



Benenden
Magazine
November
2017

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scouts.org.uk/volunteer

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New Academic Year

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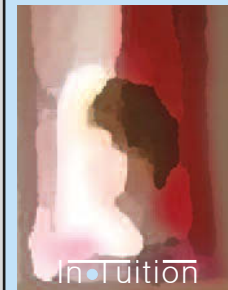
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Editorial



Short of transplanting Sydney Opera House to the Glebe Field and packing the cellars of the Village Hall with kegs of gunpowder, it's hard to imagine how Benenden's annual fireworks display could be improved upon. Perhaps we should prevail upon the organisers to dig a ditch across the rec and have the Countess of Wessex drift past on a royal barge to the strains of Handel's Water Music - but even that would struggle to better the experience of the last few years.

This is one of the highlights of the village calendar, and while a little less traffic gridlock and slightly shorter queues for the beer stand might be welcome, the enormous amount of work that goes into the occasion is amply rewarded by the spectacle and the sense of a community gathered together under one handsomely-lit November sky.

Do your best to come along, then hope for a crisp, dry winter's evening and a record crowd with charitable intentions.

Rather more sombre but no less of an occasion will be the Acts of Remembrance to commemorate the dead of two World Wars and to recognise the pain of those they left behind. In this month's magazine we feature the Royal British Legion's traditional gatherings at the War Memorial (on page 14), while remembering (on page 18) that heroism, sacrifice and suffering were never contained to one side of the conflict.

Lest we forget.

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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Village Calendar

October

Saturday 28	Benenden Engineering Society, local MG TC under restoration visit, 10am	
Saturday 28	Benenden Neighbourhood Plan meeting, Benenden Village Hall, 9.30am	p.9
Saturday 28	Stephen Message, Art Exhibition, Memorial Hall, 10-5pm	p.35
Saturday 28	Fish and Chip Supper, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 29	Stephen Message, Art Exhibition, Memorial Hall, 10-4pm	p.35

November

Thursday 2	All Souls' Day Service, St George's Church, 7.30pm	p.9
Friday 3	Woodland Wide Games, Iden Green Congregational Church, 7pm	
Saturday 4	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	
Saturday 4	Benenden Bonfire and Fireworks, The Glebe, 5.30pm	p.11
Sunday 5	Mark Bromley, Organ Recital, St George's Church, 6pm	p.17
Wednesday 8	Benenden Engineering Society, Giants of Brede, The Bull, 8pm	p.13
Friday 10	The Friends of St George's Annual Quiz, Benenden Village Hall, 7.15pm	p.13
Saturday 11	Cyril Moore Skittles Evening for the Poppy Appeal, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Saturday 18	Village Autumn Clean, Benenden's Shop and Iden Green Pavilion, 9.30am	p.25
Saturday 18	Quiz Night, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 19	Messy Church, St George's Church, 4-6pm	p.21
Monday 20	Planning Committee and Transportation Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Monday 20	Parish Council Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7.30pm	
Tuesday 21	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.27
Tuesday 21	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Members' Winter Party, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.25
Saturday 25	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Coffee Morning, Memorial Hall, 10am	p.25
Saturday 25	Darts, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 28	Merry and Bright, Memorial Hall, 3pm	

Benenden Youth Club/Streetcruizer, age 11+

Tuesdays at Benenden Village Hall, 6.30-8.30pm

Coffee Shop

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-12noon

Cakes & Chaos: Cafe and Toddler Group

Fridays during term time in St George's Church, 9-11.30am

Refuse Lorry Collections

Saturday 4 November for Garden/Compostable Waste

Benenden, Village Hall layby, 8-9.20am and Iden Green, crossroads, 9.40-11am

Saturday 18 November for Domestic Waste

Benenden, Village Hall layby, 8-9.20am and Iden Green, crossroads, 9.40-11am

Parish Council



Work on our Neighbourhood Development Plan is well underway. We now have a representative steering group to oversee this. Working groups are being set up to consider specific local issues for inclusion in the plan. We had our first village meeting in the Village Hall on 28 October to develop a vision for Benenden for the next 20 years or so. Our next meeting, specifically to consider housing development, will be on Saturday 11 November in the afternoon, also in the Village Hall. Do come along to this if you can.

I stress that this is not a rewrite of our Parish Plan, issued in February 2015, but will build on it, to give it teeth in the overall planning process. The plan, when finalised and agreed, will provide key input in future decisions by Borough, County and the Government's Planning Inspectorate. It will be our plan and not easily overridden.

This ties in with the concept of 'localism' which is now a driving force in wider Government policy. However, although this does give local communities increased power, it also gives us more duties (but without more money). Certainly our community has a history of getting things done ourselves, from our community shop, café and Post Office to village events, such as the bonfire and firework celebration on 4 November this year. However we need to do this not only as a neighbourhood but as good neighbours individually. We need to use our shop and to help events such as the bonfire by not parking irresponsibly and blocking the road, possibly hampering access for emergency services.

It is, indeed, sad to see a decline in neighbourliness even in our close-knit community in recent times. It is increasingly difficult to get volunteers for some of our traditional activities and organisations such as our Hospital Voluntary Car Service. In addition there are some very inconsiderate people who don't care about our village or us at all. They will chuck things out of car windows for us to pick up later or dump their empty bottles on the ground in our Village Hall car park. So do please join us on Saturday 18 November from 9.30am for our autumn litter pick. We will meet outside the community shop and also in the Iden Green pavilion car park. The Parish Council will provide a hot drink and a cake at the shop for every volunteer. Hope to see you there.

Peter Davies, BPC Chairman
01580 240723 chairbenendenpc@gmail.com

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

Parish Council Meeting
Monday 20 November 2017,
Iden Green Pavilion, 7.30pm

**Planning and Transportation
Committee Meeting**
Monday 20 November 2017,
Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm
(new timing for a trial period)

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Just a Thought



The Perils of Autumn-Cleaning

Rather than spring-cleaning there has been a certain amount of autumn-cleaning in my household just recently. Inspired by the wish to redecorate the main bedroom, we found it necessary to move the furniture and Hoover the carpet before washing down the walls. However this was a rather distressing exercise.

How is it possible for that amount of dust to accumulate on such a tiny ledge? How often should one expect to move a full-length, wooden, double wardrobe or push the double bed its own width, or even half its width again, across the room in order to Hoover underneath. Change the bulging vacuum bag and carry on. The desire for built-in cupboards grows.

Next job, pack all the books in the ceiling-to-floor bookcase into manageable-sized boxes. Years of experience suggest that I use nothing bigger than those A4 boxes that come when buying reams of paper. This stage has another danger apart from pulling one's back: that of getting totally distracted by coming across interesting books you didn't know you had, or those that you keep meaning to read instead of flopping in front of the TV.

The books having been sorted, this preparation exercise tends to throw up another danger: there suddenly are rather too many objects that don't have an obvious home and prompt the problem of where to keep them until next June's fete. I recently discovered a box in the garage labelled 'for the fete' that is at least two years old. Beware the insidious accumulation of clutter or, more significantly, clutter with no allotted place.

Should the decorating be completed satisfactorily and everything returned freshly polished and dusted, there is a danger that this new-found enthusiasm for moving things round and clearing things out might need to be applied elsewhere. Several other locations have been sitting on the 'must do' list for rather too long. However, any more autumn-cleaning and the above problems will appear all over again.

Finally, there is the long-standing competition with the demands of the garden. At least objects in the house stay still, even if collecting prodigious amounts of dust, whereas living objects in the garden are always moving, getting higher, wider, more bushy and more prolific. If nothing is done, the boundary between house and garden will become somewhat blurred. It would seem that there is no choice as to where attention must be directed once the bedroom is done.

Sue Fisher

Church Calendar

St George's Church

Rector: Revd David Commander 240658 david@dc-uk.co.uk (day off: Thursday)

Churchwarden: Tracy Claridge 240454 TLClaridge@TLClaridge.co.uk

Churchwarden: Julia Collard 241944 Julia.collard@btinternet.com

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com

Please inform the Rector or Churchwardens if you, or anyone else, is ill or would like a visit or home communion.

Thursday 2 November

7.30pm All Souls' Day Service

Sunday 5 November 8am Communion

10am All-age Communion
and Sunday School

5pm Choral Evensong
6pm Organ Recital

Sunday 12 November 8am 1662 Communion

10.45am Remembrance
Service

5pm Evening Prayer
at Mission Church

Sunday 19 November 8am Communion

10am Sung Eucharist

4pm Messy Church

Sunday 26 November 8am Communion

10am Morning Worship

5pm Praise Service
at Mission Church

Mission Church, Sandhurst

Rector: Revd David Commander 240658 david@dc-uk.co.uk (day off: Thursday)

Every Tuesday 10am Communion

Iden Green Congregational Church

Pastor: Rev Peter Michell 240642 www.idengreen.org.uk

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

The Roman Catholic Chapel

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Baptisms 9 October Mya and Jake Trouliotis

Funeral 3 October Chris Wood Charing Crematorium

Rector's Letter



Our rural churchyard

In August, I put out a plea for people to help those who have maintained our churchyard for many, many years. I am delighted to say that the response was very positive, and for that I thank those who have come forward and have helped on several of the working parties.

Some may recall a comment in the October 2016 magazine about the introduction of plants and shrubs, personal mementos and other artificial items on some graves, and these being against the Diocesan Churchyard Regulations 2014. (These are set nationally, but with slight variations across different Diocese. A copy is available in church.) The problem, over the years, with the Regulations not being implemented, is that their boundaries become blurred, and you get into a situation where someone says, "Why can't I have ... whatever the wish is ... on my loved one's grave, like they have?" - pointing to an example of something similar, somewhere else in the churchyard. Before we know it, there's a proliferation of items that not only do not comply with the Churchyard Regulations, but which to other people look completely out of place in a rural churchyard.

Here, of course, lies a pastoral minefield that I am about to tiptoe through: how to stop the increase of such personal mementoes that do not comply?

Concern has been expressed about items in the churchyard, especially in the context of what is required under the Regulations - these are effectively nationally applicable bylaws framed in such a way as to provide a balance between the sometimes conflicting needs of:

(i) ensuring an acceptable appearance of a churchyard - as opposed to a cemetery; (ii) maintenance; and (iii) the wishes of relatives of the deceased.

Among items not permitted under the Regulations are artificial flowers, miniature fences and chippings, the latter two, particularly, causing hazards and considerable difficulties for the maintenance of the churchyard. The Regulations also say that rose bushes, shrubs and trees must not be planted on individual graves, because they have a habit of growing. (For example, in St Nicholas Sandhurst a conifer has been planted in a grave, while 25ft above the grave is an overhead power-line; something will have to be done about this, for obvious reasons!)

To bring our churchyard within the Regulations, all non-permitted items will be removed after a period of three months from their first being observed. They will be recorded and kept for 12 months, and if they are not claimed within this period, they will be suitably disposed of. (Notices will be posted in the churchyard to coincide with this article.) Existing small plants will not be disturbed.

If you can help by removing anything on your family grave that does not comply, we would be grateful, and it may reduce the upset some may feel. I trust that we can maintain the beauty of our rural churchyard for years to come for the benefit of everyone who visits.

Revd David Commander, Rector



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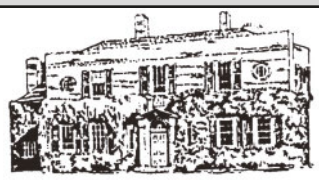



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News and Events

Golden afternoon for Pre-School

Pre-schoolers past and present celebrated 50 years since Benenden Pre-School first started caring for children, with a tea party in the village hall. Current and former staff and children enjoyed a photograph display showing the Pre-School's long history, craft activities, as well as lots of tea and cake.

Benenden Pre-School began its life in 1967 in the St George's building that remains its home today. Back then, it was called the Benenden Playgroup and was run by a group of volunteer mums. Pat Sims became the first official Supervisor in 1974. Sessions cost just 25p for each child, but parents were expected to help.

"Parental involvement was key," says Pat. "Children were learning through play, and naturally, so when a child is ready to do something then they will learn it more quickly."

It is a theme that has lasted and an ethos that is recognised by the school's 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating.

Lucy Whitestone, the current Supervisor, says the Pre-School's links with the community have "grown strong and stronger". Children regularly take supervised walks through the village, visiting the butcher's or the village shop. "We still have the most beautiful garden and I think this is such a benefit to children," she adds. "We value outdoor learning."

One former Pre-Schooler, as well as a former Chair, Sarah Andrew, particularly remembers the old wooden toys. She says: "I have really strong memories of painting on the easels and the wooden work bench. I love that my children are playing with the same old wooden toys that I enjoyed as a child." supervisor@benendenpre-school.co.uk



Benenden needs You!

Benenden Neighbourhood Plan
Village Meeting

Benenden Village Hall
Saturday 28 October
9.30-12noon

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council are seeking plans from local communities as part of their local development plan. If you want us to have a say in development of housing, recreation facilities local amenities and utilities then please come along.

Get involved and help shape our future

Arnold Cole Trust

The Arnold Cole Trust would like to invite applications for its annual disbursements from those clubs and societies within the parish of Benenden in need of funds. Dr Arnold Cole was GP in Benenden from 1930 until his death in 1960. His daughter, Joan Weston, set up the Trust in 1968. The aim of the Trust is to apply its income for the general benefit for the parish of Benenden, with special consideration being given to the elderly and young. All applications in writing please to: The Secretary, Arnold Cole Trust, Scribbins, Benenden, Kent TN17 4DT. Please note applications must be received no later than 30 November 2017.

Steve Robinson, Secretary, ACT

All Souls' Day service

Thursday 2 November, St George's Church,
7.30pm

If you would like the name of a loved one read out in this reflective service please let Revd David know. Refreshments will be available for a time of fellowship from 7pm.

Revd David Commander, Rector 240658
david@dc-uk.co.uk

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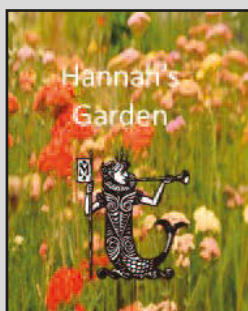


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Bonfire 6.30pm

Fireworks 7pm

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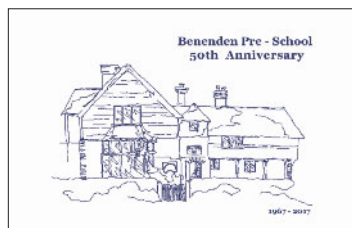
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Benenden Pre-School

50th Anniversary Tea Towel



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Talking Shop

COME AND JOIN OUR TEAM

A resounding 'nothing' was the most common reply in our recent Benenden's customer survey, when we asked the question, 'What could we have done better?' It's good to know that we are generally getting it right and thank you for all your kind comments, including those indicating where we might improve.

If there was any slight marking down in the survey, it was generally about the speed of service, which in many cases is because we try to train our wonderful volunteers 'on the job', with the inevitable minor delays that ensue.

Predictably, a remarkably large number of people expressed their pleasure at the friendliness of shop and cafe staff. The welcoming ambience of Benenden's is constantly remarked upon by our customers and the occasional expression of envy has been heard from those who live too far away to visit regularly.

Furthermore, the all-round gratifying experience of this community shop is not confined to customers. Volunteers have also discovered a whole new circle of companions who rapidly become friends when working there. The environment positively encourages people to work closely together, facilitating a light-hearted atmosphere which permeates the whole shop. Laughter is frequently heard and one can't help but be drawn into it.

With the festive season approaching and the list of possible volunteers standing at over 100, we would really appreciate it if more came forward to offer their help, particularly if you were able to sign up for a regular slot. Our managers of both shop and café, as well as Mel, who heads the team, are amazingly good (and incredibly patient!) at explaining how systems work and gently guiding new volunteers into the workings of Benenden's.

Do come forward to offer your help; we rely on community support and the more people who come forward, the fewer hours each will need to give. You won't regret joining this happy team.

Bev Beveridge

Benenden Bonfire & Fireworks



Saturday 4th November

Gates open 5.30pm
Glebe Field, Benenden.

Ticket sales:

www.benendenfireworks.co.uk

or Benenden Village Shop

Polite Notice

On the night to reduce congestion, please allow time to walk or car share if you can.

Please be mindful of your parking and keep driveways clear. Please do not park causing obstruction for passing vehicles.

No personal sparklers or fireworks.

Thank you for your co-operation.

The Friends of St George's Church

Quiz Night

Friday 10 November 2017

Benenden Village Hall

7.15 for 7.30pm

**Gourmet
pie supper**

**Tables of 8
at £12 a head**



Invite your friends and make up a table

To book a table please contact:

deborahjenkins26@btinternet.com / 01580 241878

Full steam ahead

Wednesday 8 November, The Bull, 8pm

Benenden Engineering Society is holding a presentation given by the Brede Steam Engine Society. This will be about the saving for preservation the two large triple expansion steam engines at Brede waterworks and their engine houses. The first of these engines was installed in 1904 to pump water from underground wells to the surface. All are welcome. If you would like to join us on the evening, to help with numbers, please call me: Phil Robins 240793



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2017 Acts of Remembrance

In its Charter the Royal British Legion is charged with organising festivals of Remembrance, services and parades to perpetuate the memory of sacrifices made by our armed servicemen and women in war and peace.

In its early days it was focused on members of families and parishes who lost their lives in the World Wars. Benenden's roll of honour resounds with sets of brothers who fell in the First War: two Burts, two Coleys, two Watsons, two Harmsworths and three Paveys, all members of a close community who volunteered well ahead of compulsory conscription.

We can think of all their mothers gathered round the unveiling of our parish memorial by the surviving Harmsworth brother in 1921. Our memorial is relatively rare in not depicting lives cut short by war but reflecting the grief of these mothers.

Hazel Strouts' family account on page 18 reminds us that the accident of birth has found very similar combatants and even families on both sides of conflicts. My own territorial regiment sent volunteers to the Boer War in 1900, to Palestine in 1915 to serve on horseback alongside Lawrence of Arabia, and still mounted in 1940 mopping up Vichy French in Syria. They followed this across North Africa, Italy, France and finally floated their tanks across the Rhine. Latterly, volunteers have gone to augment regular forces in Aden, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia.

French and Poles came to our aid: Jean Maridor from France, whose RAF exploits against V Bombs in 1944 saved Benenden School

from destruction; and Ronald Kellett's Poles who made up another Royal Air Force squadron. In different World Wars, Italians, Turks and Japanese supported different sides but the ordinary members of the armed forces did not choose which alliance to support. Their dead and injured were loved members of, in the main, ordinary families.

We have seen an increasing realisation that what was termed shell shock 100 years ago is now post-traumatic stress disorder. This requires the sort of expertise that can only be achieved professionally, so Legion funds are clearly focused on injured and ex-service personnel to help them re-establish themselves. We cannot manage this through branches but the Legion needs funds to maintain ongoing support of all kinds for those who have served. Hence the Poppy Appeal remains a key ongoing fund raising activity.



There will be three Acts of Remembrance in the village this year:

For the children of the Primary School on Friday 10 November at 11am at the Parish War Memorial.

Armistice Commemoration on Saturday 11 November at 11am at the Parish War Memorial.

The Parish Service of Remembrance on Sunday 12 November at 10.45am followed by the usual commemoration at the Parish War Memorial.

Robin Dalton Holmes

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Benenden CE Primary School

Our 17 children from Year 6 went on a residential trip to Carrotty Wood near Tonbridge for an action-packed week and this is what they said about it:

“Our accommodation - a lodge - was small but just perfect for us. The bedrooms were downstairs and the kitchen and sitting/dining room upstairs. The food was filling and delicious. We had a roast, lasagne, sausage and mash, and a chicken curry.

We took part in lots of activities:

Team Development Tasks including being blindfolded and helping someone through a laser challenge.

Maze which was a race to collect the puzzle pieces from the maze and make up sentences linked to the story of the Good Samaritan. After we completed the task, we played a game called zombies. It was really fun!

Campfire amazing! We entertained each other with songs and jokes then cooked marshmallows and roasted chestnuts.

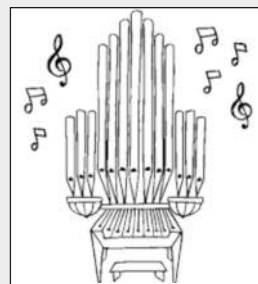
Wide-games which are games played in a large outdoor space. We played one called mad hatter and another one in the dark using glow sticks.

High ropes involving lots of activities, all a long way off the ground! The last one was called the leap of faith. That was the one I was dreading most. I had to climb a tall post and stand on the top. When I was steady I had to jump off and grab hold of a trapeze. I jumped and caught hold of it and hung there, then I had to let go and be lowered to the ground. I loved it so much I did it again.

BMX biking super fun! We all got really muddy doing it, but I got the muddiest when I fell in a puddle. The bikes were really hard to ride as you had to stand up on the pedals while riding over obstacles.

Raft building my group made a raft which made it all the way round the lake and back again. The funniest bit was when the raft fell apart and we all fell in.

Climbing which was extremely fun. The first thing we did was to climb the wall normally, then



Mark Bromley

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we did it blindfolded, feeling for the hand and foot holds as we went up. I rate it 1000/100!

Night walk in the pitch-black woods - and we were not allowed to turn our torches on. We got a bit lost and we saw a huge slug and somebody screamed. We eventually sat on a log and ate chocolate biscuits and told jokes. When we got back to our lodge, we laid on our backs and watched the stars.”

The children had an amazing experience - there so many interesting and varied activities. We watched them grow as individuals and team members. Well done, Year 6.

Gill Knox, Headteacher



Captain Hermann Philipp Gercke
(senior)

Benenden History

Remembrance Day

Remembering everyone

Born on her grandfather's farm in Benenden, Hazel Strouts is the third generation of her family to live in the village, but on Remembrance Day the Germans as well as the British are on her mind. This is because of her German mother Ursula, and because her great-grandfather Captain Hermann Philipp Gercke



Three brothers, Waldemar,
Hermann and Georg Gercke

wrote a family chronicle showing that heroism and self-sacrifice have nothing to do with nationality. This is what he wrote:



Ursula (who married Alan Strouts) on her father Hermann's knee, and with her two brothers, Georg and Harry, in 1917

When we moved to Königsberg in 1863, the harbour was full of schooners from all over the Baltic, as well as from Holland, England, Portugal. And the smells: intoxicating. Oranges, herrings, hemp, dried cod, freshly sawn wood, corn, bones and skins and, above all, the smell of tar. Wonderful. Magnificent. The harbour master and pilots wore blue uniforms, with gold anchor buttons and gold braid on caps and sleeves. What those men seemed to know of the world! And how they could swank and spit!

I was in love with the sea, and by the time I was 16, I was set on joining the Imperial German Navy. Training was tough and included an around-the-world tour in a sailing ship which the British deemed unseaworthy. They were right, but somehow or other we did the trip and, on return, I got engaged to Emilie, my golden girl, my treasure. Our first son was Hermann, our second, Georg, and our youngest, Waldemar. Our children were the joy of our lives.

Everything looked fine. I became captain of the Hohenzollern, Kaiser Wilhelm II's private yacht. He didn't need merely a captain, but also someone to be jolly and amusing. I was called on to sing in the evenings, or recount stories about my travels. He was not a bad man, but nor was he good. I think it tells volumes that, when he played tennis, on courts clearly visible from the street in Kiel, no one took any notice of him.

When war broke out in 1914, my two younger sons came home to volunteer. Waldemar, who had just qualified as an engineer and got engaged, was among those sent through Belgium, to attack Paris from the north.

He fought bravely in the first Battle of the

Marne, winning the Iron Cross, but on New Year's Eve 1914, he went to mass in the local village church. The French chose that moment to launch a bombardment. Several shells hit. Waldemar was fatally wounded. In the first hours of New Year's Day, he passed on to eternity. My son, Waldemar! My son. I lack the strength to talk further. I have built an altar to you, deep in my heart, and there, in my thoughts, I live with you. We never saw your grave.

Georg, was an artist. I tried to discourage him from this uncertain career but failed miserably. He often brought his friends home to our flat in Berlin. Out came his guitar and the singing began. Happy days. He was laughing and carefree, with sparkling, deep brown eyes.

He was 28, and studying art in Paris, when war broke out. He joined an infantry reserve regiment. He received command of the IX Company.

In the autumn of 1915, he was sent to fight in Serbia. His worst enemy, he said, were not men, but lice. But the fighting was fierce and he too received the Iron Cross.

I had a job as inspector of ships when Georg, our lively, laughing son, arrived to say goodbye. He was being moved to the western front, to Verdun. We heard his laughter for one last time, but his eyes had changed.

On the 18th May he wrote us his last letter. On the 20th, he fell, leading his company to storm the infamous L'Homme Mort, a high point where soldiers, on both sides, fell in their thousands. The French advantage was that they were defending fortifications. The German disadvantage was that they had nothing to shield them, except the bodies of their comrades. Georg has no grave.

Oh, Georg, our merriest son. You brought beauty, joy and sunlight. Now the sun shines on you forever, but in the Elysian Fields. Farewell, my dear son!

Emilie and I still had Hermann. He was the only professional fighter of the three. By 1914, he was an experienced naval officer and married. He had four children, including a daughter, Ursula.

During the war, the Kaiser kept his battleships cooped up in harbour, and off the North Sea, but his cruisers were very busy on the Baltic. They were fighting the Russian navy, which fought valiantly, using mines to protect their shores. Their job was to defend their capital, St Petersburg, which, sitting at the head of the Gulf of Finland, was vulnerable to attack from the Baltic.

The German goal was to take St Petersburg. Hermann had a big advantage in this arena because he spoke fluent Russian and knew the topography well. He was assigned, first of all, as Admiral Staff Officer to Prince Henry of Prussia, head of the Baltic naval forces. This man, unlike his elder brother, was much loved, especially by the navy.

Soon, Hermann asked for active service and went, with Prince Henry objecting, to serve as Staff Officer, first to Admiral Behring and then to Admiral Hopman. He had four very close shaves with death. Always, amazingly, he survived.

I began to feel he had a charmed life, but then the Russian revolution brought fighting in the east to an end and Hermann volunteered for the submariner school in Eckenförder. The

submarines were the last hope of the Kaiser. Russia was out of the war, perhaps England would follow, if only her supplies from abroad could be held up, or even stopped? But few submariners survived, and Hermann's chances were particularly slim. He was given command of a large, cumbersome type, slow to manoeuvre and slow to dive, and originally designed for long-distance transport. A handful of these, with guns fitted on deck, were sent out to fight.

On St Valentine's Day, 1918, Hermann's boat, the U154, lay in harbour at Warnemünde, where I was stationed. He had come to say goodbye. He arrived at 3am and cast off that evening. What my men and I did not do to make sure his boat was



Captain Hermann Gercke (junior), wearing the Iron Cross (First Class), with his wife and eldest son

in the best condition possible! We gave it all we had. As he slipped moorings, I stood on the harbour mole and called out, "Success and a happy return to harbour!" And so they disappeared, into the dark.

We used to hear, occasionally, of their voyage. He was working in tandem with Gernot Goetting, captain of the U153. Their job was to harass shipping off the west coast of Africa.

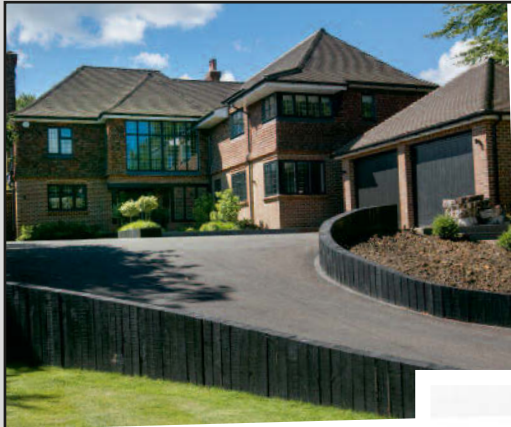
Gernot came home.

After a rendezvous off Gibraltar, Hermann had just returned to his boat when everything disappeared in a flash of flame, followed by a high column of water, and a dark smoke cloud. Three men were seen struggling in the water, but no one could rescue them, neither the English submarine, which had been lying in wait, nor Gernot.

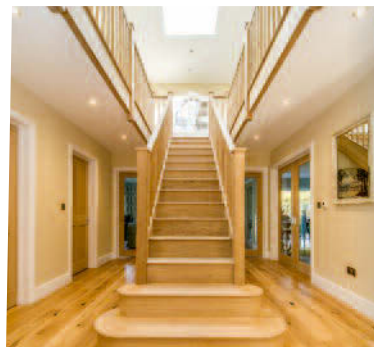
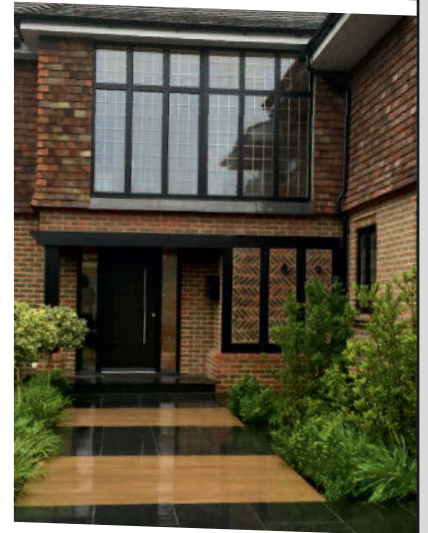
I took the telegram to my wife. We stood next to each other. Wordless. Tearless. For a long, long time.

Remember them.

Adapted from Captain Hermann Philipp Gercke's family chronicle, written in the 1920s



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Friends of Benenden Primary School: Autumn walk

October sent us an unexpectedly warm day for our autumn walk and we gathered at St George's to set off in full force with 50 children in tow, both pupils and siblings from the Primary School. Along our two-kilometre route there were plenty of activities to keep us all entertained and help us make the most of the countryside.

Along the way we hugged a tree, made leaf confetti and jumped into puddles; there was, of course, the stereotypical puddle accident, where an unfortunate child lost their footing and sat in it, but with the high spirits of the day it was soon forgotten.

The circular route finished back at St George's where we all indulged in a well-earned cup of tea accompanied by delicious cake. The children all got to make their own chocolate apples to take home. As with all of our events it was very well supported by parents with cake donations and their valuable time and we owe a big thank you to David Commander for allowing us to use the Church.

A word of warning, though: if out walking you come across a snake or two on the path, rest assured, the children made these finding materials from the environment.

Cassy Rose

9th annual Richard Beattie Davis musical event in aid of Hospice in the Weald

The final Richard Beattie Davis Memorial piano recital last month saw a good audience on hand for Gil Jetley, who had travelled from Italy for two performances in London before coming down to Sandhurst. We were treated to a lovely variety of styles by Bach/Busoni, Schumann, Chopin and Mendelssohn, and as a result of people's generosity, we managed to raise £380, which means that our total for 2017 is £1,745 in memory of Richard - he would be truly amazed.

Thanks go to everyone concerned and especially Monique Edmonston, who looked after 'front of house' and served the fruit juice cocktails. Finally, a special thank you to my generous sponsor, who has made such a difference to the overall total. We have now raised over £9,000 since 2008.

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News from Benenden School

It is surprising to think it has already been a year since we formally opened our new staff houses and the all-weather pitch and pavilion, yet the impact of these two projects at School has been enormous (not least because our 1st team won the National Schools Lacrosse tournament following their first season using the new pitch).

Our attention is now focused on our next developments: work has begun on creating additional teaching space by converting what is now an outdated wing of music and office space, in advance of the construction of a new school hall and music school. This development is due to get underway in 2019 and will be a wonderful new facility for the School and the wider community. I will continue to keep residents updated.

The first few weeks of term have been, as ever, full of hard study, activity and fun. We held our traditional House Dram event, the Two Generation Sports day for families and hardy girls have been enjoying sleeping out under canvas at weekends.

Our cadets are training hard for the village Remembrance Service and we were delighted to see so many of our friends from the village attending our Scholars' Concert at St George's. Thank you for your support - it means a great deal to the girls to perform in front of such a large audience.

Finally, we are pleased to be able to welcome notable guest speakers to Benenden and were delighted to host the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP. Mr Brokenshire discussed topics including his career, Brexit, the Northern Ireland peace process and security in the UK. He also encouraged our girls to pursue their interest in politics, regardless of their political beliefs - and told the girls in the audience that one of them could well be a future Prime Minister of the UK. We certainly hope so!

Samantha Price, Headmistress

Benenden Music Scholars' Concert

Last month The Friends of St George's were delighted to welcome the music scholars from Benenden School for a concert in St George's church. A total of 18 scholars, led by Benenden's Director of Music Edward Whiting, played a wonderful range of music from the 17/18th century up to the modern day. The girls, performing individually, had researched their pieces and told us a little of the background of the composers and why they had chosen to play them. Their instruments ranged from recorder to bassoon, violin to harp, trumpet to trombone and all were beautifully accompanied by Benenden's resident pianist Viv Lewis.

For those of us who have attended each year since our first Scholars' Concert in 2013 it has been a particular pleasure to see the girls' progress through their musical careers. A number from the audience commented on how the girls had really matured and developed as musicians since their first appearances.

It was wonderful to see some very tiny and very talented new scholars alongside the older girls who are now very polished performers. It was a pleasure to see the church so full and the event so well supported. The evening raised over £300 to go to The Friends of St George's funds, which help maintain the fabric of the church and support its use for community events such as this.

Jo Clube

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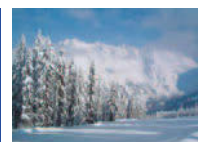


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Village Hall highlights

Until a few weeks ago I didn't know that the thing at either end of a curtain pole was called a finial. That all changed with the purchase of gorgeous new curtains for the windows in both the main and small hall (burgundy, blackout and fully lined). I discovered that out of the three windows in the small hall there was only one finial in place. A combination of Sellotape, clever knotting, and luck were keeping the existing curtains from coming off the pole.

A quick Google later and I discovered, to my horror, that to buy finials worked out no cheaper than to buy a whole new curtain pole. But fear not, this is the part of the story where the marvels of modern social media really came into their own. A quick cry for help on the Nextdoor site and within a couple of hours I had two lovely people (a lady in Rolvenden and my real next-door neighbour) offering me free finials. My hubby stained all six of them to match the hall's curtain poles, and voila, the new curtains are up and looking splendid.

The next new pair of curtains, which Nancy Tolhurst and the rest of the Benenden Players, are really excited about, are new stage curtains. They are being installed in early November (luckily not by me, but by Cameo Curtains), so will be up and ready for their panto debut next year. A huge thanks to the Players for their generous contribution.

Before I go, November and December hall bookings are filling up quickly. If you are after a venue for a party, don't delay. Please contact me at:

Lorraine Jones 243123
enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org



Iden Green and Benenden WI

Our October meeting was a friendly gathering enjoying a talk on whale watching in the Azores - what a lovely holiday for Minnie Garnier, seeing these wonderful creatures. We also celebrated autumn with a sale table of all things apples: jelly, crumbles, stewed, bagged up and ready for cooking. The money made will go to WI funds.

Dates to remember:

Tuesday 21 November, Members' Winter Party, Memorial Hall, 2-4pm

Saturday 25 November, Coffee Morning, Memorial Hall, 10-12noon

There will be no meeting in December
Tuesday 16 January 2018, Open Meeting, Memorial Hall, 2-4pm

Elisabeth Spicer 01797 252456

Annual Village Autumn Clean

Saturday 18 November, Benenden's Shop or Iden Green Pavilion, 9.30-11am

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Produced by Helen Grant MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA



Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra

Saturday 2 December, St George's Church,
7.30pm

The Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra first played in St George's Church two years ago and, having felt a warm welcome, returned last year and will be performing here again on Saturday 2 December in aid of the Air Ambulance charity. Tickets are available at Benenden's as well as online.

In the last few years we have been delighted to have as soloists recent winners of the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition: the pianist Martin James Bartlett and the cellist Laura van der Heijden (who will play with us again at our concert in Benenden School on 24 June 2018). In the forthcoming concert we are extremely pleased to have Freddie Flintoff from Benenden School as soloist in Bruch's famous violin concerto.

I myself joined the orchestra after several decades of little playing and find that joining with others gives one extra impetus and excitement in getting to know the works of great composers and trying to communicate them. Some of our players form into smaller groups.

There may be some of you who might think of joining us - please see our website (www.thecso.org.uk) for details or speak to us. We particularly need brass and string players. For concerts we have to generally pay for extra players to make up the required orchestra and this depletes our funds and the amount we can give to charity.

Rob Eastwood 01622 850330
freastwood@gmail.com

Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra

Conductor Michael Hitchcock

Leader Rob Eastwood

Saturday 2 December

St George's Church at 7.30pm

Rossini Overture

The Italian Girl in Algiers



Bruch

Violin Concerto
in G Minor

Soloist

Freddie Flintoff

Music Scholar Benenden School

Beethoven Symphony No.1

Tickets: Adults £10 Students £5

www.thecso.org.uk

Benenden's Community Shop (or on the door if available)

Profits to Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance

(registered charity no. 1021367)

1053542



Benenden Pre-School News

The Benenden Pre-Schoolers had a great time on our annual autumn walk. They walked around the village and the children learnt lots about where they live and how lovely the village looks in this colourful season. Thank you to all the mums and dads who joined in!

The children also had a special visit from the Farm to Fork initiative run by Tesco. They had fun learning about all the different colourful fruit and vegetables and tasting some of the healthy snacks.

To find out more about Benenden Pre-School, please email:
supervisor@benendenpre-school.co.uk

Village Lunch

Tuesday 21 November, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm

All welcome - £4 a head. If you need a lift please let us know and we can arrange it. Please contact Genevieve Greenwood on 01580 240526 if you haven't already put your name down but would like to come. We look forward to seeing you.

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Alone on Christmas Day?

Does the thought of spending Christmas Day on your own fill you with dread and worry? If it does, then please either drop into the Memorial Hall anytime between noon and 5pm for tea or coffee, sherry, glass of wine, soft drinks, mince pies, nuts, dates, biscuits, cakes - and/or sign up for lunch on the form at the community shop. A three-course lunch will be served only to those people who sign up beforehand or call Lesley Attwood on 243318. We do need to know numbers please.

Lunch will be turkey roll with stuffing and gravy, roast potatoes and seasonal vegetables. Followed by Christmas pudding, brandy butter and cream or fresh fruit salad and cream, then Cheddar, Stilton, and Somerset Brie, accompanied by red and white wine, with The Queen's speech at 3pm.

Once we have an idea of numbers, we will start the preparations. Please could any star bakers/cooks out there please volunteer their services and create some festive goodies? Please state on the form in the village shop what you would be able to make? Any excess will go to Catching Lives, Canterbury, or Nourish, Tunbridge Wells. Any profit will go to Catching Lives, Canterbury.

Drop in anytime. There will be cards, chess, cribbage, magazines and newspapers to read, maybe a quiz, who knows, we could even talk to each other! Please tell us if you would like to be collected by car. Any volunteers on the day would be most welcome.

Tracy Claridge, Lesley Attwood
and St George's Church 243318

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Have your say on KCC's budget

To balance Kent County Council's budget for 2018-19 we have to find an estimated £66m of savings in response to additional spending demands and reduced Government grant. Our consultation includes plans for £56m of savings with a further £9m yet to be identified. We would really welcome your comments on these plans as well as suggestions as to where you think savings can and should be made.

Leader of KCC Paul Carter said in a recent press interview that "the consequences for next year's budget are really very significant". KCC plans to increase Council Tax by the amount permitted under the referendum principles, including the additional social care levy. The estimated increase for 2018-19 is 3.99% (£41.84 per year for a band C property.) This will increase KCC's share of the Council Tax bill for a band C property to £1,089.68.

Since 2011-12 KCC has saved £589m in response to the financial challenge. Please visit: www.kent.gov.uk/budget to have your say on our proposals to fix the 2018-19 budget gap and tell us your priorities.

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Otago in a glass

Last month Benenden enjoyed its fourth wine tasting, organised by Tracy Claridge at a new venue in the Memorial Hall. On this occasion we were treated to a flight of fine wines from Domain Road of Central Otago in New Zealand, introduced by visiting winemakers Graeme and Gillian Crosbie.

We may all be familiar with the tropical and gooseberry-laden aromatics of NZ Sauvignon Blanc, but this tasting revealed a diverse, weightier and cerebral side to the Islands' winemaking. Otago is more southerly than Marlborough, where many of our perfectly fine Sauvignons hail from, and the unique terroir of the region and the willingness to experiment with a judicious use of oak brought depth and length to their Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Gris. Both were nicely contrasted by the racy, limey Water Race Riesling and a Pinot Noir displaying Burgundian properties on both its nose and earthy palate.

From the North Island's Gimblett Gravels we sampled a fine Chardonnay from Pask Winery, comparable to many a Mâconnais at that price point, and an attractive Merlot, more Bordeaux Right Bank than New World.

The evening was capped by a punchy, purple-hued Malbec from Tironui in Hawkes Bay, with an intensity of taste to match its bold colours. The event was a great success and showed not only what fun can be had with fine wine in good company, but also what variety can be found when modern winemakers challenge Old World stereotypes and allow the terroir to speak for itself. Look out for future tastings in Benenden.

Alfred Nicol

Jane's Kitchen

These palmiers are a slightly more lady-like offering than traditional mince pies; they look beautiful dusted with icing sugar and would be great served after dinner with coffee. Easy to make and freeze very well.

MINI MINCEMEAT PALMIERS

Makes about 24

225g boozy mincemeat

1 roll from a 425g pack of frozen ready-rolled puff pastry, defrosted

Plain flour, for rolling

Icing sugar, for dusting

Ground cinnamon, for dusting, optional

METHOD

- Put mincemeat into a food processor, pulse on and off until it forms a spreadable paste.
- Unroll the pastry on its baking sheet, dust with a little flour, roll out to form a square.
- Spread mincemeat evenly all over the pastry, right up to the edges, then, using the baking sheet to help you, roll up from two opposite sides so that you have two long sausage shapes side by side.
- Gently squeeze the two edges together so that they keep their shape but don't unroll.
- Wrap loosely with the baking sheet, transfer to a plate and chill for 30min.
- Pre-heat oven to 400F/200C/180Fan
- Remove palmier roll from fridge, unwrap, and using a small sharp knife carefully cut the roll into 1cm slices. Place onto a non-stick baking sheet, bake for 15min, or until golden and cooked.
- Transfer immediately to a wire rack to cool slightly, dust with icing sugar (or a mix of icing sugar and cinnamon) and serve, warm, on a plate.
- If you want to freeze the palmiers, cool completely, place in a lidded plastic container between layers of parchment paper. To re-heat, put the frozen palmiers onto a baking sheet and re-heat them for a few minutes in a hot oven and then dust as above.

Jane Drysdale 291027

drysdale@bishopsdaleeast.co.uk

Land where good wine is part of the family

Peter Thomas visits Roussillon and finds passion in the vineyards

Selecting and buying a bottle of wine in a supermarket is often an unremarkable experience, largely based on colour, discount, choice of pizza topping and the nature of the evening's DVD. It's Bridget Jones tonight with an American Hot, so perhaps a 25-per-cent-off Chilean Merlot to lessen the shock of Renee Zellwegger's enormous underpants.

At Domaine Boucabeille, where the forbidding mountain of Forca Real casts its shadow over the village of Corneilla-la-Riviere, things come with rather more import attached and a moral obligation that won't be ignored.

"I planted these vines," says Regis Boucabeille, forthright doyen of the estate, "I tended the grapes, I caressed them, I picked

them, I turned them into wine and now I'm handing them over to you."

It's a love letter to the terroir of Roussillon and to its wine people, but underlying his words, as we taste the fruits of

his labour, seems to be an implicit threat from this most amiable of men: "Treat my wine with respect because it comes from the heart."

No drinker worth his salt could ignore such a message. Here, 20km or so west of Perpignan, Regis and his son Jean tempt wine from the steep and unpromising schist of the mountain, using "the best Grenache grapes in the world" - grown on vines replanted in 1970 to reinvigorate abandoned vineyards - in a bid to replace what Regis describes as "banalite, unformite" with "individualite, specificite".



Regis and Jean in the cellars of Domaine Boucabeille

There's a twist to this local revival, however. Regis may be Catalan through and through, raised in this fiery border country, but his wife was an interpreter for the European Union and Jean grew up in Brussels, studied in Paris and only took over the winery in 2002.

He uncorks a bottle and wistfully recalls the 2001 Monte Nero, "Papa's wine" as he calls it, a sumptuous Grenache Noir/Syrah blend, full of silky dark fruit and the garrigue herbs of the Pyrenees-Orientales.

"I didn't know how good the wine was that I was making," laughs Regis, with a French-Catalan lilt, but nowadays many people know how good the wines of Boucabeille can be. They're available in three-star restaurants in Belgium - a subject on which Regis seems to be quite the expert - around the world, and from Justerini & Brooks, who offer the Monte Nero 2015 at £49 for six in bond.

A step up the price ladder are the Les Orris wines, red (Syrah and Mourvedre) and white (mostly Rousanne) blends made under the Cotes du Roussillon Villages appellation, named after the humble shepherds' huts that dot the region but representing the grander face of the 'black mountain'.

They're organic gems and they represent the flowering of a revival that is spreading the good reputation of Roussillon. The Boucabeilles may mourn Brexit, but this is a region that is still reaching out to the wine drinkers of Benenden, and even the rest of Britain.

A few kilometres away, west along the N116 and vertiginously north into the hills of the Fenouilledes area to the commune of Cassagnes, the welcome is every bit as warm





The schist soils of Caramany are the key to Modat's wines

for a passing pair of Brits at Domaine Modat, despite preparations for the harvest beginning to gather pace.

Philippe Modat - the Fils of Modat Pere et Fils - is to be found in his natural habitat in vineyards bought from a local co-operative member and turned into a vibrant new project by himself and his Pere, Henri in 2007. The ethos, very much like Boucabeille, is independent, family and unflinchingly hands-on, and Philippe gives passionate voice to this wild land above the Agly valley.

The soil is "souple" he explains, because this is organic land, no pesticides, so plenty of grass roots to stop the ground from becoming hard and baked. He walks a few metres to land cultivated non-organically by his neighbour, attempts in vain to dig a heel into the unyielding earth, and walks away.

"If you want to play petanque, it's good," he smiles, "but if you want to make wine, not really."

Like the Boucabeilles, the Modats are Catalans who have returned to their roots. Philippe was a lawyer and prosecutor in Paris before coming home to make wine, while his own son Quentin worked in Bordeaux, Burgundy and Marlborough to gather experience he could bring back to Languedoc-Roussillon.

Their wines are local, but also nomadic

and available in Britain from James Nicholson. The white De-Ci De-La (From Here From There, made from white grapes planted hither and thither in plots of red) is a blend of Grenache Blanc, Grenache Gris, Carignan Blanc and Macabeu that's about as Roussillon as a wine can be, with notes of wild fennel peeking out from under five months of creamy French oak.

The simple red Le Petit Modamour (a vigneron's play on 'little word of love', the wine Quentin's many girlfriends apparently receive on the third date) are fresh, fruity and a good fit for the wine rack of an enthusiastic carnivore, while the more weighty Comme Avant (Cotes du Roussillon Villages Caramany) uses Carignan, Syrah and Grenache Noir to conjure up the spices, herbs and smoke that might go well with a wild boar from the domaine's own woods.

In an exciting land for the drinking tourist, Boucabeille and Modat represent the spirit of Roussillon, their wines raised with love by good families until they're ready to go out into the world and do credit to the region.

Additional reporting, tasting and translation by Simon Latham



Bird Notes

By the kind invitation of the owner I regularly visit Ethnam Farm in Sandhurst to record the bird life and my latest visit in September was a memorable one in what can be very much an up-and-down month, some visits recording very little activity and others with passage movement in full flow. Ethnam Farm lies above the River Rother with the top part of the farm surrounded by tree-lined pasture fields descending to ditch-lined water meadows adjacent to the river. In between there are some thorny, scrubby, damp areas that can be very productive for birdwatching.

My walk started with a look at a large conifer tree where I noticed a tiny bird which eventually revealed itself as a Goldcrest. It fed upside down, showing its beautiful yellow crown stripe. Getting a good view of this tiny, rapidly moving little bird is always a joy. I next noticed a Swallow leaving a farm building where it has bred for a number of years and its presence there suggested it still had unfledged young in the nest. This is quite late for a Swallow to be bringing up young and I would think this could be its third brood of the year.

Whilst admiring the Swallows I noticed some hirundines feeding higher up, they were mostly House Martins and were present for all of my three-hour visit. It would be very difficult to put a number on them but it certainly ran into the hundreds.

As I approached the thorny scrub area, a flock of finches flew from one bush to another. It was difficult to see of what species the flock was composed although I could make out Goldfinches and Greenfinches and possibly Linnets. The activity was pretty high and I was getting frustrated by being unable to identify them as they flew from cover to cover. Fortunately there was a blackthorn bush which had been defoliated by caterpillars and I was able to see the birds land. I stood with

my back to another bush so that my outline was not obvious and waited to see what landed in the bare bush. It was not long before a Chiffchaff moved in and started to feed, its identification obvious due to its down-flicking tail action which made it easy to distinguish from a Willow Warbler.

The Chiffchaff was joined by a female Blackcap, with her lovely reddish brown head. Yellowhammers, Reed Buntings and Linnets joined the line-up. Then two birds flew onto the top of the bush and I couldn't quite believe my eyes when I raised my binoculars: they were two Lesser Whitethroats looking splendid in newly moulted, clean plumage and smart new flight feathers ready for their long journey to Africa. This warbler is usually identified by its rattle-like call from deep undergrowth and so this view was very special, allowing me to admire their grey heads contrasting with white throats and brown backs.

Shortly afterwards its close cousin the Whitethroat dropped into the next door bush and it too looked great in smart new plumage. These two closely related species would, however, go on very different journeys to their winter quarters, with the Lesser Whitethroat going via the east Mediterranean route and wintering in eastern Africa, whereas



top: Lesser Whitethroat, *Sylvia curruca*;

below: Whitethroat, *Sylvia communis*

opposite: Yellow Wagtail, *Motacilla flava*

Illustrations: Stephen Message

www.message-wildlife-art.co.uk



the Whitethroat would cross over to Africa near Gibraltar and winter in the western Sahel region.

The meadows adjacent to the Rother had both Skylark and Meadow Pipit and amongst the cattle I could hear the distinctive call of a Yellow Wagtail. It took some time to find the bird as it blended in so well with the yellowing meadow. The numbers of Yellow Wagtail have been in steep decline so I am always delighted to see this migrant pass through. It is often confused with its cousin the Grey Wagtail, which is a resident

species most frequently seen on a waterway or around our sewage works. Grey Wagtails have distinctive yellow underparts and hind quarters but lack the yellow throat and streaky yellow back.

On one particular thistly meadow a flock of 200 Goldfinches landed, which is a good number of this beautiful finch, whose population seems to be rapidly expanding. There were plenty of immatures in the flock, a sign of a good breeding season, and that seems to be the picture for most species this year. After two or three years of poor breeding records, a good year is very much needed.

On my way back up the slope to the farmhouse there is tall hawthorn hedge with a fence and there, sitting on the fence, was the unmistakable Spotted Flycatcher darting on and off, picking off flies. To see so many migrants on one small farm is certainly unusual in view of the recent declines in populations.

Charles Trollope 240821 cetetal@btinternet.com



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SU LACY - BENENDEN CAKES

Anyone who has spent a happy hour in Benenden's café chatting over a cup of coffee and a slice of something nice will know that Su Lacy makes exceedingly good cakes. The most popular is her sticky ginger and lemon drizzle. In fact it's so famous that it gets a mention in this year's panto (plot spoiler: apparently it doesn't get thrown).



Su came to Benenden in 1999 and for several years endured the commute up to London to work in an office. In 2010 she started up Benenden Cakes because she wanted to design a website - not as much of a non sequitur as it seems as the website featured her other great interest, cakes.

Once a week she maintains her interest in computing by volunteering at Tenterden Gateway, where she teaches computer skills, making many friends in the process.

Su's intention has never been to be big and commercial, and she doesn't do wedding cakes ("All that white icing!"), preferring 'tea-time' cakes made from the best ingredients in her kitchen using her trusty mixer, and finding that they are much in demand. She offers a delivery service in the village (a small charge for further afield) and in addition to the village shop, supplies individuals around the area.



Sticky ginger and lemon drizzle

Benenden School parents often order cakes for their daughters' birthdays or if they have something to celebrate. Christmas is always busy but Su is happy to take orders and can also do gluten and dairy-free.

Cakes can be ordered on her website (www.benendencakes.co.uk) and she has a link to the Cranbrook town website and www.mumsbakecakes.co.uk - a kind of cake interflora. You will also find her advertisement in Ward's the butcher's (with her telephone number). So what to choose? Chocolate and raspberry or orange and almond? Venetian carrot, double lemon drizzle or coffee and walnut? Su will even do miniature versions of some of her cakes. On the website is a list of the 16 or so she makes regularly, but she is happy to discuss one-off specials. Everything is baked to order and supplied fresh. What could be more delicious!



Apple cake



American chocolate cake

Minnie Garnier

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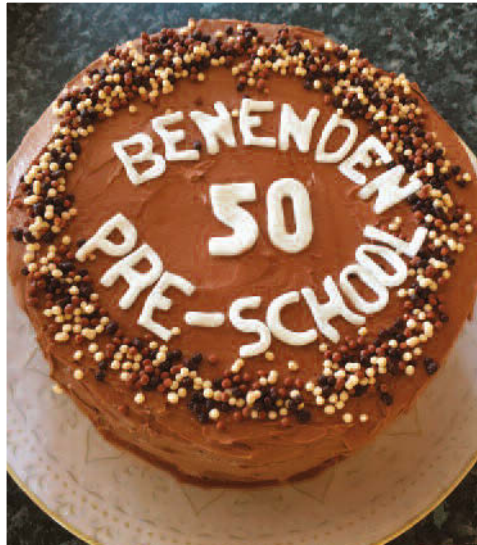
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Above: Milestones at 50: Benenden Pre-School celebrates its golden anniversary; Friends of Benenden Primary School encouraged 50 along their autumn walk; champion conkerer at the Benenden Ordinary Dads Society monthly Friday gathering
Front cover: Spectacle and community: the legendary Benenden Bonfire and Fireworks. Photograph: Stuart Kirk Photography