

# Benenden Magazine

December 2019



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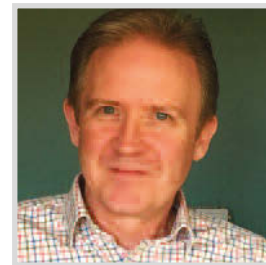
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# Editorial



Consider this the Christmas edition of the Benenden Magazine, with all our festive best wishes contained within, although deadlines being what they are, there's every chance the New Year edition will be with you before your turkey has even been stuffed.

Speaking of turkey, inside you'll find a fascinating interview with Andrew Wreathall. You may not have heard of him, but if you buy your plump and tasty Christmas bird from Ward's, you owe him a debt of gratitude as the man at the helm of Appledore Turkeys. Read him on page 34 and discover why traditional breed, slow-maturing, dry-plucked turkey is the way to go this year.

We also shine a light (page 31) on the man who has lit up Mounts Hill for the last 27 years and, for those of an historical disposition, we look back even further (on page 19) to the swine-herding days of the distant past, when fattening pigs was what Benenden had a good name for.

Elsewhere, dotted through these pages, is evidence of what Benenden does best in the modern age, with details of all the good works carried out on our behalf by so many dedicated and sedulous souls, from those who are securing our rural village future through the Neighbourhood Development Plan, via those who run the community shop and the annual fireworks display, to those who may go slightly under our radar, making Christmas a better place for those who would otherwise be alone on this most communal of days.

Some of these industrious souls put the rest of us to shame with the amount they do, on a strictly unpaid basis, but we don't all have to work ceaselessly for the village. If everybody gave a couple of hours a week, did just one job, volunteered to do their own little something, Benenden would be an even better place than it is now. Maybe that's a New Year's resolution for everybody, a month early.

Peter Thomas, Co-Editor

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# Church Calendar

## St George's Church

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

Churchwarden: Tracy Claridge 240454 [maisonsicheluk@tlclaridge.co.uk](mailto:maisonsicheluk@tlclaridge.co.uk)

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

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

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

Sunday 1 December	8am Communion	10am All-age Communion	5pm Advent Carol Service: Service of Light
Saturday 7 December		10.30am Benenden Girls' School Carol Service	
Sunday 8 December	8am 1662 Communion	10am Morning Worship	5pm Evening Prayer at Mission Church
Friday 13 December		5pm Saint Ronan's School Carol Service	
Sunday 15 December	8am Communion	10am Sung Eucharist	
Wednesday 18 December		2.30pm Benenden Primary School Carol Service	
Saturday 21 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 Family Service	
		10.45am Communion	
Sunday 29 December	8am Benefice Communion	10am All-age Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst	

## Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Every Tuesday 10am Communion

## Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

## The Roman Catholic Chapel TN17 4EL

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

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

## From the Parish Registers

Wedding 16 November Alexandra Hirst and Thomas Newell

# Rector's Letter



## Caring at Christmas ... and beyond

So, there's another year nearly behind us. I must have blinked and missed a few months of the year because it certainly doesn't feel like 12 months since we were celebrating carol services and all the Christmas services together. But here we are once again in December, with the joy of seeing the excitement of young children really enjoying Christmas for the first time, and the joy of remembering and celebrating what God did for us in sending his Son as a baby. This is definitely 'family time': time with our own families, time with church-family, and time with the 'holy family'.

As you will see from the diary of services at St George's through Advent and Christmas, there is a lot going on. I hope that you will be able to join in the joy of some of the services. Please remember any neighbours who may want to get to a Christmas service but are not able to do so themselves. Christmas time can be a very emotional and hard time for many people; with many people seemingly very happy, joyful and celebrating (and, of course, eating and drinking too much), whilst for others it can be a very, very lonely time. This really is an important time to think of others.

Apart from all the services over the Christmas period, we also have the Christmas Day lunch in the Memorial Hall. If you don't want to be alone on Christmas Day, please come and join us for a delicious Christmas dinner. The food is important, of course - so thank you to all those who contribute and make it all happen - but the fellowship of being with someone else is very important. When the rest of the world seems to be happy and celebrating, Christmas can be very hard; so please, come along this year - or encourage someone else to - rather than being on our own. Fellowship is at the heart of the Christian faith; at the Christmas Day lunch we share fellowship together.

Let's not let it stop that fellowship straight after Christmas though. Why not come along to the 'Hello. How are you? Club' that Tracy Claridge and others are starting in January? This is about a caring, supportive community. We are also wanting to build on a Messy Church initiative of, 'Leave what you can. Take what you need', with food and other items being available in the church porch, free, to anyone who has a need; this, too, is about a caring community. Or if you want to talk about anything, or have some prayer time together, give me a call. Prayer is also at the heart of the Christian faith; I, and others at church, would love to pray for you/with you if you would like us to. This is about a caring community.

I wish you a very happy Christmas, I hope you can share it with others and enjoy it. God bless.

Revd David Commander, Rector

# Village Calendar

## December

Sunday 1	Advent Carol Service: The Service of Light, St George's Church, 5pm	p.10
Tuesday 3	Christmas Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.17
Tuesday 3	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Carol Singing, Hartley House and Larchmere	p.15
Friday 6	Benenden Primary School Christmas Fair, Benenden Primary School, 3pm	p.9
Friday 6	Benenden's Community Shop Volunteers' Evening, Benenden's Community Shop, 6.30pm	p.21
Friday 6	Woodland Wide Games, Iden Green Congregational Church, 7pm	
Saturday 7	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Club, 8pm	
Monday 9	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Annual Choir Service, Frittenden, 2pm	p.15
Monday 9	Parish Council Meeting, Memorial Hall, 7pm	
Saturday 14	Chinese Supper Night, St George's Club, 8pm	
Sunday 15	Harmsworth Court Service, Community Room, 4.30pm	
Tuesday 17	Merry and Bright, Christmas Party, Memorial Hall, 3pm	
Wednesday 18	Benenden Primary School Carol Service, St George's Church, 2.30pm	
Friday 20	Preparing the Church for Christmas, St George's Church, 9.30am	
Friday 20	Christmas Draw and Meat Raffle, St George's Club, 8pm	
Saturday 21	Parish Carol Service by Candlelight, St George's Church, 7.30pm	
Saturday 21	Christmas Draw and Raffle with nibbles, St George's Club, 8pm	
Christmas Eve	The Crib Service, St George's Church, 3pm	p.10
Christmas Day	Christmas Lunch, Memorial Hall, 12.30pm-4.30pm	p.11
Tuesday 31	Glenda's New Year's Eve Party, St George's Club, 8pm	

## Benenden Youth Club/Streetcruizer, age 11+

Tuesdays at Benenden Village Hall, 6.30-8.30pm

## Coffee Shop

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-12noon

## Benenden Bowls Club

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

## Cakes & Chaos: Cafe and Toddler Group

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

## Refuse Lorry Collections

Saturday 14 December Domestic Waste only

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

Saturday 28 December Domestic Waste only

No service

Saturday 11 January Domestic Waste only

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

# Parish Council



The consultation period for our Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 Draft ended on 31 October, and the review committee has been set up and is busy reading through the comments and responses received. Thank you to all who took the time to respond, supporters and objectors alike. Your comments are a valuable tool in the process of our plan, and each one will be given careful consideration by the committee. A further opportunity to comment on the next draft of our plan will be available at the Regulation 15 stage.

The saga of our new waste collection service continues, with some major teething problems slowly being smoothed out. However, please do keep reporting missed collections on the TWBC website <https://beta.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/refuse-and-recycling/missed-bin-collection#> or alternatively call TWBC on 01892 554426. On the bright side, our bottle banks have now been removed from the village hall car park, making for a more peaceful environment for the neighbours.

Thank you to all who turned up for our autumn village clean on 9 November, and our apologies again that we were let down by the very late delivery of equipment by TWBC. We have decided that it will not be feasible to reschedule the missed clean-up over the Christmas period, and therefore will be holding our spring clean earlier than usual next year. We will let you know as soon as we have a date confirmed.

May we remind you that if you wish to comment on current planning applications in our parish, we cannot pass anonymous comments onto TWBC, as they are unable to accept these. However, you can request that your name and address is redacted before your comments are posted onto the TWBC website, so do not be discouraged from submitting comments if you have opinions or facts concerning an application that you believe should be taken into consideration by TWBC and the Parish Council alike.

Have a very happy Christmas, and a peaceful New Year, and may I take this opportunity to thank all of you who have volunteered your time and effort to help make Benenden the thriving and vibrant community we have today.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair  
01580 240364 [nic.jthomas@btinternet.com](mailto:nic.jthomas@btinternet.com)

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk  
01580 240371 [clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org](mailto:clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org)  
For more information see our website [www.benendenparishcouncil.org](http://www.benendenparishcouncil.org) or find us on facebook

Parish Council Meeting  
Monday 9 December 2019,  
Memorial Hall, 7pm

Parish Office will be closed  
23, 26 and 30 December 2019  
and 2 January 2020





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# Just a Thought



## Let there be light

Who pulls the curtains open in your house? One of my small delights is to open the curtains first thing every morning. I like to let in the light and look out on the day. It doesn't matter what the weather is like but it is particularly rewarding if the sun is shining.

I have just returned from staying with my daughter and her family. I found it very strange that when I came downstairs I usually found her and my two small grandchildren eating breakfast before school, with only one of the several curtains open. I can understand that her husband doesn't do the deed as it is hardly light when he leaves for work. I suppose in their scheme of things, opening curtains is quite low on the priority list behind eating cereal, getting uniform on, signing off the reading book, finding PE kits and providing lunch for pre-school.

When we lived in Africa I regularly frustrated my house staff by gaily opening all the many curtains in the living room to let in the light. Boniface in particular used regularly to sigh, as he wanted to keep all the curtains closed to keep the house cool. In fact it is very likely that he closed them all again as soon as we had gone to work.

One time on our return from overseas it was necessary to move and to find a new house. Unfortunately we found ourselves house hunting when the latest trend in house design had been to reduce the size of all windows - presumably to reduce heat loss and conserve energy. It took us some time to find a house from a different era that had windows from floor to ceiling, at least in the main room, so that the light could come in and I could look out.

One disappointment that I have when visiting National Trust houses is that one enters a magnificent room with full-length windows and possible beautiful views only to find that everywhere is bathed in gloom. We are told that the blinds have to be drawn to prevent fading of the furniture, carpets and hangings.

Then there are those beautiful half-timbered Tudor houses with great beams and low ceilings, but often their windows are so small and with leaded glass. I love to see this kind of house - but I couldn't live in one. The occupants have to have a light on even in the middle of the day. My family tease me but I cannot help it. I must have light. The downside of course is that all windows have to be cleaned, both inside and out, and the greater the square footage of windows the more cleaning there is to be done. Perhaps that's why I enjoy camping so much.

Soon we can look forward to Christmas trees, candles and fairy lights brightening any window, large or small, and I won't be closing the curtain on that particular window even at night.

Sue Fisher

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# News and Events

## TWBC update

### Refuse service

The kerbside collection of waste is Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's largest contract, which was awarded to Urbaser after a competitive tender process. The good news is that a great deal more recyclables are being collected. The bad news is that there have been some significant teething problems with the new service, especially at this end of the borough.

These difficulties have arisen because some new crews are not familiar with our area and many of our properties are difficult to find. The amount of recycling collected has also been more than anticipated, requiring lorries to return to the depot more often, so planned collection routes are not being completed in the time provided. Some problems were expected but not the 3% collection errors recorded over the last few weeks.

TWBC officers and the contractor have been working to overcome the problems and teams have been working at weekends to catch up with collections. The most effective way to report a missed collection is by reporting to [depot@TunbridgeWells.gov.uk](mailto:depot@TunbridgeWells.gov.uk) or on-line at <http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/residents/bins-and-recycling/bin-collections>

The introduction of the new service has enabled the bottle banks by the village hall to be removed - a relief to those living within earshot.

I hope the new service will soon settle down. For those households who have subscribed for the collection of black bin garden waste (and had an inadequate service), I am pressing for compensation - by extending the period of the opt-in subscription by a month.

### Calverley Square

I have been a supporter of this project, which was being worked up at the time I was elected to the Borough Council. As a project to boost the footfall in the town of Tunbridge Wells it may



not have been the project I would have chosen but, focused on replacing the 80-year old Town Hall and Assembly Hall, which are inefficient and expensive to run, it was hardly revolutionary.

Most of the funding was already being delivered and, with low interest rates, the project was as affordable as it was ever likely to be and would have had no impact on council tax, but sadly a massive amount of misinformation was put around and TWBC's full council voted against moving to the construction stage.

That was a pity because the planned car park and offices would have been worth significantly more than the construction costs and would have created an income stream. The theatre would have been a significant draw for the town and the plans were attracting interest from major theatre producers and orchestras. The business community, too, was very supportive.

So an affordable project, potentially very good for the town and borough, will not proceed and other towns could well benefit from our loss.

After five years working up plans, I have come across some understandably disappointed people in the Town Hall. I have no difficulty with people having a different view to mine - I just feel a good opportunity has been lost.

Tom Dawlings

Borough Councillor for Benenden & Cranbrook





Everyone is invited to ...

The Crib service  
at 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*

## Primary School news

We are very proud to announce that we will be welcoming Rose Hudson-Wilkin, the Bishop of Dover, on Friday 6 December to cut the ribbon to open officially the new school. We look forward to welcoming many guests who have been involved in bringing this beautiful building to our village. Invitations will be by appointment only.

We would also like to invite everyone to our Christmas fair on the same day, an event which will be held in the school hall from 3pm to 6.30pm.

Since we opened our doors in September, we have welcomed 35 new families, expanding our pupil numbers to 206, as well as some 46 families who have attended our open mornings and afternoons.

You may have noticed that the landscaping of the site has started, with trees and shrubs being planted. The children are looking forward to having their own class planting areas come spring.

Lindsay Roberts, Headteacher 240565

## Benenden Hospital news

Christmas can be a particularly difficult time to be homeless. If you're on the streets, it's impossible to escape the damp and cold and you never feel safe.

When it comes to doing something about this, we're all in it together. That's why we held a Christmas market at the hospital recently, to help raise funds for our chosen charity Porchlight.

Our award-winning Atrium was turned into a temporary market for local businesses and stallholders to sell their goods.

Body Shop, Lily's Lollipops, Biddenden Vineyard, Cranbrook Health & Wellbeing and Katie Briggs Art were among the exhibitors.

Staff and patients bought gifts including candles, Christmas wreaths, wrappings paper and cards, jewellery, books and even 'reindeer food'. There was carol singing by Staplehurst Primary School, a raffle, tombola, a guess-the-weight-of-the-cake competition, mince pies and mulled juice.

This month, we welcome back pupils from Benenden Primary School for more carol singing at our annual Christmas lights switch-on.

They were amazing last year and we look forward to hearing them again soon.

Merry Christmas everyone,  
Jane Abbott, Hospital Director



## Benenden Pre-School news

The Pre-School children, parents and staff have really enjoyed our beautiful village setting this month. On a sunny November morning we set off on our annual Autumn walk through the village, crossing the green and the churchyard to the Glebe Field. We hunted for autumnal treasures and gathered red and golden leaves as well as sticks and blackberries. After listening to a story on the field we made our way to the new Primary school hall where we had our snack.

The children explored leaf printing using rollers and investigated mixing colours to make green, orange and purple and the results have been stunning.

Benenden Bonfire Society asked the Pre-School children to make the guy for the village bonfire again this year. We had fun making the head out of papier-mâché, using paper from our recycling bin, cutting wool into lengths for the hair and stuffing the clothes with newspaper.

[supervisor@benendenpre-school.co.uk](mailto:supervisor@benendenpre-school.co.uk)

## Alone on Christmas Day?

Please come and join us at the Memorial Hall for a lovely lunch, great company, a word from Her Majesty at 3pm and bonhomie of the highest order. The menu is simple, freshly produced and delicious. Salmon blinis and sausage rolls to start with as we meet and mingle from 12.30pm, then we sit down for turkey with all the trimmings, Christmas pudding or fruit salad, cheese, coffee and mince pies. Wine and fortified wines and soft drinks provided.

From Monday 25 November, please sign up at the village shop. There is no charge, but if you would like to make a donation, it would be gratefully received on the day.

Lifts can be arranged, so please give contact details. Please advise of any eating allergies/vegetarian/vegan/gluten-free etc when booking, and/or call:

Lesley Attwood on 243318.

Any offers of food donations for the lunch, please contact:

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# Sinbad's Quest

A cartoon illustration of Sinbad the Sailor. He is a man with a mustache, wearing a blue turban, an orange tunic with a brown belt, and brown trousers. He is standing on a patch of sand, holding a large, curved sword with a yellow hilt. The sword is positioned diagonally across the frame, with its tip pointing towards the top right corner. A red line from the word 'Quest' in the title loops around the sword's hilt.

WRITER AND DIRECTOR  
**BEVERLEY BEVERIDGE**

MUSICAL DIRECTOR  
**GRAHAM BEVERIDGE**

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## Benenden School news

The girls returned from half term with wonderful stories, not to mention pictures, from our academic trips to Grenada, Russia and Italy and from the UK-based Model United Nations and Duke of Edinburgh's Award trips.

Of course, school has got underway again amid a general election and with so much interest and enthusiasm for the political process - as well as perhaps some future politicians! - among our pupil body, the girls are fully engaged in the election campaign. Several of our older girls are eligible to vote next month and we are also planning our own internal mock election to give all our pupils a flavour of democracy in action.

Away from the pyrotechnics playing out in the political arena, we were pleased to host the village fireworks display this year, followed a few days later by our own school display, and we hope to develop this relationship further in future.

As ever, we were proud for the school to be represented at the village Remembrance events and in addition we hosted a special event in the afternoon in which we honoured Capitaine Jean Maridor, a Free French pilot who died 75 years ago while saving the school buildings - while they were being used as a Second World War military hospital - from a flying bomb. We held a special whole school service before dignitaries and members of Capitaine Maridor's family unveiled a commemorative plaque.

Our partnership with The John Wallis Church of England Academy in Ashford is a longstanding and mutually beneficial relationship, as a part of which this year's sixth formers have begun mentoring the Year 11 John Wallis students. In addition, we are delighted that seven Benenden girls and seven John Wallis pupils have enjoyed a joint trip to CERN in Switzerland, where they experienced the wonders of this internationally renowned science research facility.

Samantha Price, Headmistress

## BODS

(Benenden Ordinary Dads Society)

Local school dads meet in **THE BULL**  
on the first **FRIDAY** of every month  
from 8pm  
to catch up and have a few beers

All dads are welcome!

To be included on the email list, contact  
Colin Smith on  
07545 545337 [smith.colin@gmail.com](mailto:smith.colin@gmail.com)

Look forward to meeting new dads!

## Iden Green and Benenden WI

A nostalgic, but stimulating time was experienced by many of our members when we met recently for tea and cake. Not only did we share our happy memories but we were also enlightened about the Cranbrook in Bloom competition. Some of us could remember Benenden winning the Best Kept Village award, at a time when Fuggles was selling petrol and we walked our children across the Green to the primary school.

Unfortunately, after carol singing at Hartley House and Larchmere on Tuesday 3 December, the WI choir will be disbanded due to lack of support. However, we are all looking forward to joining with members and friends at the annual choir service at Frittenden, at 2pm on Monday 9 December.

The fruits of our labour were relished at our winter party as over 30 members and partners tucked into a delicious meal. Not only that but the sweet harmony and dulcet tones from our guest entertainers sealed our contentment.

Although our WI will not be meeting in December, as a caring organisation we are always at the end of the phone should any members wish to chat. We would also like to wish everyone a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Jackie Liffen 752232 [WI@daisystar.co.uk](mailto:WI@daisystar.co.uk)





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## Benenden Village Trust

The future of the Iden Green playground

Following on from the success of the new playground in Benenden, the focus has now turned towards the one in Iden Green. Some of the play equipment is reaching the end of its life, as is the play surface and access, but before the Benenden Village Trust considers proposals and funding for improving the playground, it seems appropriate to consult with parishioners - particularly those living in Iden Green - about what they would like to see, if anything, provided in any new project.

It would probably not be sensible to replicate the Benenden playground at Iden Green, but some residents and interested parties have suggested including some play equipment for children with disabilities or mobility challenges and others have said they would like to see some fitness equipment for older people such as those seen in the Hawkhurst playground and elsewhere. Along with this goes the suggestion that maybe the playground should be relocated closer to the car park, by the tennis club, or to the pavilion, in order that it may be accessed more easily by those with pushchairs and wheelchairs.

Any changes to the current situation will have a cost but it is likely to be at a lower level than for the Benenden scheme. The Trust hopes to supplement its funding in the same way with valuable contributions from parishioners, local organisations and not-for-profit bodies, but we would like to hear from you - not just Iden Green residents but those from Benenden also.

If you have thoughts, ideas or, indeed, concerns please contact Sally Ann Marks (email below) who, as a new trustee of the BVT, has offered to find out the strength of feeling and interest in a potential scheme for Iden Green.

Questions to consider include the following:



Do you use the current Iden Green Playground? If so, how often?

Should the existing facility be replaced?


Is there a need for two playgrounds in the parish?

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Is the current equipment sufficient or do you have other ideas of what could be included for the future?

Would you or your family use equipment for youngsters with disabilities or do you know of other families that would?

Would you like to see some adult fitness equipment installed and if so would you use it?

What about an outdoor fixed table tennis table?

Volunteers will be needed to help to get this going - would you like to get involved in taking any new scheme forward?

Would you consider joining such a group of enthusiasts?

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sally Ann Marks [sallymarks100@hotmail.com](mailto:sallymarks100@hotmail.com)

## Christmas Village lunch

Tuesday 3 December, Benenden Village Hall,  
12.30pm

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

Sheila Hume 240838

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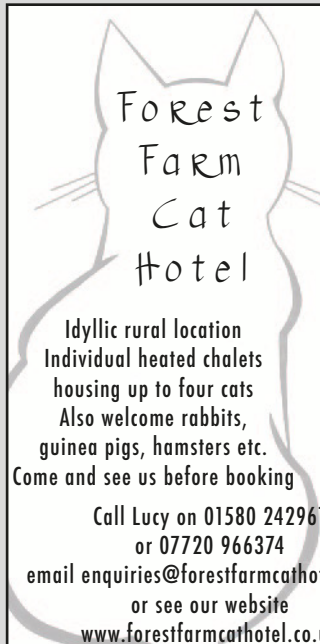
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# You can lead a pig to pasture

Jack Wales tells the story of medieval droving links between Benenden and Bishopsbourne

Every autumn, for nearly a thousand years from about 500 AD, and probably earlier, hundreds of men from villages in north and east Kent drove thousands of pigs to pannage, or pasturage, in dens all over the Weald to fatten them on acorns and beech mast. It was the biggest social and economic event of the year. The practice had largely faded by about 1400 but was the basis on which the many Wealden villages with 'den' suffixes developed.

Benenden had about 30 dens, with links to many north and east Kent villages. Bishopsbourne, just outside Canterbury and where I live, was one of them and for this period had traditional rights to two adjacent dens in the northwest of the parish: Leasden and West Bishopsden.

There was an obvious link between the parishes; the manor of Bishopsbourne belonged to the Archbishop from 811 to 1544, and several of the Benenden dens were also his property. As the owner of a den charged for the pannage rights, successive Archbishops were obviously keen to keep as much business in-house as possible, but it is likely that the practice went back to the early Jutish period in Kent in the sixth century, and arguably well before that.

Traditionally, pigs were driven to the dens at the September equinox and stayed until Martinmas (11 November). Then they were walked the short distance to the Rother and shipped down to Rye - probably from Newenden, which was an important port from Roman times to the 17th century. At Rye they were cured with Romney Marsh salt (part of the

foreshore there is still called Middle Salts, and salt has been recovered from the Marsh since before the Romans). Rye clearly had a substantial trade in salting fish, and dealing with pigs would have been a useful and easily organised addition. Obviously, they would not have been walked back, as they

would have lost the weight they had recently gained.

This much we know, but there are many interesting questions, of which one is the route. Bishopsbourne to Benenden is just over 30 miles and the drovers would not have been paid, merely provided with food and drink. For most of this period



there was only a partial money economy, and anyway it's likely that the drovers saw it partly as a holiday. Probably it took three days, so would have needed two overnight stops at places where the pigs could be secured and fed. These would have to be paid for, so it's likely they were places also owned by the Archbishop. Petham, a few miles west of Bishopsbourne and also owned by him, had dens in Benenden, so presumably the route went to Petham and onwards from there. There is research suggesting that the route then went via Wye, Bethersden and Biddenden, but it must be likely that, over the best part of a millennium, routes altered for reasons to do with terrain or relationships with particular landowners.

Next, what exactly happened once the pigs reached Newenden? Transporting live pigs is difficult, so it's likely they were killed there, shipped down to Rye (which took only a few hours) and butchered and salted there. What happened then? Pigs were the main source of meat throughout this period (oxen were used as draught animals; sheep were kept for wool), so presumably some were shipped home, which is a reminder of how important water transport was from the Bronze Age onwards. Were others sold? Sale of pork must have been an important source of income. If so, where to? Rye was presumably a centre for the distribution (chiefly by sea) of salt pork as well as salt fish.

The link between the two villages gives an interesting historical sidelight. Bishopsbourne in this period was a big village and one of the largest settlements in Kent in the Domesday Book. Benenden was tiny. Now things are reversed. Bishopsbourne (whose river disappeared sometime between 1086 and about 1700) is one of the few communities in the country much smaller than at Domesday. Benenden is now much the larger of the two.

For anyone interested in drove routes, I recommend KP Witney's *The Jutish Forest*, which is based on a lifetime's research, and his book *The Survey of Archbishop Pecham's Kentish Manors 1283-85*. Also, Ernest Pollard and Hazel Strouts, who lives in Benenden, have analysed the Benenden dens in detail.



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## Talking Shop

It hardly seems possible that this Christmas will be the fifth since Benenden's opened in 2015. The first was of course in the premises of the Kitty Fisher and how things have changed since then. Many of us have become accustomed to the presence of Benenden's on The Street and now take for granted the welcome sense of warmth, comfort and fun generated by Mel and her wonderful team of managers and volunteers.

This Christmas will be no exception as we prepare to offer some great treats to celebrate the festive season. Those who visit between 12 and 2pm will be welcomed by the inviting aroma of mulled wine, which will be on sale with our customary superb mince pies - a great way to get into the Christmas spirit. Hannah's delightful wreaths will also be available to order, along with beautiful table decorations this year. There will also be an opportunity to purchase tickets to win a bumper Christmas hamper filled with all kinds of goodies.

For our indispensable and generous volunteers, we have organised the next Volunteers' Evening, on Friday 6 December starting at 6.30pm in the café. Come prepared to indulge yourselves with mince pies, mulled wine and a good old singsong of Christmas carols. It's always a really uplifting, jolly evening and a fitting way to convey our thanks for all you do. Please do come along and bring any prospective volunteers who would like to give it a go.

On another note, Benenden's has been able to donate £262 each to village lunch and Christmas lunch funds from the proceeds of the shop's book fund. It's amazing how those £1 donations mount up over the course of a year. Also, Merry and Bright will receive a cheque for £117, which is the proceeds from last year's Christmas shop raffle.

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Sunday 29:	Shop, Post Office and Café open 9am-1pm
Monday 30:	Shop and Post Office open 7.30am-5.30pm Café open 8.30am-4.30pm
New Year's Eve:	Shop and Post Office open 7.30am-3pm Café open 8.30am-2.30pm
New Year's Day:	Shop closed
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So, there we have it; another year gone by with our community shop still providing so much, to so many, in numerous ways. Please do keep supporting us and keep this great venture going for the good of us all.

We wish you all a very happy, healthy and hearty Christmas and look forward to seeing you at Benenden's.

Bev Beveridge

## Benenden Panto ticket sales

Rehearsals are now well underway for 'Sinbad's Quest', the Benenden Panto from 30 January-2 February and it's shaping up to be another crazy show.

Tickets go on sale online on Monday 2 December at [www.benendenplayers.co.uk](http://www.benendenplayers.co.uk).

Or you can buy them at the pop-up box office in Benenden's community shop from 9-10.30am on the following Sundays: 8, 15 and 22 December and 5, 19 and 26 January. Credit cards accepted.

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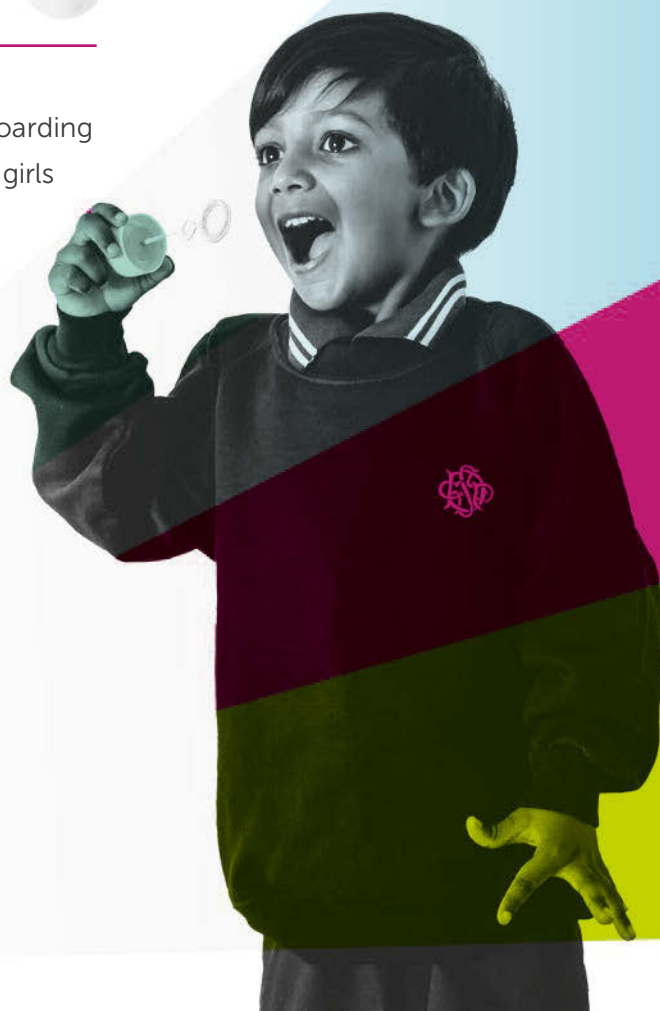
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## Village hall highlights

Christmas is the time of year for friends and family to have a big get-together, and sometimes lack of space in our homes can mean these occasions become stressful. This year, we have a couple of bookings from families who are using the hall instead of their houses. I wonder if this will become a new tradition?

There are a couple of new regular classes starting in the new year, so watch this space for further information. We have a such a varied mix of clubs and classes at the hall, there really is something for everybody. You can pick up a copy of the timetable in the hall foyer, or you can check details on Facebook, Nextdoor, Twitter or on our webpage.

I am happy to report that the bottle banks have been removed from the village hall car park. Our immediate neighbours must be relieved they no longer have to hear the crashing and smashing of bottles, but there have been some fly-tipping issues recently around our bin area, the latest including a pair of car tyres. In addition to looking unsightly, it also means that hall staff have to deal with the problem. Please do be considerate when having a clear out, as we would like to keep the bin as a free amenity to hall hirers.

Season's greetings to one and all from the trustees and staff of Benenden village hall. Until next month, take care, and enjoy the festive period.

The Farmers' Market in the village hall:  
Tuesday 3 December, 9-11am  
Tuesday 17 December, 9-11am  
[www.benendenvillagehall.org](http://www.benendenvillagehall.org)  
Lorraine Jones 07419 989830  
[enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org](mailto:enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org)

## History of a hymn

### O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

The English translation of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (Veni, Veni Emmanuel) was the creation of Rev John Mason Neale (1818-1866), a frail and humble Anglican priest. Noted as a brilliant scholar and one of England's great hymn translators, he was known to have lamented the Reformation's neglect of the rich history of hymnody, despite the movement's praiseworthy restoration of worship and song to the language of the common people. As a result of his ceaseless efforts working with ancient hymn texts, Neale resurrected the much beloved Veni, Veni Emmanuel from obscurity.

The task probably came easily to him since he was proficient in 21 different languages. His first translation of the carol-hymn was produced in 1851 for *Medieval Hymns*, but it contained only five verses. Three years later Neale produced another one with altered text, and together with the help of another scholarly Anglican minister, the Rev Thomas Helmore (1811-1890), who contributed the haunting adaptation of a 15th-century French plainsong melody, the exceptional O Come, O Come, Emmanuel was published in *Hymnal Noted*, Part II.

Emmanuel, meaning 'God with Us', was a splendid title for the carol-hymn. The title reaffirmed the concept of Christ's birth as God Incarnate dwelling among men and announcing to them his mission here on earth. In the world of the ancient Hebrew, the choice of name was made judiciously, as the name Emmanuel must have held special significance for Neale as he laboured feverously, despite his frail condition, among the poor and the lowliest on society's scale.

Although he was never adequately appreciated during his lifetime by his superiors in the Anglican Church, Neale's dedication to serving the poor and indigent was on a level with that of his work with sacred texts and hymns. Each pursuit was performed tirelessly, with dignity, and for the higher good.

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## Village fete: can you commit one hour of your summer?

Put it in your diary - the next village fete in support of St George's church will be on Saturday 20 June 2020. It's a wonderful occasion only made possible by the fantastic group of volunteers who collect, sort, cook, marshal, put up, man and take down the stands.

The fete has grown bigger and better over the last three years, and we need more help to make it run more easily. We need 100 volunteers to commit one hour each - many hands will make light work and ensure that everyone has plenty of time to enjoy the fete as well as providing essential labour to 'get the job done'.

It is great fun being involved in a great community event so, if you are 16 years and older, please help us and email me or sign up in Benenden's Community Shop now and I will be in contact.

Joy Rowlands, Chairman, Benenden Village Fete, in support of St George's church  
joyrowlands824@yahoo.com 07486 660498

## Free TV retuning

Since there has been a change in the transmitter for our area, several people have lost the ability to reach certain channels, especially Freeview. If you are having problems just call 0808 100 0288 and they will give you advice and try to fix the problem. If not, they will come to your house and reset everything and in some cases replace the antenna. There is no charge for this service, although you may have to wait a few days for an appointment. It is offered for three months after each retuning of the transmitter, so keep the number for future problems. Read more at [www.freeview.co.uk/help/tv-change](http://www.freeview.co.uk/help/tv-change)

### JUNIOR TENNIS COACHING

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



Who: Club Members of 6-18 years



Where: Iden Green Tennis Club



When: Friday Term Time groups from 5pm onwards



How much: £6 per session



Contact for further details:  
[eleanor.cochrane@btinternet.com](mailto:eleanor.cochrane@btinternet.com)

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

## From little acorns ...

Tim and Deana Maw of Iden Green, featured recently in these pages as prime examples of local entrepreneurs breathing life into the rural economy, were rewarded for their efforts when their Oak Barn wedding and events venue was announced as runner-up in the Best Rural Start-Up category at the South East regional finals of the Rural Business Awards.

The Oak Barn venture forms part of a three-and-a-half-year restoration project on the once derelict Frame Farm on Iden Green Road. The redundant Grade II Listed buildings, some dating from the early 17th century, were transformed into an eco-friendly, luxury complex, drawing heavily on neighbouring services and suppliers. The judges of the Amazon-sponsored event praised the Maws' "lovingly restored" 25-acre site and the facilities that had been "beautifully incorporated into the historic fabric of the buildings".

A delighted Tim said: "We have put our heart and soul into our new business and are extremely proud to win this award after just ten months of operating, but we couldn't have succeeded so quickly without the wealth of local talent in our area."



## Fireworks night no damp squib despite the deluge

Well sometimes you win and sometimes you ... just get very wet and very muddy! This year's village bonfire and firework event went ahead but the set-up was completed in, to say the least, challenging conditions.

Most events around the county were cancelled but in our new venue, by kind permission of Benenden School, we were able to provide all that we are famed for - a family-friendly event with good food, fun and a brilliant bonfire and firework display.

The decision to go ahead was taken, in part, based on the forecast that said the wind and rain would subside considerably by the late afternoon.

They did. Also, and most importantly, we needed to be sure we could ensure the safety of everyone who helped or was attending as a spectator. Well, the new venue affords considerable flexibility with regard to the area that the fireworks are fired from and there was never any thought we might cancel. We are Benenden, you know.

Despite our continued efforts through the day to inform our public that we would go ahead, our numbers were less than half what we would normally expect. Those that attended showed spirit, camaraderie and some interesting choices of footwear, but we may incur a small loss - or hopefully just break even - so unfortunately there will not be any distribution of funds this year. That is sad but a reality of running public events, outside, in







November. Many other societies have lost money through cancellation.

As always my personal thanks to the brilliant committee who not only work with efficiency and effectiveness but this year showed stoicism in abundance on the day. Thanks, too, to all our fantastic volunteers, without whose help we could not hold the event, and

Benenden Pre-School for a terrific Guy, who sat proudly on top of the fire for ages before being symbolically engulfed in flames.

We also thank those that

support us in the broader context: Benenden School, Benenden Hospital, Tate Fencing, Jubilee Hire, Mark and Lucy at the Bull and, of course, Wizard Fireworks for the display. Surplus Gingerbread men, apparently very tasty, went to the primary school children for taste testing.

For next year's event, we'd like some new blood on the committee. We meet informally from July through to November and in the first instance are looking for a few people to 'shadow' existing members leading up to 2020 event. Please contact us on [info@benendenfireworks.co.uk](mailto:info@benendenfireworks.co.uk) or Facebook or 07788 279000 if you'd like to know more.

See you next year in shorts for the predicted Indian Summer Bonfire Night.  
Grant Matthews







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# Recycle, reuse, repurpose and mend

How even the smallest village can make a big difference to the planet

Do you remember when fizzy drinks came in a glass bottle? If you do, you'll also probably remember the excitement of taking them back to the shop to pick up the deposit.

In the 1970s, polyethylene terephthalate (PET) was invented. It could withstand the pressure of carbonated liquids, like glass, but was cheaper. We all know what happened next. In 2019, global sales of single-use plastic bottles are in excess of 1,000,000 a minute and each of those bottles takes about 450 years to degrade, meaning your great great great great great great great great great great grandchildren will still be contending with plastic from our old bottles.

In England we are woefully lagging behind other countries in terms of our recycling. Germany is the best developed country in the world, with about 56% of their domestic waste being recycled; but Wales is fourth in the world, with over 52% and an aim to have zero waste by 2050. That's important, because each household produces about a tonne of waste a year - the weight of a small car. As a nation, we could fill the Royal Albert Hall with rubbish in just under two hours.

Unsurprisingly, there is now a target for us to recycle 50% of domestic waste by next year. In England we are unlikely to achieve this (we're at about 47%) but we are gradually improving. In Kent we are doing better than the national average, particularly for stuff taken to 'the tip', where about 70% is recycled.

This is important because of what happens to our rubbish. The new Tunbridge Wells Borough Council system is trying to ensure that more of what we dispose of can be reused, either through recycling or composting. The bin lorries have separate compartments for paper and cardboard (80% of UK paper is sent for

recycling); cans, glass and plastics; and food waste. The food waste produces either compost or soil and agricultural fertiliser. You can also put out any textiles and small electrical items (in small bags next to the rubbish green bin in refuse week) and batteries (in a bag on top of the recycle brown bin in recycling week).

Within the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) there are various processes, including human sorting, to divide the waste into recyclable and non-recyclable items.

What can we do to help? First, don't stop recycling - aim to reduce over six months the amount of bin bags you put in the green bin. Second, consciously avoid buying items (particularly food) with excessive packaging - it has been known for people to leave the packaging in the supermarket as an indicator of their dissatisfaction. Third, reuse, repurpose, give away or mend.

Gift wrap often contains non-paper elements which you can't recycle. If it bounces back when you scrunch it, it cannot be recycled.

Low-grade plastic such as carrier bags, bread bags, toilet roll wrappers and plastic joiners around multipacks of drinks can't be put in our recycle bins. Carrier bags can be taken to the supermarkets for reuse and collect the rest and take to your nearest collection point.

Screw lids back on glass containers before you put them in your bin because they are separated and recycled.

Rinse bottles and tins briefly before recycling.

At all costs do not put pet litter, nappies and sanitary products in the recycling. These will cause an entire load of recycling to be sent to landfill.

If you would like more details about household waste management, or would like to find out what happens to our waste in Kent, then visit [www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk) and click on 'waste'.  
Mary Cruse





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John Clarke aged 18

## Spotlight on: John Clarke

Lighting up Christmas  
for 27 years

Many of us will have driven past the impressive display of Christmas lights at Mounts Hill over the years and they'll be there again this year during

December and up until 5 January. This is the work of John Clarke, whose display has grown and grown since he started it 27 years ago.

John has lived in Benenden for 65 years, during which time he has been active on the parish council, with the village hall and, still, with the Players. He arrived here in 1954 aged just 15 as a farming apprentice on Beacon Hall Farm. "I had an uncle who was a farmer in Norfolk, and I had always wanted to farm," he says. "It was a big change from family life, coming to Benenden. There wasn't a lot to do in my spare time, but I do remember when overtime pay rose to half a crown an hour!"

At 18, he left to study for his National Diploma in Agriculture and Fruit at the Kent Farm Institute in Sittingbourne. The college had been notable for the fact that it had run a scheme to retrain officers from the First World War and had been an important training centre for the Women's Land Army during the Second World War.

Coming back to Benenden, John

worked for Mr Cooper of Colebarn Farm on Stepneyford Lane as a dairyman: "We had 25 cows when I joined. I stayed there for 33 years, working my way up, and when Mr Cooper retired, we had a herd of over 200." John then took over tenancy of the farm, which was part of the Hole Park Estate, and decided to raise sheep instead and take on farm contracting work.

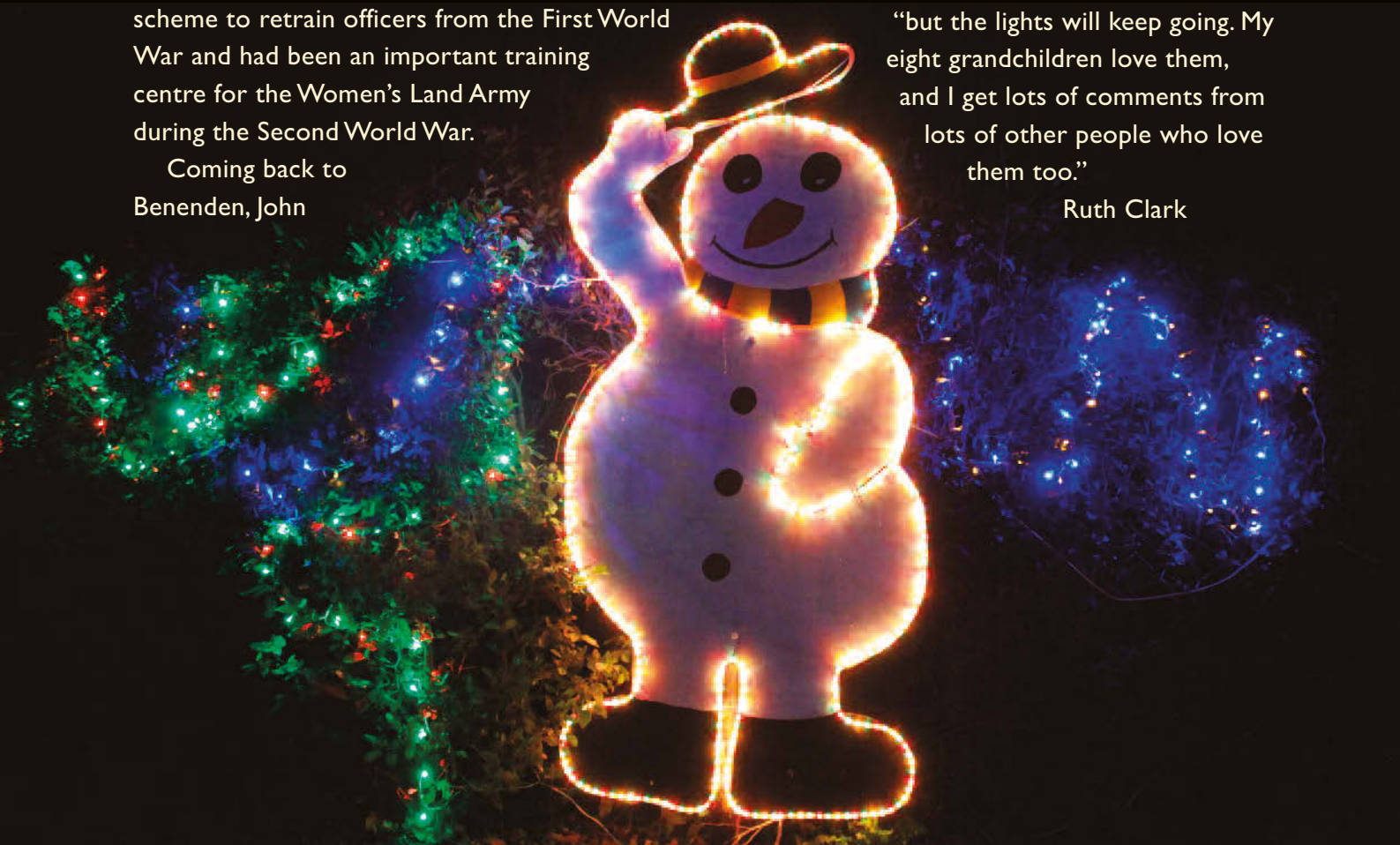
It was while at Colebarn Farm in 1957 that John met Sheila, who lived "across the valley" at Mount Le Hoe Farm. They married in St George's Church in 1961, followed by a reception in the Memorial Hall. "It was a bit of a squeeze," he smiles. After farming, John provided a local taxi service before he retired in 2012.

John and Sheila moved from the farm to Mounts Hill in 1992 where, every year, the house and front garden are festooned with thousands of Christmas lights. "It takes about a week to put them up and some in the village say they can tell when I switch them on as the power dips."

Christmas light displays seem to be a family tradition. His brother in Stonegate started his display to raise money for charity and John soon followed him. "At first I had collection boxes in the various village pubs and shops but as these dwindled, I stopped fund raising," says John,

"but the lights will keep going. My eight grandchildren love them, and I get lots of comments from lots of other people who love them too."

Ruth Clark





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## Make your own Christmas wreath

Ruth Clark learns how to make a sustainable Christmas wreath

We are very lucky to have two florists in the village who grow their own flowers for bouquets, weddings and

all kinds of special events: Hannah Miles Watson of Hannah's Garden and Sheila Hume of Blue Hen Flowers. Both make the most beautiful Christmas wreaths, and both are very happy to show people how to make their own, so I visited Hannah in her garden shed, which was full of moss and a treasure trove of dried grasses, seed heads and flowers, all grown in her garden, for a step-by-step lesson.

**Step 1** Hannah likes to use compostable materials to make her wreaths, so we started with a willow frame, which you can make yourself from bendy twigs or buy from Hobbycraft. Also have a pair of secateurs and ball of strong garden twine ready.

**Step 2** We then took handfuls of moss, which you can pull from your garden or order online, and built a three-inch base onto the frame, wrapping twine around it tightly to secure. This provides a base to attach the foliage. Go all the way around for a full wreath, but we decided to make a half wreath as the willow base gave a nice effect. (Fig.1)

**Step 3** Then add foliage, overlapping short pieces as you go to hide the stems and winding the twine tightly around the wreath to hold it in place. Make sure to angle the branches from the centre out to give the best effect and decide with the first piece how far you want to extend out. Every six inches tie in a small piece of foliage to cover the twine, and trim the stems

on the inside to keep it tidy. So long as the foliage is leathery and shiny, such as spruce, ivy and pine, it will keep its colour and shape and you can mix different varieties to give texture. If you wish you can also add some dried grasses in bunches periodically. (Figs.2, 3 and 4)

**Step 4** Finally, add some colour, in the form of berries, rosehips and catkins, which you can find now in your garden or hedgerows, and dried flowers and seed heads. "I have dried gypsophila, lavender, helichrysum from my garden, which looks lovely," says Hannah. "Hops, nigella and crocosmia seed heads also give a nice effect. Just experiment with what you have around you. If you would like to add cinnamon sticks, flower heads, oranges and pine cones, it's best to use a glue gun to fasten these on." (Fig.5 Hannah and the wreath we made)

I was thrilled with the result.

### BOOK A WORKSHOP

If you would like to join a natural grapevine or willow-based wreath-making workshop, Blue Hen Flowers in Iden Green is holding one on Saturday 7 December at 10am (one place left) and Monday 16 December at 6.30pm. This is a lovely festive occasion to relax and create a wreath using foliage, feathers, dried flowers, cones and dried fruit, £40 a head, including refreshments aplenty. To book please email:

**Sheila Hume, Blue Hen Flowers**  
[bluehenflowers@gmail.com](mailto:bluehenflowers@gmail.com)  
[Bluehenflowers.com](http://Bluehenflowers.com)

Alternatively, you can order ready-made wreaths from Hannah at the village shop or email her directly by 15 December:

**Hannah Miles Watson, Hannah's Garden**  
[hannah@hannahsgarden.net](mailto:hannah@hannahsgarden.net)  
[hannahsgarden.net](http://hannahsgarden.net)



Fig.1



Fig.2



Fig.3



Fig.4



Fig.5



## Food & Drink

### Talking turkey at the home of Christmas dinner

If you are of a nervous disposition and have any common sense at all, you will do well not to venture into a barn filled with several thousand stag turkeys in the run-up to Christmas. It's not that the birds are nervous at the prospect of their impending fate, rather that they are fully grown, weigh about 12kg apiece, are very male and have you heavily outnumbered.

The ones you'll see on the counter at Ward's the butcher's in a few weeks' time will be trimmed, trussed and safely tucked away in boxes, but in a large and airy barn at Appledore Turkeys they are a different prospect entirely. Step into their midst and en masse they erupt into a sea of ear-splitting, gobbling lunacy, the odd one making a charge for your legs, presumably to establish breeding rights over the many thousands more hens in the fields outside.

Andrew Wreathall, whose family has been in the turkey trade since his grandfather raised a

handful of birds every year for sale on the black market in Suffolk during the last war, can spot an anxious visitor a mile off, and he offers a few words of comfort.

"They'll charge you but they won't go through with it," he explains. "They're all show and as they become more mature at this time of year they like to show off their maleness." He's right. The sense of threat quickly abates and the stags' blue and pink heads, the long 'snoods' dangling over their beaks, soon turn from alarming to comical as we pass through

the barns and into the open air.

These are free-range birds, but present them with a bright, sunny day and they'll happily stay indoors. Give them dull and overcast and they'll peck happily around the paddocks, competing





on decibel count with the geese that are being reared at Appledore for the first time this year. Luckily, out here on the fringes of the Romney Marshes, where the Wreathalls also farm 3,000 acres of arable, there are no neighbours to disturb and the family business, which shifted down from Essex a generation ago, goes from strength to strength.

The key to success here is quality. These are no cut-price creatures; they're what Andrew calls the "Rolls Royce of turkeys", destined for traditional butcher's shops with a discerning clientele (that's you, dear reader), who are happy to spend a little extra on the most important meal of the year.

The chicks arrive at one day old from hatcheries in Essex and Liverpool and go straight into brooding sheds, where they're nurtured at 30 degrees for four weeks while they "feather up", after which they move into the sheds to eat a diet based on local wheat, grow and fatten for the table. Amid the noise and the kerfuffle, Andrew explains how his birds diverge from the ones you'll find piled high in the supermarket:

"These arrived in June, so by Christmas they'll be 26 weeks, which is very old by most standards. The commercial birds you get in the supermarket will be 12-14 weeks, but they use big breeds that grow very quickly and hit their weights quickly, which is a way of cutting corners and cutting costs. Our birds are smaller breeds that will be allowed to mature to the full potential of their weight, so you get more conformation, a bigger meat yield, and they lay down more fat, so overall you're getting a much tastier bird.

"After that, ours are all dry plucked, hand plucked [Andrew and his brother Clive employ 130 pickers in December, some of whom can denude an incomprehensible eight turkeys an hour], so we can hang them for a minimum of ten days to mature the flavour, because they're a game bird.



"The supermarket birds are wet plucked, soaked in water and put through a machine, gutted straight away and blast chilled, but once they've been immersed in water, the meat starts to deteriorate immediately, so they're 'gas flushed' in a plastic bag as a preservative, which gives them their shelf life. The supermarkets say they're hanging them, but because they're in a bag, the meat won't mature and the flavour won't develop."

At Appledore, it's 20 per cent white birds, which became fashionable in the 1960s, and 80 per cent traditional bronzes, which have made a spirited comeback. It's mostly hens, because they weigh in at a manageable 4-8kg, but the weighty 8-12kg stags are popular with those who like turkey curries and sandwiches for a fortnight.

The farm supplies around 130 specialist shops in London and the South-East, and a couple of bronzes will be reserved for the Wreathalls' dinner tables, but 200 or so will find their way to Ward's. I know there are 20,000 out there in the Appledore Turkeys barns, but I'm on the list already, just in case.

Peter Thomas

#### WHAT TO DRINK WITH TURKEY

A moist and flavoursome free-range bird still won't be fatty enough to cope with too much tannin, so be careful with your clarets - go for something mature and smooth. The red of choice in my house is always a New World Pinot Noir, and the Kiwi version made by Kate Radburnd, available in the community shop, fits the bill, with enough body and acidity to cope with the hearty side dishes, but not so much as to overpower the meat.



Cotoneaster 'Cornubia'



## In Your Garden

### Berried and bronzed

No, I am not about to write a column on the Christmas turkey, sorry to disappoint, but in fact to write about berries for winter interest in the garden and other signs of colour that are

out there right now - bronze being one of them, seen here on faded leaves of the Japanese forest grass. And it's not just berries. Winter twigs, variegated evergreens, bark and of course, lots of conifers in various hues.

There are two shrubs that are brimming with red berries at this time of year. The first is *Nandina domestica*, otherwise

known as heavenly bamboo. The Japanese use these berried twigs in the same way we use sprigs of holly in the house over Christmas. According to the Japanese, if you plant this shrub by a door and you happen to have a bad dream overnight, you can tell this to the shrub and then no harm will follow - not something you would read in the RHS Dictionary of Plants, but an endearing story nonetheless. A good sized shrub for smaller gardens but if you wanted to bulk up the impact you could plant a group of three together as their naturally bushy habit blends the branches very effectively.

The other berried stalwart is *Cotoneaster frigidus* 'Cornubia' - this is quite a big plant, as tall as a small tree but with an arching,

loose habit that doesn't make it seem too overbearing. Potentially 'semi-evergreen', so don't hold out for leaves over winter, but you could be lucky if your garden is sheltered. Again, this shrub is weighed down with red berries and so very eye-catching at this time of year.

I bought a pretty variegated privet the other day. It was cheap as chips, but a lovely delicate oval leaf and I will plant it as a stand alone shrub. We always think of privet as being clipped in a straight-line as hedging but it's natural form is actually very useful in a mixed border and of course being evergreen earns double points over winter. I first got the idea of using 'hedging' plants in borders from a book written by Christopher Lloyd, called 'Foliage Plants'. It belonged to my grandmother and was passed down to me, and apart from being a hilarious read, it has some really good advice on using ordinary shrubs in the garden. I'd grab a second-hand copy off Amazon if you can.

If you come across a quiet, sunny but cold winter's day over Christmas, make time for a stroll in your garden and enjoy all the seasonal colour it can provide. A very merry Christmas to you all.

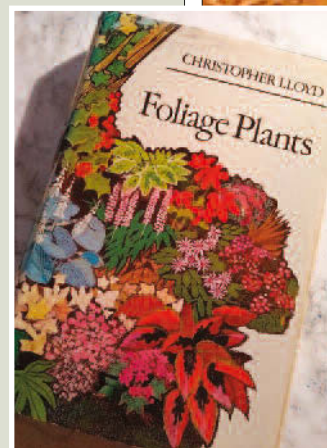
Annabel Lear GARDENS

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*Nandina domestica*

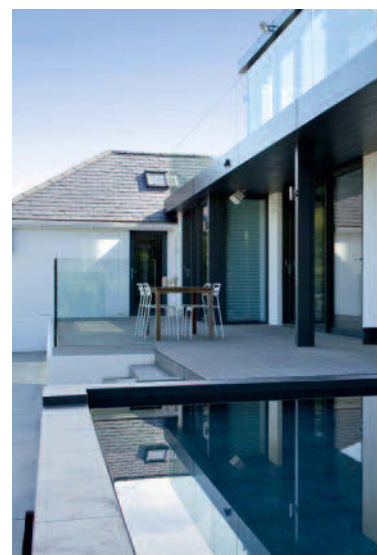


Bronze-leaved hakonechloas





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Above: The village bonfire and fireworks igniting the very best of Benenden spirit: undefeated, resilient and resourceful.

Photographs: Theo Shaw

Front cover: Resplendent turkeys. Photograph: Amelia Thomas