

Benenden Magazine

November 2022



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Helen Grant

**MP for Maidstone
and the Weald**

I am here to help you in any way that I can. If there is an issue of concern to you, where you believe I can assist, or if you would like to arrange a meeting with me, please email me at helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk or telephone **020 7219 7107**.

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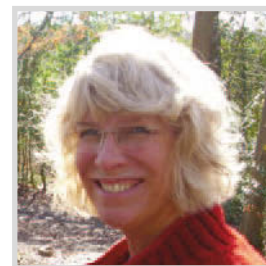
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Editorial



In this time of political and financial turmoil there is some comfort to be drawn from all the great activities happening in the village this month. Instead of a time of slowing down and hibernating, November starts with a literal bang with the return of our fabulous bonfire and firework display at Benenden School. Numbers are limited so I recommend you snap up fast-track discount tickets in advance, online or at the village shop (page 9). But, earlier that day, if you have an hour or two to spare, the tireless team who look after the churchyard would very much appreciate a hand clearing the final patch of wildflowers. Then everything will be ready to burst into bloom next year, attracting myriad bees and butterflies.

Other horticultural 'seeds' are being nurtured across the village: work is continuing on the wildflower meadow behind the primary school; plans for an allotment space on Walkhurst Road are underway; and a new gardening group is being launched (page 24). While these may seem relatively minor when contrasted with what's going on the wider world, I appreciate them much more deeply after talking with Olena about the challenges her and her family are facing due to the war in Ukraine (page 32). I can't even imagine what it would be like to have to pack a suitcase and leave my home within a few hours, not knowing what the future holds. Her sister, one of four Ukrainian girls welcomed by Benenden School, is so happy to be there - what an opportunity. While she was sad to have left her school and friends back home, her face lit up as she talked about her lessons and the facilities.

This was at the back of my mind as I toured the new concert hall (page 34). It is truly stunning and what I particularly applauded is that not only is the hall to be used by schools across the county, it is also hosting events for our community, too. Our very own 'not so mini' Glyndebourne!

Ruth Clark, Co-Editor

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

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Distribution: Marilyn and Dick Hill, Layout Editor: Camilla Macdonald

Contributions to: benendenparishmagazine@gmail.com by the 10th of the preceding month.

Advertising orders or queries to: advertising.benendenmag@gmail.com.

Distribution queries to: dd.rhill@btinternet.com.

Postal address: c/o Community Office, Benenden Village Hall, Benenden, TN17 4DY 01580 240371

Printed by The Wealden Advertiser Ltd, Cowdens Close, Hawkhurst, Kent

Village Calendar

November

Friday 4	Freddie Flintoff Concert, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 1.45pm	p.23
Saturday 5	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	p.13
Saturday 5	Benenden Bonfire and Fireworks, Benenden School, 5.30pm	p.9
Wednesday 9	Gardening Group, Memorial Hall, 7pm	p.24
Saturday 12	Cyril Moore Skittles Evening for the Poppy Appeal, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 15	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.9
Tuesday 15	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Winter Party, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.15
Friday 18	Tracy Claridge Memorial Tasting, Benenden School Café, 7pm	
Saturday 19	Conservative Supporters' Supper, The Bull, Benenden, 7.30pm	p.15
Saturday 19	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Club, 8.15pm	
Monday 21	Parish Council Meeting, Memorial Hall, 7pm	
Tuesday 22	Merry and Bright, Christmas table decorations and tea, Memorial Hall, 2pm	
Saturday 26	Quiz Night, St George's Club, 8.15pm	

Iden Green Toddler Group

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

Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-11.30am

Benenden Bowls Club

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

Cakes & Chaos: Cafe and Toddler Group

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

Parish Council



We are pleased to report that the transfer of the ownership of the allotment land in Walkhurst Road is near completion. For those of you who are not aware of the history of this land, it is a field of about one acre that was kindly bequeathed to Benenden Parish Council by Pat Thoburn, who lived at Pympe Manor nearly all her life and passed away peacefully in 2017, just short of her 91st birthday. Pat's bequest stipulated that the field should be owned by the parish council, and used only for allotments, so we have been busy researching the best way to deal with this in anticipation of the imminent land ownership.

It is very likely that we will need to create a Benenden allotment association, as only properly established associations set up as a community resource can apply for funding. The allotment association will require a governing document, and trustees or a management committee. If you would like to put your name forward to become part of the association, either registering your interest in a plot, offering to help, or both, then please do contact our clerk Caroline Levett and let her know. We would like to clarify, though, that registering interest and/or help does not guarantee a plot.

In other not so positive news, it is regrettable that following ongoing vandalism and anti-social behaviour at the public toilets, we have made the decision to close them until further notice. It is our view that the toilets are not a safe environment at present, and we need to make a difficult decision as to whether we should continue to maintain them, or whether the upkeep costs involved could be put to better use elsewhere in the parish.

We would be grateful to hear the opinion of residents on this matter, so please do email me or Caroline and let us know your thoughts.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair
nicolat@benendenparishcouncil.org

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

Parish Council Meeting
Monday 21 November 2022,
Memorial Hall, 7pm



Church Calendar

St George's Church

Rector: Revd David Commander 240658 revdavidcommander@gmail.com (day off: Thursday)
Curate: Revd Ylva Blid-Mackenzie 01233 820100 rev.ylva@gmail.com (Sunday, Monday and Tuesday)
Churchwarden: David Collard 241944 julia.collard@btinternet.com
Churchwarden: Sue Fisher 241907 sue@undaunted.co.uk
www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com
Please inform the Rector, Curate or Churchwardens if you, or anyone else, is ill.

Wednesday 2 November

7.30pm All Souls' Day Service

Saturday 5 November

4pm Connect Four
at Mission Church, Sandhurst
5pm Choral Evensong

Sunday 6 November

8am Communion

10am All-age
Communion

Friday 11 November

10.55am Act of Remembrance,
War Memorial

Sunday 13 November

8am BCP Communion

10.45am Remembrance Service
followed by an Act of Remembrance,
War Memorial

Sunday 20 November

8am Communion

10am Sung Eucharist

Sunday 27 November

8am Communion

10am Morning Worship 5pm Advent Service of Light

Morning Prayer

8am Mondays and Fridays

Mission Church, Sandhurst

Rector: Revd David Commander 240658 revdavidcommander@gmail.com (day off: Thursday)
Morning Prayer 8am Tuesdays and Wednesday
Mid-week Communion 10am Tuesdays

Iden Green Congregational Church

Pastor: Tobin Bird 240027 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

Masses

9am Sundays

7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Baptisms

8 October William Bilton

15 October Mylo and Max Iroegbu

Weddings

18 October Liane Truter and Nigel Marshall

29 October Igraine Scott and Ross Hukins

Funerals

19 October Adrian Betts Cremation Tunbridge Wells Crematorium

4

22 October John Martin Memorial Service

Church Letter



Back and busy, renewed and refreshed

Here I am, back from my sabbatical: my 'holy trek' in Scotland and the north of England. What a wonderful and rewarding time it was, full of amazing experiences. Things have been safe whilst I've been away thanks to the churchwardens and service cover provided by our ministry team of Revd Ylva, Revd Rosemary, David Harmsworth, Lyn Hayes and Vicki Young; plus other local clergy, including Revd Jack Bateson at the girls' school - whom I bumped into on Holy Island! - and our archdeacon, Ven. Andrew Sewell. Other colleagues helped with some of the weddings over the summer. Thank you to everyone for help; this meant that most things ran uninterrupted whilst I was away. (Except that part of the ceiling at St George's fell in the day after I left!)

My 'holy trek' involved about 350 miles of walking in beautiful scenery, a retreat at the abbey on Iona, and another on Lindisfarne. It also involved time spent in the beauty of nature on the Orkneys and in the Outer Hebrides. I visited some amazing and beautiful churches; went to some 'interesting' church services; visited some medieval and also 10th century chapels, ancient graveyards, and 5,000-year-old stone circles and dwellings.

I have seen the respect with which people of the past treated their dead. I have met some lovely people, from all over the world; I have met many Christians and also people of no faith; and have had some wonderful conversations. There have been many 'coincidences' with the people that I have met. Through the people, the worship, the walking, through nature and simply just slowing down, I have drawn closer to God. I am so grateful that I have been allowed to do this and experience this. Thank you. And I can honestly say it is good to be back; and I have enjoyed leading worship again in the parish. So, for better or for worse for you, and feeling refreshed, I am here to stay for a little longer.

Coming up in the next few days and weeks we have some special services. Wednesday 2 November is All Souls' Day and we have a service in the evening at St George's, where we can name, remember and light candles for loved ones. This starts at 7:30pm, with refreshments in church from 7pm. If you would like a name to be read out, please email Cathy at benendenchurch@gmail.com.

On Saturday 5 November, at 4pm, we have 'Connect Four', a family service with refreshments, Bible stories and activities for all the family. This is at the Mission Church in Sandhurst. We are aware that Sunday mornings are not great for families to come to church, so please come along and give this a try. And, of course, the following weekend we mark Remembrance on Sunday 13 November.

At the end of the month, we move into Advent, and have a carol service on Advent Sunday in St George's at 5pm on 28 November. It's good to be back and busy.

Revd David Commander, Rector



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Talking Point



Campaigning for a legal duty of care at universities

My daughter Phoebe, and her two brothers, Tom and Hamish, went to school locally, Dulwich and then Cranbrook School. They all went on to university, Phoebe to Newcastle to study Philosophy. I am sure you will all resonate with the mixture of excitement and trepidation that accompanies the preparation for heading off to uni. There are such high expectations yet many challenges and this process of flying the nest is a very vulnerable time. Phoebe found it extremely tough and lockdown happened before she had found her feet. There were other issues but, having reached out to 12 members of university staff, Phoebe lost all hope and took her life on 3 June 2021.

You would never think it could happen to you. It is every parent's worst nightmare. You want to ignore it because you think talking about it may instil ideas etc, but it needs to be out in the open and talked about because ultimately it is healthier.

Why am I writing this here you may ask? Students leaving home for the first time are an extremely vulnerable group. They must learn to be independent, have no set boundaries, make new friends, cope with study pressures and are often far away. We trust universities to support our children. Currently there is a legal obligation to ensure there is appropriate support in place (i.e. a legal duty of care) for those in school, the workplace (university staff included) and even prisons, yet there is nothing for our university students.

How could there be a legal duty of care at universities? Surely they cannot be expected to look after students when they are out. Valid questions. So, let's be clear on what we are asking for. Universities should owe a legal duty to exercise reasonable care and skill when teaching students and providing support services: have they missed lectures, are there problems with work, what help do they need and what specific support does that student need?

Why is this not legal already? I have no idea. Obviously, it's more work for the university and something they have not been obliged to do so far. Today the universities do not even record the number of those who have taken their life at their institutions. The result is that they are not learning why students take their lives and what could have been done to prevent it.

What do we need to do? To help our students, current and future, for always, we must act now and seek a change in the law. To do that we need it debated in parliament. Therefore, I am appealing to you to sign and share this petition (<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/622847>). A legal duty of care at universities would bring clarity for all students, staff and parents. There would be proper 'opt-in' programmes, information-sharing within the universities, learning from the past, the correct support services depending on needs. At Bristol, for example, they have adopted a policy where they can now phone parents - 96 were phoned last year. How many lives may have been saved by that? But it is not universal.

I do believe Phoebe would be here today if she had been given the right support at university and, of course, if they had phoned me. It's so hard to live with.

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Benenden Fireworks

We are nearly there. When: Saturday 5 November. Where: Benenden School main entrance, not the primary school.

There's no vehicular access and we know the roads will be busy for two hours. Parking is limited and not everyone thinks it's great, but the vast majority love this event and will be delighted to have it back this year. Primarily we want this to be a local event. Buy your tickets in advance and save money, either online (see the advert for details) or at the village shop.

Tickets have already started to fly and if needs be we will set an upper limit, so don't miss out. The more locals that go and walk to the event, the fewer cars on the road. No material is required for the bonfire and please don't bring personal sparklers/fireworks. We recommend you wear wellies.

The gate opens and entertainment starts at 5.30pm; bonfire at 6.30pm; the display at 7pm will be amazing; the barbecues will be roaring and there will be a bar, chilli, hot chocolate and mulled wine.

Sue Penny has been organising volunteers but needs more, so please help if you can (email sue_penny@btinternet.com). The kids can buy multi-use glow sticks, popcorn, and soft drinks. Surplus profit will be distributed to local youth causes/projects.

Grant Matthews

Chair, Benenden Bonfire Society

www.benendenfireworks.co.uk

Village lunch

The village lunch will take place on Tuesday 15 November in the village hall at 12.30pm. £5 each and all welcome. Please could you let me know if you would like to come by Thursday 10 November, so we can plan and shop, as well as cook.

Minnie Garnier 240506

A poster for the Benenden Bonfire & Fireworks event. The background is dark with a large, bright bonfire and fireworks exploding in the sky. The text is in various colors: yellow for the main title and date, white for the location, and red for the access information and parking notice. The event is on Saturday 5 November 2022 at Benenden School, main entrance, Cranbrook Road, Benenden, TN17 4ES. It is a pedestrian access only event, and there is no on-site parking. Tickets should be bought in advance from the website www.benendenfireworks.co.uk or Benenden's Community Shop. The event starts at 5.30pm with gates opening, 6.30pm for the bonfire, and 7pm for fireworks. No personal sparklers or fireworks are allowed.

**Benenden Bonfire
& Fireworks**
Saturday 5 November 2022

Benenden School
main entrance Cranbrook Road,
Benenden, TN17 4ES
PEDESTRIAN ACCESS ONLY
Sorry, there is no on site parking

Get your tickets in advance.
www.benendenfireworks.co.uk
or Benenden's Community Shop

No personal sparklers or fireworks.
Gates open 5.30pm Bonfire 6.30pm Fireworks 7pm

Arnold Cole Trust

The Arnold Cole Trust would like to invite applications for its annual disbursements from those clubs and societies within the parish of Benenden in need of funds. Dr Arnold Cole was GP in Benenden from 1930 until his death in 1960, after which his daughter, the late Joan Weston, set up the trust in 1968. The aim of the trust is to apply its income for the 'general benefit for the parish of Benenden with special consideration being given to both the elderly and young'.

All applications in writing please to:
The Secretary, Arnold Cole Trust, Scribbins,
Benenden, Kent TN17 4DT. Please note
applications must be received no later than
30 November.

Kent kindness

Kent Kindness is a local charity that offers support and hope to young asylum seekers and refugees who are living in Kent. We aim to give them classes in basic English along with general life skills and other educational, sporting and social opportunities. We are looking for new volunteers so if you can help, please email us contact@kentkindness.co.uk
Henrietta King

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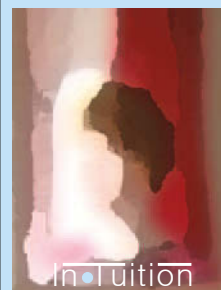
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Churchyard Working Party

We aim to make the working party on 5 November the last one of the year, when we can put the churchyard to bed for the winter. However, despite the sterling efforts of our band of volunteers (to whom I am extremely grateful), there is still a large area of the 'wildflower' area which remains to be dealt with. This entails strimming and then raking up.

I would therefore love to see some additional volunteers on this occasion so that we can do justice to this amenity, enjoyed by so many. If you can bring along a strimmer, that would be ideal, but there will be plenty of raking, for which we have a good supply of rakes. Stout shoes are advisable as the vegetation where we will be working hides both cracks in the ground caused by the drought and kerbstones around graves.

Refreshments provided. I hope to see you there.

Dick Hill 240517 dd.rhill@btinternet.com

Remembrance Events

On Friday 11 November the Benenden Branch of the Royal British Legion will, as usual, gather at the War Memorial at 10.55am to remember the Armistice that took effect exactly 104 years ago.

In addition to the senior pupils of the primary school we invite local residents to join this brief assembly.

On Sunday 13 November the annual Remembrance Sunday service will take place at St George's Church starting at 10.45am. Members of the Legion's Branch Committee, the Parish Council, Benenden Hospital and Benenden School's Combined Cadet Force will, after the service, lead the congregation to the War Memorial for the laying of wreaths. The Last Post and Reveille will be sounded as usual at the church and at the parish memorial.

If you wish, please gather in Walkhurst Road as soon as you can after the church service as the main road will not be closed. All those with service medals are invited to wear them for our special Acts of Remembrance.



THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION POPPY APPEAL

This year our volunteers will make a limited collection door-to-door. All donations are much appreciated.

We have once again also set up an online JustGiving site to facilitate donations.

To donate please go to:
www.justgiving.com/fundraising/jane-dalton-holmes5



Jane and Robin Dalton Holmes
Benenden Branch Royal British Legion

Poppy Appeal collection

We are arranging a limited house-to-house collection for the Poppy Appeal. From 29 October until 12 November, boxes will be placed at the community shop, Wards the butchers, Benenden Hospital, the St George's Club, the primary school, Benenden School, the Bull and the Woodcock Inn.

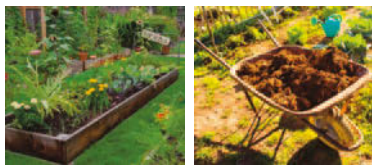
During the mornings of Saturday 5 and Saturday 12 November we shall establish a street collection with a wider range of poppy items and a limited allocation of the 2022 enamel badges outside the village shop.

Once again we have also set up an arrangement with JustGiving to facilitate donation to our village collection. This collection last year exceeded £5,000 for the valuable work of the Royal British Legion.

To use JustGiving please enter the full link below and you will also, if you wish, be able to claim for the additional gift aid contribution to augment your donation:

www.justgiving.com/fundraising/jane-dalton-holmes5

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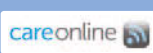


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p.a.leek@btinternet.com



Volunteer Transport Group

The Volunteer Transport Group is now up and running and ready to use. If you have a medical appointment that you are unable to get to because you do not have access to a vehicle and public transport is not a viable option, contact me and I will see if one of our volunteer drivers can assist you.

We are still looking for volunteers to assist with this group, so if you feel able to take on the occasional journey to help out, please get in touch.

Mick Moore 240755
m.moore131156@gmail.com

Iden Green and Benenden WI

The Red Lion at Brede was the place to be on 12 October when a happy party of ladies from our WI arrived. The lunch was most enjoyable as the staff were very caring and kindly gave our ladies free crumble and custard, as there was a glut of apples in the pub garden. All plates were quickly emptied and we look forward to visiting again.

Delia Taylor once again gave an excellent talk at our October meeting, this time about ENSA. She explained how, as part of the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (NAAFI), the Entertainment National Service Association was started at the beginning of World War II at the Drury Lane Theatre. Many famous names joined the troupe and they have performed over two and a half million times, serving in uniform throughout the war, both at home and abroad.

Thanks to the generosity of members, we were able to contribute £30 from a Bring and Buy stall towards the funds needed to repair the village pumps. We are all looking forward to our winter party on 15 November, when once again we shall meet in the Memorial Hall. Members are invited to contribute a dish of their choice and we are hoping to arrange some light entertainment.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

Benenden Branch of the Maidstone & The Weald Conservative Association

Members and local Conservative
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at **The Bull** in Benenden
on **Saturday 19 November** on **7.30pm**

Special Guests
Iain Dale
and
Helen Grant MP

If you would be interested in attending
please contact:
Sally-Ann Marks 243141
sallymarks100@hotmail.com

Conservative Association

You are warmly invited to attend a supper at The Bull, Benenden, on Saturday 19 November at 7.30pm where our principal speaker will be Iain Dale, political journalist, author and broadcaster with LBC Radio.

Our MP Helen Grant has also agreed to join us and both should be able to update us on the new political regime in parliament. We always welcome new members and on this occasion we open the event to anyone who is interested and would like to attend. Iain Dale is a well-respected, balanced and forthright journalist and author; in these 'interesting times' it will be fascinating to hear his views.

Tickets for the supper cost £35 which will cover expenses as this is not a fundraising event, however there will be an optional raffle.

For more information and to apply for tickets please email sallymarks100@hotmail.com or phone 243141.

Robin Dalton Holmes, Branch Secretary

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Benenden Players

We have a fabulous line up of festive fun and frolics with music and sketches in the Christmas Crackers revue on 16 December in the village hall. Tickets are now on sale online (see page 11) and you can book a table of eight or individual seats. Please bring nibbles if you wish but not drink, as there will be a well-stocked bar and funds raised go to a worthy cause. Come along and join in the singing - it's the perfect occasion to get into the Christmas spirit.

We are very excited that we will be performing the stage version of 'Allo 'Allo, written by Jeremy Lloyd and David Croft, in the village hall in January next year. Performance dates will be Friday 27 and Saturday 28 January at 7.30pm, and a matinee performance on Sunday 29 January at 2.30pm. All performances will include food and the audience will become part of the action as they sit around tables in René's café. If you fancy an evening or afternoon of light entertainment, put the dates in your diaries now. Tickets go on sale at the end of November.

Ruth Clark www.benendenplayers.co.uk

Christmas lunch for those on their own

Don't be alone on Christmas Day. Please come along to the Memorial Hall for a lovely festive lunch. It will be free, although donations will be welcome, and transport will be provided if you need a lift. Offers of help to cook, drive and clear up would be much appreciated. Please call or email me if you would like to come or can help, so we can plan.

Chris Parkinson 388402
cfcgparkinson@gmail.com

Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

Our autumn produce sale was a fantastic success. From juicy homegrown tomatoes, green pumpkins, hot chilli peppers, sizable marrows and beautiful flower displays, to an abundance of apples and pears, we turned the school into a bustling farmers' market and, despite a downpouring of rain, parents and the local community came to support and we raised £230.

The children enjoyed the freshly made apple and blackberry smoothies to drink on their way home and we hope that many families were able to cook delicious fresh food with their purchases. A huge thank you to the local community, parents and to the Cranbrook Farm Shop for donating a selection of fresh produce.

The fun continued throughout the week, with Reception and Year 1 children learning how to make their own freshly squeezed apple juice using a hand-crank apple press and blender, while others used the leftover vegetables to make a tasty soup.

This month, the PTFA will be hosting a recycling school supply and uniform event in our efforts to reduce wastage and support the school community. Contributions from the public are always appreciated and if you would like to help us in our fundraising efforts please do get in touch.

The Benenden Christmas Market will take place this year on Saturday 10 December from 1-4pm at the Primary School. If you are interested in a stall or volunteering please contact benendenfundraiser@gmail.com

For more information on how you can support or become involved in the PTFA, visit our website via the QR code or at www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk/PTFA/

Rachel Tinker, Benenden CEP, PTFA Chair



Bell ringing

We have been astonished and humbled by the extraordinary number of emails of support and appreciation for the bells that we have received in response to our article in the October edition of this magazine. It says much, that so many parish residents find time from their busy lives to send these messages. We now have all the written evidence of strong community support to see off any future attempt to silence them. Thank you all ever so much.

There is, of course, an even more important way to support the ringing of these magnificent and historic bells. They do not ring themselves, and sound only because for the past 300 years, people of Benenden have come forward to be trained in this unique national musical craft, thus maintaining a local band of ringers, when so many other towers have fallen silent.

In a typical year, we reckon to lose two or three ringers by natural wastage - moving away, or ceasing to ring for medical, professional, family or other reasons. So, we need constantly to recruit and train to maintain an active band. The answer to "do you need another ringer" is always 'yes, please'!

If it isn't for you, maybe you know someone, any age from school to pensioner, who might be up for a new challenge in serving this community. Call us on 240083, email rodericklebon@hotmail.com, or just come up and join us any Wednesday evening or Sunday before the service.

Congratulations to Dolly Bellman on passing her handling test and being elected to junior membership of the Kent County Association of Change Ringers (Ashford District) on 15 October at Appledore. Half the band are now under 18, and we hope to keep it that way.

Rod Lebon

Benenden School

We are delighted to have formally opened our new Centenary Buildings - comprising the Centenary Hall and the Sir David K.P. Li Music School - in a packed day that concluded with an exceptional performance by the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Parents, patrons, alumnae and members of the Benenden community were invited to the school to enjoy a busy afternoon of tours, speeches and performances before an awe-inspiring concert by the London-based orchestra. Opening with a triumphant rendition of Mozart's Overture to The Marriage of Figaro, they were led by soloist and virtuoso Jennifer Pike in an exquisite performance of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto. They returned after a short interval with Strum by Jessie Montgomery and closed with Beethoven's Symphony No. 7.

The orchestra was the perfect test of the Centenary Hall's adaptability and its capacity to facilitate even the most intense musical performances, and it was clear from the audience's positive response that the venue was quite impressive enough to host one of the nation's leading concert orchestras.

Thank you to everyone who gave so generously to The John Wallis Church of England Academy winter support appeal, for which we raised £1,370 to help the school open over the weekends and Christmas break to provide a hot meal and warm space as cost of living prices soar.

Benenden is looking forward to future events, both for the school and the wider community. This time next year we will be celebrating our centenary and these facilities are a fitting addition to lead the school into its second century.

We are delighted to be welcoming two professional touring companies next month: Chapterhouse's A Christmas Carol on 2-3 December and the Len Phillips Swing Orchestra on 10-11 December. Full details and booking at www.Benenden.school/events
Samantha Price, Headmistress

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Benenden School

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Christmas*

Saturday 10 December



*A Swingin'
Christmas*

Sunday 11 December



Centenary Hall,
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Talking Shop

Do you remember? Last year we managed a carol singing social evening but, due to Covid restrictions, it was outside the shop and, I seem to recall, on a bit of a chilly evening. It certainly brought the roses to our cheeks but we made the most of it and it was good fun.

We're not offering quite the same experience this year. Our volunteers' carol singing will be back to normal, held in the shop from 6pm on 2 December and accompanied by mulled wine, sausage rolls, mince pies and lots of socialising. We hope this will be a fitting way to celebrate with people who have generously helped to keep Benenden's going throughout the year. Please do come along and meet lots of like-minded people in a lovely, friendly atmosphere. We are so very grateful for your commitment and help in keeping our shop going, especially through some difficult times.

If you are considering volunteering in the shop, please do come forward. It certainly is a case of the more the merrier, especially if you can commit to one two-hour slot a week. Training can be given on the job and our managers and regular volunteers are very good at explaining how it all works and very patient when it goes wrong! It really is good fun and we are blessed with having very pleasant and appreciative customers. If you are new to the village, there isn't a better way of getting to know people. You just need to pop in and register and then sign up for a slot to try it out. You might be surprised at just how many doors it opens for you.

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

Primary School

We have reached the end of another busy term and it has been fantastic to see the children really getting back into their stride with their learning. During September, we enjoyed celebrating European Day of Languages. The children were encouraged to wear the colours of the Spanish flag and they looked amazing. The whole school assembled in the hall for a presentation about the importance of learning languages. We learnt greetings in different languages; talked about Spain, the country, food and traditions; and we explored flamenco before being treated to a master class with Mrs Vidal-King, our native Spanish teacher, who dressed with all the trimmings.

Forest School is back up and running and I think it is fair to say that the children are very excited to be going back to the woods again. Already they have been treated to judo and quidditch taster sessions. All clubs are now up and running and instrumental lessons have also resumed.

What a wonderful time we all had at the Rawlinson Run at the end of September. A team of children from years 2, 3 and 4 competed against 12 other schools in cross-country at Dulwich Prep School. A special mention goes to Issy Morgan, who achieved a fantastic fourth place in her race. We were very proud to be awarded the sportsmanship award.

Finally, if you have a child starting school in September 2023 and would like to take a tour on 11, 21 or 30 November, please call or email us to book an appointment.

Lindsay Roberts, Executive Headteacher
240565 office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk
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Benenden Pre-School

The children have been making apple crumble, using fruit brought in by some of our lovely parents from their gardens. They are practising using one-handed tools when using a knife to chop the apples, and learning how to measure and mix for the topping. We have also been enjoying local pears for our morning snack.

This month we are reinstating our autumn walk around the village with parents joining the children and staff. We will be collecting colourful leaves, conkers and other autumnal treasures to use in activities at school, such as painting, counting and making conker necklaces. At halfway, we will have a story and an activity on the Glebe Field, and a tasty snack baked by the children.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor
supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

Free lunchtime concert

For those regular attendees of Friends of St George's Music Scholars' concerts over the years, you will no doubt remember Freddie Flintoff. For newcomers to the village, we are talking violins not cricket! Freddie first played for us as a very small girl when she started at Benenden School and wowed audiences with her energy and talent. She went on to become head girl and is now in her fourth year reading geography at Manchester University.

Along the way, as well as FOSG concerts, Freddie played with the Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra, the National Youth Orchestra and even a solo performance at one of our own harvest lunches.

Freddie is coming back to Benenden's Centenary Hall on Friday 4 November at 1.45pm, playing Nigun from Baal Schem by Ernest Bloch, Violin Sonata No.2 in G Major Op.13 by Edvard Grieg and Bha là eile ann by Donald Grant. Benenden School have kindly extended a free invitation to attend. I hope to see as many of you there as possible.

Jo Clube

Music Scholars' concert

I'm sure all of you that attended last month's music scholar's concert in Benenden School's amazing Centenary Hall will join me in expressing our sincere thanks to the scholars, their teachers and the school. This year there were two concerts, with the younger girls playing at lunchtime and the older girls in the evening. For many of us it was the first time we had seen the wonderful new concert facilities.

At lunchtime we heard some beautiful pieces on piano, flute, violin and cello with some of the girls, amazingly, playing entirely from memory. We finished with a wonderful duet, The Two Imps by Kenneth Alford, played by sisters Melanie and Nicole on the marimba, a fun and uplifting piece. All the girls played so well it was truly inspiring, the depth of talent tells me we have much to look forward to at future concerts.

In the evening Benenden residents and members of the Friends of St George's turned out in force and were treated to some wonderful performances on Benenden's concert piano, violin, double bass, oboe, trombone and clarinet. The talent of the girls was exceptional, Chopin was obviously a favourite with two nocturnes and a waltz intermingled with pieces by Debussy, Faure, Monti, Colin, Mozart and Ravel. The finale was a fast moving and exhilarating performance of the first movement of Malcolm Arnold's Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano by Malcolm Arnold, played by clarinettist Lucy and accompanied by Anne Marshall.

A retiring collection in aid of Friends of St George's raised £445, which will go towards the ongoing maintenance of our historic church buildings to support their use as a facility for all members of our village and wider rural community, now and for future generations.

Jo Clube

New gardening group

Further to a previous message in this magazine to keen gardeners, we confirm that we will hold an initial meeting to discuss setting up a gardening group here in Benenden. It will be held at 7pm on Wednesday 9 November in the Memorial Hall.

Please do come if you are interested to find out what we might be able to do/achieve. We have received quite a few emails from people who are keen to know more and we will contact them individually. Meanwhile, please let us know if you wish to come to this first meeting so that I can arrange teas and coffees - or maybe a glass of wine.

Sally Ann and Ron Marks 243141
sallymarks100@hotmail.com
ronmarks1946@gmail.com

Village Hall

We are still looking for a fresh face to join our small team, so is this the perfect part-time job for you? Benenden Village Trust is looking for a part-time caretaker to help with the smooth running of the hall. The successful applicant will be self-motivated, dependable and trustworthy with good communication skills. You would need to be flexible to support the varying day-to-day use of the hall, with some relatively short visits, including weekends and evenings as necessary.

Working with the manager and the cleaner, responsibilities include, but are not limited to, ensuring that the hall is clean and fully operational; liaising with hirers; opening and closing the hall for non-regular hirers; and monitoring the security of the building. The salary is £12.36/hour plus contributory pension scheme for an average seven hours a week.

For more information please contact:
Holly Clayson, Manager 07419 989830
enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org
www.benendenvillagehall.org

Benenden Hospital

As we move into November, I instantly think of 'Movember' and the amazing work this movement does to raise awareness of men's mental and physical health. Sadly, there are significant challenges within male health; testicular cancer is the most common cancer among young men, men die an average of five years earlier than women and one man dies by suicide every minute.

At Benenden Hospital we know how important it is for men to speak up. Gary and Nigel both had urology problems which they sought help for from their GP before being referred to our hospital for treatment.

Gary says: "My advice to any men who are struggling with urology problems would be, don't hide your symptoms. You should go straight to your GP and don't suffer because there's always help available."

Nigel advises: "Don't wait as long as me. It's something which is worrying as you get older, you worry about cancer, you have PSA tests and they come back and look reasonably okay but it's not satisfactory. It's like many things - the sooner it's dealt with the better."

Prostate and testicular cancer is far easier to treat in the early stages, so it's essential to get checked on a regular basis to ensure that any changes are picked up promptly. Sometimes these symptoms relate to other conditions that affect the male reproductive organs but if you are experiencing symptoms which could indicate prostate cancer or any unusual changes in the way your testicles look or feel, I urge you to book a GP appointment.

I hope we can all work together to support male health and wellbeing during this month and beyond.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

Planning Matters

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

- 22/02567/FULL Great Nineveh Farm, The Oast, Nineveh Lane. Conversion of redundant barn to create one new dwelling with associated detached garage, terracing and swimming pool, associated change of use of land including landscape and biodiversity enhancement.
- 22/02931/FULL Stable Cottage, Nineveh Lane. Conversion of former stable building for purposes incidental to the main dwelling. Reinstatement of historic mansard roof.
- 22/02853/FULL Frame Farm, Iden Green Road. Proposal to erect a retractable swimming pool enclosure over an existing swimming pool.
- 22/02963/FULL The Bothy, The Street. Erection of two storey extension to existing bungalow with internal alterations and dormer windows; erection of loft conversion into dormer with windows; alteration of existing barn to games room and artist's studio with new fenestration.

More planning matters at:

benendenparishcouncil.org

St George's Harvest Lunch

After a well-attended and uplifting harvest festival service at St George's on Sunday 2 October, we all settled down to our first harvest lunch in three years. It was a delight to see so many people sitting down to savour the delicious food which had been kindly provided by members of our local community. The generous donations given at the lunch raised just over £400, which will be given to WaterAid.

A huge thank you to everyone who attended and to those who contributed their time, effort and cooking expertise to making this such a successful, warm and fun event. A further thank you also for the beautiful harvest arrangement which greeted us all as we approached the church through the lych gate.

Cathy Presgrave

Benenden Village Trust

A beautiful painting of landmark Benenden buildings has been presented to the village hall by the Arts Society High Weald in celebration of its 25th anniversary as a society meeting in the hall every month. The painting, specially commissioned from artist Zillah Richards, was accepted on behalf of the hall by Martin Dickson, chair of the Benenden Village Trust, which runs the hall and other recreational facilities in the village. The Benenden buildings shown in the painting (see back cover) include St George's church, the Bull, St George's Hall - also owned by BVT - and the old village primary school. It will be hung in the hall's small meeting room.

The hall was packed as society members celebrated their anniversary after first listening to a fascinating lecture from cultural historian Gavin Plumley on the fin de siècle Viennese painter Gustav Klimt. Jane Sawyer, the founding chair, told the meeting about the society's creation in 1997 and early days. Jacqueline Schalburg, the current chair, oversaw proceedings and the presentation.

The painting embodies a quarter of a century of partnership between the village hall and the society, one of the hall's longest and most significant regular users. The anniversary shows the vitality of the society, also demonstrated by its impressive lecture series, charity work and visits and tours - including as far away as the Central Asian Silk Road.

Martin Dickson, BVT Trustee

Benenden's

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Walk for Anna

We made it! About 112 miles were covered, mostly in sunshine, raising well over £11,000 for Mind in memory of our daughter, Anna. A huge thank you to everyone who contributed so generously. Friends and family joined us for several days, walking between Winchester and Eastbourne. All wore bright blue Mind t-shirts. Some were school friends or work colleagues of hers. We met interesting people en route (including a couple from Saskatchewan who love walking in the UK and Sally Gunnell, who was getting fit to climb Kilimanjaro).

It is the most beautiful National Trail, going over the rolling countryside of the Downs, with relatively easy walking conditions. Winchester Cathedral is an inspirational place to start. Getting up each morning just to walk is absolutely wonderful for both the mind and body. We miss it. And we now feel 150 years young (but still, sadly, aged 73 and 77).

Again, thank you for all the support. It has been much appreciated. The JustGiving site is still open for last minute donations:
www.justgiving.com/fundraising/anna-sargent10
Margaret Sargent 850311

The Oak Barn celebrates

We can't believe it's been almost four years since we opened our doors in 2019 and we are thrilled to announce that we have just celebrated our 100th wedding at The Oak Barn, Frame Farm. Our first wedding on 2 February 2019 was a stunning, snowy day and since then there has been one joy-filled celebration after another leading up to the 100th couple, Max and Lynsey.

For every couple who marries at the farm, as well as for all other events hosted at the farm, we plant a local, native tree but, to mark this special occasion, we asked Max and Lynsey to plant their tree and we celebrated with local sparkling wine (see back cover).

Deana and Tim Maw 441571
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Benenden Cricket Club

The last 'game' of 2022 saw us preparing for winter, getting the pitch ready for its long break. The Green was mown for once and looked fit for cricket on a glorious day. We opened up with Peter Newman seeding from the Memorial Hall end, and Richard Gairdner, ably assisted by daughter Gemima, from the Bull end.

James Glean and Barry Bassett put in steady spells with mats and rakes, accompanied by 'BB' Beatbox Barry's varied playlist, from Spice Girls to gangsta rap, which had some of the more sensitive souls blushing. The lesser-spotted Gareth Thompson and Tom Newman rapidly dismissed the loam with shovelled shots all around the wicket. Perhaps using them instead of bats could transform their scoring? We hope Peter Newman's line and length with the fertiliser spreader has improved, or the 'Tiger Stripe Newman' moniker may resurface from 30 years ago.

All was overseen by a somewhat presidential Les Aldous, but we let him off, being tired from long spells of both mowing and scarifying from both ends in recent weeks. The treasurer arrived by bicycle to inspect works and seemed somewhat crestfallen at no post-match drinks at the Bull. Splendid contributions from all, but man of the match must go to Les for all his graft and organisation.

Peter Newman



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Our village defibrillators: life-saving technology

In Benenden we are lucky enough to have two defibrillators, also called automated external defibrillators or AEDs. One is situated on Wheelwrights House on the west side of the Green and the other is about to relocate to the Congregational Church porch from the phone box on Iden Green Road. Volunteers maintain the AEDs and the parish council pays for the consumables. Boxes do not charge the device, they keep it warm in winter and cooler in summer so it is 'rescue ready'. Neither box is locked.

We are planning to place another AED in a locked box at Cranden Diamonds. The ambulance service will have the code and we will make it widely known to people living and working nearby.

What does a defibrillator do?

A defibrillator is used to shock the heart back into a normal electrical rhythm, restoring a normal heartbeat. It does not restart the heart.

Who should it be used for?

AEDs are used for people who are in cardiac arrest when the heart stops beating effectively. It is not used in heart attacks, when the person is clearly alive and usually suffering chest pain, nor is it appropriate to use it for people who are expected to die because of a long-term illness.

Why can't we wait for an ambulance?

Of the 30,000 or so cardiac arrests in the community in the UK each year, only 10% survive. Survival is increased dramatically by providing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), as described in last month's magazine, and by the use of an AED within three to five minutes.

In Cranbrook and Benenden only 35% of category one, life-threatening, calls, are attended by trained personnel within eight minutes.

Can I harm someone with an AED?

No. AEDs are automated and will not shock someone unless it can read what is called a 'shockable rhythm'.

Do I need to be trained?

No, the device talks you through it. I would however recommend you watch the St John Ambulance video on YouTube or attend one of the training sessions at Benenden Hospital.

A quick guide to using an AED and CPR

To use a defibrillator, follow these simple steps:

- 1 If the casualty is not breathing and appears unconscious, they are probably in cardiac arrest. If you are alone, phone the ambulance first, they will provide instructions and send help. Otherwise get someone to call for you and send someone to get an AED.
- 2 Start CPR.
- 3 Turn the defibrillator on by pressing the green button and follow its instructions.
- 4 Peel off the sticky pads and attach them to the patient's skin, one on each side of the chest, as shown in the picture on the defibrillator. Ensure the person's chest is dry and, if they are hairy, use the razor in the defibrillator pack to quickly shave the areas the pads are attached to. Try to keep doing CPR while this is happening.
- 5 Once the pads have been attached, stop CPR and don't touch the patient. The defibrillator will then check the patient's heart rhythm.
- 6 The defibrillator will decide whether a shock is needed and, if so, it will tell you to press the shock button. A fully automatic defibrillator will shock the patient without you pressing the button. Don't touch the patient, or allow others to, while they are being shocked (the AED will tell you this).
- 7 The defibrillator will tell you when the shock has been delivered and whether you need to continue CPR.
- 8 Continue with CPR until the patient shows signs of life or the defibrillator tells you to stop so it can analyse the heart rhythm again. Start CPR again as soon as the machine says you should.

How can I help?

We need to raise about £700 more towards the new AED and box. If you wish to donate, please contact me or drop it into me at Wheelwright's House. Cheques payable to Benenden Players.

Peter Ellis 07860 941139



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Dancing through life with a spring in her step

Jean Chapman recently celebrated her 90th birthday, so it was a good opportunity to talk with her, not only about her years in Benenden but also about her extraordinary life as part of the Keep Fit

Association (KFA) movement since 1952. Jean started life on a farm in Micheldever, Hampshire in 1932 but the war meant the family moved a great deal which led to Jean attending nine different schools. "I discovered dancing at 11 and absolutely loved it," she says, "but my father didn't think that would be a good career so I studied PE at St Katharine's College in London, where, fortunately, dance was a strong part of the course.

When she qualified as a PE teacher (her mother, grandmother and great grandmother had all been teachers), Jean became involved with the KFA, which incorporated dance into fitness classes. These wonderful classes were (and still are) extremely popular nationwide because they provide a fun full-body workout for people of all ages.



Wells. Not surprisingly it wasn't long before she started running fitness classes, first in Iden Green, followed by regular weekly sessions in Cranbrook, Goudhurst and Horsmonden.

The family quickly became involved with many aspects of village life. Jean managed the fete book

stall for 18 years and was a founding member of the Benenden Players, which started in 1981.

Jean's energy is truly inspiring: "I'm lucky that dance has kept me fit over the years." She still runs, twice weekly, 'Dance and Exercise for Seniors' classes in Benenden Village Hall (on Monday and Thursday mornings), where many of her 'students' have been with her for over 40 years. For more information, please contact Jean on 240232.

Ruth Clark

at Wembley Stadium in 1963.

Jean has been part of the KFA movement ever since, taking a demonstration team from Cranbrook Adult Education Centre to many venues in Kent. "Every year we had a new fitness outfit," says Jean. She also took a demonstration team from Sussex, several times, to perform at the annual National Festival in the Royal Albert Hall to celebrate the versatility of the dance discipline.

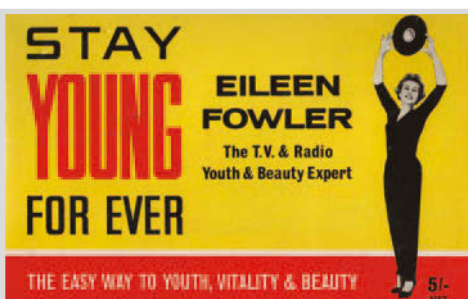
Jean met Roy while she was at college and they married in 1958, moving with their three children, Christopher, Liz and David, to Benenden in 1976 when Roy, an electrical engineer, relocated to Tunbridge



Jean choreographed many Benenden Players' dances

It was through the KFA that Jean met 1950s fitness advocate Eileen Fowler. Eileen had been running fitness classes since 1934, followed by daily

classes on BBC Radio in the '50s. When invited to conduct sessions over ten weeks on TV, Eileen invited Jean to be part of the team. "It was hard work, but great fun," recalls Jean, who was also in Eileen's team when they demonstrated at the Festival of Movement



A family's journey from the horror of war to peaceful Benenden

Like many I've spent months reading about the war in Ukraine, the politics, the ebbs and flows and the impact on the daily lives of families living there. Britain, along with many countries around the world, responded to the call for help and shelter and gradually Ukrainians - mostly women and children - have arrived to stay with kind sponsor hosts in the towns and village around us.

Recently I had the opportunity to speak to someone who has experienced the trauma of having to leave their home in Ukraine at short notice. Quite by chance in the café recently, I met a cheerful Olena Kravchenko, who was celebrating her move that day into a flat in Benenden with a coffee and croissant. We got talking and she happily agreed for me to tell her story here, and that of her three-year old son Matty, mother Maria and 15-year-old sister Alisa, who travelled to the UK with her and, of course, her father and brother back in Ukraine.

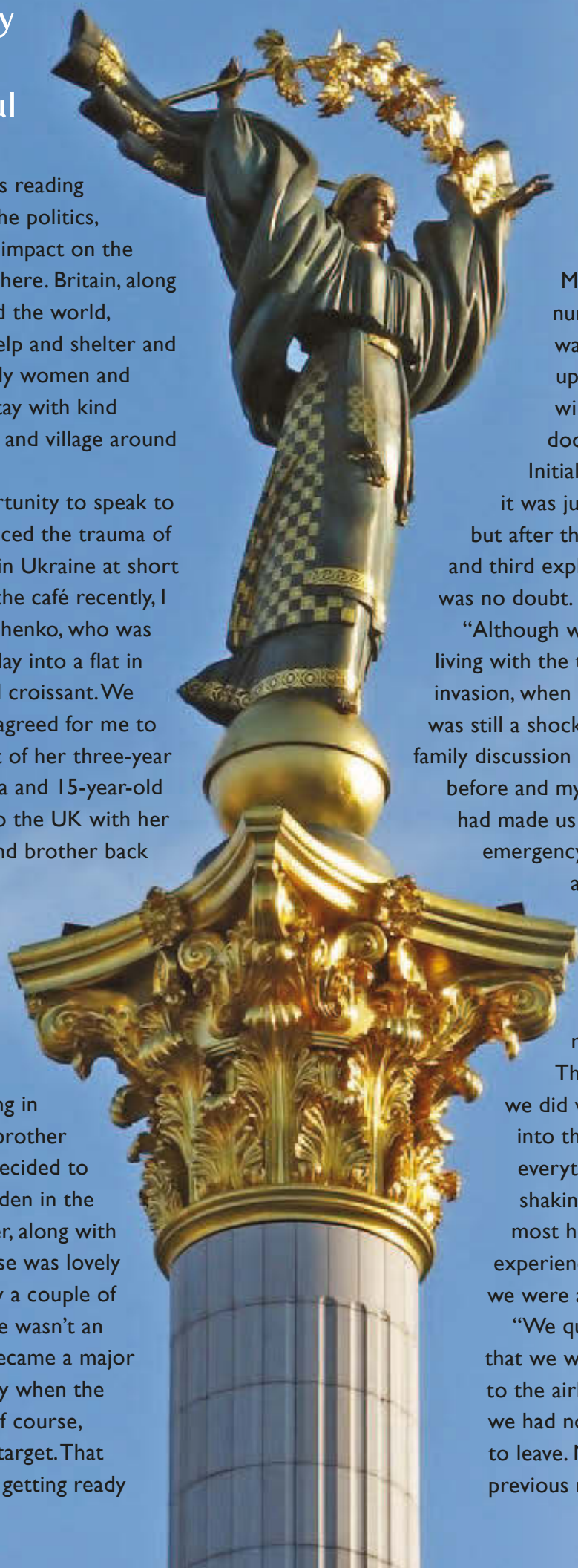
Her story starts when Covid descended and the world tilted on its axis in 2020. Olena had just given birth to Matty and was on maternity leave from her marketing research job, living in a flat close to her parents, brother and sister in Kyiv. They all decided to move to a house with a garden in the country and isolate together, along with her grandmother. "The house was lovely and the fact that it was only a couple of miles from a military airbase wasn't an issue," says Olena. "But it became a major issue at 5am on 24 February when the bombs started to fall and, of course, the air base was a primary target. That morning I would have been getting ready

for work and taking Matty to nursery but was woken up by the windows and doors rattling. Initially I thought it was just thunder, but after the second and third explosion there was no doubt.

"Although we had been living with the threat of invasion, when it came it was still a shock. We'd had a family discussion some weeks before and my mother had made us all pack an emergency suitcase and kept the car filled up just in case we had to move quickly.

The first thing we did was all move into the cellar, but everything was shaking. It was the most horrifying experience of my life - we were all terrified.

"We quickly decided that we were too close to the airbase and that we had no choice but to leave. My father had previous military





In Benenden, Olena with Matty,
her mother and sister, Alisa

experience so he immediately volunteered. My brother works in IT and, thank goodness, his company had been prepared and had booked a holiday complex near the Polish border for its workers and their families in case of invasion. We spent the next two months there in one room. It was safe but it was cold, with no kitchen or washing facilities. This was a very difficult time - we felt like zombies and it was hard to think about the future and our choices while worrying about those back home.

"Gradually we started to research our options. My brother returned home but, as we speak English, coming to the UK seemed to be the best and safest option for my son, sister and mother, particularly so that Alisa could continue her education. That was our primary goal. She's clever and had already had a lot of disruption during Covid, and things are very uncertain in Ukraine as you can imagine. I contacted a friend who lives in England, who, through her English wife, linked us with the lovely Simpson family in Sissinghurst who wanted to provide

accommodation. They were amazing and helped us with all the relevant visas and documents. The four months we stayed with them enabled me to find work and, as a result, independence and stability."

Through the host family, Alisa was introduced to Benenden School and she is one of four Ukrainian girls who have been given a free place to study there. Asked to describe the school, Alisa said: "It's a safe place after this stress. Everyone is happy and always smiling."

Olena, who speaks five languages, was recruited by the UK office of the company she worked for in Ukraine. "I can work from home which is great," she smiles. Matty attends The Learning Tree nursery in Sissinghurst and is at an age where he is quickly picking up English. "He had some issues to begin with, but he loves it now and the staff there are brilliant." Olena's mother Maria is a doctor and is hoping to return home soon.

"The whole experience has been dreadful, but the British people are so kind and have been so welcoming and helpful. I do feel that I am one of the lucky ones", says Olena.



In Ukraine, Olena with her mother,
father, brother and sister, Alisa

As we finish talking, a door slams shut in the café and Olena jumps, visibly shaken. She apologises: "We never used to be scared of thunder or loud noises but we are now."

Ruth Clark

Independence Monument, Kyiv
Sunflowers - the national flower of Ukraine



Astonishing! A ‘vital community asset’ lands on our doorstep

Peter Thomas at the unveiling of world-class music facilities at Benenden School

About halfway through our guided tour of the new Centenary Buildings, I noticed a strange thing. One of our number, a sane and level-headed chap, not easily moved to hyperbole, had begun to walk wide-eyed and with his jaw sitting at least two inches below its normal resting place.

At every turn, the open-mouthed incredulity seemed to grow and he began to mutter. “Astonishing,” he said, several times. “Absolutely astonishing.” I asked him if he was alright. “Astonishing,” he replied, which I took to mean yes, although I’d not seen him like this before.

Of course, we’d all expected something pretty special of a project that had been seven years in the making and had had an undisclosed (for which read stratospheric) amount of cash

thrown at it by way of donations and “careful borrowing”, but as our astonished man confirmed, this was some way beyond special.

Many of us - the village’s dog walkers in particular - had watched the Centenary Hall and



the Sir David K.P. Li Music School emerging slowly but dramatically from the earth. In the midst of winter, with the site puddled and wind-blown, we’d wondered if it would all be worth the wait once the Portakabins had gone; and now, in the company of the Mayor of Tunbridge Wells and his big ceremonial chain, we three,

the humble contingent of invitees from the Benenden Magazine, were about to find out.

As we walked and talked with the school's director of music, Edward Whiting, we learned the nitty gritty. The main hall seats up to 800 people, who can, as part of their visit, pass through five pivot doors, which each weigh 650kg but, rather handily, can be rotated with just one finger. Its 'diagrid' roof houses 870 metres of timber beams, not to mention the 1,500 metres of gold aluminium fins that adorn the building. If you have the time, you'll be able to count 35,000 bricks and brick slips, but if you do, you'll be missing the bigger picture.

Yes, the facts and figures are impressive, but it's the grandeur and the sheer scale of the concert hall (leaving aside the impressive 23 practice and rehearsal rooms of the music school) that take the breath away, even without an orchestra to stir the senses. I'm sure that when the crowd are ensconced (on rows of seats that retract magically into the walls) and the music is being massaged by the exquisite birch and maple acoustic panels that line the walls, the place will come into its element, but empty and still, it has the feel of a welcoming cathedral of warm wood, ingenuity and excellence.

What, you may well ask, has all this got to do with the village at large? Well, the commitment

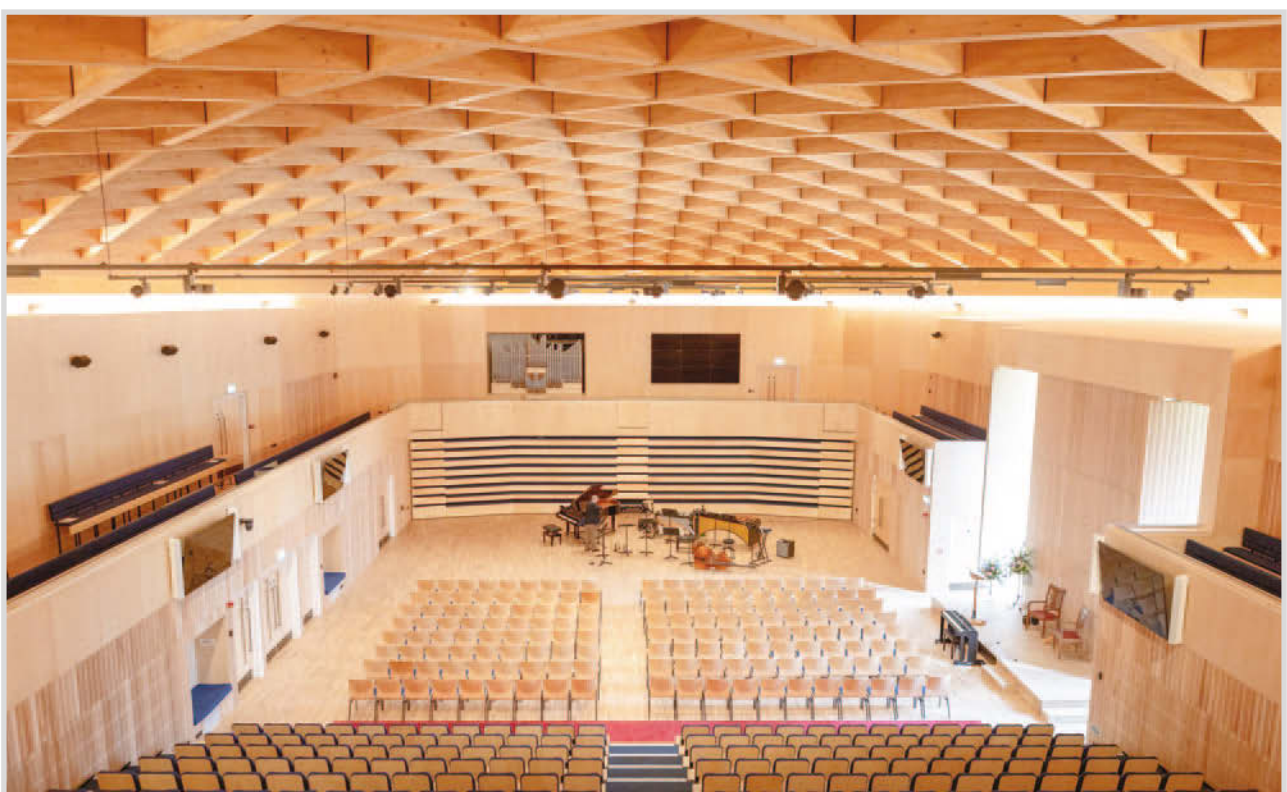
from headmistress Sam Price is that these grand new buildings will become far more than just an add-on to the school's music department. She sees them as an investment in music, for



children, for wellbeing, to destress and improve achievement, to be shared with the state sector and the local community, who have already had the chance to attend a free concert shortly after the opening and will surely embrace many more opportunities to soak up the benefits of a world-class auditorium.

"I want hundreds and hundreds of young people across Kent to be using these facilities," she added, outlining a vision beyond curriculum, adding that the project will represent a "vital community asset for schools struggling with music provision". Who could fail to be impressed by such a bright prospect?

As our awestruck friend said: "Astonishing. Absolutely astonishing."



In Your Garden

It may be hard work, but relax into autumn

With a truly visceral feel of autumn in the air, a book published back in 2001 and written by Dan Pearson is one that I reach to as my companion as I start to shift my focus from the mayhem of summer to the (relatively) slower pace of the new season and into winter.

'The Garden: A Year at Home Farm' was written in response to a four-acre site in Northamptonshire that he and the garden's owner brought back from the brink. I have long admired how Pearson gardens and this is transposed to the way he writes.

While we know him most recently for realising the dreams of Vita Sackville-West to build Delos, a 'garden within a garden' at Sissinghurst, to remind them of happy times Greece, I return to this particular book for further inspiration.

In his chapter for October, he mentions the light and how it softens, particularly in the morning. He planted a large swathe of *stipa gigantea* and *molinia* 'Moorhexe' in the Barn Garden to capture this light and the effect is almost translucent. I subsequently 'borrowed' this idea for a client's

sheltered south-east facing border and planted a slightly different variety of *molinia* called 'Transparent'. When the sun shines on it first thing and the air is still, the effect is quite magical. One word of warning though: although *molinia* is a stunning grass, it has a rootball like no other to divide. You may need mechanical means (as we discovered) in the form of a battery-operated hedge cutter, which did do the trick, but it was a problem I was not expecting to have to deal with.

He goes on to explain how we have to 'relax' into autumn and enjoy the 'informality' of it, and this resonates quite truly with how I approach gardening at this time of year.

There is a good section on propagation, too, with re-planting into warm soil along with useful ideas on planting up for autumn colour, which is best achieved with a confident 'grand scale' approach.

In November he writes about woodland work, particularly planting new hedges and trees but also coppicing and producing pea sticks from hazel, useful for plant supports in the borders. As we head towards December the colour palette has reduced to a point where we rely on our choice of landscaping materials much more, particularly in areas nearer to the house, where a select group of evergreens can soften a hard edge yet provide good contrast with the materials, say, of a stone wall. It's another good reason to think carefully about the hard landscaping elements of your garden, as they are much more evident in the winter months.

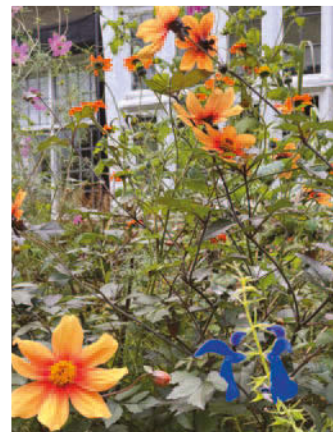
After what seemed like an eternal summer of dry ground, fortunately we can all now finally get a spade into the borders and get busy. I do not feel quite as relaxed as Pearson suggests,

as my workload has tripled - and fairly instantly, too. I am now digging over ground to extract newly-sown weed seedlings, dividing and replanting perennials, planting narcissi and alliums (the tulips can wait a month), re-edging borders and leaf-clearing.

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Student Wellbeing



Above: Fullness of village life: Painting commissioned by the Arts Society High Weald in celebration of 25 years of meeting in the village hall; apple pressing and stall display at the primary school's autumn produce sale; St George's harvest lunch; newcomers to the village welcome lunch; Standen Street community orchard; The Oak Barn celebrates their 100th wedding
Front cover: Community, warmth and spectacle. Benenden bonfire and fireworks. Photograph: Hayley Daley