

# BACS

## Newsletter March 2007 No. 55

*Benenden Amenity and Countryside Society*

### Dates for your Diary:

Parish Poll – Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2007, 4pm-9pm  
Spring Walk – Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2.30pm  
Dawn Chorus Walk – Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> May, 5am

### New Primary School – Parish Poll:

As you may know, Benenden Parish Council has arranged for a poll on the subject of the proposed new primary school. Voting will take place on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March from 4pm until 9pm. As in any other election, all three parish polling stations will be open: Benenden Village Hall, Iden Green Pavilion and Benenden Hospital.

Over the last year, our village has recently experienced the shock of divisions within itself on the subject of the site of the proposed new primary school. The BACS committee believes this poll will provide everyone with the opportunity to express their preference, and will ensure that the views of all local residents are known to those involved in the project, before the final decision is made on which site to select.

Please remember to vote on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March.

### Spring Walk:

This year's spring walk is on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March and will be a circular walk near Goudurst with stunning views around the Kent countryside.

We will set off at 2.30pm from the car park just below the pond on Bedgebury road. As usual, there will be the option of taking a shorter route for those who would prefer this, and dogs will be welcome. Please contact Alan Milne for further information.

### Dawn Chorus Walk:

Everyone is invited to take part in the first BACS Dawn Chorus walk. We will meet at Somers at 5.00am on Sunday 6 May and will be lead by Stephen Message, professional artist and ornithologist. Breakfast for those who survive it all will be at Somers. We will be going down to Parsonage Wood. The walk will take place whatever the weather but walkers should not bring their dogs.

Please contact Alan Milne if you are intending to take part. This will give us some idea of numbers, which will be useful for catering purposes.

## **AGM report:**

The 19<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Benenden Amenity and Countryside Society took place Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> March in the Benenden Village Hall. The meeting began with Alan Milne presenting his chairman's report, after which Dick Hill presented the treasurer's report. Alan Milne was then re-elected as chairman, Angela Lloyd-Jones was re-elected as secretary and Dick Hill was re-elected as treasurer. The remaining committee members were then also re-elected to serve on the committee for another year.

The chairmans report in full follows at the end of this newsletter.

This years guest speaker was Edward Barham, owner or the Hole Park estate, situated between Benenden and Rolvenden. Following the formal part of the meeting, Edward Barham gave a presentation on "The Fortunes of Farming in the Weald of Kent; past and present" with particular reference to what he does at Hole Park. Edward explained that despite the title of the talk, it is very difficult to make a fortune out of farming, especially in the Weald which has a large amount of woodland areas, pests, rabbits and poor soil. However, the poor soil quality is ideal for many types of hop, the growing of which peaked in the 1870's when the Weald was responsible for 10% of national hop production. In the 1880's there were 450 acres of hop fields in Benenden alone. Since then, the demand for hops has fallen, especially since the second world war, as tastes have begun to change from bitter to larger.

Today, it is almost impossible to make money by just farming. There are now very few hopfields in the area, which are grown for the production of a few local specialist ales. Unless a dairy farmer can make a profit by privately producing and distributing milk, the production of milk will make no money. Today, milk costs 21p a litre to produce, but if sold to the milk board farmers will only receive 17p a litre. Sheep farmers also struggle as Lamb prices are now lower than they were 12 years ago.

However, Edward explained there is room for optimism about the future of farming in the Weald. Partly because of the introduction of the single farm payment, and partly due to the resourcefulness of farmers to find new markets and new ways of generating an income from their land. For example, disused farm buildings can be converted for residential or light industrial use. At Hole Park, there is now a very successful office development and the Great Barn, which is used for events. Managing woodland, of which there is no shortage in our area, can also be very worthwhile. At Hole Park, Christmas trees are grown, and willow is also grown and sold to be used as wood for cricket bats. If you would like to find out more about Hole Park, visit [www.holepark.com](http://www.holepark.com)

The talk was thoroughly enjoyed by all. William Davies thanked Edward Barham for his interesting and informative talk.

## **Planning Matters:**

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

The subscription for 2006 is £3 for an individual or £5 for a family. Alternatively, you can pay £50 for life 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.

### 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.

<b>April</b>	<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>
Sat 7 <sup>th</sup> – Iden Green Crossroads Sat 21 <sup>st</sup> – Benenden Village Hall	Sat 5 <sup>th</sup> – Iden Green Crossroads Sat 19 <sup>th</sup> – Cherryfields, Benenden	Sat 2 <sup>nd</sup> – Iden Green Crossroads Sat 16 <sup>th</sup> – Benenden Village Hall Sat 30 <sup>th</sup> – Iden Green Crossroads

### Your committee:

<p><b>Alan Milne – Chairman</b> Somers, Mounts Hill, Benenden, TN17 4ET Tel: 240819 Fax: 241109, Email: alanmilne@chartsec.co.uk</p> <p><b>Dick Hill – Treasurer</b> Columbanus, Off Standen Street, Iden Green, TN17 4HR Tel: 240517</p> <p><b>Angela Lloyd-Jones – Secretary</b> West Winds, Cranbrook Road, Benenden, TN17 4EU Tel: 240354 Fax: 243064, Email: angela136@btinternet.com</p> <p><b>David Grief – Membership</b> Crit Hall, Cranbrook Road, Benenden, TN17 4EU Tel: 241772 Fax: 240772, Email: david@grief.co.uk</p>	<p><b>Natalie Blakemore – Planning</b> 2 Hortons Close, Benenden, TN17 4LF Tel: 243118, Email: nattib@tiscali.co.uk</p> <p><b>Roger Lake – Parish Council Rep.</b> Benenden Barn, The Street, Benenden, TN17 4BZ Tel: 241605</p> <p><b>Gill Snow - Publicity</b> Orchards, Mounts Hill, Benenden, TN17 4ET Tel: 240493, Email: grsnow@hotmail.co.uk</p> <p><b>William Davies - Newsletter</b> Weald House, Iden Green, TN17 4HH Tel/Fax: 240723, Email: wgd@wealdhouse.co.uk</p>
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### BACS CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 19<sup>TH</sup> AGM – 7 MARCH 2007

It is customary at the AGM for the Chairman to review the past year's activities of the Society.

We continue with our two walks each year, and in 2006 held one based on Sissinghurst Castle and the other around Robertsbridge. We always hope that members will bring friends and family on the walks, and most times dogs are welcomed. We supply a walking map and notes, so that everyone can go at their own pace and even take a shorter route, if they prefer. As always, we are grateful to Philip Message for having arranged our walks.

Our next walk is based on Goudhurst and we set off at 2.30pm on Sunday 25 March from the car park just below the pond on the Bedgebury Road.

Members have assisted the Parish Council with the clean-up days it organises to help keep Benenden clean and free of litter. We keep members regularly in touch with events in our Newsletters. Ernie Pollard has now finished his regular articles about local history and the last war in the Newsletter: we are very grateful to him for his support and continued interest.

I am also grateful to our Committee members who each carry out an important job in the running of BACS. Each has an important role to play in the smooth running of the Committee and this is referred to in each Newsletter. If you know of anyone in or just outside the parish whom you feel would like to join us, please let me know. Membership fees remain at £3 per individual, or £5 per household. Life membership is also available at £50.

Members have asked for a Dawn Chorus Walk, so Stephen Message has kindly agreed to lead one on Sunday 6 May. We leave Somers at 5.00am and survivors are invited to breakfast afterwards at Somers. This time, of course, we cannot invite dogs. Most of you will know Stephen, who is Benenden born and bred and is one of England's leading bird artists and ornithologists.

In support of Benenden Hospital in its centenary celebrations, we visited their Museum for an interesting tour and relaxing evening. We are most grateful to the staff and management of the hospital and the museum for making the evening so enjoyable.

BACS was established nearly 20 years ago to raise community awareness, so as to help protect and sympathetically develop Benenden Village and Iden Green and to protect their environment in an ever more demanding and changing society. It is important that the village changes with the times and with increasing demand, especially for construction projects.

The Primary School Project is ongoing and shortly should reach a conclusion. Various groups within the village have been invited to numerous meetings and have expressed their views. I have been asked what the position of the BACS' Committee is. Out of the 8 Committee members, 1 is in favour of the Glebe Field, 1 prefers the Ridge or Pasture site and 6 would like construction to be carried out on the Orchard site.

The basic reason for preferring the Orchard comes down to the fundamental reasons for establishing BACS: the Society was created to help ensure that the amenities of Benenden and Iden Green and the surrounding countryside are protected for the continued enjoyment of future generations. Benenden Village is special, and has a wonderful aspect which reaches right into the heart of the village. We are in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). We do not have street lighting nor yellow lines. We are privileged. Even one light on the horizon of the Ridge Pasture, or the removal or restriction of the Glebe as an amenity for the village will destroy the special feeling, balance and fabric of the village for ever.

Whilst the Orchard site may not be ideal (what proposed construction site ever is?), it is tucked away from congestion and pollution, and is near the centre of the village. It will reduce traffic movements within Benenden itself.

The village is holding a poll on the subject on Thursday 22 March. The usual 3 polling stations at Benenden Village Hall, Iden Green Pavilion and Benenden Hospital will be open from 4.00pm to 9.00pm.

I do hope that as many residents will vote as possible, so that a clear village preference for one site can be ascertained.

There is no question that the primary school does need to be renewed and it is good fortune that so many possible sites have been identified now, compared with just one earmarked 20 years or so back.

Your Society is fully supporting a construction project of a different kind. A Roman culvert (known as the Strawberry Culvert) is being sympathetically restored, and an exhibition on the proposed restoration is being held in the Memorial Hall from 10am to 4pm on Saturday, 17 March. BACS have given £100 to support this worthwhile scheme. All are welcome to this exhibition.

I would like to thank all those in the village, members and otherwise, who have written to us over the last year with suggestions for future events and areas of support, and have assisted us in various ways. Please keep your comments and suggestions coming in.

After this AGM, you are all invited to stay on for a drink and something to eat.