COUNTRY LIFE®

FEBRUARY 8, 2017

EVERY WEEK

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About 0.64 acres | Guide £5.95 million

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Savills London Country Department
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tkearney@savills.com

Trevor Rawlings
Savills Esher
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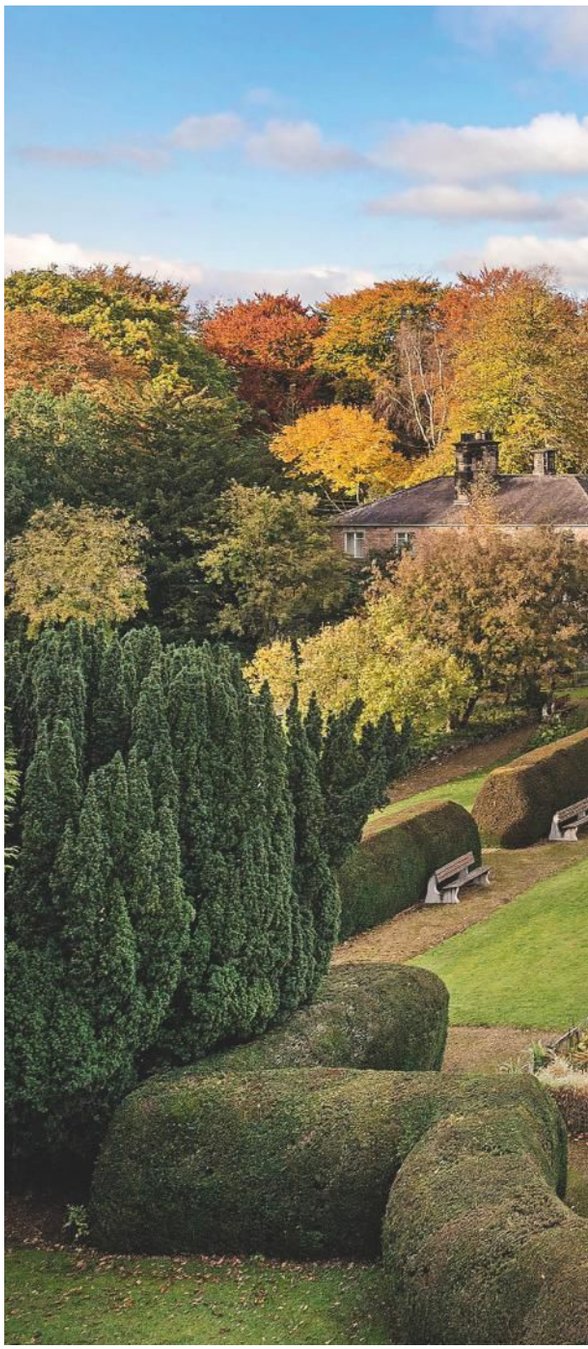

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About 24 acres

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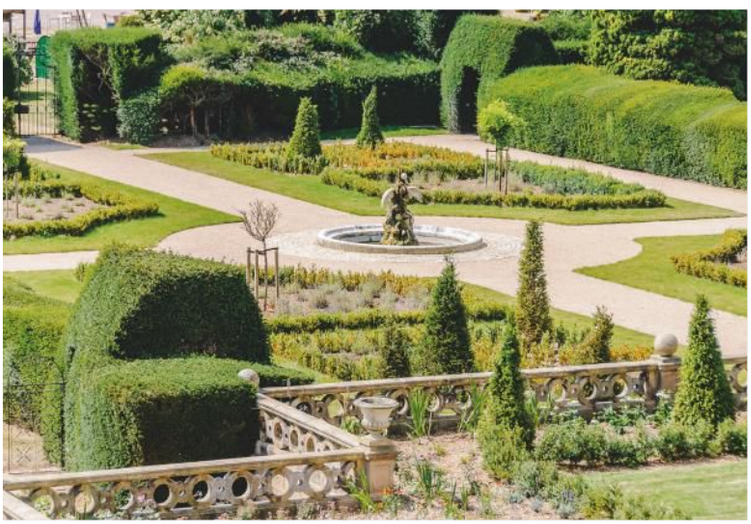

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Contact: Castle Douglas office 01556 487991

Haslemere, Surrey — **£695,000** guide price

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Contact: Haslemere office 01428 734936

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Contact: Ledbury office 01531 577983

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Contact: Market Harborough office 01858 513933

Frensham, Surrey — **£1,150,000** guide price

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Contact: Skipton office 01756 317973

Capel Iwan, Carmarthenshire **£1,100,000**

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Dennington, Suffolk **£525,000** guide price

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Husbands Bosworth, Leicestershire **£1,150,000** guide price

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Old St. Mellons, Cardiff, South Glamorgan **£975,000**

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Contact: Cyncoed office 029 2227 9138

Scarcroft, West Yorkshire **£950,000**

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Contact: Wetherby office 01937 205882

Scruton, North Yorkshire **£450,000**

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Contact: Bedale office 01677 367987

Herodsfoot, Cornwall **£499,950** guide price

Quietly located, period 4 bed residence with beautiful gardens, 2 receptions, conservatory & detached garage. 1.7 acres. EPC F.

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Maxwell Doig trained at the Slade and studied anatomy at University College, London before developing his distinct mixed-media technique at the Hochschule der Kunst, Berlin. Balanced between romance and objectivity his paintings go beneath structural surfaces to hint at each building's inner life.

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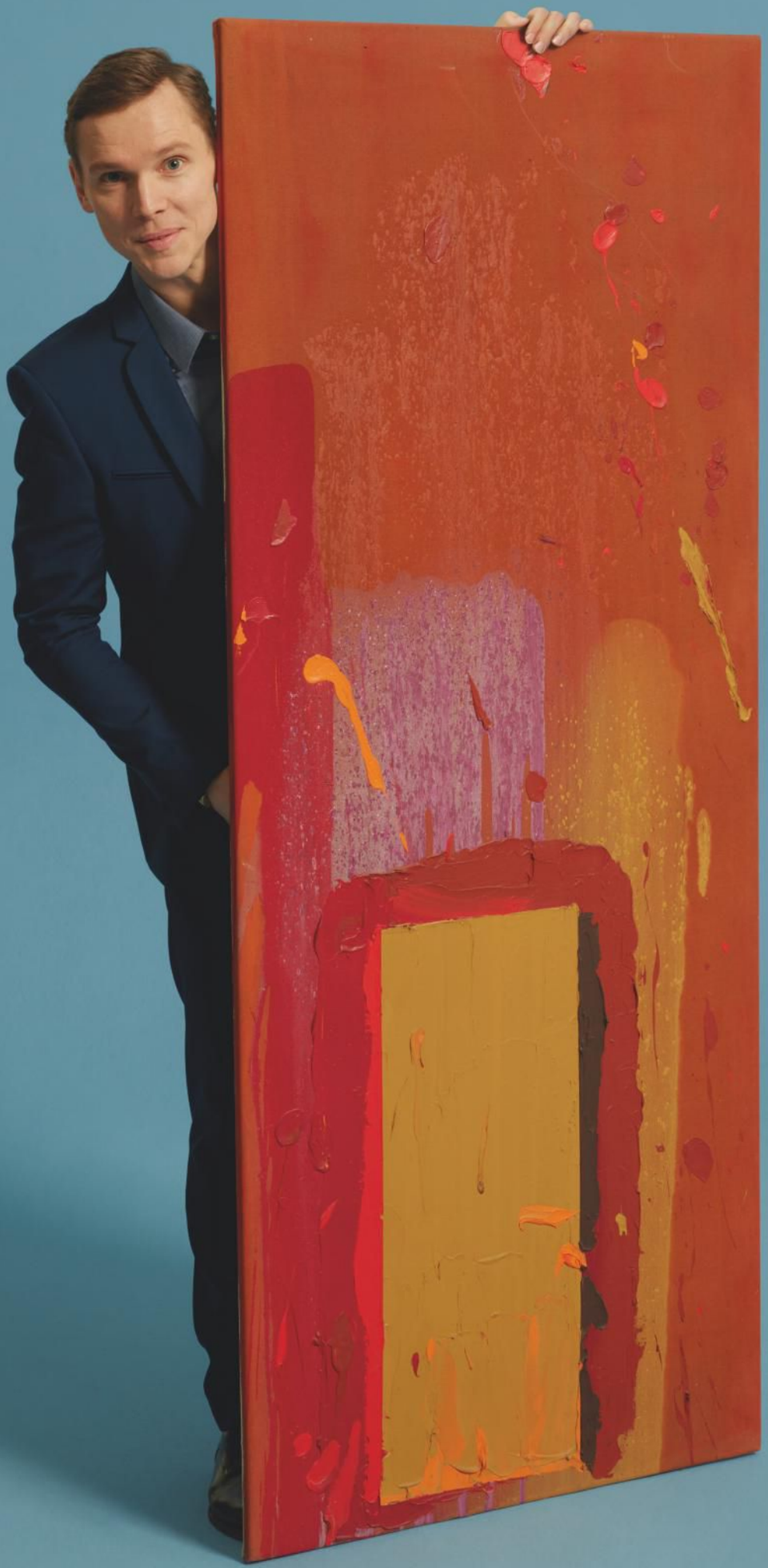

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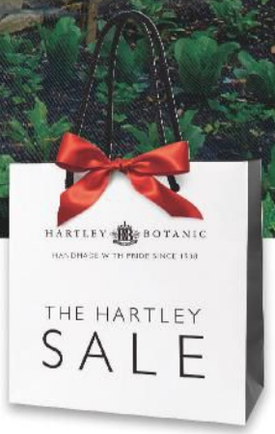

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VOL CCXI NO 6, FEBRUARY 8, 2017

Miss Beatrice Smith

Beatrice, second daughter of Mr and Mrs Oliver Smith of North Yorkshire, is engaged to be married to George Neville, youngest son of the Rev and Mrs Michael Neville of Chelsea, London SW3. They will be married at St John the Baptist Church, Healaugh, North Yorkshire, in April.

Photographed at St John the Baptist Church, Healaugh, by Liz Neville

Contents February 8, 2017

Crichel in Dorset (Paul Highnam)

Long to reign over us: the official portrait of The Queen to celebrate her becoming our first monarch to reach 65 years on the throne and a Sapphire Jubilee. In this photograph, shot in 2014 by David Bailey, Her Majesty is wearing sapphire jewellery given to her by her father, George VI, as a wedding present in 1947

David Bailey 2017/PA; Julian Waterman; Andrejs Pidjass/ alamy; John Millard

Rogue the rook

'Once, he argued with a stoat, which ripped a slice of black feathers from his back'

Nature red in tooth and claw, page 48

Compasses

'I say trusty compasses, but, for nine centuries, they were anything but'

Don't let anyone tell you to get lost, page 58

Police dogs

'When I'm in uniform or when the sirens are blaring, they know we're working'

They may be part of the family, but these canine officers mean business, page 62

This week

Every week

COVNTRY LIFE EST. 1897

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Don't destroy the green belt, Mr Javid

WE are being promised a housing White Paper on a daily basis and one issue it's bound to cover is the status of the green belt. As houses that are near to towns, but are in the countryside command a premium and it's easier to build on virgin sites, the big, too powerful house builders lust after it. Only last week, Nigel Wilson, Chief Executive of Legal & General, argued for the release of 1% of the green belt to build a million new homes—if that happened every year, there would be no green belt left in a century.

Our advice to Sajid Javid, the Secretary of State concerned, is to be careful. Planning has not always had a glorious history, but the green-belt policy is one that people understand. It's so ingrained in the national psyche that many commentators who should know better refer to green-belt development when what they really mean is any building in open countryside. It works—and it's now more relevant than ever.

Green-belt policy was established in 1955 to prevent the urban sprawl that disfigured rural areas in the 1920s and 1930s; it now covers 13% of England. Given that England has become so densely populated, one can only marvel at its achievement in preventing cities such as Southampton and Portsmouth from merging into blob-like conurbations. It has sought to ring-fence urban development so that it's distinct from the surrounding countryside.

No policy that's 62 years old can be immune from criticism; historically, the designation has not been applied consistently and today's expectations are far greater. When people are prepared to commute to London from as far as Cambridge or the south coast, the whole of the South-East can be regarded, in planning terms, as part of the capital. As a result, development jumps the Metropolitan Green Belt; not permitted within the *cordon sanitaire*, it multiplies, *bacillus*-like, outside.

Remember, too, that city life is far more attractive than in the days of heavy industry and smog. Commuting is going out of fashion; fewer young people bother to pass their driving test because they don't live the dispersed lives their parents did.

Nature's calming influence becomes all the more important in these hectic times. Without the restriction of the green belt, those places that have been made ugly by defunct industry or retail parks wouldn't be redeveloped.

Rather than tinkering with the green belt, we should rekindle the kind of vision that led to the post-Second World War new towns, of which the last, Milton Keynes—admittedly not a thing of beauty—is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

We've surely learnt that development works best when it's concentrated, creating 'walkable' communities. Alas, however, we currently have no land-use strategy for a crowded England and the countryside dies by 1,000 cuts.

British Society of Magazine Editors Scoop of the Year 2015/16
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Flower power: Chatsworth, Wedgwood and the RHS

THIS June, for the first time, a riot of colour will adorn the Cavendish family's Derbyshire estate for the inaugural RHS Chatsworth Flower Show. Set to be bigger than Chelsea, it will include the first ever Wedgwood garden, as the centuries-old fine-bone-china maker has, last week, announced a three-year partnership with the RHS.

As well as being title sponsor for the Chatsworth event (June 7–11), Wedgwood will also have a presence at the Chelsea (May 23–27) and Tatton Park (July 19–23) shows.

The partnership is a fitting one, as it was Josiah Wedgwood's eldest son, John (1766–1844), who originally planted the seed for the RHS—in 1801, he suggested the idea in a letter to one of George III's head gardeners.

With this move, Wedgwood hopes to reposition itself as a premium British lifestyle brand, harnessing the unique opportunity to 'provide interactive experiences to an international audience in an authentic, unexpected way', explains Ulrik Garde Due, President of the Living portfolio at Fiskars (which acquired Wedgwood in 2015). 'It [2017] will be a year of launches for Wedgwood, with the RHS shows providing the perfect environment to showcase our evolution.'

All three RHS shows will feature a tea conservatory pop-up, which will showcase Wedgwood's new Wonderlust collection, inspired by the global eclecticism of the 18th-century Grand Tour and the flowers and plants of different continents.

Visit www.rhs.org.uk for further information and to buy tickets.

Fantastic firsts: Chatsworth and Wedgwood will be making their RHS debuts this year

eye35/David Tyrer/Alamy; Wedgwood; Crossrail/MOLA; Andy Hay RSPB

One of the skeletons found at Bedlam was a victim of the plague

Crossrail: an archaeologist's dream

ARCHAEOLOGISTS have had something of a bonanza with the creation of Crossrail, the massive engineering project to build a new 73-mile railway line from Reading to east London, as it has allowed them to study previously inaccessible areas of the capital.

More than 10,000 objects have been uncovered since work on Europe's biggest infrastructure project began in 2009, in areas such as Canary Wharf, Liverpool Street, Tottenham Court Road and Acton. New insights have been gained on London in its days as a Roman port and on the Great Plague and the Great Fire.

'Tunnel: The Archaeology of Crossrail', an exhibition at the Museum of London Docklands (February 10 to September 3; www.museumoflondon.org.uk/museum-london-docklands), will display items spanning 8,000 years of human history. Standout exhibits include iron Roman horse shoes found near Liverpool Street station, a wooden Tudor bowling ball unearthed from the site of a former manor house at Stepney Green and skeletons from a mass grave at Bedlam. DNA testing has shown one of them was a victim of the plague.

The exhibition also outlines the story behind the creation of Crossrail itself. Visitors will doubtless withhold their verdict on whether the chaos and destruction that have come in its wake have been worthwhile until the first services on the Elizabeth Line begin to run next year. *Jack Watkins*

Help repair Snowdonia

The famous Watkin Path has been severely damaged, negatively affecting local wildlife

SNOWDONIA needs your help. An urgent campaign has been launched by the National Trust to raise £250,000 to repair the national park's broken paths and restore its wildlife habitats, after a recent review revealed the scale of erosion.

More than four million people visit Snowdonia every year, with 450,000 walking up Snowdon alone—a number that has doubled in the past 10 years. Although the repairs will only focus on 2½ miles of path, they are vital and rangers stress the need to start work immediately in order to protect rare wildlife, such as the endangered Snowdon beetle.

'Snowdonia isn't as tough as it first appears,' comments National Trust ranger Rhys Thomas. 'When [footpaths] break up and turn into mud, it can be incredibly difficult to know where to step. Delicate upland habitats are being flattened, making it impossible for ring ouzels nesting on the ground along Snowdon's Watkin Path to find insects to feed their chicks.'

He continues: 'I've been building and rebuilding paths in the area for eight years. It's tiring, time-consuming work, involving tens of volunteers shifting tons of stone by hand, vehicle and helicopter.'

The campaign, which is the latest in the National Trust's long-running Snowdonia Appeal, will continue until the end of 2017. To donate, visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/snowdonia-appeal

Good week for

Love letters

In Lover, Wiltshire, volunteers have set up a pop-up post office, taking online orders and stamping envelopes with 'Posted at Lover'. The initiative will raise money for the village's old school building

TB-plagued cattle

Scientists have genetically engineered cows with a gene that protects them from TB, without side effects, which could lead to a future free from culls

Happy campers

A few days in a tent could shift your body clock back 2½ hours, discouraging 'social jetlag', linked to diseases that cost our economy up to £40bn a year

Bad week for

Birds of prey

Their persecution is still 'unacceptably common', according to the RSPB, which says they are being unlawfully killed at the highest rate for three years

Global warming

The hottest year since record-keeping began, 2016 is the third in a row to outdo the previous year, says the World Meteorological Organisation

Five a day

Iceberg lettuce, broccoli, courgettes, spinach and aubergines are in short supply in shops due to extreme weather in southern Europe

Call of the curlew

WITHOUT urgent action, curlews could be lost as a breeding species in southern England within a generation, says the RSPB. A conference was held last week, organised by Curlew Media, the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, the RSPB and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, to discuss what can be done.

The bird's breeding population in Scotland declined by 55% between 1995 and 2013 and in England by 32%. The curlew is so rare in Wales and Northern Ireland that trends can't be calculated. In the Republic of Ireland, there are thought to be barely more than 120 breeding pairs.

The loss of hay meadows and wet grassland have been a key threat in the southern parts of the UK; good nesting habitat in upland areas has also come under pressure. Overall, in recent years, the curlew's breeding range in the UK has decreased by about 17%.

Furthermore, a quarter of the world's breeding curlews come from the UK and the bird is classified as 'near threatened' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. It's the only 'near threatened' species of which the UK has a substantial part of the global breeding population.

'This lovely bird and its evocative call are woven into the lives of people,' says organiser Mary Colwell. 'They are part of who we are.' Conservation officer Phil Shelldrake adds: 'We've turned around the fortunes of other birds, such as cirl buntings and stone curlews, in southern England and we can do the same for the curlew.'

The plan at the moment is to explore habitat management and predator control in certain areas. Visit www.rspb.org.uk for further information.

Stamp Duty windfall

THE 3% Stamp Duty (SDLT) surcharge introduced in April has made almost twice as much for the Government than expected, says HMRC. The total for the year—£1.19 billion, £962 million of which came between June and December—is being labelled a 'windfall'.

Almost a quarter of UK house buyers are affected by the hike, which was introduced to dampen the buy-to-let sector and thus help first-time buyers. However, although it has certainly provided the Treasury with a bigger pot, the problem of 'significant cash investment in buy-to-let', says Savills's Lucian Cook, means that only about a fifth of additional properties sold during the period were bought with a mortgage.

Nick Leeming, chairman of Jackson-Stops & Staff, comments: 'The data suggests that buy-to-let investors are not being deterred. We will see the true impact of this policy in time, but my fear is that additional costs will be passed on to tenants.'

Brown's back

IF you didn't get enough of Capability Brown last year—the 300th anniversary of his birth—then you're in luck. Next month, a new play—'a complex story of love, loss and disagreements' with live music and extravagant costumes—will premiere at Burton Constable Hall, East Yorkshire. *Mr Brown's Directions* will offer a unique opportunity to eavesdrop on how the 'Shakespeare of gardening' plotted his grand landscapes, as it's based on a series of minutes recorded by the estate's steward, John Raines, during Brown's visits to Burton Constable between 1772 and 1782.

'*Mr Brown's Directions* is quite extraordinary,' comments Ceryl Evans, director of the Capability Brown Festival, 'and [brings to life] the only records of this kind showcasing Brown's work. To hear the conversations he had and see the plans he made provides a fabulous insight into Brown's mind and how he communicated with his clients.'

There will be four performances: 2pm and 7pm on both Friday, March 10 and Saturday, March 11. Afternoon tickets include tea in the Great Hall; evening perfomances include refreshments. To book, telephone 01482 392699 or visit www.litup.org.uk.

An extravagant play will bring Capability Brown's work at Burton Constable to life

Good news for Kent

GRANTS of more than £3.65 million have been awarded to three projects in Kent that will protect 'the garden of England' for future generations.

Marine-habitat organisation Guardians of the Deep and The Fifth Continent—Romney Marsh Landscape Partnership, both run by the Kent Wildlife Trust, will benefit from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grants, as well as the Old Chalk New Downs Project, to be run by Kent County Council.

'These projects cover huge swathes of the Kent countryside,' explains Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East. 'From the remote, flat, windswept landscape of Romney Marsh, to the nationally and internationally important Marine Conservation Zones of the Kent coast, to the disappearing chalk grasslands on the Kent Downs, each is beset with its own challenges… Local communities and organisations will be able to discover, care for and protect these environments and carry out vitally important work that may otherwise not be possible.'

Kent's marine landscapes will benefit from the new grant

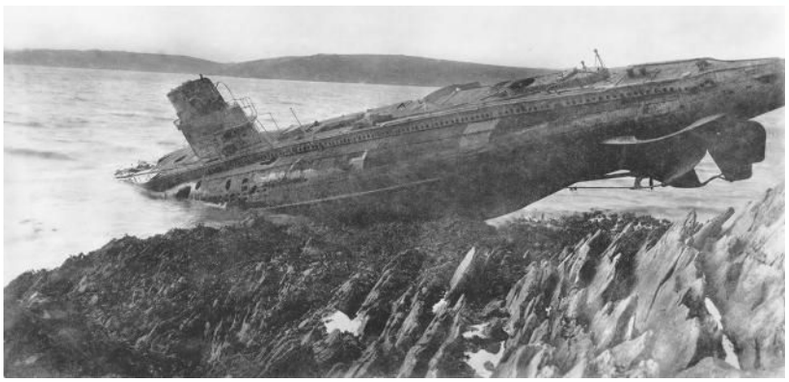
Bird flu worsens

Some 63,000 birds on three Lancashire estates will have to be culled in an effort to prevent the further spread of the H5N8 avian flu, which claimed 11,000 hens last month. Defra has established 3km (1.8-mile) protection zones and 10km (six-mile) surveillance zones in the area.

Although there is little threat to public health and food safety, the Government instruction to keep poultry and other captive birds indoors to ensure separation from wild birds remains in place until the end of February. The news follows a number of other outbreaks of the virus last month, including at farms in Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire.

BASC has issued a reminder to be aware of the symptoms of the disease—a swollen head, discolouration of neck and throat, loss of appetite, respiratory distress, diarrhoea and fewer eggs laid and to heed advice contained within the Bird Flu and Gamebirds document endorsed by Defra. Visit https://basc.org.uk/blog/avian-flu/latest-guidance-bird-flu-gamebirds to see it in full.

'The overall message has to be to plan ahead and remain vigilant,' says BASC's Glynn Evans.



A photo taken by naval officer Jack Casement of a German U-boat stranded on the rocks at Falmouth, Cornwall, is one of several images released by Historic England to mark the centenary of Germany's declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare on February 1, 1917.

More than 1,000 British ships were sunk during that year and even hospital boats painted with the internationally recognised Red Cross symbol were targeted. The National Submarine War Memorial at Temple Pier on the Thames has also been upgraded to a Grade II* listing. A third of the Submarine Service's personnel lost their lives during the war, the highest proportion of any branch of the armed services. *Jack Watkins*

We'll always have gin

GIN lovers rejoice! The future of the spirit is safe; last week, the UK National Tree Seed Project announced it had collected seeds of juniper plants for preservation: gin's key ingredient, they will be stored at the Millennium Seed Bank in Wakehurst, West Sussex.

Although the popularity of gin has been increasing, the seeds themselves have recently come under threat from a deadly fungus-like organism, *Phytophthora austrocedri*. Storage won't cure the disease, but will safeguard a source of juniper. In this increasingly uncertain world, it's good to know that, whatever happens, we can always have a gin and tonic. *JF*

EXMOOR'S iconic Tarr Steps (*above*) has been rebuilt after suffering severe damage during Storm Angus last November. Large stones from the 164ft Scheduled Ancient Monument, which is also a Grade I-listed structure, were washed down the River Barle when the two-day storm battered the West Country. Contractor Crest-moor first retrieved the stones, which weigh up to 2.5 tons each, and then partially dammed the river in order to reconstruct the medieval clapper bridge.

Due to its protected status, Tarr Steps Bridge, which has been damaged many times in its long history, must always be reconstructed exactly as it was before, with each of the 17 spans returned to their original locations.

'This much-loved landmark attracts thousands of people to our county every year and we're very pleased to have restored it back to its former glory,' says David Fothergill of Somerset County Council, which looks after the county's 3,000 bridges and structures. *Julie Harding*

Alamy; Burton Constable; Aksenova Natalya/Shutterstock; Alex Ramsay; Somerset Council; Gresei/Dreamstime; Historic England/Patrick Casement

Country Mouse

Eat what's in season

THE front cover of the *Daily Mail* screamed 'Veg rationing in supermarkets' and inside the paper were pictures of security guards standing next to boxes of courgettes and, after panic buying, barren shelves in shops. The world is clearly coming to an end.

Widespread flooding in Spain, where many of the vegetables are grown, has caused prices to soar and courgettes are now being sourced from the USA. But hang on: do we really need courgettes in February? Have we forgotten about eating in season, reducing the air miles on what we consume and our own nation's food security?

Homegrown leeks, Savoy cabbage, purple sprouting broccoli, the vast array of root vegetables and the impossibly chic kale are all at their best now. In March, we can look forward to spring greens; in April: cauliflower, followed by asparagus and peas. The courgettes should wait for September.

Eating in season not only makes sense financially, it also means that you'll be eating homegrown produce at its tastiest. The lack of knowledge of where our food comes from and our overdependence on foreign imports is a serious challenge to our farming community and to our bank balances. **MH**

Town Mouse

A feast for snails

THE children have been laid low by sickness this week, so permission to attend a 70th-birthday party in Salisbury on Saturday felt like leave of absence from a plague ship. It was extraordinarily uplifting arriving in the cathedral close. The sunshine brought to life the stone and brickwork of its encircling buildings and bestowed, for the first time this year, that touch of warmth that presages spring. Tourists and townsfolk basked in its unfamiliar rays, moving slowly across the cathedral green with their heavy coats unbuttoned. Dominating the whole scene was the vast, golden mass of the cathedral itself, the prodigious spire rearing up into the emptiness of the sky. Surely, there is here some of the quintessence of England.

It's hard to imagine a space more utterly unlike the Salisbury Cathedral Close in every particular than our garden. The following day, however, we broke the tedium of another enforced day at home by preparing this postage stamp of enclosed ground for spring. As I optimistically sowed a few vegetable seeds, I reflected on the bitter experience of previous years: far from growing fruits for our own table, we were preparing an elaborate feast for the slugs and snails that proliferate here. **JG**

Quiz of the week

1) In which county is the Britannia Royal Naval College?
2) An adult human skeleton is composed of how many bones?
3) *Lonicera* is more commonly known as what?
4) Who became the first Children's Laureate in 1999?
5) How many players are there in a netball team?

100 years ago in COUNTRY LIFE February 10, 1917

A PROMISING YOUNG DUTCH RABBIT.

to poisoning by an overdose of the medicinal properties with which most plants are endowed. When a surplus of one sort of plant is available, that which cannot be used at once should be kept fresh by standing the stalks in a bucket of water so that it can be used up combined with other plants during several days.

Rabbits thrive better on grass than on anything else, as every handful contains that variety of plants so necessary to their well being, and from early in May till the end of July they require little else. Many people can provide

YOUNG BLACK FLEMISH DOE.

THERE is a great temptation when, say, the carrots are raised to use up all the tops at once in huge feeds to the animals, and this will probably cause a mild form of poisoning and disastrous results. Rabbits thrive better on grass than on anything else, as every handful contains that variety of plants so necessary to their well being, and from early in May till the end of July they require little else.

Very British Problems

By Rob Temple

Being very apologetic for laughing too much at someone's joke

1) Devon 2) 206 3) Honeysuckle 4) Quentin Blake 5) Seven

The nature of things

Dunlin and redshank

WHILE the tide is low, numerous little waders run to and fro, dipping their bills into the exposed mudflats, finding morsels to eat on and under the wave-riven, sandy surface. Shrimps and sandhoppers, remains of stranded fish, even jellyfish can be picked at by purposeful bills, along with crustaceans, molluscs, worms, flies and pieces of washed-up plant material such as seeds.

Dunlin (*bottom left and right*) are frequently among the foragers, many of them having forsaken their favoured summer breeding grounds on the high moors of the Pennines and Scotland for better feeding opportunities on lowland estuaries and coasts. Dipping their bills in haste into the soft sand, with a sewing-machine-like action, the resident dunlins are joined by migrants from colder northern lands and will form big flocks that may move together in clouds of synchronised flight, similar to starling murmurations.

Unshowy through the winter months in an overall cape of browny-grey above white underparts, on the arrival of spring, their plumage is dramatically sharpened up, with regular tortoiseshell patterns of red-brown and black spread over the head and back.

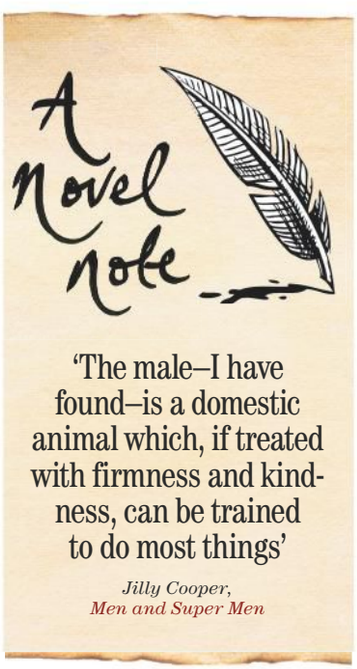
Another resident preferring a coastal sojourn through the winter and frequently enjoying the company of the dunlin is the somewhat larger redshank (*above left, right and middle*). Its colouring is similarly subdued at this time, but it's easily discerned by its orange-red legs and piercing warning cries. **KBH**

Illustration by Bill Donohoe

Time to buy

Pewter hip flask, from £65, Inkerman (01892 752211; www.inkerman.co.uk)

Yorkshire Dales Game & Country tweed-and-leather dog bed, from £295, Pink Whiskers (07570 019321; www.pinkwhiskers.co.uk)



Sea-salt-caramel chocolate truffles, £19.50, Prestat (020–8961 8555; www.prestat.co.uk)

Unmissable events

Exhibition

February 11–June 4 'From Rome to the Royal Crescent', No 1, Royal Crescent, Bath, Somerset. A selection of detailed architectural models by Timothy Richards, including Rome's Pantheon, London's Somerset House and 1, Royal Crescent itself, will be on display as part of Bath Preservation Trust's celebrations of the 250th anniversary of the city. Admission included in standard museum entry, adults £10 (http://no1royalcrescent.org.uk; 01225 428126)

Cookery class

February 18 Knife Skills: Slice and Dice, Cookery School, Little Portland Street, London W1. Learn how to wield a kitchen knife like an expert, chopping, slicing, dicing and filleting. After sampling the results, you will leave with the recipes for the dishes you have created. 4pm–7.30pm, £140 (020–7631 4590; www.cookeryschool.co.uk)

Literary festival

February 16–25 Purbeck Literary Festival, Isle of Purbeck, Dorset. A programme full of literary magic includes talks from 'Beetle Boy' author M. G. Leonard, children's writer Nicholas Frith and travel writer Nick Hunt, plus film, poetry and music. Now in its fourth year, the festival, which has a 'wild' theme, will be using Victorian folly Durlston Castle as its base. Visit the website for event prices and to book (www.purbeckliteraryfestival.info)

Orienteering

February 11–19 Orienteering Week, Waddesdon Manor, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. Join the Thames Valley Orienteering Club for a muddy adventure, with four routes to choose from. 11am–3pm, normal grounds admission applies (01296 820414; http://waddesdon.org.uk)

Theatre

February 16 *Saint Joan*, National Theatre Live (*above*), nationwide. Shaw's masterpiece, starring Gemma Arterton and directed by Josie Rourke, will be broadcast live to cinemas around the country from the Donmar Warehouse in London's Covent Garden. Visit the website for venues and to book tickets (http://ntlive.nationaltheatre.org.uk)

Auction

February 11 Sale of antiques and collectables, Swan & Turner, Jedburgh, Roxburghshire. More than 700 lots will go under the hammer in the auction room's final sale before closing its doors. Highlights of the catalogue include a near-life-size bronze sculpture of a horse and jockey (£5,000–£7,000) and a *coco-de-mer* shell (£300–£500). 10am start (www.swanturner.co.uk; 01835 863445)

Book now

February 25–26 Traditional Upholstery Weekend, Schumacher College, Dartington, Devon. Bring along 1m of your chosen fabric and you will be provided with the materials and tools to create a deep-buttoned foot stool, with the aid of professional upholsterer Leigh-Anne Treadwell, during this two-day course. 9.30am–5pm, £250 (01803 847070; www.dartington.org)

Knight Time

By Margaret Noble

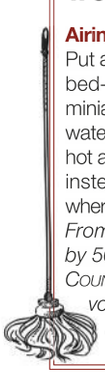
Fright Knight

Household hints from 90 years ago

Airing a bed

Put a stout stick upright under the bed-clothes, so forming a kind of miniature tent; then put in the hot-water bottles. By this method, the hot air is dispersed all over the bed, instead of warming only the part where the bottles have been placed.

From '500 Household Hints by 500 Housewives', published by Country Life in 1926. We cannot vouch for the accuracy of any advice given



Valentine's Day wines

Harry Eyres advises the charmers out there on the perfect pink Champagne

Our Valentine's Day celebration, the learned among you will remember, is thought to have its origins in the Roman festival of Lupercalia, when, according to Plutarch, noble youths and magistrates ran through the streets of Rome naked and women held out their hands to be struck with shaggy thongs in the hope of getting pregnant. Nowadays, you might think of it as the day when romance gets into bed with commerce.

Why you should be celebrating it

I always imagined that London's so-called 'carriage trade'—the seriously smart merchants with headquarters in SW1—would shrivel up and die rather than have anything to do with Valentine's Day, but at least one of them, Berry Bros & Rudd of St James's Street, seems to be exchanging the pinstripe suit for nothing at all.

What to drink

Champagne and Valentine's Day are as hard to prise apart as Port and Stilton. The more flamboyantly romantic will also feel that the Champagne needs to be pink. Berry Bros & Rudd Champagne Brut Rosé (£33; www.bbr.com, *below*) is savoury, meaty stuff, not frivolous at all, and would go well with the last game of the season. Alternatively, you can combine a bottle of Berry's Champagne Mailly, Grand Cru—which has lots of ripe, Pinot Noir character—with the excellent, cedary and voluptuous 2012 Berry Bros & Rudd Pauillac, from the cellars of Jean-Charles Cazes, in a special Valentine's Duo Gift Set (£50, including gift wrapping and delivery; www.bbr.com). How could Cupid's arrow miss after that?

Country Life Picture Library; Dreamstime; Jack Sain; Alexander Pladdet/Dreamstime; Margaret Noble

Letters to the Editor

Mark Hedges

Letter of the week

Smaller bags

AGROMENES is right to warn the RSPB about losing its reputation by allowing radicals to dictate its agenda. Those of us who love country sports should also be careful that our agenda isn't driven by those with other, short-term interests. As another shooting season draws to a close, I am far from alone in my concern that the inflation in sporting bags could spell the end of our sport, unless the countryside's leaders are willing to engage in the debate. We, too, should accept science-based criticism: the number of game birds being released and shot is unsustainable.

Anybody wise enough to read this journal and who also enjoys shooting can attest that the correlation between the number of birds shot and enjoyment of the sport is weak, yet we all subscribe to a system that links these factors. The sporting majority needs to restate its respectable rules and beliefs publicly, before the bossy elements in our society dictate a new set of them for us.

William Kendall, Suffolk

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

Lost letterbox?

THE white wooden letterbox (*Letters, January 25*) looks to be an exact pairing to our red-painted one, which the post office collected from until recently. When the service was discontinued and the key handed back, I found a similar, white-enamel sign inside, which had been in situ for at least 50 years. Were private letterboxes once standardised?

Rodney Morgan-Giles, Hampshire

Contact us (photographs welcome)

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Wandering wildfowl

MUCH has been written recently about the presence of woodcock in central London. In days gone by, the corncrake (*below*), now rare in the UK and mostly confined to the Western Isles of Scotland, was a common sight in central Edinburgh.

In *Memorials of His Time*, published posthumously in 1856, Henry Cockburn, Whig politician, Solicitor General for Scotland and noted judge of the Court of Session, commented: 'How can I forget the glory of that scene on the still nights on which… I have stood in Queen Street, or the opening at the north-west corner of Charlotte Square, and listened to the ceaseless rural corncrakes, nestling happily in the dewy grass.' And this just a stone's throw from the official residence of First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

Tom Drysdale, East Lothian

I THINK I can throw some light on Marcus Rutherford's woodcock encounter (*Letters, January 18*). If a bird takes flight or is blown out of a tree in a gale faster than its own top airspeed, it might have to go where the wind takes it. I was a vet with a clinic in Lewisham—not noted as a game-shooting district—some six miles from Shoe Lane as the woodcock flies. During a night shift, with a gale blowing, I once fielded a phone-call from a worried lady who'd come upon a cock pheasant in her back garden—what should she do about it? I've never regretted saying the first thing that came into my head: 'Twenty-five minutes a pound, gas mark four.'

Chris Godfrey, Greater London

Irony at immigration

ADD to Leslie Geddes-Brown's list of organisations guilty of the 'insolence of office' (*Spectator, January 25*) the airport Border Force. As an Australian, resident in this country for the past 43 years, I am quite rightly obliged to follow the 'other passport' signs, but recently found myself being shouted at for inadvertently standing in the wrong queue. I had flown for 20 hours after attending my mother's funeral and to be bawled at in a public place was both upsetting and humiliating—this is exactly the abusive behaviour that members of the public are reminded will not be tolerated.

Jenny Brockholes, by email

We are still here

I NOTICE that in your piece about Wynnstay (*Property Market, January 25*), the article refers to a large part of the estate being sold in 1948 to pay death duties, which resulted in the severance of the Williams-Wynn family's connections with Ruabon. In fact, Wynnstay House (*above*) was sold in 1948 as a school, with about 50 acres for playing fields. Wynnstay estate remains intact as one of the Williams-Wynn family's estates and the family connection with Ruabon remains as before.

Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn Bt, by email

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Winsome watercolour

I AM an Australian artist specialising in historic architecture and one of my favourite magazines is COUNTRY LIFE. It was in your pages that I learnt of the company Floris and its No 89 aftershave and, on a recent trip to the UK, I visited the shop and bought some. On my return to Sydney, I did a watercolour of the wonderful shopfront on Jermyn Street, London SW1 (*above*). I've sent a copy to the owners of Floris, but wondered whether you might be interested as it was your magazine that first alerted me.

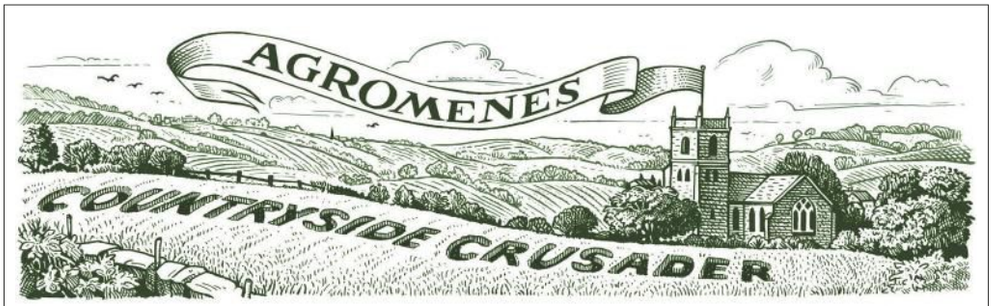
Simon Fieldhouse, Sydney, Australia

Top of the poppets

FOLLOWING on from Agromenes's comments (*January 18*), I doubt that I am the only one whose mother regularly preceded requests to do something that, in her opinion, wouldn't 'be any trouble, take much time or involve undue effort' with 'be a poppet…'.

Catherine Lewin, by email

Paul Quagliana/Shooting Times/Time Inc; wronaphoto.com/SOTK2011/Alamy; David Kjaer/naturepl.com; foodandwinephotography.com/Getty; Christies



Age is just a state of mind

WHO'S old today? 'Blistering speech on Brexit' by 76-year-old Ken Clarke, journey to Japan and Hiroshima planned by 80-year-old Pope Francis and another busy year ahead for 90-year-old Elizabeth II: these current news stories may seem to feature the exceptions, but there's hardly a village in England that doesn't rely on 70 and 80 year olds to keep things running, raise money and look after the less able. There are, of course, the 'sit down at 60' brigade, but even they rely on that army of redoubtable men and women who have no intention of giving up.

People such as Caroline Cranbrook, at 81, the scourge of out-of-town shopping, but now taking up cudgels for rural businesses hit by rate increases; Elizabeth Butler-Sloss, still battling for the deprived at 83; or the youthful Ann Hay, who, at 75, runs a Cumbrian bowling club, coffee mornings for the 'oldies' and produces wonderful flower arrangements for the local church. Who's calling them old? We've all got to adjust to a new attitude in which, to quote the 97-year-old athlete Charles Eugster, 'age is just a number'.

> ‘It's no longer good enough to think of the over-sixties as the road-sign image of two old dears’

It's no longer good enough to think of the over-sixties as if they fitted the road-sign image of two old dears with sticks trying to cross the street. Nor should we revise our attitudes just because we can't afford to pay pensions as early as once we did. In the words of Japanese gerontologist Yasuyoshi Ouchi, it's simply: 'Today's elderly are younger than in the past.' And he should know. Japan's Geriatrics Society conducted a major piece of research that showed that even between 2000 and 2010, people seemed to have aged much less and, on average, appeared 10 years younger than their forebears. Thus the society redefined the elderly, starting them at 75 instead of 65. Not surprising really, considering that our notion of 65 was invented by the Germans in 1916.

The change in attitude is urgently needed as a matter of respect and a recognition of the continuing contribution of older people. Retirement shouldn't be the goal for the fulfilled. Change and learning new skills, taking on different demands and new challenges ought to be the expectation of healthy people in their sixties, seventies and even eighties.

The caveat of 'healthy' is, of course, important. Recognising that most of us are healthier than ever before shouldn't blind us to the fact that a minority is incapacitated by illness—but that can be true at any age. The proportion rises as people get older, but incapacity should never be seen as a necessary part of the definition of age. In that case, why should ambassadors be required to retire at 60 or Church of England clergy at 70, irrespective of their capacity?

This ageism is not only very old-fashioned, it's extremely expensive. If we continue to think like this, the next generation will have an intolerable burden of paying for active people who increasingly live well into their nineties.

How much better and cheaper if pension entitlements were rolled forward and men and women worked longer so that, when they do retire, they will have more to live on. It's the attitude that counts. Research is very clear. You remain healthy longer if you're active, engaged and working. It's already true that, in many countries, even with proper social-security systems, more than half want to work to 70 or beyond. It's a view we should recognise as normal and encourage it. If nothing else, it reduces our stock of curmudgeonly old boors for whom complaining fills the space left by not working.

Follow @agromenes on Twitter

Fred van Deelen; Country Life Picture Library

Athena

Cultural Crusader

Time to wage war on Westminster gridlock

BRITAIN is rightly proud of its Parliament building. The Palace of Westminster has served as a centre of government for nearly a millennium and it preserves one interior—Westminster Hall, built in the 1090s—that has been the focus of its life for the lion's share of that time. In its present manifestation, however, it is essentially a Gothic Revival masterpiece whose clock tower has become the physical embodiment of the free world.

All but the most hardened of Modernists would be sorry to see this historic building replaced, so, for this reason, many billions of taxpayer's pounds are about to be spent ridding it of lethal asbestos and an entanglement of highly-flammable wiring so that it can continue to function long into the future.

However, it's not just the building that is in urgent need of renovation. Tourists flood to London in their millions to find this noble building encircled by ugly security barriers hurriedly placed here after the horrific events of 9/11. Traffic on Parliament Square roars past on what is, in effect, a four-lane giratory system, created to take the through traffic away from Central London before the M25 was built.

> 'No wonder MPs have resorted to a tunnel as an easy means of access'

It cuts to pieces an architectural ensemble of buildings that ought to be read together with the Palace, including Westminster Abbey and the Jewel Tower to the south, the Supreme Court to the west and Whitehall to the north.

A succession of London Mayors has done little to address matters. In Parliament Square itself, they have left the traffic clogged by poorly sequenced traffic lights. On the grand scale, they have made no attempt to commission a proper strategic plan of how London traffic might be better organised to avoid Westminster. With tourists tottering backwards through the crowds with their 'selfie sticks' extended, the pavements are crowded, barrier-ridden and dangerous. No wonder MPs working in Portcullis House have resorted to a tunnel as an easy means of access to the Palace proper.

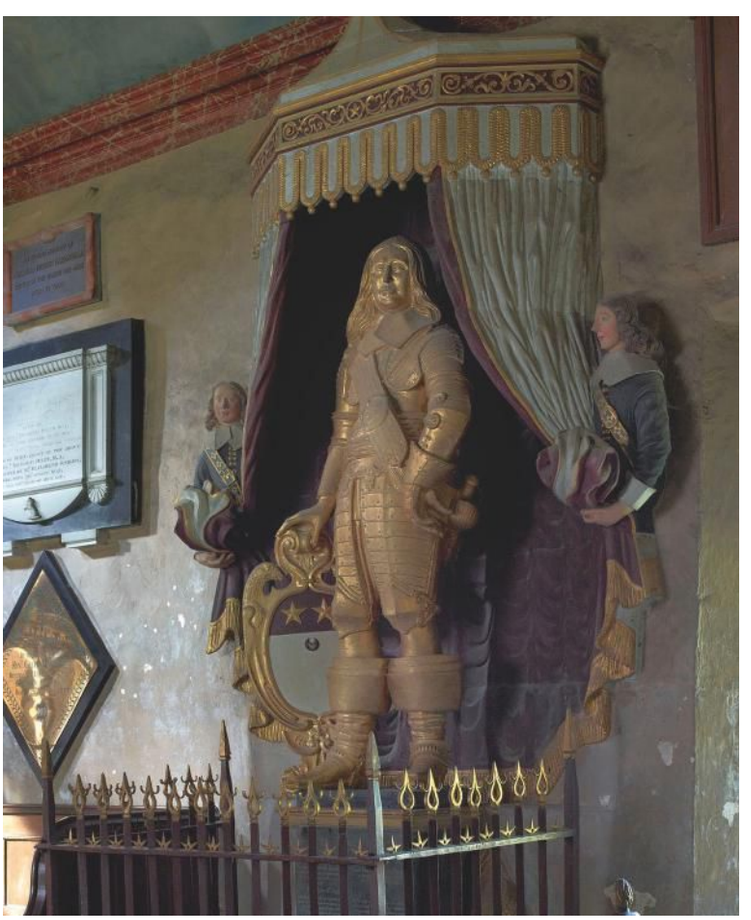
The connections between the patches of green in and around the square are also hopelessly inadequate. Those Parliamentarians who continue to park their private cars around the base of Parliament must be truly delighted to escape the noisy, fume-ridden environment left for everyone else.

In any other country, this would be instantly recognised as the national disgrace that it surely is. Indeed, the treatment of Parliament Square has become an international cause of concern for UNESCO, which is sending a delegation in February to report on the condition of what remains for now a designated World Heritage Site.

With the great refurbishment shortly to begin, and at least five years of disruption ahead, Athena hopes that this complex issue can be properly addressed. How depressing it would be if, at the end of this huge project to improve the Palace, we confront around it the same shameful muddle that we have today.

This week: The Golden Cavalier

It was recently announced that St Mary's Church, Lydiard Tregoze, Wiltshire, will receive an initial grant of £131,700 from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the conservation of its exceptional collection of art and fittings, including this striking monument known as the Golden Cavalier, the funeral monument of Edward St John, who died in 1645. It's one of three nationally important monuments in the church. The building also preserves the extensive remains of wall paintings and medieval and 17th-century stained glass as well as a fine collection of ironwork. This functioning parish church stands within Lydiard Park, an estate and country house managed by Swindon Borough Council. The grant will enable the church to complete its development plans and progress to applying for a full grant of £746,700 in 2017/18.



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Navigating the pecking order

Greeting someone has become something of a social minefield. **Victoria Marston** tackles the question on everybody's lips: to kiss or not to kiss?

A KISS on the hand may be quite Continental, but what of a kiss on a cheek? Or even—*mon dieu!*—multiple kisses? What started as the preserve of the French, artistic types and the lovies among us has swept our nation and left us all in a state of confusion and social awkwardness. Just how *are* we supposed to greet one another these days?

> ‘Just how *are* we supposed to greet one another these days?’

‘A kiss may ruin a human life,’ said Oscar Wilde. A little dramatic for our purposes, perhaps, but a miss-kiss can definitely cause a shaky start to a meeting. The crux of the issue is, certainly, uncertainty.

First and foremost on this list of uncertainties is the basic dilemma of whether or not we should kiss the individual before us at all—wouldn't a handshake be more correct? *Debrett's* attempts to shed some light on the situation thus: ‘As a general rule, don't kiss people you don't know. Don't kiss colleagues. Do kiss close friends and dates. The key is to make your actions clear to avoid embarrassing confusion.’

However, it goes on to muddy the waters by explaining that this ‘general rule’ is dependent upon multiple variables: ‘situation, age, background, profession and your relationship’. Thus, whereas it's probably not the done thing to dive for the cheek of your boss or bank manager, you might well wish to bestow a peck on a schoolfriend or your interior decorator—as previously mentioned, artistic types are, as a general rule, more likely to indulge in the *bise*.

This decision is merely the first hurdle. Once committed to a kiss, which cheek should one aim for? The widely accepted wisdom is that you should aim for the right cheek, therefore you head left, but it would appear that not everyone got this memo and you should be prepared to ‘change direction at the last minute’.

More often than not, this lack of co-ordination will result in, at best, a clashing of noses or, at worst—depending on your feelings for the recipient—a clashing of lips. Should the worst happen, there is really little to be done other than to laugh awkwardly and move onto the next item of business.

If you manage to navigate your choice of cheek successfully, bravo—but you're not home safely quite yet. Next on the list of uncertainties

Nataliya Kostenyukova/Shutterstock

is whether one kiss suffices—or should we go in for a second? (The British, quite frankly, shouldn't even consider a third or fourth—we just can't pull it off.) Generally speaking, if you've kissed them once, you'll probably be expected to do so twice—in for a penny, in for a pound.

Conversely, a single kiss can actually be taken as a signifier of a deeper relationship—something to consider if you don't wish to start the rumour mill turning.

These main hurdles being safely cleared, there are other, lesser factors that nonetheless warrant consideration. Should your lips make contact with their cheek? (Yes—air kisses are false—but only lightly as saliva is unpleasant.) Should you make a sound? (No, *mwahs* are deeply distasteful—unless you're actively mocking people that *faire la bise* and the recipient is in on the mockery.)

Ultimately, the whole issue boils down to one of sincerity—or lack thereof. Having grown up in a distinctly British and suitably non-tactile family, then spent a year living *en France*, I feel comfortable in asserting that the reason our Gallic cousins pull off the embrace with so much more panache than we ever could is that when they kiss someone, they mean it—we just aren't good at demonstrating affection.

I still remember my father finding me prostrate and sobbing on my bed as a heartbroken teen. 'There there,' he said, patting me awkwardly on the back. 'Would you like some gin?'

> 'A single kiss can be taken as a signifier of a deeper relationship'

But in France, Italy, Spain or anywhere European that isn't England, a group of young men will enthusiastically embrace one another with genuine warmth and not a hint of discomfort. When we attempt it, we lack conviction—and it's palpable.

We're often keen to adopt exotic customs at the expense of our own, but will we allow the great British handshake to die, in order to carry out rituals that go against our very nature? I, slightly aloof-seeming Briton that I am, will always be an advocate of the handshake. Proffer your hand, grasp theirs and mean it, shaking with all the enthusiasm that your great British reserve can muster—so much more pleasant than a tentative and half-hearted embrace.

Debrett's offers a final word of warning: 'If you'd prefer to shake hands, be sure to hold yours out before any kissing manoeuvres begin but, if you're part of a group introduction, don't be the only non-kisser at the party.' And thus, the waters are muddied once again.

Country Life's guide to modern greetings

Stranger Handshake

Colleague Handshake or two kisses, depending on relationship

Friend One or two kisses, depending on degree of closeness

Family One kiss

Lover One kiss

Fiona Reynolds

The hills are alive

A frosty ascent of the highest of the Brecon Beacons

I LOVE hills. Perhaps it's because I was born among them (in Alston, Cumbria, the highest market town in England) or because, as a child, our holidays were always in Snowdonia and the Lake District. Or it may be because there's something truly inspiring about the majesty of hills that touches emotions other places can't reach.

> ‘We were joined by a huge red kite hunting below us’

I'm not alone. John Ruskin experienced his epiphany as a young man, watching a storm break over Chamonix in France: ‘Spire of ice—dome of snow—wedge of rock… a celestial city with walls of amethyst and gates of gold—filled with the light and clothed with the Peace of God. And then I learned… the real meaning of the word “Beautiful”.’

In the summer of 1793, William Wordsworth and his friend, Robert Jones of Ruthin, made a night ascent of Snowdon and the poet's view from the top, with adjacent summits emerging through pools of mist, captures a moment all Snowdon aficionados recognise: ‘A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved/All over this still ocean; and beyond,/Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched,/In headlands, tongues and promontory shapes,/Into the sea, the real sea, that seemed/To dwindle, and give up its majesty, /Usurped upon as far as sight could reach.’

During Christmas, I watched again the film *On the Black Hill*, adapted from Bruce Chatwin's wonderful novel. It's set in the Golden Valley on the edge of the Brecon Beacons and beautifully captures the spirit of the Welsh borderlands and their people, the market towns of Hay-on-Wye and Brecon and the sweeping, high mountains. Irresistible.

On a freezing morning in January, frost thick on the ground and the landscape shrouded in a heavy mist, I set off with friends to climb Pen y Fan, the highest of the Brecon Beacons range. It was a spooky, eerie day and we had no idea whether the fog would clear, but, after leaving our car just south of Brecon, in the National Trust car park, we caught our first glimpses of blue sky and whipped clouds moving fast above us.

Green remembered hills: *Brecon Beacons from Penlan* (1984) by Roy Powell

Still in heavy mist, our boots slipping on the frozen ground, we climbed—west of the mini summit of Allt Ddu rather than up the main track because we were keen to gain height quickly. We were soon rewarded. Surmounting our first little hill, Twy Cil-rhew, and traversing around to rejoin the main path, we broke through the mist into brilliant sunshine and the most stupendous view. Above us, still a mile or so distant, the summit, atop a precipitous edge; below us, cauldrons of mist, moving and breaking as if caught by eddies of wind and, to our right, pouring over the ridge into the valley below.

The walk to the summit was one of the most glorious experiences imaginable: crystal-clear light, swirling clouds, deep valleys and sweeping ridges, broken here and there by the bright colours of a distant walker's jacket or the sparkle of sunlight on a frosted stream—Wordsworth's experience relived.

At the top, we met dozens of others, most of whom had climbed from Storey Arms (a shorter and, it must be said, less exciting route). The vast plateau was freezing and windswept so, after a quick, ceremonial visit to the summit cairn, we didn't dally. Our route down was equally splendid: from Corn Du, we took the western path, past the obelisk, descending to the waters of tiny Llyn Cwm Llwych. Stopping there for lunch, now alone, we were joined by a huge red kite hunting silently below us, its russet-and-black back upturned.

I'm now well into the Cambridge term—no hills, no mountains. However, swirling mist, frost, spectacular blue skies and architectural beauty have not been in short supply this year so far. My mountain fix has been satisfied—for now.

Fiona Reynolds is Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and the author of ‘The Fight for Beauty’ (Oneworld). She will be writing about her favourite walks every month

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Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery; David Levinson

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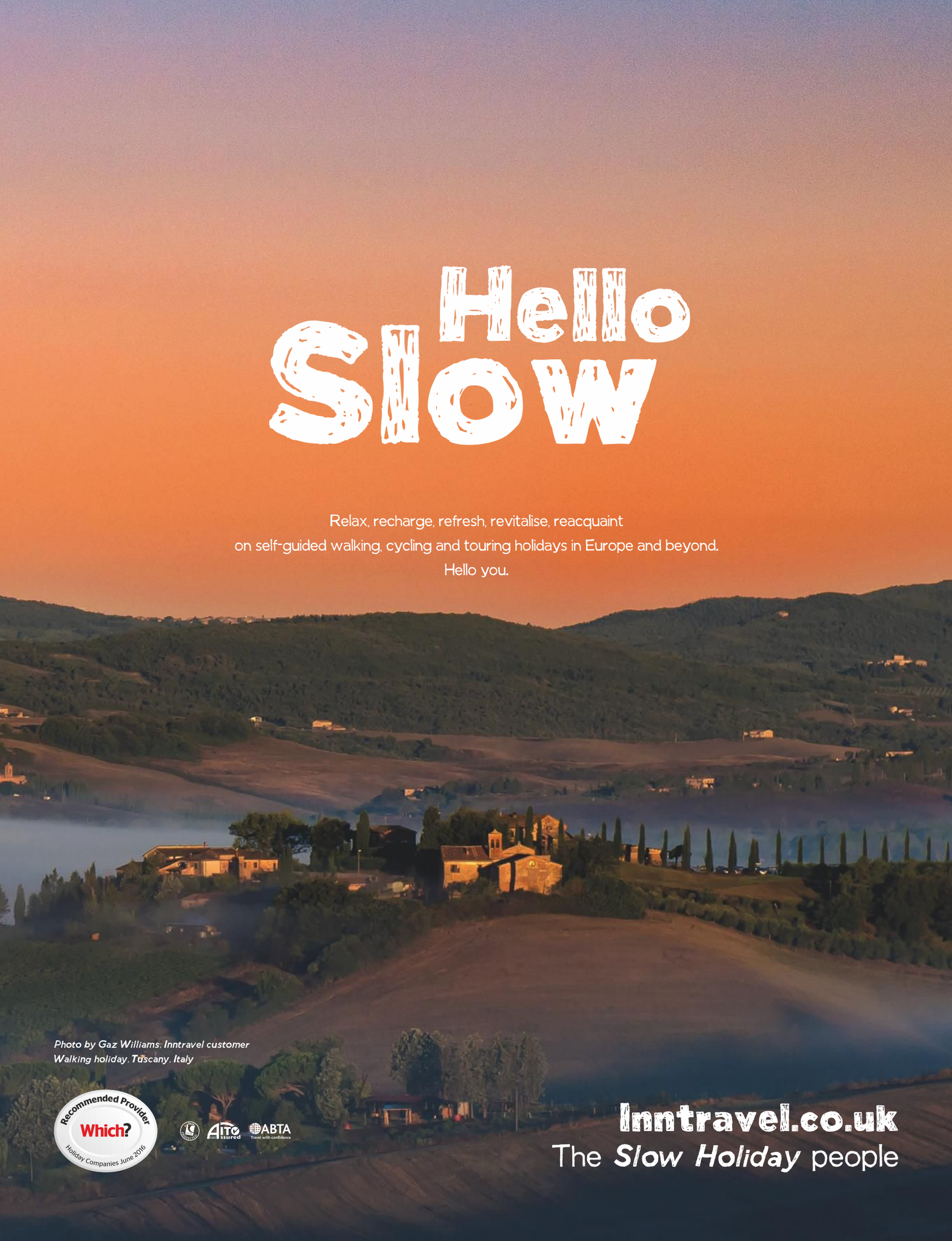

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Joe Gibbs

Save our stag

ONE bone-cold evening last week, my wife and I *pas-de-basqued* through the welcoming portals of the Caledonian Club in SW1. A piper was giving it *laldy* on the steps, summoning homesick Scots from murky Belgravia streets to the consolations of a bar jostling with bottles of the amber nectar.

Twenty-five years ago, my wife's grandmother had to cease her patronage of the Caledonian. Whenever she settled, with a grateful sigh, into a drawing-room sofa for a quiet cocktail, some crasher popped out from behind the wings of an armchair and lectured her on abstruse genealogical matters or alternative uses for stag's gralloch. It all became too much.

However, times have changed, amazingly for a London club, and the denizens we encountered seemed charming and lively, with the exception of the antlered ones hanging on the walls, which the moths have given rather a hard time. Painting them with paraffin used to be the answer, but insurers might have a word to say about that.

We had been bidden to the Caledonian to rally behind the latest Scots monarch threatened with exile: not a Stuart, but the resplendent, very un-moth-eaten *Monarch of the Glen* painted in 1851 by Landseer. This staggie Mr Universe has had a checkered history since his creation.

Originally commissioned as one of a set of three for the House of Lords refreshment rooms, their lordships found themselves temporarily 'boracic lint' and the painting was sold off privately; it went through a succession of owners until it reached the Pears Soap Company in 1916. After suffering the indignities of peddling cough mixture, butter and insurance, it was acquired by distiller John Dewar & Sons, for which it became a proud trademark, and thence by descent to the multi-national drinks company Diageo.

Diageo had loaned the painting for 17 years to the National Galleries of Scotland, which has mounted the current campaign to keep the *Monarch* enthroned in Edinburgh.

> 'The Oscar was disguised as a table-lamp stand at Glenbogle'

Making its fourth appearance at Christie's, the painting was to have been sold in December for a record estimate for the artist of £8 million. However, Diageo agreed to give the museum four months to raise a—generously reduced—sum of £4 million to secure the work a permanent home. To date, £3.25 million of this has been pledged, but the March deadline is nearing.

Enter, chased by a very large stag, Douglas Rae, Scot-in-exile, proprietor of Ecosse Films. It was Douglas who made the highly successful BBC series *Monarch of the Glen*, loosely derived from the Compton Mackenzie novel, whose Sunday evening feelgood factor we basked in for seven seasons. And it was Douglas's initiative that pulled us together last week. Speaking after dinner, Julian Fellowes, who appeared in *Monarch* as Kilwillie, in a famous double act with Richard Briers as Hector MacDonald, recounted the surreal experience of joining the series as an impecunious actor and leaving it as the Oscar-winning screenwriter of the movie *Gosford Park*.

As most of the cast and crew had followed closely his four years of ups and downs in making his name as a screenwriter, he brought the Oscar on set for his friends to see. In a possible first for an Academy statuette, it found its way into the following series of *Monarch*, disguised as a stand-in for a table-lamp base in Lady Molly's sitting room at Glenbogle.

Landseer is said to have painted his great beast in Glen Affric, the Caledonian forested glen just to the west of where we live. As many stalkers have remarked, you wouldn't get a body that large on a hill stag, although the 12-pointer royal head is perfect (a monarch is technically 16 points).

There has been speculation that Landseer used a park-fed stag from Windsor Great Park as his model—there were, indeed, red deer at Windsor then. Some were descendants of those brought over from Hallerbruch by the Hanoverian Kings of England; others came from the New Forest.

Eventually, the Windsor reds all but died out, until The Duke of Edinburgh reintroduced a small herd from Balmoral in 1979.

Was the iconic *Monarch* stag a Scots head on an Anglo-German body painted by an Englishman who loved Scotland? Perhaps. And perhaps Robert the Bruce was born in Essex and clan tartans were invented by two Welshmen. People will believe what they wish to believe and, in Scotland of all places, myth has the currency of fact.

Whatever the facts and whatever your opinions about Victorian north Britain, Landseer's *Monarch* will be forever a defining symbol of that era in Scotland, a country in which it should remain.

Joe Gibbs lives at Belladrum in the Highlands and is the founder of the Tartan Heart Festival

Next week: Ysenda Maxtone Graham

Illustration: Clare Mackie

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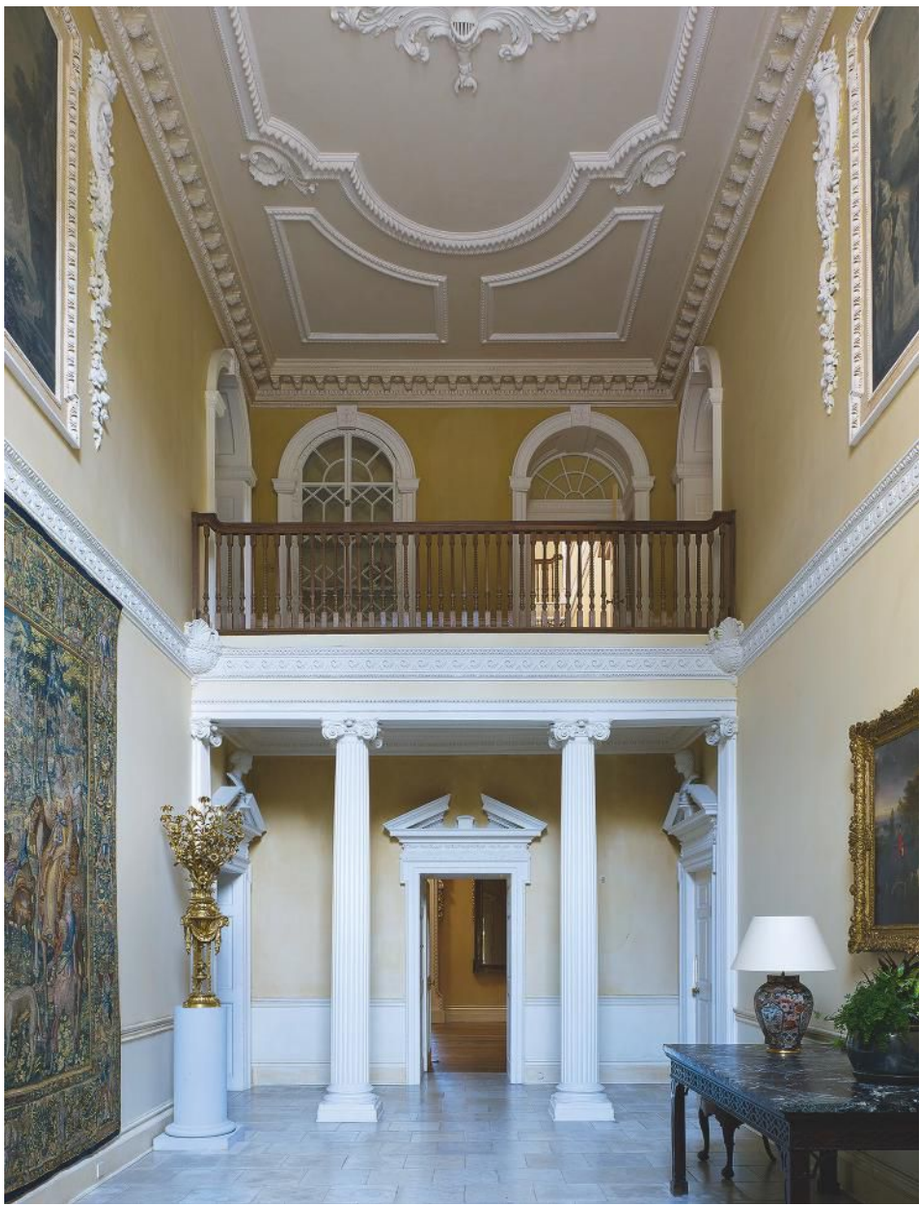


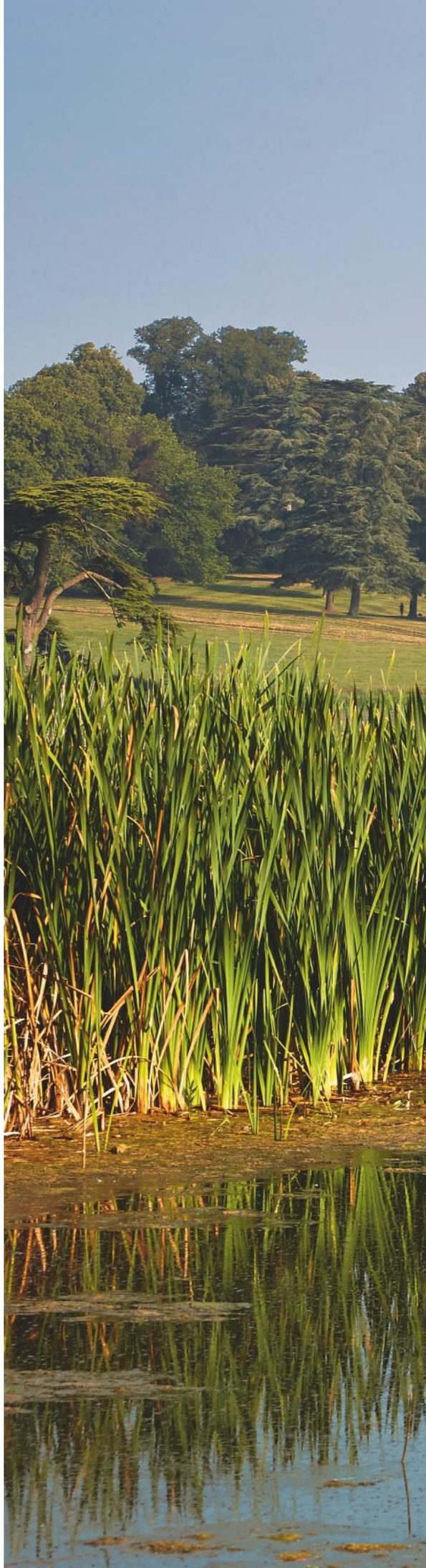


Fig 1 above: **The vestibule originally incorporated the staircase of the 1740s house. Visible in the ceiling is part of a cartouche displaying the Napier coat of arms.** *Fig 2 right:* **A view of the house across the lake with the stable tower behind. The façade of the original house before the 1770s alterations can be seen behind the columns of the central colonnade**

CRICHEL in Dorset is an unusual and fascinatingly complex house, an onion with a central core wrapped round with later layers. John Newman described it in 'The Buildings of England' as an 'archaeological puzzle' and Avray Tipping found his analysis for COUNTRY LIFE in 1925 hampered by 'a complete absence of documentation'. In recent years, the deposit of the estate archives in the Dorset Record Office and John Cornforth's research into the Napier Sturt bank accounts at Hoare's have produced some of the missing building accounts.

As yet, however, there are no drawings for the 18th-century phases. William Burn's Victorian designs for Crichel are at the RIBA Drawings Collection, but there is still little documentary evidence for the substantial neo-Georgian works in the 20th century. As a consequence, much of the history of this remarkable building must be unpicked from the physical and visual evidence.

Crichel belonged to the Napier and Sturt families for 400 years, but, after the death in 2010 of the late Mary Anna Marten, only daughter of the 3rd and last Lord Alington, the property was sold as she left six children and beneficiaries. The well-managed estate, which comprised 10,000 acres and 150 houses and cottages, was broken up and dispersed in 2012. Fortunately, the main house, with some of its contents, and 1,300 acres including the park and 30 cottages, have been acquired by an Anglophile American family, the Chiltons, who have made it their English home and refurbished the interior, restoring several James Wyatt ➢

A magnificent puzzle

Crichel, Dorset, part I
The Home of Mr and Mrs Richard Chilton, Jr

In the first of two articles, **John Martin Robinson** looks at the Georgian evolution of this extraordinary building, which has, wrapped within its 1770s exterior, a 1740s house

Photographs by Paul Highnam

rooms, which can now be seen as the masterpieces they are.

Much of the rest of the estate has been bought by Lord Phillimore, son of the neo-Georgian architect Claud Phillimore, so cultural disaster has been averted and this beautiful part of Dorset continues to be cherished and managed on traditional lines by sympathetic new owners.

> ‘Crichel in Dorset is an unusual and fascinatingly complex house’

Crichel stands on the site of a Jacobean predecessor that burnt down in 1742. The house was promptly rebuilt ‘in great splendour’ from 1743 to 1747 by Sir William Napier (***Fig 2***). His architect was John Bastard of Blandford, scion of the leading builder-architects in the area, famous for the handsome early-18th-century buildings they erected in their home town. Bastard was paid as architect in Napier’s bank account at Hoare’s. Payments are also recorded there to Francis Cartwright, another leading Dorset builder, who was probably the contractor executing Bastard’s designs.

The new house was a three-storeyed rectangular block with the staircase and hall on axis and the main entrance on the east side facing the church like its Jacobean predecessor. Its style was the English Baroque perpetuated by the Bastards with moulded window architraves and curly doorway pediments; it can still be seen behind the neo-Classical colonnade on the south front and was recorded in a vignette on an estate map of 1765.

The interior had Rococo plasterwork very similar to the Bastard work in Blandford church, the best of which survives in the vestibule (***Fig 1***), the original staircase hall, with Napier’s arms in a large cartouche on the ceiling. The 1740s joinery was also of good quality as demonstrated in the turned-oak balusters and carved tread ends of the present staircase reset by Wyatt in the 1770s.

In 1765, the estate was inherited by Humphrey Sturt. He was the nephew and heir of Sir William Napier of Crichel, the last baronet of the Napper or Napier family, which had owned the Crichel estate since the early 17th century. Through his mother’s family, Sturt was the heir to the Alingtons, whose dormant barony was to be re-created for the Victorian owners of Crichel in 1876. ➢

Fig 3: **The colonnade is one of the most idiosyncratic elements of Crichel and frames a spectacular view out into the landscaped park**

Fig 4 above: **The east façade, begun after 1765. The church, possibly by George Alexander, was built in 1850 and has a splendid vaulted chancel.** *Fig 5 right:* **The 1740s staircase was moved and adapted by James Wyatt in the 1770s. The panels by Cipriani are from Arlington Street in London and were installed in the late 1920s**

The Sturts themselves emerged in the 17th century as rich merchants and aldermen of London. Humphrey's maternal grandfather was Lord Mayor. When he inherited Crichel, he already owned estates in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Devon, as well as the Sturt family seat at neighbouring Horton in Dorset, which he now gave up and replaced with Crichel.

Sturt was not only very rich as a result of these inheritances, he was also married to the heiress of Hoxton, a London property on the edge of the City that effectively paid for his own grand scheme to transform the house. Arthur Young, the agriculturist, described Sturt as 'his own architect' and his changes to Crichel have all the originality and quirkiness to be expected of a Georgian virtuoso-amateur.

In effect, a series of new additions was wrapped around the existing 1740s house, which was retained in the middle: large new rooms were built at each corner and a bedroom storey and Ionic portico or colonnade on the south front (***Fig 3***), which remains the house's most idiosyncratic feature. The grounds were landscaped with a large crescent-shaped lake and belts of trees in the manner of Capability Brown (***Fig 4***).

In his *History of Dorset* (1774), Hutchins wrote that the house was 'so immensely enlarged that it has the appearance of a mansion of a prince, more than that of a country gentleman'. The Bastards were used again as the builders. John, William, Benjamin, James and Thomas Bastard II were all paid for work between February 1768 and 1773, but, in 1772, Sturt brought in James Wyatt and his brother Samuel to design superb interiors and finish the project.

> 'It has the appearance of a mansion of a prince, more than that of a country gentleman'

Sturt encountered the Wyatts' architecture through the Pantheon, a 'Winter Ranelagh' in Oxford Street, London, which opened to spectacular acclaim in January 1772. Like many other English, Welsh and Irish landowners, Sturt was impressed and immediately asked the 26-year-old James Wyatt to design the new rooms within the extensions he was constructing. These were mentioned by Hutchins in 1774: 'The hall, dining room, drawing room, portico, library, the common dining parlour, with all the apartments over them are entirely his [Sturt's] additions. The staircase is in the middle of the house lighted by an elegant glass dome.'

Sturt had already progressed with the dining parlour, library (***Fig 6***) and the new (east) entrance hall, but Wyatt completed the latter and was entirely responsible for the other rooms, including the best dining room and drawing room and the upper storey on the south and east fronts. They are among his finest surviving early rooms in England and parallel other works of his in the early 1770s, such as the interior of Beaudesert in Staffordshire, now destroyed.

As part of his work, he created a grand new staircase hall, removing the ceiling of the Napier entrance hall to make a full-height space and reusing and expanding the old oak staircase from next door (***Fig 5***).

Wyatt was involved from early in 1772 and was paid £20 on July 16, 1772, probably for his initial drawings. He was paid further sums in April 1775 and July 1778, presumably for visits and additional designs, and a last payment in 1780. Samuel Wyatt, elder brother to James, was also paid £18 4s in July 1778. This was the sort of project James liked and excelled at, in which the owner and a local builder did all the work and supervision on site and he provided beautiful drawings (sadly lost) and remote control from London.

The team of craftsmen he had assembled for the Pantheon (partly taken over from Adam at Kedleston) was fully deployed at Crichel. ➢

Fig 6: **The library, with one of its gargantuan Palladian bookcases. The fine fireplace, with its copy of Van Dyke's portrait of the Earl of Strafford and his secretary, is probably recycled from another 1740s building**

They included Joseph Rose for plasterwork, Biagio Rebecca for wall and ceiling paintings in medallions and panels, John Deval for chimneypieces and Domenico Bartoli for *scagliola*. Rebecca was paid £147 17s on September 25, 1776, showing that the decoration of the drawing and dining rooms, his and Wyatt's two great schemes, was finished by then.

John Linnell and Ince & Mayhew, fashionable London firms that often worked with Wyatt, were paid for furnishings from 1776 to 1780, although none of it now remains at Crichel and it is impossible to say whether Wyatt designed it specially or not.

Sturt died in 1786. His eldest son inherited Horton, but Crichel was left to his second son, Charles, who let the house. He was a keen yachtsman and lived on Brownsea Island overlooking Poole Harbour. An inventory of the contents of Crichel prepared for letting in 1796 gives an impression of the interior with the family rooms well furnished, but the big rooms largely empty, suggesting they were not much used.

The 'Best Dining Room' only had an 'oval dessert stand' and a 'set of mahogany dining tables with circular ends on claws'. The 'Best Drawing Room' had a pair of 'curious oval claw stands' and 'one twelve light lustre richly ornamented'. There were two rooms on the south front behind the portico, the 'Clouded Bed Chamber' and 'White dimity Bed Room' both with four posters. The private rooms at the north-west corner were then called the Portico Parlour (after its colonnaded sideboard end), used as a family dining room, and a Billiard Room, which contained a harpsichord, but not a billiard table.

Charles died in 1812 and was succeeded by his son, Henry Charles Sturt (1795–1866). His major change was to switch the main entrance from the east to the west, contriving a new hall on that side designed by Thomas Hopper (famous for the Carlton House conservatory). He also converted the 'Portico Parlour' to a library with fitted oak Regency bookcases. Designs by Thomas Evans of Wimborne for Charles exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1824 were probably not executed.

A major 19th-century remodelling of Crichel was carried out by Charles's son, Henry Gerard Sturt, a Tory MP who was created 1st Lord Alington in 1876. He employed William Burn, the favourite architect of the mid-Victorian aristocracy with a flair for modernising country houses and noted for his sophisticated planning. He cemented the exterior, put plate glass in the windows and architraves round them and added the impressive Roman Doric *porte-cochère* on the west front in 1868–9.

He and his nephew, J. Macvicar Anderson, worked at Crichel for three decades, erecting the neo-Norman gateway at the Witchampton gate to the park and building new north wings with private family rooms and additional service accommodation. Much of this Victorianisation was removed or re-Georgianised in the 20th century, as will be seen in next week's article.

My favourite painting Katie Hickman

The Virgin of The Rocks by da Vinci

Neil Bennett; National Gallery, London, UK/Bridgeman

‘This is the first painting I can remember that really moved me. I was 10 and would often be taken to the National Gallery on Sundays as an outing from boarding school. Perhaps it was the contemplation of a family group that I found so poignant? I was fascinated not only by their faces—at once human and supernatural in their beauty, illuminated as if by moonlight—but also by background detail: the clump of *narcissi* at John the Baptist’s feet, the craggy rocks embracing a mysterious green lagoon and the golden folds of the Virgin’s robe. Revisiting the painting recently, I found it every bit as mesmerising’

John McEwen comments on *The Virgin of the Rocks*

VASARI placed Leonardo in the vanguard of the modern manner for his ‘force and boldness of design, the subtlest counterfeiting of all the minutiae of Nature exactly as they are, with good rule, better order, correct proportion, perfect design and divine grace’.

This panel was painted to replace an earlier version, now in the Louvre. The original painting had been commissioned for inclusion in an altarpiece by a Milan-based Franciscan brotherhood dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, but contractual disputes resulted in it being sold to a third party. Scientific analysis reveals that the replacement was painted over a sacred, but otherwise unrelated, picture.

The Louvre version showed Leonardo for the first time putting a group of figures—Virgin, messenger angel and infant Jesus blessing infant John the Baptist—in a complex landscape. In the London version, the gradual transition between light and dark gives greater unity to the composition.

There is symbolism in the darkness. The writer Samuel Lock, who died recently, identified the black hole at the Virgin’s core as a deliberate glimpse of the everlasting. This accords with the then lack of an iconography for picturing her Immaculate Conception: that she was born of human parents, but, by God’s privilege, conceived without the ‘stain’ of original sin common to all mortals. Jeremiah (31:22) testified the sinless Virgin as God’s first ‘creation’.

Leonardo found particular inspiration in Proverbs chapter 8, in which the female personification of ‘wisdom’ attests: ‘The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way… before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth.’

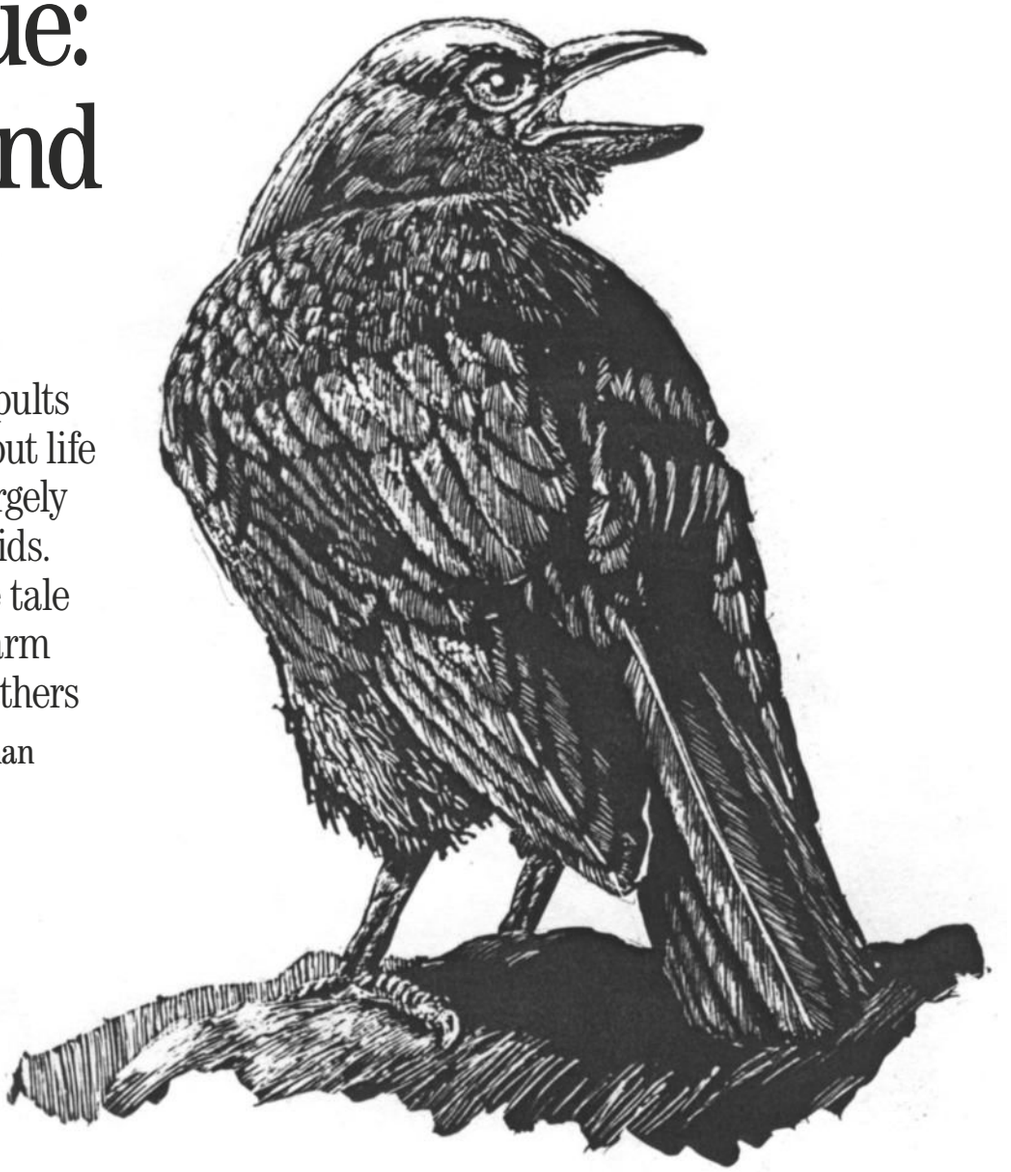
***The Virgin of the Rocks*, 1491/2–9 and 1506–8, by Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), 74½ in by 47¼in, The National Gallery, London WC2**

Katie Hickman is a novelist and historian. Her new novel, *The House at Bishopsgate*, is published by Bloomsbury this week

Going rogue: one man and his rook

Today, few boys carry catapults and fewer still eat rook pie, but life in the treetops remains largely unchanged for these corvids. **Charles Bingham** tells the tale of a rook on a Wiltshire farm that cried louder than the others

Illustrations by Julian Waterman



THE rookery in the tops of the leafless oak trees was beside a country lane, the tarred surface of which was littered with twigs, fallen and discarded from nest-building, and whitened with the splashed droppings of the birds. A single Scots pine stood a short way off and, at the top, a two-year-old rook named Raucus and his young mate commenced their nest in March.

The elder members of the colony *caa-d* in disagreement at this unusual choice of a pine tree instead of the oaks in which the other nests were built and, despite the efforts of Raucus to increase the size of the structure, they pulled the nest to pieces while he was absent gathering sticks.

Twice, Raucus renewed the base of his nest, twice the members of the colony had their way. His mate then chose a lowly site in the branches of an oak beside the lane. The efforts of the rook assisted Henry, a pensioner from the nearby cottage, who collected the fallen sticks each evening; they made kindling for the blackened kitchen range and the open-hearth fire that his sister lit on Sundays.

The nests were lined with dried grass, dead leaves and sheep's wool plucked from thorn hedges, the barbs of wire fences or from the sheep themselves as they lay upon the ground. Into the bowl of Raucus's nest, his mate laid four mottled-green eggs during the final week of March.

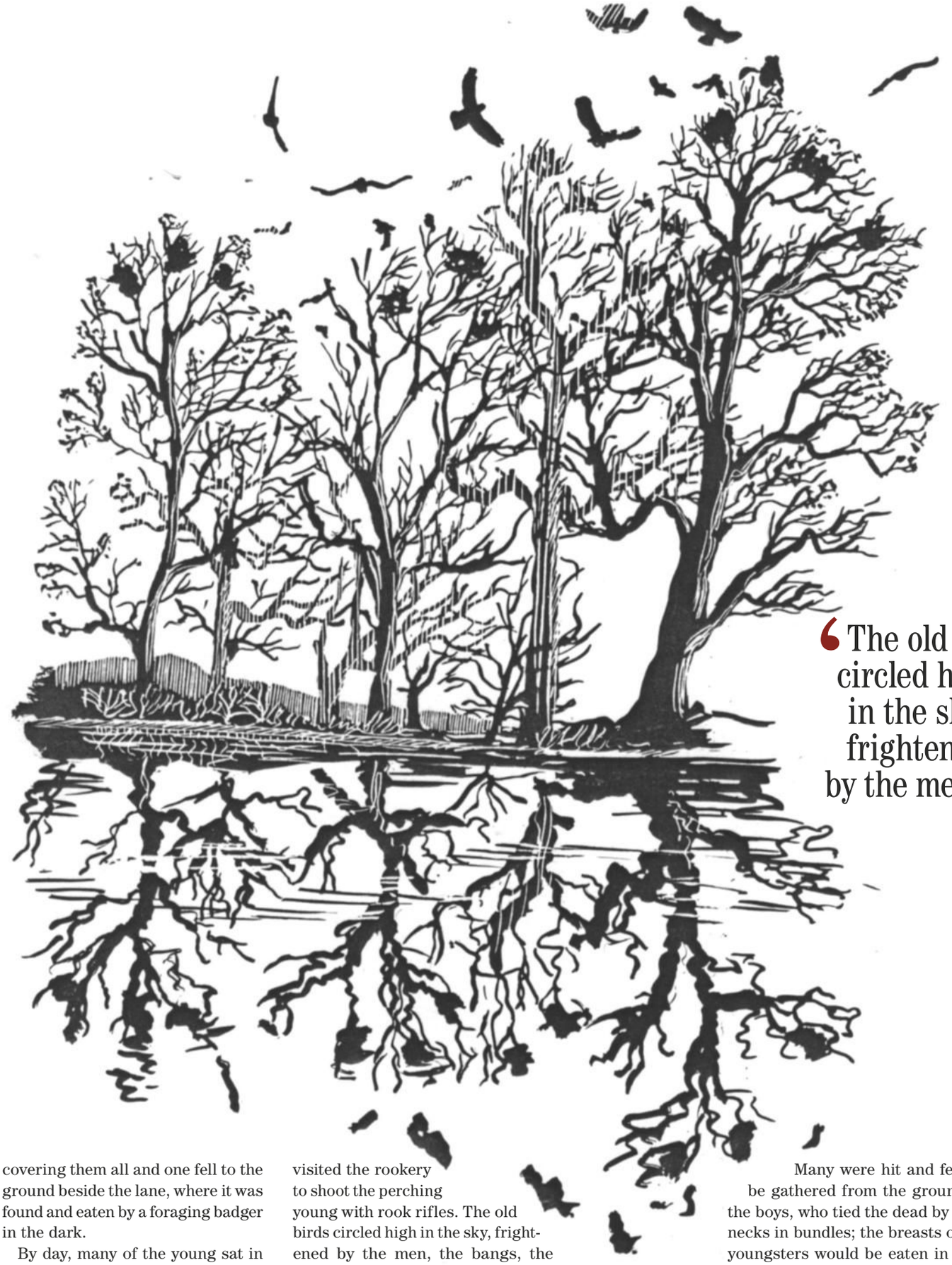
The clutch being complete, she sat upon the eggs in proud anticipation and was fed by Raucus, who arrived at the nest with the bare skin of the white pouch below his beak swollen with grubs, worms, maggots and oat seeds picked from the horse droppings in the fields. She flapped her black wings, opened her beak, gurgled, cried and guzzled down the food he coughed into her yellow throat. The shining sun warmed her back, her tail protruded over one edge of the nest and she was able to peer over the other with bright and beady eyes.

At times, Henry walked below and this she and the other mothers tolerated, but, if he looked up, the sight of his white face and staring eyes caused her to lift off and rise into the air with troubled cries. The rooks then circled in the sky until the old man hobbled home.

Henry noticed the parents' increased activity when the young ones hatched and the greedy squeaks and calls penetrated his old, time-blunted ears.

At the end of April came several days of rain, in which many of the young rooks died of wet and cold. Henry found partly feathered bodies with blue and swollen bellies on the ground beneath the trees, their parents distressed by their inability to brood over them, providing protection and warmth, and, at the same time, gather food.

The noises of the rookery grew louder in early May, when the young sat on the edges of the nests and on nearby branches. The rooklets still returned to their homes at night, but Raucus's mate had difficulty in



‘The old birds circled high in the sky, frightened by the men’

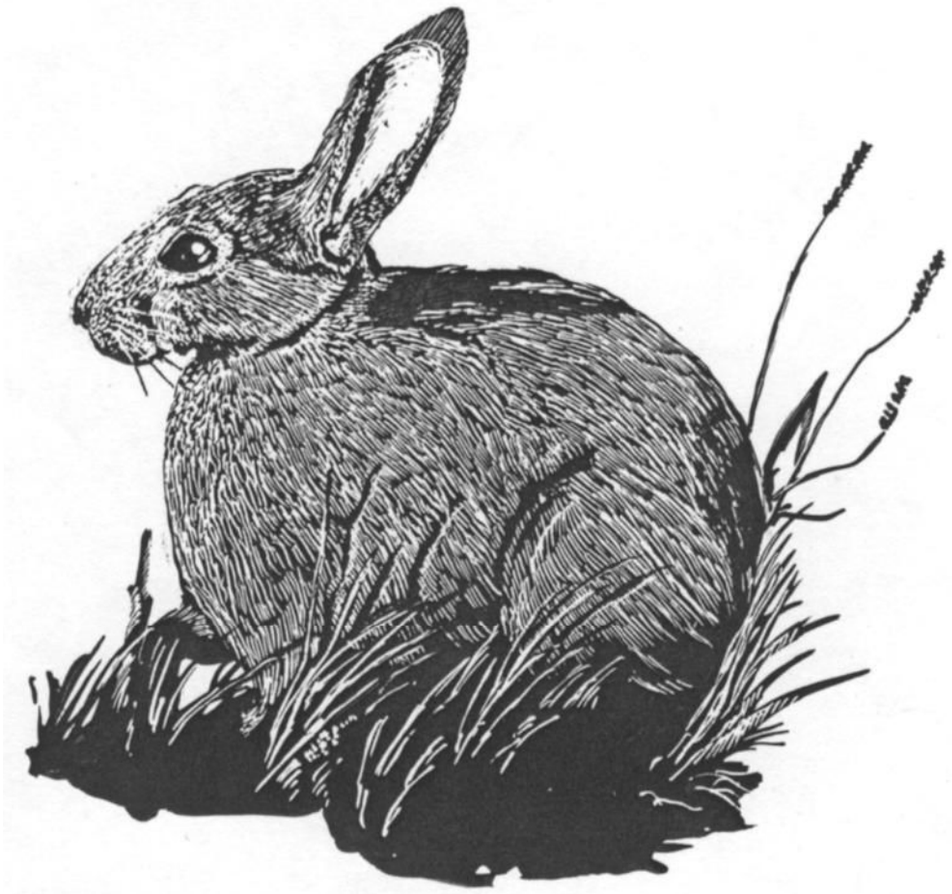
covering them all and one fell to the ground beside the lane, where it was found and eaten by a foraging badger in the dark.

By day, many of the young sat in the treetops, partly screened from below by uncurling, soft-green leaves, these awkward, black and spikey-feathered children being most handsome to their parents.

On the twelfth day of May, two farmers and their 14-year-old sons visited the rookery to shoot the perching young with rook rifles. The old birds circled high in the sky, frightened by the men, the bangs, the cracks and the cries of bewilderment from their offspring in the trees. They called to their young ones to take to the safety of the air, to fly, but the rooklets were not yet far enough advanced to trust their wings.

Many were hit and fell, to be gathered from the ground by the boys, who tied the dead by their necks in bundles; the breasts of the youngsters would be eaten in rook pie later in the week. After an hour, there seemed little more at which to shoot.

Some rooklets managed to clamber back into their nests to shelter and others, swaying on the highest branches, shielded by a screen of leaves, ➢



were too difficult to hit. Two of the Raucus young survived. The parents flew down when the shooting party departed and it wasn't long before the rookery quietened, the shrill calls lowering to softer *caa*-ing.

Henry had lived with rook shoots all his life. He walked beneath the trees that evening: 'Never mind m'dears, there be enough of 'ee left, fer sure.' Picking up a few sticks and gathering a bunch of primroses for his sister, he returned to the cottage at the end of the lane.

> 'Once, he argued with a stoat, which ripped a slice of black feathers from his back'

The following day, the two boys returned after school. Armed with catapults, they shot stones at the two remaining young rooks in Raucus's nest. One stone hit a branch on which a bird was perched, causing it to lose balance, sway and fall—the boys kept him as a pet in the farmhouse boot room, where he lived into old age, hopping between the outhouses and the yard.

The remaining rooklet was fed with energy and devotion by Raucus and his mate. Receiving so large a quantity of food, the young one grew to a size above the average. He became adventurous, flying from tree to tree and into the fields. On the grass, he followed his parents, watching their movements, calling all the while for more grubs, worms, snails and seeds. After several weeks, he became larger than his mother, who finally left him to rejoin the rook colony in exhaustion. Raucus, growing tired of the demands of his offspring, also discarded Rogue to fend for himself.

By November, the other rooks had tired of the larger bird's domineering manner and called a parliament, circling him in a meadow and driving him from the colony. Left to his own devices, he skulked along the hedges and lanes and in the leafless copses close to Henry's cottage.

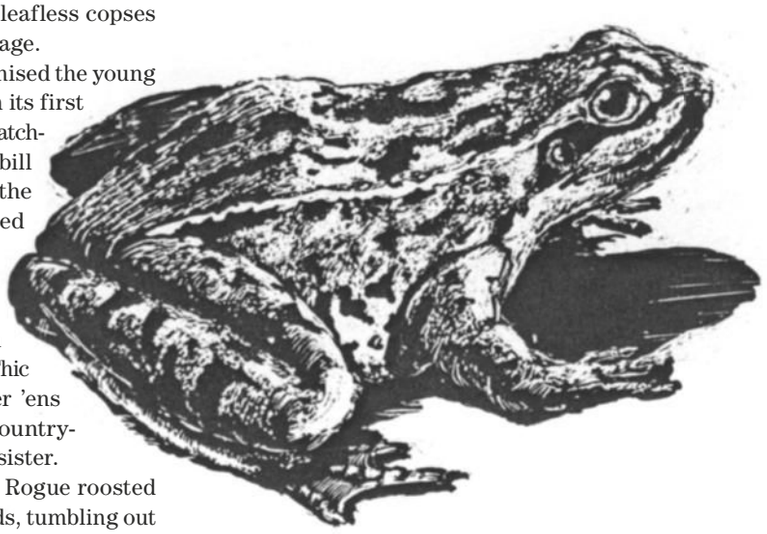
The old man recognised the young rook, which, being in its first year, lacked the bare patches of skin below the bill that distinguished the older birds. He called the bird a 'bliddy rogue' after catching him stealing an egg from the hen run and the name stuck: 'Thic crafty Rogue be at yer 'ens agin,' the ancient countryman reported to his sister.

During the winter, Rogue roosted in the thick pine woods, tumbling out of the sky at dusk with the robber carrion crows. Being heavier than his black comrades in crime, he stole their food, driving them from the rotting carcases of rabbits, sheep and those birds that had died of starvation in the coldness of the winter months. He swallowed mice unearthed behind the farmer's plough and he pecked at the spawning frogs in March, eating the tadpoles as they hatched. In April, he followed the magpies along the sprouting hedges on raids of the song birds' nests. He ate young thrushes and pecked the flesh from the breasts of fledgling blackbirds with no pity.

In the May sky, Rogue watched Fareye the buzzard wheeling, searching for the young brown rabbits nibbling tender grass. The pink-skinned, listening ears of the rabbits protruded above the bluebells and buttercups, their twitching noses testing the breeze for warning scents of man and fox. Fareye dropped from the sky without scent or sound, his wings folding and talons reaching down to grip the soft, round bodies.

Rogue watched each death in anticipation of the share to come when the hawk had torn his fill from the limp body. When Fareye departed, flapping heavily to rise from the ground, the rook flew down, scattering the magpies, which retreated to the hedge to watch, chatter and await their turn.

Once, he argued with a stoat, which ripped a slice of black feathers from his back before he could regain the air—the bird learned the lesson and, from then on, avoided stoats and weasels. He didn't interfere with the dreys of the grey squirrels, which he found to be full of fleas instead of eggs. The white eggs of woodpigeons



were sucked with impunity and the eyes pecked from the pigeon squabs, which raised swaying heads to imbibe the white, milky liquid regurgitated by their parents. The adults flew at him, only to be struck away by his stabbing beak.

Rogue's travels became widespread, to the rocky outcrops of Dartmoor, the gnarled and twisted oaks of Wistman's Wood and the conifer plantations of the rolling hills. Each pair of nesting crows defended its territory, seeing the intruder from afar, harrying him with air duels in the sky, forcing on the raider.

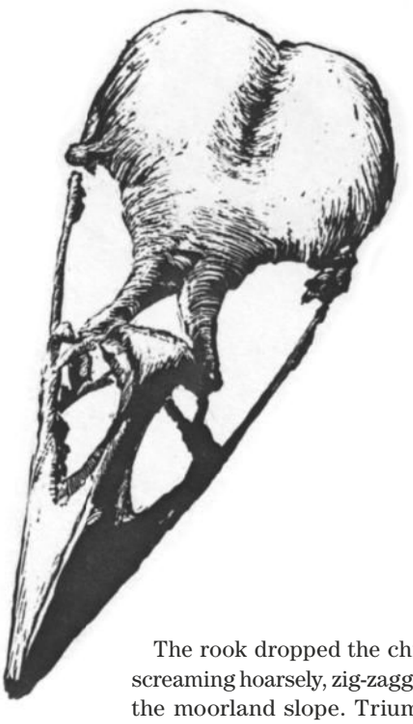
He came at last to Raven Rock, a granite peak 2,000ft above the sea, for centuries a nursery of ravens, the nest of sticks and twigs added to each year. Sometimes, in winter, a gale lifted the whole structure from the ledge, dropping the mud-cemented bundle onto the sparse heather below. A new nest would be built in March and lined with wool from the dead sheep upon which the ravens fed.

The present occupants had held the site for seven years and, each spring, the hen brooded the eggs for three weeks, enduring wind, rain and cold before the first chippings raised her to watch the cracking of the mottled shells. *Cruk*, called her mate from his lookout post, 200 yards distant on a blackthorn bush. *Cruk*, *cruk*, *cruk* sounded across the heather as he leaned forward to eject each shattering call into the wind.

Other birds crouched or flew away, for Cruk was the owner of the stabbing chisel beak, slayer of rabbits, eater of birds and scourge of the Blackface ewe with a woolly, white and sickly lamb. He ate any food that came his way, even the stinking flesh of long-dead salmon kelts. He was feared. With his mate, he robbed Fareye of prey, the ravens harrying the angry hawk from two sides until, ruffled and discomforted, the buzzard hopped to one side. Even the peregrine, king of the uplands and the cliffs above the sea, avoided Cruk.

But Rogue was greedy and he was sly. For several days, he watched the nest from afar, pretending to hunt among the rocks for lizards and beetles, until the raven parents flew to the valley for food. Rogue flew low between the rocks, picked out one of the chicks in his beak, took a running hop to the edge and launched himself downhill. *Cruk*, *cruk* echoed between the hills.

> ‘Rogue was greedy and he was sly. For several days, he watched the nest from afar’



The rook dropped the chick and, screaming hoarsely, zig-zagged down the moorland slope. Triumph and greed gave way to fear when a black shadow swept between him and the sun and Cruk stabbed down with the terrible beak. Tail feathers drifted in the wind; the rook lost balance, tumbling to earth beside a stream that ran through the tussocks. The raven jumped on the stricken bird, holding him with scaly feet, beating his wings at the thief, then struck with the fatal weapon.

Flies and beetles broke down the body during the summer and all would have dissolved away had not a fisherman passed along the stream. He took a few dark feathers for his trout flies, then put the empty skull in his pocket, wondering at the hole in the top of the white bone. He made his way home in the evening, giving his wife a creel of small trout and the skull to the children, who left it with their toys upon the floor until it was rescued by the fisherman.

The same ravens nested for many years on the granite outcrop known as Raven Rock and the skull of Rogue rested on the slate mantelpiece of the fisherman's house throughout the seasons. His wife knocked the remnant into the fire one day while dusting and the final traces of Rogue were spread on the vegetable garden with the wood ashes the following morning.

Charles Bingham is the author of 10 books on fly-fishing and the riverbank. His most recent work is 'An Angler's Archive' (Coch-y-Bonddu Books)

The fine art of placement

Hamblyn's Coombe, Dittisham, Devon

Tim Longville is guided through the hillside garden of sculptor Bridget McCrum and learns from her the dos and don'ts of creating a suitable setting for outdoor art

Photographs by Val Corbett

***Cycladic Dove Bowl*: a quintet apparently admiring their own reflections, on the main lawned area**

When does landscape become garden? *Big Bird* stands just above the bay called Parson's Mud

WHEN the late Robert McCrum left the Navy in the 1970s, he worked at first in London. After a few years, however, he and his wife, the sculptor Bridget McCrum, felt the need for a more permanent base on land, for which they had clear specifications in mind: it had to be near water and have enough land to allow Capt McCrum to give full rein at last to his passion for plants. It also had to be quiet and isolated enough for his wife to work undisturbed on her sculptures.

Hamblyn's Coombe, a 19th-century woodman's cottage with later extensions, a mile or more outside the village of Dittisham on the River Dart in south Devon, ticked and double-ticked all those boxes. Its seven acres are perched high on the steep wooded slopes rising from the broad reaches of the river below and can only be reached by a daunting road-cum-track running along the fringes of a wood. There were also outbuildings easily converted into Bridget's studio.

From the beginning, garden-making and sculpture-making (and placing) went hand in hand. The result is often described as a sculpture garden, but that suggests that the sculpture is, as it were, the dominating soloist, the garden the mere accompanist, but that isn't—and was never meant to be—the case. Instead, this is a collaboration of two equal partners, just as, in making it, the McCrums collaborated on the planting and even on the placing of the sculptures.

Preceding pages: **The sculpture *Hunting Bird* tucked away beneath the foliage of the *Cercidiphyllum* and beside the *Magnolia stellata***

Bridget explains their method: 'Robert would develop a passion for a group of plants—acers, say, or cornus or hydrangeas—and would collect rare examples of each. Then, I would block-plant between his rarities.' Smiling, she adds: 'Not that I would ever claim to be an expert in the way that he was. When people come round the garden now, I ask them what my plants are!'

From the beginning, they had clear ideas about the sorts of plants they

The view along the two hedged compartments from the bank above them. The sculpture in the distant right-hand corner of the grassed compartment is *Tower III* by Simon Percival

wanted—and the sorts they didn't. 'The plants here have to fit in with this remarkable landscape. And some don't: they just look too suburban.' Others, they thought, just looked too cultivated, so there are no cultivated forms of herbaceous plants here, only wild examples of plants such as ferns, epimediums and rodgersias, used in dense, large-scale, ground-cover plantings.

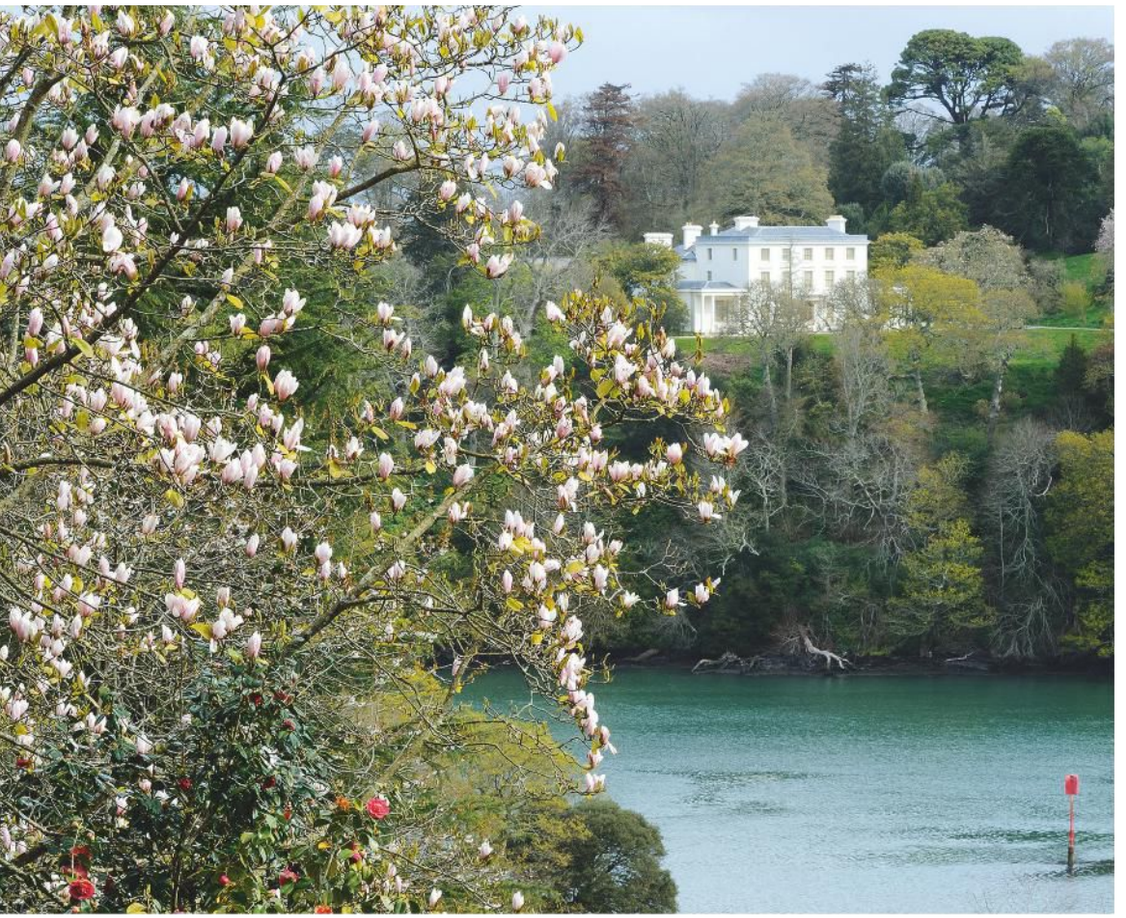
Their ideas about colours were equally well defined. 'We made it a rule that we would include no harsh yellows, bright oranges, shocking pinks or puces.' Red, however, was approved of, as evidenced by a spectacular group of vividly red-flowered *Embothrium coccineum*, which was a reminder of Corot's comment that one splash of red can light up a whole scene.

> 'When people come round the garden now, I ask them what my plants are'

Even when they knew exactly what they wanted to plant, growing it here was never easy. 'There's so little of our acid soil and so much shillet [shale] in and under what little we've got that most of the planting was done with a pickaxe.' However, they were determined to work with what they already had, rather than importing soil from elsewhere.

They worked with what they'd got in other ways, too. 'Right from the beginning we allowed—indeed, encouraged—the wildflowers, which wasn't usual in 1984.'

By and large, they also kept the natural contours of the landscape, modifying the slope as little as possible, which involved creating a network of paths snaking to and fro across it, sometimes through dense plantings of trees and shrubs, sometimes through open glades of long ➢



Above: **A glimpse of Agatha Christie's Greenway across the river.** *Right:* **Bridget McCrum at work**

grass filled with those encouraged wildflowers. That inevitably means the paths can be ferociously steep in places, particularly in the lower reaches of the garden, down towards the little bay known as Parson's Mud.

As for the placing of the sculptures, there was nothing pre-determined about it. That is, there were no spaces reserved for specific works. Usually, the planting came first and then 'you just had to find the right place for the right piece. If a sculpture isn't positioned perfectly, it looks terrible'. The right place meant somewhere that 'gave a piece scale', with trees and shrubs around it of a similar size. Sometimes, those had a similar shape and texture, sometimes they had deliberately contrasting ones.

A good example is a massive, blocky sculpture, based on the shape of a temple from 3500BC on Gozo, where Bridget has another house, which is placed among feathery tree ferns and the solid bulk of *Rhododendron macabeanum*. ('I bought the tree ferns as a present for Robert, out of the proceeds of a successful sculpture exhibition.')

Need to know

- **Size** Seven acres
- **Altitude** From sea level to 200ft
- **Soil** A thin skim of acid soil over shale
- **Climate** High-ish rainfall, so plants grow quickly 'and we don't get damaging hard frosts because we're so close to the water. We lose the sun behind the hills in winter, which may not be good news for humans, but at least means we don't get damage from early-morning sun on still-frozen stems and leaves,' advises Mrs McCrum

The importance of careful placement

Bridget recalls: 'Years ago, I made my first marble piece. Soon after, I'd proudly placed it in the garden, but when I visited friends on the other side of the estuary, they immediately asked "Bridget, what's that white plastic bag doing in your garden?". I learnt then that you only position a marble sculpture in an enclosed space'

The placing of that particular sculpture is also a good example of the fact that even her biggest pieces aren't necessarily placed in obviously eye-catching positions. Often, the sculptures have to be found as much as the places for them had to be found.

As the planting wasn't just designed to be sympathetic to Bridget's sculptures, but was also designed to be sympathetic to the landscape, the planting, although intended to look 'natural', was positioned and sometimes shaped with a good deal of thought and care.

> 'We didn't try to impose our ideas on it at once. We allowed it to develop over time, at its own pace'

Good examples are the mini-grove of white birches down by the river and the rounded hedges and box mounds that help define the miniature compartments of the relatively flat area immediately to the west of the house, where the curved shapes were designed to echo the meanders of the river and the rounded tops of the surrounding hills.

Bridget is also keen to point out that, although this is a garden created out of a clear set of aesthetic ideas, it had no overall plan. 'We knew the way we wanted it to look, but we didn't try to impose all our ideas on it at once. We allowed it to develop over time, at its own pace.'

The irony, as she wryly points out, is that, nowadays, she and her devoted part-time helper, who's been here for 25 years or more, spend most of their time thinking about necessary thinning out rather than about new plantings.

The garden at Hamblyn's Coombe, Dittisham, Devon (mccrum.sculpt@waitrose.com), opens for visitors between March and November by arrangement. Bridget McCrum's work can currently be seen at Messums Fine Art (www.messums.com) and at Messums Wiltshire (http://messumswiltshire.com), where she will have a show of new work from July 15 to August 2

David Wheeler

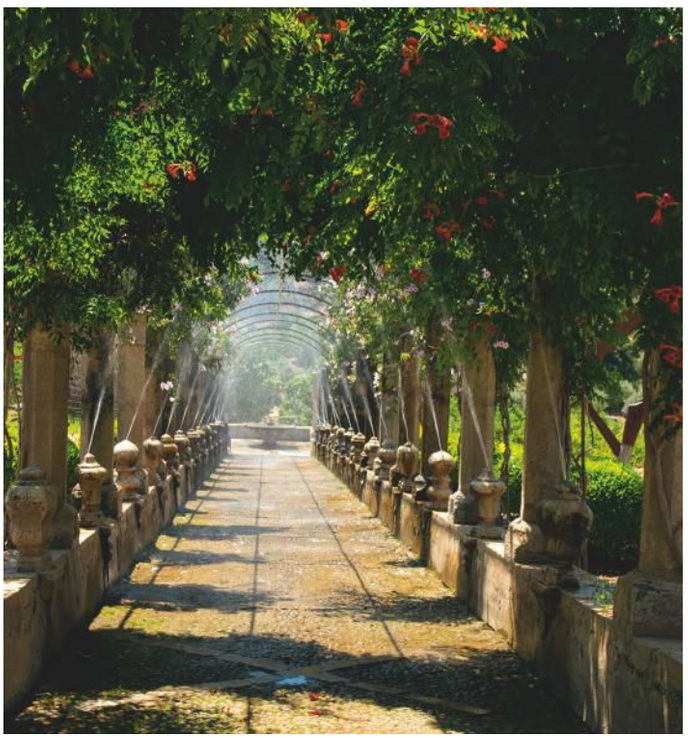
The irresistible allure of Mallorcan skies

UNDER a duvet of Welsh borderland grey cloud, I'm craving my April return to Mallorca, an island blessed at that time of the year with such a wealth of wild flowers that it seems almost pointless to think about its gardens. However, it's the gardens I'll be heading to, reacquainting myself with a sequence of extraordinarily varied places that I've come to love in recent times.

Tests on underground water flows reveal the Balearics to be a southern outcrop of the Pyrenees, linked to that mountainous range by deep rivulets running beneath the Mediterranean. Mallorca is the largest of the group and enjoys the widest (and, indeed, wildest) range of landscape diversity. Away from the happily contained budget-airline resorts and the sweep of Palma's urbanised bay, the island rises and falls dramatically.

The north's under-populated Serra de Tramuntana—now a World Heritage Site—can be explored by a spinal switchback road through pines and holm oaks; the south-eastern plain is peppered with hamlets and small towns, still bearing exotic architectural references to a history pepped up by ancient Moorish rule.

Robert Graves lived there for more than 60 years and it continues to be a favoured haunt of European expatriates, kindly invaders who have put down their own tap roots among a native population that has in no way surrendered its Catalan identity. Among the incomers are numerous garden-makers realising their dreams of creating paradise, furnished with unfamiliar plants that would need the costly protection of heated glasshouses in northern climes.



Jardines de Alfabia's water jets add an unexpected cool spritz

Bridge Community Project/Alamy Stock Photo; Dennis Van Der Water/Dreamstime

The most dramatic of all is the garden made by Heidi Gildemeister, high up on the island's north-eastern edge where, among fantastical rock formations, a snooker table of verdant tranquillity lies at the heart of a botanical collection of world importance. To wander among its surrounding outcrops, mantled in exuberant euphorbias is to open the pages of a horticultural encyclopedia.

Mrs Gildemeister won acclaim with her ground-breaking book, *Mediterranean Gardening: A Waterwise Approach* (1995), which has taught many a rookie gardener how to overcome the foibles of successful cultivation in similarly dry locations. Now, under the auspices of the Black Vulture Conservation Foundation (yes, Mallorca is for bird-watchers, too), her garden, Torre d'Ariant, combines beauty with learning.

In the south-west, Camilla Chandon's Son Muleta is equally remote and dramatically situated. An English cottage garden in Mediterranean garb, you can't fail to notice that blue dominates the April scene, when its elongated, terraced beds are spiked with cobalt echiums and irises, rising from clouds of cistus, lavender, rosemary and agapanthus.

Majestic olive trees provide welcome shade over sitting areas dressed in mounds of clipped teucrium and box, exclaimed by pencil-thin cypresses and Irish yew. April-flowering climbing roses, pinned to the retaining walls, project intense perfume into an already aromatic cocktail and close inspection of the turfed paths reveals a scattering of wild orchids.

It is said that many of David Austin's famed English roses thrive in warmer climates. In South Africa and California, his richly yellow rose, Graham Thomas, excels itself. In Mallorca, at Ca'n Estel, away from the hills, an assortment of Austin's best roses populates vast island beds delineated by wide paths flanked with irises and lavender.

And there's another delight: citrus. Many kinds are grown at Ca'n Estel, looking as lively as Christmas trees hung with orange and yellow baubles, their small ivory flowers simultaneously wafting an irresistible scent on the slightest breeze.

Return visits to Mallorca seem guaranteed to spring new surprises, new gardens. There are several lined up for my next foray, although the traditional and long-established places have strong allure, too. A recurring dream of mine has, for its backdrop, the extensive wisteria-clad pergolas at the Moorish estate of Alfabia, where someone has made great play with unexpected showers of cooling water, further animating one of Mallorca's horticultural treasures.

David Wheeler will host a luxurious Country Life readers' tour to Mallorca's finest gardens this spring, from April 23 to 28. Price per person: £3,850. Single supplement: £490. The price includes accommodation at two five-star hotels, all visits and transportation on the island, all evening meals with local wines, plus five lunches and return flights from London Heathrow.

For further information and to book, contact Boxwood Tours (mail@boxwoodtours.co.uk; www.boxwoodtours.co.uk) or telephone 01341 241717

Horticultural aide memoire

No. 6: Look after the birds

By now, the winter store of fruits and seeds upon which our birds rely is running low. Beef up their supplies by putting out plenty of emergency rations. Seeds of all sorts are easily piled up on surfaces out of reach of marauding cats. Those that get knocked to the ground will be hoovered up by the dunnocks of this world. Blue tits and their relations will cheerfully hang upside down to pick seeds in dripping out of an upturned half-coconut. A sparrowhawk will clean up from time to time, but that's life. Enjoy the passing show. **SCD**

Show me the way to go home

Never mind satnav, it was the compass that revolutionised the way we travel. **Jonathan Self** navigates its story, from ancient China to the Second World War

NAUGHTY elephants,' my grandfather would say, in a tone of utter despair, as he struggled to teach me the different points of the compass, 'squirt water. Do you get it now? N is for "naughty" and "north" and is here at the top. E is for "elephants" and "east" and is here on the right.' There were certain core skills that he believed every child should master and reading a compass was one of them. Possibly, if he'd waited until I was five or six and was able to spell, he might have found the going a bit easier. Nevertheless, long before I went to prep school, I was a dab hand at navigation.

There are, of course, lots of different navigation methods. Mariners used to follow currents, winds and even fish. Viking sailors released birds in the belief that, if they didn't return to the ship, there must be land nearby. Plants and trees have long guided travellers, as have the sun and the stars. My late mother found her way around London by way of shops and hotels—which led to some strangely circuitous routes, such as Oxford Circus to Bond Street Underground station via Liberty, Fenwick, Asprey, the Ritz, H. R. Owen, the Connaught and Claridge's. For the past 1,000 years or so, however, mankind has relied almost completely on the magnetic compass.

The first written reference to lodestone—a dull, grey rock that has the power to attract and magnetise iron and, if a sliver is suspended by a thread, will align itself north and south—is to be found in the 6th-century BC writings of the Greek philosopher Thales of Miletus.

However, it seems likely that the Chinese were the first to understand its potential. There are numerous mentions of it in Chinese literature from the 4th century BC onwards, when lodestone was employed for the purposes of divination. In the first century AD, for example, the Emperor Wang Mang possessed a primitive lodestone compass to ensure he could sit facing south, the imperial direction.

It's unclear at what point the Chinese used such compasses for navigation, but the first definitive description of a directional compass—'a magnetic needle floating in a bowl of water'—is in a book dated 1044.

Proof of the compass's use in the West doesn't appear until 1187, when an English Augustinian monk called Alexander Neckam wrote that when sailors 'are ignorant to what point of the compass their ship's course is directed, they touch the magnet with a needle. This then whirls around in a circle until, when its motion ceases, its point looks directly to the north'.

During the latter half of the 13th century, some design modifications—including the addition of a 'wind rose', which made it possible to measure other directions in units or degrees, a gimbal to allow for the motion of the ship and a wooden box to protect the whole device—made the use of magnetic compasses practicable at sea.

In the space of a very short time, the merchant ships of Venice, Genoa, Pisa and Amalfi doubled the number of voyages they were able to make every year to the eastern Mediterranean, as navigation was now possible during the winter months. Indeed, it would not be overstating it to say that the invention of the maritime compass had a very marked effect on international trade, as well as making it feasible for the European nations to start exploring and colonising distant parts of the world. Christopher Columbus, Hernán Cortés, Vasco da Gama, our own Sir Francis Drake and others of that ilk would never have got anywhere—or come back—without their trusty compasses.

Actually, I say trusty compasses, but, for nine centuries, they were anything but. The simple technology had several flaws. To begin with, even at their best, compasses point to magnetic north rather than geographic north. That they work at all is due to the molten iron in the Earth's core, which has the effect of turning the whole planet into a giant magnet.

Like all magnets, Earth has two poles, one that attracts and one that repels. These poles aren't aligned perfectly with true north or south and, to make it more confusing, they shift from place to place and over time, according to the movements of the magma. Magnetic variation at London in 1580, for example, was 11.15° east, but, by 1850, it had ➢

> 'I say trusty compasses, but, for nine centuries, they were anything but'

A sense of direction

Given the importance of the compass to human development and progress, it isn't surprising that it has long been the subject of art and literature. In particular, it has been used metaphorically in order to portray purpose, a guide and a sense of direction.

We only part to meet again.
Change, as ye list, ye winds; my heart shall be
The faithful compass that still points to thee
John Gay

Conscience is a man's compass
Van Gogh

A rusty nail placed near a faithful compass will sway it from the truth, and wreck the argosy
Walter Scott

I am told by those who know that there are six varieties of hangover—the Broken Compass, the Sewing Machine, the Comet, the Atomic, the Cement Mixer and the Gremlin Boogie, and his manner suggested that he had got them all
P. G. Wodehouse

Andres Pidjass/Alamy

changed to 22.24˚ west. In 1950, it was measured at 9.07˚ west and it is still decreasing at the moment.

By the middle of the 15th century, navigators had identified the wandering pole, although it took several centuries to understand its cause. Various methods were tested to correct the deviation—or, to use the technical word, declination—of which charts and tables, created on the basis of previous observation, were the most accurate. Nevertheless, on long journeys, even a small deviation could send one hundreds of miles out of one's way.

> 'Truth lies within a little and certain compass, but error is immense'

Another issue was the quality of the compass itself. After the Scilly naval disaster in 1707, when four British ships containing 2,000 men were lost as a result of a mistake in the fleet's dead reckoning—which the Spanish call, somewhat mordantly, *navegación de fantasía*—an inspection of the fleet's compasses was made. Of 506 instruments examined, only 73 could be said to be in anything close to working order.

Then there was the matter of interference. The introduction of greater quantities of iron in shipbuilding, beginning with iron nails and ending up with iron hulls, played havoc with the reliability of marine compasses.

Over the centuries, there has been a great deal of competition between different experts and manufacturers, with endless and generally unwarranted claims as to the reliability of one new compass over another. This isn't so surprising when one considers that there were huge social and financial rewards for those who solved, or at least appeared to have solved, the various problems. In reality, it wasn't until the end of the 19th century, when a more or less dependable version—the gyrocompass—was perfected, that travellers could rely on a single, completely trustworthy instrument.

I still have the piece that my grandfather utilised to teach me the rudiments of navigation, his First World War officer's marching compass, for which he can have had very little use at the time, as he spent most of the war in charge of Woolwich Arsenal (the actual arsenal, not the football team). It has accompanied me on journeys through the Amazonian rainforest, across the Sahara, up the Zambezi and, somewhat more prosaically, along Offa's Dyke, the Pennine Way and other National Trails.

I can't say, in all honesty, that it's entirely accurate. More than once, I've cursed it—especially the time I nearly found myself crossing accidentally into the Sudan—but I put up with its foibles as one puts up with the idiosyncracies of an old friend. As Lord Bolingbroke said: 'Truth lies within a little and certain compass, but error is immense.'

Mary Evans/Peter Higginbotham Collection; Craig Pearson/Scorpion26/Dreamstime

A group of young sailors aboard the training ship *Arethusa* receiving compass instruction. The boys came from a variety of poor backgrounds

Navigating History

585BC
Thales of Miletus claims that lodestone attracts iron because it has a soul

1040
An ancient Chinese text called *Wujing Zongyao* describes how to make a simple compass by magnetising a thin leaf of iron into the shape of a fish and floating it in a bowl of water

1111
The first reference—again Chinese—to ships sailing using a magnetic compass: 'In dark weather they look at the south pointing needle'

1302
The first dry mariner's compass—a freely pivoting needle on a pin, enclosed in a box with a cover and wind rose—is developed. Later compasses were suspended from a gimbal to reduce the effect of motion at sea. This invention transforms international trade and allows Europeans to explore the rest of the world

1600
Dr William Gilbert claims that the world is a giant magnet. He designs an improved, but by no means perfect, compass

1690
Sir Edmond Halley shows a model of a liquid compass—but it's another 400 years before the concept is perfected

1701
After two long voyages, Sir Edmond publishes *The General Chart of the Variation of the Compass*, making it easier for travellers to find true north

1839
George Airy works out how to correct compasses using magnets. He charges one ship owner £100 for making a correction that takes him only a few hours

1876
Prof Sir William Thomson patents a new compass and binnacle, perhaps the first marine compass that can truly be described as accurate. By 1907, he has sold more than 10,000 of them

1908
The first accurate directional gyrocompass goes into production, ensuring that travellers can always find true north

1943
Miniature compasses and maps printed on silk are hidden in Monopoly board games and sent to prisoners of war in Germany to help them escape

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The long paw of the law

When it comes to detective work, our police force owes as much to its canine constables and their handlers as it does to officers on the beat, discovers **Tessa Waugh**

Photographs by Lucy Ford and John Millard

AT Etal Lane police station in Newcastle, three dogs are gambolling around their handler, PC Steve Henry. Police Dog (PD) Rudi, a Belgian malinois, is a three-year-old general-purpose dog—tasked with anything from tracking a suspect or stolen goods to grabbing hold of someone with a weapon; PD Jackson, a seven-year-old red cocker spaniel, is a specialist dog (known outside the police as 'sniffer dogs'), trained to seek out explosives, drugs, firearms and cash; Gerti, a tiny, five-month-old black cocker, is being trained to take over from Jackson when he retires.

'You can stroke him,' reassures PC Henry, gesturing towards Rudi. I do so, but gingerly, as, although the malinois—which resembles a lighter-framed version of the German shepherd—is prized for its trainability, it can look pretty menacing, too.

Dog handling is a popular career within the police and, as the number of positions has decreased recently, places are hard won. Each officer is tested for suitability (you need to be fit, co-ordinated and able to use your voice effectively) and only then will they be given a young dog of about 18 months with which to embark on three months of training.

Each dog is carefully chosen to complement the officer's size and temperament and, having passed the training, officer and dog are licensed and allowed out onto the streets. ➢

Below: **PD Gem shows her scary side.** *Right:* **Former-PD Rudi with PC Steve Henry**

Woof, woof! What do we have 'ere?

- Dogs have been used for law enforcement since the Middle Ages, when parish constables kept bloodhounds to hunt criminals
- Private associations, which were used to prevent crime in the 19th century, often provided men with dogs for protection
- The first attempt to use dogs for official police work was in 1888, when the Metropolitan police commissioner tried using bloodhounds to find Jack the Ripper. The murderer eluded the dogs, but the Met's use of dogs continued
- The British Transport Police claims to be the first force to have an official dog section. In 1908, it introduced four Airedale terriers to help officers patrol Hull docks

PC Henry with (*from left*) former-PD Rudi, PD Louis, PD Jackson and new recruit Gerti

Copper's choice: the best breeds for police work

General-purpose dogs are used for all sorts of tasks, including tracking (criminals or vulnerable people), protecting the police officer, locating possessions or evidence and disarming someone with a weapon

- **German shepherd** Sociable and versatile animals that form a strong bond with their owner
- **Belgian malinois** Lighter in weight and can work to a greater age than most German shepherds
- **Dutch herder** Another foreign import becoming increasingly popular here

Specialist dogs are trained to search for drugs, cash, guns, bodies and explosives

- **English springer spaniel** Prized for their willingness, intelligence and agility
- **Labrador retriever** Above-average trainability and reliability

They quickly form a bond, helped by being rarely apart: the dogs travel in the van on every shift and go home with the officer after work. 'It's a big commitment,' admits PC Henry, a handler for Northumbria Police for 14 years. 'My wife will often say "Crikey, he's always looking at his watch" because I always have to get back for the dogs.'

However, police dogs do fit into family life and quickly understand the concept of being on and off duty. 'On rest days, we all go out for walks, although you have to go where there aren't too many people around,' explains PC Henry, who worked both at the Olympic and Commonwealth Games with Jackson. 'When I'm in uniform, we're in the van, driving to the station or when the sirens are blaring, they know we're working.'

His last general-purpose dog, PD Louis (another Belgian malinois), retired last year, after 11 years in the job, during which the dog 'had my back' many times, not least when they were sent to find a mentally disturbed woman who'd gone missing in the Derwent Valley. 'We were searching near a bridge when he started barking,' recalls PC Henry.

'I rushed along the riverbank to find the lady still breathing, half in and out of the water. She was hypothermic and had terrible injuries from throwing herself from the bridge. I carried her back to the road, with Louis barking the entire time so that back-up would find us.' Their actions saved the woman's life, for which they were awarded the Police Dog Team Operational Humanitarian Action of the Year Award—presented nationally—in 2008.

Shifts are divided into three over a 24-hour period—days are usually quieter, providing an opportunity for training, but nights are full on. 'People start drinking, taking drugs, stealing,' elaborates PC Henry. 'You wouldn't believe what happens. I was quite naïve when I started and thought everyone would be in bed.'

Above: **Working with officers, police dogs can help apprehend fleeing suspects quickly.** *Top right:* **PD Grayson, a 'sniffer dog', found £1,000 of crack cocaine in Basingstoke last year.** *Right:* **Tools of the trade: the vest of handler PC Stacy Beale**

Joel Goodman/LNP

He's candid about the impact a dog can have: 'They [the suspect] might want to fight every cop out there, but, when they see a seven-stone German Shepherd barking at them, it usually has the desired effect and they put their hands up.' He recalls a man brandishing knives on the Tyne Bridge. 'I challenged him first, but it had no effect, so I let Louis go. He knocked him onto his back, the man dropped the knives and we were able to get the handcuffs on.'

PC Stacy Beale of Hampshire and Thames Valley Police, who recently graduated with her latest general-purpose dog, Gem, a police-bred German shepherd, points out the need for care when instructing a dog to grab a suspect's arm—they don't do it gently. 'Every time you use your dog, you have to justify yourself 100%,' she cautions. 'If you make the wrong decision, you're the one who has to defend yourself in court.'

Her first dog, PD Ritzy, a German shepherd, was particularly adept at public order. 'Once, Aldershot and Woking football supporters had a coming together after a match and we kept them apart for an hour

> 'When I'm in uniform or when the sirens are blaring, they know we're working'

before back-up arrived.' Now retired, Ritzy lives with PC Beale, plus three Dobermans, PD Gem and a specialist dog called PD Grayson, a liver-and white sprocker that found £1,000 of crack cocaine in a bush in Basingstoke last year.

Tenacity and determination are qualities that dogs and handlers possess in bucketloads. Essex Police's PC Sophie Chesters and PD Ivy were commended for pursuing a burglar for three-quarters of a mile across a river, before arresting the man, who'd taken refuge in a tree. 'Ivy's nose was the thing that got them,' discloses PC Chesters, whose other dog, a springer, PD Mo, is a forensic-recovery dog detecting blood, bodies and the scent of death.

Sgt Duncan Sutherland of Scottish Police East Region reports: 'Everywhere the Royal Family goes, I go. I was there before Zara Phillips's wedding in Edinburgh and when there was a riot

in George Street before the G8 summit, the dog section prevented carnage.'

Sgt Sutherland trains gundogs and judges working trials and says there's little difference in the way gundogs and police dogs are trained. 'It's all reward based—if they do the right thing, they get a toy.' At the station next to Fettes College, the officer displays the samples of Semtex, street drugs and cash they use for training. PC Max Hamilton is there with PD Chief, a large German Shepherd. 'He's not the sort you can pat,' advises PC Hamilton, describing a recent incident in which Chief apprehended a burglar and his loot.

When you go to bed tonight, be thankful that PD Chief and his colleagues are out there, keeping villains at bay.

The heat is on

COUNTRY LIFE's guide to the best hearth-warming stoves, elegant fireplaces and essential accessories

By Amelia Thorpe

Old and new

Antique fireplace specialist Thornhill Galleries is a useful source of decorative finds, such as this 18th-century Louis XV fireplace in limestone, £7,500, shown with wrought-iron fire dogs and grate and a reclaimed briquette interior. The company has some 350 marble, wood and stone antique fireplaces in stock at any one time, plus reproduction designs, accessories and a fully bespoke fireplace service (020–8949 4757; www.thornhillgalleries.co.uk)

3 of the best: classic stoves

Beaumont 8 Series wood-burning stove, £1,686, Chesney's (020–7627 1410; www.chesneys.co.uk)

Esse 1 Ruby wood-burning stove, £541, Esse (01282 813235; www.esse.com)

Jotul F400 Ivory wood-burning stove, £2,369, Jotul (01527 506010; www.jotuluk.com)

3 of the best:
contemporary stoves

From left to right:
Arc multi-fuel stove, £1,596, Charnwood (01983 537777; www.charnwood.com)

Farringdon medium wood-burning stove, £1,399, **with log store,** £162, Arada (www.aradastoves.com; 01297 35700)

Yeoman CL3 gas stove, £1,079, Yeoman Stoves (www.yeomanstoves.co.uk; 01392 261900)

Light touch
The Classic Fireplace, £1,295, is designed by internationally renowned architectural practice Robert A. M. Stern. It's made of Haddonstone's TecStone cast limestone material, designed to closely resemble natural stone, but with a much lighter weight, making it ideal for retro-fit, timber-frame and new-build projects in which component weight may be an issue (www.haddonstone.com; 01604 770711)

Finely balanced
Known for the elegant simplicity of its kitchens, Martin Moore also has a well-established arm specialising in natural stone flooring and fireplaces, designed to suit both period and contemporary interiors. Expect the same balanced proportions and restrained elegance in its fireplace designs, including the Rousseau in French limestone, from £3,084, Martin Moore Stone (0330 311 6547; www.martinmoorestone.com)

Safe style
Protect children and pets from the heat of the fire or stove with this diamond pattern Traditional medium fireguard, available in black-painted or aged galvanised metal finishes, 71cm (h) by 87cm (w) by 25cm (d) (28in by 34in by 10in), from £335, Garden Requisites (01225 851577; www.garden-requisites.co.uk)

Grand design
Lapicida's fireplaces are made to order and can be created from a portfolio of existing designs or as an entirely bespoke solution to suit your home. Shown here, a grand French-style fire surround in limestone, just right for a manorial interior, £8,480, Lapicida (020–3012 1000; www.lapicida.com)

Hearth warming

Danish company Morsø must have something to do with the increasing popularity of *hygge*, given that it's been making stoves for more than 150 years and now exports them all over the world. One of its latest wood-burning models is the unexcitingly named 7943, but what it lacks in name, it more than makes up for in the spectacular glass sections that surround the combustion chamber, so you can enjoy the view of the flames from all angles. Available with plain or log-storage base, the 7943 costs from £2,612, Morsø (01788 554410; www.morsoe.com)

Hooked on classics

Head to Jamb's gallery in Pimlico to enjoy the classic English country-house aesthetic for which the company is well known. As well as furniture and lighting, there's a selection of antique and reproduction fireplaces, such as this bespoke bolection-shaped design made in marble with antique slips, from £5,000, Jamb (01423 796288; www.jamb.co.uk)

3 of the best: club fenders

Burnished-steel club fender, from £1,356, Rockingham Fender Seats (www.rockingham-fenderseats.com; 01733 687375)

Hex club fender corners, from £1,500 for a pair, Fiona Wilbraham (07799 778787; www.fionawilbraham.com)

Brass club fender, £1,680, Norfolk Fender Seats (01485 520809; www.norfolkfenderseats.co.uk)

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3 of the best: log baskets

From left to right
Somerset log holder, £366, Chesney's (020–7627 1410; www.chesneys.co.uk)

The Fat Lip log basket, £100.80, Bodj (01983 537760; www.bodj.co.uk)

Capital Fireplaces Lido small log store, £139, Fireplace Products (01268 200139; www.fireplaceproducts.co.uk)

In the clear

The Clearview Vision 500 was the first multi-fuel stove approved for burning wood and authorised fuel in UK smoke-control areas and the large double-glazed door, offering an uninterrupted view of the flames, surely earns it even more applause. This low-canopy model on 100mm (4in) legs costs £1,656 (01588 650401; www.clearviewstoves.com)

Rare find

Chesney's has revived the 18th-century practice of sourcing highly unusual marbles for use in fireplace design, resulting in some elegant pieces that show off the dramatic colouring and veining of the natural stone. The Kent Bolection fireplace is shown here in Moonstone, from £7,000, Chesney's (020–7627 1410; www.chesneys.co.uk)

The grate debate: Fireplace or stove?

IN THE frost and snow of winter, nothing beats the traditional cosiness of a roaring log fire, be it in a fireplace or stove. Although radiators and underfloor heating can be very efficient, they simply don't have the atmosphere-building qualities of crackling logs and flickering flames. But should it be a fireplace or a stove?

There can be no doubt that an elegant fireplace makes an attractive focal point year-round, whether you opt for an ornate, antique chimneypiece or a clean-lined contemporary design. A fireplace is always going to be the central feature of a sitting room, adding character and balance to the interior design, not forgetting that the warmth, smell and glow of an open fire will emphasise its role as the heart of the home.

However, although the age-old pleasure of an open fire may be unbeatable, it isn't an efficient method of heating, as the uncontrolled airflow draws centrally heated air from the rest of the house up the chimney at the same time as hot air from the fire.

A stove, on the other hand, may create a less formal focal point than a grand fireplace, but some prefer it for its relaxed appeal, even for a touch of that now infamous cosy Danish *hygge*, thanks to the stove's ability to deliver radiant heat with significantly higher efficiency than an open fire. The latest clean-burn technologies in wood-burning stoves combine efficiency with minimal emissions, making them much better for the environment.

The ideal solution? One of each—an open fire for formal entertaining and a hardworking stove for everyday living.


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Giles Kime

Playing with fire

Why antique chimneypieces are the new rock 'n' roll

IMAGINE you're one of those modish souls who has expended considerable effort and money paring back the interior of your drawing room: radiators replaced with underfloor heating, rugs and carpets with limed-oak floors, saggy old Chesterfields with L-shaped sofas, clusters of paintings and prints with a few Twombly-esque canvases and a tired old fireplace with a Minimalist void.

But then you look at the room in all its discreet loveliness and you realise that it looks like every other house in your fashionable postcode or Cotswold village. Worse still, you realise that something vital is missing—its heart.

It's this startling revelation, I suspect, that sends people grabbing for their iPads on a journey around the websites of Chesney's, Jamb, Westland and Thornhill Galleries and leads them to the conclusion that a room without an interesting chimneypiece is like St Paul's without its cupola. The result is that the trade in interesting, unusual or just plain beautiful chimneypieces is currently at an all-time high.

'They create an immediate sense of an established environment,' explains Will Fisher of Jamb, 'and the best examples have a unique capacity to distill materials, craftsmanship and history.'

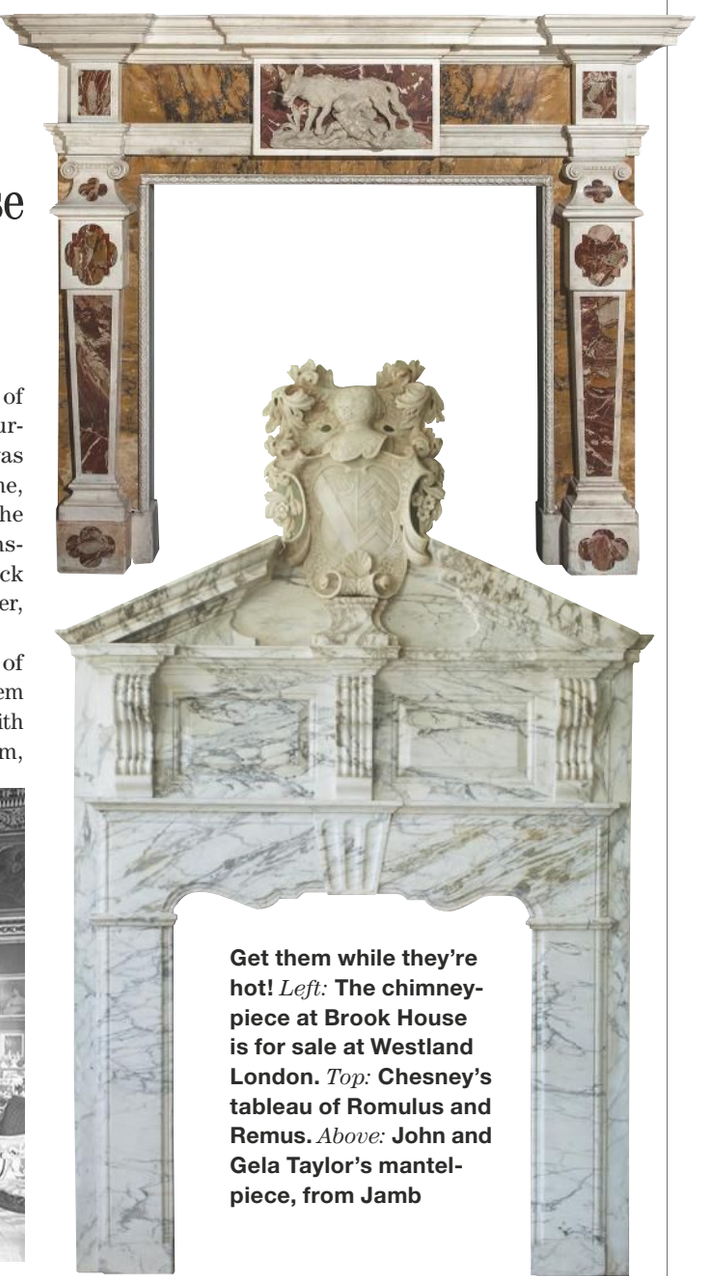
The appeal of beautiful, intricate and exquisite materials is proving irresistible to a growing roster of A-listers: it was at Jamb where John Taylor, bass guitarist of Duran Duran, and Gela Nash-Taylor, founder of Juicy Couture, bought the magnificent early-18th-century chimney piece for their London apartment designed by Robert Kime (*Country Life*, *November 9, 2016*). Provenance is also important: the Taylors' chimneypiece incorporates the crest of the family who commissioned it for their Hackney home.

> 'They create an immediate sense of an established environment'

An impressive history is much of the appeal of the chimneypiece currently at Westland London that was made for Brook House on Park Lane, built by Thomas Henry Wyatt in the 1860s. In the 1930s, it was transferred to an apartment in the block that replaced Brook House and, later, to a shop nearby.

The highly decorative nature of many chimneypieces also makes them a magnet for interior designers. 'With the current fashion for eclecticism, there's a growing trend for juxtaposing antique chimneypieces with modern art and furniture,' says Paul Chesney, founder of Chesney's.

With this in mind, anyone wanting to pair their B&B Italia sofas with a glorious chimneypiece in the manner of Sir Henry Cheere—which includes a tableau of Romulus and Remus being suckled by a wolf—need look no further.



Get them while they're hot! *Left:* **The chimneypiece at Brook House is for sale at Westland London.** *Top:* **Chesney's tableau of Romulus and Remus.** *Above:* **John and Gela Taylor's mantelpiece, from Jamb**

Country Life Picture Library

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Simon Hopkinson

Flex your mussels

There's no beating the French when it comes to giving your *moules* a little ooh la la, insists **Simon Hopkinson**

THE worst of all junior-apprentice chores I will ever recall is that of tipping great sacks of filthy mussels into the maw of a huge, old cast-iron potato peeler that lived outside the kitchen door of my first place of work. I was 16 years old and this was one of my initial toils during my precious, Christmas school holidays. Of course, anything chef threw at me, I would do without question, being an obedient teenager and already knowing full well that removing the barnacles, ingrained sand and seaweed from mussels prior to cooking them seemed an obvious cleansing process.

> 'Of course, anything chef threw at me, I would do without question'

I had previously witnessed pristine, blue-black-shelled mussels peeping up out of a wide and deep, two-handled solid pot, their orange flesh revealed in all their juicy joy, as Dad had cooked these on the Aga, at home, since I was, oh, about eight years old.

Our town of Bury had—and does to this day—an especially fine market both indoor and out, but it was the 'out' that always seemed to be the favoured source of our regular family shopping. Very few folk, these days, shop the way that my parents did then. Each had an occupation (dentist and school teacher), but they were able to make time to visit this astonishingly good market four or five times a week as a matter of course.

This wasn't because it had 'organic greens', 'rare-breed meats' or 'artisan cheeses'—my favourite stall sold just the best Lancashire cheeses ('a creamy, a crumbly or a tasty one, my duck: which would you like?'), which were quite commercially produced, but memorably delicious. No, it was simply a good market, full stop.

Jason Lowe

Your own kitchen rockpool: bring the flavour of the seaside into your home with this mussel recipe

The fish stalls were the best of all. Whole hake of such beauty that it would make Padstow blush (before most of the catch was shipped off to Spain); scallops, live in shell (in the 1960s!); plaice so fresh you could smell them from the far-off Granelli's ice-cream van (where I would, most often, be lingering); and, of course, magnificent mussels piled up to peaks the size of small slag heaps.

I reckon four or five huge scoops of the fishmonger's trowel would have been no more than a matter of pence, but yes, they, too, were filthy and needed a good scrub. Unlike me, however, in my shivering commis-chef role, Dad had the luxury of our Aga-warmed kitchen in which to scrape, scrub and polish his molluscs.

Moules marinière

Serves 2

I know full well that the following information will be of no use whatsoever to those of you who don't live in my manor of Shepherd's Bush, west London, but, for those who do, The Fishmonger's Kitchen at 119, Shepherd's Bush Road, W6 (020–7603 0673; info@fishmongerskitchen.co.uk), has been a veritable boon to me over the past few months. Although it has been a fine purveyor for several years, of late, it has blossomed further by importing fish and shellfish direct from the giant Rungis market on the outskirts of Paris.

Just one of the benefits of this is a regular supply of the pristine *bouchot* mussels, which are so clean, so small, so sweet and delicious that to cook them is to be at one with your very own kitchen rockpool.

When authentic just won't do: a pinch of curry powder gives this delicious *mouclade* an exotic and spicy kick

Ingredients
75g butter
1 finely chopped onion
250ml white wine
1kg mussels
2tbspn chopped parsley
Freshly milled white pepper—or cayenne, if you prefer

Method
Using a very large pan with a lid, melt the butter and fry the onions in it until they're softened and transparent. Pour in the wine and allow to come to the boil. Tip in the mussels, put on the lid and, holding the pan in both hands, shake it around a bit. Put onto a high heat and cook for 2 minutes. Take a look to see how they're opening—it doesn't take long—and give them another shake, trying to bring the more opened mussels from the bottom of the pan up to the top.

Return to the heat, replacing the lid, and continue cooking for a further few minutes. Have another look and give another shake.

When it seems that most of the shells are open, tip in the parsley, add white pepper (or cayenne), shake and stir around for the last time and tip into a large, previously heated bowl. It goes without saying that you will also need a little crusty bread here.

Mouclade

Serves 2

In his column for the *Financial Times* in 2007, my chum Rowley Leigh writes thus about *mouclade*: 'The fact is that the mildly exotic aroma of curry powder suits some French cooking perfectly and nowhere more so than in the tantalising whiff that it gives a good *mouclade*… and I cannot imagine achieving the same effect by using one's own [freshly made] garam masala [say]. There are times when authentic just won't do.' And he's right.

Ingredients
1 recipe for *moules marinière* (see above, minus the parsley and seasoning)
2–3tspn potato flour (*fécule*) or, at a pinch, cornflour
1–2tspn curry powder—I favour the Bolst's brand
Large pinch of saffron (optional)
100ml double cream
Squeeze of lemon juice

Method
Shell the mussels into a bowl and strain their juices through a fine sieve into a saucepan. Slake the potato flour (or cornflour) with some water to make a thin paste. Bring the mussel juices up to a simmer and add the curry powder and saffron, if using.

Simmer to infuse the spices for 5 minutes or so, then very gradually stir in some of the thickener—you might not need all of it—until the sauce generously coats the back of the spoon. Note that the sauce will thicken quickly, so take care.

Now, stir in the cream and lemon juice and bring back to a simmer. Stir in the mussels, heat through and check the seasoning. Serve with grilled slices of sourdough bread, rubbed with garlic and olive oil.

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Penny Churchill

Fig 1: **The spirit of 'old Kensington': the 'very special' former home of Sir Winston Churchill at 28, Hyde Park Gate, SW7. £23m**

High, wide and handsome, London's race for space

From family homes redolent with history to elegant new turnkey apartments, the capital is coming back to life

Fig 2: **The large drawing room leads onto the wonderfully private 55ft-long garden**

IN a year that saw higher taxes and political and economic uncertainty suppress prime London residential values by 4.9% overall, a report from Savills Residential Research suggests that the very top end of the market was more active in 2016 than in the previous year, with £1.43 billion being spent on properties worth more than £20 million in the 11 months to the end of November 2016, compared with £1.07 billion for the whole of 2015.

Realistic price adjustments, coupled with the currency play for international buyers, appear to have triggered greater buyer commitment and prime London sales volumes picked up significantly from September 2016 onwards, Savills say. In a marketplace increasingly split between overseas buyers looking for secure, service-driven, turnkey developments and discerning home-grown or UK-based buyers, who will wait for as long as it takes to get their hands on one of those special family houses that sit tucked away in quiet, leafy corners of the capital, it looks as if vendors and buyers are ready to move.

For James Gow of Strutt & Parker's Kensington office (020–7938 3666),

28, Hyde Park Gate, SW7 (***Fig 1***), is one of those 'very special' houses and came to the market in September 2016, at a guide price of £23m. The London home of Sir Winston Churchill and Baroness Spencer-Churchill from 1945 until his death in January 1965 (as its prominent Blue Plaque testifies), this impressive and exceptionally wide, seven-bedroom family house boasts some 5,760sq ft of cleverly arranged living space on four floors, including a large drawing room (***Fig 2***) with doors leading onto the wonderfully private, 55ft-long, west-facing garden.

> ‘UK buyers want one of those special family houses’

For the past 20-odd years, the landmark, mid-19th-century, brick-built house, listed Grade II—incorporating neighbouring 27, Hyde Park Gate, which served as office accommodation for Churchill's staff—has been the family home of its present, low-profile owner, who carried out a major refurbishment in the early years of her tenure. Ideally located within a short walk of the beautifully kept grounds of Kensington Gardens, the house, according to its listing, has been 'considerably altered' internally since it was offered for sale by Knight Frank & Rutley in October 1965, although, externally, it still exudes the spirit of 'old Kensington'.

'Five years ago, the Kensington market was crying out for high-end, new-build developments with large lateral apartments to satisfy demand not only from international buyers looking to acquire a hassle-free London base with "all the bells and whistles", plus full security and concierge services, but also from owners of large Kensington houses looking to downsize. We now have four world-class new developments within the Royal Borough: Vicarage Gate House, W8; One Kensington Gardens, W8; Holland Green Place, W8; and—one of last year's major success stories—Holland Park Villas, W8,' reveals Sami Robertson of Knight Frank's Kensington office.

Fig 3: **Charming Archway House sits on the verdant north side of Clapham Common, SW4. £8.5m**

Fig 4: **Linda Nicholson has made the house a showcase for her collection of period musical instruments**

Vicarage Gate House is a prestigious scheme of 13 superb apartments, built by Vicarage Gate Ltd and well-known London developer Northacre, and perfectly situated between High Street Kensington and fashionable Notting Hill, alongside the mansions of Kensington Palace Gardens. The selling agents are Hamptons International Kensington (020–7937 9371).

One Kensington Gardens (***Fig 5***) is an exclusive development of 97 spacious apartments designed by the architect David Chipperfield and located opposite Kensington Palace and Gardens. Residents enjoy access to a 24-hour concierge service, valet parking, a health spa, a 25m (82ft) indoor pool and a private health and fitness centre, in addition to private treatment rooms. Knight Frank (020–7938 4311) and Strutt & Parker (020–7318 4677) are joint selling agents.

Holland Green Place is a state-of-the-art new development built around the new London Design Museum on the site of the former Commonwealth Institute, on the southern edge of Holland Park. It comprises three residential buildings—62 flats in all—and offers a wealth of facilities, including a secure barrier entrance, 24-hour concierge service, secure underground parking with lift access to each building, a 20m (65ft) swimming pool, sauna and steam room, a gym, massage and treatment rooms, a private cinema, a golf simulator, a children's playroom and a business suite.

Knight Frank quote a guide price of £16.5m for the resale of 51, Holland ➢

Green—a spectacular 4,370sq ft, lateral, sixth-floor apartment with vast entertaining space, ceiling heights of 10ft, floor-to-ceiling windows, four bedrooms, four bathrooms and far-reaching views to the west, south and east.

Finally, Holland Park Villas is an exclusive development of 72 private apartments on a two-acre site purchased from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in January 2010, in a joint venture between Native Land and Grosvenor. The scheme will also include 96 affordable homes to be built on three separate sites across the Royal Borough. Due for completion in March 2017, the development is intended to set a new benchmark for ultra-prime properties in central London.

In stark contrast to the current building frenzy in stately Kensington, the scene around elegant Archway House (***Fig 3***) on the north side of verdant Clapham Common has changed little since it was built, between 1714 and 1720, by carpenter John Hutt as part of a terrace of fine, early-18th-century houses. Unusual in scale, being seven bays wide with 7,433sq ft of living space, the interior of the house is remarkable for the pristine state of its original architectural features, fireplaces, sash windows, panelling and staircase. The garden to the rear is an impressive 103ft in length and the formal garden to the front is set behind delicate period railings.

> ‘Prospective purchasers may come out to play’

A large drawing room with a splendid Queen Anne fireplace occupies the full depth of the house and has views of both front and rear gardens. Two more panelled rooms complete the ground floor. The lower-ground floor consists of a kitchen-cum-family dining room with access to both gardens, a charming formal dining room, a larder/wine cellar and utility rooms.

The first floor houses a grand reception room with antique parquet flooring, two more elegantly panelled rooms and an antique fitted library. The second floor has a master bedroom suite and two further bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms. The third floor, accessed by a ‘Chinese Chippendale’ staircase, has two spacious bedroom/sitting rooms, one leading to a roof terrace, with both having en-suite shower rooms.

Fig 5: **One Kensington Gardens is an exclusive development of 97 spacious apartments located opposite Kensington Palace, W8**

Currently for sale through Savills (020–3430 6900) at a guide price of £8.5m, Archway House has been the cherished family home of the accomplished keyboard player Linda Nicholson for the past 30 years, providing a showcase for her extensive collection of period musical instruments (***Fig 4***) and a stage for her regular recitals, which draw audiences south of the river from far and wide.

Back across the Thames, Trevor Abramsohn of north London agents Glentree International is whistling a happy tune for the first time in many moons. ‘Activity in the marketplace was surprisingly brisk before the Christmas recess, with three or four homes being sold between £3m and £4m in a single day. If the present level of activity is anything to go by, it looks as if prospective purchasers may actually come out to play, even at this early time of the year.’

He adds: ‘We’re “nursing” an enquiry from Asia for a £50m mansion set in grounds, yet there is surprisingly little out there to buy, even for this humongous figure. Added to that, a UK buyer who’s been on our books for 10 years has just decided to make a bid on a £20m new house in Kenwood. It makes you wonder why this interest has remained dormant for so long.’

Be mindful where you move

Yoga studios are the new Waitrose—at least where property buyers are concerned

ONCE upon a time, the 'Waitrose effect' increased the prices of houses across the land. These days, it's all about healthy living—yoga studios, juice bars, health-food shops, parks and rivers—so we at COUNTRY LIFE are calling it 'mindful moving'.

'People are much more concerned about having a healthy lifestyle and this can only be a good thing,' comments Penny Mosgrove, CEO of Quintessentially Estates (www.quintessentiallyestates.com). 'Where there is a Wholefoods store, there is an uptick in interest from buyers. This is coupled with an increasing need for the sanctuary of outside space—growing numbers of our clients are seeking gardens and balconies and councils have started to crack down on roof terraces across the capital due to privacy laws. Outside space is becoming an ever more sought-after luxury.'

Back to the dark ages

IT'S official. It's quicker to travel by horse and cart than it is to navigate London traffic. Transport for London figures show that central London buses travel at an average of 3.8mph and Londoners waste more than 100 hours sitting still (in their cars) per year. As such, say Quintessentially Estates, high-net-worth buyers, who would have previously relied on a chauffeur, are increasingly looking to properties close to Tube and bus stops. Crossrail and HS2 will have a major effect, too.

Millionaires'-Row-on-Sea

BOURNEMOUTH has been identified as one of the world's most unaffordable places in which to buy a house. The Dorset coastal town, where the price of a home is 8.9 times higher than the median annual household income in the area, has been ranked just below Los Angeles and San Francisco in a new survey, beating all other UK towns and cities.

Coastal research data from Savills shows that seaside living attracts people of all ages and from all walks of life, due to the diverse lifestyle it provides, the beautiful scenery, bustling towns and employment opportunities. Bournemouth's history as a beach resort and expanding technology sector pushed the 42% rise in house prices and upgraded its status to the 10th most expensive place to live on Earth. *Lucy Pearson*

Hidden gems

OVER the past decade, the housing market has been significantly outperformed by that for jewellery, reveals the latest research. Vintage jewellery has soared in value by more than 80%, whereas the average house price in England has risen by 47% during the same period.

As such, according to Bonham's, Britons are sitting on millions of pounds worth of designer jewellery, simply because they don't know what it's worth. After a number of extraordinary finds—including a brooch from a child's dressing-up box that sold for almost £10,000 and a 'worthless' piece of costume jewellery (*above*) going for £68,500, after it was discovered to have been designed by Coco Chanel—the auction house has launched a campaign, Makers & Eras (www.bonhams.com/makersanderas), with free valuation days across the country and dedicated auctions. So forget downsizing and have a rummage!

Good week for... high achievers

In April, 35 Strutt & Parker staffers (and two dogs) will attempt the National Three Peaks challenge to raise money for the Sebastian Coe Charitable Foundation, supporting Cancer Research. These hardy estate agents will climb three mountains—Ben Nevis (4,409ft), Scafell Pike (3,209ft) and Snowdon (3,560ft)—in only 24 hours. We wish them the best of luck! To donate, visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/andrewscott5489

Room service?

HOTEL rooms are not the most obvious choice of property investment—indeed, the idea may never have occurred to many—but their popularity is expected to increase this year, largely due to the 3% Stamp Duty surcharge that came in last year on second homes. Hotel rooms are exempt from this surcharge because they're classed as commercial investments.

'Investors were initially cautious, but the model is proving its worth,' explains Jean Liggett, CEO of Properties of the World. 'Fixed returns, a transparent process and a clear exit strategy look set to make hotel-room investments boom in 2017. That 68,777 hotel rooms were in construction across Europe during December—a year-on-year increase of 13.1%—shows the scale of opportunities available.'

The process is simple: buy a room, then lease it back to the hotel in return for a slice of guest revenue (usually a set amount). At the end of the lease, the hotel owner buys the room back—the (normally increased) price is set at the time of initial sale.

Other advantages are that the lease on a hotel room is cheaper than most property investments, someone else cares for the property and its tenants and returns can be high. The small downside is the investment's lack of liquidity.

Hotel rooms currently for sale start at about £40,000. Contact Properties of the World (www.propertiesoftheworld.co.uk), Property Frontiers (www.propertyfrontiers.com) or Invest In Rooms (www.investinrooms.com). *Roderick Easdale*

Sculpies/Helen Hotson/Bestofgreenscreen/Sabri Deniz Kizil/Dmitry Kalinovsky/Dreamstime

Wilton Castle comes with a dry moat, landscaped gardens and five bedrooms. £1.495 million

King of the castle

THE Jackson-Stops & Staff Cirencester branch has just brought a 12th-century Norman castle to the market at £1.495 million (*above*), which comes with the opportunity to purchase the title Lord of Wilton Castle. With five bedrooms, this Grade I-listed Scheduled Ancient Monument incorporates features from the Norman, Tudor, Elizabethan, Georgian and Victorian eras and has undergone a recent 10-year restoration. It has lovely landscaped gardens, a former chapel, a dry moat and is surrounded by romantic partial ruins.

On the River Wye in Herefordshire, Wilton Castle was originally built to keep out the Welsh. There are three towers, but only two have been restored. A new owner will have the opportunity to develop the Great Tower, which could provide further living accommodation, including three en-suite bedrooms, a new glass entrance and a drawbridge (01285 653334; www.jackson-stops.co.uk)

Kew: *the* London address

A rare opportunity has arisen to rent a house within the gates of Kew's Royal Botanic Gardens. Lion Gate Lodge (*right*), in the Victorian Tudor Revival style with Dutch gables, has four bedrooms, feature fireplaces, wood flooring throughout, a newly fitted kitchen and bathroom and double doors opening onto a private garden. It's available to let through Carter Jonas at £3,950 per month (020–3131 7201; www.carterjonas.co.uk)

A jewel of a shop

After 144 years in New Bond Street, the celebrated jeweller S. J. Phillips is moving to new premises. Diana Scarisbrick pays a nostalgic last visit to London's most atmospheric treasure house

Photographs: Clara Molden

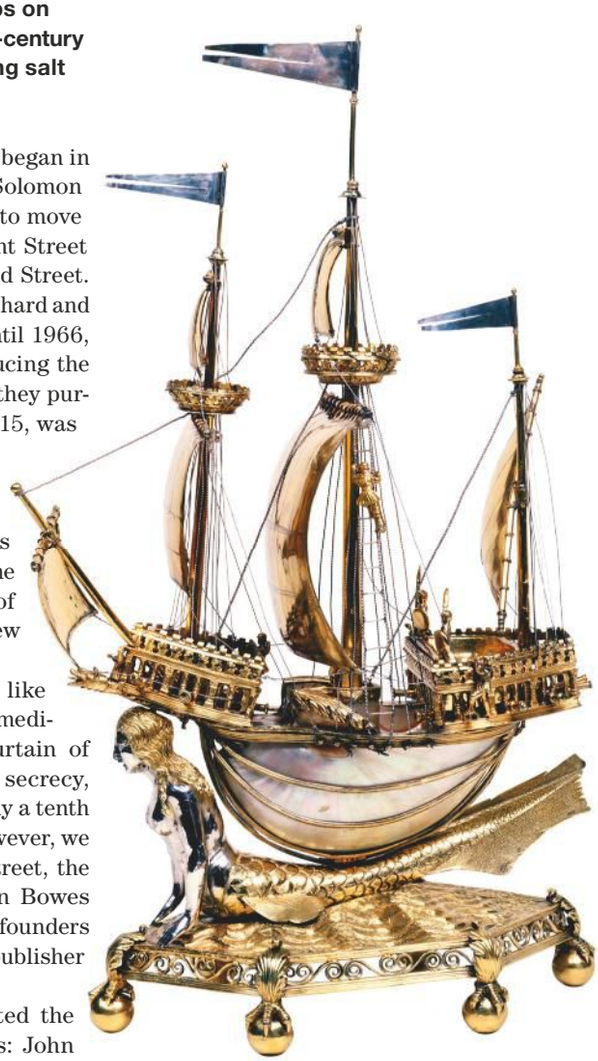
FOR many years, an attractive part of the London scene has been the sight of people clustered round the window of S. J. Phillips at 139, New Bond Street, W1 (***Fig 1***). Crammed with every type and category of jewellery, it drew the eye and incited admiring comments, such as 'isn't that brooch pretty?'.

An extraordinary experience awaited those, who, magnetised, ventured inside. The walls of the large space beyond the window were lined with angular, dark-brown mahogany cabinets, a long counter formed from glass-topped cases ran along the right-hand side (***Fig 3 and 7***), with freestanding display furniture and, in the middle, a flat-topped desk with chairs.

Shining out from this sober Victorian setting, the brilliance of the multitude of diamonds, the gleam of antique silver and the lustre of gold created an enchanting background to the animated atmosphere of buying and selling, which continued throughout each day. In addition to the four well-turned-out salesmen, the three directors—brothers Nicolas and Jonathan Norton and their cousin, Francis Norton—were omnipresent, either standing behind the counter in front or seated at a table at the back of the shop (***Fig 8***).

As for the customers of all ages and pursuits, ranging from royalty to rock stars, they were either looking down into the cases, trying on whatever jewel had taken their fancy or bargaining over prices. Everyone, both buyers and sellers, seemed completely at home, as if in a well-run club and, more than that, enjoying being there, part of an international coterie of people of a certain well-defined taste.

Fig 1: **The exterior of S.J. Phillips on New Bond Street.** *Fig 2:* **The 16th-century Burghley *nef*, a vessel for serving salt and spices**



How did all this come about? It began in 1873, when the firm's founder, Solomon Joel Phillips, decided it was time to move west from his premises in Regent Street and set up shop at 113, New Bond Street. His son 'Teddy' and grandsons Richard and Martin Norton remained there until 1966, when they moved to 139, reproducing the Victorian interior. Subsequently, they purchased the freehold, which, in 2015, was sold by the fourth generation.

Now that they're leaving and a new S. J. Phillips has been installed at 26, Bruton Street, it's a good moment to assess what the firm achieved during its presence of almost a century and a half in New Bond Street.

This is by no means easy, for, like other professionals—in law and medicine, for example—the iron curtain of confidentiality binds jewellers to secrecy, so any information received is only a tenth of an iceberg of transactions. However, we do know that, while in Regent Street, the company's clients included John Bowes and his French wife, Joséphine, founders of the Bowes Museum, and the publisher Daniel MacMillan.

The Bond Street shop attracted the greatest 20th-century collectors: John

Fig 3: **Inside one of the long display cabinets: simple arrangements allowed the jewels to speak for themselves**

Pierpont Morgan, William Randolph Hearst, Clarence Mackay, Sir William Burrell, Lord Lee of Fareham, Kenneth Clark and all branches and generations of the Rothschilds.

These art lovers could take their pick of gold boxes, miniatures, rare Queen Anne and 18th-century French silver and the Russian crown jewels, acquired from Christie's when they were sold by the Soviets through a syndicate in 1927. This period of expansion came to an end with the stockmarket crash of 1929, but, somehow, after the sudden death of Uncle Teddy at a race meeting in 1934, the brothers Richard and Martin Norton weathered the storm. They carried on through the Second World War in spite of bombardments, active service and being torpedoed in the Atlantic.

In 1943, the Nortons were involved in Operation Mincemeat, by providing an invoice for a diamond engagement ring placed in the wallet of 'The Man Who Never Was'. With a photograph of his attractive fiancée, it helped establish the identity of the corpse planted on the shore of Spain, who was carrying fake plans for the invasion of Greece, so as to deflect the enemy from the Allies' intention to invade Sicily.

> 'The Nortons love the chase of acquiring the best and outwitting their competitors'

In the next phase, according to Arthur Grimwade in *Silver For Sale* (1994), S. J. Phillips became 'the greatest treasure house of acquirable possessions for limitless pockets in the world'. Famous works of art that passed through their hands include the romantic 16th-century Burghley House *nef*, now in the V&A (***Fig 2***), the 12th-century Savernake hunting horn and the solid-gold wine coolers given by Queen Anne to the victorious John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, all now in the British Museum.

The shop also attracted foreign private collectors: the Americans Judge Untermyer, Bradley Martin and Arthur Gilbert, the Chilean Arturo López-Willshaw and Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza from Lugano.

At home, the lead was taken by Queen Mary (***Fig 9***), who, in contrast to her reputation as stiff and unbending, entered into the spirit of the shop, talking to the other customers and admiring the newest acquisitions. Many memories must have been brought back by the jewels of the Victorian banking heiress Baroness Burdett-Coutts, a staunch friend of Mary's mother, the Duchess of Teck. Queen Mary even considered acquiring the great Burmese sapphire clusters sold to Baroness Burdett-Coutts by the Empress Eugénie, a thought that must have reminded her of how far she had come from her impoverished girlhood.

Another remarkable woman, Margaret Thatcher, who came to the shop determined —against all advice—to buy hairbrushes ➢

Fig 4: **An 18th-century Portuguese Badge of the Order of Christ**

Fig 5 above: **Margaret Thatcher's 18th-century diamond brooch**

Fig 6 right: **The Dudley pearl. One of the finest natural pearls, it was named after a 19th-century owner, the Countess of Dudley**

Christie's; Tristan Atkins

for the bald Mikhail Gorbachev, acquired for herself an 18th-century diamond jessamine flower for less than £10,000. Pinned to the lapel of a jacket, it became so closely associated with her image that it sold for £158,000 when her clothes and jewels were dispersed at auction in 2015 ***(Fig 5)***.

Of the many captains of industry in S. J. Phillips's clientele, the palm went to Giovanni Agnelli, autocratic ruler of Fiat, who demonstrated his excellent taste by purchasing for his wife a unique and exquisite Regency diamond necklace made for the Countess of Shrewsbury.

It is significant that, for years, whenever in London, other jewellers, such as members of the Bulgari family, have always come to buy for their own pleasure from the Nortons. Many more devotees come from the world of fashion and the doyenne of them all, Dame Anna Wintour, editor of the American edition of *Vogue*, explained why in her foreword to the catalogue of an exhibition of paste jewellery in 2010: 'It is always a very special treat to visit a place of such charm and character run in the best tradition of a family business. It is a reflection of the Nortons' passion for what they do, that either Jonathan, Nicolas, or Francis is invariably on the floor ready with a warm welcome and an informed point of view. When I am there I often feel as though I have stepped

Fig 7 left: **Inside the shop: the studious but relaxed atmosphere was reminiscent of a private club**

Fig 8 top: **The owners at work: Jonathan, Francis and Nicolas Norton in the shop's inner room**

Fig 9 above right: **Queen Mary with Richard and Martin Norton on S.J. Phillips's stand at the Grosvenor House Art & Antiques Fair, London, 1952**

into the most delightful incarnation of a jewellery shop from a 19th century novel. Time slows down and a magical and graceful, often highly amusing, encounter ensues. The Nortons' lovely and intuitive manners are as rare today as the precious jewels in their collection.'

Brought up as connoisseurs to recognise the best, the Nortons love the chase of acquiring it and outwitting their competitors. They cast their net far and wide, for, although they obtain stock from casual people who walk through the door and from the descendants of former clients who prefer to sell privately without the publicity of the saleroom, they don't wait for the world to come to them. They take stands at the annual TEFAF fair in Maastricht and at Masterpiece in London and, so as to reach out to the new Chinese wealth, they collaborate with the indomitable Asian Director of Sotheby's, Patti Wong, every October at Sotheby's Hong Kong Show. Later this year, they will exhibit a collection of 18th-century Portuguese jewellery **(*Fig 4*)** in Lisbon and Macao, again with Sotheby's.

Quick to respond to changes in taste, less silver is on sale than before and, owing to lack of space, there is almost none in Bruton Street. Of the natural pearls so much sought after today, the Nortons are proudest of the Dudley pearl **(*Fig 6*)**, sold to a private collector. Its extraordinary lustre puts even Elizabeth Taylor's celebrated 'La Peregrina' in the shade.

Pearls are, of course, also popular for earrings, which has made them the most sought-after of all jewels and, at S. J. Phillips, every woman should be able to find the design most becoming to her looks from the wide selection—long, short, antique, modern—on offer.

Masters of the art of dealing, the Nortons enter this new chapter in their history with many advantages. Their name is a guarantee of quality and, to sell the rare, wonderful and beautiful, they have perfected a winning combination of charm and integrity. As before, all their energies are concentrated on the one shop, for they have never been tempted to set up branches elsewhere, not even in New York. Highly disciplined, they are there all day, five days a week, throughout the year, lunching in their own dining room so that every caller can be sure of finding a welcome from at least one of the three.

Their zest and energy is infectious and, just as their staff stay until retirement, their customers are equally loyal. They know there is no other place for them to go, for where else can you step out of the bustle of a London street and be so happily transported into a magical world so far beyond the everyday?

S. J. Phillips will open in its new shop, at 26, Bruton Street, W1, later this month (www.sjphillips.com)

Huon Mallalieu

Questions of attribution

Re-identified Old Masters set the New York salerooms alight in January

AT the time of writing, I have had no news of the New York Master Drawings week, but on the evidence of Sotheby's sales of Old Master paintings, drawings and sculpture around the same time at the end of January, the dealers should have enjoyed some success. In both the evening and day paintings sessions, eight of the 10 most expensive lots went to private collectors from America or Europe.

It is generally a pleasure to re-meet old friends and, this week, there are two. Adam de Coster (1585/6–1643) fell into the most profound obscurity after his death, despite having established a good reputation as a 'pictor noctium', or Caravaggesque tenebrous painter, and having his portrait painted by Van Dyck. He was born in Mechelen, midway between Brussels and Antwerp and passed most of his career in the latter city, although he visited Hamburg, and it seems likely that he also went to Italy.

In fact, the 52¾in by 37⅜in painting that Sotheby's sold for $4.85 million (£8.868m), 2½ times the estimate, could be taken as evidence for an Italian journey. From the early 17th century to the 1950s, it was in the collection of the Principe di Galati in Palermo, where it was listed as by Gerrit van Honthorst.

The model for *A Young Woman holding a Distaff before a lit Candle* (***Fig 3***) also appears wearing the same red dress and similar turban and sash in *The Denial of St Peter* by de Coster, which also seems to have an Italian provenance.

Almost all his works suffered misattribution of the centuries and it was only in the 1960s that

Fig 1: **Re-attributed Rubens study. $5,075,000 (£4.046m)**

Benedict Nicolson brought him back to the light. The Sotheby painting was only given back to him on its previous visit to the saleroom, when I last wrote about it here (*Country Life*, *February 13, 1992*). I was greatly taken by the 'almost ideally beautiful, slightly tranced, face' contrasted to the thicker wrists of a working girl painted from life.

I also speculated as to whether it was a parable on Domestic Virtue, as, in French, a pun could be made between *buisson* (distaff) and *boisseau* (a bushel), but there is no knowing whether de Coster spoke French as well as Flemish and it doesn't work in the latter. However, I still think it a very beautiful work. It was one of the top lots bought anonymously, so one cannot say whether by private, trade or museum.

Fig 3: ***Young Woman*** **by de Coster. $4.85 million (£3.885m)**

Fig 2: ***Head of a Woman*****. $1,812,500 (£1.445m)**

The top lot of the series was both a recent acquaintance and a new discovery, a 46½in by 22in study of a horse and rider by Rubens (***Fig 1***), which sold for $5,075,000 (£4.046m). Only the horse was fully realised, with the rider less so, but, until recently, the rider was worked up and a background sky and landscape had been added. In June 2015, still in that state and catalogued as 'After Sir Anthony Van Dyck', it was sold by Christie's, Amsterdam, for a princely €12,500. It has now been convincingly authenticated by Rubens scholars, and must have had a very happy vendor in New York. Nowadays, Orazio Gentileschi (1563–1639) is probably less remembered than his daughter Artemisia (1593–1653), which one might think to be a rebalancing of art history by modern equality campaigners. She is indeed a feminist heroine, not only for her ability, but also because of her rape by the vile Agostino Tassi, but I suspect that she has always been regarded as the better painter of the two.

She was hugely successful for much of her career and even in 1849, when few female painters were remembered at all, Hobbes's *Picture Collector's Manual* notes: 'In portraits she excelled her father.'

Both she and her father worked for Charles I, who owned her celebrated self-portrait as the spirit of painting and at Sotheby's was one of Orazio's paintings from the royal collection. The 16½in by 14⅜in *Head of a Woman* (***Fig 2***) was bought by Charles in the early 1630s and in 'Britain's Greatest Sale'

Fig 4: **Turner watercolour of a Swiss view. $756,500 (£603,657)**

(*Country Life*, *December 23/30, 1999*), it was acquired with 50 other pictures and some clothes by a consortium headed by Robert Houghton, a Puritan but nonetheless formerly the King's brewer.

Its whereabouts thereafter are unknown until a 1930 exhibition at the RA. It has been in America since 1989, and now it has sold for $1,812,500 (£1.445m), against a $2 million to $3 million estimate.

The drawings session was dominated by British watercolours, with two Turners and a Burne-Jones heading the field and a Blake not far behind. The Turners were both Swiss views, one very probably and the other certainly on Lake Thun. The first (***Fig 4***), which measured 9⅞in by 14¼in, sold for $756,500 (£603,657), and the second, slightly smaller, for $612,500 (£488,621). They are said to have belonged to Turner's mistress and companion, Sophia Booth, to have passed from her to John Heugh, a merchant who owned Holman Hunt's *The Scapegoat*, and from him to a Liverpool shipping man Ralph Brocklebank, a notable watercolour collector. Although they were sold by his executors, his son, a still more notable collector, bought them back, and they remained with the family until now.

Fig 5: **Burne-Jones's *The Madness of Sir Tristram*. $408,500 (£325,822)**

The Burne-Jones was the 23in by 21⅞in *The Madness of Sir Tristram* (***Fig 5***), in water and bodycolour, which made $408,500 (£325,822). It was first owned by Aglaia Ionides, one of the Pre-Raphaelites' Greek muses, and next by Sir William Tate, son of the gallery founder.

Next week **Founding pot**

Pick of the week

In the sculpture session were two works of art that greatly appealed, one a new friend, the other an old one. New, to me, was a rare early-13th-century Limoges *champlevé* Eucharistic dove (*left*), a portable tabernacle to hold the host, which sold for $1.94 million (£1.557m). The old friend was the only known Nottingham alabaster altarpiece on the theme of martyrdom (*above*), with Saints Stephen, Lawrence, Erasmus and Thomas, which made $1,332,500 (£1.063m). The 15th-century piece had been in the Paris Chartreuse until the French Revolution. I first saw it in Denver, in the collection of the late William Berger, who had bought it at a sale from the British Rail Pension Fund (*Country Life, January 8, 1998*).

Transport Tom

John Martin Robinson enjoys a new biography of Britain's greatest engineer—the man who opened up Britain with an infrastructure that survives today

The Menai Bridge. Previously, cattle were forced to swim the strait

Biography
Man of Iron
Julian Glover
(Bloomsbury, £25)

IN the 19th century, Thomas Telford (1757–1834) was one of the most famous names in Georgian British history. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. He towered above the self-made geniuses and national heroes for whom the Victorians founded the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) to display great figures of the recent past as examples for the present and future.

However, in the course of the 20th century, the 'man of iron' who had engineered the Industrial Revolution and created the modern world became less of a role model. His portrait is no longer on permanent display in the NPG. Perhaps the end of steam trains removed the romance: Smeaton, Rennie, Boulton & Watt and Telford are not now the household names they once were.

Unlike his precursor Victorian biographers, Julian Glover (a former Conservative speechwriter) treats his subject less as a heroic force of nature and more as a complex, clever man. The stonemason turned architect turned engineer was arrogant and ambitious, but not fame-seeking. Nor was he a sole genius: indeed, he worked with remarkable assistant engineers and contractors.

Nicknamed the 'Pontifex Maximus' by his friend Robert Southey, Telford built churches, harbours, canals, docks, aqueducts, roads and bridges. He was also an amateur poet and loved the Borders landscape—he was a shepherd's boy from Westerkirk in Eskdale—which he revisited every year throughout his life.

He was lucky to be born in Georgian Scotland, with its excellent elementary education (the best in Europe), and all the opportunities following the Act of Union. Mr Glover traces Telford's career and celebrates his achievements as the archetype of the once cherished Scotch myth 'the lad o'pairts', who made spectacular good to become a model of what can be achieved by persistence, skill and ambition.

The book begins with a glorious fanfare of purple paragraphs, all snorting horses, howling winds, rushing waters and cheering crowds as, at 1.35am on January 30, 1826, the first Royal Mail coach crosses the Menai Bridge en route from London to Dublin.

This remarkable feat of engineering in North Wales was the high point of Telford's career: at the age of 68, he had designed and built the first important modern suspension bridge, with a deck 580ft long hung 100ft above the straits from 16 thick iron chains. It was acclaimed as the eighth Wonder of the World and is still an object of astonished admiration today, as is his magnificent vertiginous canal aqueduct at Pontcysyllte over the River Dee.

The Menai Bridge may be the most famous of Telford's creations, but it's just one of the 184 enormous projects on which he worked. Among these were 93 bridges and aqueducts, 37 docks and harbours and 17 canals, including the sublime Caledonian Canal connecting the German Ocean to the Irish Sea across the Scottish Highlands and its concomitant Göta Canal across Sweden.

Mr Glover's rather old-fashioned literary style suits his subject, reselling the hero-worshipping cadences of Samuel Smiles's 1862 *Lives of the Engineers* (anachronistic comparisons with HS2 would have been best edited out, however). Although not, as he claims, the first modern biography of Telford (Aurum published one by Anthony Burton in 1999), *Man of Iron* is a lively, well-researched book that will help to put Telford back where he belongs—in the Valhalla of British national heroes, an evergreen role model for ambitious, skilled boys.

Memoir
The Wild Other
Clover Stroud
(Hodder, £20)

IN THIS enthralling memoir, Clover Stroud (born in 1975) recounts the first 41 years of her life to date. For 6,067 days of that life (she counted), she and her sister Nell were blessed with a lovely, fun-loving, liberating, horse-loving mother who made every day a joy and made life in their country house, at Minety in Wiltshire, idyllic.

'So, please, please,' the reader begs in the first chapters of this memoir, 'don't have the accident'—but the accident comes. On the 6,068th day of Miss Stroud's life, while she was sitting in double history, the head teacher came in and asked her to step outside.

'I cannot look back at life,' she writes, 'without seeing a jagged scar that separates the time immediately before the accident from the time after it.' Her mother, falling off her horse onto a concrete surface, had suffered a catastrophic blow to the head and was in a coma.

What follows proves that there are fates worse than death. Her mother came out of her coma and lived on, and on, for 22 more years, but was never, ever again able to recognise or communicate with any member of her family. She gets 'better', in that she can walk about, 'but she could also say nothing, do nothing and knew nothing either… Mum became a very fit and apparently physically able madwoman'.

Miss Stroud describes in forensic detail what these 22 years were like: the terrible, terrible missing and the vain hoping and the gradual, agonising change from praying for her mother to get better to willing her to die and be at peace.

Life for the daughter in these dark years is racy, boisterous and very horsey. You might think she'd never want to go near a horse again, but the opposite is the case. She works in a stable yard after leaving school, goes and lives with travellers in Ireland in her gap year before Oxford and then works on a ranch in Texas, riding bucking broncos. She, Nell and her half-sister Emma immersed themselves in all-consuming work after their mother's accident: Nell started Gifford's Circus and Emma became the renowned ceramics manufacturer Emma Bridgewater.

For Clover, the craving was for horses: 'Maybe the more dangerous the places the horses took me to, the closer I felt to Mum, since what I really craved was to find her.' She is also the mother of five children and strives to be the kind of parent her own mother was to her on those precious 6,067 days.

Ysenda Maxtone Graham

Universal Images Group/Getty

Fashion history
Clothing Art
Aileen Ribeiro
(Yale, £55)

Monet was familiar with designs by Worth (*above*) who probably created the dresses worn in *Femmes Au Jardin,* (1867, *below*)

AILEEN RIBEIRO'S magisterial and beautifully designed new book proves that all representations of clothing in art carry meaning. Not always the one the painter intended, however, for it also explores the fallacy of 'timeless' clothing. A labour of love as well as scholarship, this huge tome offers 250 broadly chronological paintings, many little known. Even just viewed as great European portraits dating back as far as 1600, it's a tour de force.

Prof Ribeiro has led her field—the study of the history and portrayal of clothing—for decades. Her comprehensive knowledge flowers here, not just as scholarly insight, but also through her understanding of the 'emotional aspect' of clothing, painted or not.

The book has five sections, each of which stand alone: portraiture; nationality in dress; dressing up—masquerade, artistic license and Orientalism—and two brilliant 19th-century sections. Of those, the first runs from Impressionism to *haute couture*; the second, on designing dress, looks in detail at the 19th-century phenomenon of aesthetic dress that led to the 20th century's artistic manipulation of clothing, both in painting and real life, from Gustav Klimt to Sonia Delaunay and onwards to artists today.

Today's printing of images on clothing actually began with Elizabethan painted textiles, worn by Elizabeth I. The author reveals how artists copied as well as deflected from real life, with a comparison of mid-1860s design sketches by Charles Frederick Worth (who also pioneered paper patterns) with Monet's *Femmes au Jardin*.

Psychological analysis is deft. Of note is John Collier's *Sacred and Profane Love*, showing a returned First World War soldier reflecting on his choice between an old-fashioned, modest, elegant young woman in shot-khaki silk and a shingled, silk-stockinged, lipsticked flapper. Should he embrace the serene past? One's heart urges him to grab the future.

That emotional response is controlled by artistic manipulation of clothing, about which, at every turn, this visually mesmerising overview breaks ground.

Philippa Stockley

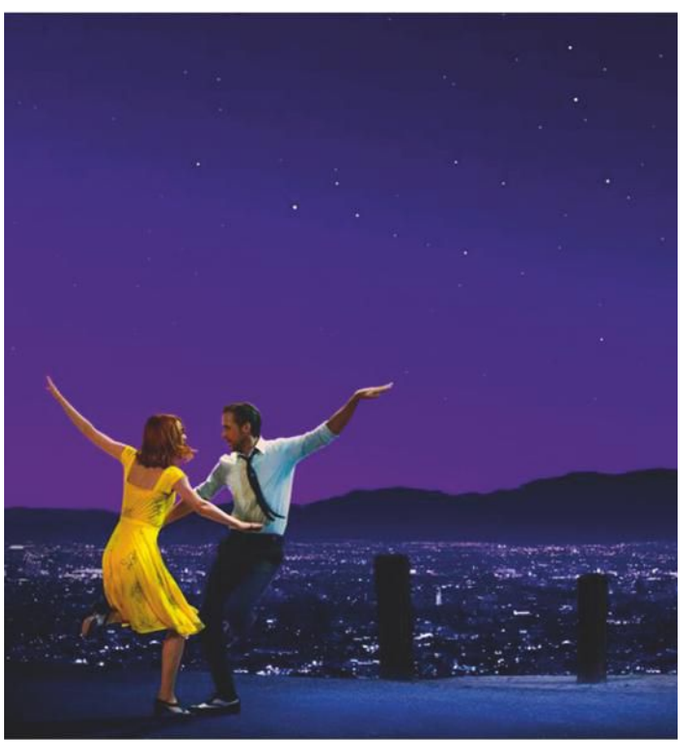
Musée D'Orsay, Paris; Victoria & Albert Museum, London

Screen and heard

Geoffrey Smith explores the essential connection between movies and their music

AS films are, by their very nature, something we look at, it might seem somewhat perverse to assert the importance of music in the cinematic experience. From the medium's earliest days, however, music and movies have been inseparable, creating a kind of symbiosis between what's seen and what's heard. The film industry has always recognised this. At their best, movie and music become one, a single experience gripping the eyes and ears of the audience, so that they're perceived as a unity, an emotional whole lifting the viewer-listeners out of themselves into a heightened reality.

In fact, these days, film music needs no special pleading. Its distinction is well established, reflected in its acceptance and status in the classical-music record charts and concert halls as well as in theatres, where well-loved movies have been reincarnated on stage, driven by the spell of their original scores. The classic dance film *The Red Shoes*, for instance, is touring the country as an actual ballet, choreographed by Matthew Bourne and incorporating Hollywood legend Bernard Hermann's magnificent music.



Everyone's going gaga for *La La Land* (*above*), but can it make the leap from screen to stage like *The Red Shoes* (*top*)?

In London, the combination of film and live music, or film music on its own, has become a regular presence on the South Bank (020–7960 4200; www.southbankcentre.co.uk), neatly fitting into its multiple sequences and themes.

On February 14, its 'Film Scores Live' season offers romantics a perfect Valentine's Day occasion with a showing of the immortal weepie *Brief Encounter*, accompanied by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and preceded by a performance of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto, whose yearning strains dominate the soundtrack.

On the 25th, in 'Belief and Beyond Belief', the BBC Concert Orchestra presents *Music to Die For*, scenes from stage and screen with a spiritual resonance, including excerpts from *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*, followed on March 19 with *From Heaven to Hell at the Movies*, with stirring orchestral and choral excerpts, among them Prokofiev's famous Battle on the Ice from *Alexander Nevsky*.

One special area of film music that may be overlooked, but which has been central to the history of cinema, is its role in silent movies. Lacking a verbal component in the on-screen drama, music became crucial in providing an aural dimension, in the playing of a live pianist or ensemble. There's still a particular charm in watching a silent movie accompanied on the spot by a pianist either improvising or playing from a score and that vintage experience is available in the Barbican's current series of 'Silent Films and Live Music' (020–7638 8891; www.barbican.org.uk).

Among the works on offer are a double bill by the master comedian Buster Keaton, on March 5, followed on the 25th by a remarkable world premiere: the first performance of Shostakovich's piano score for the 1929 Russian film *The New Babylon*, which was suppressed in its original form by the Soviet authorities.

Johan Persson; Moveistore Collection Ltd/Alamy; Entertainment Pictures/Alamy; Kevin Clifford

***Brief Encounter* (*right*) and its haunting strains are the perfect way to spend Valentine's Day or enjoy the silent *Robin Hood* with live music (*below*)**

Meanwhile, Saffron Hall, the elegant performance centre in Saffron Walden, Essex, is re-creating a special thrill of silent cinema, a film accompanied by full orchestra: Douglas Fairbanks's dashing version of *Robin Hood*, from 1922, with a new score by Neil Brand, performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra on February 25 (0845 548 7650; www.saffronhall.com).

However, the intrinsic thrill music brings to movies is not just vintage, but contemporary: you couldn't have a more vivid demonstration of the union between the two genres than the current mega-hit *La La Land*, which is a kind of apotheosis not just of the Hollywood musical, but of Hollywood music. From the very beginning, the pulsating, infinitely varied soundtrack is a current of emotional energy, carrying the action forward and enriching it at every turn.

Ryan Gosling's aspiring pianist places jazz at the centre of the story and that joyous sophistication gives *La La Land* its true rhythm, the buoyant swing that connects it to the carefree world of *Singin' in the Rain* and which the film's exuberant art proves is no mere exercise in nostalgia, but alive now, filling the screen with the hopeful passion of youth.

'Mark the music,' as Shakespeare said, and the musical life of *La La Land* is irresistible, on its own or erupting into dance. Although some traditionalists have found the ending disappointing, as boy does not wind up with girl—in the time-honoured fashion of Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds—it seemed to make perfect sense in a film in which the music reigns.

The last thing we hear before the credits roll is Mr Gosling's pianist counting off the next tune and, as a former jazz musician, that's fine with me.

What's new

London's opera houses showcase novelty: from February 27 to March 14, ENO presents the world premiere of Ryan Wigglesworth's setting of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, staged by Rory Kinnear in his directing debut, with Iain Paterson and Sophie Bevan heading the cast (020–7845 9300; www.eno.org). At Covent Garden, from March 11 to 31, Director of Opera Kaspar Holten and Music Director Sir Antonio Pappano combine in a new *Die Meistersinger von Nurnberg*, with Bryn Terfel as Hans Sachs, plus Gwyn Hughes Jones as Walther and Rachel Willis-Sorenson as Eva *(020–7304 4000; www.roh.org.uk)*

Book now

Kirill Karabits (*left*) and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra host a German feast on February 22, comprising music from Wagner's *Lohengrin* and Schumann's Third Symphony and Cello Concerto *(01202 280000; www.bsolive.com)*

English Touring Opera launches its spring season with Puccini's *Tosca* and Gilbert & Sullivan's *Patience* in London from March 4, touring the country until June 10 *(020–7833 2555; www.englishtouringopera.org.uk)*

The Hallé Orchestra, under Sir Mark Elder, celebrates Elgar in Manchester from March 9 to 12, culminating in *The Dream of Gerontius*, with tenor David Butt Philip *(0161–907 9000; www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk)*

Last chance to see

Tenor supremo **Jonas Kaufmann** concludes his Barbican residency on February 13, with a rare male performance of Strauss's soprano showcase *Four Last Songs*, accompanied by the BBC Symphony Orchestra *(020–7638 8891; www.barbican.org.uk)*

Give this a miss

As part of the Vault Festival under Waterloo Station, SE1, the Quorum is presenting **The Swarm**, an immersive opera and sound project about migrating honeybees. Not my kind of buzz. February 8–12 *(07598 676 202; www.vaultfestival.com)*

Self-effacing master of illusion

Mysteries lie beneath the surface of Michael Andrews's paintings, as a rare exhibition reveals to **Laura Gascoigne**

The Estate of Michael Andrews/Courtesy James Hyman Gallery, London/Mike Bruce/Gagosian

Thames Painting: The Estuary **(1994–5), finished a few months before Andrews died of cancer, is a haunting vision of primal matter—the mudflats of Canvey Island—merging into abstraction**

THE view overlooks a river estuary: just mudflats and water, no sky, with a few distant figures on the shoreline. Some aspects of the scene—the tide-streaked mud and the light reflecting off the water—look distinctly familiar; others feel slightly uncanny. The river is the Thames, although not as we know it. The estuary at Canvey Island has merged with flooded Florence and the figures on the jetty are time travellers from a vintage photograph of Tower Bridge. At second glance, the swooping perspective is itself impossible: the image appears to warp both space and time.

Thames Painting: The Estuary (1994–95) was the last picture painted by Michael Andrews, the third in a series interrupted by his death from cancer in 1995. At the age of 66, this obsessively painstaking artist left fewer than 250 paintings, more than 60 of which have been brought together by Gagosian at Grosvenor Hill in London W1 for the first major survey of his work since the Tate's retrospective of 2001.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Andrews was part of the London art scene revolving around the legendary Soho drinking den The Colony Room, but he was always an unlikely bohemian. Born into a devout Methodist family in Norwich, he was a fish out of water, temperamentally and artistically, in the so-called School of London, most of whose leading members—Francis Bacon, Frank Auerbach, Leon Kossoff, Lucian Freud and R. B. Kitaj—were born abroad.

Andrews was quintessentially English. In contrast to the bold Expressionism of his contemporaries, his early works such as *Tea in the Garden* (1956) and *Boy and Girl* (1959) have a quiet, faintly unsettling reserve about them—a quality he described as 'mysterious conventionality'.

They also have a palpable sense of space. Even in the tobacco-

and booze-fuelled fug of his depiction of the Soho club, *The Colony Room I* (1962), with its cast of regulars including Bacon and Freud, the atmosphere created by the deep-green walls suggests a forest or an aquarium rather than a room. At the end of the decade, this sense of space found a better outlet in his series of paintings of hot-air balloons drifting over dreamlike landscapes titled 'Lights'.

To Andrews, then attracted to Zen Buddhism, the inflatable—and deflatable—balloon seemed the perfect image for what the philosopher Alan Watts called 'the skin-encapsulated ego'. His growing conviction that an artist could only see things as they were by losing his ego coincided with his discovery of a new way of spray painting with stencils that eliminated the personal imprint of the brushstroke. In his 1970s series of underwater paintings of fish, titled 'School', he used the technique to marvellous effect to produce surfaces as subtle as ceramic glazes.

Meanwhile, summer holidays spent on the Glenartney sporting estate in Perthshire belonging to his friend Jane Willoughby provided a new and rather surprising stimulus. Zen and the art of stalking seems a strange combination, but Andrews recognised the sport, with its ancient lore, as an illustration of Man's interdependence with Nature.

In *Running with the Deer* (1980), a line of deer bounds across the middle of our field of vision between the blur of grasses in the foreground and the cloud shrouding the hilltops behind, their fleeting forms as seemingly integrated with the canvas as the bison with the cave walls at Altamira.

Left: ***School I*** **(1977) alludes to the similarities between fish and humans in their social conformity.** *Above:* ***Lights VII: A Shadow*** **(1974). The balloon, a metaphor for the isolated ego, united Andrews's interests in aerial travel and Zen Buddhism**

In 1983, Andrews found a subject on the other side of the world that represented 'a near perfect manifestation' of his philosophy of interdependence: the majestic bulk of Ayers Rock, imbued in the tradition of the Aborigines with the spirit of their creator-ancestors. After nine days spent circling the rock with a sketchbook and camera—and, at one point, nearly falling off it—he returned home with jars of red earth and bunches of spinifex grasses to use in his paintings. 'There is something slightly magic about using the materials that the rock is actually made of,' he said.

There is also something magic about painterly illusion, of which Andrews, in his mysteriously conventional way, was a master. The shadow thrown by the balloon on the sunlit sand in *Lights VII* is so convincing that you feel you might obliterate it by standing in front of it. Illusion in painting is often dismissed as a cheap trick, but Andrews' illusions are never superficial. 'I am interested in external appearances for what they reveal of what is internal,' he stated.

Like Leonardo, he was fascinated by Nature's mysteries, which is what lends his work its peculiar depth.

'Michael Andrews: Earth Air Water' is at Gagosian, 20, Grosvenor Hill, London W1, until March 25 (020–7495 1500; www.gagosian.com)

Next week: **Vanessa Bell at the Dulwich Picture Gallery**

The Estate of Michael Andrews/Courtesy James Hyman Gallery, London/Mike Bruce/Gagosian

The Colony Room I **shows the celebrated Soho drinking club, a favourite of Freud and Bacon**

Crossword

A prize of £15 in book tokens will be awarded for the first correct solution opened. Solutions must reach Crossword No 4466, COUNTRY LIFE, Pinehurst II, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF, by **Tuesday, February 14**. UK entrants only.

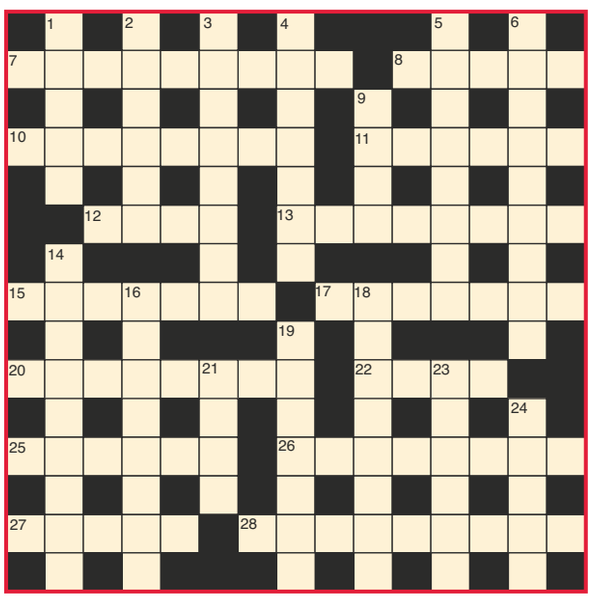
ACROSS

7. Keen that fierce woman gets insect (9)
8. Voice from poor medic (5)
10. Exclude one note for singer (8)
11. A poet I edit when soporific (6)
12. Youngster returns not in education employment or training (4)
13. Fee for dental piece (8)
15. Delay prisoner record (4, 3)
17. Girl from European country (7)
20. Heist map to get colleague on board (8)
22. Face team (4)
25. Answer vexed questions revealing change of direction (6)
26. Grope for board game (8)
27. Nose for tobacco (5)
28. Leads gallery to employ again (9)

DOWN

1. Wide delivered by cricketer (5)
2. Kindle in campaign items (6)
3. I tour mansion being unable to sleep (8)
4. Quick car (7)
5. Test inspection charge (8)
6. Deters cat litter being spread about (9)
9. Harbour drink (4)
14. Political views of three quarter (5, 4)
16. Turn up memoir in shop (8)
18. Right to interrupt downtime to repair instrument (8)
19. Failed to honour writer from Principality (7)
21. Copies animals (4)
23. Girl consumed in argument (6)
24. Shoes for apartments (5)

4466 **TAIT**



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SOLUTION TO 4465 (Winner will be announced in two weeks' time)
ACROSS: 1, Satisfactory; 9, Officiate; 10, Loose; 11, Nobly; 12, Entertain; 14, Trouble; 16, Punch-up; 17, Element; 18, Roedean; 19, Last-ditch; 21, Beech; 22, Capri; 24, Evergreen; 25, Regent Street.
DOWN: 1, Safe-blowers; 2, Tacky; 3, Statement; 4, Agent; 5, Tolerance; 6, Rio; 7 Round the clock; 8, Penny-pinching; 13, Achievement; 15, Breadline; 16, Parchment; 20, Treat; 21, Bugle; 23, Poe.

Winner of 4463 is Terry Ford, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

Bridge Andrew Robson

BUDAPEST enjoyed a 35° heatwave during the 53rd European Championships. The bridge of the England Open team blew hot and cold.

Here is your columnist blowing cold, in the match against Finland. West led the eight of Spades to East's Queen. Plan the play in Four Hearts.

Dealer East
Both vulnerable

	♠ 6 4 2 ♥ A Q 7 5 ♦ A 3 ♣ 8 5 4 2	
♠ 8 7 ♥ 10 9 8 ♦ Q 9 8 5 4 2 ♣ K 10	N W+E S	♠ K Q 10 9 5 ♥ 6 ♦ K 10 6 ♣ J 9 7 3
	♠ A J 3 ♥ K J 4 3 2 ♦ J 7 ♣ A Q 6	

South	West	North	East
			Pass
1♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	End		

At the table, the uninspired declarer won the Ace of Spades, drew trumps in three rounds finishing in dummy and led a Club to the Queen. This lost the West's King and the contract was doomed.

Say you duck East's trick one Queen of Spades and finesse the Knave on East's likely Spade return (there is little danger of West ruffing the second Spade, as that would leave East with a robust six-card suit, with which he'd surely have opened a Weak Two). You now draw trumps in three rounds and, like a beginner, cash your three Aces: Spades, Clubs and Diamonds.

At trick eight, you exit with a second Diamond. East wins the King and leads a second Club (the Knave). You cover with the Queen, but, even though this loses to West's bare King, he is endplayed, with only Diamonds remaining. You ruff in dummy, shed your third Club from hand and claim your game.

Note that, as so often, the top-of-a-doubleton opening lead does not work well (against an inspired declarer). If West leads (say) a Diamond, declarer doesn't know he has a second Spade trick and will likely lead an early Club to the Queen and go down. I had a chance. And squandered it.

Our second Budapest deal saw England's David Gold, South, blowing hot against the host nation.

Dealer North
Neither vulnerable

	♠ K 8 6 4 ♥ 7 6 3 ♦ 8 6 3 ♣ A J 6	
♠ Q 10 9 2 ♥ Q ♦ K J 9 7 4 ♣ 5 4 2	N W+E S	♠ 7 5 ♥ K J 10 4 2 ♦ 10 5 2 ♣ K 10 8
	♠ A J 3 ♥ A 9 8 5 ♦ A Q ♣ Q 9 7 3	

South	West	North	East
		Pass	2♥(1)
2NT	Pass	3NT	End

(1) Weak Two, non-standard without the sixth card.

West would have been well advised to lead his partner's Hearts. Instead, he fished out a risky seven of Diamonds. East would have been well advised to withhold his third-hand-high ten, but that card was wasted, declarer winning the Queen.

At trick two, declarer led a Club to the Knave, East winning the King and returning the five of Diamonds. Declarer won the Ace, crossed to the Knave of Clubs and returned to his Queen, pleased to see the even split and enjoyed the nine, West discarding a Spade (and East a Heart).

Declarer was up to eight tricks, with the Spade finesse (low to the Knave) his obvious chance of a ninth. The trouble was that the Spade finesse was unlikely to succeed, given that East had opened a Weak two and had already turned up with three Clubs to the King. Declarer cashed the Ace of Hearts to learn more, seeing West's Queen (so East had opened with five).

Declarer led a low Spade to the King and the crunch point had arrived. Did West begin with six Diamonds in a 3-1-6-3 shape, in which case, West had discarded down to two Spades and declarer would have to guess whether he had bared his Queen?

Or did he begin with a 4-1-5-3 shape, in which case, declarer could exit with a third Diamond. Given that this latter shape would enable declarer to succeed whether or not West held the Queen of Spades, declarer exited with the Diamond (how East wished he'd retained his ten).

West could cash his three Diamonds, but, at trick 12, have to lead from Queen-ten of Spades round to declarer's Ace-Knave. Nine tricks.

the directory

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Taste the difference

THE day reports appeared that scientists were trying to put the taste back into tomatoes, I was ordering my vegetable seeds for the spring. They don't really need to get out their test tubes—they could just look at the seed catalogue for the French firm Graines Baumaux. The size of *Vogue*, this thundered through the letterbox last month.

If you think I exaggerate, just consider the tomato section. Compared to Franchi Sementi of Harrow, the Italian firm based in England, which only offers 37 tomato types, Baumaux has 26 pages dedicated solely to tomatoes. Each variety is illustrated and has helpful remarks, such as 'parfaite', 'succulente' and 'type cerise'. These are augmented by small cartoons of French chefs making 'superb' gestures.

Faced with so much choice, I've ordered four varieties. These are Ebeno (blackish in colour), Indigo Blue Beauty (a generous person would call this blue, but it's really dark purple), Tirouge (boldly striped yellow on red) and Black Zebra Cocktail. This has 'excellente saveur, riche et complexe' and is a cross between Green Zebra and Black Cherry.

Until you've leafed through the 700 tomato varieties, you'll have no idea what the supermarkets could do. Instead of boring, round, red tomatoes the size of a golfball, you can choose from a huge range of colours and sizes.

There are at least three—Pineapple, Brutus and Gigantomo—that weigh 3lb each and Grinta is more than 5½in long. At the other end of the scale, Galapagos 'avec un curieux parfum épicé' is shown together with a Euro coin that's bigger than each fruit. These are bright yellow.

It's also worth looking out for Cuor di Bue (in Franchi's catalogue), which means Ox Heart—exactly as it is shaped—and Costoluto Fiorentino. The company unfortunately describes the latter as a 'misshapen, heavy, ribbed beef tomato'. Baumaux has a Costoluto Genovese. It's just as ugly if you disapprove of heavy ribbing, but I love its authenticity. Zapotec Pleated, an 'ancienne variété mexicaine des indiens Zapotec', can also be found at Baumaux.

Tomatoes here also come in pink, green, pale or bright yellow, orange, 'black' and 'blue'. If you're tempted by this multiplicity of tomato types, Baumaux will tell you some can be grown outdoors and others in pots on windowsills, so there are few of us who can't grow them.

Then what? To start with, I arrange mine on a wooden charger, sorted by colour. Just as decorative as flowers.

> ‘ Baumaux's giant catalogue has 26 pages dedicated solely to tomatoes ’

David Tanis, head chef at the iconic Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, offers Sliced Tomatoes with Sea Salt in his book *A Platter of Figs and Other Recipes*. 'This isn't so much a recipe,' he writes, 'as a way to think about tomatoes… you want 4lbs ripe summer tomatoes, different colours if possible. Choose heirlooms such as Green Zebra, Yellow Taxi, Mortgage Lifter, Cherokee Purple and Lemon Boy.'

You can get Cherokee Purple and Green Zebra from Simpson's Seeds. The firm was started by Colin Simpson, a *Sunday Times* investigative reporter I knew. Baumaux has Lemon Boy, Cherokee Purple and Green Zebra.

These you should slice, scatter with torn basil leaves, chives or parsley and, at the last minute, scatter sea salt on top. I would use Maldon. There's a photo of the sliced varieties in a plain white dish and they really do look splendid. Make sure, adds Mr Tanis, that you never refrigerate tomatoes. Store and serve at room temperature.

I haven't even talked about their taste. Simpson's says Tomande F1 is 'one of the best tasting large tomatoes' and I'm with Franchi in rooting for Costoluto Fiorentino. But why not discover the taste of real tomatoes yourself?

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