



Above: Here, there and everywhere: primary school children's Colour Run; Morris dancers mark May Day at the Bull; garden party at Buckingham Palace; Dingleden open gardens and teas; caring for the war memorial; The Bull at Benenden on Tour at Benenden School; primary school children in A Midsummer Night's Dream; Benenden Cricket Club's first match of the season on the Green  
Front cover: Hidden beauty: A granary believed to date from the late 15th century. Photograph: John Kent



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Magazine  
June 2026

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# Editorial



Spring weather is supposed to be changeable, I always thought, although the only way it's changed over the last month is to go from bad to worse. I got caught in a hailstorm last week, which at least took my mind off temperatures which remain, as the forecasters like to say, "well below average for the time of year".

I'm sure when I was a boy, spring was always hot and sunny, although not quite as hot and sunny as summer, when it never rained at all. Nobody ever carried a water bottle with them when they went on a ten-minute walk, mind you, so perhaps dehydration hadn't been invented back then. Another way in which life was much better in the past - apart from rickets and outside toilets.

In fact, you'd be forgiven for thinking life in a village like Benenden must have been idyllic in days of yore, but then you read the From The Archives feature in this month's magazine and you find out that in the early 20th century, while you may not have been plagued by frantic mothers on the school run in 4x4s, you were just as likely to get mown down by a horse and cart driven by a cider-addled grocer, or hit on the napper by a starting handle hurled by a frustrated taxi driver.

Perhaps we really aren't so badly off nowadays. We may be cold, damp and facing extinction, but here in the parish, we have people who, as you'll find out, organise fantastic fetes, inspire children, protect birds, grow vegetables that look like your private parts and, yes, even help to choose the new Archbishop of Canterbury. It's all in the mag - just read it!

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)

Associate Priest: Revd Dr Rosemary Kobus van Wengen 764857 [rosemaryvanwengen@gmail.com](mailto:rosemaryvanwengen@gmail.com)

Churchwarden: Sue Fisher 241907 [sue@undaunted.co.uk](mailto:sue@undaunted.co.uk)

Churchwarden: Cathy Presgrave 07500 119189 [cathy.presgrave@gmail.com](mailto:cathy.presgrave@gmail.com)

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

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

8am and 5pm services will be in the chancel of St George's Church, accessed through the Bishop's Door to the east end of the church

10am services will take place in the hall of Benenden Primary School

Sunday 7 June	8am Communion	10am All-age Communion	5pm Evening Prayer
Sunday 14 June	8am BCP Communion	10am Morning Worship	
Sunday 21 June	8am Communion	10am Sung Eucharist	
Saturday 27 June			4pm Connect Four at Mission Church, Sandhurst
Sunday 28 June	8am Communion	10am Morning Worship	
Morning Prayer	8am Mondays and Fridays at The Rectory, Benenden		

## Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Morning Prayer 8am Tuesdays and Wednesdays, but not 3 June

Mid-week Communion 10am Tuesdays

## Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

The 10am Morning Worship is broadcast on our YouTube channel: search 'Iden Green Congregational Church'.

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

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

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

## From the Parish Registers

Wedding 16 June Amrita Dasgupta and Joseph Pearce, at St Nicholas, Sandhurst

# Church Letter



## From Buckingham Palace to the Benenden fete

In May we had much to appreciate in our beautiful village and much to be thankful for. Here I report on things that have happened and will shortly be happening relating to our church.

The first involved both Helen and me. We were fortunate enough as the Rector (and 'Mrs Rector') of the Benefice of Benenden and Sandhurst to be invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace. What an amazing experience. The Prince and Princess of Wales were there the day we attended, as were the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, and we were fortunate to spend five minutes speaking with the Duchess - who is the Patron of our Restore, Renew, Rejoice project. The weather was kind, the afternoon tea lovely and the gardens huge. It was a very memorable and special day.

The second were the annual church meetings - the equivalent of an annual general meeting - which took place on 18 May. The annual parish meeting was due to elect the two churchwardens for the coming year, although at the time of writing the meeting hasn't taken place, so I can't tell you the result! This was followed by the annual parochial church meeting, at which, apart from the usual church business, elections and report on the previous year, there was also a presentation on the progress of the Restore, Renew, Rejoice project. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

The third thing is the village fete in support of St George's Church: Saturday 13 June, 12-4pm, on The Green. If you're free on Friday 12 June, please come along anytime between 9am and 7pm to help with all the setting up. Many hands make light work. If you want to see and hear about the progress on the church project, you should be able to view the work in the nave on fete day. There will be photos of the build progress, as well as an opportunity to ask questions - and make a donation to the project.

Work on the heating phase is going well (see underfloor heating pipes in place below). We would love to be able to give the go-ahead to the second phase of the project very soon, i.e. the toilets and then the kitchen, as fundraising/grant applications permit.

Revd David Commander, Rector



# Village Calendar

## June

Tuesday 2	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 2	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Saturday 6	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	
Saturday 6	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 9	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.9
Saturday 13	Benenden Fete, in aid of St George's Church, The Green, 12noon-4pm	pull-out
Saturday 13	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Monday 15	Parish Council Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Tuesday 16	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 16	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 16	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Garden Party at a Member's home, 5pm	p.17
Friday 19	Hemsted Park, LP Swing Orchestra, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7pm	p.11
Saturday 20	Social Evening, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 23	Merry and Bright, Visit to Pypne Manor, Memorial Hall, 1.45pm	
Saturday 27	Darts, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 28	The Angry Whelk Fresh Fish Stall, Benenden Village Hall, 12-2pm	
Tuesday 30	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 30	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	

## Iden Green Toddler Group

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

## Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-11.30am

## Cakes & Chaos: Toddler Group

Wednesdays and Fridays during term time at the Mission Church, Sandhurst, 9-11am

## Benenden Bowls Club

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

# Parish Council



With the evenings becoming lighter by the day, the gardens becoming more colourful and the trees bursting into life, this is such an exciting time of year, particularly for me: my first full year of being a Benenden parish councillor is fast approaching. As a small introduction to myself, I have always lived in and around the area, growing up and attending school in Tunbridge Wells. I first moved into this delightful village nine years ago and have been working at Benenden Hospital, in the ophthalmology department, for over ten years. I try to involve myself in village life as much as possible by helping at the wonderful village fete, the Iden Green jazz and blues event and other similar events, whilst juggling a busy life.

In recent months I have taken over the responsibility of looking after the village assets, including items such as the phone boxes, village green sign, public toilets and defibrillators, to name but a few. Part of the role is carrying out six-monthly inspections, alongside a fellow parish councillor, who brings a wealth of knowledge about the village which greatly assists me in my role of reporting and recording any repairs and maintenance required and ensuring that works are carried out in a timely fashion. In addition to this I find myself checking village assets as I travel around the village on a daily basis.

If anyone is interested in volunteering to help with any of these maintenance tasks, please do get in touch with Caroline, our parish council clerk, by emailing [clerk@benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk) where your help would be gratefully received.

Recently, all parish councillors received notification from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council that the parish council election was uncontested and, therefore, members will remain unchanged. If you are interested in becoming a parish councillor, there will be a vacancy advertised in the normal manner soon.

Debbie Ham, Parish Councillor

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk  
07593 226462 [clerk@benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk)

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

## Parish Council Meeting

Monday 15 June,

Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm

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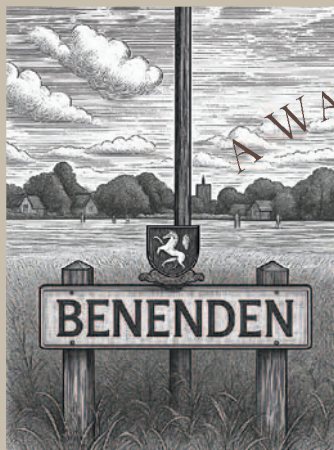
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# Talking Point



## Shining a light on Benenden's community spirit

If you've been into the village hall recently you may have noticed a substantial improvement: the lighting throughout the building has been upgraded. Goodbye ancient, flickering fluorescent tubes; hello modern, brighter, dimmable LEDs. The change has many benefits apart from the better quality of light for anyone using the hall, be they taking part in a dance or pilates class, cooking in the kitchen, or using the changing rooms. LEDs are much more energy efficient and last much longer than fluorescent lights, so this will save the hall money over the long-term.

It's an illustration of how the hall, now 50 years old and showing its age, is being gradually renovated, but the improvements also underline a much broader and more important point: the inspiring way Benenden institutions and individual villagers so often come together for the greater good of the community. The village hall is owned and run by Benenden Village Trust (BVT), a charity whose antecedent was set up just over 100 years ago to provide recreational facilities in the parish. But the charity's finances have not been in great shape in recent years, due to spiraling costs, limited income and the need to maintain the hall in good condition, as well as the recreation fields and children's playgrounds in Benenden and Iden Green. War in the Middle East has not helped matters, with energy costs and inflation rising, and stock markets falling.

But the community has been providing invaluable support to the trust, with the parish council in the lead. It provided a grant for the lighting upgrade and made a large contribution to the replacement of the hall's elderly space-heating boiler in 2024. Over the past two years it has also given, or earmarked, large grants for the removal of trees on the Benenden recreation ground affected by honey fungus, tree work at Iden Green recreation ground, and restoration work on the Benenden children's playground. It has also taken on responsibility for maintaining both the Benenden and Iden Green recreation grounds.

Many individuals have also volunteered to help the trust, be it keeping an eye on the condition of the playgrounds or watering just-planted saplings. There have been particularly large volunteer turnouts - including members of the Benenden Players - to make the trust's fund-raising film nights in the village hall such a success.

BVT is also very grateful to the Bonfire Society for two grants for children's playground repairs at Benenden and Iden Green over the past two years, from the profits of the Bonfire Night spectacles, which it distributes to local causes. But community support should be reciprocal, which is why BVT is encouraging its trustees, members and others to volunteer to help at this year's bonfire. You can help make this great village event another huge success in 2026 by signing up at: <https://benendenfireworks.co.uk/volunteers/>. If you would like to find out more about becoming a BVT member please contact Caroline Levett at [bvtrust@gmail.com](mailto:bvtrust@gmail.com)

Martin Dickson, Chair, Benenden Village Trust

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**Contact:** Deborah Jenkins 240454  
[benendenalms@gmail.com](mailto:benendenalms@gmail.com)

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For further information please contact the clerk to the trustees:

Deborah Jenkins 240454  
benendenalms@gmail.com

## Benenden Bonfire

Following last year's successful Benenden Bonfire, the committee is pleased to have been able to distribute a share of the profits to the following local organisations.

- Arnold Cole Trust £400
- Benenden Bowls Club £400
- Benenden Cricket Club £1,000
- Benenden Players £1,000
- Benenden Pre-School £800
- Benenden String Orchestra £500
- Benenden Village Trust £1,000
- Benenden's Community Shop £900
- Cranbrook Scouts £800
- Merry & Bright £200

The bonfire and fireworks this year will take place on Saturday 7 November and it will be advance ticket only. Tickets will not be available at the gate. This is to enable us to meet our insurance obligations and the new Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (Martyn's Law), which, following the Manchester Arena attack, all public events now must comply with.

Gary Bell, Chair, Benenden Bonfire Society  
www.benendenfireworks.co.uk

## BENENDEN FETE 2026

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**WHEN** into our cars from 8.30-9.30am on:

- Saturday 23 & 30 May, 6 June
  - Wednesday 27 May, 3 & 10 June
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**WHERE** Car park area outside the public toilets, adjacent to The Bull

**WHO** If you can't make these dates call:  
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## Village lunch

All Benenden and Iden Green parishioners are invited to join us for lunch in the village hall at 12.30pm on Tuesday 9 June. If you would like to come and haven't written your name down already, then please ring me by Thursday 4 June. We are a bigger group now which is wonderful but means the cooks need longer to prepare. It costs just £5.

Sheila Hume 854627

## Dingleden Open Gardens

The Dingleden Open Gardens event on 9 and 10 May was a great success raising £1,700 for St George's Church Restore, Renew, Rejoice fund and £1,140 for the Sign Health charity. We were blessed with wonderful weather on Saturday and over the two days there was a steady stream of visitors enjoying three gardens and Laurels Nursery, and enjoying tea and delicious cake at organiser Judy Williams' house. Despite the cold on Sunday the greeting teams stayed outside and we had cheerful, stalwart and very generous visitors. Thanks to all those who opened their gardens, baked, and helped.

Eleanor North

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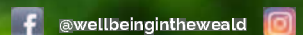


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See website for details - [www.wellbeingintheweald.co.uk](http://www.wellbeingintheweald.co.uk)



## Friends of Benenden Primary School

We were delighted to host our very first Colour Run, which proved to be a huge success and a fantastic day for our whole school community. With more than 100 children taking part, the event was filled with excitement, laughter, and plenty of colour from start to finish. Children ran together around the course while brightly coloured powder was thrown, creating an unforgettable spectacle and lots of fun for everyone.

It was wonderful to see children of all ages taking part with such enthusiasm and team spirit. At the finish line every child received a medal to celebrate their achievement and participation. Parents, carers, and family members came along to watch the runners. Their support, alongside the hard work of staff and volunteers, made the event possible and helped ensure the day ran smoothly.

As well as being great fun, the Colour Run was also an important fundraiser for our school. We are pleased to say that all monies raised will go directly back into the school to benefit our children and enhance their learning experiences. Following the overwhelming success of the event, we are already hoping to make the Colour Run an annual tradition. We would like to thank everyone who took part, volunteered, donated, and supported us in making it such a colourful and memorable day.

Evie Banfield

[friends@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk](mailto:friends@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk)

[www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk/PTFA/](http://www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk/PTFA/)



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## Benenden Primary School

The summer term brings challenges and a need to focus hard to really demonstrate all the children have learned this year. This includes the May external Year 6 SATs, Year 4 Multiplication checks and the Key Stage 1 phonics checks. The children and staff have worked hard all year and I am looking forward to each and every child being the very best they can be.

Not only this but we will be making the most of the summer weather, and by the end of the school year every class will have taken part in a residential, school sleepover or campfire evening. Not forgetting sports day, of course! There is also a lot of hard work going into the Year 6 and Key Stage 2 production, which has followed on from the incredible Year 5 production of A Midsummer Night's Dream, hosted by Benenden School.

It is a wonderful time of year to see the outcome of everyone's hard work throughout the year. This is not possible without the amazing staff team who are the best at being flexible, enthusiastic and kind. They are a brilliant bunch who care so much for the school community and give the best they can to every child.

Alison Brook, Headteacher 240565

[office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk)

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## Weald of Kent Awards

One of the things I love most about being the MP for the Weald of Kent is that it genuinely is one of the most special places in the country. Our farms, village shops, pubs and cafés, growers and producers are some of the best in Britain, and I'll always do whatever I can to support them.

That's why I'm so pleased to open the nominations for the Weald of Kent Awards 2026, my annual celebration of the very best of our corner of Kent. There are five categories: Local Hero of the Year; Independent Shop of the Year; Local Business of the Year; Farmer, Grower or Producer of the Year; and Pub, Café or Restaurant of the Year.

The awards recognise everyone from individuals and community groups who go above and beyond, to the businesses, pubs, cafés and producers that make this such a special place to live. Across the Weald, there are so many people and groups who work quietly and tirelessly to hold our villages and parishes together. Alongside them are brilliant businesses that work around the clock and which stand out as some of the best in Britain, even when the pressures on them have never been greater.

Last year, we received more than 100 nominations and over 1,000 of you cast your votes. I'd love to beat that this year. So, if there's a local business that's gone the extra mile, a farm that grows particularly delicious fruit, or a community hero that deserves recognition, please do nominate them. You can do so at [www.katieforkent.com/weald-of-kent-awards](http://www.katieforkent.com/weald-of-kent-awards). Nominations close on 13 July at 5pm with voting to begin shortly after.

Katie Lam, MP Weald of Kent

LITTLE WALKHURST OPEN GARDEN	<p>This year we are fund raising for Hospice in the Weald again and opening our six-acre garden on <b>19 &amp; 26 July</b> and <b>2 August</b> from <b>12.30-4.30pm</b>.</p> <p>Come and enjoy at our 18th century house our cottage-style garden, woodland walk, wildflower meadow, summer and orchid houses, wildlife ponds and waterfalls. See Peter's new project and my art studio will be open too.</p> <p>Dogs on leads please. Entry is £5 for adults and includes refreshments. Sara Rowan</p> <p><b>Little Walkhurst, Walkhurst Road, Benenden TN17 4DT</b></p>
---------------------------------	---

## Benenden Pre-School

At pre-school we seek to instill children with respect and care for the resources and toys we play with. We have conversations about looking after our belongings and the fact that if a toy breaks, it can't necessarily be replaced and that this is sometimes expensive. Children generally look after toys very well and will point out if, for example, a page of a book gets torn and will fetch the Sellotape to help mend it. Children learn to understand that actions have consequences and this understanding helps them to have respect for belongings and other objects.

We use china plates and real glasses at snack and lunch time and have incredibly few breakages as children use these objects responsibly and with care. Another important factor in supporting children to look after belongings is tidying up after themselves. We encourage children to tidy as they go, not moving on to a second activity before they have tidied up whatever they are currently playing with. Children learn the importance of every toy having its place: it is less likely to get damaged or broken and is readily accessible to other children.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor

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



## Loss and Grief Café

Coming to terms with the loss of someone we love can feel overwhelming and deeply personal. Even when we know they are at peace, grief can bring many different emotions: sadness, loneliness, confusion, anger or simply a sense of missing them deeply.

We warmly invite you to join us at the Mission Church, Back Lane, in Sandhurst on Saturday 27 June (10-12noon) for a gentle and supportive morning where we can explore grief together through conversation, readings, and simple crafting activities. This will be a safe and welcoming space where you can talk, listen, reflect, or simply be alongside others who understand. Sometimes it helps to share with people who have experienced loss themselves, and sometimes it is enough just to know that someone is there to listen.

Contact me for more information or to book your free place.

Lyn Hayes 07792 332904 lindapin@aol.com

## Talking shop

Benenden's is delighted to announce that it is now ten years since we opened and we will be having a special celebration with our fantastic band of volunteers. The new summer café menu is now up and running and, as well as our usual range, we are offering yummy pizzas, Caesar salad and goat's cheese salad, as well as lasagne, chips, fish finger sourdough sandwiches and freshly cooked bacon and eggs on our lovely new grill. We also offer smoothies and milkshakes and are a whizz at creating iced lattes with an array of syrups. Wine and other alcoholic drinks can be consumed if you are enjoying a main meal. As well as our normal range of ice creams and lollies we now have a Mr Whippy type machine for a cone.

Expanding our range keeps business brisk and improves our long-term prospects in these difficult times. Staff are working very hard and are even coming in on Sundays and bank holiday Mondays from 9am-1pm, but we are still in great need of more volunteers to help cover shifts, especially as the holiday season approaches. We greatly value those who help and they are vital to our success.

At present there are just a few volunteers who work in the café and we have altered the rota so that we need just two per day. These shifts cover the busiest times, which are the most rewarding times to work. If you are unsure please do come in for some training alongside an experienced person.

In the shop, there is always a need for people to help with unpacking and distributing deliveries as they arrive, as well as serving customers. Again, training can be given at a pace you are happy with. Volunteering is a great way to meet people in the village and is a pretty entertaining experience. Please do come forward to help and celebrate ten years of Benenden's this summer.

Bev Beveridge info@benendens.co.uk  
www.benendens.co.uk

## Benenden Cricket Club

We need more players as we strive to maintain the tradition of over 200 years of cricket on the idyllic green. Whilst we are no longer the formidable side of the 19th and 20th centuries, our cricket is fun and inclusive for all abilities, often enjoyed by dads with sons and daughters.

We appreciate the village's continuing cooperation, especially the financial contribution from the Bonfire Society. Spectators are always welcome - a perfect excuse to get a drink at our sponsors the Bull and watch. Our home games on Saturday (1.30pm start) this year are:  
30 May; 7, 20 and 27 June; 11 July;  
15, 22 August at 1.30pm and 29 August at 1pm;  
12 September at 1pm

If you have any queries or know of anyone who would like to play or be involved, please contact me.

Peter Newman, Vice-Chairman  
07810 658981 pcslnewman@yahoo.co.uk

## Iden Green and Benenden WI

Our recent social afternoon was well attended and members, amongst other things, enjoyed talking about various craft activities. The annual meeting on 19 May was also very successful as some new committee members were appointed and everyone enjoyed exchanging plants and produce. A couple of our representatives also attended a tea party given by Frittenden WI.

Our garden party this year will be on 16 June in a member's garden. Expect a delicious spread of tasty delicacies together with a chance to explore the beautifully kept garden. If the weather isn't kind to us, then we shall sit in the spacious lounge or conservatory. On 23 June we shall be visiting Benenden School, following up on our excellent March meeting when we had a talk about its history.  
Jackie Liffen WI@daisystar.co.uk



### Benenden Cricket Club Invite New Members

#### Traditional Village Green Cricket

The season is in full swing • We invite new players of all standards • We play friendlies on Saturdays • All equipment is provided

To join the Cricket Club, contact Peter Newman  
07810 658981

## Summer yoga

This summer I'm back from Tamil Nadu and teaching a weekly Classical Hatha Yoga class on Monday afternoons at the Iden Green Pavilion. While teaching and practising in South India over the past couple of years, I've been immersed in a traditional, methodical approach to yoga and I'm really glad to be able to share it here at home. We begin simply, working with the joints, breath, and basic movements, and then build gradually towards steadier, more refined postures. It's not rushed and over time tends to leave you feeling lighter, clearer and at ease. The classes will run through the summer before I return to India in August.

Classical Hatha Yoga is taught in a way that keeps things grounded and approachable, while still staying true to the authenticity of its ancient roots. It's open to complete beginners as well as those who've dipped in and out of yoga over the years and would like something a bit more structured. Over the summer we'll build step by step, with the aim of deepening our practice and providing a sense of wellbeing that remains. Currently, the weekly class is full, but I'm very happy to open another and I'm also available to work privately after an initial assessment. Feel free to get in touch. I'd love to hear from you.

anna.cecilia.cruse@gmail.com

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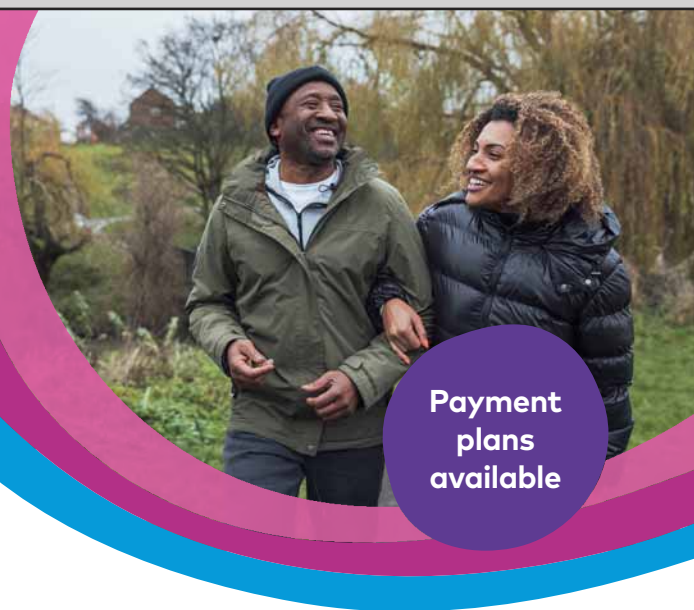
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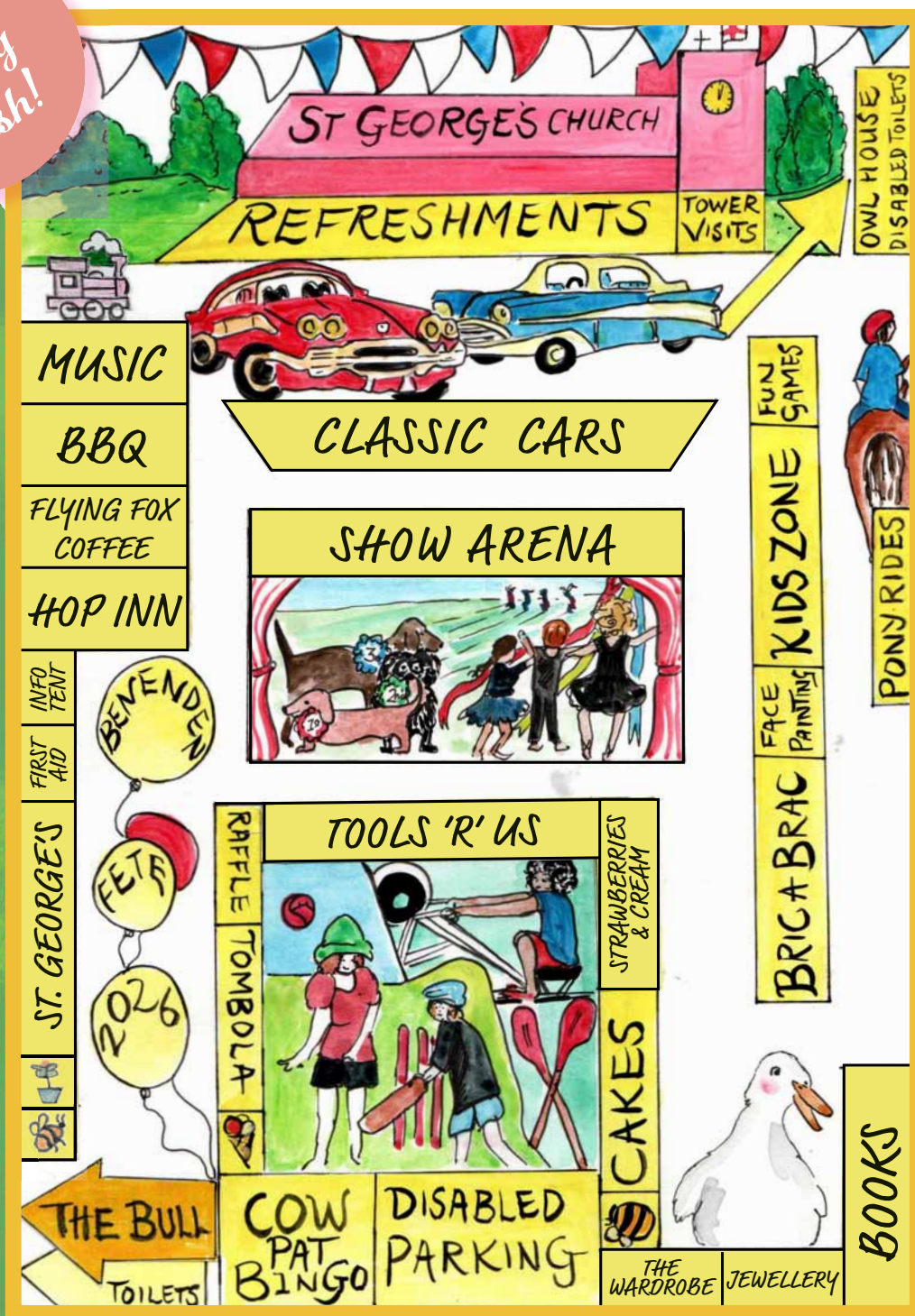
Benenden Village Fete



@benenden\_fete

# Benenden Fete '26

Bring Cash!



Sat 13 June, 12-4pm

## Timetable

12	Fete opens & BBQ ready Magic Ben Benenden Jazz featuring Debbie Katis by the Hop Inn & BBQ	3.15	Children's fun Spud & Spoon, Sack, Three-legged & Sprint races. Turn up to take part in the Arena by 3.10.
12.30	Rhythm of Life Choir by the church	3.30	Cow Pat Bingo live!
1.15	Fun Dog Show in the Arena	3.40	Raffle winners announced
2-2.30	Echo 155 entertains us by the Hop Inn & BBQ	4	Close
2.30	Ami Piper Dance School show in the Arena		
3	Art Show: winners announced Benenden Jazz featuring Primrose by the Hop Inn & BBQ		

# Benenden Village Fete on the Green

## Wonderful Stalls

Discover fabulous finds and bargains on our stalls including books, pre-loved clothes and jewellery, toys, tools and kit, plants galore, plus a treasure trove of bric-a-brac and vintage treasures.

## Scrumptious Food & Drink

Buy scrumptious cakes and honey; sit down to cream tea by the church; savour Flying Fox fresh coffee; treat yourself to strawberries and cream, milkshakes and ice cream; snap up BBQ delights and wash them all down with real ale, cider, wine and fizz from the Hop Inn.

## Recyclable Cups

Pay £1 deposit for your drink's cup and when you return it you will get £1 back. It's that simple? Enjoy – Return – Reuse.

## Fun & Games

There is lots of fun for the whole family. Who can resist Face Painting, Tombola, Soggy Sponges? Take the Ergo rowing challenge and show off your skills at the Coconut Shy, Hook-a-Duck, Cricket and try your luck with the prizes-packed Tombola. At the top of The Green enjoy a ride on the mini steam train and a pony ride run by Hemsted Forest Equestrian Centre before sending a teddy down the zip wire. Then try and guess how many balloons have been packed into the giant Matador – not as easy as you think.

## Wacky Races

Calling all children who fancy their chances in the Spud & Spoon Race, Sack Race, Three-legged Race and Sprints. Just turn up at 3.10 ready to enter. Medals are up for grabs.

## Classic Cars

At the top of The Green take a walk around a display of classic cars lovingly cared for by local owners.

## Music, Music, Music

We are very lucky to have Benenden Jazz, featuring singers Debbie Katis and Primrose; Echo 155 and the joyful Rhythm of Life Choir.

## In aid of St George's Church

"A traditional treat for all the family"



## Fun Dog Show

1.15 In the Arena  
Gather at the Arena by 1.10 ready to start

### 'Dogs not Dogs' Fancy Dress Parade

In tribute to David Attenborough parade your pooch dressed as a different animal. Prize for the most creative 'Dog not Dog'!

### 'You Clever Dog You' Skills Show

They've been practising all year! Bring your talented best friend to show off their:

- Waggiest Tail

- Best Trick

- Best Fun Agility Skills

Buy your entry ticket in the Cow Pat Bingo tent between 12.30-1

Hosted by [cranbrookdogwalking.com](http://cranbrookdogwalking.com)  
Walking - Day care - Holiday stays

## Cow Pat Bingo

A star attraction and nail biting! Buy a grid square and hope that Minnie - the very special Hinxden Dairy cow - chooses it to deliver her first pat to win you a night for two at The George in Rye.

## Primary School Art Show

To celebrate our natural world and 100 years of David Attenborough our Primary School Children have created wonderful artwork and a selection will be displayed on the St George's stall – alongside intriguing artifacts discovered during the current church restoration work.

## At the Church

Climb St George's Church tower to appreciate the stunning views over the village and surrounding countryside. This is a not-to-be-missed experience. View the impressive restoration progress inside through the west door and end with a most delicious cream tea.

## Fabulous Raffle Prizes

Always a fete highlight! Buy tickets before the fete at the shop, the village hall and the Bull or buy them at the fete on the Raffle stall. Be quick though – they go quickly! Great prizes include cash and a hot air balloon ride for two. Thank you to: Ami Piper Dance Studio, Appleacre Art Studio, Azara Therapies, Banjara, Benenden Vineyard, Benenden Bonfire Society, Benenden's, Benenden Players, Biddenden Cider, Block the Butcher, Carriage Hair Studio, Great Dixter, Hannah's Garden, Harvey's Brewery, Helen Jewsbury, Hemsted Equestrian Centre, Hemsted Park, Hole Park, Kino Hawkhurst, Majestic Tenterden, National Trust, Palmstead Nurseries, Pashley Manor, Pypmne Manor, Tesco Tenterden, The Bull in Benenden, Wealden Smokery, Westfield Farm honey.

## Parking & Toilets

Please don't park on the road. Lots of parking is available on the field by the village hall. There are allocated parking spots available at the bottom of The Green. The public toilet is by the village hall and disabled toilets are at the top of The Green.

BENENDEN CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF  
SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH  
& OUR NATURAL WORLD



## A HUGE THANK YOU TO:

...all the volunteers who help to bring this wonderful traditional fete to fruition. It wouldn't be the marvellous occasion it is without your hard work and support. And thank you to our sponsors and all those who have donated prizes and items for the stalls.



## SPECIAL THANKS TO:

The Mission Support Sponsors (Canham Homes, GMP, Lambert & Foster and Whitehead Monkton) for covering our technical and logistical costs, powering us towards another successful year of fundraising.

Our loyal supporters: Benenden Hospital, Bike Workshop, The Bull & Hole Park.

The George for the Cow Pat Bingo prize & Arthur Reynolds for the hay bales.



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## Benenden Hospital

For Dementia Action Week (18-24 May), I sat down with our ward manager and dementia lead, Carly Spice, to learn how dementia awareness is embedded in the care we provide:

“Dementia is an umbrella term for the symptoms of a range of conditions that affect the brain; including memory, thinking, communication and the ability to manage everyday tasks. It is progressive, which means symptoms can change over time, and everyone’s experience will be different.

“Dementia is not a normal part of ageing, and with the right support people can continue to live well. Dementia Week raises awareness, reduces stigma and encourages conversations about dementia.”

How does Benenden Hospital support patients with dementia?: “We use ‘This Is Me’ documents to capture personal preferences, routines and ways of communicating, and we welcome carers as key partners (including carer badges where appropriate) so patients see familiar support around them.”

What recent improvements have helped further support patients with dementia?: “A simple improvement has been strengthening our dementia-friendly ward environment and orientation support: for example, using clear visual prompts and digital day-to-night clocks to reduce confusion, especially in unfamiliar surroundings. We’ve also expanded access to gentle, purposeful activities (such as colouring and word searches) and made technology easier to use with more user-friendly TVs.”

What is your role in dementia training?: “I work closely with our ‘Dementia Champions’ and the wider multidisciplinary team to share learning from practice, keep our approach consistent, and ensure we continue to improve the experience of patients living with dementia and the people who care for them.”

If you or someone close to you needs dementia support, call Alzheimer’s Society on 0333 150 3456. They’re available for you.  
Claire Harley, Hospital Director



**The Rhythm Of Life Community Choir**

NEW VENUE DUE TO RENOVATIONS AT ST GEORGE’S CHURCH

**Mission Church Sandhurst Thursday 10-11.30am during term time**

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Carla on 07743 430 797

## Benenden School

Over the Easter holidays we were pleased to lend our beautiful site to a large group of students and staff from Latin America, who were in the UK for a language skills and cultural camp. They very much enjoyed their time here immersing themselves in British culture.

They are not the only ones who spent Easter travelling. I was pleased to visit Suwon City in South Korea, where, on behalf of the school, I signed an agreement with the mayor that paves the way for a potential new school. Suwon City is bidding to establish a Free Economic Zone with all the infrastructure to support it. If the bid is approved by the Korean government, the new zone would include the creation of a Benenden School campus, bringing Benenden’s globally-renowned Complete Education to South Korea. It would join the growing Benenden family of schools alongside Benenden Schools Guangzhou in China and Orwell Park School in Suffolk.

Back here at Benenden, we are reaching the start of exams season, so our Year 11s and 13s can be found all over the site with their noses firmly in their books - revising for their GCSEs and A Levels.

Rachel Bailey, Headmistress

## Summer Teas return

Although St George's Church is temporarily closed for the Restore, Renew, Rejoice project, we will be going ahead with the summer teas on Sundays throughout July and August (2-4pm from 5 July-30 August). We will meet in the Memorial Hall at the bottom of The Green. Come and join us for a cup of tea and piece of cake and a natter with your friends. As before, donations are welcomed and all proceeds will go towards St George's Church.

Helen Commander

## Benenden Players

One of the lovely things about living in this village is that everyone looks after each other, and that can definitely be said about the Benenden Bonfire Committee. Yet again they have made a wonderful contribution to the Benenden Players, who over the past few years have been working and investing to improve the lighting system in the village hall. These additional funds will continue to fund this project and will be implemented in time for this winter's show 'Allo 'Allo Part Two. We will be auditioning for actors in late summer so, if you fancy being René or a policeman who speaks abominable French, watch out for the adverts in a future edition of this glorious magazine.

Louise Simpson

## Planning Matters

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

- 26/00847/FULL Springhill Cottage, Standen Street. Conversion of garage to ancillary accommodation.
- 26/01021/FULL and 26/01022/LBC Woodcock Inn, Woodcock Lane. Replacement of first floor window with a door & installation of external staircase.

More planning matters at:

[benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk)

## A Midsummer Night's Music

Do join Sutton Valence Choral Society in Sutton Valence School Chapel, ME17 3HL, on Saturday 4 July 2026 at 6pm for an evening of Shakespearean songs and sonnets conducted by Anthony Osborne. Tickets £15. Accompanied children free. Available on the door or from [www.suttonvalencechoral.com](http://www.suttonvalencechoral.com) or [pamela.hipkins@btinternet.com](mailto:pamela.hipkins@btinternet.com), or phone 01622 861313.

## Cranbrook Library and Family Hub

This new space in Cranbrook offers a welcoming environment with a variety of free groups and courses for families.

The current groups include:

Stay & Play with Little Bookworms - a relaxed session for families for children 0-5, Wednesday 1-2pm; Baby Group - designed especially for pre walking babies, Friday 9.15-10.15am. The health visitors are also based in the library and continue to run their Healthy Child Clinic every Thursday, 9.30-11.30am.

## Teas in the Churchyard

At St Nicholas Church, Sandhurst, we are holding our annual 'Teas in the Churchyard' on Sunday 7 June, from 2-5pm. Tea and cakes will be available. Our churchyard will be buzzing with wildlife and wildflowers, so you can wander the trails and see the architecture. We look forward to welcoming everyone.  
Catherine Elliott

## Letter to the Editor

Please write to the Editor,  
c/o Community Office, Benenden Village Hall, Benenden TN17 4DY or email  
benendenparishmagazine@gmail.com

### CHARLES WOULD HAVE LOVED IT

Dear Editor

How nice it was to read about dear Charles Trollope who, very sadly, died recently. I have much enjoyed his bird contributions over the years.

Accidentally I left my phone switched on for an hour this afternoon with the 'Merlin' bird app recording bird sounds in my garden at Scullsgate. When I looked at the list of birds recorded I immediately thought of Charles, and how sad that I could not inform him, for even he might be amazed.

The following 29 birds were heard and then two Buzzards and a Heron flew over - making 31: White Wagtail, Tree Creeper, Collared Dove, Green Woodpecker, Rook, Song Thrush, Nuthatch, Dunnock, Goldcrest, Mistle Thrush, Grey Wagtail, Wren, Pied Flycatcher, Wood Pigeon, Jackdaw, Swallow, Carrion Crow, Marsh Tit, Great Tit, Blackcap, Blue Tit, Siskin, Coal Tit, Chaffinch, Robin, Pheasant, Blackbird, Chiffchaff and Goldfinch.

If you have never used this free app then I recommend it - there is no telling what is in your garden in our parish.

Alastair Pringle

## INTERNATIONAL CLASSICAL CONCERT SERIES at MARLBOROUGH HOUSE VINEHALL 37th Season 2025-26

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Mussorgsky Pictures at an Exhibition

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## Hospice in the Weald music

Tickets can now be booked for the following programme of the annual Hospice in the Weald musical events in Sandhurst:

Wednesday 17 June at 3pm: The first recital is a special Liszt programme by the world-famous specialist, Leslie Howard. There will also be a Henselt duet performed with Florian Verweij.

Saturday 25 July at 3pm: Daniel Grimwood will be playing for the garden party recital. Minimum donation £24. Details to follow.

Wednesday 9 September at 3pm: Florian Verweij will return from Holland for his recital, which will feature an extra duet with Leslie Howard.

Please book early by calling me or dropping envelopes with cash or cheque through my letterbox. Minimum donation for the first extra recital is £30 as this is a special gift from Leslie Howard to raise even more for Hospice in the Weald.

Gillian Davis 850384

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# Clubs, Sports and Recreation



Get ready for the  
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**SATURDAY 11 JULY**  
**IDEN GREEN PAVILION**

Flaunt your fabulous flowers and fantastic fruit along with your vibrant vegetables

All are welcome to enter and attend the second annual flower and produce show and now is the perfect time to plan and nurture your entries. There are nine categories to choose from (see panel).

Please deliver your entries to Iden Green Pavilion before 12pm on the day. The doors to the general public will be opened at 1pm for all the exhibits to be enjoyed before the prize giving at 2.30pm.

Tea and cakes will be served and we are looking for volunteers to bake and/ or serve the refreshments on the day please.

Please email Pippa Sarton on [sph147@aol.com](mailto:sph147@aol.com) or call 242814 if you are able to support the Benenden Gardening Club with either the serving shifts or cake baking. Registering your interest and entering the categories can also be done by email with £1 per entry being payable in cash on the day of the event.

Happy Gardening.

## The CLASSES to enter are: **FLOWERS**

- Single bloom
- Display of garden flowers
- Arrangement of flowers in a standard size teacup

## **VEGETABLES**

- Four of any one vegetable (as near same size)
- Four potatoes (as near same size)
- Display of at least four types of vegetable, arranged for artistic effect

## **FRUIT**

- Display of any soft fruit (could be mixed), arranged for artistic effect

## **CHILDREN'S CLASS (12 years and under - category has FREE entry)**

Anything grown by themselves

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

The ugliest/funniest vegetable

## **BEST IN SHOW AWARD**

Awarded by the judge for the best overall entry





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# Benenden Nature

## Help protect our swifts: volunteers needed

Our regular wildlife contributor Cheryl Mason needs your help to protect and grow our swift population

June is the height of the swift season and our skies should now be filled with their unmistakable high-pitched calls as they race overhead. These extraordinary birds travel thousands of miles from Africa each year to breed here, but sadly their numbers are in decline, largely due to the loss of nest cavities in buildings.

Swifts return to the same nesting sites year after year, making the protection of existing colonies especially important.

Unfortunately, modern roof repairs, renovations and insulation work can unintentionally block the small gaps and spaces that swifts rely on for nesting.

High Weald Swifts is hoping to recruit volunteers to carry out a simple survey in our village this summer. The survey will help us identify exactly where swifts are nesting locally. From this, we can begin to map 'swift hotspots' - areas where colonies already exist. This is important because it is far more effective to build on existing colonies than to try to attract swifts to places where they are not currently present. Once we

know where these hotspots are, we can work with residents to support the colony, for example by encouraging the installation of swift nest boxes on suitable properties.

Surveys typically take place between mid-June and mid-July, when swift activity is at its peak.

Volunteers are asked to spend a couple of hours on a warm, calm evening watching the skies and nearby

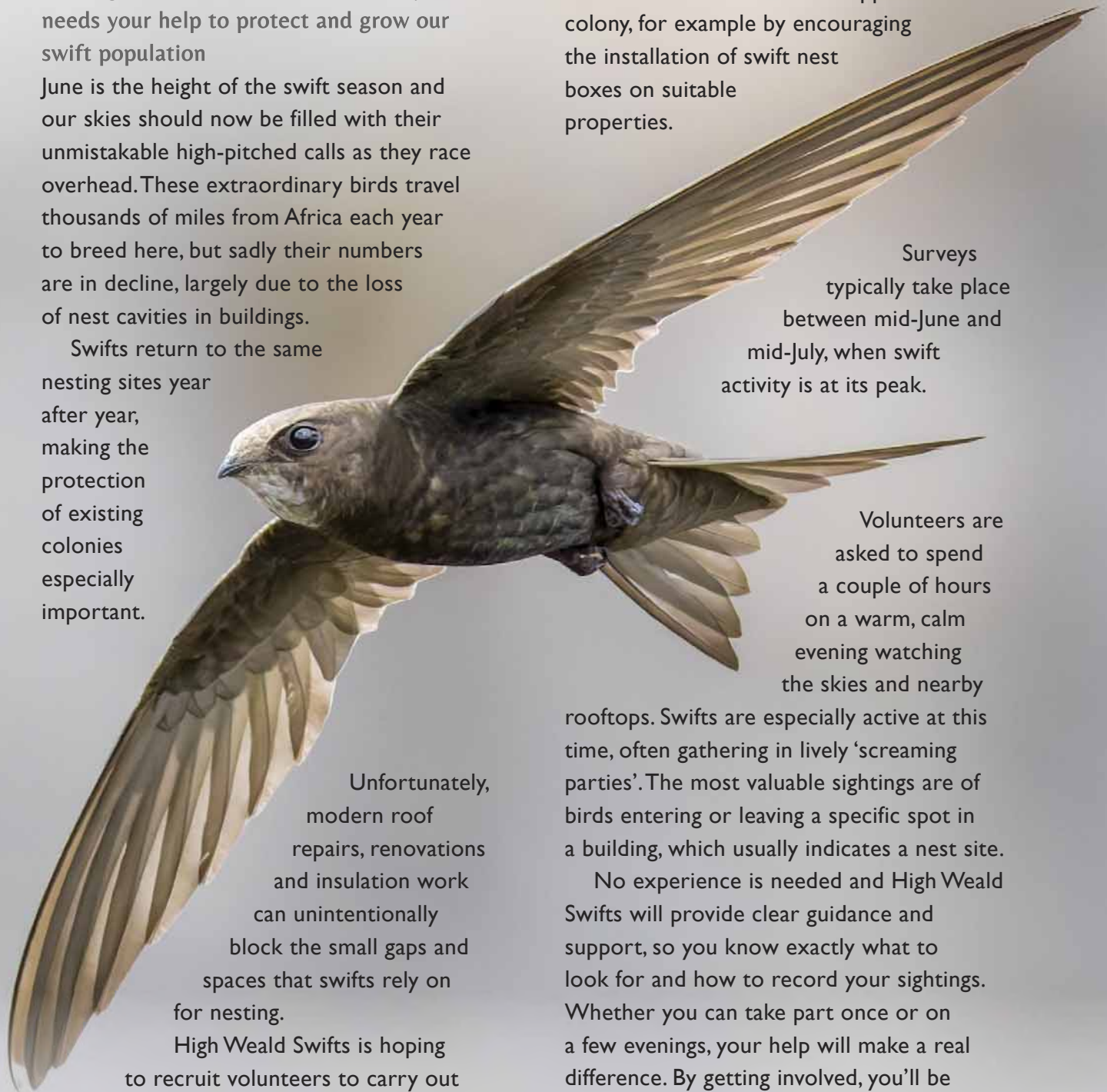
rooftops. Swifts are especially active at this time, often gathering in lively 'screaming parties'. The most valuable sightings are of birds entering or leaving a specific spot in a building, which usually indicates a nest site.

No experience is needed and High Weald Swifts will provide clear guidance and support, so you know exactly what to look for and how to record your sightings. Whether you can take part once or on a few evenings, your help will make a real difference. By getting involved, you'll be helping to protect and grow our local swift population, ensuring these much-loved birds remain part of our summer skies for years to come.

If you would like to take part, please get in touch:

[cheryl.mason@highwealdswifts.co.uk](mailto:cheryl.mason@highwealdswifts.co.uk)

Photograph: Alexis Lours





## Extraordinary: helping appoint the Archbishop of Canterbury

Understandably the important task of finding and appointing the Archbishop of Canterbury is one that takes a lot of careful consideration. Benenden villager Sally-Ann Marks was one of the small team involved in the process and here she tells us what was involved in this 'extraordinary experience'.

Dame Sarah Mullally is the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury and the first woman to hold the role. She is the senior archbishop and primate of the Church of England but also the bishop of the Diocese of Canterbury and thus our

very own bishop. Dame Sarah is also a Lord Spiritual, sitting in the House of Lords in Parliament, and the ceremonial head of the worldwide Anglican Communion. She has been in the House of Lords for over ten years as previously she was the Bishop of London. Her background is unique as she had been a specialist cancer nurse who rose through the ranks in the NHS to be the Government's chief nursing officer for England in the Department of Health before being called to train and be ordained in the Church of England.

The process to identify, discern and finally appoint an archbishop is quite a lengthy one and there are good reasons for that, as I came to realise last year. In the early part of 2025 I was elected to the Vacancy in See Committee; this was the group of people (about 30 members) from the Diocese who had some important decisions to make, one of which was to elect two members from the House of Laity onto the Crown Nominations Commission (the CNC). The CNC's duty was to 'discern' and recommend a candidate for the position of the next Archbishop of Canterbury.

I was later elected to the CNC and almost immediately started the lengthy process of finding a suitable candidate. As one of just 17



people from across the world, it was an immense privilege to be a part of the discussions and to finally put forward a single name to the prime minister and finally to His Majesty the King for his assent.

Many have compared the very swift process of electing the recent Pope with the long process of the work of the CNC but, having been a part of that process, I am convinced that the length of time was put to very good use. The comparison with the Roman Catholic system (where only single, generally elderly, men were and are the electorate) is one that is not equal. Of the 17 members of the CNC, eight were women; two were archbishops (of York and Jerusalem); eight were full members of the clergy (including a wonderful Maori priest) and seven of us represented the laity - in my case representing the Diocese of Canterbury. We were chaired by Lord Jonathan Evans of Weardale (past head of MI5) to take a very deep dive into the past histories and present competencies of all the candidates. We read reports that covered, in depth, every aspect of their careers, lives and experiences; took soundings across the church family and finally interviewed those who made the shortlist.

To be a part of this extraordinary experience was a privilege indeed; and to be able to say that the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury is to be a woman because of our deliberations, investigations and prayer, is wonderful. Dame Sarah was announced as the next incumbent of the See of Canterbury in early October last year and I was invited to the formal announcement at Canterbury Cathedral.

There were further events to celebrate, one being the legal process in January this year in St Paul's Cathedral. Again, I attended, as a member of the CNC, and to be a part of that service in the magnificent building with the bells ringing out across the City of London was another moment I will never forget.

Finally, I was enormously privileged to be a guest at the formal installation in Canterbury Cathedral on 25 March this year. The service was

a great event with some breathtaking music (my personal favourite was the Norfolk African Choir who moved, swayed and sang their joyful celebrations right through the building - see them on the CofE website), some great, well-known hymns and lots of pomp and joy. His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales and the Princess were in attendance.

I reflected often on my extraordinary privilege and luck to be a part of this whole



process, especially as Benenden is only just within the Diocese of Canterbury - and we only moved here just over ten years ago. I must add that, despite so many of us being thrilled that we have a woman to head the Church of England, there are of course some for whom this is a difficult path - especially for some members of the worldwide Anglican Communion. The discussions within the CNC were always respectful of differing views and took account of strong, long-held beliefs.

I was particularly struck by the Archbishop's words at the Announcement of her role in October last year; she spoke humbly about having spent the first years of her nursing career in the laying on of hands to assist those who were suffering from disease or illness and how this translated to her current role of using her hands in worship, action and prayer for all the ills of this world. We look forward in faith and hope.



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## Alison Brook: a passion for inspiring children

When I met Alison Brook, headteacher of Benenden Primary School, she reminded me of the wonderful teacher who inspired me and my career as a child (shout out to Mrs Foley!). As we talked, Alison's love for the school and her passion for supporting youngsters as they navigate learning, ready to take on the challenges of secondary school and the world, was clear.

Alison first arrived at Benenden Primary as a student teacher in 2013, having decided to change careers. She became a fully-fledged teacher in 2014, progressing to special educational needs and disabilities co-ordinator (SENDCo) and assistant head in 2020 and headteacher in September last year. Her route to the school, working with youngsters of all ages and with a range of learning and physical abilities and challenges, has equipped her perfectly for the role and responsibilities she has today.

After her self-professed "less than successful" encounter with GCSEs and A Levels, Alison worked as a climbing instructor and lifeguard, a secretary, then joined Valence School for children with physical disabilities and complex medical needs, eventually becoming deputy head of care.

During that time, she spent a period working for a drug and alcohol rehabilitation project focusing on supporting youngsters across Kent, where she met co-worker and future husband, Peter Brook (who is pastor of Staplehurst Free Church and part of the St George's Restore, Renew, Rejoice project team). Never one to relax, Alison took an Open University teaching degree, started teacher training and had two babies.

You would think Alison would spend any spare time after a busy school day relaxing, but not at all. Monday evenings she is busy with the Cranbrook Scouts and on Fridays she's found at Staplehurst Free Church Youth Club. She also plays the piano, oboe and occasionally the penny whistle in a barn dance band, although her real love is the guitar.



Passionate about the benefits of learning outdoors, Alison is a forest school leader and each class at Benenden Primary regularly spends a day at the forest school site in the grounds of Benenden School. "On so many levels it's rewarding as the children learn to work together, solve problems, build resilience and become independent creative thinkers," she says.

"Increasingly, we are seeing children with a range of learning challenges and it's important that we are as inclusive as possible, helping each one of them to learn, and to be ready and confident to leave for secondary school. Our aim is to enable everyone to succeed to the best of their ability."

Alison will need her vision and every ounce of energy to navigate the challenges the school will face in the future. "School funding nationally has been cut and that will have a big impact on us in the future as we strive to do more - but with less," she explains. "More than ever, we need to involve family members and village volunteers to help with critical fundraising activities and to provide support in the classroom and during outdoor learning sessions."

As I leave after chatting with Alison, I pass by a bunch of happy children each holding a trumpet case - another lovely activity the children get to experience. Wonderful!

If you are able to volunteer regularly (weekly or fortnightly) to help the school develop confident, adventurous children, then please email [office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk) in the first instance. It will be greatly appreciated.

Ruth Clark

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# Event Preview



sound effects and devices of our own we are constantly looking to exploit the poetic, fantastic and absurd. Using magic realism, our stories slip easily between the realistic and the fantastical while constantly reminding the audience that ‘it’s just a play’ and we are actors.”

There are just six of them, playing multiple

roles and 26 different instruments between them and, as Rowan Talbot the director told me, using half a kilo of white face make-up over the 45 performances! It will be a bit bawdy - this is Chaucer after all - and is aimed at adults but many older children enjoy the Rudes’ shows.

Show time is 7.30pm prompt, Thursday 16 July, at Sandhurst playing fields (TN18 5NY) but feel free to come from 6pm and grab your pitch on the grass with your camping chairs, picnics, blankets and warm clothes to obtain the full Rudes experience. The play lasts about two hours plus a 20-minute interval, and tickets are from £11 to £25, with reductions for seniors and family groups. Best to book online in advance but tickets are also usually available on the door. Toilets and parking on site. Booking and further information from [www.therudes.co.uk](http://www.therudes.co.uk) or contact me.

Shirley Wiggs [shirleywiggs60@gmail.com](mailto:shirleywiggs60@gmail.com)

## A rude, bawdy romp of word, wit and song

The Rude Mechanical Theatre Company are back on 16 July in Sandhurst with their entertaining new production of ‘The Wife’, inspired by Chaucer’s *The Wife of Bath*. The Rudes toured an earlier version of the play in 2014 and I remember it went down a storm; this year’s has a new design, new score and lots of new songs.

When the play begins, it’s spring on the road to Canterbury and Alyson of Bath, cloth-maker, widow, pilgrim, and five-times-married expert in the arts of love, has plenty to say and no intention of holding her tongue. As hooves clip-clop and birdsong bubbles, she tells of husbands rich and foolish, charming and cruel, and the hard bargains of love. Then comes her tale of a young knight, a terrible crime, and a question that sends him wandering the world in search of an answer no one can agree on.

Without giving too much away, we can expect a beautiful poetic romp of word, wit and song, with whispers of a hard-won truth about love, power, and what women most desire.

If you have not yet seen The Rudes’ unique brand of musical theatre, do dive in! As they tell it: “Through mime, vocal



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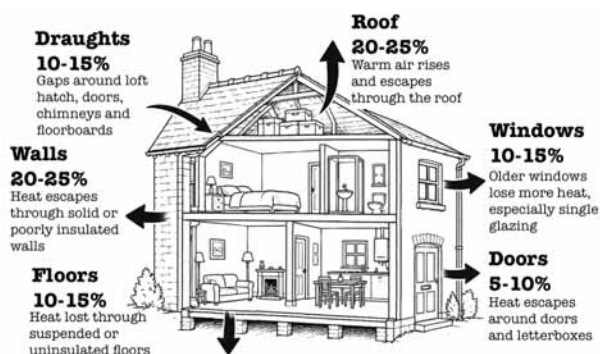
## Why insulation comes before heating gadgets

New heating technologies attract plenty of attention, but before investing in gadgets or replacement systems, Tim Dwyer suggests first considering how to reduce the heat already leaking from the house

For many homes, especially older village properties, the most effective improvements are often simple changes to the building itself - and summer is an ideal time to make them.

### Understanding the house

Not all homes behave in the same way. A Victorian cottage with solid walls and open fireplaces will respond differently from a modern insulated house. Some older buildings were designed to manage moisture naturally through open chimneys, breathable materials and background ventilation, so changes need to be considered carefully rather than simply sealing every gap. In winter heat escapes through roofs, walls, windows, floors and gaps around doors and loft hatches. In many older homes, the roof and walls account for most heat loss. Good insulation is not only about reducing fuel bills. It can also make a home feel more comfortable by reducing draughts, cold surfaces and uneven temperatures.



### Start simple

Loft insulation is usually the easiest and most cost-effective place to begin. Many homes still have far less insulation than current guidance recommends, and topping it up is often straightforward. Because warm air rises, improving ceiling insulation can make a noticeable difference.

Other simple improvements include draught-proofing loft hatches and doors, using thicker

curtains and sealing obvious unwanted gaps. Before spending significant sums of money, it is worth considering where a house feels cold or draughty during winter. Older doors, unused chimneys and suspended timber floors are often responsible for surprising heat loss.

Some improvements require more careful planning. Homes built before the 1920s usually have solid brick or stone walls. These walls can often be insulated, internally or externally, but poor detailing may trap moisture, create condensation problems or alter the character of older buildings. Homes built from the 1930s onwards are more likely to have cavity walls, many of which can be insulated successfully if suitable and in good condition.

### Insulate, but don't suffocate

As homes become better insulated and more airtight, ventilation becomes increasingly important. Cooking, showering, drying clothes and even breathing release moisture into the air. Without adequate ventilation, condensation and mould can follow - ventilation is the controlled movement of fresh air that keeps a home healthy, whereas draughts are uncontrolled leaks that waste heat. Extractor fans, 'trickle' vents on windows and occasional window opening can usually provide enough fresh air without excessive heat loss.

### A home ready for the future

Improving insulation first often makes later decisions easier. Heating systems can run more effectively when the building itself wastes less heat. Think about which rooms need heating. Unused spaces do not need to be kept as warm as occupied rooms. However, very cold rooms with little ventilation can increase the risk of condensation and mould, particularly if moisture drifts from warmer parts of the house.

The good news is that improving comfort and reducing energy use does not always require dramatic change. Often the best approach is incremental improvement: understanding the house, fixing obvious weaknesses first, and avoiding treating every home the same.

Coming next: Simple ways to keep homes cool



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Similar to the horse and cart used in the village

## Benenden transport in the early 1900s

Let's go back over 50 years to 1974, when there was a global oil crisis, petrol prices rose considerably and for a few months the country experienced a three-day working week. At the time Christopher Neve was editor of the parish magazine and he was inspired to research and write the following article.

Now that every drop of petrol counts, it is interesting to consider how the village solved - or failed to solve - its transport problems before private motoring was taken for granted. When the First World War ended, children who walked to school from Iden Green, or from what used to be quite a large community at Dingledean, got a penny cup of soup to go with their sandwiches because they could not get home like the others for lunch. But those that lived at Goddard's Green were for many years taken to school by horse and cart, driven by Mr Tom Burt, who worked for 40 years at Rollings [the village shop at the time - now Benenden's Community Shop]. This rudimentary bus service was continued, combined with grocery deliveries, when the cart was replaced by a motor lorry with canvas awning in the 1920s.

Mrs Millicent Chapman vividly remembers accompanying her father, Mr Burt, on the grocery round to Great

Nineveh and beyond, where they would be entertained on farms with cider to the extent that, with the cart dangling with presents of rabbits and bags of sweets, it was much left to the horse to get them back by lantern light at dusk. As well as the carts belonging to the two butchers, delivery arrangements included a handcart with a basket on the front with a lid, full of warm bread and buns from the bakery, which Mr Sid Lock as a boy pushed regularly up the street. Some of the

children who would steal his steaming doughnuts on a Thursday morning lick their lips at the thought of them now.

It was quite usual to hire bicycles by the day from Mr Baldwin, but at the more extravagant end of the scale there was always "Pa" Smith's taxi service, run from his home second from the end in Barrack Row. Like the Tea Rooms, Mr Smith's taxi made its appearance with the advent of Benenden School in 1924 when he depended for most of his trade on ferrying girls and their boxes back and forth from Cranbrook station. The car he used was a 1919 Fiat 501, with brass paraffin lamps on the front. This model's reputation for reliability was not always consistent with the performance of Pa Smith's taxi. And it was common for him to get so vexed with cranking it in the evenings that he would throw the starting handle over the hedge on the other side of the road, and have to go out looking for it with a hurricane lamp.

To be continued



1920s motor lorry

# In Your Garden

## The month when the senses come alive

There's no denying that the month of June is a feast for the senses. We have colour, foliage, scent, height; the gentle hum of insect and bird life; the warmth of midsummer air and the joy of feeling sun on our faces. The ground is workable, too, making gardening a joy as we pick our way through the borders, weeding, staking, trimming lawn edges and planting out our carefully grown seedlings.

Although we are spoilt for choice as everything has sprung into life, there are notable plants worth mentioning this month. Not wanting to ignore the roses, as this is their time, but for now I will give space to other worthies, particularly those with scent.

Philadelphus (or mock orange) is indispensable in a mixed border, and there is a good choice, too, but I would certainly pick one that is suitable for your space. Choose a more compact variety such as P. 'Belle Etoile' or 'Manteau d'Hermione' for a smaller space. On the edges of a woodland area in the Sevenoaks garden I work in, there is a mature species, philadelphus, growing metres tall (about 7m) with a lilac growing nearby - pure heavenly scent and beautiful to look at, albeit only for a fleeting month or six weeks, but very worth it.

Coming down a scale or two are bearded irises. These start in mid-May so tend to be over by early June but definitely need a mention due to their pure scented glamour, stature yet delicacy and relative ease of growing. I work with a selection of 'Benton' irises in the same garden as above, and the colours are spectacular, all bred by Cedric Morris from Benton End in Suffolk. I have 'Menace', 'Arundel', 'Caramel' and 'Duff', although I have my eye on 'Daphne' if I can find one. Beth Chatto stocks online and the plants are always good quality but there are other reputable nurseries which you can seek out.



Mine grow in a metre-deep border against a house wall in a very sunny spot, so ideal for baking the rhizomes. I do, however, have slightly too much neighbouring coverage, but it is light, in the form of knautias, catmints and roses, and so far the irises don't seem to mind.

They are vigorous, though, so after flowering I will have to divide all of them and replant straight away.

Clematis look lovely at this time of year,

particularly threading through other plants or twining up a rusty obelisk. A client of mine uses a very pretty, compact 'diversifolia' type called 'Arabella', which is a delicate mid-mauvy blue. It scrambles beautifully through a border, weaving its way amongst geraniums and bush roses, but will need a little help to climb up an obelisk as these varieties are not natural clingers. It soon finds its way, however, and flowers much longer than other varieties.

Other plants I like to use now, and find difficult to garden without, are dianthus, potentilla, border geraniums, hostas, campanulas, astrantia and my very favourite buddleja 'Alternifolia'. We are blessed in this country to be able to garden with such a wide variety of plants, so embrace the diversity and get planting.

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