

A scenic landscape featuring a clear blue sky with three hot air balloons. One balloon is in the upper right, another in the center, and a third in the lower left. The ground shows a field of sheep, trees, and a fence. The text 'Benenden Magazine' and 'September 2020' is overlaid in the center.

Benenden Magazine

September 2020

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Editorial



This issue is a nice combination of reminiscence and expectation. While we are currently fighting the challenges of COVID-19 daily, VJ Day on 15 August reminded us of another global fight that ended 75 years ago. John Gregory's memories of fighting in Burma (page 21) give us a powerful glimpse of the hardships that many suffered then. We also look back on the lives of two other villagers: Ruth Tolhurst and Chris Lowe.

While researching Chris's life online I was thrilled to find the very non-PC advertisement (page 31) from 1971 promoting the first Anglo-American Transatlantic motorcycle races that he created. I was a journalist in the marine industry in the 70s and 80s and ads like these (even for diesel engines and anchors!) were commonplace. Advertising creativity has improved since then, thank goodness.

For me, September is always a month of new beginnings heralded by the children returning to school - probably with more excitement and eagerness than ever before. It's been lovely to see them making full use of the playground now it's open again, with families picnicking alongside. Not only has COVID-19 reminded us of the little pleasures like this that mean so much, it has also given many of us a heightened awareness of our environment, and the last few months has seen a renewed focus on, and interest in, protecting our habitats (page 34). We can't ignore the fact that our climate is changing and the hot spell in August gave us a stark reminder of what is to come. Phil Robins (page 32) urges us to start implementing renewable energy systems at home sooner rather than later.

Finally, please heed the call by Benenden's community shop for new committee members. It's not a huge commitment and they are a great team. Your village, as always, needs you.

Ruth Clark, Co-Editor

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

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Village Calendar

September

Saturday 5	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	p.13
Saturday 12	Friends of Kent Churches, Ride + Stride for churches, 10am	p.11
Wednesday 23	Annual Parish Meeting, St George's Church, 7.30pm	p.9
Wednesday 23	Annual Parochial Church Meeting, St George's Church, 7.30pm	p.9

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



What a strange spring and summer we have experienced. The sunniest spring on record, with no pubs or cafés open to sit outside and while away the time of day; for many, an unprecedented amount of time spent at home, but with no visits allowed from friends and family. But now it would seem things are gradually moving back in the right direction; our Benenden's café is open for takeaways, our two pubs have been inventive in their creative use of space for socially distanced food and drinks, and our primary school will be welcoming pupils back for the new school year - complete with a newly planted and verdant green roof at last.

Unfortunately, two of the volunteer-run initiatives by the Parish Council are still not up and running again: speedwatch and the village clean-up are both bogged down with too much red tape and stringent safety measures, making them virtually impossible to run at the moment. However, it has been encouraging to note that KCC Highways have been busy during lockdown, with new road surfaces to some of our worst potholed country lanes, and further resurfacing planned in the near future.

It is good to read that the Benenden Village Trust are moving forward with plans for the new playground at Iden Green, and also that three new trustees have been co-opted to the BVT. There has been a reminder that there are currently three vacancies for committee members for the village shop, and here at the Parish Council we currently have one vacancy to be filled. So, if you feel that you would like to put your name forward to join us, albeit remotely for the foreseeable future, please do contact Caroline, our clerk, at clerk@benendenparishcouncil.org. or me at nicolat@benendenparishcouncil.org

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 21 September 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.

Each 10am service will be recorded, and the video available later in the day on www.benendenchurch.org.

Sunday 6 September	8am Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst	10am Communion
Sunday 13 September	8am Communion	10am Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst
Sunday 20 September	8am Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst	10am Communion
Sunday 27 September	8am Communion	10am Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst

Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

Every Tuesday 10am Communion

Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

The Roman Catholic Chapel TN17 4EL

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Funeral 23 August Iven Newton-Edwards Interment

Rector's Letter



Making our new normal

Back from holidays. Back to school, college or university. Perhaps even back to work. But definitely not back to normal. The consequences of this extraordinary time that we are living in continue, and seem set to for many, many months to come. Despite these consequences - which affect all of us, but in different ways - I still give thanks for the beauty of the rural area in which we live. I give thanks because I know that things could always be so much worse if we did not have the beauty of our countryside and garden around us. While we may have down days because of the way the restrictions affect the things we normally want to do, it does us good to spare a moment to think of those who are not as fortunate as we are and to be grateful for what we do have.

If you are going back to school, college or university, I trust that you will be able to settle down into the new routine and the new way of doing things quickly so that you can enjoy your time, the learning of new skills and building your knowledge. If you are going back to work, I trust that this too will be smooth and you settle into the routine easily. Our work is not the be-all and end-all, it does not solely define who we are, but it is an important part of our lives. Things may not be as they were; you may have to accept that and work on the new normal, the new routine, and make it work for you. I trust you can find a way to do that quickly.

If you are fortunate enough to be going back to work, then please take some time to think of those in our community who want to but find that they cannot. The financial impact of these extraordinary times are starting to take effect. I hope that we will soon be able to report on the setting up of a proper Food Bank for Benenden and Sandhurst. If you are interested in helping, please give me a call.

Two other things to let you know about - dates for your diary:

- Our re-scheduled Annual Parish Meeting (for the election of churchwardens) and Annual Parochial Church Meeting (reporting and elections of other posts) takes place at 7.30pm on Wednesday 23 September in St George's Church.
- Ylva Blid-Mackenzie, our new curate, will be starting with us on Sunday 30 August. She will be at the 8am service at St Nicholas and the 10am service at St George's; please make her very welcome. Ylva's ordination is going ahead on Saturday 26 September at 4pm, at Canterbury Cathedral. The service will be ticket only and numbers will be limited due to current restrictions, but it will be streamed live. See the church website for details when they are released.

Revd David Commander, Rector

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Just a Thought



The education conundrum

“The teacher arrives at her classroom door with children already holding on to various parts of her anatomy like baby possums with their mother. One child is showing the teacher her cut hand, another tells her about going to Auntie’s after school. A third announces that it is only 27 days until her birthday. A little boy has spotted the travel clock in the teacher’s basket and demands to know how it works whilst another has a story about his grandfather shooting a snake on his farm. The teacher reaches her desk at last to hear:

‘This is the money for the cake sale next week.’

‘Miss, I haven’t got a pencil.’

‘Here is my absence note from my mum.’

‘I’ve forgotten my reading book.’

‘I’ve found my library book - my brother borrowed it.’

‘Is it PE or swimming today?’

‘My daddy’s grandma has died.’

‘Can we play dragons in the afternoon?’

‘David stole my best sparkly pen and then took it home.’

‘I’m not friends with Ilse today.’

‘Good morning everyone,’ seems a bit redundant somehow!

Thus begins another busy and generally enjoyable day in early primary.”

I found the piece above in a forgotten folder the other day. I wrote it a few years ago and after reading it again, I felt that things hadn’t changed very much since then. Young children the world over have very similar characteristics in many ways. But what will it be like in the UK as we greet this new school year?

One newspaper reported recently that little Thai children now each have their own plastic bubble - a cube shaped one - in which they are expected to spend the whole school day. No chatting, no sharing, they even had their afternoon rest in their bubbles.

On the other hand, when talking to one of my teenage grandchildren about the present state of affairs, it would seem that now she can play tennis again (albeit only friendly matches) and she is able to go out cycling to stay fit, she is not too worried about the restrictions.

“I just do all my chatting online,” she smiles. “Oh, and my lessons when we have them!”

I do feel that the younger ones need both the teacher and each other, even if the older ones don’t think that they do. The challenge now is to find an acceptable arrangement somewhere between swamping the teacher and complete isolation when schools once again open their doors in these demanding times. It presents an unenviable conundrum for the authorities - whoever they are - and I have much sympathy for the teachers who will be navigating this next phase.

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Benenden Village Trust news

When the Benenden Village Trust took over from the Harmsworth Memorial Trust a couple of years ago, the founding trustees were determined to make the organisation as accessible as possible to everyone in the village. The trust manages the village hall, the St George's building, the recreation grounds at Benenden and Iden Green and their children's play areas; it is also 'landlord' to the Benenden Bowls Club and the pavilion and tennis club at Iden Green.

With a generous endowment from the Harmsworth family from the 1920s it is in an excellent position to provide recreational, sporting and educational facilities for Benenden. To maximise local input, the BVT created a membership. Sadly we were not able to hold an open 'in person' annual general meeting this year, but during August, members of the trust will have been emailed details of its finances and activities for 2019/2020, and information about how we will conduct a virtual AGM. This will be available to read on the website. We encourage all who live in the parish to take up membership and exercise the additional power to vote at the meeting and elect the trustees.

Of the existing board, five are willing to continue and they are delighted that some others have put themselves forward for election. Any questions about the accounts or activities of the trust should have been lodged by 28 August; voting papers will be sent to Members on 9 September and should be returned by 25 September, with the results scrutinised before results are announced on 1 October.

In the meantime, our day-to-day work continues with the reopened village hall and Benenden play area. Plans are being drawn up for replacing the play equipment in Iden Green. Just one plea: the play areas are for children supervised by their parents. They are not a suitable meeting place for teenagers or young adults 'after hours'.

David Harmsworth, Chair

www.benendenvillagetrust.org

GIBBON & BUCKLAND CHARITY GRANTS FOR STUDENTS AND SCHOOL-LEAVERS

Application forms are available
at the Village Shop,
or from the Clerk, David Harmsworth
at gibbonandbuckland@gmail.com
or 01580 240683.

Latest date for applications 30 September.

Grants are usually for further education or in getting started in working life but may also be given for GAP year projects of educational worth.

You must be aged between 16 and 25 (on 1 October) and be, and have been for not less than three years, resident in the Parish of Benenden.

St George's Church annual meeting

Now the church is open again after the coronavirus lockdown, it is time to get back to our church work. The annual church meeting in April was cancelled so it is now being held on Wednesday 23 September in the church, starting at 7.30pm. At this meeting we hold our elections and give reports on what has been happening to our church family since the last annual meeting.

This year, Tracy Claridge is standing down as churchwarden after six years, the Deanery Synod representatives need electing and there are spaces on our Parochial Church Council. There will also be reports from Revd David Commander and other groups connected to the church, so please do come along. We cannot offer refreshments this year, but you will get a warm welcome.

Julia Collard, PCC Secretary



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Talking Shop

Benenden's Community Shop AGM took place 'virtually' on 30 July and the presentation is available to view on our website. We are now recruiting new committee members. We have three vacancies and encourage you to consider joining our team - the time commitment is only about two hours at four meetings a year. You can get more involved, if you wish, by taking the lead on a specific area, and you will help support our team of managers by acting as a sounding board and offering advice.


Most importantly our committee supports our excellent management team while offering input on new policies or projects. It is a very flexible way to give something back to the community, and fresh ideas will help us keep the shop, café, and post office relevant and interesting for customers. Members normally serve for three years, although you can stay longer, and many do. Please email us if you are interested in joining.

Thank you to the customers supporting our favourite shop despite these strange times. As a cautious return to normality, there are tables and chairs outside the café again. The café is now offering a selection of fresh filled rolls and an increased selection of cakes, in addition to hot snacks and drinks. These are sold on a take-away basis, but you are welcome to sit outside to eat them. A bin is provided near the door for any rubbish and tables and chairs are sanitised after each use.

We would like to remind all our customers that masks are required anywhere inside the shop and to sanitise hands as you enter. As a result, we can welcome four customers at a time.

Grateful thanks go to the volunteers who are returning, but as some are still unable to, staff are spread thinly. If you are able, Benenden's will extend a very warm welcome to anyone who feels they could offer some time to help in the shop.

Bev Beveridge info@benendens.co.uk
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For more information contact Alison Prall
240417 alisonprall40@gmail.com

Village Hall news

The hall reopened its doors a few weeks ago and we've very much been enjoying having a few of our regular hirers back, making use of the wonderful facility. We continue to follow regularly updated Government advice on how best to operate, including limiting numbers, maintaining social distancing, providing hand sanitiser and cleaning products, increasing our cleaning efforts and throwing all the doors and window open at every opportunity.

Of course, the current situation means that several of our regulars are not able to return yet, due to the nature of their activities or the vulnerability of their clients, and so we hope things continue to move in a direction which will mean we can see them again soon.

In September we will once again have yoga, dance, Pilates and badminton, and if you are interested in joining any of these activities, please do get in touch.

We're also taking on new bookings if you are looking for a place to hold a class, meetings, or clubs. We have some availability particularly in the middle of the day, so do contact us to see if we can accommodate you.

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St George's churchyard

I hope that many of you have had an opportunity to enjoy the churchyard this summer. In the 'natural' area, the ox-eye daisies produced a superb display and they were then followed by a mass of mauve knapweed. We have also had orchids and yellow rattle, the latter much favoured by creators of flower meadows.

A small group, suitably distancing of course, has endeavoured to keep the churchyard under control. This included the removal of a tiny proportion of the ever-increasing anthills and using the soil to start to fill in the depressions and large cracks which have appeared, presumably as a result of the extremes of weather which we have experienced this year (see photograph on the back cover of the July magazine).

Part of the cycle of a flower meadow is the late summer/autumn cut, when everything is cut down and removed, and this we propose to start on what will be the first churchyard working party of 2020, scheduled for 9.30am to 12noon on Saturday 5 September. I hope the fit among you can manage an hour or so. We have various tools, but if you have and can operate a sturdy strimmer, that would be fine. Otherwise, just bring gloves and stout shoes - for the cracks! In view of the type of work which we shall be doing, social distancing should not be a problem.

Dick Hill

New head at Marlborough House

This month Marlborough House School, Hawkhurst, welcomes Eddy Newton as its new head. Previously head of Chafyn Grove School in Wiltshire, Mr Newton arrives amidst a series of recent successes for MHS: as well as being shortlisted for an Independent Schools of the Year 2020 award, 100 per cent pass rates were achieved for both the Common Entrance and Cranbrook Entrance exams.

www.marlboroughhouseschool.co.uk

Benenden Cricket Club news

COVID-19 has presented us all with challenges both personal and professional, and it is the same for sport. Village cricket is back in full flow, but with several new restrictions. The fielding team sanitises their hands every six overs, the ball must be kept clear of saliva and sweat but must be cleaned regularly. Social distancing rules have also made it impossible to host teas (one of the highlights of village cricket) and severely restricted the use of the pavilions. Nonetheless the village teams have adapted well, and it is great to see the game that we all love back.

At Benenden CC we are very conscious of our responsibility to the village and our hugely supportive neighbours around the village green. With many still social distancing, and with the club using shared facilities such as the village hall, we took the difficult decision to play this season's remaining fixtures away from home. The Green is a marvellous venue to play cricket and a blue ribbon match for many opposition teams, but it is a small ground, and retrieving balls from private properties, accessing equipment that has been kindly stored for us in these unprecedented times would have represented unnecessary risks. Our aim is to respect everyone's personal circumstance and keep everyone safe. Our intention is to return to cricketing on the Green in 2021.

On the field we have enjoyed three fantastic games since our return. The undoubted highlight has been the number of youngsters that are playing for the club. This bodes very well for our future. The notable successes in this abridged season has been Copter Brunt scoring his maiden century against Newenden CC, and the bowling form of Ben Latham, who has picked up seven wickets in his first two matches.

We continue to thank the village for their support and look forward to continuing cricketing on the Green for many years to come.

Richard Brunt, Captain, Benenden Cricket Club



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Benenden School news

At the time of writing, it is the eve of the A Level results being released, followed by GCSE results the subsequent week. This is always an anxious time for the girls in exam years, but especially so this year after exams were cancelled due to the coronavirus. As has been widely publicised, there is a great deal of uncertainty and unease about the system used by the Government to award the students their grades, and I think it is fair to say that there is enormous trepidation at the moment for all of us working in education.

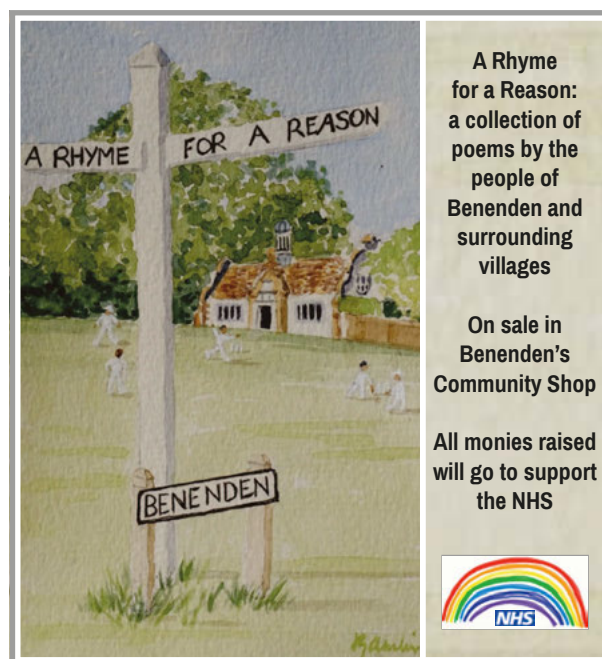
At the same time, we are planning hard for the beginning of the new term. Most of the girls will be returning in September, although some overseas girls will be returning later so will continue to join lessons remotely. In addition, from mid-August we welcomed some overseas girls back early, so that they can serve their mandatory isolation periods here before the start of term. Some staff returned from their summer holidays to look after the girls and to run some on-site activities for them.

We are very much looking forward to having the girls back here and we have introduced numerous measures to ensure everyone stays safe. We hope that the glorious weather holds for the next few months as it will be much easier if we can work outside as much as possible.

The school site has not been as busy as it would usually be during the summer as we could not welcome our summer schools, but we were very pleased that a scaled-down version of the Benenden Village Tennis Tournament was able to continue.

Meanwhile, work on our new school hall and music school has continued throughout the summer and we are delighted that the roof of the hall has been successfully completed. This represented a major phase of the construction project and we know how excited the girls will be to see the progress of this development, considering they won't have seen it since March.

Samantha Price, Headmistress



A Rhyme for a Reason

Before you leave the village shop
Wait a moment - make a stop
Pick up this little poetry book
Open cover and take a look.
Put hand in purse - give pound or two
To help the NHS in all they do.
For when you and I were in safe isolation
They were striving for this nation.
Each book that's sold could save a life
Someone's friend, parent, husband, wife.

All monies raised will be given to the NHS.
Thank you
Shirley Gooseman

Planning Matters

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

20 August 2020

- 20 01960 FULL Pypmne Manor, Pypmne Road. Erection of new plantroom building.
- 20 02054 FULL Stream Cottage, Coldharbour Road. Conversion and change of use of a barn into a holiday let; erection of an incidental outbuilding.
- 20 02103 FULL 20 02104 LBC The Old Barn, Frame Farm, Iden Green Road. Proposed pool enclosure.



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Benenden Hospital news

Simon Brooks works here at Benenden Hospital as The Clinical Lead for Anaesthesia. He is currently raising funds for the Sam West Foundation and their mission "To promote awareness, diagnosis and treatment of mental health issues affecting young people and their families. To advance the education of young people in music and art."

Simon's efforts for the foundation will see him trek with a group of fellow adventurers in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal and home to the Himalayas. Once in Kathmandu, Simon will have two days to acclimatise for one of the world's classic long-distance hiking trails, and still one of Nepal's most popular treks, the Annapurna Circuit.

The maximum altitude will be 5,416m, and the average 2,800m. The trail consists of 18 days walking and trekking across terrain that is steep and rocky. Simon and his fellow trekkers will be attempting the Thorong La Pass which is the climax of the Annapurna Circuit at 5,416m and one of the hardest treks on the Annapurna circuit. At this altitude, there is only half of the oxygen available at sea level, meaning every step you take feels like you just ran a marathon.

Simon's target is to raise £3,000. If you would like to support Simon in his efforts, please visit his Just Giving page:
www.justgiving.com/fundraising/simon-brooks22
Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

Create your own High Weald Walking Festival

This year the High Weald Walking Festival has been replaced by 50 self-guided walks. The walking guides will be available to download for free from the beginning of September. They include clear directions and a map and can be easily printed at home. They will only be available for one month and will come down on 1 October, so don't miss out.

www.highwealdwalks.org

Iden Green and Benenden WI

At last we have accessed the National Federation of Women's Institutes' mailbox and discovered several interesting things. Unfortunately, one piece of unwelcome news is the proposed permanent closure of Denman College. Many of us are very sad as we shall miss the opportunity to meet like-minded people and learn new skills there. However, the federation has promised that individual groups will benefit from the surplus funds and there is a lobby to reduce the annual fees.

Although we can't use the Memorial Hall for our meetings because of capacity restrictions and risk assessment, we are hopeful that our October meeting may be held in another local venue. Many members are looking forward to getting back to our meetings with speakers and this may be a way to enable them. Meanwhile, please remember most of us love to chat and most have a telephone.

We are thrilled to say that 'A Rhyme for a Reason' has sold over 200 copies and raised a substantial sum for the NHS. Many congratulations to Shirley, the poets and all involved. However, there are still a few available at Benenden's Community Shop. They only cost £5 each but, as all funds are going to the NHS, you are encouraged to donate as much as possible. One satisfied customer said that "they make a really good buy and would make excellent gifts for friends".

Jackie Liffen 752232 WI@daisystar.co.uk

St George's Club news

We are pleased to announce that the St George's Club is now open and offering a bar and socially distanced relaxation. You can find us opposite the butcher's, and you will be sure of a friendly welcome.

Glenda Marshall



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Paul Leek

Benenden Action Team news

A heartfelt congratulations to all those young parishioners who recently receiving their exam results. Since taking on a small role in home schooling my own children, I have huge respect for all of you that have managed to work hard, stay focussed and maintained your drive towards completing your work.

I don't envy the decisions you now have to make. To get on the working ladder, to go onto further education or to take some well-deserved time out and go and explore. Whatever you chose, don't think about it for too long. The opportunities are all out there for the taking.

We have all had our eyes opened over the past six months. To new opportunities, to a new reality and to new people around us. Our amazing little rural idyll has served us all so well and has kept us safe and secure through a global pandemic that has nearly stopped the world turning. As the leaves change and autumn beckons, I feel I am seeing Benenden in a new light, through clearer eyes and able to maintain focus on what is important. I can't lie, I am looking forward to school starting back again soon, but simply to allow my children to see their friends and teachers and start to fuel their minds again.

To all those who now have their results, well done and good luck with whatever decision you chose to make first. It won't be your last and if you need any help at all, BAT has over 200 willing volunteers, from so many amazing backgrounds, with so much experience, in so many things, that you can always call on to have a friendly chat and to develop your thoughts, if you need us.

Stay safe and well.

Guy Hagan, BAT co-ordinator

07515 275150 guy@rawfellconstruction.co.uk
www.benendenaction.co.uk

Benenden Players' news

We were very happy to be able to hold a drama workshop in August in the village hall for 15 youngsters. This was the maximum allowed under COVID-19 guidelines and every place was filled within an hour.

Over two days, our lovely drama specialists Cath Snow and Tom Bass, who both live in the village, took the children on a journey developing their own 'Play in Two Days', which they ultimately performed, complete with costumes and props.

It was special seeing the children enjoying themselves after many months with little interaction. We hope to run another in October half term; more details will appear on our Facebook group and in the magazine.

Ruth Clark

Primary School news

The eagle-eyed among you will have noticed that several weeks of renewed activity on the primary school 'building site' have resulted in a rather smart new green roof.

The saga began as the original project drew to a close in time for the start of the last school year, with Keir Construction looking set to deliver the building complete and on time. Sadly, no sooner had the soil been loaded on, it was swiftly removed amid reports the weight was thought too much for the structure to bear.

What followed was a lengthy delay, due to end in February, when temporary classrooms were drafted in to accommodate pupils while the work was completed. Then along came a large tree, landing rather inconveniently on one of the temporary buildings, followed by coronavirus and an even longer delay, which only ended when a large crane turned up at the height of summer to finish the job.

Early signs are that the greenery has settled in and the school is finally looking the finished article. A roof worth waiting for, we hope (see pictures on back cover).

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VJ Day commemoration brings back memories

On 15 August Benenden marked the 75th anniversary of VJ Day with a small wreath-laying ceremony at the war memorial. In attendance was Aurea Gregory, wearing her husband's Burma Star.

The occasion was especially poignant for her as John Gregory fought in Burma up until the end of the war. In 2011, John wrote a letter to his granddaughter Abbie, telling her about some of his experiences as a young soldier in Burma at the time. Here is an excerpt which gives us just a glimpse of the hardships he encountered. "I joined the army in 1940 when I was just 21.

I was selected for officer training which took six months and I passed out as Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery. In 1942, we travelled by boat to India where we landed at Bombay. We then went north to



Quetta where our regiment trained Indians to become soldiers. They had come from different parts of India, spoke different languages, and had no experience of warfare. We had to speak a common language, so the officers learned Urdu and the troops were taught to speak it too.

We then formed the 5th Indian Field Regiment which consisted of three batteries, each having four 25-pounder guns. One battery was made up of Pakistanis, one of South Indians and one of Mahrattas. I was then promoted to Captain. Next, we took our newly formed regiment to Burma with the aim of 'kicking the Japanese out'.

We landed at Chittagong. Our first campaign

was in the Arakan, a coastal area of Burma divided from the central plain and Irrawaddy river valley by mountains. Our Commander-in-Chief was General Slim, a great man and distinguished soldier. We were one of two divisions pursuing the Japanese from Mandalay to Rangoon, which fell to us in May 1945. The conditions in which we fought were thick jungle, muddy roads in clearings and streams which had to be crossed (the engineers had to construct bridges first). During three to four months of torrential monsoon rain, neither side could move. I mostly got around in Jeeps. Mosquitos posed a big threat, bringing malaria and deadly diseases. I was very fortunate not to suffer any illness in my four years abroad.

The Japanese were fanatical fighters; they would rather die than be taken prisoner. They despised the British troops who were taken prisoner and treated them cruelly, torturing and starving them. When we freed prisoners-of-war from the notorious Changi jail they were like skeletons.

The war ended in Burma with the official surrender of the Japanese in Singapore on 12 September 1945. A 17-gun salute was fired for the Supreme Allied Commander, Admiral Mountbatten, by the 11th Battery of the 5th Indian Field Regiment. A moment to relish and one of great pride. There was a

ceremonial surrendering of swords by Japanese

officers to British officers. This is how I came by the swords which are on my study wall.

I returned home in 1946 and so ended my war."



The initial announcement of Japan's surrender came on 15 August 1945, which is why the UK marks that day. The US, however, marks 2 September - the day that the surrender document was signed aboard the battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay. However, it wasn't until 12 September that the Japanese forces in Burma finally surrendered and ended the war there.

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Coming Home



Liz Kirby has returned to the village after running a safari business in Namibia. Here she asks for contributions to help keep three children they used to sponsor at school.

My family moved to Benenden in 1976. Forty-four years later and I'm back and looking forward to making a new life

here. My path took many turns and I eventually found myself in Namibia, starting a company called Wild Dog Safaris. When you live among people that know real poverty, that is when hearts are the most open. There is one story I would like to tell here.

When you spend up to 14 days on safari with a guide, you share many great experiences and you also learn a little about the life of the guide. Most of our international clients were a little shocked by the hardships most Namibians have faced, and many want to help make the life of their guide a little better.

One day I chatted with two clients: a mother and daughter. They enjoyed their trip so much that they asked what they could do to make a real difference to the guide's life. "What about school for his son, Ruben?" they said. "Well, yes," I replied, "but it's not that cheap if you want to be serious and go to a private school." A state school will provide little more than poor reading and writing skills and he had already mastered these.

They were serious, but Ruben was already nine years old and his English needed improving. He worked hard and after six months he was ready and started at Windhoek Christian Academy. He did well, often in the top



four of his class. A few years later his sponsor family were not able to keep up the monthly payments and Wild Dog Safaris took on his sponsorship. We then added two more of our guide's children to the school: Rusia and Mercy.

Roll on to February 2020 and our world has changed. With no

safaris there is

no income and no assistance from the Namibian Government or banks. We lasted for a few months but after retrenchments for staff that had been with us for over 15 years, there was nothing left.

Ruben will finish this school year in December and is hoping to go to a secondary school. It will cost around £35/month instead of £200/month. This also applies to Rusia and Mercy once we find the

right school for them. However, because of recent events, we are no longer able to sponsor these children and I'm hoping to find a way to continue their education.

For us, living in Benenden is quite different but we have experienced a heartening welcome which has made all the difference, especially for my husband and daughter, who have only known life in Namibia. So, I am making an appeal for help in funding the education of these children. Every little helps and I will keep in touch with them and give reports of their progress.

St George's Church has agreed to handle any donations. Please contact me or Charles Trollope.

Liz Kirby 240232 lizkirby1962@gmail.com
Charles Trollope, PCC Treasurer 240821
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A love of music and making



What links the brutalist architect Sir Basil Spence, the composer Michael Tippett, Millfield School, viola da gambas, Edwardian pond yachts and Benenden? It's Michael Goater, who moved to the village last year with his partner Kate Bindloss. Michael's career has followed many twists and turns but at each point it was his love of learning and acquiring new skills that has opened new doors along the way and through which he has stepped quite happily.

As a young man, Michael wanted to be an architect but, because he couldn't afford to go to college, he became an architectural draughtsman at the practice of Basil Spence & Partners in North London, famous for designing Coventry Cathedral. "I learned a colossal amount there," says Michael. "But I didn't really take to life in London so, aged 20, applied to study for a degree at the Bath Academy of Art in Corsham. I think it was my rather dapper tweed jacket that swung it and they accepted me."

Alongside his artistic skills, Michael played and taught piano in his spare time, playing once for the great Tippett, who lived locally at the time. At just 24 years old, he joined Millfield School teaching music, then art and finally became head of the arts and crafts faculty. Headmaster at the time was founder Jack 'Boss' Meyer, who set up the school in 1935 with seven Indian boys, six of whom were princes. Jack was an inveterate gambler, first-rate cricketer and known to be "eccentric, ingenious, controversial, impetuous and charming". Not surprising then that Michael was inspired to write his biography in 1993.

Art and music have blended throughout Michael's life and it was during the long school holidays that he added another string to his bow. "I am extremely interested in Renaissance and baroque music and decided to learn to make a viola da gamba, which were popular at the time and still played today. They look like a small cello and are played upright, held between the calves." One thing led to another and Michael's reputation quickly spread, leading to many commissions. After eight years at Millfield, another door opened, and he joined the Welsh College of Music to teach instrument making.

"However, I eventually decided to cut loose to try to become a professional instrument maker," says Michael. "Once more my good luck held. Fortunately, my bank manager's father had played for the London Symphony Orchestra, so he was quite happy to support my new enterprise with an overdraft." So, Michael headed to Norfolk and spent the next 30 years making and restoring instruments before moving down to Benenden last year, closer to his and Kate's family. Today, in his workshop, his love of wood sees him happily restoring old furniture, bringing old cellos and violins back to life, and returning stately Edwardian and Victorian pond yachts to their former glory.

Michael plans to start furniture restoration classes in the future for those that would like to learn the techniques. "It brings such great satisfaction and you never know what doors it may open for my students," he smiles.

Ruth Clark



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Tracy Claridge returns to his 'second home' to revisit its memorable spirits

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There are six vineyard areas around the Cognac area, all of which are within the appellation controlee for Cognac, but which are considered to vary in quality from the best growth area of 'Grande Champagne' through 'Petite Champagne', then 'Borderies', 'Fins Bois', 'Bon Bois' and finally 'Bois Ordinaire'. The best Cognacs are generally only made using Grande and Petite Champagne grapes, but all Cognac is produced by blending a variety of 'eaux de vie', which can be made from grapes from different locations and vintages. Different qualities of Cognac are produced by all brands, controlled by the length of time the Cognac is allowed to mature in oak barrels. The longer the Cognac matures in the barrel the smoother it will generally become. Once it is bottled, no further development takes place.

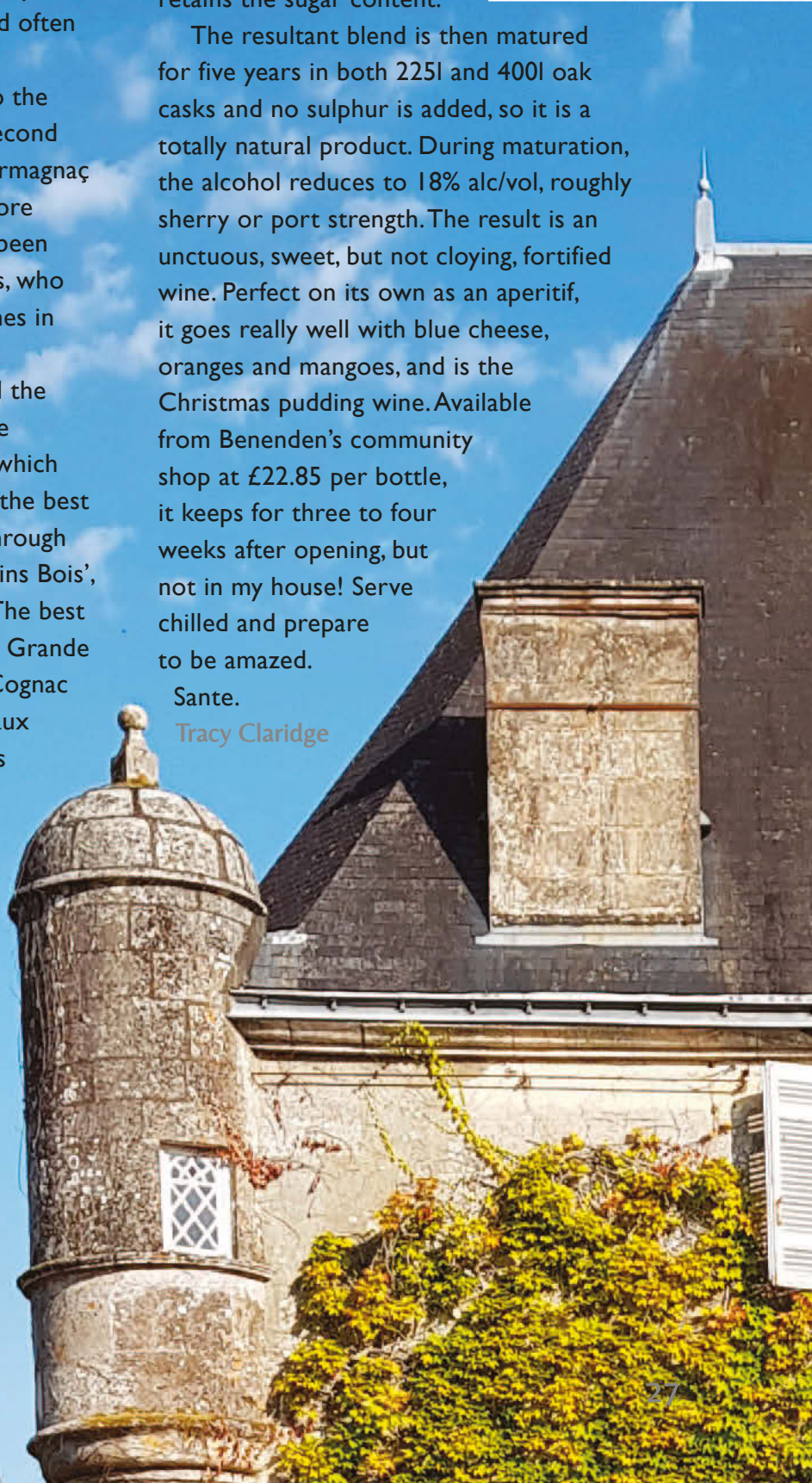
Chateau d'Orignac produces both Cognac and Pineau des Charentes. The Pineau is of exceptional quality, made from 60% Merlot and 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, very unusual, as these are the red noble grapes of Bordeaux - Ugni Blanc and Colombard

white varieties are more common. They pick the grapes, press them immediately and then add 40% alc/vol five-year-old VSOP Cognac to stop the fermentation. Yeasts only work until about 17% alc/vol, so this process retains the sugar content.

The resultant blend is then matured for five years in both 225l and 400l oak casks and no sulphur is added, so it is a totally natural product. During maturation, the alcohol reduces to 18% alc/vol, roughly sherry or port strength. The result is an unctuous, sweet, but not cloying, fortified wine. Perfect on its own as an aperitif, it goes really well with blue cheese, oranges and mangoes, and is the Christmas pudding wine. Available from Benenden's community shop at £22.85 per bottle, it keeps for three to four weeks after opening, but not in my house! Serve chilled and prepare to be amazed.

Sante.

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Ruth Eleanor Tolhurst

9 February 1926 - 24 June 2020

Ruth Eleanor Stannard, daughter of Albert and Mary Stannard and younger sister to Alan and Betty, was born and grew up at Grange Cottage, The Green, Benenden. She was educated at Benenden Primary School and Tonbridge Grammar School for Girls and although due to the war she couldn't follow her dream to become a veterinary nurse, she was offered a place at University College Hospital, London, where she gained her SRN in 1947.

Things weren't easy for Ruth during the war, and her sister Betty, aged 22 and serving in the WRAF, was killed in action, but later she met Bob Tolhurst, from another Benenden family and on leave from the Royal Navy, and they were married in 1947. In those days, it wasn't permitted to nurse and be married, so Ruth settled into family life and first Briony was born in 1948, then Vivien in 1951.

In the summer of 1951, the young family moved to Bristol, where they lived until December 1959. Jenny was born in December 1955 and Ruth was busy with her young family,

but was also a great help to others, even assisting the local doctor with the birth of a neighbour's baby.

In July 1960, after spending six months at Grange Cottage, the family moved to Berkhamsted in Hertfordshire, but in 1972, Ruth, Bob and Jenny moved back to

Benenden to care for Albert, who had worked for the Ingram family since leaving school. Briony and Vivien had 'flown the nest' and Jenny attended sixth form at Cranbrook Grammar, so Ruth was able to take up nursing again and worked at Benenden Hospital until her retirement in 1991.

Over the next few years, she cared for many elderly people in the village, including Bob, who sadly passed away in 2007, and it wasn't unusual to see her walking across The Green in the middle of the night to tend to someone.

Ruth always made her children's clothes and knitted for her children and grandchildren. She and Bob loved their dog Tolly and in the autumn Ruth could be seen, with Tolly, roaming the fields picking blackberries or sat on the seat at the top of the fields overlooking Frame Farm while grandchildren ran up and down the hill. Sadly, in 2008, a year after Bob's death, Jenny also died.

Both Bob and Ruth were devoted to the village, daily locking and unlocking the church, collecting for Poppy Day and making teas at the fete. Ruth was a member of Benenden Women's Club, of which her mother had been a founder member. Bob very much enjoyed being part of the Benenden Players, looking after the star on top of the church tower at Christmas and splicing ropes for the cricket club.

Family and friends gathered at Viv's home, Two Barns, after a service at the Kent & Sussex Crematorium. We all very much enjoyed sharing Dame Vera Lynn's Spitfire and Hurricane flypast as we said farewell to Ruth, mum, grandmother, great grandmother and great, great grandmother. Briony Coupe (née Tolhurst)



A Life Remembered



Chris Lowe pours champagne into Giacomo Agostini's 'Race of the South' trophy at Brands Hatch

reminisce about his father's interesting life and the mark he made on the international motorcycling world.

Chris grew up in Disley, Cheshire, and in 1947 joined

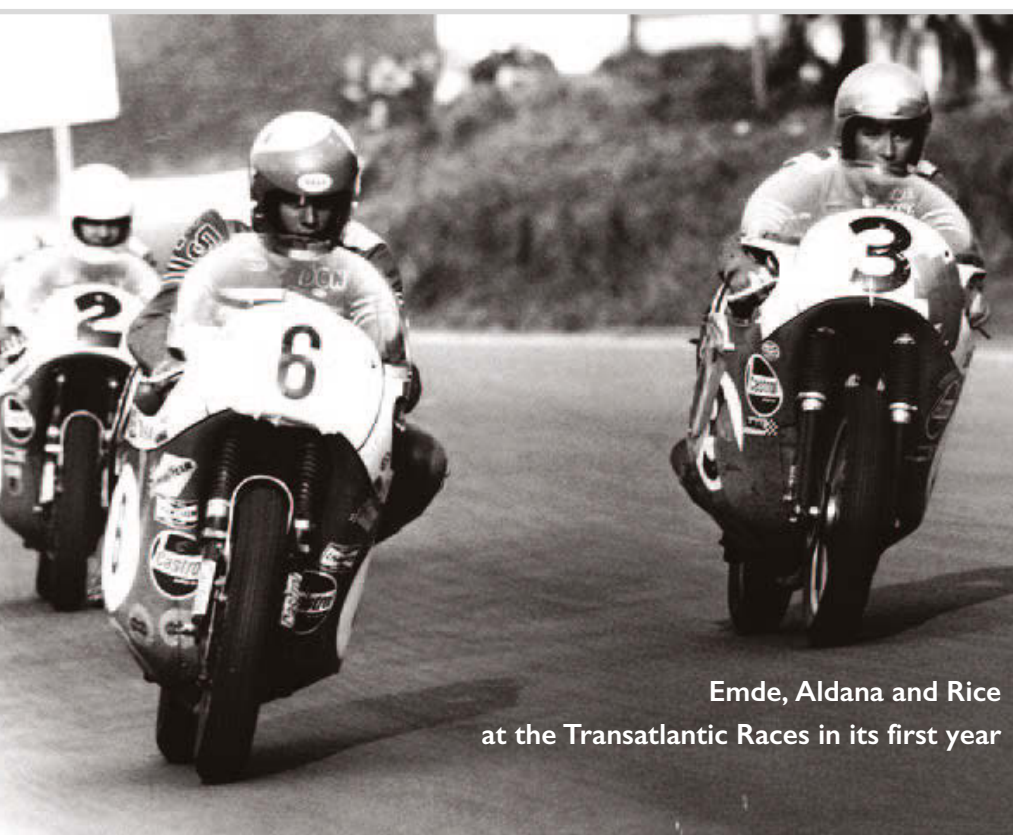
Chris Lowe

Motorcycle racing legend Chris Lowe died last November after 38 years in the village. Ruth Clark learns about his impact on the sport and his love of jazz from his son Simon. While he was alive Chris Lowe was very modest about his many achievements and studiously avoided the limelight. But, as his son Simon revealed recently, this was only the case in his later years. During the 1970s and early 1980s Chris was considered the most powerful man within British short-circuit motorcycle racing. But more of that later.

Chris died last November, aged 92, after 38 years living in Laurel House in Benenden. I caught up with Simon at Chris's house to

the Merchant Navy with Clan Line, which took him to Tasmania, among other places. Although he loved the sea he didn't really take to the life, and after a year left Clan Line to join ICI's publicity department in Manchester. He had met Kitty, his wife to be (they were married in 1950), while he was still at sea and when the bright lights of London beckoned, they moved south and Chris took a job with Temple Press, organising exhibitions and reader travel excursions for the weekly magazine *Motorcycling*. He was soon making a name for himself and, before long, joined Grovewood Securities/Motor Circuit Developments (MCD). There he played an instrumental part in the team that built a motor racing circuit empire encompassing Brands Hatch, Snetterton, Mallory Park and Oulton Park.

Chris created, and was the driving force behind, the very successful televised Anglo-American Transatlantic Match Races (or Transatlantic Trophy as it was later known), which pitted a team of top American riders against a team of British aces at various UK circuits over the Easter weekends from 1971 to 1991. It was a revolutionary innovation in the sport at the time.



Emde, Aldana and Rice at the Transatlantic Races in its first year

In its first year all the riders were on identical 750cc BSA Triumph Triples and saw Dick Mann, a Daytona 200 winner, race against the UK's Paul Smart and Tony Jeffries amongst others. By 1974, the one-make rule was abandoned, and a young American rider Kenny Roberts faced off with British rising star Barry Sheene. The Brits won the first four series. It wasn't until 1975 that the Americans won the challenge, with a line-up that included Roberts, Dave Aldana, Gene Romero, Steve Baker and Pat Hennen. The races were staged at all the circuits run by Chris Lowe.

With marketing still in his blood, Chris joined the trackside advertising business



Barry Sheene, Transatlantic Trophy, Mallory Park, 1981

Benenden life. Kitty was a member of the WI and they had lots of plans for their retirement here (including running a mobile library around the district), but tragically, Kitty died in a car accident in 1986. Chris continued working at Aerosigns, handling outdoor golf and motorsport advertising until 1996.

Eventually, Chris did enjoy his retirement in Benenden. He was a regular fixture in the King William IV pub and, more recently, he could often be found lunching in Benenden's Community shop café. "This was an essential amenity for him, and it gave Lindsey and me great comfort to know that he went there," says Simon.

I'll give the last word to legendary circuit commentator Fred Clarke, who said of Chris on hearing of his death: "He was a true gentleman who, despite his powerful position, was always willing to make time for a quick chat, as well as expressing gratitude to those around him. Above all else, it was his sharp and cutting wit that I liked best, with often many a big named rider on the receiving end."



Aerosigns at the end of the 1970s, so his contact with motorsports was not lost, but all his life he was fanatical about big band jazz and swing. In the 1940s, you could have seen him playing lead trumpet with the Blue Serenaders, a Stockport-based dance band, alongside David Coleman on saxophone. He passed his love of music on to his children: Simon became a musical director and today is artistic director at Loretto School in Scotland; his daughter Lindsey, who works in publishing, plays trumpet with various London-based big bands and small groups; and about 25 years ago the Battersea Arts Centre Big Band performed in our own village hall.

Chris and Kitty were happily involved in

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Brands Hatch GOOD FRIDAY 12.30 pm
ROTHMANS
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ROUND 2
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ROUND 3
Oulton Park EASTER MONDAY 2 pm
DAILY EXPRESS
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Solar panels

The future will be renewable

The UK is committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050 and to achieve this goal we must start incorporating renewable technology in our homes. Phil Robins encourages us to do it sooner rather than later.

I am a bit disappointed with how few people in Benenden have incorporated some form of renewable technology at home. There is the occasional property with a solar array and a few others with heat pumps but overall not many, considering that Benenden is a largely affluent village. With the country now committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2050, the Government will have to start applying pressure to encourage homeowners to start making the necessary changes.

We can see the first signs of this with the Green Homes Grant launched this month, where up to £5,000 will be available towards the cost of installing insulation and double glazing. I expect that the carrot will gradually turn into a stick when oil and gas boilers can no longer be fitted; this has begun with gas boilers not permitted to

be installed into new properties from 2025.

Because of the many properties that need substantial improvements to lower their carbon footprint, local authorities will have to change their position and start allowing changes to be made that, up until now, they have not.

The most common renewable, the photovoltaic (PV) panel, is now about a quarter of the price paid only ten years ago. These systems are now more reliable and, importantly, can be cost-effective without Government support. Using the Smart Energy Guarantee scheme, where the energy companies pay you for what you export, systems can still be worth fitting for economic reasons.

Our own home in Great Nineveh was a disused stable block and milking parlour, which made it easy for us to install systems from the start. To fit heat pumps in existing properties will be a challenge but may be one that has to be faced in the future when tax on heating oil increases or your heating engineer says he is not allowed to fit a replacement oil boiler. There is a model of heat pump available now, whether ground sourced or air sourced, that can replace virtually any boiler. Installation costs have been high in the past, but competition has cut this significantly. I think there is a scheme running currently offering a grant towards air-to-water heat pump installations. These units can replace a boiler in a conventional heating system even with radiators. Ground source heat pumps need pipework installed below ground. Installing these systems costs more than fitting an air source unit but they both have their advantages and disadvantages.

Solar PV panels are visible when fitted to some roofs, which can make getting permission more difficult as they have to be south east to south west facing to get a reasonable output, which may mean fitting them to the front of a property. But with a bit of thought it may be possible to fit panels in to a roof valley or on to an outbuilding or a frame at the end of the garden or in a paddock where they can do their job without being noticed. In a few years' time, when people start panicking as progress to

becoming carbon neutral is too slow and the effects of global warming are getting even more obvious, I would not be surprised to see properties with low ratings on the Energy Performance Certificate being penalised to make owners carry out improvements. We will all have to pay something sooner or later. Why not sooner?

WHAT WE DID IN GREAT NINEVEH

Heating and hot water: Our building was a blank canvas, so we installed underfloor heating, as it's the best system to use with a heat pump. We chose a ground source unit as we could install a loop in our field. This first unit ran for ten years but we were never happy with the water temperature it produced; it hovered around 40 degrees C, which is barely hot enough. Remember you don't have to add cold water to it as you would in a conventional system when the hot water is at 60 degrees C plus. Under the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme that came in, we were able to upgrade the unit to one producing water at 50 degrees C and this we have been entirely happy with. Although it is more expensive than equivalent oil boilers, there are no servicing costs to consider.

I always liked the idea of solar thermal panels, where hot water is heated. After a trip to the



4.5kw solar electricity storage battery

Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales we decided to fit two panels into the valley on our roof which supplies preheated water to our heat pump's normally cold-water inlet.

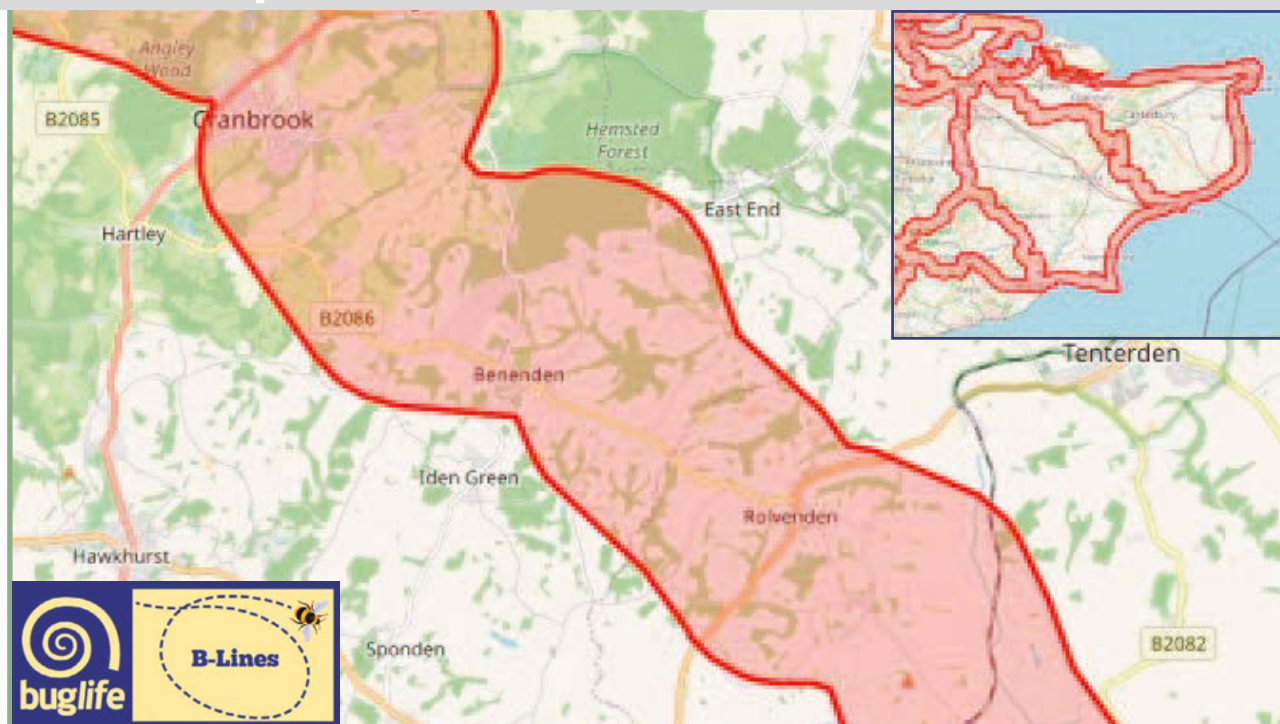
Solar PV: When the Government Feed-in Tariff scheme was ending three years ago we decided to install a solar array on our garage roof; although not ideal as it faces south east, it has worked remarkably well, producing up to 29 kilowatt hours of electricity each day, weather permitting. At the time of writing, 21 megawatt hours have been produced since the system was fitted. That is enough to supply the power for around 2,000 homes for one day or just one for six years.

I am not a fanatic, but I am now a lot more aware of the damage we are doing. I have particular pangs of guilt over our oil-fired Aga and the Land Rover Defender I use. To try to offset these we have recently bought a small used Renault Zoe electric car as a trial, which is now used for all of our local trips; with a range of around 85 miles it gives us plenty of scope for about 90 per cent of our mileage.

www.gov.uk/green-deal-energy-saving-measures



15kw air source heat pump



Help boost our pollinator population

Benenden sits in a B-Line corridor, one of a nationwide series of ‘insect pathways’ being encouraged to help halt the decline of pollinators. Peter Driver explains what these are and what we can do to help.

Insects are in decline in the UK. Their numbers and range are dwindling and have been since at least the 1970s (around 250 UK pollinators are now in danger of extinction). The reasons for this decline are complex and include pesticide use but one of the key contributors is loss of native wildflower meadows. Over 97% of all flower-rich grasslands have been lost in England since the 1950s, resulting in reduced pollen and nectar sources for insects and a subsequent decline in other wildlife such as birds and bats, which depend upon insect-rich habitat.

Many areas of wildflower-rich habitat now exist as small patches often isolated from each other by large expanses of less wildlife-friendly habitat. This fragmentation of habitats is a matter of concern as the populations of insect pollinators they support become marooned and unable to move in response to climate change. Buglife, the Invertebrate Conservation Trust, is committed to halting declines in our native insect pollinators.

Native insect pollinators provide an essential

‘ecosystem service’ being responsible for the pollination of a large proportion of our food crops and our native plants. For example, some crops, such as tomatoes and peppers, require the flower to be vibrated rapidly before releasing pollen and only bumblebees are able to do this. Further declines in bumblebees and other pollinators could therefore lead to dramatic reductions in crop yields. To prevent this, large areas of wildflower-rich habitat need to be restored and created to provide essential food and shelter for pollinators. To increase opportunities for species to move around the countryside as the climate changes, Buglife is promoting the need to identify and develop key dispersal corridors: the B-Lines.

B-Lines are a series of ‘insect pathways’ running through our countryside and towns, along which Buglife aim to restore and create a series of wildflower-rich habitat stepping stones. They will link existing wildlife areas together, creating a network, like a railway, that will weave across the British landscape. Each B-Line will be approximately three kilometres wide with two north-south and two east-west B-Lines per county.

As you can see from the map, Benenden sits firmly within one of these B-Lines. The initiative will also play a major role in the delivery of the Government’s National Pollinator Strategy, which

sets out a ten-year plan to help revive pollinating insects across England.

Agri-environment schemes already provide significant funding for wildflower habitats and by increasing the amount of the most beneficial management options and looking to create new wildflower-rich habitat, farmers and landowners can help develop large stretches of the B-Lines network. However, private gardens have an important role to play in helping to support wildlife in our villages, towns and cities. If enough people and landowners get involved, every small patch of wildflowers or flowering shrub can make a real difference, and the scheme will complement

other initiatives such as the Kent Wildlife Trust's 'Action for Insects' campaign.

All is not lost. Insects can increase rapidly given the right conditions; populations can recover and it's something that we can help to make happen. We need pollinators to thrive and to do so they just need more of the wildflowers that were once so plentiful. Maybe you are already doing some (or all) of this. Let me know - I'd love to hear what is going on and it will help to build a picture of where we are already reviving the fortunes of these vital creatures.

peterjdriver@gmail.com

www.buglife.org.uk



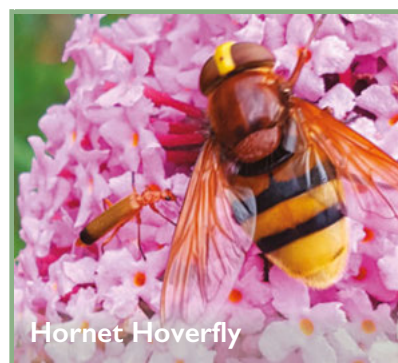
Hairy Legged Mining Bee



Spotted Longhorn Beetle



Grey-banded Mining Bee



Hornet Hoverfly

WHAT WE CAN DO

First of all it doesn't matter if your garden isn't within the red-shaded B-Line (insects don't necessarily follow the designated routes!)

- Attract insect pollinators into your garden by providing them with flowers over a large part of the year, aiming for March through to early November.
- Even if you only have a window box, plant herbs such as lavender, mint, wild marjoram, fennel, sage and thyme and the bumblebees will find it.
- Plant bee-friendly garden flowers. Many showy garden flowers provide no sources of nectar or pollen for insects. Grow single-flowered dahlias or other cottage garden flowers such as hollyhocks, snapdragons and foxgloves.
- Many vegetable plants need bees to pollinate the flowers in order to produce a crop. Every tomato, cucumber, aubergine, runner bean, blackcurrant and pepper that you eat was

almost certainly pollinated by a bumblebee. No bees = no baked beans. Now that's a sobering thought.

- Fruit trees and shrubs such as apple, cherry, plum, blackberry, gooseberry and raspberry are great for pollinators. Willow, blackthorn and hawthorn provide food for them early in the year.
- Eliminate or reduce the use of chemicals. Throw away the ant killer - you will have just as many ants in your garden whether you use it or not. Let's try and make Benenden a pesticide-free zone.
- Let your lawn grow - leave part of the lawn unmown and see what wild flowers spring up. Give #nomowmay a try or, if you've got the space, why not create a mini wildflower meadow?
- Try and leave some areas less tidy in the winter months to help insects survive the cold period.

In Your Garden



Tithonia rotundifolia
'Torch'

Jewels in the borders

I think I can admit, with ease, that as a nation of keen gardeners we have eventually managed to plug a gap in our borders which in many years prior would have normally appeared round about now. We have had the mad rush of late spring to early summer - a very beautiful time of year but increasingly fleeting due to our new-age hot summers - and can now switch from a pastel palette to a bold, jewel-like scheme which should take us up to the first frosts.

This would be the oranges and reds of crocosmias and heleniums, the vivid blues and purples of tender salvias, the deep yellows of helianthus and rudbeckia, and the shocking pinks of cosmos, cleomes and dahlias. None of these plants is shy or retiring; they are generally tall, although some of my favourites are the smaller coreopsis, such as 'Moonbeam', and all pair exceptionally well with grasses of any variety.

There is something about these colours and the light at this time of year that can make the borders resemble a box of jewels, glowing in the rich, slightly lower light, and thanks to our new warmer autumn nights we can extend this display most likely up until mid-November here in southern England.

Pairing well with these strong colours are some great foliage plants. This is where things

can get a little tricky, as these are also striking in form and combinations can start to resemble a tropical look, which is not everyone's cup of tea. Cannas and bananas, tetrapanax, ricinus and melianthus all grow very happily with late-season plants and I have found a number of clients are warming to this combination - and if the ground is properly prepared and planting times adhered to, this should negate the need for excessive watering.

It is definitely worth trying out - and great fun too. You can get ahead a little by growing some of these colourful plants from seed. Tithonias and nicotianas, cosmos and helianthus, ricinus and amaranthus are easily raised. Tubers for cannas and dahlias can be potted up in mid spring. Cuttings of salvias (taken from either previous or current year's growth) can be potted on and heleniums, crocosmias and rudbeckias easily divided after a few years.

It is not a costly affair. However, we all have failures every now and then: I for one have had a terrible year for dahlias; my cleomes, which I grow each year from seed, have been massacred from day one by caterpillars and slugs; and I planted out my cannas too late so am watering and feeding like a dervish to get them going. But somehow a display happens and it all comes together. Enjoy experimenting with some new plants this month in your garden and enjoy the results right through until November.

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Above: New beginnings: the green roof at the Primary School; new skills learnt at the Benenden Players' workshop
 Front cover: Taking a long-range view. Photograph: Lorraine Charsley