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COUNTRY · HERITAGE · GARDENS · COOKERY · TRAVEL · CRAFT

LandScape

Life at nature's pace

April 2020

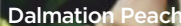
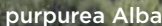
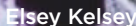
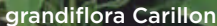
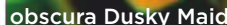
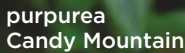
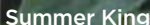


Hidden treasures along a forgotten coastline
Colour in a garden of curiosities
Woodland stories from a silversmith's hand

*The beauty
of British
country
life*

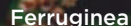
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Dear reader...

THE PHRASE 'APRIL SHOWERS' is commonplace and is believed to have its roots in an English proverb dating back to the 1800s. Yet, surprisingly, although rain can be sudden and heavy, April is often one of the driest months, with warm spring days to be savoured.

It is one of my favourite times to be in the garden: ripe tulip buds sway in the breeze, and tiny serrated leaves dance on the pendulous branches of the birch tree. Everything here is bursting into growth, including the lawn.

The wet winter shows itself in areas of springy green moss, and a few dandelions have opened their yellow faces to the sky. Large patches of clover form irregular cushions of dark green; their trifoliate leaves pushing back the grass. As I survey the assorted plants which make up my neglected lawn and ponder how I will improve its appearance, I notice lots of little piles of soil. They look like tiny molehills, with a hole in the middle. At least 20 of them are dotted around, like a village of squat houses set in a meadow. As I muse on what they could be, a small, slender bee lands on the grass and crawls into one of the holes.

These are Mining bees, and I have not seen them in my garden before. Watching them going about their business, I feel immensely privileged to witness these solitary souls. I sit and watch their comings and goings, contemplating the fact that a small lawn, no matter how dishevelled, can be home to so much life...

Rachel

Rachel Hawkins
Editor

Subscribe to

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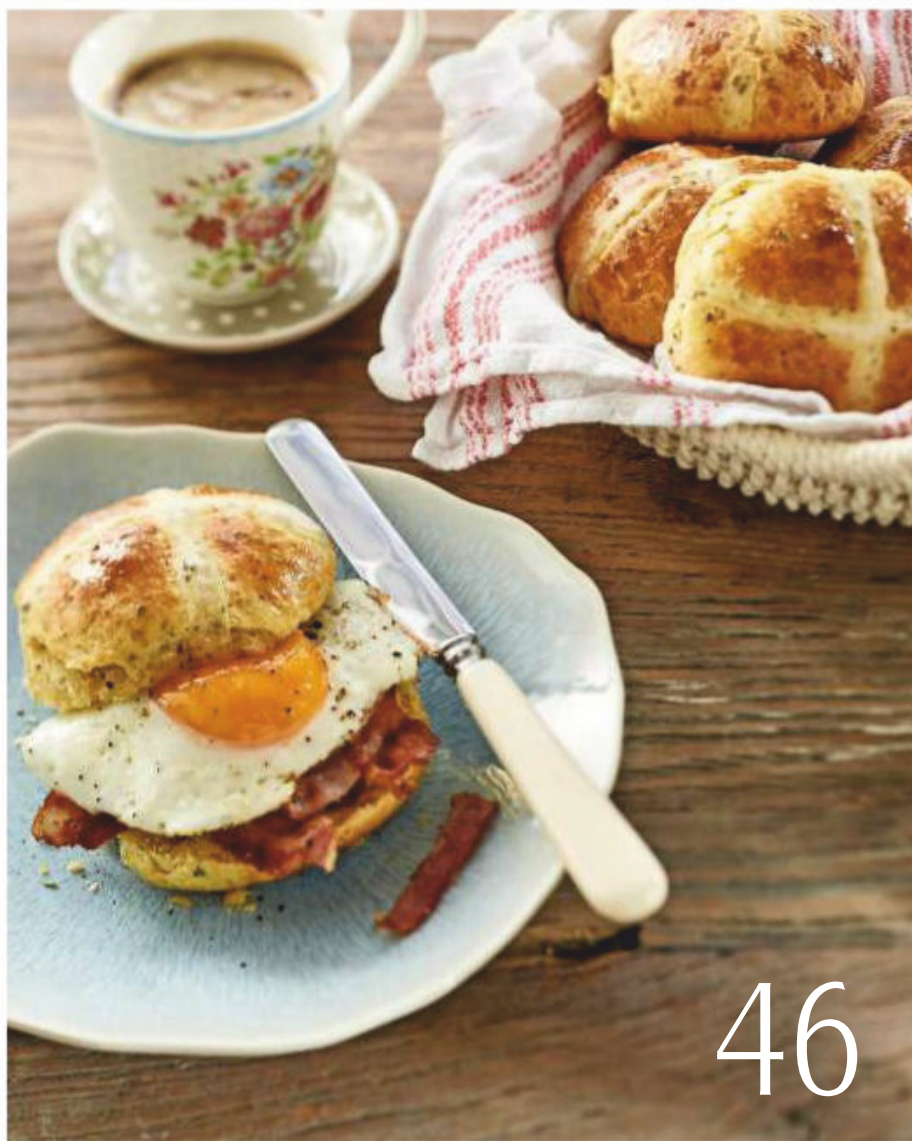
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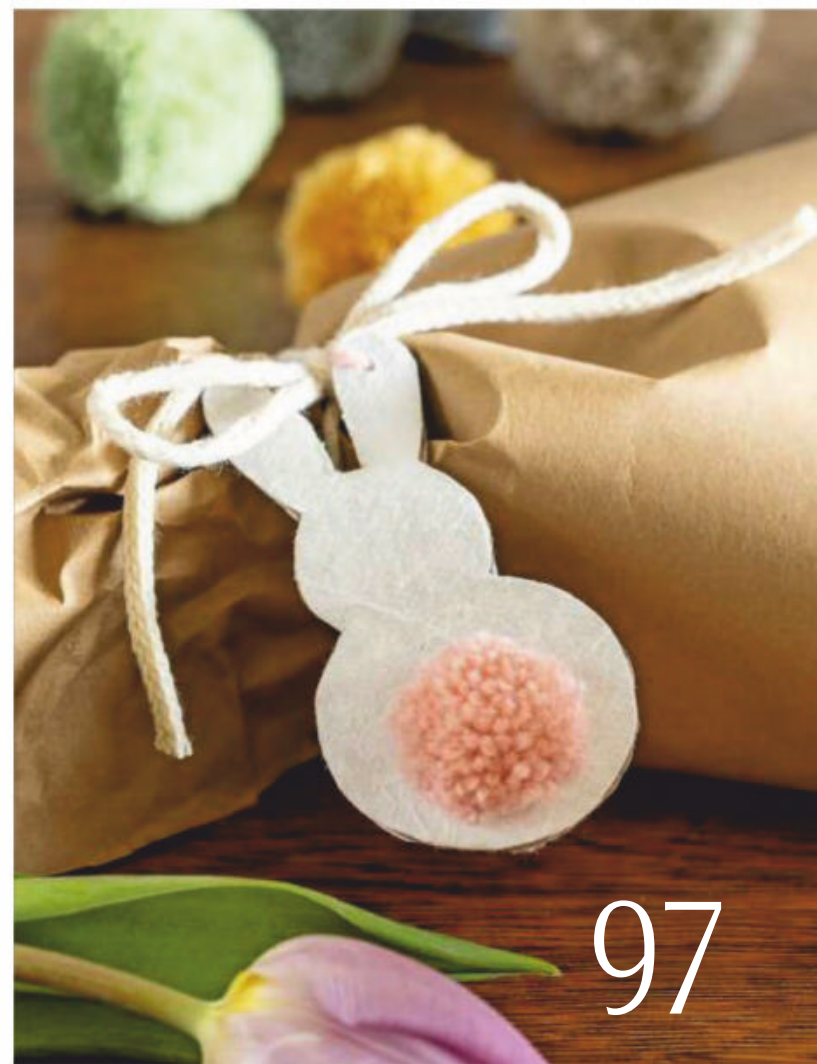
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Readers' Letters

Sharing your news and views of country life

Star Letter

Turning back the years

I was fascinated by the article on the Teddy Bear and Doll Hospital in the December edition of LandScape. I have a 67-year-old bear who was definitely showing his age: lack of hair and loss of weight. He is not of any great value, apart from sentimental. The article spurred me on to try to refurbish him myself. Having recently undertaken two needle felting workshops, I took my courage in both hands and began to work on restoring my teddy, using a bag of toy stuffing, linen thread and some wool tops. The original fabric was so thin that it ripped in a couple of places as I pushed new stuffing in: however, undeterred, I carried on. Once he was re-stuffed, I stitched him up, and his operation scars are now covered by a lovely new furry coat. Here are both the before and after pictures.

Julie Bosley, Herefordshire



Cake with style and substance

What a wonderful cake your pear, chocolate and almond one was in the November issue. It looked spectacular with the whole pears baked in it and tasted even better. I made it, using gluten-free flour, when I hosted our book club meeting and had a great response. I am looking forward to trying some of the January recipes ready for the next meeting.

Sue Armstrong, Shropshire



Boxing clever for inspiration

Usually, I am prepared for a visit from the grandchildren in the school holidays, but with it being a busy Christmas and new year, I did not have the chance to prepare. So, when I picked up the February issue, I was instantly drawn to the Moonlight in a Box article. We raided the cupboards and craft boxes, and a few hours later, the kids were delighted with the results. Thanks for the inspiration.

Angela Whitehead, by email



Delighted at chance discovery

I discovered the delightful LandScape at our local library, where members donate used magazines. I fell in love immediately and have subscribed. I am already receiving them electronically and cannot wait for my hard copies to arrive in the mailbox. Recently, our Penn State Master Gardener group in Western Pennsylvania held a winter sowing workshop. Included with that was a project for little ones to make ornaments out of milkweed pods. This is one of the samples I created for them. We had a grand time. There were smiles all round.

Judy Ridgway, Pennsylvania, USA

Reflections on the countryside

I wondered if readers would like my poem and my painting of the Amber Valley in Derbyshire on a frosty morning? I also made an acrylic painting on wood, which has been embellished with items found on the seashore.

Colours of the Landscape

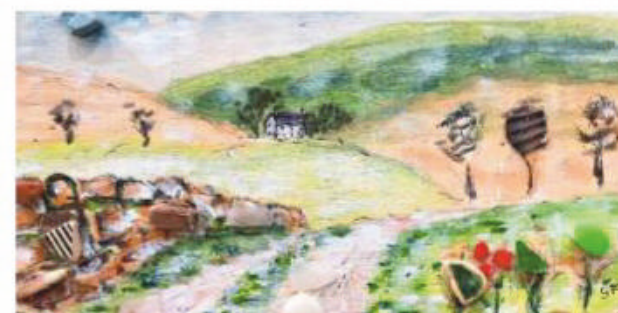
Winter seems to come with morbid tones
The tree has shed its dark brown cones
The berry marked in pillar-box red
Lighting up the holly tree instead

And tones of a lighter yellow
Will appear on its green pillow
When trees awake to springtime fever
All credit to the landscape weaver

The brightest blue of sky and sea
Speaks summer is assured for me
There is a change in the weather
The hills are sprouting purple heather

Orange and brown is its autumn crown
And then it's winter once again

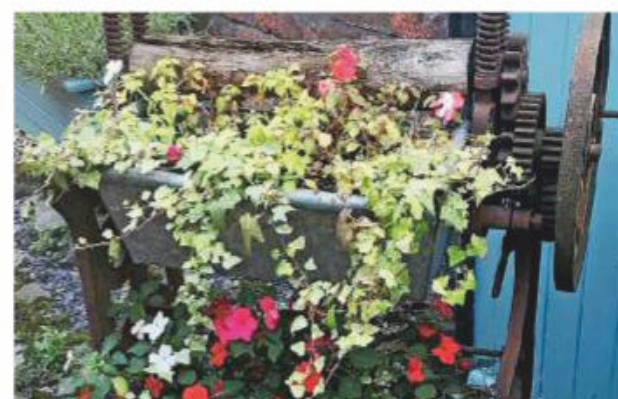
Sandy Fryer, by email



Squeezing out some extra use

While I was shopping the other day, I came across a mangle which has been turned into a beautiful planter. What a wonderful idea, to turn something that is no longer of use into something useful.

Marie Legge, Lancashire



WRITE TO LANDSCAPE

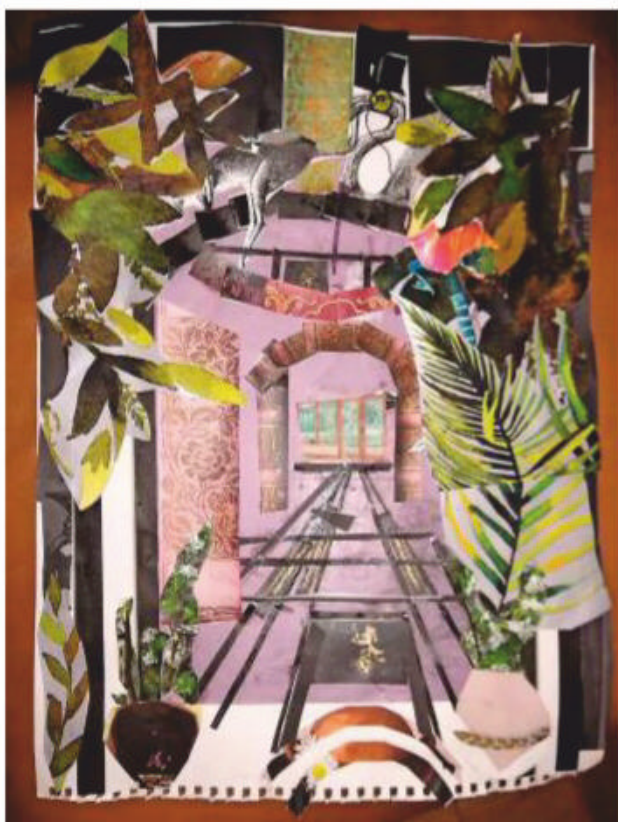
We love hearing about how our readers are enjoying the seasons. Write and tell us about a craft project you have been working on, an interesting place you have discovered or an issue about the countryside you want to share. Letters or emails should come with one or two good-sized photos, taken on a digital camera or smartphone. Write to **LandScape, Media House, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE2 6EA** or landscape@bauermedia.co.uk.



The product of a gentle push

I was not familiar with LandScape magazine until my husband, an avid gardener, recently brought one home. He encouraged me to make the Christmas cottage tea cosy from the November issue, and I was more than happy to oblige. I am delighted with the result. Thank you for a great pattern and a great idea. I have already shared the idea and the source with many of my friends.

Marla Redding, by email



Pastime for all to enjoy

I made this collage using offcuts of wallpapers. I always thought collage was for children, but it is so much fun: it is good for everyone.

Ann Giscombe, Hertfordshire

Feathers filled with fragrance

My favourite hobby is cross-stitch, and I love to make handmade gifts for people. I made this peacock pomander, which I filled with dried lavender. I am really pleased with how it turned out, and it made the ideal gift for Mother's Day.

Edith Wynch, Staffordshire



STAR LETTER PRIZE

This issue's Star Letter writer wins a beautiful Sophie Allport Kitchen Bundle, comprising a tea towel, apron and double oven gloves, worth £51, from the new Butterflies collection. For more information or to view the full collection, visit www.sophieallport.com or phone 01778 560256.



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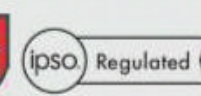
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Our LandScape

The best of the season to inspire and admire

POCKETS OF SUNSHINE

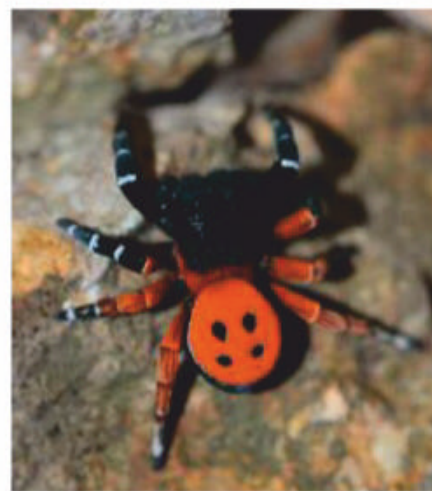
Emerging in spring, the oxlip, *Primula elatior*, is a herbaceous perennial in the family Primulaceae, most commonly found in open woodland.

Often confused with cowslips and primroses, it was thought to be a hybrid until 1842, when botanist Henry Doubleday observed notable differences, which led him to carry out breeding tests. He sent his findings to Charles Darwin, who confirmed that the oxlip was a true species. Cowslips are deeper in shade, with a distinct apricot smell, while oxlips are slightly larger, with pale yellow, almost luminous blossoms that arise above a delicate rosette of ovate, mid green leaves.

Their distribution is confined to Essex, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. In 2002, it was voted the county flower of Suffolk.



COLOUR IN A FLASH

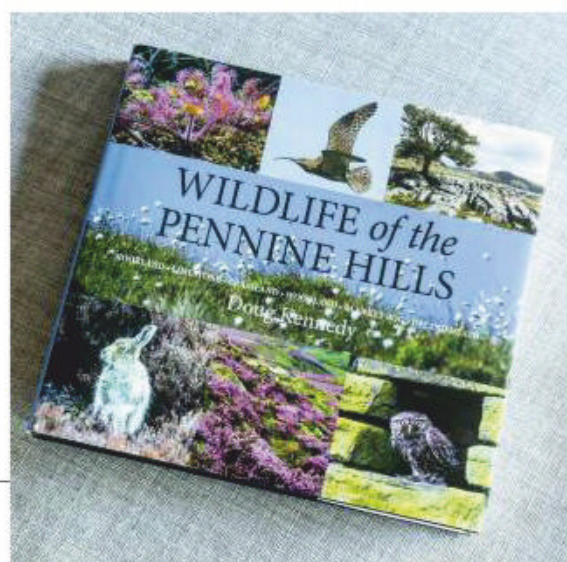


Rediscovered on a Dorset heathland in 1980, the Ladybird spider, *Eresus sandaliatus*, is considered one of the most endangered arachnids in the UK. The females mature to approximately ½in (1.5cm) long and are jet black. The males are approximately 0.4in (1cm) and are characterised by their orange abdomen and ebony spots. They favour sandy soil, where they build deep, silk-lined burrows, crowned with a silken canopy. While females remain underground, the males emerge for a short time during spring to search for a mate. They depend on lowland heath, much of which has been lost to agriculture and forestry. Conservationists are slowly introducing them to new nesting sites, in the hope that populations will establish.

NATURAL HARMONY

Often described as the 'backbone of England', the Pennines form a range of hills separating the North West from Yorkshire and the North East. Through comprehensive research and beautiful photography, author Doug Kennedy explores this breathtaking region, which nurtures an intricate ecosystem. Each chapter delves into the landscape and geology, explaining its impact on the flora and fauna.

Wildlife of the Pennine Hills £20,
www.merlinunwin.co.uk





BLUE SWATHES FOR A BATTALION

Often referred to as the 'Secret Valley', Rannerdale Knotts is a fell in the Lake District, between Buttermere and Crannock Water. According to legend, during the 'Harrying of the North'; a number of campaigns waged by William the Conqueror to subjugate northern England following 1066, Rannerdale became the site of a battle between Norman invaders and the native Cumbrians, with their Norse allies. The local warriors were led by Earl Jarl Boethar, or Buthar, who lured the Norman army into the valley, before ambushing and defeating them. The name 'Buttermere' is said to be a derivation of 'Buthar's mere', meaning 'Buthar's lake'. Bluebells grow in profusion here, and folklore suggests that they sprung from the spilled blood of the slain Norman warriors. During April and May each year, the Secret Valley becomes a sea of blue.



ENDURING CELEBRATION

Each year, a horse-drawn carriage, bedecked with daffodils, parades through the cobbled streets of St Andrews, Fife, for the annual Kate Kennedy Procession; Scotland's oldest historic pageant. The procession appears to trace its origins to Bishop Kennedy, founder of St Salvador's College, and his niece Kate, who visited the town and was adored by the students. There is no historical evidence Kate ever existed, and the celebration may have derived from Gaelic festivals marking the arrival of spring. Today, the parade is led by a pipe band and locals dressed as the patron saint of Scotland, Lady Kate and historical characters in the country's history.

GATHERING BLOOMS

April sees a flourish of new blooms as hundreds of flowers burst from the bud. This basket is ideal for collecting the best of the season's bounty, so the sweet fragrance can be enjoyed a little closer. Based in the Scottish Highlands, it is made by crafters collective Naturally Useful and measures approximately 16in (40cm) by 12in (30cm). The willow is sourced from a nearby field, where 25 varieties grow in abundance.

Flower Gathering Basket £60,
www.naturallyuseful.co.uk



An array of tubs, vessels and assorted containers brings spring flowers and greenery right up to the door of the sugar-pink house at Dyffryn Fernant Garden.

GARDEN OF CURIOSITIES

With its bright blooms bursting from clusters of pots, shapely topiary and surprise features, Dyffryn Fernant in Pembrokeshire is a joy to behold in springtime





Christina Shand, creator of the garden at Dyffryn Fernant, which she has filled with colour.



A seating area affords views towards the volcanic outcrop Garn Fawr, site of an Iron Age Fort, across gorse-carpeted hills. On the left is lily-flowered tulip 'Virichic', and a pot of violas is elevated on a stand to the right.

PEMBROKESHIRE IN APRIL hums with life as the rich flora and fauna of this coastal county in South West Wales responds to rising temperatures and lengthening days. Ferns uncurl their newly minted fronds in the hedgerows, among violets, celandines and stitchwort; bluebells lift dark stems, hung with buds, through the pale blue starry flowers of spring squills on high, rocky cliffs. Breeding birds are busy everywhere, including puffins, guillemots and red-legged choughs, on sea cliffs and inshore islands, and ravens, skylarks and stonechats on the moorland, heath and grassland that stretches inland. The dawn chorus is loud and long lasting. At Dyffryn Fernant, near Fishguard, Christina Shand and her husband, David Allum, listen for the sound of the cuckoo and eagerly await the return of the swallows that nest year after year in their barn, swooping in and out through hatches cut into the doors. "They have real attitude," says Christina.

Dyffryn Fernant is located approximately a mile from the sea, tucked south of the main road linking Fishguard and

"the duty we owe to our gardens and to our own bettering in our gardens is so to use the plants that they shall form beautiful pictures"

Gertrude Jekyll

Cardigan, at the end of a narrow lane snaking between high hedgerows. The garden's six acres spreads eastwards downhill, from an uncompromisingly pink house that glows in the soft April sun, to the Fernant stream. Dyffryn means 'valley,' with the name of the garden translating to Fernant Valley.

Christina moved here in 1994 at a low point in her life: "I had two young children, my first marriage had failed, and I was starting again from scratch," she says. "This was the only place I found that I really liked, in spite of the fact that the house was virtually derelict, the lane was knee deep in mud and the land an impenetrable tangle of brambles and blackthorn. But the house faced south, and the setting felt extremely light, being near the sea; very different from the old rectory that we lived in before, which had been surrounded by large beech trees."

For the first two years, Christina renovated the house, with little idea of making a garden, even though she had taken masses of plants with her from her previous garden and lots of interesting objects from the garden antiques business she ran with her first husband. "I brought everything I could with me, including some big copper containers from the stables that had been used for washing clothes or mixing horse mash, some old seats and even paving slabs, with no clear idea of how I might use them," she says. "When I had done most of the necessary work on the house, I started to sort out the front and back gardens. I had modest goals of having something pretty at the front, with a domestic space behind to grow food, dry the washing and sit in the setting sun."

Riot of colour

Christina had wanted to limewash the Georgian farmhouse in line with local tradition, where earth pigment from the site is added for colour. "Around here, the washes tend to be pinky-red because of the soil, and some of them are quite bright," she says. "But I couldn't afford to use limewash." Instead, Christina tried a pink masonry paint. "When I did a test area, I was shocked by the colour, but I left it for a while, breathed deeply and decided to go for it. It's so vibrant: I love it."

The intensely pink house expresses a love of colour that is woven throughout the equally bold and brilliant garden around it, and it provides a wonderfully rich foil for the flowers. "The front garden tends to be full of colour. I think you can let rip in a small space, and it really works," says Christina. "I don't go with colour-themed beds. I use whatever looks good, regardless of whether or not the colours are supposed to work together. It's all about the particular hues and the texture of the plant. Look at the pink petals and yellow stamens on a cistus flower, for instance." Her bright mix of tulips in terracotta pots in the front garden includes orange 'Ballerina', yellow 'West Point' and 'China Pink'; all elegant lily-flowered forms, with pointed, ➤



Top: Steps leading up to the kitchen garden behind the house are marked by a line of cider jars.
Centre: Flowering borders surround the smooth curves of a bold water feature.
Bottom: A carving of Cernunnos, the Celts' horned mythological god, framed by an archway.

recurved petals. They are interspersed with stoneware jars, groups of stones and a pot of violas perched on a wrought iron pot stand; evidence of Christina's passion for collecting and arranging objects. There is always a group of little pots on the table beside the front door, where small plants, such as unusual snowdrops or primulas, can be admired over morning coffee.

Behind the house, Christina's kitchen garden is the productive place she wished for, with raised beds for growing salads and vegetables, and an array of containers, including iron saucepans, tin baths and butler sinks planted with herbs, tulips and even a mini meadow. All of this is presided over by a carving in yew of Cernunnos, the horned god of Celtic myth, who is thought to be associated with nature, animals and fertility. It was carved by the late Welsh artist John Cleal.

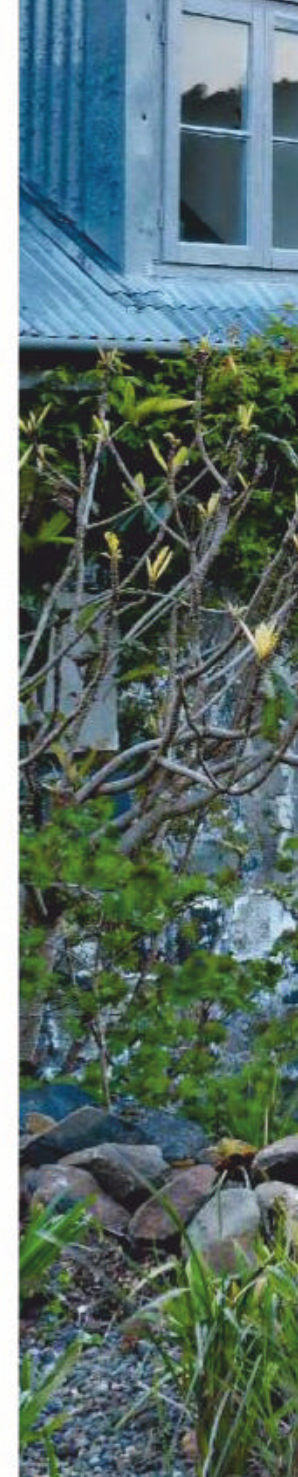
With the front and kitchen gardens established, Christina was still left with lots of containerised plants that needed homes. As a result, her garden continued to expand as she pushed further and further into the overgrown spaces. Now, 24 years on, the garden is a mosaic of discreet areas. Some of these are intensively gardened, such as the Rickyard, the front garden and the Orchard. Other areas are left wild to bleed into the surrounding landscape, such as the ancient rush pasture, called Waun Fach, or 'small moor', while the maintenance of some parts of the garden lies somewhere in between. These areas include the damp meadow near the pond, planted with pheasant's eye narcissi, cream and white camassias, bearing starry flowers on an upright stem, and snake's head fritillaries, *Fritillaria meleagris*, with their delicate chequerboard-pattern petals. The soil is mostly an acid, sticky clay: productive, but heavy to work, though in some areas, such as the Courtyard, there is not much topsoil at all.

Below the steep, rocky bank beside the house sits a large Arabian-style copper filled with water that spills and glitters over its bulging metal sides. Nearby, steps lead up to the Magic Garden, an area left largely wild, with just native plants. Stones emerge from the ground, resulting in a mystical feel. Here, views extend east over the garden towards the rocky outcrop of Garn Fawr and west across fields to the sea. "The azalea bank is one of my favourite places in the garden in spring," says Christina. "Many of the azaleas are scented and underplanted with bluebells, hellebores and species narcissi, which are so pretty."

Courtyard garden

Leaving the front garden through a gate, passing *Daphne x burkwoodii* 'Somerset', a compact evergreen shrub with fragrant pink flowers, a path leads down into the Courtyard garden.

Dainty *Daphne x burkwoodii* 'Somerset' flowers release their scent (left). Tulipa 'Black Parrot' displays its frilled, flame-like petals (right).



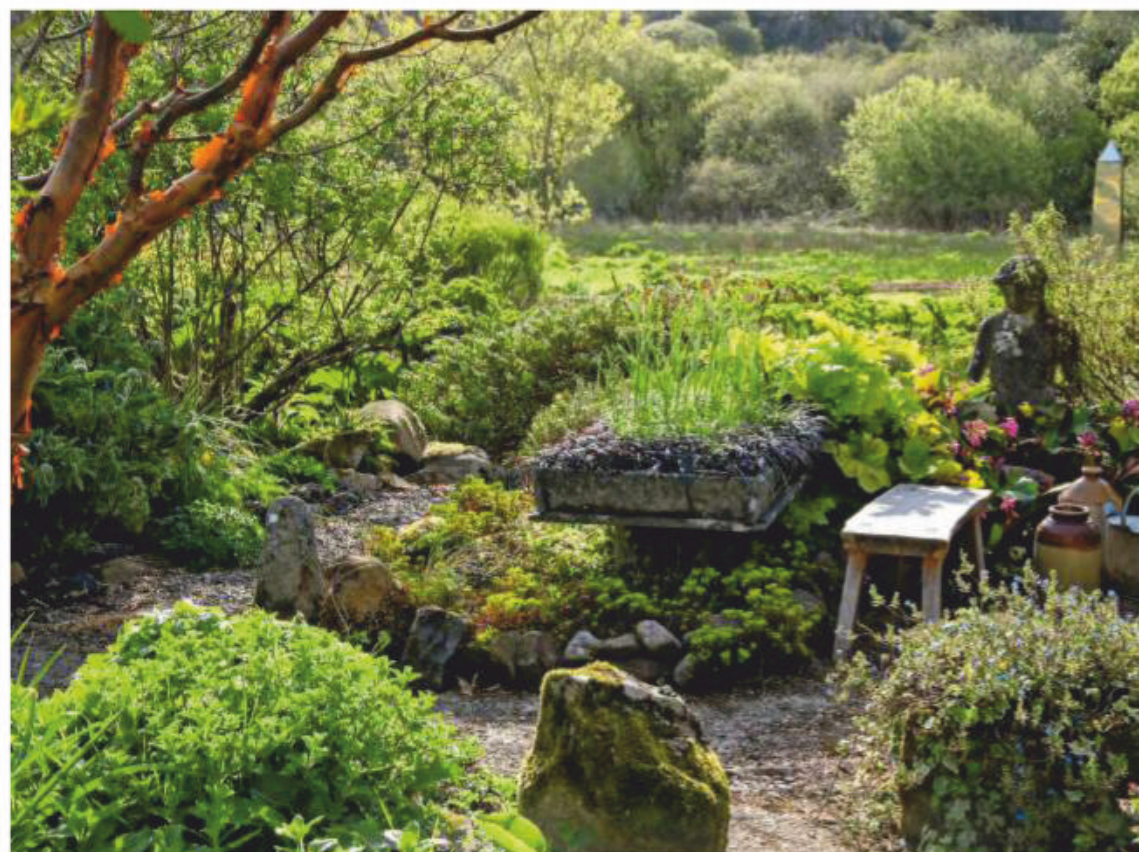


The Courtyard garden is dotted with pots of bright tulips among the fresh leaves of herbaceous perennials. Dense clumps of fennel and large leafy artichoke plants flourish at the right of the beds.

Once the farmyard, and framed by the Long Barn, the old tractor shed and pigsties, this area used to be full of brambles, rubble and broken asbestos. Underneath all the rubbish, there were just lumps of rock. “I decided where I wanted my paths, then used crowbars to move the boulders into place,” says Christina. In spring, brightly coloured yellow, red and white ‘Apeldorn’ tulips burst into bloom here; a type that flowers reliably year after year in the ground. Containers zigzag down the slope past the Long Barn, including glazed ceramic pots of white lily-flowered tulips and big metal containers bursting with flamboyantly ruffled parrot tulips, so-called because their petals are thought to resemble the bird’s feathers. Plants that enjoy good drainage do well in the stony soil here, including some with big, bold foliage, such as feathery-leaved giant fennel, *Ferula communis*, silvery globe artichokes, *Cynara scolymus*, and *Euphorbia mellifera*, a spurge that produces honey-scented, ochre flowers in spring.

Another influence on Christina’s gardening style is the late Beth Chatto. “I learned so much from reading *The Damp Garden*, particularly about the importance of using contrasting foliage,” she says. “Flowers are just the icing on the cake.”

Meandering through the Courtyard garden, the path leads between mossy rocks, past an *Acer griseum*, or paperbark maple, its peeling orange trunk translucent in the spring sunshine, to a shallow slate planter full of tussocky, black-leaved *Ophiopogon planiscapus* ‘Nigrescens’. ➤



The flaming bark of a peeling acer catches the spring light where a raised planter spills over with the leaves of black mondo grass. A stone figure, waist-deep in plants, emerges from the Courtyard beyond.



Clockwise from top left: Vivid *Primula pulverulenta* on dusty stems; bog-binding *Darmera peltata*; the Bog garden's reflective steel obelisk.

Damp conditions

Near a statue of Adonis, steps lead down into the Bog garden. This elemental space is home to plants with a primitive feel, such as *Gunnera manicata*, a giant rhubarb, with leaves that will tower overhead by late summer; *Darmera peltata*, with its neat, pink flowerheads atop naked, hairy stems; and *Primula pulverulenta*, bearing whorls of magenta blooms on stems coated with a white bloom. At its centre stands an imposing 9ft (2.7m) tall, stainless steel obelisk. "David and I saw a mirrored obelisk at the Chelsea Flower Show 20 years ago, which we loved, but couldn't afford," says Christina. "So we worked out how to construct something similar, and a welder made it for us. I love the contrast between the modern, clean obelisk and the primitive bog plants around it. I see it as a fixing point for the whole garden."

From here, a path leads out into the wilder reaches of the garden, skirting Waun Fach and leading to the pond where swallows swoop to drink and feed beside a grove of *Betula pubescens*, the downy birch, planted by David in 2003 and tolerant of the wet conditions here. Turning back towards the house is Nicky's Field, a grid of 50 beds, each planted with a single variety of grass, set around a western oak, *Quercus petraea*,

CHRISTINA'S PLANTING TIPS FOR BOGGY SOIL

Marsh spurge, *Euphorbia palustris*

A bushy herbaceous perennial that grows to approximately 3ft (90cm) and produces a big clump of acid-green foliage in spring. "It goes really well with primulas and kingcups, and doesn't seed around," says Christina. "In autumn, the leaves turn yellow and orange."

Primula candelabra hybrids

Herbaceous perennials, with a rosette of leaves at the base and upright stems bearing tiered whorls of flowers in shades of pink, orange and purple. "They can seed themselves around beautifully and have a slightly airy feel to them," says Christina. Height up to 40in (1m).

Arum lily, *Zantedeschia aethiopica*

Herbaceous or semi-evergreen perennial, with erect, glossy, green, arrow-shaped leaves to 16in (40cm) and funnel-shaped white spathes, with yellow spadices. Christina recommends this plant because it can take really wet conditions, looks rather exotic and has fabulous leaves.

Royal fern, *Osmunda regalis*

A robust, deciduous fern, with giant fronds up to 8ft 3in (2.5m) long. "It's wonderful in part shade, by a stream or pond, and turns attractive red-brown in autumn," says Christina.

Umbrella plant, *Darmera peltata*

Clusters of pale pink flowers arise on tall, hairy stems up to 5ft (1.5m) high before its glossy, rounded leaves show. Christina says that while this plant can become invasive on boggy ground, it creates a dense root plate, which can help to stabilise banks.

in memory of Christina's brother, Nicholas Shand.

Another path from the Bog garden leads around the end of the Long Barn into the Orchard; quiet in the spring as herbaceous perennials rouse themselves from dormancy, to loop up into the Rickyard. With patches of fertile soil where cattle were once penned, the Rickyard is now a bold, formal space, where seven varieties of clipped evergreens, including pittosporums, yew and box, line a central path, and rusted metal 'tusks' arch protectively over a large terracotta oil jar. Tulipa 'Abu Hassan', described by Christina as her "absolute favourite tulip", fits beautifully here, as do bold blocks of hot red and pink Viridiflora tulips, their intensely coloured petals cooled by a green stripe. The distinctive rocky outcrop of Garn Fawr rises above a sea of gorse, blackthorn and willow to form a backdrop, as it does throughout this garden.

Spring is a busy time here. Christina has the help of her son, Michael Dunn, who trained at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, and long-time gardener at Dyffryn Fernant, Jo Harris. "There's a mass of energy knocking around at this time, and so much to do: it's a juggling





A sessile oak is a focal point in the field dedicated to Christina's brother, providing a place for contemplation (left). A burst of colour in a half-barrel in the Orchard (right).

"If you don't know where you want to go, then it doesn't matter which path you take."

Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*

Detail is paramount in the garden, from rusty arches to topiary and an elegant oil jar in the Rickyard. Tulip 'Abu Hassan', clipped pittosporum, hebe and box all feature.

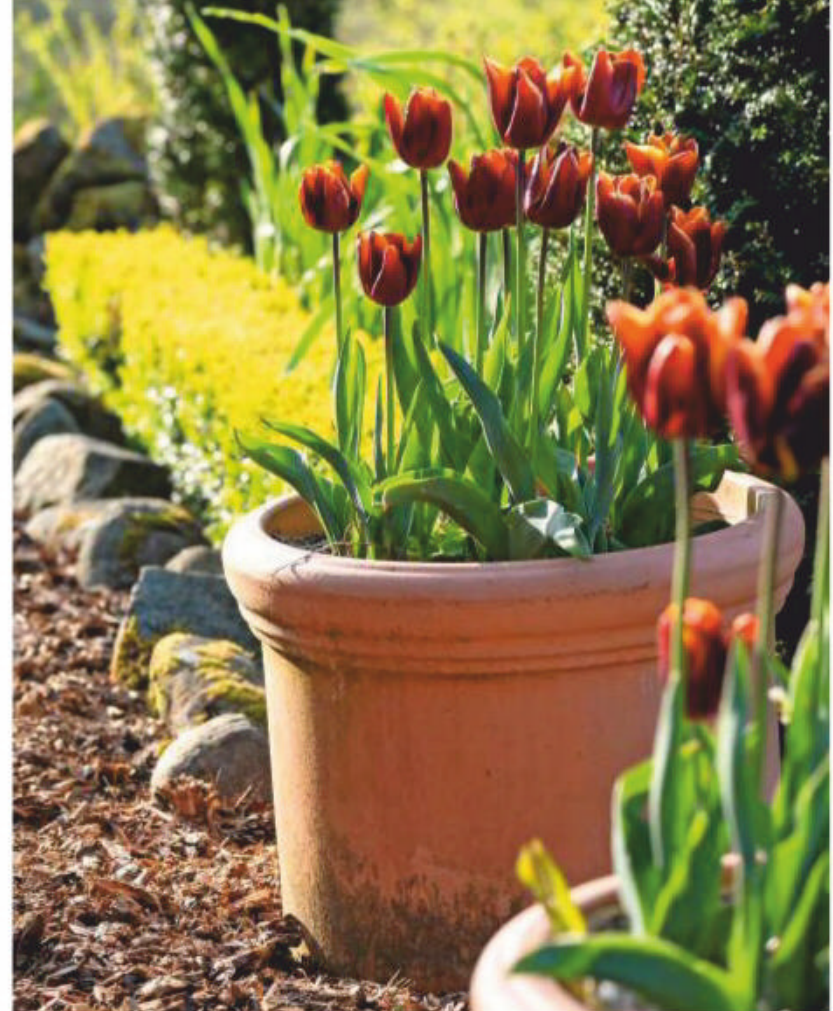


A pot of glowing tulipa 'Abu Hassan' in a border with a clipped box hedge edging.

act,” says Christina. “We’re often cutting back the orchard beds in spring because they’re too wet to work on before then, and I like to try to get on top of weeds in April in the Quarry garden and the car park: that way, we stay ahead for the rest of the year.” David is in charge of all the invaluable back-up work that ensures the garden can shine: getting machines fixed, doing the shopping, dealing with visitors and putting up the signs.

Massive slate plinths are used as benches in the Bog garden, which are so heavy that they had to be winched in. There are approximately 20 seats of all sorts through the garden, ranging from basic benches made of a single plank of wood to stylish loungers and everything in between. “You have to sit down to really experience a garden,” says Christina. “It gives you time to notice the way the light works on different surfaces, how dark leaves absorb light and pale grasses and leathery magnolia leaves reflect it, while others are transparent and light passes through them. The reflection of water on the underside of a gunnera leaf is so beautiful. That kind of fleeting image entrances me.” ■

• **Words:** Carole Drake • **Photography:** GAP Photos/Carole Drake



CONTACT

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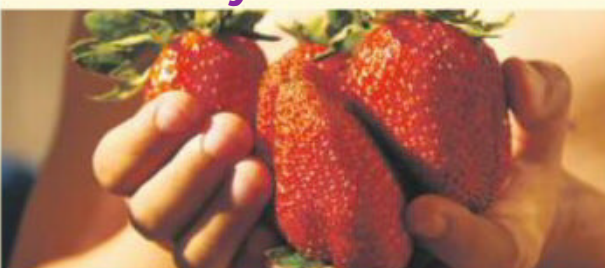


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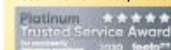
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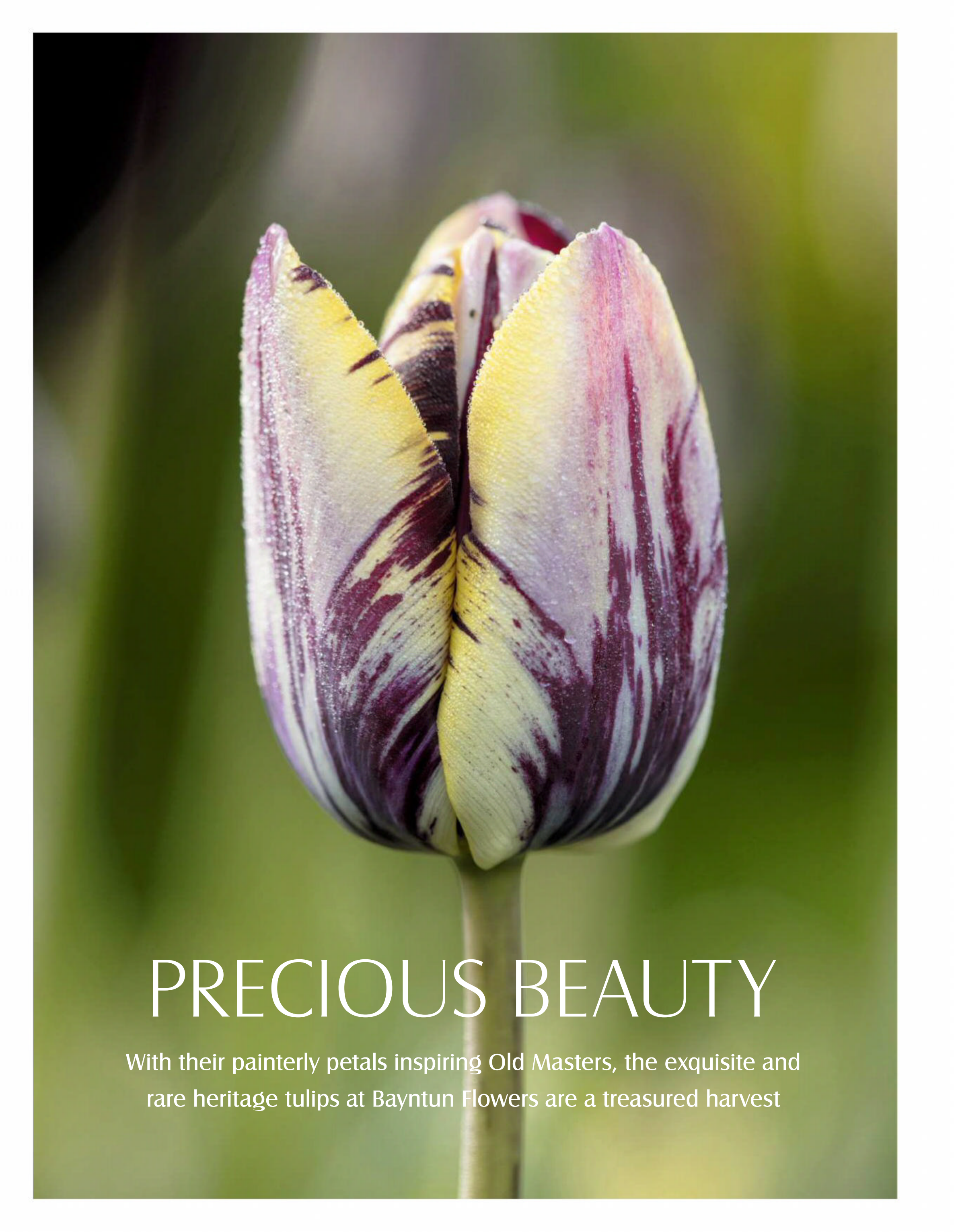
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PRECIOUS BEAUTY

With their painterly petals inspiring Old Masters, the exquisite and rare heritage tulips at Bayntun Flowers are a treasured harvest



Left: Dutch-style historic cultivar, tulipa 'Insulinde' was first introduced in 1915-16. Growing to a height of 24in (60cm), the petals fuse violets on a creamy-yellow base.
Right: Tulipa 'Rembrandt' is very similar, with aubergine and yellow feathers on white. It grows to 31in (80cm).

THERE IS A quiet sense of timelessness at Blacklands; a 100-acre, old country estate in West Wiltshire. Here, Polly Nicholson gently nurtures more than 70 different heritage tulip cultivars, some of which date back to the mid 17th century. They chime well within their elegant, historic parkland setting.

Looking like beautiful feathered birds, a few of the tulips sit, gracefully poised, in worn stone or tarnished zinc pots by the house. “They work well in weathered containers, which complement their own age and colouring,” says Polly, who has also woven them in the garden with winter ferns, wallflowers and forget-me-nots. Some ruffle the verges of the drive beyond; a successful experiment to see how they might look when grown through grass, and which has now extended to incorporate a blend of choice historic tulips, intermingled with select modern cultivars.

The principal collection, however, lies beyond the house; up the leafy country lane to a dedicated flower field on the boundary of the estate. Here, set apart from other flowers also grown for bespoke floristry, is a swathe of more than 1,000 individual historic tulips, planted together in a glorious blend of colour. They do not shout out in the way of more modern cultivars. Instead, these precious tulips, the latest of their genus to flower in late April to early May, bloom decoratively, but demurely. They are subtle and refined.

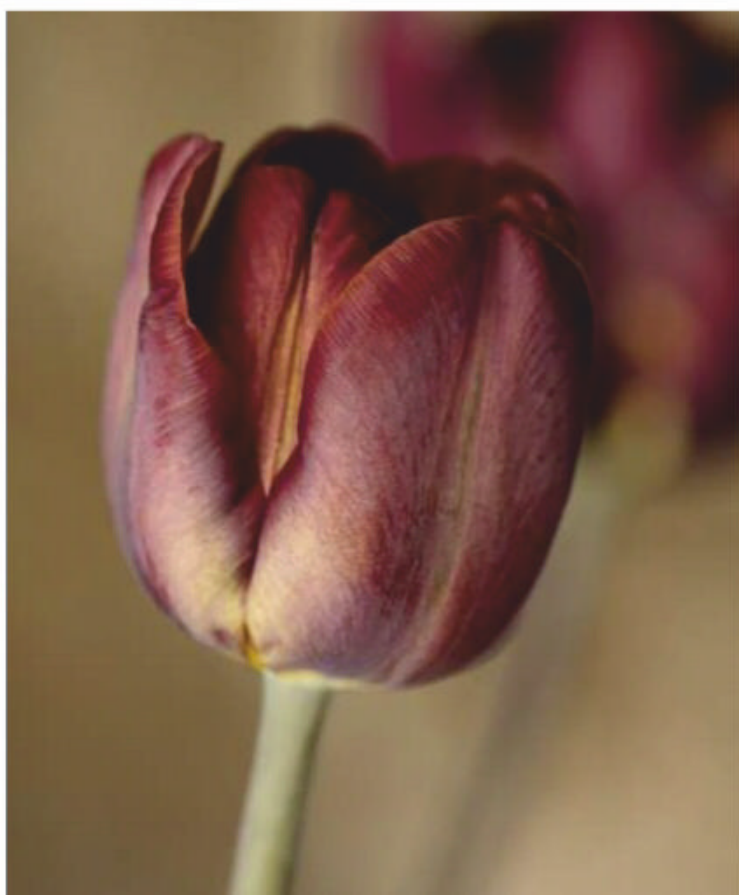
Polly describes them as the quieter, calmer version of those we cultivate today. “They are smaller-sized, with muddier colours than their contemporary counterparts,” she says. “I love the way they all bleed and blend into each other.” This effect is beautifully illustrated by her deliberate tonal planting. Her collection is portrayed as a seamless wave of muted colour, with one tone rolling into the next. “I grow historic tulips as a farmer, but I want to use them as a florist, so, even in planting, I can’t help aiming for aesthetics,” she explains.



Polly Nicholson, of Bayntun Flowers, Wiltshire, among her precious heritage tulips.

Each individual tulip is like a work of art. The plain types, referred to as ‘breeders’, have unique quality and tone. They range from the complex fusion of a single colour, as in the deep mahogany and aubergine of ‘James Wild’, to the antique rose and rich salmon of ‘Rose des Dames’. “I can see and understand why they were once singled out for breeding,” says Polly. “Their unique strength and vitality of colour is lacking in modern bulbs. I particularly love the depth and rich polish of the reddish-brown ‘James Wild’.”

However, it is the ‘broken’ tulips that are the more prized; simply because they cannot be deliberately created. These are rare, bewitching tulips, which have unpredictably broken from single, jewel-coloured flowers into what is often an exciting amalgam of colour, inscribed with patterns resembling flickering flames or unfurling feathers. They became the absolute symbol



Far left: Tulipa ‘James Wild’, a breeder type, with deep blushing tones, was introduced in 1860. Cup-shaped petals are apricot and brown, and it reaches 20in (50cm) in height.

Left: Tulipa ‘Rose des Dames’ also has the delicately fused warm and cool hues.



Their closed heads bobbing above a sea of upright leaves, tulipa 'Columbine' make a striking spring display.

of wealth among mid century Dutch merchants. As tulip fever raged in Holland from 1634-1637, these precious bulbs commanded exorbitant prices. According to Anna Pavord, author of *The Tulip*, "single bulbs of certain kinds of tulips could change hands for sums that would have secured a town house in the best quarter of Amsterdam".

This precarious market crashed in 1637. Weak and virused, the bulbs could no longer be sustained in viable quantities. Their novelty waned as the May-flowering tulips were replaced by the first summer flowers. Tulipomania, as it was known, was over, but these curious tulips prevailed, exchanged and hybridised by specialist breeders, who were fascinated by their beauty and the capricious, seemingly random, nature of 'breaks'. In the 1920s, it was discovered that a virus, transmitted by aphids, was responsible for their feathered transformation. ➤

"Two shapely leaves will first unfold,
Then, on a smooth elastic stem,
The verdant bud shall turn to gold,
And open in a diadem"

James Montgomery, 'On Planting a Tulip-Root'



The stunning, streaked petals of 'Absalon', introduced as far back as 1780, falls into the bizarre colouration sub-category. It reaches a height of 16-20in (40-50cm).

A few of the more stable, historic broken cultivars grace Polly's collection: 'Absalon,' which is rich mahogany inlaid with gold; 'Columbine'; a ruby and amethyst-spangled diamond-white cultivar, and 'Insulinde'; robed in regal purple, edged with ermine and gold. But for Polly, like the Dutch merchants, their allure is not knowing if or how they will break.

Pretty as a picture

Initially, Polly was drawn to historic printed or painted versions of these extraordinary tulips. Working as an antiquarian book specialist, such images frequently crossed her path, and her passion for Renaissance paintings increased her exposure to their charm and diversity. For those who could not afford the high prices sought during Tulipomania, one way in which they could still enjoy these flowers was to commission an artist to paint some. Polly admired their beauty in the artworks of Dutch Old Masters, such as Brueghel, Bosschaert and Rachel Ruysch, unaware of their remarkable survival. Now she proudly grows many of the flowers depicted in those paintings.

The opportunity to do so arose when Polly, her husband, Ed, and their young family moved from the city to Wiltshire in 2008. They renovated the Georgian house and, driven by a lack of flowers to fill it with, Polly began to cultivate seasonal flowers for cutting. She filled the walled garden's flower beds with a selection of annuals, perennials and bulbs. Before long, flowers spilled into their own dedicated flower field. The home-grown flower business, Bayntun Flowers, grew from surplus blooms. "It quickly became clear to me that, to thrive, I needed to differentiate and grow something really special," says Polly. "I realised it was the perfect moment to cultivate those rare, historic tulips I'd long admired on canvas or paper."

The most obvious source for historic Dutch bulbs was Holland. "I discovered an extensive living library of more than



Tulipa 'Columbine', an English florists' tulip, with feathery markings, opens up in the mild spring air.



A still life painting, in oil on wood, by the early 17th century Dutch artist Johannes Bosschaert, captures the fine detail of heritage tulips; once the only way to enjoy these rare beauties.

4,000 historic bulbs, including heritage tulips, planted in the gardens of the Hortus Bulborum Foundation in Lisse, outside Amsterdam," she says. In the late spring of 2016, Polly travelled with her head gardener, Hannah Gardner, to see the flowering bulbs first-hand; hoping to select and purchase her first historic tulips. Unfortunately, due to unseasonably cold weather, not a single old specimen tulip was actually in flower, nor was she able to select freely from specimens illustrated in the printed catalogue. "Bulbs were to be issued randomly; a maximum of three per order; each commanding a huge price," she says. Polly returned empty-handed.

"My first bulbs came from a more keenly-priced specialist Dutch bulb supplier, Jacques Amand, which currently catalogues approximately 70 different historic cultivars; the bulbs selling out almost immediately." Polly found additional selections, equally fleeting, from a few catalogue suppliers. She initially gathered up a dozen cultivars, including breeder 'Fairy



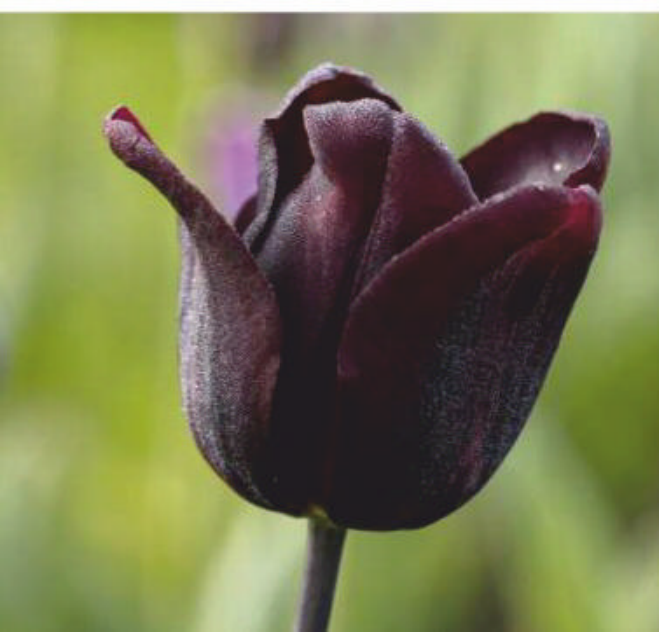
Spiky, old Dutch tulip 'Lac van Rijn', introduced in 1620. Although limited in number, it is one of the earliest tulips still available.



English florists' tulipa 'Mabel', introduced from 1850-56, has raspberry ripples on a white base. A member of the sub-category rose, it grows up to 22in (56cm).



Breeder 'Old Times', from 1919, is dark bronze, with hints of light yellow and purple, and is the same height as 'Mabel'.



Rich garnet breeder 'Dom Pedro', a Rembrandt tulip from 1911, has a subtle yellow base. Taller, at 27in (70cm), it falls into the bizarre colouration category.



Flames of reddish pink lick the broken petals of 'Saskia', a relative newcomer, introduced in 1958.

Nymph' and broken 'Insulinde', 'The Lizard' and 'Absalon', which is one of Polly's favourites. "I love the richness of its unusual burnished browns and bronzes," she says.

The first historic tulip bulb Polly planted was 'Insulinde'. "This is a prettily-painted, broken tulip, with violet and purple feathers flung over thick, creamy petals; so different to modern cultivars," she says. "It's one of my best historic cut flowers because it reproduces relatively reliably, allowing me to grow it in sufficient quantity for sale, without depleting my stock."

But Polly's oldest and, perhaps, rarest tulip, is the ancient 'Lac van Rijn', which was introduced in 1620 and predates Tulipomania. Small and dainty, it is set apart from the rest of historic Dutch tulips by its decidedly pointed petals, which are coloured burgundy and edged in white, with a yellow base. "I also grow 'Alba Regalis', dating from 1670, which is similar in age and form, but pure white," says Polly.

Dutch-style historic tulips are sometimes called Rembrandt tulips, although the Old Master himself rarely painted them. The name is a reference to the city of Leiden, which was not only the birthplace of Rembrandt, but also where tulip growing in Holland began. "Rembrandt tulips are characterised by lesser, but still ever-so-slightly pointy petals," explains Polly. This feature helps to distinguish them from the historic English florists' tulips, which she also grows.

Amateur enthusiasts

English 'florists', not to be confused with today's florists and flower arranging, were passionate amateur growers and largely working men, including shoemakers, shop owners and miners of



RECOMMENDED HERITAGE TULIPS TO GROW

Polly recommends starting out with the more stable, but dramatic, broken tulips, such as the white 'Insulinde' and the purple 'Columbine'. "They capture the spirit of Tulipomania and are beautifully broken, feathered tulips, which reproduce more reliably than the rest," she says. "The cup-shaped 'Columbine' is actually an English florists' tulip. It's a little complicated, but a 'diluted' version is commercially available."

The brown and bronze tones of 'Absalon' can be added to dramatically deepen the broken colour on offer, while the colours of the yellow-feathered, pink 'Saskia' will liven up the garden.

Breeders have a sublime quality of their own, with rich, glossy deep garnet 'Dom Pedro'; the polished mahogany 'James Wild', which is another commercially available English florists' anomaly; the pretty, rich salmon-pink 'Le Mogol'; or the purple-hued 'George Grappe'.

Heritage tulip bulbs are less easy to come by than contemporary varieties, but a good range is available from specialist supplier Jacques Amand and a smaller selection from companies such as Living Colour, Kevock Garden Plants and Bloms Bulbs.

Elegantly wrapped petals of tulipa 'George Grappe', from 1939, combines purples and lilac with a mauve-blue base.

the late 18th century. Their tulips were honed, grown and shown, and selectively bred to attain specific key characteristics. They are quite distinct from their Dutch ancestors. The early Florist Society laid down exacting standards of form, purity and colour, against which all florists' tulips were judged. These tulips have almost flat, rounded, unpointed petals. "The perfect shape is a shallow half-cup," explains Polly. They are similarly subdivided into breeder and broken types, but unlike the kaleidoscope of Dutch Rembrandts, their flowers must conform to one of three strict colour combinations. These are 'bizarre', which has brown, red or purple markings on a yellow ground, as in 'Old Times'; 'byblomen', which has violet or purple markings on a white ground, as in 'Talisman'; and 'rose', which has rose-pink or cerise markings on a white ground, such as 'Columbine' and 'Mabel'.

New breaks are not encouraged. Instead, English florists strive to preserve the purity of these horticultural idols, without deviation. Today, there is only one remaining florists' society in existence: the Wakefield and North of England Tulip Society, founded in 1836, which promotes the growing and showing of English florists' tulips, preserves the old varieties and grows and

shows other tulip varieties and species. "The members are real experts in their field, with supreme knowledge," explains Polly, who joined the venerable society in 2018. "The bulbs are literally priceless; rarer and scarcer than historic Dutch bulbs, and they cannot be bought." Members only receive or exchange mere handfuls of bulbs annually, as they are too precious to spread beyond their inner circle.

English florists' tulips are grown in the open, under hessian or hemp covers, which protect them from rain, hail, frost or sun damage, which might mar their perfection. "They have been bred for beauty and are not particularly hardy," says Polly.

Following expert advice from senior florists, Polly has raised bulbs from her initial allocation of broken and breeder bulbs, which crucially arrived individually wrapped in separate parcels. The society's annual show is held in the first or second week of May. "The timing is spot on for the northern growers, but in warmer Wiltshire, mine are almost going over by then," explains Polly. Despite this, she scooped a first place for her vase of 12 English florists' blooms and second for her breeder tulip 'James Wild' when she showed for the first time last year. Individual blooms are shown in brown glass beer bottles; a tradition



Bayntun tulips, shown off individually in glass vases: 'Absalon', 'Mabel', 'Old Times', 'Saskia', 'Le Mogol', and 'George Grappe'. Their exquisite colour fusions and patterns make an impact with just a single bloom.

dating back to the original florists who met and showed their tulips at local pubs, where the bottles were readily available, cheap and empty. They also show off the blooms beautifully.

Curiosities of cultivation

Polly grows all her historic tulips in open fields. "It's good for their vigour: free air circulation keeps them healthier," she says. The climate is cool, wet and windy, but the tulips seem to thrive in the rich, alluvial topsoil at the foot of the Marlborough Downs. "I incorporate 5cm of sharp horticultural sand on planting to improve drainage," she explains. The flower farm is managed organically, and Polly is working to secure certification with the Soil Association.

Planted or lifted, breeders and brokeners are strictly segregated in order to keep them clean of virus-threatening aphids. In turn, Dutch tulips are kept separate from the English florists' tulips to avoid cross-contamination. All are meticulously labelled and

"And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
Its beauty's secret nearer"

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'A Flower in a Letter'

monitored. All tulips are susceptible to botrytis, mildew and tulip fire. "This can wipe out an entire collection in one go," warns Polly. "Bulbs are therefore planted in fresh ground each year, and anything vaguely suspicious is immediately burned."

Dutch bulbs, for floristry, are placed 4-6in (10-15cm) apart to encourage tall, straight cutting stems. The more precious English florists' bulbs, whose flowers are not for sale, are given more space, planted at 8in (20cm) intervals.

All the bulbs are lifted in June, with fastidious segregation maintained, and are hand-cleaned, dried and stored outdoors in aerated crates. "New bulbils are removed and replanted in recycled aquatic plant baskets, and plunged into 'nursery beds' in the walled garden until they are large enough to move up to the field," says Polly. New bulbils are exciting, as they may contain a random break. "When my 'Fairy Nymph' breeder broke, it conjured within all the excitement of Tulipomania." Polly hopes to deliberately encourage and breed in this chance phenomenon in the future.

Her collection continues to grow in breadth and depth. "There are more than 50 historic Dutch cultivars: 200 each of 'Insulinde' and 'Silver Standard', which most reliably produce multiple new bulbils," she says. "These are the best for cut flowers, simply because they bulk up more readily."

"My English florists' tulips are infinitely more precious. I have approximately 20 cultivars; literally only three or four bulbs of each, which are strictly not for sale. They're fickle and notoriously slow to increase, so you definitely have to be in this for the long game."

It is the dedication and commitment of generations of breeders which ensure these historic jewels are still available to this day. "I'm delighted to be capturing and cultivating some of the finest specimens of horticultural history," says Polly. ■

• Words: Jacky Hobbs • Photography: Clive Nichols

CONTACT

www.bayntunflowers.co.uk

There are a number of specialist tulip events at Bayntun Flowers this year: These include Historic Tulips on 21 April with guest speaker Anna Pavord, author of *The Tulip*, and Teresa Clements, secretary of the Wakefield and North of England Tulip Society. On 22 April, Shane Connolly presents *The Fine Art of Arranging Tulips*. There is also an NGS Open Day on May 1 to raise money for charity.



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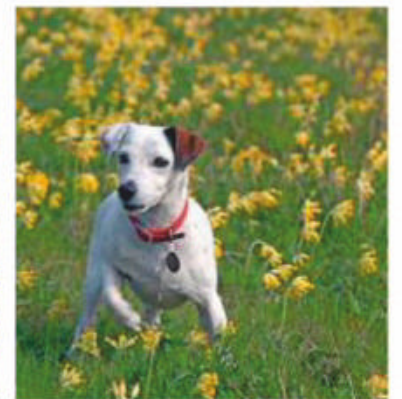
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The garden in... April

Kari-Astri Davies' spirits are lifted by delicate new flowers tumbling over a bank and filling the fields with sunshine

Left to right: Trailing, mat-forming aubretia flowers; harbinger of spring, the cuckoo; layers of Solomon's seal unfurl; time out to soak up the verdant landscape; having a field day among the cowslips.



ONE SUNNY APRIL morning as I was walking with the dog along our local mill leat, there was a fleeting, catch-your-breath-and-admire-the-spectacle moment. Lavish mounds of intensely purple-blue aubretia flowers overspilled a garden bank abutting the leat; reflected vividly back in the calm, dark water.

Further on, a pair of ravens called softly to one another in the pines by the church while a cuckoo could be heard from the nearby woods. Spring is here at last.

*"The merry Cuckow, messenger of Spring,
His trompet shrill hath thrise already sounded"*

Edmund Spenser, 'Amoretti, Sonnet XIX'

Cottage garden favourite

The chubby plaited stems of Solomon's seal, *Polygonatum x hybridum*, are extending and bending; the leaves soon to loosen from their braiding. Later, in May, groups of thin, tubed bells will hang from the bowed stems. This Solomon's seal is a hybrid between the native *P. multiflorum* and the rarer *P. odoratum*. It is easy and willing to grow; even in shade. Often associated with cottage gardens, its household medicinal uses in days gone by included poultices to heal broken bones and bruises. The dramatic, dark-leaved 'Betberg', originally found in the wild in Germany, is slower to clump up.

In the copse at the end of the garden, I have planted the less vigorous, lower-growing *P. odoratum*. I have yet to ascertain how much fragrance the green-tipped, white bells have. 'Red Stem' is a choice form.

Last spring, I bought *P. sibiricum* as a filler rather than a specimen plant.

This polygonatum has a muddled appearance, with whorls of finer leaves running up the stems, growing to just under 40in (1m), with greenish bells. The whorl-leaved *P. verticillatum* 'Roseum', with its pink bells, is a selected form of another rare British native species.

The polygonatum sawfly can be a scourge. I had hundreds on one particular *P. x hybridum* clump last year. The small, pale grey caterpillars are present in June along the leaf edges, and they should be removed, or they can strip the plants bare.

Cowslips and crosses

Out in the countryside, even when travelling by car or train, the verdant displays of familiar wild flowers along road verges and railway embankments mark the procession of the seasons.

As luminescent primroses on shadier banks fade, sunnier embankments throng with cheerful cowslips, *Primula veris*, tossing their scented, many-flowered, golden heads. In my tiny meadow patch, plants I grew from seed are slowly spreading along the margin between wilder and mown grass.

Other country names for this plant include freckled face, fairy bells, and paigles, but it is most commonly referred to as the cowslip; so named in Old English for

“The primroses blow in the dews of the morning,
And wild scatter’d cowslips bedeck the green dale”

Robert Burns, ‘The Chevalier’s Lament’



Left to right:
‘Potimarron’
squash
flourishes;
planting out
sweet peas;
gold-laced
primula.

the belief that they sprang up from cowpats.

In the cottage-style, semi-shaded bed, a seed-grown laced polyanthus takes centre stage. Gold lines the petal edges and subdivides the dark, almost-black petals, giving the effect of many more. The gold-laced primula is a selected cross between primroses and cowslips, tracing its roots back to the late 17th century. Nearly lost in cultivation after its peak popularity in the 1860s, it has been revived and improved by a number of nurseries and collectors from the 1950s onwards.

Spring jobs

During April, I will be sowing ‘Potimarron’ squash and courgette ‘Romanesco’ seeds inside. ‘Potimarron’ seems to be the best performer so far for my growing conditions.

I will also be planting out sweet peas on my new potager frame. The frame consists of metal uprights, with lines of small hoops, through which are threaded bamboo canes. Sweet peas include the cream ‘Jilly’, classic purple bicoloured ‘Cupani’ and the palest pink ‘Heaven Scent’.

In late April, I will be pruning more vulnerable shrubs, such as *Hydrangea serrata* ‘Grayswood’ and salvias, including shocking pink ‘Cerro Potosi’, and hoping there will not be more severe frosts to come. ■

CARNIVOROUS TRUMPETS

I have written about my childhood fascination with insectivorous plants in the past: native and other sundews in particular.

I was adamant that I would not be drawn into sarracenia; commonly known as pitcher plants, but I must confess that over the last few years, I have bought a few of the less expensive hybrids. Many have fascinatingly patterned trumpets, and I love the shape and structure of the clumps.

Originating from North America, most of my hybrids are kept in a cool conservatory over winter. They are now waking up; producing lightly etched new trumpets, which emerge flat before opening into a tube and flowers. The hard structure of sepals and the upside down flower canopy remain for months, whereas petals are fleetingly produced.

Last year’s shrivelled trumpets will be cut back and some clumps repotted. Peat-free carnivorous plant compost can be bought or made, comprising 2 parts bark compost, 1 part each perlite and Cornish grit.

Plants go outside for the summer to obtain nutrients from the insects they trap; an adaptation that makes up for the low fertility boggy areas inhabited by their parents.



Petals reminiscent of diaphanous ballet dancers’ wrap-over skirts.



Kari-Astri Davies started gardening in her twenties with pots of roses, geraniums and sweet peas on a parapet five storeys up in central London. She’s now on her fifth garden, this time in the Wiltshire countryside. Inspiration includes her plant-mad parents, as well as Dan Pearson, Beth Chatto, Keith Wiley and the Rix & Phillips plant books. Kari describes her approach as impulsive, meaning not everything is done by the book.

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- Impatiens (Busy Lizzie) 'Accent Mixed' x 6

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In the garden

Seasonal ideas for your outdoor space



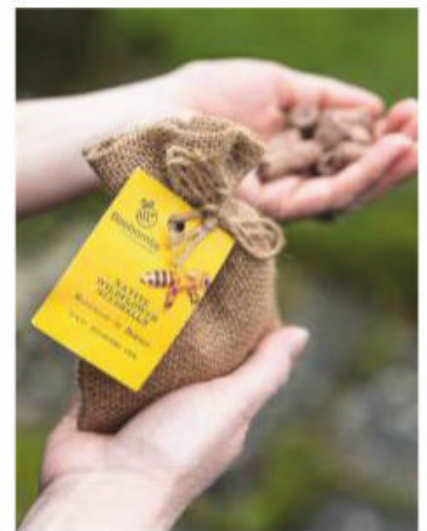
TIME TO PLAN

Keeping a vegetable garden or allotment journal is an easy way to record crop rotation, what grows well, how much is produced and when new seeds are sown. The journal can also be used throughout the current growing season to document the weather and how it affects growth, any pest control used and noteworthy musings, which can be useful when planting the following year. The notes can be accompanied by diagrams or colour markers to help document the findings.

SOWING A WILD HAVEN

More than 97 per cent of wild flower meadows have been lost since the 1930s. Inspired by a desire to reintroduce these habitats, Ben Davidson makes natural seedballs in rural Dorset. Each contains a sprinkling of seeds from 18 species native to Britain and confirmed by the Royal Horticultural Society as 'Perfect for Pollinators'. The seeds are mixed with local clay and sifted compost, designed to protect them until they are ready to germinate.

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A NATURAL SPRAY

Greenfly aphids are among the most common garden pests, usually found in large clusters on soft plant tissue, such as new shoots or the underside of leaves. These soft-bodied insects feed on the sap, causing damage and distorted growth. They also secrete a sugary liquid, known as honeydew, which allows the fungus, sooty mould to thrive. A jet of water will help to dislodge them, with care taken to avoid damaging the plant. Any affected shoots should be pruned. An insect-proof mesh or cloche can be used to prevent further damage until the plant matures.





FLURRY OF SPRING COLOUR

Often grown for its striking foliage, *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost' has large, silvery heart-shaped leaves, delicately veined and edged with vibrant green. In April, however, the plant is complemented by tall sprays of tiny blue flowers, which resemble forget-me-nots and rise above the dense, lush mound. Continuing to bloom into early summer, they are followed by new, larger basal leaves that remain throughout the growing season. The plant does well in dappled shade and thrives in nutrient-rich soil that is moist, but well drained. Brunnera is often used in woodland gardens, planted in drifts under a canopy of deciduous trees or for edging a path.



WORTH THE WAIT

Lilies add a striking elegance to the garden, with large trumpet blooms sitting atop tall stems in shades of raspberry pink, buttery yellow and creamy white. Grown from bulbs, they can be planted in spring to ensure a flourish of colour during summer. First, a hole or trench is dug. The bulb anchors a heavy blossom load, so it is crucial that the hole is more than 8in (20cm) deep from the bulb to the topsoil. Each lily bulb contains overlapping scales, or plates, which can trap water and lead to rot. Placing them on their side in the soil will help to avoid this. Once covered, a thin layer of grit is sprinkled on top to ensure good drainage. For the best results, they should be planted in clusters of two or three, approximately 8in (20cm) apart.

EASING OUT

Based in the heart of Devon, Greenman Garden Tools is a third-generation family business. It was established by Adam Greenman, who found inspiration in the much-loved tools of his grandfather, which have endured despite their age. This knife is made from sustainable ash and stainless steel; perfect for pulling weeds from the patio as they begin to vegetate in spring.

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CHEERFUL FACES

The bright and sunny flowers of primula encapsulate the particular beauty of the season



A treasured teacup painted with flowers in complementary colours becomes a pretty plant pot for a primrose; its pale lemon, saucer-like heads rising above the leafy stems.

Delicate pale, speckled eggshells nestle among soft primula flowers. With petals in shades of pink, and hearts of gold, a cluster of the spring flowers brightens a box wreath.





A charming Easter place setting comprises an informal 'nest' with a tiny quail's egg and pastel flowerheads tucked into glass jars.



With its roots exposed, a pretty primula plant, placed under a cloche, creates a natural table decoration.

Scattered blooms in the colours of spring, including primulas, narcissus, tulips and mimosas, framed by a plate.



A simple mug allows a plant to be easily moved from place to place where the beauty of a purple primula can be admired.



*"The Primrose for a veil had spread
The largest of her upright leaves;
And thus for purposes benign,
A simple flower deceives"*

William Wordsworth, 'A Wren's Nest'

*“Bountiful Primroses,
With outspread heart that needs the rough leaves’ care”*

George MacDonald, ‘Wild Flowers’



The woodland is brought indoors with plump bunches of primroses wrapped in moss and bound with rustic string.



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A SELECTION OF SUMMER flowering, hardy or half-hardy annuals sown in springtime can be enjoyed later in the year as cut flowers in a floral arrangement.

Seeds can be sown directly into the ground once it is warm and moist. Before planting, the soil should be raked to a crumbly consistency and any weeds or stones diligently removed.

Alternatively, the seeds can be grown in egg cartons placed on a windowsill, six weeks prior to the last spring frost. The seedlings are planted outside once the weather warms up. Regular irrigation helps to keep the soil moist through the germination process.

Established borders can be adapted to provide summer cutting material or a part of the garden dedicated to growing cut flowers. Plants are selected for their colour and fragrance, such as cornflower, cosmos and rose mallow. Architectural plants, such as *Ammi majus* and antirrhinum, add height and texture.

Many flowers for cutting are attractive to pollinating insects. Once cut, they offer a cheaper alternative to bought bouquets.

For the best results, the stems should be cut at an angle to prevent them from resting at the bottom of the vase and sealing over. Any foliage below the water level should be stripped away. For longer-lasting blooms, the vase should be placed away from heat or direct sunlight and the water changed every few days.

SOWING FOR COLOUR

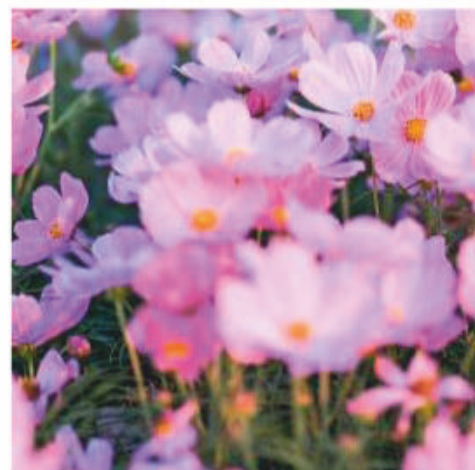
Seeds planted in spring can be nurtured to ensure a crop of beautiful flowers for cutting later on, perfect for creating arrangements indoors



Calendula officinalis bears large, frilled flowers that are bright and cheery, adding interest to a display. Sow in early spring.



A bushy annual, nigella blooms in shades of lavender, rose and cream above feathery foliage. Sow between March and May.



Cosmos has colourful daisy-like flowers, with prominent golden centres. They make good fillers in bouquets. Sow from March to April.



A compact annual, antirrhinum is ideal for adding height to arrangements, with frothy spires of tubular flowers. Sow in early spring.

“I know a bank where the wild thyme
blows, Where oxlips and the nodding
violet grows... With sweet musk-roses
and with eglantine”

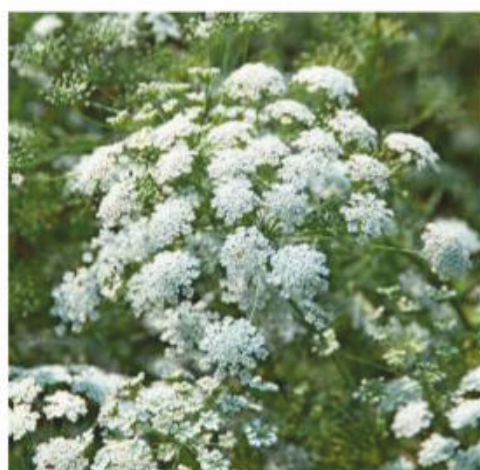
William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*



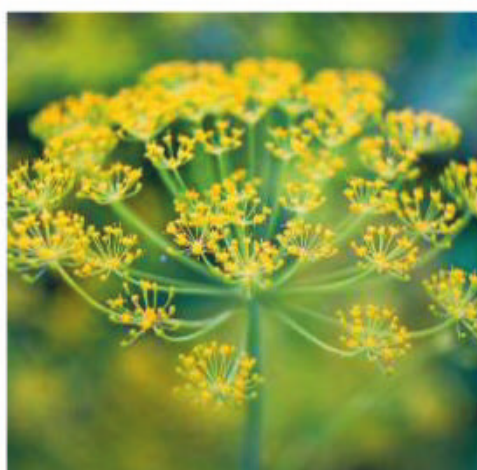
The seedlings should be
watered regularly for
healthy growth.



Cornflower, *Centaurea cyanus*, bears cobalt blue, thistle-like flowers, which work well in wild flower displays. Sow from March to May.



Ammi majus produces delicate parasols of white flowers that soften bouquets and create a frothy effect. Sow in mid spring.



Dill, *Anethum graveolens*, makes an excellent cut flower filler, with acid-green, lacy leaves and a delicate fragrance. Sow in mid spring.



Cerinthe is good for foliage, with lush blue-green leaves and nodding tubular flowers that provide texture. Sow in mid spring.

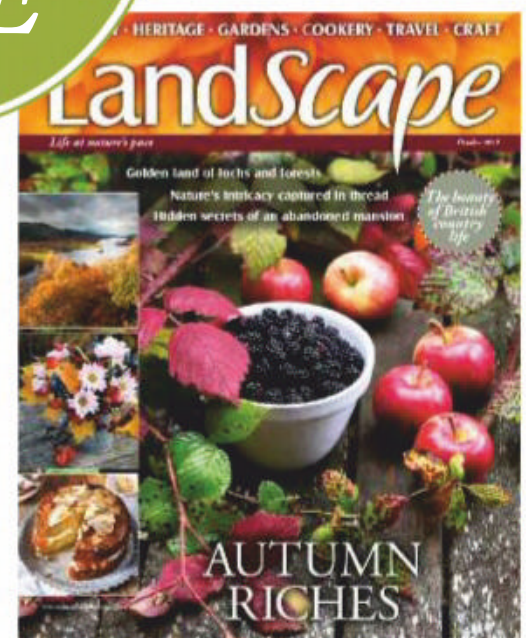
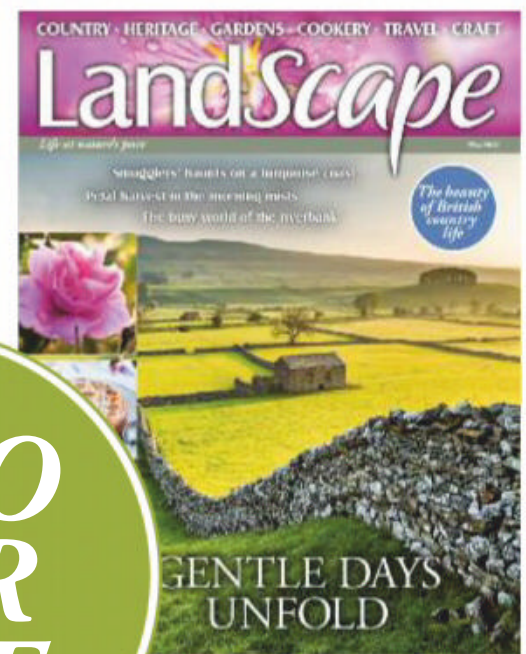


Lavatera trimestris, or rose mallow, produces deep, funnel-shaped blooms that make long-lasting cut flowers. Sow in mid spring.

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CELEBRATING AN EASTER FAVOURITE

Spicy and fruity hot cross buns are given a new twist when used in a variety of different desserts

Hot cross bread and butter pudding

Serves 8

11 hot cross buns
120g unsalted butter, softened,
plus extra for greasing
4 eggs
100g caster sugar
1 tbsp cornflour
2 tsp mixed spice
1 tsp ground cinnamon
250ml whole milk
zest of 1 orange
zest of 1 lemon
100g raisins
2 tbsp apricot jam
15 x 25cm rectangular oven dish

Grease the oven dish. Slice 6 hot cross buns in half horizontally and set aside the crossed tops. Slice the remaining hot cross buns into three horizontally.

In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, sugar, cornflour, mixed spice and cinnamon, using an electric whisk, for 2-3 mins until thick and creamy. Slowly whisk in the milk until fully incorporated, then add the orange and lemon zest.

Spread both sides of the bun slices, apart from the reserved tops, with butter and line the bottom of the prepared dish with half of the slices. Scatter with half of the raisins, then layer with the remaining halves, followed by the remaining raisins. Top with the reserved slices, crosses facing up. Pour slowly over the custard mixture so that it seeps into all of the bread layers. Leave to stand for 1 hr.

Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4. Cover just the top of the pudding with tin foil and bake for 40 mins until golden. In a small pot, mix the jam with 1 tbsp of boiling water and brush the top of the pudding with it. Allow to cool for 5 mins, then serve.

“Good Friday comes this month, the old woman runs.
With one or two a penny hot cross buns”

Poor Robin’s Almanac, 1733

Frozen dessert tower

Serves 8

9 hot cross buns, sliced
 in half horizontally
 600g condensed milk
 800ml double cream
 zest and juice
 of 1 orange
 zest and juice
 of 1 lemon
 1 tbsp mixed spice
 1 tbsp ground
 cinnamon
 100g mixed peel
 1 tbsp malt extract
 200g raisins
 butter, for greasing
 100g plain cooking
 chocolate, broken
 into pieces
 2 litre plastic tub
 23cm cake tin

In a stand-alone mixer, whisk the condensed milk and double cream together for 4-5 mins until very thick. Add the orange and lemon zest and juice, stirring until completely combined. Stir in the mixed spice, cinnamon, mixed peel, malt extract and raisins. Fill the tub with the mixture, reserving 500g in a bowl, and freeze overnight. Cover and chill the reserved mixture.

Lightly toast the buns on the cut sides under a grill. Take the ice cream out of the freezer and let it stand for 5 mins to soften. Grease and line the cake tin with baking paper and spoon in 2 tbsp of the chilled mixture. Scoop a ball of ice cream and sandwich it between two hot cross bun halves. Place it on top of the chilled mixture to fix in place. Repeat until there are 5 ice cream-filled hot cross buns in the tin. Make sure the sides of the buns are next to each other, then fill any gaps with the chilled mixture. Top with 4 more ice cream-filled buns, again fixing them in place with a layer of chilled mixture. Top with scoops of the remaining ice cream. Using a palette knife, smooth the remaining chilled mixture around the sides of each tier. Freeze for 2-3hrs until solid.

When ready to serve, place the chocolate pieces in a microwaveable bowl and melt in a microwave in 30-second bursts until it stirs smooth. Remove the cake from the freezer, pour the chocolate over and serve.

TRADITIONAL HOT CROSS BUNS

Makes 12

For the dough

500g strong bread flour,
 plus extra for dusting
 2 tsp mixed spice
 ½ tsp ground nutmeg
 7g sachet easy-blend yeast
 50g golden caster sugar
 1¼ tsp salt
 50g butter, cut
 into small pieces

100g currants
 50g chopped mixed peel
 1 egg
 100ml milk
 oil, for greasing
For the cross
 60g plain flour
 3-4 tbsp water
For the glaze
 25g golden caster sugar
 50ml water

To make the dough, sift the flour, spices and nutmeg into a large mixing bowl and stir in the yeast, sugar and salt. Rub in the butter, then stir in the currants and mixed peel. In a bowl, beat the egg with a fork until broken up and frothy, then beat in the milk. Make a well in the centre of the flour mixture. Add the milk mixture and enough warm water to mix to a soft dough. Add more water if needed; up to approximately 150ml. Turn out the dough and knead well for 5 mins until smooth and elastic.

Place in a lightly oiled bowl, turning to coat the dough in the oil. Cover and leave in a warm place to rise for 1½ hrs until doubled in size.

Turn out onto a lightly floured surface, lightly kneading again. Grease two baking sheets. Divide the dough into 12, rolling each piece into a ball. Place on the baking

sheet and cover with a damp tea towel. Leave in a warm place until doubled in size. Preheat the oven to 220°C/gas mark 7.

To make the cross, sift the plain flour into a bowl and stir in sufficient water to mix to a soft paste. Spoon the mixture into a piping bag and snip off the end. Pipe a cross on each bun.

Bake the buns for 15 mins. Meanwhile prepare the glaze. Place the 25g of sugar and 50ml of water in a small pan and heat, gently stirring until the sugar dissolves. Once the buns are cooked, transfer to a wire rack placed over a tray. Brush with the glaze while still hot.

The buns are best eaten on the day they are made. They can be frozen for up to two months. Defrost in the refrigerator overnight and warm in the oven at 180°C/gas mark 4 for 5 mins.





Cheese and herb hot cross buns

Makes 8

100g unsalted butter, softened, plus extra for greasing

250g plain flour, plus extra for dusting

200g strong flour

150g Cheddar, grated

2 tbsp dried mixed herbs

7g fast action dried yeast

200ml milk at room temperature

1 egg, plus 1 yolk

50ml cold water

black pepper

fried egg and bacon, to serve

Grease a large baking tray. In a large bowl, combine 200g of the plain flour, all the strong flour, grated cheese and 1 tbsp of the mixed herbs, and season with pepper. Using a wooden spoon, make a well in the dry ingredients. Add the yeast, then add the butter. Pour in the milk and crack in the egg. Stir together with a wooden spoon in a figure of eight motion. Once the mixture has come together into a wet dough, knead for 10 mins with hands dusted in flour until the dough is smooth. Transfer to a clean bowl and cover with cling film. Leave in a warm place for 1 hr 20 mins until it has risen to double its size.

Knock the air out of the dough by punching it in the middle, then separate into 8 equal pieces. Roll each piece into a ball and lay out on the prepared tin, approximately 1cm apart from each other, then cover loosely with cling film. Leave in a warm place for 30 mins to rise.

Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6. In a small pot, mix together the remaining flour with the cold water and the remaining mixed herbs; mixing thoroughly into a smooth paste. Transfer to a plastic piping bag and snip the end with scissors so a thin line of paste can be squeezed out. Remove the cling film, then pipe a cross on each bun with the herb and flour paste. In a small pot, beat the egg yolk, then brush the bun, missing out the crosses with the egg. Bake for 15-20 mins until golden. Allow to cool, then halve and fill with fried eggs and bacon.



Easter loaf

Makes 1 loaf

280g plain flour, plus extra for dusting

250g strong flour

1 tbsp mixed spice

1 tbsp ground cinnamon

7g fast action dried yeast

100g unsalted butter, softened, plus extra for greasing

250ml milk at room temperature, plus extra for brushing

zest and juice of 1 orange

1 egg

100g mixed peel

150g raisins

30ml cold water

900g loaf tin

In a large bowl, combine 250g of the plain flour with the strong flour, mixed spice and cinnamon. Using a wooden spoon, make a well in the dry ingredients. Add the yeast, then add the butter. Pour in the milk, add the orange zest and juice, and crack in the egg. Stir together, using a wooden spoon, in a figure of eight motion. Once the mixture has come together into a wet dough, knead for 10 mins with hands dusted with flour until the dough is smooth. Knead in the mixed peel and raisins. Transfer the dough to a clean bowl and cover with cling film. Leave in a warm place for 1 hr 20 mins until it has risen to double its size. Grease the loaf tin liberally.

Knock the air out of the dough by punching it in the middle, then roll it into a sausage shape the length of the prepared tin. Place the dough in the tin and cover loosely with cling film. Put in a warm place for 30 mins to rise.

Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6. In a bowl, mix together the remaining flour and the cold water into a paste, then fill a non-nozzle piping bag with the mixture. Pipe a cross across the top of the loaf. Brush the top with milk.

Bake for 35 mins, then remove from the oven and re-pipe the cross. Cook for 5 mins, then allow to cool completely before removing from the tin and serving.

Spiced bun trifle

Serves 8

- 4 hot cross buns, cut into cubes
- 2 egg yolks
- 50g caster sugar
- 2 tbsp cornflour
- 200ml milk
- 600ml double cream
- 1 tbsp mixed spice, plus extra to decorate
- 8 sheets gelatine
- 3 oranges
- 700ml cold water, plus extra for soaking the gelatine
- 2 tbsp citrus peel, plus extra to decorate
- 2 litre glass bowl

To make the custard, whisk together the egg yolks, sugar and cornflour in a large bowl for 2 mins. Whisk in the milk, followed by 200ml of the cream slowly. Mix in the mixed spice. Transfer the mixture to a saucepan, then simmer for 2-3 mins until thickened. Set aside to cool.

Place the gelatine in a bowl and cover with some cold water. Leave to soak for 5 mins. Zest 1 orange and juice all the oranges into a separate saucepan and add the 700ml of cold water. Simmer for 1-2 mins until warm.

Squeeze the excess water from the gelatine sheets and

mix into the orange mixture. Mix in the citrus peel.

Layer the bottom of the bowl with the bun cubes so the crosses are visible through the outside of the glass. Cover with the orange jelly and leave to chill for 1 hr.

When the jelly is firm, top with the custard, then whip the remaining double cream in a stand-alone mixer for 2-3 mins until soft peaks form. Fill a wide star-nozzled piping bag with the cream and pipe it on top of the custard to create the final layer of the trifle. Sprinkle with the extra mixed spice and citrus peel. Chill or serve immediately.



Caramel eggs with hot cross bun soldiers

Makes 6

**6 hot cross buns,
halved horizontally**
**150g dark cooking
chocolate, broken
into pieces**
400g caster sugar
4 tbsp cold water
200ml double cream
**12 x 7cm
half-eggs mould
used egg box**

Place half the chocolate pieces in a microwaveable bowl and microwave for 1 min. Stir until completely smooth. Liberally brush the half-eggs mould with half the melted chocolate and tip from side to side to coat each half shell. Leave to chill for 20 mins, then brush on another coating of the chocolate. The melted chocolate may need to be put back in the microwave for 30 secs to do this. Repeat the process with the remaining chocolate and the clean mould to make 12 halves. Leave to chill for 2 hrs until completely solid.

To make the soft caramel, place the sugar in a large saucepan and stir in the cold water. Place on a low heat for 10-12 mins until the sugar has turned into a golden syrup. Cook on a rolling boil for 4 mins until the liquid has changed to a golden colour. Slowly mix in the double cream and continue to stir on a low heat for 2 mins until thick. Allow to cool completely. Fill a piping bag with the mixture and set aside until completely cool.

Remove the chocolate eggshells from the cases by levering them out with the tip of a table knife. Pour 2 tbsp of boiling water into a cup, then fill one eggshell with the caramel to the brim. Brush the rim of another half with the boiling water, then fill that half with caramel and hold the egg halves together to seal. Place in the used egg box. Repeat until all 6 eggs are made.

To serve, halve and toast the buns until golden, then cut into soldiers. Place the chocolate eggs into an egg cup each and serve with the hot cross bun soldiers.



Hot cross pancakes

Makes 10

230g plain flour
1 tsp baking powder
120g caster sugar
2 eggs
150ml milk
100g dried mixed fruit
1 tsp ground cinnamon

1 tbsp mixed spice
zest and juice of 1 lemon
3 oranges
**50ml unsalted butter,
plus extra for greasing**
30ml cold water
8cm ring

Sift 200g of the flour into a bowl, then add the baking powder, 20g of the sugar, the eggs, milk, mixed fruit, cinnamon and mixed spice. Whisk thoroughly to combine, then add the zest and juice of both the lemon and 1 orange into the mixture. Whisk again until smooth. In a large frying pan, melt the butter until a liquid, then pour it into the mixture and stir through.

To make the orange syrup, zest and juice the 2 remaining oranges into a saucepan and add the remaining sugar. Simmer on a low heat for 3-5 mins until the sugar dissolves, then bring to the boil. Keep on a rolling boil, stirring, for 4-5 mins until thickened, and set aside.

Place the pan on a medium heat, grease the ring and set in the pan, then pour in approximately 4 tbsp of the batter. Cook for 1-2 mins until set in the shape. Remove the ring, using a palette knife to ease the sides and tongs to remove. In a small pot, mix together the remaining flour with the water and mix thoroughly into a smooth paste. Transfer to a plastic piping bag and snip the end with scissors so a thin line of paste can be squeezed out. Flip over the pancake and pipe a cross from one side to the other. Cook for a further 2 mins, then transfer to a warm plate. Make the rest of the pancakes in a similar way. Serve with the orange syrup.



A SPRING ROAST

Seasonal lamb and baby potatoes infused with flavours from the herb garden are cooked together for a succulent and tasty meal

One-pot lamb and new potatoes

Serves 8

1.5kg new potatoes,
sliced lengthways
25g butter
300ml chicken stock
5 shallots, peeled and sliced
2 tbsp fresh thyme leaves,
plus sprigs to garnish
6 tbsp fresh mint,
roughly chopped, plus
leaves to garnish
2 tbsp fresh tarragon leaves,
roughly chopped
2 garlic heads,
halved horizontally
2kg leg of lamb,
at room temperature
4 tbsp white wine vinegar
2 tbsp olive oil
black pepper
2-litre roasting tray

Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6. Place the potato slices in the roasting tray. In a saucepan, melt the butter on the hob and add the stock. Bring to the boil, then pour over the potatoes. Mix in the shallots and 1 tbsp each of the thyme, mint and tarragon, then season with the pepper. Place a half garlic head in each corner of the tray.

Make several small cuts in the skin of the lamb leg, then place it on top of the potatoes. Stuff the cuts with the remaining thyme and tarragon, as well as 1 tbsp of the remaining mint. Season the skin with black pepper.

Cover the roasting tin loosely with tin foil, then roast for 1 hr 30 mins, basting every 20 mins. Remove the foil and cook for 30 mins for pink meat. Allow to rest out of the oven for 10 mins, covered with the foil.

Combine the remaining mint, vinegar and olive oil in a liquidiser and blend until just smooth. Pour over the lamb before serving; garnished with the herbs.

*“Thou, that feedest ev’ry creature,
Whether tame, or wild by nature,
Receive our prayers, who humbly own
The plenteous goodness thou hast shown!”*

In the kitchen

Inspiring seasonal ideas and recipes



SPIRALS OF FLAVOUR

These delicious pastries are light and perfect for springtime. To make 8: Place 40g of wild garlic leaves, 25g of basil leaves, 125ml of extra-virgin olive oil, 65g of pine nuts, 1 peeled and crushed garlic clove, the juice of 1 lemon and 3 tbsp of hard cheese in a food processor and season. Blend on high until smooth. Adjust the seasoning as required, then cover and chill until needed. In a bowl, stir together 600g of plain flour, 1½ tsp of salt and 2¾ tsp of active dry yeast, gradually stirring in 3 tbsp of extra-virgin olive oil, followed by 375-450ml of hot water to make a rough, craggy dough. Turn onto a floured surface and shape into a ball. Knead with floured hands until soft and elastic, approximately 10-12 mins. Place in a clean, oiled bowl and cover loosely with a damp tea towel. Let the dough rise in a warm place for approximately 2 hrs until doubled in size, then turn out and knock it back. On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough into a 45 x 30cm rectangle. Spoon a layer of the sauce all over the dough, spreading it out evenly and reserving any remaining for another time. Roll up the dough like a sausage and cut across it into 8 slices. Arrange on their sides, cut side up, in a muffin tin lined with paper muffin cases. Brush the tops with more olive oil and cover loosely with a damp tea towel. Leave to rise in a warm place until puffed, approximately 45-60 mins. Preheat the oven to 190°C/gas mark 5, then bake the buns for 25-35 mins until golden-brown. Remove and allow to cool in the tin before serving warm or at room temperature.

GROOVES IN GRAIN

This lemon juicer is made from locally sourced cherry wood and treated with natural oils for a durable finish. It measures approximately 20 x 6cm and has been made by Simon Pilkington in Berkshire, using a combination of traditional woodturning and carving techniques. Inspired by the natural beauty of the grain, each is unique and governed by the reclaimed timber used.

Kitchen Lemon Juicer £35,
www.etsy.com/uk/shop/FernleyandFinch



ASPARAGUS HARVEST

St George's Day on 23 April marks the start of the British Asparagus Festival and the beginning of the asparagus season in the Vale of Evesham, Worcestershire. The area has a long history of producing some of the best asparagus in the world; its sandy soils and mild climate providing an ideal environment for the plant to grow. Vale of Evesham asparagus has been awarded European (EU) Protected Food Name status, which links it to a specific geographical area and indicates a particular level of quality. Celebrations begin at The Fleece Inn in Bretforton, where the first-cut round of asparagus will be the centre of festivities that include Morris dancing and a blessing. There will also be charity auctions of the finest local spears. The festival runs until 21 June.

MAKING AN IMPACT

A plain kitchen space can be lifted when the cupboard doors are given a bright lick of paint. Choosing a bold spring shade, such as leafy green, brings a splash of colour, while simple wooden furniture and flooring help to accentuate the effect.

A bowl of fresh foliage, cut from the garden and placed on the table, complements the paint and brings the vibrancy of the season indoors.



CAPTURED IN THE ICE

Leftover red, white or rosé wine can be frozen in ice cube trays to use in cooking at a later date. The alcohol content will prevent the wine from freezing solid; instead remaining slightly soft around the edges, so it is recommended that the ice cube tray is placed inside a container in the freezer. For accuracy, the amount of wine which each cube mould holds can be determined by filling one with water, then pouring it out into a measuring cup. Making a note of the volume on the bag label will help in calculating how many cubes are required for a specific recipe at a later date. Frozen wine can be stored for three months or more.

REVIVING TRADITION



Established in 1976, Nicholas Mosse Pottery produces beautiful products in the style of Irish spongeware. The traditional pottery of Ireland during the 18th century, it uses simple shapes and decoration applied with a cut sponge. This set comprises a small mug, plate and bowl, and is adorned with a sheep design inspired by the flocks that dot the hills of the Irish countryside.

Trio Set Sheepies £80,
www.nicholasmosse.com

SALADS WITH A WARM HEART

Fresh and full of flavour, these dishes are a meal in themselves, combining savoury and sweet ingredients

Roast radish and goat's cheese

Serves 4

1kg new potatoes
4 tbsp olive oil
25g unsalted butter
30 medium radishes
1 head of garlic, peeled
and split into cloves
2 tbsp chopped dill
60g rocket
zest and juice of 1 lime
2 x 85g rounds rinded
goat's cheese, chopped
into small chunks
sea salt and black pepper

Preheat the oven to 200°C/gas mark 6. Place the new potatoes in a large saucepan of cold water and bring to the boil. Simmer for 5 mins, then drain thoroughly. Place the potatoes in a large roasting tray, drizzle with the olive oil and add the butter. Season with the salt and pepper, then stir so the potatoes are fully coated. Roast for 10 mins, then mix in the radishes and garlic cloves, and cook for a further 25 mins until the potatoes are golden.

Mix in the dill, rocket and the lime zest and juice, and divide between four serving bowls. Add the goat's cheese cubes to the salads so they melt over the potatoes and radishes. Serve immediately.

"To make a good salad is to be a brilliant diplomatist – the problem is entirely the same in both cases. To know how much oil one must mix with one's vinegar"

Oscar Wilde



Lemon and ginger chicken and pearl barley



Serves 4

350g pearl barley

2 tbsp olive oil

1 garlic clove, peeled
and finely chopped

4 chicken breasts, chopped
zest and juice of 1 lemon

2cm piece root ginger,
peeled and grated

½ red cabbage, thinly sliced

150g watercress

sea salt and black pepper

Rinse and drain the pearl barley in cold water, then cover with cold water in a large saucepan. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 25-30 mins until tender. Drain and refresh in cold water until cool. Set aside.

In a saucepan, heat 1 tbsp of olive oil, then add the garlic and chicken. Fry, stirring, for 3-4 mins until the chicken is seared. Add the lemon zest and juice, and the ginger, then cover and cook for 5-6 mins until the chicken is cooked through. Toss through the red cabbage.

Off the heat, mix through the pearl barley and watercress, and season with salt and pepper. Divide the salad between four bowls, drizzle over the remaining olive oil and serve.

Hot-smoked salmon and eggs

Serves 4

4 eggs
1 tsp paprika
2 tbsp chopped fresh dill
60ml yoghurt
zest and juice of 1 lemon
400g watercress
300g hot-smoked salmon,
broken into chunks
sea salt and black pepper
crusty bread, to serve

In a large saucepan, cook the eggs in boiling water for 7 mins for soft yolks or until the preferred consistency is reached. Drain, then run cold water over the eggs for 1 min to cool. Crack and shell the eggs carefully, then halve and sprinkle with paprika and sea salt. In a small jug, mix together the dill, yoghurt and lemon zest and juice, then season with pepper.

Scatter the watercress on a serving plate, then arrange the egg halves on top. Arrange the salmon chunks on top of the salad, then drizzle over the yoghurt and dill dressing. Serve with crusty bread.



Beets & salami

Serves 4

3 beetroots, trimmed
4 tbsp olive oil
2 red onions, chopped into chunks
2 tbsp honey
2 tbsp white wine vinegar
1 tbsp wholegrain mustard
2 little gem lettuce, trimmed
and roughly chopped
100g British peppered
salami slices
1 tbsp flat-leaf parsley leaves
sea salt and black pepper
sliced farmhouse loaf, to serve

Preheat the oven to 140°C/gas mark 1. Slice 1 of the beetroots very thinly, like potato crisps. Line a flat baking tray with baking paper, then lay out the slices in a single layer. Drizzle with 1 tbsp of the oil. Bake for 40 mins, turning over halfway through, until crispy.

In the meantime, arrange the red onion chunks on an oven tray and drizzle with 1 tbsp of the honey and 1 tbsp of the oil. Season with salt and pepper, and bake for 30 mins.

Chop the remaining beetroots into bite-sized pieces and place in a saucepan. Cover with cold water and bring to the boil. Simmer for 12-15 mins until just tender, then drain and refresh in cold water to cool.

In a jar, combine the remaining oil and honey, the vinegar and the mustard. Season with pepper. Shake with the lid on, then whisk until completely combined.

On a large serving plate, arrange the little gem lettuce, onion and beetroot chunks, and salami. Coat with the mustard dressing and top with the beetroot crisps. Sprinkle with the parsley and serve with the bread.



Steak strips and red cabbage

Serves 4

2 sirloin steaks,
at room temperature
½ red cabbage, trimmed
150g lamb's lettuce
100g sun-dried tomatoes
2 tbsp horseradish cream
4 tbsp single cream
zest and juice of 1 lemon
2 tbsp chopped flat-leaf parsley
sea salt and black pepper
bread, to serve

Preheat a frying pan on a medium heat and season the steaks with the salt and pepper. Place the meat in the hot pan and cook for 4 mins for rare; 5 mins for medium. Turn it over and cook for the same amount of time, according to preference. Holding the steak with tongs, sear the sides for 30 secs, including the fatty edge. Place on a warm plate and cover with tin foil. Allow to rest for 5 mins.

Remove four of the outer cabbage leaves and keep them intact. Place each leaf on a plate,

then de-core and chop half the remaining cabbage, discarding the rest or keeping for a future dish. Fill the leaves with the chopped cabbage, lamb's lettuce and sun-dried tomatoes. In a small jug, mix together the horseradish, cream, lemon zest and juice, and the parsley. Season with pepper.

Remove the tin foil from the steak, then slice the meat into thick strips. Top the salads with the steak and dress with the horseradish dressing. Serve with bread.

Carrot & orange with halloumi

Serves 4

2 x 225g British halloumi

1 tsp paprika

3 oranges

¼ tsp English
mustard powder

2 tbsp white
wine vinegar

3 tbsp olive oil

1 tbsp chopped
flat-leaf parsley

150g watercress

2 chicory heads,
trimmed and
leaves separated

350g carrots, peeled
into ribbons

black pepper

crusty bread, to serve

Slice the halloumi squares vertically into pieces 1cm thick and place on a plate. Dust lightly with the paprika. In a small jug, mix together the juice of 1 orange, the mustard powder, vinegar, oil and parsley. Season with pepper, then whisk with a fork to combine thoroughly. Preheat a frying pan.

In the meantime, peel the remaining oranges. Cut the orange segments away from the pith, then cut each segment into three. Arrange the watercress and chicory between four plates, then scatter with the orange and the carrot ribbons.

Place the halloumi slices in the pan and cook for 1-2 mins until starting to go crispy. Turn them over and cook for the same amount of time. Transfer to the salads. Drizzle over the dressing and serve with crusty bread.





FROM LOCH TO PLATE

UNDER WIDE SKIES, rolling hills are mirrored in the still waters between the isles of Raasay and Skye; their rippled reflections occasionally dispersed by a gentle breeze or small fishing boat as it bobs with the swell. A net is hung over one side; the deck laden with boxes of freshly caught shellfish, ready to be taken to a small, sky-blue log cabin nestled beside a glimmering sea loch, within view of the haul.

On the benches outside the cabin, small groups of people cluster together against the wind gusting down from the hills as they tuck into platefuls of fresh langoustines, oysters and crab. A happy chatter resonates inside; the seats thronged with people and the tables a patchwork of vibrant colour. Here, at the Kishorn Seafood Bar in the North West Highlands, food is often caught in sight of the restaurant and delivered directly to the kitchen door.

First established in 1996, the restaurant lies near the villages of Ardarroch and Achintraid, with views across Loch Kishorn to Skye and the Applecross peninsula. "We have spectacular views of the Cuillin Hills; snow-capped in winter and beautifully lit in summer," says Lucy Kerr, who took on

the restaurant in 2017. "There's always something to see, whether it's an ethereal landscape draped in mist, a glittering seascape or a passing squall. It's beyond compare."

The interior has been kept clean and simple, with chalky-white walls and woodwork painted in a cloudy grey. "This enables us to shift the focus from inside to out, where the vista is," explains Lucy. "The field beyond our white picket fence is a haven for local wildlife. Visitors might be lucky enough to catch sight of a small herd of Dexter cattle or the stags that visit each year to feed for the rut, while they enjoy their lunch," she muses. "We even have a resident otter family by the shore."

As well as the scenery, the restaurant is best known for its fresh, locally sourced seafood. "Almost everything on the menu comes from within a 30-mile radius. We are lucky enough to have a small local fishing fleet which specialises in supplying langoustines, lobsters and crabs, as well as local boats with divers for scallops and razor clams," says Lucy. "We support several local businesses which smoke and cure our salmon, make our specialist dill sauce and grow our salad leaves. Local and sustainable: that's what we're about."



A seafood restaurant near the waterside in Wester Ross makes the most of panoramic views and the local catch

Sharing seafood platters overflow with local shellfish, including oysters, mussels and squat lobsters, which has earned the restaurant its stature. “Personally, my favourite dish is the scallops.

“We cook them slowly and serve them in a rich, buttery sauce, with crusty bread and salad leaves. They are served with a garlic and seaweed, or chilli and lemon butter, which allows visitors to choose based on preference,” she adds. “They’re full of flavour.”

After closing for winter, Lucy enjoys the start of the new season. “Spring is definitely my favourite time of year. The lambs are out in the fields, the hawthorns are flowering, the swallows have returned, and all the birds are chirping away while they hatch their new broods,” she explains. “The visitors are also returning, and it’s lovely to give a hearty Highland welcome to both new and familiar faces alike.

“I am often reminded what a privilege it is to live and work in such a remote and beautiful part of the world. It really is a hidden gem.” ■

• Words: Holly Duerden • Photography: Ed Duncan

Slow-cooked scallops in garlic and seaweed butter

Serves 1

5 scallops, corals on

50g butter

1 garlic clove, peeled and crushed

dried seaweed

salt and pepper

bread and salad, to serve

Rinse the scallops under cold running water and check there are no brown membranes left on the flesh.

In a large pan, melt the butter and add the garlic, a large pinch of dried seaweed, and salt and pepper to taste.

Simmer until the butter begins to bubble, then add the scallops and keep on a low to medium heat, so the flesh does not brown. Baste the scallops with the butter and cook until the edges start to separate, and the texture is similar to a marshmallow.

Using a slotted spoon, scoop the scallops into a bowl, then pour over the cooking butter. Serve with the crusty bread and salad leaves.



CONTACT

Kishorn Seafood Bar, Kishorn, Strathcarron, IV54 8XA.

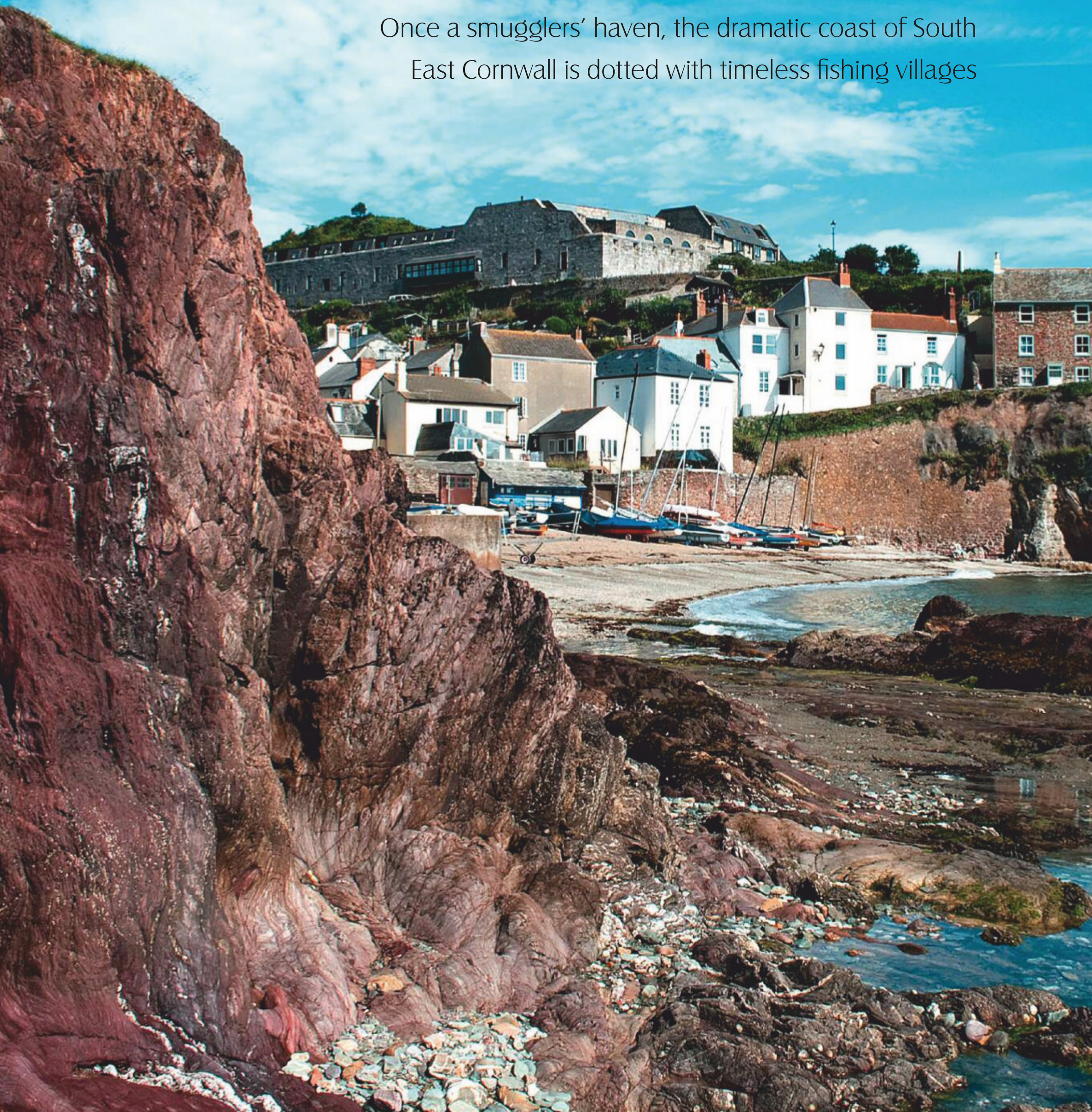
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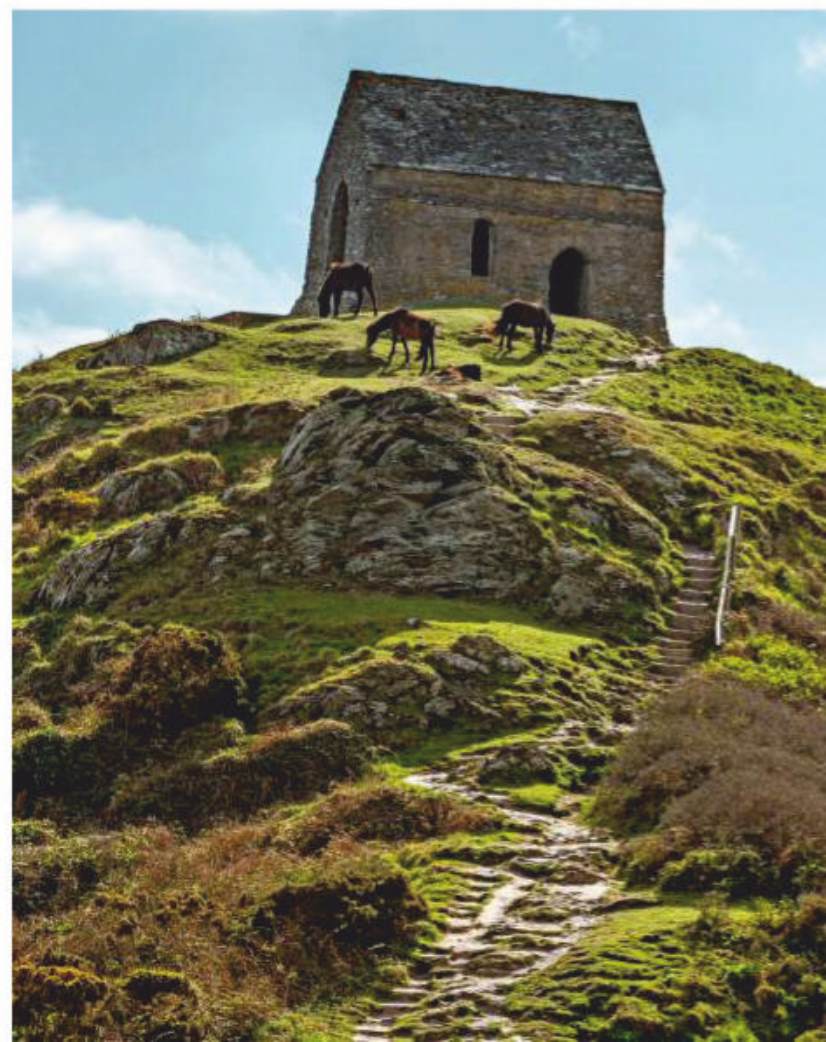
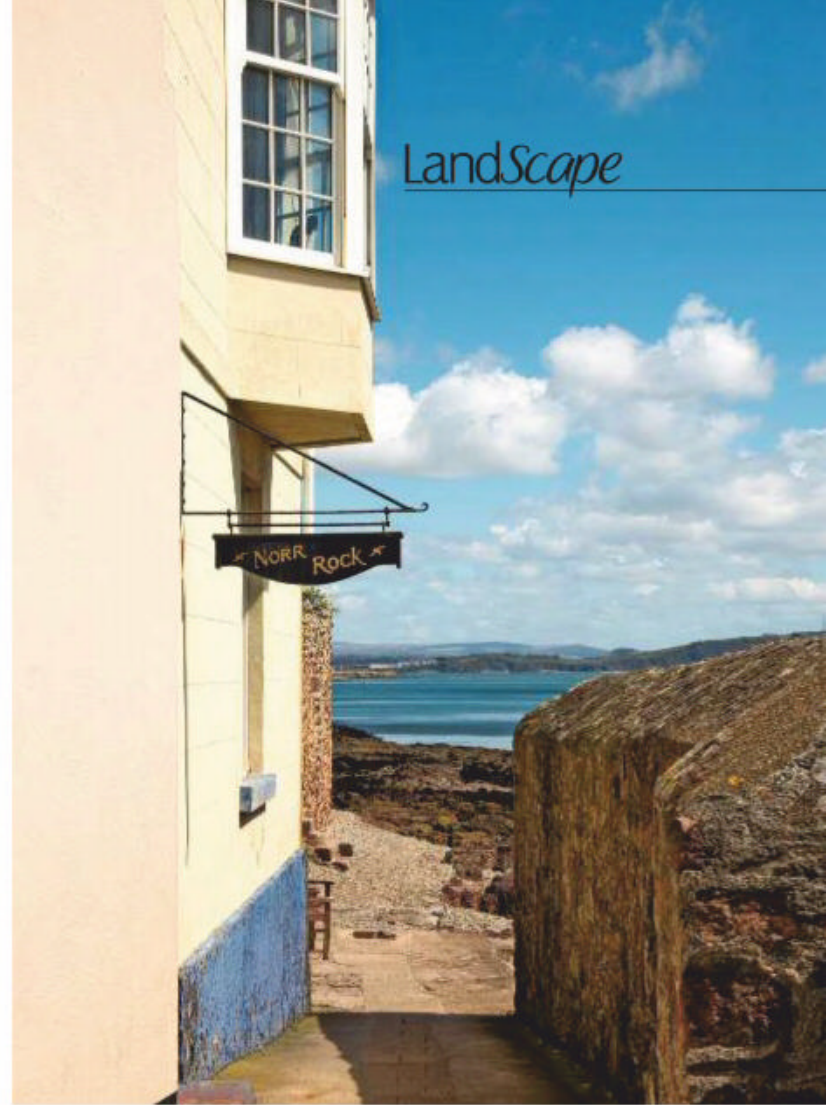
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TREASURES ALONG A FORGOTTEN COASTLINE

Once a smugglers' haven, the dramatic coast of South East Cornwall is dotted with timeless fishing villages





SHAPED BY AEONS of tide and weather, the coastline of South East Cornwall is spectacular. Towering rock faces plummet dramatically to the sea, foamy with white horses in windy weather. Seabirds mourn overhead. Tiny villages, redolent of times past, are linked by narrow, winding ways and footpaths. There is a sense of detachment from the 21st century.

This is a place of sequestered beaches, high cliffs and darkly historic fortifications that are a reminder of past turmoils. A place of big skies, seascapes and windswept headlands, its sense of remoteness is made all the more surprising by its proximity to the hubbub of the city of Plymouth, just across the water to the east, in Devon.

The most bustling part of this stretch of coast is the historic fishing town of Looe; divided by the river into East and West Looe. The river itself also divides just north of the town, into the East Looe River and the West Looe River.

Archaeological evidence suggests that humans inhabited the Looe area as early as 1000BC. At the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, the manor of Pendrym, which encompassed much of modern-day East Looe, was held by William the Conqueror.

By the middle ages, Looe was thriving. The port had become one of Cornwall's largest and exported local tin, arsenic and granite, as well as being home to a busy boatbuilding industry. Records show that the town provided 20 ships for the Siege of Calais in 1347.

The town's heritage as a prolific fishing port goes back to pre-medieval times. This history is celebrated in the Sardine Factory, a heritage centre for the fishing industry, which has been built on the site of an old pilchard cellar, where the fish, *Sardina pilchardus*, was once processed. Situated on the west bank of the River Looe, this contemporary stone edifice blends well with vernacular buildings, as materials from the original cellar were salvaged and used in its construction.

Just around the corner from the centre in West Looe is the church of St Nicholas, built during the early 14th century. Stone steps, edged by the tiny green leaves of the lush plant known as baby's tears, lead up to its door. Inside, the walls are cream-washed, though the interior is quite dark, with wooden roof timbers and pews. In one corner, a colourful prayer net is displayed. A delightful nod to the fishing heritage of the area, its strands of red, blue and white wool are tied on as a votive offering, instead of the candles found in many churches.

During the building's long life, it has functioned as a guildhall and a prison, as well as a church. Successive restorations have taken place over the centuries. The 18th century clock, having been removed in 1922, was replaced by today's replica as a millennium project.

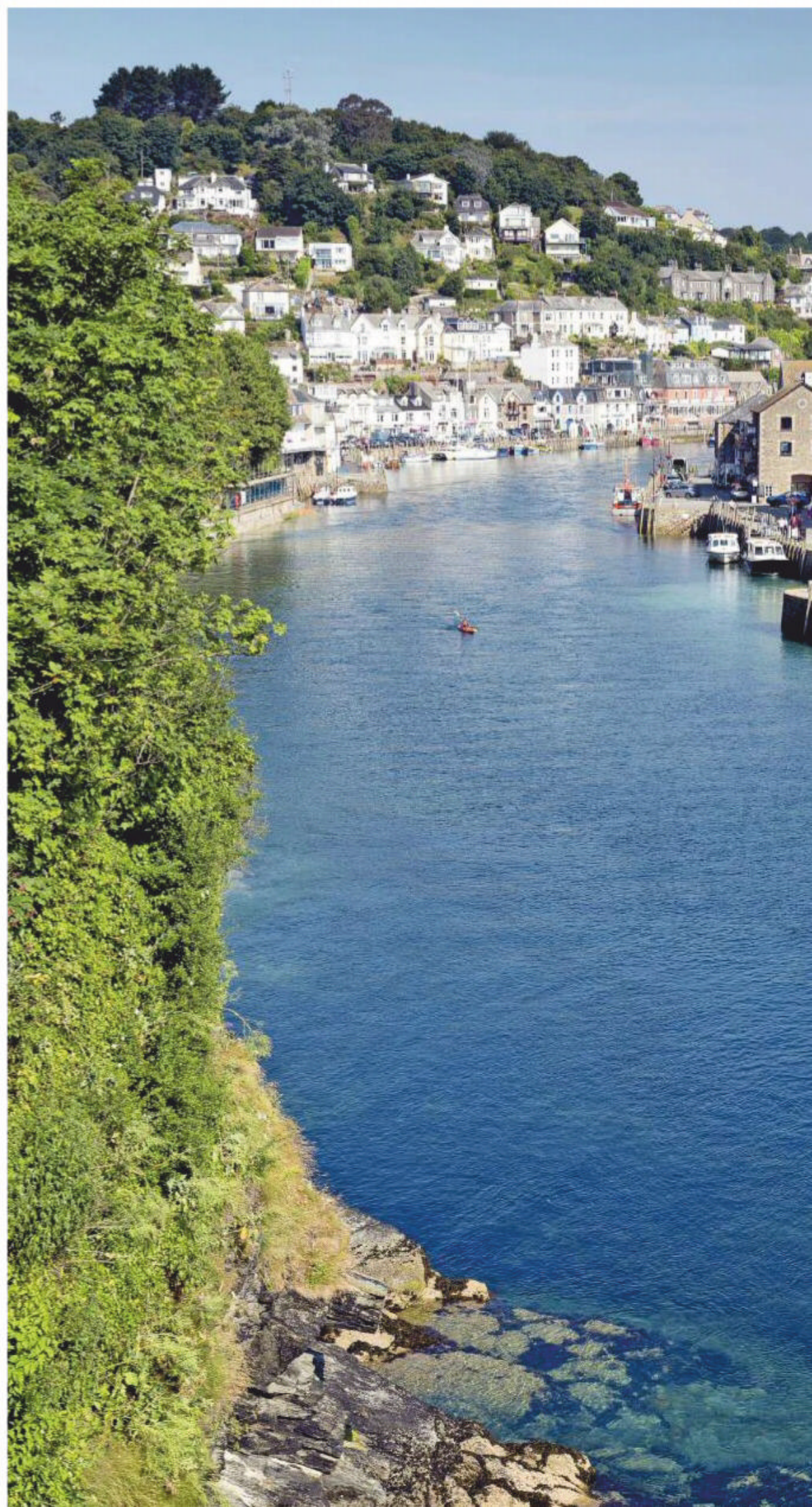
Ancient inn

Just over 100yds (91m) from the church, set back from the river on Princes Square, is one of the oldest inns in the UK. The Jolly Sailor is known affectionately as the Jolly, and although its present custodians, Zoe and Garry Seymour, have carried out sensitive refurbishments, its sense of history

is beautifully maintained, with old dark beams and irregular flagstones on the floor. Boats could moor alongside the inn until the 19th century, but the land was then reclaimed from the sea, with cottages built on the site.

"The Jolly was first established as a public house in 1516," says Zoe. "Many of the present beams were salvaged from wreckage of the Spanish Armada; much of this wood was used in buildings around Looe."

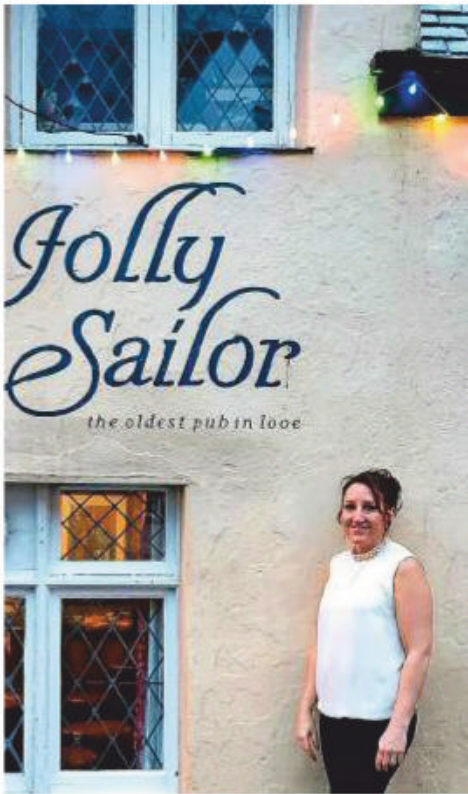
"The main beam above the bar comes from a ship of the line at the Battle of Trafalgar. A French ship was captured in 1805 and renamed HMS Indefatigable. In 1816, that ship



was broken down, and the landlord claimed the beam to prop up the existing ones.”

There are many quirky features, including a small trapdoor in the floor of the main bar. “This drops down approximately 6in,” says Zoe. “The reason for this is that the ceilings are so low, the darts players used to hit the beams. They used the trapdoor to stand in so they could lower the dartboard, allowing them to play without hitting the ceiling.”

The bed and breakfast part of the building was added at a later date. It was originally two storeys and was used as a grocery shop and living quarters for a local family. An >



Smuggler’s Cott, restored in the 1590s using timbers salvaged from the Armada, is now a restaurant (left). Zoe Seymour outside the Jolly Sailor, said to host ghosts as well as pub regulars (right).

A view into Looe, with its colour-washed homes climbing up from the azure waters, and its quayside.

MUCH-LOVED CHARACTER

Those who walk a short distance along the west bank of the River Looe estuary, towards the coast, will meet Nelson. Nelson was a one-eyed, well-loved grey seal which lived on Looe Island, just offshore. For more than 20 years, he regularly visited Looe Harbour and became a great favourite with residents and visitors. In 2003, he ceased to visit, much to the dismay of his many fans. Today, a life-size bronze statue of him sits on the rocks overlooking the water. Nelson’s statue serves as a memorial and was created by Cornish sculptor Suzie Marsh. His unveiling in 2008 was even honoured with a flypast by 849 Naval Air Squadron.



extra storey was added, and in the 1930s, a brewery bought the building. It then became part of the Jolly Sailor and provided accommodation for the owners for many years before being turned into bed and breakfast rooms.

Inevitably, for a place of such great age, the Jolly is reputed to be haunted by several ghosts. “We often have strange activities,” says Zoe. “We might both be looking at the key hooks for a set of keys which aren’t there. We search

for them, only to return and find them hanging up. We also hear the chairs in the family room scraping, as if someone was getting out of their seat, but no one is there.

“As well as three spirits in the family room, we have a former landlady, a man who sits at the end of the bar and another who roams the corridors day and night, coughing as he goes.”

The Jolly Sailor has been a hub of the community for centuries. In the 18 months that the Seymours have been there,

A high-angle, bird's-eye view of the coastal town of Looe. The foreground shows a rocky shoreline with a prominent, circular stone pier structure. A road with parked cars runs along the coast. In the background, a large, forested island (Looe Island) is visible in the blue sea. The sky is clear and blue.

A bird's eye view of Looe, with its banjo-shaped pier in the foreground and marine nature reserve Looe Island, also known as St George's Island, just off the coast.

they have won a regional award for Best Community Pub and Best Newcomer in Plymouth and Cornwall.

Bridging east and west

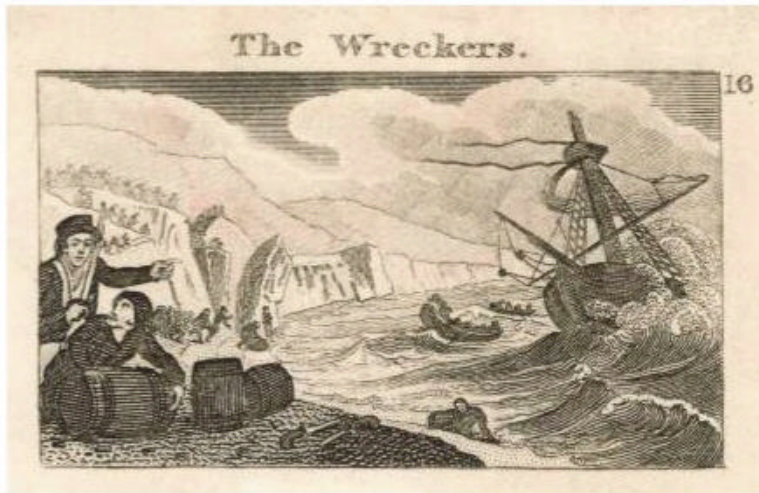
A third of a mile upriver from the Jolly, a bridge links East and West Looe. At high tide, many boats bob along the river, sitting on the mud when the tide recedes. Both parts of the town rise steeply on either side of the water, some of the

houses colourfully painted. By night, the studded sparkle of lights climbing higher and higher gives the town a picturesque, fairy tale quality.

The first bridge to span the river was constructed in 1411 and made of wood. It was replaced by a stone bridge in 1436, and today's Victorian bridge sits slightly further upstream.

East and West Looe were once two separate administrations, but in the late 19th century, they merged ➤





SMUGGLERS' DOMAIN

The Cornish coastline has long been awash with smuggling associations, and this south-east corner is no exception. Smuggler's Cott is an ancient building in East Looe, situated between Middle and Higher Market Streets. It dates back to the first half of the 15th century. A 3ft (1m) high tunnel in the cellar, rediscovered in the 1930s, leads to the quay. To the east, on the Rame Peninsula, a fleet of more than 50 smuggling vessels operated out of Cawsand Bay during the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Rame History Group has researched an interesting account of smuggling: "A large tombstone to the right of the porch of Rame Church marks the final resting place of members of the Edwards family, who were 18th century squires of Rame. They had a colourful history. One of them, Stephen, was the last squire of Rame and was deeply involved in smuggling. One January night in 1788, the smuggling vessel 'Revenge' anchored off Kingsand carrying kegs of spirit. The booty was heaved up the shore and hidden in the cellars of houses. However, Navy patrol boats arrived on the scene, and in the ensuing scuffle, some of the smugglers jumped overboard to try and escape. Others were captured by the Navy when they took control of 'Revenge'. The next day, an excise officer arrived with a warrant to search houses in Kingsand. He had the power to seize any contraband discovered."

The report continues: "When a huge cache of spirits was found, a mob of over 100 villagers turned out and pelted the customs officers with stones and bottles. They took refuge in the Rising Sun inn, where all the windows were smashed by missiles thrown by the mob, which had now increased to 200. Among those taking part was Stephen Edwards. He was arrested along with other local men, and eventually, seven of them stood trial at the Old Bailey. Smuggling trials did not take place locally, as the jury were generally sympathetic to the defendants, if not engaged in smuggling themselves. Stephen Edwards' trial took place on 8 June 1791, and he was charged, with another man, 'of unlawful and violent assault on the customs officer and another man in the execution of their duty, also for obstructing and opposing the same officer'. Edwards was further charged with assaulting the customs officer who led the rescue party. The first offence was very serious and carried the death sentence, but, for Edwards, it was reduced to a misdemeanour. Edwards was found guilty and sentenced to three years in jail."

For more information, visit www.ramehistorygroup.org.uk

to be under the jurisdiction of one governing body. Looe Town Council has two wards: East Looe and West Looe.

Approaching the bustling centre of East Looe from the bridge, the streets grow narrower, and some of the upper storeys are overhanging. Venerable buildings house modern shops. East Looe was something akin to an early new town, being built on a grid layout, which is evident as one explores deeper into its network of streets.

Many of East Looe's buildings date back to the 15th century, including the Old Guildhall Museum and Gaol, situated a third of a mile from the bridge, on Higher Market Street. As its name suggests, this stone building has seen service as a jail, magistrates' court and guildhall. It boasts many original features and is Grade II* listed.

Life by the sea

The seafront is just a few minutes' walk from the museum. Here, the Banjo Pier, named for its distinctive shape, stretches out to sea, separating the estuary from the beach. Designed by Joseph Thomas in 1897, the structure acts as a sea wall and prevents the river from silting up.

Nearby are both the modern-day lifeboat station and the old one; the latter now serving as a gallery for the work of local artists. Boats and fishing are, and always have been, an integral part of life in Looe.

Terry Morris is the skipper of Out of the Blue, a charter boat operating from East Looe. With her large deck space, the boat is licensed to take up to 10 people. At the front is the cabin, which Terry regards as his office. Here is stowed all the equipment needed for trips; if conditions are right, Terry may take his passengers more than 20 miles from the coast.

"Out of the Blue is a traditional deep-keeled boat, with exceptional sea-keeping capabilities," says Terry, who has been taking charter trips from Looe for more than a decade. "She is ideal for deep sea fishing and sightseeing alike. ➤"



Skipper Terry Morris on deck aboard his passenger-carrying boat, Out of the Blue.



The seven-arched bridge straddling the River Looe, linking the west and east sides of the town.



Seaton has a quiet, sheltered beach at the foot of the wooded Hessenford valley. The River Seaton meanders across the sands, and rock pools can be found at both ends.

“She’s a very dependable boat. She’s 30 years old, and I’ve owned her for approximately seven years.”

The boat’s deck is an excellent vantage point for wildlife watching. “This stretch of coast towards the Rame Peninsula is particularly beautiful in spring, with magnificent wildlife,” says Terry. “We see large amounts of porpoises, different species of whales, seals and shoals of big Bluefin tuna.”

Looe sits right on the South West Coast Path (SWCP). At 630 miles, this is England’s longest waymarked national trail. From East Looe, the SWCP climbs up Castle Street, heading generally east towards the Rame Peninsula. Once walkers are up on the clifftop path, the views are tremendous. Looe Island sits to the south: a place that has seen human presence since the iron age, but which is now a rich wildlife reserve in the care of the Cornwall Wildlife Trust.

Although the SWCP is a splendid way to explore the region, it does require a reasonable level of fitness. The coastline can also be travelled by car; often along steep, tortuous roads that add to the area’s sense of remoteness. Occasionally, the SWCP follows these quiet roads.

This is a coast populated by tiny villages, such as Seaton, less than two miles on from Murrayton and home to the

Seaton Valley Countryside Park. The beach at Seaton is noticeably dark in colour, being created by erosion of the coastline. The debris is carried by the currents and deposited at the beach, so its darker hue is determined by the surrounding geology. Rock pools are at either end.

Continuing east, delightfully named villages are encountered, such as Downton and Portwrinkle, all with the backdrop of the coastline along Whitsand Bay. Away to the south-east, the Rame Peninsula juts darkly out to sea, the pimple of St Michael’s Chapel distinctive on the headland, tiny, at this distance. The peninsula is well-named: Rame is thought to mean ‘ram’s head’ or ‘protruding cliff’.

Victorian fort

Just over a mile beyond Portwrinkle, the arresting sight of Tregantle Fort comes into view. This imposing and extensive fort is constructed of irregular, grey stone blocks, with recessed slit apertures interspersed among two rows of more regular sized windows. It was built between 1854-1858 at a cost of £136,505 and accommodated 1,000 officers and men.

Tregantle Fort was part of a series of fortifications constructed to defend Plymouth Sound. These forts were



Sharrow Point juts out to sea from Whitsand Bay, with the tiny pimple that is St Michael’s Chapel just visible on the furthest seaward peak.

The grotto known as Sharrow Grot measures approximately 15ft (4.5m) deep, 18ft (5.5m) wide and 7ft (2m) high (right).

With its rocky outcrops, Tregantle Beach would have offered cover and escape routes for smugglers (below).



*“But, as thou walk’st should sudden storms arise,
Red lightnings flash, or thunder shake the skies,
To Sharrows friendly grot in haste retreat,
And find safe shelter and a rocky seat”*

James Lugger, inscribed on the walls of Sharrow Grot

commissioned by Prime Minister Lord Palmerston in the 1850s and 1860s, part of the ‘Ring of Fire’ which surrounded Plymouth in Victorian times and protected the Royal Dockyard at Devonport from potential French attack.

Tregantle’s guns were positioned to aim inland, as it was thought the French were more likely to approach from that direction. By the time construction was finished, armament technology had progressed, and the site was at far more threat from the seaward side.

Although mothballed in the inter-war years, the site has remained in military ownership and is still used as a training establishment for all three of the armed services. When troops are not active, walkers can pass right in front of the fort on the SWCP. During operations, red flags are flown, and access is strictly prohibited, meaning walkers have to pass the fort by road. From here, there is a superb vantage point looking across the water into Devon and the sprawling conurbation of Plymouth. The contrast with this quiet and rural Cornish spot is striking.

Along the coast

Beyond Tregantle, the SWCP continues through Whitsand Bay. The beaches in this area are often accessed by steep paths and are rarely over-populated.

Their difficulty of access can make these beaches even more appealing. Half a mile from Tregantle, the path reaches the cliffside village of Freathy and, just to the west of the village, a path and steps lead down to Sharrow Beach, tucked beneath towering cliffs.

Some of the coastline here belongs to the National Trust, and Andy Simmons is the ranger for the area.



Ranger Andy Simmons, with a National Trust nameplate.

“Sharrow is a lovely beach, which is lifeguarded at times,” he says. “Although it has a steep path down, it is one of the Trust’s most accessible beaches in the area, but there are issues with the cliffs, which have been stabilised, and care needs to be taken, as you can get cut off by incoming tides.”

Above the beach, at the east end, set high in the craggy cliffs, is Sharrow Grot, also known as Lugger’s Cave, after the ex-Naval purser who excavated it in 1784. The grotto was dug into the cliff from the terrace of another former pilchard processing shed. Into its roof, Lugger inscribed lines of verse, some of which have been lost due to roof collapses. The Trust has restored the entrance in recent years, but access down to it from the path is tricky and not for fainthearted, requiring a sure-footed approach down very rough-hewn steps.

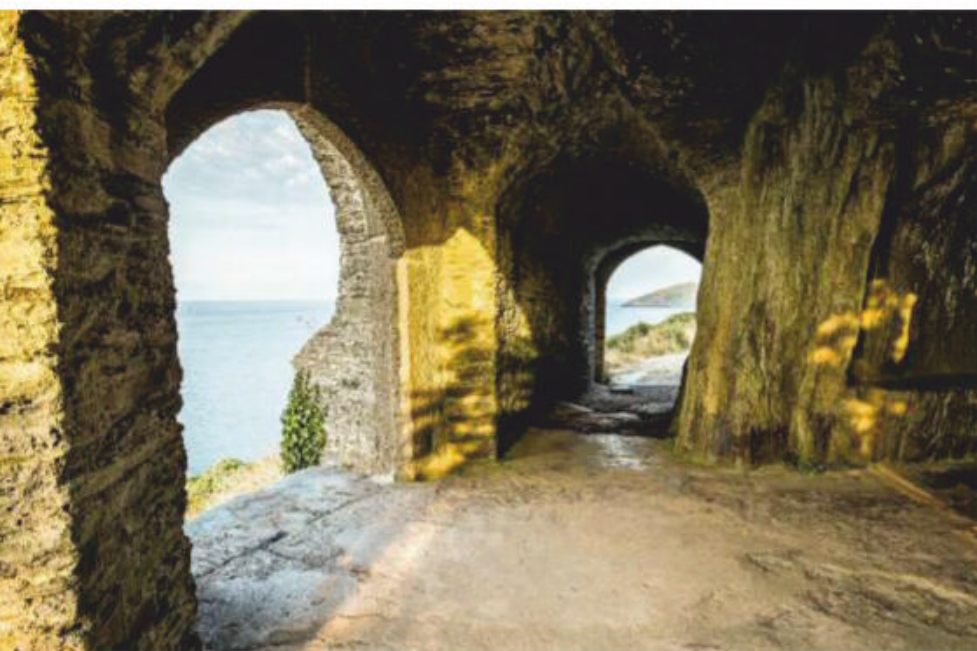
Andy relishes caring for the coastal habitats. “It is, of course, all about the coastline, the sea, nature and farming,” he says. “In springtime, the flowers are at their most wonderful: bluebells, primroses, pink campion, bird’s foot trefoils, stitchwort, thrift and oxeye daisies are abundant. If you are lucky, you may see a Peregrine falcon swooping.”

As the peninsula grows closer, the pointy, broached spire of St Germanus Church in Rame is distinctive. The road passes Polhawn Fort, down on the cliffs; the village of Rame is set just behind the coast.

To visit this village is to step back out of the 21st century. Well off the beaten track and exposed to the elements, the ➤

MOUNT EDGCUMBE

Approximately 3 miles further up the coast from Kingsand lies Mount Edgumbe; its country park stretching as far as Rame Head and covering some 865 acres. The estate was home to the Earls of Mount Edgumbe for more than 400 years. Approached by an extensive drive, the house is surrounded by formal gardens and set in a Grade I listed landscape. It was built between 1547 and 1550, but was seriously damaged during World War Two, with the restoration being undertaken in the late 1950s. During the 1970s, the family sold the estate to Cornwall Council and Plymouth City Council, which now jointly administer it. It has been open to the public since 1988, with interiors restored to 18th century styles. The gardens are extensive and variedly themed, and the country park can be explored via one of the designated trails or along the SWCP.



Queen Adelaide's Grotto, with its arches installed following her visit to the former cave, was previously used as a watch house.

area feels extremely remote. The church is extraordinary. It was enlarged and rebuilt in the 13th century on the site of an earlier Norman church. Walled with dark stone inside and out, it takes a moment for eyes to adjust to the dim light, for St Germanus has no electricity. Partly melted candle stubs sit in candelabra hanging from the roof; tall candlesticks stand at the pew ends, and the organ has to be hand-pumped.

Despite its seemingly primitive nature, the church is well-loved, well-used and wonderfully atmospheric. An inviting 'Church Open' sign hangs outside and, if the timing is right, home-made apple juice is available within.

Back out on the coast path, just over half a mile from the church, as the Cornish crow flies, St Michael's Chapel is perched high on the summit of Rame Head, on the south-west tip of the peninsula, where once stood an iron age promontory fort. From the coastguard station, a grassy path leads between thickets of gorse across a narrow isthmus out to the chapel. Stone steps lead up to the exposed building; the first riser engraved in memorial to a lady called Sally: "Embrace life, embrace love, embrace this view..."

The headland is conservation-grazed by Dartmoor ponies to keep the sward short and can be beyond wild in windy weather. With no glazing in the chapel, it can be as wind-whipping outside as it is in.

The chapel was first licensed for Mass in 1397 and is on the site of a much earlier Celtic hermitage. The stone shell of the building is intact and was once limewashed to make it more visible on the headland. The spot commands one of the most superb views: east into Devon; west into Cornwall.

On the eastern corner of the Rame Peninsula, at Penlee Point, lies another Cornwall Wildlife Trust site. Penlee

Battery Reserve has been in its custodianship since 1992. It covers 16.3 acres and was once part of the Victorian and Edwardian defences of the area. Its guns were installed between 1899-1911 and removed in 1956, when the site was decommissioned. Today, some defences are still visible, although most features have been demolished or covered to make the site safe.

The reserve is mainly on south-east facing slopes, with views across Plymouth Sound, and it lies within part of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The site supports diverse vegetation, ranging from woodland, which is home to Tawny owls, to scrub and grassland, with some bare ground and seasonal pools. Its 'unimproved' grassland is important for its range of species, which includes the rare bee orchid. Historic manmade aspects of the site, tucked among vegetation, such as exposed stone and concrete, provide ideal habitats for basking lizards. Old underground chambers offer homes to bats. In spring, Penlee is a good place from which to observe migrating birds.

The reserve can be reached by lane from Rame Church, and a boardwalk has been installed so that those using wheelchairs can access a viewing platform.

Near Penlee Point, on the seaward side of the SWCP, is another treat: Queen Adelaide's Grotto. During the 18th century, a cave at the site was used as a lookout post, but in 1827, Princess Adelaide visited with her husband, who was to become King William IV. After this Royal visitation, archways were constructed, and the grotto dedicated to her. It is now a place where proposals of marriage are often made.

The coast path heads north from Penlee Point to reach the twinned fishing villages of Cawsand and Kingsand in just over a mile. Steep streets of stone and colour-washed houses drop to the seafront, and the old fort at Cawsand has been converted into residential apartments.

Shifting boundaries

Although now twinned and blending one into the other, the villages were once on different sides of the county boundary, with Cawsand in Cornwall and Kingsand in Devon. In 1844, the boundary shifted east to the River Tamar. A sign on a blue-painted cottage in Garrett Street shows where the division occurred, with 'Devon-Corn' displayed on the wall.

As with other locations visited, these villages have a strong smuggling and fishing heritage, and remains of more



The gorse-draped approach to St Michael's Chapel. Its cliff location made it perfect as a coastal lookout, and it is likely a priest or watchman was once resident.



A perfect vista through a porthole shape created by a garden gate set under an arch in Cawsand.

old pilchard cellars, from the late 16th century, are visible on the shoreline just beyond Kingsand. When smuggling was rife in the 18th and 19th centuries, thousands of casks of spirits were landed here every year.

Above Girt Beach at Kingsand, the Maker with Rame Institute, with its clock tower, stands proud. The tower was added to commemorate the coronation of King George V: the building today serves as a village hall. Its exposed position renders it somewhat vulnerable, and in 2014, it was undermined by crashing waves during a violent storm.

"That storm really hit the village hard, and it knocked out a hole big enough to walk through in the foundations beneath the clock tower," recalls Jan Ferguson, who owns



The distinctive marker on the cottage where the county boundaries of Devon and Cornwall used to meet.



the Panache Gallery in Kingsand. “The structure was hanging on by a thread as the water got underneath. Luckily, it was saved before it collapsed.”

The Panache Gallery & Gifts is vibrantly well-stocked with the art and crafts of local creatives. Jan has owned it for 10 years. “I wanted a gallery and shop space that was warm and welcoming, not stuffy and pretentious,” she says. “I’m really proud to sell local art and Cornish goods.”

Jan recognises the influence of the region on artists. “The area is so unspoiled and peaceful. It allows quiet contemplation and being at one with the beauty of the world around us. There is time to just stop and think. It inspires people to be artistic, to enjoy and value arts and crafts, and be open to new ideas, without being clogged up with the hustle and bustle of everyday life.”

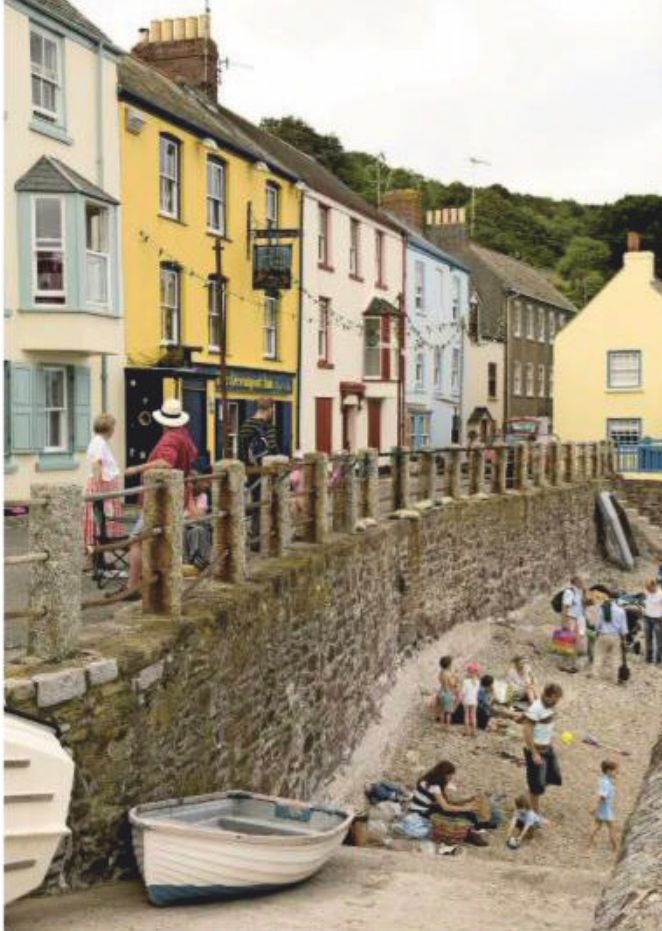
Jan also restores old pieces of furniture. “When I was 16, I had a Saturday job in an antiques shop,” she says. “The owner was a fantastic furniture restorer and inspired me to have a love of antiques and collectables, and he also taught me, as he sympathetically restored items. Now, my pleasure is

to restore items for sale as well as for our home and family. I love to return pieces to their original beauty, imagining those who may have come into contact with that item over the years and what story it would tell me if it had the chance.”

The gallery’s works of art encapsulate beautifully the glorious panorama of the Rame Peninsula. This is a timeless place of vast seascapes and roads less travelled; a breathing space in a corner of Cornwall. ■

• Words: Simone Stanbrook-Byrne • Photography: Jeremy Walker

Colourful properties in Kingsand, which has a long fishing heritage like many villages along this stretch of Cornish coastline.

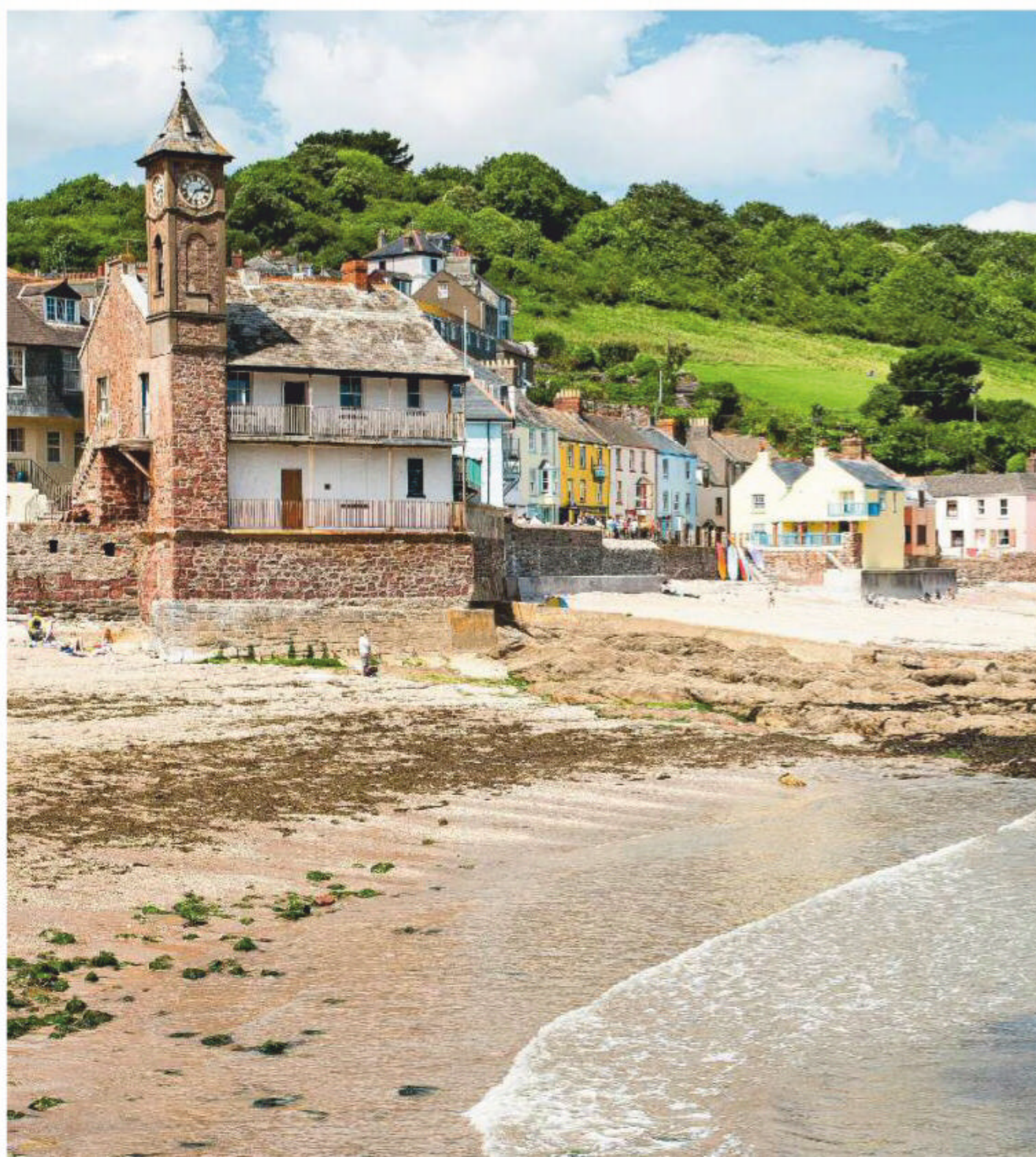


Jan Ferguson paints props for the Panache Gallery. Shelves are lined with Cornish blue and white pottery.



Narrow streets in Cawsand; typical of these charming coastal villages.

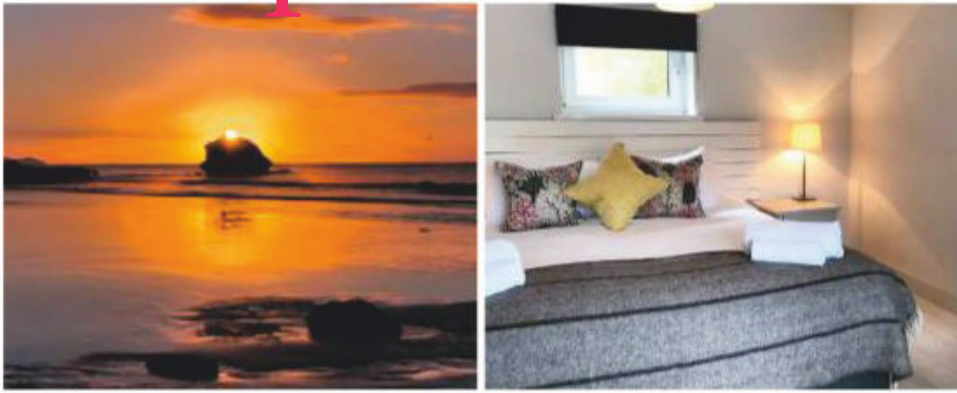
At the mercy of the sea, the Institute clock tower abuts the sand.



Photography: Alamy; iStock; Shutterstock Illustration: Steven Hall

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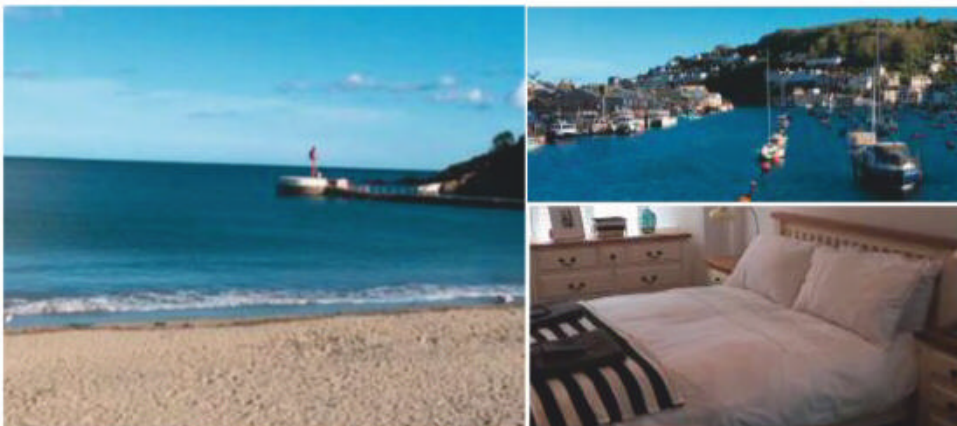
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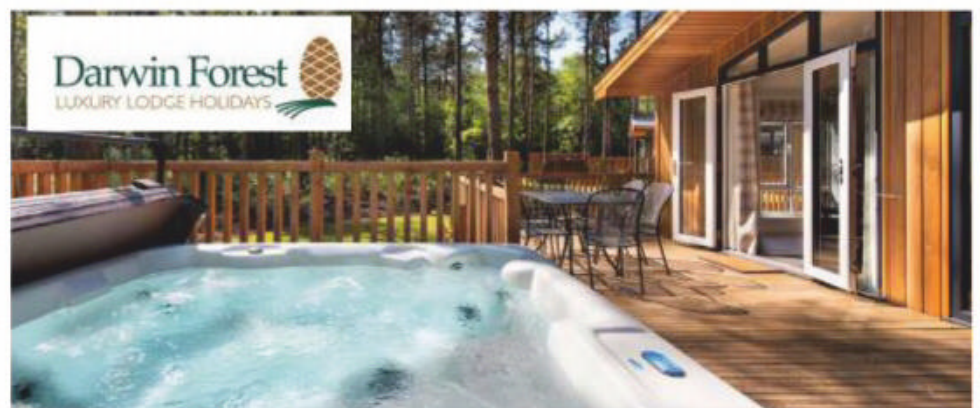


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In the home

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Clean Green RRP £8.99, www.hardiegrant.com



NATURE'S NEW BEGINNINGS

Hens' eggs can be coloured with natural dye and turned into pretty seasonal decorations. The eggs are dipped in water and delicate leaves, such as rosemary or fennel, are arranged on the wet shell. Each is wrapped using a cut-off from a pair of old tights to hold the leaves in place and set aside. Vegetables such as beetroot or red cabbage are brought to the boil and left to simmer for 20 mins to allow the colour to seep out. Adding a tablespoon of apple cider vinegar or salt while the water boils will help to retain the dye. The water is strained into a mason jar and allowed to cool to room temperature. The eggs can be dipped until the desired shade is reached or left in the jar overnight. Lukewarm water enables the dye to take hold.

ENVELOPED IN NATURAL SOFTNESS

The sensation of being wrapped in a soft, plump towel after a bath or shower is both comforting and pleasurable. To keep towels at their best, they should be washed separately from other laundry and in light loads to prevent crushing. Too much detergent can make a towel feel crunchy, and the water temperature should not be too hot, as it will flatten cotton out. A ¼ cup of distilled white vinegar and a few drops of essential oil placed in the detergent compartment helps soften the fabric, rather than coat it in synthetics, as with commercial products.





DRESSING UP FOR THE SEASON AHEAD

A living room can be given a fresh look when the sofa is dressed with a pretty throw and cushions. As days begin to warm, thick winter blankets can be neatly folded away and replaced. Choosing cushions with floral patterns reflects the season, and pastel hues bring a gentle palette to the room. The furniture can be arranged around or near a window to light up the space and allow the lengthening days to be enjoyed a little closer. This provides an easy way to give the room a new look without the expense and effort of redecorating. The furnishings can be varied in unison with the changing colours of the season.



CUPPED IN LACE

Working from her cottage in the Yorkshire Wolds, crochet artist Ann Brown makes delicate bowls for trinkets and treasures. Inspired by the myriad of colours in the countryside surrounding her home, the bowls are available in a range of shades, from soft pink to bronze. Both pretty and practical, each measures approximately 5 x 16cm, with a lace motif in the Art Deco style. They should not be machine or handwashed. A microfibre cloth can be used to clean the bowls.

Lacy trinket bowl £20, www.auriolcrochet.co.uk

A USEFUL COMPANION

These feline holders are perfect for keeping lengths of twine, string or remnants of wool from past projects tidy. To make, a circle is cut from a piece of cardboard by drawing around the bottom of a can or jar. A pink triangle is painted just above the centre for the nose, with two blue dots above for the eyes. To make the ears, a faint pencil line is drawn horizontally above the eyes. A short diagonal line is then drawn from each end of the horizontal line to the edge of the circle, creating a boat shape, which is cut out. Slots of the desired size are cut into each side and the string wound through them.



LandScape



WOODLAND STORIES
CAPTURED IN SILVER



At her workshop among the trees, jewellery maker Laura Brown crafts intricate layers of precious metal to create scenes from nature



Laura Brown, amid the trees in the peace of her workshop, soldering layers of a silver woodland scene to make one of her unusual 3D pendants.

COMING UPON LAURA Brown's workshop is a delightful surprise. A little path, carpeted in dappled sunlight, winds its way through trees, and suddenly, in a quiet glade, there it is: a small, green-painted wooden building; an organic part of this Cornish woodland.

Inside this sequestered sylvan place, Laura, affectionately known as Elby, sits on a stool surrounded by the tools of her trade. She is working on one of her signature three-dimensional pendants. It is exquisite: the tracery of branches outside the window opposite her workbench captured in miniature within the piece. They will form a backdrop to the tiny woodland scene she is creating in precious metal.

"I've always been drawn to small things," explains Laura. "I like small details that might be missed at first. Patience is vital. It's so important not to rush or cut corners, otherwise it can go wrong. When working with these tiny pieces, you have to take a deep breath and not be afraid of trying."

Laura came to professional jewellery making in 2013, following a variety of jobs. "I was always given those tasks deemed to be creative, but I never saw it as anything other than a sideline; not to be taken seriously," she says.

"Then, one day, instead of walking past the local art college, I went in and signed up for an adult evening class in jewellery making, once a week for 10 weeks. This was the start, and from there, I used libraries, the internet and just trial and error to develop my technique.

"I love learning new skills, and I had a deep desire to explore something; anything, creative. With jewellery making, the idea of building the pieces, the solidity of the metal and the mystery of all those unknown tools really appealed to me."

In the intervening years, Laura has honed those skills and, inspired by her surroundings, manages to recreate the essence of the natural world in her pieces. In so doing, she also treads very lightly on that world: her workshop is powered by a reconditioned solar panel, and captured rain is her only source of water. All her materials are ethically and environmentally sourced very thoroughly, her gold and silver is recycled, and her packaging is from recycled materials.

"All the silver offcuts are sent off for recycling; even the dust on the floor or in my catchment. The dust is called 'lemel', which means 'uncountable'."

Laura usually works on three or four pieces at a time. On her workbench stands a collection of pendants; each piece a multi-layered tableau casting shadows from the slanting sun.

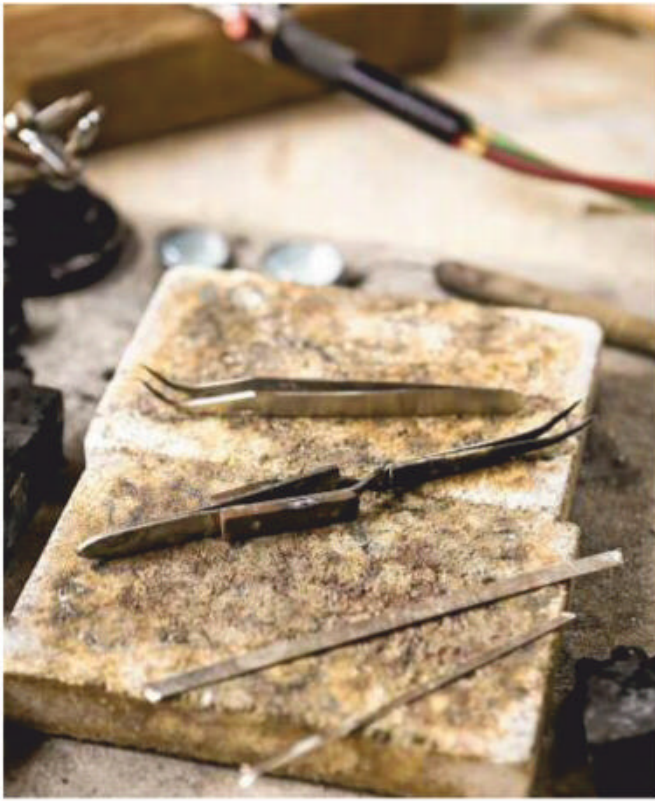
Setting the scene

"Whenever I make a piece, there often tends to be layering," she explains. "I am drawn to theatrical narrative pieces. I like trying to tell a story or allowing the person looking at the piece to see a story. Many of my pieces could be described as illustrative."

She undoubtedly achieves this. At a recent show which Laura attended, she was delighted when a man examined her jewellery

“Thy loving smile will surely hail
The love-gift of a fairy tale”

**Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass and What
Alice Found There***

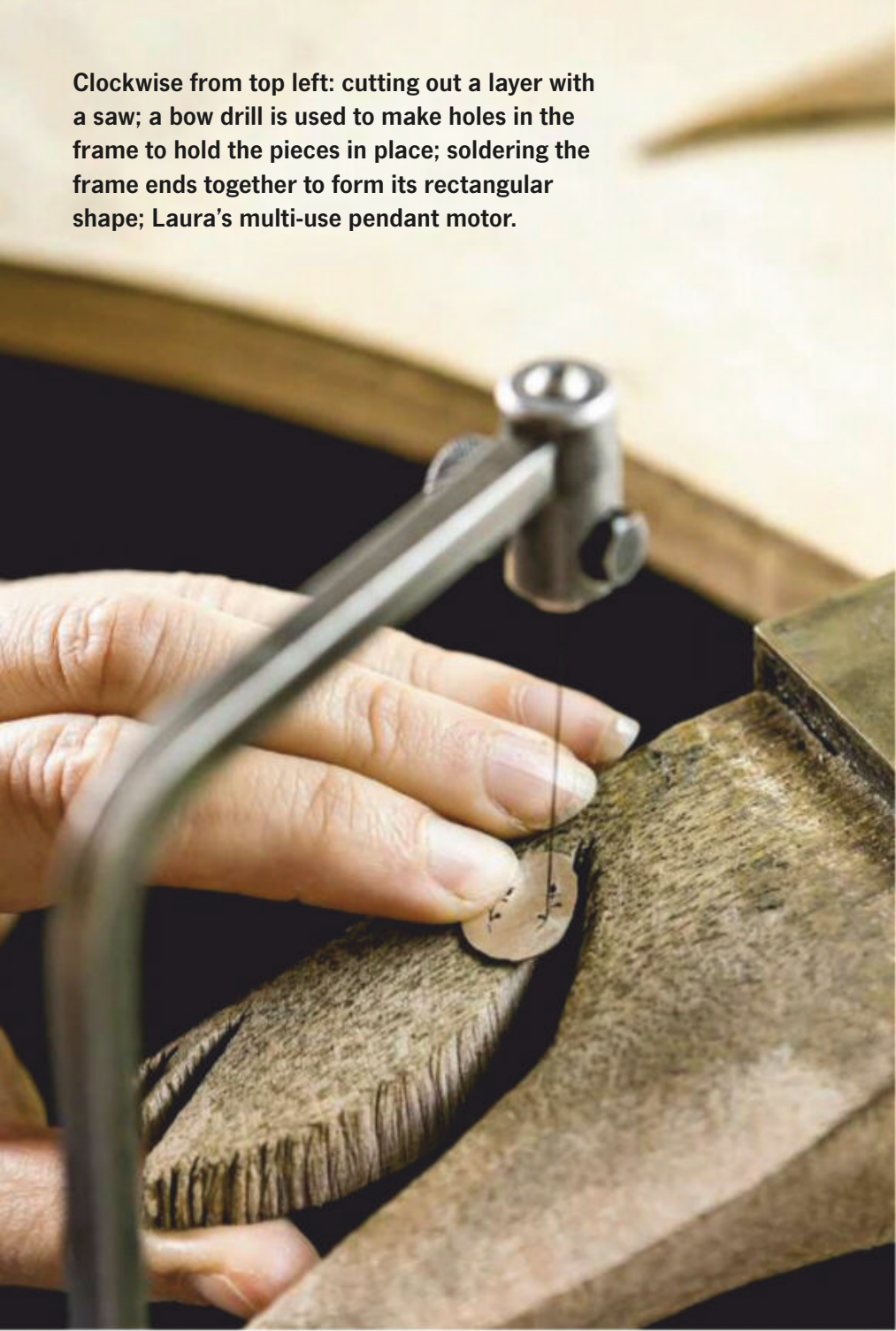


Tools used include tweezers for manipulating the components, pliers and a hammer to punch strips of metal to mark the position of the holes.



Laura looks out from the stable door over the verandah of her wooden studio, which is raised above the ground.

Clockwise from top left: cutting out a layer with a saw; a bow drill is used to make holes in the frame to hold the pieces in place; soldering the frame ends together to form its rectangular shape; Laura's multi-use pendant motor.



for a long time and said: “These remind me of reading to my daughter when she was little.”

Each pendant is a tiny rectangular rural scene, slightly smaller than a postage stamp. One has a backdrop of birch trees, symbolic of growth and renewal, on a low hill. In front of these is another smaller tree, a fox looking at a star and minute foxgloves engraved on silver. The fox’s tail curves protectively round its body at the front of the tableau, and tiny circular holes in the ‘frame’ represent the dappled light of a woodland glade: the ‘sun pennies’ of nature. There are six layers in all, front to back, and the whole is less than 1cm in depth.

The star is a precious or semi-precious stone. Laura buys in the stones ready-cut, using different types to represent the changing seasons: diamond for winter, blue topaz for summer, green sapphire for spring and an orange garnet for autumn.

Vital ingredients

Among the tools on her workbench lies what Laura calls her ‘recipe book’. “I write down everything; refining as I go. My recipe book has drawings, measurements; everything I need to remind me of the construction of each piece: the shapes, the tools I’ve used, all the ingredients I need to make it and the process that I worked through,” she says.

The most important tool in the creation of her jewellery is a saw: a lightweight precision instrument used to cut required shapes from, for instance, a virgin sheet of silver.

“I hand-cut everything,” she says. “The idea that the marks of my saw blade; each movement I make on each piece is just a little bit different, even with the same ‘recipe’, appeals to me.”

Before starting, Laura will draw the component parts of the item of jewellery she is about to make: the fox and his foxgloves or perhaps a hare and brambles. She has her own tradition of associating certain plants with particular animals.

“If I can draw it, I can cut it,” she says. “The saw is the first tool I started with, and it is the start point for everything I make. I cut a strip of silver from the sheet; form that into the external shape of the pendant, then gradually build up the layers within it. I cut each component part to build up the piece.”

Another vital tool is her neat soldering torch that directs a tiny and very controllable flame to the point where a join is needed. Laura buys strips of solder, which are then used to join constituent parts; attaching, for instance, the fox into the pendant, with tweezers being used for handling the pieces.

She also uses a pendant motor. “This is a great tool; much like a dentist’s tool. It does a variety of jobs, with attachments, which I used to do by hand: sanding, grinding, burring, stone-setting, making holes. It’s powered by a foot pedal.”

Finishing process

Some of Laura’s work includes enamelled detail on the metal; setting, for instance, enamelled trees into a landscape on a



Frames and details of various layers at different stages (top).

Motifs from nature, delicately fashioned in silver, include owls, foxes, hares and deer (above).

Laura's work also includes enamelled pendants, with examples depicting moonlit scenes in the forest.



background of silver. Any stone embellishment is flush set into the silver, by first drilling a tiny hole to take the stone.

"This is the last job," she says. "Any soldering must be done prior to adding a stone, because heat would change its colour." Once it is flush, Laura burnishes the stone, which sets it in place.

No joins are visible in the finished piece; a testament to the skill of the maker, and many people ask Laura if the pendants have been carved.

Her joy of creating is palpable. "I absolutely love the finishing process of each piece," she says. "At the start of making, it is like looking at something far off in the distance that you can't quite make out. It feels like a long way away. This is because the jewellery goes through a process where it looks so different at every stage; from the first moment of flat sheet to forming the end piece.

"Several times during the process, it is black with oxide from soldering, and throughout the making, there is roughness that needs to be softened, solder which needs to be

stripped back and sanding to be done. At the finish, you are bringing up the best of each element. It's where your hard work pays off as you watch a piece emerge; burnishing elements to make them sparkle; making the light bounce. It's really pleasing to see the end result in your hands, as though the piece has just come into focus."

Once finished, these enchanting pieces are destined for new homes, where their many facets will be appreciated by their new owners.

Emotional connection

"I like the thought that when these pieces are not being worn, they can be put on a shelf and will stand alone as something lovely to look at," says Laura. "Some pieces cast long shadows in sunlight, and the idea that someone takes a piece off and notices that aspect of it, perhaps by accident, is a thought that makes me happy. Shadows are part of the story: an extra dimension. I want a person who has bought something I have made to know that I put my heart into each and every



Laura smooths the metal using the sander attachment on her pendant motor (far left). Burnishing the silver to add highlights and bring out detail in the scene (left).

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“Among the taller wood with ivy hung,
The old fox plays and dances round her young”

John Clare, ‘The Vixen’

moment of making it. I want people to have an emotional connection to my pieces.”

The day Laura walked into that art college was one of those spur-of-the-moment decisions that shapes lives. From this has developed a supremely exquisite skill. In the purity of her pieces, Laura creates a magic that people can acquire to mark significant moments in their own lives: births, weddings, anniversaries. Laura is forging the family heirlooms of the future. ■

• Words: Simone Stanbrook-Byrne • Photography: Clive Doyle

CONTACT

<https://elbybrown.co.uk>

In addition to her three-dimensional pieces Laura also makes rings, nose studs and earrings. Prices for her smallest pieces, such as a star-shaped nose stud, start at £25; her complex pieces may be up to £430.



MARKS OF ORIGIN

Laura sends her work to the Goldsmith’s Company Assay Office in London to be hallmarked. The whole process usually takes seven to 10 days and starts with Laura completing an online form for each piece being sent. This is cross-referenced with the package containing the component parts of the item.

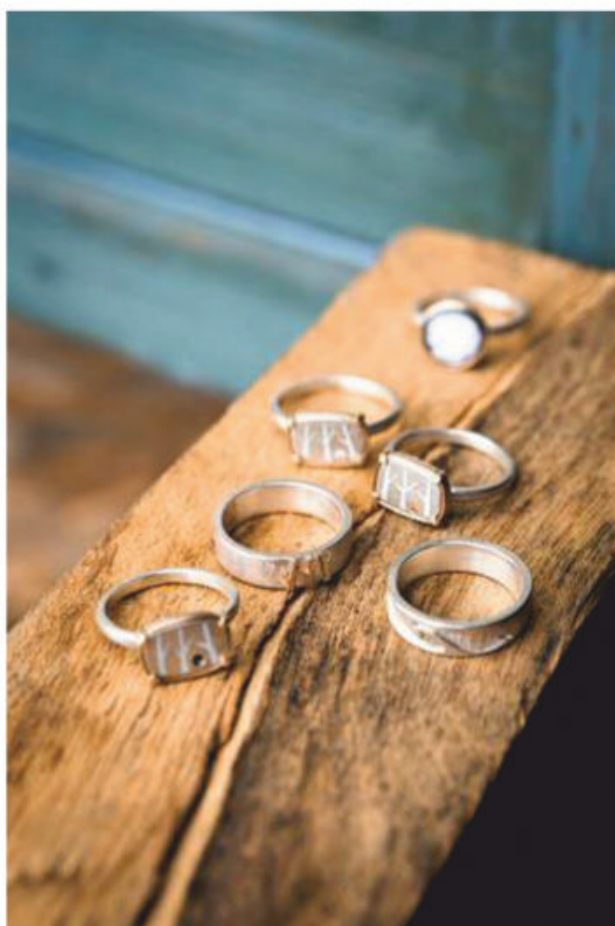
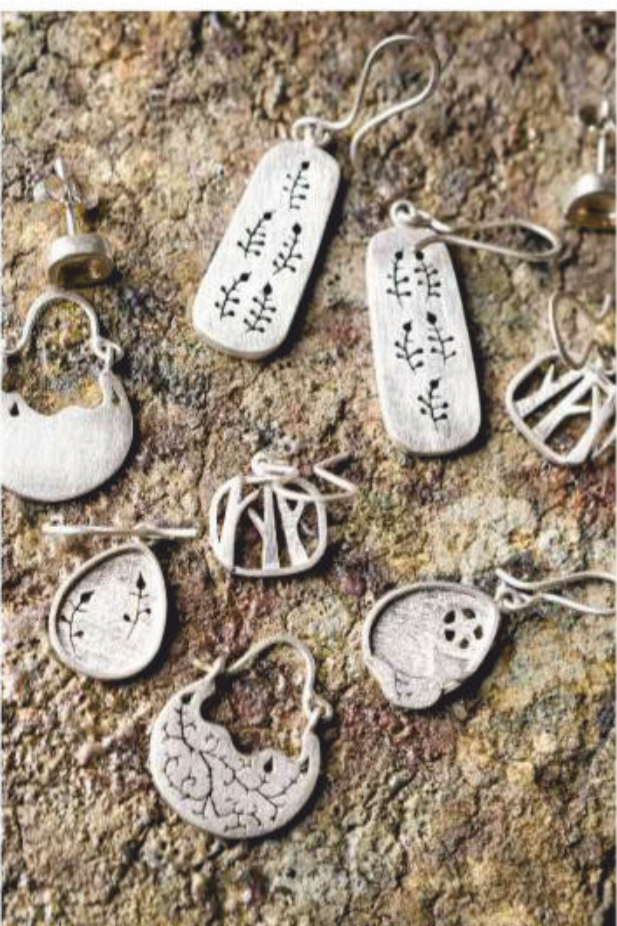
“It takes a bit of time to check and double check,” she says, “but once you are used to the process, it isn’t too long. The longest part is sorting individual component pieces of the item and weighing each one to enter on the form.

“The hallmarking office works on a basis of trust: you don’t have to send finished pieces, you just have to send the component parts, and the office trusts that what it sees is what the maker will put in the actual piece.”

The completed hallmark comprises several separate elements. The first part of the hallmark represents the maker’s name: LKB, in Laura’s case. This element is individual to each maker, as is the shape of this section of the hallmark. Next comes the mark indicating the type of precious metal: a lion indicates silver, a crown, gold.

After that, a number appears, such as 925, denoting the quality of the silver or gold. The fourth part of the hallmark on Laura’s pieces is a leopard’s head, which represents London; the place where the piece was hallmarked. Finally, there is an optional mark: a letter, denoting the year of marking.

“The font, case and shape of the letter all change on 1 January, so no two are the same,” Laura explains. “There is nothing better than getting a piece of jewellery back from the hallmarking office with the maker’s marks. Each stamp on the precious metal tells a story, and I love a story.”



A collection of Laura’s earrings and rings, which also include engraved and simpler designs, inspired by her surroundings.

PIN OF SOFT PETALS

A pretty addition to a lapel or a delightful gift, this felted primrose brooch is both easy to make and a nod to the arrival of spring

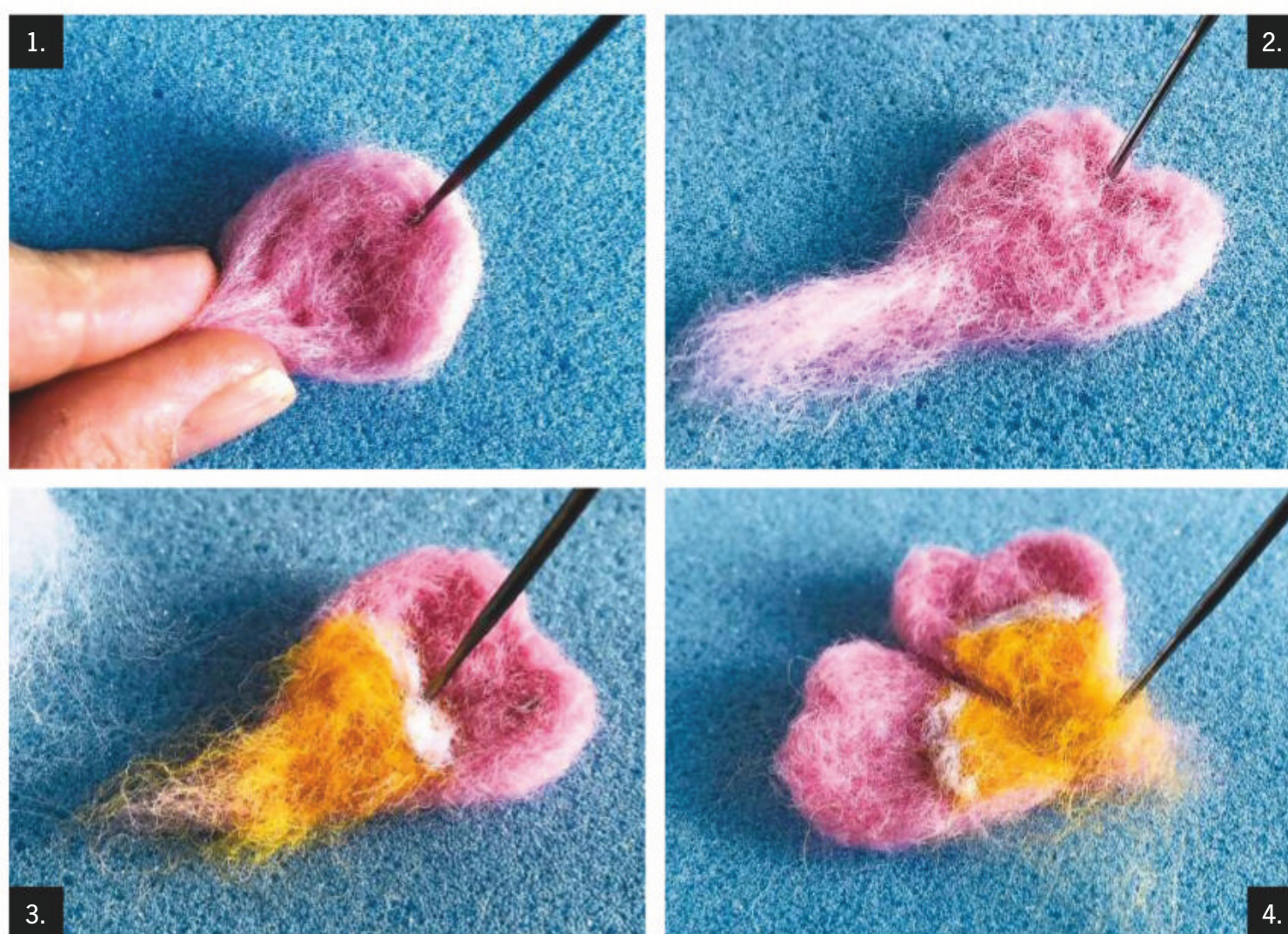


THE ART OF needle felting employs easy to follow techniques to mould and tease fibres of wool into a variety of forms. Unlike wet felting, where the wool has to be soaped and dried, making it more time-consuming and messy, it requires just a needle with tiny barbs. Using a stabbing motion, the barbs catch the wool fibres, interlocking them together. The more the wool is stabbed, the tighter the work becomes. Needle felting is perfect for beginners wishing to try a new craft. A simple shape, such as a flower, is an ideal starting point, and in this spring project, it can be turned into a pretty brooch by adding tiny details, mirroring the softness of spring in delicate colours.

MATERIALS

- Pure carded wool in pink, yellow, white, spring-green, leaf-green and black
- Green sewing thread
- Brooch back
- Multi-needle felting tool with six 38-gauge needles
- Single 38-gauge felting needle
- Felting foam block or thick upholstery foam
- Sewing needle

TO MAKE THE PRIMROSE



1. To make the flower, a small amount of pink wool is firstly moulded into a petal shape by pulling the wool into a loop. With the wispy ends held in one hand, the petal is placed on the foam block. Using the single needle, the outer edge is stabbed, working in towards the centre. While the wispy ends are still held in one hand, the petal is gently teased off the foam block, turned over and the stabbing process repeated so that the shape shrinks and becomes denser.

2. Next, the dent in the top of the petal is created by stabbing the needle a few times at that point. The petal is then turned over and the process repeated until the desired shape is achieved. When the first petal is complete, steps 1-2 are

repeated to make a further four petals.

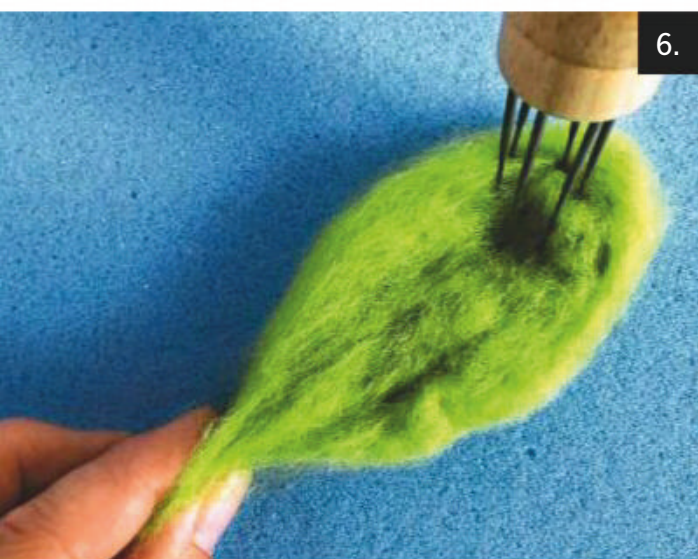
3. Each of the five petals are then decorated. First, a small wisp of yellow wool is placed at the base of the petal. It is then stabbed gently, leaving a wispy end. A smaller amount of white wool is placed just above the yellow felted part of the petal and blended in.

4. Next, the decorated petals are joined together to form the flower. Two petals are placed side by side so the wispy ends cross over. The ends are stabbed with the single needle to secure them in place.

5. This process is repeated until all five petals are connected, using extra yellow wool if needed. ➤

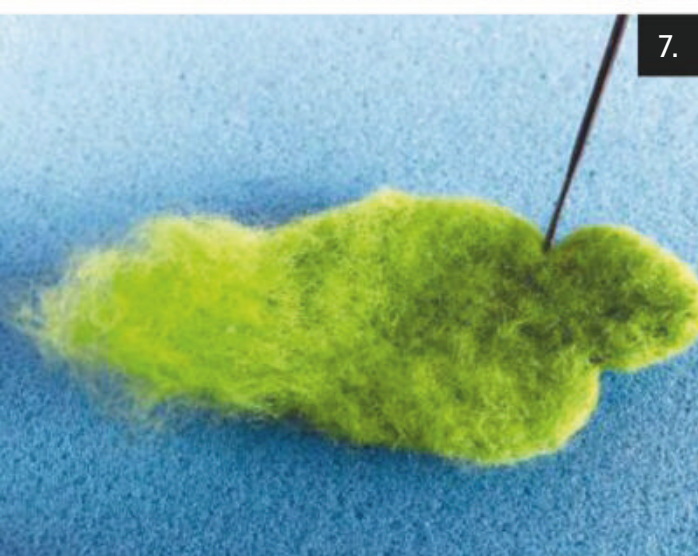


TO MAKE THE LEAVES



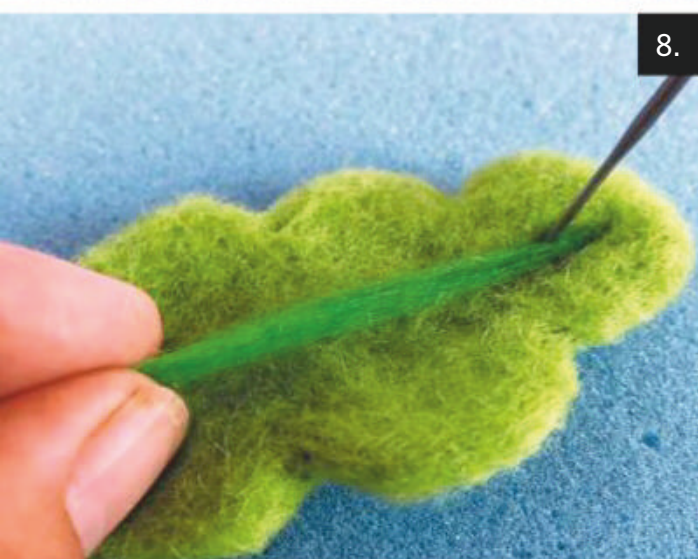
6.

6. Once the flower is complete, the leaves are made for it to lay on. Using a big piece of spring-green wool, a leaf shape is formed by pulling the wool into a loop. This should be bigger than the final leaf size, as it will shrink in the following steps. With the wispy ends of the loop held in one hand, the leaf is placed on the foam block. Using the multi-needle tool, the leaf is stabbed from the outer edge, gradually working towards the centre. The leaf is then lifted off the foam and turned over, and the stabbing repeated. The leaf should end up thick and dense.



7.

7. To complete the shape of the leaf, a single needle is stabbed a few times along the side, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ in (2cm) from the top to make a dent. The same process is then used on the other side of the leaf. This step is repeated a further $\frac{3}{4}$ in (2cm) from those dents to create the leaf shape.



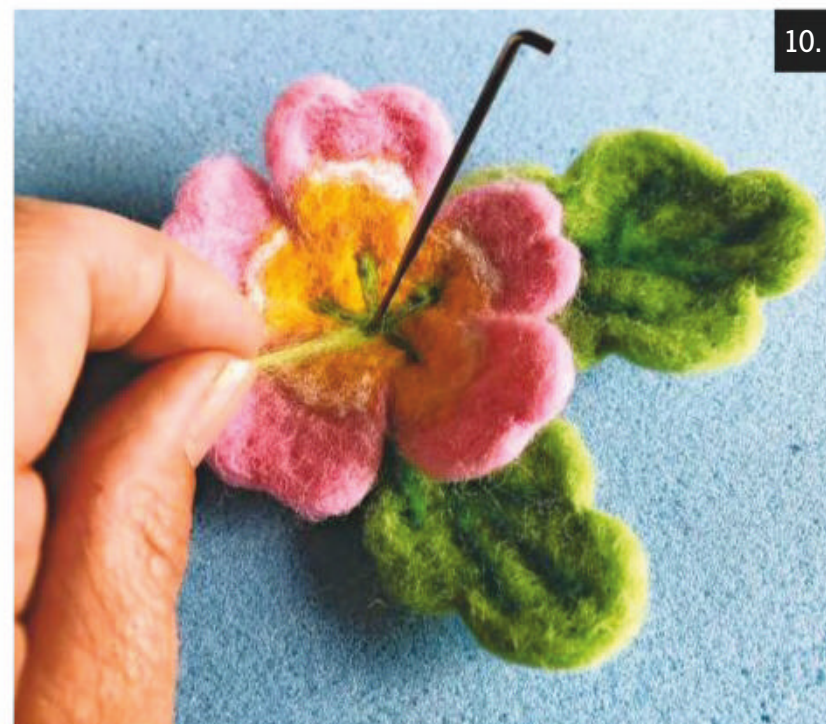
8.

8. A small amount of leaf-green wool is needed to make the veins. Using the single needle, a wisp is stabbed at the top of the leaf in the same spot. Using the free hand, the strand is gently pulled to create a line, which is then stabbed all the way along with the needle to secure it in place. This can be repeated if the line needs to be stronger in colour. To make the subsidiary veins coming off the main vein, the technique is repeated, but the lines made shorter.



9.

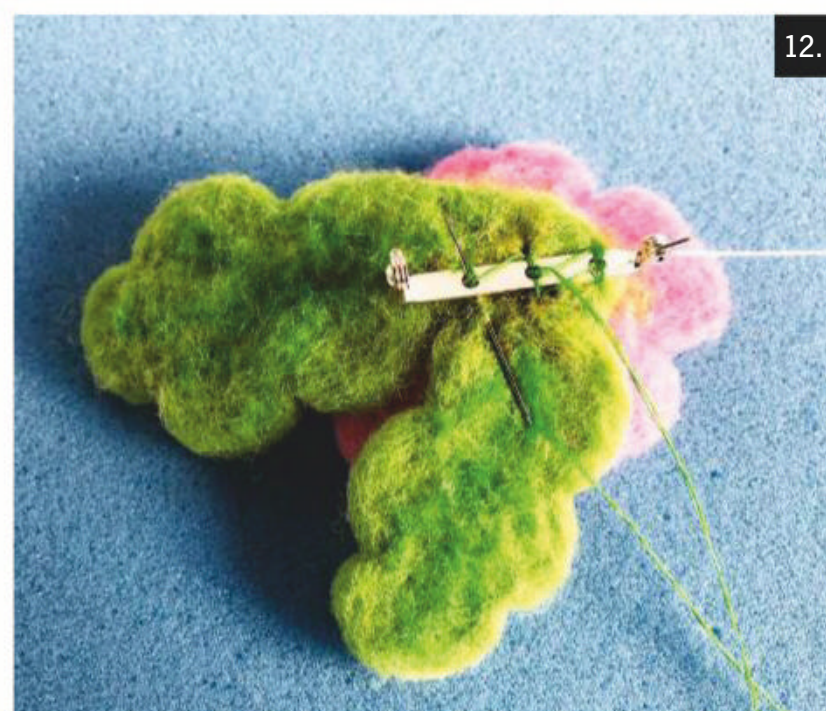
9. Steps 6–8 are repeated to create a second leaf. To join the two leaves together, they are placed side by side so that the wispy ends cross over. Using the single needle, the ends are stabbed to secure them in place. The piece is then lifted off the foam block, turned over and the remaining wisps of wool stabbed on the reverse.



10.



11.



12.



The felted flower can also be attached to a gift bag. Colours can be blended and experimented with when making the petals.

JOINING THE ELEMENTS

10. Next, the flower is attached to the leaves. Firstly, it is placed in the desired position. Using the technique in step 8, wisps of spring-green wool are stabbed in five lines. This will attach the flower to the leaves.

11. To ensure the flower is fully secured to the leaves, a small amount of black wool is placed in its centre and stabbed a few times in the same spot. Using the single needle, the remaining wisps protruding from the centre of the flower are wound round it and stabbed back in to form a spot.

12. Finally, the piece is turned over to show the reverse. Any stray wool is lightly stabbed with the single needle and the piece rubbed between the palms of the hands to smooth. The flower is then attached to the back of the brooch. Using green thread and a sewing needle, the brooch is sewn back to the reverse of the piece using the holes provided. Once secure, the thread is fastened off.

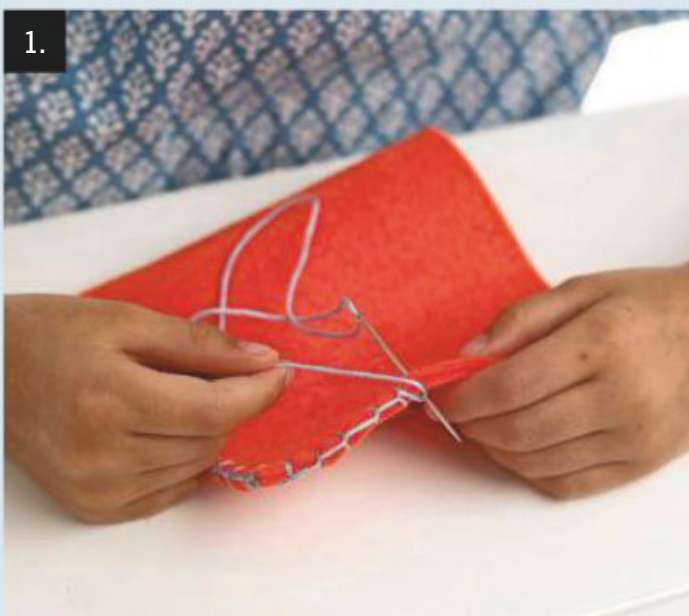


Adapted from
NEEDLE FELTING BY
EMMA HERIAN
Published by GMC
Publications, RRP £14.99,
www.gmcbooks.com and
all good bookshops.

BAGS OF FUN

Chloe makes a cheerful chicken from felt which can be used in an outdoor game on a spring day

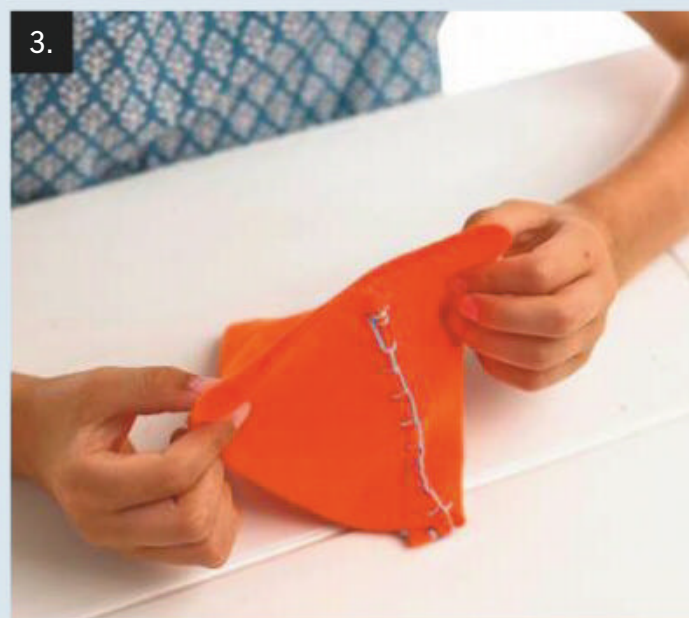
HOW TO MAKE THE BEANBAG



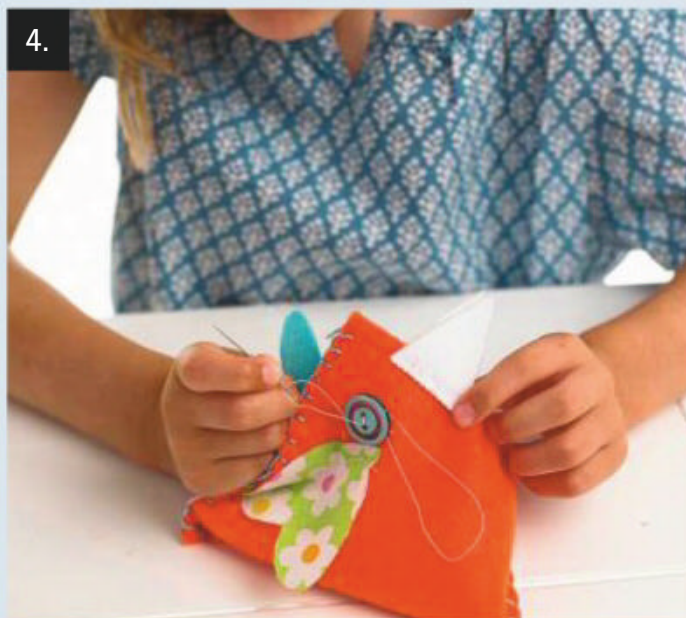
Step 1: A rectangle of felt is folded in half to make a square. With the fold at the bottom, the top and one side of the square are stitched together using a blanket stitch to create a bag. Contrasting thread can be used for a decorative effect.



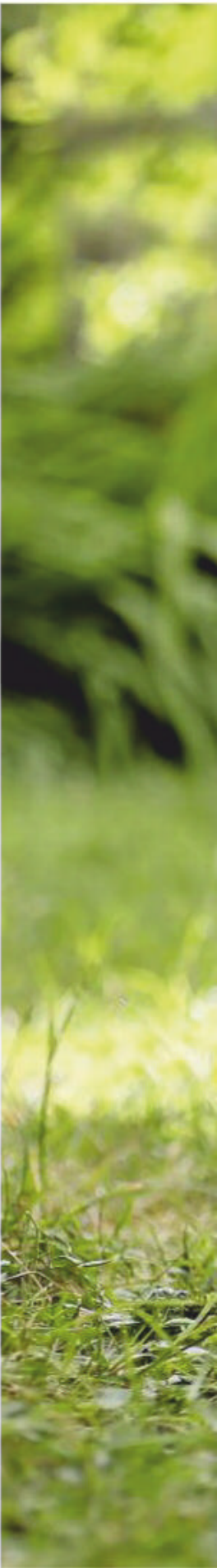
Step 2: The felt bag is opened wide and the rice carefully poured inside. A little extra can be added if necessary.



Step 3: The bag is closed. The centre of the closed edges are held on either side and pulled outwards. This makes a pyramidal shape. The edges are then stitched together with a blanket stitch to complete the shape.



Step 4: Two felt triangles are stitched either side of one edge to form the beak. To make the wings, two large heart shapes are cut from pretty fabric and sewn to the felt. A smaller heart shape is cut for the chicken's comb and sewn. Pearly buttons are sewn just above the wings for the eyes.





LEFTOVER FELT, PRETTY scraps of fabric from past projects and shiny buttons are turned into characterful beanbag chickens by Chloe during a fun-filled afternoon. The quirky chickens are quick and easy to make, comprising a rice-filled bag held together with blanket stitch and finished with pearly eyes, a colourful beak, patterned fabric wings and a bright comb cut into a heart shape.

With an armful of the birds, Chloe enjoys time in the spring sunshine trying to throw them into a wicker basket from a distance. Once the game has finished, they can be used as seasonal decorations to brighten the home.

MATERIALS

For 1 bean bag:

- 8½in by 4½in piece of felt
- Needle
- Coloured embroidery thread
- 6 egg cups of rice
- Scraps of coloured felt or fabric
- Scissors
- Sewing thread
- Two large buttons
- Small basket



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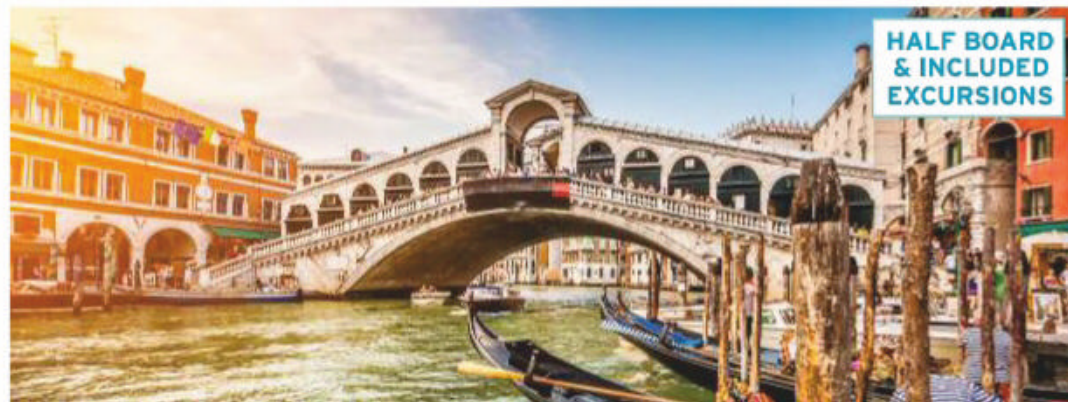
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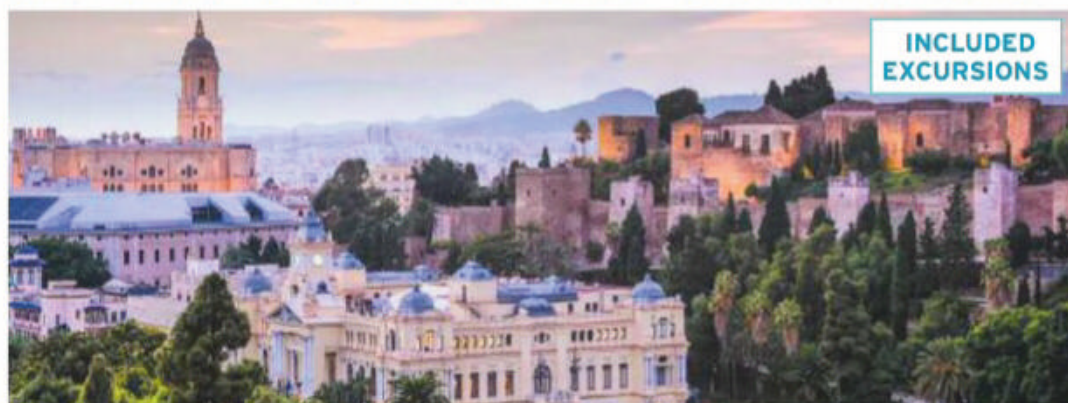
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BOBTAIL BUNNIES

With their plump bodies and fluffy tails, these big-eared rabbits make delightful Easter decorations or seasonal gift tags

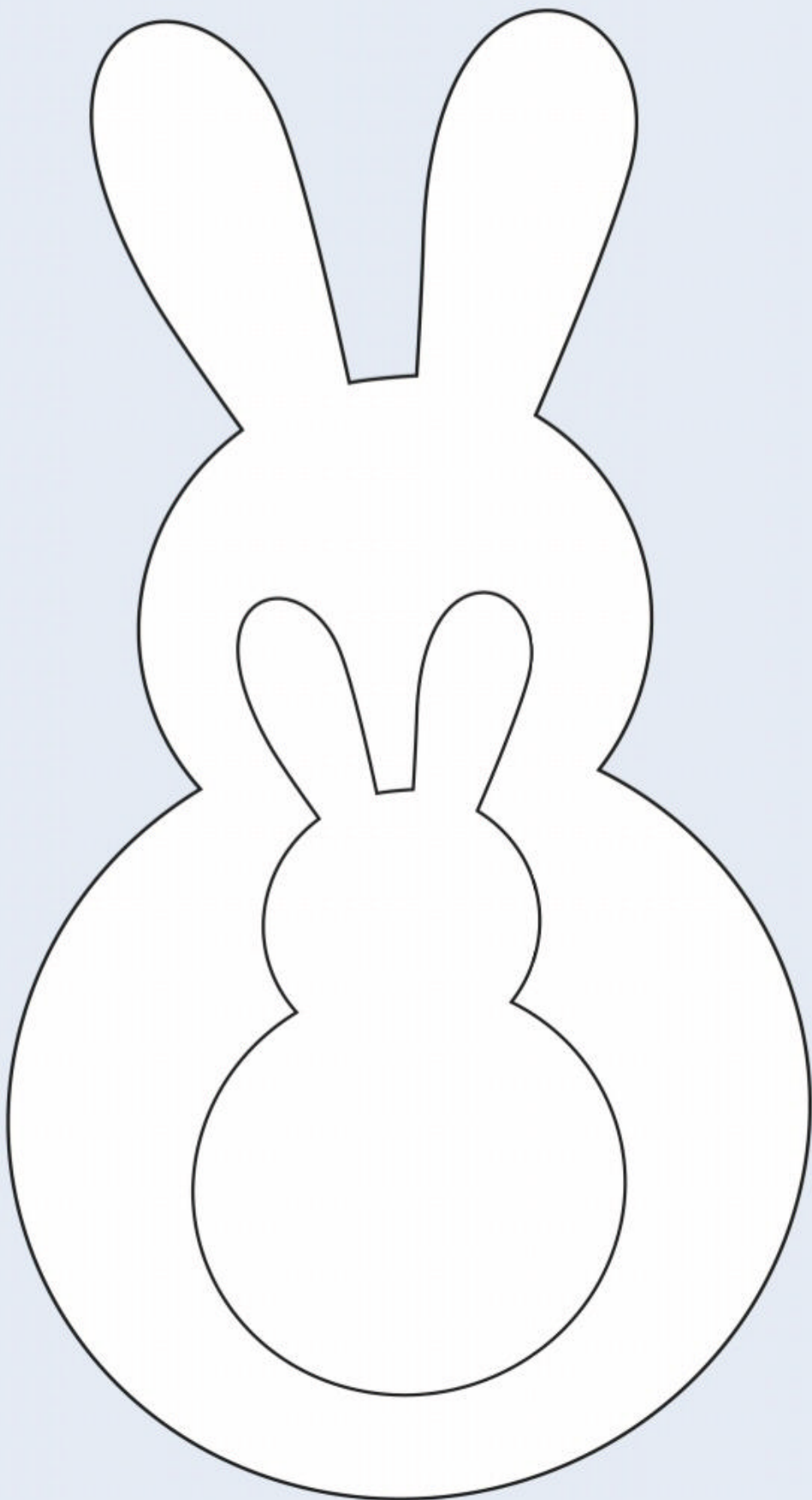
THESE FUN AND simple to make bunnies add Easter cheer to the home when hung as decorations and also make charming gift tags for a bunch of spring blooms or a gift.

Requiring just card, paper and wool to make, they can be cut in different sizes, and their appealing pom-pom tails are a good way of using up spare yarn from the work basket.

MATERIALS

- A5 card
- Pencil
- Scissors
- A5 decorative scrap paper
- Glue
- Craft knife
- Small amounts of coloured yarn
- Needle
- Decorative string

CUTTING TEMPLATES



Smaller bunnies can be used to decorate gifts or make a special tag for a pretty bunch of spring flowers.



Time can be spent experimenting with different shapes. Here, a daffodil-type flower is drawn on card and covered with sunny yellow paper. The pom-pom is attached in the same way.

MAKING THE RABBIT

Step 1: Using the templates as a guide, a rabbit shape is carefully cut from a thick piece of card. The rabbit can be left plain or covered with pretty paper. To cover, the shape is drawn around; first one side and then turning to the other, onto the paper. It is important to draw each side to get an accurate fit. The two pieces are cut out and stuck on. Using a craft knife, a 1in sided square is cut below the centre of the body, where the tail will be positioned. This need not be perfect, as the tail will cover the hole. To finish, a hole is made near the top of one ear, using the needle, and the string threaded through and knotted to form the tie.



Step 2: The pom-pom is gently eased through the hole until it sits snug inside. Equal amounts of the pom-pom form a tail on both sides of the rabbit. The hole can be made a little larger at this stage if necessary.



MAKING A POM-POM

To make a pom-pom, yarn is wrapped around one hand until an inch in thickness is reached. The bundle is carefully removed from the hand and tied tightly in the middle, forming a butterfly shape. Using sharp scissors, the loop ends are cut through on both sides and the pom-pom trimmed to the desired size. Smaller pom-poms are made by wrapping yarn around just two or three fingers. Care is taken not to wrap too tightly.

• **Photography:** Richard Faulks

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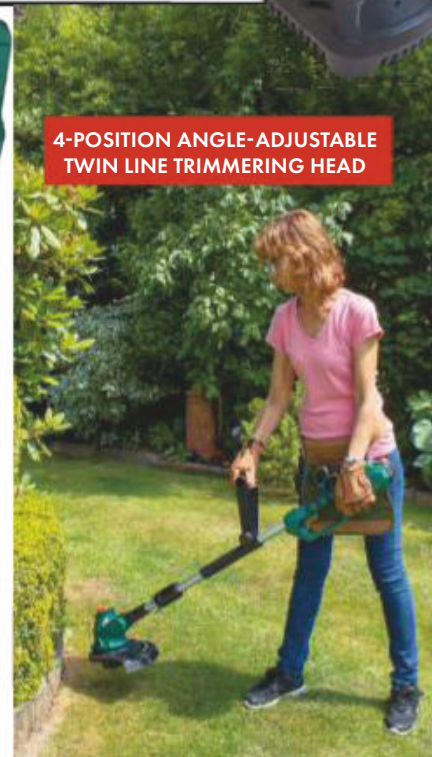
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A BREED WITH CHARACTER

With its handsome appearance and amenable nature, the
enduring Sussex is an ideal chicken to keep

ON A SUNNY April day, a gentle clucking can be heard from within a sheltered field. Here, a small flock of white hens, with black ruffs and tails, peck and scratch through the lush spring grass. A large cockerel, with matching plumage, attends them; first standing tall to scan the pasture for any danger to the hens, then bending to forage in the grass. A brief cackle of command brings all the hens rushing to him to see the discovery of a tasty bug or beetle. For a moment, the cock struts as they bob admiringly around him, then he pops the insect into the beak of his favourite hen.

Historic breed

These are Sussex hens, a traditional English breed, developed, as the name suggests, from the household and farmyard chickens of the Sussex and Kent area. They are a very old breed; recognised as a distinct type of hen at the first general poultry show in 1845, while folklore traces them as far back as Roman-era hens. By comparison, the Orpington hen, another traditional breed, was only developed in the 1890s, while modern commercial hybrids, such as the Silver Link, date from the 1970s or later. The 'Breed Standard,' detailing the ideal appearance of a Sussex hen, was written in 1902, and the Sussex

Breed Club was formed in 1903. Initially, just three colours of Sussex were recognised: light, speckled and red, but by the 1930s, extensive breeding and selection work had produced the range of eight colours seen today.

"There are hens which look like Sussex hens in the photos of my great-grandparents' farm in the 1920s," says Kirk Robertson, who has kept and bred Sussex hens for the last 30 years. "Originally, I just got a mixture of

chickens, so the children could learn about husbandry and where eggs came from," he explains. "They loved it, and I developed quite an interest in chickens, finding out what was rare and unusual, and all the different breeds. Then I saw photos of a Light Sussex hen in a poultry magazine and thought: 'That is a gorgeous-looking bird.'" Kirk bought some Sussex eggs to hatch out and has not been without Sussex hens since. His flock has grown considerably from their back garden beginnings and now roams the fields of Higher Oak Farm in Lymm, Cheshire, from where Kirk sells pedigree eggs for hatching and also point-of-lay hens, which is a term used for hens that have matured to an age where they are ready to begin laying eggs. Sussex hens start to lay in their first year, at 23-25 weeks old.

All Kirk's Sussex hens, such as the group foraging with their cockerel, are the Light Sussex type, which refers to their colour. His hens have white bodies, with black tail and wing feathers. Their neck feathers, or hackles, are black, with a white stripe around the edge. This pattern is called 'lacing' and produces the effect of a black lace ruff around the hen's neck. Compared with many other breeds, these neck hackles are particularly full, giving the birds a gracefully curved neck.

"We only have the Light Sussex, because I particularly like that

Kirk Robertson and daughter Amelia on their Cheshire farm, holding two of their flock. A calm, friendly breed, the Sussex is comfortable around humans.



A larger cockerel with his female charges. He also has a more prominent comb and red wattle. These thin, fleshy lobes circulate overheated blood, helping to keep the birds cool.

Buff Sussex hens have more golden tones in their plumage.



VARIETIES OF SUSSEX

The Sussex is bred in eight different colour forms:

Light: White body, black tail and wing feathers, with black and white lacing on the neck hackles.

Buff: Similar black patterning to the Light Sussex, but on a golden-brown body.

Red: Similar black patterning to the Light Sussex, but the body is a shade of dark auburn.

Coronation: White body and similar markings to the Light Sussex, but in a shade of lavender.

Silver: Dark body, with silver-grey lacing on the neck and breast.

White: Pure white, with no lacing.

Brown: Golden-brown feathers, tipped with black and white, giving it a partridge-like pattern, with no lacing.

Speckled: Body has mahogany feathers, each with a white tip, with no lacing.



As its name suggests, the Speckled Sussex has light markings on dark feathers.



Whites display the purest colouring.



A contented Sussex in a henhouse, which provides shelter in colder, wet weather, but also needs to be ventilated.

colouration,” says Kirk. “Within the breed, they’re definitely one of the most popular colours. We have people come to the farm who don’t know what breed they want, and they always go away with a Light Sussex. We’ve never had anyone come to buy them and then change their mind.”

Whatever the colour form, underneath their dense plumage, all Sussex hens have pale pink skin, called ‘white’, while the serrated combs on top of their heads, the wattles around their beaks, and their ear lobes are all bright red. Both sexes have these, but the combs and wattles are smaller for the female.

Darker colours of Sussex have red eyes, while the lighter varieties have orange eyes. In all its forms, the beaks are yellow and slightly curved, and their legs are long, pale pink and featherless. Compared to the modern hybrids, Sussex hens have a stocky, rectangular build, with wide shoulders, an upright chest and a long, flat back. They are a large breed, standing 14-18in (35-45cm) tall or more, and quite heavy. An adult cockerel weighs a minimum of 4.1kg, and a hen 3.2kg.

Friendly personality

“Light Sussex are good-looking hens, but what I grew to love about them is their character,” says Kirk “They’re laid back, inquisitive and loving; rather like Labradors, really. They all have different characters, and they like being handled. They can easily be trained to take food out of your hand, and you can even pick them up and give them a cuddle if you handle them a lot. Even the cockerels are true gents: I’ve never had an aggressive one.” This friendly, docile nature makes Sussex >

“Wisdom is a hen, whose cackling we must value and consider,
because it is attended with an egg”

Jonathan Swift



A proud mother with two of her delightful chicks. The Light Sussex, however, is less broody than other varieties.

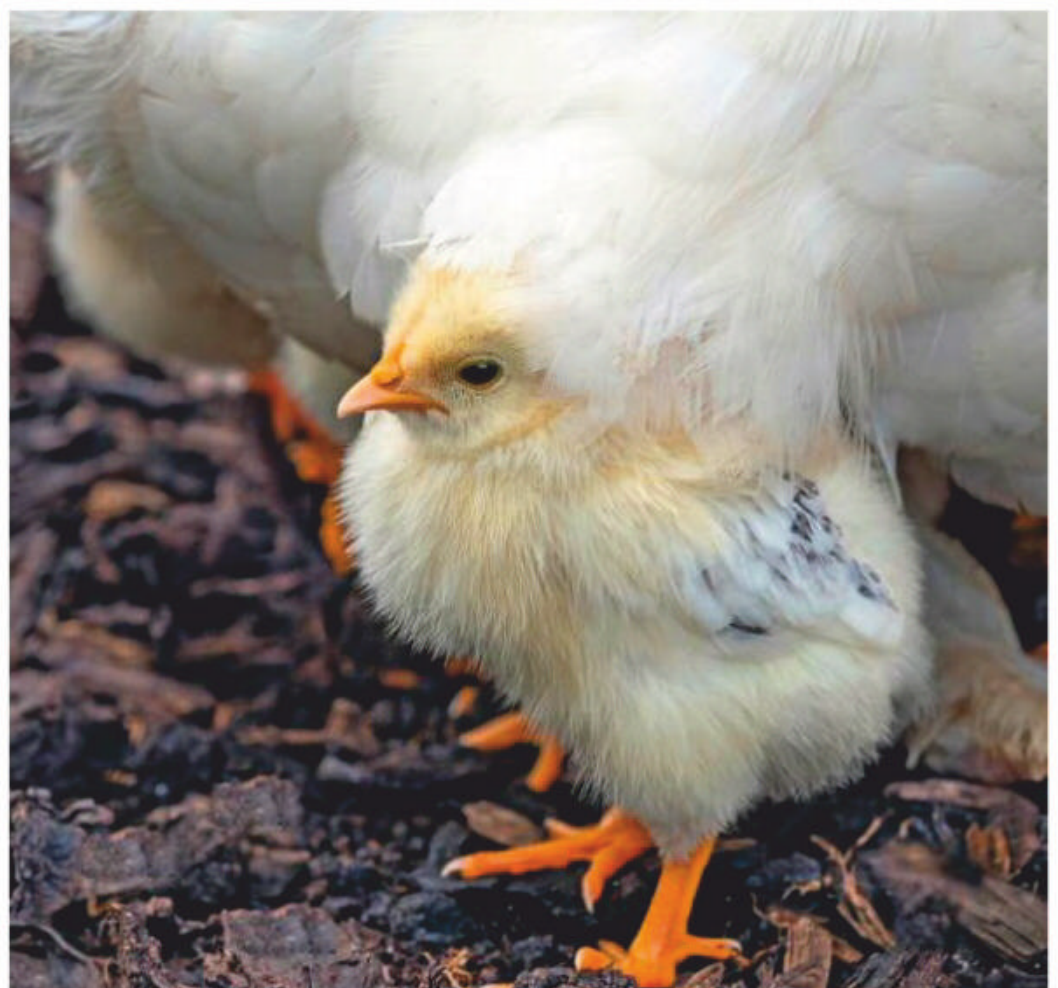
BREEDING SUPPORT

Despite their friendly nature, Light Sussex hens do not make particularly good mothers. “They have a high fertility rate, but they don’t go broody,” says breeder Kirk. “When they do start to sit on a clutch, they tend to get off halfway through.” Instead, a broody hen of another breed or an electric incubator is used to hatch Sussex chicks, keeping the eggs warm and regularly turned for the entire 21 days until hatching.

When using a broody hen, she is put in a separate ‘broody house’ with the nest of eggs, away from the rest of the flock. “When they hatch, Light Sussex chicks are the cutest yellow-white fluff balls,” says Kirk. Chicks hatched in an incubator will be moved to a ‘brooder unit’, while those with a hen remain in the broody house. After a couple of days, the hen will lead the chicks out into the main run while the rest of the flock are not about. Under her guidance, they will start to forage, but will also be fed chick crumbs, specially formulated for growing chicks, four times a day.

“After a few days, the white feathers start to come through, and the black hackles develop by three weeks old,” says Kirk. “They go through a number of moults while growing, but by six to eight weeks, they look like Light Sussex hens. The cockerels and hens can also be identified by then, as the cockerels get taller, and the combs on their heads develop more.”

At this age, the young birds are called pullets and can be introduced to the rest of the flock. The broody hen will then leave them naturally and return to her place in the flock. The pullets start their place in the flock at the bottom of the ‘pecking order’ and need to be kept in a separate house, with a smaller entrance to keep the larger birds out, until they reach their adult size at four to five months. They become of more interest and importance to the cockerel once they start laying.



Newly-hatched chicks have a yellowy bluish before their feathers turn white and their plumage markings fully emerge.

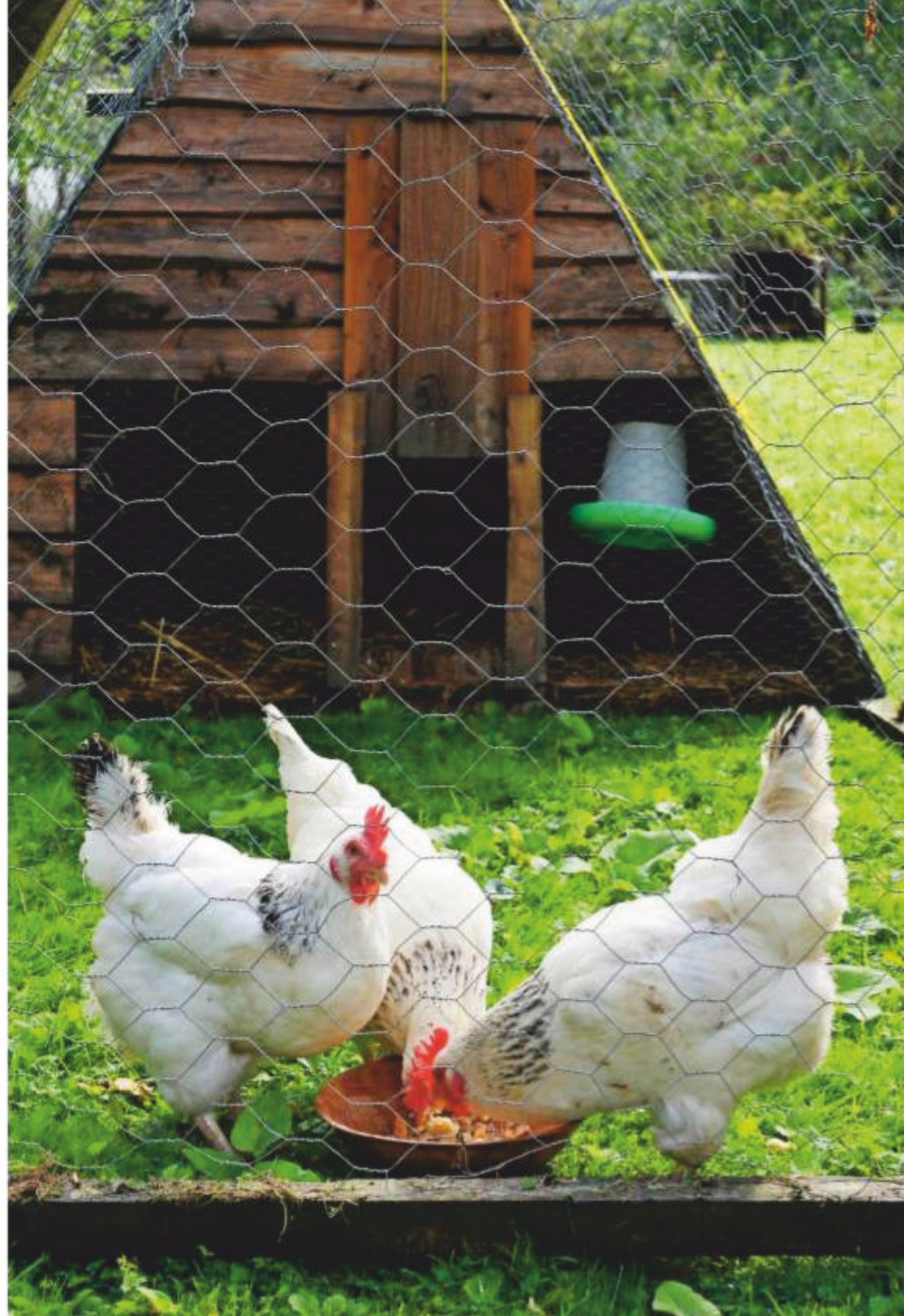
“Papa, potatoes, poultry, prunes and prism,
are all very good words for the lips”

Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*

KEEPING SUSSEX HENS

For a garden flock, Sussex hens can be kept in a stand-alone henhouse, with free-range access to a fenced run, or in a mobile poultry ark, with an integral run. “A unit sold for six hens will accommodate three Sussex hens and a cockerel,” advises Kirk. “It can go on the lawn and will need moving every couple of days to give them access to fresh grass.” The hens are shut in at night to keep them safe from foxes and other predators.

Inside Kirk’s henhouse, the hens have a 12in (30cm) square nest box filled with straw, where they lay their eggs, and a thinner layer of clean bedding on the rest of the floor. “We use chopped rape straw bedding, which has eucalyptus oil added to it as a mild natural disinfectant,” explains Kirk. As well as green stuff and insects from foraging, Sussex hens have a daily ration of mixed poultry grain or layers pellets to provide them with all the nutrients they need, such as protein, vitamins and minerals, to support egg production. They have fresh water at all times and a bowl of poultry grit, which aids their digestion.



Hens tuck into their feed which includes layers pellets, formulated to provide the birds with a balanced diet.

hens ideal for first-time poultry keepers, especially as they are also hardy and disease resistant.

Being a British native breed, they cope well with an average UK winter. “They go indoors if it rains, and they spend more time inside anyway in winter because the days are shorter, but they stay warm under all those soft feathers,” says Kirk. “I’ve seen them happily outside at -10°C.” The hens do need access to shelter, however, which must be well-ventilated, but free from draughts at their perching level. “They’ll come in when it rains and go out when it’s dry,” adds Kirk.

Earning their keep

Sussex hens are a dual-purpose breed, which can be kept for laying eggs or raised to provide meat. In the early 20th century, they were one of the two main commercial table birds. “We keep a few of our cockerels to eat ourselves, but they’re no longer a commercial breed because they

take too long to ‘bring to the table’,” says Kirk. “A Light Sussex will take six to 12 months to mature, depending on how big you want it, compared to 15 weeks for a modern hybrid. They don’t make cheap food. The texture of the meat is completely different, though, and the flavour is fantastic. It’s probably how chicken would have tasted 100 years ago.”

The main focus of Kirk’s Sussex hen breeding, however, is for egg laying. An adult Sussex hen lays approximately 180-200 eggs a year. This is less than the 300-plus eggs produced by a commercial hen, but considerably more than the 50-70 eggs typically laid by some more ornamental breeds, such as the Cochin. Egg laying is not spread evenly through the year. “You get plenty of eggs for nine months of the year, then, like most rare breeds, they shut up shop in December, and you only get the occasional egg,” says Kirk. The reduced hours of daylight during the winter causes a natural decrease

in egg production unless artificial light is provided, as with hens on commercial farms. “Once the light levels start to pick up, they start laying again,” says Kirk. “By April, they’re all laying well.” The eggs are very pale brown, called ‘tinted’, without any spots or speckles, and medium sized, similar to a standard supermarket egg.

A cockerel is not necessary for egg laying; only to produce fertile eggs for hatching. The hens lay the most eggs during their first 18 months. “They carry on laying until they’re approximately five years old,” says Kirk. “Then we let them live out their days, just doddering happily around with the rest of the flock.” They have a lifespan of six to seven years.

“The Sussex are charming birds: I could watch them for hours. I wouldn’t hesitate to recommend them to anyone. They’re an absolute joy to have.” ■

• Words: Helen Babbs



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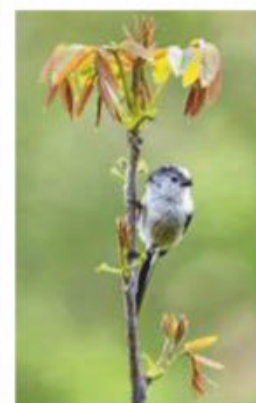
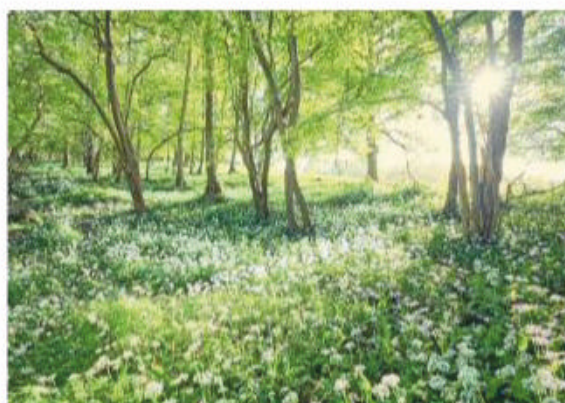
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The countryside in... April

Sarah Ryan savours the smells, sights and sounds of the season as spring makes its presence felt

Left to right: Wild garlic in the woods; spiky, aromatic ramson flowers; a tiny Long-tailed tit clings to a slender budding branch; pausing awhile on a handy log bench.



THE AIR IS thick with the pungent scent of the little white flowers at my feet: thousands of stars massed among long-bladed leaves. I crouch down and pluck one of the soft leaves from the ground. The heady, oniony scent intensifies with the rupture, and I drop it into a brown paper bag salvaged from a past shopping trip; crinkled and grubby, but still good enough to use.

“Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote,
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour
Of which vertú engendred is the flour”

Geoffrey Chaucer, ‘The Canterbury Tales: General Prologue’

These wild garlic plants, or ramsons, *Allium ursinum*, are forcing their fragrant heads up through the damp, crumbling leaf litter. I step carefully through the plants, picking healthy, young and clean-looking leaves and occasional flowers; some of which come up by the root: a tiny round onion of a bulb dangling from my hand and smeared with soil. Up to 20 flowers erupt at the tip of each stalk, with six narrow white petals and six powdery white

stamen. I drop them in the bag until it is almost full, then roll it closed and put it in my pocket. Many more remain; crowding around and between the tree trunks. The cabbage days are ending; the slow preparations of spring are coming to sudden fruition, and the season is starting to live up to its name.

Kicking through last year’s leaves, I gaze up at the interlacing branches, blurred by the sun’s bright glare. Some are opening, tentatively, into leaf; others still tightly budded; determined to hold out until only the fullest days, richest in light, arrive.

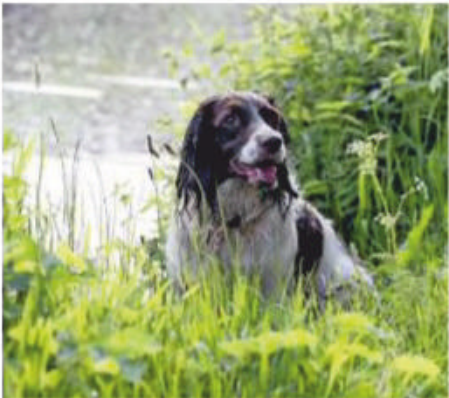
Nature’s seat

Most plants, like the garlic, are not so fussy. On the edge of the wood, near the river, is a chunk of old tree: a relic from a past chopping, left as a bench for passers-by, a home for little beasties and a larder for anything that eats them. I perch on the edge, pausing to breathe in the cool freshness of the air, and listen to a bellowing wren, creaking Great tit and an occasional fluting ‘cuck-oo’. The chorus is rounder now than it has been in months.

The tree-bench has dried out with age and sunlight. I feel the coarse ridges of its bark beneath my fingers and the fine roughness of bare wood, where it has flaked away. Beside me, a bendy little plant has sprouted from the dark whorl of a knot. The feathery compound leaves are bottle green, edged with a thin line of scarlet; startling against the bleached, greying wood. There is no flower yet, but I

“Well-apparel’d April on the heel
Of limping Winter treads”

William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*



Left to right: A dog knee-deep among the sprouting grasses; budding blackthorn form an avenue of white along the river; a colourful kingfisher perches on a blossom twig; cherry-pink and white apple flowers.

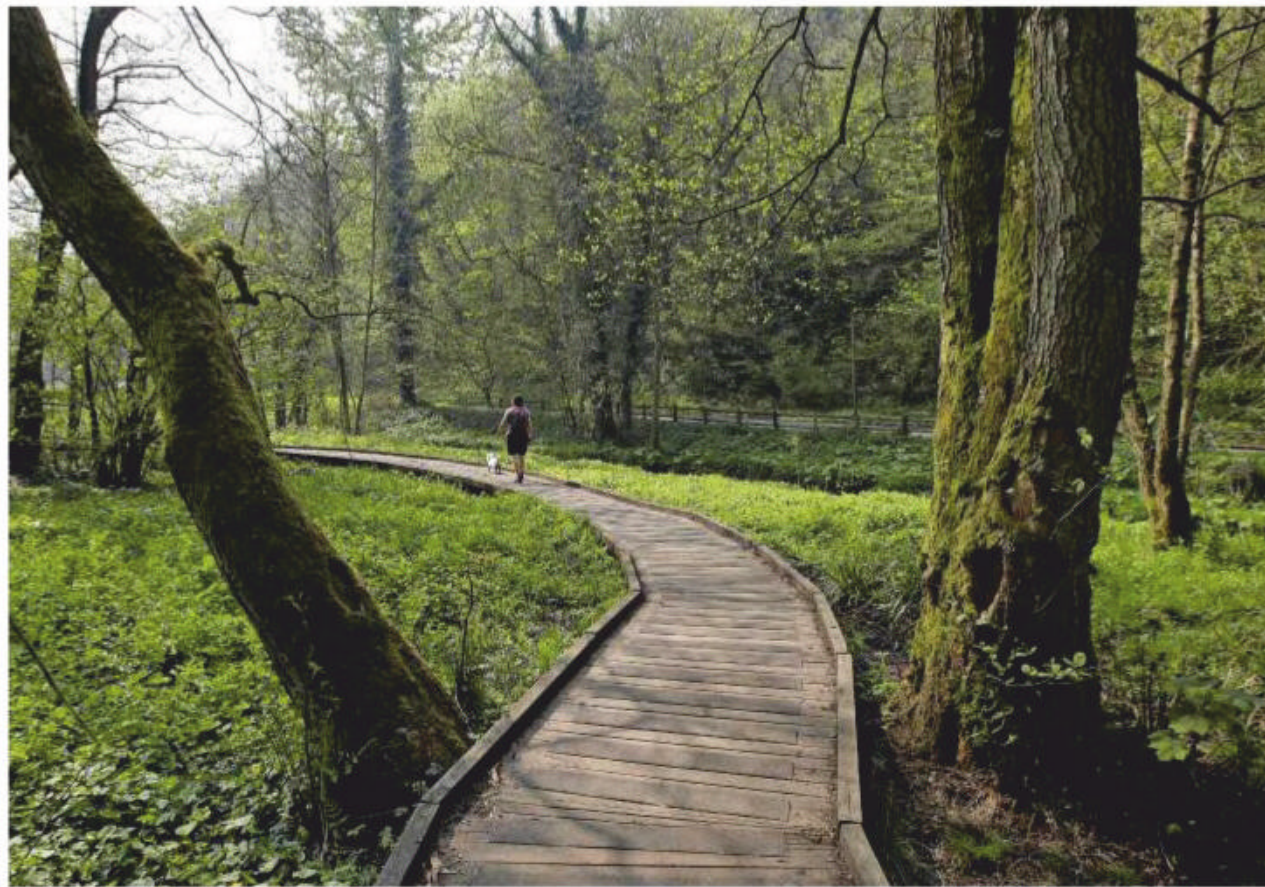
wonder if it is a buttercup that has found a place in this old tree. Elsewhere on the log, paired leaves reach up from a fissure as though they are about to try to hoist themselves out and away. The leaves flop over the wood, basking in uncontested light.

New discoveries

The path along the river is busier now: there are people walking dogs that scamper around, snuffling at trees and posts, and snorting in the leaves, with their tails waving low.

The blackthorn between path and river is filled with tiny white blossoms, like scraps of tissue paper caught on the branches as a swift wind carried them through. An apple tree has thrown out white, pale pink and rich cherry-coloured blossoms, washed together like a scrap of red fabric caught among white sheets.

I stand up to walk home and, instead of taking the path along the river, I cut diagonally across the meadow, following the flattened route of a well-used track. Everywhere I look are signs that spring has arrived, all around me is tender and bright with young, new life. ■



As the first warming rays filter through the trees, the forest floor awakens with a creeping green carpet, and tender young leaves adorn the branches above.



Sarah Ryan grew up in the Scottish Borders, climbing trees and poring over wildlife books. Those habits have little changed and she still makes time daily to get out into the woods nearby, or at weekends to venture further afield. Inspiration comes from Roger Deakin, Nan Shepherd, Kathleen Raine, wildlife recordist Chris Watson, and outside the window.



EBB AND FLOW

The perpetual rise and fall of the tide is a fascinating and awe-inspiring phenomenon governed by the forces of nature, and the moon and Sun



As the water recedes
at Seahouses,
Northumberland, the wide,
sandy shore becomes a safe
place to explore for dog
walkers and beachcombers.





The setting Sun over the UK's south coast. Although the moon has the strongest effect on daily tides, the gravitational pull of the Sun, which is just one third of the moon's, also plays a part.

TIS A clear, fresh day, and the beach lies under a huge sky that seems to stretch endlessly to the sea. Glistening pebbles of purple and grey lie scattered among the driftwood and strings of kelp piled on the wet shore, trailing into the dips and ridges sculpted by the water. There are whorls of sand left by the lugworms and mermaid's purses and razor shells long since abandoned by their occupants.

It is low tide here at St Annes in Lancashire, and the sea is only a thin string on the horizon; far past the ruin of the old jetty, which emerges out of the sand. But in a short while, the restless water will return; rising and falling on the sands in nature's endless rhythm.

Infinite attraction

Swelling and shifting tides are the constant pulse of the coast; a perpetual beat accompanying the life of the sea and the people on its shores. High and low water dictate when ships sail, when samphire and shrimp can safely be gathered, and the best places for fishermen to trawl for their catch. A true sailor's heart was said to beat faster on a flood tide, and it was firmly held that the dying took their final breaths with the ebbing waters. "He's a going out with the tide", says Peggotty as Barkis nears death in Dickens' *David Copperfield*.

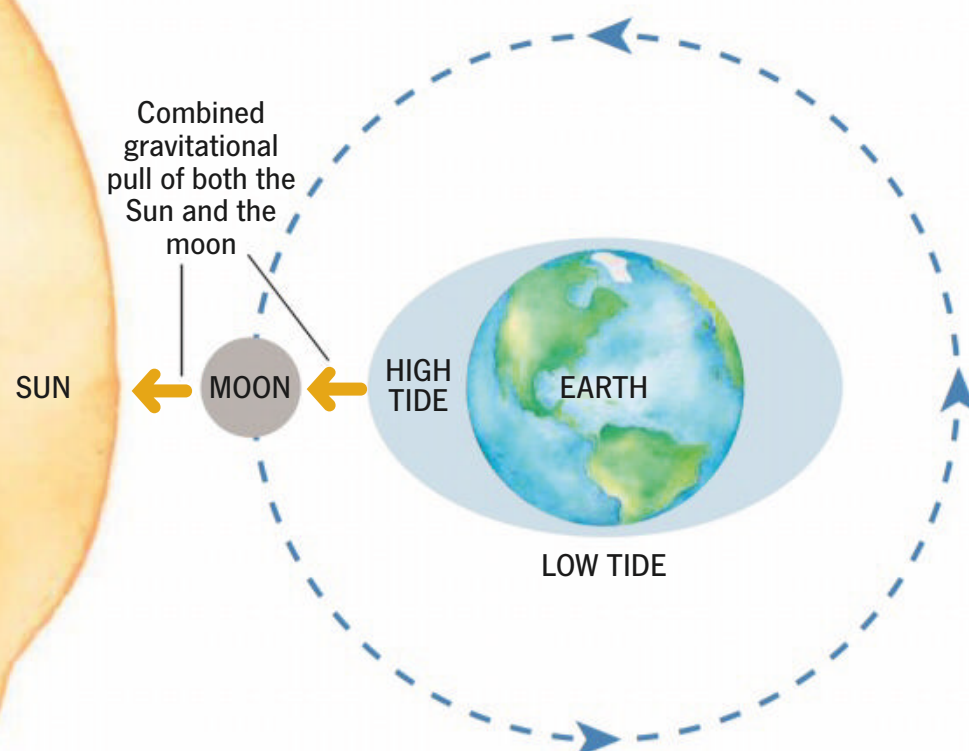
But what causes the tides? Once believed to be the result of the Earth's respiration or water flowing through subterranean tunnels, it was not until the 17th century, and the work of the French mathematician and scientist, Descartes, and especially Isaac Newton, that the answer was revealed to lie not on Earth, but in the heavens.

"Everything on Earth has a gravitational attraction to both the moon and Sun, and it is this that creates the tides," explains Professor Kevin Horsburgh, of the National Oceanography Centre. "The moon is the more important of the two, as it is much closer to us. But the effects of gravity

"One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washed it away;
Again I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tide, and made my pains his prey"

Edmund Spenser, 'Amoretti LXXV'

When the moon and the Sun are aligned with Earth, their gravitational pull is combined, resulting in tides that are higher or lower than usual.



are complicated by the fact that the Earth and moon are revolving around each other. This motion produces centrifugal forces, which push things outwards from the centre point, like being on a fairground ride or driving around a sharp corner.”

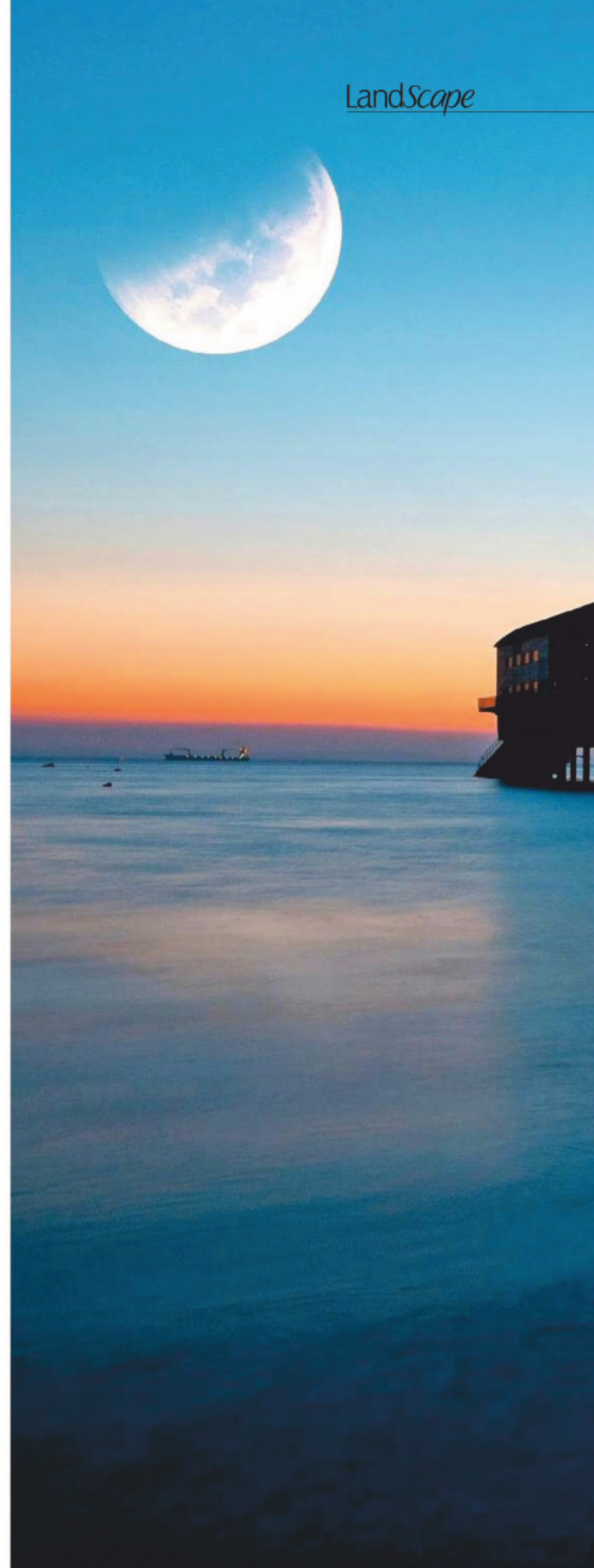
As the moon moves around the Earth, the oceans are pulled by gravity towards it, with the bulging water creating a high tide on that part of the planet. “Here, gravity wins out over centrifugal forces, but on the opposite side of the Earth, the moon’s gravitational force is weaker, and the reverse is true,” says Kevin. On this side, centrifugal forces dominate, but a high tide is still created as they push the water outwards. Low tides occur in between these bulges of water.

The tides, therefore, follow a lunar day: the water rising and falling back approximately every six hours as the moon travels around the Earth. Most places in the UK have two high and two low tides a day, occurring approximately 45 minutes later on successive days as that specific point on the spinning Earth catches up with the orbiting moon.

Effect of the Sun

If the moon was the only gravitational pull on the seas, the tides would be almost uniform. But the Sun also has an effect, boosting the gravitational pulling power of the moon when the two come into alignment.

“Every fortnight, when the moon is full or new, the Sun and moon are in a straight line, and their gravitational strength is combined,” explains Kevin. “Then you get a bigger tide, known as a spring tide. It’s nothing to do with the season: the name comes from the Old English for ‘leaping forward’. One set of spring tides can be bigger than another because the moon reaches ‘perigee’; its very closest position to Earth, when it’s popularly called a ‘supermoon’.” ➤



Although the mass of the moon is far less than that of the Sun, it is much closer to the Earth and it has a greater influence on the tides.

“The winds and the waves are always on the side of the ablest navigators”

Edward Gibbon

On the alternate two weeks, between spring tides, the Sun and moon are pulling on different sides of the Earth, and their combined force is diminished. This gives rise to smaller, neap tides; the name possibly derived from the Old English ‘nēp’, meaning ‘to become lower’.

“Around the spring and autumn equinoxes on 21 March and 21 September, the Sun and moon can be aligned, and the Sun is overhead at the Equator,” says Kevin. “This twice-yearly occurrence is when the oceans are most responsive to the tidal forces, and you can get an exceptionally big global tide.”

The difference between high and low water is known as the tidal range. Britain has some of the highest tidal ranges in the world; the Bristol Channel having a mean spring tidal range of 40ft (12.3m) and Liverpool Bay 27ft (8.3m). At

Lowestoft, on the eastern coast, on the other hand, the range is only 6ft (1.9m). In areas with shallow, flat beaches, such as St Annes, the sea may recede a long way out, whereas waves may continually crash against cliffs towering from deep water, and the tidal range only becomes noticeable over a period of several hours.

Taking shape

Although the gravitational pull of the moon causes all water molecules to oscillate, even those in a cup of water or a garden pond, the combined effect of this movement is so slight as to be negligible. Only in large bodies of water, such as the oceans, does the energy of the moving molecules build into a wave that travels across the water as a tide: not to be confused with surface waves created by the wind. Even ➤



Walkers gather to cross from Arnside to Kents Bank, Cumbria, guided by the Queen’s guide to the sands, a position dating from the 16th century. The guide escorts visitors over the treacherous mudflats and tidal sands of Morecambe Bay for a nominal salary of £15 a year and the use of a cottage. Fisherman Michael Wilson took on the role in 2019.



The North Sea pounds the Victorian pier and promenade at Cromer on the North Norfolk coast, in December 2013, during a storm surge. Flood defences and forecasting, however, prevented the devastating damage of the floods 60 years earlier.

AWARENESS OF HIDDEN DANGERS

As the waters ebb to reveal stretches of golden sand, and inviting coves become accessible, it is easy to forget about the threats that tides can pose. “Tidal cut-off is one of the biggest dangers on the coast and a major cause of rescue call-outs,” says Mike Hannam, of the RNLI. “People are often unaware that they are in potential danger and, as such, are not prepared. You should always check tide tables and carry a means of calling for help.”

The most common problems are island causeways and sandbanks, which can quickly be flooded, and isolated bays that are cut off by an incoming tide. In some places, the height of the tide and local topography combine to create particularly dangerous conditions.

“Morecambe Bay has a tidal range of up to 10.5m, and its shifting, very soft sand is exposed for a vast distance,” says Mike. “When the tide comes in, it covers the sand faster than you can walk. A similar problem is experienced at Southend-on-Sea. We have to rescue people by hovercraft, as the sands won’t support trucks, and the water is too shallow for boats.”

Rips, often misleadingly referred to as rip tides, are actually fast currents created when water is pushed from the shore out to sea; often exacerbated by high surf conditions, when waves along the shore are higher than normal. “Rips are found around river mouths, estuaries, exposed beaches and manmade structures, such as piers and groyne,” explains Mike. “They are very dangerous because they can take you from the shallows very quickly and leave you out of your depth.

“People should never try to swim against a rip current: they will quickly become exhausted. It’s

best to stand and wade, if possible, or swim parallel to the beach until you are free of the current. The best way to avoid them is to swim between the red and yellow flags on a lifeguarded beach.”

Perhaps the most dramatic of dangerous waters occurs during storm surges, when the sea can breach harbour walls and other defences, sometimes causing widespread flooding.

“During a storm, severe winds can push water onshore,” says Mike. “The severity of the surge will depend on the size and speed of the storm, its orientation to the coastline and local water depth, driven by tidal conditions.”

Between 31 January and 1 February 1953, a storm surge at high spring tide on the North Sea caused devastation down the east coast of Britain, as well as in Belgium and the Netherlands. More than 2,000 people were killed in a night that saw ships overwhelmed by the sea and 6ft (1.8m) waves cascading through coastal towns.

In the UK, 990 miles of coastline were damaged, 160,000 acres of farmland were rendered unusable and more than 25,000 people lost their homes. It remains the UK’s worst natural disaster and led to the creation of today’s storm surge warning service and defences, such as the Thames Barrier.



A high-water marker showing the 1953 flood level on a house front at King’s Lynn in Norfolk.

Surfers ride the Severn Bore in Gloucestershire. The large surge wave occurs where the river estuary is the right shape, and the tidal conditions allow it to form.



small seas; for example, the Baltic or Mediterranean, may have little or no tide.

The topography of a coast, whether convoluted with coves and caves or smoothed by shallow beaches, as well as the shape of the seabed and depth of water, will affect the behaviour of the tide. At Avonmouth in Bristol, the funnelled coastline means its exceptionally high tide also comes in quickly as the water is squeezed up a narrow gap; a phenomenon that gives rise to the famous Severn Bore. Tidal waves can be deflected by land, so that even places close together may experience different tides. Cromer and Aldeburgh, for example, nestled approximately 70 miles from one another on the curve of the Norfolk coast, experience high tide several hours apart.

While most places have two tides a day, this is not always the case. “Some places have what is known as double high water; in effect, two high tides, rather than a high and then a low tide,” says Kevin. “This is prevalent around Bournemouth and Southampton, while Weymouth has a

double low water. These complex tides occur because local tidal currents and the geometry of the seabed interact with the tidal wave to generate new, higher-frequency waves.”

Tides can also be affected by the weather. Low atmospheric pressure allows the water to rise higher, and high pressure conversely dampens the tide. Strong winds can also push water towards or away from the shoreline.

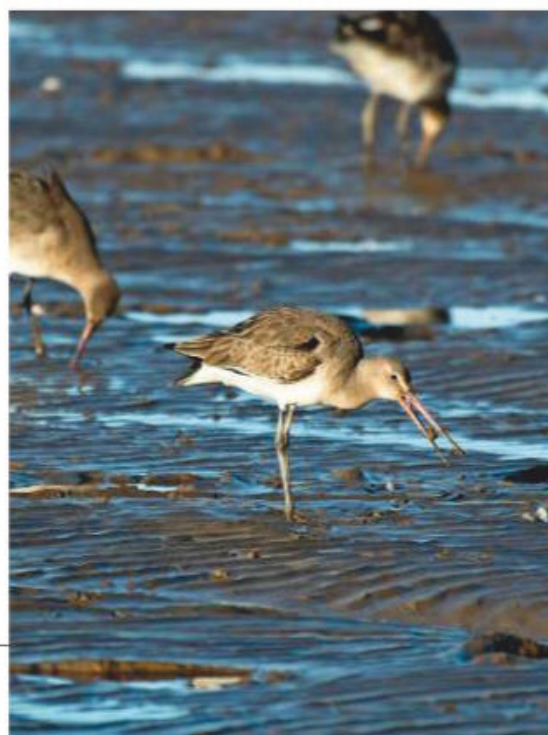
Predicting risk

The times and heights of tides at more than 700 locations around the coast of the UK are available as tide tables: an indispensable navigational tool for mariners and a potential lifesaver for walkers, surfers and anyone enjoying the many attractions of the sea.

What is thought to be Europe’s first-ever tide table was compiled by the Benedictine monk, John of Wallingford, who died in 1258. His tables predicted the ‘flood at London brigg’, three hours later here than at the mouth of the river and occurring 48 minutes later each day. ➤

TIDAL ECOSYSTEM

Tides are a vital part of the oceanic ecosystem; circulating nutrients, moderating water temperature and helping to dilute and remove pollutants. Many fish rely on tides to feed; waiting offshore for smaller fish to be washed towards them or riding the tide to shallower waters, where food is plentiful. Oysters open and close with the phases of the moon, staying closed longer on neap than on spring tides, and bristleworms spawn on a waning moon. At low tide, birds sweep onto exposed sands to feed on snails and cockles, while in rock pools, anemones fold away their tentacles, and crabs hide under seaweed until the water returns.



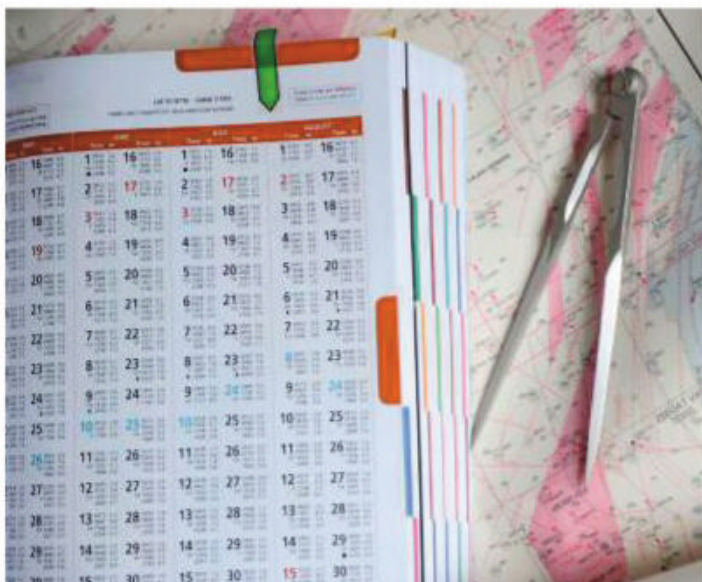
A black-tailed godwit, *Limosa limosa*, feeding at low tide, in Morecambe Bay, Lancashire.

*“The high tide!” King Alfred cried. “The high tide and the turn!
As a tide turns on the tall grey seas, See how they waver in the trees,
How stray their spears, how knock their knees, How wild their watchfires burn!”*

G K Chesterton, ‘The Ballad of the White Horse’



The road linking Beal and Lindisfarne in Northumberland lies submerged until the tide goes out, twice a day, enabling cars to pass between the holy island and the mainland.



A tide table, pair of compasses and a marine chart used to gauge tides.

Tide tables and signs show crossing times for the tidal road at Lindisfarne. Here, emergency services attend a visitor on the causeway. As the water rises, stranded travellers have to climb up into the tower shelter for safety.

Watching the ebb and flow of the sea can prove mesmerising, but beach lovers should always be mindful of an incoming tide and make sure it does not cut off their exit point.



“Because tides are driven by astronomical forces, they are predictable,” says Kevin. “With a few years’ tidal measurements from any location, we can reconstruct its tides for the next 100 years. We can also work backwards to find out about tides that occurred in the past. We know that the terrible flooding in the South West in 1607 was not caused by a tsunami, as had been suggested, but by high water combined with high winds.

“Tides were initially measured by floats placed in brick tubes, called stilling wells, with machinery that traced the tidal curve onto a rotating cylinder of paper. Big strides in prediction were made after the 1860s, when Lord Kelvin promoted the harmonic analysis of water movements, and the first tide predicting machine was used at Bidston Observatory in the Wirral in 1924. Today, you can get an app on your phone that does much the same.”

But rising sea levels, due to climate change, may make very long-term tide prediction more difficult, as the depth of water and shape of the seabed change. “Any significant change in the average water level is enough to change the tides,” says Kevin. “Building flood defences, such as barriers

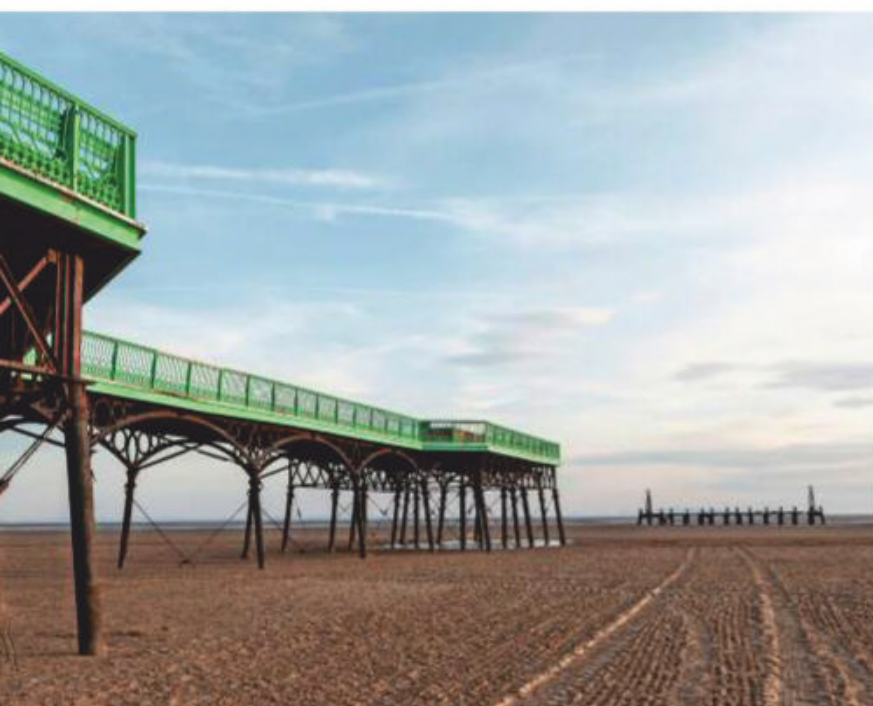
or other coastal developments, may also have unintended effects, as they can alter the shape of the sea basin; itself affecting water levels.” The jetty at St Annes was abandoned when improvements to the docks at Preston resulted in silting up around St Annes, and steamers could no longer operate.

On a commercial level, knowledge of tides is ever more important as marine commerce expands, and it has been estimated that the UK holds 50 per cent of Europe’s potential for tidal power: a form of hydropower that converts the energy from tides into electricity.

“Tides are one of the most fascinating and important topics in marine science,” says Kevin. “Understanding them is vital for coastal safety, allows us to comprehend a changing coastline and provides the knowledge that we can use for generating clean energy.”

But even as we learn more about the tide, for many, standing on the beach watching the mesmeric power of the sea as it ebbs and flows, shows nature at its most awe-inspiring and, still, mysterious. ■

• Words: Di Wardle



St Annes pier, with its jetty in the background. Dock improvements at Preston led to the Ribble Valley being dredged, causing the pier to be marooned on dry land.



Professor Kevin Horsburgh, chief scientist for international development at the National Oceanography Centre, which has sites at Southampton and Liverpool (left), and Mike Hannam, community safety delivery support manager for the RNLI, working on the south coast (right).

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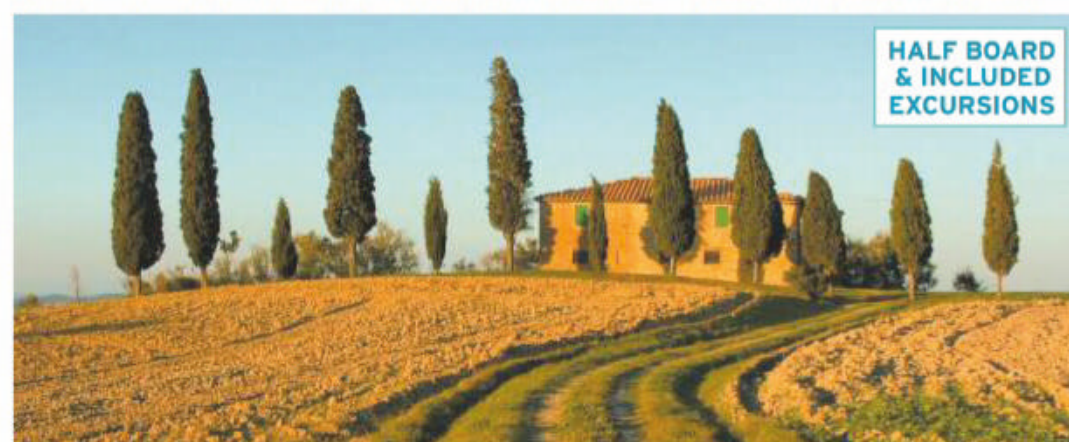
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April Events

NORTH WEST ENGLAND



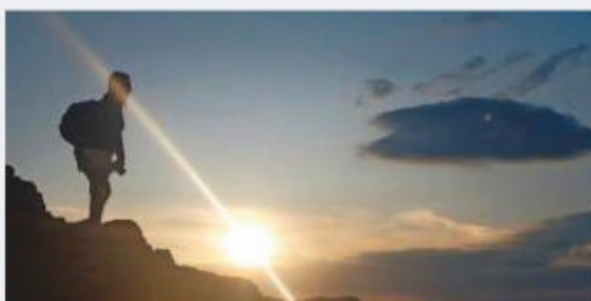
Plant Hunters' Fair

Hoghton Tower, Preston, Lancashire

18 April

Held in the grounds of a magnificent 16th century Elizabethan fortified manor house, this fair gets the gardening season off to a great start. It offers visitors a wide choice of perennials, alpines, shrubs, trees, rare species and old heritage varieties from specialist nurseries.

www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk



Scafell Pike Sunset Walk

Wasdale National Trust campsite, Cumbria

18 April

Discover the stunning views from the summit of England's highest mountain during this leisurely hike. With expert mountaineer guides, walkers will reach the peak before sunset, where a glass of champagne awaits. The descent is followed by a fireside drink at the Wasdale Head Inn.

www.mountainadventurelakedistrict.co.uk

NORTH EAST ENGLAND

Stitch In Time: A Knitting Cabaret

The Witham, Barnard Castle, County Durham

2 April

Join Melanie Gall for a delightful evening of lost wartime knitting songs. Audiences are encouraged to bring their own projects and stitch along to these funny, poignant, toe-tapping, needle-clicking tunes, which were lost for almost 100 years.

thewitham.org.uk



53rd Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering

Morpeth, Northumberland

17-19 April

This annual gathering celebrates the history and culture of the region. Featuring a range of indoor and outdoor events across the town, there will be crafts, battle re-enactments, workshops, tours, walks, talks and performances from Taffy Thomas, the first storytelling laureate, as well as music from the era of the great gypsy piper Jamie Allan.

www.northumbriana.org.uk



Willow Plant Supports Workshop

The Cheviot Centre, Wooler, Northumberland

24 April

Join artist Anna Turnbull as she guides students through the process of creating beautiful garden obelisks and peony supports from willow. All materials, tools and equipment are provided throughout the day.

www.biteabout.co.uk



YORKSHIRE

Seaside Cottage Sculpture Workshop

The Seal's Whiskers, Little Ribston, North Yorkshire

4 April

Join sisters Melanie and Debra to design and create a coastal scene from recycled timber. Materials are provided as well as tools and light refreshments. Due to the rural location, participants are advised to bring a packed lunch.

www.craftcourses.com



Harrogate Spring Flower Show

Great Yorkshire Showground, Harrogate, North Yorkshire

23-26 April

Take a stroll down Memory Lane to discover what gardens were like 100 years ago and which plants were being introduced from across the globe at this special Roaring Twenties-themed flower show, which celebrates the new decade. With a wonderful range of tempting specialist food and drink, handmade crafts and gifts for sale, and a host of experts offering gardening advice, there will be something for everyone.

www.flowershow.org.uk



Festival Of Vintage

York Racecourse, North Yorkshire

25-26 April

One of the UK's largest indoor vintage festivals celebrates its 10th year with an array of entertainment, displays, shows, shopping and live music that offers a nostalgic look at the tunes, fashion and lifestyle of the 1930s-1960s. Vintage attire is encouraged, and there will be a full programme of dance lessons and workshops throughout the weekend.

www.festivalofvintage.co.uk

MIDLANDS

Quilting Weekend - Hay on Wye

Bredwardine Village Hall, Herefordshire

4-5 April

Join Jacqueline Seymour for a relaxing and stress-free weekend and learn the traditional craft of quilting. Amid beautiful surroundings, Jacqueline's expert tuition is ideal for novice quilters who wish to build on their skills. The course will cover a variety of quilting techniques, including rotary cutting fabrics, piecing techniques, adding pieced borders, layering and machine quilting to create a lap quilt to take home. Participants are requested to bring their own sewing machine. Refreshments and home-made lunches are included. To book a place, please email Jacqueline at bee-spokequilts@hotmail.com or telephone her on 01981 501043.

www.bee-spokequilts.com



Staffordshire Spring Wild Food Foraging Course

Buzzards Valley, Tamworth, Staffordshire

24 April

Held in the beautiful 60-acre estate, this outdoor course explores meadows, hedgerows, ancient woodland, coniferous plantations and waterways in a bid to find tasty wild food treats. Participants will be given an overview on foraging laws and safety, instructions on how to tell apart edible species from poisonous lookalikes, tips on harvesting and recipe ideas. There will also be delicious samples to try from a range of soups, sauces, salts, pickles, syrups, cordials, jams, jellies, leathers and vinegars.

www.foragingcoursecompany.co.uk



Shakespeare's Birthday Celebrations

Henley Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire

25-26 April

To mark William Shakespeare's 456th birthday, there will be a host of entertainment and merriment on offer to celebrate the world's greatest playwright. A parade through the town, starting at Shakespeare's birthplace and ending with the laying of flowers at his final resting place at the town's Holy Trinity Church, will also be taking place. The street will be alive with free activities and performances to suit all ages at this family-friendly event.

www.shakespeare.org.uk

EAST MIDLANDS & EAST ANGLIA



Spring Migrants Bird Walk

Forest Centre, Marston Moretaine, Bedfordshire

11 April

Enjoy a guided walk, led by an expert team, who will be spotting the visiting spring migrants of the Millennium Country Park. This is home to 225 hectares of woodlands, grasslands, meadows and a stunning wetlands nature reserve. Walkers will have the opportunity to see a variety of birds, including willow warblers, wheatears, chiffchaffs and whinchats.

www.marstonvale.org

Eastnor Castle Spring Foraging Course

Parking area, Eastnor Castle, Ledbury, Herefordshire

18 & 24 April

Learn how to identify the different plants, flowers, fruits and mushrooms that grow here during this 2½ hr walk, which includes stops to taste seasonal home-made refreshments, such as hogweed and wild garlic soup and elderflower champagne. A tasty wild food lunch follows.

www.wildfooduk.com



Kiln Fired Enamelling Workshop

Selston, Nottinghamshire

24 April

Discover how to make beautiful enamelled creations, such as earrings, brooches, cufflinks, key rings, plaques and pictures during this creative workshop led by Katie Sanderson. It is suitable for both beginners and those who wish to expand on their skills. All materials and tools are provided.

www.katiesanderson.co.uk



SOUTH WEST ENGLAND



Postcards From The Edge

The Byre Gallery, Millbrook, Cornwall

1 April-2 May

This exhibition on the Rame Peninsula is hosting the work of nine local artists and makers inspired by the South West Coast Path, which has drawn people for centuries, due to its beautiful light and dramatic coastline. The path stretches 630 miles from North Somerset to East Dorset.

www.thebyregallery.co.uk

April Events



Malmesbury Artisan And Farmers' Market

Market Cross, Malmesbury, Wiltshire

3, 10, 17 & 24 April

Held at the historic landmark, which dates back to 1490, this popular market sells an enticing array of local, fresh and organic produce, together with hand-made products and gifts. Visitors can also discover the rich history of England's oldest borough, including the 12th century abbey.

www.discovermalmesbury.life



Cornwall Garden Society's 2020 Spring Flower Show

Royal Cornwall Showground,
Wadebridge, Cornwall

4-5 April

The show offers dazzling displays of floral and botanical art exhibits, show gardens, more than 130 specialist nurseries and traders, and an area for eclectic arts and crafts.

www.cornwallgardensociety.org.uk

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND



Organic Bread Making

The Art Barn, Manor Barn, Adderbury, Oxfordshire

2 April

Join Cate Wetherall in this fun and informative class. Cate will demonstrate the difference between flours and yeasts, and explain how to measure and mix a great dough. Students will master the art of kneading, shaping and baking to create loaves, a pizza base and soda bread.

www.pureartworkstudio.co.uk

Beginners' Willow Sphere Sculpture Workshop

New Cottages, Pirbright, Surrey

4 April

Discover how to create a beautiful willow sphere with expert tuition from Sara and Hanna Holmes. Set in a picturesque country garden, this workshop has an informal, relaxed atmosphere. All materials and a light vegetarian lunch are provided.

www.willowtwisters.com



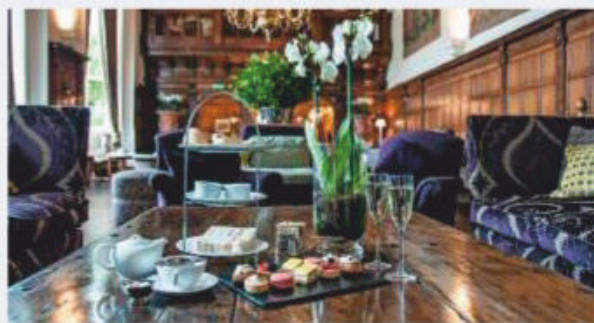
Easter Sunday Afternoon Tea

Danesfield House, Marlow, Buckinghamshire

12 April

Enjoy a delicious selection of finger sandwiches, scones with strawberry jam and Cornish clotted cream, and home-made cakes, served with a choice of teas. Children can also take part in an egg hunt with the Easter bunny.

www.danesfieldhouse.co.uk



SCOTLAND

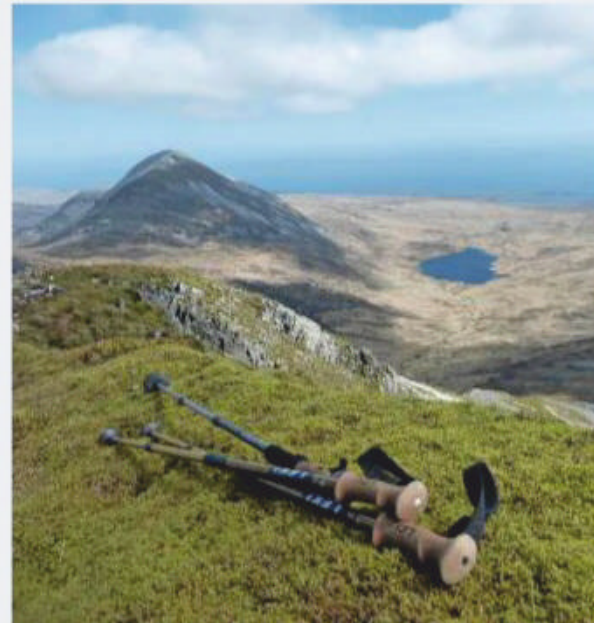
Scotland's Daffodil Festival

Backhouse Rossie Estate, Cupar, Fife

11-12 April

The air will be filled with the delightful scent of thousands of narcissus. Visitors can enjoy a garden fete, prize-winning daffodil displays, expert talks and the opportunity to see some of the first cultivars created in the UK from the Wordsworth-style daffodils by the Backhouse family ancestors.

www.backhouserossie.co.uk/scotlands-national-daffodil-festival



Walk Islay

Islay, Inner Hebrides, Argyll and Bute

19-24 April

This annual walking event takes place across the beautiful scenery of Islay, Jura and Colonsay. There will be a variety of walks offered over the six days to suit every level of walker, covering a range of terrains, from beaches and lochs to mountains and moors. They will provide participants with the chance to see eagles, otters, deer, goats and chough along the way.

www.islayjura.com



Cyanotype Prints

Leslie Street, Blairgowrie, Perthshire

25 April

Discover the fascinating process of cyanotype printmaking with Ashleigh Slater, who will teach various techniques using seasonal plants and flowers, buttons and lace to create collages, which will be transformed into five A4-sized prints. All materials and light refreshments will be provided throughout the day.

www.craftcourses.com

WALES

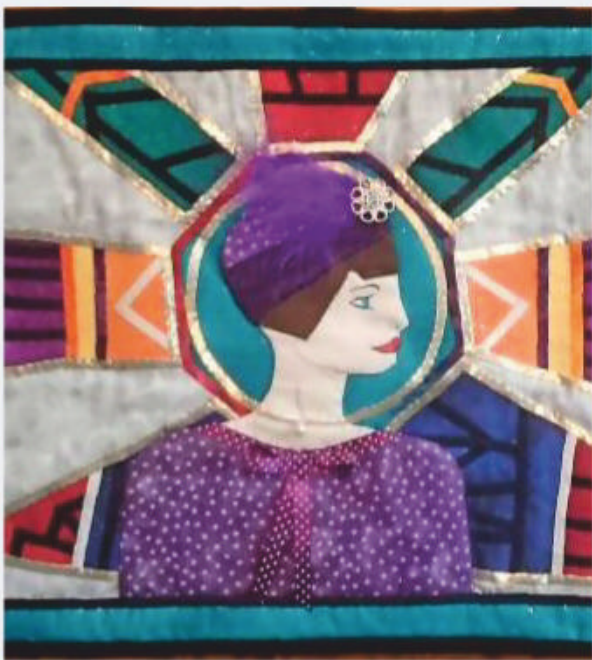
Welsh Heritage Quilters' Exhibition

Minerva Arts Centre, Llanidloes, Powys

4-18 April

Inspired by the theme of '20:20 Visions' this exhibition will be displaying a varied range of quilts and wall hangings from traditional wholecloth designs to the Jazz Age and Sashiko. There will be demonstrations by members of the Quilt Association and the opportunity to create a Sunbonnet Sue design on 11 April, as well as stalls selling a range of pre-cut fabrics.

www.quilt.org.uk



Chepstow Walking Festival

Chepstow, Monmouthshire

15-19 April

From meandering riverside strolls to challenging hikes along rugged terrain, this festival offers walkers more than 30 guided routes which accommodate all levels and abilities and provide a wonderful introduction to the rich cultural heritage and breathtaking landscape of the Lower Wye Valley. The event will also include a map interpretation workshop and an evening of stargazing under the dark skies.

www.walksinchestow.co.uk



Spoon Carving

Coppicewood College, Cilgerran, Pembrokeshire

25 April

This course will teach how to use an axe and a variety of knives safely and effectively to create a unique wooden spoon from a log. Wood choice, carving techniques and tool sharpening will be covered, and all materials provided. There will also be a vegetarian lunch and light refreshments.

www.thecoppiceplot.com



Wonderwool Wales

Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells, Powys

25-26 April

This festival celebrates the green credentials of Welsh wool and its versatility as a material for crafts, clothes, home furnishings and more. It covers everything from exhibits of sheep, raw and hand-dyed fibres, yarn, embellishments, equipment, dyes and books to examples of finished textile art, craft, clothing and furnishings.

www.wonderwoolwales.co.uk

NORTHERN IRELAND



Ballymoney Spring Fair

Ballymoney, County Antrim

11 April

Visitors can enjoy a market along with a programme of attractions and outdoor entertainment, workshops, street performers and a cavalcade of vintage cars. A carnival parade will bring the festival to a close.

www.visitcausewaycoastandglens.com

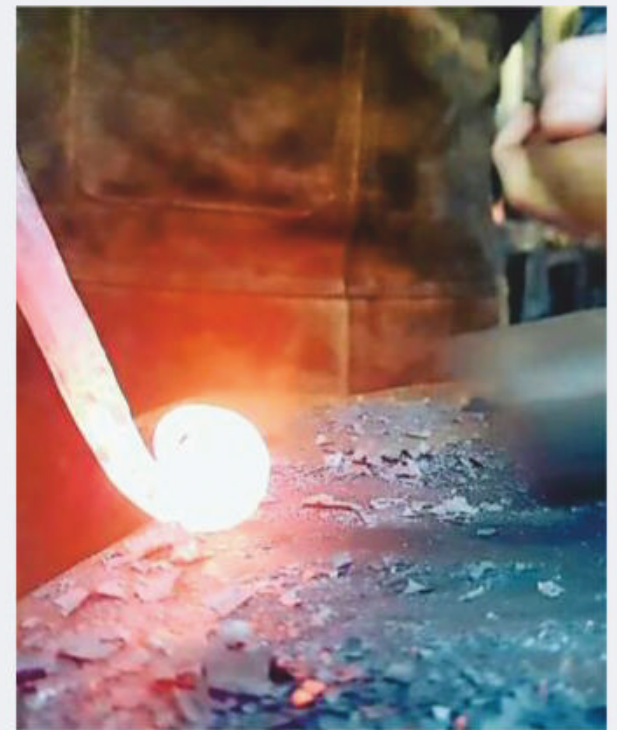
Blacksmithing Weekend Course

Hot Milk Forge, Martinstown, Ballymena

18-19 April

Discover the art of blacksmithing and create a beautiful hand-forged flower basket hanger. Participants will learn all the skills required, including scrolling, drawing down, twisting, upsetting and riveting. All safety equipment and materials will be provided

www.artistblacksmithschool.com



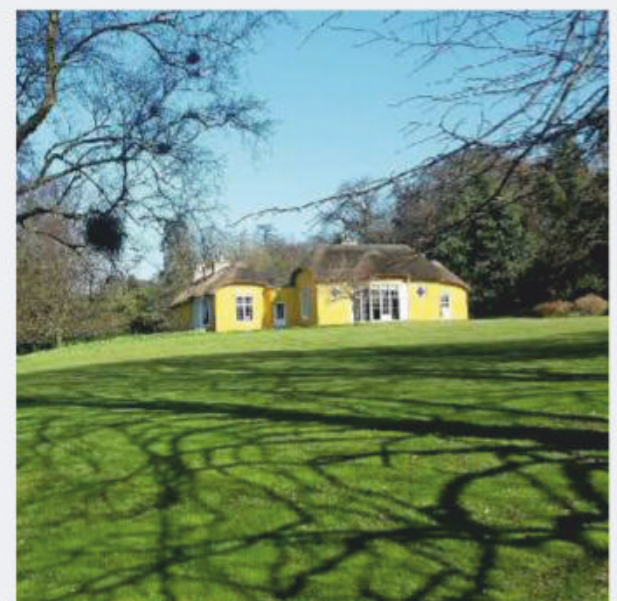
Birdsong and Bluebells Dawn Chorus

Derrymore House, Bessbrook, County Armagh

25 April

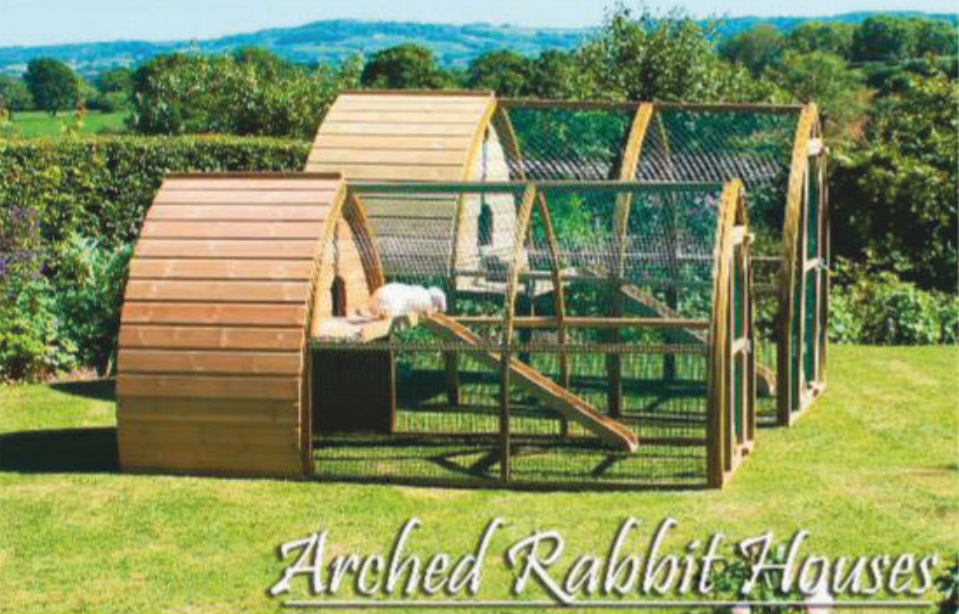
Rise before the lark and experience an amazing spring dawn chorus on an early morning guided walk through the beautiful Derrymore Woods while admiring the carpet of bluebells which grow there. A hearty cooked breakfast awaits walkers in Bessbrook afterwards and the opportunity to explore this fascinating, primrose-coloured, late 18th century thatched house.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk



LandScape makes every effort to ensure all details are correct but recommends details are confirmed before travelling.

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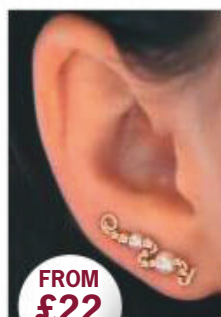
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GET AWAY TO CORNWALL

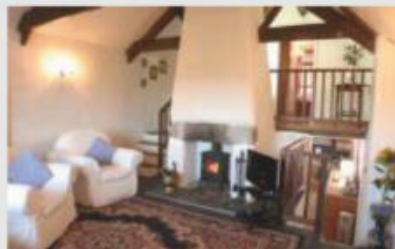


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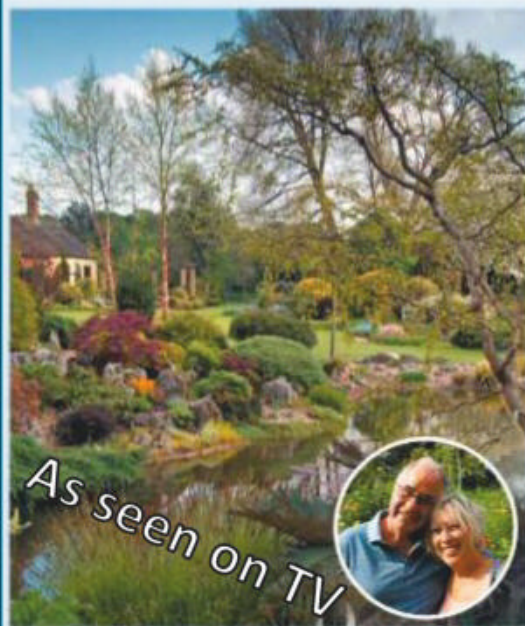
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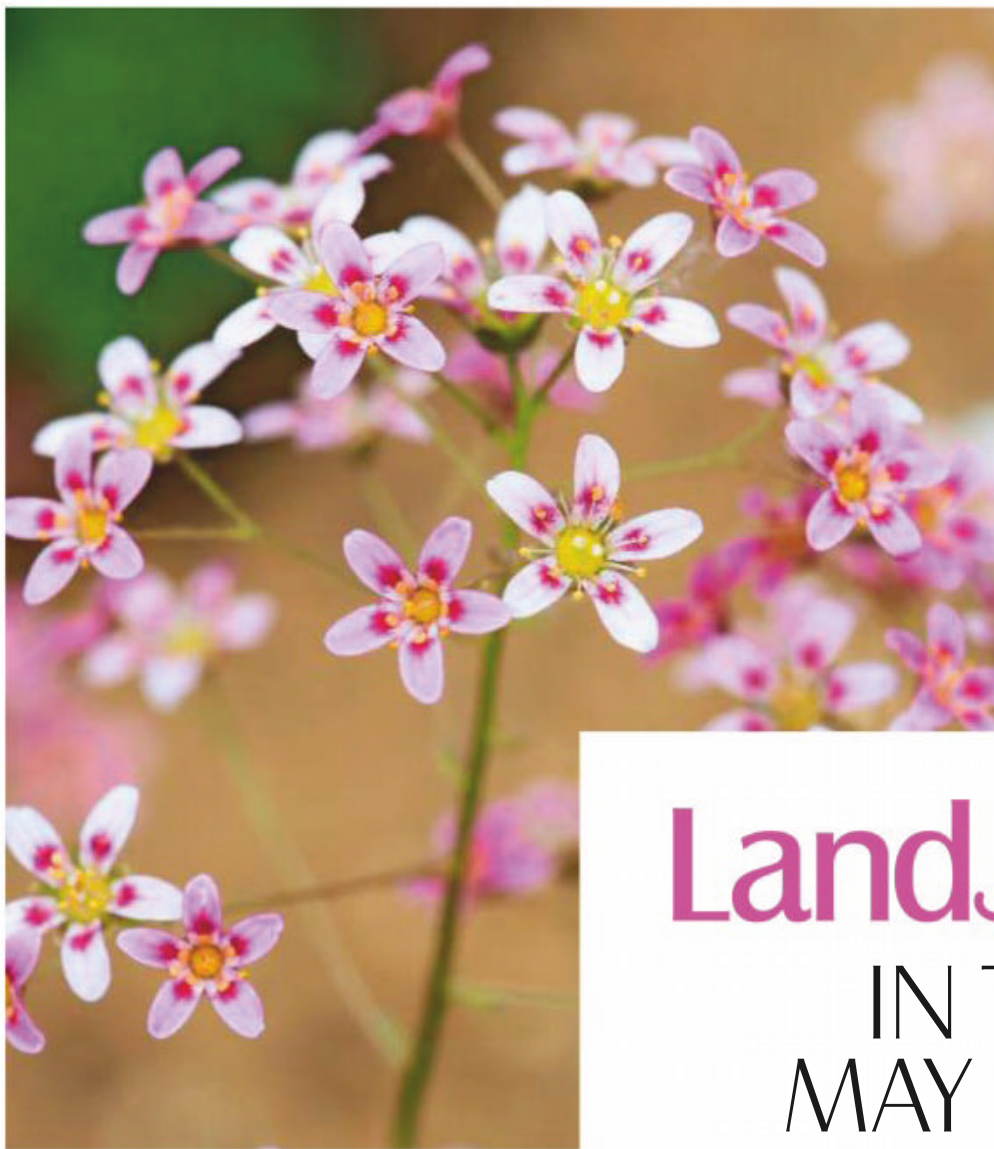




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www.michael-michaud.com



LandScape

IN THE MAY ISSUE

on sale 25 March

Diminutive blooms with a steely nature

Artists' idyll on a Scottish shore

The weaver of beehives from bygone days

Flavours of spring under a golden crust

Walk in the footsteps of giants and pilgrims



Photography: Alamy; Clive Doyle; House of Food; Shutterstock

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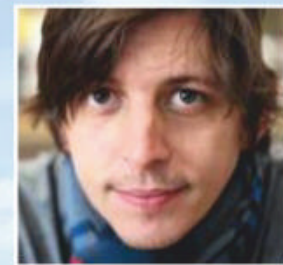
Rachel

Rachel Hawkins
Editor

A style guide to the *outside*

Industry expert and founder of Out and Out Original, Daniel Fairburn, brings you this season's best deals on designer furniture.

Visit www.outandout.com or call **02037 728 752** for more exciting deals and discounts.



Copenhagen - Rattan Corner Sofa

The Copenhagen corner lounge sofa is woven with thick rounded polyrattan and sits on a robust metal frame to give you strength and durability. This classic look sofa sits up to 5 in comfort thanks to the thick seat and back cushions. Also included is an on trend luxurious granite table top which has been meticulously shaped and rounded to give it a more organic feel. Virtually maintenance free and includes a 12 months warranty. Normally £699, this comfy sofa is now available at a fantastic price of **£499***, but only when you quote your £200 **discount code LSMAR20** at checkout.



Marbella - 5-Seater Corner Lounge Set

The ideal addition to your outdoor space, this stunning outdoor lounge set offers comfort and style at an affordable price. Normally £599, it's now available for **just £399*** when you quote **discount code LSMAR20**. Bang on trend in gorgeous shades of grey, this set is designed with a contemporary feel. It's hardwearing, woven in strong polyrattan on a galvanised steel frame. The comfy cushion covers can be removed and hand washed with care. The sofa and armchair seats 5 easily, and includes a tempered, glass-topped coffee table you can entertain outside with ease. Virtually maintenance-free it's the perfect choice at a fantastic price.



Santorini - Lounge Set with Cushions

This sleek modular looking lounge is truly versatile and can be arranged in several different ways. Consisting of one left hand and one right hand sofa, two ottomans and a compact coffee table, a simple re-arrangement of the pieces enables you to turn it into 2 chaise longues, 2 day beds or keep all 4 pieces separate for a more sociable outdoor lounge space. Also available in blue and includes a 12 month warranty. Normally £699, it's now available at an amazing **£499***. To receive your £200 **discount quote code LSMAR20** at checkout.



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