

Benenden Magazine

February 2023






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Editorial



I was in the pub grumbling the other day - neither of which will come as any surprise to those who know me - in a wide-ranging fashion, but also specifically about what had become one of my great bugbears: the lack of quizzes. Not on the TV - surely I'm not the only one that revels in a Monday night of Mastermind, Only Connect and University Challenge - but in the parish.

They used to be regular events, but then Covid derailed them, probably in the same way that the Black Death wiped out the karaoke craze of the late 14th century. Anyway, I was bemoaning their loss when two came along at once and restored my faith in human resilience. There's going to be one this month (25 Feb, to be precise) at Iden Green Pavilion, then a resurrection of the St George's one in November, both of which threaten to be monumental dust-ups between frustrated quizzers.

That's the trouble with quizzes: they bring out the fiercely competitive side of some people. I've heard myself berated at these events for being somebody who "takes it seriously". Well, how do you take a quiz 'not seriously'? Do you invite the village idiot (or idiots) on to your team, or feign ignorance as part of a 'levelling up' process. No. You can have one too many pints beforehand, to give the other teams a chance, but that's as far as it goes.

Anyway, there I go again, getting too competitive, but for me, these events are part of Benenden's rich tapestry. They're 'very village', a bit weird but quite wonderful, like the bizarre Christmas Crackers revue - men openly practising transvestism and reading from Wind in the Willows - or the January production of "Allo 'Allo', which brought Nazism and French bistro culture to Benenden for possibly the first time.

Long may such lunacy continue. In the meantime, to adapt an old football hooligan chant for the quizzing arena: "Come and have a go if you think you know who was prime minister in 1927."

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)
Curate: Revd Ylva Blid-Mackenzie 01233 820100 rev.ylva@gmail.com (Sunday, Monday and Tuesday)
Churchwarden: David Collard 241944 julia.collard@btinternet.com
Churchwarden: Sue Fisher 241907 sue@undaunted.co.uk
www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com
Please inform the Rector, Curate or Churchwardens if you, or anyone else, is ill.

Sunday 5 February	8am Communion	10am All-age Communion	5pm Choral Evensong
Sunday 12 February	8am BCP Communion	10am Morning Worship	
Sunday 19 February	8am Communion	10am Sung Eucharist	
Wednesday 22 February			7.30pm Ash Wednesday Service
Saturday 25 February			4pm Connect Four at Mission Church, Sandhurst
Sunday 26 February	8am Communion	10am Morning Worship	
Morning Prayer	8am Mondays and Fridays. Note none on Friday 10 February.		

Mission Church, Sandhurst

Rector: Revd David Commander 240658 revdavidcommander@gmail.com (day off: Thursday)
Morning Prayer 8am Tuesdays and Wednesday
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

Funerals 11 January Betty Ward Funeral and burial
18 January David 'Alan' Williams Funeral and burial

Church Letter



All are made in the image of God

It has been an interesting start to the New Year. “The Church Commissioners are to create an ‘impact investment fund’ worth £100m to mitigate long-term consequences of their fund’s connection with the transatlantic slave trade. Profits from the new fund will be used primarily overseas to provide grants to “address some of the past wrongs” of the Church of England’s links with the slave trade. The Archbishop of Canterbury said in a statement, ‘It is now time to take action to address our shameful past.’” (Church Times, 13/1/2023)

I have a lot of respect for our archbishop and would not want his job for all the tea in China, but I struggle with the idea of this fund. We absolutely have to recognise the past wrongs of the CoE; we have to strive for a church and society that works for justice for all people; that recognises everyone is a creation of, and equally loved and valued by, God. We should therefore treat everyone in the same way, irrespective of race, colour, gender, sexuality, religion. Our primary teaching is that we should love God and love one another, and “do to others as we would have them do to us”. We are far from that and have much to do.

However, to impose the standards of today back on to the actions and standards of our forebears, centuries ago, and then try to pay for those wrongful actions, just does not sit comfortably. Yes, we acknowledge the Church did wrong, but we need to learn from the wrongs and work to ensure similar injustices are not repeated. I remain open to learning more about the reasoning for this fund.

Your parish church may well have characters from its own history whose actions might not sit comfortably with us today. I wonder, though, what future generations will think of our actions when they look back at us 200 years hence, and impose their standards back on us? I suspect we won’t come out of it without fault. That doesn’t stop us trying to do the best we can now, by the standards we live by, and help our fellow brothers and sisters in this world who are worse off than we are.

We can help them now, through supporting food banks or through our own direct financial support. In the summer, we have our village fete in support of St George’s. This raises important funds for our parish church. We, in turn, use the money to aid the work of our church, and a significant number of charities benefited this last year, including the Children’s Society, St Luke’s Healthcare for the Clergy, Let The Children Live, Starfish Malawi, Catching Lives, Médecins Sans Frontières, Demelza Hospice for Children, Dolen Llanbrynmair, Tools with a Mission, The Salvation Army, Hospice in the Weald, Weald Family Hub, Sightsavers, Nourish, and Young Carers of Crossroads Care, Kent. In our immediate locality, the primary school, the pre-school, and Wellbeing in the Weald also benefited financially from the church fete.

As the parish church in Benenden we will continue to support individuals and charities where we see a real need now, today, using the best standard we can: all are made in the image of God; all are loved by God.

Revd David Commander, Rector

Village Calendar

February

Wednesday 1	The Former Benenden Hospital Public Consultation Event, Memorial Hall, 2-7.30pm	p.11
Saturday 4	Darts, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Monday 6	Katherine Baker, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7pm	p.19
Saturday 11	Skittles, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 14	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	p.13
Tuesday 14	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	p.13
Saturday 18	Quiz Night, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Monday 20	Parish Council Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Tuesday 21	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.21
Tuesday 21	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Plastic - The Inconvenient Convenience, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.15
Friday 24	The Bukolika Trio, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 1.40pm	p.19
Friday 24	Benenden Symphony Orchestra, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7.30pm	p.19
Saturday 25	Pavilion Quiz Night, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	p.9
Saturday 25	Ladder Toss, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 28	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	p.13
Tuesday 28	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	p.13

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

Warm Welcome Space

Fridays and Sundays in the Memorial Hall, 1-3pm

Parish Council



I was told the other day that there is no such thing as bad weather, simply the wrong clothing. I, for one, will simply be pleased when we don't need chest waders and a sou'wester to get to Benenden's.

I'm nervously optimistic that the local flooding, which has been overwhelming around Cherryfields, has now been resolved and its residents can finally look forward to a few less muddy footprints on the carpet. The tyre-eating potholes, however, that are now appearing on our roads are out in force and I urge you to please report them through the Kent County Council website that enables you to pinpoint them on a map. Please do this as often as you like - we will all appreciate it.

Talking of appreciation, the Queen's Well was erected in 1887 and has been a silent sentinel at the heart of our village ever since. As you will know, it lies unprotected and in need of urgent restoration following its own battle with a truck last summer. You can support this restoration by following the link on our website, to ensure another landmark doesn't get washed away in the years to come.

Looking ahead to the amazing events just round the corner, the many local lunches, quiz nights and coffee mornings, there is so much to look forward to. Please note the new 'warm space' that is running on Fridays and Sundays in the Memorial Hall, and the last few Winter BAT Packs are still available in the entrance of the church. Please help yourself for anyone you know that may benefit. Let's all stay connected, warm and dry.

We as a Parish Council look forward to hearing from you with any thoughts or concerns you have. Our details are all on the website, so please just get in touch.

Guy Hagan, Parish Councillor

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk
07593 226462 clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org


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

Parish Council Meeting
Monday 20 February 2023,
Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm

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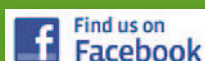


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Talking Point



Hard of hearing?

Hearing Aids. Hearing Loss. Hard of hearing. Deaf. What do these phrases or words mean to you? What may surprise you is that about 11 million people in the UK are deaf or have hearing loss, about one in six people, becoming more common with age. But the rates amongst younger people are rising fast. A pooled data analysis published by BMJ Global Health indicates that over a billion young people could be at risk from hearing loss, owing to exposure to excess decibels on personal listening devices and attendance at live music events. People in their 20s and 30s are presenting with disabling hearing loss, and once you get to your 40s, then some hearing loss becomes almost inevitable.

This matters because hearing loss is associated with other morbidities. It brings about social isolation; if you can't hear what is being said, it's much easier to smile, nod and disengage, than ask constantly for repetition. Hearing is associated with balance, and rates of falls increase substantially in those with hearing loss. Mental health issues such as depression may arise from isolation, and people with hearing loss are five times more likely to develop cognitive impairment and dementia.

The UK Health Security Agency estimates that only about 40% of people who need hearing aids actually have them. Most people wait about ten years (after noticing hearing loss) to get a hearing aid, and then often don't use them once they have them. Why? Reasons include stigma, self-consciousness, the hearing aid not providing enough benefit, or discomfort.

Let's look at these:

Stigma and self-consciousness: Modern hearing aids, NHS ones included, are virtually invisible. Most people are surprised when I tell them I wear hearing aids as they hadn't realised. My NHS aids have Bluetooth, so I can use them for phone calls, podcasts, music, etc. On the train, I am surrounded by people with white EarPods, and my own hearing aids are much less obtrusive or evident. So, for me, the stigma argument is diminished.

The hearing aid not providing enough benefit: No hearing aid will return hearing to how it was, and because it amplifies all sound, it can take a bit of practice to filter out unwanted sound. Actually, you've always done this anyway but because your brain needs time to adjust to hearing aids, it can feel unnatural at first. Persevere and seek help from your audiologist if things don't improve.

Discomfort: The dome (the bit that sits in the ear) comes in different sizes, so this should be manageable. Some hearing aids are invisible, sitting in the ear canal. Again, seek help from your provider if you experience discomfort.

Where to start? The Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) offer an online hearing test and they won't try to sell you anything. If there's a problem, accept it, and see your GP. It's well worth it, and you will be surprised how much better life becomes when you can hear again.

Mary Cruse



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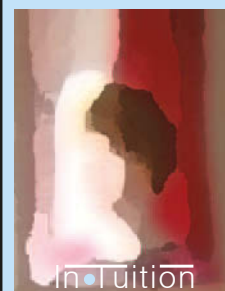
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Ring for the King - more ringers needed

The Coronation of a king is still one of the rarest and most significant events in the life of the nation, and above all one at which bells are expected to be rung in every possible community on and around the day.

In recent years there has been a steady decline in the number of skilled ringers. The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers estimate that the country is around 8,000 ringers short of the number required to ring every bell that day across the nation, and has recently launched a national recruiting initiative: 'Ring for the King!'

Benenden is no exception to the national trend. Although, unlike many churches, we still have an active band, we are significantly short in both numbers and skill levels, to ring our bells for the Coronation in their full number, or how they should be rung - and this situation is getting worse as we are losing several of the band this year.

For over 300 years, people of Benenden have come forward to be trained in this vibrant musical craft. A recent survey has convincingly demonstrated your love and support for our magnificent bells, one of the finest rings in the South East, so please think hard about the further step of becoming a ringer yourself. Yes, it's a commitment but the reward is well worth the time. You don't need strength or fitness - it's all skill; our band ranges in age from ten to 80 and our experienced individual tuition is completely free.

So, if you want to join in and make your vital contribution to this great May day, as well as all the other occasions that our bells are rung, now is the time to start. Join us any Wednesday evening or Sunday morning. We need you.

Rod and Karen Lebon 240083
rodericklebon@hotmail.com

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on Saturday 25 February
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Bill Lewis 243093

Pavilion Quiz Night

Returning for the first time after Covid is the very jolly and ever-popular Iden Green Pavilion Quiz at 7pm on Saturday 25 February. This is always a fun evening, which raises funds for the pavilion, so put together a table of eight or come along and we will team you up with other quizzers. Tickets are £10 ticket and includes a delicious hot supper and there is a stupendous raffle too. Bring your own nibbles and drinks. Call me to book:

Bill Lewis 243093

Christmas lunch success

The free Christmas day lunch in the Memorial Hall for villagers on their own went well. The hall was beautifully decorated, and the delicious food was cooked and delivered by kind volunteers. In all, 20 enjoyed the festive drinks and lunch amid much laughter and animated conversation. We listened to the King's speech before heading for home. My considerable thanks go to the volunteers who helped and cleared up. Thanks, too, to those who donated food and money for the event, which meant that we raised £440 for Catching Lives.

Chris Parkinson

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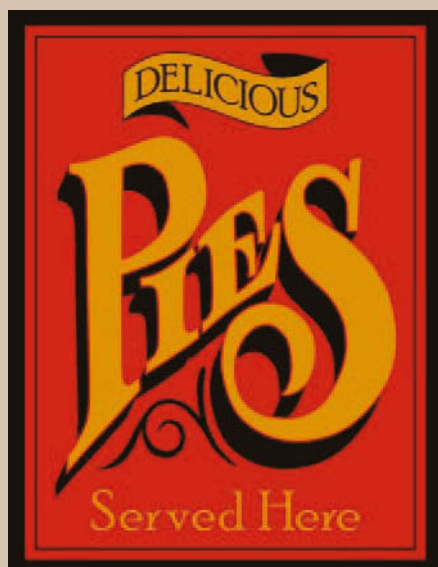
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WEDDINGS & PARTIES

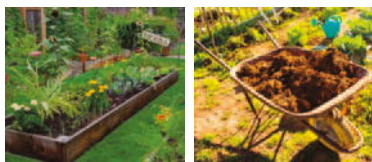
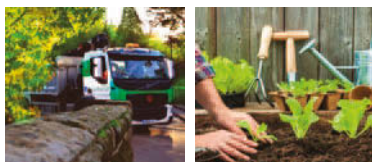
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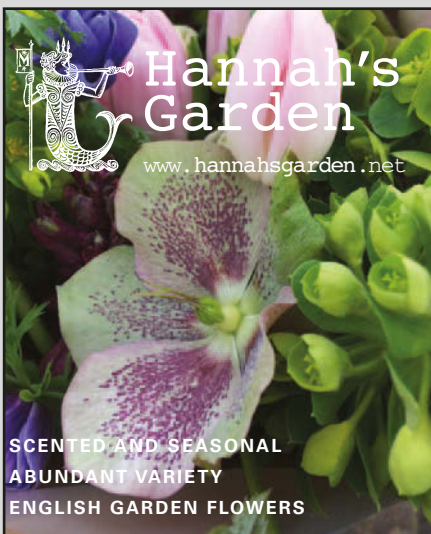
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Benenden Pre-School

Pre-School started the new term in fine voice, enjoying a number of singing sessions delivered by a visiting teacher. Even children who were initially shy soon joined in.

We learned new songs and rhythms, such as calypso, and used unusual props, including a large circular piece of Lycra that all the children held onto in a circle. We bounced bean bags on the Lycra as we sang, starting with just one and building up to five, meeting the challenge not to bounce them off. It made the children laugh as well as sing.

Singing with children introduces them to new vocabulary and provides rhythm and repetition, allowing them to start developing their awareness of relationships between letters and sounds. It also builds self-confidence, engages the emotions and promotes social inclusion: it is a wonderful activity which we enjoy practising daily.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor

supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

Mobile library is a village treasure trove

Albert Einstein once said, “the only thing that you absolutely have to know is the location of the library”, which begs the question: “Do you know the location of yours?” Yes, you say, it’s in Cranbrook or Tenterden, and you can never park anywhere near them. Well, it may surprise you to know that as regular as clockwork (given the vagaries of the traffic and potholes) an amazing resource arrives in Benenden and East End every two weeks: one of the fleet of modern library buses run by the Kent County Council mobile library service.

The first mobile library service in the UK started in 1921 in Perthshire and in Kent in 1924. Today our mobile library, run by a very friendly lady called Jo, comes to

two locations in Benenden every two weeks. The air-conditioned bus has an hydraulic platform for disabled access and is stocked with a regularly changing selection of books and audiobooks for all ages. If you can’t find the book you’re looking for, you can reserve it online or ask Jo, and it’ll be on the bus when available.

Jo can sign up new members instantly. There are never any charges or fines because the bus is not allowed to carry money, but you should never incur a fine as you can send Jo an email or just renew online.

Staff can provide help and inspiration in selecting books and other resources, and the library subscribes to a number of useful apps. For example, ‘Pressreader’ gives you access to a vast array of digital papers and all genres of magazine from around the world; ‘Libby’ also provides access to emagazines, ebooks and audiobooks; and there is also ‘uLibrary’ and ‘BorrowBox’, with access to even more audiobooks.

The app ‘Libraries’ allows you to find online databases and lots of educational resources. To be honest, it’s like going down a rabbit hole with a new twist and turn appearing all the time - you could spend hours just immersed in a world of knowledge and entertainment. All it takes is a free membership to KCC Library.

The bus arrives in Benenden on Tuesdays, every two weeks at the bus stop outside the village hall from 10-10.30am and then moves on to the hospital for 10.40-11.10am. It will be in Benenden again on 31 January and 14 and 28 in February and March. The bus is a very friendly place to meet others and is a fantastic resource for adults and children of all ages. I look forward to seeing you there.

Chris Heath

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Iden Green and Benenden WI

Our new year programme started with a flourish when we welcomed new members to our January meeting. We hope they soon feel confident enough to contribute towards our planning. A fascinating talk was given by our member, Vanessa, on the WI in costume. We also decided our chosen resolution for this year. Most of us agreed that 'Clean rivers for people and wildlife' was the one we wished to promote.

Our next meeting will be based on a talk titled 'Plastic - The Inconvenient Convenience', given by Andy Dinsdale. His website 'Cleaner Rivers, Cleaner Seas', endeavours to encourage citizen and community engagement in the science. This links well with our resolution and we will hope to learn about new developments. Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

Primary School

At the end of last term, we said farewell to our head of schools, Mr Goodman, who has become headteacher of East Farleigh Primary School, but I am delighted to inform you that Mrs Brook has been appointed acting head of school of Benenden CEP. She remains the leader of behaviour and attitudes and outdoor learning across the federation.

As we stride into February, forest school is already underway, with Year 3 and 4 enjoying themselves in the woods; Year 6 have been on a residential trip to Bowles and Year 5 have already begun their Shakespeare rehearsals in preparation for their performance at the end of the spring term. Teachers have booked a variety of trips to enrich the children's experiences and their curriculum topics, and Mrs Mileham is thrilled once again to be taking some children to take part in this year's Sportshall Decathlon - Kent Trials.

Do look at the website to find out what we are doing.

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

IDEN GREEN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH ACTIVITY WEEK

Monday 30 January - Netball 6.45pm

Tuesday 31 January - Toddlers 9am

Thursday 2 February - Cuban Evening 7.30pm

Friday 3 February - Wide Games 7-9pm

Saturday 4 February - Dads and Kids 9.30am

- Ladies Breakfast 9.30am

Sunday 5 February - Family Service 10am

ALL WELCOME

Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

Are you a member of the Co-op? Fancy trying something new for 2023? You can help us raise funds just with your existing weekly shop. The PTFA have been chosen as the cause of the Cranbrook Co-op, giving us a fantastic opportunity this year to begin our reflection garden and outdoor classroom project at the primary school.

The beautiful garden will offer the children a quiet, reflective space tucked away from the bustle of the playground, featuring a seating area amongst wild flowers. Recognising the importance of mental well-being, this enchanting space will offer the children a moment with nature to rebalance. We are also raising funds to build a timber, gazebo-style outdoor classroom so lessons can be taught outside.

How can you help us raise funds for this hugely beneficial project? By becoming a member of the Co-op, you can select Benenden Primary School as your cause, so 2p of every £1 spent on your Co-op shopping items will be donated to us. Co-op Cranbrook now offers online shopping, delivery and collection, so it couldn't be easier to help us. Thank you for your support.

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

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Friends of St George's

It seems a long time since our events programme was in full swing. In 2020 we had organized our largest-ever schedule of events, and sadly had to cancel them all, including, ironically, a visit by a vocal ensemble from St Petersburg.

We have not been completely devoid of events, however. The Music Scholars of Benenden School gave us two wonderful performances in 2021 and 2022, both of which were well-supported.

Our programme for 2023 includes the return of the popular Quiz Night on 17 November, and our first event, a concert in the church by the Wealden Consort, is on Saturday 18 March.

Despite covid, we have not been deflected from our principal purpose, which is to help maintain the fabric of St George's and its churchyard. Since 2020 we have donated over £14,000 to the church, as follows: £1,610 for north porch roof repairs; £1,061 for additional handrails at the north door; £11,320 for stonework repairs following the quinquennial inspection. This brings the total value of work on the church funded by the Friends to over £85,000.

There have been some changes to our committee and in particular Cathy Presgrave has taken over as membership secretary from Clive Turner, who is stepping down after many years of devoted service. Thank you, Clive.

We are grateful to all the members of the Friends for their continuing support. If you would like to join us, please email Cathy (cathy.presgrave@gmail.com).

Martin Pexton, Chairman,
Friends of St George's



A Concert of
Spring Music
to include
Haydn's
Little Organ Mass

on Saturday 18 March 2023
at 7.30pm
in St George's Church, Benenden

The concert is being held in support of
Friends of St George's

Tickets £15 to include interval refreshments,
available from Benenden's Community Shop
or at the door

Planning Matters

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

- 22/03567/FULL and 22/03568/LBC Netters Hall, Attwaters Lane, Hawkhurst
Replacement of sunroom with double storey rear/side extension, first Floor side/rear extension, internal alterations, erection of separate new boiler building. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 22/03489/FULL Broad Oaks, Frogs Hole Lane Change of use of existing outbuilding to form a carer's annexe including erection of rear extension. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 22/03618/LBC The Old Livery Stables, The Green Repairs and reinforcement to the timber frame. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 22/03683/FULL The Forest, Nineveh Lane Demolition of existing outbuildings, Erection of replacement outbuildings. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 22/03673/LBC The Forest, Nineveh Lane Insulation and re-tiling of existing roof. The Parish Council supports this application.

More planning matters at:
benendenparishcouncil.org



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MP for Maidstone and the Weald

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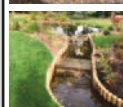
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Benenden School

We are delighted to be back after the Christmas period. Of course, the school looked especially festive in the heavy snow during December, and in a way it was a shame that the timing of the snowfall meant the girls missed seeing how stunning the site looked, although at the same time the logistical challenges would have been very significant indeed, so perhaps it was for the best that they had gone!

As you would expect, we have wasted no time in getting the spring term off to a focused start, with the Upper Fifth and Six Two straight back into mocks and the Upper Fourth delving into their Enquiry Week, during which they explored the very topical issue of How Can We Grow and Eat More Sustainably?

Indeed, the real-world focus of our curriculum was brought into sharp focus when Rishi Sunak proposed that every child in the country should study numeracy in some form up until the age of 18. As you may know, at Benenden we have been operating in this way for several years. All our sixth formers complete our in-house Professional Skills Programme, the showpiece of which is the Enterprise Challenge, in which students compete in groups to run businesses. As part of this project, they learn practical numerical skills: pricing, profit and loss, tax implications, economies of scale, analysis of sales data, interpreting quantitative customer survey feedback and so on. It was pleasing to see that our approach to preparing our students for the workplace and life is one that seems to be resonating with government.

Early January can often feel a little flat but there is much to be enthusiastic about in the school diary, while we are also excited about our first full programme of commercial events, which we will be announcing very soon. We hope to see you at one of our events in the coming months.

Samantha Price, Headmistress

Benenden School concerts

It was a great thrill to welcome members of the local community to various concerts in Benenden's new Centenary Hall last year, and we're delighted to invite you to several more free events this term:

Friday 27 January, 1.45pm

Benenden Chapel Choir

The choir perform one of their favourite pieces: Benjamin Britten's iconic 'Ceremony of Carols', with the harp accompaniment performed by Rosanna Rolton.

Monday 6 February, 7pm

Katherine Baker

The principal flautist of the Royal Opera House, accompanied by Anne Marshall, give a recital of music by Bach, Poulenc and Martinu.

Friday 24 February, 1.40pm

The Bukolika Trio

A welcome second visit, the stunning technique and musicality of these young Polish musicians will be showcased in music for violin, cello and piano by Frank Bridge and Nikolai Kapustin.

Friday 24 February, 7.30pm

Benenden Symphony Orchestra

The orchestra give their annual Winter Concert with music by Schubert, Respighi, Rossini and Walton.

Enquiries should be directed to music@benenden.school or call 236953.

Edward Whiting, Director of Music



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Village lunch

Please join us for the monthly village lunch, held in the village hall at 12.30pm on Tuesday 21 February. There is always a main course, a pud and coffee or tea, for £5 a head. If you would like to come, please let us know by Thursday 16 February to give us time to shop and prepare. If you need a lift just let us know. Please call me to book:

Sheila Hume 854627

Merry and Bright

A fresh start to the club started with an AGM that went very well with lots of new ideas - and we welcome new faces to join us. Some may have heard that the club has finished - be assured that it will continue to take place as always from 2-4pm in the Memorial Hall every month on a Tuesday. Please call Laraine to confirm the date of the February meeting.

Laraine Penny 241703

Village fete

The village fete in support of St George's Church will take place on The Green on Saturday 17 June (12noon-4pm). Over the next few months, we will provide updates on all the traditional stalls, fun, games and music. In the meantime, please start collecting your donations (clothes, books, bric-a-brac, hardware, tools, toys and jewellery) ready to drop off at the collection point from 17 April. We will let you know where this will be in the next issue. The success of this wonderful community event relies on many volunteers who give their time and energy, running up to and on the day. If you would like to get involved, please get in touch. We'd be delighted to hear from you.

Athena Cripps athenacripps@gmail.com

Benenden Hospital

This month we celebrate National Apprenticeship Week from 6-12 February. Organised by Amazing Apprenticeships, the week encourages people to come together to celebrate all the benefits of these learning opportunities. This year's theme is 'Skills for Life', which I feel reflects the aim of our hospital's apprenticeship programme, which we encourage our staff to participate in.

Josephine Baker, our learning and experience manager, identifies development opportunities for our staff: "Apprenticeships are 80% learning on the job and 20% studying. We find it's very empowering for staff to have real experiences of living the job while they're learning it. Investing in employees' qualifications shows that we value their abilities and skills and are willing to support their development."

I am currently studying for my Level 5 coaching apprenticeship, which has led me to interact in new, dynamic ways with staff as I provide coaching sessions to practise my skills. Claire Harley, our director of patient services, is also studying for the same apprenticeship, which demonstrates our willingness to lead by example and sets a motivational precedent for staff career growth.

I am proud of our nursing associate programme, which allows healthcare support workers to progress into that role. I'm excited to announce that we're introducing a nursing associate conversion apprenticeship, which allows our nursing associates the opportunity to train and study to become a registered nurse. Our staff can achieve their potential within our hospital, which is very inspiring.

We are also introducing an IT application support lead apprenticeship this year and hoping to continue the development of our clinical apprenticeships with a diagnostic radiographer opportunity later in 2023.

If you would like to learn more about these opportunities, please visit the careers page of our website (www.benenden.org.uk).

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

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Managing blood loss, such as a deep cut with a knife, usually requires the application of direct pressure on to the wound ideally using sterile dressing, but a clean, non-fluffy, item like a tea towel or tee shirt is equally as good. Tissues and cotton wool should be avoided when dealing with big wounds as they tend to break up and leave debris in the wound. Holding the edges of the wound together can be helpful in promoting wounds to stop bleeding.

If there is something deeply embedded in a wound, e.g. glass, it is often best to leave it there as it may be plugging a hole in a vein or artery. Direct pressure onto a piece of glass is not a good idea, as this would push it deeper; instead apply pressure around the wound.

Gravity can also slow down bleeding if the person affected can tolerate having their arm or leg raised for example. People with significant blood loss may also feel faint, so lying them down and raising their legs can be helpful in maintaining the blood flow to their head. If they lose consciousness, they need to be placed in the recovery position while blood loss leading to a cardiac arrest needs immediate CPR.

Peter Ellis



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Namibian children update

A new school year is about to start in Namibia and both Rusia and Mercy have passed their exams and been awarded places for 2023. Rusia, 11, will be going into Grade 5 and Mercy, 8, is going into Grade 3. They both worked hard and Mercy received a certificate for being the most improved student during 2022.

I can't thank you enough for helping with the costs of their schooling, it makes a huge difference to the families that have suffered so much since 2020. The Benenden community have shown amazing compassion and support and it's really appreciated.

This year, it is estimated that £2,800 will fund them both until December. Our daughter, Hazeley, knows both children well and has embarked on a sponsored swim this term, planning to cover a total of 10km in lunchtime sessions. If anyone would like to assist, there is a JustGiving account on www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/elizabeth-kirbyrusiaandmercy2023. Alternatively, please call me for banking details to make a donation online or by cheque. Any help, no matter how small, would be greatly appreciated.

Liz Kirby 240232

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Sue joins merry band at busy Benenden's

As we trudge our way through this 'winter of discontent', with rain, wind and strikes to greet us most mornings, there is always Benenden's to light up the day - and it does so magnificently. Those of you who visit regularly will have noticed that we have a new assistant manager, Sue, who is mainly going to be working in the café.

Sue has had a varied working life, having been brought up in Blackheath. Her first job was at the Home Office opposite the CID office where, at 18, she was excited to see 'the Sweeney' in action. Having honed her typing skills, she moved on to work as secretary to the branch manager of the Alliance Building Society and later trained as a cashier.

Another move took her to the Woolwich Building Society in Kent and after it merged with Barclays Bank, she became senior cashier for 15 years.

Having been made redundant, Sue decided it was time to up sticks and come to live in Hawkhurst to be near her family. Cranbrook School was lucky to be able to take her on, first in staff and students' services and then as a house matron in one of the boys' boarding houses. In December 2021, after a hip replacement, she took early retirement, but this lively lady wanted an enjoyable part-time job so Benenden's seemed the perfect choice. To quote Sue: "The moment I walked in for my interview I loved the place and knew I wanted to work there. Thankfully I got the job and absolutely love it - the staff have been so welcoming and the customers are a lovely bunch of people. I think I have settled in well."



I don't think any of us would disagree. Not quite the excitement of the Sweeney, but pretty good.

Welcome, Sue. We are delighted you've joined the team. On a sadder note, just before New Year we said goodbye to Nikki, who has left to devote more time to her family.

We thank her so much for all she did and wish her well.

The staff and committee have decided that monies from the Christmas hamper raffle, the sale of second-hand books and proceeds

from the sale of the late Shirley Gooseman's book, together totalling £320, will be donated to the Benenden Defibrillator Fund. On hearing this, Shirley's son, Mark, said: "If one life is saved through the new defibrillator, mum would be delighted." We are very grateful for this donation.

The café has been proving to be very warm and welcoming during these dismal months and is ever the place to lift the spirits. We are always on the look-out for more volunteers to work in both the shop and the café. Some have expressed reticence about working in the café because there's more to learn, but we can train you and it's great fun being a barista. Remember; when you feed people they tend to respond very favourably, so do come and give it a go.

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Our Village



Celebrating a remarkable decade of success for a thriving village



Borough councillor Tom Dawlings reflects on the achievements that have helped Benenden remain a place to be proud of. In the January edition, Peter Thomas very correctly blew the trumpet for this excellent monthly magazine. It was about a decade

ago that the village embarked on preparing a Parish Plan. At that time, the church produced a monthly magazine for a small subscription but parishioners identified that communications in the village more generally needed to be improved. The Benenden Magazine, delivered free to all households in the village and wholly self-funding, resulted from the discussions that followed on how this should be achieved.

The recent national award for the magazine prompted me to reflect on other successes for Benenden that have been achieved in the last decade. Top place has to go to the building and opening of the new primary school, after years of work and lobbying by the school governors. This involved seeking a design sensitive to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, obtaining planning permission, securing funding and getting the delivery of the project to the top of Kent County Council's new school priority

list. The outcome is a very distinctive building appreciated by staff and pupils. The parish council is presently creating a wildflower meadow in the Beacon Field (the land immediately to the east of the primary school), having agreed to lease the land from KCC.

An equally positive achievement has been the establishment of Benenden's, our community shop and café. The village shop was on the market as the Parish Plan was being prepared and residents wanted to ensure its future. Discussions with Benenden School identified that more staff accommodation was needed and an idea was developed that the school would acquire the building for staff accommodation and lease the shop back to the village for a community shop, café and post office. Everything about Benenden's has been a triumph, from the issue of shares in the community shop, to Mel's excellent management, the volunteers, the financial performance and the greatly appreciated café facilities. Benenden's also gave rise to periodic wine tastings, getting villagers together and tasting wine under the tutelage of experts. The recent tasting at Benenden School in





November in memory of Tracy Claridge raised £2,000, which was shared between Catching Lives and Hospice in the Weald.

The Parish Plan identified that the major village property assets (Benenden Village Hall, St George's Hall and the recreation grounds in Benenden and Iden Green) would benefit from more focused attention. The Benenden Village Trust was

formed to do that and the new play areas on the recreation grounds in Benenden and Iden Green are two very visible achievements.

Following on from the Parish Plan, with a specific focus on planning and housing, was the Neighbourhood Development Plan. This identified the social and market housing required in the village over the 15-year plan period,

the green spaces that needed protection and the community contributions expected from the developers of the four allocated sites. The plan then had to be approved by the Local Planning Authority (Tunbridge Wells Borough Council), examined by the Government Inspector and approved by a referendum of parishioners before adoption as a planning document against which planning applications are now considered. This was a huge exercise expertly led by Paul Tolhurst with groups of volunteers looking at housing numbers, housing design, environment, transport and the local economy. Having an adopted NDP puts Benenden in a stronger position to influence developments in the parish.

The allocated site in Walkhurst Road is owned by the Benenden Almshouse Charities. The charity owns almshouses in Benenden and Iden Green which are let out as social housing, and it plans



to create further almshouses owned in perpetuity to let to those with a strong connection to the village.

There are so many good things that happen in Benenden. We have a very effective parish council, chaired by Nicola Thomas. I admire the work that the Revd David and Helen Commander do for our church and community. There was a lovely donation to the church bells and the bellringers have been as busy as ever - the number of weddings in St George's Church I am sure will have been boosted by the hospitality facilities at Frame Farm.

The village fete, now so brilliantly led by Athena Cripps, generates funds and brings the village together. So, too, do the Benenden Players, providing us with much to laugh at. The Bonfire Society puts on a brilliant show for bonfire night. There are several active sports and social clubs and there is a trust helping villagers in tertiary education. The village is well supported by Benenden School and Benenden Hospital. We are surrounded by beautiful countryside. We have two pubs which are central to the communities of Benenden and Iden Green and at the heart of it all is The Green, where cricket has been played since the 19th century - long may that continue.

I think it is a privilege to live here. The achievements in the last decade show what can be achieved by a great team working together.



Spotlight



Naomi Featherstone: sharing the transformative power of yoga

Benenden often draws people back to their roots and Naomi Featherstone is one of them. Ian and Sue Cranstoun's daughter, she first moved here with the family when she was just five. Although her studies and acting career took her away for 17 years, she returned with her husband Will and two young children in 2019 for a new phase in her life as a yoga teacher in the village.

You could say that performing as an oil slick dressed from head to foot in bin bags aged just seven in a Benenden Players' panto inspired Naomi to become an actor! "I loved it all - singing, dancing and acting - and seeing Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat in the West End with Jason Donavon, aged

nine, decided me once and for all," she says.

While studying English at Durham University, Naomi had a marvellous time performing in all sorts

of plays and musicals: "I applied to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) when I was doing my finals. There are four rounds of auditions and they only accept 30 out of 4,000 applicants each year onto the degree. I wasn't successful the first time I applied but was the next."

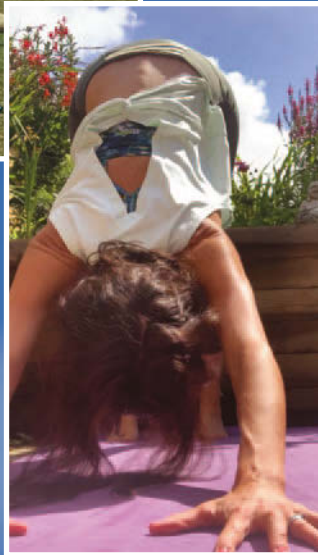
Graduating in 2010, Naomi's first role was at Shakespeare's Globe playing Jane Seymour in Howard Brenton's 'Anne Boleyn'. "I loved performing in the open air - it felt natural and playful - and the best bits were when London's pigeons interrupted us mid-scene and we had to incorporate them somehow!"

Playing Diana in 'All's Well That Ends Well' at the Globe came next.

Will Featherstone was also performing in both plays, and they have been together ever since. Ten years of touring around the UK and overseas followed, including at the National Theatre in George Bernard Shaw's 'Man and Superman', playing Helena in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' for Bristol Old Vic and some TV too.

It was while playing Mag in 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' in the West End (while pregnant) that she realised she wanted to change direction and spend more time with Will and raise a family - and so came the move back here to Iden Green. But she certainly didn't relax: a postgraduate certificate in education under her belt enabled her to teach English at Sevenoaks School and train as a professional yoga teacher.

Yoga had become an important part of Naomi's life while



Mag in 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' West End



performing: “Acting is physically and mentally demanding and when I discovered yoga it transformed me and became crucial not only physically, but also to my mental health and

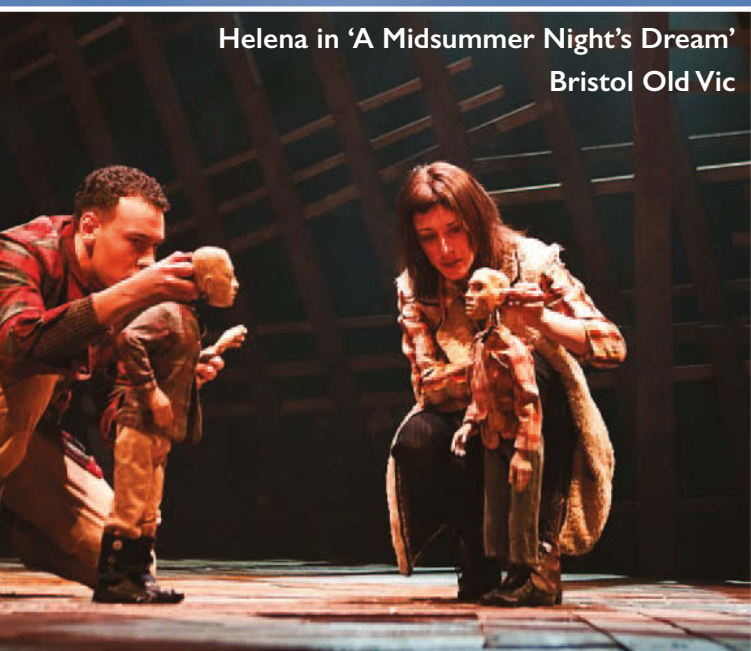


Jane Seymour in 'Anne Boleyn'
Globe

happiness. It healed me on so many levels back then and has done so again after having my second child.

“Originally, I did the professional training not to teach but to connect fully with the practice. I discovered the benefits of yoga on tour in America. As someone who had always been last to be picked for any sports team, I didn’t have a particularly kind narrative with my body, but yoga changed that for me. I was developing my own strength holistically and trusting my body while my mind was still.

“It was exhilarating to realise my mind, breath and body could work together to make me feel



Helena in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'
Bristol Old Vic

confident and calm. Teaching yoga since the world opened again has been an incredibly positive experience.

“People in my classes know that the practice is for them, they can let go of to-do lists and take time to focus on building their own strength and stillness from deep within. I knew how the practice had affected me but it’s a real joy to see the openness and confidence it brings to people of all ages and fitness levels. I feel very lucky that it’s my job!”

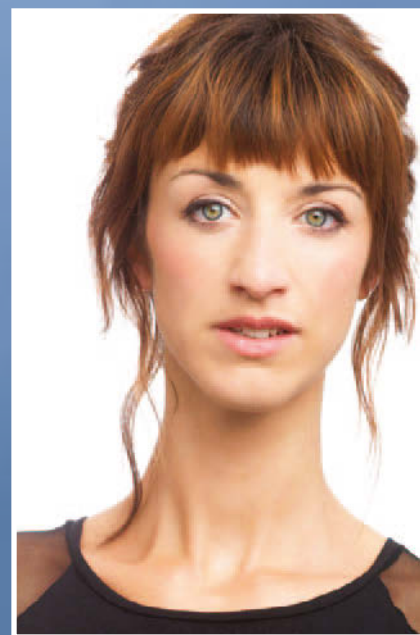
Wanting to share her passion for yoga and its numerous benefits led Naomi to start classes a year ago and today she runs four hour-long sessions a week in Iden Green and Benenden. She offers traditional Hatha practice with some elements of Vinyasa flow, focusing on keeping a healthy spine, building strength and finding internal calm in this busy world.

When not teaching yoga, Naomi continues to tutor A Level English and her passion for Shakespeare’s language sees her helping RADA students unlock and understand his texts.

After chatting with Naomi and hearing about her endeavours and inspiring pursuit of her passions, a Shakespearean quote came to mind (okay, I admit I did some research and Shakespeare always delivers!): “The time of life is short! To spend that shortness basely were too long.” Henry IV Part I.

You can find all the details about Naomi’s yoga classes in Iden Green and Benenden on her advertisement, page 6.

Ruth Clark



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Rhythm of Life choir: bringing joy and friendship through song

Walk past St George's Church any Thursday morning between 10-11.30am and you will hear the joyful voices of villagers singing their hearts out as part of the Rhythm of Life choir



Carla Smith is the energetic musical powerhouse who created the choir, first in Tenterden, followed by a second group in Benenden in late 2021. When she was 26, you would have found Carla

playing piano in the musical 'Chicago' in the West End, but

repetitive strain injury from playing so much led her to retrain as a singing teacher and she experienced first-hand the healing power of singing. Today she teaches singing and drama at Homewood School in Tenterden.

"The inspiration for the Rhythm of Life Choir came ten years ago when I was approached to start an adult choir, and it's been such a transformative experience, not just for choir members, but for me, too," says Carla. The 40-



strong choir in Tenterden meets every Monday in St Michael's Church and the Benenden choir meets every Thursday in St George's. Every now and again they host special concerts and were a hit at the Benenden Fete last year and Christmas Crackers concert last month.



"You don't have to be an expert singer, we welcome anybody of any ability to come and sing their hearts out," says Carla. "We don't take ourselves too seriously and sing a wide variety of songs - musical favourites, gospel, classic pop, nothing is off limits".

I met up with the choir in The Bull, a favourite spot for coffee and more conversation, after a rehearsal. It's clear that the group is about more than singing, it's also about friendship. Christmas and summer are opportunities to party. Many told me what the choir meant to them. Philippa, Louise and Angela summed up the general consensus: "It's a truly happy, uplifting and joyful experience and so good for our souls and wellbeing. We've made good friends and often laugh more than we sing."

If you would like to join this friendly choir in Benenden or Tenterden please contact Carla on 07743 430797 or email carlasmith882@gmail.com. Facebook: The Rhythm of Life Choir
Ruth Clark



In Your Garden



Relishing the challenge of a blank canvas

Having moved house just before Christmas, I am faced with a new garden to look after. To give it some perspective, I have the most wonderful 180-degree views across the valley from Sandhurst to Bodiam, but very little in terms of actual 'garden' to work with, as the previous occupiers kept horses in the fields below and were not keen gardeners.

I am therefore faced with an almost blank canvas of approximately a third of an acre, with fields and orchards beyond. It's a blissful spot and with a copse of woods to my north and east I am all but sheltered from the coldest winds, although very open to the prevailing south-westerlies. I have a very pretty red crab apple and a semi-mature oak tree at the entrance and plenty of space to play with.

Being faced with such a blank canvas makes for an interesting flip side to the coin, as I am naturally deploying methods I use when advising others - which means I am looking at my space as an entirety, rather than a sum of its parts. This is quite key - even if you have to phase the workload, it is still worth having an overview (sometimes referred to as a master plan). If you could send up a drone to get a bird's eye view, you'd get the idea, as it puts

the garden area into perspective within its surrounding landscape. (I can see a drone finding its way onto my next 'wish list', but for now Google Earth will have to suffice).

I shall be working with a minimal budget, and as I rent, I will not be parting with cash to install expensive new elements. Everything will have to be either re-purposed or sourced for free from elsewhere. I am a big fan of leaving large areas of grass to grow long and may stretch to planting a tree or two, as there is no height within the entire area.

I have some spare bulb orders lying around, which I will plant out now (a bit late for these, but they'll cope). I will mark out a new vegetable patch and prep the ground

ready for planting out in the spring. I will transplant some of the random shrubs to areas

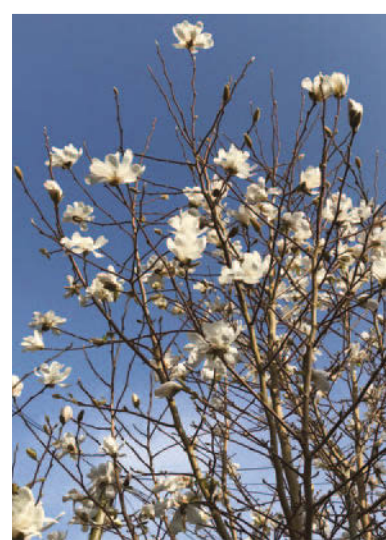
nearer the house which need screening and softening and plant out all my spare plants sitting around in pots, which badly need homes. Division is so easy and a very quick way to build up stock for free.

This gradual approach - keeping my overall vision in place - is a formula that works well for me (and also my clients). Keeping my garden grounded within its surroundings is key and my starting point for any new site, at home or at work. Either way it is good to be starting a new garden once more.

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Above: At work and at play: Jo brings the visiting mobile library to Benenden; in Namibia, Mercy received a certificate for being the most improved student during 2022; Vanessa entertained the Iden Green and Benenden WVI; training at Benenden Hospital; Benenden Players 'Allo 'Allo in rehearsal
Front cover: Ethel radiant in a sunbeam. Photograph: Hugh Clark