

# COUNTRY LIFE<sup>®</sup>

MARCH 15, 2017

EVERY WEEK

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Little squirts: the empire of the wood ant

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## Berkshire

### A fine Georgian farmhouse

Kintbury 1 mile, Hungerford 4 miles (trains to London Paddington approximately 70 minutes)

This property is offered in excellent decorative condition throughout and is in an idyllic rural setting in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 4 reception rooms, 5 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms. Indoor swimming pool, tennis court, stabling and outbuildings. EPC: E. About 14.96 acres.

**Guide price: £3,000,000**

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## Dorset

A pretty stone farmhouse, Listed Grade II, with an extensive range of outbuildings in approximately 2 acres of gardens and grounds.

- Hall ● 3 reception rooms ● 4 bedrooms ● 2 bathrooms ● Potential annexe ● Extensive outbuildings
- Gardens and grounds

Guide price: £985,000

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## Somerset

### A newly refurbished Grade II listed Georgian family residence

Wells 8 miles, Bristol Airport 14 miles, Castle Cary 20 miles (London Paddington 90 minutes)

The subject of a meticulous modernisation programme with state of the art technology, this 6 bedroom house stands in generous gardens in a popular village in Somerset – ideal for many sought after schools. A coach house has planning potential and there is a hard tennis court. About 1.18 acres.

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## *Moated former rectory*

CHAILEY GREEN, EAST SUSSEX

Haywards Heath Station: 6 miles (London Bridge/Victoria from 46 minutes), Brighton: 14 miles, Gatwick Airport: 19 miles

Grade II listed moated country house. 4 reception rooms, double kitchen, 7/8 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, 4 bedroom barn with games room, 2 bedroom cottage, garaging, tennis court, swimming pool, formal gardens, lake, pastureland, woodland.

About 44 acres | Excess £4 million

Will Peppitt  
Savills London Country Department  
**020 3797 4159**  
wpeppitt@savills.com

Sophie Wysock-Wright  
Savills Haywards Heath  
**01444 849517**  
swwright@savills.com



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# *Country house in an exceptional setting*

HAYWARDS HEATH, WEST SUSSEX

Haywards Heath Station: 1.5 miles (London Bridge/Victoria from 46 minutes), Gatwick Airport: 13.5 miles, Central London: 42 miles

Grade II listed, 6 reception rooms, 8 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, kitchen/breakfast room, pair of semi-detached listed cottages, garaging with flat over, tennis court, swimming pool, formal gardens, mature parkland, woodland, paddocks. Flat: EPC=C

About 20.5 acres | Guide £5.75 million

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Savills London Country Department  
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pfinnegan@savills.com

Sophie Wysock-Wright  
Savills Haywards Heath  
**01444 849520**  
swwright@savills.com



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## West Sussex, Rudgwick



## An exceptional Grade II listed country house harmonising period features and contemporary design

Horsham: 7 miles (Victoria 51 mins) | Guildford Station: 14 miles (Waterloo 31 mins) | Central London: 44 miles  
Hall | Drawing room | Sitting room | Dining room | Kitchen/breakfast/family room | Entertaining suite | Wine cellar  
7 Bedrooms | 6 Bath/shower rooms | Office | Gym | Landscaped gardens and grounds | Swimming pool | Tennis court  
Garaging | Greenhouse | Outbuildings including stables and a tack room

**About 4 acres**

**A further 41 acres available by separate negotiation**

Guide Price £3,200,000



**Nicola Craddock**  
Country Department | 020 3642 4591

**Daniel Burstow**  
Guildford Office | 01483 610 270

**JSA: Knight Frank**  
Horsham Office | 01403 339 180





## Buckinghamshire

**A beautifully situated country estate in a private and accessible location**

Buckingham 6 miles, Oxford 29 miles, M1 (Junction 14) 15 miles

An extensively refurbished manor house with 6 principal reception rooms, 6 bedroom suites (all with en suite bathrooms), self contained 2 bedroom staff/guest annexe. Two 2 bedroom cottages. 16 stables, indoor arena, post and rail paddocks. Mature gardens and grounds, kitchen garden, woodland, lake and tennis court. EPC: F. About 121 acres.

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Computer Generated Image



## Hampshire

### A unique opportunity to build an attractive country house

Basingstoke 6 miles (London Waterloo 45 minutes), Newbury 12 miles, M3 (J6) 7 miles

Permission has been granted to build a 6,000 sq ft country house set in a superb rural position with good views. The accommodation will comprise; 6 bedrooms, 5 reception rooms, 5 bathrooms, range of outbuildings with Grade II listed barn and granary. About 5.3 acres.

**Guide price: £1,250,000**

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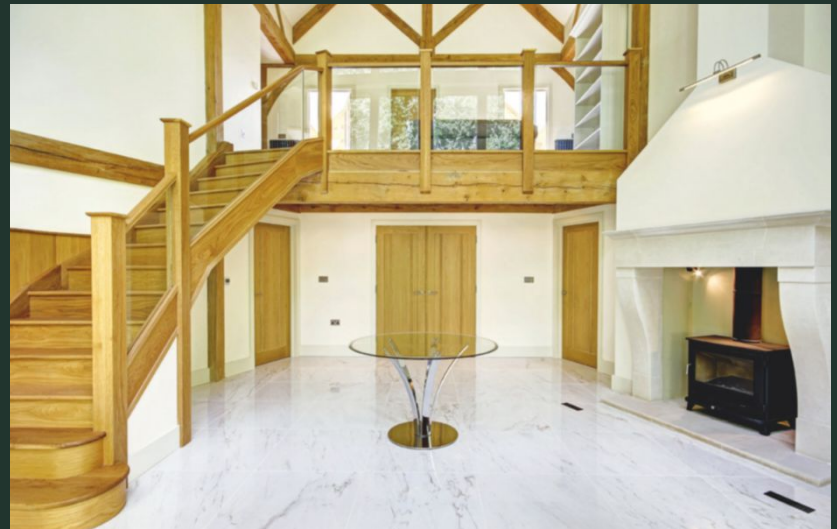
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## Berkshire

### An exceptional new green oak framed property

Newbury 4 miles, Hungerford 10 miles and Reading 20 miles

Situated on the outskirts of Newbury in an ideal location for excellent schools and communications. Beau house is an extremely well presented property, with secondary accommodation and attractive views. 3 reception rooms, 5 bedrooms and 4 bathrooms. EPC: C. About 0.54 acres.

**Guide price: £1,500,000**

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# GRADE II LISTED HOME IN THE POPULAR VILLAGE OF BREAMORE

**FORDINGBRIDGE, HAMPSHIRE £1,250,000 FREEHOLD**

Located in the pretty and sought after village of Breamore in the Avon Valley, on the North West side of the New Forest, this beautifully presented home has unspoilt views over the water meadows. In recent years the property has undergone extensive renovation to create a stunning family home whilst retaining many of the original period features including a large inglenook fireplace and flint walls.

Five bedrooms | two bathrooms | sitting room | dining room | kitchen/breakfast room | utility room | study | cloakroom with shower | 1.46 acre plot | garden | double garage

**Winkworth Salisbury**  
01722 443000 | Matthew Hallett  
mhallett@winkworth.co.uk

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## *Stunning mansion in a prestigious location*

WINDLESHAM, SURREY

Heathrow Airport 10.9 miles, Central London 28.8 miles

Reception hall, 4 reception rooms, 8 bedrooms,  
9 bathrooms, lift, leisure complex with indoor pool, sauna,  
steam room, gym, games room, cinema, extensive garaging,  
secondary accommodation, entertaining terrace, gardens  
and grounds, GIA 19,601 sq ft (1,821 sq m). EPC = B

About 3.91 acres | Guide £13.95 million

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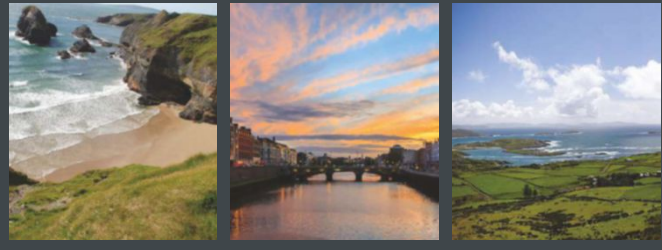
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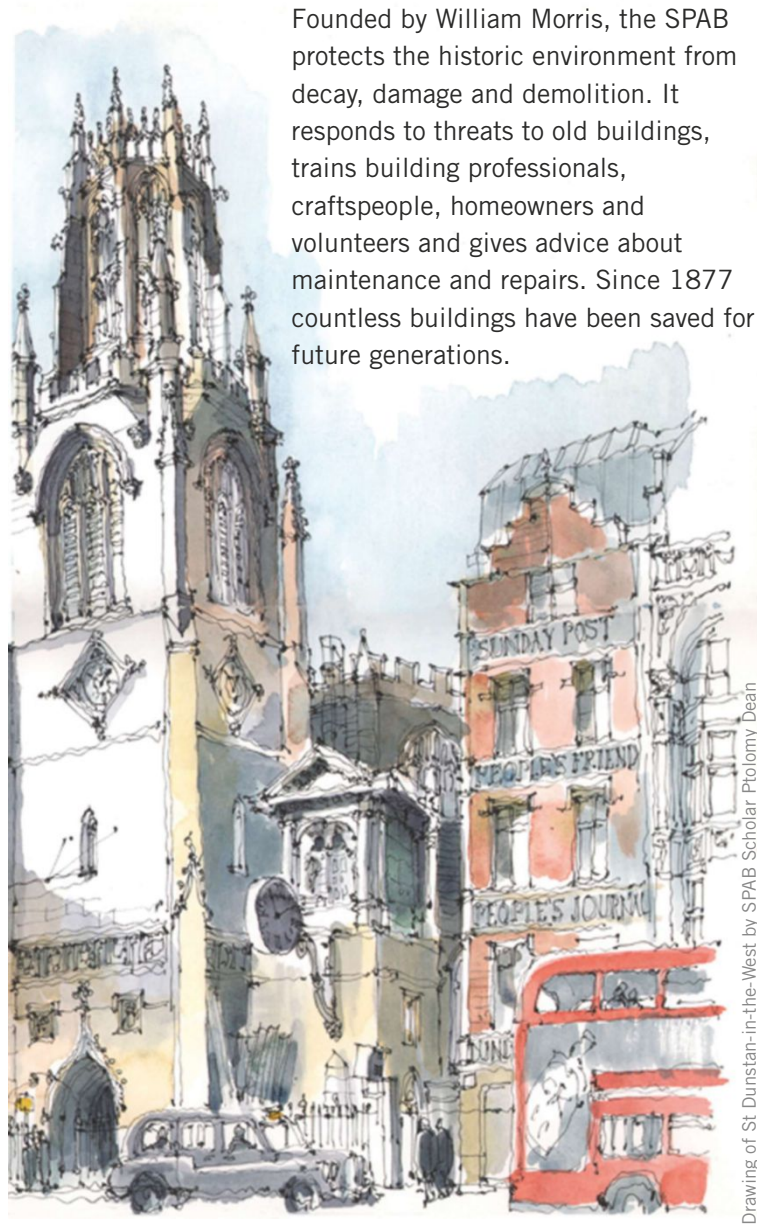
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Drawing of St Dunstan-in-the-West by SPAB Scholar Prology Dean

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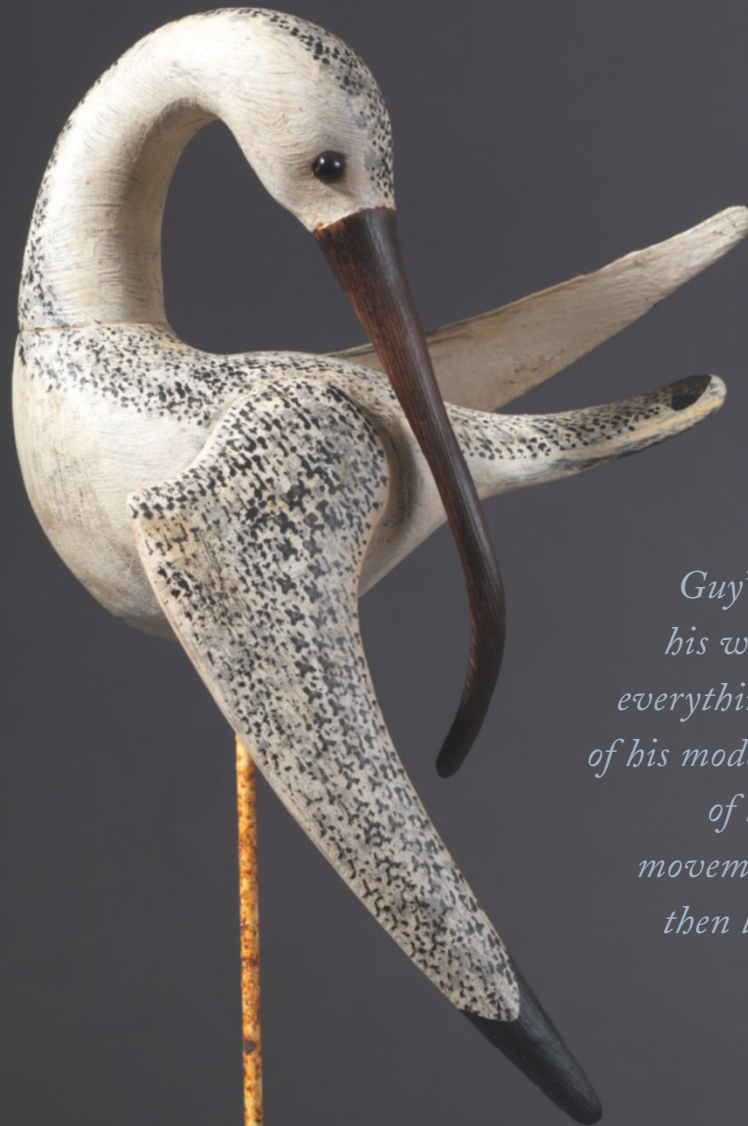
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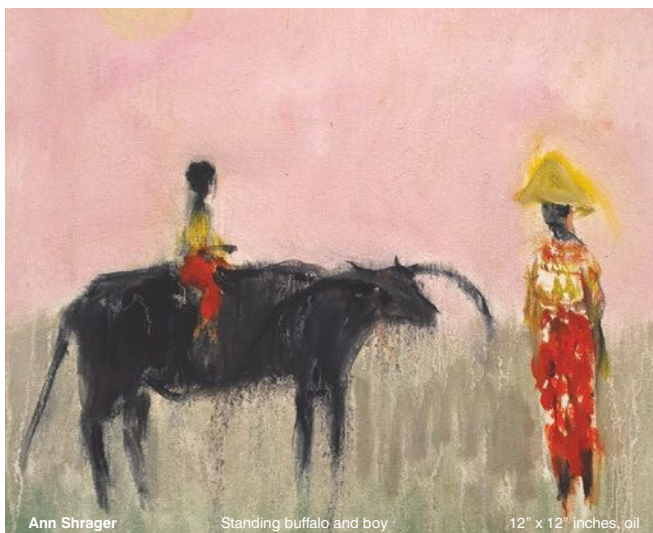


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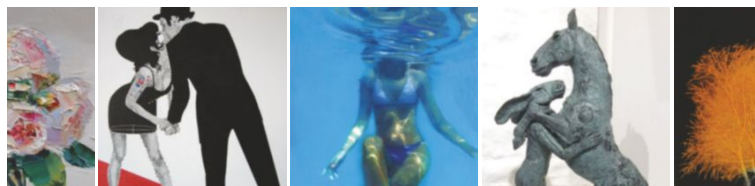
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# COUNTRY LIFE

VOL CCXI NO 11, MARCH 15, 2017



*Dr Elizabeth Gardner*

Lizzie, only daughter of Mr and Mrs James Gardner of Midhurst, West Sussex, is engaged to be married to Felix Meston, younger son of the Hon and Mrs William Meston of Mistley, Essex. They will be married at St Mary's Church, Easebourne, West Sussex, in June. Lizzie is an ecologist, working at Arup, the globally renowned design and engineering firm, to minimise the impact of development on wildlife and the environment.

*Photographed at home by Anya Campbell*



The perfect country cottage  
(Scott Anderson/Picfair)

## Magnolias

'It's the living foundation stone of one of the world's greatest gardens'

Long-living and beautiful, page 46



Wood ant

'They attack foraging predators such as badgers'

Don't tread on an ant... there might come a time when he's treading on you, page 54

## Interview

'There is a risk among the younger age groups of forgetting the soldier'

Michael Hockney supports our troops, page 40



It's not just humans who love the Aga (page 58)—Barry, a Valois Blackface lamb, is being hand-reared by owner Emma Childs. The breed was only introduced to the UK in 2014

## This week

40 'I have such respect for their bravery'

Michael Hockney, the founder of the Lord Mayor's Big Curry Lunch, talks to Michael Murray-Fennell

44 Alexandra Pringle's favourite painting

The editor in chief at Bloomsbury chooses a vibrant work by her friend that 'lights me up'

46 The cups that cheer

Yellow-flowered magnolias have long attracted the plant connoisseur, but these alluring trees deserve more widespread planting, argues Mark Griffiths

54 **Cover story** Enter the empire of the wood ant

David Profumo admires the wood ant's strictly ordered world and its ability to shoot formic acid to defend itself

56 A profusion of plaster

Roger White visits Rashleigh Barton in Devon to examine its lavish ornamental plasterwork

64 **Cover story** How to de-feather your nest

Do you despair of your adult children, still squatting in their childhood rooms? Kit Hesketh-Harvey shares his wisdom on dealing with the boomerang generation

67 When only a Subaru will do

The latest Subaru Forester may be the best 4WD for 'real country life', says Charles Rangeley-Wilson

68 **Cover story** The Aga saga

For 95 years, it's been so much more than a cooker. Julie Harding lifts the hot plate on the heart-warming kitchen feature no country house should be without

74 Feats of clay

Catherine Milner investigates the revival of enthusiasm for working with clay and discovers a new aesthetic that has transformed pottery into fine art

78 Interior design

Peter Gomez tells us what inspires Zoffany, we choose the best new fabrics and wallpapers and Giles Kime discovers what's chic for chalets

86 Kitchen Garden Cook

Melanie Johnson adds some zing with this season's new spring onions

## Every week

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Celebrating the NGS turning 90

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Joe Gibbs wonders if a dog can be a member of your family

52 In The Garden

Steven Desmond plans summer's most vibrant blooms

88 Property Market

Size doesn't matter when it comes to charm for Penny Churchill

90 Property News

Eleanor Doughty finds out why we all pray for a parsonage

94 Art Market

Huon Mallalieu remembers the bravery of two nuns in a Hong Kong plague

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Corinne Julius is uplifted by Josef Frank's colourful designs

98 Performing Arts

Michael Billington would like us all to sit down and pay attention

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# A marriage made in platinum

**I**N November, The Queen notches up another milestone: the 70th anniversary of her marriage to The Duke of Edinburgh. Epic marriages are a statement of the commitment of one person to another, despite all the trials—emotional and otherwise—that beset them. Fewer people stay the course these days, which means that a platinum anniversary—seven decades—must be viewed with awe.

Royal marriages have not always been so happy, but this one, which far exceeds any other in longevity, has given the nation a backdrop of stability. There's no question of the personal fulfilment Her Majesty has derived from it and, if Prince Philip has sometimes been frustrated by his role, his grace in carrying it out will go down as a model for correct male behaviour in an increasingly common situation as more women take top jobs.

The Queen is famously resistant to fuss on her own behalf, but might make an

exception when she and her husband share the spotlight equally.

How should we celebrate it? The architect Bryan Avery, whose buildings include the Museum of the Moving Image and the BFI London Imax, has an idea. Another great monarch is remembered in the Queen Victoria Memorial scheme, which created the Mall and Admiralty Arch. At right angles to this is another axis: Broad Walk through Green Park. A double avenue of London planes, the Broad Walk is—or should be—reached through the magnificent Canada Gate and runs up to the equally splendid old gates from Devonshire House.

Neither gate is ever opened, however—the carriage drive, which was presumably projected for the avenue, was never built. Mr Avery proposes Broad Walk should become a fountain, made of half-a-dozen rectangular pools of water flowing, one to another, down the gradient. There is much to commend this proposal.

Green Park is almost entirely trees and, although parts are intensively used, the central Broad Walk is strangely empty. Mr Avery's Great Cascade, as he calls it, would be a popular addition to the capital, with some of the qualities (but not the glitches) of the Diana Memorial Fountain in Hyde Park. Jets could project from one fountain to another; mist might be generated on special occasions. It leaves room for The King's Troop to fire gun salutes.

In their straitened condition, Royal Parks may not want to take on any more responsibilities, but its objection would surely be overcome if a maintenance fund could be provided. The Queen's prestige is such that, in these days of super wealth, a single donor might be found to cover the cost.

There may be other ideas of how the anniversary should be celebrated and we look forward to hearing them, but we believe that the Great Cascade deserves consideration. Let's get cracking on it.

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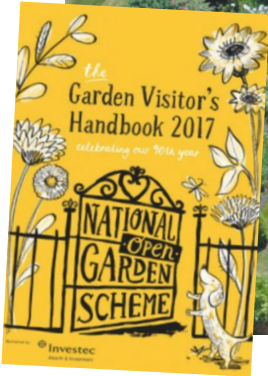
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The West Garden at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, was the first garden to open under the National Garden Scheme

# NGS turns 90

**N**INETY years ago, in 1927, a shilling was all that was required to gain entry to the gardens of Hatfield House in Hertfordshire, the first to open on behalf of what is now called the National Garden Scheme (note Garden, not Gardens, as announced yesterday) (NGS); visitors could 'wander where they liked', wrote an excited *Times* reporter.

The scheme had been established earlier that year by the Queen's Nursing Institute to contribute to a memorial fund in aid of patron Queen Alexandra, following her death in 1925. Of the original 600 gardens that opened in 1927, more than 80 are still part of the scheme—Sandringham in Norfolk and Ramster in Surrey are the only two to have been involved for every one of the charity's 90 years.

To date, the NGS has raised more than £45 million for its beneficiary charities, which include Marie Curie and Macmillan Cancer Support; upping the shilling-a-head charge in the 1970s helped enlarge the coffers.

Coinciding with the start of COUNTRY LIFE's weekly NGS feature (*Notebook*, page 35), the new Yellow Book (above)—officially *The Garden Visitor's Handbook 2017*—the essential guide to gardens opening for the NGS, is out and it's had a special anniversary makeover. COUNTRY LIFE readers can purchase the book for £9.99 (RRP £12.99)—visit [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk) and enter the code CLMGVH17. Furthermore, May 27–29 is the NGS's Anniversary Weekend, with 400 gardens open as well as craft fairs and exhibitions.

Steve Young/Alamy; Reuters/Alamy; Gordon Close



Hedging bets over nests

**F**ARMERS are petitioning Defra to reverse the August hedge-cutting ban, a move that, unsurprisingly, doesn't have the backing of some wildlife charities. In 2015, Defra extended the ban, which started on March 1, to September 1 to protect nesting birds, despite farmers saying it's a pointless exercise as birds have fledged by then. They also observe that local-authority—and private garden—hedges can be cut from August 1 and that contractors, racing to get work done before wet weather and soft ground in September make a mess of the fields, are losing work.

However, a recent analysis by the BTO of 50 farmland-bird species shows that, although 24 of them—thrushes and tits, for instance—

were unlikely to have young nesting into August, 14 others have extended breeding seasons. These include birds listed as being of conservation concern, such as the spotted flycatcher, dunnock and linnnet.

The BTO's Dave Leech, who led the study, points out that species such as goldfinch, bullfinch and yellowhammer may still have chicks nesting in September. Dr Leech adds: 'This is likely to be a conservative estimate of hedgerow use as it can take fledglings a week or two to become proficient at flying, during which time they are likely to be dependent on the cover afforded by the hedge.'

The petition, organised by *Farmers Weekly*, had 1,100 signatures last week ([www.fwi.co.uk/hedge-petition](http://www.fwi.co.uk/hedge-petition)). *KG*



Among the 550 works at the Royal Society of British Artists' landmark 300th show, at Mall Galleries, London SW1, from March 22 to April 1, is this cheerful mixed-media piece by Gordon Close, *Sculpture and Washing*. The selling exhibition (prices start from £125) has 'a rich seam of brightly coloured, naive, jolly Surrealism, as well as works that hint at something more sinister'. Visit [www.mallgalleries.org.uk](http://www.mallgalleries.org.uk) for further information.

Round the corner on Pall Mall, Panter & Hall, London SW1, offers the rare opportunity to buy original artwork, paintings and drawings by Sam Toft, whose devotees find her characters Mr and Mrs Mustard and their expanding menagerie of pets led by faithful hound Doris enchanting. 'We Came, We Looked, We Liked The View' runs until April 7 ([www.panterandhall.com](http://www.panterandhall.com)).

### Good week for Smiley's people

John le Carré is to resurrect his famously oblique hero, George Smiley, in *A Legacy of Spies*, a new novel due in September

### Stone curlews

The prehistoric-looking farmland bird has improved in conservation status, to amber; the RSPB deems it self-supporting, with 400 pairs

### Barnacle geese

A public appeal has raised £285,000 to expand their Solway Firth landing place at RSPB Mersehead by 112 hectares (277 acres)

### Bad week for

#### Spuds

After centuries, we've fallen out of love with the humble potato, but not due to carb-free diets; sales are down 20% from 10 years ago, but crisps and chips are still popular

#### Renters

Skyrocketing property prices in parts of the UK mean houses are 'earning' more per year than the people who live in them, says Halifax

#### The Manx

The April 2016 census found that the population of the Isle of Man has fallen for the first time in 30 years, due to an ageing society and young people moving away

## Send in the clones

TAMARILLO, the striking bright-bay gelding that won Badminton in 2004 and Burghley (2008) plus an Olympic medal, was a superior stamp of eventer, described by his rider William Fox-Pitt (*below*) as a horse of a lifetime: graceful in dressage, fast and brave across country and an agile if cheeky showjumper. We won't see his like again—or will we?

His breeder, Finn Guinness, a genetics expert, expressed frustration that the line ended there—until he had the idea of cloning Tamarillo at Replica Farm, an equine cloning service in the USA. The resultant colt, Tomatillo, is now four years old and his first mares are due to foal this year.

Mr Guinness is offering a nomination to breed from Tomatillo as a lot in the silent auction at the Dubarry Horn and Hound Ball in aid of the Hunt Staff Benefit Society at Cheltenham Racecourse on April 22. The mare can be covered naturally at the Guinness family's Biddesdon Stud in Wiltshire or through frozen semen.

Other lots include a day at Wincanton races as an owner with champion trainer Paul Nicholls. Tickets cost £100 (01285 653001; [www.hs-bs.org.uk](http://www.hs-bs.org.uk)). KG



### The song that started Beatlemania

In a pivotal moment 50 years ago, The Beatles recorded *All you need is Love* for the first time at the Abbey Road studio. It was a live BBC broadcast—in fact, the world's first live, international, satellite TV production—and it reached more than 400 million people worldwide.

One photographer, David Magnus, was granted exclusive access and some of his rare, behind-the-scenes shots have never been published, until now. A new show, 'The Beatles Unseen', featuring this remarkable collection of images from 1967, opens tomorrow at Proud Chelsea, 161, King's Road, London SW3, and runs until May 14. Visit [www.proud.co.uk](http://www.proud.co.uk)



## Heritage hearsay

**C**ONTROVERSIAL though the tunnel may be (*COUNTRY LIFE*, February 22 and March 8, 2017), Stonehenge has been granted the Special Award for Heritage Achievement in recognition of English Heritage's work to reinterpret the site.

Other Hudson Heritage Awards winners, announced yesterday by Lady Cobham, Chairman of VisitEngland, at Goldsmiths' Hall,

**English Heritage has been rewarded for its work on Stonehenge with a special achievement award**

London EC2, include Norman Heddingham Castle, Essex, for best wedding venue; 18th-century picturesque 30-acre garden Plumpton Rocks, North Yorkshire, for best hidden gem; Palladian Holkham Hall, Norfolk, for best shopping; and Sherborne Castle, Dorset, which was built by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1594, for best food. Visit [www.hudsons-awards.co.uk](http://www.hudsons-awards.co.uk) for further information.



The only marble sculpture by Michelangelo in Britain—*The Virgin and Child with the Infant St John*, or the Taddei Tondo—has been lent by the Royal Academy for the first time in 50 years to feature in 'Michelangelo & Sebastiano' at the National Gallery, London WC2 (until June 25).

Commissioned in about 1504/5, the tondo depicts the infant St John the Baptist presenting a goldfinch (symbolising the Passion) to the Christ Child, who shies away towards his mother, perhaps anticipating his future destiny. It is 'one of the most important Renaissance works of art in Britain,' says Dr Gabriele Finaldi, Director of the National Gallery. It will return to Piccadilly next year to be redisplayed as part of the Royal Academy's 250th anniversary exhibitions.

## Roman relic unearthed at Blenheim

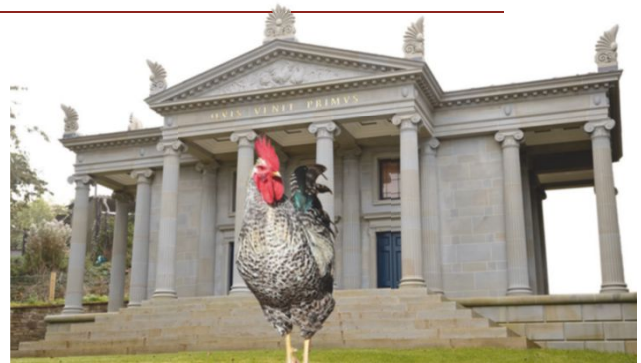
**A**N old flowerpot in the grounds of Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, has been found to actually be a Roman sarcophagus worth £300,000.

The 1,700-year-old marble coffin—which features a frieze depicting an inebriated Dionysus, a drunken satyr and other revellers including Hercules and Ariadne—has been out in the rock garden, exposed to the elements and used as a tulip planter, for 100 years; before that, it was used as a trough at the base of a fountain. The discovery was made by chance, when an antiques dealer visited.

Believed to have been brought to Blenheim by the 5th Duke of

Marlborough in the 19th century, the 6ft 6in-long sarcophagus is one of the few items the Duke kept hold of after mounting debts led to the sale of his collections. Once home to the earthly remains of a Roman noble, it has now undergone extensive conservation work and is on display inside the palace.

Nicholas Banfield, of Cliveden Conservation, who has overseen the restoration, comments: 'The piece is actually in remarkable condition considering it has withstood seemingly aggressive environments, particularly that of a fountain receptacle.'



## Peck, peck, who's there?

**C**LUCKINGHAM PALACE, a 16ft-tall Palladian-style hen temple (the word house is simply not enough), has recently been recognised in the Stone Federation's Natural Stone Awards. Located in English Bicknor, Gloucestershire, it was built by Smallwood Architects, using local Forest of Dean stone and is said to have cost £150,000 to create. It covers 775sq ft, just under the size of the average UK house (818sq ft).

'Since the MPs' expenses scandal, the duck (or hen) house has taken on a new significance,' comments John Goodall, *COUNTRY LIFE*'s Architectural Editor, 'yet birds and poultry do need space to roost and, if you want to make a feature of such structures, why not do something splendid with them? This astonishing chicken house is a case in point, built in a neo-Classical idiom like a great country house.'



Brian Janssen/Alamy Stock Photo



Royal Mail has issued a set of 10 colourful stamps celebrating the late David Bowie, including artwork for six albums covers, including *Hunky Dory* and *Aladdin Sane*, and four tours

## COUNTRY LIFE at the Game Fair

On July 28–30, the Game Fair will descend, for the first time, on Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, and COUNTRY LIFE is happy to announce a partnership with the event, along with Time Inc stablemates *The Field*, *Horse & Hound*, *Shooting Times*, *Shooting Gazette* and *Sporting Gun*.

As the largest outdoor countryside-themed event in the world, the fair is set to attract about 120,000 visitors and 1,000 exhibitors and, this year, COUNTRY LIFE will be running The Village Green, an area featuring cricket matches, a Tiptree gin bar, cream teas, deckchairs and picnickers. Watch this space for reader-exclusive ticket offers and visit [www.thegamefair.org](http://www.thegamefair.org) for further information.

## If you go down to the woods today

CHARACTERS from *The Gruffalo*, the best-selling picture book written by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Scheffler, are being brought to life in a new, free augmented-reality app, launched by the Forestry Commission England and Magic Light Pictures.

The Gruffalo Spotter can be downloaded and used at 26 forests across the country; families can follow clues on an interactive trail to track their favourite characters, learning about woodland creatures on the way. Once families have spotted the 3D characters, they can use the app to take photos with them.

'This exciting development will deliver a completely different forest experience for our visitors,' says Bridgette Hall of Forestry Commission England. 'The Gruffalo is a world-renowned story and to be able to bring the characters to life in their natural setting is fantastic. It's great we've had the opportunity to join the two worlds of technology and Nature together in a sensitive way.'



## Country Mouse *Springing into action*

WHENEVER my husband telephones me at work, I fear that some disaster has befallen him or one of our dogs. Usually, it's because he can't find something, but the purpose of this call was to announce excitedly that, not only was there frogspawn in our pond, but also a couple of smooth (or common) newts.

For weeks, he's been peering into the murky depths in the hope of spotting the gelatinous masses of clear spheres containing black dots and he was beyond happy when the spawn duly appeared. No doubt the recently paired newts—which look like tiny, underwater dragons to me—were pleased to see it, too. Having spent the winter hiding under rocks and paving slabs, it will provide them with much-needed nourishment as they, too, prepare to breed.

After a trip to an independent, family-run supermarket at Dikes of Stalbridge—where we bought locally reared steak, Dorset Blue Vinney cheese and knobbly Jerusalem artichokes—we sat on the edge of the pond and observed the secretive newts as they nibbled their lunch. As we enjoyed a cup of tea and our old labrador, Sock, lolled in the warm rays of the sun, our terrier, Chester, embarked on a mad half-hour, dashing round the garden at a rapid rate of knots. All creatures, it seems, are full of the joys of spring. **PL**

## Town Mouse *A Roly-Poly disaster*



IN my travels, I'm often compelled by delays to use station platforms as offices. It's inconvenient and frequently frustrating, but, this week, three station waits gave me unexpected pleasure.

East Midlands Parkway huddles improbably beneath eight vast power-station cooling towers. Splendidly bathed in evening sunshine, I became quite enamoured of them by the end of an hour. Two days later, Newcastle was an exhilarating contrast. Here, I escaped from the commuters bustling to work and joined a small group of trainspotters at the end of a platform. While they enjoyed the locomotives, I admired the keep of the neighbouring castle. Finally, there was the rural peace of Alnmouth. Locals conversed cheerfully across the silent tracks and I decided to go in search for a cup of tea. My delay, I was kindly assured at the caravan shop, was nothing to the one caused earlier in the week by a suicide on the line.

One of these prolonged waits saved me from the task of preparing a children's costume of a Roly-Poly Bird for school. I was inwardly congratulating myself on the release until it emerged that colourful plumage had been cut from a pile of crucial papers that—with no one to protect them—had been gathered from my desk. **JG**



## Quiz of the week

- 1) In which year was Channel 4 launched?
- 2) What is Hansen's disease more commonly known as?
- 3) Which artist created the lions at the foot of Nelson's Column?
- 4) If something is anserine, what type of bird does it relate to?
- 5) Which king was the target of the Rye House Plot?

## 100 years ago in COUNTRY LIFE March 17, 1917



IN the graveyard of Ripley Parish Church, some four miles north of Harrogate, is to be seen a 'Weeping-Cross'. It is a curious massive object carved out of stone, with recesses cut into the lower tier on which the penitents would kneel during their supplications, a somewhat forbidding ordeal during such weather as prevailed when the writer recently visited the church, when the recesses were filled with snow. Archaeologists state that this relic of early British Christianity dates undoubtedly from Roman occupation of our land.

## Wicked words

We invite people like that to tea, but we don't marry them

Lady Chetwode on future son-in-law John Betjeman

- 1) 1982 2) Leprosy 3) Sir Edwin Henry Landseer 4) A goose 5) Charles II

## The nature of things Horseradish

THE horseradish I planted last time disappeared without trace, perhaps because it was assigned a spot that was just too inhospitable, even for as tough a customer as *Armoracia rusticana*. It's time to give it another go, however, and a better location, for this pungent plant of singularly peppery roots is at its best when dug straight from the ground.

Native to Europe and long ago naturalised in Britain, the benefits of this hardy perennial member of the cabbage family are legion. In Greek mythology, horseradish had its own mythical status, being considered worth its weight in gold. Certainly, many health benefits have been attributed to the plant over the centuries, including as an antioxidant, a stimulant to healthy digestion and circulation, an antibiotic and a diuretic. Its natural 'heat' is said to be beneficial to rheumatic joints, to ease stiff muscles and sciatica.

Horseradish likes an open, bright position, but will cope with some dappled shade and requires free-draining, but nutrient-rich soil. The thick roots will develop better with dependable moisture in the soil and can be dug up



at any time to use while very fresh and pungent. The time-honoured method of preserving grated or even whole roots is to plunge them in white-wine vinegar, which maintains the desired white colour and heat, for its flavours are very volatile and dissipate rapidly when exposed to air. **KBH**

Illustration by Bill Donohoe

## Time to buy



**The Cadogan travel bag,** £585, Fairfax & Favor (01760 338199; www.fairfaxandfavor.com)



**Golden Four Pearl Pea Pod pendant,** £100, Michael Michaud (020-7942 2000; www.vam.ac.uk)



'She was becoming herself and daily casting aside that fictitious self which we assume like a garment with which to appear before the world'

*The Awakening,*  
Kate Chopin

**Bumble Bee glass coaster,** £3.95, Sarah Boddy (<http://sarahboddy.com>)

## Unmissable events

### Game fair

**March 18–19 West of England Game Fair**, Royal Bath & West Showground, Somerset. Shooting, fishing, Gundogs, wildfowling, falconry and ferrets, plus archery, blacksmithing, vintage tractors, country food and cookery. Tickets from £5 online; from £7 on the gate ([www.westofenglandgamefair.co.uk](http://www.westofenglandgamefair.co.uk); 01392 421500)

### Flower festival

**March 18–19 Kempley Daffodil Weekend**, Kempley Village Hall, Gloucestershire. Free guided walks, plant stalls, a raffle and refreshments will all be on offer as part of the Golden Triangle Daffodil Festival. There will also be a scarecrow show at St Edward's Church and St Mary's will be open for access to the ancient frescoes and wall paintings ([www.daffs.org.uk](http://www.daffs.org.uk))

### Exhibition

**Until March 25 'New Paintings'**, Bohun Gallery, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. Oil paintings by Glaswegian artist James McDonald RSW, including still-lives highlighting the beauty in the most mundane objects (above) and poignant portraits ([www.bohungallery.co.uk](http://www.bohungallery.co.uk); 01491 576228)

**Until May 2 'Four Friends'**, Boat House Gallery, Flatford, Suffolk. National Trust-hosted exhibition of the works of four painters—Zara Chancellor, Mathilde van der Does de Willebois, Charlotte Stewart and Dina Southwell—all inspired by the local area ([www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk); 01206 297201)

**Until April 21 'Architecture as Metaphor'**, Griffin Gallery, Evesham Street, London W11. Work from more than 30 artists from the UK, Germany and Holland exploring the relationship between architecture, design and fine art (<http://griffingallery.co.uk>; 020-8424 3203)

### Plant fair

**March 19 Rare Plant Fair at the Bishop's Palace**, Wells, Somerset. Perennials, shrubs, trees, alpines, bulbs and exotic plants from expert nursery owners will be for sale in the historic, 14-acre gardens. Visitors can also explore the well-pools, the private chapel and ruined great hall and meet the famous mute swans that reside by the moat. 10am–4pm, entry £5 ([www.rareplantfair.co.uk](http://www.rareplantfair.co.uk); 0845 468 1368)

### Book now

**April 29 An Introduction to Traditional Stone Carving Tech-**



**niques**, Birtley estate, Guildford, Surrey. Expert advice and guidance from experienced carver Simon Keeley, from drawing designs through to creating maquettes and, finally, approaching your stone block. 10am–4pm, £85 plus £10 for stone (07939 337441; [www.simonkeeley.co.uk](http://www.simonkeeley.co.uk))

**March 31–April 2 All About Piano!** Institut français du Roy-

aume-Uni, Queensberry Place, London SW7. Festival celebrating all forms of piano, with concerts from young talents and international stars (both classical and jazz), talks, masterclasses, activities for children and an art exhibition. Visit the website for event details and to book (020-7871 3515; [www.itsallaboutpiano.co.uk](http://www.itsallaboutpiano.co.uk))



**Wickets, Langley Upper Green, Essex CB11 4RY**  
**March 19, 11am–4pm. £4.50, children free**

A charming country garden in the rolling north Essex countryside, its peaceful atmosphere is enhanced by views out over the surrounding fields—especially through the silver birches surrounding a large pond. Spring planting, an elegant bridge over the water, resident chickens and delicious refreshments are just some of the delights on offer.



## Knight Time

By Margaret Noble



## Saturday Knight Fever

## What to drink this week

### 2008: an underrated vintage



They might be well-kept secrets, but the year certainly had its highlights, discloses Harry Eyres

Unfortunately, 2008 is nobody's favourite vintage. Indeed, that year of financial crisis is, for many, highly forgettable. Crisis can, of course, turn into opportunity, even if the two Chinese characters that make up the word don't exactly mean 'danger' and 'opportunity' as John F. Kennedy, among others, liked to repeat—the second character, 'ji', means something more like 'critical point'. The 2008 vintage in Bordeaux suffered from coming on the market during a financial downturn, but it also preceded the two stellar vintages of 2009 and 2010—as a result, prices have always been quite reasonable. The year also produced a very good vintage in Champagne.

### Why you should be drinking them

It was one of the latest Bordeaux vintages in recent times, but those who waited long enough in 2008 achieved sufficient ripeness with classic balance, resulting in one of those good, but lesser vintages that some have always considered more typical of Bordeaux than big, ripe years such as 2009 and 2010. In Champagne, the grapes came in perfectly ripe and with excellent acidity.

### What to drink

Château Pichon-Longueville, Comtesse de Lalande is always among the more expressive, less heavy-weight Pauillac crus and the 2008 (£120; [www.thewhiskyexchange.com](http://www.thewhiskyexchange.com)) is typical, with focused red-fruit aromas and voluptuous elegance on the palate. Pensées de Lafleur 2008 (below, £230 per three; [www.justerinis.com](http://www.justerinis.com)) is a wonderful example of this unique, almost Burgundian Pomerol: fascinating, complex and fragrant. As for Pol Roger Brut Vintage 2008 (£46 a bottle in bond; [www.laywheeler.com](http://www.laywheeler.com)), this is a full, rich and virile Champagne with perfect, crisp ripeness—it might just be as good as the marvellous 2002.



Dreamstime; Margaret Noble; Country Life Picture Library; Richard Griffin/Shutterstock; James McDonald/Courtesy of Bohun Gallery



## Letter of the week

### A stitch in time



I WAS interested to read of Mrs Willmott's son's use of her sewing machine (*Letters*, February 22), but I believe that my machine trumps hers. When I was married in 1982, I was given an electric Singer.

My husband bought a third-hand Laverda combine harvester, but the chaff skirt needed replacing. We couldn't afford a new one, so I bought a length of black PVC. My husband climbed onto the kitchen table and fed the metal supporting bracket through the machine, while I used the foot pedals and sewed the material onto it. We fitted the skirt onto the combine and it was still in place when we sold it 20 years later.

The sewing machine has sewed many miles of garments since and is still in regular use today.

*Sally Machin, Nottinghamshire*

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



### A truly noteworthy portrait

THE new £5 note has excited much comment, but what interests me is the photograph of Sir Winston Churchill. This is his most famous portrait, taken by Yousuf Karsh (*right*) in 1941, a low point in the Second World War. Churchill was in Canada and, on the day in question, he had just addressed the Canadian Parliament with his 'some chicken, some neck' speech.

At its conclusion, he left the chamber and had a cigar thrust into his hand. Another step and he saw the photographer, but wouldn't surrender his cigar. Karsh came forward, removed it from Churchill's mouth and immediately took the picture. The image was captured and the war was won.

We should all be grateful to Karsh, but where is his name on the note? I trust that this will be put right in future editions.  
*Anthony Houghton Brown, Buckinghamshire*



### Back to Basildon

BASILDON PARK near Pangbourne, Berkshire, was built by John Carr of York for Sir Francis Sykes in 1783 to replace an old manor house of unknown origin



that stood in the park nearby. *Ancestral Homes of Berkshire* (1884) mentions the old house being 'neither so large nor so convenient as its successor but much more picturesque'.

In recent years, no illustration of the old house has been found, but, clearly, in 1884, a depiction existed, perhaps with the annotation of Bastedene, Bestelden, Basselden, Bassildon or even Basildon. It would be a source of great scholarly interest if any of your readership could help with identification.  
*The Marquis of Huntly, Oxfordshire*

### The green, green grass of home

HOW strange that Agromenes's views on farming in New Zealand (*'The grass isn't greener down under'*, March 1) are so different to my experience and knowledge, but then he's clearly a supporter of permanent subsidies and the Common Agricultural Policy, which has been a hugely expensive mistake, not just for the EU, but for how it has restricted opportunities to eliminate poverty in the developing world.

I was born in New Zealand and have family and friends out there, including farmers, who keep me well informed. Agriculture is vitally important to the economy and when subsidies were phased out about 30 years ago, against all the usual predictions, farmers were quick to adapt to market demands. They also had the incentive to improve efficiency and productivity. The business has grown and farming has prospered as a result.

*Paul Knocker, Isle of Wight*



### How to hit the housing target

THERE are more than 48,000 towns, cities and villages in the UK—putting seven dwellings in each per year would exceed the Government's housing targets and there are lots of marginally viable retail premises that could be converted. The rub is that people need cars, but where would they park? Well, this is the 21st century and we have self-driving cars that could go away and park themselves, returning when called! Ah, but where would they wait? There are lots of roads—put parking tunnels under some of them.



*Dr Arthur E. Smith, Lancashire*

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## What's bugging you?

**M**RS THOMPSON is happy to Hoover up living ladybirds by the hundred, is she (*Letters, March 1*)? Will she—and her neighbours—be equally happy to spend time and money dealing with greenfly and blackfly infestations in the garden come summer, I wonder? So much better to sweep the ladybirds up gently and rehome them, leaving Nature to do what she does best.  
*Sue Thomas, Bristol*

**I**N reply to your letter from Lincolnshire, we too have had trouble with ladybirds swarming our house. For the past couple of years, they have gathered in the autumn around the heading of our curtains and windows. At night, they crawl over us—my husband even found one in his ear—and I'm sure that they bite.

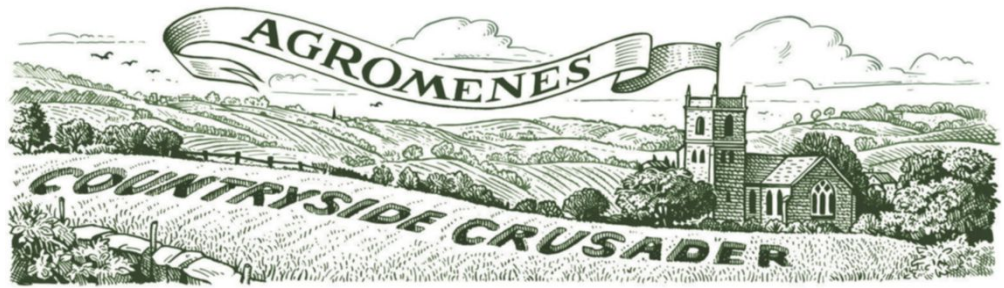
I try to collect them in a box and take them to winter in the greenhouse to eat any aphids, but they disappear and again we find them in the house. I used to like ladybirds, but now we regard them as pests.  
*Janet Dawkins, Surrey*

## COUNTRY LIFE MARCH 22



How the Frenchie became top dog; playing a Scrabble champion; the rural publishing revolution; the shaping of Nature; plus a Scottish beauty and spear-fishing

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# It's time to demand a revolution

**T**HERE comes a moment when we have to give up on reform and demand revolution. It isn't something that Agromenes normally proposes, but Phillip Hammond's first Spring Budget is the last straw. Alloting £300 million to a hardship fund for those hit by Business Rate hikes and a special deal for pubs is simply sticking plaster for a system that is clearly bleeding to death.

Business Rates are no longer a sensible way to raise money for local purposes. They were originally designed to ensure that those who made money in a community should be levied for the services that were locally provided. Locally set, locally levied and locally spent: it was a logical and wholly defensible system. Regular and independent uprating was the way in which the burden was shared and the rateable value did provide some reasonable surrogate for ability to pay.

On a practical level, none of these conditions now obtain. The Business Rates are largely fixed by national regulation, largely collected for the Treasury and largely distributed according to a national formula. In general, all businesses put money into a pot, have no control over where it goes and are subject to rating revaluations that result in huge winners and losers on a basis that is at best opaque and, at worst, utterly incomprehensible.

It's a bad deal for all those who are caught by the requirements, but what makes it worse is that the deal loads on businesses costs that are not borne by their competitors. The local shopkeeper pays his rates, but his mail-order competitor doesn't, yet every mail-order house benefits from law and order, trading standards, education and roads, all of which are provided, at least in part, from the Business Rates.

Retail traders in cities and market towns are struggling to compete. That excellent chain John Lewis, owned and operated by its staff,

has had to cut dramatically this year's payout to its partners, so difficult has trading become. All over the country, in great cities as well as small villages, pubs, garages and shops are closing, their demise hastened by the Business Rate system. No one wants people to be favoured simply on grounds of tradition, but this is about fairness. We all should be angry when some are charged, but others get away with paying practically nothing.

Such a situation is the antithesis of a free market. Shackling one group while advantaging its competitors should be wholly unacceptable to a Tory chancellor, yet Mr Hammond's Budget only talked of general consultation on Business Rates and there is no hint that he's

“The burden of paying for services should be placed on sales”

envisaging the necessary revolution. Country people, in particular, should be concerned at this. The present system is damaging everywhere, but it's particularly destructive in rural areas, where there are already so many other fac-

tors that undermine the ability of businesses to survive.

Property should no longer be the basis upon which local taxes are levied. The burden of paying for services should be placed on sales. Whether we take Brexit as an opportunity to impose additional VAT or to institute a simple service sales tax, the key factor is to ensure that the new arrangements are fair to all.

There would be no Business Rates, but the equivalent total would be raised on everything you buy, whether by mail-order or from the local supermarket. Small businesses and start-ups would be exempt in order to maintain rural services and encourage the entrepreneur, but, otherwise, there would be a level playing field, demanding no complex revaluations. This concept may be revolutionary, but its time has come.



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## Athena Cultural Crusader

### What's the point of keeping it real?

**H**AS technology brought us to the point when a copy is as good as the real thing? The question has been posed by critics in response to the achievements of the Madrid-based firm Factum Arte, which specialises in cutting-edge photographic and 3D printing techniques to make replicas of works of art. Athena can testify that they are astonishingly good.

At Waddesdon last year, as described in *COUNTRY LIFE* (August 17), the firm copied the Louis XIV Savonnerie carpet in the Red Drawing Room to allow visitors temporarily to walk across the room, but it looked so realistic that people needed persuasion to tread on it. This week, the National Gallery unveils its 'Sebastiano and Michelangelo' exhibition (*Visual Arts, March 8*), which includes a full-scale replica of the murals

in the Borgherini Chapel in San Pietro in Montorio in Rome. At Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill, copies have been made of paintings sold from the house in the 19th century.

**‘The more a work is reproduced, the greater the aura of the original,’**

Athena recalls the 1990s restoration of the Queen's House at Greenwich, when photographic copies were installed of Orazio Gentileschi's 1630s ceiling paintings in the Great Hall, which had been removed in the 18th century: they looked flat and plastic and have long since been removed. By contrast, Factum Arte's reproduction of Veronese's vast *Wedding at Cana*, recently installed on the end wall of the refectory of Palladio's San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, is so accurate that it replicates the seams made as a result of Napoleon's troops cutting up the original to take it to the Louvre, where it remains. Now, the room makes visual sense again, although it still seems disappointing that the Louvre can't lend the original back, as it is thought too fragile to move.

Does this mean that the original works are in some sense devalued? Athena doesn't think so. Even if the resources of virtual reality were added to the technology of Factum Arte, a copy of the Borgherini Chapel in London can never replicate the experience of visiting the original, yet, famously, the cultural critic Walter Benjamin argued in 1936, in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, that modern techniques of reproduction, notably photography, stripped works of art of their 'aura' of genius and eternal mystery. In fact, the reverse has proved the truth—the more a work is reproduced, the greater the aura of the original, as the millions who visit the *Mona Lisa* can testify.


Factum Arte's reproductions stand in a long tradition of copying works of art—in bronze and marble as well as paint. Few people now can do this convincingly, although the recent appearance on the market of some uncannily good fakes of works by Frans Hals, Parmigianino and even Gentileschi have revised views about the disappearance of such traditional skills. As Factum Arte points out, it relies on old-fashioned craftsmanship itself, in, for example, carving and gilding. A copy may look as good as the real thing, but, illogically perhaps, knowing it's a copy immediately awakens a desire to see the original.

Fred van Deelen

## This week: Ravilious



These three panels by Eric Ravilious, presumed lost, came to light when the dining hall of Merchant Taylors' School, Hertfordshire, was refurbished last summer and a false ceiling removed. They respectively depict a marrow and other vegetables in one, wheat and bread in another, figs and berries in the third. The panels date from the construction of the school in 1931–3 and the style is unmistakable. Their authorship is confirmed by a brief reference in *The Builder* (May 5, 1933).

They were paid for by the architect, William G. Newton, who enlivened the buildings with artworks, including stained glass by Francis Spear and sculpture by Alan Durst. The hall is almost entirely functional, with a high roof of curved concrete beams. *James Bettley* 



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# 'I have such respect for their bravery'

The founder of the Lord Mayor's Big Curry Lunch on supporting army veterans

HE never talked about it,' Michael Hockney says of his father's experience serving in the army during the Second World War, 'but I do know that he saw some harrowing things towards the end when the Allies were breaking through and going into the prisoner-of-war camps.'

Instead, it was his time working as an adviser to the Ministry of Defence during the 1990s that first opened Mr Hockney's eyes to the army and, in particular, the difficulties faced by some soldiers on their return to civilian life. Their plight prompted him to accept an invitation to join ABF The Soldiers' Charity (originally the Army Benevolent Fund, founded in 1944) as a trustee. A few years later, he founded the annual Lord Mayor's Big Curry Lunch, which, next month, will be filling Guildhall in London for the 10th time as it raises money for the charity.

Curries are a staple of army messes and part of the Big Curry Lunch's appeal is the informal, democratic aspect. 'Everyone sits at long tables on benches,' explains Mr Hockney, 'and there's no seating plan—you could find yourself sitting opposite the Secretary of State for Defence or the Bishop of London.' So far, the event has generated £1.55 million and both the Lord Mayor and Mr Hockney would love to see this year's lunch take that total to £2 million.

This year, the focus is on those soldiers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Mr Hockney is keen to stress that, for the vast majority of the soldiers who leave the army, there are no issues; if anything, their time in uniform gives them an advantage. 'They're fit, they're well-disciplined, they're used to working under pressure. A lot of them have learnt amazing skills.'

Some, however, do face difficulties, both physical and mental. 'Nobody who approaches the charity with a genuine need is

going to be disadvantaged by a lack of funding,' confirms Mr Hockney. Assistance could be 'a small number of pounds to possibly helping an individual for the rest of their life. I personally can't imagine the intensity of some of those conflicts in Afghanistan. I have such respect for their bravery and commitment'.

A number of the beneficiaries attend the lunch. 'It can range from someone who has lost a limb or who has been seriously burnt in a conflict to someone whom the charity has helped with further education. You can see that there's an inner strength to these people that's helping them get through these difficulties.'

One of the aims is to raise awareness among the City's younger generations of the role of the armed forces. Mr Hockney, whose distinguished career in advertising and management consultancy has been founded on a bedrock of qualitative research and statistical analysis, sees the issue as one of numbers. 'Statistically, 30 years ago, virtually everyone in the country would have someone in the family who had been in the armed forces because of the Second World War. As we come to the end of that generation, the proportion of people with such a connection has reduced and there is a risk among the

younger age groups of forgetting the soldier.'

He continues: 'There has been huge coverage of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and that keeps the army in people's minds, but often they think of it from a political dimension. One of the things we are very keen to do is to remind everybody of the individual soldiers and the contribution and sacrifice they've made.'

**'I can't imagine the intensity of some of those conflicts in Afghanistan'**

Mr Hockney stresses that the City has been 'absolutely amazing'. He highlights the support of the Corporation and Livery Companies, including his own, the Worshipful Company of Musicians, which regularly gives awards to young military musicians.

Music is one of Mr Hockney's passions. He was deputy chairman of the English Chamber Orchestra and Music Society and classical music fills the rooms of his Twickenham home. A 1960s copy of an Italian virginal sits in one corner. 'Same action as a harpsichord,'

he confides, 'the plectrum plucks the string and then draws back.'

When not in the capital, he and his wife, Elizabeth, are in Dorset, where he plays the organ in their local church. He was first introduced to the instrument while growing up in Liverpool and hearing it in Giles Gilbert Scott's vast cathedral. The organist at his parents' church taught him 'the really important things—how to accompany hymns and psalms, how to improvise and how to do all that in a way that fits the service. He taught me the organist isn't a showman.' One can't help but think it's a lesson he has applied to other areas of his life, not least his unobtrusive but capable contribution to several charities.

Wine is another passion. While restoring their London home, he discovered the original 1635 brickwork behind the modern breeze blocks in the cellar. Out came the blocks, in went his collection of wine, previously languishing in storage. Some of the finest bottles feature in the intimate fundraising dinners for various causes that he and his wife host at home.

Which wine would he recommend with a curry? Apparently, it's a topic of some debate among connoisseurs. 'There are those who say you need a really beefy red wine to go with curry,' he advises, 'but there are others who say a softer wine. The first group might say a Shiraz, the second a Merlot.'

For his part, Mr Hockney recommends dry Rieslings with spicy foods ('there are some very good ones from New Zealand as well as Germany'), but, with a curry, he prefers to drink beer, Cobra to be precise.

Whatever one's preference—wine or beer—he reassures readers that there will be an unlimited supply of both at the Lord Mayor's Big Curry Lunch.

Michael Murray-Fennell

## On the record

The Lord Mayor's Big Curry Lunch in aid of ABF The Soldiers' Charity is on April 6 at Guildhall, EC2. Tickets cost £100 or bid online for auction lots (020-7811 3960; www.soldierscharity.org)

**Where is your favourite place in Britain?** Loughrigg Terrace in the Lake District

**What is your favourite building?** The Church of Santa Maria dei Miracoli, Venice

**Book?** The 'Barsetshire' novels (Anthony Trollope)

**Music?** *The Crucifixus* (Lotti)

**Food?** Battered cod, mushy peas and chips

**Alternative career?** Barrister

**Dinner guest?** Groucho Marx

**Who is your hero?** Sir John Smith, founder of the Landmark Trust





# My terrier and other family

YOUR terrier is not family,' Judge Donald Cryan told a couple in a recent eviction case at the City of London Court. Thus the unfortunate Mr and Mrs Kuehn were denied the company of Vinnie, their Morkie (Yorkshire-Maltese cross) terrier, in the Limehouse penthouse where they had dodged the 'no dogs' rule by claiming their pooch was part of the family.

How can our learned friend be so sure about Vinnie? My terrier, Moon—a teacup Jack Russell, incorrigibly wicked, apple of my eye—may only share 84% of her DNA with me (my teatime banana shares 50%), but she's closer to being human than some humans we know.

‘Never trust a teetotaller or a man that wears elastic-sided boots’

My wife allows Moon to share the marital bed on strict condition that she lies on top of the eiderdown in *Tottering-By-Gently* style. During her absence, far away on the dark continent, I have woken each morning to find Moon and I are snugly measuring our lengths against each other between the sheets. I can vouch that this will revert to default mode when my wife returns without anyone having to say anything.

We are seeking a suitor for Moon: he must be short-legged, amusing, intelligent, sleek, armigerous, in possession of a good fortune and *sans peur et sans reproche*—the *reproche* bit is demanding for a Jack Russell, but only the best will do for my girl. We have yet to fasten the family pearls around her neck and despatch a photograph to the COUNTRY LIFE Frontispiece

Illustration: Clare Mackie



page, but it may come to that. My eldest daughter, who had the honour of featuring there, tells me it's known affectionately as 'dog of the week'. What could be more appropriate?

As for Judge Cryan, he should find a copy of *My Talks with Dean Spanley* (1936) by Lord Dunsany. The narrator, a scientist with an interest in the transmigration of the soul and reincarnation, falls into conversation at his club with a dean with a curious past. After judicious application of vintage Port and Imperial Tokay, a Hungarian nectar to which the dean is vulnerable, the author coaxes from him a description of his former life as a dog.

The book is also memorable for the imprecation, 'never trust a teetotaller or a man that wears elastic-sided boots'. Far be it from me to suggest that Judge Cryan is either, but he may yet return as a Morkie in a life to come.

DNA has been occupying our minds in another way. The gods of the silver screen don't often flutter over these barren parts—the last time, they plucked Karen Gillan to be a companion on *Doctor Who*—but they've sent us Diana Gabaldon, whose 'Outlander' books have become boxset blockbusters, located in the Highlands and based on the Lovat family in the Jacobite era.

The effect has been a remarkable increase in tourist traffic to the Wardlaw Mausoleum, a lovely old building wherein lie the mortal remains of Lord Lovat of the '45. Or do they? Lovat was the last peer to be executed in Britain for his part in the rebellion. Although he asked to rest at Wardlaw, the Government decreed burial in the Tower of London to prevent the corpse becoming a focus for trouble.

During my father's five-year tenure as Constable of the Tower, he doubtless thought he had

custodianship of Lovat's bones, which were buried there by his predecessor, Earl Cornwallis, under the chapel of St Peter Ad Vincula. When the floor was relaid in the 19th century, a coffin was there bearing Lovat's name and a long inscription on a brass plate.

However, not long after Lovat's burial, reports circulated that the undertakers, at the family's behest, swapped his body for that of another. Lovat, meanwhile, had been taken from Gravesend to Beaulieu by ship and, in Wardlaw's dank crypt, there is a coffin that bears an identical inscription to that in the Tower. Lovat, whose political allegiances in life were nothing if not in two places at once, seems to have managed the same feat in death.

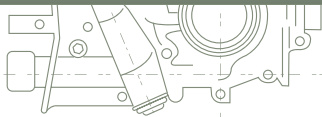
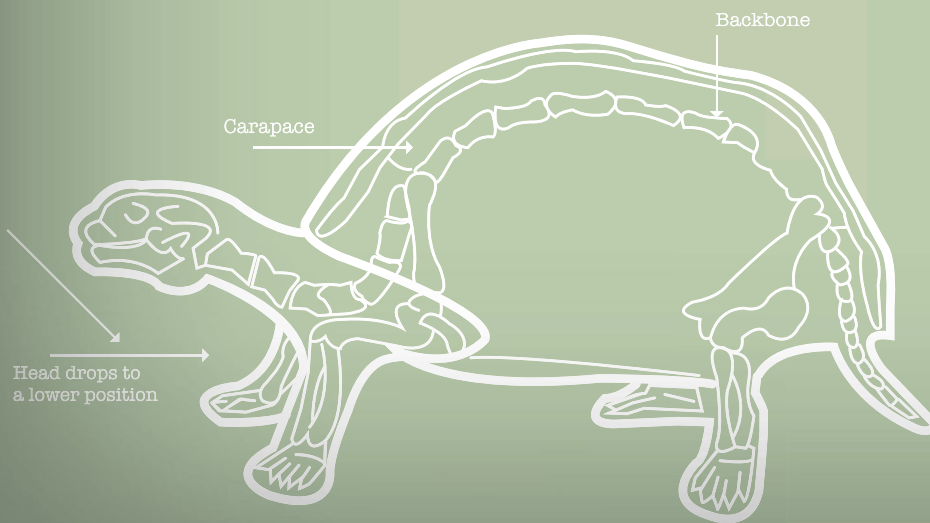
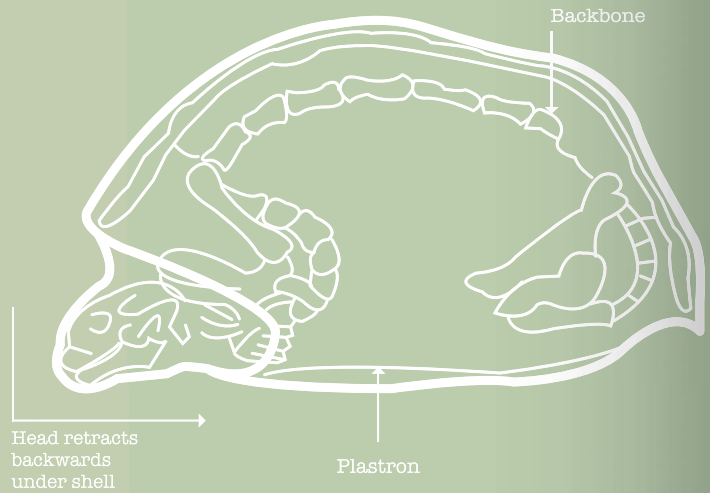
Last week, Dame Sue Black, the celebrated forensic anthropologist who hails from Inverness, came to solve the conundrum. Lovat's undertakers are recorded as having sewn his head back onto his body, but, on opening the Wardlaw coffin, Dame Sue found no skull. However, there are signs of grave robbers and the skull could have been taken as a Jacobite relic.

DNA can't help, as Lovat had no sister with female descendants (male DNA changes between generations), so Dame Sue will examine the skeleton to postulate the disease suffered by the previous occupant and method of death to see whether they match Lovat's. What could help her mission—and Wardlaw's campaign to raise £50,000 for repairs—would be the unearthing of the coffin in the Tower. If it contains bags of sand, Wardlaw may have its relic. 🐾

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

Next week Ysenda Maxtone Graham

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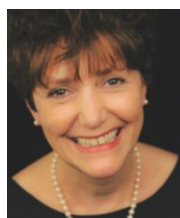
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# My favourite painting Alexandra Pringle

## *Illium* by Gillian Ayres



*Illium*, 2011, by Gillian Ayres RA, (b. 1930), 4ft by 6ft, Private Collection



Alexandra Pringle is editor in chief at Bloomsbury

Gillian Ayres has been my friend since the early 1980s. We have travelled together in India, Egypt and Yemen and my times spent with her in her homes in Wales, then Devon and in far-flung places are some of the most precious of my life. Her work lights me up. There is something about the combination of gorgeous colour and shape, of abstraction that echoes natural forms that I find intoxicating, that gives me a rush of joy every time I look at her work. Like Matisse, as she gets older, Gillian's work becomes bolder, more vigorous, more exciting and youthful. This, *Illium*, from a recent exhibition, is a perfect representation of all that I love about the work of Gillian Ayres

### John McEwen comments on *Illium*

GILLIAN AYRES titles her paintings merely to differentiate them—'my paintings are never really of their titles'—and avoids explanations. 'The colour I use doesn't come from nature in any direct sort of way. It comes from pots of paint,' she has said.

Her studio home is a 15th-century cottage down a rough track in Cornwall, the last of the country hideaways—first in North Wales, then Devon—that she has lived in since the 1980s, when she finally gave up teaching, finishing as head of painting at Winchester College of Art. But her happy and prosperous childhood was in Barnes, from where her father worked dutifully in the Ayres's Soho factory, founded on the demand for motorists' peaked caps.

At six, she entered a progressive Froebel day school: 'They let you race ahead with what you were interested in, a method that is sadly out of fashion

today because we all have to conform.' It influenced her teaching, Yoko Ono and Gilbert and George among her students. At St Paul's Girls' School, she discovered van Gogh, Gauguin, Cézanne and Monet and, as an art student, was bowled over by the illustrated 1949 *Life* magazine article on Jackson Pollock. She took flight for Cornwall from Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts rather than face her finals: 'I wanted abstraction, I wanted pure painting.' So it has remained. *'Gillian Ayres' at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff (April 8–September 3) is a retrospective with special attention paid to her 1980s Welsh paintings. It coincides with a new monograph by David Cleaton-Roberts, Martin Gayford and Andrew Marr, published by Art/Books, and an exhibition of new work, 'Paintings and Woodcuts', at Alan Cristea Gallery, London SW1 (March 16–April 22).*



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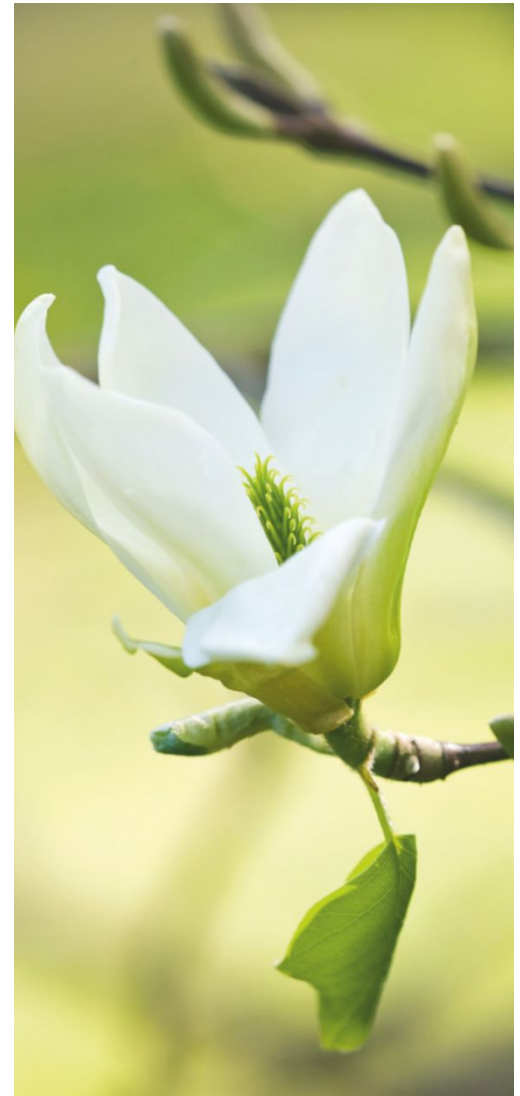
# The cups that cheer

*Photographed at RHS Wisley Gardens, Surrey*

Yellow-flowered magnolias have long been the quest of the connoisseur, but, with a range of smaller, reliable cultivars now being offered by specialist nurseries, these alluring trees deserve more widespread planting,  
reports **Mark Griffiths**

Photographs by Clive Nichols





**O**N my first visit to Longwood Gardens, Pennsylvania, USA, I was given a tour by its then curator, Rick Darke. ‘Any ideas?’ he asked, pointing to a grand old tree that stood in the distance. I told him I hadn’t a clue and myself that it might be a native oak, such was its splendour. I knew otherwise once I’d approached it and glimpsed the flambeaux of cool, creamy yellow that flickered among its broad new leaves. It was *Magnolia acuminata*.

Rick explained that this specimen had been discovered in South Carolina in 1788 by André Michaux, pioneering explorer of North American flora. From Michaux, it had gone to two brothers, Samuel and Joshua Peirce, who included it in an arboretum that they began planting on their farmland in 1798. Peirce’s Park, as this plantation became known, was derelict by 1906 and about to be felled when the business magnate Pierre S. du Pont bought and conserved it.

On the land around this historic nucleus, he pursued his own horticultural vision. The result was Longwood, which du Pont later endowed for the benefit of the public. Having flourished there from the beginning, the magnolia was the living foundation stone of what became, and remains, one of the world’s greatest gardens.

At 100ft tall, it’s the largest known *M. acuminata* in the USA. Others come close, however. This species is

a giant among magnolias, often making a stately tree in its native North America. The flowers open between April and June, with or just after the leaves, and sometimes give an autumn encore. They range from ivory to pale primrose and bright lemon, with outer segments that are often green or bloomy grey.

In some variants, their exteriors are suffused with shades of cyan—hence ‘blue magnolia’, one of this species’ common names (the other being cucumber tree, from the shape and colour of its unripe fruiting bodies). In two cultivars selected for this trait, Blue Opal and Seiju, the flowers are respectively tinted Prussian blue and verdigris, both with yellow interiors.

One might imagine that it’s for these strange hues that *M. acuminata* is prized, but no—it’s for the flowers’ carotenoid content. This cocktail of pigments gives them an innate yellowness that’s true and transmissible even when masked by green or blue-grey. Among hardy Magnolia species, only *M. acuminata* has this Midas touch. Over the past 70 years, hybridists have used it to pursue an ideal: smaller magnolias with showier yellow flowers that open before the new leaves expand.

The Brooklyn Botanic Garden initiated this quest and first saw success. In the 1940s, at what was then its Kitchawan Research Station in Westchester County, *M. acuminata* was

*Preceding pages:*  
***Magnolia x brooklynensis***  
**Hattie Carthan commemorates Brooklyn’s tree saver and community activist.**

*Above left:* **Bred by August Kehr of North Carolina, *M. Honey Liz* is a hybrid created out of *Miss Honeybee* and *Elizabeth*.**

*Above right:* **Palest buttermilk and citrine-toned *Elizabeth* is from a cross between *M. acuminata* and *M. denudata***

crossed with *M. liliiflora* Nigra, a robust Asian shrub with large, wine red-flushed blooms that are, as botanists say, precocious, meaning they open before the foliage develops.

Magnolia seedlings take a good few years to flower and longer still to evaluate. It wasn’t until the 1950s that the garden’s plant breeder, Evamaria Sperber, began to select the best offspring of *M. x brooklynensis*, as this new hybrid was styled. The first to be named was *M. Evamaria*, whose sumptuous flowers combine Naples yellow, peach and dusty rose.

With her next experiment, Dr Sperber struck gold. In the mid 1950s, she crossed *M. acuminata* with *M. denudata*, the heavenly *yulan* from China, whose flowers, white and lightbulb-shaped in bud, are borne on bare branches. The best plant among their offspring was named *M. Elizabeth*.

Since its introduction in 1977, this cultivar has become the most widely grown yellow magnolia and deservedly so: its flights of buttermilk and soft citrine are sublime.



It becomes large, its boughs ascending in a pyramidal crown. This makes for imposing multi-stemmed specimens, but also suits it to use as a bright and symmetrical, clear-trunked standard tree. A row of the latter forms the glorious centrepiece of a Modernist design at Worcester College, Oxford, and makes me wonder why we don't see more such magnolias in formal avenues, hard landscapes and towns.

Over the following two decades, Brooklyn Botanic Garden made new crosses and issued further outstanding cultivars. Two of the best are *M. Lois* (vigorous, hardy, broadly upright, and decked with custard cups come April) and *M. Yellow Bird* (goblet-shaped blooms that sit, like plump canaries, among the fresh new leaves).

The garden had started a gold rush. Until the present century, it was mainly pursued in the USA and notably by two remarkable individuals. In North Carolina, August Kehr achieved a prodigious output of crosses. He also raised seeds obtained from other growers and selected cultivars.

## “ The magnolia was the living foundation stone of one of the world's greatest gardens ”

Of these, my favourite is *M. Sundance*, whose pale flowers are large, luminous and lolling and, on warm days, lace the air with lemon fragrance.

In Michigan, meanwhile, the no-less prolific Phil Savage was at work. Three of his triumphs are especially popular. *M. Butterflies* swarms with musk-scented chalice in jonquil. *M. Yellow Lantern* shows the influence of its parent *M. x soulangeana* in being coldproof, branching low and broadly and having large and upright vase-shaped flowers. These are limpid apricot in bud and like candlelight thereafter.

*M. Gold Star* is as tough as its parent, *M. stellata*, and has similarly starry



flowers, but these are hollandaise rather than white and borne on a shrub that's taller and more tree-like.

Latterly, the excitement has moved away from America. In New Zealand a few years ago, Mark Jury introduced his creation *M. Honey Tulip*. It resembles his masterpiece *M. Black Tulip*, but its goblets brim with mead instead of Montepulciano.

However, the gold crucible *de nos jours* is undoubtedly Wespelaar Arboretum in Belgium. Its founder and owner, vicomte Philippe de Spoelberch, has amassed yellow cultivars and assessed them for Northern Europe. He has also raised and selected his own—among them, some of the best.

These were developed from new crossings that Kehr made just over a decade before his death in 2001. Aware that he might not live to see the results, he sent their untried seeds to Wespelaar in the early 1990s. With these packages of promise, M. de Spoelberch worked pure alchemy, producing such covetable cultivars as *M. Honey Flower* (comparatively small, bowl-shaped flowers in bright sulphur), *M. Banana Split* (immense blooms that peel apart in floppy vanilla segments dashed with pistachio and strawberry) and *M. Butterbowl* (neat rounded blooms whose colour and substance recall marzipan brushed with cassis, but which smell of papaya).

*Above left: M. Judy Zuk bears medium yellow flowers overlaid with pinkish-orange hues. It's a strongly fragrant but complex cross resulting from M. acuminata, M. liliiflora and M. stellata parentage. Above: From the prolific Phil Savage of Michigan, musk-scented M. Butterflies is a tree of compact, pyramidal form*

All perform well in our climate, flowering freely when young and making fine trees, given a decade or so of good cultivation. However, European *Magnolia* aficionados say that another Wespelaar introduction, *M. Daphne*, is finer still, indeed the best yellow cultivar of all. I'd agree: the contrast between its brilliant chrome-yellow beacons and forest-green new foliage is sheer exhilaration.

Moreover, its modest height (to about 20ft) and shapely conical crown make *M. Daphne* ideal for smaller gardens and for prominent solo placing elsewhere.

However, let's not forget the species that made this bonanza possible. Typical *M. acuminata* is sometimes dismissed as not showy enough to warrant the space it requires. Nonetheless, it's a magnificent beast to set loose in a wood or parkland, where its blooms, like those of its distant

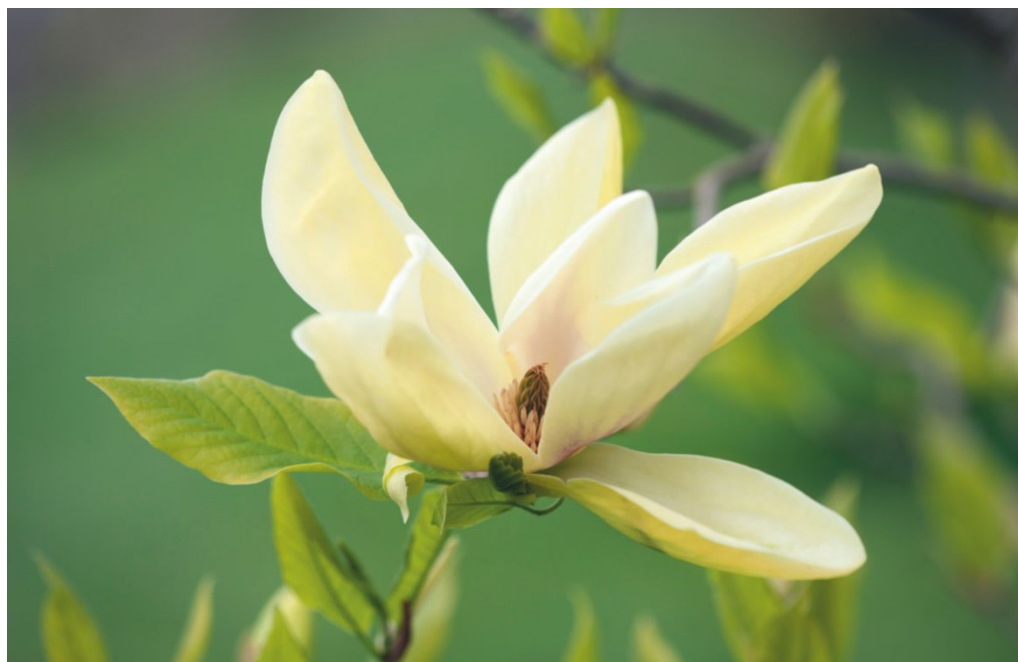
## It makes me wonder why we don't see more such magnolias in formal avenues

cousin the tulip tree, repay craning and peering and its autumn foliage (clone and weather permitting) turns parchment and sepia.

More useful for gardens is the form native to the southern USA, *M. acuminata* var. *subcordata*, which tends to be smaller and shrubbier and to flower when younger. I'd recommend the selection Miss Honeybee —compact, low-branching and with brimstone blooms.

Despite being the biggest of the lot, Longwood's great old tree is also var. *subcordata*. It has been propagated and released under the cultivar name Peirce's Park, worth growing not only as a piece of living history, but also for its longevity, vigour and floriferousness.

In all these magnolias, reliably warm springs can spur precocious blooming and strengthen yellow colouring. In our fickle climate, they may appear more bashful and wan than in America or elsewhere. To which, add our affliction by that great enemy to magnolia flowers, the hard late frost. Being British, however, we scorn such difficulties.



**Top:** The immense flowers of *Magnolia* Banana Split, 'floppy vanilla segments dashed with pistachio and strawberry'. **Above:** Gloriously lemon-washed and hardy *Magnolia* Gold Star

Important and beautiful collections of yellow magnolias can be seen at Wisley in Surrey, Hergest Croft in Herefordshire and Caerhays in Cornwall (*COUNTRY LIFE*, March 8, 2017). On a smaller scale, they're beginning to grace gardens nationwide.

They need no more fuss than other hardy magnolias: sun or dappled shade, soil that's rich, moist and ideally (but not compulsorily) mildly acid to neutral and perhaps the shelter of nearby trees or walls when young. As for worries about their performance in the UK, certainly, in very rough springs, they can seem a tad low-energy lightbulb, but, in better years, you'll find their golden candelabra outshine the sun. 🐦

### Golden days

Stockists include **Ashwood Nurseries** [www.ashwood-nurseries.com](http://www.ashwood-nurseries.com); **BlueBell Arboretum & Nursery** [www.bluebellnursery.com](http://www.bluebellnursery.com); **Burncoose Nurseries** [www.burncoose.co.uk](http://www.burncoose.co.uk); **Glendoick Gardens** [www.glendoick.com](http://www.glendoick.com); **Junker's Nursery** [www.junker.co.uk](http://www.junker.co.uk); **Pan-Global Plants** [www.panglobalplants.com](http://www.panglobalplants.com); **The Place for Plants** [www.placeforplants.co.uk](http://www.placeforplants.co.uk); **Thornhayes Nursery** [www.thornhayes-nursery.co.uk](http://www.thornhayes-nursery.co.uk); **Wisley Plant Centre** [www.rhs.org.uk/wisleyplantcentre](http://www.rhs.org.uk/wisleyplantcentre)

For details of stockists of individual species and cultivars, visit [www.rhs.org.uk/plants](http://www.rhs.org.uk/plants) and use the Search facility or look in *The RHS Plant Finder*, available from bookshops

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# Summer's most vibrant blooms start now

**M**OST of our bulb and tuber planting in the garden is done in the cool mists of autumn, but there are always some special duties reserved for the spring. For that reason, they often get overlooked in the general call to arms as everything in the garden leaps forward on a daily basis. Let us turn advisedly to the planting of dahlias and lilies as a deliberate act rather than a last-minute bodge.

The dahlia, having gone from no-no to must-have in modern times, is simple enough to cultivate. We all thumb the lurid pages of catalogues in search of suitable cultivars. This can be a visually shattering experience, but steel yourself to the task, as fortune favours the brave. Each to their own, of course, but I do favour big groups of something magnificent like Karma Lagoon, tall and richly violet, at intervals across the sightline.

If floral size beckons, but you wish to retain your eyesight, I propose Café au Lait, a fluffy monster in fawny pink. Should monochrome discipline appeal, try Twyning's After Eight, which has nothing to do with either tea or chocolates, but is a very good single-flowered doer.

This being the busy time, I keep to a simple routine. Those bunches of tubers that were dried off at the end of last season and stuck in a bucket in a shed are now brought forth and simply potted up in a general-purpose medium and watered. The object of this is to get the shoots growing, which will happen soon enough.



**Pale and interesting: the Edwardian classic *Lilium regale* is sure to enhance any garden and is a good subject for pots**

It's best to keep the plants in a frost-free glasshouse. Once the shoots are 4in high, you can either divide the clump by neatly severing it into sections of tuber and root and repot individually or take the new shoots off as cuttings. They're very willing to root. Be strict with your labelling or you'll soon be in a muddle. And don't keep them too warm or you'll enter the dark tunnel of pest control.

Lilies seem always to have maintained their social position.

“Lilies seem always to have kept their social position”

This has nothing to do with the challenge of growing them, as it's simple enough. I'm often surprised at how few people do it. Growing them in pots is a little more labour-intensive than gazing at their beauty in a woodland garden, but no more so than any other outdoor potted plant. Again, the first task is selection, in which exercise the only difficulty is the wide range that spreads across the pages of every brochure.

I like lily flowers to be but little removed from their wild ancestors, so I have a few favourites to suggest. Among these is *Lilium regale*, that Edwardian sensation the plant hunter 'Chinese' Wilson thought worth breaking

his leg for to introduce to us. Another from that heroic age is *L. auratum*, the 'golden-rayed lily of Japan', for my money far more impressive than any number of modern dwarf novelties. As scent is a priority for me, *L. longiflorum* is a must with its delicious morning perfume.

To grow these big lilies in pots, we must start with a container of sufficient size. I favour big terracotta pots, against which white lilies look so well. I put some lumps of stone in the bottom, not for drainage, but for a bit of extra stability. Three bulbs in a 10in pot always seems about right: I want the flowers to hang a little around the edge towards my nose. Use John Innes No. 3 compost to keep them going through the season.

*Lilium longiflorum* will need to be planted good and deep in the pot as it's a stem-rooter. *L. auratum* needs acid soil, so use the ericaceous version of the same compost. A layer of grit across the surface neatens things up and keeps them that way. When the green shoots are a few inches tall, bring the pots to their intended quarters and construct a simple framework of canes and raffia for non-intrusive support.

*L. longiflorum* is a bit on the delicate side, so watch out for cold nights and take precautions, although there's no need for the shroud of white fleece.

All these tall fellows are naturally a bit rickety in windy weather, so choose your site with care: a sheltered corner is ideal, with several hours of sun during the day. The effect is theatrical when they come into flower, so put them somewhere near an elegant seat to allow yourself an Alma-Tadema afternoon.

**Steven Desmond is a freelance landscape consultant, specialising in the conservation of historic gardens**

**Next week: Alpine primulas**

Andrea Jones/Garden World Images; Rex May/Alamy

## Horticultural aide memoire

### Layer shrubs

Many mature shrubs can be easily propagated by the ancient technique of layering. The climbing hydrangea, *H. petiolaris*, is a good example. Find a non-flowering shoot and bend it down to a patch of soil cultivated for the purpose. Make a short lengthwise cut through the wood, prop it open with a twig and secure it just under the soil surface with a piece of wire bent double. The tip of the shoot should appear above ground. By the autumn, the layer will have formed roots and can be removed from the parent plant and planted out. **SCD**



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**U**NLESS you're a yaffle or a pangolin, the prospect of having ants in the neighbourhood is probably unwelcome, but, since the time of Plato, these advanced insects have intrigued humans with their industrious colonial activity.

Myrmecologists have estimated the global ant population to be some 10,000 trillion. However, here in Britain, we have just 36 native species, one of the foremost being that long-legged forager the southern wood ant (*Formica rufa*), also known as myroo, mergan or emmet (a mischievous Cornish nickname for seasonal tourists).

Widespread through suitable broad-leaf and pine forests, they're just emerging in March from hibernation and are now busily refurbishing their distinctive dome-shaped nests, which give off a urinous, ammoniac reek (thus the other ancient sobriquet of 'pis-mire').

Red and blackish-brown, the wood ant possesses relatively good eyesight and sharp mandibles. It can be fairly aggressive in defence of its home range, but has no sting. However, it can squirt concentrated formic acid distances 12 times its body length that's strong enough to turn a forget-me-not pink and can cause pustulations—Shakespeare's Hotspur is 'nettled and stung with pismires'.

**Below: It's tough being the middle child of 250,000: from Shakespeare to Woody Allen, ants have long been a staple of literature, signifying frugality and industry, as well as being used as an ominous metaphor for Communism. Right: Wood ants spray formic acid in defence**

# Enter the empire of the wood ant

Capable of squirting formic acid distances up to 12 times its body length, the wood ant's strictly ordered world and thrifty efficiency is celebrated in the Bible and tales of totalitarianism, observes a spellbound David Profumo

Steve Mackay; Kim Taylor/Nature Picture Library





This poison is said to smell like salt-and-vinegar crisps—Scandinavian bakers occasionally use it to flavour cake icing and the laminated plastic Formica is chemically related.

Although there is a hardy Scottish cousin—aptly, *F. lugubris*, which prefers the shade—*rufa* colonies seek out sunshine and their anty tumps (which can be 5ft tall and harbour a quarter of a million individuals) act as both umbrella and oven, being thatched with weather-proofing pine needles and angled east-west to maximise thermo-regulation from any available sunlight.

Less geometrically precise than bee structures, they comprise a network of carved galleries and storage tunnels, usually including a midden and a morgue, through which the workers busily formicate—you can sometimes hear a whispering sound as they seethe under their roof.

Ants have long been reckoned as an indicator species of healthy woodland—Hitler protected them for the benefit of the Third Reich's timber.

Requiring a sugar rush, they are often uninvited guests at picnics—although cucumber and coffee act as natural deterrents. Wood ants consume many pests such as beetles, midges and moths and have evolved a system of 'milking' aphids, which process sap into honeydew—a substance rich in sugars and hormones that they exude when palpated by the ant. Woody Allen's iconoclastic character Z (from the 1998 animated film *AntZ*) complains: 'Call me crazy, but I have a thing about drinking from the anus of another creature.' A sizable colony can collect hundreds of pounds of honeydew during the year.

Unlike some species, *rufa* is largely monogynous and does not tolerate multiple queens. Some specialists regard colonies as a form of 'superorganism' that functions through swarm intelligence, with the workers somehow co-operating, communicating via antennae and mutual feeding, yet with no overall leadership (the queen spends much of her time asleep and is effectively an egg factory).

The majority of the colony consists of wingless, infertile female workers named minims—perhaps that should be maiden ants?—that perform dedicated duties and are prodigiously strong (they can lift 100 times their own weight). Like Homer's Myrmidon warriors, they attack foraging predators such as badgers and green woodpeckers and repel invasions from other, cannibalistic ant species.

On muggy days in June, the colony's 'sexuals'—winged males and females—embark on a nuptial flight. The males often perish *in copula*, but the queen can store a lifetime's worth of sperm from this single extravaganza. Once fecundated, she

## Like Homer's Myrmidon warriors, they attack foraging predators such as badgers

may either establish a new colony from scratch, return home and borrow existing workers to form a satellite nearby or else indulge in social parasitism whereby another species' colony is annexed and its

workers press-ganged into raising her brood—the variety *F. fusca*, once chillingly dubbed the Negro ant, is often targeted for such enslavement.

The grubs are diligently fed by workers, their diet dictating their future role in the caste system when they emerge from the pupal stage as adults.

Ants have featured widely in insect fables, in which traditional moralisers tend to emphasise their thrift and industry—'Go to the ant,' instructs the Old Testament and Milton approves 'the parsimonious emmet'. In the modern period, however, formic metaphors have become more alarming—a reflection of the teeming automatic lifestyle of cities and even of totalitarianism.

From H. G. Wells's prescient *Empire of the Ants*, via T. H. White's sinister formic realm in *The Sword and the Stone*, to the thinly disguised fear of Communist invasion in several Cold War films, the super-efficiency of the ant has acquired ominous undertones.

As that glamorous, bipolar lyricist Adam Ant summarised it: 'Don't tread on the ant/He's done nothing to you/There may come a day/When he's treading on you!' 🐜



# A profusion of plaster

*Rashleigh Barton, Devon*  
*The home of Russell and Ali Mabon*

The West Country was home to a flourishing 17th-century school of ornamental plasterwork. Roger White encounters a lavish example in an externally modest building

Photography by Justin Paget





*Fig 1 preceding pages: The parlour. Fig 2 above: The house in its landscape. The central hall is entered through a modern porch and the cross-wing to the left contains the parlour and great chamber. That to the right was rebuilt in the 19th century*

**F**OR much of its history, Rashleigh Barton has been a modest farmhouse. It sits in rolling countryside above the west bank of the River Taw, across the valley from the little town of Chulmleigh (although it is invisible either from it or indeed any road). The river flows north-westwards to the much more important town of Barnstaple, some 15 miles away, and the main road connecting Barnstaple to the regional centre of Exeter follows its course.

The Rashleigh family originated in Barnstaple, but were in possession of this property by 1196. In 1530, the Rashleigh heiress Ibbot married Thomas Clotworthy from South Molton and, although the Rashleigh name stuck, the estate became a Clotworthy possession until 1708, when it passed by marriage to the Tremaynes of Heligan in Cornwall.

The Tudor Clotworthys found themselves in possession of a late-medieval house built of cob. As is characteristic of Devon, it was

long and low with a double-height hall incorporated in the centre of the plan. This was entered through a tall porch—in the position of its low, modern successor built in 1999 after the original had been lost—and warmed by a fireplace with a massive chimney-stack, both typical architectural features of the region.

At one end of the hall (to the south), there was a screens passage and, beyond that, the kitchen and buttery, with accommodation above. The hall itself was spanned by a roof—still surviving and partially visible—with multiple tiers of windbraces, a treatment that, through its greedy consumption of timber, emphasised the wealth of the house's owners. In a cross wing at the opposite end were the principal family chambers arranged on two floors.

It is presumed that, during the 16th century, one of the early Clotworthys—either Thomas and Ibbot's son Thomas or their grandson Simon—introduced a floor into the hall, creat-

ing new domestic rooms in its roof space that linked the first-floor chambers at the two ends of the house. Such reorganisations of medieval hall interiors are a commonplace of the Tudor period. In the process, the partition closing off the screens passage was replaced with a wall pierced by a single door.

Of the Tudor decoration of the house, we know little, because, in the 1630s, during the tenure of John Clotworthy, its interiors were reordered and overlaid by the sumptuous plasterwork that is the modern glory of Rashleigh Barton.

Externally, Rashleigh Barton's modest size and plain, whitewashed walls do little to raise expectations of an exciting interior (*Fig 2*). The porch leads into a corridor, the successor to the screens passage. To the right (south) lay the original kitchen and services. Access to the room above it was provided in the 1630s by a stair turret and external gallery. The latter (*Fig 3*) is now internalised by the



*Fig 3 above:* The 1630s gallery, internalised by later additions, probably in the 19th century. The gallery and its stair gave access to a withdrawing chamber above the kitchen services.  
*Fig 4 below:* The hall, with its great fireplace and relatively plain plaster decoration. In the late Middle Ages, this interior rose for another storey and was open to the roof

addition of new kitchens, probably in the 19th century, to the rear of the hall.

At the time of this addition, the original services were completely reconfigured to create two comfortable rooms, one of which was a cosy, oak-panelled winter parlour. The parlour joinery, complete with Clotworthy arms over the fireplace and a frieze of fire-breathing dragons, may be partly recycled from elsewhere in the house. To the south again, the Clotworthys added a granary range, never directly accessed from the house.

Across the passage from the winter parlour, a door opens into the hall, a single-storey room with a simple beamed ceiling and an even simpler granite fireplace, probably of Tudor or late-medieval date (*Fig 4*). By the early 17th century, the hall had ceased to function as a dining chamber in gentry houses, although it remained one for servants. This probably explains why at Rashleigh Barton no particular effort was made to introduce fancy decoration here. Rather, it was concentrated on the withdrawing spaces beyond and accessible through a door ➤



at the opposite end of the room from the entrance passage.

The ground-floor parlour was where the family could meet, talk, relax informally and sometimes eat (**Fig 1**). Above it was the great chamber, which was for all formal entertaining, including dining, music and dancing.

## ‘The curlicues sprout hops, pears, pomegranates and different flowers’

The parlour has a flat ceiling divided by deep, plaster-clad beams into three oblong compartments. At the centre of each is a shield of Clotworthy heraldry (**Fig 7**), out of which elaborate foliage trails loop and intertwine across the remaining surface. The curlicues sprout hops, pears, pomegranates, apples and different flowers and the intervening spaces are occupied by such creatures as elephants, camels, lions, boars, pegasuses and cockatrices, not to mention birds, butterflies and assorted bugs. The design and modelling are not sophisticated, but are immensely endearing.

To connect this upgraded parlour with the yet more elaborately decorated great chamber above it required a suitably handsome staircase, which was provided in a new projection at the north end of the wing. This rises to a landing enclosed by typically Jacobean elongated column balusters (**Fig 5**). The vestibule at the top of the stairs—an antechamber to the great chamber—suffered badly during the long years of Rashleigh Barton’s neglect, when much of the ribbed barrel vault collapsed (**Fig 8**).

However, the tympana of the end walls retain their elaborate strapwork cartouches centred on Clotworthy heraldry, with *putti* perched nonchalantly on the extremities and, in one of them, the initials ‘IC’ (for John Clotworthy) and ‘MC’, together with the date 1633. Visitors would have seen this before passing through the door beneath into the richly embellished great chamber that was the climax of the Jacobean interior.

The chamber walls are bare—no doubt, originally, there would have been hangings or panelling to conceal them—and the crudity of the fireplace opening suggests that a more elaborate affair, possibly with overmantel, is missing. The decorative effort is all now concentrated on the ceiling, a barrel vault that has clearly been superimposed on the earlier medieval rafters (**Fig 6**).

The latter protrude somewhat awkwardly through a dense web of ribs that curve, intersect and interweave like the pattern of a particularly elaborate knot garden. Many of the



**Fig 5: The dog gate on the 17th-century principal stairs. The four flights are arranged around a panelled core, a form that had become unfashionable by the 1630s**

resulting compartments are, in fact, filled with stylised sprigs of flowers and it is indeed known that the patterns of such Elizabethan and Jacobean ceilings were often inspired by what went on in the garden.

The four largest compartments are concave-sided octagons and these are occupied by foliage tangles of exactly the same varieties as the parlour below: apples, pears, hops and pomegranates. Paired with these are quartets of animals—foxes, dogs, lions and unicorns respectively. Even this does not exhaust the profusion of motifs, which also feature goats, rams and birds (including a peacock and a dopey owl). All this arranges itself around three pendant bosses, the central one in the form of an openwork cage.

The ensemble is completed on the inner wall with arms said to be those of William Bouchier, 3rd Earl of Bath, although, as he died in 1623 and the plasterwork here is probably a decade later, they perhaps refer to his eldest son Edward, the 4th Earl. The Bouchier seat was at Tawstock Court near Barnstaple and John Clotworthy was presumably a *protégé* who aspired to entertain his powerful patron at Rashleigh Barton.

The question that obviously presents itself is who the author of this display of rustic virtuosity in plaster might have been. The existence of the Abbott family from the village of Frithelstock, a north Devon ‘dynasty’ of plasterers going back to the late 16th century, has been widely accepted since the

publication in 1940 of a *COUNTRY LIFE* article by Margaret Jourdain. This focused on a surviving sketchbook full of what, on the face of it, looked like Elizabethan and Jacobean motifs, seemingly compiled by one John Abbott, born in 1639.

It was thought at one time that the sketchbook was a testament to the longevity of a stylistic vocabulary that had long gone out of fashion elsewhere, passed down through generations of Abbotts.

In fact, the dates occurring in the plasterwork at Rashleigh Barton make Abbott’s involvement here impossible and, in any case, there are no similarities with Abbott’s documented work, which is dated to the 1680s and in the characteristic idiom of Charles II’s reign.

Subsequent writers drew attention to Abbott’s grandfather, also John, who died in 1635 and may have been the first of the family to take up the profession, or his father Richard, born in 1612.

More recently, doubt has been cast on the very existence of an Abbott dynasty, as there is no direct evidence to confirm the identity of any plasterers in the region prior to the mid 17th century. However, even if the Rashleigh plasterwork cannot be by John Abbott the younger, the nearness of the estate to Frithelstock does at least allow the possibility of involvement by his elderly grandfather or youthful father.

There does, in any case, seem to be a definite overlap in both idiom and motifs between the



*Fig 6 above: The ceiling of the former great chamber. The central of its three pendants is a cage-like sphere; the ring is presumably for hanging a lamp. To the right are visible the arms of the Earls of Bath. Fig 7 below left: One of the panels in the parlour; swirls of foliage radiate from a Clotworthy family coat of arms. Fig 8 below right: The antechamber at the head of the main stairs*



Rashleigh great chamber and the ceiling of a house in Boutport Street, Barnstaple, dated 1620. There also are also comparisons to be made with the more ambitious ceilings in the gallery at Lanhydrock and the great chamber at Prideaux Place (see *COUNTRY LIFE*, June 9, 2010), both in Cornwall and both of about 1640.

A major difference is that both of those grander schemes incorporate biblical scenes, whereas the Rashleigh ceilings are entirely secular in their vocabulary. Whether this reflects Clotworthy's attitude to life and religion, and whether the plasterwork as executed

has any specific symbolism, must remain an open question.

The passing of the estate to a Cornish family in 1708 meant that Rashleigh quickly declined into the status of a tenanted farmhouse. The building was spared extravagant renovation, but it also suffered attendant neglect: the hall became a workshop, the south wing degenerated into a garage with hayloft above and cows wandered through it. The parlour and great chamber ceilings survived, but the anteroom ceiling partially collapsed.

By the time the Tremayne family finally sold the estate in 1975, the building was in a parlous

condition, from which successive new owners gradually rescued it, notably Lord and Lady O'Hagan in 1987–88. Some aspects of the restoration might now be judged rather heavy-handed, particularly the insertion of plate glass into windows where small leaded panes would have been more authentic and sympathetic, but the important thing is that Rashleigh Barton has survived and that Russell and Ali Mabon, its owners since 2006, have made it a comfortable, stylish and workable family home. 🐦

*Acknowledgements: Hugh Meller, Nigel Pratt, Jenny Saunt*

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After a three-course lunch with wine, coffee and *petits fours*, Willow will be in conversation with our Interiors Editor, Giles Kime, describing how she uses flowers to transform a space and enhance an occasion. Later, she will demonstrate how she made the bunches she has created for OKA and will also sign copies of *Flourish*, her latest book. The event will finish at 3pm.



**When:** May 17, 12pm–3pm

**Where:** Coworth Park, Blacknest Road, Berkshire SL5 7SE

**Tickets:** £55 per person, including VAT, for coffee on arrival, a three-course lunch—including one glass of Champagne, a glass of wine, coffee and *petits fours*—and a gift

**To book:** visit [www.dorchestercollection.com/en/ascot/coworth-park](http://www.dorchestercollection.com/en/ascot/coworth-park) or telephone 01344 876600

# How to de-feather your nest

Do you despair of your adult children, still squatting in their childhood rooms? Kit Hesketh-Harvey shares his wisdom on dealing with the boomerang generation

Illustration by John Holder

**J**UST look at the opening pages of this beautiful magazine. Oh, you already did? Well, even I'll admit that the property pages are some of COUNTRY LIFE's real attention-grabbers. Enormous houses, up and down the kingdom, with ancillary accommodation, lodges, cottages, barns, annexes, staff wings and attics for conversion. Touch them, stroke them!

Surveys reveal—oh, you don't hide from our boys—that you, dear reader, are likely to be a beneficiary of the 1980s hike in UK property prices. You never dreamed, did you, that the equity in your place would increase 20-fold. I didn't. Face it—we done good. However, now, the chickens are coming home to roost. Literally.

We did as we were done by, expecting our issue to Stand On Their Own Two Feet. We kicked them out. We made their rooms unwelcoming shrines to permanent sixth-form-hood. School-leaving photos remained unframed, art projects were left in mortifying view. Empty Jägermeister bottles and souvenirs of God-knows-what rite of passage gathered eloquent dust. The moment they left for uni, we piled black dustbin bags full of clothes onto their beds and turned off the radiators.

But whaddya know? The kids came back. The boomerang generation, they've been called. They have no choice. Back in the day, we could buy our own place for three years' salary. Nowadays, that wouldn't meet the mortgage deposit. The latest batch has nowhere else to call home. I (luckier than most) also garnered a holiday home and a London foothold, of sorts. I can't get into either. Both are being squatted in, either by my children >

**Hell is other people: rising house prices may bring back intergenerational living**





AME-A  
SORRY  
NO POLY  
ial Pursuib



or their acolytes. We've triggered Article 50, but they've proved Remainers.

Meanwhile, the grandparents scattered, not wanting to be in the way. Visits are rushed, unsatisfactory, fretful-making. Care homes are expertly, expensively run as businesses, in large degree by astute members of the Indian community. (The Indians themselves wouldn't dream of such a state of affairs. Dadi and Naanji live with them.)

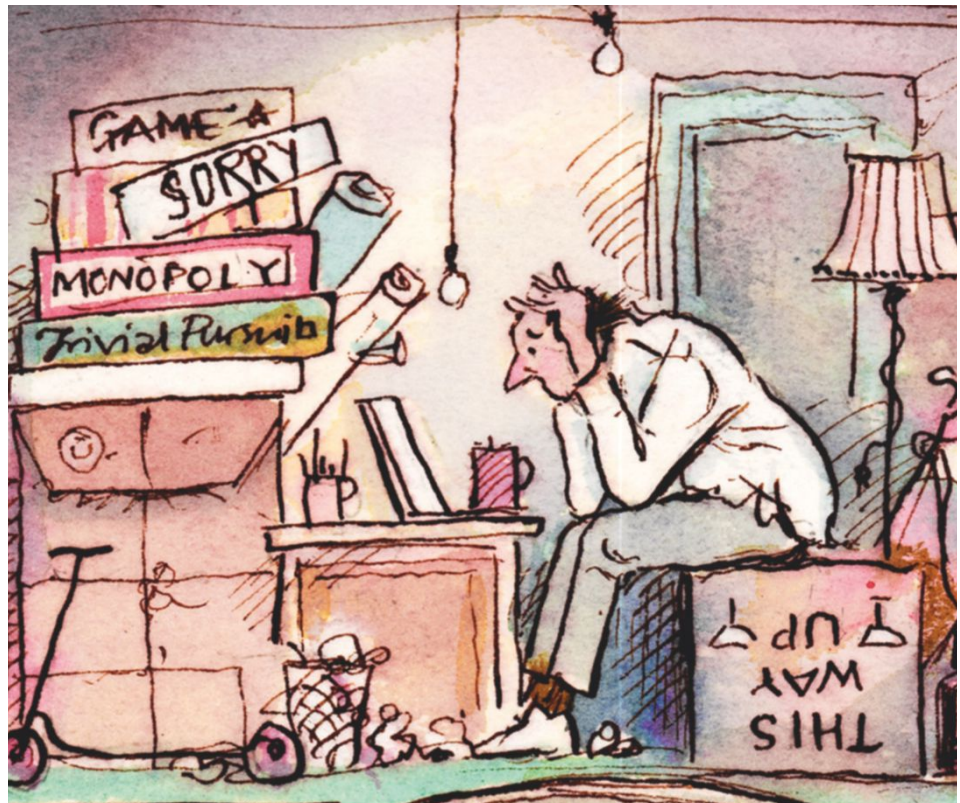
## ‘But whaddya know? The kids came back. The boomerang generation, they've been called,’

Those *Who Do You Think You Are?* census-returns are an eye-opener. The properties over which you've just drooled were built for three times the number of occupants. Households bundled together the generations. It was the 1960s—our vintage—that changed things. Extended family, filial obligation, the war effort, all jettisoned in the name of independence, individuality and the great god privacy. Building land was plentiful and larger residences could be divided into flats. Now, inevitably, the supply has dried up.

Clearly, we should be downsizing, releasing equity that we never dreamed of acquiring and bedrooms that we don't need. We should hand half to the kids now, to buy their own shoeboxes, and swan off on a cruise with the rest. If we don't, inheritance taxes will decimate the profit.

However, downsizing is traumatic. It's an emotional wrench, moving and taking all those art projects to the dump. You've spent two decades as a slave to your children. Why shouldn't you have a couple more, finally to enjoy the place that you've worked so hard to pay for? I quite agree, so here are half-a-dozen possible ways to throw the boomerang right back:

- Airbnb—everybody's doing it. Turn that nursery floor into a boarding house or even do an entire house swap! Jet-lagged Canadians appearing for breakfast at 5am... nyah.
- Poor Aunt Jane gave a lifetime of dedication to the Moonies or to driftwood painting in the Galápagos Islands and, now, Brexit means that she has to come home or forfeit her pension. (Then again, it's blindingly obvious why she never managed to persuade anybody to live with her.)
- This one really is worthwhile. Your state-of-the-art, privately educated, university-degreed, socially networked layabout on his third gap year or a family of freezing Syrian



**Far from the madd(en)ing crowd: sometimes, it's best to seek solace in the box room**

refugees with nothing but the clothes they stand up in? It's a no-brainer.

- A sudden passion for model trains. An entire roomful would cost no more to set up than your child's friends' weekly alcohol consumption.
- It's a period property. We neglected the wear and tear in order to pay for your school skiing trips. I'm awfully sorry, darling, but the council has condemned your bedroom as unfit for human habitation.
- And should all of those fail, you've surely read *Fifty Shades of Grey*? Your mother has decided that she wants a Red Room of Pain.

Alternatively, let us consider the unspeakable (unspeakable merely for the past 40 or so years of social history and, even then, only in the First World). It's been thrust upon us, but the intergenerational household might be back for good.

Deep breath. Is it really so dreadful if everybody does move back in? Chimps manage it. Consider the financial advantages: no more hundreds of thousands of pounds of family capital burning as offerings upon the altar of... what? Privacy? Loneliness? Fewer assaults upon income? The multiple Council Tax, holiday cover, kennels, cars, nannies, broadband, newspapers, wardens, gardening help, taxis, water rates, carers, someone to help you move that ruddy sideboard? The—God bless us, everyone—two grand a week in care-home fees? What of our environmental irresponsibility? Dual shopping trips, heating bills, new-builds, petrol-swigging visits to salve our concern?

## ‘You've surely read *Fifty Shades of Grey*? Your mother has decided that she wants a Red Room of Pain,’

Why not instead move *en masse* to a property whose location, size and facilities fit all, if what fits all isn't what you've already got? The more units you throw into the pot, the more bang you get for your buck. Two houses can equal one castle. Granny-annexes sail through planning nowadays. Privacy is possible, what with headphones, insulation and the internet. Should you manage to avoid being murdered by your own children for seven years, Inheritance Tax is sidestepped altogether.

Rules need to be pre-negotiated and private spaces defined. (Chin up: Grandpa might actually enjoy *South Park*.) Rent, bills and care rosters must be scrupulously reviewed in quarterly accounts meetings. Tidiness and security are obligatory, but simply accept that children need space and make noise and life becomes a permanent Christmas. And as the great Wizzard said: 'I wish it could be Christmas every day.'

Yes, you'll have to relearn tact, discretion, tolerance, but is that so bad? Unselfishness. No more grieving over redundant shrines. No more sibling ammunition. Instead of guilt, gilt. Instead of phonecalls, conversation. Instead of independence, support. And instead of privacy, love. 🐦

## When only a Subaru will do

No longer looking like a shrunken SUV with greenhouse glazing, the latest Subaru Forester is the best 4WD for 'real country life' in its price bracket, says Charles Rangeley-Wilson



I HAVE a deep affection for Subarus in general, the Forester in particular, although, with each new version I try, I'm increasingly sure that, just under 'heavy metals' on the order forms that keep those factories in Japan's Ota in Gunma Prefecture on the roll with raw material, there must be a line for 'epic amounts of ganja'. How else to explain the bewildering bestiary of machinery that emerges from the place?

If one engineering constant unites more or less everything Subaru makes—its fabulous Boxer engine mated to permanent all-wheel drive (AWD)—it's all *Wacky Races* meets *Last of the Summer Wine* after that. You could line up the Justy, the Brat, the Alcyone, the Sumo, the Tribeca, the Baja, the Impreza, the Outback and the BRZ—to name just a few of the often weird, always surprising and mostly wonderful machines Subaru has conceived—and never guess they all came from the same stable, let alone what Subaru's designers were on as they drew them.

And that's the case with the Forester. I've owned two in my

time. The first was a Turbo S, which was so bat crazy when I tried it, I had to have one. It was like a shrunken SUV, with greenhouse glazing, Farmer Palmer comes to town suspension and an engine out of a rally car. As if that wasn't crazy enough, Subaru gave a 70bhp boost to the next incarnation XT and I had to have that one, too. I tried and nearly bought the 350bhp STi, but it really was a teeny bit too bonkers.

Thus it was with some trepidation that I fired up the latest model delivered to my driveway: a diesel. The reality of not many miles to the gallon and higher CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than a 747 have put paid to the rabid Foresters of yesteryear. You can still buy a mildly crazy 241bhp petrol version (with a reformed drink habit), but you won't find too many on the road. In reality, it's all about the diesel these days. Still Subaru. Still doing things its own way: it's a flat-four diesel, mated to the same symmetrical AWD.

From the point of view of the vehicle dynamics, the set-up is hard to fault. The Boxer engine has perfect balance, a high sump and a low centre of gravity. Although the symmetrical AWD exerts a heavier toll

on the drinks bill, it's really the best and simplest way to achieve the traction, grip and stability that you want in a 4X4 you intend to use as a 4X4. I doubt there are many places you can take a Land Rover that you couldn't take a Forester.

**‘In Australia, these things are everywhere. Nuff said’**

For the purposes of getting the vehicle muddy, I did try a few very rutted and slippery tracks round Norfolk and it sailed up them all.

The suspension is as pliant as ever, nothing like the fashionable-firm of the European opposition. It feels weird at first, but magic carpet after a while. Then again, everything about the Forester feels weird at first and rather fabulous after a few days. The sit-up-and-beg driving position. The amazing all-round visibility: still like driving a greenhouse. The way you simply step in and step out of the car: so dignified! The

### On the road

Subaru Forester 2.0D XC Premium

Priced from £32,180

Annual Road Fund Licence  
£500 (for cars registered after April 1, 2017)

Combined fuel consumption  
46.3mpg

Power 147bhp

0–60mph 9.9sec (estimated)

Top speed 116mph

satnav looks as if it's 10 years out of date, but works perfectly.

The audio and phone interface blinks into life with amusement-arcade graphics, but is as good a system as I've used. The plastics are all a bit melted-down Athens taxi, but, then again, you can hose or sponge the mud and dog hair off them.

For someone prepared to buck the trend and drive a Scooby Forester instead of the more urbane alternatives, I doubt you could find a better real-life country vehicle for the money. In Australia and New Zealand, where SUV consumption is dictated less by fashion than the need to not break down in the Outback, these things are everywhere. Nuff said. 🐾

# The Aga saga

For 95 years, it's been so much more than a cooker. Julie Harding lifts the hot plate on the heart-warming kitchen feature no country house should be without

Photographs by  
Richard Cannon

IT'S the heart of the kitchen,' declares Mary Berry, probably Britain's most famous Aga owner. 'I love the warmth and the wonderful welcome. If I had to live without one, I'd loathe it.' Reassuringly traditional yet elegantly fashionable, the enduring cast-iron Aga has become a domestic icon in the 95 years since its invention by Swedish physicist Gustaf Dalen.

Peculiarly British, like the Sunday roasts and crumbly scones it produces, people who own one appreciate the shiny, instantly recognisable exterior that's barely changed in a century, the consistent heat that emanates from its solid frame, the exceptional taste of the comforting delights that emerge from its cavernous ovens and the fact that it can be leaned against. 'An Aga becomes a part of the family. I can't think of any other home appliance that sparks that kind of love. It's utter passion,' confirms company spokeswoman Laura James.

Former *Great British Bake Off* judge Mary's fondness for the Aga began decades ago when she was invited to her London flatmate Penny Tetley's Little Gaddesden home. 'I learnt the theory of cooking from [Penny's mother] Ma Block. I loved the way her Aga cooked,' she discloses, before recalling an early culinary disaster. 'I made a meringue layer on butter papers, but omitted to remove the

**'Mrs Aga' creator Bryn Parry says he wouldn't be married if he hadn't agreed to buy his wife, Emma, one**





papers during the assembly, which Ma Block found as she cut into it at supper.'

Mary has cooked on virtually every kind of Aga and, at the Buckinghamshire home she shares with her husband, Paul Hunnings, she has a five-oven, dual-control model in duck-egg-blue, with gas-fuelled ovens and electric-powered tops. 'Sometimes, I'm testing recipes and having people round, but a lot of the time, there are only two of us, so I can turn off parts of the cooker, which really suits me,' she explains.

The TV cook also religiously places the beds of her dogs—labrador Millie and working cocker Darcey—at its base each night. Soggy gloves and dog towels are put on the top to dry out, as are her tree-surgeon son Tom's ropes.

## ‘An Aga becomes part of the family. It sparks utter passion and love’

'An Aga has so many uses,' says Mary, who utilises every cooking function, from the boiling plate for toasting crumpets, the roasting oven with the solid shelf placed near the top for a Victoria sandwich, the base of the simmering oven (bottom right) for pastry—as this 'avoids a soggy bottom'—and the entire cooker at Christmas when roasting a turkey and all the trimmings.

'I can cater for any number with the Aga,' she asserts. 'One trick [if you lack oven space] is to cook your roast potatoes, parsnips and stuffings the day before, then just pop them in on the day to heat up.'

In fact, Mary prefers to prepare meals ahead throughout the year and recommends one-dish recipes, such as fish pie, shepherd's pie or roasted vegetables with sausages. 'Today, everyone wants slow roasts—pulled pork, pork belly, lamb—because it doesn't matter if they're left in for half an hour too long. Any casserole done beautifully slowly is lovely, too.'

Mary does, however, have some words of warning for those inheriting an old Aga. 'You need to be aware that the simmering oven is very slow and you'll need to get used to it, so, if you're cooking a casserole, start it



off in a quicker oven, then move it to the simmering one. If you're using the ovens, keep the lids down to ensure the heat stays in and the cooker runs more efficiently.'

She also advises new owners to invest in a timer so that the charred remains of last night's supper become a thing of the past.

Fellow devotee the Duke of Somerset also confesses to occasional memory lapses involving cooking in the Aga

**Mary Berry (above) finds that there's almost nothing she can't do on her Aga. Mrs Aga (far right) is quite the character**



his parents installed in Bradley House, Wiltshire, in the 1950s. 'I've forgotten things and found them burnt a few days later,' he confesses with a smile.

Every morning, the Duke makes toast on the left-hand hot plate ('without using the tennis-racket contraction') of his royal-blue, four-oven oil Aga and is fond of popping a snipe into the top-right oven to roast for 10 minutes.

'Although we don't make cakes, my wife and I cook a range of main courses, from fish on the top plate to game and meat in the oven. We also always warm our plates in the bottom left.'

He remembers fetching the coal that powered the now-converted stove when he was a child. 'I've grown up with the Aga and I gravitate towards it when I'm cold,' the Duke admits. 'We also use it for airing clothes. An Aga is a nice thing to have. It cooks things in a special way, with consistent heat that isn't fierce although, if you're new to one, you need to experiment, because not everything will turn out right first time.'

The Duke has never worked out how much his cooker costs to run, but Ian O'Brien of Somerset-based supplier and installer O'Briens says oil-fired Agas generally consume 40 litres (nine gallons) of fuel a week: 'That may seem a lot, but it's tempered by other benefits, such as not needing to use the tumble drier or

electric kettle, as well as less central heating because heat from it percolates around the house.'

Over the years, the Aga's place in our culture has extended from the kitchen to the bookshelf by becoming immortalised as a genre of romantic fiction—much to 'Aga saga' author Joanna Trollope's disgust. Real Agas regularly feature in *The Archers* and have even inspired a series of cartoons based around 'Mrs Aga'.

Their creator, Bryn Parry, co-founder of the Help for Heroes charity with his wife, Emma, freely admits that, if he didn't own an Aga, he wouldn't be married. 'Emma began muttering in her late thirties that, if I didn't buy her an Aga, I'd be history,' divulges the cartoonist. 'She'd been brought up with one so, to her, it's a symbol of home and hearth, but I hadn't, so I didn't get it.'

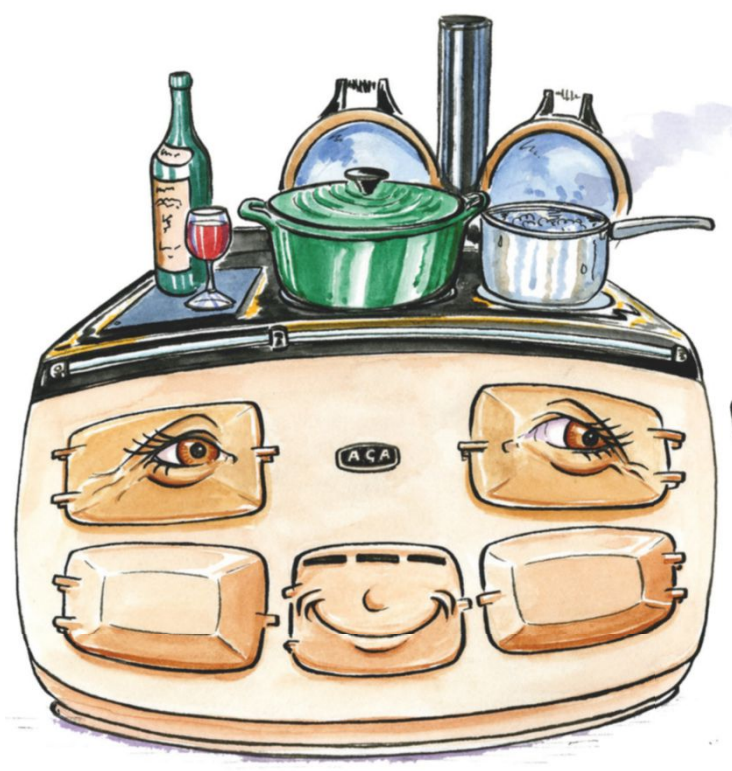
With a dark-blue, two-oven, gas-fired Aga installed as per a 'private contract' just days before Emma's 41st birthday and his marriage secured, Bryn challenged his wife to write a cookbook, which became *Home on the Range*. 'She came up with 150 recipes and I said I'd illustrate it,' he recalls.

'Emma said the cartoon Aga needed to have a womanly figure, so I drew curvy, smiley, maternal-looking models through the night and, by dawn, I'd given birth to Mrs Aga.'



### All about Agas

- Dr Gustaf Dalen invented the Aga in 1922 while confined to his home after being blinded in an experiment. He witnessed how labour-intensive ranges were to operate and so developed the world's first heat-storage cooker
  - **Once fuelled by coal, most Agas are now powered by gas, oil and electricity**
  - The Aga has been given only small 'tweaks' over the decades, such as wider lid handles, springs to make the lids lighter and, during the 1970s only, a sliver of colour around the base of the lid to match the front
  - **The first Agas were made only in cream, but, today, there are 12 colours**
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MRS AGA WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO 9199LY SUPS



**The Duke of Somerset has had an Aga since the 1950s and admits: 'I always gravitate towards it when I'm cold'**

The Parrys' Aga is usually turned off during the warmer months—unlike Mary's, which is only turned down. 'There's always a discussion about turning the Aga off,' admits Bryn. 'We get used to having it on, plus firing it back up isn't easy. I have to get down on my hands and knees and usually have to get a man round.'

The couple uses a French range called Henri for cooking during the summer. 'Henri is all brass knobs, flaming gas and flamboyance, so he's used for stir-fries and steaks. Mrs Aga is more slow and deliberate. I see her as Mrs Bridges [from *Upstairs, Downstairs*]—big-busted with her

sleeves rolled up, very dependable and good at baking.' The couple both cook on their Aga, but Emma's creations take precedence. 'She makes wonderful walnut cakes and lemon drizzles and, every other day, produces two loaves of bread, one wholemeal and one sourdough. I eat the bread when it's just come out of the Aga and it's warm and delicious,' enthuses Bryn, who's an advocate of cooking courses for new Aga owners.

Now convinced that life without an Aga is impossible, the artist was horrified when a friend, who'd just purchased a large country house with an Aga, wanted to scrap it. 'I persuaded him to keep it and now he absolutely loves it. It's always worth the effort to try to understand them,' eulogises Bryn. 🐦



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# Feats of clay

Clay has become all the rage. Catherine Milner investigates the revival of enthusiasm for working with this defiantly low-tech material and discovers a new aesthetic that has transformed pottery into fine art



*Above: **Dead Nature, Chaos** by Bouke de Vries (2015).*

*Below: **Christie Brown's The Uncanny Playroom** (2010)*

ous loofah-like sculptures—that they made with their bare hands. In recent years, Grayson Perry, Edmund de Waal and Julian Stair have re-established the primacy of the pot, using it to tell stories about everything from the history of the Jesuits to the Chernobyl nuclear-power-station disaster.

As prices for their work have soared from a few hundred pounds to a few hundred thousand over the past 30 years, pottery has moved from the homely world of craft to the high-octane reaches of fine art. Nao Matsunaga, Sam Bakewell, Malene Hartmann Rasmussen and Lucille Lewin are all part of a brilliant new generation of artists using clay, their work headed more for the pristine galleries of Mayfair and Manhattan than the craft shops of the Brecon Beacons.

**F**OR the past 30 years, the vogue for virtual, highly conceptual art using man-made materials has dominated the contemporary scene. Now, however, there appears to be a shift towards art that is more tangible and a new artistic movement is emerging, forged from that most elemental and ancient of materials: clay.

There have always been potters who have made vases, jugs and other utilitarian objects. But there have also been times, notably in Italy during the Renaissance—in works by Donatello, for instance—when artists have used clay to make the highest forms of sculpture. The distinction between craft and art became blurred in the 19th century, when William Morris popularised craft by getting famous

artists to work in wood and ceramic using traditional methods.

In 1913, just before the First World War, the art critic and impresario Roger Fry established the Omega Workshops pottery, where artists Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell expressed themselves in three-dimensional form, decorating clay pots and plates. The merging of craft and art was continued in the 1950s by the California Clay Movement, whose leader, Peter Voulkos, made massive abstract ceramic sculptures.

In England at about the same time, British potters such as Hans Coper and Gillian Lowndes saw themselves as artists rather than artisans. They adopted a philosophy that went far beyond what was suggested by the simple-looking pieces—Coper's beautifully balanced pots, Lowndes's curi-



*Susie Ahiburgh/Christie Brown; Bouke de Vries*

Despite savage government cuts since 1980, which have reduced the number of art schools teaching ceramics in the UK from 17 to just four, Britain is now one of the pre-eminent places in the world in which exciting art is being made from clay (the other main countries are Denmark, Japan and the USA). Paul Greenhalgh, Director of the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts—whose new book, *Ceramic: a history*, will be published in the autumn—comments: ‘A very powerful head of steam is growing in ceramics in Britain at the same time as training in the art schools is badly needed.’

The abolition of courses teaching applied arts such as ceramics and woodwork has resulted in a grassroots rebellion, he adds. ‘Over the past 20 years, we have heavily de-skilled our art schools, but the truth is a lot of younger people want to be independent makers, designers and artists and, for that, they want to acquire skills and discipline.’

A testament to this wave of enthusiasm for clay among the population at large is the number of community pottery classes and workshops that can be found up and down the country. Full to bursting, they’re much in demand, not only from bored housewives, but also from twenty-somethings for whom digital technology is second nature, but creating something physical and

## ‘Making something out of clay reinforces our physicality and sense of who we are’

palpable is not. As Mr Stair says: ‘People are moving away from a visual and virtual world into creating something tangible. Making something out of clay reinforces our physicality and sense of who we are.’

The Troy Town Art Pottery, a ‘radical and psychedelic’ ceramic workshop in east London, is highly popular with the throngs of young people who live in that area. It was established in 2014 by Aaron Angell, an artist who had encountered much resistance to experimentation in the art-school ceramics studios and community potteries he attended. He wanted to provide an alternative where people would be free to make what they liked.

*The Great Pottery Throw Down* proved to be one of BBC2’s big draws last year, with more than two million viewers reflecting a generation of indi-

viduals who are rediscovering the gratification of making. One of the show’s judges, Kate Malone, whose flamboyant and brightly coloured stoneware was the subject of a wonderful exhibition at the Rothschilds’ Waddesdon Manor last year, is trying to raise money to start a clay college in Stoke-on-Trent. Its aim would be, in the absence of the art schools doing so, to ensure that the ancient skills of traditional pot-making are preserved and handed on to the next generation.

‘Everyone gets pleasure from making, sharing and having objects made from clay—it grounds them,’ she says. ‘What you produce in a pottery class could be art or could just be your cereal bowl.’

As striking as the variety of pottery being made is the fact that it’s being discussed, exhibited and sold at unprecedented levels in exhibitions and art fairs. Messums Wiltshire has just opened ‘Material: Earth. The New British Clay Movement’, which celebrates the new aesthetic born from this defiantly low-tech material. At the end of the month, Tate St Ives will reopen after a closure of four months with ‘That Continuous Thing: Artists and the Ceramics Studio, 1920–Today’, an exhibition that explores the rise of pottery as art rather than craft.

The Yale Center for British Art’s big autumn show “‘Things of Beauty ➤

**Contemplation 3** by Alexander Macdonald Buchanan (2012–14)

Alexander Macdonald Buchanan/Sean Henry



Growing”: British Studio Pottery’, opens at New Haven, Connecticut, USA, in September and will then travel to the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge next March. The Fitzwilliam has one of the finest contemporary-ceramics collections in the UK, the bequest of Sir and Lady Nicholas Goodison, which has recently been celebrated in a new book.

Ceramic Art London, the Craft Potters Association’s annual fair, which opens later this month at Central Saint Martins, is one of many similar events that are flourishing, from Hatfield to Aberystwyth to Perth. Even *Woman’s Hour* has embraced the *zeitgeist* with its Craft Prize for a work ‘original and excellent in concept, design and process’. The top 10 entrants will have their pieces put on display at the V&A in November.

A new museum devoted exclusively to ceramics opened in York in 2015. Meanwhile, Stoke-on-Trent, home to an industry of porcelain manufacture that had, until recently, been dying a slow death, is producing more tableware than ever before, including some of a more arty genre. A leading candidate in the bid to become UK City of Culture 2021, Stoke is also home to the British Ceramics Biennial. ‘We are definitely enjoying a ceramics moment’ says the biennial’s director Barney Hare Duke.

The redefinition of craft as art can be seen internationally, too. The American artists Sterling Ruby, Betty Woodman and Liz Larner are all using clay in widely divergent ways to make arresting sculptures. In Europe, long established European porcelain factories, such as



Left: **Bullfighter** by Grayson Perry (1984).  
Below: Merete Rasmussen’s **Blue Twisted Form** (2011)



Sèvres Meissen and Nymphenberg, now make as much money from selling clay objects by contemporary artists and designers, such as Chris Antemann or Aldo Bakker, as they do from dinner and tea services.

The most enduring of all clay objects is the humble pot. A vessel that carries food and drink, it is also something that has taken on the characteristics of the human form, with shoulders, lips, feet and bellies. In recent times, aided by the evolution of enormous kilns, a number of makers—many of them featured in the Messums show—have started creating vessels of gargantuan proportions. Alexander Macdonald-Buchanan, Felicity Aylieff and Mr Stair all throw jars and vases 6ft high or more, in reference, perhaps, to our world of plenty.

**Venus et Amour II** by Philip Eglin (2016)



Malene Rasmussen; Stephanie Rennie; Philip Sayer

## Where to see ceramics

- **‘Material: Earth. The New British Clay Movement’** is at Messums Wiltshire, from March 12 to May 1 (01747 445042; [www.messumswiltshire.com](http://www.messumswiltshire.com))
- **‘That Continuous Thing: Artists and the Ceramics Studio, 1920–Today’** is at Tate St Ives, Porthmeor Beach, St Ives, Cornwall, from March 31 to September 3 (01736 796226; [www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-st-ives](http://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-st-ives))
- **“‘Things of Beauty Growing’: British Studio Pottery”** is at the Yale Center of British Art, New Haven, Connecticut, USA, from September 14 to December 3 (<http://britishart.yale.edu>) and then at the Fitzwilliam Museum, 32, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, from March 20 to June 18, 2018 (01223 332900; [www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk](http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk))
- **Ceramic Art London** is at Central Saint Martins, 1, Granary Square, London N1, from March 31 to April 2 (020–3137 0750; [www.ceramicartlondon.com](http://www.ceramicartlondon.com))
- **Clay College Adopt a Potter crowdfunding appeal:** [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/clay-college-stoke](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/clay-college-stoke)
- **Troy Town Art Pottery:** [www.troytown.org.uk](http://www.troytown.org.uk)
- **Woman’s Hour Craft Prize 2017:** [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)
- **British Ceramics Biennial**, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, from September 23 to November 5 (01782 294634; [www.britishceramicsbiennial.com](http://www.britishceramicsbiennial.com))



Equally notable, however, are the potters who enjoy smashing them up, breaking them into a thousand beautiful shards. One of many artists working in this way is Bouke de Vries, a London based Dutch ceramicist, whose epic table piece *War and Pieces*, made from fragments of 19th-century porcelain, is currently on display at Berrington Hall in Herefordshire. 'Pottery is one of the only things that a culture leaves behind, because it survives. And then every culture is identifiable by its ceramics, they all have a style,' says Mr de Vries.

Using clay—as any viewer of *The Great Pottery Throw Down* will testify—has sometimes been equated with sex, its visceral messiness being a cipher for the organic businesses of the human body. It has also been associated with death, in the form of reliquaries and effigies. Two rare works by Mr Perry—a black urn illustrated with a bull charging a man and a plate inscribed with the words 'Death to Grayson Perry'—draw the connection between clay and the fragility of human flesh. On the plate is one of the earliest of Mr Perry's self-portraits, done when he was just 22. In honour of the same tradition, Mr Stair makes sarcophagi, cinerary urns and monumental pots the shape of Egyptian canopic jars.

In stark contrast with these artists are those working in a Pop Art style, of whom Richard Slee is the most established master. He makes glossy, brightly coloured renditions in clay of domestic objects such as fly swatters and garden shears. Malene Hartmann Rasmussen draws on Nordic myths about trolls and forests to create dark, but luminescent, *mise-en-scènes* featuring pink rabbits, enormous acorns and psychedelic flowers.

There are even some performance artists, such as Stephanie Buttle and Phoebe Cummings, working in clay. Their pieces are not intended to be fired or to last, playing on the ephemeral nature of the earth around us.

From a collector's point of view, the opportunities are as exciting as they are various. Online galleries such as CFile and Maak offer an infinity of ceramics beyond the choice found at more traditional galleries.

There is a communication between the maker and the collector that can only be found through handmade objects, particularly those that use elemental materials. To celebrate the new love of clay, Messums Wiltshire will hold a Makers Festival on April 29 and 30. Visitors will be invited to throw pots, sculpt portrait busts, make clay paintings and even cars



**Top: Chris Antemann modelling her porcelain *Covet* sculpture for Meissen. Above: Miss Antemann's *Card Party* (2015)**

and help build an enormous coral reef. Talks and panel discussions by ceramics experts will debate the importance of making in education, the enduring legacy of the pot and how to collect ceramics. One of the more intriguing courses on offer will be the clay play sessions for adults, led by award-winning potter Sandy Brown.

As Johnny Messum says: 'One of the most exciting things about this new Clay Movement is the wider consensus unconsciously held by makers and curators about the need to re-evaluate the importance of the handmade as part of the creative process.'

# Interior design Made in Britain

Photograph by Richard Cannon

## Peter Gomez

Fabric and wallpaper designer

**I**T was the discovery of old wallpaper fragments at Temple Newsam in North Yorkshire—some of which dated back to the 17th century—that inspired Zoffany, the company that breathes new life into beautiful historic designs, as well as creating those that are exciting and modern.

When Edward Wood, the future Earl of Halifax, sold the house and its Capability Brown-designed parkland to Leeds Council in 1922, it was stripped of its paintings, furniture and fixtures. Several decades later, in the early 1980s, designer Humphrey Boyle discovered forgotten remnants and established a small hand-screen printing workshop nearby to re-create some of the historical wallcoverings.

These formed the basis of the 'Temple Newsam Collection', which was launched in 1984. It was an instant success and Zoffany established a name as a world leader in the art of reproducing lost fabrics and wall coverings.

At the time, Zoffany's founders recognised a demand from decorators and architects for high-quality, off-the-shelf wallpapers based on heritage designs. Their approach was to analyse historical production methods, build up a library of documentary samples and reproduce them for a contemporary market.

'It's a process we very much carry on today,' explains head of design Peter Gomez (pictured here with the studio's new Holkham Bay wallpaper). 'The success of Zoffany is our ability to update these designs.

We have the provenance of the document archive, which we draw inspiration from, but we're a young studio with forward-thinking ideas: it's a lovely mix.'

One aspect that has never 'progressed' is the company's focus on hand-painting or hand-drawing designs. 'We very rarely use computers,' says Peter, who studied screen printing in London after a childhood largely based in Gibraltar.

The studio is based in Denham, Buckinghamshire, where there is a team of designers, but Zoffany also brings in freelancers to work on projects. 'Instead of using trained textile designers, we work with artisans, as we want them to excel at what they do,' explains Peter. 'For example, a mural artist won't be fazed by a large canvas and won't be distracted by thinking about how to convert the work into a wallpaper or worry about repeats—that's our job.'

The collection today falls into two styles: a city look in which fabrics might have more lustre and designs be more subtle and a country-house style that's more relaxed and informal. However, says Peter, 'as they all come from the same colour lines, they're very adaptable.'

'We have a big international following. It's something to do with the blend of working with historic documents and updating designs—it lends Zoffany a gravitas that's appreciated throughout the world.'

[www.zoffany.com](http://www.zoffany.com)

Arabella Youens

### On the record

**Who's your favourite artist?** Mark Rothko—I love the impact of the colour and texture of his work

**Who's your most inspirational designer?** Zaha Hadid. I loved her bravery and her architecture was more akin to art

**What's the possession you'd never sell?** My grandfather's wrist-watch





# On the face of it

Add depth, interest and decorative detail to your interior with the latest fabrics and wallpapers

### Road map

Sweden's oldest wallpaper company, Boråstapeter, founded in 1905, has collaborated with lifestyle brand Lexington to launch New England wallpaper, re-created from an 1899 guidebook, £85 per roll, Lexington Company (00 46 854 55 58 60; [www.lexingtoncompany.com](http://www.lexingtoncompany.com))



### Style point

As fun as it is chic, Arrows wallpaper could be hung vertically or horizontally. Shown here in Blush colourway, it costs £81 per roll from Barneby Gates (01672 560240; [www.barnebygates.com](http://www.barnebygates.com))

### Wild life

Baboons and chameleons sun themselves as hoopoes and hornbills call in this fantastical garden wallpaper design, named Savuti after one of Africa's most loved national parks. From the Ardmore collection, £80 per roll, Cole & Son (020-8442 8844; [www.cole-and-son.com](http://www.cole-and-son.com))



### Treasure trove

Decorative antiques specialist Lorforde's new Chelsea shop is home to fabric and wallpaper collections from a number of special artisan designers, including Rapture & Wright, whose hand-printed Sakori wallpaper, £22 per metre, is shown here (9, Langton Street, SW10; [www.lorfordeantiques.com](http://www.lorfordeantiques.com); 020-3434 3133)

### Shaded glory

Opulent pattern in soft hues creates a sense of faded beauty, just right for a modern interior. Santiago wallpaper, £58.50 per wide width (134cm) roll, Lewis & Wood (01453 878517; [www.lewisandwood.co.uk](http://www.lewisandwood.co.uk))



### Abstract vision

Mirabilis Wall covering, £442 per roll, features fabric threads used to create softly textured abstract flowers on a paper background. It's shown here with a chair covered in Taidai, £152 per metre, both by Rubelli (020-7349 1590; [www.rubelli.com](http://www.rubelli.com))



### Pattern recognition

Widely admired as the doyenne of pattern, Neisha Crosland makes her designs sing with beautiful use of colour. Blackberry wallpaper in Gooseberry Green, £102 per roll, Turnell & Gigon (020-7259 7280; [www.turnellandgigon.com](http://www.turnellandgigon.com))



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# Interior design FOCUS

## Rare find

Named after Elizabethan playwrights Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, fabric and furniture specialist Beaumont & Fletcher enjoys a reputation for theatrical style and beautiful craftsmanship. Choose from couture hand-embroidered fabrics embellished with pearls and crystals to beautiful plain velvets, mohairs and linens, including the 18 colours of Orkney 100% pure stonewashed linen, £95 per metre, Beaumont & Fletcher (020-7352 5594; [www.beaumontandfletcher.com](http://www.beaumontandfletcher.com))



## Light idea

Ideal for simple sheers, Elipse Natural and Ripple Jasper White, both £123 per metre, are from the Japanese-inspired Edo collection of lightweight linens from Mark Alexander (01623 756699; [www.markalexander.com](http://www.markalexander.com))



## Spring fresh

The ancient Japanese art of *shibori*, a traditional resist-dyeing technique, is currently enjoying a revival alongside all things indigo. The Artisan fabric collection is Vanessa Arbuthnott's fresh take on the craft: her original designs were created by folding, shaping and compressing fabrics by hand, then immersing them in a vat of indigo. 100% linen, £49.50 per metre (01285 831437; [www.vanessaarbuthnott.co.uk](http://www.vanessaarbuthnott.co.uk))



## Rich tones

Russet, ochre and blue shades combine in bold stripes and pattern in the Festival collection from Mulberry Home, from £59 per metre (020-7351 7760; [www.gpjbaker.com/brands/mulberry-home](http://www.gpjbaker.com/brands/mulberry-home))



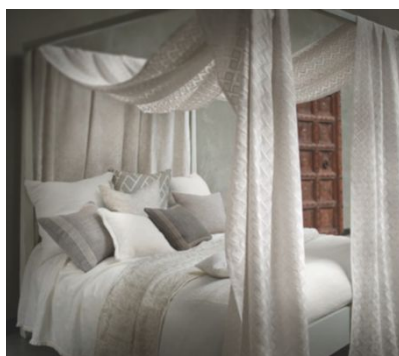
## Farm yard

The motifs may have a naïve story-book charm, but the block-printed look gives this Gable wallpaper a distinctly modern edge, £97 per roll, Farrow & Ball (01202 876141; [www.farrow-ball.com](http://www.farrow-ball.com))



## Blue note

French fabric house Manuel Canovas introduces a classic design inspired by an 18th-century Indienne document. Palladio is printed in Ciel on a bleached canvas ground, 100% linen, £79 per metre, Manuel Canovas at Colefax and Fowler (020-8877 6400; [www.manuelcanovas.com](http://www.manuelcanovas.com))



## New neutrals

Subtle textures and hues combine in the decorative prints, embroideries, woven jacquards and textured weaves from the new Origin and Tosca collections, from £115 per metre, from Mark Alexander (01623 756699; [www.markalexander.com](http://www.markalexander.com))

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[www.tetrad.co.uk](http://www.tetrad.co.uk)



**L**ITTLE more than five years after the release of *Chalet Girl* (St Anton's answer to *Jane Eyre*), the interiors already look as dated as a *dirndl*. Habitués of schmanzier chalets will know that the Alpine look has evolved beyond all recognition in the past few years—less scrubbed pine and wood-burning stoves and more black walnut and underfloor heating. Now, the style—all capacious L-shaped sofas swathed in wool and cashmere and Minimalist open fires—is rapidly permeating beyond Verbier, Megève and St Moritz.

'More than any kind of home, the mountain chalet offers a retreat from the urban world,' says Nicky Dobree, a leading proponent of the look, who designed the £30,000 a week Klosters chalet of The White Company founder Chrissie Rucker and her husband, Nick Wheeler, creator of shirt retailer Charles Tyrwhitt. Such are its attractions that she isn't surprised that it's spreading beyond ski resorts.

## ‘The Alpine look is rapidly permeating beyond Verbier, Megève and St Moritz’

The key ingredients in Dobree's schemes are touchy-feely fabrics: heavy linens, wool, cashmere and sheepskin. 'I use wool in many of my interiors—not just in the mountains, but everywhere. It's cosy, hard-wearing and upholsters beautifully. For the Klosters project, I chose lambswool for the curtains as it's warm and hangs beautifully. It also looks and feels fantastic.'

Perhaps inevitably, there is a distinctly Alpine feel to many of the new fabrics at London Design Week currently taking place in and around Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour SW10. Highlights include Zinc's Bonheur collection of textural weaves that have a slightly retro, fashionable feel as well as a new fabric from Rubelli that is so soft it's simply called Cuddles. Both would look as at home in Kensington as they would in Colorado. 



A sofa upholstered in a textural weave from Zinc's Bonheur collection ([www.zinctextile.com](http://www.zinctextile.com))



### A laidback lodge for chaps

Those who prefer a more masculine look while they're recovering from a gruelling day on the slopes might be tempted by the El Lodge in Sierra Nevada, Spain ([www.ellodge.com](http://www.ellodge.com)), recently designed by Andrew Martin International. Elle Lodge this definitely isn't; rather than sheepskin and lambswool, expect plenty of macho cowhide, antler chandeliers and lamps fashioned from Campari bottles.

Founded in the late 1970s, Andrew Martin has pioneered the modern man-cave style of decorating that was the antithesis of knicker blinds and *toile de Jouy* that dominated the following decade. Today, the company has evolved into a flag waver for eclectic, anything-goes interior design.

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## More ways with spring onions

### Whole steamed sea bass with spring onions and fennel (serves 4)

Firstly, you will need a couple of sea bass of about 1.5kg (3½lb) each. In a small bowl, mix together a few tablespoons of olive oil, the juice of a lemon, 8 chopped spring onions, 2 thinly sliced fennel bulbs and seasoning. Slash the skins of the fish, spoon the mixture into the cuts and rub in. Wrap loosely in foil and bake in a medium-hot oven for 25 minutes. Serve with saffron creamed potatoes.



### Baked avocado (above)

Slice an avocado in half and remove the stone. In a bowl, mix together 2 tablespoons of mascarpone, half a chopped red chilli, 1 chopped spring onion, 3 tablespoons of finely diced, cooked chicken, 2 tablespoons of lemon juice and seasoning. Pile mounds of the mixture onto the avocado halves and top with an extra chopped spring onion and a few bits of chilli. Bake in a hot oven for 10 minutes and serve with a squeeze of lemon, plus lemon-dressed spinach leaves.

### Asian-style beef and spring onions with brown rice (serves 2)

Slice 2 pieces of frying steak into thin strips and add to a medium-hot wok with a little vegetable oil. Throw in 3 chopped spring onions (white and green parts) and a handful of mangetout and stir. Pour in a tablespoon each of *mirin* and soy sauce, add grated ginger (a piece of about 2cm sq) and a dash of chilli paste and stir again. Add 200ml of *miso* soup (a sachet is fine) and reduce a little, then mix in a small lump of butter to make the sauce shine. Fold in a scattering of toasted black sesame seeds and freshly chopped coriander to your brown rice and serve in bowls with the beef.

Melanie Johnson

Spring, with all its fresh, green bounty, is just around the corner, so I thought this week's recipes should be healthy and light. Spring onions will always brighten up a salad, but they bring such freshness to cooked dishes, too



## Chicken, spring-onion and mozzarella meatballs with pesto courgetti salad

Serves 4

### Ingredients

#### Meatballs

- 2 medium sweet potatoes, cut into wedges
- 3tbspn maple syrup
- 200g chicken breasts
- 60g mozzarella
- 3 finely chopped spring onions
- 75g fresh white breadcrumbs
- A handful chopped fresh basil
- 1 lightly beaten egg

#### Pesto

- 2 handfuls basil leaves
- 100ml olive oil or more if needed to loosen
- 75g almonds
- 75g grated Parmesan
- 1 clove garlic
- Juice of 1 lemon plus 1tspn zest

- 2 spiralsised courgettes

### Method

Preheat your oven to 180°C/350°F/gas mark 4. Arrange the sweet-potato wedges on a baking sheet, drizzle with olive oil and maple syrup and roast for 25 minutes or until tender.

Peel away the skins and put the flesh in a food processor along with the chicken and mozzarella. Pulse the mixture, but don't take it so far that it becomes a paste, then stir in the chopped spring onions, breadcrumbs, basil, beaten egg and some seasoning. Mix well and scoop out in small mounds, rolling each one into a ball with your hands.

Heat some olive oil in a pan over a medium heat and fry the meatballs, taking care not to overcrowd the pan. Cook in batches if necessary and, once done, keep them warm in the oven.

Make the pesto by simply blitzing together the basil, olive oil, almonds, Parmesan, garlic, lemon juice and zest in a processor until they create a paste, seasoning to taste. Stir the pesto generously through the spiralsised courgette.

Serve the meatballs hot, with the courgetti salad on the side.

# AMMONIUM BICARB- ONATE

Not in Jordans granola. 'Toasted oats with honey and nuts', now that sounds much tastier to us. Because unlike some other cereals, we believe the best ingredients are found wearing wellies, not a lab coat. Which, interestingly, is a dress code that we also apply to jumping in puddles.



**NOT  
IN  
OUR  
NATURE**



**L**AUNCHED on the market last week, at a guide price of £5 million through Strutt & Parker (020-7629 7282), Grade II-listed The Hall (**Fig 1**) at Shudy Camps, Cambridgeshire, is a striking Queen Anne country house set in 29 acres of picturesque parkland, 15 miles south-east of Cambridge and close to the borders of Essex and Suffolk. Once the heart of an important farming estate, the elegant red-brick house has been brilliantly restored and reinstated within its original park by its current owners, Christopher and Sarah Field, who moved there with their young family in January 2005.

**For five years, it was covered in scaffolding**

With 10,850sq ft of 'partly liveable' space on three floors to contend with, the task facing the Fields was a daunting one. 'There were draughts and leaks everywhere and, for the first five years, the house was covered in scaffolding,' Mrs Field recalls. With her husband working in the City, it fell to her to oversee the renovation, but, gradually, the pieces of the jigsaw came together.

According to Victoria County History, The Hall, originally known as Shudy Camps Park, was built in 1698-1702 by Sir Marmaduke Dayrell, who inherited his interest in Shudy Camps manor from his elder brother, Sir Francis. The new house consisted of 'a long narrow front range, later remodelled and heightened, and an irregular block at the back, reconstructed in the mid 1800s in Tudor style, with offices and stables to the south'.

Presumably, this 'Tudor style' building is the present, three-bedroom 'Elizabethan House' listed by English Heritage in 2002, when it was described as 'a house (circa 1700) formerly a service range to Shudy Camps Park'.

For almost 200 years, successive Dayrell heirs—most named alternately Marmaduke and Francis—took on the estate, which prospered at first, but gradually declined until, in 1898, the Rev Richard Dayrell

## Not small, but perfectly formed

Sometimes size doesn't matter when you're looking for a special property



sold it, heavily indebted, to one Arthur Gee. Gee died five years later and, in 1904, the principal local landowner, the Rev G. F. Thornton, vicar of Shudy Camps and Canon Emeritus of Ely Cathedral, bought more than 300 acres, including the house and park, which, after his death, were sold again when the estate was broken up in 1939.

Requisitioned by the military during the Second World War, the house and park were sold several times in the 20th century, before being rescued by the current owners.

And what a rescue operation it has been! In addition to a thorough renovation and upgrade of the entire

house, the Fields have created a splendid new kitchen/dining area in the east wing, raising the roof to insert a vaulted ceiling. The matching west-wing extension at the other end of the house has been transformed into a gym and cinema room, with a golf simulator and a fun, American diner-themed kitchen. The former gate lodge and entrance to Shudy Camps Park have been acquired and reintegrated into the grounds of The Hall.

In addition to the two extensions, the main house offers five principal reception rooms, a snug, a billiards room, a cellar with two spacious wine stores, a master suite with an en-suite bathroom, a shower room and two dressing rooms, six further bedrooms, four bath/shower rooms and a second-floor games room.

Superb equestrian facilities include stabling for four horses, a full-size dressage arena and eight post-and-railed paddocks. A new tennis court has been laid down and a heated outdoor pool installed in an enclosed garden area with a covered wooden pergola/barbecue house.

The sporting Field boys have enjoyed a blissful childhood at The Hall, but, having reached university

**Fig 1: Elegant The Hall at Shudy Camps in Cambridgeshire had been lovingly restored into the perfect family home. £5m**



## Not huge, but with no wasted space

The Old Rectory comes with just under 1½ acres of immaculate gardens and grounds, the main body set to lawn with high stone walls on the boundary and divided by mature trees, borders and yew hedges. In the north-east corner is a grass tennis court and an old stone-and-wood pony stable, with its original loose box. A further 4.8 acres of paddock adjoining the garden boundary may be available to lease from the Burghley estate.

age, are spending less and less time there. With Mr Field spending half the week at their London flat in preference to a daily commute, the Fields have decided to downsize to a smaller house in the area, although their sons are understandably dismayed at the prospect of losing their favourite weekend and party venue.

Another classic country house launched earlier this month by the Market Harborough office of Strutt & Parker (01858 433123) is the beautifully renovated Old Rectory (**Fig 2**) at Tinwell, near Stamford, Rutland, for which ‘offers over £2m’ are being sought. Historically owned by the surrounding Burghley estate, from whom the present owners purchased it some 16 years ago, The Old Rectory, listed Grade II, stands opposite Tinwell’s lovely All Saints Church, with its unusual saddleback roof, added in about 1350.

The former rectory was the birthplace of Thomas Laxton, who practised as a solicitor in Stamford before concentrating on his main interest, the hybridisation of plants; he’s probably best known for the development of the Laxton’s Superb and Laxton’s Fortune apples, the Royal Sovereign strawberry and the Thomas Laxton pea.

The 5,000sq ft house, which dates mainly from the early 19th century and incorporates an earlier service wing to the rear, is described by selling agent Edward Brassey as ‘not huge, but with no wasted space’—a claim borne out by the owners’ ingenuity in arranging the interior to provide flexible family living



**Fig 2: Flexible family living is a breeze at the classic Old Rectory at Tinwell, Rutland. ‘Offers over £2m’**

space, including three main reception rooms, a breakfast kitchen, a playroom, six bedrooms (three with en-suite bathrooms) and a family bathroom.

A building in the grounds has been converted into a one-bedroom cottage, which has proved to be a highly successful holiday let. Listed-building consent has been granted for a Vale Garden House conservatory on the rear terrace.

‘For envy too small, for contempt too great’ is the motto inscribed—with the date 1777—above the front door of a north Cotswold gem, Grade II-listed Todenham Hall (**Fig 3**), a handsome, Georgian former rectory set in 11 acres of gardens, grounds and paddocks, in the village of Todenham, three miles north-east of Moreton-in-Marsh in Gloucestershire.

Extensively refurbished in 2006, the house, which has 17th-century or earlier origins, offers 5,010sq ft of living space on three floors, including a reception/staircase hall, three impressive reception rooms, a fabulous bespoke kitchen/breakfast room, six bedrooms, four bathrooms, a playroom/cinema room and a bell tower.

It comes with a substantial, two-bedroom coach house, likewise restored and enlarged in 2006. Strutt & Parker (01608 650502) quote a guide price of £4.5m. 🐦



**Fig 3: Todenham Hall is just three miles from Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire. £4.5m**



# More tea, vicar?

Dearly beloved, the parsonage's appeal never falters, finds Eleanor Doughty



NEVER mind big, crumbling piles with more bedrooms than you have second cousins, the English parsonage provides a perfectly sized slice of idyllic country life. With features such as well-proportioned rooms, a central village location and lush, green gardens, it's easy to see why more than just vicars are drawn to these charming properties and their popularity has never really waned. After all, parsonages—a term that describes both vicarages and rectories—are possessed with, as Catherine Morland put it in *Northanger Abbey*, 'unpretending comfort'.

However, not all parsonages were made equal. Many fit the 'Georgian box' archetype, but others come in altogether more Victorian, even modern, garb. Writer Anthony Jennings, director

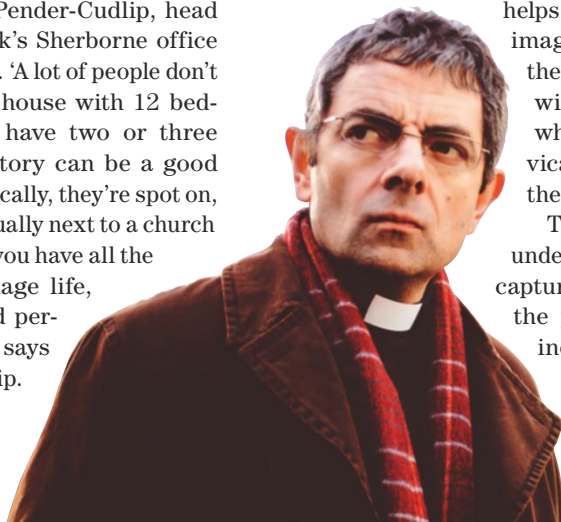
of *Save Our Parsonages*, describes them as 'perhaps the most admirable, desirable and aesthetic body of domestic buildings ever built' in his book *The Old Rectory: the story of the English parsonage*.

Agents tend to be thrilled when a rectory comes onto the market. They're the ideal family home, believes Luke Pender-Cudlip, head of Knight Frank's Sherborne office (01935 810062). 'A lot of people don't want the huge house with 12 bedrooms. If you have two or three children, a rectory can be a good size.' Geographically, they're spot on, too. 'They're usually next to a church and, therefore, you have all the benefits of village life, a local pub and perhaps a school,' says Mr Pender-Cudlip.

**Sermons and the simple life: from Rowan Atkinson (in *Keeping Mum*, below) to Jeffrey Archer, the parsonage is still popular**

Mark Peck, director of Cheffins, the Cambridgeshire-based agency, agrees (01353 654900). 'With imposing locations and generous gardens and grounds, old rectories are often the best property in the village. They continue to represent the archetypal village house for many buyers.' The P. G. Wodehouse England perception helps. 'For many, they conjure up images of croquet matches on the lawn with cucumber sandwiches,' explains Mr Peck, who's recently sold a former vicarage in Soham on behalf of the Ely Diocese.


The parsonage is also an understated social marker. 'They capture in elegantly built poetry the position of many wealthy individuals,' says architect Robbie Kerr of ADAM Archi- ➤



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# Property comment

ture, who grew up spending time at a charming Queen Anne rectory in Stanford-in-the-Vale, Oxfordshire. 'The church lay at the heart of the community and those running it were often well disposed, with time to explore architectural taste and refine their home into beautiful buildings of the latest fashion.' Often, Mr Kerr says, they were 'built without constraint'.

In a social context in which the eldest son would inherit the estate, the second would join the Army and the third would go into the Church, the vicarage needed to be sturdy. 'If you were the son of a rich family, you weren't going to go and live in a tiny little property—you would be living in a fine house,' says Lindsay Cuthill, head of Savills' country-house department (020-7016 3820). 'You start, through that historical context, having very well designed, substantial houses for people of means.'

Novelist Jeffrey Archer has lived in his rectory in Grantchester, Cambridgeshire, for 30 years. The village has three—the old one belonging to the Archers and immortalised in Rupert Brooke's 1912 nostalgic poem *The Old Vicarage, Grantchester*, the middle vicarage and, now, a modern one. The Archers' house, which dates back to 1683, has a 3½-acre garden with mature trees, a lake and front lawn (*COUNTRY LIFE, April 15, 2015*). Inside, it's 'the perfect size,' says Lord Archer. 'We've got a kitchen, a utility room, a dining room, a drawing room and a study and, upstairs, a television room and five bedrooms. You can't look at it and not think "what a lovely house".'

The financial premium on parsonages is difficult to pinpoint, but agents estimate it to be about 10%–20%. In any case, demand outstrips supply; it's not every day that rectories come up for sale.

Those parsonages that come without lots of land divide buyers, says Mr Cuthill. 'A high-profile celebrity may love the look of a rectory, but feel unable to buy it because it's visible from the street. A lot of rectories had a separate door onto the garden for parishioners to come and visit; that means easy access. If you want somewhere very private, it might not be the property for you.'

Luckily, for the rest of us, a parsonage is pretty close to perfect. 🐣



If only all vicars looked like James Norton (in *Grantchester*), we'd all live in a rectory

## Pining for a parsonage?

### Read

*The Murder at the Vicarage* by Agatha Christie  
*The Vicar of Nibbleswicke* by Roald Dahl  
*Barchester Towers* by Anthony Trollope  
*The Rector's Wife* by Joanna Trollope  
*Lark Rise to Candleford* by Flora Thompson

### Watch

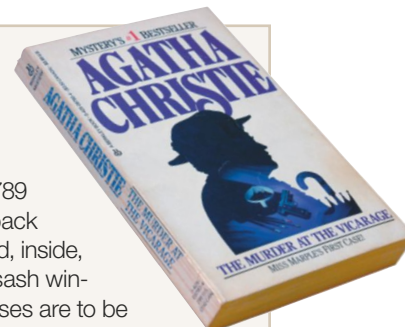
*Keeping Mum* (2005), in which Rowan Atkinson plays a reverend who, unwittingly, has his murderous mother-in-law (Maggie Smith) to stay  
 ITV's *Grantchester*, from the novels by Archbishop's son James Runcie, in which Anglican-vicar-cum-amateur-sleuth Sidney Chambers (James Norton) helps an overworked policeman solve crimes

### Buy

An eight-bedroom Grade II\*-listed rectory

has come to the market in Lower Brailes, Warwickshire, with Knight Frank at £2 million (01789 867263). Parts date back to the 14th century and, inside, its exposed timbers, sash windows and oak staircases are to be admired. The gardens total 1.2 acres laid to lawn and are accompanied by a south-facing terrace

Closer to the Georgian ideal is The Old Rectory in Norwich (*below*), a handsome Grade II-listed country house with secluded gardens, on the market with Savills at £1.65 million (01603 229229). Some of the house was built in 1735 and it boasts a Victorian drawing-room addition



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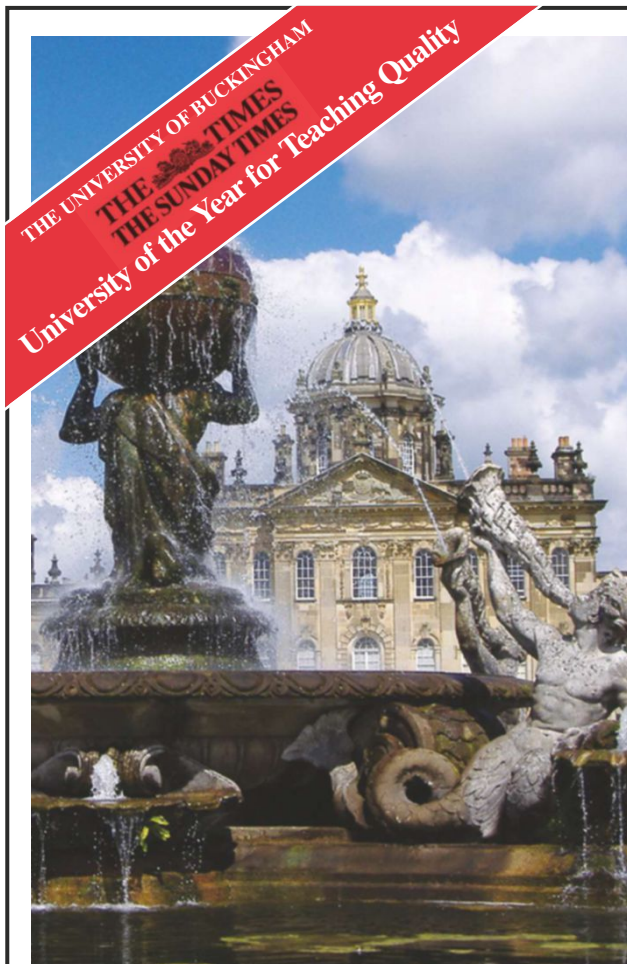


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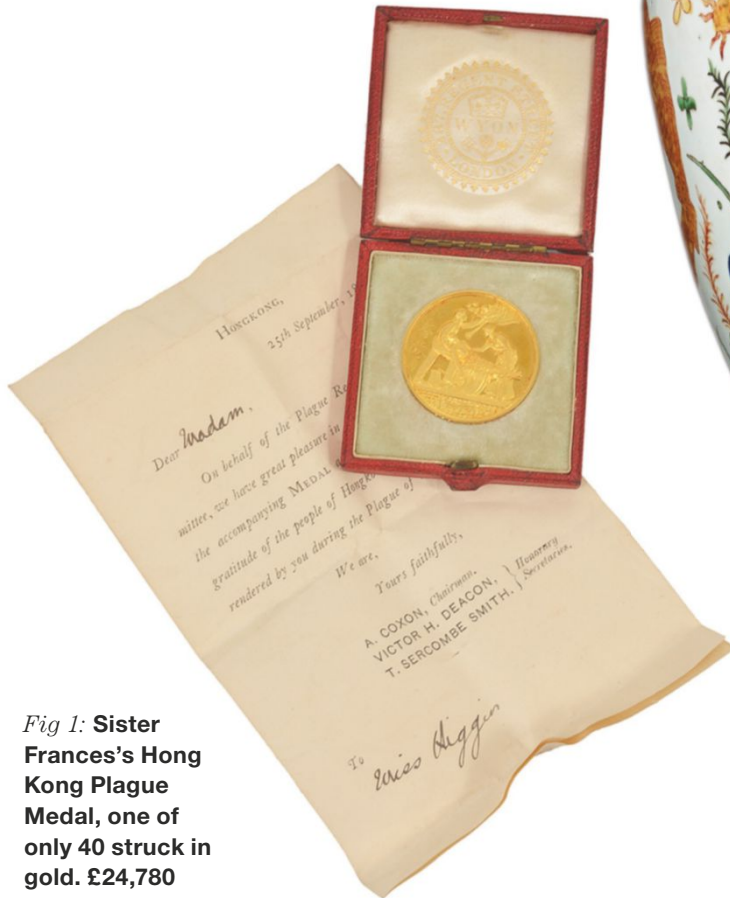
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# We will remember them

A medal celebrates the unselfish courage of two Sisters who battled plague in Hong Kong



**Fig 1: Sister Frances's Hong Kong Plague Medal, one of only 40 struck in gold. £24,780**

IN a despatch dated May 4, 1898, the Hong Kong correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, wrote: 'In Hong Kong plague is on the increase. Up to noon on May 2nd we have had 712 cases and 632 deaths. The returns for the week ended April 30 are 191 cases and 114 deaths, as against 127 cases and 109 deaths in the previous week. "Sister Frances," Miss Elizabeth Frances Higgin, died from plague on April 29. She joined the Government Civil Hospital here in 1890, was all through the plague epidemic in 1894, and is certainly a martyr to duty. On the 28th it was evident that she was suffering from the worst form of the disease, and she became rapidly worse and died at two o'clock the following morning. The funeral

took place the same afternoon, and was attended by nearly all Hong Kong, while a gloom spread over the whole place when the news of her sad fate became known.' It continues: 'One seldom hears more than a passing mention of these noble women who unselfishly risk their lives as did Sister Frances, but we in Hong Kong know and feel that our nursing sisters, in these times of plague, require and exhibit more courage than a dozen Pipers of Dargai



**Fig 2: Chinese porcelain *wu-cai* or five-colour vase. £913,200**

[Sergeant George Findlater of the Gordon Highlanders who had recently won the VC in India], and knowing this we honor them for the noble lives they lead. Yet Sister Frances will be forgotten by the world in a week, if indeed anyone outside Hong Kong ever hears of her, while the fame of the Piper of Dargai will be remembered for a generation!'

The Ulster-born Sister Frances had been awarded the Hong Kong Plague Medal for her work in 1894 when sickness first struck the colony, as had her colleague Sister Gertrude—Miss Emma Gertrude Ireland—who died of plague just a week after her. This outbreak

of plague, known as the Third Pandemic (the First began in 541 during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian and the Second was the Black Death in the 1340s) began in the Chinese province of Yunnan in 1855 and, by the World Health Organisation's reckoning, continued endemic in Hong Kong until 1939 and to be active elsewhere until 1959.

There had been 2,500 deaths in Hong Kong in 1894 and 80,000 people fled the colony amid serious civil unrest. Matters were still worse in parts of India a few months later. However, there was one positive aspect: a young Franco-Swiss scientist called Alexandre Yersin, who had gone to Hong Kong to help, made a long-sought discovery. He identified the plague bacillus, pointing to the eventual prevention and cure of the disease. The bacillus was later named in his honour: *Yersinia pestis*.

Alas, however, this did not make 1894 or even 1898 the plague to end all plagues, any

### Pick of the week

Now that March is here, it would be churlish not to include this charming 2¾in-high Bow porcelain model of a hare scratching its ear, which dates from about 1760. Despite a little restoration on the ears, it sold for £5,308 at Woolley & Wallis of Salisbury at the end of last month.



more than the First World War was to end all wars.

The two steadfast nurses were indeed remembered in Hong Kong and their graves are still tended, although the stained-glass window erected to honour them in St John's Cathedral was destroyed during the Second World War.

Sister Frances's Plague Medal (**Fig 1**), one of only about 40 struck in gold, was sold for £24,780 last month by Catherine Southon in her auction at the Farleigh Court Golf Club, Surrey. It had descended in the family of her sister. Estimated to £8,000, it provoked quite a bidding battle, so the Sisters are not yet forgotten.

Where, one wonders, is Sister Gertrude's medal?

A more dramatic estimate upset came in a February sale at Fellows in Edgbaston, when a large Chinese porcelain *wu-cai*, or five-colour, bowl painted with golden carp, lotus blossoms and grasses (**Fig 2**) estimated to £1,800 made the largest price in the firm's 141-year history.

The number five was auspicious and this enamel decoration was developed particularly during the reign of Jiajing (1522–66), but the cataloguers offered no suggestion as to date, other than that the base had 'a borderless six-character mark (pseudo-Jiajing)'. They were aware of precedents for a high prices, but

felt that this bowl, consigned through a Chinese client, was a little less sophisticated.

However, the views were well attended and many bidders then came to the sale in person, including a collector from Japan, with many more online and on the telephone. Bidding started at £1,000 and finished at £810,000 hammer—£913,200 in total—going to a Chinese telephone bidder.

A lot in a Colchester sale held by Reeman Dansie took me back more than 30 years to when we were furnishing a kitchen. We could not afford a custom-designed one, even if we had wanted it, preferring an old farmhouse look. We achieved it by searching country and other sales and antique shops and adapting or cannibalising damaged pieces. In this way, we created a quite successful dresser.

In those days, stripped pine was all the fashion, even if the wood had never been intended to be seen, and we probably could not have afforded this very handsome early-19th-century oak high dresser (**Fig 3**). Now, however, £843 seems really rather a reasonable price, especially as it was 'in good condition, commensurate with age'.

Another lot in this sale was an illustration of hubris. It was a 10in by 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ in watercolour by James Danby (1816–75), son of



**Fig 3: Early-19th-century oak high dresser. £843**

the better-known Francis, showing the celebrations for the coming of age of the Marquess of Chandos at Stowe in 1844 (**Fig 4**). Only four years later, thanks to the Marquess's father, the 2nd Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, known as 'the Greatest Debtor in the World', most

of the land and many of the contents of the house had been sold and Stowe's great gardens had to be maintained by a staff of four rather than 40. The £3,100 achieved by this watercolour might have been handy. 🐦

**Next week CADA at the Palace**

**Fig 4: The celebrations for the coming of age of the Marquess of Chandos at Stowe in 1844 painted by James Danby. £3,100**



## A Frank encounter

Corinne Julius is uplifted by the designer-architect's riotously colourful textiles and groundbreaking interior designs

**A** VIVID realm of glorious clambering vines sprouting exuberant flowers, striking shaped leaves and exotic fruits or bugs and beasts intertwined with swooping, chattering birds in a cacophony of colours and forms: such is the unmistakable world of the Austrian-born architect, designer and painter Josef Frank.

By the early 1950s, at the very time he retired from designing, Frank's textiles, wallpapers and furniture had become synonymous with Scandinavian style. His patterns—mostly joyous and slightly folksy, with the odd dark and slightly sinister exception—were the backdrop to many middle-class homes in Europe and America. For almost 30 years, he collaborated with the Swedish design company Svenskt Tenn and the results remain enormously successful.

Frank's world acknowledges a debt to William Morris, albeit a William Morris on steroids

A Jew and a committed Socialist, Frank trained and worked both as an architect and a designer in Vienna. He designed the first Werkbund Estate and, in 1925, co-founded the design and furnishings company Haus und Garten. Although he was a Modernist, he felt that homes should be comfortable and reflect their occupiers.

Frank was also heavily influenced by Nature, arguing, unlike other Modernists, that decoration added richness. 'The monochromatic surface appears



**Hawaii (1943–45)** was inspired by a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. In the museum, Frank found a collection of *Trees of Life* from northern India, upon which this print motif is based

uneasy, while patterns are calming, and the observer is unwillingly influenced by the slow, calm way it is produced. The richness of decoration cannot be fathomed so quickly, in contrast to the monochromatic surface which doesn't invite any further interest and therefore one is immediately finished with it.'

With the rise of Nazism, he moved, in 1933, to Sweden, where he collaborated with the Swedish designer and entrepreneur Estrid Ericson of Svenskt Tenn, to create some 2,000 furniture sketches and 160 textile prints, glassware, metalwork and interior-design ideas. In 1941, Frank and his Swedish wife, Anna, moved to New York, where

he experimented still further with colours, motifs and repeats.

Entering the exhibition is to be assaulted by a blaze of colour and pattern, all very unBritish in its exuberance, yet some of Frank's visual world acknowledges a debt to William Morris, albeit a Morris on steroids. Many patterns were designed during Europe's darkest days,

yet they are filled with an optimism and joyful energy. They suggest a world full of abundance and possibilities, a fruitful paradise in which humans could integrate and thrive. There are just a few hints of a darker, scarier world.

Accompanying the textiles and a few early sketch designs is one partial room set that demonstrates Frank's belief in colour, form and pattern at their most overlain. It's easy to see why his designs appealed to many who might normally have preferred a profusion of chintzes.

On show are plans, drawings and photographs of the interiors of the house in the grounds of Millesgården in Stockholm, designed by Frank and Ericson in 1951. The exhibition cries out for further such reconstructions.

In the mid 1950s, Frank stopped designing and turned to painting watercolours, which were never exhibited and largely unknown. Only recently was his cache of 400 watercolours discovered in an old portfolio left to the nephews and nieces of Dagmar Grill, his partner in later life. They range from studies of bowls of fruit and flower arrangements, to landscapes in the South of France and street scenes in north London, both places he visited regularly on holiday. Some have a mildly Fauvist air, but the majority, although pleasant, don't match up to the originality or distinctive style of his textile designs.

By far the most interesting are those in the small 'Fantasy Houses' series of imaginary homes for his friends, painted in 1947 when he was faced with a dearth of actual commissions. Although few in number, they show Frank's outstanding ability as an architect and designer. Sadly, none of the houses were ever built.

The exhibition aims to establish Frank's undoubted talents as an interior designer and the display of textiles is both engaging and mood-altering. It disappoints in providing insufficient demon-

stration of his layered interiors or of his abilities as a furniture designer. This may be because the museum specialises in textiles, or perhaps reflects the bias of the exhibition's Swedish curators. Despite this, the

textiles are worth a visit on their own. Overall, the show is terrifically cheering and just the thing to buck the mid-winter gloom.

*'Josef Frank; Patterns-Furniture-Painting' is at the Fashion*

*and Textile Museum, 83, Bermondsey Street, London SE1, until May 7 (020-7407 8664; www.ftmlondon.org)*

**Next week: The Bruegels at the Holburne Museum, Bath**



**Above: A partial room set with Frank's prints, wall-papers and textiles, demonstrating his belief in layering colour, form and pattern. Right: Many of Frank's print motifs came directly from Nature, but some came from illustrations in field manuals. Butterfly draws its inspiration from the books *Butterflies of America* and *Insects of America***





# Look at me

Eating, drinking, talking:  
not during a play, pleads  
Michael Billington



Imelda Staunton would like to direct her character's anger at audiences who can't sit still through *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

I'VE been thinking a lot lately about audiences: if they're getting worse or better and what it is that dictates their sometimes strange behaviour. What brought my ideas into focus was a remark by Imelda Staunton, currently starring in Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* at the Harold Pinter Theatre. Attacking the growing practice of consuming food in the stalls, Miss Staunton said: 'I don't see why people can't just engage in one thing.' Her timely remark prompted an avalanche of comment: much of it, I noticed, in support of her plea for single-minded concentration on the part of playgoers.

Ironically, the play in which she is appearing demands a vast amount of drinking by the char-

acters on stage. Obviously, it's simulated, but it made me think I wouldn't want to sit behind Albee's George and Martha if they went to the theatre. I imagine they'd be fractious, noisy and would probably stamp out at the interval.

Before going further, I should point out they're brilliantly played by Miss Staunton and Conleth Hill in James Macdonald's production. You see a husband and wife tearing each other and their two young guests apart, but eventually coming to terms with reality. The play is both searingly funny and emotionally cathartic and eminently worth seeing.

Miss Staunton's point was that Albee's play both demands, and repays, close attention, yet, although the Saturday night audience with whom I saw it was quiet and

attentive, there were irritating pockets of restlessness. A young man in front of me seemed unable to get by without constant recourse to a plastic water bottle, which he noisily unscrewed. Having bought an ice cream in the interval, he then scraped the side of the carton with his spoon throughout the second half. A chap next to me, who may well have been dragged to the theatre by his date, also audibly gulped glasses of red wine throughout the play's three hours.

These were only minor nuisances compared to some of the things I've seen recently, including the consumption of large trays of food while a show was in progress. I've never seen this happen at the National Theatre, the Royal Court or any of our

great regional theatres such as Manchester's Royal Exchange or the Sheffield Crucible, but it occurs a good deal in London's West End and the theatre owners themselves are partly to blame.

A note in the programme for *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* says 'We respectfully ask that food is not consumed during the performance', yet, with breathtaking hypocrisy, the Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG), which owns the building, places a brochure in front of each seat offering the delivery of sweets, crisps, ice creams and bagels.

And this is not just a one-off. I noticed the same service at Richmond Theatre, also owned by ATG, where I recently saw a lovely touring production of *La Strada* directed by Sally Cookson.

Johan Persson; Manuel Harlan



**Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead: 'I do wish they'd get on'**

What's going on? It's partly that behaviour patterns are changing. I remember Peregrine Worsthorne once pointing out that people now do in public the things they used to do in private: his examples included holding intimate phone conversations and showing extreme affection for a loved one. However, I also think something else is happening.

In the theatre, there is certainly a selfish belief that one has the right to eat, drink, text or phone even if it annoys other people. Even more striking is the way the very same people who enjoy distracting others are often the first on their feet for the now ritual standing ovation at the end of the show.

I am all for heartfelt applause. There also times when a standing ovation seems totally sincere. It happened when I saw *The Girls* at the Phoenix Theatre, because the audience genuinely wanted to celebrate the guts and spirit of the WI ladies who famously disrobed to raise money for charity. I witnessed another such ovation at the first night of Richard Bean's *The Hypocrite*, at Hull Truck, but this was for a very special reason: I felt the audience was thrilled to see a piece of local Civil War history turned into a piece of riotous comedy as part of Hull's year as UK City of Culture.

However, I've been to many West End first nights where some routine play or middling musical has the spectators leaping to their feet as if someone has suddenly set fire to their seats. My theory is that, as in America, the high cost of a ticket forces people to justify their capital outlay by pretending that whatever they've seen is an earth-shattering event.

I don't want to sound like a crusty old codger. Much of the time, I sit with raptly attentive audiences. I'd also hate to suggest there was some pre-digital golden age in which everyone was impeccably behaved. I'm old enough to remember the days when matinees were underscored by the rattle of tea cups as trays were delivered to seats in the stalls.

There is also a long history of audibly insulting remarks from impolite spectators. Peter Bull, who played Pozzo in the original 1955 production of *Waiting For Godot*, often quoted the lady in the midst of a well-dressed party in the Criterion stalls who suddenly cried 'I do wish the fat one would go'. There is a strange echo of that in an article Tom Stoppard has written for the excellent revival of *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* at the Old Vic. Remembering the play's first night in 1967, Sir Tom said he rushed out to the pub next door when he heard the man in front of him say, during the opening duologue, 'I do wish they'd get on'.

People in theatres, down the centuries, have been known to throw things, to riot, to engage in fist-fights and even, on one infamous occasion, to shoot an American President.

By the standards of the past, you could say today's audiences are relatively quiet and well-behaved, yet I still resent—and I know I'm not alone—the selfish spectator who, in the course of the play, can't resist phoning the babysitter, checking the football scores, unwrapping a box of chocolates or drinking with the desperate urgency of a camel in the Sahara. 🐪



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# Britain's left-footers

Roy Hattersley has compiled an impressive and critical history of British Catholicism, says John Gummer

**History**

**The Catholics**

**Roy Hattersley**

(Chatto & Windus, £25)

**S**ON of a former Catholic priest, ebullient political pugilist and celebrated *bon viveur*: who would have cast Roy Hattersley as the elegant, compassionate and discerning author of a notable history of British Catholicism, yet his engaging and immensely readable account is just that. From the first stirrings of Henry VIII's dispute with Rome to the arrival of Pope Francis, Lord Hattersley tells his story with clarity and understanding.

It is a joy to read, not least because it makes clear the most complex of issues without losing the essentials or trivialising beliefs that, today, might seem of little importance.

The book opens with an admirable explanation of the politics of the Court of Henry VIII, its rivalries and the attempts to coerce the Pope into annulling the King's marriage. It is the author at his best, only equalled by his exploration of the relationship between John Henry Newman and Henry Manning and their interaction with the Vatican hierarchy. In both cases, you see the man who survived the manoeuvrings of modern Labour Party politics applying a greater understanding to political process than ecclesiastical historians could ever have commanded.

Particularly effective is the way in which he moves the narrative seamlessly on through Edward VI's reign into the restoration of the old religion under Mary. The process through which people lived in these years is often portrayed as a series of clear-cut changes about which individuals made clear-cut decisions. Lord Hattersley catches



**A portrait of Sir Thomas More. A Catholic, he refused to take the Oath of Supremacy to Henry VIII and was executed**

the reality of compromise, contradiction and simply hoping for the best that more accurately describes men's actions in this turbulent period.

His appraisal of St Thomas More and St John Fisher is particularly astute. He recognises More's manifest failings, but warms to his final undoubted heroism. Fisher emerges as a man of real stature, steadfast and consistent, loving and loveable, but simply at sea in the world of politics that was never his choice.

The same deft appraisal and clear narrative carries

us through the Elizabethan settlement, the plots and propaganda, to the gradual emergence of toleration and acceptance. However, throughout, it is the author's ability to make plain what must have bewild-



**An embroidered textile from the English School, Badge of the Five Wounds of Christ**

ered the participants that makes this book so informative a read.

Particularly astute is the handling of the Irish dimension. It was, of course, essential to cover the parallel history of Ireland, yet it was important not to be dragged down by it or to make the coverage disproportionate. We learn enough to understand properly what was happening in Ireland itself as well as the effect of Irish immigration into England and Scotland, but Lord Hattersley never allows himself to be led away from the history of Catholicism into a history of Ireland.

Throughout the narrative, there is gentleness and understanding, yet its generosity does not inhibit sharp and effective assessment. Its handling of Newman and Manning is particularly interesting. The politician in Lord Hattersley shines forth as he properly estimates the significance of Manning as a leader both in Church matters and as a social reformer and promoter of just solutions, not only in Ireland, but for the dockers and working people more generally.

He rightly recognises Manning's strengths, but he is less than fair to Newman. Newman was a constant seeker—always trying to see what was right, what the early Fathers actually said and what, in the circumstances, could be adduced. He was not a politician and Lord Hattersley can't forgive him for that, nor can he really understand what is the essence of Newman's charisma. Above all, he doesn't confront the simple fact that it is Newman, not Manning, who drew men and women to the Catholic Church, not only in his lifetime, but also today.

For the rest, this is a well-judged and immensely impressive book. Lord Hattersley has not brought new facts or undiscovered material to his narrative, but something even more refreshing.

He has brought an understanding and a sympathy, but with a sharply critical eye to Britain's Catholic heritage.

His Grace The Duke of Norfolk, Arundel Castle/Bridgeman; National Portrait Gallery, London, UK/Bridgeman

## History/biography/poetry Deaths of the Poets

Paul Farley and Michael Symmons Roberts  
(Jonathan Cape, £14.99)

IN *Edgeland*s, the authors explored patches of England caught between town and country. Their new book opens in an auction room and is more of an indoors and international affair, 'about places and the charge we feel (or don't) for their associations with a writer'. But what might have been morbid or merely academic becomes an exhilaratingly curated collection of the best poetry anecdotes.

The authors—poets themselves—evidently enjoy their pilgrimages and are unafraid of the irreverent quip, but well informed and asking shrewd questions, such as 'can we actually quote a single line by this poet whose deathbed we are visiting?'

First is the notorious 'teenage forger' Thomas Chatterton, born on one of Bristol's 'edgelands', remembered less for his writings than for Henry Wallis's painting of his premature death. Then comes Keats, 'an admirer of Chatterton' and, before we know it, we're in a New York bar with Dylan Thomas, on a bridge in Minneapolis waiting for John Berryman (the headline was 'Moonstruck Man Leaps to His Death'), or at Sylvia Plath's last address in Primrose Hill during that winter of 1963 ('we both remember older people talking about it with a kind of hush and awe').

The authors relate how, one mild November, the contemporary poet Hugo Williams found a street near his home snow-bound—'he'd stumbled upon the location shoot for *Sylvia*'. This excellent volume is threaded with such unexpected stories, the kind that one poet tells to another.



Henry Wallis's *The Death of Chatterton*. Chatterton was arguably better known for this painting than his writing

Other sad tales will be familiar—about Lord Byron, Emily Dickinson, John Clare, certain war poets, W. H. Auden in a Viennese hotel, Louis MacNeice down a pothole, Thom Gunn among his drugs, Robert Lowell in a taxi, 84-year-old Marianne Moore after throwing the ball to

start the Yankees' season and, of course, Philip Larkin in Hull, 'going to the inevitable'. But, invariably, the authors take us beyond the Blue Plaques and famous last words, freely associating, speculating, informing and always entertaining us.

*John Greening*

## Fishing Farlows Salmon Flies

Compiled by Martin Lanigan-O'Keefe  
(Coch-Y-Bonddu Books, £50)

IN THE archives of the venerable tackle emporium Farlows are two pattern books that record and contain actual samples of salmon flies spanning almost a century. Now, this fascinating and handsomely illustrated descriptive catalogue of its collection has been compiled by Martin Lanigan-O'Keefe, providing a unique core sample of fly-fishing history.

With rapid improvements in transport, Victorian travellers progressively sought sport further afield and began to request location-specific 'killer' flies, of which there was soon a massive proliferation. The Farlows index totals some 800 patterns, of which 695 are reproduced here in colour, from such still familiar names as Blue Charm and Jock Scott to sadly forgotten splendours (Rob Roy, Dublin Fusilier, Ursula), many of them exotic and elab-

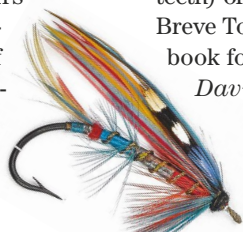
orate, with married wings, heads of gold thread or now unobtainable ingredients such as Florican Bustard or Himalayan Pheasant.

Publisher Paul Morgan is to be congratulated on the quality of this esoteric volume's production, as is Mr Lanigan-O'Keefe himself for his painstaking expertise in unravelling various archival anomalies—duplicated names, multiple permutations, cross-references to the firm's catalogues—so that, where feasible, each pattern receives alphabetically its own description, provenance and anecdotal history.

This should prove of great value to contemporary fly-dressers wishing to replicate tyings of the past (from about 1870 to 1964), as well as appealing to collectors and anglers fascinated by all aspects of the *Bibliotheca piscatoria*.

If you want to discover the identity of Dendy Watney, why certain Snow Flies are so hackled (to guard against the depredations of kelts' teeth) or the origin of a Grande Breve Tocate feather, this is the book for you.

*David Profumo*



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We return to The Squeeze. Contrast these two endings (Spades are trumps):

(a) Dummy  
West ♥2 East ♥A  
♥43 ♦AJ ♥A  
♦3 ♣3 ♦KQ  
♣A ----- ♣K  
Declarer  
♠A  
♥K  
♦2  
♣2

(b) Dummy  
West ♥2 East ♥A  
♥43 ♦AJ ♥A  
♦3 ----- ♦KQ  
Declarer  
♠A  
♥K  
♦2  
♣2

As declarer, you wish to make three more tricks in each ending, yet have just two obvious winners. It's impossible to wring a third trick in (a). You lead your Ace of Spades, but East can discard his Club and you get nowhere.

In ending (b), however, the lead of the Ace of Spades squeezes East in Hearts and Diamonds, because he has no 'idle card' (this is a technical term). Go back to (a). What you needed to do earlier is lose the Club, to tighten the ending.

For most squeezes to work, you need to have precisely one fewer winner than the number of cards remaining. In (b), you have two winners and three cards remaining. Losing an early trick to reach this desired situation is known as 'rectifying the count'.

On our first illustrative deal, as declarer, you have 11 winners and 13 cards. To bring about the desired 'N-1', you must lose an early trick. West led the nine of Hearts, which looks safer than leading from a Knave.

Declarer won the Knave and now rectified the count by ducking a Diamond round to East's nine. East continued with the King of Diamonds.

Winning dummy's Ace of Diamonds, declarer now played out his three remaining Heart winners (throwing his last Diamond on dummy's last Heart). West followed to the second round of Hearts, discarded his last Diamond on the third, but was squeezed in the black suits on the last Heart. Slam made.

If declarer hadn't ducked a Diamond, West would have been able to discard two Diamonds on the Hearts and avoid the Squeeze.

Here is another Six Notrumps, West having opened a Weak Two. Plan the play on West's Knave of Clubs lead.

Dealer West  
North-South vulnerable

♠ K J 4  
♥ Q 7 4  
♦ Q 5 2  
♣ A Q 3 2

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

♠ A Q 6 2  
♥ K 6 2  
♦ A K 4 3  
♣ K 5

South West North East  
2♥(1) Dbl(2) Pass  
6NT(3) End

- (1) 5-10 points and a decent six-card suit.
- (2) Ugly shape, but can't afford to be frozen out.
- (3) Practical leap.

Declarer won the Club lead with his King and counted 10 top tricks, with an 11th easily establishable in Hearts, but should he lead a low Heart to the Queen, or lead the King? The success of the slam depends upon his choice.

Declarer can't afford the Heart trick to go, two, eight, Queen, five, for the count would not have been rectified. At trick two, declarer correctly led the King of Hearts.

West clearly had to win the Ace of Hearts or declarer would be able to generate a second Heart trick by leading towards the Queen. West continued with the ten of Clubs.

Declarer won dummy's Queen of Clubs and cashed four rounds of Spades, discarding a Diamond from dummy, East following all the way. He then led a Heart to dummy's Queen and watched East squirm. Whichever minor East threw gave declarer a fourth trick in the suit—slam made.

Dealer South  
Neither vulnerable

♠ A 7  
♥ A Q 3 2  
♦ A 4 3  
♣ K 4 3 2

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

♠ K Q 4 2  
♥ K J 7  
♦ 7 5 2  
♣ A Q 5

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

- (1) Cheaper of fours as responder.
- (2) 15-19 balanced.
- (3) Might invite with 4NT.

A prize of £15 in book tokens will be awarded for the first correct solution opened. Solutions must reach Crossword No 4470, COUNTRY LIFE, Pinehurst II, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BE, by **Tuesday, March 14**. UK entrants only.

## ACROSS

- 7 Scottish city—and its currency, say (8)
- 9 Pointer the French require at the start (6)
- 10 Carry out orders from old Turkish governor (4)
- 11 Unfathomable? A *Midsummer Night's Dream* isn't! (10)
- 12 Deceptive gloss archdeacon always shows (6)
- 14 Oddly I'm a hound, a sci-fi robot (8)
- 15 Person teasing cleric, one leaving Worcs town (13)
- 17 Without equal, unlike the House of Lords (8)
- 19 Flag a woman carried in outskirts of Bhavnagar (6)
- 21 Declare beast of burden was always eating? (10)
- 22 Get rid of outhouse (4)
- 23 On which some sporty types go downhill fast! (3, 3)
- 24 Marker of papers, formerly a pit employee (8)

## DOWN

- 1 Firmly fixed accommodation for horses? (6)
- 2 Host always entertaining Royal Marines (4)
- 3 Bud rises unexpectedly to pay out (8)
- 4 Tell where pupils are often found (6)
- 5 British duke beginning to work with American jazzman (10)
- 6 Strangely his flare is more showy (8)
- 8 Receive email, possibly, and know what is meant (3, 3, 7)
- 13 Church official overcomes sin by going without fruit (10)
- 15 Souvenir a king found in tower's entrance at last (8)
- 16 Possibly count old coin on island? (8)
- 18 They all go out on stage (6)
- 20 Team the Spanish girl originally named? (6)
- 22 Superficially read second Kipling novel (4)

4470

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SOLUTION TO 4469 (Winner will be announced in two weeks' time)

ACROSS: 1, Imbibe; 4, Robber; 10, Spotted Antpitta; 11, Noddy; 12, Underfeed; 13, Bye-bye; 15, Equine; 16, Opt out; 18, Breton; 21, Leaf mould; 22, Piano; 23, Think the world of; 24, Regard; 25, Detest. DOWN: 1, Insane; 2, Broadly speaking; 3, Batty; 5, Opportune; 6, Between you and me; 7, Rwanda; 8, Adjure; 9, On edge; 14, Bookmaker; 17, Taught; 18, Bedews; 19, Ulster; 20, Confit; 22, Parse.

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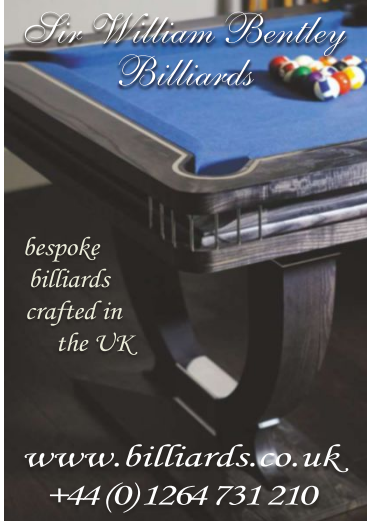
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## A taste of honey

I DID a count the other day and, in the larder and on the kitchen shelves, I have 38 jars of honey. Yes, 38. I have six bottles of Italian honey: lime flower, millefiori, chestnut, wild thyme, *del bosco* (woodland) and orange blossom. I have strawberry-tree honey from Spain. There are jars from Yorkshire, Norfolk, Suffolk as well as ones from such grand floral places as Windsor Great Park, Richmond Park and Sandringham. There is a small pot of sea-lavender honey, which is extremely rare. The 38 don't include a pot each of damsons and cherries in honey.

They take up quite a lot of space and date back a decade or two, but, as beekeepers tell me, 4,000-year-old honey from burials in the pyramids proved perfectly edible, so I'm not worried about their pointless 'best before' dates.

I am a honey hoarder. There are two explanations. The first is that, whenever I pass one of those seductive roadside stalls with their appealing honesty boxes, I have to buy something, hence I probably have as many

jars of exotic marmalades, pickles and curds as I do honey. Is it a peculiarly British thing?

The second is that I was brought up with post-Second World War rationing, when even onions were treasured and sold under the counter only to the favoured few. My automatic reaction when I see any food for sale is to squirrel away several—or half a dozen—in the unlikely event that I'll never again be able to buy lemon curd or quince jelly.

I put this compulsion down to a deep-seated neurosis brought on by Sir Stafford Cripps (who enforced rationing). This rationale is supposed to make me, in my husband's eyes, a poor neurotic obsessive and not an infantile shopper who can't resist temptation. As you might guess, my protests don't work entirely.

When he saw my honey jars arrayed in rows for sorting and wiping down, he looked dissatisfied—to put it mildly. 'We'd better eat some of these,' he says as the larder shelf creaks ominously. And I agree. Luckily, I have a recipe book devoted

entirely to honey along with helpful details about bees, how honey is made and what varieties there are.

You might like to try Australian Blackbutt, for example, or Catclaw from Arizona if you're passing. Pohutukawa, from New Zealand, is a fine tongue-twister.

The book is called *Honey* and is by Hattie Ellis (a shame it's not by Bee Wilson, another ace recipe writer, but that would be

“ When I see food for sale, I squirrel away a half dozen ,

too neat). The trouble with *Honey* the book, however, is that it's more interested in sweet dishes and I want savoury ones. There seems to be a limit on the number of meats, fish and vegetables you can souse with honey to good effect. Especially as I'm currently into using maple syrup as a meat accessory (don't worry,

I only have five bottles of this plus a rather fetching tin showing a little snow-covered log cabin in the Canadian woods with a horse and buggy and barking dog).

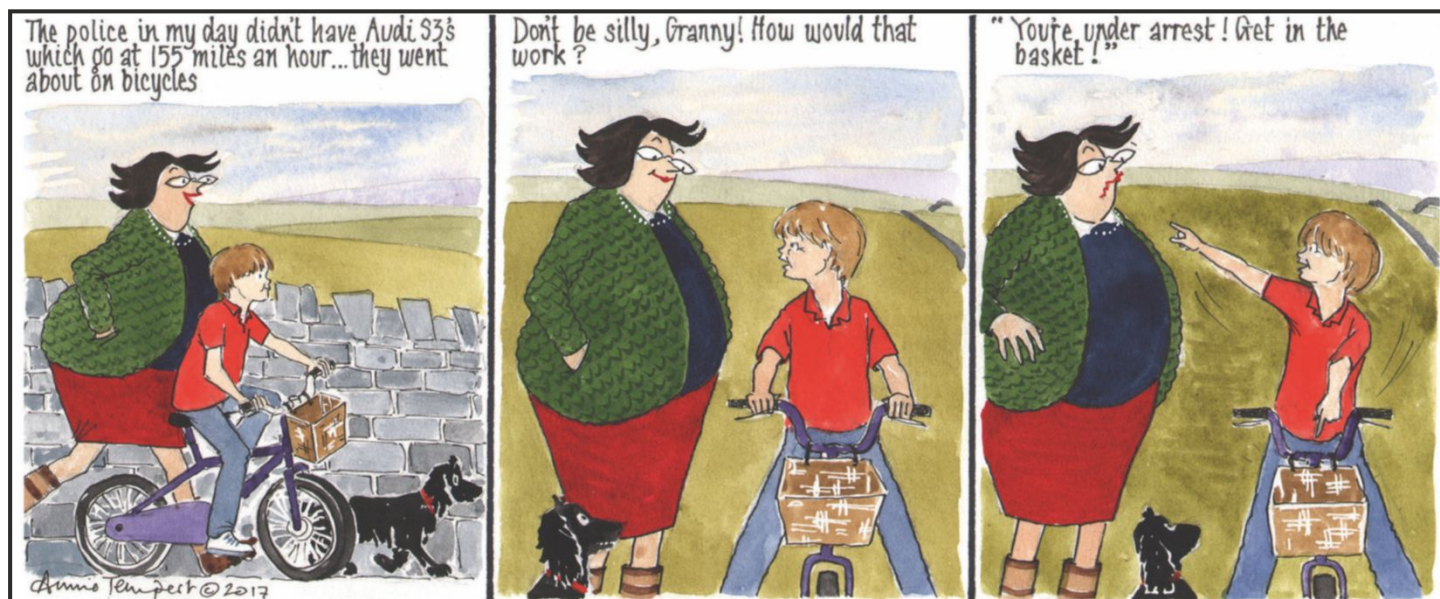
However, I do recommend her dish of Ambrosial Apricots with Thyme and also sticky sesame sausages. Roasting root vegetables such as parsnips, beetroots, squash and carrots with honey spooned over them is perfect in these glum grey days. Try the purple carrots just out.

That's used up at least one jar of honey. I'm also thinking of hiding the marmalade jars (only eight at the present count) and offering honey on toast for breakfast. A honey aficionado adds that runny honey works better on crumpets in that it makes its way neatly into all those little depressions.

Even if I declare a moratorium on buying further jars, I fully expect my executors to have to deal with a score of varieties still lurking in the larder. However, even if it takes 4,000 years to use them, I'll know they're within their sell-by period.

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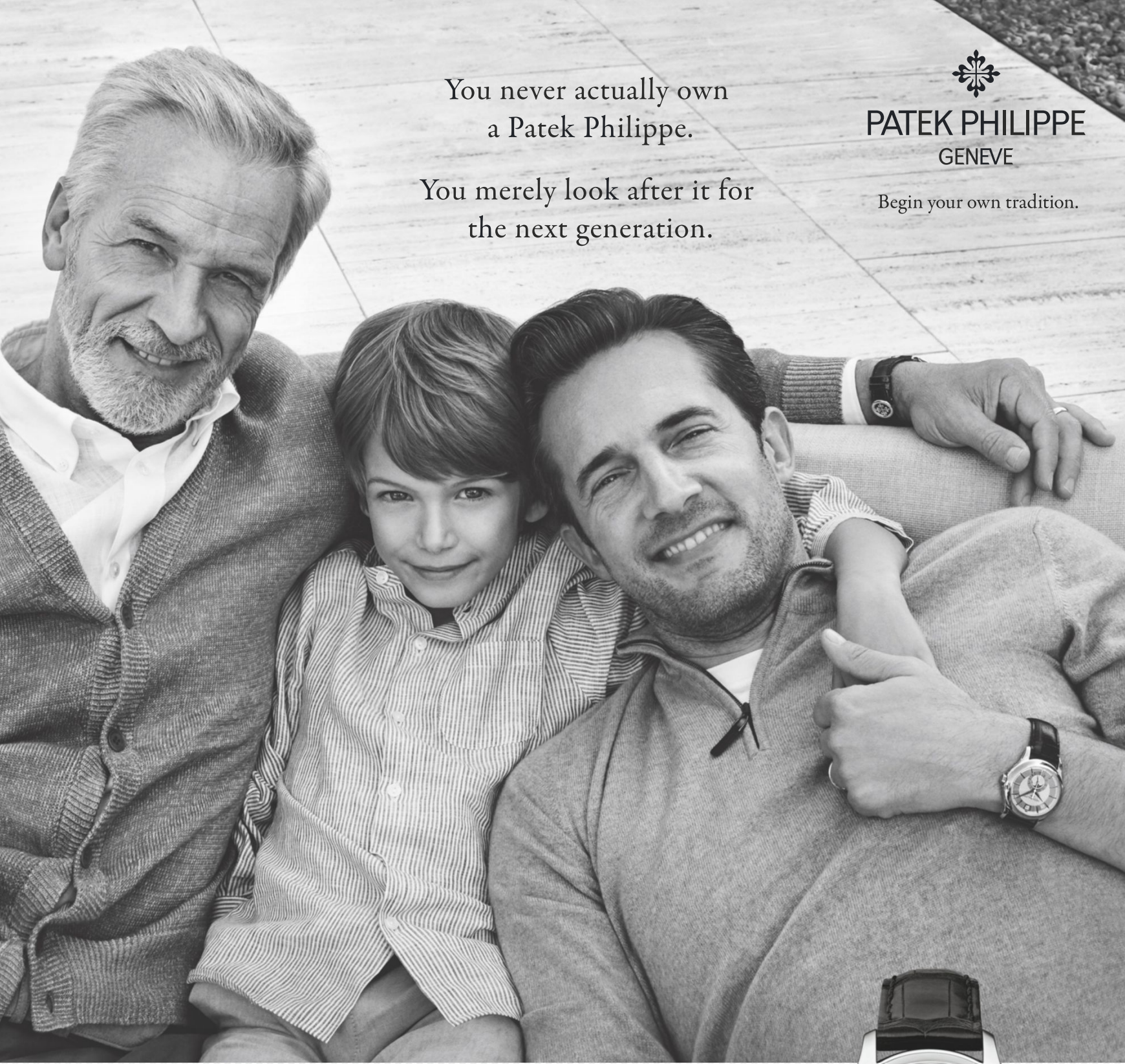
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