

March 2017

West Berkshire, North Hampshire & East Wiltshire

OUT & ABOUT

A Newbury News Ltd publication

A helping hand

The Community Furniture Project is about more than selling second-hand goods



A grand day out

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Local author Charlotte Betts on her love of writing



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Jonathan Hopson

... going downhill is not such a bad thing



Continuing the recreational sporting theme from previous articles on cycling and table tennis, this month's topic is skiing.

I first caught the skiing bug while on a university trip to La Plagne, France, in 1979.

Most of the group were total beginners and after some helpful *École du Ski Français* (ESF) ski school lessons, by the end of the first week, we were able to snow plough down blue and green runs.

We didn't ski particularly fast and we definitely didn't ski with style, but we made it down the mountain.

The sense of accomplishment, spectacular mountain scenery and alpine food and wine provided a thoroughly addictive high-altitude combination.

There have been a number of subsequent skiing holidays, (and quite a few more ESF lessons), and while the distance covered under the skis has reduced as the years have progressed, in contrast, the overall enjoyment and sense of camaraderie have increased.

One particularly memorable moment was skiing in fancy dress in Courchevel, France in the early 1980s.

Being one of a group of a half a dozen people skiing dressed in black tie was somewhat surreal, but thankfully the sun was shining, so it wasn't particularly cold and mercifully no-one fell over that day.

Writing this has prompted me to dig out the photographic evidence from the attic, above.

Another highlight was skiing the 17km Vallée Blanche route in Chamonix, Switzerland.

Starting out with a professional ski guide from the Aiguille du Midi cable car at an altitude of 3,700 metres, you then stride out along a narrow arête or ridge on the crest of the mountain, carrying your skis with one hand and the other firmly gripping a tethered single rope.

The views from the top are simply breath-taking, as is some of the skiing on the 2,700 metre vertical descent into the valley.

At the start, it really seems as if you are skiing



on the roof of the world and it's also the only place where I have, albeit temporarily, experienced complete silence. Highly recommended.

In early January this year, a group of three of us – my 20-year-old son, Edward, a university friend of his and I – joined a mixed chalet party of 14 in Les Arcs, France.

Despite some very patchy snow cover, around 50 per cent of the pistes were open and skiing conditions, particularly higher up, were remarkably good.

Although there was a wide variation in age range – from late teens to early 60s – everyone got on well together and there were some memorable evenings out, including bowling and pool at the Sport Bar and a hilarious quiz evening at Whistlers.

One of the best runs in Les Arcs is the 7km succession of pistes down from the L'Aiguille Rouge.

A mixture of black, red and blue runs descend from a height of 3,226 metres to the pretty village of Villaroger and a welcome stop for a reviving vin chaud or two.

For those looking for some après ski on the slopes, the Arpette restaurant in Les Arcs is famous for hosting DJ sessions on Wednesday afternoons.

Beware!

If you're planning to dance on the tables in ski boots – as many people choose so to do – prior practice might be advisable.

In summary, Les Arcs and the neighbouring resort of La Plagne offer more than 425km of skiing – more than enough for most people.

Now I'm off to practice my ski boot dancing before my next visit. **OA**

Did you know

■ The word "ski" comes from the Old Norse word *skíð*, which means a piece of wood. Ancient carvings unearthed by archaeologists in Norway suggest the locals started skiing many thousands of years ago, with one rock drawing thought to date from 4000BC.

■ While skiing as a sport is widely accepted to have originated in Norway, tribesmen in the Altai Mountains between China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Russia may have been practising a form of skiing even earlier than the Scandinavians. Part of a primitive wooden ski, thought to be 8,000 years old, was found near Lake Sindor in Russia. A tribe in the Xinjiang province of China still makes skis by splitting spruce trees and wrapping them in dried horse skins, which they use to climb slopes as well as slide down them. Unlike modern skiers, however, they have only one pole – they need the other hand for hunting elk.

■ In 1965, Sherman Poppen from Michigan, made a snowboard for his daughter by binding two skis together to create a sort of skateboard without wheels. He called it a "snurfer" – or a surfboard to use on snow. About a million "snurfers", which were steered with a handheld rope and had no bindings, were sold over the next 10 years.

■ Sherlock Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle discovered skiing when he moved to Switzerland in 1893 – the mountain air had been prescribed for his wife's health. There he found two locals, the Branger brothers, skiing at night to avoid fellow villagers' derision. With them he made the first pass of the 8,000ft Maiefelder Furka mountain passage. He was also, according to the *Telegraph*, the first Englishman to write of the thrill of skiing, saying it took you "as near to flying as any earthbound man can".

■ Most passenger cars are designed to reach speeds of around 120 miles an hour. But speed skiers, who throw themselves down super steep slopes at the maximum speed possible, can go a lot faster than that. The current world record, held by Italian skier Simone Origone, is an incredible 156.2 miles an hour!





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Young at heart



Think you've left it too late to get fitter and stronger? Vicki Brown says you are never too old to start making a change

Something I hear all too often is "I've left it too late", "there is no point starting now" or "it isn't a good idea to start at my age, I may hurt myself" – the list could go on.

But it couldn't be further from the truth.

It's never too late to begin or restart exercising and, whatever your age, exercise is of fantastic benefit to the body and mind.

The NHS guidelines suggest that everyone should be doing at least 150 minutes of moderate activity every week.

The easiest way to achieve this is do something every day for at least 10 minutes. If you do 30 minutes five days a week you will be able to meet the guidelines. This is the minimum amount, so don't stop if you feel you can do more.

To achieve the moderate activity threshold, you will need to do activities that raise your heart rate – for example brisk walking, water aerobics, riding a bike or mowing the lawn.

In addition to these activities, it is also recommended that you "work your muscles" by doing activities such as weight training, carrying heavy loads and gardening – for example digging, would put your muscles under load.

A simple change that everyone can make is to try and sit less.

Many people spend large periods of the day sitting – for some it is up to 10 hours every day.

Whether it be watching the TV, at the computer, driving, reading or listening to music, most of the time people are seated.

If these are common activities for you and you are aware that you spend long periods of time not moving, the key is to try to get up and walk about regularly. Ideally every 15 minutes or so, but try not to go longer than 60 minutes without getting up.

Some of the activities that you sit to do may be able to be done while standing or even walking around, such as making a phone call.

One of my focuses when I train people is lifting weights and being able to lift themselves. This is something that can seem incredibly daunting to some people.

Not only that, but there is a common misconception that it isn't beneficial to start lifting weights. As the joints and muscles start to ache, this is exactly the time to make sure you use them and keep or make them stronger.

Muscles support your skeleton and joints, if they deteriorate and weaken the chances are your posture and general mobility will reduce.

Weight lifting is proven to reduce the risk of osteoporosis and preserve bone density, as well as reduce the risk of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, arthritis and type 2 diabetes. It can also improve sleep and reduce depression.

It's never too late to start doing more and trying something new like lifting weights, so why not give it a go?

If you are unsure or want to make sure it is suitable for you to get started it is recommended that you discuss it with your doctor and you may also want some guidance from a fitness professional to get you moving in the right direction.

The benefits are numerous. Make a start and get ready to feel better on the inside and out don't let age be a reason to stop you. **OA**

4 SIMPLE STEPS CAN IMPROVE YOUR FITNESS

1. Get up and move throughout the day
2. Do at least 150 minutes of moderate activity each week
3. Work your muscles by doing weight-bearing activities
4. Be prepared to try something new

Personal trainer Vicki Brown is the founder of LiveFitNow, based in Wash Common. For a free consultation, more information and links to online home fitness videos, visit: www.LiveFitNow.co.uk



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Facial treats for Mother's Day

Theresa Fleetwood, mother and founder of Andresa Aesthetics Skin Health Clinic, shares her Mother's Day skin treats and gives you the chance to win a 60-minute luxury anti-ageing facial

There are lots of treats that can make you feel younger, but what if one could make you look younger?

Wine and chocolates are always a lovely way to say thank you, but what we're seeing right now is people booking high-performance facials for their mums that melt away the years (and are completely calorie free).

OH BABY

If you're treating a new mum, it's about reducing the fine lines and dark circles caused by changing sleep patterns, and offering her the opportunity to pamper herself as she would have done before baby's arrival.

They're a perfect way for new dads to mark their wife or girlfriend's first Mother's Day.

MUM IN A MILLION

If you're treating your own mum, a luxury facial gives her the gift of time to completely relax, unwind and free her mind from endless to-do lists whilst giving her complexion a real lift.

But facials at a skin health clinic are more than just feelgood facials, giving long-lasting results weeks later.

She'll definitely thank you for it.

SPOILT FOR CHOICE – FINDING THE PERFECT FACIAL

Thanks to the development of highly-effective non-invasive skin treatments, you can access a menu of facials based on the outcome that you want.

Here's the top five requests according to clients at our clinic:

- **Relaxation:** no more frowning; just a soothed, smoother complexion that takes away puffy eyes and leaves you looking and feeling rested
- **Anti-ageing:** these treatments remove fine lines, reduce deep lines, increase elasticity and lift the skin from within
- **Hydrating:** particularly sought after at this time of year, treatments plump and firm skin offering a dewy, more youthful appearance
- **Revitalising:** intensive treatments that boost collagen production and wake your skin up, making it function as it would have done before you had children
- **Refining:** treatments here focus on making pores smaller and taking away fine lines, offering a flawless finish

PUT YOURSELF FIRST FOR A CHANGE

Not sure that your children are going to take the hint?

Then make Mother's Day the day when you put yourself first.

With so much time dedicated to our children, sometimes we need a little reminder to make time for ourselves.

Think of it as a little reward for all the sleepless nights and school runs.

MUM'S THE WORD

With treatments including laser facelifts, High Skin Refining (HSR) anti-ageing facials and stem cell facials all delivering noticeable results, people often ask our clients how they're managing to look so well.

As a highly discreet clinic, in a beautiful countryside setting in Wasing Park, with us 'mum' really is the word.

WIN A 60-MINUTE LUXURY ANDRESA ANTI-AGEING FACIAL

This revitalising luxury Andresa facial delivers noticeable, long-lasting results.

By combining Dr Babor precision formulas that contain highly effective, active ingredients, with exclusive treatment methods, your skin will instantly look radiant and more youthful.

You will be truly pampered as it includes a wonderful shoulder, décolletage, neck and facial massage. **OA**

To be in with a chance of winning, answer the following question:

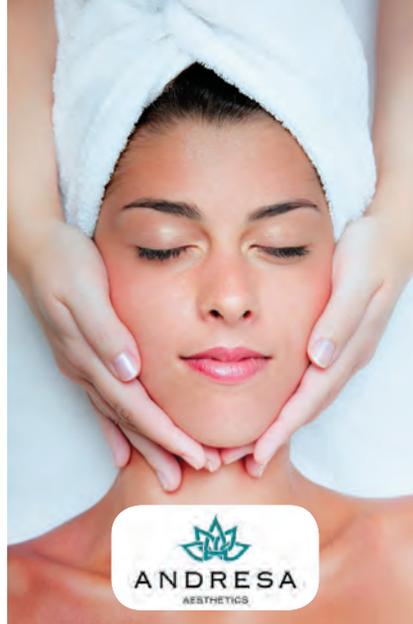
NAME ONE OF THE TOP FIVE REASONS FOR REQUESTING A FACIAL AT ANDRESA?

Send your answer on the form to Andresa Mother's Day competition, OUT&ABOUT, Newspaper House, Faraday Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 2DW. The closing date for entries is Tuesday, March 9.

SPECIAL OFFER

Special offer for Out & About readers: Free Make-up Makeover after any Andresa facials booked during March 2017.

To find out more about Andresa Skin Health Clinic go to www.andresa.co.uk or call (01635) 800183.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Theresa Fleetwood is the founder of Andresa Skin Health Clinic, which offers the very latest bespoke, non-surgical skincare and anti-ageing therapies. Located in a stunning oak-beamed barn conversion in the beautiful surroundings of the Wasing Estate in Aldermaston, the Andresa beauty suite offers a wide range of beauty and relaxation treatments alongside the five-star Andresa Skin Health Clinic. For more details visit: www.andresa.co.uk
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ANDRESA COMPETITION

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I would like more information about the Andresa Skin Health Clinic

KITCHEN CHIC

Red nose day is on **Friday, March 24** and this year organisers want you to get baking for a good cause, which wearing one of their specially-designed exclusive aprons by celebrity photographer Rankin

Adult Apron £12.99

at least £5.00 going to Comic Relief

Kids Apron £7.99

at least £2.25 going to Comic Relief (plastic coating so perfect for baking)

Tea Towel £4.99

at least £1.50 going to Comic Relief

Leather Journal £7.99

at least £3.50 going to Comic Relief

Colouring-in Notebook £5.99

at least £2.00 going to Comic Relief

HomeSense has partnered with renowned fashion and portrait photographer Rankin to create exclusive aprons for Red Nose Day 2017 and help people living incredibly tough lives across Africa and here in the UK. The apron is part of a Red Nose Day 2017 range of products available in HomeSense stores nationwide.

HomeSense has partnered with renowned fashion and portrait photographer Rankin to create exclusive aprons for Red Nose Day 2017.

With all the ingredients to become a design classic, the apron features a selection of unique, quirky and quintessentially British animal portraits, including Rankin's own dog.

HomeSense is an official Red Nose Day partner for the third time and this year a host of celebrities have been photographed by iconic photographer Rankin wearing the apron to help raise money for Comic Relief.

The campaign is being fronted by the Hairy Bikers, Si King and Dave Myers. The bikers are supported by a host of celebrities, including The Hemsley Sisters, Nadine Coyle, Lesley Joseph, Linda Robson and Fay Ripley, to name but a few.

The adult apron, priced at £12.99, is available to buy in HomeSense and TK Maxx stores and online at tkmaxx.com and rednoseday.com.

With at least £5 from every adult apron sale going

to Comic Relief, the money will help people living incredibly tough lives in the UK and across Africa.

The HomeSense Red Nose Day range also features a new children's apron, encouraging the whole family to join in the bake sale action by getting creative in the kitchen.

Further products in the collection include a tea towel, also designed by Rankin, as well as a leather journal and a colouring-in notebook.

Rankin said: "When I was asked to create this year's Red Nose Day exclusive collection for HomeSense I agreed without hesitation. It is a fantastic cause and I knew it would be a lot of fun. What you're seeing is some of the best talent in the animal business and, although I'm never one for nepotism, my own dog got on the team sheet. I wanted to make these images as cute and fun as possible and I hope I have included something for everyone which encourages both adults and children to get in the kitchen and raise some dough for Comic Relief." OA





If you're doing something for Comic Relief this year, don't forget to let the *Newbury Weekly News* know – send details of your event and pictures to newsdesk@newburynews.co.uk

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Waste not, want not

Never was this adage more true than when applied to the Newbury Community Resource Centre.

Now in its 20th year, the charity encompasses the Community Furniture Project, Renewal Project, Growing Together, PullingTogether and the Training and Community Support Centre.

Sarah Bosley found out more from the charity's chief executive Kelvin Hughes ►

“

We work with a whole range of people across the community and work in incremental steps to address local issues

”





Kelvin Hughes

Since it began in its earliest form in 1997, the Community Furniture Project has helped thousands of people in so many different ways.

Not only does it provide affordable furniture for families in need, but it also raises thousands of pounds to fund community projects across the district and helps support people with learning and physical disabilities and mental health problems.

The furniture project started life as an extension of Berkshire Women's Aid, which had been given two garages to store furniture to pass on to families leaving the refuge.

It expanded into a unit in Queen's Road in 1997 and has been evolving to meet the needs and demands of the local community ever

■ Last year the Newbury Community Resource Centre facilitated an estimated saving of 2,228 tonnes of CO₂e through re-use and recycling (based on figures supplied by the REalliance partnership with WRAP and Defra)

■ This is equivalent to taking 437 cars off the road for a whole year

since.

A new charity – the Newbury Community Resource Centre (NCRC) – was set up in 2000 to recognise the variety of different initiatives now undertaken.

The NCRC is run by an army of volunteers and, for the past 12 years, has been co-ordinated by chief executive Kelvin Hughes. He says that the geography of West Berkshire

means that there are a whole range of issues where people need support and setting up the NCRC was in response to this.

"There is an awful lot more that unites people here than separates them," he says.

"There are a lot of different people working here together, despite all having different needs or reasons for being here.

"We work with a whole range of people across the community and work in incremental steps to address local issues.

"We are not an environmental, children's or disability charity, but we do a lot of work with all of those people.

"The only thing they have in common is that they are all local.

"Sometimes we look around and think how did we get here, but then we look at all the decisions that have been taken and every one was in response to a real need in the local community.

"There is a very direct link between the pound you spend with us and helping the community you live in."

Kelvin is keen to point out that it is not just people in need who can purchase goods from the Community Furniture Project.

All goods are available at three price bands – a full price; a discounted price for people on benefits; and via a scheme in association with the Citizen's Advice Bureau and Sovereign Housing, where people in desperate need can acquire goods for free.

"The primary thing for us is reuse and recycle," he says.

"We can make use of a lot of things and we are very grateful to the people who donate to us, but we are also keen for people to come in and purchase too.

"We have a rule that whatever we sell has to be affordable for people. The first thing people lose when they have no money is choice, so we want them to have as much choice as possible."

All the money that comes in through the shops is then spent on supporting the projects that the NCRC run.

These are split into five main categories: The Community Furniture Project; Training & Community Support; Growing Together; Pulling Together; and The Renewal Project.

There is a large focus on aiding people's learning, employability and progression and the opportunity to build on qualifications

The History

1997 – The Community Furniture Project is launched by Berkshire Women's Aid, starting with a unit in Queen's Road to support families in need

2000 – The Newbury Community Resource Centre (NCRC) is launched as an overarching not-for-profit organisation

2004 – The Community Furniture Project opens at a second site in Basingstoke

2005 – Training and Community Support is launched from The Slater Centre at New Greenham Park

2009 – Growing Together begins

2011 – Pulling Together is launched

2012 – The Renewal Project is started

2013 – NCRC moves to larger premises in Bone Lane, Newbury

and eventually achieve a diploma is available to everyone.

"We offer training in a range of things from woodwork and conservation, to bike mechanics and customer care," Kelvin adds.

"For young people the biggest problem they have is they don't actually know what they want to do, so we let them try a lot of things and see what they have a natural aptitude for. It is about giving them the space to try different things.

"It is also about giving people more stability.

"We run a five-a-side football team to give them a support network outside of work hours.





Individual items reused included:

- 2,444 tables of all sizes
- 2,244 dining chairs
- 1,503 bedside cabinets
- 1,432 sofas
- 1,035 bookcases
- 933 white goods
- 752 beds
- 744 bicycles
- 593 wardrobes
- 8 pianos

Furniture reused in 2016		
	Number of items	Total weight (tonnes)
Furniture	16,504	451.60
Bric-a-brac	31,394	145.21
Children's items	747	6.25
Bikes	744	10.43
Household items	13,834	46.90
Carpets and flooring	285	2.71
Bedding and curtains	1,873	2.07
Bathroom items	36	0.67
Garden items	131	1.55
Electrical items	2,992	46.80
Total	68,540	714.20

In 2016 the Community Furniture Project

- received 14,358 donations
- had 93,301 customer visits
- saw 29,622 customer purchases
- arranged 4,812 collections by project vehicles
- made 3,336 deliveries of furniture
- recycled 66.69 tonnes of material

"It helps people build up a network of friends to support them and gets them to understand that they can be a contributor to the community.

"Feeling you are helping others can be very powerful in growing someone's confidence."

Progression is a favourite word at NCRC and Kelvin believes that it doesn't matter where people start from, they can always progress.

This is the case with both learning and with mental health progression.

At NCRC they have a five-step scheme for supporting people with mental health issues.

"We always encourage people to come in and just have a step one day, even if they were previously up at step five," Kelvin explains.

"We just always want them to come in and not stay at home on their own.

"We are aware that things are not always on an upwards trajectory and we think people should be able to come in and work at whatever step they feel like on any given day, which should help them cope more in the long run."

The charity employs 48 people, in a variety of part-time and full-time roles, and has 324 volunteers currently registered, but they are always keen to welcome newcomers.

"There are so many ways you can help," Kelvin says.

"Donate to us, buy from us, volunteer with us, or train with us.

"We really are what we say we are. We are inclusive and people are here because they all want to help the local community."

The charity has now secured a 20-year lease on the current Newbury premises, thanks to support from the Greenham Common Trust, meaning it can plan for a secure future and concentrate on the things that matter – helping the community it serves. ►

The 5-Step programme aims to support people with mental health issues by allowing them to progress at their own rate:

Step 1 – This is just getting someone into the NCRC building and out of their own house, which for many people is a significant first step

Step 2 – Joining in with basic arts and crafts activities

Step 3 – Getting on to the periphery of volunteering by watching others and contributing when and where they can

Step 4 – Getting involved in volunteering or learning or just spending more time utilising the skills they already have

Step 5 – The person is involved in regular volunteering and is actively looking for work

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The Newbury Community Resource Centre runs five different projects. To find out more about the work they do visit www.n-c-r-c.org



the community furniture project



The Community Furniture Project

Based in Bone Lane, Newbury and Joule Road, Basingstoke, the furniture shops collect unwanted items which are then restored, reused or recycled and resold to help support all the other charitable initiatives undertaken by NCRC.

This doesn't just mean support financially either. The work undertaken to restore and recycle items plays an integral role in the Training and Community Support Centre's schemes.



Growing 2gether is a project designed to give people the chance to learn about and help to grow a range of fruit and vegetables.

It offers volunteering and training opportunities from its site at Cottismore, near Kingsclere.

The 1.5 hectare site also offers a place for school visits or birthday parties, as well as Forest First Nursery – an outdoor parent and toddler group held on the first Tuesday of every month from 9.30am until 11.30am.

The fresh fruit, vegetables and flowers grown at Cottismore are also sold to help boost the charity's coffers.



The Training and Community Support Centre (TCS) is an accredited training centre, with 10 qualified trainers and assessors, who work closely with LASER Learning Awards, focussing on its wide-ranging LEAP (Learning, Employability and Progression) courses.

The centre hosts a number of workshops where items donated to the CFP are repaired and tested before being resold. It also specialises in training in warehousing and logistics, offering AITT (Association of Industrial Truck Trainers) accredited courses in forklift truck operating.

The TCS takes referrals from West Berkshire Council, as well as families and carers of those in need of support.



It is not just focused on training however, believing that a person's social life is just as important. It has set up a mixed ability football team, that trains twice a week and plays in the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Inclusion League; has a small gym at its Bone Lane centre; and also organises regular darts and social evenings.

Its training has been recognised with awards from West Berkshire Education Business Partnership and West Berkshire Learner Achievement Awards.



This initiative focuses on the restoration of the River Lambourn in Newbury and continues the work started in 2009 by the Environment Agency.

It aims to help restore the chalk characteristics of the river, which has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The nationally important habitat offers the opportunity for people to carry out voluntary work, as well as educational projects, such as 'Trout in the Classroom'.

The project works closely with local schools to promote awareness of the river ecosystem and wildlife and RAT (river action team) Pack events are run during the holidays from the Riverside Community Centre, in Newbury.

A Forest School is now run from the river in Shaw twice a month.



Pulling Together helps build the self-confidence and self-esteem of people suffering from depression and other mental health problems.

By offering a friendly and supportive social network from its Newbury premises it hopes to tackle feelings of loneliness and social isolation. It offers people the opportunity to engage in a range of activities that will help them learn new skills and enter employment.

All of this is achieved thanks to an innovative 5-Step programme that has been developed by NCRC.

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In good company

Newbury National Trust support group was founded 35 years ago, in order to allow trust members to meet up and enjoy group outings and talks. Today, it has some 400 members and an extensive programme of events. Geraldine Gardner met up with Gerald Orbell and Keith Spires to discover more

The National Trust has been welcoming visitors to stately homes, old cottages, working mills, barns, gardens and coastland for more than 120 years.

The organisation was founded in January 1895 by Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter and Hardwicke Rawnsley. It has grown to become one of the UK's largest charities.

Today, across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the trust looks after a quarter-of-a-million hectares of land, 775 miles of coastline, and thousands of archaeological monuments and historic buildings, large and small.

Every year, millions of people enjoy days out to properties and land in the trust's care.

At the heart of the success of the trust are the thousands of volunteers who give up their time to act as guides or help out in the various locations.

The organisation also relies on a network of support groups, who share an interest in the trust's work and provide much-needed funds, as well as a social hub for like-minded people in their area.

There are more than 200 National Trust support groups in the UK and, this year, the Newbury & District Association celebrates its 35th anniversary. The Newbury association was founded in 1982 by a group of friends who wanted to support the trust and one of its founders, Mary Hepburn, is still involved as president.

The purpose of the group is to allow people to enjoy special interest talks, visits, holidays and other social

and fundraising events or hands-on conservation activities. Its success can be measured by the fact that the Newbury group has more than 400 members.

The attraction of joining a National Trust support group is that you meet people who share the same interests and can enjoy organised visits to special places.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the group is generally made up of retired people. As outgoing chairman Gerald Orbell explains: "The age-range of our group is 60-plus, but you would expect that, given that many of our outings are during the week and so suit retired people."

On average, the organised daytrips are enjoyed by between 30 to 60 members, but the evening talks are a different matter.

"We hold monthly talks up at the Greenham arts centre," says vice chairman Keith Spires. "They are extremely popular and sometimes it is standing room only. We very often welcome more than 100 to the evenings."

The talks are booked by one of the committee members, Michael Perkin, whose job it is to find interesting speakers on varying topics.

"They don't have to be about National Trust properties," says Keith. "For instance, our January talk by Robert Fromow was about the Australian Outback.

"He presented to a packed house."

The success of the group is heavily-reliant on the

nine-strong committee and their efforts to make sure an entertaining and diverse programme is presented to its members.

Six years ago Keith Spires decided to add theatre outings into the mix and these have proved to be a winner. "I book about four trips a year – it could be theatre or a concert. Most recently, we went down to Dartford, Kent, to see the Russian State Ballet perform *Sleeping Beauty* – it was fantastic."

I met up with the group just before the coach set off and they were all full of praise for the hard work put in by the committee and of the addition of these outings.

Joy and Bob Brand have been members for nearly 20 years. "We found out about the group quite by chance," said Bob. "We've been on lots of trips since we joined, which we wouldn't be able to do otherwise.

Joy particularly enjoys the extended residential visits. "It's lovely to visit other parts of the country and see the historical sites around the area," she said. "We also go to a lot of the talks because they are on such a wide range of subjects."

Another keen theatre-goer is Molly Breakspeare. She said, "I love these trips. This is a real treat, it's not every day you get to see the Russian State Ballet."

Their next trip, to see *Funny Girl*, is already sold out.

One important element of the Newbury group is fundraising and making sure that the money is put to good use. "The National Trust allows us to say where we would like the money to go," explains Gerald. ➤



“As far as I am aware we are the only group that has chosen to support education.”

One of the ideas the committee had was to offer to pay the transport costs for schools wanting to take children on educational trips to local sites and properties.

One of the first schools to benefit was Falkland Primary. “The school wanted to take some of the children to Studland Bay, so we funded the cost of the coach and off they went,” says Keith. Since then Winchcombe and Brightwalton primary schools, among others, have also been able to go on outings because of the financial support offered.

Robert Sandilands School visited the Chedworth Roman villa as part of their history curriculum.

“When we decided we wanted to put the money into education, I contacted local organisations, such as Greenham Common Trust and the Colefax Trust, to see if they, too, would like to contribute. We had a tremendous response and we are still able to offer financial support to any local school looking to go on an educational outing.”

There are many places for schools to visit as well. A quick look at the NT website shows there are more than 20 properties or other sites within a 30-mile radius of Newbury, one of which is Winchester city mill, which like many other NT-run centres, supports school outings with talks and organises the day to make sure the children get the most out of their visit.

“We know how hard it is for schools to organise these trips,” says Keith. “There are so many rules and regulations, never mind the cost, which can be prohibitive. We really believe in the value of these visits and of the children being able to explore and enjoy our heritage. It’s really lovely when we receive thank yous from them – making the financial support we can give worthwhile.”

The group also provides funding for other projects that they consider of benefit to the local community. Most notable was their involvement in the provision of an information panel about the Falkland Memorial, which was unveiled in 2015, at a ceremony attended by director general of the National Trust, Dame Helen Ghosh.

“Not many people know that the Falkland Memorial site is owned by the National Trust,” explains Gerald. “It is of particular historical significance to the people

of Newbury. The information panel gives an insight into the First Battle of Newbury and tells people about what took place during the conflict in which Lord Falkland was killed.”

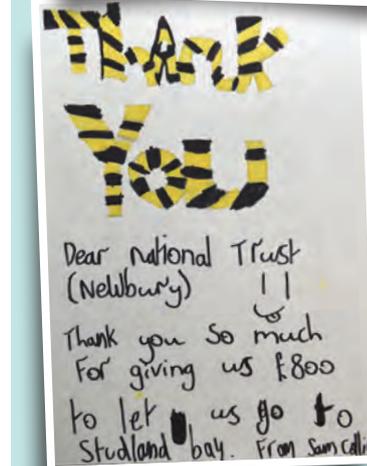
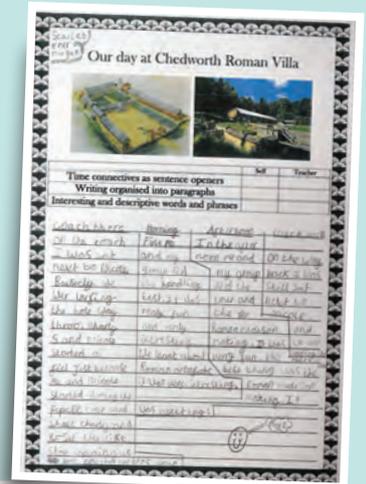
The group also strongly support Sandham Memorial Chapel in Burghclere, as well as the Vyne, near Basingstoke, which is currently undergoing extensive renovation to the roof.

Although the average age of the Newbury group is probably 60-plus, interest in this country’s heritage has never been greater and a larger number of families are visiting properties and landmarks each year. This is good news for the support groups across the country whose valuable service to the local community, as well as the National Trust, looks set to continue for a long time to come.

To find out more about the Newbury National Trust Support Group visit www.newburynta.btk.co.uk
To find out more about the National Trust go to www.nationaltrust.org.uk **OA**



Top and right: Setting off to see to the Russian State Ballet in Dartford
Above right: Keith Spires and Gerald Orbell



Some of the ‘thank you’ notes from local children

In September 2016, long-standing member of the Newbury National Trust Ian Hopper kept a record of the group's five-day trip to the north west of England.



Inside Lady Lever Art Gallery. Left background is *The Wedding Morning*, 1892, by John Henry Frederick Bacon (1866-1913). Leverhulme bought this painting from the 1892 Royal Academy private view to use in an advertisement for Sunlight Soap. In the advertisement, bars of Sunlight Soap were substituted for the clock on the mantelpiece and for the cup and saucer on the table.



Beatles Statue. On Liverpool's Pier Head. Donated to the city by the Cavern Club, and coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the Beatles' last concert in their home city when they played at the Liverpool Empire.



Little Moreton Hall. Said to be the finest half-timbered manor in England, it evolved into a top heavy, irregular structure and was described as "a fairy story, gingerbread house" and a "a stranded Noah's Ark".



Crosby Beach. Antony Gormley's 100, life-size, self-replicating sculptures.



H'boro Scrolls and Medals. Inside Liverpool Town Hall, the display in the main ballroom on the first floor. The 100 Freedom of the City scrolls and medals were awarded to the families of the 96 Hillsborough victims and the four key campaigners for justice.



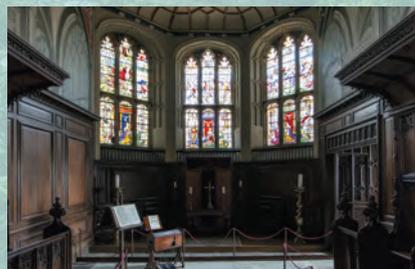
Anglican Cathedral. Visible in the distance over the west doors is Tracey Emin's controversial pink, neon sign – in her handwriting – "I felt you and then I knew you loved me".

There are plenty of National Trust-owned places to visit within a 30-mile radius of Newbury. To find out more visit www.nationaltrust.co.uk



Ashdown House, Lambourn
Unusual Dutch-style house on the Berkshire Downs, built by William Craven as a house fit for the queen he loved, Queen Elizabeth of Bohemia, in 1662.
Access to the house is by guided tour only. Pre-booking is not required, except for large groups. The house is tenanted and access is limited to hall, staircase (100 steps) and roof.
There is a lacemaker at work and also woodland crafts demonstrations.

The grounds can be visited when the house is open and the woodland is open all-year-round, Saturday to Thursday.



The Vyne, Sherborne St John
Currently undergoing a major roof project, the history runs from its royal Tudor beginnings. On the ground floor, which is open to visitors, discover a rare pre-Reformation chapel once visited by Henry VIII and a classically-inspired 18th-century staircase hall.

Other NT sites include:

Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere
Home to large-scale murals by Sir Stanley Spencer

Basildon Park, Reading
18th-century house purchased by Lord and Lady Iliffe in the 1950s

Frensham Little Pond
Bishops fish pond in stunning heathland and abundant wildlife.

Long Crendon Courthouse
Medieval courthouse

Mompesson House, Salisbury
18th-century townhouse in Salisbury's Cathedral Close.

West Green House Garden, Hartley Wintney
A delightful series of walled gardens surrounds the charming 18th-century house.

Great Coxwell Barn, Faringdon
13th-century stone barn.



The taste of a country inn

Hilary Scott says you'd be mad not to march down to the Hare and Hounds in Speen to get a taste of their traditional pub menu, with a dash of something extra, in a cosy and inviting hostelry

“A proper English inn where you can eat, drink and sleep”

That's owner Jonathan Nelsey's description of the Hare and Hounds in Speen where for 12 years he and wife Jean have created an elegant but cosy pub, hotel and restaurant.

We chat to Jonathan at the bar over an aperitif (there's a good list of vodkas and gins on a blackboard) and he is the quintessential innkeeper.

As he entertains us, he keeps his eye on the locals, the arriving guests for the bar and The Barn restaurant – a lovely space with a unique atmosphere – and his well-trained staff.

There are 30 bedrooms, too, under his wing and he says they are just the right standard for the restaurant – “you need to make sure that your rooms match,” says Jonathan.

He is especially proud of the fare matching

his description of the Hare and Hounds being an English inn – it's not intimidating, where you get either a one-word or a 100-words description on the menu, but it's not basic.

We think he's pitched it just right.

Under chef Tom Brannagan – one of many staff who has worked at the Hare and Hounds for a spell, then returned a few years later, like general manager Chris Dyble – the menu has some ‘pubby’ dishes and others more sophisticated.

There's mushrooms on toast, button mushrooms in red wine and stilton cream sauce, or devilled pigs in blankets in a paprika cream sauce, for starters.

There are steaks (more of them later), duck and game pie for mains and some lovely desserts like affogato or cheesecake and a proper cheese board.

Jonathan is particularly proud of his

steaks – they're cooked in a Bertha, a professional indoor charcoal oven and grill.

Jonathan, a chef turned innkeeper, says he hasn't been so excited about a bit of kit for the kitchen since combination ovens, way back.

The reason is because the Bertha is enclosed, the charcoal infuses the meat and doesn't escape like a traditional barbecue.

We try the 8oz rump (£15), which comes with fries, onion rings, salad, grilled tomato and mushroom and a red wine and stilton sauce.

We ask for medium rare and it's perfect.

It slices easily to dip into the pungent stilton sauce and the barbecued flavour is still detectable.

The other main we choose is the slow roast pork shoulder (£14.25), chive mash,





an apple and onion fritter, local Tutts Clump cider gravy and fresh vegetables.

The pork is rolled into a perfect round and is meltingly soft surrounded by a sweet/sharp shot of Tutts Clump cider-flavoured gravy.

The apple and onion fritter is like an onion bhaji, an accompaniment Jonathan developed with his chef.

Before our mains, we'd chosen tempura battered tiger prawns with a chilli ketchup, £7.25.

The prawns were fresh-tasting in a mean crispy batter and the chilli ketchup was mild not hot.

We also chose a board of pork and black pudding terrine with chicken liver and Armagnac paté, £6.75, which came with homemade piccalilli, real ale chutney and toasted bloomer.

The piccalilli was crunchy and fresh, the pork and black pudding terrine was coarse and peppery in contrast with the smooth chicken liver pate.

I could have done with another triangle of toast, but despite that it was a great choice for a terrine-lover like me.

We are now pretty full, but the accommodating staff give us time to rest before bringing a rich and smooth crème

brûlée (all desserts £5.50) and an unusual 'mess'-type pudding with kiwi, mango and meringue, which was also lushly creamy and fresh at the same time.

The wine list is well chosen – having both been to the Margaret River region in Western Australia we joke as we sit down that you rarely see this region's wines on the menu.

But lo, there is a delicious Margaret River Semillon which was just as it should be – peachy and full of sunny notes.

After dinner, we sit at the snug bar for a final drink and conclude that Jonathan and his wife and staff have styled everything just right.

This doesn't feel like a faux English inn, it is a proper tavern, but with stylish touches and impressive food that doesn't daunt.

It's not far out of Newbury town centre, it has plenty of parking and The Barn is becoming popular for weddings, which are limited to 20 per year to ensure a balance with the busy restaurant trade.

So, though you might not have a horse to tie up outside or your own tankard ready to fill with ale, you'll find proper old-fashioned hospitality, but brought bang up to date at the Hare and Hounds.

I'd saddle up and get on down there when you can. 

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www.hareandhoundshotel.net

Top: roast pork shoulder with cider gravy.
Bottom from left: tempura battered Tiger prawns, board of pork and black pudding terrine with chicken liver and Armagnac paté, 8oz rump steak cooked in a Bertha, crème brûlée

Photographs: Dijana Capan



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toptipples

by *James Allen*

Keeping it local



In the first of a series featuring local wine merchants, James Allen shares some of the delights he discovered at Haynes Hanson & Clark in Whitchurch. And they have a special offer for out&about readers

The Newbury area is blessed with a number of excellent wine merchants. I attended a wine tasting recently at Haynes Hanson & Clark's shop in Whitchurch.

I was treated to some super wines, the notes for which I would like to share with you!

"The pursuit of good wine at a good price is very exciting", enthuses Master of Wine Anthony Hanson.

It was with this zeal and drive that he founded the wine merchant Haynes Hanson & Clark in 1978 with Denis Haynes and Nicholas Clark.

"The idea was to be an independent specialist, fast-moving and shipping directly," says Hanson.

"We pride ourselves on the efficient, friendly, personal service we offer, ensuring that clients old and new are always looked after by someone knowledgeable, enthusiastic and keen.

"Thanks to our long history and years of hard work in establishing relationships with wine producers, we are able to seek out bottles that offer brilliant quality and value, from the £6 mark upwards."

Muscadet Sèvre & Maine Sur Lie, Dmne Chauvinière 2015 £9.55

The nose is perfumed, floral and fresh followed by a beautifully silky texture in the mouth.

Touraine Sauvignon, Domaine Jacky Marteau 2015. £10.00

The 2015 is wonderfully open and aromatic, with ripe greengage and hints of spices and fresh herbs. Very popular in our tasting.

Viognier, Domaine Gayda, Pays d'Oc 2015. £10.15

This 2015 is an attractively perfumed, peachy wine. There is ample richness, yet the acidity is racy and wonderfully fresh.

Mâcon-Prissé, Vignerons des Terres Secrètes 2015. £12.15

Un-oaked, clean and lively in style, aromas

are bright, floral and lemony. Excellent middle richness with peach and apricot flavours.

Kumeu River Estate Chardonnay, Auckland 2014. £21.00

One of the stars of the evening, the 2014 is a spectacular vintage. This Estate Chardonnay is a bright, pure wine, with lovely oaking, that has a rich core that is balanced perfectly by racy, fine acidity.

Racine Minervois, Bruno Lafon & François Chamboissier 2015. £9.20

A juicy Languedoc blend with aromas of spiced plums and perfumed garrigue, the palate is vibrant and fresh.

Gamay sur Volcan, La Madone, Côtes du Forez, Gilles Bonnefoy 2015. £13.00

Colour is vivid purple, with fresh, red fruit and floral aromas. The palate is ripe and seamless, with good depth of flavour and a long-lasting flavour.

Rioja Crianza, Bodegas Bagordi 2012. £11.25

The colour is a bright ruby with open spiced cherry aromas. This is a fresh, ripe style, with a creamy texture and a fine structure. The tannins are gentle, with a clean, bright, enticing finish.

Chateau de Malleret, Haut Médoc 2009. £18.33

Château de Malleret 2009 is the epitome of rich, ready-to-drink Bordeaux. The palate is of medium to full weight, with generously rounded texture, ample fruit core, supple edges and a pleasing length.

Château Raymond Lafon, Sauternes 2008. £28.00

Château Raymond-Lafon is beautifully placed – the vineyards about those of Château d'Yquem and their wines are often compared in quality, despite the disparity in price.

The property was bought in 1972 by Pierre Meslier, then the manager of Yquem. He

immediately duplicated the regime of Yquem at Raymond-Lafon and set about producing one of the great sweet wines of Bordeaux.

This 2008 is a wine with racy acidity and crystalline intensity that cuts through the wine's natural richness. The aromas combine white flowers, spiced apricot and peach, with sublime textures and a clean finish.

Ready to drink, but will cellar well to 2020 and beyond. If you like sweeter wines... this is a delight. **OA**



READER OFFER

Prices are per bottle. Haynes Hanson & Clark, are offering a special 10 per cent case discount on six-bottle cases (normally only on 12-bottle cases).

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Mack the fish

Mackerel is an oily fish full of goodness and a British staple, which works well with a variety of flavours. And it's a healthy alternative to the winter excesses, says Simon Rhodes

There is no better time to enjoy mackerel – a marvellous British fish – than in the winter months.

This amazing oily fish, which is related to the tuna, is very nutritious and high in Omega 3. It is a great fish to enjoy after the excesses of the festive season and to kick start a summer of great healthy eating.

It is easy to prepare and cook and is also economical.

During the winter months mackerel go to colder, deep waters, coming back to warmer waters to spawn in vast numbers.

They are aggressive predators by nature and are relatively easy to catch by fishermen of all ages and abilities using a spinney or feathered hooks.

Fresh mackerel should be stiff with bright eyes and bright red gills. We tend to buy our mackerel from Scotland as they are generally bigger and tend to come to us in superb condition.

Mackerel are rich in taste, so creamy buttery sauces are not ideal accompaniments.

The fillets can be simply pan fried skin side down in a little oil or the whole fish can be baked in the oven or grilled.

I also find that a simple tomato and red onion salad works well with mackerel and cuts through the oiliness.

It's important to take time to make a good salad dressing.

I find that salad dressings vary greatly depending on what oils you use. It's great fun experimenting with different combinations of oils, sugars, honey, mustards, and vinegars – why not have a go and create your own personal favourite salad dressing. Toasted sesame seeds also add to salads.

Mackerel's versatility means that it can also work well with Asian flavours.

Try marinating the fillets of mackerel with soy sauce, ginger, lime and chilli.

Simply combine some chopped chillis, (depending on your preference of heat), the juice of a lime, a 'thumb' of grated ginger and 2 tspn of soy sauce and marinate the fillets for a few hours then grill for about five minutes skin side down.

Serve with some steamed jasmine rice with finely chopped spring onion. Garnish with fresh chopped coriander.

Devilled mackerel is a great favourite with Rick Stein.

Marinate whole mackerel with a paste of ground cumin, chilli powder, a little turmeric, salt and tomato puree, then bake in the oven for about 10 minutes.

This dish works very well with a fresh noodle salad with lime juice, sesame oil, soy sauce, sugar and fresh coriander leaves.

We also sell smoked mackerel fillets which, again, work so well with salads or just as a simple dish on its own.

Or, why not try smoked mackerel with a carbonara sauce with pasta instead of the usual ham and mushrooms?

We stock fresh mackerel at The Lobster Pot Fishmongers in Cobbs Farmshop, Hungerford, and we can prepare your mackerel however you desire – filleted or headed, cleaned and gutted.

Come in and talk mackerel with us. 



About the author

Simon Rhodes owns:
The Lobster Pot Fishmongers, Cobbs Farmshop, Bath Road,
Hungerford, Berkshire RG17 0SP
Telephone: (01488) 686770

Devilled mackerel is a great favourite with Rick Stein



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Bread winner

At Honesty 'freshly baked' means freshly baked says Romilla Arber

It was with the idea of opening a bakery where all things Honesty really started.

I had been brought up watching my mother bake homemade bread, primarily for the family, but also to make a little extra money so that she could afford to take us on our first holiday.

I have memories of her mixing the dough, kneading the bread and getting it ready to go in the oven.

Bread is enticing on many levels. It appeals to our base human senses, the smell, the appearance and, of course, the taste.

You can also trace the history of human civilisation through bread and to me it is the perfect, albeit regretful, example of how and why our food culture has declined in the UK.

In the 1960s our bread was reconfigured without our consent and without our knowledge, to make it more profitable and its shelf-life longer; a win-win situation for the bread manufacturers, but sadly not for us.

So many people I speak to complain of a bloated feeling after eating mass-produced bread. When I say 'mass-produced' bread I am including most supermarket bread in this category, despite the brown paper bags and 'freshly baked' signs in stores leading us to think it has been baked in an artisan bakery.

Mass-produced bread contains over-processed flour, excessive yeast, fat, flour treatment agents, bleach, emulsifiers, preservatives and enzymes.

So while traditionally-made bread contains three or four ingredients, mass-produced bread contains more than 25 ingredients. Not surprising that it leaves your gut a little queasy and has been banned in London parks as a food for the ducks.

I quickly realised that opening a bakery on its own was not going to be economically viable.

Bread is cheap to produce in terms of ingredients, but once you add labour and distribution costs you have to be shifting a lot of bread.

So the story goes that the Crown and Garter came up for sale. There was room enough in the barn for a small baking kitchen with a coffee shop and that was the start of Honesty Bakery.

Just over a year later and we operate out of Unit 8 New Greenham Business Park. We have two huge deck ovens and since March 2016 have produced more than 115,000 items.

There is some way to go before we are covering all of our overheads, but we are going in the right direction. There is definitely a demand out there for well-produced bread made using traditional methods.

The bakery is staffed by three full-time bread bakers who work through the night and three pastry chefs who work in the day.

Each month we try to develop a new cake and bread recipe to offer to our customers and we also try to produce items that work well in the particular season in which they are made.

In January, for example, the bread of the month was a dark muesli bread which was I think something that fitted in well after the excesses of the festive season.

I am looking forward to the summer when we shall have all the soft fruits available to make fruit pies and tarts.

There have been some funny times and things that have happened that make you wonder why you ever started in the business.

When we started to produce the cake and biscuits it was in my kitchen at home that the first batch of 23 cakes was made.

I was up until 2am in the morning with my lovely children also helping. I went to bed for two hours and then got up again once the cakes were cool enough to ice and pack up for delivery.

I sometimes ask myself if I am a bit strange doing all of this, but I guess life is a bit strange occasionally and you have to join in or it passes you by. 

RECIPE



SMALL CHOCOLATE PUDDINGS

These little puddings have the secret ingredient of a Belgian Truffle so you are guaranteed a yummy moist centre. They are much easier to make than the fondant chocolate puddings you get in restaurants.

Serves 6

Butter and flour for preparing the pudding moulds
 200g dark chocolate, broken into pieces
 100g caster sugar
 120g butter, cut into cubes
 100g ground almonds
 4 egg yolks
 4 egg whites
 6 Belgian truffles

■ Grease six small pudding moulds and dust each one with a little flour. This will ensure that the puddings do not stick to the moulds. Preheat the oven to 180°C / Gas 4.

■ Bring a pan of water to simmering point. Put the chocolate, sugar and butter in a glass bowl and place it over, but not touching the water. Let the ingredients melt together, stirring them only occasionally.

■ Remove the bowl from the heat and stir in the almonds, then the egg yolks. Whisk the egg whites in a separate clean bowl until they form stiff peaks, then, using a metal spoon, fold them into the chocolate mixture.

■ Spoon a tablespoon of the mixture into each mould and place a truffle on top. Spoon the rest of the pudding mixture into the moulds, dividing it evenly between them. Place the moulds on a baking sheet and bake in the oven for 20 minutes until the tops of the puddings are slightly convex and feel firm to the touch.

■ Using a tea towel, take a mould and run a knife around the pudding to loosen it. Invert the mould on to a dessert place so that the pudding comes free. Release the rest of the puddings in the same way and serve with cream.



**Whats for Dinner?
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feast of foodie treats for mum

Hilary Scott has a few ideas on how to spoil mum on Mother's Day, March 26, from delicious cream teas, luxury overnight stays and fun classes to food and drink gifts – all bound to make her feel special

We love that the **Red House in Marsh Benham** does a Gentleman's Afternoon Tea, but don't worry, it also does a traditional one. Both are £15. The Traditional is a pot of tea with sandwiches, scones with clotted cream and homemade strawberry jam and a slice of that day's cake. The Gentleman's is a pot of tea with mini Scotch eggs, sandwiches, homemade sausage rolls, scones, clotted cream and strawberry jam. But for just £7.95 you can have a simple cream tea with tea, scones, jam and cream. And you can add a glass of Prosecco any of the teas for £7.50.

The Red House is a traditional thatched pub with a refurbished restaurant overlooking marshland. It also has a lunch/dinner menu, with daily specials. The Red House, Milkhouse Rd, Marsh Benham, Newbury RG20 8LY. (01635) 582017. www.theredhousepub.com.

The **Watermark Restaurant** at the **Regency Park Hotel, Thatcham**, serves a real selection of treats. There's scones, cream and jam with tea for £6.95, a full afternoon tea for £14.95 and a champagne tea for £19.95.

You can also choose from its extensive sandwich menu, which includes chicken and tarragon mayonnaise, or smoked salmon with herb crème fraiche, all around £7, and add a pot of tea and then a cake from the cake menu which can include carrot, chocolate or banana. Set between Newbury and Thatcham, the Regency's teas are available from 2pm-5pm every day. There's a spa too if you really want to push the boat out for mum. Regency Park Hotel, Bowling Green Rd, Thatcham RG18 3BY. (01635) 871555. www.regencyparkhotel.co.uk.



On Mother's Day itself **The Vineyard** is hosting a special Mother's Day lunch. You can bet the three-course meal with a glass of Champagne as an aperitif will be delicious and mum will also receive a special gift to takeaway. The lunch is 12pm to 2pm and is £65 per person and £35 for children under 12. For £284 you could treat Mum to a stay at The Vineyard – one night in a luxurious room, a seven-course dinner, with two matching wines per course, a full English breakfast and full use of the "5 Bubbles" spa. The Vineyard, Stockcross, Newbury RG20 8JU. (01635) 528770.

Classes and chefs...

If your mum would like to learn how to make bread, Lucie Steel runs a run a micro bakery business just outside Hermitage. It's unique in that her bakery is in a shipping container in her garden. Says Lucie: "I bake commercially three days a week, teach baking classes one to two days a week and sell at several community markets.

"Vouchers can be bought for any bread class and, as well as the standard classes, I offer bespoke ones for groups of four people. I have already taught two bespoke classes this year, which were special birthday gifts for mums and the children and husband came too.

"My classes start in my cottage with tea/coffee and toast on arrival, then into the bakery to make bread all morning, then a two-course lunch after which students go home with a bag full of their freshly-baked loaves."

See www.breadangels.com to buy vouchers or contact Lucie on birchcottagebread@yahoo.com or on 07766 203335.



Forget Eat Live Pray – maybe Mum would like to talk, eat, laugh.

In fact, **Talk Eat Laugh** is the name of a private chef company run by Rachel Muse, who has a team of talented chefs at her disposal – and she says having a chef for a dinner party is way cheaper than a catering company.

“We do all the work, from the shopping to cooking the food,” says Rachel whose company is based in Salisbury, but covers the Newbury area. “We can do any events, from a buffet lunch for a lot of people, to a small dinner party for four. The chef can be around £120 plus the food so you see how cheap it can be.” Menus are bespoke after consulting with you, says Rachel, and the company specialises in healthy food.

For more details call 7442 250 888 or look at www.talkeatlaugh.com.



Another private chef company is **Red Hot Chefs**, based near Newbury Racecourse. James Hawksworth specialises in race day picnic packages and his exquisitely-presented food is stunning to look at as well as eat.

Delicate canapes include stuffed baby tomatoes or a terrine on top of rye bread with a soft quail's egg yolk. Try his smoked salmon mousse topped with lime jelly or a delicate watermelon, feta and olive salad. Desserts include a rich chocolate mousse with raspberries. For more information contact James on james@redhotchefs.co.uk



The buzzword for 2017 is veganism – everyone who's not turning vegan is eating vegan food. If your mum is interested perhaps treat her to a vegan festival.

The number of vegan food festivals across the UK will double in 2017. With vegan food sales up 1,500 per cent year on year (*London Economist*) **VegfestUK** have launch their online guide to vegan festivals.

In March, get down to Brighton on the 11th or Oxford on the 25th for the Vegan Festival. On June 24, a larger one for the South East will be held in Portsmouth. See www.vegfest.co.uk/vegan-festivals-guide-2017

Foodie gifts for mum...

M&S are a favourite for gifts on Mother's Day – we know we would like the cute box of **Rose & Violet Creams**, dark chocolates with rose and violet flavoured fondant centre, £4.

And the **Autograph Lilac Days bouquet** with a stunning mix of roses, stocks, lisianthus and thistle, £25 is a treat to go with the chocs. Or pick up a **cheesecake** from M&S – from chocolate to lemon, they are all delicious (prices vary).

Still on sweet treats, **Niederegger** has been called the world's leading marzipan brand – and you can find boxes of a raspberry pannacotta marzipan wrapped sweet from John Lewis at £4.50 a box.

If your **mum likes to bake** how about these delightful ceramic farmhouse-style letters? (see opposite page) They're free-standing, 11.5cm high, and 6.5-7.5cm wide. They're £12.99 and can be ordered through www.hettyandbetty.com.



Or get her one of the lovely retro aprons in blue or yellow at £20 from a website that champions British products and gifts www.victoriaeggs.com.

Keen cooks will adore a home-made curing kit for **salmon** from Ross&Ross, £21. It comes in a little brown box and contains all you need to make smoky, beetroot and gin cured fish. You just add the salmon and each cure takes around three days so you don't need to wait long to taste. The kit is currently a finalist product in the Gift of the Year awards.

Visit www.rossandrossfood.co.uk to order.

They say it's Mother's Ruin but how can it be when it's had a huge upsurge in sales recently?

So, if you want to buy mum a bottle of gin, what to choose?

One of our favourites is **Bloom Gin** – as well as a gorgeous floral bouquet it's distilled by one of the world's few female Master Distillers, Joanne Moore, who chose the flowers of chamomile and honeysuckle, with the citrus fruit pomelo to make up the three main botanicals for Bloom.

Available from Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Asda, Ocado and Morrisons at around £24 for 70cl, its bottle is so pretty mum will have a hard time breaking into it we reckon. **OA**



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Discovering your own Narnia

Author Charlotte Betts is a member of the Romantic Novelists' Association, The Society of Authors and The Historical Novel Society. She has amassed numerous awards in the six years she has been published – *The Apothecary's Daughter* won the YouWriteOn Adult Book of the Year Award 2010, the Romantic Novelists' Association's Joan Hessayon Award 2011 and the RoNA's Historical Category award for 2013.

The sequel, *The Painter's Apprentice*, was published in 2012 and shortlisted for the Festival of Romance's Best Historical Read Award in 2012.

The Spice Merchant's Wife was published in 2013 and won the Festival of Romance's Best Historical Read Award in 2013 and was shortlisted for the Romantic Novelists' Association's Historical Romantic Novel RoNA award in 2015.

Charlotte's next book *The Dressmaker's Secret* will be published in 2017.

Charlotte talks to Danielle Auld about her journey to writing fame and how she hopes to help inspire others with creative writing workshops. ►



They say writing is 10 per cent inspiration and 90 per cent perspiration, so who better to ask whether this is true than Newbury-based Charlotte Betts, multi-award-winning author of *The House at Quill Court*.

I met with Charlotte at her home just outside Newbury. As I pulled into the driveway, it wasn't hard to see how her imagination is sparked by her surroundings. She lives in a pretty chocolate-box cottage on the outskirts of Newbury, amid woodland and countryside that stretches as far as the eye can see.

It's not just the home she has created for herself and her family that looks as if it has been plucked from the pages of a fairytale, but also her story of how she went from a writing hobbyist to an award-winning author with books published in nine languages

and sold worldwide.

In just six short years, Charlotte's ability to transport readers back in time through her historical novels which, according to one reviewer, would "make an epic television drama", with their trademark strong female leads, has secured her a publisher, landed her the 2010 YouWriteOn Adult Book of the Year Award and the 2011 Romantic Novelists' Association's (RoNA's) Joan Hessayon Award.

Charlotte also won the RoNA's Historical Category award for 2013 and has been shortlisted for the Festival of Romance's Best Historical Read in 2012. As if this isn't enough, Charlotte went on to win the Festival of Romance's Best Historical Read Award with her novel *The Spice Merchant's Wife*.

So, given this impressive catalogue of achievements, how much of it was due to inspiration and is the writing life as idealistic as it may seem?

Over the last six years you have gone from being an unknown writer to an award-winning, represented author. Has it been an easy journey?

No, it definitely wasn't easy. It took me seven novels and 11 years before I found an agent who helped me to secure a publishing contract.

It was those six novels, however, that enabled me to find my style and to learn a great deal about how I can gain the most out of my writing – getting into the right headspace to write, finding the right environment and overcoming the hurdles that all writers face.

And of course, learning to balance the demands of life with writing day in and day out.

Is writing something you've always wanted to do?

Not at all. I've always liked making things, painting and sewing. I had my own interior design business, but when I stopped doing that, I craved an alternative creative outlet. So now I paint with words.

At first it was just a hobby, something I enjoyed doing for myself. But the more I wrote, the more I felt I wanted to get my work published. If nothing else, it would be justification to my family and friends as to why I spent hours sitting in a corner scribbling instead of getting the dinner on.

You mentioned about finding the right writing environment. Can you just sit in a corner and write or do you have a special place for writing?

I find the right environment really helps when it comes to creative writing.




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Not feeling pressured or rushed is essential. I like to have a calm desk and to be able to see outside.

Despite that preference, many years of squeezing writing into any available moment means that I can now write pretty much anywhere.

When I travel by train I just get the notebook out and pop back to the 18th century.

Walking and generally being at one with nature also helps me to get my head into the right place for writing. I'm fortunate that where I live is perfect for that, as I really am surrounded by nature.

I have a peaceful den at home where I can slip away to write. My desk looks out over my garden and the countryside beyond so, if I'm ever lacking inspiration, I can just gaze out of the window.

As a girl, I was captivated by CS Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* and spent half my life looking for this magical land in wardrobes and woodland. I feel as though I've finally found it.

Do you remember getting that all-important publishing contract?

Definitely, that's something I won't ever forget. I remember feeling the swell of excitement when I first got the email.

I'd uploaded my work on a peer critique website. My (then) agent saw my work, signed me up and found me a publisher.

It only really felt real when I shared the news with my writing group, Word Watchers. We're a close group and they were all very excited for me. We celebrated with a big bottle (or two) of bubbly.

It took me 11 years to find a publisher. These days though, I know more about the industry and, looking back, would have done things differently.

If I had got out and networked and attended publishing industry events and conferences I think I would have found an agent much faster.

Your work has been described as "outstanding in historical content fact and fiction". What was it that made you decide to write historical fiction?

I wrote a novel about the Second World War. It was set during my parents' time, therefore I didn't really regard it as historical, but I had to research to fill in the gaps in my own knowledge. I enjoyed the research side so much that I decided to try my hand at historical fiction.

I considered writing in the Regency or Georgian eras, but so many writers were

already doing this, I decided against it – although I have now written books set in these times. I studied Henry VIII to death at school so the Tudors were out too.

Then, one day, my father gave me a copy of Pepys' Diaries. I was so entranced with the level of detail that I fell in love with the era and decided that this would be a good starting point for my next novel *The Apothecary's Daughter*.

What books do you like to lose yourself in when you are not writing?

My all-time favourite is Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca*.

I'm virtually never not writing, but when I do read it is usually something that in some way contributes to the research for my next book.

However, I do like to get my teeth into a good mystery or a psychological thriller. I also read historical novels to see what other authors are doing.

Right now I'm reading Amitav Ghosh's, *The Glass Palace* as research for the novel I'm working on, *The Palace of Lost Dreams*. The story is set in Hyderabad, India, just after the fall of the Mughal Empire and at the creation of the Raj.

It's a really fascinating time because there was a lot of upheaval. ►



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Newbury Weekly News



Newbury Weekly News – Still making history is an account of this truly local newspaper, ownership of which remains within the founding family since its first edition in 1867. It features some of the people who have contributed to the publication's longevity, and those who have worked to reinforce its place within the community it serves. Proud to be local, nevertheless at times its reach has also been both national and international. The history of the *Newbury Weekly News*, its growth and survival over 15 decades, is a remarkable tale of change and consistency.



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*I craved an alternative creative outlet.
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The French were trying to take over the world and Napoleon had set his sights on India, too. It was also at a point when racial discrimination in India was beginning to intensify. Until then it was perfectly acceptable for Englishmen to have Indian wives, but children of Anglo-Indian marriages were no longer allowed to join the East India Company's army, instead having to join the Indian regiments.

Is there one piece of advice that you would give to aspiring writers reading this today?

Write every day.

The more you write, the better you'll get. There are lots of things you can learn when it comes to writing that will help you, but it's practicing these and implementing them into your work that is key for writers developing their skills and style.

So can you learn to write?

I do believe you can learn to be a competent writer, yes. It's hard work, but I also believe you'll never be a brilliant writer unless you are obsessive and passionate about it because writing demands so much of you.

There are times when I hit a wall and I sit at my desk and have to force myself to keep on writing, because if I didn't, I'd just give up. Just getting words down on paper is the main thing because then you can go back and edit it.

You have to keep going because writing is 10 per cent inspiration and 90 per cent perspiration. You just have to do it because that 10 per cent is pure gold.

The sad thing is there are so many people out there with wonderful ideas and a real passion for making it happen, but it's so easy to get lost along the way and give up on your dreams. Getting a book written isn't easy and getting representation is even harder.

As I said earlier, it took me seven novels and 11 years before I found a publisher. I feel that with the knowledge I now have, it needn't have taken so long or been so difficult.

That's why I have decided to share my knowledge with other budding writers in the Creative Writing Escapes that I will be hosting at my home.

One-day workshops are available that provide structured writing advice to aspiring novelists; those who maybe have hit a wall and need help to climb it, those who want to start writing, but don't know where to start, or maybe those who want to improve their writing skills and progress a novel already begun.

Writers can get advice on how to decide what to write and where to start researching, right down to building yourself a profile online and canvassing publishers.

I'll provide guests with the perfect ingredients to help them get in touch with their creativity, a hearty, homemade lunch, and freshly baked cakes, endless cups of tea and an escape from the pressures of your daily life.

The workshops are designed to give writers the freedom and flexibility to be able to focus on improving their writing and find their own writing place. Their own Narnia.



Creative Writing Escapes offers writers and budding writers the opportunity to indulge their creativity and focus on their goals.

A combination of perfect homemade food, delectable cakes and an endless supply of tea, with structured writing support from successful writers and authors, they help writers to stop making excuses, get their stories down on paper and bring their dreams to life.

The escapes provide day and half-day writing workshops at Charlotte's home near Newbury and weekend country house writing retreats for true escapism.

Creative Writing Escapes combines the skills of award-winning author Charlotte Betts and those of commercial writer Danielle Auld, director at Complete Copywriting, to give authors advice on the holistic process of writing, from starting that story to promoting your work and building your network.

www.CreativeWritingEscapes.co.uk 

1813. Venetia Lovell lives by the sea in Kent with her pretty, frivolous mother and idle younger brother. Venetia's father, Theo, is an interior decorator to the rich and frequently travels away from home, leaving his sensible and artistic daughter to look after the family. Venetia designs paper hangings and she and her father often daydream about having an imaginary shop where they would display the highest quality furniture, fabrics and art to his clients.

When a handsome but antagonistic stranger, Jack Chamberlaine, arrives at the Lovell's cottage just before Christmas, bringing terrible news, Venetia's world is turned upside-down and the family have no option but to move to London, to the House in Quill Court, and begin a new life. Here, Venetia's courage and creativity are tested to breaking point, and she discovers a love far greater than she could have ever imagined . . .

Two years ago I reviewed *The Spice Merchant's Wife* by Charlotte Betts, for *Out&About* and remarked the author had "clearly established a niche for herself, combining history with a dash of adventure".

She has further honed her craft and *The House in Quill Court* continues in the same vein. Set in the early 1800s, the story focuses on Venetia Lovell, a capable and feisty heroine, who is faced with the challenge of making the best of bad situation.

She also has an artistic talent for interior design, but is born in an age when a woman's place is in the home and so her strength of character is sorely tested.

The book is littered with colourful characters from Venetia's feckless, but kind-hearted mother, to her chancer of a brother, the faithful servant, the unfathomable brooding

stranger and both kindly and dastardly souls.

What Betts manages to do so cleverly is to combine an easy read, with only one possible outcome, with historical detail, which enlightens the reader as to customs and practices of the time.

The author clearly carries out thorough research and this shows in the richness of the pictures she paints through her words.

The House in Quill Court is a satisfying and engaging book, perfect for these spring evenings, when the weather is just turning, but you need a good book to hunker down and lose yourself in.

Geraldine Gardner



Cash in *your* attic

Spring is a time of dusting off the cobwebs, when many of us decide to get organised. We stop putting off the jobs we have been meaning to do and attempt to inject some order into our lives. Thomas Plant says a great place to start is the attic, where you might discover some unexpected treasures

Many of us can't remember what we have got in our attics – me included. We try to declutter the house and the space in the roof is a great place to hide things away.

As a result, the attic is often a treasure trove full of family heirlooms, precious and interesting items that we have forgotten about.

Maybe grandma told you a story about an item you have kept up there, maybe there's something of value that you had no idea about...you never know.

So, before you throw out worn-out books or dusty toys, it may be worth considering getting them valued – you could be sitting on a fortune.

Here are some examples of the type of things you may have hidden away and what to look for when you find them:

VINYL RECORDS

Any records from iconic singers or groups such as David Bowie or the Sex Pistols will always be sought after at auction.

Prices can start from £50 for one with a sleeve in good condition. Look for the condition it's in as well as the popularity of the artist.

CHILDREN'S TOYS

Tinplate toys, boxed Dinky and Corgi vehicles, Steiff, Dean's or Schuco teddy bears and trains are also very popular at auction.

Lots can go from £40 and into the thousands depending on their rarity and condition.

Look for the trademark Steiff button on teddy bears and soft toys and other markings as well as the good condition of the toy and if it has its original packaging.

CAMERAS

Cameras do not spring to mind when thinking about items at auction, but they are hugely popular – not only the cameras themselves, but also the lenses.

Look for top makes including Nikon, Leica and Hasselblad. Cameras with mahogany cases are also worth further investigation.

JEWELLERY

All diamond jewellery will sell well. Also the vintage and more unusual examples from rings, necklaces, brooches to bracelets. Again, pieces can fetch upwards of £50 each.

Have a good look through your jewellery boxes and drawers. Try and look for hallmarks and the clarity of the stones to get an indication of quality and year of make.



And here are some of the more unusual and interesting items you may find – don't write them off without further inspection...

Watches (especially men's), silver, binoculars, postcards, vintage clothing, Army uniforms, medals and badges.

Even if you don't find anything of huge monetary value, you could find something of sentimental value... you could even have that clear out and create some of the much-needed space you have been wanting for so long. OA





It is worth bearing in mind that what you think may be uninteresting, could be something that collectors really would find interesting.

For example, a client came in to one of our valuation days and brought along a whole box of what they thought was just costume jewellery and bits and pieces.

At the bottom of the box was this interesting miniature painting of an eye, right. It was, in fact, more than 200 years old. There are many collectors of mourning and sentimental items and this piece sold for more than £1,300 on its own.



“

You could be sitting on a fortune

”



Thomas Plant discovered his love for auctioneering at a young age, living on the family farm. Watching the man with the gavel at local cattle auctions was a regular event, and Thomas quickly decided on which side of the rostrum he'd rather be.

He went on to take a degree in antiques and served his apprenticeship with leading auction houses, including Christie's in London.

Today, Thomas is the co-owner of Special Auction Services in Newbury and is also a favourite TV expert on BBC programmes, including *Bargain Hunt*, *Flog it!* and *Antiques Road Trip*.

If you've any jewellery, antiques and collectables you'd like valued for auction, don't forget we hold free valuation days every Wednesday at:

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Free as a bird

***H is for Hawk*, a memoir on grief and goshawks by Helen Macdonald, offers a rare insight into training a bird of prey and the unleashing of raw human emotion, say Lissa Gibbins and Helen Sheehan**

*As a child, Helen Macdonald was determined to become a falconer, learning the arcane terminology and reading all the classic books. Years later, when her father died and she was struck deeply by grief, she became obsessed with the idea of training her own goshawk. She bought Mabel for £800 on a Scottish quayside and took her home to Cambridge, ready to embark on the long, strange business of trying to train this wildest of animals. *H is for Hawk* is an unflinchingly honest account of Macdonald's struggle with grief during the difficult process of the hawk's taming and her own untaming. This is a book about memory, nature and nation, and how it might be possible to reconcile death with life and love.*



Approaching her 40s with a growing sense of unease, without children, partner, job or home, Helen Macdonald finds herself suddenly and acutely bereaved following the death of her beloved father.

Bereft and unable to cope with life at all, she reaches out for something to help her forget the grief that is eating away at her and fill her with a revived passion.

Helen goes about procuring then training the most magnificent and fearsome of all short-winged hawks, a goshawk.

Helen Macdonald's father was instrumental in the development of her passion for birds in childhood, so this wasn't a new world.

Training a goshawk, however, was something she had never attempted. They are birds that are famously, she writes, "murderous, difficult to tame, sulky, fractious and foreign". In the world of falconry, goshawks have a terrible reputation.

Perhaps that is what draws her to possessing and training one. The rawness of its being, the power and strength with which it hunts and the instinct-driven world in which she can lose herself while coming to understand this beautiful, bird.

The susceptibility to emotional turmoil and heightened state of alert after sudden and unexpected bereavement comes across in the author's, at times onomatopoeic, description of her first meeting with the bird. "A sudden thump of feathered shoulders...Scratching talons, another thump. And another. Thump..."

As the reader you can hear her heart pounding as she describes the thumps, feel the feral instincts of the goshawk matching the tides of raw, grief-stricken emotion of the author. They are synergised.

Then she sees her... "Two enormous eyes. My heart jumps sideways. She is a conjuring trick. A reptile. A fallen angel. A griffon...Something bright and distant...". She is awestruck and love-struck in the same instant. And there begins her journey with the hawk.

Mabel, for that is what she calls her ("from amabilis, meaning lovable or dear"), holes up with Helen in her curtain-drawn house to start the process of familiarisation and feeding.

Helen's experience of falconry means she is confident and knows what to do. It is slow and intense.

The first time she removes the hood, "The goshawk (stares) at me in mortal terror, and I can feel the silences between both our heartbeats coincide... It feels like I am holding a flaming torch."

Her first task is to get the bird to eat. "You want the hawk to eat the food you hold, it's the first step in reclaiming her that will end in you becoming hunting partners... You must become invisible... You empty your mind... think of exactly nothing at all... you make the food the only thing in the room apart from the hawk."

Slowly, as Mabel begins to eat, Helen begins to make herself visible; cautiously she becomes herself in the presence of her new hawk.

“
The hawk was everything
I wanted to be: solitary,
self-possessed, free from grief...
”

Alongside the training narrative runs a commentary about class and gender. Macdonald realised from an early age that she wasn't like other falconers. "I'd never met men like these. They wore tweed and offered me snuff."

She describes the divisions and privilege in British falconry – "It took me years to work out that that this glorification of falcons was partly down to who got to fly them. You can fly a goshawk almost anywhere because their hunting style is a quick dash from the first after prey at close range, but to fly falcons properly you need space: grouse moors, partridge manors, huge expanses of open farmland, things not easy to come by unless you're wealthy or well connected."

As Mabel and Macdonald become more confident with each other and they go into the countryside to fly rabbits, everything that she had hoped for in training a goshawk comes together. The prose soars as her mood lifts

and the delight that she feels is beautifully described through the flight and freedom of her captive bird. She is lost in the world of her hawk – "The hawk was everything I wanted to be: solitary, self-possessed, free from grief and numb to the hurts of human life."

Also woven into her narrative is a biographical account of her childhood literary hero, and fellow austringer (the name for someone who trains goshawks), Terence Hanbury White.

Macdonald read White's own strange account of his failed efforts to train a goshawk in the late 1930s using medieval methods.

Macdonald had read and re-read *The Goshawk* since she was a child and credits it with her lifelong passion for hawks and hawking.

White is someone with whom Macdonald feels an affinity.

Born in India to an alcoholic father and an emotionally distant mother who apparently detested each other, he was packed off to boarding school where mistreatment (probably including, Macdonald assumes, sexual abuse) leads to his fear of intimacy and, subsequently, a lack of close relationships prevailed throughout his life.

There is a kinship that Macdonald feels with White, the outsider, depressed and misunderstood, trying to train a goshawk. The release from pain and sadness with which they both throw themselves into the project are humbling and touching.

That is something that Macdonald does so brilliantly throughout this book. She touches you. Her language and descriptions of nature move something primal and instinctive within you. It is a memoir that leaves you wanting more, and inspires you to walk in the countryside and to try to catch a glimpse of the mighty goshawk. [OA](#)

Helen Sheehan and Lissa Gibbins are writers and owners of Aide Memoire, based in Great Bedwyn. Inspired by their passion for words, they write memoirs, edit novels and documents and proofread for a wide range of clients.

Email: lissa@aidememoire.biz / helen@aidememoire.biz

A Mother's Day Treat

Maintaining a balanced life seems so simple until you have to do it as a parent.

Juggling all the family's needs and commitments is a challenging task and just a few minutes to yourself feels impossible among the whirlwind of work and the demands of family life.

Any quiet moment is inevitably sabotaged by thoughts of what else needs to be done. Sometimes, however, we stop for a moment and imagine stepping off the treadmill and it is then that our thoughts turn to a holiday.

And there it is – the reward – the payoff for maintaining the balance. An escape to a place where someone else is in charge and you can relax and enjoy living in the moment with your family, immersed in activity and adventure or simply doing nothing much at all. Whether you want to feel sand between your toes on a tropical island, watch the sunrise over the Serengeti or hike the Inca Trail, the possibilities are endless.

For the ultimate escape on Mother's Day, the Amanzoe in Greece comes highly recommended. Sarah, Bailey Robinson's European sales specialist, visited last year as a treat from her daughters, and shares her experience.

Aman Resorts are renowned throughout the world for their exquisite service, meticulous design and the unparalleled beauty of their locations.

The classically inspired, hilltop acropolis of Amanzoe is no exception. Nestled among olive groves overlooking the Aegean Sea on the east coast of the Peloponnese, this flawless property is the epitome of tranquil simplicity and style, a peaceful retreat from which you can explore the coast, islands and ancient heritage of the region.

This was my first experience of an Aman resort and while I was expecting opulence, Amanzoe is in a different world.

With every imaginable luxury and extraordinary attention to detail, everything from the gardens and pavilions to the beach cabanas and villas exceeds expectation.

The whole resort is simply stunning, with soaring pillars and colonnades in marble and stone throughout.

However, it is as the sun sets over the Aegean Sea, when the golden light casts shadows across this contemporary acropolis, that it becomes magnificent.

Thoughtfully positioned to make the most of the views, the rooms each have a private pool, garden and terrace. They are

so spacious and inviting that if the four restaurants were not so enticing, you might never leave.



I have been fortunate enough to stay in many beautiful hotel rooms but none have taken my breath away like the Pool Pavilion at Amanzoe; pure luxury with his and her bathrooms, a sunken marble bath and walk-in shower with a sky view.

The private garden matches the room for size, with a pool, terrace and more incredible views.



Prices from £3,780 per person, 7 nights, B&B including international flights & transfers.

Starting the day with the sunrise yoga class was an absolute must for me. A 180° panoramic view of the Aegean Sea and the surrounding countryside, with olive groves and sprawling cypress trees, can be seen from the yoga pavilion.

I enjoyed a rejuvenating session under the calming influence of the yogi, and there is no better way to set you up for the feast that is an Aman breakfast.

Mid-morning we moved to the Beach Club, a 10 minute car transfer away, but if you are feeling energetic you can use the complimentary mountain bikes available in the resort.

Located on a private beach, the Beach Club is home to four swimming pools and overnight cabanas as well as a casual eatery and two-room spa. We enjoyed a delicious lunch of freshly-caught seafood, salad and mezze.

The highlight of the afternoon was an elegant departure on one of the resort's powerboats, an exhilarating ride to the beautiful island of Spetses for a swim in the clear water of a secluded bay, before an indulgent moment at a bar in the whitewashed streets of the island.

Many guests take the opportunity to dine on Spetses in the evening, which is easily reached by water taxi from Porto Heli.

Amanzoe is a rare combination of timeless beauty, exquisite attention to detail and a sense of tranquillity that is hard to find.

It has an undeniable wow factor and I dream of returning.



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Where quality, professionalism and value count

get your garden ready for **Spring**

Award-winning garden designer Kate Gould says steady maintenance of your garden need not be a chore and careful planning now will mean you can enjoy it all the more all the year round



to succumb to problems later in the year.

After that is completed, the next sunny day on which you can spare a couple of hours might be well spent cleaning the patio.

No matter how well thought out, any external hard landscaping will be subjected to all the elements Mother Nature can throw at it and there will be times when simply brushing and washing down your patio doesn't get it as clean as it could be.

There are a multitude of chemical and 'green' products on the market to clean stone and you should, of course, always read the label and try a test patch first regardless of which product you



Gardens, especially small ones, look the most pleasing when they are swept and tidy – unless the style of the garden is a relaxed and unstructured wild flower haven – but with the modern pace of life, time spent tidying your garden can be in short supply. Realistically there may be more pressing tasks to attend to and time for gardening may be at a premium.

If you find this is the case why not try this approach.

Choose a nice sunny spring day and put aside a couple of hours to tidy and sweep away the remnants of the winter garden debris.

Plants often look weather-beaten at this time of year, but as soon as the perennials are neatly cut down to the ground their appearance is improved almost in seconds.

After cutting back and mulching them now, there is very little to do throughout the rest of the summer.

If you can at this time, add in pea stakes or canes to support any plants that might need it – Campanula, Delphinium, Phlox are such cases – as it will prevent difficulty later on in the year when selecting points to push in supports among the foliage will be challenging.



purchase.

Some, such as Patio Magic, provide really good effects on sandstone and man-made paving. It is a product that can be diluted and watered on, there is no scrubbing or brushing and even if the effects are not perhaps immediate, the gentle cleaning effect keeps on working through the year.

The maintenance of your garden shouldn't be a chore, it should be something you enjoy and want to do if you want to actively garden your space rather than employ a maintenance gardener.

Whichever approach you take, the time spent in cleaning and tidying should always be make the time you spend in the garden after enjoying the fruits of your labours worthwhile. **OA**

Shrubs such as Hydrangea can be fairly quickly cut and tidied as can roses.

No garden is maintenance-free and, although perennials look like hard work, they are often much less maintenance than you think.

With the climate as it has been of late, one of the most important jobs to do when the weather improves is to feed the garden using a slow release granular organic fertilizer.

The rainfall throughout winter will have leached nutrients out of the soil and so feeding your plants will not only encourage strong growth, but flowers too and a well-tended and fed plant is one that is less likely

Kate Gould is an award winning garden designer with more than a decade's hands-on experience transforming gardens of all sizes and a regular exhibitor at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show where she has been awarded three gold medals. www.kategouldgardens.com





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April 2016 - We are pleased to announce we have recently joined only a small handful of Detailers outside the USA to become approved by the International Detailing Association having completed a set of Certification Exams so we can now proudly display this logo



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They recently restored the paintwork of a much-loved Mini. They removed the imperfections to correct the finish and applied a protective ceramic coating. To finish it off, a new set of wheels and tyres were fitted.

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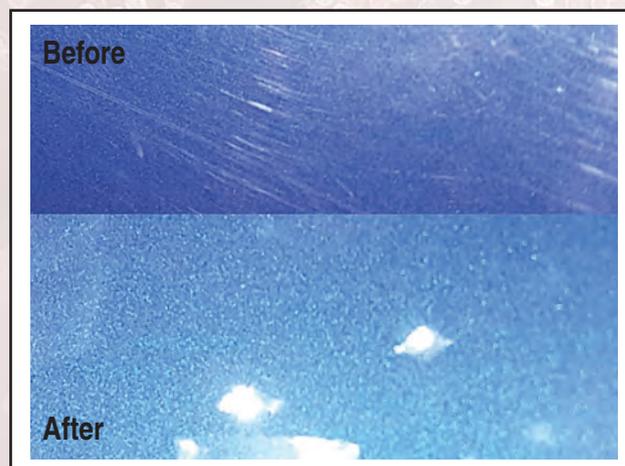
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What's on

Find out what's happening in West Berkshire and the surrounding area this month, with concerts, theatre, fetes, lectures, exhibitions and markets to choose from. You can find more detailed listings every Thursday in the *Newbury Weekly News* or online at www.newburytoday.co.uk

REMINDER

Neighbourhood Watch meeting

Monday, February 27

West Berkshire Council Offices, Newbury
7.30 pm

Talk by Graham Loxton-Best on *A Day in an English Court Room*. Representatives from the police and fire service will also be attending to give crime updates and to answer any questions.

There is parking close by and the evening charge is £2. Anyone is welcome to attend this meeting



Civil War

Saturday, March 11

Shaw House, Church Road
Newbury

11am – 4pm

Immerse yourself in history with a day in the 17th century. Discover what life was like for those who had to take up arms against their fellow countrymen.

Witness soldiers training to use swords, muskets and pikes and visit some of the tradesmen and civilians who accompanied the armies.

Plus living history demonstrations inside Shaw House.

Entry is free

www.westberkshireheritage.org/shaw-house

Picture David Muscroft/Shutterstock Inc



Soaring soprano

Thursday, March 2

An Evening with Lesley Garrett
Corn Exchange

Newbury
7.45pm

Join Britain's most popular soprano for a delightful evening of song, reminiscences and chat.

Lesley's behind-the-scenes stories and anecdotes will give audiences a unique insight into her life on the stage. She has performed on the opera and concert stage both in the UK and internationally, with artists as diverse as Michael Ball, Renee Fleming, Andrea Bocelli, Bryn Terfel and Lily Savage. She has also recently starred in *Carousel* and *The Sound of Music* and appeared on television shows including *Strictly Come Dancing* and *Loose Women*.

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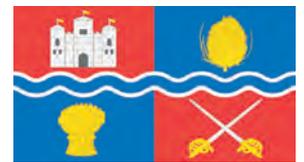
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March dates for your diary

Wednesday 1

Painting with watercolours.

Five-week course, £50. The Hurst Leisure Centre, 7pm-9pm. To book contact The Adult Learning Office. Telephone: 0118 9812918.

Thursday 2

Babajack, 8pm, Arlington Arts. Box office 01635 244246

To March 25, **Faust x2**. A version of Goethe's dramatic poem with music. The Watermill, Bagnor. watermill.org.uk
Box office 01635 46044

Carl Donnelly: Bad Man Tings, 8pm, New Greenham Arts. Box Office 0845 5218218

An Audience with Lesley Garrett, 7.45pm, Corn Exchange, Newbury. Box Office 0845 5218218

Friday 3

Unplugged. Open Mic night, 7.30pm-11pm, Ace Space, St Nicolas Road, Newbury.

www.acespace.org.uk/wordpress/events/unplugged-3-2017-03-03/

Saturday 4

Susan Calman : The Calman before the storm, 7.45pm, Corn Exchange, Newbury. Box office 0845 5218218.

First World War Poetry Reading, 11am-4pm, Sandham Memorial Chapel (usual entry to the chapel). 01635 278394. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sandham-memorial-chapel

Jewellery valuation day with Frances Jones, 10am-4pm, Hungerford Antiques Arcade

Peter Knight's Gigspanner, 7.30pm, Croft Hall, Hungerford. www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/peter-knights-gigspanner-tickets-30692494076

Monday 6

Newbury District Gardeners Association. Talk by Joy Craig – *Propagation and cultivation of fuchsias*, 7.15pm, St Nicolas School, Link Road, Newbury. Visitors welcome

Tuesday 7

Service led by David Bartholomew, 10am, Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere. 01635 278394. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sandham-memorial-chapel

Wednesday 8

Nineteenth-century Berkshire women:

talk by Lin Ricketts, offering an insight into the lives of the different classes of women in Berkshire during the 19th century, 7.30pm to 9.30pm at Shaw church hall. All welcome. Free parking. Entry is free, but donations are gratefully accepted. Berkshire Family History Society, Newbury Branch.

Meet Fred (theatre), 7.45pm, Corn Exchange, Newbury. Box office 0845 5218218. Age guide 14 plus

Thursday 9

Blazin' Fiddles, 7.45pm, Corn Exchange, Newbury. Box office 0845 5218218

The Misfit Analysis, 8pm, New Greenham Arts. Box office 0845 5218218

Friday 10

Astronomy Talk: A brief tour of our universe by Tony Hersh, 7.30pm, Stockcross Village Hall. £3 all welcome

Northern Soul Live, 7.45pm, Corn Exchange, Newbury. Box office 0845 5218218

Saturday 11

Celebrate St Patrick's Day with Hickory Smoke, Old Bluecoat School, 7.30pm-10pm. Bring your own beer. Tickets available from Picture It, 17, Thatcham High Street. £6.50 per person

Free Fairtrade refreshments, Aldworth Market, village hall, 9.30am to 12noon. Variety of Fairtrade groceries, fresh produce, flowers and foods, handcrafts etc. Child-friendly. Playground adjacent. Details: 01635 578090

To March 31, **Meryl Donoghue: It's a jungle out there**. New Greenham Arts gallery. The gallery is open Monday-Friday, 10am-5pm.

Renaissance to Romantic, Pangbourne Choral Society, a programme of sacred music, 7.30pm, Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel, Pangbourne College

Monday 13

Holy Box Chapel talk, 11am-1pm, Sandham Memorial Chapel. £6 plus admission. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sandham-memorial-chapel

Monthly meeting of the Newbury Embroiderers' Guild, 7.30pm, St Francis

de Sales Church Hall, off Warren Road, off Andover Road. Visitors are welcome £5. Talk by Angie Hughes *Creative Icebreaking* will show how to overcome the mental blocks you may experience before starting a new piece of work. She will inspire you with a range of useful ideas for getting started. Contact: 01635 862289, info@newburyembroiderers.org.uk, www.newbury-embroiderers.co.uk

Tuesday 14

Papercraft Workshops, 11am-12.30pm, Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere. £10. Booking essential 0344 2491895. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sandham-memorial-chapel

Jewellery making workshop, 2pm-4pm, Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere. £15. Booking essential 0344 2491895. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sandham-memorial-chapel

Newbury Floral Society, area demonstrator Annette Urquhart will be presenting *Ready to Roll*, Royal British Legion Hall, Newbury, 2pm. Guests welcome. Contact 01635 253874 for further information

And tomorrow, **Romeo and Juliet/Twelfth Night**, Corn Exchange, Newbury. Box office 0845 5218218

Wednesday 15

To March 18, and March 21-25, **New Era Players present The Kitchen Sink**, a comedy by Tom Wells, 8pm, New Era Theatre, Wash Common. Tickets £10. boxoffice@neweraplayers.org

Thursday 16

To Saturday, **Showtime Bohème**. Presented by Nomads, 8pm, New Greenham Arts. Box office 0845 5218218

Friday 17

To Sunday, **Babe the Sheep Pig**, Corn Exchange, Newbury. Times and prices vary. 0845 5218218

Saturday 18

Newbury Choral Society and Southern Sinfonia present Mendelssohn's *Elijah* at St Nicolas Church, Newbury, 7.30pm. Tickets £15 (£5 under 16s) available online at www.newburychoral.org.uk or from Corn Exchange (0845 5218218) ►

March dates for your diary

Arts editor Trish Lee picks four of the best of what's coming up on the arts scene in March. Reviews of all of these events – and for more arts news – see N2 in the *Newbury Weekly News* each week

Don't mess with the devil

Lust... sacrifice... regret... all hit The Watermill in a world premiere on March 2.

Faust x2 is a thrilling, atmospheric and moving reinvention of a timeless tale.

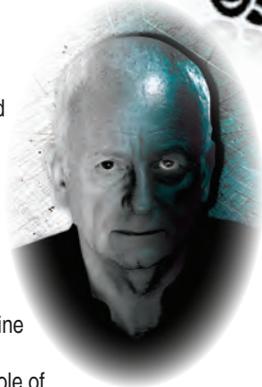
Inspired by Philip Wayne's translation of Goethe's dramatic poem, British screen and stage star Ian McDiarmid presents his own adaptation with humour and a sense of danger.

Famed for his role as Emperor Palpatine in *Star Wars*, the Tony and Olivier award-winning actor plays the titular role of Faust, a disillusioned academic who makes a deal with the devil, selling his soul for a chance of a different life.

Two young people – a teenage girl and a former student – both encourage and frustrate his newly awakened sensual desires and emotional needs. For Faust, to be young again is 'very heaven' – but only hell awaits.

Ideally suited to The Watermill's intimate space, the production includes music and features projection by acclaimed animation and video designer Zsolt Balogh. The production runs to March 25.

www.watermill.org.uk



A fair and thoroughly-modern Rosalind

Since winning the inaugural New Adventures Choreographer Award in 2011, Old Parkonian James Cousins has quickly made his mark on the dance world; recognised by *Time Out* magazine as one of the future faces of dance, with a string of high-profile international commissions already to his name and described by the great Matthew Bourne as 'one of the UK's most promising choreographic talents'.

Last summer, over a period of seven weeks in South Korea, he created a new dance piece – in collaboration with four dancers, three local to Seoul.

Four hundred years after Shakespeare wrote *As You Like It*, Cousins has taken inspiration from the headstrong and independent heroine Rosalind to develop a contemporary work.

On Wednesday, March 29 (7.45pm), following its UK premiere he returns with his company to the Corn Exchange to perform his modern dance that asks if women need to emulate masculinity to find equality; *Rosalind*.

www.cornexchangenew.com



Blast of the blues

If Chicago blues is your bag, catch Mud Morganfield, eldest son of undisputed king of the blues Muddy Waters, at Arlington Arts on Thursday, March 16 (8pm).



Only after Muddy Waters' death in 1983 did Mud consider a career in music and he soon made up for lost time, cutting his teeth in the southside Chicago clubs, where he fast became a popular draw on the circuit; mixing original songs and Muddy Waters classics into his live sets.

He possesses the same quality baritone voice and stage presence that made Muddy such an icon of the blues.

His 2014 album *For Pops: A Tribute to Muddy Waters* won a Blues Blast Award for Best Traditional Album. He's performed on *Later Live with Jools Holland* on the BBC and performed at some of the world's leading festivals, from the North Sea Jazz Festival and the Cambridge Folk Festival to the Chicago Blues Festival, taking blues music to almost every continent on the globe.

www.arlingtonarts.co.uk

The story of Modernism

A fabulous new exhibition, *Degas to Picasso – Creating Modernism in France*, has just opened at the Ashmolean, Oxford.

The rise of Modernism is a compelling story, played out in France from the early 19th century to the middle of the 20th, where international artists were drawn to Paris by salons and dealers, the creative exchange between poets and painters, and the bohemian atmosphere of places like Montparnasse and Montmartre.

The exhibition plots a course from the Romantics through Impressionists and Post-Impressionists to the groundbreaking experimentation of Picasso, Braque and Léger, but it shows there was no straight line leading from tradition to the shock of abstraction.

The story is more fascinating – as academic artists and members of the avant-garde exchanged ideas and rivalries developed between the different schools and powerful characters.

The exhibition, which runs to May, explores the artists who created Modernism and how they did it, through works by Manet, Pissarro, Cézanne, Degas and Picasso.

Visit www.ashmolean.org





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Saturday 18th March	Needle Felting Mouse or Teddy Bear (£40)	10.00-15.00
Saturday 1st April	Beginners Crochet (£25)	14.00-16.00
Saturday 6th May	Corner to Corner Crochet Shawls/Blankets (£35)	14.00-17.00
Saturday 13th May	Beginners Crochet (£25)	14.00-16.00
Saturday 3rd June	Intermediate Crochet (£35)	14.00-17.00
Sunday 30th July	Summer Open Day and Craft Fair - Book a Table Ring Sue for details	

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March dates for your diary

Lewis and Leigh, 8pm-10pm, ACE Space, St Nicholas Road, Newbury. www.acespace.org.uk

Quiz and Curry in aid of Save the Children, Mortimer Community Centre, The Street, Mortimer Common. Doors open 7.15pm for a 7.30pm start. Teams of six, £10 a ticket. Contact 07971241222

Sunday 19

Electronic organ concert, 3pm, spanning the decades, all played live on stage by David Harrild. William Penney Theatre, AWE Rec Society, Tadley. Interval, refreshments, raffle. £8 at the door. Sylvia 0118 9323971. SATNAV takes you to Main Gate – ask for theatre

Tuesday 19

Spring Equinox – inspiring local dance talent, 7pm Act 1, 8pm Act 2. Corn Exchange. Box office 0845 5218218

Wednesday 22

Andy Parsons – Peak Bullsh*t, 7.45pm, Corn Exchange. Box office 0845 5218218

Bob Fox, 8pm, New Greenham Arts. Box office 0845 5218218

Thursday 23

Live and Lyrical, 8pm, New Greenham Arts. Age guide 18 plus. Box office 0845 5218218

Friday 24

Champions of Magic, 7.45pm, Corn Exchange, Newbury. Box office 0845 5218218

Saturday 25

Big Girls Don't Cry, 7.45pm, Corn Exchange, Newbury. Box office 0845 5218218

Ian MacDonald presents Ethos

Comedy: an evening of stand-up comedy, 7.30pm-10pm, ACE Space, St Nicholas Road, Newbury. www.acespace.org.uk

South Berks Concert Band – Best of British, a musical trip around the UK Save the Children Kennet Branch, Kennet Valley Free Church, Calcot, 7.30pm. For tickets email southberksconcertband@yahoo.com

Study day, Sacred & Profane – the art and life of Stanley Spencer, 10am–4pm, Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere. £30. Booking essential 0344 2491895. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sandham-memorial-chapel

Cantemus Newbury Chamber Choir, Kintbury St Mary's Church, 7.30pm. Sacred and secular music, including Rachmaninov, 6 Choruses, Gorecki, Totus Tuus and Brahms, Leibeslieder Waltzes. Tickets £10 from The Corner Stores, Kintbury or on the door. In aid of Church and Cantemus Choir funds.

90th anniversary of dedication service with the Bishop of Basingstoke, 4.15pm, Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere.

Tuesday 29

Monoprint workshop with Robert Fitzmaurice, 11am- 4.30pm, Sandham Memorial Chapel, Burghclere. £50, booking essential 0344 2491895

West Berkshire & North Hampshire Primary Schools Cross Country Championships 2017, Newbury Showground, first race 1.30pm (please arrive early to avoid traffic congestion). Organised by Team Kennet Triathlon & Athletics Club

Wednesday 29

Dance: Rosalind, presented by James Cousins Company, 7.45pm, Corn Exchange, Newbury. Box office 0845 5218218

Thursday 30

Comedy: Bilal Zafar: Cakes, New Greenham Arts, 8pm

Friday 31

The Thing That Came From Over There!, 8pm, New Greenham Arts. Box office 0845 5218218

Deadline for listings for April issue:
Tuesday, March 14

Email: report@newburynews.co.uk
or tweet: @outnaboutberks

Village markets



Aldworth Community Market, every Saturday, 9.30am to noon. 01635 578090.

Basildon village market, 10am to 12.30pm. Last Saturday of the month. 01491 671515.

Beenham village market, 2pm to 3.30pm. Second Saturday of the month. 0118 971 4822

Bradfield market, Bradfield Village Hall, 10am to 11.30am on the second Saturday of the month. 0118 9744068

Bucklebury Artisan Food market, The Bladebone Inn, Chapel Row, first Saturday of the month, 10am to 12noon. Love food @BuckleburyAFM

Farmers' markets – Newbury, first and third Sunday of every month, 9am to 1pm; Hungerford, fourth Sunday, 9am to 1.30pm; Purley-on-Thames, second Sat, 9am to 1pm.

Hamstead Marshall market, second Saturday of every month, 10am to 1pm, 01488 658932/ 658168.

Hermitage farmers' market, second Sunday of every month, 10am to 1pm, 01635 201555.

Inkpen Food and Craft Market, Inkpen Village Hall, 3rd Sunday of every month, 10am - 12.30pm.

Silchester Market, Silchester Village Hall, first Saturday of the month, 10am to midday.

Spirals Craft market, raising money for The Brain Tumour Charity, dates and venues vary. See www.spiralscraftmarket.co.uk

Thatcham Community Market every Wednesday, United Reformed Church Hall, Church Lane, Thatcham 10am to 11.30am. 01635 872713.

Wolverton Village Hall, market first Saturday of every month, 9.30am to 11am. 01488 608594.

Woolhampton Village Market, first Saturday of the month, 10am to midday. 0118 971 3637.

Woolton Hill Village Market, last Saturday of every month, 10am to 1pm.

February competition winners:

Classic Car competition: Gary Bevan, Mortimer Common; May Riggs, Tadley; Garry Diggins, Thatcham; H Parker, Upper Basildon

General competition rules: The winner(s) will be the first entry(ies) drawn with the correct answer. In the event that a winner must be notified quickly and is unavailable on the daytime number provided,

another winner may have to be chosen. Newbury News Limited employees, and employees directly involved in the competition, and their families, are not eligible to enter. The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Responsibility not accepted for entries lost or torn in the post. Postal entries must be on the original form. There are no cash alternatives to the prize.

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The hutch with a view



The Hutch at the Discovery Centre, Thatcham is a fitting memorial to mother and daughter nature lovers Elizabeth and Ann Hutchings, as Wendy Tobitt from the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust discovered

The Hutchings family from the left: Sue Hutchings (Ann's sister-in-law), Ann Parker (Ann's wife), David Hutchings and Margaret Neville (Ann's brother and sister) and Richard Neville (Ann's brother-in-law).

When Elizabeth Morrison was growing up in the village of Thatcham in the 1930s she played outdoors with her friends, roaming freely through the country beside the River Kennet.

Elizabeth loved nature, and birds in particular; she could name most birds by sight, and knew their calls and songs too.

Years later Elizabeth took her own children Ann, David and Margaret to the same places and passed on her love of wildlife; encouraging them to look out for birds and listen for the different calls to identify which ones were singing.

When Elizabeth died in 2012, her children decided to create a legacy in their mother's name, so she would always be remembered in a place where she loved being close to nature and they chose the Nature Discovery Centre in Thatcham as the location.

Sadly, in 2014 Elizabeth's daughter Ann Hutchings died after a brave battle with cancer.

Discussions between the family and the Wildlife Trust, which runs the Nature Discovery Centre on behalf of West Berkshire Council, continued and this winter The Hutch was unveiled as the memorial to mother and daughter.

"Our family name is Hutchings and Ann was always known as Hutch, so we were very pleased when the lovely staff at the Nature Discovery Centre agreed to call the building The Hutch.

"It is a fitting and lasting legacy to our dear sister and mother," said Ann's sister, Margaret Neville, when she visited the Nature Discovery Centre recently.

Built from sustainably-sourced green oak timbers with larch walls and roof, The Hutch is already a favourite spot for Nature Tots and Young Rangers, two of the nature clubs run at the Nature Discovery Centre, as well as school groups.

"Ann was a popular school teacher, so the fact that The Hutch is being used for so many groups of young people to teach them about birds and nature is absolutely perfect," said Margaret.

Manager of the Nature Discovery Centre Liz Shearer helped Ann's sister and brother create The Hutch.

She says: "We were very happy to work with Margaret and David to create The Hutch as a lasting memorial to their mother Elizabeth and sister Ann."

This spring, take a moment to sit with your family inside The Hutch and enjoy the birdsong from nearby trees. You too could pass on a love of wildlife to the next generation, just as Elizabeth did. OA



Ann Hutchings

FURTHER INFORMATION:
www.bbowl.org.uk/whats-on

Picture: Becky O'Melia



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