



Benenden Magazine

May 2020





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# Editorial



The incredible altruism of so many Benenden and Iden Green parishioners mentioned in this issue is humbling and inspiring. When we heard that we were able to print May's edition of the magazine we thought at first that, due to the lockdown and the closure of the church, clubs and schools, there would be little news to include. How wrong we were. From every corner of the parish we heard news about how many people were rallying not only to support one another locally, but also making personal Protection Equipment (PPE) for carers and NHS staff, fund raising and more.

Staff at the girls school are making thousands of head visors in their workshops and thousands of people all over the country are making scrubs, uniform wash bags and headbands at home. We mention just a few in the village who have rallied to the cause but there will be many more that we didn't have time to uncover before going to print so a huge round of applause to you all (page 28).

Although we are living apart now, it seems we are closer than ever, and a multitude of small acts of kindness surround us. Such as when Benenden Hospital called the Benenden Action Team recently and donated 40 large Easter eggs which were happily received by the Primary School staff and children of key workers still attending. Hannah Miles-Watson of Hannah's Garden has launched 'Say thank you to local heroes'. She started by giving a bouquet to a local midwife who, on top of her long shifts, is galvanising the village to make PPE. She, in turn, nominated the next person and the chain will continue until lockdown is over. So, if you receive a surprise bouquet one Saturday you will know you are appreciated.

It's not really surprising that the more you do for others, the more you do for yourself. It helps make the world a happier place-and it's contagious!

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

Contributions to: [benendenparishmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:benendenparishmagazine@gmail.com) by the 10th of the preceding month.

Advertising orders or queries to: [advertising.benendenmag@gmail.com](mailto:advertising.benendenmag@gmail.com).

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# Village Calendar

The Village Calendar may look a little light for the foreseeable future. Coronavirus and the Prime Minister's lockdown of the entire country have rather put a crimp in our social lives and dates have been cancelled left, right and centre. Even the civic amenity vehicle won't be around for a while.

These will be trying weeks for us all as we negotiate a new landscape of self-isolation and social distancing. To that end, David Commander has come up with a list of guiding principles to steer us all through the confusion. We hope they may be a help until normal service is resumed.

## Guiding principles

Our approach to making decisions about specific events, services or issues can be guided by these principles:

**Be calm and trust** the advice given by relevant authorities.

**Protect the vulnerable.** It's not just your health, but the health of others who may be more vulnerable.

**Continue to love our neighbour.** Respect their needs and concerns as much as your own - but safely. If you have a neighbour living alone and isolated they would appreciate a call.

**Be transparent and open** with one another, sharing accurate and up to date information.

**Be creative** when making decisions - "how can we do this differently in these circumstances".

# Parish Council



At least the sun has been shining, which makes the interminable queuing for life's essentials a little more manageable, although as I am one of the fortunate (or is that unfortunate, I can't quite decide?) who are still working full time - albeit from home - I have to admit I have delegated the queuing task to my teenage daughter and furloughed husband. Apparently this is marginally more interesting than shed painting.

During this period of extended lockdown, the Parish Council has been keeping in close contact with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council via email and with weekly remote meetings to give updates on the provision of support required for our more vulnerable parishioners, and to receive relevant guidance from the County Council or central Government. Benenden is, of course, extremely fortunate to have the excellent BAT volunteers looking after the self-isolating and vulnerable in our village. Thank you to all involved with BAT - you are doing a truly amazing job.

It is very sad news that Gordon Reynolds has passed away. Gordon was responsible for recruiting me to the Parish Council some seven years ago now, and I was always in awe of the amount of time and energy he gave to Benenden. He quite obviously loved this village, and I am glad that he saw his grandson attend the new primary school. Gordon was always unfailingly kind to me and my family, and we shall miss him. Our thoughts are with Crissie, Lucy and the family.

Keep safe everyone, I am hoping that by the next issue of this magazine, there may be some signs of us getting back to a more normal way of life.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair  
01580 240364 [nic.jthomas@btinternet.com](mailto:nic.jthomas@btinternet.com)

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk  
01580 240371 [clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org](mailto:clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org)  
For more information see our website [www.benendenparishcouncil.org](http://www.benendenparishcouncil.org) or find us on facebook

Parish Council Meeting  
Monday 18 May 2020,  
7pm - details tbc





# Church Calendar

## St George's Church

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

Churchwarden: Tracy Claridge 240454 [maisonsicheluk@tlclaridge.co.uk](mailto:maisonsicheluk@tlclaridge.co.uk)

Churchwarden: David Collard 241944 [julia.collard@btinternet.com](mailto:julia.collard@btinternet.com)

[www.benendenchurch.org](http://www.benendenchurch.org) 850849 [benendenchurch@gmail.com](mailto:benendenchurch@gmail.com)

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

Although the church building is closed and public worship suspended, the church is very much alive.

### Online Sunday services

Assuming these restrictions are still in place throughout May, there will be a service available online every Sunday morning. The video of the service and a service sheet can be found on the Home Page of the church website. ([www.benendenchurch.org](http://www.benendenchurch.org)) Please 'join' the rest of the church family, online, at 10am each Sunday.

If public worship in the church recommences, then we will revert to the normal 8am and 10am service pattern each Sunday.

## Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

## Iden Green Congregational Church

Elder: Tobin Bird 240027 [www.idengreen.org.uk](http://www.idengreen.org.uk)

## The Roman Catholic Chapel TN17 4EL

Fr Barry Grant 713364 [www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org](http://www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org)

## From the Parish Registers

Funeral 17 April Gordon Reynolds Funeral and burial

# Rector's Letter



## Helping and caring for others: Part 3

Thank you to so many people for putting the “Love your neighbour as yourself” into practical action. These may be extraordinary and very strange times, but there is good that is coming out of this as well, of course, as feelings of anxiety and hardship, sadness, and grieving.

Holy Week (the period between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday) was an incredibly strange time in the church this year. Holy Week is the busiest time for the church: with services every single day; a time of coming together and reflecting before then being able to celebrate once again together on Easter Sunday. But the church building was closed. This included personal prayer for the priest, which whilst understandable was very sad; we had to find other ways of worshipping together and marking Holy Week. We may not have met physically, but the busyness was very much still there. We still maintained our daily services through Holy Week, but this year by recording them and uploading them to YouTube (now that was a learning curve!) the church family managed to ‘join together’ at the same time for our services. Because of the technology, we were also joined by folk in South Africa, Singapore, and New Zealand. Whilst the building was closed, the church was alive ... and reached people further away.

At the time of writing, it has just been announced that we are in for at least another three weeks of lockdown. We are more fortunate in our villages than many other people in our country and we need to remember that and be thankful. But now is the time when things, even for us, will start to feel harder as we face up to the reality that this isn't going to end soon. So the plea is even more important this month: think of your neighbour. If you are going out for essential shopping, or to collect medication, or you're doing an online shop: give them a call, ask them if there is anything they need. Help your neighbour. The work that is being done by BAT (Benenden Action Team) is incredible; thank you to all the volunteers. Help is there for you. You just need to ask; please, do not be afraid to ask for help. This is caring for your neighbour in action.

These remain very strange times, and they are anxious times for many. There is a piece of scripture, in Philippians, about anxiety which might, at first reading, seem out of place: “The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” I encourage you to give it a try. Make your requests known to God; pray to God. The next verse says: “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

May you know God's peace and blessing.

Revd David Commander, Rector

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# Just a Thought



## Time to draw

How did it come to this? Here I am sitting at the table in the middle of the 'lockdown' trying to draw Snap the crocodile, Prickle the porcupine, Squeeze and Slither - snakes, and a rabbit who parachutes into the middle of their jungle! This is the second story I've written for my youngest grandchildren using these characters, and I'm finding it somewhat more challenging to illustrate than the earlier stories that involved triangular-faced cats and a couple of plump pandas.

I would never ever consider myself any kind of artist but I realise that I have been drawing in one way or another since school days. First it was maps. All my geography essays were full of maps. It was so much easier than explaining things in writing. This was very useful later when teaching in several countries in the developing world without class atlases or projection equipment. I used to draw the required continent or even the whole world freehand on the blackboard to help bring the lesson alive.

When in the sixth form myself I had a fascinating time in zoology lessons. In those days we were allowed to do detailed dissections followed by drawings of each stage. Recently I found some old school folders in the attic showing the wonders I had discovered with a scalpel: progressing from the humble earthworm, through a dogfish, and then a frog and finally arriving at a rabbit.

Teaching upper primary classes, in whatever country, has always been accompanied by drawing of one sort or another either on the board illustrating such stories as the journey of latex from rubber tree to car tyre, or making posters and worksheets for science, English, maths or general studies. History was a little trickier but stick men were a favourite tool and they can be made to do almost anything. They even worked for training new teachers.

Our last posting was to St Helena and there one didn't need 'lockdown' to find time to explore possible hobbies. I took up golf and 'proper' drawing. I made some progress with the golf, although too often I was distracted by the wonderful scenery and the sea. As for drawing, I tried flowers and other plants reasonably successfully but landscapes probably showed too much striving for accuracy and not enough soul. Once again I also employed my stick men and had great fun making detailed illustrations showing 'life on St Helena'.

Since retiring I have been writing and illustrating stories for grandchildren along with making notices, cards and posters for other activities. There's nothing too taxing in my attempt at amusing or informative creations. Now sitting at the table, I find myself wondering if I can alter my story so as to reduce the number of times that I have to draw Blunt, the scorpion with a less than effective sting! Both realistic and cartoon drawings of this creature seem to require some significant technique. However, this lockdown at least provides plenty of time.

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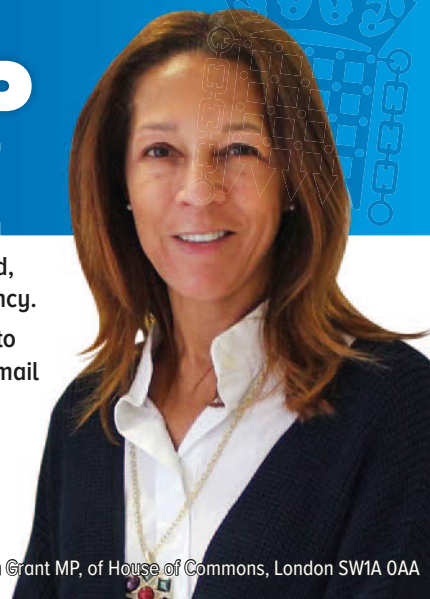


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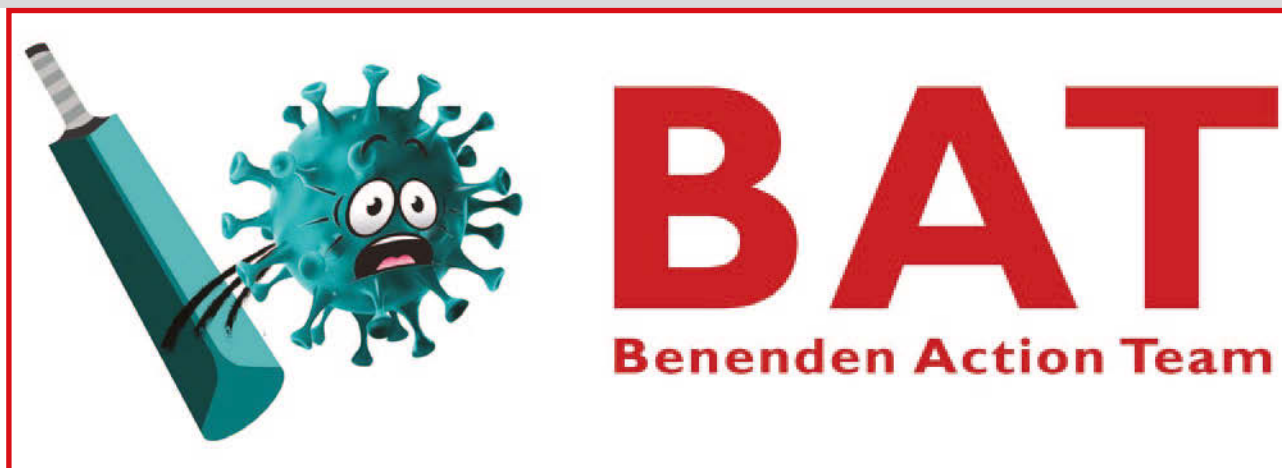
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## Village volunteers rally round

Guy Hagan, lead co-ordinator of the Benenden Action Team (BAT), talks about the support the village volunteer group has been giving over the last few weeks.

Four weeks ago, I sat in St George's Church and listened to our wonderful community discussing the best ways to help itself through the coronavirus pandemic. After speaking to Revd David Commander that evening, it became obvious that we had a considerable volunteer force that could be managed to do great things.

In the four weeks since the birth of BAT we have mustered nearly 200 volunteers overseen by eight area co-ordinators. We have delivered leaflets to every home in the parish twice, collected dozens of prescriptions, delivered food and essential items to those in forced isolation and created a Food Voucher Scheme funded by the community shop and the church to enable those in financial hardship to buy essential items in the village.

We have launched a website with useful advice, walked dogs, helped with odd jobs, cleaned cars, sorted IT issues, encouraged people to write poetry and created a general 'good neighbour' feeling to support each other through this unprecedented time. I have personally been involved in discussions at parish, borough and county council levels and received a letter of support from our MP. The next month is going to be an exceedingly difficult time for many and the BAT volunteers are on hand to help, so please contact us if you need help.

As lockdown continues, it is increasingly important that those alone and isolated at home with no friends or family to chat to over the phone need contact. If you would like a regular cheerful chat, or know someone who would benefit, then please let us know (call Ruth on 07767 261883).

I saw the amazing capabilities of volunteering nearly three years ago, when I started on community projects in London, and for the past year I have been involved with the international disaster response charity Team Rubicon. Seeing what can be achieved, by small teams of dedicated volunteers, to assist those in need through the worst time of their lives, has humbled me to my core. I feel that same pride in seeing how this amazing Benenden community has come together to help itself - it truly refocuses the mind to what really matters in life.

Finally, please visit the BAT website for useful and regularly updated news, information, and advice during the crisis. Contents include your local BAT contact, KCC updates, local food suppliers, village shop details, online activities, and important prescription information and safety advice.

[www.benendenaction.co.uk](http://www.benendenaction.co.uk)



Guy Hagan  
BAT co-ordinator  
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The Benenden Food Fund is now available to help those in the parish with short term needs where salaries have been seriously affected by the COVID-19 virus.

The vouchers provided can be used in the village shop and the butcher to provide goods for those who are finding it hard to manage during this difficult time.

Please spread the word if you know of someone who is facing financial difficulty.

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The shop is open from 8.30am to 3pm, Monday to Saturday and 9am to 12noon on Sunday. A home delivery service is available to local and vulnerable residents, delivered by a team of admirable volunteers. If you wish to take advantage of this service, please give your order and payment over the phone the day before you need it delivered. Frozen meals, namely beef lasagne, chilli con carne, spinach and ricotta cannelloni and chicken tikka masala are available at £3 each.

In the shop, we ask you to continue to adhere to the rule of only two customers at a time so that social distancing works in the confined space. We also ask that where possible you pay by card, especially by tapping or swiping it, to minimise contact with money. So far, most customers have been doing this and with the wonderful good humour which we so often see in this lovely village. Thank you all for your patience and understanding while we try to make sure that our shop remains as safe as possible for customers and staff, who I'm sure you will agree, deserve a huge round of applause for all they are doing.

Bev Beveridge



In these exceptional and challenging times, our volunteers will not be collecting door to door.

Instead we have set up an online JustGiving page.

Our target is to raise £3,000 and all donations will go directly to Christian Aid.

To donate please go to:

[www.justgiving.com/fundraising/benenden-idengreencaw](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/benenden-idengreencaw)

Tracy Claridge, local Christian Aid Organiser  
240454 [Christianaid@tlclaridge.co.uk](mailto:Christianaid@tlclaridge.co.uk)

## Christian Aid Week

Christian Aid Week (CAW) gives us an opportunity to celebrate and share the lifesaving work Christian Aid undertakes with your support. Last year CAW raised over £7.5 million through a combination of church collections, events, and house-to-house fundraising. Sadly, due to the coronavirus outbreak, much of our usual fundraising cannot go ahead this year. We value our volunteers enormously and want to ensure you all keep safe when fundraising for CAW.

In these challenging times many churches have already made bold steps, streaming services online and harnessing technology and social media to reach out to communities. In this way we hope that our supporters will be able to continue to donate. We will not be collecting door to door. Instead, we have set up an online JustGiving page. Our target is to raise £3,000 and all donations will go directly to Christian Aid. Every little helps. Should you wish to donate, please go to: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/benenden-idengreencaw](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/benenden-idengreencaw).

I very much hope that you are able to join us in celebration and support of Christian Aid Week this year as we pray for all those affected by this new virus.

Tracy Claridge, local Christian Aid Organiser  
240454 [Christianaid@tlclaridge.co.uk](mailto:Christianaid@tlclaridge.co.uk)

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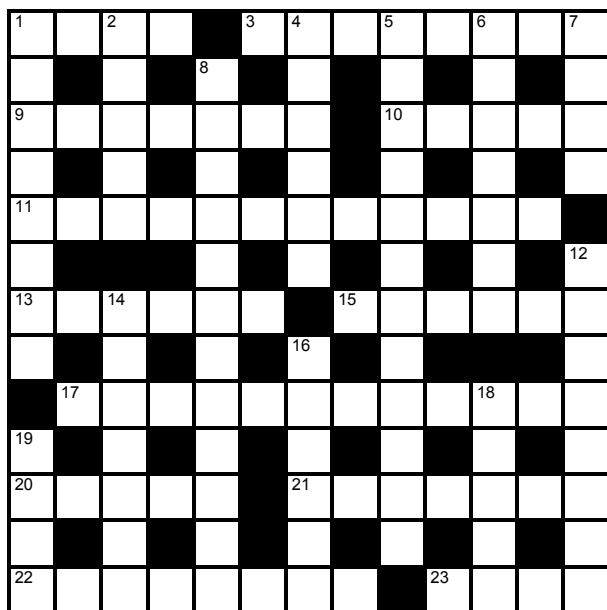
Reg'd Charity 1066420





# MINDBENENDERS By ASCII

## CROSSWORD No20 (Tricky)



### Across

- 1 The Smartie way to travel (4)
- 3 Young dog, dripping, could gain a little weight (5,3)
- 9 Accused of having led Gale astray (7)
- 10 Improve about novelty (5)
- 11 Before feeling foreboding (12)
- 13 Painful choice between one thing and a Kentish port (6)
- 15 European Union, Scripture and the Egyptian Soul? I have found it! (6)
- 17 Oddly, I solicit an IV to build advanced society (12)
- 20 Indian police, using a bamboo slat, hit wrongdoers (5)
- 21 Must gain ore desperately or remain in the Bronze Age (4,3)
- 22 Butcher not entirely honest about 3? (5,3)
- 23 Gets married midweek? (4)

### Down

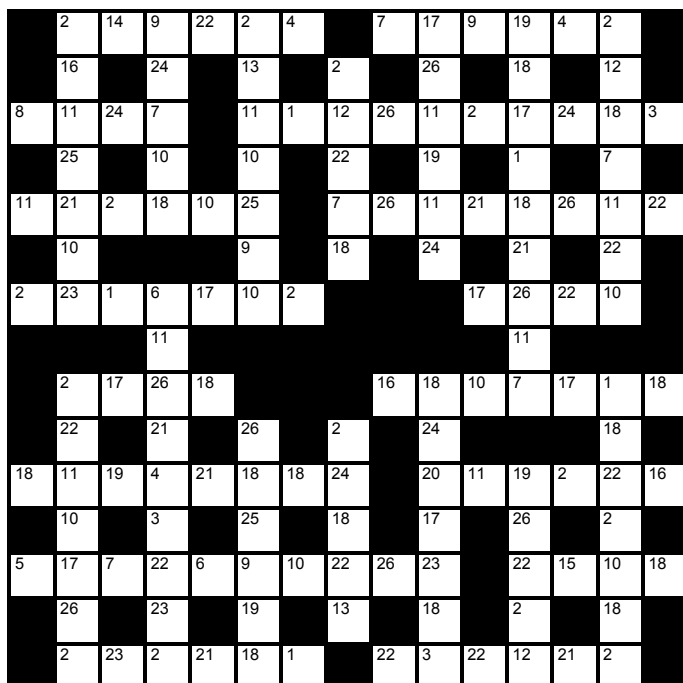
- 1 Couple canoodling over cuppa create something of a stir? (8)
- 2 Blow bugle for salient point. In the Ardennes, perhaps? (5)
- 4 More news on romantic meeting at altitude? (6)
- 5 Walker pushed around, perhaps? (12)
- 6 Article after end and before common era: controlling money (7)
- 7 Nowt, regrettably, may be one of several in 17 (4)
- 8 Sadly, I bite gay Lear; has what it takes not to resent it (12)
- 12 Sounds like curry containers on a bike (8)
- 14 One of four to stand by me but doesn't stick around (7)
- 16 Two relatives and me make swimsuit (6)
- 18 Enter French donkey? Ridiculous! (5)
- 19 Turn up Florida internet address (4)

## SUDOKU

	5	9		7	1			
						9	3	
			4					
4	7				5			
8							5	9
	6		8	4				7
		2			7			
				9		6		4
6							1	

Each column, row and block **must** contain numbers 1 to 9 in any order. Each number can be used only **once** in each column, row or block.

## CODEWORD No20 (Easy)



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Each number represents a letter. Break the code and complete the grid. Three letters have been given to help you. Heavy lines denote a new word.

## FOURWORD

1	2	3	4
2			
3			
4			

In the grid, place all of these letters to make the same four words across and down. Four clues are given to help you.

AADDEEEFFGGGOORRR

- 1 A ref, shaken; in terror!
- 2 Her Majesty to leave, therefore
- 3 Old Edward has silver on top
- 4 Came by bus? I hear it was by water



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Paul Leek

## Benenden School news

We have been doing all we can to support the community at this time. Several staff from the school's technologies and science departments are producing vital personal protective equipment for healthcare professionals. At the time of writing, 1,000 visors have been made in the school's workshop so far and they are being donated to the Headcorn 'Hot Hub', the pop-up assessment centre for those experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, and The Grange.

We have also loaned two defibrillators to the centre, along with examination beds, pulse oximeters and various disposable supplies, and Kath Willdridge, our medical centre's senior nurse, is also volunteering there. We also donated our supply of gloves, goggles and masks from our science and DT departments to our local COVID response supply team.

Some of our generous parents from overseas have donated a large supply of face masks for the NHS, which we will distribute when they arrive here. In addition, we have offered our site as an overspill car park for Benenden Hospital and have contacted Kent County Council to offer to support children of key workers. Several of our staff are also involved in the Benenden Action Team and, on a smaller level, the daffodils in our grounds were recently distributed to local self-isolating elderly people.

We work closely with The John Wallis Church of England Academy in Ashford and are looking at how we can share some of our remote lessons with their students, offer remote careers and higher education advice and invite students to join some of our lessons remotely. In the meantime, we are trying to ensure it is 'business as usual' for the girls as much as possible and we continue to run all our lessons remotely until we are able to reopen physically. We have adapted the usual timetable of the day to help the staff and girls to manage the demands of remote learning.

While the girls are not on site, we are happy for members of the village to use the

grounds to walk and run in (but please maintain social distancing, clear up after your dogs and don't walk around the buildings). Once the girls are back then we will need to revert to the usual public footpaths. We hope that this is useful and helps residents to get their daily exercise. If anybody has any further ideas for how the school can get involved in the response effort then please get in touch with us.

Samantha Price, Headmistress

## Benenden Hospital news

We are proud to support the NHS in the fight against coronavirus. A formal announcement was made by the Government in March, advising that an historic agreement had been reached between the Independent Healthcare Providers Network (IHPN) and NHS England to purchase capacity across the private sector in England to support the anticipated requirements to deal with COVID-19.

We are delighted to be able to support the NHS at a time of need and this allows us to build on our relationship of working with the NHS since 2005. On 7 April we welcomed our first patients from Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust to Bensan Ward and we expect to see more in the coming weeks. This means that all planned elective surgery in the NHS and private sector has now stopped, and that Benenden Hospital will now be accepting medical patients transferred from Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Hospitals for the first time since 2003.

As a hospital, we are delighted to recognise the amazing work of our NHS colleagues and other key workers by taking part in the weekly Clap for our Carers and we are immensely proud of the response of our staff during this national health crisis. My single most important message to everyone wanting to support the NHS at this difficult time is to simply stay at home, protect the NHS and help save lives.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director





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## Iden Green and Benenden WI

Care, consideration and camaraderie have been given our special attention this month, with all our members keeping their telephone lines working overtime.

Many of us have been working in our gardens, tidying and preparing plant and vegetable beds. Others have been clearing out cupboards, cleaning and doing the many jobs that 'we didn't have time for' before. We have been also thinking about our own shepherdess/secretary who has been busy lambing on her own; plus our poet/author Shirley Gooseman, whom you can read about on page 21.

Those who can communicate online have had an extra bonus and have been enjoying games such as Scrabble and Sudoku, plus keeping in touch with friends and family with FaceTime, Zoom and the like.

We have all missed gathering to socialise but now is the time to complete the puzzles, pieces of knitting, embroidery, patchwork, sewing and crochet that we started at our last meeting. Meanwhile, we would like to thank family, friends and the community for all their help, especially the village shop for keeping us fed.

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

## Primary School news

Although we closed on Friday 20 March, the children of key workers have still been coming to school.

Our staff are currently working from both home and at school on a rota and we have been holding virtual staff meetings online. We prepared a series of teaching activities including some videos of themselves reading stories or teaching maths concepts etc and we continued to do this when we returned from the Easter break on 16 April and will do until we can reopen the school for everyone. Despite the unprecedented situation staff morale is high as we all just want to do our bit and support our families that need us.

Lindsay Roberts, Headteacher 240565



## DOUBLE HELIX

by RKvW

Joy, like the fossil in the rock,  
the star within the trunk, concealed from view,  
is found in secret places,  
not quite disguised as pain  
but intertwined, inseparable; the two  
will grow as one; and any who  
seek joy must bear the pain - the cross  
that breeds and brings to birth  
the resurrection life, born in a tomb.

The double helix, pain and joy, mysteriously bound,  
in which the secret of all life is found.





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## Calling budding poets

Local author Shirley Gooseman (alias Emma Berry) who is currently writing her 17th book about the fictional Kent village of Massenden, is inviting villagers of all ages to write a poem on any subject during lockdown. She will read them all with the aim of producing a small book which she hopes to sell to raise money for the NHS.

“I cannot do much for the community but if this would help take one’s mind off this beastly virus even for an hour or so then maybe I would be doing something for a few people,” she says.

Please send your poems (adding children’s ages) to Shirley at:  
shirleygooseman123@btinternet.com

## Buttons and elastic

Do you have spare buttons (1.5-2cm width only) and elastic at home that you could donate to all those locally making headbands and masks for carers and NHS staff (see full story page 28). These are urgently needed and can be dropped off in the basket in St George’s church porch. They will be distributed to the makers from there.

## Let’s mark VE Day

Before the lockdown, we were planning a variety of activities to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day 8 May but of course these have all been cancelled. However, in a small way we can still remember the enormous sacrifices that were made at home and abroad and to celebrate, as people did 75 years ago, the arrival of peace in Europe. So, please join me if you can, dig out your flags and bunting and drape your fences and hedges that weekend.

Peter Ellis

## Letter to the Editor

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

### A CALL TO SMALL BUSINESSES

Since taking on the responsibility of BAT co-ordinator through this COVID-19 pandemic, I have become acutely aware of the needs of this amazing parish. Our immediate concerns have been to support the ‘vulnerable’ but I wrongly assumed who would fall into this category. Now, a month into the lockdown, my understanding of the wide spectrum of those who are vulnerable, has become much clearer.

So, I appeal to all of you who are self-employed and whose earning lives have stopped due to this virus. Those that do not have the comfort of a guaranteed monthly salary. Those who have set up their own business and those brave souls whose work has completely disappeared. I have run my own construction business for the past 12 years and, although many things have affected my industry during that time, this is unprecedented. If you are small businesses and are suffering, I would like to make contact.

How are you coping? What are you feeling? What does the future hold for your business? Can you diversify? Do you need financial support? Is it time to stop and go in-house again and get that regular pay slip? With numbers comes strength and I want to reach out to those in our community that are feeling ‘business vulnerable’ now. Those 35-60-year olds working so hard to ensure their families are safe and well, but whose lives have been rocked by this dreadful virus. Let’s get strong again together.

Guy Hagan   guy@rawrefillconstruction.co.uk

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## The Bus Shelter Gang named

We are pleased to report that the members of the 'bus shelter gang' (shown in last month's magazine) have been identified successfully by Miriam Message, who has lived in the village for 86 years.

A little online research also revealed a lovely story about Revd Yearsley (pictured second from left) that was reported in Time magazine in the USA in March 1938 as follows: 'From England last week came news of how Rev. Vyvyan. B. Yearsley, vicar of Benenden in Kent, rigged up a phonograph with a volume

control under his lectern, obtained a number of records of pieces which he instructed his unskilled choir to sing. Yearsley reported: "When my choir sings badly, I drown them by turning up the volume of a gramophone record - perhaps of Westminster Choir."

The Bus Shelter Gang from left to right: Jeremy O'Donovan, Rev Vyvyan Yearsley, unknown girl, Douglas Rollings, Capt Barnett, Con Rumens, John Man, Col Lionel Man, Mrs Man, Mr Reece, Daniel O'Donovan, Albert Beeslee, Pop Horton, Daphne Moore, Mrs Pollard and Alma Cooper

**FOURWORD**  
1 FEAR, 2 ERGO, 3 AGED, 4 RODE

6	9	8	5	3	4	7	1	2
5	3	7	1	9	2	6	8	4
1	4	2	6	8	7	5	9	3
9	6	5	8	4	3	1	2	7
8	2	3	7	1	6	4	5	9
4	7	1	9	2	5	3	6	8
3	8	6	4	5	9	2	7	1
7	1	4	2	6	8	9	3	5
2	5	9	3	7	1	8	4	6

**SUDUKO**

Q	X	W	O	E	G	J	T	A	Y	N	F	R
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
M	S	D	H	V	B	C	Z	U	L	I	P	K
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

**CODWORD No20**

Across: 1 Tube, 3 Puppy fat, 9 Alleged, 10 Renew, 11 Presentiment, 13 Ordeal, 15 Eureka, 17 Civilisation, 20 Lathi, 21 Iron Age, 22 Porky pie, 23 Weds  
Down: 1 Teaspoon, 2 Bulge, 4 Update, 5 Perambulator, 6 Finance, 7 Town, 8 Agreeability, 12 Panniers, 14 Driver, 16 Bikini, 18 Inane, 19 Flip

**CROSSWORD No20**

**MINDBENDERS**  
Answers



## Final farewell to a great friend of Benenden

### Gordon Reynolds

21 April 1951 - 9 April 2020

On the morning of Friday 17 April, Gordon Reynolds was laid to rest peacefully in a simple ceremony in Benenden churchyard. The short service was streamed to family in New Zealand and other parts of the UK. It was a very peaceful occasion, in a rural setting, which was very befitting for a man from the farming community.

In the last 13 years Gordon had suffered several spells of illness. Throughout all his treatments he retained his good humour, appetite for hard work and an enduring love for the village. Gordon's quiet, dogged determination helped achieve the building of a new primary school in the village. It was very fitting that he was able to be well enough to attend the opening last year.

Gordon was born on 21 April 1951. He went to school locally and, after a year at Shuttleworth Agricultural College, he returned

to the family farm in Benenden. Gordon was a passionate stockman. He was instrumental in building the pedigree dairy herd, that his parents had started, into one of the leading Holstein herds in the south east. The farm milked 130 cows and for many years 90 per cent of production was sold locally, within a 20-mile radius.

Gordon leaves behind Crissie and three daughters with his first wife Julia. Julia now lives in New Zealand with two of their daughters. The eldest, Clare, runs a dairy farm in South Island with her husband and four children. The second daughter, Sarah, runs a vineyard near Alexandria also in South Island, with her partner Marc and three children. The youngest daughter Lucy, lives at Forest Farm in Benenden, with her husband Harvey and two children, keeping the family farm going.

Due to the unusual circumstances with COVID-19, it was impossible to hold a thanksgiving service to celebrate Gordon's full life. The family hope, that at some point in 2021, a suitable date can be found for this to happen.

Arthur Reynolds





## IN HIS FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS

A personal tribute from Robin Dalton Holmes

When I came to work in Benenden in 1983 the first member of the Reynolds family I encountered was Robert, Gordon's father, already in the 16th of his 25 years as a churchwarden. Gordon and Arthur had married members of the Benenden School games department, and, together with Christopher, all three were established in agricultural life, but it was Gordon who remained most associated with the village.

His quiet contributions included flying the festival flag on the church, providing and erecting the Christmas star, renewing the churchyard fencing, securing the space for the experiment of sheep grazing in the churchyard and maintaining the overgrown edges of the Glebe. When Robert coordinated the garden fete in the Vicarage garden, Gordon provided the transport to gather furniture from many village institutions. At his converted barn at Forest Farm, he installed a tennis court which he generously shared with many keen local players until early this year.

At various times as a primary school governor and chairman of the Parish Council he was a considerable protagonist for reviving plans to build a new primary school and lobbied at the highest level for progress. Like his father's struggle to have a modern village

hall built in the 1970s, this was not wholly welcome but ended in success. Gordon embraced the need to edge the parish into a balanced community and gave his full support to the formulation of a Parish Plan in 2015, and a Neighbourhood Development Plan this year.



It gave him huge pleasure that he and his brothers, along with his three daughters, had expanded his father's initial small holding into the management of thousands of acres worldwide, involving many differing agricultural schemes.

He never complained of his ongoing medical afflictions and remained optimistic, always recognising and acknowledging the marvellous treatment from the NHS in London and Kent and the huge sums these involved. It was tragically sad that he should have lost his health battle just before Easter and that only a small family gathering was permitted to attend his committal.



Jane as a student nurse

## Jane Abbott - focused on a life in nursing

Ruth Clark talks to Jane Abbott about her fascinating journey to becoming Hospital Director and Chief Nurse of Benenden Hospital

"Although nursing is not in my family, I knew I wanted to be a nurse from when I was very young and I never wavered," explains Jane. "I was distracted by sports a lot when I was in my teens, playing cricket for Kent at 16, netball at school and representing Kent in the high jump at a National Schools Championship at Crystal Palace (as an expert at Fosbury Flops!), but I knew I couldn't do both, so I chose nursing."

A student at Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School, Jane clearly took its motto to heart: *Abeunt Studia in Mores* (From study, character grows). Her teachers expected her to go to university but she applied instead to train as a nurse at Guy's Hospital "because at the time it was the best in the country and I was ready to get going," she says. While she

studied for her A Levels, she did voluntary work at Bexley Psychiatric Hospital at the weekends, where the young Jane experienced things that had never touched her world before. "I met people in their 60s who had been patients for decades and had been put away just for stealing from a market stall because they were hungry. It was an abrupt reality check."

Out of 10,000 applications for just 200 places to train at the prestigious Guy's, Jane was accepted as a student nurse. She stopped playing sport and started a tough training schedule that she nonetheless loved: "I spent the next three years working with the patients on a variety of different wards. Although it wasn't a popular ward with the student nurses, my favourite was renal. People there are very sick, and the work is very intensive, but I loved every second. It was real front-line nursing and great teamwork between doctors and nurses, with drama after drama to handle daily. It was so rewarding to see long-term very ill dialysis patients receive transplants and then go home well."



Jane, far right, at Guy's Hospital

She became a Sister at 25, one of the youngest to do so, and a Ward Sister at 30. Her last year at Guy's was memorable because





Jane, seated second from right, as Ward Sister at Guy's Hospital

this is where she met her husband Peter, a staff nurse at the time. Between 1992 and 2001, Jane managed to study for a part-time degree in education while undertaking increasingly senior nursing management roles at various hospitals. She eventually became Clinical Manager at a trust which included 20 medical and care of the elderly wards, two accident and emergency departments and two day hospitals. "It was an extremely challenging and rewarding time but, by then I had two children, and wasn't seeing much of them," remembers Jane. "So, when I saw the job of Director of Nursing and Quality at Benenden Hospital in 2002, I jumped at it."

Since she's been here, Jane has obtained a master's degree and was appointed Hospital Director in 2009. Most weeks now she splits her time between Benenden Hospital and Benenden Health's HQ in York. Yet, she still finds time though to walk 10,000 steps a day, take part in 'Walk for Cancer' events, and can often be found wielding her pink bowls at the Benenden Bowls Club. "I still love sports and watch everything on TV." (Hint: I know from experience that, as a result, she is invaluable on a quiz team!)

Jane's career to date has been quite a journey, she admits. "But I wouldn't change a thing. Quite the best thing you can do is look

after someone when they are vulnerable." While she may not be a hands-on nurse these days Jane gets a great deal of satisfaction managing her team. "I like seeing people work hard to achieve the best they can. They don't have to be a winner. It's important too in my working life, where I get a huge amount of satisfaction nurturing my staff to be their very best."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Benenden

Hospital has been asked to support the NHS and the staff and facilities have been made available to provide much needed additional capacity for patients needing care that would normally take place in local NHS Hospitals. "These are challenging times indeed," says Jane. "But we have an excellent team here and wonderful facilities that enable us to provide important support during the crisis."



Jane Abbott, Benenden Hospital Director and Chief Nurse



# Frontline Support



Michaela Thorpe, scrub bag and headband

benefit and who can, in turn, distribute them to their colleagues,” says Janette, who has been making scrubs, bags and headbands for doctors, nurses and paramedics around the country through her contacts. Denise and Helen have been making scrub bags for midwife Michaela Thorpe, who lives in Benenden and works at Pembury Hospital and has been sharing them with colleagues.

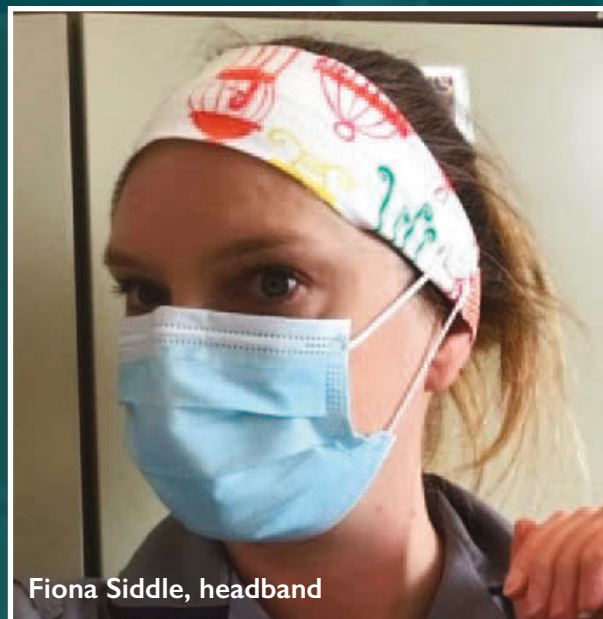
“Good quality pillow and duvet cases make great drawstring bags that we can pop our scrubs into and put straight into the washing machine when we get home,” says Michaela. “The headbands are particularly important and there is a huge demand for these, the more brightly coloured the better as they cheer up the patients too. During a 13-hour shift I change my mask every hour and without the headband which has buttons either side to

## Sewing army helps those at the sharp end

Due to the scarcity of personal protective equipment thousands of volunteer home sewers nationwide have stepped up to make scrubs, the drawstring bags they are put in after use ready for washing, and headbands to which uncomfortable facemasks can be attached.

In local towns and villages, including Benenden and Iden Green, many have been busy sewing to help those on the frontline working in hospitals and care homes and as carers. Just some of those who are busy sewing locally are Sue Brooks, Janette Hall, Sarah Hall, Helen Jewsbury, Kath Malaugh, Denise Riches, Pat Sims, Sally Streeten, Amelia Thomas and Heather Trollope. “There are a lot of us doing this across the area, but we need many more,” says Sally. “If you have a machine and can sew in a straight line then the bags and headbands are easy to make.”

“Everyone probably knows someone who is working in the care industry who would



Fiona Siddle, headband

hold the mask elastic, I would get very sore behind my ears.

Making scrubs uses a specific pattern and fabric. For more information about this visit the Facebook group ‘For the Love of Scrubs - Our NHS Needs You’.

If you have GOOD QUALITY polycotton pillowcases, duvets, and sheets that you can donate please contact:  
Helen Jewsbury 07938 004262



# How to make a headband

There are good step-by-step videos on YouTube, but here is Janette's easy guide.

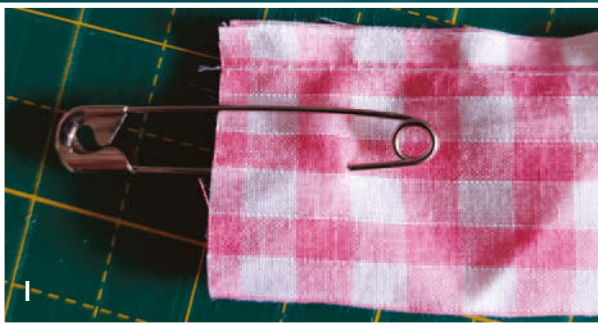
## YOU NEED

- Two pieces of fabric\* for the main band: 43/45cm x 20cm in size
- Two pieces of fabric for elastic casing band: 43/45cm x 8cm
- 15cm elastic 3-4cm wide
- Two buttons about 1.5-2cm diameter
- Thread

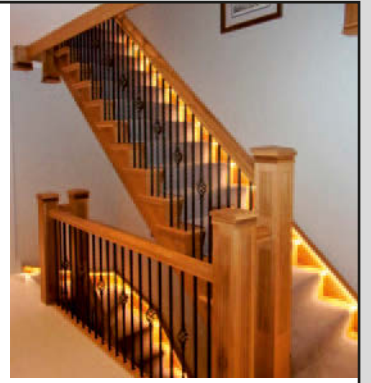
\* washable at 60 degrees

## INSTRUCTIONS

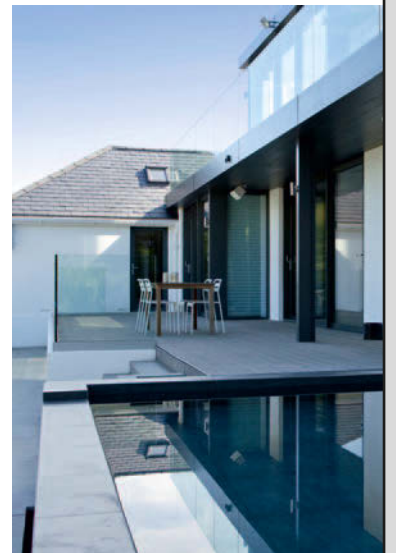
- 1 Sew the fabric into two tubes with 0.5cm seam allowance.
- 2 Turn the tubes right side out and press with the seam along the centre of the back.
- 3 Thread the elastic into the smaller tube and hold the ends secure with pins until you are ready to join the sections. Don't twist the elastic.
- 4 Sew buttons onto the large section about 15cm from the centre of the band.
- 5 Fold under 0.5cm on the ends of the long section and wrap these around the end of the elastic sections sewing across to secure in place with a rectangle and then a cross through the centre.







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## A virtual wine trip well worth making

Peter Thomas on the Loire whites that have arrived in the community shop

You may have been lucky enough to attend the most recent village tasting: a meandering, ultimately slightly hazy journey along the Loire Valley, but if you weren't on board, now's your chance to catch up by taking a virtual voyage of discovery.

If there's one thing this period of enforced containment has surely taught us, it's that the real world is a whole lot better than the virtual one, but frankly we don't have much choice at the moment, so it's time for a stroll to the community shop, avoiding all human proximity, grab two bottles of wine (well within the rationing criteria) and wait until the cocktail hour begins (which for me is has become rather earlier than it used to be).

Now it's on with the virtual reality goggles - the ones that make you think you're in a bustling seafood bar in the upwardly mobile city of Nantes, surrounded by shellfish - and open the first bottle, the 2018 Chateau de la Chesnaie Muscadet from Maison Chéreau Carré, a domaine founded in 1960 by two ambitious families still seeking to turn this once-maligned wine into a recognised force.

Across the region, the formerly humble Melon de Bourgogne grape is being turned into some exceptional bottles. A recent article in Punch magazine described them as "a more bracing version of Burgundy - Chablis with more zest and a lower price tag", and this is one such, made

from 30-year-old vines on, apparently, "a sunny mica schist plateau", matured on its lees for at least six months to produce a bright, fruity but multi-faceted accompaniment for, of course, oysters, but also all manner of fish and soft cheese. At £11.85, it's a real, not virtual, bargain.

The shop's Domaine des Chasseignes Sancerre, weighing in at £19.95, is in another price league entirely, but for those with a taste for top-class Sauvignon Blanc and a love of new season's asparagus - soon to be arriving from Lower Ladysden Farm - it's worth the stretch. It's classic old-world Sauvignon, restrained and stylish but full, lemony and gently grapefruity, ready to tackle those lovely green spears and perhaps the shop's popular Capricorn goat's cheese from Cricket St Thomas in Somerset.

## The whole valley in a nutshell

Sancerre is the largest vineyard AOC in the Loire Valley. The steep rolling countryside with vineyards around the dominating hill of Sancerre is unique to the region, which is rightly famous for its aromatic Sauvignons.

There are now approximately 2,700ha of vines planted here, meaning Sancerre accounts for more than half the central Loire's total of 5,000ha. While the vast majority is Sauvignon Blanc, about 25% is Pinot Noir. In fact, before phylloxera devastated these vineyards at the end of the 19th century, red varieties dominated: principally Pinot Noir and Gamay.

Until appellation contrôlée was introduced, some of these grapes went north to be used for →

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→ making Champagne. It was only after phylloxera that Sauvignon Blanc took over, and now Sancerre is renowned for its whites, which are derived from three distinct soil types: silex (flint), caillottes (limestone) and terres blanches (clay and limestone), producing three very different styles of wine.

The band of flint, accounting for about 20% of production, is found in the most easterly part of the vineyards around Sancerre, and the wines tend to be mineral, often with a slightly smoky nose. About 40% of the vineyards are limestone, often on soil that is very thin - in places virtually non-existent - with the vines struggling straight into the white rock. Most of the terres blanches, accounting for 40% of the appellation, are in the western part, with many vineyards planted on steep hills.

The Muscadet grape is the Melon de Bourgogne. It originally came from Burgundy in the Middle Ages - it's a sibling of chardonnay and gamay - and was popularised in the far western Loire in the 18th century. Lees aging is the key to giving Muscadet its depth, which is why the appellations can all be appended 'sur lie'. That used to be a mark of quality for Muscadet, but today it simply designates wines bottled the year following the harvest. Many of the best Muscadets are aged far longer and thus can't be marked as such.

The largest appellation in the region is Muscadet Sèvre et Maine, on either side of the Sèvre and Maine rivers, south of Nantes, but the ten 'crus communaux' really are at the heart of where Muscadet is headed, toward small production and much higher quality - Sèvre et Maine covers more than 8,200 hectares, a cru like Le Pallet just 13.

Tracy Claridge

## These just in

Two other new arrivals at the community shop will be music to the ears of the many of us who find ourselves in straitened financial circumstances during the coronavirus crisis. They're both from the well-regarded Pays d'Oc

co-operative Les Vignobles Foncalieu and both punch way above their £6.75 price tag.

The 2017 Saint Marc Reserve is a bright and breezy young red that could use a bit of air but will pair nicely with the new-season's lamb that will soon be finding its way to Ward's; but my new best friend is the 2018 Le Versant Viognier, a classy and well-behaved embodiment of this wonderfully lush grape, but with bags of body, spicy undertones and gloriously oily peaches and apricots that bring a decadent finish. The money you've saved on the wine you could maybe spend on a few sweet scallops to accompany it.

Peter Thomas

## Local suppliers scoop awards

The annual Taste of Kent Awards showcase the best food and drink across Kent and this year many local suppliers scooped awards for their excellent produce, including:

**Farm diversification of the year** won by Lower Ladysden Farm who grow and sell a variety of soft fruit and vegetables, alongside a wealth of produce stocked in their farm shop in Goudhurst. Order online and collect.  
[www.lowerladysden.co.uk](http://www.lowerladysden.co.uk)

**Restaurant of the year** The Small Holding in Kilndown won. Although they are closed, you can buy a lovely hamper full of local cheeses, charcuterie, fresh bread, bottle of wine and more which is delivered to you.  
[www.thesmallholding.restaurant](http://www.thesmallholding.restaurant)

**Food product of the year** Kingcott Dairy in Staplehurst won for its Kingcott Blue cheese. You can buy this and other cheese from them online. [www.kingcottdairy.co.uk](http://www.kingcottdairy.co.uk)

**Tastiest juice of the year** Biddenden Vineyards won for its Red Love Apple Juice. Buy this and a range of other juices, wine and cider online. [www.biddendenvineyards.com](http://www.biddendenvineyards.com)

Our very own Hinxden Farm Dairy was a finalist in two categories: 'Farm Diversification' for their range of dairy-based products and in the 'Dairy' category for their delicious crème fraîche. [www.hinxdenfarmdairy.co.uk](http://www.hinxdenfarmdairy.co.uk)



## Spotting birds through your kitchen window

As we are spending more time at home, Charles Trollope encourages us to join the Garden BirdWatch survey

With government restrictions keeping most of us in the confines of our homes and gardens, it is a good time to look at our garden birds. The mild winter has meant garden feeders have been relatively quiet, particularly the rarer species such as Siskin, Brambling and Lesser Redpolls. However, the tit numbers have been well up this winter after a much-needed better breeding season in 2019.

It is the 25th anniversary of the British Trust for Ornithology's Garden BirdWatch survey. Over 56,000 gardens have been registered over the years, 250 of which have completed the full 25 years, while 8.8 million weekly lists have been submitted, involving 194 million individual birds and other species.

Surprisingly, considering its recent population fall, the House Sparrow tops the chart for overall numbers with more than 18 million records. Looking at the changes, the biggest mover is the Goldfinch, which was not really classed as a garden bird 25 years ago. I used to see them in flocks feeding on thistle down, then in the early 2000s nyjer seed was introduced to the range of bird foods and flocks of up to 20 birds would soon empty my feeders. Curiously, they now seem to have moved on to sunflower hearts.

The second highest positive mover is the Woodpigeon, whose population has moved to over five million pairs. This increase has largely been attributed to changes in farming practices with the introduction of winter sowing, particularly oil seed rape, giving them a reliable food source during winter. They have also moved into more urban areas taking advantage of seed-based feeders.

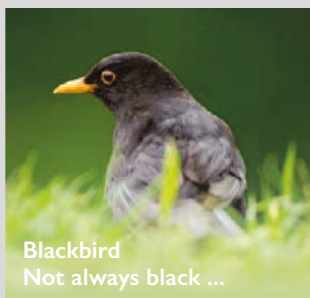
The Nuthatch is the third largest improver. Nuthatches are primarily a woodland species but have moved into gardens to take advantage of peanut feeders and are clearly one species to have benefited from climate change, with their distribution range moving northwards by 50km every ten years.

On the negative side, the Song Thrush is the largest ranking casualty. It is very closely related to the Blackbird, which makes it difficult to explain its fall, although their chosen diet, with a liking for small snails, is a little different. The second largest sufferer is the Greenfinch, whose fall has been ascribed to the effects of trichomonosis, a disease of the throat and gullet; next is the Starling, which has declined quite significantly since the early 80s partly due to changing agricultural practice including the conversion of pasture to arable, as grassland harbours their favourite food source the crane fly larva. Well clear at the top of the list in terms of numbers declining comes the House Sparrow, with avian malaria a likely cause.

You do not have to be an expert to take part in Garden BirdWatch. Just visit [www.bto.org/join-gbw](http://www.bto.org/join-gbw), then look out your window - we've even provided you with a handy guide to some of the species you're most likely to see. Happy watching.

Charles Trollope 240821 [cetetal@btinternet.com](mailto:cetetal@btinternet.com)

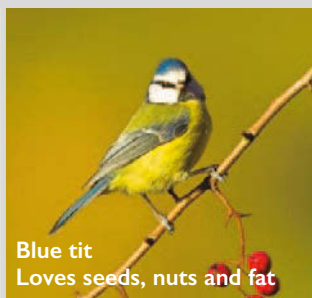
opposite: Table of most common birds with helpful hints on identification  
from [www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk) and the Big Garden BirdWatch: birds to look out for



**Blackbird**  
Not always black ...

Male blackbirds live up to their name but, confusingly, females are brown often with spots and streaks on their breasts. Sometimes blackbirds even have white feathers - that's a condition called leucism.

Blackbirds eat a variety of foods, from earthworms to fruits like apples and berries. They also love porridge oats.



**Blue tit**  
Loves seeds, nuts and fat

A colourful mix of blue, yellow, white and green makes the blue tit one of our most attractive and most recognisable garden visitors.

Blue tits are happy to use hanging feeders to grab sunflower seeds, peanuts and tasty fatty snacks. They're agile and happy to perch at odd angles.



**Chaffinch**  
Loves hopping on the ground, looking for seeds

Male chaffinches have a subtle pink breast, while females are more brownish. They both have distinctive black and white flashes on their wings.

Chaffinches are not so keen on using bird feeders and generally prefer to shuffle around on the ground, picking up seeds that other birds have dropped.



**Coal tit**  
Small and cheeky

Not as colourful as some of its relatives, the coal tit has a distinctive grey back, black cap, and white patch at the back of its neck.

Look out for coal tits making quick visits to feeders for seeds or suet pellets. They don't like to hang around, and prefer to dash back to a safe perch in a tree or bush to eat.



**Collared dove**  
'Coo-coo coo, coo-coo coo...'

Collared doves are a pale, pinky-brown grey colour, with a distinctive black neck collar. They have deep red eyes and reddish feet, and are responsible for repetitive cooing songs and twiggy nests on your satellite dish.

Nervous visitors to bird tables if seeds and grains are on offer, but are a bit big for most bird feeders.



**Dunnoek**  
Small and brown - likes lurking in flower beds

A small brown and grey bird. Quiet and unobtrusive, the dunnoek is often seen on its own, creeping along the edge of a flower bed or near to a bush, moving with a rather nervous, shuffling gait.

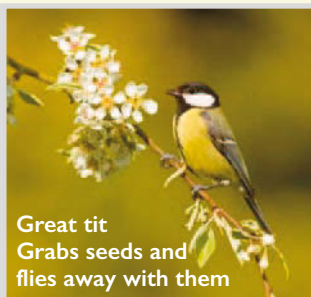
Some are bold enough to brave the bird feeder or visit a bird table for any seedy, fatty scraps. Mostly they prefer to hide among shrubs or feed on other birds' leftovers on the ground.



**Goldfinch**  
Brightly-coloured but argumentative

Everyone's favourite? A brightly-coloured finch with a red face and yellow wing patch. Sociable, often breeding in loose colonies, goldfinches have a delightful liquid twittering song and call. But don't be fooled - they can be a bit grumpy.

Goldfinches are seed-eaters. Make sure you stock up, as they often go around in flocks and have large appetites.



**Great tit**  
Grabs seeds and flies away with them

The largest UK tit is green and yellow with a striking glossy black and white head. It's a woodland bird which has found that our gardens offer plenty of food and places to nest.

Like blue and coal tits, great tits make quick visits to bird feeders for seeds and fat. They also eat insects and consume a lot of caterpillars in spring and summer.



**Greenfinch**  
Eats lots and lots of seeds

Its twittering and wheezing song, and flash of yellow and green as it flies, make the greenfinch a truly colourful character. Males can be bright, almost lime-green, but females and younger birds are more dull.

Eat seeds, and lots of them. Sunflower seeds (with or without the shell) are their favourite. They are sociable birds and might visit you in a small flock to feast on seeds.



**House sparrow**  
Common - but not as common as they were

Though their numbers have dropped alarmingly, they still common garden visitors in many areas. Males have a black chin and 'bib'; females are dressed in more subtle shades of brown.

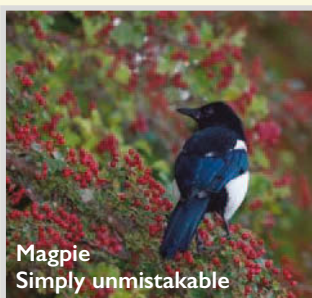
Eat almost anything. Seeds are their favourites, though they're not too fussy and will try most foods, in feeders or on a bird table.



**Long-tailed tit**  
Small, cute and sociable

The long-tailed tit is easily recognisable with its distinctive colouring, a tail that is longer than its body, and a bouncy flight. These cuties roam around together in family flocks that stay together all year-round.

Long-tailed tits eat a lot of insects, though they can be attracted by fat like suet cakes or pellets. They'll often visit you in a big flock, arriving and leaving all together.



**Magpie**  
Simply unmistakable

With its noisy chattering, black-and-white plumage and long tail, there is nothing else quite like the magpie in the UK. When seen close-up, it's easy to spot the beautiful iridescent purple, blue and green tones in its feathers.

Magpies eat absolutely anything.



**Robin**  
The gardener's friend

The UK's favourite bird - with its bright red breast the robin is familiar throughout the year. Males and females look identical, and they both hold territories during winter.

Robins eat a lot of creepy-crawlies, including worms (which is why they like gardeners turning over the soil). They'll grab mealworms from a bird table or feeder, or snack on sunflower hearts. Fruit is another favourite.



**Starling**  
Glossy, squawky and starry

Smaller than blackbirds, with a short tail, pointy head and wings, starlings look black at a distance but when seen closer they are very glossy with a sheen of purples and greens. In winter they're covered in pale spots - which gives them their name.

Starlings aren't picky and will eat almost anything they can get their beaks into. They can be quarrelsome on the bird table, however.



**Woodpigeon**  
A common garden visitor

The UK's largest and commonest pigeon, it is largely grey with a white neck patch and white wing patches, clearly visible in flight. Woodpigeons also have beautiful pinkish and turquoise hints to their plumage.

Woodpigeons eat seeds and grains, and green shoots when they're out in the fields.



# In Your Garden



## Early spring flowering shrubs

This time last year I wrote an article on tulips. It is very difficult to not write another one - there is always a story to tell about these enigmatic flowering bulbs, not to mention your latest colour combinations. However, I have been struck at how beautiful our spring flowering shrubs have been this year, possibly due to the vast amount of rainfall we have had over winter. Who really knows - we should just enjoy each gardening year as it unfolds.

Having recently moved house, I now have a garden that is a treasure trove of undiscovered plants. I am slowly getting to know what I've got, but without a doubt the show-stopper so far has been *Exochorda x macrantha* 'The Bride'. From a very unassuming sprawl of untidiness in winter came some very pretty leaves and then the blossom - abundant masses of the purest white covering the now perfectly arching stems, which have been flowering for weeks. This has really placed it firmly in my 'best plants for clients' notebook: indestructible, very pretty, early and long flowering. It's best pruned after flowering (but I have been known to inadvertently prune in winter, no harm done).

Its only downside? No scent, but you can't have everything in life. I'd plant a *Choisya ternata* (Mexican orange blossom) next to it, to give an evergreen splash and honey-scented

flowers, almost perfectly timed once the *Exochorda* has finished.

Other notable shrubs are *Viburnum x burkwoodii* and *Viburnum x carlesii* 'Aurora', both scented. Both like sun or dappled shade and if your soil is particularly heavy Wealden clay then dig a large planting pit, break up the floor with a fork and add a few spadefuls of garden compost (or a handful of bonemeal if no compost to hand) and a large watering can of water.

Magnolias, camellias, amelanchiers, forsythias (yes, I am a fan) and chaenomeles are all very garden worthy but do your research for the right variety for your garden. And don't forget to maintain it - avoid the 'hedgehog' route, snipping the end off every stem - take out a few older stems to the ground, prune one or two branches down to a leaf node but otherwise leave it alone to grow into its natural form.

We are all in the midst of a global crisis as I write this. If you are fortunate enough to have some outside space then take the time to look after it - it will reward you greatly. Take each season as it comes and listen and watch the plant life as it unfolds. Stay safe and keep well, and keep gardening.

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Above: Industry in lockdown:Visors being created for the NHS in Benenden School DT department; the army of sewing bees mobilised making laundry bags and headbands for the NHS; bike maintenance workshop in action and hobbies at home  
Front cover: Blissfully unconcerned. Photograph: Peter Driver