



Above: Festivities: Christmas Market at the primary school; Benenden String Orchestra in concert; Benenden's carol singing social; Benenden School pupils donate to the Mayor's Toy Appeal; Iden Green and Benenden WVI celebrate at the Bull; Benenden Gardening Club enjoy a wreath-making workshop; John Betts performs with Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra.

Front cover: Celebrating our milestone. Illustration: Amelia Thomas

one hundred editions

Benenden Magazine

January 2024





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and a Jolly New Year!

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New Year

Editorial



For the past four and half years I have had a regular date with the talented team that put this magazine together to plot and plan the next month's issue - fuelled by coffee and chocolate biscuits (made by Camilla if we are lucky). Is there ever a time we don't have a treasure trove of articles to consider? No! Is there ever a concern that we won't be receiving news from village organisations and clubs? Never. Camilla, our valiant and ever-patient production editor, plans out what goes where and highlights events coming up; Paul does a magnificent job juggling advertisers and keeps a watchful eye on finances; Peter, my award-winning co-editor and Jiminy Cricket advisor, keeps us all on track, writes scintillating copy and ensures no hanging parentheses sneak in. Finally, Charles, our resident ornithological expert, is our wise advisor and treasurer who gently guides us back when we threaten go off piste. In 2024 we welcome Cathy Presgrave, as our PCC representative, to this happy band. I hope she can bake!

It's a real privilege working with them and it's a real privilege to have the licence to ferret out all those interesting people and businesses across this village to write about them or invite them to write for us. Chance meetings often lead to these pages and luckily not many people run away when they see me coming! For example, until I chatted with village hall manager John Betts I didn't realise just how many activities take place in the hall (page 27).

Volunteering in the café and being part of Marilyn and Dick Hill's 31-strong magazine distribution team, I often get useful feedback - anything from "I put it straight into the bin" (thankfully rare) to "I read every page". You can't please everyone all the time, but we do our best. Here's to the next 100 issues.

Happy New Year everyone.

Ruth Clark, Co-Editor

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

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Editorial Board: PCC Rep: Cathy Presgrave, PC Rep: Nicola Thomas,

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Village Calendar

January

Saturday 6	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Social Club, 8.30pm	
Saturday 13	I Believe in Unicorns, Benenden School Theatre, 2pm	p.19
Saturday 13	Bingo, St George's Social Club, 8.30pm	
Monday 15	Parish Council Meeting, Benenden Hospital Quinlan Centre, 7pm	
Tuesday 16	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 16	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 16	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.9
Tuesday 16	Iden Green and Benenden WI, New Year Meeting, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.9
Saturday 20	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.30pm	
Tuesday 23	Merry and Bright, AGM with guest speaker, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.15
Wednesday 24	Laura van der Heijden and Jâms Coleman, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7pm	
Saturday 27	Cheese and Wine Night, St George's Social Club, 8.30pm	
Tuesday 30	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 30	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Wednesday 31	Benenden and Iden Green Ukulele Jam, Introductory Session, The Bull, Benenden, 6pm	p.25

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



So we are at the 100th edition of this award-winning magazine, which is the envy of many other villages around us and beyond. How lucky we are! Great credit needs to be given to Kent Barker, who as a then member of the parish council originally came up with the idea of a village magazine that could be delivered free to every household in the parish, and Kent was instrumental in bringing the idea to fruition.

Happily for the parish council coffers, the magazine is now so successful that it is self-funding. So many thanks and credit to all those who have given their time and energy to create what has become a real asset to village life and the community as a whole.

We should be seeing the completion of the new public toilet in the middle of January, complete with disabled access and all mod cons, even hot and cold running water!

For those of you who are interested, the application for the development of the former hospital sites at East End has now been submitted to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council under reference 23/03274/FULL by Esquire Developments. You can view all the documents associated with the submission on the TWBC website here: <https://twbcpa.midkent.gov.uk/online-applications/search> and then enter the reference of the application.

This application will be discussed at our meeting on 15 January 2024, 7pm at the Quinlan Centre at Benenden Hospital. This is a public meeting, open to all, so please do come along if you have any questions or comments to share with us about this application.

And lastly, a very happy and peaceful new year to you all from all your parish councillors.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair
nicolat@benendenparishcouncil.org

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

Parish Council Meeting
Monday 15 January 2024,
Benenden Hospital Quinlan Centre, 7pm

Morning Prayer **8am Mondays and Fridays**

Mid-week Communion 10am Tuesdays

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

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

Church Letter



Familiar comforts, new adventures

Phew! There's the busyness of Christmas over. Did you manage to enjoy it, or does it feel like you simply survived it? I hope you managed to enjoy, at the very least, part of Christmas. That you were able to stop, just for a moment perhaps, and take stock of what Christmas is all about, and remember the awe and wonder of the Christmas story.

Now, here we are, into a new year, with all its newness and potential, and at the same time all its sameness and routines, its reassurances and its concerns. For many, January means: Aargh I still haven't done my tax return! I promised myself I wouldn't leave it until the last minute last year, but here we are, still not started again. For me, apart from the tax return business, there is also the familiar pattern of Epiphany in January. There is the familiarity of 'Cakes & Chaos', our toddler group, now in its tenth year, starting up once again. We also get into the routine of a regular service pattern at church for a little while, including Connect Four - our monthly, informal, family service on a Saturday afternoon where we connect with one another and with God and the Bible (4pm on the fourth Saturday of the month).

January also sees the first of our fete committee meetings as we gear up for another great community event in the summer. (Put the afternoon of Saturday 15 June in your diary now). We'll also be doing something completely new in January: digging some archaeological test pits in church as part of the project to bring your church into the 21st century and prepare it to face the 22nd century. (Do not fret, things will be made good again afterwards before, hopefully, the project work goes ahead the following year.)

Then it will soon be Ash Wednesday (14 February), and the start of Lent. Before we know it, it will be Palm Sunday, Holy Week, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and then Easter Sunday (Easter Sunday being 31 March this year). So, is it 'more of the same' as we embark on 2024? In some ways, yes it is. Enjoying the comfort of routine and normality. However, the new year is also a time to stop and think 'what do I want to do this year? What do I want to make happen this year?' I encourage you to enjoy the familiarity of the routine of the coming year, but also to embrace the new things and the potential of a new year. As we move from 2023 into 2024, make this the year that you turn your wish, your ambition, into a reality.

Revd David Commander, Rector and Area Dean

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Talking Point



Counting the human cost on Britain's most dangerous roads

People may tell you this a sleepy little place where very little happens, but let me tell you, life on Mounts Hill is never boring. Mounts Hill is the little slope heading west out of the village, and its principal characteristics are that it involves a lengthy blind brow on a blind left-handed curve, followed by a steepish decline into a blind right-handed bend with a wooden fence as its near-side boundary.

I say 'fence', but normally it's just a shattered collection of sticks, due to the fact that a lot of drivers think the best way to approach a stretch of road with very poor visibility, a tricky turn and people either pulling out of their driveways or walking their dogs, is to accelerate and then swerve at the last minute, into oncoming hazards or the fence.

We had another one not long ago: I'm told it was a Bentley but all I could see in the dark was a recovery vehicle or two, some hi-vis vests and a lot of commotion. The following morning, the verge was a mess of fencing, headlight glass, door mirrors and discarded bodywork, all left for somebody else to clear up.

I used to try and explain to people that they were going too fast, but they'd just puff out their chests and point out that the speed limit is 60mph, so I should eff off and mind my own business. To put that kind of attitude into context, I recently read a Sunday supplement motoring writer, assessing the merits of a 'performance' car, who declared that the driver could only feel the full benefits when they "opened it up" on country roads. He was clearly a pillock, but a pillock with a large, receptive audience.

It's one of the great anomalies of the British road network: on a motorway, going in a straight line on the flat with no traffic coming the other way, you can only go at 70mph, but on a twisty downhill with other drivers heading towards you, you're legally entitled to go at 60mph. Sometimes we get two idiots coming in different directions - a sort of perfect storm of automotive stupidity. It never ends well for the fence, and apparently it requires several deaths for the authorities to deem a change of speed limit necessary at any given site, so we'll have to wait until we get two minibuses, driven by lunatics, travelling in opposite directions, colliding on a dark night in the rain.

That should get the numbers up, although you'd have thought the fact that more than half of fatal crashes occur on rural roads would be a clue in itself. (According to Brake, the road safety charity, "per mile travelled, rural roads are the most dangerous roads for all kinds of road user.")

An enforced 40mph limit in appropriate areas might even chip away at the tally of 100,000 foxes killed each year on British roads, which is around five times the number formerly killed by hunting, but that's another issue entirely.

In the meantime, I've got it off my chest again. That should do it for another couple of years.

Peter Thomas

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Benenden Bonfire Society

The aim of the Benenden Bonfire Society is, when funds allow, to distribute a proportion of the profits from the event within the parish and surrounding area. We focus on youth groups and/or projects but will consider other applications, too. This year we have limited funds to distribute and application forms are now available in the village shop. Completed forms must be returned there no later than 1 February, please.

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

Iden Green and Benenden WI

Our Christmas festivities ended with some of our members enjoying a delicious celebration meal at the Bull in Benenden. We had such fun, chatting, laughing at the cracker jokes and passing on the rabbit!

At our next meeting on 16 January (2pm, Memorial Hall), apart from the surprises in store, we shall be debating the national resolutions for this year. These are: 1. Dental health matters; 2. Impacts of poor housing conditions; 3. Say 'No' to gambling advertising; 4. Improving outcomes for women in the criminal justice system.

Further details are in WI Life, together with a form for members to complete and return to us. Our new varied programme is now available and we welcome 2024 with anticipation. Please do not hesitate to come along if you would like to join us. May we wish you all a happy and peaceful New Year.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

Benenden panto

If you walk past the village hall on a Sunday afternoon over the next few weeks you will hear singing and laughter as we rehearse for OZ - curtain up on Friday 2 February with four shows over that weekend. Villagers, young and old, have been working hard on and off stage to bring you a wonderful traditional panto, creating OZ scenery, planning lighting and sound and fine-tuning costumes and props. Meanwhile the cast have been perfecting their lines (Oh yes they have!).

Tickets are selling fast and you can buy yours very easily online here:

www.benendenplayers.co.uk or

scan this code to go direct to the site. Alternatively please call me if you have any questions or would like to book with me.



Ruth Clark 07767 261883

Village lunch

Thank you to all who came to the Christmas village lunch. It was fun wasn't it! The first lunch of 2024 will be on Tuesday 16 January in the village hall at 12.30pm. There is always a main course, a pud and coffee or tea, for £5 per person. If you would like to come, and haven't signed up, please ring to let me know by Thursday 11 January.

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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Volunteer Drivers Group

The group has been back in existence for just over a year and during that time has covered 16 requests for lifts to medical appointments. So far we have not had to turn down a request, but during the course of the year we have lost some of the original volunteers, so are now looking for a few more drivers to join the ranks. There is no specific or minimum time commitment, you just pick up a request if you are available.

If you would like to find out more or need to call on the group for assistance, please contact:

Mick Moore 240755
m.moore131156@gmail.com

Primary School

What a busy and industrious term it has been. In November a mixed-age group of children from Benenden took part in a team-building afternoon at the Angel Centre in Tonbridge. Well done to Mila Backwith, Henry King, Lucy and Arthur Falder, Jackson Hukins, Alfie Hicks, Elsie Pain, Ava and Miley Poole, Milo Pollard, Bea Plewes and Jack Jones.

Early in December the Christmas season got off to a good start with our choir spending an evening at Tenterden Garden Centre, performing to a packed crowd. A big shout out to our soloists, Bella Vincent and Oliver Gray, who were brilliant.

Our popular Christmas market returned this year and it was a wonderful event due to the amazing parental support our school enjoys. Particular thanks go to our incredible PTFA, who had been working tirelessly behind the scenes for weeks.

Well done to all the children who took part in our Nativity 'Baarmy Bethlehem' - it was simply magical.

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

Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

The PTFA were thrilled to raise over £2,000 at the Christmas Market, so a huge thank you to all those who joined us or volunteered. Our events help us support the school and over the holiday we were able to contribute to a full school trip to Tonbridge to see Aladdin in pantomime and supply the refreshments for the children's class Christmas parties.

A very big thank you to all the PTFA team for giving so much of their time this year to plan and run these events. We look forward to seeing you at an event next year.

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

Benenden Pre-School

We're back to pre-school on 5 January and the most important New Year's resolution is surely to be kind to others, in our pre-school, our family and our community. While we may not be able to control what happens in the wider world, to alleviate the suffering of those in war zones or to prevent the melting of ice caps, we can certainly strive to have a positive impact on those with whom we come into contact.

Having kind hands is something we encourage: hands are for helping our friends and for being constructive and creative. Children are naturally kind and helpful and thrive when given responsibilities such as assisting with preparing snacks, helping a younger child wash their hands or being the one to turn the lights out before we go outside to the garden.

Happy New Year.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor
supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

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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

Talking Shop

Well, here we are at the end of another year and Benenden's is still very much alive and not so much 'kicking' as liberalising, entertaining and regenerative. Those of you who visit regularly will have seen the many changes which are taking place, especially with regard to staffing, but we are confident that going on into 2024 we will continue to thrive and grow.

With this in mind, we are actively seeking someone who, being IT savvy, can help us overhaul our website. If there is anyone who can devote a few hours to helping us, please contact us by email at info@benendens.co.uk or pop into the shop and speak to us. You can be any age and won't need to join the committee.

Our customers will be delighted to hear that from 6 January, our Saturday café opening hours will extend to 3pm again. Not only that, but we will be returning to providing our delicious, competitively priced lunches as our staffing situation has improved.

Changes in staff will be reported on in future issues but be assured that we are confident that Benenden's will continue to provide the special, friendly place for so many people to use in 2024. Despite the current economic climate we have been able to make three charitable donations during the festive period. We wish you all a very happy, healthy New Year. Keep coming to support our favourite community shop.

Bev Beveridge info@benendens.co.uk

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Merry and Bright

We ended 2023 with our Christmas party with lots of home-made foods, decorated tables and a nice sing-along. Looking back, 2023 was a very successful year, with speakers, outings and garden party, and new members joining throughout. We would like to thank all of the committee for all their support through the year.

We are looking forward to 2024 being even better, with lots of good ideas in the pot. Why not start the year with a visit to our club? Our first meeting on Tuesday 23 January, is the AGM followed by a talk by Charlotte Molesworth about her lovely garden. Everyone is welcome and lifts can be arranged for those who do not have transport. A big thank you to everyone who kindly came along to do demonstrations of their hobbies. We found them all very interesting and we look forward to seeing more new faces in 2024.

Laraine Penny 241763

Julia Collard 241944

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Benenden Hospital

As I sit down to write the first article of 2024, I've been reflecting on one of our greatest successes from 2023: our patient webinars.

Many of us discovered the joys of FaceTime, which allowed us to connect with loved ones, during the Covid pandemic. We've taken inspiration from this to create consultant-hosted webinars, also known as online talks, to educate and inform our patients about a range of our treatments and services. Digital events provide more accessibility, support our reduction in paper throughout the hospital (our Paperlite strategy) and inform and educate patients before they've even stepped through the main entrance.

We had 29 webinars in which 2,680 participants attended and 447 patients received treatment at our hospital after attending a webinar. But what do our free online talks involve? Let's say you've registered to attend our 9 January knee replacement with ROSA webinar. After booking your place on our website, you'll need to ensure you have Zoom downloaded so you can open the event.

During the talk, our consultant orthopaedic surgeon, Mr Chipperfield, will discuss the benefits of robotic-assisted knee surgery followed by the opportunity for those attending to ask questions. The sessions last for around an hour and are completely free. I hope that you, as a member of the Benenden community, make the most of our patient webinars so you can learn about a health concern and feel empowered to take the first step to better health this year.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

Topical health

Broken bones, or fractures, are common in the winter when people slip in the ice and snow. Most at risk include the elderly, the young, people with some conditions, e.g. osteoporosis, and those who engage in some physical sporting and occupational activities.

As with all first aid problems, assessing someone with a potential broken bone requires you to ensure first of all that the person is breathing and not bleeding profusely, as these need to be treated first. Signs and symptoms of a fracture include pain, reduced movement, swelling, deformity, bruising and in extreme cases bone sticking out through the skin.

The general first aid priorities in managing a suspected fracture are immobilising the break, managing swelling and getting help. It is usually not a good idea to give the casualty oral pain relief as they may require an anaesthetic later. Immobilisation can be achieved by holding the affected area until professional help arrives - this might mean holding an arm against the person's chest or abdomen or turning up the bottom of their jumper or t-shirt to act as a sling. For a suspected spinal fracture, or open fracture, just hold the person still in whatever position they are in.

Swelling can be reduced by applying ice and/or through elevation where this is possible, e.g. for a suspected broken finger. Where possible, take the person to hospital. Where this is not possible or desirable, e.g. for a broken and deformed leg or suspected spinal fracture, phone for an ambulance. People who complain of a loss of sensation or whose extremities become very cold away from the fracture need rapid professional help. Tell the 999 operator if this is the case.

Peter Ellis



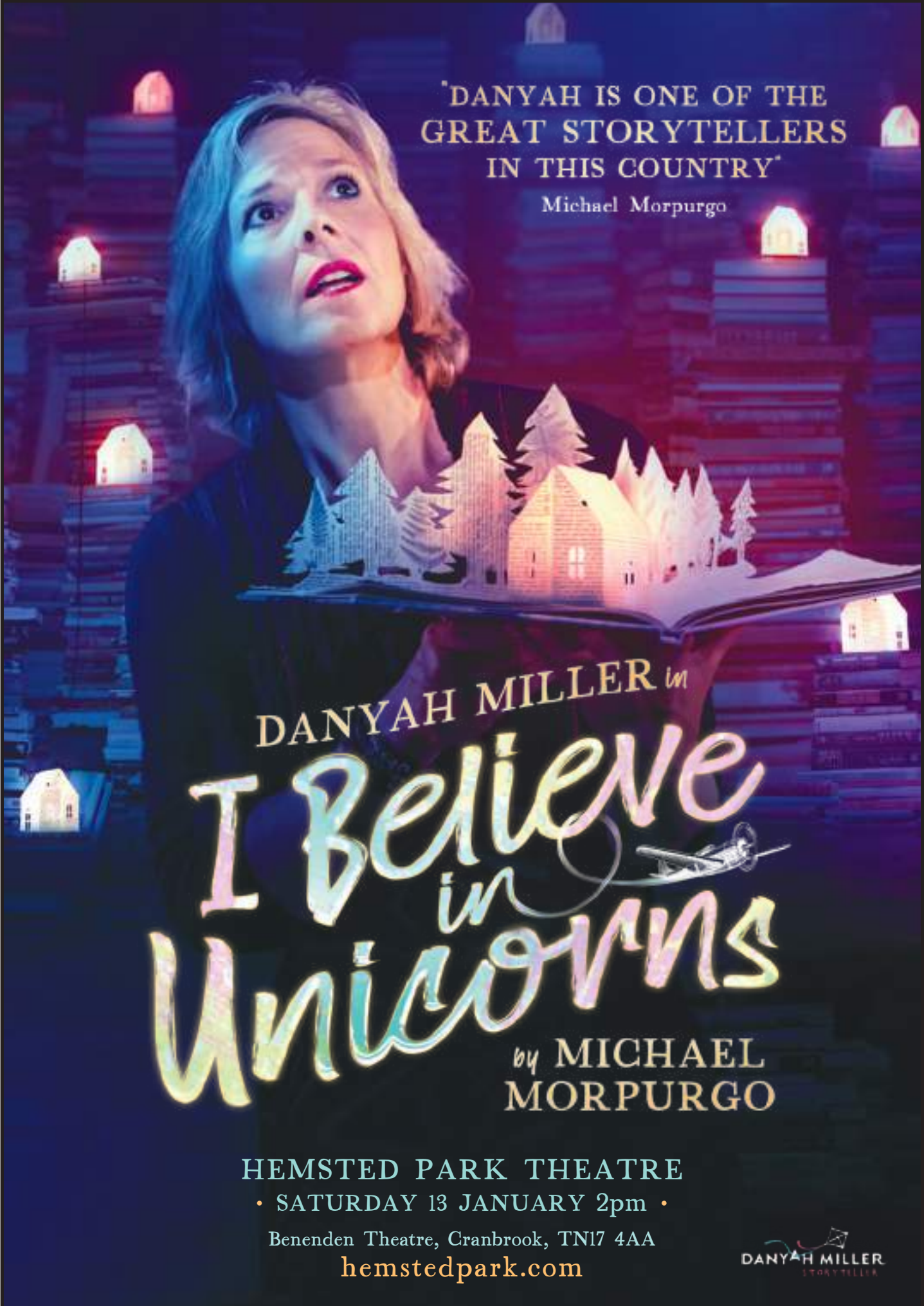
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Benenden School

As I write this column on Christmas Jumper Day, we are just one week away from the end of term, with students enjoying a range of Christmas activities across school, decorating their dorms (and gingerbread houses!), and preparing to enjoy our upcoming carol services and festive winter ball.

Students have incorporated the Christmas theme into their continuing 100 Acts of Kindness this month, an initiative that aims to complete 100 Acts of Kindness for both the Benenden and wider community, by the end of the school's 100th year. Students in our Hemsted boarding house are fundraising for Great Ormond Street Hospital this year, and as well as raising money they have each written a Christmas card to the staff and patients in all 37 wards of the hospital.

Further Christmas celebrations were had, with a very festive edition of the Memory Lane Café this week, which saw elderly members of the local community treated to a celebration of Christmas. Our choir and director of music delivered a festive repertoire which was hugely appreciated by guests - and an abundance of Santa hats, Christmas jumpers and tinsel certainly added to the Christmas spirit.

As we look ahead to the spring term, rehearsals are now firmly underway for our Centenary Celebration Show at the London Coliseum, where guests will be treated to a spectacular performance of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat by students from Benenden. It's wonderful to witness the students rehearsing as excitement builds for this one-off event.

As well as drama rehearsals, the school was a thriving hub of activity this week (even more so than usual) as we welcomed a record number of delegates from visiting schools for our 16th Model United Nations Conference. The event comprised more than 400 students and staff, and the standard of debate was extremely high.

It has been a characteristically busy term for Benenden, and we look forward to continuing our fantastic programme of centenary events!
Samantha Price, Headmistress

Planning Matters

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

- 23/03022/FULL Holly Cottage, Iden Green Road. Demolition of existing outbuilding, utility and porch and construction of new two storey side extension.

More planning matters at:
benendenparishcouncil.org

Benenden Gardening Club

At our Christmas party we toasted our first year with mulled wine and festive food. Our entertainment for the evening was a brilliant wreath-making workshop given by our two local flower-growers: Hannah Miles-Watson and Sheila Hume. Hannah showed us how to make a homemade 'base' from willow, hazel or wisteria, packed it with soaking moss and tied in small bunches of foliage to create a magnificent greenery wreath. Sheila made a dried flower and grasses wreath, with all the 'ingredients' grown, picked and dried over the past months from her garden. New Year beckons and with exciting talks, including Marian Boswell in March, shows and visits.

Minnie Garnier

First Crocus

Again you're here.
Pushed up
through cold, hard winter crust.
Pert, bright, ridiculous,
out of place.
Your almond head of orange,
a solitary vibrant glow
against the grey crisped white.
Bravely you wait,
A tiny ludicrous blaze.
A proclamation
of things to come.
Rosemary Lloyd Jones

One hundred editions of our magazine

An Evening in the Bull

WHERE WE ARE NOW

When I joined the Benenden Magazine as a co-editor (back in 2016, after my wife had threatened never to talk to me ever again if I refused to use my one transferable skill, as a professional journalist, for the benefit of the village), it was already well established under the leadership of founder Kent Barker. Owen Lewis was editor for the first six months, but Kent then took over, soon to be joined by myself and Minnie Garnier.

Much water has passed under the bridge since then and personnel have come and gone, but the spirit of the original remains. I became editor, thankfully inheriting the production team (consisting basically of the matchless Camilla Macdonald) and advertising/finance team (almost entirely the ever-vigilant Paul Leek). With resident wine expert Tracy Claridge on food and drink, I quickly signed up the irrepressible Ruth Clark as co-editor and roving reporter.

With Charles Trollope acting as treasurer and various representatives of the Parochial Church Council and Parish Council to keep us in check, we meet once a month, mostly over coffee and biscuits in my kitchen, to thrash out the contents of the following month's mag. In this vein, we are now clocking up the 100th issue, trying our best, as per our original brief, to promote harmony and goodwill in the village while also informing and educating - and winning Best Editor and runner-up in Best Magazine at last year's National Parish Magazine Awards (sound of trumpet being blown in background).

They're not hard rules to follow. We all love our village (whichever bit of it we happen to inhabit, from Iden Green to East End and all points in between), which makes reporting on all the good - occasionally bad - that goes on here quite natural. We hope to carry on spreading the word in Benenden for at least another 100 editions, but here is the story of how your former parish magazine became the all-singing, all-dancing, full-colour and glossy beast it is today.

Peter Thomas



AN EVENING IN THE BULL THAT SPAWNED A BOLD NEW IDEA

The Bull, a couple of pints of Harvey's and a conversation with dear Tracy Claridge some years ago have a lot to answer for. Tracy and I met up for a beer one evening to chew things over about how we could get news of a forthcoming event made known around the village. There was the church weekly newsletter/pew sheet, but that was only seen by those who came to church. There was the church monthly magazine, going out to around 400 people - that would be better.

But what about everyone else in the village who didn't subscribe to it? How to try and get everyone in the village to hear about something? Another pint of beer, and then the thought: 'Wouldn't it be good if the magazine went to every household and every business in the village; that would get the news of an event spread much further.' And so the fledgling idea of a free, village-wide magazine came about. I can't remember what the event was that we were wanting to promote, but I do know that there has been a very positive impact from that chat.

The good idea didn't just stay an idea though. Somehow, by the efforts of a great team of amazing people, the idea became a reality. The church A5 magazine, with a colour outer, available to subscribers, developed into an A4 full-colour magazine delivered to every household and business in the village. The

effort of so many people to make this happen reflects so well upon the great community in which we live. Thank you, Tracy. Thank you, everyone. We have a great magazine that we should all be proud of.

Revd David Commander

THE PLAN

I led the communications work stream for the fledgling Parish Plan and one of our key recommendations read as follows: "Review editorial and distribution arrangements of the parish magazine, moving to a free-of-charge publication available to all households."

Once the plan was published, along with Kent Barker I moved to the implementation phase. The idea originated with him and I had the vehicle and the relationships to make it happen. We then presented the concept to the St George's PCC. I met with Charles Trollope - who has remained on the team - and we discussed it with the existing editor, Nick Eastwood. We then met with the Wealden Advertiser regarding printing and finally liaised with a contingent of the PCC - Charles Trollope, David Commander, Tracy Claridge and Julia Collard and all agreed in principle to go ahead.

I was delighted when Marilyn and Dick Hill agreed to continue managing the distribution team. Kent approached Camilla Macdonald, who had been the layout editor for the Parish Plan, and has since played a similar role for the magazine.

Previously, the parish magazine (produced and managed by the PCC) was raising around £4,000 a year in annual revenue - and of that, £1,500 surplus went to the PCC. The PCC supported the change, continuing to supply the treasury function and distribution network and, in recognition of this and the revenue they had relinquished, the new publication would be run on a commercial basis and pass back an appropriate level of income each year. Initially we were able to deliver £500 each year and still break even. We've since found our feet and have performed more strongly in

recent years, so we've been able to build up some decent reserves and we currently give £1,000 to St George's each year.

I'd assumed that I would perform a start-up role but I'm still here as advertising manager, part of a team that works hard to keep the magazine working as it should for the village.

Paul Leek

THE HEAVY LIFTING

Before the change in 2015, the former parish magazine had about 400 subscribers at £5 per annum, delivered by 20 villagers. The new version, to be put through approaching 850 letter boxes, meant asking the existing deliverers to expand their rounds, creating new rounds and the recruitment of additional deliverers - we now have 31.

Remarkably, this presented no real problems, perhaps typical of the village spirit. An immense debt of gratitude is due to all the deliverers, who invariably get the magazine out promptly in all weathers, some with hair-raising roads to cope with. Furthermore, when there has been a vacancy there has been no shortage of volunteers to take over a round.

The mechanics of the operation are straightforward, albeit a little time-consuming and physical.

Assuming no hiccups at the Wealden Ad, the magazines are dropped off at our house at around 9am on a Friday. We then sort them into the various bundles, having already prepared the labels (or envelopes for those which we post), get everything into the car by late morning and set out to drop them off at the church, shop, primary school, etc, or, in some cases, at the homes of deliverers. In the afternoon, Marilyn does her own round.

I referred above to the physical aspect. The total weight of 100 issues comes to just over 11 tons. Marilyn and I have to move every single magazine three times, so it could be said that we have shifted 34 tons of magazines over the years. (Quite a feat! Ed.)

Marilyn and Dick Hill



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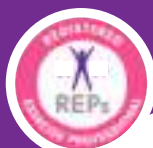
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From lullaby to grunge: the joys of the ukulele jam

Russell Cruse on joining Benenden's very own 'uke' celebration ensemble

At a festival in 2006, I was dozing on the grass, when the next act came on. I hadn't planned to see them but as soon as they began, I sat up and took notice. Yes, there were eight musicians and yes, they were all in evening dress. And they all had instruments. But any resemblance to a sedate octet ended there. Their instruments turned out to be ukuleles of various sizes and what was coming out of them was not some Hawaiian lullaby or a 1920s show tune but Nirvana's grunge anthem 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'.

This was the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain, a group which (it's no exaggeration to say) changed the way people looked at the odd little instrument - the national instrument of Hawaii, introduced by Portuguese sailors in the late 19th century. Within only a few years of their rather jokey enterprise, ukulele bands were springing up everywhere. Benenden was no exception.

The Benenden and Iden Green Ukulele Jam began much like others, with a repertoire of light strum-along songs, but it wasn't long before

the band began performing pieces that were more challenging. We found ourselves learning music by the Velvet Underground, AC/DC, Dandy Warhols, and more contemporary songs (in the great scheme of things!) with bands like Train, Avicii and Jack Johnson. Band members would bring stuff, and we'd quickly go from 'We can't play that!' to 'We love this'. Over time, we have built up a songbook of about 150 songs. We still play the oldies but goodies and are still learning new stuff.

We are very much in demand for local festivals, pubs, at weddings or other celebrations. We're a mixed group, most of whom started off with no prior musical experience, and we have learned both musicianship and how to play in an ensemble. We meet weekly at the Bull.



If you have always thought 'I wish I had learned to play an instrument', or 'I wish I hadn't stopped learning an instrument', or 'I want to sing in a band' or 'I must get out more', then

come along to our introductory session for all abilities, for singers, bassists, and potential uke players, at the Bull from 6pm until 8.30pm on Wednesday 31 January. We'll have instruments to borrow on the night, and whilst we can't promise you'll end up in the UOGB, we can promise a lot of fun.



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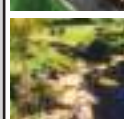
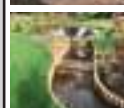
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Benenden Village Hall

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AMI PIPER SCHOOL OF DANCE

The hall has been the home to our classes for many years and we are so lucky to have such an amazing venue in the village. We offer a range of weekly classes from ISTD ballet, tap, modern and acrobatic arts for children from the age of four as well as adult classes in tap and ballet. Please contact me if you would like more information and to register your interest in a three-week trial offer.

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BABY CLASSES AND BABY MASSAGE

Mini movers and massage on Wednesday mornings is a six-week baby massage class combined with sensory play from birth up to active crawling. Movers and shakers baby sensory is for older babies. We include different themes each week but the main theme in every class is perinatal mental health and wellbeing. Our new Bath Babies Sensory Retreat sessions include individual baths for a wonderful water sensory experience to support the bond between parent and baby.

Evie Banfield 07872 348155

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BENENDEN PLAYERS

The hall is the home of Benenden Players, hosting our world-famous (almost) annual pantomime and our occasional summer celebratory events and drama workshops.



We're currently well into rehearsals, set-painting, prop production and costume-primping mode at the moment for OZ, our next panto (see page 11). If you're keen to join in the fun, maybe you have hidden talents with paint, needle and thread, or fancy helping backstage, or harbour ambitions to join the chorus, then please let us know.

Nancy Tolhurst

nancy.tolhurst@btinternet.com

Ruth Clark ruthbclark55@gmail.com

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CHARLIE HARTLEY YOGA

I've been teaching yoga at Benenden for over 15 years, and run a gentle class on Mondays and a general class on Fridays. Whether you are seeking improved



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Benenden Village Hall

→ FUNFIT

Funfit, for all ages and abilities, takes place on Tuesday mornings from 9.30-10.30am. The emphasis is on improving your own agility, balance, coordination and strength through fun activities. I use a variety of pieces of equipment to provide challenges to improve your balance. Developing strength is really important for everyone, particularly as you get older. Every ten years, people who do not use weights lose between five and ten percent of strength and bone density. If you exercise regularly you will have more strength, better balance and be less likely to fall over.
Peter Stennet shrattle@hotmail.co.uk



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A gong bath meditation is a wonderful opportunity to unwind and de-stress and doesn't require you to do anything other than to get comfy and lay down with your eyes closed, whilst the vast array of sounds wash over you. Each session (third Friday of each month 7.30-9.15pm) begins with gently focusing on the breath, guiding you to a place of calm, before setting and focusing on an intention for your sound journey. I create a nurturing space for you to experience the deeply relaxing and rejuvenating effects of the gongs.

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LEGO CLUB

Every Saturday morning from 9-10.30am you will find children from five to ten years old having fun building Lego, with a new challenge every week. Spaces are limited so please contact us for more information and availability.

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SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING

This friendly group is run by Hawkhurst u3a. We welcome new dancers who may not be u3a members but would like to join us for a free taster session. We meet on a Friday morning from 10.45-12.45pm, with a 'bring your own coffee' break mid-way through the session. You will learn the basic steps to do reels, jigs and Strathspeys. You will become familiar with 'right hand stars' and 'figures of eight' and 'double triangles'. Your stamina will increase and you leave your troubles by the door as you will be totally absorbed in having fun and keeping fit.

Ros 714449 or Margaret 481176



WEALD POWER YOGA

I have been teaching yoga for over five years and my classes (Monday mornings from 9.30-10.30am) offer a fun and dynamic yoga experience. The goal is to focus on the breath while checking out from our busy minds. Based on the vinyasa flow style of yoga, you can expect a whole-body workout and to leave your mat feeling stretched, strengthened and deeply relaxed. Suitable for all levels including beginners. Ruth Allen ruth@wealdpoweryoga.com Instagram: @wealdpoweryoga



THE FIIT CLUB

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VILLAGE LUNCH CLUB

The Village Lunch Club meets every third Tuesday of the month. There is always a main course, a pud and coffee or tea for £5.

Sheila Hume 854627

Browse the hall calendar here:

benendenvillagehall.org

For more information on activities or to book the hall:

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Benenden School celebrating 100 years



Fig.1

Three remarkable women, 24 girls and second-hand furniture: the start of it all

Abigail Barkis recalls the pioneering roots
of a century of educational excellence

In 1857, Gathorne Gathorne-Hardy, the first Earl of Cranbrook, bought Hemsted House, its land and other properties from the Hallet-Hodges family. Norton, Hoggart and Trist estate agents auctioned the estate along with 4,500 acres of land, pleasure grounds, a hop garden, fruit and kitchen gardens and many farms in the Benenden area.

Three years later, he demolished the house and built a new home designed by David Brandon, President of the Royal Institute of

British Architects, at a cost of £18,544. Brandon provided Gathorne-Hardy with an Elizabethan-style house with a porte-cochere, balustrading and tower. The bricks were made on the estate and the gas that lit the interior of the house was extracted from the land. There was a library, gun room and billiard room built in a Victorian country house style. Formal terraces separated the house from the park on the south and east sides.

At the beginning of the 20th century, a Dutch garden was laid out on the east terrace. The new approaches to the house, and the elaborate gardens which surrounded it, were designed by William Broderick Thomas and further grounds were planted, with elements of the earlier landscape retained.



Fig.2



Fig.3



Fig.4

In 1910, Sir Harold Harmsworth, later Viscount Rothermere of the newspaper dynasty, bought the estate and in 1912 called in Herbert Cescinsky to remodel the house to reflect the architectural fashion of the time. The height of the tower was reduced, French balustrades were replaced with stone battlements, the porte-cochere was removed and stone carvings were installed above the front door.

The rooms were embellished with oak panelling believed to have been salvaged and repurposed from the house Gathorne-Hardy demolished. Rooms were decorated with ornate plaster ceilings, chandeliers and elaborate glass. In the Terrace Room, the portrait of the Earl of Suffolk still hangs above the fireplace that Rothermere altered to accommodate it, and the 17th and 18th century Belgian stained glass still illuminates the entrance hall. The house boasts some genuine early 17th-century plank and muntin panelling, topped with a pictorial frieze depicting pastoral scenes within the picturesque landscape.

In 1923 the estate was divided and the Founders of the school bought the house and the immediate grounds. The Founders, Miss Bird, Miss Hindle and Miss Sheldon, were three friends around 30 years old, teaching at Wycombe Abbey. Three key events resulted in the founding of Benenden School: first, in response to an unprecedented demand for more public-school education, Stowe School was founded; next, as Wycombe Abbey was oversubscribed, the dynamic headmistress challenged her staff to start another school like hers; finally, the founders of Frensham, a new



Fig.5

Fig.1 The Rose Garden, 1880s

Fig.2 Engraving of David Brandon's Hemsted House

Fig.3 The newly built Hemsted House, 1862

Fig.4 Gathorne-Hardy at his desk, circa 1885

Fig.5 The Founders of the school outside the main entrance

Fig.6 Gathorne-Hardy at the new entrance

school in Australia, visited Wycombe Abbey and fired the friends' enthusiasm, showing them that it was possible to start from scratch.

A visit to Miss Frances Dove, a pioneer of women's education, crystallised their ideas. Miss Dove had started Wycombe Abbey in 1896, having been on the staff of St Leonards, and she always hoped that there would be at least a third school for girls in the same tradition. Between them, they outlined a detailed plan of campaign. →



Fig.6

Benenden School celebrating 100 years



Fig.7

house - one with at least 70 bedrooms and large grounds.

By July 1923, the names of 24 girls had been put down. A furnished school was found in Bickley and a temporary home was established for the first term. Miss Sheldon was appointed headmistress, in co-operation with Miss Bird and Miss Hindle. That first term was described by Miss Bird as a mixture of public school and children's party, and there remained the problem: where next?

Eastwell Park was considered an ideal location but negotiations fell through. Then Miss Hindle spotted the details for Hemsted Park, the home of Lord Rothermere. At first its remoteness

was seen as a handicap, but the charm and suitability of the house impressed the Founders. On Christmas Eve they signed a document giving them a two-term tenancy of Hemsted Park for £1,500, with an option to purchase at £22,500.

In January 1924, they arrived at the house. Slept on camp beds in what was Lord Rothermere's bedroom and the following day, second-hand furniture began to arrive, along with friends and local volunteers

helping to transform the premises into a fully operational school. Within three weeks they had appointed Busby (butler) and Purver (gardener) - both to become much-loved mainstays of the

→ In summer 1923, a meeting of friends was held in Portman Square to discuss the formation of a school council. The Founders outlined their plans and explained that they each had £100 to contribute but no house in mind at that moment. The council, encouraged by Miss Dove, agreed that if they could find a house, financial support and a nucleus of girls to get the school started, they would support the venture by forming an educational company.

To raise funds, letters were sent to seniors, old girls, of Wycombe Abbey and St Leonards, to personal friends and to names randomly taken from Who's Who, Crockford's Clerical Directory and Whitaker's Almanack, offering shares in the company. With £2,000 pledged, the trio set about finding a



Fig.8



Fig.9

Fig.7 The school from the main drive, 1920s

Fig.8 The Founders

Fig.9 The whole school including teaching staff, 1923



Fig.10



Fig.11



Fig.12

Fig.10 Nora Sainsbury, housekeeper and Thomas Busby, butler

Fig.11 Working on the Terrace, 1925

Fig.12 Reading in the grounds, 1930

Fig.13 Tennis on the Terrace, 1947

Fig.14 The Rose Garden, 1974

school - a queue of maids and a housekeeper, Miss Sainsbury.

After the first term it was clear that enough names were being put down to ensure the future of the school, so a prospectus was issued for Benenden School (Kent) Limited, capital £30,000, shares of £10 each. By the second year, the Founders each got their £100 back.

From its beginnings in 1923 to the present day, Benenden School has remained a stalwart of the local area despite many changes and additions - boarding houses, the gym, the science centre, the theatre, the all-weather pitch and, most recently, the Centenary Hall and Sir David K.P. Li Music School, have all been established since the school's foundation - and expanded on its historic setting with state-of-the-art facilities.

The school's initial 24 students has grown to an impressive 550 today, and in the interim, alumni as inspirational and diverse as HRH The Princess Royal; tech entrepreneur and television personality Amber Atherton; Sue Ryder, founder of the Sue Ryder Foundation; HRH The Princess Royal Basma bint Talal of Jordan; former director general of MI5 Baroness Manningham-Buller and international business woman Dr Amy Jadesimi have been educated there.

In 2024, Benenden is celebrating 100 years of inspiring future thinkers and leaders to shape a better world. Born of the raw ambition of three remarkable women, the school has educated and nurtured thousands more and looks forward to helping many others to reach their potential in the exciting years to come.



Fig.13



Fig.14



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Why I've got Georgian wine on my mind

Peter Thomas reveals an exotic treat from the wine room at Benenden's

Who invented wine? Some say it was a Blue Nun in a British supermarket back in the 1970s; others that it was the Chinese, who invented pretty much everything else; or even the Romans; but they're all wrong.

Yes, the Romans were largely responsible for what we might call 'modern wine', but if you wanted to go back to vinous roots, to the cradle of wine, then you'd do well to head for Georgia, where archaeologists have discovered the pips of cultivated grapes from around 6,000BC, in the kind of clay jars, known as qvevri, that the Georgians are still burying in the ground and using for fermentation even now.

At a time when the European wine market is all about the west, it may seem incongruous to think that the heart of it all is in a relatively small country in the east, sandwiched between Russia and the Caucasus mountains to the north, and Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan to the south; but its precarious position on a key land bridge between the Caspian and Black seas, linking Europe and Asia, has created a nation with a fierce sense of identity and some deep-seated and admirable traditions.

Little did they know, as they sipped contentedly all those centuries ago, that one day their national drink would find its way to that other cradle of civilisation, Benenden, where our community shop now stocks an excellent bottle made from Saperavi, the most popular grape of the region. Apparently the Georgians regard such wine as highly nutritional and with incontrovertible links to the longevity and potency of its citizens, and while we have no scientific proof of these theories, I can



report that I have carried out extensive research into the Tamada Saperavi and found that it's a real gem.

Tamada - named after a toastmaster of the kind that might take charge of a traditional Georgian feast - is made in the Kakheti region by GWS, where Philippe Vespy, former head viticulturist for Chateau Mouton Rothschild in Bordeaux, is at the helm, which may explain the finesse.

Where some eastern European imports can have a disconcertingly rustic nature about them, this is dark, sleek and velvety, full of mulberry and cherry fruit, medium-bodied and fermented in stainless steel for freshness, but with the richness to stand up to, say, roast lamb, steak, winter stews and hard cheeses.

At £11.85, I'd say it's excellent value, not to mention a great conversation piece and a valuable part of everybody's wine 'journey' - if you'll forgive that overworked term. While enjoying it, you may wish to ponder a country that has brought its ancient wine into the modern

marketplace while still relying almost entirely on indigenous grapes.

Sadly, although not surprisingly, it has been let down on occasion by its overbearing neighbour and principal market, Russia - Georgian wine imports were banned for seven years by the Kremlin in 2006, despite their popularity - but it now has 18 recognised appellations, mostly in the east of the country, where Kakheti produces 80 per cent of the country's output, often from Mtsvane Kakhuri, Saperavi and Rkatsiteli.

There can't be many village shops where you'll find such a fascinating wine. If you enjoy it, we'll keep supplying it, and maybe look to bring you other exotic treats along the way.

In Your Garden

Maximalist making the most of the New Year

I do realise that by the time January comes around we are quite glad to see the back of anything remotely decorative. In fact, until recently I have relished the pared-back look to my house once Christmas, in all its glory, has been removed, and I see January as my 'reset' month, when there are barely any commitments in the diary, my home has that tangible post-party-season warmth to it and my mind is cleared of emotional clutter.

Why on earth would I want to start assembling more decoration, you may well ask? It all started a few seasons ago when, miraculously, I managed to forward-plan the planting of a number of amaryllis bulbs in the autumn. As seen on Instagram, I dutifully placed large bulbs onto a few inches of grit in a large glass jar, topped with some birch twigs twirled around the base, a bit of moss for greenery and a large ribbon tied-in somewhere sensible, and I had enough spares to give away as Christmas presents to family and friends. The rest languished on my kitchen windowsill where I could watch them daily and I was rewarded with a spectacular display of glamorous, multi-flowerheaded bulbs.

Amaryllis now come in all sorts of colours; lipstick reds, velvety burgundies, peppermint stick pinks and whites and, not everyone's favourite but I love them, pale green. The latter is an excellent mixer with other shades and I like its contrast with the



brown of twigs and the bright green mosses. I also like to arrange dried hydrangeas in large bowls, jars or glasses.

I am a huge fan of hydrangeas, particularly the mopheads which, again, are not hugely fashionable, but I am a complete glutton for a glamorous flower. Mopheads

also fade beautifully when dried, particularly the blue ones, so I snip as many flowerheads as possible in the autumn and leave them in a jar of water to eventually dry completely.

I picked up this tip from Arthur Parkinson's book, *The Flower Yard*, which I turn to regularly now for winter decorating inspiration. He also uses the dries in wreaths for Christmas, which look lovely next to any berries, twigs or feathers found in our gardens. I must admit to being a bit of a magpie, so anything sprayed with metallic paint, be it silver, rose gold or gold, is a winner with me.

Honesty and poppy seed pods, hazel twigs, dried allium flowers all easily arrange alongside lichen-covered branches and a few sprigs of evergreen foliage for contrast. The bigger and taller the better, and they can even act as a focal arrangement in a hallway or on a large table. Just one of these can still look pared down, in my opinion, so they very much have a place in my home over the New Year, although I do fear I am gradually turning into a maximalist, both at home and in my working life as a gardener and designer. Clients and garden owners with minimalist tastes, beware!

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