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Magazine
September 2021

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Editorial



Those who know me will attest to the fact that I like to keep busy and like nothing better than filling my days with myriad jobs and activities. But then the pandemic hit, and I had to learn to take my foot off the accelerator. After struggling at first with the long, quiet days at home, I started to embrace the fact that I couldn't go out and about, jaunt to London, or go on holiday. While it's been lovely now to travel outside the 'shire' and to meet with friends and family in person instead of virtually, I do miss some of the peace and quiet of the last 18 months.

But I must admit that I am my own worst enemy and I've already started filling up my diary for the weeks ahead so I can't see me changing my spots anytime soon. I will try and remember, though, to book in more downtime and give myself more space to appreciate the simpler things in life. It was such a pleasure, for example, to wander around three glorious open gardens in the village recently, catching up with other villagers and generally appreciating the simple joys of nature and companionship. Charlotte and Donald Molesworth's garden at Balmoral Cottage (see front and back cover) always gives me the boost I need to tackle my own with renewed energy.

There's energy in bucket loads needed and expended by those stalwarts busily preparing for the village fete, which promises a wealth of traditional delights. I just hope the summer weather we have been waiting for finally arrives to give us a glorious day on 18 September. It's such a boost to see several of our village events returning once more, signalling renewed optimism but, in light of the continued Covid challenge, coupled with a certain amount of sensible caution.

Ruth Clark, Co-Editor

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Village Calendar

September

Saturday 4	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	
Sat 4-Sun 5	Art in a Topiary Garden, Balmoral Cottage, Benenden, 11-5pm	p.9
Sunday 5	Village Panto Auditions, Benenden Village Hall, 2.30pm	p.9
Thursday 9	The Rhythm of Life Community Choir, St George's Church, 10am	p.19
Saturday 11	Benenden Pre-School, Fundraiser Open Day, St George's Hall, 10am	p.15
Saturday 11	Friends of Kent Churches, Ride + Stride for churches, 10am	p.13
Saturday 11	Barbecue, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Saturday 18	Benenden Fete, in aid of St George's Church, The Green, 12noon-4pm	pull-out
Monday 20	Parish Council Meeting Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Tuesday 21	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.11
Tuesday 21	Iden Green and Benenden WI, What Women Wore, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.15
Friday 24	Wines of southern France, Benenden School Café, 7pm	p.11
Saturday 25	Skittles, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 28	Merry and Bright, Memorial Hall, 3pm	

Benenden Bowls Club

Thursdays, April-September, on the recreation field, practice night, 6.30pm

Cakes & Chaos: Cafe and Toddler Group

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

The Village Calendar is starting to fill up. Until we emerge fully from the trials of the pandemic, we'll carry on sharing David Commander's list of guiding principles to steer us all through until normal service resumes.

Our approach to making decisions about specific events, services or issues can be guided by these principles:

Be calm and trust the advice given by relevant authorities.

Protect the vulnerable. It's not just your health, but the health of others who may be more vulnerable.

Continue to love our neighbour. Respect their needs and concerns as much as your own - but safely. If you have a neighbour living alone and isolated they would appreciate a call.

Be transparent and open with one another, sharing accurate and up to date information.

Be creative when making decisions - "how can we do this differently in these circumstances".

Parish Council



At last it seems as though we can begin to plan ahead, and I am sure you are aware that next year we will be celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Part of these celebrations will include the lighting of the village beacon, and as this is unsurprisingly situated in the Beacon Field adjacent to the primary school site, the parish council has agreed that it would be a lasting tribute to HRH if we could turn this field into a wildflower meadow.

Kent County Council (which owns the land) and the primary school have agreed that we can go ahead with this project, and we have already met with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BCT), who are giving us advice on the best way forward.

Work has already begun. We have had some of the overgrown field cut back and the arisings removed as much as possible. We have then spread 'green hay' over part of the field, offered to us by the BCT from the established wildflower meadows at the Rare Breeds Centre and Great Dixter. We are also receiving a donation from the BCT of yellow rattle seed (vital for establishing wildflower meadows, being parasitical on grass). Any further donations of green hay or yellow rattle seed would be gratefully received - if you can help, please contact councillor Peter Driver at peterdriver@benendenparishcouncil.org.

The Beacon Field has been allocated as a valuable Local Green Space in our Neighbourhood Development Plan (see page 11), so when our NDP eventually gets to the referendum stage, you will not just be voting on where new housing will be sited, there are other very important issues that will be of lasting benefit to the community.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair
nicolat@benendenparishcouncil.org

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk
01580 240371 clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org

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

Parish Council Meeting
Monday 20 September 2021,
Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm

Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

Churchwarden: David Collard 241944 julia.collard@btinternet.com

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com

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

Each 10am service from St George's will be live-streamed. The Zoom link to the service will be available on the church website, www.benendenchurch.org

Sunday 5 September	8am Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst	10am Communion
Sunday 12 September	8am Communion	10am Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst
Sunday 19 September	8am Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst	10am Communion
Sunday 26 September	8am Communion	10am Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst

Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Every Tuesday 10am Communion

Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

For those shielding the 10am Morning Worship service is also broadcast on our YouTube channel: search for 'Iden Green Congregational Church'.

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

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Wedding 28 August Sophie Barker and Jordan Heim

Funerals
4 August Penny Wilmot Interment
17 August Shirley Gooseman Interment
22 August Patricia McHale Interment
24 August Shirley Gooseman Memorial Service
29 August David and Margaret Presgrave Interment

Rector's Letter



Respect and Gratitude

Last month, Revd Ylva wrote this letter instead of me and it raised speculation that I was leaving/had left. I'm still here! Ylva has now been 'priested'; she will continue to serve our communities as an ordained priest, and as our curate. (If you want to know the difference, ask Ylva or myself.)

Something that has left us, though, are all the Covid restrictions. All the restrictions on public worship were lifted on 19 July with the Government saying: "You know your own situations, apply Covid guidelines to keep people safe in your church building." This we have done. Briefly, when you come to church, please hand sanitise; please use the NHS Test & Trace system - either the QR Code or the register - on entering church. Social distancing and the wearing of face coverings are now optional; and there will be congregational singing. If you would prefer to wear a face covering please do so. If you would prefer to be socially distanced, please use the designated safe zone on the right-hand side in church. It all about respecting other people's views. If someone is sitting in a pew wearing a face covering, perhaps that is an indication that they'd prefer to be socially distanced or would prefer you to wear a face covering if you sit next to them.

I hope you will consider coming back to church. On my return from annual leave, we will be reviewing the service pattern (and any new Government Covid guidelines) in both parishes ready for October.

All the way through the Covid restrictions, a daily scripture and reflection has been available on the church website and outside St George's Church. We took a break from this in August due to holidays; but here is an example of a reflection:

Scripture: "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry'" (John 6:35a) And the Reflection: We need real food - represented by bread - to live our physical lives. If we don't eat, we do not lead healthy lives; if we do not eat, it leads to death. But we are also spiritual beings; and we also need to eat food that feeds our spiritual life. Food that feeds us for our eternal life. What is that spiritual food? Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." He is our spiritual food. Get to know him; read the scriptures in the Bible; pray; spend time with others who believe in Him' i.e. come to church, and worship him. That is how to feed your spiritual life. Try it."

Just a short reflection to think about each day. If you want the daily reflections to continue, I'd be grateful if you would let me know.

Finally, our harvest festival service is approaching at 10am on Sunday 3 October at St George's Church. Let's gather and be grateful for all that God gives us.

Revd David Commander, Rector

Geoff Tiltman

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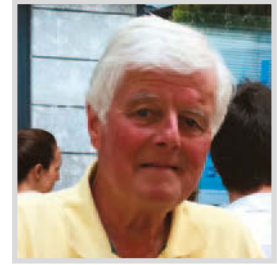
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Talking Point



Morning ramble

Six thousand, nine hundred steps (according to my Fitbit) is the usual tally on the round trip that Alfie and I do most days, to collect the newspaper and a coffee from Benenden's. There is always someone to see and chat with at the shop, so we are often delayed.

Our walk takes us through Iden Green, down the side of the Bramley orchard into the woods past Bluebell Cottage, through Woodside Farm, encountering Ethel who will show great displeasure if you fail to bring something for her to eat. Continuing up the track, we cross the wheat field past the horses to the footpath which runs behind the new school and onto the Church, then down the side of the cricket pitch on the village green. Along the way you cannot fail to notice the seasons from the muddy fields in winter, the lambs in spring, apple blossom, followed by the abundance of fruit in the orchard and ripening cereals turning from green to brown ready for harvest. Soon the blackberries will be ready, and the mornings will turn a bit crisper. How lucky we are to live in such a beautiful part of the county.

One of the positives to come out of this past 18 months, when we have all had to change our ways, is how nice it has been to meet so many villagers on our walk, from fellow dog walkers to the young families living around Benenden and Iden Green. The friendliness of everyone is infectious despite the trials and tribulations of the Covid restrictions.

Obviously along the way I have ample time to have an occasional rant, from the failure to put the drain, at the bottom of Hilly field, at the correct level to avoid the creation of a pond by the gate, to the thistle field next to the school, which was happily spreading seeds across the parish until it was, thankfully, eventually cut in late August. The path through the Churchyard is suffering from excessive footfall and the old school is starting to look forlorn with holes appearing in the roof. Hopefully plans are in hand to restore it.

None of that can spoil the sight of St George's standing proud at the top of the green, a lovely quintessential village scene.

Peter Traill



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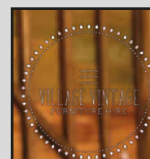


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Benenden Panto auditions

The wonderful Benenden panto returns in 2022 in the village hall with five performances from 27-30 January. It will be another world premiere of a panto written by our very own Bev Beveridge.

Auditions will be held on Sunday 5 September in the village hall: 2.30pm for juniors (children need to be nine or over by 27 January 2022) and 4.30pm for adults. Please prepare 'Give a Little Whistle' from Pinocchio if you want to be considered for a solo singing part.

Commitment to attending rehearsals in the lead-up to and including all the shows is very important. These start in early October and take place every Sunday afternoon (with a break from 18 December-2 January), plus every Thursday evening for adults. Depending on scenes being rehearsed early on, not everyone will be needed but, as time progresses, everyone will need to attend every Sunday.

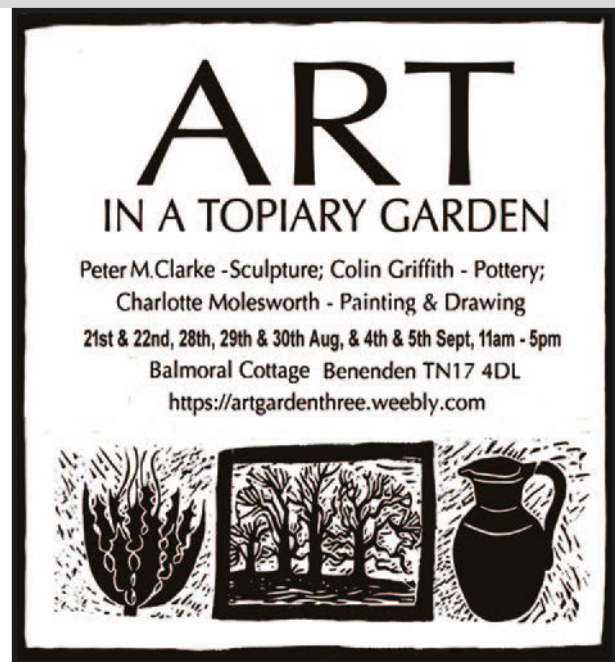
For regular updates please join the Benenden Players Facebook Group.
Nancy Tolhurst, Benenden Players Chair

Your fete needs you

Saturday 18 September, The Green, 12-4pm

There is much excitement about this year's fete which promises to be a fantastic event. Its success is due to the many volunteers who help in the run up to the day and on the day itself - we couldn't do it without you. BUT, we do need more help the day before and on the day itself. The day before to move items from the scout hut to the village green - turn up at 12noon and we will find something for you to do. On the day of the fete there are a variety of jobs. If you could spare an hour, or two, or three, we would be very grateful. Just add your name to the volunteer sheet on the noticeboard in the community shop or in the Church and we will be in touch to confirm details. Alternatively contact me directly.

Tracy Claridge 240454
tlclaridge@tlclaridge.co.uk



Fete plant donations

The plant stall at the village fete is always popular and once again your donations are much appreciated. Please label them (e.g. Aster September Ruby or Aster if you do not know the variety) and drop them off with Penny at Benenden's community shop from 13-15 September at lunchtime. Alternatively, please drop them off at the plant stall on the morning of the fete. If not convenient please call Penny on 07593 917195 to arrange a time.

Fete call for cakes

Whether you are an experienced baker or discovered the joy of baking during lockdown please consider supporting the cake stall at the village fete with your creations. All your efforts are greatly appreciated, be they biscuits, cakes, jams, or chutneys. They need to be delivered to Helen Jewsbury (call 240589) on the evening of Friday 17 September or you can bring them to her stall on the village green on the morning of the fete.

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Neighbourhood Development Plan

Our NDP goes in front of the examiner

The Benenden Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) has now moved to the penultimate stage of the process. Some three and a half years after work commenced, our plan is currently subject to the scrutiny of an independent examiner.

The examiner was appointed by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) with the agreement of the parish council in January 2021. All independent examiners must be qualified and experienced planning professionals. Their role is to ensure the plan meets all statutory requirements and the basic conditions set out by UK government in various planning acts and via supporting regulations. Examination is a significant test. A professional planning expert is in the process of probing the plan, the development process, and a significant number of contributions from concerned stakeholders, including residents.

Only around 30 per cent of neighbourhood plans decide to allocate specific sites for development. Most NDP groups shy away from this final decision as it is often the most controversial aspect. It is so much easier to leave the tough choices to the local authority. Benenden NDP decided to allocate sites to retain as much control as possible at local level. As a result, our examination has been more complex and the independent examiner received a significant number of objections to our plan from a group who identify themselves as 'The Friends of East End' (FOEE).

The examiner decided to hold a public hearing (online via Zoom) to discuss housing allocations proposed for brownfield sites at Benenden Hospital and invited only one representative from interested parties to take part in this.

FOEE nominated a barrister to represent them, as did Benenden Healthcare Society. TWBC was represented by its head of planning, KCC by its highways officer and the High Weald AONB management by its senior planning officer. This left Biddenden and Benenden Parish Councils representing themselves.

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The public hearing, which took about five hours, addressed six key questions, and a recording of it can be found online.

Having studied all the documentation submitted as part of the plan, plus the input from statutory bodies, the evolving guidance from the National Planning Policy Framework, and of course input from those invited to speak at the public hearing, the examiner is now considering his recommendations. His decision is expected at the end of August and the outcome will feature in next month's edition of this magazine.

If we pass examination the final step is a referendum, where the residents of the parish will make the ultimate decision.

Paul Tolhurst

Chair, Benenden NDP Steering Group

www.benendenneighbourhoodplan.org

Village Lunch

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

Genevieve Greenwood 240526



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We all loved our summer holidays and are excited to be back in school. We very much hope everybody got up to some fun adventures. Here is to a new, wonderful, successful school year. Just a few key and helpful reminders.

For any online shopping we encourage you to use the easyfundraising.org.uk page or smile.amazon.co.uk and choose our Benenden primary school PTFA as your chosen cause to support at checkout. Shopping on those sites automatically gives us a kickback to buy lovely new resources for our children. So easy, too.

We hope you were able to grab a copy of our Benenden Lockdown Cookbook, which was for sale in the village shops. Thank you to all who were able to support.

Remember to save the date for our village fete, taking place on 18 September from 12-4pm on The Green. It's a wonderful opportunity for the community to come together. Bring along your family and friends and visit the children's corner - expect lots of fun. Don't forget to bring (lots of) coins and cash as we will not have card readers. See you there.

For anybody who cannot give time to volunteer or participate in our activities yet would still like to delight our children with new resources and equipment at school, you can always visit our always-on wonderful.co.uk donation page. It is accessible all year round and you can easily make a donation to the PTFA at any time. A huge thank you to those that already have.

For more information on all PTFA activities and how to participate, please scan this QR code or visit the PTFA event section on the school's website:

<https://tinyurl.com/2bpyw54h>

Astrid Miller, Benenden CEP, PTFA Chair





**THE FRIENDS OF KENT CHURCHES
SPONSORED RIDE AND STRIDE
Saturday 11 September, 10am-6pm**

Friends of Kent churches give grants to churches and chapels of architectural merit or historical importance and help to maintain their fabric and fixtures in good order. Support the church or chapel of your choice.

- Why not plan a route with your friends and family to bike ride or walk?
- Visit your church to pick up a sponsorship form and list of participating churches.
- Find some sponsors for however many churches you can call into (or sign the list outside).

Safety on the roads is paramount. We recommend high visibility vests.

For more information contact Alison Prall
240417 alisonprall40@gmail.com

Village Hall

We've had a wonderful summer at the hall (despite the unreliable weather), filled with weddings, parties and workshops, as people have been reuniting with friends and family members. The same energy is continuing into September with the return of all the regular classes, as well as a couple of new ones.

There is a new pilates session available on Thursday mornings at 9.15am with the lovely Lizzie. Her classes will continue right through the October half-term and all the way to Christmas.

We also have a rather unusual new booking in the form of monthly gong baths. The first of these is on Friday 3 September after which they take place every first Friday of the month. Dawn will guide you through some grounding, centering sound therapy, using the specific vibrations of the gongs, which is exactly what many of us may need at the end of a long week!

We are also welcoming back our much-loved Benenden Players to begin preparations for their long-awaited panto, having had no choice but to cancel last year's. Auditions are being held on Sunday 5 September and rehearsals start shortly afterwards.

Holly Clayson, Manager 07419 989830
enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org
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Grants for students

The Gibbon & Buckland Charity, which started in 1602 with the gift of the school house at the foot of The Green, still gives some support to the primary school, but uses most of its income to give student grants. These are available for any young person under the age of 25 who is resident in, and has been resident in, the parish of Benenden for not less than three years and is either in further education or in other ways getting prepared for working life. Trustees will also give consideration to applications for grants for gap year projects of educational worth. If you could benefit, or know someone who could, please ask for an application form at the community shop, or from the clerk to the charity at gibbonandbuckland@gmail.com. The latest date for applications is 30 September.

Iden Green and Benenden WI

We mourn the passing of Shirley Gooseman, who had been an active member of the Women's Institute for many years. Not only was she a brilliant poet and novelist, she was also a very sociable lady who supported all our efforts and joined in everything with enthusiasm. We shall miss her.

At our August meeting, Andrew Ashton gave a fascinating talk on Goldenhurst, an ancient Kent farmhouse. His illustrations were superb, and it was especially interesting to hear that Noel Coward used to live there. Many celebrities also visited, including Nigel Havers and Joan Collins.

At our next meeting, on Tuesday 21 September at 2pm in the Memorial Hall, Sheila Farmer will share her extensive knowledge on 'What Women Wore'.

There are a few spaces left for people to join our outing to the Cherry Tree on 23 September.

Suspense is building for our Social Afternoon on Friday 1 October in the Memorial Hall, where Peter Batty will be talking about the hidden gems of Kent.

Jackie Liffen 752232
benendenwi@gmail.com



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Saturday 11 September
10-12pm

Plant and cake stalls

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Benenden Pre-School

We will reopen on 6 September with a record number of children on the register. Traditionally numbers grow throughout the year but this time we are virtually full from the start. Over half of the children attending live in the parish, with many arriving on foot (or in a pushchair) and we very much encourage such green travel.

The first few weeks of term will be all about settling in. It is extraordinary to think that the two-year-olds joining us have spent a significant proportion of their lives in lockdowns with limited contact with extended families and peers. So, staff are very much aware that separating from parents and carers and interacting with other children may be bigger steps than usual for this cohort and the care aspect of an early years' practitioner's role will very much come into play.

This term we look forward to welcoming a couple of Benenden School girls to volunteer with us one afternoon a week. This is an exciting new local community link for the pre-school.

A group of our lovely mums volunteered in the garden one Saturday morning in August and their work, together with new turf and a new raised sandpit, has resulted in a revitalised garden. We are holding our annual open morning in the garden on Saturday 11 September and you are all most welcome to attend and have a look.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor
supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

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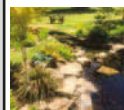
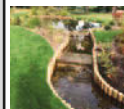


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BENENDEN FETE 2021

PULL-OUT GUIDE



Cakes Dog Fancy Dress & Talent Show **Bric-a-Brac**
Tools-R-Us **BBQ & Beer** Cream Teas **Kids Corner**
Music **Auction of Promises** Raffle **Book Stall**
Classic Cars **Chic Boutique** Pony Rides
Coconut Shy Plants **Cow Pat Bingo** Show Arena
Strawberries & Cream

BENENDEN FETE '21



12:00	Fete opens by Raj Bisram
12:05	The Ukulele Band
12:35	Benenden Jazz
1:00	Ami Piper School of Dance Display
1:30	Weald of Kent Morris
2:05	Dog Talent Show
2:30	The Ukulele Band
3:00	Benenden Jazz
3:25	Benenden Antique Auction with Raj Bisram
3:45	Raffle & Cow Pat Bingo Winners
4:00	Close

DON'T FORGET
TO BRING
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The Benenden Fete, in aid of St George's Church, is a traditional treat for the whole family!

Wonderful stalls

You never know what treasure you'll discover at our stalls: a huge selection of books in the 'Rare Reads' tent; quality clothes and jewellery in the 'Chic Boutique'; children's toys, books and clothes in 'Kid's Cave'; an array of tools and machinery at 'Tools-R-Us'; plants galore; and choice 'Bric-a-Brac' items.



Delicious food & drink

You won't go hungry at this fete! Buy scrumptious cakes and ice cream, sit down to afternoon tea at the Church, snap up Mr Ward's renowned burgers and sausages from the BBQ and wash them all down with beer and wine from the Hop Inn.

Kiddy fun

Head for the children's area for lots of fun and games organised by the PTFA with a huge selection of toys, costumes, clothes, books and games to tempt all ages. Who can resist a bouncy castle/assault course, face painting, lucky dip, flinging wet sponges at soggy volunteers, showing off your throwing skills at the Coconut Shy and Hemsted Forest Equestrian pony rides?

Cow Pat Bingo & balloons

A star attraction and quite nerve-wracking! Buy a grid square and hope our cow chooses it to deliver a cow pat to win you a stay for two at the Rye Lodge Hotel in Rye. Then take the 'Morris Minor Balloon Challenge' and guess the number of balloons squeezed into the car. Not as easy as you think!

Win a private flight

Take to the skies and win a very special flight for two around Kent from Headcorn with Paul Tolhurst. Tickets cost just £1 each on the Silent Auction/Raffle stall.

Classic cars

Take a walk around a display of classic cars lovingly cared for by local owners. If you have one you would like to show off, then please bring it along before midday.

In the Church

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



Music & dance

The central arena will host a medley of music and dance throughout the afternoon. The talented children from Ami Piper's School of Dance will perform at 1pm, followed by the wonderful Weald of Kent Morris at 1.30pm. Entertaining throughout the afternoon are two of Benenden's talented music groups: The Ukulele Band and Benenden Jazz.

DOG SHOW

At 2pm enter your priceless pooch into our Dog Show in the arena where the focus is on FUN!

Three categories:
— Waggiest Tail
— Most Doggie Sits
— The Irresistible Treat Table (last to resist wins the prize!)

Thank you to Roosters, Cranbrook, who donated 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes (and runner up treats).



BENENDEN ANTIQUE AUCTION

TV's antiques' expert Raj Bisram will auction several special items in the first Benenden Antique Auction. If you have a treasure you would like to donate, please send a photo and brief description to: cathy.presgrave@gmail.com

Prizes & promises galore

Our raffle which features lots of great prizes (including cash) is (almost) world famous! So don't forget to buy a ticket at Benenden's Community Shop or The Bull pub beforehand or on the day at the Raffle/Auction of Promises Stall. If you feel in a winning mood, then place a bid on one or more of the fabulous Auction of Promises which include a day of bird watching, a Valentine Special at Little Greenways Airbnb, superb wine, a wine tasting evening for you and your friends; expert gate & fence repair/installation, CV & job application advice...and more.

Gate donations

This year all gate donations will go to the Sam West Foundation. Sam lived locally and was only 15 when he tragically committed suicide. His mother and brother Ben set up the foundation to promote awareness, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health.



Find us on Facebook:
Benenden Village Fete

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

Raffle prizes: Cash, Benenden Panto, Benenden Vineyard, Biddenden Vineyard, The Bull, Chimera Climbing, Gardenscape, Grierson Galleries, Hannah's Garden, Helen Jewsbury Ceramics, Kino Hawkhurst, Maison Sichel Wineries, Pashley Manor Gardens, Wards the Butcher, Weald of Kent Golf.. and more!



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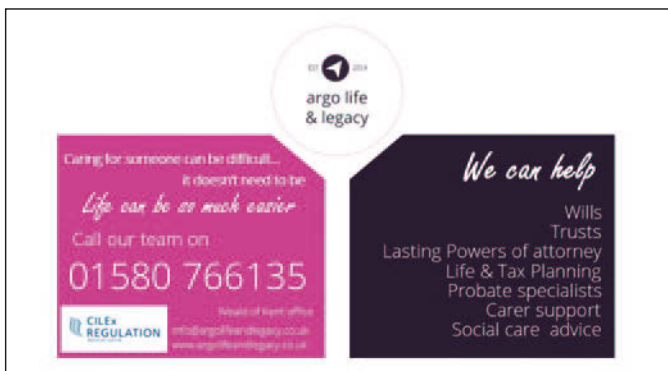
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Benenden School

With exams once again cancelled across the UK due to the pandemic, this year's results week was again a strange one, but Benenden students in both the A Level and GCSE years are to be congratulated on their strong outcomes, which are in line with the trend over recent years.

Our leavers are now off to leading universities around the world, with domestic destinations including Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial, Durham and Edinburgh. International courses are always popular at Benenden, with this year's including Yale, Stanford, NYU, Cornell and Columbia, while one student will be embarking on the Dual BA Program between Trinity College, Dublin and Columbia.

The system of awarding grades has been criticised this year for leading to higher grades across the country but at Benenden, the process had been extremely robust. Our pupils went through a rigorous internal assessment process, which included judging each pupil on a selection of their coursework, class assessments and previous test performances, in addition to sitting formal assessments in the spring and summer to gauge the level students were currently performing at.

It has been an incredibly strict and time-consuming approach and I would like to thank the teaching staff for the very careful process they followed to award students grades and, of course, the students themselves for their sustained focus throughout this extraordinary year of disruption and uncertainty.

The students have thoroughly deserved these excellent grades and everybody should be very proud of their results against an extremely challenging backdrop.

Samantha Price, Headmistress

Benenden Village Trust

Benenden Village Trust (BVT), which owns and manages important recreational facilities in the parish, will hold its 2021 Annual General Meeting at 7pm on Monday 11 October in the Iden Green Pavilion. This is subject to any Covid restrictions on gatherings, so please check the website for latest information. We would be delighted if as many trust members as possible could join us.

Facilities owned by BVT include Benenden Village Hall, the Pavilion, the recreation fields and children's play areas in Benenden and Iden Green, and St George's Hall. Most of the trust's assets were donated to the parish a century ago by Viscount Rothermere for the benefit and recreation of all.

The trust is managed by trustees elected by members. Membership is free and is open to all aged over 18 living in the parish, as well as representatives of organisations and businesses within the parish. We welcome applications to join as well as volunteers to serve as trustees.

Details about eligibility and rules for membership can be found at www.benendenvillagetrust.org/membership-info. If you are interested in becoming part of the BVT, please email the BVT Manager Caroline Levett (bvttrust@gmail.com).
Martin Dickson www.benendenvillagetrust.org

Royal British Legion

The annual general meeting of the Benenden Branch of the RBL will take place at 7.30pm on Thursday 7 October in the Memorial Hall. All supporters will be welcome. Arrangements for Remembrance Sunday and the Poppy Appeal collection will be published in the October magazine.

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Village bonfire and fireworks

Do we? Don't we? Should we? Shouldn't we? After much thought, changing of minds and uncertainty as to which was the correct decision, the committee has decided there are too many 'what ifs' to go ahead with this year's event. Therefore, there will be no village bonfire in November.

There may be a Covid spike, there may be restrictions and our important band of volunteers may not be forthcoming. The investment of time and money could all be wasted, and our reserves are very low - you may recall the deluge of rain in 2019 that reduced our visitors so that we only just broke even. We want to return a profit to benefit parish projects, specifically those with a focus on youth, but that will now be in 2022.

On Sunday 7 November this year you'll all be able to tell me if we were right or wrong to cancel. Hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Grant Matthews

Chair, Benenden Bonfire Society

Join our magazine team

It's almost five years since the Benenden Magazine was relaunched as a joint venture between St George's Church Parochial Church Council and Benenden Parish Council. Our small team manages editorial content, layout and publishing, while a wider network of volunteers delivers to all households in the parish. Costs are supported entirely by advertising revenues.

I look after the business management, sales and billing and work with the rest of the team to make sure that our finances are in good health. I liaise closely with the PCC treasurer to keep track of income and costs, and the production editor to agree the advertising content.

I'm now looking for someone to work with me to spread the workload a little and to make sure that the knowledge and expertise isn't concentrated in one person.

Paul Leek 07850 724304

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Rhythm of Life Choir

I've recently set up a community choir in Benenden which is not just about singing, it's about community, friendship and the healing powers that music and singing can bring. We get together from 10-11.30am on Thursday mornings (during term time) in St George's Church.

Of course, it can help to have a great voice but that is not what this choir is about. If you simply love to sing, then this choir is for you. Most members enter the choir and shyly say that they have poor voices, but after a term or two, they are singing their hearts out and often surprise themselves with their secret inner diva.

Singing and being part of a choir builds confidence. It offers a few hours each week of musical mindfulness and escapism. Often in our busy lives we rush around and give no real time to ourselves to reboot and feel nourished. This choir aims to offer a judgment-free and loving environment where all your worries seem to simply melt away. We also produce an amazing sound.

In the past we have performed in many various concerts for many different charities and have raised over £15,000. Membership is £45 a term. Please come along to one of our sessions or call me for more information.

Carla Smith 07743 430797

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Topical health

The importance of vitamin D

As with so many elements of our diet, we are used to being complacent about many of the vitamins and minerals that play a huge role in keeping us healthy. Vitamin D is one of these. We make more of it when we are exposed to direct sunlight, but it is not as readily available in our diets as many of us may think. It's found in good quantities in fatty fish such as salmon, tuna, and mackerel but to a lesser extent than many people may believe in dairy produce, unless fortified.

Vitamin D is associated with bone and teeth health and so a lack of it can, for example, cause bone pain through the bone-softening disease osteomalacia. There is some evidence that vitamin D may reduce the severity of some infectious diseases, which is why, during the pandemic, it has been made available to all care home residents. There is also some evidence that it plays a role in enabling normal muscle function and, as such, in reducing falls risk in the elderly.

Some people are more at risk of vitamin deficiency than others. For example, people with dark skin may find it difficult to get enough sunlight in the UK to help stimulate production, and some diseases interfere with vitamin D synthesis, for example chronic kidney disease and bowel diseases such as Crohn's.

As we approach autumn, after a rather limited amount of sunshine this summer, there is even less opportunity to synthesize our own vitamin D which is why the NHS advises us to consider taking a supplement. The recommended daily dose for healthy adults is 10 micrograms from the end of October to the end of March. There is no need to take a higher dose as this can cause a build-up of calcium in the body.

Peter Ellis

Benenden Hospital

Welcoming new nurses to our CQC-rated Outstanding hospital in Benenden is something that I am passionate about. Out of over 400 members of staff working here in full-time, part-time or flexible jobs, 72 are nurses. There are many benefits to being a nurse at our hospital: from in-house training and development facilities to free Benenden Health membership.

In December, the Health Foundation stated that the Government will need to recruit 50,000 nurses in England by 2024/2025, for the NHS to fully recover from the pandemic. During the most challenging times we refocused our attention at Benenden Hospital to non-Covid patients, which allowed the NHS to prioritise dealing with all Covid health challenges around the county.

On a positive note, UCAS statistics from January reported that the total applications for nursing courses have risen by almost a third. I like to believe that the heroic effort of nurses throughout the pandemic has inspired this tremendous rise in new applicants.

At our hospital we also offer student nurses work placements. Jeni Hagger, a Canterbury student who recently participated in a seven-week placement, reflected on her time with us: "This has been the most supportive student placement I have experienced so far and one of the loveliest places I have worked in my life."

Additionally, we assist people on their 'Return to Practice' course, thus ensuring that those who have left nursing but would like to return, get the same help as student nurses.

We are excited to be hosting an in-person recruitment event at Benenden Hospital, situated in our beautiful Kent countryside, on Saturday 11 September. Please keep an eye out on our website and other channels for further information on our forthcoming event and current vacancies.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

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Planning Matters

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

- 21/02193/FULL Lower Standen Farm Standen Street. Conversion of a redundant Oast into a single residential dwelling together with a small extension, replacement of existing outbuilding and change of use of land to residential curtilage together with landscaping and ecological enhancements. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 21/02298/FULL and 21/02299/LBC Cleveland's The Street. Listed Building Consent: Proposed internal alterations to kitchen, larder and utility/boot room, installation of new window, replacement of one existing window and replacement of a window with patio doors, proposed patio area and new fencing. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 21/02136/FULL Colebarn Farm Cottage Stepneyford Lane. Creation of terrace on south side; Living room extension with doors onto terrace; Insertion of door way from office out onto the terrace; Creation of wc & hand wash basin in former boiler space; Amalgamation of separate wc and bathroom into single room with existing wc doorway blocked up, fittings renewed, systems updated, new extractor fan; Replacement windows and exterior doors; Electrical upgrade, including LED lighting where appropriate; Plumbing upgrade; New kitchen, existing configuration; Removal of oil powered central heating system and replacement with low energy electric panels; Additional loft insulation, as required; Make good exterior rendering and repaint; Replace gutter boards and gutters. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 21/02441/FULL Moorwood Woodcock Lane. Conversion and extension of outbuilding to create annexe accommodation ancillary to the main dwelling. The Parish Council objects to this application.

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- 21/01577/FULL Benton Farm, Dingledean. Provision of equestrian menage measuring 55m x 25m with silica sand and rubber chip topping with 3x rail wooden fencing. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 21/02054/FULL Cattsford Farm, Dingledean. New agricultural building for use as animal welfare with open cattle shed and hay storage. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 21/02014/FULL The Old Barn, Nineveh Lane. To dig a nature pond on agricultural ground. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 21/02261/FULL St Georges Church. Upgrade the existing path between the village and the school. The Parish Council supports this application.

Piano recital for Hospice in the Weald

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Shop in the time of Covid

Bev Beveridge looks back at the challenges Benenden's community shop faced during the hardest times of the pandemic and how the team adapted and managed

As we gingerly emerge from all the lockdowns, mask wearing and other restrictions of the pandemic, it is hard to envisage how we managed to deal with such a unique and frightening phenomenon. I think it's true to say that most of us (including the government) didn't really see it coming and it required cooperation unlike any since the war. However, bearing in mind how difficult the situation became so quickly, Benenden's stepped up to the mark admirably.

There is something endemic in the British public, which is crystallised in the good people of Benenden, that tends to make them pull together when the going gets tough. To keep them safe, the volunteers were initially asked not to come in to volunteer at the shop. Needless to say a number of our staunchest supporters rocked up to offer to deliver goods to those who needed to self-isolate and to help unload stock deliveries when the shop was closed. This generous goodwill persisted throughout as people found ways to help.

Our splendid managers, Lorraine, Penny, Nicola and Nikki, under Mel's capable leadership, organised themselves into two teams to minimise infection and with the café closed, they all manned the Post Office and shop. This meant rapid learning of Post Office procedure for café managers to ensure continuing delivery of service. A remote card payment system was also set up to allow home deliveries.

It was highly stressful trying to maintain as efficient a service as possible whilst trying to allay the personal fears of staff and customers and changing opening hours and rotas at short notice to maximise opening times and adhere to government guidelines. One member of staff who had a challenging health condition, had sadly left because she was vulnerable. However, in spite of this, the changes to normal routine were embraced by the

remaining managers who cheerfully made the best of it and rose to the challenges.

Panic buying at the supermarkets led to frequent shortages in some products and their empty shelves proved to be a positive success for Benenden's whose resourceful staff were able to obtain flour, fresh yeast, sugar and other basics from a catering supplier. These supplies came in bulk and were decanted into smaller quantities for sale in the shop, often by volunteers. It was quite usual to go home looking like a flour grader after a session doing this! These products sold well as many people from far and wide turned to more homely pursuits during lockdown and made bread and cakes. Shop sales were healthy during the worst of times as people avoided going to bigger shops and rediscovered the benefits of popping into the local shop, especially as Benenden's retained its customary friendliness.

Penny remembers one incident which touched all the managers during this time. One kind customer bought each of them a bunch of Hannah's Garden flowers to say thank you. All the managers were moved by the many expressions of gratitude which came in from customers via cards and emails. At times like this, the smallest gestures can make all the difference.

Of course, there is always the other side of the coin when a very few customers refused to wear a mask or, in some cases, refused to acknowledge the existence of Covid. These challenging situations needed to be treated with a certain amount of cool headedness on the part of the staff who kept calm and carried on. Benenden's is gradually returning to its normal, busy routine and it's up to us to make sure it carries on. See you there.



Volunteer Graham
and manager Mel



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The great treasure trove soap opera

In his latest reminiscence, Stephen Durnford recalls an event which other residents may also

remember: a coroner's inquest, held in the Old Schoolhouse on 14 September 1964

The purpose of the inquest was to determine whether a locally found cache of coins was to be declared legally 'treasure trove', from which certain consequences flowed. By a curious coincidence, 1964 was the year in which Martin Jessop Price, of whom I wrote recently, became a Fellow of The Royal Numismatic Society and, years later, a Curator of Coins at the British Museum, but I know of no evidence to suggest that Martin played a part in identifying the Benenden Hoard's coins.

The coroner, a partner at Cranbrook solicitors Murton, Clarke & Murton-Neale, was John Eric Clarke, with whom, unsuspected by either of us at that time, I was to become co-trustee of my mother's estate a dozen years later. The British Numismatic Society's report of the inquest may be found in the BNS's journal (britnumsoc.org) on the 1965 digital archive page.

To quote from the BNJ: "The hoard was found on 13th August 1964 under the brick floor of a downstairs room at 2, Stream Cottages, Benenden, Kent, by Frank and Keith Rivers who were carrying out repairs." There is no mention there of the unrecorded drama retold below. The BNJ continues, "after the coins had been declared treasure trove ... they were sent to the British Museum for examination. There were 84 sovereigns and 49 half-sovereigns dated between 1847 and 1912. Of the sovereigns, 35 (ie over 41%) had been struck at Australian mints.

"Although the finders had not noticed any container, the coins were encrusted with a deposit of ferrous oxide which suggested that they had been kept in a metal box. The condition of the coins was generally good; few even of the earlier Young Head coins were more than a little worn and the closing coins of George V were in almost mint state." The BM then bought one coin, and the



Ashmolean a further thirty one. Finally "the remaining coins were disposed of to the trade and the amount obtained from the sale of all the coins was paid in full to the finders."

It was a 19-year-old tank driver on leave from the army who had made the first find and who wore his best dark suit and winkle-pickers to the inquest. How the hoard was brought to official notice I do not recall, but the finders were commended for the correctness of their actions.

That was the juncture at which the proceedings stood when the drama began to build up.

The cottage in question had once been the home of a man named Austin, a known depressive who had drowned himself in the village pond decades previously. Once he had been fished out of the water, his clothing was found to be stiff with five pound notes stitched into the linings. He had died intestate and had apparently not previously revealed his hoarding habits. It was informally supposed, therefore, that it had been he who had also hidden the coins under the floor of his cottage, especially as the most recent coin predated the date of his death, but no definite link could be demonstrated.

At this point the drama cranked up another notch, because a surviving member of the Austin family, perhaps its only one, was presented to the coroner. This much younger Mr Austin was a local shepherd and sought to make the case for himself as the legitimate heir and thereby entitled to the coins. However, he was not a direct descendant of the deceased, who had left neither widow nor offspring. While personally sympathetic, the coroner was obliged to disallow the plea as required by the rules of treasure trove, because the original owner of the coins was unknown, and the circumstantial evidence was insufficient as proof for legitimising Mr Austin as inheritor.

Before its 1997 revision, treasure trove used to be declared when gold or silver was discovered after having been deliberately hidden with the intention of being recovered later and when neither the depositor nor any inheritor could be proven. The Sutton Hoo ship burial goods were therefore not treasure trove, but the Benenden Hoard was. I believe that the coroner had finally

suggested informally that the finders might pass some of their windfall to Mr Austin in due course. What the finders did eventually do with their cash I know not, but we observers all went home that day with a feeling of having been shoehorned into the plot of a soap opera.

Stephen Durnford



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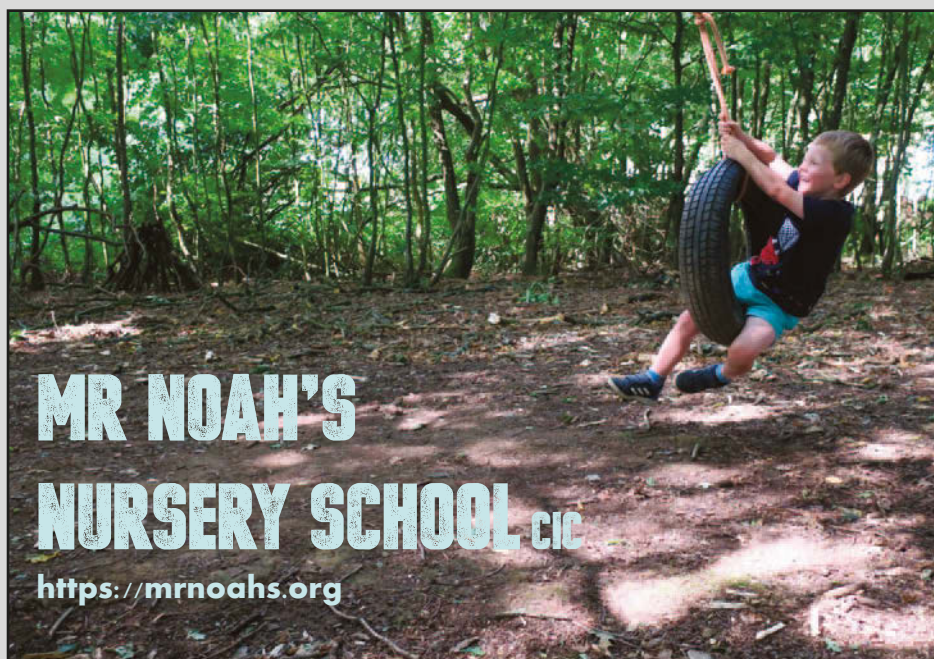
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Hot Topic

The superpowers of our wildflowers

This year there seem to be more wildflowers around as more of us are 'wilding' areas of our gardens, councils are leaving more verges to blossom and Monty Don is encouraging us all to let go of our lawns. While this is encouraging, one in five species is currently under threat of extinction. As well as being a critical resource for birds and insects today, wildflowers occupy a special place in folklore and ancient health treatments, so, when you stroll past dandelions or yarrow, spare a thought for the magical and medicinal powers. Ruth Clark shares some of her delights.



your eyes, or, while reciting a verse, a useful way to find your sweetheart (beats modern day dating sites!).

Field scabious. Another handy addition to the medicine cabinet for those needing treatment for scabies (hence its name) or to soothe sores caused by the bubonic plague - thankfully a thing of the past.



Meadowsweet The pleasant aroma of this plant meant it was used as a 'strewing herb' on

house floors and to flavour wine, beer and vinegar. It contains a mild form of salicylic acid (the major ingredient in

aspirin) which made it popular for the treatment of rheumatism, gout, infection and fever.



Lady's bedstraw

A multipurpose flower to have around the house.

The dried plants were used to stuff mattresses as its vanilla scent deterred fleas and, in the past, it was also used to coagulate milk when making cheese and to create the distinctive colour of Double Gloucester.



Common agrimony or sticklewort

I always wonder how our ancestors discovered the very particular properties of plants. This one is great for curing musket wounds and, if you place a sprig under your head, you will enjoy a good night's sleep (this I will definitely try).



Lady's smock or cuckoo flower This delicate pink flower, which opens around the time the cuckoo starts to call, is said to be sacred to fairies, so picking it and bringing

it indoors was considered unlucky, which is why it's not included in Mayday garlands.

Dandelion One of the most vital early spring sources of nectar, this prolific flower was popular as a medicine with the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese and Native Americans. Every part of the plant has a use,

the most fascinating of which is that the latex it secretes can be used to produce natural rubber. In 2014 the first prototype test tyres were made with blends of dandelion rubber, and in 2017 a Chinese firm invested \$450m into making commercially viable rubber from dandelions.



Yarrow or bloodwort A useful plant to have to staunch blood flow from wounds or nose bleeds, yarrow used to be thought to give the power of second sight if you held a leaf against



Taking advantage of our new-found freedom I went to Scotland in late May. It had been some time since I visited the Cairngorms in May, one of my favourite times of year, and I was looking forward to seeing how much the landscape had changed and the resultant impact on bird life.

During my last visit I detected over 80 species and it was rather disappointing therefore to record just over 60 on this visit. However we didn't visit the high tops, which rules out Dotterel, Ptarmigan and Snow Bunting, nor did we look for Divers/Grebes in the known lochs in the area.

Despite the lack of variety, though, there were some good moments to record, the best of them being walking up the Dulnain river and picnicking in a ravine high up the glen. A large bird of prey swooped over our picnic spot and I could

not believe my eyes as a beautiful Golden Eagle passed low enough that I could see the lovely light yellow feathers on the crown of its head that give it its name.

Then a second bird joined the first. It is very unusual to get such a close view as we were in grouse moor territory and the eagles are very wary of humans, particularly game keepers who try and keep them away by various means, not always legal. I can only assume that the birds had not seen us, as we were tucked away in a ravine. The usual sighting is a speck in the sky and trying to make an assessment of the silhouette to see if it is a buzzard or an eagle.

The other highlight of this particular walk was watching a female Ring Ouzel collecting food in the grassy hillocks, which it then took across the river to its heathery nest site. Although we did see a couple of Curlews in the glen, it wasn't in the usual numbers, nor did we hear their lovely bubbly display song as we would normally expect. The number of Common Sandpipers along the river seemed well down, also, but the number of Grey Wagtails seemed average.

One of my favourite walks is going up Glen Feshie, which is one of those long glens that crosses the Cairngorm massif joining Braemar to Aviemore. The glen starts as a wide-open space and slowly narrows as it rises. This results in habitat changes from open land to forest (mainly lovely old Scots pine trees) and then to moorland, before the habitat reverses descending to Braemar. I have thought of doing the complete walk one day, but as it over 30 miles, it remains on the 'to do' list and likely to remain there.

Following the big floods in 2007 that washed away one of the bridges across the river Feshie, the estate has built a good path along its eastern flank. As we approached the more wooded section of the glen, we diverted off the main path to explore a waterfall mentioned in a guide book. It was a delightful series of cascades among some very mature trees in an undisturbed environment. This looked good habitat for Redstart and Spotted Flycatcher but neither was in evidence, although singing Willow Warblers were plentiful, as were Mistle Thrushes.

Back down on the main track, we continued up the glen in the hope of better luck upstream. Our progress was



brought to a grinding halt as this new path suddenly disappeared. In front of us was a sharp, steep drop; the spring storms had completely washed away the path and altered the line of the river by some 30 metres. I remembered earlier in the year how a train had been derailed by a landslide near Aberdeen, killing the driver. I suspect it was the same storm.

We scrambled somewhat precariously down the drop, then across the stream that joined the river, to regain our path, but it was not long before we found the path washed away once again. Huge Scots pine trees had been uprooted and unceremoniously dumped in the river, making any progress up the river extremely difficult. Birdwatching was now rather secondary as we tried to find our way through. Needless to say we did not get as far up the glen as planned.

We reached the site where the old bridge had been washed away in 2007. There was a ford nearby where all-terrain vehicles cross the river, so we decided to wade across the river to where there was a good road rather than fight our way back on the other side. Socks were removed and boots replaced before taking the plunge. The river was running quite fast and the swirling water had a giddy-making effect, but it was safely negotiated. Boots were emptied of water and socks replaced.

Back on the road, we could now admire the scenery once again. The rewilding of the glen, which the estate had embarked on a few years earlier, mainly by reducing deer numbers, was immediately apparent in the number of new Scots pine trees emerging in the heather. In some places along the road, the new trees blotted out the views of the river, which was a pity. I remember from previous visits that there were a few Sand Martin colonies, but none was seen. As they nest in holes made in river banks, I suppose the storm had removed their nesting sites. There should be new sites to explore, but we didn't see any evidence.

Below is a summary of some of the main species expected in this area of Scotland. Some of the explanations are my thoughts and not necessarily factual.

Charles Trollope 240821 cetetal@btinternet.com

opposite above: Ring Ouzel, *Turdus torquatus* opposite below: Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos*

Illustrations: Stephen Message www.message-wildlife-art.co.uk

Golden Eagle Seen on four occasions, which is more than expected. I wonder if that is due to changing attitudes on estates such as Feshie, plus the increasing number of satellite trackers fitted to birds, which would give pause for thought for any gamekeepers tempted to shoot them, particularly following the many mysterious disappearances in the Monadhliath mountains, which have attracted much suspicious attention. The fact that the Scottish Parliament is considering licensing driven grouse shooting may be also having a positive effect.

Osprey One sighting. Not bred at Loch Garten this year. This is the second consecutive year of failure. The Scottish population is in a healthy state and occasionally when one bird of a breeding pair doesn't return, the nest isn't used for a year or two.

Red Grouse and Black Grouse Not seen. I wonder if the cold wet spring had a negative impact. Visited one well known Black Grouse lek without success.

Goldeneye One female seen on Lochan Eilein, none seen on Loch Garten. The population increase after the project to install nesting boxes may have reversed with the increasing Pine Marten population finding this new source of food.

Cuckoo Heard and seen on most days. Fairly common. Its host species is mainly Meadow Pipit, which may be a problem (see below).

Ring Ouzel One sighting. One or two records is about the norm.

Tree Pipit, Meadow Pipit and Wheatear All seen but in much fewer numbers particularly Wheatear.

Redstart, Whinchat, Spotted Flycatcher None seen. Like Tree Pipit and Wheatear, these species are summer visitors. The habitat remains and looks good for these species. Their decline may be something to do with their wintering areas rather than their breeding areas.

Siskin, Crossbill, Crested Tit All seen in normal numbers. Crossbills could have been the Scottish species. I do not have the skills to separate them.

Willow Warbler Very common and still is, unlike Hemsted Forest, where I found only a couple of singing males this year. I fear they will disappear from the forest. Climate change is moving their breeding range northwards.

Blackcap A significant increase. This species appears to be continuing to increase its range across Great Britain.

In Your Garden



Bordering on the exotic

I am very aware that a number of my readers will be yawning at the mere mention of 'exotic' plants. Bear with me, though, and I'll try to convert you.

I have to start with Christopher Lloyd. His famous exotic garden at Great Dixter started (for want of a better word) a pandemic of bold foliage planting and hot colours, and as a gardening nation we really sat up and took note. Granted, having an entire space devoted to this type of planting would not work for most of us, but integrating elements of it certainly does and it works brilliantly at this time of year when many of our borders are looking a bit tired and floppy with one too many gaps. The warm, damp soil lends itself and lower light levels really make bold colours sing.

Foliage is key and this is where many of us trip up, thinking we should be planting a towering banana or tetrapanax. I work in a private garden in Sevenoaks and we have a long mixed border of roses, hebes, veronicastrums, hardy salvias and sedums - all quite traditional plants. I have interplanted with a stripy canna, some huge dinner plate dahlias and a gentian blue tender salvia, and it all blends very well. Add a pop of orange from the geums and some tiny sherbet yellow coreopsis, and the border really perks up, lasting right through until first frosts.

I would not contemplate adding a banana leaf or a giant tree fern in here as it just wouldn't work, but adding and experimenting



with a few new shapes and colours shouts just about loud enough in my book. It's also really good fun.

If your garden is relatively small then I would urge you to counter-intuitively plant something big: in a shady corner try a tree fern with some *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Strong Annabelle' underneath (these have huge white flowers on stronger stems than the usual variety); or plant a huge grass such as

Miscanthus sacchariflorus or the very pretty *Arundo donax* 'Variegata', which looks like a giant reed and works very well with dark-leaved dahlias or cannas.

A banana could replace a small tree - plant *Musa basjoo* as it is hardy in this country. It can also be cut right back in the spring if you want to contain it, otherwise if you

let it grow each year it will be five metres tall before you know it! There are some lovely dark-leaved grasses around in the plant nurseries - pennisetum have beautiful flower heads, and millet seed heads (although very tender) look spectacular dried.

Whilst some garden owners are happy to dive headfirst into wall-to-wall exotics, I appreciate this is not for everyone. It is possible, however, to blend new and unusual plants within your existing scheme, and this is the time of year to do it.

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Above: Three artists displayed in Donald and Charlotte Molesworth's topiary garden: Peter M Clarke - sculpture, Colin Griffith - ceramics, and Charlotte Molesworth - painting, drawing and prints

Front cover: Eyes of Ocellus, detail, by Peter M Clarke, Art in a Topiary Garden. Photograph: Amelia Thomas