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Editorial



I'm confused and not a little alarmed. The first day of September marks the official start of autumn but it's pretty clear that the first signs of autumn started to arrive at least a month ago. The first indication was the tractors rumbling back and forth, busy harvesting in early August. Then I found myself picking big, fat blackberries and ripe apples in my garden more than a month early, while feeling seasonally unfamiliar chills in the evening. We maintain a little wildflower patch in which there are bee hives but because the wild flowers died off a lot earlier than usual, the bees had to go much further afield to find pollen and nectar.

The Met Office reports that this summer is on track to be one of the warmest since records began in 1884. While the weather has been wonderful, the ramifications for nature are less so. Three successive heatwaves and very little rain are to blame and have accelerated ripening while at the same time 'stressing' trees to take protective measures by dropping leaves early to conserve energy. It's the first time that I've heard that Londoners are being warned not to sit under trees because of the dangers of dying branches suddenly falling.

The knock-on effect on our wildlife is concerning and will have impact into winter and next year. Bees may shut down for winter earlier without enough food to last through and early crops of berries mean there won't be enough to keep birds going.

One can only hope that normal seasonal service will be resumed eventually, but I'm not optimistic. So I'll try to help by growing flowers that will thrive a in dry, sunny climate to keep those bees happy, planning a little wildlife water tub (which I should have done years ago) and setting up more water butts.

Oh, and I'll remember not to sit under trees!

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,

Business and Advertising Manager: Paul Leek, Advertising Assistant: vacant Distribution: Marilyn and Dick Hill, Layout Editor: Camilla Macdonald

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Village Calendar

September		
Thursday 4	Hug in a Mug, Benenden's Community Shop, 10am	p. 13
Thursday 4	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Lunch at Hawkhurst Fish Farm, 12.30pm	p.21
Saturday 6	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	
Saturday 6	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 7	Open Garden, The Copper House, Benenden, 11-4pm	p. 15
Tuesday 9	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 9	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 9	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.9
Friday 12	Hemsted Park, Red Priest, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7.30pm	p. 19
Saturday 13	Bingo, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 14	Village Panto Auditions, Benenden Village Hall, 2.30pm	p.9
Monday 15	Parish Council Meeting, Memorial Hall, 7pm	
Tuesday 16	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Abegail Morley: History of Benenden School	,
	Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.2 l
Friday 19	Hemsted Park, Timothy Rundle, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 1.30pm	p. 19
Saturday 20	Hemsted Park, Chapel Down Wine Tasting Experience,	
	Benenden School Terrace Room, 6pm	p. 19
Saturday 20	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 23	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 23	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 23	Merry and Bright, Cream Tea at Hawkhurst Fish Farm, 2pm	p.2 l
Saturday 27	Local Pilgrimage, St George's Church, 9.45am	p. I 7
Saturday 27	Hemsted Park, Pasadena Roof Orchestra,	
	Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7pm	p. 19
Saturday 27	Autumn Barbecue, St George's Social Club, 7.30pm	
Sunday 28	The Angry Whelk Fresh Fish Stall, Benenden Village Hall, 12-2pm	
Sunday 28	St George's Harvest Lunch, St George's Church, 12.30pm	p. 17

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: Toddler Group

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

Parish Council



Thankfully August has been a quiet month for the parish council. It's the month when we have a break from our monthly meetings, and unless there are a multitude of planning applications to consider, the councillors have a well-deserved break.

One piece of news worth noting, though, is that we are in the process of setting up a new website under www.benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk, in order that we comply with current regulations, and this will be running alongside our old website for a while as our clerk gradually populates the new one. Please do give feedback to Caroline on the new site, and also please do notify her of any community events that you would like us to publicise. Our parish council emails will eventually also come under the format of .gov.uk and we will let you know as soon as these are up and running as well.

There is some progress being made on the setting up of the Community Speedwatch group, with strong representation from our Iden Green residents. It would be really good if we could have volunteers from other areas of the parish as well, so please do let Caroline know if you are able to give a couple of hours every now and then to help with curbing the perennial problem of speeding through our village.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming our new councillor, Debbie Ham, who is joining us in September. This will complete our team and so we are looking forward to picking up our responsibilities with a fresh face to help us look after the best interests of our parish. Welcome, Debbie.

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 15 September, Memorial Hall, 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 7 September 8am Communion 10am All-age 5pm Choral Evensong

Communion

Sunday 14 September 8am BCP Communion 10am Morning Worship Sunday 21 September 8am Communion 10am Sung Eucharist

Saturday 27 September 4pm Connect Four

at Mission Church, Sandhurst

Sunday 28 September 8am Communion I I am Harvest Service

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

Weddings 16 August 'Zanna' Casement and 'Charlie' Cornish

23 August 'Charlie' Hugill and 'Lockie' Ashley-Holligan

Funerals 15 August Paul Gregory Interment

29 August Lorna Elliott Interment

Church Letter



A prayer to share, now as then

Eternal God and Father
help us to entrust the past to your mercy
the present to your love
and the future to your wisdom
In the name of Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

I have treasured this prayer ever since I first came across it many years ago. I love its simplicity and its continuing relevance to all our lives. Often people are so weighed down by memories and regrets from the past, both their own mistakes and misdeeds and the wrongs done to them by others, that they are unable to find freedom and fulfilment in the present. Excessive anxiety about the future is equally disabling, detracting from the enjoyment of what is good now, for fear of what the future may bring.

I pray this prayer for myself, for my loved ones and for those I know in need of its reassurance and encouragement. But recently I have come to see a much wider significance in the words. They are relevant not only to individuals but to government, politics, international relationships and indeed to the Church. The mistakes and bad experiences of the past do not have to hinder our present actions; nor must we succumb to despair about the future.

We are called to live in the present, to act now, in love and hope, and trusting in the power of God to heal and to guide. I only discovered quite recently that the writer of this prayer was Augustine of Hippo, the renowned 4th-century scholar, philosopher and theologian. Prior to his conversion to Christianity in his early 30s he had lived, by his own account, a dissolute life of which he was now ashamed. He knew at first hand how much he needed God's mercy. Moreover he lived, like us, in a time of political instability and anxiety as to what the future would bring. Yet his message was one of hope.

Pandemics, global warming, terrorism, the threat of a third world war, there is plenty to worry about. But as Jesus said, don't waste your time and energy worrying about the future. St Paul, like Augustine, had plenty to repent of, and he also knew all too well that he could not look forward to a quiet old age and a gentle death. His answer, like Augustine's was to live his life in faith, hope and love.

This is what that simple prayer is all about.

Revd Dr Rosemary Kobus van Wengen, Assistant Priest



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Talking Point



A short walk to the café for coffee and creativity

Some writers need calm, some writers need coffee. When he moved to Manhattan, W H Auden, one of my favourite poets, embraced the din of the metropolis, finding the best place to write was in cafés. He was unimportant, anonymous and very productive.

Many writers enjoy the reverse psychology of a change of scene. Kingsley Amis's advice to writers, when they got stuck, was to go for a walk. Even better, I think, if you can walk towards some coffee, too. Blank pages or blank screens don't seem so blank with background noise, people watching and of course, coffee. Or a large cappuccino (or two) and maybe a croissant.

All of this is a circuitous way of saying that since moving to Benenden, I'm very happy to be in walking distance of the village shop, coffee shop and even newsagent for anything hot off the press.

As well as all the usual distractions of working from home, I've had boxes to unpack. Most are books, as I finally have room for my huge collection. My writing advice for moments of being stuck has included 'unpack a box of books', which is a kind of 'go for a walk' for the mind. It's testament to the spectacular book sale that was part of the village fete that I couldn't help but add some truly amazing treasures to my collection, from 1930s poetry of Auden's era, to Penguin classics and the letters of Evelyn Waugh. I just had to find room for these: new friends to go with all of the old ones.

Far from being ignored, thank you everyone for the welcome to the village. In the first weeks of living in the village in frozen February, I also made my own contribution to café hubbub. I was waiting for my wifi to be installed, juggling journalism deadlines (which often involve interviews conducted over Zoom) and embarrassingly misplaced my headphones in the move.

One of my interviews in the midst of all of this was with the science fiction film maker Chris Sanders. We talked about The Wild Robot, his beautiful film nominated for innumerable Oscars, and How To Train Your Dragon, but I can't believe that I forgot to ask him about Lilo & Stitch.

As anyone with small children will know, this is the live action remake of the eccentric cartoon he co-wrote and directed in 2002. Sanders reprises the voice of Stitch, the uncontrollable robot/rescue dog on the loose in Hawaii, which my son can now imitate and launch into at opportune moments.

I blame moving chaos for being so remiss. But perhaps I'm being hard on myself as the success of the film has been unexpected to pretty much everyone. It was planned as a straight-to-streaming release, but the opening in the US surprised everyone by setting the Memorial Day weekend box office record. It's subsequently become a billion-dollar release (and counting...).

Work on the Stitch sequel is underway. If I get the opportunity to write about his creator again, I will plan to misplace my headphones again and see if we can treat the café to the sound of Stitch being interviewed. Benenden kids, at least, will thank me.

Olivia Cole

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News and Events

New Parish Council website

The parish council was extremely fortunate to have been supported with its website for many years by the late Rohan Barnett but is now required to change to a gov.uk domain. The new website, benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk, is now live. Please take a look at it and let us have any feedback.

Caroline Levett clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org

Village lunch

All Benenden villagers are invited to join us for lunch in the village hall at 12.30pm on Tuesday 9 September. If you would like to come and haven't written your name down already, then please ring me by Thursday 4 September if possible. It costs just £5 and lifts can be arranged. We look forward to seeing you. Sheila Hume 854627

Grants for students and school-leavers

The Gibbon and Buckland Charity, which started in 1602 with the gift of the schoolhouse at the foot of The Green, still gives some support to the primary school, but uses most of its income to give student grants. These are available for any young person under the age of 25 who is resident in, and has been resident in, the parish of Benenden for not less than three years and is either in further education or in other ways getting prepared for working life.

Trustees will also give consideration to applications for grants for gap year projects of educational worth. If you could benefit, or know someone who could, please ask for an application form at the community shop, or from the clerk to the charity at gibbonandbuckland@gmail.com. Latest date for applications is 30 September.

Rowena Hagell



Benenden panto auditions

We're looking for about eight talented adults and the same number of children (must be aged 10 or more) for the Benenden Players' next stellar production, 'Jack and the Pet Shop', which will have its world premiere from 30 January-1 February for four joy-packed performances.

We need some to act, some to sing, some to dance and some to do all three. Talent a bonus, heart essential. Everyone who gets a part needs to commit to rehearsals every Sunday afternoon (adults and children) and adults to Thursday evenings on top (from about mid-October onwards).

Auditions will be held in Benenden village hall at 2.30pm (until 5.30pm) on 14 September. No need to dress up, but if you can sing it'll be worth having a few verses of something ready.

Any questions, please email: markhollander1@googlemail.com or mrjamesconmy@icloud.com



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Consider joining our committee.

Additionally, the committee needs two more members. In particular we are looking for someone who is good at DIY or has tech skills. To join the committee please contact Gary Bell 07974 207548 | garydb@gmail.com

Dementia support

Hug in a Mug gatherings are popping up all over Kent thanks to local community interest company, The Dementia Experience.

These coffee mornings were instigated when Clara Hebblethwaite, the Founder of The Dementia Experience, was looking for others in the same boat as she struggled to deal with her mother's dementia. She knew how important it was to find support from those who got it, whilst tooling up with as much knowledge about dementia as she could find.

Anne Burdon, one of The Dementia Experience Volunteer Directors who hosts the Hug in a Mug in Benenden, describes why she does what she does.

"I love hosting Hug in a Mug. People arrive looking desperately overwhelmed and you can sense the isolation they are feeling. It doesn't take long for them to realise they are not alone. They swap stories with others, seek advice from others, all of whom really get it as they've all been touched by dementia. The books can only tell part of the story - peer support from those who've actually lived it fills in the missing chapters. Most of those that come along are sole carers for their loved ones. They simply don't have the time, the energy or the reserves to spend hours researching extra support available to them. More often than not somebody in the group knows the answer. If not, I can do the leg work for them. It can be anything from signposting to care agencies or private carers, to the more mundane stuff of where to source a wheelchair. Hug in a Mug is a safe space to share all emotions. We laugh together, we cry together, we natter about everything and anything - we become a family."

Hug in a Mug Benenden takes place on the first Thursday of every month in the café at Benenden's community shop, 10-11.30am. Free tea, coffee, cake and conversation with those who understand.

To find out more please contact: Anne Burdon, The Dementia Experience anne@dementia-experience.com www.dementia-experience.com



Benenden Village Hall

From August onwards several prime-time slots have now become available to book for regular hirers in either or both of our halls We can offer availability on Monday mornings, Tuesday evenings and Friday mornings. Discounted rates are offered for our regular hirers with prices starting from as little as £13.50 per hour (for the small hall/meeting room). If you are looking for a venue then the hall could be perfect. Please contact me. John Betts, Hall Manager 07419 989830 enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org

Talking shop

September heralds some new additions to our menu. Cosy up with sausage, mash and beans; chicken or vegetable curry; macaroni cheese; lasagne or jackets with a choice of fillings.

Due to popular demand we will repeat our 'Craftanoon' on 31 October: three sessions; 1-2pm, 2.15-3.15pm and 3.30 -4-30pm. Arts and crafts, spooky games, and spooky hamper for the best dressed child up to ten years. £12 per child. Spaces are limited so be sure to sign up soon.

From September our shop closing hours will return to 5pm on Thursdays and Fridays and we will be closing the café on Sunday.

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

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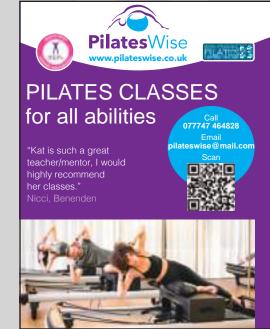
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GROUP MAT CLASSES Monday 8.30pm

Benenden Village Hall

Benenden Village Hall

Thursday 9am Bloomsburys, Biddenden

St Andrew's Church Hall, Tenterden

GROUP REFORMER CLASSES PRIVATE ONE TO ONE & DUETS

Monday-Thursday 9am-4pm in new Pilates Studio, Benenden

Benenden Primary School

I am thrilled to be the new headteacher of the school where I have worked for II years, starting as a Year 3 teacher in 2014. I am passionate about the school and all the children who are part of it and look forward to continuing to further develop links within the community as the year goes on. I am a strong advocate for being outside - whether learning or playing. I am a scout leader in Cranbrook and a worship leader (and pastor's wife) at Staplehurst Free Church.

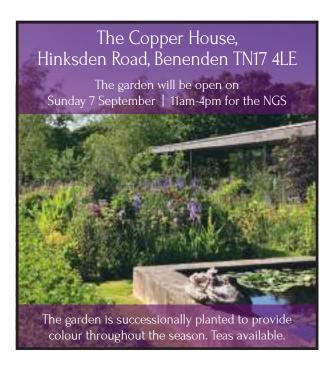
We recently held our final celebration collective worship, where we had many cup and award winners. Our head boy, Alfred R, and head girl, Annabel W, handed over the baton to George G and Caoilainn C. For the first time, we also appointed deputy head boy and girl - Noah B and Florence L.

We ended our school year by saying goodbye, not only to our incredible executive headteacher, Lindsay Roberts, but also to Mia Jackson one of our teachers, who has moved on to a school closer to home, and Debbie Herbert, a teaching assistant who has led the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant programme within the school, as well as supporting many children along the way.

We also bid farewell to our Year 6 class as they go off to new schools, having had some very successful SATs results at the end of the year. We are very proud of the people that they have become and wish them success as they make the next step in their journey of life.

This month we will hit the ground running, hosting a Macmillan Coffee Morning on Friday 26 September from 9.45am-11.30am, to which you are all invited. I look forward to meeting you.

Alison Brook, Headteacher 240565 a.brook@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk



Benenden Pre-School

We were very happy to participate in the first Benenden Gardening Club Summer Flower and Produce Show. With the support of one of our lovely parents, the children planted up three mini gardens in tub trugs in preparation for the show. The theme of the mini gardens was to delight the senses. The first one was for sight and was full of colourful flowers including lobelia and begonia. The second appealed to our sense of smell and included herbs such as rosemary and basil. The third was to tempt our taste buds and was planted with potatoes and carrots.

The children were delighted when Sally-Ann Marks visited us to present them with a certificate of congratulations for entering the sensory mini gardens, and even more delighted that she gave each child a packet of seeds, kindly donated by Cranbrook Farm Shop and Nursery, for them to take home and plant over the summer.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk





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Pastures new for Penny

Sadly we are saying goodbye to our longest serving member of staff, Penny Roberts. Penny will be arming herself with fork and trowel to spend more time with her plant business and with animals, both her passions. Penny has been with the community shop since March 2016, starting in the café and then moving to the Post Office - always a familiar face behind the counter and a pleasure to work with. We wish her much joy and hope to see her relaxing in the café or, dare I say it, volunteering!

Friends of Benenden Primary School

As the summer holidays come to an end we reflect on what has been a wonderful year of fundraising, fun, and community spirit so far.

The past term was packed with memorable events that brought families, staff, and villagers together in support of our school. From the ever-popular bake sales to the bustling village fete, our events have been a brilliant way to raise funds and foster community connections. The Easter Trail was a hit, with families enjoying clues, scavenging and chocolate.

A huge highlight was the lively barn dance, which had everyone up on their feet and celebrating. And let's not forget the pop-up bar at the KS2 production - a lovely touch adding to the evening's atmosphere while raising funds.

These events are not possible without the hard work of our members and the amazing support from our school community. Thank you to everyone who volunteered, donated, baked, danced, served, and supported - your contributions make all the difference.

We're full of ideas but always welcome more. If you have suggestions for events or ways we can better support the school, we'd love to hear. We look forward to another exciting year. Evie Banfield and Jane Mason

Evie Banfield and Jane Mason friends@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk/PTFA/



Pilgrimage walk

We are happy to announce that we are planning another local pilgrimage walk, taking in the lanes, byways and footpaths around Benenden, stopping for reflection and having the time to connect with nature and enjoy the company of fellow pilgrims whilst walking in our wonderful countryside.

This will take place on Saturday 27
September, starting from St George's Church at 9.45am for a 10am start. The walk will be around three to four miles long, using as much of the off-road routes as possible and finishing back at the church for a well-earned cuppa and our traditional offering of cake.

We would love to walk with you. If you have further questions, please get in touch.

Revd Ylva 07766 711957 rev.ylva@gmail.com Lyn Hayes 07792 332904 lindapin@aol.com

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Timothy Rundle **Oboe Recital** 19 September

Wine tasting

20 September

Pasadena Roof Orchestra 27 September

Harry The Piano

8 October









Sherlock Holmes: The Hunt For Moriarty 10 & 11 October

The Real Manhunter 17 October

Spot's **Birthday Party** 23 & 24 October

London Concertante Four Seasons 30 October

Blazin' Fiddles

9 November











The BBC Big Band 22 November

Jess Gillam

11 December

Lost in Music

12 December

The Nutcracker

13 December

Faulty Towers Dining Experience 13 & 14 December



The Philharmonia **Brass at Christmas** 19 December



NT Live Hamlet 25 January



The Nat King Cole Story 13 February



Ben Fogle

23 February



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Benenden Cricket Club

Our home fixtures for September on The Green are:

Saturday 6 September v Sandhurst at 1.30pm Saturday 13 September v Sissinghurst at 1pm

Looking to store equipment

One community-minded neighbour has volunteered use of part of their garage to help Benenden Cricket Club to store our mowers but we still have a ride-on roller, for which we still need to find a home. Do you have space in an outhouse or garage which you are not using? If you can help, please contact me. Barry Bassett bb@vmi.tv

Merry and Bright

Throughout the year we have had a steady stream of newcomers who enjoy the club. They are hard to attract, because when we ask people to come along, a lot say "no", and when asked why, they all say the same: that we only sit, drink tea and gossip. Maybe years ago that was true, but the club has moved on and we either have a speaker or a demonstration, lots of outings and garden parties, with no time for gossip. Tables are put together so we can communicate as one.

Do pop along and see for yourselves. Your first visit is free. If you join this far into the year you will pay less. We look forward to seeing you. If you have any queries or would like a lift please contact one of us.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 23 September for a cream tea at the Waterside Café, Hawkhurst Fish Farm. We would be very pleased if you joined us.

Laraine Penny, Chair 241763 Julia Collard, Secretary 241944



Standen Orchard celebration

We've now confirmed the dates for the Standen Orchard annual general meeting and ensuing Apple Day Celebration for Sunday 12 October. The AGM will be held at the Iden Green Pavilion at 11am and the celebration will start at 1.30pm at Standen Street, TN17 4LB (what3words: intend.poodle.proposals). Genuine family fun: PYO, music, archery, apple juice and pressing, cider and food. Bring a picnic. Local produce stallholders are welcome. Please contact me. Susie Armstrong 07748 180801

Iden Green and Benenden WI

We all enjoyed being shown paracise exercises by Kim Wheeler. It was good that everyone was able to join in and most of us benefited in one way or another. Another outing to the Hawkhurst Fish Farm is planned for 4 September, meeting there at 12.30pm. Please make sure your name is on the list and let us know if a lift is needed.

On 16 September, Abegail Morley, is coming to the Memorial Hall to talk to us about the history of Benenden School. Having met Miss Bird briefly when we first came to the village, this will be the icing on the cake. Should any ladies wish to join us for any of our activities, do please get in touch. Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

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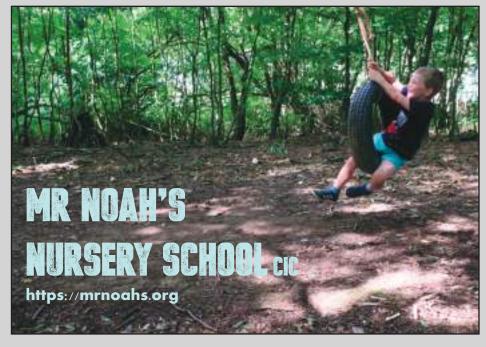




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Grief talk

Coming to terms with the loss of a loved one can be one of the hardest things we have to do. When someone has died, while we may feel our loved one is at peace, it can still leave us with hugely mixed emotions.

From 10am-12noon on Saturday 20
September in the Mission Church, Back Road,
Sandhurst TN18 5JU, we are offering a morning
to explore our grief through conversation,
readings and crafting together. It will be a safe
space to come to talk and share what has been
going on for you. Talking to others who have
been through similar experiences can be
helpful, or just knowing that someone is there
to listen.

For more information and to book this free workshop please contact:

Claire Roberts 754374 claireecr57@yahoo.com

Benenden School

The start of the academic year is always filled with a special kind of energy, much like the very enjoyable Benenden village tennis tournament we had the pleasure of hosting once again. As a school, the excitement, possibility and promise that come with new beginnings, new students and new staff sets the tone for the months ahead: one of curiosity, challenge and community.

Beginnings take many forms. For our new students, it marks the start of friendships, discoveries, and learning that will shape their futures. For our Sixth Formers, it is the beginning of their final years at Benenden, full of leadership opportunities and personal growth. For staff, it can mean the start of new roles or initiatives and for the school as a whole, it is a time to reflect on where we've come from and where we are going.

With a new school year ahead of us, I am excited for all that lies in store.
Rachel Bailey, Headmistress

Planning Matters

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

- 25/01835/FULL The Barn, Great Nineveh,
 Nineveh Lane. Single storey rear extension and installation of rooflights and replace stables with annex building
- 25/01640/LBC Campion House, Standen Street. Removal of cementitious material from the external panels & re-rendering. Timber repairs, the re-introduction of I timber support, and the introduction of I timber support. Internal replastering & the replacement of 2 rooflights.
- 25/01543/FULL Land Adjacent To Bikkel, Goddards Green Road. Conversion of outbuilding to single dwelling.
- 25/01698/LBC Benenden C Of E Primary School, The Green. Addition of window to West elevation (Alterations to schemes 22/02278/LBC & 23/00410/LBC).
- 25/01665/FULL Netters Hall, Attwaters
 Lane, Hawkhurst. Reinstatement of
 basement lightwell, new painted hardwood
 windows to the central range of the south
 elevation & conservation roof lights. (Alterations related to 22/03567/FULL &
 24/01668/FULL).
- 25/01880/FULL Waters End Farm, Standen Street. Single-storey rear extension connecting to existing outbuilding; roof extension; repositioning of dormer window; removal of brick steps & extension of exterior retaining wall.

More planning matters at: benendenparishcouncil.org



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01580 240755 m.moore131156@gmail.com Mick Moore

Rhythm of Life Choir

Just an advance reminder that due to the renovation work starting in St George's Church later this year, we will be moving to St Nicholas Church, Sandhurst in January.

Carla Smith

Benenden Hospital

In September, I'm continuing the celebration of our hospital staff, through the many recognition days: International Housekeeping Appreciation Week, World Patient Safety Day, IT Professionals Day, World Pharmacists Day and HR Professional Day. I'm proud of the dedication and commitment our staff demonstrate day in, day out at our hospital. We're always highlighting these key days across our social media platforms and hope that you find the posts interesting and engaging.

Did you know we also launched our TikTok account @benenden_hospital this summer? This social media channel allows users to watch, create and share short videos online. We're using TikTok to showcase our amazing staff, hospital facilities and private treatments.

On 13 September, it's World Sepsis Day, so I wanted to raise awareness about the signs and symptoms of this life-threatening condition so you can act quickly. They are: slurred speech or new confusion; extreme shivering or muscle pain; passing no urine (in a day); severe breathlessness; it feels like you are going to die; skin is mottled, discoloured or very pale.

Moving into the cooler months, it's important we take the necessary steps to optimise our immune system and wellbeing ready for winter. This could include boosting your nutrition, adapting your exercise routine or taking more time out for you.

Claire Harley, Hospital Director





Volunteer Transport Group

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.

The group has responded to more than 60 requests for assistance since being re-formed, but to keep up with demand we would always welcome new volunteers to sign up and help out. There is no minimum time commitment, so if you are interested, do please get in touch with me.

Mick Moore 240755 m.moore131156@gmail.com

St George's Church



Royal patronage for Restore, Renew, Rejoice project: call for volunteer fundraising and event skills

First phase planned to start in January next year

We were honoured to host a visit by Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Edinburgh GCVO, on 13 June to St George's Church. Her Royal Highness was accompanied on her visit by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, the Lady



Colgrain. Her Royal Highness took a great deal of interest in the Restore, Renew, Rejoice project, particularly our desire to create more volunteering opportunities in the community and to make the church more accessible and comfortable. After a very engaging conversation with the project team and some members of the congregation, Her Royal Highness agreed to be our patron.





Formal approval from the Church of England We are delighted to let you know that after many years of hard work, all the permissions are now in place for the improvement works we wish to carry out in St George's. Just ahead of the royal visit we heard from the Church of England that our 'faculty' had been granted - this followed an earlier notification from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council that our planning permission had also been agreed.

Capital fundraising campaign

These milestones mark a significant achievement in the project, and we now move into the delivery phase. This means that we need to significantly accelerate our fundraising efforts. The church has already raised £850,000, through legacies, investments and congregational giving, but the latest estimates indicate that the total cost of this project will be in the range of £1.7-1.9 million. We have already applied to several grantmaking trusts and, starting in September, will approach local businesses for support.

How can you get involved? To achieve our ambitious capital fundraising target we need specific help as follows:

Are you an event organiser?

Can you help secure a crowd puller?
The Benenden community has been gifted an opportunity to run a fundraising event at
Hemsted Park by Benenden School and we need a volunteer to take ownership of forming a committee to organise and deliver a high-profile event and to net at least £20,000. The event will likely be in October 2026. The idea is to attract a 'big name' capable of attracting new potential donors from as wide an area as possible. If you

have any connections with a 'big name' who

contact benenden2020project@gmail.com.

might be willing to support our campaign, please

Researcher/Online fundraising campaign
As part of the capital fundraising campaign,
we are planning to reconnect with anyone
married or baptised in the church within the
last 50 years. We will ask them to donate and
encourage friends and family to do the same via
www.stgeorgeschurchbenenden.co.uk. The ideal
person would have sufficient time and computer
skills to collate the data from church and other
records and then run a simple online marketing
campaign. We would also encourage them to
attend the planned event at Hemsted Park.

Capital fundraising subcommittee

This subcommittee is very keen to hear of any contacts that villagers may have with relevant grant-making trusts, any suggestions you may have for capital fundraising schemes or if you have time and skills that you can give to fundraising. Please get in touch through our website or email benenden2020project@gmail.com.

We have been so grateful for ongoing local support in terms of practical help and financial resources. Individuals can make a donation through our project website at www.stgeorgeschurchbenenden.co.uk.

Start date for construction and access
Given the scale and complexity of the project, it has been split into phases for both construction and fundraising purposes.
The first phase - the new heating system with level floor - is scheduled to start in January 2026. The subsequent phases will follow to optimise the alignment of fundraising and cost-effective construction. This approach will also reduce the impact on the worship life of the church. Alternative provision has been made for services and community activities for the unavoidable closures. The plan is for the church to be available for significant community use by Advent and Christmas 2026.







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St George's Church

- A reminder of what we are raising funds for This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to future-proof the church for our children and their children. The focus to improve access and comfort for all regardless of outside temperature! We plan to reorder internal and external church facilities to make it more inclusive and welcoming for future generations:
- Improving disability access to allow step-free entry to the church from the road.
- Removing changes in floor levels and trip hazards to establish a new, level, insulated surface across the whole nave and west end of the church.
- Improving heating and lighting with carbonreducing technologies, which will reduce carbon emissions and annual running costs.
- Improving insulation and draft-proofing so that heat generated stays in the building.
- Provision of internal and accessible toilet and baby-change facilities.
- Updating audio-visual equipment for the hearing-impaired and reduction in obtrusive noise from the current heating system.
- Installing kitchen facilities to support a broader range of community events.
- Repurposing an underutilised space into a multipurpose room.
- Enhancing broadband and power provision to support all of the above.

The benefits to our community

- A warm safe space for all ages for private prayer, community events and religious services throughout the year including the colder months.
- Weekly structured play activities for babies/toddlers and their carers.
- Digital literacy skills training, equipment and intergenerational volunteering opportunities.
- A community space for engagement, connection and reflection, be that silence and solitude, coffee mornings, bell ringing, flower arranging or community singing, all of which have been shown to support positive mental wellbeing.
- A building more able to respond to the evolving needs of our community.
- Reducing environmental impact and applying for exemplary 'Eco church' accreditation.

The PCC and project team at St George's would like to express grateful thanks to:
Her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Edinburgh GCVO; the governing council and senior leadership team at Benenden School;
Oliver Streeten, Trueplan (UK) limited;
Benenden Magazine.

Peter Brook, Project 20|20 Community Liaison benenden2020project@gmail.com





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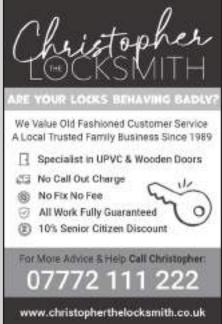
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Gibbon and Buckland Charitable Trust



Gibbon School House: village landmark for sale as KCC lease ends

The Gibbon School House sits in a prominent position at the bottom of The Green. It was donated to the village by Edmund Gibbon at the beginning of the 17th century and opened as a free school in 1609, as noted on a board on the front of the building. School use on the site continued for over 400 years until the primary school moved to its new site in 2019.

The building is owned by the Gibbon and Buckland Charitable Trust, whose constitution enables it to spend its annual income paying grants for educational and training courses undertaken by those under 25 who live in the parish, and in supporting the primary school. In 2024 grants of more than £27,000 were paid to young people in the village, following advertisements in this magazine and the village shop.

Until this summer, Kent County Council had a full repairing and insuring lease of the property and paid the trustees a market rent. The rent has been almost the sole source of the charity's income used to fund its annual grants. However, as the building is no longer for school

use, KCC understandably wished to end its financial commitment when the lease came to an end on 30 June.

This left the trustees with a difficult decision. Should they try to keep the building as an investment or should they look to sell it and to invest the proceeds in order to provide an income? The school house is listed and part of it has been empty for six years. Inevitably, expenditure on repairs and maintenance will be required on an ongoing basis, and insurance is relatively costly. The charity does not have significant funds with which to upgrade or adapt

the building for letting, notwithstanding the external maintenance carried out at KCC's expense in 2024.

Being a grant-making charity means that the trust needs a sufficient and stable income to achieve its permitted objectives each year. That income had been available under KCC's lease, because KCC was also responsible for the upkeep and insurance of the building. That is no longer the case. Being a local charity, the trust is not set up to deal with either residential or commercial letting. With all these factors in mind and having obtained independent professional advice about the available options, the trustees have concluded, albeit with some sadness, that there is no alternative but to seek a sale. Legally the trustees had to consider what is in the best interests of the charity and steps are being taken to put the property on the market in the early autumn.

The trustees very much hope that the outside of the building will remain largely as it is, partly as a result of being listed but also because of its position in the conservation area of the village. Inevitably, the use and ownership of buildings has to be adapted in the face of changing circumstances as time passes.

Simon Brown, Chairman of the Trustees

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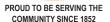


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Primary School







Alice in Wonderland: extraordinary and bizarre

The Benenden Primary School Year 6 end-ofterm production featured the incredible story of Alice's trials and trails through a

wonderful array of scenes and adventures, meeting extraordinary, bizarre and gloriously costumed creatures performed

by very talented children.

The show, written especially for schools, featured scenes set between catchy songs involving solos and groups from the cast. The rectangular stage was set in the centre of the hall and encircled by children from Years 3, 4 and 5, who all contributed actions and songs with enthusiastic fervour.

We had three Alices, brilliantly performed by Anabel, Phoebe and

Agnes, whose different heights allow the story to unfold as Alice navigates the problems and opportunities in Wonderland. The



performances illustrated their bewilderment in scenes where they encountered the White Rabbit, the Caterpillar, the Cheshire Cat, the Queen of Hearts and so many weird characters.

This is a crazy world where nothing seems to make sense.

Characters appeared from the four corners of the hall and from 'a hole in ground' centre stage, spot lit, to play their part in this strange tale. The enthusiasm and quality of performance of the entire cast was enjoyed by us all. There were many standout performances, including Alice's encounters with the Queen of Hearts (Issy), the Caterpillar (Gracie), the White Rabbit (Penny) and the Mad Hatter (Alfie), leading to her return to her caring parents (George S and Floss).

Credit goes to the entire staff for their effort, especially Miss Allen and Mr Emmett, whose talents perfected the production.

Tony Ceeney







Spotlight



The Sweet Scent of Success

Sara Tidy meets Simon de Wilde, founder of Hawkhurst Lavender

It's the most perfect summer's day. In glorious sunshine heat shimmers across the fields and bees hover above neat rows of fragrant purple flowers. In this idyllic setting, I'm here to meet Simon de Wilde, founder of Hawkhurst Lavender, to discover how he's turned an unexpected passion for lavender into a thriving family business.

As we follow the path between swathes of lavender spikes which brush against our legs, releasing a fresh herbal scent, Simon explains: "This is an English lavender - called intermedia Grosso X. When it's distilled, it has a very light floral scent. I use it because it yields a lot of oil which comes from glands all over the plant - in the stems, leaves, and flowers. I cut and distil it the same day in small vats for around two hours, which keeps the scent fresh."

I learn that the process is a little like distilling whiskey. "You boil water, the steam bursts the oil glands, the steam rises, travels through a condenser, cools down and turns back into liquid. That liquid separates into lavender-infused water, called hydrosol, and the essential oil floating on top." He continues:

"Hydrosol is antibacterial, antimicrobial, antiinflammatory, antiseptic, hydrating, soothing, and calming. It has micro-particles of lavender oil in it, so it's diluted and safe.

"We currently sell it as a toner, but we're now going to package it as a 'cleanser and toner' because it gently and effectively removes makeup and cleans skin without soap. We also sell it as face or body mist - it's great to refresh or calm the skin, or to soothe mild burns."

Banking on lavender

I wonder where Simon's passion for lavender and its healing properties came from. Did he have a pharmaceutical or manufacturing background? Not at all. Facing the end of his career as a derivatives broker in the City, he was forced to reflect on and re-evaluate the next stage of his life.

"I wondered what to do next - I was too young to do 'nothing' and would have driven my wife and family mad without a project!" So, with some land on their property and a lifelong interest in plants nurtured by his late mother, Simon started exploring smallholding projects. Lavender kept cropping up in his research - it thrives in poor, well-drained soil and offers a wealth of possibilities for natural products.

"As my wife and daughter both have sensitive skin, the idea of developing some natural products was appealing, so I planted a test plot." The lavender crop grew so well that Simon bought a small still from Portugal and harvested the first batch. "From the moment I distilled it, and that fresh lavender oil came through, I was hooked and convinced that it was worth selling!"

Blending a family business

From that first lavender planting to marketing a finished product has been a steep learning curve. Simon's wife, Charlotte, whose own background is in IT and HR, drew on her experience with sensitive skin to develop and create some natural, gentle skincare products. She researched carrying oils meticulously, ensuring they were non-pore-clogging and packed with nutrients.

"All our skincare products have to pass strict

testing, including preservative safety," she says. "We didn't want to use chemicals or alcohol, so we found a natural preservative, which we reformulated, and which passed testing. Our hand and face oils contain 14 different plant oils, and each one brings something unique - antioxidants, vitamins, hydration.

"Everything is designed to sink in quickly, so you're not left with a 'greasy' feeling on your skin."

Labels, branding, and product development are now Charlotte's territory, while Simon handles growing, distilling, and blending. "Even the kids attend the local fairs and shows with us and help us in testing samples. It's become a real family business."

From kitchen table to National Trust

When Hawkhurst Lavender was launched in 2022, Simon expected the online platform Etsy would be a good place for sales: "We thought orders would fly out the window, but it was really slow going."

Instead, local craft fairs became their key route to market. Meeting customers face-to-face allowed Simon to explain the difference between mass-market lavender and their fresh, small-batch products. His charm, enthusiasm and passion for the product attracted customers like bees to honey, sales grew, and positive feedback spread.

Hawkhurst Lavender is now sold across 15 local stores (including Benenden's community shop), the couple continue to attend fairs and shows to connect with customers personally and, the icing on the cake, the National Trust has selected Hawkhurst Lavender as a local producer to be stocked in their gift stores across the county.

Lavender Fields Forever

The lavender fields have already doubled in size, with improved irrigation and natural drainage. Two hair oils - a finishing oil and an overnight treatment - are in development but there are no plans to scale beyond what the family can manage.

Simon says: "I grow, harvest, distil, and make it all myself. That's the beauty of it - being involved

in every step. I'm proud of what we've built. It's not about making a fortune; it's about purpose, passion, and creating something good."

He is clearly doing something he loves at the same time as using his invaluable skills from a lifetime in sales and connecting with people. I ask if he would ever go back to the City, if he could?

"Not likely! I'm a lucky man. I've a true family business. This is undeniably the Good Life - lavender-scented, family-run, and built on love."

Simon's story is proof positive that it's never too late to find your passion, to reinvent and repurpose your skills, and to create a new path for yourself and your family. Take some time to look around you, reflect on what you're good at, what you care about and be open to opportunities.

As my Auntie Jean once said, "Take some time to smell the roses," or, in this case, the lavender.

THE RANGE

Hydrosol (Toner/Mist) Cleansing, hydrating lavender water.

Hand & Nail Oil A 14-oil blend to moisturize hands and strengthen nails.

Face Oil Nourishing facial oil rich in antioxidants and vitamins.

Massage Oil Lightweight blend for soothing massages.

Foot Oil Peppermint-infused for tired feet and

improved circulation.

Body Oils Including a spicy fenugreek blend and an insectrepelling formula.

Pillow Mist Relaxing spray combining hydrosol and essential oil for better sleep.

Muscle Rub Nine oils to ease inflammation and aches.

Beard Oil Conditioning blend for facial hair and skin.

Every product is vegan, plant-based, and handmade in small batches on-site.



<u>In Your Garden</u>



Tall plants, the perfect planting partners

I used to help maintain a two-acre garden on the outskirts of Horsmonden, shortly after finishing my studies at Hadlow. The owner was a very keen gardener and plantswoman and was fortunate enough to have a very obliging husband with deep pockets. I largely 'cut my teeth' in gardening here and spent a happy three years or so assisting her in developing the garden. She was dotty about perennials, grasses and dahlias - shrubs were assigned to a border of their own - and she had a good eye for a plant, which she mostly curated from a small plant nursery conveniently located on her way back from the school run.

Each week I would turn up for work and there would be a little group of new purchases waiting to be planted. One time I remember seeing a very tall, bendy, narrow-leaved plant called 'Helianthus salicifolius', which was not yet in flower and to my untrained eye looked like an overgrown weed.

How wrong I was. By the end of summer this beautiful, statuesque plant was well over nine feet tall with masses of waving stems and small, yellow, sunflower-like flowers in abundance. Threading through nearby was a generous drift of salvia uliginosa, with piercing

blue flowers mingling with a tall miscanthus sinensis 'Malepartus'. Orange and cerise cactus dahlias filled in any gaps, with groups of fluffy pennisetum flowerheads at the front making a striking combination that has stayed with me.

Eupatoriums are another favourite that I like to partner with pink or purple loosestrifes, filipendulas or veronicastrums, which all look good in the winter months, too. There's a really good rudbeckia, R. laciniata, which has good self-supporting properties and another favourite is the goat's beard Aruncus dioicus, with its fluffy white flowerheads and cut-leaf foliage. The taller grasses are perfect to plant nearby and I have even been known to plant a 'hedge' out of tall miscanthus, to screen the edge of a swimming pool for a client.

The Miscanthus sacchariflorus is gigantic, not for the faint-hearted, but I managed to convince a client once to squeeze one into a very tiny, tropical-themed garden I was planting for them, and it really worked well. Another favourite, but not to everyone's tastes, is the giant reed Arundo donax variegata - very tall, vigorous and variegated and a must in a tropical theme.

All these lofty plants can be very useful if you need to fill or screen a space quickly, particularly in a large border where nearby shrubs have yet to catch up. It is best to buy

your tall plants small, in one-litre pots preferably - I have tried putting in ten-litre miscanthus and it was a disaster trying to get it, but others may say differently. Planting small saves hugely on watering and prevents any fretting about establishment - younger plants thread through in a way no amount of human intervention could ever achieve and they soon catch up to make a pleasing display.

In loving memory of my father,
who died last month at the age of 92.
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Above: Community in action: pre-schoolers are presented with a certificate of congratulations on behalf of the Benenden Gardening Club's Flower & Produce Show; Merry and Bright enjoy a sociable afternoon outing; cricket club supporter's cards were given out at the family double wicket event; complimentary youth table tennis in full swing Front cover: Basking in the sunshine: Taking time to appreciate fleeting moments. Photograph: Janet Beattie