

Benenden Magazine

June 2024



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Editorial



So, after a lot of sound and fury, we have three borough councillors to represent our new ward of Hawkhurst, Sandhurst and Benenden: Tom Dawlings (Conservative), Beverley Palmer (Conservative) and Ellen Neville (Tunbridge Wells Alliance). I'm just hoping that our parish's presence in third place on the official ward designation doesn't turn out to be a reflection of our place in the political pecking order behind two bigger entities. We can ill afford to be treated as an afterthought, so will be relying on our elected members to fight our corner. The plan is to allow each of them to submit a brief outline of their hopes and plans for Benenden in next month's magazine, which may give us a clearer idea of their commitment to the local cause. Watch this space.

In the meantime, village life goes on as normal, if the Benenden fete could ever be described as normal. This year's event, on Saturday 15 June, will contain all the usual tradition, talent, beer, barbecue, cricket and cow pats, with the added attraction of studying the look on the face of the person who wins first prize in the raffle and realises they've got themselves a 'wing walk' - as in being strapped to the wing of an aeroplane that's actually flying, in the air, at a great height.

Will it be, in the spirit of my co-editor, a look of unbridled excitement at the prospect of such daredevilry? Or just one of mortal terror. Then again, if it sounds like your worst nightmare come true, you could always donate it to a 'good friend' or 'favourite relative'. Either way, many thanks to The Wing Walk Company for donating a prize that will add a new and unexplored dimension even to our eccentric and much-loved summer highlight.

If you've never been, it's an unmissable treat and the culmination of many months of hard work by a lot of noble villagers. If you've been many times, you won't need me to tell you it's the only place to be.

Peter Thomas, Co-Editor

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 2 June 8am Communion 10am All-age Communion 5pm Choral Evensong

Sunday 9 June 8am BCP Communion 10am Morning Worship

Sunday 16 June 8am Communion 10am Sung Eucharist

Saturday 22 June 4pm Connect Four at Mission Church, Sandhurst

Sunday 23 June 8am Communion 10am Sung Eucharist at St Nicholas, Sandhurst *

Sunday 30 June 8am Benefice Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst 10am Benefice All-age Communion

Morning Prayer 8am Mondays and Fridays

* There is no 10am service at St George's Church. This benefice service will mark Vicki Young leaving us as she is ordained on Saturday 29 June and begins her training curacy in Marden.

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

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

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Funerals 7 May Christopher Neve Memorial Service

13 May Jean Patterson Funeral

31 May Gerald and Kathleen Gurr Interment

31 May Frederick Page Funeral

Church Letter



Joy for 30 years of women in the priesthood

The day I wrote this piece, I attended a special, wonderful service at our cathedral; a service that celebrated the 30th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood in the Church of England. Someone said to me just before I went: “Is it only 30 years that women have been priested?” This was said with real surprise. Yes, it is only 30 years since gender equality started to come to the CoE.

Back in 1862, women were first admitted as deaconesses in the CoE, but this as a lay-order, not an ordained role. The first call for the ordination of women was brought to the Lambeth Conference in 1920. In 1975 the General Synod (the governing body of the CoE) said: “There are no theological fundamental objections to the ordination of women to the priesthood.” It was not until 1987 that the first women were ordained as deacons, but still not priests. In 1992, General Synod voted (just) in favour of women priests. Some parishes passed resolutions: A) women could not be the incumbent, or B) women could not preside at the Eucharist.

It was under these unequal resolutions that the first women were finally ordained as priests in 1994 (the very first women in the Bristol Diocese on 12 March; the first women in the Canterbury Diocese on 8 May). In 2005, General Synod began the process for women bishops. The first female bishop was commissioned ten years later in 2015. In 2019, 26 years after the ordination of women to the priesthood, Bishop Rose, our Bishop of Dover, became the first black female bishop in the CoE.

So today, having attended this wonderful celebration service, I gave thanks for those pioneering women; but I also recognise the pain and battles they went through. I gave thanks for the women priests who have served, and continue to serve, in our own parishes: for Revd Sheila Smallman, Revd Rosemary and Revd Ylva. And, at the end of June, we will celebrate again as Vicki Young is ordained a deacon at the cathedral - she will be priested in 2025. Our parishes, our pastoral care, our worship, would be all the poorer without them. Thanks be to God for their ministry amongst us.

Priestly ministry, and the sacramental ministry of the Eucharist, does not depend upon the person (that is part of the 39 Articles of Religion adopted in 1562). It is God’s ‘calling’ to which we, all deacons and priests, are responding: “There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God at work in all.” I rejoice in the ministry of all who have responded to God’s call, and all who will respond in the future. “You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit.” What joy. Alleluia!

Revd David Commander, Rector and Area Dean

Village Calendar

June

Saturday 1	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	
Saturday 1	Bingo, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 2	St George's Project 20 20, Open Meeting, St George's Church, 11.30am	p.11
Tuesday 4	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 4	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Thursday 6	Official Opening of the Wellbeing Garden, Benenden Primary School, 10.30am	p.9
Saturday 8	Darts, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 11	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.13
Wednesday 12	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Lunch at The Trough, Charity Farm, 12.30pm	p.11
Saturday 15	Benenden Fete, in aid of St George's Church, The Green, 12noon-4pm	pull-out
Saturday 15	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Monday 17	Parish Council Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Tuesday 18	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 18	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 18	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Garden Party at a Member's home, 5.30pm	p.11
Friday 21	Island Hopping in the Med, Benenden School Terrace, 7pm	p.33
Saturday 23	Golf Game, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Monday 25	Merry and Bright, Garden Party, Balmoral Cottage, Benenden, 2pm	p.11
Saturday 29	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	
Saturday 29	Skittles, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	

Iden Green Toddler Group

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

Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-11.30am

Benenden Bowls Club

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

Cakes & Chaos: Café and Toddler Group

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

Parish Council



The Benenden Parish Council (BPC) meets at 7pm every third Monday of the month with the exception of August when no meeting is held and in December - 2nd Monday of the month. Meetings are open to the public, although, sadly, we don't see many Benenden parishioners attending ours other than those who may have a particular interest, such as a planning application.

You are probably aware of the many projects that the BPC has embarked upon in recent times: the restoration of the Grade II listed wells in Benenden and Iden Green; the public toilets; the village green flag pole (work in progress); the village notice boards (soon to be replaced); and the continuing creation of the wild flower meadow, which will one day be a wonderful space for both people and nature. We are also responsible for the war memorial (kept so well through the voluntary efforts of Alex Durnell) and act as a facilitator when appropriate, such as assisting in the establishment of the allotments at Benenden in accordance with the late Pat Thoburn's bequest to the village. Many of the councilors give their time and energy to ensure that these worthwhile commitments are seen through to completion.

This is not an exercise in blowing the BPC's trumpet, merely a gentle reminder of some of our responsibilities to the parish. Perhaps there are other projects that we could take on - and that's where you come in. Volunteering and involvement in the community can be good for our wellbeing and so, if you have suggestions, skills, and the inclination, please let us know. Perhaps, now that the defibrillator has been relocated from the K6 telephone kiosk in Iden Green to the Congregational Church across the road, someone can suggest an idea for making good use of the now empty, but still attractive, red telephone box?

On a less positive note, the BPC also receives complaints and it's disappointing to hear that some dog owners are failing to clean up after their pets have been exercised on our lovely green spaces. You know who you are! Please consider other people and especially the children who play there.

Julie Lewis, Parish Councillor
julielewis@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 17 June 2024,
Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm

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Talking Point



Let's become a dementia friendly village

We are all affected by dementia. We either have it, know someone who has it or know someone who is caring for someone who has it. What we often forget is that within our small community there are tens of people whose lives are directly affected by dementia. This is not someone else's issue. With estimates that by next year over one million people in the UK will have a diagnosis of dementia it is also not something we can as a village afford to ignore. If we do, it is not somebody in the next village who will bear the burden, it is us and the people we love.

What, then, can a community like Benenden do? First we have to acknowledge that as a community we want to do something about dementia. Once we do this we can create a strategy for becoming more a dementia friendly place to live. Dementia friendly communities are places where people living with dementia can feel safe and, quite frankly, the whole community will benefit. There are some simple ways in which businesses, organisations and individuals can make our village more dementia friendly - a few are included here.

The first is to accept that people living with dementia have a right to access services and to interact just the same as anyone else, although we might have to accept that they may interact in their own way and that even this will change over time. One way to help us understand this is to attend dementia friends training, perhaps as individuals or by inviting trainers into our organisations or businesses.

Signage is a really simple win. People with advancing dementia do not see the world in the same way they used to, nor in the same way as people living dementia free. Simple signage can help. A good example is for a toilet with the sign written in lower case in bold black on a yellow background, with a character of a man/woman and a picture of a toilet on the sign. This is easy to read, the contrast is clear and there are other visual references as to what it is for. Similarly many spaces have entrance signs, but might also benefit from similarly formulated exit signs.

There are dozens of resources online to help organisations, businesses and individuals to become more dementia friendly. My question to Benenden is do we care enough to do anything about this?

Peter Ellis



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Benenden Village Trust

It is important for Benenden that we have a thriving village hall at the heart of the community, along with well maintained recreation fields and playgrounds, but supporting these facilities is expensive - and getting ever more so - while Benenden Village Trust, the charity which runs the recreational amenities, is facing a cash crunch.

Come along to the trust's annual general meeting on Monday 29 July to find out the cause of the financial difficulties, BVT's strategy to cope with them, and what you can do to help.

The trust also owns St George's Hall (home to the pre-school and the St George's Social Club), the Iden Green Pavilion (run by a separate charity) and the lands on which sit both the Benenden Bowls Club and the Iden Green Tennis Club.

The assets stem from gifts to the village in the 1920s from Lord Rothermere, which Simon Brown described in his fascinating article in May's magazine commemorating the 100th anniversary of the legacy. Lord Rothermere also gave funds to BVT's predecessor charity to support the running of the facilities.

The village hall has long been loss-making. For many years, income from the Rothermere gift supported its operations and maintenance of the recreation grounds, but in recent years that income has been substantially exceeded by ever-rising inflationary costs. The result: an urgent need to boost BVT's income, whether by new initiatives, donations or more intensive use of our assets.

Members of the trust can contribute to the discussion at the AGM and will be getting an invitation and papers in due course. If you are not yet a member, why not join up by contacting Caroline Levett, BVT Manager, at bvttrust@gmail.com, and come along. Membership is free and open to all residents of the parish over 18.

Martin Dickson,
Chairman, Benenden Village Trust

BENENDEN FETE 2024

DONATION TIMES & INFORMATION

WHAT Good condition bric-a-brac, tools, clothes, children's items & novels/biogs

WHEN into our cars from 8.30-9.30am on:
• Saturday 25 May, 1 & 8 June
• Wednesday 29 May, 5 & 12 June
Please don't leave donations at other times

WHERE Car park area outside the public toilets, adjacent to The Bull

WHO If you can't make these dates call:
Amanda Garratt 07766 000064
(bric-a-brac & tools)

Maggy Hoyt 07485 051265 (bric-a-brac)

Ruth Clark 07767 261883 (novels/biogs)

Athena Cripps 07786 434524 (other)

Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

Please join us on Thursday 6 June from 10.30am-12.30pm as we welcome the Bishop of Dover, Bishop Rose, to officially open the Benenden Primary wellbeing garden. The event will be a celebration of the garden and a collective worship with the school. Please sign in at the main primary school reception - all are welcome.

The garden is now flourishing and becoming a frequently visited and much-loved feature of the school. The children can search for the creatures that call it home, along with using it as a space for quiet reflection.

In other news, a reminder that the PTFA toy stall at the village fete is still collecting donations. The last date to drop your items is Friday 7 June in the main car park of the primary school from 8.15-8.45am. If you would like to donate please contact the PTFA chair on the email below. We aim to raise funds for our next outdoor classroom project.

Rachel Tinker, Benenden CEP, PTFA Chair
chair-ptfa@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk
www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk/PTFA/

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St George's Project 20|20

After a huge amount of work, the parochial church council are now almost able to submit our plans. Once approvals are granted, the PCC will look to appoint a contractor through a tendering process, hopefully by the very late autumn. Although this is still a very provisional timetable it is exciting to look forward to the natural evolution of our beautiful St George's church into a more comfortable, inclusive, and welcoming space that will also be easier to maintain, more economical to run, and quieter - better equipped to support the spiritual and community life of the village.

A key enabler will be raising the funds required to make these changes, the majority of which will come from grant-making trusts from outside the parish. However, there will be opportunities for sponsorship and for local stewardship. We will share more details on project timeline and our fundraising approach next month. If you would like to get involved in the project in any way, please get in touch.
Peter Brook, Project 20|20 Community Liaison
benenden2020project@gmail.com

Merry and Bright

Our meetings so far this year have been a great success. We found Cranbrook Museum very interesting when we visited, with their exhibits bringing back a lot of memories for a lot of us. It was surprising how many 'locals' had not been before.

Our meeting on 28 May is a talk from Sue Fisher on her teaching experiences in Africa. That's followed on 25 June with a garden party in Charlotte's beautiful Balmoral garden. Please come along if you are interested. Lifts can be arranged if necessary.

Laraine Penny 241763

Julia Collard 241944

ST GEORGE'S PROJECT 20|20



Come and join the conversation to
shape the future of our village church
on Sunday 2 June at 11.30am
in St George's Church

Iden Green and Benenden WI

We celebrated spring and our horticultural skills by having another plant and produce stall alongside our AGM on 21 May. A bring and buy and raffle added to the spice. The meeting was also very successful with some very special ladies volunteering to serve on our committee. Shirley was again voted back as president.

The National Federation of WIs has launched its first podcast with the initial episode based on 'Thinking Differently: Autistic and ADHD Women and Girls'.


On 12 June the booking is complete and the table full at the Trough, Charity Farm, when members are anticipating some delicious food and good company. Ladies are meeting there at 12.30pm. We are all anticipating a delightful time at our wonderful annual garden party which will again be held in a member's garden on 18 June at 5.30pm.

Future activities include a visit to the fish farm in Hawkhurst on 3 July plus another social afternoon which is at the planning stage.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

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Village lunch

The monthly village lunch in the village hall is now on the second Tuesday of the month. So in June the lunch will be on Tuesday 11 June at 12.30pm and all are welcome. We can offer lifts if required. £5 a head.

If you would like to come and haven't already signed up please do ring and let me know, preferably by Thursday 6 June to allow for shopping. We look forward to seeing you.
Genevieve Greenwood 240526

Benenden Village Hall

If you are looking for somewhere to hold your next meeting, why not consider us? Whatever the size of your meeting, the hall is the ideal venue, with adequate free parking, a choice of meeting rooms, projectors, screens, tables, chairs and communal facilities including toilets and a well-equipped kitchen.

The small hall is ideal for smaller meetings for up to 30 people. It has its own supply of tables and chairs and is equipped with a motorised, ceiling-mounted projector screen that hirers are welcome to use with their own equipment, or the hall has a portable projector that is available to hire. There is also a flip chart stand/whiteboard that hirers are welcome to borrow (paper and pens not supplied). Parish residents can hire the small hall at the discounted rate of £14.50 per hour.

The main hall is ideal for larger meetings, with chairs for up to 180 people. The projector in the main hall can be connected to wirelessly using a laptop, tablet or mobile phone, or using the supplied cable with a laptop. This hall also has a selection of wireless microphones, including a lapel microphone and a headset microphone, that are available to hire for use with the main hall's sound system. Parish residents can hire the main hall at the discounted rate of £24 per hour.

John Betts, Hall Manager 07419 989830
enquiries@benendenvillagehall.org

Benenden Bonfire Society

The Benenden Fireworks and Bonfire will be on Saturday 2 November this year and once again we will be in the field at Benenden School.

We always seek to distribute profits from the event to local groups and so following last year's event we have been pleased to distribute funds to Merry and Bright (£50), Benenden Cricket Club (£500) and Benenden Pre-School (£552) and are in the process of providing funds to Sissinghurst Scout groups.

The £1,000 for the Sissinghurst groups will be distributed as follows: Squirrel Drey and Beaver Colony will get £200 each; the Cub Pack and the Scout Troop will get £300.

The new Squirrel Drey for 4 and 5 year olds went camping (under canvas) for the first time last year. This was very exciting for them but obviously involved the buying of some extra equipment, which we helped fund, in order for it to be safe and suitable.

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

Sissinghurst Scouts

We love our summer meetings, outside all the time, rain or shine. The Scouts (10-14yrs) had an extremely muddy circus skills camp recently and well done to Sam, who finished his Silver Chief Scouts Award. The Cubs (8-10yrs) are about to camp so let's hope the weather is better. They've been practising fire lighting, cooking, navigating and first aid.

The Beavers (6 and 7yrs) had a fun trip to Cranbrook Union Mill, where they ground cereal using old methods. They've been learning to read and use a map for the navigator badge. A camp is planned. The Squirrels (4 and 5yrs) have been exploring the woods and playing over the stream. They'll be camping in July.

Jan Ashley
enquiries@SissinghurstScouts.org.uk

CHALKDOWN RDA

Charity No1174554



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Chalkdown Riding for the Disabled, Staplehurst, are currently looking for volunteers to help with their therapeutic riding sessions on Wednesday and Thursday mornings in term time. If you have equine experience, enjoy being part of a team and would like to help our riders discover the healing powers of horses then please get in touch.

All volunteers will need to provide two references and will be DBS checked.

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EXHIBITIONS THIS SUMMER 2024

APRIL and MAY

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JUNE and JULY

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Rude Mechanicals return

The popular Rude Mechanicals return to Sandhurst on Wednesday 24 July to perform their musical play *The Dressing Book*. This creative theatre company uses masks, improvisation and physical comedy to tell stories that hit home in today's world. The play is aimed at adult audiences but older children will enjoy the show. Arrive at the playing fields from 6pm (bring picnics and low-backed folding chairs) for 7.30pm start (parking and toilets on site)

Tickets: www.therudes.co.uk

Primary School

The new term got off to a flying start with the whole school taking part in our very own mini marathon. All the children - and a few members of staff - ran four kilometres. Not bad for a Monday morning. Well done to George Gray, who finished in first place.

Years 5 and 6 have been pleased to welcome Liam Cook for some fantastic coaching sessions. Liam is head of cricket at Benenden School, also the head coach for the Brazilian ladies' team, and the sessions were full of fun, facts, skills and wonderful play.

A group of ten Year 5 children represented West Kent area at the Kent School Games Eco Ambassador Training at Polo Farm Sports Club in Canterbury. The children took part in a number of workshops, where they looked at how we can look after our planet and our school community in a more ecological way. They will now devise an action plan of incentives and activities for us.

Well done to George Goatman, Monty, Alfred, Ryan, Blake, Elsie, Sienna, Izzy, Lilly and Agnes. It is experiences such as these that enrich learning and make everlasting memories for the children.

Lindsay Roberts, Executive Headteacher
240565 office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk
www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk





Join a spectacular evening reception
in aid of the Army Benevolent Fund

**Beating Retreat by
The Band of The Brigade of Gurkhas
Close Quarter Battle Kukri Display
The Old School Samba Band**

Thursday 18 July at 6pm
Sutton Valence School

Tickets | £40 and Under 14 | £15
to include fizz and canapés
Contact: Chris Parkinson | cfgparkinson@gmail.com



Beating Retreat event

There will be a special opportunity to see the skilled Band of the Brigade of Gurkhas perform a stunning 'Beating Retreat' at Sutton Valence School at 6pm on Thursday 18 July. The evening will also include a Close Quarter Battle Kukri display by the Gurkhas demonstrating how the use of the kukri has been developed into a martial art.

Renowned not only for their prowess on the battlefield but also for their exceptional musical talents, the band stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage and indomitable spirit of the Gurkha community. Beating Retreat has its origins in the early days of chivalry when beating, or sounding, retreat signalled a halt to the day's fighting, a return to camp and a sounding of the guard for the night.

The evening will also include the melodic sound of The Old School Samba Band and is in aid of the Army Benevolent Fund, a registered charity which helps ex regular and reserve soldiers and their families who are in difficulties and need help. The charity assists over 5,000 people every year - ranging in age from nine months to 105 years - in a variety of ways, such as home adaptations, hardship relief, mobility assistance, education bursaries and care home fees.

See box above for ticket details.

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Benenden School

The summer term is always particularly enjoyable and this one has got off to a great start - helped by the improved weather of course. First, we were delighted to welcome musicians, singers and directors from the world-renowned English National Opera to hold a series of Opera Takeover workshops with our students and those from local primary and prep schools.

ENO experts taught the children to sing and perform music from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, through workshops in which they explored vocal techniques, expressive choreography and some of the elaborate costumes the ENO had brought along. It was a delight to welcome so many schools to experience this opportunity and hopefully we managed to inspire a new generation of opera lovers.

An annual Benenden highlight is our Leavers' Day, when our Year 13 students run a series of events for the rest of the student body. This year we enjoyed a Minions theme, which involved a very messy colour run and lots of sweet treats, before the students got dressed up for a formal evening dinner. The event acts as a charming final celebration of our Year 13s before they focus fully on their forthcoming A Level results.

Elsewhere, we also celebrated a range of dance styles with our annual dance show. Students performed to a packed theatre of parents and staff at an event showcasing a range of styles, including contemporary and the student-led Benenden Dance Club's street dance.

The evening finished with a ballet based on the silent movies of the 1920s, which was a touching reference to the School's Centenary.

Our Lower School students have taken to the stage this week for our annual junior play. This production was directed by three of our Year 12 students and we were very proud of the young cast and crew's hard work.

Samantha Price, Headmistress



Benenden Cricket Club
Invite New Members

Traditional Village Green Cricket

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Contact Peter Newman
07810 658981

Benenden Cricket Club

Happily, the interminable rain has eased and we were able to finally play our first game of cricket, sadly losing to Detling by 67 runs, after early batting struggled against a sharp young attack.

The great news is that all of our bowlers taking wickets wore our new shirts, proudly supporting The Bull. It is too early to make a definitive conclusion that they help our playing, but the stats at this early stage support the notion!

Our first home game will be on Saturday 1 June (1.30pm start time), so do come and support us. We even have special supporters 4 and 6 cards for you to wave when our team scores boundaries.

Further home fixtures for June are:
Saturday 22 June v Family Double Wicket
at 3pm

Saturday 29 June v Rusthall at 1.30pm
Barry Bassett



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Plants | Tombola | Cow Pat Bingo | Live Music
Dancing | Strawberries & Cream
Coconut Shy

BENENDEN FETE '24

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SAT 15TH JUNE 12-4PM

TIMETABLE

12.00	Fete opens & BBQ ready	2.00	Benenden Jazz <i>Stage</i>
	Jane Whiteley plays the organ <i>Church</i>		Rhythm of Life Choir <i>Church</i>
12.15	Fun Dog Show: Bring along your talented pooch and take part! <i>Arena</i>	2.30	Reg.E.Mental magician <i>Arena</i>
1.00	Ami Piper Dance School Show <i>Arena</i>	3.00	Echo 155 <i>Stage</i>
	Benenden Strings <i>Church</i>		Children's fun Olympic races <i>Arena</i>
	Reg.E.Mental magician <i>Stage</i>	3.15	Cow Pat Bingo
1.40	Weald of Kent Morris <i>Arena</i>	3.30	Raffle winners announced
		4.00	Close



BENENDEN VILLAGE FETE

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Buy scrumptious cakes and jams; sit down to cream tea in the Church; savour Flying Fox fresh coffee; treat yourself to strawberries and cream, Hinxden Dairy milkshakes, and ice cream; snap up burgers and sausages from the BBQ and wash them all down with real ale, cider, wine and fizz from the Hop Inn.

Recyclable Cups

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

Kids Zone

Head for the kids' area for lots of fun and games organised by the PTFA with a huge selection of toys, clothes, books and games to tempt all ages. Plus, who can resist face painting, a Bouncy Castle/Assault Course, Tombola, Soggy Sponges, and showing off your skills at the Coconut Shy, Limbo, Cricket and Splat the Rat. Then head to the top of The Green to enjoy a pony ride run by Hemsted Forest Equestrian Centre.

Classic Cars

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

ARENA FUN & GAMES

12.15

Fun Dog Show:

Bring along your talented pooch to take part in: Most Impressive Trick; Best Fancy Dress; & Most Like Their Owner. Hosted by cranbrookdogwalking.com.

1.00

Ami Piper Dancers:

Enjoy a lovely display by Miss Ami's talented students.

1.40

Weald of Kent Morris:

Make sure to have your Hop Inn drink in hand while you enjoy this traditional dance.

2.30

Reg.E.Mental Magician:

Hilarious magic and comedy for children.

3.00

Fun Olympic Races:

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

Cow Pat Bingo & Morris Minor Balloons

A star attraction and nail biting! Buy a grid square and hope our very special Hinxden Dairy cow chooses it to deliver a cow pat to win you a night for two at The George in Rye. Then try and guess how many balloons have been packed into the Morris Minor – not as easy as you think.



In the Church

Climb up the St George's Church tower to appreciate the stunning views over the village and surrounding countryside. This is a not-to-be-missed experience. Afterwards relax with a delicious cream tea and browse bargain artwork.

Music, Music, Music

After the bells ring out to start the fete you can enjoy beautiful music played by the young Benenden Strings, Jane Whitely on the organ and joyful singing by the Rhythm of Life Choir. Meanwhile, outside on The Green's stage you will be entertained by the talented Benenden Jazz and Echo 155.

Fabulous Raffle Prizes

Don't forget to snap up a raffle ticket with a chance to win great prizes, including an amazing wing walking flight from Headcorn donated by The Wing Walk Company. Buy them in advance at the village shop, Wards the Butchers and The Bull or on the day at the Raffle stall. Other prizes donated by: Appleacre Art Studio, Banjara, Benenden's, Benenden Players, Biddenden Cider, Carriage Hair Studio, Chimera Climbing, Hannah's Garden, Helen Jewsbury, Hemsted Equestrian Centre, Hemsted Park, Hole Park, Jane Bell, Kino, Majestic, P.Ward & Sons, Pashley Manor, Tesco, The Beauty Shed, The Bull, Wealden Smokery, Westfield Farm honey, ZBM Veterinary Physiotherapy.

Parking & Toilets


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

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

Special thanks to: The Wing Walk Company for first prize in the raffle; The George for the Cow Pat Bingo prize; Lambert & Foster for sponsoring the Bouncy Castle/Assault Course; The Oak Barn for generators; Arthur Reynolds for the hay bales and all our advertisers.

The Wing Walk Company

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Topical health

It has been second nature to reach for ibuprofen if we have soft tissue pain, but new evidence suggests it may be prolonging our pain. A 2022 study* found evidence that non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs more than likely turn short-term pain into chronic/long-term pain by blocking the inflammation and repair process.

During the repair process, a complex interplay occurs between different cells, proteins and the circulatory system. The inflammation helps to create new blood cells, protect the damaged tissue and promote the generation of new tissue. What's more, the presence or absence of inflammation sends signals to the brain telling it to either continue the healing process (create more inflammation) or that the job is done and to return the tissue to its normal state.

Self healing can be improved by calming the nervous system through relaxation techniques regulating stress, mindful ways to reduce catastrophising and massage from a skilled practitioner. Diaphragmatic breathing is simple and effective at calming the nervous system and has been shown to reduce cortisol - one of the aggravators of chronic pain. Look for apps and books on breathwork.

Meditation can be effective in reducing chronic pain and, practised regularly, sets up new neural pathways and soothing neurotransmitters.

Remedial massage too is effective in reducing chronic soft tissue pain. It is estimated 80% of back pain is soft tissue related. A skilled therapist will work within your comfort threshold, giving you a self-care plan between treatments to speed up your recovery. Look for an advanced clinical massage qualification with myofascial release, which addresses tissue memory and holding patterns from poor posture, old injuries and trauma.

* Parisian M, Lima LV, Dagostino C, et al. Acute inflammatory response via neutrophil activation protects against the development of chronic pain. Science Translational Medicine. 2022;14(644)

Lisa Dawson www.azaratherapies.co.uk

Hospice piano recital

The 16th Sandhurst RBD Memorial Hospice Charity Piano Recital will be held at a garden party on Saturday 27 July at 3pm. Well-known pianist Mark Viner will perform Beethoven Fantasie, op.77, something by Alkan (he is chairman of that society), Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody, some Blumenfeld and, of course, Henselt. This will be the first visit by Mark, so I want to have a good audience on hand. Tickets are by donation (minimum £23).

Gillian Davis 850384

Planning Matters

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

- 24/00875/FULL School Farm, Cranbrook Road. Replacement of existing dwelling to create five bedroom dwelling, together with associated garage and car parking.
- 24/01092/FULL Beacon Hall Farm, Rolvenden Road. Removal of Condition 5 relating to agricultural occupancy of planning permission 82/01069/OUT.
- 24/01159/FULL Under Mount, Cranbrook Road. Variation of Condition 2 of 22/01692/FULL - Adjustments to the design including: Erection of a balcony on rear elevation of two-storey side extension; Amendments to roof lights on front elevation of two-storey side extension; Addition of sun tunnels on rear elevation; Addition of solar panels on to roof.
- 24/01131/FULL Timber Building And Land Dingleden. Change use of former agricultural building into a 4 bedroom dwelling.
- 23/03274/FULL Benenden Hospital Goddards Green Road - further consultation required on review of applicant submitted Viability Position (April 2024).
- 24/01210/AGRIC Hilltop Farm, Hinksden Road. Prior Notification of agricultural development - Erection of agricultural barn.

More planning matters at:
benendenparishcouncil.org

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Machu Picchu trek to empower youngsters

In a world where most mother-son bonding might involve video games or baking cookies, Claire and Alfie Leach are taking it to a whole new level: trekking from Cusco, Peru to Machu Picchu with double gold Olympian Dame Kelly Holmes to raise funds for her charity, the Dame Kelly Holmes Trust, which is dedicated to empowering young people through sports. "We chose this charity because a champion in your corner is something every child and young person should have," says Claire. "Often, it's your parents but not everyone's so lucky - and Kelly is a Kent girl so we're keeping it local."

This isn't your typical mother-son bonding trip, though; it's an epic adventure filled with laughter, determination and five days of challenging trekking at 4,500m above sea level. Alfie was also diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes recently so they're not just conquering Machu Picchu; they're conquering obstacles and changing lives along the way. And what better way to support such a cause than by literally climbing mountains?

Please donate, if you would like, to a part of Claire and Alfie's journey to change lives one peak at a time and to encourage them along. The trek is completely self-funded so 100% of your donation goes to the charity.

To follow Claire's blog as they prepare for the trip and donate if you can, just scan the QR code. Thank you.

www.damekellyholmestrust.org



Biddenden festival

The Biddenden Literary & Arts Festival will take place from 10-13 October in All Saints Church. The festival promises something for everyone and all ages to enjoy, from author talks, poetry recitals and art exhibitions to captivating performances by the talented students from local schools.

Biddenden Community Library is organising the event and is inviting local authors, artists and musicians to get involved to showcase their work and perform. Exhibitor details will be released soon on the website:

www.biddendenlibrary.org.uk or email Artsfest@biddendenlibrary.org.uk

Roger Martin

Benenden Pre-School

This month we held our 'grandparent's mornings', an opportunity to welcome the wider family into the setting and celebrate the special relationship between grandparent and grandchild.

We hosted over 30 grandparents and the children loved showing them round their pre-school. The grandparents in turn enjoyed supporting the children completing activities both inside and in the garden, including making pasta necklaces, designing buildings from magnetic shapes and completing an obstacle course. Everyone sat down for a refreshing cup of tea and a slice of cake before singing songs together to complete the morning.

A number of the grandparents had previously been pre-school parents and related fond memories of the setting from past decades. What a lovely thread of continuity for our village pre-school, playing its part in the education of generations of families.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor

supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

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Summer concert

For what promises to be a summer's evening of enjoyable and entertaining music for all the family, Sutton Valence Choral Society under conductor Bryan Gipps, together with guest opera star Helen Bailey, will be performing popular opera extracts and other traditional favourites at Sutton Valence School on Saturday 6 July at 7pm.

Tickets £15 (including a glass of wine).
Accompanied children free. Tickets will be available on the door or from:
Pamela Hipkins 01622 861313
pamela.hipkins@btinternet.com

Dunk's almshouses celebrate

Sir Thomas Dunk (1657-1718) came from a family of clothiers and ironmongers, lived at what is now Saint Ronan's School and attained high office as Sheriff of London. In his will he created a legacy from which local people have benefited ever since: the Dunk's charities.

With his money the almshouses were built in the centre of Hawkhurst and a school for boys opened in their central hall in 1723. So for the past 300 years the almshouses have been able to provide affordable accommodation for local people and Dunk's Educational Foundation has supported young people in their quest for continuing education with grants.

To mark this milestone, Dunk's (opposite Waitrose) is opening its doors from 20-23 June (10am-4pm). An exhibition will showcase its history and work and a grand raffle is also part of the celebrations. Sir Thomas, who lies in St Laurence's church, would probably be amazed by the stir he is causing after all this time.

Gunda Cannon 388973
www.dunkscharities.co.uk

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Letter to the Editor

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

IN PRAISE OF THE IDEN GREEN WELL

Dear Editor

I'm glad to see the Iden Green pump being restored. I donated towards its restoration because it's been a big part of my life growing up here. I used to wait there for a taxi from Fuggles Garage to take me to Benenden to catch the bus to Mary Sheafe school in Cranbrook.

I remember Joe, a small man standing by his gate. He always wore a bowler hat and a waistcoat and said 'good morning' to me most days when I passed his cottage in Mill Street. Last year I was talking to someone about the pump and they told me that Joe used to go down and collect his water from there. She was most surprised.

It will be lovely to see it restored back to its former glory.

Susan Downes



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Talking Shop

Working hard to return to service as normal

The shop committee would like to take this opportunity to apologise for the evident disruption in Benenden's over the last few weeks as we have tried to navigate our way through a number of changes. We owe it to all our customers to try to explain how this has occurred as we make every effort to maintain our much treasured village community shop.

Mel worked with the shop committee as manager from the beginning and as she was leaving at the end of March, it fell to us to try to find suitable replacements for a position which had become increasingly more demanding than it was at the beginning. After much discussion it was decided that the best way to effectively cover the role of general manager was to employ a manager and a deputy who could share the workload. This has been, and continues to be, our aim and we are working hard to find the right people for these roles; new members of staff who can demonstrate the qualities which make the shop thrive and engage happily with our most precious workers - staff and volunteers. We hope to achieve this in the very near future.

We are under a legal obligation to provide a Post Office facility all the time the shop is open and we have to train all staff to be qualified to operate it. The complicated systems in the Post Office require intensive training which takes time and effort online followed by training from previously qualified staff. Over the past few weeks this has been difficult to organise and we are doing our utmost to rectify the situation. We are very grateful for your patience and support as we are working hard to provide the best service that we can.

Given the resignations of Abi and Kerry, who felt they could not meet all the needs of the shop, the committee asked Mel to return temporarily, as a consultant, to help us as we recruit new managers. Mel has kindly agreed to help us to train staff, interview new staff and keep things running as smoothly as possible. We are really fortunate to have Penny, Karen, Sue, Les, Kate and Laura as our regular part time

staff who, as a great team, are working very hard to help us through this. We all understand that an organisation such as Benenden's is a very precious place, a hub of the community.

We are readjusting the opening time of the café back to 8.30am (Monday to Saturday, closed Sunday) with the closing times remaining for the time being at 3pm Monday to Friday and 1pm on Saturday. There have been a number of changes to the café menu recently; some well received and others not so. We would be really pleased to hear from our customers what you think. Over the next few weeks there will be a short questionnaire available so you can have your say. From the results we will do our best to accommodate the most popular choices.

Last, but certainly not least, a plea to all our volunteers. Please continue to sign up and help us. You are needed more than ever. Many of you are very experienced and your help is much appreciated. To those who are less experienced and perhaps not so confident, it's really worth signing up for the later shifts so you can receive some training when it's generally quieter.

Lucy O'Flaherty has kindly taken on the job of organising

the rota of volunteers and is happy to help with training. Benenden's is fun to work in, staff, volunteers and customers are delightful people and it's a pleasure to be there.

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Claire Harley: where medical excellence meets traditional tombola

Ruth Clark meets Benenden Hospital's new director and finds that it is very much business as usual for this centre of medical excellence. Following Jane Abbott's retirement in April after 21 years, the last 15 as hospital director, Claire Harley has stepped into the role and on the day we met was clearly delighted to be heading up the award-winning medical centre. "While I bring a fresh pair of eyes to the role it will be very much business as usual but I won't be complacent and will continue to focus on our patients, our staff, growing the organisation and being part of the local community," she says.

Claire's no stranger to Benenden Hospital as she has spent the last 14 years as director of patient services, responsible for the day-to-day operation of the hospital, ensuring high quality safe care and the very best patient experience. "This hospital has 118 years of caring with a passion for customer service that is evident from the moment you walk through the door. It made a huge impact on me when I first arrived all those years ago and it's where my own passion lies. While it's a place that is steeped in history within the Benenden community, we are focussed on continuous innovation - both

in terms of patient experience and diagnostic and surgical technology.

"Each phase of the hospital's timeline has had its challenges, and each hospital director has left it in a better place before they passed the baton to their successor. I'm excited to be leading the next phase supported by a brilliant team, which includes three new members

of the team - a new medical director, director of clinical services and director of operations."

Claire trained as a physiotherapist in Glasgow and worked across Kent & Sussex Hospital, Pembury Hospital, and the Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead. In 1992 she moved to Newham to take up a role in paediatric physiotherapy and, after a brief spell in South Africa at the Johannesburg General Hospital, she returned to join NHS Greenwich in 1997, ultimately becoming clinical team manager of therapy services, focussing on improving patient access to services.

As director of Benenden Hospital she oversees a busy facility which is part of Benenden Health, a mutual, not-for-profit private healthcare provider with over 890,000 members and a network of private hospitals nationwide. On average between 200-300 in/out patients pass through its doors in East End every week.

While the hospital is very much focussed on providing medical services, Claire is also mindful of the role it plays in the village. "We have become much more involved with the community over the past few years in various ways and I want to build on that," she says. Once again the hospital will be at the fete - this year running the tombola - and Claire will be there if you would like to pop by and say hello.



teacher at Reading Blue Coat School and, over the next 11 years, taught at King's Canterbury and Hereford Cathedral School before becoming Head of Godolphin, in Salisbury in 2010, and then in January 2014 she joined Benenden as the Headmistress.

While there have been challenges over the last ten years (navigating Covid of course), there have been many significant highlights including:

“It’s a special place and I’m very grateful”: Samantha Price, the head who made a difference

Before Samantha leaves Benenden Girls' School in July, Ruth Clark meets up with her to look back over her ten years in the village. An ambition to “make a difference” in her life led Samantha Price on the road to teaching and, for the past ten years, as headmistress of Benenden School. There's no denying that she's made a huge difference - not just to the school but also to the lives of the many girls that have benefited from her stewardship during that time.

Not surprisingly it's been a demanding and multi-faceted role but one she has clearly enjoyed. As a young girl, teaching was not part of her life plan at all. “All my friends said I should be a teacher but, having been a rather naughty teen at boarding school, that was the last thing I wanted to be, and particularly not at a girls' school!” But fate had a different plan.

After studying History of Art at Edinburgh University, Samantha joined Tate Britain before she decided that teaching was the career for her. She started as a History of Art and History

strengthening ties with local state schools; establishing its first overseas school in China; increasing the number of local youngsters benefiting from bursaries to 24 by the end of the year; developing the curriculum to include a professional skills programme alongside achieving impressive exam results; introducing day places to enable more students to benefit; and overseeing a formidable programme of enhancing school facilities. These include the All-Weather Pitch, opened in 2016, and the Centenary Hall and The Sir David K.P. Li Music School which opened in June 2022 and which has enabled the School to establish its professional performing arts arm Hemsted Park.





Samantha is a staunch defender of this generation and frequently puts her head above the parapet for them: she used her media platform as Girls' School Association president to defend their campaigning instincts and pushed to help as many Ukrainian refugees as possible, personally lobbying MPs when bureaucracy jeopardised one girl's safe passage. The school provided bursaries to four Ukrainian girls - an opportunity which will no doubt have a transformative effect on their lives.

"My biggest frustration is that there isn't a dedicated, long-term, cross-party focus on ensuring a sustainable change and improvement in education in the UK. Other countries have undertaken such a strategy, and they are years ahead of us as a result." Samantha lists stamina, resilience, passion and vision as the key ingredients for the job of Headmistress and, not surprisingly, it has been suggested to her that she should consider transferring from education to the world of politics, but her ambition to make a difference in education remains strong.

The School and her professional life aside, Benenden village will always hold special memories for the Price family, says Samantha. When they arrived from Salisbury in 2014, Gaby was eight, Olly was five and, as a relatively new army chaplain, husband lori was often travelling or posted away. "Olly loved being involved



in the Benenden Players. He appeared in two pantos and I vividly remember the day he heard he'd got the comedy part of Mustafa Fry-up in Sinbad's Quest in 2020. We were all walking home when lori told him, and he ran around in overjoyed circles." Both children went to Saint Ronan's Prep School and, before she heads off to York University to study Art History and Curatorship, Gaby is spending her gap year working at Dulwich Prep.

Samantha is particularly proud that the School could buy the building that contains Benenden's shop café, enabling the creation of a vibrant community hub. "It's a special place and I'm very grateful for the warmth my mother receives when she goes down to the café to



enjoy a latte and a cheese scone. While she lives in Salisbury, she visits us a lot and people often stop by to chat with her in the café."

The family will leave Benenden in early July, hoping for some down time before Samantha

takes up her new post as Head of Cranleigh School in Surrey. "I'm looking forward to the new challenges of helping to make a difference now in a different school which is co-ed and larger. The fact that lori will be based only down the road in Aldershot will, of course, be brilliant and was very much part of the decision to move," smiles Samantha.

Local History

Plato: Butcher, Boy's Own hero and highly unlikely archaeologist

Sara Tidy discovers the depths to which Kev Plato Howley's love of history has taken him.

You could easily be forgiven for mistaking the young man with slicked back hair, trimmed moustache and impish grin, who wields a chopping knife and expertly fillets a

chicken, for someone else. Kev Plato Howley, fondly known as Plato and one of the butchers at the Hartley Farm Shop, bears an uncanny resemblance to Private Walker from the iconic British comedy series, Dad's Army. It turns out that he also knows more about the goings-on on the wartime 'Home Front' than most. Concealed under his butcher's apron, Plato is a local history buff with a passion for uncovering WW2's hidden secrets.

"A few years ago, I heard a story about a secret resistance bunker that was hidden in the woods in Crowhurst. With my mate, I decided to find it," he says.

Britain's Secret Army, also known as Churchill's Underground Army, is still possibly one of the best kept wartime secrets. During the Second World War, Britain had its own resistance network known as the GHQ Auxiliary Units. Made up of local men, they were trained in underground resistance, equipped with firearms, explosives and booby-traps. In the event of invasion, they were instructed to stay underground and to emerge each night to cause chaos and disruption for the enemy as long as they could, before being caught or killed.

Plato continues: "During WW2, Bodiam Castle was used as a main base camp (you can still see the pillboxes and gunneries). There was a POW



camp and there are, supposedly, underground tunnels in the Bodiam area." The tunnel system was constructed to allow the British resistance to blow-up the railway lines between Hastings and Eastbourne and London, to stop the Germans getting from the coast to the capital in the event of a land invasion.

"We discovered from their surviving relatives that Charles Simmonds worked at the gate station at Bodiam and Frank Jarvis was the last guy who knew exactly where the bunker was. He told my Dad that they'd booby trapped the lid of the bunker with old hand grenades in case the Germans found it.

"We realised that a tunnel system and any bunker would need to be positioned relatively close to the railway lines. So, to find the bunker we also guessed that an escape tunnel leading to it might be near a stream. If the enemy used dogs to chase the British insurgents a stream would help wash away some of their scent.

"After a lot of background research, we got permission to go onto some property we had a hunch about. In the middle of the woods, we found a big green wall about three foot thick and 15 foot long. It looked odd and out of place and, on closer inspection, we found it was a humungous piece of concrete with ivy growing over the top! As I pulled back the ivy, my foot hit something in the undergrowth; it was a 1940s bleach bottle in mint condition. We pulled the ivy back more - and found the entrance to a tunnel."

"About four foot high by shoulder width, it's obviously pitch black in there. We shone our torches to reveal a purpose-built brick tunnel.



We crawled through the passageway and every five metres or so it bent round and dropped down a level. When my dodgy knees finally gave in, we decided that we were going quite far and deep, and that we must also be quite mad, so we stopped and my mate had to pull me back out.

“Although we didn’t make it all the way, we’re convinced that we did find the escape run tunnel to the bunker. The location of the bunker isn’t recorded anywhere - it’s a resistance secret. And we’re going to keep it that way!”



Like a Boy’s Own hero, Plato’s enthusiasm is captivating. His love of history was sparked from his early childhood, when he went out exploring with his Dad; favourite discoveries include arrowheads from Crowhurst’s flint-making heritage, roman coins, part of a Norman helmet in a stream in Battle and a sword and a cleaver in the Crowhurst clay. He loves researching, visiting museums, or talking to other people interested in local history. He gets a thrill from discovering and unearthing secrets, or things that have been long hidden.

“It’s that feeling you get when you find something which is really old and you’re holding it in your hands. It’s the thrill of finding something that hasn’t been seen by anyone or touched for years.”

Plato freely admits he’s an unlikely archaeologist. “With dyslexia and ADHD, I could never sit still so I learnt in a different way. The only things I understood at school were music

and mechanics. My mechanics teacher picked up on my ‘learning challenges’ where other teachers didn’t. He used to say, ‘Plato knows what he’s doing, he just can’t express it in the same way as other kids in the class.’”

Plato lives with his fiancé and young daughter. He encourages her to learn in a different way, too. There’s no TV in their home, but there’s always music: BB King, blues or reggae. “My daughter plays computer games for 20 minutes then, when she’s finished her homework, we encourage her to read books, which she loves. I often say, ‘I challenge you to read this book before bedtime’, and she’ll smash it. She also likes the idea of finding and discovering things. She’s interested in the outdoors, so I take her out bush-crafting, she has her own hammock and loves to drink hot chocolate warmed over firewood.”

Like many of us, Plato’s career has followed a twisty path, first qualifying as a veterinarian nurse, then working as a painter and decorator before becoming a butcher. “I’ve been on a wiggly road and now I’ve got a family and it’s a different road. I think butchery is a skill people will always need.” But he’s still on his adventures - and growing, learning and sharing them. He’s passionate about bushcraft and teaching people how to survive and, particularly, in helping autistic kids to enjoy camping and the outside safely.

It’s been a delight talking to the Walker doppelganger. And to discover that Plato is that perfect example of why you should never judge a book by its cover, or a butcher by his apron.



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Time to show a little love for the underdog grapes

There are some grapes I feel genuinely sorry for. They sit in forlorn bunches in the shadow of their more showy fellow grapes, largely ignored yet with so much to give, like virtuoso jazz saxophonists playing to half-empty rooms while the Eurovision Song Contest packs out the stadium down the street.

As I ponder the unfairness, I have in mind Cabernet Franc, which, even at its most publicly renowned, tends towards a supporting role in the great wines of Bordeaux, behind Cabernet Sauvignon (which is actually its own offspring, conceived in the 17th century) and Merlot.

It's an early-ripening grape, and often planted as a back-up plan in case the fickle Cabernet Sauvignon fails to ripen; it can tough out cold winters in a way that old softy Merlot simply can't; but as a result of its great versatility and reliability, it ends up being more of a utility player than a star in its own right.

Glad to report, though, that for those drinkers with a little imagination, it still produces lovely, characterful wines, often with a distinctive nose of blackcurrant leaf (really, take a good sniff) and a palate that can be full of herbs, sweet peppers, fresh acidity and smooth tannins.

It really shines in its spiritual home in the Loire valley, and as if by magic, we have one such wine in the village shop, called Le Petit Chemin (£14.75), from the Domaine du Saut du Loup on the left bank of the Vienne river at Ligré. It's 100% Cabernet Franc, from the AOC Chinon, made from 40-year-old vines - and it suffers from no sense of inferiority at all when confronted with a plate of charcuterie, strong cheeses, robust veggie fare or even a good roast.

MUST HAVE MUSCADET

Head west from Chinon, stop before you fall into the sea, and you may find yourself in the catchment area of another largely ignored - often unfairly maligned - grape, whose bad reputation springs wholly from a brief burst of broad acclaim.

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I say it's the grape that's maligned, but in fact very few people have even heard of Melon de Bourgogne - a half-brother to Chardonnay, but with far less international profile. It's the wine produced from it that's maligned: Muscadet, which was a Loire triumph until winemakers started planting new vines in unsuitable places to produce feeble wines in industrial quantities.

From a decent producer like Domaine de Amoureux, though, it can still be an affordable treat, especially when paired, lightly chilled, with its traditional soulmates, fish, shellfish, moules marinière, shrimps, oysters etc. The one in Benenden's (£11.95) is typically crisp and fruity, with a little creaminess from being aged 'sur lie' - on its lees, the yeasty bits left over after fermentation and usually filtered off.

PRETTY IN PINK

And then there's rose, often sniffed at by connoisseurs as being sub-wine, not at all serious; but when the sun has got its hat on, a small supply of the pink stuff is essential in your fridge door. We have a full range of the delicious stuff, from pale pink Provençal to rich rosado from Navarra in Spain, for drinking with summery foods, or on its own, just because it's summer.

Maybe it's time to redress the balance for all these oft-ignored bottles of the good stuff.

Peter Thomas



Exploring the wonders of the temperate rainforests of the Weald

Stephen Lemon of the Weald of Kent Preservation Society delves into the very special woodlands that surround us. Temperate rainforests in the west of Britain hold plants adapted to living with high humidity resulting from being nearer to the Atlantic coast. Some of these 'oceanic' plants also find a home in the ghyll woodlands of the High Weald. Here they are isolated from their colonies in the west and probably best described as relics, surviving in what are now small fragments of suitable habitat created by the High Weald's geology and topography. The elevated ground with alternating

outcrops of clay, sand and bands of sandstone allows water to permeate through the bedrock and soils to produce springs which over time have carved out the ghylls. The steep narrow sides help these ghylls retain humidity by increasing shade and reducing exposure to the sun and wind.

Ghyll woodland in the High Weald of Kent stretches from Cowden in the west to Wittersham in the east. Some fine examples of ghyll woods are found south of the B2086 Benenden road, between Hartley and Rolvenden. From west to east they are Robin's Wood, Waterdown Gill, Netter's Hall, Little Nineveh, Great Nineveh, White Chimney Wood, Babbes Farm, Parsonage Wood, Stream Farm, Strawberry Wood and Dingleden. These woods have the benefit of sitting on two or three geological formations: Tunbridge Wells Sand, Wadhurst Clay and Ashdown Sand. The geological junctions and fault lines are the source of the springs in these ghylls.

Hornbeam, beech, yew and holly all thrive on the sandy, acidic soils and can tolerate the shady conditions. Sweet chestnut can be dominant but often less so close to the streams. Pedunculate oak and sessile oak form huge trees and their hybrid is often present. Ash and field maple do well on clay and loam soils and alder is common in flushes and along the streams.

The occasional wild service, such as the large tree at Dingleden, can be easily missed. Where these trees have been managed as coppice, their large stools become mossy forests. The rare rusty feathermoss *Sciro-hypnum plumosum* is virtually confined in Kent to ghyll woodland, including Waterdown Gill, where it grows on ash at the stream edge as well as on nearby rocks. The high humidity at the base of a ghyll allows larger plants to take root on trees,





such as polypody fern and wood sorrel, which grow on a huge, coppiced hornbeam along the stream at Dingleden.

The sandy and loamy slopes to the ghylls are the habitat of two iconic oceanic residents: hay-scented buckler-fern and a moss called shining hookeria *Hookeria lucens*. The buckler-fern has delicate fronds with crisped edges requiring year-round humidity to avoid desiccation and has been recorded from Robin's Wood, White Chimney Wood, Parsonage Wood and Stream Farm. *Hookeria* is a large moss with transparent leaves that die if they receive direct sunlight and has leaf cells large enough to be seen with the naked eye. It occurs along the ghyll streams in White Chimney Wood and Parsonage Wood and was previously recorded at Dingleden.

The bands of sandstone that outcrop in and along these ghylls create picturesque waterfalls in White Chimney Wood, Parsonage Wood and Dingleden. They are also very important habitats for a wide range of mosses and liverworts,



including oceanic species like wry-leaved tamarisk-moss *Heterocladium heteropterum*, a tiny moss which grows as wiry tufts on rocks in dark crevices along Waterdown Gill.

When ghyll woodlands occur over Wadhurst Clay they are generally of shallower gradient, such as Nine Acre Wood on the north side of the B2086. They tend not to hold the more extreme oceanic species mentioned above, but an interesting plant that prefers the clay soils is coralroot, a relative of the more common cuckooflower. It grows along the stream at White Chimney Wood and also in Winsor Gill, north of Rolvenden. This curious plant produces bulbils which fall off and grow into new clones and has an equally curious native distribution in Britain, being confined mainly to clay woods in the eastern High Weald and to chalk woodland in the Chilterns. With thanks to the Weald of Kent Protection Society (WKPS) for this article. To discover more about the society, and how to join visit www.wkps.org.uk



In Your Garden



A month to feast on the delights of midsummer

There's no denying that the month of June is a feast for the senses. We have colour, foliage, scent, height; the gentle hum of insect and bird-life; the warmth of midsummer air and the joy

of feeling sun on our faces. The ground is still workable, too, making gardening a joy as we pick our way through the borders, weeding, staking, trimming lawn edges and planting out our carefully grown seedlings.

Although we are spoilt for choice as everything has sprung into life, there are notable plants worth mentioning. Not wanting to ignore the roses, as this is their time, but for now I will give space to other worthies, particularly those with scent. Philadelphus (or mock orange) is indispensable in a mixed border, and there is a good choice as well, but I would certainly pick one that is suitable for your space - you cannot really butcher philadelphus to fit in somewhere smaller without sacrificing on flowers, so choose a smaller, more compact variety such as P. 'Belle Etoile' or 'Manteau d'Hermione'.

On the edges of a woodland area in the Sevenoaks garden I work in, there is a mature philadelphus about seven metres tall with a lilac growing nearby: pure heavenly scent and beautiful to look at, albeit only for a fleeting month or six weeks but very worth it.

Coming down a scale or two are bearded irises. These start in mid-May, so tend to be over by early June, but definitely need a mention due to their pure scented glamour, stature yet delicacy and relative ease of growing.



I work with a selection of 'Benton' irises in the same garden as above, and the colours are spectacular, all bred by Cedric Morris from Benton End in Suffolk. I have 'Menace', 'Arundel', 'Caramel' and 'Duff', although I have my eye on 'Daphne' if I can find one. Beth Chatto stocks online and the plants are always good quality, but there are other reputable nurseries which you can seek out.

Mine grow in a metre-deep border against a house wall in a very sunny spot, so ideal for baking the rhizomes. I do, however, have slightly too much neighbouring coverage, but it is light, in the form of knautias, catmints and roses, and so far the irises don't seem to mind. They are vigorous, though, so after flowering I will have to divide all of them and replant straight away.

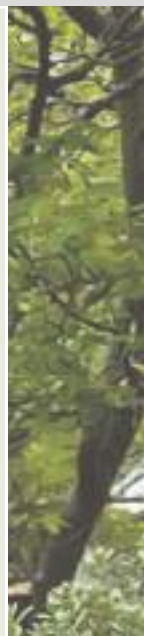
Clematis look lovely at this time of year, particularly threading through other plants or twining up a rusty obelisk. A client of mine uses a very pretty, compact 'diversifolia' type called 'Arabella', which is a delicate mid-mauvy blue. It scrambles beautifully through a border, weaving its way amongst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

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

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Above: Snapshot of the parish: Work on the well in Iden Green; Grandparent's Morning at the pre-school; Benenden cricketers sport their new Bull branded shirts; allotment holders hard at work; sunshine outside Benenden's café; Claire and Alfie Leach with trekking to Machu Picchu in their sights; projector set up in the small hall at Benenden Village Hall
Front cover: Heard but not always seen. Photograph: Amelia Thomas