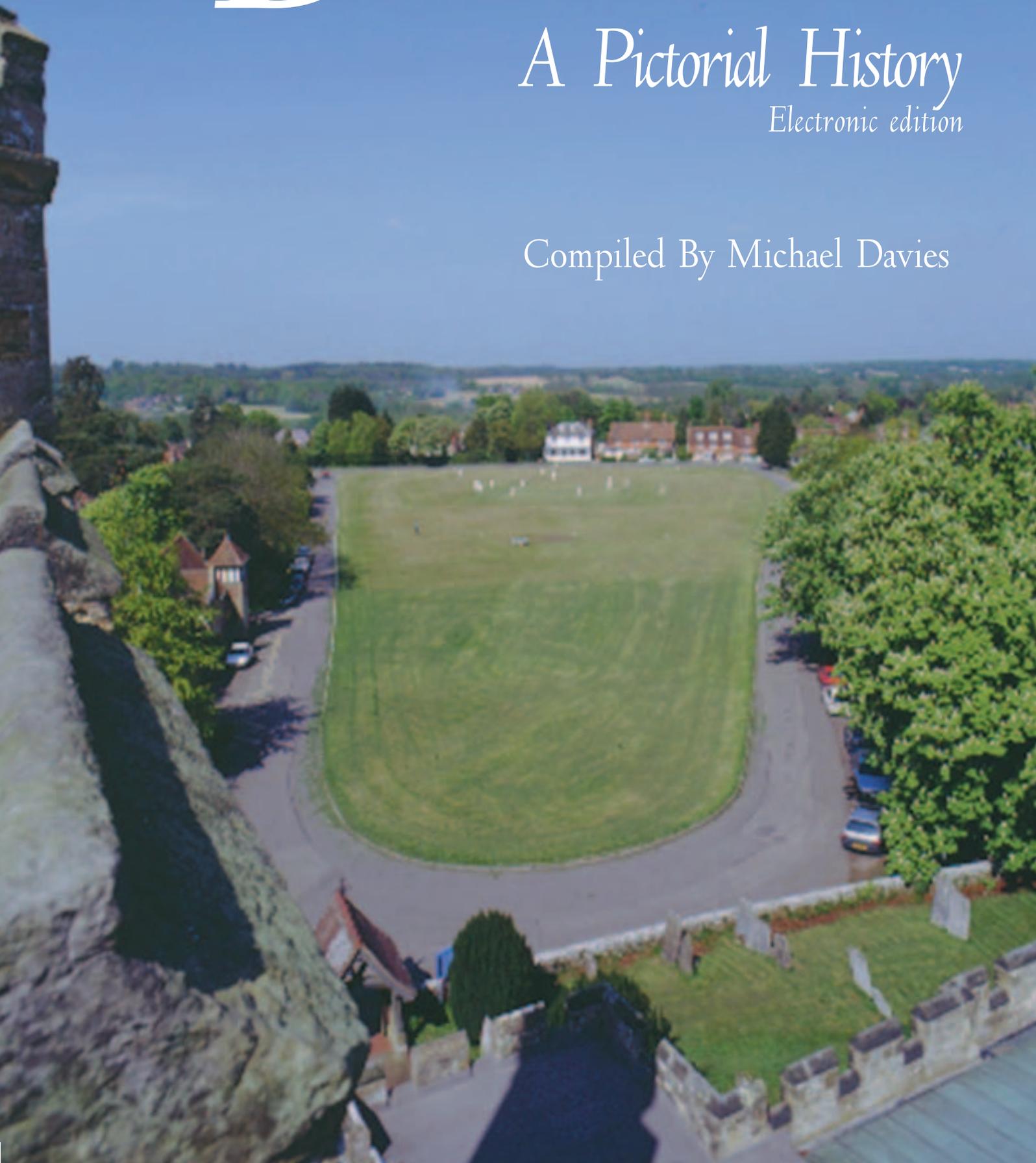


Benenden

A Pictorial History

Electronic edition

Compiled By Michael Davies



Benenden

A Pictorial History

Over 120 pages of pictures and history of Benenden - the digital version is an almost true representation of the printed book created in the year 2000 and sadly all sold out, that is suitable for viewing on screen using Adobe Acrobat or similar software.

www.benendenvillage.org.uk/benendenbook

The Village Green



The village celebrating Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee on the green in 1887.

Copy of Deed Benenden Village Green

This conveyance made the fourteenth day of June one thousand nine hundred and twenty eight.

Between The Right Honourable John David Earl of Cranbrook (hereinafter called "the Donor") of the one part and the Parish Council of the Parish of Benenden in the County of Kent (hereinafter called the council) of the other part. Whereas the Donor is desirous of conveying by way of Gift to the Council the hereditaments hereinafter described and intended to be hereby assured in trust for the perpetual use thereof by the Public for exercise and recreation pursuant to the provisions of the Open Spaces Act 1906, or some or one of them.

And the Council have agreed to accept such gift upon the trust and for the purposes aforesaid and subject to the conditions specified in the Schedule hereunder written. Now this deed Witnesseth that in pursuance of the said desire and agreement the Donor as Settlor doth hereby grant and convey unto the Council All that piece of land containing three decimal nought nought one acres more or less situate at Benenden aforesaid and known as The Green and Numbered 971 on the Ordnance Survey Map (1906 Edition) for the Parish of Benenden. To hold the same unto the Council in fee simple. And the Council hereby declare that they will hold the said hereditaments upon trust for the perpetual use thereof by the Parish of Benenden for the purposes of exercise and recreation pursuant to the Open Spaces Act 1906 and subject to the conditions specified in the Schedule hereunder written.

In witness whereof the Donor and the Chairman and two other members of the Council have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.



Queen Victoria's Jubilee 1887. Photo taken from the top of the Church Tower.

Hasted refers to a "large green, called the Playstool, formerly used as a bowling green by the neighbouring gentry, who within memory used frequently to resort to it and at whose expense it is kept in order".

Dearn states that "this pastime has long been discontinued, but much to the credit of the place (the green) is not neglected".

Hazelwood (1889) says "The Fair was held annually on May 15 and cricket matches are still played on this open spot". He goes on to say "the beauty of the Green and Church were enhanced in 1808 by the removal of an alehouse and some cottages, which formally existed close to the Church" (opposite page, bottom right).

Iden Green



Iden Green crossroads looking along the road to Benenden.

Igglesden: "The rich possessions of Benenden are not confined within the area of the village street, but extend in many directions, each bringing us within view of grand old buildings and typical Wealden scenery".

This certainly applies to Iden Green, despite reputedly being referred to in its early days as a 'plague hamlet', so called because it grew up a mile or so from a main village to escape the Plague in 1665, Goddards Green and East End also being examples.

The Parish Magazine of 1903 at one point refers to the centre of Benenden as "The Town"!

Pictured above is
This engraving is on an 1824 English Crown.

The 'photo was sent from Australia to 'Country Life' to find the whereabouts of Standen House.



Boorman & Co. circa 1906, Iden Green's general stores and post office and the biggest shop in that part of the village. Borman & Co. had a number of similar business' in Smarden, Bethersden, Wittersham and Tenterden. Sadly, the store in Iden Green shut down during 1994.

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Wars

The Benenden Volunteers, a small local infantry unit, was raised during the French Revolutionary war period at the end of the 18th. century.

By 1802 there was a major reorganisation of such local units and The Benenden Volunteers disappeared. The badge, pictured right, may be the only physical item left behind.

In 1860, with new threats from the French, F Company, 2nd. Volunteer Battalion, The Buffs, East Kent Regiment was formed.

A cutting entitled 'Volunteers of 1799' read...

"Reference has been recently made in the foregoing pages to the Volunteers that saw the light towards the close of the eighteenth century. The famous Review held near Maidstone by King George the Third drew together all the various Kent Corps - Cavalry, Artillery and Infantry - and as a record of an interesting national event a list of the troops contributed by East Kent is

CAVALRY.		
Bolton,	47 men,	Captain Hoagpeny.
Elham,	67 men,	Captain Honeywood.
Lydd,	52 men,	Captain Cobb.
Prosser,	102 men,	Major Sir K. Knottbull.
Norington,	105 men,	Captains Harnwood and Taylor.
Wingham,	88 men,	Captain Gunden.
Walmer,	55 men,	Captain Poynter.
Dunton,	42 men,	Captain Bridgman.
Thanet,	32 men,	Captain Garrett.
ARTILLERY.		
Broadstairs,	62 men,	Captain Philpot.
Ramsgate,	44 men,	No Officer mentioned.
INFANTRY.		
Folkestone,	131 men,	Captains Jordan and Pinfold.
Hythe,	63 men,	Captain Dunder.
Bonny,	64 men,	Captain Loflie.
Lydd,	68 men,	Captain Finn.
Tenterden,	75 men,	Captain Curtis.
Cranbrook,	75 men,	Captain Adams.
Benenden,	58 men,	Captain Badger.
Goodhurst,	59 men,	Captain Carter.



here given:-
"

We now turn our attention towards THE 'BOER WAR'. Below is a news article and illustration relating to three generations of the Southon family of Benenden.

"Three generations of the Southon family are enrolled in the F (Benenden) Company Second Volunteer Battalion East Kent

Regiment, namely, Quarter-Master-Sergeant B. Southon, Sergeant E. D. Southon and Sergeant E. G. Southon, a sketch of whom is given in the accompanying illustration. Quarter-Master-Sergeant Southon served 24 years, commencing in 1860, the beginning of the Volunteer movement, when he and others had to purchase their own uniform and accoutrements. He was always a first-

KENTISH VOLUNTEER FAMILY.



Mills, Forges & Wells

An article from the Kent Messenger dated, September 9th. 1933, entitled 'A Lone Weald Miller' read...

I had a chat this week (writes a "Kent Messenger" representative), with Mr. W. Reeves, one of the oldest millers in the Weald, as he sat in his dusty, little office at Benenden Roller Mill, repairing a sack with the dexterity that spoke of long years of practise.

There was a touch of sadness about the scene for, instead of the bustle and activity usually associated with a mill, the large four storied building was deadly quiet, save for the dull rumble of water in the distance as it rushed through the water wheel, and no smoke came from the tall chimney at the side.

Trade is very slack to-day and the mill is beginning to get dilapidated. Ere long it will probably join the ever increasing number of mills up and down the countryside that have outlived their period of usefulness and are now derelict and fast decaying, with broken sweeps and leaky water wheels.

MORE THAN 100 YEARS OLD.

Benenden Roller Mill, or Wandle Mill to give it its correct name, has been standing for more than 100 years - it was built in 1828 - and before it was erected, another mill stood on the same site. In fact, for between 200 and 300 years there has been a mill there, and the water in the Wandle stream was sufficient to supply power to three mills, two now closed, being in the parish of Hawkhurst.

Mr. Reeves is a native of Benenden and went to work at the mill when a lad more than 57 years ago.

BUSY DAYS.



"Things have altered a bit since I first came to the mill," he said with a wry smile. "It was a busy place to work in and employed five millers. In those days, the mill ground nearly all the wheat and corn grown in the parish, and farmers grew large quantities then. There was scarcely a house in which the occupants did not bake their own bread, and they all came to the mill for their flour. Now very little wheat is grown locally and I have only one customer who bakes his own bread - one instead of scores. People gradually stopped making their own bread - I don't know why - and when the great mills were built at the ports and in the cities, there was little left for the small country mills to do."

Flour made at Benenden mill was sent to Rolvenden, Tenterden, Sandhurst, Newenden, Northiam, Beckley, Hawkhurst and Robertsbridge, and, in addition, there was a big demand for ground oats, beans, barley and maize.

At the present time no flour is ground at the mill, but only oats and barley, and a small amount of beans which neighbouring

farmers occasionally send in.

The mill contains three pairs of stones for grinding wheat for flour, one pair for corn and one pair for maize.

At the time Mr. Reeves began his career as a miller, there was another mill - The Beacon - at Benenden, one at Sandhurst, one at Rolvenden, one at Cranbrook, and three at Hawkhurst, out of which Cranbrook mill is the only one still working.

RUSTY MACHINES

In 1855, an engine was put in to help to grind when the water failed in the summer months. This has not been used for years and the flour making machines, which have not been working for nine years, are rusty and covered with cobwebs.

Benenden In Colour



Map of village, circa 1770.

Thomas Pankhurst was an agricultural labourer born in Benenden in 1778.

"To learn to read was the utmost object of what little education I received at school; and I was more than twenty years old before I could cast up pounds, shillings, and pence."

The only example of his 'Geographical Planisphere' (section shown below) is in the Cranbrook Museum, though the British Museum has a copy of the instructions for using it.



Above: Benenden Church & Parsonage from Dearn's history of the Weald of Kent.
Published by J. T. Dennett, Bookseller, Cranbrook, 1814.

Below: Hemsted House, circa. 1862.

