

B.A.C.S. NEWSLETTER
April 2002
No. XXXVII

Dates for your Diary:

Clean up Benenden Day on Saturday April 27th at 10am.
Annual Assembly of the Parish Council on Monday 29th April at 7.30 in the Village Hall
Spring Walk on Sunday May 12th at 2pm.
Autumn Walk on Sunday September 15th.

Clean up Benenden Day Sat April 27th at 10am.

Please help us to tidy up the village for it to sparkle for the Jubilee celebrations. Bring rubber or gardening gloves, and meet at the Village Hall to collect a bag and be allocated an area. It is after all National Litter Month, as well as the first day of the cricket season!

Spring Walk on Sunday May 12th at 2pm.

This year the walk will take place around Hole Park, Rolvenden. This had been planned for last year, but the restrictions caused by the foot and mouth outbreak prevented it from taking place. Please park along the avenue of trees along the main drive of Hole Park, to start the walk at 2pm, which will last for 1 1/2 to 2 hours depending on your state of fitness and how much you like to chat along the way! Afterwards there will be a tour of the gardens (hopefully including the bluebell walk in full bloom),. There will be a charge of #3.50 per person which will go to the National Gardens Scheme. Tea will then be served at a room in the gardens, so please bring contributions of cakes, biscuits and sandwiches for everyone to share. Friends, family, and children are all welcome as usual, but please note that dogs will only be allowed on the walk, and not in the garden itself.

Planning Matters.

The society monitors planning applications. We make objections in only a very few cases. In the last few month, for example, we have objected to the retention of the oil-drilling platform at Eaglesden, to a manager's house and workshop extension at Ham's Travel, and to a telephone mast near Pullington House. All of these were either turned down or withdrawn. This rate of success is not of course solely due to our objections, most of these plans have been generally unpopular, but we believe that our views carry some weight. We also objected to an application for two houses to replace the Ivanhoe bungalow in The Street, but supported the revised application for three bungalows and this was passed. Our aim is to conserve our village and its landscape, but also to be constructive when we can and not to oppose development which seems appropriate.

If you have any planning concerns, please contact Ernie Pollard as below, or our Chairman Alan Milne, on 01580 240255, or E-mail alanmilne@chartsec.co.uk

Subscriptions.

Couple and family membership remains at £5, single membership at £2. If you no longer wish to be a member please do let us know so that we can stop posting your newsletter and hassling you for money!

At present we have over 130 members, some of whom have still not yet paid for last year! Please pay your area rep.(either for last year and this, or just for this year) **A.S.A.P**

Area 1; Benenden West and Cranbrook Road (East of Cheeseman's Garage);

Lizanne Brown, Lower Standen Farm, Benenden, Kent. TN17 4LA.Tel;240193

Area 2; The Green and The Street;

David Grief, Crit Hall, Cranbrook Road, Benenden, Kent.TN17 4EU. Tel 240609

Area 3; Walkhurst Road and Goddard's Green;

Alan Milne, Somers,Mount Hill, Cranbrook Road, Benenden, Kent.TN174ES.Tel 240819.

Area 4; Hemsted, New Pond Road and Mount Le Hoe;

TrishEvans, White Stables, Rolvenden Road, Benenden, Kent.TN17 4EH

Tel; 240527.E-mail;trish.evans@ukonline.co.uk

Area 5; Scullsgate, Nineveh and Cranbrook Road West ;

Murray Clayson, Applegarth, Cranbrook Rd, Benenden, Kent.TN17 4EU

Tel; 240205

Area 6; Pullington and Dingledden;

Diana Gabriel, Highfield House, Rolvenden Road, Benenden, Kent.TN17 4EH

Tel; 240255.E-mail; gabriel@rya-online.net

Area 7; Standen Street and Iden Green;

Ernie Pollard, Springhill Farm, Standen Street, Benenden, Kent.TN17 4LA

Tel; 240674.E-mail; epollard@springhillfarm.demon.co.uk

New members are always welcome, so please tell old friends and new about the Society.

If any of you would be happy to receive your newsletter by e-mail, please inform our accountant, Diana Gabriel on gabriel@rya-online.net

As we said in the previous newsletter, we hope to include an article on the local countryside in each newsletter. We are again grateful to Ernie Pollard who has written the second in a series of guided walks in the Benenden area. I apologise that this time I just did not have time to illustrate it! If anyone has ideas for further contributions, please contact one of the committee. Comments would be welcome on this the second of our Parish Trails - is it too long?, too short?, inaccurate in any way? –please let us know. These are drafts, not finished products and eventually we hope to produce a small booklet of walks in the parish.

Lizanne Brown April 2002

Parish Trail: Walkhurst Road and the Beacon

A walk of about one and a half hours, setting off northwards from the War Memorial (Grid reference 180328) along Walkhurst Road. Waterproof footwear is needed for the footpaths in all but the driest weather.

The small developments of Rothermere Close and Harmsworth Court, built in the 1970s, recognise the generosity of Lord Rothermere of Hemsted. He gave the land to the village, originally for allotments, in 1924 (?). His sons Vere and Vyvyan Harmsworth were killed in World War I and their names are amongst those on the War Memorial, which Lord Rothermere also gave to the village.

Feoffees Cottages, on the right at right angles to the road, were once the Benenden Workhouse. A feoffee is a trustee and the Feoffees referred to here were originally the trustees of the Workhouse. It was founded in 1732, and quickly became fully used, as poverty increased through the 1700s. People of the parish who were old or infirm and could not support themselves, and children who were orphaned or abandoned, were cared for in the Workhouse and, if possible, put to work. It was run by the parish and paid for by a Poor Tax on all property owners. It was eventually replaced by the Cranbrook-Union Workhouse (serving several parishes) in the 1830s (?).

Brick-kiln House, also on the right, at one time gave its name to this road (Kiln Lane in the early 1800s). It was first a farm-house and later a brick-works, owned by the Munn family. Local clay was used and there are some substantial pits in the close vicinity.

Continuing along Walkhurst Road, at some unknown point we enter the den of Walkhurst, one of the old dens or woodland pastures for swine (see trail 1). Walkhurst belonged to the manor of Eastry, some 35 miles away east of Canterbury, from where the pigs were once driven. A document of about 1290, recording the division of this den into land owned by the church and land owned by men of Walkhurst, can be seen in the archives of Canterbury Cathedral.

The Munn family (of Brick-kiln) included a “black sheep”, Thomas Munn the highwayman. His autobiography is said to be contained in a rare pamphlet, of which a copy survives in the British Museum and in which he is styled *The Gentleman Brick-maker*. Local tradition is that he lived at the house now known as Little Walkhurst, on the left side of the road.

Walk down the hill into the wooded valley where the stream is crossed by Walkhurst Bridge. One of the Canterbury woods, Little Walkhurst, lies beyond the bridge on the west of the road. Turn right just past the bridge on footpath **WC349**, through the woods. This footpath is on an old road which can be followed for over a mile to Stepneyford Lane. This road was closed, together with three others, by order of the parish vestry in 1859 (?) probably to save the parish the expense of maintaining a little-used route.

The land drops away on the right to a gill and stream which can be turbulent in spate - an old name for a field along its banks near here is Devil's Race. The trees are mostly old coppice stools, with hornbeam especially abundant, but also with some fine oak standards. Woodland herbs, such as wood anemones, primroses and bluebells are common, with sedges on the road where it is especially wet and ramsons (smelling strongly of garlic) near the stream. Follow the footpath around tight bends, left and then right, forking right at a junction with another (private) old road to Goddards Green. On the right especially are extensive pits, perhaps where marl was dug to spread on the (slightly) lighter land immediately to the north of the road.

Leaving the woods behind, the road eventually becomes an attractive green lane between managed hedges. Look out for some wild service in the hedge on the right. After a right-angle bend to the left, take footpath **WC349A** on the right, running due south over the grass field to a bridge across the stream. Early Ordnance Survey maps mark stepping stones across the stream here and one can still be seen on the line of the old road. Continue though a large conifer plantation on land which was farmed before the trees were planted some 40 (?) years ago.

Emerging from the plantation between orchards and Christmas trees, turn right (west) along footpath **WC352**. In 1777 this was Footpath Field, an indication of the antiquity of many of our paths. To the left is a modern telephone mast and the shell of Beacon Windmill, built in the 1790s and working until the 1930s. We are now on Beacon Hill, giving its name several farms as well as the toll mill. The beacon was one of a national network erected to warn of the approach of the Spanish Armada in the 1580s, but the exact site is not known. Follow the footpath to the road and walk back towards the village centre. The road was probably used as a drove road from the east, even before Domesday.

To the left, south of the pond beyond Athelsden House and its yard are young native trees, planted to mark the millennium. Pullington House on the right, with the ancient Irish Yew in the garden, was the home of Richard Neve, steward of the Hemsted Estate for Lord Cranbrook in the 19th century. Opposite, an old sunken road leads to Iden Green and can be followed using a footpath along its eastern edge. Beyond Pullington, the road is known as Grants Hill, from the Grant family who owned land here. The eighteenth century graves of two Richard Grants, father and son, are in the churchyard, each bearing a family shield with three cockerels.

A map of 1777 shows no buildings between Pullington and The Green, but now the road is lined on the right (north) side by houses and small closes, including flats for the elderly. Tudor Cottage, also on the right, was a late nineteenth century toll house, conveniently close to the road for toll collection. The recreation ground was once part of the land of the Bull Inn, while the Inn itself was the venue for parish meetings of all sorts. On the north side of the road, on the bend into Walkhurst Road and set back from the road, is Walnut Cottage, an old village post office with its lovely old shop windows. The circuit is complete.