

As we head into our 21st year as custodians of this beautiful old pub, we would like to extend a huge thank you to our team, patrons & family for supporting The Bull at Benenden through some very memorable times! We raise a glass to our dear departed & look forward to all that 2025 may bring. Cheers all!

Holloweld!

A warm welcome awaits!

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Editorial



It's always slightly strange writing the editorial for the first issue of a new year - when here I am putting pen to paper just before Christmas in front of a rather lovely little tree - but it's actually quite nice looking forward to the prospect of the days starting to stay lighter for longer. I'm a paper diary user and, oh, joy, the thrill of opening a crisp and empty diary and putting in birthdays and holidays and reminders of when to plant and prune. Joining these will be my resolution reminders, because I'm taking Peter Massey's advice to make a few fun and realistic new year resolutions (Talking Point page 7). I'm hopeless, as every year I make the same resolution - take more exercise - and of course I don't really achieve it. But, I promise myself yet again, I will in 2025 (yeah, right!). Much more achievable is to 'count my blessings' and 'not to stress the small stuff'.

Let me start by counting the magazine's blessings which, dear reader, includes you, as you are not only why the volunteer magazine team beavers away every month to produce this publication, you are also the source of all the news, articles and stunning cover images. We also very much appreciate the tremendous support we receive from advertisers because that income covers our printing costs. Hopefully you agree that the magazine is a great way to share (almost) all that's going on across the village and our wonderful team of distributors are tireless in making sure that you receive your free copy every month. An enormous thank you to you all and especially to Dick and Marilyn Hill, who coordinate the distribution team and portion out the copies for them all before heaving them into the church ready to be collected.

Finally, what is the 'small stuff' that I will endeavour not to stress over in 2025? Hmmm. Slugs eating my tender shoots! Mice eating the strawberries just as they ripen! Moles having a whale of a time up and down the garden! I'll remind myself these don't matter a jot compared to what's going in the wider world and count my blessings.

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.

Editors: Ruth Clark, Peter Thomas

Editorial Board: PCC Rep: Cathy Presgrave, PC Rep: Nicola Thomas,

Treasurer: Charles Trollope, Acting Advertising Manager: Paul Leek, Advertising Assistant: vacant

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

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Village Calendar

January		
Saturday 4	Benenden Players, The Great Revue, Benenden Village Hall, 7pm	p. l l
Saturday 4	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sat 4-Sun 5	Learn to Prune your Apple Trees, Standen Street Community Orchard,	
	Iden Green, I 0am	p. I 3
Sunday 5	Benenden Players, The Great Revue, Benenden Village Hall, 2pm	p. 1 1
Friday 10	Allotment Association and Gardening Club Quiz, Benenden Village Hall, 7pm	p.9
Saturday II	Skittles, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sat II-Sun I2	Learn to Prune your Apple Trees, Standen Street Community Orchard,	
	Iden Green, I 0am	p. I 3
Tuesday 14	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 14	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 14	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p. I 3
Saturday 18	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sat 18-Sun 19	Learn to Prune your Apple Trees, Standen Street Community Orchard,	
	Iden Green, I 0am	p. I 3
Monday 20	Parish Council Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Tuesday 21	Iden Green and Benenden WI, New Year Meeting, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.23
Saturday 25	Hemsted Park, The Glenn Miller Orchestra,	
	Benenden School Centenary Hall, 5pm	p. 19
Saturday 25	John's Cheese and Wine Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 26	The Angry Whelk Fresh Fish Stall, Benenden Village Hall, 12-2pm	p.23
Tuesday 28	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 28	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 28	Merry and Bright, AGM and Victorian Tea, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.23

Iden Green Toddler Group

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

Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-11.30am

Benenden Bowls Club

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

Cakes & Chaos: Café and Toddler Group

Fridays during term time in St George's Church, 9-11am

Parish Council



Over recent months it has been impossible to avoid this government's loudly trumpeted commitment to house building, although on a seasonal note it has been amusing to hear the very existence of deputy prime minister Angela 'Santa' Rayner being questioned, on the basis there is "nobody that can go round the country delivering I.5m new homes"! Even the housing minister, Matthew Pennycock, has accepted that delivering the new homes is going to be "more difficult than we expected". Who'd have thought it!

So, I hear you ask, how will this new juggernaut of a housing policy affect our parish? At present we have our Benenden Neighbourhood Development Plan in place, currently taking precedence over the outdated Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Local Plan. However, this is likely to change in spring 2025, when the new local plan will probably come into force - and will be subject to an immediate review, which will likely include a very large increase in the number of new homes being required across the borough.

This will be the time for the parish council to begin to review and update our own NDP, and we have every intention of carrying this out, ensuring once again that we give ourselves the best chance that any potential development in our parish is exactly where Benenden wants and needs it, if at all.

There is an added problem of the catastrophic fall-off in the number of affordable homes coming forward, with a dwindling appetite amongst housing associations to buy those offered by developers via planning obligations.

If housing associations are not willing to take up affordable housing, then there is something wrong with the planning system. Developers need to have early engagement with housing associations to ensure the stock they bring forward meets the latter's demand, and not the other way round. If this fundamental problem with the system is not sorted out urgently, then our housing crisis can only get worse.

So I wish you a happy 2025 from us all at the parish council. There is a lot of hard work ahead, but rest assured that we will do everything in our power to ensure our parish remains the beautiful and peaceful place we love, while maintaining our enviously vibrant community.

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 20 January, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm

Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

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

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

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

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com

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

Sunday 5 January 8am Communion 10am All-age 5pm Choral Evensong

Communion

Sunday 12 January 8am BCP Communion 10am Morning Worship Sunday 19 January 8am Communion 10am Sung Eucharist

Saturday 25 January 4pm Connect Four

at Mission Church, Sandhurst

Sunday 26 January 8am Communion 10am Morning Worship

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 Wednesdays

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

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

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Funeral 8 December Peggy Terry Interment

Church Letter



Catching lives that have fallen through the gaps

As we move into another year, it is worth remembering that there are people locally who are really struggling with life and have no roof over their heads. Just think about the cold weather, the rain, the winds we have been having, and having nowhere to call home. So I want to use this piece to tell you - or remind you - about the work of Catching Lives in Canterbury.

St George's Church has been supporting Catching Lives for many years. It is an independent charity supporting people who are rough sleepers or homeless; people who have fallen through the gaps in society. Throughout the year, Catching Lives provides breakfast and lunch daily, a laundry service, a clothes bank, toilets and showers, storage, a postal address (which is essential for claiming benefits, looking for work, or registering with a GP), telephone, computer and internet access, mental health support and a drop-in nurse. The charity has launched its 2024/25 winter appeal and is looking to raise £50,000 to provide a seven-day-a-week service, with bed space for up to 15 people every night during the coldest months of the year.

It is terrible to see so many people in this day and age, so close to us, having to sleep rough, often in unsafe locations and through the worst winter weather. Catching Lives works with the council, Porchlight and other partners to help people move on from the shelter into housing; but the charity needs help. This help could be in the form of:

- Volunteering Catching Lives is currently looking for daytime and evening volunteers in the kitchen; to be part of the shelter welcome team; or to be a driver. An application form is available by visiting their website (details shown below).
- Donating financially (visit the website)
 - £5 could go towards hot drinks at the day centre to keep people warm
 - £8 could provide breakfast and lunch for a week for one person experiencing homelessness
 - £19 could provide essential services for a day to a person experiencing homelessness
 - £47 could host someone for the night at Canterbury Community Shelter
- Donating items for example: thick socks, scarves, beanie hats, power packs, torches with USB chargers, travel mugs, thermos flasks, water bottles. See the website for a full list.
 www.catchinglives.org

As we enjoy - and probably take for granted - the security of a warm home, please think of helping those who do not have that comfort at the start of this new year. Your support could help Catching Lives to save lives this winter.

Revd David Commander, Rector and Area Dean





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Talking Point



A time of resolutions

'Resolution' has several meanings. The United Nations passes resolutions and it can show resolution in reaching a resolution of the problems concerned. You can use a high-resolution microscope or resolve oil into bitumen and tar. But at this time of year New Year's resolutions come to mind: the act of promising yourself to do something or not do something for the rest of the year.

Some resolutions are easier to keep than others. Giving up smoking or taking more exercise is allowed to crop up regularly every year. My favourite is one I've kept with ease over the last decade, because it's fun: 'When in London after dark, drink champagne with friends and you can change any of the words in the sentence.' So, 'when in the Bull after dark, drink beer with strangers' is just as good as 'when in the Woodcock garden in the afternoon, drink lemonade with the dog'. Easy!

Another which has stuck because it pays back is 'open every church door you walk past in the City and look inside'. There are some wonderful architectural surprises which I had ignored for two decades.

But some resolutions are harder to stick to. This year I stuck to 'one Italian lesson per day'. Sparked by finding my great grandad's master's papers and the loan of a 20-book series of naval episodes, I eventually got started on 'reading books more and the phone less'. I've not stuck to picking up the guitar every day but, to quote Meatloaf, "Two out of Three Ain't Bad".

Whether you usually make new year resolutions or not, have a think about a couple of suggestions made by a friend in the village (thanks Tony). Resolve to do one thing for the local community this year. And resolve to do one thing outside of our local community - get outside the Benenden bubble!

Happy new year.

Peter Massey



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We have recommenced our regular monthly lunchtime meetings at The Bull, Benenden.

Currently there are vacancies for new members. If you are retired and would welcome friendly, relaxed company at a lunch, with interesting speakers, then please contact the Hon. Secretary on 01580 441201 for more information.

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News and Events

Benenden Bonfire Society

Following 2024's successful event, from I January 2025 we will be accepting applications for funding from community groups in the parish of Benenden. The recipients of this funding can be a group or an individual creating benefit for the parish. The committee favours opportunities for young people but this is not exclusive and other age groups are welcome to bid for the funds available.

Successful applicants may be invited to submit a more detailed bid outlining the project/opportunity and how it will benefit the group/parish. There will also be a requirement to set out costs and funds already held by the group/individual and why, if applicable, additional funds are necessary.

The deadline for applications is I February and these should be submitted at Benenden's community shop. A link to the application can be found at:

www.benendenfireworks.co.uk/supporting-local/

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

Benenden almshouse vacancy

A vacancy has arisen for a one-bedroom house at Thorn Cottages, Coldharbour Road, Iden Green. Applications are invited from either couples or single people, over the age of 55, who have been resident in the parish of Benenden for at least three years or have family connections.

An application form, which needs to be submitted by Friday 17 January 2025, is available from the clerk (details below).

Deborah Jenkins 240454
benendenalms@gmail.com
Benenden Almshouse Charities



Allotment and Gardening Clubs quiz

It's January, cold, wet and miserable, so come along to a fund-raising quiz hosted by the Allotment Association and Gardening Club. Proceeds go towards improving access to the allotment field; just take a look next time you wander down Walkhurst Road; it's very muddy! The quiz is at the village hall, on Friday 10 January. Doors open at 7pm, the quiz will start at 7.30pm, tickets £10 each. Gather your friends and book a table of 6-8, or we'll just pop you on a table to form a team. There will be a bar and raffle. Gardening knowledge, while helpful, isn't essential! Email allotments@benendenparishcouncil.org to book your table.

Benenden Almshouse Charities



A vacancy has arisen for a one-bedroom house at Thorn Cottages, Coldharbour Road, Iden Green.

Applications are invited from either couples or single persons, over the age of 55, who have been resident in the parish of Benenden for at least 3 years, or have family connections.

An application form is available from the Clerk, Deborah Jenkins 01580 240454 benendenalms@gmail.com

Completed application forms to be submitted by **Friday 17 January 2025**

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The Great Benenden Revue

After Christmas, just when you think it's all over and you may be feeling a bit deflated, come to the Great Benenden Revue and have your spirits lifted again! On the evening of 4 January (starting 7.30pm) and the matinee on 5 January (starting 2.30pm), the Benenden Players could be cavorting around you as you sit comfortably around tables in the village hall, eating what you have brought and drinking what you have bought from us. Will it be silly? Yes! Will it be funny? Of course! Will it be worth coming to see an eclectic mix of song, dance and superb acting? Judge for yourself. Tickets are going fast so snap yours up here: www.benendenplayers.co.uk Bev Beveridge

Christmas tree recycling

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

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

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Village lunch

All Benenden villagers are invited to join us for the village lunch in Benenden village hall at 12.30pm on Tuesday 14 January.

If you would like to come and haven't already signed up please do ring and let me know, preferably by Thursday 9 January if possible. Lifts can be arranged. We look forward to seeing you.

Genevieve Greenwood 240526

Christmas non-perishable food leftovers

Leftover biscuits? Diet started and want the last of your Christmas treats out of the house? Any non-perishable foods would be appreciated for the Nourish foodbank. Please drop at St George's church or the Garden House, Standen Street. Collections possible. Please contact Gemma:

241064 gemmalouhunter@gmail.com Gemma Coupland and Liz Bewley

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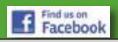


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Village defibrillator

A note of thanks to everyone who has supported Benenden Players events in aid of the village defibrillators over the years. We have been able to use the last of this money to replace the box containing the defibrillator on The Green which, after about 15 years in situ, has been irreparably damaged. The defibrillator is one of three public defibrillators in the village, the others being in the congregational church porch in Iden Green and the other at Cranden Diamonds on Mounts Hill - the code for the latter can be accessed by phoning 999. Peter Ellis

Benenden Village Trust

The first BVT film night proved a huge success, with over £1,000 in profits contributing to the village hall heating project. Over 60 residents bought tickets to see Casablanca, a movie classic. Some decided to dress up for the occasion, which helped build the atmosphere. Chris Heath won the prize for best dressed, thanks to his fez, djellaba and sunglasses.

The meal served during the interval received many compliments. Thanks to Grant Matthews of WOW cooking, who worked so hard to provide a tasty tagine, which he donated to event. Benenden Players also supported the night with technical help on ticket sales, lighting and sound. They also lent us Graham Beveridge, who played piano during the interval to keep us in the mood.

After the show everyone helped get the hall clean and tidy so it was ready for the next morning's booking. It is always so heartening to see people mucking in to help - it's what makes our community such an enjoyable place to live.

Suggestions poured in for titles we can show in the future, so please check the magazine for details of the next film night.

Paul Tolhurst

Poppy Appeal 2024

Our Poppy Appeal collection in Benenden and Iden Green has already raised the substantial amount of £4,200. This total includes a very generous St George's Church collection of £576 on Remembrance Sunday, as well as contributions by way of QR codes, the two Saturday poppy stalls, Benenden School, the hospital, the primary school, our shops and pubs, and also from several particularly benevolent donors and organisations.

We are most grateful to those who once again volunteered their time to undertake house-to-house collections at a continuing difficult time for all fundraising endeavours. Jane Dalton Holmes

St George's Social Club

November was busy and so too December. We opened the doors to welcome people after the bonfire and we held the annual Cyril Moore Skittles Trophy on 9 November (where entrance money goes to the village Poppy Appeal). It was a great competition and the winner this year was Reg Hill.

The club's snooker and darts teams have started their winter league programmes in the local leagues, getting some good results. At present the darts team are unbeaten and top of the league.

Due to re-organisation of events, we had a small corn hole tossing competition which was won by Rex Bourne. The end of November saw a good quiz night with a great selection of questions and won by Steve and Sandra West, Peter and Jane Ellis and Glenda Marshall.

John Marshall 07488 244217





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Mick Moore 240755 m.moore131156@gmail.com

Wednesday coffee mornings

We would love to see more people at the coffee morning in the Memorial Hall every Wednesday between 10am and 11.30am, to catch up with old friends and make new. We look forward to seeing you soon for a hot drink and a biscuit.

Gilly Walton 242855 gilly.walton@gmail.com

Primary School

During a busy last term, we opened our doors to parents and grandparents and for about an hour they watched our learning in action. It was a lovely morning. Our termly parent evenings were also very well attended and a special thank you to head boy Alfred R and head girl Annabel W for signing people in and pointing them in the right direction.

We all shared a very poignant moment when we held a two-minute silence in respect of Armistice Day. The Year 6s represented the school at the Benenden war memorial and it made us very proud to see how seriously the children considered what others have done for them in history.

A group of girls from Years 5 and 6 took part in the Versatility Netball Festival run by the Wealden Partnership at Dulwich Prep School. The children were split into more advanced players and development squads and mixed with other schools to create teams. They took part in a round robin of training and coaching. The girls all played absolutely brilliantly; Sienna H won Most Improved and Lilly O'L won the Spirit of the Game award. Lindsay Roberts, Executive Headteacher 240565 office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk

Benenden School

The beginning of the year is always a time for reflection, gratitude, and renewed determination and I am immensely grateful for the welcome I have received since moving to Benenden last August. 2024 was a year of growth, collaboration and change at the school. As we entered our second century, our community came together to embrace challenges and celebrate achievements, from academic successes to musical and sporting triumphs. These accomplishments reflect the commitment of our students, the dedication of our staff, and the unwavering support of our parents and wider community.

The growth of our performing arts venue, Hemsted Park, has been immensely exciting and we hope you have enjoyed some of the events and performances we've hosted over the busy Christmas period. The new spring/summer season is looking to be just as entertaining. Do keep an eye on www.hemstedpark.com.

Looking ahead to 2025, I am excited about the opportunities that lie before us. Education is not only about academic excellence but also about nurturing compassionate, thoughtful and resilient individuals who can make a positive impact. A key part of achieving that is an environment where every child feels valued, inspired and empowered to reach their full potential.

Here's to a prosperous and inspiring 2025 for everyone.

Rachel Bailey, Headmistress



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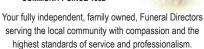


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Benenden Hospital

With the longer and darker evenings and colder weather I wanted to illuminate January by reflecting on the success our hospital had with our award submissions last year. Our goal is always to ensure our patients have the best care experience and we also want to keep in step with new thinking and innovations. We wrote submissions focusing on our ROSA Knee Replacements, SageTech Anaesthetic gas-capturing system, Aquablation® (enlarged prostate treatment), our new liver-scanning service and My Benenden Hospital Rewards (loyalty scheme).

In November, we were thrilled to announce a win at the Building Better Healthcare Awards. Our hospital, in collaboration with SageTech Medical, took home the award for Best Carbon Reduction Initiative for the integration of SageTech's groundbreaking system to capture and recycle anaesthetic gas in our operating theatres. Credit to our fantastic team for all the work that went into realising this staff-led idea and leading the way in sustainability.

We were very proud to have been announced as finalists at the prestigious LaingBuisson Awards in the 'Hospital of the Year' and 'Innovation in Care' category. We were successful in some local awards, too, winning Best Creative, Digital and Innovation Business at the Tunbridge Wells Kent Business Awards.

Another excitement was receiving reaccreditation after our assessment for 'Investors in People - We Invest in Wellbeing', and we've been upgraded to Gold status. This is a huge achievement and shows that we are making great progress in our health and wellbeing efforts.

These achievements provide encouragement and a boost to the work our staff do every day delivering care. They help us to feel even more confident in suggesting new ideas as we begin a new year. I'm personally looking forward to seeing the innovative projects and treatment opportunities that we will be thinking about and exploring in 2025 and continuing to focus on caring for our patients and each other.



Benenden Pre-School

My new year wish for the youngest members of our community is for the ever-continuing development of their resilience, creativity and critical thinking skills. When a child encounters a new or potentially tricky situation at preschool, be it sharing a toy or learning to put their coat on by themselves, it is often that their confidence and their problem-solving skills will help them find a solution. Adults naturally model possible ways forward, for example using a sand timer to promote turntaking or demonstrating the 'magic' way to put on a coat. For those who don't know, place the coat on the floor, stand by the hood, place your arms into the sleeves and swing it over your head. Such independence is joy for children!

Children take these ideas and run, build on them, share them with their younger peers and revel in their autonomy.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

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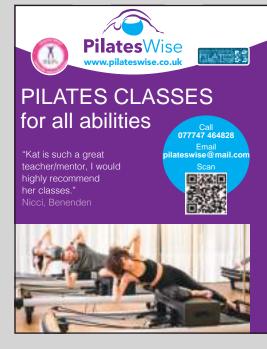
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Primary Subjects Singapore Maths French

The Ladies' Book Club

We are still welcoming new members to the book club, where we meet for a meal and a chat at local pubs. If you want to recommend a Christian book that you've read lately or join us for some relaxed conversation please email me: Victoria Bray vickybray007@hotmail.com

Iden Green and Benenden WI

Christmas lunch at the Bull in Benenden was amazing as usual and we all had a thoroughly good time.

Our new year meeting is on 21 January at 2pm in the Memorial Hall. We have to consider our resolutions but the main part of the afternoon will be fun and games giving us lots of time to socialise and chat. This year's programme looks enticing, with excellent speakers such as Melanie Gibson-Barton returning to enlighten us on the suffragettes. We are also looking forward to hearing about the best make-up for the mature woman.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Jackie Liffen 752232 Wl@daisystar.co.uk

Merry and Bright

Our committee have been working hard arranging and planning for 2025, from basket making to wood turning, outings and more. Everyone is welcome to come along for an afternoon tea with us. The first tea will be free as a thank you for your visit. Our meetings are every fourth Tuesday in the month, from 2-4pm in the Memorial Hall, except when we go out visiting in the summer.

Our next meeting will be at 2pm on 28 January at the Memorial Hall for our AGM followed by our Victorian tea.

Look on the village website for more information or contact:
Laraine Penny 241763
Julia Collard 241944

Fresh fish stall

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

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

Mark Wilson 07870 274864

Planning Matters

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

- 24/02802/LBC Gibbons School House, The Street. Reinstatement of collapsed ceiling to an existing store room to the rear of the house.
- 24/02803/LBC Gibbons School House, The Street. Addition of 4 roof lights to the rear of the property. (Works already carried out).
- 24/02868/FULL Culpeppers, Coldharbour Road. Minor Material Amendment of Condition 2 of Planning Permission 23/01223/FULL - (Alterations to; increase/changes to Building Design, Height & Size; External Materials; Garage Design & Size; Landscaping).
- 24/01767/FULL Land At Netters Farm, Attwaters Lane, Hawkhurst. Development of solar array, battery storage and associated infrastructure (resubmission of 23/02067/FULL).
- 24/01768/FULL Land At Lower Ellenden Farm, Water Lane, Hawkhurst. Development of solar array, battery storage and associated infrastructure (resubmission of 23/02067/FULL).

More planning matters at: benendenparishcouncil.org



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Benenden's Community Shop

Volunteer numbers are on the decline - is it time for you to get involved? A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

Benenden's Community Shop Limited was launched in 2015 with the support of the community. It has around 350 shareholders, who are members of a Community Benefit Society under the terms of the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. Most importantly, the entire business is run by the community for the community. The store is staffed by local volunteers, supported by a paid manager, deputy manager and several part-time supervisors and a volunteer management committee.

Nine years later, for many people Benenden's provides an essential lifeline, for others it is valued as a convenience which would be sorely missed.

A NEW MANAGER AND DEPUTY

The past 12 months have been challenging for Benenden's, with high staff turnover and rising

costs, set against the backdrop of a 'cost of living crisis'.

Jules, our new manager, started with us in late June and Lorraine the deputy manager started in September (both pictured at the recent carol singing social for volunteers). They have done an excellent job in improving stock control in the shop and a recent survey of café customers has allowed us to focus on delivering what customers have said they

would like to see being served.

Jules also introduced a Crafternoon in October which was enjoyed by 30 local children, with another in December.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

While Benenden's was never intended to make vast profits, it does need to make a profit to enable us to replace ageing equipment

and, hopefully, in the future perhaps make donations to local community groups once again. Unfortunately, as published on our website, for the financial year ending 31 March 2024 and for the six months from 1 April 2024 the shop is running at a loss and so we are not currently in a position where we can do either, which leads me to the next and most important part of this article.

A PLEA FOR VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers do a great job and along with paid staff keep the shop and café running. Without them, Benenden's would not be the same.

The wage bill is one of the areas where we have seen costs rise significantly, as we have had to increase paid hours and cover empty volunteer shifts with paid staff, and the only way we can improve the situation is by increasing the number of volunteers.

Volunteer numbers have dwindled over the past nine years, so we need to increase them. I started volunteering in the shop back in 2022 when we moved into the village. I found it a great way of meeting people and making new friends while serving the local community. It's also great fun.

If you are wondering what sort of commitment volunteering means: there are four volunteer shifts in the shop lasting two and a half hours each from Monday to Saturday and three slots in the café. Training will be given and as a volunteer you can sign up for a regular weekly shift or for shifts when the volunteer rotas are circulated for the week ahead.

Without an increase in volunteer numbers, our financial situation is unlikely to improve, as the increase in the minimum wage and in employers' National Insurance contributions, from April 2025, means our wage bill is going to increase again.

So, if you have been thinking of volunteering but haven't yet done so, I would urge you to drop into the shop, talk to Jules or Lorraine and sign up.

Gary Bell, Chair, Benenden's Management Committee

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Spotlight



Bidding farewell to the last butchers in Benenden

It will be the end of an era when Wards, our village butcher's, sadly shuts its doors for good on 31 December. The Ward family have been running the business for the last 55 years, first Peter and Betty Ward, who were joined by Andrew and Martyn - two of their three sons - when they left school. In fact they started helping their parents while they were still at school, delivering up to 50 orders around the village on a bicycle with the meat in a large basket on the front.

Cattle wrangling was a useful skill, too, when the bullocks decided they were going to escape their destiny in the abattoir behind the shop and make their bid for freedom through neighbours' gardens. (The abattoir closed in the early 90s). Their father taught them butchering skills and passed on the secret recipe that makes their sausages and burgers so tasty. As news of the upcoming closure of the shop has spread around the village, they have been hard at work keeping up with demand as freezers are being stocked.

Andrew and Martyn have an unusual bond. In his 30s Andrew suffered from kidney failure for several years which meant he had to travel up to Guys' Hospital for dialysis several times a week. Providentially, Martyn was able to donate one of his kidneys to him. "Virtually overnight my skin went from an orange/yellow colour to a normal pink," says Andrew. On hearing that he was a butcher, his nurse told him: "You could have brought a kidney with you!"

Now the brothers are looking forward to a well-deserved retirement in the home they have lived in since they arrived in 1969. Both are looking forward to lazy mornings if they wish, instead of 6am starts, and no longer working in a chilly shop. Andrew (70)

plans to spend much more time playing golf and improving his already enviable handicap of 14. The other green surface he plays on is the snooker table - he's part of the St George's Social Club league team. Martyn (68) is looking forward to having the freedom to spend more time exploring the countryside on foot and by bike. Both love to travel so foreign climes are beckoning.

We wish you a very happy and well-deserved retirement.

Ruth Clark



Clubs, Sports and Recreation



A year as a volunteer with the local Cubs

Kate Ferry on the rewards of 'giving something back' to the group she loved as a child

As many of you will know, Benenden sadly lost its Cub and Scout groups at the end of 2022. Some of the youngsters subsequently transferred to the Sissinghurst Scout Group and as a result the group has been the recipient of funds from the Benenden Bonfire. For those of you at the Bonfire this year, the Scouts put up the mess tent, put the lights around the trees and fried the onions!

In 2023 several articles were written in this magazine asking for volunteers to support the group. I grew up in Benenden and was fortunate to have had the opportunity to be involved in the village Brownie and Guides groups and I wanted to support other children to have the same formative experiences. And so, dear reader, I volunteered.

The Cubs are a great bunch of children from a number of different villages (predominantly Sissinghurst but also Benenden, Biddenden, Frittenden, Hawkhurst, Staplehurst and Cranbrook). I think what makes this Cubs

(and Squirrels, Scouts and Explorers) group so popular is that they are able to spend so much time outside. From Easter to October, all meetings take



place out of doors, whatever the weather, and the children seem to get so much from that. Twice a year the Cubs discuss what activities they'd like to do over the next six months, and they almost entirely choose outdoor activities.

This year began with the Cubs working towards their 'money badge', which entailed learning how to budget, understand different currencies and designing their own currency. They then moved onto the 'adventure badge', which is one of the core badges to make up the Chief Scout silver award, which is the highest award a Cub Scout can earn. In June we spent several weeks working on the 'fire maker badge'. This involved learning about the

best types and sizes of wood for a fire, finding and chopping down the wood, storing it properly so we could use it the following week and then maintaining a fire to cook burgers and s'mores for dinner.

There have also been some Saturday activities. If you were shopping in the Co-op in Cranbrook in May, your biscuits may have been baked and packaged by the Cubs and Scouts, or you may have been served at the checkout by one of them. The Co-op staff were so generous and kind to the children, who loved the experience. The group was also one of the Co-op charities for 2024.

One of the highlights of the year for the Cubs was the summer camp. This was a five-day, four-night camp which for some of the Cubs was the longest they'd spent away from their families. I was so impressed by how they all coped with camp life and I think they all learnt a lot of skills, particularly about handling food and building fires, as they were responsible for cooking their breakfast every day. Camp activities included a hike and navigation exercise for their hiking badge, swimming, climbing and building a pizza oven in the ground to cook their own pizzas in. A highlight for me was seeing how they grew in confidence throughout the week. For example when we arrived at the climbing centre a number of Cubs said they were too scared but by the end, without any pressure from the adults, they'd all had a go









and you could see the pride in their faces.

In autumn, the Cubs worked on a range of badges: entertainment, night hike and pioneering. The night hike was a real adventure and something we spent several weeks building up to so they came prepared. Their preparedness was thoroughly tested as the heavens well and truly opened up near the end of the hike. They were all returned to parents very soggy in their waterproofs but buzzing from the experience.

The group would love to maintain its link to Benenden and increase the number of children from the village. The schedule is:

- Squirrels (aged 4-6): Wednesday 3.45-4.45pm
- Beavers (aged 6-8): this group had to close in September as there was no one to lead it. We hope that will change soon as it was very popular. Please email if you're interested in helping out.
- Cubs (aged 8-10.5): Wednesday evening 6-7.30pm
- Scouts (aged 10.5-14): Friday evening 7-9pm
- Explorers (aged 14-18): Contact for further information.

To anyone looking for a volunteering opportunity, I'd thoroughly recommend getting involved. I've found it more rewarding than I expected, partly because the Cubs come from a range of backgrounds and experiences but also because my fellow volunteers are a really nice bunch. If you're thinking of a new volunteering opportunity for 2025 please email: Arun Osborne (Akela)

cubs@sissinghurstscouts.org.uk





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Hot Topic

What to consider when planning long-term social care

Care consultant Peter Ellis provides valuable advice about the variety of services on offer Social care services exist to support people with the activities of daily living usually over long periods of time. Understanding what you, or a loved one, might want from a social care provider, and how it is paid for, is usually a once in a lifetime event and can be very confusing.

While there are variations on the theme, the main forms which social care takes are homecare and care homes. Care homes include those with nursing and those without. Both forms of residential care provide 24-hour a day care and accommodation including all meals and utilities etc. Nursing homes have the capacity to manage more complex needs.

A care home will cost from £1,000 a week and is considerably more expensive if you require nursing or other specialised care. Nursing care is offered in care homes without nursing by the community nursing team but is restricted to tasks like injections and dressings and is not suitable for people whose conditions need regular professional monitoring or treatment. The NHS may fund some elements of nursing care in nursing homes because they then do not have to resource community nurses. This funding is called funded nursing care (FNC) which is needs-assessed and is paid at two levels, currently about £220 or £302 a week. If you are considering a nursing home you should ask about this.

Homecare is likely to cost £20-30 an hour from an agency, with most packages being an hour in the morning and half an hour each at lunch and bedtime; that's about £420 a week or £22,000 a year. Live-in care starts at £800 a week plus bed and board for the carer. Not all live-in care is regulated so be careful in vetting your provider.

Some homecare providers are self-employed and, if paid directly by the client and registered as a sole trader rather than a limited company, do not have to be registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC). They should however have insurance and training certificates.

As a rule, people with savings over £23,250 have to pay for their own social care. If you have

savings of between £14,250 and £23,250 you have to contribute from your savings and any income such as a pension. Below this any personal contribution will come from income only.

People who do well in home care are those with less complex care needs as well as those who have friends and family supporting them, for example with shopping and occasional meals. When choosing a homecare provider you should only consider local agencies, as they provide the most reliable care. Similarly with a care home choose one where it is easy for your friends and family to visit, because even the best care homes can become isolating.

Look at the providers registration page at www.cqc.org.uk/care-services; this will tell you if they have any specialisms, for example dementia care. While the rating from the CQC can be useful, for example in avoiding providers with a current rating of inadequate, be aware that any rating from an inspection three or four years ago may now be meaningless. If in doubt discuss the rating with the service's manager and ask what changes have been made since the last inspection. In every case make sure to meet the service, or care, manager and ensure they are able to answer your questions clearly.

If considering a care home, think about the feel of the place when you visit. Consider what activities the home offers and how these reflect your interests or those of your loved one. Going into a care home is often the last move a person will make, so treat it like you would moving home.

Useful links:

www.carehome.co.uk www.homecare.co.uk www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-socialservices www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-supportguide

Local home care providers include:

www.amoracare.co.uk
Faye Hunt 07789 276426
faye_hunt@hotmail.com
www.carecompany.care
www.townandcountryhomecare.co.uk

Local Interest



time hunt for the 'flying mice' of the village skies Local nature enthusiast Peter Driver

was in the dark about Benenden's bats, so he went looking for some
Although I've never been able to tell one bat from another, I have long been fascinated by the 'flying mice' that we are sometimes lucky enough to see whirling around the garden at dusk. I assumed that all small bats were Pipistrelles and bigger bats, well, to be honest I never saw any bigger bats. To remedy this lack of knowledge, earlier this year I bought

It was very exciting to detect my first bat (a Common Pipistrelle) which was soon followed by a second species (Soprano Pipistrelle). I also recorded two of our largest bats, Noctule and Serotine, before finishing with another fairly common species, Brown Long-Eared Bat. So that was five species of bat on my first venture out. I was hooked!

myself a bat detector and set out, as a novice,

to see what bats I could find within the parish.

Initially most of my sorties were within a few hundred yards of my home in Iden Green but I also visited the churchyard, Hemsted

bat species. Keeping to public footpaths throughout, I went to the ponds by Waters End Farm (just in Sandhurst) in order to search for Daubenton's Bat. Daubenton's is closely associated with open water, often skimming the surface to hoover up prey, and sure enough I managed to record this species here.

A nocturnal visit to some cow pasture turned out to be a hot spot for Noctules and Serotines, which like to feed on the dung beetles and chafers which flourish there. Fortunately there weren't any cows actually present in the field and there was enough moonlight to just about see where the cows had 'been'. My reward for avoiding the pats was prolonged close views of both species as well as the ubiquitous Common Pipistrelles.

My detector gives an automatic identification of the bat but it is sometimes unreliable. There are online analysers which are better and I'm also able to look at recordings on my laptop using Call Analysis software to confirm the identity myself. The first thing I learnt is that it just isn't possible to identify every bat I record!

The picture below shows a recording from Iden Green Woods. The top part of the picture represents the amplitude (loudness) while the bottom section shows the frequency of the call (both plotted against time).

There are two bat species in the recording shown below; Common Pipistrelle (peak energy at 45 kHz) on the right and Serotine (around 30 kHz) on the left.

I managed to add a few more species to my total over the summer but bat activity reduces with the approach of autumn and now all of our bats should be in hibernation. Winter is a good time to review what I have found.

Common Pipistrelle This is our commonest bat, it weighs around the same as a 20p piece and is by far the most likely species to be seen hunting for small flies in your garden. As can be seen below, calls peak at around 45 kHz.

Soprano Pipistrelle This bat was only recognised as a separate species in 1999 and is the second most common bat to be found in the parish. It is often found near water and is frequent over Iden Green sewage works. Calls peak at 55 kHz.

Brown Long-Eared This bat is sometimes called the whispering bat as its calls are comparatively quiet and it can only be detected within five metres or less. Some moths can hear bats echolocation and take evasive action, so to combat this, these bats sometimes 'switch off' echolocation and rely purely on their hearing. It also feeds by 'gleaning', i.e. plucking insects from leaves or bark, but if you find a pile of moth wings in your porch or garage it will be because of this bat.

Noctule This is the UK's largest bat with a body the size of a Starling and a wingspan of 15 inches - a very impressive animal which loves to dine on dung beetles. It's also a declining species which we are lucky to have in Benenden.

Serotine Another large bat of meadows and pasture which also loves a dung beetle dinner.

Natterer's One of the quieter species, scarcely bigger than a Pipistrelle and slow flying, it can snatch a spider from its web.

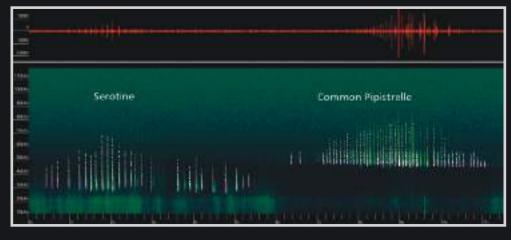
Daubenton's It usually emerges late in the evening and can be found hunting over open water. I'll try a couple more of our larger ponds for this species next summer.

Brandt's/Whiskered Species of the genus Myotis are difficult to tell apart from their calls and in the case of Brandt's and Whiskered virtually impossible. Uncommon, but of the two species, Whiskered is more frequently found in Kent.

Leisler's Bat A smaller relative of the Noctule - this is another scarce bat.

I now know a lot more about Benenden's bats: different species emerge at different times, feed in different habitats and on different prey. There are fast-flying bats and slow-flying bats; in addition to echolocation calls, there are feeding buzzes and social calls to recognise. They roost in different places, in holes in trees, behind tiles and in roofspaces. But there's so much more to learn and I can't wait for next spring so I can go out again with the detector.

If you want to know more about bats there's lots of information on the Bat Conservation Trust website or if you've a more general interest in wildlife please join the Benenden Nature Facebook group.



Bird Notes



Woodpeckers galore and days of exhilaration in Hungary's wooded hills

Our renowned 'bird man' Charles Trollope heads to the mountains to finish off his memorable European trip

From the vast plains in eastern Hungary I travelled to the foothills of the mountains in the north. It was a beautiful habitat with limestone hills and cliffs, where the woods contained a good cross-section of both coniferous and deciduous trees. The deciduous were mainly beech and not surprisingly Hawfinch was one of the commonest finches enjoying the beech mast. This chunky handsome finch is rarely seen locally but a few winters ago we had an 'irruption' - when birds come over from the continent in search of food, particularly if it has been a poor year for beech mast in Europe.

The woods were also good for woodpeckers, including our own Great and Lesser Spotted. I watched a woodpecker fly into a willow tree and saw what I thought was a young Great Spotted as it had a red head, but it was too early in the year for young. It was in fact a Middle Spotted Woodpecker, which has not been recorded in the UK. It is slightly smaller than the Great Spotted with a shorter beak. It was a lovely bird and I could not help thinking it was a pity that those who named this bird might have been a bit more imaginative!

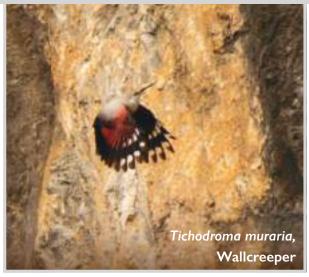
The limestone cliffs are always worth a visit, which involved a good hike up through the trees, and I enjoyed listening to Marsh Tits singing. Most of the Marsh Tits I find in Kent are by their call and rarely by song, but their

continental cousins seem to be the opposite. On the path up to the quarry we came across a Fire Salamander. a beautiful lizardshaped amphibian, about 20cm long with black and orange markings. We were able to watch for a good few minutes as it negotiated its way



across the path. A beautiful creature.

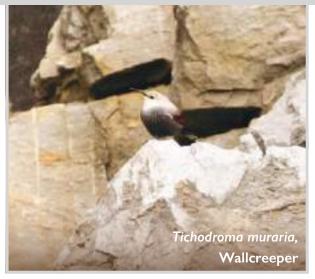
On reaching the cliffs, we scanned them in search of a very special bird and it was not too long before one was spotted investigating the cracks for insects. It is very well camouflaged until it flies, when it shows its spectacular crimson wings. It was a Wallcreeper. When you see it, it is no wonder that this bird tops the list that most bird watchers would like to see. I have seen one before in the Pyrenees but it was only a fleeting glimpse, whereas on this occasion I watched the bird for over



20 minutes. It was a moment I will never forget and one of my colleagues managed to capture the bird in flight (see above). Whilst we were watching the Wallcreeper, a Grey Headed Woodpecker called and flew past, but too quickly to get any sort of view.

Our next destination was the Bukk Plateau, a forested area not unlike Hemsted, with a good mixture of mature trees. It was not long before we saw an active woodpecker nest hole. After a few minutes a black head appeared with a beak full of sawdust. He shook his head, depositing the sawdust outside of the nest and then stood in the hole, I think waiting for some applause! This was repeated a number of times and each time he stood in the entrance, looking as if he was saying "aren't I clever". It was on one of these occasions that





I noticed its red head cap, confirming it was a Black Woodpecker, which is Europe's largest and a species I was longing to see, having spent days in the Pyrenees searching without success. On one occasion he popped out of the nest hole and clung to the side of the tree trunk enabling us to see him in his entirety and get a feel of his large size.

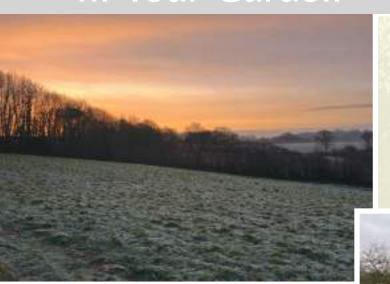
Part of the forest in the Bukk Plateau is a protected area and only accessible with a warden. We followed the warden's car, which suddenly came to a sudden halt because he had spotted a majestic Ural Owl. It flew before we could disembark but fortunately not very far and perched on top of a bush in the afternoon sun, giving us superb views. I knew that Ural Owls were present but as they are mostly nocturnal I never thought I would see one.

We proceeded on foot and it wasn't long before a White-backed Woodpecker landed high in a tree. This was the fifth new woodpecker species for me. Whilst we were enjoying the view, a second woodpecker landed lower down the trunk. Believe or not it was a Grey-headed Woodpecker, which I had only heard and not seen the previous day.

Bird watching can be a frustrating hobby but on occasions it can be very exhilarating and certainly this was one of those days. The total number of bird species I saw or heard on my trip to Hungary was IIO.

Charles Trollope 240821 cetetal@btinternet.com Photographs: Neil Davidson

In Your Garden



New year is the time to celebrate winter colour

Once the mayhem of Christmas has passed and the tranquillity of a new year has settled in, I put in a little thought on

how I can use colour in client's winter gardens. January and February are particularly devoid, I hear the cry, but really I think it is just a shift in expectation that needs managing. Colour obviously lifts our spirits - we only have to look up to a cerulean blue sky in winter to realise that - but it is in fact all around us, even at this time of year.

My starting point is the structural elements. These are evergreens either in hedge, topiary, bushy shrub or tree form. As an added bonus, some are scented, e.g. daphne or sarcococca, but most are pleasingly green 'forms' using box or yew, or I am fond of using rather parochial hedging plants such as privet or Portugese laurel and leaving them to grow into their own organic shape, as opposed to obsessive clipping.

It is good to have some natural shape going on in a garden to contrast with the clipping, even from deciduous shrubs - letting elders grow unruly, for example, allows nature to at least take some hold from our control. There is, however, no greater sight than a tightly clipped yew hedge, preferably in block form, as anything planted in front, whether spent perennials, a flowering shrub in winter-skeleton form or a variegated evergreen such as a euonymus, will create a stunning visual.

Trees are an obvious structural element, too, allowing the eye to bounce up high as it travels around the garden, and if you are lucky enough to possess a winter-flowering cherry then so much the better, with their candy floss pink-and-white petals in scant array on the branches. I have long eulogised the merits of dogwood stems, 'Winter Fire' being a particular favourite

- although this variety takes longer to establish than others, it's worth the wait.

I still remember the cornus beds at Hadlow College when I studied there - the college did hold the National Collection so we were a little spoiled on that front, as great expanses were planted and the effect

was magical. Try to place these where they catch some sunlight, preferably backlit, and they are the better for it. I also like using libertias -

the grandiflora variety is fine for an evergreen sword shape but there are multi-coloured varieties called L. ixioides which have stiff stems of red, green, purple-red and bronze stripes (a bit like a phormium but without the rambling size and predictability). These again look great planted generously in front of winter evergreens, and if a few deciduous grasses are planted nearby and

grouped with overwintering perennials you can easily see how colour can be introduced.

Add in some flowering hellebores, little iris reticulatas, naturalising swathes of snowdrops and aconites with some narcissi pushing through, and you will find this is quite enough for this restful time of the year. It is never too long before the riot of spring bulbs starts once again and we are back into the full swing of the growing season.

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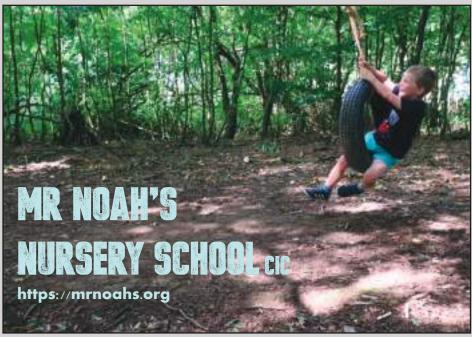
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All Seasons Fitness







Above: Village celebrations: Benenden Hospital receives Gold reaccreditation after assessment for 'Investors in People'; replacement housing for the village defibrillator on The Green; primary school pupils taking part in Versatility Netball Festival; Matthew Sharp, the stunning soloist with Cranbrook Symphony Orchestra; Benenden's Community Shop volunteers enjoy carol singing social Front cover: Seasonal cheer: One frosty morning. Photograph: Ali Ludgate