

January 2017

West Berkshire, North Hampshire & East Wiltshire

OUT & ABOUT

A Newbury News Ltd publication

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Out&About

January 2017

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Jonathan Hopson

In a new monthly column, Jonathan Hopson looks at life from the other side of 50. It's never too late to try something new and for 2017, he's encouraging people to take up cycling.

Grab life by the handlebars and ride a bike! As the US president John F Kennedy noted, "Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride".

It's also good to know there's no such thing as elderly when you're on a bike.

Research from Cycling UK shows that during 2015, 40-49 year-olds on average each cycled 87 miles during the year, outstripping all other age groups.

The average cycle mileage in 2015 for all age groups was 53 miles.

As a recent addition to the world of MAMIL's (Middle-Aged Men in Lycra), my take on cycling is that it's extremely rewarding and a great way to improve general fitness.

It can also be a great way to raise money for charity.

For example, the annual London to Brighton bike ride takes place in June and covers around 54 miles.

Over 25,000 people took part in the 2016 event, helping to raise more than £2m for the British Heart Foundation.

It starts in Clapham Common, London, with start times staggered every 30 minutes from 6am to 10am.

The first riders home take about two and a half hours to complete the course, with the majority taking four to seven hours.

Keen riders will probably succeed in conquering the Ditchling Beacon, the famous mile-long hill with a maximum 16 per cent gradient, a few miles outside Brighton.

The view from the top of the Ditchling Beacon is well worth the pain of the ascent, and it's mostly downhill from the top of the Ditchling to the finish on Madeira Drive on Brighton seafront.

Maintaining sufficient forward-momentum to



Jonathan Hopson gets on his bike

ascend the Ditchling Beacon without walking at any point is a significant challenge – particularly as you've had to cycle around 45 miles beforehand – but conquering the Ditchling generates a feeling of great satisfaction.

I've taken part in the L2B ride three times in the last five years, finishing in around four hours.

Although it's physically quite challenging, the route takes in some scenic countryside and there's also the feel-good factor of knowing that you have participated in one of the UK's largest single fundraising events.

A helpful place to start for anyone to learn about cycling is the British Cycling website www.britishcycling.org.uk and a great place for anyone in the Newbury area looking for a regular organised road cycling ride is Banjo

Cycles in Hambridge Road, Newbury.

Most Saturday mornings, weather permitting, a group of around 15 to 20 men and women set out at 8am on a two-hour ride.

Led by an experienced Banjo rider, the group covers around 30 to 40 miles, averaging around 14 to 16mph.

I've been taking part in the Banjo Saturday

morning rides for the last nine months and they are a great way of exploring the countryside within a 20-mile radius of Newbury, as well as helping to improve one's general level of fitness.

Banjo also offer a comprehensive range of coffees, teas and home-made cakes to help replenish energy levels.

Whatever your age and fitness level, as five times winner of the Tour de France Eddy Merckx said: "Ride as much or as little, or as long or as short as you feel. But ride."

Ride as much or as little, or as long or as short as you feel. But ride.

Did you know...

- the first constructed bike was made almost entirely of wood
- the longest tandem bike was 67 foot long and had 35 seats
- the *Butterfly Bike* designed by artist Damien Hirst, was auctioned for \$500,000 at Sotheby's
- the largest rideable bicycle has a wheel diameter of 3.3m (10ft 9.92in) and was built by Didi Senft from Germany
- On a bicycle, you can travel three times faster than you can walk, for the same amount of energy. No other living thing can expend so little energy for so much self-powered travel





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Get up and go

Time to shift yourself from the couch and shake off the excess of turkey and Christmas pudding. Vicki Brown says it's easy to stay on track if you set sensible goals



As we take down the tinsel and enter the New Year thoughts often turn to a 'New You'.

We over indulge, celebrate and enjoy the festive period and as the New Year begins we look at starting afresh.

New habits for the New Year

Many new year resolutions are linked to a healthier, fitter or thinner you. People turn to exercise, diets and no alcohol for the month of January to start seeing the changes.

But only one in ten of us will achieve the goals that we set out to reach.

Failure is often linked to a lack of planning and organisation as to how to meet those goals. You need to think about how you are going to achieve the goal that you are striving for.

Think about what *you* want to achieve.

Don't get drawn in to what everyone else is doing but focus on what you want to achieve as this is more likely to keep you focused in the long term.

Goal setting

Set yourself a goal, then break it down into small and manageable steps.

Write this down so that you can follow it as you go.

Once you've decided what your aim is, you might need a bit of guidance. Get some professional help or look at online sites such as Couch to 5km, the guide to helping you achieve a goal without overwhelming you and preventing success.

Keep a diary

Make a note of what works, what isn't working, the good and the bad. Be prepared to make changes to your plan should you need to. If there is no flexibility the chances of falling off the wagon and finding it hard to get back on are more likely.

Make it a habit

The key is to introduce habits that you can withstand for the whole year, not just the first couple of weeks in January.

Rather than doing extreme and drastic diets as January begins, think about healthy eating habits that will barely even feel like a "diet".

Increase the amount of fruit and vegetables that you are eating, make sure you eat regularly and drink lots of water.

If you are going to limit anything in your diet, focus on limiting the processed foods that you consume, especially sugar.

Reducing alcohol is always going to be recommended if you want to become healthier and lose weight.

When you first start making changes it all may seem like a chore. If you aim to make it part of your lifestyle, even though you may find it hard to do at first (including eating well and exercise), you will start to feel better and that will help to keep you on track.

Then it becomes your hobby, with new challenges and new achievements.

Remember it is never too late to start making changes towards a healthy lifestyle. Whether you are a teenager or in your 80s you will feel

the benefit from getting moving and eating well.

Take the New Year opportunity and make this day one of a healthier you.

Not sure how to get started?

Would you like help to setting and achieving your health and fitness goals?

Take advantage of LiveFitNow's New Year special offer – 20 per cent off our Personal Training packages until January 31, 2017.

Mention Out&About January to apply this discount. With expert guidance and motivation you will increase your chances of reaching your goals. Especially if you are trying something new, knowledge will give you the confidence of knowing how to meet your goals.



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

Trainers at the ready

Race for Life



What better incentive to get fit in the new year, than to enter the annual Race for Life organised by Cancer Research UK.

The charity is calling on women of all shapes and sizes to show cancer who's boss by entering Race for Life 5k or 10k events at Newbury Showground.

Although many see January as the perfect opportunity to start a new chapter in terms of health and fitness, motivation can slip as the cold weather drags on.

That's where Race for Life comes in. The event takes place at 11am on Sunday, July 2, so women who enter now will be creating their own compelling goal to aim for later in the year, when the warmer weather makes staying on the sofa less tempting.

Cancer Research UK's Newbury event manager Michelle Leighton said: "Signing up



to take part in Race for Life is a great way for women to commit to get a little more active.

"Taking part is not about being fit or fast and participants can choose to walk, jog or run around the course. Planning to raise money for life-saving research could prove more of an incentive to get up and get moving than the usual new year's resolution to shift the

post-Christmas pounds."

Cancer Research UK's Race for Life, in partnership with Tesco, is an inspiring women-only series of 5k, 10k, Pretty Muddy and marathon events that raise millions of pounds every year to help beat cancer sooner by funding life-saving research.

Money raised through Race for Life allows Cancer Research UK's doctors, nurses and scientists to advance research which is helping to save the lives of men, women and children across the UK.

Michelle continued: "Race for Life is an amazing way to celebrate everyone we love who has survived cancer. It's also an emotional and moving way to pay tribute to those dear to us whose lives have been cut short by the disease.

To enter Race for Life today visit raceforlife.org or call 0300 123 0770.

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Beauty really is skin deep



Victoria Lee says there are lots of reasons why we should take care of our skin and simple care and attention can help you look, feel and be healthy.

The questions 'Why should I take care of my skin?' leaves all skin professionals speechless. Skin is the largest organ of your body. And by far, it is the least appreciated, which is baffling.

Much like an expensive car, your skin comes with all the bells and whistles to make your life easier.

It protects you from the elements, regulates temperature, and acts as a filter, to name just a few of its jobs.

But without regular care and maintenance, even the most luxurious car will wear out before its time and look older than its actual years.

Your skin is no different. If it isn't properly cleansed and exfoliated, it will build up bacteria, sweat, oil and dirt. When that happens, your skin becomes a magnet for microbes, yeast and other flora, which try to eat the debris.



Victoria Lee from Diverse Beauty
www.diversebeauty.co.uk

There are many existing technologies along with new innovative emerging treatments. It's tricky to know what the difference is so call Diverse Beauty on (01635) 728023 to book in for a free consultation and a free £15 voucher. We want you to understand your skin and get the best from it.

Say hello to blackheads, pustules, deep lines and wrinkles, and even skin cancer.

Healthy skin can fight the signs of aging easier, heal much faster, and stave off potential disease better than unhealthy skin. And, of course, it looks younger and healthier because it is!

You don't have to spend hours and hours on your skin to help it do its job better. Simply cleanse your skin with the cleanser that's right for your skin type, followed by a toner to restore the correct pH level, exfoliate once or twice a week, and moisturise your skin with the correct moisturiser for your skin type. By cleansing and toning, your moisturiser can concentrate on nourishing newer skin cells rather than trying to relieve dry and old crispy cells.

Add sunscreen to further protect it from the sun's damaging rays and protect your collagen that will keep you looking younger for longer.

But there's one more reason to care for your skin, and sometimes, that reason can be a hard one to hear:

You probably spend hours every week doing house work of sorts but, have you ever thought about who sees what you have achieved? Yet more people look at your skin day in and day out, so would it not make sense to clean and care for the things people see?

I know what my answer would be.

Microcurrent delivers tiny electrical impulses that mirror the body's own natural bio electrical field. In most cases, treatment is virtually sub-sensory, with just a slight electrical tingling sensation.

As an aesthetic treatment micro-current stimulation has been shown to have a number of other cosmetic benefits:

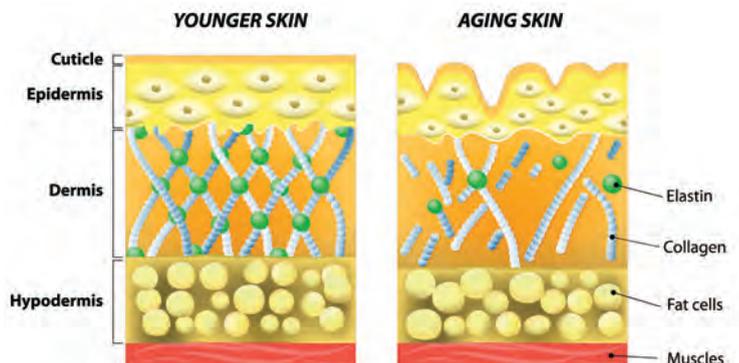
- Re-educates muscles
- Increases blood and lymph circulation
- Enhances the penetration of the active ingredients of skin care formulations
- Increases the production of collagen and elastin

Microdermabrasion: aids the removal of the dead skin cells and reveals the softer more youthful looking skin cells underneath. As we age, the automatic process of exfoliation and cell renewal slows down. Sometimes the body needs a little help.

The superficial abrasion of the skin also triggers the body's own natural repair mechanism which triggers the production of new collagen. This has a remarkable softening action on surface lines and wrinkles.

High frequency: treatments are used to stimulate, sanitize and heal the skin. This type of treatment is designed to provide high frequency currents that generate warmth in the skin and stimulate nerve endings, in turn increasing blood circulation, nourishing the skin and improving product penetration within the skin.

Galvanic: Current during a facial treatment works to improve blood flow and lymphatic drainage in the areas it is applied on. This helps the skin cleanse itself naturally. Moreover, if you're dealing with impurities, the ions used in this treatment neutralize them. The alternation between positively and negatively charged ions makes your muscles contract and expand rhythmically, which helps them keep their elasticity.



NEW YEAR STYLE YOU...



With only eight per cent of us thought to stick to our New Year's resolutions each year, leaving us feeling frustrated and disappointed, House of Colour stylist Kate Jones argues that there are many ways to bring change, motivation and positivity to our lives in 2017, including ensuring we have the right colours in our wardrobes and that clothes are chosen to reflect our inherent personality and fit our body shape.

The right colours

We know what we wear significantly affects our confidence.

We read about it in the media all the time and we have probably all judged others, especially those in the public eye, by what clothes they have on, so why are we still wearing the wrong colours?

It's really easy to gravitate towards colours which we've been wearing all our lives.

For example, many people resort to black as their go-to colour, because they've been sold the myth that black looks good on everyone – a myth, that isn't true.

Black is only flattering to people whose colouring is from the winter part of the colour wheel, which is blue-based and has cooler versions of colour. However, it can make people from other areas of the colour wheel look tired and dull.

Wearing the right colours affects our mood, thoughts and mental processes and we look and feel bright and energised.

So, if you are looking to start the new year with a bang, wear the colours that are right for the pigment in your skin and enjoy the compliments that inevitably will follow.

If you stick with your choice of 36 colours (all that look good on you), another wonderful thing occurs in your wardrobe and that is all your colours go together, so there is no need to keep 'sets' or specific items that 'match', because everything works with everything and most importantly with you.

The pyramid wardrobe

House of Colour recommends a pyramid structured approach to building a complete wardrobe with your everyday go-to clothes in your best neutrals as the base.

The pyramid idea comprises the building blocks of your wardrobe and there should be fewer items per level as you go up.

The bottom is the base and comprises essentials both in terms of the clothing, style and colour from your neutrals, denim, base shirts or blouses, winter coat and jackets or jumpers.



The middle level contains bolder patterns and textures that suit your style and colour palette.

These are what House of Colour will call your 'wow' colours – perhaps a smart mustard cardigan for autumns, or a deep burgundy for winters.

The top level are your statement items which people will notice immediately.

For men, these may be a bold scarf, a bright shirt or an on-trend jacket.

For women, this could be an amazing hat, a bold necklace or statement shoes or bag.

Whether you are thinking of your work wardrobe, dining out with friends or even taking the dog for a walk, why not always look the best you can in everything you own.

Eco-sustainability

'Eco-friendly', 'organic' and 'sustainability' are often used when referring to today's fashion industry but changes to the production processes and labour conditions abroad still have an enormous way to go, according to House of Colour.

One way we can help is to avoid buying poor quality, excessive items that we don't need and to have a more focussed wardrobe.

If you prune your wardrobe by removing all the things you never wear because they don't fit properly or are the wrong colour or style, then you will probably find that you have more outfit combinations from your existing wardrobe than you realised.

We help our clients build a wardrobe with maximum outfit choices from a select number of quality garments, which saves them money, stops mistake purchases, and is better for the planet.

When you know what suits you it's easy as your wardrobe becomes truly you over time, so its not just a new year's resolution you can stick to, but its an understanding that lasts a lifetime...

Kate Jones is a Star Consultant with House of Colour and works from her log cabin studio in Whitchurch, just outside Newbury. She has been a personal stylist for the past 12 years and over that time has helped thousands of women and men of all ages understand how to save money, have a wonderful confidence boost

and learn how with a great working wardrobe they can look and feel fabulous. She works with individuals, large corporate companies, small businesses, celebrities, colleges and charities.

To find out more visit:

www.houseofcolour.co.uk/katejones
kate.jones@houseofcolour.co.uk





Memories are made of this

Win a 30-minute engagement photoshoot and 7x5 print



Christmas Eve is said to be the most popular day of the year for a marriage proposal with Christmas Day and New Year's Eve close behind.

So if you're now newly-engaged and want to mark this wonderful occasion, award-winning photographer Annabel Farley has teamed up with *Out&About* to offer a professional engagement photoshoot in Newbury to capture this special moment.

She'll have a chat with you to get to grips with your theme and to ensure she captures your unique personality in the shots. That way you all get the most from the shoot.

Annabel Farley Photography was established in 2012 and since then, she has been much in demand as a wedding photographer, and has been featured in a range of magazines and blogs.

As well as weddings, she also offers other photographic services such as family portraits and business headshots. She has been recognised and awarded a "highly-commended" accolade by the Society of Wedding and Portrait Photographers.

Annabel said: "We specialise in fine art wedding and portrait photography, offering a classic, natural, romantic style. We're privileged



to capture the priceless memories of the milestones in people's lives.

She added: "An engagement shoot is a great way to get used to the camera in preparation for the big day and you'll receive a gallery of beautiful images to choose from."

The prize includes a 30 minute engagement shoot in Newbury plus a 7x5 print.

Find out more about Annabel Farley Photography www.annabelfarleyphotography.co.uk

To be in with a chance of winning a 30-minute engagement photoshoot and 7x5 print with Anabel Farley Photography, answer the following question on the coupon provided,

and send it to Annabel Farley Photography Competition, OUT&ABOUT, Newspaper House, Faraday Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 2DW. The closing date for entries is Tuesday, January 10, 2017.

For OUT&ABOUT competition rules, please turn to page 55.

Question: When was Annabel Farley Photography established?

**Annabel Farley
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Walking with WOLVES

If you want to try something new, then why not visit the Wolf Conservation Trust. Sarah Bosley met up with Tsa Palmer, who, along with her late husband Roger, set up the trust, which is not only home to 10 wolves, but also funds conservation projects worldwide and runs education sessions and open days at the trust's headquarters, in Beenham



When she was introduced to a three-month-old wolf cub on a first date, Tsa Palmer had no idea how intertwined her life would become with the animals.

The cub, named My Lady, was being hand-reared by Tsa's future husband, Roger Palmer, after he fell in love with the animals on a trip to Alaska in the 1970s.

From that first encounter has grown an international organisation – the UK Wolf Conservation Trust (UKWCT) – which is now ploughing hundreds of thousands of pounds into research and conservation projects across the globe.

"In the early days, a lot of people still thought that all wolves were vicious," explains Tsa. "But

Roger knew that the key was getting them young and bottle-feeding them. "You have a window of around two to three months where you can socialise them and they won't have picked up the fear of humans from their parents.

"Tame is not a word I would use to describe the wolves, because they are not tame animals, but they are wonderful."

The couple acquired more wolves to keep as pets in the early days of their marriage and they were used in a number of films and TV shows, including *An American Werewolf in London*.

"The wolves really enjoyed it," says Tsa. "They really surprised me how well they soaked up everything that was being asked of them. You never expect them to actually jump out of a well when they [the film crew] want them to, but they did."

In the summer of 1983 the family, including the wolves, all moved to Beenham and, with the "reasonable amount of money" that was paid for the wolves' starring roles, Tsa says they were able to build them a bigger and better enclosure.

"When we moved, we were looking for somewhere without close neighbours, so this



was a good location," she explains. "We had six acres and the wolves lived right by the house at first.

"My three children were brought up with the wolves. They were always in the house when they were being hand-raised."

Despite Tsa and Roger's family welcoming the wolves into their lives, some locals initially had misgivings. In the ensuing years, however, the family and the wolves have cemented themselves into the heart and soul of the village and the people who live there.

Beenham Primary School now proudly displays a wolf on its logo and Tsa says she doesn't think the howling bothers people too much.

The first time some locals were aware of the wolves was when they set off on a trek to uncover what was responsible for the bright lights in the surrounding countryside one night.

"The BBC were filming with the wolves at night behind our house and people, in Bradfield Southend in particular, saw the lights and thought it was UFOs," says Tsa.

"They came to see what it was and found the film set. That made people take a bit more notice and the village has now really taken to them."

More than a decade later and a conversation with Dr Erich Klinghammer, the founding director of Wolf Park in the US, planted a seed for Roger and Tsa to create something more with their pet wolves.

So, in 1995 the couple formed the UK Wolf Conservation Trust from their Beenham farm.

It is a not-for-profit organisation that relies heavily on its more than 70 volunteers and aims to enhance conservation, aid research and promote public awareness of wolves.

Sadly, Roger died 12 years ago but Tsa, along with her three children, an army of volunteers and her full-time wolf keeper, Mike Collins, has kept his vision alive and has so far ploughed around £300,000 into conservation projects around the world.

"It was just a hobby and it was going to stay that way," she adds. "But the interest in wolves has increased and the European countries have become a lot more joined-up in their conservation, so wolves are now more widespread than they used to be.

"The Wolf Trust is the shop window for raising money and giving it to conservation projects around the world."

The trust also runs education programmes for schools and supports research by offering work experience for university students, sponsoring a PhD student and funding the purchase of equipment, such as camera traps.

They have even hosted the wedding reception of two students who met during a work experience placement there.

There are currently 10 wolves at the trust, including three that were born there in 2011.

The Beenham Pack, as the siblings are known, were the second set of cubs to be born at UKWCT.

The first arrived in 1999 and were the first European wolves to be born in the UK since they became extinct in the mid-18th-century, after years of generous rewards being offered for the killing of these predatory animals.

It is with the Beenham Pack that visitors can now enjoy a walk with wolves.

"We couldn't do our walking with the wolves without our volunteers," says Tsa. "On a typical weekend walk we will have around 20 members of the public joining us. People can get very close and take a lot of photos.

"The wolves behave as they would normally, interacting with each other, pouncing if they

see a frog or rolling in a scent."

Other events hosted by the trust include photography days, wolf discovery days and children's activities.

The children's days allow youngsters to create an enrichment toy for the wolves. This involves hiding food inside a Christmas cracker for example and then placing it in the enclosure for the wolves to discover.

Around 10,000 people visit the trust each year, attending one of these specialist days or going along on a Wednesday, when the doors are now flung open to the public to come and see the wolves. On these days there are volunteers on hand to speak to visitors.

"I hope that visitors gain a lot of knowledge during these days," says Tsa, who admits that the 'very beautiful' Torak is her favourite wolf. "At zoos you don't get that personal insight that our volunteers can offer.

"What is unique here is that, because we only have wolves, we can spend time talking to people who will hopefully go away with knowing more about these animals."

Tsa and her wolves have come a long way from that first date when she met the three-month-old My Lady.

And, as if genetically engineered into them, her children also share her passion for animals, with one daughter now working at London Zoo. Two of her children visited Ethiopia last year, to see for themselves where the money the trust sends is being spent and she says that one of her daughters is aiming to visit all of the projects the UKWCT supports.

"I never thought it would end up like this,"

Tsa adds. "It gives me real enjoyment to see people's reactions. During the open Wednesdays it's lovely to see a child who is very taken with the wolves.

"Recently I met a family who had come from Holland and their whole summer holiday had been completely focused on coming here.

"I can take the wolves for granted, but I feel quite humble when people come so far and they seem very moved and happy to be here.

"I am very proud of it all."

in 1995 the couple formed the UK Wolf Conservation Trust from their Beenham farm



The conservation projects

One of the four main aims of the UK Wolf Conservation Trust is to raise money to help fund wolf-related conservation projects around the world. To date, nearly £300,000 has been donated by the Trust to a variety of projects around the world, from Kazakhstan and Ethiopia to Iran and the USA.

ETHIOPIA



Since 2007 the UKWCT has donated more than £49,000 to the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme (EWCP), which has been working for the conservation of Ethiopian wolves (*Canis simensis*) and the Afroalpine habitat for the past two decades.

The Ethiopian wolf, which is critically endangered, is found only in Ethiopia and its survival is closely linked to the persistence of healthy Afroalpine ecosystems. It is one of the world's most threatened species and is Africa's most endangered carnivore. It is found in seven isolated habitats in the Ethiopian highlands, above 3,500m.

EWCP is based out of the Bale Mountains National Park in south-eastern Ethiopia, from where seven wolf monitors work in the field following the wolves and collecting data on their behaviour, breeding success and health. The team also comprises more than 30 local people, including research assistants, education and outreach officers and veterinary officers.

NEPAL

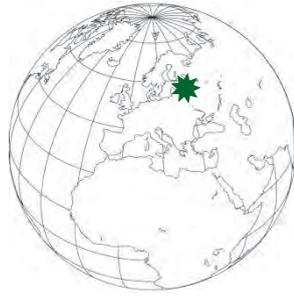


For the last five years the UKWCT has provided funding to the Friends of Nature in Kathmandu to aid its data collection on wolves in the area.

Little is known about the distribution of wolves in Nepal and there is no baseline information on their status, behaviour, population estimates and range.

It is hoped that the information collected will help assess the status of grey wolf in the proposed study area, identify and document the prevalent threats to the wolves and document the ethno-wolf relation in the area.

RUSSIA



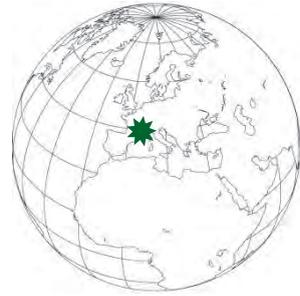
The UKWCT has been working with the Wolf Advocating Company since 2006, providing nearly £45,000 in funding in that time.

In some parts of Russia, a bounty is offered for every hunted wolf. What the hunter then does with that wolf is up to them, so Vladimir Bologov has made it his mission to try to rescue wolf pups, rear them and return them to the wild.

His work also includes research on wolf ecology, wolf control methods and aspects of the wolf/human conflict. The group works out of the Central Forest Nature Reserve and the Biological Station Chisty Les, which also now includes an education centre, built with the help of funds from the UKWCT.

An area of 12,000 hectares around the biological station now has protected status.

FRANCE



Donations from the UKWCT, amounting to £11,000 since 2014, are helping to support the French project, CanOvis.

It is studying the effectiveness of using livestock guardian dogs (LDGs) to deter wolves in an area in the south east of the country, including the mountains of Mercantour and the Canjeurs Plateau.

The project, which began three years ago, has already collected a great deal of data using GPS collars to track LGDs and sheep. It is hoped the research will improve the training of LGDs and increase their efficiency as sheep protectors.



Pictures: p13 Tsa and Roger Palmer with Quatro
Tsa and Roger with their children Zannah, Lara and Johnny, and wolves Kodiak and Kenai.
Left: Tsa today with Mai, picture: Phil Cannings

The UK Wolf Conservation Trust (UKWCT)

The wolves

There are currently 10 wolves at the UKWCT. In 2006 the trust took on three Canadian wolves, Mosi, Mai and Mika, who were all born at Dartmoor Wildlife Park and abandoned by their mother not long after they were born. They arrived in Beenham at just six days old, but sadly Mika died shortly afterwards.

Torak arrived a few days later from the Anglian Wolf Society and is related to some of the trust's earlier wolves through his father and to Mosi and Mai through his grandfather.

In 2010, as can happen in the wild, there was a dominance fight between sisters Mosi and Mai and they were split up. Torak and Mosi continue to live as a pair in one enclosure while Mai now lives with Motomo. He was brought to the trust that year to keep Mai company and the pair had a litter of cubs. Born on May, 2011, Nuka, Tala and Tundra have become the main ambassadors of the UKWCT, having been hand-reared there since birth. The Beenham Pack live together in another enclosure.

The fourth and final enclosure houses the Arctic Pack – Massak, Pukak and Sikko. The three wolves were born in captivity at Parc Safari, near Quebec, Canada, amid a fierce snowstorm and were virtually hypothermic when they were rescued. Their names are all reflective of the treacherous conditions they were born in. The trust gave them a home in May 2011, when they became the first Arctic wolves in the UK.

Get involved

There are a number of ways to get involved with the UK Wolf Conservation Trust.

You can become a Walking Member, a Junior Member or even Adopt a Wolf.

The trust is open to the public every Wednesday, from 11am until 4pm, with feeding time at 2pm. Tickets are available on the gate at a cost of £8 for adults and £5 for children up to the age of 12 years – under-3s are free.

Special events take place throughout the year, include the exciting Howl Nights. These take place one Friday each month

– but not on a full moon. Starting at 7pm, you will learn why wolves howl, as well as hearing them in spine-tingling action. Next year's Howl Nights are on January 13, February 10, March 24, April 7, May 12, June 2, September 8 and October 6. On Valentine's Day, February 14, 2017 – which coincides with the wolf breeding season – children will be given the opportunity to make heart-shaped treats for the wolves, before hiding them in the

enclosure (the wolves are taken out before any children are let in). They can then watch the wolves find and eat the treats.

Young enthusiasts will also enjoy the Easter Eggstravaganza, on Tuesday, April 11, 2017. This time the treats will be hidden inside colourful eggs.

Details on all of these events are available on the trust's website:

www.ukwct.org.uk



Pictures: top, Tala, Francesca MacIlroy; middle, Nuka and Mai, Mike Collins; bottom, Massak and Pukaka, Calum O'Flaherty





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Saturday 4th February	Beginners Crochet (£25)	14.00-16.00
Saturday 12th February	Needle Felting Penguin Beginners & Improvers (£40)	11.00-16.00
Saturday 18th February	Beginners Knitting (£25)	14.00-16.00

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It's a new dawn, it's a new day...

New year's resolutions can be such a cliché, but there is something about January that gets people thinking about their goals and ambitions and taking on a new challenge.

Out&About asked three experts in their field how to go about getting a new job, taking up volunteering and retraining for a new career





HR expert HILARY BACKWELL has more than 25 years' experience in HR. Having worked in a range of industries including eight years locally at Quantel (now SAM) before spending 12 years in the technology sector, Hilary established Time2Time HR to provide pragmatic advice to meet the individual HR needs of clients across the Thames Valley and western Home Counties.

After the excitement of the Christmas festivities, is your New Year resolution "to find a new job"?

If so, is this an impulse decision or are you driven by the desire for a new career or a new challenge? Do you really dislike your current job or is it just a case of the winter blues?

Better to ask yourself why you are looking for a change before you start trawling the job boards for that exciting new opportunity.

A clear understanding of your goals will make it easier for you to find the greener grass on the other side of the fence.

Take stock before you jump ship

Start by listing the advantages and disadvantages of staying or leaving as a way to focus your mind

- Will a move form part of your longer-term career goals by broadening your experience?

- What is it you don't like about where you are and why are things likely to be better elsewhere?

- If you like the company where you currently work, why not talk to them about your desire for change?

Research, research, research

Once your motives for changing jobs are clear, where do you start?

Looking for a new role is hard work, time-consuming and needs dedication and effort. You need to be clear about what type of role, company and location meets your needs.

Where is the best place to find this new role?

- Job boards such as Indeed, Totaljobs, Reed and Monster. Which one has the type of vacancy you are looking for? Do make sure you find the right one before loading your CV. Choosing the right site to post your CV to, is a good way for companies to find you.

- Networking. LinkedIn is a powerful tool. Make sure your LinkedIn profile is up-to-date (you might want to switch off alerts while you are making those changes). Highlight your

key skills and pop the most important ones at the top of the list. And please, always use a professional-looking photo.

- Recruitment agencies. Find out which ones specialise in the area that interests you. Once you find a good recruiter, nurture that relationship, the more they warm to you and know you the easier it will be for them to find you the right role.

- Contact companies directly – find a company that interests you and visit their website, check their current vacancies. If there is nothing suitable you can research the right name to contact and write or email them directly. Be very specific in how your skills can add value to their organisation.

'See me'

Whichever route you choose you need a CV that can stand out from the crowd; it needs to be concise, snappy and positive; ideally no more than two pages.

Remember, recruiters review hundreds of CVs so if they don't see something of interest immediately, they'll filter yours out.

- Personal statement – three or four lines, highlighting your experience and skills

- Career history in chronological order

- Talk about your achievements, don't just list your responsibilities

- Remember to include contact details

- Make it easy to read; consider the typeface, avoid quirky ones, keep some white area around the text

- Photos aren't necessary

- Check spelling and grammar – ask someone to review it

Where possible include a cover letter with your application – this is another opportunity to show that your skills and experience match those required.

You may need to apply for many roles; some companies do take time to respond to applications, others sadly may not respond

at all so don't get disheartened.

It's a good idea to keep a record of which company and role you have applied for and when, and record the outcome so you can keep on top of what is happening.

Preparation and planning prevent a poor performance

Once your hard work has paid off and you have been invited for an interview, whether face-to-face or on the phone, you must prepare yourself.

- Research the company (website, news, LinkedIn)

- Think about things you have done in your current or past roles which can provide real life examples of your skills.

- Prepare answers to likely questions you will be asked, eg why do you want this job

- Prepare your own questions, eg ask about their expansion plans or what makes it a great place to work

- If you are asked to do a 15-minute presentation, practise it and make sure you don't run over

And finally – be yourself

Don't rush to answer a question, it is acceptable to take a minute to reflect.

If you are offered and accept a drink, try not to spill it – although it can make for a memorable interview.

Be professional – shake hands.

Do follow up after the interview with an email thanking the company for their time.

Businesses planning next year's recruitment, contact Hilary for advice and good luck with fulfilling your new year, new job resolution.

Hilary Backwell, HR Consultant,
Time2Time HR Ltd
www.time2timehr.com
E: hilary.backwell@time2timehr.com
T: 01635 600305



GARRY POULSON is director of the 43 year-old Newbury-based charity Volunteer Centre West Berkshire. For 19 years Garry has been involved in the local community since becoming a ‘helper’ with the RAC Auto Cycle Union motorcycle training scheme when he was 15. Garry also volunteers with the Round Table, The Newbury Society and The Newbury and Thatcham Welfare Trust.

January, like September, is one of the two ‘renewal’ months in the year.

At these times we decide to turn over a new leaf, seek a new job, get fit, make plans and have a desire to make changes to our lives in some way.

For many, that change can be wanting to become involved in their community, make a contribution, learn a new skill, add some knowledge and gain some experience in order to add value to a CV.

Volunteering is one pathway to making a difference in your own life and, importantly perhaps, making a difference to someone else’s life or our locality.

People often say “I want to put something back” .

But the advice that Volunteer Centre West Berkshire offers to potential volunteers is to ‘take something away’ by being involved.

The volunteer centre says ‘enjoy your volunteering, enjoy making a difference, enjoy learning about new organisations, enjoy meeting new people and, by default, you will be putting something back’.

The very essence of volunteering means having a stake in your local community or in an issue that you care about.

But where do you start if you want to become involved?

My advice is to make an appointment to visit the volunteer centre in the first instance.

Visitors are astonished to discover the depth and breadth of volunteering opportunities on offer.

People interested to find out more will be offered an interview with our expert adviser Chris Read.

The informal interview lasts around 50 minutes, during which time Chris will ask about your interests, hobbies, passions, experiences and the type of areas that you feel you would like to support and not support.

Based on your responses, the volunteer centre database matching system will provide detailed information about roles best suited to you from more than 400 volunteering opportunities that extend right across West Berkshire.

For example, a potential volunteer may suggest that they would like to work in the environment to assist with local conservation tasks, they may be considering a change of career and want to discover what it might be like working within an education setting, they may suggest that they would like to support older people in some way and become a befriender or perhaps volunteer with people with learning difficulties.

The local arts scene is heavily supported by volunteers. Local history and heritage organisations rely on volunteers to celebrate, preserve and record our environment.

Community transport services across West Berkshire enable thousands of people to get to appointments of all kinds and cheerful volunteers from all backgrounds drive minibuses or their own cars.

Village Agents volunteer in parishes, Samaritans listen, CAB advisors help people in all manner of difficulties, charity shops raise money to support a myriad of causes here at home or in parts of the world in crisis.

People listen to children read, others offer expertise in finance, planning IT, HR, PR.

One of the first questions people ask is “How much time am I expected to give?” .

The answer is, it depends entirely on the opportunity that you choose to undertake and what you would like to do and when and where you would like to help.

There really isn’t a minimum amount of time.

Naturally, if a volunteer was to choose an opportunity that required extensive training and support, then there can be ‘expectations’ of volunteering time, but this would be explained from the outset and accordingly

you wouldn’t be expected to enter into something that you couldn’t reasonably fulfil.

There really is something available for everyone from the age of about 15.

Going online is another way to research how you want to be involved.

The Volunteer Centre has a helpful and, importantly, impartial online support system. Fill in the *let’s do it* form, click four or five preferences and our trained interviewer can send you some opportunities to consider.

Here are a couple of comments that the volunteer centre received from happy volunteers...

(We have changed their names to protect confidentiality)

“Hello, just messaging to thank you for all your help. You put me in contact with Mencap and I’ve just given in my application.

Thank you so much for your time and guidance, it was so appreciated! All the best and many many thanks again!”
Sarah

“I have just heard that I have been accepted as an assistant at the museum, which is great news, and exactly what I wanted.

Thank you so much for all your help.”
John

The Volunteer Centre is a registered charity 1156302 and is based at 1 Bolton Place, Newbury RG14 1AJ. The offices are located between Temptation Gifts and Pret A Manger, off Northbrook Street.
www.volunteerwestberks.org.uk
01635 49004 or info@vcwb.org.uk



RACHEL WOODFORD joined Newbury College as marketing manager in April 2016, having spent five years working for local marketing and PR agency Resonates. She has more than 20 years' marketing and PR experience working for many local organisations including National Instruments and Kleinwort Benson.

With the Christmas decorations back in their boxes and the sales in full swing, January is when most of us start thinking about what the new year may bring for ourselves, our families and the wider world in general.

Many of us see the new year as an opportunity to make a fresh start and do things differently. According to research undertaken by BUPA in 2015*, 26 per cent of the UK population (roughly one in four adults) make resolutions in the new year.

It's a tradition that can be traced back for centuries – the Babylonians would pledge to return borrowed objects and pay back debts at the start of a new year and the Romans would make a vow to the god Janus (from whom the month of January takes its name).

Many of us, having spent the best part of the festive period over-indulging in some way, feel obliged to set goals in the new year to help reverse some of the damage.

Perhaps it's also because we realise yet another year has gone by and we've still not accomplished the goals we set previously, that we endeavour to make a new list of challenges for the coming year.

Trouble making it stick

The lucky few who did re-evaluate their lives at the beginning of last year and were successful in achieving their health, career or aspirational goals, are in the minority.

According to the same piece of research, only 12 per cent (or one in eight) British adults keep the new year's resolutions they make.

So why do we find it so hard to keep them? The answer may lie in the type, quantity and motivation for the goals we set.

Most of us make resolutions as a way of improving the quality of our lives.

For some this means losing weight, exercising more, giving up smoking, spending more time with the family, finding a better job, climbing the career ladder, learning new skills and hobbies and making new friends.

The first few weeks are not so bad, but by February many of us, despite our best

intentions, are struggling to keep up the momentum. All too often we slip back into bad habits, lose the motivation and eventually give up all together.

Ways to help yourself

There are hundreds of self-help books written by psychologists on ways to break bad habits and achieve our desired goals, but applying common sense is probably the most effective.

For example, if you'd like to exercise more but hate running or going to the gym, find a sport you do enjoy or try a different activity altogether, such as walking, dancing or gardening. If something is fun and enjoyable



When the goal is part of a wider plan, it also has a greater chance of success.

Newbury College student Bobby Loyal (pictured), recently completed a Website Design for Beginners course, which allowed her to refresh her training.

She hadn't worked in the industry for more than 10 years and wanted to get a new job.

"Brushing up my knowledge and improving my skill set was all part of my 'return to work' plan," explains Bobby. Completing the course has significantly improved Bobby's chances of progressing her career.

Try something new

It's well documented that learning new skills helps to build confidence, so rather than follow the crowd this year and set the usual list of resolutions, why not focus on trying something new?

This could be a completely new hobby such as welding, photography or dressmaking, or broadening your skills and knowledge in an area that interests you, such as languages, IT or cookery.

Make it more enjoyable by including a friend or family member, so that you can give each other encouragement and make it more likely you'll succeed.

With the many resources available in the local area and online, it's never been easier to try something new. Newbury College offers a range of leisure and professional courses starting in January, including French, Italian, Spanish, throwing and hand-building clay, ballroom and Latin American dance, web design and IT for beginners.

It also has free distance learning courses for those who prefer the flexibility of learning from home.

*Source: <http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/bupa-new-year-resolution-survey/>

we are much more likely to have the willpower to stick with it.

The same is also true when the reason for setting the goal is to achieve more than one objective.

As well as wanting to learn a new skill, student Yvonne De Jager took up art-based leisure courses at Newbury College because she wanted to make new friends.

"I initially started an art drawing skills course as I had moved into the area and didn't know anyone – it provided a good opportunity to meet new people, as well as acquire new skills," said Yvonne.

"Other people on the course were also there for the social aspect, as well as to improve their art skills. It was a great way of keeping busy and active, and making new friends and gave me a great sense of achievement."

Looking for a new hobby, or to kickstart a new career, visit www.newbury-college.ac.uk/adults, or call 01635 845000

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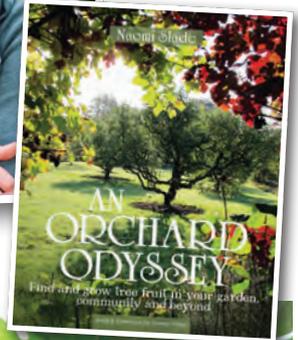
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Fruit for thought

Following her popular book on snowdrops, Newbury-based journalist and author *Naomi Slade* decided to turn her attention to something new when fallen apples gave her the idea for her latest book, *An Orchard Odyssey*



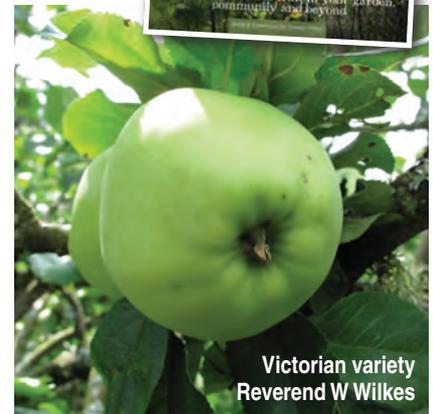
It can take something very simple to bring an idea together and, for me, it was the sight of the ground strewn with yellow apples next to the Kennet and Avon Canal in central Newbury that led to my new book.

The truth is that I love orchards and I always have done. I remember, as a small child, coming face to face with a huge apple at the end of my grandmother's garden, it was huge – as big as my head, I remember – and I visited it every day watching it further swell and ripen.

passing. The legacy of gardening grandparents dwindled and knowledge was eroded.

I find that people often view orchards with nostalgia, as something that was lovely, but is gone. Lost. Grubbed up irrevocably. The gnarled trees never to be lounged under again, a whole culture rendered a pretty, romantic story of times past.

Yet, as a journalist specialising in gardening and lifestyle, the life I live and the landscape I see contradicts this. There are fruit trees everywhere.



Victorian variety
Reverend W Wilkes

“*five trees is an orchard*”

But as I grew, it seemed that there was a disconnect between people and fruit that I could not quite understand.

Apples came from France and South Africa, not Kent or Herefordshire. People didn't seem really to know what to do with the tree in their garden, or even to have the confidence to reliably identify and scrump an apple or a cherry or a plum in

My house, built in the 1870s, is on a road that 150 years ago punched straight through orchards that grew on the edge of town. And this is a pattern that is repeated elsewhere; around smaller market towns, trees old and new grow in back gardens and orchard remnants live on.

And it is not just about gardens. Drive up the A4 towards Reading or head out on the back roads towards the M4 and the hedgerows are bursting with self-set apples. There is a walnut tree in the car park of Newbury Baptist church and cherry plums spill out by the tow path.

I have seen the ground carpeted with fruit on Newbury allotment – fruit crushed underneath the car wheels of allotmentees heading for their primped and productive plots, seemingly unaware of the irony.

And as I walked around town, taking photographs and thinking about fruit trees, the idea developed and grew. The world didn't need another gardening book, what it needed was a game-changing sort of book, offering a whole new perspective on orchard gardening.

A new perspective that would bring it closer to the ordinary person, make it more relevant, more achievable. Something that considers the realities of busy lives and small gardens yet permits a sense of ownership of the trees and a greater connection to fruit, landscape, heritage – the things that matter most to the reader.

The way forward was clear. For conservation purposes the definition of an orchard is 'A minimum of five trees with crown edges not more than 20 metres apart'.

And if one takes this definition and applies it to most people's lives, this is a huge area and not many trees. Therefore, if you have five houses in a row and a fruit tree in each garden, this is an orchard.

I looked out of my window. There are 18 fruit trees in the adjacent five gardens, including mine.

In Oxford, there is a crowd-sourced foraging map run by Oxford Wild Food, which declared on twitter that "Oxford is not a city with added fruit trees, it is an orchard with added houses." A truer word was never spoken – and to my mind, Newbury is no different.

Thus, the book was born, *An Orchard Odyssey*, which aims to re-engage people with both their orchard heritage and inspire them to notice and



enjoy the fruit trees that grow untended in the rural and urban landscape.

It discusses the history and culture of fruit and how it has moved across the world, and it talks about how we got to where we are now. But the most important thing is that it takes the simple 'five trees is an orchard' idea and rolls it out in such a way that virtually anyone can have an orchard of their own, or access to one.

It means that feral trees in the landscape can be defined as an informal orchard, as can an ultra-formal arrangement of potted and trained trees in a tiny courtyard – and everything in between. They can be relevant and accessible again.

And each newly-planted or rediscovered orchard can help feed the family, support wildlife, keeping alive a sense of place and allow one to explore exquisite and unusual flavours. It enables local varieties to be preserved and it has huge implications for community cohesion.

It is not so much a gardening book per se, more the first step on a journey – that of the reader. While it is informed by my own experiences and journeys, the aim is to open people's eyes and enable them to feel confident about tasting the fruit off that stray tree, starting a community orchard – or counting the fruit trees in their garden and that of the neighbours, and revel in the knowledge that they may have been living in an orchard all along, hidden in plain sight.

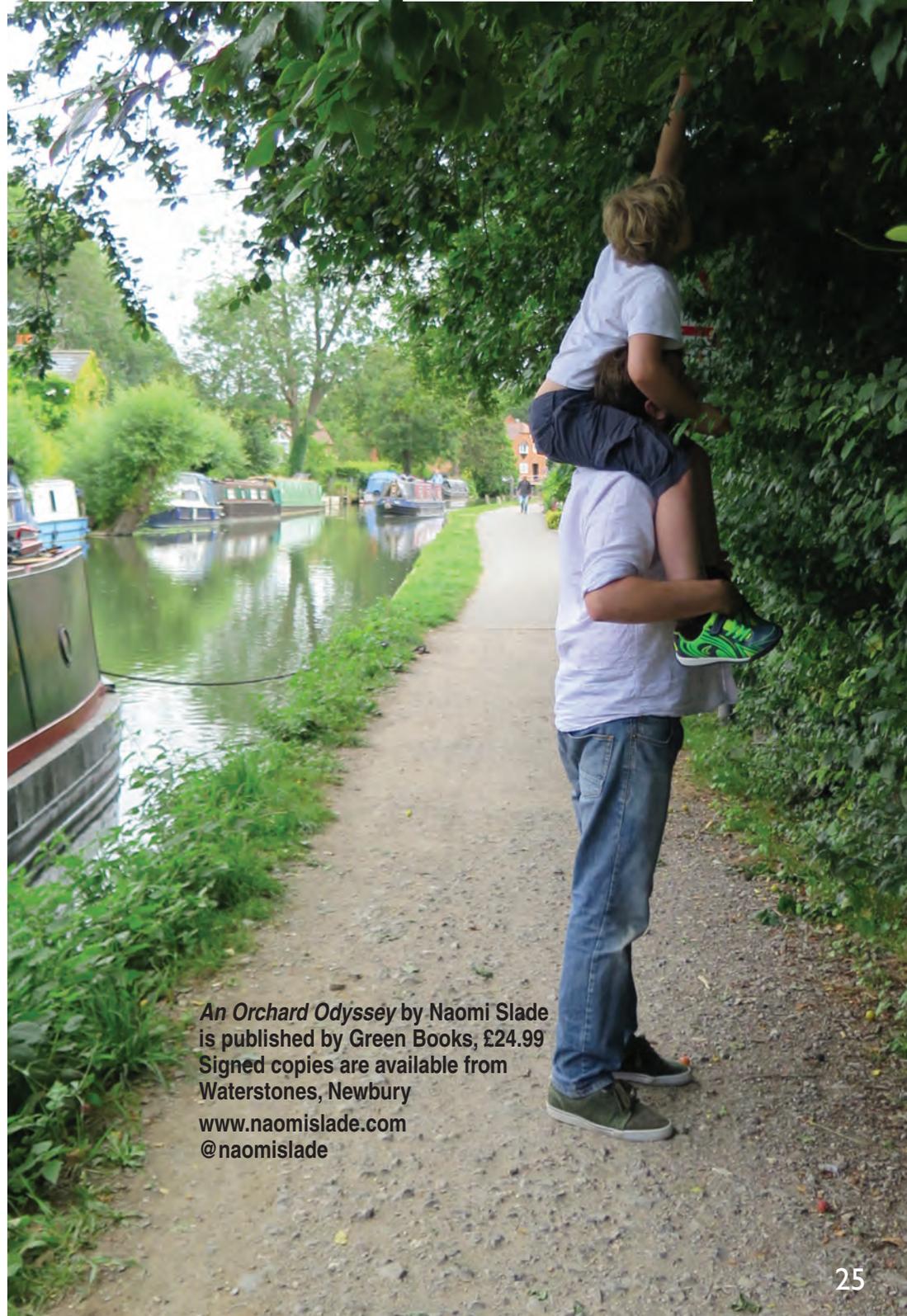
Ultimately, it will inspire the reader to take a new look at their garden and their landscape, and, I hope, herald a new dawn for fruit enthusiasm and ownership.



Walnut tree



A patchwork orchard in Newbury back gardens



An Orchard Odyssey by Naomi Slade
is published by Green Books, £24.99
Signed copies are available from
Waterstones, Newbury
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toptipples

by *James Allen*

There's no need to give up alcohol in the new year, altogether, get a taste for the low ABV options says James Allen.

As an alternative to the dreaded dry January, how about simply maintaining your consumption levels, but decreasing your alcohol intake by opting for wine and beer with lower ABV?

One of the challenges of making low alcohol products is that the alcohol itself adds both body and a slight sweetness to the drink.

The less alcohol the thinner and dryer it becomes and thus a challenge to its maker. With care and attention, however, it is quite possible to make excellent, even outstanding low alcohol drinks, both beers and wines.

Here are a few of them.

REAL ALE – WITH LOW ALCOHOL?

Wiper and True Brewery from Bristol are legendary on the craft beer circuit.

They continue to tamper and test new hops and ingredients to create stunning beers including a stout made from milk.

A best-selling beer from them is Wiper and True Small Beer, which has big beer taste but is only 2.7% ABV!

Vibrant with citrus, tropical fruit and berry flavours meandering to a gentle bitter finish.

The Naked Grape Hungerford.
330ml bottle,
four for £12



2015 – CLASSIC YEAR FOR GERMAN WINES

So long under the shadow of Liebfraumilch, classic German wines have come back into their own in style with the stunning Rieslings of the 2015 vintage.

The alcohol levels of these beautiful wines are so low yet they make such lovely drinks.

I tried a Mosel Kabinett wine from the village of Wehlen. Only 7.5 per cent ABV yet perfumed, poised and ever so long flavoured. A wow!

This low alcohol is a characteristic of most fine German wines.

Try the Louis Guntrum Riesling from Nierstein. This is only 9.5% ABV, and tastes of peaches, green apples, and juicy pears.

Perfect with cold cuts and curries.

The Naked Grape, Hungerford.
£12.99 per bottle



STONEWALL SAUVIGNON BLANC 9.5% 2015

Stonewall comes from one of New Zealand's finest estates and enjoys a huge fan club here in the UK. Owner John Forrest has always been an innovator and his latest success is this 9.5% Vol Sauvignon.

It's a great way to keep alcohol consumption in check without compromising on quality or flavour. John explains: "My aim was to achieve fruit ripeness with reduced berry sugar levels and hence reduced final wine alcohol."

"After two years of trials, and thanks to my viticulturist Tim Alexander, we succeeded in producing wines, sustainably grown and cost efficient, which met my two key criteria."

Classic, fresh and lingering, this could be the future of Marlborough Sauvignon. A lovely apéritif and partner to seafood, exotic salads or goat's cheese.

Laithwaites, Theale.
£11.99 per bottle

Can Fish Change Your Life?

It might not seem so simple, but Simon Rhodes says persevere with serving up tasty fish recipes and you really could be helping to boost your children's brain power and creating the geniuses of the next generation

I was driving in my car recently when I heard, on the radio, two different authors of slimming and lifestyle books talking about how a controlled balanced diet can help achieve a healthier life.

Included in their discussions with the presenter was a big mention about getting more fish into your diet, it was then that I suddenly heard myself nodding in agreement and talking to the radio that it was about time fish was brought to the forefront of our diets and healthy living.

This could easily be achieved with a new year's resolution and a new start.

We should be waking up to the fact that food is important in our lives and plays an important part in our wellbeing.

Fish is not the devil's food; it is a great source of protein, it contains fats that help the brain and bones, it also contains iron and minerals including zinc, and iodine.

These can all contribute to lowering your cholesterol, preventing heart disease and cancers and also assist in the prevention of dementia.

Fish is also brilliant for kids; it can help with bone and tissue development and also improves their brain power – which could mean you have a potential NASA scientist sitting in front of you. *I wonder how many parents have read this and looked at their children engrossed on the X-Box which was bought as a present for Christmas and thought 'he's having a laugh – I got more chance of them being abducted by aliens than them eating fish!'.*

Persevere with them, fish has many flavours and textures and in my experience with a little enthusiasm from the parents and a bit of variety, a compromise can be achieved.

My wife serves up fairy footballs (remoulded fishcakes) to our little girls and they love it.

A prawn curry, an oven roasted piece of cod, a good homemade fish pie or even a chargrilled swordfish steak (which can be compared to chicken in texture) can get your kids and you eating more fish.

If we can change our approach to foods then maybe, just maybe we won't have the health problems we now have in the future.

Fish could actually change our lives!

Top 10 benefits of seafood:

- Great for your heart – Seafood is low in saturated fat and high in omega-3, which can protect the heart from disease and lower the amount of cholesterol in the blood.
- Clearing the vessels – Eating fish can improve your circulation and reduce the risk of thrombosis.
- Joint benefits – Eating fish as a regular part of a balanced diet has been shown to ease the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.
- The eyes have it – Eating oil-rich fish regularly can help to keep the eyes bright and healthy. Fish and shellfish also contain retinol, a form of vitamin A which boosts night vision.
- Essential nutrients – Seafood provides the body with many essential nutrients which keep us running smoothly, including iodine, selenium, zinc and potassium. Fish and shellfish are also excellent sources of many vitamins, including vitamins A and D.
- Take a deep breath – A number of studies have indicated that fish and shellfish may help to protect our lungs. Not only can seafood relieve the symptoms of asthma in children, but it has shown signs of preventing it.
- Brighten your outlook – Seafood may also play a large part in preventing depression; research has highlighted links between low omega-3 levels and a higher risk of depression. Seafood could also help us to avoid Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and post-natal depression.
- Your skin looks great – Not only does omega-3 help to protect the skin from the harmful effects of the UV damage, but eating lots of fish can also help with the symptoms of skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis.
- Good for down below – Evidence suggests that a diet rich in fish oils can help to protect us against serious inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD) including Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.
- Boost your brainpower – The human brain is almost 60 per cent fat, with much of this being omega-3 fat. Research has indicated that people who eat plenty of seafood are less likely to suffer dementia and memory problems in later life. DHA, an omega-3 fat found in seafood, has also been linked to improvements in children's concentration, reading skills, behaviour, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Grilled Swordfish Steak with Mint Lime Salsa

Tickle your young ones taste buds with this simple recipe

Sword Loin	Bell Pepper
Tomatoes	Lime
Onion	Paprika
Sugar	Soy Sauce
Mint	

Season the Sword loin then griddle until just cooked on a griddle or frying pan

Then make the salsa

Finely chop or blitz the tomatoes, onion, bell pepper, and a little fresh mint and add the seasoning and a squeeze of lime.

Serve with a dash of soy sauce with the salsa on the side.

Ideally served with minted new potatoes.



About the author

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



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honesty **cooking** **up a treat**

Romilla Arber, founder of the Honesty Group, explains the philosophy behind her business. Starting this month, Romilla shares some of her favourite recipes from her book *What's for Dinner? Second helpings*, for you to try at home.



Honesty was an idea that had been floating around my head on and off for a while before I was actually brave enough to take the plunge.

To create a food business in a world dominated by big business was a daunting prospect. I wanted to show that food can be supplied to the consumer with honesty and integrity.

Honesty in so far as people have the right to know exactly what is in their food, how it is produced and where it comes from. You can't expect people to make the right choices concerning the food they eat if they don't know these simple things.



Integrity, in being able to create a business that can pay its lowest paid staff above the minimum wage and not expect them to work all the hours. Integrity also in as much as respecting one's suppliers and seeing them as an integral part of your business not a group of people or businesses to be manipulated and pressurised into charging less for their goods than they should charge.

I have for many years been interested in the politics of food and am of the firm belief that in the majority of transactions it is the consumer who is valued least in the chain despite what is said to the contrary.

Without wanting to state the obvious food is vitally important to the human race, not only because it sustains us but also because its consumption whether over or under can make us ill.

It can for example affect the ability of our offspring to get the most from their lives. It has an effect on the relationship we have with our planet and life on that planet and it provides many of us with a living.

Running a food business brings all of these issues and many more into sharper focus.

The cookery school was the first part of Honesty to get up and running.

We wanted to create a great environment for learning about all things to do with food and drink, working with local tutors and doing some of the teaching myself has meant that we are able to keep the cost of the courses at an affordable level.

At this stage we had already purchased The

Crown and Garter and had a team of builders working on creating a relaxed, charming environment in which to enjoy food and drink.

It had been a coaching inn since 1640 and had had little remedial structural work carried out on it for some years so you can imagine the state of the place once you started to delve below the surface.

It needed plenty of work and when I say plenty I mean plenty, from the floorboards to the roof and pretty much everything in between.

The place consists of a pub, restaurant and 10 hotel rooms.

It is in an idyllic setting in Inkpen village and is easy to fall in love with. The menu changes regularly to reflect the changing of the seasons and the food is simple, fresh and well cooked.

When we first opened, the old skittle barn where the previous owners had lived, was turned into a bakery and a small coffee shop.

The bakery quickly became too small once we started to supply some small local businesses with bread and cakes so we moved this part of the business to Greenham business park and extended the coffee shop.

That coffee shop is now one of three that Honesty owns and runs, all in their local communities on small village high streets.

It's all a challenge and most of the time is an enjoyable challenge.

It is not easy but then things worth working for rarely are.

It's all a challenge and most of the time it is an enjoyable challenge.



Recipe



Homemade Yoghurt

Yoghurt is so easy to make and it's surprising that more people don't do it. It is such a natural product and far-removed from the sweet, flavour-enhanced yoghurts sold in supermarkets. You don't need a fancy yoghurt maker either, which would just take up vital space in our kitchen.

All you need is a few jars to put the yoghurt in to set.

Add fruit for a pudding or enjoy your homemade yoghurt for breakfast.

Makes three large pots

1 litre whole milk or semi-skimmed milk

75ml full-fat natural yoghurt

■ Bring the milk to the boil in a saucepan. Remove from the heat and allow to cool for 45 minutes.

■ Add the natural yoghurt to the milk and stir it in.

Pour the mixture into clean, sterilised jars and keep them in a warm place overnight.

I usually put mine in the airing cupboard, wrapped in a tea towel.

Chill in the fridge before serving.



Far left: Romilla Arber
Bottom left: Crown & Garter, Inkpen
Above: Honesty Cafe, Lambourn

Whats for Dinner? Second helpings
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www.honestygroup.co.uk



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have a bite...

We all know about the 'make this year the year you run a marathon' articles. Relax! A much gentler start to 2017 could be resolving to start supporting more independent businesses. And when those businesses are foodie places, well here's one resolution that's guaranteed to last well past February. Hilary Scott looks at some independent cafés that all offer something unique – they are not bland chains but vibrant places you'll come back to time after time, even well into 2018.



Eliane
High Street, The Courtyard, Hungerford RG17 0NF
T: 01488 686 100
www.elianesmiles.com

'A happy place to meet and eat' is Eliane's strapline – and with its sunny décor, healthy food and relaxed atmosphere it can't fail to bring a smile to your face.

The brainchild of Rafia Willmot and Mark Kimchi, the doors opened in 2014. Following Rafia's husband John's battle with cancer in 2010, Rafia set about to understand and alter the dietary eating habits of her entire family. Having met and consulted with Mark – a researcher into corrective diet for diseases – she and John radically changed the way that John ate, and he finally came through and now, thankfully, has a clean bill of health.

So, said Rafia: "We are organic wherever possible and as much as possible. We specialise in allergen-sensitive fare, so that we can offer something for everyone. And because we are a health-conscious café/restaurant, you can be sure your lunch dish, cake, quiche, tart, cookie or croissant, baguette, brioche, flapjack or figgy pudding will be lower in cholesterol too."

All the food is homemade on site and Eliane is a 100 per cent non-Genetically Modified zone too, preferring to use local suppliers.

Expect colourful and pretty as well as tasty food – a zingy spring salad with green beans and jicama for example, or Persian rice with herbs and roasted vegetables.

You will find meat and fish dishes, but at Eliane they prefer to use a wide variation of organic vegetables and legumes (red kidney beans, lentils, chickpeas, soya beans, adzuki beans, cannellini beans). And instead of refined sugar in the cakes and sweet eats, organic coconut, palm sugar, dates, agave syrup, raw coconut nectar and stevia, is substituted.

Rafia has now written a cookbook, *Food to Make the Soul Smile*, which is available at Eliane and other outlets.

Eliane enjoyment: Happy staff, open seven days a week, private catering available.

The Tea Cosy
Hurstbourne Tarrant
T: (01264) 736644
www.theteacosyhurstbourne.com

If gigantic – and we mean gargantuan – cakes are your thing, then The Tea Cosy tearoom in Hurstbourne Tarrant can satisfy your appetite.

Especially when the cakes come in flavours like chocolate orange, Ferrero Rocher and Walnut Whip.

Owner Jenni Danks explains Big Friday Cakes obviously happen on a Friday, and customers make a beeline for the pretty tea rooms, bedecked with bunting, colourful furniture and squashy sofas.

Said Jenni: "I started the Tea Cosy because I had young children and wanted a meeting place in the village.

"At the time there was no pub and I wanted a welcoming place."

The Tea Cosy opened its doors in May 2014 – and immediately the customers poured in.

The menu is light lunches and afternoon teas. Open Wednesday to Sunday, 9.30am-5pm, you won't see chicken nuggets on the children's menu, but healthier dishes like boiled eggs and soldiers.

Adults can indulge in this childhood favourite as well as choosing from a range of sandwiches on good bread, paninis (most popular – brie and bacon), cheese on toast, salads and soup.

Said Jenni: "We do loose leaf teas, teacakes, scones and more and afternoon teas which vary in price from £12-£15 a head depending on the size of the party.

"What we like at The Tea Cosy is we have a lot of generations coming in, from grandparents to mums and dads with their children.

"And even if you don't come on a Friday for Big Friday Cakes we've always around 11 varieties of cakes – made by a lady in Andover – to choose from."

Cosy comforts: Bookings taken, crafts on sale, free wi-fi, USB and charge points.



Lusso
Weavers Walk, Newbury
T: (01635) 32128
www.gelartoicecream.co.uk/lusso

Fans of the GelArto ice cream van in Northbrook Street will already know it has a sister called Lusso dishing up pizza from its eaterie in Weavers Walk.

And after you've devoured their sourdough-base pizzas you can have a few scoops of

"We had been wanting to have a more permanent place anyway. We called it Lusso which means luxury in Italian, trying to convey we aim for quality."

Lusso is somewhere you can go to during the day for coffee and cake, or a lunchtime pizza and beer or wine, or for an evening meal. The most popular pizza is the goat's cheese with caramelised red onion chutney, pesto tomato, mozzarella and balsamic glaze.



their sublime ice cream with flavours like Dark Chocolate and Cherries, Pure Piedmont Hazelnut or Jaffa Cakes.

Co-owner Tommy Szebeni, who runs Lusso with his wife and brother Peter, said: "We started the van in the summer of 2014 and then we got to winter and thought what can we do? So, last year we set up a marquee in the same location as the van and did pizza with a portable wood fired oven. We realised when they sold well, we could do pizza.

Aficionados love the Freakshakes, epic milkshakes with flavours like Nutella and doughnut, or salted caramel.

Lusso is ideal for business lunches, said Tommy. "Location-wise we are good for businesses and as pizzas take four to five minutes in the oven we are quick too."

Lusso love: Epic milkshakes, local beers and wine, children's menu of pizza and a scoop of ice cream for £6.50.



The Nomad Bakery
Prospect Street, Caversham
www.nomadbakery.co.uk

Home-made sourdough bread toasted and slathered in butter and home-made jam, a seasonal soup that's gluten-free and vegan but can have added protein, sandwiches like manchego and chorizo and children's art trays with veg sticks, hummus and healthy snacking – all these have ensured The Nomad Bakery in Caversham has been buzzing since it opened in November.

Run by Laura Gonzalez, known in the Reading foodie community as a baker who sold at events and as a supper club cook through Pop-Up Reading, she has finally realised her dream of a combined bakery and café.

Of Argentinian origin, one of Laura's specialities is Argentine pastries – she makes her own brioche pastry and flavours it with the renowned Caversham Jam Lady's jam and a big selection of those jams, jellies and chutneys sweet and savoury, can be sampled and bought in the bakery.

Laura's bread – from the sourdough called Reading's Heritage loaf to the seeded rye, focaccia and farmhouse – has literally been flying off the shelves, meaning customers needed to get there early to bag a loaf. She now has a bigger kitchen so the bread baskets on the counters can be replenished often.

"It has been my dream for a long time," said Laura who gave up her job at Vodafone to open the bakery/café.

"After roaming around Reading kitchens for almost three years, we had the opportunity of setting up our base in the heart of Caversham and without doubt we dived in. We just wanted to have a place where everyone feels at home and could have real bread (flour, water and salt without any unnecessary additions), yummy treats and homemade eats worry-free because we make our recipes as allergy-friendly as possible.

"Now we are a few months old and we have formed what we call The Nomad Family, which consists of our friends who helped us all the way, the amazing Nomad team and our devoted regulars.

"We are eternally grateful to them for helping us in this adventure."

Nomad niceties: home-made crunchy granola takeaway bags, wi-fi, crafts like ceramics, tapas evenings.



nibbles

The team from the Magnolia Brasserie led by head chef Ben Bullen at Faringdon's Sudbury House Hotel have been awarded 2 AA Rosettes.

The Magnolia Brasserie opened its doors in June 2014 and Ben says: "At the Magnolia Brasserie we have a mix of Mediterranean style and classic British dishes on the menu; I like to create twists on classic flavour combinations using fresh, quality ingredients to give our diners a memorable experience at Sudbury House.

"We have a feature woodburner stove and an open plan kitchen in the brasserie, which gives me and my team the opportunity to interact with our guests."



Cold January nights need comfort food, and M&S has given lasagne a new twist by using minced venison instead of beef.

Venison is seeing a resurgence as people discover the benefits of the lean and nutritious meat, which is low in fat, high in iron and extremely versatile.



Matt Dawson, M&S product developer, says: "We slow-cook the venison with allspice, star anise, port and red wine, which makes the lasagne meaty, rich and moreish." Gastropub Venison Lasagne is £4.50 for 400g.

Originally sold as an essential ingredient for making Japanese Katsu Curry, Yutaka's curry block is fast becoming popular with cooks using the curry blocks like normal stock cubes. They can be used to flavour stews and gravies, as well as made into a sauce to spice up chips, sausages and noodles.

For a meat marinade, mix ½ curry stock cube in 2 tbsp of water then add 2 cloves crushed garlic, 1 tbsp soy sauce, 1 tbsp Shaoxing rice wine and 1 tsp rice vinegar. Place in a freezer-style bag with the meat of your choice and allow to marinate for an hour.

Yutaka Curry Cubes are available from Sainsbury's. £2.25RRP





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Crowning glory

The Crown Inn at Upton is full of superb surprises says Hilary Scott



I am a self-declared Bloody Mary expert. I took the mission on many years ago (you're welcome) and can't tell you the effort I have put in to rate the drink across the world.

Airports are a speciality, it's become a pre-flight and layover habit and they are normally bland; in the US, they're usually too fishy and strong for me as they often use clam juice: meanwhile

Harry's Bar in Venice is pretty good.

But I never thought that one of the best I have ever tasted would be in a pretty country pub in the Hampshire countryside.

Laced with chunky grated horseradish, with just the right amount of spiciness, celery and lime, The Crown Inn at Upton deserves a Bloody prize.

Actually, the minute you walk into this beautiful inn you kind of guess everything is going to be good.

The newly refurbished pub under chef Lewis Spreadbury and general manager Amanda J'Bair, a duo who used to run The Bunk Inn, is tasteful yet reflects the farming community and stunning countryside it sits in.

From the cosy fireside space to the cool grey

dining areas and the conservatory where the light floods in, it's a place you could while away many an hour.

The bar menu is classic fare but with the Crown twist – pork belly with mustard, a smokey BLT, fish and chips, sausage and mash to name a few.

We sampled the pork belly and discovered the twist – thick and crunchy-topped melting belly cubes served with charred lemon, a hearty mustard

mayo and smoked salt. It was superb, and even my dining companion who normally eschews animal fat raced me to the wooden board to finish it off, scrabbling to pick up the last cube.

To the rest of the food – I usually hate when reviews walk you through the meal in order, but sometimes, like a good tale that builds to a climax, you need to do it so potential customers get an idea of the beautifully balanced and clever menu.

So, starters were the smoked trout with a trout mousse, caper and potato salad, quails' eggs and crispy skin, and a dish of crab cake with a crab bisque and squid ink aioli.

The trout was vivid pink and soft, the mousse a smooth and unctuous quenelle and the two little towers of salad spicy with the capers and soft potato. Nestled between were the perfectly cooked eggs and ever-so-crunchy trout skin the size of, well, crisps. It was fresh, zingy and delicious.

The crispy-coated and loaded crab cake topped by a thick egg yolk was packed full of fish and sat in a top-notch bisque with a slick of almost silver aioli and it was all seen through a

harlequin fried potato garnish. It was rich and showcased the crab.

For mains, we went for venison and sea bream. Now suet puddings can be thick and spongy but this venison suet pudding served with the smoothest potato puree, sprouts and stuffed cabbage was soaked in an amazing gravy and crunchy on the outside, the result of steaming then lading with gravy and roasting in the oven.

The venison inside was buttery yet spicy and tender, the little stuffed cabbage ball revealing a spicy sausagemeat stuffing.

Meanwhile two fillets of sea bream – the portions at The Crown are generous – sat in



Pork belly with mustard

a white wine and cream sauce, butter beans and rainbow chard and on top was a barbecued fennel piece which was “just the best texture” said its diner.

The dessert list is just as varied as the rest of the menu but we could only manage to share one – the vanilla pannacotta with lemon curd, freeze-dried raspberries and meringue.

The dessert came in a pretty globe dish on a stand and was a picture with the old-fashioned sandwiched meringue sitting on top of the pannacotta and surrounded by little pyramids of curd and the raspberries.

We were amazed at the quality of the entire meal and at good prices, too – mains are between £14 and £20 and starters around £7, desserts are similar price to the starters.

The wine list is varied and we had a lovely sauvignon blanc for £18.

There are lots of nice touches – the china is stoneware in different colours and shapes, the coffee is a Hampshire blend called Moonroast and the pub opens specifically for breakfast on Sundays.

The Crown Inn was a true surprise – from the glorious food to the lovely décor, the great drinks and snacks to the rolling Hampshire countryside it sits in about 12 miles from Newbury.

And while it gets an unofficial Bloody Mary award from me, it deserves more formal recognition. Although it has only been open for a few months under Amanda and Lewis, I would bet you several (good) Bloody Marys it gets it soon.



The Crown Inn, Upton,
Nr Andover, Hampshire,
SP11 0JS
(01264) 736044
www.thecrowninnupton.co.uk



Above: Smoked trout with a trout mousse, caper and potato salad, quails' eggs and crispy skin; above right: Venison suet pudding



**Left: Crab cake with a crab bisque and squid ink aioli and above: sea bream
Below: Vanilla pannacotta with lemon curd, freeze-dried raspberries and meringue**

The dessert came in a pretty globe dish on a stand



Food pictures: Dijana Capan





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Natural balance

After locating a tai chi class in Newbury, Geraldine Gardner has set out on a quest to discover the secrets of this most gentle of martial arts

I don't know how many times I have watched the movie *Notting Hill* and been mesmerised by the tai chi class going on in the leafy London garden, as the camera pans across towards Hugh Grant and Julia Roberts sitting serenely on a park bench at the end of the film.

On many such occasions I promised myself I will give tai chi a try.

More recently, *The Intern*, starring Robert de Niro and Anne Hathaway also featured a similar scene, pictured below, and finally I was spurred into action, deciding to make 2017 the year I gave it a go.

To my delight I discovered classes in Newbury and am now getting to grips with 'step back and repulse monkey', 'grasp the sparrow's tail' and 'single whip'.

I talked to teacher William Mak about his experience and all things tai chi.



Pictures: Phil Cannings





What are the basic principles of tai chi and what it teaches?

Tai chi follows the philosophy of the Tao (Tao Te Ching) and also combines ancient Chinese knowledge of meditation, mindfulness, martial arts and medicine, all explored through the principle and concepts of internal energy ('chi').

It can be summed up simply in two words, natural balance. Tai chi teaches us that there's a different way of going about our lives, a way that does not require us to confront obstacles or try to force situations to turn out how we believe they should be. Tai chi shows us how we can be sensitive to and integrate with the forces we encounter in our everyday lives.

Most people recognise tai chi through its slow moving forms. The beauty of tai chi is embedded within the form which cultivates naturalness. The basic ideas of being centred, relaxed, clear and focused in mind and body whether at rest, or in motion are explored and then eventually become part of you when practicing tai chi.

When did you start to learn tai chi?

I started my martial arts journey over 20 years ago when I studied under a reputable Mantis-style Kung Fu instructor.

After a number of years I realised that the way forward for me was to search for a pure source of internal martial art training.

After considering the options available, in 1995 I decided that I would study with my current tai chi chuan teacher, Master John Ding (6th generation lineage Master of Yang Style Tai Chi), who is based in London.

I was instantly hooked by his ability to demonstrate tai chi's legendary potent power paradoxically through seemingly effortless relaxation.

How long did it take to become a teacher?

When I moved out of London in 1999, I continued to travel weekly to receive traditional training.

After many years I was certified to teach and I decided to spread the art and its benefits in my local town of Newbury.

What has tai chi taught you?

Tai chi is a wonderful art that develops all aspects of you, your life and your relationships. It has taught me about what good health of mind and body really is, and how to achieve that.

It keeps me healthy, relaxed and much more tolerant to the stresses and strains of life in these times.

I also have a deep interest in martial arts and the art has certainly fulfilled my expectations in this area too.

While life is certainly ever-changing, I have found that tai chi has been a constant in my life and a source of balance.

How long have you been teaching in Newbury and Thatcham?

I have been teaching for three years now as a representative of the Master Ding Academy teaching tai chi in Thatcham and last year I opened a class in Newbury.

What can people get out of learning tai chi?

Tai chi is based on principles of non confrontation that are literally thousands of years old. It can show us how to incorporate these ideas into our everyday hectic lives. And make them work for us.

Each person begins for their own primary reasons – perhaps they want some improvement in health, a sense of community, help with stress, self-confidence, self-defence, self-development, to connect with their sense of the spiritual or all of the above.

As tai chi is a holistic art, practised correctly over time it can bring about these benefits by being incorporated into your daily routine.

Tai chi is not about remembering things, ie postures and sequences of movements, it's about embodying them at the right time.

It is simple to be relaxed when the days are easy. Tai chi teaches us to maintain that relaxation when the days are hard.

What will surprise practitioners is that all the other benefits will become accessible as they progress on with their training.

Over and over I have seen practitioners who start tai chi for their primary reason, achieve these aims and then continue on to explore further benefits.

How does tai chi differ from other similar disciplines?

We don't like to compare with other approaches as each person is unique and will have individual preferences. More importantly, people should come and experience what Tai Chi can offer for themselves and form their own opinions.

However, I can say what attracts me to and keeps me practicing tai chi.

Firstly I could quickly realise benefits when I began learning tai chi. At the same time working with my teacher and more advanced students it was easy to see that there was real depth to the art and that there was so much more available.

When we practice with others we work together towards a common goal, it's not competitive, but collaborative. Every class, everyone leaves a little better than when they entered.

Is there an age limit to learning?

There is no age limit, though the way of practicing should naturally change according to your age. Classes or movements are sometimes adapted to specifically cater for the needs of older practitioners, others for the needs of the very young. If in doubt, always contact your local teacher for their advice.

I have found that the limiting factor to learning tai chi isn't usually age, it's often the desire to learn and making time in your life to spend a small amount of time on just you without distraction.

How long does it take to get the basics?

I honestly feel that to see tai chi practiced well is to see the basics done well.

It's a lifetime's practice to get the basics.

Having said that, if a student attends class regularly, and does a little regular practice at home, they will begin to feel benefits within six weeks.

However most importantly just come and experience the art, enjoy the training and forget these stressful judgements.

Over time everyone can get the basics. Anyone who sticks at it will go further than the basics.





Tai Chi Chuan

T'ai-chi ch'uan (also spelled taijiquan and taiji chuan) is an ancient Chinese martial art that comes in many variations.

Some styles can trace their lineage back to the founding of the art, while others date back to the early part of the 20th century.

Some stress competition, while others emphasise health or self-defence.

T'ai-chi ch'uan is usually literally translated as 'grand ultimate boxing'. The 'grand ultimate' portion of the name refers to the Chinese concept of the origin of the universe. That is the principle of yin and yang. In fact, the common yin-yang symbol is properly called the t'ai chi diagram. T'ai-chi ch'uan is the art of the harmony of yin and yang, in tangible form.

There are many conflicting stories about the origins of Tai Chi. The foundation concepts of t'ai chi ch'uan, which come from Taoism and Confucianism, go back to the beginning of written history in China. They come from Lao Tzu's monumental text, *Tao Te Ching*, from the *I Ching* and from various other health-promoting and breathing exercise treatises. The actual art can be traced back only 300 to 700 years, however.

The founder is said to be Chang San-feng (Zhang Sanfeng), who is thought to have lived from 1279 to 1368, but no one knows if he actually existed. Some experts claim him as just being a myth, while others argue he did exist and there are monuments to him in China.

Many believed Chang San-feng was a Shaolin monk who decided to leave the monastery to become a Taoist hermit.

On Wu Tang (Wudang) mountain, he gave up the hard fighting style he had learned and formulated a new art based on softness and yielding.

One story tells how he had a vision between a snake and a crane (although some say it was a magpie, an eagle or a hawk). In theory, the crane should have had an easy time killing the snake, but in Chang's vision, the crane would try to attack the snake's head, and the snake would evade and hit the crane with its tail. When the crane would try for the snake's tail, the snake would bite the crane. This resulted in the discovery of the basic t'ai chi concepts of evading, yielding and attacking.

Chang assembled a martial art that used softness and internal power to overcome brute force. He is believed to have written: *"In every movement, every part of the body must be light and agile and strung together. The postures should be without breaks. Motion should be rooted in the feet, released through the legs, directed by the waist and expressed by the fingers. Substantial and insubstantial movements must be clearly differentiated."*

This marked the beginning of t'ai-chi ch'uan, but at that time it was called chang chuan, or long boxing, after the endless flow of the Changjiang (Yangtse) River. Later, Chang formulated the 13 postures of t'ai chi. While no one knows what his art looked like then, it is thought that the movements were practiced as individual techniques or concepts.

©H. Kurland

Tue 6.45 pm - 7.45 pm	Newbury Methodist Church	Intro to tai chi
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To find out more about tai chi classes in Newbury and Thatcham contact:

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Try something new – trade some things old

Thomas Plant from SAS offers some tips on how to get into buying and selling at auction

It is at this time of year when often people decide to make a change in their lives – which can involve deciding not to do a particular thing.

I like to put a positive spin on the New Year, seizing the moment and focusing on doing something different, that I have been meaning to do for a while.

I am going to use 2017 as the chance to accomplish a fitness challenge (suggestions welcome), so what about you?

Have you always wanted to take up antique collecting? Have you seen something you liked at an auction but were unsure whether to buy it? Why not use the New Year to set yourself a challenge and learn about antiques?

You may already have an interest in items such as silver, books or glassware or maybe you have a love of flowers or animals.

The good news is, whatever your pastime, buying at auction offers a wide variety of pieces, often at reasonable prices, which is ideal when starting out as a collector.

Top Tips for buying at auction

- Decide which lot/lots you would like to buy – you can look in the catalogue or go to the view a couple of days before the auction
- Ask questions, the specialists are there to advise you
- Decide a maximum figure you would like to spend (the excitement on the day can lead to a bidding frenzy, so you must be sure to only bid what you can afford. Remember a buyer's commission is charged in addition to the hammer price)
- Raise your paddle number or catalogue to bid (to stop, simply shake your head or say no)

If you have been successful and it is practical, you can pay and take your purchase home with you immediately.

A pair of fine late-19th-century continental silver stirrup cups, having well-modelled heads of horses on bell-shaped bases, with raised designs and bearing engraved crest of a rampant lion, with strike marks and UK import hallmarks for London 1899, one approx 8ozt and the other 8.5ozt £500-£800

As well as monthly Antiques and Collectables sales we hold over 50 specialist auctions each year which is great for new collectors.

Auctions include cameras, fine art, jewellery, toys, dolls, teddy bears, film and entertainment memorabilia, cigarette cards, sporting memorabilia, militaria, postcards and stamps.

So, come and take a look!



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An Edward VII silver tea caddy, the oval cannister with raised design of figures in a landscape, plain cap, Chester 1903, approx 3.5ozt £60-100



A fine pair of 18ct gold and mother of pearl cufflinks, modelled as buttons with twist edges and united by chains, approx 10.4g, in a vintage fitted Bullen Ltd box £250-£350



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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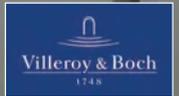
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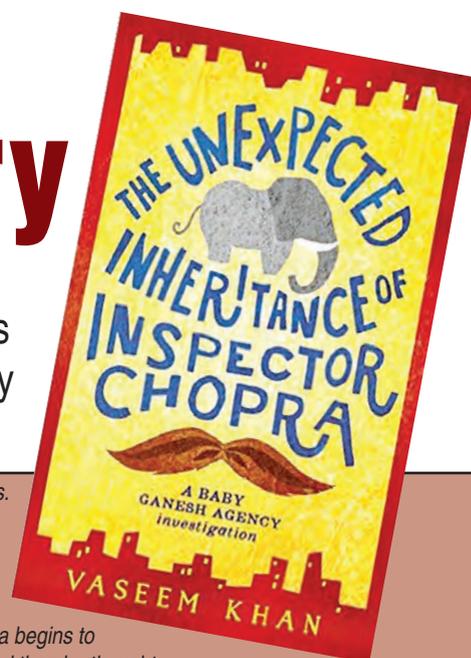
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Mammoth mystery

It's all about the elephant, the murder and a sprinkling of Indian mystique, say Helen Sheehan and Lissa Gibbins, who found this debut novel, *The Unexpected Inheritance of Inspector Chopra* by Vaseem Khan, an unexpected and charming delight



The Unexpected Inheritance of Inspector Chopra
The first in the Baby Ganesh detective series by Vaseem Khan (Mulholland Books) Published December 2015)

On the day he retires, Inspector Ashwin Chopra inherits two unexpected mysteries. The first is the case of a drowned boy, whose suspicious death no one seems to want solved. And the second is a baby elephant. As his search for clues takes him across the teeming city of Mumbai, from its grand high rises to its sprawling slums and deep into its murky underworld, Chopra begins to suspect that there may be a great deal more to both his last case and his new ward than he thought. And he soon learns that when the going gets tough, a determined elephant may be exactly what an honest man needs...

The Unexpected Inheritance of Inspector Chopra is the first book in what will surely be a long and delightful detective series about a retired police inspector and his beloved elephant.

Not dissimilar in style and content to Alexander McCall Smith's *No 1 Ladies Detective Agency* series, this gentle but gripping tale through the eyes of Inspector Chopra is beguiling and extremely readable.

On the day of his retirement in Mumbai, Inspector Ashwin Chopra discovers to his frustration and dismay that he has inherited a baby elephant from his late uncle.

This is an unwanted and desperately inconvenient gift, not least because Inspector Chopra, his no-nonsense wife Poppy and his difficult and exasperating mother-in-law live together on the 15th floor of a tower block managed by the indomitable Mrs Subramaniam.

Inspector Chopra knows as much as the rest of us about looking after a baby elephant and to add to his woes, in spite of his imminent retirement, he becomes embroiled in a murder case that he just cannot ignore.

Ganesha the elephant arrives in a sorry state, off his food and clearly depressed.

The surprise, worry and practical limitations purporting to the arrival of baby Ganesha make for a difficult start to the relationship, and it isn't until a dramatic night time event takes place that the bond between them starts to form.

As the murder investigation develops, leading Chopra and Ganesha across the slums, markets and suburbs of Mumbai, an unexpected and delightful friendship emerges between the two.

Particularly memorable is the amusing scene in a shopping centre where a clash of wills

between the inspector and the elephant causes merry mayhem.

Happily, as the story unfolds, Ganesha cheers up considerably under Inspector Chopra's unconventional care.

A more colourful and complex backdrop to a book would be hard to find: the city of Mumbai shines through the story as we experience its highs and lows, its glittering riches, its desperate poverty, and its changing face from ancient Indian city to modern technological and financial centre.

Vaseem Khan manages to juggle beautifully the emotional and physical aspects of caring for a baby elephant – a fascinating bonus for the reader – alongside a truly gripping tale of murder and corruption.

Woven through the narrative are quotes from two books that Chopra purchases, instructing him on the care of an elephant.

The first, *The Definitive Guide to the Life and Habits of the Indian Elephant* by Doctor Harpal Singh, is a scientific account of an elephant's needs and habits, but it scorns the myths surrounding this noble beast.

The second book, *Ganesha: Ten Years Living with an Indian Elephant*, is written by Harriet Fortinbrass, an ex-pat who owned an elephant from its babyhood.

Her emotive account shows a great awe for the Indian elephant; a loving bond formed between the author and her pet that persuaded her of the elephant's superior emotional intelligence. The way in which the inspector learns to care for Ganesha, both physically and emotionally, comes through his study of these two books, alongside his own surprisingly accurate instinct.

Happily for us, Vaseem Khan's second book in the Baby Ganesh detective series, *The*

Perplexing Theft of the Jewel in the Crown, was published in May 2016.

This time Chopra and Ganesha become entangled in the theft of the Koh-i-Noor diamond.

For centuries the diamond caused wars and rifts throughout society. Now part of the British Crown Jewels, this priceless gem continues to hold a power that many are too weak to resist.

When the Crown Jewels go on display in Mumbai, security is everyone's principal concern. So it's a huge shock that on the very day of Inspector Chopra's first visit to the exhibition, the diamond is stolen.

Such a daring theft, in spite of the heightened security, proves too tempting a mystery for our inspector and his sidekick.

It was the sight of an elephant lumbering down the road in Mumbai in 1997 that inspired Vaseem Khan to write this series.

Born in London in 1973, Vaseem left university and headed to India to work as a management consultant. Now back in the UK he works at University College London for the Department of Security and Crime Science.

He is fascinated by elephants, great literature, cricket and crime, all of which you will experience to a greater or lesser degree in this, his first novel.

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

ROMANCING THE RAILWAYS

Holiday train journeys conjure up images of Agatha Christie-style scenarios and fine dining as you gaze out at the landscapes flashing by.

If you're looking for a big new adventure, Sarah Parker, from Bailey Robinson, Hungerford, has some suggestions that will take you to the far corners of the globe



There is something undeniably romantic about the great railway journeys of the world. In the golden age of travel, the journey was considered as important as the destination and no detail was overlooked in the pursuit of comfort and style.

Time slowed as passengers simply enjoyed the passing scenery while cocooned in a world of refinement; elegant dining, sophisticated interiors and impeccable service.

Today, luxury train travel offers passengers not just an unrivalled opportunity to access some of the world's most remote regions, but also an opportunity to marvel at breathtaking landscapes and dynamic scenery while relaxing in splendid opulence.

The Orient-Express, now owned and operated by Belmond, arrived in Peru nearly two decades ago.

The Belmond Hiram Bingham Pullman service, named after the explorer who discovered the ancient Inca citadel, operates from Cusco to Machu Picchu, a magical railway journey which takes just over three hours.

Decorated in the style of a 1920s Pullman carriage, each is furnished with polished wood and brass, with large comfortable armchairs. Tables are set with gleaming crystal and polished cutlery where you can enjoy brunch en route to Machu Picchu, and a gastronomic dinner on the return to Cusco.

As of May 2017, the new Belmond Andean Explorer will operate between the UNESCO World Heritage site of Arequipa, past the reflective beauty of Lake Titicaca, and Cusco, the ancient capital of the Inca Empire.

This luxury sleeper service will be one of the highest altitude train journeys on Earth, traversing over the high plains of the Andes

for two full days and one very comfortable night. Let the views from observation car captivate your attention, and unwind in the dining cars amid interiors inspired by the texture and tone of Peru's hand woven fabrics and Alpaca wool. Enjoy the Andean air with a Pisco Sour on the open deck of the observation car as the train travels through magnificent scenery.

Climb aboard the Eastern and Oriental Express and discover South East Asia.

Explore Bangkok and Singapore with the classic four-day three-night itinerary inspired by *Shanghai Express*, the 1932 film starring Marlene Dietrich.

Watch the world go by your window on this 2,000 kilometre journey through rural landscapes and ancient villages, past gleaming pagodas, tea plantations, temples and historic monuments, and wonder in the remarkable contrast to the vibrant cities that



epitomise the excitement and diversity of Asian metropolitan life.

Step into your cabin and the scene is set for a timeless journey; sophisticated, elegant and private, by day your cabin becomes a private lounge where you can enjoy the ever-changing scenery in comfort.

Dinner is a formal occasion in keeping with the lavishly decorated dining cars while the colonial-style observation car, with its open observation deck and resident pianist, is a perfect spot for cocktails.

Equally lavish and luxurious, Rovos Rail offers old world class aboard Africa's most exclusive railway service. Lovingly-restored carriages provide the perfect place to relax and revel in the diverse and beautiful landscapes through windows which open fully for maximum impact.

Lush upholstery and Edwardian furnishings

add a touch of glamour to the formal dining, lounging and observation cars, while sleeper cars range from the super comfortable Pullman, to opulent Royal Suites that take up half a carriage and include a full Victorian bath.

This remarkable African experience is complemented by a small army of attentive staff who will cater to your every whim.

Popular journeys include the two-night Pretoria to Cape Town trip and longer trips to some of Southern Africa's finest reserves and parks, including Victoria Falls and Kruger National Park, where you can stop and enjoy the incredible wildlife and scenery.

Travel from Jasper in the heart of the Rockies, through British Columbia to the North Pacific Coast, aboard the Skeena on a two-day daylight journey.

Epic landscapes fill the carriage as you journey past lakes, rivers and waterfalls,

framed by a backdrop of mountains and vast stretches of wilderness. The train's panoramic dome car offers sweeping views of these landscapes and the wildlife that occupy it.

The journey ends in the port town of Prince Rupert – gateway to Alaska and the fjord country.

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Sharp's the word

Michael Allen finds the revised Mazda3 a smart move

I wish I could be sharper, smarter and more sophisticated. So does my wife. I guess it's an age thing.

But Mazda doesn't suffer my failings and they are exactly the three improvements promised in the all-new Mazda3 now on sale.

That's only half the story, though. The popular Mazda3 (it's sold more than five million models globally) features a host of new features inside and out, and big efforts have been made to reduce cabin noise, too, making this one of the most quietly efficient cars in class.

Up front there's a revised grille and other exterior changes include different door mirrors and a redesigned rear bumper. Sharply cut, high-sheen finish alloys are also ultra smart.

Inside there's smarter trim, a new leather steering wheel and an electronic parking brake, which frees up more space.

I like the excellent full-colour, head-up display reflected onto the front screen which shows a digital speedo, plus a traffic sign reminder of speed limit. This at-a-glance feature saves

the driver taking eyes off the road without being intrusive – all cars will surely work this way one day.

Mazda are still very modest about two of their greatest attributes – reliability and handling – this is the DNA that runs through the entire range.

Suspension revisions mean that the hatchback's pin-sharp handling is even more advanced, while also improving ride comfort and reducing vibration.

Also new is the rather baffling sounding G-Vectoring Control (or GVC) which varies engine torque to optimise load on the front wheels and add more allure to handling and comfort.

The 2.0 120PS Sport Nav model I have been testing (£20,645) is deceptively quick and though there's little impression of speed, 0-62mph comes up in a creditable sub-nine seconds time while the four-cylinder petrol unit is supremely smooth and refined.

A peachy six-speed, wristy manual gear change is about the best you'll get in any car.

To those in the know, smart handling is what you expect from any Mazda – instantly enjoyable and involving, while ride quality is uniformly excellent, even over the worst of surfaces.

Taking a leaf out of the Germans' book, Mazda wisely chooses classic all black for the Mazda3 cabin for doors, dash and seats and simplicity of layout and sensible ergonomics mean that the driver instantly feels at home and in control.

A centre-dash 'infotainment' screen pokes rather self-consciously out of the dash but is managed and sorted quite simply by a rotary

knob based on the centre console – you don't have to be a techie to get to grips with it all pretty quickly.

As a family car, the Mazda3 excels, with bags of interior space and a highly practical boot – there's a surprisingly large amount of room out the back. Rear seats fold down in one smooth, fast action to reveal a really useful, almost completely flat load floor.

With more dynamic and curvaceous looks than a Golf, the Mazda3's latest revisions have ensured that it is a serious contender for best in class. It's that good. Rivals beware.

Mazda3 2.0 120PS Sport Nav

- Price: £20,545 (Mazda3 range from £17,595-£24,195).
- Engine: SKYACTIV-G, four-cylinder 16v 1,998cc petrol unit; 120PS at 6,000rpm.
- Drivetrain: Six-speed manual gearbox (auto available), front-wheel drive.
- Performance: 0-62mph in 8.9 secs, top speed: 121mph.
- Economy: Combined 55.4mpg.
- CO2 emissions: 119g/km.
- Dimensions (mm): Overall length 4470, overall height 1465, overall width 1795.
- Sport Nav model key features: 28-inch alloys; LED headlights with auto levelling; LED rear lights and daytime running lights; adaptive front lighting system; reversing camera; front and rear parking sensors.

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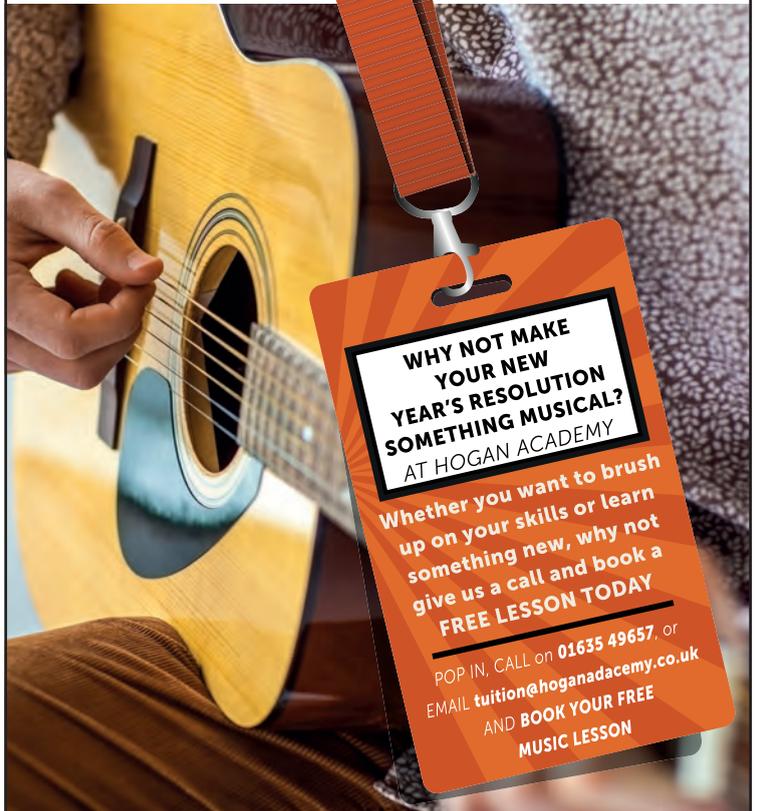
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What's on

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



Keeping it clean

January 9 to February 28
Restoration and Conservation Tours
Blenheim Palace,
Time: 11am and 2pm

Admission: These tours are included in a Palace, Park and Gardens ticket or valid annual pass

Every year during January and February the Palace undergoes a deep clean. Now that Blenheim Palace is open all year round, visitors have the opportunity to learn all about this process.

Gain a closer insight into how the priceless collections housed within the palace are cared for.

These tours are not yet available for bookings, so check back again soon for more details.

Please note: in keeping with normal tours, these tours will not operate on Sundays or Bank Holidays when a free-flow system is in operation.

www.blenheimpalace.com



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Ladies Lunch Club

Every last Monday of the month Esseborne hosts a Ladies Club where guests are entertained by interesting speakers after lunch.

There is a set 4-course menu with a glass of wine, coffee and petite fours.

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Monday 30th January
WORDS OF MY LIFE
by Chris Meredith

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Uncovering family history

January 18
Missing Down Under, How I Found My Great Aunt

Berkshire Family History Society
 West Berkshire Museum, The Wharf, Newbury
 2.30pm-3.30pm

Tickets £5

Speaker Margaret Crook is a retired primary school teacher. She started researching her family because myth had it that she was related to Ann Hathaway, her paternal grandmother's maiden name.

So far no link has been found, but she's had great fun tracing back to the early 19th century and possibly farther back.

Tickets from the museum 01635 519562 or online:

www.westberkshireheritage.org/whats-on

Call to check latest times or cancellations.

www.westberkshireheritage.org

Comedy capers

If you're looking for some entertainment in the new year, you could discover unknown talent at two Newbury venues in January

Friday 6

Unplugged Open Mic night,
 Ace Space, St Nicholas Road,
 Newbury
 7pm for 7.30pm start.
 Call 07905 590214

Friday 13

Jongleurs,
 Corn Exchange, Newbury
 7.45pm
 Box office 0845 5218218



January dates for your diary



Off with his head

January 18

The Last Days of Charles I

West Berkshire Museum, The Wharf, Newbury,
7pm-8pm

Tickets £5

King Charles I once said, "A subject and a sovereign are clean different things", yet it was his own people that brought him to trial and execution in 1649.

Historian Alan Turton tells of the last tumultuous years and days of this controversial monarch.

Please note that all seating is unreserved.

Tickets £5. Available to buy from the museum 01635 519562 or online

westberkshireheritage.org/whats-on (online bookings incur a small booking fee)

Call to check latest times or cancellations.

www.westberkshireheritage.org



Changing political landscape

Wednesday 25

Hungerford Historical Association

Hungerford
Corn Exchange,
7.30pm

The spoils and ashes of war: WWII to the end of the Cold War.

Talk By Robin Buchanan-Dunlop

Visitors welcome £4

www.hungerfordhistorical.org.uk



Paper creations

Tap your inner creativity and enjoy the art of papercrafting

Newbury Papercrafting Show

Berkshire Stand, Newbury Racecourse

Saturday, January 28

10.30am- 4pm

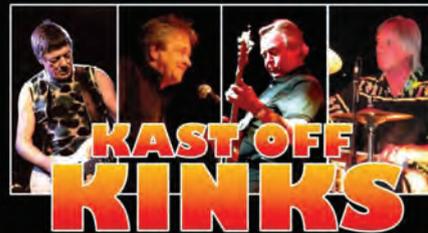
Fun and inspirational event for the paper crafter, with free make and takes, demonstrations, workshops and retailers to restock your craft cupboard.

Exhibitors include: JJD Cards, The Art of Craft, Stamosaurus, Limetree Crafts, Stamps & Memories, Petticoat Parlour, Ribbonbox, Live & Love Crafts and many more!

Admission Prices: £3 per adult. U16s Free.

Further details can be found at:

www.stampsandmemories.co.uk



For dedicated followers...

January 27

Kast Off Kinks,

Arlington Arts Centre,
Snelsmore Common,
8pm

Not quite a tribute band as the Kast off Kinks feature former members of the Kinks from through the years, including original drummer Mick Avory.

Expect all the hits including: *You Really Got Me*, *Dedicated Follower of Fashion*, *Sunny Afternoon*, *Lola*, *Waterloo Sunset*, *Apeman*, *Come Dancing* and many more for a great night out.

Box Office 01635 244246

January dates for your diary

Wednesday 4

Train to Teach Information Evening, Trinity School Library, 6pm-8pm.
Contact: Joanne Pudan (ITTCO)
traintoteach@trinity.newburyacademytrust.org

Saturday 7

To January 22, **Wasing Park's Winter Wonderland Wedding Showcase** Visits are by appointment only. Please call 0118 907 0199

Monday 9

Newbury & District Association of National Trust. Illustrated talk by Robert Farrow on *The Australian Outback*, 7.30pm, New Greenham Arts. Visitors £3. For more details call Keith Spiers 01635 30457

Newbury Embroiderers' Guild monthly meeting, 7.30pm, St Francis de Sales church hall, off Warren Road, off Andover Road, Newbury. Visitors are welcome. This will be a practical meeting and a show-and-tell. Contact: 01635 862289
info@newburyembroiderers.org.uk
www.newbury-embroiderers.co.uk

Tuesday 10

Kintbury Wildlife Group, members' New Year party, with an evening of members' own slides and talks, a fun competition, party food and drink and a chance to socialise. All welcome, non-members £2 entry please. Meeting starts at 7.30pm in the Coronation Hall, Kintbury. More details from 07796 605016

Flower demonstration, Newbury Floral Society, by area flower arranger Carole Stables. The society meet on the second Tuesday of each month at 2pm in the Royal British Legion Hall for demonstrations, workshops etc. Guests welcome. Contact 01635 253874 for further details

Saturday 14

Sounds of the Glenn Miller era, 7.45pm, Corn Exchange, Newbury.
Box office 0845 5218218

Newbury District Ornithological Club, annual members' afternoon with members' own short talks, tea and cakes and a chance to socialise. Doors open at 2pm for a prompt 2.30pm start. St Mary's Church Hall, Greenham. New members and visitors

always welcome. More details from 07796 605016.

Wednesday 18

Steve Knightley, 8pm, Ace Space, St Nicholas Road, Newbury 07905 590214

Thursday 19

To January 21, **Rare Productions presents Annie.** Times and prices vary.
Corn Exchange, Newbury.
Box Office 0845 5218218.

Sunday 22

Newbury District Ornithological Club
A full-day visit by car to Steart Marshes on Bridgewater Bay, for wintering wildfowl, raptors and waders. All welcome, but please ring 07796 605016 for more details

Thursday 26

To February 25, **Murder for two.** The Watermill, Bagnor Box office 01635 46044
Young Men : a feature-length dance film. 7pm Corn Exchange, Newbury Box Office 0845 5218218

Friday 27

Tangomotion, 7.45pm, Corn Exchange, Newbury. Box office 0845 5218218

Saturday 28

Eric Sardinias, 8pm, Arlington Arts Centre. Box office 01635 244246

Newbury District Ornithological Club. A winter morning walk on level ground around Speen Moors, suitable for all abilities. Meet in Northcroft Leisure Centre carpark at 9am. Please ring 07796 605016 for more details.

The Counterfeit Stones: Satisfaction.

7.45pm Corn Exchange, Newbury
Box office 0845 5218218

Mari Wilson: Pop Deluxe 8pm New Greenham Arts Box office 0845 5218218

Deadline for listings for February issue: Tuesday, January 10

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. (01189) 744068

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.

December competition winners:

Cathedrals Express: Laura Squire, Thatcham

Battle Proms: Shirley Lyon, Frilsham; Amanda Evans, Newbury; Grace Butler, Kingsclere

Andresa: Jan Quelch, Newbury

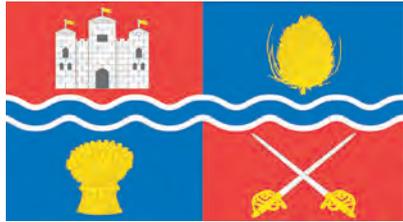
Champagne book: Anne Cannell, Stroud Green

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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ENJOY THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Shake off the Christmas tinsel. It's time for a breath of fresh air, says Wendy Tobitt from the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust.

It's time to pull on your boots, woolly gloves and scarf, and get outdoors to explore the wild countryside – there's so much just around the corner.

The trust looks after many of the most popular wildlife places in West Berkshire. The sign-posted trails make it so easy for the whole family to explore, especially if you have a pushchair or bicycles.

Snelsmore Common, off the B4494 north of Newbury, now has three waymarked trails, one of them fully accessible to wheelchairs, and a heathland wildlife crayon-rubbing trail for children to have lots of fun with.

The trust has made access to Snelsmore for horse-riders easier by removing the car park height barrier so horseboxes can park there. There are defined tracks, as well as a longer circular ride along public rights of way and the waymarked BHS Three Downs Link.

Who had a new bicycle for Christmas?

If you're keen to get everyone cycling safely off-road, then Greenham and Crookham Common is the perfect place. More than 10km km of flat gravel track is tempting for any speedy off-road fanatics.

There are car-free routes to the common from Thatcham and Newbury railway stations via the Kennet & Avon Canal towpath and bridleways.

New year, new routes

If you're a regular dog walker or jogger on Greenham and Crookham Common why not take a look at the map boards and choose a new route? You may be surprised by new encounters with wildlife.

Photographers will love the atmospheric winter skies across the commons.

Brilliant sunrises highlighting heather and gorse coated in frozen cobwebs, and glowing sunsets are a rich resource.

The wildlife trust has installed new trail signs at Paices Wood Country Parkland, including map boards, helping more people enjoy the easy-walking surfaces without fear of getting lost. You can extend your walk using public rights of way.

The trust manages several local nature reserves on behalf of West Berkshire Council, including Snelsmore Common, Greenham and Crookham Commons, Paices Wood Country Parkland and Wokefield Common.

The work to improve access to these nature reserves was funded by Grondon Waste Management Ltd and West Berkshire Council, and Greenham Common Trust after a successful Pitch to the Panel in 2015.

Contributions to improving access are helping so many more people enjoy being outdoors and discovering wildlife this winter.



Imogen Johnson-Hughes follows the heathland wildlife crayon-rubbing trail at Snelsmore Common



Frosted cobwebs on gorse



Great spotted woodpecker, one of the seven species on the wildlife crayon-rubbing trail

FURTHER INFORMATION:

www.bbwt.org.uk/nature-reserves for all Wildlife Trust nature reserves

<http://bit.ly/2frTP8t> to read Heathland Wildlife blog and download the wildlife crayon-rubbing trail information sheet.

Pictures: Sorrel Johnson-Hughes and Andrew Ward

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