



Above: *Out and about*: lambs fill the spring fields; the primary school community on their Easter pilgrimage round the village; Merry and Bright at The CM Booth Collection in Rolvenden; Benenden Health in Westminster to campaign for better menopause support in the workplace

Front cover: *St George's Church*: No hint of the building works within. Photograph: David Sarton



Benenden Magazine

May 2026


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Editorial



I love the May issue as it always packed with news about upcoming events and coincides with longer, increasingly sunny days. While formatting the latest walk (page 33) I decided to don my boots and explore the trail and it was marvellous. I wandered through swathes of wild garlic and, after tucking a few leaves in my pocket, serendipitously met a lady along the way who shared her favourite recipe: roast chicken with a handful of leaves in the cavity. What more can you ask - country trails melded with cooking advice along the way.

How wonderful that not one, but three, time capsules have been buried beneath the floor of St George's (page 27). It reminded me of the time capsule that we planned to bury in the garden to mark the Millennium. For 26 years it lay in the garage, unfilled and unfulfilled, and it was only last year that we finally donated it, hoping that it will enjoy its ultimate destiny.

The International Time Capsule Society (there is one!) estimates there are between 10,000 and 15,000 time capsules worldwide, but sadly 95% of them are apparently mislaid by the fifth anniversary of their burial. Watching the recent Artemis II space adventure reminded me of the Apollo 11 trip to the moon in 1969. What I didn't know (before I went down the online time capsule rabbit hole) was that they left a time capsule on the moon's surface. It was a coin-sized silicon wafer with microscopic etchings of goodwill messages from leaders of 73 countries. President Eisenhower's message was "The Congress hereby declares that it is the policy of the United States that activities in space should be devoted to peaceful purposes for the benefit of all mankind." I try not to think what message the current president would provide if asked today!

Oh, to be a fly on the wall when ours are opened in 150 years' time.

Ruth Clark, Co-Editor

The Benenden Magazine is published monthly as a joint venture by Benenden Parish Council and St George's Parochial Church Council. It is distributed free to all residents of the parish. Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the publishers. Responsibility for accuracy of information rests with contributors and advertisers. Neither the publishers nor the editors shall be held responsible for or endorse any opinions, products or services printed in the magazine or directory.

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Village Calendar

May

Saturday 2	Churchyard Working Party, St George's, Benenden, 9.30-12noon	
Saturday 2	Hemsted Park, The Bull at Benenden Music Club, Benenden School Theatre, 7.30pm	p.21
Saturday 2	Spring Barbecue, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 5	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 5	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Thursday 7	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Election, Benenden Village Hall, 7am-10pm	p.9
Friday 8	Iden Green and Benenden WI, Social Afternoon, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.19
Saturday 9	Dingleden Open Gardens, 10-4pm	p.15
Saturday 9	Benenden Bowls Club, Open Day, Recreation Field, 12noon	p.9
Saturday 9	Hemsted Park, Alex McAleer - Mind Reader, Benenden School Theatre, 7pm	p.21
Saturday 9	Social Evening, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 10	Christian Aid Week starts	p.9
Sunday 10	Dingleden Open Gardens, 10-4pm	p.15
Tuesday 12	Village Lunch, Benenden Village Hall, 12.30pm	p.9
Saturday 16	Quiz Night, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Monday 18	Parish Council Meeting, Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm	
Tuesday 19	Mobile Library, bus stop outside Benenden Village Hall, 10-10.30am	
Tuesday 19	Mobile Library, Benenden Hospital, 10.40-11.10am	
Tuesday 19	Iden Green and Benenden WI, AGM, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.19
Saturday 23	Parish Annual Assembly, Benenden Village Hall, 2pm	p.13
Saturday 23	Ladder Toss, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Tuesday 26	Merry and Bright, Police: everyday situations, Memorial Hall, 2pm	p.16
Friday 29	AGM, St George's Social Club, 8.30pm	
Saturday 30	Hemsted Park, The Sinatra Jukebox, Benenden School Centenary Hall, 7pm	p.21
Saturday 30	Social Evening, St George's Social Club, 8.15pm	
Sunday 31	The Angry Whelk Fresh Fish Stall, Benenden Village Hall, 12-2pm	

Iden Green Toddler Group

Tuesdays during term time in Iden Green Congregational Church, 9-11.30am

Wednesday Coffee Mornings

Wednesdays in the Memorial Hall, 10-11.30am

Cakes & Chaos: Toddler Group

Wednesdays and Fridays during term time at the Mission Church, Sandhurst, 9-11am

Benenden Bowls Club

Thursdays, April-September, on the recreation field, practice night, 6pm

Parish Council



The arrival of spring never ceases to be anything other than an uplifting time of year for me. Throughout winter I yearn for the warmer days, and who can resist the wonderful feeling of being able to wander outside without the bother of layering up against the cold, watching the garden come to life again in a riot of colour.

This is the time of year when you can wander around the village and make use of all the benches donated over the years at strategic points, the latest being opposite the village shop. This was donated by the developer responsible for the market housing and new almshouses in Walkhurst Road: Canham Homes Ltd. While this bench is obviously brand new and in tiptop condition, please do let us know if there are any that have seen better days and we will restore and repair if possible.

Thank you to all who volunteered for our spring village clean-up in March. We had around 35 litter pickers making our highways and byways a better place, and the village shop did a roaring trade in cakes and drinks, serving as a well-deserved thank you to the volunteers, with the parish council picking up the tab, of course!

Our annual assembly takes place at 2pm on Saturday 23 May in the village hall, and all are very welcome to come along and hear the reports from the parish council, as well as many of our local community groups and charities. It is a really good chance to appreciate all that goes on in our wonderful village over the year, and there will be tea and cakes afterwards, which is a great opportunity to catch up with everyone. I hope to see some of you there.

Nicola Thomas, BPC Chair
nicola.thomas@benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Caroline Levett, Benenden Parish Council Clerk
07593 226462 clerk@benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk
For more information see our website benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk or find us on Facebook

Parish Council Meeting
Monday 18 May,
Iden Green Pavilion, 7pm

Church Calendar

St George's Church

Rector: Revd David Commander 240658 revdavidcommander@gmail.com (day off: Thursday)

Associate Priest: Revd Ylva Blid-Mackenzie 01233 820100 rev.ylva@gmail.com

Churchwarden: Sue Fisher 241907 sue@undaunted.co.uk

Churchwarden: Cathy Presgrave 07500 119189 cathy.presgrave@gmail.com

www.benendenchurch.org 850849 benendenchurch@gmail.com

Please inform the Rector, Associate Priest or Churchwardens if you, or anyone else, is ill.

8am and 5pm services will be in the chancel of St George's Church, accessed through the Bishop's Door to the east end of the church

10am services will take place in the hall of Benenden Primary School

Sunday 3 May	8am Communion	10am All-age Communion	5pm Evening Prayer
Sunday 10 May	8am BCP Communion	10am Morning Worship	
Thursday 14 May			7.30pm Ascension Day Service at St Nicholas, Sandhurst
Sunday 17 May	8am Communion	10am Sung Eucharist	
Saturday 23 May			4pm Connect Four at Mission Church, Sandhurst
Pentecost 24 May	8am Communion	10am Communion	
Sunday 31 May	8am Benefice BCP Communion	10am Communion at St Nicholas, Sandhurst	
Morning Prayer	8am Mondays and Fridays at The Rectory, Benenden, but not 22 and 25 May		

Mission Church, Sandhurst

Rector: Revd David Commander 240658 revdavidcommander@gmail.com (day off: Thursday)

Morning Prayer 8am Tuesdays and Wednesdays, but not 20 May

Mid-week Communion 10am Tuesdays

Iden Green Congregational Church

Pastor: Tobin Bird 240027 www.idengreen.org.uk

Sunday Services 10am Morning Worship 5.30pm Evening Worship

The 10am Morning Worship is broadcast on our YouTube channel: search 'Iden Green Congregational Church'.

The Roman Catholic Chapel of Our Lady and St Joseph TN17 4EL

Fr Barry Grant 713364 www.sttheodore-cranbrook.org

Masses 9am Sundays 7.30pm Holy Days

From the Parish Registers

Funeral 22 April Hazel Eastwood Funeral, St Nicholas, Boughton Malherbe

Church Letter



There is so much to celebrate in May

I trust that the Easter period was a blessing for you, and you managed to have some quieter time from the usual busyness of life. The main part of St George's Church - the building - may be closed at the moment, but the work of the church and the variety of services continue just the same, and the 'Restore, Renew, Rejoice' project continues to go well. Early in April, time capsules were buried in the floor of St George's adjacent to the font. This was a significant event, and exciting for the children and youngsters involved. (More details on page 27).

May is a beautiful month. It is also a month of much celebrating. We'll be celebrating our first wedding of the year as Joe and Amrita get married at St Nicholas under a 'Marriage Order' (another first) because of the closure of St George's. We'll also be celebrating the joy of the baptism of Iona Stephenson - again at St Nicholas as we currently haven't got a font or floor at St George's.

We'll be commemorating and celebrating Ascension Day on Thursday 14 May - Jesus' rising from earth to heaven. Then, a week and a bit later, we celebrate Pentecost on 24 May - 50 days after Easter Sunday. This is when we remember the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the first disciples; it is seen as the birth of the church and is also known as Whit Sunday or Whitsun. In between those two services, we also have our annual parochial church meeting on 18 May. It's an opportunity to say thank you for the ministry and service of many people who make our church work.

The week after Pentecost, on 31 May, apart from it being Trinity Sunday, we will also be celebrating the confirmation of three parishioners, as Claire Hughes, Julia Smith and Sienna Jones all publicly confirm their Christian faith at a service at St Michael's in Marden. Earlier the same day we'll be recognising Revd Ylva's ministry with us and praying for her as she continues to discern God's calling for her future ministry and service.

Despite the uncertainty of things on the world stage, we have much to be thankful for and to celebrate in Benenden. We just need to remember and look up in May and see the beauty that is around us at this lovely time of year.

Revd David Commander, Rector



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Talking Point



Bringing connection and joy to dementia support

Caring for someone living with dementia can be one of the most loving, and exhausting, roles a person can take on. During Dementia Action Week (18–24 May), it feels especially important to recognise the quiet dedication of carers across our communities and to highlight the support that is available to them.

Across Kent, The Dementia Experience is helping carers and families reconnect with moments of joy that still exist within the dementia journey. Their work is built on a simple but powerful idea: that even in the midst of challenge, connection, laughter and meaning can still be found. At the heart of the organisation is a compassionate and energetic team who understand that when caring begins to drain the tank, people need spaces where they can pause, breathe and feel uplifted. Their sessions are designed not just for those living with dementia, but also for the 'everyday warriors': the partners, children, friends and neighbours who care for them.

Through a range of free weekly clubs and events, The Dementia Experience creates welcoming environments where people can relax, share stories and build supportive friendships with others who truly understand their journey. Activities include Hug in a Mug coffee mornings, live music sessions and Joy in Motion gatherings, which combine music, gentle movement and shared fun. These sessions focus on what matters most in the present moment - connection, warmth and a sense of belonging - rather than trying to tap into the past or panicking about the future.

Alongside these joyful experiences, the organisation also offers practical information sessions, helping carers gain confidence and pick up useful tools to support everyday life. What makes this approach special is that it is rooted in lived experience. The team recognises that while dementia brings undeniable challenges, it does not take away the need for companionship, creativity and joy. Dementia Action Week is a chance for all of us to reflect on how we can become more understanding, supportive communities. Sometimes that simply starts with a conversation, a smile, or taking the time to learn more.

The Dementia Experience invites anyone affected by dementia - whether directly or as a carer - to come to a session, meet others and experience the warmth and welcome for themselves. Because even in difficult times, music, laughter and human connection still have the power to brighten a day, one conversation, one song, and one small moment of joy at a time.

Clara Hebblethwaite

www.dementia-experience.com

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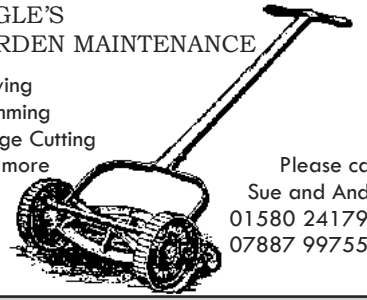
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Benenden Bowls Club

If you fancy having a go at lawn bowls please come along to our open afternoon at the club from midday on Saturday 9 May. We are a small, very social club that only plays friendly games. Club nights for practise are from 6pm on Thursday. All are welcome. Find us at the top end of the village hall.

Glenda Marshall

Village lunch

All Benenden and Iden Green parishioners are invited to join us for lunch in the village hall at 12.30pm on Tuesday 12 May. If you would like to come and haven't written your name down already, then please ring me by Thursday 7 May. We are a bigger group now which is wonderful but means the cooks need longer to prepare. It costs just £5.

Minnie Garnier 240506

TWBC election candidates

The nominations for the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council election taking place on Thursday 7 May are:

Michael Edward Applebe Liberal Democrats

Ellen Neville Tunbridge Wells Alliance

John Spence Reform UK

Rosanna Taylor-Smith Conservative & Unionist

You may vote between 7am and 10pm at Benenden village hall. You don't need your polling card but you will need photo ID.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is taking part in the Government's flexible voting pilot at May's elections. Electors will be able to choose to either vote on polling day as usual (7 May) or early on Saturday 2 May or Sunday 3 May. There will be three voting hubs and voters can choose to vote in any one of them on these two days.

The hubs will be located in Royal Victoria Place in Tunbridge Wells, in the Community Centre in Paddock Wood and in Vestry Hall in Cranbrook.

christian
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10-16 MAY

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Christian Aid Week

Please give generously during Christian Aid Week 10-16 May, to support Beacon of Hope, a life-changing project in Kenya that helps people feed their families and generate income selling their produce on market stalls through cultivation of small, unused city spaces. You can donate easily online, please either scan the QR code above or go to caw.christianaid.org.uk/envelope-2026/Benenden/iden-green.

Let's help make a difference. Thank you.

Deborah Jenkins

Poppy Appeal organiser wanted

Jane Dalton Holmes has organised our village Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal in November for many years, raising an amazing £100,000-plus for the charity during that time. This year will be the final time for her to organise this fund-raising activity, and she is looking for someone to join her to learn what is involved, before handing over responsibility in 2027. The funds raised by the appeal provide invaluable support for veterans, serving personnel and their families.

If you are interested to learn more about what is involved, please contact me.

Derek East 291311

sueandderekeast@hotmail.co.uk

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Parish Annual Assembly

The Annual Assembly of the Parish will be held on Saturday 23 May, 2pm, at Benenden Village Hall. Parishioners are invited to hear reports from the Parish Council and village organisations. Refreshments will be available.

Benenden Village Fete fun

Not long now to go before the wonderful community event that is the Benenden Village Fete, in aid of St George's Church. Here's to a glorious afternoon for the whole family, discovering bargains and your future treasures, savouring BBQ, pints, fizz, coffee, cream teas, cakes, ice cream and strawberries. Here's to brilliant performers, magic and music. To games, children's races, automotives and locomotives. To the Hemsted ponies, proud pooches and the Hinxden heifer. To good old-fashioned fun, and fantastic fundraising too.

This year we are paying tribute to David Attenborough and the natural world he has committed his life to championing and the Primary School is holding an art competition for their children (look out for posters for details). A selection will be displayed on the church 'Restore, Renew, Rejoice' stall and the winners will be announced on the day.

We also have a challenge for dogs to enter the Fun Dog Show dressed as an animal in our 'Dogs not Dogs' show and to demonstrate their waggiest tail, most doggie sits and fun agility skills.

Tickets for the legendary fete raffle are on sale in Benenden's, the Bull and the village hall now. There are many great prizes, including a balloon ride over the beautiful Kent countryside. They always sell quickly so don't forget to snap yours up.

There is still time to donate quality, unwanted items to the fete stalls. See the box above for donation information and details of how to arrange collection of some items.

Athena Cripps and Cathy Presgrave
stgeorgesbenendenfete@gmail.com

BENENDEN FETE 2026

DONATION TIMES & INFORMATION

WHAT Good quality, clean bric-a-brac, vintage items, tools, working equipment, ladies & children's clothes, accessories, unused cosmetics, jewellery, toys & books

WHEN into our cars from 8.30-9.30am on:

- Saturday 23 & 30 May, 6 June
 - Wednesday 27 May, 3 & 10 June
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WHO If you can't make these dates call:
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fete opens at midday. Entry is on the Bull side

of the site for the supervised parking area.

Please ring me if you have any questions.

Richard Stubbings 854992

Fete clothes donations

Time to have a sort out. We would love your

quality, clean ladies' and children's clothes and

accessories to sell on 'The Wardrobe' stall at

the village fete in aid of St George's Church

in June. Also, new for this year, we want any

unused in-date cosmetics, perfumes and facial

products for our 'Skin Deep' section. We also

need clothes and trouser clothes hangers.

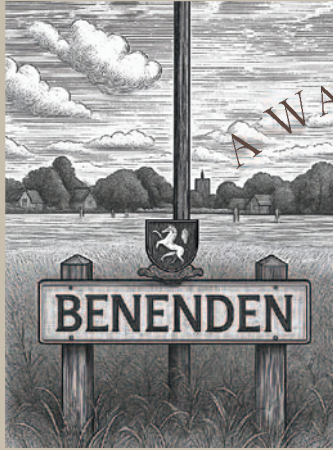
You can donate at the drop-off times

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Michelle Burford 07929 206482



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Benenden Primary School

Just before Easter, the whole school went on a pilgrimage. Rev David helped us to consider what the purpose of the pilgrimage was, and then we were off! All 213 children walked through the footpaths of Benenden, stopping at stations which were manned by volunteers. The stations included making a cross, 'silent spotter', a campfire to let go of things we are sorry for and, of course, a biscuit station! All walkers signed a pilgrimage book and considered what they had gained from the experience.

The experience was, of course, different for every individual. However, for me it was an opportunity to be totally inclusive and ensure that this was something that every single member of the school community experienced. This was no mean feat and would not have been possible without volunteers from three local churches, and also our regular volunteers.

With school budgets tightening, we are increasingly reliant on volunteers, who enable us to go the extra mile for all children within our school. We have volunteers who come in for an hour to read with the children. We have some who come in to support with fundraising or specific events and activities. We are also very fortunate to have a number of volunteers who give up whole days every week to offer support within classrooms. I am so very grateful to every single one of these individuals and offer my wholehearted thanks to you all.

If you have some time on your hands and can volunteer one day or more per week, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Benenden Primary School office to discuss.

Alison Brook, Headteacher 240565
office@benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk
www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk

DINGLEDEN OPEN GARDENS

Peter & Sylvia Kellett, Judy Williams and Steve & Angie Lambert will be opening their gardens in **Dingleden, TN17 4JU** to the public on **9 & 10 May, 10-4pm**

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Entry is £5 & under 18s are free.
Parking & refreshments available.

Benenden Pre-School

We are very grateful to the Benenden Bonfire Society for awarding funding to us again this year. The pre-school children enjoy making the guy every year and staff happily volunteer at the Benenden Bonfire Night on an annual basis. The Bonfire Society's generous gift is enabling us to purchase a new mud kitchen for the garden.

A mud kitchen is a really important element of an early years' garden. Mud kitchens are sensory-rich environments and mud and water the ultimate natural sensory materials for young children to play with. It promotes fine motor skills, such as scooping and stirring, as well as gross motor skills such as digging and carrying. Handling kitchen utensils, pouring, mixing, and transferring materials strengthens hand-eye coordination.

A mud kitchen gives children the opportunity for imaginative and creative play as well as developing language and communication through role play. Sharing, turn-taking and problem-solving are practised and early maths concepts are explored through counting and measuring.

Thank you Benenden Bonfire Society for supporting your village pre-school.
Lucy Oakley, Supervisor
supervisor@benendenpreschool.co.uk



Merry and Bright

At our March meeting we had a very interesting visit to the Morgan Motor Museum in Rolvenden. Having lived in Benenden all my life I have never visited before and there were a couple of others who hadn't either - it was well worth a visit. Thank you to Mr Booth, who let us bombard him with questions! Afterwards we had afternoon tea in the Star Inn in Rolvenden. Thank you Lynn and Yvonne and all the staff for a lovely spread. Our April visit is to Tenterden Garden Centre, where we will have a cream tea and then I am sure a few plants will be purchased.

On 26 May we will be in the Memorial Hall for a talk from the police on everyday situations, after which we will have our Victorian tea. Everyone is welcome.

Laraine Penny, Chair 241763

A message from your local MP

In January, after thousands of people across the Weald were left without running water for days, I wrote to every home asking people to share their thoughts on South East Water. The response was overwhelming. More than half of you said you've been without running water three or more times over the last decade; 85% of people rate the service as poor or appalling; and over 90% feel the chief executive shouldn't remain in post.

What was most worrying was the total failure to support those who were most vulnerable. People on the priority services register, including families with newborn children and those with serious health conditions, reported receiving no water deliveries and, in many cases, no communication at all.

I've passed all these findings on to the regulators now investigating South East Water, and I'll keep pushing for proper accountability, a change of CEO and a service we can actually rely on.

Now to a different survey: my crime questionnaire, in which almost everyone said they would like to see a much more active police presence. Kent Police have implemented a new neighbourhood policing model that allocates a dedicated 'beat officer' to every ward. It's their job to build up a picture of the area, understand where and when crime happens, and disrupt crime and antisocial behaviour based on the information they gather and what you tell them.

The local ward officer for Benenden is Amily Davis. If you want to tell them about anything you're seeing or worried about in your area, or you'd like to invite them to an event, you can do so via the Kent Police website. Visit the 'Contact Us' section, select 'Contact an officer directly', and complete the form.

Remember, though, if you need to report a crime, call 999 if it's happening now, or otherwise 101. And if you're having trouble getting in touch with the police, you can always reach out to me, and I'd be happy to help.

Katie Lam

Benenden Hospital

It seems spring has been rebranded among staff as the new New Year: a time to put the quiet thoughts and goals of winter into action. I've certainly found this to be the case after completing the Bath Ultra 50km Challenge at the end of March for Alzheimer's Society. May sees National Walking Month, and the benefits of walking, and in fact any exercise, are undeniable in improving heart health, aiding in weight management, reducing anxiety and boosting mood. I will be fully embracing this by completing the Jurassic Coast 100km rounding off my fundraising efforts.

Also in May, Alex Chipperfield, medical director and consultant orthopaedic surgeon, offered ten colleagues the full cost of race entry, on behalf of the hospital, to take part in the Maidstone Riverside 10km or 10-mile run taking place on 10 May. This was gratefully received by both experienced and beginner runners. Staff set up charitable fundraising pages so people could support their journey and our hospital's chosen charity for this year, The Big Wrap.

In March, I and our private GP for women's health, Dr Fiona Warner, joined a roundtable hosted by Benenden Health in Westminster to address the growing number of women leaving the workforce due to inadequate support for menopause symptoms. Our hospital is proud to lend its voice and expertise to Benenden Health's campaign, accelerating progress towards organisations embedding clear menopause support policies.

Spring is also in full bloom around our hospital grounds, so thank you to our grounds team for maintaining our beautiful surroundings. Staff have been taking spring photos on lunchtime walks and sharing them, which has been a joy to see.

Claire Harley, Hospital Director



Benenden Cricket Club Invite New Members

Traditional Village Green Cricket

The season is in full swing • We invite new players of all standards • We play friendlies on Saturdays • All equipment is provided

To join the Cricket Club, contact Peter Newman
07810 658981

Benenden Gardening Club

Time to start planning your planting for our second annual Flower and Produce Show on Saturday 11 July in Iden Green Pavilion.

There are nine categories, plus a 'best in show' award:

Flowers single bloom; display of garden flowers; and arrangement of flowers in a standard size teacup.

Vegetables four of the same vegetable (similar size); four similar size potatoes; and display of minimum four types of vegetables, arranged artistically.

Fruit artistic display of any soft fruit.

Children's Class (up to 12 years) anything grown by themselves.

Miscellaneous ugliest/funniest vegetable.

All are welcome to enter. Membership of the club is not necessary. More details will be in the June issue.

Pippa Sarton

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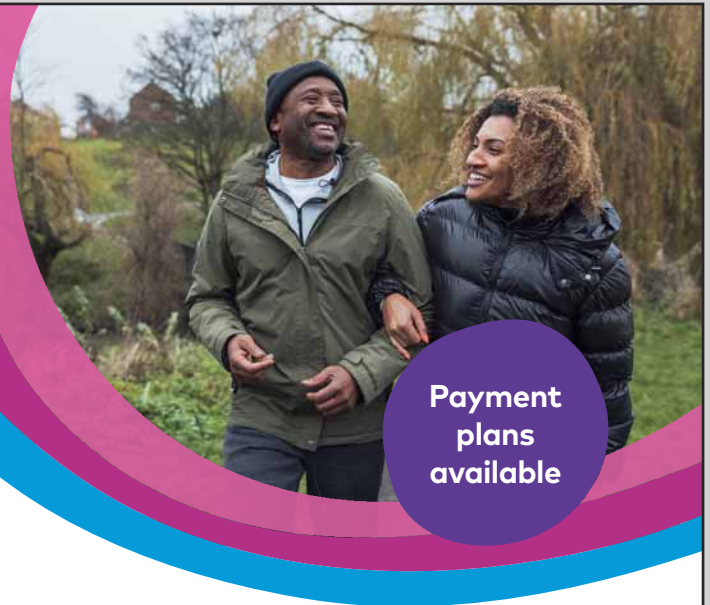
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Talking shop

The annual stock take happened on 9 April and huge thanks to all those intrepid people who turned up to indulge in the exciting task of counting everything in the shop! Your help is very much appreciated for this tedious task.

Due to the current crises, like many other businesses, we are experiencing difficulties with getting certain products (e.g. butter and cooking oils amongst others). Delivery of various items is disrupted because of the issues with fuel. We ask you to bear with us.

There have been several changes recently, not least in the décor, where a fresh coat of paint has considerably brightened us up. A new chiller in the café now houses cakes and savoury fillings, freeing up space for a more exciting menu. Pizza ovens have been purchased so we can bring a touch of Italy to Benenden, and we are also installing a griddle so we can offer freshly cooked sausages and bacon and fried eggs. During spring and summer we will be offering Caesar and Greek salads along with butterfly king prawns and sourdough fishmonger sandwich with lashings of tartare sauce.

New milkshakes and smoothies will also be on offer but if anyone fancies something a little stronger, we have a selection of new wines to have with food. Tuesday has been a quiet day in the café so we are offering a 10% discount on all main meals that day only. We are re-opening the café from 9am to 1pm on Sundays (please pre-book large groups). Last but not least, despite difficulties with sourcing some products, we're pleased to say the dumplings have arrived and are selling well. These have nothing to do with stews, so if you're intrigued, ask to see them when you next visit.

Bev Beveridge info@benendens.co.uk
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Iden Green and Benenden WI

To gauge satisfaction with our group, a WI member was asked what she particularly liked about our meetings. She said that she appreciated the lovely welcome one receives as you come into the hall. She also mentioned that it is a happy place with lots of laughter and smiling.

Annabel Lear's talk last month on planting a summer border was informative and exciting. It provided a good, helpful start to our summer gardening efforts. Recently we also met for a delicious meal at the White Hart in Newenden. Our next gathering is on Friday 8 May for a social and craft afternoon in the Memorial Hall 2-4pm. Bring items you have made and tell us about them. There will be tea, cake and a raffle.

At our annual general meeting on Tuesday 19 May, we will be voting for a new president, as Shirley Fidler retires. She has given so much to the running of our WI over many years and we send her our love and thanks. Nominations are invited for committee members. There will be the usual, popular plant and produce table and a raffle.

Jackie Liffen WI@daisystar.co.uk

Planning Matters

For full details of the Parish Council's comment please see minutes of meetings.

- 26/00563/FULL Millers Meadow, Cranbrook Road. Single storey rear/side extension. Demolition of existing front walkway cover and store. Replacement front porch roof, changes to fenestration and the introduction of tile hanging. Construction of an ancillary building.
- 26/00711/FULL Bramley Dial, Cranbrook Road. Proposed single storey rear extensions, front porch, pergola and rear terrace; conversion of existing garage/store to a habitable room; alterations to fenestration.
- 26/00791/FULL Ramsden Farm, Dingleledn. Retrospective: alterations to fenestration & rooflights; addition of flues; erection of wall; installation of sewage treatment plant; conversion of outbuilding to art studio/gym; landscape alterations; Non-retrospective - construction of swimming pool.
- 26/00777/LBC Feoffee Cottages, Walkhurst Road. Conversion of an existing building comprising 6no flats into 4no cottages; demolitions of internal partition walls; addition of porch & 2no staircases; alterations to the external fenestration; associated landscaping.
- 25/01076/SUB Benenden Hospital, Goddard's Green Road - Submission of details in relation to condition 27 (boundary treatment details) of 23/03274/FULL.

More planning matters at:
benendenparishcouncil.gov.uk

Benenden School

We were delighted to again be named - for the fourth year running, no less - as one of the top 100 schools in the world by Spear's. It's always pleasing when third parties acknowledge our success, and this is especially true when they highlight aspects that we place great importance on; for example Spear's cited our focus on cultivating independence and leadership, alongside our ethos of developing young women with compassion, courage and courtesy.

Elsewhere in the media, our Head of History of Art, Matthew Wilson, recently wrote a compelling article for The Spectator defending a subject that, while highly valued here at Benenden, frequently comes in for criticism. Mr Wilson also delivered a particularly fascinating assembly in which he challenged us all to wonder who might be considered the next great artist. It was a thought-provoking and insightful talk which the students found stimulating.

Creating curious minds is one of our main missions and our Year 7s have recently spent a few days off timetable to encourage their understanding of the environment and sustainability. Their Enquiry Project focused on an exploration of the school site and they visited Sissinghurst Castle Gardens. They planted a new vegetable garden outside their boarding house and, having looked into how we grow our food, they used their creativity and culinary skills to make their own soups.

Curiosity about the world around them is something we hope will serve them their entire lives and it was in evidence at a meeting of the Iden Green and Benenden Women's Institute where some of our Sixth Formers regaled the group with some of their special interest projects that they undertake alongside A Levels: Subjects ranged from women's football to Dungeness architecture.

Rachel Bailey, Headmistress

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Cranbrook Library and Family Hub

This new space in Cranbrook offers a welcoming environment with a variety of free groups and courses for families. The current groups include:

Stay & Play with Little Bookworms - a relaxed session for families for children 0-5, Wednesday 1-2pm; Baby Group - designed especially for pre walking babies, Friday 9.15-10.15am. The health visitors are also based in the library and continue to run their Healthy Child Clinic every Thursday, 9.30-11.30am.

Hospice Moonlight Walk

Our annual Hospice in the Weald Moonlight Walk is back on 27 June starting from Sevenoaks Rugby Club at 6pm. It's the perfect opportunity for those touched by the hospice to walk in memory of someone they love. You can choose from the four, eight and 13-mile options starting, with a warm up to music and, on return, a glass of fizz at the finish line; also, food and coffee/tea will be available to buy. Everyone is welcome, including well behaved dogs.

All entry fees and fundraising support Hospice in the Weald in providing free care and support for people facing life limiting illness and their loved ones. To sign up or for more information, go to the events section of www.hospiceintheweald.org or call 01892 820533.

Richard Moxham

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Milhaud Elegie for Cello and Piano
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Bonis Cello Sonata in F major, Op.67
Lili Boulanger Attente
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Massenet Thais Meditation
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Hospice in the Weald music

Tickets can now be booked for the following programme of the annual Hospice in the Weald musical events in Sandhurst:

Wednesday 17 June at 3pm: The first recital is a special Liszt programme by the world-famous specialist, Leslie Howard. There will also be a Henselt duet performed with Florian Verweij.

Saturday 25 July at 3pm: Daniel Grimwood will be playing for the garden party recital. Details to follow.

Wednesday 9 September at 3pm: Florian Verweij will return from Holland for his recital, which will feature an extra duet with Leslie Howard.

Please book early by calling me or dropping envelopes with cash or cheque through my letterbox. Minimum donation for the first extra recital is £30 as this is a special gift from Leslie Howard to raise even more for Hospice in the Weald.

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Benenden Tennis Tournament



Benenden Tennis: summer tradition for all ages

The Benenden Tennis Tournament has become a much loved summer tradition in Kent. Running for over 30 years, it was established to offer fun, competitive tennis for both adults and children while raising money for local charities. Run entirely by volunteers, almost 100% of the money raised is donated, making community and charity central to everything it does. The tournament is held in the beautiful grounds of Benenden School. When the sun is shining, the setting is hard to beat.

A huge thank you goes to the school for generously hosting the event, supporting the set up and providing the use of their excellent tennis facilities across the six day tournament. We are hugely grateful to our local business sponsors, who support the event in many ways, including set up costs, medals, balls and refreshments. Sponsors include Burfields House Wealth Management, Harpers & Hurlingham, Fridays, Mudwall, Cranbrook Farm Shop, Hotshotz and Jubilee Hire.

The junior tournament days are packed with more than just tennis. There is a popular tea tent offering home baked cakes and strawberries, as

well as the infamous sweet shop and the junior raffle always a highlight. A coffee and drinks stand and sports stall also add to the lively atmosphere. During the junior doubles, Wow Cooking provides a delicious barbecue, while families are always welcome to bring picnics and enjoy the tennis from the sidelines.

In 2025, we welcomed a record number of players, with over 150 juniors and 100 adults taking part. Children as young as seven compete,



making it a fantastic introduction to tennis, with the focus firmly on enjoyment and good sportsmanship. Younger participants receive participation medals, and players of all abilities are welcome in both the junior and adult

competitions. Alongside the fun, there is also some excellent competitive tennis, particularly in the top divisions. All junior age groups receive winner and runner up medals.

Thanks to the amazing support of players, families, sponsors and volunteers, over £10,000 was donated last year to local charities including the

Caldecott Foundation, Catching Lives, Hastings Foodbank, Dandelion Time, the Sam West Foundation and the Woodchurch Driving Group.

The tournament runs from Tuesday 21 July to Sunday 26 July. Juniors aged 7-17 and adults of all standards are welcome. Entry is £25 per person per event and a new two generation tournament on Friday invites juniors to team up with parents, grandparents or older family members.

A huge thank you to all those that help on the day, but if anyone would like to help by providing cakes, raffle prizes, on-site support or first aid, please do get in touch. If you have a local charity you would like us to consider supporting please contact me.

Registration is now open at www.benendentennistournament.com

Georgina Wixley 07368 467322

juniorbenedentennistournament@gmail.com



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Restore, Renew, Rejoice

A legacy set in stone: a milestone for St George's

Just before Easter, on a bright and blustery morning, we gathered within the historic nave of St George's for an event of profound significance. To be back inside the building was a privilege; with the old floor removed and the spring light streaming through the windows, the church looked magnificent, even as it prepares for its future.

Led by Revd David Commander, Churchwarden Cathy Presgrave, and Richard Stubbings (Chair of the Restore, Renew, Rejoice project), we met to witness the burial of three-time capsules - a bridge between the Benenden of today and the generations of 2176.

Capturing the Spirit of 2026

These capsules, which will be buried under a stone etched with the year 2026, contain more than just objects; they hold the heartbeat of our community.

St George's Church Alongside our parish records and reflections, we included markers of a changing world, such as the order of service for the historic installation of The Most Revd Dame Sarah Mullally as the first female Archbishop of Canterbury. We also captured the vibrancy of our village life: the 2025 Fete guide (celebrating a record £20,000 profit!), a jar of local honey, current currency, and a USB stick with digital memories - offering a hopeful "good luck" to the future tech-experts who try to open it!

Benenden Primary School Presented by Head Boy George and Head Girl Caoilainn, this capsule captures the joy of childhood today. It includes 3D-printed models, Pokémon cards, grocery price lists, and a touching list of what our children hope to become when they grow up.

Benenden School Represented by Head of School Georgina and Sixth Former responsible for external relations Delilah, this capsule honours the historic bond between the school and the church. It contains a copy of The Term and a dedicated copy of The Benenden Angel, signed with a special message from Headmistress Rachel Bailey.

While we cannot know if the villagers of 2176 will arrive at St George's in flying cars, we act now out of a firm conviction: this church will still be standing as a place of beauty, peace, and community celebration.

Momentum is building

This ceremony marked more than a social milestone; it signalled that our project is firmly in the construction phase. The removal of the old floor is complete, and work is beginning on the modern underfloor heating system. We remain on track for our grand reopening in time for the Advent season.

Join Us in Making History

We have come so far, but we still have a journey ahead to reach our final fundraising target. If you have not yet donated, we invite you to do so now. Your gift is an investment in the very floor that will support this community for the next 150 years.

Please consider supporting the appeal today

Donate Online www.givealittle.co/c/restore_renewrejoicebenenden

Get in Touch To discuss a donation or share a message with the team, contact us at: fundraising@stgeorgeschurchbenenden.co.uk

Together, we are ensuring that when those capsules are unearthed in a century and a half, the people of Benenden will look back at 2026 and see a community that cared deeply for its heritage and its future.

Peter Brook, Restore, Renew, Rejoice
Community Liaison



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Energy Matters

Solar thermal: hot water from the sun

When we think of solar panels, many of us might picture electricity-generating PV panels. But there is another type - solar thermal collectors - that capture the sun's energy to heat water directly. Tim Dwyer looks at this simple, reliable technology and what it can offer households seeking lower bills and reduced carbon, particularly where hot water is a significant energy use.

How it works

Solar thermal panels are typically fitted to a roof, angled towards the sun. They come in two main types: flat-plate panels, which appear as dark glazed rectangles, and evacuated tubes, which resemble rows of glass cylinders. A typical three-bedroom home needs about 3-5sqm of roof-mounted panels. Because they convert sunlight directly into heat rather than electricity, solar thermal collectors can convert 50-70% of incoming solar energy into useful heat, whereas PV panels convert around a fifth into electricity.

The heat warms a fluid (a mixture of water and antifreeze) inside the panel. This is pumped through the bottom coil in the hot-water cylinder, transferring heat to the stored water before the fluid returns to the panel. The antifreeze allows the system to operate even on cold but sunny winter mornings.

A familiar idea - but improved

Early systems from the 1990s and 2000s could be temperamental. While the principle is unchanged, modern systems are reliable. Smarter controls, better overheating protection and improved fluids mean today's systems deliver the same benefits with less fuss.

Solar thermal is most productive from spring to autumn. In summer, many households find it supplies most of their hot water, often allowing the boiler, immersion heater or heat pump to remain largely off for weeks at a time. Over a year, a typical system can provide around 50-60% of annual hot-water demand. In winter it may not produce fully hot water, but it can still pre-warm the cylinder, so the boiler has less work to do.

Why it matters

Heating water accounts for roughly 15-20% of household energy use. Halving that makes a noticeable difference to bills and carbon emissions. For homes using oil, LPG or electric immersion heaters, the savings can be particularly welcome. Over 20 years, a system can avoid several tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions while reducing reliance on expensive fuels.

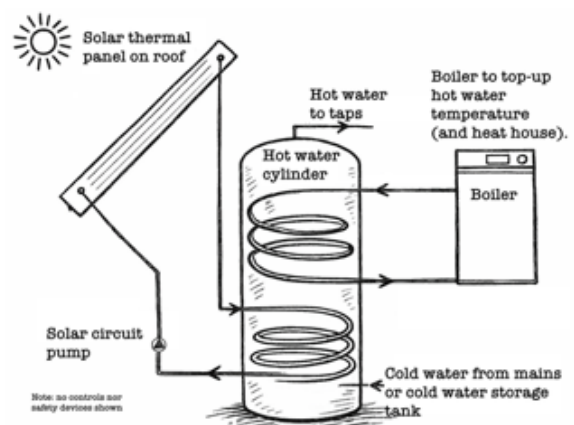
Practical considerations

The main constraint is space for a 200-300 litre well-insulated hot-water cylinder, typically about 1.4-1.7 metres tall and 60cm in diameter - about the footprint of a large kitchen bin but as tall as an adult. Homes with combi boilers may need changes to accommodate this. South-facing roofs are ideal, but east- or west-facing roofs can still work well. Panels usually fall under permitted development planning, although it is sensible to check in Benenden's conservation areas. Maintenance is modest, mainly replacing the antifreeze fluid every few years. The panels have no moving parts and are designed to last decades.

A village perspective

Solar thermal can take over much of the hot-water load during the warmer months, reducing fuel use and deliveries. It remains one of the most efficient ways of using the sun's energy, lowering bills and cutting carbon with very little attention once installed.

Coming next: Keeping the heat in - why insulation comes before gadgets



Simplified solar thermal system: a closed loop transfers heat from panel to a dedicated hot-water cylinder

Benenden Nature

Every little helps: even the smallest wildlife haven counts

“There is nothing inevitable about the decline of the natural world - it is the result of choices we make, and we can choose to act differently.”

Tony Juniper, What Nature Does for Britain

For me, wildlife-friendly gardening is about sharing my space with the creatures around me. The connection to nature is vital for my mental wellbeing. There's a deep sense of joy in watching something you've nurtured become a home, feeding ground or shelter for wildlife, and you don't need acres of land to make a difference. However small your plot, you can have a positive impact. In intensively farmed rural areas, even the smallest wildlife haven matters. Here are three key things I always consider:

GROW A BUFFET

A well-planned garden can offer food all year round: seeds, berries, nectar and insects.

Teasels are one of my favourites. Their purple flowers draw in bees from mid to late summer (July-September) and later the seedheads provide winter food for birds. We had a 'charm' of goldfinches visiting regularly to collect seeds.

Dandelions are terribly underrated. These bursts of sunshine are a lifeline in early spring, when bumblebees first emerge in search of nectar. Nettles are another unsung hero. Once they set seed, sparrows and bullfinches help themselves, while blue tits relish the aphids beneath the leaves. Nettles are essential food plants for the caterpillars of red admiral, peacock, small tortoiseshell and comma butterflies.

Tip: If space is tight, grow nettles in an old bucket or trough.

Fennel is wonderfully pollinator-friendly and seems happy almost anywhere, along path edges,

in gaps between flagstones, even in other pots. Hoverflies and shield bugs are drawn to its delicate fronds.

Tip: Plant it near a seat and you'll be transfixed by the insects.

I try to balance native wild species with the occasional non-native. Mahonia, for example, flowers early, providing nectar for buff-tailed bumblebees when little else is available.

When choosing cultivated plants, avoid showy double varieties often sold in garden centres. They may look impressive but can be all petals and very little nectar or pollen. Choose flowers in their natural form; old cottage varieties are usually a safer bet.

Avoid pesticides. Encourage natural predators such as ladybirds, lacewings and hoverflies to control aphids. Bats and hedgehogs also help keep insect and slug numbers in balance.

Tip: Be cautious of plants labelled “pollinator-friendly”. Many contain pesticide residues harmful to the very insects they claim to support!

Pots of colourful annuals can still have a place but choose varieties rich in pollen and nectar rather than purely ornamental bedding plants.

Tip: Remember the night shift. Moths are attracted to night-scented stock, evening primrose, borage and sweet rocket.

If you have grass, consider introducing meadow flowers as plug plants. Cowslip, oxeye daisy, meadow cranesbill, self-heal and meadow buttercup have all thrived here. We planted yellow rattle to curb the vigour of the grass, and over time it has reshaped what was once lawn into a far richer, more varied habitat. Varying grass length has made a real difference. By rotating when and where we cut with a scythe, some areas are left longer while others are kept shorter. That mix supports a wider range of insects and plants.

Many British bee species nest in short turf or bare soil, so we keep the grass closely cut along paths and edges.

BEDDING PLANTS

Busy Lizzie
Begonia
Petunia
Lobelia compact type
Pansy/Viola (hybrids)
Marigold (Tagetes)
Sweet Alyssum

POLLINATOR-FRIENDLY ALTERNATIVES

Geranium (hardy cranesbill)
Perennial Wallflower
Salvia
Lobelia cardinalis/training Lobelia erinus type
Viola tricolor (wild pansy or heartsease)
Calendula officinalis (pot marigold)
Wild Thyme



WATER: A LIFELINE FOR WILDLIFE

Water is essential. Even the smallest pond, an old sink or half barrel, can quickly teem with life. Choose a sunny spot with some afternoon shade and avoid placing it directly beneath trees. Make sure there's an easy escape route so small creatures can climb out. Stones, logs and marginal plants around the edges create ideal habitat for frogs and newts. Include one or two upright plants, such as flowering rush, and you may attract damselflies and dragonflies, which use tall stems to rest and emerge. Submerged plants like hornwort or spiked water-milfoil help oxygenate the water and keep it clear naturally.

Tip: No fish or pump. Fish eat smaller creatures, and pumps can harm delicate aquatic life.

CREATE SAFE HAVENS

Pollinators need more than flowers, they need safe places to rest and nest: hollow stems, loose soil, sheltered corners. Mammals need structure too. A trailing rosemary spilling over our retaining wall has become home to a hedgehog, hidden deep within the foliage. Another has chosen a small patch of bramble as cover. Alternatively, create a log pile in a shady corner.

Hedges are especially valuable. Our mixed native, with hawthorn, holly, field maple, spindle and hazel, echoes a traditional farm hedgerow. Together they provide blossom, berries and year-round cover. The dense structure offers nesting sites for birds such as blackbirds and song thrushes, and ground-level shelter for hedgehogs, pygmy shrews and wood mice.

Along the base, yellow archangel and bugle have thrived, creating rich ground cover where bumblebees forage. In spring the blossom hums with bees and hoverflies, while caterpillars feed on the leaves and overwintering insects shelter there.

Wildlife-friendly gardening isn't about perfection; it's about recognising that our gardens are part of a wider living landscape.

Cheryl Mason, Wild About Goudhurst
cheryl.m.mason@btinternet.com

Wildflower suppliers:

www.beehappyplants.co.uk www.wildseed.co.uk

MY FAVOURITE BERRY PRODUCING PLANTS

Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) February-April. Snowy white flowers, popular with solitary bees; the purplish berries relished by birds.

Wild Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*) May-June. Loved by birds for the hips & a hit with the bees.

Crab Apple 'Red Sentinel' *Malus sylvestris*, 'John Downie' *Malus robusta* April-May. Solitary bees, bumble bees visit for nectar; Blackbirds & thrushes love the fruits.

Rowan Tree May. Ideal for small spaces. White blossom & autumn berries attractive to birds.

Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) May. Bees are attracted to the blossom, the red berries an autumn treat for birds.

Elderflower (*Sambucus nigra*) June-July. Creamy flower heads in summer, a magnet for insects; dark berries in the autumn, loved by the birds.

Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) June-August. Attractive to bees & night time moths.

Ivy (*Hedera helix*) September-November. The flowers are loved by bees & hoverflies, the purple berries an important food source for birds over the winter months.

NECTAR-RICH PLANTS FOR POLLINATORS

SPRING

Crocus (*Crocus tommasinianus*, *Crocus chrysanthus*, *Crocus vernus*)

Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*)

Sweet rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)

Aubretia, single flowered (*Aubrieta deltoidea*)

Lungwort (*Pulmonaria officinalis*)

Honesty (*Lunaria annua*)

Meadow cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*)

Bugle (*Ajuga reptans*)

Lady's Smock, known as Cuckooflower or Milkmaids (*Cardamine pratensis*)

SUMMER

Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus* subsp, *Britannicus*)

Marjoram (*Origanum vulgare*)

Vipers Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*)

Catmint (*Nepeta racemosa*)

Lavender (*Lavendula x intermedia*)

Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*)

Giant Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)

Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*)

Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*)

Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*)

Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*)

AUTUMN

Devil's Bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*)

Common Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*)

Michaelmas daisy (*Aster amellus*)

Sedum (*Hylotelephium*)

Common Ivy (*Hedera helix*)

WINTER

Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*)

Hellebore (*Helleborus* sp)

Honeysuckle (*Lonicera x purpusii* 'Winter Beauty')

Crocus (*Crocus laevigatus*, *Crocus niveus*)





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Local Walks

Following the village roads that lead us back into history

The fourth in our series of revisited - and occasionally updated - walks around the parish, as originally brought to life by local historian Ernie Pollard in the 1990s.

TRAIL 4

Stepneyford, East End and The Pump

Duration: 2hrs

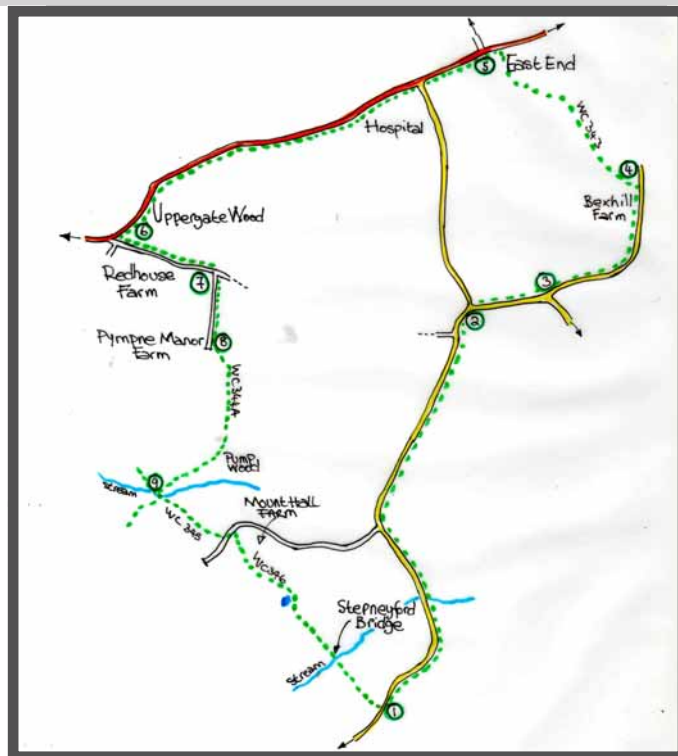
Start: Grid reference 834333

Start on Stepneyford Lane near Maplesden and walk northwards downhill (1). Dogwood is common in the hedges here although relatively scarce in most of the parish; in autumn the leaves turn a dark colour. Notice alder trees on the right, usually a streamside tree but here on a hillside, and sycamore, an early introduction from continental Europe. The common hedgerow shrubs are hornbeam and hazel, characteristic of old Weald woods and hedges.

Soon cross Stepneyford stream, where a stone marking the boundary between Rolvenden and Barclay hundreds stood on the far side, to the west of the road. In the past this was accidentally broken by farm machinery. Next on the left is the eastern end of the old road from Walkhurst Bridge. To the north of this road, in the angle with Stepneyford Lane, is an area of farm and woodland formerly known as East Walkhurst, far detached from Walkhurst itself. East Walkhurst was owned by the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral until the 19th century.

On the same side of the road is Backtilt Wood, part of the old den of Backtilt, owned by Dover Priory. In 1801 the wood was divided into Lower and Upper Backtilt, with a field between them, so that the central area of today's wood is fairly recent. There are a wide variety of trees, but much is chestnut coppice, probably planted in the 19th century for hop poles.

In the lowest part of the wood a large pit can be seen from the road. This is marked as a quarry on the first Ordnance Survey maps of 1870. We know from parish records that stone from Backtilt was used for road repairs in the 19th century and may come from this quarry.



Soon cross from the Wadhurst Clay, where the road is sunken, with high banks, to the Tunbridge Wells Sand, where it is much less sunken. The difference is presumably related to the underlying geology, although elsewhere in the parish there are deeply sunken roads on Tunbridge Wells Sand, as on Coldharbour Road.

There are about ten striking, silver-barked beech trees at the edge of Backtilt Wood; almost all have several trunks, suggesting that they were coppiced or layered before being allowed to grow tall. The (now private) road to the west at the upper end of the wood was closed in 1859, at the same time as that from Walkhurst Bridge to Stepneyford Lane, which was passed earlier.

Turn right into Halden Lane (2) at a junction with the little triangle of scrub at its centre, there is a seat on the far side, should one be needed (Fig. 1). The lane leads on to Halden Place in Rolvenden, where the Guldefords of Hemsted had another large house and park.



Fig. 1

Turn left at the first junction after about 200 yards (3). In the hedges, as the road drops down towards the stream, are hops, mingling with →

Local Walks

→ the hazel and the hornbeam. Whether these are native hops or varieties introduced for cultivation I do not know. Hops were once grown on virtually every farm in Benenden, as confirmed by the numerous oast houses.

The stream rises from springs at the junction of the sands and the clays not far to the west; it flows east to the Newmill Channel and then south to the Rother and the sea. The bridge here was known in the 1600s as Pepper Mill Bridge and a paper mill stood about 200 yards along the stream to the east.

Mounds close to the bridge suggest either an earlier bridge on a slightly different line or possibly a dam holding water for the mill. A yew tree stands by the larger mound. The Atlas of Kent Flora says that the yew is native in Kent only on the chalk, and that elsewhere it owes its presence to seeds dispersed by birds from churchyard and other planted trees. The many yew place names in the Weald, such as Iden in this parish, together with its very wide distribution, strongly suggest that the yew is a true native of the Weald. Climbing the hill beyond the stream, look out for another local tree, a small but fairly old wild service (or chequer) tree high on the bank, beyond Bexhill Cottage and the same side of the road.

Take footpath WC343 to the left just past Bexhill Nursery (4). The path runs to the north of the old house of Frogs Hole Walk by the side of hedges and a deep ditch and then across an open field to join Goddard's Green Road close to the hospital sign.

Turn left along the road (5). Now in the East End of Benenden, the name is probably a survival from the division of the parish into quarters, for rate collection, from at least the 1600s. The other quarters were West End, Iden and Dingleton, logical on the map but a curious choice of names. Currently on the broad drove road, Goddard's Green Road.

The hospital began as a tuberculosis (TB) sanatorium in 1905-6 with the purchase of Cleveland Farm Estate. With the waning of TB, the hospital diversified successfully.

An old Benenden house can be seen attached to the medieval house of Great Dixter in

Northiam, having been moved piece by piece from Benenden in 1910. It came from East End and was known as The Old House at Home. I think that it stood on Goddard's Green Road on the west side of Mockbeggar Lane, where in 1777 there was a small farm known as Further Home Farm. The house belonged to William Ward who also owned Home Farm further along the road. On the left is a high windmill mound. The mill had gone by 1777, although the name Windmill Hill, with Millbank House and Orchard, survived at least until then.

Soon to the left of the road is Uppergate Wood, the name (Upper Street) suggesting that it derives from either this road or (less likely) from the Roman road to the southern end of the wood. There is a record of oak bark, for tanning, taken from this wood around 1540. Parts

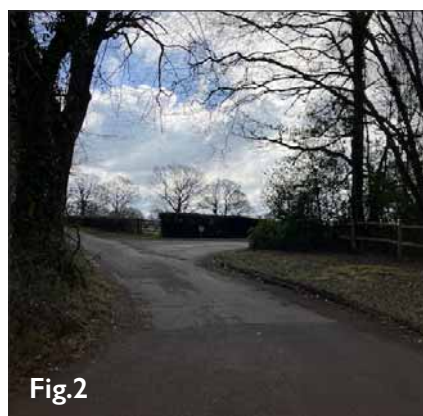


Fig.2

of Uppergate Wood have, like many others, been planted with chestnut.

Turn left beyond Uppergate Wood (6), along a quiet lane (Fig.2).



Fig.3

The lane, Pump Lane, is the one passed earlier on Stepneyford Lane, at the northern end of Backtilt Wood. Look out on the

right for a boundary stone marking the junction of Rolvenden and Barclay hundreds (Fig.3). The boundary followed the road from Backtilt and turned westwards here across the field towards Goddard's Green.

Turn right (7) along the drive (Fig.4) down towards Pypne Manor (historically Pump Farm, The Pumhouse, or just The Pump), one of the fine medieval houses in the parish dating from around 1500.

Then over the stile on the left and follow the footpath WC244A (8) (Fig.5). Walk slightly left across the field. The Pump was a clothier's house in the 16th century, belonging to the Gibbon family, one of whom founded the Free School. Through the kissing gate (Fig.6) is Hurdle Field, where the wool was dried on frames after washing or drying, and beyond the laid hedge on



Fig.4



Fig.5

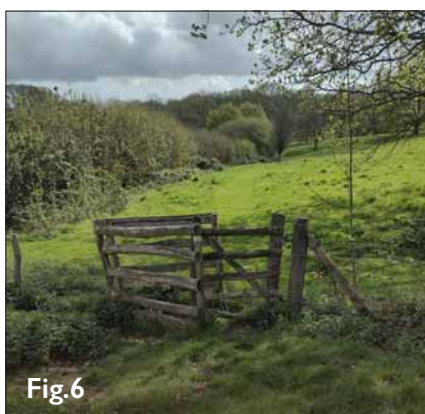


Fig.6



Fig.7

the left is Tenterfield, where the cloths were dried under tension on hooks (tenterhooks); the field names survived into at least the 19th century. A sunken track leads down from the house into Tenterfield. In Hurdle Field there is another sunken way, perhaps dating from the time of the clothiers but in use until at least the early 20th century and marked as a track on maps of that time.

Continue uphill along the edge of Pump Wood on the left, where there is a vast pit occupying most of the wood, perhaps the largest of the many large pits in the parish. Cross the stile (Fig.7) and walk across the field, which used to be an orchard, through the gate (Fig.8) and along the track past another large pit and down to the stream.

Beyond the old stone and brick bridge (Fig.9) take



Fig.8



Fig.9



Fig.10



Fig.11

footpath WC345 left (9) through a gate and cross the field towards Mount Hall (once Mud Wall) Farm and the road, kinking slightly left and almost immediately right at the road, through two metal gates and on to footpath WC346. The footpath runs through fields (with livestock), through a gate (Fig.10), around a pond and then more or less centrally through fields down the hill and across a bridge over the Stepneyford stream (Fig.11). Take care as the path down to the bridge is steep and can be slippery. Follow the hedge on the left to the top and emerge on Stepneyford Lane, opposite Maplesden. The walk is complete. Explore Ernie's history articles at www.benenden.history.pollardweb.com Useful maps: Ordnance Survey Explorer 125, 136, 137 cover the whole Benenden, Iden Green and East End area, also the online KCC footpaths map Photographs and walk check: Claire Hughes and family



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Charles Trollope

16 November 1948 - 2 March 2026

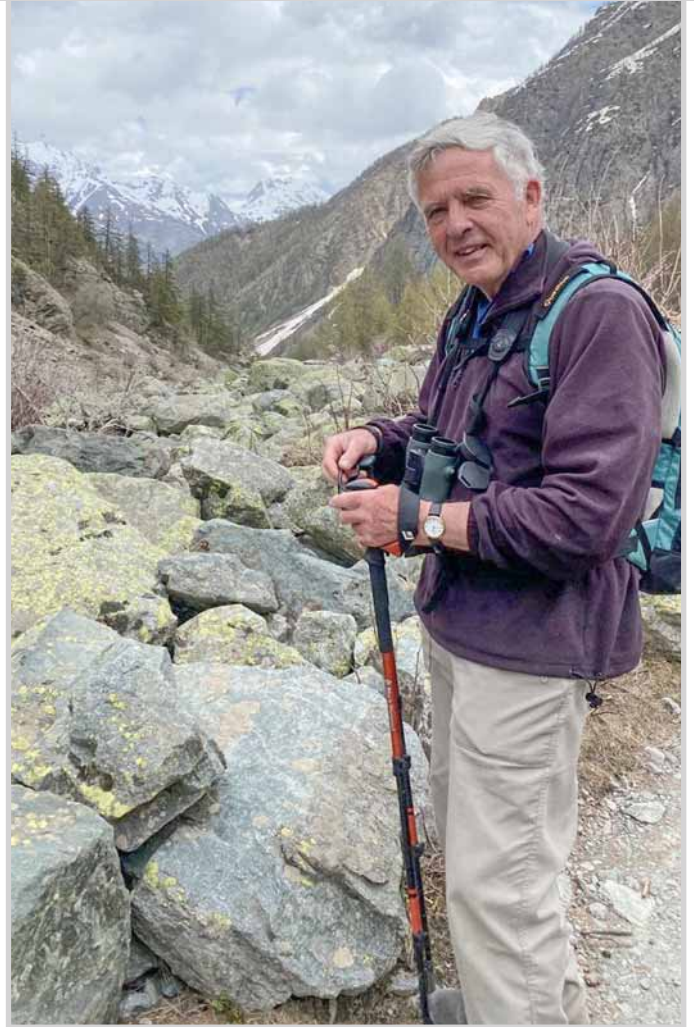
A loyal servant and good friend to this magazine was lost recently

Charles Trollope was diagnosed with mesothelioma (a cancer of the external lining of the lung associated with asbestos exposure) in January. Charles moved to Iden Green with his family in 1997 with his wife Heather and two sons Richard and Henry. He worked for many years in the paper-making industry for Reed International and more latterly at Horton Kirby paper mills in South Darenth.

As many of you will know, Charles had a passion for wildlife and the natural world, especially for our feathered friends. His love of birds was not that of a twitcher, someone who drives miles to get 'a tick', but as someone who just loved being out in the countryside, anywhere in the world, identifying and noting the birds around him. He was a skilled ornithologist and could identify birds by sight, sound or behaviour, skills that were put to use by the British Trust for Ornithology for over 30 years as he conducted annual bird surveys along stretches of the River Rother and elsewhere in Kent and Sussex. His love of birds was well known in our community, and he wrote bird articles for many years for this magazine - as a result of which he was frequently contacted to identify birds or answer questions, which he was only too willing to do, his enthusiasm obvious and infectious.

He was a dedicated member of St George's Church community, for whom he was treasurer for over 19 years, and was a driving force behind the annual church fete as well as reading regularly at the 8am communion service.

Charles lived life to the full and threw himself into anything and everything with a positive attitude, never scared to give something new a go. He loved playing and watching sport, was a regular visitor to the Open, Wimbledon and the Oval. Indeed, he was member of Surrey County Cricket Club for over two decades, taking with him friends and family for a day out at the cricket.



Famously, he was irked by Surrey CCC when they introduced a rule that one couldn't bring alcohol into the ground, but not to be outdone, he simply decanted some Chardonnay into a rectangular plastic bottle and wrapped it in foil, thus disguising it as sandwiches and smuggled it in. He always had a big smile on his face at the lunch break as he offered his friends, with a wink, a "glass of tuna sandwich" to go with the egg and shrimp pie!

A sociable and family man, Charles loved being with friends and family more than anything else and took joy from the simplest of things - a walk with friends, a day out at the sport, a round at his beloved Rye golf course - but most of all a good meal with family, an occasion when he would often rub his hands together and say with a huge smile on his face, 'Well isn't this fun!' It was, Charles, and we shall miss you.
Richard and Henry Trollope

On the following pages Charles shares his passion for birds one final time in the last piece he wrote for the magazine

Extinct in Britain but thriving in France: the birds of the Alps

Charles Trollope, in what proved to be his final piece for the magazine, details the wealth of birds, some now no longer found in Britain, to be seen on a trip to the French mountains

In May 2024, Jane Davies and I went to visit her daughter Sarah in France. Sarah and her French husband Pascal own and manage a hotel in Le Monetier-les-Bains, a resort at 1,500m in the Serre Chevalier ski area, in the Hautes-Alpes department, close to the Italian border.

We arrived in the dark and the next morning Jane and I were up early. It was a bright, sunny day, and as I gathered it had been cold, wet and windy the previous week, I was hoping the local birds would be welcoming the change in weather and be in good voice.

Opening the front door I immediately noticed what I thought to be a House Martin visit a nest site on the building opposite. Closer inspection with my binoculars revealed that it wasn't a House Martin but a Crag Martin. Also I could hear Swifts 'screaming' overhead. What a start to the day - and I was still only on the front doorstep!

As we strolled up through the village a lovely Black Redstart was feeding in a little derelict building plot. On entering a more



Jynx torquilla,
Wryneck

open area I heard the high-pitched song of a Serin - a small yellowish finch - in a tree right in front of us, a male with its bright yellow head and breast, looking very dapper.

Whilst I was admiring this bird, a Common Redstart joined in the early morning chorus. It was singing in a small fir plantation, which was walled in and so, frustratingly, we couldn't locate it. The male is a spectacular looking bird with a black throat, orange-red breast and white forehead.

Suddenly I heard a striking, loud call. My immediate reaction was that it was probably a bird of prey, possibly a Kestrel. The sound was coming from a small group of trees and because we were still in a residential part of the village it was difficult to get access to the site. It was not until the end of my stay that I actually saw the bird, which was quite a lot smaller than I was expecting from the loudness of its call. It was a Wryneck, a member of the woodpecker family, which, like its co-species the Green Woodpecker, has a diet consisting mainly of ants.

From the village we walked down towards the river. The path goes through some pastures with rocky outcrops and shrubs, which looked like a good habitat, and it didn't disappoint. The top of the first bush had a singing Whinchat, a bird that is becoming quite a rarity in the UK. The next sighting was even more exciting, with a pair of Red-backed Shrikes collecting nesting material. The male,



Serinus serinus,
Serin

with his grey head, reddish-brown back and thick, black eye stripe is a very handsome bird.

I could not help thinking that the last two birds to become extinct as breeding birds in the UK were the Wryneck and Red-backed Shrike, so it is comforting that healthy breeding populations are not too far away.



Lanius collurio,
Red-backed Shrike

On approaching the river, the noise level was quite deafening, with the snow melt creating a very fast-flowing torrent. Nonetheless, during my stay Black-bellied Dippers were seen carrying food for young, as well as Common Sandpipers in possible breeding territory. A small group of Goosanders were also recorded but I suspect these were birds on passage.

Next day involved a walk through the woods up to a plateau. The first part of the walk once we had left the village was scrubland bordering fir trees. There was a little warbler flicking in and out of the branches about, making a high-pitched repetitive note. This ruled out Willow Warbler or Chiffchaff but it was tricky to get good views, although eventually I was able to get a reasonable sighting. It was a bit like a Wood Warbler but lacking any yellow on the breast - both breast and underparts being a clean white compared to other closely related

warblers. It was a Western Bonelli's Warbler and it turned out to be by far the commonest warbler in the area.

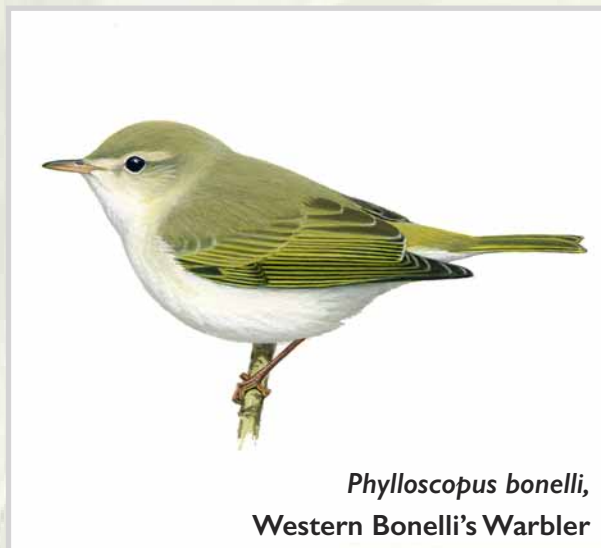
On reaching the plateau some 1,000 feet above the village I picked up the songs of Whitethroat, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff, all very familiar birds. I can only assume this altitude was more to their liking, as I did not hear them in the valley.

Other notable birds seen were Goldcrest, Firecrest and Crested Tit in the pine woods. Hearing the long drawn hoarse call of the Willow Tit near one of the wetter areas was a reminder of hearing them around Bewl Water many years ago. Sadly they are now extinct in the South East.

Both Golden and Short-toed Eagles were present and the holiday total number of species was 59. It was not the number that matters but the range of species which are now rare in the UK that made it so exciting and enjoyable.

The hotel was closed during our stay, with Sarah and Pascal taking a well-earned break after a hectic ski season. Many customers come not only for the skiing but for the excellent and delicious fare that Pascal provides as chief chef. Dinner in the evening during our stay was as good as the bird watching - and that is saying something.

Illustrations: Stephen Message
www.message-wildlife-art.co.uk



Phylloscopus bonelli,
Western Bonelli's Warbler

In Your Garden

Weather to sit back and watch spring unfold

I am pleased to inform you that so far we have had good weather for spring husbandry in the gardens I maintain, and generally things are

looking under control out there. In previous years we have had such cold and slow starts that April and May have been months of rushed jobs - but not so this year, thankfully.

Playing catch-up in the borders is something I have become quite footloose about, so it is a relief to be able to sit back and watch spring unfold, as it is quite the most magical time of the year. Consequently I am even thinking about staking lofty and large herbaceous now, which is a first for quite a few years - ideally done in early spring when the crowns of plants are emerging.

It may seem odd staking such a tiny plant but it is near impossible to do so once too late, and I cannot stress enough the difference it makes to the borders if done properly. Bamboo canes and string, weaved through in sections, will work; pressing in branching sticks around the edges will also do the trick. Of course, metal hoops are wonderful if you have enough of them but they can be expensive (and you always need more than you can budget for) but I have been known to opt for a few decorative ones for last minute staking (eg. single coiled for peony stems), while wooden hurdles are handy in key spots. If you can manage to tiptoe throughout the beds and weed, I would definitely do this now.

Very soon the herbaceous will have covered the ground, so get the weeds out before they set seed. Any spent bulb foliage can come out (or be left to die back into the ground if you wish) and early spring plants can be cut to the



ground now before allowing new fresh growth to emerge (eg pulmonaria and primroses). I also tidy up hellebores, taking out any spent flowering stems and tatty leaves. I may leave a few of their seedlings in situ but it will be a good few years before they show a flower.

I would start planning your summer pots now in time for a trip to a local plant nursery to stock up on colourful

annuals and trailing plants. I always purchase a number of foliage plants too - I know there are so many pretty flowers to choose from but foliage is equally as integral to a summer display, providing structure and texture. Some of my current favourites are Panicum 'Sparkling Fountain', either a dark purple/black or lime green ipomoea, coleus and silvery helichrysum all mix well. On a larger scale cannas are unbeatable, the variegated Arundo donax is also a whopper but worth it for some serious height in your display. Dahlias and tender salvias are also great in pots, as are interesting conifers or even small deciduous shrubs such as a guelder rose, with its lanky leaf-laden branches and open habit.

As always with containers, keep the growing medium fairly rich, preferably add a bit of loam (from a bag of topsoil) to keep the compost texture more stable and nutrient-rich. Loam also has better water-holding capacities than bagged composts. Finally, if you can be organised enough to source large water-holding saucers to place underneath your pots, then so much the better for your plants.

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