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Editorial



We may not be in full Michael Bublé mode just yet, but it's fair to say that at long last it's beginning to look just a little bit like Christmas. The latest version of lockdown seems likely to return a few of life's pleasures to the village, and although the details are a little hazy at the moment, it seems we should be able to welcome our families back into our homes for the festive season, whether we like it or not.

To mark the resumption of jollity, and thanks to the goodwill of Hole Park Estate, The Green will soon be the site for a handsome Christmas tree, the size of which will leave nobody in any doubt that Benenden is back in business again, if, indeed, we ever went out of business.

Meanwhile, the good reverend David Commander is wrestling with what the new regulations will mean for St George's at this most important time of the year. He has mapped out a timetable for celebration and commemoration over the Christmas period to include most of the usual events although not necessarily in the usual format or at the usual venues. The Lord moves in mysterious ways, as we know, and this year he'll be using YouTube.

The centre pages of this issue contain everything you need to enjoy the ever-popular parish carol service, which always lifts the spirits, and if you find yourself still in need, the Benenden Action Team is eager to help at www.benendenaction.co.uk.

So, dear readers, whatever shape your Christmas takes, please stay safe, enjoy yourselves and rejoin us, rested and refreshed, in January.

Peter Thomas, Co-Editor

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

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Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

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 will be recorded, and the video available the next day on www.benendenchurch.org

Sunday 6 December 8am Communion 10am Communion 5pm Advent Service of Light

at St Nicholas, Sandhurst

Sunday 13 December 8am Communion 10am Communion

at St Nicholas, Sandhurst

Sunday 20 December 8am Communion 10am Communion

at St Nicholas, Sandhurst

Monday 21 December 7.30pm Parish Carol Service

streamed on YouTube (see details on p3)

Christmas Eve 3pm Nativity Service 11.30pm Communion

on The Green

Christmas Day 8am Communion 9.30am Morning Worship (ticketed, see details on p3)

10.45am Morning Worship (ticketed, see details on p3)

Sunday 27 December 8am Communion 10am Communion

at St Nicholas, Sandhurst

Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Tuesday 8 December 10am Communion
Tuesday 15 December 10am Communion
Tuesday 22 December 10am Communion

Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

The Roman Catholic Chapel TN17 4EL

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Funerals 5 November Michael Patrick Funeral St George's and committal Charing Crematorium

2 27 November Diana St John Funeral and burial

Rector's Letter



A different Christmas

By the time you read this we will, hopefully, be coming out of lockdown and starting to think about what Christmas might be like this year and how we will celebrate it together and with family. Over the last month or so I have been trying to re-imagine how we are going to conduct services under the Covid restrictions. The planned schedule is shown on the opposite page, but may, of course, be subject to change.

Advent Sunday (29 November) occurs during lockdown. Our Advent 'Service of Light' will happen, just delayed by one week to Sunday 6 December, and will be adapted. The church (we who gather) will be surrounded by candlelight rather than holding individual candles; we will have a service of readings, prayers and the choir singing five Advent carols. At the end of the service, everyone will be invited to take an Advent candle and a prayer card home for use each day through Advent.

The parish carol service usually gathers far more than can safely come together in St George's under Covid restrictions. This year, therefore, the service will be recorded in advance and then streamed on YouTube at 7.30pm on Monday 21 December. From Friday 18 December the link will be made available on the church website www.benendenchurch.org, Parish Council website and distributed to those on St George's church-family email list. The centre pages of this magazine contain the carol service sheet - if you wish to print off more copies it will be available to download on the church website. Please consider a neighbour who may be alone that evening and, if we are allowed, and you and they feel safe, then why not invite them to join you, socially distanced, to sing the carols from your home.

The crib service is another that would swamp the safe capacity of St George's: last year there were 480 in attendance! This year we are doing something very different: a Nativity service, using life-size Nativity figures, at the lychgate (which will be transformed, by Charlotte, into the stable). Please gather at the top of The Green, with chairs, warm clothes, and keeping socially distanced, for a short service starting at 3pm (and pray for a dry afternoon!).

The midnight service will go ahead in St George's as normal, but socially distanced, hand sanitising and wearing face coverings. Christmas morning, though, will be different. There will be one Communion service, starting at 8am. This will be followed by two short family morning worship services, the first one starting at 9.30am, and the second one at 10.45am, each of these will be ticketed. Please sign up (by emailing Cathy: benendenchurch@gmail.com) for the service you wish to attend, as numbers will be restricted to 100 for each of the services; and collect your tickets (for each adult and child) from Revd David after the 10am services on Sunday 6 and Sunday 20 December - or by coming to The Rectory. If no ticket, entry will not be possible to these two services. Sorry.

It is a shame that we have the necessity for these changes but, providing the rules on gatherings do not change after lockdown, we can still worship together, praise God, and give thanks for the birth of His Son on earth. Doing it differently may just make us appreciate this great gift even more. God bless you and your families this Christmas time.

Village Calendar

December

Sunday 6	Advent Carol Service: The Service of Light, St George's Church, 5pm	p.3
Monday 14	Parish Council Meeting, on Zoom, 7pm	
Monday 21	Parish Carol Service, on Zoom, 7.30pm	p.3
Christmas Eve	Nativity Service, The Green, 3pm	р.3
Christmas Day	Christmas Lunch, Memorial Hall, 12 30pm-4 30pm	ъ9

The Village Calendar may look a little light for the foreseeable future. Coronavirus and the Prime Minister's lockdown of the entire country have rather put a crimp in our social lives and dates have been cancelled left, right and centre. Even the civic amenity vehicle won't be around for a while.

These will be trying weeks for us all as we negotiate a new landscape of self-isolation and social distancing. To that end, David Commander has come up with a list of guiding principles to steer us all through the confusion. We hope they may be a help until normal service is resumed.

Guiding principles

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



The Government is proposing changes to the planning system to make it easier for developers to develop, especially in the South East of England. It is also proposing an increase in housing allocation for Tunbridge Wells Borough from 14,776 new dwellings to about 18,000 in the next 16 years.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is endeavouring to finalise its Local Plan before the proposed changes are made law, and the Benenden Neighbourhood Development Plan, now having been submitted to TWBC, gives our parish more weight against development in excess of the numbers that have already been agreed with TWBC. Of course, if parishioners don't vote in favour of our plan in the parish referendum next May, we will be at the mercy of Government imposition of numbers, so a vote in favour of our plan will at least give the Parish Council more say in how development is managed. All details of the Benenden Neighbourhood Development Plan can be viewed online at: www.benendenneighbourhoodplan.org

The Benenden Village Trust (BVT) is proposing to close the existing public toilet facility next to the village hall (see last month's edition of this magazine) and provide two cubicles in lieu, in the corner of the village hall. The existing plans reduce the current changing room facilities and take away a large chunk of off-stage (in the wings) space. Following receipt of various comments from parishioners, we understand that the BVT is now revising its plans to incorporate the proposed toilets in the opposite corner of the hall, in what is now the parish office. Please make your opinions, or suggestions, about the alterations known to the BVT Manager (bvttrust@gmail.com) or write to the BVT, sending the correspondence to the village hall office.

Despite any restrictions that might be in place over the Christmas period, please keep safe and we wish you a very happy festive season.

Graham Beveridge, Parish Councillor

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk
01580 240371 clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org
For more information see our website www.benendenparishcouncil.org or find us on Facebook

Parish Council Meeting
Monday 14 December 2020,
on Zoom, 7pm
Please email the Clerk for access to the meeting



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Just a Thought



Comforts of Christmas Past

As I came out of Benenden's the other day, I was greeted by a friend who asked: 'Are you going to write something to cheer us up for Christmas?' Now, sitting down to that task in the middle of the November 'lockdown', the idea is daunting. Perhaps looking back to Christmases past will help.

One of my most memorable Christmas Eves was when Richard and I were camping on a hilltop in Western Uganda. As the light faded into the warm night and the dark sky began to fill with stars, we heard the first drumbeat. This was followed by another, and another, and yet another until the whole valley below was filled with the sound of joyful drumming. We could see little but could almost feel the vibrations. Magical.

For most of my childhood we had traditional Christmases complete with the grandparents, stockings, turkey, tree and presents. I never graduated further than a minor angel in any nativity. The lasting memory from my ultra-traditional girls' grammar school was the ghastly Christmas parties when we had to dance with the teachers.

For a significant number of years after university, there were far more Christmases in the tropics than in the UK. My first ever away from home, in 1967, was spent with missionary friends in Uganda. I remember the frustration of trying to ring home amid the excessive pressure on the already fragile telephone system.

Before we had our own family, the holidays were often spent travelling throughout East Africa and on the 25th we would find a church, of whatever size, for a service, some of which might be in English. As for food, one year we were presented with a live goat, which was destined to be Christmas dinner, once we had found someone to do the necessary deed.

When we had family of our own, whatever the country, we would congregate with other families round a school or club swimming pool for a picnic lunch, saving the Christmas meal for the cooler evening. The children would often put together an ad hoc nativity for parents. It was different but great fun. We sorely missed the grey-haired brigade but in that regard we were mostly all in the same boat.

One cannot complain as this separation was, for the most part, by choice, because of work and there was much to compensate for it. However, the extreme came on St Helena, when for the first time we were without any of our three children. That year we attended carols at the Governor's residence, sang in the cathedral choir for the midnight and morning services, had a long walk and supper with friends. But there and then I declared, 'Never again. From now on we are going home for Christmas!' Richard agreed: 'We are indeed.' We were the grandparents now and all the family was in the UK.

For most people there is much comfort in recalling Christmases past and while Christmas present might be uncertain, there is always hope for great Christmases yet to come.

Sue Fisher







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News and Events

Grateful
thanks to
Hole Park
Estate for
their very
generous
gift of the
fabulous
Christmas
tree to be
sited on
The Green



Christmas tree

The precise shape of Christmas may not yet be known, but whatever happens, the village will have a truly festive feel thanks to the impending arrival of a very large Christmas tree on The Green at the beginning of the month.

The tree, grown in Benenden, is a kind gift from Edward Barham at Hole Park Estate in Rolvenden and will measure around 18ft, so you won't miss it. In a normal year it would have been put up in the village hall, but under the circumstances it was decided that outdoors would be a better option.

Members of the Parish Council will be erecting the tree, fixing it with guy ropes to ensure it stays on The Green and decorating it with lights, and it is hoped the church's Nativity figures will make an appearance closer to the big day.

Hole Park has a 60-year history of Christmas tree production, initially as an offshoot of its estate forestry operations but more recently as a specialist supplier to the UK market and member of the British Christmas Tree Growers Association.



Christmas Day lunch

Alone on Christmas Day? Please come and join us at the Memorial Hall for a lovely lunch, great company, a word from Her Majesty at 3pm and bonhomie of the highest order. The menu is simple, freshly produced and delicious. Salmon blinis and sausage rolls to start with as we meet and mingle from 12.30pm, then we sit down for turkey with all the trimmings, Christmas pudding or fruit salad, cheese, coffee and mince pies. Wine and fortified wines and beer and soft drinks provided.

From 25 November, please sign up at the village shop. There is no charge, but if you would like to make a donation, it would be gratefully received on the day. Lifts can be arranged, please give contact details, and advise any eating allergies/vegetarian/vegan/gluten free etc when booking at the community shop, and/or call Lesley Attwood on 243318.

Any offers of food donations for the lunch, please contact:

Tracy Claridge 240454 maisonsicheluk@tlclaridge.co.uk

Seasons from all of us at The Bull at Benenden. We have missed you, a warm festive welcome awaits! Greetings On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, a delicious roast turkey... with all the trimmings!

On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, two pints of Larkins Porter & a packet of scratchings
On the third day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, three bottles of Biddenden Ortega
On the fourth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, four steak & kidney suet puddings with lashings of gravy
On the fifth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, five golden pints of Curious Brew
On the seventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, seven twinkling candles
On the eighth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, eight pints of Harvey's
On the ninth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, nine doggy treats & a winter walk
On the tenth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, ten Christmas carols
On the eleventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, eleven mistletoe kisses
On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, a dozen days by the roaring fire at the Bull, Benenden

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...Fingers crossed!

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Benenden Action Team news

After careful consideration, a lot of local conversations and continued and fabulous goodwill within the volunteer base, it has been agreed that there is a place for BAT existing beyond the time of COVID-19 in the village.

We have therefore evolved BAT to create a well-connected network throughout all areas of the village and its many, already well-established, groups, societies, trusts and institutions. Pulling these elements together and maintaining a free channel of communication will enable BAT to help those in need and those that we may not hear about whilst going about our busy daily lives. Keeping our ears to the ground and looking for indirect referrals has proven to be our best way to assist people in these challenging times.

So, please stay safe and keep looking to your left and right to see that all those near you are keeping well. If you hear or see any people in the village struggling for any reason, please just contact Ruth or me and we can confidentially work towards a solution. We have so many resources available to us and, with the new network connecting so many facets of the community, we can work together more effectively and ensure no-one in the parish struggles due to the pandemic or beyond.

Guy Hagan, BAT co-ordinator

O7515 275150 guy@rawfellconstruction.co.uk Ruth Clark ruthbclark5@gmail.com www.benendenaction.co.uk

Planning Matters

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

16 November 2020

- 20 02962 FULL 8 Vere Meadows. Proposed porch; garage conversion.
- 20 02582 FULL I Bishopsdale Cottages, Bishopsden Road. Variation of Condition 2 (Approved Plans); Condition 3 (External Materials) of 20/00402/FULL - Addition of window to north west elevation and alterations to materials shown on plans.

Back in business at The Bull

For Mark and Lucy Barron-Reid, the latest month of lockdown hasn't been easy. Maybe for some it hasn't been as severe as the first time, but the loss of the Bull for another long stint has still been hard on drinkers and publicans alike.

"We've done fish and chip takeaways while we've been shut," says Lucy, "but it's a really strange thing to reopen and have to adapt and evolve again, and we've all got to remember how to do it, but we'll be back better than ever.

"There's been an eerie silence in the pub since we shut our doors for the second time, and it's a strange and emotional time, having your business forcibly closed, but as we all know only too well, there's been little option due to measures designed to keep us well and our loved ones safe.

"Now, though, we're getting ready for business again, and although guidelines for the festive season haven't yet been published, we imagine the rules will be much as before, and one thing we know for sure is that we have a wonderful team here at the Bull who have adapted to new rules without fuss and kept the pub COVID-secure, warm and welcoming.

"So, as we approach our 17th year as caretakers of a pub that has been trading since 1608, we would like to thank our team, our patrons and our family for helping to create a great British pub at the heart of this remarkable village."

I'm sure we'll all drink to that as we prepare to celebrate a little bit of normality returning to our lives.





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Talking Shop

As we approach our sixth Christmas, it all seems very surreal. No one could have foreseen what has happened in 2020 but, although our shop is restricted in many ways, this great facility is firmly rooted in the community and still providing much needed support and service with customary good cheer.

For anyone who is isolated by lockdowns, be assured that we can provide a delivery service. Just order and pay by phone and one of our volunteers will deliver.

It is with regret that we are saying goodbye to one of our most stalwart committee members: Paul Tolhurst. Paul has been on the committee since the start and has been a brilliant chairman for nearly three years but is now stepping down. We are extremely grateful to him for all his hard work and commitment over the past six years. Sally-Ann Marks has taken over as temporary chairman.

Finally, it has become apparent recently that we are occasionally in need of an IT specialist who is able to give some much-needed advice from time to time. If there is anyone in the village who is able to help us out, we would be very grateful.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year.

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



Increased funding for Rural Fibre Broadband

Community Fibre Partnerships are schemes whereby Openreach work with local communities to enable homes in rural areas to receive fibre broadband where broadband speeds are poor. The cost of the scheme is shared by Openreach and the community (although funding is available from the government with a further top up voucher available from KCC to help cover the community share of the costs). From September the KCC funding has increased from £1,000 per customer to £5,500 which, along with the government grant, makes a total of £7,000 per premises towards the fibre cost. This could enable many parts of Benenden currently with poor broadband to achieve a future proof fibre solution. The KCC increase is currently time limited to the end of March 2021 (or until the total amount of funding received for the county has been spent) so swift action is recommended!

Peter Driver



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Iden Green and Benenden WI

Cards are written, cakes are baked, turkey ordered and decorations will soon be up. Although, many of us may be spending Christmas alone this year, we know that our members are a resilient and resourceful bunch and will celebrate, each in their own way, nevertheless.

Those of us with computers have been receiving news online but it is good to know that some printed copies of past West Kent News can be collected from Benenden's community shop.

National Federation have sent a short list of resolutions for us to vote on:

- I A call to increase awareness of the subtle signs of ovarian cancer;
- 2 To help stop women dying prematurely from coronary heart disease (CHD);
- 3 To take concrete action to stamp out racism and discrimination;
- 4 A call to protect natural spaces and create wildlife friendly communities;
- 5 To help stop the destruction of peat bogs to tackle climate change.

Please can members inform our secretary or me which resolution they think the WI should adopt this year.

We would like to join Shirley Fidler, our President, in wishing everyone a happy, peaceful and safe Christmas and hope that the New Year is a little kinder. Shirley will be in touch with all members in January.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

Catching Lives

Thanks for all the donated clothes and books etc left in St George's church porch. We are looking for BBC: books, bedding and clothes. Please bag up and leave in the porch. If donations need collection, please call me. For details of donating, volunteering and the management of Covid within Catching Lives, see www.catchinglives.org. With ever more homelessness and unemployment, the charity needs your help. Tracy Claridge 240454 maisonsicheluk@tlclaridge.co.uk

STEPHEN MESSAGE ART DISPLAY

Saturday 31 October -Thursday 24 December Old Shop, Greenview TN17 4DD By appointment only.

Following Government advice and if permitted at the time, Stephen hopes to have a full display of prints and originals.

Contact: 07909 585988 messagewildlifeart@btinternet.com www.message-wildlife-art.co.uk

Benenden Hospital news

In a year when service to the health of the nation has been in clear focus, we're celebrating a group of colleagues who have given more than 700 years combined service to Benenden Hospital. No fewer than 43 colleagues are to receive long-service awards, although it will unfortunately have to happen without a formal ceremony because of the need to maintain social distancing.

There is one common thread that runs through healthcare, whether in the private sector or the NHS, and that is one of total devotion to caring and service, and while we are unable to present the awards in person, that doesn't detract from the duty we have to recognise colleagues who have given so many years' service, and we will be saying thank you to each of them.

The staff receiving awards have a wealth of stories to accompany their years of service, from meeting their future husband on the wards to attending the Queen Mother's birthday celebrations in St James's Park. The Queen Mum was patron of the hospital for many years.

It's quite humbling that colleagues have seen fit to devote so much of their careers to working at Benenden Hospital. It's such examples of caring and devotion that make the hospital such a special place to work.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

15

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Primary School news

The half-term holiday certainly was a welcome break and everyone returned refreshed and excited about the new term. It has been fantastic to see all the children really getting into their stride with their learning again and the staff have lots of lovely things planned for them leading up to Christmas. We are determined that Christmas activities will not be cancelled.

During the latest lockdown we were delighted that the Government prioritised the wellbeing and long-term futures of our children and did not close us. After returning in September, we implemented a range of measures to make sure that we kept our school community safe. Unfortunately, all extra-curricular activities were unable to operate during lockdown but breakfast club and after-school club remained open to provide wraparound childcare.

In addition, we have asked parents, visitors and contractors to wear a face covering on the site to comply with COVID-19 guidance where you are likely to come into contact with other members of the public in an area where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. We will, of course, continue to adapt our protocols in line with all guidance from the Department of Education.

Finally, amidst the challenges that we have already faced this term, I am delighted to inform you that Benenden CEP School was awarded Music Mark Status 2020/2021; recognised for the value that we place on music and our dedication to offering and delivering a broad and balanced curriculum. This is an amazing achievement, so well done to everyone.

2021 Reception Intake: Please contact us by telephone or email (details below) to make an appointment to view the school.

Please do look at the website www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk for all the latest news.

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

Parent Teachers and Friends Association news

We are pleased to share that a brand-new Benenden Primary School Parent Teachers and Friends Association (PTFA) committee was voted in at school in October (formerly known as the Friends of Benenden). Underpinning all our efforts is a wish to make a difference for our children, enriching their school life and enhancing their educational opportunities. Many wonderful volunteers have already taken on activities and many more are supporting our fundraising for various school projects. Already we have been able to help fund first aid classes for all the children and new gardening equipment for each class. A big thank you to everyone - every effort counts.

We hope to involve the community in our activities through the year. The current landscape is challenging but we will try to find creative ways to be part of village life. We are delighted to be partnering with Hole Park Estate again this year, supporting the parents at school to buy their wonderful Christmas trees. The children have recently been busy designing their own Christmas cards and some sets will be available for you to buy in Benenden's community shop. Please also use the new clothing donation bin located in our school car park which is always accessible via the side footpath gate. Preferred items for donation are clothes in good shape and wearable condition but paired shoes, sheets, blankets, curtains, towels and sleeping bags are also accepted. You can see a picture of the bin on the back cover of this issue. Thank you for your support for these initiatives. Money raised will go towards new reading books.

To find out more about ways to support us, please look at our new website www.sites.google.com/view/benenden-ce-primary-ptfa

We also want to take this opportunity to wish you all a peaceful festive season. Stay well and safe.

Astrid Miller, Chair

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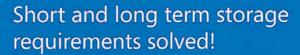
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Parish Carol Service

Monday 21 December streamed on YouTube at 7.30pm

From Friday 18 December the link will be made available on the church website www.benendenchurch.org, Parish Council website and distributed to those on St George's church-family email list.



Velcome and lighting of the Advent Candles

Carol 1 Once in royal David's city

- 1 Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed. where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed: Mary was that mother mild. Jesus Christ her little child.
- 2 He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all. and his shelter was a stable. and his cradle was a stall: with the poor and mean and lowly lived on earth our Saviour holy.
- 3 And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love. for that child so dear and gentle is our Lord in heaven above: and he leads his children on to the place where he is gone.
- Not in that poor lowly stable, with the oxen standing by, we shall see him; but in heaven, set at God's right hand on high: where like stars his children crowned all in white shall wait around.

Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-1895)



Bidding Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.



leading 1 Genesis 3:8-14 The Fall

Carol 2 The first Nowell

1 The first Nowell the angel did say was to Bethlehem's shepherds in fields as they lay; in fields where they lay keeping their sheep on a cold winter's night that was so deep: Nowell, nowell, nowell, nowell,

born is the King of Israel!

2 Then wise men from a country far looked up and saw a guiding star; they travelled on by night and day to reach the place where Jesus lay:

- 3 At Bethlehem they entered in, on bended knee they worshipped him; they offered there in his presence their gold and myrrh and frankincense:
 - Then let us all with one accord sing praises to our heavenly Lord; for Christ has our salvation wrought and with his blood our life has bought: Cornish carol, possibly 18th century

adapted by Michael Perry (1942-1996)

Reading 2 Genesis 22:15-18 The promise to Abraham

Carol 3 O come, O come, Emmanuel

- 1 O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear:

 Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.
- O come, thou Rod of Jesse, free thine own from Satan's tyranny; from depths of hell thy people save, and give them victory o'er the grave:
- O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here; disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight:

- O come, thou Key of David, come, and open wide our heavenly home; make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery:
- O come, O come, thou Lord of Might, who to thy tribes, on Sinai's height, in ancient times didst give the law in cloud and majesty and awe: John Mason Neale (1818-1866)



Reading 3 Isaiah 9:2, 6 & 7 The prophecy of the Messiah's birth

Carol 4 It came upon the midnight clear

- It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold: 'Through all the earth, goodwill and peace from heaven's all-gracious king!' The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing.
- With sorrow brought by sin and strife the world has suffered long and, since the angels sang, have passed two thousand years of wrong: the nations, still at war, hear not the love-song which they bring:

 O hush the noise and cease the strife, to hear the angels sing!
- And those whose journey now is hard, whose hope is burning low, who tread the rocky path of life with painful steps and slow:
 O listen to the news of love which makes the heavens ring!
 O rest beside the weary road and hear the angels sing!
- And still the days are hastening on by prophets seen of old towards the fulness of the time
 when comes the age foretold:
 then earth and heaven renewed shall see
 the prince of peace, their king;
 and all the world repeat the song
 which now the angels sing.

 Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876)

Edmund Hamilton Sears (1810-1876) adapted by Jubilate Hymns



Reading 4 Micah 5:2-4 The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem

Carol 5 O little town of Bethlehem

- O little town of Bethlehem,
 how still we see thee lie!
 above thy deep and dreamless sleep
 the silent stars go by:
 yet in thy dark streets shineth
 the everlasting Light;
 the hopes and fears of all the years
 are met in thee tonight.
- O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth, and praises sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.

 For Christ is born of Mary; and, gathered all above, while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
- 3 How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given! so God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
 No ear may hear his coming; but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him, Still the dear Christ enters in.
- O holy Child of Bethlehem,
 descend to us, we pray;
 cast out our sin, and enter in:
 be born in us today.
 We hear the Christmas angels
 the great glad tidings tell:
 O come to us, abide with us,
 our Lord Emmanuel.

Phillips Brooks (1835-1893)



Reading 5 Luke 1:26-38 The Annunciation to Mary

Carol 6 Silent night

- Silent night! Holy night!
 All is calm, all is bright
 round the virgin and her child:
 holy infant so tender and mild,
 sleep in heavenly peace;
 sleep in heavenly peace!
- Silent night! Holy night! Shepherds quail at the sight, glory streams from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing 'Alleluia, Christ the Saviour is born, Christ the Saviour is born!'

3 Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light:
radiant beams your holy face
with the dawn of saving grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht! Joseph Mohr (1792-1848) translated by John Freeman Young (1820-1885)

Reading 6 Luke 2:1-7 The birth of Jesus

Carol 7 Away in a manger

- Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head; the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
- The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes. I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky, and stay by my side until morning is nigh.
- Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay close by me for ever, and love me, I pray.

 Bless all the dear children in thy tender care, and fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.

Author Unknown Little children's book, Philadelphia, 1885







ntercessions



eading 8 Matthew 2:1-11 The magi are led by the star to Jesus

Carol 8 We three Kings of Orient are

- 1 We three kings of Orient are, bearing gifts we traverse afar field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star:
 - O star of wonder, star of night, star with royal beauty bright, westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.
- 2 Born a king on Bethlehem plain, gold I bring to crown him again. king for ever, ceasing never over us all to reign:

- 3 Frankincense to offer have I. incense owns a deity nigh; prayer and praising, all men raising, worship him, God most high:
- 4 Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom; sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone-cold tomb:
- 5 Glorious now behold him arise. king and God and sacrifice. Heaven sings: 'Alleluia'; 'Alleluia,' the earth replies: Edward John Hopkins (1818-1901)*

Reading 9 John 1:1-14 The Incarnation of the Word of God

3

Carol 9 Hark! the herald angels sing

- 1 Hark! the herald angels sing glory to the new-born King, peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled. Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies; with the angelic host proclaim, 'Christ is born in Bethlehem.' Hark, the herald angels sing glory to the new-born King.
- 2 Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord, late in time behold him come, offspring of a Virgin's womb! Veiled in flesh the Godhead see: Hail, the incarnate Deity, pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.

Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness! Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings. Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth. Charles Wesley (1707-1788) and others



New woodland home for Mr Noah's Nursery School

After 25 years in Iden Green, Mr Noah's Nursery School is excited to announce that it has put down new roots in a private, ancient woodland between Hawkhurst and Cranbrook. Reverend Peter Michell, a lifelong educator and known to the children as 'Mr Peter' is still at the helm. Inspired by the forest schools of Scandinavia and the benefits of the natural environment for the learning development and mental health of children, Peter has always ensured they spend a lot of time in the woods. From these experiences grew his vision to establish a permanent nursery in a woodland.

Setting up a new nursery is not easy at the best of times, least of all during a pandemic, but Mr Peter and his wonderful staff have focused on their dream to create a truly rural nursery, rich with opportunities for learning through play.

Over the years Mr Noah's has gained an outstanding reputation for its holistic approach to early years development, based on the Christian values of 'loving one another, gentle living and learning together'. The new location offers a magical outdoor environment, providing a safe and stimulating experience for children, and the opportunity to enjoy space and peace.

The school encourages play in nature, as well as activities such as gardening and the care of livestock, which includes chickens, rabbits and guinea pigs. After a hot lunch, most afternoons are spent building dens, playing in the mud and letting their imaginations run free.

As an eco-school, the nursery is dedicated to minimising its impact on the environment. Children learn about conservation and global citizenship and are involved in recycling. The school follows an eco-friendly procurement policy and is involved in the Kent County Council Education for Sustainable Development Award Programme.

What better way to serve a community than to provide small children with such a gentle and loving start to their education?

Clare Griffiths and Claire Powell mrnoahs.org

Benenden School news

The first week back after half-term was significant for two reasons, both of which are particularly topical. First, we were relieved not to have had any cases of coronavirus on site; our strategy of random screening using our on-site testing device is underway and at the time of writing, all tests have come back negative.

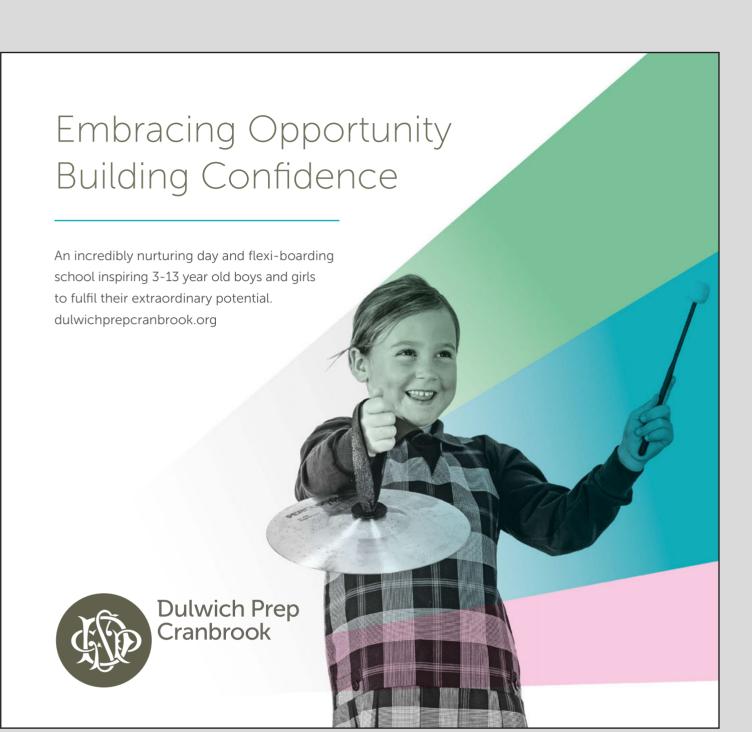
We hope to be in a position soon to relax some of our measures at school, which currently include girls not visiting their friends' dormitories. We also had some girls staying on site with us over half-term because of travel restrictions, and it was lovely to be able to lay on a series of low-key activities for them.

Second, I have been incredibly impressed by the level of the girls' political understanding. The US election results had all year groups gripped, and teachers who led lessons and a whole school assembly on the subject had to be nimble to keep up with the latest twists and turns during the week.

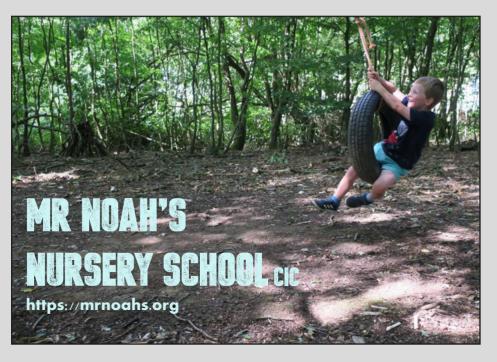
Elsewhere, school life has been operating as normally as possible within the necessary restrictions. We were able to observe Remembrance, rehearsals are ongoing for our various drama productions, we held fun runs for our youngest girls and Year 13 are studying hard ahead of their exams. Last week we held one of our Enquiry Weeks for the Year 7 girls, plunging them into 1493, where they had to work out what caused the untimely demise of a servant in the household of Leonardo da Vinci. The girls had to use skills such as analysing blood samples, testing fingerprints, translating different languages, drawing a scale ground plan of Leonardo's house and decrypting a code.

We have also started offering on-site clay pigeon shooting to the girls, with thanks to Cranbrook School for the equipment, and there have been plenty of individual successes, including one of our sixth-formers performing as part of a youth orchestra in the Britain's Got Talent semi-final, a Year 9 girl winning an international translation competition and another girl from the same year being selected for the Surrey hockey squad.

Samantha Price. Headmistress







Hot Topic





Time for football to make a comeback

When my son was young, one of the highlights of winter weekends was Saturday morning



football. After the usual aggravation over misplaced kit, we'd set off, chatting about how 'Man U' were doing in the league and whether, at 17, Wayne Rooney was old enough to play for England.

During the warm-up and coaching sessions, I'd have 40 minutes freedom to walk the dog, returning to the touchline for the

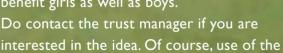
15-minute 'match' at the end. We fathers would cheer loudly our offsprings' every

missed pass, poor tackle or errant shot. Without overdoing the nostalgia, the sessions afforded a real camaraderie and provided a useful early energy burn-off.

It does seem a pity that there's no Saturday football available in Benenden. We do, after all, have a full-size football pitch on the recreation ground with virtually no one using it. The Benenden Village Trust, which owns and maintains the pitch along with the changing rooms in the village hall is keen to promote greater use. We would certainly consider marking out lines and providing

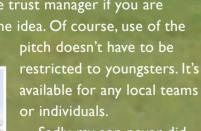
netting for the goals if there was the demand.

The Trust is not in a position to organise and run sessions, but surely there must be some keen parents who'd be prepared to take that on after the end of the current restrictions. And, of course, football is rapidly becoming a gender-blind game, so it would equally benefit girls as well as boys.



Sadly, my son never did emulate Rooney and become a professional footballer earning squillions a week. But you never know what talent - and fortune - may be lurking in your offspring.

Kent Barker byttrust@gmail.com







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Let your eyes do the talking

Ruth Clark discovers the rejuvenating effect of thicker lashes at Benenden's popular salon It wasn't until my optician took five years off my age that I realised the power of lash extensions. Some months ago, I had decided to give my meagre lashes a boost with a trip to Helen Aldridge, the owner of the Dream Lashes, Nails and Brows salon in Benenden, and the result was a richer but still natural look with the added benefit of not having to wear mascara or suffering 'panda' eyes after exercising.

After having lash extensions for many years, Helen decided to train as a lash artist herself: "I fell in love with it immediately and discovered I was good at it too." She operated from home before opening the salon in Benenden at the beginning of the year to offer lash, brow and nail treatments. Unfortunately, after

only ten weeks, COVID-19 restrictions closed the salon for five months. "After a few tears, I picked myself up and used the time to concentrate on my business. I underwent intensive online training to further enhance my skills, increased my social media marketing skills and worked hard to spread the word about our services. When I opened again the response was overwhelming. I let the eyes of my clients do the talking, so word has spread quickly. It doesn't matter how old you are - my oldest client so far is 86 - lash extensions are transforming. Not only do they open up your eyes and make you look better; they do wonders for your self-confidence too."

A variety of effects can be achieved. "In the initial consultation we discuss what effect the

client wants, natural, glamorous, or somewhere in between, and I take a photograph to analyse in detail later. I can make small eyes look bigger, make close-set eyes appear wider apart, level up eyes if one is higher than the other and even disguise hooded eyes. Some clients want extensions just for a special occasion and others get hooked!"

The cost is £60 for a full set (2hrs) and £35 (1hr) for an in-fill every two-three weeks if, like many, you become a lash addict. The eyelash

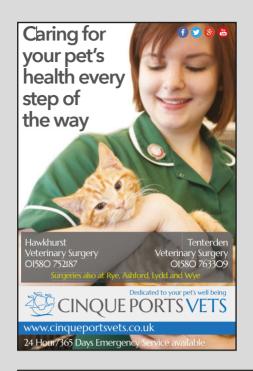
extension is attached to an existing natural eyelash and, as natural lashes only live for 8-10 weeks, extensions need to be added to the fresh new lashes to maintain the effect. In addition, Helen offers a popular lash lift and tint treatment. This takes an hour, costs £50 and is ideal for those who can't commit to lash extensions. It's essentially a perm for your lashes

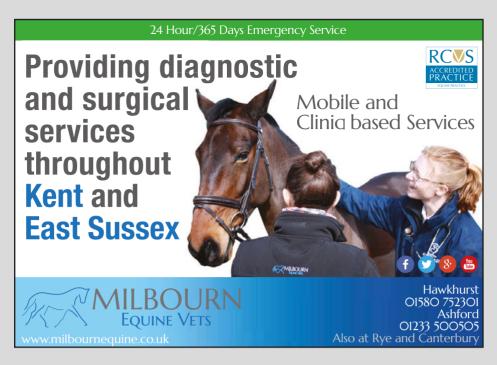
so they curl upright, and it lasts up to ten weeks. The lashes are also tinted which makes them appear longer and thicker.

It's no surprise that Helen didn't rest on her laurels during the latest lockdown. She took the opportunity to start training in semi-permanent make-up procedures and in 2021 will offer semi-permanent eyebrows, eyeliner, lip liner and lip blush treatments. She is also celebrating the fact that she has been selected as one of eight finalists in the Kent Eyelash Specialist of the Year category in the Kent Health & Beauty Awards taking place on 10 December. Fingers crossed Helen.

You can browse and book the salon's full range of services at:

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Hot Topic



Deflating the balloon of

negative thoughts

Charlie Sampson explains how The Thrive Programme can help you take control of your life and bring out the best of yourself.

Thriving people are more positive and resilient when faced with challenges - qualities that are needed now more than ever. You may think you are stuck with certain patterns of thinking and there is not much you can do to change this. That's not true.

Lasting change is simpler and faster than you might realise. All you need is to understand some fundamental principles about how to thrive.

We believe that what we are seeing is reality. In fact, we all look at the world through a series of 'lenses' which influence how we see things, i.e. cognitive bias. For example, in winter nearly a third of us will suffer seasonal affective disorder (SAD). However, the weather doesn't influence me at all. Same weather, different lens. Having a positive or negative mindset is a cognitive bias. These feelings are not happening to you, you are creating them, and if you are creating them, you can change them.

The lenses through which we view the world are largely influenced by our beliefs, which we learn from our parents, our friends, our environment and the media. However, our beliefs are not a life sentence and they should

be challenged - especially when they aren't helpful. An example of an unhelpful belief is that smoking is addictive. Every year half a million people in the UK are admitted to hospital with smoking-related illnesses. They know that smoking is bad for their health but feel unable to give up because they are 'addicted'. When you think you are addicted to something it renders you powerless. A big part of The Thrive Programme smoking module, which I teach, is to help smokers challenge the unhelpful, powerless belief that they are addicted.

Here are three examples of how I help

challenge the belief that smoking is addictive. Pregnant mothers nearly

always give up smoking without any great difficulty.

Heavy smokers never wake up in the middle of the night suffering from nicotine withdrawal.

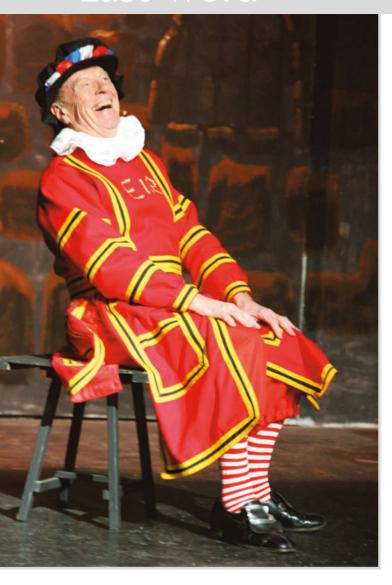
Smokers fly for ten hours or more and never feel the need for a cigarette during the flight. Once they see smoking as an annoying habit that might kill them rather than being 'addicted', then they are likely to be successful at stopping.

We can think of our beliefs as being like a party balloon. The more air we blow into the balloon with our unhelpful thoughts, the more we keep the belief afloat. Stop blowing air (by challenging and changing the thoughts) and soon the belief will deflate and eventually disappear. All our unhelpful and limiting beliefs can be challenged in the same way.

For more information: www.thriveprogramme.org /charlie-sampson

Charlie Sampson: Most of my professional life in the corporate world was in advertising working for Saatchi&Saatchi. In 2001 I moved to Beijing to run the China operations for the company. After retiring in 2015 l trained as a Thrive coach, training individuals and company employe<u>es</u> on how to Thrive. My connection to Benenden comes from my parents who retired here in 1985 from Scotland. Dad had been a flight commander in WW2 with I31 (County of Kent) Squadron. I am married to Antonia who is a jewellery designer and we have four children. We now are living in Mum and Dad's old house in Standen Street.

Last Word



Final curtain for a much-loved star of stage and village

Bev Beveridge of the Benenden Players pays tribute to Michael Patrick

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death in October of Michael Patrick, who lived in Benenden with his wife, Angela, for 23 years. He was quite simply the best of men and someone who made a lasting and positive impression on all who met him.

Originally from South London, he and Angela moved in 1968 to Tenterden, from where he commuted to his work at the Stock Exchange for many years. Having a keen interest in theatre, he joined the Tenterden Operatic and Dramatic Society (TODS) during the late 80s, beginning backstage, where he learned all the vital skills of set construction and stage craft. Within a short time, he began to perform on

stage with walk-on parts, acting, then stage management and directing, but admitted that the most testing task was prompting. In all, he directed ten plays for TODS and the Benenden Players and worked tirelessly to support all their productions in so many ways. In 2019, Michael and Angela received a well-deserved Lifetime Achievement Award for their services to amateur drama in Kent.

Michael had qualities as a person which enriched the lives of so many others. His family were devoted to him as husband, father and grandfather who, with a warm and generous heart, always put them first. He loved helping to look after his grandchildren and he was fond of a game of golf. However, because of his extraordinary energy and desire to help, Michael made time for so much more.

Having moved to Benenden in 1997, and fallen in love with the place, Michael and Angela threw themselves into village life. In 1998, he auditioned to be a villain in the panto for the Players and reached the dizzy heights of playing the dame, which he loved. He was a highly talented actor but was never precious about what role to play; happy to be involved and totally unselfish with his time and commitment. There might, however, have been the occasional complaint from him when committee meetings went on too long and he was missing football on TV!

Nevertheless, if help was needed, both Michael and Angela were always there, happy to muck in and do the most difficult jobs, with a smile, humour and energy. He was great fun to work with, both on and off the stage, and no one was more adept at getting people to pay attention to instructions. His generosity of spirit was infinite. A member of TODS explained that when Michael and Angela retired from their roles last year, it took a whole committee to share out their tasks, and even then their efficiency couldn't be matched.

The Benenden Players were blessed by his membership of the committee and, using the useful experience gained in a financial



background, he soon took on the role of treasurer. Following that, he joined the then village hall committee, which was run by volunteers. Mike predictably became the treasurer and Angela the secretary.

He was one of the group of amazing people who rolled up their sleeves and voluntarily embarked on the job of taking up the dowdy tiles of the village hall, so that the present smart hall floor could be laid, thus saving the community a lot of money. Around four years ago, Mike took on the job of looking after the War Memorial at the end of Walkhurst Road,

where he planted well over a hundred new plants and continued to keep it in pristine condition, although his illness was well advanced at that time. With his keen eye for detail and admirable energy, he frequently quietly went about keeping the village looking beautiful. He painted the phone box in Iden Green, regularly cleaned the village sign and cleared the leaves out of the bus stop to keep it tidy, as well as doing odd jobs for elderly people. If something needed to be done, he would do it with extreme good grace.

Michael enriched the lives of people with whom he came into contact. His sometimes stern demeanour would belie the kind, caring person underneath, but it always became apparent as the twinkle in his eye and sudden warm smile would light up his face

and convey the witty, intelligent, compassionate person he was. A member of TODS put it beautifully: "He had that disarmingly confrontational sense of humour which always made me feel as though I'd done something wrong, and as I always thought that I was probably guilty, I fell for his absolving smile every time."

We will really miss this funny, generous, lovely man and I can say with confidence that all who knew Michael are far richer for having done so. We send our warmest regards to his family.



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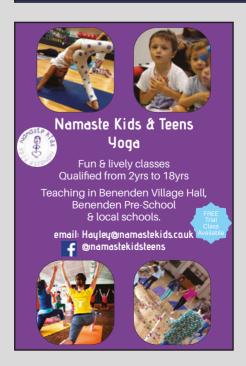




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Food and Drink





Food and Drink



plum and wild fennel to Ebony Farm lamb with rosemary and preserved lemons. "It's basically just drying meat by chucking some salt on it," says John as we tour the incubation and aging chambers, where computers control temperature and air movement. Ian begs to differ and points to an array of jars of herbs and spices that produce surprising flavours.

Orange peel, apparently, is great for bringing the best out of cured beef.

"Science plays a role but you feel things, taste them and smell them constantly," relents John, whose pride and joy is the range of 'beer sticks' he has devised to accompany a jar or two, and the low-fat but spicy Nduja spreading salami. "But basically there are two methods. Either you take pork, mince it fine or coarse, add a bit of salt, stick it in a tube and age it (salami is created by using a starter culture and a fermentation process like cheese). Or you take entire chunks of meat, put salt around them to dry and preserve them, and make bresaola, lomo and lonzino out of loins and collars."

Whatever the scientific detail, it seems to work, and Moons Green is now available locally in the Milk House in Sissinghurst and the Great House in Hawkhurst, at Hartley Farm Shop and Eggs to Apples, and online at www.moonsgreen.co.uk. 'Proper' Christmas hams are available as well.

As the advertising slogan goes: "We have a cure for people who are fed up with factory food."

Wine wonders galore

Sales of wine in the village shop have almost doubled in 2020? Why so? During the first lockdown, more people shopped locally, had more spare money than usual and found that this was no ordinary selection of the usual high street brands at higher prices. Wine importers in the hospitality sector have had to offload stock at bargain prices to keep cash flow going, so look at the bottom shelves and you will find good wines at under £7. The bargain Bellingham Sauvignon from South Africa at £6 has been a runaway success.

Chateau Trillol 2015/16 AOC Corbieres rouge, reduced from £12.95 to £8.40. A blend of 48% Syrah, 40% Grenache and 12% Carignan. Like a high quality Cotes du Rhone Villages, with good body, spice and black fruits - incredible value.

Reserve St Marc Syrah 2018 IGP Pays d'Oc, £6.75. From one of the best co-operatives in France, Foncalieu, this is a soft, fruity, easy-drinking style from an excellent vintage.

Le Versant Viognier 2018 IGP Pays d'Oc, £7.20. Also from Foncalieu, 100% Viognier, lush and fruity with good structure.

Principe de Viana 2017, 50cl, £13.70. Late picked Chardonnay. A delicious, rich and creamy sweet wine with fresh acidity, aged for 12 months in oak barrels. Perfect with blue cheese, fruit salad, tarte aux pommes, non-chocolate patisserie.

Chateau d'Orignac AOC Pineau de Charentes NV, 70cl, £22.85. Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon grape juice with five-year-old Cognac, aged in wooden barrels. An excellent sweet fortified wine to accompany everything Christmassy.

I could not leave this year without mention of the Benenden Bacchus 2019, £17.95, from Graham Latter's Dingleden vineyard. Selected parcels of vines are hand picked for optimum flavour and only I,000 bottles of the 2019 were made. It has a beautiful floral, rose-petal nose, crisp well-balanced acidity with hints of lemon peel, nettle and blackcurrant leaves and a lingering lemongrass finish.

Tracy Claridge

In Your Garden



Berries and twigs for Christmas

A wander around a plant nursery or garden centre at this time of year is a real treat. Seeing massed displays of fiery dogwood stems, berried shrubs and hellebore blooms is picture-perfect so near to Christmas. I am also drawn to benches overflowing with tiny violas (white for me, orange for the bravehearts) and anything silver or glaucous for foliage - Calocephalus brownii - also known as the Barbed Wire plant, is virtually indestructible and Euphorbia wulfenii or festucas for the glaucous element.

I somehow manage to always sneak in a dogwood or salix into my planting schemes now. Both can grow huge, but they can also be coppiced, which keeps them to a manageable size. There are, as always, a few exceptions such as Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire', which is best left to form a branching thicket, whereas others can be cut back to the ground every February for brighter, straighter stems each and every season. Unless you want virtually a small tree overnight, I would advise coppicing salix annually - it is very vigorous, or it can be pollarded, which will allow the main stem to grow to a height and then the crown is cut

back at the end of each winter to allow it to throw up fresh stems.

If space allows, then pack as many of these stems in as you can and plant where the low sun spotlights their fiery growth. They look simply stunning in vast swathes, as any trip to a winter garden will show you. At my alma mater, Hadlow College, they hold the National Collection of cornus, so merits of the genus were hard to avoid and I have used them in planting schemes ever since. A past client of mine excelled at growing salix, but 'Yelverton' was one of my particular favourites, which she had growing vigorously on the banks of a pond.

Berries are more fleeting - our garden birds usually see to that. However, if you can plant a variety of berry-laden shrubs, then you can outwit the birds for long enough to enjoy their brilliant colours. Callicarpa bodinieri 'Profusion' has vivid purple berries held in clusters on bare stems; the Heavenly Bamboo 'Nandina domestica' bears bright red berries deep into winter and their foliage is delicate and evergreen; and we are all familiar with cotoneasters - I'm fairly certain the berries must taste dreadful as the birds seem to leave these ones until last.

Of course, Christmas is not the same without fairy lights. Whether you have bought sprayed twigs from a florist or grown your own coloured stems in the garden, I heartily recommend twining twinkling lights around the stems and keep the display by your front door for every visitor, and yourself, to enjoy. A very Merry Christmas to you all.

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Above: Looking to the past, looking to the future: harvest from Dingleden Vineyard; clothing and shoe bank accessible at the Primary School; Benenden Players' Halloween drama workshop; Remembrance Sunday Commemoration Front cover: Layne and Buzzard. Painting by Stephen Message www.message-wildlife-art.co.uk