

Above: Colour, community and magic in the midst of winter: Performers from The Great Revue; Benenden Cricket Club annual dinner in the Bull; primary school children enjoying the snow; a magician entertains at the Merry and Bright Christmas party Front cover: Light to be found: A silvery moon. Photograph: Amelia Thomas



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Men's Cookery Classes Aharnate Wadnesdays Cranbrook School Contact to book	Welcome Wednesday Drop In Every Wednesday 2pm-3.30pm St Dunetan's Chruch Granbrook	Youth Club Every Wednesday 3pm - Sam (term sme only) Congregational Church Cranbrook
Wellbeing Walks Every Tuesday and Thursday 9am, 9.30am and 10am in and around Crantrook	Words for Welfbeing Monthly, on a Tuesday 3pm to 3pm Charbrook Library Contact to book	Allotment Walks Every Sunday 10am-11am Cutled Drive Cranbrook November to March

Editorial



I know from the reaction to pieces in this magazine about local history that it's a source of great fascination to many. Everywhere has its history, and Benenden is no exception, ever since the days of Bynna in his den in the 11th century. It makes me wonder if people in 1,000 years will be as interested in me as I am in what happened 1,000 years ago. Is our history going to be as interesting to them as I find Flemish weavers and mediaeval ironworks.

In 3025, will somebody be marvelling at how I sat in my study for five days a week (sitting down being an essential component of the 21st-century lifestyle), writing nonsense for a living and occasionally nipping out for a coffee at the village shop. Then again, did the pig drovers of 500 AD think their porky peregrinations would be written about for centuries to come?

History for the most part isn't huge battles and historic discoveries, it's about people getting on with their lives in ways that will change beyond recognition over time and gain ever-increasing fascination as a result. Perhaps our distant descendants will one day marvel at how a small Kentish village thrived, struggled and survived down the centuries, its mind focused on government planning regulations and the dodgy broadband signal.

Maybe they'll discover in the parish council archives (the 21st-century equivalent of the Dead Sea Scrolls) the electronically preserved version of the February 2025 edition of this magazine and read Peter Massey's interesting account of a visit to Oxford's Bodleian Library to study the history of Benenden; or be equally fascinated by the life story of cricket-loving Dr Claire Grant and the monthly meanderings of the Merry and Bright Club.

Whatever happens, I hope somebody will be editing the Benenden Magazine all those years on and recording all the little things that make history in a village which I'm sure will still be going strong.

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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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 February 8am Communion 10am All-age 5pm Choral Evensong

Communion

Sunday 9 February 8am BCP Communion 10am Morning Worship Sunday 16 February 8am Communion 10am Sung Eucharist

Saturday 22 February 4pm Connect Four

at Mission Church, Sandhurst

Sunday 23 February 8am Communion 10am Morning Worship

Morning Prayer 8am Mondays and Fridays, not 21 February

Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Morning Prayer 8am Tuesdays and Wednesdays

Mid-week Communion I 0am 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

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From the Parish Registers

Church Letter



Stop, look around and appreciate what you have

How easy it is to take all that we have for granted; and to think that it will always be there. Do we ever stop, in all the busyness of life, and think about what we have been blessed with? Perhaps we ought to pause for a moment and consider all that we have; and take time to think about the situation of others in our country and around the world.

For example, over the Advent and Christmas period there is a star on the flagpole at the top of St George's Church, which can be seen from miles away. When the wind picks up, the star has to be taken down; we don't want the flagpole breaking and the star crashing to earth. Four times over that period the star had to come down and then go back up again; somebody climbing up and down the tower twice each time - what a hassle. But at least we had a star; we had a flagpole; there were people to take it down and put it up; and we could pay the electricity bill.

Or there was the busyness of the nine services in the benefice in 16 hours over Christmas Eve and Christmas Day - exhausting. But at least we had the freedom to go and worship if we wanted to, unlike some Christian brothers and sisters in other parts of the world who would be persecuted for worshipping together; we had a church to go to. Or the large number of family members (and their pets) staying over Christmas, eating and drinking us out of house and home. But at least we had family who wanted to come and spend Christmas with us.

We need to step back and appreciate what we do have, rather than taking all we have for granted or grumbling. Just look, nationally and internationally, at what others are having to deal with regarding the weather recently: snow causing roads to be closed, and sheep buried in drifts. Snowmelt and rain causing flooding, of homes and businesses; and people getting stuck in their cars in floodwater. The wildfires in Los Angeles County, and the destruction of so many properties. Neither wealth nor fame were protection from the devastation of the fires. At the time of writing, 153,000 people have had to be evacuated from their homes, the vast majority of whom, I suspect, never expected that would ever happen to them in the comfort of their homes, or the comfort of their normal daily lives.

Or think of what other families in the world are dealing with as war and bombardments shatter their homes, businesses and lives. Think of the people of the Ukraine and of Gaza; many of them just ordinary families, trying to go about their daily lives, like you and me.

Be grateful for what you have: a roof over your head, warmth, food, family, friends, perhaps a faith. And count your blessings.

Revd David Commander, Rector and Area Dean

Village Calendar

February		
Saturday I	Tabletop Curling, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Friday 7	Hemsted Park, Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club,	
	Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7pm	p. l l
Saturday 8	Golf Game, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday II	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday II	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday II	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p. I 3
Saturday 15	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 16	Hemsted Park, Macbeth: David Tennant and Cush Jumbo, Cinema Screening,	ı
	Benenden School Theatre, 3pm	p. l l
Monday 17	Parish Council Meeting, Benenden Hospital Quinlan Centre, 7pm	
Tuesday 18	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Delia Taylor: Memories of Desert Island Discs	5,
	Memorial Hall, 2pm	p. I 3
Saturday 22	Hemsted Park, Jasmin Vardimon Dance Company - NOW,	
	Benenden School Theatre, 7pm	p. 1 1
Saturday 22	Bingo, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 23	The Angry Whelk Fresh Fish Stall, Benenden Village Hall, 12-2pm	
Tuesday 25	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 25	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 25	Merry and Bright, Lauren Smith: Living with Disability, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.19

Iden Green Toddler Group

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

Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-11.30am

Benenden Bowls Club

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

Cakes & Chaos: Café and Toddler Group

Fridays during term time in St George's Church, 9-1 lam

Parish Council



Well, I've just got back from the Bull. This evening's conversation, as always, ranged far and wide. We discussed the relative heights of European Gothic cathedrals compared to the Taj Mahal (none of us had a clue), followed by concerns about empty grit boxes - not such a trivial concern, considering the weather we've been having. We agreed that people ought to take a look in their nearest one and, if it appears to be uncontaminated by grit, the correct action would be to contact Kent County Council highways department via their 'Report a Fault' website: winter maintenance - salt bin empty, to let them know. I've only ever used one in anger once, but I was very glad it was there - and full.

Then attention turned to the awful lean on the old oak tree on the path between Hilly Fields and Iden Green, the plight of which my friend and parish council colleague Peter Driver has been highlighting on his excellent Facebook page, Benenden Nature. It really does need looking at before the canopy grows in and the weight brings the lot down. The parish council will be discussing it at our next meeting.

In the midst of these discussions, Lucy came in, concerned that she hadn't seen a particular individual recently; we were all able to reassure her that we had seen them very recently, and so this led on to a discussion about social capital. I was surprised to learn that some of our number had never heard the term. In case you might be counted amongst them, I should explain. The Office for National Statistics provides a pretty sound definition: "The extent and nature of our connections with others and the collective attitudes and behaviours between people that support a well-functioning, close-knit society." In other words, the interaction between individuals tends to work towards the development of a decent community.

A village provides the perfect model for this. Lucy is representative of one of the three main hubs of the village (the Bull), the other two being the shop/café and the church. Both as a volunteer and, er, client of all three, I've experienced the concern generated when someone 'hasn't been about, lately' or 'didn't pick their paper up yesterday' and have noted that there are plenty of kind souls who care and will spend time trying to find out if things are OK. Particularly during the recent cold snap, it was noticeable that people have been taking steps to ensure that friends and neighbours are safe and comfortable. This is social capital at work and we here are privileged to enjoy something that is, sadly, no longer a given in many other places in this country and around the world.

Russell Cruse, Parish Councillor

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 February, Benenden Hospital Quinlan Centre, 7pm



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Talking Point



Ensure your puppy gets the right exercise

New puppy owners often lament the 'five-minute rule' (per month of age) for exercise. This 'rule' is fake news! I've asked vet colleagues about its origins, but no-one knows. Unfortunately, this myth can harm a puppy's development. A misconception is that exercise damages bone growth and cartilage. This is incorrect. Growth-plate damage typically results from blunt trauma - like a collision with another dog, furniture or car - not from regular exercise.

In fact, lifelong low-impact exercise strengthens cartilage and supports joint health, although excessive high-impact activities, such as intense ball-chasing or jogging/brisk walking on a lead with your puppy when very young, should be avoided.

From three weeks puppies start to explore. This is essential not just for the development of its musculoskeletal system by the motor stimulation of the brain, but also for development of intelligence, memory, socialisation and emotional resilience. A good breeder will have a play area for pups to provide sensory and motor stimulation. Watching pups in such an area is an education as they explore and tussle with each other and then suddenly flop down to sleep. As pups grow they will be active until tired and will sleep to recover. An eight-week-old puppy will have sessions of activity lasting from 30-60 minutes, with breaks for naps up to two hours long. Overall it will be active for six to seven hours a day and sleep at night for eight hours.

It's not advisable to exercise pups in public areas, or socialise with unknown dogs until after the second vaccination, although it's fine to socialise the puppy with dogs you know are vaccinated. Free play with other sociable pups or dogs is essential for behaviour education and physical development and is to be encouraged but not forced.

Take your puppy to an enclosed area for off-lead activity or, if not enclosed, use a loose long line. Ideally the ground should be soft with a varied terrain - the village green, a field or garden is ideal as they can sniff, run, jump and just have a good time. Play is the key to good physical and emotional development, so become their cheerleader. Teach them recall and start with simple tasks like sit, stay, lie, and giving a paw, as this can be used later when specific strengthening exercises can be initiated.

The pup should be allowed to play until it is tired and then it should rest, which is essential for physical and psychological recovery. The length of an exercise session can start at 15-30 minutes at two to four months and extend to 45-60 minutes at up to six months. High-speed ball chasing, especially with 'chuckers', is not advisable as it encourages excessive acceleration and reckless skidding and twisting. Once growth plates have closed, which will usually happen between seven months for small breeds and 10-14 months for larger breeds, they can generally move without limitation. If you are concerned that your pup might develop arthritis later in life, the most important advice is to keep them nice and light, and exercise helps with this too.

Search online for 'Dr. Chris Zink's Puppy Exercise Guidelines'. A very useful reference.







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News and Events

Memorial Hall

We are looking for replacements to join the team who run the hall. One is to replace Jackie Liffen, who has looked after the bookings for a very long time. The post is to take in bookings and place them on website, send out invoices quarterly and act as treasurer.

In addition, we are looking for a replacement for Colin Hayman, who has done a very good job over the last few years looking after the maintenance of the hall. This will be an ad hoc job rather than being committed to specific hours every week. It will require having items carried out either personally or by arranging a contractor to work in conjunction with the treasurer or hall committee.

For more information about either position please contact me.

David Collard 241944

Quiz night fun

Thanks to all the helpers and participants who managed to turn out on a bitterly cold January evening to support the Gardening/Allotment joint quiz. We had one 'gardening' round, with the rest the usual scattering of topics to ensure non-gardeners could participate. A special appearance by Monty Don (as the teams' joker) added to the fun. Funds raised will go towards supporting the Allotment Association in their efforts to improve the site, specifically access and a place to park and off-load tools, compost etc. It's currently very muddy!

Nancy Tolhurst



Village Fete

Save the date! This year the village fete, in support of St George's Church, will take place on The Green on Saturday 14 June (12-4pm). Planning is already well underway to create a wonderful community event featuring traditional stalls, games, fun, music, food and drink.

Keep an eye out for regular updates and details of where and when to drop off donations (from May). So start putting aside any pre-loved and good condition books, clothes, jewellery, bric-a-brac, tools and hardware that you would like to give. It's so good that these items will find new life at the fete while also contributing to the upkeep of the church.

The success of the fete depends on the support and energy of many volunteers. If you would like to get involved on the day before or on fete day itself (10-6pm) it would be very much appreciated and we would love to hear from you.

Cathy Presgrave cathy.presgrave@gmail.com





The Cranbrook and District **Probus Club**

PROBUS is a local, national, and international association of retired people who come together in non-political, non-sectarian, non-profit, autonomous clubs which provide regular opportunities for members to meet others in similar circumstances, with similar levels of interest, make new friends, and maintain and expand their interests.

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

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





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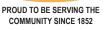
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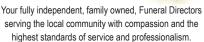
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Village lunch

All Benenden villagers are invited to join us for lunch in the village hall at 12.30pm on Tuesday I I February. If you would like to come and haven't written your name down already, then please ring me by Thursday 6 February if possible. Lifts can be arranged. We look forward to seeing you.

Kay Martin 240566

Non-perishable food leftovers

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

241064 gemmalouhunter@gmail.com Gemma Coupland and Liz Bewley

A very 'village' revue

Thank you to all who came to enjoy our very 'village' revue in early January. Over 200 people saw the two shows, which featured a 'pick and mix' of music, comedy and dancing. There was something for everyone, including soulful blues, a superb real-life demonstration of the entire history of dance, and a bunch of sketches illustrating what really goes on in parish council meetings (who knew?) and other aspects of village life! Well done to those dedicated 'players' who rehearsed over Christmas and New Year, and to the diligent sound, lighting, back stage and production teams.

Please come and join the merry troupe if you fancy being involved on stage or behind the scenes.

Ruth Clark www.benendenplayers.co.uk

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Chopin Etude F minor, op.25/2
Chopin Mazurka B flat minor, op.24/4
Chopin Fantasie in F minor, op.49

For full details, free mailing, tickets call 01580 883092 or write to A.G. Whitehead, Vinehall School, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JL geoffreywhitehead@vinehallschool.com

Iden Green and Benenden WI

We all enjoyed our first meeting of the new year when various ideas were discussed and there was also a great deal of reminiscing.

On 18 February we are excited to welcome Delia Taylor back to entertain us. This time she will be bringing her memories of Desert Island Discs and there will be opportunities for the audience to join in at various times. The West Kent WI AGM is in Gravesend on 19 March. If members would like to go, please speak with Shirley.

The rest of our year's programme is also very promising, and in addition we shall continue to hold social afternoons and various visits to local restaurants and attractions. If you would like to join us, please do get in touch. Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk



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Mick Moore 240755 m.moore131156@gmail.com

St George's Social Club

We ended 2024 with a terrific 70s party where we dressed up and enjoyed food and music from the decade. During February we have planned some fun social activities: indoor curling, golf, bingo and a quiz (see the village calendar on page 4). Our last quiz was won by Steve West and Peter Ellis so come along and see if you can beat them this month. Find us on the corner at the crossroads.

Glenda Marshall 243089 glendajoym@gmail.com

Sissinghurst Scouts

We have vacancies for anyone over four years old. Scouting is so varied we'll find something you'll like to do, from traditional camps to the flying simulator at this year's Kent International Jamboree. Sadly our six- and seven-year-old Scouts, known as Beavers, can't meet because we need a volunteer to help run their section.

Joining is great fun. You'll get involved in a huge variety of activities, unusual and unexpected. Please consider volunteering or ask your friends. To join us email Arun enquiries@SissinghurstScouts.org.uk or call Jan 0797 3541325.

Primary School

Well done to the children who took part in our 'Simply Nativity' last term - it was magical! The children looked amazing in their costumes, sounded brilliant and without a doubt showed exceptional commitment, confidence and courage. Thank you to everyone for putting on such a wonderful show and to all our parents for their donations to our two school charities, RNLI and Animal Rescue. We raised £152, which will be split between them.

Amongst the excitement of the nativity, Mrs Mileham and Miss Maynard accompanied some children to the Indoor Athletics Festival in Tonbridge. Miss Maynard was blown away by the children's compassion, determination and encouragement for everyone involved. She commented, "It was lovely to see both schools cheering each other on in their races and being so incredibly supportive. We have a wonderful group of children to be hugely proud of."

So much is happening at school. Forest school is already underway; Year 6 are looking forward to their residential trip to Bowles; Year 5 have already begun their Shakespeare rehearsals in preparation for their performance at the end of the spring term; our choir are off to the O2 at the end of January to take part in the 'Young Voices' concert; and auditions are underway for our 'Brilliant Benenden Showcase' scheduled for the end of February. The class teachers have also booked a variety of trips and Mrs Mileham is thrilled once again to be taking some children to take part in this year's Sportshall Decathlon, Kent Trials.

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





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

Gilly Walton 242855 gilly.walton@gmail.com

Benenden School

January may have brought gloomy weather, with its grey skies and chilly winds, but we've had an energetic and vibrant start to the year at the school. We celebrated two particular successes from the Christmas holidays: our ski team returning home from the Independent Schools Championships in Italy with nine medals, and another talented student winning a gold medal in the Equestrian Championships in New Delhi.

The mock exams were a sobering start to the year for our GCSE and A Level students, but we have enjoyed House Drama, a riotous annual event where our students write, produce and perform short productions for each other, with an eye on the coveted winner's trophy.

The performances for this term don't stop there. Rehearsals are underway for our Lower School production of 'Alice in Wonderland', while the new spring/summer season at Hemsted Park, our commercial arts venue, opens in spectacular style at the end of January. With jazz, Shakespeare, dance and the Benenden Symphony Orchestra all included in the line-up for in February, I am looking forward to some beautiful performances that will bring more welcome cheer. Rachel Bailey, Headmistress

Benenden Hospital

This month celebrates National Apprenticeship Week from 10-16 February and when I think about the pressures that people face on embarking on a career or pursuing a long-held dream in an affordable way, I do find the initiative inspiring. Here we understand the importance of valuing our people and are fully invested in supporting our workforce to grow and develop.

Last month, I had a chat with our learning and experience manager, Josephine Baker, who explained how and why work-based apprenticeships play a critical part in supporting internal development and strengthening our workforces' skills.

"We offer work-based apprenticeships across many training needs, including leadership and management, specialist areas such as HR, learning and development, customer service, IT and more generic skills such as coaching," explains Josephine. "We have an internal nursing apprenticeship that supports our employees to train to be a registered nurse, advancing from a healthcare support worker to a nursing associate and finally registering as a qualified nurse."

Our comprehensive nursing apprenticeship happens while under paid employment, giving our staff the opportunity to gain valuable hands-on experience. I can't speak about apprenticeships without mentioning our wonderful new employee experience video. For this, I spoke to our resourcing officer, Claire Mansfield, who worked hard to organise the filming of this project. "We are really proud of it," she said. "It showcases our hospital in the best light, with all that we have to offer as an organisation. It also displays a cross-representation of the team that we hire and the departments you can work in."

You can watch the video on YouTube. It's very inspiring, even for those not looking for a role. If you are, please visit our careers website page. We'd love to welcome you to our team. Claire Harley, Hospital Director

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Merry and Bright

Our annual general meeting has just taken place, when we also enjoyed a relaxed time with a two-themed quiz and a Victorian tea afterwards. We happily looked back at photos of our Christmas party.

Our 25 February meeting features Lauren Smith, who is coming to tell us how she is coping with her disability. We will welcome anyone who would like to come along and, of course, we will be having tea afterwards. Lifts can be arranged if needed.

Laraine Penny 241763 Julia Collard 241944

Benenden Pre-School

We have had a chilly start to the new year at pre-school with low temperatures and even a blanket of snow. The children still enjoy an outdoor play, although once fingers and toes feel the cold it's quickly time to go back upstairs to play inside.

Early years education is essentially all about play and about staff supporting and extending that play. A practitioner may suggest adding a resource to children's play, could model new vocabulary or encourage a new or shy child to join the game. For example, chairs lined up by the children to create a bus offers an opportunity for a discussion on where they might be going, road safety, how many tickets are needed. And of course, the game lends itself to the song Wheels on the Bus, or our pre-schooler's favourite book of the moment Whales on the Bus, in which a wonderful array of animals travel in a wide variety of vehicles, spanning ice skates to hot air balloons.

Play is an absolutely essential aspect of a child's healthy development, helping them to learn, to build relationships and to acquire resilience as they grow in confidence and curiosity. All these traits will stand our children in good stead throughout their lives.

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

Planning Matters

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

 24/03106/FULL Marble Meadow, Cranbrook Road. Retrospective - construction of shed for forestry purposes.

More planning matters at: benendenparishcouncil.org

Talking shop

Let's start what can be a dismal time of the year, February, with a bit of good news! It may not be earth shattering, nor will it make a difference to the world situation, but Benenden's was awarded its customary five-star rating for hygiene during an inspection on 11 November. All congratulations to those who work here, both staff and volunteers, for keeping up our excellent record.

We are trying out a new venture in offering an all-day cooked breakfast, both to eat in and to take away: bacon, sausage, beans, toast and scrambled egg for £8.95. If this proves popular, it will become a regular item.

On another subject, if you have noticed our beer stocks looking particularly colourful, it's because we are now stocking McCanns beer and lager. McCanns are situated just up the road at Hukins Hop Farm, which has been growing hops for over 100 years. It doesn't get more local than that. You can visit the taproom there and try the craft beers at source but Benenden's is now stocking some of the beers in cans if you fancy trying something different.

Last, but certainly not least, we are still in need of volunteers, especially as it's that time of year when people get ill. If you can do an extra shift to help out, please do so. There are times when we get very stretched for cover and we do very much rely on our volunteers. Many grateful thanks to all those who regularly help out.

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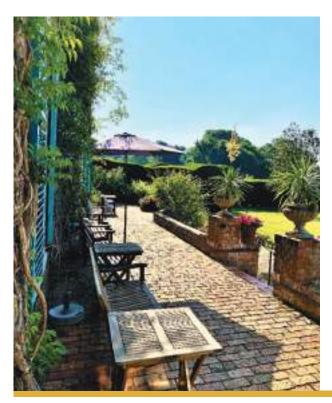
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Spotlight

Claire Grant: Village doctor, café regular and cricket fan

Claire Grant has been a resident of Benenden since moving to the village in 1980, spending almost four decades at Campion House along Standen Street in Iden Green. The purchase of the house owed something to serendipity: Claire and her husband Roger had viewed the house when it was on the market a few years prior and spent the next few years regretting not buying it. A friend (long-time Benenden resident Ruth Pringle) alerted her when it went back on the market and this time there was no hesitation (not even deterred by the alleged sighting by a previous owner of a "friendly, blue-lady ghost").

Claire was born prematurely (in 1937), her impromptu arrival causing the rushed opening of the maternity ward at Worthing Hospital. She grew up in north London, with early childhood memories of the Blitz, including the time when a phosphorous firebomb crashed through the ceiling of her bedroom.

Thankfully, it did not go off.

Claire is known to many in
Benenden as 'Dr Grant', having been a
fixture for years at the Old School and
Orchard End surgeries in Cranbrook, as
well as at Hawkhurst surgeries and other
local villages. She also did a stint at Benenden
Chest Hospital. By practising medicine she was
following the family trade, including that of her
father, who came to England from Trinidad
in his 20s as a newly-qualified doctor.

As a female doctor in the early 1960s, Claire was a rare breed. She was given the nickname 'The Bird' on one ward as the only non-male doctor and considered the name a badge of honour. She trained at numerous hospitals around the country, including Brighton, Derby, Sheffield, and Nottingham.

A passionate gardener throughout her life, Claire still delights in visits to Sissinghurst, reeling off the names of the plants. She has also played the cello for many years, including as part of the



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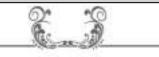


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Spotlight



Cranbrook orchestra. In her more 'youthful' 60s, she took up bell ringing at Hawkhurst and other local churches. She made it her mission to take the Grade 8 cello exam in her 70s, passing with aplomb.

Claire now lives in the centre of Benenden, and she can often be seen in Benenden's café enjoying a baked potato with one of her wonderful carers. She still indulges in one of her oldest passions: cricket, whether listening to Test Match Special, or watching the Benenden team on The Green. She is regarded as the team's 'number one supporter' and can often be seen on the edge of the green wearing her regulation



Benenden Cricket Club 'baggy green' cap, holding her personal cricket 4-6 cards and tucking into a sandwich and cup of tea.

Claire loves living in Benenden and she often says that there is no place she would rather be. With the lively schedule of community events and the social hub that is the café, she is utterly content.

JJ Grant











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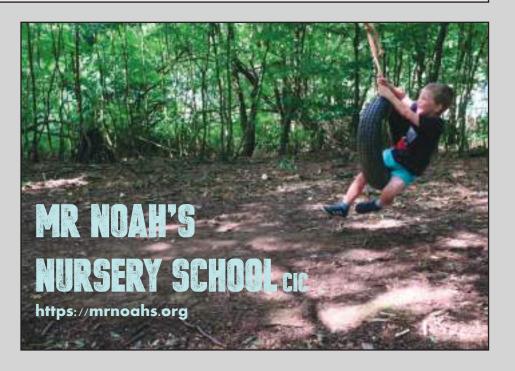
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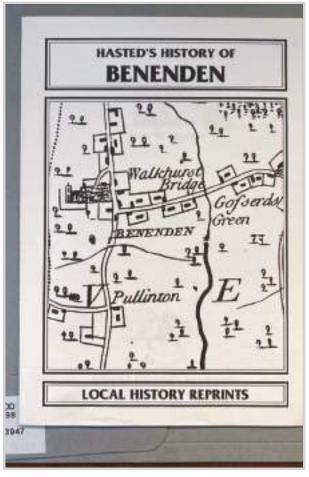


Benenden: a tale of sulings, carucates, disgavelling and villeins

Peter Massey heads to the city of dreaming spires to peruse a very special 18th-century history of our parish

I swore not to burn down a library last year! All part of renewing my Bodleian library card. Apart from giving me access to the most famous and extensive collection of books in the world, it would allow me to find out what's inside the magnificent Radcliffe Camera, the huge dome dominating the skyline in Oxford. It was built in the 1740s, John Radcliffe having made his fortune as a doctor to Queen Anne and William III. I had sponsored tiddlywinked round it, parked my bike on it, admired its beauty but not once stepped inside to read or research anything.

So, with the keys to every book ever published, where should I start? Why, back in Benenden of course. I admire the wonderful local histories researched by Ernie Pollard (www.benenden.history.pollardweb.com) and I'm sure he knew of Edward Hasted's 'History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent' long before I found it in the Bodleian's online



searches at www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk. Hasted lived in Sutton-in-Hone, near Dartford, and started his 100 volumes of research into every parish, manor and church in the county in 1755, when in his 20s. Volume I, was published





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Local History



in 1788 and completed with volume 12 in 1801, when he was in his 70s. That's dedication!

With excitement I requested that Hasted's History of Benenden be delivered into the Radcliffe reading library so I could enter the Camera's inner sanctum. An email popped up at about half past nine and I went to pick it up. I was expecting a dusty leather-bound tome, so imagine my surprise at a clean, slim pamphlet - it was an extract of course but nevertheless fascinating.

I wandered upstairs into a wondrous dome and sat down. With AI to help translate what sulings, carucates, disgavelling and villeins were, I worked my way through a fascinating story of what came before I798 from the even older sources that Hasted was using. Manors and houses with their owners and origins, ecclesiastical and charitable histories, families and marriages. Familiar names such as Guldefords, Gybbons and Norris. Unfamiliar names such as Bishop Odo of Bayeux - who was granted the manor of Benenden by his half-brother William the Conqueror - Robert de Remonel and John de Benendene, going back to the reign of Edward I

I never knew The Green used to be known as the Playstool and was used as a bowling green. Or that 15 May was the date for the horse and cattle fair. That Sir John Norris used to be dragged through the mud by ox cart to get to church until "It has of late years had the improvement of a turnpike road". The history of owners of Frame Farm in Iden Green includes Edward Alexander Esq, Sir Levinius Bennett and Lady Falkland and the "present owner" Francis

Motley Austin. The estates of Great Walkhurst and East Walkhurst belonged to Christchurch Canterbury until they were "fettled" by Henry VIII. And lots more.

All fascinating stuff to Benendenites I'm sure!

Gripped though I was, I broke off every few minutes to soak up the stunning baroque architecture all around me, built at the time that Hasted started his research, the results of which I was reading. Every time I've wandered through

Radcliffe Square, I have been filled with "wow". Now I'm full of "wow...wow!" Here's looking forward to getting the whole of volume VII out next time and learning a bit more about Cranbrook and Tenterden.

If you want to read the history yourself, you can at www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-kent/vol7/pp173-183.

A free pint or glass of wine to the person to email the editor with the most amusing sentence using all four words, correctly or not as you wish: sulings, carucates, disgavelling and villeins.



Spotlight



Kate Rundell: A year of painting passionately and connecting constantly

Every day last year village artist Kate Rundell 'connected' with friends all over the world in a very special way by sending or giving them a postcard that she created in pen and ink, watercolour or linocut. Each of the cards reflected something she had done or seen that day. She also posted each small piece of artwork



on Instagram (@katerundellartist) along with a few words about each day and what inspired each image she produced.

"Art is a passion of mine and I try to create every day," she says. "I wanted a way to challenge myself artistically and to also connect and reconnect with family and friends by sending them a card which they in turn could use to connect with someone else. As 2024 was a leap year she created 366 unique pieces of art. The 29 February 'leaping hare' card was sent to a friend whose birthday was on that day! It was quite a challenge."

It's wonderful to scroll through the images to see the year unfolding and it's a marvellous record of everyday life. Every evening she would sit down at her kitchen table and produce a card from one of the photos she had taken earlier in the day. "It became quite therapeutic, thinking about the day in peace and quiet and recording a highlight," she says. There's Morris dancing outside the Bull; a visit to the new village allotments; fungi amongst leaves discovered while gardening; glistening waterdrops; her chickens; a Friday night pint ... I encourage you to browse the images if you can.



Although the 'Connected Postcard Project' has come to an end, Kate is still creating art every day. When we met, she had just embarked on the Strada Easel challenge with artists from all over the world, producing a painting or drawing from life each day of the month (visit her Instagram to see her beautiful paintings created in under a time-lapse minute). She likes to be challenged and have a project on







the go. Even on holiday she takes a tiny paintbox so she can capture the world around her. She creates little 'zines' that unfold as a storyboard of a wedding or a visual narrative of a country walk.

Oil, water colour, linocut, pen and ink, all are techniques Kate uses, including myriad





herself. A variety of metals and plants have been steeped to create a broad palette of shades such as onion skin for an earthy brown; copper to produce blue; a vibrant yellow from daffodils and a creamy grey from aluminium strips.

lived in Benenden for



year and recording my progress."

As I say goodbye to Kate, I'm freshly inspired to get more creative in 2025 and will be keeping an eye on her Instagram to see her artistic diary unfold.

You can see some of her art in Bayliss & Co in Tenterden or online at www.katerundell.uk. For details of The Holt B&B visit www.theholt.org. Ruth Clark













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Last Word



In his 30s he began to write about the process of painting and the way in which this had to do with a particular kind of intuition about English landscape. This became a book 'Unquiet Landscape' which was successful at the time perhaps because of its anti-academic tone. It was republished 30 years later and became a minor, modern classic. In 2023 'Immortal Thoughts' was published which brought into opposition three simultaneous

Christopher Neve: painter and writer

Christopher Neve loved Benenden and lived much of his life here until his death aged 81 last year. He was born in London and was two months old when his father, Cecil Neve, an RAF pilot-officer,

was reported missing, presumed dead, while flying over the English Channel. When he was five his mother married again and moved to their old house in Benenden.

Christopher went to Edinburgh intending to study architecture but quickly changed his mind and enrolled at the Edinburgh College of Art where taught painting by William Gillies and Robin Philipson, key figures in the art scene. After travelling scholarships in Europe and a postgraduate degree in painting he moved to

UNQUIET LANDSCAPE
Plocas and Ideas in 20th-Cantury
British Pointing

Magniflown --Aniso reader cluster
Baleri Hackstain

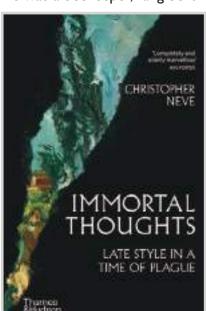
London and joined the staff of Country Life magazine in 1965 as the art correspondent where he remained until 1987. There he regularly wrote about 20th century paintings while continuing to paint and exhibit, starting with a one-man show at the Fine Art Society.



during the summer of 2020, the horrors of the progress of the pandemic worldwide, and the last work of several great artists.

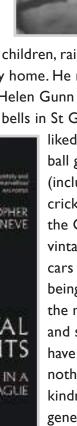
He married Arianwen

in 1968 and they had two children, raising the family in his beloved family home. He married again in 1994 and he and Helen Gunn had a son. He was a beekeeper, rang bells in St George's,



liked many ball games (including cricket on the Green), vintage racing cars and being in the mountains and said "I have received nothing but kindness and generosity lifelong".

preoccupations the beauty of the natural world



In Your Garden



Wintry dreams of pots full of warm summer colour

As I write this article I am sitting indoors on a very cold, snowy and icy morning. I have been banished from gardening at least for a few days so my mind has wandered to warm summers when plants are in full fettle and colourful blooms fill our borders.

Thumbing through my tear-sheet files (as one does on cold, wintry mornings) I was reminded of my success rate growing roses in containers - my first foray coming via a client of mine in Brenchley. She was very fond of roses and when we could no longer find space in the borders we decided to try out the possibility of growing them in large pots on the terrace. It seemed against my better judgement as a gardener - I had viewed mature roses in pots an unnatural way to grow and also a bit of a faff - but as we discovered, choosing the smaller varieties ensured a greater success rate, as long as we followed a few ground rules.

Without doubt, pot size is crucial, so a minimum of 30cm in diameter and height. We found not using terracotta a bonus, as water does tend to get drained away from the roots more quickly, and there are some lovely ceramic pots in nurseries now - buying in pairs is a good idea if budgets allow. For the growing season, we would sit pots in a generous saucer to conserve water, but during the winter months we would store saucers away and sit the pots on 'feet', so they didn't get waterlogged. Use a good soil mix with at least some loam and grit, a few spadefuls of organic matter from the compost heap and

incorporate well into a bag of compost. If you can make your own then so much the better.

We also religiously removed the top few inches of soil every early spring with a fresh blend, along with a hefty mulch. Roses respond



very well to
feeding even
when in the
ground, so in a
container I would
recommend a
weekly liquid
feed as you
would with other
container plants
during the
growing season.
I tend to use
liquid seaweed,

but see what works for you in terms of time and maintenance - sometimes a handful of slow-release fertiliser is a better option.

A watering schedule is a must once we are into early summer, when I would ramp up the watering to at least once a week, one full can per pot, twice a week if it gets hotter. Some advise watering every day in very hot weather but I have never found it necessary - the best test is to dig in with your finger to assess the moisture levels and then water if required.

When choosing roses we did stick to using either patio or the smaller shrub varieties, but don't feel too constrained. We once planted R. 'Olivia Rose Austin' as a bare-rooted specimen, which eventually outgrew its pot; in winter we pruned it right down then transplanted it out to no detriment at all. I have successfully grown R. 'The Lady Gardener', 'Princess Alexandra of Kent', 'Pretty Polly', 'Captain Tom' and 'Absolutely Fabulous'.

Next month I promise to return to more seasonal matters, but for now, I would enjoy dreaming of roses and all their abundant blowsiness and colour.

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GROUP MAT CLASSES

Monday 7.15pm Benenden Memorial Hall

Monday 8.30pm Benenden Village Hall

Wednesday 10.15am Benenden Village Hall

Thursday 9am Bloomsburys, Biddenden

Thursday 7.45pm St Andrew's Church Hall, Tenterden

GROUP REFORMER CLASSES PRIVATE ONE TO ONE & DUETS

Monday-Thursday 9am-4pm in new Pilates Studio at the Wellness Haven, Benenden