

BACS

Newsletter April 2005 No. 47

B e n e n d e n A m e n i t y a n d C o u n t r y s i d e S o c i e t y

Dates for your Diary:

Spring Walk – Sunday 3rd April 2005, at 2pm, Somers. (CONFIRMED DATE)

AGM:

The BACS Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 9th February, in the Village Hall. The meeting began with the chairman presenting his report for 2004. Over the year, the society organised two walks and assisted the Parish Council with two clean-up days. There was also a very successful evening at Cranbrook Museum. The BACS committee has been very busy contributing to both the recent conservation area appraisal, and the development of the code of practice designed to prevent a repetition of the Benenden fly infestation. The committee also continued to look at all planning applications, especially those which could have a significant impact on the parish. In addition, the society supported the recent village hall redevelopment, and it was announced that a donation had been made from the society to support this project.

Following the treasurers report, the committee for the new year was elected. Alan Milne was re-elected as Chairman, Angela Lloyd-Jones was re-elected as secretary, and Dick Hill was re-elected as Treasurer. The remaining committee members elected were Roger Lake, David Grief, Peter Blockley and William Davies. It was announced that Ernie Pollard would not stand for re-election. The chairman thanked Ernie for all his work and support over the years, especially the valuable contributions he has made to the newsletter.

This year's guest speaker was John Hare, who is one of the world's leading explorers and adventurers. Following the formal part of the meeting, John Hare gave an illustrated talk on his crossing of the Sahara by camel, from Lake Chad to the Mediterranean shores of Tripoli. John detailed the difficulties he came across while trekking across the desert. This included losing the way on a few occasions, and injuries sustained to both fellow explorers and their camels. At one point, an eye operation had to be performed on a colleague within the expedition, as he was in danger of losing his sight. This was done in the middle of the desert using nothing but a pen knife. A camel also had to be operated on, as its blood circulation had deteriorated to the extent that its life was in danger. John also explained how the process of desertification has resulted in much less water and vegetation across both the Sahara and Gobi desert. Lake Chad is now only 1/40th of the size it was in 1900. The camels could carry a heavy load, so water was never a problem, but ensuring the camels had enough to eat was not so straightforward. Enough grass had to be carried for them when crossing the more hazardous parts of the desert. One camel died when the food supply was low, as it attempted to eat some dried maize, which punctured its lung.

John also emphasised his admiration of the camel, as they have evolved to survive in such a harsh environment, and without them this trek would not have been possible. In sum the trek was 1462 miles, and the camels had trekked 400 miles before even beginning! Unfortunately the wild Bactrian camel is now on the brink of extinction, and John Hare concluded his talk by outlining the work of the Wild Camel Protection Foundation. This is a charity he has set up to help protect these animals in both Africa and China. If you would like to find out more, or make a donation, please contact John Hare on 01580 241132 or email harecamel@aol.com. There is also a website at www.wildcamels.com. Alan Milne thanked John for his interesting talk and the Society presented a cheque to his charity.

Benenden Primary School:

A public meeting was held in the Village Hall on 10th March to update local residents on the proposed development of a new Primary School. David Hicken, the consultant hired by the County Council to investigate the feasibility of building a new school, was present at the meeting. Also present was Bruce MacQuarrie and Mike Thompson from the Kent County Council. The meeting was chaired by Rev. Christopher Smith.

Three possible sites have now been assessed in detail, all of which meet the minimum KCC and DfES standards. Each site allows for a 'courtyard style' school sized 1400 metres squared, sports pitches, car parking as well as a drop-off and delivery zone. The first site discussed was on the Glebe field and the land adjoining the recreation ground. Another more compact site on Walkhurst Road was analysed. Finally, a site alongside New Pond Road was discussed. All these sites have both advantages and disadvantages associated with them, and as there is no 'perfect site' it is likely that some residents will be unhappy with the decision, when it is made. However, there will be further stages of consultation both before and after a formal planning application is made.

It is hoped that following consultation with the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council planning authority, a planning application will be made by 2007. Building work would then take place throughout 2007 and 2008, with the new school ready to open in September 2008.

Spring Walk:

This years Spring walk has been scheduled for Sunday 3rd April, at 2pm, and will begin at Somers. We shall walk round Parsonage Wood first and then Jocelyn Gregory will take us round her farm to see the animals. Unfortunately, NO DOGS will be permitted on this walk, but it is hoped that this year's walk will provide an opportunity for children to see some recently born lambs. Tea will be served at Somers, following completion of the walk. Parking is also at Somers, Mounts Hill, with overflow parking available at Bramley Dial.

Amenity Refuse Collection:

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council organises the schedule for amenity refuse vehicle, which visits the Parish for three hours every fortnight, on a Saturday morning. For your information, the dates and venues of this service for the next three months are printed below. The vehicle is accessible from 8am until 11am, and this is the same every fortnight.

April	May	June
Sat 9 th – Iden Green Crossroads Sat 23 rd – Benenden Village Hall	Sat 7 th – Iden Green Crossroads Sat 21 st – Cherryfields, Benenden	Sat 4 th – Iden Green Crossroads Sat 18 th – Benenden Village Hall

Planning Matters:

The Committee continues to look at planning applications for the benefit of all in Benenden. Peter Blockley is now responsible for monitoring all planning applications. A summary of planning applications can be found on the Parish noticeboard in the village centre, and details can be seen at the Borough Council Offices in Cranbrook.

If you have any concerns about a planning application near you, please contact a committee member who will be able to raise your concerns at the next committee meeting.

Subscriptions:

Please contact David Grief if you have not yet paid your 2005 subscription, and you will be sent a renewal form. Alternatively, you can print an application form on the BACS website, which can be found at www.benendenvillage.org.uk. You can also discover the origins and objectives of the society on this site, as well as read about upcoming BACS events.

We are currently trying to increase our membership. If you know of anyone who may like to join BACS, please contact David Grief, who will ensure a form is sent. Perhaps you can encourage friends and neighbours to join. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, which contains details of events being organised by BACS, and items of local interest from around the parish.

Your new committee:

Full details of your new committee are printed below. As noted in the AGM report, Ernie Pollard has now stepped down from the committee. Ernie has worked tirelessly for the society over the years, and his research into planning applications and parish trails has been much appreciated by the committee. We are also very grateful to Ernie that he will continue to support the society in any way he can, and his latest article on the Benenden Home Guard is printed in this newsletter.

Since the AGM, Natalie Blakemore expressed an interest in becoming a committee member and has now been co-opted onto the committee. There is an opportunity for one more volunteer to join the committee and anyone who is interested should contact the chairman, Alan Milne.

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The Benenden Home Guard, 1940:

This is the fourth of the occasional Home Guard extracts. They are from a record made by Collingwood Ingram (of The Grange, now Collingwood Grange) of the talks he gave to the men when he was the local commander of the Home Guard. The first meeting was on 23rd May 1940. This is not the full record and where sections have been omitted this is indicated by

Once again, we are extremely grateful to Ernie Pollard for researching the topic and compiling this article.

7th July 1940

It has been decided to form, what might be termed Battle Posts at the four Road Blocks we intend to put up – Iden Green, Benenden, Pullington & Goddards Green. I have called these “Battle Posts” as some of them will only be manned in the event of a General Alarm. When this is sounded the men who have been detailed to man these Posts will go direct to their respective stations & not to our Main Post. All those who have not been so detailed will proceed at once to St Georges Club, where they will form the Reserve Party. Please make a careful note of this. It is an important change in our Standing Orders. Remember that in future St Georges Club (which has now been fortified) - & not the Vicarage Yard as previously stated – will be our Rallying Point in future.

The Battle Posts (all of which are being fortified) will be under the command, so far as possible, of men who have had previous active service experience.

The Following have been selected

For the main post (St Georges Club)	S. Barham
Iden Green	L. Clark
Pullington	C. Clegg
Goddards Green	J. Rennie

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Let us assume that the enemy has landed by parachute. However well he may have prepared himself beforehand - & this he is certain to have done – by the careful study of maps & photos, you may rest assured he will not have the same intimate knowledge of the country that we have. Upon landing, it is highly probable he will take some time to orientate himself – to discover exactly where he is – and even after that, his progress is bound to be hesitant and uncertain. Put yourself in his shoes. How would you like to be suddenly dumped in a strange, foreign country – a country closely hedged & more or less densely wooded - & to be told to find your way to such and such a place? It wouldn't be easy. It's our task to make it a jolly sight more difficult for him & at the same time a damned unhealthy job.

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Now as to tanks & other forms of transport. This is where I hope our Road Blocks will come in. It is no good pretending that these Road Blocks will be able to stop tanks however small they may be, but we might manage to delay them – especially if we can make them believe we have mined the road. I think the best way of achieving this would be by placing obstacles on the ground that look like mines. This sounds rather like a schoolboy trick, but I think it will work. An old motor car accumulator painted black with a sparking plug sticking into it and a wire running to both sides of the road, would look devilish suspicious – or a small square tin with some strange looking contraption attached, might also serve the same purpose.

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Incidentally I might mention that I have devised a scheme for making all our roads extremely dangerous for the enemy without hindering the safe passage of our own troops. It is now in the hands of the war office & I sincerely hope it will soon be adopted.

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In the event of a local enemy landing, it will be Mr Rollings duty to warn Mr Fuggle to destroy all the petrol on his premises at once. Every private car should be immediately rendered unserviceable. There is one more point that I would like to draw your attention to. If we are called out for the real thing there will be no telling how long it will be before we can return to our own homes again. It behoves everybody therefore to take some kind of rations with them – food in as concise and nourishing form as possible. It will be our unpleasant duty to stop all refugees & to see that they are turned back. They should be told that if they evacuate from their own area without orders, they cannot be fed. In all cases they must “stay put”. As everybody knows it was the congestion caused by refugees that was largely responsible for our undoing in France.

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After parade all men without uniforms will report to St Georges Club where they will have a battle dress issued to them. You will be glad to learn that we have had eight tin helmets issued to us. These will be kept at the two posts for use by the men on duty.