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EVERY WEEK | FEBRUARY 26, 2020

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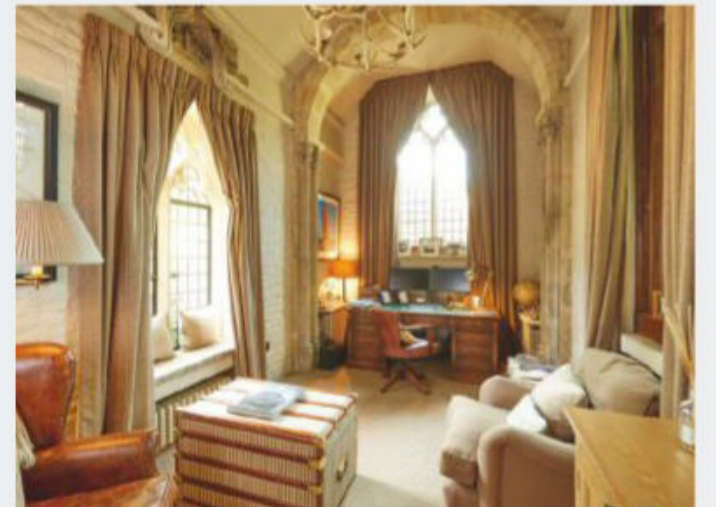
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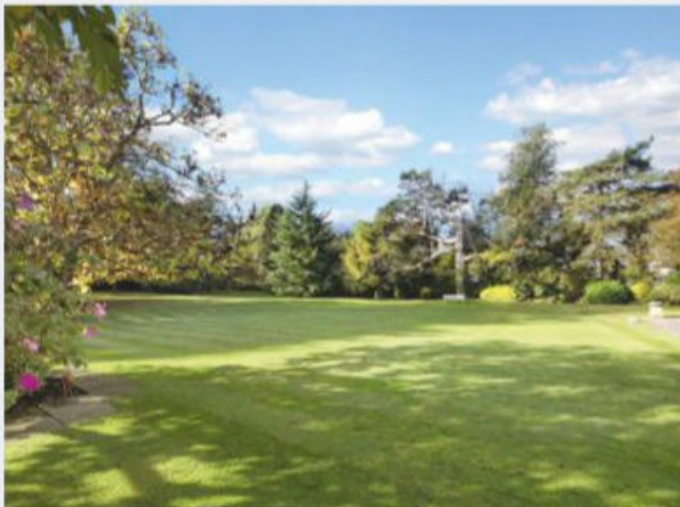
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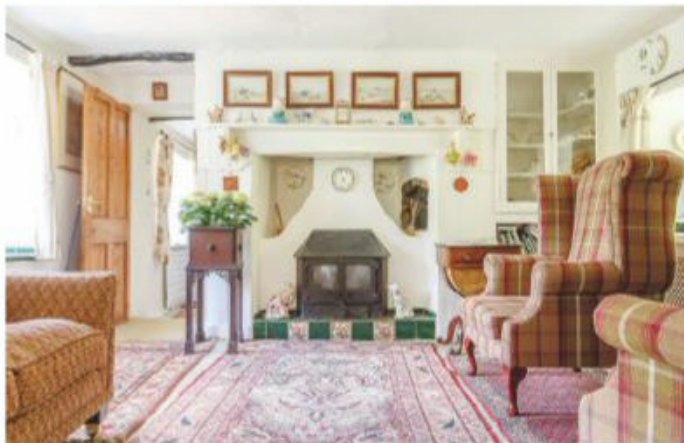


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Devon, Whitestone



A true gardeners' paradise surrounded by enchanting grounds in a peaceful rural position

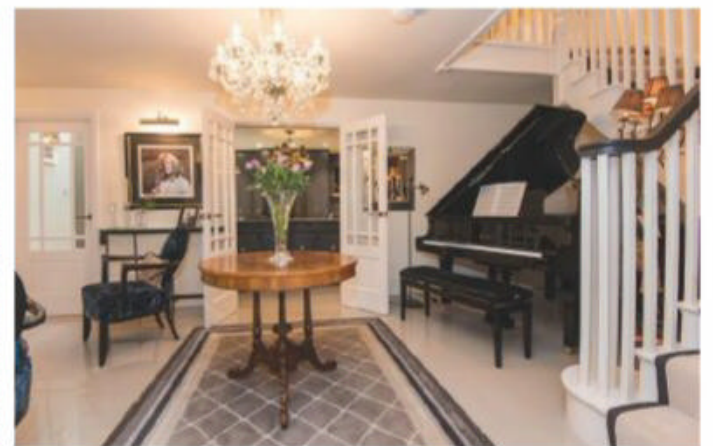
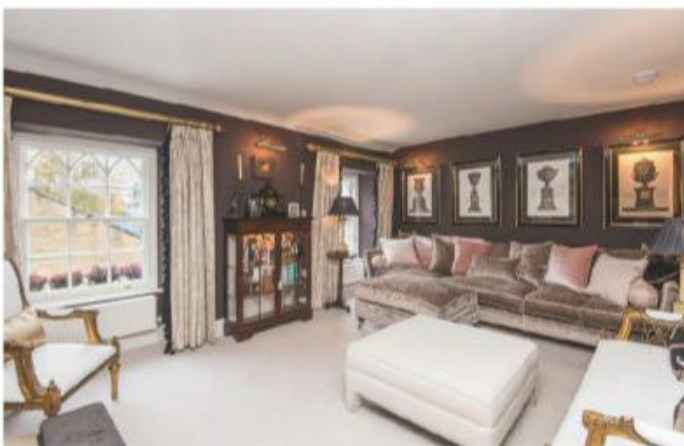
Whitestone: 2.5 miles, Exeter: 4 miles, Crediton: 5 miles, Dartmoor National Park: 6 miles
Dining room | Sitting room | Kitchen | Conservatory | Master bedroom | 2 Further bedrooms | Shower room
Garage and attached lean-to | Stables | Outstanding gardens | Vegetable garden | 6 Fields | EPC Rating E

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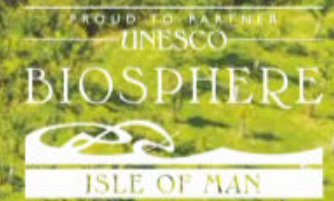


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Photo of the Ballakea Estate, St Marks provided by Chrystals Estate Agents Isle of Man.

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Thomas Cooper Gotch

RBA RI RP NEAC, 1854–1931



Sharing the Catch, 1891

signed upper right and inscribed on reverse

oil on canvas 122 x 160 cms 48 x 63 ins

EXHIBITED

London: Royal Academy, 1891, no. 746

Nottingham Castle: Special Exhibition of Cornish Painters, 1894, no. 206

Kettering: T. C. Gotch Memorial Exhibition, 1932, no. 42

Newlyn and Bristol: Artists of the Newlyn School, 1880–1900, 1958

LITERATURE

Royal Academy Pictures, 1891, p. 88

Pall Mall Gazette Extra, 'The Pictures of 1891', p. 39

Caroline Fox, Stanhope Forbes and the Newlyn School, 1993 (Newton Abbot: David and Charles), p. 61

As a founding member of the Newlyn School this is Tom Gotch's most impressive natural realistic composition. *Sharing the Catch* ranks alongside some of the most important images created by this school at this time. His contemporaries such as Frank Bramley 1857–1947, *Hopeless Dawn* Exhib at the RA 1888 (Tate Gallery) and Stanhope A Forbes 1857–1947 *A Fish Sale on a Cornish Beach* Exhib RA 1885 (City and Art Gallery, Plymouth) are comparable works.

Sharing the Catch records the ancient custom of sharing fish between the families. A parcel of fish was kept back after the sale of the catch to be fairly divided between the fishermans' families and by custom a "passer-by" chosen to arbitrate. In recording the event Gotch also portrays the intergenerational reliance of the families and the importance of their survival.

Sharing the Catch is today one of the few important Newlyn paintings still in private hands.

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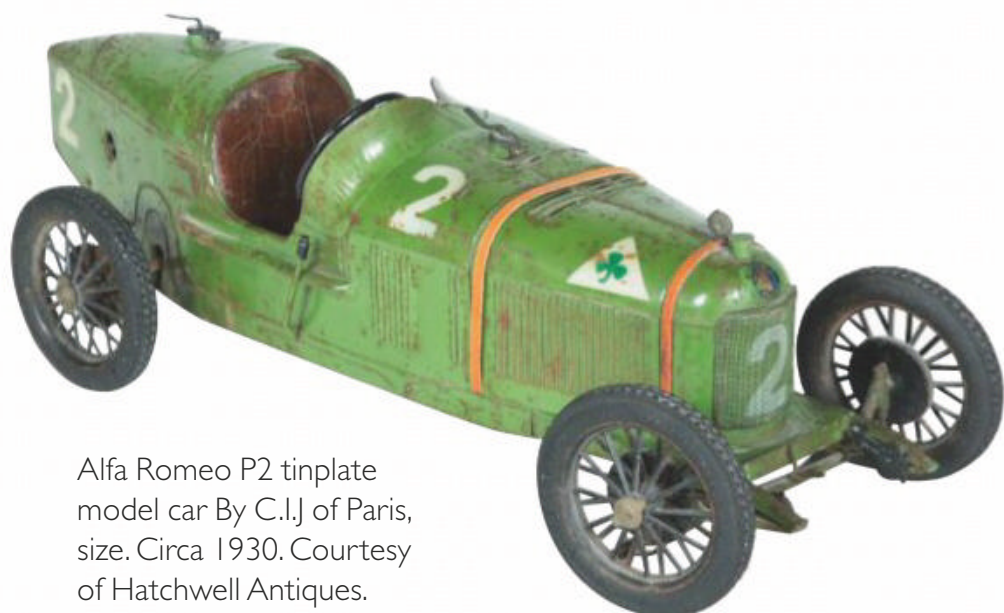
Antiques | Art | Design



Le Bistrot, stage design for the ballet film 'Edition Speciale' by Louis Cuny 1961. Gouache on paper, 18 x 38 cm. Signed by Erté (1892-1990). Courtesy of John Adams Fine Art. johnadamsfineart.com



A fine set of four George III boat-shaped Sauce Tureens. Hallmarked London 1796, maker Robert Sharp. Courtesy of J H Bourdon-Smith Ltd. bourdonsmith.co.uk



Alfa Romeo P2 tinplate model car By C.I.J. of Paris, size. Circa 1930. Courtesy of Hatchwell Antiques. hatchwellantiques.co.uk



Larmorna Cove by Dame Laura Knight, RA, RWS (1877-1970). Signed and dated 1920. Watercolour and gouache, 14.5 x 17 in. Courtesy of Walker Galleries. walkergalleries.com

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Large Black Pig
 (Ingrid). Bronze
 sculpture, edition
 of 12, signed
 & numbered
 by Nick Bibby.
 Courtesy of
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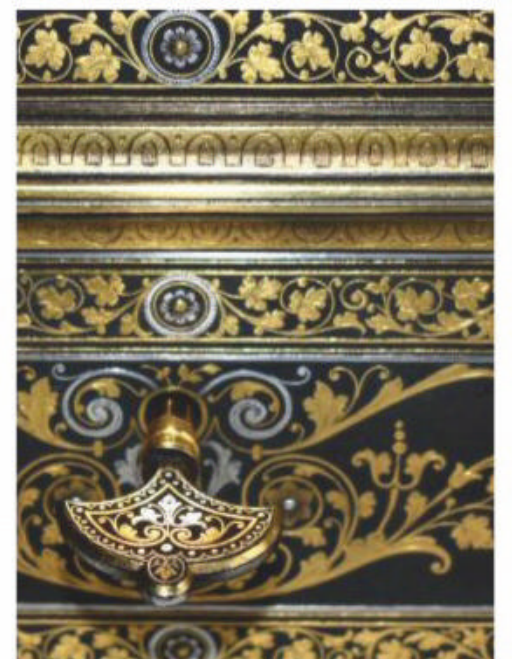


Lys et Iris dans un Vase de Galle by Bernard Buffet. Oil on canvas, signed, dated 1998 and inscribed verso, 36 x 25.5 in. Dedicated on the back: "For Guibert and Eve, affectionately, Christmas 1998. Bernard & Annabel". Accompanied by a certificate of authenticity from Maurice Garnier. Courtesy of Haynes Fine Art.
haynesfineart.com



French Art Nouveau plique
 à jour ring. Circa 1900.
 Courtesy of SpicerWarin.
spicerwarin.com

Spanish Silver & Gold Damascened
 Casket, Placido Zuloaga, Eibar,
 circa 1875-80. Courtesy of
 Michael Baggott Antiques.
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COUNTRY LIFE

VOL CCXIV NO 9, FEBRUARY 26, 2020

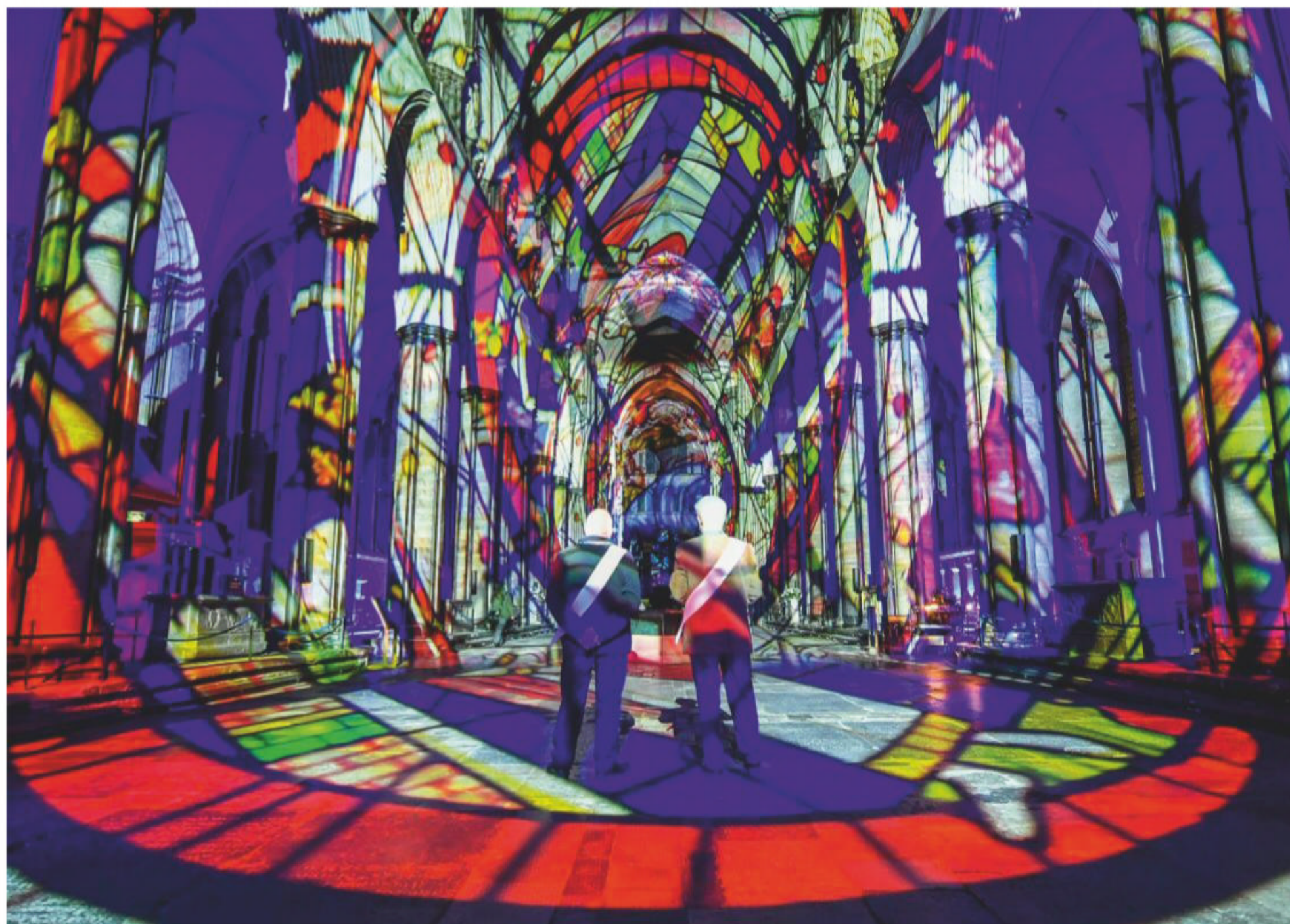


Miss Charlotte Brooksbank

Charlotte, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs Michael Brooksbank of south Oxfordshire, is engaged to be married to Christopher Gibson, only son of Mr and Mrs Alistair Gibson of Stanton Drew, Somerset. A make-up artist for productions such as *Strictly Come Dancing* and the BAFTA Awards, Charlotte will marry Christopher at St Mary's Church, Streatley, Berkshire, and afterwards at Lains Barn, Wantage, Oxfordshire, in April.

Photographed at Barton House, Wantage, Oxfordshire, by Daniel Gould

Contents February 26, 2020



Ben Birchall/PA Images

Light of ages: the installation *Sarum Lights* fills Salisbury Cathedral with colour and music to mark the building's 800th anniversary



A vulpine stare
(Alannah Hawker)

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COUNTRY LIFE

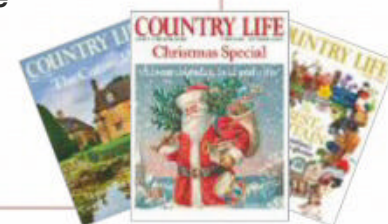
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As wily as a fox

I HAVE this thing where everybody has to think I'm the greatest,' declares Fantastic Mr Fox in Roald Dahl's 1970s tale of an astute fox outwitting three farmers. Ever since the demise of the bear, wolf and lynx, this handsome yet destructive creature has indeed been our top mammalian predator, engendering admiration and frustration in equal measure.

For centuries, *Vulpes vulpes* has raided chicken houses, stolen lambs and snaffled game. In retaliation, we've poisoned, shot, trapped and pursued them in the form of organised hunting. However, it is ironic that, 15 years on from the Hunting Act coming into force, how best to control the ever-prolific Reynard is still a bone of contention. Charlie Farley now also thrives as a city slicker, swapping partridge for left-over pizza, causing all sorts of havoc by terrorising pet rabbits and guinea pigs and even nibbling the odd child.

Why, in that case, does any encounter with a fox stop us dead in our tracks? The truth is that, with their splendid red coats,

‘Fifteen years after the Hunting Act, how best to control prolific Reynard is still a bone of contention’

bright eyes, pricked ears, acute senses and feline agility, they continue to mesmerise and amaze us. Even the most hardened gamekeeper admires their cunning and guile—they're perfect hunting machines and true survivors. It's that age-old affinity between the hunter and hunted: the deep affection and respect of man for his quarry—a paradox that baffles some. As John Lewis-Stempel observes (*page 48*): 'I suffer the English disease regarding Reynard. I hate foxes. I admire them, too.'

As night envelops dreary winter days, the blood-curdling screams of a vixen

calling for a mate fill the dank air and, in the distance, an expectant dog fox barks his reply. If another dog or vixen enters this courtship, all hell is let loose and cater-wauling ensues. Once territories have been secured, they're marked nightly, leaving a pungent smell of fox pee.

One reason foxes are so successful is because they're such attentive parents. Foxes are capable of producing five or six cubs in a litter and their young grow quickly. Born black or dark brown underground, they emerge as little red foxes in time to flatten the first show of bluebells around their earth. Their prosperity is partly due to being omnivores that feed on almost anything that's edible.

The extended family (known as a 'skulk') also helps, with plenty of aunts and uncles available to step in if anything happens to the parents. That, added to intelligence, dexterity and nimble grace, will ensure the longevity of this ancient, addictive and constantly evolving bond between Man and beguiling beast.

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PPA Front Cover of the Year 2018

British Society of Magazine Editors Scoop of the Year 2015/16

PPA Specialist Consumer Magazine of the Year 2014/15

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British Society of Magazine Editors Columnist of the Year (Special Interest) 2016

Editor Mark Hedges

Editor's PA/Travel Rosie Paterson 555062
Editorial Assistant Phoebe Bath 555046
Telephone numbers are prefixed by **01252**
Emails are name.surname@ti-media.com
Editorial enquiries 555046

Deputy Editor Kate Green 555063

Managing & Features Editor

Paula Lester 555068
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Oliver Pearson 07961 800887; Emma Lewis
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Head of Market: Country & Gardening
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Taking the lead

LEADING shooting and rural organisations are calling for the end of lead and single-use plastics in shotgun ammunition, it was announced on Monday. Nine organisations, including BASC, the CLA, the Countryside Alliance and the GWCT, released a statement asking the shooting community to cease using lead shot 'within five years'. The move to lead- and plastic-free ammunition will 'benefit wildlife and the environment while also safeguarding the growing market for healthy game meat,' they say.

The statement continues: 'This is a significant announcement, but one the shooting community should not fear. British wildfowlers and other European countries have already moved away from lead without detriment to participation or performance.' It points out that 'shooting has changed greatly over the years and this move is just the next step in that illustrious history'.

A spokesperson for BASC says: 'This approach dissuades a legislative action

and shows the shooting community is willing to take up the mantle of self-regulation.'

Lead shot is already banned on all foreshores and for the shooting of ducks, geese, coots and moorhens. However, for pheasant and partridge, it is by far the most popular choice. The current alternatives are bismuth, steel and tungsten matrix, but shotgun owners have long been sceptical about their cost and efficacy.

BASC and its partners have assured the shooting community that recent developments in non-lead shot would mean shotgun owners would see little difference in performance. They describe the long-held belief that steel shot is ineffective as 'a rumour from the early days of steel shot development'.

By switching away from lead shot, the organisations believe game will become easier to get to the table, as well as reducing the damage lead causes to the countryside. Lead left behind in un-picked birds can be ingested by scavengers, resulting in lead poisoning.



Lead shot is still favoured by many guns, but the alternatives would benefit wildlife and the public perception of shooting

Former headkeeper and COUNTRY LIFE contributor Simon Lester believes change is possible, 'if we make it so'. 'We have to do it. It's as simple as that,' he says. 'The technology for non-lead shot is there

and it's nonsense to think we can resist for any longer. We've resisted for too long already. If we don't listen, it's just going to be another stick with which anti-shooting organisations can beat us. Lead is a poison. It's time it went.'

Mr Lester suggests cartridge manufacturers simply stop the production of lead-based ammunition, saying the 'self-regulation argument doesn't necessarily stand up, as there are some people still shooting duck with lead shot. Simply remove the option'.

Patrick Galbraith, editor of *Shooting Times*, praises the move, saying: 'In years to come, I hope to be on a gun bus somewhere and to hear someone say "do you remember when people used to reckon nothing would ever compare to lead? How wrong we were".' For details, visit www.basc.org.uk

The final hours of the barquentine *Endurance*, as the ship cracked and disintegrated into the pack ice, were hauntingly captured on film by Frank Hurley, the expedition's official photographer. Today, a newly discovered presentation album of Hurley's photographs from the Antarctic goes on sale at Bonhams



A grey area for birth control

RESEARCH is underway to perfect an oral contraceptive that will slow down the booming grey-squirrel population.

An injectable formula has already been proven to be successful and the UK Squirrel Accord (UKSA) is hoping that an oral contraceptive, which would be delivered via species-specific feeders, could provide a cost and labour-effective method of managing grey-squirrel populations.

Grey squirrels, which are an invasive species from North America, can cause damage to young trees by stripping away their bark and they also carry the squirrel-pox virus, which has almost wiped out the indigenous red squirrel. Recent figures released by the European Squirrel Initiative estimate that the damage done to UK forestry by grey squirrels costs in excess of £40 million per year.

The UKSA needs a further £250,000 to complete its project. Visit www.squirrelaccord.uk for more information and to donate.



Good week for

Dog owners

British breeds have seen a surge in popularity thanks to Brexit, says the Kennel Club. New figures show registrations of Jack Russell terriers—the Prime Minister owns a cross—increased by 30% and Pembroke Welsh corgis by 38%



Beavers

Research conducted by the University of Exeter found that beavers at the River Otter, Devon, have helped mitigate flooding, reduce pollution and boost wildlife

Archeologists

Storm Ciara uncovered a 130-million-year-old dinosaur fossil on the Isle of Wight. The footprint was preserved in clay and is said to be of a Neovenator, which grew up to 30ft long and weighed some 4,000kg. It was found by the Wight Coast Fossils group in Sandown Bay

Bad week for

Banksy

A Valentine's Day mural by the elusive artist was vandalised within 48 hours of it appearing in Bristol. The artwork—of a girl firing a sling-shot—was defaced with explicit pink lettering. It has been boarded up to protect it from further damage

Stealthy getaways

Police arrested two burglars who broke into a bookshop, after the pair got distracted by drinking Prosecco. They were found at 3am in Gay's The Word, having also finished a bottle of tequila. Both have been sentenced



Losing our Marbles

The UK may be held to ransom over the return of the 'stolen' Elgin Marbles. The EU's negotiating mandate includes a demand for the return of 'unlawfully removed cultural objects' to their countries of origin; the Government says their return 'is not up for discussion'

Apple crumble

Champneys Spa is being taken to court over claims it misled customers by suggesting its apple crumble could cut the risk of diabetes and cancer. The £230-a-night spa chain also faces nine charges of failing to declare allergens on its menus



This year, on May 8, 75 years will have passed since VE Day—the end of the Second World War in Europe. To celebrate, English Heritage will send 'lindy hoppers' to join community events and street parties across England. If you need some lindy-hopping help, visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/ve-day



Look back for the future

WE must learn to recycle existing historic buildings if we are to cut carbon emissions, Heritage England (HE) announced today. In this year's *Heritage Counts* report, published by HE on behalf of the Historic Environment Forum, research claims 'sympathetically upgrading and reusing existing buildings, rather than demolishing and building new, could dramatically improve a building's energy efficiency'. At Levens Hall, Cumbria (*above*), a biomass heating system was installed that cut the estate's carbon footprint significantly. Buildings are the UK's third biggest greenhouse-gas-emitting sector, and combined with the construction industry, make up 42% of the UK's carbon footprint.

Ben Cowell, director-general of Historic Houses and chair of the Historic Environment Forum, says: 'This research is game-changing. It shows how living in the past can help us step into a carbon-friendly future.' The report calls on the Government to provide VAT relief for renovation 'to incentivise the much more sustainable option of refurbishing existing buildings'. HE estimates that if 50% of all pre-1919 residential buildings were upgraded between 2021 and 2031, carbon emissions would fall by 39.6 million tons by 2050, equivalent to more than three million flights from London to Dublin.

Getting into hot water

THE Government has announced £20 million of funding to turn the canals and waterways of the West Midlands into cheap and renewable energy sources. The canals of Birmingham (*pictured*) were selected by the GreenSCIES project, which has already recycled the waste heat of a London Underground ventilation shaft into heating for hundreds of homes in Islington. It's estimated that the recycled heat will cut carbon emissions by up to 80% and could cut heating bills in half. The project will use the funding to install 'water-source heat pumps' in the canal, which work like a 'reverse refrigerator' by using a coolant gas to transfer heat from the water into a tower block of some 1,200 homes. If successful, the project may be extended to provide heating for Birmingham City Hospital.

Another Government-backed project in Rugeley, Staffordshire, will see heat pumps used to warm some 2,300 homes. A former coal-powered powerplant will be turned into a sustainable village, which will be warmed by waste heat from a disused mine shaft, as well as local canals.



THEY were arguably the most feared fighters of their time, the most aggressive and violent of all the Viking raiders, and the source of their rage and fury came from a cup of herbal tea.

That's the claim of a recent scientific study by ethnobotanist Karsten Fatur, who believes that the legendary warriors were under the influence of *Hyoscyamus niger*, otherwise known as 'stinking nightshade'. The berserkers were known to run into battle in an almost trance-like state, lashing out at friend and foe alike, and were even said to strip naked in the heat of the melee.

All of this can be explained by the nightshade, says Mr Fatur, who suggests that, before starting a fight, the warriors could have either brewed it in tea, infused it into alcohol, or simply rubbed it on their skin.

'It would have reduced their sensation of pain and made them wild, unpredictable and highly aggressive,' he explains. 'There may also have been dissociative effects, such as losing touch with reality. This might have allowed them to kill indiscriminately without moral qualms.'

COUNTRY LIFE understands that a modern equivalent would be driving down the A303 on a Friday evening.

The next time you're visiting a friend and they offer to make you a cup of herbal tea, be sure to ask what's in it.



'Human Touch', a collaboration between international contemporary artists and stitchers working in prison, opens at Sotheby's today. The exhibition was organised by the charity Fine Cell Work, which works to enable prisoners to lead crime-free lives by training them to do high-quality creative needle-work. Artists

such as Ai Weiwei, Idris Khan and Bob and Roberta Smith (above) created the designs, which were then intricately stitched in prisons across the UK. The exhibition runs until March 3; all the works are for sale and all proceeds will go to Fine Cell Work. To bid, visit www.finecellwork.co.uk



British-weather-proof solar panels

GOOD news for those who despair at the sight of wind turbines, as a team of scientists in Australia has invented a solar panel that they claim is 'British-weather proof'.

In the UK, where there are, on average, 58 days of sunshine each year, solar power has often been overlooked for the more invasive wind turbine. That might be about to change, according to Lianzhou Wang from the University of Queensland. 'Essentially, we've developed solar technology that is British weather proof,' he says. 'It can produce energy indoors or even when it is cloudy and wet. It is also printable, flexible and transparent—meaning it could be used as a skin to power next-generation electric cars or applied as a film to windows on buildings and homes.'

The technology is also 25% more efficient at producing energy than the current world record, claims Prof Wang, who believes that, in future, it could power 'planes, homes and wearable technology'.

Country Mouse

Calling the shots



MORNINGINGS are an increasing joy. The birds, which have largely been singing as soloists, have begun to join together to form an ensemble. In two months' time, we will awake to the full dawn chorus—Nature's annual musical highlight.

The news that major shooting organisations have joined together to call for an voluntary ban on the use of lead is sensible. Fishermen gave up the poisonous metal decades ago, but I suspect it will have far-reaching effects on the countryside and the birds and animals that live in it.

The alternatives to lead are bismuth and tungsten—both roughly four times more expensive—or steel, only fractionally more costly. The first two alternatives suggest that, for economic reasons, there will be less shooting and unforgiving steel poses a problem to teeth when eating game, yet shooting is indefensible if the game is not eaten.

All this may add up to fewer shooting days and smaller bags—which many believe will be a welcome move—but could, in turn, mean that less land is given over to the sport. Sadly, if that happens, it won't be good news for the songbirds that benefit from a kind of symbiotic relationship with the pheasants and partridges in the woods, copses and cover crops. **MH**

Town Mouse

Don't mess with a magician



HOMEWORK seems to get harder over half-term. One of the children has been set the intriguing task of writing their own moral tale after the example of 'Aesopop'—my prosaic correction of the name to Aesop has been staunchly ignored—and there have been tears and tantrums trying to get the story started.

It merely makes things worse that this case of writer's block has encouraged the rest of the family to see moral tales in everything. I started the process by way of suggestive encouragement, but it has quickly become a slightly heartless tease and a means of justifying any unwelcome domestic chores.

The teasing, however, has finally served its purpose. On one family walk, there were calls for a story and I promised to tell one if someone could also invent a moral tale. Irritated and surprised, the frustrated writer suddenly burst out: 'Once upon a time there was an elephant and a *fakir*. The elephant teased the *fakir* about his tricks outside the temple, so the *fakir* turned him into a box. Moral: Don't mess with a magician.'

It will need to be fleshed out with a bit more detail, but the homework has written itself. Perhaps the teasing needs to stop as well. **JG**



Quiz of the week

- 1) The young of both beavers and squirrels are known as what?
- 2) Which art movement is most associated with the artists Picasso and Braque?
- 3) What does an etymologist study?
- 4) Who is the only politician to have held all four of the Great Offices of State (Prime Minister, Chancellor, Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary)?
- 5) Which British singer was born Farrokh Bulsara in Tanzania in 1946?



Riddle me this

There are three letters to my name, take away two and I still sound the same. What vegetable am I?

100 years ago in COUNTRY LIFE February 28, 1920



WHEN left in the open ground *Saxifraga stracheyi* looks sorry for itself. Its precocious flowers, nipped in the cold night air, are stunted and always more or less harmed by wet as well as frost. When given protection the plant produces a most glorious display of flowers in spring. The flowers may be protected in the open ground by twigs of Scots pine stuck upright in the ground and so arranged that the twigs cover the crowns of the plant. An even better way is to put it in a pot or pan in a cold frame or unheated greenhouse. The plant shown was photographed on February 19, having been grown in a cold frame. The effect in mid February, when the plant is in full beauty, ready to be brought indoors as a room plant, is easily obtained, but not easily surpassed.—H. C.

1) Kit/kitten 2) Cubism 3) The origins of words 4) James Callaghan 5) Freddie Mercury. Riddle me this: A pea



Oh, the agony!

Resident agony uncle Kit Hesketh-Harvey solves your dilemmas

A landmark occasion

Q I'm considering remarrying, but, until now, we haven't had much to do with each other's children. It just seemed like a lot for them to deal with if it wasn't for the long haul. Now that we want it to be, what's the best way to introduce them and get along harmoniously, without treading on their other parents' toes?

D. L., North Yorkshire

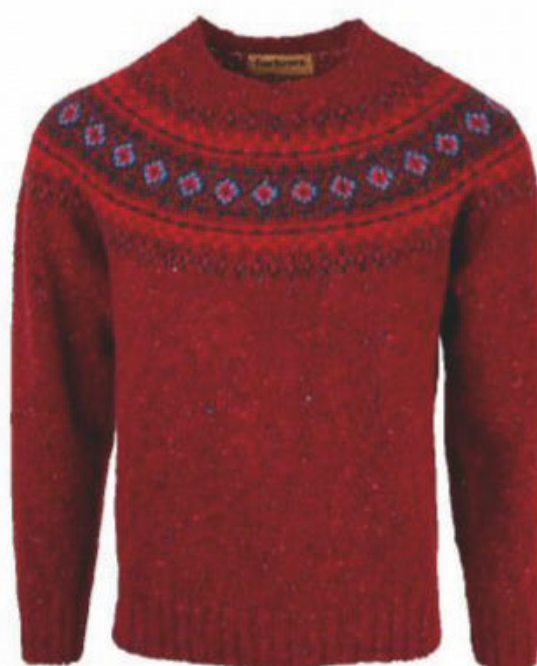
A No problem. No question, even—this is very obviously a case for the Landmark Trust. Its unusual properties blend families as effortlessly as your Harrogate barista blends his smoothie. I'd head for Scotland, not so far from you, but foreign enough to be an adventure. These beauties all have discreetly connecting bedrooms, so that an Edwardian decorum may be fictionalised until the moment feels right. Gargunnoch House near Stirling contains a piano possibly played by Chopin. Auchinleck House in Ayrshire was James Boswell's family home. If one roof feels premature, Saddell Castle and Saddell House, in Argyll and Bute, have their own white-sand beach. In these Blyton-esque settings, the children will bond over games of hide-and-seek. I needn't bother to wish you luck.

Time to buy



The Pro-Grower Vegetable Seed Selection, £16.50, Abel & Cole (03452 626262; www.abelandcole.co.uk)

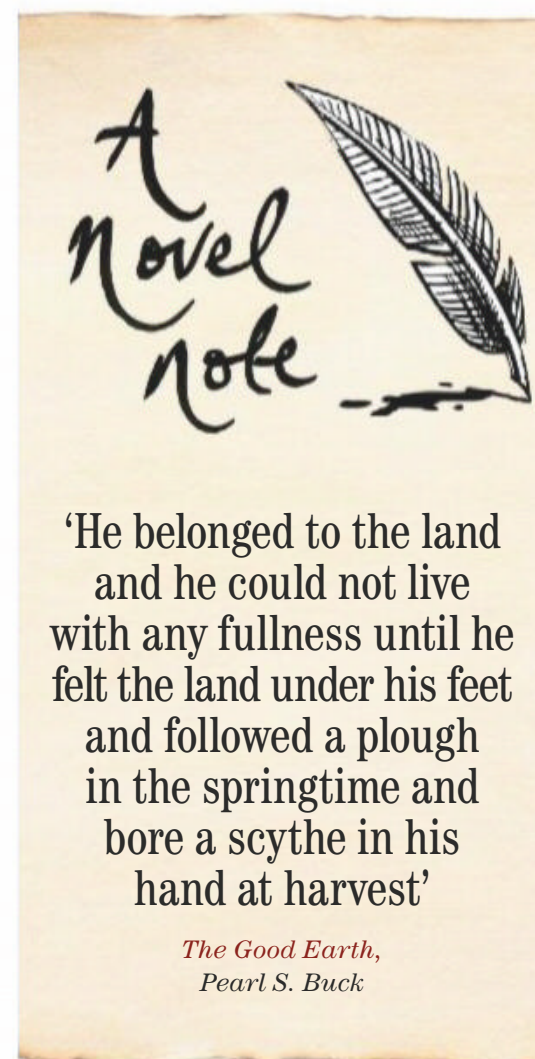
Irish Donegal Fairisle Knitted Jumper, £119, Farlows (01544 322311; www.farlows.co.uk)



Carving Set, from £550, Savernake (01672 870120; www.savernakeknives.co.uk)



Rose Oven Gloves, £16.50, Lochs & Fens (07710 057006; www.lochsandfens.co.uk)



'He belonged to the land and he could not live with any fullness until he felt the land under his feet and followed a plough in the springtime and bore a scythe in his hand at harvest'

The Good Earth, Pearl S. Buck



Another log on the fire By Oliver Preston



"Eton, Oxford, the Guards."

"Nintendo, Xbox, Playstation."

Unmissable events

Exhibition

Until March 29 'Geoffrey Willey: A Life Through the Lens (right)', Ryedale Folk Museum, Hutton le Hole, North Yorkshire. Explore the photographer's life and passion for the countryside through his own images and film, which he left to the museum when he died, at the age of 103, in 2015 (01751 417367; www.ryedalefolkmuseum.co.uk)

Until April 12 'Beyond the Vessel: Narratives in Contemporary European Ceramics', Messums Wiltshire, Tisbury. Works in clay by 14 artists commenting on modern-day issues, such as pollution and war, yet still drawing inspiration from ancient mythology (01747 445042; www.messumswiltshire.com)

Auction

February 27 The Poet, the Lover and the Patriot: Lord Byron, Chiswick Auctions South Kensington, Fulham Road, London SW3. A private collection of works relating to the Romantic poet will be offered for sale—highlights include a gold-and-enamel locket featuring



a lock of his hair, a pocket watch bearing his crest and a letter from Byron to Francis Hodgson (020-8992 4442; www.chiswickauctions.co.uk)

Festival

February 28–March 31 Essex Book Festival, various venues. More than 100 events at 40 different venues, covering fiction, non-fiction, current affairs and poetry. Guest speakers include Val McDermid, A. N. Wilson, Kenan Malik, Louise Hare and Jess Phillips. Ticket prices vary, see website for the full programme and to book tickets (01206 872739; www.essexbookfestival.org.uk)

Book now

April 24 Forage and Feast, The Gurnard's Head, Zennor, Cornwall. Walk the local footpaths, hedgerows and shorelines, foraging for ingredients with Caroline Davey of the Fat Hen wild-cookery school, before returning for lunch. From 10am, £65pp (01736 796928; www.gurnardshead.co.uk)

July 8–12 Henley Festival, River & Rowing Museum, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire.

This year's line up includes appearances from Madness, James Blunt, Sophie Ellis-Bextor, Kathy Sledge, Myleene Klass, Rory Bremner and Milton Jones, plus food by Angela Hartnett. General admission from £50 (01491 843404; www.henley-festival.co.uk)



Westview, Great Glen, Leicestershire LE8 9EH. February 29–March 1, 12 noon–4pm. Admission £3, children free

This garden has a discerning array of plants, many grown from seed. At this time, some of its fine snowdrop collection will still be in flower, but it is also an education in how to arrange a small, walled cottage garden in an orderly, yet varied fashion. Many features, such as the borders, will come later, but some alpine will be appearing (www.ngs.org.uk).

Wines of the week

Perfect with shellfish

Domaine de la Mortaine, Gros Plant, Pays Nantais, Loire, France 2018. £10.50, Yapp Bros, alc 11%

Unless you've holidayed around Nantes, you're unlikely to have tasted Gros Plant (or Folle Blanche), which is unfairly called 'the poor man's Muscadet'. This wine is bone-dry, citrusy and sea-spray fresh, with wet-stone tanginess and biting acidity.



Black cherry and spice

Tandem, Inmune, Navarra, Spain 2017. £13.49, Novel Wines, Wine People, alc 14%

Tandem has blended grapes from several vineyards in Navarra, all at 2,600ft altitude, imparting a natural freshness to this unoaked Garnacha. It has black-cherry aromas with black pepper, a spicy palate with fresh acidity and crunchy tannins alongside ripe fruit. There are leathery notes and more spice on the finish.



Crisp and elegant

Westcott Vineyards, Estate Chardonnay, Vinemount Ridge, Niagara Peninsula, Ontario, Canada 2017. £22.95, South Downs Cellars, alc 13%

Yeasty pie crust and spiced, baked-apple palate, with fully integrated, well-judged oak. Enlivened by crisp, red-apple acidity, this elegant Chardonnay is drinking beautifully now.



For more, visit www.decanter.com Decanter

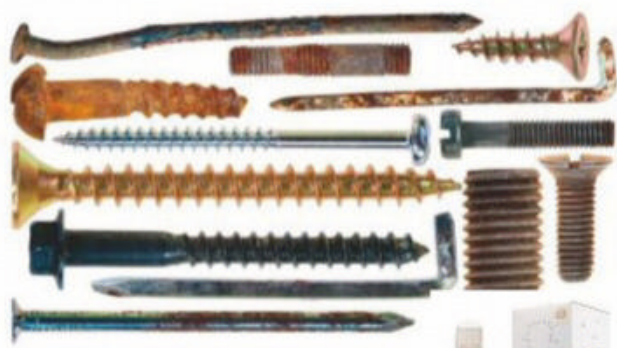


Letter of the week

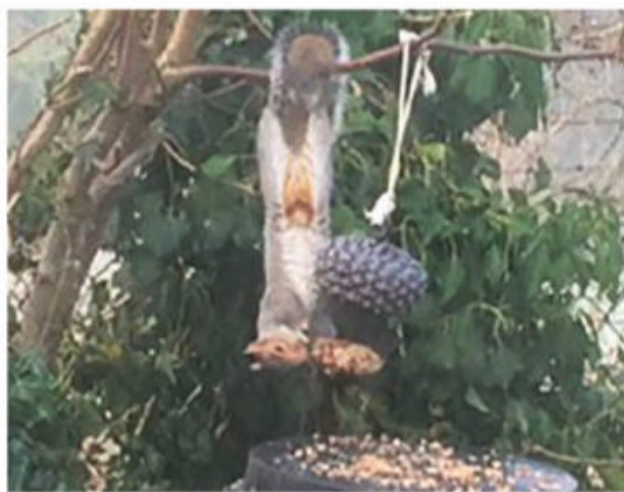
All sorted

I HAVE just had a most rewarding experience when waiting endlessly to speak to my insurance company regarding storm damage. As I listened to the depressing music playing down the phone line, I ran to the cellar and returned with an old wooden box of nails, screws and hooks amassed over the years and, as I continued being told how important my phone call was, I began sifting through the box—a job I have been meaning to do for years. By the time I actually spoke to a representative, I had sorted out the contents and was in a very pleasant mood, rather than the grumpy individual I would otherwise have been.

Annabel Watts, by email



The writer of the letter of the week will win a bottle of Pol Roger Brut Réserve Champagne



Just hanging out

I WANTED to share a photograph of this little chap harvesting nuts in his own particular way. He does this every morning, giving us an ample source of entertainment.

Tatiana Izzard, by email



Branching out

TWO weeks before Christmas, I gathered several stems of heavily berried holly from my father's farm. As I was about to go on holiday, I put them in water in the shed, where I hoped they would remain safe until I returned. On arriving home, I discovered to my dismay that all the berries had been stripped from the branches—I could only assume they had been eaten by mice. On New Year's Day, rummaging in the shed, I found this old slipper, neatly filled to capacity with the berries. Presumably, they had been stored for hungry times ahead.

Wendy Barry, Co Wexford

The long and winding road

I WOULD like to add to your piece on electric vehicles (*Town & Country*, February 12): policymakers and media commentators appear to regard rural dwellers as incapable of making sound decisions on vehicle ownership and use. As do many in the countryside, we have two cars: a petrol Polo for local journeys and a diesel 4x4 for longer, out-of-town journeys and in ice or snow (our roads are rarely gritted). The latter vehicle generally achieves 57–58 miles per gallon and both were bought second-hand. Having been closely involved with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change since 1991, our choice of vehicles and their usage was carefully considered—that choice would be different if we were urban dwellers. Current costs and the limited range of electric vehicles are relevant considerations for both the rural poor and not-so-poor.

Michael Jefferson, Bedfordshire



Hold the lentils

THE article 'One man's meat' (*Spectator*, February 5) was topical for me. Recently, Edinburgh University Students' Association held a vote proposing to cease the sale of beef products in all its cafes, to be more environmentally friendly. My peers and I have worked hard to disentangle the confusing mixture of information given about the impacts of beef production—90% of all beef sold by the university is Scottish, a fact those voting for the

ban seem ignorant of. Thankfully, our voices were heard and Edinburgh will continue to support local farmers. Instead of removing the option of eating local food, shouldn't universities be considering the environmental impacts of all food? Sustainably produced products are the way forward in the 'food fight' against climate change. Therefore, I echo Jason Goodwin's sentiments and I, too, say: 'Hold the lentils.'

Tuppence Mellish, Midlothian



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Food for thought

YOUR excellent article 'Around Britain in 50 foods' (*February 12*) was almost complete, but I feel an honourable mention should go to the Eastern Counties for West Mersea oysters, Tiptree jam (*above*) and Maldon sea salt. These brilliant products, the first having been mentioned by the Romans, are each worthy of note.

Andrew Lewis, Essex

Fire in the belly

IN 'Around Britain in 50 foods', you state that Navy Strength Plymouth Gin is 'strong enough to fire cannons'. I understand that, at 57.1% ABV, if spilt on gunpowder when dolling out the tot, the high alcohol content of the gin ensured that the munition would still ignite. Thus, two pleasures could be simultaneously satisfied: a decent G&T and firing on a French man-of-war.

David Woolf, Glamorgan

COUNTRY LIFE MARCH 4

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Through fire and floods

HARROWING pictures from Herefordshire over the past week have shown the devastation caused by flooding where there hadn't been floods in living memory. Elsewhere, people who have already been victims this year, or in the past few months, have again had to face the rising waters after two months' worth of rain fell in a matter of 24 hours.

Infuriatingly, the media has largely concentrated on incidentals: 'Why didn't Boris visit?'; 'Who's getting payments and who's not?'; and 'Surely the Environment Agency could have protected this part of town!' The bit that's been missing from many reports is the sad truth that these natural disasters will become more frequent and less predictable.

However effective the world becomes in cutting its carbon emissions, we have already changed our climate significantly. There's enough warming in the pipeline from past industrial activities to mean that, even if we keep overall warming below 2°C, we're still going to have to learn to live with temperatures, rainfall and winds at levels we've rarely encountered in the past.

This puts Defra right in the firing line. The new Secretary of State, George Eustice, has had a baptism of fire in responding to the situation. It's not an enviable position. Despite warnings from advisers over more than a decade, governments of every hue have failed to invest sufficiently in flood prevention and sea defence. Nor have they improved building regulations enough to take account of climate change. This has left Mr Eustice carrying the can.

Very properly, he has publicly admitted that not everyone can be protected everywhere. Brave, truthful words, but the reality is more stark. Not enough is being spent to secure the sea and inland defences needed and neither of the forthcoming Agriculture and Environment Bills include the detailed policies and finances

necessary to get underway the tree planting and agricultural changes needed to counter the threat of flooding. The time for warm words and good intentions is well and truly over.

That view will at least be fully supported by the new team at Defra. When I wrote last week of the reshuffle (*February 19*), the junior minister line-up hadn't yet been announced. It turns out to be very encouraging.

The energetic Rebecca Pow, MP for the rural constituency of Taunton Deane, Somerset, has retained her position and is joined by rising star Victoria Prentis, MP for Banbury, Oxfordshire, another constituency with farming interests. Both have long been committed to environmental action and both understand the countryside.

This is the most rurally aware Defra we've had since the department's inception. With a Secretary of State from a farming family and a Lords' minister, John Gardiner, who farms in Buckinghamshire and has worked for the Countryside Alliance, rural people have

a team aware of their concerns. Notably, the Minister of State, Zac Goldsmith, has been given an environmental remit in three departments; he will be able to count on support from his fellows.

The problem they all have is to put real meat on the bones of the two bills going through Parliament. It's not only on flooding that there's a lack of detail. Right across the board, these bills give powers to the Secretary of State, but few commitments of how and when he will use them or what resources he will have.

It will be important for Lord Gardiner and Lord Goldsmith to be given the leeway to accept amendments in the House of Lords that will define the necessary action more clearly and give country people confidence. The Government should give the quality team it has appointed the freedom its members need to succeed.



Follow @agromenes on Twitter

‘Not enough is being spent to secure sea and inland defences. The time for warm words is over,’



Athena

Cultural Crusader

Is this the best new home for the Lords?

PLANS, seen only by a chosen few and reported to Athena, have been drawn up by architects BDP for converting the prestigious Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre opposite Westminster Abbey into the House of Lords as part of the renewal of the Palace of Westminster. No budget has been set and no costs yet revealed for this ambitious temporary home, but Athena fears a second Scottish Parliament, where costs rose from £50 million to a calamitous £400 million or more amid unrivalled public anger.

The conference centre already has a sloping fan-shaped auditorium that seats 700, which might seem an ideal fit for the 800 peers, especially as there are so many crossbenchers. But no, the Lords, as will

MPs, would be treated to an exact replica of the present Chamber in layout and even height. This means blasting huge holes in two massive concrete floor slabs that hold the cantilevered structure together.

Costs are further increased by the decision to move all the catering and dining facilities to the roof to create a new sun terrace intended to compensate peers for the temporary loss of the much-sought-after House of Lords Terrace on the bank of the Thames. All the plant, therefore, will have to be moved from the roof to the basement. New lifts and a grand stair will further increase the cost.

‘The Lords would be treated to an exact replica of the Chamber in layout and height,’

Because the conference centre is on the opposite side of Parliament Square from the proposed temporary Chamber for the Commons, it will need duplicate committee rooms. These will be placed at the back of the building and the existing reception reconfigured as two storeys of peers’

offices facing the abbey. One peer apparently observed: ‘They will have to cut down those trees if I am to enjoy my view.’

Sadly, he reckons without security. To meet the latest security standards, the building will need secondary and perhaps tertiary glazing for blast-proofing. In addition, there will be a massive 25ft-high ‘Berlin Wall’ along Victoria Street.

When the re-wired and re-serviced Houses of Parliament is ready to receive peers back into their Chamber (beautifully restored in the 1980s), after seven to 10 years, the conference centre will require further expensive transformations to allow it to resume its present profitable use. Indeed, London has only three conference centres to more than 10 in Paris. When the Queen Elizabeth II centre closes, Olympia will also be undergoing refurbishment. Thus calls are now being made for the proposed move to be subject to a Treasury Green Book assessment.

When the Commons Chamber was destroyed in the Second World War, the House of Lords moved economically to nearby Church House. We need a similar transfer, or even a move out of London, that will remove much of this hideous expenditure. Athena predicts that the Lords will not survive the opprobrium it will generate.

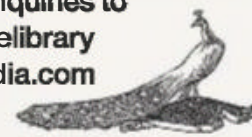
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1909 May 29, published

Thomas Waldo Story’s Mermaid raises her crown triumphantly soon after her fountain’s installation in the grounds of Blenheim Palace. Supported by tambourine-playing nymphs on dolphins’ backs, the gilded bronze statue still graces the Italian Garden at the magnificent Oxfordshire seat of the Duke of Marlborough.

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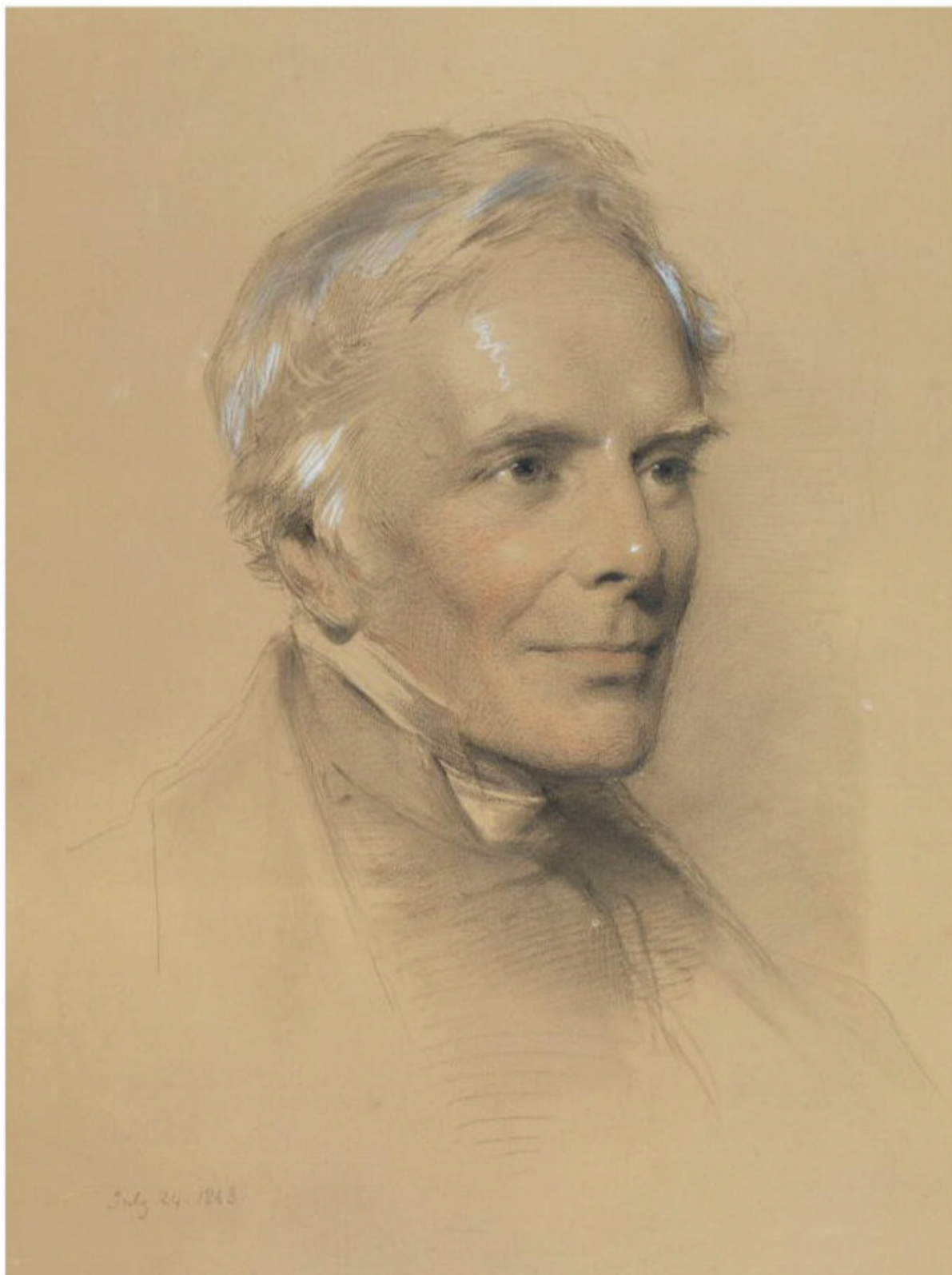
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My favourite painting Tim Hands

The Rev John Keble by George Richmond



The Rev John Keble, 1863, 28½in by 20½in, by George Richmond (1809–96), National Portrait Gallery, London



Dr Tim Hands is headmaster of Winchester College

‘Richmond’s portraits, with their distinctive highlights, beautifully reflect the visionary gleam of Victorian idealism. This portrait of John Keble, with its additional sense of the magical, unaffected integrity of a scholar, teacher, poet and priest—a nonpareil, whose every word was considered a brilliant or a pearl—is one of his best. There are engravings in many collections, not least in the Senior Common Room of Oriel College, Oxford, where Keble and his colleagues, Newman and Thomas Arnold among them, shaped the principles of early-Victorian educational and religious reform. What people, what a period and what a portrait’

John McEwen comments on *The Rev John Keble*

GEORGE RICHMOND and the Rev John Keble (1792–1866) were staunch High Churchmen of the 19th-century’s religious revival. Keble was a leading light of Tractarianism, also called the Oxford Movement, preaching the restoration of pre-Reformation liturgical and devotional rites. It led to Anglo-Catholicism and, in the case of the now canonised St John Newman, conversions to Roman Catholicism.

Richmond, the son of a professional miniaturist painter, entered the Royal Academy Schools at 15. He was a member of his friend Samuel Palmer’s idealistic

brotherhood of ‘Ancients’, which sought a revival of Arcadian innocence with biblical and Vergilian undertones, much influenced by the artistic visionary William Blake. From middle age, as a Royal Academician, Richmond was best known for portraits of notable contemporaries.

Keble was the son of a country vicar. Educated at home, he won a scholarship to Oxford, where he was a brilliant undergraduate. He entered the Church and, despite his Tractarian importance, shunned ‘power and influence’ to become a rural curate like his father, whom he subsequently cared for with his sisters.

The Christian Year, his book of poems for Sundays and feast days, became the 19th century’s most popular poetry book. It provided the Church with a number of hymns, too.

Richmond’s much admired talent for drawn portraits met a worthy sitter in Keble, described by one contemporary as having ‘one of the most beautifully formed heads in the world’ and ‘brilliant, penetrating eyes which lighted up quickly with merriment’. The then theologically intended Keble College, Oxford, was founded in his memory in 1870. Richmond presented a bust of Keble he had sculpted. 🐦



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LEAP YEAR



AT school, I knew a girl who was born on February 29. At the time, she was greatly pitied for not really having a birthday every three out of four years. Ultimately, I'd say, she'll have the last laugh when she is able to claim—with a decent pinch of salt—to be celebrating her 20th birthday as we all turn 80.

As we all know, leap years, in which we bump up our standard 365-day Gregorian calendar to 366 with the addition of February 29, arrive once every four years. This is to accommodate the fact that the Earth actually takes 365.2422 days to orbit the Sun. If we didn't, at some point in the future (about 750 years, to be precise), we would find ourselves enjoying winter in June.

‘For any gentleman who declined an offer, there was a penalty to pay—12 pairs of gloves’

The arrival of a leap year is marked in various ways around the world, not only by those celebrating their rare, yet true birthdays—‘leaplings’, if you will. In Ireland, Leap Day is also known as Bachelor’s Day, thanks to the tradition whereby women are ‘allowed’ (perhaps ‘encouraged’ might be more appropriate these days) to propose to the man in their life. This supposedly stems from a complaint made by nun St Brigid of Kildare, in the 5th century, that women were having to wait too long for their prospective husbands to get down on one knee.

In response, St Patrick agreed that long-suffering ladies could take the initiative on this day, once every four

Calm down, dears: the leap-year proposal proved a rich source of postcard humour in the early 20th century

Ladies, gather your red petticoats and Poundland rings—the day on which you’re ‘allowed’ to propose marriage is on the horizon, says Victoria Marston

years, ‘balancing’ the powers between the sexes in the same way the additional day balanced the calendar... depending on your definition of balance, of course. For any gentleman who declined such an offer, there was a penalty to pay—a new dress, material for a new skirt, money, a fur coat or 12 pairs of gloves, depending on which account you read. The logic behind the gloves was that the woman would be able to hide her ringless finger (and shame) from prying eyes.

The 1606 book *Courtship, Love, and Matrimonie* took things a step or two further, asserting that not only did women have the right to take the lead in romantic matters for the duration of a leap year (as opposed to only on the one day), they actually gained this power at the expense of a man’s prerogative: ‘Albeit, it is nowe become a parte of the Commun Lawe, in regard to the social relations of life, that as often as every besextile year doth return, the ladies have the sole privilege, during the time it continueth, of making love unto the men, which they may doe either by wordes or lookes, as unto them it seemeth proper.’

All this may sound somewhat archaic, but someone at Poundland obviously thinks

there’s something in it—the high-street retailer is currently selling a £1 engagement ring called the Ask Him Ring (‘Because he might never get round to it’). Poundland fan or no, this does seem an economical solution for any ladies who suspect they may soon be in possession of 12 pairs of gloves. If you’re in Scotland, you might also want to scan the aisles for a bargain red petticoat—legend has it you’re supposed to wear one for the occasion, presumably to give the beleaguered male ample warning and a chance to flee.

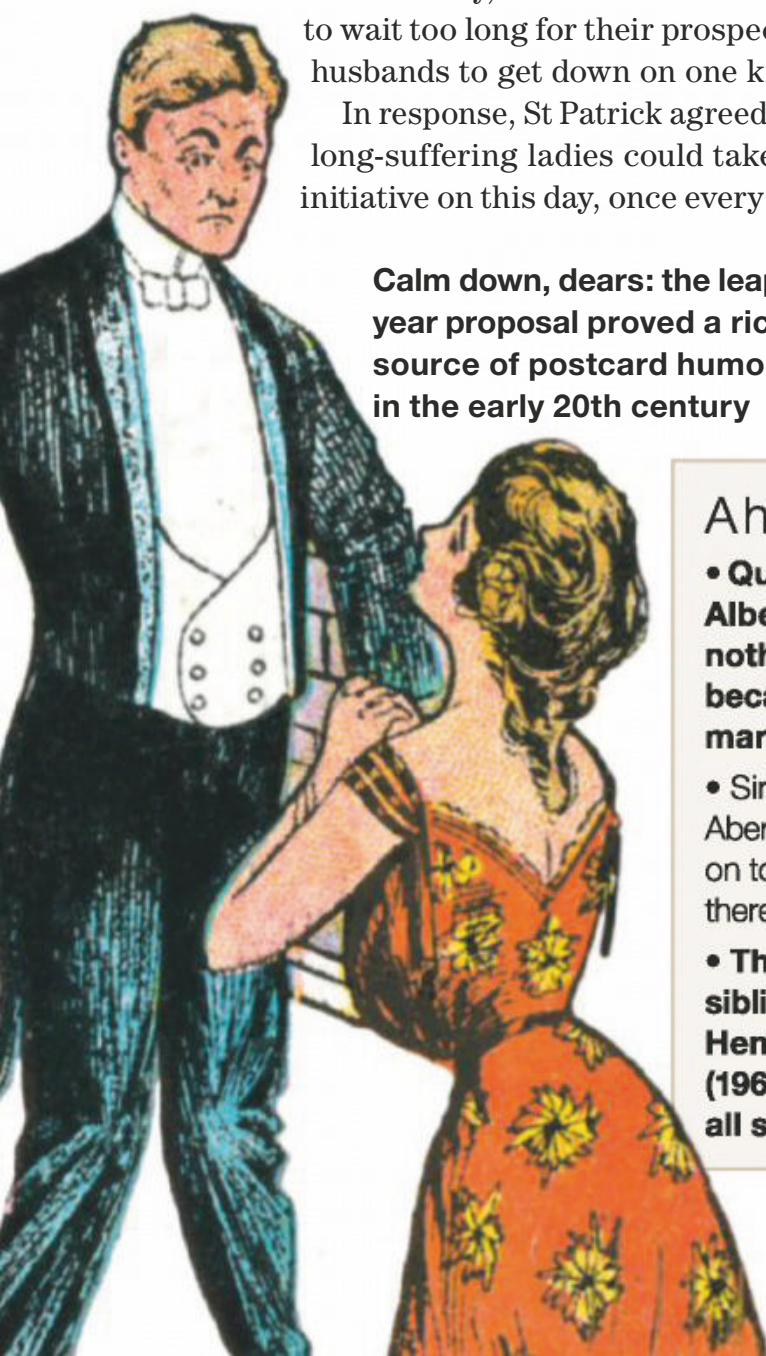
Any women in pursuit of a husband this month might well be hoping for a healthy dose of luck—although, according to *Courtship, Love, and Matrimonie*, men are actually forbidden from saying no—and luck comes into the equation both at home and abroad. Women in Finland are similarly encouraged to propose marriage on leap-year day, but, in Greece, taking your vows on this day is considered highly unlucky and likely to end in divorce. In both Scotland and India, being born on February 29 condemns you to a lifetime of misfortune (sorry, leaplings). The Germans have a jollier take on things. In the Schaltjahr, it is traditional for only women to dance around the maypole come May Day—perhaps to show themselves off to best advantage before all the proposing starts.

In an age when women can actually propose to whomever they choose, on any day they fancy, we may finally appreciate just how nerve-racking it has been for men all this time. Perhaps these words, from *The Parterre of Poetry and Historical Romance* (1836), might lend some courage on Saturday: ‘Come out, pretty tremblers, let us hear what you have to say? Never blush and never shrink! We are no Neros. Your cases shall be considered. We will look into your administration during the last three years. You must be patient, and hope for the best, *mes chères*.’ Well... equality in all things, I suppose.

A hop, skip and a leap

- **Queen Victoria proposed to Prince Albert on October 15, 1839. This was nothing to do with leap years, but was because no one was allowed to propose marriage to the reigning monarch**
- Sir James Milne Wilson was born in Banff, Aberdeenshire, on February 29, 1812. He went on to become premier of Tasmania and died there aged 68 (or 17) on February 29, 1880
- **The Guinness World Record for ‘most siblings born on Leap Day’ is held by the Henriksen family in Norway, with Heidi (1960), Olav (1964) and Leif-Martin (1968) all sharing their infrequent birthdays**

- People of note born on leap-year day include Renaissance pope Paul III (1468), Shakers founder Ann Lee (1736), Italian composer Gioacchino Rossini (1792) and the father of the modern submarine, John Philip Holland (1840)
- **The Salem Witch Trials began on February 29, 1692, when a slave, a beggar and an elderly woman were accused of witchcraft by a group of young girls**





Scalloped splashes of gold

Lauded by Wordsworth for their ‘glittering countenance’, the appearance of the first celandines and the swallow’s return to our shores are Ian Morton’s favourite, and much anticipated, harbingers of spring

THE nation waits—when will the first swallows be sighted? Records kept since Victorian times indicate March as the most likely month, although the migrants often arrive earlier. Hampshire naturalist and diarist Gilbert White noted in his *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (first published in 1789 and never out of print since) that ‘the House Swallow... appears in general on or about the 13th of April... now and then a straggler is seen much earlier’. In 2018 and 2019, sightings in the south of the country were reported during unusually warm spells in early February. Rural tradition held February 21 to be the date when the bird should arrive, but the swallow was not alone in greeting the new season of growth, for on that day, too, the lesser celandine was expected to bloom. Here was

no coincidence. Celandine is an anglicised form of *chelidon*, the Greek for swallow. From distant days past, bird and plant were twin harbingers of spring—and they still are.

Never mind the host of golden daffodils that flash upon the inward eye, William Wordsworth actually preferred the celandine. ‘There’s a flower that shall be mine, ’tis the little celandine,’ he wrote in one of three poems he devoted to the modest, ground-hugging plant. The spread of pointed

‘The flower’s spread of pointed petals inspired painters to depict the sunrise’

petals and its ‘glittering countenance’ would have inspired painters who sought to depict the sunrise, he suggested. Perhaps he knew that the Celts called the plant *crian*, their word for the sun. Indeed, Wordsworth loved the lesser celandine so much that he asked for it to be engraved on his tombstone in St Oswald’s churchyard, Grasmere. A celandine duly appears on his memorial plaque in the church, but, oh dear—unwittingly, the artist chose the wrong celandine.

The poet’s lesser celandine is a member of the buttercup family and, despite the similarity in appearance and their linked membership of the *Ranunculus* order, the greater celandine belongs to the poppy family, the two plants having been classified in the mid 18th century. Wordsworth may not have despaired, however, as writers seem to have

risen above any need to distinguish between them. An earlier poet to extol the celandine was William Browne of Tavistock, whose 1613 work described it as ‘a shepherdess of matchless beauty’. Others who lauded the celandine included poet and essayist Edward Thomas, who died at Arras in 1917, and novelists C. S. Lewis and D. H. Lawrence. The latter, in *Sons and Lovers*, remarked on their ‘scalloped splashes of gold’.

At home in damp woodland, the lesser celandine is one of the first plants to show flowers before the leaf canopy excludes light. It dies back in May and remains dormant for the rest of the year. Its folk names ➤

Making its home in damp woodland, the lesser celandine is among the first plants to flower before dying back in May





included spring messenger, smallwort, brighteye, cheesecups, butter and cheese, kenningwort, gentleman's cap and frills, golden guinea and frog's foot (the *Ranunculus* order is rooted in the Latin for frog, *rana*, which prefers the moist habitat also liked by the plant).

In the language of flowers, the lesser celandine signifies 'joys to come'. A less attractive folk alternative was pilewort, the name accorded by the *Doctrine of Signatures*, which propounded the tradition that if a plant or a section thereof resembled a part of the human body, then it could be used to treat a condition afflicting that part ('*If looks could kill*', September 18). The celandine's tuber root was taken to look like a haemorrhoid and, according to the *Doctrine*, it was also known as figwort—figs being an archaic though graphic name for piles. To confuse the etymology further, the plant's Latin name is *ficaria verna*, spring figs. In the US, where the lesser celandine is condemned in several states as invasive and toxic to grazing livestock, it's known as the fig buttercup.

‘It cleanseth awaie slimie things that cleave about the ball of the eye’

Its glossy petals, of which it has from seven to 12, share their structure with the buttercup and another relative, the marsh marigold. Research by Gronigen University in the Netherlands has determined that the petal surface has an optical layer one cell thick that radiates light both outward and inward. The inner surface scatters light to layers of air, starch and mesophyll below, the starch deflecting it back so that it passes twice through the pigment to produce that rich yellow. The surface shine is seen by obliquely approaching insects as a flash of brightness, beckoning a pollinator, and the petals close overnight, as well as in the day when rain is due. Although it propagates through its dozen or so tubers that detach to form new plants, it also produces granular seeds in the junctions between stem and leaves. In heavy rain, these may wash off and gather in drainage channels, giving rise to the country myth of a 'rain of wheat'.

The lesser celandine retreats in May, when the four-petal blooms of the greater celandine take over and last until September. The classified name of this version, *Chelidonium majus*, refers directly to the Greek and

claims a history of wider and more varied medicinal application. Remarkd by Pliny and Dioscorides and recommended for toothache, eye problems, gallstones and dyspepsia, its range of isoquinoline alkaloids argues today that even a moderate herbal dose would have been dangerous unless the toxicity had been eliminated by cooking or drying.

Folk names included yellow spit, swallowwort, nipplewort, tetterwort (tettters being skin problems, such as ringworm and eczema) and wartwort, the applied juice being corrosive. The swallow association related not only to the birds' presence, but also to an ancient belief that, if the eyes of swallow fledglings were pecked out, the parent birds restored them with the juice of the plant. Anglo-Saxon medicine prescribed an infusion of the plant rendered lukewarm with honey in a brass or copper pot as an eye salve, its value first recorded in 1310. The notion of its optical properties survived in John Gerard's *Herbal* of 1597, which declared that 'it cleanseth and consumeth awaie slimie things that cleave about the ball of the eye'.

Nicholas Culpeper maintained the medicinal faith in both celandines in his 1792 *Herbal*. Of the lesser plant, he declared that 'if you dig up the root of it, you shall perceive the exact image of the disease which they commonly call the piles'. An oil or ointment 'readily cures both the piles... and the king's evil'. This latter condition was scrofula, glandular swellings in the neck now recognised as a TB symptom, but traditionally curable if touched by a royal hand, a superstition that only died with Queen Anne in 1714. Culpeper asserted that he cured his own daughter of scrofula with lesser-celandine ointment that 'broke the sore, drew out a quarter of a pint of corruption, and healed without any scar at all in a week's time'. He further declared that the plant had a comprehensive effect and, if kept on the skin 'helps in such diseases though it never touch the place grieved'.

Culpeper also described the greater celandine as 'one of the best cures for the eyes—most desperate sore eyes have been cured by this only

medicine'. He added that it was 'best to allay the sharpness with a little breast milk'. The plant and root boiled in white wine and taken with aniseed 'opens obstructions of the liver and gall, helps the yellow jaundice... helps the dropsy and the itch, and those that have old sores'. A distillation of the greater celandine could be used 'with a little sugar and a good little treacle against the pestilence'. Culpeper was reiterating the tradition of 'plague-water', the celandine being one of a dozen plants that, if distilled in white wine and stirred for three days, was thought to protect against contagion.

Mystics suppose that the greater celandine signals happiness, cures depression and, if put on a pillow, generates prophetic dreams. Folklore had it that a witch who carried a plant in a red bag hung around her neck hoped thereby to avoid detection and imprisonment. Conversely, a floor scrubbed with water in which celandine had been infused was supposed to deter witches and burning the plant as incense had the same effect. However, across the Atlantic, the plant was said to deter officials—especially law enforcers and tax collectors—and to aid escape. 🦋

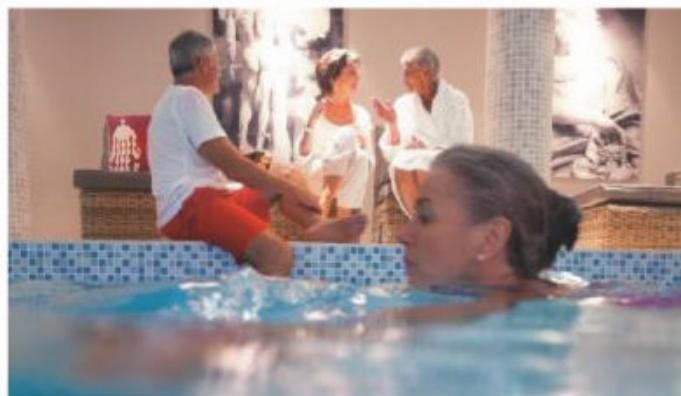


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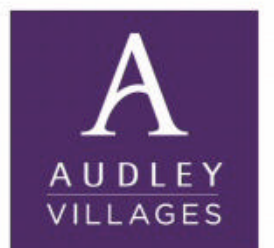
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A palace worthy of a bishop

*The Bishop's Palace,
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Encircled by water in the shadow of its cathedral, the Bishop's Palace at Wells is a captivating survival. John Goodall looks at the history of this outstanding building 800 years after its construction

Photographs by Paul Highnam

ON October 23, 1239, Jocelin, Bishop of Bath and Wells, dedicated the newly completed cathedral church at Wells. Work to this new Gothic building had been underway since the late 12th century and the ceremony must have had enormous personal significance for Jocelin; he had been born and educated in the city, served as a canon here from 1200 and been consecrated bishop in 1206. His contribution to Wells, however, ran even deeper than these details of his life might suggest. ➤



Fig 1 above: The 1340s gatehouse. Fig 2 right: The cathedral and 1280s ruined hall





Over the course of the 12th century, there had been disagreement about where the bishopric of Somerset should be based, whether at Wells or at one of two great Benedictine abbeys at Glastonbury and Bath. In 1218, Jocelin abandoned a long-running battle to foist the bishopric on Glastonbury and instead made Bath and Wells his joint cathedrals (COUNTRY LIFE, December 13/20, 2017).

The timing of this decision was no coincidence. England was just emerging from interdict and civil war and, no less importantly, the church itself was possessed of a new sense of purpose in the aftermath of the great Lateran Council in 1215.

These wider events decisively divided Jocelin's rule into two periods. His early career, which culminated in his consecration as bishop, was typical of an ambitious clerk in royal service (his brother, Hugh, followed a similar course and was elected Bishop of Lincoln in 1209). His family connections and success, moreover, probably explain why, as a new bishop in 1207, he secured a royal licence to create a hunting park to the south of Wells. It was perhaps attached to an existing episcopal residence here.

In October 1216, however, Jocelin attended the coronation of the young Henry III at Gloucester. Henceforth, he became part of a ruling circle determined to restore royal authority in the realm. Bound up with this purpose, and doubtless reinforced by the great power he wielded and the Lateran reforms, was a consciousness of his responsibilities as a bishop. It was for these reasons that he finally settled the issue of his cathedrals (and had the decision endorsed by the Pope), why he reformed the cathedral community at Wells and began two architectural projects central to the dignity of his office and see.

The first was the completion of the church, which, as we have seen, culminated in the dedication of 1239. Undertaken concurrently



Fig 3: The entrance corridor. The medieval fireplace was introduced in the 19th century

with this, however, was a magnificent new episcopal palace in the shadow of the cathedral. There is no documentary reference to the start of either project, but, in historical and stylistic terms, they are likely to have run concurrently from about 1220.

No wonder that, when he died in 1242, Jocelin was dignified with burial in the centre of the cathedral choir—the conventional place for a founder—beneath a monumental brass inlaid in marble (now lost), one of the first tombs of this type ever seen in England.

The central range of the palace as it survives today was built by Jocelin. This is rectangular in plan, two rooms deep (a very unusual treatment in medieval domestic planning) and was originally two storeys high (*Fig 4*). The lower floor is vaulted throughout and the principal rooms, which

had large windows, were all arranged on the upper floor (*Fig 7*). Some of the upper rooms were painted with ochre and red lines to give the illusion that they were built of beautifully cut blocks of stone.

On both levels within the range, there are narrower rooms to the south, where the building faces the entrance court, and broader ones to the north. Today, the southern area of the ground floor is opened out as a single entrance corridor, but it was certainly subdivided in the Middle Ages (*Fig 3*). To either end of this, in the angles of the building, are spiral stairs. A porch gave access to the range and a latrine block projected from it to the north.

There may have been other buildings that related to this range, such as services and a hall, but most scholars have interpreted it as an entire residence incorporating a bishop's chamber and hall. Without further evidence, it's hard to be confident of this.

More important than the function of the rooms, however, is the exceptional scale of this building. In the early 13th century, timber remained the most common material even for grand domestic architecture. Whether or not this is a complete residence, in other words, it was truly palatial.

That didn't save it from expansion, however, by Robert Burnell, who was consecrated Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1275. Burnell was a close associate of Edward I and, in the 1280s, he greatly extended the palace with a chapel (*Fig 8*) and great hall. The latter was on a scale to rival the largest halls in England, standing 142ft long and 60ft wide. Archaeological investigation has revealed the remains of an encaustic tile floor that once

Fig 4: The palace with Jocelin's range in the centre and Burnell's chapel to the right



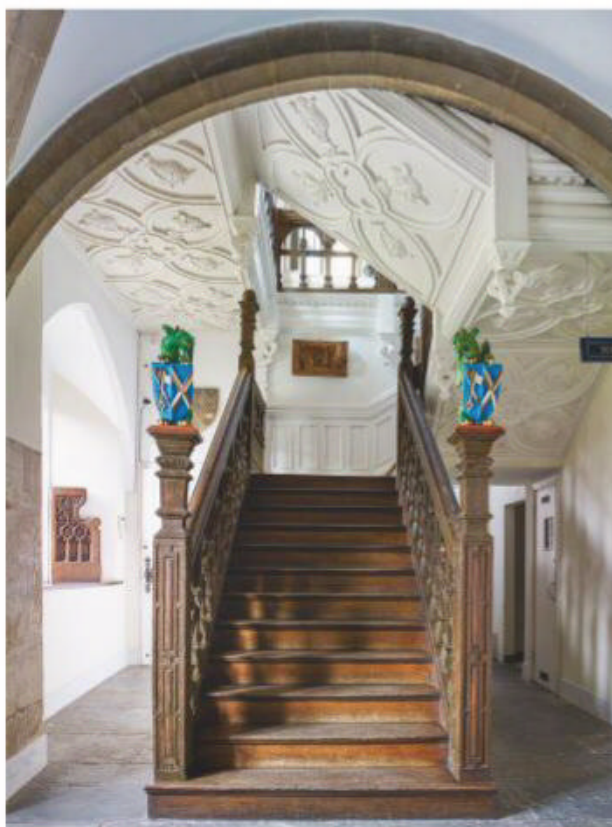


filled the interior and a description by William of Worcester in the late 15th century states that it was divided by two arcades of arches.

To a 13th-century audience, the form of the hall exterior would have been remarkable. Most halls in this period had multiple gables along their side walls so that they could accommodate tall windows. In Burnell's hall, however, the side walls were not gabled, but rose much higher than usual to a flat, battlemented parapet. The corners of the building were also emphasised by turrets. In effect, the hall adopted the architectural forms of a castle for decorative display. This was a revolutionary idea that would be developed to spectacular effect in English late-medieval domestic architecture.

At the same time as Burnell improved his palace at Wells, he was constructing another residence at his birthplace at Burnell, Shropshire. Licensed by the King in 1284, it was undoubtedly designed by the same mason and outwardly evokes the keep of a castle. Built two rooms deep, it may also have been inspired by Jocelin's range at Wells.

In 1340, a royal licence was issued permitting Bishop Ralph (1329–63) to build a wall for the security and quiet of the Wells cathedral community around the churchyard and



houses within the precinct. It was almost certainly in connection with this licence that the palace was encircled by wall, towers, gatehouse (**Fig 1**) and moat, the latter fed by the springs in the shadow of the cathedral that give the town its name. It's now the home of swans that enjoy celebrity on social media.

The next transformation of the palace (and also the town), followed the consecration

Fig 5 above: Portraits of bishops fill the first-floor gallery. Fig 6 left: The Jacobean staircase inserted in 1608–16 was reconfigured in about 1810 and augmented with dragon finials and ornamental plasterwork

of another local man, Thomas Bekyngton, as Bishop in 1443. Bekyngton reputedly found the palace neglected and his changes to it are admiringly recorded by Worcester, the aforementioned writer and topographer. He notes the construction of a new gate costing 200 marks 'at the entrance to the palace', as well as 'on the site of the grove of trees on the north side of the archbishop's [sic] hall a cloister, parlour, chambers for visiting lords, a very large kitchen, with conduits of water to the kitchen, buttery, cellar, bakehouse and stewponds for keeping fish, at a great cost of £1000'.

One much-adapted range created by Bekyngton survives, but these wider additions must have extended across much of what is now the open approach to the palace. They included a middle gatehouse, visible in some 18th-century views of the building, which has since been swept away. Nevertheless, when the bibliophile and antiquary John Leland visited Wells in about 1540, ➤



Fig 7 left: **Jocelin's chamber was originally open to the roof, with a quatrefoil rose in the gable.** Fig 8 right: **The east window of the chapel**

he described the palace in terms easily recognisable to a modern visitor: 'This palace ys strongly waullid and embattled castelle lyke, and hath in the first front a godly fare house yn the midle, and at eche end of the front a round towr... and then is ther one at every corner. The haul of the palace ys exceding fayre. The residew of the house is large and fair. Many bishops hath bene the makers of it.'

The Reformation had a profound effect on this magnificent building. In 1550, the Duke of Somerset seized the palace and his attainder two years later gave time for the building to be stripped of materials. When the Bishop successfully petitioned for its return, he received a licence to pull down the great hall, which was clearly too large and dilapidated for use. Its roof disappeared, but the partitioned shell of the building survived for the next 300 years.

During the early 17th century, Bishop Montagu (1608–16) made numerous improvements to the palace, including the insertion of a fine staircase, now reconfigured (**Fig 6**). Much of his work, however, was swept away during the Civil War. Following the abolition of the episcopacy in 1646, the whole property was bought by Cornelius Burges, who, according to Chyle, the 17th-century historian of Wells, busied himself 'pulling off not only the Lead thereof, but taking away also the Timber... leaving only bare walls, excepting the Gate Houses, which he tenanted

out to some inferior people'. Major repairs followed the Restoration in 1660 and Chyle subsequently described the building as having been returned to the 'the outward appearance as well as the name of a palace'.

Over the course of the 18th century, the building was freely adapted for the convenience of consecutive bishops. Many of these changes were reversed or overlaid, however, during the 19th century. Bishop Law (1824–45) focused his attention on the gardens and partly demolished the ruins of Burnell's great hall to improve them.

'This noble hall,' wrote Sir Richard Hoare in a letter from Stourhead of 1829, 'forms the principal ornament to the Episcopal Palace, owing to the good taste and judgement of the present worthy Prelate; who, by taking down one of the walls, has introduced it into one of the most beautiful flower-gardens imaginable, where it forms the most picturesque object.' It's impossible to disagree with this assessment, but the damage still seems regrettable (**Fig 2**).

Sir Richard also noted other 'other judicious improvements', including the repair of the chapel and the creation of a museum of antiquities and natural curiosities in the 'the crypt of the Palace'.

In 1846, Gothic Revival architect Benjamin Ferrey was commissioned by Bishop Bagot (1845–54) to add a new floor over Jocelin's range, reconfigure the interior and erect the

present porch. Ferrey worked without constraint, restoring and re-creating medieval details. Much to his annoyance, the Bishop commissioned 'an ignorant upholsterer of Bath' (in the judgement of the antiquarian J. H. Parker) to furnish the main rooms (**Fig 5**), yet they show an acute and impressive awareness of local late-Gothic detailing.

Over the past century, the usage of the palace has gradually changed, although it is still occupied by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, an astonishing and important continuity. The property is now owned by the Church Commissioners but The Palace Trust, first formed in 1968, works to preserve and make publicly accessible the palace and its 14 acres of gardens. As part of this responsibility, the trust launched a £4.1 million development project with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2010, to improve the presentation of the site and create a new cafe. Last year, a record 460,000 visitors crossed the drawbridge.

This success should serve as a rebuke to those Church Commissioners who, in 2013, attempted to remove the bishop from the building, almost certainly with the intention of selling it (as they have done at other sites elsewhere). The reaction to this scandalous undertaking was a powerful reminder of how valued and loved the palace and its gardens are by the people of Wells. Long may it remain The Bishop's Palace. 🐉

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Fantastic Mr Fox

On a dreary February day, John Lewis-Stempel comes face-to-face with a brace of *Vulpes vulpes crucigera* among the emerging snowdrops in the dingle below his Herefordshire farmhouse

Illustrations by Philip Bannister

THERE'S a bit of a dingle below the house. Nobody goes there much. The floor is black mire, and the trees when living hold a sullen silence, and when fallen down dead are tangled wrecks.

In the dingle, all the world's mists are manufactured. Strange creatures inhabit the place. I saw a wryneck there once, clasping a limb of oak like a grey lizard (or a canker). On another occasion, I was surprised by an albino grass snake. In the dingle, I've watched a weasel 'waltz'—my inner Romantic attributed the eurhythmy to *joie de vivre*; my inner scientist suggested the effects of the nematode parasite *Skrjabingylus nasicola* in the weasel's brain.

The oddest resident, however, of the dingle, is the fox. *Vulpes vulpes crucigera* is a dog, but a cat-like one. Those amber eyes have vertical slit pupils, like a cat's, and, in hunting, the fox likes to pounce, like a cat. Those cattily erect ears can hear a watch ticking at 60ft. There are experts who think that the fox, like birds, is able to use the Earth's magnetic field for navigation.

As I say, Mr Tod is an odd creature. The dingle below the house spews foxes as it spews mist. Sometimes, the two come out together, as they did today.

I was in the dingle this morning to check the floral calendar. Snowdrops merely underscore winter's cold. The sure sign of spring is the blossoming of marsh marigold or kingcup, the brilliant yellow blooms of which erupt like suns from the earth. Marsh marigolds (*Caltha palustris*) transform the dingle into shangri-la, just as they turn winter, that other sort of dingle, into spring.

Despite their beauty, marsh marigolds, members of the buttercup family, are curiously hardy, their leaves and petals shinily resilient of frost and wind. They are among our most ancient of plants, growing here on England's soil before the Ice Age. But they get no benefit from being countryside elders, the old flora: marsh marigolds are declining due to the agricultural 'improvements' of drainage and the switch from hay to silage.

I went to the dingle more in hope than expectation. So I was not unduly surprised to find a mass of leaves of *Caltha palustris*, even round buds of flowers, but nothing that could quite be called a flowering. What really confirmed the continuation of winter, what really hammered in the sense of desolation, was the stink of mating fox and the mist rising through the naked trees.

I did not linger and climbed out of the dingle onto the high ground of the chicken paddock, into a typically dull, indifferent February day. I started to clean out the hen house, one of those farm jobs that at least gets you into the relative warm. And the clucking of mother hens is companionably comforting. Straw, of course, is solidified sunshine.

‘I suffer the English disease regarding Reynard. I hate foxes. I admire them, too ;

Cleaning out the chickens is a task for after midday; the hen might be domesticated, but some jungle-fowl memory persists. Like diurnal wild birds, the chicken prefers to lay its eggs in the morning so it is not so burdened by weight and the labour process during daylight, when it is feeding.

By 1pm, the mist had caught up with me. So had the fox. I wondered why the chickens, fluffy Light Sussex and sleek grey Marans, were getting under my feet, insistent on entering the wooden shed even as I forked litter out through the doorway up into the tractor's trailer. Then I went outside the shed: wound tight around it was a rope of fox odour, musty and citrus. Theoretically, such proximity of fox was impossible: the electric fence was on.

It was. I checked. But, walking the fence, I found the tunnel the fox had dug under the netting. Make that foxes. There were two shadow shapes at the far end of the paddock. I walked towards them. They merely stood and looked at me, with that grin of theirs.



Usually foxes are lone killers, but, in a lifetime of foxes, I have seen them hunt collaboratively more than once. The brace in the paddock, I guessed, were family.

I suffer the English disease regarding Reynard. I hate foxes. I admire them, too. They are good at their job, which is assassination.

As I write this, I have a print on the office wall called *Rufus Comes to Stay*. It is the only extant print of said painting by BB, also known as Denys Watkins-Pitchford, the author of *Wild Lone*, arguably the best novel ever written for children about the



English countryside. Apart from family mementoes, the print is my most prized possession. It depicts the winter sun rising through a stand of larch to reveal a fox on snow: in a single moment, a fleeting image, BB caught the synchronous romance and devilry of the vulpine breed.

I kept walking towards the foxes at the end of the paddock. They kept standing there, their fur lustrous with mist.

You wonder how foxes can survive a winter such as this, because wet kills, more than wind and snow.

Foxes don't survive. Almost all country foxes die before they are four.

I got to within 30 yards of the foxes, before they began to twitch uneasily. Perhaps a sense of entitlement had something to do with their holding their ground; the fox has been in England longer even than the marsh marigold, since the geological Wolstonian period, 352,000BC to 130,000BC.

Pride, perhaps. Desperation, too. They were beautiful, but they were thin. For a mad moment of English confliction, I simultaneously wanted to throw a stone at them and

offer them a box of hen's eggs. In the end, the foxes made my decision for me and ran, not as I supposed to their tunnel, but to the netting fence. They cleared it with a single, arcing bound. All 4ft of it.

Odd creatures indeed, foxes. They leap like deer.

Twice crowned victor of the Wainwright Prize for Nature writing, for 'Where Poppies Blow' and 'Meadowland', John Lewis-Stempel was the 2016 British Society of Magazine Editors Columnist of the Year

LOYAL, mischievous and undeniably cuddly, our canine companions hold a special place in our hearts long after they're gone. It can be hard to explain this bond to someone who's never had a dog, but it's powerful, real and poignant. Tales of delightful and dastardly dogs have stood the test of time. Here are 10 instances where Man's—or woman's—best friend scratched a cosy spot in the history books.

Rufus and Sir Winston Churchill →

Sir Winston Churchill's rhetoric and humorous putdowns are well documented. Most even know about the years he spent painting goldfish at Chartwell. Lesser known is the fact that he was a big softie. His two great loves were brown miniature poodles named Rufus and Rufus II—'but the II is silent'. Rufus may have accompanied Churchill to Buckingham Palace, but he was rebuffed padding into the Cabinet Room: 'No, Rufus,' said the Prime Minister. 'I haven't found it necessary to ask you to join the wartime Cabinet.'

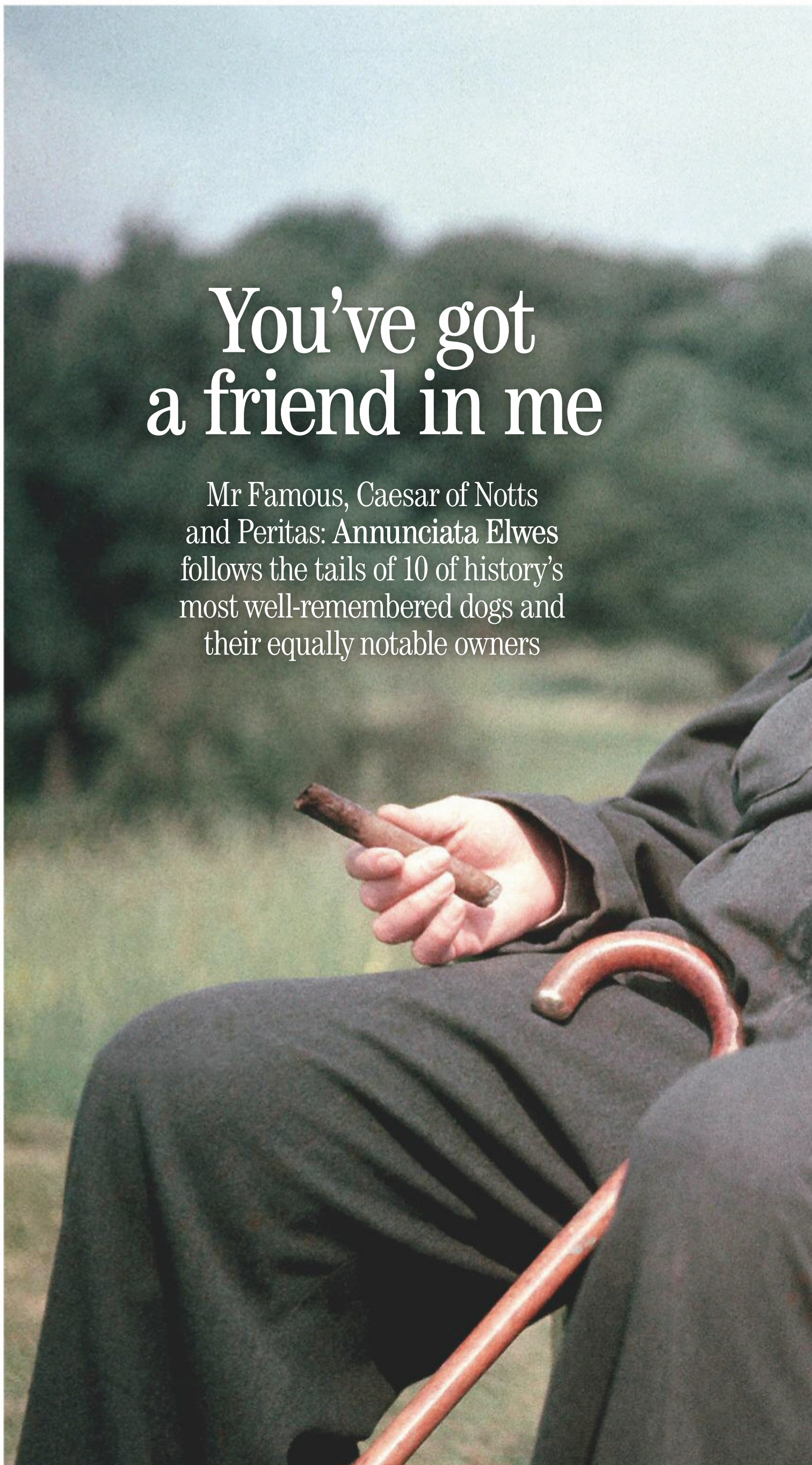
At Chequers, during the reign of Rufus II, Churchill covered the poodle's eyes when watching the scene in *Oliver Twist* in which Bill Sykes attempts to drown Bullseye, saying: 'Don't look now, dear. I'll tell you about it afterwards.' Rufus II, who 'had breath like a flamethrower', ate with the family in the dining room—on a Persian rug—served by a butler. His master wasn't averse to leaving a Commons debate to telephone and enquire after his wellbeing. When 'darling Rufie', 'my closest confidant... who heard everything', died in 1962, he was buried at Chartwell next to his beloved predecessor.

Fortuné and Joséphine Bonaparte

Having starred at the Siege of Toulon, quelled a Royalist rising and won command of the French army in Italy by the age of 25, Napoleon Bonaparte might have expected a warm welcome in the bed of his new wife. Instead, he received a nasty surprise. Upon drawing back the covers on his wedding night in 1796, his leg met a pug, Fortuné, who promptly took a chunk out of it. An intrepid dog, Fortuné had delivered messages (under his collar) between Joséphine and her family when she was imprisoned at Les Carmes. A military man should not fear a pug; thereafter, the three slept together (when not in bed with other parties), until Fortuné perished following a fight with a chef's English bulldog.

You've got a friend in me

Mr Famous, Caesar of Notts and Peritas: Annunciata Elwes follows the tails of 10 of history's most well-remembered dogs and their equally notable owners







Peritas and Alexander the Great ↑

As history records Alexander the Great being gifted no fewer than 150 dogs, it can be tricky to extract the truth about the noble hound Peritas. What we do know is that the dog was so beloved by his master that, when he died, a city in India was named in his honour. Greyhound, bulldog, mastiff, Molossian or Afghan hound, perhaps with ‘a strain of tiger blood’ (according to one historian), Peritas was famed for his fighting spirit, which came in handy when conquering the ancient world with a master who claimed descent from Achilles.

War dogs were not uncommon in the 4th century BC. ‘Never, with [Molossians] on guard, need you fear for your stalls a midnight thief, or onslaught of wolves, or Iberian brigands,’ wrote Virgil. One story has Peritas besting a pride of lions, another trouncing an elephant. In his final battle, he bounded into the fray against the Mallians, was struck by a javelin and died in his master’s lap.

Old Ginger and Sir Walter Scott →

Every Dandie Dinmont alive today, with amusing topknot, big eyes, little legs and pendulous ears, can be traced back to Sir Walter Scott’s day—he had one called Old Ginger. It’s the only breed that is allowed to sport its own clan tartan, .

These rough-coated terriers are named for a farmer in Scott’s 1814 novel *Guy Mannering* who won a litter in a drinking game. The author bred them, calling them ‘the big little dog’, and often gave pups as gifts, including to Wordsworth. Despite Scott holding ‘the race of Pepper and Mustard... in the highest estimation’, the Dandie Dinmont is on the Kennel Club’s list of native vulnerable breeds.



Mr Famous and Audrey Hepburn



This pup was well named: the fluffy Hollywood Golden Age beau starred with his owner Audrey Hepburn and Fred Astaire in *Funny Face* (1957). A mini Yorkshire terrier, Mr Famous was Hepburn’s closest companion and travelled around the world. Often in her arms or riding in a bicycle basket, he was photographed by Cecil Beaton and appeared on countless magazine covers.

Sadly, when Hepburn was filming *The Children’s Hour* (1961) in LA, he was run over; her husband, Mel Ferrar, gave her a new Yorkie named Assam of Assam.



Martha and Sir Paul McCartney ←

‘You and me were meant to be with each other, silly girl.’ You’d be forgiven for thinking The Beatles’ 1968 *Martha My Dear* is a love ditty, but no—Martha is an expression of devotion to Sir Paul McCartney’s old English sheepdog, the hairiest fifth Beatle. He explains: ‘Whereas it would appear to anybody else to be a song to a girl called Martha, it’s actually a dog, and our relationship was platonic, believe me.’ She was ‘very cuddly,’ added John Lennon.

One of Martha’s offspring, Arrow, starred on the cover of the album *Paul is Live*, which shows Sir Paul being yanked across the Abbey Road zebra crossing.



Cut and Ball and Henry VIII

This was not a king to stick to a favourite, as his marital record testifies. As well as ferrets, canaries and nightingales, Henry VIII was fond of spaniels, beagles and greyhounds. The Tudor Court followed suit and, with ruffs and puffy sleeves, dogs were the accessory of choice, doubling up as footwarmers in church.

Henry's hounds wore velvet collars with silver or gold spikes, some adorned with pearls and his coat of arms. Others sported white-silk coats and enjoyed regular massages. His favourite hunting dogs were Cut and Ball: when they went missing, he paid nearly 15 shillings (£225 today) as a reward for their return. After he died, 65 dog leads were found in his closet.

Boatswain and Lord Byron →

The poet may have shocked Society with his saucy writing and love affairs, but Byron's love for animals was pure. His pets included 'a bear, a fox, four monkeys, a parrot, five cats, an eagle, a crow, a falcon, five peacocks, two guinea hens, an Egyptian crane... a goat with a broken leg and many horses', but his Newfoundland, Boatswain, is the only one honoured with a tomb.

Byron had the last laugh. DNA analysis of some 100 locks of hair given to lovers revealed most were canine.



Mary, Queen of Scots, and her lapdogs

As an exiled child in France, forced to learn a new language, the Queen confided in 22 lapdogs—mostly pugs, spaniels and Maltese terriers. Widowed at 18, she left for Scotland with her favourite white terriers in tow and was widowed again. Imprisoned in England for 18 years, Bess of Hardwick, her gaoler, reported she spent hours talking to her lapdogs.

In a final act of devotion, a Skye terrier went to her execution, hidden beneath her skirts. After she was beheaded, her body seemed to twitch—the dog was found shaking and covered in blood. It refused to move or eat and died soon afterwards.



Caesar of Notts and Edward VII ↑

'I am Caesar. I belong to the King' was inscribed on the collar of Edward VII's wire fox terrier, Caesar of Notts. Born to the high life in 1898 and known as 'Stinky' among courtiers, he slept on a chair beside the King's bed and had his own footman. After the King died in 1910, Caesar and a Highlander led the funeral procession, trotting behind his coffin, taking precedence over heads of State and nine kings, including George V. Kaiser Wilhelm II, in particular, was not amused.

Caesar was immortalised by Fabergé in chalcedony, rubies, gold and enamel and is depicted on the King's tomb in St George's Chapel, Windsor. He was also named as the author of a book entitled *Where's Master?*, published a month after Edward VII's death. 🐕



Purple reign

Purple-sprouting broccoli, the surprisingly robust dandy of the vegetable patch, is best enjoyed with an anchovy sauce and a dusting of feta, says Tom Parker Bowles

If a cauliflower is, in Mark Twain's eternal words, nothing but cabbage with a college education, then what the hell is purple-sprouting broccoli? Not so much Borstal calabrese as kale with an art degree. With its magnificently mauve heads and elegantly slim-ish stems, it resembles a cross between a brassica Beau Brummell and a particularly flamboyant punk.

This vegetable-patch dandy is as tough as nails, too—a thoroughly well-dressed bruiser, not merely enduring the extremes of British winter, but positively revelling in that chill. Frosts, tempests and snowstorms are but seasonal blips, with this robust beauty always returning for more. Come Armageddon, or End of Days, I'm sure our hardy hero would, like the cockroach, still be going strong.

Equally impressive is the plant's priapic vitality. Lop off the tips and new shoots spring almost eternal. No wonder purple-sprouting broccoli is a hero of the bitter, frugal months, one of February's true gems. As the great Alastair Little says in *Soho Cooking*, 'it anticipates spring by a month or so and introduces freshness to jaded winter palates'.

There's goodness in all that greenery, too. Of course there is. Some may go so far as to call it a 'superfood', brimming with the likes of Vitamins A and C, carotenoids, iron, folic acid, calcium and phytochemical sulforaphane,

to which all sorts of miraculous properties are ascribed. Helps against heart disease, they say, and osteoporosis, too. It's a vitamin shot in verdant form, an eminently edible salve.

As to its origins, they're shrouded in the usual half-truths and hyperbole. According to John Evelyn, writing in *Acetaria* in 1699, purple-sprouting broccoli (the last word is Italian for 'little arms' or 'little shoots') was certainly from Italy and probably introduced over here at about the same time as his tome appeared. Although he's not entirely clear.

‘It resembles a cross between a brassica Beau Brummell and a flamboyant punk’

It's not until 1724, and Miller's *Gardener's Dictionary*, that there's definitive proof. The plant was a stranger to these shores, it says, 'until within these five years'.

Some claim that broccoli developed before cauliflower, from when gardeners tried to grow cabbages for shoots, rather than a nice, compact head. Indeed, it is a sort of cabbage, where the flowers have begun to form, but stopped growing when in bud. In cauliflowers,

these buds are tightly clustered, but in purple-sprouting broccoli, they're in separate groups. 'Brassica oleracea, cymose group, is one of the most puzzling members of the cabbage family,' sighs *The Oxford Companion to Food*. 'Shoppers can usually distinguish it easily from the cauliflower, [but] botanists cannot.' It was only relatively recently that the standard green-coloured variety, now all but ubiquitous, became commonplace.

However, this is a cooking column. So enough of roots and onto flavour, strident, but not overwhelmingly so. One of my favourite snacks is a fistful of the raw stuff, dipped in a mixture of half fresh lime juice, half fish sauce, with a few chopped bird's-eye chillies thrown in. A basic Thai *prik nam pla*.

Given a few minutes heat, those more sulphurous edges are tamed. No more than two minutes in a steamer, then lavished with good olive oil, a squeeze of lemon and lashings of salt and pepper. The Puglians devour it with orecchiette pasta, chopped small so it fits into the 'little ears', flavoured with garlic and chillies (natural bedfellows for its bittersweet allure), and finished with a grating of *ricotta salata*. Pecorino works nearly as well. I also throw it, raw, into punchy Thai stir fries and even, if feeling industrious, dredge it through tempura batter and deep fry until gossamer crisp. Or simply serve with a great, golden bowl of hollandaise. That's the joy of purple sprouting. It will take whatever flavours you throw at it and still be gasping for more.

This month's recipe comes from the aforementioned Mr Little and his book *Soho Food*. Mr Little, together with Rowley Leigh and Simon Hopkinson, was a hero of the late-1980s London restaurant world, great writers as well as cooks. Their influence is immense. This recipe, like purple-sprouting broccoli, never ever lets you down. 🍴

Purple-sprouting broccoli with anchovy sauce

Serves 2 as a side or 1 as a light lunch

Method

- Set a large pan of lightly salted water to boil. Put the anchovies, chillies, garlic and oil in a large frying pan and cook over a medium heat for three minutes. Stir well to crush the anchovies, then set aside. Boil the broccoli for two minutes and drain.
- Return the frying pan to a high flame and tip the broccoli in, stir and fry for a minute to coat it with its flavourings. Serve hot or at room temperature with a squeeze of lemon juice.

For a pasta sauce

- Follow the above recipe, but cut the broccoli into small pieces. Boil some penne or, more authentically, orecchiette, until al dente and toss it in the frying pan with the broccoli. This dish is best finished with some more oil and a little grated feta cheese.

Pasta sauce note

- At all times with this dish, watch the salt; anchovies are very salty, as is feta. The Italian version of feta is called *ricotta salata*, literally 'salted ricotta'.

Ingredients

500g purple-sprouting broccoli, bigger stalks removed
Salt and pepper
50g anchovies, preferably dry salted ones, soaked for half an hour in a couple of changes of water, then filleted and chopped
3 small dried red chillies, very finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, peeled and finely chopped
6tbspn olive oil
1 lemon

Where to eat...

I love Angela Hartnett. Everybody does. Mayfair's Murano is a wonderful high-end Italian, but Cafe Murano is its relaxed younger sister, with *cicchetti*, pastas and regional classics. In season (of course), purple sprouting will often be served with chilli and anchovy.

(020-3371 5559;
www.cafemurano.co.uk)





On the shoulders of design giants

Listening to the world's greatest interior designers talk about their work is one of the best ways to get to grips with an elusive art



THE internet is credited with magically transforming us all into interior-design experts. But has it really? Or has it merely given us both a greater awareness of trends and a supernatural ability to spot a House of Hackney cushion at 50 paces? In the same way that the rise of the TV chef turned viewers into armchair gastronomes, social media has equipped us all with the wherewithal, but none of the know-how. We hope that when we chuck together all the exciting new ingredients we've found online, they'll all magically crystallise to create a sparkling and coherent entity, like the carefully shot and cropped images we see on Instagram. Yet, too often, the result is more likely to be nothing more than some deeply unhinged eclecticism.

The problem is less to do with a lack of knowledge and more about an innate sense of what will and won't work. The

‘The organisers have an impressive ability to attract living legends, such as Kit Kemp and Nina Campbell,’

latter is a rare skill—some are born with it, some acquire it by osmosis and others simply open their minds to the wisdom and ideas of those who have done it all before. Achieving the last of these is easier said than done. Other than enrolling on a course at the Inchbald School of Design or attending a talk by the paint *savant* Joa Studholme, opportunities are few and far between—except, that is, at the orgy of interior-design inspiration that is London

Design Week, which kicks off at Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour, SW10, on March 8.

The organisers have an impressive ability to attract living legends to speak (Kit Kemp, Nina Campbell, Barbara Barry, David Mlinaric and Steven Gambrel, to name just a few). In addition, there are talks in the showrooms, the number of which has now risen to 120 and which include Colefax & Fowler, Vaughan, Julian Chichester, Zoffany, Cole & Son, et al. The result is that the building on the Thames briefly becomes home to the greatest concentration of design wisdom in the universe.

The experience of listening to a designer talk about how and why they make decisions and where they got their inspiration offers a privileged insight that has more breadth—and fathomless depth—than anything you'll find on your Instagram feed. 🐦

For details of the events taking place at Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour, London SW10, from March 8–13, see facing page

The stars of the show

From March 8–13, the Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour will host more than 100 events offering fathomless depths of interior-design inspiration



Above: Rita König. Below, from top: Beata Heuman; Emily Todhunter; Olga Polizzi

ONE of the many highlights of this year's London Design Week will be interior designer Rita König in conversation with COUNTRY LIFE's Giles Kime, discussing her work on both sides of the Atlantic, the restoration of her farmhouse in Co Durham, her new Create Academy online classes and her career as a journalist. Other notable events on the programme include conversations with the renowned design director of Rocco Forte Hotels, Olga Polizzi; interior designer Beata Heuman; and Patrick Frey, president and creative director of French fabric house Pierre Frey.

Co-founder of Mr & Mrs Smith James Lohan and his sister, Hannah, an interior designer, will discuss the influence of boutique hotels on prevailing styles. Joining a wide range of panel discussions will be designers Emily Todhunter, of Todhunter Earle; Emma Pocock, of Turner Pocock;



Samantha Todhunter; and Tom Bartlett, of Waldo Works.

There will also be events at showrooms around the site, including an opportunity to hear celebrated designer Nina Campbell and Selina McCabe, partner at Winch Design, share their insider tips gleaned from working on challenging projects—inside, outside and on yachts at sea.



For anyone keen to learn more about good lighting, the discussion between Gail Taylor, founder of th2designs, and Rebecca Weir, creative director and founder of Light IQ, is a must. They will discuss the importance of lighting in the home, in particular, its role in creating a balanced interior, and offer insight into trends and techniques.



There will also be a rare opportunity to see some of the historical archive documents that inspired G. P. & J. Baker's new Signature II wallpaper collection, plus the chance to join designer

Rebecca Craig as she introduces the new range of fabrics from Sanderson that celebrates the values of the National Trust, which is in its 125th anniversary year.

History has played an important role in the development of British firm John Boyd Textiles, which weaves the finest horsehair fabrics using original looms and techniques that date back to 1870. Owner Anna Smith reveals how the fabric was chosen for upholstery by designers from Chippendale and Hepplewhite to Lutyens and Rennie Mackintosh and why it continues to be in demand today.

‘There will be opportunities to enjoy masterclasses on a range of subjects’

Another speaker with an eye on the past is designer, architectural historian and natural-paint guru Edward Bulmer. He will discuss the importance of period design and traditional craft techniques as he launches his Historic range of hardware, including door handles and escutcheons, in collaboration with Collier Webb and McKinney & Co.

In addition, there will be opportunities to enjoy demonstrations and masterclasses on a wide range of subjects, including traditional furniture-making, the art of bespoke finishes, styling your home for entertaining and how to use marble to best effect. 🐾

● **London Design Week** takes place from March 8–13, 10am–6pm, at the Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour, Lots Road, London, SW10 (020–7225 9166; www.dcch.co.uk)

● Entry is free, but all guests are encouraged to register at www.dcch.co.uk. Doing so also offers the chance to win a luxury one

night's stay, including dinner and breakfast, at one of the London-based Firmdale Hotels

● All events are free except for Conversations in Design. Tickets for these talks cost £10, but COUNTRY LIFE readers can quote LIFE when booking to take advantage of a special price of £7.50 to hear Rita König in conversation with Giles Kime



► Get physical

CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN has joined forces with fashion designer Bruce Oldfield (favoured by royalty, celebrities and, of course, many beautiful brides) to host its first wedding showcase on March 28. The charming gardens are a hidden oasis in London, founded in 1673 by the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries for apprentices to study the medicinal qualities of plants. The event will showcase an expertly curated little black book of suppliers for all wedding-planning needs and you'll be entranced by Mr Oldfield's latest bridal and mother of the bride collections. Enjoy nibbling canapés, sipping sparkling wine and taking inspiration from the gardens' superb floral displays as you decide on the finer details. Tickets £25 for two; 66, Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, SW3 (020-7352 5646; www.chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk)

Eye on the ball

Henley-on-Thames-based watchmakers Bremont has recently announced a new role as official timekeeper of England Rugby. Known for its patriotism, it is the perfect brand for the job—the owners Nick and Giles even have the surname English. The company has released the Rose Collection, featuring two sub-dials embossed with the English rose, contrasting hands nodding to the St George's Cross and, on the reverse, the words Swing Low sit underneath an engraving of the English rose. From £4,995 (0800 817 4281; www.bremont.com)



► To be or not to be

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON will see this year's Shakespeare Birthday Luncheon hosted by esteemed local jewellers Pragnell on April 25. Performers, artists and ambassadors from all over the world will celebrate the life of the great playwright. Enjoy a three-course lunch with Fortnum & Mason fine wine, hosted by Alexander Armstrong and featuring live music from the National Youth Jazz Orchestra and the London Youth Chamber Choir. The Pragnell Shakespeare Birthday Award this year will be given to Juliet Stevenson, whose stage career began at the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1978. They had me at the dress code—'formal and decorative without restraint'. Tickets from £100 per person or £1,000 for a table of 10 (01789 267072; www.pragnell.co.uk)



◀ Back to the drawing board

RIVER COTTAGE HQ in Devon is hosting a three-day mindful drawing retreat this July, set against the backdrop of its blissful 100-acre smallholding. All skill levels are welcome, but guests will be encouraged to relax their mind through creativity to the point when time appears to slow down. Led by artist and professor Tania Kovats and global consultant and psychotherapist Jane Sassienie, the emphasis will be on drawing practice with exercises framed by simple meditations—and delicious food, too. Choose between staying in the 17th-century farmhouse or in a cosy bell tent. Massage and reiki sessions are available on request. July 13-16, £1,035 (01297 630300; www.rivercottage.net/retreats)





▲ Brush with success

To take you seamlessly from winter to spring, layers are key, and I'm looking to With Nothing Underneath's new brushed-cotton shirts for the answer. Snuggly and chic in equal measure, the length is two inches shorter than designer Pip Durell's other shirts (gorgeous linen and cotton poplin), so they will tuck perfectly into a pair of jeans. Available in coffee, navy, oat and blue sky. £110 (www.withnothingunderneath.com)



The Forager

Hauser & Wirth, Bruton, Somerset

Somerset's Hauser & Wirth gallery goes from strength to strength, with the Durslade Farm Shop opening at the end of the year. Until then, eager shoppers will find plenty in the emporium, set in a central courtyard (take a peek first at the excellent Don McCullin exhibition, until May 4). We love the hand-whittled maple spoons by Rosie Brewer, which glorify the wood's natural twists and twirls (£32). Similarly celebrating a material's natural form, Mags Maxwell's silverware is informed by pebbles and stones, using the Korean art of Keum-boo gilding (from £175). There are bespoke red and yellow block-colour cashmere throws by Max Bill (£1,150); pottery by Jonathan Garratt, inspired by prehistoric Chinese and African designs (£50); and it is impossible to resist Manuela's fig-scented perfume, which makes one think of frolicking in a Roman glade (from £195 for 30ml). Easier on the wallet are the packets of seeds, such as the Oudolf (named after the garden's designer), containing prosaically named Button Snakeroot, Carthusian Pink and Chinese Meadow Rue. (01749 814060; www.hauserwirth.com)
Jemima Sissons



▲ At the races

THE ORCHARD at the Cheltenham Festival (March 10–13) is the place to be seen. Sip a glass of Nyetimber, ogle fabulous jewellery from Boodles and speak to Holland & Holland about the gunmakers' new Range Rover collaboration (design your own vehicle to the highest specifications). Bentley will be there, too, fresh from its centenary year, showcasing old and new models. The Jockey Club launches new private pods in the Club Enclosure this year, for up to 20 people—relaxed dining, private balcony and world-class racing. From £7,200 (01242 809289; www.thejockeyclub.co.uk)

High 5

Boots for Cheltenham Festival and beyond

► **Valentina**, £499.95, Keith Scarrott (01242 253154; www.keithscarrott.co.uk)



◀ **Turnover boots** in dark brown, £650, Holland & Holland (020–7499 4411; www.hollandandholland.co.uk)



► **Amira black over-the-knee suede boot**, £395, Fairfax & Favor (01760 338199; www.fairfaxandfavor.com)



◀ **Inclement tassel boot** in seaweed/conker, £499, Penelope Chilvers (020–7491 9777; www.penelopechilvers.com)



► **Suede biker boots**, £245, Really Wild (01491 352600; www.reallywildclothing.com)



Dragons of Walton Street

Creative director and daughter of the founder Lucinda Croft talks to Hetty Lintell about creating a cherished heirloom

I STILL have my Mason Pearson hairbrush from childhood and it works as perfectly as the day I set my excited eyes on it. It amazes me what grown adults will hang on to from their childhood bedrooms—often kept a secret—but, at Dragons of Walton Street, such treasures are to be celebrated. ‘When my mother started the company 40 years ago, it wasn’t really the done thing to spend money on children,’ explains Lucinda Croft, now at the helm. But times changed when Princess Diana saw fit to deck out William and Harry’s nurseries with Dragons furniture and other famous faces followed suit.

‘Customers come into the shop with their dreams. It is then my job, with our talented team, to make them a reality,’

The company started with one handpainted chair plonked in the window of Rosie Fisher’s antique shop on London’s Walton Street, SW3, and it grew from there. Now sold across 70 countries, each piece of exquisite furniture is handmade in Britain, then taken to their workshop in West Sussex to be handpainted. Most clients, even international ones, want to come to the London shop to see the selection.

‘There is nothing like the storytelling we offer,’ Mrs Croft continues. ‘Imagination is so powerful and childhood so fleeting that, if you can keep children as children, the furniture fuels imagination and playtime,

as well as their education.’ Dragons designs clever, charming illustrations and places favourite characters, animals and wildlife at eye level or on quirky angles, where they can be most enjoyed in whatever room they are destined for. Every element is bespoke: ‘We always think—how can we most delight people when they walk into a room or open a drawer?’

Dragons is naturally sustainable, too, with every piece of furniture lasting a lifetime and beyond. ‘We regularly repaint 20–30-year-old furniture,’ Mrs Croft insists, telling the tale of one customer who dressed her four nurseries 30 years ago and recently walked into the shop wanting to bring it all back and restore it for her grandchildren. The company can repaint furniture with new initials, names and favourite characters from books—it is licensed to paint characters from Beatrix Potter, *Paddington Bear*, *Winnie the Pooh* and *Flower Fairies*—and can incorporate childhood pets, holiday memories or family members, too. Nothing is too far-fetched and clients are encouraged to dream big. Dragons will make it happen—from helicopter beds to bespoke doll’s houses, this is a place to capture the dreams of children and adults alike. 🐉



Behind the doors

The first doll’s houses (or baby houses) were made in 16th-century Europe, with one of the first made for Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria as a show piece

Often built as a record of the times, they were rarely used as toys

In the 18th century, cabinet houses

appeared—exquisite doll’s houses created in the interior of a beautiful cabinet

The Victorians brought doll’s houses to the mainstream as toys to be played with

In the 1920s, a cousin of George V commissioned the ultimate doll’s house for Queen Mary, an avid collector of miniatures

Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, it featured highly skilled work by 1,500 craftsmen and housed a genuine Singer sewing machine, real Champagne from Veuve Clicquot, clocks by Cartier, a tiny issue of COUNTRY LIFE and a Rolls-Royce—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle even wrote a book in miniature form for its library. It is still on show at Windsor Castle

Contemporary or traditional doll’s houses can be bespoke and only a few craftsmen are skilled enough to make them. These are houses to be played with and added to over the years, then passed down through the family. One client wanted two big doll’s houses for her daughters, but Mrs Croft recommended buying one, so that they would learn to share. Doll’s houses from £1,595 (020–3544 2000; www.dragonsofwaltonstreet.com)

A few of my favourite things



Nicholas Coleridge

Now chairman of the V&A Museum and The Prince of Wales's Campaign for Wool, Nicholas Coleridge ran the Condé Nast publishing empire, owners of 140 magazines in 30 countries, from 1991 to 2019.

He has written 14 books, both fiction and non-fiction, including his recently published bestselling memoir *The Glossy Years*. He and his wife, Georgia, live in London and Worcestershire and have four children

Words by Hetty Lintell. Illustrations by Ollie Maxwell

► I don't have much hair, so often wear a sunhat to avoid sunburn. I have some good Lock & Co Panamas, but my current favourite is from Bates of Jermyn Street, one with a wide straw brim like the one Cecil Beaton used to flounce about in. I wear it racing at Goodwood and also in Rajasthan, but never at the airport. It isn't ever a good look, wearing a Panama at Heathrow (020-7734 4707; www.bates-hats.com)



▼ I wear these robust Theo Fennell silver cufflinks almost every day. Theo kindly gave them to me for my 60th birthday, engraved with my initials and the Roman letters LX. For special occasions, I wear gold Cartier ones with giraffes engraved on them, giraffes being my lucky symbol—I have long collected 18th- and 19th-century prints of giraffes and consider them a chic animal. I won the Cartier pair at the jewellers' Christmas party... they were hidden inside a Christmas pudding and I almost broke a tooth biting into them, but it was a glorious surprise. The initials and giraffes were added later (020-7591 5000; www.theofennell.com; 020-3147 4850; www.cartier.com)



◀ I have had my photograph albums, which are covered in beautiful Venetian paper, made in Oxford by Maltby's the bookbinders for more than 30 years—I am now on volume 36. They are my pride and joy, as they chronicle our whole lives, our family and friends, from birth to last week. I try never to be more than two weeks behind in sticking photographs in and captioning them. Once you let a year slip by, it's over, you will never catch up. Maltby's make them to order, with double the usual number of pages, so they last longer. I may eventually bequeath them to the British Library (01865 747654; www.maltbysbookbinders.com)





Queen Anne Clapton Revel, Buckinghamshire, dates back to the early 1700s. £1.95m

Time to reflect

Find some perspective next to the peaceful waters of these three properties

THE River Wye in Buckinghamshire is a chalk stream that flows south-eastwards for 10 miles from its source in the Chilterns, through West Wycombe, High Wycombe, Loudwater and Wooburn Green, to its confluence with the Thames at Bourne End.

For centuries, the river powered corn and fulling mills until, in the late 1600s, the arrival of Dutch experts in paper-making and water-management led to the creation of dozens of paper mills along a complex system of watercourses between the hamlet of Loudwater and the village of Wooburn.

One of the largest was Clapton Mill, whose Dutch owner, Groner Steyn, erected an imposing family home on high ground that overlooked the mill pond and the river below. Built in the classic Queen Anne style between 1700 and 1710, with later 18th-century alterations, Steyn christened it Clapton Revel, a name derived from the Dutch for ‘mansion house’, as befitted a house of status at the heart of a 25-acre mini-estate.

An article in *COUNTRY LIFE* (*March 6, 1937*) highlights the beauty of the setting: ‘Water in the garden is always delightful, and here especially so, since besides the main stretch—a backwater of the River



Wye—there are several other diversions of the river, beside which one goes by winding paths and across little bridges, finding here a secluded water garden, there a swimming pool, plantations, waterfalls, and the mill stream itself which was no doubt the original purpose of such diversion.’

Having diversified into tent-making and the manufacture of canvas for biplanes during the First World War, Clapton Mill finally closed its doors in 1922, by which time the Clapton Revel estate was being sold off piecemeal, mainly for housing, due to the expansion of nearby Beaconsfield. Clapton Revel’s Victorian water-gardens



Grade II-listed Ockham Mill, completely renovated in 2015, is one of the largest former mill houses on the River Wey in Surrey. £3.5m

were sold with the former mill building, and the main house next door, with its mill pond and gardens running down to the river—1½ acres in all—gradually slid into slow, but inexorable decline.

‘The house was semi-derelict when, in the mid 1980s, my late wife and I came to view it and immediately fell in love with it,’ says owner Anthony McGarel-Groves. ‘The first thing I did was re-roof the entire building. The garden was completely overgrown and when we cleared away the lovely old brick wall that encloses the house to one side, we found a row of espaliered fruit trees that

must have been there forever. It was one of many discoveries we made during 35 years in what has always been a warm and friendly house.’

Currently on the market through the Beaconsfield office of Savills (01494 731950) at a guide price of £1.95 million, Clapton Revel, listed Grade II*, is a marvellously unspoilt, early-18th-century house of immense character. It offers more than 4,100sq ft of accommodation on four floors, including a panelled reception hall with flagstone flooring, an elegant, light-filled drawing room with French doors, which lead to

a balustraded balcony with views over the gardens and mill pond, and a dual-aspect sitting room/study that in turn overlooks the swimming pool.

Stairs lead down to the lower ground floor and the well-organised, open-plan kitchen/breakfast/dining room, a pleasant family living space, again with lovely garden views. The first floor houses three main bedrooms, two with en-suite bath/shower rooms, with a further three bedrooms and two bath/shower rooms on the second floor.

The gardens are a delight. To the front of the house is a pretty lawned area with ➤



Park Hall, built in the early 1700s, is set in more than 14 acres of spectacular gardens at Great Bardfield, near Braintree, Essex. £2.25m

a swimming pool and herbaceous borders, beyond which is a wisteria-clad pergola and terrace area. Steps lead down to the lower garden, which has sweeping areas of lawn and raised flowerbeds: an enchanting feature is the tree-lined path between the mill pond and the river.

For sale through Knight Frank in Cobham (01932 809854) and Seymours in Woking (01483 228723) at a guide price of £3.5m, Grade II-listed Ockham Mill is one of the largest former mill houses on the River Wey in Surrey. It was once part of the Ockham estate of William King, 8th Lord King, who inherited the family home, Ockham Park, in 1833. He married Ada Byron, the only legitimate child of the romantic poet, who brought with her not only a vast fortune, but a useful family contact in her cousin, Lord Melbourne, whose influence saw King created 1st Earl of Lovelace in 1838 and, in 1840, Lord Lieutenant of Surrey.

Lord Lovelace marked his arrival on the county scene by buying the nearby East Horsley estate and any land, house or cottage that came on the market in the surrounding

villages. In 1862, he built Ockham Mill of red and black brick in the 'Lovelace' neo-Romanesque style. It continued to operate until the 1920s and still has a working water wheel and much of the original gearing. In 1958, Ockham Mill was offered for sale by Knight, Frank & Rutley as part of the 4,984-acre Ockham Park Estate.

In 2015, its present owners undertook a sympathetic restoration that included the reinstatement of the fifth floor, with the addition of two bedrooms with high timbered ceilings. In all, the mill has more than 5,700sq ft of living space, including the mill room, the wheel room, a study, garage and wine cellar on the ground floor; a living room, dining room, sun room and kitchen/breakfast room on the first floor; and six large bedrooms on the three floors above.

The impressively converted building is located on a private road in a hamlet a mile or so from the village of Ripley. The house stands in 2½ acres of delightful gardens and grounds that are a haven for wildlife and include a large fish-filled lake fed by the Wey and five islands accessible by bridges.

The large ornamental lake that is the focal point of more than 14 acres of gardens, grounds and paddocks around Grade II-listed Park Hall at Great Bardfield, near Braintree, Essex, was the scene of wild winter skating parties during the tenure of its previous owners, the late Ariel and John Crittall, who entertained lavishly. However, their fine country home, built in the early 1700s with a Georgian façade added in 1827, appears to have deteriorated after 1974.

Park Hall's present owners, who bought the house in a state of considerable disrepair six years ago, spent three years returning it to its pristine former glory, taking care to retain its many interesting elements, including a Crittall conservatory. The property comprises the main seven-bedroom house, a cottage/studio and outbuildings, including a barn and excellent stabling, and the land and lake play host to a wide variety of wildlife, such as muntjac, kingfishers, pheasants, badgers, hares and rabbits.

Park Hall is now on the market with Jackson-Stops in Chelmsford (01245 806101) at a guide price of £2.25m. 🐾



If the school fits

Choosing the right school might be hard, but choosing the right house nearby is even harder, so allow us to inspire you



▲ Cumbria, £425,000

Situated on the edge of the handsome and historic village of Lanercost, which has its own primary school, Abbey Mill is also only 14 miles from the Austin Friars independent day school. This two-bedroom former corn mill has been sympathetically restored, with plenty of modern touches where necessary, and also comes with an integral holiday cottage, which might help with those pesky fees. The property sits in mature gardens on the banks of the Lanercost Quarry Beck, offering beautiful woodland and riverside walks. *Finest Properties* (01539 468400)



▲ Dorset, £1.45 million

If the thought of being too far from the kids brings you out in a cold sweat, The Gardens, near Motcombe, in Dorset, might be the solution. The 7½ acres in which it sits backs directly onto the Port Regis School grounds, meaning that the school run can be completed by car, bicycle, horse or on foot. As well as its mix of garden and pasture, the property comes with five bedrooms, two reception rooms and a double garage, with planning permission to add two further bedrooms. *Jackson-Stops* (01747 850858)



▲ Oxfordshire, £1.195 million

Hiding in the heart of Abingdon and set on the banks of the Thames is 1, Fellows Close. This historic house was once owned by the nearby abbey and is within striking distance of Abingdon Prep School, Cothill House, The Manor Prep and Radley College. The interiors are a mixture of period pieces (including bespoke wooden panelling from Flanders) and modern luxuries and the garden, which backs on to the Thames, was professionally designed and planted with the intention of being low maintenance. Four double bedrooms make up the first floor and the kitchen contains a Victorian built-in safe that doubles up as a wine store. *West: The Property Consultancy* (01865 510000)



▲ Berkshire, £1.675 million

The mature and private gardens of Earleydene Cottage are the perfect setting for this deceptively contemporary half-timbered home in Berkshire. Ascot, Sunninghill, Sunningdale and Windsor are all short journeys away and the choice for both prep and senior schools is, frankly, so overwhelming there's little point in me listing them here. Five bedrooms, two of which are en-suite, plus a magnificent kitchen/breakfast room with an island, supplement the three reception rooms. *Knight Frank* (01344 592792)



◀ Suffolk, £1.25 million

Dedham Vale was the setting of choice for Constable and Gainsborough and it certainly suits Grade II-listed Springhill. Dating from 1577, this Tudor home has been recently renovated and is near both Old Buckenham Hall and Orwell Park schools. With six bedrooms and three reception rooms, it comes with a barn conversion that leads to a separate annexe. *Savills* (01473 234800) 🐦





Pride rocks

The Rockery, Chatsworth House, Bakewell, Derbyshire

At last, Joseph Paxton's monument is being given the restoration it deserves, reveals **Tiffany Daneff**

Photographs by Jonathan Buckley

THE Rockery is the craziest bit of hard landscaping ever made anywhere, I think. It is an heroic piece of landscape creation.' Tom Stuart-Smith is surveying the water breaking onto the stone 40 feet below Wellington Rock, the largest and most outrageous of Joseph Paxton's gritstone creations at Chatsworth in Derbyshire.

For much of the end of the 20th and the beginning of this century, Paxton's alpine masterpiece—constructed in the 1840s in memory of the 6th Duke of Devonshire's visit to the Alps on his Grand Tour—has been overlooked. Overgrown Victorian yews and rhododendrons added to the fusty impression, which was then compounded by plantings that were intended to bring colour, but ended up creating a disjointed rag bag.

The only people who really seemed to understand the point of the Rockery were the children who clambered over the thrilling boulders and between the giant rock stacks playing games of hide and seek.

Now, however, the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire have embarked on the biggest project at Chatsworth since Paxton finished his work more than 200 years ago, of which the fine old Rockery forms a key part.

'A few years ago,' the Duke recalls, 'we asked Tom Stuart-Smith to come up with ideas for the 16 acres of wilderness in the middle of the garden now known as Arcadia. Having spent a whole day walking the area and the surrounding parts of the garden, Tom sat us down and said that, although he would be delighted to come up with a scheme for Arcadia, he felt that the rock garden was of much greater national and international interest and could he start ►

The 21st-century naturalism of the new plantings reveals the monumental beauty of Joseph Paxton's original rock garden

there. Steve Porter [head gardener], Amanda [the Duchess] and I were delighted with this advice, which, of course, seemed obvious once we'd thought about it.'

Work on the three-acre Rockery is now in year three of a four-year schedule due to end in 2021. 'The dark funereal yews' recorded by *The Gardeners' Chronicle* on June 26, 1875, have been thinned and brought back under control, as have the rhododendrons, uninteresting patches of grass have been stripped and only a few choice azaleas, maples and large sequoias remain. With two seasons' worth of largely perennial planting settling in, the new, fresh green foliage and soft undulating plantings reveal the rocks in all their monumental glory.

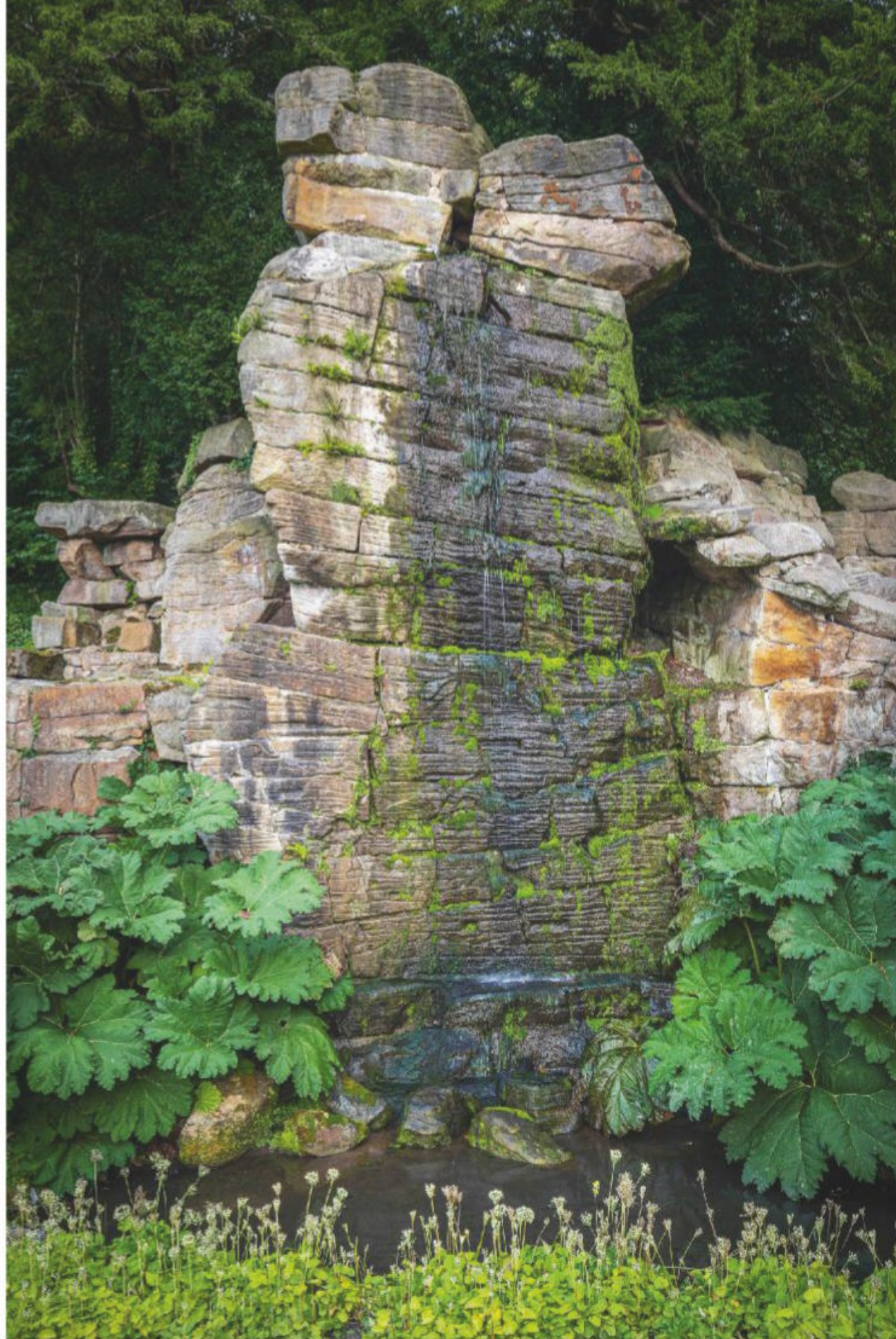
The planting has been given a 21st-century naturalism, using a few key exotic plants repeated across the whole rock garden within a tapestry of 100 less dominant species. As the seasons progress, these hero plants will lend a particular and evolving character. For example, June features white azaleas with white rhododendron, *Iris sibirica* and *Euphorbia palustris*. These are followed in July by pale phloxes, rodgersia and gunnera, which, in turn, will give way in August to *Hydrangea paniculata*, *H. aspera*, Lythrum, Cimicifuga and Eupatorium.

‘In Paxton, the Duke had found his man, more than up to the gargantuan endeavour’

'Paxton's rock garden,' Mr Stuart-Smith says, 'was created for carriage rides, but we now want to create something more immersive, where Nature takes precedence. We want to introduce obstacles you have to go around.'

This Rockery was always meant to be about the stone. As Paxton noted in his *Magazine of Botany* in 1846: 'All the vegetation, moreover, which accompanies an extensive Rockery, should be subordinate to it.' This was not the type of rock garden that Reginald Farrer was to pioneer in the early 20th century, in which viewers might get down on their knees all the better to see the collections of tiny alpine plants. This was just the job for the young and energetic Paxton, then at the beginning of his career.

The original works were part of the 6th Duke's desire to express more of the sublime at Chatsworth, which lay in landscape perfectly suited to this. Kate Colquhoun described the area thus in her 2003 biography *A Thing in Disguise: the Visionary Life of Joseph Paxton*: 'Hills give way to peaks, thick woods to pasture, and through it all snakes the River Derwent.'



Above: In winter, water rushes down the face of Wellington Rock. Facing page: Part of the new planting, featuring the dark crimson Lilium Black Beauty, Hydrangea paniculata Annabelle, Aster macrophyllus Twilight, Persicaria and Veronicastrum virginicum

At the age of 21 years, William George Spencer Cavendish Devonshire, Marquis of Hartington, known to his family as Hart, had inherited Chatsworth, together with a brimming portfolio of other houses that included Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, Chiswick House in west London and Bolton Abbey in Yorkshire, 200,000 acres of land and an annual income of £70,000. His mother, the famous Georgiana, and the 5th Duke had been much more focused on London society, so the gardens had remained largely untouched for 50 years. The young Duke, however, was a Regency man with a concomitant interest in the many new and exotic plants now being imported. He was 'a King of fashion and elegance', according to the celebrated German landscape artist Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau.

By the time the Duke had engaged the young Paxton in 1826, he had already asked Jeffry Wyattville, an architect in the new Gothic style, to transform the 1790s grotto at Chatsworth into a naturalistic cavern using boulders and crystals of copper ore. Perhaps Wyattville had sown the seeds for the Rockery with his mention, in his annotated notes for the area close to the present Rockery, of 'exposing part of the Rocks to the South' and 'causing the Water... to be so impeded as to give a Natural Cascade falling over the Rocks'.

Either way, in Paxton, the Duke had found his man. He was more than up to the gargantuan endeavour, directing his workmen in the construction of rock arches, vast rock-ing stones (balanced so perfectly that they continue to tip back and forth today), piles ➤





Tom Stuart-Smith's design, implemented under head gardener Steve Porter, increases the sense of adventure by leading visitors along paths with edges softened by plantings and rocks, allowing Paxton's intention of imitating 'a wild and rugged scene' to shine through

of smaller rocks and overhanging stones to create what he described in *Magazine of Botany* as 'imitations of the natural features of a wild and rugged scene'. Most impressive of all was the 14-yard high Wellington Rock, the top of which was formed of two boulders joined with mortar coloured to mimic stone.

Sadly, there are no detailed records of how the Rockery was constructed, nor the giant stones manoeuvred, although this most probably involved some form of steam engine and a crane. This is perhaps because, although he worked closely with the Duke, Paxton's office was at Barbrook, the home he built for himself at Edensor, so his records were not preserved with those from the estate.

'The spirit of some Druid,' the 6th Duke famously wrote in his *Handbook of Chatsworth and Hardwick*, 'seems to animate Mr Paxton in these bulky removals.' He also commented on the naturalistic planting that they both preferred: 'Admire the plants of Berberis and Cotoneaster, the turf, and borders of well educated bilberries, the wild currants from Fountains Abbey, and do not disdain our collection of native mosses.'

The latter was a collection of Cryptograms on the rocks below the narrow chasm known as the Strid and included mosses, liverworts and lichen. Ferns were also planted into the crevices between the rocks.

‘Tom Stuart-Smith has gone full Paxton, with plans to build six giant rock stacks’

There is a particularly charming entry from the Duke's diary for March 8, 1849: 'I walked to show Paxton a climbing rock plant I discovered. He allows its rare & very pretty but it requires a perpetual dripping of water.'

Illustrations from *The Gardeners' Chronicle* of 1875 show how formal were the edges of the paths, then intended for carriages. A great deal of the rock work done over this recent winter, explains Mr Porter, has been to soften and break up the edges. 'We have been using big rocks and smaller rocks, with boulders, to create rhythm, then, in some places, there are no rocks where the path blends into the planting.'

Another excellent introduction is the seating. 'People,' says Mr Porter, 'will be encouraged to perch on boulders, either a rock simply placed by the path or a bench made from large boulders, many of which were left over from the recent restoration of the house and will be supported on smaller rocks.' In the more formal areas, such as beside the pond,

are the Coalbrookdale benches that the Duke has been collecting for this purpose. Although not part of Paxton's Rockery, they fit very well. So far, three benches have been found, now painted green with the Lily of the Valley bells picked out in white.

Breaking with the past, the brave decision has been taken to do away with the bridge across the water. This is a good thing, as it had become a pinchpoint where visitors would stop and queues form. It also offered a short cut across the rock garden and stopped people exploring. Instead, the paths have been slightly rerouted so that they meander. 'It was Amanda's idea not to replace the bridge,' says the Duke, 'and was definitely an inspired decision, as the former wooden bridge blocked the view of the Rockery and the giant rock stacks from above and below. Access around the Rockery has been improved, too, so it is now available for everybody, another significant improvement.'

By far the most exciting part of this most exciting of projects is the development of the west entrance, where the Baroque garden meets the Rockery. Here, Mr Stuart-Smith has gone full Paxton, with plans to build six giant rock stacks. It will, he promises, look like a Pagan temple. Work is scheduled in the next six months. We have seen the scale model and cannot wait for the full reveal. 🐉



Not *that* money plant

ONE February day three years ago, Yoko called me from the local garden centre: ‘That spot behind the house that you don’t know what to do with, I’ve found just the thing for it—a money plant.’ Before I could protest, the line went dead, leaving me to ponder why a knowledgeable plants-woman who hates the humdrum and is proudly Japanese should fall for *Crassula ovata*, a tender South African succulent that’s known the world-over as the money plant and is most commonly grown in Chinese-owned restaurants, takeaways and shops.

She returned with a gauntly beautiful, golden-flowered shrub that, in the warmth of the house, was soon lacing the air with a scent somewhere between hyacinth and freesia. ‘Lovely,’ I said. ‘Now, what about this money plant of yours, shall I fetch it from the car?’

‘What are you talking about?’ she replied and pointed at her perfumed prize: ‘That’s it.’

‘It’, properly, was named *Edgeworthia chrysantha*, a robust deciduous shrub that belongs to the Daphne family (*Thymelaeaceae*) and is native to China. It’s more frequently encountered in Japan, however, where, over many centuries, it has become naturalised. There, its bark was, and still is, harvested for the fibres, which give strength to *washi*, a fine paper favoured by calligraphers and other artists, hence its synonym *Edgeworthia papyrifera*.



With its sweet-smelling, frost-defying blooms, the precious *Edgeworthia chrysantha* deserves a place in every garden

Yoko’s father was a celebrated calligrapher. Was that why she called this shrub ‘the money plant’? ‘Good God, no; what a vulgar idea. No—as a girl I nicknamed it *kane no naru ki* [money tree] when I learnt that, since the 1870s, Japanese currency had been printed on paper made from its bark. Even today, if you handle our bank notes, you’re touching Edgeworthia.’

Long before it was turned into lolly, gardeners had a yen for it. They were fascinated by the numerical regularity of its woody parts. Like an inverted tripod, each stem produces three stout branches of equal length, thickness and angle of projection. Those limbs do the same when they branch, as do their branchlets in turn, and so it goes to the ultimate twigs, diminishing in size, but always

‘Since the 1870s, Japanese currency had been printed on paper made from its bark,’

following the rule of trifurcation. Never mind money, Japan’s actual and centuries-old name for *Edgeworthia chrysantha* is *mitsumata*, ‘three prongs’.

If happy, it grows fast to four or five feet in height. Ours has tripled in size in three years, as if inextricably bound by this species’ lucky number. It makes a framework that is sparse at first, but will broaden, becoming a dome infilled with intricate branchlets. Large, oblong and in a soft bluish pea-green, the luxuriant leaves put it in the first rank of hardy exotics; but it’s what happens after they drop that earns *E. chrysantha* a place in almost any garden.

The leaves’ fall exposes the immature flowerheads, each circular and packed with buds, that have been forming at the branch tips since late summer. As winter progresses, these enlarge, develop a silky white

pelt and turn downwards on short, arched stalks (picture a miniature showerhead coated in chinchilla, as seen in all the best Surrealist doll’s houses). From January onwards, as the buds separate and open, the flowerheads expand into hemispheres of silver-fleeced tubes with radiant yellow faces. These blooms are long-lasting, withstand severe frost, rival *Sarcococca* and *Daphne* in scent and contrast brilliantly with the cinnamon tones of the branches that bear them.

Despite these merits, *E. chrysantha* was rare in cultivation for well over a century after its introduction to Britain in 1845, confined to conservatories and to gardens in the far South-West in the mistaken belief that it was tender. It’s only recently, as decent-sized plants have increased in availability, that we’ve become bolder with it and its vermilion-flowered cultivar *E. Red Dragon* and found that both are reliably hardy within a few guidelines.

‘Money plants’ flourish in the shelter of walls and trees, in full sun or dappled shade and a rich, but free-draining acid-to-neutral soil. It’s unnecessary, indeed counter-productive, to wrap them with fleece to protect their flowers from freezes. Late frosts do them more harm than hard winters; thus damaged, however, they’ll usually shoot again in the heat of summer.

Only prune stems that are a nuisance and only after flowering: it doesn’t pay to interfere with their hard-wired tripartite branching. Finally, site them so that you can enjoy them from the house in winter and be greeted by them on entering the garden: plants this precious deserve to be kept close. 🐦

Horticultural aide memoire

Divide snowdrops

The snowdrop is a precious thing and easily increased. When the flowering period has finished, approach a clump and, working carefully with trowel and fork, lift it bodily out of the soil. The blooms will typically be densely bunched. Gently tease the plants apart, then replant them in their new quarters a few inches apart, at the depth indicated by the colour of the leaves. A single bulb can increase threefold in a year. For galanthophiles who have paid handsomely for new forms, it’s an excellent return. **SCD**



Mark Griffiths is editor of the *New Royal Horticultural Society Dictionary of Gardening*

Next week Edible roots

Pomp and propaganda

Jeremy Musson explores the glorious detail unveiled in a new exhibition devoted to the late Stuart Age

THE frenetic output of art after the restoration of 1660 tells us much about the courtly patronage, relationships and influences of the later Stuart age (1660–1714).

In its first survey exhibition of the period since the 1960s, Tate Britain's 'British Baroque: Power and Illusion' puts art alongside furniture, silver and architectural drawings, including some items never shown in public before, to give a select and subtle—and at times dazzling—insight into a world quite as complex as our own confused age.

In the later Stuart decades, power ebbed away from the monarchy towards the great landed proprietors who dominated Parliament. Money men and merchants grew rich in a newly global world; Britain—and Europe—would never be the same again. One of the first paintings on display is Dirk Stoop's depiction of Charles II passing through temporary triumphal arches in a cavalcade through the City, in 1661. An equestrian portrait towards the end shows a Lord Mayor of London with pearl-encrusted sword, a figure so unbelievably grand that the subject was long thought to be the Grand Dauphin of France.

The early desire to put Charles II's Court on level pegging with its European equivalents shines out of Verrio's decorative schemes for the interiors of Windsor Castle and images of the King himself; the 'Windsor beauties', painted by Peter Lely, suggest vitality and youthful hopes. The tension of religious allegiances is told through Catholic artists, including John Michael Wright and the Flemish Jacob Huysmans. In one room, a portrait of



Benedetto Gennari's spectacular *Annunciation* (1686) for James II's chapel at Whitehall Palace

Charles II's queen, Catherine of Braganza, is hung, amusingly, if slightly unnervingly, between a Huysmans portrait of Charles II's natural son, the Duke of Monmouth, as John the Baptist, and Charles's mistress, the Duchess of Cleveland, and their son Charles Fitzroy, depicted by

Lely as the Virgin and Child. The knowing portrait of the Restoration Court wit Lord Rochester hangs opposite.

James II's world is evidenced by paintings by Benedetto Gennari, including *A Holy Family* (1682), painted for his second wife's Catholic oratory

at St James's Palace, and *The Annunciation* (1686), supplied for the Wren-designed Catholic chapel at Whitehall Palace. These make a telling contrast with Thornhill's pared-down interior grisaille decoration for the dome of St Paul's Cathedral, represented here in oil sketches



Left: **Equestrian Portrait of a Lord Mayor of London** by John Closterman. Right: **Lely's Mary Bagot, Countess of Falmouth and Dorset**

of about 1710. Wren's office drawings for St Paul's capture the breathtaking ambition of that national landmark.

Most remarkable are the two huge Wren-office unexecuted designs for the magnificent royal palace of Whitehall drawn by Hawksmoor, including one showing sculpture and decorative detailed inked in by Grinling Gibbons himself. The new Whitehall was not to be, but, as Anthony Geraghty observes in his catalogue essay: 'The vocabulary of princely magnificence was also exported to the English country house.'

Here, the Baroque found full expression in architecture and garden planning. Oil sketches by Verrio (for Burghley) and Laguerre (for Petworth and Chatsworth) give a vivid sense of the theatrical effects created in an age that loved illusion—also explored in a delightful room of still lifes by Verelst and Gow Ferguson, and *trompe l'oeils* by Samuel van Hoogstraten. Thornhill's sketchbooks are not to be missed.

A room dedicated to 'Beauty' displays full-length portraits of aristocratic women: the 'Hampton Court Beauties' by Godfrey Kneller and a pair of the 'Petworth Beauties' by Michael Dahl. The latter are displayed at full length for the first time since the late 1820s, when they were reduced in size by having their canvasses folded to create space for extra paintings to be hung below them (*Town and Country*, September 4, 2019).

From 1689 until 1714, Britain was almost continuously at war and paintings such as *The Battle of the Boyne* (1691), *William III at the siege of Namur* (1695) and *The Duke of Marlborough and the Earl of Cadogan on the Battlefield* (1714) give a flavour of the chaos and din of battle that was a subtext of these years. Wartime frugality and the poor health of Queen Anne may have dampened Court activities, but portraiture entered a new age of confidence, with Kneller emerging as a supreme figure. The potency of party politics

is illustrated by four members of the Kit-Cat Club from when the Whig Junto met in country houses to manage the nation's affairs. The exhibition closes with a vast 1710 group portrait by John James Baker (Kneller's drapery painter) conjuring just such a meeting, its elite clique posing as virtuosi and discussing antique coins and prints (alluding to military prowess) at the height of their power and just before defeat to the Tories in October 1710. The painting has never been on public display before and is an arresting image, reminding us that real power is always something of an illusion.

'British Baroque: Power and Illusion' is at Tate Britain, Millbank, London SW1, until April 19 (020-7887 8888; www.tate.org.uk)

Next week 'Art Deco by the Sea' at the Sainsbury Centre



Honoré Pelle's dynamic bust of Charles II, 1684, complete with full Restoration curls



Of gods and princes

The 'revitalised' list of exhibitors at Maastricht looks set to show quality over quantity, with Egyptian fragments, princely silver and a rare helmet, plus a notable van Gogh

THE mood among the exhibitors at TEFAF Maastricht (March 7 to 15) will be interesting. Last year, what was described as 'a revitalised selection procedure' was installed, whereby a number of longstanding participants were 'disinvited' in favour of newcomers. This year, I gather that perhaps 40 more veterans will not be returning and there will be 25 first-timers. This has produced a slightly lower total of 280 stands, which is to be welcomed. There has always been a turnover, of course, but it is to be hoped that the balance of specialities has not been much affected.

I have been looking at the 1997 handbook; only one of that year's five antiquities specialists—Mieke Zilverberg, the Amsterdam ancient coin dealer—is among



Fig 1: *Paysanne devant une Chaumière*, July 1885, by van Gogh, sold for £13 million. With Dickinson



Fig 2: **Fragments from an Egyptian relief dedicated to Hapi, god of the Nile.** With Charles Ede

this year's 13. Probably second in longevity is Charles Ede of London, which first showed in 1998, and I look forward to seeing its two limestone fragments from a relief dedicated to Hapi, god of the Nile (**Fig 2**).

This Hapi is not baboon-headed Hapi, son of Horus (often transliterated as 'Hapy' to differentiate them). The figures on the fragments are both the Nile god, representing his split personality as 'Lord of the Fish and Birds of the Marshes' for Upper Egypt and 'Lord of the River Bringing Vegetation' for Lower Egypt. If unbroken, it would show the figures tying plant stems around a hieroglyph proclaiming the

unity of the country. The relief dates from between 1279BC and 1155BC and comes with a strong provenance; the larger fragment measures 14¼in by 13¾in.

In the 1920s, a Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) Lonquan celadon dish (**Fig 3**) was on Halma-hera Island in the then Dutch East Indies, where it was photographed with locals and bought by an Italian. From Italy, the dish meandered through Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands and will now be shown by Vanderven of S-Hertogenbosch. It is splendid, with a 19½in diameter. Lonquan refers to green-glazed wares from a kiln complex in what is now the Zhejiang province of South China.

Provenance is the watchword nowadays and there is more with the silver dealers Koopman of London. Anne-Louis-Alexandre de Montmorency, 7th Prince de Robecq

Fig 3: **Ming dynasty Lonquan celadon dish.** With Vanderven

(1724–1812), was fortunate that his servants were not like Mme Defarge in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Rather than hunting him to the guillotine, his administrator, M. Pessey, bought one of the family's *châteaux* when the Prince emigrated during the Revolution and handed it back when he returned. In gratitude, the Prince, who had no male heir, left the *château* and its contents to the Pessey family.



Fig 4: **Silver-mounted carved coconut by Dutch silver-smith Andries Fredriksz.** With Koopman



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Fig 5: Etched burgonet, about 1560. With Runjeet Singh

The Montmorencys had a long military history and had been awarded this title by the first Bourbon king of Spain. The 7th Prince commanded Louis XVI's army in Flanders during the Seven Years War.

One of the works of art that remained in the Pessey family until recently will be a highlight of the Koopman stand. It is a carved coconut (**Fig 4**) in superb mounts by a distinguished member of a dynasty of Dutch silversmiths, Andries Fredriksz. (1566–1627), who was warden of the Amsterdam goldsmiths' guild 13 times between 1599 and 1625. The cup is 13½in high. Its circular base stands on four turtles with dolphins and shells and the stem is a siren on a dolphin. The coconut itself is carved as a fish and the fantastic Bosch-like silver

mounts make it the sort of *Kunstkammer* object that would have appealed to Emperor Rudolph II. It has an asking price in the region of £185,000.

Warwickshire-based Runjeet Singh, a dealer in East Asian arms and armour, has been awarded one of the fair's Showcase stands that give newer galleries a one-off chance to participate in the major international event. Many go on to become full exhibitors. Mr Singh has a truly cross-cultural offering—a rare etched burgonet (helmet) (**Fig 5**), made in Nuremberg in about 1560, but inspired by Ottoman patterns and demonstrating the fascination of European courts with the arms of their foes. It was captured by the Turks during the Austro-Turkish War of 1591 to 1606. Mr Singh says that he 'hopes its appearance on the market will delight all collectors who see it "in the steel"'. It will be priced at €90,000 (about £75,000).

The London dealer Blairman long ago moved away from classic English 18th- and early-19th-century furniture to specialise in the Arts and Crafts, but has never lost its admiration for earlier heroes, notably William Beckford and George Bullock. Both will feature prominently on this year's stand, which, as usual, will be unlike any other at Maastricht. Beckford was not only a folly builder, scandalous author, Maecenas collector and

patron, but also keenly involved in the design of furniture and works of art that he commissioned. An example is an 18th-century Chinese *famille noire* bowl (**Fig 7**), for which he conceived the silver-gilt mounts, made by John Robins, a London smith. The mounts carry Beckford's arms surrounded by martlets, one of his heraldic badges. The provenance becomes still more exotic: the bowl went to his daughter, the Duchess of Hamilton, and, after appearing in the Hamilton Palace sale in 1882, found its way to the Surrealist and patron Edward James, then to Christopher Gibbs, whose taste was impeccable.

Dickinson's £13 million van Gogh, *Paysanne devant une Chaumière* (**Fig 1**), has received much publicity because of its rediscovery after being sold for £4 in a 1967 country auction, for £45 in a North London junk



Fig 7: Chinese *famille noire* bowl with Beckford's silver-gilt mounts. With Blairman

shop in 1968 and \$1.7 million in 2001. It may also have been the first van Gogh ever sold, one of only two in his lifetime.

I look forward to other paintings shown by London galleries Richard Green and Mazzoleni (also of Turin). Richard Green has three works by an artist previously unknown to me, Achille Laugé (1861–1944), who was born near Carcassonne into a farming family. He was *bouleversé* by Seurat's *Grande Jatte* and, in still lifes such as *Nature morte au grenades* (**Fig 6**), he developed his own delicate adaptation of Pointillism. Another offering here will be a pastel by Federico Zandomenighi (1841–1917), *Jeune femme attachant un ruban* (**Fig 8**), which, to my mind, leaves Renoir nowhere,

Mazzoleni will have a particularly vibrant Futurist canvas by Giacomo Balla *Linee Forze di Mare—Rosa* (**Fig 9**), dating from about 1919. 🐦

Next week First results of 2020



Fig 6: *Nature morte au grenades* by Laugé. With Richard Green

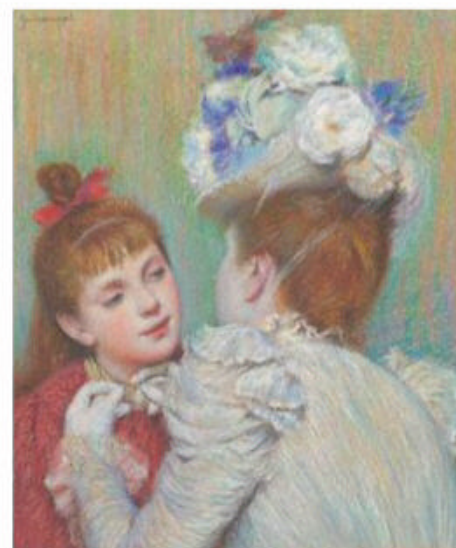


Fig 8: *Jeune femme attachant un Ruban* by Federico Zandomenighi. With Richard Green



Fig 9: *Linee Forze di Mare—Rosa*, 1919, by Balla. With Mazzoleni



Albion the brave

Two works illustrate the ambivalence—loyalty and pride mixed with disgust and anger—that playwrights, from Shakespeare to Alan Bennett, often display towards England



Daisy Edgar-Jones is wonderful as Zara, Audrey's wayward daughter, in the revival of Mike Bartlett's *Albion* at the Almeida

I APOLOGISE to readers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, but I wanted to focus this week on plays about England. This is not for nationalist reasons, but because I've recently seen, on successive nights, two works that deal with one part of our disunited kingdom.

One is a revival of Mike Bartlett's *Albion* at the Almeida (closing this weekend, but with plans for a TV broadcast). The other is the bluntly titled *Death of England* by Roy Williams

and Clint Dyer at the Dorfman. Both are extraordinary plays; both reveal the mix of love and loathing, admiration and anger, that dramatists display when they address the state of our nation.

You can see that ambivalence in the most famous of all speeches about England: the one by John of Gaunt in *Richard II*. How often one has heard politicians, looking for a bit of morale-boosting rhetoric, quote the lines about 'This earth

of majesty, this seat of Mars, this other Eden, demi-paradise'.

They conveniently forget, however, that the speech is a fierce attack on Richard's governance of the realm and concludes: 'That England that was wont to conquer others/Hath made a shameful conquest of itself.' The last time I heard those lines spoken on a public stage, as Parliamentarians grappled with the 2016 Referendum result, people broke into spontaneous applause.

Where Shakespeare led, others followed. I've noticed how often dramatists are caught in two minds when they address the subject of England. J. B. Priestley's fine play, *The Linden Tree* (1947), offers both a vigorous defence of the post-war Attlee government and an attack on the 'grey, chilly hollowness' of the trade unions and the civil service.

John Osborne, starting with *Look Back In Anger* in 1956, spent his whole career arguing

with an England that he clearly loved. Alan Bennett's *Forty Years On* (1968), set in a minor public school called Albion House, is full of wickedly funny parodies of a rapidly vanishing, class-bound England for whose passing it shows a nostalgic regret.

What is fascinating is that similar contradictions are present in the two more recent plays about England. *Albion's* director, Rupert Goold, has brought it back after three years because he says that 'plays, like plants, grow over time'. His argument is that, in 2017, Mr Bartlett's play tended to divide opinion, depending on which side you took in the Referendum. Now, he suggests, we live in more complicated times as we begin what he terms the act of 'national recalibration'.

‘It’s possible to love the country passionately yet also register uncertainty about what it stands for’

I see Mr Goold's point, but I would argue that *Albion* was always a richly ambiguous play that saw all sides of the argument about England. Its protagonist, Audrey, is a rich businesswoman who devotes her energies to restoring the ruined garden of her country house in the Cotswolds. She is driven by a desire to honour the memory of a son killed in a recent foreign war, but, in determining to rescue a garden that for her represents a lost England, Audrey alienates just about everybody. In attempting to create an Oxfordshire demi-paradise, Audrey learns the difficulty of living up to her dreams.

For me, the beauty of the play is that it taps into so many contradictory emotions. On the



The audience is swept along by the energy of Rafe Spall's solo performance as Michael in *Death of England*

simplest level, it appeals to our love for English gardens—in this case, one, exquisitely realised in Miriam Buether's design, that originally offered 'the chaos of Nature in a formal setting'. Although one sympathises with Audrey's longing to re-create a piece of the past, one understands the scepticism of her leftish, lesbian novelist chum, who stands for progress and the present. Mr Bartlett frequently invokes *The Cherry Orchard* and, as in Chekhov's play, one is torn between conflicting responses: a nostalgia for a lost world and a recognition of the need for change.

I should add that you won't currently find a better performance in London than that of Victoria Hamilton as Audrey: she is both brisk entrepreneur and romantic dreamer, and her features become a mirror to her soul. There is wonderful work from Daisy Edgar-Jones as her wayward daughter, Nigel Betts as her consort-like husband and Margot Leicester as

a permanently disgruntled cleaner who finds herself supplanted by a hyper-efficient Pole—another aspect of a play that puts a large slice of contemporary England on stage and shows us wrestling with a crisis of identity.

Death of England takes us into a very different world. Performed with furious energy by Rafe Spall, it shows an aggressive Eastender, Michael, coming to terms with the death of his flower-seller father and the poisonous legacy he inherited from him.

The father, it would seem, was an archetypal little Englander who died just as his beloved nation was being knocked out of the football World Cup. However, Michael discovers that there was another side to his dad. He learns that the old man would periodically retreat to a room owned by an Asian friend where he would read, chat and express his desire to create a better world for his son. The Asian tells Michael: 'Your father was a confused man, a lonely man, much like his country.'

It is clear what the writers are trying to do: to show that the notion of 'Englishness' is extremely complex and that an aggressive form of patriotism springs from a lifetime's resentment at being lied to by the powers that be. I suspect there is an element of wish-fulfilment to the notion that there is a buried idealism lurking behind white working-class anger.

However, one is swept along by the vigour of the writing, by the tornado-like onslaught of Mr Spall's solo performance and by the ingenuity of Mr Dyer's production, which treats the audience as willing accomplices. In the end, one is confronted by the contradiction that runs through almost every play about England: that it's possible to love the country passionately yet also register uncertainty about what it stands for and where it's heading. 🐼
'*Albion*' at the Almeida, N1, until February 29 (020-7359 4404); '*Death of England*' at the Dorfman, SE1, until March 7 (020-7452 3000)

Crossword

A prize of £15 in book tokens will be awarded for the first correct solution opened. Solutions must reach Crossword No 4618, COUNTRY LIFE, Pinehurst II, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF, by **Tuesday, March 3**. UK entrants only.

- ACROSS
- DOWN
- 4 Code Tim’s adapted for home help? (8)

8 Journey by country road? Not in this, surely! (8)

9 Good fellow given brief look (6)

10 Part of year mute mimers recollected (10)

11 One who is barely recognisable on certain beaches? (6)

12 Turncoat with a job at Edinburgh initially (8)

15 Fed up about introduction of premium on armaments (8)

16 Stress originally on really small songbird (8)

21 Quick way to get an Eton crop, perhaps? (5,3)

22 Symbol English doctor associated with the French male (6)

23 Varsity sportsperson with courage—a six-footer? (10)

26 Gloomy woman’s man, briefly (6)

27 Reportedly is familiar with seedy bar, getting quick drop? (4,4)

28 Characteristics of exploits involving Yorkshire river (8)
- 1 Outdo husband, securing one major achievement (7)

2 Society woman’s junk mail (4)

3 Just method for building navigable channel (7)

4 Food shop in Asian capital, say? (4)

5 Graduate receiving a bloke in deep purplish red (7)

6 Treat someone to drink, accepting one’s initial view (10)

7 Tooth in Channel Islands? So right (7)

13 Restriction on amphetamine hopefully observed by drivers! (5,5)

14 Vessels taking more than one sheep across river? (5)

17 Get together to build reaping and threshing machine (7)

18 Acrobat’s drinking glass (7)

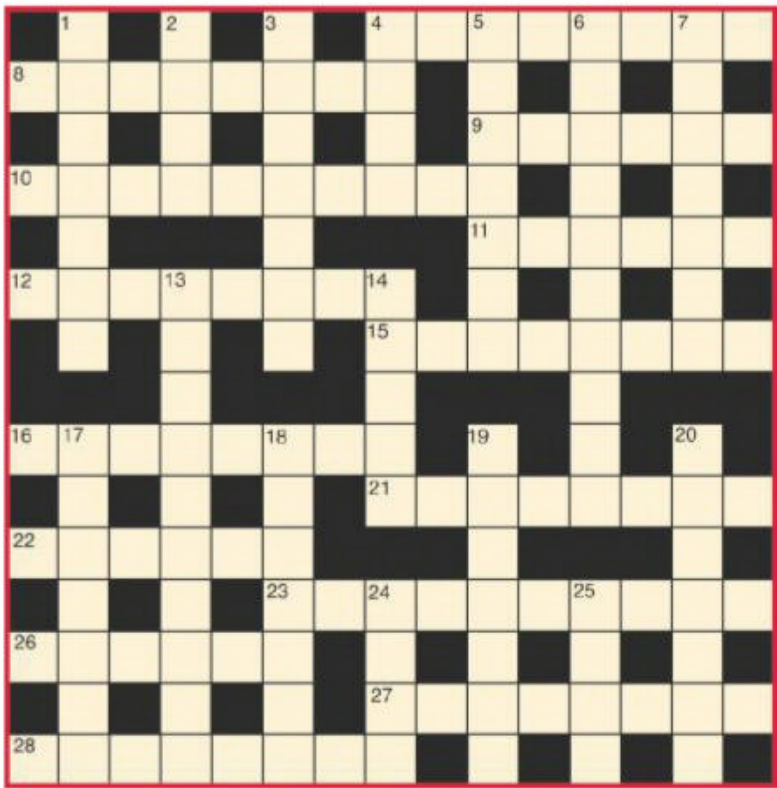
19 Shell a street, showing pomposity (7)

20 Survive? Not in wicked uprising (7)

24 Upper-class sailors on top of such vessels (4)

25 It rises and falls in Lowestoft, I declare (4)

4618 CASINA



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SOLUTION TO 4617 (Winner will be announced in two weeks’ time)

ACROSS: 1, Lassitude; 6, Study; 10, Hit it off; 11, Launch; 12, Green peppers; 14, Gala; 15, Trifecta; 18, Brasilia; 19, Vary; 21, Tied cottages; 24, Adhere; 25, Cheerier; 26, Addle; 27, Feldspars.

DOWN: 2, Acid; 3, Stingrays; 4, Trowel; 5, Definite article; 7, Thump; 8, Decorators; 9, Sloe gin; 13, Fair-minded; 16, Eavesdrop; 17, Allowed; 20, Agreed; 22, Dwell; 23, Near.

Winner of 4616 is Isobel Radcliffe, Hampshire

Bridge Andrew Robson

WE return to Istanbul and the 9th European Open Championships. My morning routine began with a swim in the fine pool, followed by a stroll along the promenade, necessitating a dash across a main highway. Returning to the hotel in time to play at 10am on one morning, I found myself without glasses. Disaster—if you can’t see the difference between the Ace of Diamonds and the Ace of Hearts, you’re not going to play well. I ran back to the aforementioned busy road and miraculously found my glasses in the gutter. Phew!

Declarer played our first Istanbul deal quite beautifully. Plan the play in Four Spades after West, who has opened the bidding with One Heart, cashes the Ace-King of Clubs and switches to the ten of Diamonds.

Dealer West
Neither Vulnerable

♠ 10853

♥ K87

♦ AK32

♣ 109

♠ 7

♥ AJ954

♦ 10987

♣ AK3

♠ 962

♥ 63

♦ Q65

♣ Q8754

♠ AKQJ4

♥ Q102

♦ J4

♣ J62

South	West	North	East
1♠	1♥	Pass	Pass
2NT(2)	Pass	2♥(1)	Pass

(1) Showing a good Spade raise, the unassuming cue bid.
(2) Suggesting an alternative game, sensible given his no-trumpy Heart holding.
(3) Wisely choosing the nine-card Spade fit because of his weak Clubs

Declarer won the third trick with dummy’s Ace of Diamonds and drew trumps in three rounds, West throwing two Hearts. He crossed to the King of Diamonds and ruffed a third Diamond. He ruffed his third Club and ruffed dummy’s fourth Diamond. The elimination was complete.

Declarer’s last three cards were his Queen-ten-two of Hearts, dummy’s were King-eight-seven of Hearts and West was down to Ace-Knave-nine of Hearts. Declarer exited with the Queen of Hearts (key play). West had to win—or declarer could lead towards the King. However, after taking his Ace, West had to lead from his Knave-nine, declarer running the nine to his ten and scoring the last trick

with dummy’s King. Ten tricks and game made.

On our second Istanbul deal, you receive the ten of Clubs lead versus your Six Notrumps. The duplication of values in Hearts is disappointing. You’ll need two extra tricks from Spades and Diamonds. Plan the play.

Dealer South
East-West Vulnerable

♠ J54

♥ KQJ

♦ AJ753

♣ A2

♠ —

♥ 852

♦ KQ102

♣ 1097653

♠ Q108763

♥ 9763

♦ 84

♣ 8

♠ AK92

♥ A104

♦ 96

♣ KQJ4

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT(1)	Pass	3♠(2)	Pass
3NT	Pass	4NT(3)	Pass
6NT(4)	End		

(1) Showing 15–19 and forcing to game facing a Two-over-One response.
(2) Showing his delayed (that is, three-card) Spade support in case there’s a five-three fit.
(3) Quantitative Notrump slam invitation.
(4) Holding a couple more points than he may have had.

You should test Diamonds first, because, if West holds the miracle King-Queen-low, you’ll not need any extra Spade tricks. You win the Ace of Clubs, cross to the King (interestingly, East discarding) and lead a Diamond, West flying up with the King, indicative of his holding the Queen. You let his King hold the trick, win his passive Heart return in hand and lead your second Diamond to the Knave (winning).

However, the Ace of Diamonds that follows sees East discard (you letting go the two of Spades). You try the King of Hearts and both opponents follow.

You know West began with six Clubs, four Diamonds and at least two Hearts. He has either no Spades or only one. You’re now confident of success and your slam will land unless West has a bare Queen of Spades.

You lead dummy’s Knave of Spades, planning to run it. East covers with the Queen and you win the King and see West discard. You now cross to dummy’s Queen of Hearts and lead a second Spade to your nine. Twelve tricks and slam made.

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Small, but mighty: schools that punch above their weight

In praise of preps: why they still offer the best education

Five things every parent should know

Who heads the Olympic medal table?

Punching above their weight

Small independent schools can still give larger rivals a run for their money in terms of academic results, facilities and individuality.

Madeleine Silver finds out how they manage to hold their own



Yorkshire is known to be a running Mecca and Giggleswick pupils take full advantage of the 200-acre grounds on the edge of the Dales

I THINK people are often put off by the word “small”, admits Leweston’s new headmaster John Paget-Tomlinson, where the senior-school tally sits at only 202, ‘but the massive advantage is the attention that can be given—dare I say lavished—on individuals. Having worked in a school of nearly 1,000, I’ve seen that a child can get completely lost in the grey middle. I think that, more than anything else, parents want their children to be known and valued as individuals.’

For the mother of identical twin girls who started at the Dorset school last term, the modest head count has added prominence. ‘In a small environment, everybody gets to know them as individuals rather than just as “the twins”,’ says Anne-Louise Bellis. ‘The beauty is that, as parents, you know the whole cohort and the children do as well.’

Having looked at a smorgasbord of sprawling public schools, mother of three daughters Simone Truett and her husband settled on Heathfield in Berkshire, which has 191 girls on the register. ‘The fact that it’s a small school was one of the main draws. Often schools promise to cater for your child’s individual needs, but it’s logistically impossible, even with the best will in the world,’ says Mrs Truett. ‘Heathfield seemed the best prepared to be *in loco parentis*. We love the fact that the headmistress, Marina Gardiner Legge, maintains that, if we call at any time, she absolutely knows who our child is and what’s going on.’

The headmistress of Milton Abbey, Judith Fremont-Barnes, confirms: ‘You don’t have that horrible thing where someone walks down the corridor towards you and you issue a height-appropriate comment. We know,

when we see a piece of work, that for one child it might be a triumph and for another it might not be good enough. The real joy is that you can follow up on a child’s individual interests. Last year, we had a boy who developed an interest in millinery, so he and the art teacher formed a hat club of two.’

Merchiston Castle School’s headmaster Jonathan Anderson acknowledges that the smaller environment doesn’t suit every child. ‘Some boys will thrive being a smaller fish in a big pond and others will enjoy being a bigger fish in a smaller pond,’ he says, ‘but one advantage we have is that we can be much more attuned to the changes boys make as they develop and react quicker.’

Similarly, Mrs Gardiner Legge recognises that the success of her girls often relies on them being motivated. She suggests: ‘If you are academically really competitive and



Unsurprisingly, outdoor life is key at the 300-acre Glenalmond College in Perthshire, where pupils climb Munros and kayak in lochs

need a group of 30 girls with whom you're always competing to be at the top, you will be happier in a bigger school arena.'

Any concerns about limited opportunities and facilities are quashed by heads of small schools. 'In a smaller school you do everything,' says Mrs Gardiner Legge. 'It's not a case of "drama is other people's thing", and that participation really engenders confidence.'

For Mr Paget-Tomlinson, the 'facilities arms race' that has unfolded at some bigger schools is not something that worries him. 'We have the facilities that allow pupils to engage in any activities they want—whether it's the pottery workshop, darkroom or indoor pool—but I would guess that they aren't in as great a depth,' he says.

‘Parents don't say it's a shame we don't have a 3D printer. Ultimately, it's about the community,’

'However, when we talk to parents, they tell us how much they enjoy the friendships their children are making and the opportunities they are getting here—they don't say it's a shame we don't have a 3D printer. Ultimately, it's about the community that these small schools create.'

Learning how to get on with other people in these close-knit communities, says Mrs Fremont-Barnes, is one of the most valuable outcomes. 'If you fall out with your peers, you can't go and find another group, you have to work at your relationships,' she says. 'I think that's useful for life in the boardroom, but it's also terribly useful for life with a mother-in-law—whom you also probably haven't chosen.'

Small, but mighty

Christ College, Brecon

343 pupils aged 11–18, boarding and day

The surrounding Brecon Beacons National Park is not wasted here: it supports studies in the creative arts, sciences and geography, as well as sport. Ambitious productions include *Scrooge the Musical*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Beauty and the Beast*, with pupils mentored by professionals for on- and back-stage roles. Rugby is run in partnership with Cardiff Blues and hockey with Hockey Wales.

Dunottar, Surrey

405 pupils aged 11–18, day

Until 2014, Dunottar was all-girls, but, since going co-ed, the proportion of boys has grown to 45%-plus of students and, in 2017, it welcomed its first headmaster, Mark Tottman, who has been credited with prompting a swift rise in popularity. A state-of-the-art sixth-form centre opened in 2019, with a university-style work space, cafe and recreation area. Lunch breaks can be taken off-site and relationships with teachers become more informal.

Ellesmere College, Shropshire

399 pupils aged 13–18, boarding and day

Unlike many bigger rivals in the Midlands, Ellesmere is academically non-selective; the philosophy is that success means doing the very best you can. On the sports field, the school attracts the best, with academies for seven sports—Ellesmerians have achieved international recognition in rugby, swimming, sailing, canoeing, tennis and shooting in the past five years. With a rural setting, the outdoor-pursuit programme is in high demand.

Giggleswick School, North Yorkshire

340 pupils aged 11–18, boarding and day

Size hasn't hampered any investment in facilities and opportunities; over the past

10 years, a £1.5 million sports hall, indoor climbing wall, purpose-built dining hall, art studio and theatre have been added to the 200-acre Giggleswick campus, set on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales. Although academic achievement is encouraged, what happens outside the classroom is equally valued. Everything is played out with an injection of northern charm—and grit.

Glenalmond College, Perthshire

360 pupils aged 12–18, boarding and day

Set in 300 acres within touching distance of the Highlands, but only an hour from Edinburgh and Glasgow, Glenalmond has been described as the most beautiful school in Scotland. It's unashamedly about more than passing exams; the pipes-and-drums band has played for members of the Royal Family, the school has one of the highest success rates in the UK for completion of Gold and Silver Duke of Edinburgh Awards and pupils are encouraged to climb nearby Munros and kayak on lochs.

Godolphin, Wiltshire

380 girls aged 11–18, boarding and day

As its 300th anniversary looms, the school—only a five-minute walk from Salisbury city centre—continues to honour founder Elizabeth Godolphin's belief in the power of education to transform young women's lives. The Inspiring Bright Minds programme encourages them to learn beyond their textbooks, whether it's the Mandarin club or editing the School Gazette; pupils are frequently crowned Under-19 National lacrosse champions and the CCF is in high demand.

Gordonstoun, Morayshire

430 girls and boys aged 13–18, boarding and day

Students make regular trips into the wilderness and the school's coastal location ➤

School life



Banging the drum for the smaller school: pupils at Loretto on the East Lothian coast enjoy myriad adventures, from the CCF to golf

means that sailing is high on the agenda. Every pupil is a member of one of the school's nine community and rescue services, whether following in the footsteps of former student The Duke of Edinburgh by being part of the coastguard or by becoming a retained firefighter in the school's own service, which attends real emergencies as part of Scotland's fire and rescue service.

Hampton Court House, Surrey

108 pupils aged 13–18, day

Sixth-form lessons at Hampton Court House, only 35 minutes from London Waterloo on the train, start at 1.30pm and finish at 7pm to accommodate late-night teenage sleep patterns. The innovation is paying off: 83.3% of pupils garnered A*-B grades at A level last year. Set in its own private parkland, the school has an ethos that children need guided freedom to thrive; staff, including the headmaster Guy Holloway, are addressed by their first names and a 'dress code' replaces a formal uniform.

Heathfield, Berkshire

191 girls aged 11–18, boarding and day

Headmistress Marina Gardiner Legge wholeheartedly celebrates Heathfield's modest size: 'An education is about interaction with

adults and peers and that chance is much greater in a smaller school.' Heathfield celebrated its 120th anniversary last year, a new £1.5 million sixth-form centre is in the making, the English department had its most successful year to date in 2019 with all girls gaining A* or A grades at A Level and pupils continue to hold their own against prominent boys' schools on the polo field.

Kilgraston, Perthshire

225 girls aged 13–18, boarding and day

It has recently invested in a £1 million science centre, which has already paid dividends. 'We are bucking the national trend of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects with 60% of pupils pursuing a university course in that topic, representing a hefty 22% in subject uptake,' points out headmistress Dorothy MacGinty. Set in Perthshire's rolling hills, Kilgraston is the only school in Scotland with equestrian facilities on campus.

King's Bruton, Somerset

343 pupils aged 13–18, boarding and day

When The Queen opened the new Queen Elizabeth Music School last year to mark its 500th anniversary, it threw the school into the spotlight. The curriculum in sixth

form is a flexible mix of A Levels and BTECs, the school's hockey teams have been to 12 national finals in the past seven years and the chapel choir regularly sings choral evensong at regional cathedrals.

Leweston, Dorset

202 pupils aged 11–18, boarding and day

More than 40 staff and students turn up for the Friday lunchtime run each week and the challenging campus course set among the school's 46 acres has helped secure an impressive cross-country record. It's one of only nine pentathlon academies in the UK—with national and European title holders and British team members among its alumni—and is carving a reputation as a serious competitor in equestrian sport.

Loretto, East Lothian

390 pupils aged 11–18, boarding and day

Set in 85 acres of leafy campus just outside Edinburgh on the beautiful East Lothian coast, Loretto is Scotland's oldest boarding school. Former Scottish Rugby Union captain Jason White is head of sport and the school is home to the Loretto Golf Academy, attracting young players from across the world. The adventure programme includes indoor and outdoor rock climbing, canoeing



Left: Artistic skills to the fore at Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh. Right: Girls at Kilgraston, Perthshire, thrive in STEM subjects

and stand-up paddle boarding and there's an impressive take up for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh
430 boys aged 13–18, boarding and day
 'When boys join us, there's an expectation that they're going to get involved,' says Jonathan Anderson, headmaster of the only remaining all-boys' boarding and day school in Scotland. Sport is one area in which it excels; more than 60 Merchistonians have played senior international rugby and 24 have played international cricket. 'We go toe-to-toe with some of our big Edinburgh rivals and we're successful more often than not.'

Milton Abbey School, Dorset
220 pupils aged 13–18, boarding and day
 'We have a proud tradition of nurturing people who aren't necessarily "school shaped",' says headmistress Judith Fremont-Barnes. 'A lot of our children don't perform at their best behind a desk, but get them behind a camera, in the hospitality kitchen or on the shoot and they can do something extraordinary.' The school's small size means that everyone gets a chance: 'Very often, we'll have 90% of our students out representing the school in a team jersey at the weekend.'

Monkton Combe School, Bath
394 pupils aged 13–18, boarding and day
 'Everyone knows everyone, so no one falls between the cracks,' says principal Chris Wheeler about Monkton, on a ridge three miles from Bath with wonderful views. It's big on pastoral care and doesn't shy away from its Christian ethos. 'We actively celebrate failure with a slot in the weekly principal's assembly allowing pupils to talk to the whole school about things that have gone wrong and how they have learned from their mistakes.'

Moreton Hall, Shropshire
330 girls aged 11–18, boarding and day
 There's a big push for enterprise here; Moreton Enterprises is a sixth-form-led in-house business; the Directors' Table gives students the chance to meet successful business people and Moreton Connect is a network of contacts among parents and Old Moretonians that pupils can access. There's a new community theatre and, in 2019, the school won the U14 National Lacrosse Championships.

Queen's College, London W1
376 girls aged 11–18, day
 Occupying four large houses on Harley Street, Queen's College is academically selective, but class sizes are small enough to focus

on individual talents. It makes the most of being in the capital, with trips to museums, galleries and theatres, all of which inspire particular enthusiasm for music and drama. Recent whole-school shows include *Twelfth Night* and *The Sound of Music* and there's a full lunchtime and after-school schedule of activities, from guitar group to coding club.

Queen Margaret's, York
261 girls aged 11–18, boarding and day
 Boarding is arranged by year group: the first two years are spent in a cosy farmhouse with an adjacent den and, by their final year, girls will have moved into The Cottages, where day-to-day life offers greater freedom. Academically, maths and science are among the strongest subjects and beyond the classroom the activities are extensive; there's a riding school, dance opportunities range from hip hop to ballet and there's an outlet for aspiring songwriters, the 'Songwriter's Collective'.

St Mary's Ascot, Berkshire
390 girls aged 11–18, boarding and day
 Results at this leading Catholic boarding school (where the 20 day girls are called 'day boarders' to reflect their immersion in school life) are high flying; 94.9% achieved A*-B grades at A Level last year. The small ➤

School life

size means the community is also close knit—with the chapel at its heart—and founder Mary Ward's prediction that 'women in time will come to do much' can come to fruition.

St Mary's Calne, Wiltshire

360 girls aged 11–18, boarding and day

Founded in 1873, St Mary's boasts impressive exam results—86% of girls secure A*-B grades at A-Level—but its small size means every pupil is known, with a dedicated tutor to support her through all aspects of school life, from organisational skills and subject choices to university application. Sport results reflect the extensive facilities, which include a six-lane swimming pool, dance studio, 24 tennis courts and an Astro-turf field. The Chamber Choir is internationally acclaimed.

St Mary's Shaftesbury, Dorset

183 girls aged 11–18, boarding and day

Set in a 55-acre estate, the Catholic faith is at the heart of the school, whether through formal sung Mass or night prayers; each new girl is given a 'guardian angel'—an existing pupil who will help her settle in. The purpose-built art department buzzes well into the evening and nearly all pupils get involved in the theatre productions, if not on stage then helping with costume and set design, or lighting and sound engineering.

St Michael's School, Carmarthenshire

315 pupils aged 11–18, boarding and day

Tucked away in the village of Bryn, overlooking the Gower Peninsular, this understated school has garnered a reputation for academic rigour; 92% of pupils achieved A*-B



Above: Riding at Queen Margaret's, York. *Below:* Monkton Combe boys on the Bath water

grades at A Level last year. Although maths and science are renowned areas of success, importance is also given to creative subjects. The art department is housed in a new block on a hill with views across to the Gower and the photography club is in high demand.

Tudor Hall, Oxfordshire

325 girls aged 11–18, boarding and day

Since Martha Todd housed three pupils in her house in 1851 as the 'Establishment for Young Ladies', numbers have multiplied many times over. Today, the school boasts a new £6.2 million teaching centre, with innovative spaces for the core subjects, as well as the creative arts, ceramics, photography, textiles

and food. The career paths of alumni, from designer Patsy Seddon to racing presenter Francesca Cumani, are equally diverse.

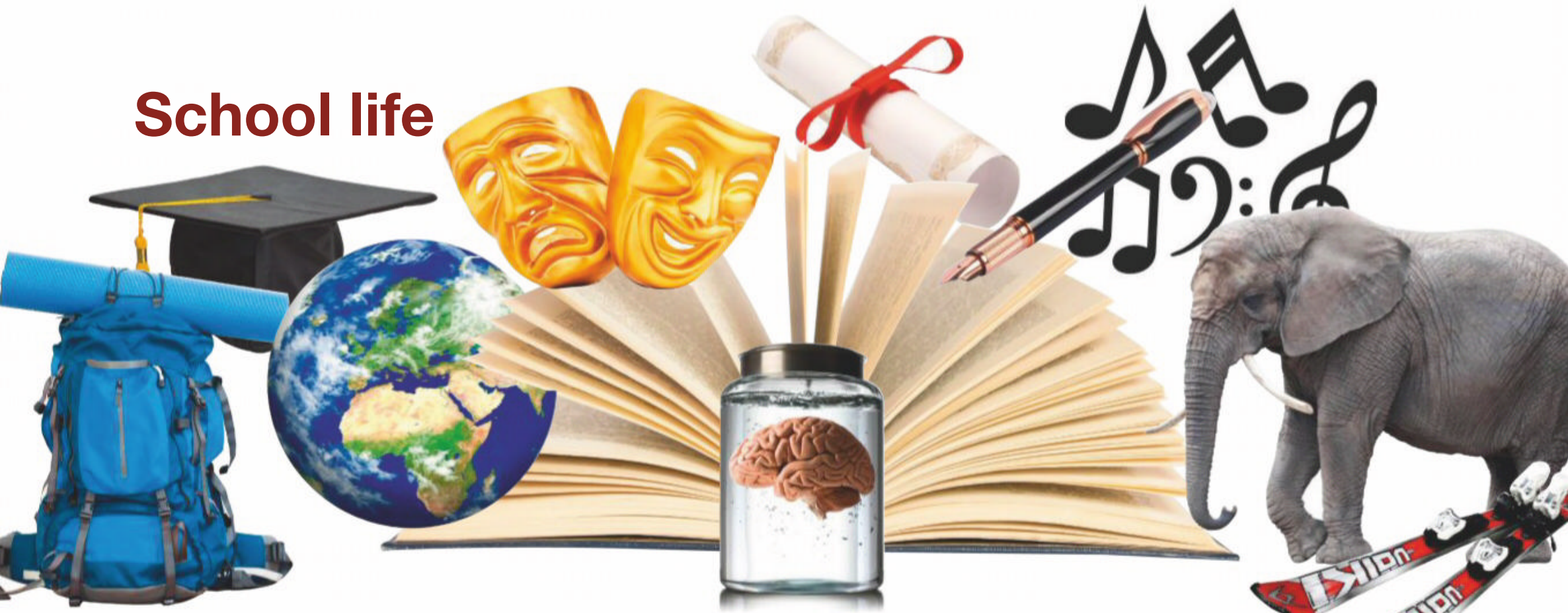
Westbourne School, Glamorgan

158 pupils aged 11–18, boarding and day

Located in the seaside town of Penarth, near Cardiff, Westbourne's results match those of much bigger powerhouses—40% of its GCSE grades last year were A* and it was awarded the International Baccalaureate School of the Year by *The Times* in 2018—but it still manages to remain non-selective, achieving results through small class sizes, one-to-one academic support and a heavy dose of pastoral care. 🐦



School life



Down with CE, up with PSB

The latest acronym to bamboozle prep-school parents is the PSB—the Pre-Senior Baccalaureat—which will be the qualification of choice in some 40 schools by autumn. It promises to develop and measure a broader range of skills—music, design & technology and sport, for example—than the traditional Common Entrance (CE) exam.

Pupils will study much the same core curriculum as that of CE, but the PSB aims to develop the softer skills employers and secondary schools say they want: communication, leadership, independence, reviewing and improving, thinking and learning.

‘Senior schools are looking for these soft skills more and more—how children interpret, think critically and so on,’ explains William Goldsmith, head of St George’s School Windsor Castle, which is moving to the PSB. ‘We’re not changing what we teach, only how we teach those skills we know are crucial for employability.’

Let’s get flexible

It’s no secret that full boarding is becoming an increasingly hard sell. Apart from the cost, sending children ‘away’, particularly pre-teens, troubles today’s parents. This term, traditional Buckinghamshire prep school Caldicott allowed Years 4 and 5 to board weekly for the first time.

‘Saturday school has taken a back seat because of both parents working, commuting and wanting more family time at weekends,’ agrees Jeremy Wyld, head of St Hugh’s prep in Lincolnshire, ‘but we’ve seen a real uptake in ad hoc boarding.’

‘The maximum children board now is two or three nights a week,’ adds Susi Blithe, a houseparent at Northamptonshire prep Beachborough. ‘The secondary schools we feed are dropping weekly boarding in favour of flexi, too.’ Even Wellington College allows pupils to go home almost every week, despite its prospectus claim that it is ‘not a weekly-boarding school’.

Five things every parent should know

Lucy Higginson tackles five burning issues in education

Death of the gap year

The traditional ‘gap yah’ is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. More sixth-formers are content to press straight on to university and those who do take a year out are using it very differently. In a white-hot job market, they aim to support degree choices and career aspirations, such as developing language skills or working with wildlife. Cost is a factor, as is the increased number of internships on offer.

‘The change I’ve noticed is people wanting to go away for a shorter time. Volunteering has dropped and the growth now is in two- and three-week programmes involving some culture and adventure,’ says Jane Mclellan of Real Gap Experience.

Training for character

Like it or not, this is no longer incidental to school life; last year, OFSTED announced that it will monitor how schools ‘develop character’. Although many of us assume that the hurly-burly of team selections, debating, community service, expeditions and other aspects of independent-school life ensure children grow up rounded and grounded, this—apparently—is not enough.

Last term, Eton hosted a conference to ‘consider character education from theory through to delivery’. For co-host Julia Harrington, headmistress of Queen Anne’s School Reading and founder of educational neuroscience research centre BrainCanDo, it’s about

‘developing your inner compass and your own resources’.

Such efforts may seem heavy handed when co-curricular life is so rich. ‘But [character development] doesn’t only come through co-curricular work and we have to look at what we can do to improve it,’ says Mrs Harrington. ‘We need it to be an everyday part of life, not only something you learn from a hillside expedition.’

For her, the purpose of the Eton conference was to inform teachers about the adolescent brain, how bad habits and negativity spread through peer groups—‘so much attitude of mind is catching’.

Not going to university

As business leaders increasingly find that graduates are woefully unprepared for working life and students become more dissatisfied with the cost and contact hours of a British degree, ‘uni’ is not the only way. Those who can afford it look to the US and others bypass university altogether, encouraged by the rise in prestigious schemes and degree apprenticeships offered by firms such as PWC, KMPG and Deloitte.

‘University is a big financial decision,’ says Carole Hall, head of careers at Sheffield Girls’ and a careers consultant across the Girls’ Day School Trust (GDST). ‘Some of these degree apprenticeships with global companies can put you in a fantastic position.’

Charlie Steel bypassed university after Eton, when work experience at a headhunting firm turned into an internship and, ultimately, a job offer. ‘I’ve never regretted it,’ he says. ‘I was quite nervous about being judged for not having a qualification, but it encouraged me to work hard and time is on your side—I’m usually the youngest person at my level.’

‘Companies are getting better at advertising themselves in the right places, using websites such as www.notgoingtouni.co.uk, and careers advisers are better informed,’ adds Mrs Hall, although she warns: ‘The best ones are massively competitive.’

In praise of preps

Traditional prep-school education is alive, well and continually evolving, finds Kate Green, and it still provides the best start in life

Illustrations by Annabelle King





School life

FROGSPAWN and guinea pigs, dens and muddy puddles, riddles and Latin verbs, sailing and cricket—we still expect prep schools to offer this nostalgic, homespun idyll, but with a 21st-century twist: the jolly japes and scrapes enjoyed at Linbury Court by Anthony Buckeridge's accident-prone creation Jennings, but minus the privations and incompetence of the anarchic Nigel Molesworth's dreadful alma mater, St Custard's.

The joy of today's prep schools is that they can be both mildly eccentric and academically excellent, proudly traditional and cutting edge. They can be small or large; single or mixed sex; day, flexi- or full-boarding; in London or on Dartmoor;



beside the sea or in a cathedral cloisters. Many have enviable settings that cannot help but propagate happiness. Algebra and grammar will still be taught, but alongside robotics, Mandarin and mindfulness.

‘The “soft skills”—that’s the rest of the world catching up with what prep schools have done forever,’

This first-class education doesn't come cheap, however, and there's a media narrative that suggests some establishments struggle to compete with rising standards in State primaries and an understandable reluctance to pay fees until senior school. However, Christopher King, chief executive of the Independent Association of Preparatory Schools (IAPS), argues that such comparisons are often based on SATS results, which do not reflect a good school's curriculum, and that none of the 630 UK schools in his organisation have closed.

‘The IAPS has been around for 126 years. If it had stayed still, it would be dead in the water,’ he observes, ‘but it’s adapted to circumstances and made itself relevant to today’s parents. One of our strengths is diversity—there’s a school for you.

‘Some parents look for a brand name, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, because such places have made their reputations, but it won't be right for every child. Some put emphasis on the academic side and preparation for prestigious senior schools; others the holistic education or sporting side. Many schools have developed very good learning support and parents who feel their children need bolstering and boosting will be reassured by that.’

Mr King cites the number of specialist staff in a prep school as being a key advantage, plus less tangible benefits. ‘The “soft” skills—leadership, collaboration and so on—that’s the rest of the world catching up with what prep schools have done forever. These life skills are terribly important; every prep-school head has always known that.’

Simon Barber is the third-generation headmaster of Ludgrove, a famously successful rarity in preserving its all-boys, all-boarding tradition. ‘Geography, reputation and brilliant staff all play a role—we're lucky to be able to do what we feel is good,’ he says.

‘After the first weekend of term, I said at assembly: “I just wish we could bottle what we’ve had this weekend.” You could question why we do boarding, but to watch boys charging around, having a blast, is wonderful. We're full on, a great balance between home and school.

‘It's camps, pottery, playing Virus—boys being boys. It's homely, but there's autonomy to choose, which is empowering.’

A few miles away, David Paterson, the fourth member of his family to run Woodcote House, presides over what is perhaps the archetype traditional boys' prep. ‘We have stayed small, as parents pay a lot of money and it behoves us to keep classes small,’ he explains. ‘You’ve also got a lot more chance of finding something for a child to shine at and we really can enforce old-fashioned traditions of respect and manners.

‘I don't believe children of that age need flashy facilities—they need the right environment,’ he adds. ‘Lovely as sports halls are, they don't really make a difference in the long run. I wouldn't want to join the arms race. The boys seem to love the character of the place.’

Howzat: 160 not out

Lambrook in Berkshire, which celebrates its 160th anniversary this year, typifies the art of survival in a competitive area. The school's first headmaster, Robert Burnside, tutored Queen Victoria's grandchildren, two of whom, Prince Christian Victor and Prince Albert, attended Lambrook—their grandmother came to matches, accompanied by members of the Household Cavalry.

By the 1980s, there were 140 boys, all boarding; following a 12-year merger with Haileybury Junior in Windsor, it became co-ed—there are now 569 pupils including pre-prep. Old Lambrookians will recognise the elegant grounds, golf course, chapel and main house, but will be goggle-eyed at the spanking £6 million development.

Mr Paterson is also a believer in Common Entrance (CE), which is being discarded by some other preps. ‘I still think it's a good exercise. It may be more about placement than anything else now, but it's good training for GCSEs and a 13-year-old boy needs an academic focus. It's also a source of pride—it shows that they're good enough to get into their next school—and it has gravitas.’

Knighton House in Dorset has dropped CE in favour of the KED



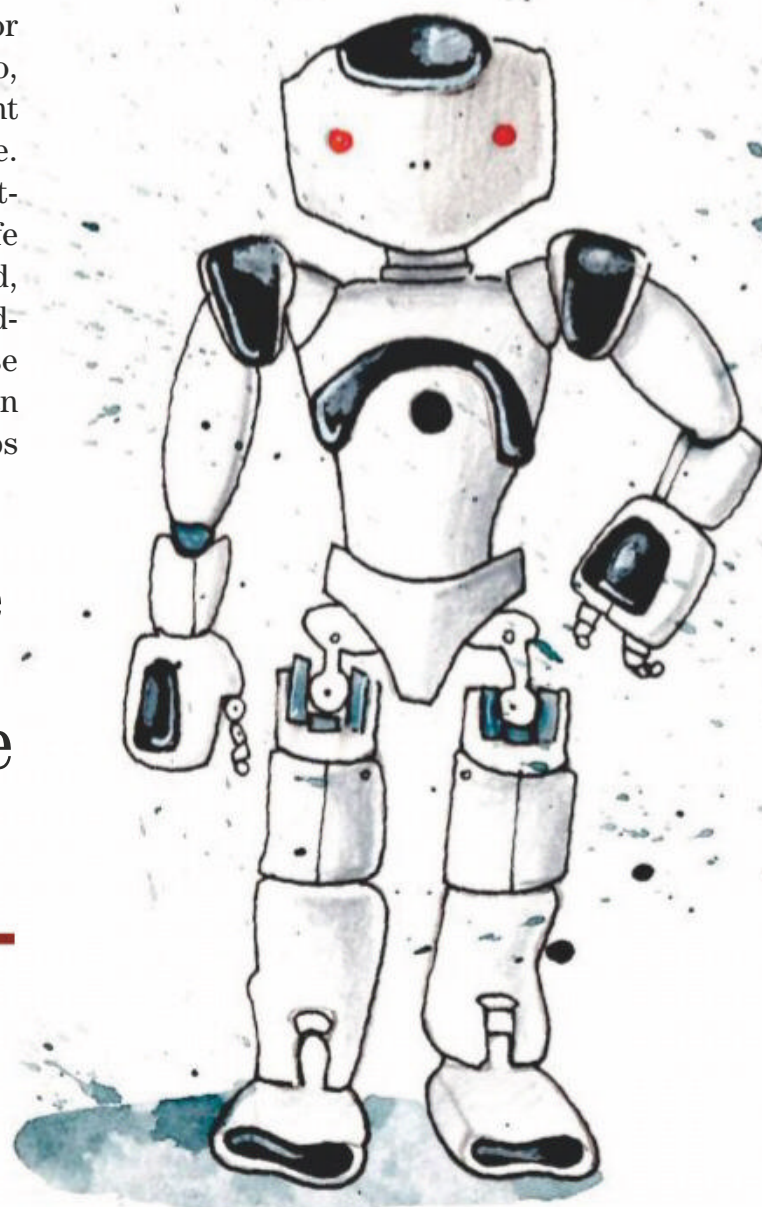
(Knowledge, Enlightenment and Discovery) curriculum, but, in other respects, it's the female equivalent of the Boys' Own education; dungaree-clad pupils get up early to bring their ponies in from the fields and most of the staff own a dog.

'Exam structure can take up to 12 weeks of teaching a year,' argues headmaster Robin Gainher, who teaches history, owns a Lucas terrier called Dexter and has three daughters. 'Most of our girls are pre-tested and we prepare them for that, but KED gives them the opportunity to spend the last two years doing something much more interesting. We're not fixed to the national curriculum, which means the girls can take flight. If we're into a topic, we can get on with it and not have to stop for something else.'

He agrees that today's prep school can be 'whatever you want'. 'They often have the loveliest settings and they have their quirks

and languages, which is a lovely thing for a child to hang on to.' As his colleagues do, he believes that there's a strong argument for spending the fees budget on this stage. 'The foundation years are the most important—for reading, writing, holding a knife and fork properly, becoming co-ordinated, learning how to treat people—so that children go on to secondary schools with these things in place. If you get that right, they can thrive anywhere.' A good prep school preps you for life—as any fule kno.

‘Children of that age don't need flashy facilities—they need the right environment’



Something for everyone: a round dozen

Ardvreck, Perthshire **Co-ed, day and boarding**

The Highland setting and Scottish culture are obvious USPs: expeditions, known as 'Barvicks' include scaling a Munro and there's an annual Ard Challenge, an 11-mile yomp through a glen that culminates in a carnival on the shores of Loch Tay. School houses are named Barrie, Buchan, Burns and Scot, the curriculum includes reeling and the renowned pipe band has played at Perth Racecourse and on the summit of Skye's Inaccessible Pinnacle. Unsurprisingly, Ardvreck is particularly successful at shooting and skiing.

Bruern Abbey, Oxfordshire **All boys, day and flexi boarding**

This school's *raison d'être* is preparing boys with dyslexia or other learning difficulties for entrance examinations to mainstream senior schools. Each boy has a laptop—a 'godsend' for those who struggle to express themselves—and the maximum class size is 12. The emphases are on boosting self-esteem, literacy, numeracy and good food, plus lots of French flavour: choral and skiing trips and the use of a Loire Valley manor house.

Kitebrook, Gloucestershire **Co-ed, day and boarding (weekly or flexi)**

The four 'merit' groups are called Ash, Beech, Cedar and Oak, reflecting the arboreal nature of the attractive grounds of this Cotswold prep (motto: *Spiritus Ad Surgere*

—Let our Spirits Soar High), where tree-climbing is a major break-time activity. A school in the ascendant with increased numbers (to about 250) and new facilities that places strong emphasis on tradition, good manners, prayers and giving children the confidence to speak in public.

Knighton House, Dorset **All girls, mostly boarding (full, weekly or flexi)**

Since the 1950s, Knighton girls have been the envy of their peers, for their ponies, cheerful red dungarees and carefree, sensible education—a recent inspection stated that they have 'an outstanding appreciation of the non-material aspects of life'. Some 130 pupils have the run of 35 acres by the River Stour, of which the centrepiece is a gracious, 18th-century ivy-clad house—it's a proper country school with lots of animals.



Ludgrove, Berkshire **All boys, all boarding (fortnightly)**

Ludgrove has remained true to tradition, with all 185 pupils boarding to the same pattern (now, every other weekend is spent at home) in a country-house setting, one that belies its proximity to Wokingham. Approached by a long drive through its 130 acres, the school's facilities are superb—an Exploration Centre opens in September, bringing coding, programming, robotics, carpentry, art and design under one roof—yet, somehow, don't look too shiny and the atmosphere is unfailingly comfortable and friendly. Ludgrove is rightly renowned for all-round high standards and feeding the high-profile senior schools.

Mount Kelly, Devon **Co-ed, day and boarding (full or weekly)**

Originally called Mount House, it's now the prep part of Kelly College on the edge of Dartmoor. As one might expect with such a setting, there's a strong focus on sport—the senior school is renowned for producing swimmers—and using initiative in activities such as gorge walking, lighting fires, compass reading, survival and navigation, all part of the inspiring Shackleton Programme. At the weekend, boarders can go skating at the Eden Project and surfing off Cornish beaches, plus there's a farm. ➤

School life

Old Buckenham Hall, Suffolk

Co-ed, day and boarding

'OBH' promises an education that blends *'Swallows and Amazons* with the iPad' and the setting—80 acres with woodland to explore, a cycle track and a lake—certainly lends itself to that creed at this often-garlanded school. The OBE (Old Buckenham Explorers) programme breaks down into skills (first aid, map-reading), physical and community. There's a notable emphasis on food policy: a three-course lunch always includes homemade soup.

Parsons Green, London SW6

Co-ed, day

Every week, the children at this oasis on the Fulham Park Road are posed a 'Thinking Friday' question, with responses stuck on a board. It's part of Philosophy for Children (P4C), which is taught throughout the school; mindfulness sessions have been introduced this term. Another distinctive feature is that chess is part of the school day for Years 3 to 6 (there's a Chesslings club for Years 1 and 2, too)—pupils learn algebraic notation to record moves. STEM subjects are also prominent and there are lots of clubs, such as ballet and fencing.

‘They have their quirks and languages, which is a lovely thing for a child to hang on to ,

The Pilgrims' School, Hampshire

All boys, day and boarding

A Pilgrim can be an artist or an actor, a sailor or a quizzer, a chess player or a karate kid, according to outgoing headmaster Tom



Burdon, but whatever the interest, he will be immersed in it. Certainly, most pupils are musical; the school, which enjoys an atmospheric, Roman-medieval setting in the cathedral close (the Pilgrims' Hall is a major tourist attraction), supplies choristers for Winchester Cathedral and Winchester College, all of whom board and are on a 40% bursary. After-school activities, which are known as Commoners, include Winchester Fives, fishing and pasta-making.

Walhampton, Hampshire

Co-ed, day and boarding (weekly and flexi)

Many prep-school surroundings are spectacular, but Walhampton has an edge: a coastal setting in 100 acres on the edge of the New Forest where imagination can take flight. There are lakes, ponies, bees, swans, sailing and kayaking, a shepherd's hut, the Faraway Tree and Curly Wurly Mountain, plus enough space to host athletics championships. The Walhampton Express—a minibus service to the Brockenhurst-London Waterloo train—makes it handy for city-based weekly boarders, too.

Windlesham House, West Sussex

Co-ed, day and boarding

Windlesham is one of the oldest prep schools, founded in 1837 on the Isle of Wight; it was the first to admit girls, in 1967, and,

unusually, has no uniform. Its 19th-century headmaster Henry Maldon was one of the architects of today's football rules and its chapel, which was originally doomed for demolition in Oxford, has moved with the school in all its incarnations. Today's setting is a delight, in a Queen Anne house amid 65 acres on the South Downs. Windlesham aims to be the antidote to urban hot-housing, yet still boasts academic excellence and myriad extra-curricular activities, such as clay-pigeon shooting, polo and textiles. It has a strong ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) department.

Woodcote House, Surrey

All boys, day and boarding

The Good Schools Guide describes this most charming of preps as a 'dying breed—the thriving family-owned school', 'idiosyncratic' and 'unapologetically focused on doing its own thing'. Its success and singularity lies in its manageable size (about 100 pupils) and the unfussy, homely atmosphere that produces first-class results. There are many dogs and sometimes pigs and chickens; its 30 wooded acres has an Elephants' Graveyard and a rope assault course, an outdoor wood-fired oven for cooking pizzas and a dungeon. Boarders can use Skype, but must still write a proper weekly letter home. Boys in the senior boarding house, Dominies, can cook Sunday breakfast and watch Sky Sports. 🐘





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School life

We are the Olympians

Ahead of the Tokyo Olympic Games this summer, Phoebe Bath discovers which independent schools produced the gold medallists of the past century

Winchester

Tennis—Max Woosnam (Antwerp 1920)

Bedford

100m—Harold Abrahams (Paris 1924)

Eltham

400m—Eric Liddell (1924)

Oundle

Rowing, coxless four—Richard Beesly (Amsterdam 1928)

Showjumping, team and individual—Harry Llewellyn (Helsinki 1952)

Eton

400m hurdles—David Cecil, 6th Marquess of Exeter (1928)

Rowing, double sculls—Dickie Burnell (London 1948)

Eventing, team gold and individual silver—Derek Allhusen (Mexico 1968)

Rowing, coxless pair, coxless four—Matthew Pinsent (Barcelona 1992, Atlanta 1996, Sydney 2000, Athens 2004)

Rowing, men's eight—Andrew Lindsay (2000)

Rowing, coxless four—Constantine Louloudis (Rio 2016)

Bancroft's

800m—Tommy Hampson (Los Angeles 1932)

Harrow

Sailing—David Bond (1948)

Charterhouse

Sailing—Stewart Morris (1948)

Shrewsbury

Rowing, coxless pair—Jack Wilson (1948)

Rugby

Showjumping, team—Douglas Stewart (1952)

Steeplechase—Chris Brasher (Stockholm 1956)

Millfield

Long jump—Mary Rand (Tokyo 1964)

Rowing—Helen Glover (London 2012, 2016)

Shooting—Peter Wilson (2012)

Lancing

Eventing—Richard Meade (1968 team, Munich 1972 team and individual)

Marlborough

Yachting—Iain MacDonald-Smith (1968)

Eventing, team—Mark Phillips (1972)

Pangbourne

Sailing—Rodney Pattisson (1968, 1972)

Stewart's Melville

Swimming—David Wilkie (Montreal 1976)

Farney Close

Decathlon—Daley Thompson (Moscow 1980, Los Angeles 1984)

Radley

Rowing, coxed four—Richard Budgett (1984)

Latymer Upper

Rowing, coxed four, coxless pair—Andy Holmes (1984, Seoul 1988)

Bablake

Field hockey—Robert Clift (1988)

Showjumping—Nick Skelton (2012 team, 2016 individual)

Gresham's

Field hockey—Richard Leman (1988)

Hampton School

Rowing, coxed pair—Greg and Jonny Searle (1992)

St Paul's

Rowing, men's eight—Simon Dennis (2000)

Shiplake College

Rowing, men's eight—Ben Hunt-Davis (2000)

Halliford School

Rowing, men's eight—Steve Trapmore (2000)

Dulwich College

Rowing, men's eight—Kieran West (2000)

West Buckland School

Triple jump—Jonathan Edwards (2000)

King's Canterbury

Rowing, men's eight—Fred Scarlett (2000)

Monkton Combe

Rowing, coxless four—Steve Williams (2004, Beijing 2008)

George Watson's

Cycling—Chris Hoy (2004, 2008, 2012)

King's Worcester

Rowing, lightweight double scull—Zac Purchase (2008)

Gordonstoun

Rowing, coxless pair—Heather Stanning (2012, 2016)

Truro

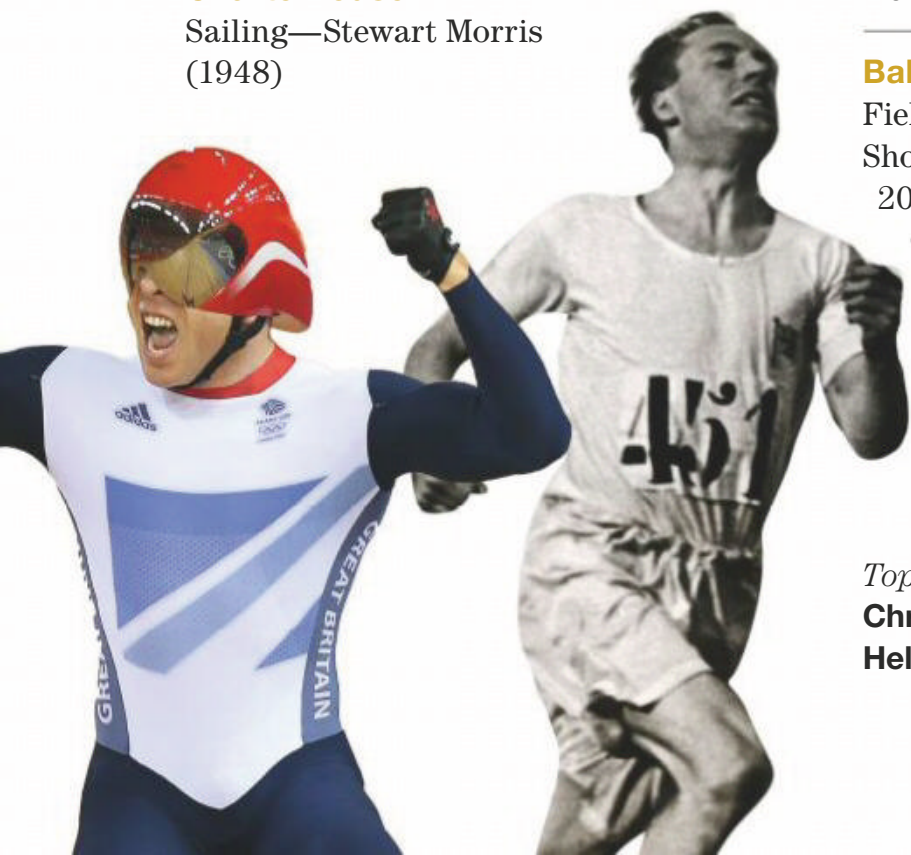
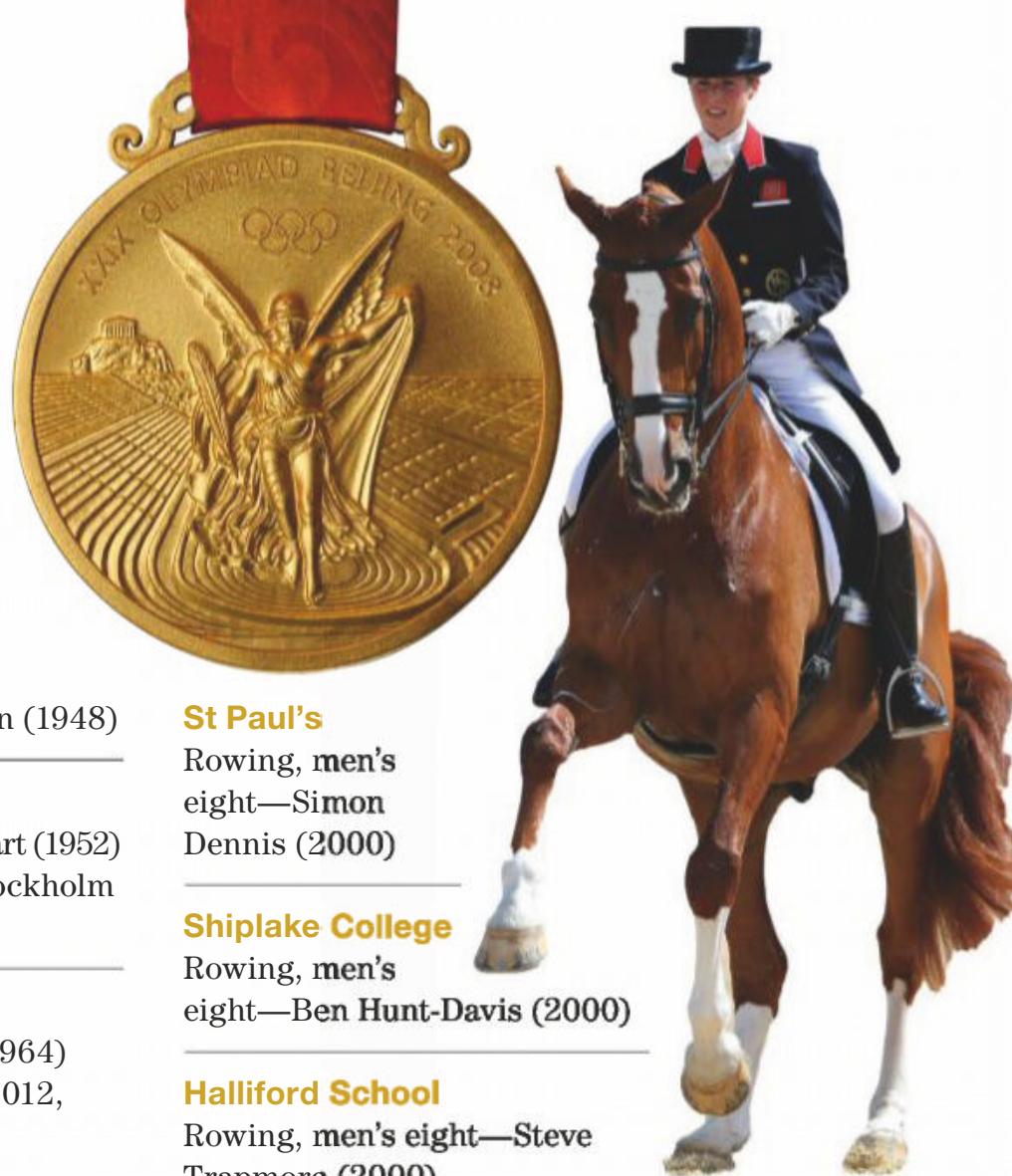
Sailing—Ben Ainslie (2008, 2012)

Elizabeth College

Dressage, team—Carl Hester (2012)

Stonor

Dressage, team gold—Laura Tomlinson (2012)



Top: Laura Tomlinson of Stonor riding Mistral Hojris. *Far left:* Sir Chris Hoy of George Watson's. *Left:* Eric Liddell of Eltham. *Right:* Helen Glover of Millfield and Heather Stanning of Gordonstoun



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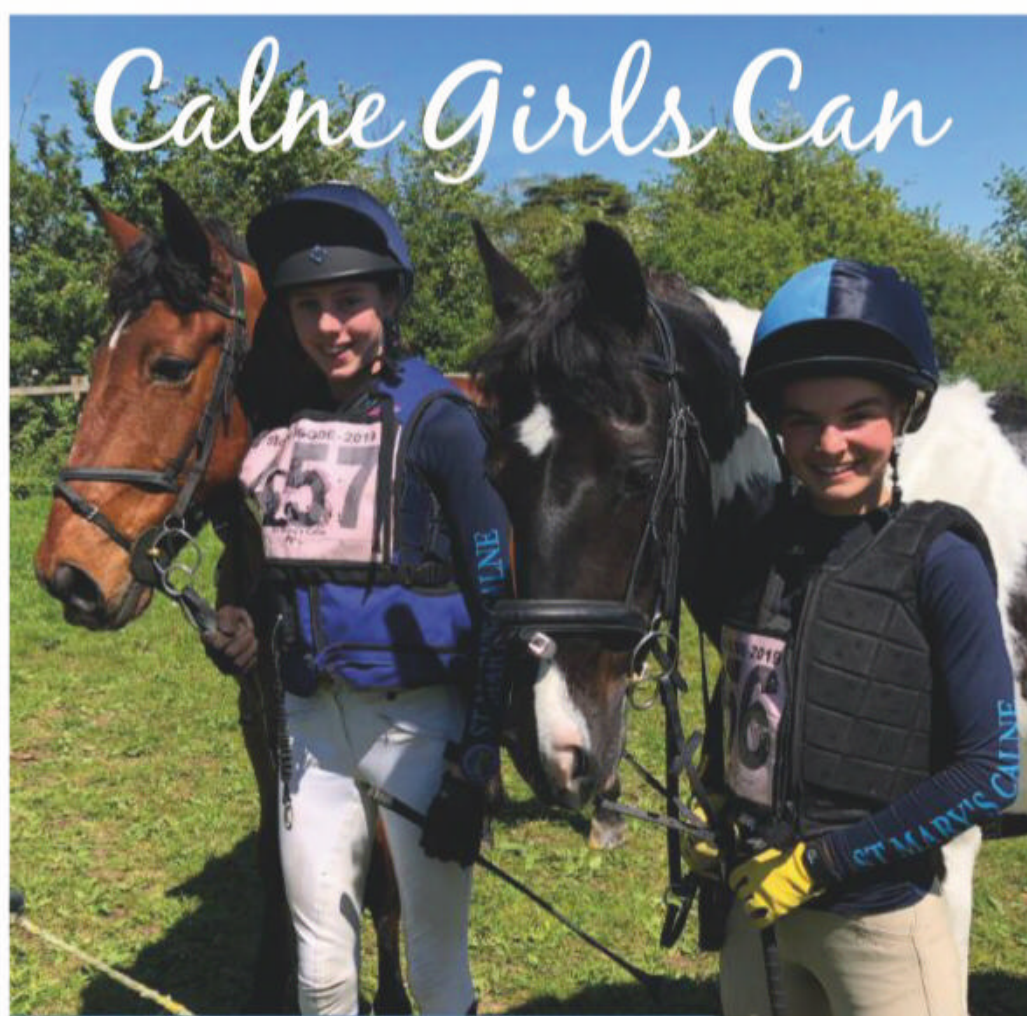
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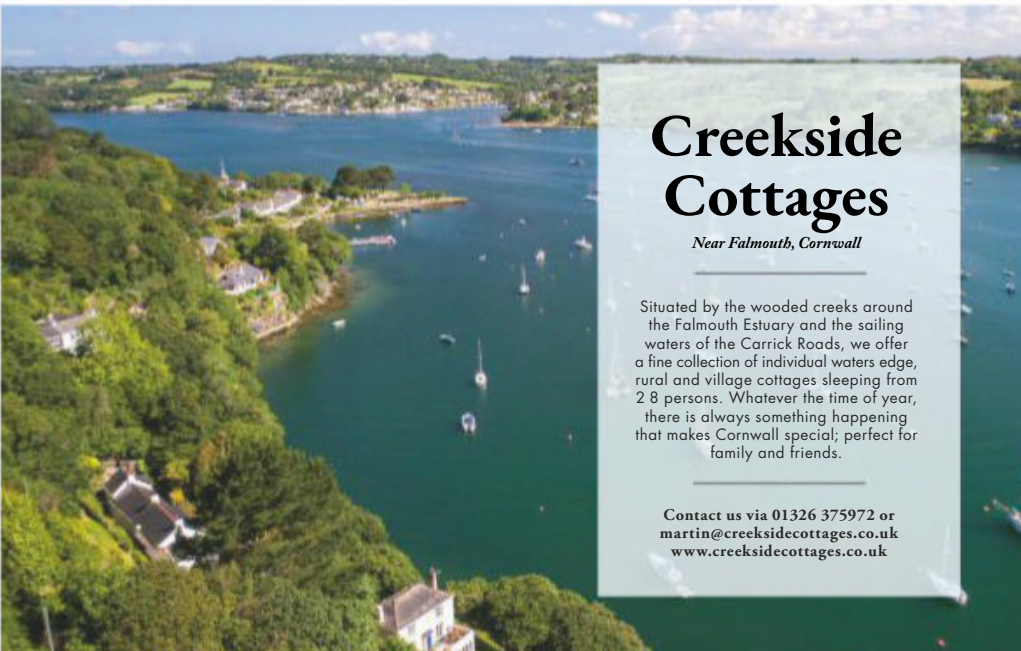


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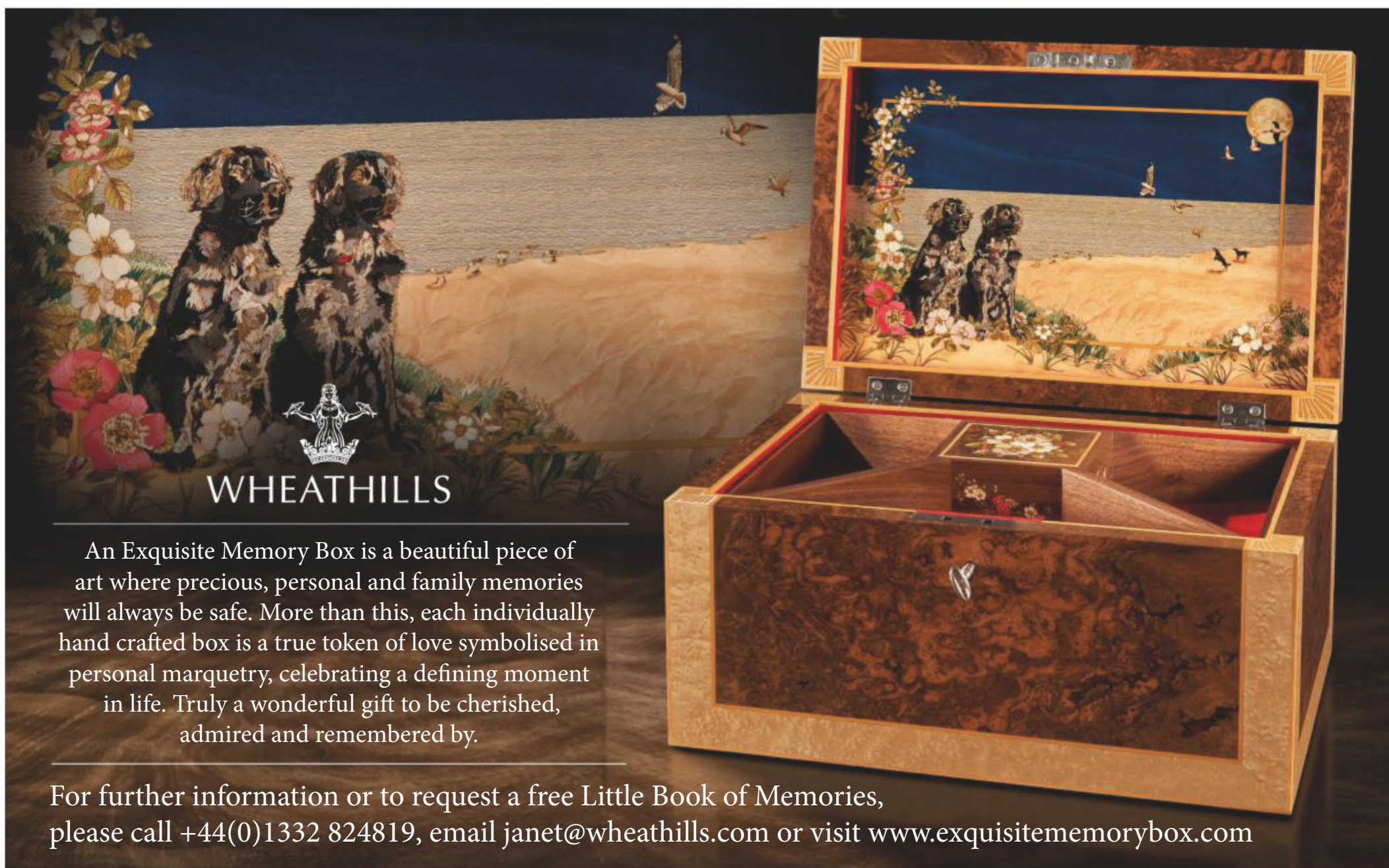


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AU66 UST	CAS 70R	EME 12Y					POO IS	TON 6E
AY63 SHA	C474 LAN	EMS 513Y					914 POR	724 CY
BA66 OTT	C4 THY	END 3R					POU 176R	T247 NOR
B42 DEN	CAT 71E	ERN 355T					PUI1 LAN	T123 ACY
B42 LOW	CEA 53R	ET11 ELS					PUI1 TER	TUL 137T
842 NEY	CHA 11G	FAB 814N					RA11 SON	TUR 2K
BAS 537T	CLA 12K	FA12 EST					RAT 724Y	TYN 4N
BE14 TON	CLA 551K	F41 TTH					RAU 11IL	VAL 321A
BEE 6H	C114 UDE	FAR 2R					REU 73R	VAN 6E
BEE 3R	C134 VER	F422 RAH					ROA 6H	V411 NDA
B335 LEY	COL 137T	FAR 23R					ROB 11IA	V42 NEY
BEE 350N	CO11 BOY	FEL 161A					ROC 6K	VEG 5
B36 LEY	COR 2R	F131 DER					ROO 113Y	VES 7A
BEH 4N	COS 73R	F14 XEN					ROW 311A	JWA 1T
B31 TON	COU 173R	FOO 12D					ROI1 YAL	WAN 7T
BEN 6H	COW 1Y	FOR 63T					RUD 63E	WEL 555H
83 VAN	C10 YNE	FRI1 DAY					RUI1 SEY	WE12 NER
BOL ID	C21 PPS	FYF 3E					RUI1 DLE	W35 SON
BO11 SER	CRU 11IP	G4 LES					RUS 70N	WES 732N
B00 7S	CUI1 LUM	GAL 113Y					SAB 444H	WES 770N
BOS 706K	DAC 6K	G41 LON					S411 EER	WET 770N
B055 WEL	DAG 115H	G428 ETT					S411 PLE	W135 LAW
BOT 114M	DAL 18Y	G412 DEN					S411 DOR	W111 LDE
MRI3 OYD	D444 REN	GAY 1E					S314 MUS	WOO 164R
BRA 44D	DAR 7L	G311 TLE					S311 ENA	WOO 770N
B24 NCH	DE11 REK	GEO 299E					SES 4Y	WO12 LEY
BRA 555S	DER 116K	GHA 241A					SEY 3D	WOR 513Y
824 VO	D351 REE	61 ORY					SHE 3A	WO12 TON
BRA 213R	D111 VYA	GL11 YNN					SHO 11E	Y34 TES
B23 WER	DON 394N	GON 6G					SOU 7H	YEO 114N
B217 TEN	DO12 MER	G10 ULD					SPR 46G	YOR 12K
BUF 70N	DOR 53T	GOU 214Y					S7 AMP	YOU 114S

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Country Life, February 26 2020 101



Where there's muck, there's eggs

TOGETHER with Bill and Melinda Gates, I like an egg and a hen in lay. The Microsoft billionaires and philanthropists have reached the conclusion that raising chickens provides a route out of poverty for millions of women around the world. On Melinda's website, there's a picture of a hen divided into sections labelled Education, Empowerment, Financial Security, Health, Entrepreneurship.

Folk wisdom seems to suggest that when a girl takes her eggs to market and starts dreaming like Melinda, she'll drop the basket and break the eggs, but an earlier philanthropist had a solution for that. 'Put all your eggs into one basket,' Andrew Carnegie advised, 'and watch that basket!'

These days, what gets me excited about going out to the hen house is not so much the eggs as the straw. I see a hen divided into sections marked Eggs, Alarm Clock, Responsibility, Compost. I approach with my fork and wheelbarrow, my

eyes fixed on the bedding spread under their perch. It's a damp straw cake richly ennobled by copious droppings. It's matted and full of nutrients. Although I'm not going to eat it myself, at least not directly, I have developed an incredible greed for it, fuelled by compost mania.

Fresh chicken manure, as any gardener knows, contains nitrogen, which plants use to photosynthesise and to build cells; potassium, which aids growth and the development of flavour; and phosphorus, the root-builder. A single hen can produce about 10lb of manure a month and it is the perfect compost accelerator.

I lust after compost, thick as cake and dark as chocolate and smelling of the earth. I want all the muck and all the magic. It's like the seasonal craving you develop for red meat, as if the rain and cold and the dark nights bring on a creeping anaemia that can only be banished by blood and iron in the diet. Bard me with brisket, stay me with steak and, in the dark watches

of the night, whisper to me in the language of stroganoff, the dialects of bourguignon!

I'm in a fever for compost, too. I am a devotee of the Shropshire-born agronomist Sir Albert Howard, who devised the Indore composting method and had the deepest respect for Indian peasants and pests, his twin Professors of Agriculture, as he

'A single hen can produce about 10lb of manure a month and is the perfect compost accelerator'

called them. When I am not tearing cardboard boxes into strips or tossing tea leaves into the kitchen compost, I happily read about compost for hours at a stretch. In her authoritative

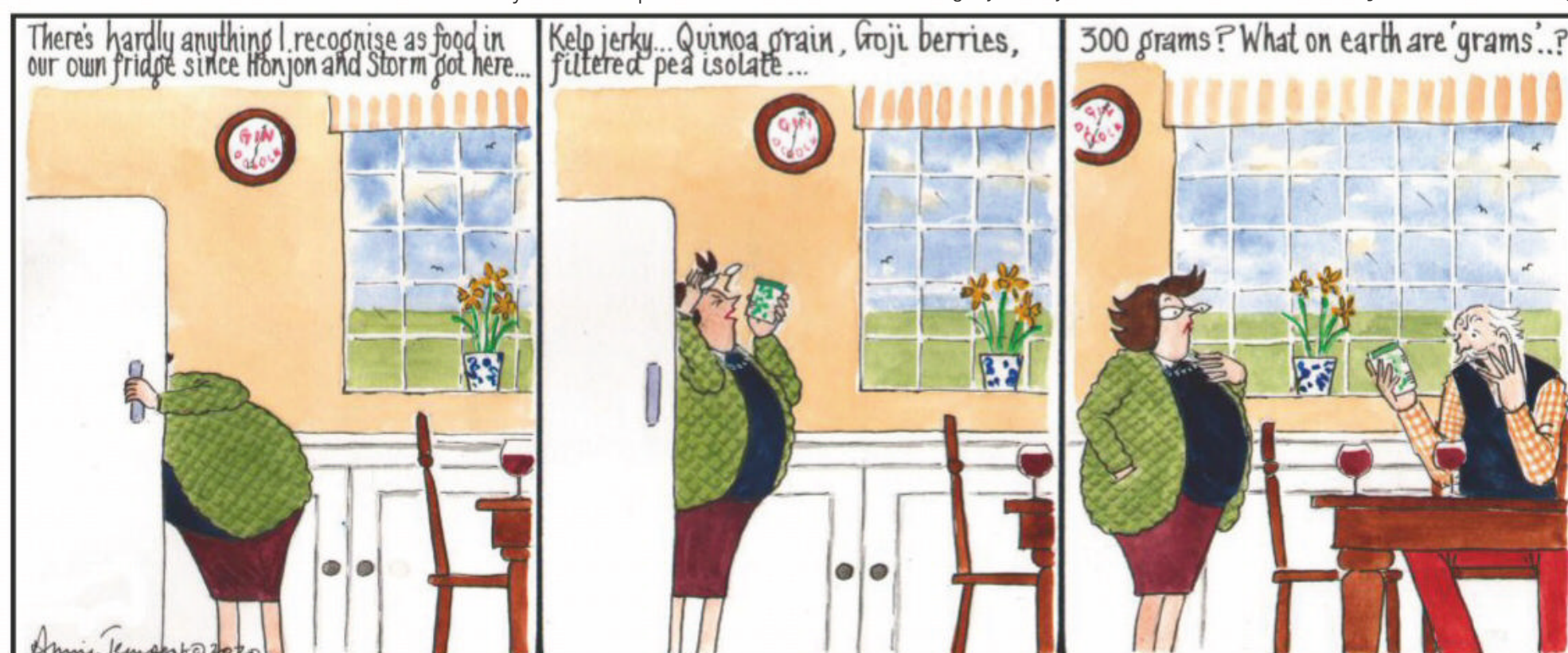
History of Kitchen Gardens, Susan Campbell describes how gardeners' boys in the heyday of the potager were instructed, in return for their modest pennies in wages, to spend their own in the compost heap. I recommend the bucket-by-the-back-door method, myself. Urine is sterile. It contains plenty of the magic nitrogen and I refer naysayers to a study that found greenhouse tomatoes fertilised with a mixture of human urine and ash yielded nearly four times more tomatoes as non-fertilised plants. So there.

Not everyone is happy about the bucket. Kate approves, although she's reluctant to contribute until the weather gets better. The children are less sure—it seems to them a little offensive. They should count themselves lucky.

I've been reading *Harnessing the Earthworm* by Dr Thomas J. Barrett, but I'm also tempted by *The Humanure Handbook: Shit in a Nutshell* by J. C. Jenkins. The youth would be horrified, but Sir Albert would approve.

TOTTERING-BY-GENTLY By Annie Tempest

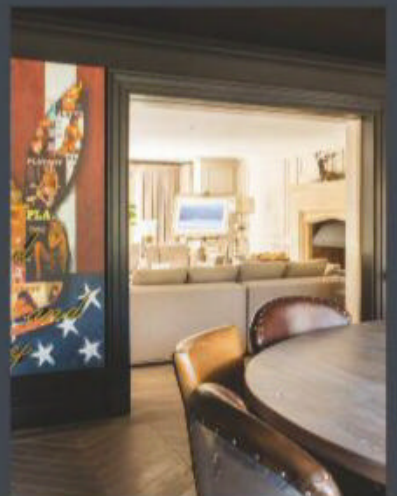
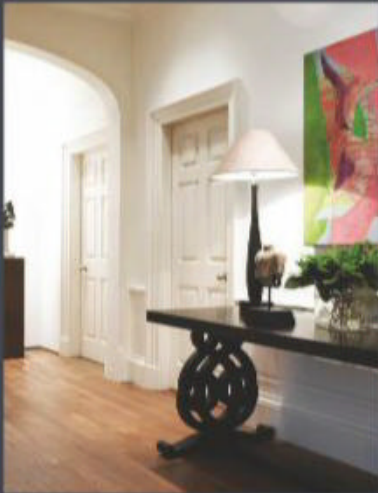
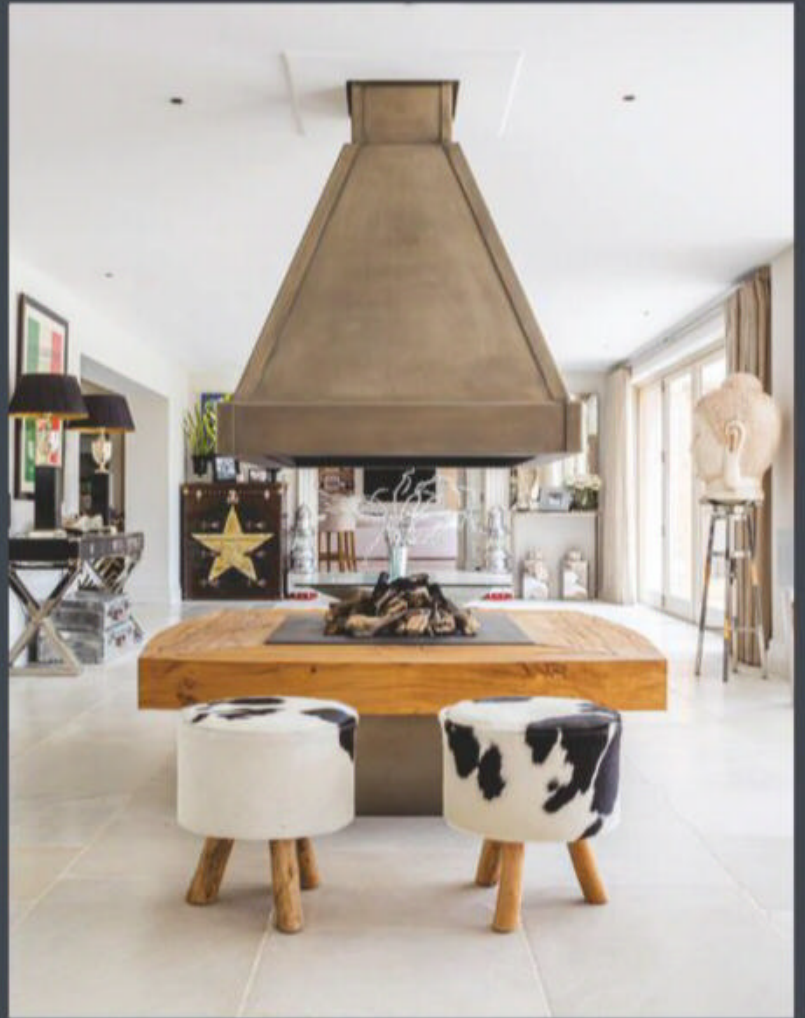
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