

Above: Appreciating village assets: Kate Rundell's sketch of an allotment gathering, produce and dahlias; the cricket team with their most loyal supporter at the last match before the cricket square is 'put to bed'; the new forest school site made available to the primary school; gold medal winner, Diccon Gray, representing England over 60s at the Home Nations Veteran Championships Front cover: Vibrancy from Benenden Art Fair: Among the Yellow Blossom. Digital collage: Claire Gill clairegill.co.uk





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Editorial



Sometimes the stars align and, quite by accident, there's a common theme to the articles that come together in an issue: this is one of those times. When the magazine team gather over coffee and biscuits every month to plan the next issue we have a rough idea but it takes a couple of weeks for contributions to settle down and find their place.

The stories told by Denise Riches, Tim Maw and April Trezies are transformative tales of adventure and endeavour. Denise's life took an unexpected turn when she was caught up in the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Memories of the anniversary of that event inspired her to write about it (page 35) which in turn triggered a sequence of positive events (page 7). When April took an A level at the age of 43 it triggered a "life-changing" taste for academic and creative studying (page 31).

When it comes to adventures you'd be hard pressed to beat those undertaken by Tim who has led expeditions across Africa, the Middle East and Asia, ridden motorbikes across the Sahara through Iran and Rajasthan, and in Egypt, the Kalahari and Namib, and circumnavigated Britain and Ireland by jetski. Not content quite yet to relax, he has recently returned from the Himalayas, where he was part of a team looking to achieve a record-breaking 'Highest Bike Ride' whilst raising much need funds to equip a school in Nepal (page 28).

I'm greatly inspired by all three and re-energised to tackle new horizons - although perhaps not as high as those Tim encountered! You can hear more about his trials and triumphs at the Oak Barn, Frame Farm, on 22 November. That evening will be a busy night for the village, coinciding with two other fundraising events: the Friends of St George's Quiz Night and the Cat Simoni concert.

A full month ahead of us: November starts with a bang with the Benenden Bonfire heralding a month of music, fun and games (browse the calendar on page 2). What a vibrant place to live.

Ruth Clark, Co-Editor

The Benenden Magazine is published monthly as a joint venture by Benenden Parish Council and St George's Parochial Church Council. It is distributed free to all residents of the parish. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the publishers. Responsibility for accuracy of information rests with contributors and advertisers. Neither the publishers nor the editors shall be held responsible for or endorse any opinions, products or services printed in the magazine or directory.

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Village Calendar

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Saturday 2	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon				
Saturday 2	Benenden Bonfire and Fireworks, Benenden School, 5.30pm				
Tuesday 5	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am				
Tuesday 5	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am				
Thursday 7	Hemsted Park, Britten Sinfonia, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7pm				
Saturday 9	Autumn Village Clean, Benenden's Community Shop, 9am				
Saturday 9	Cyril Moore Skittles Evening for the Poppy Appeal,				
	St George's Social Club, 8.15pm				
Tuesday 12	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.14			
Friday 15	Hemsted Park, Sheku Kanneh-Mason and Harry Baker,				
	Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7pm	p.19			
Saturday 16	Classic Film Night - Casablanca, Benenden Village Hall, 6.30pm	p. l l			
Saturday 16	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm				
Sunday 17	Hemsted Park, The James Taylor Quartet,				
	Benenden School Centenary Hall, 5pm	p.19			
Monday 18	Parish Council Meeting, Benenden Hospital Quinlan Centre, 7pm				
Tuesday 19	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am				
Tuesday 19	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am				
Tuesday 19	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Winter Party, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p. 15			
Wednesday 20	Hemsted Park, Trio Bohémo, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7.30pm	p.19			
Friday 22	Cat Simoni Concert, The Chapel of Our Lady and St Joseph,				
	Benenden, 6.30pm				
Friday 22	The World's Highest Bike Ride, The Oak Barn, Frame Farm, 6.45pm	p.29			
Friday 22	Friends of St George's Quiz Night, Benenden Village Hall, 7pm	p. 15			
Saturday 23	Bingo, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm				
Tuesday 26	Merry and Bright, A Sabbatical in Scotland, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p. 15			
Saturday 30	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm				

Iden Green Toddler Group

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

Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-11.30am

Benenden Bowls Club

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

Cakes & Chaos: Café and Toddler Group

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

Parish Council



As chair of Benenden Parish Council, I was recently invited along to the newcomers' lunch held at St George's Church, just to say a few words about what the parish council gets up to. It was a lovely couple of hours finding out from new arrivals in the village how they are enjoying life in our piece of rural paradise, and the feedback was, of course, very positive.

This lunch was organised by volunteers, also attended by other volunteers from organisations around the village, explaining what they get up to and how their organisations contribute to village life. The number of organisations in this village that rely on volunteers is actually quite astounding. Too many to list here, but somewhere between 15 to 20 different clubs, events, village-based charities, community spaces and even this esteemed publication are all dependent on the goodwill of those who freely offer to do something for nothing.

Although it is not 'nothing'. It is incredibly important time given to support our village and maintain the wonderful community spirit and vitality that we are lucky to have in Benenden. Not all villages have such a vibrant community, and I know we are the envy of many of the surrounding parishes in our ability to 'get things done'.

Nevertheless, there is always the need for more volunteers, and if you are new to the village (or even if you have been here a while) I would highly recommend that you get involved in some of the organisations that are so vital to keeping our village alive and in robust health.

Why not start with a couple of hours a week at the village shop? Or have some fun and camaraderie helping out at bonfire night? It is such a great opportunity to meet new friends, and take it from me, volunteering is an honour and can even be a pleasure! Try it, and you'll immediately understand the benefits it gives to our wonderful community.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair nicolat@benendenparishcouncil.org

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

Parish Council Meeting Monday 18 November, Benenden Hospital Quinlan Centre, 7pm

Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

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

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

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

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com

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

Sunday 3 November 8am Communion I 0am All-age 7.30pm All Souls' Day Service

Communion

Sunday 10 November 8am BCP Communion 10.45am Remembrance Service

followed by an Act of Remembrance,

War Memorial

Sunday 17 November 8am Communion 10am Sung Eucharist

Saturday 23 November 4pm Connect Four

at Mission Church, Sandhurst

Sunday 24 November 8am Communion 10am Morning Worship

Morning Prayer 8am Mondays and Fridays

Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Morning Prayer 8am Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Mid-week Communion 10am Tuesdays

Iden Green Congregational Church

Pastor: Tobin Bird 240027 www.idengreen.org.uk

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

The I0am Morning Worship is broadcast on our YouTube channel: search 'Iden Green Congregational Church'.

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

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Wedding 5 October Lucy Traill and Andrew Rowley

Funerals 14 October Martin Wade Funeral Kent and Sussex Crematorium

18 October Martin Wade Memorial Service

Church Letter



Maybe you're too busy to, or too busy not to

Revd Ylva and I have just returned from a three-day Diocesan clergy conference 'Together in Prayer'. About IIO clergy from across Canterbury Diocese gathered, with some of the senior leadership team, at Ashburnham Place near Battle. I went with thoughts of 'this had better be worth it!'. We had not had one of these gatherings since before Covid, and therefore also with the previous Bishop of Dover, not with Bishop Rose. (There has also, in that time, been a huge change in the clergy in the Diocese - there were 20 ordained in June in our Diocese, including our own Revd Vicki Young.)

Have you noticed that when you head off to something thinking, 'this had better be good' or 'I'd prefer not to go', invariably the event turns out to be enjoyable? I'm happy to report that was the case for me. It was good; really good. There were three guest speakers:

Sister Gemma Simmonds a Roman Catholic nun which, being honest, didn't fill me with 'Wow, this is going to be great', before I headed off. Gemma is a sister of the Congregation of Jesus, Director of the Religious Life Institute at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge where she teaches theology. Formerly a missionary in Brazil and a university and prison chaplain, she is a prolific author in ecclesiology, spirituality and theology. She was an amazing, engaging and inspiring speaker and human being.

Bishop Hugh Nelson formerly incumbent at Goudhurst and Kilndown, now Bishop of St Germans in the Diocese of Truro; and acting Bishop of the Diocese of Truro and Bishop to the Forces. He was honest, open and encouraging.

Lyndall Bywater co-ordinator of the Changing Lives Prayer Network in Canterbury Diocese, as well as a writer and broadcaster. She is champion of all things to do with prayer. An incredible lady and so encouraging; so natural about prayer - and ably supported at the conference by her guide dog, Venus.

The three-day event was a very worthwhile investment of time. There were two little things I want to share with you that I found helpful, and you might too. The first was a one-liner that Sr Gemma quoted from a Glaswegian she'd met: "If ya too busy, ya too busy!" A simple, perhaps throwaway statement; but it is true. If you are too busy, the thing you are doing doesn't get done so well; you don't focus properly; you become too tired; and everything, including your lifebalance, suffers.

The skill, having recognised that of course, is how to become less busy. But the recognition is a good starting point. The second thing was: the parish is not going to fall apart by you taking 30 minutes with God in prayer. For a priest this is simple and obvious when it's pointed out. So I will be spending more time with God in prayer. Why? Because I'm too busy not to. I hope you can find some quiet time, with God, in the busyness of your life.



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Talking Point



Healed by the power of the pen

At various times of emotional turmoil I have put pen to paper in an attempt to release my emotions. Often I would just 'let it out' and not read what I had written afterwards.

I had read in this magazine about the Words for Wellbeing group run by Wellbeing in The Weald, so when I lost my partner of 22 years to cancer, I turned to them. After being out of circulation for some time while nursing him through his illness, I felt socially inept and rather lost. On my way to the first group session I felt physically sick, not knowing what to expect. I needn't have worried. This was a very gentle group session, writing generally positive notes, without any major personal revelations. I grew to enjoy these sessions and I enjoyed meeting new people again.

During the summer I attended a golden wedding celebration. My thoughts turned to events I had been involved in 50 years ago. Lying awake at 3am going over them I knew I needed to put pen to paper again, just to get these thoughts out of my head. The result is my article in the magazine (page 35). My writing journey had begun. I was enjoying this!

I have now joined U3A (University of the Third Age) and attend a couple of their writing groups. The first was 'Write Your Own Life Story'. No longer shy about sharing my writing with others, I looked forward to it. There were some very good writers in the group and for the first time in ages I laughed properly. My healing journey was well and truly started. The next group was 'Creative Writing'. More thought-provoking but nonetheless enjoyable, and perhaps a little more educational.

I now find my demeanour is much more positive and cheerful. I am no longer lonely, and I am kept busy again. If any of you are struggling after a loss or bereavement I would urge you to find something you enjoy. It's easy for people to tell you to join a club, but it isn't so easy to find the right thing. It may not be writing for you, but I found it is far easier to join a group of people involved in an activity rather than walking into a coffee morning and having to make small talk.

I would like to thank Ruth Clark, co-editor of this magazine, for her support in this journey. If you are interested in going to Words for Wellbeing, the contact details are hello@wellbeingintheweald.co.uk. U3A can be found on Google.

Denise Riches





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News and Events

Cat Simoni concert

Cat Simoni is returning to the Chapel of Our Lady and St Joseph in Benenden on Friday 22 November to give another of her wonderful concerts featuring a variety of music and song, from light opera to modern pop. Songs can be requested in advance (see contact details below).

Mulled wine and mince pies will be served and there will also be a raffle. All proceeds in aid of the upkeep of the chapel. To book your seat(s) please contact Dee Simoni (07903 068692 or alexsimoni42@gmail.com) or Genevieve Greenwood (240526 or greenwoodrg@hotmail.co.uk) and put your name(s) on the list. Please pay for your seat (£8 per head and in cash please) on the door on the night. Doors open at 6.30pm. Places are limited so book early.

Autumn Village Tidy

Litter picking is a simple action that anyone can do to make an immediate and visible difference to the village, and protect and enhance its appearance. The parish council leads an organised village tidy event every spring and autumn, and the latest one will be on Saturday 9 November, starting at 9am.

We are extremely grateful to our volunteers - many of whom have become regulars and take part every year. As ever, equipment (litter pickers, hi viz jackets, bin bags) will be provided by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and can be collected from outside the village shop. Volunteers can take part for any length of time between 9 and 1 lam.

Litter collected and bagged should be left at the village hall and equipment returned to the shop by I Iam. Volunteers will receive a voucher for a drink and cake to be used at Benenden's café.

For more information, email clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org Caroline Levett



Village Hall

The time has come to replace our old heating system. Last winter we undertook some running repairs but a permanent solution was needed before the next winter started. Former Trustee Richard Stubbings spent many hours in discussion with suppliers as he worked to identify the best option. BVT were keen to make the hall heating effective for users, efficient to run and environmentally friendly. Richard recommended retaining our current hot-air system that heats the space quickly. We selected a new gas-fired heater capable of being converted to biofuel at a future date, so we can reduce carbon impact. Our contractors, Element3, installed and tested the new system on 25 September.

Fundraising to pay for the new heating is underway, with the Benenden Village Trust offering a classic film night with supper. Please support the village hall by coming along to see Casablanca on Saturday 16 November. Details on reserving your seat can be found on page 11. Paul Tolhurst







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Benenden Village Trust



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Remembrance events

On Sunday 10 November, the annual Remembrance Sunday Service will take place at St George's Church, starting at 10.45am. All those with service medals are invited to wear them.

After the service the Royal British Legion standard bearer and escorts will lead the Benenden School Combined Cadet Force contingent to the war memorial for the laying of wreaths and the sounding of the Last Post and Reveille.

The main road will not be closed so that all present are asked to cross carefully and gather in Walkhurst Road.

On Monday 11 November, Armistice Day, the senior pupils of the primary school will gather at the war memorial at 10.55am to remember those parishioners who fell in the two World Wars. We invite local residents to join this commemoration.

Poppy Appeal collection

We are once again arranging a limited house-to-house collection for the Poppy Appeal. From 26 October boxes will be placed in the community shop, Ward's the butchers, Benenden Hospital, the St George's Club, the primary school, Benenden School, the Bull and the Woodcock.

During the mornings of Saturday 2 and Saturday 9 November, we shall establish a collection with a wider range of poppy items and a limited allocation of the 2024 enamel badges outside the community shop.

Royal British Legion, Benenden Branch



Benenden Players

Save the date for 'The Great Benenden Revue' in the village hall on Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 January - just when we all need cheering up after Christmas! Performances will begin at 7.30pm and 2.30pm respectively.

Tables will be set out cabaret-style and you're invited to bring whichever nibbles you fancy whilst you watch some world premiere acts, as well as old favourites. A bar will be provided for all drinks. Great atmosphere and a fun-filled time is guaranteed for all as the players present comedy sketches, superb music and singing. More information will be published in the December issue but it's always good to get in early. You can book tickets now (£10 adults & £5 for 16 and under) via www.benendenplayers.co.uk.

Bev Beveridge 07710 164490 bev.bev@hotmail.co.uk

Grief Workshop

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

On Saturday 30 November, from 10-12.30pm in the Mission Church, Back Road, Sandhurst, we are offering a morning to explore our grief through conversation, readings and crafting together. It will be a safe space to come to talk and share what has been going on for you. Talking to others who have been through similar experiences can be helpful, or just knowing that someone is there to listen.

For more information and to book this free workshop please contact me.

Claire Roberts 754374 claireecr57@yahoo.com

Christmas Day lunch

It's time to start planning for this year's Christmas lunch, which we will be holding in the Memorial Hall for anyone who will be on their own on Christmas Day. We meet from 12.15pm and aim to sit down to eat at 1pm. Traditionally we watch the King's speech (the real one, not the film!) at 3pm.

If you would like to join us please contact me on 01580 240658 or email helenjcommander@gmail.com. Or you can pop a note through the Rectory door. The sooner we have an idea about numbers the easier it is to organise the catering. We don't charge for this lunch, but any donations received are forwarded to 'Catching Lives', a charity that we support in Canterbury who in turn support homeless people.

If you have provided food items in the past I will be contacting you again; however if you would like to offer help in any way this year, please also contact me as shown above. Helen Commander

Village lunch

We really look forward to welcoming everyone to the village lunch on Tuesday 12 November at 12.30pm in the village hall. New people are always welcome. If you haven't booked and would like to come, please ring me, preferably by Thursday 7 November to allow for shopping. We can give lifts if that helps, so do let us know.

Sheila Hume 854627

Little Walkhurst fundraising success

We wanted to thank all those who visited our six-acre open garden earlier this year. Since 2021 we have raised just over £1,000 each year for the Hospice in the Weald, but this year we had a record 470 visitors and raised £2,500. It seems that next year we may have to find more tables and chairs for our refreshment area!

Peter Stennett and Sara Rowan

Weald Table Tennis Club

Many congratulations to Benenden's Diccon Gray, who recently picked up two golds and one silver medal while representing England over 60s at the Home Nations Veteran Championships. Playing with Tim Dyson (Yorkshire) and Christine Wicks (Sussex) in the team event, Gray led England to 7-0 victories over Guernsey, Ireland, Isle of Man, Jersey and Wales, and 6-1 over Scotland.

Partnered by fellow left-hander Dyson, he got his second gold when they won the men's doubles. In the men's singles, Gray came through tough quarter and semi-final matches before being beaten by Dyson in the final.

Since the competition, Diccon has had a new hip installed, so watch out for more medals next year!

Weald Table Tennis Club meets at Benenden Village Hall on Thursday (7-9pm) and Sunday (6.30-8.30pm) evenings, all-comers welcome. Barry Bassett

Merry and Bright

We recently had our last outing for this year at the Hawkhurst Fish Farm. It was a very nice afternoon and the scones were lovely. At our October meeting Marianne Ball (nee Staines) talked about growing up in Benenden. This month Revd David Commander is coming to show us slides and tell us about his sabbatical in Scotland. We end the year with our Christmas party.

We have already collected a lot of different ideas for next year, for which lifts can always be arranged, new members are welcomed and you can contact us for any information. We will be only too happy to speak to you.

Laraine Penny 241763 Julia Collard 241944

Iden Green and Benenden WI

A jolly time was had at our lunch at Tenterden Garden Centre, and again the following week at our social afternoon when trading stall holders found the time very entertaining and profitable.

Tess Fitzpatrick, Professor of Applied Linguistics, delivered a fascinating presentation about her work at Swansea University at our October meeting. We took part in an interesting word association exercise and Tess explained the intricacies of aspects such as different languages and derivation, nature v nurture, healthy ageing and lexical networks, and how a forensic linguist can aid in detecting crimes by examining an individual's texts. Clear, concise communication is essential in most professions and work is ongoing to enhance patient experience in healthcare discussions.

Our next meeting, on 19 November, is our winter party. If any non-members would like to attend, please ask one of our ladies to introduce you. Our Christmas meal will again be at the Bull in Benenden, 12.30pm on Wednesday 4 December.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk



Friends of St George's Quiz Night

Just a reminder that the annual quiz night in aid of the Friends of St George's takes place on Friday 22 November. If you haven't already formed or joined a team, now is the time. Last year 13 teams of eight took part, which is about the limit for the village hall.

Doors open at 7pm for a 7.30pm start. The format will be similar to previous years with seven rounds of questions and supper served at half time - teams supply their own drink.

If you aren't already in a team we can put you in touch with others to form one.

The price for the quiz and supper is £18 per head and we will collect money in advance from team captains. There will also be a raffle.

To take part, or to ask any questions, please contact Deborah Jenkins (deborahjenkins26@btinternet.com).

We look forward to welcoming everyone to what should be another great evening.

Martin Pexton, Chairman, Friends of St George's





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

Currently there are vacancies for new members. If you are retired and would welcome friendly, relaxed company at a lunch, with interesting speakers, then please contact the Hon. Secretary on 01580 441201 for more information.



The Laureis Nursery, Dingledon, Benender, Cranbrook, Kent TNo 4JU Phone 01560 240463 www.thelaureisnursery.co.uk

Talking Shop

As I walked out of the rain into the shop for my café shift, I entered a warm, buzzy atmosphere like a cross between The Archers and Dibley. In the café we were busy - we always are. Even when it's quiet there is always food to cook or prepare, the dishwasher to load, tables to clean and stocking up to do. It's never boring and it has a habit of taking you out of yourself. The team is great and all our customers are very friendly.

Why am I banging on about the joys of working in the café in particular? We really could do with more volunteers to help us in both the shop and the café. Often volunteers are worried about working in the café. Don't be! We all had to learn the ropes and it's so often easier to start in the shop to learn the till and then give the café a try. If you're not confident, help in a later shift when it's quieter and the staff have more time to give you some training. Don't worry about making mistakes; we all do! Our lovely staff will give you lots of encouragement.

The success of Benenden's depends on the skills of our staff and the goodwill of our volunteers. Shifts (2.5-hr slots) are at times to suit you and every volunteer shift means we can keep the café open for longer and saves the cost of staff overtime. Don't be afraid to come and volunteer. Everyone has different obligations and any time you can offer us will help ensure a happy and successful future for Benenden's.

Finally, our volunteers are invited to our Christmas singsong in Benenden's from 6pm on 10 December. Your melodious voices will be ably helped along by festive refreshments. Do put it in your diaries.

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

Benenden School

It is always a privilege to share updates from Benenden School each month in this magazine and it gives me a chance to reflect on the positive developments that shape our students. Most recently, I have been appreciating all the community partnerships that we are so pleased to be a part of. Our older students spend time each week lending a hand at a number of locations including Benenden Primary, the village shop, the Grange and many others, and we are proud partners of Sissinghurst CC and Hawkhurst FC.

Our goal has always been to foster not only academic success but also the growth of well-rounded, compassionate young people who are ready to make a positive impact on the world. Those offering support and encouragement to our students have a significant part to play in this ambition.

Earlier this month, a film crew joined some of our students who were actively involved in community service for a new school film. In trying to capture an essence of what our school stands for, it was important to involve members of our close community and we are very grateful to everyone for putting up with some (I hope minimal!) disruption at Benenden's or in the hospital atrium. As ever, the support we received from everyone in the community is hugely appreciated. Thank you.

I am also delighted to share some very recent triumphs, including a well-deserved award for our senior nurse, Sarah Rushton, who won the 'Unsung Hero' category in the Tatler Schools' Awards, and it was an honour to have been a finalist in the Best Independent Girls' School category at the Independent School of the Year Awards.

Rachel Bailey, Headmistress





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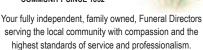


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Tours for 2025 primary reception

Please let family and friends know if they have a child starting school in September 2025 and may be interested in a Benenden Primary School tour on 8, 18 or 27 November at either 9.30am or 1.30pm. Appointments can be made via the school office on 240565 or via office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk.

Primary School

Our first term was full of excitement and challenges. There's been lots of outdoor learning and Year 6 completed their cycling proficiency. Year 2 had their djembe drumming lesson outside in the quiet area and a number of classes have enjoyed exploring our new forest school site, generously provided to us by Benenden resident Kate James.

Times away from their desks have a really positive impact on children's wellbeing, resilience and oracy skills. A big shout out to the staff team who regularly go above and beyond to take the children outdoors - a task that is not as easy as it sounds.

One of our key priorities is the development and accuracy of pupils' ability to communicate, hold a conversation, listen attentively and to enjoy discussion, so as part of our professional development plan for the term, all teachers had oracy training. Our aim is to ensure that all pupils develop the skills that help them to achieve well across the curriculum and in life beyond school.

Finally, it was lovely to share our harvest service with our school community in St George's Church. Many thanks to all of our families who generously contributed towards the harvest collection and we will be sharing the produce with Nourish. Lindsay Roberts, Executive Headteacher 240565 office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk

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For full details, free mailing, tickets call 01580 883092 or write to A.G. Whitehead, Vinehall School, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JL geoffreywhitehead@vinehallschool.com

Benenden Pre-School

Autumn has arrived and at Pre-school we are enjoying wallowing in the season. Literally wallowing. The children are embracing the copious amounts of rainwater and mud in the garden as they pour it and mix it in the mud kitchen, jump in the puddles to see how far it flies and create imaginary worlds with it for dinosaurs and our new toy sea animals.

Using big needles and butcher's twine we are threading conker caterpillars: one kind pre-school family went foraging, created a production line and supplied us with bags of conkers with holes drilled through them.

We are looking forward to our annual autumn walk through the village with parents, each child armed with a paper bag in which to collect seasonal treasures. The children will be baking cakes for a snack mid-walk and will enjoy them while listening to a story on the Glebe Field.

And then it's time to make the guy for the Benenden bonfire before we break for half term. Papier-mâché for his head. More wallowing - in sticky glue! Lucy Oakley, Supervisor

supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk



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Primary Subjects Singapore Maths French



GROUP MAT CLASSES

Monday 7.15pm Benenden Memorial Hall

Monday 8.30pm Benenden Village Hall

Wednesday 10.15am Benenden Village Hall

Thursday 9am Bloomsburys, Biddenden

St Andrew's Church Hall, Tenterden

GROUP REFORMER CLASSES PRIVATE ONE TO ONE & DUETS

Monday-Thursday 9am-4pm in new Pilates Studio at the Wellness Haven, Benenden

St George's Social Club

Our recent monthly quiz was well attended. We also enjoyed tabletop curling, which is a real laugh and it's amazing how some people get really competitive! On the second Thursday of every month we hold a darts competition. All are welcome and the £5 entry fee includes food and cash prizes. Please register before 7.50pm. Glenda Marshall 243089 glendajoym@gmail.com

Topical health

Chronic pain is pain that persists for more than 12 weeks. Many people who suffer from it are fearful of movement. The primary purpose of pain is to alert the brain to illness or injury so you can take protective action. Initially, the brain starts a cascade of inflammatory responses, swelling and redness. As the swelling and redness subside, repair and remodelling of the tissue continues.

The mind needs to process the injury, too. The experience could create fear and anxiety and we end up focussed on the sources of pain, not being able to get past them. We do things to try and avoid causing more or worse pain (e.g. limp, stop weight bearing).

A lack of fitness or deconditioning can also be a source of pain and a good fitness teacher can help you get back moving again. It's common to avoid movement when we have pain. But move you must and the payoff will be fantastic if you stick with it. Exercise is vital for most of us at some point to be able to get back to full health.

Over my ten years of teaching pilates, many of the people I see come with back problems, but they stick with it because it works and they have long since resolved any issues they first came with. Or they stay because it keeps them moving. Get stronger by moving longer and try to dampen down the pain signals and swap them for movement, fresh air, and nature.

Kat Briggs www.pilateswise.co.uk

Benenden Hospital

As November approaches, my thoughts turn to the important Movember campaign, which has been transformational in men's health. The movement has tackled three of the biggest health issues affecting men: mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer.

I find the founding story of Movember such an inspirational one. From two friends in 2003, chatting in a Melbourne bar and deciding to bring back the 'tash' to raise funds for prostate cancer, to over six million annual participants and over 1,320 men's health projects funded. It's so powerful to see what can be created with a little momentum.

Out of 40% of men who say they've never spoken to anyone about their mental health, 20% say there's a 'negative stigma' around it and 29% say they're 'too embarrassed' to speak up (Priory Group). As a result, many men choose to suffer in silence. This month and moving forward, I think we should all try to check-in with the men in our lives more often.

To support our patients and staff with checking in, we launched a male health hub on our website in September last year. This hub provides a one-stop resource offering useful information and advice on a wealth of subjects, from sexual health and looking after your heart to body image and joint pain. Or you may want to explore the Movember website (uk.movember.com).

Our wellbeing team host regular webinars for our staff, featuring different health or life topics as part of our 'Benenden Learns Together' initiative. Prostate health was a more recent session presented by two of our expert Continence Care Specialist Nurses, which provided the opportunity to ask questions. I think the first brave step with anything that we are worrying about is to reach out and have a conversation. To finish this month's article, I wish to thank our urology service and the staff who support it, for their continued dedication to improving male health.

Claire Harley, Hospital Director

CHALKDOWN RDA Charity No1174554

VOLUNTEERS NEEDE

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

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

Email staplehurstrda@gmail.com for more information Or download an application form from

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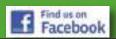
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Concert in aid of Riding for the Disabled

The Chalkdown Riding for the Disabled Group at Duckhurst Equestrian Centre in Staplehurst is an amazing place where adults and children with a variety of learning or physical difficulties ranging in age from three to over 70 enjoy the thrill and freedom of riding horses.

The group is led by chair Pauline Roestenburg who, together with over 50 volunteers, guide and encourage 12 students from Snowfields Academy in Cranbrook every Wednesday and up to 20 riders, both adults and children, every Thursday during term time. The riding sessions not only bring considerable mental and physical therapeutic benefits to the riders, but they also bring parents and carers together to enjoy downtime over coffee, tea and cake.

I saw first hand the work the volunteers do when I visited recently and we will be featuring this inspiring group in more detail in a future issue of the magazine. But, more immediately, we wanted to highlight an important fundraising event for them coming up in December.

It costs £40,000 a year to keep this wonderful charity doing its valuable work and creating awareness, and fundraising keeps the tireless team busy year-round hosting a variety of events. For the first time they are hosting an evening of Christmas music with the very talented Tongswood Chamber Choir in St Dunstan's Church in Cranbrook on Sunday 8 December. See the advertisement opposite for full details. It promises to be a marvellous evening and perfect timing to get you in a festive mood - while also contributing to a very worthwhile cause.

chalkdownstaplehurst-rda.co.uk Ruth Clark

Benenden Allotment Association

We are about to mark our first birthday, so we celebrated in early October with an open afternoon down on the allotment site. Around 30 friends, guests and plot holders gathered to chat, drink warming tea, taste some delicious home-made cakes, judge produce and admire all our hard work.

Good news: our long-awaited mains water connection should be installed early in November. It will be really useful next summer.

Watch-out for details of a village quiz early next year. This will be a fund-raiser jointly managed by the Allotment Association and the Gardening Club. Yes, there will be plant questions, but not exclusively - we want everyone to have a chance at doing well!

Nancy Tolhurst, Chair, Benenden Allotment Association

Planning Matters

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

- 23/02523/FULL Uphill, New Pond Road.
 Erection of 22 no. dwellings with associated access works, tree works, landscaping and parking, following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings. Revised details.
 The Parish Council objects to these revisions.
- 24/02187/FULL Timber Building And Land Dingleden. Variation of Condition 2 of Planning Permission 24/01131/FULL -(Amendments to approved plans). The Parish Council makes no comment.

More planning matters at: benendenparishcouncil.org

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Benenden Village Trust

'We are handling the acorns that have fallen from the giant trees of the past'

A tree-planting ceremony was held on Benenden recreation ground recently to commemorate the centenary of major gifts to the village by the 1st Viscount Rothermere for the recreation of parishioners. The ceremony was organised by Benenden Village Trust, the charity, founded in 2018, which now oversees Lord Rothermere's legacy and manages its many assets.

Martin Dickson, the current BVT chairman, welcomed guests and noted that the trust's list of assets underlined the very central role it played in village life, even though it was not particularly well known.

The tree - an English Oak - was planted by David Harmsworth, the first chairman of BVT, who gave a fascinating speech in which he outlined Lord Rothermere's career, his connection with Benenden and the reason for his bequests to the village, commemorating the deaths of two of his sons, Vyvyan and Vere, in World War I.

He said: "This recreation ground was his gift to us in memory of Vyvyan; in memory of Vere, he gave the recreation ground in Iden Green; he also gave land for allotments, and the St George's Club building built by Lord Cranbrook.

"It feels, as one looks back, as though we are handling the acorns that have fallen from the giant trees of the past. The grandees have departed, but they have left behind a really significant inheritance."

David also
noted that, while
he happens to
share his surname
with the family
name of the
Viscounts
Rothermere,
he knew of no
direct connection
between the
families. His
remarks may
be read in
full in next
month's issue.

Both he and Martin thanked



trustees for overseeing the Rothermere legacy, both now and over the past 100 years, and for all their hard work on behalf of the village. However, Martin also noted that the trust currently faced a cash crunch, since outgoings substantially exceeded income, due to general inflation, rising staffing costs and the need for extensive maintenance of its old buildings. It therefore welcomed donations and offers of voluntary help.

He said trustees had been developing plans to ameliorate the problem, with new initiatives including a fund-raising film night at the village hall and the much-welcomed return of football to the recreation ground after an absence of many years. BVT looked forward to celebrating a second century in 2124.

Caroline Levett



Spotlight



The Highest Bike Ride: the trek begins with mules, mountain bikes and laptops

In the July issue, Tim Maw wrote about preparing to undertake a record-setting 'Highest Bike Ride' to raise much-needed funds to equip the village school in Kakgot, Nepal. He's back in one piece and here he reflects on the first few days of his incredible expedition in September to summit the 95th highest mountain in the world.

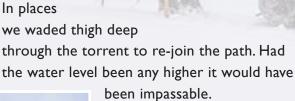
In the distance a splash of blue could be seen on the plateau above the Bharbun River. It was the blue paint of the roofs, indicating we were soon to arrive in the small village of Kakgot after three hard days of trekking. These last few kilometres followed the edge of the flat plain where the river had divided into many channels. Our mules picked their route through the rough ground, their bells providing a soothing indication of progress above the sound of the water.

There are no roads to Kakgot. Our team had been dropped into Juphal, in the west Nepali region of Dolpa, from a small plane. It braked hard on touch down so it could make the turn before the cliff edge at the end of the air strip. From here, everything we needed for the next three weeks was carried either on our backs or on mules. The trek followed the Thuli Bheri, a violent white-water



river that feeds the Karnali. The word bheri translates as low land, but the route started at 2,470m and gained 1,000m on the way to Kakgot. This was no steady climb, as the path clung to the steep side of the valley, crossing high ridges and then dropping back to the

water's edge many times.



Reaching Kakgot was of great significance for our team as the village school, named in honour of Sherpa Tenzing Norgay, had been the focus of our fund raising since the beginning of this year. We were now acutely aware of



how remote the region is and how challenging it is for supplies to reach here.

The welcome we received from the headmaster and children was wonderful. The

laptop computers we had brought were presented and we began to look at how we could create a more efficient computer network for the teachers. A satellite internet connection is a top priority. Their current system works on radio waves transmitted from a mountaintop antenna but low cloud frequently jams the weak signal.

We climbed to see the radio mast the following day. It was one of our rest days but we needed to continue our acclimatisation and ascend a local peak before returning to the school to sleep for another night. For the body to adjust to high altitudes it is important to climb high and sleep low, increasing the climb height each day. That day we travelled light, but it was a tough climb and we were concerned at how we would do this with our packs and mountain bikes the following day.

During our time at the school we discovered it was the headmaster's dream to create a boarding school using the existing buildings. Currently there are only 60 children attending the school but, despite the tiny classrooms, there is capacity for more. Many children in the region live too far from the school to walk in each day so a boarding house would allow them to stay at the school during the week. Quite simply it is the difference between these children either having an education or not.

We left Kakgot with high hopes that we would return 12 days later having climbed Putha Hiunchuli with our mountain bikes on our backs and a new Guinness World Record in the bag. I am pleased to say we all made it back, but those 12 days were not quite as we imagined. Putha stands at 7,246m, making it the 95th highest mountain in the world and classified by the French Alpine system as 'a little difficult'. In fact, it turned out to be the most arduous climb any of us had ever made.

Our second climb to the radio mast with our bikes was certainly slower but the weather



deteriorated as we reached a higher ridge at 4,350m. The drop on either side of the path was over 1,500m and gusting winds made the traverse extremely tense, with the bikes acting like sails. Seven hours later we reached camp and the following day had another similarly difficult time, crossing multiple ridges before finally arriving at Putha Base Camp at 4,907m.

The camp was idyllic, with short grass and a mountain stream supplying fresh glacial meltwater. When the sun shone the days were warm and we soon settled into life centred around a mess tent. With stunning high peaks all around us it was hard to appreciate we were already 100m higher than the summit of Mont Blanc. With only half the level of oxygen we enjoy at sea level, any activity was demanding, but the real test was about to begin on the glacier and above the snowline.



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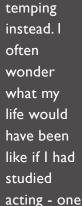
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Spotlight







acting - one of those forks in the road."

Marriage and looking after a growing family followed, which kept April busy but, always one for a challenge, at the age of 43 she decided to do an A-Level in law. She got

an A, the fire was lit and, aged 45, she was accepted to study a full-time degree in Philosophy and Literature at the University of Sussex. "It was one of the happiest times of my life," she says. "Commuting from home in Cowden was relatively easy and I could fit the work around home life. Studying philosophy was a real awakening and it was a life-changing experience."

Following her divorce April threw herself into trying a variety of courses to keep her busy and her brain working. Studying silver smithing part time in Tunbridge Wells and jewellery making with Sarah Macrae at West Dean College led her to invest in her own equipment so she could continue creating at home. She didn't stop there (I'm exhausted just writing this!). At West Dean she also took short courses in basket making, blacksmithing, picture framing, stained glass,

photography and drawing. She took up modelling the human form in clay at evening classes, and found she had a talent for it, which led her to start an art degree majoring in sculpture.

April's creative skills are in evidence around her home as we talk. Beautiful vases and sculptures are on the shelves and she's wearing some of the earrings, rings and bracelets she has designed and made. Oh, and she's a talented dressmaker, too! She is happy to undertake a few jewellery commissions and is planning to open her studio in 2025.

Ruth Clark



April Trezies: Forks in the road that led to a beautiful life

When you meet April there's no doubt whatsoever that she is very creative. Seeing her so stylishly dressed, with coordinating glasses and matching jewellery that she has made herself, I

always feel that I could have made more of an effort. Her creative flair was a breath of fresh air when, shortly after moving to the village in 2022, she joined the Benenden Players to help with costumes for the upcoming panto. She is also a member of the Rhythm of Life Choir that meets every Thursday in St George's Church. "I love performing and creating and it's a great way of making friends quickly. I have met such a lovely bunch of people who have been so welcoming and, when I had a health scare recently, been so kind and supportive," she says.

A young April, growing up near Windsor, had set her sights on an acting career and had been accepted by a drama school. "They deferred my place for a year as they thought I was still quite young but then, due to financial issues, rescinded the place," she explains. "During that year I had taken an advanced secretarial course so started



Local History



Memories of Jean Maridor, WWII Spitfire pilot: a hero in Benenden and France

Richard Holme, whose mother was engaged to the man who famously saved Benenden School from a 'flying bomb', recalls poignant moments between the two families

My late mother Jean Holme (nee Lambourn) was engaged to Jean Maridor (nicknamed Mari); indeed they were due to be married eight days after he was killed, heroically saving Benenden School (then an army hospital) from a VI flying bomb on 3 August 1944.

The story is well known in the village, but to reiterate, Mari damaged the VI over Rolvenden and it was likely to fall on the school buildings, potentially killing hundreds of Army servicemen. Mari fired at the VI, coming very close, too close, and although he destroyed the VI, he was killed in the resulting explosion.

Recent archival research by Colin Welch has revealed that Mari often flew remarkably close to VIs in his fervent desire to eliminate them; within 50 yards on several occasions, where general guidance suggested no closer than I50 yards. At the speed he and the VI were

travelling, this would have given him just half a second to avoid the VI, should it explode.

For example, on 5 July 1944, he shot down two VIs on the same day. With the second one near Hawkhurst, he got within 50 yards and when his cannon jammed, he flew ahead of it, with it in his slipstream, causing it to fall to the ground.

This summer, with my cousin Nicholas Lambourn, I visited Mari's home city of Le Havre, for commemorations linked to the 80th anniversary of his heroic death. Nicholas' father John met Mari and, a keen historian, later authored several books on him. Perhaps the main events on our visit were at the Ecole Jean Maridor, where a new portrait of my mother with Mari was unveiled. There, we met the former French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe,





who spoke passionately about Mari and the example he set, having risen from a humble background.

M Philippe asked us about what my mother did after Mari's death and her

cancelled wedding. I explained that after just two weeks off, she returned to active service in the WAAF and five years later met and married my father, John Holme. They lived happily in Sevenoaks until they died in 2001.

My mother stayed connected with Mari's family after the war ended. As children, my sister Katie and I enjoyed staying in Le Havre, Normandy with Mari's lovely sister Therese, her husband Fernand and their children Jean and Michel, and they would also come over to Sevenoaks, where we lived. They were happy times.



After Peter Hall met my mother in his research for his published history of Mari's 91 Squadron, my mother felt more able perhaps to open up about her wartime experiences and was very glad to meet several other pilots from that squadron, who had survived the war.

Now only Michel is left of the immediate family, and I was glad to meet him again in Le Havre this summer, along with his daughter Lois and Philippe Cayla, a cousin once removed of Mari. We passed to Michel some relics of Mari that my mother had had and which we felt belonged in France, notably goggles, medals and a splinter from the VI, see below.

The engagement ring that Mari gave my mother is still used in our family; my daughter Alison wore it at her wedding in 2015 and my son Tom's wife Tasha wore it at their wedding earlier this year.



We also visited the Aeroclub Jean Maridor and Mari's grave in the Sainte-Marie cemetery, leaving a simple bouquet. Initially buried at Brookwood cemetery, he was reinterred at Le Havre in 1946 in a ceremony at which 20,000 followed his coffin.

Nicholas and I were also pleased to meet historians Francoise Amiel-Hebert and Florence Roumeguere; their fathers Henri Amiel and Jacques Roumeguere were also wartime heroes and, in fact, Compagnons de la Liberation. Both Florence and Francoise are keen historians of Mari and other wartime heroes from the Le Havre area.



There have been various commemorations of Mari's heroism, both in Benenden and Le Havre. The biggest locally was the 1994 event where many of Mari's flying colleagues and ground crew from his 91 Squadron attended. Many of Mari's contemporaries had by then risen to high positions in the French Air Force.

A memorial was placed in the church by my mother and Therese. Benenden School, who have always been supportive, hosted a lunch for nearly 100 and in 2019, a memorial tablet was unveiled there by my sister Katie Stewart on the occasion of the 75th anniversary. There are various relics of Mari exhibited in the Maridor Room at the school.

His memory lives on, both in Benenden and Le Havre and in our families. richardholme8@gmail.com





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Reminiscence

Escape from Limassol, or how I learned to love the bagpipes

Fifty years ago, Benenden villager
Denise Riches found herself caught up in
an unexpected political power struggle in
Cyprus. Here she remembers how everyone
came together to support one another.
In 1974 I was only 20 years old and newly
married. On 15 July it was just a normal day
at work for me as a civilian employee at RAF
Episkopi in Cyprus. I had started to make tea
and there was a power cut. It wasn't long before
we heard that there had been a coup.

I lived in Limassol and my husband worked some distance away at Akrotiri. It was unsafe to leave so I stayed on the base that night, going home the next day. We were confined to the house under curfew and you could hear shots ringing out across the town. Five days after the coup, Turkish forces invaded the northern part of the island and hostilities intensified in Limassol. We learned from the radio that there were attempts to arrange a ceasefire to enable families to escape the town in convoy, but this proved difficult and we were advised to just 'go for it'. The drive was quite tense, but we eventually made it out of town.

We joined a long line of cars entering the base at Akrotiri and were greeted by a piper playing the bagpipes. How very British and what a lovely welcome. We felt home and safe. It was very emotional.

There were many married quarters on the base, but there were also a lot of personnel in private accommodation in the town, so this was like trying to fit a quart into a pint pot. RAF personnel had to sleep at their place of work, and several families were accommodated in each house. The host wives must have found it difficult to be invaded by so many people, but there was a cheerful camaraderie about it all. Forces 'compo' rations were delivered to us - large boxes containing tins, chocolate and even cigarettes.

Despite the unusual circumstances, things settled into a nice routine and I was bussed to work at Episkopi with my roommate. There were



bonuses to living in a house of women and children: when we came home from work the rations had been opened and dinner was saved for us. During the evenings our husbands could come and visit and take us out on a 'date'. As you can imagine couples often sought quiet areas for some 'alone time'. One enterprising household had a tent in the garden and there was a rota for the husbands and wives to stay in it overnight!

This lasted for about two weeks and as things became more settled in Limassol we were allowed to return home. This didn't last long and a second offensive was launched on 14 August when peace talks broke town. The decision was made to evacuate us back to the UK, in alphabetical order of surname. I sat in the house waiting for the lorry with the loudspeaker to come round and announce my turn. I boarded the RAFVC10 and left my husband behind in Cyprus, landing early on 17 August, and rang my mother. I had no way of telling her what was happening, but she was prepared from watching the news on TV.

I stayed with my parents for six months, registered with a temp agency and went to work. I was able to return to Cyprus in early 1975, staying until the end of my husband's tour of duty in December 1975. Certainly an interesting time experiencing the protection of the UK armed forces and true British spirit under adversity at first hand.

In Your Garden



Refreshing
your borders
can brighten
the autumn
Taking stock of how

our borders have performed throughout the year is a task I approach with great positivity in the

autumn, and this year is no different. Our gardens are constantly on the move as we are kept on our toes by everything mother nature throws at us, and while this year's incessant rainfall has made working outdoors very tricky for us horticulturalists, it is still the best time of year to plant. The soil is still warm, with plenty of added moisture from the rains meaning even once the temperatures drop, newly planted roots will be growing strongly, making a bigger splash next spring, not to mention healthier and steadier root growth.

I am vowing, where stock supplies permit, to scale down in pot sizes when replanting herbaceous or grasses - to one litre, especially during an autumn plant. Factoring in soil warmth and available moisture levels, it's a win-win for any plant and, contrary to what you may see on the TV, you can establish a generous clump of sedum much more quickly with nine one-litre pots than five two-litre and have money to spare in your pocket. Even better, you could divide a section for free (from your own garden or a friend's). I have seen Carol Klein buy just two plants and upon getting them home divide them up immediately, pot up and increase stock that way, although you clearly have to wait longer for these to bulk up, patience being a great virtue of any good gardener.

Getting the underplanting of roses right is always a challenge but autumn is a particularly good time to improve things. Old handbooks by the like of David Austin are good for inspiration: on the front cover of his 2018/19

handbook is a beautiful pairing of R. 'Desdemona' with Astrantia major 'Claret' (although the softer variety 'Roma' would pair just as well) and using a pale pink agastache alongside a mid-pink rose. I also like large-leaved heucheras or heucherellas under roses, as the leaves do not overwhelm but give

coverage to the roses' bare legs, plus their flower stalks are very pretty and long lasting.

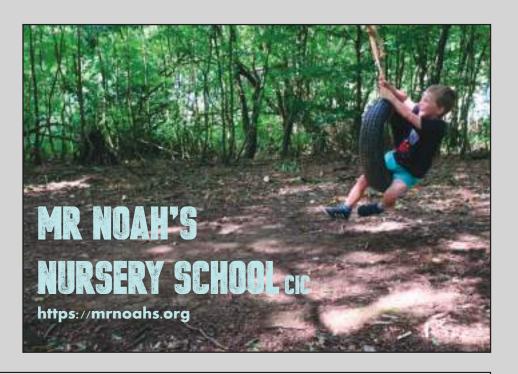
I find visualising next year's spring bulbs also easier at this time of year, despite knowledgeable folk saying this is easiest during the bulb's actual flowering season. I think this is largely due to the lack of competition from other plants that helps me focus on what I want where, decisions always made easier with an uncluttered mind, I feel. This year I have majored on smaller spring bulbs, good varieties of narcissi and an overhaul of my bulbs in pots. I love all shades of blue in spring - scilla siberica, tiny puschkinias, muscari (especially the bicolour ones such as 'Mount Hood') and pale blue iris reticulatas.

I am also developing my narcissi range: a white N. 'Cheerfulness' brings double joy with scent, N. Obdam ditto and N. bulbocodium 'Arctic Bells' in palest yellow. I am packing these into pots, a variety in each with some muscari or scillas in the top sections - success stories are noted (either for my own garden or a client's) and, as ever, the bulb list grows exponentially! **Annabel Lear GARDENS** Planting . Design . Consultancy 07759 440922 annabellear@btinternet.com



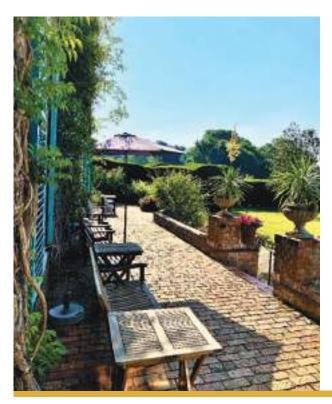








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