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Magazine
July 2020





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Editorial



It's lovely to feel the village relaxing just a little as the lockdown constraints start to loosen. In June it was great to see more children able to return to both our schools and St George's open its doors for individual private prayer. Personally, I didn't expect the utter joy of meeting small groups of friends and family for a distanced chat and a drink. Zoom has been a wonderful tool, but nothing can quite replace the real thing. Like Troy I miss hugs and 'le bisou' (page 29).

When we plan each month's magazine, we try to capture the many facets of our village, its people, and its seasonal rhythms. In other years we would be celebrating June's village fete pictorially and looking forward to Iden Green's Jazz and Blues later this month. Instead, we are celebrating the individual skills and endeavours of those around us. Unintentionally, wood is a focus. We were very pleased when Nigel Kemp, a local woodsman with a terrific knowledge of the countryside and a phenomenal memory, finally let us interview him (page 21). While Michael Goater, a relative newcomer to the village, gives us an insight into antique furniture restoration (page 24).

I love writing with pen and ink, and over the last few months have written more letters and cards to friends and family than ever before. So, I was intrigued to see the variety of Victorian glass ink bottles unearthed (literally) by our resident mudlarker, Peter Stennett (page 23). I'm not alone when it comes to putting pen to paper it seems. Shirley Gooseman's call to local poets of all ages to write about their experiences of lockdown has culminated in 'A Rhyme for a Reason', a book of poems now published and soon on sale in the community shop to raise funds for the NHS. William Wordsworth certainly summed it up when he said: "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility."

Ruth Clark, Co-Editor

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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



During this strange time, when you would have thought everyone would be occupied with other matters, it has been interesting to see how busy the Parish Council email box has become.

All kinds of matters have been brought to our attention: speeding motorists; tree placement suggestions; inconsiderate parking by parents picking up/dropping off at the primary school; suggestion for a community food project; concern over the safety of ducks crossing Mill Street; landscaping issues around the new primary school, to name but a few.

When such correspondence is received, it is put on the agenda of our next monthly meeting (currently held remotely via Zoom) and discussed with members of the Parish Council. Therefore it may take longer than expected to receive a response to a particular query or suggestion, but please be assured that we do our best to answer as promptly as democracy allows.

You will see that the current planning applications are now being listed in this magazine, as well as on our Parish Council website (where they have been recorded for quite some time now). If you would like to make a comment on an application, please register and post your comments on the TWBC website at this address: www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/residents/planning/planning-application-search/comment-on-a-planning-application.

Hopefully we are now returning to some sort of normality, but for now our meetings will continue to be held remotely. Parishioners are very welcome to attend remotely as well; the link can be found at the top of the agenda published on our website in the days leading up to the meeting.

Personally, call me old fashioned, but I am very much looking forward to the time when we can meet at our normal venues around the village again.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair
01580 240364 nic.jthomas@btinternet.com

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk
01580 240371 clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org
For more information see our website www.benendenparishcouncil.org or find us on facebook

Parish Council Meeting
Monday 20 July 2020,
7pm - details tbc



Church Calendar

St George's Church

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

Churchwarden: Tracy Claridge 240454 maisonsicheluk@tlclaridge.co.uk

Churchwarden: David Collard 241944 julia.collard@btinternet.com

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 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.

Assuming these restrictions are still in place throughout July, 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) Please 'join' the rest of the church family, online, at 10am each Sunday. The service will be accessible until the following Saturday.

St George's Church is now open for individual private prayer from 9am to 5pm.

When restrictions are eased further, the Revd David Commander and the churchwardens will review how to open the church for public worship, and how to work with the restrictions that are likely to be imposed. Cakes and Chaos will resume once all the restrictions have been lifted, probably in September.

Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Iden Green Congregational Church

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

During lockdown our Sunday services are broadcast online at 10.30am on YouTube. Search for Iden Green Congregational Church. When lockdown eases to allow Sunday services we will revert to our 10am and 5.30pm services.

The Roman Catholic Chapel TN17 4EL

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Rector's Letter



Opening churches, curates and racism (all in 500 words)

Three months of lockdown and things seeming that they'd never change, and then changes, changes and changes. In mid June, the churchwardens and I had been planning how to open the church for 'individual private prayer', as we were told we 'may consider doing so' from Monday 15 June. We did our planning for that date, and then were told we could open two days earlier. Hey ho.

The day before the magazine went to print we heard the news that places of worship can consider re-opening, with restrictions, for public worship from 4 July. We have already met to start planning how we will be doing this. Right now, there is no detail other than to pass on the good news that we intend to worship at St George's Church on Sunday 5 July. There will be restrictions, and it won't be the full range of services, but it will be great to be back in church worshipping and praising God together. (See the church website for updates: www.benendenchurch.org.)

Other good news to report is that within the benefice (the parishes of Benenden and Sandhurst) we are to get a part-time curate to assist in the ministry and mission of our churches. Ylva Blid-Mackenzie was due to be ordained at the end of June in Canterbury Cathedral and then join us in the parishes. This has been delayed, due to coronavirus, until possibly the end of September, but she will be ordained in due course and then join us as a deacon before being ordained as a priest, hopefully next summer.

Ylva will be writing a piece for the August magazine to introduce herself. Once public worship restrictions are lifted, we will be able to welcome her at a church service, and she will begin work with us once she is ordained.

So, what is a training curate and what is a deacon? A deacon 'shares in the pastoral ministry of the church in our community and leads God's people in worship' (amongst many other things). A curate helps with the workload, as an ordained assistant. The 'training' bit is probably self-explanatory (for some reason the Diocese now think I have the experience to be a Training Incumbent!) When you meet Ylva, please make her feel welcome.

So those are the good things to be writing about. Then we turn the news on and see so much about racism, inequality, and injustice. We, every one of us, would do well to simply remember that God created each of us. God treats everyone equally. All are equal in the eyes of God. God does not see the colour of our skin and think any differently. And God calls us to be the same.

Revd David Commander, Rector



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Just a Thought



Singing in lockdown

My daughter Beth checked with my husband first, some time back in April. "I'm sure she'd be up for that," was his reply.

Beth has sung the soprano part in her church choir and put all the parts together for the vicar to use for online services. She also played the cello as her contribution to the little orchestra, followed by producing the co-ordinated piece. She even put together a video for her best friend's birthday, which involved combining contributions from half a dozen families. But they are all her generation and all know one end of a smartphone from the other. She was now proposing that members of her family, including her mother and father, record the five-part madrigal 'Now is the month of Maying' for fun! Was I really up for that?

I know the madrigal quite well but I'm best singing with support and not so sure of being on my own. However, not wanting to disappoint I agreed to have a go. Step one is to find the necessary equipment.

First: one smartphone about which I understand about a third of what it can do; phone calls, photos, WhatsApp, and Google Maps are my limit. Download a recording App! Really? Will that compromise my phone and tell the bank, Google, Microsoft and Mark Zuckerberg all my confidential details? Maybe he doesn't sing!

Second: earphones for hearing the accompaniment but not recording it. They must be in my cupboard somewhere - probably still in the original box.

Third: my computer, which is not so much of a problem but I need to find the email where she sent the link to access the accompanying music. Have we really exchanged that many emails since April?

We are now ready to record. Richard will go first as he is a good singer and knows what he is doing. I have to sort out which buttons to press for playing and recording. We start to record and then realise my chair squeaks and he is rustling his music. Start again. He coughs halfway through. Start again. Eventually the verses are recorded and Richard asks to hear them. Ahh, I wonder where they are or even if they're there at all? SOS Beth, to which she replies providing the necessary baby steps required to locate them.

Now it's my turn. My first effort is all croaky so we stop and I sing a couple of hymn tunes to warm up my voice. Next effort and I'm late starting and never catch up. Try again. Richard points out that I was a bit flat in the fourth bar and late on the second page. Deep breath, and this time it all goes well until the end when the second verse starts while I am still recovering from the first. Am I really up for this?

We got there in the end and she glued/welded/melded/fused it all together, and she assures us it was quite acceptable (even if it was now June). She'll send it over.

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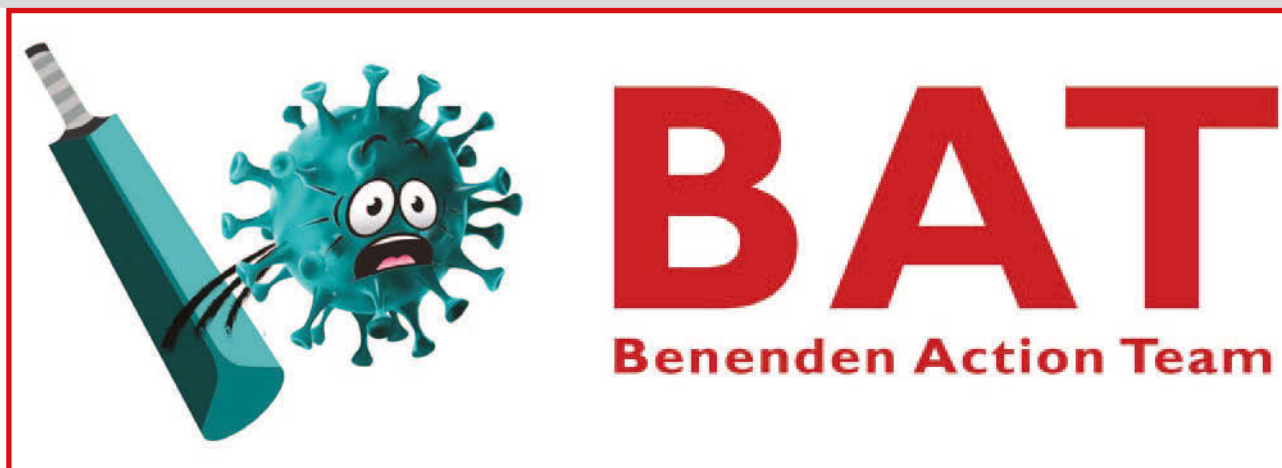
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Benenden Action Team news

The Benenden Action Team (BAT) continues to provide a 'comfort blanket' around the village (as a volunteer described it recently). As expected, the demand for prescription pickup and food delivery has reduced as lockdown has eased and more people have been able to leave home.

However, we foresee an uncertain time in the coming months for many, with concerns about schooling, supporting our youngsters during the summer holidays and, for some, uncertainty about future employment. As a result, BAT is currently exploring additional ways in which we can provide support to villagers, including expanding our food bank service, and we are very fortunate to have a village fund to draw on to support these initiatives.

Many, many thanks to those who have donated to this recently. If you wish to contribute, please see the details below. Every little helps. For example, there are lovely facemasks made in the village for sale in the community shop for £3 and every penny goes into the fund.

BAT has also been looking to assist local charities supported by the church and specifically the homeless charity Catching Lives. The clothing and bedding generously donated by parishioners has been sorted and will be delivered ready to help those who will soon be returning to life on the streets.

Finally, our children have had to adjust to the times and ideas to help them are currently being explored by BAT. They are a tough crowd. I have seen changes in my own children, but as I have three sons (12, 9 and 7), as long as food and being outside appear in their daily calendar, with minimal exposure to screens, they are coping in lockdown. I understand that the teen demographic is also feeling the pressure and we are currently exploring various initiatives to focus on them.

How to donate to the village fund

If possible, please pay your donation directly into the St George's PCC bank account using the following reference:

BAT Food Fund

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If you prefer to pay by cheque, please make it payable to St George's Benenden PCC and post to Charles Trollope, Chaucer Cottage, Iden Green Cranbrook TN17 4HB.

The St George's Church charity number is 1132696.

If you have any questions about the Fund please contact the treasurer:

Charles Trollope 24082

cetetal@btinternet.com

Guy Hagan, BAT co-ordinator

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Primary School news

Despite the enforced lockdown on 20 March, our school has remained open for the children of key workers while providing remote learning for all pupils. In April, we launched Google Classroom, a digital education platform, a place where our pupils' learning experience at home could continue as close to normal as possible.

The platform is purpose-built for remote learning in a way that other school communication channels are not. For instance, teachers can communicate directly with pupils, set individualised tasks, let pupils work together, and easily give personal feedback. Through the platform, we are better able to stay connected, re-create the vibrancy of our classrooms and give our children a sense of normality again.

On 7 May the Government announced that the wider opening of primary schools would take place from 1 June. We spent the following three weeks frantically planning and I was delighted to open our doors in accordance with guidance to children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6, in addition to those children of key workers. I know I speak not just for myself but for all the staff, when I say every day was an absolute joy to watch the children come into school laughing and smiling and then working alongside their teaching teams and friends, sharing their energy and enthusiasm to be able once again "to learn at school".

Here are just some of the comments from parents:

"I just wanted to pass on my thanks to you, Mrs Roberts and the rest of the team who have worked hard to get the school/classroom ready for the children to come back."

"My daughter was getting very lonely and I was increasingly worried about the effect of the isolation on her and I'm very grateful to the school and staff for re-opening."

"The communication from the school has been outstanding and my daughter has skipped into school both days without so much as a glance back at me! She is so happy to see her friends (and teachers!) again."

Pupils and staff are organised into protective

bubbles of no more than 15 pupils with staff assigned to only one bubble. I won't deny that planning for the re-opening was not without its challenges but I am incredibly grateful to all the staff for their continued dedication at this unprecedented time and we are very much looking forward to the day when we can welcome all our pupils back.

Lindsay Roberts, Headteacher 240565

Talking Shop

During these challenging times there is a tendency to turn to simple activities that provide comfort and a sense of wellbeing. During this pandemic there has been a resurgence in the desire (or need) to cook; in particular bread and cakes. The supermarkets have not always been able to provide all the ingredients for these, but we are proud to say that our favourite store has managed it.

Our resourceful managers have sourced all kinds of flour, sugar and yeast from David Catt, a bulk supplier in Boughton Monchelsea, and this has been decanted into smaller amounts to be sold in Benenden's. Also, much appreciated are the absolutely delicious English strawberries from Lower Ladysden Farm; another of those simple pleasures to make the going easier. Plus, of course, we have some great wines.

The shop AGM was originally planned for 25 June but, due to present restrictions, the date has been tentatively rebooked in the village hall on 30 July. Please arrive at 7pm and the social distanced meeting will end at 8pm. Shareholders will receive an invitation during the next few weeks. It must, however, be stressed that these arrangements will be subject to any change arising from COVID-19.

We are blessed to have this great little store in our village with hardworking staff who have kept everything going so brilliantly. Added to that we have had some wonderful volunteers who have tirelessly worked there throughout the lockdown. Our heartfelt thanks to them all.

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Benenden School news

Benenden has started to welcome pupils back to its site. Since 23 March, before the UK Government announced nation-wide lockdown, every girl at Benenden has been conducting her lessons remotely through Microsoft Teams, with the vast majority of these being taught live by teachers.

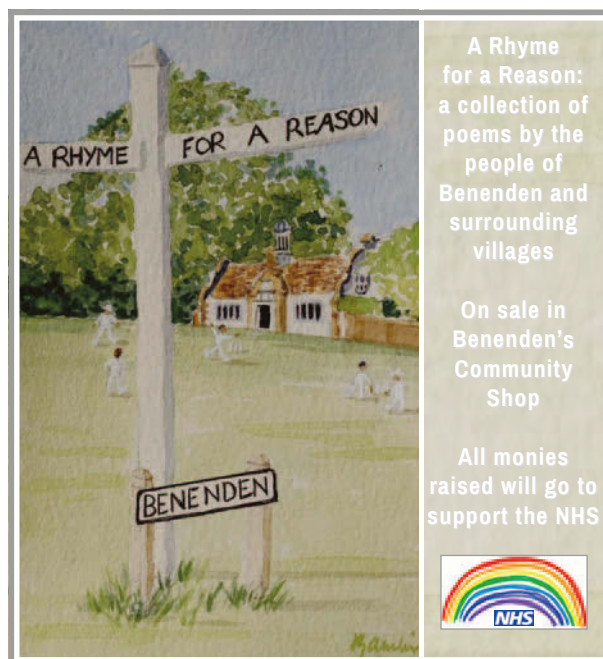
This arrangement is continuing for the rest of the term but since halfway through June, girls in the Fifth and Six One (Years 10 and 12) who live close enough to attend on a day basis have been able to return to school if they choose to. A handful of girls have returned and their day of remote learning is overseen by a member of staff. It has been lovely to welcome them back and they have thoroughly enjoyed being with their friends again - and of course being reunited with the school's wonderful food!

There are extensive measures in place to ensure staff and pupils are protected. The girls spend the day in year group bubbles and upon arrival each morning, they have their temperatures taken by staff in personal protective equipment before following a designated route to their assigned classrooms. Social distancing measures are in place around the site, extra cleaning is in operation throughout the day and hand sanitiser is available.

On a practical level, having girls back in small numbers allows us to test some of the measures that we will have in place for the autumn term and we are currently working hard to plan, as far as possible in the circumstances, for how we can best operate the school at the start of the new academic year.

In the meantime, we are putting the finishing touches to Speech Day, our traditional end-of-year celebration, which for obvious reasons will be somewhat different this year. This event will be run virtually over Microsoft Teams, featuring pre-recorded videos compiled by staff and students, and for once we are not too worried about the weather!

Samantha Price, Headmistress



On sale from early July: A Rhyme for a Reason

Over the last few months Shirley Gooseman, aka author Emma Berry, has been collecting poems written by people of all ages in Benenden and surrounding villages about life in lockdown. 'A Rhyme for a Reason' has just been published and is on sale from the first week in July in Benenden's Community Shop for a minimum donation of £5 per book. All monies raised will go to support the NHS.

"I have been delighted by the response by our budding poets to this worthy cause and the result is an inspiring and reflective look at our local communities' response to the challenges and surprising upsides of dealing with the changes we've all encountered faced with COVID-19," says Shirley.

"By buying this collection you will be helping to support the superb efforts of our wonderful NHS. I would like to thank everyone who has taken part in this very special project."



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Benenden Hospital news

In the current climate a word now increasingly mentioned, is 'infection.' For Benenden Hospital, reducing the risk of infection always has been and remains a priority. I can report we have had no cases of hospital-acquired infections such as MRSA and Clostridium Difficile since 2002, the date records go back to.

In response to coronavirus, we have put additional measures in place to keep patients and staff safe. From the moment you arrive we are seeking to allay your anxieties by meeting all current national guidance. The patient pathway from reception through the atrium to the out-patient department, imaging suite and eye unit have been reconfigured to meet social distancing guidance. For those requiring surgery, our single bedrooms help reduce the risk of infection as well as providing peace and quiet to aid recovery.

While these measures are vital, a key group of people is the hospital housekeeping team. They ensure standards of cleanliness remain high and, quite simply, are some of our unsung heroes who consistently go above and beyond, but they can't do it alone. Everyone has a part to play and handwashing is so important. Soap and water for 20 seconds can make all the difference to keeping safe and infection free.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

Fame for Benenden Bells

Benenden has just achieved minor fame in The Ringing World, the weekly magazine for bell ringers, which has been running since 1911. The recent 5 June issue carried a beautiful photograph of a hot air balloon over St George's church taken by Graham Heath last summer (see back cover). Graham is tower captain of All Saints, Maidstone, a church we visit to ring more advanced methods than we can ring here. Graham submitted the photograph into a competition run by The Ringing World and won.

Rod Lebon

Iden Green and Benenden WI

Thankfully all our WI members have remained well during lockdown. We have missed our meetings, but it has made us appreciate our friendships even more. Here are just a few reflective quotes gathered from our members during lockdown:

- Airlines say that it will take three years for them to recover. Never mind, the time will fly.
- All prayers lead to God like the rivers lead to the sea.
- Believe in miracles.
- Don't sneeze when someone is cutting your hair.
- Don't spoil the ship (sheep) for a ha'porth of tar (which keeps flies off the sheep).
- Early to bed, late to rise, makes me happy, wealthy and wise.
- Home-school programmes on the radio are interesting.
- If you threw everyone's problems into a pile and you could choose just one, you would grab your own back.
- If your sheep escape, remember Bo Peep and if you leave them alone, then they'll come home.
- Just think how we used to eat birthday cake after someone had blown on it. Good times.
- Laughing is good exercise for the insides.
- Light always follows the dark.
- Lose yourself, pick up a pen and enter another world.
- Masks are useful for blocking out the traffic fumes.
- My clothes are all shrinking because I have to eat all the cakes I am baking.
- Try not to worry about things you cannot alleviate. Take each day as it comes and try to find joy in little things.

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Neighbourhood Development Plan

Regulation 15 draft: health-check underway

The Regulation 14 draft plan was published on 25 August 2019 and following the closure of the consultation period on 31 October 2019 the feedback review team have completed their work. Recommendations for change to the plan have been carried through and the draft Regulation 15 plan has been completed. This involved significant work; Nicola Thomas, Peta Grant and Graham Beveridge in particular must be congratulated for their considerable contribution to redrafting the plan.

This Regulation 15 draft has now been passed to a set of independent checkers, paid for by Locality, the government-sponsored organisation responsible for neighbourhood planning. They will perform a health check on our Regulation 15 draft, to make sure it conforms with local and national planning regulations. They will offer suggestions for amendment if they spot any problems. This is not the formal examination of our plan, which will be undertaken once the Regulation 15 plan is lodged with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

Once the health-check is complete we will update the plan and expect to submit our formal Regulation 15 plan to TWBC in early August. They will undertake a review and once satisfied, will then arrange for the appointment of an independent examiner to assess our plan. The independent examiner will undertake a formal public consultation following which any required changes will be sent to TWBC and via them to the Parish Council.

The final parish referendum is likely to be delayed until May 2021, as all elections and public votes have been suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Government may change dates and allow an earlier referendum once lockdown has ceased. If it does so, we will let you know in this magazine.

Paul Tolhurst

Chair, Benenden NDP Steering Group

Village Hall news

As things stand, the hall remains closed to hirers due to the social distancing measures outlined by the Government. We are not letting the time pass idly, however, as we are giving the place a new lick of paint, taking care of some outstanding repairs, giving the whole place a lovely deep clean and sorting out the storage spaces.

I have been working on financial and administrative tasks, while Karen has been sorting through the kitchen, refreshing noticeboards, hanging pictures, and handling many other on-site tasks. Jenn, our wonderful cleaner, has been very busy with a slightly different job, welcoming brand new baby girl River into the world. Another gorgeous addition to the village hall gang.

We'll continue to keep in touch with our regular hirers as and when the COVID-19 situation changes, and we'll work together with everyone to adapt to rules and keep everyone safe. We are taking bookings for future dates, and are happy to transfer payments to another date, to accommodate events which need to be rearranged. The 2021 schedule is filling up fast with weddings, as people postpone their celebrations to next year, and there is a lot to look forward to as people start returning to the hall.

We wish all of our hirers and fellow villagers well during this challenging time, and appreciate everyone's ongoing support and encouragement as we learn together how to adapt and evolve as a community. We always welcome feedback and suggestions with regard to what you want to see from your village hall, and we are happy to receive any communication to the email address below. We very much hope to see you soon.

Holly Clayson 07419 989830

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Planning Matters

The following is a list of planning applications considered by Benenden Parish Council in recent months.

20 July 2020

- 20 01516 FULL Wickets, The Green
Erection of single storey rear extension.

15 June 2020

- 20 01215 FULL Beacon Mill Cottage
Rolvenden Road Conversion of an agricultural building into a residential dwelling and associated change of use of land to residential curtilage. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 20 01265 FULL Land Adjacent to 2 Hague Cottages, Coldharbour Road. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 20 01267 FULL Netters Hall Attwaters Lane
Hawkhurst Variation of Condition 2. The Parish Council supports this application.

18 May 2020

- 20 00762 FULL 2 Eaglesden Cottages Mill Street Iden Green Five dormer windows added to existing garage roof. Insufficient information to be able to comment.
- 20 01041 FULL Land Adjacent to Springhill Oast Standen Street Demolition of one poultry unit and conversion of the remaining poultry unit into two dwellings. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 20 01043 FULL Goddards Green House
Goddards Green Road Conversion of pool house into private gymnasium, changing room and bike store; conversion of outbuilding into a two bedroom annex. The Parish Council supports this application.
- 20 01089 OUT Outline Application (Access not reserved) - Erection of 4 no. two storey detached dwellings with integral garaging facility, formation of new access drive and associated works. Land to the North West of Broughton House, Rolvenden Road. The Parish Council objects to this application.
- 20 01079 FULL Pullington Fold Farm,
Rolvenden Road Proposed single storey

rear extension with internal alterations; infill extension of existing front entrance; changes to fenestration, roof material alteration to slate and enlargement of existing raised platform. The Parish Council supports this application.

- 20 01105 FULL Pippins, Cranbrook Road
Proposed regularisation of workshop to annexe with erection of porch (retrospective). The Parish Council supports this application.
- 20 00970 FULL Havering House, Walkhurst Road
Erection of greenhouse. The Parish Council objects to this application.

To comment on an application, visit:

www.pa.midkent.gov.uk/online-applications

Fete cancelled

After consultation with the PCC, we have made the difficult decision to cancel the village fete this year. This is disappointing in my first year as chairperson but, as soon as it is safe for people to meet again, the committee will start to plan next year's fete on 19 June 2021. So, put the date in your diary and watch this space for further details.

Joy Rowlands 07486 660498

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Spotlight

Nigel Kemp: Woodsmen



Bev Beveridge and Ruth Clark take a walk down memory lane with a man who lives in and loves this countryside.

Whenever we visit Nigel Kemp to order a delivery of well-seasoned logs or to chat about village history, he always offers us a 'brew' in his cosy shack. There he regales us with tales of growing up and how he became a woodsman and

worked on the Pympe Manor Estate for Pat Thoburn for many years until her death in October 2017. Nigel, now 77, is a natural storyteller and his recall of names, dates and youthful escapades is impressive.

Born in Rolvenden, he was only five when

his mother left to join the Women's Royal Army Corps. He was raised by his father and by his own admission "was always in trouble and playing truant. I hated school and lost count of the number of times I was caned so was very happy to leave at 15. I liked working, though: my first job was in the fish shop in Rolvenden at weekends, aged nine." He's been independent ever since.

"My first proper job was labouring for a local building firm. I started training to be a bricklayer, but I didn't like it at all. Ever since I saw a film at

school about logging in Canada, that's all I ever wanted to do, so I got a job at British Gates at Castleton's Oak, making fencing panels, cattle cribs and sheep troughs. I loved it and eventually worked with the round timber in the mill there - my dream job."

Unfortunately, the bad winter of 1962 meant that the firm couldn't transport the big timber and Nigel was laid off. It was around that time that he was reunited with his mother, Rosetta Goodsall, and another adventure began, this time in London. "I had several jobs including digging graves at Wandsworth Cemetery and making model parts on an injection moulding machine for Airfix, but I just couldn't settle in the city and in 1968 moved back here."

Over the subsequent years, Nigel worked digging drains and labouring on farms. Gradually, what started as a side line helping to clear fallen trees, grew into a full-time enterprise supplying logs to locals and pulp to a Sittingbourne cardboard mill. "My mother worked alongside me. She was over 6ft and worked like a Trojan."

Nigel's association with Pat Thoburn, or "the Guv'nor" as he calls her, started after the Great Storm of 1987, when he helped her clear some trees. With a twinkle in his eye and more than a hint of devotion in his tone, he explains: "I used to go off for a month at a time, walking the countryside and sleeping under a plastic sheet to keep the slugs off, and the Guv'nor used to worry about me. I eventually moved into a caravan on the estate and worked for her for over 30 years, advising her on which trees to plant, helping with the garden and managing her woodlands. She was a lovely lady."

While Nigel's life hasn't been easy, he declares himself a "very happy man. I've been very fortunate and I have very good friends. That's the best you can ask for."



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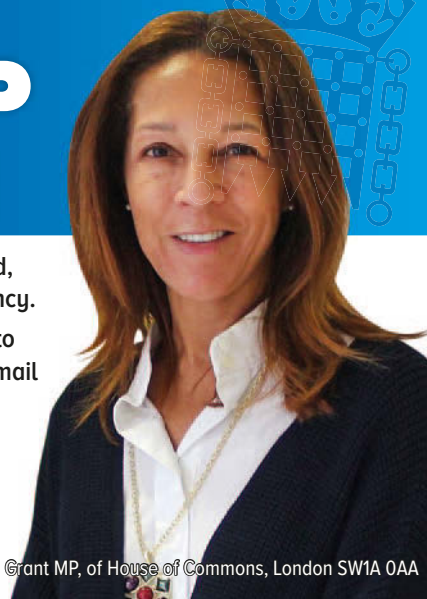


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Benenden History

More mudlarking at Little Walkhurst

While digging in his pond Peter Stennett has uncovered many intriguing items that were part of everyday life in Benenden many years ago. This month he tells us about the variety of glass ink bottles he has found.



Fig.1

As well as the Santer jug reported in the March edition of this magazine, the villagers of Benenden deposited a wide range of other 'treasures' made from pottery, glass and metal in our pond many, many years ago.

These days we are more used to sending emails or texts at the click of a button. In Victorian times, however, the lost art of handwritten letters was in its prime along with the penny post, bottles of ink and nib pens. So, it's not surprising that I have found many small glass ink bottles in my pond mud. These were widely available for sale at a penny each and held just two to four ounces of ink. They came in a variety of shapes and were sealed with a tight-fitting cork held in place with wax.

Of the cylindrical bottles, there were various versions. The cone shape was the most common. These bottles had flat bottoms and sloping sides, making them steady and unlikely to spill when a pen or quill was dipped. Square or rectangular-shaped bottles often came in different and creative forms. Even more interesting are the multi-sided ink bottles. These often look like a combination of rectangular and cylindrical bottles. Then there are the novelty shapes, which tend to be more sought-after, such as a teapot, umbrella, and the shoe that I found.

Pictured here are just some of the different shapes that I have found embedded in the mud walls of our pond. The one bottle I would have loved to find is known as the cottage. It has a glass thatched roof, windows, door and a rain barrel. I sometimes wonder if there is one still buried deep in the mud.

Fig.1 A collection of the most common shapes.

Fig.2 The barrel shape (left) was very popular as were those that stood at an angle (right) making it easy to dip your pen into the ink when there was not much left.

Fig.3 Novelty shapes, a shoe and a bird cage.

Fig.4 Only a few bottles were made in coloured glass. The middle one has two channels on the top on which to rest your pen. The blue one is called an igloo.



Fig.2



Fig.3



Fig.4



Finishing a Regency table

Living with antique furniture

Michael Goater gives us an insight into his world of restoring antique furniture from his Benenden workshop. When we hear the word 'patina', we tend to

think of that colour and surface resulting from handling and polishing over the years. Each piece of furniture acquires its character and appearance from the way it is used over time. For the antique furniture restorer, one of the most important things to do is to estimate the age of the piece, because he must be able to work within the construction techniques and finishes often unique to that period. And when a new piece comes into the workshop, I always think of the advice I was given years ago: "Sit down and have a look and a think." Over the years that advice has saved my clients a lot of money.

Preserving the character of a piece is enormously important, especially when the original maker has used a particularly decorative

feature, which elevates the piece above the ordinary.

There is nothing worse than furniture which 'wobbles a bit'. Occasionally we have pieces which have needed a wall to lean on to make them stand up straight when all it really needs is about an hour in the workshop. One such piece was a Chippendale tea table. An exquisite thing which my assistant thought would collapse if you just blew on it. A front leg was damaged and loose where it entered the elaborate mouldings of the tabletop. I had to warn the client that he might be looking at around £400 because the leg would have to be removed in order to make the joint sound. We started work using a set of razor-thin knives which would be heated and gently inserted into the joints to melt the glue. Further damage must be avoided, and the work can take hours. Hence



Chippendale tea table

my estimate.

The phone rang and I asked John to continue with the process. After two or three minutes I came back and there he was holding a completely detached leg.

"What have you done?" I stupidly asked. But the inside of the joint was immaculate, precision joinery which had come apart beautifully. Far from being grateful, the client was initially suspicious at the large discount, and thought we had given him someone else's invoice! Sometimes you can't win.

A positive aspect of restoration is that there is always something to learn. Even my small workshop in Benenden has a good library of historic and practical furniture books. They have suffered, but for an excellent cause. I was fortunate to teach at the London College of



Removing hot glue from a Chippendale carver



Restored decorative painting
on a French chair

Furniture, eventually leaving to become self employed as a restorer. However, I was conscious of not having a recognised qualification, but was aware of an organisation called BAFRA (the British Antique Furniture Restorers' Association) whose aims are the upkeep of standards

and education for its members. They offered me the chance to be assessed for accreditation and membership. So, in 2003 I parted with my £90 assessment fee. An assessor came to my workshop who was a brilliant restorer, working on furniture from the Royal Household, and managed to put his finger on every topic where my knowledge was slightly hazy. However, upon agreeing to take a week's course on French polishing (£900!) and achieving a satisfactory standard, I was in. From then there was almost no field of restoration in which

I could not seek advice and practical guidance, which made an enormous difference to our scope of work. They also helped me to set up the day and evening classes for those who

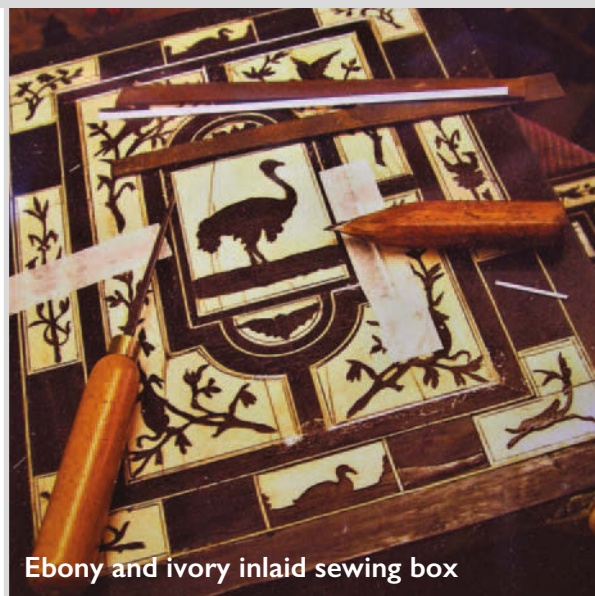


Gilded and carved dressing table

wanted to restore their own furniture. Later, my assessor admitted that he gave me a tough time because he had been a pupil at the school where I was a faculty director, but he later helped to vote me in as



Late 17th century
English carver



Ebony and ivory inlaid sewing box

BAFRA chairman (now retired). You can access BAFRA through its website.

Never hesitate to get advice if you want to know more about your furniture. It should be free and the sooner you get it the cheaper

any restoration costs might be. Unfortunately, furniture does not get better by itself. Also, do not be too influenced by what you see on TV, because it's all about money and drama and entertainment. Many of the valuations are frankly optimistic. If you seriously want to know about

antiques, try the Antiques Collector's Club or Antiques Trade Gazette publications.

Michael Goater

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On reading the Bible

Revd Rosemary van Wengen shares some thoughts about reading the Bible

Not long ago I had a very interesting conversation with somebody who had recently decided to read the Bible. He had started, logically enough, on page one, and had read all through Genesis and Exodus, but when he got to Leviticus he found himself struggling. This is not an uncommon experience!

The problem is that the Bible is not just one book, but a whole collection of books. So just reading it from cover to cover is like reading from one end to the other of a bookshelf and expecting the books to make sense as a coherent whole.

I suggested that he might start with the New Testament, with the Gospel accounts of Jesus's life and teaching; then the exciting book of Acts, the sequel, describing the birth of the Christian Church. Then the Letters (Epistles), full of encouragement and teaching for the new Christians: what their faith, and ours, means in terms of practical living.

The Old Testament is a wonderful treasure house of history, story, poetry and prophecy. Many Old Testament texts are widely known from Handel's Messiah, and many of the stories are familiar; they are part of our culture. We all know about Joseph and his coat of many colours, and David and Goliath. But to read the whole story of Joseph is to see the unfolding of a gripping drama worthy of an entire TV series. Then David, the shepherd boy who became a king; a charismatic figure, a poet and musician, a

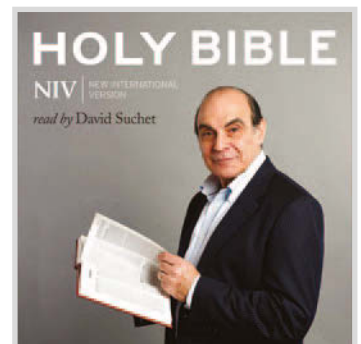
victorious leader; and yet in many ways a deeply flawed character.

Many of the Psalms attributed to him reflect both his acknowledgement of his sinfulness and his faith in God's mercy and forgiveness. There is so much more to David than the slayer of Goliath.

Although some will relish the challenge of reading the whole Bible, it is not for everyone. There are many helpful resources, in digital or booklet form, listed on the Bible Reading Fellowship website (www.brf.org.uk).

I recently came across the NIV Bible app, which includes the full text of the Bible, superbly narrated by the actor David Suchet (aka Hercule Poirot), himself a practising Christian. This App includes a concise summary of all the individual books, a variety of reading plans, and helpful background information. Hearing Suchet read passages I have been familiar with for most of my life I have been amazed at discovering new insights and nuances of meaning. To hear him read the story of the Creation from Genesis was like encountering it for the first time.

The Bible is sometimes described as 'the world's least read bestseller', though in some parts of the world people literally risk their lives to obtain it. We are fortunate to have this treasure to explore whenever we wish, to 'read, mark, learn and inwardly digest', and to explore what it means for our own lives.





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Looking forward

Love in lockdown

Le Bisou

As I stand, arms hanging by my sides, head cocked, an uncertain smile flashing on and off my untouched lips, I begin to fear! Is the kiss doomed?

I yearn to hug my friend who stands opposite me, further than the recommended two metres. A friend whom I would hug upon meeting and again when we part. One part of our unspoken love, our bond, a piece of what keeps us friends.

I worry. Will I ever hug my ailing mother again? Did I hug her enough? Telling people you love them, over the phone or from a safe distance seems disconnected and I miss the emotion stored in that simple embrace; the movement between two warm souls with the extra squeeze at the end to affirm what cannot be spoken.

I miss hugs. But the Kiss? Or Le Bisou? What does the future hold for it? I have spent over half my life living in France and every day I kissed my friends. The small double kisses on each cheek,



the single kiss of the north, the triple kisses of Provence. Used between men and women alike, drifted across the channel, by people who like myself find it charming and emotive. The handshake born of combat and mistrust is not the same but even that show of respect is now forbidden - it, too, deemed

unsafe in this new age.

With most of Europe in total lockdown and populations avoiding not only the people they are unsure of or mistrust, but also the people that they know and love, will all forms of expression which best show our care, our respect or our deep feelings toward the friends we have made and the people we are yet to meet, will they ever come back? Will social distancing, as it continues, instil in us a fear of physical

contact? Will it make us constantly wary of embarrassing or insulting by the simple act of proffering a hand?

As I walk away from my friend, arms useless at my sides, heart heavy and a little empty inside, I wonder. Will the kiss survive?

Troy Bennett

Join in the Big Butterfly Count

From 17 July to 9 August, people all around the country will take part in the Big Butterfly Count run by the charity Butterfly Conservation. This is a nationwide survey that has taken place annually for the past ten years and has grown into the world's biggest survey of butterflies.

Because butterflies react very quickly to changes in their environment, they are excellent early warning indicators for other wildlife losses. Last year, over 113,500 people took part in the count, and it's easy to do: simply count butterflies for 15 minutes during bright (preferably sunny) weather as often as you wish and wherever you wish between 17 July and 9 August. This is the time of the year that most butterflies are at the adult stage of their lifecycle, so more likely to be seen.

If you are counting from a fixed position in your garden, count the maximum number of each species that you can see at a single time. For example, if you see three Red Admirals together on a buddleia bush then record it as three, but if you only see one at a time then record it as one (even if you saw one on several occasions). This is so that you don't count the same butterfly more than once. If you are doing your count on a walk, then simply total up the number of each butterfly species that you see during the 15 minutes.

You can submit separate records for different dates at the same place, and for different places that you visit, and your count is useful even if you do not see any at all. You can submit your sightings online at www.bigbutterflycount.org or by using the free Big Butterfly Count smartphone app (easily downloaded from the website).

It's worth exploring the website, where you'll find the results of previous surveys and discover population trends over the years. The interactive map allows you to track all the sightings locally and across the country.

Last year saw large numbers of Painted Lady butterflies. This intrepid creature spreads northwards from Africa, crossing the Sahara Desert and then the Mediterranean Sea to breed in central and northern Europe during the summer, with their offspring making return journeys southwards to avoid the winter cold - a round trip of some 7,000 miles. The number that reach our shores varies greatly from year to year, with periodic years of great abundance termed 'Painted Lady Years'. The last time this happened was in 2009.

The Peacock enjoyed its best summer since 2014 and the Red Admiral bounced back strongly after a disappointing 2018, with numbers up by 138%, and even the beleaguered Small Tortoiseshell, which has lost three-quarters of its UK population since the 1970s, fared (relatively) well. Other winners, compared with 2018, included the Marbled White (up 264%), Gatekeeper (up 95%), Meadow Brown (up 87%) and Six-spot Burnet (up 64%).

However, the three common white butterflies, Large White, Small White, and Green-veined White, all of which did extremely well in 2018, each suffered a large drop in numbers, while our blue butterflies also decreased. Unfortunately, all five of these 2019 'losers' were seen at levels well below their average per count over the whole ten years.

Here are images to help identify some of our commonest butterflies or you can download a handy chart from the website: www.bigbutterflycount.org



Large White



Small White



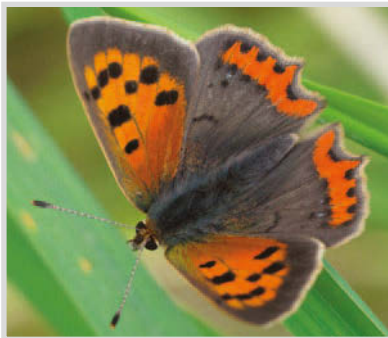
Green-veined White



Brimstone



Marbled White



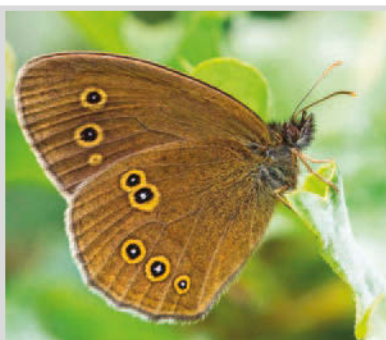
Small Copper



Gatekeeper



Meadow Brown



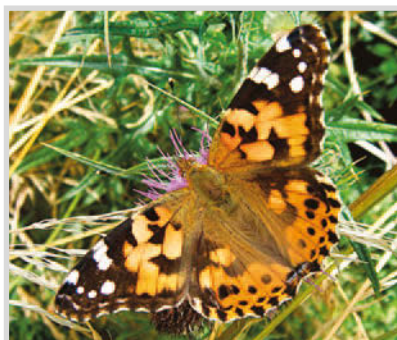
Ringlet



Speckled Wood



Comma



Painted Lady



Small Tortoiseshell



Red Admiral



Peacock



Common Blue



Holly Blue



Silver Y Moth



Six-spot Burnet Moth

Spend 15 minutes in a sunny spot. Use this chart to note how many of each species you see. Then submit your sightings at www.bigbutterflycount.org or download the free app.

In Your Garden

Cytisus battandieri
(the pineapple broom)

plants up a house wall, it is to sort out the framework good and proper. These plants are heavy, permanent and live a long while - hard to believe when it's a diminutive plant in a three-litre container - but they do grow into giants before long so proper support is vital.

You will need either your own masonry drilling skills, or someone else's, and either put up sensible and durable training wires on a tension system (to get them level and taut), or try sourcing the metal reinforcing mesh sheets usually used for building work - a 3.6 x 2m sheet is about £10 online. It will rust beautifully with age and is

extremely robust, but again you will need handy DIY skills to get it attached to your wall.

A client of mine in Sevenoaks had a wonderful *Ceanothus* 'Concha' growing against their house wall. However, after six years of being in the ground it decided it had had enough and duly died on me, leaving a large blank space. I will replace it with the same plant, as it was just perfect while it lasted - nice dark, evergreen foliage all year round and a show-stopper of a flowering period in May.

A bit further round, on a south east wall, are two large *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, which are almost up to the rafters now and clothing the house in their luxurious glossy green foliage. The flower scent is heavenly, too, and this spring I had a family of blackbirds build a nest at around six feet from the ground, so it was a real joy to have them all chirping away whilst I was weeding in the borders below. Enjoy planting or planning for something new in your garden this month.

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The beauty of wall shrubs

Until really quite recently, I have not given this category of plants a huge amount of thought, or even notice. And like most things in life that pass you by, once you stop, look and consider, then the subject leaps to life and you wonder how it had been ignored by you for so long.

I have two very pretty shrubs growing against my own house wall: the first is *Cytisus battandieri* (the pineapple broom) and the other is a very tender and highly scented jasmine. My house wall faces direct west and the first half is brick with timber above. The brick acts as a wonderful sponge to the heat of the midday sun, retaining it during the day and slowly evaporating back into the cool of the night. Wall shrubs love this kind of situation so both shrubs are growing extraordinarily well and I really appreciate the way they hug the house, softening the hard lines and acting as a backdrop to the rest of the border just in front of them.

We usually associate growing plants on our houses as climbers, for example a large rose or a wisteria, which can be a bit of a faff in terms of maintenance. If I can give any sound advice here for growing particularly these two

Romneya coulteri
(Californian Poppy)



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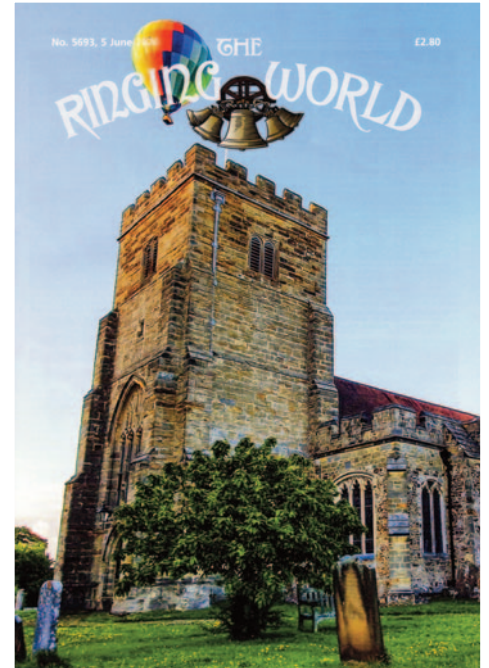
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Above: Hard at work: redistributing old ant hills onto old indented graves; Benenden-made headbands in use at the Princess of Wales Hospital, Bridgend; St George's church gracing another front cover
Front cover: The perfect visiting highlight. Photograph: Amelia Thomas