



Benenden Magazine

June 2022

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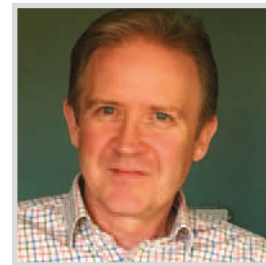
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Editorial



For the most part, the contents of a parish magazine are happy and positive, about schools and sports, clubs and societies, country walks and home-made chutney, with a bit of village politics thrown in to stir the pot. Sometimes, however, there is less buoyant news to pass on, so we make no excuses for giving over four pages of this issue (pages 32-35) to mark the sad passing of our very own Tracy Claridge.

Tracy was taken from us all too soon, at the age of just 66, and the length and breadth of the tributes we've published are testament to both his popularity and the sheer enormity of the workload he assumed on behalf of us all. The only shame is that we couldn't give over an entire issue to accommodate the long queue of admirers who wanted to offer their own words of praise and condolence.

On a personal level, I'll miss him very much, whenever there's a glass of wine to be drunk or a daft conversation to be had; but, as the insensitive old saying goes, life goes on, and as June arrives on our doorsteps, there are all manner of admirable people and exciting events to fill the remainder of our pages.

Not least the village fete, of course, which was just one of Tracy's 'babies'. This year's will be as wonderful and communal as ever, and it's my great wish that we'll all celebrate it with added gusto in commemoration of Tracy and the hard graft he put into it over the years. I for one intend to have an extra pint in the beer tent to remind him that the village traditions he so cherished and encouraged will continue to thrive long after we're all gone.

It's the least I can do for one of Benenden's finest.

Peter Thomas, Co-Editor

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Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

Thursday 2 June		8.30pm Jubilee Celebration of Life in Service
Pentecost Sunday 5 June	8am Communion	11am Jubilee Service and Communion
Sunday 12 June	8am BCP Communion	10am Morning Worship
Sunday 19 June	8am Communion	10am Sung Eucharist
Sunday 26 June	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 10am Morning Worship is broadcast on our YouTube channel: search 'Iden Green Congregational Church'.

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

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org
Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Baptism 22 May Charlotte Fowler

Weddings
1 May Katharine Alder and Paul McAnearry
14 May Becca Massey and Simon Andrews
21 May Annabelle McGregor and Xander Georgetti
22 May Emily Fisher and Ollie Smith
28 May Laura Burchell and Craig Wickham

Funerals
15 May Patricia 'Trish' Evens Interment
17 May William 'Bernard' Phillips - Funeral and burial
20 May Patricia and Raymond Pearson Interment
27 May Tracy Leigh Claridge Committal Kent and Sussex Crematorium
and Thanksgiving Service St George's

Rector's Letter



We're never too busy to think of others

The wedding season is in full swing once again, particularly with all the restrictions of Covid over the last couple of years having been lifted. For a similar reason, the number of baptisms and baptism enquiries we are handling is increasing. Both of these are a real joy.

Then, of course, there is the celebration weekend for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, a real history-making occasion, with all the background work going on all over the country for street parties, picnic lunches, concerts, flower festivals, am-dram revues, church services and beacon lighting events. And just to add to the busyness, the Sunday of the Jubilee weekend is also Pentecost, when we remember the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the early church. And just to make it even more busy in the parish, a wedding on the Saturday, too. (Someone didn't have the Jubilee weekend on their radar when the wedding was booked a couple of years ago! Hey-ho, it will add to the fun and craziness of the extended weekend).

In Benenden we also have the busyness, the fun, and the exhaustion of the village fete in support of St George's Church. Before that happy occasion, though, we also have the sad event of the funeral of 'Mr Fete', Tracy Claridge, at the end of May and the service of Thanksgiving, when we can, hopefully, celebrate a good life together. He will be missed and there are fitting tributes to Tracy elsewhere in this edition. And then, the end of the academic year is fast approaching, with all its different activities, sports days, church services, shows, discos etc, etc; all of which take a lot of effort, by many people, to make happen.

In all that busyness, we need to take a leaf out of Tracy's book of life and remember those who are struggling at this time (more and more people are, as the economic situation gets worse); and remember those who are arriving in our country, county and villages as refugees. Let's try and remember to be generous with all that we have been blessed with and be prepared to share out of our abundance.

That 'generosity' is not exclusively about money; it is about having a generous heart and a generous spirit to want to help others. That can be offering someone our time; time to talk and say "hello". As I said last month, it might just be smiling at someone as you pass them in the village. Little things can make a big difference. (We've been thinking about that in collective worship at the primary school, and thinking about the parable of the mustard seed.) If we all do kind things, even if they are little, together they will make a big difference. God bless.

Revd David Commander, Rector

Village Calendar

June

Thursday 2	Jubilee Celebration of a Life in Service, St George's Church, 8.30pm	p.9
Thursday 2	Jubilee Lighting of the Beacon, Beacon Field, 9.30pm	p.9
Saturday 4	Benenden Players, The Platinum Revue, Benenden Village Hall, 7.30pm	p.11
Saturday 4	Summer Barbecue and Brush Chucker, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 5	Jubilee Service, St George's Church, 11am	p.9
Sunday 5	Jubilee Picnic Lunch, The Green, 12.15pm	p.9
Saturday 11	Bingo, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Saturday 18	Benenden Fete, in aid of St George's Church, The Green, 12noon-4pm	pull-out
Saturday 18	A Right Royal Charity Quiz Night, St George's Club, 8.15pm	p.13
Monday 20	Parish Council Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Tuesday 21	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.19
Tuesday 21	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Garden Party at a Member's home, 5.30pm	p.13
Saturday 25	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 26	Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra, St George's Church, 7.30pm	p.15
Tuesday 28	Merry and Bright, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.19
Wednesday 29	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Pashley Manor Gardens visit, 11am	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: Cafe and Toddler Group

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

Parish Council



My children long ago flew the nest and I now have a two-year-old granddaughter to keep me on my toes. As she has progressed to walking and clambering about, she has developed a great fondness for the park. Thankfully, living in Benenden Parish I have two state-of-the-art facilities to choose from, one in the main village close to the primary school, the other on Iden Green recreation ground.

I remember their predecessors, and these really are a great improvement for children, parents and sometimes even grandparents to get some fresh air, exercise and have some fun. I have no loyalty to either park but I find it very pleasing to see how well used they are, so a big thank you to local people and organisations who made this possible.

On the subject of entertaining children, Iden Green Tennis Club has resumed junior coaching and to encourage local children to play, the club is offering subsidised lessons with our excellent coach Piotr. There are some places still available so please have a look at the club website www.idengreentennis.net and get your children involved.

Two final points, firstly to say thank you to the 25 volunteers that turned up for the village tidy - we collected over 20 big sacks of rubbish and doesn't the village and surrounding area look better for it. Secondly, we are still trying to raise funds for the renovation of the village wells - these are of great historical importance so please visit www.wonderful.org.

Stephen Cochrane, Parish Councillor

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk

01580 240371 clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org

For more information see our website www.benendenparishcouncil.org or find us on Facebook

Parish Council Meeting

Monday 20 June 2022,

Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm



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We would like to say a huge 'THANK YOU'

to our patrons, local businesses, musicians and amazing team for supporting our
Music & Curry Night in aid of UNICEF Ukraine. It was a fantastic night and a great success!



We raised a whopping £2,240.00!!



The event showed just how wonderful our local community is and what a great village
local The Bull at Benenden is, as if we needed reminding! **Thank you again.**

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Talking Point



Local action for a global problem

When I was a child, our milk was delivered by an electric vehicle in glass bottles that were washed and reused, and we happily shared it with blue tits that often pecked through the foil lids for a sip of cream. Fast forward 40 years and observe the giant leap backwards for mankind: an unfathomable increase in the use of plastic to satisfy our hunger for a cheaper and easier lifestyle. It is ironic that we are destroying the natural world with a product we have manufactured from plants and animals that lived millions of years ago.

Plastic production gobbles a staggering 8% of annual global fossil fuel production. In 2019 that was 460 million tonnes of plastic, a figure that has doubled in the last 20 years. Half of it is 'single use' and less than 10% of the plastic that has ever been produced has been recycled. Little wonder that there are now over 50 trillion pieces of plastic and micro-plastic in the world's oceans. As UV light and wave action breaks it into ever smaller pieces, the Earth's Coriolis force and resulting currents gather the plastic mush into the five swirling 'gyres' located between our continents on either side of the equator. They are often referred to as plastic rafts but they are more like a plastic soup that is virtually impossible to extract from the water.

Plastic is not merely floating in the ocean; it has worked its way into all forms of life, with the average person eating about 5g of plastic each week. You can't see it or smell it, but you are consuming or inhaling the equivalent of a credit card in micro and nano-plastics each week. Inevitably some of this remains lodged in our tissue, particularly the lungs, liver and kidneys and little is known about the long-term health effects.

This is a gargantuan problem that can only be mitigated by mankind. I am a firm believer in 'every little helps', so a few individual lifestyle changes do make a big difference when the whole community works together. 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' is already a common mantra for many.

This year, the village fete committee is introducing a small but significant change; it is an initiative that has been proven to work at many sporting events and festivals and we need your help.

You will still ENJOY a pint of fine ale, a chilled wine or a flute of fizz, but this will either be served in a compostable 'glass' or in one of our new 'St George's, Benenden' reusable pint glasses. A £1 deposit will be included in the price of your pint, so when you RETURN your glass at the end of the afternoon, you will receive your £1 back. The glasses will then be washed and RE-USED at next year's fete and other church events. Look out for the 'Enjoy Me, Return Me, Re-use Me' slogan and help our village make a difference.

Tim Maw



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Benenden celebrates the Jubilee

As well as enjoying the opportunity to spend some time with family and friends, why not join in Benenden's Jubilee celebrations from 2-5 June. Do share this page so everyone knows what is happening.

THURSDAY 2 JUNE

8.30pm: St George's Church: A celebration of a life in service

Join for a short service of readings and singing to applaud those whose lives are dedicated to the service of our local community. If you serve, or have served, locally or further afield in the country or abroad please come in uniform, wearing medals, badges or other items showing the service you are associated with.

9.30pm: Lighting of the beacon

After leaving church at around 9.15pm, make your way to the beacon field where we will be joining thousands of other beacon sites across the Commonwealth who are lighting up at 9.45pm to mark the Jubilee. The national anthem will be sung followed by a special peal from St George's. This event is supported by the Parish Council and the Bonfire Society. Stout footwear for uneven ground and a torch are advised.

SATURDAY 4 JUNE

7.30pm: Village Hall: The Platinum Revue

See page 11 for full details.

SUNDAY 5 JUNE

11am: St George's Church: Jubilee Service

12.15pm: The Green: Jubilee picnic lunch

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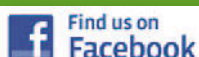
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The Queen's Platinum Jubilee events

Please contact me if you can help with any of the events, I am especially looking for a bugler or bagpipe player and help setting up for the Jubilee picnic lunch.

Peter Ellis 07860 941139
peteralanellis@aol.com

Iden Green and Benenden WI

Having enjoyed an excellent lunch at Petals Garden Centre, some of our lovely ladies were pleased to help clear the table, ably demonstrating the general willingness of our WI to help anyone, anywhere. We were lucky with the sun shining on us as we wandered around looking at the many varieties of plants.

Most of our members remembered their subs in time for the AGM, when we voted for Shirley to be our president for another year. We are also fortunate to have a very helpful, happy team on our committee. Also, at the last meeting we had two very successful stalls: one for plant and produce exchange and another for books.

Arrangements are well in hand for the Village Fete on 18 June when we shall be displaying our fascinating archives as well as having a small bring and buy stall to demonstrate our activities. Our big 100th anniversary celebration will be at our garden party on 21 June which begins at 5.30pm. Also, all members are invited to join us at Pashley Manor Gardens on 29 June, meeting at the entrance at 11am.

Please put the evening of 5 July in your diaries, when we are hoping to hold a free, trial, social evening in the Memorial Hall for anyone who may like to come along. Watch this space.
Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

Benenden Pre-School

Benenden Pre-School has entered the Wilder Kent Awards, run by the Kent Wildlife Trust. By entering, we are demonstrating our desire to connect children and families with nature and protect our planet for the future.

We already promote this in a number of ways, principally by spending time each day, whatever the weather, in our lovely garden where we grow fruit and vegetables. Each child has recently planted a sunflower and they are fascinated by the weekly progress of the plants. We have a recycling bin and a food waste bin in addition to a dustbin and we have a wormery in the garden to convert some of our food waste into compost.

Our daily 'stair leader' (the children take it turns to be the one who comes down the stairs first when we go outside) is now also in charge of turning the upstairs lights off to ensure we are not wasting electricity. We find children really enjoy this sort of responsibility.

Parents help us directly as well by, for example, avoiding single use plastics in lunch boxes and by walking, cycling or scooting their child to pre-school whenever possible. Parents who drive turn their engines off while dropping off in order to reduce unnecessary air pollution.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor
supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

St George's Club

Keep the Jubilee celebrations going by taking part in the Right Royal Jubilee Quiz at the St George's Club on Saturday 18 June at 8pm. Teams of four to six. Only £2 a head and please bring a raffle prize. Proceeds to the club and the British Heart Foundation, for whom John Marshall is doing the London to Brighton cycle race the next day.

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Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

With the most amazing fun-filled dance moves, all children enjoyed a very successful school dance-a-thon last month. The children worked hard to raise funds with their own sponsorship forms and collected money from their friends, families and neighbours. The pupils had to dance for 30 minutes non-stop to groovy music with their peers and all monies are going towards new enriching playground equipment to enhance their breaktime enjoyment and other curricular activities. Huge thanks to all who supported and well done to all children.

We are getting ready for the Benenden village fete. Each class at our primary school is helping run a stall. We are excited to offer a popcorn stall, surprise lucky dip, our colourful sweetie jars, a great bottle tombola, traditional games of splat the rat and wet sponge and the famous Kids' Cave. Do come with lots of change and coins as it will be cash only.

If you still have some great children's toys or games, do please still drop off at the Scout Hut. Thank you.

If you can, please support our continued efforts to raise funds towards new outdoor learning resources. Every £10 will make a difference, so if you can, please visit our charity donations page. Just use this link to donate www.gofund.me/80bf4556

For more details on activities or how to support, please scan QR code or visit our website www.tinyurl.com/2bpyw54h



Astrid Miller, Benenden CEP, PTFA Chair

Benenden Cricket Club

Our home fixtures for May on The Green are:

Saturday 4 June v Hastings and Bexhill

Barbarians at 2pm

Thursday 16 June v Tunbridge Wells Royals
at 6pm

Saturday 25 June v Rusthall at 2pm

Richard Brunt, Club Captain

The Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra

Celebrates a return to making music in Benenden Church

Conductor: Michael Hitchcock, Leader: Clare Haythornthwaite

Egmont Overture - Beethoven

Masques et Bergamasques - Faure

Symphony 3 (Scottish) - Mendelssohn



Sunday 26 June 2022 at 7.30pm

St George's Church, Benenden, Kent TN17 4DL

In advance adults £10, students £5

from thecso.org.uk or Benenden Community Shop

£12 on the door



Profits to Catching Lives - catchinglives.org

CSO is registered charity no. 1053542



Benenden Cricket Club

After an early defeat against Staplehurst in late April, Benenden went on a winning streak in May with two conclusive victories and a rain-affected draw.

Benenden v Wittersham in early May saw strong bowling performances from Barry Bassett and also Benenden's newest team member, Richard Gairdner. Richard is new to the village and looks set to become a stalwart member of the club since he is also a skilled batter too. Sadly the game was halted after Wittersham's innings due to a deluge.

A week later, the game against Smallhythe featured six spectacular catches in uncharacteristic style from Benenden, who limited the opposition's score to just 103 after 40 overs. Benenden took just 25.3 overs to reach this with the loss of only four wickets.

Last week against Teston saw Benenden batting first and a great partnership that saw Copter Brunt scoring 64 and Les Aldous 33 runs to help Benenden to 188. Another strong spell in the field saw a flurry of wickets fall, limiting the opposition to an all-out 129 runs.

Our next home game is on Saturday 4 June against the Hastings and Bexhill Barbarians at 2pm; also against Rusthall at home on Saturday 25 June. Look out for our popular midweek T20 games, which will feature a paying BBQ.

Barry Bassett

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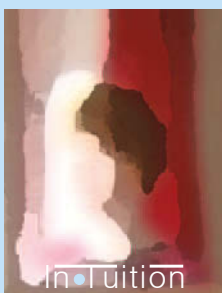
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Planning Matters

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

- 22/01117/FULL 5-7 Wood Lane. Change of use of nos. 5 and 7 Wood Lane from creche childcare facility to residential dwellings. (Retrospective).
- 22/01055/FULL Dene Hollow, Frogs Hole Lane. Removal of Condition iii (Agricultural Occupancy) of planning approval WE/5/71/115.
- 22/01271/NMAMD Land adjacent Telephone Exchange, New Pond Road. Non material amendment in relation to window colour, weatherboarding.
- 22/00655/FULL 2 Hilltop Cottages, Dingleden. Erection of two storey extension, additional single storey extension to the rear and detached car port.

More planning matters at:

benendenparishcouncil.org

Benenden Bowls Club

The bowling season has started and we have begun well, winning both of our opening friendly matches, both away at the Tenterden and Headcorn clubs. Following these two great results the first interclub knockout (The Bambridge Cup) was played on Sunday 15 May on our beautiful bowling green behind the village hall. Although we only had ten, it was a great afternoon and the rain held off long enough. The top three players were: Rex Bourne (25 points), club chairman Ray Cheeseman (22 points) and president Jane Abbott (21 points).

John Marshall johnm.jm41@gmail.com



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Successful auction event

A big thank you to all those who helped at the recent auction and supper event held in the village hall. We were so lucky to have the excellent services of Raj Bisram, who hosted the evening with such enthusiasm and verve. Over 40 items were auctioned off and the evening's fun included a quiz of unusual antique objects, supper, good wines, a raffle and even musical entertainment from Benenden Jazz.

Thank you to all those who donated items; to those who then bought them; the musicians; to all those who helped on the evening and, of course, to Raj. I am delighted approximately £3,300 was raised for St George's Church. This includes £300 donated by a resident who later sold a larger item privately but who wanted to add the proceeds to the overall amount.

Sally-Ann Marks



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BENENDEN FETE 2022

PULL-OUT GUIDE



Cakes Fun Dog Show **Bric-a-Brac** Tools-R-Us
BBQ & Hop Inn Afternoon Tea **Kids Corner** Raffle
Books Classic Cars **Chic Boutique** Bouncy Castles
Coconut Shy Face Painting **Plants** Cow Pat Bingo
Show Arena Strawberries & Cream **Live Music**

BENENDEN FETE '22



12:00	Fete opens, BBQ
12.05-12:30	Children's Royal Crown Procession (Arena)
12:30-1:00	Reg E. Mental magician (Arena)
1:10-1:40	Ami Piper Dance School Show (Arena)
1:15-1:35	Rhythm of Life Choir (Church)
1:40-2:10	Children's Triathlon (Arena)
	Contestants arrive 1:30
1:40-2:00	Benenden Jazz (Stage)
2:10-3:00	Fun Dog Show (Arena)
2:00-3:30	Jane Whitely plays the organ (Church)
2:10-2:35	Lyn & Martin Hayes (Stage)
2:45-3:05	Rhythm of Life Choir (Stage)
3.15-3:45	Benenden Jazz (Stage)
3:00-3:30	Reg E. Mental magician (Arena)
3.45	Raffle & Cow Pat Bingo winner announcements
4:00	Close

DON'T FORGET
TO BRING
£ CASH!

The Benenden Fete, in aid of St George's Church, is a traditional treat for the whole family!

Wonderful Stalls

Discover treasure on our stalls including books in the Memorial Hall; pre-loved clothes and jewellery in Chic Boutique; children's toys, games, books & clothes; tools and machinery at Tools-R-Us; plants galore; and choice Bric-a-Brac items.

Delicious Food & Drink

Buy scrumptious cakes and jams; sit down to afternoon tea in the Church; treat yourself to strawberries and cream and Northiam Dairy Moovers & Shakers milkshakes and ice cream; pick up popcorn; snap up burgers and sausages from the BBQ and wash them all down with real ale, cider, wine and fizz from the Hop Inn and Benenden Bacchus wine bar.

Introducing recyclable cups

To limit waste we are introducing recyclable cups. Pay £1 deposit for the cup when you buy your ale/cider and when you return it you will get £1 back. It's that simple. Enjoy - Return - Reuse.

Children's Zone

Head for the children's area for lots of fun and games organised by the PTFA with a huge selection of toys, costumes, clothes, books and games to tempt all ages. Plus, who can resist a bouncy castle/assault course, Tombola, Soggy Sponges, showing off your skills at the Coconut Shy and Splat the Rat, face painting by the creative Pre-school mums...and so much more?

Vintage Cars

Take a walk around a display of vintage cars lovingly cared for by local owners.



In the Church

A climb up the Church tower to appreciate the stunning views over the village and surrounding countryside is a not-to-be-missed experience. Afterwards, why not relax with afternoon tea in the church while listening to the organ and the Rhythm of Life Choir.

Music, Magic & Dance

Enjoy live music throughout the afternoon from Benenden Jazz, Rhythm of Life Choir and Lyn and Martin Hayes. The medley of arena highlights includes a Royal Crown procession; Ami Piper's Dancers; Fun Dog Show; Children's Triathlon; and magic performed by the hilarious Reg E. Mental.

Amazing Raffle Prizes

Don't forget to snap up a raffle ticket with a chance to win great prizes, including an amazing flying lesson. Buy them in advance at Benenden's Community Shop or The Bull pub or on the day at the Raffle Stall.

ARENA FUN & GAMES

12:05PM: ROYAL CROWN PROCESSION

To celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee we are inviting children under 12 to make and decorate a fabulous crown and wear it in a procession at the opening of the fete. There will be prizes awarded for the three best crowns made in each age category. Beautiful or bonkers – get creating and gather at the arena entrance at midday.

1:40PM: CHILDREN'S FUN TRIATHLON

Calling all children who fancy their chances in the Spud & Spoon Race, Sack Race and Three-legged Race (bring a friend for this one). You can enter them all or just one – it's up to you. Medals up for grabs. BUT – please sign up in advance. You'll find the form enter on the village shop noticeboard.

2:10PM: FUN DOG SHOW

Bring along your talented pooch to take part in these fun categories:

- Waggiest Tail
- Most Doggie Sits
- Best Trick

Prizes donated by Roosters, Cranbrook.

MOST REGAL DOG

Post a photo of your dog on our throne on Instagram tagging @benenden_fete_2022 and @benendenvillage. Use our little props to give them a right royal look and the most regal dog will win a prize.



Cow Pat Bingo & Morris Minor Balloons

A star attraction and nail biting! Buy a grid square and hope our very special Northiam Dairy cow chooses it to deliver a cow pat to win you a night for two at The George in Rye. Then try and guess how many balloons have been packed into the Morris Minor – not as easy as you think!



Find us on Facebook:
Benenden Village Fete

Instagram @benenden_fete_2022



benenden hospital

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01580 363 523 benendenhospital.org.uk

A huge thank you to our sponsors and all those who have donated items, prizes, and their time to bring this wonderful traditional fete to fruition. We couldn't do it without all your hard work and support!

Prizes donated by: Paul Tolhurst, Benenden Vineyard, Hemsted Equestrian Centre, Billie Loves, Pashley Manor Gardens, Chimera Climbing, P.Ward & Sons, The Bull, Helen Jewsbury, Hannah's Garden, Benenden Players, Kino, Grierson Galleries, Benenden Bonfire, Palmstead Nurseries, Biddenden Cider, The Foundry Salon, Olly Collier.

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Benenden School

The beautiful weather set a lovely positive note for everyone at the start of what promises to be an extremely busy and productive term. All year groups will be undertaking exams, in some form, in the coming weeks and it has been very pleasing to see the Upper Fifth and Six Two returning with a focused mindset. These year groups have come back straight into mini mocks and they have been managing these professionally and with purpose, which is great preparation for their public exams, which will be the first sitting since the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020. We are all relieved that the exams are back and wish these girls the very best of luck with the term ahead.

Elsewhere, there is far more than exams to look forward to. The Upper Fourth have been writing their Diploma final projects and there is a real sense that school life has returned to normal, with House Shout taking place on the first weekend, and we have exciting plans for the traditional showpiece events of the summer term, including BenFest, sports day, speech day and those enjoyable activities that represent important rites of passage for our departing Six Twos.

We are also looking forward to welcoming a small number of Ukrainian girls - whose families have been displaced owing to the current situation - to join us at Benenden and we hope that, visas permitting, they will become part of our community very soon.

During Easter our new School Hall and Music School - formally called the Centenary Hall and The Sir David K P Li Music School - was handed over to the school by the lead contractor. We expect students to be using this wonderful new facility during the second half of this term and we look forward to welcoming the community to see the new hall in due course.

Samantha Price, Headmistress

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in aid of St Michael's Hospice

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Merry and Bright Club

At our May meeting we decorated the Memorial Hall with the painted bunting we made in April and enjoyed a lovely Jubilee party. We have some very good artists among us and it looked wonderful. Please come along to our next get together from 2-4pm on 28 June, when we will be shown the ancient art of 'well dressing' or 'well flowering' and be able to have a go ourselves. This is an old countryside tradition where people gather to create intricate pictures formed from plants and flowers and which were often used to decorate wells. I've never seen this before but it promises to be great fun. Please contact me for more information.

Laraine Penny 241703

Village lunch

The village lunch will take place on Tuesday 21 June in the village hall at 12.30pm. £5 each and all welcome. Please could you let me know if you would like to come by Thursday 16 June, so we can plan and shop, as well as cook.

Sheila Hume 854627

Primary School

After many weeks of waiting, we finally received our OFSTED report, which I am delighted to say confirms that Benenden Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school. The report reads amazingly well - indeed the inspector was extremely positive about so many areas of our school. Comments include:

- Pupils are enthusiastic about their school.
- They are happy to attend and particularly appreciate the way staff look after them.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils.
- Pupils regularly attend after-school clubs.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and to assume positions of responsibility.
- Leaders prioritise reading.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well by staff.
- Pupils' wider development is a strength.

We are all extremely proud and I would like to thank the staff, governors, parents and, of course, the children for all their hard work and commitment over the last three years, including their response to all the challenges that we all faced, as we tried to navigate our way through a national pandemic. At the end of this term, we are busy planning for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. We are looking forward to opening our doors once again and welcoming parents into school for an open morning where we will be able to showcase the breadth of our curriculum. Then, later in the afternoon, we shall enjoy a whole school tea party. The children will wear red, white and blue and will be given a commemorative Platinum Jubilee coin courtesy of our wonderful PTFA.

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

Topical health

As we enter barbecue season, one of the things those of us who follow trends in infectious disease expect to see is a decline in the incidence of Covid-19 infections but an upturn in reports relating to food poisoning. As with Covid, though, there are a few simple steps we can take to avoid the risks associated with barbecued foods, although unlike with Covid, we don't recommend you wear a mask when consuming your bangers and burgers.

Warm weather is the perfect breeding ground for bacteria like *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella* and *E. Coli*, which are often present in uncooked and undercooked meats. So here are three simple tips for staying food safe.

First, wash your hands between handling uncooked and cooked foods. Microorganisms can spread from one place to another on our hands, and in this case washing means with soap and water.

Second, defrost meat completely before cooking. You cannot guarantee to defrost meat during the cooking process, so don't even try. It is usually best to defrost items like sausages and burgers overnight in a bowl or on a plate in the fridge. If you are in a hurry, defrost food in the microwave before cooking and remember to cook what you have defrosted within 24 hours.

Third, don't cross-contaminate uncooked and cooked foods, so store them separately, use different utensils and crockery - oh, and did I mention, wash your hands?

It is important that any meat is cooked thoroughly. Remember burnt on the outside does not mean cooked on the inside. It is important to cook food evenly by turning it frequently so it is cooked from all sides, and while it is okay to serve steaks rare or pink, this is never the case with chicken, pork or sausages. Any cooked leftovers should be refrigerated as soon as possible and consumed within 48 hours. Here's to a tummy bug-free summer.

Peter Ellis

Benenden Hospital

As June sees the celebration of our Queen's Platinum Jubilee, I thought it would be the perfect time to revisit the past royal patronage at our hospital. In 1906, Her Royal Highness Princess Christian (daughter of Queen Victoria), laid the foundation stone that you can see in the Pavilion restaurant today.

In 1950, the Benenden Healthcare Society was honoured when Queen Elizabeth, Consort to King George VI, visited Benenden Sanatorium (our hospital) for the first time. In the early 1950s, the Society was looking for a way to increase its profile. The Queen Consort, who had since become the new Queen Mother, had shown interest in the work of the sanatorium, so she was asked if she would become the society's patron. To everyone's delight, she agreed.

Society secretary Joe Fountain asked if it would be possible to have the cover of the Bible in the recently refurbished St Margaret's Church embossed with the Queen Mother's coat of arms. To his surprise, Her Majesty's Private Secretary called on her behalf, agreed to the embossment and even signed it. The original Bible and pen are safely stored at Benenden Hospital.

1965 marked the Society's Diamond Jubilee year and this occasion was the Queen Mother's third and final visit to the recently renamed Benenden Chest Hospital. Her Majesty wrote in the visitor book: "This sanatorium is held in the highest regard and this is a great tribute to those far-sighted men who started this hospital as the Post Office Sanatorium Society."

On 30 March 2002, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother passed away at the age of 101. To honour the Society's beloved patron, flags flew at half-mast at York and the hospital.

The Society's Royal patron is an important part of our hospital's history and as we celebrate our Queen's Jubilee, it is very special to remember our connection with her family. Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

The 39 Steps on stage

Alfred Hitchcock with a difference comes to the area as the Ta-Dah! Theatre Company stages an adaptation of the John Buchan tale 'The 39 Steps' with a comic twist.

It's at Biddenden village hall on Thursday 30 June and Friday 1 and Saturday 2 July, and it promises "a gleefully theatrical spoof of the movie classic", which threatens to be "a mixture of a Hitchcock masterpiece, a juicy spy novel, murder mystery and a dash of Monty Python", all for £11 a ticket, available at: www.tadahtheatreco.co.uk.

Hospice in the Weald Musicals

Welcome to our 14th season of Richard Beattie Davis Memorial Musicals, which has a distinctly French feeling. The garden party in aid of Hospice in the Weald will be, as always, on the final Saturday in July at 3pm. Hugo Philipeau will be making his English debut with a lovely selection of music, including Chopin, Debussy and Ravel.

The September Hospice recital will be at 3pm on Tuesday 6 September, when Sasha Karpeyev will be playing with François Pineau-Benois, our first violinist who is coming over from Paris. Sasha tells me that they are exploring the 'Belaieff' composers, which thrills me - possibly inspired by Richard's book 'The Beauty of Belaieff', the definitive study of the Russian music publisher. They will be playing Rachmaninov, Prokofiev, Glazunov and more.

Tickets will only be sold in advance. Please contact me for reservations:
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Enterprising Locals

Charlie comes home in a first-class Carriage

Ruth Clark talks to the owner of Benenden's new hair salon

It's full circle for Charlie Cox, the owner of The Carriage hair studio that opened in the village last month. The daughter of David Hulme, who many will remember as our local policeman, Charlie lived here in the 90s, subsequently married in St George's and then christened her two children in the church.

As a young girl she worked as a Saturday girl in the salon that was in the same space that she now occupies, before moving to a salon in Cranbrook where she trained for ten years.

"I was ready then to branch out on my own and set up The Carriage in Northiam

in 2016. It wasn't difficult to come up with a name as the salon was in a railway carriage!" she says.

Since then, Charlie and her colleague Eden have built quite a reputation as hair stylists in Northiam.

"It was a great place and unusual, but we were quite isolated," says Charlie. "Other than our customers and each other we really didn't see anyone else during the day and there wasn't a local shop within walking distance."

So, when Charlie heard that Dreams Lashes and Nails were moving into

Cranbrook and that the space in Benenden was becoming available, she decided the time was right to move here. "It's so lovely being part of a village community now and just a couple of steps away from the shop and café. Many of our clients are local anyway and prefer Benenden, so it hasn't been disruptive

at all - in fact we had

six new clients in the first two weeks!"

Charlie and Eden use and sell L'Oreal and K18 products and provide a full

range of services for men and women, including colour, extensions and wedding styling. The salon is open five days a week - closed on Wednesdays and Sundays - and, to make life easier for commuters, they are open late on three days.

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June Openings

Local Open Gardens

Over the next few months, many will open their beautiful gardens to the public to show the fruits of their labours and raise money for worthwhile causes. We've picked a few locally that will be well worth visiting in June.

Sunday 12 June, 11am-5pm

Take the Goudhurst Garden Safari around four beautiful gardens: Lime Tree House, Well House, Gill House and Chequer Tree Farmhouse, with a variety of shrubs, roses, flower borders, wildflower meadows, ponds, woodland and vegetable patches.

In aid of Hospice in the Weald.

Entry £5 and service dogs only.

Goudhurst Road, Goudhurst TN17 2PA

Wednesday 15 June, 12noon-5pm

Balmoral Cottage displays Charlotte Molesworth's exuberant topiary in a truly romantic and secluded organic garden. National Garden Scheme charities.

Entry £6 / children £2.50

The Green, Benenden TN17 4DL

Wednesday 15 June, 11am-6pm

Enjoy Hole Park's formal and woodland garden in a wonderful park setting. Home-made teas.

National Garden Scheme charities.

Entry £10 / children £2

Benenden Road, Rolvenden TN17 4JB

Tuesday, 21 June, 10.30am-4pm

Explore Little Mockbeggar's gorgeous cottage garden, wildflower meadows and ancient woodlands. Tea and cakes available.

In aid of St Michael's Hospice.

Entry £5. No dogs please

Mockbeggar Lane TN27 8ES

Wednesday 22 June, 1-4pm

Discover Great Maytham Hall, home of the original secret garden.

National Garden Scheme charities.

Entry £7 / children free

Maytham Road, Rolvenden TN17 4NE

Open Art Studios

This year marks the 25th anniversary of South East Open Studios where, from 3-19 June, over 200 artists across the region welcome us into their studios to see them at work, talk about their process, passion and philosophy, and buy if we wish. We've picked just a few that are open locally. Full details in the online guide www.seos-art.org

In her hand-built ceramics, Liz Bewley produces playful decorated pieces celebrating not only wild women, mermaids, and moon maidens but also a variety of animals, naughty dancers and planters. Each is unique and fun. Open 3-5, 9-11, 13-14 and 16-19 June
Springhill Barn, Standen Street, Benenden TN17 4LA

Artists Clare Winchester and Ali Stump join to show their portfolio of current prints and painting. Clare's rich abstracts are inspired by memories of walks and places, while Ali shows a selection of prints, including etchings, mono prints and collagraphs. Open 4-5, 10-12 and 17-19 June
Garden Studio, Beacon Mill House, Rolvenden Road, Benenden TN17 4BU

Multiskilled Sara Rowan works in watercolour, acrylic and oil as well as creating ceramic objects inspired by nature, soul and mysticism.

Open 3-5, 10-12, 17-19 June
Little Walkhurst, Walkhurst Road, Benenden TN17 4DT

In Goudhurst you can meet and see the work of seven very talented artists and ceramic sculptors together under one roof: Claire Dominic, Bernard Hartley, Tricia Muller, Rosemary Houghton, Helen Jewsbury (who lives in Benenden), Wendy Love Hinds and Nicola Colbran.

Open 3-5, 9-12 and 16-19 June
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Charity

Bike to Hike charity challenge

As our friends will testify, we love a challenge. In the past we have climbed Kilimanjaro, done crazy one-day challenges in the Lake District, and last year James walked the Pennine Way. However, this year it may be that we have bitten off more than we can chew with the Bike to Hike Challenge. This madness was initially proposed when we were still in our 50s but delay due to COVID has nudged us over a significant threshold, and it remains to be discovered if we are still as young as we feel.

So, this summer we will cycle down France from coast to coast and then a few weeks later hike across a good part of the Alps. By the time you read this we will hopefully have just finished the ride, which follows a meandering route from St Malo to Nice, covering 1,000 miles - 70 miles a day. Just for fun we are throwing in an ascent of Mont Ventoux, the famous Tour de France climb, on what could have been a rest day. If you are interested in looking at or doing the route, then there is a great book called 'France En Velo'.

Then a few weeks later we will return to France and walk across the Alps for two weeks on the GR5, starting in Chatel and finishing in Modane - almost another 200 miles. As you can imagine, both routes are quite up and down, and by the end we will have climbed over 30,000m. To put that in perspective, on the walk every day we will go up and down the equivalent of Scafell and more whilst averaging over 15 miles.



To keep us going, we have lots of friends joining us along the way, including some other Benenden locals. William Casement is doing the whole cycle and Giles Clark, who runs the Bike Workshop, is driving the van and supporting us on the ride.

The pain will all be worth it if we can achieve our fundraising target of £30,000 for our two charities:

Chalkdown Group Riding for the Disabled Association supports local people and has been operating for over 30 years. Gill was until recently a trustee and still volunteers every week. The project we are supporting is 'A Stable Roof' which will rebuild some essential stables that were already in a poor state when Storm Eunice finished them off.

Power for the People is a small charity that invests in communities living in extreme poverty in East Africa to help them build a bright sustainable future. James has been the chair of Power for the People for the last five years. The project we are supporting is 'Window in the World' for the Paorinher community in Uganda. We will build a new classroom, provide computers and books, and most importantly internet connectivity to access remote teaching and the rest of the world.

If you would like to support us, click on the link www.sponsorme.charitiestrust.org and search for Bike to Hike. Thank you.

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Enterprising Locals



Fighting with lockdown in luxury lingerie

Benenden is a hub for enterprising companies who have decided to base their operations here, and Intimates Lingerie is one of them. They invited Ruth Clark to visit them at their UK HQ on Apple Pie Farm recently to talk about their business on the occasion of their 25th anniversary, and it was fascinating. Sarah and Andrew Charlesworth in 1997 had both been working in the luxury cosmetic fragrance and hosiery industries before deciding to start their own venture. They founded Intimates in 1997 to introduce premium brand lingerie, swimwear, nightwear and loungewear from Europe and America into the UK. "It was a big step for us," says Sarah, "but we had so much experience working with high-end brands and retailers that we thought 'why not do it ourselves', and we haven't regretted it since."

Sarah and Andrew were joined by Andrew's children, Ben in 2009 and Sophie in 2010, and today the family business represents some of the world's leading names, including DKNY, Ralph Lauren, Hanro, Commando, Ginia, Kate Spade and Donna Karan. They work closely with these brands and import their products into the UK, managing onward distribution to small independent and large retailers across

the country including Next, John Lewis, Fenwicks, Marks and Spencer, Selfridges, Harrods and Hoopers.

While the company employs about ten in London at their sales room, in their dedicated Hanro shop on South Molton Street and at their concession in Harrods, 19 are based in their Apple Pie Farm HQ, which is boosted by casual labour during the summer when shops stock up ready to meet higher demand for lingerie products at Christmas.

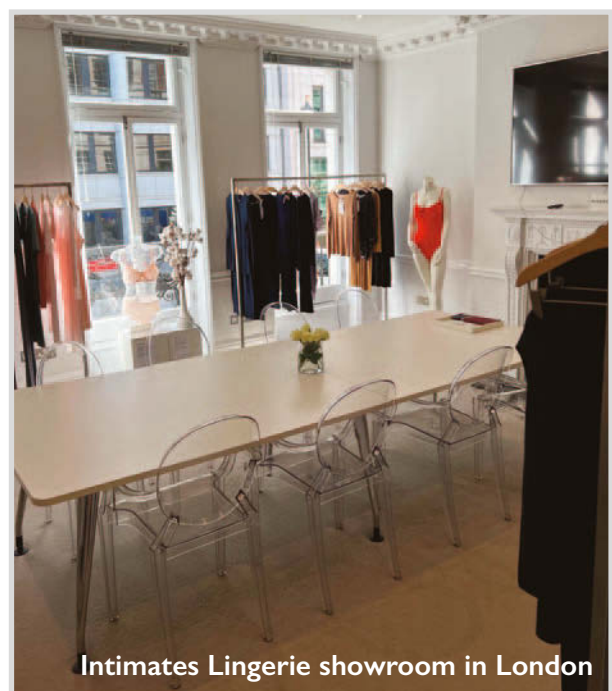
Not surprisingly lockdown had a significant

effect on retailers and, as a result, on Intimates. "The retail industry was already changing rhythm as consumers were shopping less and less on the high street and increasingly moving online," explains Sarah.

"Covid and lockdown accelerated that by five to ten years, but we were ready."

"It's not always easy," she adds. "The pandemic made us extremely nervous, but we had the benefit of working with very established brands and in fact 2021 was our best year in business yet. It never gets boring that's for sure, as the industry is continually changing."

intimateslingerie.co.uk





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NURSERY



Food and Drink

From the Himalayas back to Kentish beer roots

The Benenden Village Wine Society has enjoyed a few triumphs in recent years. As one of the organisers, I shouldn't really say that, but we've had some great tastings, introduced a lot of people to a lot of wine and raised a fair few quid for charity along the way. Even by our high standards, though, the last one was a step up the ladder.

With the massive help of Jo Thornton, from luxury brand retailer LVMH, and with the usual generous hospitality of Samantha Price at Benenden School, my colleague Alfred Nicol and I brought 30 lucky ticket holders into a

We've called on one of Kent's best small breweries - Old Dairy from Tenterden - to visit us at Benenden School on Friday 8 July (7pm for 7.30pm) and take us through their range of excellent brews.

The exact line-up is yet to be finalised, but there will be eight beers, from light, summer types to full-bodied best bitters, and the tasting will be completed by two barrel-aged specialities, which to a lifelong ale enthusiast sound very exciting indeed.

For a slender ticket price of just £15, you'll receive a welcoming bottle on arrival, before we're talked through the beers by an Old Dairy expert. The plan is to enjoy some of the evening



beautiful room and treated them to a gourmet supper accompanied by some quite astonishing bottles, topped by a once-in-a-lifetime Chinese wine produced by the Ao Yun winery in Yunnan province.

It crossed my mind at the time that only a tiny percentage of people in the entire world would ever taste this exclusive concoction - a Bordeaux blend made in the foothills of the Himalayas - and Benenden was now probably, in percentage terms, the best represented community in the entire world.

We raised £700 for Porchlight - the Kent-based charity helping the homeless and vulnerable - and then we sat down and wondered how on earth we could follow such a night.

Well, the answer is that we're going back to grass roots. Or rather to the hop fields upon which Kent founded its alcoholic reputation before sparkling wine came along. Yes, due to insatiable popular demand, we're having a beer tasting.

in glorious summer sunshine, with food that has yet to be decided upon, due to uncertainty over kitchen arrangements, and will have to be bought and paid for separately once all becomes clear. Sorry for the vagueness, but this is slightly new ground for the committee and we're winging it, I confess.

Tickets will be on sale at the village shop very soon. Cash with order, please, and it would help if you could provide us with your email address so we can contact you regarding the food situation in due course.

We look forward to seeing you there.
Peter Thomas



A caring man and a true friend to Benenden

Tracy Claridge

8 April 1956 - 22 April 2022

On April 22, the village lost one of its greatest friends, Tracy Claridge, taken from us far too soon at the age of 66. Tracy was involved in just about every organisation in the village that sought to work for the good of the community, and he was tireless in his efforts: St George's Church, the village fete, the Christmas lunch and Christian Aid; not to mention dragon boat racing, the primary school, the Hello! How are you? Club and the Benenden Action Team; as well as Nourish, Catching Lives and the bowls club; and we'll have missed a few out by mistake.

Here we've gathered a few tributes from across Tracy's wide range of activities, hopefully to give an idea of how much he was appreciated and how sorely he will be missed.

Tom Dawlings, lifelong friend

I first met Tracy in 1974 playing cricket at the Woodford Wells Club in Essex, shortly after we left (different) schools - he was five days younger than me. Tracy had been at Chigwell School and was a formidable young cricketer. Having played football at school, he also joined Woodford Rugby Club where he learned to play a game to which he was ideally suited, but basketball apart (which he played for England), learning about wine was more important for Tracy at that time than club sport and he spent time abroad in Europe and Australia grounding himself in the wine business.

In 1981 many Woodford Wells cricketers joined a tour to South Africa - a touring party which included former England and Kent captain Mike Denness and Peter Parfitt (Middlesex and England) - at a time when South Africa were banned from international cricket because of the apartheid regime. For most of the tourists this was a great experience, less so for Tracy, who was very troubled by the apartheid

system he witnessed.

After his time in Australia, Tracy based himself in Kent. He set up Claridge Fine Wine and then made the career move to join Maison Sichel, for whom he worked for the rest of his life. He played cricket for Sevenoaks, Ashford and Hawkhurst but his main sporting focus for some years was playing rugby for Cranbrook. He was also a fine 'occasional' golfer.

To Tracy, I say thank you for your friendship over many years. We shared a 60th birthday party, we holidayed with our young families in Spain and I particularly remember a wonderful few days' wine tasting in Bordeaux. Happy memories and lots of laughter.

Thank you, too, for all you have done for Benenden. I thought you were indestructible. Rest in peace my friend.

David Commander, fellow church family

I first met Tracy nine years ago at the social lunch on 'interview day' for a new incumbent at St George's. I am so grateful that he became a good friend and a great support in all things church and community.

He often told me the reason he came to St George's in the first place was that he used to live right next to the church and "the bloody bells would wake me on a Sunday morning, so I might as well get up and go and join them!"



I'm so grateful for those "bloody bells"!

Tracy was a Parochial Church Council member for the whole time I have been incumbent, and for six years a churchwarden. He wanted to help me achieve things at church and in the community, but he kept apologising that he didn't think he was supporting me very well. But that was Tracy. He had no idea just how much he was helping so many other people, or how much good he was doing.

He would also say to me quite often, over a beer: "I don't understand God or this

Christianity thing; I wish I had your faith." But he did understand it; he just didn't know it. He lived this Christianity thing. He was Catching Lives for us, and Nourish and Christian Aid, and Mr Fete. He started the Christmas Day

lunch when I suggested it over a beer one time; he started the Hello! How are you? Club. We just need to recruit a battalion of helpers now to carry on the work of this one man.

It was a privilege to be with Tracy and Deborah through the last days and weeks of Tracy's life. I have lost a great churchwarden, a drinking buddy after PCC meetings, a supporter, an encourager, a doer. I have lost a dear friend. God bless, Tracy. The church family and the community will miss you.

Sam Andrews, team mate from his Cranbrook rugby and Hawkhurst cricket days

Well, what a completely rubbish year. First, we lose the world's greatest leg spinner and now we lose quite probably the worst. For all his skill, I don't think Shane Warne was ever able to impart the same degree of mental disintegration on batsmen as Claridge - I make no bones for calling him that, he suited his surname. It wasn't just the shameless smirk that accompanied yet

another non-spinning loopy pie, but his conviction that the poor sap at the other end would fall for it. And they did. Time after time.

His teammates at Hawkhurst couldn't believe it either. Every time he took a wicket, we would throw our caps to the floor and stamp on them in rage that the batsman could be so stupid. "What?" Claridge would say with a mischievous smile. "That was a perfect length!"

He loved the counter-intuitive impact of crap leg spin on human psychology, as he did making a new friend from a chance encounter or a new

experience or taste.

Life to him was a series of adventures that would lead to greater knowledge.

I first met Claridge when I narrowly avoided a jet of red wine that shot out of his front door in Cranbrook. I had just bought a terraced house next door to



the man who at that time looked like a vast Viking warrior, a modern-day Eric Bloodaxe. "Come in," he said, "I'm blending a red wine for Morrison's, try this." I have no idea if Chateau Waterloo Road was ever stocked at Morrison's, but after several litres of blending, we began a firm friendship that was only briefly tested when his stereo was destroyed on my stag night.

Over the years, we played lots of sport together: cricket, rugby, golf, and one lamentable attempt at basketball, at which he was really good and I was appallingly short. It wasn't all testosterone, though. We would swap books we liked and music was always a constant. We did occasionally disagree - I failed to persuade him of the joy of Cajun music and Staffordshire Bull Terriers, he failed to get me to like Leonard Cohen and Australian wine - but he was unfailingly generous in company and a passionate pursuer of all things that made life fun.

Of course, the fire of youth was tempered by the passing years but the glow was always there. —>

→ In his later years, he found faith. He was always going to, in my mind: he wanted to find a serenity that his early family life had not delivered, and the passion for Leonard Cohen was a sure sign of that yearning for meaning.

We never imagine friends like him will leave us before their time, but we now know that even the mighty Eric Bloodaxe is not immortal, and we should all do our very best to reconnect with our friends before they cut a new star in the sky on their way to the afterlife.

Goodbye, Claridge, I shall miss you very much. Rest easy and I shall stamp on my cap in your memory.



Paul Hewitt, charity fundraiser

I knew Tracy to be a deep thinker and an early riser. Many mornings, I would get a ping, well before 6am, to see a message penned in the distinctive franglais we both adopted: “Salut, mon brave ...” followed by a comment on a shared interest, whether it was the homelessness crisis, inequitable student loan policies or Brexit causing havoc on wine imports. Tracy was interested in everything, particularly where he felt a person or a group were being treated unfairly.

When I picture Tracy, I have images of him striding around The Green organising tents, stallholders, and total strangers. I see him

dressed as a shepherd at the crib service or having a pint at the Bull with friends.

His charm and convictions meant I (and most other people) could rarely say no to him. He coerced me to run a stall at the village fete for at least five years longer than planned and I always marvelled at the size and diversity of his network, and how he seamlessly connected the personal with the professional. A classic example would be Tracy going out of his way to mentor our daughter and help her launch her career in the wine industry.

We will all remember him for his never-ending generosity and support of many charities. He organised a popular annual lunch in a City wine bar in aid of Catching Lives, an independent charity in Canterbury for the homeless. It was a cause he was passionate about, and it was through him that I started volunteering there.

Tracy’s own introduction to Catching Lives was through James Duff, a valued friend who sadly died earlier this year. Tracy and James were fine men and did much in their lives to help others. I hope many in the Benenden community will join me in my determination to continue raising awareness and funds for the charity that meant so much to them both.

Guy Hagan, Benenden Action Team leader

When the pandemic hit and the vision of David Commander’s volunteer support network evolved into the Benenden Action Team, we spent many hours reviewing the various village groups that were already established, and one name kept appearing. Mr Claridge was everywhere, a constant energy. Some say that he had the ability to get into places where water couldn’t. His wine certainly did.

To me, the man was the biggest heart in an equally enormous frame and that heart opened doors that I simply couldn’t even see. When the inevitable introduction had been made, his ability to hold me accountable was ever present and there was something almost old fashioned in his ideology that resounded in me. If you have the ability to help someone in need, why wouldn’t you?

When I think of him now, I think of the smiles of others I met, once they had met him. The relationships I now have with the people he introduced me to, will anchor my own heart deeply within this amazing village. He was the easiest man to follow but almost impossible to thank. He did so many things for so many people just because it was right to do them. Not for awards or thanks of any kind, but for the simple pleasure of helping someone in need.

He has left me with a very bright and clear moral compass, that I will use throughout all I do in this community and in all aspects of my own life, that I will happily pass onto my own children. I thank him for that most of all.

Peter Thomas, wine student

It was the dreadful lime green hoodie that gave him away. At about ten feet tall he was a hard man to miss at the best of times, but in that hoodie he was probably visible from space, so you could spot him coming your way from about 100 yards, often towards the village café, where he'd say hello to seemingly everybody, wander out the back to check the wine supplies, then sit down, cadge a cappuccino and chat for a while before striding off to busy himself somewhere else, normally for somebody else's benefit.

You might find him on the street, shaking the tin for a good cause,



or badgering people to get involved in his latest venture; but for my part it was the wine that formed the focus of our friendship.

I started off picking his brains and showing enthusiasm, but before long I'd been seconded on to what became known, jokingly, as the Benenden Wine Committee. This was an august body intended to organise the village wine tastings that had become Tracy's social

trademark, but invariably it involved Tracy, his beloved Deborah and our compadre Alfred Nicol rocking up on my doorstep, eating quite a lot and 'tasting' even more, to the point where we had to get Alfred to take notes so the next morning we'd have some idea what high-level decisions we'd made the night before. I never remember seeing Tracy drunk, though, quite possibly because this man built like a giant redwood would always get marginally less the worse for wear than normal-sized people.

He was an infuriating man to organise an event with, mainly because while the rest of us were still going over the fine detail of what we'd discussed, he'd already made several unilateral decisions and was ploughing on, head down, to his next project.

That was the way he was: the kind of man who would rather do stuff for the common good right away than sit around deciding when to do it. He was compassionate, charitable, caring; a great friend and ally for an incomer to the village; and such a lovely man.



In Your Garden



Thinking outside the book

During my earlier years as a horticultural student, we had a number of modules relating to plant care, establishment and maintenance. Progressively so, we were never issued with 'checklists' or 'calendar notes' to carry out plant care duties and this has dutifully stuck with me ever since. I say progressively, because in a day and age when our seasons are increasingly out of kilter, a seasonal 'to do' would be worthless, so for that I salute Hadlow College.

Plants are genetically modified to wake up each spring, come into leaf and flower then return to dormancy. The cycle remains, well, cyclical, but what has changed is our seasonal weather patterns. Too cold in spring, too warm in winter, low or no rainfall or with seasonal floods and parched summers. Quite a challenge for a plant and the same for a gardener.

I have just one book in my possession relating to month-by-month care: 'The Gardener's Year' by Alan Titchmarsh, published in 2005. I only ever bought it as an aide-memoire for tasks that needed doing whenever I thought the plant was ready or, most usually, when I was ready. I had friends at the time questioning why I was digging up a flowering

clump of astrantia in July. "But they're in flower!" they would shout. I would shout back that I needed the space to plant out the huge dahlia someone had just given me, and in any case, I needed to divide this astrantia up into, say, 15 or 20 small plants, pot them up and in a few weeks have new top growth and a saving of 200 quid!

There are some tasks I would most definitely do only at certain times of the year: fruit tree pruning, specifically prunus, which must be carried out after flowering, usually in April to avoid 'silver leaf'. This is a condition that gradually kills a tree and can also spread to neighbouring trees, and the spores are more abundant in winter, less so in spring. Pruning in spring when

the tree is putting on strong growth means the bleeding sap fights off any lingering spores, and the knowledgeable Mr T dutifully mentions this, but on every month are lengthy checklists, which I have to admit I have never ever read.

My very first gardening book was 'Gardening Made Easy' by Jane Fearnley-Whittingstall - published in 1995. Even back then she was very loose about what to do and when, and even had a page on the 'no-dig' approach. What a visionary! I must add, though, that this was a period when I had yet to touch a book by Christopher Lloyd or Beth Chatto, whose work I subsequently read dating back to the 1970s, and not a checklist in sight.

With our current climate, we have lavender flowering in December, bees circulating in January, the tulips cannot go in until the first frosts (sometimes in January) and blossom can be fleeting in a dry April. As gardeners, we need to thoughtfully consider how we care for our plants. Good husbandry helps ward off pests and disease, nurtures our soil and conserves moisture in the ground, all of which proactively helps our gardens find balance in this changing world.

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Above: The rhythm of village life is not all high days and holidays: pre-schoolers planting in their garden; the table tennis club move back into the village hall; David Commander during the wedding season; Rex Bourne winner of The Bambridge Cup for bowls; the foundation stone laid by Her Royal Highness Princess Christian for Benenden Sanatorium in 1906
Front cover: Summer sentinels. Photograph: Amelia Thomas