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Magazine
October 2023



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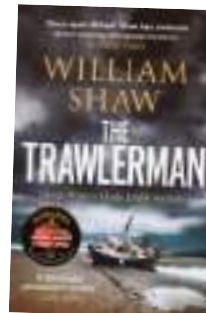
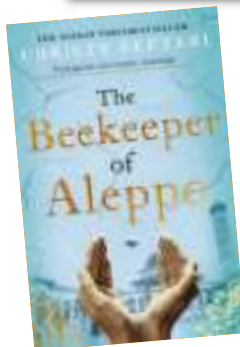
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Editorial



I think we can safely say that, despite the delights of this year's Indian summer, we're finally, inexorably, heading into a very different weather pattern and mindset. Soon the sun will be a distant memory ("Ooh, it doesn't seem possible, don't the months fly by, where's me thermals," etc) and as we head deep into autumn in this October issue of the magazine, I'm thinking I'll miss the barbecue season most.

In the past fortnight the Thomases have been enjoying plenty of food straight off the charcoal, which we won't do again for another nine months, but as we pack the trusty Tennessee Broiler back into the shed, we're heartened by the onset of hearty stews, roast game and winter greens.

Some people mark the passing of the seasons by the leaves and hedgerows, but I have my very own system, in which the refreshing Helles lagers are replaced by the old ales, the jaunty rose wines by the hearty reds. Luckily, this winter we'll have on our side the new selection of beers and wines in the community shop, which I was asked to revitalise (along with my daughter, who has been the techno wizard and design guru). In a bid to upgrade in terms of both choice and accessibility, we've bolstered the range and provided every wine with its own shelf label, offering tasting notes and food pairings.

Everybody's prices are going up, but we've tried to keep ours as keen as possible, from the everyday supping wines to the bottles for a special occasion (the white Burgundies from Domaines Simonin and Gonon are a special treat, and there are plenty of top reds to accompany rich, seasonal dishes).

So, if you're looking for a drink to accompany the new season, it would be great if you'd consider shopping local rather than at the supermarket. You'll get a great selection for sensible money - and you'll feel good about yourself into the bargain.

Peter Thomas, Co-Editor

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

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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 (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, Associate Priest or Churchwardens if you, or anyone else, is ill.

Sunday 1 October	8am Communion	11am Harvest Service 5pm Evening Prayer and All-age Communion followed by Harvest Lunch
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Sunday 8 October	8am BCP Communion	10am Morning Worship
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Sunday 15 October	8am Communion	10am Sung Eucharist
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Sunday 22 October	8am Communion	10am Morning Worship
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Saturday 28 October		4pm Connect Four at Mission Church, Sandhurst
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Sunday 29 October	8am BCP Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst	10am Benefice Communion
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Morning Prayer	8am Mondays and Fridays	
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Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Morning Prayer	8am Tuesdays and Wednesdays
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Mid-week Communion	10am Tuesdays
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Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services	10am Morning Worship	5.30pm Evening Worship
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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
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From the Parish Registers

Baptisms	10 September	Orla and Luca Nichols
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Funeral	28 September	Susan Bridges Thanksgiving Service and burial
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Church Letter



Where has the time gone?

They say time flies, don't they? Well, this year is certainly whizzing by and here we are entering the last quarter already. There are things I do annually - like renewing car insurance, booking MoTs, getting the new Lectionary for the Church Year, preparing for Harvest and Remembrance - but it really doesn't feel like a year since the last time I had to do them. Time must be speeding up. Or perhaps I'm slowing down.

Time is a strange thing. It is precious and valuable; something not to be wasted. It is something that we don't get back if we squander it; and yet there are occasions when an hour can seem to be going by very slowly. Former NATO secretary-general, Paul-Henri Spaak, said: "If an hour seems long, I remind myself that it will never return, and it immediately becomes terribly short."

On 14 October this year, I will have been licensed as the Rector of Benenden and Sandhurst for ten years. Helen and I moved into the village in September 2013. On the one hand, ten years is a long time, but then I remind myself of the age of our parish church and all of a sudden ten years seems quite a short time. So much has happened in these last ten years, in our own lives and in the life of the village. Just take a little bit of time to think about all that has happened in your life in the last ten years, or the things you have done in the village. It soon adds up. I bet you then start thinking, "Where has the time gone?"

The time that we have lived and served here has been a real privilege. There is a well-known piece of scripture, from the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament, that begins: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." Part of it continues, "A time to weep, and a time to laugh. A time to mourn, and a time to dance." The privilege of being a parish priest is that I have, over these past ten years, done all of these with many of you, and I want to thank you for that. (The "dance" is metaphorical not literal, by the way!)

After the 10am service at St George's Church on Sunday 15 October, we invite you to join us in church and raise a glass (or a coffee mug if you prefer) to mark the occasion, as Helen and I thank God for calling us to serve Him in this wonderful community.

Revd David Commander, Rector and Area Dean

Village Calendar

October

Sunday 1	St George's Harvest Lunch, St George's Church, 12.30pm	p.9
Thursday 5	Pop-Up of Luxury Goods, The Bull, Benenden, 12noon-5pm	p.23
Friday 6	The Music Scholars of Benenden School, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 6.30pm	p.13
Saturday 7	Oh What A Lovely War, Benenden School Theatre, 2.30pm and 7.30pm	p.19
Saturday 7	Ladder Toss, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 10	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 10	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Saturday 14	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	
Saturday 14	Race Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 15	Kidenza - Pieces of Eight, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 4pm	p.19
Monday 16	Parish Council Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Tuesday 17	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.9
Tuesday 17	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Memories of a Sabbatical, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.23
Friday 20	Tracy Claridge Memorial Tasting, Benenden School Café, 7pm	p.15
Friday 20	Heart of Kent Choir - The Great Think Pink Show, Benenden School Theatre, 7.30pm	p.19
Saturday 21	Benenden Bowls Club, Coffee Morning, Memorial Hall, 10am	
Saturday 21	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Mon 23-Tues 24	Kinder, Benenden School Centenary Hall, multiple timeslots	p.19
Tuesday 24	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 24	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 24	Merry and Bright, Quiz Afternoon, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.15
Thursday 26	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Lunch at The Peacock Inn, Goudhurst, 12.30pm	p.23
Friday 27	Sleeping Beauty, Benenden School Theatre, 1pm	p.19
Saturday 28	Gary Delaney: Gary in Punderland, Benenden School Theatre, 7.30pm	p.19
Saturday 28	Bingo, 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, 6.30pm

Cakes & Chaos: Café and Toddler Group

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

Parish Council



One of the parish council's major projects this year has been the raising of funds for the restoration of the Victorian wells in Benenden and Iden Green. It looked a mammoth task, but the required total creeps ever closer and the healthy sum of £2,150 was raised at the Iden Green Jazz & Blues afternoon, which represents a fabulous effort from all those involved, so thank you.

Once the work is completed - and the progress of the Benenden well at the crossroads is plain for all to see - it will help bring our parish back to looking its best, which is a subject close to my heart. Being a keen cyclist, I have various routes around the Benenden parish that I like to ride and they remind me how lucky I am to be living in our beautiful area.

My favourite and most ridden route takes me pretty much around the boundary of Benenden on country lanes with a only a very brief visit to Rolvenden. I cycle this route all year round, so it gives me a perspective on all the seasons and the changes in the countryside.

In spring I notice the hawthorn leaves popping their bright green leaves and the early blossom of blackthorn. There are some large clumps of snowdrops to enjoy before the arrival of daffodils in our verges.

I enjoy very early summer rides when I have the roads to myself and watch as the great oaks come into their leaf, then on to the autumn, which I used to be wary of but now can embrace, with all its golden colours, as a precursor to winter.

Last week I cut down a byway by some newly planted vines and came through a dark passage, then through the opening there was a stunning view over fields and trees to Dingledean, it took my breath away. I hope you all appreciate what we have and get out there and see it, by whatever means you can.

Stephen Cochrane, Parish Councillor

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 16 October 2023,

Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm



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Talking Point



You can take the girl out of Benenden ...

This month I am heading off to university for my first term there and the impending move has made me reflect on my time growing up in Benenden. It's something I am often asked about, particularly by those who have grown up in urban areas, I suppose because there is an underlying assumption that villages are dull and sleepy, miles from anywhere of interest, and full of boring old people. Others find even greater surprise that I do not yearn for the city buzz - in fact I have deliberately shied away from it by choosing to go as far from urban civilisation as possible by studying in Cornwall.

I have not always enjoyed living here quite so much. When I was in my early teens, at school in Tonbridge, I struggled with the fact that most of my friends lived a while away and it felt like I was missing out on the 'teenage experience'. But in time, and frankly thanks to lockdown and volunteering in the village shop, I realised that I wasn't missing out on anything; I learnt that while Benenden might not have a wild night life, there was plenty to keep me occupied.

I have developed a life that is centred around the village calendar, events like the fete, the jazz festival and the Iden Green quiz mark the rhythm of my year. The idea of losing that routine will be the one of the most jarring things about leaving home, and having to hear about it all over FaceTime will be difficult, especially as I try to create my own new routine down in the West Country. But it will also be the quotidian aspects of life in Benenden that I'll miss greatly: lunching (and judging people's parking) in the village café or going to The Bull on a sunny evening.

I have often wondered about where I might be in years to come - deciding the course I wanted to do at university, nosing around property websites for my future house - but it has always been something of a fantasy, as though I would never leave.

While Benenden will always be my childhood home, it has dawned on me that it will not be where I always live, that life will change. I have been rather shaken by this realisation, and after a long summer of relaxation that has felt blissfully never-ending, the prospect of leaving in the next few days is a daunting prospect.

But Benenden will always be my sanctuary, filled with wonderful people and memories. I may be leaving here physically, but as they (sort of) say: 'You can take the girl out of Benenden but you can't take Benenden out of the girl.'

Amelia Thomas

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St George's Harvest Lunch

We are delighted to be holding our Harvest Lunch after the I am Harvest Festival service at St George's on Sunday 1 October. This year we have again opted for a cold bring-and-share buffet. I will be placing in the church, nearer the time, a list of dishes that we require for a simple ploughman's lunch. You can then add your name and contact number next to your contribution. Any food donations for the lunch will be very gratefully received.

There will be no charge for the lunch this year, but donations are welcomed on the day in support of Water Aid from those who are able.

As always, it is good to have an idea of numbers for catering purposes. If you are able to attend, or have any questions, please email me. Also, please let me know of any dietary requirements you may have.

Helen Commander

helenjcommander@gmail.com

Arnold Cole Trust

The Arnold Cole Trust would like to invite applications for its annual disbursements from those clubs and societies within the parish of Benenden in need of funds. Dr Arnold Cole was GP in Benenden from 1930 until his death in 1960, after which his daughter, the late Joan Weston, set up the trust in 1968. The aim of the trust is to apply its income for the 'general benefit for the parish of Benenden with special consideration being given to both the elderly and young'.

All applications in writing please to:
The Secretary, Arnold Cole Trust, Scribbins,
Benenden, Kent TN17 4DT. Please note
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St George's Church Harvest Lunch

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Helen Commander helenjcommander@gmail.com

Places are limited and will be issued on a first
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Please let me know of any dietary needs.

Everyone Welcome

Benenden Players

Auditions for 'Oz', the village's next panto (2-4 February), went very well, with lots of talented adults and children turning up. Well done to all who attended. All the parts have been filled, so it's now full steam ahead with weeks of rehearsals and creative preparation to follow.

If you fancy helping backstage, then please email enquiry@benendenplayers.co.uk. We love putting people to good use helping with scenery, props, costumes, or critically over the performances themselves. Tickets go on sale in December so watch out for details in the November issue.

Ruth Clark

Village lunch

All parishioners are welcome to join the village lunch, held in the village hall at 12.30pm on Tuesday 17 October. There is always a main course, a pud and coffee or tea, for £5 per person. If you would like to come, and didn't sign up last month, please let me know by Thursday 12 October.

We cannot regularly have people from other villages, but if you have someone staying, or as a one off would like to bring a friend, that is fine.

Sheila Hume 854627



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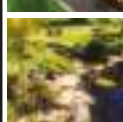
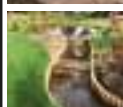
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Benenden Bonfire and Fireworks

I am pleased to say the response to my articles in both the August and September issues of this magazine has been very good and we now have new committee members and a number of new volunteers, so please put the date in your diaries now: this year's event will be held on Saturday 4 November.

We are grateful to Benenden School for again allowing us to use the pasture field to the left of the main drive leading up to the school, but there will be no vehicular access or parking on school property. Pedestrian access will only be via the main gate on Cranbrook Road.

Food from the barbecue and chilli, along with hot chocolate and the usual licensed bar, with a selection of ales, bottled lager and mulled wine, will all be available. There will also be music before the event, together with sweets and multi-use LED light sticks on sale.

We are seeking volunteers to help with the event, be it before, during, after or, indeed, all three of those. If you think you could help, please contact Richard.brothers@tch.org.uk

Once again, we have to thank our three main sponsors, Benenden Hospital, Jubilee Hire and Tate Fencing for their ongoing support. Thanks go to both existing and new members of the committee who give significant time and focus to making this event happen. Profits will be distributed to local groups and charities.

We look forward to seeing you at what, for many, has always been a 'must do' event on the village calendar. Gates open at 5.30pm.

Gary Bell, Co-Chair Benenden Bonfire Society
www.benendenfireworks.co.uk

In association with
The Friends of St George's Church

THE MUSIC SCHOLARS OF BENENDEN SCHOOL

Friday 6 October 2023
7pm to 8.30pm
in Benenden School Centenary Hall
with welcome drinks from 6.30pm

Attendance Complimentary
retiring collection for the Friends of St George's Church

To attend please sign up at the back of the church,
in Benenden's Community Shop
or email joanne.clube@gmail.com

Music Scholars' concert

Benenden School have invited us to join them once again for a concert by their senior music scholars with a retiring collection in aid of the Friends of St George's. Last year there was a great turnout and it would be wonderful to see you there again this year, on Friday 6 October, 7pm to 8.30pm, with welcome drinks from 6.30pm.

It's a great opportunity to hear some excellent young musicians and enjoy the amazing facilities of Benenden's Centenary Hall, while also raising funds to support the Friends of St George's. The funds raised are used by the Friends to support the maintenance of the church buildings for use by the wider rural community of Benenden.

It would be helpful to have an idea of numbers - there will be no charge for attendance just a retiring collection. If you can please email joanne.clube@gmail.com or sign up in the village shop or at the back of the church. We look forward to the opportunity to get together and celebrate young musical talent.

Jo Clube 07800 699529



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Wednesday coffee mornings

We would love to see more people at the coffee morning in the Memorial Hall every Wednesday between 10am and 11.30am, to catch up with old friends and make new. We look forward to seeing you soon for a hot drink and a biscuit.

Gilly Walton 242855 gilly.walton@gmail.com

Catching Lives

St George's and the wider Benenden community have been supporting Catching Lives - an independent charity for the homeless and vulnerably housed in Canterbury - for nearly ten years. Many will recall Tracy Claridge's annual appeal for bedding.

Times are tough for charities at the moment, though, and we would like to ask a little more of the village. There are two specific requests:

- Catching Lives needs more volunteers to help man its drop-in centre for the homeless in Canterbury. Ideally volunteers sign up to a regular weekly shift. Teams of three or four work between 8.30am and approximately 1.30pm, preparing breakfast and lunch for between 20 and 30 clients using whatever ingredients have been donated. I was introduced to Catching Lives by Tracy and have been a 'floater' volunteer, filling in where there are gaps in the regulars' rota, for the past five years. I find it very rewarding.
- There is an ongoing fundraising campaign in memory of Tracy to try and raise £15,000 a year for a mental health professional at Catching Lives. Charity events in the Benenden community raised nearly £14,000 in the 12 months to April 2023 and have collected another £4,400 since, so a big thank you to all who have organised or donated. If you are planning a fundraising event in the coming months and feel able to support us, it would be much appreciated.

Please contact me for more information on volunteering or fundraising and donating.

Paul Hewitt 07703 532744
phewitt1203@gmail.com

At Benenden School Café



Friday 20 October
7 for 7.30pm
Tracy Claridge Memorial Tasting

Tickets | pmartinthomas@hotmail.com

£35

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top-class wines
plus a glass on entry
Excellent food



Merry and Bright

After our August meeting we have another two new members, so welcome to you both. The Merry and Bright Club has been going for many years but we cannot find any information about how or by whom it was started. If anyone can help, please contact us. Thank you in advance.

Our new, revived Merry and Bright has changed many things and we have hopefully embraced more modern interests. We have lowered our age for joining, as many people retire earlier and younger and are sadly left alone at earlier ages, so they can come along and join us.

When this club started, people were just local residents and families. Now, with so much more development in the village, there are new families from all different places coming to the village, so we felt we should lower the age for joining.

If anyone is thinking of joining us, please come along for a free first visit to see whatever demonstration we have on, followed by our Victorian Tea. If you would like someone to collect you or give you an idea of our club, please contact Laraine or Julia on the details below. We look forward to hearing from you.

Our meetings for the autumn are: 24 October, 28 November and 19 December. All are from 2pm to 4pm in the Memorial Hall.

Laraine Penny 241763

Julia Collard 241944

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Talking Shop

Meet the lady responsible for our gorgeous homemade cakes and tarts ... Karen Sharp. Cooking is Karen's passion. She spent many years as a chef and has had a varied culinary career working for companies such as Pernod Ricard, Glaxo and Elizabeth Arden and catering for weddings and buffets. Today, she works part-time in Waitrose and has started to branch out by making cakes as a supplier. We are very fortunate that she makes us some of the best cakes we've ever had.

Karen's range for Benenden's includes: chocolate-orange, Victoria sponge, coffee and walnut, carrot cake, caramel and lemon drizzle (made with her own homemade lemon curd), as well as lemon tart, treacle tart and Bakewell tart. She can make any cake so if there is something else you'd like to see, let us know. She also takes orders for occasion cakes or cupcakes. You can contact Karen on 07720 292859 or email karensarp34@yahoo.co.uk.
Bev Beveridge info@benendens.co.uk
www.benendens.co.uk

Nourish Community Foodbank

We're amazed by the kindness of people who regularly donate to Nourish at the donation points at St George's Church, The Garden House, Standen Street and the Catholic Chapel, New Pond Road. As harvest is upon us and we give thanks for food, your support in making a donation, however small, to help keep our stocks topped up would be very welcome. The following items are much needed: sauces - chilli, sweet and sour, curry and pasta, tinned soup, pies, fruit, fish, baked beans, rice, spaghetti hoops, coffee, soup, potatoes, toothpaste and sanitary products.

You can also donate cash to the food bank at: www.justgiving.com/nourishcommunityfoodbankuk. Thank you all again for your generosity at these difficult times for many.

Gemma Coupland and Liz Bewley

Benenden Pre-School

This term our new little ones are settling in quickly, picking up routines, tucking into snacks and enjoying activities which may well be new to them, such as yoga. We like to offer lots of sensory experiences, particularly at the beginning of a new term. Children so enjoy wallowing (sometimes literally!) in bubbly water, paint and playdough, and sensory play stimulates one or more of our five senses, which supports exploration of the world and the development of our motor and social skills.

Sensory play is hugely creative as children decide what to make out of the playdough or how to apply the paint. It is an invitation to children's curiosity and their problem-solving abilities. When young children of any age learn new information using their senses, they engage with and retain this information more effectively. Hooray for hands-on, and hands-in, learning!

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor

supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

Christmas lunch

Our village Christmas lunch is being held in the Memorial Hall on Christmas Day. If you are single and on your own or a couple who don't want to be on your own, please sign up in the shop to join this wonderful festive celebration. There is no charge and transport can be arranged if required.

The event also needs a bevy of volunteers, so if you are able to contribute in any way with food, providing some vegetables, helping prepare on Christmas Eve, giving someone a lift or washing up afterwards, please speak to me at Benenden's.

Although this is my first year steering the proceedings, I understand that there are already a number of generous folk that keep the village Christmas Day lunch running each year. We are very much hoping you will be back again this year with your valuable contribution ensuring many of our valued villagers enjoy Christmas together.

Karen Saunders

Benenden Village Hall

After a quiet summer, with many of our regular hirers returning after a summer break, it is now getting busier at the hall with bookings for parties, pantomime rehearsals and new clubs and classes. In addition to the regular baby classes, dance classes, exercise classes, gong bath, mindfulness and meditation, pilates, Scottish country dancing and yoga we are pleased to have new some classes starting: exercise/fitness on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, baby massage on Wednesday mornings and tuition classes on Friday afternoons. For more information, please see the hall's website (www.benendenvillagehall.org).

I work in the community office at the hall (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 12.30pm) so please feel free to pop in and say hello or ask about hiring the hall. If you would like to visit to have a look around the hall to see if it meets your needs, please let me know and we can arrange a convenient time when the halls are free.

Work on updating our website continues and a directory of useful information and contacts is being compiled to help you plan your event. If you are a local business and would like your details added to our information pages for weddings and formal functions or children's parties, please contact me.

John Betts, Hall Manager 07419 989830
enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org

Benenden School

We are delighted to have begun this very special academic year, which marks Benenden School's Centenary and offers the chance for numerous celebrations and initiatives.

It has been lovely to see all the students back with us, and especially to welcome our new intake this year. All the staff (particularly those in House) as well as the other students, have been helping the new girls settle in and it's always a pleasure at this early stage of the year to see them so quickly getting into the Benenden routine and confidently navigating their way around.

Needless to say, now that the various induction periods have finished, lessons are all firmly underway and students are adjusting well to the new timetable as part of our Centenary Curriculum. This year's Electives programme is already underway for all year groups; once again, there is an impressive range of topics included, covering everything from advanced genetics to journalism, and from investments to debating, so the students will learn a great deal.

On the subject of the Centenary, the long-awaited celebratory year has of course now arrived. When I told the girls in our first assembly this week that 100 years ago there were just 24 students gathered for the start of the academic year, there was a genuine sense of pride on the 555 faces in our Centenary Hall at how far the school had come. There is a wide-ranging programme of events planned throughout the year and we are also very excited about Benenden 100, the book we have produced to mark the Centenary and which, at the time of writing, is being delivered to school next week. Copies are available from www.benenden.school/centenarybook
Samantha Price, Headmistress

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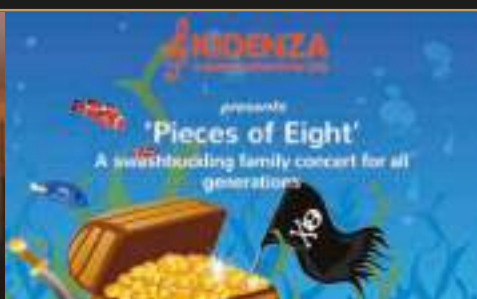
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Angela Hewitt

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Benenden Gardening Club

A balmy late summer evening saw the gardening club's late summer show take place at The Copper House. We ran a gentle competition of three categories, best flower arrangement, best fruit or veg and best single bloom, all accompanied by a glass of wine and nibbles. Wendy Tremenheere, former assistant head gardener at Sissinghurst, was kind enough to judge for us and the winners received their certificates to hearty applause. Our club welcomes interested gardeners of all standards so please get in touch if you'd like to join.

Eleanor Cochrane

Eleanor.cochrane@btinternet.com

Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

Many of you will have seen in last month's issue the completion of the fantastic wellbeing garden groundworks. The warmer weather put a short halt on our planting plans, but we look forward to updating you on the progress in future issues as the garden begins to expand and flourish. We would kindly ask for your support and help in funding this phase and welcome any donations that can be made via our [gofundmepage](#) - or please feel free to contact me directly if you wish to discuss a contribution to this worthwhile project.

More information on the project can be found at gofund.me/68d001b9 or scan the QR code.

Thank you for your continued support.

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



Primary School

The staff worked hard over the summer to make sure the children could have the best possible start to the new school year. All the classrooms had a good spring clean and we were hugely grateful to our PTFA, who gave up their time generously to support the installation of our new wellbeing garden, which is amazing. A huge thank you to everyone who has been involved in this wonderful project.

We have welcomed 33 new children to the school this year and the staff and I have been extremely pleased with how quickly they have adapted to their new classrooms and teaching teams.

We have also started the new school year with a full complement of staff. We were delighted to welcome Miss McBride, Miss Snelling, Miss Sanchez, Miss Caddington and Mrs Fry to the team. We have also welcomed a new therapy dog, much to the delight of everyone. Ogwen belongs to Miss Ashton and is a trained, well-behaved and very friendly two-year-old Border Collie, who has previously worked as a nurture dog in a school. Animal therapy is known to promote pupil wellbeing and mental health and I can honestly say the children and staff are feeling the benefits already.

Finally, we are so grateful for the help of our wonderful parents, especially David Purnell, for building us the most fantastic compost toilet for forest school. What a brilliant resource to make our time at forest school more comfortable and accessible in a sustainable way that has a minimal impact on our wild space.

Lindsay Roberts, Executive Headteacher
240565 office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk
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Mick Moore 240755

m.moore131156@gmail.com

Planning Matters

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

- 23/01925/LBC Woodside, Iden Green Road. Installation of through floor lift.
- 23/01953/FULL West Winds, Cranbrook Road. Replace the existing dwelling and garage with a new 4 no. bedroom dwelling, garage and swimming pool.
- 23/01897/FULL Waters End Farm, Standen Street. Replacement dwelling and associated landscaping including the creation of a lake.
- 23/02172/FULL and 23/02173/LBC Pypne Manor, Pypne Road. Single storey rear extension.
- 23/02131/LBC Champion House, Standen Street. Listed Building Consent - Full replacement of southern sill and partial of northern, removal of cement from panels and re-rendering of panels, door leaves removed, serviced and repaired with dry oak, window casements to be removed and serviced with subframes repaired, installation of 2 no. ferrous retaining straps, and wood burner installation.
- 23/02218/FULL and 23/02219/LBC Brick Kiln, Walkhurst Road. Two-storey southern extension and one-storey northern extension, first floor extension, restructuring of internal layout, replacement of all windows and installation of additional dormer window to the first floor.

More planning matters at:

benendenparishcouncil.org



Iden Green and Benenden WI

Although the weather was very hot, we had a cool time at our social meeting at the beginning of September when Vicky explained various intricacies of the care system. We were entertained on 19 September by our speaker, Melanie Gibson-Barton, who gave an informative talk on the origins of teddy bears and how Teddy's bear was created in honour of Theodore Roosevelt, who refused to shoot a bear when on a hunting trip. She also displayed various interesting, charming and colourful pictures. Also, a few of us visited Tenterden Garden Centre for lunch. The food was well worth the money and we had a pleasant time.

On 17 October we are looking forward to hearing about Revd David Commander's 'Memories of a Sabbatical'. Then on 26 October a visit to The Peacock Inn, Goudhurst, has been arranged for anyone who would like to go.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk



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Topical health

People don't think about their shoulders until one starts hurting. The shoulder is an unusual joint as it relies hugely on its strength from the surrounding muscles. No fewer than 17 muscles attach to your scapula (shoulder blade) and 13 to the humerus (upper arm bone). It is a mobile joint, but also relatively unstable and shoulders are one of the most commonly injured joints in the body.

Your shoulders are more likely to stay healthy if you are strong, flexible and mindful of your posture. If you sit hunched at work, or are round shouldered, your shoulder can't move in its full range. This can result in neck and back pain, or even tennis elbow - as other areas have to do more work.

Shoulder care tips:

- Watch your shoulder position - do you hold them slightly hitched up towards your ears, especially when cold/stressed/ at work?
- Lift your sternum (chest bone) as this puts your shoulders into a better position due to the bony connection via the clavicle (collarbone).
- Avoid reaching for something on the back seat of the car/giving something to a child from the driver's seat. A lot of shoulders don't like this reaching, twisting movement.
- If you are sitting for a while, move your shoulders- circle them round, get the blood flowing.
- Don't do heavy activities at arm's length. Think about your core and bring weight closer to you.

Most importantly, don't leave shoulder pain. It is easier and quicker to treat as soon as it starts hurting, rather than weeks down the line when other areas of your body have started joining in and accommodating for the problem.

Sophie Bendall 388542

www.cranbrookosteopaths.co.uk

Benenden Hospital

Last month saw the successful launch of our new Male Health Hub, which coincided with Urology Awareness Month. Whether you're a man, or have a partner, family member or friend needing support, it's important to take care of your physical and mental health throughout your life, and of course know how and where to ask for help. That's why our Male Health Hub was created.

Now you can access guidance, advice and support in three age categories: 18-50 years old, aged 50 to retirement and post-retirement. Within these categories you'll find a range of topics such as: supporting your male partner with their physical and mental health; sexual health, testicular and prostate issues, erectile dysfunction, urinary tract conditions, heart health and joint pain; mental health at work, loneliness and body image issues.

I am also proud of the private urology service we provide. We're the first private hospital in Kent to offer Aquablation®, a robotic-assisted treatment for enlarged prostate. The groundbreaking heat-free precision procedure, which takes around an hour to complete, will enable us to treat a greater number of patients in the same timeframe as conventional surgery, with patients spending significantly less time recovering.

I hope these hospital updates have inspired you to seek support with your physical or mental health, or to encourage someone you love to do so.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse



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St George's 20|20 Project



Vision of a church that meets modern needs

Introducing Peter Brook, project manager
Community Liaison & Fundraising

I'd like to introduce myself as, over the next few weeks and months, I will be spending even more time in Benenden supporting St George's 20|20 Project. The 20|20 Project is about the church naturally evolving to meet the ever-changing community needs of Benenden - our vision is for a fully accessible space that's as kind to the environment as possible, while preserving the beauty of the building. Our vision includes:

- Step-free access from the road into the church
- Toilet facilities inside the church
- Baby-changing facilities inside the church
- Improved lighting which is brighter and more energy efficient
- Improved heating which is more reliable and produces less polluting carbon
- Improved kitchen facilities

I've been a governor at Benenden Church of England Primary School since 2016 and both my boys absolutely loved their time at the school and being in the village. In my



professional life I've worked as a senior project manager in the NHS, at Kent County Council and for Citizens Advice. I will be using some of those skills to support the community liaison and fundraising elements of the 20|20 Project, working alongside the technical team and the Parochial Church Council.

I will be producing regular updates on the project and hope to get as many members as possible of the community engaged - further details to follow. I can be contacted by emailing benenden2020project@gmail.com

Please say hello if you see me in the village.
Peter Brook

Anniversary



David and Helen Commander: celebrating ten years serving our parish

On 14 October, Revd David Commander celebrates a significant anniversary: ten years as the Rector of the Benefice of Benenden and Sandhurst. During that time, he and his wife Helen have very much become part of the fabric of life in Benenden.

When I asked them to recall particular highlights over the years, in addition to their regular responsibilities, they were unanimous: the toddler groups in both villages; growing the fete into an incredible community event; evolving the village magazine from mono A5 into colour A4; the Christmas lunch; and kick starting the Benenden Action Team when Covid hit. "All of these have been made possible by the considerable support of villagers," says David.

It's been non-stop for the couple ever since they moved here in 2013 and, while there have been challenging moments, of course, they have celebrated every minute. "Helping people is a privilege, but I couldn't do this job without the help of so many parishioners," explains David.

David's path to ordination and Benenden is one that he admits was not part of life's plan as a young man. Becoming a priest was certainly never on his agenda, "but when the call came I couldn't ignore it, however hard I tried".

Let's go back to when the couple met, aged

just 17, and what led them to St George's Church in Benenden 37 years later. It was a love of fencing that brought David and Helen together, when he visited Scotland to compete in a competition. He was representing England under 18s and she was representing Scotland. Her family was hosting him and David vividly remembers the first time he met her: "It was under the clock at Edinburgh Waverley station at 6.30pm on Friday 21 May 1976. It was fate and meant to be."

Both continued to compete at high level, keeping in touch by letter (no text or WhatsApp in those days!) and meeting at competitions before they stopped to focus on their careers - as a chartered mechanical engineer for David and as a nurse for Helen. They married in 1982 and there followed 11 years working for engineering companies in Harwich, Nottingham and Ashford, often entailing long commutes or only weekends at home. Their two daughters arrived in 1986 and 1988.

In 1993, the couple moved to Watlington, near Maidstone, and shortly after, when facing redundancy, David decided to start his own design and engineering consultancy business. "We had two young girls and a large mortgage, so it was a huge challenge but ultimately the best decision and we enjoyed running the business for the next 17 years," he says.

At Watlington, the couple became involved in the church in the village. David was a choir member, became churchwarden, undertook organising and then leading Alpha Courses, and started to preach. "I also introduced a new service, more relaxed and aimed at younger people, and it was very much appreciated."

It was while praying one day that David heard a voice saying very clearly: "I want you to be ordained." As you can imagine this was totally unexpected. "I burst out laughing and told God he'd got it wrong," he recalls. "The thought just wouldn't go away but it took me a year before I plucked up the courage to speak to Helen. "It was a shock, but I wasn't surprised," she says.

There followed a two-year period undergoing a discernment process, where David was helped to examine and test his sense of calling. Next followed three years of training, averaging

25 hours a week, at the South East Institute for Theological Education, all the while running his business.

David was ordained as a deacon in 2010 at Rochester Cathedral, and as a priest a year later, and served his curacy at St James' Church, Tunbridge Wells. "It was a huge change in direction for Helen and me when, at the age of 51, I put on a clerical collar for the first time. I shouldn't have been surprised by how differently people treated me and looked to me for guidance and support. I encountered many sad and challenging situations which nothing had really prepared me for. Having Helen by my side was so important; she is so supportive. I really couldn't do this job without her."

After three years as a training curate, the couple were ready to move to a rural parish and applied for the vacancy in the Benefice of Benenden and Sandhurst. The interview process was rigorous, as you can imagine. "I left at the end of the day feeling like a piece of chewed string and we were elated when I was offered the job that evening," says David. They moved into the Rectory in September and David was licensed on 14 October 2013.

David starts every busy day with 30 minutes of prayer at 8am, either at St George's or at the Mission Church in Sandhurst. "It's a good way to begin the day and anyone can join me," he says. "St George's is 800 years old; you can feel it's steeped in prayer and it is a great privilege to add to that." The rest of the week sees David leading - with the help of others - church services in both villages, school worship and

assemblies, being at the toddler groups, meeting people, conducting baptisms, weddings and funerals - a lot of meetings, dealing with issues, and a lot of admin!

Earlier this year, David became Area Dean, looking after the welfare of eight priests in 13 local parishes and making sure they are looking after themselves. He only has one day off a week and he certainly needs it, "but I'm very blessed to be supported by priests Rosemary Kobus van Wengen and Ylva Blid-Mackenzie, and others in the Ministry Leadership Team."

What does the future hold? Not one to sit still, David, with the support of the Parochial Church Council, is helping St George's to be here for the community into the future with Project 2020 (see page 27). "Over its 800 years, this church has always evolved and moved with the times and we have benefited from the foresight and vision of those who have gone before us. It's now our responsibility to continue to make it usable and relevant for the community in the 21st century and prepared for the 22nd century."

David admits he didn't expect to be our parish priest for ten years. "It feels right that we are in the place God wants us to be though, and there is still lots to do. Conducting church services is only 10% of the job - there is so much more involved. While many villagers may not attend the services, I believe that many trust Helen and me to listen, to be there when they need us - at the joyous times, the difficult times and the sad times. It's a privilege to be able to serve everyone in our community."

Ruth Clark





Jean Patterson: celebrating 100 years of a remarkable life

On 22 August, Jean Patterson celebrated her 100th birthday in Benenden. The significant day was marked with a special lunch with close family and friends, followed a few days later by a party including her three children, seven grandchildren and eight

great-grandchildren. She was inundated with good wishes, gifts and birthday cards - including one from the King and Queen.

It was my pleasure to sit with her recently to hear about some of her amazing experiences since she was born, along with her twin sister Jill, in 1923 in Simla in the Himalayan foothills of northern India. George V was King, Stanley Baldwin was Prime Minister, Tutankhamun's tomb was opened and insulin was introduced for the treatment of diabetes.

Jean's father had been in the British army serving in India, based in Simla, and when he retired he remained to run a gentleman's club in what was known as the 'Summer Capital' of British India. Jean has fond memories of her young life in the mountainous city before making the long trip, with her sister, to boarding school in Eastbourne aged 12.

She loved school and remembers the family

being invited to George VI's coronation in 1937 but, when war was declared, her parents preferred their daughters to be home with them in India. She recalled the adventurous six-day trip back by plane with her sister in 1939, hopping from country to country and flying only during the day.

It sounds like life for the young women in Simla was great fun at the time. "If we didn't walk, we rode," she recalls. "When we went to a party we had to wear jodhpurs under our long dresses!" Jean returned to England in 1946 and her family followed a year later, just before partition, finally settling in Walkhurst Road in Benenden.

It was while working as assistant librarian at Sandhurst Military Academy that Jean met Arthur Patterson, known



by a thankful Sultan after Pat (then a Brigadier) helped quell the Brunei Revolt in 1962, rounding up escaped rebel leaders in the swamps and jungles over a wide area of North Borneo. For this he was awarded the DSO and decorated by the Sultan. "It was a fabulous celebration and we didn't have to pay for a thing," recalls Jean.

When Pat retired from the army (as Major General) in 1972, the couple continued to travel, spending time in Nepal visiting medical centres around the country and camping as they went. They eventually settled down and fully embraced life in Benenden. Pat tended his huge vegetable garden and became a church warden, while Jean joined the Woman's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) delivering 'Meals on Wheels' locally.

as 'Pat', a dashing officer who would sweep her off her feet - quite literally. They were engaged three weeks after their first date (he proposed outside United Dairies!) and married just two months after that, here in Benenden in December 1949.

Jean was 26 and Pat was 32.

By that time Pat had served in World War II in the 6th Gurkha Rifles, receiving the Military Cross for his exploits in Burma in 1945.

Life as an army officer's wife was exciting.

Shortly after they married, she accompanied Pat when he was deployed to Malaya in 1951 at the height of the Malayan Emergency, for which he was appointed MBE and later OBE. They spent just over 16 years in Malaya (where their first two children were born), interspersed by posts at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in France on Montgomery's staff (where they welcomed a third child) and at Western Command in Chester.

Jean has kept a daily diary ever since she was a schoolgirl and her memory is phenomenal. She remembers the names of all the ships she travelled on to and from the east - including out to Singapore in 1954 on the historic Empire Windrush, which sank on its return trip. Thankfully she wasn't on board.

Jean clearly loved travelling, became an expert in moving house and made friends in high places. She recalls being invited to the coronation of the Sultan of Brunei in 1968. The invitation was made



Being a centenarian hasn't stopped her continuing to contribute to village life. She is one of the stalwarts who deliver this magazine every month, often accompanied by a great grandchild.

All the time we were chatting in Jean's garden she was furiously knitting. "I've knitted baby clothes for all my grandchildren's children and this is for the last of them. He hasn't got children yet, but I don't want him to miss out. I'm planning ahead!" I just hope I have her energy when I'm her age.

Ruth Clark



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Writing for wellbeing, health and happiness

Hilary Wilce explains how the power of the pen can help us feel more confident, happy and purposeful

Imagine writing a list of ten things that make you happy. Friends, family, pets, nature, hobbies - all these might easily come to mind. But now go for a hundred. It's really hard. Your mind has to stretch into areas you don't usually think about: your new trainers are really comfortable; the car repairs cost less than you anticipated; the full moon was spectacular last night. Now choose one of those 100 things and write for five minutes about why and how it makes you happy. At the end of all this you're likely to see afresh how many things there are in the world that bring you pleasure, and how many facets there are to joy.

Now imagine writing for five minutes on 'One thing that makes me anxious is ...'. Or 'A time when I felt completely free was ...'. Imagine writing about a colour you love. And one you hate. About your childhood bed. Or your most recent meal. Or a thing you'd do if you knew you couldn't fail.

Or try something stranger. Is there a part of your body that's giving you grief? Have a

conversation with it on the page. "Aching left hip, what do you want to say to me?" Wait quietly for the answer, and the results can be astonishing. I once saw a bad back tell its owner: "The trouble with you is you're all front, you only care what you look like to others, and you don't bother to look after the things inside you that keep you up." The back's owner didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

All these exercises, and hundreds more, sometimes including visualisations, music and diagrams, make up what's known

as Writing for Wellbeing, an easy but powerful way of exploring thoughts, wishes and feelings.

It helps us recover memories, let go of things that don't serve us, gain clarity, and make room for new perspectives.

I started tutoring it when I realised my creative writing workshops, which covered things like plotting, drama and dialogue, lit up when we touched on personal issues, and I've now run workshops for years, drawing on my experience as a writer and coach.

But you don't need to be a writer to take a Writing for Wellbeing workshop. It works for everyone. City companies use it for personal development, cancer patients find it helps with recovery, artists use it to unlock new creativity. And there's a mass of academic research confirming that it really does make people feel more happy, confident and purposeful.

But I see this in workshops all the time: that light bulb moment when someone realises something new and important about their life; the laughter and empathy when embarrassing moments are shared; the group encouragement for new goals and directions.

This autumn I'm running workshops for the Wellbeing in the Weald project, and I'm quite sure that this gentle, exploratory process will work its magic there like everywhere else.

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Heading north in search of waders in their summer finery

Charles Trollope continues his ornithological expedition to Shetland and enjoys some unusual encounters

After seabirds, the second most common group of birds in Shetland are the wader family, and Shetland has some rare Arctic breeders as well as being a stopping off post for migrants heading to the Arctic.

These Arctic breeding waders have very different plumages in summer compared to their winter ones. One of the highlights of the trip was seeing 'grey' waders that I see in winter in our estuaries looking resplendent in their breeding plumage. The species that

has the most contrast is the Knot. In winter it is a featureless grey but transforms into a very colourful red/orange, particularly on

its breast and underside. At the southern end of Mainland there are a few tidal pools which make a good spot for the migrants to refuel and this is where I saw the Knot.

The other wader that drew my attention was the Sanderling, which I frequently see running along the tide lines on Camber Sands in winter and is usually distinguished from the other waders by its pure white breast and belly. Here on its way north, it sported a lovely rufous head and breast with a little black spotting.

Amongst the wader flocks we watched was one wader which arguably has more attractive

winter plumage than summer: the Purple

Sandpiper. In winter it has a greyish head and breast, which with a little bit of imagination appear slightly purple and contrast well with yellow bill and legs; in summer the head and breast take on brownish streaks and its bill and legs turn dark.

Many waders have evocative breeding songs and probably my favourite is the 'bubble' song of the Curlew. Walking through the moorland I heard the familiar sounds of drumming Snipe and the plaintive

calls of the Golden Plover. The drumming noise of the Snipe is not vocal but the vibration of a tail feather as it dives through the air during its display flight, as in the illustration opposite.

A song that I have only heard once before is the Dunlin's rather pleasant, melodic trill. Shetland is also home to the Curlew's close relative the Whimbrel, which has a bubble song not too dissimilar to the Curlew. They winter



Red-necked Phalarope,
Phalaropus lobatus



Red knot,
Calidris canutus



Purple sandpiper,
Calidris maritima

in Africa and the consistent northerly wind had delayed their arrival, so we only saw a few. Only the week before I went to Shetland I had seen a flock of migrating Whimbrel land on Rye golf course to refuel before heading north.

The wader I was really looking forward to seeing was the Red-necked Phalarope, which is a long-necked, delicate wader that breeds around the Arctic Circle and has a unique feeding technique as well as an unusual nesting behavior. The word phalarope comes from the Ancient Greek Phalaris or 'Coot' and pous, 'feet'. Both Coots and Phalaropes have lobed toes to help them swim. Unlike most waders, the phalaropes are pelagic, spending most of their winter at sea.

Because of the late spring, our trip to Fetlar was delayed to the end of our week's stay. Fetlar



Whimbrel,
Numenius phaeopus

is one of the remote islands, taking two ferries to reach, and has a small population of breeding Red-necked Phalaropes.

The island is

most famous for hosting a pair of breeding Snowy Owls between 1967 and 1975.

Like most waders, phalaropes change their winter plumage into a more colourful one. Unusually in this case the female is the larger, more colourful one - the reason being that roles are reversed during the breeding season. As soon as the female lays the eggs, the male takes over all the breeding, incubating, hatching and bringing up the young. The female goes off in search of another male, sometimes fighting with other females to get access to another male.

We arrived on Fetlar and drove over to the west coast to find some reedy pools, which are their nesting habitat. I have to say I was quite tense at this point, having travelled many miles using air, road and ship to see this enigmatic bird in its full breeding regalia. Was the late spring going to deny me? Fortunately a

handsome female soon emerged from the reeds into open water and, eyes glued to my telescope, I was able to admire it. The Phalaropes have a very unusual, if not unique, feeding technique whereby they spin like a top, causing a vortex

in the water which draws up small crustaceans and insects from the floor, to be plucked off the water with their fine beaks.

The Red-necked Phalarope's nearest wintering place is the Arabian Sea and most guidebooks assume that they fly across Europe to reach this destination, but a satellite tracking device was fitted to one of the Shetland birds last year and to everyone's amazement it flew across the Atlantic down the east coast of the USA, crossed over Central America and wintered in the Pacific off the Peruvian coast. This is another example of the unbelievable migrations that some birds make.

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I am indebted to Tony Marsh who accompanied me on this trip for his excellent photographs



Snipe,
Gallinago gallinago



Sanderling,
Calidris alba

In Your Garden

Faith restored by a day trip to Wisley

A few weeks ago I was on my way to RHS Wisley with my local 'hort soc' and I must admit I was not expecting great things. I last visited Wisley quite some time before lockdown and had found it slightly prosaic and underwhelming. Thankfully I was rewarded this time and my

notebook was duly filled with very workable planting combinations and my iPhone storage creaked at the vast number of photos I took.

It would have been impossible (for myself) to have seen everything on offer, as the site is vast. My 'must-sees' were the new Hilltop scientific centre, which opened in June 2021, plus the long mixed borders. There has also been some extensive landscaping around the main entrance, including large island beds planted with a compact cotinus variety called 'Young Lady' with a mid-green leaf and in full dusky pink flower at the time.

On the way to Hilltop I passed through the Wisteria Walk. Although it was the wrong time of year to see it in flower there was some eye-catching underplanting in pinks (pale through to 'Barbie-esque' magenta), purples and whites, using gladioli, cosmos and cleomes to great effect. This leads onto the 128m long double mixed borders, where my notebook and pen went into overdrive - numerous planting combinations in both pastel and hot shades

and plant labels in abundance, for which I was most grateful.

A tall border phlox 'Light Pink Flame' with Agapanthus 'Silver Moon' (variegated foliage) were stunning together, along with echinops and a low nepeta; a lilac phlox 'Violetta Gloriosa' with a lilac x laciniata 'Mill' (unusual feathery foliage also called Persian Lilac) with a salvia microphylla 'Cerro Potosi'



underneath; plenty of tall loosestrifes, phlomis, macleayas, coppiced catalpas, hibiscus and the giant reed, Arundo donax, towered behind eucomis and big plate red dahlias.

These borders led up to a powerfully striking sculpture of a horse's head, 'Still Water' by the artist Nic Fiddian-Green at the tip of a viewing point looking down across the

entire site. This sculpture is also made from bronze and is now permanently installed at London's Hyde Park Corner.

The Exotic Garden provided strong combinations such as eupatorium, dark elders, clipped pittosporums with crocosmia 'Lucifer', persicarias and ligularias. Sedum 'Red Cauli', a dark-leaved variety planted on corners, was well-behaved (ie. no splaying in the centres); another workable combination of a dark elder with a deep pink rose and the variegated Miscanthus 'Morning Light'. Crocosmia 'Lemon Spray', a shorter variety, looked striking with the very dark Heuchera 'Obsidian'.

The Glasshouse borders lead from the Hilltop area down to the gigantic glasshouses. These borders were originally designed by Piet Oudolf and are due to be transformed by the designer into a new scheme this autumn. His combinations are so unusual and breathtaking, they were a joy to see close up. A bit light on plant labels here, so I put my pen and paper away and just enjoyed the plants. I will most definitely go back and do a few other sections in the future, including the Trial Borders, the Mediterranean Terraces and the Alpine Meadow.

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Above: Sunshine and showers of village life: Merry and Bright visit the Bowls Club; Jean Patterson receives her 100th birthday card from The King and Queen by special delivery; Jazz & Blues at the pavilion Iden Green; having our cake and eating it from Benenden's Community Shop.

Front cover: Vibrantly successful. Jazz & Blues in support of the Iden Green well restoration. Photograph: Amelia Thomas