

Benenden Magazine

September 2024





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Details here



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Editorial



I'm bereft! After an enthralling Tour de France that unfolded over three weeks, followed by two weeks of Olympics - every day packed with amazing sporting endeavour - I find myself facing an impending sporting vacuum. Thank goodness the inspiring Paralympics will keep me on tenterhooks until 8 September but what then? I'm not a football or rugby fan so perhaps I will learn to love cricket and follow the test series in Pakistan in October. It's not that I don't have enough things to do instead of wasting time watching TV. I pretend I'm 'taking five' which inevitably stretches to '20' (okay, 60)!

From the 'in-seine' opening ceremony to the comparatively tame closing party, the Olympics delivered nail-biting medal successes, true grit, heartbreak and odd 'sports' (breakdancing!?). I found myself glued to trap shooting (even though I couldn't see the clays until they exploded in puffs of pink).

I reckon Benenden could run its very own Olympics. After all there are sporting endeavours most of us undertake every week that deliver winners, losers and edge-of-seat thrills. Bin collection day: points for putting out the right bin on the right day with deductions for rushing out in your PJs, or forgetting the food caddy (been there, done that). Navigating road closures: driving in ever-decreasing circles before you decide to risk it in the hope the road czars are just having a laugh and find that there are no road works at all. Points deducted for swearing (been there, done that!). Being the first to order your turkey from Wards: you need to time this carefully in order to carry off the gold medal. I think I've scooped it already this year (it's silly I know but makes me smile) but I need to nip in and check. Getting silver just isn't the same.

Ruth Clark, Co-Editor

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

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Village Calendar

September

Sunday 1	Pride and Prejudice, Benenden School Rose Garden, 5pm	p.11
Saturday 7	Jazz and Blues at the Iden Green Pavilion, 2pm	p.9
Saturday 7	Cornhole Tossing, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 8	National Garden Scheme, The Copper House, Benenden, 11am-3pm	
Tuesday 10	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 10	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 10	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.14
Wednesday 11	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Coffee Morning, Member's home, 10.30am	p.13
Saturday 14	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Monday 16	Parish Council Meeting, Memorial Hall, 7pm	
Tuesday 17	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Surprise Speaker, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.13
Thursday 19	Benenden Gardening Club, David Sarton, Recent Garden Projects, Benenden Hospital Quinlan Centre, 6.30pm	p.23
Saturday 21	Tabletop Curling, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 24	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 24	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Saturday 28	Autumn Barbecue, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 29	St George's Harvest Lunch, St George's Church, 12.30pm	p.15

Iden Green Toddler Group

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

Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-11.30am

Benenden Bowls Club

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

Cakes & Chaos: Café and Toddler Group

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

Parish Council



It is almost exactly six years ago that Benenden Healthcare Society put forward the redundant hospital sites at East End to the Borough Council as brownfield land for redevelopment. Understandably there were concerns raised by local residents as to whether these sites were suitable for development and the effect this would have on the surrounding area, but with a lot of hard work by our Neighbourhood Development Plan group, the site-specific policies in our NDP were formulated to ensure that we could achieve the best possible outcome for these sites.

I am happy to report that recently the planning committee at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council approved the planning application put forward by Esquire Developments for demolition of all the old hospital buildings and the erection of 81 new houses (including 26 affordable homes), to include substantial landscaping and biodiversity areas, with particular attention given to the replacement of the Garland wing with a crescent-shaped terrace of houses encompassing a public walkway so that all residents can benefit from the views onwards to the south of the site.

The avenue of mature oak trees running from north to south on the site will be retained, there will be a large wildflower meadow and grassland, an orchard and a large pond created with native marginal planting. Residents will be able to use the café at Benenden Hospital, which has also given consent for a small retail unit to be established within the café area. There will be play areas and a trim trail, and the existing cricket pavilion will be repurposed as a community space.

We believe this is the best possible result for these sites, and we will be working closely on behalf of the residents with the developer and Benenden Hospital so that we can mitigate any issues arising during the lengthy construction period.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair
nicolat@benendenparishcouncil.org

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

Parish Council Meeting
Monday 16 September,
Memorial Hall, 7pm

Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

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

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

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

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com

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

Sunday 1 September	8am Communion	10am All-age Communion	5pm Choral Evensong
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Sunday 8 September	8am BCP Communion	10am Morning Worship	
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Sunday 15 September	8am Communion	10am Sung Eucharist	
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Sunday 22 September	8am Communion	10am Morning Worship	
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Saturday 28 September			4pm Connect Four at Mission Church, Sandhurst
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Sunday 29 September	8am Communion	11am Harvest Service followed by a harvest lunch	
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Morning Prayer	8am Mondays and Fridays		
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Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Morning Prayer	8am Tuesdays and Wednesdays
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Mid-week Communion	10am Tuesdays
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Iden Green Congregational Church

Pastor: Tobin Bird 240027 www.idengreen.org.uk

Sunday Services	10am Morning Worship	5.30pm Evening Worship
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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
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From the Parish Registers

Baptism	18 August Jasper-Joel Malins
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Weddings	3 August Rose Pickering and James Cochrane
	17 August Yasmeen Cohen and Edward Prest

Marriage Blessing	24 August Junko and Robert Reid
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Church Letter



We must each tend to our garden

It's been a summer of non-stop sport: football, tennis, cricket, cycling and then the Olympic Games with their amazing variety of sports and nationalities. As an Anglo-Dutch family we have sometimes felt quite confused when England and the Netherlands have been pitted against each other, notably, recently, in football, rowing and hockey. We could see it as a win-win situation, as whichever side triumphs we can claim the victory as our own - though I have to confess that the sight of a British medallist draped in a Union Jack does remind me that proud as I am to have a foot firmly in Dutch culture and society, my deepest roots are British.

In recent days it has not only been on the winners' podium in Paris that we have seen people waving their national flag. Following the unspeakable horror of the events in Southport we have watched appalled the scenes of violence and destruction wreaked by rioting mobs in our major towns and cities. Brandishing Union Jacks, mindless thugs attack people of 'foreign' appearance, mosques and police stations, all in the name of maintaining our 'British way of life'. God help us if this is what the British way of life has become.

Voltaire, the 18th-century French philosopher and satirist, was profoundly concerned with the injustice and morally wrong philosophies of his day. In his satirical novel 'Candide', a young man is taught that "All is for the best in this best of all possible worlds". As he learns to think beyond philosophy and to see the world as it really is, he feels the frustration that many of us share at our inability to bring about change. What can he, a single individual, do about it?

The answer, the final 'message' of the novel, is surprising. "Il faut cultiver notre jardin" - we must tend our garden. This is by no means as simplistic as it appears. Does it mean burying our heads in the sand (or in our well-tended flower beds) and ignoring what is happening? Far from it. While we may feel powerless to influence the events we see unfurling on our television screen, we are reminded that we are personally responsible for the patch where each of us finds oneself. The 'garden' of our life is our home, our relationships, our community. Here we are challenged to practise kindness, compassion, generosity, patience and integrity.

This is what we can and must do. "You in your small corner," as the old song says, "and I in mine." The prophet Micah sums it up: "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." It was true then, some 750 years or so BC, and is still true now.

Happy gardening!

Revd Dr Rosemary Kobus van Wengen, Assistant Priest

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Talking Point



Intelligent solutions to our real world problems?

It's so sad to see the state of our dear village. It's downright troubling, and someone needs to address it. With the current government in power, it feels like our once-pristine community is slipping through the cracks. We've got to restore some order and standards around here, from the roads to the pavements to the cyclists.

First, let's talk about the roads. Have you noticed the potholes and cracks? These roads, a symbol of our village's infrastructure, need proper maintenance. We pay our taxes, and what do we get in return? It seems like infrastructure is the last thing on the government's mind. Navigating these roads shouldn't feel like a trial. I'm not saying we should all grab shovels, but maybe a firm word with the local council could remind them of their responsibilities.

This brings me to the issue of dog poo on pavements. Just as our roads need attention, so do our walkways. A stroll in our village should be pleasant, not a minefield of dog mess. It's high time pet owners took responsibility. If you have a dog, clean up after it. Personal accountability seems to be a foreign concept these days. It's not hard to carry a bag and use it. I'm not organising a clean-up brigade, of course (I'm far too busy), but a little peer pressure might do wonders.

And then we have the cyclists. While I appreciate their efforts to stay fit and reduce emissions, some seem to think they own the place. They speed through the village two abreast, ignoring traffic rules and common courtesy, wearing unsightly Lycra shorts. It's dangerous and disrespectful and these people need to remember they share the road with everyone else. A bit of discipline and adherence to the rules would make a big difference. I'm not here to enforce laws, but we expect better behaviour.

It's all about restoring order and respect. Under the current government, it feels like these basic, traditional standards are being ignored and things have got far worse since I was growing up.

A bit of effort and responsibility from everyone will go a long way. We share this wonderful space, and it's up to us to keep it in top condition. Let's not settle for anything less, even if it means pushing back against the complacency of the current leadership.

Artie Fishell

* Following on from Peter Massey's recent Talking Point about artificial intelligence, we asked AI to address the pressing matters of village life. By adjusting your instructions to the 'machine', you can make your article 'more right wing', 'more left wing', 'like the Daily Telegraph' or 'closer to the Guardian', possibly even 'calm and considered' (although this one is rarely used). You may have found yourself mentally penning a letter to the editor as you read it. You may even have recognised some of your own views in there - the ones you're proud of or the ones you don't really like about yourself. That's AI. It simply reflects the best and worst of human nature. Be careful how you use it.

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Grants for students and school-leavers

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

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

Rowena Hagell, Clerk, Gibbon and Buckland charity

Benenden Bonfire Society

Preparations for this year's event on Saturday 2 November are now underway. The committee is looking for a new treasurer, because due to work commitments our current one, Alex Baker, has stepped down.

The committee meets about six times during the year and the busy period for the treasurer is once the tickets go on sale in October and a few weeks after the event. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact me.

Gary Bell, Chair, Benenden Bonfire Society
07974 207548 garydb65@gmail.com



Newcomers' lunch

St George's Church is delighted to invite all newcomers to Benenden to an informal lunch in the church on Saturday 12 October at 12noon until 2pm. You will be offered a light buffet lunch with a glass of wine or soft drink and all newcomers are welcome. If you have moved to this village within the last couple of years, please do come and take this opportunity to meet other new residents and members of this community. We also wish to invite representatives from various village organisations who will be asked to give a very brief outline of their activities.

If you wish to attend please email me directly and I will ensure you have a formal invitation. If, however, you have new neighbours or know of people who have just moved here, do also please let me know and I will ensure they are invited. All the family are welcome.

This is a wonderful village to live in and we hope to be able to welcome you to the lunch and convince you, if you were not already convinced, of course, that your decision to move here was indeed the right one.

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Chapterhouse Theatre
1 September



The Ugly Duckling
The Ballet
31 October



Britten Sinfonia
Max Richter's Vivaldi Recomposed
7 November



Sheku Kanneh-Mason
& Harry Baker
15 November



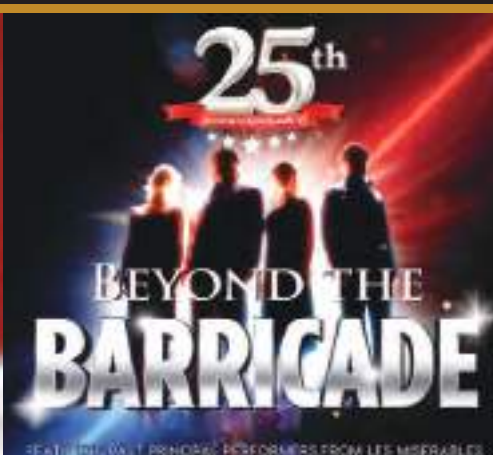
The James Taylor Quartet
ft Benenden Chapel Choir
17 November



Trio Bohême
Candlelit Concert
20 November



Faulty Towers
The Dining Experience
13 December



Beyond The Barricade
25th Anniversary Tour
14 December



The Scummy Mummy
Christmas Show
19 December

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Winter Revue

Benenden Players will present a winter revue on Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 January 2025. We're looking to showcase village talent old and new, featuring sketches, songs and other acts.

If you have hidden talents and fancy joining us on the boards we'd love to hear from you. We've rehearsal time planned in so you can hone your act. We're also especially keen to find backstage and technical crew to help with elements such as lights or sound. If you're interested please contact Nancy at: nancy.tolhurst@btinternet.com.

Merry and Bright

A very big thank you to Penny and Phil McMillan for a wonderful afternoon in their beautiful garden and to Phil, who taught us how to play croquet. In all my years I never knew the correct rules. All who played really enjoyed themselves and are longing to play again. We had one little shower so we had our tea early before playing. We've been so lucky so far with the weather, so we could not complain about just one shower.

Our August get-together is a ploughman's at Benenden Bowls Club. Anyone who would like to have a go at bowls will be more than welcome. We seem to be getting a bit sporty.

We have had well-mixed monthly meetings so far this year. As we are now halfway through the year we are starting to plan our Christmas party. We hope this will be a bit different and exciting for us all. For more information about our meetings please contact us.

Laraine Penny 241763
Julia Collard 241944

Grief Workshop

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

On Saturday 7 September, from 10-12.30pm in the Mission Church, Back Road, Sandhurst, we are offering a morning to explore our grief through conversation, readings and crafting together. It will be a safe space to come to talk and share what has been going on for you. Talking to others who have been through similar experiences can be helpful, or just knowing that someone is there to listen.

For more information and to book this free workshop please contact me.

Claire Roberts 754374
claireecr57@yahoo.com

Iden Green and Benenden WI

When Ros Maggs came to tell us about the Unique Charity, we listened intently as she outlined the intricacies of KBG syndrome, a rare chromosome disorder, which affects her grandson. She tries to make money for the charity and bought with her some delightful cards which she sold to fund raise.

Some of us are meeting at 12.30pm on 28 August to lunch at The Red Lion at Brede. We plan to visit the church to see the flowers afterwards.

A coffee morning is being held at a member's house on 11 September at 10.30am, which will be fun.

Our next meeting will be on 17 September in the Memorial Hall when a surprise speaker will be attending.

On 2 October, we are lunching at Tenterden Garden Centre and are arranging to meet there at 12.30pm. Then on 4 October we shall hold a social afternoon with a trading stall, at the Memorial Hall starting at 2pm.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

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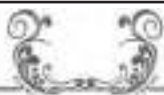


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Village lunch

We really look forward to welcoming everyone to the village lunch on Tuesday 10 September at 12.30pm in the village hall. New people are always welcome. If you haven't booked and would like to come, please ring me, preferably by Thursday 5 September to allow for shopping. We can give lifts if that helps, so do let us know.

Genevieve Greenwood 240526

In memory of Louise Nicholson

In October my friend Jackie Nudd, I and five others will be walking the English Way - the Camino Ingles pilgrimage route in Spain - in memory of Jackie's daughter Louise Nicholson, to raise much needed funds and awareness for DAVSS (Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Services). It's a fantastic local charity that helps and supports victims and their families affected by domestic abuse and coercive control.

Louise died nearly six years ago, leaving two children, since when Jackie has been fighting for justice for her daughter and her grandchildren. We need to keep educating each other and raising awareness about domestic abuse and its effects on those who suffer as a consequence of a crime that largely goes under the radar.

We will be tackling the 118km route over six days starting in Ferrol in Galicia and ending at the Cathedral of St James in Santiago. Please give as much or as little as you can for such a worthy cause. Donating through JustGiving to the pages of Linda Hayes and Jackie Nudd is simple, fast and totally secure. They send your money directly to the charity so it's the most efficient way to donate. Thank you.

Lyn Hayes

St George's Church Harvest Lunch

will follow the 11am Harvest Service in
St George's Church on Sunday 29 September

Ploughman's Lunch will be served
at the back of the church with
only 40 places available

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Places must be booked in advance by adding
your name to the list in church or by contacting:
Helen Commander helenjcommander@gmail.com

Places are limited and will be issued on a first
come first served basis, so please book early.
Please let me know of any dietary needs.

Everyone Welcome

Football returns to Benenden

Club football is coming back to Benenden, thanks to a joint initiative by the Benenden Village Trust, which owns the recreation ground and village hall, and Staplehurst Monarchs Football Club.

It is some years since competitive football was last played in the village and the goals had fallen into disrepair, but thanks to grant support from the Football Foundation, the game will return this season with a newly formed SMFC development side.

The Monarchs have almost 30 youth and adult sides providing football for men, women, girls and boys of all abilities from across the Weald of Kent. Looking for a second base in the area to host matches, Wayne Totterdell, manager of the new development side, worked with the BVT and village hall to source funding for the purchase of new state-of-the-art box net goals through a Monarchs U18s fundraising match against a Bell & Jorrocks All Star side in Frittenden.

Wayne and a team of Monarchs' volunteers installed the new goals alongside local contractor Steve Fagg, who very kindly provided his services and equipment free of charge. The goalposts will be kept in situ for use by all the community and for all the budding future football stars in the village.

Caroline Levett, Benenden Village Trust



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Benenden School

I am delighted to have been appointed as the new headmistress at Benenden School and am very much looking forward to getting to know the local community in the coming months and years; if the warm welcome I have already received in Benenden's is anything to go by, I'm going to be very happy here.

While the students and many of the staff broke for a well-deserved rest during July and August, a different buzz of activity descended on site. The facilities were enjoyed by a number of groups including musicians from Kent Music School, international exchange students from Austria, a young jazz group, and of course the annual Benenden tennis tournament.

Our on-site performing arts venue, Hemsted Park, is preparing for a full schedule of musical and theatrical performances, which begin on 1 September with an open-air rendition of *Pride and Prejudice* in the Rose Garden. Highlights for this season include internationally acclaimed cellist and former Young Musician of the Year award winner Sheku Kanneh-Mason, who I am particularly looking forward to hearing on 15 November. The full season's programme is available at www.hemstedpark.com.

Away from the site, our students have been enjoying trips, exploring beautiful scenery and learning new skills. Their personal resilience has been tested by some of the more challenging aspects of the trips, which have included rafting in Snowdonia, trekking across a glacier in Iceland and climbing in Kenya.

Of course, August brings exam results for our A Level and GCSE students. We wish them all the very best of luck, while at the same time encouraging them to retain an open mind and remember that exam results won't define the rest of their lives.

Rachel Bailey, Headmistress

St George's Social Club

Over the last couple of months we held our popular quiz, had great fun tabletop curling and cornhole tossing (one of our most popular games) and enjoyed a barbecue cooking Wards' burgers and sausages. Anyone is very welcome to come along to one or all our functions without being a member. Check out the full list of events on the village calendar on page 2 and we look forward to seeing you.

Glenda Marshall 243089

glendajoy@gmail.com

Weald Table Tennis Club

Benenden's Diccon Gray recently competed in the World Masters table tennis championships in Rome. There were 6,100 competitors, aged 40 to 99, from 109 countries.

Diccon played in the over 50s men's doubles and he and his Cypriot partner Zekai Nevzat qualified from their group but lost in a very close first round match, 15-13 in the fifth and deciding set. In the over-45 mixed doubles he partnered Kent-based Rita Lopes, again winning the group but being comfortably beaten in the knockout phase by a crack husband-and-wife Polish partnership. In the over 60s men's singles he won his group, then had a 'bye' in the first round (last 516) but then beat an American, Chinese and Pole in subsequent rounds before succumbing to a Slovakian in a close match. There were more than 800 players in the over 60s so Diccon declared himself "moderately satisfied" with reaching the last 32.

Although hugely competitive, the event is thoroughly enjoyable and sociable. Diccon is now looking forward to competing in the Europeans in Serbia 2025 and the next worlds in Korea.

If you would like to enjoy table tennis, the club meets Thursday and Sunday evenings in the village hall and is open to anyone of any standard.

www.wealdtabletennisclub.com

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Benenden Cricket Club

We had a fine away win against East Sutton in early August. Will Brunt and James Glean bowled decent opening spells, but sadly, our wicket keeper, Les Aldous, had to pull out at short notice with injury, and stopping boundaries on the fast outfield with only ten players was challenging. At 120-2 after 20 overs, a daunting 200-plus total threatened, but Barry Bassett continued his fine bowling form, delivering excellent flight, length and line to take five wickets in succession, achieving his first 'five-fer' for the club. Will Goddard bowled tidily and neat wicket keeping from Tom Mawhinney, and fine fielding from John Vernede and others, helped rein the hosts back to 173-9 off 40 overs.

After a splendid tea, we made a brisk start and from 75 for 1 at 20 overs, the runs mounted up, thanks to Peter Newman's 81 and followed by Will Brunt (22 not out), joined later by Will Goddard (32 not out including four sixes), as the young bucks raced to victory with more than six overs to spare. The man of the match contenders were the two Wills for their all-round performance, but it went to Barry for his match-turning bowling.

Sorry to those who have turned up to watch our home midweek games this year, all of which have been cancelled for a multitude of reasons. Hopefully these will resume next year.

Our upcoming home fixtures for September are:

Saturday 14 September v Sissinghurst at 1pm

Saturday 21 September v Kilndown and Lamberhurst at 1pm

Saturday 28 September v West Farleigh at 1pm
Peter Newman, Captain



Benenden Cricket Club
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Benenden Pre-School

Pre-school is looking forward to the next academic year in September and welcoming the new children who are joining us. The staff have had a summer holiday tidy up and a declutter of the rooms as less is always more.

Children are more creative when offered good quality open-ended resources and a suitable space in which to play with them. One of our most played with resources is our set of Community Playthings blocks. These are hollow blocks which, although quite large, are light enough for children to carry and can be fashioned into a thousand different objects, according to the children's play. We have seen them transformed into a pirate ship, a shoe shop, a tower block to climb up and an obstacle course. They have had toy cars driven along them, the farm animals sheltered inside them and have been decorated with pebbles.

The blocks have been in the pre-school for over 20 years. Imagine the numbers of local children who have had their imaginations fired by these wooden shapes. We look forward to seeing what games they inspire in September.
Lucy Oakley, Supervisor
supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk

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Benenden Hospital

September holds two very important awareness days: World Sepsis Day (13) and World Patient Safety Day (17). At the hospital, infection prevention is a number one priority and we're proud that we've had zero cases of sepsis this year.

Sepsis is a life-threatening condition arising when the body's response to an infection injures its own tissues and organs, and the body's immune system becomes overactive. Sepsis always starts with some form of infection, whether it be a chest infection or UTI. Why some people develop sepsis and others don't is unknown and there is no particular group which sepsis targets. It is most common in the very young and our older population, but can also affect those who are considered fit and healthy.

How to spot sepsis?

S slurred speech or confusion
E extreme shivering or muscle pain
P passing no urine (in a day)
S severe breathlessness
I it feels like you're going to die
S skin mottled or discoloured

Some of the easiest ways you can prevent infection include:

Washing your hands well after using the toilet, gardening, blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, stroking your pet or visiting/caring for a sick person - to name a few.

Don't pick at wounds, scabs, blemishes, insect bites. If you have a cut or graze, wash the area. For more serious injuries or inflamed cuts or bites, seek advice from a medical professional. Cover any coughs or sneezes with a tissue before throwing it away. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow. Don't share dishes, glasses, eating utensils or napkins.

By being more aware of infection we can help keep ourselves and each other safe. I hope you all keep well as we move into autumn.

Claire Harley, Hospital Director

Topical health

"There's no way I could go on a trampoline since having kids!" I hear this often from women who fear wetting themselves when they jump, i.e. stress urinary incontinence.

Pelvic floor muscles form the base of the core, spanning the bottom of the pelvis. They support the bladder, bowel and uterus and one of their jobs is to keep us continent. To function well, these muscles need to be strong enough to provide the support required, but flexible enough to stretch and relax. If we leak when we jump or run (or sneeze or laugh), it's a sign that the muscles aren't functioning as they should.

Should you avoid high impact if you leak? In my view, no. We know that higher impact exercise provides enormous benefits to our bone health, which is a priority for women, particularly as we age. Here are some suggestions of what you can do:

- Learn to squeeze and fully relax these muscles. Take a big breath in and with your out breath squeeze your back passage as if trying to stop yourself from passing wind and pull that squeeze through to the front. Hold for your out breath, then take another big breath in and fully let go.
- Establish what you can currently do without leaking and build gradually from there. Can you do teeny jumps on the spot before you leak? Great. Start there. Then try to make the jumps slightly bigger. Can you do tiny bounces on a trampoline while holding on to the side? Great. Start there. Then practise without holding on.
- When people are worried about leaking they often tense up and breath-hold, which can make it even trickier for the pelvic floor muscles to do their job. While practising your bounces, keep breathing and try not to grip your tummy muscles or pelvic floor muscles.

Pelvic Health Physiotherapists are experts in diagnosing and treating people with pelvic floor dysfunction, so if you feel like you need support please search for a physio here www.thepogp.co.uk/patients/physiotherapists/ Elizabeth Davies www.thiswomanlifts.com

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We're here to make sure anyone with a mental health problem has somewhere to turn for advice and support.

The Cranbrook and District Probus Club



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

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



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Benenden Gardening Club

David Sarton will talk about projects past and present on Thursday 19 September at the Quinlan Centre (opposite Benenden Hospital). The doors open at 6.30pm and entry is free for members and £3 for guests. Tea and coffee are available along with a raffle.

Please RSVP to:

Minnie Garnier

melissagarnier56@gmail.com

Beating Retreat success

Thank you very much to all of you who supported the Beating Retreat event in July which featured the impressive Gurkha Band. The response from the village was typically generous and I am extremely grateful. We raised over £3,500 for the Army Benevolent Fund, which was a great result.

Chris Parkinson

Richard Beattie Davis Memorial

The 16th season of Richard Beattie Davis Memorial recitals began on 27 July. The garden party was a wonderful occasion with a fabulous pianist, Mark Viner. After expenses, we raised an incredible £781 for Hospice in the Weald. This means that since Richard departed we have collectively raised over £18,000, plus a few hundred pounds from a string quartet at St Nicholas Church, Sandhurst.

The next event will be on Wednesday 11 September at the earlier time of 2pm. The performers will be duo pianists Emma Abbate and Julian Perkins.

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Planning Matters

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- 24/01828/FULL Nightingale Barn, Goddards Green Road. Change of use of home office/studio into holiday let including first floor extension, alterations to fenestration and roof lights and raised timber deck.
- 24/01791/TPO The Rectory, The Green. TREES: 3no. OAK (T1) - Remove deadwood, reduce 4no. overextended limbs; (T3 & T4) - Remove faulted limbs.
- 24/01725/FULL Hinxden Farm, Hinksden Road. Change of use of land to residential curtilage, provision of driveway, erection of a double garage, demolition of single storey extensions and erection of a two storey side extension and associated works.
- 24/01668/FULL and 24/01669/LBC Netters Hall, Attwaters Lane, Hawkhurst. Extension of C19th addition to farmhouse to accommodate a utility and boiler room.
- 24/01672/FULL Beaufort Cottage, Iden Green Road. Erection of a yurt.

More planning matters at:
benendenparishcouncil.org



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All change at Benenden's but fun remains the same

There's never a dull moment at Benenden's, with new staff, training schemes and new products. In amongst all the changes, there have been certain guiding lights which have helped us to achieve a thriving, welcoming, successful community shop. This is by no small means down to our stalwart bunch of volunteers who turn up regularly to help and have some fun along the way.

Talking of fun, our volunteers' social evening in July was very much appreciated. Two of our newer volunteers, Jenny and Hugh Rumary, said this: "Becoming a volunteer wasn't difficult at all as no previous experience was required, just the ability to work with a friendly and supportive team who are always pleased to see you. No two shifts are ever the same, whether behind the counter serving customers, filling shelves, or helping with a delivery. It keeps you on your toes! After only a few weeks, we feel we are making a valuable contribution, not just to the shop, but also the local community, and with a lot of fun mixed in."

Do please sign up at the shop if you fancy joining the gang.

A huge thank you to Mel, who returned to help the changeover with our new general manager Jules, who is settling into what is a complicated job very happily and enthusiastically. Mel has now left with our deep thanks and our very best wishes in whatever she chooses to do next.

Our café staff, Sue, Les and Kate, are taking on board our customers' feedback as to what they would like on the menu and several new products are being really well received. Thanks to all who filled in the little questionnaire and of course thanks to all our customers who visit



regularly and show such good-natured patience as our volunteers learn the ropes.

Finally, and

very importantly, we are looking to recruit a new committee member. The committee is made up of volunteers and is vital to the smooth running of the shop. The team is made up of a real mix of caring people who want to see the shop succeed now and far into the future. Peter Traill, who has been our chairman for three years, is now ready to step down. We have a strong committee comprising people with various skills but we need someone who feels they can take over from Peter.

The ideal chair would be someone who has business experience. We have members experienced in HR and finance but a more general understanding of business would be very beneficial. If you feel you can help, please email Peter (pgtraill@gmail.com) who will explain what the job entails. We tend to meet every four to six weeks so it's not too onerous. Apart from paid staff, Benenden's is dependent upon the goodwill of people who offer their services to help keep this precious hub going, so if you can help in any way please come forward and join our friendly team.

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Tony Ceeney celebrates the talents of our primary school's children and staff in a spectacular end-of-year show

Upon entering the school hall our breath was taken away by the staging. Courtesy of a pupil's father we were presented with a magnificent Kansas windmill that almost touched the ceiling. The stage was then surrounded by children from Years 3, 4 and 5. We were about to experience something special: the school's adventurous KS2 production of an adaptation of an epic musical.

The ambitious challenge was taken up by Mr Emmett, the creative Year 6 teacher, ably assisted



by the talented Miss Allen. In addition to the main characters that we all know and love we were introduced to mice, winged monkeys, gatekeepers and numerous others who were blended into the

story. The large cast was perfect for a school production, which included very catchy songs.

We start with the hurricane in Kansas that causes Dorothy, brilliantly played by Bella, to land in Oz accompanied by Toto. She meets with munchkins and then a scarecrow, portrayed by Milo, who characterised realistically. She then meets a tin woodman played by Jake, who skilfully demonstrated the limitation of un-oiled joints. Finally she is introduced to a lion played by an engaging Florence. All the main characters showed excellent stage presence whilst missing a brain, a heart, courage and, of course, Kansas.

The winged monkeys emerge as argumentative creatures who pick on one of their own, played sympathetically by Elliott, who longs for his freedom and independence. Their leader is the Wicked Witch of the West, who seeks revenge for the loss of her sister, crushed beneath Dorothy's Kansas dwelling. Zoe fully encompassed the role in movement, stage presence, speech and singing.

The gatekeepers, Jordan and Ernie, amused the audience whilst pondering the complex issues of brains and colours.

Following a meeting with the Wizard, impressively portrayed by Oliver, Dorothy defeats the witch, the scarecrow gains a brain, the tin man his heart and the lion her courage. Finally Dorothy is back in Kansas heralded by a great song from the whole cast.

The show demonstrated the courage, capability and talents of not only the students but, also, a versatile school staff to create a wonderful and spectacular event.



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Local Interest

From village to earth to universe: the wider view

Benenden artist Corinne Corbett-Thompson talks to Vanessa Nicolson about her work and environmental concerns in advance of her forthcoming exhibition at Hastings Museum & Art Gallery

Corinne Corbett-Thompson has been a 'local' for many years, but grew up in Spain, and has lived in Sarawak, Oman, Turkey and Brunei. Being well travelled has led her to develop a sense of understanding and curiosity for wider cultures and landscapes. Her paintings bring to mind images of planets seen from outer space. Like astrophotography, they lead the viewer to appreciate the vastness of the universe, and the importance for us to see the connection between our own planet and our place in the cosmos. In Corinne's words: "I think that when you see Earth, our planet, as a tiny part of the vast universe, you get a different sense of its fragility and hopefully these paintings stimulate the viewer to appreciate more what we have and need to protect."

In her studio in Benenden, Corinne works kneeling on the floor, turning the painting around and around. "It allows me to be almost 'in' the painting," she says, "letting the paint formations guide me and speak for themselves." The results are abstracted images that convey the vastness of the cosmos and the continents and oceans within it, of which we are such a small part. The formations of paint give the impression of land masses, sometimes punctuated by well-delineated colour, but often bleeding into each other like rivulets. The colour moves and flows, interweaves and transmutes into something else. Nothing is static.

Corinne is an advocate of getting out every day in all weathers. She appreciates how the



seasons affect the colours and shapes in nature, and how special it is to observe the patterns of change in the same locality, for instance in the woods and the countryside in which she regularly walks. She is deeply concerned about the state of our rivers and hopes that our water can become clean again. The exhibition in Hastings will include a work designed to offer this hope. 'The Unbroken River' is an installation of a meandering river that flows from plastics collected from the beach, through to pottery shards and on to beautiful ceramic 'pebble' bowls, to show, through art, how our rivers and seas can look when restored. The

intention is to motivate visitors to join together in making some individual contribution however small, whether it is picking up more litter or buying less disposable plastic, to help our planet survive. A Reflective Journey from Earth to Universe, Hastings Museum & Art Gallery, 28 September 2024 - 12 January 2025 www.corbett-thompson.com





Gutsy Girls: for the adventurous among us

When Natalie Bannister moved back to the UK after working in a surf camp in Portugal she found London a lonely place so decided to organise a variety of day-long activity events in the city for like-minded women as a way to dip in and out of exercise, try something new, have lunch and make friends. "We had hosted some women-only surf camps in Portugal and at first I didn't get it," says Nat, "but I saw how much fun and friendship there was alongside the lack of competition and ego within the groups and realised the attraction."

It was an inspired decision and within the year Nat had added adventure trips abroad to the variety of day events. "It was never meant to be a business but it proved so popular that within a couple of years I decided to take the plunge, stop working in social media marketing and consultancy and start Gutsy Girls."

That was seven years ago in London before Nat, her partner Dom and dog Alfie, decided

to move to Kent (first Goudhurst then Benenden, last year) to be closer to the woods they often visited at weekends to walk, cycle and run in.

Nat's aim to make outdoor adventure accessible to all women, regardless of their skill level, has clearly appealed to many. This year Gutsy Girls is hosting 130 summer and 80 winter trips - including stand up paddleboarding, trail running and bike packing the UK in Bath, learning to surf in Portugal, island hopping by kayak in Croatia, and horse riding and yoga in Norway. This is just a small sample of what's on offer and range from short two - three night breaks to week-long trips.





“We very much appeal to women who want to discover new sports and activities in a safe, supportive and fun environment,” says Nat, and over the last seven years, women from 18-75 years old have enjoyed Gutsy Girls adventures - many returning several times. “Age is absolutely not an issue,” she says. “While about 70% of our guests are in their 30/40s, we are attracting a growing number in their 50/60s who want to get back into sport after raising a family. Our main focus is beginners and then helping people progress to experience something a little more challenging.”

Groups are small (between 8-12 people) and are perfect for solo travellers. Alongside expert guides each group is looked after by one of Gutsy Girl's 50 experienced and trained host coordinators, who look after all the details and ensure a stress-free and enjoyable experience.

When I meet with Nat, she is busy planning new countries and experiences for 2025 and beyond, and asking her community of 32,800 followers on Instagram to vote for their favourites. Madeira, Montenegro, Albania, the Dolomites and, interestingly, Patagonia are proving popular. “My favourite part of the job is trying out new places,” she says. “I recently visited some national parks in America to research hiking trips there and they were just stunning.”

Visit www.gutsygirls.co.uk and/or join the community and follow on Instagram ([gutsygirls_](https://www.instagram.com/gutsygirls_)) to explore the range of trips

available. I have to say that I'm very tempted by a week of beginner paddleboarding, hiking, yoga and via ferrata (cable-assisted) climbing interspersed with wine tasting and pasta making workshops! Adventure combined with rewards - the perfect combination.

Ruth Clark



Local History

Lest we forget: remembering a brave WW2 bomber crew

Down a track near Rolvenden Layne is a monument close to the spot on Hexden Marshes where, 81 years ago, a Wellington bomber crashed on the outward-bound leg from its base in Yorkshire, en route to bomb Frankfurt. Only rear gunner Art Lees was able to parachute to safety, while the remaining four Royal Canadian Air Force crew were killed.

The field where it landed, and where much of it still lies deep down, is owned by Edward Barham of Hole Park and in 2002 he decided to erect a monument to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the crash. It was unveiled on the anniversary in April 2003 by the Canadian High Commissioner with Art, who survived the war, as guest of honour.

By that time Art was in his 80s, living in British Columbia. He had moved jobs and home, and his whereabouts were unknown, so in the days before internet, Edward wrote



to the town hall at his last-known place of residency, where, by chance, his wife Rosa worked, and the two were able to speak. Although Art had been approached by others to return to the site and recall events, it took courage and time for him to know that on this occasion the time was right.

Air Canada flew him to England as guest of honour on the flight from Vancouver and Edward arranged for him to stay at Great Maytham in Rolvenden, which at that time had several residents of similar age and with similar stories.

The highlight was the unveiling day, with the Air Cadet Band playing, a fly-past by wartime aircraft, local dignitaries and TV in attendance and RCAF and RAF attending. Approximately half the cost of the monument was paid for by public subscription, including a generous donation from Art Lees's 424 Squadron RCAF, the rest by Hole Park.





During his stay in the UK, Art and Edward visited Maidstone Cemetery, where those killed were buried. Art recalled that the coffins had been weighted with sandbags as there was so little of the individuals recovered from the scene. Poignantly he also



gave Edward the D ring from his parachute, which he pulled as he left the aircraft and was still firmly clutching when he landed.

Art sadly died just two years later but had kept in touch with Edward. His visit to England in 2003 changed his life; forever after he was a hero, asked to attend galas, schools and dinners as guest of honour, open the fete and appear on local TV. He recalled that he did not feel like a hero on that grim day in 1943, but he was so glad to have come to England and brought the heroism and tale of his dead comrades to the fore.

The bomber and its dangerous cargo still lie in Hexden Marsh, with parts coming to the surface most years. A wreath is laid annually at Remembrance Day by Rolvenden RBL to commemorate those killed.



The full account of the event, which appears in 'Rolvenden at War', published by Canterley (www.canterley.co.uk)

On 10 April 1943 a Wellington bomber of the Royal Canadian Air Force, 424 (Tiger) Squadron, took off late at night from RAF Topcliffe in Yorkshire, loaded with phosphorous incendiary bombs. Around an hour and a half later, just after midnight, an engine failed and the aircraft began to spin. The order was given to bail out at the woefully low altitude of 600 feet: only Flight Sergeant Arthur ('Art') Lees, the rear gunner, was able to. The bomber crashed into the Hexden Marshes south of Lambsland Farm, Rolvenden Layne, bursting into flames and killing the four remaining crew members aboard despite the attempts of Lees to save them.

They were pilot Warrant Officer (Class II) Robert Montgomery Buie, aged 21; wireless operator Flight Sergeant Amos Walter Kimmerly, aged 21; bomb aimer Pilot Officer Leonard Keith Taylor, aged 23; and navigator Pilot Officer Ralph William Thompson, aged 22. Buie, Taylor and Lees were crewmates of longstanding; all three had bailed out and survived a similar crash over Wiltshire 10 weeks earlier.

Tenterden's fire crew raced to the scene but a local army unit was quicker, and had established a protective cordon around the site. The firemen pleaded to be let through; the sentries refused, citing the danger of exposing the phosphorous bombs to water (under the wrong circumstances the two can react to form harmful ammonium chloride gas). A tense and undignified stand-off took place - at one point an army officer threatened to cut the firemen's hoses. Eventually a compromise was reached and the crew were allowed in, but they could only do half the job, and later on that Sunday morning the fire broke out again and Rolvenden's combined squad took over. Thompson, the only RAF member, had been married for only six months before his death. He was buried in his hometown of Castle Bromwich near Birmingham. The other three fatalities were Canadian and are buried at Maidstone Cemetery.

Much of the wrecked aircraft, including the engines, wings and fuselage, remains underground in the soft marshland. Since the war, what were taken to be oxygen bottles from the plane were found occasionally and stacked at the side of the field but it was only when deep tillage was being undertaken in the 1970s, that a total of 21 incendiary bombs were identified, including those supposed gas bottles. They were detonated by RAF bomb disposal. The Brenzett Aeronautical Museum also recovered a section of one wing which remains in their collection. The estimated remaining 18 bombs remain undisturbed and still viable, about 25 feet beneath the surface, and for this reason the exact site of the crash is not publicised.

Some idea of what the brave WW2 bomber crews went through is portrayed in the gripping 'Masters of the Air' series currently on AppleTV.



Kent & East Sussex Railway: a rich, linear nature reserve

Keith Barron, a regular in Benenden's café, has been a member of the Kent & East Sussex Railway for the past 50 years and is part of its newly formed sustainability group. Here he explains their efforts to develop a biodiversity strategy. Preservation was the name of the game in the early 1970s, when those who mourned the end of steam trains wanted to save as many as they could. Now they are called heritage railways and there are over 200 of them covering 560 miles. They have morphed from enthusiasts' playthings into living museums and leisure destinations.

Today, we face a far more urgent preservation imperative to restore nature, and it seems to me that heritage railways can play a part. This is because they are green corridors - or potential green corridors. Since the 1970s, when the railway preservation movement began, there has been a loss of 40 million farmland birds. We are one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, ranking 198th out of 218. Younger generations are unaware of the loss because of what is known as 'baseline regression syndrome', or as Gerard Manley Hopkins put it in *Binsey Poplars*: 'After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.'

Last year we commissioned Kent Wildlife Trust Consultancy Services to undertake a breeding bird and bumblebee survey of the line. The results were remarkable, confirming that our scrub and tree-lined route running

through remote Kent and Sussex countryside is rich in biodiversity. There are over 70 species of wildflowers growing on embankments and in ditches; dense scrub supports around 38 of the 89 bird species which were identified (17 of

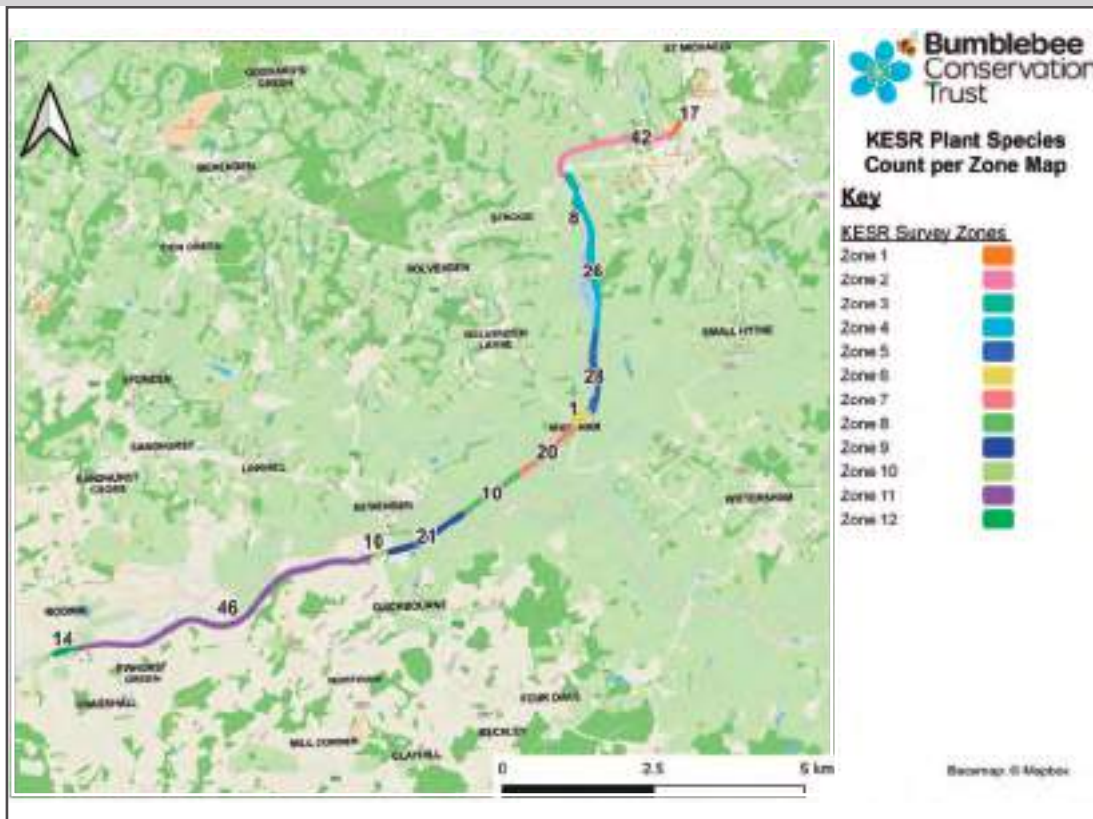


which are red-listed and 22 amber-listed). In its 10.5 miles the line is supporting an extraordinary 60 yellowhammer territories - a red-listed bird in serious decline nationally. Even more importantly, high conservation status species such as nightingales and turtle doves are being

supported by lineside vegetation, and 15 different bumblebees were identified, including two rare ruderal species. The railway finds that it is effectively supporting a linear nature reserve!

We decided to commission the surveys for a number of reasons. There was already a nascent support for nature amongst many of the railway's groups. Station gardens were being tended with bee-friendly flowers; bird boxes and bee hotels had been erected; more importantly, the gang responsible for managing lineside vegetation and maintaining a safe railway have designated themselves as 'Forestry and Conservation'. Biodiversity surveys would put this on a scientific basis. As the railway is an educational charity, it makes sense to inform and educate passengers about the natural wealth just outside the carriage window.





railway owns. One of the two species this can support is the white-letter hairstreak butterfly, which is very rare. Perhaps we can manage a re-introduction. For that too.

It was through James that we were introduced to Emily Davies of the Kentish Stour Partnership who came to survey a large lineside pond with a view to restoring it to a

We are planning to develop a sort of i-Spy booklet for passengers. The PR jargon would be all about 'enhancing the visitor experience', but our motivation is not so utilitarian. We want to protect nature for its own sake. It is heartening to discover how many of the railway's members (most of whom are volunteers) are excited by the surveys' revelations. Recently, at their request, I gave a talk to all the ticket inspectors who are keen to be able to talk informatively to passengers.

I am not an ecologist, though I have read a wealth of books about biodiversity, rewilding, nature-based solutions and so forth. My amateur passion was focused when my youngest son studied for an MSc in Sustainability at Birkbeck a few years ago, but it is exciting to work with local experts and agencies.

I have joined the Romney-Rother Catchment Partnership (much of the line runs through the Rother Valley) set up by the South East Rivers Trust, and we have offered the group an exploratory trip along the line, which is like a remote country lane without the traffic. Approached by James Clow, Kent Tree Senior Strategy Officer, for Kent County Council, we have planted ten disease-resistant elm trees as part of a re-introduction strategy along the edge of a two-acre wildflower field the

state where it can support great crested newts. This is funded by Natural England.

From the outset I have regularly updated the director of the High Weald National Landscape (formerly AONB) about our discoveries and developments, but perhaps the most significant partnership has been with the Kent Medway Making Space for Nature project. Thanks to workshops and introductory meetings, it has been possible to establish the railway's identity as a green corridor with a tapestry of habitats that can contribute at a landscape level to nature recovery. Through their interactive mapping system, we are logging our findings and hope to play an active part in their strategies for the future.

In the next three years, working with the Rother Valley Railway, who are re-instating the last lost three and a half miles from the main line at Robertsbridge to Bodiam, the opportunity arises to see how the complete rebuilding of a railway line can improve biodiversity. First published by St John's College, Cambridge alumni magazine, May 2024



In Your Garden



Council brings colour to late summer in the borders

By the time we have reached late August I find that most of our carefully planned colour schemes have disappeared out of the window, in favour of an all-out kaleidoscope of colour. Spring is now long-gone and is always a very natural affair, veering towards the gentle

side; midsummer borders are colourful, frothy and carefully planned to showcase our planting design skills. Once we arrive at August, however, it's as if someone has pushed the 'riot' button (no political pun intended here) and we cannot seem to get enough of the colour clash.

As I write this article I am staying in North Berwick which, as I have discovered, has been a major medal winner for 'Britain in Bloom' since the early 1990s. East Lothian Council is the local authority here and I take my hat off to their success at implementing a team of excellent volunteers not only to execute an enticing and colourful display but at the same time raise awareness of environmental issues and community involvement. The colour combinations are wacky and bold, perfect for wider public places where subtlety is generally passed by, and an orangey-red, eye-wateringly bright yellow and fuchsia pink combination tends to hit you in the eye on your way to the ice-cream queue.

For schemes such as these, some design input is definitely required but more on the side of scale, balance, form and impact. So, we have tall, red/orange crocosmia 'Lucifer', with their long, sword-like foliage; masses of tender salvias of all colours, knitting their way through

the front sections; sentinel groups of bold cannas, dinner-plate dahlias and big yellow pompom chrysanthus. Also spotted are some pretty pink malvas and the newly popular cosmos 'Antiquity'. I do like this sub-tropical feel, which councils, including East Lothian, are managing to deliver in a much more creative way these days, particularly when planting schemes are being incorporated into existing borders to mingle with shrub roses and bushy evergreens. The Victorian desire to 'bed out' on such a large scale seems wasteful in an amenity setting, where budgets are already constrained, and so a re-think has clearly occurred to minimise the waste but still deliver on impact.

In a private garden however, you are quite at liberty to do as you feel, particularly if dahlia and canna tubers can be dug-up and replanted, also divided in spring, if wished, to increase stock. Many tender annuals can be raised from seed too. Of course we can always make a trip to a local plant nursery and stock up for a more instant look, and at the end of the season all waste can be thrown onto the compost

heap - or do as I do when clearing up annuals and shave off the entire stem at the base, throw the tops onto the compost and keep the underground root network to decompose directly into the ground beneath, which tops up microbial levels in the soil, keeping it healthy and aerated.

Whether you are visiting public spaces or planting your own at this time of year, the possibilities for colour and impact are a delight. The lowering light levels help to illuminate all the strong colours and back light the now flowering grasses. This elevates a collective effect

guaranteed to raise spirits and provide inspiration for next year's schemes. Be brave, bold and above all enjoy the process.

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Above: Activity around the village and beyond: Progress on the allotment site; Merry and Bright treated to a croquet afternoon; Diccon Gray at the World Masters Table Tennis Championships, Rome; Women's Royal Army Corps cyclists pit stop at the café; Benenden Hospital visit the primary school; riding a fabulous model railway; the welcome installation of new football goals

Front cover: Creativity and practicality combine on Benenden Allotments. Photograph: Amelia Thomas