



Benenden
Magazine
November 2023

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Editorial



As is usually the case, our Indian summer came to a swift end marked by wind, rain and dropping temperatures. And, as is usually the case, I'm cross that I didn't take more advantage of the glorious weather to weed, mow, clean the gutters etc, etc. No worries, this is the time to take action inside the house. But who am I kidding - even enforced time at home during the pandemic didn't inspire me to turf out old clothes, books or paint that long-suffering spare bedroom.

The good news is that, instead of tackling these practical tasks, I have been inspired by Dr Michael Mosley's 'Just One Thing' series on Radio 4 to make some small changes to my diet and lifestyle that will significantly improve my health and wellbeing. Many of these will be very easy to adopt, purely and simply because I live in this village. A trip to the café will do me a lot of good, it seems, because drinking tea reduces stress, improves memory and can reduce the risk of bone fractures, while a cup or three of coffee is linked to better brain and heart health.

While there I can enjoy the benefits of being sociable which, it turns out, is good for your heart and your sleep - and can even help you live longer! Of course, exercise is recommended, so I will definitely sign up for one or two of the classes in the village hall. I'm a dreadful singer but am even tempted to join the Rhythm of Life Choir in the church, as belting out a tune can enhance your immune system, reduce your blood pressure and alleviate feelings of chronic pain.

Finally, I can round off the day enjoying a small, guilt-free glass of red wine (perhaps the Tamada Saperavi from the community shop, recommended to me by my co-editor) with my dinner a few days a week, which will benefit my gut biome and heart.

Perhaps these small changes will spur me on to tackle those practical domestic jobs which, oddly, continue to mount up. I'll report back.

Ruth Clark, Co-Editor

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

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Village Calendar

November

Wednesday 1	Living with Fibromyalgia, Charity Farm Café, 11am	p.19
Friday 3	A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings, Benenden School Theatre, 7pm	p.11
Saturday 4	Benenden Bonfire and Fireworks, Benenden School, 5.30pm	p.9
Saturday 4	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 7	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 7	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Friday 10	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Social Afternoon, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.22
Saturday 11	Cyril Moore Skittles Evening for the Poppy Appeal, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Thursday 16	Trio Bohemo, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7.30pm	p.11
Friday 17	Cat Simoni Concert, Our Lady and St Joseph's Chapel, 6.30pm	p.22
Friday 17	The Friends of St George's Quiz Night, Benenden Village Hall, 7pm	p.15
Saturday 18	Autumn Village Clean, Benenden's Community Shop, 9am	p.3
Saturday 18	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 19	Angela Hewitt, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 5pm	p.11
Monday 20	Parish Council Meeting, Benenden Hospital Quinlan Centre, 7pm	
Tuesday 21	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 21	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 21	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.17
Tuesday 21	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Winter Party, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.22
Saturday 25	Swinging at the Cotton Club, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7.30pm	p.11
Saturday 25	Darts, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 28	Merry and Bright, Wreath Making Demonstration, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.15

Iden Green Toddler Group

Tuesdays during term time in Iden Green Congregational Church, 9-11.30am

Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-11.30am

Benenden Bowls Club

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

Cakes & Chaos: Café and Toddler Group

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

Parish Council



As you can see from the cover of this month's magazine, the restoration of the Queen's Well in Benenden is now complete (well, almost - our perfectionist contractors are replacing some of the roof tiles as they have observed these are not an exact replication of those on the original roof). It is very satisfying to see so much hard work come to fruition, so thank you to all who have been involved in this project.

I am happy to confirm that we are now able to move forward with the restoration of the Pump House at the Iden Green crossroads after the sterling effort by my fellow councillors on the fund-raising front. We are hoping the contract time will not be quite so lengthy as the Queen's Well (accidents notwithstanding) with restoration scheduled to be complete by summer 2024. Although we have been able to fund any shortfall in funds for the wells from our reserves, we would still welcome further donations to lessen the burden of proportion of tax taken for the parish council from your annual Council Tax bill.

To this end, we would be very grateful if anyone has any idea what happened to our fundraising banner, which was fixed to the safety fencing around the Queen's Well. This mysteriously disappeared over the summer months, and we would like it returned to us if at all possible so that we can use it on the Pump House during its restoration period. Thank you.

We are also moving forward with the refurbishment of the public toilets, having received more affordable quotations via the Government website required for projects of this size. We are hoping the work will be completed by the end of the year, with a fit-for-purpose new design that we can be proud of.

We have been asked to highlight how dangerous it is when vehicles park close to the crossroads in the village and would request that residents park considerably away from this accident black-spot.

Our autumn village clean-up will be held on Saturday 18 November. Please do come along to the community shop at around 9am that morning to pick up your safety equipment for an hour or two of volunteering to keep our village looking as beautiful as possible.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair
nicolat@benendenparishcouncil.org

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

Parish Council Meeting
Monday 20 November 2023,
Benenden Hospital Quinlan Centre, 7pm

Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

Associate Priest: Revd Ylva Blid-Mackenzie 01233 820100 rev.ylva@gmail.com

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

Churchwarden: Sue Fisher 241907 sue@undaunted.co.uk

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com

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

Thursday 2 November

7.30pm All Souls' Day Service

Sunday 5 November

8am Communion

10am All-age

5pm Choral Evensong

Communion

Friday 10 November

10.55am Act of Remembrance,
War Memorial

Sunday 12 November

8am BCP Communion

10.45am Remembrance Service
followed by an Act of Remembrance,
War Memorial

Sunday 19 November

8am Communion

10am Sung Eucharist

Saturday 25 November

4pm Connect Four

at Mission Church, Sandhurst

Sunday 26 November

8am Communion

10am Morning Worship

Morning Prayer

8am Mondays and Fridays

Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Morning Prayer

8am Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Mid-week Communion

10am Tuesdays

Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services

10am Morning Worship

5.30pm Evening Worship

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

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

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Masses

9am Sundays

7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Baptism

15 October Fleur Constant

Wedding

25 October Philippa Bourne and Ben Klein

Funerals

11 October Sir John Ure Committal and Memorial Service

15 October Doreen and Derek Massey Interment

23 October Trevor Ward Funeral and committal

Church Letter



A time to remember those we have lost

Firstly, a thank you to so many people for their kind words and messages these past few weeks following our tenth anniversary of being called by God to service in this community. Helen and I are very grateful to so many of you for your support.

Secondly, as I wrote last month, time flies, and here we are once again in November - in the month of remembering. There is, of course, Remembrance Sunday (on 12 November this year), with its church services and Acts of Remembrance at the war memorial. This gives us a time to remember. To remember those from our community who have served our country; those who have served and given their lives; the families whose lives have forever been affected by the loss of someone serving in the armed forces. It is a time to remember the work of the Royal British Legion and all they do to help service personnel and their families.

November also gives us an opportunity to gather to think about and remember our own loved ones who have died, whether that be recently in this past year, or many, many years ago. If there is someone that you love who has died, you are invited to a service where we can remember our loved ones who are now longer with us physically but whom we still love and miss. There is a service on All Souls' Day (Thursday 2 November), in the evening at St George's Church. At this service, the names of loved ones are read out and we light candles as we think of them and the importance of them in our lives. The service begins at 7.30pm, with refreshments and fellowship from 7pm. Everyone there will be remembering and missing a loved one; it is a service where we are all there for the same reason. Please do join us if you are able.

Finally, as we watch the horrors unfolding on our televisions of the news in Israel and Gaza, it is a timely reminder that we should not take the peace in which we live for granted. What we are witnessing - from a distance - is brutal, barbaric, inhuman and heart-breaking, as ordinary men, women and children suffer. Apart from prayer, I feel completely helpless as I watch and hear what is happening in that region.

What we are seeing is totally extreme, but all disputes start somewhere. They start with just seeing differences between people, rather than recognising everything that all humanity has in common. We can each play our part in our community to recognise, respect and rejoice in our differences, rather than build up barriers because of those differences. We can all treat everyone in our local community with justice, compassion, equity, love and care. As I pray for Israel and Gaza, I also pray for the diversity and tolerance within our own community. I invite you to do the same.

Revd David Commander, Rector and Area Dean



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Talking Point



The power of good people and good chat

I can see how our bees depend on their community to survive, but what about us? Human communities have many nuances. I am struck by the number of both locals and strangers who remark on the exceptional nature of Benenden and its surrounds. Our community appears to make people feel safe, interested, sociable in a way that many places do not. There's a willingness to acknowledge, even talk to, strangers - it's almost as if we were 'up north', where talking to strangers is a given. Of course, a dog helps you connect, but what is it that we foster in our village - and how?

For example, a couple of weeks ago, I stopped on one of our many footpaths as our dogs met and an hour later two of us were still standing there sharing stories. At the weekend, some visiting walkers sat down for a hard-earned beer in the Bull car park and an hour later we'd had more beer and lots of chat. Every cup of tea in the café comes with a free smile. Friday evening in the Bull or the Woodcock always results in a few strangers becoming less strange (and a few friends getting stranger!). Friends remark on the importance of this sociability and how it makes them feel.

The pubs and the café are hubs of our community's connectivity, as are the churches, charities and footpaths. The many clubs, societies, schools, events, musicians and support groups provide cross connections to people from every corner of the parish and beyond.

For me, two things are the glue of a community like ours: good people and good conversations. Good people are interested in others: generally, who is around them and specifically, who is in front of them. Taking the time to say hello and give a smile, chatting to the folk in the shop, helping people when they need to work out a problem or just move themselves or something from a to b. Subconsciously creating good conversations which derive from curiosity, from asking questions and from listening. Listening to what's not said as well as what is said.

So, a special shout out to the people who work in all our places, be it serving behind a bar or counter, trimming hedges, taking services or investing their time holding together businesses, clubs and the places around us. Both the paid and unpaid deserve our thanks for the way Benenden feels to us locals and strangers alike.

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Remember, remember: the Benenden Bonfire

We are just days away from the Benenden bonfire on Saturday 4 November. The venue is the pasture field at Benenden School. Gates open at 5.30pm, the bonfire will be lit at 6.30pm with fireworks at 7pm. There will be a bar, the barbecues will be roaring, there will also be chilli, mulled wine and hot chocolate. Tickets are available in advance from Benenden's Community Shop and online at www.benendenfireworks.co.uk.

Please remember, you can only enter the event via the main school entrance and there is no on-site parking available. If you are intending to travel by car, please drive and park considerately and allow up to 20 minutes to walk to the venue. We know the local roads will be busy and this can be an inconvenience, but this is a village event and most people will be delighted to have it back again this year. Also, the more locals that can walk to the event, the fewer cars there will be on the road.

To ensure everyone has a safe and enjoyable time, please do not bring sparklers or fireworks to the event.

I am delighted the event is going ahead because things really did hang in the balance when, back in spring, Grant Matthews announced, after 11 years, that this would be his last year as chair of the Benenden Bonfire Society and unless someone stepped forward, it might also be the last Benenden bonfire. When I responded to Grant's call for someone to volunteer to take up the reins, I had not appreciated a number of the society stalwarts were calling it a day, too.

When there were just five of us at the first committee meeting in July, I realised that we had a real challenge on our hands to ensure the bonfire took place in this and future years. Not only did we need some new committee members, but the task of finding around 60 volunteers to help run the event was also a daunting one.

That evening, over some rather lively beer sourced from Benenden's, we decided we would rise to the challenge and make every effort to

A poster for the Benenden Bonfire & Fireworks event. The background is a large, bright fire. The text is in various colors and fonts. At the top, it says 'BENENDEN BONFIRE & FIREWORKS' in orange and white. Below that, 'Saturday 4 November' in white. On the left, a starburst graphic says 'HOT FOOD LICENSED BAR & MORE'. In the center, 'GATES OPEN 5.30pm' in red, 'BONFIRE 6.30pm' in red, and 'FIREWORKS 7pm' in red. Below that, ticket prices: 'Online Advance Ticket Price Adults £6.50 Children under 16 £3.50 Children under 5 free Gate Price Adults £8 Children £5'. It also says 'Tickets available online from 1 October www.benendenfireworks.co.uk or from Benenden's Community Shop'. At the bottom, it says 'A share of profit will be donated to local groups and projects. There is no on-site parking. Please park considerately and allow up to 20 minutes to walk. No personal sparklers or fireworks. Thank you.' On the right, there are logos for 'JUBILEE HIRE', 'Benenden Hospital', and 'TATE FENCING'.

ensure the bonfire and fireworks continued. We were convinced of the importance of holding this regular and popular village event, particularly because a share of the profits had always gone to local groups and projects, with a focus on youth. So, we began the task of finding some new committee members and volunteers.

My cry for help in August's edition of this publication received a pleasing response and in addition to Tom Cripps and Alex Baker, who are continuing on the committee, we have new members: Richard Brothers, Deborah Davidson, Kaysie May, Giles Robinson, Kate Ferry and Minnie Garnier.

Benenden bonfire and fireworks would not be possible without the work of the committee and the many volunteers who help with the set-up and with marshalling, serving in the bar, the barbecue and making and serving the chilli, as well as our sponsors, Tate Fencing, Jubilee Hire and Benenden Hospital, to whom I am extremely grateful for their continued support. Thank you. We are also grateful to Benenden School for allowing us to use again the pasture field for this year's event. As in previous years, a share of the profits from the event will be donated to local groups and projects.

Should you be reading this after the event, we hope you had a really enjoyable evening and will join us again next year.

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



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Trio Bohemo

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Angela Hewitt

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Swinging at the
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25 November



The Jazz Sapiens

8 December



Christmas with the Len
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15 December



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The new Royal British Legion Standard

It is proposed to dedicate our new Royal British Legion Standard during the 10am service at St George's Church on Sunday 29 October, in time for it to be carried by Ian Malaugh on 10 November at the parish war memorial, and on 11 November at the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall.

Remembrance events

On Friday 10 November, the Benenden branch of the RBL will, as usual, gather at the war memorial at 10.55am to remember those parishioners who fell in the two World Wars. In addition to the senior pupils of the primary school, we invite local residents to join this brief assembly.

On Sunday 12 November, the annual Remembrance Sunday Service will take place at St George's Church, starting at 10.45am. Members of the Legion's branch committee, the parish council, representatives of Benenden Hospital and Benenden School, led by its Combined Cadet Force, will, after the service, lead the congregation to the war memorial for the laying of wreaths. The Last Post and Reveille will be sounded as usual at the church and at the memorial.

If you wish, please gather in Walkhurst Road as soon as you can after the church service, as the main road will not be closed. All those with service medals are invited to wear them for our special Acts of Remembrance.



THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION
POPPY APPEAL

This year our volunteers will make a limited collection house-to-house. All donations are much appreciated.

Alternatively, to make a donation please consider scanning our new dedicated QR code.

Jane and Robin Dalton Holmes
Royal British Legion, Benenden Branch

Poppy Appeal collection

We are arranging a limited house-to-house collection for the Poppy Appeal. From 28 October, boxes will be placed at the community shop, Ward's the Butchers, Benenden Hospital, the St George's Club, the primary school, Benenden School, the Bull and the Woodcock. During the mornings of Saturday 4 and Saturday 11 November, we shall establish a street collection with a wider range of poppy items and a limited allocation of the 2023 enamel badges outside the community shop.

Alternatively, to make a donation please consider scanning our new dedicated QR code in the box above.

Royal British Legion, Benenden Branch

Benenden Bells

To mark ten years of service and ministry to St George's Church and parish by Revd David and Helen Commander, we rang a quarter-peal of 1,260 Grandsire Doubles in 45 minutes on Tuesday October 10. The band, conducted by Karen Lebon, comprised: Katie Dellow, Ben Dellow, Karen Lebon, Will Dellow, Rod Lebon and Jack Gardner.

Rod Lebon



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Merry and Bright

The weather was kind to us for our sunny trip to The Pilot for our fish and chip meal. Thank you to all who used cars to take everyone, with a few stopping on the way home for an ice cream. This was a nice finish to the summer and ideas are already on the way for next year's meetings, with more interesting speakers, outings and garden party.

Even though we are at the end of our year, for anyone who would like to pop along to see what we are about, all will be welcomed. As only two meetings are left for 2023, membership would not be asked for the first visit. There is a wreath making demonstration on 28 November; and Christmas party with entertainment from our local ukulele band on 19 December.

Just a reminder, if anyone would like to visit but has no transport, please contact us to arrange transport. We can pick you up and return you home.

Laraine Penny 241763

Julia Collard 241944

Benenden Wine Society

The Tracy Claridge Memorial wine tasting was held for the second time at Benenden School in October, for a full house of 65 of the great man's friends and admirers.

With a successful auction and raffle, the money raised topped £2,300, in aid of Tracy's two favourite charities, Porchlight and Catching Lives, both looking after the area's homeless people.

It was an excellent night, hosted with verve and expertise by Alfred Nichol, who introduced eight wines donated by TC's former colleagues and employers (Maison Sichel, Richard Household of Brompton Wines and Peter Franz of Sensible Wine Services), along with generous school parents.

There wasn't a bad wine among them, which would have pleased Tracy no end. It made us, especially Tracy's beloved Deborah Jenkins, want to do it all again next year.

Peter Thomas

The Friends of St George's Church



Quiz Night

Friday 17 November 2023
Benenden Village Hall
7pm for a 7.30pm start

Tables of 8 **bring your own drinks and glasses** £15 per head to include **supper**. There will be a **raffle**.
Invite your friends or we can put you in touch with others.

To take part please contact:
Deborah Jenkins deborahjenkins26@btinternet.com
or Cathy Presgrave cathy.presgrave@gmail.com

Friends of St George's Quiz Night

Friday 17 November sees the return of the quiz night in aid of the Friends of St George's. The quiz was a long-running fixture in Benenden's social calendar until Covid came along, with 13 teams of eight taking part in a hard-fought contest last time.

The quiz will be held in the village hall with doors opening at 7pm for a 7.30pm start. The format will be similar to previous years, with seven rounds of questions and supper served at half time - teams supply their own drink.

Some teams will be seasoned campaigners from previous years - names such as 'Dazed and Confused' and 'Could do Better' spring to mind - and we hope that many relative newcomers to the village will join us. If you aren't already in a team of eight, we can put you in touch with others to form one.

The price for the quiz and supper is £15 per head and we will collect money on the night from team captains. There will also be a raffle.

To take part, or to ask any questions, please contact: Deborah Jenkins on deborahjenkins26@btinternet.com or Cathy Presgrave on cathy.presgrave@gmail.com

We look forward to welcoming everyone to a fun evening.

Martin Pexton, Chairman

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Village lunch

All parishioners are welcome to join the village lunch, held in the village hall at 12.30pm on Tuesday 21 November. There is always a main course, a pud and coffee or tea, for £5 per person. If you would like to come, and didn't sign up last month, please let me know by Thursday 16 November.

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

Kathleen Brewis 240081

Talking Shop

As I write this in a t-shirt due to summer weather in early October, I can only say that the subject of the volunteers' Christmas get-together on 12 December seems a little inappropriate. The way things are going, we might end up singing the carols around the barbie! However, notwithstanding the vagaries of the climate, the Christmas volunteers' evening will take place in the café and all our volunteers are warmly invited to rock up at 6.30pm, to enjoy some mulled wine, seasonal goodies and good-natured singing with David Commander, who has kindly agreed to host the carols.

On the subject of volunteers, our very grateful thanks go to all those who have stepped up to help during the last few weeks, especially in the café, where we have been short-staffed but pretty busy. Interviews for new staff are well under way and we should soon see some welcome new faces behind the counter.

The renowned Benenden bonfire night approaches on 4 November, and with everything crossed for good weather on the night, we have tickets on sale in Benenden's: adult tickets are £6.50 and children (under 16) are £3.50. Under 5s go free.

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

Benenden Pre-School

The children are making the guy for the Benenden bonfire, an activity we enjoy every autumn. It is lovely to contribute something for a local community occasion and it offers all the children the chance to engage a variety of creative experiences. Papier-mâché is great sticky fun and plenty of torn up newspaper and glue stuck on to a balloon transforms into the guy's head. Once hardened the children paint on the face with all its features. They cut wool strands to create the hair, practising their scissor skills.

They love stuffing the guy's clothes with armfuls of straw and working out how to attach the gloves and socks to the arms and legs as well as experimenting with how to prevent the head from separating from the body. Science as well as art comes into play and a great time is had by all.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor

supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

Newcomers' lunch

St George's Church would like to invite all newcomers to the village to a lunch party which will probably take place in spring next year. Meanwhile we would like to ask anyone who is new to Benenden to let us know so that we can compile a list of invitees.

To those who have recently arrived, welcome. Please do email St George's Parochial Church Council secretary Julia Collard (julia.collard@btinternet.com) and let her know. Our last such lunch party, in November last year, had over 70 people attend and was enjoyed by all. It was also an opportunity for some of our local organisations to advertise themselves and show what a vibrant and busy village they serve.

Similarly, if you have new neighbours, please do let us know. Meanwhile, do visit us in church - the welcome is always warm.

Sally-Ann Marks

Benenden Village Hall

With clubs and classes every day of the week there's something here for everyone. It's also a great place for parties, functions and social events. If you have a birthday or special event coming up, come and see how hiring the hall can help make it special. The main hall, with a stage, is suitable for up to 200 and a small hall that is perfect for smaller events and meetings. Both halls have adjoining doors and can be hired together or separately from £14 per hour for parishioners.

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

Funfit: new exercise class

If you fancy a fun approach to getting fit, then come along to try 'Funfit' in Benenden village hall from 9.30-10.30am every Tuesday morning. Funfit provides opportunities to improve your agility, balance, coordination and strength. We start by warming up and stretching before moving onto a variety of skipping, speed bounce, balance and ladder drills. We include a new approach to using weights to build strength and finish with a cool down, relaxation and centring.

Your first session is free. Please contact us if you would like more details.

Peter Stennet and Sara Rowan
Shrattle@hotmail.co.uk

Benenden School

Benenden has had much to celebrate over the past month, following the formal launch of the School's centenary year in a spectacular opening event.

Around 1,000 people, including the Mayor and Mayoress of Tunbridge Wells, gathered in the Rose Garden to enjoy a performance by our school band, a beautiful centenary poem written by a student, speeches from our Head Girl and Chair of Governing Council, and the unveiling of a beautiful bronze sculpture which was specially commissioned to mark the centenary.

I was delighted to close the event with a toast to the School's original founders, which then triggered a spectacular display of fireworks - a particularly fitting way to start Benenden's centenary year.

Hot on the heels of this launch event, we were thrilled to host a pioneering global conference entitled Inspiring Future Female Leaders. Some of our most inspirational alumnae, including HRH The Princess Royal and Her Royal Highness Princess Basma bint Talal of Jordan, energised students from across the globe which was a delight to see.

The month also saw the official launch of Benenden 100, the book we have produced to mark the first 100 years of Benenden School. The book is packed full of profiles on some of our most notable Benenden Seniors, those that have helped to make the world a better place and incited real change and development in their respective fields. It is a truly inspirational read and I urge anyone with an interest in the last 100 years of Benenden School to pick up a copy.

(www.benenden.school/centenarybook)
Samantha Price, Headmistress

Benenden Hospital

At Benenden Hospital, we not only strive to provide our patients with outstanding care and engage with local initiatives, we also support many amazing charities throughout the year with fundraising events. In late September, we hosted a Macmillan Coffee Morning where I was blown away by the generosity of our staff, who baked delightful cakes for our stand in the atrium. My colleague Michelle Anderson, director of HR and OD, had the wonderful job of judging the Benenden Bake Off and providing the winner with a 'Hollywood' handshake!

In total, £366 was raised, which could pay for a Macmillan grant that helps a family affected by cancer take a holiday and enjoy precious time together.

On 20 October, staff also wore their best pinks in support of Wear It Pink Day. Our cosmetics nurse, Kate Comrie, the clinical lead for our breast augmentation and reconstruction service, gave out top tips to check your breasts for signs of cancer.

Having worked in healthcare for my entire career, it's essential for me to highlight the importance of getting any health concerns or new lumps or bumps checked by a healthcare professional. Even though we don't treat cancer patients, our diagnostic imaging service provides CT, MRI and X-ray scans, as well as ultrasounds, to help identify any abnormalities and to ease your worries.

The first step with any diagnostic journey is to book an appointment with your GP. We have five at our private hospital and many of our patients praise the efficiency of this service. When it comes to cancer awareness, at Benenden Hospital we recognise that prevention is key.

Thank you to all the clinical and non-clinical staff, volunteers, patients and visitors who supported these charity events - and remember, we're always here to help better your health.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

Fibromyalgia group

Do you suffer from fibromyalgia? Would it help to meet with others to share stories about how you manage this chronic condition? Then please come for a relaxed chat and a coffee at Charity Farm Café at 11am on Wednesday 1 November. Look for the table with a sign when you arrive.

Topical health

With the onset of autumn getting many of us thinking of firing up the log burner, it's a good time to consider first aid for burns. Burns and scalds produce red, often peeling, skin, blisters, swelling or even very white or blackened skin. There are three thicknesses of burns, from superficial ones affecting the skin's surface, to full thickness burns in which the skin is burnt away.

The first aid advice for all burns and scalds is the same. Remove the person from the source of heat, or the source of heat from the person. If their clothes or hair are alight this might mean dropping to the ground and rolling or smothering the flames with a blanket. Then cool the area by running the burn under lukewarm water for up to 30 minutes - use wet towels if this is not possible. After this, cover the area in clingfilm, but not tightly as the area may swell. You can use burns dressings, or clean 100% cotton if nothing else is available. Importantly, don't apply any creams, ice or butter. Give the person pain relief (e.g. paracetamol or ibuprofen) and elevate the area if possible - for a facial burn this means sitting up.

A person with burns can become quite unwell very quickly so, unless the burn is minor, seek medical attention. Burns which are extensive, which affect the face, nose or lips, or in the course of which smoke may have been inhaled for an extensive period, can be life threatening and an ambulance should be called or the person taken directly to a hospital emergency department.

Peter Ellis

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Letter to the Editor

Please write to the Editor,
c/o Community Office, Benenden Village Hall,
Benenden TN17 4DY or email
benendenparishmagazine@gmail.com

NARROW IS THE PATH

In my youth, the width of a footpath had to be such that 'a lover and his lass can walk arm in arm'. What is it nowadays and do we have anyone checking our local footpaths?

Elizabeth Johnston

Primary School

The new term has been busy. Forest School is back up and running and the children are very excited to be going back to the woods. They have been treated to judo and cheerleading taster sessions, and Captain Wonderweb and first aid workshops have been enjoyed.

It was lovely to be back in St George's Church and share our harvest service with our school community. Our reception children and their year 6 buddies performed a song together superbly; indeed, the whole school raised the church roof with their beautiful singing and children from across the year groups read their prayers confidently and capably. Many thanks to all our families who generously contributed towards our harvest collection which we shared with Nourish.

In early October a team of children from years 2, 3 and 4 competed in the Rawlinson Run at Dulwich Prep School. Well done to everyone and huge congratulations to Phoebe for winning the year 3 girls race.

Across the federation we have procured an extensive number and range of digital equipment and faster connectivity to allow children to quickly access technology and be discernible users.

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

2024 Primary School tours

Please let your family and friends know if they have a child starting school in September 2024 and may be interested in Benenden Primary School. Appointments can be made via the school office (240565) or via office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk to make an appointment to view the school. Dates for tours: Friday 10 November, Monday 20 November and Wednesday 29 November. There are two viewings on each date: 9.30am and 1.30pm. All are welcome.

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

Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

With the help of a group of parent volunteers the wellbeing garden has begun to come to life with plants such as Aster 'Little Carlow' an immediate hit with our local bees. It didn't take long before an abundance of wildlife began to find their new home, helping the garden flourish with winter colour. A huge thank you to all those who helped. We are also extremely grateful to the Basil Russell Trust and Gardenscape Direct for their generous donations, along with our thanks to Round Wood of Mayfield, Palmstead and Arvensis Perennials, who really helped by offering discounts on our purchases of a wide variety of plants and items for the garden.

This project has really been a true community effort and we thank all those involved. It is not complete yet but we are well on our way and we cannot wait to share it with the community at a celebration in the new year. If you would like to contribute to help with our last stages of the project and to help fund the maintenance of this garden, please do get in touch or donate at gofund.me/47a02e8e or scan the QR code.



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

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Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JL
geoffreywhitehead@vinehallschool.com

Cat Simoni concert

On Friday 17 November at 6.30pm in Our Lady and St Joseph's Chapel, New Pond Road, Benenden, the wonderful Cat Simoni will be performing live with a variety of favourite songs from light opera to well-known modern pop. Requests can be taken in advance and audience participation will be a must! She is an amazing performer so this is a not-to-be-missed occasion. There will be a raffle and each ticket includes a complimentary glass of wine or soft drink.

All proceeds will go to the upkeep of the chapel. Tickets at £5 (cash please) are limited so please book early by calling:

Dee Simoni 07903 068692 or
Sheila Hume 854627

Benenden Gardening Club

Our guest speaker for the second Benenden Gardening Club talk was the well-known garden designer and lecturer Edward Flint, who started his career with Christopher Lloyd at Great Dixter.

His talk on Autumn Sown Hardy Annuals was so interesting, based on years of experience and his unmatched knowledge of plants. His informal and chatty style of speaking engaged and entertained the audience and, I think I speak for everyone there, left us determined to get planting their next-year seeds (but not quite yet) and to prick out before the second lot of leaves appear.

Once again the venue was the Quinlan Centre, kindly loaned to us for the evening by Benenden Hospital. Guests were able to enjoy a glass of wine, tea or coffee and a chat before the talk started, with a raffle to finish off a thoroughly enjoyable evening. We had a more-or-less full house, too - an enthusiastic measure of local interest and an encouraging start for the newly-formed club.

We are planning more garden visits and talks for next year and an outing in the summer to Sussex Prairie Garden.

Minnie Garnier

Membership Secretary: Stephen Cochrane
StephenC@mdiversified.co.uk

Iden Green and Benenden WI

David Commander's talk to us about his sabbatical was riveting. It combined Celtic spirituality, varied sacred venues, fascinating artwork, amazing scenery and peaceful vistas. From challenging adventures starting along the Great Glen Way to the exquisite, tranquil beauty of the Outer Hebrides, he held us spellbound. He truly encountered God in the beauty of His creation.

Our visit to Planters on 26 October was enjoyed by everyone. Another social afternoon is planned for 10 November in the Memorial Hall, 2-4pm, when we are invited to bring a friend, enjoy the special refreshments and join in our chats, including talking about any interesting hobbies and crafts, which we are invited to show, together with any poems or musings.

Our winter party is on 21 November, always an enjoyable event with the most scrumptious food provided by members. Please let me know if you would like to join us at the WI Carol Service at St Lawrence Church, Hawkhurst, on 14 December.

Please also ensure that you have seen the menu for our Christmas meal at the Bull on 7 December and informed Shirley of your choices.
Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

Hospice recital

In September, the South Korean pianist Sinae Sung travelled down from the Conservatory in Glasgow to perform for the 15th annual RBD Memorial concert series. This was the final one for 2023 and resulted in the largest collection for a September recital: an incredible £647. The total for 2023 is £1,397. Special 'front of house' help was provided by the efficient and ever helpful Irene Vidler.

Plans are already set for next year, so please mark Saturday 27 July, when Mark Viner will be making his first appearance in Sandhurst, and Wednesday 11 September, for the return of the piano duo of Emma Abbate and Julian Perkins.

Gillian Davis

Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra

The Friends of St George's are delighted to welcome back the Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra for a concert in the church on Saturday 2 December at 7.30pm.

The programme begins with Beethoven's Egmont Overture and in the second half we will hear Bizet's Symphony No.1 in C. The centrepiece is Reinecke's Flute Concerto, which will be performed by a local talent, Daisy Noton.

Daisy studies at the Royal Academy of Music and was a BBC Young Musician Woodwind Finalist in 2020. She has won many international and national competitions, including first prize in the Alexander & Buono International Flute Competition in 2021. She has performed as a soloist with the London Mozart Players and was principal flute of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain.

Tickets are £12 in advance (from the community shop or www.thecso.org.uk) and £15 on the door, with proceeds going towards repair and maintenance of the church. Previous performances by the CSO have been extremely well received and this promises to be a very enjoyable evening.

Martin Pexton



Planning Matters

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

- 23/02618/FULL Redwood, Cranbrook Road. Reconfiguration and alterations to dwelling including removal of linked garage, relocation and creation of all ground floor fenestration, a first-floor extension to front and rear with standing seam roof with solar panels between seams, vertical extension to create second floor, rear facing dormers, vertical thermal wall cladding to exterior, and water harvesting, and erection of detached studio in the garden.
- 23/02648/FULL Land To The West Of Beacon House, Rolvenden Road. Reinstatement of vehicle access to field from Benenden Road (Part-Retrospective).
- 23/02681/FULL St Margarets Cottage, Goddards Green Road. Change of use from school hall to single dwelling including works to roof at rear of property.
- 23/02523/FULL Uphill, New Pond Road. Erection of 22 no. dwellings with associated access works, tree works, landscaping and parking, following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings.

More planning matters at:
benendenparishcouncil.org

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Clubs, Sports and Recreation



The Benenden String Orchestra: youngsters creating beautiful music

Every Monday evening, children from local schools gather at the Memorial Hall in Benenden for a string ensemble rehearsal, led by Biddenden-based violinist and director of music at Saint Ronan's School, Tom Elliott. Before turning to teaching a decade or so ago, Tom was a full-time professional violinist and, as a member of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, played in many of the world's most famous concert halls, from the Albert Hall to Carnegie Hall.

This group for young string players started life as an offshoot of the charity Tom runs in Rye, Bridgepoint Music, but as most of the musicians seemed to hail from Benenden, he decided to move the group our way and call it the Benenden String Orchestra.

The members of the ensemble range in age from 8-13, and Grades 1-5 in ability, which presents certain challenges for Tom when arranging the music for them to play, but also opportunities to break down challenging repertoire into manageable chunks. Tom says: "Although some of our younger members haven't been playing that long, we have been able to play some interesting music, from Bach, Vivaldi and Pachelbel to Mozart, Schumann and Grieg. We've even played a bit



of jazz. I love seeing the children develop their sightreading and ensemble playing, so that they can go from being completely nonplussed in the first rehearsal, to then giving really good performances of proper music just a term later.

"Rather than dumbing down and giving them something comfortably within their grasp, I believe in pushing young players and am constantly amazed at what they can achieve."

The group are currently working on the programme for their Christmas concert, which is being held in St George's Church at 3pm on 10 December. As well as carols, we are told to expect a version of 'Winter' from the Four Seasons, some seasonal Bach and a few 'surprises'.

Debbie Katis



Local History



Fig.1

How skilled craftsman restored our historical Queen's Well

At each of the two main crossroads in Benenden parish, there is an historical structure, built to commemorate Queen Victoria's long reign. In 1887 the Queen's Well was erected at Benenden crossroads for the Golden Jubilee (50 years reign) and in 1897 the Pump House at Iden Green crossroads was built for the Diamond Jubilee (60 years reign). Both structures are listed buildings and the parish council has a duty to keep them in good repair.

The two structures blend into the surroundings and, despite the thousands of people that pass them every day, they go relatively unnoticed by the general public. However, they are beautiful examples of Kentish craftsmanship of that time and it was decided by the council that a full refurbishment was overdue because of the effect of infestation and rot which had penetrated the structures.

In July 2021, the work went out to tender to local companies and it was decided that Anthony Hicks would be awarded the

refurbishment project because they gave the most comprehensive and detailed quotation. They understood exactly the work that would have to be carried out to return the structures to their former glory.

The refurbishment of the well at Benenden crossroads was the first to be started. Anthony Hicks's project manager, Graham Stevens, said that the timbers could be repaired in-situ by jacking up the structure, cutting out the infested timber and splicing in new timbers. The whole structure sits on four stone plinths and the plinths showed signs of cracking, which was caused by the steel locating pins, set into the top of the stones, expanding over time due to corrosion. These pins would need to be removed and new stainless-steel pins installed, drilled into the stones through the timber structure, once it was lowered into position.



Fig.2

During the lead-in period, before the project began on site, thieves stole a very large-diameter and long Openreach cable from a trench along the Rolvenden Road and were travelling at speed along The Street in Benenden, making a right hand turn into New Pond Road. The cable was trailing out of the boot of the car by several metres and, as the car rounded the turning at the crossroads, the cable struck the well and knocked the whole structure off its stone plinths. It is estimated that the structure weighed over four tonnes, so the force required to do this would have been considerable. Surprisingly, it didn't collapse but many Kent peg tiles fell from its roof and broke, and many of the timber members were split in the process.



Fig.3



Fig.4

Benenden Well Structure after the accident

It was decided that so much damage had been done that the only way forward would be to completely dismantle the well, take it to the contractor's workshop and repair each timber member in turn. The plinth stones would also be taken to the stone mason for refurbishment and all the repairs would need to be carried out under the supervision of a conservation officer, because of the well's listed status.

All the elements of the structure were catalogued and drawings prepared to ensure that it would be re-constructed correctly. Even some of the tenons were broken by the impact of the cable and new ones had to be fashioned.

A scaffold was erected around the structure for access, any salvageable tiles were removed and taken back to the yard for safety and the under-boards were numbered, taken back to the workshop and laid out on the floor in their site-built sequence for assessment. The rafters, beams and columns were then numbered and dismantled and removed for further assessment and the pricing of all the repair work to be undertaken.

The stone mason was unable to remove the steel pins from the plinths because they were firmly embedded in the top of the stones. It was decided that the only way to re-use the existing plinths would be to cut off the cracked, chamfered tops, thereby also cutting out the rusted steel pins completely, and planting new chamfered tops, inserting longer stainless-steel pins to locate the whole structure on site.

There are some inscriptions carved into the ring-beam timber members and luckily one of the joiners, John Hoffman, is also an artist and was able to carefully repaint them in red to return them to their original state.

Each of the timber members was inspected and a whole list of repairs made and agreed with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's conservation

officer. Any timber that was split or infested was removed and new oak timber spliced in its place. All the repaired timbers were then stacked and stored in the workshop until the plinth stones were ready. The method of refurbishing the plinth stones had to be agreed with the conservation officer because they were being considerably altered due to the fact that they were cracked and the steel pins were corroded and could not be removed. This extended the duration of the project considerably and may have given the impression that no progress was being made.

Eventually, all repairs were completed and the Anthony Hicks team were ready to re-erect the well. The timber structure was carefully re-constructed

on site on its refurbished plinths and the Kent peg tiles re-fitted, adding additional peg tiles where they had previously been broken by the cable

incident. The 'new' well now stands proudly where it has stood since 1887.

As you can imagine, all this work has been costly as it can really only be carried out by specialists. The parish council has received some money through an insurance claim but this does not cover all the costs, so thank you to all those residents who have contributed to the well fund.

The Queen's Well is fully funded now, but we still need to fund the refurbishment of the Iden Green Pump House. If you are feeling generous, we would greatly appreciate donations. Our account details are: Benenden Parish Council Account: 20398394. Sort code: 60 83 01
Graham Beveridge



Fig.5

Fig.1 The finished result

Fig.2 After the accident

Fig.3 Supporting missing broken tenon

Fig.4 Split column and ring beam

Fig.5 Inscription carved into the ring beam

Fig.6 Column base infested with woodworm

Fig.7 Infestation area cut out

Fig.8 New oak timber inserted and spliced

Fig.9 New oak timber shaped to match



Fig.6



Fig.7



Fig.8



Fig.9

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Village Charities



Please consider donating now

You may recall our previous article before Christmas last year regarding the valuable work that Nourish does in our community. The pre-Christmas drive donated two whole carloads of food and toiletries; the community gave generously again at Easter and the recent harvest collection at the church and the school has been very successful, donating 131kgs of food. However, with Christmas approaching, Nourish will need to keep donations going. As the months get colder and more income will be spent on energy costs, less will be available for food.

We have been amazed by the kindness of people in the community to give generously to the throughout the year, as the cost of living continues to impact those locally. This included a couple of very generous cash donations from residents in Benenden, but we should remember that there is still very much a need for the food bank and that, while it is helping the whole of the Tunbridge Wells borough, it very much benefits residents in our village.

It's coming round to that time of year again and many home delivery supermarkets have

already released their delivery slots for your Christmas shop. We're sure some of you will already be stashing Christmas presents on top of the wardrobe. Can you consider one more gift? A meal or two for someone struggling during the colder months?

How can you help?

Currently Nourish desperately needs pasta, rice, soup, shampoo, toothpaste, soap and tins of fruit, potatoes, fish and spaghetti.

Other ideas that cost nothing but would support Nourish include:

- Any items on 2-for-1 offers that you can add to your shop
- Clearing out your cupboards? Any cans or dried goods close to their best before date
- If you're menopausal and no longer need

sanitary products, perhaps you could continue to buy these from time to time to donate.

You can drop off items at one of three donation points around the village: St Georges Church, The Green; the Garden House, Standen Street; Benenden Catholic Chapel, New Pond Road. If you can't get to a drop-off point, we can try and arrange a collection. We are still looking for

other more convenient drop-off points around the village to enable people to give easily.

We are also looking for volunteers who could offer to clear donation points once every so often and deliver to the Nourish collection centre in Tunbridge Wells between 9am and 12noon, Monday to Friday. If you'd like to get involved please contact Gemma (gemmalouhunter@gmail.com).

If you would like to give a cash donation go to www.justgiving.com/nourishcommunityfoodbankuk

Thank you all again for your generosity at these difficult times for many.
Gemma Coupland
and Liz Bewley





The restoration of Beacon Field into a wildflower meadow

When Benenden Primary School was built, the developer had the opportunity to transform the adjacent field into a lush meadow. However, instead of taking on this potential, the field was left in a state of neglect. Heavy machinery spread the subsoil from the school's construction, leaving deep ruts in the ground. However, this serendipitously introduced nutrient-depleted topsoil to the field, which is a good growing medium for wildflowers. After significant investments and efforts, including deep harrowing, the condition of the field improved.

Unfortunately, when Kent County Council was approached about taking responsibility for the field, they declined due to budget constraints. As a result, the obligation fell upon the parish council, which took it upon itself to address the field's deteriorating condition.

In 2020, parish councillor Peter Driver approached Bumblebee Conservation Trust to ask for habitat advice and guidance on the field. Bumblebee Conservation Trust has a local project in the area called Bee Connected, which now spans the area of Folkestone in the east, up towards Ashford and across to Burwash and Battle in the High Weald. Bee Connected and

its former name, 'The Short-haired Bumblebee Project', has had a presence in the area since 2009. One of the project's aims is to work with farmers and landowners to give bespoke advice on managing and maintaining flower-rich habitats for bumblebees and other insect pollinators. Bee Connected were very interested in working with the site, as it is surrounded by rare bumblebee species such as the ruderal, brown-banded and moss carder, so with habitat improvements, the area could potentially attract these species.

Work in progress

On the initial visit, it was established that the field had been left unmanaged for a long period of time. As a result, thistle species had become very dominant, with low wildflower diversity. The area was also deeply rutted, making it difficult to walk and survey. It was noted that the field would be a long-term project and a work in progress due to the current state.

Since August 2021, work has been ongoing. The key aims are to reduce the thistle density, reduce the overall fertility of the soil, reduce grass density (as they outcompete wildflowers)



and increase the number of wildflowers. We have used a number of methods for doing this: firstly, the use of a plant called yellow rattle. This flower species is a hemi-parasite, obtaining its nutrients from grass roots, which reduces the growth of the grass, opens the grass sward, lowers the nutrient content of the soil and allows other wildflowers to establish. It is an annual and should be sown between mid-July and December, as it needs frosts to break the dormancy. This species is often referred to as the meadow maker, as it can speed up the process of creating a wildflower meadow by about 50%. To date, we have completed three yellow rattle sowings across the meadow from 2021-2023, the yellow rattle is taking, spreading and, where successful, the grass has decreased.

In addition, we have used green hay, kindly donated to us by Great Dixter Gardens and the Rare Breed Centre. This involves cutting an existing meadow once it has set seed, raking it into builder merchant bags and then thinly spreading it at the Beacon Field onto bare ground. This is a cost-effective way to help establish a meadow and uses seed local to the area. To help get some initial wildflowers to establish on the meadow, we have also planted knapweed, teasel, and common mallow plants. These species have long tap roots, are drought tolerant and can be translocated well.

The future

The restoration of the meadow will take time due to its poor original state, but with the hard work of Peter, Bumblebee Conservation Trust staff and volunteers, and local volunteers, we are starting to see an improvement in flower diversity and a reduction in the number of thistles. Eventually, we hope to have a meadow with good wildflower diversity, abundance and continuous flowering from March to October. Winter sheep grazing from September to February would also help the meadow restoration by reducing the grass density, leaving gaps and space for the wildflowers to colonise.

Peter is currently walking a 'BeeWalk' in the village, which includes the meadow. This is a monthly survey with a fixed route walked each month from March-October, where all species of bumblebees are recorded. Hopefully, we may record rare bumblebees using the field in the near future.

How to get involved

We would greatly appreciate volunteers to assist us. Can you help us with habitat work parties on the Beacon Field? If so, please contact alex.hodges@bumblebeeconservation.org or peterdriver@benendenparishcouncil.org
Nikki Gammans and Aydan Khan,
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Village Charities



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In those countries, voluntary groups put youngsters through a training course in the use of the tools, at the end of which they are given a complete set. This gives them a trade for life in a part of the world where big employers are rare. The tools needed are for woodworking, building, farming, engineering, ground working, electrical, plumbing, clothes-making and office work. So, in addition to tools, they collect computers (minimum Windows 7), sewing machines, knitting machines and cloth and wool for clothes. Both hand and electrical tools are needed. In many areas the electricity supply is erratic or non-existent.

The tools they don't need are for grass control, like edging shears and lawn mowers. They have their own self-propelled grass

controllers in the form of goats, who demolish everything that grows that they can get their chops around, whether on offer or not. These donated tools really do give people jobs for life and often enable them to pay for younger siblings' education. There are many orphans to look after, due often to AIDS death, and orphanages are rare.

The charity is very economical. It uses a vast army of volunteers, employs very few, and does not work through governments, but TWAM also has a great need for cash, not least for the costs of



container-shipping and replacing the vans, which do a vast mileage and are prone to dying grisly deaths, usually on a motorway and full of tools!

So don't let

those unwanted tools go to a skip. Bring them to me, your local collector who lives in Benenden, the kindest village in Kent.

Chris Parkinson 388402
cfgparkinson@gmail.com



Bird Notes

Scoters, Divers and rare Warblers: the thrilling sights and eerie sounds of the Shetlands

Charles Trollope finds old friends and rare sightings
on the final leg of his voyage to the far north

During my trip to the Shetlands, I enjoyed a few other bird encounters that are worth recounting. A bird that I frequently see flying along the coastline at Dungeness is the Common Scoter, but it is always fairly distant and brief, so it was good to find a breeding pair in Shetland. It is not a colourful duck, mainly black, but the male has a yellow patch on its bulbous bill, which I have never seen at close quarters.

Wintering in the many bays around the islands is the Great Northern Diver, and it was great to see them, before they migrate north, in their breeding plumage with chequered back and a black and white stripey collar. It is a striking bird. The best field guide for European birds is the Collins Guide, which for some reason names this bird as a Great Northern Loon, using the American name for Diver. In American Field Guides it is called a Common Loon, which is all rather confusing. Having said that, I quite like the name Loon, as it imitates their long, monosyllabic, eerie and atmospheric call.



Great Northern Diver,
Gavia immer

Red-throated Divers, however, breed on the islands and some pairs were exploring possible nest sites, enabling close views of

this otherwise elusive species. From a distance, the red throat can look dark, resembling a Black-throated Diver. Divers are some of my favourite species, with their long necks and bodies and upturned head and beak making a great silhouette.

The Long-tailed Duck is a winter visitor and there were a few small flocks still about. Like the waders, they had moulted into their breeding plumage and looked very different, particularly the male sporting its newly grown long tail.

One of the first birds I saw on my trip was a Twite, sometimes known as a Mountain Linnet. Although I have seen this bird on a few occasions on my holidays in the Cairngorms, its breeding abundance has fallen dramatically. Fortunately the Shetland population has held up much better. It gets its name from the flight



Red-throated Diver,
Gavia stellata



Twite,
*Linaria
flavirostris*



Shetland Wren,
Troglodytes
troglodytes
zetlandicus

call, which is a rather drawn out, slightly rising bleat: tweeit. The male has a pinkish rump but this is not easily seen.

This was followed by a

Shetland Wren, which is a sub-species of our mainland wren and is slightly larger, darker and longer billed. There are not many passerines breeding on the islands, so when a Robin appeared it would have been on a stopover on its way to Scandinavia.

The Shetland Islands attract an amazing variety of species, particularly during migration, with birds getting blown over from across the Atlantic. Birds that breed in Siberia and winter in South East Asia are also frequently seen due to a not very well understood phenomenon known as 'reverse migration', where birds fly in the wrong direction. The most common reason is that summer visitors overshoot their breeding areas, perhaps driven by northerly winds.

The archipelago has therefore attracted many birdwatchers to make their homes here, hence there is a very good chance that any rarity that does make it will get spotted. The same applies to the other archipelago at the other end of the British Isles, the Isles of Scilly.

I was hoping that a rarity might be found during my trip and I was in luck when news came through that a Subalpine Warbler was in a park near Lerwick. The Subalpine Warbler belongs to the same genus as our Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat and can be difficult to find, as it likes to skulk in the shrubbery. Sometimes you need a great deal of patience to see these skulkers!

Being very close to Lerwick we tried our luck, and arriving at the location we immediately heard it, and it duly hopped out, giving us great views. Most warblers tend to be LBJs (Little Brown Jobs) but this was one of the more colourful ones, with a blue/slatey grey back, a brick red throat and a white stripe under the

eye, often referred to as a moustachial stripe.

Up until recently there were three sub-species of Subalpine Warbler, which have recently all been given species status. This one was identified as an Eastern Subalpine Warbler. Amazingly, two days later there came news that another Subalpine Warbler had been found quite close to our hotel, but this one was not so obliging and it took some searching before we located it. On this occasion it was identified as a Western



Eastern Subalpine Warbler,
Curruca cantillans

Subalpine Warbler and we were able to compare the subtle differences. There are about six records per year

of all three subspecies, so finding two in two days was exciting and exceptional.

The one disappointment was a trip to a small island called Mousa, where there is a breeding colony of Storm Petrels, which couldn't take place as high winds made it too unsafe to land. This would have taken place as darkness approaches, as the parent bird only comes to feed the chicks at night to avoid predators. At least it's a good reason to go back.

Charles Trollope 240821
cetetal@btinternet.com

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



Western Subalpine Warbler,
Curruca iberiae

In Your Garden

Scent of the South East in a Scottish microclimate

A recent trip to the East Lothian coast in October reminded me of how our tiny island comprises of multiple different climatic zones, making it world famous for our ability to work with such a diverse palette of plants. In particular, we tend to think of microclimate pockets in far southern counties, such as Cornwall, so I was surprised to find quite a number alongside this stretch of Scottish coastline.

My first surprise was to discover a small gravel garden, which one careful owner had transformed from what was probably a difficult area in their front garden, with direct access onto a village green. Swathes of stipa tenuissima, height from verbena bonariensis, pink roses and blue campanulas, even a large contemporary bowl of water all sitting in a deep bed of white-washed gravel, was surprisingly easy on the eye - someone had clearly been taking notes while watching Monty Don in his 'Paradise Garden' at Longmeadow! It had been well thought through and executed, and although none of these plants is remotely tender, they were not what I expected to find in a rural Scottish village.

A short walk to the beach and I passed by a collection of large pots on a front doorstep

which would not have looked out of place on a London balcony, full of dahlias, tender salvias (including one of my favourites, the ludicrously floriferous and gigantic 'Amistad'), some coral begonias and double lilac petunias. Not only were temperatures here warm enough



but clearly the plants were sheltered from strong, damaging winds. That was before I noticed how fence lines were constructed in the area - not built as continuous closed boards but with a vertical section removed every foot or so to allow for winds to flow through them in a similar way to a filtered air flow through a hedge.

A large Elaeagnus 'Quicksilver' is growing into a stunning tree, a sight normally reserved for sheltered spots in Devon or on woodland edges in the southeast; a Fuchsia 'Magellenica' is dripping in flower over a garden wall, softening the edges of the local stone and contrasting well with the green paint on the front gate. Sea buckthorn and echium line the sandy pathways to the dunes and pine trees emit their antiseptic scent into the warm air. I could be in Cornwall.

There is no doubt, though, that some of these summer 'treasures' will be quickly cut back as we do here in the southeast, but earlier I am sure of it. Once winter wind and rain arrive in Scotland, even in the Borders, there is not much release until the warmer winds arrive in the spring, whereas down here we can sometimes have warm weather right through until Christmas, such are the vagaries of our new climate. As autumn progresses here in Kent - even though as I write we are most definitely in the throes of an 'Indian' summer, with temperatures in the early 20s - the small areas of microclimate I discovered in East Lothian, I suspect, will already be closing down for the colder months ahead.

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Above: The bounty of village life: HRH The Princess Royal at Benenden School to speak at the Inspiring Future Female Leaders Conference; hard at work at the Bull; Benenden Hospital's Macmillan Coffee Morning cake stall; planting the wellbeing garden at the primary school; St George's Church harvest lunch; Merry and Bright out and about.

Front cover: Restored to glory. Detail of the underside of the canopy of the Queen's Well, Benenden. Photograph: Ruth Clark