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Magazine  
March 2021



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# Editorial



I don't know about you but Lockdown 3.0 seems to be more challenging than the others. Although we are familiar with managing the rituals and rules around life, work and schooling by now, it really doesn't get any easier. Initiatives such as Wellbeing in the Weald's Tea@Two online get-together (page 9) do help fight loneliness, and I know many of you are regularly calling those living on their own. Happily, along with the green shoots and flowers of spring appearing, we are starting to see light at the end of the tunnel as lockdown restrictions hopefully start to relax over the next few months.

The speed of vaccinations is an important factor in bringing the end of lockdown closer. If you've visited Headcorn Airfield to get your vaccination then you'll have experienced the splendid job they are doing. The whole process is fast and hats off to the amazing volunteers there who, despite the extreme cold, were happy and smiling and managing the flow in and out with efficiency. One village visitor to the airfield noticed that during the heavy rain the marshalls didn't have umbrellas so, after a call out to Benenden villagers via the BAT jungle drum network, was able to deliver 12 large, and very much appreciated, brollies. To all the volunteers here and out there ... I salute you.

While we may often feel like Bill Murray in Groundhog Day, if we look around there are several creative enterprises taking place: such as the Woodcock's online cook-along (page 29), or the Benenden Players' Revue mid-March. It really doesn't surprise me that Sandi Toksvig considered Benenden an extraordinary place to escape to (page 23).

Ruth Clark, Co-Editor

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# Village Calendar

March

Monday 15

Parish Council Meeting, on Zoom, 7pm

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



You can tell we've reached the depths of lockdown boredom when a recording of a parish council meeting has the most hits in a day on YouTube! Thankfully it was not our parish council that made the headlines, and the Chair of Handforth Parish Council has rightly lost a vote of no confidence, and his term in office has now ceased.

But this welcome diversion from all matters Covid did temporarily focus minds on the role of parish councillors. Happily, I can report that our council is as far removed as possible from the antics observed at Handforth. However, the role of a councillor is not an easy one. We are volunteers who give our time freely for the good of the parish, and we continually adapt, learn and innovate to improve services while providing a legitimate voice on local issues.

Through our role in the planning system, particularly since the introduction of neighbourhood planning, we also have the ability to shape future physical development within our community.

Perhaps the main obstacle to being an effective parish council is self-interest, and in my eight years as a councillor, I have observed how it can easily become the enemy within. But thankfully I have found that councillors who join us for anything other than altruistic reasons, soon become weary of their role and fall by the wayside.

Rest assured, I am confident that our current councillors have the best interest of the whole parish at heart, and are willing to give painstaking attention to matters that go far beyond their own back yards.

Now, where is my mute button!

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair  
[nicolat@benendenparishcouncil.org](mailto:nicolat@benendenparishcouncil.org)

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

## Parish Council Meeting

Monday 15 March 2021,

on Zoom, 7pm

Please email the Clerk for access to the meeting

# Church Calendar

## St George's Church

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

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

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

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

Although public worship is suspended in the church buildings of St George's, St Nicholas or the Mission Church, the church is very much alive and remains open for individual private prayer seven days a week.

### Online Sunday services

Assuming these restrictions are still in place throughout March, there will be a service available online every Sunday morning from 8am. The video of the service and a service sheet can be found on the Home Page of the church website. ([www.benendenchurch.org](http://www.benendenchurch.org)) Please 'join' the rest of the church family, online, at 10am each Sunday. The service will be accessible until the following Saturday.

We will also plan how to journey together through Holy Week and celebrate Easter online should the church still be closed for public worship.

## Mission Church, Sandhurst

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

## Iden Green Congregational Church

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

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship on Zoom

For those shielding the 10am Morning Worship service is also broadcast on our YouTube channel: search for 'Iden Green Congregational Church'.

## The Roman Catholic Chapel of Our Lady and St Joseph TN17 4EL

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

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

## From the Parish Registers

Funerals  
1 February Olive Martin Funeral Charing Crematorium  
3 February Hilda Kemp Funeral Tunbridge Wells Crematorium  
15 February Angela Lloyd-Jones Committal and interment  
16 February Michael Patrick Interment

# Rector's Letter



## Update on your church

St George's Church remains open for individual private prayer seven days a week. That's the good news. The effect of coronavirus, though, has still not diminished to the levels where we feel able to reopen the church for live, in-house, public worship. The churchwardens of both parishes and I have concluded that we will continue with the suspension of public worship for March. There will be a service available every Sunday on YouTube throughout the month, for which the average online attendance for the last four weeks has been 115 viewings. See the church website for the link ([www.benendenchurch.org](http://www.benendenchurch.org)). If things improve dramatically before then we will, of course, review this decision.

March takes in pretty much all of Lent, but there is a Lent Course available online, every Tuesday evening, on the Zoom platform. If you'd like to join in any of these reflections, then please follow the link on the church website.

The end of the month takes us into Holy Week: Palm Sunday is on 28 March. There will be services every day through Holy Week - they will just be different to previous years, as so many things have been this last year. On the evenings of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday - Easter Eve - we will stream a live service on Zoom at 7.30pm. On Maundy Thursday there will be a recorded Communion service online at 7.30pm. On Good Friday there will be a recorded service online at 10am. As above, the details and links will be on the church website.

On Easter Sunday, 4 April, we hope to have the joy of reopening the church doors for live public worship. This will be such a joy and seems a very appropriate service on which to return to our churches, but it will have to be reviewed closer to the time.

When we return to public worship, we will not immediately reintroduce the pre-Covid service pattern. We will run with the alternating benefice service pattern for at least the month of April, i.e. an 8am service in one parish, and a 10am service in the other; then the following Sunday the service time/venue will be swapped. Specific dates, times, and locations will be given in the April issue.

In the meantime, it is spring. The snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils have been shivering under a covering of snow, and it has been very, very cold, but the days are getting noticeably longer, more and more people are getting vaccinated and there is hope of a brighter future. As Captain Tom said: "Tomorrow will be a good day." Let's look forward with hope and expectation.

Keep well. Keep safe. Keep praying. God bless.

Revd David Commander, Rector

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# Helen Grant

## MP for Maidstone and the Weald

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If there is an issue of concern to you, where  
you believe I can assist, or if you would like  
to arrange a meeting with me, please email  
me at [helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:helen.grant.mp@parliament.uk)  
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# Just a Thought



## The puzzling appeal of the jigsaw

I used to enjoy doing Sudoku puzzles as a relaxation after lunch, but after a while I found my approach to them becoming rather too mechanical. I then came across Codeword. I love Codeword and the challenges that our wonderful English language, with all its seemingly illogical spellings, continues to present. I doubt if I will get bored with doing them.

Lockdown and its attendant restrictions mean that there is rather more time available for doing puzzles, and that means especially: jigsaws. I used to enjoy doing them before all this Covid business but now there is a perfect excuse to indulge myself.

Most historians give the credit for inventing the jigsaw puzzle to John Spilsbury, an engraver in England. Around the year 1760 he mounted a world map on to a sheet of hardwood, used a jig saw to cut around country boundaries and gave it to children in the local school. Regardless of any educational purpose many children still enjoy jigsaw puzzles, and it is interesting to see how different children tackle the challenge. Surprisingly, the most logical are not always the most successful. However, jigsaws do not suit everyone, since, whether young or old, one must employ a particular kind of patience and perseverance.

As you do an increasing number of puzzles you begin to identify the varying quality and nature of individual jigsaws. First there is the picture itself, offering a plethora of subjects and scenes. Next these themselves frequently present challenging experiments in form and colour. Beware the street scene outside Cadbury's factory where almost the entire picture is depicted in varying shades of brown, beige and cream. Then there is the artist's interpretation of a Parisian café, where there is not a definite line to be found but everything merges into everything else.

Some puzzles have a limited variety of shapes for pieces, whereas others seem to run on the principle that any shape goes, which is very disconcerting until you get used to it. As for the border, there is now an amazing array of configurations, including, apparently, 3-D puzzles and even more bizarre creations. The mind boggles!

Generally I opt for the traditional rectangle, which at least gives one a comfortable base from which to begin. Then, all you have to do is keep going until the hole is filled. During this time, you are occasionally convinced that, despite it being a brand-new puzzle or that you have reassurances from the person from whom it has been borrowed, there is a piece missing. Nothing is more satisfying than placing the final piece of a puzzle, and nothing more distressing than to find that that piece is nowhere to be found. It has only happened once to us, and my husband persuaded me to make a substitute piece, but somehow it is not the same.

By the way, apparently a person who enjoys jigsaw puzzle assembly is called a dissectologist, which sounds very professional.

Sue Fisher



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## Census Day is 21 March

Households will shortly be receiving letters containing their unique online codes to access their census questionnaire. The letter, due in the first two weeks of March, will also contain a guide and the option to request a paper questionnaire if preferred. Plenty of help will be available: staff at the Cranbrook census support centre will be able to help with digital access, provide computers for use, and support with paper questionnaires, and there will be telephone helplines, online support and a team of local census officers.

The Covid-safe centre will work on an appointment basis. All staff will be dressed in full PPE, wear hi-viz jackets and be wearing clear identification. They will never come into your home or ask for money. All information supplied will be treated as completely confidential. All data outputs will be stripped of all personal information, which will be locked away for a minimum of 100 years for future generations and historians.

The census is an exciting once-in-a-decade survey that provides the most accurate information of the population; its changes, its make-up, and how 'we' live and work.

This information is then used to inform future planning and application of budgets for the coming years. A census has been carried out every decade since 1801, with the exception of 1941. For more information please visit: [census.gov.uk](https://census.gov.uk) or YouTube.

Linda Neusten, Census Engagement Manager,  
Tunbridge Wells & Maidstone  
[Linda.neusten50@field.census.gov.uk](mailto:Linda.neusten50@field.census.gov.uk)  
07452 942307

## Help fight digital poverty

Many schools and pupils are desperate for laptops and tablets so children can study at home. The charity Top Up To Teach needs working internet-compatible tablets or laptops (with battery and charger) to donate to Kent schools.

The equipment needs to be under seven years old and those that can run Zoom and Microsoft Teams with an inbuilt camera are especially welcome. If not already clean, the charity will professionally remove all data from them.

Please contact Ruth on 07767 261883 to arrange collection in the village area.

For more information, or to donate to help the charity buy equipment, visit: [topuptoteach.org](https://topuptoteach.org)

## Feeling lonely?

Then you may like to know that Wellbeing in the Weald volunteers are hosting Tea@Two Zoom sessions three times a week on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. You are welcome to join us at 2pm for an hour on any of these days for a chat from the comfort of your own home with cuppa in hand.

Everyone is very friendly and conversation ranges from sharing tips on how to make the best of these difficult times, to finding out about the varied lives the people in the groups have led, but best of all having a bit of a giggle. Talks by specialists are also being planned in the near future. Recommendations or volunteers to talk or host are very welcome.

For more details and to sign up, please contact [hello@wellbeingintheweald.co.uk](mailto:hello@wellbeingintheweald.co.uk), or call 07961 669575. We look forward to meeting you soon.

Abigail Barbier



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

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## Benenden Action Team

I am increasingly aware of the varied negative effects of this pandemic on all ages across our amazing village, but no matter how many times the goal posts are moved, we react, adapt and move forward together.

Home schooling has been a major challenge for our children and teaching staff but they have risen to that challenge and the schools and children have adapted accordingly.

Buying everyday essentials takes effort and planning, and I know that many friends, neighbours and volunteers have stepped up to help. Don't forget too that, if you can't leave home because you are vulnerable or shielding, you can order supplies from the shop. They need 24 hrs notice. A big thank you to the shop volunteers who make this possible.

People have been so isolated and alone, but initiatives like BAT, Wellbeing in the Weald and Tea@Two Zoom sessions are connecting people and bringing comfort to many.

BAT is here to help and support the village of Benenden and Iden Green so if you need food, shopping, a friendly call, assistance in getting connected or anything else, please just let us know.

Guy Hagan, BAT co-ordinator

07515 275150 [guy@rawfellconstruction.co.uk](mailto:guy@rawfellconstruction.co.uk)  
[www.benendenaction.co.uk](http://www.benendenaction.co.uk)

## Benenden Players go virtual

Following the success of the National Theatre, the RSC, and other arts organisation, the Benenden Players have gone online. We've all missed our world-famous, award-winning panto this year. So, for a chance to see your favourite panto stars perform please head over to our website at [www.benendenplayers.co.uk](http://www.benendenplayers.co.uk) The revue will go live from the middle of March.

## Talking Shop

Please remember that the valiant staff and volunteers are keeping your local shop going throughout all the recent challenges and are doing their best to provide our customers with as many of their needs as possible. As a welcome forward look to spring and warmer times, there are daffodils on sale in Benenden's, which may be just what's needed to cheer us up at the moment. As Easter approaches, there will, of course, be hot cross buns on sale as well as some chocolate and non-chocolate goodies for those who prefer something other than Easter eggs.

The shop has been quieter of late, so please remember that if you treasure this precious local amenity, it would help if you could support us and come to Benenden's for as many supplies as you can. We can deliver to any of you who might need that facility. If anyone has new neighbours, please recommend Benenden's to them. A habit of visiting the shop formed now could help them to make new friends in the area, especially when things get back to normal.

I can heartily recommend a takeaway hot drink from the café during a daily walk (a cheeky sausage roll or piece of cake hits the spot too). Your café custom will help to make sure our lovely shop survives in good shape, to return to being the bustling social hub we all love, just as soon as we are allowed.

We have been given a 'fully compliant' rating by the Government's Health and Safety Executive for our Covid safety procedures, so you can feel confident that every possible care has been taken to keep everyone safe. Many thanks, as always, to our regular volunteers and our customers. Please keep coming.  
Bev Beveridge [info@benendens.co.uk](mailto:info@benendens.co.uk)  
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## Benenden School

Despite the ongoing uncertainty, we have been proceeding with school life as much as we can. We continue to run a full timetable of lessons remotely, with sport lessons and other extras, such as music and drama, continuing wherever possible.

In early February we were pleased to hold a screen-free day. As well as helping the girls' wellbeing, the intention was for this to be a useful day of academic consolidation for the older year groups and for the younger pupils to learn some new skills and knowledge.

We welcomed two excellent speakers for virtual events: Chi-chi Nwanoku, the acclaimed founder of the Chineke! Orchestra, the first professional orchestra in Europe to be made up of majority black, Asian and ethnically diverse musicians; and David Lammy, the Labour MP for Tottenham, who offered us a fascinating insight into the opposition's views during this period of political turmoil.

We are very proud of one of our Year 11 girls who has been working exceptionally hard to galvanise the school community to donate unwanted laptops and we have already received a thankyou letter from a primary school which has benefited from Benenden's donations.

We recently announced that we will be opening our first schools overseas as part of a commitment to increase the number of pupils who are able to attend Benenden on significant bursaries. We have partnered with Hong Kong-based CTF Education Group (CTFEG) to open a series of schools in China, with the first of these due to open in South China in 2023.

Finally, I would like to remind readers that we are pleased to be introducing day boarders to the for the first time from September. We have two fully funded scholarships available, one in STEM and another in Humanities or Languages, to girls joining us in the Sixth Form as day boarders. Details at [www.benenden.school/day2021](http://www.benenden.school/day2021)  
Samantha Price, Headmistress

## Iden Green and Benenden WI

Although we miss seeing each other, it's very enjoyable to receive emails and speak on the telephone. I contacted Kim at The Cherry Tree recently and she is looking forward to seeing us all. She is already taking post-pandemic bookings, but we will arrange a future date when we've spoken to all our members.

Some of our ladies recently joined Hawkhurst WI on Zoom and enjoyed an entertaining talk on Edith Cavell. While others connected with the West Kent Federation for a talk by actress, Sophie-Louise Dann, on her career and interest in baking.

The West Kent Federation of WI's AGM is planned for 10 March and our delegate will join others on Zoom. Our national AGM has been postponed until 8 June and it is hoped that it will be held at the Royal Albert Hall.

Meanwhile, we know most of our resilient members and contacts are able to bear the difficulties and loneliness of our present circumstances, but if anyone needs a friendly shoulder or chat, please get in touch. We are hoping some of you will join our committee at our AGM where you can benefit from new friendships, worthwhile activities and the opportunity to practise, renew and learn new interests such as bookkeeping, IT, management, social or secretarial work. It's also fun to help with the raffle, arrange outings or make teas.

Jackie Liffen 752232 [WI@daisystar.co.uk](mailto:WI@daisystar.co.uk)

## Christian Aid

Christian Aid collection week is 9-15 May and this year, instead of door-to-door collections, we will be asking you to make your donations online via JustGiving. Full details will be published next month.

Tracy Claridge, local Christian Aid Organiser  
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## Primary School

Since January we have been open for critical workers/vulnerable children and we have worked hard to refine our remote learning. We have constantly reflected and adapted, particularly looking at how we could further enhance children's engagement. Despite us not all being together in body, our teaching team have actively been sharing each other's remote learning practice as well as drawing on experiences and expertise from farther afield. Indeed, we are recognised by the DfE as a leading ICT provision and I am proud to say that we have also been supporting two schools locally ensuring that their remote learning curriculum meets the high expectations set out by the Government. We are also delighted that over 20 families have taken up the offer of the loan of converted school laptops and hope this is now allowing their children to fully engage in their learning.

The earliest schools might 'begin to re-open' will be Monday 8 March and we are waiting with bated breath at what this will look like in reality. We will continue with everything that we have in place and we will keep seeking ways to ensure everyone is supported and motivated. We are overwhelmed by positive feedback from parents and every week I am amazed by the quality and variety of work that is being produced by the children within their online classrooms.

Finally, massive congratulations to Leo one of our pupils in Robins class for completing his virtual hike up Mount Everest. Not only has he raised over £800 so far to donate to the charity UNIQUE but he has also started on a new challenge, virtually walking 149 miles along the great ocean coast in Australia. What a superstar!

If you would like to support Leo, you can donate online here:  
[www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Katie-Fox16](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Katie-Fox16)  
Lindsay Roberts, Headteacher 240565  
[office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk](mailto:office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk)

## Parent, Teacher and Friends Association

When this issue lands on your doormats spring will be in full swing, blooms will be prolific and sunnier days more frequent. We are hopeful too for new occupants of the bird boxes, which we will be putting up in the Glebe Field by super helpers of the PTFA. The Benenden Primary school children can then eagerly watch out for them and we invite you also to keep a keen eye out on your walks.

The new school playground, a wonderful part-funded effort by the past Friends of Benenden PTA and community - a big thank you to all who supported - is in fruition and the children could not be more excited. A super Easter Raffle has been put together and there are some marvellous prizes from local businesses to be won. Please check the PTFA section of our school website for how to buy tickets. If you run your own business, or work for one who would like to be involved, please do get in touch. Thank you for your support.

We have an exciting new project underway and we would love you to be involved. We are collating the community's favourite 'lockdown' recipes for our very own Benenden Cookbook, which will be on sale digitally and hopefully in print too. Do send in your favourite recipe by end of the month and if it is child friendly to follow to encourage all generations to get involved, even better. More details can be found on the website (go to the PTFA section of the school website [www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk](http://www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk) then click on 'events and activities').

The support for the new clothing bin is great. Thank you so much but, to avoid hazards and the risk of infestation, we ask that you don't leave bags beside the bin but to try again the following week. We aim to have it emptied weekly.

Athena Cripps, Benenden CEP, PTFA

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## Iden Green playground

The fund-raising campaign for a new playground at Iden Green is edging closer to its financial target and now has a dedicated website for those who prefer to donate online. The old playground had to be closed last year because of the potentially dangerous state of its equipment, leaving a hole in the heart of the village. The campaign is hoping to re-open this summer with an expanded range of modern equipment and safe surfacing.

If you wish to give online please go to the 'Wonderful' charity payments website: [www.wonderful.co.uk/pay?ref=1176351](http://www.wonderful.co.uk/pay?ref=1176351). If you use this route you will have the opportunity to Gift Aid your donation directly and enable the campaign to boost your contribution by 25p for every £1 that you give.

Alternatively, you can donate by cheque or bank transfer to Benenden Village Trust (BVT), the charity responsible for the play areas in both Benenden and Iden Green. Cheques should be sent to Benenden Village Trust, Community Office, Benenden Village Hall, The Street, Benenden, TN17 4DE. If you wish to donate by bank transfer, please contact the Trust Manager, [bvtrust@gmail.com](mailto:bvtrust@gmail.com), for details. If you are able to Gift Aid a donation by cheque or bank transfer, please also contact the Trust Manager for a form.

At the time of writing, the campaign had just passed an important appeal milestone, with donations topping £40,000 towards the target of £44,000. Donations from private individuals stood at £2,961, plus £438 in Gift Aid. Recent generous donations include a £2,702 Member Grant from Kent County Council through Councillor Seán Holden, to whom much thanks.

Martin Dickson, Benenden Village Trust

## Village Fete

This year's village fete has been moved (Covid willing) to Saturday 18 September (midday-4pm). Once again it will take place on the village green and the monies raised will support St George's Church, its charities and the NHS.

Our wonderful and ever-popular Book Tent will move into the church for the first time which means we will have more space than ever to browse hundreds of fiction and fiction titles. We have a great team of book sorters that will work hard sorting the books in advance in the Scout Hut, but we need someone to head up the team, following the amazing work that Deborah Jenkins has done for many years.

I am also looking for volunteers to help either beforehand or on the day. So please do get in touch with me if you would like to help. It will be very much in the same format as 2019, which was a huge success.

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

## Benenden Pre-School

As I write this on 12 February it's Chinese New Year! This week in Pre-school, despite lockdown and freezing weather conditions, the children have enjoyed celebrating the Year of the Ox.

The children made beautiful red Chinese lanterns, concentrating as they carefully cut along lines, folded the paper and stapled on handles: employing so many essential skills in one activity. They danced as a group under our dragon who emerges from the back of the cupboard every year, his elaborate colourful cardboard head and long fabric body delighting the children as they co-ordinated their steps with each other to snake rhythmically around the room to music.

Katie, one of our many generous and clever parents, cooked sushi and dumplings for the children to sample at snack time, offering them the opportunity to try a new food and tastes and a new way of eating too - with chopsticks!

Lucy Oakley, Supervisor

[supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk](mailto:supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk)

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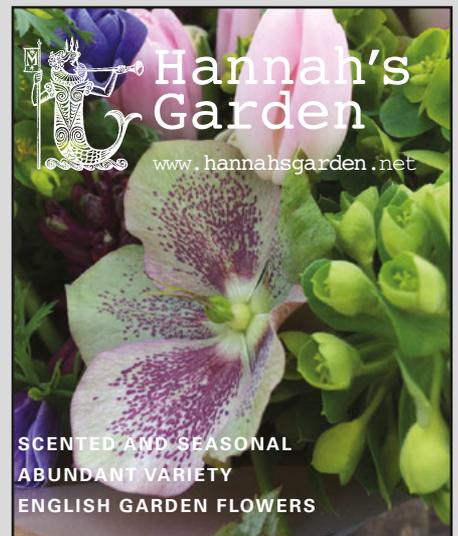


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# Neighbourhood Development Plan

It's about so much more than building sites

Around 90% of the public feedback received about our rough draft and two formal phases of consultation concerned the allocation of sites for new building. It's understandable that proposed building, particularly if it's close to one's own home, gets the most attention, but the NDP is actually about much, much more. The plan contains policies and projects, built on your input from our early workshops and feedback during each consultation phase, which are designed to support the aspirations of the community of Benenden.

Policies can be generic, applying across the parish, or site-specific. They are requirements that must be considered by developers or landowners when they create planning proposals, but they must be limited to the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan. For example, we can't have a policy to reduce speed limits, which are the responsibility of Kent County Council. Projects are proposals that fall outside the remit of a Neighbourhood Plan but which may be delivered in partnership with other authorities such as KCC or Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. So, our plan does include a project to review speed limits and lobby KCC for reduced limits in specific locations.

The plan contains 36 generic policies, including creation of wildlife friendly zones, protecting our fabulous dark skies and amazing views, safeguarding public green spaces and enhancing community facilities. The 50 site-specific policies are designed to ensure that developers deliver high-quality dwellings that reflect distinctive local character, reduce and repair any damage done during development, and contribute to supporting and improving local services and facilities.

It's worth noting that TWBC are planning a change to developer contributions. For developments like those set out in our plan, they intend to set a Community Infrastructure Levy. With an approved Neighbourhood Plan, 25% of the levy will go to the Parish Council for local

infrastructure projects. If the parish does not have an approved Neighbourhood Plan, the levy remains with TWBC to allocate to borough projects (which may be nothing to do with the parish that generated the funds).

Our plan has 14 projects, which we anticipate will be funded in part by such developer contributions. These include provision of allotments and public electric car-charging points and reviews of broadband and mobile phone coverage across the parish. You can read each policy and project in detail on the Neighbourhood Plan website ([www.benendenneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.benendenneighbourhoodplan.org)) or the TWBC Local Plan website - just search for Benenden Neighbourhood Plan. When you vote in favour of the Benenden Neighbourhood Plan in early summer, you will be voting for so much more than housing allocations.

Paul Tolhurst

Chair, Benenden NDP Steering Committee  
[www.benendenneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.benendenneighbourhoodplan.org)

## Planning Matters

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

15 February 2021

- 21 00221 FULL Land Adjacent To Springhill Oast, Standen Street Variation of Conditions 2 Approved Plans and 6 Landscaping and Ecology of Planning Permission 20 01041 FULL - Substitution of reinforced grass grid with loose pea shingle with treated timber edge.
- 21 00142 FULL Pelham, Walkhurst Road Extension to garage to provide workshop, home gym and living accommodation above.
- 21 00091 FULL Moorlands, Woodcock Lane. Erection of a garage / store.
- 21 00130 FULL Twysden Cottage, Coldharbour Road. Demolition of existing shed and existing prefabricated double garage, replace with a traditional timber frame barn style garage and store; associated landscaping works.



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## Benenden Hospital

We've recently celebrated colleagues who have completed apprenticeships in catering, IT and nursing and I'm proud to say, each has achieved a distinction. Their achievements, and the skills they've attained, are important not only for their careers but in helping the hospital achieve continued success.

Carla Roome works as a catering assistant and has completed her commis chef apprenticeship. Keeping patients (and colleagues) well fed is important in aiding recovery, and throughout the course Carla learnt much about the variety of products available in different food categories and their nutritional values. Despite completing some modules by phone and Zoom, including her culinary challenge, Carla passed with a distinction.

Ryan Igglesden came to the hospital as an IT apprentice, having applied for IT jobs but found that businesses wanted someone with experience which he didn't have. I'm delighted we could help him onto the employment ladder, and he's now building on the skills he's learned during his apprenticeship.

Jane Styche is our eye unit sister and she began her apprenticeship in 2019. Despite a tight deadline to enrol, she was encouraged to apply for a course in leadership and management. While Jane's journey was far from smooth, with five different coaches, a changeover in systems and the arrival of Covid she achieved a distinction and is now officially recognised by the Institute of Leadership and Management.

Congratulations to everyone and good luck to colleagues who will be looking to secure success in their own apprenticeships during 2021.

Jane Abbott, Hospital Director and Chief Nurse

## Topical health

### Take care of your kidneys

How often do you consider the health of your kidneys? With one million people in the UK not aware that they have early chronic kidney disease and the main causes of kidney disease being linked to lifestyle and longevity, perhaps you should. World Kidney Day is 11 March and it's a good time to consider what your kidneys do for you and how you can keep them healthy.

As well as filtering and maintaining the correct levels of fluids, electrolytes and acidity, the kidneys are responsible for ridding the body of toxins through urine. They also play a role in blood pressure control, in producing vitamin D to maintain bone health and in the production of a hormone which manages haemoglobin. They do all this well because there are about one million active nephrons in each kidney and they are well supplied with a network of small, but easily damaged, blood vessels.

In the UK, most kidney disease is caused by diabetes and high blood pressure; both are, to some extent, either avoidable or treatable. The best ways to prevent late onset diabetes and hypertension are to avoid becoming obese, staying active and not smoking. If you are being treated for diabetes or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's advice and stick to the regime, as well as getting your kidney function checked regularly. As blood vessels in kidneys are damaged by high cholesterol, watch your diet and take any prescribed cholesterol-lowering medications.

General kidney health is best achieved by staying well hydrated. Water is best, about four pints for women and five for men daily, which you need to increase if unwell or in sunny weather.

Peter Ellis



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# Local Enterprise

## Sandi Toksvig makes an Extraordinary Escape to Benenden

We are lucky to live in a beautiful part of the country and in February we were able to see it through the eyes of Sandi Toksvig on Channel 4. Between lockdowns last year, Sandi and comic actress Jessica Hynes visited Old Smock Mill (also known as Beacon Windmill) between Benenden and Rolvenden to film an episode of the Channel 4 series Extraordinary Escapes. Unfortunately, we learned about its 17 February broadcast date after our last issue had been printed, but you can watch it again on Channel 4's on-demand site All4 ([www.channel4.com](http://www.channel4.com)).

The production company contacted Benenden Parish Council to ask for approval to film in the village and much-appreciated coffees were provided by Benenden's community shop during shooting. Sandi and Jessica borrowed electric bicycles from Bloomsburys Biddenden to explore the grounds at Hole Park.

In the series, Sandi explores the delights of the UK's wildest, most remote and beautifully designed holiday digs. Whether a lofty lighthouse, windmill or a towering treehouse, the ingenious builds in each episode will showcase the architecturally inspiring, cleverly designed holiday properties Britain has to offer and show viewers that staycations are something to be celebrated.

From secret retreats and seaside sanctuaries to quirky windmills, Sandi and a travel pal (Alison Steadman, Prue Leith, Sindhu Vee and Jessica Hynes) uncover the fascinating design stories behind each property. They marvel at the incredible lengths the owners and architects

have gone to, to ensure each property offers a unique experience, from brave and bold designs that make the most of a stunning view, to passion projects where every detail has been considered, to homes that embody the sense of wonder found in their surrounds.

Old Smock Mill owner Clare Winchester was thrilled that they chose to film an 'Extraordinary Escape' at her historic windmill: "Sandi and Jessica were lovely and charming and clearly enjoyed their time here." It has been a challenging time for Clare as she juggles bookings around lockdown restrictions. "But I'm glad to say we have had a lot of interest and we have no weekends available now until November, but we still have some weekdays".

"The year has been a journey of exploration for many of us and it was a joy to find so many beautiful, quirky and remote bolt-holes around almost every corner," says Sandi.

If you fancy an escape, then you'll be able to view all episodes now on All4 ([www.channel4.com](http://www.channel4.com)).  
[www.oldsmockmill.com](http://www.oldsmockmill.com)



Photograph: Richard Gadsby

Photograph: David Merewether



## The write stuff

Ruth Clark discovers what inspired four village-based authors to write and how they tackle the creative process from blank page to the finished article.

I've long envied those that have a book or play inside them. Although I have always written for a living, as a journalist and then in PR, I just don't have the inspiration or staying power to pen a longer work. So, I spoke to four writers in the village to discover why and how they do it.



### ANGELA PATRICK: SUNDAY TIMES BEST-SELLER

In 1963, Angela was 19 when a brief fling left her pregnant, unmarried and facing a stark future. Her strict Catholic parents insisted she have the

baby in secret and put it up for adoption.

Angela was sent to a convent run like a Victorian workhouse, where she gave birth to Paul, who was taken from her at eight weeks. She didn't see him again until 30 years later.

Angela wrote her story in the memoir 'The Baby Laundry for Unmarried Mothers', published in 2012. The idea came from her daughter Kate, who worked for the BBC and put Angela in touch with a specialist agent who asked her to write 12 three-page mini chapters, which he sent to publishers.

"I was interviewed by five companies and all of them wanted it," says Angela. "I chose Simon & Schuster because they were the nicest." Angela was given three months to complete the book. "It was incredibly hard as I was working at the time," she remembers, "and it brought back a lot of awful memories that I had long buried, but it was cathartic."

The book led to appearances on TV and radio and interviews in national newspapers. It reached number five in the Sunday Times non-fiction best seller list and over 60,000 copies have been sold. "The book touched a nerve with many who had been through a similar experience," says Angela. "I'm glad society has moved forward since then."

### ANNE LUDLOW: DEBUT NOVEL

It's been a long road for Anne from starting to write to publishing her debut novel 'The Gentleness of Steel' last year. "Since very young I've made up and told stories and I have a book full of ideas," she says. Finally, 14 years ago, retired and with her children all grown up, she sat down and wrote the first three chapters of her first novel. "It was awful," she admits. "It's all very well having an idea in your head but putting it down on paper properly was not easy."

Over the next ten years, Anne embarked on thousands of hours of practice. A creative writing course at Oxford University, where she won a prize, was "gold dust" she says. "It was very hard, and I developed a thick skin, but I learned a tremendous amount."

She returned to her novel eight years ago, writing every weekday for two hours, then sent the synopsis to a dozen agents, but none took it up. Ultimately, she self-published it with Troubador. There has been a five-star reception

for 'The Gentleness of Steel', with over 300 books sold and 200 e-books to date online. Anne has already embarked on her second novel.



BEV  
BEVERIDGE:  
PANTOMIME  
DAME

Bev confesses to living in a fantasy world since she was a child, which makes her perfectly suited to writing



pantomimes! “I was always writing short stories and even got a Blue Peter badge for my ‘Magic Pencil’ story,” she says. “Then, as a teacher, I wrote school plays, but I never had the confidence to do any more than that until ten years ago, when Victoria Campbell, who had written and directed a pantomime for the Benenden Players, asked me to co-write and direct one with her.”

Since then, Bev has written and directed nine, several of which have won awards, and the tenth was ready to be performed this month but will now be in 2022. She started with the traditional Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty tales before branching out and creating more recently Raiders of the Lost Monarch (featuring Donald Trump as a baddie!).

“There are no rules with panto as long as you have the basic ingredients of a goodie, a baddie, a dame, an animal and a happy ending. I love the whole process of visualising and rehearsing it with a cast and then seeing it performed and experiencing the response of the audience. The writing process has become harder as I push the boundaries, but I jot down ideas in a notebook that’s always with me.”

She starts writing each panto in February, refining it almost every day until the 12,000-word script is finished in July and five shows are performed by a 30-plus cast to packed audiences in the village hall.

SHIRLEY GOOSEMAN:  
NOW WRITING HER 17TH BOOK

Shirley has been writing since she was a little girl, but it wasn’t until 2013 that she started writing books under the pen name Emma Berry. It was the tragic death of her 50-year-old daughter Mandy from cancer that inspired Shirley to put pen to paper in earnest: “I was heartbroken and looking through a photograph album when I saw a picture of Mandy with her pony. I decided then and there to write a book, but about a young boy and his pony. I sat down and within an hour had visualised the whole fictional village of Massenden.”

You can start at any stage in the Massenden Chronicles series. The first two books were aimed at children, but as the characters have aged so has the target readership. “It’s been such a therapeutic experience for me and the families in the books have become friends,” says Shirley. She wrote her first six books by hand before typing them up on



the PC: “After that I went straight to the PC, which has cut the process by half.” When writing a book, Shirley can spend anything from two to six hours a day in her summer house. In the early days she turned out three 250-page books a year but today will take it a little easier. Her books now average 500 pages and take between four and six months to complete.

“I’m very lucky”, she says. “I never know what I’m going to write when I sit down - characters just appear.”



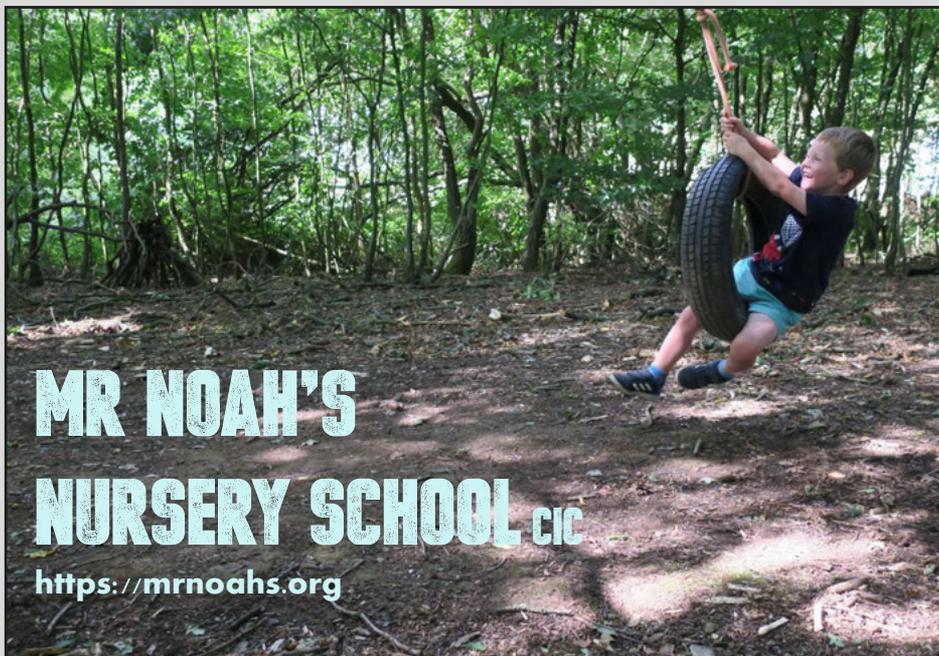
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Student Wellbeing

# Memorial



## Pat Thoburn's memorial stone

Pat Thoburn was first and foremost an artist and it was with this in mind that we, her family, sought to have a memorial stone made that was worthy of her talent.

We visited The Lettering Arts Trust at Snape in Suffolk which promotes the work of letter cutters across the country and, having made contact with several artists, chose Richard Klose of West Sussex, whose work seemed to fit closely with our ideas.



Pat studied sculpture at The Slade where she won a scholarship and was commissioned to make a sculpture for The Festival of Britain in 1951. We therefore wanted a sculptural element in the design.

We chose the Iona cross because of the family connection with Scotland. Our great grandfather was a Scot, and the family often visited Scotland and went to services at the little kirk at Loch Insh on Speyside. After our grandmother died, our grandfather and Pat commissioned a window, engraved with the Iona cross to be placed over the altar in her memory.

When we cleared the house at Pympne we found numerous drawings and paintings of the Iona cross which Pat had obviously done in preparation.

Pat always took a particular interest and delight in calligraphy, so we were anxious to get that right.



It was after Aunty Pat died that we discovered her wish to be buried and we think now that she may very well have had a stone in mind. We can only hope that she would have approved of our choice.

May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Jessica Leach and Stephen,  
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# Food and Drink



**Time to spice up your virtual cooking**  
Rachel Freeman rustles up an online meal with the Woodcock I was really looking forward to the first cook-along



virtual platform there was a sense that we were all in one big kitchen. There was also some gentle persuasion from barman Zee to enjoy an aperitif whilst cooking along, and it seemed rude not to join in on that.

Pav encouraged us to ask questions as we went, which was reassuring, ensuring I was adding the right ingredient at the correct time. Zoom is a great platform that allows this type of virtual interaction. Soon the kitchen was starting to smell very aromatic; the chicken was in the oven, filling the air with delicate spices. I was pleasantly surprised with how easy the sauce was to make. I tasted it to check for seasoning and it was delicious. As we were stirring and tweaking the flavours, bar manager Lydia came online with some recommended wine pairings. She recommended two white and two red varieties that would complement the dish.

session hosted by the Woodcock in February and I wasn't disappointed. I'm sure we are all missing the odd meal out so to cook alongside a chef seemed a novel and fun activity.

Pav, the head chef at the pub, posted the ingredients and the recipe ahead of time so I was well prepared for the Zoom session when it started at 6pm. Lyndora, The Woodcock landlady, welcomed those on the call and then we set off, full steam ahead. The menu of choice was a British favourite: chicken tikka masala and rice. Pav was really friendly and soon got us into measuring spices and marinating our chicken. He was super interactive, answering our queries as we all prepped along with him.

The marinating went well and soon we were all stirring and measuring our tikka masala sauce. The pace was perfect, not too slow, or too fast, catering for those who were all cooking along together. It felt so sociable and although we were joined via a



It was also good to see another of the kitchen team when Harry the sous chef popped into view to say hi. The cook-along Zoom sessions will be rotated and Harry is next up with his recipe.

The dish was nearly finished, and we all were chatting along with each other online as we completed our creations. It was a good dish to prepare for the first session, breaking us in gently to the format and style of interactive cooking.

Editor's note: The Woodcock is not charging for these weekly sessions. To get involved all you need to do is call them or check their social media for details.

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# Bird Notes

## Colourful newcomer an unwelcome visitor

I was sitting in my sun lounge with my back to the window when my wife said: "Just look behind you!" I turned round and saw a large, bright green bird on my peanut feeder. To my amazement it was a Ring-necked Parakeet, in some guidebooks called a Rose-ringed Parakeet. This was a garden first, bringing my garden list to 77 species since I moved here in 1987.

The last addition to the list was a Red Kite two years ago and I am usually thrilled to add another species, but on this occasion I was not. Although this is a beautiful bird it is an escaped species that has taken a liking to our conurbation habitats and the population has grown exponentially to the detriment of our native species, particularly the Nuthatch. Like that bird it is a hole-nesting species and has often been recorded turning out Nuthatches from their nesting holes.

The Ring-necked Parakeet first bred in the UK in Kent in 1971, firstly in the Thanet area and more latterly in the area of north west Kent that fringes the border with Greater London. Although the Kentish population has grown from 50 pairs in 1990 to 1,000 pairs in 2010, the distribution has remained concentrated in the above-mentioned areas.

The north west population has expanded marginally in the intervening period, eastwards to Meopham and southwards to Sevenoaks. The London population has also grown, particularly in south west London and when I have occasion to walk in Green Park, I always hear screaming flocks flying in the plane trees. Not a pleasant sound.

The birds have a wide diet including fruit, buds, nuts and seeds, and with plenty of bird feeders around, there is little need to relocate. I also suspect the urban areas are warmer, reflecting their native ranges in India and equatorial Africa.

Parakeets are generally more mobile in winter, hence a female visiting my garden this January (the female lacks the rose ring around the neck). I think it is very unlikely that it will stop and attempt to breed, and if it did move into the wider countryside there would be a conflict with fruit growers. However, there have been quite a few calls for a cull, for conservation reasons, to protect native species such as the Nuthatch and the declining Starling, another hole nester.

On 1st January this year it was announced that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs was considering a massive cull, which caused quite a lot of press comment, most of which seemed to be supporting the idea, although the RSPB is not backing it at present.

It would be very interesting to hear from other villagers if they have seen this exotic species in their gardens.

Charles Trollope 240821 cetetal@btinternet.com



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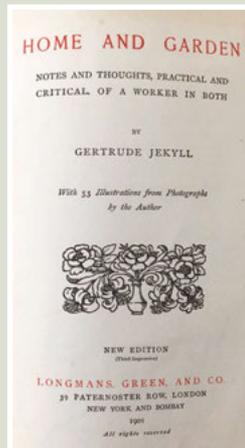


## Good books, old and new

As I write this article we are a good few inches deep in snow with a positively Arctic feel to the wind. What with us all being in our third lockdown, the pace has palpably slowed and given me enough time to reconnect with the (relatively humble) collection of gardening literature that I have amassed over the years. I regularly refer to some, but the older books are looked at when I need an antidote to the fast-paced, online content we are able to access so easily right now.

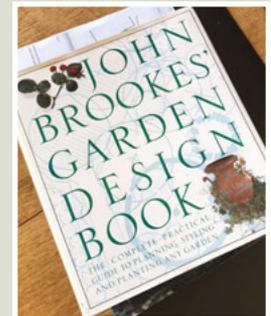
I am very fortunate to have some gardening books that once belonged to my paternal grandmother. I have two by Gertrude Jekyll - *Home & Garden* and *Wood & Garden*, both printed in 1901 - plus a book written by William Robinson (of Gravetye Manor fame) called *The English Flower Garden*, a fourteenth edition printed in 1926. I also have numerous others that belonged to her on subjects such as alpine plants, rock gardens, wall shrubs and hardy climbers - W J Bean no less - and *Carnations for Amateurs* (which I confess I have yet to read!).

Sitting alongside these are some of my own books collected over the years. The first gardening book I ever bought was *Gardening Made Easy* by Jane Fearnley-Whittingstall (mother of the infamous Hugh), published in 1995, around the time that gardening programmes other than *Gardeners' World* were appearing on the scene. My second purchase swiftly followed: an RHS publication called *The Small Garden*, by a well-known



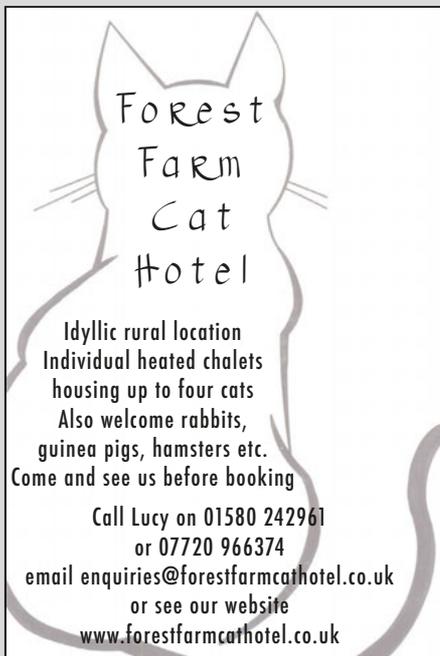
designer called Julie Toll. At the time I had a small London garden and I absolutely adored this book - it was beautifully illustrated and photographed and the author wrote about designing small spaces in an accessible yet professional way. I still refer back to it to this day.

I then graduated onto books by Monty Don, Beth Chatto, Christopher Lloyd (discovering the 'gardening greats') and in the design world by Dan Pearson, John Brookes (old school but still cuts the mustard) and Rosemary Alexander (of *The English Gardening School* fame). From this list I can see how it followed the line of my knowledge and interests to the point where I am today and included now are gardening magazines such as *Gardens Illustrated* and the quarterly-published *Hortus* - these two are quite different, by the way, but it is important to get a broad depth on horticulture.



My industry, thankfully, and pardon the pun, is rooted in the history of past garden owners and horticultural trailblazers, most of whom were excellent writers. While there is a huge amount of content online to consider and absorb, we still need to have books on our shelves, whether from 1901 or a current title. I am aware of the popularity of Kindles; I read blogs, listen to podcasts and even read parish magazines! But the books are what I return to, answering any question I may have and somehow always adding value. Timeless, really.

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