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Magazine  
April 2021

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# Editorial



If you see me about the village this month looking annoyingly chipper, there's a very good reason for it. I've just been vaccinated. I went to East Peckham, waited for ten minutes, got seen a quarter of an hour early and came out feeling full of vim and vigour, practically immortal, in fact.

I've haven't seen so many middle-aged people being so unashamedly positive about life since free bus passes came in. We're all ringing each other up and asking "Have you had yours yet?", and comparing side-effects like badges of pride. Of course, those of us who couldn't get an appointment closer to home in Headcorn had a bit of a grumble, but it was a small price to pay for a momentous occasion, because hopefully this is the biggest step yet out of lockdown, boredom and being stuck at home.

Maybe by the time the May edition comes out, we'll all have had our hair cut - I'd have to say mine is looking like a cross between Grizzly Adams and Dusty Springfield at the moment, so roll on Step 2 of the roadmap - and a pint in the pub garden. I'm looking forward to a handshake (will they ever come back into fashion?) and even the occasional hug, so beware!

In the meantime, the rest of life trundles on as best it can. Village politics never sleeps, and progress towards a referendum on the Neighbourhood Development Plan is being made slowly but surely. The date has yet to be confirmed, but we're preparing you for it in this NDP Special issue by speaking to those who painstakingly formulated Benenden's plan and asking them all the questions that need to be asked about it.

Me? I'll be voting in favour of a blueprint that will give the village control over its own destiny for the foreseeable future, but others aren't so sure, so we asked them for their views as well. All you have to do is read and then vote.

Peter Thomas, Co-Editor

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# Church Calendar

## St George's Church

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

Churchwarden: David Collard 241944 [julia.collard@btinternet.com](mailto:julia.collard@btinternet.com)

[www.benendenchurch.org](http://www.benendenchurch.org) 850849 [benendenchurch@gmail.com](mailto:benendenchurch@gmail.com)

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

Each 10am service will be recorded, and the video available the next day on [www.benendenchurch.org](http://www.benendenchurch.org)  
It will remain accessible for the whole week.

Easter Sunday 4 April	6.15am Sunrise Service at St Nicholas, Sandhurst	
	8am Communion	10am Communion
	at St Nicholas, Sandhurst	
Sunday 11 April	8am Communion	10am Communion
		at St Nicholas, Sandhurst
Sunday 18 April	8am Communion	10am Communion
	at St Nicholas, Sandhurst	
Sunday 25 April	8am Communion	10am Communion
		at St Nicholas, Sandhurst

## Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

## Iden Green Congregational Church

Pastor: Tobin Bird 240027 [www.idengreen.org.uk](http://www.idengreen.org.uk)

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship on Zoom

For those shielding the 10am Morning Worship service is also broadcast on our YouTube channel:  
search for 'Iden Green Congregational Church'.

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

Fr Barry Grant 713364 [www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org](http://www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org)

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

## From the Parish Registers

Funeral 17 March Patricia 'Trish' Evans Funeral Charing Crematorium and  
Memorial Service St George's



# Rector's Letter



## Easter: new hope, and new life

“Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!”

At the beginning of April we will be celebrating once more the wonder, the joy and the hope that is brought to us in the event of the resurrection of Jesus all those years ago. We plan to do so by gathering for public worship in our parish churches! That, in itself, will be a real joy.

At the time of writing, there have, regrettably, been no details released by the Recovery Group of the CoE. We, therefore, have to use the Government's four-stage road map that was released towards the end of February and work out how to apply it to our church situation - and trust that we interpret it and the current CoE guidelines correctly. Just like the first Easter for the disciples, who were going through a time of darkness and uncertainty, apprehensions and fears; and conflicting advice and opinions. Ultimately though there was hope, and goodness, and light. We are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel; we are beginning to feel new hope for the future, just like those first disciples on that first Easter morning. Still with many uncertainties and unanswered questions, but now also with hope that things will be alright.

All this time, St George's Church has been open for individual private prayer and I know people have made use of this. Come Easter Sunday, though, we will be reopening for worship - not just relying on recorded services being available online. For a first taste of worshipping together, you could join us at 6.15am on Sunday 4 April at St Nicholas Church, Sandhurst, when we gather for a Sunrise Service. (No bacon butties to follow afterwards this time though I'm afraid!)

If that's too early, then there's a service in St Nicholas Church at 8am; and if that's still too early, then there's a service at St George's Church at 10am. Until then, the online recorded service will continue to be available every Sunday; access links are available on the church website: [www.benendenchurch.org](http://www.benendenchurch.org). If you are reading this article during Holy Week, then please see the church website for details of the services taking place every day that week.

Once we have reopened for public worship, provided the Government restrictions are not reimposed, we plan to be open for worship every Sunday. We won't be returning to the pre-pandemic full service pattern, but to begin with we will adopt the following pattern in the two parish churches:

1st Sunday of the month	8am St Nicholas, Sandhurst	10am St George's
2nd Sunday of the month	8am St George's	10am St Nicholas, Sandhurst
3rd Sunday of the month	8am St Nicholas, Sandhurst	10am St George's
4th Sunday of the month	8am St George's	10am St Nicholas, Sandhurst

We continue to look forward to better times ahead, but in the meantime let us not miss the joy, the hope, the light, and the incredible love shown in the resurrection. Alleluia! Christ is risen. Happy Easter. Keep well; keep safe; keep praying; and may God bless you.

Revd David Commander, Rector



# Village Calendar

## April

Monday 19

Parish Council Meeting, on Zoom, 7pm

Sunday 25

National Open Garden Scheme, Balmoral Cottage, Benenden, 12noon-5pm p.11

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

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

## Guiding principles

Our approach to making decisions about specific events, services or issues can be guided by these principles:

**Be calm and trust** the advice given by relevant authorities.

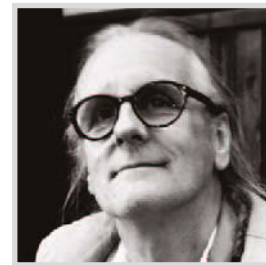
**Protect the vulnerable.** It's not just your health, but the health of others who may be more vulnerable.

**Continue to love our neighbour.** Respect their needs and concerns as much as your own - but safely. If you have a neighbour living alone and isolated they would appreciate a call.

**Be transparent and open** with one another, sharing accurate and up to date information.

**Be creative** when making decisions - "how can we do this differently in these circumstances".

# Parish Council



“Data not dates.” Yet another three-word Downing Street mantra. Let’s hope this one at least does the trick. Lockdown has been awful. Families and friends kept apart; perhaps loved ones sick and suffering; home schooling; those not furloughed forced to risk their own safety to survive.

But, as spring approaches, reminders of how it was this time last year begin to emerge. For some of us, at least. The garden, perhaps tended more than it had been for years; release from the trial of the daily commute; clear, aviation-free skies. Why, even Zoom calls weren’t so bad: remember family quizzes and on-screen drinks parties? And a kind of peace, not seen or heard for decades, descended upon our village.

But, of course, we were fortunate. It’s our privilege to live in a beautiful part of the country and although not everyone was free to enjoy gardens or moments of privacy within the home, it was possible to take our prescribed exercise in places those in cities could only dream about.

Once convenient rat-runs for commuters and school runs, our lanes became peaceful once more - amenities we could enjoy and in which we could take delight. Cyclists and riders could pass safely and pedestrians no longer had to fling themselves to the side to escape vehicles (if not always the mud they spattered everywhere). Footpaths, long under-used, were woken by walking boots and widened by wellies, as individuals and families discovered and followed them across fields and through woodlands.

Data and the weather permitting, we soon may be free to meet one another outside the Bull or Benenden’s and, perhaps, as summer comes, we may even get to enjoy each other’s company indoors. But let’s hope we remember some of the gains we and our environment made and that we hold onto them as firmly as we did when we had no alternative.

Russell Cruse, Parish Councillor

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk  
01580 240371 [clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org](mailto:clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org)

For more information see our website [www.benendenparishcouncil.org](http://www.benendenparishcouncil.org) or find us on Facebook

## Parish Council Meeting

Monday 19 April 2021,

on Zoom, 7pm

Please email the Clerk for access to the meeting





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# Helen Grant

## MP for Maidstone and the Weald

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# Talking Point



## On the challenges of coming back to Benenden and WiFi

When I left Essex for my parents' house last March, I thought it would only be for a few weeks. But almost a year and one prematurely terminated tenant agreement later, I'm still here. Normally, I'm working and living up there as editorial assistant at Health & Wellbeing magazine. Of course, though, I'm among the millions of young adults who have been forced to move back to the family home due to the pandemic which, needless to say, has come with its challenges.

With three working adults in the house (good luck WiFi), we all had a part to play in adjusting to our new set up. For example, my mum took charge of the weekly shop, I volunteered to cook most of the evening meals and my dad - the self-proclaimed 'kitchen manager' - kept the endless stream of cereal bowls and coffee cups from piling up on the surfaces. All of which collectively helped to avoid the situation of being asked to pitch in with household chores - something that makes a world of difference when you've spent the first half of your 20s learning how to successfully adult.

It was important for me to be able to maintain some of my independence during this time, so I continued to do my washing as I normally would and turned my childhood bedroom filled with dated photos and lilac wallpaper, into a space that worked for me. Privacy and boundaries also had to be respected, which has taken both parties time to get used to. My dad's crashed many a Zoom meeting with my colleagues (even when my door's been closed) and I'm sure my mum isn't best pleased when I forget she's presenting to the board and I'm singing I Want To Break Free by Queen at the top of the stairs.

That being said, staying safe in the village I grew up in has not only been a humbling experience, it's also brought back feelings of nostalgia and fond memories of when I was little. Seeing the old primary school gates have reminded me of the friendships I made back then that remain as strong as ever, and the vicar's house sparks images of dancing around the maypole.

Through daily walks within the centre of Benenden, I've been able to reconnect with my local community and help to support the precious essential services that have provided for us all at a time of need, even if it is just popping to Benenden's for milk or eggs.

So, while I wish the devastating events of 2020 hadn't reared their ugly head at all, there are some positives I can take from moving back home. Namely, forming our own family lunch club where we were able to sit out and enjoy each other's company while basking in the warm April sun; getting my adorable (if I do say so myself) kitten Teddy and making the most of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to enjoy the beautiful Kent countryside and the quaint village of Benenden itself.

Daniella Gray



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## Iden Green playground

Iden Green is to get its much-needed new children's playground - and it may be built as early as next month. The campaign to raise funds for it has been sufficiently successful to allow Benenden Village Trust - which is responsible for the playgrounds in both Benenden and Iden Green - to sign a letter of intent with Sovereign, the playground equipment supply and construction company that built Benenden's smart new playground.

Iden Green's old playground had to be closed last year because some of its equipment had become potentially unsafe. The new playground will have a substantially expanded range of modern equipment and safe surfacing. Sovereign is expecting to start work at the site in May and should have completed construction by the end of that month, weather permitting.

Unfortunately, the Iden Green Tennis Club car park will have to be closed for the two-to-three week building period to allow Sovereign to bring in equipment and a very large storage container. BVT recognises the inconvenience to club members and hopes they will be understanding. It expects some alternative parking can be made available for the duration of construction and will be able to give further details nearer the time.

An artist's impression of the playground (minus the picnic bench) can be seen at [www.benendenvillagetrust.org](http://www.benendenvillagetrust.org)

Donations to the appeal can be made at [www.wonderful.co.uk/pay?ref=1176351](http://www.wonderful.co.uk/pay?ref=1176351) or by cheque or bank transfer to BVT. If you have questions about the appeal, please contact Caroline Levett, the BVT manager ([bvttrust@gmail.com](mailto:bvttrust@gmail.com)). If you have questions about the building process please contact Julie Lewis ([julielewis@live.co.uk](mailto:julielewis@live.co.uk)), who heads the Friends of Iden Green Playground, a team of village volunteers which has done so much over the past year to bring the project to fruition.

Martin Dickson, Benenden Village Trust



In these exceptional and challenging times, our volunteers will not be collecting door to door.

Instead we have set up an online JustGiving page.

Our target is to raise £3,000 and all donations will go directly to Christian Aid.

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## Christian Aid Week

The climate crisis is leaving people hungry, homeless and heartbroken and many are struggling to survive without a reliable source of water. From drought to flooding, climate chaos robs people of control over their lives. In recent years, the drought has been so bad in some areas that it's caused a hunger crisis.

Please support my fundraising and help to provide reliable water source. Your gift will help support Christian Aid's vital work with some of the poorest communities in the world. You can donate to the Benenden & Iden Green JustGiving page online here:  
[www.justgiving.com/fundraising/cawbig](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/cawbig)

Donating through JustGiving is simple, fast and totally secure. Once you donate, they'll send your money directly to Christian Aid, so it's the most efficient way to give - saving time and cutting costs for the charity. Our target this year is £3,000. Thank you so much for your support.

Tracy Claridge, local Christian Aid Organiser  
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## Oak Barn wins ‘green’ award

Tim and Deana Maw are delighted that their wedding and events venue in Benenden - The Oak Barn, Frame Farm - has won the Sustainability and Environmental Impact Award at the prestigious Rural Business Awards.

These national awards recognise and celebrate the successes of businesses operating in the UK's rural economy. The judges were impressed that 'green' thinking was at the heart of Tim and Deana's business and that it had been their intention right from the planning stages. Their ongoing efforts to reduce waste and lower their carbon footprint, as well improving their natural capital by using sustainable actions, was seen as commendable.

"We are thrilled to win this award which recognises our achievements," says Tim. "Sustainability and the environment were at the forefront of our restoration plan and it is so fulfilling to host events with minimal impact on our fragile world. Every decision we make, however small, has an effect on our future."

[www.the-oak-barn.co.uk](http://www.the-oak-barn.co.uk)

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## Balmoral Cottage garden open days

As part of the National Open Garden Scheme, Charlotte and Donald Molesworth's beautiful garden will be open to visit from 12noon-5pm on 25 April and 12 May. Together they created the garden over 37 years ago and today its romantic and extensive topiary form the backbone for rich mixed borders. The whole garden is organically managed and particular attention has been given to the needs of nesting birds and small mammals.

Visit [www.ngs.org.uk/view-garden/34649](http://www.ngs.org.uk/view-garden/34649) to purchase tickets in advance. Or entry on the gate is £6 (adults) and £2.50 (children).

You can find Balmoral Cottage north of the village green, a few hundred yards down the track west of St George's Church.

## Talking Shop

Do you remember those far off days when you were able to enjoy some delicious refreshments at a table with others in a convivial atmosphere? You do? Well, Benenden's is delighted to announce that from 12 April, (notwithstanding last minute wobbles from the Government), we are intending to put some tables outside the café and serve you again.

Of course we are still subject to Covid-based rules, so for the time being, we will not be able to offer the use of the toilet to our customers. There will be a menu on each table and we ask that one person from the table comes in to order and pay and then returns to their seat while a member of staff brings out the order. Refreshments consumed on the premises will be charged at the eat-in rate whereas take-out prices will still apply otherwise. We will kindly ask you to leave trays etc. on the table when you have finished. Staff will clear and sanitise the area according to regulations before the next customer.

To begin with, the menu will be limited but as restrictions ease and weather allows, we hope to get back to as near normal as possible. Café opening hours will be from 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Saturday and 9am to 1pm on Sunday.

Shop opening times will be from 7.30am to 5pm from Monday to Saturday and 9am to 1pm on Sunday and we would like to thank all staff and volunteers who have worked so hard to get us through these difficult times. Thanks, too, to all those customers who have not only given us their much-needed custom but have shown their appreciation by kind words and even gifts.

So often we have heard people say that Benenden's has served the community not just as a place to buy things but as a place to make contact, have a chat or a joke and even to have a grumble about life! Benenden's has become something more than a shop to many people and it will be a real pleasure to see it once more become a place to linger and enjoy the simple pleasures of sitting round a table with others.

Bev Beveridge [info@benendens.co.uk](mailto:info@benendens.co.uk)

[www.benendens.co.uk](http://www.benendens.co.uk)



## Planning Matters

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

15 March 2021

- 21/00239/FULL Weavers, Mill Street, Iden Green. Removal of Condition 5 (access); Condition 3 (Landscaping) of 15 503322 FULL.
- 21/00202/FULL I Corner Cottages, Cranbrook Road. Replace decomposed wooden roof over front door on like-for-like basis; repair render on some damaged first floor side façade panels; replace existing wooden fence to front; re-pave front parking with pebbles.
- 21/00203/LBC I Corner Cottages, Cranbrook Road. Listed Building Consent: Internal and external repairs and renovations to include; updating electric wiring and new distribution board (including smart meter), install dedicated water supply and replace metal piping with copper piping; install gas line (including smart meter) for new central heating combination boiler and oven in kitchen; replace all radiators and some piping; removal of partition stud wall in kitchen; construction of new stud wall in kitchen to create new utility room and toilet; underfloor heating; new flagstone floor in kitchen; alterations to bathroom; lay tiles in bathroom; repair plaster on walls and ceilings throughout the cottage; repaint walls and ceilings; clean existing brick and wood floors; wax wooden floors; replace decomposed wooden window on second floor, rear façade; replace decomposed wooden roof over front door on like-for-like basis; repair render on some damaged first floor side façade panels; replace existing wooden fence to front; repave front parking with pebbles.
- 21/00465/FULL Benenden Girls School, Cranbrook Road. Variation of Conditions 2 (Approved Plans) and 17 (Level Details) of Planning Permission 18/01131/FULL - Music Hall - Reduction to external ramp to basement level, Extent of plant screen, Removal of high level glazing and brickwork

wall extended to parapet level, Courtyard/Amphitheatre Area - Removal of step in curved wall, School Hall - Geometry of metal fins, Removal of rooflight in link building, Removal of high level glazing.

- 21/00370/FULL Stable Cottage, The Green. Demolish and rebuild porch and rear conservatory; Reorganise internally to provide 3 bedrooms on ground floor and open plan kitchen, dining and living space on first floor; New windows to existing cottage and new extension to provide garden room and balcony.

## Striding out for Sightsavers

Some of you may know my mother Barbara Hare from the times she comes to stay and joins me to worship at St George's. During lockdown she had both cataracts removed and new lenses implanted, which at the age of 92 has restored her sight. Out of gratitude for this, she has now pledged to walk 100 miles in 50 days, in aid of Sightsavers. She will finish in early April, and we would be so pleased if you felt able to sponsor her in this epic journey.

Donating through her JustGiving page ([www.justgiving.com/fundraising/barbarah](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/barbarah)) is simple, fast and totally secure. Your details are safe, they'll never sell them on or send unwanted emails, and once you donate, they'll send your money directly to the charity.

Lizanne Brown

## Village Hall

Village hall staff and Trustees are elated that the village hall is set to reopen from 19 April for children's activities, and look forward to welcoming adults back from the middle of May.

Please contact me to make a booking or find out any more information:

Holly Clayson 07419 989830  
[enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org](mailto:enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org)  
[www.benendenvillagehall.org](http://www.benendenvillagehall.org)

## Benenden School

I hope you and your families are well. It was wonderful over the weekend to see and hear the site come alive again as so many of our pupils returned to school and it is almost beginning to feel normal again. It is a shame that our students living overseas are still not able to join us in person, but they are very much with us online and in spirit until we can welcome them back ready for the start of the summer term.

The adjustment after months at home will undoubtedly be difficult for a number of our pupils, as it will be for young people across the country, but I can see this is already being tempered by the excitement of seeing their friends again, resuming a proper routine and enjoying the highly regarded Benenden food once more!

It has been pleasing to see how well all year groups have settled back into the classroom. Meanwhile, in the absence of A Level and GCSE exams in the normal way, our Year 11 and 13 students have this week been taking assessments which will form part of the evidence for the grades they are eventually awarded.

Away from the academic side of things, the vibrant array of events that supplement life at Benenden has continued, most notably with a student-led Cultures in Industry discussion event as part of our online Cultures Week and then, during our first week back on site, one of our Sixth Form student societies streamed a live interview with Lord Dunlop, a former Under Secretary of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

We are also holding a series of pastoral talks for parents in which our staff responsible for caring for the girls share their expertise on a range of issues relating to supporting teenagers; given the fact that we are all living in a challenging climate right now, these have proved invaluable - certainly to me, as mother of two teenagers!

Samantha Price, Headmistress

## Orla's fabulous fundraising

When Iden Green resident Orla Feely set herself the challenge of walking every day of February, she didn't dream her exercise efforts would raise over £1,000 for charity.

The 15-year-old decided to go for a daily walk, come rain or shine, in a bid to fill her after 'school' and spare time with some exercise, while also raising money for a good cause.

Orla chose Cyclists Fighting Cancer, a small UK charity that enables children and young people living with cancer to regain their physical fitness, strength and confidence through cycling. The charity, founded in 2005, supports children during and post-cancer treatment by providing them with adapted bikes, trikes and other equipment.

Orla set herself the goal of raising a modest £200 but she received so much support that she soon smashed this target. By the end of the month Orla had walked 106km - the equivalent of walking from Benenden to London - and to date she has raised just over £1,100 for Cyclists Fighting Cancer.

Orla has been overwhelmed by the support and messages received, Thank you. If you would like to support Orla's fundraising, you can donate via her JustGiving page: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/orlafeely](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/orlafeely)

## Benenden Action Team

Don't forget that if you live in the village and need help or advice for any reason then please call the Benenden Action Team (BAT). BAT comprises a fabulous bunch of volunteers who are ready and willing to provide confidential support if needed. Whatever the issue we'll do our best to help.

Guy Hagan, BAT co-ordinator

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## Primary School

Monday 8 March marked the end of our second school closure and once again we were delighted to be able to open our doors and welcome all our pupils back and be united as a whole community.

The lockdown had been tough but we were determined to continue with school life as much as possible and just before the February half term, back by popular demand, we ran our second virtual Benenden Sleepover. There were over 150 children involved in the events throughout the evening, taking part in a number of activities, including den building, making armpit fudge (yes, really), quizzes, campfire entertainment, a bedtime story and of course, the unforgettable dancing with Mr Goodman, offering a welcome change from lockdown monotony and bringing the whole school back together again.

Another highlight of the term was World Book Day. We decided to make it a non-screen day and, although we were not in school to celebrate together, the teaching team made sure the children were able to enjoy lots of fun things. Instead of dressing themselves up, each child was asked to dress up a potato as their favourite character. Some even decorated a shoe box, or similar, to show that character in a scene from the book. The theme was Share a Story, so all the staff recorded themselves reading stories for the children, to which were added the Reading Star Challenge, Guess the Book from Its Cover and the Build a Reading Den, all of which brought remote learning to a fitting end.

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

## Players' online revue

Benenden Players have created an online revue to remind friends and family what passed for normality here pre-Covid. Catch the stars at [benendenplayers.co.uk](http://benendenplayers.co.uk), or the players' Facebook page.

## Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

Spring is sprung and, as Easter arrives it brings with it a renewed sense of hope and happiness for us all. Our children have returned to school, to be welcomed not only by their teachers and friends, but also a small medal, gifted by the PTFA to commemorate heroic homeschooling achievements. To show loving appreciation to the teachers for their heroic hard work, a fun thank-you video was created. The pupils were also provided with daffodils to take home and with which to adorn Mother's Day, to offer a happy surprise across Benenden and beyond.

Please join our Virtual Easter Balloon Race where, for £3, you can buy a balloon and monitor its progress from 4 April as it leaves Istanbul. Real weather data is used to determine race conditions and 1st prize will be £500, with additional prizes to be won. By simply participating at [www.ecoracing.co/user/page/1480](http://www.ecoracing.co/user/page/1480) we can all raise funds to support our school's projects for enhancing learning and wellbeing.

Similarly, our Easter raffle will raise valuable resources, and by texting BENENDEN to 70331 to buy a £3 ticket, you have a chance to win from a plethora of prizes including yoga sessions, farmshop gift vouchers, cinema tickets, and much more. If, as a local business, you are able to offer additional prize donations, please do get in touch with us before the random draw on 12 April. Thank you in advance for all your support.

Your favourite lockdown recipe can (and, arguably, really should) feature in our Benenden Cook Book, to be on sale early summer. Please send it to [cookbookptfa@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk](mailto:cookbookptfa@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk) by 15 April to ensure your culinary wizardry is included.

More information, visit school website and go to PTFA event section or scan QR code.

Chris Sevenoaks, Benenden CEP, PTFA



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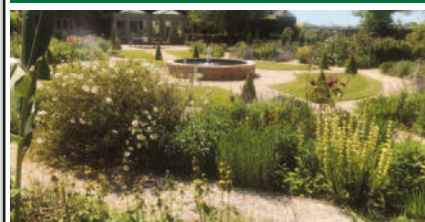
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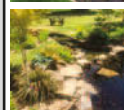
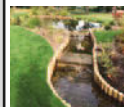


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[info@benendens.co.uk](mailto:info@benendens.co.uk)

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## Iden Green and Benenden WI

Recently members of the West Kent Federation met together virtually to learn about modern slavery, as it was one of the NFWI resolutions last year. Although it is something we do not think we encounter, the police are always pleased to listen if you have any suspicions that someone is showing signs of being mistreated. Please use the 101 number to report.

We joined Hawkhurst WI for a fascinating talk, A Schoolgirl's War, inspired by the scrapbook of a teacher at Maidstone Grammar School for Girls during World War II. Mary Smith, a retired headteacher, told how she had researched the history of the school during the war years and unearthed a great many artefacts, photographs, and paintings, as well as the air-raid shelter tunnels in the grounds of the school.

Thanks to Val who joined the West Kent Federation AGM on Zoom as our delegate. She said that it was a successful business meeting with various reports and plans on the agenda.

Obviously, we will respond with alacrity if necessary but, if we are still allowed to meet, we are proposing to re-commence physically with our Garden Party on 29 June (note the changed date). This will be our usual annual gathering but unfortunately it will only be for existing members as space is limited. We shall hold a raffle but will also need to have the AGM. Hopefully, the business side can be completed quickly and miraculously so that it doesn't impede on our social enjoyment. We invite prospective new members to join us in the Memorial Hall on 20 July.

Jackie Liffen 752232  
benendenwi@gmail.com

## Village Fete

If you have any spare books, CDs or children's DVDs, we would be pleased to sell them at the village fete, on Saturday 18 September. Please contact Lizanne Brown on 242908 to arrange delivery to the scout hut, or collection if you are unable to deliver.

Benenden Cricket Club strive to maintain the tradition of idyllic village cricket, which has been enjoyed on our glorious village green since 1798.

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If interested in playing, please contact our Club Captain, Richard Brunt on:

07834 572838 or email [bruntyhk@hotmail.com](mailto:bruntyhk@hotmail.com)




## Benenden Pre-School

Our Pre-School garden is bursting into colour. Beds and pots are hosting bright yellow daffodils, alongside pale primroses and purple crocuses which the children have enjoyed taking turns in watering. This week the children have been creating Mother's Day cards. In small groups they have in turn looked carefully at a vase full of daffodils and each child has been absorbed in recreating the flowers using a variety of materials and processes. Some are drawing lines in pencil, felt pen or paint to enclose a space and use the shapes to represent the flowers and their leaves. Others are interested in the texture of tissue paper, cutting or tearing it into pieces which they then scrunch up to make the daffodil trumpets. Many explore colour and investigate what happens when they mix colours, working out how to make green for the stalks. What unites them all is that they have constructed their cards with a purpose in mind: a special gift for their mothers.


Lucy Oakley, Supervisor

[supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk](mailto:supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk)

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## Benenden Hospital

World TB Day was celebrated on 24 March and there is significance in that for the village. The hospital's roots go back to when tuberculosis (TB) was a major world health issue and rife in the UK, and one man's vision became the catalyst for establishing Benenden Hospital.

In 1905, Charles Garland set up the National Association for the Establishment and Maintenance of Sanatoria for Workers Suffering from Tuberculosis Friendly Society (known today as Benenden Health). In 1906, the hospital's foundation stone was laid (this still has pride of place in the hospital today) and in 1907 we began welcoming post office workers who convalesced in the tranquil surrounding. I do often wonder what Charles Garland would make of the ultra-modern facilities and range of treatments we offer today.

Sadly, TB remains with us worldwide and TB Day is an opportunity to raise awareness of it. Currently, around one quarter of the world's population is infected and the European region includes nine of the 30 countries with the highest burden of multidrug-resistant TB in the world. Working together in partnerships, the WHO in Europe is assisting with scaling up rapid TB diagnostics tests, providing faster and more effective treatment, in order to make further progress in prevention and care, and boosting research to develop new and more effective vaccines.

It's good to know Benenden Hospital's rich history includes a period when we contributed to the worldwide fight against TB. If you'd like to contribute a story to our history, with anecdotes or through old photographs of the hospital you'd be willing to share, please send to [marketingbht@benenden.org.uk](mailto:marketingbht@benenden.org.uk) and why not take a look at our history via [www.benendenhospital.org.uk/about-us/ourhistory/](http://www.benendenhospital.org.uk/about-us/ourhistory/)

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

## Topical health

### Know your blood pressure numbers

It's extremely easy to dismiss high blood pressure as a minor inconvenience which does not bear worrying about. High blood pressure has the potential to cause damage to various organs in the body including the heart, brain, and kidneys and, untreated, can be responsible for causing heart attacks, stroke, kidney disease and even vascular dementia. Sadly, these can all affect people of any age. The best way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have it measured, although sometimes people develop signs and symptoms which may suggest it e.g. headaches, nosebleeds, dizziness, and chest pain.

The NHS cite high blood pressure as 140/90mmHg or higher as measured at your GP surgery, or 150/90mmHg or higher if you are over 80. If you do your blood pressure at home, you will want to see each of these figures reduced by 5mmHg. Ideally your blood pressure is best between 90/60mmHg and 120/80mmHg, or below 150/90mmHg in the over 80s (again with an additional 5mmHg taken off if you are at home). The first figure e.g. 120mmHg represents the the systolic pressure: the pressure in the arteries as the heart contracts; and the lower number, the diastolic pressure, is the pressure as the heart relaxes.

Blood pressure management is not all about taking medications, although there are a great many different types out there, for many of us the best way to manage our blood pressure is with some lifestyle changes. It is important to know your numbers because making changes can prevent mildly high blood pressure progressing to the point you need medication. Cutting down on things like salt, caffeine and alcohol, and not smoking, all have a big impact on blood pressure even before you get to the point of losing weight or increasing the amount of exercise you do.

Peter Ellis



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# Neighbourhood Development Plan

The Neighbourhood Development Plan will govern the shape and future of Benenden parish for the foreseeable future and villagers will have the chance to vote for or against it at an upcoming referendum (date to be confirmed). Here the plan's architects and opponents put their views for and against.

## Taking tough decisions for the good of the village

Those following Benenden's Neighbourhood Development Plan will know that some 25 volunteers have worked since 2017 to develop an NDP covering Landscape and Environment, Business, Infrastructure, Building Design and Housing Allocations. Minnie Garnier's Housing Allocation Group knew allocating sites for new homes would prove controversial. Around 70% of NDPs do not allocate sites, leaving this difficult decision to the local authority - it's much easier to blame 'the Council'.

Benenden volunteers are made of sterner stuff. Allocating sites means local control over development and enables us to include any extra 'windfall' development within our agreed target. Our volunteers were trained by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. They reviewed each of the 14 sites first offered by local landowners, on foot and through desk research. Sites were assessed on a standard approach supported by experienced planning consultants.

TWBC initially gave Benenden a target of 231 new dwellings and an additional 10% 'windfall'. All the knowledge we had gained from our assessments of the first sites helped us to negotiate hard and eventually our target was reduced to around 100 new dwellings, plus existing permissions.

During this process, eight more sites were offered, including some brownfield/previously developed land, so site selection required a balance. Planning guidelines reflect national policy and local public preference to prioritise

protection of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The same guidelines and preferences emphasise brownfield over greenfield sites.

The village also asked for affordable housing, ideally almshouses. We opted for four sites, each with between 18-25 new houses:

- Redevelopment of two brownfield sites at Benenden Hospital, outside the AONB, alongside provision of essential amenities;
- One brownfield site inside the AONB, near Benenden village;
- One greenfield site inside the AONB, near Benenden village, for almshouses - locally managed affordable housing, with 13 market houses included on site to finance the building of the 12 new almshouses required.

Those living near Benenden Hospital have been vocal, stressing the distance to shops and other amenities. They have suggested it is better to build on greenfield land inside the AONB, nearer Benenden and Iden Green, leaving brownfield land unused.

We, however, see this as a real opportunity to make best use of brownfield land in our parish, with control over sites that would otherwise be a target for developers who have no interest in the needs of the local community. Allocating these sites in our NDP gives us the best possible chance of managing housing numbers and design, as well as securing protection for wildlife and delivering improved amenities.

It is understandable that concerns are raised when change is proposed, but we believe the addition of around 50 new homes (with permission already granted for a further 24 homes) at East End will substantially improve the two sites and create a more cohesive community alongside the thriving enterprise of Benenden Hospital.

Paul Tolhurst

Chair, Benenden NDP Steering Committee  
[www.benendenneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.benendenneighbourhoodplan.org)

# Neighbourhood Development Plan

## The NDP questions that need answering

QUESTIONS TO PAUL TOLHURST CHAIR, BENENDEN NDP STEERING COMMITTEE

**Q.** We've heard that if the NDP was voted out at a referendum, then no new houses would be built in the village. Is this true? Definitely not. No plan means no control. Landowners put forward 22 sites for building and only a properly signed-off plan protects the parish from potentially large-scale speculative development.

**Q.** Why can't the houses required be scattered in single/small numbers around the village in numerous small developments? Our first priority is to provide affordable housing. This was made clear in feedback from village workshops and is part of national guidelines. Small sites don't have to include affordable housing, and usually consist of large executive-style homes, rather than the smaller homes our community requires. Selecting small parts of larger sites is just not smart, because developers often argue later that further building on the rest of the site is legitimate. We have filled four medium-size sites rather than allocating parts of sites which risk future sprawl, and far better to lose only one green field (for almshouses) than numerous green fields for piecemeal development purposes.

**Q.** Opponents criticise you for being the only NDP in the area to allocate sites. Why did you do this?

Around 70% of NDPs write general development policies, leaving tough decisions on site allocation to the Local Authority, but this gives away control. By allocating, the parish decides which sites are developed and we can create specific policies for each site.

**Q.** We're told that building "most new houses in one huge development in the East End" is a bad idea. Isn't it? Let's look at the maths. There are four sites



allocated in the NDP. Two sites adjacent to Benenden village will provide up to 45 new homes. Two sites at East End will provide up to 50 new homes, and are both 'brownfield' sites, outside the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A further 16 new homes in Benenden village and existing permission for 24 at East End pre-date the NDP and are in addition to the plan.

**Q.** You say that a strategy controlled by a robust NDP will force developers to provide funding and amenities for the village as part of their contracts. Are you sure this will happen? By allocating sites we can create specific policies requiring developers to fund infrastructure improvements needed to make each site work for us. The independent examiner ensures our policies are legal and reasonable, so once they are passed by the examiner and approved at referendum, developers are expected to meet our policy requirements.

**Q.** Opponents have also claimed that you plan to make Walkhurst Road one way and/or move the war memorial. Is any of this true? No and no!



## QUESTIONS TO HAZEL STROUTS AND FRIENDS OF THE EAST END

**Q.** You would like the NDP voted out. In that event who do you see regulating required house building in the village? The NDP needs amending. The National Planning Policy Framework requires that, “to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities”. It requires sustainable transport and good connectivity. The East End has no bus service and no footpath to the village. TWBC will continue to regulate housing, judging applications on their merits.

**Q.** If the NDP is not supported, TWBC will still insist on the village taking its share of housing required to meet Government quotas. Which of the 22 sites put forward by local landowners will you be recommending as suitable for building on? TWBC will insist on the village taking its share of housing with or without an NDP. TWBC planners should allocate sites with input from the village, not the other way round. Ours is the only parish to self-allocate. Recent data shows housing needs down and, in a post-Covid world, urban commercial space will be used for housing. Let's benefit from changes.

**Q.** Won't developers be delighted at the prospect of no NDP, no control over housing numbers, no need to pay for affordable housing or community projects? Voting against an NDP that proposes so many houses will reduce, not encourage, new building. If, as seems likely, the five-year supply of housing is reached on 1 April, there will be a presumption against further development. Affordable housing? All developers building more than ten houses contribute to the community.



**Q.** You describe the East End as an “entirely rural” area and yet it is dominated by a hospital that employs 300 people and provides parking and accommodation for many. How does this qualify as rural?

The East End is no hamlet. It covers almost a third of the parish, extending from Walkhurst along Goddards Green Road towards Tenterden, south towards Hole Park, then west to Walkhurst Road stream and back to Goddards Green. It is entirely rural except for the small enclave of the isolation hospital, founded where the fewest live. Walk a few yards in any direction - you are in open AONB country.

**Q.** You say that traffic in the village would increase if houses were built at the East End. Wouldn't traffic increase wherever houses were built in the village? No, because other sites are within walking distance of village amenities.

**Q.** If the NDP were voted against, what, in your view, would happen to the two brownfield sites in East End? Won't these still be developed but without any restrictions or benefit to the area?

There is already permission for 24 houses, an appropriate number. The hospital site is not industrial wasteland. It has four Local Wildlife Sites and established parkland. There is no good reason to demolish and rebuild existing 18 dwellings nor to add another 50 houses.

# Neighbourhood Development Plan

## An East End view

“There are parts of Britain I am always drawn back to. Kent’s Weald has a different feel from much of England. Here, close-knit patterns of small irregular fields are surrounded by tall thick hedges and parcels of ancient woodland ... In our archaic land, the age of fields extends all the way back to an era 900 years ago ... This land of thick hedges, odd-shaped fields and secret rivers has survived as north-west Europe’s most intact medieval landscape.

Yet on our watch ... ” \*

Yet on our watch, houses are going up all over the countryside. How to find sites? Our Neighbourhood Planning Committee is the only one in the borough which decided to allocate sites itself, placing most new houses in one huge development in the East End, on a brownfield site at the hospital. A good idea?

Development on brownfield makes sense if you have industrial land near settlements, but the hospital site lies in the countryside, half-way between two villages, and includes environmentally valuable land. Yes, the plan keeps new houses out of the village but it creates a different problem. New families will be forced to do everything by car. East End children, like others in the parish, attend our school. East Enders, like everyone else, engage with the village. There will be more car usage than ever. True, it may create similar problems for Biddenden but is that a comfort?

The East End is not a hamlet. There are only two settlements in our parish, which is why the parish council’s job is “serving the people of Benenden and Iden Green”. Because the East End is entirely rural, it was chosen as the site for an isolation hospital which recently built a new centre on greenfield. It now wants to build almost 100 houses on the parts it no longer needs. Aesthetically, the plan improves nothing: those ugly car parks remain.

In 2013, the hospital site was considered appropriate for 24 houses, which seems sensible, but the new draft plan includes 50



View of part of the south east hospital brownfield site



View of part of the south east hospital brownfield site

new houses in addition to the unbuilt 24, plus 18 houses to replace nine existing buildings (each containing two semi-detached homes for staff). This is far too many houses in one location.

Over time, a new settlement at the East End, as well as the village itself, will expand outwards. Settlements naturally expand outwards. You can try to halt the process, but you cannot stop it. This plan hastens the encroachment of that precious space in between.

In ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, killing the albatross was a crime. You could say exactly the same of plans to build a new settlement in the countryside. Vote against the Neighbourhood Plan.

Hazel Strouts and Friends of the East End  
T: @EastEndFriends1 F: EastEndFriends

\* Jim Dixon, The Times 31 May 2019

## Allowing Benenden to shape its own future

Tom Dawlings, our Borough Councillor, provides an update on TWBC's Local Plan

I think we all recognise the pressure on Government to build more homes. In turn the Government has pressured local authorities to deliver housing. TWBC's target has increased from 6,000 dwellings in the period of the last Local Plan to nearly 14,000 in the new plan period to 2038, and recent political wrangling has ended in no reduction to this target. But the borough is very constrained with 70% within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), or Greenbelt, or liable to flooding, so it was determined that the target could only be met through the creation of a new 'garden village' with appropriate infrastructure (transport links, schools, medical and recreational facilities, etc).

Early in the Local Plan process, TWBC launched a 'Call for Sites', inviting landowners to submit sites for development. In Benenden, a total of 22 were advanced, including two for the proposed garden village of potentially 2,500 dwellings. The Parish Council wisely decided that it would be prudent to create a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), enabling Benenden to shape its own future and TWBC's early decision against new garden villages in the AONB was a relief.

The Local Plan provides for a new garden village at Tudeley with most new housing in the north of the borough outside the AONB. It will deliver a five-year housing supply until 2038. This will bring more certainty to the planning process because, for as long as we lack a five-year housing supply, we risk planning applications being assessed not just against local planning policies, but also national policies which may not reflect the local context. The new Local Plan will remove this uncertainty but, until it is adopted, we remain vulnerable to speculative applications.

Residents around East End have raised concerns about the Local Plan, but the NDP



The Feoffee site on Walkhurst Road adjacent to Rothermere Close



View of the north east hospital brownfield site

restricts development to the area of the redundant hospital buildings and the curtilage of existing hospital houses. It preserves the green spaces and requires developers to make improvements to facilities at East End and better connections to Benenden village. This is important and necessary because the Hospital is outside the AONB (with the protections this provides) and national policies prioritise previously developed land for housing. Consent for the demolition of the old sanatorium building at the Hospital was given several years ago; the recent support for its preservation and conversion to homes I suggest underscores the point that residential is the best (or only) use for the site.

The Local Plan has received cross-party support and now moves forward for consultation in April/May. There are 71 sites allocated in the Local Plan and inevitably not every councillor nor every resident will support every site, but as someone who passionately believes in the protection of the High Weald AONB, I am relieved that the Local Plan allocates the bulk of development on land outside the AONB.



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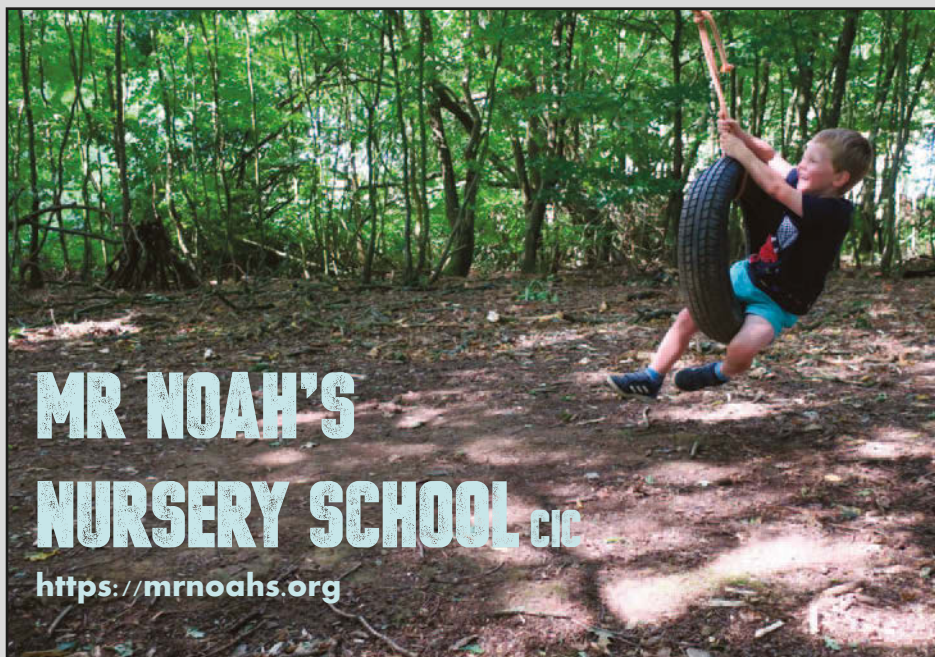
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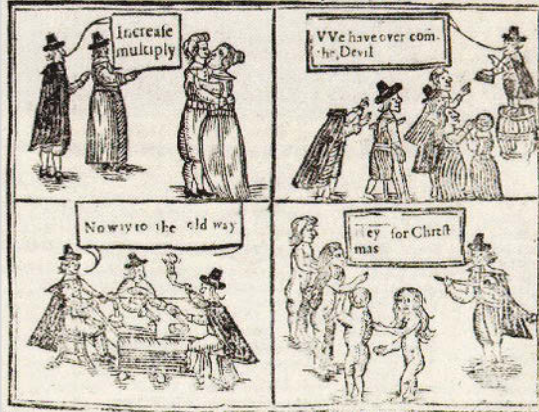


## The Ranters Declaration, 2

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Their new Oath and Protestation; their strange Votes, and a new way to get money; their Proclamation and Summons; their new way of Ranting, never before heard of; their dancing of the *Hay* naked, at the white *Lion* in Peticoat-lane; their mad Dream, and Dr. *Pockridge* his Speech, with their Trial, Examination, and Answers: the coming in of 3000. their Prayer and Recantation, to be in all Cities and Market-towns read and published; the mad-Ranters further Resolution; their Christmas Carol, and blaspheming Song; their two pretended-abominable Keyes to enter Heaven, and the worshipping of his little majesty, the late Bishop of *Canterbury*: A new and further Discovery of their black Art, with the Names of those that are possessed by the Devil, having strange and hideous cries heard within them, to the great admiration of all those that shall read and peruse this ensuing subject.

Licensed according to order, and published by M. Stubbs, a late fellow-Ranter



Imprinted at London, by J. C. MDEL. 1650

## Ranting and raving around Rolvenden?

Was this area a hotbed of Ranters and loose morals in the 1600s?

Russell Cruse delves into the history books to investigate.

The Act of Supremacy of 1534 made Henry VIII supreme head of the Church in England, leading to a period of religious and political turmoil. By 1649, decades of capricious rule by the Stuart dynasty had increased divisions, resulting in two bloody and costly civil wars. Charles I was executed, leaving England to be "Governed as a Commonwealth and Free-State, by ... the Representatives of the People in Parliament ... without any King or House of Lords".

Politics and religion were inseparable. Protestant sects had been around for decades, some with a greater following than others: Seekers, Levellers, Diggers, Muggletonians and Quakers are familiar names from the many groups that sought to "turn the World upside-down".

Most eyebrow-raising, however, were the Ranters. They recognised none of the morals that society generally accepted, and meetings (generally in alehouses) involved drinking,

smoking, swearing and the practice of what we today would call 'free love'. They acknowledged no social distinctions and were "associated with revelling, roaring, drinking, whoring, swearing and all manner of wickedness".

However, George Fox carried many of the Ranters' beliefs with him when he founded the Religious Society of Friends - better known as Quakers. Both groups professed fellow feeling and concern for the poor, which endeared them to the common folk and caused some of the better off a deal of anxiety. In 1653, Fox announced: "O ye



great men and rich men of the earth! Weep and howl for your misery that is coming ... The fire is kindled, the day of the Lord is appearing, a day of howling ... All the loftiness of men must be laid low."

As late as 1657, Thomas Collier felt free to state: "Any that know the principles of the Ranters may easily recognize that Quaker doctrines are identical ... no Christ but within; no



Scripture to be a rule; no ordinances, no law but their lusts, no heaven nor glory but here, no sin but what men fancied to be so, no condemnation for sin but in the consciences of ignorant ones, [but Quakers] smooth it over with

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→ an outward austere carriage before men, but within are full of filthiness.”

John Bunyan denounced both sects because they permitted women ministers, conceding, however, “had not the Quakers come, the Ranters had over-run the nation”.

A prominent Quaker fell “into too much familiarity and conversation with some women-kind, especially such as (it seemed) were somewhat inclined to a spirit of Ranterism. He grew loose and ... committed lewdness with a servant-maid”, and Mary Todd, a London lady at a meeting “pulled up all her clothes above her middle, exposing her nakedness to all in the room”. Far too Rantery; although for Ephraim Pagitt, “the Ranter is more open and less sour” than a Quaker.

You will know of Ranters Oak and Ranters Hall on the Rolvenden Road and perhaps of Ranters Hall on Ranters Lane in Goudhurst. One might thus suspect that the Weald was itself a hotbed of Ranterism. Sadly, not so. There is little evidence of Ranter activity in this area but there was, it would appear, no shortage of Quakers.



The activities of the Society of Friends put a number of Wealden noses out of joint in the 17th century, refusing to attend church and, far worse, refusing to pay tithes to the Church. Many were persecuted and imprisoned until eventually it was decreed that the law of the land could not be used to condemn such actions. Thereafter, Quakers would often champion those imprisoned for being unable to pay their tithes, leading to still greater animosity towards them from landowners, magistrates and the Anglican Church. No surprise, then, that following the Restoration, both Crown and Church sought to reinstate laws that had fallen into disuse during the interregnum.



A particular case occurred in Cranbrook in 1681. One John Aford, a Quaker shopkeeper, was convicted of recusancy (refusing to attend church) “by direction of an Incensed Judg Cheife Justice Pemberton to a soft pliable Jury that minded noe oath”. Bailiffs descended on Aford’s shop, attempting to seize the contents in recompense, even though the value of the goods far exceeded the cost of the fine. A prominent supporter (although not a member) of the Quakers, Nicholas Bishopp, stepped in and bought the contents of the shop before the goods could be seized, paid off Aford’s fine and returned all the goods to him. It’s worth noting that Bishopp also sold High Polls farm to a Quaker named James Stone, who bequeathed it for the relief of the poor. None of this went down well with the powers that be.

Of course, the term ‘Quaker’ had been a term of abuse, but once it had become more acceptable, it appears highly likely that the term ‘Ranter’ (as it had been earlier in the century) was being used as a term of abuse for Quakers long after Ranterism had ceased to exist. It is plausible that those places where Quakers lived or held their meetings would have had the epithet ‘Ranter’ attached to them by those opposed to their philosophy.





## Out in the cold with the wild camels of the Gobi

Benenden's John Hare OBE, co-founder of the Wild Camel Protection Foundation, tells the story of a memorable Mongolian adventure with the BBC's Perfect Planet Team

Wild double-humped camels mate at the coldest time of year. It's in mid-January, when Mongolia's temperature plummets to -40 degrees Celsius or thereabouts, that the bull camel's amorous feelings are aroused. Indeed, owners of double-humped domestic Bactrian camels resort to pouring buckets of iced water over their animals' hindquarters if their domestic bull is lacking in enthusiasm.

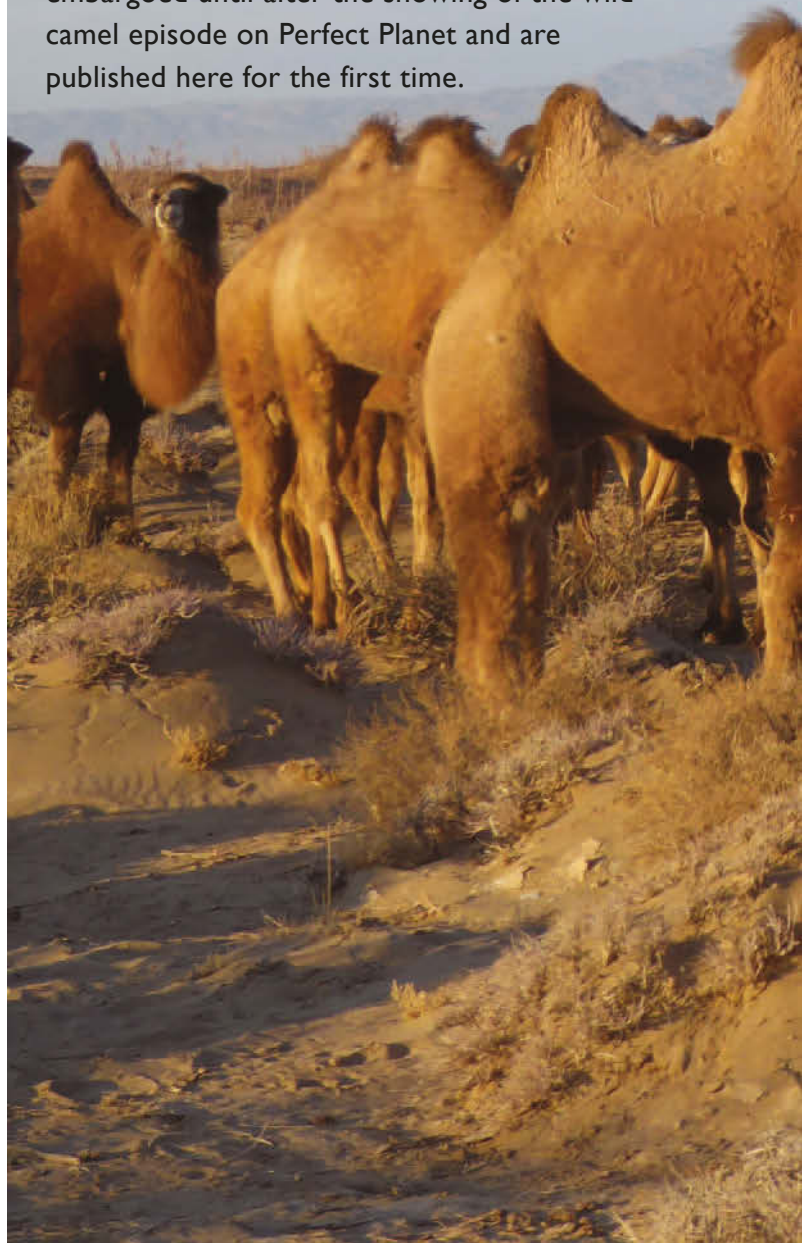
The three-man Perfect Planet team had travelled to Mongolia to film the amorous peculiarities of the wild camel and I joined them at our charity's breeding centre in Zakhyn Us, where our bull has a harem of 16 females. Fortunately, although it was only -35, he was well and truly aroused, and over two weeks the crew captured appropriate footage and were immensely satisfied with the results.

They then set off to photograph wild camels undertaking similar activities in their natural surroundings, although I was very dubious. Wild camel habitat in Mongolia is 55,000 square kilometres, roughly the size of Wales, in a region called the Great Gobi Strictly Protected Area 'A', or more simply, Gobi 'A', and it isn't easy to find a population of approximately 450 in such a vast desert. Moreover, if found, they would be unlikely to put on a display for the cameras.

The team were fortunate, though, in that they had with them our 'camel man', Dr Adiya

Yadamsuren, who is widely regarded as the most knowledgeable wild camel expert in Mongolia and, that rarity, an academic man of action.

They disappeared into Gobi 'A' for almost six weeks, but initially the team found few tracks and no wild camels at all, let alone ones inclined to mate. However, after three weeks their luck changed when they experienced a day of wind-driven snow. Snow does not settle for long in the Gobi, but if there is a strong wind it drifts up against the sides of mountains, and when all other water sources are frozen solid, snow slush is compelling and palatable for thirsty wild camels. Wonderful footage was captured of a herd heading for the hills in their search for snow, and because of the crew's inability to find wild camels mating in the wild, the theme of the sequence was changed from Wild Camels' Mating Habits to The Search for Snow. My personal 'behind the scenes' photographs were embargoed until after the showing of the wild camel episode on Perfect Planet and are published here for the first time.





How, you may ask, did I come to be involved?  
By the greatest good fortune I had made four



pioneering trips of research on the wild camel during the 1990s in both China and Mongolia and had concluded that action needed to be taken or the species would become extinct.

In 1997, Kathryn Rae, an environmental lawyer, and I established a UK charity, the Wild Camel Protection Foundation (WCPF), based at School Farm in Benenden, with its mission to save the wild camel from extinction. Much has been achieved and not just the establishment of a 155,000 square kilometre reserve in China's former nuclear test area of Lop Nur.

In the Gobi 'A' buffer zone in Mongolia,



we have set up the breeding centre. Starting with eight wild camels in 2004, the centre now holds 35 and has reached its holding capacity. In addition, eight captive-bred wild camels have been released into Gobi 'A' and a new extension is shortly to be opened 350 miles away.

In 2008, after five years of genetic testing based on samples provided by the WCPF, the wild camel was shown to be a new and separate species of camel. It is not the wild Bactrian camel (*Camelus bactrianus ferus*) - just the wild camel (*Camelus ferus*). Genetically it is as different to the Bactrian camel as we are to a chimpanzee.

The wild camel is the ultimate survivor, which is why it was featured on Perfect Planet. It is man who has forced the Chinese wild camels into the very heart of the Gashun Gobi (the bitter desert) and Lop Nur. Here, approximately 600 wild camels survive on saltwater slush, with a higher content of salt than seawater, in an otherwise waterless area. The wild camels in Lop Nur survived over 43 atmospheric nuclear tests, some of which were more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, and unlike in the human population surrounding Lop Nur, we saw no sign of horrific radiation-induced mutations in the herds of wild camels.

Many scientists believe that the ability of the wild camel to drink salt water, which no other mammal will touch, and their survival in the face of nuclear annihilation, warrant intensive scientific study. Indeed, the wild camel might hold secrets that could be of immense value to man as he blunders into an uncertain future.

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LEVEL 2 TECHNICIAN

## Keeping a step ahead of foot problems

As a foot care practitioner, I come across many unhappy feet. Lockdown sadly brought more challenges for many of my clients, and feet suffered through neglect. Basic nail trimming for some people is a difficult task and unruly, long nails can cause discomfort and pain, but



there are a few tips and tricks you can do yourself at home to help maintain good foot health, particularly if you can't get to see your foot health practitioner.

For sufferers with hard skin build-up and calluses, soak feet in warm water as often as you can - daily is ideal but certainly every few days. Add Epsom salts to the water as they soften the skin, ease pain related to



inflammation, have anti-fungal properties and can help relieve stress. Use a bucket or baking tray and soak your feet if you can't get in the bath.

Feet should be checked daily, especially if you are diabetic or have a medical condition that affects your heart or circulatory system, or you lack mobility. Ask a friend, family member

or carer to examine your feet and toes, look out for trauma, cuts, sores, discoloured skin or swelling, anything that isn't 'usual'. Remember, anything that's not normal to you, isn't normal and should be checked out immediately.

To help with dry, cracked skin, use a good moisturiser, apply liberally and wear cotton socks and sleep in them; if you can't tolerate socks at night, wear for a few hours during the day. This allows moisture to really penetrate and soften hard skin.

Athlete's foot thrives in damp, warm conditions, so a daily wash is important, but always dry your feet after bathing, especially between the toes, using a hair dryer if you can't reach down - fresh cotton socks daily will also help.

Add a dash of white vinegar to your foot bath as this works as a mild exfoliator, helping with warts and calluses, while soaking for 15 to 20 minutes may help kill bacteria or fungi contributing towards foot odour and athlete's foot.

Keep your feet elevated if you suffer with swollen feet /ankles, as this will

decrease pain and swelling - try to keep them at the level of your heart. Lying on a couch with pillows under your feet is better than a chair and a foot stool - try to elevate feet for two to three hours a day.

Justine Oliver TCFCP Dip, MCFH

07760 340119 [justineoliver.fhp@gmail.com](mailto:justineoliver.fhp@gmail.com)

**Justine**, who lives in Rolvenden Layne, came to focus on foot care two years ago after many years providing advanced beauty treatments. Her study of nutrition included a focus on diabetes which included the importance of looking after feet and she found that she loved the specialisation. "There is a big need for professional foot care, not just by the elderly, but by all ages and particularly those that spend a lot of time on their feet. I look after a lot of runners and workmen who suffer wearing metal toe-capped boots all day," she says. Justine visits clients in their homes and has been very busy through lockdown. "While stressful in some cases, it's been very rewarding too as for many of my clients I have often been the only person they have seen for many days."



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## Burgundy 2019: small but perfectly formed

Nick Hillman is one of the Benenden community shop wine suppliers and is the CEO of his own company Wineservice. Some of his producers have presented their wines at the Benenden wine tastings. Here he tells us about Burgundy and the 2019 vintage.

The Burgundy winegrowing region, with its unique heritage, is ideally situated just one hour from Lyon and two hours from Paris. Since the Middle Ages, it has been located on a primary commercial axis linking Northern Europe with the Mediterranean basin and an historical trading route between the Rhone Valley and the Paris basin.

Burgundy is 150km long and enjoys a climate that is well-suited to vine cultivation. The convergence of Mediterranean, continental and oceanic influences plays a major role in the aromatic richness and reputation of its wines.

The 2019 vintage was a unique and changeable year that brought its own stresses for a great many producers. Harvesting, however, took place without a hitch and the wines are promising, with freshness but an indulgent side to boot, exceeding winemakers' expectations. Hearteningly, since the start of the 20th century, every vintage that has ended with a '9' has been wonderful, and the only downside to this one is the below-average volumes.

January was warm and dry, and after a cooler spell in early February, things turned very warm,

leading to a problematic early season, as the region was badly affected by frost, with a sudden cold burst from Siberia on 4-5 April. The regional and village appellations were hit particularly hard and Chassagne-Montrachet fared worst, with 50-60% losses.

The flowering was difficult, strung out through June, with the weather now windy and cold. As well as some coulure (the failure of grapes to ripen after flowering), there was quite a lot of millerandage (variations in size and maturity of grapes), so a very small crop was always likely.

The rain continued until the end of June. The skies then cleared and all temperature records were broken, with peaks of 42 deg C. Despite earlier excess rainfall, hydric stress was now the fear, but crucially, unlike other very hot vintages like 2003, the vines did not completely close down, so phenolic ripening continued. Whilst some growers continue to strip vines of some of their leaves, those that encourage canopy growth to act as an umbrella shade produced the best results.

The grapes that entered the wineries in 2019 were perfectly ripe with great concentration, but they were small with little juice, producing a vintage of high quality and low volume.

If you would like to place an order for any 2019 Burgundy wines or ask any questions, please contact:

Nick Hillman 01342 837333  
[sales@wineservice.co.uk](mailto:sales@wineservice.co.uk)





# In Your Garden

## Dealing with tricky situations

Probably the question I'm most often asked relates to areas where the soil is 'tricky'. This could be dry shade, it could be forever sandy or you could be blessed with sticky clay whilst sited on a flood plain! There are numerous parameters to 'problem soil', but I watched a brilliant programme once given by Carol Klein, which turned any negative into a positive - or you can read Beth Chatto on how she dealt with difficult areas in the wilds of East Anglia.



Some problems will need proper addressing, for example a badly drained lawn or a compacted surface due to past

vehicular access - for these, help from a reputable contractor will be required and you will find the difference immediately worthwhile. Otherwise it is simply a matter of choosing the right plants for the conditions.

I understand that looking it all up online can be problematic. I often find conflicting advice on plant heights and spreads, but mostly it's the soil requirements - how many times do I read 'likes a free-draining soil' for everything from cherry laurel to roses! - so I would ditch the internet and go straight for the book shelves. My list would be Chatto, Christopher Lloyd (or anyone from Dixter), any head gardener from a large garden, plus Klein or Ursula Buchan. Sarah Raven has good advice and I like Dan Pearson, too, the trick being to read from someone who has actually gardened for many years.

I have a problem area to deal with at a client's house in East Sussex. They have a bank sloping at a 50-degree angle down to a pond and the ground is sticky clay with numerous

boulders (presumably to act as break points). My solution is to plant a bank of dogwoods, with the intention that their creeping root systems 'knit' together to form a stabilised bank. There will then be pockets of soil for any self-seeders such as primroses for spring and any wild flowers that could fly in for the summer. The dogwoods will love the moisture-retention and look good even in winter. The only problem I envisage will be how I scale the site to plant, but I will have to work that one out on the day.

If you have boggy ground then look to marginal plants such as loosestrife or something tough like a lysimachia. Dry shade in rooty ground is best left to creeping ivies, periwinkles or epimediums, or lily of the valley and sweet woodruff if you can wait while they slowly establish.

If you have constantly baked soil in a windy site, desiccation could well be a problem, unless you look

to coastal gardens for inspiration. Santolinas, sea kale, verbenas, low-growing fleshy sedums or willow stipas will



all relish the conditions. Choose small plants, preferably in 9cm pots, otherwise they could be difficult to dig in amongst tree roots or into the tough dry soil. Water in well, mulch and keep checking on the moisture levels in their first year, then they should be good to go.

Make the most of what your garden has to offer and you will be rewarded with colour and texture throughout the seasons.

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Above: Putting best feet forward: The Oak Barn, Frame Farm won the Sustainability and Environmental Impact Award at the Rural Business Awards; Orla Feeley on one of her fundraising daily walks; Barbara Hare at 92 walking 100 miles for Sightsavers  
 Front cover: Vibrant after prolonged dormancy. Photograph: Amelia Thomas