

Benenden
Magazine
February 2020



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Editorial



There are some problems in life we can do very little about. When it gets dark at 3.30 in the afternoon in the middle of winter, for example, it's no fun, but short of all jumping up and down in unison (perhaps enlisting the help of Sandhurst and Newenden for good measure) and trying to tilt the earth on its axis, we're pretty much scuppered until springtime. When it comes to maintaining the beauty of those dark skies through the night, however, there are things we can do, both as a village and as individuals.

In this month's edition (page 31), Mary Cruse investigates how Benenden's Dark Skies policy is faring, how many stars we can still see when we stand in the garden and stare up to the heavens before we go to bed, and how the village's main institutions are managing their responsibilities to keep their lighting to a minimum, while, of course, fulfilling their health and safety obligations.

Of course, if you're one of those folk with a Colditz-style security light that comes on for half an hour every time a gnat flies past, you may wish to give this article a miss.

The other burning issue of the hour is the Neighbourhood Development Plan, which is being formulated as we speak by a team of hard-working locals trying to balance the demands of central Government and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council for extra housing with what's best for the village.

There were always going to be some bumps along the road, and some dissatisfied residents, but hopefully the picture will start to become clearer following news just in that Savills, working on behalf of the Benenden Hospital Society, are to hold a public exhibition of plans for development at the hospital site in East End. Venue: Benenden village hall. Date: Monday 17 February. Time: 4-7pm.

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.

Editors: Ruth Clark, Peter Thomas

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Acting Advertising Manager: Paul Leek, Advertising Assistant: Iain Fraser

Distribution: Marilyn and Dick Hill, Layout Editor: Camilla Macdonald

Contributions to: benendenparishmagazine@gmail.com by the 10th of the preceding month.

Advertising orders or queries to: advertising.benendenmag@gmail.com.

Distribution queries to: dd.rhill@btinternet.com.

Postal address: c/o Community Office, Benenden Village Hall, Benenden, TN17 4DY 01580 240371



Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

Churchwarden: Tracy Claridge 240454 maisonsicheluk@tlclaridge.co.uk

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

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com

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

Sunday 2 February 8am Communion 10am All-age Communion 5pm Choral Evensong

Sunday 9 February 8am 1662 Communion 10am Morning Worship 5pm Evening Prayer
at Mission Church

Sunday 16 February 8am Communion 10am Sung Eucharist

Sunday 23 February 8am Communion 10am Morning Worship

Wednesday 26 February 7.30pm Ash Wednesday
Service

Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Every Tuesday 10am Communion

Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

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Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

Rector's Letter



From pantomime to polar bears

The year 2020 seemed to get off to a very shaky start. What with the killing of an Iranian general by the United States in Iraq, the civilian plane being brought down in the region, the horrendous fires continuing in Australia, the floods in Indonesia and, much closer to home, the horrible bug that is going around and flooring so many people. We could put ourselves into quarantine to avoid the bug, but that doesn't really help us socially, and I guess that most of us feel completely helpless when we consider the big issues on the world-stage and think, "I can't do anything."

Perhaps we can't globally; but we can each make a difference locally. We can each help make a difference to another individual's life by building relationships, by caring, by being interested in others and their needs.

We've also got some things that we can look forward to through February. Right at the end of January and into the start of February we've got the Benenden pantomime to look forward to! Go along and support those who put so much hard work into making a great community event happen (and have a laugh at the same time - laughing is proven to be good for us). For rugby fans we've got the Six Nations kicking off; in our household, on the 8th, we'll be enjoying the Calcutta Cup match - or, at least, one of us will! Also on the 8th is the second "Hello. How are you? club." Go along, have a chat, meet new people. You could make a difference to someone's life just by taking an interest in what they are doing.

For the romantics amongst us, there is Valentine's Day to look forward to on the 14th (sorry, you now haven't got the excuse of forgetting it). For those who like to get stuck into something, the fete committee are looking for many volunteers to help on the day and in the run-up to the big event. Could that be you this year? If so, let me know, by the 18th if possible - the date of our next fete meeting.

Looking further ahead there is Shrove Tuesday - which means pancakes - so the 25th is something to look forward to. The following day is Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent, and if you would like something quieter and more reflective, there is a service at St George's at 7.30pm. And, of course, it's a leap year - maybe there's a secret proposal being planned. Oh, and if you hadn't heard, 27 February is International Polar Bear Day.

Lots of things to look forward to; lots of things to get involved in; lots of opportunities to meet with others in the village and to make a difference in someone's life. Most of us can't make much of an impact on the world stage, but we can each make a difference here.

Revd David Commander, Rector

Village Calendar

February

Saturday 1	Sinbad's Quest, Benenden Players, Benenden Village Hall, 2.30pm and 7.30pm	p.9
Saturday 1	Skittles, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 2	Sinbad's Quest, Benenden Players, Benenden Village Hall, 2.30pm	p.9
Friday 7	Woodland Wide Games, Iden Green Congregational Church, 7pm	
Saturday 8	Hello. How Are You? Club, Memorial Hall, 10am	p.11
Saturday 8	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Saturday 15	Mr and Mrs Evening, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 16	Harmsworth Court Service, Community Room, 4.30pm	
Monday 17	East End site exhibition, Benenden Village Hall, 4-7pm	p.19
Monday 17	Parish Council Meeting, Benenden Primary School, 7pm	
Tuesday 18	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.21
Tuesday 18	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Looking at Antiques, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.13
Saturday 22	Music Quiz, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 25	Merry and Bright, Memorial Hall, 3pm	
Saturday 29	Hello. How Are You? Club, Memorial Hall, 10am	p.11
Saturday 29	Pavilion Quiz Night, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	p.9
Saturday 29	Darts, St George's Club, 8.15pm	

Benenden Youth Club/Streetcruizer, age 11+

Tuesdays at Benenden Village Hall, 6.30-8.30pm

Coffee Shop

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-12noon

Benenden Bowls Club

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

Cakes & Chaos: Cafe and Toddler Group

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

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

Saturday 22 February Domestic Waste only

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

Parish Council



As an avid sun-lover, I often find these deep winter months a challenging time, but with the first show of snowdrops, and even some daffodils pushing their way through, I begin to feel more optimistic with the signs that the appearance of spring is not too far off.

However, my mind has been drawn away from our gloomy winter weather by spending the last few months reading through and giving careful consideration to the representations and feedback received by the Benenden Neighbourhood Development Plan to the Regulation 14 Draft - I thank the NDP review committee wholeheartedly for their help and input on this to date. We have nearly completed this task and, once complete, all will be available to view as a (quite lengthy) document on the NDP website.

On other matters, teething problems with the outside lighting at our new primary school have been resolved, and the Parish Council will be holding their monthly meeting for the first time in the new school hall on Monday 17 February at 7pm. Apparently the underfloor heating is very effective, which will be a welcome bonus.

Please could we ask that parents and carers on the school run not to park on the grass verge on the north side of the recreation ground. This has churned up the verge unnecessarily, and parking on the roadside responsibly is, in fact, a very effective form of traffic calming.

Thanks to all of you who take the time to pick up any rubbish around the village throughout the year. We will be holding our spring village clean-up earlier than usual as we missed the autumn clean - date to be confirmed in the next magazine.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair
01580 240364 nic.jthomas@btinternet.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 17 February 2020,
Benenden Primary School, 7pm





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Just a Thought



A tourist town in winter

Under a grey leaden sky threatening yet more rain, sits a compact little town on a mound which rises above a sea of marshes. An imposing old church dominates the cluster of tiled roofs tucked up close, whilst the remains of a protective wall and the last pair of gate towers stand hinting at a turbulent past.

At the skirts of the town is a miscellany of buildings - an overflow of private dwellings, sailors' huts, working boatyards and converted warehouses whose names are the only witness to their original purpose. There too cling the station, the potteries and the supermarket that won the contest between heritage and convenience.

As a ragged fringe to the skirt are the boats. There are boats of many kinds, large and small, for commerce and for leisure, the gleaming testament to pride and care, the workhorses and the neglected. Some are tied at the water's edges in the river and canals whilst others are raised high and dry in yards and gardens. Few bear witness to an earlier lucrative but more risky time when high tides, moonless nights and the whereabouts of the revenue officers occupied their owners' minds.

It would seem that whichever way the town is approached one must pass through acres of car parks, each at this season with only a smattering of vehicles scattered like odd pieces in a weird board game. A gaggle of teenagers stands by the conveniences, chatting and laughing without threat and oblivious to the cold wind.

From the car parks the narrow, cobbled streets wind their intricate way towards the top of the hill, and amongst the old half-timbered houses and stone-walled buildings of the early grammar school are the everyday shops providing the town's necessities. But, round every corner and down every lane, tea shops of all shapes, sizes and aspirations proclaim the lifeblood of this presently quiet town. For now most are closed, chrome chairs upturned and bright tablecloths folded away, there being little demand in winter for tea trays, scones, currant buns and ice creams.

At least the tourist office is open, although the racks are not yet bulging with colourful and enticing leaflets for 'A trip back in time', 'A lesson in the art of spinning', 'A visit to a real English castle', or 'A tour of the infamous public houses'. The large and intricate model of the town, with its flashing lights and evocative audio commentary turned off, lies accessible to those who venture in, control barriers as yet stacked in piles to one side.

It is early in the year and the town still sleeps, hardly stirring while the gentle heartbeat of everyday life pulses quietly on in the empty cobbled streets, and behind the curtains of those heavily beamed cottages, full of so many secret smuggling histories. But as the year progresses and the seasons bring warmth and sunshine, so also they bring the life, the bustle and the tourists to the town.

Sue Fisher

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News and Events

Christmas Day Lunch 2019

Numbers were down this year, but the 18 people who attended had a great time, some saying that it was the “best ever”, always a dangerous phrase. We started at 12.30pm and the wine was flowing. Last year I listed all the people who contributed with either financial or food donations. You all know who you are, and you do not need your names in lights, suffice it for me to say a truly heartfelt thank you to all of you.

Christmas can be a very difficult time of year for many, for many reasons. For me, community spirit is key and this overflowed. As well as those who attended, so many helpers who popped in and out, and not just locals. Her Majesty the Queen made her usual 3pm TV appearance saying “Only a life in service to others is worth living” (Albert Einstein). Well, Her Majesty has certainly put in her shift, from day one. We must all strive to give that little extra, to go that extra yard, but we cannot do it on our own. We are fortunate in Benenden and Iden Green to have such a wonderful community spirit, long may it last.

Leftover food was delivered to Nourish and/or Catching Lives. Any remaining monies contribute to the Nourish advert in this magazine, and the Hello. How Are You? Club, which is now up and running in the Memorial Hall. Please see article on page 11.

Tracy Claridge

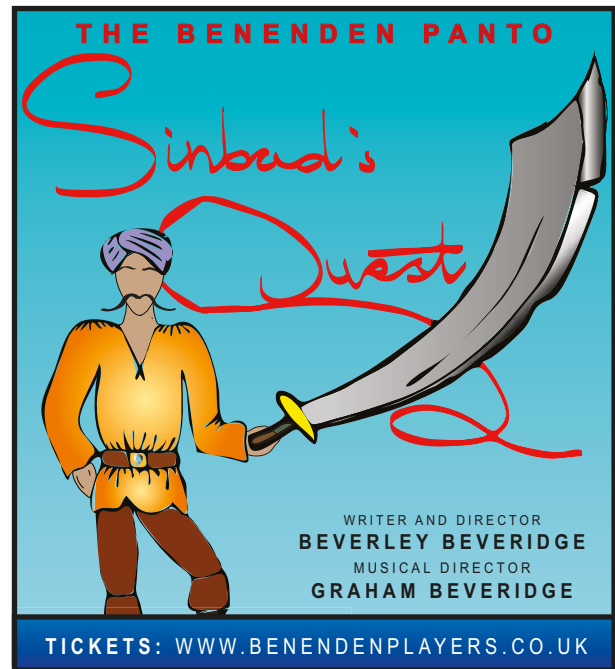
Pavilion Quiz Night

Saturday 29 February, Iden Green Pavilion,
7pm for 7.30pm

Please join us £10pp including hot supper.

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Bill Lewis 243093



Benenden Hospital news

Benenden Hospital was recently featured on ITV's Lorraine Kelly show as part of a campaign to get mobile phone users to “look up”. Dr Hilary Jones was filmed at the hospital as he interviewed our lead physiotherapist about a syndrome called ‘tech neck’ or ‘text neck’, repetitive stress caused by constantly looking down at smartphones.

Did you know that 78% of us now own a smartphone compared with just 17% in 2008 - with 95% among 16-24-year-olds? Figures show that we (well not me personally) look at our mobile devices every 12 minutes and spend about two-and-a-half hours a day on them, some of us within just five minutes of waking up.

As Dr Hilary says, technology is evolving so fast that in many ways it is outstripping the body's ability to keep up with it. The human head weighs around 10-12lbs. However, when the neck bends forward the weight on the cervical spine can be as much as 60lbs. That's the equivalent of a sack of potatoes, 57 pints of milk, 18 medium chickens or 126 avocados.

People can start getting headaches, feeling a lot of tension and being unable to relax. Quite often we now see patients with aching around the neck and shoulders.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director



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Hello. How Are You? Club

Saturday 8 February, 10-12noon

Saturday 29 February, 10-12noon

Memorial Hall

Tracy Claridge 240454

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Hello. How Are You? Club

Sometimes we all need a change of scenery. If you feel like you'd like to get out of the house and enjoy the company of new people, come along to the Memorial Hall on the village green to enjoy the new Hello. How Are You? Club.

The doors will be open and the welcome comforting to all, especially families. If you want to sit in the corner and read a paper or a book, please just do that. If you want to engage in conversation and chit chat, feel free. If you want to play a board game or cards, that's fine, too. It's a club where you can be you, and tea, coffee, soft drinks and biscuits will be served.

What will we talk about? Anything, absolutely anything. There is no theme to this, but community spirit is the key and it is a gathering of people who may not have the opportunity to talk to other people in their daily lives, for whatever reason. Will we have fun? It will be what we all make it.

The first meeting took place on Saturday 18 January. A beautiful winter's day, clear blue sky, bright sunshine with some warmth, crisp underfoot, a perfect day to kick off the venture. People came, they talked, they laughed, some read the papers, some listened, we had some fun, there was a good feeling. From little acorns... Please encourage people to come along to the next on Saturday 8 February.

Tracy Claridge 240454

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Benenden Pre-School news

Pre-School has a wonderful work bench and tool box which are very popular with the children and this term the staff are supporting the children in developing their woodwork skills.

We use balsa wood as it is soft and allows small hands to drill holes and hammer in nails with success and therefore delight. The children quickly learn the basic safety rules, such as that a maximum of two children work at the bench together, tools are never taken away from the bench and sawing can only take place when the wood is in the vice.

They become very absorbed in activities at the woodwork bench and you can see scientific exploration and critical thinking taking place, as well physical development and co-ordination. Both fine - holding a nail - and gross - sawing and hammering - motor skills are developed as well as the ability to self risk assess. The result? A huge amount of enjoyment and satisfaction and only the very odd sore finger.

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Benenden School news

It is my pleasure to wish you and your families a Happy New Year, and indeed a Happy New Decade. We ran two trips during the Christmas holidays: one was an unforgettable nine-day trekking experience in Nepal, including visits to some of the Nepalese charities we have been supporting, while the other trip involved a group of girls competing in the Independent School Ski Championships in the French Alps. On both trips the girls worked tremendously hard and did themselves and the school proud.

Our pupils were straight back into the thick of it after returning from Christmas, with those in exam years undertaking mock exams and progress tests, while at the other end of the school, Year 7 have been in enquiry days, experiencing lessons devoted to the subject of migration.

Meanwhile, it is extremely exciting to watch our new school hall and music school progress: we have returned from the festive break to see the elevations of what will be the new hall taking shape, giving the pupils, in particular, a great impression of what they can look forward to from this wonderful new facility.

There is also much to look forward to in the coming weeks of this term at Benenden, including Burns Night reeling; the Careers, Higher Education and Futures Convention; the Chapel Choir performing evensong at Eton and the Lacrosse Nationals, where we routinely reach the latter stages, so we are keeping our fingers crossed!

Samantha Price, Headmistress

JUNIOR TENNIS COACHING

Iden Green Tennis Club is now offering tennis coaching for Junior Members on Fridays during Term Time.



Who: Club Members of 6-18 years



Where: Iden Green Tennis Club



When: Friday Term Time groups from 5pm onwards



How much: £6 per session



Contact for further details:
eleanor.cochrane@btinternet.com

Iden Green Tennis Club junior membership is £20 per year.

Iden Green and Benenden WI

Having suffered from a grey and dismal winter, we were pleased to see the sun shining as we attended our first meeting of the year. Everyone was cheerfully welcomed into the warm and comfortable room and although there were a number of outstanding issues to cover and dates to remember, we finished the business side quite quickly and enjoyed a cup of tea together with special cake to celebrate a member's 90th birthday. We then settled to listen to our President, Shirley, give an entertaining and amusing talk about her fascinating life and what fun it has been. Overall a good afternoon for dispelling those blues.

We held another popular social afternoon last month when visitors were invited to join us in the Memorial Hall. This offered a convivial atmosphere where we had plenty of interesting things to do (such as Scrabble, puzzles and a book table) plus, as usual, a raffle, craft and knitting table, delicious cakes and interesting conversations.

Our next meeting, on Tuesday 18 February, will be Looking at Antiques with Tim Anthonisz. This is an open meeting where participants are invited to take their treasures along for comment and valuation.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

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Talking Shop

As I arrived at our exceedingly well attended shop this morning, I was greeted by the usual buzz and general friendly busyness of the place. All this despite the fact that overnight, possibly during a power cut, a pipe had become detached from a pump in the cellar and it had become flooded.

A smiling Nancy Tolhurst was there in her wellies manning a pipe which needed to be discharged into the toilet to drain the water. In the cellar were Ken Anderson and Phil Robbins, wading around and working hard to make sure the task was done effectively. Job done, they later appeared in the café, where they cheerfully enjoyed some refreshment before heading home. This fortunately does not happen every day. However, when it does, we are blessed to have people who are willing to drop everything to come and sort it out.

Our volunteers likewise are there to give their time and effort to keep Benenden's up and running, even when times get difficult. This time of year can be challenging but most helpers would agree that the experience of working in the shop cheers them whatever the weather. One of these volunteers is Fiona Boorman, who makes the journey from Stone outside Tenterden to help out in Benenden's. Her words speak for themselves: "I have been volunteering for two years now and couldn't think of a friendlier place to work. Mel and her team are patient (needed when I make mistakes!), welcoming and always positive. Nothing is too much trouble when it comes to Benenden's customers and the atmosphere is one of joie de vivre. One of the best things I've done."

Likewise, loyal volunteer Genevieve Greenwood explained: "To me the shop and café are the heart and hub of the village. It is always enjoyable working with the other friendly and helpful staff and also seeing friends from around the village and beyond. It is a way of ensuring that our community has this wonderful facility."

What a great testament this is. If you're thinking of joining us, then do. It really is a case of the more the merrier.

Bev Beveridge

Primary School news

The children of Benenden Primary School took part in a sponsored Dance-a-thon on Thursday 16 January, to raise money for Starfish Malawi, an organisation that seeks to make a difference in education, vocational training and health awareness in the country. The significant sum of £1,000 was raised. We are extremely proud of the support children and parents have shown.

Lindsay Roberts, Headteacher 240565

Dream addition to the High Street

A big welcome to Helen Aldridge who has taken over Maison Manicure. She transformed the salon over Christmas and opened Dream Lashes, Nails and Brows on 7 January. Charlotte, who many will know, remains at the salon to do nails while Helen is a lash and brow expert. "I'm very excited to be part of the Benenden community," she says. "We've been busy from the start and everyone has made me very welcome".

Helen Aldridge, Dream Lashes, Nails and Brows 388190

Fancy performing at the fete?

At this year's village fete on Saturday 20 June (12-4pm) the central arena will feature a variety of fun activities, including dancing, children's fancy dress, dog competitions and music. As we know, Benenden has lots of talent and we are looking for musicians - young and old - who fancy donating their time to play or sing for a short time during the day.

Contact:

Ruth Clark 07767 261883
ruthbclark55@gmail.com



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issue of concern to you, please e-mail
Helen at helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk
or telephone **020 7219 7107**.

www.helengrant.org

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Jenny Stevens 07720 006244
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www.cranbrookchoral.org.uk

Sandhurst Twinning Association

QUIZ NIGHT

**When: Saturday 7 March 2020
Where: Old School Hall, Sandhurst
Time: 7 for 7.30pm start-10pm**

£10 per person including supper.
Up to 8 per team. Book a team or
we will put you together with others.
Bring your own nibbles, drinks
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To book contact:

Jill Oliphant 850414 jillmoliphant@gmail.com
Judy Avery 850623 judyavery@outlook.com

Cranbrook Choral

If you are looking to try something new in 2020 how about joining a choir?

It has been proven that music brings many health benefits and it's impossible not to go home on a high after singing some of the most glorious music ever written.

Can't read music? No problem, there are lots of rehearsal aids online to help.

You'll discover new music, forge new friendships and enjoy new experiences.

We rehearse at The Vestry Hall, Cranbrook every Monday evening at 7.30pm.

Why not come along and give it a try?

Further details:

www.cranbrookchoral.org.uk

VE Day revue - your village needs you!

Due to popular demand the Benenden Players are organising another 'For one night only' village revue. This time it will be on Saturday 9 May to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day. What makes these revues so much fun is that so many villagers get involved. So, we are once again asking you talented bunch to dust off your vocal cords, find your funny bones, polish your instruments and contact me to book your slot on the evening's line-up. The theme will, of course, be WWII.

We will help with ideas, music, props and costumes (if we have them in our cupboard) and, link you up with like-minded 'thespians' if you want to perform in a group.

Peter Ellis peteralanellis@aol.com



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Benenden Village Trust



RECREATION FACILITIES IN BENENDEN

The Benenden Village Trust (BVT) is reviewing the facilities it provides for the village and would like feedback, ideas and suggestions from everyone who has a view of how things might develop.

Please read this special four-page pullout and let us have your thoughts and comments on what you would like to see in the future.

bvtclerk@gmail.com
www.benendenvillagetrust.org

What is the BVT?

BENENDEN VILLAGE TRUST (BVT)

Currently the BVT owns and manages the village hall, the recreation sports fields at Benenden and Iden Green - including the two play areas - and a small piece of ground, formerly an allotment, in Woodcock Lane. It also owns the St George's building, and the land on which the Bowls Club, the Iden Green Pavilion and the Iden Green Tennis Club are situated.

Among the charitable objectives of the BVT is the provision of facilities for 'recreation and leisure time occupation'. The key word here is 'facilities'. The trust can consider building or providing structures, but is highly unlikely to be able to run clubs or organisations that might use them.

We would like to hear from you on the provision we already make and new ideas you might have. For instance, might an all weather multi-purpose hard court as well as - or instead of - the football pitch be something to consider? Who would be interested in organising, say, 5-a-side football, or netball, or basketball on it?

And what about indoor facilities? If the BVT considered providing a structure for a new sports and social club - or improving the facilities for the existing St George's Club, what should they be and who might use them?

Currently the Bowls, Tennis and St George's clubs are run as membership organisations. Is it good for the village to have a mix of private and 'open to all' facilities?

We are particularly keen to ensure that young people are well catered for - so what would they like - or be likely to use?

On the opposite page - and online - is a questionnaire and an opportunity for you to give us your views on what you would like to see. But please bear in mind that we may be constrained by what the Charity Commission will allow us to do, and will have to consider if we organise new facilities, that they will really be used.

Please reply online if possible via the BVT website - www.benendenvillagetrust.org

Or return this form to the Community Office by hand or by post to: Community Office, The Street, Benenden, Kent TN17 4DE (Do use a continuation sheet if you need) or email your replies to bvtclerk@gmail.com.

We would really appreciate your input.

David Harmsworth, Chair BVT www.benendenvillagetrust.org

Questionnaire

- 1 Do you have any brief observations on the existing facilities provided by the BVT?

- 2 In general terms do you feel there are any recreation facilities seriously lacking? If so what?

- 3 How much do you think new outdoor facilities, if achievable, such as an all weather multi-purpose hard court would be used, by whom and for what?

- 4 Again, if achievable, would you welcome the idea of new facilities for an indoor social and sports club?

- 5 If so what would you like it to provide?

- 6 The football pitch on the Benenden recreation ground is only used by teams from outside the village. Do you think this is the best use of the area?

- 7 What youth facilities do you think might be offered - either indoors or outside?

- 8 Have you any other comments or suggestions?

Background to the BVT

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Viscount Rothermere gifted the assets of the Trust to the parish as a memorial to the Peace following the First World War and to the sons he'd lost, Vere Sidney Tudor Harmsworth and Harold Vyvyan Alfred St George Harmsworth.

They include the St George's Club (previously built for the purpose by Lord Cranbrook), the Recreation Ground (adjoining the village hall), the Iden Green Recreation Ground, an allotment field in Walkhurst Road, and the allotment field in Standen Street. He also made a generous endowment for their upkeep.

Today the BVT, a charity, owns and maintains these assets for the benefit and recreation of all. The Trust is specifically responsible for:

- promoting facilities for recreation and leisure in Benenden and Iden Green
- maintaining the bequests of Lord Rothermere in memory of his sons.

The Trust is managed by Trustees who are elected by Members. Membership is open to adults living in the Parish and to representatives of organisations and businesses within the Parish.

BECOMING A MEMBER

Any individual resident of the Parish of Benenden aged 18 or over is eligible for membership, as are named representatives of businesses in the Parish. Please email the clerk for further details and an application form.

BECOMING A TRUSTEE

The BVT welcomes people with specific skills - particularly legal, accounting, and property and estate management - to volunteer as trustees. Please email the clerk for further details.

HAVING YOUR SAY

Please complete the questionnaire on the previous page online or email your thoughts and responses to bvtclerk@gmail.com



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East End site exhibition
Monday 17 February
4pm-7pm
Benenden village hall

Savills, in conjunction with The Benenden Healthcare Society, will be staging a public exhibition of the proposed development at East End.

It will include full details of the plans for new housing.



Neighbourhood Development Plan

A view from the East End

In last month's magazine it was reported that only 31 residents from East End provided input on the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). In fact, no fewer than 164 residents signed a strong objection to the siting of most houses in the East End. Even more objected to similar proposals in the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan (LP).

The NDP is silent on development on site 158, north of The Street, but the LP, which takes precedence, stipulates that a route be provided within the Uphill site to access development in 158. By first of all siting most housing in the East End, we will end up, if and when 158 is also developed, with a sprawling village with a growth area in the village centre (where people can walk to school), and a second one, three miles out, where cars will be the answer to almost every activity. Is this sensible?

An East End satellite settlement will increase village traffic. Almost 75% of our primary school children come from outside the parish so East End children, being nearer, will get priority. They will be driven to school (with children in their car seats) along the shortest route - Walkhurst Road. There are currently 76 households in the East End: they take an active part in village life.

The proposal would more than double this number. Would new residents be any different?

New housing should be close to a developed core. This standard planning policy has, over the years, preserved the village's focused beauty. The NDP changes course. It proposes a sprawling village, a jammed core and crowded access lanes. Gill Stewart, Amanda and Robert Petch, Arianwen and Christopher Neve, Hazel Strouts and Bernard Phillips

A reply from the NDP chair

Those who have signed this letter have correctly stated that one of the inputs received as part of the Regulation 14 consultation was a petition coordinated by the 'Friends of East End' and signed by just over 160 people. Many were residents of Benenden Parish and others residents of Biddenden, some of whom also sent in separate responses.

On reflection I agree it would have been better if the article had been more specific about the petition. I would like to reassure all those who responded to the Regulation 14 draft, including the petition from East End, that their input will be carefully considered by the Review Group and weighed against existing national and borough planning policy.

Paul Tolhurst

Chair, Benenden NDP Steering Group

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Village hall highlights

It is with great sadness that I bring you news of the closure of the Benenden Farmers' and Craft Market. Due to the lack of footfall, Lindy Alton, the market manager, made the hard decision to withdraw. On a more positive note, it highlights just how well Benenden's shop provides for us and how well loved it is by our community.

Amanda Beacroft, is back at the hall after a short break, with her FitSteps class, designed by 'Strictly' stars Natalie Low and Ian Waite. They have taken the best of ballroom and Latin, mixing it with the latest, proven ways to get fit fast and deliver the most exciting, fun, fabulous workout ever. Suitable for all ages and abilities, from 16 upwards, it's held in the main hall at 11.15am every Wednesday. For further information check out www.beacroft.net

We also welcome back James and Hannah from Cwnsaethu Dog Behaviour and Training, with their dog and puppy class on a Friday evening. To find out more about the courses, contact James at mail@jamesreavil.com.

If you are thinking of setting up your own club or class and are needing a venue, then please do get in touch. Our rates start from as little as £12 per hour and you will receive free social media advertising on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Nextdoor, Google Business, and also a mention in this column. What are you waiting for? Contact us today for further information.

Lorraine Jones 07419 989830
enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org
www.benendenvillagehall.org

Village lunch

Tuesday 18 February, Benenden Village Hall,
12.30pm

Our village lunch costs £5, is open to all ages and everybody is welcome. If you would like to come along, or if you enjoy cooking and would like to join the band of volunteers, we would love to hear from you.

Kay Martin 240566

SPIDERS IN THE DYSON

by Mary Kellett

Hallo Sydney, hallo George
Are you both alright?
There's a bit of a clear-up going on
For a birthday party tonight.

God knows where the wife is,
She ran off with 'er next door,
I think she went behind the desk
And fell onto the floor.

I was round the pictures.
I'd spun a lovely web,
Round and round from frame to frame
It's been up there since Feb'.

So delicate with lots of flies
I'd caught them all mid flight
Cunningly draped for a long, long way
Across the ceiling and past the light.

Now gone, all gone, just sucked away
My exquisite creation
Just so that 'er indoors
Can have a celebration.

So we'd better have a roll call
There's Syd, George and me,
Daph and Freda, all the kids,
Legs okay, but mind Flo's knee.

There's an awful lot of dust in here
It's not good for my chest
I suppose it's hanging round in draughts
And I never wear my vest.

Well, it doesn't help my reputation
I'm Cyber Spider Eric,
To wrap up warm when going out
Looks weedy and pathetic.

Right chaps, we've all been here before
We all know what to do
Climb to the top and make some threads,
Doug and Enid, Fred and Sue

Gather all the ends together
And make a great big knot
The rest climb up
And I'll make sure we've rescued the lot.

Right, now we're at the compost heap,
Bin open, JUMP, we're free
Told you all I'd get you out
And back in time for tea.



Kate (left) in training

From daytime TV to military discipline

How one young Benenden woman came back home to find her way in life

One of the great things about our village is that our kids always want to come back here for the weekend, which is lovely, although there are always some, like Kate Clark, who take it a little too far. A couple of days is good, but ...

"It's one thing having a 22-year-old back at home," she admits, "but when you have a 28-year-old sitting round in her pyjamas in the middle of the day watching Jeremy Kyle, it's probably hard for a parent to be quite as positive."

That was the scenario that presented itself to Ruth Clark, co-editor of this magazine, who had done a good job of rearing her two offspring but now found herself wondering what her daughter was eventually going to do with her life. It wasn't that Kate had been lazy - degrees in politics at Exeter and international development at Birmingham were interspersed with teaching lacrosse at Stowe, selling pizzas and volunteering in Bolivia - but when it came to finding a vocation, being a management consultant in Clapham quickly

lost its appeal, "so I came back to Benenden to reset myself".

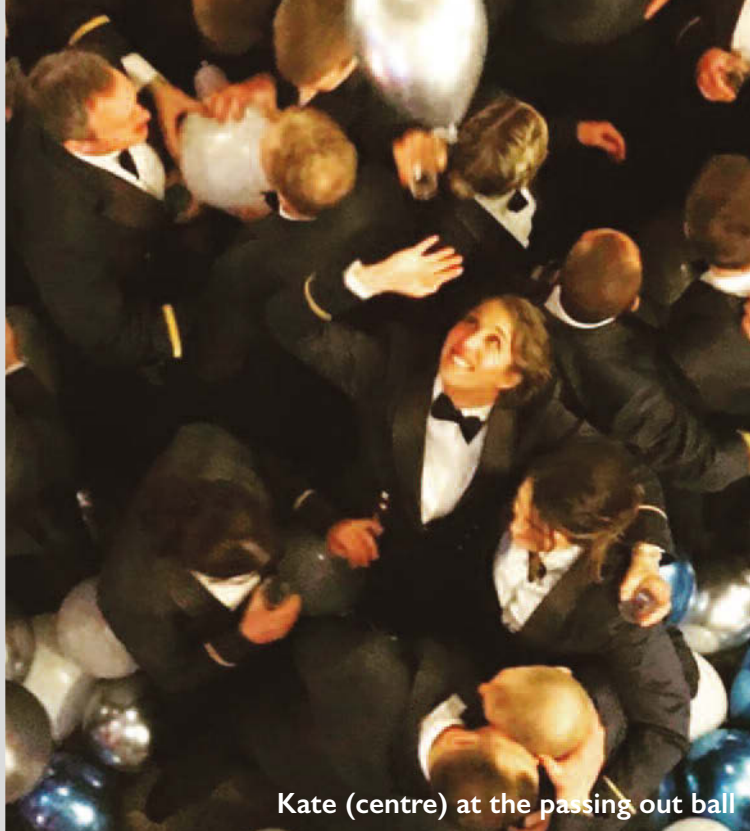
If you regularly enjoy a cup of coffee or a pint in the village, you'll know the next bit of the story. The former Cranbrook pupil managed the Bull for ten months and then topped up her c.v. with a spell working in the community shop, but neither of these jobs, nor her academic achievements, pointed the way to a career. Instead, she took a piece of well-meant advice - although one that grated with her feminist principles - and decided to try out a life in the Royal Air Force.

"I spent a long time bouncing around from one thing to another," she explains, "then our next door neighbour, who had three sons all in the military, knocked on the door, told me to look at the RAF website and go and find myself a husband in the military - which is just what the modern woman wants to hear! But by then I had no excuse and I looked into it, saw all the benefits for a person with qualifications, went along to a presentation and got sucked into it."

Kate had been in cadet school at Cranbrook but never with a view to a career, and it surprised her as much as any of her friends that this was the route she chose to take. Dad Giles [big beard, into military history and repairing bicycles] was in the navy but Kate and Hugh were never military children,



Kate (right) with brother Hugh and mother in the shop



Kate (centre) at the passing out ball

yet, last month, after six months of training and militarisation, she graduated from RAF College Cranwell in Lincolnshire and returned to Benenden with rather more of a sense of purpose and job satisfaction, as Pilot Officer Clark, although that's a title that carries with it a little confusion.

"I've spent months explaining to people that I won't be flying anything, but in six months I'll be officially a pilot officer, I'll turn up at my base and people who are a lot older than me and a lot more experienced will salute me and I'll have to try not to laugh; but I'll be wearing the Queen's commission on my shoulder and there's a reason I've been given that and it comes with a lot of responsibility."

The next step for Kate is to get back into the gym for some intensive fitness work to prepare her for phase two of her training at an army base, then straight into a rather different phase to turn her into an intelligence officer, with a posting due in September, which is all very impressive but comes with complications for her mum.

"I now have two children with very exciting jobs," says Ruth, self-confessed nosiest woman in the village (in service of this magazine of course), "but Hugh works in commercially confidential research and development in

Cambridge and Kate will be in intelligence, so neither of them will be able to tell me what they're doing. I don't know how I'll cope."

For Kate, however, the job comes as some degree of payback to her long-suffering parents and the graduation ceremony was an official thank you for their patience during the 'Jeremy Kyle days'.

"It was such a fab moment," she recalls.

"It was in Lincolnshire in December, so it was freezing, but we'd been practising the parade twice a day and we nailed it when it mattered, we threw our hats in the air, the scroll with all our names on it was delivered by two Chinook helicopters, and I think mum and dad were very proud.

"Coming back here all that time ago, working in the pub and shop, living at home, trying to figure out what I was doing with my life, had finally paid off. It must have been hard for them, but there was never any frustration, I was allowed to figure it out in my own time, they were so supportive it's nice to be able to pay them back in some way.

"Now, people say it's so perfect and ask why I didn't do it before? But I found out what I didn't want to do and I dealt with a lot of things that younger recruits wouldn't have done. I discovered just being youthful isn't always the best preparation."

Peter Thomas



Pilot Officer Kate Clark



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The Snowman Trek

Paul Hewitt has run the village fete silent auction for many years and volunteers at Catching Lives, the charity that St George's church supports. Here he describes a trip of a lifetime to Bhutan.

Bhutan had been on my bucket list of places to visit for ages: a country that measures its success by Gross National Happiness, home to some of the highest unclimbed mountains in the world and an entry visa system that discourages casual tourists. So, I was delighted when my friend Clive asked if I would like to join him and six other friends on The Snowman Trek.

me that perhaps I had been a little hasty saying "count me in" before really thinking about the potential risks, let alone the training and kit required for such an adventure.

My first impressions: almost everyone, including school children, chooses to wear traditional Bhutanese dress - known as gho for men and a kira for women; there are strict planning controls that ensure all new buildings are no more than five stories high and are built in the traditional Himalayan style; there are Buddhist temples and prayer flags almost everywhere; there is absolutely no begging. However, there are signs that some of their traditions are coming under threat as, for example, the Aman Hotel group builds six uber-luxury hotels across the kingdom.

One of the biggest concerns was if we could all acclimatise to the altitude. The highest pass is 5,464m and this would be preceded by a night sleeping at over 5,200m where the temperature inside the tent was -10 Celsius. The first few days were tough, getting into a routine of walking eight-ten hours a day and feeling constantly short of breath. Some team members got a headache from the altitude, whereas I got a puffy face from excess water retention, which some people thought was an improvement! However, after a few days of medication and learning to pace ourselves, we all acclimatised.

We rose each morning at 6am and after an →



Archers in their Goh

He explained that fewer people have completed the 24-day high-level trek than have reached the summit of Mount Everest. It wasn't until later that evening, when I was explaining all this to my long-suffering wife, that it dawned on

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ones are now turning to gathering Cordyceps, medicinal mushrooms which are believed to increase testosterone and command high prices when smuggled into nearby China. The easy cash is dissuading many young Bhutanese from taking on responsibility for yaks from their parents. Like youngsters all over the world they are spending their money on the latest fashions and gadgets: here it is bows (as archery is the national sport) and designer trainers.

Our route took us through some of the most remote and exquisitely beautiful scenery imaginable and completely distracted us from the fact we spent 24 days without seeing

→ optional meditation session ate a breakfast of porridge and eggs. We would set off at about 8am and a stop for tea mid-morning. While preparing breakfast, the cooks also made a hot lunch: red rice (a Bhutanese speciality) and three vegetable dishes which were transported in a large thermos tiffin carrier. There was something surreal about sitting down to eat lunch on a deck chair with a cloth-covered picnic table at 4,000-plus metres.

We would arrive at the next camp site, with tents having been put up by the crew, by mid-afternoon. At lower altitudes we would sit in the sun talking, diary writing, reading, playing games and drying kit. But at higher altitudes it was the toughest part of the day, trying to keep warm before the evening meal of soup, more rice and vegetables and a fruit-based pudding. Rinzin, our guide, would regale us with Bhutanese legends and then discuss the route for the next day before turning into bed at 7.30 or 8pm with a hot water bottle and a few pages on our Kindles.

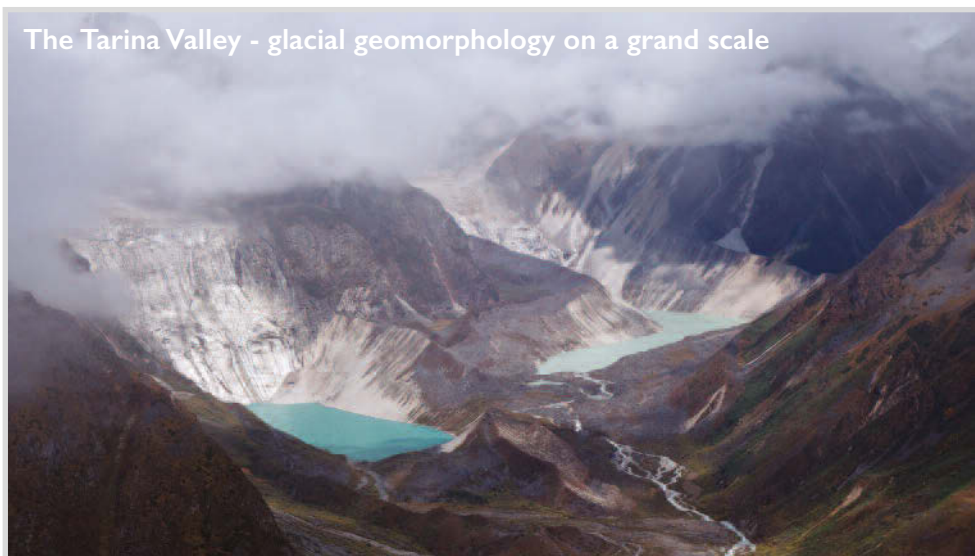
The trek follows ancient trading routes that have been used by yak herders for centuries. However, many of the younger

a wheeled vehicle or having access to a mobile data signal. One morning we were lucky enough to see fresh snow leopard tracks on the way up to the highest pass. The scale and raw beauty of the landscape was awe inspiring. I felt truly insignificant and understood why the Bhutanese people see the highest peaks as sacred and never contemplate climbing them.

We completed the 350km of the trek, climbing more than 11,000m and traversing 14 high passes, with no injuries, not even a blister. The sense of achievement was incredible, and it was a privilege to get a taste of a country which is trying to balance the dynamics of a growing tourist economy whilst preserving its religious and cultural values with integrity.

Paul Hewitt phewitt1203@gmail.com

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Cruising the Loire without leaving the village

The latest Benenden wine tasting will explore one of France's greatest treasures

There are some wine regions in France that I can find my way around without too much trouble, not just geographically but vinously. Put me down in the deep south of France and I'll drink well, bluff my way through Catalan culture and never get lost. Parachute me into the Loire Valley, however, and I'd be a fish out of water.

Without Google, my knowledge is limited to the Counts of Anjou, Joan of Arc and the Hundred Years War, and my familiarity with the wines of the region is similarly scant, perhaps because I was put off at an early age by too many bottles of scabby Muscadet.

Luckily, all that is about to change, thanks to the latest tasting evening run by the self-appointed yet hugely enthusiastic Benenden Wine Committee. Hard on the heels of our hugely successful Rioja night, we're moving north some 500 miles as the crow flies and equally as far in stylistic terms, to a land stretching from Nantes in the west to Orleans in the east, where they make highly regarded crisp and fruity whites along with stylish and civilised reds.

Perhaps the most famous parts of the region are the easternmost satellites of Sancerre and Pouilly Fume, where you'll find mineral Sauvignon Blanc that bears little similarity to anything that's grown in the New World, but good Muscadet is gaining traction in this household and I'll be keen to delve further into the Chenin Blanc of the Savennieres AOC near Angers and the Pinot Noirs, Gamays and

Cabernet Francs that are far more drinkable than they are well known.

Better, of course, than this extremely potted history will be the insights of Richard Household, owner of Brompton Wine and an expert in the Loire field. He'll be hosting the night, at our regular haunt in the cafe of Benenden Girls' School on Friday 13 March at 7pm, and he promises to steer us gently along the longest river in France and through the many and varied styles of wine, from sparkling Cremant de Loire to sweet Premier Cru Chaume.

As ever, there will be excellent food on offer, something suitably regional and French, with drinks on arrival and a raffle that will raise money for a good cause of somebody's choice. If the Rioja night is anything to go by, tickets, priced at £15 and available from the community shop, will sell like hot cakes.

Peter Thomas

Richard Household at Benenden School Café



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Please protect our dark skies

Mary Cruse reflects on the increase of 'security' lighting in the village and calls for more to be done to protect our status as a Dark Skies Village.

One of the glories of living in Benenden is our dark sky. Village children are lucky in lots of ways, and seeing the stars is just one of them. However, over the past years Benenden skies have got lighter, as light pollution has increased. Thirty years ago, the darkness was so great that on a moonless night one couldn't see anything without a torch. Nowadays, the trees are visible against the horizon glow.

We are proud to be a Dark Skies Village, but this is under threat, as the default position appears to be that new dwellings should have exterior lights as standard, as well as pavement streetlights. The village successfully fought a brief but fierce battle against a developer's proposal to install street lighting on six-metre high posts. But for how much longer. Might a developer not look around and ask what makes us a Dark Skies Village?

The village has, over the years, faced calls for street lighting, with security and safety cited as justification. Studies to determine whether street lighting reduces crime find that whilst lighting increases perceptions of safety, it's not clear that it has an empirical effect - most domestic burglaries occur in the daytime. Similarly, traffic collisions don't seem to increase with reduced street lighting.

There is now evidence of the harmful effect of light pollution on the natural world, and that includes humans. The Institute of Lighting Professionals published a lengthy study demonstrating disruption of ecosystems, particularly invertebrates. Mammals too are affected, especially nocturnal predators, which use darkness to hunt. Cloudy skies near cities are now thousands of times brighter than they were 200 years ago.

Disruption to our circadian rhythms, the cycle of sleep/wake, hunger, activity, hormone

production and other physiological processes, is a result of exposure to light pollution. Some researchers think that poor sleep, obesity, diabetes, mood disorders and even cancer can be linked to excessive night-time light. Researchers at Harvard School of Public Health (2017), studying 110,000 women, found that exposure to night-time lighting increased breast cancer risk in pre-menopausal women who were current or past smokers. Other studies have found statistically significant positive correlations for lung, prostate and colorectal cancers. Light at night is not good for our health.

It's not great for the planet, either. Lighting accounts for nearly 6% of global CO₂ emissions.

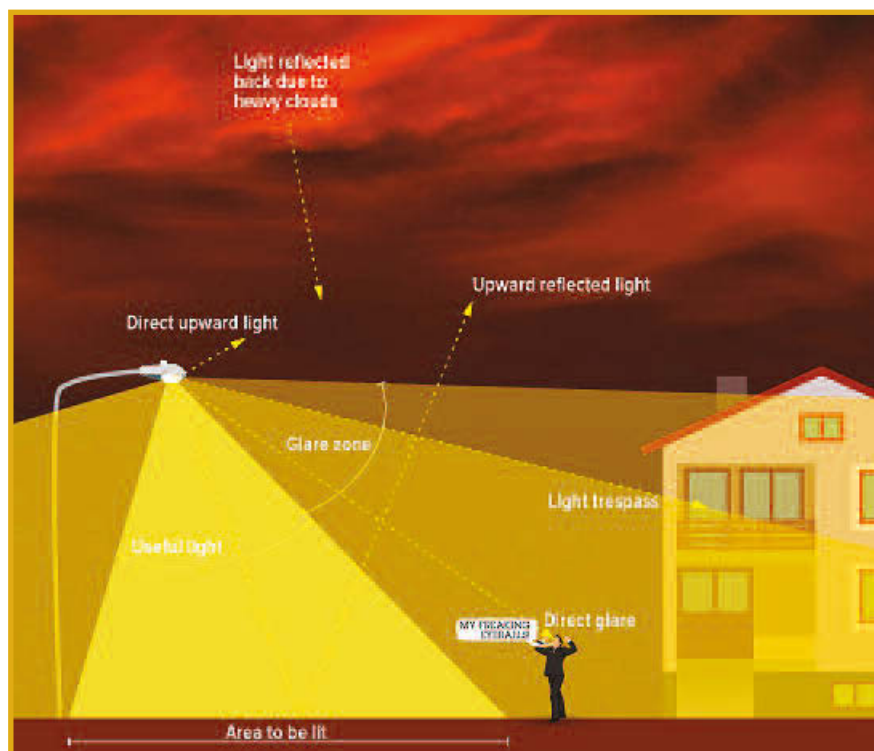


Fig1 Different components of light pollution.
Courtesy Anezka Gocova, in The Night Issue

In Germany (2019), the majority of those surveyed were in favour of reducing or abandoning their Christmas lights, in order to protect the climate. Unless global greenhouse gas emissions fall by 7.6% every year, we are not going to make the 2015 Paris Agreement target of no more than a 1.5% temperature rise.

What is noticeable in our village is the increase in exterior security lighting and 'decorative' lighting - up/downlighters outside →

→ houses and along driveways. This contributes to the fact that 99% of Europe and the continental US experience some degree of light pollution. Fig2 is a Dark Sky reading taken at a moonless but clear midnight, halfway along Walkhurst Road. Outside Benenden Hospital, it is 'Inner Suburban', and the primary school (with car park lights on) is 'Inner City'. Fig3 shows light pollution levels in the parish: the village hall lights, Benenden School and Benenden Hospital are significant contributors to this (Campaign to Protect Rural England; Night Blight light pollution map). Some reading this may think 'Well, this is just the way of the world'. But it doesn't have to be.

Cranborne Chase is an AONB overlapping the boundaries of Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire and Somerset. In October 2018 it became the first

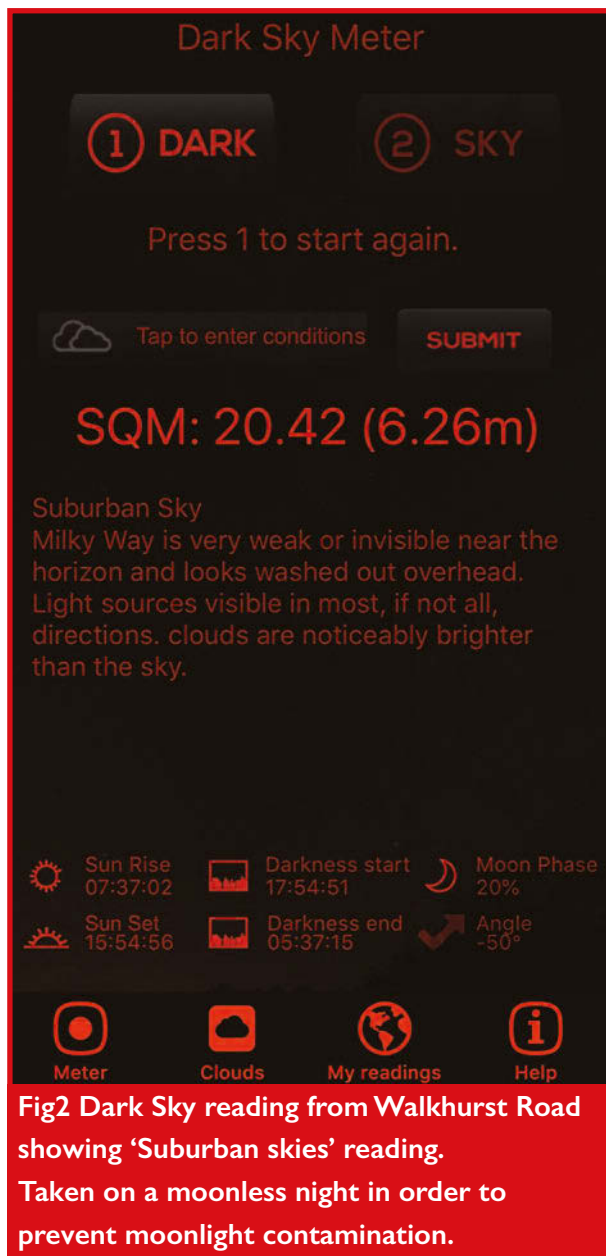


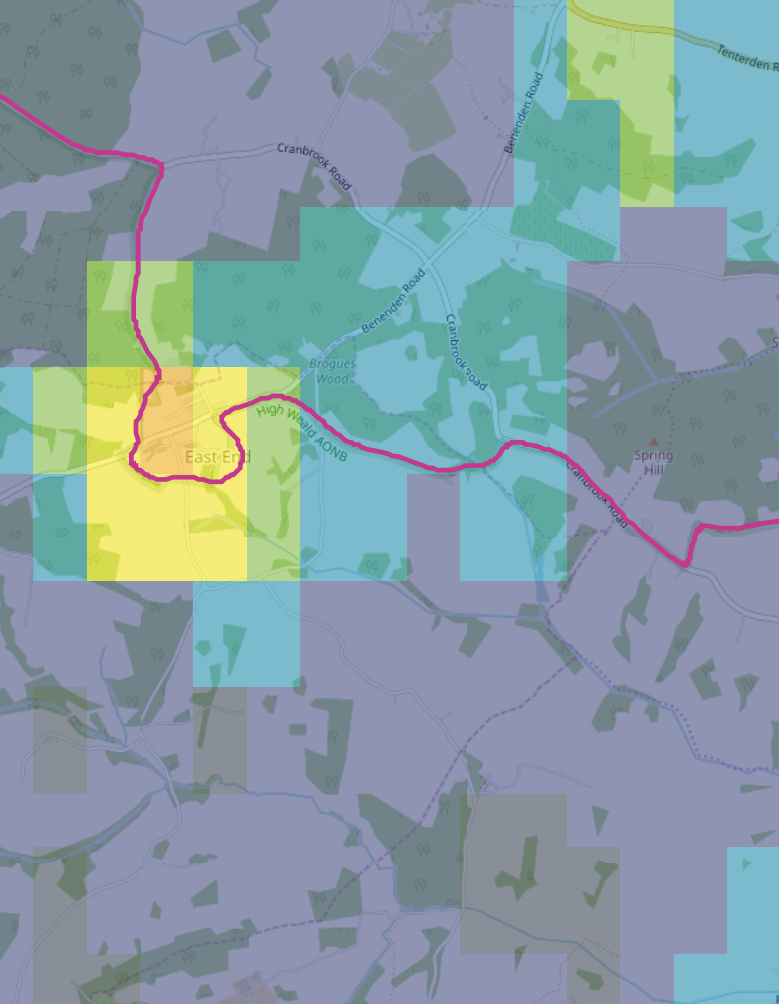
Fig2 Dark Sky reading from Walkhurst Road showing 'Suburban skies' reading. Taken on a moonless night in order to prevent moonlight contamination.



Fig3 CPRE Night Blight map showing the three main areas the hospital and the village hall (which has a car park light

AONB in England to be designated an International Dark Sky reserve, despite being only 30 minutes' drive from Bournemouth and Poole. Working collaboratively with schools, business, landowners and parishes, their Dark Skies team were able to change the quality of their skies over 10 years. Individual homeowners agreed to change exterior lighting, using Dark Sky friendly designs, and agreeing to PIR sensors rather than 'always on' lighting. They have very clear lighting direction for developers, knowing that developers coming into an already lit area are much more likely to press for street and external light installation than those building in a dark, rural area.

And in Benenden? We could do the same, with will and determination. Light pollution, without action, will inevitably worsen. In another 30 years, village children will see fewer stars than we do now, and their experience of the world will be poorer for it. So, turn off that light, close your curtains, walk with a torch and look upwards.



of light pollution in Benenden; the girls' school, which is on all night).

BENENDEN SCHOOL

Headmistress Samantha Price: "We are very fortunate to be in such a beautiful area and we are proud to play such a strong part in preserving and maintaining the countryside of Benenden, while at the same time investing in improving the school's facilities for the benefit of pupils and the wider community.

"Lighting in a modern school environment is essential but we are very mindful of the balance that needs to be struck between ensuring the safety of our staff and pupils when moving around the site in the evening and preserving the natural beauty of the village. For this reason, we always switch off our floodlights at 9pm and operate with the minimum of lighting overnight. In addition, our lighting conforms to all national standards and building regulations and is all low energy, which maximises our energy efficiency.

"We would be more than happy to discuss with the parish council any further ideas they may have on this issue."

BENENDEN HOSPITAL

Hospital Director Jane Abbott: "During the recent large-scale redevelopment of the hospital, the lighting levels, control strategy, energy consumption and light pollution were addressed by a number of initiatives. Internally, light fittings are LED in many instances with intelligent controls to activate during periods of occupation.

"In the new atrium area, which is very visible from the main road, we have recently set up an automatic lighting 'scenario' so that the lights are dimmed to an acceptably low level during times of unoccupancy. However, by its nature, the hospital is occupied for many hours of the day.

"The external environment has intelligent downward-facing lighting columns and low-level bollards - all LED. All but one of the car parks with tall columns have intelligent lighting so that lights come on softly as one approaches and then go off again. The third and newest car park never had that installed but we have commissioned our supplier to convert these to the intelligent type so that they will not be on all night.

"We have a programme of works to replace all of the old sodium yellow-type exterior lights with LED - passive infrared sensor-controlled and not on a general time switch. In this way, we hope to reduce our environmental impact, energy consumption and light pollution in what we fully appreciate and respect is a shared Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty."

BENENDEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Headteacher Lindsay Roberts: "We support the village's commitment to protecting its Dark Skies. We endeavour to minimise our use of the car park lights, although we do have a statutory duty to ensure that our parents, pupils and staff have safe access and egress from the site, which is why lights are provided. We had initial problems with programming the lights, but we now have them on for a relatively short period, which should reduce the amount of light pollution generated. We don't leave external lights on for security purposes, thus minimising the impact of the site on the locality."

Bird Notes

Fascinating Fulmars facing uncertain future

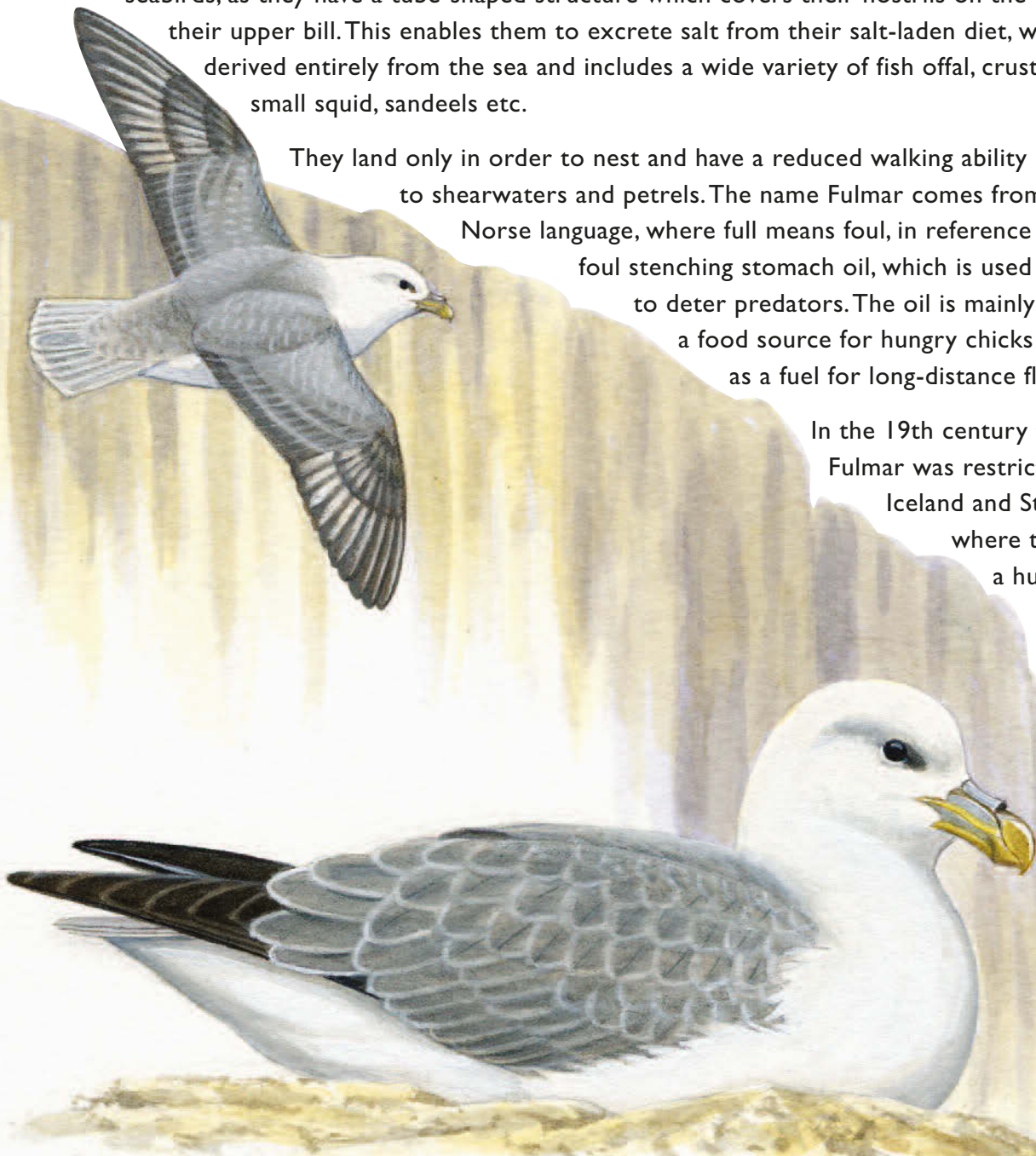
One of the most pleasurable activities I would miss if I lived in a landlocked country would be a coastal walk. We are very fortunate in having some of the most spectacular coastlines anywhere in the world - even in the Southeast we have the Seven Sisters white cliffs amongst others. Not only are the scenes stunning but the wildlife can be spectacular, particularly our seabirds.

One that immediately catches my eye is the Fulmar, which appears to be another gull with a white head and mottled grey upper parts but it belongs to another family altogether. It is the flight mode that is immediately obvious and which distinguishes it from all other gulls; soaring with stiff wings that never seem to flap, it glides effortlessly over the waves like a mini albatross using the power of the wind to travel. I have watched Fulmars through binoculars for many hours and it is impossible to detect any movement of the wing or tail for their change in direction. They nest on cliffs and this is where it is best to see them, where they can use the updraft of the cliffs to access their nest sites.

The Fulmar belongs to the Procellariiformes - a family of largely 'pelagic' birds including shearwaters and petrels, which spend most of their lives at sea. They are sometimes referred to as tube-nosed seabirds, as they have a tube-shaped structure which covers their nostrils on the top of their upper bill. This enables them to excrete salt from their salt-laden diet, which is derived entirely from the sea and includes a wide variety of fish offal, crustaceans, small squid, sandeels etc.

They land only in order to nest and have a reduced walking ability similar to shearwaters and petrels. The name Fulmar comes from The Norse language, where full means foul, in reference to its foul stenching stomach oil, which is used as a spray to deter predators. The oil is mainly used as a food source for hungry chicks as well as a fuel for long-distance flights.

In the 19th century the Fulmar was restricted to Iceland and St Kilda, where there was a huge colony and the



inhabitants at that time relied on the birds for oil for lamps, meat for food and feathers for rent. The harvest took place in August when the chicks were bloated with stomachs full of oil. As Fulmars nest on steep inaccessible cliffs this was a highly dangerous practice and I expect quite a few lives were lost, but if one did not risk life and limb then starvation was the alternative.

Some 12,000 birds were taken every year, yielding 600 gallons of oil, and each family had to pay the landlord about 1,200 pounds of feathers. As the Fulmar has only one chick, the size of the colony must have been huge to withstand this sort of harvest over many years, especially as although Fulmars, like albatrosses, live a long time, circa 30 years, they do not breed until they are seven to nine years old.

It was during this time that the whaling industry was at its height and it is thought that the Fulmar derived huge benefits from whale oil and blubber, as well as discards and guts from the growing and powerful industrialised fishing trawlers. As a result of this bounty the Fulmar's range expanded to the Scottish coast and down the British Isles, reaching as far as Kent, where in the 1970s there were small colonies of about 100 pairs off St Margaret's and Foreness Point. Today there are still a few breeding pairs left but, like many other seabirds, their numbers are now declining in Kent, as well as nationally, as climate change takes effect, reducing their prey and also drying up discards.

Until recently we could only guess where Fulmars went on their fishing trips to feed their offspring. Then a group of scientists from Aberdeen University fitted GPS loggers to some breeding birds on an uninhabited island in the Orkneys. One male bird in his 11th breeding season left his nest after his partner returned from her fishing trip to do her turn on the eggs. It was late May and the weather was good and calm and initially he sat on the sea for three days waiting for the wind to pick up to help him reach his chosen feeding grounds. The wind picked up and to the utter amazement of the trackers he flew 1,000 miles in two and a half days into the depths of the northern Atlantic, reaching an area where the mid-Atlantic Ridge is broken and the cold fertile waters from the Arctic meet the warm Atlantic.

These waters are full of plankton, squid and fish, on which he feasted, joined by birds from all over the Atlantic, including Sooty Shearwaters from the Falklands. Over three days he moved slowly westwards feeding, so that he was 1500 miles from the nest site.

His return journey was just as interesting; rather than make a beeline for his nest site he flew in a south-easterly direction towards south-west Ireland, ending up in Galway Bay, where he fed for eight hours. He then turned north up the Irish coast and around the Outer Hebrides, stopping off for another feed at Tiree before arriving back at the nest to relieve his mate of ten years.

He had travelled a straight line distance of 3,900 miles in just over two weeks, yet this was the only tracked Fulmar who went this distance. Others chose much closer feeding opportunities, but I suspect that he found these feeding grounds when exploring the seas during the eight or so years between fledging and breeding and made a mental note of their position.

The future for Fulmars and other Procellariiformes is one of great uncertainty. There have recently been some rather alarming breeding failures around our coasts, mainly due to sandeel shortage, which is either due to ocean warming or over-fishing by factory ships hoovering up the small fry for fertiliser production. Fulmars being mainly surface feeders are now ingesting micro plastics along with plankton and krill, a problem which is going to get worse in the short term.

Charles Trollope 240821 cetetal@btinternet.com



In Your Garden

Tidy garden, tidy mind

I had my first bonfire of the season today - unbelievably! As we all know, we have had volumes of rain since September, leaving the ground saturated and (largely) unworkable and any thought of a bonfire has been cast aside. As I write, though, weathermen have told us we are in for a whole week of cold starts and

dry days. For me, a day clearing in the garden with a roaring bonfire is a day well spent and it without a doubt leaves you feeling very accomplished, not to mention your garden looking like it is getting ready for spring.

This first fire did a good job of clearing a huge pile of shrubby prunings, rose clippings, clematis tangles and an old buddleja that I had renovated. The Christmas tree proved very useful as a fire starter, too. Now that I have shifted a considerable amount of debris, I can then plan to have bonfire number two going whilst I cut back the deciduous grasses (specifically *Miscanthus 'Kleine Fontane'* and *Hakonechloa macra*).

This sounds terribly efficient, but I am very wary that burning deciduous grasses involves huge amounts of bonfire smoke so I do have to be considerate of the neighbours. A good tip for cutting back volumes of seven-foot tall grasses: use the hedge cutter, it does it in minutes, although minus points for my not gardening sustainably. Once this task is done, I can then have a good sweep of the garden paths with a stiff yard broom.

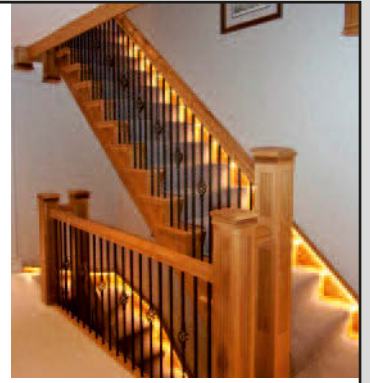
Whilst I am an advocate of a good tidy up at this time of year, I do not mean one has to get obsessive. I rarely disturb the borders, leaving leaf litter and debris to rot down into the soil. I do run along the edges with either a hand fork or a long-handled three-pronged affair and flick debris from the gullies back into the border, but that is it. I leave numerous stacks of wood to rot down and regularly sprinkle garden compost or leaf mould around any emerging bulbs. A well-swept path and a crisp border edge at this time of year really pays dividends without having to clear away the garden's essential stores of micro-organisms, soil bacteria and carbon, so essential to the ongoing health of your garden and its wildlife.

Enjoy getting out into your garden this February and gently wake it up from its winter slumber.

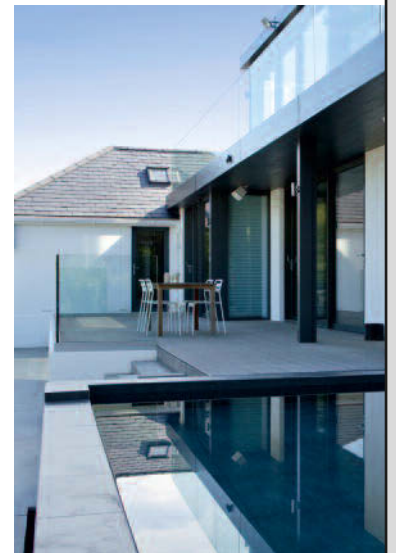
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Above: The spirit of our community: Benenden Primary School students receive a Co-Op cheque as one of its supported charities; preparations for the Benenden Players' panto; St George's Club quiz team raise funds for Child Bereavement UK; Hello. How are you? Club is off the ground; high spirits at the Christmas Day lunch; Helen Aldridge opens Dream
Front cover: A local friendly face. Photograph: Henry Petch