

Benenden Magazine

May 2018



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Editorial



The sun may have shone on Benenden for a short while in April, but that doesn't mean everything in our garden is rosy, as events of the past few weeks have shown. The hard-working contributors to our Neighbourhood Development Plan showed off the fruits of their labours at the village hall last month, and an impressive body of work it was, but their efforts have been hit by the news from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council that we will be required to accept more than 200 new dwellings inside our parish boundaries between now and 2030.

It's a challenge that puts other recent struggles in Benenden thoroughly into perspective, but it's one that our NDP volunteers and other concerned bodies will rise to, and have already met with TWBC to discuss. Paul Tolhurst addresses the issue on page 15 and will keep readers updated, but if this isn't the time for everybody in the village to link arms and take a fierce interest in all our futures, then I don't know when that time will come.

Encouragingly, the annual spring clean drew its biggest crew of litter-pickers yet, who managed to return to base with the usual haul: half the contents of a drunk's dustbin, a ready supply of mangled traffic cones and enough assorted car parts to build our very own hybrid vehicle. It's an unending struggle but one that makes a visible difference.

Meanwhile, look around you and you'll find apple blossom, spring lambs, asparagus and the other makings of a proper Wealden spring, which may help you recall why you live here in the first place. It may not always be easy being us, but the struggle is surely worth it.

Peter Thomas, Co-Editor

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

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Village Calendar

May

Thursday 3	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council election, Benenden Village Hall, 7am-10pm	p.9
Friday 4	Woodland Wide Games, Iden Green Congregational Church, 7pm	
Saturday 5	Private Party, St George's Club, 8pm	
Sunday 6	Charles Spanner, Organ Recital, St George's Church, 6pm	p.25
Saturday 12	The Marsh Warblers, West Gallery Music, St George's Church, 10.30am	p.9
Saturday 12	Benenden's Big Bash 20/20 Cricket Match, The Green, 12noon	p.9
Saturday 12	Charity Bash, Benenden Village Hall, 7.30pm	p.21
Saturday 12	Spring Barbecue, St George's Club, 8pm	
Sunday 13	Christian Aid Week starts	p.21
Tuesday 15	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.29
Tuesday 15	Iden Green and Benenden WI, AGM, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.17
Saturday 19	Bingo, St George's Club, 8pm	
Sunday 20	Messy Church, St George's Church, 4-6pm	p.27
Monday 21	Parish Council Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Monday 21	Parish Annual Assembly, Iden Green Pavilion, 8pm	p.15
Tuesday 22	Merry and Bright, Memorial Hall, 3pm	
Friday 25	The Wines of Gougenheim Argentina, Benenden School Café, 7pm	p.33
Saturday 26	Quiz in aid of the British Heart Foundation, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Wednesday 30	Shop volunteers' coffee-making social, Benenden's Community Shop, 7pm	p.25

Benenden Youth Club/Streetcruizer, age 11+

Tuesdays at Benenden Village Hall, 6.30-8.30pm

Coffee Shop

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-12noon

Benenden Bowls Club

Thursdays on the recreation field, practice night, 6.30pm

Cakes & Chaos: Cafe and Toddler Group

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

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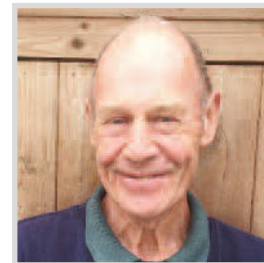
Saturday 5 May for Domestic Waste

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

Saturday 19 May for Garden/Compostable Waste

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

Parish Council



It was 20 years ago that the then Chairman of the Parish Council called on me to ask if I would join. I believe it was an uncontested election, just like the one this year, and at my first meeting I was made Chair, so I had a very steep learning curve in local politics!

In the early years much time was spent in lively debate about the need for a new primary school, so it gives me enormous pleasure to finally see the contractors on site and I am thrilled to think that my grandson may be among the first intake to the new school.

We are fortunate in Benenden to have a wide variety of talent which was channelled into the excellent Parish Plan for our village, and I am delighted that from those seeds we now have Benenden's, our superb community shop and café, this magazine, a lunch club and many other benefits for the community. The Neighbourhood Development Plan was commissioned by the council some two years ago, and for those that were able to attend the recent exhibition in the village hall, it was plain that much progress has been made.

Regrets? I have a few, mainly that the issue of poor communications, broadband and phone coverage, highlighted in the Parish Plan, has still not been addressed, but the overriding feeling is of a job being well done.

We should all be grateful to those who represent us at TWBC and KCC, working hard for very little gratitude. One of them was dear Peter Davies, who passed away recently and sadly will not see the fruits of his labours over many years. It is up to us to finish his dream.

It is a great shame that more people are not prepared to stand for election and offer their talents for the benefit of the village. Personally, as I stand down from the council, I can reflect on two decades of meeting and working with many interesting and gifted local people. It has been a privilege.

Gordon Reynolds, retiring councillor

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk

01580 240371 clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org

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

Parish Council Meeting
Monday 21 May 2018,
Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm

Parish Annual Assembly
Monday 21 May 2018,
Iden Green Pavilion, 8pm

Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

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

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

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com

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

Sunday 6 May	8am Communion	10am All-age Communion and Sunday School	5pm Choral Evensong 6pm Organ Recital 7.30pm Ascension Day Service at Mission Church
Thursday 10 May			
Sunday 13 May	8am 1662 Communion	10am Morning Worship 3pm Benenden Girls' School Confirmation	5pm Evening Prayer at Mission Church
Sunday 20 May	8am Communion	10am Sung Eucharist	4pm Messy Church
Sunday 27 May	8am Communion	10am Morning Worship	5pm Praise Service at Mission Church
Fri 11-Sat 19 May	Nine Days of Prayer from Pentecost to Ascension: a short daily Prayer Service on 11, 13, 15, 17 and 19 May at Mission Church, 5pm on 12, 14, 16 and 18 May at St. George's, 5pm		

Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Every Tuesday 10am Communion

Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

The Roman Catholic Chapel

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Baptism 21 April Oscar Fowler

Funerals 3 April Peter Davies Funeral Charing Crematorium

7 April Peter Davies Thanksgiving Service

14 April Zdzislaw Siemaszko Interment

30 April Dorothy Sibbey Funeral Kent and Sussex Crematorium

Rector's Letter



What difference can I make amid the violence and war?

As I sit writing this, I hear reports about the success of the air strikes launched on Syria by the US, the UK and France to destroy manufacturing or storage plants of chemical weapons. Why anyone, or any government, should want to use chemical weapons against another human being, particularly knowing that children will be affected, is deeply disturbing and astonishing. I know it is so wrong; I know it cannot be allowed to continue; I am glad that I am not in a position where I have to make the decisions on what to do about it. Who knows what will happen in the time between my writing this and it being published.

The vast majority of us feel powerless to affect events that happen on the world stage, but there are people who can and do have a positive effect globally. The majority of them are, of course, world leaders - and, as a priest, I pray for them regarding the decisions that they have to take. But other individuals also have an effect on global life, most of them probably thinking they would not have a worldwide influence - although some do.

Think back to Malala Yousafzai, a young girl campaigning for the education of women and children in her native area of north-west Pakistan; she made an impact, changed things, was recognised, and received the Nobel Peace Prize. Not many will achieve that, but each of us can have an impact upon, and improve, the local community in which we live. Participation in our community is key, so I encourage you to get involved in something.

If you are interested in one part of the church life of your community, then there are a number of things coming up, or ongoing, where your participation would be fantastic. We have the celebration of Ascension, this year it is on Thursday 10 May. We have a time of preparation between Ascension and another celebration, this time Pentecost, which we'll be marking with Nine Days of Prayer, with a short service every day at 5pm. We are also in a time of preservation at both parish churches, as yet more work (and money) is needed to maintain our medieval buildings. The preservation, though, is not to maintain the building as a museum; it is so that the building is still there for the community and to be used by the community.

So I encourage you to use your church; be part of it; grow it - be it! And then we can continue to celebrate, as a community, within its building. Not many of us can have an affect on the world stage, but each of us can have an effect on the local stage. Make your contribution to village life and achieve a positive difference.

Revd David Commander, Rector

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Just a Thought



Sing wherever you are

I am writing this just after Easter and all that means for a church choir, and before a choral society secular concert. I came to music and singing a little later than I might have done, due to an unfortunate episode in primary school. As an enthusiastic member of the recorder group I was taking part in a school concert when, during the interval, it was suggested that I just pretend in the second half. In secondary school I decided music wasn't for me and turned to dance and gymnastics!

All was not lost however. I went to Aberystwyth University with its impressive choral society, which was so big I could bury myself in the rows of sopranos with banks of tenors behind. There I learnt what the different notes meant and the significance of the variety of rests, amongst other things. The fact that I had danced meant at least I could count.

Thereafter I found, as many others have, that singing was an invaluable way to meet new people and make friends, especially if you move around quite often as my husband and I have done. It seems that every time one arrives in a new community one is asked three things: "Do you play bridge?" "Do you play an instrument?" and "Do you sing?" In each place we have lived we have been able to find a group that sings. The size has varied from a choir of well over a 100 to a handful of people with nothing but a tuning fork to keep us in line. In Malaysia we had to drive 40 miles up to the capital and back every week to sing with a choir. In Uganda the choir was on the doorstep. The singers were of different nationalities, creeds and lifestyles but all brought together by a love of music.

Anyone who sings in public will have a collection of special memories. One of mine is of a group of us joining in with an all-African choir for a performance of The Messiah, where they knew the entire work off by heart! We were left dotted amongst them, conspicuously holding our scores. At the same time various members of the audience got up and wandered around before returning for a bit more of the singing.

Another time, in Malawi, we were singing Handel's Israel in Egypt and just as we reached the chorus about the plague of Hail and Thunder there was a tremendous drumming on the corrugated roof as a tropical storm arrived and the heavens opened overhead. In contrast there was one special Easter on St Helena when a small group of us stood at the top of a 600ft cliff singing the early morning service as the sun rose over the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean.

It doesn't matter what age, training or musical ability you have, there will be a suitable group not too far away. You just have to join it.

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News and Events

Village goes to the polls

Thursday 3 May, Benenden Village Hall,
7am-10pm

It would be an overstatement to say that election fever was gripping Benenden, but the village is going to the polls again this month. Not at Parish Council level, though, because the seven candidates have been returned unopposed, which means the PC now consists of:

Graham Beveridge, Russell Cruse,
Wayne Henning, Lynne Kemp, Julie Lewis,
Mervyn Skeet and Nicola Thomas (chair).

In the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council elections, however, local resident Tom Dawlings (Conservative) will be seeking to retain his place as councillor for the Benenden and Cranbrook ward, against opposition from Saul David Clackson of Tunbridge Wells (Liberal Democrat), Anne Priscilla Musker of Tunbridge Wells (Labour) and John Christopher Smith of Sissinghurst (Tunbridge Wells Alliance).

Polling will take place at the Village Hall on Thursday 3 May.

Big Bash is back

Saturday 12 May, The Green, 12noon

The second Benenden Big Bash event will take place on The Green on Saturday 12 May, where the village cricket team will lock horns with a team comprised of parents of pupils from the Pre and Primary Schools in a 20/20 extravaganza.

Last year's inaugural event raised impressive funds for the schools, thanks to the sporting spectacle and attendant stalls, barbecue, bar and entertainment which made this a wonderful family day.

Please do come along for a noon start and support/ wince/ point and laugh at the teams as you enjoy an afternoon which will showcase the best in Benenden sport and social life, untainted by ball-tampering scandals and ensuing tears.



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Warbling at St George's

Saturday 12 May, St George's Church,
10.30am

The Marsh Warblers, a choir that specialises in sacred and secular music favoured by amateur singers and instrumentalists in the Georgian period, will perform at St George's Church, Benenden on Saturday May 12, as part of its Grand Day Out, an annual tour also taking in All Saints at Biddenden, St Mary the Virgin at High Halden and All Saints, Woodchurch.

The short, informal concert of 'West Gallery music' will begin at 10.30am. All donations go to church funds.

Benenden Cricket Club

Our home fixtures for May on The Green are:

Saturday 5 May v Detling CC at 2pm

Saturday 12 May v Benenden Pre-School and
Primary School at 12noon

Saturday 19 May v Egerton CC at 2pm

Saturday 26 May v Telston CC at 2pm

Richard Brunt, Club Captain

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Church Fete just around the corner

Saturday 16 June, The Green, 12noon-4pm

With less than seven weeks until the Benenden Church Fete on Saturday 16 June, the committee and other volunteers are busy organising the fun. There will be all the usual favourites, while last year's new successes, the barbecue, cow pat bingo starring Glitter the cow, the fancy dress dog show and the classic car display will all feature again. This year instead of the silent auction you will be able to bid in an auction of promises, whereby members of the community offer their talent or time to the highest bidder.

Along with the ever-popular raffle, with a first prize of £200, there will be a Super Raffle, with one lucky ticket owner winning a one-hour flight in a private plane for two or possibly three people. The flight will depart from Headcorn Airfield and fly over Benenden, down to Beachy Head and back along the coast to Rye.

The church tower will be open for visits to take in the wonderful views across the village or you could try your hand at bell ringing under the guidance of St George's very own Ringing Master. The central arena will host displays from the Charlotte Hudson School of Dance and the Primary School children will be dancing around the maypole. The Hop Inn will be serving drinks to accompany live music and there will be stalls selling strawberries and cream, ice cream and cream teas.

Come along to the village green from 12noon-4pm to help make this day a great success. Please leave any donations for the fete stalls under the gazebos in the front garden of The Rectory, The Green, Benenden, apart from books, which can be left in the church porch.

If you are able to volunteer your help on fete day or offer your time or talent in the Auction of Promises please contact:

Tracy Claridge 240454
tlclaridge@tlclaridge.co.uk

Deborah Jenkins 241878
Benenden Fete Committee

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

We offer sociable and competitive cricket. New players and supporters of all ages, abilities and both sexes are made very welcome.

For more information please visit:
www.benendencricketclub.co.uk

If interested in playing, please contact our Club Captain,
Richard Brunt on:
07834 572838 or email bruntyhk@hotmail.com



New primary school: progress report

Those of you who have stopped recently at the new primary school site will have noticed that, since the first flurry of activity, progress seems to have ground to something approaching a halt. Unsurprisingly, this has led to rumours at the old school gate that the build has hit major bumps in the road, but fortunately this isn't the case.

Sources close to the project report that, despite the inevitable delays associated with a local government venture, all is on track, if not quite full steam ahead. Work began in December, thus preventing a lapse in planning consent, and the lack of activity in the past few weeks stems from the need to make the opening onto the road and complete the roadway, which had to be put on hold until the end of the hibernation season.

The enabling works that were ahead of schedule are now on schedule and the main contract is currently out to tender, awaiting responses by 7 May, with a contractor expected to be appointed in early summer.

With the needs of the environment and local wildlife taken fully into consideration, the build is reportedly progressing within the expected, hedgehog-determined time frame.
Peter Thomas

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Neighbourhood Development Plan

Two steps forward, one step back

The NDP team staged their first Village Exhibition last month, a well-attended affair which gave us an opportunity to share progress so far, and most of the feedback we've had was very positive. For many, the result of the Primary School Project was a high point. I don't think we'll be able to progress the go-kart track round The Green, or the church being used for pit stops, but it provided many good, challenging and thoughtful ideas including improving the surroundings of Cherryfields and the playground, and reuse of the old Primary School buildings.

Wildlife, footpaths and maintaining the beauty of the parish are a concern, well illustrated by some fantastic photos. The Green Environment Group provided impressive maps showing detail on the locations of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Tree Protection Orders and Ancient Woodland.

Communications with residents will continue to be important as we need your thinking to construct a robust plan that works for all the Parish. We have a website under construction which we hope to launch by mid-May and we'll let you know once this is ready.

Our focus is now moving onto completing our assessments of the Call for Sites, developing 'Benenden-flavoured' planning policies and the initial drafting of our plan. We are still on track to deliver a draft by January 2019, but it is not all good news. The Housing Supply stand attracted a lot of interest and many who attended were shocked to hear that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council may have a 'soft' target for development of between 200 and 250 additional dwellings within the Parish by 2033 - this information gleaned by our consultants based on the 14 sites in Benenden put forward by landowners and a cursory desktop evaluation of these sites undertaken in Tunbridge Wells.

BENENDEN PARISH ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

The meeting will be held on
Monday 21 May 2018 at 8pm
in Iden Green Pavilion

Parishioners are invited to hear reports from the Parish Council and village organisations.

Particularly current will be reports from the new Benenden Village Trust and Benenden's Neighbourhood Development Plan Team

Refreshments will be available

Given our transport links, school places and infrastructure, many asked us how we would cope with a population increase of perhaps 500 people. The Parish Council, supported by the NDP team, believe we should embrace some development. It will ensure the Parish remains vibrant and could offer additional affordable housing. Our intention is to engage constructively with TWBC recognising they have been handed a 'top down' target by central Government. But we must make sure development is sympathetic, sustainable and restrained.

We do not want to change this beautiful Parish or undermine our community. Evolution rather than revolution is our hope and it is now that the hard work begins.

Paul Tolhurst, Chair, NDP Steering Committee
paul.tolhurst@btinternet.com



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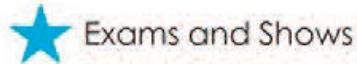
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News from Benenden School

The final few weeks of the spring term were busy as ever. The girls performed tremendously well at the Lacrosse Nationals, with the 1st team achieving a most creditable third place and the 2nd and UI5B teams both finishing as runners-up. In the final week of term I was so proud watching the School's Chapel Choir perform Stabat Mater in the Chapel of King's College Cambridge. The Choir's singing was stunning and to perform that strongly in front of a large audience in such a wonderful setting reinforced to me how fortunate we are to have such musical talent among us.

We also held our inaugural Conference for Heads; an extremely well-attended event at which representatives from 50 prep and senior schools debated topical issues which affect schools, parents and pupils. We are delighted to take a leading role in such industry-wide matters.

The Easter holiday presented an opportunity for some well-earned rest for the girls but this didn't stop some of them from embarking on exciting challenges: a group took part in a Model United Nations conference at Haileybury, our hardy Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award students went on a training expedition and drama students performed in Barcelona.

Back at Benenden, during the holidays the School was home to 490 children from South America through the Oxford International Education Group. They thoroughly enjoyed their time at Benenden and visiting local tourist attractions.

We are very much looking forward to sharing the exciting plans for our new School Hall and Music School with the village. The public display of our plans will be held on Saturday 28 April in Benenden Village Hall, from 1pm until 2.30pm.

Then on Friday 25 May we are delighted to be hosting the Benenden village Argentine wine tasting in the School Café, 7pm for a 7.30pm start. Tickets for this event are available at Benenden's Community Shop.

Samantha Price, Headmistress

Benenden Pre-School News

The Pre-School returned after the Easter break to some much-needed sunny weather. This term is all about architecture and the children have been looking at buildings in their own environment, using stories such as Goldilocks and the Three Bears to compare different sizes of furniture and Three Billy Goats Gruff to explore bridges.

We have been lucky enough to have a visit from a vicar who brought with her a cardboard church to illustrate what churches look like inside, and the children helped to fill it with suitable furniture using their cutting and sticking skills. They have also had lots of fun creating their own buildings with junk modelling.

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

Iden Green and Benenden WI

The spring coffee morning went well, while in April Mr Chambers gave an interesting and entertaining talk on Supernatural Reports.

Three members attended the West Kent County Federation annual meeting held in Tunbridge Wells. In the morning Dame Floella Benjamin, Liberal Democrat representative for children in the House of Lords, was the guest speaker. Her knowledge and compassion for the young people she deals with had us spellbound. After lunch there were two more speakers: one from the Kent Voluntary Sector Emergency Group, the other, Mrs Hilary Howorth, on the plastic collected in the Pacific and alternative methods of recycling.

Dates to remember:

Tuesday 15 May, AGM, 2-4pm (All welcome)

Tuesday 19 June, Garden Party, 5pm

Tuesday 17 July, Mrs Nash Making Jewellery, 2-4pm

All meetings are in the Memorial Hall. For further enquiries:

Shirley Fidler, Chair 752232

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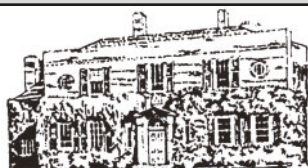
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The best of intentions - the dying wishes of Gervase Gibbon



In Chelsea Old Church on Cheyne Walk, close to the Thames, there is a memorial to Sir John Lawrence, who died in 1638. The inscription tells us that Sir John's wife Grissel was the daughter and co-heir of Gervase Gibbon of Benenden. There is a story behind this.

The Gibbon family was established at The Hole (Hole Park) in Rolvenden and at The Pump in Benenden by 1500. Their wealth came from land and from cloth, although by the time Gervase (sometimes Jarvis) Gibbon was born in 1568, they were no longer clothiers and described themselves as "gentlemen".

Gervase Gibbon went to Tonbridge School, where he was taught by the puritan preacher John Stockwood. He married Grissel Roberts of Glassenbury in Cranbrook and they had three daughters, Frances, Helena and another Grissel. Gervase was rich, possessing some 1,200 acres of land. In addition to his principal farm at The Pump, his estate included eight other farms in Benenden, five in Rolvenden, three in Tenterden, one in Biddenden, and land on Romney Marsh, in Iden and in Rye.

The Benenden farms included Bishoppenden (today's Bishopsdale), Little Walkhurst and, probably, Great Walkhurst. He also leased Great and Little Walkhurst woods from the Dean and Chapter at Canterbury, and, rather curiously, had the living of the church of Monkton in Thanet.

Gervase died at the age of 27 in 1595, when his daughters were only four, three and one, and must have been already ill when he made his will in January 1594. It is a very long and complicated will, in which he did his best to provide for his young daughters after his death in any conceivable eventuality. It begins: "In the name of

god Amen Sithence man borne of a woman hath but a short time to live his life being but a spann long and his dayes as the flowers of the field I Jarvis Gibbon of Bennenden in the countie of Kent gent' for the full ordering and disposing of all my mortal goodes landes and tenements wherewith it has pleased almighty god of his mercy to bless me in this life and to the end that I might as much as in me lyeth both provide for my wife and children and also appease all controversie which may arise as my self have seen to happen for want of disposing this earthly life."

Gervase's hopes of avoiding controversy were to be dashed. He left his estate in a complex manner, some to his wife for the duration of her life, some to his daughters when of age, with his uncle, Edmund Gibbon, and cousin, Francis Gibbon as trustees, and some to Edmund and Francis in their own rights. As the girls were so young and Gervase held land directly from the Crown, his estate came under the control of the Court of Wards and his will fell into a bureaucratic limbo. More than 40 years later, Sir John Lawrence, husband of Gervase's youngest daughter Grissel, wrote in his own will: "The settling of my wife's estate has cost me more at this date than double the value of her inheritance were it to be sold." The words "at this date" suggest the problems of Gervase Gibbon's will were still unresolved!

Ernie Pollard



Gervase Gibbon's house at The Pump, Benenden, sketched in 1879 by Howard Gaye and reproduced by courtesy of the Kent Archaeological Society from *Timber and Brick Buildings in Kent* by Kenneth Gravett, 1971. The house was dismantled and re-erected at Ightham in the 1930s. In Benenden it stood close to the beautiful house Pypne Manor, which carries on the 'Pump' name. In Ightham it is known as Gibbon's Place. More information on the Gibbons of Benenden and Rolvenden can be found at www.benenden.history.pollardweb.com

MEET YOUR MP Helen Grant

Helen Grant, MP for Maidstone and the Weald, holds regular surgeries around the constituency. If you would like to arrange an appointment to discuss an issue of concern to you, please e-mail Helen at helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk or telephone **020 7219 7107**.

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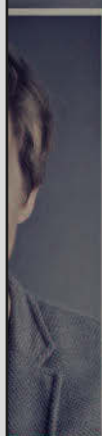
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Pancreatic Cancer UK
HOSPICE in the WEALD

Christian Aid Week 2018

Sunday 13 May to Sunday 20 May

This year's Christian Aid Week will take place from Sunday 13 May to Sunday 20 May.

The charity has been supporting refugees since 1945 when it was launched and the refugee crisis is every bit as challenging today.

Our collectors, wearing their official badges, will be posting appeal envelopes through letterboxes from 13 May onwards. It is hoped Benenden and Iden Green residents will give as generously as in the past - a record £4,250 was raised in 2017 - so that Christian Aid can continue its vital work of helping those struggling to survive and feed their families. Thank you in advance for your support.

Tracy Claridge and Lesley Attwood, local Christian Aid Organisers. Tracy is taking over from Lesley this year and can be contacted on:
Tracy Claridge 240454
Christianaid@tlclaridge.co.uk.

Charity Bash

Saturday 12 May, Benenden Village Hall, 7.30pm

Former long-serving Dulwich Prep teacher and Benenden resident Sue Mahon is walking 190 miles along the Pilgrims Way to raise money for Pancreatic Cancer UK and Hospice in the Weald. The journey will take her from Winchester to Canterbury and then on to Goudhurst, the final resting place of Sue's friend Anni Lyth, who died from the disease last year.

Anybody wishing to donate to these two charities can do so online at <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/SueMahon>, or by attending the Charity Bash, organised by Anni's friends and family, on Saturday 12 May at Benenden Village Hall, for which tickets are available at <http://buytickets.at/sonata/149038>

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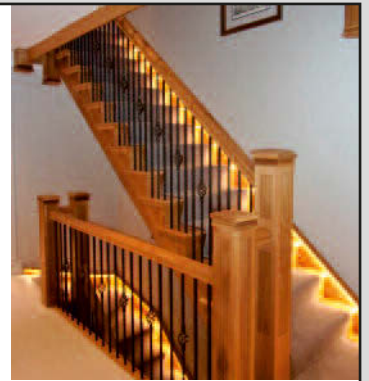
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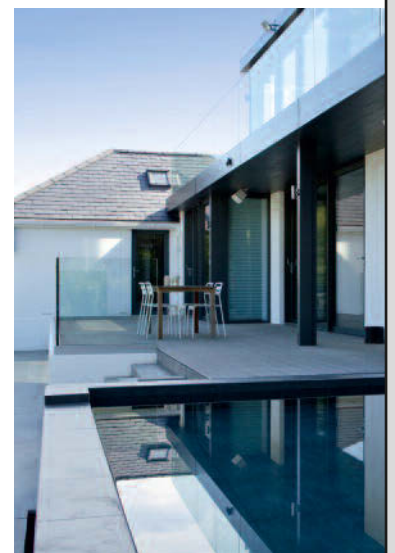


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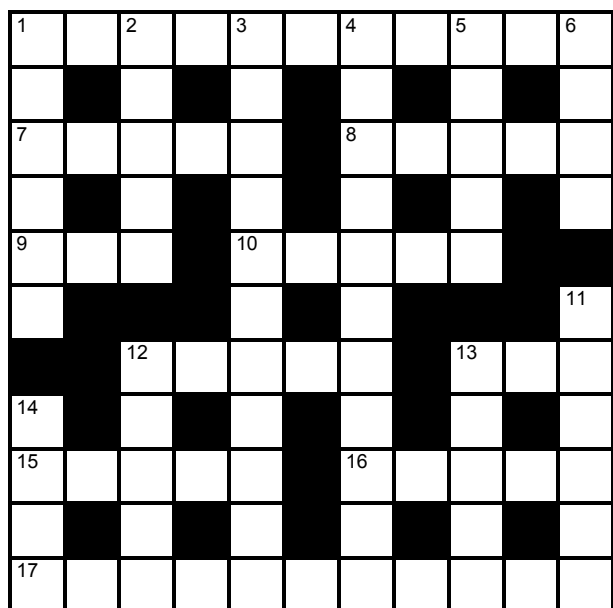


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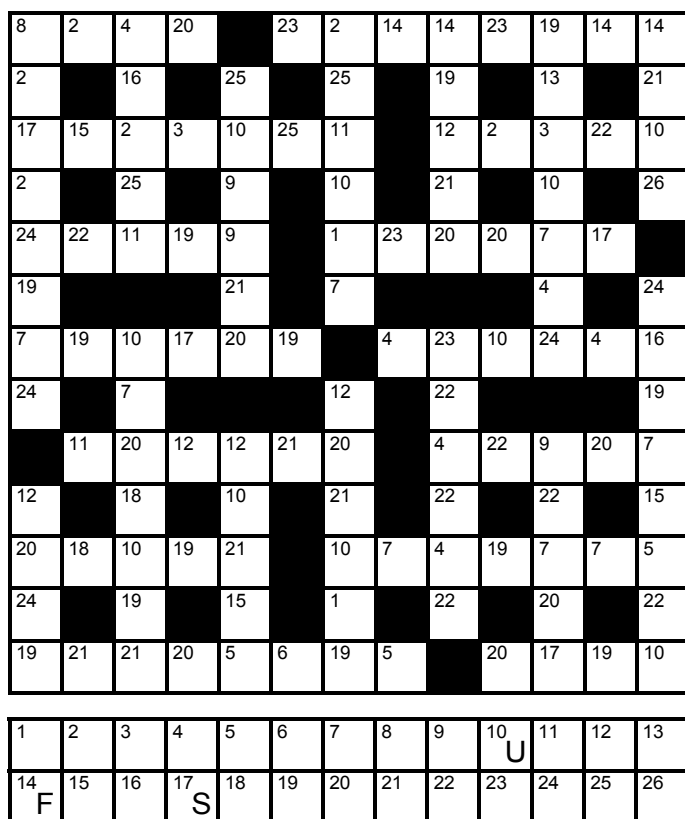
Across

- 1 Recalling putting a body back together? (11)
- 7 Bottle request from Florida, shortly (5)
- 8 A bit of European-approved pastry? (5)
- 9 Appalling sag in balloon! (3)
- 10 They sound like perfect places to sell cattle (5)
- 12 Deny Euro overvalue. Confusing way to assist 9 (5)
- 13 Affirm always (3)
- 15 Golfers can't abide this portion of their game (5)
- 16 Copper resolution shortly makes all well (5)
- 17 Offspring order insects to get down! (11)

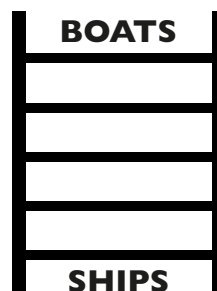
Down

- 1 About that smoky haze to east: it's safe (6)
- 2 Intends to have wealth but sounds a little like a miser (5)
- 3 Ikea bevel 'em wrongly, one might imagine (4-7)
- 4 Need epic Rex to be competent and skilful (11)
- 5 The worst of us sea-tossed having an abundance of fresh thoughts (5)
- 6 Suitable name for a Highlander? (4)
- 11 Address gentlemen politely although they sound very unkempt (6)
- 12 Venetians in disarray leave Etna to return to heart (5)
- 13 Beside Moses between, some say, Elvis Presley (5)
- 14 Took advantage of American school system? (4)

CODEWORD No4 (Moderate)

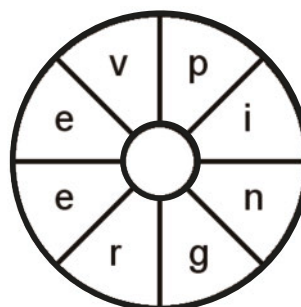


STEP CHANGE



Change the word at the foot of the ladder into the word at the top by altering only one letter at a time.

NINE FROM EIGHT



Find the missing letter at the centre of the wheel to create a nine-letter word. Clue: You might hear it through it.

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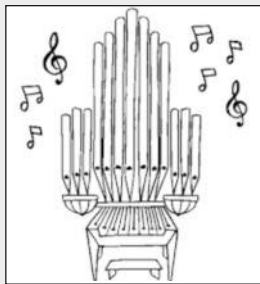
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Charles Spanner
ORGAN RECITAL

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6pm

following Choral Evensong at 5pm

Benenden Bowls Club

Now that we have officially entered spring and the sun is beginning to shine, it is time to get outside and enjoy a gentle game of bowls. Benenden Bowls Club has been in its present position, in the recreation field behind the village hall, since 1959 (the other side of the big hedge behind the bottle bank).

The club are always looking for new members to play 'friendly' weekend matches against other clubs, and interclub knockout tournaments. Practice is on a Thursday evening from 6.30pm starting on 26 April right through the summer - and remember it is not an old person's game, it is enjoyed by all. Even if you do not want to play you are welcome to come and watch the matches at weekends, or the Thursday practice.

Fixtures will be posted regularly and if any local business wishes to sponsor the club, please contact:

Glenda Marshall johnhmarshall@sky.com
John Marshall, Captain for Friendly Matches

Talking Shop

Wednesday 30 May, Benenden's Community Shop, 7pm

We are extending a warm invitation to all our volunteers (trained or untrained) to a light-hearted coffee-making and social get together in the Benenden's café on 30 May at 7pm.

There will be the opportunity to learn the ropes in the café if you haven't already done so and try some of the products. This is a great chance for those volunteers who haven't yet acquired the magical skill of creating the perfect cappuccino.

You'll be able to practise and enjoy the fruits of your efforts in a convivial atmosphere - do let us know if you will be able to join us!

The much-admired coffee used in the café comes from a small family firm called Rye Bay Coffee Company founded 20 years ago. It is run by Keith Burden and his son Jonny - who will be on hand to help train our volunteers - and it began when Keith went to Venezuela and returned with some high quality coffee beans. Unfortunately due to political unrest in Venezuela, they were unable to continue to import from there and now the organic, fair-trade beans used in the cafe are from Sumatra, Ethiopia and Honduras.

The description is 'strong cocoa/nutty and spice flavours with undertones of sweet fruit, and a hint of fermented and floral' and the blend is created with espresso in mind, packing enough punch for all-day use.

'Nuts and praline flavours dull the bright acidity and fruit,' and judging from what our customers regularly say, it certainly seems to hit the spot. Rye Bay Coffee also supply businesses in Northiam, Sissinghurst and Hawkhurst as well as running Waterfalls Gift Shop and café in Hastings.

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Benenden Bonfire Society: distribution of profits

Each year, the BBS aims to distribute funds from its annual bonfire to youth groups or projects for the benefit of youth in the parish of Benenden.

The 2017 event financial breakdown is as follows:

- Cash Balance brought forward £4,097
- Income Bonfire 2017 £16,167
- Less Costs -£7,826
- Total Income 2017 £8,341
- Balance £12,438
- Balance held for 2018 Bonfire £5,438
- Total available for distribution 2017 £7,000

We were delighted to receive a number of applications for funding and the following were successful:

Benenden Scout Group application for £2,800 to be put towards capital repairs and ongoing costs of running the local Scout Group. Granted in full.

Benenden CE Primary School PTA application for £1,000 to be used towards achieving the aim of a Forest School for pupils, providing opportunities to achieve and develop confidence through hands-on learning in woodland and natural environments. Granted in full.

Benenden Players application for £800 to provide another drama workshop during the summer holidays. Feedback from last year's event was that parents saw a real increase in their children's confidence. Granted in full.

Benenden Pre-School application for £500 to improve seating within the garden for the children and to provide training opportunities for staff. Granted in full.

Sissinghurst Cubs application for £1,000 to provide hammocks and 'tarps' so that cubs can sleep outside while on their summer camp. The committee did not wish to set a precedent of providing money to applicants from outside the parish but were satisfied that since Benenden Cub Pack closed, most children have joined Sissinghurst, returning to Benenden when of Scout age. Currently seven children attend Sissinghurst Cubs from the Benenden Parish. Further, if a Cub Pack resumes in Benenden the equipment will be available to be shared. This



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and Sandhurst

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01580 240658 revdavidcommander@gmail.com

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**Sunday
27 May**

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Mission Church
at 5pm**

Lift up
your
Hearts
in
Praise!

decision also recognised the historic involvement of the Scout movement in the Benenden Bonfire. Granted in full.

This leaves a balance of £900. Further enquiries are still being conducted as to whether this money should be granted to a recreational project within the parish. If you wish to contact the BBS please do so via email info@benendenfireworks.co.uk

The committee would like to thank all those who supported the actual event and particularly those who helped in any way.

Grant Matthews

Benenden Bonfire Society Committee
www.benendenfireworks.co.uk

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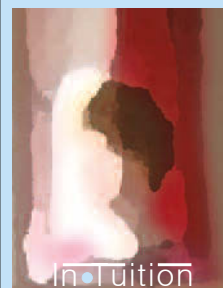
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Super spring cleaning

The Parish Council would like to say a very big thank you to all those who helped with the village spring clean-up last month. The biggest crowd of helpers we have had to date turned out and worked extremely hard to make our village look spick and span again. Vast amounts of rubbish were collected - TWBC will let us know the final figure of black sacks filled in due course - and I hope you all enjoyed your complimentary drink and cake at Benenden's Community Shop. We hope to see you again - and maybe a few more new faces - at the next clean-up in the autumn.

Nicola Thomas, Chair, Parish Council

Ancient game alive and well

Sundays, The Bull, Benenden, 7pm

Cribbage is a game of luck and skill which originates from the 1600s. It was invented by Sir John Suckling, an English courtier, poet, gamester and gambler and has a long tradition as a popular pub pursuit, so where better to enjoy a game than The Bull, built in 1608 by William Bugg, a keen cribbage player.

Matches take place every Sunday evening from 7pm and landlord Mark Barron-Reid is seeking fresh players to join in the fun. He says: "We play in singles, threes and pairs and are looking for new people to join us for a game or two, so feel free to come along and help keep an old tradition alive."

For more information, please email:
crib@thebullatbenenden.co.uk

Village Lunch

Tuesday 15 May, Benenden Village Hall,
12.30pm

All are welcome. It's just £5 a head. If you need a lift please let us know and we can arrange it. Please call Kay on 01580 240566 if you haven't already put your name down but would like to come. We look forward to seeing you.

CRANBROOK
MUSEUM



THE HOP PICKERS LINE

The railway that ran from Hawkhurst to Paddock Wood

Exhibition for April and May

Tuesday to Saturday, 2-4.30pm
Entrance free, donations welcomed

The Museum is on Carriers Road.
Opposite Jockey Lane car park.

THE HOP PICKERS LINE HERITAGE GROUP



Village Hall highlights

Last month's Grierson Galleries Art Show proved a great success, with 500 people through the door. It received so much positive feedback that the dates have already been pencilled in for next year - and beyond. Following on from that triumph, and in addition to our regular clubs and classes, we also have a couple of dates for your diary.

On Monday 7 May we have our annual visit by David Orchard, who will be selling his beautiful teak garden furniture at knockdown prices from 10am-4pm in the main hall. There is also a charity bash in aid of Hospice in the Weald and Pancreatic Cancer UK on Saturday 12 May starting at 7.30pm. You are promised great music from the Great Rock and Soul Band, great dancing, great food, great prizes and great fun. Tickets cost £20 (which includes food) and can be purchased at either the Community Shop or online at <http://buytickets.at/sonata/149038>.

Did you know that hire rates for our regular clubs and classes start from as little as £10 per hour with the added bonus of having your new venture highlighted on our social media pages and a mention in this magazine?

www.benendenvillagehall.org.

Lorraine Jones 243123
enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org

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Image courtesy of Manuel Canovas

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Friends of St George's Spring Concert

Two extraordinarily gifted married couples with local ties, Timothy Rundle and Sarah Andrew on oboe and bassoon and Quentin Thomas and Zoë Harmsworth on organ/piano and cello, showed once again how lucky we are in Benenden to be able to tap into world-class talent - in this case four experienced international players who were thrilled to be able to give something back to our community.

After pieces by Albinoni, Boismortier and Mozart, Quentin played a beautiful, hypnotic organ piece by the minimalist Estonian composer Arvo Pärt, which focused our minds on what a treasure our organ is. We know, however, that it does require some major maintenance and the generous donations to the retiring collection will be used towards this.

The first half ended with Poulenc's great Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano. It's a real virtuoso tour-de-force and we heard as fine a performance as you would hear anywhere before enjoying a glass of wine and the most delicious food in the interval.

In the second half, after an electric performance of the Saint-Saëns Oboe Sonata, we had a mix of lighter music by Rachmaninov, Vaughan Williams, Gershwin and Fauré and were sent home with our toes tapping by the whimsical tango rhythms of the enchantingly idiosyncratic Argentinian composer Piazzolla.

We can only hope that these players can be persuaded to get together for us again in the not-too-distant future.

Andrew Stowell

Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra

Laura van der Heijden

BBC Young Musician of the Year 2012

CHARITY CONCERT
raising vital funds for the
HOSPICE IN THE WEALD

3pm Sunday 24 June 2018
Benenden School
Benenden TN17 4AA

Conductor Michael Hitchcock

Dvořák Cello Concerto
Brahms Symphony No.2
Mendelssohn Rug Blas Overture

Tickets - £15 adult, £5 student
www.thecso.org.uk
Benenden's Community Shop



© Celine Latuene Delavotha

Classical for charity

Details have been finalised for the latest events in the tenth annual Richard Beattie Davis Sandhurst Musical series for Hospice in the Weald.

Saturday 28 July, 3pm Oliver Davies (pf) and Adrian Bradbury (cello) will be performing at this year's garden party event. The interesting programme will consist of Cui, Glazunov, Piatti and others. Tickets by donation (minimum £17).

Wednesday 12 September, 3pm Alexander Karpeyev will be the first Russian to guest at the series. He will be playing Medtner, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and other repertoire from his homeland. Tickets by donation (minimum £15).

All events take place in a private home in Sandhurst with a fine Steinway grand piano.

Reservations in advance only from:
Gillian Davis 850384

CODEWORD No4

1	G	1	J	4	C	5	Y	6	W	7	N	8	V	9	Z	10	U	11	P	12	B	13	D		
14	F	15	K	16	H	17	S	18	Q	19	A	20	E	21	L	22	O	23	R	24	T	25	M	26	X

STEP CHANGE

BOATS, COATS, CHATS, CHITS, CHIPS, SHIPS

NINE FROM EIGHT

GRAPEVINE

MINDBENENDERS

CROSSWORD No4

Answers

Across: 1 Remembering, 7 Flask, 8 Piece, 9 Gas, 10 Byres, 12 Valve, 13 Aye, 15 Slice, 16 Cures, 17 Descendants

Down: 1 Refugee, 2 Means, 3 Make-believe, 4 Experienced, 5 Ideas, 6 Glen, 11 Messrs, 12 Veins, 13 Aaron, 14 Used

Food & Drink

Full of beans! Brazil and Burundi on Benenden's doorstep

"An exotic commodity roasted on Kent land," reads the motto of Coldblow Coffee, a tiny Wealden artisan business run by Grant Robinson, owner of Tenterden's Nutmeg Delicatessen.

Tiptoe past the gaggle of guard geese in the old farmyard, peer in through the door of the workshop and there, in the low light in one corner, you'll find Grant Robinson, hemmed in by the light industry of a bespoke bicycle business, manning his Giesen W6A roaster with the contented zeal of a true artisan.

Those of you who occasionally stray beyond the parish boundaries may know Grant from his other workplace, the hallowed Nutmeg Deli, a few yards from Waitrose in Tenterden, where he serves cakes that throw down a challenge even to our own community shop, and some of the best coffee money can buy.

When not manning the counter, however, he disappears to the darkest east of the county to prepare the beans for the final stage of a journey that has led them from, perhaps, Brazil or Burundi to the backwaters of Warehorne, where an invisible cloud of coffee perfume brings an unmistakable scent of the Tropics to the ancient oak woodlands. It's a heady aroma that springs from unpromising beginnings, as Grant explains,



dipping into rough hessian sacks to scoop out hard, tasteless green beans that defy recognition.

"Until you roast them they have no coffee flavour, nothing inherent," says the man who himself sprung from an unlikely source, a south London lad who gave up a five-year job in the City and 18 years as a tree surgeon to end up indulging his passion in the Weald. "I suppose they

smell pea-like or a bit gravelly, unusual, not unpleasant, but certainly not coffee."

Now, however, comes the magic. Into the half-tonne Dutch-made roasting drum go 4.7kg of Brazilian Rubi Bourbon beans, grown in rich, red loam soil at an altitude of 1160m on a farm called Fazenda Lages. They're ethical beans, sourced by a responsible importer from an independent farmer, and when roasted for about ten minutes at 193 degrees, with the process controlled from a laptop on a workbench, they'll pop like popcorn (a stage called 'first crack'), then come out rich, chocolatey, nutty and, when mixed 50-25-25 with beans from Colombia and Rwanda, will form the backbone of the Nutmeg's unique espresso blend.

"It's like blending grapes for wine," explains Grant, "to come up with something that's going

to work for a coffee that's extracted in about 25 seconds and has to have a lot going on, with a base, body and high notes. But if you want to make filter coffee or a cafetiere, I'd advise going for single origin beans so you can pick out the inherent flavours."

The single origin Colombian, for example, exhibits "notes of raspberry, cherry and honey with a butter body",



according to the tasting sheet, while “super bright and sweet” Rwandan, harvested only between March and July, may offer “milk chocolate, pineapple and plum”.

“Apparently there are more volatile compounds in coffee than in any other food or drink, more combinations of flavours, more complexity,” says Grant, who once traded from a three-wheeled van with an espresso machine on Hythe beach.

“It’s like the difference between a bog-standard lager and a craft IPA,” explains the man whose other loves include Spanish ham and French cheese. “Some people will hate a craft IPA but I’d find it a lot more interesting, and if it changed seasonally I’d love it even more. That’s the joy of roasting in small batches - following the seasons.

“The mass coffee market has its place but it’s the fast food end of the coffee world and it’s not my thing. Luckily these days, as people’s palates mature, the trend is towards smaller, less milky drinks and better flavour in amazing little independent coffee shops, and we’re busier year after year after year.”

Peter Thomas

Photographs: Amelia Thomas

Coldblow’s espresso blend and its Brazilian, Colombian and Rwandan roasts are all available in the Nutmeg Delicatessen in Sayers Lane, Tenterden.

Patricio Gougenheim, owner and winemaker, at Benenden School Café

Friday 25 May
7 for 7.30pm

The Wines of
Gougenheim Argentina

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Eight tasting wines,
One glass of wine at interval
with beef and cheeses.

B's

Grape versus Place?

Choosing wine has never been more difficult as we are dazzled with the sheer choice available. So should a confused consumer reach for the familiar place or the particular grape? Do we go for a region or country we have enjoyed before, or do we reach for a Merlot, Malbec or Sauvignon Blanc, regardless of where it is from?

Choosing by grape may sound like the obvious choice, but is it? The old guard will not place the grape variety on the label, leaving us none the wiser while those New World producers who label clearly by grape may not deliver the quality one hopes for. In the 1990s the popular grapes were planted indiscriminately with mass production primarily in mind.

Perhaps place offers greater security? Not always, as the region may not guarantee quality but may well still demand a price tag befitting its posh provenance. Choosing by country is even less reliable. Consider Italy, providing such a range of styles, soils, climate and varieties, that saying one likes or dislikes Italian wine is about as much use as a chocolate teapot!

The answer will never be clear cut, but some wines have answered the question for us by combining grape and place in their wine identity. Mendoza’s Malbec, New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc and Barossa Shiraz are three that come to mind who, through clever grape selection, marketing and a little luck have identified and produced a winning wine for their region.

If, however, you are looking for a fine wine and expecting to spend over £20, then I would lead with place, guided by wines that have won awards or the press. Otherwise head for a combination of grape and place.

Here are three suggestions from my go-to country of Chile. Majestic’s Luis Felipe Edwards Gran Reserva Chardonnay (£9.99 or £7.99 Mix Six price) has a creamy Burgundian feel. Tabali Vetas Blancas Cabernet Franc (Wine Society, £12.50) brings Old World elegance and New World power. Errazuriz Max Reserva Cabernet Sauvignon is full-bodied, full-flavoured and feels much classier than the £12.99 Waitrose is asking.

Alfred Nicol

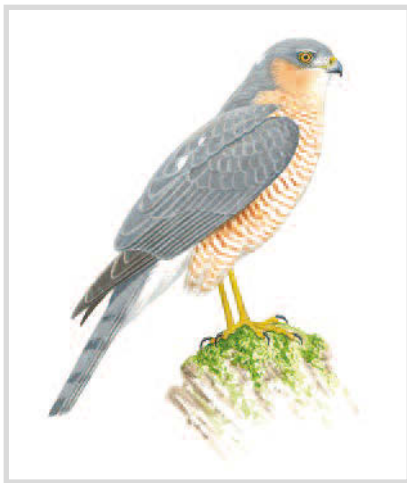
Bird Notes

Buzzards are now probably the most frequently seen raptor in this area. Their breeding displays over the woods and frequent calls make them highly visible. Most of the larger woods in the parish seem to have a resident pair, which is quite amazing in view of the fact that the first breeding record in the county was so recent, in 1999.

Their expansion to the east of the country from their stronghold in the west is one of the most remarkable ornithological events in recent times. This fantastic recovery is not completely understood but reduced persecution and the banning of pesticides are probably the main drivers. Fortunately Buzzards have a broad diet, with rabbits being the most common prey item, but when rabbits are in short supply they will turn to other small mammals as well as beetles and worms to augment their diet. They are also known to take chicks from the nests of tree-nesting species including that of the Carrion Crow and related species.



Kestrels are the next most commonly seen raptor in the area, again easily identifiable by its hovering hunting technique. Roadside edges and rough grassland are its favourite haunts, where voles make up a very large part of its diet. This is sometimes supplemented by ground-nesting chicks such as pipits and larks in the breeding season. The two areas where I most often see one hunting are the oaks at the bottom of Hilly Fields and on the rough area near the practice golf range on the Sissinghurst road.



Kestrels have been in slow decline, possibly due to improved pastures for grazing replacing vole-rich rough ground. The introduction of set-aside reversed the trend for a while but was not sustained long enough to affect the population to a significant extent.

Sparrowhawks on the other hand are only occasionally glimpsed, as their hunting technique is by stealth and surprise. Unfortunately they have learnt that there is a good supply of their quarry at garden bird tables. They will approach the garden using the cover of a hedge and then dive over and grab a feeding bird. I have seen this on a number of occasions with about a 30 per cent success rate. The most dramatic attack was when the hawk caught a Great Spotted Woodpecker and pinned it to the lawn before plucking it and eating it. However I have seen many more piles of feathers than I have seen attacks, with Blue Tits and Collared Doves being the main victims; identifiable from their remains. The female hawk is quite a lot larger than the male and may be responsible for the doves, the male for the Blue Tits.

In the summer, this trio of raptors is joined by our only local migrant bird of prey, the Hobby. It is a member of the falcon family and slightly smaller than a Kestrel. It usually arrives in late April and nests in hedgerows, woodland edges and isolated trees, which means it can just about nest anywhere. It tends to be seen more often in late summer, when family parties hawk for insects over farmland, particularly dragonflies, which are consumed on the wing having first been de-winged.

above: Sparrowhawk, *Accipiter nisus*;
top right: Honey-buzzard, *Pernis apivorus*;
opposite: Hobby, *Falco subbuteo*
Illustrations: Stephen Message
www.message-wildlife-art.co.uk

It is an elegant falcon with long pointed wings enabling it to fly fast and catch aerial birds such as Swallows and even Swifts. The Hobby has in the past nested in Hemsted Forest but I haven't seen or heard of any recent breeding attempts.

The above four raptors all breed in the parish and writing this article has highlighted to me that there is very little competition for prey, allowing them to co-exist. The only overlap is the Sparrowhawk and Hobby but even then they target different species of birds as the Hobby goes for the more aerial ones.



Other birds of prey are occasionally seen in the parish. Occasionally a Marsh Harrier will fly over - they have recently bred as close as Lossenham Marsh near Newenden. The establishment of the Red Kite colony in West Sussex after the introduction in the Chilterns has meant an increased number of sightings locally as the young wander from their natal breeding grounds.

Peregrine Falcons that nest on the Kent coastline are now beginning to nest inland on such impressive structures as bridge towers and cathedrals. There are no such structures locally but keeping an eye open for fly-overs will probably be rewarded, although patience is needed!

The Merlin, our smallest falcon, nests in the northern hills and catches small birds such as Meadow Pipits. Merlins winter on our estuaries and coastline and I have seen one in Biddenden when the Hammer stream was in flood at the turn of the century. Hen Harriers are also

mountain breeders and much persecuted, illegally, as they like Red Grouse chicks. They are now very rare but some do join Harrier roosts on the Kentish marshes in winter.

Goshawks frequent large, wooded forests and, despite both Bedgebury and Hemsted being suitable habitat, disappointingly this large Sparrowhawk has never bred or even been seen locally. There are possibly two pairs that do breed in Kent but their whereabouts is kept under wraps for security reasons. Unfortunately egg collecting is still an ongoing problem.

It is the same with the Honey-buzzard, which is a very rare summer migrant that also breeds in similar habitat to that of the Goshawk. Its name is a bit of a misnomer as it feeds mainly on wasp larvae, which it digs out of the ground. It occasionally breeds in Kent.

Charles Trollope 240821 cetetal@btinternet.com

	Kent Pairs 1994-1998 Survey	Kent Pairs 2008-2013 Survey
Buzzard	0-1	1000-2000
Sparrowhawk	200-300	1000-2000
Kestrel	750-800	2500-3000
Hobby	15-40	250-350
Marsh Harrier	0-14	80-100
Peregrine	1	30-40
Goshawk	n/a	0-2
Honey-buzzard	n/a	0-2



Last Word

Peter Davies

18 April 1946-4 March 2018

On Saturday 7 April at St George's, the village said farewell to Peter Davies, chairman of its Parish Council and long-standing supporter of

its causes and values. The church was full to the brim for a service conducted by the Reverend David Commander, assisted by Reverend Dr Rosemary Kobus van Wengen, which contained all the expected and deserved tributes, alongside some rather more surprising details of Peter's life, times, passions and humour.

Beginning with a rendition of Melancholy Man by the Moody Blues and progressing through The Yarn of the Nancy Bell - a Victorian tale of naval cannibalism by William Schwenk Gilbert - to the more traditional reading of Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 by his widow Jane, the thanksgiving encompassed fond words from their children Sarah, Richard and William, as well as recollections - some less reverent than others - from old friends and former colleagues.

We learned that at Durham University, Peter showed an aversion to lectures and tutorials that seemed not to hinder his progress towards a degree in Politics and Economics, a successful career in business and, later, an enormous contribution to the wellbeing of his chosen home of Iden Green and the broader parish.

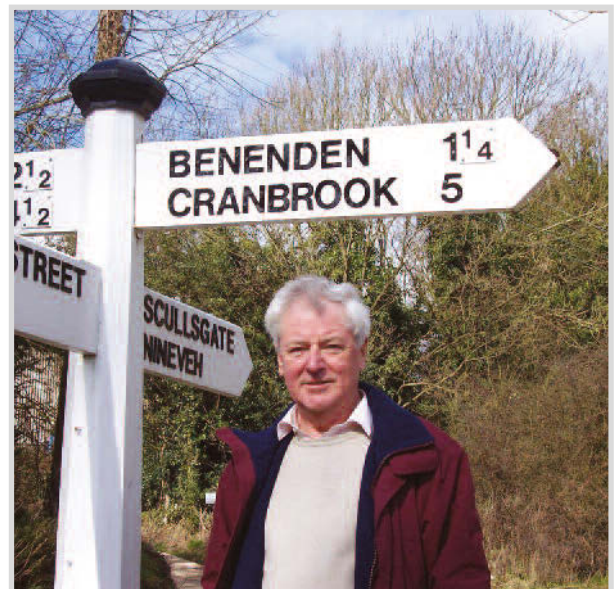
"Well-read, witty, clever, charming and self-taught," summarised university colleague David Maddison, echoed by Roger Manning, a kindred spirit in local politics, who recalled how he "debated with humour, even on the subject of potholes in Benenden".

While working for Shell, Peter apparently honed his love of snooker and beer, continuing the latter into later life, often at the Woodcock, where his catchphrase, "Jug up!", might be heard in encouragement of swifter supping.

Roy Bullock, former leader of TWBC, described Peter as "relentless in trying to

protect the main characteristics of village life"; these included, said William, a good Sunday roast and a desire to "waste not, want not ... to see the value in whatever you have".

For those of us who knew him only for a few years as a fellow villager, we said goodbye to a hard-working and decent man with a deep-seated love of the community. Others knew him longer and better and here we reproduce below the tribute written by good friend Robin Dalton Holmes, which was read at the thanksgiving.



WE SALUTE HIS CONTRIBUTION

Peter's interest in politics and local government was deep-seated. Brought up in East Kent he went to Sir Roger Manwood's School in Sandwich and was already a Young Conservative when he entered Durham University.

After graduating he joined the Economic Intelligence Department of the Westminster Bank and later contractors Richard Costain, before joining Shell.

In 1973 he and Jane were married and bought a small house in Staplehurst. After moving swiftly to Sissinghurst to accommodate Sarah in 1974, Richard in 1976 and William two years later they spent five years with Royal Dutch Shell in Holland, returning to Sissinghurst in 1988. There Jane and Peter had their first taste of local government, joining the Cranbrook and Sissinghurst Parish Council.

In 1992 they moved again, to Weald House

in Iden Green, still within the vital catchment area of Cranbrook School. I first encountered Peter in 1998 as he was retiring when he agreed to stand for the Benenden Ward of the Borough Council, which he won back from Jake Nicholson that May.

By 2002 his share of the vote on the new three-member ward won him the longest tenure before facing another election, a measure of his reputation across this part of the Weald. Peter was proud to have won the debate to call the ward Benenden and Cranbrook, in that order. At the same time he became Chairman of this local party branch and in due course was elected a Vice-President of the Maidstone & The Weald Constituency Conservative Association.

His time on the Council gave him the opportunity to apply his skills positively in Borough affairs including time in the cabinet as Deputy Leader. It was a period of particular stress in the Council but he drew a sage distinction maintaining enduring friendships despite occasional policy disagreement.

Throughout the long period from 2003 when governors were staging a campaign for a new modern primary school, he again had to maintain a balanced stance with all parties as a Local Authority-nominated governor, although in private he made no secret of his own aspirations for the project. It was a happy culmination that Peter was able to celebrate the beginning of new school construction last November.

Peter was in 2010 looking forward to an election to the Deputy Mayoralty of the Borough, which might inevitably have led to Mayoralty and hopes to ensure that Tunbridge Wells fraternity did not overlook the interests of the rural portion of the Borough, and also embarking on fundraising for the Mayor's charities, which would certainly have included the quizzes he much savoured. A shift in local



politics meant that he lost out in the 2010 poll.

The third enduring strand in his life was family and in 2013 he and Jane threw themselves into celebrating their ruby wedding with a beautiful summer lunch party in their own garden.

With Sarah, Richard and William abroad he relished the opportunity for purposeful worldwide travel.

In 2003 they bought a property near Sarah in the French Alps which ensured an opportunity to encourage the bilingualism of grandchildren. As well as India, journeys to Richard in Australia, and William in Singapore followed.

Peter's knowledge of where to find relevant information made him an invaluable leader of the Housing Section in the 2015 Parish Plan. He then joined the Parish Council and, after being elected Chairman, established the pattern of monthly reports in the Benenden Magazine. He also found time for visits to the Woodcock and regular slots as a shop attendant in the Community Shop.

When grave afflictions had struck both Jane and Peter he was phlegmatic about his severe loss of sight without doubting the potential for success of new medical techniques. Mercifully a series of operations put him en route to being a driver once more and in due course able to accompany Jane on her own challenging journeys and hospitalisation.

Just as both of them were emerging from this dark period it came as a devastating shock to learn of Peter's last challenge. Typically he was deeply embroiled in the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan for the village. Even from his sick bed, telephone calls to Peter demonstrated his respect for local matters and he remained a fount of long-forgotten factual information. As successively a Man of Kent who came and gave great service as a Kentish Man, Peter has left a very considerable mark right to the end and we salute his indefatigable contribution to local life and his family.



Above: Grierson Galleries Art Show maximising the village hall space; nothing can dampen the Pre-School Easter egg hunt; passion indulged on a visit by Benenden Engineering Society to three JCB plants near Uttoxeter; Neighbourhood Development Plan exhibition displaying a huge amount of work from the community; the glorious Benenden School Arts Festival
Front cover: Lambs near Parsonage Wood. Photograph: Amelia Thomas