

BACS

Newsletter November 2005 No. 49

Benenden Amenity and Countryside Society

Dates for your Diary:

Workshop for proposed new village primary school – Monday 7th November at 7.30pm
Film Evening – Saturday 12th November 2005 at 7.30pm
AGM – 8th February 2006

Film Evening:

Everyone is invited to attend a showing of the 1950's film *Adventures in the Hopfields* at the Village Hall, Benenden, on Saturday 12th November at 7.30pm. Doors open at 7pm.

Tickets, which are available on the night, are £5 for adults and free for children under 12 and include coffee and biscuits. BACS are sharing the profits between two local charities, the Hospice in the Weald and Hawkhurst Cottage Hospital of Friends.

The film, which stars a six-year-old Jane Asher, Mandy Miller, Anthony Valentine and Melvyn Hayes of *Ain't Arf Hot Mum* fame, was shot in 1954 in and around Goudhurst. Directed by John Guillermin, who went on to make blockbusters like *Towering Inferno* and *Death on the Nile*, the film gives a unique insight into life in the Goudhurst hop fields in the 1950s with many local people appearing as extras.

Amazingly the film languished on a Chicago TV studio's shelves for nearly fifty years before being thrown out with the rubbish in 2002. A film enthusiast rescued the reel and advertised it for sale. It was snapped up by Tunbridge Wells film collector Barry Littlechild who has since shown the long lost film in packed village halls around Kent and accompanies it with other films from his collection including 1950s newsreels and a film of the last trams to run in London.

As the film was made for the Children's Film Foundation to be shown in Saturday Morning Cinema, the programme is suitable for all ages and will be fascinating insight into the past for children who are interested in history and a step back in time for older members of the audience.

Primary School planning meetings:

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Planning Department is holding an information display of possible sites for the new primary school over the weekend of the 5/6th November. It will be from 10 - 4pm at Benenden village Hall. On Monday 7th November a workshop will be held at 7pm until 9pm at the Village Hall, for the Planning Department to hear all your views regarding the different sites. Everyone is invited to attend.

Conservation Area Appraisal:

The Benenden and Iden Green Conservation area appraisal has recently been published, and Brian Haywood, a senior design and heritage officer at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, gave a short presentation on the appraisal at the September meeting of the Benenden Parish Council.

Mr Haywood talked about this and the options for enhancement around the parish. This includes rationalising, refurbishing and upgrading signage around the parish, replacing diseased trees, and upgrading 'street furniture' such as seating. In Benenden, enhancements could also include improving the edge of the road around the green, improving edges to the forecourt area in front of the Bull Inn as well as the forecourt area in front of the Village Shop. In Iden Green, enhancements could also include improving the footway in the main street and facilitating pedestrian movement at the junction at Oakfield Cottages.

All of these ideas are detailed in the appraisal document, which also summarises of the development of our parish over time, and the elements which now contribute to its special character. Please contact the Borough Council directly on 01892 526121, if you would like a copy.

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:

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 have recently launched a new membership drive. If you know of anyone who has recently moved to the parish, please contact Gill Snow who will ensure a BACS welcome pack is sent. This will include a Benenden Directory, as well as back issues of this newsletter.

Your committee:

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The Benenden Home Guard, 1940:

This is the sixth 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 are not the full record and where sections have been omitted this is indicated by There are indications in this address that enthusiasm for the home guard was starting to wane.

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

25th August 1940

It has been laid down by Higher Authority that fire will not be opened on any aeroplane unless it is flying under 1800 ft and can be definitely identified as enemy by its markings and by its behaviour in a hostile manner. In the event of fire being opened on a proved enemy aeroplane, it must be controlled by an Officer of N.C.O. & must not be indiscriminate.

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From conversations at the Conference held at Fothersby (?) on Aug 29th (??) it seems that the military consider an invasion almost certain. This, they believe, will be partly air-borne, partly sea-borne. Roughly the plan of defence is to divide the country up into grids. Home Guard units situated within these grid systems will man specified Road Blocks. Those outside of it will put up temporary Road Blocks to delay & engage small parties of the enemy, & adopt harassing guerrilla warfare. It was not deemed a wise policy to defend villages against strong forces of the enemy. These should be sniped & generally worried when resting at night. It is important that members of the Home Guard should be thoroughly conversant with their own countryside.

The general idea is to keep our roads free of serious obstacles to allow the free movement of our own troops. To ensure this mobility many of the concrete Road Blocks are now being removed and specially constructed movable obstacles substituted. These are to be called "Boys". They are to be made on the principal of uncapsizable toys – namely so heavily weighted at the base that they return to an erect position when pushed over. Their object is to "belly" the tank – that is to say to hoist the body off the ground so that the tanks cannot grip the ground.

There have lately been certain signs that the novelty of our job is beginning to wear off: that some of you are beginning to feel a little bored by what may appear to you to be irksome and unnecessary duties. Did you "listen in" to Sir Harold Nicolson the other day? He described boredom as one of Hitler's hidden weapons. If this remark be true in regard to the regular army, how much more so is it, when applied to the Home Guard? Now that the menace of an invasion seems to you to be less imminent, you are no doubt saying to yourself "Am I really of any use to my country? I am a busy man & this Home Guard job is occupying a great deal of my spare time". To this I would answer, that the menace of invasion is by no means past.....

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Now as to difficulties & disabilities I have just referred to. There are many. One of them is inherent to the whole system. By signing your enrolment form you have agreed to become subject to military law & liable to obey such orders as may be given to you. Empty words. You and I know perfectly well that obedience to a command must, in reality, be as voluntary as the rest of your effort – it must be given as freely as your time & other services.- if we are to attain any standard of efficiency. I need not remind you that, without discipline, a body of men becomes no more than a disorderly rabble. That is all there is to say on that point.

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Now that we are no longer required to stop cars on the road, the usefulness of the Telephone Exchange Piquet is to a great extent nullified. As you perhaps all know, I have for a long time felt very uneasy about the extensive stretch of ground behind Goddards Green that has remained unobserved save by the A.R.P. men of the Sanatorium. I have discussed the matter with the military & they very definitely regard the observation of this territory as of more importance than the Benenden Cross Roads – so that if it be a choice between these 2 posts the selection must rest with the Sanatorium. But it is desirable that, if possible, to man both, and if this can be arranged it will. In the meantime the Sanatorium have agreed to co-operate with us by supplying a certain number of men in order to make our strength up to four per night – two on duty and two off . There is an empty cottage available so you will be quite as comfortable there as at the Club post.

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Now that more rifles are available, musket instruction can be recommenced. Mr Barham will take the first squad tomorrow (Monday) evening at 6.30 at the Memorial Hall.