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Editorial



You may notice a shortage of seasonal good wishes in this Christmas issue from the clubs and organisations who regularly contribute to the Benenden Magazine. If this seems a touch unfriendly, then let me explain: everybody wanted to wish you a happy festive season, so much so that if we'd let them all do it, we'd have needed to put on an extra two pages just to fit them all in.

So, I'd like to do it for them; to say thank you to all our loyal readers (okay, I know this is delivered for free to your door every month, so you don't have much choice, but we get so much grateful feedback that we feel confident you're loyal) and to wish you all a very merry Christmas and the happiest new year anybody can have, hoping this crazy world doesn't implode in the meantime.

It's been another year of wonderfulness in Benenden. I noticed an online newspaper recently decided that our village was the most marvellous place to live in the county, or the entire universe, or something; but then we knew that anyway. We've got so many good people working on our behalf in positions of responsibility; others organising entertainment, like fetes and quizzes and film showings and wine tastings, usually for charity; not to mention the pubs, the small businesses and the community shop, the café and all the volunteers who work there.

True, we're about to lose our lovely butcher's shop (of which more next month), but we'll survive and thrive, because the village, as ever, will pull together, not just at Christmas but all year round.

I've never invited any friends to Benenden who haven't left thinking this is a place they'd love to live, and I really can't imagine living anywhere else myself. So, let me - on behalf of everybody who works on this magazine, and everybody whose words were trimmed this month - wish you a wonderful festive time and then another year of being here.

Peter Thomas, Co-Editor

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

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Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

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

Churchwarden: David Collard 241944 d.collard49@btinternet.com

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

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com

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

Sunday I December 8am Communion I 0am All-age 5pm Advent Service of Light

Communion

Sunday 8 December 8am BCP Communion 10am Morning Worship Sunday 15 December 8am Communion 10am Sung Eucharist

Tuesday 17 December 7.30pm Parish Carol Service

Sunday 22 December 8am Communion 10am Morning Worship

Christmas Eve 3pm Crib Service 11.30pm Communion

Christmas Day 8am Communion 10am Morning Worship

followed by Communion

10am Benefice Communion

Morning Prayer 8am Mondays and Fridays, and also on Christmas Eve

Mission Church, Sandhurst

Sunday 29 December

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

Morning Prayer 8am Tuesdays and Wednesdays, but not Christmas Eve Mid-week Communion 10am Tuesdays, but not Christmas Eve and 31 December

Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

The I0am Morning Worship is broadcast on our YouTube channel: search 'Iden Green Congregational Church'.

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

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Baptisms 17 November Darcie and Albert Norris

Church Letter



There is never a place for covering up abuse

Today it was announced that the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Revd Justin Welby, has resigned. If you take the time to read the Makin Report - the independent review into the Church of England's handling of the serious abuse by the late John Smyth - there can be no doubt that the Archbishop had to resign. Having met and spoken with Justin a number of times, I am saddened that his ministry has ended in this manner. My first thought last week when the report was published - and regrettably the Archbishop's initial words - made it for me inevitable and crucial that he should step aside.

Anyone who says that 'safeguarding is not important', well, the John Smyth case and the resignation of the Archbishop clearly show that safeguarding is not only important, it is, unfortunately, essential. We must have, at the heart of everything, the needs of victims of abuse perpetrated by anyone in the church. The Archbishop has resigned over the church's failings and his own failings, but every single one of us is responsible for the safeguarding of those who are vulnerable and those who have been abused.

One shocking statement within the Makin Report said: "Despite the efforts of some individuals to bring the abuse to the attention of authorities, the responses by the Church of England and others were wholly ineffective and amounted to a cover up." It highlighted a comment made by a now deceased cleric who was aware in the 1980s of the extent of the abuse: "I thought it would do the work of God immense damage if this were public." An appalling attitude: cover up and collusion, when calling out this evil was required. The CoE has got it wrong for centuries; we need, for Christ's sake, and for the beginning of healing of the hurt caused, to start getting it right.

If this has raised personal issues for you, please come and speak to me. If it has opened wounds and you need to report something, please have the courage to do so; I can help you with that if you wish. If you want to do it through one of the safeguarding officers in the Diocese rather than through me, then contact Paul Brightwell: pbrightwell@diocant.org, 07398 009951, or Fiona Coombs: fcoombs@diocant.org, 07548 232395. Or if you wish to contact Keith Makin, the man who has led this inquiry, he can be contacted on a dedicated confidential email at: keith.makin@independentreviews.live, or by phone on 07713 149683.

The CoE's Lead Safeguarding Bishop, Joanne Grenfell, says: "Every member of the church is responsible for a culture in which victims are heard, responded to well, and put first: there is never a place for covering up abuse." I truly hope we have all learnt that at last. We can't undo the wrongs of the past; we can each play our part to work for a safer culture, community and church.

I wish this could have been a happier letter for the December issue of the magazine, but we live in the real world, and these evils need speaking about. I hope to see you at some of the services throughout Advent and Christmas. God bless.

Village Calendar

December		
Sunday I	Advent Carol Service: The Service of Light, St George's Church, 5pm	p.9
Tuesday 3	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 3	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Wednesday 4	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Christmas Lunch, The Bull, Benenden, 12.30pm	p.23
Saturday 7	Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra, St George's Church, 3pm	p.9
Saturday 7	Board Games Evening, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Monday 9	Parish Council Meeting, Memorial Hall, 7pm	
Tuesday 10	Benenden's Community Shop Volunteers' Carol Singing Social, Benenden's	
	Community Shop, 6pm	p. 17
Wednesday I I	Benenden Gardening Club, lan Florey 'Botanicals: a garden in your glass',	
	Benenden Hospital Quinlan Centre, 6.30pm	p. 15
Thurs 12- Fri 13	Hemsted Park, Faulty Towers The Dining Experience,	
	Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7pm	
Saturday 14	Music Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Saturday 14	Hemsted Park, Beyond The Barricade, Benenden School Theatre, 7.30pm	
Tuesday 17	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 17	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 17	Christmas Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.9
Tuesday 17	Merry and Bright, Christmas Party, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.23
Tuesday 17	Parish Carol Service by Candlelight, St George's Church, 7.30pm	
Thursday 19	Hemsted Park, The Scummy Mummy Christmas Show,	
	Benenden School Theatre, 7.30pm	
Saturday 21	Christmas Party and Raffle, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Christmas Eve	The Crib Service, St George's Church, 3pm	p.17
Christmas Day	Christmas Lunch, Memorial Hall, 12.15pm	
Saturday 28	Social Evening, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 29	The Angry Whelk Fresh Fish Stall, Benenden Village Hall, 12-2pm	p.9

Iden Green Toddler Group

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

Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-11.30am

Benenden Bowls Club

Thursdays, April-September, on the recreation field, practice night, 6pm

Cakes & Chaos: Café and Toddler Group

Fridays during term time in St George's Church, 9-1 lam

Parish Council



I was saddened to learn that our village butcher, Ward and Sons, will close after Christmas this year. Ever since I was lucky enough to move to this area 30 years ago I have been a regular customer for my weekend joint. At first I travelled up from Sandhurst, now I pop in on my Saturday morning bike loop after stopping for papers at the community shop. It will be a great loss to Benenden, as I think we would all agree that it has been an integral piece of village life for as long as most of us can remember. I for one will raise a glass of Georgian red from the excellent collection of wine at Benenden's with my next delicious sausage and mash - they are the best bangers I have ever tasted.

Good luck for your retirement, gents, you will be missed by all.

On other village matters I would just like to thank all the fantastic volunteers who turned out for the parish council-led litter pick recently. We had over 30 pickers, so many in fact that there were a couple of disputes over assigned sections, thankfully settled amicably. We collected 25-30 sacks and various other discarded road signs/sandbags etc, as ever. Amongst the stranger items found was an item of discarded ladies' underwear, so if anyone is missing these, please contact Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, who are keeping them in a safe place in anticipation of collection.

Of course, all the usual village events will carry on as ever next year. One to look out for soon is the fund-raising quiz on 10 January for our thriving allotments, held jointly with the Benenden Gardening Club. You may want to brush up on your horticulture, although there will be non-plant-based questions as well!

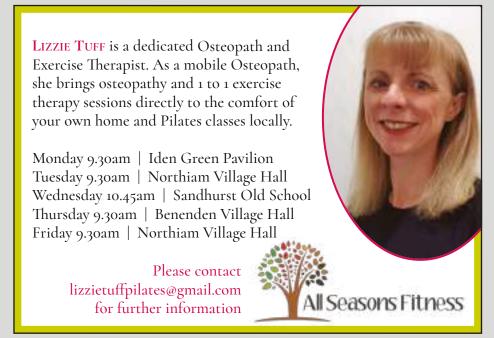
In the meantime, a Happy Christmas to you all from everybody on the PC. Rest assured, we'll be working hard on your behalf in 2025, as ever.

Stephen Cochrane, Parish Councillor

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

Parish Council Meeting Monday 9 December, Memorial Hall, 7pm







Talking Point



Are lorries a problem?

There have been reports of heavy lorries taking some of the more unsuitable routes in the parish. Some of us may have occasionally witnessed inordinately large vehicles attempting to negotiate narrow roads and may have jumped to one of several conclusions: Are they bent upon finding a short-cut and have come unstuck? Have they followed poor directions or fallen victim to the idiosyncrasies of satellite navigation systems? Have they suddenly been halted by a 'road closed' sign?

Most of us know this problem: being forced to follow an entirely unsuitable series of diversions - usually encountering and being hindered by those who, for the same reason, are coming from the other direction. Worse, contractors don't always indicate any alternative and, like rats in a maze, drivers are left to find their own way out. So it may be that lorry drivers are as pained to be making their journey as residents are to witness it.

And let's remember that, in a parish containing many widely dispersed agricultural and other businesses, not to mention building projects, it's very likely that large vehicles are engaged in commerce; an enterprise that they are fully entitled to undertake, whatever the difficulty of access. So, it's important not to jump to conclusions and, if the occasional vehicle finds its way, for whatever reason, onto our narrow lanes, it can't really be said to be a nuisance, although surely inconvenient at the time.

Should it happen regularly, without legitimate reason, that's a different matter. Kent County Council runs a scheme called 'Lorry Watch', which can be organised under the aegis of KCC, should they believe that it's warranted. It's unlikely the odd vehicle would trigger any action but, if large vehicles are becoming a nuisance in your area of the village, local councillor Ellen Neville would like to hear from you (ellen.neville@tunbridgewells.gov.uk).

Only with clear evidence and information can KCC act, so in addition, should a 'Lorry Watch' be thought necessary, she will require volunteers to take part. If you think you could also help with this, please get in touch with her.

Russell Cruse





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News and Events

Christmas village lunch

The Christmas village lunch will be on 17 December at 12.30pm in the village hall. All are welcome and we can provide lifts for those who need one. Just let us know. If you have not put your name down already, please let me know you will be coming by 4 December if possible. We look forward to seeing you.

Sheila Hume 854627

The Bull suffers double hit

The Bull has suffered major problems recently which have severely impacted their business. The water-leak repair works blocked their car park for many days and affected water supplies. These have now been completed. Plus, technical issues disconnected their landline for over a week (which may still be the case as you read this) which means customers cannot reach them to book tables or festive events at what is their busiest time of the year.

Mark and Lucy have set up a new dedicated mobile to call to make bookings, 07729 353541, or email: enquiries@thebullatbenenden.co.uk. They thank you for your patience and support.

Village litter pick

The village litter pick's 'Grand Panjandrum' (aka Stephen Cochrane) extends his huge thanks to all those who took part in the autumn village litter pick. It was the largest turnout ever, with 30 volunteers scouring the village from end to end and collecting bags and bags of litter - including some intriguing objects! They were then rewarded with refreshments in the café. This endeavour makes a big difference and helps keep our village beautiful. Next is the spring litter pick (date to be announced on these pages), when we hope you'll be able to give an hour or two of your time.





Fresh fish stall

In the village hall carpark from 12-2pm on the last Sunday of every month you will now be able to buy a wide range of fresh and smoked fish, along with dressed crab and a variety of shellfish, from Mark Wilson of The Angry Whelk.

Mark comes up from Bexhill and is very happy to take orders in advance if you wish to collect it from him on the day. You can find more details about his range of seafood here: www.angrywhelk.co.uk.

Mark Wilson 07870 274864







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Benenden Players

Just when you think all the fun of the festive season is over, we are inviting you all to join us for an evening (4 January) or a matinee (5 January) of fun, frolics and all kinds of tomfoolery (see advertisement on page 11 for ticket details).

Benenden village hall will come alive to the sounds of titillating singing and lively jazz and you will be entertained by a multifarious assortment of sketches, skits and scandalous scallywags as they perform for you. Some sketches will be recognisable and others are world premieres - there will be something for everyone. Seating is cabaret style around tables, wonderfully informal, and you are invited to bring your own nibbles but there will be a bar for drinks, please.

Apart from having a very good time entertaining you all, we are keen to raise funds for equipment we need, so do come along and have fun with us.

Bev Beveridge 07710 164490 bev.bev@hotmail.co.uk

Christmas tree recycling

Hospice in the Weald is aiming to collect 2,000 Christmas trees to raise £62,000 in January. The initiative raises vital funds for the hospice and local community. For a suggested donation of £20 per tree, with 10% of all donations going to a local, community-based charity, your tree will be collected. Registration is already open and you can sign up at: www.hospiceintheweald.org.uk/events/christm as-tree-recycling/.

A team of volunteers will collect the trees on 12, 13, and 14 January. Registered trees must be ready for collection by 8am on 12 January, as the hospice is unable to guarantee specific collection time or day. Once collected, all trees are recycled, benefiting both the community and the environment.

Lucy Edkins



Poppy Appeal 2024

The total Poppy Appeal collection in Benenden and Iden Green has not yet been fully assessed. There are now a number of different electronic ways by which the collection is gathered, and the Royal British Legion is not yet ready to tell us how much has been raised by individual direct transfers to headquarters.

The generosity of donors, however, has been apparent in the boxes returned to date for counting, and we are very grateful for so much support. We are also most grateful to those who volunteered to help with collections in 34 boxes at a continuingly difficult time for all fund raising.

Jane Dalton Holmes

PF Ward and Sons to close

After 55 years being run by the Ward family our village butcher's is sadly closing at the end of December. Brothers Martyn and Andrew Ward have served the village well and we will certainly miss them, their willingness to fulfil our various meaty requests (and of course their wonderful sausages). We will feature the brothers and their business in a future issue of the magazine. In the meantime we wish them a happy retirement.



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Benenden Gardening Club

Our Christmas get-together will be held at the Quinlan Centre (opposite Benenden Hospital) on 11 December. And our topic this year? Booze! Ian Florey of Anno Distillers will entertain us with 'Botanicals: a garden in your glass'. Mulled wine, nibbles and mince pies. Doors open at 6.30pm. Members free, guests £5. Places are limited so please let us know in advance if you want to attend by emailing melissagarnier56@gmail.com

Minnie Garnier

Topical health

This is a season when our health and immune systems need extra support. The colder months can bring challenges, such as lower energy, higher stress and increased exposure to seasonal illnesses. Plus, the holiday season often brings indulgent meals, late nights and disruptions to our normal routines. Good nutrition and low stress are key to supporting the immune system.

Foods rich in vitamins C, D, zinc and probiotics, such as citrus fruits, leafy greens, nuts, seeds and plain yoghurt boost immunity and keep energy levels steady. Protein rich foods like lean meats, fish, tofu, legumes, and eggs are also crucial, as they provide the amino acids that fuel immune cells. Staying hydrated also supports optimal body function and energy.

Research shows that chronic stress and higher levels of cortisol can drain the body and weaken our immune defences, making it harder to fight off seasonal colds and flu. Keep stress to a minimum by setting boundaries, practising deep breathing or meditation techniques, staying active with gentle movement and create a calming environment to improve sleep quality.

Finding balance starts with considering what small shifts could offer better health outcomes and bring more calm to your life. These small steps can allow you to start the new year feeling resilient and energised.

Rachel Tinker www.rtwellness.com

Quiz Night

Benenden's Gardening Club and Allotment Association will host a quiz on 10 January at 7pm in Benenden Village Hall, to raise funds for our allotments. Select your team of up to eight and join in the fun (horticultural knowledge not essential!). Tickets £10 each, raffle, pay-bar, and mulled wine. Book your table via allotments@benendenparishcouncil.org

Nancy Tolhurst

Primary School

Last term the children enjoyed many different activities including FitFencing, an incredible bake sale and a number of sporting festivals. Year 4 had an opportunity to visit Benenden Girls' School and watch their junior music scholars' concert. Year 2 had a great time in the forest, practising the digital photography skills they have begun learning about. Fudge has had a wonderful time since starting as our wellbeing dog. He's been reading, learning phonics, writing, exploring forest school and having lots of tummy rubs.

Our termly house afternoon was related to our work on empowering children to understand how their actions need to be 'good for me, good for you, good for everyone'. In their houses, the children focused on looking at their own strengths - what they are good at and love. This then led to some work on what their house as a community is good at.

It was lovely to welcome so many parents, carers and grandparents to our open afternoon. The parents joined in with a singing assembly and then went into the classrooms to see a history lesson using rocky road, firework pictures, using a computer design programme, outdoor learning and much more. It has been a pleasure to show around families considering a place for their child for EYFS in September 2025.

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





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Talking Shop

Another year gone by, and Benenden's is marking the festive season in style. We thank our hardworking staff and wonderful volunteers who give so much to keep it all going, and with this in mind, a reminder to our volunteers that you are invited to our annual Christmas singsong and social evening in the café on 10 December from 6pm. David Commander will be there to conduct the singing and Graham Beveridge will be tinkling the ivories so, along with some mulled wine and festive treats, it should be an entertaining evening. Do bring along anyone you know who is thinking of volunteering. Adding to our lists of volunteers will be hugely helpful to the future of Benenden's. To help with catering please indicate on the list in the shop how many are coming.

Please pop in for all kinds of Christmas goodies, cards, wrapping paper, cheeses, Hot chocolate snowmen, naughty elves on the shelf, wines and you can order champagne, too. You can buy raffle tickets for luxurious hampers, one for adults and one for children. We will also be offering a great selection of home-made mince pies.

Excitingly this year, instead of made-up wreaths, Hannah will be offering a lovely creative kit which comprises a woven base and decorative pieces such as dried flowers etc. You only need to add fresh foliage. For the next three months, Hannah's flowers will be sourced elsewhere, with a return to her home-grown products from March.

The Craftanoon in October was enjoyed by 30 local children. They painted, decorated shortbread, and fished for spiders in jelly. It was a great success and we hope to hold a Christmas event.

We are looking for another part time member of staff (over 18 yrs). It would be for 20 hrs/week and includes post office training, some weekends and afternoons.

We wish all our customers a joyous and peaceful Christmas and a very Happy New Year. Bev Beveridge info@benendens.co.uk www.benendens.co.uk

Everyone is invited to ...

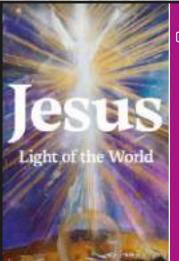
The Crib service in St George's Church on Christmas Eve at 3pm



It would be lovely if everyone - young and not so young - could come along dressed as a character from the Nativity story: Mary, Joseph, Shepherd, Inn Keeper, Wise-men, Angel, Star, Cow, Sheep, Donkey ... anything appropriate you can think of! This will enable us to bring to life the story of the nativity in a way that will be meaningful and fun for all.

We look forward to seeing you as we create the nativity tableau together.

David and Helen Commander



IDEN GREEN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH CHRISTMAS SERVICES

18 December at 6pm Carols in the Car Park Followed by mince pies & warm drinks

22 December at 5.30pm Service of Lessons & Carols Tea at 4.30pm - All welcome

25 December at 9.30am Christmas Morning Family Service Everyone welcome

HAPPY CHRISTMAS FROM ALL AT IDEN GREEN

St George's Social Club

We held a ladder toss night which is not everyone's cup of tea but everyone mucked in and it was won by Theresa Thorpe. Our monthly quiz was set by John Marshall and Martyn Ward and they really tested us with some difficult questions. It was won by Peter and Jane Ellis. We ended the month with Quad 240 darts. See the village calendar on page 4 for our December events.

Glenda Marshall 243089 glendajoym@gmail.com





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Puss in Boots

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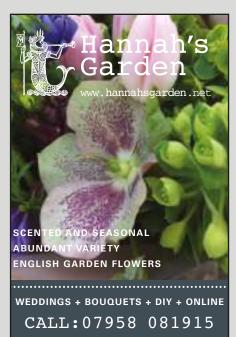
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Benenden Hospital

I believe that giving is at the heart of the December festivities so I'd like to reflect on the ways in which our hospital has shown kindness and support in our community this year.

We held our very own 'Benenden Bake Off' for Macmillan Coffee Morning, which raised £230 for Macmillan Cancer Support. For 'Wear it Pink Day', staff wore their best pinks and £175 was raised for Breast Cancer Now. Various stands were also held in our atrium to raise awareness on World TB (tuberculosis) Day (a wonderful nod to our hospital heritage), Dignity Day and Volunteers Week.

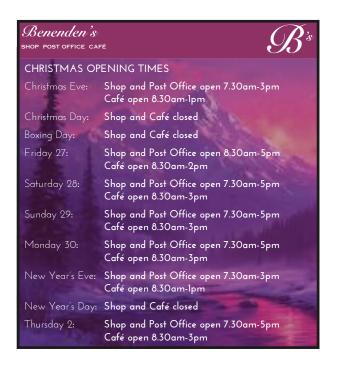
Since starting my new role as hospital director, engaging with the local community has been one of the highlights of my year. I attended the village fete, where we cohosted a tombola, attended Benenden Health members meet-ups and spoke at the Frittenden WI Group, which provided opportunities to share our heritage and the work we are doing to innovate and provide safe patient care. In November, members of our marketing team attended a networking event at Hemsted Park to speak with local businesses.

For Infection Prevention Control Week, our clinical governance & IPC lead visited the primary school to talk to year 4 and 5 students about germs and the importance of effective handwashing - and I loved the pictures of the funky germs they drew.

This year, we've submitted to six national and regional awards, with a focus on hospital innovations, and we've seen great success in highlighting our achievements. Our annual 'Best of Benenden Awards' also took place last month, where staff celebrated their hard work in alignment with our values.

Finally, I look forward to welcoming the students from Benenden School to our hospital this month, where they'll be singing carols to patients, staff and visitors.

Claire Harley, Hospital Director



Benenden Pre-School

Christmas is coming and with it a range of both new and traditional festive activities for the children, all of which are being supported by some of our lovely parents. We are starting by baking Czech Christmas biscuits, a new recipe for us all, which I'm sure will make the school smell heavenly.

The children are making their own Christmas tree bauble from which will hang a scroll detailing their height as of December 2024, a truly personalised gift. They are also visiting the pre-school Christmas shop, where they will choose a present or two for family members which they will wrap up and label, using mathematical skills to work out how much paper they need and fine motor skills to manipulate the scissors to cut the paper and hold the felt pen.

Best of all, throughout these activities, they will be happily involved in the acts of kindness and giving, choosing and creating gifts for those they love. And the icing on the Christmas cake is the children's Christmas Party with festive fun, food and Father Christmas himself.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

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Iden Green and Benenden WI

Our winter party on 19 November was great fun. As usual the atmosphere was convivial and the food delicious.

The new WI resolutions are: I. Raise public awareness, remove stigma and examine all areas of health affected by incontinence;

- 2. Increase public confidence in delivering CPR;
- 3. Strengthen the law and investment to support the circular economy of clothing and fabric; 4. Eliminate landfill of medication packaging and encourage manufacturers to use recyclable packaging.

We shall be celebrating at our Christmas meal at the Bull, Benenden, on 4 December at 12.30pm.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

Merry and Bright

We have had a very enjoyable year, with outings, garden party, and an afternoon of bowls to name but a few. The club thanks everyone who gave up their time to come along to entertain us, especially those who very kindly invited us to their gardens for tea and croquet. Not forgetting the Bowls Club afternoon where we had more lessons in the art of bowls.

Our Christmas party is on 17 December when a magician is coming along. Then our next meeting will be at 2pm on 28 January at the Memorial Hall for our AGM followed by our Victorian tea. Happy Christmas from all at the Merry and Bright club.

Laraine Penny 241763 Julia Collard 241944

Benenden School

During the half term break I was fortunate to visit our first international school, Benenden Bilingual School in Guangzhou, China, to explore the vibrant campus there and meet the passionate staff and pupils who are bringing this very new educational environment to life.

Our vision when taking the founding ethos of Benenden School to a global audience has always been to widen the opportunities for pupils across the world so they might benefit from our educational philosophy. I was delighted to see that our values were equally important at BBSG as they are here and that was particularly apparent in the active role they play in supporting local community groups and other schools. Although over 5,000 miles from our beautiful setting in Kent, the parallels of developing meaningful connections that benefit the whole community are there as much as they are here.

The dazzling fireworks party in early November, brilliantly organised by the Benenden Bonfire Society and which we were proud to host, was another example of our supportive village community. The evening was made possible through collaboration with local businesses, who generously provided sponsorship, and community volunteers. I hope everyone enjoyed the event.

This week, we are celebrating partnerships at the school and I would like to thank each individual and organisation that partners with us. Your support and involvement help to enrich our curriculum and remind us all that education is a shared endeavour. Together we are teaching our young people not just how to succeed academically but also how to grow into thoughtful, active members of the community.

Rachel Bailey, Headmistress



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Project 20|20 update

In this issue is a wonderful article by our architect John Bailey, who describes how the parish church has been at the centre of village life for generations (page 28).

While village and church life continue through the autumn, a lot of work is happening behind the scenes as the Project 20|20 team and the Parochial Church Council prepare for what could be a momentous 2025. This includes site visits to churches who have made changes like the ones we are proposing for St George's, and attending diocesan conferences on sustainability and engaging with potential funders.

The church will need to be closed for a significant part of the building project but services will continue within the parish and benefice. A Marriage Order is now in place to ensure weddings and the readings of banns can go ahead, and couples will be legally married. Options, agreed by the Bishop of Dover, are also in place for Sunday worship, baptisms and funerals. More details in the new year.

Also, in the new year we will be launching our capital fundraising campaign. Significant sums will need to be raised from grant-making trusts, public funds, businesses and other sources. Our fundraising team is growing and if you have expertise in raising capital sums we would love to hear from you.

Peter Brook, Project 20|20 Community Liaison benenden2020project@gmail.com

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Planning Matters

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

- 24/02582/FULL Old Eaton Oast, Goddards
 Green Road. Excavation of earth &
 installation of swimming pool, pool hut, heat
 pump, water filtration system and associated
 electrics; associated earthworks, installation
 of a patio area & associated planting.
- 24/02674/FULL Old Manor House,
 Cranbrook Road. Replace 42m of close board broken fence.
- 24/02357/FULL St George's Church. Singlestorey extension to Southwest corner & wheelchair access to North porch.
- 24/02736/FULL Beacon Oaks Cottage, Rolvenden Road. Variation of Condition 2.
 Addition of two roof dormers & amendments to external fenestration.
- 24/00875/FULL School Farm, Cranbrook Road. Replacement of existing dwelling to create four bedroom dwelling, together with associated garage and car parking.
- 24/02699/FULL Springhill Oast, Standen Street. (Retrospective) Conversion of ground floor of former car port to create annexe.
- 24/02700/FULL Springhill Oast, Standen Street. Extension and conversion of stables to garaging.
- 24/02698/FULL Springhill Oast, Standen Street. Retrospective. Swimming pool.

Benenden Bonfire and Fireworks





Church History



St George's Church: Past, present and future

John Bailey, inspecting architect at St George's Church, looks at how the building has evolved over the last 1000 years and will continue to do so as Project 20|20 aims to make it more accessible, practical and welcoming

Many don't realise that our mediaeval parish churches are the product of centuries of change and alteration, to update, beautify and adapt the buildings so that they remain in use, up to date and relevant. Along with most buildings that remain in use for centuries, change is the only constant in St George's long history of service to the parish.

I am often asked how old a church is and what are the original parts. This is not an easy question with St George's. There was a church here at Domesday in 1086, but we can take the story of the building further back than that. After 1070, Archbishop Lanfranc required the Domesday Monachorum to be compiled, a book containing a list of all the Anglo-Saxon churches in the Diocese of Canterbury, including Rolvenden, Sandhurst and Benenden, which was required to pay 28s to Canterbury each Easter. There has probably been a church on the current site for over 1,000 years.

Nothing from the Anglo-Saxon or early Norman church survives above ground that can be easily identified, and recent archaeological test pits have shown that the Victorians destroyed the archaeological layers under the building.

Towards the end of the 13th century and into the early 14th, the church was significantly enlarged and the first substantial elements of the existing building date from then. The southwestern corner of the south aisle, including the south porch, and the northeastern chapel, now the organ chamber and the vestry, date from this period and are constructed of rubble masonry, which would have originally been rendered externally.

This major rebuilding some 700 years ago suggested St George's was already a substantial building by circa 1400. We then see a steady rebuilding and extension throughout the 15th century, and it is this late mediaeval period that gives us the outline and form of the church we see today, including the western tower, the north aisle, north porch, chancel, and Lady chapel. This later rebuilding uses large blocks of Wealden Sandstone, which was always meant to be seen and would have needed significant funding.

If we assume that St George's reached its present size by 1500, we also need to remember the building operated in a very different way to how it is used today. The church would have been one of the few large buildings in the parish and was used for most gatherings, markets, court sessions etc, in the nave and aisles, while the eastern end of the chancel and chapels were divided by a rood screen. The eastern end of the church was sacred while the remainder was used for both secular and religious purposes, so everybody came at some point to the building and supported it.

The present idea that the whole building is sacred and only to be used for worship with fixed furniture is very much a modern idea coming from the 17th century onwards, but of course demonstrates that buildings over time adapt to meet the needs and aspirations of those

of each generation. What few people realise is that communion rails have their origins as a barrier, used to keep dogs and animals out of the sanctuary.

It was the religious upheaval of the 16th and 17th centuries that really changed how the building was viewed and operated, with the Church of England very much concentrating on worship. The lightning strike of 1672 would have given the perfect opportunity to reform the church building to fit this new theology.

The mediaeval building was gutted and not put back together until around 1678 through a public appeal. The rebuilding was undertaken by Timothy Townsend at a cost of £3,920, 14s, and we are fortunate that a 19th-century drawing gives us a glimpse of what that 17th-century rebuilding looked like. The demarcation of the east end from the rest of the building has gone, the nave has classical lonic columns with a flat ceiling and is filled with box pews centred on a substantial pulpit. Gone is the open space of the nave, and the east-west orientation for worship, which is now very much on the pulpit placed almost in the centre of the nave.

The works were not completed until around 1715, when the western tower as we see it today was finished. Personally I feel the lower sections of the tower are mediaeval, with the belfry and upper sections rebuilt at this time. This very protestant-inspired building was to survive for almost 200 years until the middle of the 19th century.

By the early 19th century, we see a series of movements within the Church of England wishing to see a return to a form of worship we would recognise today, and for buildings to reflect what was increasingly seen as the correct form of Christian architecture: Gothic mediaeval. Rebuilding at St George's in what was the new fashion was inspired by the Earl of Cranbrook, who paid for the work, and the architect David Brandon, who designed the building we see today.

St George's was rebuilt in the Gothic form between 1861 and 1863, with the complete



removal of the 17th-century interior, and its reconstruction following the fashion of the day, with benches/pews facing east. This was a comprehensive eradication of the previous reordering in favour of one that reflected how the building was being used in the mid-19th century. Since then the church has experienced some further changes, but none that radically changes the 19th-century makeover.

What of the future? All historic churches are the product of change and only survive because they have changed and adapted to reflect the needs of those who use the building. In a world where religious observance is less important than shopping on a Sunday, we need to see our historic churches evolve again if they are to remain iconic landmarks in our villages and towns.

Today people require better standards of comfort and services such as heating, lighting, toilets and kitchens, as well as spaces that reflect modern liturgical and secular uses and thinking. A building that does not change will almost certainly die and a return to the church building being used for secular activities as well as worship will, we all hope, bring new generations to St George's and build a sustainable future.

Over the next 18 months there will be another period of change, one that will retain the best of the past, but also, we hope ensure survival into the future. I hope all will recognise that this change is essential and that in another 150 years' time there will probably be a further evolution.

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Spotlight







Riding for the Disabled: Transforming lives with horse power

'To enrich the lives of disabled people through horses' is the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) vision and when I visited our local group in Staplehurst it was inspiring to see the tremendous enjoyment the students get from being on a horse.

The RDA are pioneers in the therapeutic use of horses and the only major UK charity focused specifically on the health and wellbeing benefits of bringing people and horses together. It supports over 25,500 disabled children and adults annually through activities including riding, carriage driving, and non-ridden experiences such as Quiet Corners and Tea with a Pony.

Our closest RDA centre is the Chalkdown Group based at the Duckhurst Equestrian Centre in Staplehurst. Two days a week during term time, people of all ages and abilities, including those with physical and learning disabilities, sensory impairments, long-term health conditions and neurodiversity, gather to enjoy the thrill and freedom of riding horses.

The group is led by chair Pauline Roestenburg who, together with over 50 volunteers (including Benenden villagers Louise, Deborah, Gill, Lynne and Sarah), guides and encourages students from Snowfields Academy in Cranbrook every Wednesday and up to 20 riders every Thursday (10am-1.30pm) during term time.

During my visit it was lovely to see the sheer enjoyment on the faces of sisters Skarlet and Sienna while they rode their ponies around the school, led and supported by the volunteers.

Before long, Paul, Paula and Jonathan arrived from

the Grange in Benenden to enjoy their regular riding session. Grace who started riding with Snowfields Academy last year has grown so much in confidence that she now volunteers helping to look after the horses on a Saturday.

"It is amazing to see the physical and mental improvements our students experience over the weeks," says Pauline. "They gradually grow in confidence and it can be transformative. The movement of the horse can help in relaxing tight muscles, strengthening core stability, reducing spasms and improving balance, posture and co-ordination."

And it's not just the riders that benefit. It's an opportunity for parents and carers to relax and forge friendships over homemade coffee, tea and cake. It costs £40,000 a year to keep this charity doing its valuable work and they organise fund raising events throughout the year like their upcoming very special Christmas concert (details below). It promises to be a lovely festive event. Ruth Clark



Local History

'The grandees have departed, but they have left behind a significant inheritance'

At the planting of an oak tree to mark the 100th anniversary of Lord Rothermere's

poignant bequest to the village, following the death of his two sons in World War I, David Harmsworth gave this address in continued gratitude

Up at Hemsted House, the girls' school, there's an impressive stone fireplace in the entrance hall with a coat of arms above it: crossed rolled newspapers, with four flying bees.

When I first visited Benenden almost exactly 50 years ago, I had no idea why it was there, until I was ushered into the headmistress's study and Betty Clarke fixed me with beady, teasing eyes and asked me if I had noticed my family coat of arms. I had to confess both that I hadn't noticed it and that I had no known connection to any famous Harmsworths. I still know of no blood connection!

However, I got the job and I'm grateful that when Lord Rothermere sold Hemsted Park a hundred years ago, it was sold to the founders of the school. He also left gifts of land to the parish which have been valuable to generations of us ever since. Hence the commemorative tree.

Those crossed newspapers and the bees are good icons for just how Lord Rothermere came to be able to afford to buy Hemsted Park in 1912. Constant activity and publishing. His father Alfred Harmsworth was a not-very-successful barrister, his mother the Irish daughter of a land-agent. Together they had 13 children; Harold Harmsworth was the second son. He left school at 16.

When he bought Hemsted it was as Sir Harold Harmsworth, Baronet of Horsey. No fewer than three of his brothers were also to





become lords. His older brother Alfred was the first. At Stamford Grammar School he had launched a school magazine. He started work as a journalist. He wrote frequently for the greatest publishing success of the time, Titbits magazine. Alfred, at the grand age of 23, decided to set up



his own publication, but to raise the thousand pounds required he needed the help of his younger brother

Harold. Together they launched Answers to Correspondents, often devising themselves the questions which they would then answer.

It was a great success, and they followed up with further titles - Comic Cuts, Boys' Home Journal, Pluck, Marvel, Boy's Friend, Forget-Me-Not (subtitled A Pictorial Journal for the Home) Home Sweet Home, Home Chat and Sunday Companion. Six years later the brothers purchased the Evening News and two years after that launched the Daily Mail. Busy publishing bees, indeed. And the growth and acquisitions

went on with the creation of Associated Newspapers Ltd.

From Baronet, Sir Harold Harmsworth was elevated to become Baron in 1914,



taking the title Lord Rothermere of Hemsted. He loyally supported the government during the war and in November 1917 was appointed as Secretary of State for Air. Two of his sons, Vyvyan Harmsworth and Vere Harmsworth, both joined the British Army, and they are a large part of the reason we are here today.

Vyvyan in 1914 was a student at Oxford. He enlisted and as a Captain in the Irish Guards was wounded on several occasions in France, finally so severely that he was repatriated but died in hospital two months later, aged 23.

His younger brother Vere was a pupil at the Royal Naval Colleges in Osborne and Dartmouth and in August 1912 gained the rank of midshipman. Although he had been discharged because of a hearing problem, he volunteered in 1914 for the Royal Navy Voluntary Reserve and was assigned to the Royal Navy Division. He was captured in Antwerp but escaped to serve in Gallipoli, before being sent to France, where he died, shot in the throat, on the first day of the Battle of Ancre in the Battle of the Somme.

The following month Lord Rothermere tended his resignation as Secretary of State for Air. David Lloyd George replied: "Your sacrifices to the national cause have been so heavy, and the strain imposed on you so cruel that it would be impossible to deny you the right to some repose. Sympathy in these matters is generally best given by silence, but I am sure you know without my telling you how much I sympathise

Daily Mail.

with you in your losses and in the way in which you have continued your public duties in spite of everything."

In 1919, he was further elevated to became Viscount

Rothermere, but one can imagine just how his hopes for his sons at the house here had been dashed. Moreover, his brother was a sick man and when he died in 1921, Lord Rothermere took full control of the newspaper empire.

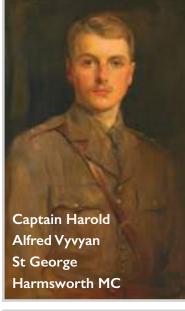
This recreation ground was his gift to us in memory of Vyvyan; in memory of Vere, he gave the recreation ground in Iden Green; he also

gave land for allotments, and the St George's Club building built by Lord Cranbrook.

It feels, as one looks back, as though we are handling the acorns that have fallen from the giant trees of the past. The grandees have departed, but they have left behind a really significant inheritance. Lord Rothermere was at the forefront of producing educational

publications; I've no idea what he thought about passing on Hemsted House to become a school, but it happened only a couple of years after he started to publish instalments of the Harmsworth Encyclopedia.

In paying tribute to Lord Rothermere's thoughtful generosity, I'd like also to pay tribute to the way in which over the years many people have stepped up to looking after our inheritance: all those parish councillors who acted as the trustees of the Harmsworth Memorial Trust and made bold decisions which led to the repurposing of the allotment plots for valuable housing and provided the recreation grounds with playground facilities, the Iden Green pavilion and the Benenden





village hall. The management and future of these assets are now in the care of the Benenden Village Trust - long may it flourish.

Mighty oaks from little acorns grow. There is an oak in Hemsted Park next to our house which is getting on for 400 years old, and it occurs to me that if this oak grows as well, it will be here for the 500th anniversary of Lord Rothermere's gift. Shall we all gather again in 2424?





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Food and Drink

No need to go far for your Christmas wines

Peter Thomas talks you through the festive drinks' menu at the community shop It's probably just me, but I find that while other people are fretting over Christmas presents for Auntie Pauline, I start ruminating on the matter of Christmas wine sometime in October. It's not a chore. As I say every year, I just don't like to think of me popping my clogs at the festive dinner table (perhaps choking on a rogue sprout) and my final thought being: "I wish my last bottle of wine hadn't been a duffer."

The best thing is that we won't have to go far to drink well, because the wine department in the community shop will have everything anybody needs on the wine front at a variety of price points.

Christmas can be tricky, because of the wide-ranging menus, from smoked salmon to turkey, maybe beef, all the fancy trimmings, preceded by mince pies and followed by a pudding with a bit of holly on top.

Perhaps you'd like to eliminate the festive nonsense and go for a pair of multi-purpose bottles to see you through the big day, in which case I'd probably go for Rhones from the exalted Perrin family: Cotes du Luberon Blanc (£11.95) and Ventoux Rouge (£12.25). They'll work well enough with pretty much anything you can throw at them.

Or, to start with, a couple of easy-drinking white aperitifs, the Fremondo Falanghina del Sannio (£11.25) or the Le Versant Viognier (£10.45), which represent some of the best value in the shop; followed by a full-bodied and fruity red, Rupe Secca, Nero d'Avola at £10.95, which went down a storm at a recent village tasting.

The more decadent among you may like to start the day with bubbles, and management are working to put some Champagne on the shelves, but if you'd rather stay local, you won't go far wrong with the sparkling wines from Biddenden's Gribble Bridge range, pink or white (both £22.95), followed by the excellent Benenden Bacchus at under 20 quid, which would cut through the oily richness of smoked salmon.

Sauvignon blanc and chardonnay are both classics with smoked fish. I'm a fan of the understated Domaine de la Bergerie Touraine Sauvignon at £14.25, but the Vignerons Foncalieu Sauvignon at £9.25 will do just as well. Moving up our range, the perfect match is the Domaine Simonin Macon-Vergisson, a white Burgundy that, although its price tag of £16.75 may seem daunting, is worth every penny. For a few

pounds less, try the Pask Gimblett Gravels Chardonnay from New Zealand (£13.35).

With the turkey, I think the buy is the silky-smooth Quinta da Extrema Colinas do Douro Superior (£11.70), which would be hard to beat at the price. If you go rogue and have a nice rib of beef, surely it has to be our finest claret, the Chateau Argadens Bordeaux Superior at a very keen £15.25.

Personally, I can't imagine Christmas without a couple of half-bottles of sweet wine, in case anybody has room for puddings and trifles. We have the unctuous Sauternes, Petit Guiraud from Chateau Guiraud at a

pricey-but-worth-it £20.15, or the more-affordable but still excellent Domaine de Coyeux, Beaume de Venise for £13.95.

Then go and sit down in an armchair for an hour or two. Happy Christmas.



In Your Garden



It's nearly time to get dressed for Christmas

This year I am very much on track - all this rain and now slightly cooler conditions have made bulb planting much easier than last year, which was so dry, and there is still plenty of time to put bulbs in should any of us be lagging behind on that front.

I also seem fairly well ahead on clearing and cutting back in the borders, although I am still very much 'on the fence' about whether this should happen now or I should wait until early spring. My current thoughts are that if a plant is looking untidy now it will look dreadful in January so it gets cut back and the borders look so much better for it.

I still leave lots of leaf litter and debris on the soil surface, as it will act as a brilliant mulch to slowly melt into the ground and provide habitats for tiny insects to over-winter without disturbance. I have noted Troy Scott-Smith (of Sissinghurst) cuts his spent perennials and leaves the clippings on the ground nearby. It is surprising how quickly matter decays if left on the soil surface.

At home I do not have much in the way of borders and paths but I do have large areas of lawn, which I like to leave long in the summer, mowing wide paths throughout to give the area some purpose. I am kept busy with this

now as I like to keep the 'path' areas nice and short for winter, so I am still mowing whenever it is dry enough.

I do maintain two large country gardens for clients, however, so I am kept busy with those instead, which also provides me with lots of foliage for wreaths and indoor decorations. There is ivy, some bay and sarcococca, a pretty variegated pittosporum, juniper, skimmia and euonymus - all of these will either go into a wreath or be tied into bundles around candles

on the Christmas table. If I remember, I will cut hydrangea flowers and leave to dry in a cold shed before using these too.

Ivy can be a contentious issue, especially if you are superstitious, but I love it

trailing around my house. It can crisp up a bit in the warmth but is very easily replaced. I cram some white scented viburnum flowers into small glass vases and pop in some eucalyptus

from the florist for contrast.

I do rely on trips to the florist at this time of year. It's a fun thing to do and I can pick up some sprayed foliage pieces if I haven't had time to do these myself, plus there are always tempting pots of white cyclamen and small hellebores to buy. I also like those tiny conifers that can look perfect on a windowsill or table surrounded by tea

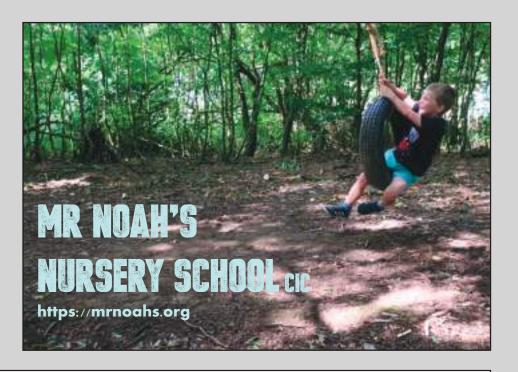
lights and some twinkling decorations.

However we get there, the Christmas period is a magical one and I always find time to slow down and enjoy the moment for what it is: a gathering of friends and family, good food and a chance to reflect on the year gone and look forward to the new. Wishing a merry Christmas to you all.

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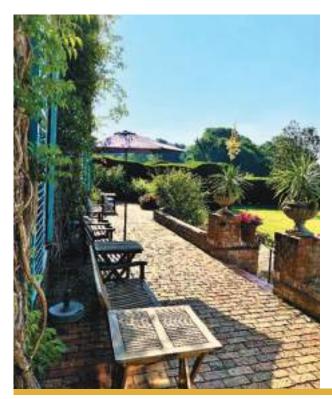








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Above: Village gatherings: For an Act of Remembrance at the war memorial on Remembrance Sunday; litter pickers dressed for the autumn village tidy; in costume for the craftanoon on All Hallows Eve at the community shop Front cover: All is quiet, all is still: Moonlight over Iden Green. Photograph: Siobhan Massey