

BACS

Newsletter July 2006 No. 52

Benenden Amenity and Countryside Society

Dates for your Diary:

Primary School Public Meetings – Tuesday 25th July and Tuesday 1st August.
Autumn Walk – Sunday 17th September at 2pm.

Benenden Hospital visit:

The organised tour of Benenden Hospital Museum on 27 March was a great success, and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended.

The Post Office & Civil Service Sanatorium Society was established in 1905 by Charles H Garland. The aim of the society was to tackle Tuberculosis, which at the time accounted for 45 of every 100 deaths in the post office, and was often contracted when workers handled contaminated post sacks. The response to a circular distributed to all post office workers in 1904 revealed that 30,000 workers would join the organisation.

Charles Garland realised that Tuberculosis was curable and preventable, and calculated that the construction of a sanatorium designed to treat 120 post office workers per year, would require an initial outlay of £8,000 and a yearly income of £2,600. He realised that if 30,000 workers consented to have a penny a week stopped from their salaries it would provide £6,505 per year. If staff at the sanatorium also contributed one halfpenny a week, this would raise the £8,000 needed for construction and a further £3,250 per year for maintenance.

The foundation stone for Benenden Hospital was laid in 1906, and the hospital admitted its first patients in May 1907. One hundred years later, and now known as The Benenden Healthcare Society, over 1 million public sector employees are members of the society and each contribute as little as £1.10 per week. More information on the society can be found on their website: www.benuk.org

Primary School public meetings:

Planning Mediation Ltd have been appointed by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to conduct a series of mediated discussions in order to examine, evaluate and potentially resolve community concerns about the provision of a new village primary school. Public meetings will take place in the Benenden Village Hall on both Tuesday 25th July and Tuesday 1st August. Everyone is welcome to attend. The timetable for discussions is detailed below:

Tuesday 25th July

18:00 to 18:50 – The value of the Glebe Field.
19:00 to 19:50 – Alternative layouts.
20:00 to 20:50 – Shared access with the Village Hall.

Tuesday 1st August

18:00 to 18:40 – Impact of Traffic & access proposals.
18:50 to 19:30 – Pedestrian access from the street.
19:40 to 20:20 – Security fencing and lighting.
20:30 to 21:10 – Public rights of way over site 8.
21:20 to 22:00 – Comparative site development costs.

Bulky refuse information:

Large household appliances such as fridge freezers and washing machines can be disposed of at North Farm household waste site, just outside Tunbridge Wells, free of charge. Alternatively, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council can collect such items for a fee of £25 per item. Please contact the refuse and recycling team on 01892 554205 for further information, or to arrange for a home collection.

Hazardous refuse, such as car batteries, oil, paint, chemicals and anything containing asbestos can also be disposed of free of charge at the North Farm household waste site.

All other bulky refuse can be disposed of in the 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.

July	August	September
Sat 15 th – Benenden Village Hall Sat 29 th – Iden Green Crossroads	Sat 12 th – Cherryfields, Benenden Sat 26 th – Iden Green Crossroads	Sat 9 th – Benenden Village Hall Sat 23 rd – Iden Green Crossroads

Autumn Walk:

The BACS Autumn Walk will take place on Sunday 17th September, starting at 2pm. We will meet in Robertsbridge for a circular walk around the East Sussex countryside. Further details will follow in the next newsletter and in the local press.

Planning Matters:

The Committee continues to look at planning applications for the benefit of all in Benenden. Natalie Blakemore is 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.

Your committee:

Alan Milne – Chairman

Somers, Mounts Hill, Benenden, TN17 4ET
Tel: 240819 Fax: 241109, Email: alanmilne@chartsec.co.uk

Dick Hill – Treasurer

Columbanus, Off Standen Street, Iden Green, TN17 4HR
Tel: 240517

Angela Lloyd-Jones – Secretary

West Winds, Cranbrook Road, Benenden, TN17 4EU
Tel: 240354 Fax: 243064, Email: angela136@btinternet.com

David Grief – Membership

Crit Hall, Cranbrook Road, Benenden, TN17 4EU
Tel: 241772 Fax: 240772, Email: david@grief.co.uk

Natalie Blakemore – Planning

2 Hortons Close, Benenden, TN17 4LF
Tel: 243118, Email: nattib@tiscali.co.uk

Roger Lake – Parish Council Rep.

Benenden Barn, The Street, Benenden, TN17 4BZ
Tel: 241605

Gill Snow - Publicity

Orchards, Mounts Hill, Benenden, TN17 4ET
Tel: 240493, Email: nsnow@compuserve.com

William Davies - Newsletter

Weald House, Iden Green, TN17 4HH
Tel/Fax: 240723, Email: wgd@wealdhouse.co.uk

The Benenden Home Guard, 1940:

This is the final of the Home Guard extracts, for the last weeks of 1940. By the end of 1940, invasion was no longer likely and one problem was to maintain the enthusiasm of the men. The notes are from a record made by Collingwood Ingram (of The Grange, now Collingwood Grange) of talks he gave to the men when he was the local commander of the Home Guard. The first meeting was on 23rd May 1940.

Once again, this is not the full record and where sections have been omitted this is shown by Collingwood Ingram's notes continued well into the next year, with the final entry 14th September 1941. He was succeeded as commander by Major Uloth some time later, but we do not have the date.

We are extremely grateful to Ernie Pollard for completing this series of extracts from the Home Guard. I think it has given all of us a fascinating insight into not just the operations of the home guard, but also life in Benenden generally, throughout 1940.

If you have missed any extracts, you may like to know past editions of the BACS newsletter can be downloaded from the BACS section of the Benenden website, www.benendenvillage.org.uk. The full collection is as follows:

Extract 1, taken from the 23rd May 1940, can be found in newsletter 43 (April 2004).

Extract 2, taken from 16th and 20th June 1940, can be found in newsletter 45 (September 2004).

Extract 3, taken from 22nd and 25th June 1940, can be found in newsletter 46 (January 2005).

Extract 4, taken from 7th July 1940, can be found in newsletter 47 (April 2005).

Extract 5, taken from 11th and 25th July 1940, can be found in newsletter 48 (July 2005).

Extract 6, taken from 25th August 1940, can be found in newsletter 49 (November 2005).

Extract 7, taken from 29th September and 8th October, can be found in newsletter 50 (January 2006).

Extract 8, taken from 20th and 27th October, and 10th and 17th November is in newsletter 51 (April 2006).

Extract 9, taken from 1st, 8th, 22nd and 29th December 1940, is in this newsletter.

1st December 1940

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Next Sunday at the same hour and place there will be a lecture on First Aid given by Dr Cole.

Starting on Monday 9th December Benenden is holding a War Weapons Week. This Company has already shown its patriotism by lending every penny of its Subsistence Allowance to the country. That was a fine gesture – a gesture that produced a personal letter of thanks from Sir Robert Kindersley & just appreciation in the press. You have already done your bit – but if you can give any more, please do. We are not a rich parish, but let us prove to the World we are a patriotic one.

The week is going to be inaugurated by an entertainment held, most probably, in this room on Sat. Dec 7th at 3 p.m. Mrs Harold Nicholson – the famous authoress known to the world as Miss Vita Sackville West – will make the opening speech. We are hoping that she will have the support of Jean de Casillis – Mrs Feather of the B.B.C. – and Miss Jean Stirling McKinley – both stars of renown. It is not suggested that any profits be made out of this first-class entertainment, but the audience is going to be asked to buy raffle tickets at the door in denominations ranging from 6d to 5/-. The winning numbers of each group will win a prize to the value of the total amount of money subscribed to that particular raffle. It is hoped that the total of the first prize for the 5/- group may come to £60 – that of the lesser groups will of course be smaller.

8th December 1940

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It has been decided to offer two prizes for the 2 smartest men in the Company – one for recruits & one for ex-service men. These will be given at the end of the winter-training season – that is to say, during the last week of March. The winner will be judged by a committee formed by your Officers, Platoon Commanders & Section Leaders. Regular attendance of drills coupled with efficiency and smartness are the things that count.

The Kent County Rifle Association has kindly offered to organise & run an Inter Company .22 rifle competition. Those who would like to compete for this Company's team – a team of 5 will be selected, of which 4 only will count – should hand their names to Mr Barham at the end of this Parade. The Competition is due to start early in the New Year, The winning team will receive medals.

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22nd December 1940

The remarks I am now going to make are addressed to only a small minority of the Company. A few of you, a very few I am glad to say, do not appear to realize that the military have given us a definite & well-defined job to perform – namely that of guarding this village & parish between the hours of 9 & 5. Now this is not a great deal to ask of us – We should, therefore, see to it that this order is carried out in an efficient and soldierly manner. I say that it does not appear to be realised for this reason. It has been reported to me that on several occasions men have abandoned their post during the night without permission or apparent cause, & have returned to their homes. Now this is an extremely serious offence – an offence which, in the Regular Army, would be a court-martial affair punishable to the utmost limits of the law – and you all know what that means. I have personally neither the power nor the wish to resort to such extreme measures, but I have certain powers, and these I intend to exercise, should similar cases arise. A man who leaves his post while on active service is committing a grave military offence. I would be failing in my duty if I overlooked such a breach of discipline. Only last Friday Mr Churchill said in the House of Commons “It would be a very great lack of prudence, a lack of prudence amounting to a crime, if vigilance were relaxed in our Army at home” Illness of course is a different matter – no one can help being ill - and your Platoon Commander will always grant leave of absence in case of sickness.

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There will be no parades during Christmas week – that is to say until Sunday next. When these are started again it has been suggested that it would be the fairest arrangement if they were held alternately at Iden Green & at Benenden. This will give residents of both districts an opportunity for attending without having to go far from their homes.

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I think it right to tell you that I have heard from an authoritative source that the German's have prepared a supply of gas. Whether they intend to use it or not in the event of invasion is purely a matter of conjecture: if they think it will pay them to do so they certainly will: humanitarian considerations will not deter them. You should see to it, then, that your gas-masks, both military and civilian, are kept handy and are in good order.

29th December 1940

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Our Battalion Commander wishes all officers & men a happy New Year. At the same time he says – Let us follow the glorious example set by our gallant countrymen in Lybia and the wonderful Greeks in Albania. Our role, though not as spectacular at the moment, calls for the same fighting spirit & devotion to duty. The time will come – it may be soon or it may not be until the Spring – but we must be ready when it does come. Keeping watch is dull & arduous work, but stick to it & you will be doing your bit & helping to save your country from disaster.