on the north and south sides of Goddard's Green Road. The application can be viewed at [twbcpa.midkent.gov.uk/online-applications](https://twbcpa.midkent.gov.uk/online-applications). The sites are allocated in the Benenden Neighbourhood Development Plan (BNDP) as suitable for redevelopment, being brownfield sites as prioritised by the Government.

A public exhibition by Esquire, the developer, presented a scheme to the village in early 2023 which the parish council could not support. This instigated extensive discussions between the parish council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council planning officers and Esquire and has culminated in the current proposal, creating a spacious layout, a crescent-shaped terrace to replicate the Garland Wing (the former sanatorium building), play area and open spaces, and biodiversity areas to complement the local wildlife sites.

The level of information required for housing developments is complex and must comply with local and national planning policy but is led by the BNDP first and foremost. As a result of the hospital sites being allocated in our plan, we have been able to direct and impose not only the site-specific policies but also the landscape and environment policies of the plan, enabling us to protect our precious landscape and prevent construction on green fields.

At the parish council meeting on 15 January, our councillors unanimously agreed to support the application (subject to certain conditions) as it complies with the BNDP policies.

Peta Grant, BPC Vice Chair

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk

07593 226462 [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 19 February 2024,

Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm



## Benenden and Tenterden Literary Events

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#### WOMEN IN INTELLIGENCE The Hidden History of Two World Wars

Tuesday 6 February at 6.30pm  
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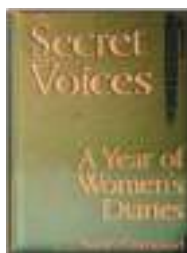


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#### SECRET VOICES A Year of Women's Diaries Friday 16 February at 7pm Memorial Hall BENENDEN

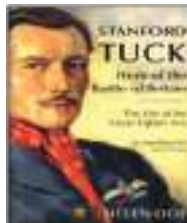


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### DR HELEN DOE



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# Talking Point



## Plans for 20m phone mast in village: hooray or horror story?

Poor mobile reception was mentioned at least 20 times in the Benenden Neighbourhood Development Plan, so a proposal to site a mobile phone mast for improved coverage in the parish has to be a cause for major celebration, right? Well, unfortunately, things are never that straightforward.

The proposal is for a 20m high mast providing 5G mobile services sited within the village. 5G is the fifth generation of mobile technology and although various scare stories and conspiracy theories have long swirled around mobile telephony, 5G seems to have attracted more than usual.

These scares have evolved from frying brains and killing birds to being responsible for the mutations that caused Covid-19, but in simple terms, the main difference between 5G and the previous generation is that 5G uses higher frequencies between the mast and the phone (around 3.5GHz since you ask). It is this higher speed which the conspiracy theorists say enables the signal to enter the human body and play havoc with your DNA.

Actually the higher frequencies are 5G's strength but also its weakness. Higher frequencies enable faster data rates but the signals quickly weaken and are easily blocked by buildings (and yes, skin). It isn't the frequency that is dangerous (for example your TV remote control works at much higher frequencies) rather it is the power at which these signals are being transmitted. Fortunately there is an international body that sets recommendations for safe power levels that every equipment supplier must comply with. After all, the mobile operators really don't want to kill off their customers or even their workforce, who must come into close proximity with the stuff every day.

So if we dismiss the health concerns, what else could be a problem? Well the proposal is for a 20m monopole mast sited next to the telephone exchange at the top of New Pond Road, and although situated just outside the conservation area the mast will loom large over The Street and be visually obtrusive to say the least.

If you are having trouble visualising something 20m high, it is exactly the same size as Anthony Gormley's Angel of the North (or four and a half double-decker buses parked on top of each other, if that's easier). The mast would be equipped with 5G and 4G antenna so mobile coverage should extend throughout the parish, although there may well still be gaps in the coverage due to the undulating landscape. The mobile operator isn't mentioned but a little investigative work suggests that it's likely to be O2.

The parish council have requested details of the mobile coverage that will result if the mast is approved and we have also asked what other sites have been considered before selection of this one. But the problem remains: how do we balance the benefits of better mobile coverage with the cost of something that could dominate the Benenden skyline for decades?

What do you think? Do please let us know.

Peter Driver

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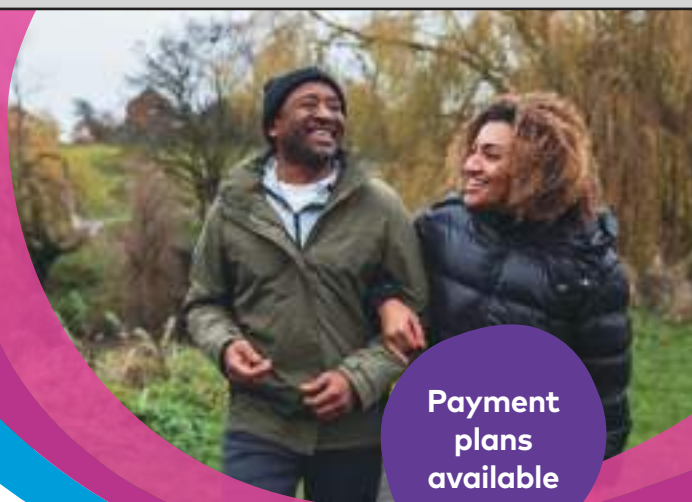
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## A message to us from Kent Police

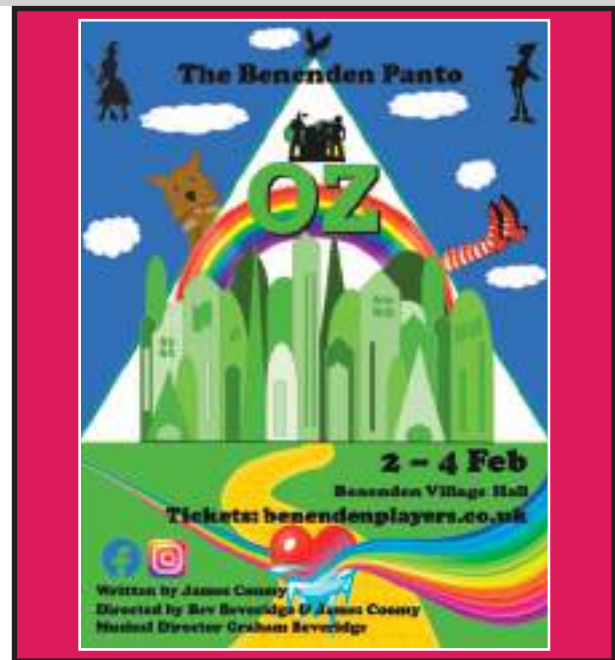
We have been meeting councillors across the whole of the Tunbridge Wells district. This is a new initiative to further engage with the councils embedded within their communities, to help raise any concerns to our staff and officers in our Community Safety Unit.

One particular concern we are seeing raised is a perceived lack of reporting to Kent Police regarding incidents happening in some of these areas. We would like to highlight the importance of reporting all incidents to the police, no matter how big or small, and our officers pride themselves on gathering information which can really help build a picture of an issue or ongoing complaint.

There is also sometimes a perception that 'nothing will be done', and we want to offer assurances that this is most certainly not the case. For example, over the past year, there has been an increased focus on tackling anti-social behaviour in and around Tunbridge Wells, which has included enhanced patrols aimed at deterring and reducing offences, and which include shop thefts, assaults, and criminal damage.

Our enforcement action has seen charge rates rise for several offences linked to anti-social behaviour. Between October 2022 and September 2023, there were 49 charges made for criminal damage, compared to 27 in the previous corresponding period - a rise of more than 80 per cent. Charges relating to offences involving the use of violence have also increased, to 230 from 204; at the same time, the number of reported incidents involving the use of violence in the borough has fallen.

It is important to again highlight that information we receive regarding incidents within our communities, is often crucial to resolving residents' concerns, deterring and solving crime, and improving people's lives. Your support or information can help provide the missing puzzle piece which helps your local officers solve a crime.



## Benenden panto

It's all very exciting. We have been rehearsing like mad and building, painting and sewing so that everything is ready for the world premiere of OZ from 2-4 February - our family-friendly panto. There are four shows in the village hall to choose from - two evening shows and two matinees. We promise a great panto experience complete with live music, bar, sweets and a raffle.

You can book online at [www.benendenplayers.co.uk](http://www.benendenplayers.co.uk) or scan this code to go straight to the site. Alternatively please call me:

Ruth Clark 07767 261883



## Village lunch

The next village lunch will be in the village hall on Tuesday 20 February at 12.30pm. If you would like to come and haven't already signed up please do ring and let me know, preferably by Thursday 15 February to allow for shopping. We will look forward to seeing you.

Kay Martin 240566

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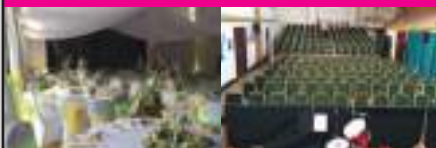
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## Iden Green and Benenden WI

It was great to meet with old friends again after our Christmas break, and also to welcome some new members. Our New Year meeting was packed with interesting topics, including a discussion about the WI resolutions. We chose to support the topic of dental health matters. Also, we had a most absorbing talk by one of our stalwart members entitled 'Fourteen houses and thirteen schools'.

A number of intriguing speakers have already been invited to entertain us throughout the year, including Juliet Mellor and Gill Latter, who will present 'A Year of Beekeeping' at 2pm on 20 February in the Memorial Hall. A packed programme of extra-curricular events are also being planned.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

## Benenden Village Hall

It has been a busy start to the new year with our regular clubs and classes, but also with bookings and enquiries for parties and events. Now is a good time to book your event or to visit the hall to see what we have to offer as a venue.

Rehearsals for The Benenden Players' pantomime, 'OZ', are going well with tickets still available for the performances from 2-4 February. Please visit

[www.benendenplayers.co.uk](http://www.benendenplayers.co.uk) to book tickets.

It was lovely to see the article in last month's magazine showcasing the variety of regular clubs and classes that take place at the hall. If you were inspired to come along to one of these, contact the appropriate hirer for further information or pop into the community office at the hall for more details.

John Betts, Hall Manager 07419 989830  
[enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org](mailto:enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org)

**BENENDEN GARDENING CLUB**

**MARIAN BOSWALL**  
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**Sustainable Gardens**

**Benenden Village Hall**  
**Thursday 14 March**  
**6.30pm**

The internationally renowned garden designer & author of The Sustainable Garden, will walk us through the process of creating & managing a sustainable outdoor space

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Visitors & non-members £5  
Tickets from Minnie Garnier at [melissagarnier56@gmail.com](mailto:melissagarnier56@gmail.com)

## Benenden Gardening Club

Our AGM and seed swap will be held at 6.30pm on 28 February in the Quinlan Centre, opposite Benenden Hospital, to include drinks and a raffle. Internationally renowned garden designer and author of The Sustainable Garden, Marian Boswall, is coming to give a talk in the village hall on 14 March. Doors open at 6.30pm. Members free/guests and visitors £5. New members are very welcome. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact me.

Eleanor Cochrane

[eleanor.cochrane@btinternet.com](mailto:eleanor.cochrane@btinternet.com)

## Sissinghurst Scouts

We run meetings and events for local children aged 4-18, teaching 'Skills for Life'. Before Christmas our Beavers and Squirrels were making biscuits both inside and out, our Cubs went on a hike in the dark and had to deal with a dramatic 'first aid' incident, and the Scouts were planning a Big Welsh Adventure for 2024.

Adults have fun too. Volunteer and play your part in giving young people opportunities. You don't need to be Bear Grylls to volunteer.

If you join us, we promise to help you.

Jan Ashley [enquiries@SissinghurstScouts.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@SissinghurstScouts.org.uk)



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## Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

As the school children returned, so did our fundraising efforts for this new year ahead, with a non-uniform day in exchange for donations of unwanted Christmas gifts. These will be stored until next Christmas for our school gift shop. Can you believe we are already planning for the Easter Egg Hunt! So hopefully we can wish along with it some warmer weather.

The rabbits seem to have had a good munch of quite a few of our plants in the well-being garden over Christmas so we have replacements to fundraise for, along with supporting the school for some upcoming trips. As always, we have a busy year ahead.

Rachel Tinker, Benenden CEP, PTFA Chair  
chair-ptfa@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk  
www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk/PTFA/

## Primary School

During the very last week of term of 2023 a team of year 5 and 6 children travelled to the Angel Centre in Tonbridge to compete in the TWKSSP Sportshall Athletics competition. They had to perform track events such as solo sprints and relays, jumps such as the vertical jump and speed bounce and throws such as chest push and javelin. I am delighted to announce that Benenden came second overall.

As we stride into February, it's amazing to think of how much we have already achieved |this academic year. Forest school is already underway; Year 6 are looking forward to their residential trip to Bowles next week; Year 5 have already begun their Shakespeare rehearsals in preparation for their performance at the end of the spring term; our choir are off to the O2 at the end of January to take part in the Young Voices concert and auditions are underway for our Brilliant Benenden Showcase, scheduled for the end of February.

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



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## Benenden Pre-School

Every Monday afternoon we are joined by the lovely Nana Jen. Even though her own grandchild left pre-school last summer, she still brings her guitar, her puppets and her props and leads a music and drama session for the last hour of the day. Jen's talent and generosity benefit the children no end: they love the repetition of familiar songs and stories, for example acting out Red Riding Hood and Goldilocks, and have become self-assured singers.

Listening to live music nurtures important social skills such as sharing, bonding, confidence and patience, and musical experiences for young children nurtures cognitive development, especially language and reading skills.

One of our favourite songs introduced by Nana Jen is called 'Magic Penny'. The lyrics tell us that love is like a magic penny and if you give it away and share it, you'll end up having more. What a wonderful philosophy.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor  
supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk



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## Merry and Bright

We started the year with our annual meeting, closely followed by an interesting talk by Charlotte Molesworth about her garden at Balmoral, illustrated by gloriously coloured slides to brighten the winter gloom.

For our meeting on 27 February at 2pm we have invited Tony Singleton, a man steeped in the architecture of old wooden houses, to talk to us about Hall Houses in the Weald. This will also be illustrated.

If you are interested in our meetings, please come along. The first will be free as a 'taster'. Annual membership is £12. If anyone needs a lift to the Memorial Hall or has any queries about our meetings please contact one of us.

Laraine Penny 241763

Julia Collard 241944

## Christmas village lunch

Around 20 guests were treated to a superb Christmas lunch with all the trimmings in the Memorial Hall on Christmas Day. Everything you would expect at a family celebration, including wine, crackers, paper hats and of course the terrible jokes. Lots of volunteers spread the load of preparing and cooking, others helped to decorate the hall, whilst others gave up their Christmas Day to serve lunch. Even the cleaning and tidying was light work with so many to help.

In organising the meal this year, I have been struck by two things. Firstly, what an important occasion this is, in terms of both the meal and the social interaction for those that attend. Secondly, how wonderfully generous people were in offering their time, funds, shopping, cooking, setting up and clearing up. It made being part of the day a pleasure. Thank you so much to all involved.

Although there is no charge for the lunch, some guests chose to give a donation to charity. The final amount was around £200 and will be given to Catching Lives.

Karen Saunders

## Benenden School

We were delighted to have been involved in so many activities in the run-up to Christmas, including four carol services in total, both here at school and in London; a sublime concert by our Chapel Choir in St Mildred's Church in Tenterden; and then two excellent Hemsted Park events: Jazz Sapiens and the ever-popular Len Phillips Swing Orchestra.

In fact, Hemsted Park has already hosted its first event of 2024 - with Danyah Miller's retelling of Michael Morpurgo's *I Believe in Unicorns* - and an exciting forthcoming programme for the spring includes ballet, swing, contemporary dance, comedy, jazz, classical and opera. We are receiving tremendous feedback from residents about having such high-quality productions on their doorstep, which is very pleasing indeed, and we hope you will continue to enjoy the events in the coming months.

The partnership between Benenden School and the local community has always been absolutely integral to our success and we are proud to be holding an exhibition in celebration of this enduring partnership. To be kindly hosted at St George's Church, the exhibition will feature archive material, photographs and uniform and will be on permanent display for the first two weeks of February, with the final public day on Tuesday 13. The exhibits have been produced by a team of students and staff and I am sure you will find them absolutely fascinating.

Meanwhile, school life has quickly got back to normal after the Christmas holidays, with our GCSE and A Level years straight into mocks ahead of their looming public exams, and rehearsals now in full swing ahead of performing *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* at the London Coliseum in March. It is very exciting but, at the time of writing, only eight weeks away, so it's becoming very real.

Samantha Price, Headmistress





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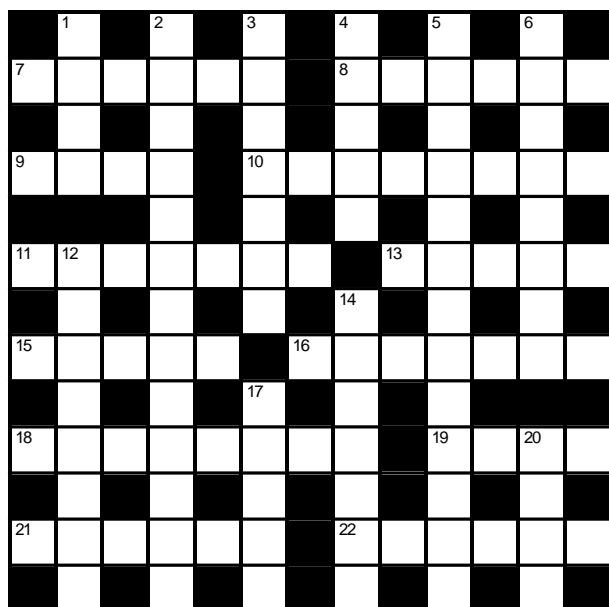
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# MINDBENENDERS By ASCII

## CROSSWORD No27 (Moderate)



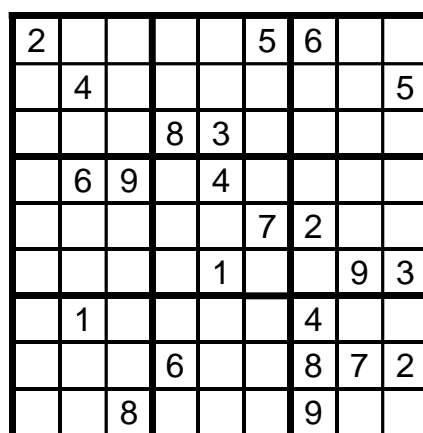
### Across

- 7 Sharing a joke with an unlikely chum, our kid? (6)
- 8 10% of legion with something in common (6)
- 9 Adds nothing to Japanese wrestling bout (4)
- 10 Bewildered neurologist leaves nest for great beauty and splendour! (8)
- 11 Simple clue; per normal (2,5)
- 13 Cooker with a huge dent in it (5)
- 15 Swing both ways before third of journey. Small and perfectly formed (5)
- 16 Looking for a maid and then two come along at once (2,5)
- 18 Four lines of verse from Qatar Uni? (8)
- 19 Buy one piece of limestone, get one free? (4)
- 21 Home Counties carriage? (6)
- 22 Revive macaque? (6)

### Down

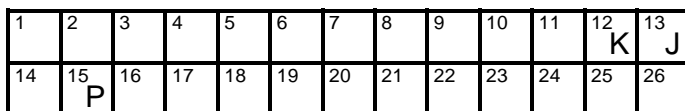
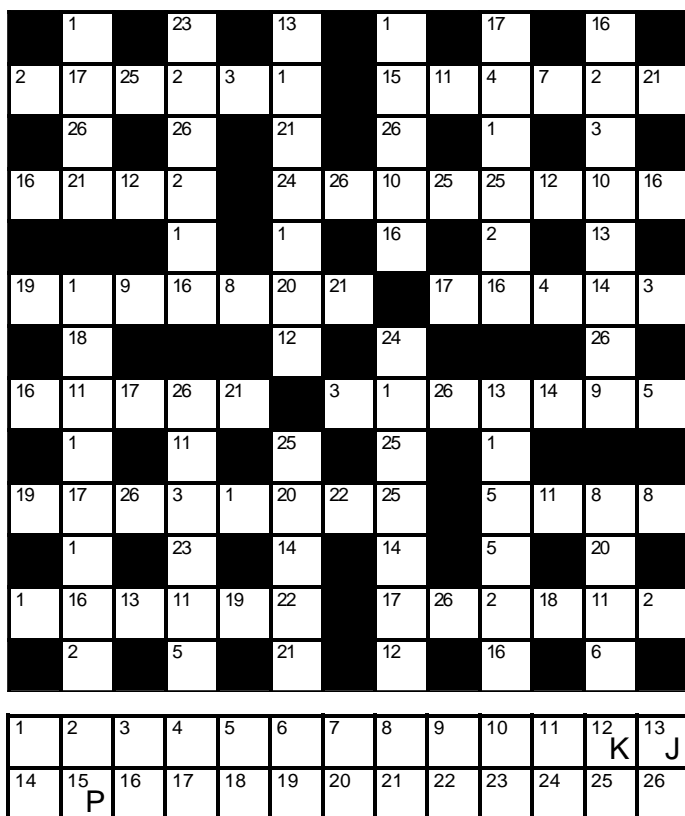
- 1 Second class degree in ballet? (4)
- 2 Storeroom cost ruined personal transport (5,8)
- 3 King Crimson, Genesis and Yes shoved in computer app (7)
- 4 Sibilant water-fowl rushes round to 2? (5)
- 5 Meets rich star upset over Festive Season (9,4)
- 6 One of those originally turning up to celebrate 5, perhaps? (8)
- 12 Ill-fitting slum suit gets things going (8)
- 14 Whose paintings might have been produced on a lathe? (7)
- 17 Mythological creature sounds like he's seated close by (5)
- 20 Acquaintance of 17 won't leave him alone (4)

## SUDOKU



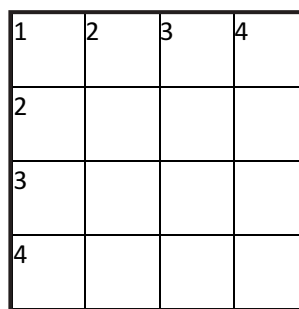
Each column, row and block **must** contain numbers 1 to 9 in any order. Each number can be used only **once** in each column, row or block.

## CODEWORD No27 (Tricky)



Each number represents a letter. Break the code and complete the grid. Three letters have been given to help you. There may be some TWO-WORD phrases in this puzzle.

## FOURWORD



In the grid, place all of these letters to make the same four words across and down. Four clues are given to help you.

BEEEEKKMNNNNNOOOO

- 1 Jazz pianist living a sheltered life?
- 2 Outside Broadcast Old English woodwind?
- 3 It's nothing
- 4 Eager to wail?



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## Benenden Hospital

I'm always encouraging staff to engage with the local community, young and old, to raise awareness about the importance of health and wellbeing. For International Infection Prevention Week last October, Kat Drummond, our clinical governance and IPC lead, and Jessica Bouchier, our governance administrator, visited Benenden Primary School, where Kat taught Year 6 students about infection prevention and hand hygiene.

The students learnt all about germs and the correct way to wash their hands, got creative by designing their own germs, and tested how well they washed their hands in our Glo Box. I believe that teaching children about the importance of hand hygiene is vital to reducing infections and illnesses as they progress through childhood to adolescence.

The visit went so successfully that Kat and Jess were invited back to teach Year 5 in November.

Within our hospital, we also share a lot of internal engagement, not only through our excellent internal communication's social platform, Blink, but also through giving staff the confidence to raise any concerns or points for improvements. The Freedom to Speak Up initiative, seen across all NHS hospitals in England and much of the private sector, seeks to protect patient and worker safety and experience, through encouraging staff to speak up.

I'm especially excited to announce that our head of marketing, Louise King, is now the programme's guardian, leading the initiative for our hospital.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

## Topical health

February is a good time to review how the year has started. Some people have ambitious health goals. That's great if you can achieve them, but life is busy and we frequently hear that patients 'don't have time'. If that's the case, keep it simple and aim for concurrent activities.

How many can you tick off the list below each day? Cut it out and have it as a handy reminder.

- 1 **Walk** Take a walk. Ideally half an hour at a good pace, but even five minutes is better than nothing. Relax your shoulders.
- 2 **Posture** Regularly check your posture. Lift your chest bone upwards. It can transform your appearance and how your body functions. Assess you aren't holding tension in your shoulders, face, hands, pelvic floor etc.
- 3 **Hydrate** Keep your body hydrated and look at the chemicals in food rather than the calories. There are some wonderful books about proper whole food nutrition. You wouldn't put bad quality fuel in your car and expect it to perform well. The same goes for nutrition.
- 4 **Relax** Try to find time for one activity you find relaxing for your body and brain. This could be a bath, reading, or chatting to a friend.
- 5 **Balance** Stand on one leg while you brush your teeth.
- 6 **Breathing** Take five slow inhale and exhales when you get into bed. In through your nose and out through pursed lips like you are blowing through a straw. This is relaxing and good for your digestion.
- 7 **Sleep** Aim for seven-nine hours a night. If sleep is an issue, even resting in bed listening to something relaxing is better than nothing.

We only have one body. Do all you can to look after it.

Sophie Bendall 388542

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## Planning Matters

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

- 23/03274/FULL Benenden Hospital  
Goddard's Green Road. Demolition of all former hospital buildings, 6 no. residential dwellings (High View, Millfield, Nos. 1 and 2 Mills Cottages, Owlscott and Mayscott) existing tennis courts, car park and vegetation; Erection of 87 no. residential dwellings (including affordable homes), relocated car park, new public open spaces, sustainable urban drainage system and landscaping including biodiversity areas and play areas. Access to be from the existing and new access locations on Goddard's Green Road, Green Lane and Mockbeggar Lane. Provision of new pumping station, roads, parking spaces and earthworks. At the meeting held on 15 January, the Parish Council unanimously agreed to support this application.
- 23/03086/FULL 14 Rothermere Close.  
Porch infill extension. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 23/03312/FULL Stable Cottage, The Green.  
Demolition of existing rear lean-to addition and erection of a replacement extension to enlarge existing kitchen and create new utility and boot room. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 23/03377/ADV Benenden Girls' School.  
Advertisement - New double-sided unilluminated freestanding totem sign. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 23/03486/REM Land At The Kitty Fisher, The Street. Approval of Reserved Matters (access, appearance, landscaping, layout, scale) following 22/00162/OUT Erection of a two-storey pitched roof 4 bed detached dwelling. The Parish Council supports this application.

More planning matters at:

[benendenparishcouncil.org](http://benendenparishcouncil.org)

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[geoffreywhitehead@vinehallschool.com](mailto:geoffreywhitehead@vinehallschool.com)

## Village Fete

Save the date! We are pleased to confirm the village fete, in support of St George's Church, will take place on The Green on Saturday 15 June (12-4pm). Planning has begun and once more the fete will feature all the traditional stalls, fun, games and music that make it such a wonderful community event. Any guesses as to what big event in 2024 could be inspiring this year's theme?

Watch this space for regular updates and for details of where and when to drop off your pre-loved clothes, books, bric-a-brac, hardware, tools and jewellery. It's your generous quality contributions that stall holders and visitors alike very much appreciate. How wonderful to think of our items finding new life and, in turn, contributing to the upkeep of the church - two birds. Please do keep us in mind for any sorting you have planned and we will communicate donation drop-off plans in due course.

We couldn't hold this fabulous fete without the support of volunteers. If you would like to join in the fun, do get in touch. Any time you can give on the Friday or on the day itself (10am-6pm), would be very much appreciated and we would be delighted to hear from you.  
Athena Cripps [athenacripps@gmail.com](mailto:athenacripps@gmail.com)



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## Ringin' in the new: join the Benenden Bell Ringers

A full peal of over 5,000 changes is a rare event these days on our fine bells, the last one being in 2017. It was therefore a great pleasure to listen to a first-class musical performance of Bristol Surprise Maximus, rung on 13 January by a visiting band of the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths. Very sadly, one of the band became unwell just four minutes from the end, after three hours and 20 minutes of superbly struck ringing in this complex and musical 'method', and the attempt had to be 'stood up', and cannot therefore be counted as a peal. We could only commiserate with them and hope they will come again.

To ring at this performance level requires many years of much dedication and practice at many towers in the complex musical art of English change ringing. Those who reach this standard are rightly regarded as an elite among ringers, which finds its home in membership, much sought-after and prized when attained, of one of the two senior societies of ringing: the Ancient Society of College Youths, founded in 1637, and the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths, which began in 1747. No ringer can belong to both - and they enjoy a friendly rivalry, especially apparent at the annual National Twelve-bell Striking Competition, the ringer's equivalent of the cup final.

In addition to their worldwide role as a ringing elite, both societies are historically based, and hold their weekly practices and meetings

within (College Youths) and just outside (Cumberlands) the City of London, replete as it is with magnificent and historic rings of 12 bells. It is naturally the aspiration of all keen young (and not so young) ringers to join one or other of the societies; membership is by election after careful consideration of ringing merit. A candidate must have an established track record of peals and be well regarded in his/her local area as a supporter and leader of ringing.

At a less stratospheric level of this art, the Benenden band have been busy over the Christmas period as always. We maintain the ancient tradition of ringing the Old Year out and the New Year in, with some mulled wine lubrication (thanks again, Robin). But if this worthy tradition is to continue, we need the further tradition, of over 300 years, of people of Benenden coming forward to be trained as ringers, to maintain our band numbers. We have a very sad example of the result when this doesn't happen, in our very own sister parish of Sandhurst, where due to lack both of volunteers to ring and the skills to train them, the band has effectively disappeared and the bells are now silent apart from very occasional visiting bands.

Is this to happen at Benenden, as in so many rural parishes with fine bells now silent? Our training is entirely free and is widely regarded as among the best and most expert in the county. Come and join our friendly and welcoming band, any Wednesday at 7.30pm. We span all ages from eight upwards, with a near equal gender balance.

Rod Lebon 240083

FOURWORD  
1 MONK, 2 OBOE, 3 NONE, 4 KEEN

6	7	8	4	2	3	9	5	1
4	3	5	6	9	1	8	7	2
9	1	2	7	5	8	4	3	6
8	2	4	5	1	6	7	9	3
3	5	1	9	8	7	2	6	4
7	6	9	3	4	2	5	1	8
5	9	6	8	3	4	1	2	7
1	4	7	2	6	9	3	8	5
2	8	3	1	7	5	6	4	9

SUDUKO

1	A	2	E	3	M	4	R	5	G	6	X	7	V	8	F	9	N	10	I	11	U	12	K	13	J
14	O	15	P	16	D	17	C	18	Q	19	S	20	L	21	Y	22	T	23	B	24	W	25	Z	26	H

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Across: 7 Humour, 8 Cohort, 9 Sumo, 10 Glorious, 11 As usual, 13 Stove, 15 Bijou, 16 Au pairs, 18 Quatrain, 19 Tufa, 21 Surrey, 22 Rhesus  
Down: 1 Tutu, 2 Motor scooters, 3 Program, 4 Scoot, 5 Christmas tree, 6 Triumvir, 12 Stimulus, 14 Turners, 17 Satyr, 20 Faun

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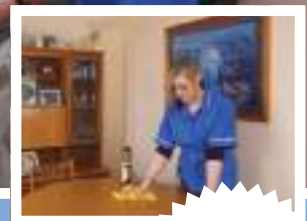
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## Welcome to our new shop managers

It can't have escaped your notice that Benenden's has been undergoing a few changes recently and we are confidently looking towards a bright future for our community shop. For the present, though, we need to adhere to the restricted opening hours and menu for the café until our staffing issues have settled down. This means that, contrary to what was reported in the shop article in January, the café will continue to close at 1pm on Saturdays and at 3pm from Monday to Friday. We are doing everything possible to restore normal hours and menus and very much appreciate your patience while we do this. In the meantime, we have some wonderful homemade cakes in the café.

We are very sorry to be saying goodbye to our lovely Mel, who has nurtured, cheered, supported and been the backbone of Benenden's since it opened as a community shop (page 28). However, we have a new general manager in Abi, who has proved to be a real pleasure to work with. She is learning quickly and we would appreciate your patience and support as she settles in.

We are looking for two members of staff to join our team: the first is for the position of deputy manager for 37.5 hours a week. This role is designed to provide focussed attention on the management of the café, which provides the majority of profit to maintain the shop. A suitable applicant would assist the shop manager in all aspects of daily management of the shop, post office and café, helping to ensure Benenden's meets its financial targets through accurate accounting, appropriate pricing and product offering and good stock management. We would be looking for someone who can ensure Benenden's retains its strong reputation for great customer service by managing the volunteer workforce through coaching, training and positive communication and being flexible when needed to deputise for the main manager.

The second position is for 30 hours a week as an assistant shop and café manager. If you feel you can fill either of these positions and join our friendly team please contact the shop. Call 279808 and ask for Abi or email [info@benendens.co.uk](mailto:info@benendens.co.uk).

On another note, the Christmas raffle and books funds have been divided between the pre-school, Merry and Bright Club and The Grange. Many thanks for your donations to these.

One of our members of staff, who many of you will have become accustomed to seeing, is Alicia Martineau, who has very successfully completed her probation period and is now, we are delighted to say, a fully-fledged assistant manager of Benenden's. Alicia has charmed us all with her lovely cheerful demeanour and friendly approach to customers, staff and volunteers alike.

She was originally brought up in Biggin Hill, then lived in Orpington, Goudhurst and now in Cranbrook. She worked for Marks and Spencer for 15 years and, after a break to bring up a family, she worked for the Sissinghurst Castle restaurant. She then became a relief supervisor at Hartley Dyke Farm Shop, and worked at both gift shops in Cranbrook, where she also ran a clothes agency. Alicia loves anything 'crafty' and loves making things, upcycling furniture and gardening.

This clever, friendly lady has settled in really well and proved herself indispensable behind the counter. I can testify to the fact that she has a great sense of humour too! Alicia is a part-time manager in our shop but in the relatively short time she has been there she has proved to be a great asset to the team. We are lucky to have her.

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



# Farewell and thank you



## 'I could really start to see the vision taking shape'

Mel Harris, departing manager of our community shop, reflects on her time at the hub of the village. I've been Benenden's manager for almost nine years and have thoroughly enjoyed creating what is now a thriving, lively, busy community shop. However, the time has come for a change, and I will have left my role by the end of January. I cannot express my thanks enough in words for all the help, commitment, enthusiasm and support during that time from the committee and volunteers, but I hope you know how much I appreciate everything you have done to help Benenden's become a success.

It has been a pleasure and privilege to manage this business from such small beginnings. For those who remember, our first week's trading was from the previously unrenovated building, working from a trestle table and a barely working till, recording manually any sales in a ledger, '... in case the VAT man calls'.

We were fortunate to have the very kind help of Mark and Lucy at the Bull, who allowed us to use their premises at the recently closed Kitty Fisher to set up temporarily whilst the renovation works were carried out. Monday morning and our first few volunteers arrived, eager and keen to help. We had very little stock, around 12 wines displayed on an old kitchen dresser, no café, and a temporary service provided twice a week by the Post Office, the clerk for which would miraculously appear from behind a velvet curtain!

There I was, with Viv and Sue (our then assistant managers), using odd bits of furniture brought in from home, hand-writing labels for pies in very makeshift surroundings, wondering how on earth we were going to make a go of this rather eclectic set up. How naïve and inexperienced we were.



During the six months there, and regular site visits to the new shop, I could start to see the vision taking shape; making decisions about the best place for the newspapers, where to put the bread, which coffee machine should we use? Eventually it came together and in January 2016 we opened.

Being involved in a new business from the outset, it's difficult to remember how it's grown into the shop we currently know, when almost every day there were new challenges to deal with. At the heart of Benenden's, however, there has always been the aspiration to provide somewhere for the people of Benenden to feel welcome and to make them feel that this is their shop, somewhere to not only shop and use the café and Post Office, but also to feel part of a community, to meet friends and often make new ones. I have made some wonderful friends during my years here and even re-connected with some I'd lost touch with.

Benenden's is dependent on the help and time given so freely by our many volunteers, and without them we simply would not exist. Our





volunteers are also our customers. Many is the time, if they've been queueing, someone has offered to help a 'new volunteer' who may be struggling at the till. We have volunteers who have been with us since day one, some who leave and return (and some who don't), and new volunteers signing up all the time. We've taken on Duke of Edinburgh students, volunteers from The Grange, sixth-form students from Benenden School, and always with a view that we can help them as much as they can help us. Is this a circular economy on a more relatable scale? I like to think it is and I hope it continues to be so.

I can recall so many customers who have become the stuff of legend. Whilst their stories will always make me smile and are certainly



worth retelling, I'll adhere to the 'no names' policy, just in case, although I can mention the time when I chased down The Street after three shoplifters who had helped themselves to several bottles of gin. I mean, the cheek of it ... taking gin! To make matters worse, I could hear the bottles clanking together in the rucksack. Imagine how infuriating when you can't tackle someone to the ground to retrieve your favourite tipple.

During the shop's official opening by

HRH The Countess of Wessex, I had a chance conversation with David Commander about how great it would be if we could do a carol service. It led to 'Carols in the Café', now a permanent fixture for our volunteers, helped along with mince pies and mulled wine.

Another conversation I had led to the first wine tasting at the shop - an event which became so popular it had to be moved to Benenden



School. However, not before the one I attended, where I witnessed an Argentinian tango, along with fishnet tights (not mine, I hasten to add) and a tuxedo, down the aisle in the shop. Having the opportunity to develop these ideas into what are now regular village events has been amazing.

It's been incredible to see how much money has been given to local causes over the years, including to our playground. When I set up our book exchange I couldn't have known how popular it would become, and donations from it continue to generate further charitable funds every year.

My thanks to the shop committee, both past and present, who have advised, guided, and assisted me along the way, and my very grateful thanks to all volunteers, again, both past and present, for your unwavering support and help. It's been fulfilling, challenging and ever-changing, entertaining at times, but always worthwhile, and I am so very proud to have been a part of Benenden's success.







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## Karen Saunders: acclaimed award-winning singer

Pop into the village shop and you may well meet Karen Saunders, one of our excellent assistant managers. She organised the last village Christmas lunch and can also be seen deftly handling the stage lighting for Benenden Players' shows alongside her partner Rodey (one of our bell ringers). But I expect not many know that Karen's love of singing with barbershop choirs has won her several prestigious national awards and, in October last year, her first international award.

A local 'lass', Karen left to pursue a career as a cardiac physiologist, then as a lecturer, before returning to the area in 2013 after 22 years with her young daughter. "I thought I'd stay for just a few years while Laura Jane was at Cranbrook School, but quickly realised I wasn't going anywhere else," she says. Today, she thoroughly enjoys working part time in the shop and Post Office. "I didn't realise how important it is for many villagers, not just as a service and socially, but also for the help and advice we are often asked for."

Karen started singing with an 'a cappella' (without musical accompaniment) barbershop chorus in 2000 when she lived in Surrey. "I knew I could sing and was very happy when I successfully auditioned to join Surrey Harmony to sing bass."

Barbershop competitions are significant events. Sweet Adelines is a worldwide network of female a cappella barbershop singers. It started 75 years ago in Tulsa, Oklahoma, as a small group of women who loved to sing. Since then, it has evolved into an organisation with more than

20,000 members around the world. It runs a series of regional national competitions and several of the top-scoring winners of these are invited to compete in the prestigious, week-long, annual international competition in the US.

"Surrey Harmony competed in two international competitions,

first in Portland and then in Phoenix, where we came 20th," says Karen. She then moved to Nottingham, joined Lace City Chorus and came 15th in the internationals in Nashville. On moving to Benenden she joined Green Street Blues in Sevenoaks before being invited to join the 30-strong Vocal Dimension chorus in Redhill, as that group prepared for its international performance in Louisville, Kentucky, in October last year. Groups often invite singers as 'ooters' or short-term members to be part of their international team.

It's a huge commitment, in time and financially. Karen travelled to Redhill every two weeks to rehearse a set telling the story of a Great British Baking contest. They performed three songs: What's Inside (from Waitress); All the Things You Are (from Kern and Hammerstein's Very Warm for May) and I Will Survive, with baking themed parody lyrics (by Gloria Gaynor). Every singer had a specific character and costume: Karen was Margery Poop!

The chorus did incredibly well, coming second in their group and winning silver medals all round. "I absolutely loved it," beams Karen showing me her impressive collection of medals. "We only missed coming first by one point!"

Karen plans to return to Vocal Dimension to begin rehearsals for the national competition in Sheffield in May. So if you hear her singing in the shop you'll know why!

To see the Vocal Dimension in action in Louisville, search for them on YouTube.

Ruth Clark





# Local Enterprise



## Dingle St Glamping: a little piece of heaven

Camping with my family was a big part of my childhood. We would wild camp in the New Forest (in the times before they sensibly restricted us to proper campsites), alongside a river in the Welsh wilderness, or at Lulworth Cove in Dorset where we spent the days swimming and rock pooling. There's nothing quite like the smell of bacon cooking in the fresh air, sausages and marshmallows on sticks over a fire, and squirreling into sleeping bags listening to the grown-ups telling tales outside. Happy days.

These memories came flooding back when I visited Dingle St Glamping recently. Right on our doorstep is a little piece of heaven that Kim and Will North have created on their secluded farm in Dingle.

The inspiration for Dingle St Glamping came after Kim and Will held a big camping festival party for family and friends, celebrating several milestone birthdays over a weekend in 2019, just before lockdown. "It was amazing and afterwards many people said that it was a beautiful setting for a camp site," says Kim. "So in 2021 we said 'let's do it' and created Dingle St Glamping to share our little bit of paradise with others."

The couple have focussed on creating an eco-friendly environment. They invested in ten large bell tents spread around a big camping field and each tent comfortably sleeps a family of five. Each contains a double comfortable air bed, duvet and pillows and guests bring their own linen and towels.

The social area includes a WW2 army tent (in case it rains), a fully equipped camp kitchen complete with gas hobs, crockery and utensils, a nice covered outdoor seating area, picnic tables, two large BBQs and a camp fire. Plus







a generator is included if you wish to plug in lights in the army tent and kitchen. The very capable Will has also built two eco drop toilets and a lovely hot shower.

“We provide everything you need for a perfect camping weekend. All you need to do is bring food, but I can arrange private catering and butcher packs from local suppliers if you wish,” says Kim. “I can also arrange extras such as bushcraft lessons, a silent disco (amplified music is not allowed), yoga and fitness sessions.”

While walking up to the glamping area we passed a small lake. “We allow wild swimming at certain times of the day and the ducks don’t mind sharing at all!” she says. It would make an ideal site for a wellness retreat and this is something Kim would like to do in the future. “It’s very pretty and very peaceful here so perfect for something like that,” she says.

It really is the ideal place for glamping. Nestled between woods and orchards with stunning views over the Weald, it’s available to hire for weekends from May half term until the end of July. “We’ve found that the weather is better earlier in the year, while August has tended

to be quite wet, so it makes sense not to open then,” says Kim. At the time of going to press, five weekends this year had already been booked - two by groups who have been before.

Kim and Will very quickly realised that the site was popular for groups who wanted to take over the whole site, rather than individual tent hire. “We found that group bookings by family and friends for holiday get togethers and birthday celebrations work best.”

It costs £2,000 to hire the whole site and all ten tents for a two-night weekend which equates to £100 per night for a family of five. “We have one group of about 20 adults and 45 children who escape from the noise and bustle of London every year,” says Kim. “They arrange a big Tesco delivery on Friday evening before settling in. They may pop down to the pub, to Bodiam or to Camber, but tend to relax. Because we are in the middle of nowhere the kids can run free and explore the woods and they absolutely love it.”

It really is a lovely setting - even in winter - and as I walk back down the track away from the site I can just imagine how wonderful it is in the summer.

Ruth Clark

For more details about Dingle St Glamping go to [www.dinglestglamping.co.uk](http://www.dinglestglamping.co.uk).

Instagram: [dinglestglamping](https://www.instagram.com/dinglestglamping). Or contact

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# A Question of History



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well. But do you? We sent ace reporter Mark Hollander down the local highways and byways to uncover some unexpected facts about the Weald; to better arm you in local pub quizzes. How many do you know?

Quite a card

The first commercially printed Christmas card was created in Cranbrook, in 1843, by John Callcott Horsley, designer, illustrator and member of the famous Cranbrook colony of painters. An edition of 1,000 hand-coloured



copies was placed on sale in London, printed lithographically and then handcoloured by a professional colourer. Horsley's sister, Mary Elizabeth, was the wife of one of Britain's greatest ever engineers, Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

A lot's in a name

The name Benenden originates from the old English (pre 11th century) and originally meant 'Bynna's woodland pasture'. The current spelling was only used from 1610. While there are many woodland clearings (or dens) in the Weald, including Biddenden and Swattenden, the most famous, of course, is Eastenders' Dirty Den.

Exported 'oop north'

The tune to the Yorkshire folk song 'On Ilkley Moor Baht At' was written by Thomas Clarke in 1805 for his song 'Cranbrook', and adopted later that century by the Yorkshire ditty that carries it to this day.

Cricket bets

The cricketer on Benenden's village sign is left-handed cricketing legend Richard Mills (1798-1882) of Benenden, Kent and England. In September 1834, Mills played with fellow Kent and Benenden man Ned Wenman against a full team of 11 players from the Isle of Oxney. Mills and Wenman amazingly won the match in front of 2,000 people, with individual bets as high as £500 - tens of thousands of pounds today.

Delivering good health

Benenden Hospital was opened in 1907, not as a private hospital, but as a sanatorium to treat postal workers with tuberculosis.





### Off to the coast, girls

During World War II, Benenden School pupils were evacuated to the Hotel Bristol, Newquay, allowing the school itself to be used as a military hospital.

### Sad legacy

Charles Gunther (1863-1931), originator of the Oxo cube, lived at Tongswood Estate (now Saint Ronan's School) from 1902 to 1931. He donated what is now the library in Hawkhurst to the village in memory of his sons, who both died in World War I. It was originally a fire station.

### Sign of the times

The Iden in Iden Green comes from the old English word meaning 'green pasture by the yew trees'. IDEN also stands for Integrated Digital Electronic Network, a mobile telecommunications technology, developed by Motorola in 1994. Happily, this does not feature on the village sign.

### Posting a warning

The Royal Observer Corps originated in the Post Office in Cranbrook in 1925 (still marked by a green plaque outside the pharmacy). Ahead of its time, it was formed to provide an early warning of any airborne attacks on London.

### Antique bank

There used to be a Cranbrook Bank. Opened by Samuel Ferrand Waddington in the building by the steps to St Dunstan's church, it issued its own notes, one of which was shown by Raj Bisram on Antiques Roadshow. Waddington intended that holders of the bank's notes would receive 2.5% interest every January and July. "The Profits of Banking will be thus equitably divided with my Neighbours," he said.





# In Your Garden



## Winter's no time for you to hibernate

I am often asked whether I continue to garden during the winter months, particularly throughout January and February. Well, I maintain a densely planted garden just outside Sevenoaks, where I have been the sole gardener for what was my tenth year in 2023. I do have help - a contractor to mow the lawns and clip the yew and box hedging, a tree surgeon for any specialist work and a local firm for seasonal brush-cutting, so you might think there wouldn't be much left for me to do in winter but there is always something, and these two months allow me to reset and get ahead.

Just today I was cutting back all the hellebore leaves to expose the flower stalks emerging from the leaf litter. This is one of the first things I do after returning from the Christmas and New Year break and it is mainly carried out to reduce the black spot that seems to appear from nowhere and quickly transfers to all parts of the plant. At the same time, though, it elevates the flower stems to make them more visible and, seeing as they are so pretty, colourful and an early nectar source, it is worth taking your time over this.

I also take the opportunity to work through the borders, cutting back any herbaceous plants I may have missed in the autumn or which are

no longer adding any value to even a frosted winter display. So that usually includes any nepetas, tatty heuchera leaves, alchemilla and asters.

Deciduous grasses are still looking good, as are sedums, perovskias and rudbeckias. Of course, all the evergreens are in great shape at the moment, so I am always glad I planted them. A new one for me to try this year will be a *phillyrea angustifolia*, like a cross between box and

olive, which works really well with grasses and seedheads, as well as a standalone structural element.

By this time of year, the 'unofficial' compost heap is beyond control - this is the one where all shrub and rose prunings, dead branches and random clippings are heaped up throughout the year, so now is the time to have a bonfire. Apart from clearing away the debris, it gives me somewhere to stand and warm up, and there is something very peaceful about a quiet five minutes staring into a flickering flame and afterwards smelling of wood smoke.

In the greenhouse I am usually found cleaning down all the benches and running plant pots under the tap. I have quite a collection of pelargoniums now, and while it would be preferable to have the top growth remain until the spring, as is often the case mildew has taken hold, so I chop all stems to the base, top-dress with more grit and line them up once more until they come into growth once more.

I have also decided to repaint all the wooden slats on the lower level - very pleasant to do when the sun is shining, especially with a podcast playing in the background!

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We organise and support groups that bring people in our rural communities together socially.

To learn more about the activities we run, see our website at [www.wellbeingintheweald.co.uk](http://www.wellbeingintheweald.co.uk) where you can also sign up to our newsletter.

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Get in touch with us by email: [hello@wellbeingintheweald.co.uk](mailto:hello@wellbeingintheweald.co.uk) or phone 07961669575

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