

COUNTRY LIFE[®]

DECEMBER 28, 2016

EVERY WEEK

The Seasons

25 pages celebrating nature's gift



How to win at Monopoly, Cluedo and Scrabble

Why green is the new grey—top designers on 2017

Haworth: home of the Brontës' genius

B BRIGHTS OF NETTLEBED

1,500 DESIGNS OF CLASSICAL FURNITURE IN STOCK
CABINETRY, UPHOLSTERY, LIGHTING, MIRRORS, PAINTINGS & SILK RUGS



A flame mahogany, ebonised and brass mounted inlaid side cabinet, the rectangular brass bound top with canted corners above a long drawer with Rococo escutcheons and handles above two crossbanded and ebony strung doors with finely cast mounts to the centre on trailing floriolate mounted and canted legs. The original Louis XVI. Width 37 (94.5cm) | Depth 18¼" (46.5cm) | Height 36" (92cm) £3,415



The above piece is from a collection of exquisitely hand-crafted furniture inspired by the interior of Althorp House, built up over 500 years and 20 generations of the Spencer family for their home.

View more than 120 pieces of Althorp Living History, endorsed by Charles, 9th Earl Spencer, in stock on our website.



For every purchase of Althorp Living History furniture, we make a donation to Wholechild, a charity founded by Countess Spencer to improve the lives of orphaned, abandoned, abused, and neglected children worldwide. Find out more at www.wholechild.org

*At this time of year we reflect on those who have made our activities possible.
In this spirit we thank you for your support and wish you a happy and healthy new year.*

LONDON

608 King's Road · London · SW6 2DX | Telephone 020 7610 9597
Open Monday to Saturday 10am - 5.30pm

OXFORDSHIRE

Kingston House · High Street · Nettlebed · RG9 5DD | Telephone 01491 641115
Open Tuesday to Saturday 9am - 5.30pm

CLOSED FRIDAY 23RD TO MONDAY 26TH INCLUSIVE

WWW.BRIGHTSOFNETTLEBED.CO.UK



Oxford

A fine Victorian house situated in this desirable road

M40 (Junction 8) 10 miles, Bicester Village 12 miles, Oxford (Mainline station) 1.5 miles (trains to Paddington 55 minutes), Oxford Parkway Station 2.8 miles (trains to London Marylebone 66 minutes)

Adjoining University Parks with 5 reception rooms, 7 bedrooms, off-street parking and a private south facing garden.

[KnightFrank.co.uk/country](https://www.knightfrank.co.uk/country)
bruce.tolmie-thomson@knightfrank.com
+44 20 7861 1070

[KnightFrank.co.uk/oxford](https://www.knightfrank.co.uk/oxford)
william.kirkland@knightfrank.com
+44 1865 790077

KnightFrank.co.uk

 OnTheMarket.com



jackson-stops.co.uk

Jackson-Stops
& Staff



West Sussex Adsdean Guide price: £1,295,000
Chichester 01243 786 316



Dorset Compton Abbas Guide price: £550,000
Shaftesbury 01747 850 858



Leicestershire Dingley
Guide price: £795,000
Northampton
01604 632 991



Weekend Retreats



Cotswolds Nr Chipping Campden
Guide price: £450,000
Chipping Campden
01386 840 224



Oxfordshire Noke Guide price: £495,000
London 020 7664 6646



Dorset Sydling St Nicholas Guide price: £349,950
Dorchester 01305 262 123



Cirencester

Exceptional family house sitting at the head of a long drive

Cirencester 3 miles, Kemble station (Paddington 72 minutes) 2 miles
4 reception rooms, 6 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms. Separate guest/staff accommodation and 2 bay garage, outbuildings, tennis court, beautiful gardens and grounds, paddocks. EPC: E. About 8.36 acres.

Guide price: £3,250,000

[KnightFrank.co.uk/CIR070073](https://www.knightfrank.co.uk/CIR070073)

[KnightFrank.co.uk/country](https://www.knightfrank.co.uk/country)
peter.edwards@knightfrank.com
+44 20 7861 1707

[KnightFrank.co.uk/cirencester](https://www.knightfrank.co.uk/cirencester)
atty.beor-roberts@knightfrank.com
+44 1285 659771

KnightFrank.co.uk

 **OnTheMarket.com**



SOLD

Lewes, East Sussex Guide £4.5 million



SOLD

Weybridge, Surrey Guide £13.95 million



SOLD

Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire Guide £2.75 million

Make a move in 2017

Right now there's a huge demand for beautiful homes in the market.

That means it's a good time to get the ball rolling and get in touch.

Once you've finished all those mince pies that is.



SOLD Godalming, Surrey Guide £5.75 million



SOLD Little Rissington, Gloucestershire Guide £2.95 million



SOLD Tidmarsh, Berkshire Guide £4.75 million



SOLD East Lothian, Scotland Offers over £1.35 million



SOLD Thatcham, Berkshire Guide £2.795 million

Lindsay Cuthill
Savills London Country Department
020 7016 3780
lcuthill@savills.com



savills.co.uk



Gloucestershire, Nr Colesbourne



A small sporting estate set amongst dramatic countryside.

Cheltenham: 6 miles | Cirencester: 14 miles | Kemble Station: 16 miles
5-Bedroom farmhouse with one bedroom annexe | 2-Bedroom flat | 7 Stables
Large barn | Outdoor manège | Pasture | Woodland and family shoot

About 113 acres (45.7 ha)

Guide Price £2,000,000



Harry Sheppard
Cirencester Office | 01285 653 101

Liza Howden
National Estates & Farm Agency | 020 7318 5182

Work With Us.

Join our Knight Frank sales team.

To keep up with the busy property market, we're looking to grow our country sales team in the Home Counties.

Vacancies are available across our **Ascot, Berkhamsted, Guildford, Haslemere** and **Sevenoaks** offices, who are looking for experienced and enthusiastic individuals to join their teams in selling both town and country properties.

If you are interested in finding out more about these opportunities, please do contact:

Christopher Dewe
+44 20 7861 1779
christopher.dewe@knightfrank.com
KnightFrank.co.uk/Recruitment



CONTEMPORARY STYLE VILLA WITH EXCEPTIONAL VIEWS

VILLEFRANCHE-SUR-MER, COTE D'AZUR, FRANCE €3,300,000 REF: HRE1286

This recently renovated villa is located in a privileged location and enjoys outstanding views over Cap Ferrat. With beautifully designed living space, as well as five en suite bedrooms and an independent apartment, every aspect is set to impress.

Five bedrooms | six bathrooms | double reception | pool house | 260 sq m living space | 630 sq m garden with cascade pool | garage | two parking spaces

020 7870 7181 | David King
dking@winkworth.com

Winkworth

MASTERPIECE®

2017 | LONDON

Save the date | Art | Antiques | Design

29 JUNE – 5 JULY

PREVIEW 28 JUNE

ENQUIRIES +44 (0)20 7499 7470
masterpiecefair.com

Pictured left: George I Period Bureau Cabinet: Godson & Coles.

Pictured right: Portrait of George Craster, by Pompeo Batoni: Robilant + Voena.



Royal Bank of Canada

Principal sponsor



Louis Monro Grier RBA, 1864–1920

Harbour Landscape

oil on board 24 x 34 cms 9½ x 13¾ ins

Australian-born, Grier's family moved from Melbourne to London, when he was an infant. Grier spent most of his childhood alternately in Canada and England, and attended schools in both countries. Shortly after his family settled more or less permanently in London around 1885, Grier moved to St Ives, possibly inspired by the earlier interest shown by Whistler. Grier deeply admired Whistler, and his earliest exhibited St Ives subjects are evidently inspired by his tonal aesthetics (e.g. staining the canvas with thin layers of oil wash; what Whistler called his "sauce").

After several years spent painting and teaching in St Ives, Grier returned to Australia in 1892, when he opened a major solo exhibition in Melbourne. The present picture is reputedly a view of the port of Newcastle in New South Wales (which, like its English namesake, was a vital coal centre), and though undated, was probably painted around the turn of the century.

Australia's Impressionists at The National Gallery
from 7 December 2016 to 26 March 2017

The Studio, Lord's Wood, Marlow, Buckinghamshire, SL7 2QS
by appointment – please telephone 01628 486565

HUBLOT



HUBLOT

BOUTIQUE LONDON

31 New Bond Street / Harrods Knightsbridge
Tel. 020 3214 9970 • 020 7730 1234

hublot.com • f • t • i • s

Classic Fusion Racing Grey.
Self-winding chronograph movement.
Sapphire-crystal dial in a titanium case.
Grey alligator strap stitched on rubber.

COUNTRY LIFE®

VOL CCX NO 51, DECEMBER 28, 2016



Miss Anna Bowen

Anna, aged 24, is the only daughter of Mr and Mrs Robert Bowen of Lan House, Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire. Educated at the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester, Anna is an agricultural consultant and freelance writer, and regularly hunts sidesaddle with the Carmarthenshire Hunt Club and the Croome and West Warwickshire Foxhounds.

Photographed at home by Justin Harris



The four seasons
(Alamy; Dreamstime; Shutterstock; Chris Allerton/COUNTRY LIFE Picture Library)



Board games

'Cluedo was created as an enjoyable way of passing time in wartime air-raid shelters'

Become the Poirot of the family, page 68



Opinion

'We are still a nation of book lovers and, crucially, of the idea of books'

Nothing can replace the pleasure of print, page 24

Literary landscape

'It was a joy to be close to the sea again, to feel that sharp east wind blowing in from Scandinavia'

Crime writer Anne Cleeves, page 66



Robert Birkby; Panacea Pictures/Alamy; Alamy/Dreamstime; Micha Themer

Purple reigns: in the bleakness of midwinter, we're all dreaming of the joys of the seasons to come, from lupins to lambs and chicks to country-house opera (page 41)

This week

24 Do you read me?

Matthew Dennison sets the resurgence of the printed novel against the demise in libraries and a national embarrassment about reading

28 Moray MacLennan's Favourite Painting

The CEO of M&C Saatchi chooses a Goya that moved him when he was studying the history of art

30 **Cover story** Where writing reached the heights
Some of our most enduring stories were conceived at the Haworth parsonage in North Yorkshire that was home to the Brontës. Jeremy Musson enjoys a literary pilgrimage to its recently restored interiors

36 A capital gallery of galanthus

Jacky Hobbs explores the growing collection of snowdrops at the botanical and horticultural haven of the Chelsea Physic Garden in London

41 **Cover story** The four seasons

John Lewis-Stempel charts the changing year and we offer ways to enhance the pleasures of the simple things that give the British year its essential character

66 Winter's tales from the lands of cold earth

Anne Cleeves, the novelist behind the BBC's *Shetland* series and ITV's Northumberland detective Vera, reflects on the wild landscapes that inspire her

68 **Cover story** Dicing with death

Whether you're solving a murder in Cluedo or becoming a Monopoly tycoon, Matthew Dennison advises on how to win at board games

72 **Cover story** Designer resolutions

Interior designers tell Arabella Youens their plans and promises for 2017

76 Moveable feasts

Harry Wallop laments the loss of the dining table

68 Kitchen garden cook

Melanie Johnson has a Scandinavian twist on parsnips

78 The country market strikes back

Penny Churchill looks back over the best of the 2016 house sales and finds that, in a year of uncertainty, property seemed to be the one thing we could count on

Every week

16 Town & Country

Jane Austen, Sherlock Holmes, Harry Potter and the Famous Five celebrate milestones

18 Notebook

20 Letters

21 Agromenes

22 Athena

26 My Week

Will Jonathan Self's 2017 diary give him something scandalous to read on the train?

40 In The Garden

Charles Quest-Ritson doesn't like yellow flowers in the garden, but resolves to give them another chance

84 Art Market

Huon Mallalieu surveys three new books that chronicle the history of the world's leading art business

86 Exhibition

Tim Richardson is captivated by an exhibition that shows Emma Hamilton to be more than a seductress

88 Books

A new biography of Beryl Bainbridge reveals how not to live your life

90 Bridge and Crossword

91 Classified Advertisements

96 Spectator

Lucy Baring hopes her homemade crackers don't go off with too much of a bang

104 Tottering-by-Gently



Pinehurst II, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF
Telephone 01252 555072 www.countrylife.co.uk

Future imperfect

Following an unbelievable 12 months, COUNTRY LIFE gazes into a crystal ball for the next

January

Justine Greening orders the removal of 2016 from future history syllabi because future generations simply won't believe what happened. Dynamic Australian Eddie Jones is the first coach to run England's cricket, football and rugby teams simultaneously.

February

Jane Austen's bicentenary celebrations fall flat when a newly unearthed manuscript for *Sense and Sensibility* has Mr Willoughby refusing to go out in the rain in case his fake tan runs—the cad. As the first driverless car hits London, black-cab and Uber drivers play dodgems in Trafalgar Square.

March

Wildlife conservationists march in protest at the pejorative expression 'mad as a March hare'—everyone knows hares are saner than most people. Donald Trump attempts to tell his Senate that they're fired.

April

Prince Harry pulls off a brilliant April Fool by announcing his engagement. The Scottish and Devon beaver families finally meet up;

their joint damming of the Thames causes the Boat Race to be cancelled.

May

Rory Bremner's Multiple Voices Party appeals to the bewildered electorate and scores a landslide victory in the snap General Election.

June

In a bid to revive ratings and appeal to the young, the BBC books Sir David Attenborough, 91, to present *Top Gear*, Mary Berry to provide cake commentary on *Test Match Special* and Ed Balls to conduct the Last Night of the Proms.

July

Defra turns Southern Rail's disused London to Brighton line into a wildlife corridor for hedgehogs. Bright sun at Wimbledon prompts Andy Murray to defend his title in a Panama.

August

Gamekeepers gratefully accept Vivienne Westwood's offer of designer bulletproof vests, but fitting them on the birds proves tricky. President Trump takes a summer break in Scotland: 'Mine's bigger than yours,'

brags Nicola Sturgeon as she escorts him along her reinforced Hadrian's Wall.

September

There is suspicion that the 23 bats, six great-crested newts, escaped lynx, dinosaur skeleton and Roman villa found along the HS2 route may have been planted.

October

Police are called to a school in Shropshire where pupils have been injuring each other with genetically modified conkers.

November

Firefighters rush to the Houses of Parliament after a builder taking an illicit ciggie break discovers a 412-year-old stash of gunpowder—MPs decamp to Center Parcs with the displaced Royal Household.

December

Boris Johnson's career is revived by a turn in the John Lewis advert as Father Christmas in a steamroller pulled by reindeer along the third runway at Heathrow. A landscape painting wins the Turner Prize (we might have gone too far with that one).

British Society of Magazine Editors Scoop of the Year 2015/16
PPA Specialist Consumer Magazine of the Year 2014/15
British Society of Magazine Editors Innovation of the Year 2014/15
British Society of Magazine Editors Columnist of the Year (Special Interest) 2016

Editor Mark Hedges
Editor's PA Rosie Paterson 555062

Telephone numbers are prefixed by 01252
Emails are name.surname@timeinc.com
Editorial Enquiries 555072
Subscription Enquiries 0330 333 4555

Deputy Editor Kate Green 555063
Architectural Editor John Goodall 555064
Gardens Editor Kathryn Bradley-Hole 555065
Fine Arts & Books Editor Mary Miers 555066
Interiors Editor Giles Kime 555067
Managing & Features Editor
Paula Lester 555068
Deputy Features Editor Victoria Marston 555079

News & Property Editor
Annunciata Walton 555078
Luxury Editor Hetty Chidwick 555071
Art Editor Phil Crewdson 555073
Deputy Art Editor Heather Clark 555074
Senior Designer Emma McCall 555080
Picture Editor Lucy Ford 555075
Picture Desk Assistant
Emily Anderson 555076
Chief Sub-Editor Jane Watkins 555077
Deputy Chief Sub-Editor
Jeremy Isaac 555084
Sub-Editor James Fisher 555089
Digital Editor Toby Keel 555086
Property Correspondent Penny Churchill
Travel Editor Rupert Uloth

Group Managing Director Oswin Grady
Managing Director Steve Kendall
Antiques & Fine Arts Manager
Jonathan Hearn 01252 555318
Photographic Library Manager
Melanie Bryan 01252 555090
PR Manager Victoria Higham 020-3148 5401
Senior Marketing Executive Harriet Blore

Commercial Director Property
Rosemary Archer 020-3148 2610
Group Advertisement Manager
Laura Harley 020-3148 4199
Country Johanne Calnan 020-3148 4208;
Nick Poulton 020-3148 4232; Lucy Hall
020-3148 4206
International 020-3148 4209

Head of Market: Country & Gardening
Kate Barnfield 07817 629935
Finance Advertising
Kay Wood 07984 180657
Luxury Advertising
Jade Bousfield 07583 672665; Jamie Coles
07773 801703
Gardening Advertising
Alex Luff 07973 613407
Classified Advertising
Robert Spencer 01252 555308
Advertising and Classified Production
Stephen Turner 020-3148 2681
Inserts Canopy Media 020-7611 8151;
lindsay@canopymedia.co.uk
US Representative Kate Buckley 001 845 516
4533; buckley@buckleypell.com



Ring in the new year

THE coming year is one for book lovers. The 200th anniversary of the death of Jane Austen (*below*) will, inevitably, set the county of Hampshire a-flutter (www.janeausten200.co.uk). Jane Austen's House Museum (her home) in Chawton will host shows and talks, including a Regency Week (June 17–25) co-hosted with nearby Alton and Hampshire Cultural Trust's 'The Mysterious Miss Austen' loan exhibition will tour Winchester, Gosport and Basingstoke. Her final resting place, Winchester Cathedral, will run tours; in Basingstoke, there will be a sculpture trail; and Jane Austen 'Big Picnics' across Hampshire will offer the opportunity to sup as Regency folk did.

The British Library, London NW1, has an exhibition of Austen's teenage writings (January 10–February 19) and, in the same year that the city's iconic Royal Crescent turns 250, the Jane Austen Festival in Bath—where *Northanger Abbey*, also 200 years old, is set—will be bigger than ever (September 8–17, www.janeaustenfestivalbath.co.uk).

Further literary landmarks include the bicentenary of Rob Roy; 130 years since Sherlock Holmes first appeared in print (in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*) and 125 years since the first publication of the stories in book form in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*; 125 years since the death of Tennyson; 80 years of *The Hobbit*; and 75 years of *The Famous Five*.

We will also mark 20 years since the appearance of a certain wizard in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and 10 years since the last book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, which is still the fastest-selling in history. Among the celebrations will be a British Library show on magic (from October 20) and a film and live-orchestra show at the Royal Albert Hall (May 11–14).

Austen shares her bicentenary with the opening of the Dulwich Picture Gallery and the introduction of the



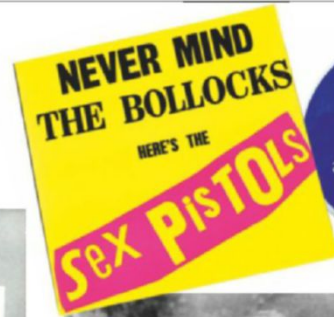
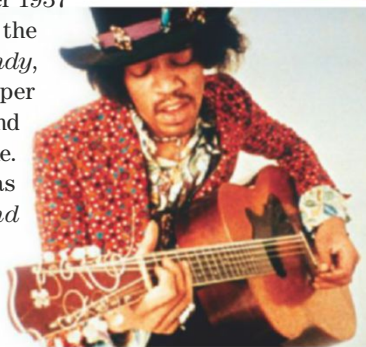
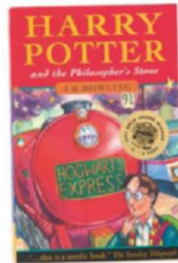
Elgin Marbles to the British Museum. The Blue Plaque scheme was inaugurated 150 years ago, the same year illustrator Arthur Rackham was born.

In July, it'll be 100 years since the Battle of Passendale started and, in August, a century since Wilfred Owen met his poetic mentor, Siegfried Sassoon, in an Edinburgh hospital—both had shell shock.

The year 1917 also saw the Royal Family change its name from Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to the more war-friendly Windsor, dropping 'all German titles and dignities' overnight—Prince Louis of Battenberg stayed with his son at a naval base in Scotland and wrote in the visitors' book 'arrived Prince Hyde, departed Lord Jekyll'. Additionally that year, the Cottingley Fairies (*top right*) were supposedly captured on camera by two children—it was 60 years before they admitted it had been a hoax.

The Georgian Group was founded 80 years ago, in a year that saw George VI crowned, the National Maritime Museum opened and 999 calls introduced. Other 1937 happenings included the first issue of *The Dandy*, the births of Jilly Cooper and Bobby Charlton and the death of J. M. Barrie.

Actor Vic Oliver was the first *Desert Island Discs* castaway in 1942, 75 years ago; John Lennon met Paul McCartney at



a garden fête in Liverpool 60 years ago and, that Christmas, The Queen's message was broadcast on television for the first time. Fifty years ago, the Spring Bank Holiday was introduced, colour TV was launched (with Wimbledon) and Jimi Hendrix (*bottom*) set fire to his guitar on stage (the first time).

Forty years ago, Red Rum thundered to victory to win a record-breaking third Grand National (*top left*); with similar energy, *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols* debuted at number one on the UK charts and Queen released *We Are The Champions* as The (actual) Queen became a grandmother (to Peter Phillips (*above left*)).

Thirty years ago, the Order of the Garter was opened up to include women and, five years later, the Church of England voted to allow women to become priests and the House of Lords admitted Baroness Thatcher. These silver anniversaries are shared by polytechnics becoming new universities and the final issue of *Punch*. However, The Queen called 1992 (25 years ago) her 'Annus Horribilis', due to the Windsor Castle fire, royal scandals and the leaking of her Christmas message to *The Sun* pre-broadcast.

It's also 20 years since *Titanic* premiered, the highest-grossing film for more than a decade, and the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales. Five years ago, we had our wettest April on record, we hosted the 2012 London Olympics, securing 65 medals for Team GB, and Frankel, the high-estrated racehorse in the world, retired. After a 2016 to write history books about, we can only ask, what-ever next?

Keystone Pictures USA/Alamy; Jane Austen House Museum; Anwar Hussein/Getty Images; Ben Molyneux/Alamy; Dreamstime; Everett Collection/Alamy; Shuterstock; Granger Historical Picture Archive/Alamy; Hétigan Gardens Ltd; Lisa Geoghegan/Alamy



Blooming after 25 years

THE Heligan estate gardens in Cornwall were a flourishing example of Edwardian progress until the First World War overshadowed everything; by 1917, they were a sad, ghostly jungle, after 15 out of the 23 outside workers had been killed.

The garden's famous resurrection didn't begin until 25 years ago, when Tim Smit of the Eden Project and John Willis, who was running the estate, were hacking their way through the aftermath of the Great Storm. Their most poignant discovery was the Thunderbox Room—the gardeners'

loos—with graffiti dated August 1914, which the Imperial War Museum has designated a 'Living Memorial'.

The Lost Gardens of Heligan, which won Best UK Leisure Attraction in the British Travel Awards, starts its anniversary year, marked by the planting of some 20,000 snowdrop bulbs and 30,000 daffodils, by opening in aid of charity on New Year's Day. Admission is free, but donations are encouraged (<http://heligan.com>; 01726 845100). There's to be a new rare-breed animal barn in 2017 plus a 'Love Wildlife' week from February 11 to 19. *KG*



Bearded tits on the up

Despite the misnomer—*definitely* a moustache—the bearded tit has cause to celebrate. Six years ago, due to an exceptionally cold winter, its numbers plummeted, but, now, there are more than 750 breeding pairs in the UK (up by 50%)—the healthiest population for 20 years.

Playing the long game

RUGBY School turns 450 in 2017 and plans a calendar of events that include a rugby relay across the globe and a documentary film. The school was founded in 1567 and its legacy includes the invention of rugby football in the 1830s—the apocryphal story centres on pupil William Webb Ellis, who, in 1823, 'with a fine disregard for the rules... first took the ball in his arms and ran with it'.

The 2017 celebrations include the publication of *From Elizabeth to Elizabeth*, a book on Rugby's place in history; a year-long exhibition at the school (from January 9); the Global Pass, in which two Rugbeians, inspired by the journey of the Olympic Torch, will pass a DHL-tracked rugby ball across the Globe 450 times; an international schools' rugby sevens tournament in March; a London street festival in April; and a new documentary film featuring the 450th Overture by Rugbeian Nathan Williamson and a 450th Anniversary Anthem composed by Simon Johnson, organist of St Paul's Cathedral. The anniversary year will end with a thanksgiving service at Coventry Cathedral. Visit www.rugbyschool.co.uk/450th for further information.



Country Mouse

Save rural life

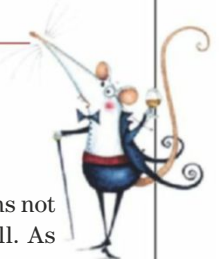
TIME will tell whether the political upheavals that have taken place in 2016 are for good or bad, but, either way, it's certainly been an extraordinary year. Our farmers have four years remaining under the Common Agricultural Policy and the subsidies that are provided for them by the EU. After that, the countryside as we know it will be in uncharted territory. Certainly, it will be different.

The British countryside has never been more popular. Walking remains the country's number-one pastime and the growing popularity of TV programmes such as *Countryfile* and this magazine demonstrate that, as a nation, we've never been more in love with it. The danger is that the countryside we love today may disappear—it's almost impossible to imagine it staying the same. Without subsidies, for instance, upland sheep farming will not be able to continue and, if we were to lose that industry, the stone walls and green fields that shape that part of our beautiful land would also disappear.

What we need is a proper debate on its future, involving all the various relevant bodies, so that the interests of rural Britain can be presented coherently to Government. If not, our landscape will be changed for ever. *MH*

Town Mouse

Joy at the airport



TO me, time spent in airports seems not merely wasted, but spoilt as well. As a traveller at Christmas in particular, you just can't escape the hassle of the crowds, the seemingly endless queues, the noisy hubbub, the cavernous shops and—as you either race against the clock or wish for idle minutes to slide past more quickly—an oppressive awareness of time. However, if airports strike me unequivocally as necessary evils of modern life, I was reminded of what extraordinarily touching places they can also be when I recently went to greet members of the family in an arrivals hall.

Amid the loitering ranks of taxi drivers was an ever-changing crowd of people waiting for their friends and family. There were even a few banners greeting those from, as I imagine, particularly long or distant travels. Time and time again bored faces lit up with the joy of recognition and reunion. Many of the meetings were comically inept, with one party entirely missing the waves and calls of the other, sometimes even while talking on phones together. But nobody cared. The greeting made, the reunited couple or group would contentedly walk away from the living nightmare of modern airport travel towards the happiness it makes possible. *JG*



Quiz of the week

- 1) Which actor won his first Oscar at the age of 82, in 2012?
- 2) Which is the largest island in Europe?
- 3) Clout, casing, brad, finish and horseshoe are all types of what?
- 4) Sodium hypochlorite is commonly known as what?
- 5) What do the Spanish eat 12 of to usher in the New Year?

100 years ago in COUNTRY LIFE December 30, 1916



SIR,—The following figures, as regards record bags of grouse, may be of interest. The greatest number of grouse ever killed in one day is 2,929. This bag was obtained by eight guns on August 12th, 1915, on the Earl of Sefton's Littledale and Abbeystead beat, Lancashire. As regards individual performances, Lord Walsingham shot 1,056 grouse to his own gun on his Blubberhouses Moor, Yorkshire, on August 30th, 1888. He shot fourteen birds in addition to this total, which represents the actual number of driven birds killed by him.

Very British Problems

By Rob Temple



Spending the majority of your time apologising for mess that isn't there

1) Christopher Plummer 2) Great Britain 3) Nail 4) Bleach 5) Grapes

The nature of things Traveller's joy (*Clematis vitalba*)

IN limestone country, particularly the chalk downs, a rampant climber romps over hedgerows and softly blankets the shrubberies that were planted to margin main roads. In winter, *Clematis vitalba* reveals the reason why one of its folk names is 'old man's beard', for its clustered seeds each drape a long, silky trail that has a silvery brightness when new, but by now is closer to old pewter. The effect of those seeds, spread *en masse* through the hedgerow, is of unkempt, bearded growth overlaying its brittle stems.

Those stems clamber over anything sturdy enough to bear them, sending out leaf tendrils that spiral around branches and twigs strong enough to provide purchase for further growth; hawthorns, dogwoods, field maples and the like are often pressed into such service. As spring matures, the fresh leaves will be crowned by scatterings of creamy-white, starry flowers that are slightly fragrant and foraged by butterflies and moths.

Flowering time gave rise to the clematis's other common name of 'traveller's joy', a lovely



title the Elizabethan botanist John Gerard records as his own invention. He admired the shadows cast by their bushy growth, but also the 'beautie of the flowers, and the pleasant scent or savour of the same'. Gilbert White, some two centuries after, admired the silvery seed heads shimmering in a gale, 'like insects on the wing'. **KBH**

Illustration by Bill Donohoe

Time to buy

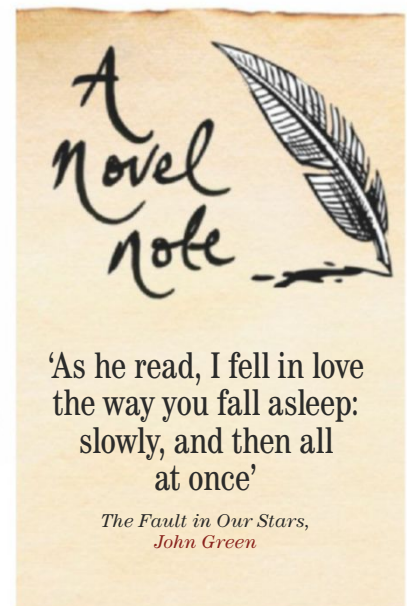
Tropical-chestnut Baby Sparrow, £45, Linley (020-7730 7300; www.davidlinley.com)



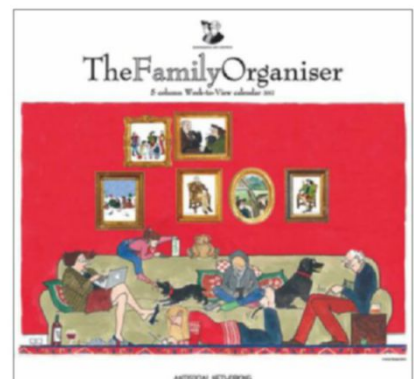
The Brace shooting jacket, £480, Maude & Fox (01258 489628; www.maudeandfox.com)



Family organiser 2017, £11, Tottering-by-Gently (www.tottering.com; 01732 866041)



The Fault in Our Stars, John Green



Unmissable events

Fireworks

January 1, 2017 New Year's Day Fireworks (right), Cromer, north Norfolk. Stroll on the beach and sample fish and chips before watching the spectacular display over the pier at 5pm. Take your camera to capture the magic and your photograph could star on the poster for next year's event—for more information, visit www.cromer-tc.gov.uk/fireworks.htm



Concert

Jan 13 and 14, 2017 Northumbrian Music Festival on Tour, St Oswald's Church Grasmere/The Wordsworth Hotel, Cumbria. Performances over the two days include the Three English Tenors, *The Glory of Sacred Music* and a recital by organist Luke Fitzgerald. Tickets from £25, including a three-course meal (www.nmfestival.co.uk; 01668 283100)

Exhibition

Until February 19, 2017 'Untold Stories: British Art From Private Collections', Watts Gallery, Compton, Surrey. Great works of art rarely or never before seen by the public, including pieces by Rossetti and Sargent as well as lesser-known artists (01483 810235; www.wattsgallery.org.uk)

Art fair

January 18–22, 2017 London Art Fair, Business Design Centre, Upper Street, London N1. Modern British and contemporary art plus a showcase of work from across the globe, major works from The Lightbox museum's Ingram Collection, the *Gravitas* lens-based photography exhibition and a daily programme of talks, tours, and events (0844 581 1388; www.londonartfair.co.uk)

Point-to-point

December 31 Cambridgeshire Harriers, Cottenham, Cambridgeshire. Wrap up and enjoy a picnic before the first race at 11am. For weather reports and a form guide, telephone 09068 446061 (www.pointtopoint.co.uk)

Trail run

January 14 National Trust Night Run, Nostell, near Wakefield, West Yorkshire. Those looking for adventure can choose from the Explorer route (about 1½ miles) or the longer Adventurer route (about five miles), which will take them along traffic-free paths and woodchip trails. All money raised goes back to Nostell Priory. Entries from £6.95, arrive from 4pm—head torches are essential (www.nationaltrust.org.uk; 01924 863892)

Family activity

January 7 Feed the Birds, Cambridge University Botanic Garden, Cambridgeshire. Create your own feeder, then sit back to watch the birds flock onto your patch. 11am–3pm. Adults from £5, children free (01223 331875; www.botanic.cam.ac.uk)

Apply now

April 7–9 Casting for Recovery UK & Ireland fly-fishing retreat, The Coniston Hotel Country Estate and Spa, Skipton, North Yorkshire. Free-of-charge retreat for ladies profoundly affected by breast cancer, run by The Countryside Alliance Foundation. Delicious food and spectacular scenery will be accompanied by counselling, medical support and fly-fishing instruction. Places are allocated by ballot (www.castingforrecovery.org.uk; 020–7840 9223)

Household hints from 90 years ago

What to do with shrivelled nuts
If nuts have become dry and shrivelled, place them (in their shells) in a bowl of cold water and let them remain for a week, changing the water every other day. At the end of the week they will have become as plump and crisp as fresh nuts, and quite easy to peel.
From '500 Household Hints by 500 Housewives', published by COUNTRY LIFE in 1926. We cannot vouch for the accuracy of any advice given



What to drink this week

Sweet wines



Make it your New Year's resolution to embrace these sweet treats, encourages Harry Eyres

Sweet wines aren't especially fashionable (Sauternes has had some wonderful years in 2009, 2011, 2014 and 2016, but you hear less about the great sweet whites of Bordeaux than the red *crus classés*) and, as a result, they are, quite frankly, underpriced. New Year is surely the time to buck this trend; if you're opening some rather good Port on the day itself, there are other occasions during the holiday season on which various festive puddings need to be accompanied by something equally sweet, but not quite so heroically powerful.

Why you should be drinking them

'Sweet' is a dull and inadequate word to describe the wonderful variety of pudding wines. These are made from all kinds of different grapes, in sometimes bizarre ways, in countries all around the world.

What to drink

Sauternes is the most famous of sweet whites and deservedly so: the sheer sensuous opulence of the best wines takes some beating. Berry Bros & Rudd Sauternes 2012 by Château Doisy-Védrines (below, £12.75 per half-bottle; www.bbr.com) has great botrytised richness on the nose and palate—super stuff from a top property. Worlds apart in grape (Chenin as opposed to Sauvignon/Sémillon), method (drying on mats, not botrytis) and country is Mullineux Straw Wine from Swartland, South Africa (£27.95 per half-bottle; www.bbr.com). This is amazingly complex, long and refreshing as well as intensely sweet. Finally, for a real rarity, try Kyperounda, Com-mandaria from Cyprus (£17.95 per 50cl; www.bbr.com): it tastes a little bit like sweet *oloroso* sherry, but with more fruit. Delicious.



Dreamstime; Alamy; Central Press/Stringer/Getty; Steve Hopkin/Ardea.com; Paul Dunstan

Bug's Life

Our guide to British invertebrates

Common bombardier beetle

(*Brachinus crepitans*), one-third of an inch long

This jazzy beetle, with electric-blue-green wing casings and a bright-orange head, is a real 007 of a bug, equipped with its very own exploding chemical bomb that's launched and directed from its flexible abdomen to deter any unwanted attention. It's extremely rare and once thought to be on the verge of extinction, but a colony was rediscovered on a brownfield site in London in 2006. *Simon Lester*





Letter of the week Sweet sounds

RECENTLY, I asked some friends which sounds from their childhood they most miss today. 'The sound of chickens in the yard,' said one. 'The sound of a carving knife being sharpened on a stone doorstep prior to Sunday lunch,' answered another. A third friend said a carpet being beaten. My own answer is the sound of horses' hooves heralding the approach of the milkman or the greengrocer. Which childhood sounds do the readers of COUNTRY LIFE miss, I wonder? *J. M. Pettigrew, Hertfordshire*



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



Give credit where credit's due

WITH reference to your recent article on Charleville Castle in Co Offaly (*October 26*), it was disappointing to see no reference to the fact that it's my former home. As you see from this photograph (*right*), taken in the 1980s, the rooms were fully restored with my own collections, with pieces from my aunt, Mrs Andrew Mellon, and my colleague the late King of Italy. *M. W. McMullen, Co Laois*



Some constructive criticism

I AM afraid I cannot agree with the caption to the photograph in the second article on St Giles House, Dorset (*November 23*), which states: 'The restored Great Dining Room turns the scars of the dry rot to grand effect.' This is, presumably, in reference to the exposed brickwork and missing ornate cornice.

The article goes on to say that this is the most important room in the house. The chimneypiece is normally the focal point of any room, but, here, the eye is inevitably drawn towards a large area of brickwork, never intended to be exposed (*below*). In my view, it should be plastered with the correct mix of lime mortar in the scratch coats and suitably reinforced with chopped horsehair.

The reinstatement of the cornice would be expensive, but essential. Philip Hughes and his colleagues should reconsider the Great Dining Room, so that it can be seen once again in its glorious unmarred splendour, without the unwanted scars of earlier misfortune.

Michael McLennan, by email



Secret postbox

HAVING recently joined the Letter Box Study Group (LBSG) while researching a talk on the postboxes in our small rural parish, I was delighted to see the article in the recent issue of COUNTRY LIFE (*'Wait a minute, Mr Postman', December 7*). We are fortunate to have voluntary groups such as the LBSG that document these important pieces of British 'street furniture'.

Your piece on the Edward VIII coins (*Town & Country, December 7*) reminded me of the rather rare Edward VIII post boxes (*above*). There is one of these fairly close to where I live, but it isn't done to disclose the location, as there are so few still in use. *Dr Geraldine Perriam, Baldernock*



Rubbish drivers

I SO agree with Robert Pawson (*Letters, December 7*). I don't recall seeing many cyclists using a mobile phone, applying lipstick, brushing their hair, holding a burger with both hands or negotiating traffic with a fidgety dog on their lap, to name but a few causes of motorists being a danger on the road.

As a cyclist, I follow the 'mirror, signal, manoeuvre' routine as a matter of course, to which I add quite a few safety observations that are not in the Highway Code, such as 'watch for the car that will pull out without looking'. Yes, there are bad cyclists, but, in my experience, there are far more bad motorists.

Providing consistent cycle routes should be a national priority, but, in the meantime, we all have to share the road with courtesy and safety.

Linda Bos, by email

Contact us

(photographs welcome)

Email: countrylife_letters@timeinc.com

Post: Letters to the Editor, COUNTRY LIFE Editorial, Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Hampshire GU14 7BF

(with a daytime telephone number, please)

Time Inc. (UK) Ltd reserves the right to edit and to reuse in any format or medium submissions to the letters page of COUNTRY LIFE.

N.B. If you wish to contact us about your subscription, including regarding changes of address, please ring Magazines Direct on 0330 333 4555

COUNTRY LIFE, ISSN 0045-8856, is published weekly by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU, United Kingdom. Country Life Subscriptions: For enquiries and orders, please email: help@magazinesdirect.com, alternatively from the UK call: 0330 333 1113, overseas call: 00 44 330 333 1113 (Lines are open Monday–Friday GMT, 8:30am–5:30pm ex. Bank Holidays). One year full subscription rates: 1 Year (51) issues. UK £170; Europe/Eire €350 (delivery 3–5 days); North America \$425 (delivery 5–12 days); Rest of World £330 (delivery 5–7 days) Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. US Postmaster: Send address changes to COUNTRY LIFE, Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named Air Business, c/o Liberty Express Distributions USA LLC, Suite 201, 153–63 Rockaway Blvd, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Subscription records are maintained at Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent. BACK NUMBERS Subject to availability, issues from the past three years are £6 a copy (£8 in the EU, £10 overseas); 01733 385170; www.mags-uk.com. Subscriptions queries: 0844 848 0848. If you have difficulty in obtaining COUNTRY LIFE from your newsagent, please contact us on: 020–3148 3300. We regret we cannot be liable for the safe custody or return of any solicited or unsolicited material, whether typescripts, photographs, transparencies, artwork or computer discs. Articles and images published in this and previous issues are available, subject to copyright, from the photographic library; 020–3148 4474. INDEX: Half-Yearly indices, listing all articles and authors, are available at £40 each, and the Cumulative Index, listing all articles on country houses and gardens since 1897, at £40 each (including postage and packing) from Paula Fahy, COUNTRY LIFE Picture Library, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. Cheques should be made payable to Time Inc. (UK) Ltd. If two Half-Yearly indices from a single year, and the Cumulative Index, are required, the total price will be £80.

Editorial Complaints We work hard to achieve the highest standards of editorial content and we are committed to complying with the Editors' Code of Practice (<https://www.ipso.co.uk/IPSO/cop.html>) as enforced by IPSO. If you have a complaint about our editorial content, you can email us at complaints@timeinc.com or write to Complaints Manager, Time Inc. (UK) Ltd Legal Department, Blue Fin Building, 110, Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. Please provide details of the material you are complaining about and explain your complaint by reference to the Editors' Code. We will try to acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days and we aim to correct substantial errors as soon as possible.



A life in miniature

READERS may be amused by the autobiography of J. M. Barrie written for the library of the Queen's Doll's House (above, November 30). The tiny leather-bound manuscript has a chapter on each page spread and reads:

Sir J. M. Barrie O. M. Autobiography
March 1922

Chapter I

At Six 'twas thus I wrote my name,
James Barrie

Chapter II

At twelve it was not quite the same,
James M. Barrie

Chapter III

At twenty thus, with a caress,
James M. Barrie

Chapter IV

At thirty I admired it less, Jas M.
Barrie

Chapter V

At forty-five it was so, J. M. Barrie
Chapter VI

And soon I think the M will go,
J Barrie

Chapter VII (L'Envoie)

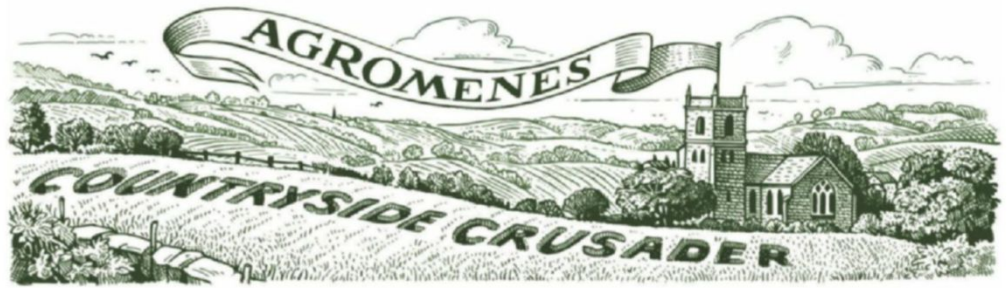
One tear for twenty's youthful swank
And then the name becomes a blank.

John Goodall, *COUNTRY LIFE*
Architectural Editor

COUNTRY LIFE JANUARY 4

120 not out—one man's vision for COUNTRY LIFE; alien creatures: the good, the bad and the ugly; woodcock shooting with pointers; plus Carla Carlisle

Make someone's week, every week, with a COUNTRY LIFE subscription
0844 848 0848



Power play to stop the pylons

THE incomparable Lake District has been saved from an intrusive line of electricity pylons that threatened to march more than 14 miles across some of the loveliest countryside of England. National Grid should be congratulated for having agreed to put its cables underground and to remove a number of existing pylons so that Wordsworth's country can be free of pylons for the first time for 50 years—although the benefit stops 32ft outside the national park boundary.

There are 4,475 miles of power lines running over the UK, of which 870 are underground. Already, we accept as normal the most expensive of underground works—those in urban areas—however, in general, power lines are strung between pylons rather than hidden below ground because of the horrendous cost difference. That can be anything between four and 14 times as much—a real issue in anyone's economics. However, there is still a debate whenever new pylons are proposed and there has even been some effort to remove

the worst of the existing eyesores. Last year, National Grid produced a £500 million scheme that replaced 45 pylons in the most precious of our landscapes in Snowdonia, Dorset, the New Forest and the Peak District.

That was a lot of money to achieve a relatively small inroad into a huge inheritance of badly planned pylons and there's very little chance of anything more radical in the future. We're pretty much stuck with the pylons we have and so, as the National Grid is now proposing big schemes across some of our most beautiful countryside, the real question is not about the past, but about the future. How much damage are we prepared to do in order to keep the lights on? What price do we put on the Welsh hill country or the Scottish Highlands, let alone the softer and more subtle English rural scene?

All the signs are that electricity prices will rise over the coming decade. Increased efficiency of our equipment, smart metering and smart grids should counter much of that. The additional costs we add to bills to pay for the necessary decarbonisation of electricity generation does genuinely seem to be covered by the efficiency savings now available, not least from the deployment of LED lighting, the savings from effective heating controls such as Nest and Hive and the much lower power demands of modern washers and dryers, kettles and vacuum cleaners. Nonetheless, burdening bills with the long-term cost of undergrounding is not something to be undertaken lightly. We have to remember that just removing those

45 pylons will cost every consumer 22p a year for the next 40 years.

However, important new power lines are needed, not least to link up with offshore wind and the interconnectors we hope to build with Norway and the rest of Europe. These are bound to cross unspoiled countryside and

countrymen and their allies are already out there defending their heritage. However, if we're to get the right balance between cost and damage, we need to be very disciplined. It is simply not feasible to expect all to go underground. We need to identify clearly the best routes and the parts of those routes that must be protected from pylons.

This will require much more openness from National Grid and will also need an urgent change in the law. Planning consent for power lines is divorced from that for the generating stations they serve. We need joined-up thinking and joined-up costing so they cause the least damage to the countryside at the lowest cost. Only through proper decision-making can we protect our heritage in a way we can afford.

‘Only through proper decision-making can we protect our heritage’



Follow @agromenes on Twitter

Paul Highnam/COUNTRY LIFE Picture Library; Sandra Dragojovic/Jamie Stentford/Issalee/Dreamstime; Urbanimages/Alamy



Athena Cultural Crusader

A global weapon to combat art attacks

IT now seems likely that the Cultural Property (Armed Conflicts) Bill will receive the Royal Assent before the end of January. Its uncontentious passage through Parliament has been helped by the universal revulsion at the deliberate targeting of cultural heritage in Iraq, Syria and Libya.

The new legislation will ratify into English law the main provisions of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property and its protocols. The UK was a signatory, but didn't ratify the treaty because of concerns that it failed to provide an adequate regime for the protection of cultural property. Those concerns were answered by the convention's second protocol, adopted in 1999, which both set out the procedures by which signatories identify and protect their cultural heritage and

made it mandatory for them to legislate for penalties for its deliberate destruction in times of conflict.

Although the UK's acceptance of the protocol is belated, the new law has serious teeth. Infringements of its major provisions can be prosecuted no matter where they have occurred. As a result, an Islamic State (IS) commander ordering, for example, the destruction of a mosque in Mosul can be prosecuted in a British court for a crime for which the maximum penalty is 30 years' imprisonment.

‘It's only by cooperation that the forces of destruction can be halted’

Closely allied to destruction of cultural sites is looting: the archaeologist Khaled al-Asaad was murdered by IS in Palmyra in 2015 because he refused to reveal the whereabouts of artefacts that could be sold. The new legislation firmly integrates control of illegally exported objects into existing British law covering stolen goods, including full police powers of search and seizure.

What it doesn't do is place more responsibility on dealers for identifying such items. As Baroness Neville-Rolfe said when introducing the Bill for its second reading in the House of Lords last June, 'dealers acting in good faith have no reason to fear prosecution under the Bill', as it doesn't seek to impose higher standards of due diligence than already exist.

That sensible approach may not prove enough for the European Commission, which, in October, opened a consultation (concluding in January) on the rules on the import of cultural goods. The commission has suggested that a new system of licensing of imports might be introduced as part of the effort to prevent illicit trafficking of artefacts from areas of conflict. As these can be anything of cultural value, the idea of introducing such a burdensome addition to existing import controls has been strongly challenged by the British Antique Dealers' Association, among other bodies.

Such objections underline the fundamental issue on which the convention and the new legislation depend: it's only by cooperation at national and international level that the forces of destruction can be halted and the art market should, therefore, be treated as part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Fred van Deelen; Victoria and Albert Museum, London

What to see this week: Nonsuch Palace at the V&A



This 16th-century watercolour of Nonsuch Palace, Surrey, has just gone on display in the British Galleries of the V&A after having been purchased for the museum with the assistance of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Art Fund. The palace was symbolically begun by Henry VIII on April 22, 1538, the first day of the 30th year of his reign. Its name underlined the fact that it was without parallel and the fantastical exterior, decorated with figurative plaster panels, was inspired by French example (*COUNTRY LIFE*, October 26, 2011). So detailed is this drawing that some of the mythological subject matter visible here is identifiable.

The building, which was largely of timber frame construction, was demolished in the 1680s. This watercolour is one of the few detailed depictions of the building to survive. It was made by the Flemish artist Georg or Joris Hoefnagel while he was in England in 1568. Later, it was used for a famous engraving of Elizabeth I on progress published in Braun and Hogenberg's famous *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* (about 1572).

NORMAL 4x4s LACK DECENT GRIP.



OUTBACK 2.0D SE PREMIUM LINEARTRONIC

GOOD JOB WE DON'T MAKE NORMAL 4x4s.

WHEN YOUR CAR CAN'T, SUBARU CAN.

Only Subaru comes with our **Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive** technology. Which means unlike normal 4x4s, you'll have superior grip in the most adverse driving conditions. Mud, wet fields, sand, rocks – you name it. So, if you're looking for a proper 4x4 that can take on anything, maybe it's time you rethink Subaru.

Symmetrical AWD technology, standard throughout the range[†] with the Subaru Impreza 1.6i RC **starting from just £17,495.*** To discover more, search **Subaru Can.**



SUBARU RANGE Fuel consumption in mpg (l/100km): Urban 25.2-41.5 (11.2-6.8); Extra Urban 40.4-61.4 (7.0-4.6); Combined 33.2-52.3 (8.5-5.4). CO₂ Emissions 197-140g/km. MPG figures are official EU test figures for comparative purposes and may not reflect real driving results. *Subaru Impreza 1.6i RC available from £17,495. Model shown is Subaru Outback 2.0D SE Premium Lineartronic. [†]Excludes Subaru BRZ.



Do you read me?

Matthew Dennison sets the cheering resurgence of the printed novel and the high quality of literary-prize shortlists against the demise in libraries and a national embarrassment about reading

THE news is good and bad. Figures released by the Publishers Association earlier this year point to the buoyancy of the UK publishing industry. In 2015, total sales of book and journal publishing rose to £4.4 billion. The best bit for anyone born pre-2000 is that, for the first time in four years, this includes a rise in sales of what are now called 'physical books'—those old-fashioned amalgams of paper, gum and board that line bookcases across the country.

However, against this are the library closures. By December 8, 67 libraries in England, Scotland and Wales had closed their doors, bringing the total number this decade to nearly 500. Library funding fell by £25 million this year.

The implications are significant. Libraries enfranchise new readers—children love them—and make books available to those with limited disposable income. Depending on their acquisitions and stocking policies, they extend the shelf life of many books that deserve to be read beyond their brief moment in the sun in high-street bookshops.

Next week, a panel of judges—of whom

I am one—will announce the 2016

Costa Book Awards. Since 1971, the awards—formerly the Whitbread

Award—have nominated books by British and Irish authors on grounds of quality and readability. This year, almost 600 novels, first novels, children's books, poetry collections and biographies were entered. Clearly, there is still not only an appetite for

new books, but,

among authors and publishers, for

the accolades literary prizes confer.

Prizes maintain a place for books and reading within our national dialogue—the highest-profile ones are widely reported

across all media.

Intellectualism

has always been a fringe activity in British life, regarded with suspicion by the majority. As a nation, we have traditionally revelled in a complacent philistinism that leaves creativity to the unconventional few.

No stigma attaches to the admission that one doesn't read. It has become as permissible to explain that one doesn't have time for reading as it is to say that one doesn't have time for church. The irony is that, at a moment of preoccupation with the national diet, obesity, fast food and refined sugars, we are happy to neglect this form of nourishment: food for heart, mind, soul.

John Betjeman once categorised reading the Victorian novel, a crowning achievement of the British literary genius, as an ideal occupation for winter days, when the pace of life naturally slows and long hours of lamplight are conducive to the expansive narratives of our 19th-century forebears.

‘We are still a nation of book lovers and, crucially, of the idea of books’

In the early 21st century, our preoccupation with immediacy makes such an assessment as much a part of history as the novels themselves. We encounter our world in snapshots and soundbites. One effect of social media is to accustom us to instant-hit communication and exaggerate the significance of short-term impact. Writers traditionally deliver their nuggets of meaning in more leisurely fashion—and they are right to do so. Writing that aims to unravel aspects of the human condition is of no benefit when swallowed at a gobble. As anyone outside their teenage years knows, life's lessons are learned over years not seconds.

At their simplest, literary prizes serve as *aides-memoires* for a society that, despite rising book-buying figures, has been reluctant to acknowledge the importance of writing or any purpose to books beyond diversion. They also reward writers for their



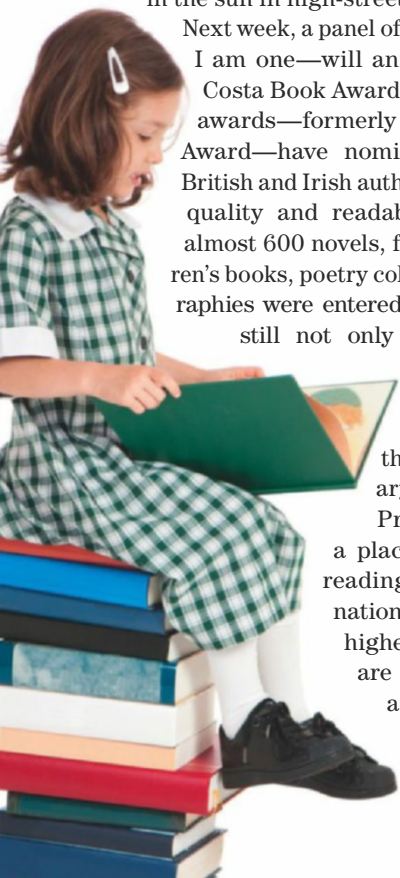
contribution to maintaining the health of our rich, flexuous and beautiful language.

Criteria for the Costa include readability and enjoyment, requirements that save the prize from the great British bugbear of the ivory tower. This means that the prize remains of the moment—I'm avoiding the word 'relevant', which is invariably abused subjectively to promote dumbing down in the interests of 'inclusivity' and 'accessibility'.

Our reading tastes have changed: memoirs dominate the biography section and the first-person narrative is increasingly used in fiction. But everyone who reads hopes for pleasure; in many instances, exposure to quality is pleasurable in itself. And wonderfully, inspiring, high-quality, enjoyable books still abound.

Each book submitted, alongside every title that contributes to the annual £4.4 billion generated by the British publishing industry, is proof that, however embarrassed we are to admit it, we are still a nation of book lovers and, crucially, of the idea of books.

Matthew Dennison is a judge for the 2016 Costa Book Awards





Crafting quality timber buildings and gates since 1912

SPARKFORD
TIMBER BUILDINGS & GATES

Sparkford, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 7LH
Tel: (01963) 440414 | Email: info@sparkford.com | [@sparkfordtimber](https://www.instagram.com/sparkfordtimber)
www.sparkford.com



Something to write home about

EVERY year, at about this time, I suffer from an overwhelming urge to start a diary. My study is littered with previous attempts. Some of these journals contain but a single entry and the most complete takes the reader no further than early March. They probably reveal as much about my finances—Smythson in good years, W. H. Smith in bad—as my life.

‘Keep a diary and someday it will keep you’

However, I take real pleasure from reading what my 22-year-old self felt as I anticipated the birth of my first son; how, during a particularly mild winter, we had a New Year’s Day picnic lunch on the beach; of a storm that left us without power for a week; or of a conversation with my father shortly before his death, when he came as close as he was able to saying that he loved me.

We are all intrigued by the idea of diaries and, at some point in our lives, most of us try our hand at keeping one. It is liberating to write about events, experiences and emotions without having to worry about (a) anyone else’s feelings or (b) our spelling and grammar. A diary is honest, intimate and revealing, which doubtless goes a long way towards explaining our enthusiasm for reading other people’s.

Mae West quipped: ‘Keep a diary and someday it’ll keep you.’ This is true even if you aren’t famous. I often turn to what bits of journal I have when writer’s block strikes. Also, diary entries have helped me to win arguments, if not friends. ‘That wasn’t what you said on February 4, 1981,’ I recently

reminded my brother, a day after a dreadful row (it took me the intervening period to look the reference up).

It can be satisfying, too, to discover that we feature in other people’s diaries. My father was thrilled when, in 1975, the *Sunday Times* rang up to tell him he had been mentioned several times in Richard Crossman’s diaries (the inspiration for *Yes Minister*) and wondered if he had a photograph of both of them together.

True, he was less pleased with the photograph’s caption the following weekend, which (more or less) read: ‘Dinner with Peter Self. He droned on again about garden cities.’

At any rate, I have on my desk a beautiful, leather-bound, blank notebook and there are no prizes for guessing what my New Year’s resolution is.

INCIDENTALLY, it is the Babylonians who are to blame for all this resolution stuff. At the



Hansel, the idea of New Year gifts that bring luck, has not completely died out in this part of the world. I take wine rather than coal, but I follow my grandfather’s example every New Year.

EVERY New Year, as Ogden Nash pointed out, is the direct descendant of a long line of proven criminals. Given the news at the moment, it’s difficult to be entirely optimistic about what the months ahead hold for us. When I’m in need of comfort, I find a walk generally does the trick. At school, we learnt Hardy’s *The Darkling Thrush*, written during the final days of December 1899, when ‘Winter’s dregs made desolate/The weakening eye of day’ and ‘every spirit upon earth/Seemed fervourless’.

Suddenly, an ‘aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small’ begins to sing: ‘There trembled through/His happy good-night air/Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew/And I was unaware.’ I mention this because, to my immense joy, every evening this week, as I tramped home through the gloaming, I have been greeted by the melodious song of a mistle thrush.

They’re so named because of their penchant for mistletoe berries, although the one I can hear appears to have taken over a holly bush. I’m happy to report that, although they’re loud (their fluted whistles can be heard more than a mile away), their morals are irreproachable. The mistle thrush is monogamous and mates for life. Indeed, according to Siegfried Sassoon, they hear ‘the cry of God in everything’. Their diaries would probably make dull reading.

Jonathan Self is an author and raw dog-food maker (<http://honeysrealdogfood.com>) who lives in Cork

Next week: Joe Gibbs

Illustration: Clare Mackie

Treat yourself or a friend this Christmas

SAVE up to **41%** on the perfect Christmas gift



This Christmas, why not take out a subscription to COUNTRY LIFE and treat yourself, or a friend or family member. Not only will you get the very best of British life delivered to your door each week, you'll also enjoy up to 41% off the full price.

magazinesdirect.com/BMF6 ☎ **+44(0)330 333 1113**

Phone lines open 7 days a week, 8am-9pm, UK time. Please have your payment details ready and quote code **BMF6**

THE DIRECT DEBIT GUARANTEE - This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits - If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit Time Inc. (UK) Ltd will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request Time Inc. (UK) Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request. - If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd or your bank or building society you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society - If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when Time Inc. (UK) Ltd asks you to - You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

COUNTRY LIFE SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

Direct Debit (UK only) Pay only £29.49 every 3 months - saving 30% on the full price of £42.50

1 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION - 51 ISSUES:

	OFFER PRICE	FULL PRICE	YOU SAVE
<input type="checkbox"/> UK	£125.49	£170.00	26%
<input type="checkbox"/> EUROPE	£209.99	£350.00	40%
<input type="checkbox"/> USA	\$254.99	\$426.00	40%
<input type="checkbox"/> ROW	£197.99	£330.00	40%

2 YEAR SUBSCRIPTION - 102 ISSUES:

	OFFER PRICE	FULL PRICE	YOU SAVE
<input type="checkbox"/> UK	£200.49	£340.00	41%
<input type="checkbox"/> EUROPE	£419.99	£700.00	40%
<input type="checkbox"/> USA	\$509.99	\$850.00	40%
<input type="checkbox"/> ROW	£395.99	£660.00	40%

SEND COMPLETED COUPON TO:

(UK subscribers)
FREEPOST Time Inc
(No further address needed. No stamp required - for UK only)

(Overseas subscribers)
PO Box 20501, 1001 NM Amsterdam, The Netherlands
(Affix correct postage)

*Pay just £29.49 payable by Direct Debit every 3 months, with the price guaranteed for the first 12 months. Offer open to new subscribers only. Direct Debit offer is available to UK subscribers only. Final closing date for all orders is 2nd February 2017. Orders purchased as a gift before the 9th December 2016 will start with the first available issue in January. All gift orders purchased after this date will begin with the first available issue. If you would like your gift subscription to start with an earlier issue please contact customer services on 0330 333 4333. Orders purchased for yourself will start with the next available issue - please allow up to 6 weeks for delivery, 8 weeks for overseas orders. The full subscription rate is for 1 year (51 issues) and includes postage and packaging. If the magazine ordered changes frequency per annum, we will honour the number of issues paid for, not the term of the subscription. For enquiries and overseas rates contact help@magazinesdirect.com or call +44 (0) 330 333 4333. For full terms and conditions visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. *The digital version comes free with the print edition of your subscription and is available strictly on a trial basis. Time Inc. (UK) Ltd reserves the right to withdraw free access to the digital version at any time. The Rewards scheme is available for all active print subscribers of magazines published by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, free of charge. Full terms and conditions are available at mymagazinesrewards.co.uk. Digital subscribers also get access as long as the subscription has been purchased directly through the publishers at magazinesdirect.com. We will process your data in accordance with our Privacy Policy (www.timeincuk.com/privacy). By providing your information, you agree to be contacted by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, publisher of Country Life and other iconic media brands, with information about our goods and services and those of our carefully selected third parties. Please tick here if you do not wish to receive these messages: by email and/or SMS by post and/or telephone about carefully selected third party goods and services.

YOUR DETAILS:

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms: Forename:

Surname:

Email Address:

Address:

Zip/Postcode:

Country / State:

Home Tel (inc Country/area code):

Mobile:

Date of birth: DD MM YYYY

GIFT SUBSCRIPTION:

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms: Forename:

Surname:

Address:

Zip/Postcode:

Country / State:

PAYMENT DETAILS

CHEQUE OR CREDIT/DEBIT CARD

1. I enclose a cheque made payable to Time Inc. (UK) Ltd for the total £/€/\$

2. Please debit my: Mastercard Visa Amex

Card number input field

Expiry date

Expiry date input field

Signature:

Date:

(I am over 18)

3. DIRECT DEBIT - (UK ONLY) Pay £29.49 every 3 months

For office use only:
Originators Reference - 764 221



Name of bank:

Address of bank:

Postcode:

Name of account holder:

Sort code:

Account no.:

Sort code and account number input fields

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society Please pay Time Inc. (UK) Ltd. Direct Debits from the account detailed on this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Time Inc. (UK) Ltd and if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank or Building Society.

Signature:

Date:

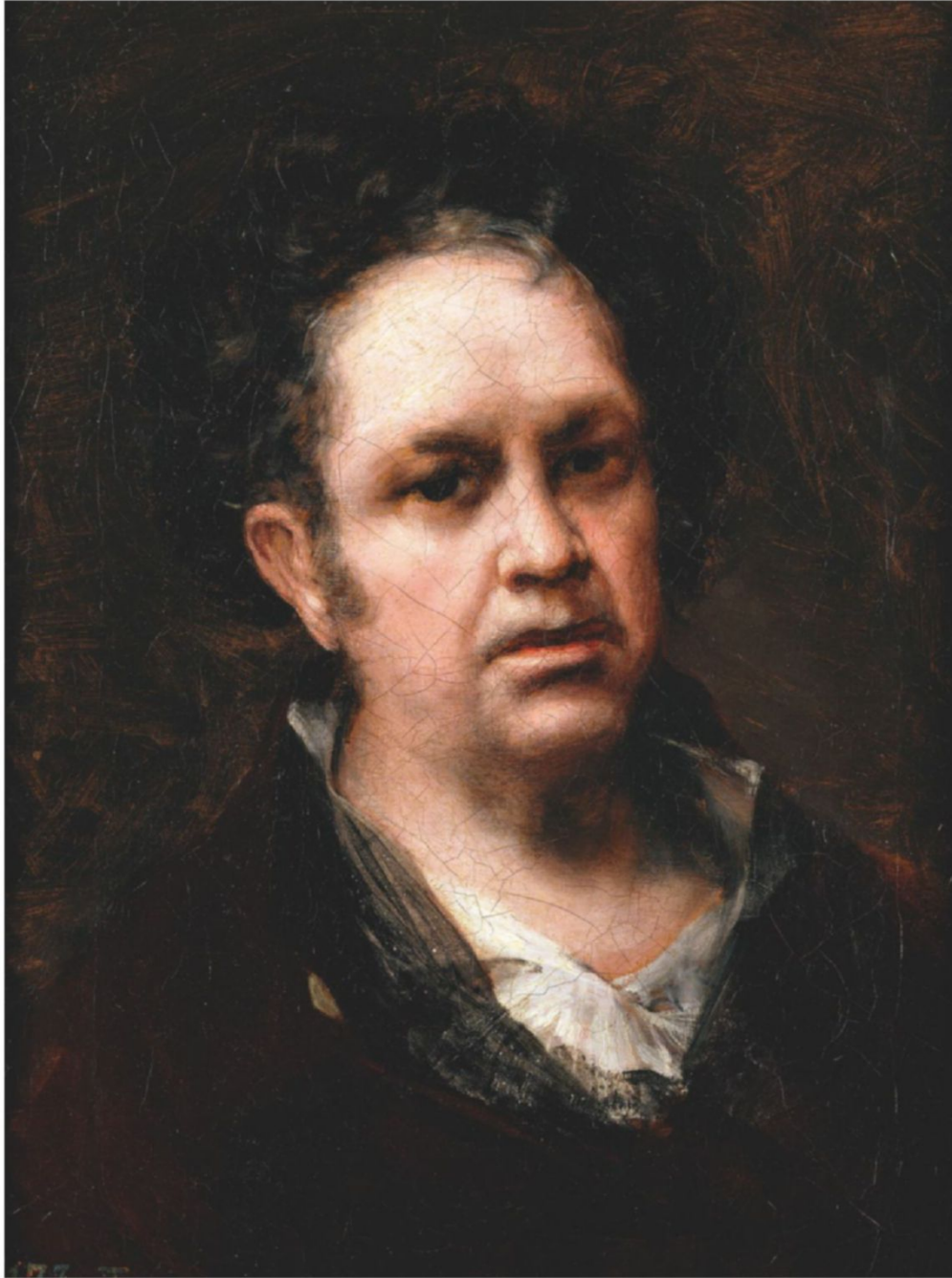
(I am over 18)



A Christmas card will be sent to all gift orders received by 9th December 2016 (either by email or post) so that you can send it on to the recipient before Christmas. If you supply an email address your order will be acknowledged by email and you will be given the option to download a Christmas card or request one by post. If you do not supply an email address you will automatically be sent a postal Christmas card.

XCL CODE BMF6

My favourite painting Moray MacLennan



Self-Portrait, 1815, by Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), 18in by 14in, Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain

Self-Portrait by Goya



Moray MacLennan is CEO of advertising agency M&C Saatchi

‘I was taught History of Art by a painter. He had zero knowledge of the “history” bit, just the “art” bit. We learnt together. Irresponsible of the school, but fun. One day, we turned the page of the textbook onto this image. He was silent for a time and then said: “Just look.” Later, when he had read the blurb, he added: “They didn’t need to tell us he was going deaf, you can see through the paint he’s cut off from the world.” I saw the painting in the Prado a decade later. It’s always a special moment when you see something for real that you’ve studied.’

John McEwen comments on *Self-Portrait*

GOYA only began doing portraits in his thirties, but they would constitute a third of his output as a painter. He was appointed Deputy Director of the Spanish Royal Academy in 1785, Director of Painting in 1795 and Painter to the King in 1799.

As honest in his portraits as he was unorthodox in his ideas, he told his students: ‘There are no rules in painting. To make everyone study in the same way and follow the same path compulsorily seriously impedes the development of young people who prac-

tise this difficult art: an art which is nearer to the divine than any other, since it is concerned with everything God created.’

His son Javier later recalled: ‘He looked with veneration at Velázquez and Rembrandt, but above all he looked at Nature, whom he called his mistress.’ The year of that student address, 1792, a severe illness left him deaf for life, soon forcing him to resign his academic post.

This late portrait followed years of turbulence and war: the imposition of French rule under Napoleon’s brother Joseph Bona-

parte and the reinstatement of the Spanish Ferdinand VII, whose repressive reign would soon force Goya into French exile. In April, he was finally cleared of collaboration with the Napoleonic regime. Similarly, the Inquisition withdrew its enquiry into five ‘obscene paintings’, one the famous *Naked Maja*.

With characteristic honesty, Goya portrayed himself understandably dishevelled—wig askew, grey hair showing, shirt disarranged—as he resigned himself to old age.

UNIQUE CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS

from £14.99

SAVE £5
when you buy 2
or more online

Whoever's on your list, they're on ours too

Whether it's your golfing partner, fashion-following friend or the country-loving in-laws, a subscription is a gift that keeps delivering.

Women, Fashion & Beauty

From fabulous high street fashion to celebrity style and beauty tips, we've got all the inspiration a woman needs.



12 issues **£29.99**
£59.20 **Save £29**



12 issues **£14.99**
£43.20 **Save £28**



12 issues **£14.99**
£44.00 **Save £29**



50 issues **£45.49**
£59.16 **Save £13**

House & Home

Hot properties, cool kitchens, country gardens – if they've got a passion for all-things home, step inside.



12 issues **£26.99**
£49.00 **Save £22**



12 issues **£29.99**
£59.00 **Save £29**



12 issues **£29.99**
£57.00 **Save £27**



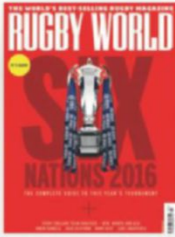
12 issues **£29.99**
£59.00 **Save £29**

Sports & Hobbies

From golf to cycling and sailing to gardening. Whatever they're into, we're onto it.



13 issues **£40.49**
£63.82 **Save £23**



12 issues **£39.99**
£60.00 **Save £20**



13 issues **£41.49**
£62.59 **Save £21**



51 issues **£104.49**
£156.25 **Save £51**

Country & Equestrian

Fuel their love of the great outdoors, with essential reads for hunting, eventing, fishing and countryside enthusiasts.



12 issues **£40.49**
£59.92 **Save £19**



51 issues **£125.49**
£170.00 **Save £44**



52 issues **£97.49**
£150.00 **Save £52**



12 issues **£34.49**
£48.00 **Save £13**

TV and entertainment, fine wine, music, lifestyle, cookery...
with over 50 titles, we've got it covered.



Subscribe online at
magazinesdirect.com/xmas15



0330 333 1113

Quote code: AYP6
7 days a week from 8am to 9pm (UK time)



Complete
the coupon
below

Complete this coupon and send to: **FREEPOST Time Inc** (No further address needed. No stamp required – for UK only)

Your details

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: Forename: _____
Surname: _____
Email: _____
Address: _____
Postcode: _____
Home Tel No: (inc area code) _____
Mobile No: _____
Date of Birth: [D, D] [M, M] [Y, Y, Y, Y]
Magazine title: _____ £

I would like to send a gift to:

Please also fill out 'Your Details' opposite. To give more than one subscription, please supply address details on a separate sheet.
Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss: Forename: _____
Surname: _____
Address: _____
Postcode: _____
Magazine title: _____ £

Total order amount: £

Choose from 2 easy ways to pay:

- I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, for £ _____
- Please debit £ _____ from my:
 - Visa Visa Debit MasterCard Amex
 Card No: _____
Expiry Date: _____
[M, M, Y, Y]
Signature: _____ Date: _____
(over 18)



A Christmas card will be sent to all gift orders received by 9th December 2016 (either by email or post) so that you can send it on to the recipient before Christmas. If you supply an email address your order will be acknowledged by email and you will be given the option to download a Christmas card or request one by post. If you do not supply an email address you will automatically be sent a postal Christmas card.

Offer open to new UK subscribers only. Final closing date for all orders is 2nd February 2017. Orders purchased as a gift before the 9th December 2016 will start with the February 2017 issue published in January. All weekly titles will begin with the first available issue in January. All gift orders purchased after this date will begin with the first available issue. Orders purchased for yourself will start with the next available issue – please allow up to 6 weeks for delivery. The full subscription rate is for 1 year and includes postage and packaging. If the magazine ordered changes frequency per annum, we will honour the number of issues paid for, not the terms of the subscription. For enquiries and overseas rates contact help@magazinesdirect.com or call +44 (0) 330 333 4333. For full terms and conditions visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. We will process your data in accordance with our Privacy Policy (www.timeincuk.com/privacy). By providing your information, you agree to be contacted by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, publisher of the above magazines and other iconic media brands, with information about our goods and services and those of our carefully selected third parties. Please tick here if you do not wish to receive these messages: by email and/or SMS by post and/or telephone about carefully selected third party goods and services.

AYP6

Where writing reached the heights

The Brontë Parsonage Museum, Haworth, North Yorkshire, in the care of the Brontë Society

Some of our most enduring stories were conceived at this Yorkshire parsonage. Jeremy Musson enjoys a literary pilgrimage to its recently restored interiors

Photographs by Justin Paget

A RELATIVELY humble North Yorkshire parsonage occupies a remarkable place in the story of English literature (**Fig 1**). It was the home of the Rev Patrick Brontë, a widower, where three of the children he raised there, Charlotte, Emily and Anne, became published novelists of lasting repute. Each generation discovers these extraordinary books for themselves and few readers of *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* or *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* can fail to be curious about the stone walls that contained the short but productive lives of their authors.

It was, in its way, a dignified and secure home, but not without its pri- ➤

Fig 1: The principal front of the Brontë parsonage, built in 1778–9







vations, principally emotional, but also economic and social. A schoolfriend wrote after Charlotte's death how odd it was that reviewers of her biography by fellow novelist Elizabeth Gaskell never seemed to think it strange that this woman of 'first-rate talents, industry and integrity' had lived 'in a walking nightmare of poverty and self-suppression'.

A year after the family arrived there in 1820, the children's mother, Maria, died; two elder sisters had also died young (the one son, Branwell, died of consumption hastened by addiction to laudanum and alcohol). Their father, a handsome clergyman who had changed his surname from Prunty

or Brunty to Brontë and delighted in wearing high cravats like his hero, the Duke of Wellington, outlived his children, dying in 1861.

A house museum since 1928, owned and run by the Brontë Society, the Haworth Parsonage has been through a number of presentations, of which the latest, completed in 2013, was the result of a two-year programme of research by the University of Lincoln, wallpaper expert Allyson McDermott and Ann Dinsdale, the Society's Principal Curator and author of *The Brontës at Haworth* (2006).

The house was crisply redecorated using contemporary descriptions,

surviving bills and accounts, sampling and cross-section evidence to achieve a more authentic reconstruction of its 1850s appearance. The wallpapers are either exact replicas or well-evidenced contemporary patterns of the appropriate colours. Nearly all the items of furniture are authenticated pieces from the Brontës' period of occupation collected by the Society since the 1890s.

The most exciting recent arrival, in 2015, is the original dining table at which Charlotte, Emily and Anne wrote their novels (*Fig 2*); every evening, they would walk around it and discuss their writings. After the death of Emily and Anne, a family

Fig 2: The parlour or dining room, and the table at which all the sisters wrote. Charlotte's portrait by George Richmond hangs above the fireplace



Fig 3: The Rev Patrick Brontë's study has an austere quality. Fig 4 right: The clock on the staircase half-landing

servant, Martha Brown, used to recall how sad she felt 'to hear Miss Brontë walking, walking on alone'.

The table had been acquired directly from the house sale in 1861, sold on quickly to a local family, in whose hands it had passed by descent, until its recent acquisition, with generous support from the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

Known originally as the Glebe House, the parsonage was built in 1778–9. A five-bay, stone and purpose-built clergy residence, with a fine door-case, it is not more distinguished than many a farmhouse or land-agent's house, but it sits at the head of the village, looking down across a steep churchyard towards the church of which Patrick Brontë was minister—the mid-17th-century tower remains, but work to rebuild the main body of the church commenced in 1879 (Fig 5).

The moors still begin just behind the house—the Brontës' childhood walks,

‘The Brontës walks and the views from the house were central to their vision of the world’

sometimes by moonlight, and the views from the house were central to their vision of the world. Charlotte remarked to G. H. Lewes of the limitations of Jane Austen's world and how one sees there only 'a highly-cultivated garden and no open country'.

The *paterfamilias* was a remarkable figure in his own right. His dignified study suggests something of his character (Fig 3). One of many sons of a poor Ulster farmer, Patrick educated himself up to taking a degree at St John's College, Cambridge in 1802. He was a curate in Essex and Shropshire and at Dewsbury and Hartshead in Yorkshire before being appointed, in >





1815, 'perpetual curate' at Thornton, near Bradford. He married Maria Branwell in 1812 and all the writers were born at Thornton—Charlotte in 1816, Emily in 1818 and Anne in 1820.

He wrote of his appointment in 1820 as 'perpetual curate' at Haworth: 'My salary is not large; it is only about £200 a year. I have a good house, which is mine also, and is rent-free'.

‘Everything is in harmony with the idea of a country parsonage’

Mrs Gaskell, the novelist who befriended Charlotte when she was already well known as a writer, was conscious of the impact of her mother and elder siblings' deaths on Charlotte. Mrs Gaskell recorded her memories of her visit to Haworth and other conversations; she felt a need to defend the reputation of Charlotte, who had been criticised for 'coarseness' and had been attacked as writing in a manner some thought unsuitable for a woman.

Mrs Gaskell wanted to show that Charlotte was an intelligent, well-educated and dutiful parson's daughter of impressive talent. Modern critics argue that she tried to suppress the

intense imagination and sensuality of Charlotte's writings, but there can no doubt her accounts give a valuable flavour of the house.

She describes the 'oblong stone house, facing down the hill on which the village stands... The house consists of four rooms on each floor, and is two stories high. When the Brontës took possession, they made the larger parlour, to the left of the entrance, the family sitting-room, while that on the right was appropriated to Mr Brontë as a study. Behind this was the kitchen, and behind the former, a sort of flagged store-room. Upstairs, there were four bedchambers of similar size'.

She also wrote: 'Everything fits into, and is in harmony with, the idea of a country parsonage, possessed by people of very moderate means.' She then noted: 'Everything about the place tells of the most dainty order, the most exquisite cleanliness. The door-steps are spotless; the small old fashioned window-panes glitter like looking-glasses.' The kitchen was an important feature in the young lives of the Brontë sisters (*Fig 6*).

Outside, she was conscious of the 'pestiferous' Gothic gloom of the churchyard, but she celebrated the domesticity of the house itself with fires creating a 'pretty warm dancing light all over the house'. The small first-floor room over the hall, which the servants told Mrs Gaskell was known

as 'the children's study', was also used as a bedroom by Emily. The children's aunt, Miss Branwell, who helped look after them, taught the children in her own bedroom over the parlour, which later became Charlotte's bedroom (now used to display costume and smaller artefacts).

The Brontës made many changes to the interior. Although the largely mahogany furnishing of the house remained much the same in the 1850s as it had been before, Charlotte actively improved the character and decoration of the house early in that decade, overruling her father's prejudice against curtains. The parlour and the bedroom over it were also both made slightly larger. A later occupant, the Rev John Wade, added a two-storey gabled extension in 1878, and inserted plate-glass windows in place of the six-over-six sash windows.

In 1928, Sir James Roberts acquired the house and presented it to the Brontë Society, which had been founded in 1893, and has made it a popular destination for readers, despite its compact size. Nevertheless, it's a difficult property to present. The society continues to extend the collection, which includes some 7,000 objects (including the furnishings). One of the valuable points of reference has been the handwritten 1861 sale catalogue of furniture and household artefacts. Many pieces were bought locally and remained in the

Fig 5 : The small garden of the house looks directly over the church and graveyard, now half-obscurd by trees. Even though there was little tree cover originally, Mrs Gaskell, who visited in Charlotte's lifetime, was conscious of the 'pestiferous' gloom of the churchyard



Fig 6: The kitchen in which the Brontë children would listen to tales of the moors told by their servant Tabby. The furniture all belonged to the Brontë family

hands of local families or the servants' families. The only replica is the tester bed in Patrick's room, which had featured in a sketch made by Branwell.

The hallway, staircase hall and landing (Fig 4) have now been repainted a pale blue-grey established by paint analysis; it had been described, by a friend of Charlotte's, Ellen Nussey, as 'a pretty dove-coloured tint'. Patrick's austere study was found to have no evidence of wallpaper and has been painted white.

The parlour or dining room has been re-papered. Mrs Gaskell wrote 'the parlour has evidently been refurbished with within the last few years... The prevailing colour of the room is crimson'. Red curtains woven in crimson 'union cloth' (as ordered by Charlotte) have been introduced and a hand-printed paper chosen of a con-

temporary design, in a crimson trellis pattern against a white background.

A stone-flagged storeroom was converted into a study by Charlotte for her soon-to-be husband, her father's curate, Arthur Nicholls. She wrote: 'I have been very busy stitching; the new little room is got into order, and the green and white curtains are up; they exactly suit the paper, and look neat and clean enough.' They married in 1854 and she died in the early stages of pregnancy the following year.

Remarkably, a scrap of wallpaper from this room was found in the New York Public Library with an authentication by Gaskell. This has been re-created from this evidence as have curtains of a carefully researched contemporary and complementary design. The pattern was printed onto original 19th-century linen.

Wallpapers have also been re-created for Patrick's bedroom, an appropriate 1850s design chosen in a green colour evidenced from surviving paint fragments. Branwell's studio has been re-papered with an exact reproduction of a surviving scrap and Charlotte's room has been repainted a blue-green wall colour. There was evidence that most of the joinery in the house was oak-grained in the 1850s, but a decision was taken not to re-create this in the recent scheme.

The Parsonage is an extraordinary place: a compact, credible piece of domestic theatre in which to consider the lives of the Brontës, the world of the 19th-century English-language novel and, above all, the triumph of the imagination in the face of adversity.

For further information, visit www.bronte.org.uk



A capital gallery of galanthus

Chelsea Physic Garden, Chelsea, London SW3

A botanical and horticultural haven in the heart of London, Chelsea's ancient Physic Garden has enthusiastically jumped on the snowdrop bandwagon in recent times, finds Jacky Hobbs

Photographs by Clive Nichols



SOME 10,000 naturalised snowdrops illuminate the four acres of the Chelsea Physic Garden in London SW3, in the depths of winter and its *Galanthus* collection now extends to approximately 120 named species and cultivars, although not all of them are in the open ground.

The present head gardener, Nick Bailey, recalls that a number of influential figures spanning the garden's history have made significant contributions to its burgeoning population of snowdrops. 'Philip Miller [1691–1771], who was head gardener here from 1722 until shortly before his death, was responsible for doubling the number of ornamental plants grown in the UK during his tenure. He would certainly have initially cultivated *Galanthus nivalis*, together with a selection of naturally occurring hybrids as they became available.'

Things ticked along, but, between 1891 and 2015, the number of cultivars has increased 40-fold, says Mr Bailey, with the most intense period having occurred in the past few decades. Christopher Brickell, botanist, snowdrop enthusiast and a former chairman of the Physic Garden's advisory board, introduced and named several new cultivars, including pagoda-shaped Trym, which continues to flourish in the garden.

'Plant donors have had a significant impact,' explains Lucy Rowley, who is responsible for sourcing desirable *Galanthus* cultivars. 'Sally Pasmore donated carloads of beautifully wrapped cultivars that were found in her Somerset garden, including her own Sally Pasmore. She's an elegant, well-poised snowdrop, not to be confused with the more awkwardly named Late Sally Pasmore—which refers to flowering time. Mrs Pasmore lives on,' chuckles Miss Rowley.

Whether late or early, the Pasmores are planted in the company of other snowdrop 'names' in a roll call that will be familiar to galanthophiles. They include *Galanthus elwesii* and Atkinsii, Primrose Warburg, John Gray, S. Arnott, Dodo Norton, Oliver Wyatt and Florence Baker, to name just a few.

The garden's annual opening focused on snowdrop time was already well established when Mr Bailey came to the garden in 2010,

A head start

Chelsea Physic Garden was founded in 1673 by the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries in order to train apprentices in the identification and application of living medicinal plants. In its early days, only the common snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis*, would have been in cultivation and not yet noted for its medicinal properties. In more recent times, however, the presence of the alkaloid galanthamine has been identified in the species and is used in the development of medicines for treating Alzheimer's disease, justifying the presence of snowdrops in the Physic Garden's Neurology Bed.



Preceding pages: The snowdrop theatre includes some of the most unusual cultivars. Above: Snowdrops Warham and Hippolyta among *Iris reticulata* and primroses

although he recalls it was a fairly low-key event celebrating a handful of species and some 40 cultivars. He wanted to energise and augment the collection, to make it a worthy destination for travelling galanthophiles.

With that in mind, he planted an embankment with some 10,000 bulbs of *G. nivalis* and forensically assessed the existing cultivars to identify gaps. Mr Bailey and Miss Rowley then worked with snowdrop expert and plantsman Joe Sharman, of Monksilver Nursery, to devise a more complete and interesting collection.

‘The potted specimens are professionally tended through the year’

Armed with a long wish list, but no finance, the garden's volunteers, predominantly enthusiastic ladies in their sixties, organised two massive fundraising events. They secured enough money to acquire 55 more cultivars, including fragrant Brenda Troyle, white-winged Wasp, Grumpy (with downturned eyes and mouth) and moustachioed Ailwyn.

When further finances allow, Mr Bailey and Miss Rowley aim to include rarer blooms, such as apricot-tinged Anglesey Orange Tip and Anglesey Aurora. 'A key role of the botanic garden is to show the origin of the cultivars as well as helping to protect and conserve wild species,' Mr Bailey explains. The garden's latter role is enhanced with key new plantings of species *Galanthus*, predominantly in the World Woodland Garden, where 16 of the 19 known species are firmly embedded.

Hardened galanthophiles may be prepared to go down on bended knee, even in muddy wet winters, to inspect a single snowdrop bloom at close quarters, but the general public is less inclined. As a result, the Snowdrop Theatre was devised, borrowing from a traditional method of displaying auriculas in their due season. It enables detailed comparison of potted species and cultivars without discomfort and, protected from the elements, the pots of plants can be viewed in pristine condition, unblemished by inclement weather.

However, Mr Bailey advises against keeping snowdrops in pots unless they're tenaciously cared for. The Physic Garden's specimens are professionally tended throughout the year at Joe Sharman's nursery, where the snowdrop bulbs are plunged into beds of damp soil to ensure the bulbs don't desiccate. At flowering time, the growing plants are lifted, re-potted and returned to the garden displays.

Another innovative display concept is the moss-encased, hanging snowdrop *ikebana*, which was introduced last year by a horticultural team member who had worked in Japan. Under Mr Bailey's direction, the team created a 26ft-long arc, comprising some 200 moss-enclosed *ikebanas* hanging over the garden's entrance, with other arrangements suspended from tree branches throughout the garden.

Chelsea Physic Garden, Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea, London SW3. Snowdrop Days, with a number of special events, will run from January 28 to February 3, 2017, 10am–4pm. For further details, visit <http://chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk> or telephone 020-7352 5646



Clockwise from top left: *Galanthus Ailwyn*, with its engaging 'face'; *Galanthus Grumpy*, with its Freddie Mercury-like whiskers; *Galanthus plicatus* Celadon; an *ikebana* arrangement for plain *Galanthus nivalis*, balled in moss





Spare me those golden years

I HAVE a problem with yellow flowers—they're not good mixers. They're fine by themselves and some people blend them nicely with orange and scarlet flowers—the RHS does this very successfully in its Hot Garden at Rosemoor, in Devon—but yellow flowers don't combine with the pink colours that dominate the plant kingdom. Alice de Rothschild, a formidable spinster who gardened no less than 335 acres in Provence 100 years ago, would not have agreed. She maintained that all difficult colours could be blended together by the addition of white or yellow. Many would agree that white is a useful mixer for other tints, but would need convincing that yellow is equally suitable.

Yellow leaves are even worse, impertinent self-publicists demanding attention they don't deserve. Their colour is often caused by a lack of chlorophyll that renders them vulnerable to the very sunlight they reflect. The yellow-leaved *Philadelphus coronarius* Aureus, *Lysimachia nummularia* Aurea and *Milium effusum* Aurea are three that I chucked out when the leaves scorched too often to justify their place in the garden. I've tried growing them in sheltered situations, but their leaves turn green in shade.

And is there anything more hideous than the yellow-leaved *Choisya ternata* Sundance? Of course there is, but *Choisya* Sundance is evergreen, so you can't get away from it even in winter.

Some people feel the same about purple-leaved plants, but I love



Impertinent self-publicist?: *Philadelphus coronarius* Aureus. The leaves scorch in a sunny position

‘In our last garden, we tackled the problem of yellow full-on,’

them. They're such a good foil for other colours in a mixed border and their own flowers never conflict with the purple leaves. Purple beeches are one of the glories of big gardens and they come in every imaginable shade of auburn, copper, red, purple and near-black. How I love to see them planted by inspired landowners in long avenues across the chalk downs.

What about yellow autumn colour? Well, the best that can be said for all those dying leaves is that their beauty is fleeting. Nevertheless, they have their admirers among better gardeners than me, who tell

us that *Ginkgo biloba*, a tree unknown in the wild, but cultivated in Chinese temples from time immemorial, turns to a beautiful clear, pure yellow in October. And that so do the American tulip tree *Liriodendron tulipifera* and our native field-maple *Acer campestre*.

In our last garden, we tackled the problem of yellow full-on. The spur was my finding six plants of *Acer negundo* Kelly's Gold offered in three-litre pots at £1 each in the market in Salisbury. Yes, it was 15 years ago, but £1 was a giveaway, even then. I wondered afterwards whether they were what prosecutors call 'stolen goods', but it never occurred to me at the time.

We decided to make them the centrepiece of a new 'yellow garden', all contained within a 9ft-tall hornbeam hedge so that they couldn't be seen from outside. I planted the acers on either side of a narrow walk and, once they'd grown to a fair height, pollarded them back every year. Their knobbly stumps then threw out hundreds (yes, *hundreds*) of slim, fast-growing stems each clothed in large yellow leaves and forming an arch under which we lingered. From early May to late October, the walk seemed bathed in sunshine even on the most overcast of days.

Then, of course, we had to add yellow-leaved evergreens, such as

cultivars of privet and box, which we regularly clipped into spheres so that new yellow leaves kept coming through and supplemented them with further yellowish goodies. *Euphorbia mellifera*, usually so tender, was a great success, as was *Euphorbia* Lambrook Gold, alongside epimediums, tulips and daffodils in spring.

That was my solution to yellow leaves and yellow flowers—*kraal* the plants together in a state of horticultural apartheid and pretend that the world outside did not exist. I won't repeat the experiment in our new garden—it's time to try something different. And I think I've found the answer. Have you noticed how many interior designers now combine yellow with pink in their fabrics, papers and other decorative schemes? I'm always amazed that such creations are loudly applauded by artistic trendies.

It's time to overrule my sensibilities and mix my garden yellows up with my pinks as promiscuously as the plant world permits. Then I shall invoke the memory of Alice de Rothschild, tell our visitors how colour-creative I am and await their acquiescence. However, inwardly, I shall continue to squirm. 🐦

Charles Quest-Ritson wrote the *RHS Encyclopedia of Roses*

Next week: Plant novelties

GAP Photos/Jaanna Kossak; Le-thuy Do/Dreamstime; Yashnily Vishnevsky/Dreamstime

Horticultural aide memoire

No. 51: Feed the birds

Those who enjoy the sight of birds from their windows should continue to feed them, as the fruits of autumn are wearing thin by now. A plentiful supply of grains and mealworms will keep the robins and finches happy. Those, like the dunnoek, who are too shy to feed from the table, will tidy up the crumbs from beneath it. Suspended nuts and fatballs will sustain the various titmice and others who have learnt acrobatics. Your rowans and cotoneasters will attract redwings and waxwings in a cold spell. If a passing sparrowhawk nabs a songbird, that's part of the deal. **SCD**





The four seasons

‘The blush of Spring, the blossom of Summer,
the flame of Autumn, the sparkle of Winter, and the
violet-softened refulgence of every waking moment
yield a never failing succession of delights’

Horace Fletcher in *Menticulture*

‘The seasons are what a symphony ought to be:
four perfect movements in harmony with each other’

Arthur Rubinstein

‘Look to the seasons when choosing your cures’

Hippocrates

‘Nature bestows her own, richest gifts/
And, with lavish hands, she works in shifts’

Gertrude Tooley Buckingham in *The Four Seasons*

Over the next 24 pages, BSME Columnist of the Year
and award-winning nature writer John Lewis-Stempel
charts the changing year and we offer ways to enhance
such pleasure in simple things

The four seasons Spring



‘ April hath put a spirit
of youth in everything ,

Shakespeare, Sonnet XCVIII



Riot of spring

Lambs gambol as ascending daylight warms their greening fields and the cuckoo calls in woodlands carpeted with dewy daffodils, bluebells and sorrel



SPRING sets in with its accustomed severity': so goes the old country witticism. The shepherd on the black Welsh mountain and the ploughman on the open field of Norfolk know from bitter-cold experience that the equinox, on March 21 or thereabouts, is a hasty human date for the official start of spring. Ask the shivery crews of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race if March blusters and freezes—they will tell you.

And is that blossom on the blackthorn or snow? Nonetheless, winter is now in its death throes. The ice age is over. How does Nature announce the arrival of spring? Let me count the ways, but, slowly, because, at first, they come singly and separately. The crocus flowers. Woodpeckers drum on telegraph poles. Queen bees emerge from their burrows. The tiny chiffchaff arrives from Africa. George Orwell, an unacknowledged naturalist, considered the clinching evidence for spring's arrival to be toads spawning.

However, now, in a rush, there is the glimpse of pale primrose in the wood, the birth-scream of the curlew over the high moor, the creeping haze of bluebells through the beech stand, the garden blackbird with a twig in its mouth.

Spring! Here at last. The old English *sprynge* is to ascend. Duly, the sap rises in the mighty oak, as do the hormones in handsome hares, which go boxing-mad in their randy mating. The spirited skylark flies up to sing over its territory and our hearts soar with it.

It is the fresh sunny sky into which the skylark sings that is the gift of spring. The brighter blue reveals a pleasant, greening Britain. The

Orwell considered the clinching evidence for spring's arrival to be toads spawning

amnesia of winter is washed away. We are explorers in a foreign land: our own.

Spring is egalitarian, another point made by Orwell in *Some Thoughts on the Common Toad*. He wrote: 'The point is that the pleasures of spring are available to everybody, and cost nothing.' From prince to pauper, country lady to hipster man about Camden Town, spring happens to us all. Retired colonels in Sussex write letters to *The Times* on the subject of the first cuckoo, children in Cumbria pick wild daffodils for Mothering Sunday. Spring is a pleasure that not even politicians can take away.

You can smell spring in the air, its saladness. Daylight increases. Then comes the moveable chocolate-egg feast of Easter, the festival of the Resurrection of Christ—although, of course, Eostre was the pagan goddess of spring and renewal, the original bunny girl. Whatever your religion, spring is the time of regeneration.

The naked earth, the thawing land, is warmed by the sun. The temperature edges over the 6°C that grass needs to 'flush', to grow with uncontrollable abandon. No wonder traditional sheep farmers time lambing for spring, when the grass is bountiful, sugar-sweet and tender.

Chaucer's 'Aprill shoures' water the land, not drown it. As the arable farmer and the horse

fancier attest, 'the going is firm' in spring. The drying land is good for both the silver-bladed plough and the Cheltenham Gold Cup.

The fisherman's mind turns to trout on the gin-clear Itchen and salmon on the running Spey. Perhaps, this year, the rod will work one of the Spey's famous beats, Tulchan, say, or Knockando.

My personal proof of the triumph of spring over winter, the winning of the seasons' tug of war, is the icumen in of the nattery house martin, which arrives here in the far west of England on April 20, when the celandines in the meadow make a starfield under the feet.

There is something intensely uplifting in seeing the martlet that, twice a year, undertakes a dangerous migratory journey and builds his mud house here, as if this place were perfect. It's difficult to resist the thought that the million wings of the martins, and their cousins the swallows and the swifts, have turned the globe to face the heart-warming spring light.

May is the time to listen to the dawn chorus, when male birds sing to woo females and, who knows, perhaps for the sheer, exalting joy of it all. The fantasia of the birds begins at about 4.15am, as the sun touches the cattle lying in the clover to life. All the birds break into song, so there is song all around, from every fence post, rooftop and tree.

The lane bursts with the loveliest of the verge-side flowers—the golden dandelion, the pinky campion and the wedding-white stitchwort—and soon there is warmth to fill the air with their honey perfume. It's a floral display to rival the Chelsea Flower Show. Down in the stream, the trout are rising for the mayfly and, in the garden hedge, the chaffinches are in a comic frenzy feeding their four squeaking chicks in the nest.

Oh, to be in Britain now that spring has come! *John Lewis-Stempel*



Preceding pages: Colin Varmdehl; Illustrations by Philip Bamister; Ross Hodinot/Nature PL



The four seasons Spring



QUIZ

- 1 Which gamebird goes a-roding in spring?
- 2 From where do badger-face sheep originate?
- 3 Which opera features the *Easter Hymn*?
- 4 What do the 11 marzipan balls on a simnel cake represent?
- 5 Which oratorio contains the aria *I know that my Redeemer liveth*?



- 1 Woodcock 2 The Welsh Mountains
3 *Cavallaria rusticana* (Mascagni)
4 The Apostles minus Judas
5 *Messiah* (Handel)



'Spring is the time of plans and projects'

Leo Tolstoy in *'Anna Karenina'*

'The snow has not yet left the earth, but spring is already asking to enter your heart'

Anton Chekhov in *'The Exclamation Mark'*



'If people did not love one another, I really don't see what use there would be in having spring'

Victor Hugo in *'Les Misérables'*

'I suppose the best kind of spring morning is the best weather God has to offer'

Dodie Smith in *'I Capture the Castle'*

'It is the sun shining on the rain and the rain falling on the sunshine'

Frances Hodgson Burnett in *'The Secret Garden'*



Eat Gulls' eggs

Few delicacies have such a short season (April 1–May 15)—blink and you'll miss the creamiest, richest flavour imaginable, with a subtle, lingering aftertaste

Skywatch



The Virginid meteor shower is expected to reach a crescendo on April 12, bringing anticipation of shooting stars on April 7–18; the Lyrid climaxes on April 23, with, it's hoped, shooting stars visible on April 19–25 and, on April 20–May 19, the Alpha–Scorpiid should shower forth

Read



The Darling Buds of May (H. E. Bates, 1958) Bucolic family lives beyond means
The Wind in the Willows (Kenneth Grahame, 1908) Mole abandons spring-cleaning for messing about on the river
The Enchanted April (Elizabeth von Arnim, 1922) Italy has calming effect on four fractious women
Great Expectations (Charles Dickens, 1861) Orphan believes insanely disappointed bride is his benefactor
The Hare with Amber Eyes (Edmund de Waal, 2010) Loyal maid stows Jewish family fortunes under a mattress

Listen to...



The Creation (Haydn, 1797)

A beautiful world springs up in this joyous oratorio

Rite of Spring (Stravinsky, 1913)

The ballet of a primitive seasonal ritual

Carmina Burana (Orff, 1934)

Wonderfully louche cantata on the rising of the sap

Jump (Van Halen, 1983)

Leap like a carefree lamb to this unfailingly rousing music

Trout Quintet (Schubert, 1819)

Something to hum on a chalkstream





For the diary

March 14–17 Cheltenham National Hunt Festival (<http://Cheltenham.thejockeyclub.co.uk>; 01242 513014)

April 2 Cancer UK Boat Races, Oxford versus Cambridge (men and women) (<http://theboat races.org>)

April 6–8 Randox Health Grand National Festival, Aintree (0344 579 3001; <http://aintree.thejockeyclub.co.uk>)

May 4–7 Mitsubishi Motors Badminton Horse Trials, Gloucestershire, box office opens January 11 (01454 218375)

May 23–27 RHS Chelsea Flower Show (0844 995 9664; www.rhs.org.uk)

May 31–June 3 Royal Bath and West Show, Shepton Mallet, Somerset (www.bathandwest.com; 01794 822200)



Through the binoculars

Hoopoe

The exotic-looking, punk-crested bird has started to turn up in greater numbers here, landing on the south coast in late April/May



Walk



Tintern Abbey to Devil's Pulpit, Monmouthshire

Kingfishers and herons on the Wye, primrose and celandine-strewn woods and big views

Cuckoo Trail, Hampden Park to Heathfield, East Sussex

Lady's smock, orange-tip butterflies, wild garlic and green woodpeckers strew the disused railway line

Rannerdale Knotts, Buttermere, Cumbria

The bluebell spread around Crummock Water is scarcely believable

Avon Valley, Loddiswell, south Devon

Dippers, nuthatches and primroses abound along the gentle, wooded river

West coasts of Barra, the Uists and Harris, Outer Hebrides


Machair (grassland) bursts with rare orchids and the loud calls of cuckoos and corncrakes fringes white sands



Michael Hart/Stockfood; Denis Nata/Kucher Serhii/Mari Stezhko/Cymoclab/Erni/Shutterstock; Helen Holson/Tian-Tass Photo Agency/Ian Dagnall Computing/Alamy; Olivia Houghton/finefoodspecialist.co.uk; David Davies/PA Images; Paul Sawyer/FLPA; geogphotos/Alamy; Peter Cade/Getty; Andy Rouse/Nature PL

The seasons Summer





‘ I love the hay grass when
the flower head swings/
To summer winds and
insects happy wings ,

John Clare, 'I love to see the summer'

Make hay while the sun shines

Sweet are the hazy afternoons by village cricket grounds, bees humming, scones for tea, mown grass and the clear, cold, meandering river beckoning for a swim



It's show time in the countryside. The gardener is giving his pumpkin its last feed before the village fête; the pig man ponders the chances of the New Empress of Blandings as the white-coated judges give her the grim eye at the district show. From the airless refreshment tent comes the rhythmic chink of teaspoons on china; Wimbledon is over, but we've got used to strawberries and cream for tea.

How still the countryside is this afternoon, as if seen through glass. No birds sing; there is just that universal hum of the bees and, somewhere far away over the hill, music from a festival, Larmer Tree or Garsington perhaps.

Evening falls with an intense glow, the light evening made lighter still by the torches of cow parsley on the lane. The woods droop on the blue-steeped hills and the valley stretches out past them into forever. It must have been on an evening like this in the summer of 1914, as the world drifted to war, that John Masefield walked around his home in rural Buckinghamshire and went home to write:

So beautiful it is, I never saw
So great a beauty on these English fields,
Touched by the twilight's coming into awe,
Ripe to the soul and rich with summer's yields.
These homes, this valley spread below me here,
The rooks, the tilted stacks, the beasts in pen,
Have been the heartfelt things, past-speaking dear
To unknown generations of dead men.

Masefield saw what others had not. Yes, Britain is beautiful because we live providentially on a temperate isle warmed by the Gulf Stream, but also because our farmer ancestors transformed the land. The British countryside is the greatest piece of art in the world. The landscape is our heritage, the toil and the design of our ancestors; it is the 'past-speaking dear'. You can see and feel this clearly on a high summer's day.

Tomorrow it may rain and summer always has too short a reign—you've already noticed that the juvenile swifts have taken their first flight. However, 1,000 years of life would not be enough if it were composed of glorious summer days in Britain. *JLS*



‘A snapdragon bends under the weight of a fat bumblebee,’

1940, that he flew his first mission. He came back to Tangmere. Johnny didn't and The Few were fewer still.

Young office workers sit eating their lunch, faces to the sun, like pale blooms. Others dangle their feet in the cooling fountain. Well, we do like to be in or beside water. We are the island race. The Thames at Henley still echoes with the slap of oars from the Royal Regatta, and, in a fortnight, it will be blazers and sails at Cowes. Somewhere on a river in Derbyshire, below the beards of weeds and the dense willow pattern on the water from overhanging trees, a family goes 'wild swimming' or, in old money, swimming. On the beach at Tenby, a dreamy girl has made a sandcastle and waits in the pearly haze for the tide to turn and fill the moat.

From the county cricket ground, there is the steady thump of the ball being hit for six; a good innings for the home side at last. At polo clubs, players and ponies, sleek with sweat, start the last chukka of the day.

HIGH summer and the air is heavy with heat. Under the greenshade of the oak, cows stand whisking their tails. Sheep, glad now to have been shorn of their heavy fleeces last week, lie in the shadow pool of the hedge.

Along the shimmering flower border of Miss Jones's cottage, a peacock butterfly flitty-floats; sunny days in Britain are butterfly days. A snapdragon bends under the weight of a fat bumblebee, which then drones away to a foxglove. The lawnmower buzzes up and down.

Although there isn't a cloud in the blue, blue sky, the farmer looks anxiously at the horizon. The hayfield needs to be cut and needs three fine days on the trot for the job. A breeze shimmies through the wheatfield. The wheat, orient and golden, can wait a month.

In a steel-and-glass office block in London, the newspaper editor is also studying the sky. Will tomorrow's leader be 'Phew! What a scorcher!' or the other summer standard, 'Washout!'? The damned weather forecasters are sending 'mixed messages', to put it politely.

In the stifling square below, an elderly gentleman, 96 now but still possessed of the alertness that saved his life more than once, is pushed along in a wheelchair. He, too, gazes heavenwards. It was a perfect day like this, in the Spitfire summer of

Preceding pages Andrew Hasson; Illustrations by Philip Bannister; Drew Buckley Photography



The four seasons Summer



QUIZ

- 1 In which country is John Mortimer's 1988 novel *Summer's Lease* set?
- 2 In which play do Philostrate and Peaseblossom appear?
- 3 To which Neapolitan song are the words of 'Just one Cornetto' set?
- 4 Which crime-busting group celebrates a 75th anniversary in 2017?
- 5 Which Cotswold village did the author of *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning* leave?



1 Italy; 2 Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; 3 O Sole Mio (Capurro); 4 The Famous Five; 5 Slad



'Summer afternoon—
to me, those have always
been the most beautiful
words in the English
language'
Henry James

What
they
write



'Summer bachelors
like summer breezes,
are never as cool as
they pretend to be'
Nova Ephron

'Summer's lease hath
all too short a date'
Shakespeare in Sonnet 18

'If it could be like this
always—always summer,
always alone, the fruit
always ripe and Aloysius
in a good temper'
Evelyn Waugh in 'Brideshead Revisited'

'Green was the silence,
wet was the light, the
month of June trembled
like a butterfly'
Pablo Neruda in '100 Love Sonnets'



Eat Summer pudding

Sunshine on a plate, leaking with the juice of the plumpest, ripest summer fruits



Listen to...

Flight of the Bumblebee (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1899)
Insect becomes increasingly furious and piece becomes fiendishly difficult

Sea Pictures (Elgar, 1899)
Clara Butt performed the first rendering, dressed as a mermaid

Sunny Afternoon (The Kinks, 1966)
Bankrupt forgets worries with an ice-cold beer

Good Vibrations (Beach Boys, 1966)
Boy gets thrummingly optimistic vibes about girl

The Lark Ascending (Vaughan Williams, 1914)
A sight and sound worth fighting for



Skywatch

July is a busy month for stargazers: watch out for shooting stars from the Ophiuchid meteor shower from May 19; the Perseid meteor shower is expected to light up the night sky on July 23–August 20 and the Capricornid, Alpha–Cygnid, Delta–Aquadrid and Piscis Australis meteor showers all offer opportunities, too

Read



Three Men in a Boat (Jerome K. Jerome, 1889) Hypochondriacs take to the Thames
Five Go Off To Camp (Enid Blyton, 1948) Another smashing adventure
The Go-Between (L. P. Hartley, 1953) A young boy learns a lot during a sultry summer holiday
Cider with Rosie (Laurie Lee, 1959) Alcohol aids seduction in the Cotswolds
An Ice-Cream War (William Boyd, 1982) Two brothers come to a sticky end

Daniel Kaesler/Dreamstime; Steve Welsh/Alamy; Classic Image/Alamy; Granger Historical Picture Archive; Monkey Business Images/Dreamstime; Ambient Ideas/Dreamstime; Alhovich/Dreamstime; Shutterstock; INTERFOTO/Alamy



For the diary

May 20 Glyndebourne Festival opens, with *La traviata*, *Hipermestra*, *Hamlet*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Don Pasquale* and *La Clemenza di Tito* (01273 815000; www.glyndebourne.com)

June 20–24 Royal Ascot (0844 346 3000; www.ascot.co.uk)

June 28–July 2 Henley Royal Regatta (01491 572153; www.hrr.co.uk)

June 27–July 10 Wimbledon (020–8971 2473; www.wimbledon.com)

July 28–30 The Game Fair Hatfield House, Hertfordshire (www.thegamefair.org; 01707 252707)

29 July–August 5 Cowes Week (www.cowesweek.co.uk)

August 4–28 Edinburgh International Festival (0131–226 0026; www.eif.co.uk)



Walk



Bembridge cliffs, Isle of Wight
A breezy escape from the south coast's madding crowd

Anglesey
Look across to Puffin Island or go inland, where reed warblers burble, marsh harriers skim and waterwort flowers on Lake Penrhyn

Northumberland coastal path
Some 62 miles of roseate terns, purple sandpipers, pink thrift, porpoises and seals

North York Moors
Carpets of purple heather as far as the eye can see and, if you keep quiet, lapwing, curlew and golden plover

Dart Valley, Devon
Pearl-bordered fritillaries, wood warblers, otters, sun-dappled ancient oaks and tumbling cold waters in Ted Hughes country



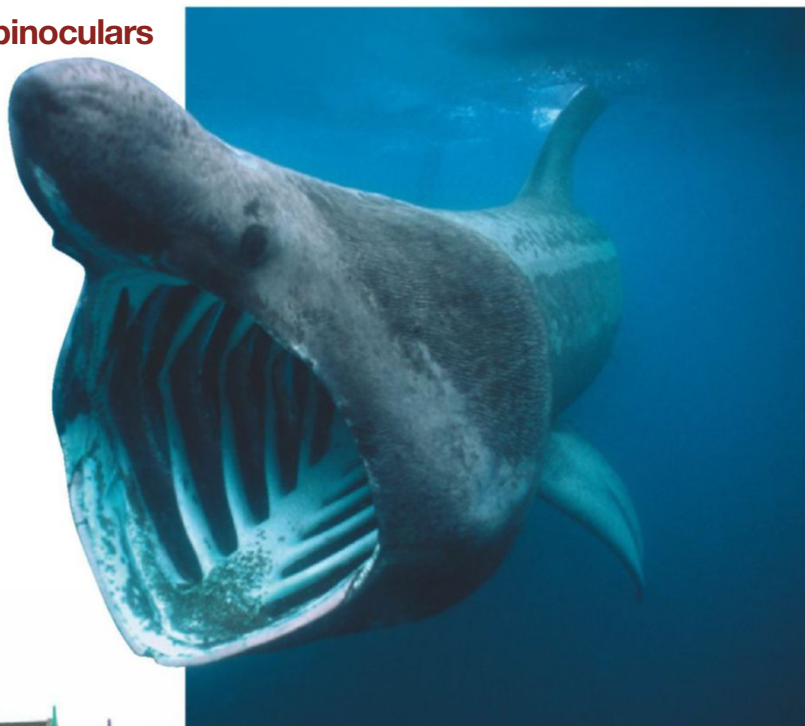
Stocksnapper/Dreamstime; Clive Limpkin/Alamy; Avalon/Photoshot License/Alamy; Michael Smith/Alamy; Shutterstock; Available Light Photography/Alamy; Richard Burdon/Alamy



Through the binoculars

Basking shark

The UK's largest fish is largely an enigma, as most of its life is spent deep underwater, but, at this time of year, it may be glimpsed off the UK's west coast as it bobs up to feast on plankton



The seasons Autumn



A scenic landscape featuring rolling hills with patches of green and autumn-colored trees. In the middle ground, a town is visible with a prominent church spire. A large body of water, likely a lake or bay, occupies the lower middle ground, with several sailboats on the water. The foreground shows misty, rolling hills with scattered trees. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and picturesque.

“A second spring when
every leaf is a flower,”

Albert Camus

The golden age

Misty orange sunsets stave off the approaching chill, hedgerows groan with bounty and the smoke of the first fire curls up into a still sky



THE seasons need no calendar. The trees know the date. From the east on meteorite nights come gales to strip the trees of their dying leaves and carpet back lawns in gold and incense: the fallen leaves are future soil for the trees. The same winds bear Scandinavian fieldfares to gorge themselves on the berries proffered by the hawthorn.

Wind is the youngster's friend. Autumn is a time to bring on the childish games: to scuff through leaves, fly a kite, play 'Obbly, obbly onker, my first conker'.

Gazing at the autumn scene, the Metaphysical poet John Donne remarked: 'No spring nor summer beauty hath such grace,/As I have seen in one Autumnal face.' Yes, there is the startling Klimt-esque palette of trees 'on the turn' and the scarlet of rosehips against chilled blue sky—perhaps the one perfect colour contrast. However, the real beauty of autumn is the majesty of Gothic decay. Go to the temple of an English copse in late October, when the leaves are burning orange, when black-and-lemon wasps (desperate for sugar) suck at ivy flowers, when ink-cap mushrooms deliquesce in their own juices and you will know it.

Look again at the rosehips. They are blood red. Autumn is the time of bacchanalian bounty, of gluts of blackberries, apples, and hazelnuts. In the blink of an eye, all fruits go from ripe to rotten ripe. The urgency with which Tufty squirrel goes about his eating is partly because he must put on fat before winter hibernation, but partly to ingest the natural harvest at its prime.

In autumn, the days cool, so evaporation from the ground is slow, hence the season's

‘As the thermometer falls, curiously, the ardour of sheep rises,’

signature mists. There's fog on the Tyne. And the Thames and the Tay.

Curiously, as the thermometer falls, so the ardour of sheep rises. The testosterone-drenched ram, a 'raddle' crayon attached to his chest, leaves a smudgy telltale mark on the rump of a 'covered' ewe. In the forests and on the hills, the sheep's close but wild relative, the deer, are likewise rutting.

Every season has its sounds. The sound-track of autumn is the barking of the stag, the *pitter-patter* of falling leaves, the *whirr* of pheasants on the wing, the cannoning of 12 bores, the squeal of hounds and the huntsman's horn.

I love autumn, the most intense and barbaric of all the seasons, with the seductive feel of the gun in the hand, the thrill of the stalk.

Autumn's true love is the wood. Here and there, a wild cherry flickers crimson as the mighty beech drops its mast for 'pannage' pigs to snout out from among the mouldering leaves. Damp amplifies the wood's mushroom breath. The jay gathers acorns to put in an earth larder. A single jay may bury thousands of acorns in a month, many to remain unretrieved. On some mist-shrouded autumn morning in medieval England, an absent-minded jay planted the seed of the victory at Trafalgar: the wood

that made Nelson's ships.

Like the jay, we also store up autumn's goodies. Cottage kitchens go industrial in the making of sloe gin, apple chutney, *marrons glacés*, pickled onions and crab-apple jelly. Not so long ago, the pig was slaughtered and salted in the autumn and beef smoked in the chimney.

Across arable fields, low, thin sun gleams on the fresh furrows for winter wheat. The plough, no matter how many sets of shares and coulter it has, is an ancient instrument and has been dragged across fields on muffled, rooky days like these for centuries. At the field edge, dried poppy heads, reminiscent of urns, rattle like a child's toy. A twittering flock of goldfinches plucks the dried thistle heads. The autumn hawkbit, which is almost as yellow as a goldfinch's wing bar, is in flower.

In the afternoon, village children getting off the school bus still scrump apples. Nothing beats the taste of a stolen fruit. Ask Adam and Eve.

In the evening, a peal of bells comes from over the hill, calling the faithful to harvest festival. Some stalwart gardener in the village has spelt out 'welcome' in runner beans in the church porch.

There is no denying it. The days are getting darker. In October, we wind back time and the evening commute is done with the car lights on. We try to keep the darkness and its demons away with fire. Candles light Halloween pumpkin heads and, on November 5, Bonfire Night, Guy Fawkes goes up in billowing flames. Children sky-write with sparklers; smoke, that other autumn mist, gets in your eyes (no matter where you stand).

On a November frost night, the sky is lit not by fireworks, but by shooting stars, the Milky Way and the Moon. In the orchard, the last apple, red like a Christmas tree bauble, falls. *JLS*





The four seasons Autumn

QUIZ

- 1 Why do leaves change colour in autumn?
- 2 Who traditionally searches the cellars of the Palace of Westminster before the Opening of Parliament?
- 3 In which country did the hymn *We Plough the Fields and Scatter* originate?
- 4 The fruit of the blackthorn flavours which drink?
- 5 Which wildfowl favours Bridgewater Bay in Somerset as a moulting site?



1 Because the green chlorophyll disappears with the sunlight; 2 The Yeoman of the Guard; 3 Germany—it was written by Matthias Claudius in 1782; 4 Sloe gin; 5 Shelduck



'That season of peculiar and inexhaustible influence on the mind of taste and tenderness'

Jane Austen in 'Persuasion'

'Autumn is the mellow season, and what we lose in flowers we more than gain in fruits'

Samuel Butler

'Delicious autumn! My very soul is wedded to it, and if I were a bird I would fly about the earth seeking the successive autumns'

George Eliot in 'Letter to Miss Lewis'



Eat Grouse

The king of the game birds when roasted and served with traditional trimmings, but it's best early in the season (starts August 12), when the race is on to bring the first birds south



'To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees, / And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core'

Keats in 'To Autumn'



'Every leaf speaks bliss to me, fluttering from the autumn tree'

Emily Brontë in 'Fall, leaves, fall'

Skywatch



As many as five shooting stars per hour might be spotted streaking across the night sky on September 21 from the Piscid meteor shower—they should remain visible to the naked eye at night until October. Shooting stars may also be seen on October 16–30 (Orionid) and October 20–November 30 (Taurid)

Read



Hallowe'en Party (Agatha Christie, 1969) Apple-bobbing goes badly wrong **Count Dracula** (Bram Stoker, 1897) Vampire turns on the charm **The Legend of Sleepy Hollow** (Washington Irving, 1820) Schoolmaster makes ill-judged proposal at harvest festival **Bonfire of the Vanities** (Tom Wolfe, 1987) Wall Street goes up in smoke **Forever Amber** (Kathleen Winsor, 1944) Orphan sleeps her way to success

Listen to...



Music for the Royal Fireworks (Handel, 1749) Sparked by royal command (George II) to mark the end of war

The hunting song, The Seasons (Handel, 1801) Sung at the gallop with much French-horn tooting

St Paul's Suite (Holst, 1912) School's back—the schoolmaster wrote this in thanks for his new soundproof studio

The Hunter's Theme, Peter and the Wolf (Prokofiev, 1936) Shooters stop aiming at birds and help capture wolf to drum rolls

September, Four Last Songs (Richard Strauss, 1948) Mellow music from a composer in the autumn of his career



Tim Gaine/Alamy; Natalya Aleksakhina/Dreamstime; GL Archive/Alamy; Terry Whittaker/FLPA; Photo Researchers Inc/Alamy; Thomas Smith/Alamy; Flynt/Dreamstime; Shutterstock; Car-topshots/Dreamtime



For the diary

August 31–September 3 Land Rover Burghley Horse Trials, Stamford, Lincolnshire (01933 304744; www.burghley-horse.co.uk)

September 9 Last Night of the Proms—you'll need to have booked for five concerts before being entered into the ballot (020–7589 8212; www.royalalberthall.com)

October 4–April 2018 'Reflections: Van Eyck and the Pre-Raphaelites' at the National Gallery,

including the 'Arnolfini Portrait' which forged a new style of painting (www.nationalgallery.org.uk)

October 6–15 The Times Cheltenham Literary Festival (www.cheltenhamfestivals.com)

November 4 Lewes Bonfire Night, East Sussex, probably the world's biggest bonfire carnival, will be held on Saturday in 2017 as Guy Fawkes' Night falls on a Sunday (www.lewesbonfirecelebrations.com)



Through the binoculars

Osprey

The winged fish-eater stocks up in preparation for its journey to Africa; the Dorset coast, notably Poole Harbour, is a good place to spot it



Walk



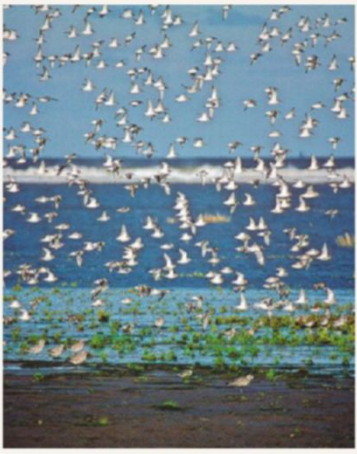
Lleyn Peninsular, Gwynedd
Clouds of Manx shearwaters prepare to depart, seal pups and chiffchaffs arrive

Westonbirt Arboretum, Tetbury, Gloucestershire
Some 15,000 trees burst into flaming colours

Glen Affric, Inverness-shire
An astonishing display of golden larches, birch trees and the odd Caledonian pine garlands the glittering loch

Will's Neck to Staple Plain, Quantock Hills, Somerset
See every shade of green and gold, as the beeches turn, from the spine of these hills, the silvery sea beyond and, at evetide, hear the eerie grunts of stags

Humber Estuary
Thousands of birds—terns, knots, shearwaters and gannets—fly past on some days



Natalya Aleksakhina/Dreamstime; Mark Brazier/Dreamstime; London Photos – Homer Sykes/Alamy; Shutterstock; Wildlife GmbH/Alamy; fotofinca/Alamy

The four seasons Winter



‘And tree and house, and
hill and lake,/Are frosted
like a wedding cake,’

Robert Louis Stevenson

Sleeping beauty

Sing out the old year, ring in the new and let tradition rule as the world briefly stills and quietens



WINTER comes in with a howl. Unseen, whether in the borough park or the Shropshire wood, the vixen screams for a mate, the tawny hoots for territory. Winter is the midnight of the year.

In the city, there is a new and foreign feeling. Romance, actually. Christmas lights reflect on wet Dickensian streets (rain and darkness make everything 'olde'), children skate in ever faster swirls on the artificial ice rink beside the museum as adults sip mulled wine, the shopper's restorative, at pop-up yuletide markets. Walking down the mews at night, there is the electric glimpse into the front room of other peoples' lives: a woman poised to serve dinner under a chandelier; a man on a stepladder putting the glass angel on top of the Christmas tree—the same angel as 10 years ago. It's family tradition.

A crammed shopping arcade and a choir sings carols for charity, battling the piped muzak of The Pogues' *Fairytale of New York*. In a Sub-urban garden, a robin sings his own winter song. 'Wildly tender' Emily Bronte called the carolling of the robin. Red is the colour of winter: the red of the robin's breast, the huntsman's jacket, the berries of the holly, Reynard's resplendent fur coat, the turkey's wattle.

Finally, the child's prayer is answered and it's Christmas Eve. While the boy sleeps fitfully, Grandma rounds up adults for Midnight Mass (it's family tradition). Although we haven't lighted the door of St Michael's since Easter, the guilt is forgotten in the exulting, communal, beery-winey blasting out of *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* and, better yet, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*.

'Tis the season to be jolly, but Nature has her own view,

Then, when you leave church, you feel it: the deep peace that has descended on Earth this silent, holy night.

The real gift of the Twelve Days of Christmas is time. The holiday element of Christmas is ancient, harking back to AD567 and the second Council of Tours, when monks were put on furlough. Christmas lunch is, accordingly, long and leisurely and, in the afternoon, there are the hours to sit in the armchair to read a book and play Cluedo as a family, as you did when you were small.

These are a few of our favourite things at Christmas: King's College Choir, The Queen's Speech, Christmas pud with hidden £1 coins, the tartan Pringle socks from Great Aunt Madeleine (at least she remembered), the London International Horse Show, the Reith Christmas Lectures and those strange foods that come out only for Yule suppers, headed by gherkins, Turkish Delight, dates, piccalilli and roast chestnuts.

Christmas is a time of promise. We have climbed the hill of the year and longer days are in sight. As a bonus, there is the pleasing reassurance of ritual; sherry in the morning with neighbours, the Boxing Day meet or shoot, the jolly along the lane with the Labrador to work off the Christmas excess (hers, as well as yours), then Hogmanay and wild, wild reeling.

Sometimes, life will wondrously imitate the art of the Christmas card and it will snow and we will toboggan, put carrot noses on snowmen, throw snowballs and live in sparkling white Narnia forever. 'Tis the season to be jolly—so men say. Nature has her own view. January is the coldest month of the year. The world goes to glass. The air smells like knives.

God, life is hard for birds and animals in winter. Suddenly, we see how thin the blue tit has become, how bare are the fields, how empty the oaks. The wood has the resounding emptiness of a stadium after the crowd has left. Trees have no more botany than stone. At the bottom of the log pile, the subdued metabolism of the newt is barely sufficient and perhaps not enough.

Dryden's chilling libretto for Henry Purcell's *Cold Song* marches in quicktime over the frozen earth: 'I can scarcely move,/Or draw my breath,/ I can scarcely move,/Or draw my breath.'

On farms, men and women crack the plate-ice in the sheep's drinking trough with a gymnastic Wellington-shod foot. Cattle chewing hay are lost in the aura of their own breath.

Our encounter with the elements bravely done, we retire indoors to the log fire, the greatest of all human discoveries. Small wonder, our soldiers in the bitter war a century ago sang 'keep the home fires burning'.

That hiss-crack sound? No, not the logs spitting, but a million ticketless men, sprawled upon sofas, opening a can of beer to watch the RBS 6 Nations. From Twickers, the Millennium Stadium and Murrayfield come stirring anthems and arias.

On Valentine's Day, according to folklore, the birds begin their courtship. Primroses bloom and to the mind's eye comes a vision of flowery meadows and lanes. The year has turned full circle. Spring is on its way. JLS





The four seasons Winter



QUIZ

- 1 In which play do Florizel, Perdita and Dorcas appear?
- 2 What is *Lepus timidus*?
- 3 What is the white grouse more commonly called?
- 4 Who wrote the poem on which *In the Bleak Midwinter* is based?
- 5 Which cathedral hosted the first Nine Lessons and Carols service?



Quiz answers: 1 *The Winter's Tale* (Shakespeare); 2 Mountain hare; 3 Ptarmigan; 4 Christina Rossetti; 5 Truro (in 1880)

'A Robin said: The Spring will never come, / And I shall never care to build again'

Christina Rossetti in 'A Wintry Sonnet'



'Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire'

Edith Sitwell

What they wrote



'There are such a lot of things that have no place in summer and autumn and spring. Everything that's a little shy and a little rum... And then when everything's quiet and white and nights are long and most people are asleep—then they appear'

Tove Jansson in 'Moominland Midwinter'



'No animal, according to the rules of animal-etiquette, is ever expected to do anything strenuous, or heroic, or even moderately active during the off-season of winter'

Kenneth Grahame in 'The Wind in the Willows'



Eat Native oysters

The colder the seawater, the better the flavour—the UK has the world's best oysters and our seas are coldest in February

Skywatch



Look up in the early hours of February 11 and, if it's a clear night in London, you might see a penumbral lunar eclipse, which is when the Moon becomes immersed in the penumbral cone of the Earth without touching the umbra

Read



Cold Comfort Farm (Stella Gibbons, 1932) The mystery of the woodshed **The Snow Goose** (Paul Gallico, 1940) A girl, a wounded goose and Dunkirk **Christmas Holiday** (Somerset Maugham, 1939) A White Russian's adventures in Paris **Love in a Cold Climate** (Nancy Mitford, 1949) Secrets, scandal and social climbing **The Shooting Party** (Isabel Colegate, 1980) The times they are a-changing at a 1913 house party

Listen to...



Winter from The Four Seasons (Vivaldi, 1725)
String players keep warm with speedy bowing

Christmas Oratorio (J. S. Bach, 1734)
Joyous carolling and exuberant trumpeting

Messiah (Handel, 1741)
Hallelujah!

California Dreaming (The Mamas & The Papas, 1966)
Wistful lament for summer

The Nutcracker (Tchaikovsky, 1892)
All's sweet in the land of the Sugar Plum Fairy



Robert Birkby; Rob Hasting-Evans/Dreamstime; Andrew Parkinson/FLPA; Everett Historical Collection/Alamy; World History Archive/Alamy; Christopher Jones/Alamy; David Franklin/Dreamstime; Colin Yarnedell/Alamy; Shutterstock; Les Stocker/Alamy; ROH/Tristram Kenton 2013





For the diary

January 6–15 London Boat Show, ExCel, London E16 (<http://londonboatshow.com>; 0844 776 7766)

Until March 14 *The Sleeping Beauty*, 70th anniversary of the Royal Ballet's first production, broadcast live in cinemas on February 28 (020-7304 4000; www.roh.org.uk)

February 2 *The Sixteen's Bach Magnificat* tour (until February 25) begins in Coventry Cathedral (01904 651485; <http://thesixteen.com>)

February 4 RBS 6 Nations rugby kicks off with Scotland vs Ireland at Murrayfield, England vs

France at Twickenham and Italy vs Wales in Rome (www.rbs.org.uk)

February 15 *Twelfth Night* opens at the National Theatre, London SE1, with Tamsin Grieg as Malvolia (www.nationaltheatre.org.uk) plus, on February 16, NT Live broadcasts Pinter's *No Man's Land* starring Sir Ian McKellen and Sir Patrick Stewart and Shaw's *Saint Joan* with Gemma Arterton (www.nationaltheatre.org.uk; 020-7452 3010)

December 9 Tingle Creek Chase Day Sandown Park Racecourse, Esher, Surrey (01372 464348; <http://sandown.thejockeyclub.co.uk>)



Walk



Ardnamurchan Point, West Highlands

Crashing waves over a lonely lighthouse on the most westerly point of the British mainland

The Ridgeway, Berkshire/Wiltshire

Be alone on top of the world with bare trees, big views and swirling red kites—except at weekends

Holkham Beach, Norfolk

Hordes of honking wildfowl and an endless sky and shore

Snowdrop Valley, Wheddon Cross, Somerset

Thick drifts of white flowers in a steep Exmoorcombe

Cadair Idris, Snowdonia, Gwynedd

On a clear, crisp day, the most spectacular landscape in Britain



Diana Mower/Dreamstime; Fibobjects/Dreamstime; Laurence Griffiths/Getty; Erlend Haarberg/Nature Picture Library; Loop Images/Alamy; Robin Goodlad/Alamy



Through the binoculars

Stoat in ermine

Not so easy to spot with the winter fur coat on, although a dark tail tip can be a giveaway





Winter's tales from the lands of cold earth

Fêted crime writer Ann Cleeves, the novelist behind the BBC's *Shetland* series and creator of doughty Northumberland detective Vera on ITV, reflects on the wild, northerly landscapes in which she has lived and how they have inspired her

THE first of my Shetland novels, *Raven Black*, was inspired by snow, ice and fire. I'd arrived into the island by the overnight ferry early one December morning to a still, white landscape. There was no wind and that's unusual in Shetland—usually, there's a gale strong enough to take your breath away.

In midwinter, it's dark for much of the morning—the islands lie on the same line of latitude as parts of Greenland and Alaska, after all. When the sun did rise, it was an orange ball throwing long shadows across the bare landscape. There are few trees in Shetland, so there are long horizons and big skies.

Then, I saw a group of ravens, stark black against the snow. As a crime writer, I thought if there were a splash of blood on the white, the scene would be like something from a fairy tale, almost mythic. In that moment, the 'Shetland' novels (featuring detective Jimmy Perez, played on BBC by Douglas Henshall) were born.

The fire came a little later that winter. Lerwick's Up Helly Aa is the biggest fire festival in Europe, held on the last Tuesday in January. It's a Victorian concoction from a Viking tradition, dramatic and visually striking. The Guizer Jarl and his squad look like true Norsemen, with full beards and beautifully crafted

Druridge Bay, Northumberland: writer Ann Cleeves says her books 'grew out of the landscape'

costumes; their helmets and shields glint in the torchlight as the replica Viking galley is pulled through the streets of the town.

The streetlamps have been switched off and the procession marches to traditional songs, lit by the flaming torches. At the end, the galley is set alight. The streets are packed with locals and visitors, watching from every available viewing point as the torches are thrown into the galley, which has taken all year to build, and it turns into a huge bonfire, sparks flying high into the dark sky. If *Raven Black* was to be a winter book, I knew Up Helly Aa would have to be a part of it.



A head from the hills: Brenda Blethyn as DCI Vera Stanhope

nothing about ornithology, but I fell into the rhythm of the observatory and loved every moment of it.

Weather affected everything we did. Fog stopped the tiny inter-island planes and gales stopped flights and boats. We always knew which way the wind was blowing. On calm nights, I went out with the scientists as they ringed storm petrels, sitting at the top of the cliff and writing down ring numbers as they took the birds out of fine mist nets and the lighthouse beams swung above us.

On my days off, I walked to the south where the crofts are and scrambled down the geos—steep inlets running in from the sea—exploring the hidden parts of the island. I was invited into kitchens and loved listening to the older people telling me stories of Fair Isle before there were weekly planes, when the men went out in their yoals to barter with the big merchant ships and it was hard to scrape a living from the land.

The Northumberland books featuring detective Vera Stanhope (played by Brenda Blethyn) grew out of landscape, too. Vera *herself* grew out of the landscape. I can't imagine her being raised anywhere but the hills, which look south to Hadrian's Wall and north towards the Scottish border.

We moved to the county in the mid 1980s from the Midlands and it was a joy to be close to the sea again, to feel that sharp east wind blowing in from Scandinavia. Northumberland provides a rich palette for a writer, especially a crime writer who specialises in traditional mysteries. And there are the beaches—wide sweeps of sand that are often empty, even in the sunshine.

If I'm missing my island existence, I can take Billy Shiels's boat out to the Farne Islands, with their seals and seabirds—puffins so close that it feels as if you can reach out and

touch them—the scene of the story of Grace Darling, who rowed out in a gale to save drowning men. Or I can cross the causeway to Holy Island, where Christianity first came to England—a place of pilgrimage still. Every time I see Lindisfarne Castle rising out of the sea, I'm astounded by the drama of it. It's an island full of stories and saints.

‘It was a joy to be close to the sea again, to feel that sharp east wind blowing in from Scandinavia’

I love Northumberland just as I love Shetland, because it's always been a working community. These aren't places that only exist for the tourist. There's beauty in the staithes that stand in the estuary at North Blyth, a reminder of the times when boats took coal from the pits to power the rest of the world. And there's a majesty in the great cranes that line much of the Tyne, even though the big ships are no longer built and launched on the river.

The nature reserves, just inland from Druridge Bay, which provide a haven for otters and wading birds, are the result of mining subsidence. If Vera grew out of the windswept moorland of rural Northumberland, she developed her character mixing with engineers, colliers and ship-builders. She has their fighting spirit, their humour and their resilience.

Where do I live now? In a seaside town on the coast of north-east England. I've begun to see the attraction of shops and friends within walking distance and I love the place's faded glory, the ghosts that haunt the esplanade and parade along the seafront. However, I still need to escape to Shetland three or four times a year. I still know which way the wind's blowing and I like the fact that, when the weather draws in, I can hear the foghorn at Tynemouth from my home in Whitley Bay. And there are still new islands to explore.

'Cold Earth' is Ann Cleeves's 30th novel in 30 years and the latest about Shetland detective Jimmy Perez (Pan Macmillan, £16.99)

Clearview/Alamy; Collection Christophel/Alamy

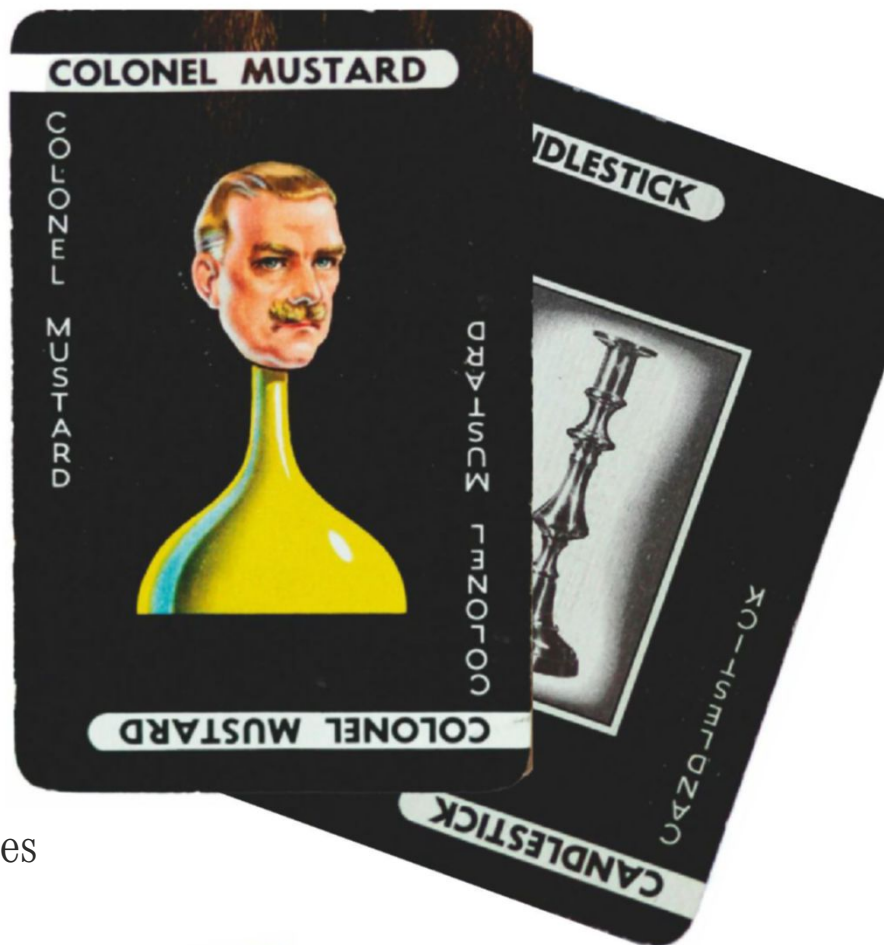
My first encounter with Shetland was in the spring. I'd dropped out of university and, through a chance meeting in a Putney pub, got the job of assistant cook in the bird observatory in Fair Isle. When I accepted the post, I didn't even realise that Fair Isle was part of the Shetland group, but it's the UK's most remote inhabited island and lies almost halfway between Orkney and Shetland.

Spring is the most beautiful time to visit the islands: there are puffins on the cliffs, squat and noisy like gossiping women, blue squill and pink thrift on the clifftops and, everywhere, the cries of seabirds and sheep. I couldn't cook and I knew



Dicing with death

Whether you're mulling over Col Mustard committing murder in the library with a candlestick or are determined to win at Monopoly this Christmas, Matthew Dennison advises how to win at board games



MINOR mishaps are a Christmas stock in trade: the figure of Joseph who has apparently abandoned the crib; the strings of fairy lights that, like varicose veins, refuse to untangle; the Aga that grinds unspectacularly to a standstill; the godparent's cheque that disappears among the paper recycling.

Many families add to that mix a yearly row over which words are or aren't permissible in Scrabble and a fruitless hunt for the missing Monopoly die or the lead piping from the Cluedo set, yet, as a nation, according to last year's sales figures, we're every bit as keen on board games as we ever were. And Christmas is our favourite time of the year to play them.

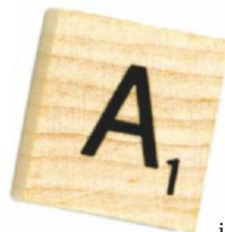
This year, as you dust down the sets of Monopoly, Cluedo and Scrabble — a little dog-eared at the corners, their cardboard boxes marked by tell-tale wine-glass rings—COUNTRY LIFE offers a few clues on improving your skills. Nothing will prevent Grandpa's groans; children may still prefer a hand of Racing Demon and an in-law is almost certain to question your version of the rules, but the sweetness of victory may just lay to rest the annual regret that you didn't abandon the whole idea in favour of a boxset of *Dad's Army*.

Travel, and a familiarity with almost anything foreign, are key to

winning at Scrabble. Authorities have claimed that the highest number of points that can be scored on a first go is 128 with *muzjiks*, a word for Russian peasants. Retsina, the name for resin-flavoured Greek wine, has seven permissible anagrams (stainer, retinas, anestri, nastier, ratines, retains and antsier) and, at seven letters, offers a 50-point bonus, although the highest-scoring word in Scrabble history is *caziques*, referring to West Indian chiefs, which scored 392 points.

Despite its usefulness, the letter S features on only four Scrabble counters: astute players are advised to use their S counters judiciously. The addition of the suffix -ish to a number of words may well get you out of a temporary hole and, at moments of dire need, the answer could be to resort to words from which other players simply can't profit, including 'my' and 'that'. After all, it is Christmas.

The rule change in 2010 to permit the use of proper nouns has significantly changed the face of Scrabble—for those who accept this new decision. Pop-group and rap-star names, with their occasional preponderance of letters such as X and Z, offer an advantage to reluctant teenage players (which probably compensates for the fact that they



haven't yet had time to visit the Russian Steppes or West Indies in pursuit of high-scoring common nouns).

On the surface, Monopoly involves a higher degree of luck than knowledge, but tactical players invariably win the day. The 2015 UK and Ireland Monopoly Championship winner, Natalie Fitzsimons, advises concentrating resources on a single property group and mortgaging other properties if necessary, in order to achieve an ideal three houses on both or all three squares in a group.

She also advocates going to jail on a regular basis, which can enable players to avoid landing on a number of dangerous squares. Players who buy up large quantities of houses potentially benefit from preventing other players from doing so—eventually, the stock of houses will run out.

More than other games, commentators indicate, Monopoly is a game in which we reveal ourselves as creatures of habit. The square least often landed on is Park Lane, but British players remain attached to it. For this and similar reasons, many people are surprised to discover not only that the game is an American invention, but that, in its first incarnation, it was patented in 1903 by a left-wing feminist called Elizabeth Magie.

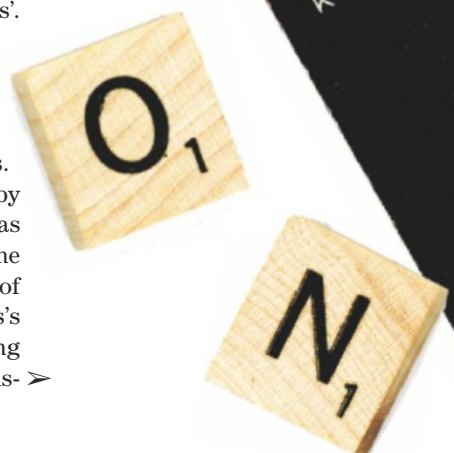
David Hughes/Dreamstime; Panacea Pictures/Alamy; Yoboro10/Dreamstime



She called it The Landlord's Game and wrote with some asperity: 'It contains all the elements of success and failure in the real world, and the object is the same as the human race in general seems to have, i.e., the accumulation of wealth.'

The original board layout included a 'poor house' and a square out of bounds to players labelled 'owner, Lord Blue Blood, London, England'. Another square bore the motto 'Labor upon Mother Earth produces wages'. For a long time, Miss Magie's contribution to the invention of one of the world's most popular games went unacknowledged, partly on account of her political convictions.

On its introduction to Britain by Waddingtons in 1935, Monopoly was marketed as 'The New Game and the Rage of America'. The success of Monopoly inspired Waddingtons's introduction, in 1938, of its racing game, Totopoly. Although less satis-



Marc Tielemans/Alamy, Yobira 10/Dreamstime, Panacea Pictures/Alamy



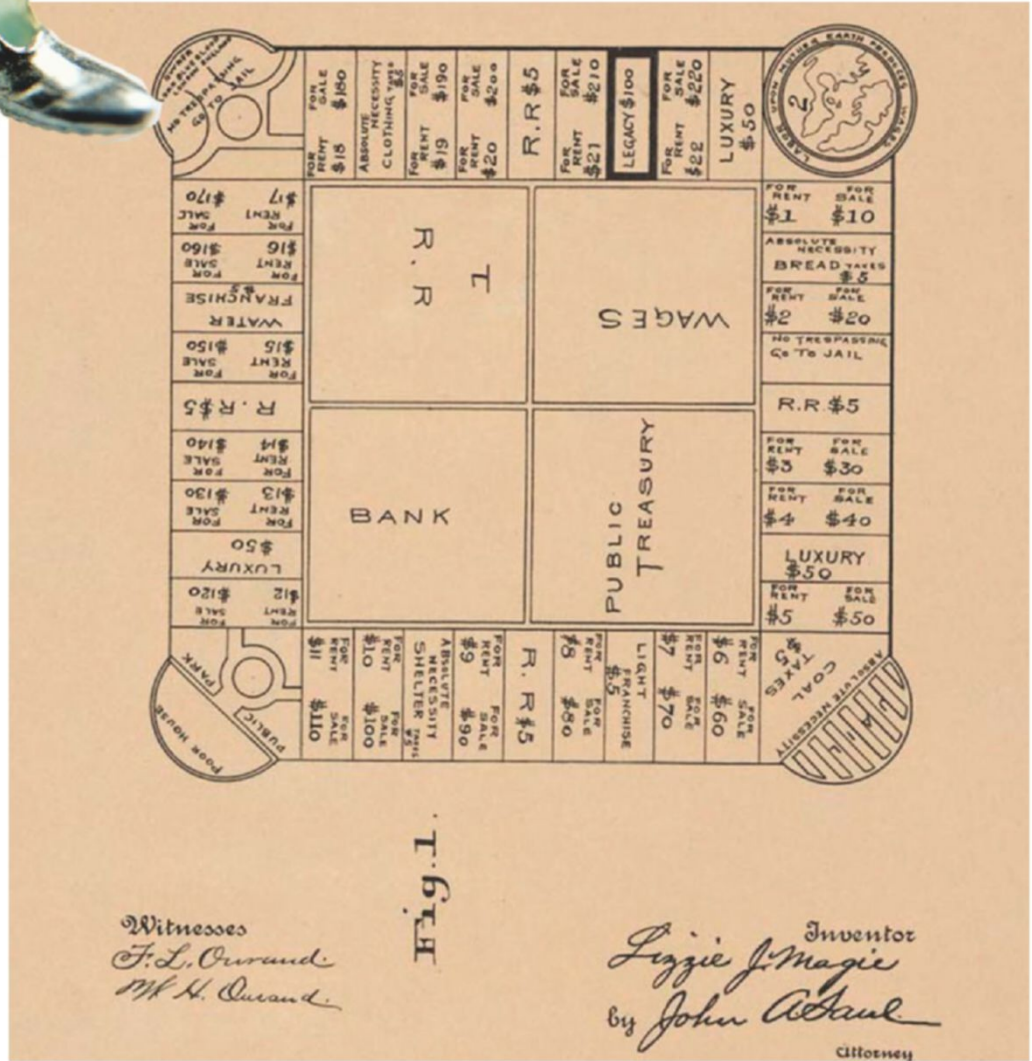
fyng as a game than Monopoly, Totopoly appealed to interwar racing aficionados, with its horses named after winners of the Lincolnshire Handicap from 1926 to 1937. The recently introduced Camel Up, a betting game based on a camel race, updates a similar idea.

Cluedo, unlike Monopoly, is a home-grown invention, although it's spawned a number of foreign variants since its introduction in 1949. It was the brainchild of Anthony Pratt, a Midlands pianist—and one-time accompanist of Kirsten Flagstad—who was inspired by themed murder-mystery evenings in the hotels in which he played the piano. A fan of the novels of Raymond Chandler and Agatha Christie, Pratt initially intended Cluedo as an enjoyable way of passing time in wartime air-raid shelters.

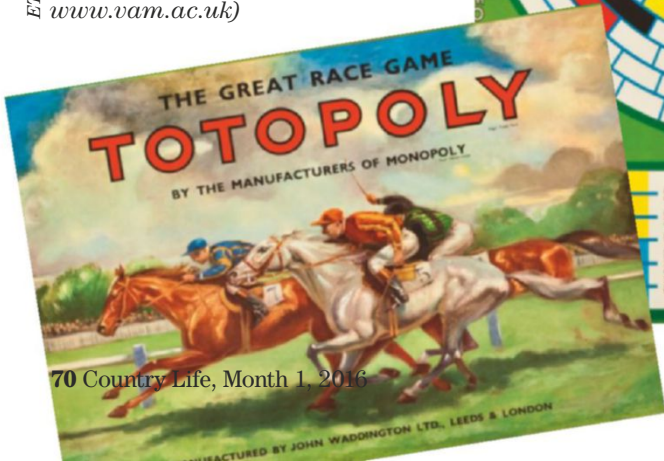
Like real-life detection, Cluedo involves its players in amassing information. Successful players suggest spending time in any room that is among the cards you yourself already hold and taking care to ask questions that include answers on cards you already hold, thereby narrowing down the responses you're likely to receive. Really serious players make notes. This may not be entirely in keeping with the spirit of Christmas games—or compatible with the perils of the seasonal drinks table.

Everyone has his or her favourite board game, from Snakes and Ladders to the wonderfully British Treasure Island game Buccaneer. What's for certain is that the most successful Christmas board games are the ones you played in the past—or that game that's just about to start.

The exhibition 'Game Plan: Board Games Rediscovered' at the V&A Museum of Childhood, Bethnal Green, London E2, runs until April 23, 2017 (020-8983 5200; www.vam.ac.uk)



Top left Two familiar pewter Monopoly tokens. The pieces differ depending on the edition and year of release. Above: Elizabeth Magie's original 1903 Monopoly board, originally called The Landlord's Game. Below: Waddingtons 1938 innovation Totopoly appealed to the interwar racing fraternity





Call For Our
New Brochure!



THE FINEST OAK FRAMED BUILDINGS

MADE IN ENGLAND

www.primeoak.co.uk

info@primeoak.co.uk

01384 296611

GARAGES | GARDEN ROOMS | ORANGERIES | HOME OFFICES | CONSERVATORIES | BARNs | STABLES



PATRICK MAVROS

HARARE LONDON MAURITIUS NAIROBI



THE PANGOLIN COLLECTION
IN STERLING SILVER, 18CT YELLOW & ROSE GOLD

www.PATRICKMAVROS.COM

Designer resolutions

From visiting the Swedish archipelago to introducing richly coloured velvets into schemes and collecting Portmeirion pottery, interior designers tell Arabella Youens their plans and promises for 2017



Emma Sims Hilditch

I'd like more fine art. I've started collecting **Ken Howard oil paintings** and I love his landscapes of Venice. Through my daughter Daisy, I've come to discover that there's some outstanding young artistic talent in London and I'd like to support it both personally and in my design projects.

For me, green is the new grey. It has an extraordinary spectrum as demonstrated to us every day in Nature. Skilfully bringing that breadth of colour into the home to create calm, elegant and sometimes striking spaces is something I'm really looking forward to.

Having returned from a visit to Stockholm and Copenhagen, I'd like to spend more time in the **Baltic states**. Their design sense is fantastic and I'd love to learn more about their art, architecture and interiors.



Edward Bulmer

It would be good to have a **Tesla Model S** to get me to site visits—of the all-electric cars, only a Tesla has sufficient range. The next picture that I hope to buy is an Olly & Suzi. Specifically I'd love to use **Jean Monro's Rose & Fern** handblock (*right*) for walling a room and, talking more generally, I'd like to see my suppliers taking **ecological and human-rights issues** more seriously; I'm going to stop using those who don't.

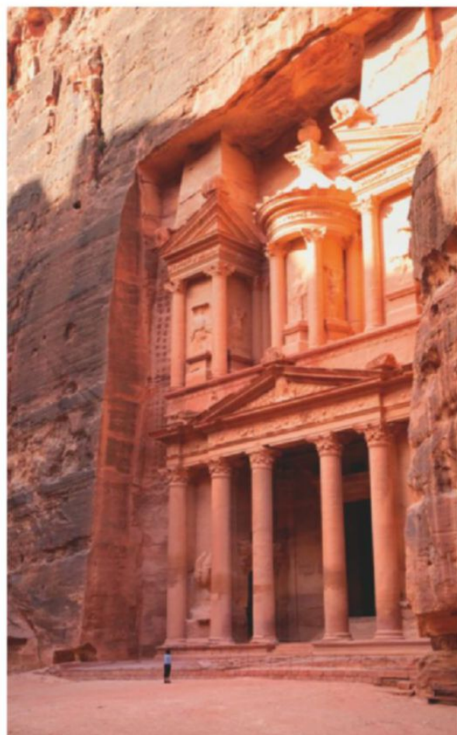
Ombersley Court in Worcestershire is a place I want to visit as I fear its precious historic decorative schemes may be a hostage to fortune as it will cease to be a family home.



Nicky Dobree

The vibrancy of colour and texture that comes from **South America, Asia and the Far East** are a big thing for me. Having grown up in Vietnam, there is always a hint of something that creeps in. I'm currently working on a 1920s villa in Munich where we've incorporated a bright-red-lacquer boot room into the scheme.

In the Alps, I love to use the colour red in fabrics and upholstery; it invariably comes through in artworks, too, evoking warmth, passion and energy. If I could buy just one piece, it would have to be a **David Hockney**. There are many places that I would love to visit, but **Petra in Jordan** (*left*) is next on my list.



Johner Images/Robert Harding/Tor Eigeland/Danita Delincart/Brett R Henry/Alamy, www.jeammonro.com



Douglas Mackie

Although I'm innately acquisitive, my New Year's resolution is to **stop buying so much stuff**. I intend to rather carry on as I am. I'm constantly evolving, but never consciously. I'm starting work on a large country-house project



and look forward to mixing good **early-18th-century Irish furniture** (a personal passion) with contemporary art. I'll be touring **the Nile** over the New Year on a wonderful old *dahabiya*. It will be my first time in southern Egypt and the perfect way to start the year.

Suzy Hoodless

Tom Hammick paintings are on my 'to buy' list. I love his use of colour and composition. Combinations of colour are always interesting to me: how we use it to best enhance a house and to reflect our client's character. I'm not focused on a specific period or style, but the best across the board.



We use lots of natural materials and I love working with craftsmen who are at the top of their game, exploring new techniques as well as reworking old techniques. I would like to visit the **Swedish archipelagos** for their devotion to simplicity.



Philippa Thorp Thorp Design

Classic car rallies are a passion, so my dream would be to buy an old **Jaguar XK120** (*below*). I've been salivating over one I've seen in a garage near my house in Hampshire.

I'd love to design a hotel one day as it's about one of the

only things I've never done in my career and I think it would be huge fun.

It would be great to go to Jaipur in India to see the traditional **fabric hand-blocking** process. I've travelled the world with my job, but India is a place that's still on my bucket list.



Henriette von Stockhausen, VSP Interiors

My aim is to buy more antique fabrics and custom-printed wallpapers. It would also be good to add more modern contemporary art and artists into our more traditional projects as they add another level of interest and unexpected intrigue and colour to a design scheme. There are so many amazing artists in and around Dorset, from **Julian Bailey, Binny Mathews and Ed Klutz**, so I never have to look far. Combining one-off pieces by these amazing craftsmen with

antique fabrics and custom wallpapers creates an even more personal space.

Schloss Schönbrunn

(*above*) in Vienna is on my list. My grandmother lived in one of the wings as a child and I only remember visiting it with her as a very little girl. I'd like to revisit it and get inspired. I still remember all of her stories. I'm particularly excited by Maria-Theresa's 18th-century rooms.

When in Vienna (Christmas is the most magic time of the year with the seasonal

markets), I'd also visit the imperial furniture collection at the Wiener Möbel museum.



Interior design FOCUS

Janine Stone

I would like to begin collecting portrait photography. I admire **Horst P. Horst's** nudes series and his portraits of some of the 20th century's most iconic faces are both sensual and extraordinary. I also adore **Richard Avedon's**



surreal and provocative fashion photography, always finding the natural beauty in his subject. His 1957 portrait of Marilyn Monroe gives us a glimpse of her vulnerability and captures it perfectly.

I work very closely with clients to ascertain their aspirations, understand what they want to achieve for their home and how they want to live in the space. I can guide clients, but, ultimately, it's their desires and dreams that I work to realise.

Tate Modern will be staging some exciting exhibitions during 2017; highlights include Alberto Giacometti and Modigliani (left).



Henrietta Spencer Churchill Woodstock Designs



Old **black-and-white photographs** will feature more in my work—they can be very evocative and a good conversation piece. They can be enhanced by adding different styles of mounts and frames to tie in with the decor of the room and with categories ranging from portraits and landscapes and townscapes to animal and nature, there's a huge choice to suit all tastes and rooms at an affordable price.

Two good resolutions would be to be bolder with colour and pattern and to use a greater mix of good-quality or custom-made contemporary furniture alongside the odd antique. I'd also like to use more **contemporary rugs** as there are some wonderful designs around, but they do tend to be expensive compared to antique ones.

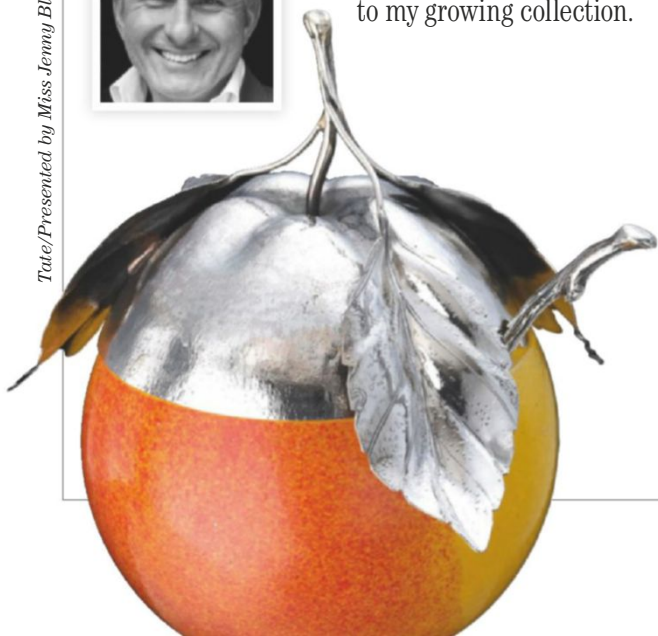
The list of places that I want to visit is endless and I'd like to have more time to see more houses and exhibitions. Closer to home, I'd particularly like to do a tour of the **Irish Georgian houses** and stay in as many as possible however grand or rundown in order to get a real feel of the place and countryside.

Paolo Moschino

I feel like I'm now at the stage where I can be persuasive with my clients to explore new ideas. The market is full of beige and white, so I want to explore more colours, patterns and new materials. It would be good to find the time to travel more—I always find my inspiration from places we visit. My new book, *Signature Spaces*, captures some of the travel inspiration.



I like to collect **Buccellati silver** (below) and, every Christmas, I like to add at least one piece to my growing collection.



Lulu Lytle Soane Britain

One plan is to add to my small collection of **antique Islamic metalwork**, the best of which is so refined and intricate. Inlaid brass, copper and silver objects, made across the Middle East and Levant, were highly desired commodities from more than 1,000 years ago.

Having bought the last surviving **rattan-weaving** company in Britain, I'd like to explore the history of furniture manufacturing using this material (right). I'm keen to research more about the origins of this industry not only in England, but also in the Far East where the rattan palm grows.



I'll visit the **Ashmolean Museum** in Oxford more regularly and further investigate its Egyptian collections—a visit as a child ignited my



interest in Ancient Egypt, which I subsequently studied at UCL.

**Graham Green
Keech Green**

Although it might make me sound somewhat grandiose, I'd like to begin to acquire some 'serious' artwork. I have a penchant for the gloomy pessimism expressed in works by both **Lucian Freud** and **Frank Auerbach**. With a focus on the figure, their works are generally described as 'sombre' and 'physiologically unnerving'—I hope that this says more about the artists and less about me!

I would also like to explore a more traditional style. Although Keech Green is known for its 'modern deco' approach to interior design, I'm also immensely fond of the classic English country-house look (*above*).



Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland is on my list to visit. Designed by Sir John Vanbrugh in 1718, this (semi-ruined) house epitomises the English Baroque style. We're currently engaged in creating the interiors for a 45,000sq ft Baroque-style house in Yorkshire, so the more references my team and I can obtain the better.

Penny Morrison

I would like to buy **slipware pottery**—there are so many potters now making beautiful slipware. Next year, I'm going to explore using **velvets** in rich colours such as petrol blue (*below*), raspberry and acid green as well as tassels and trims.

On my list of places to visit are **St Petersburg** and the Soane Museum as well as making more visits to the **British Museum** and the **Villa Kerylos** in the South of France. I would love to source more woven rattan furniture in colours—red, maize, green—plus pieces combining these woven textures with wood.



I'd also like to develop a new range of rugs in rich colours and have lacquer walls, which reflect light and make such a statement.



Ben Pentreath

My aim is to buy **Portmeirion pottery** (*below*) from the 1960s and 1970s (well, if I'm honest, I've already started). I also love the strong forms and graphic designed by Susan Williams Ellis. It would be good to use dyed hessian walling and lots of cork in my work next year. I'd really like to decorate a library with **cork walls**.



Every year, Charlie's and my list of places to visit gets longer and we never seem to get around to ticking any of them off, but the **Western Isles** may beckon this summer, I think.



**Wendy Nicholls
Sibyl Colefax & John Fowler**

What I'd like to buy right now is a **Ben Nicholson** lithograph dating from the late 1940s, which would encapsulate the peaceful abstraction that gives me pleasure. I'd love to be able to collect the peculiarly English painters of that period—**the Nashes**, **Ravilious** and so on.

One plan is to explore in my work blocks of

abstract colour and paintings counterposed with terrific pieces of furniture—for example, **Boule** with **Rothko** or **Kent** with **Fontana**—all against great colour.

I long to visit the garden at **Rousham**, Oxfordshire (*below*). Despite passing it often, I never give myself time to stop and it's an essential part of the evolution of English gardens.





Moveable feasts

With fewer of us gathering for sit-down meals, Harry Wallop laments the loss of the dining table and the seemingly inexorable rise of eating off our laps in front of the TV

THE dining table is an object as solid as it is British, an item of furniture that's been central to family life since our evening entertainment consisted of something on the lute rather than *Downton Abbey*. After a fireplace, a dining table is what makes a house a home, but—and you'd better hold on to your *demitasses*—the dining table is at risk of dying out.

A recent survey has found that 78% of British people don't sit down to a meal at a table every day. We're all too busy grabbing a porridge pot from Pret a Manger for our breakfast, munching a sandwich at our desk for lunch and then eating off our laps in the evening to pick up a knife and fork. The survey, conducted for Giovanni Rana, a pasta maker, found that 23 meals a month are now eaten from the sofa. It comes hot on the heels of another by Ikea, which found that, although 72% of adults said their parents would ensure a sitdown family meal took place at least once a week, only 50% do the same today.

It is hard to pin down the exact moment when the dining table became as *passé* as a fax machine, but it was at some point between Jamie Oliver imploring us to 'tear and share' and David Cameron chillaxing with the Chipping Norton set over a 'kitchen supper'.

As a culture, we appear to have embraced slobby bowls of noodles eaten in front of the television or avocado on toast eaten while perched on a bar stool—an object that purports to be a piece of furniture, but is, in fact, an instrument of modern torture. John Lewis, the department store and barometer of middle-class taste, says sales of those high bar tables are up 54% on last year. The bar stool/table makes every meal as enjoyable as a pasty snatched at Euston while you wait for your platform to be called.

It's all so different from a generation ago. I grew up in the 1970s

in a household that had a separate dining room—which hosted dinner parties consisting of *osso buco* and Grand Marnier soufflés (the height of sophistication)—from where the ladies withdrew, leaving the gentlemen to smoke cigars and chunter about James Callaghan.

Younger readers may find this hard to believe, but the dining-room table has an important place in our history and it would be a minor tragedy if it was to go the way of the chamber pot or the Douro chair and become a curio only to be found in more eccentric homes.

‘As a culture, we have embraced slobby bowls of noodles in front of the television’

Indeed, according to Hannah Fleming, a curator at the Geffrye Museum, which chronicles Britain's interiors, you can track the history of Britain's 'middling sorts' through the changing fortunes of the dining table. Pre-Civil War, the table is a massive oak affair, found in the hall of a home, an object that underlines the strict hierarchy of a household, where only the master sat on a chair; the rest, all the way down to apprentices, sat on stools and ate together. After the Stuarts, the table is a more elegant, gate-legged affair and found in a separate room. The dining room is a sanctuary for family and guests, not attendant hangers-on.

And there the dining table remained—for everyone from the Dukes of Bedford with their Canaltos all the way down to families in their two-up, two-downs and a front parlour—up until the 1950s.

It's only after the Second World War that open-plan living started to creep in, not as a Scandi style statement, but a reaction to a shortage of space. New



builds of the 1950s and 1960s don't have enough room for a separate dining room. 'It's also tied up with the idea of rejecting previous generations' formal social and domestic habits,' points out Miss Fleming. 'And, of course, the middle classes can no longer afford domestic servants. It makes more sense for the kitchen to be nearer the main dining space.'

Although moving a dining table out of a separate, oak-panelled room stained with cigar smoke and fine living is not in itself a reason for civilisation to collapse, it's when it's replaced by a kitchen island with bar stools that the rot sets in. This arrangement is spreading like a rash across the country because islands look great on television cooking shows, ensuring the chef doesn't have their back to camera. In a family's domestic space, however, they are invariably uncomfortable and anti-social, with all the family sat in a line and no one ever looking at each other.

Miss Fleming says we shouldn't fret—modern family life is just adapting to a shortage of space and time, but a stand needs to be made. Meals are the glue that holds a family together. Napkins, a candelabra or cruet set aren't necessary, but a meal shared together really is. And how much better if it's eaten at a table. 🐦

Somewhere back in time: In an increasingly busy and screen-based society, it's important that we celebrate the unity that the dining table brings



More ways with parsnips

Warming winter parsnip salad (below)

Peel and cut 4 parsnips, 3 carrots and 3 beetroots into chunks, toss in olive oil and roast in a hot oven with rosemary and thyme for about 25 minutes. Add a microwaveable sachet of mixed whole grains to the vegetables and stir well. Add a squeeze of lemon, a handful of fresh herbs (such as parsley and basil) and seasoning, then spoon into bowls. Top with a *harissa*-smeared grilled chicken breast and a dollop of *tzatziki*.



Parsnip-and-cauliflower curried soup

Break half a cauliflower into florets and arrange on a baking sheet with 3 peeled and chopped parsnips and a chopped red onion. Drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with a teaspoon each of turmeric and *garam masala* plus a couple of pinches of cinnamon and roast in a moderate oven for 20 minutes. Transfer to a saucepan, add enough chicken stock to cover and simmer gently. Blitz with a stick-blender until smooth, then top with a dollop of yoghurt and a scattering of mixed seeds.

Roasted pork belly with parsnips and apples

Combine 2tbspn fennel seeds, a handful chopped parsley and sage and a glug of olive oil, mix well and brush over the skinless side of a pork belly. Season the belly generously, then roll, tie and roast in a moderate oven for 3 hours. Peel 6 parsnips, cut them into quarters lengthways, toss them in olive oil and add to the roasting dish 40 minutes before the pork is done, followed by 4 cored and chopped apples 20 minutes before. Serve with pan juices.

Melanie Johnson

This week's main recipe is inspired by Scandinavia, a country that knows how to do comfort food. The *rösti* is usually made from potatoes, but this twist using parsnips is entirely delicious. They could also be served on their own for a light lunch, accompanied by dressed salad leaves



Parsnip *rösti* with Scandinavian meatballs and apple-and-beetroot salad

Serves 4

Ingredients

Salad

250g pickled beetroot
 (add 1tbspn apple-cider vinegar if using cooked)
 1 apple

100ml *crème fraîche*
 75g mayonnaise
 1 lemon
 1tbspn chopped parsley

Meatballs

300g minced beef
 300g minced pork
 1 finely diced red onion
 50g breadcrumbs
 1 beaten egg
 Butter and olive oil for frying

Gravy

20g butter
 20g plain flour
 500ml beef stock
 100ml cream
 Seasoning
 A handful chopped parsley

Rösti

500g parsnips
 2 medium carrots
 1 red onion
 2 eggs
 2tbspn cornflour
 75g mixed seeds

Method

Mix the diced beetroot, apple, *crème fraîche* and mayonnaise, along with a squeeze of lemon and seasoning, in a bowl, sprinkle with parsley and place in the fridge until ready to serve.

To make the meatballs, combine the beef, pork, breadcrumbs and onion in a bowl, add the beaten egg and seasoning and mix well with a fork. Taking small amounts, roll the meat into balls and fry in olive oil and butter until browned. Transfer to an ovenproof dish and keep warm in the oven.

Using the same pan, melt the butter for the gravy and add the flour, mixing well, followed by the stock. Stir with a whisk and bring to a simmer. Once thickened, add cream and seasoning to taste. Retrieve your meatballs, add them to the gravy and sprinkle with chopped parsley. Keep on a low heat until ready to serve.

Grate the parsnips, carrots and onion (using a processor if possible) and mix together with the beaten eggs, cornflour, seeds and seasoning in a large bowl. Put a few metal rings in a hot, buttered frying pan, fill each with spoonfuls of mixture and press down with the back of a spoon. Fry until browned, turn and allow to brown again.

Serve each *rösti* topped with meatballs and sauce and with a portion of salad on the side.



The country market strikes back

In a year of uncertainty, property seemed to be the one thing you could count on

In a year in which the pollsters got more or less everything wrong—from the UK’s Brexit vote and Donald Trump’s victory in the American Presidential Election to Leicester City’s win in the Premier League—the multiple uncertainties of 2016 should have spelt disaster for the UK country-house market. But they didn’t. On the contrary, from September onwards, leading agents saw a surge in sales of prime country houses and estates with little sign of a slowdown on the run-up to Christmas—a time when the sector traditionally hangs up its boots until spring.

Earlier this month, perseverance paid off for Atty Beor-Roberts, head of Knight Frank’s operations in the Cotswolds, when he and his team signed off on the sale of Peter de Savary’s immaculate, 207-acre Manor Hall estate (Fig 1) at Withington, Gloucestershire, to a Scandinavian buyer, in one of the region’s high-profile sales of the year. The enchanting Cotswold estate, with its Grade II*-listed manor house set high on a wooded hillside overlooking the River Coln on the edge of the village, was launched—jointly with Savills—in COUNTRY LIFE on March 30, at a guide price of £10.45 million for the whole.

However, the deal was no seasonal one-off, as Mr Beor-Roberts explains: ‘Across the Cotswolds, since August,



we’ve sold no fewer than 27 houses and farms priced between £2m and £12m—50% to local or regional buyers, 31% to London buyers and 19%–20% to buyers from overseas—and we’re still going strong. Many of the larger properties or estates are being bought by people in their fifties or sixties, who have already put their children through

‘The market finally kicked off in September—it needed to!’

Rupert Sweeting, Knight Frank

Fig 1: Serene Manor Hall estate at Withington, Gloucestershire. Guide price £10.45m



Around the regions in 2016

Barbury Castle estate, near Marlborough, Wiltshire The picturesque, ring-fenced estate, set in 1,799 acres of rolling Wiltshire downland, combines farming and equestrian enterprises with a challenging shoot. Launched on the open market at £20m in late September, it found a buyer within weeks in one of the biggest estate sales of the year (Knight Frank)



Alderley House, Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire Designed by Lewis Vulliamy and built in 1863 for Robert Blagden Hale on the site of the Hale family’s original 17th-century manor house, the Grade II-listed house was launched on the market in June 2014 at £8m and sold for £7m in November 2016 (Knight Frank/Strutt & Parker)



Manor House, Little Tew, Oxfordshire A timeless former vicarage built in 1858, the house was home to the traveller and archaeologist Nancy Sandars from her birth in 1914 until her death in 2015. Launched onto the market in May at a guide price of £2.7m, it drew more than 60 viewings and sold in four weeks for £3.6m (Knight Frank)



Fig 2: Shipton Sollars Manor, on the edge of Shipton Oliffe village, Gloucestershire, sold for more than its guide price of £3.75m after being on the market for less than a month in May

school or have sold a business in the area and now want to enjoy a Cotswold country lifestyle.'

He adds: 'It also helps that vendors are becoming more realistic on price—sometimes, a sensible reduction is all it takes to pull in a whole new batch of potential purchasers.'

It's clear from the events of the past few years that 'seasonality' no longer exists in the prime country market, says James Mackenzie of Strutt & Parker, whose busiest months are now November and December rather than spring—traditionally, the most buoyant time for country property sales. For his firm, too, 2016 has been a much stronger year than expected, with country houses valued between £3m and £5m selling easily and for good prices. In one respect, however, Mr Mackenzie has seen the market revert

to a trend last seen 10 or 15 years ago, when it was the norm to take six months to a year to sell a large country house.

Not so in the case of historic, Grade II-listed Shipton Sollars Manor, set in 35 acres of gardens and farmland on the edge of quaint Shipton Oliffe village, near Andoversford, an area of rolling countryside and open spaces considered among the most sporting in Gloucestershire. The house dates from the 1600s, when it was known as 'the Great House', but was derelict by the early 1800s, when much of the building was demolished and later rebuilt around the remains of the earlier core. Launched at a guide price of £3.75m in the Cotswolds number of COUNTRY LIFE on May 4, a refurbished Shipton Sollars Manor (**Fig 2**) found a buyer by the end of May and for more than the guide price.

‘Everyone thought that after the Brexit vote the market would fall apart—it simply didn’t’

**James Mackenzie,
Strutt & Parker**

'This year, thanks to the strength of the dollar versus the pound, we have seen British expatriate buyers returning in numbers to the prime UK country market. In fact, of the last 20 sales we agreed, 19 have been people buying with dollars. Most are over-fifties, some of whom have decided to buy now rather than later to take advantage not only of the favourable exchange rate, but also of current low rates of interest and the relatively cheap price of country houses.'

He continues: 'This age group is getting a clear run at the moment, because, with job security in the City a major concern, gone are the days of young bankers in their thirties buying country houses with their annual bonuses.'

A general move towards flexible working hours and the acceptance by employers that key workers may only need to be in the office two or three days a week has fuelled a trend for families to move from the capital to country locations beyond the traditional com- ➤



Chedington Court, near Beaminster, Dorset Sold to its previous owner for £7.17m in 2004, the historic, neo-Jacobean mansion, set in 58 acres of formal gardens and parkland on the Dorset-Somerset border, was offered for sale in May 2015 at a guide price of 'excess £7.5m'. A revised guide price of £6.95m produced a buyer from out of left field in June 2016 (*Savills*)



Porthledden, Cape Cornwall, Cornwall Built in 1909 by Cornish-born Capt Francis Oats, who made a mining fortune in South Africa and was chairman of De Beers, the 21-bedroom mansion had lain derelict for 20 years before being sold in 2003 and painstakingly restored. Launched on the market at £2.75m in September 2015, it found a buyer in October 2016 (*Savills*)



The Manor House, Buriton, Hampshire This beautifully renovated, Grade II*-listed, Georgian house on the Hampshire/Sussex border was owned by the Gibbon family in the 18th century and the Bonham Carters from 1826 to 1957. One of few grand Hampshire houses offered publicly for sale in 2016, it sold within a month of its February launch at a guide price of £3.5m (*Savills*)

Property market

‘It’s rather nice that it’s not all predictable’

Crispin Holborow, Savills

muter belt. Not only do these buyers get better value for money and amazing country views, but, perhaps more importantly, they can be sure of getting a seat on the morning train to London.

The expansion of the ‘safe’ commuter belt has already been boosted by improvements to national rail, road and air networks and infrastructure. These include the new Flybe connection from Exeter to London City Airport, the upgrading of the A303 to the South-West, the opening of the new Didcot Parkway station, the electrification of the main line at Bristol, improvements to the Midland Main Line through Market Harborough and the recent confirmation of the Government’s intention to build a new Varsity Line linking Oxford and Cambridge (*COUNTRY LIFE*, December 7, 2016).

Another point of interest is that heritage cities such as Bath, Bristol, Cambridge and Oxford continue to out-perform their satellite villages and market towns, as mature buyers in particular appreciate the advantages of being able to walk to the shops, go to the theatre and stay connected as they get older.

The further away you get from the metropolis, the less people seem to be bothered about Brexit—at least for now.



The Yorkshire country-house market always does its own thing anyway and most of the region’s best houses tend to stay in the hands of local families. That mould was slightly chipped, if not broken, by the swift autumn sale through Knight Frank—at a ‘sensible’ guide price of £6m—of Paul Sykes’s pristine, Grade II-listed Duck House at Studley Roger (*Fig 3*), which sits in the centre of its 291 acres of land near the National Trust-owned Studley Royal Park, to a buyer from the Midlands.

After a slow start to the year in Norfolk, things finally got going in the autumn and Louis de Soissons of Savills, whose ‘thing’ is classic Georgian old rectories in pretty villages, was agreeably surprised to sell The Old Rectory at Foulsham, 18 miles

Fig 3: A ‘sensible’ guide price of £6m for charming Duck House at Studley Roger, North Yorkshire, attracted a buyer from the Midlands

north-west of Norwich, for more than its £1.65m—‘something that hasn’t happened in a while,’ he admits.

Slightly against the general run of play, the real stars of the 2016 campaign were large residential farms and estates, many of which were sold privately against a background of the strictest confidentiality. Crispin Holborow of Savills received five offers on properties valued at more than £20 million in the course of the year and saw contracts exchanged in July on the 1,200-acre Manningford Bohune mixed-farming and residential estate in Wiltshire, which launched on the open market in June at a guide price of £19m. However, sales of less than top-quality farmland have been ‘all over the place since Brexit’, says Mark McAndrew of Strutt & Parker. ➤



The Hoo, Great Gaddesden, near Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire Originally built in 1683 for Dr Edward Green, the Grade II*-listed, eight-bedroom country house, set in 90 acres of Capability Brown parkland, came to the market at a guide price of £3.85m in April 2016. With three parties bidding, it sold in September (*Strutt & Parker*)



The Quaives, Wickhambreaux, near Canterbury, Kent Set in 19 acres of formal gardens and paddocks, The Quaives was remodelled in the Flemish style in the 1600s and recently refurbished by singer Christine McVie of Fleetwood Mac, whose home it was for 25 years. Launched in September 2015 at a guide price of £2.5m, it sold in March 2016 for just shy of that (*Strutt & Parker*)



Isfield Place, near Uckfield, East Sussex An idyllic, Grade II*-listed, eight-bedroom manor set in 187 acres of formal gardens, pasture and woodland on the banks of the River Ouse, historic Isfield Place dates from the early 16th century and enjoys glorious unspoilt views towards the South Downs. Relunched on the market in May 2016, it found a buyer in August at a guide price of £7.15m (*Strutt & Parker*)

R W ARMSTRONG

fine quality building



60 years of craftsmanship

specialising in the new build, renovation and refurbishment of period and country homes

T: 01256 850177 rwarmstrong.co.uk



THE FINEST QUALITY TIMBER WINDOWS | 50 YEAR TIMBER WARRANTY | FREE SITE SURVEY NATIONWIDE



Garden Rooms, Orangeries, Windows & Bi-Folds

Call: 01384 279933 - Email: info@montpelierjoinery.com - Visit: www.montpelierjoinery.com

From the makers of



Property market

‘Land was all over the place in 2016’

Mark McAndrew, Strutt & Parker

Sporting estates that stole the show included the picturesque, 1,127-acre Ballington Manor estate (**Fig 4**), a field-sportsman's dream on the banks of the River Wylde, 10 miles from Salisbury, which came to the market in September through Savills and Woolley & Wallis, at a guide price of £17.5m, and is currently under offer.

The same month saw the launch of one of Exmoor's most famous private shoots, the Earl and Countess of Lytton's spectacular, 861-acre Lillycombe estate (**Fig 5**) at Porlock, Somerset, which sold through Knight Frank in a matter of weeks, at a guide price of £5.75m.

Results have been just as encouraging north of the border, where Robert McCulloch of Strutt & Parker has noted some 23 sales of Scottish sporting estates so far this year, at prices ranging from £1.25m to £15m. Having successfully negotiated the sale of the Gladstone family's 6,228-acre Fasque estate at Fettercairn, on the fringe of the Highlands between Aberdeen and Dundee, his firm launched Philip Astor's magical, 12,000-acre Tillypronie estate near Tarland, Aberdeenshire, on the market in August at a guide of 'offers over £10.5m', moving to 'best and final offers' by November 18, with proceedings now edging towards a definitive sale. 🐾



Fig 4 above:
'A fieldsportsman's dream': the Ballington Manor estate, near Salisbury, Wiltshire. Guide price £17.5m



Fig 5 right:
Spectacular Lillycombe estate at Porlock, Somerset, sold in weeks at a guide price of £5.75m



River House, Itchenor, near Chichester, West Sussex Claimed to be the most expensive house ever sold in this popular sailing village, imposing River House occupies a prime position overlooking the harbour. Launched in March at a guide price of £5m, it sold for close to that figure at the height of the EU Referendum campaign in May (*Strutt & Parker*)



The Priory, Bowdon, near Altrincham, Cheshire A classic Georgian former vicarage, built in about 1800 and presently arranged as two properties, The Priory and its neighbour, The Well House, could be reinstated as one fine country house, 15 miles from Manchester city centre. Launched in February, it sold in June for close to its guide price of £2.9m (*Strutt & Parker*)



Water Hall, Wighton, Norfolk. Set in 5½ acres of immaculate gardens and grounds, three miles from Wells-next-the-Sea and seven miles from trendy Burnham Market, Water Hall has undergone an exemplary restoration over the past 15 years. Launched in early summer at a guide price of £3.6m, its autumn sale was one of Norfolk's deals of the year (*Savills*)

Request our latest brochure



 Julius Bahn
OAK BUILDINGS



Garden Rooms
Orangeries
Garages
Conservatories

03444 171 400
sales@juliusbahn.co.uk
www.juliusbahn.co.uk

 CERTAINLY™
WOOD

BRITISH KILN DRIED
LOGS



 woodsure
assured quality woodfuel



- Certainly Wood is a family business and the largest specialist firewood supplier in the UK
- 100% British Woodsure/HETAS approved kiln dried logs and kindling
- Flamers natural firelighters to light the perfect fire
- Kiln dried logs are ready for immediate burning
- Sourced from sustainable woodlands
- Free delivery across mainland UK



Kiln dried logs... PERFECT.

01981 251796 www.certainlywood.co.uk

Receive **£10 off** your first order
using code: COUNTRYLIFE at www.certainlywood.co.uk

*Minimum order value £125. Code Expires Dec 31st 2016.



Speaking volumes

Three new publications chronicle the history of the world's leading art business and the Modern British market continues to bloom

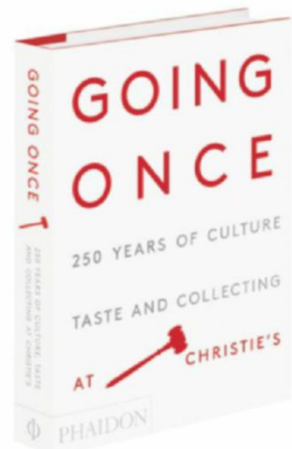
FOLLOWING Turner—30 volumes and rising—the greatest stretch on my bookshelves is occupied by the auction business and, within that, Christie's is the undoubted leader. I am missing two of the first histories, H. C. Marillier's 1926 *Christie's 1766–1925* and Denys Sutton's *Christie's Since the War* (1958), but, otherwise, my run of histories and memoirs is fairly complete: Percy Colson, *A Story of Christie's* (1950); John Herbert, *Inside Christie's* (1990); Arthur Grimwade, *Silver for Sale* (1994); Brian Sewell, *Outsider* (2011) and *Outsider II* (2012); and now three 250th anniversary volumes.

Repetition is unavoidable, but all have different flavours and viewpoints and each of the latest adds value to the whole. The official anniversary book is *Going Once: 250 Years of Culture, Taste and Collecting at Christie's* (Phaidon, £39.95) (Fig 2), a Neil MacGregor-like selection of 250 objects. *Hidden Gems* by Sarah Hue-Williams and Raymond Sancroft-Baker (Unicorn Press, £35) (Fig 3) celebrates collectors and their jewels that have often passed through the rooms many times. Charles Hindlip's *An Auctioneer's Lot: Triumphs and Disasters at Christie's* (Third Millennium Publishing, £30) (Fig 4) gives the view from the rostrum and treads, discreetly, behind the scenes.

Naturally, there are many more than 250 wonderful objects in *Going Once*, as it would be impossible to match one to every year, but it provides a stimulating guide to changing taste. I always find it difficult to write about jewels, unless set in colourful histories—there are few words in facets and carats—but the authors of *Hidden Gems*, a freelance gemmologist and the former European director of the

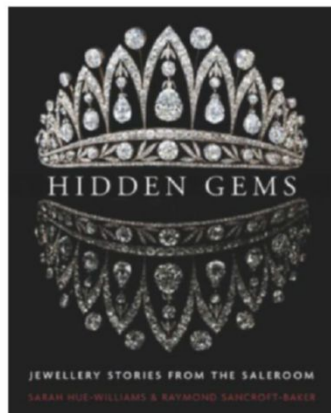


Fig 1: Still-life of Tulips and Hyacinths. £265,600. Figs 2–4 below: Three new books about Christie's

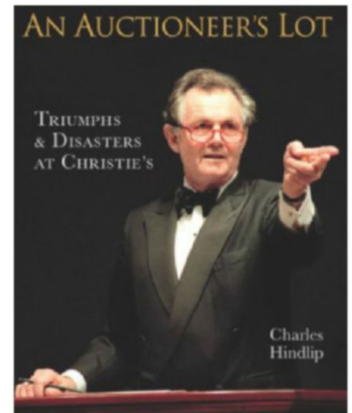


department, manage to make even dumb stones speak. Of course, they also have excellent stories and characters to play with. Above all, after long careers, they are still enchanted by the beautiful things with which they work.

Lord Hindlip, otherwise Charlie Allsopp, is more In than Outsider, and handles the imposters' triumph



and disaster with Kipling-esque aplomb (although it is Belloc's 'There's nothing worth the wear of winning/But laughter and the love of friends' that he takes as a motto). At times, one wishes for a little less discretion, as he allowed himself in his speech from the rostrum at the book launch, but this is an invaluable account of a momentous half



century for the art world. His 40 years at Christie's took him from the Front Counter to the chairmanship of Christie's International, by way of launching the department for country-house-contents sales and the firm's American operation and he brought down the hammer on many outstanding works. If, sometimes, he gives the impress-



Fig 5: James Dickson Innes's *Tan-y-Griseau: The Green Dress*. £18,600. Fig 6: *Still Life with Jug of Lillies* by Barbara Dorf. £1,178



ion that life was a party, well, even though it was a very serious business, we certainly had fun in the old days and I hope that our successors are not too different.

Soon after Lord Hindlip joined Christie's, the Modern British market enjoyed its first flowering. Currently, it blooms again. Chorley's, near Cirencester, ended its year with £265,600 being paid for a 17in by 30in

still-life of *Tulips and Hyacinths* (Fig 1) dated 1926 by Christopher Wood (1901–31). In that year, he joined the London Group and met Ben and Winifred Nicholson. A little later, they visited St Ives together and were taken with the sailor and naïve painter Alfred Wallis. He had much more effect on them than their Modernism on him, but their subsequent naïvety

can appear rather *faux*. It is impossible to guess where Wood's career might have led, as he committed suicide when just 29.

Wood was a friend of Augustus John, as was James Dickson Innes (1887–1914) and, by a tradition in the vendor's family, John painted the figure in Innes's 11¾in by 15½in *Tan-y-Griseau: The Green Dress* (Fig 5), which sold for £18,600. Certainly, the statuesque

pose and scale could be John, but an ultra-violet image shows no paint differentiation and Innes used a similar composition elsewhere. More likely, it was John's influence when they were painting together at Arenig Fawr in Snowdonia between 1910 and 1913.

My long-time friend Lucy Abel Smith consigned a collection of work by Barbara Dorf (1933–2016) to this sale, raising some £10,000 for the Longfield Big Heart Appeal. Dorf (as she was known) was a 'true eccentric' and Lucy wrote: 'At one party I remember coming face to face with both Ernst Gombrich and Iris Murdoch, on another occasion it was Kenneth Branagh. We kept up a correspondence for over 30 years and her insight on art, literature and politics was always original and sharp. Her diary, one publisher said, was actionable and unprintable! I will never know why she wanted me to have her works when she died. I was honoured to be asked to look after the future of her art work, on which she placed no strings. Her eclectic paintings and drawings offer an extraordinary insight into the character and quality of a remarkable person.'

This 19½in by 25½in *Still Life with Jug of Lilies and Scattered Fruit* (Fig 6) made £1,178. 🐦

Pick of the week

Traditionally, the London art market was in deep hibernation—on ski slopes or Caribbean beaches—from New Year until late February, but, now, there is hardly pause enough to sleep off a hangover. Some 40 dealers will rouse themselves to start 2017 at the London Marriott Hotel in Grosvenor Square for the May-fair Antiques and Fine Art Fair between January 5 and 8.



Jewellery, glass, furniture, ceramics and silver will be strengths of the fair, but, to continue the theme, I will mention two Modern British art dealers. Atelier has a Russell Flint rarity. Not only is the 11in by 15in *Isoult la Desirous and the Forest Maidens* (above) an oil painting, but Flint has posed two girls full on rather than in formulaic three-quarter face. It is priced at £30,000 and is an illustration for an edition of M. H. Hewlett's 1898 bestseller *Forest Lovers*. With unusual delicacy, Flint has chosen the moment before 'the two girls undressed Isoult, and here they folded and laid by her red silk gown'.

The veteran London dealer Manya Igel offers paintings by RAs and members of the New English Arts Club, including Susan Ryder, Diana Armfield, Peter Kuhfeld, Donald Hamilton Fraser (left) and Fred Cuming.



The original celebrity

Tim Richardson is captivated by an exhibition that shows Nelson's mistress to have been much more than a self-made seductress

SHE makes for quite a poster girl. In George Romney's *Emma as Circe* (about 1782), the widening, darkly limpid eyes of the teen-aged Emma Hamilton stare out urgently from under a swirl of bundled auburn hair.

With white décolletage framed by a simple smock, cheeks rouged in excitement, sensuous red lips parted in fear (or anticipation?), this freely realised portrait of one of the most charismatic and beautiful women of the 18th century—the daughter of a Cheshire blacksmith—is one of at least 70 that Romney completed of Emma in various incarnations between 1782 and 1791.

A good number of these portraits—Emma as Cassandra, as St Cecilia, as Miranda—are included in this splendid exhibition. Clearly, Romney had no cause to rely on the *faux-demure* coquettishness of conventional portraiture to grab the attention.

However, it's not all about sex appeal. Striking the distinctive poses and 'attitudes' for which she was to become celebrated, Emma collaborated creatively with Romney to conceive each picture as a miniature theatrical performance. This makes her much more than a mere artist's model or—worse—'muse'. Her relationship with Romney was more akin to that of an actor with a film director, yet it's also clear that Romney was both romantically and sexually obsessed by Emma—and he was not the only one.

After desperate beginnings in London, where she appears to have ended up as a 'courtesan' at a well-known Covent Garden establishment, Emma caught the eye and imagination of some of her high-born clients. It was her character as much as her



One of two paintings by Romney depicting Emma Hamilton as the Greek sorceress Circe

beauty that captivated them. One, Charles Greville, took up with Emma for a few years, only to hive her off to a widowed uncle in Naples, the antiquary and diplomat Sir William Hamilton.

The rest, as they might say, is history, because it was through Hamilton that she met a certain rear-admiral, but the strength of this exhibition is that the focus is squarely on Emma, not Nelson, with her role as 'mistress' one of several identities that include politician and autodidact.

One of the most arresting exhibits is a letter written from Emma to Greville soon after her arrival in Naples, when she realises that she has been simply passed from one man to another—indeed, an earlier letter from Hamilton to Greville lightly describes her as 'an object'. Her anguish is expressed in unvarnished language and her constant spelling mistakes seem to validate her emotional truthfulness. 'My heart is intirely broke,' she concludes.

For Emma had actually been in love with Greville. She may have been an attention-seeker and a compulsive spendthrift, but one of her most endearing qualities is that she was never cynical. Despite her setbacks, she remained an idealist and a romantic to the end—which surely bound her closely in spirit to Nelson.

Nelson and Emma first encountered each other in the early 1790s, but their affair did not begin until 1798, after his victory at the Battle of the Nile, which was facilitated, in part, by Emma's own successful diplomatic efforts at securing permission for the resupply of the British fleet at Naples.

The meeting occurs only two-thirds of the way through the exhibition—the genuinely redefining achievement of the curators is that it's quite possible to forget (as I did) all about Lord Nelson in the earlier phases of the exhibition, so extraordinary is Emma's life story before then.



Left: Souvenirs such as this late-18th-century fan were made for British visitors such as Emma. Below: Part of a Berlin service made in about 1795, soon after Rehberg's drawings of Emma performing her 'attitudes' were published

The presentational highlight is a central theatre space draped with white muslin, on which a fine film is shown of Emma's 'attitudes', the dance-like vignettes she concocted to illustrate the lives of famous historical women such as Penelope, Medea and Cleopatra (performed here with aplomb by Amelia Cardwell).

The tragic appeal of these figures can be seen to presage Emma's own descent into genteel poverty after Nelson's death, but the catalogue adds a more positive contemporary spin, explicitly likening Emma to performance artists such as Cindy Sherman and Marina Abramovic, which does not seem too fanciful an idea.

There are all kinds of odd trinkets on display, including a bracelet woven of Emma's own hair and a Berlin tea service illustrating the 'attitudes', plus several moving artefacts, such as the poem-letter Nelson wrote to Emma immediately after the Battle of Copenhagen. The poem isn't good, but the romantic impulse is magnificent.

However, the exhibition is not about the objects; it's Emma's personality that shines through. The only disappointment is the choice of final exhibit—the undress uniform coat worn by Nelson at Trafalgar, which, we are told, one visitor noticed was lain on Emma's bed after his death, apparently as a pathetic surrogate.

It appears that the National Maritime Museum's role as England's shrine to Nelson cannot be gainsaid after all and that Emma Hamilton must still be presented primarily as the glamorously

tragic lover of a national hero, as opposed to a woman of achievement and distinction in her own right.

'Emma Hamilton: Seduction and Celebrity' is at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London SE10, until April 17, 2017 (020-8312 6608; www.rmg.co.uk/national-maritime-museum)

Next week: Olive Edis at Norwich Castle Museum



Subscribe and SAVE up to 41%

magazinesdirect.com/BMP6

0330 333 1113

Phone lines open 7 days a week, 8am-9pm, UK time. Please have your payment details ready and quote code **BMP6**

*Pay just £29.40 payable by Direct Debit every 3 months, with the price guaranteed for the first 12 months. Offer open to new subscribers only. Direct Debit offer is available in UK subscriptions only. Please call us or visit our website for overseas rates. Final closing date for all orders is 2nd February 2017. For full terms and conditions visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms.

How not to live your life

Ysenda Maxtone Graham enjoys a rollercoaster ride through the unconventional life of the much-loved English novelist

Biography

Beryl Bainbridge

Brendan King
(Bloomsbury, £25)

ONE of us would like to have our untidy lives laid bare in the way Brendan King lays bare the astonishingly messy life of Beryl Bainbridge. We all have failed relationships we would rather not see immortalised in print, but the high-cheekboned Bainbridge, five times nominated for the Booker Prize with her novels, has to be one of the 20th-century British champions of serial failed relationships and here they all are, in their initial dazzle and their subsequent disenchanted petering-out.

Reading this book, you get to know Beryl in all her frailty, neediness and dyslexia and, by the end, you feel vicariously sexually exhausted, as well as drunk.

'If only you'd married Franz,' you say, by the time Beryl is on doomed love affair number 38 and you're thinking 'So how's this one going to go wrong?'. Franz was the adorable German former prisoner-of-war she was in love with aged 15 in 1947. If she had married Franz, what a different story hers would have been, but Franz moved back to Germany and, as Mr King writes, 'she measured all her future loves against this idyll that was never tested by reality'.

So she had an affair with a local Liverpool art student, Austin Davies, who decorated the sets of plays she was in as an up-and-coming actress. Austin dumped her and went on to have an affair with Anne Lindholm, who became pregnant by him and then went through the trauma of an abortion paid for by him. Later, Beryl did marry Austin and it was a dismal marriage.



Beryl Bainbridge at Parliament Hill in Hampstead, 1952–53

The great coincidence of Beryl's life was that, years later in London, her son (by Austin) became friends at school with a boy called William Haycraft—who turned out to be the son of that self-same Anne, now Anna Haycraft (who would write under the name of Alice Thomas-Ellis). She and her husband, Colin Haycraft, who ran the publishing house Duckworth's, took Beryl on as a novelist and her successful years began. Then, Beryl embarked on a long, secret affair with Colin.

This biography would make a useful handbook for how not to live your life. Whichever relationship Beryl is in, she wishes she were not, but the moment the relationship ends, she feels desperately nostalgic for it and clings on to it for much too long, before starting another one with someone even less suitable.

The 1968 journey across the USA with her American boyfriend known as Washington Harold is hilarious in its ghastliness. She has fallen in love with another man (sexy, bearded Don McKinley) just before the trip begins, so her heart isn't in it. Cramped in a camper van, bitten by mosquitoes, she and Harold drive hundreds of miles

‘Whichever relationship Beryl is in, she wishes she were not,’

a day and it's a disaster. By the end, Beryl is writing to a friend: 'If I see him again in 1000 years it will be once too often.'

But what of the novels? We don't get to the first one until page 280, by which time Beryl is still only 35. Although Mr King names each novel in turn and tells us what inspired them and how well or badly they did, he doesn't manage to convey the spirit of her fiction. His prose is rather galumphing and heavy-handed: he makes obvious comments such as: 'Perhaps inevitably given that she grew up during a time of war, Beryl became interested in social and political issues.'

The only thing to do after reading this book is to go back to the novels themselves—and be glad they were well edited, because Beryl never worked out where to put the apostrophe in 'didn't'.

Social history

The Riviera Set

Mary S. Lovell
(Little Brown, £25)

FROM GRETA GARBO and Rita Hayworth to Somerset Maugham and Winston Churchill, Mary S. Lovell's beguiling new book practically bursts its covers with the names of the rich, famous and downright notorious. It's perhaps ironic that the woman they all had in common—the American actress Maxine Elliott—is now so little remembered.

Born in Maine in 1868, she had crammed the experience of several lifetimes into the decades that preceded her arrival on the newly fashionable French Riviera at the height of the Roaring Twenties. Celebrated as much for her beauty as for her dramatic ability, Elliott had infiltrated the seemingly impregnable ranks of the British aristocracy with ease. It was even rumoured that she had been the mistress of Edward VII himself. Clearly a force to be reckoned with, she had no intention of retiring with her memories into a dignified old age.

And so it was that, in 1930, she commissioned the up-and-coming young architect Barry Dierks to build her a spectacular pleasure palace, the Château de l'Horizon, on the rocky stretch of coast between Cannes and Juans-les-Pins. In the process, she created an Art Deco masterpiece that's as much the subject of this biography as either its mistress or her myriad guests.

Anecdotes abound: of rampant infidelities and swimming pools filled with scent, of Cecil Beaton and Bob Boothby 'fighting like bears' and hours spent deliberating whether or not to curtsy to the Duchess of Windsor. This is a giddy gallop through the ranks of the inter-war *beau monde* and some readers may be left breathless at the end of the ride.

Fortunately, with Miss Lovell, we are in safe hands. As temperatures tumble and the nights draw in, *The Riviera Set* is a dream ticket to a lost world of seemingly perpetual sunshine.

Martin Williams

Neue Pinakothek, Munich, Germany/Bridgeman; Bainbridge Estate

Architecture

Wandering Architects

Michael Drury
(Shaun Tyas, £35)

I'M pleased to see the reissue of this book, first published in 2000, which I bought at great cost when it was out of print. Many readers will enjoy the subject matter: that of the Arts-and-Crafts movement. The author charts the stories of 15 or so architects who attempted to live according to the teachings of John Ruskin and William Morris. It was a hard row to hoe and the narrative explores an unusually wide range of emotion for a work of architectural history: triumph, catastrophe and love interest are all here.

I'm not sure that the title does the book many favours. Architects of this school did sometimes travel as itinerant craftsmen and there are some good paragraphs on the vogue for gypsy caravans, favoured by Detmar Blow and his client Pamela Tennant, as well as by Toad of Toad Hall before the advent of his motorcars.



Hilles House: stone slate replaces the original thatch lost in a fire

Pamela's was called Traveller's Joy. (It was not the only kind of joy that she shared with Blow, for whom she had an infatuation, nor was she the only client's wife to be smitten by a romantic architect.)

However, wandering was not the principal quality that these idealists had in common; some,

like Herbert North and Harold Falkner, travelled little and, once the Barnsleys and others had come to rest in the Cotswolds, they hardly budged. Indeed, their rootedness is part of their charm. Still, there's a great deal to enjoy in this scholarly volume, including the best account of Blow's life in published form.

Blow's life was a Shakespearean tragedy, whose denouement followed his over-reliance on the cruel, self-indulgent Bendor, 2nd Duke of Westminster: what Blow called 'the devil's buttons' (money) were his undoing. As an artist, he attempted to rise above such petty concerns, but, as other artists have found, ignoring an unpleasant necessity doesn't mean it goes away.

There is much striving, many tribulations and ultimately some failure in this book. The ideals that the architects set themselves were too high, the society in which they worked too obdurate. However, in some ways, particularly their reverence for ancient buildings, they conditioned the aesthetic of the modern world.

Alfred Powell actually lived until 1960, dying at the age of 95. A pity more of them could not have seen the dawn of that decade; its liberated exuberance might have suited some of them better than the Edwardian era.

Clive Aslet

Art history

Studio of the South: Van Gogh in Provence

Martin Bailey
(Frances Lincoln, £25)

MARTIN BAILEY is a van Gogh expert who has curated exhibitions of the artist's work and written extensively about him. However, he is not an academic—he's an arts journalist and this relieves his approach of the necessity for theoretic attitudinising. In fact, it lends a certain sprightliness to his prose, for Mr Bailey tells the story of the painter's years in Arles (1888–89) directly, but with a welcome admixture of new facts garnered from his reporter's assiduous research.

Thus, not only are one-third of the artist's output of paintings from the Arles period reproduced here, but also a newly accepted portrait of Gauguin. Likewise, a previously unknown

drawing of van Gogh by Emile Bernard is published for the first time in the literature on the artist.

Mr Bailey also tracks down and interviews anyone still alive who had a close connection with Vincent, including Jeanne Calment, who lived to be 122 and would have been 13 when the artist bought canvas from her family's textile shop. Then there's Pauline Mourard, daughter of Dr Felix Rey, who treated and befriended van Gogh. Mr Bailey interviewed both.

Famously, the artist slashed his ear and here we have the address of the brothel to which it was sent, as well as the earliest newspaper report of the incident. Crumbs of information, you may say, but all help to preserve a fresh and lively style of narrative. The author is convinced that Vincent cut his ear not simply out of frenzy, but because he had just heard that



View of Arles, 1889, one of van Gogh's 'Flowering Orchards' series

his brother Theo, his mainstay and provider, was planning to be married. Perhaps this response was a silent scream of despair as well as a cry for help?

But it was in Arles that van Gogh first called himself a landscape painter and, whatever his mercurial state of mind, he pro-

duced there some of his finest paintings. The book is a nice mixture of text and pictures, with more than 120 illustrations, documentary photos as well as a splendid array of reproductions of paintings and drawings. Recommended.

Andrew Lambirth

Crossword

A prize of £15 in book tokens will be awarded for the first correct solution opened. Solutions must reach Crossword No 4460, COUNTRY LIFE, Pinehurst II, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 7BF, by **Tuesday, January 3**. UK entrants only.

ACROSS

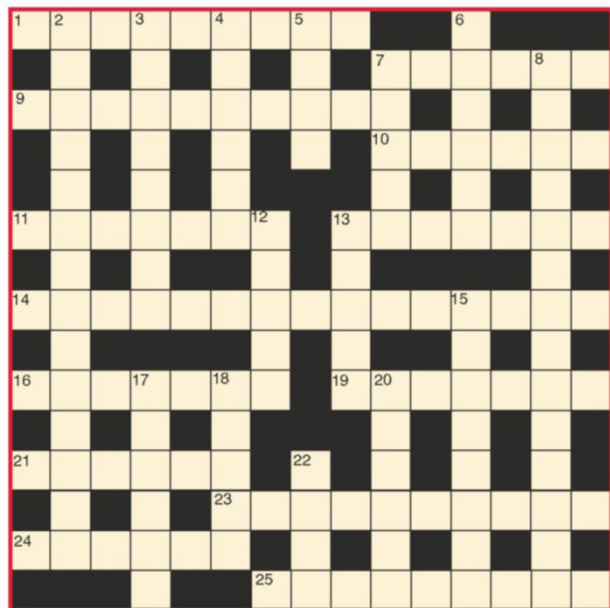
- Demonstrates point in what way at trials (9)
- Parent showing delight (6)
- Believes in military subdivision investments (4, 6)
- Three in one can be a uniter (6)
- Confronting notice in rhyme (7)
- Set off horse (7)
- Trunks store item of clothing (8, 7)
- Put off salesman in midst of soul searching (7)
- School gets affirmation that four in this year take Latin (7)
- Debutant in other words gets bird (6)
- Newspaper articles for minorities? (10)
- Agreement of condition despatched in (6)
- Swear I pay front organisation (9)

DOWN

- When my loosened basket revealed fruit (8, 6)
- The Spanish medium takes evil woman to tree (5, 3)
- Religious symbol from one side to the other (6)
- Each way is a direction (4)
- Attempting to be irritating (6)
- Chemical compound discovered in Gloucestershire (5)
- Crablike military manoeuvre? (6, 8)
- Wise number generator (5)
- Tasteless to have adhesive quality (5)
- A tin hat I repair for South Pacifier (8)
- Climb part of castle for maintenance (6)
- Pudding with sugar, but without acidity (5)
- Overwhelm first two engineers by bay (6)
- Damage small vehicle (4)

4460

TAIT



NAME (PLEASE PRINT IN CAPITALS) _____

ADDRESS _____

Tel No _____

COUNTRY LIFE, published by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd will collect your personal information to process your entry. Would you like to receive emails from COUNTRY LIFE and Time Inc. (UK) Ltd containing news, special offers and product and service information and take part in our magazine research via email? If yes, please tick here. COUNTRY LIFE and Time Inc. (UK) Ltd would like to contact you by post or telephone to promote and ask your opinion on our magazines and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to hear from us. Time Inc. (UK) Ltd may occasionally pass your details to carefully selected organisations so they can contact you by telephone or post with regards to promoting and researching their products and services. Please tick here if you prefer not to be contacted.

SOLUTION TO 4459 (Winner will be announced in two weeks' time)

ACROSS: 1, Primrose path; 8, Arena; 9, Nursemaid; 11, Up in the air; 12, Menu; 14, Motive; 15, Cheerful; 17, Aflutter; 19, Errand; 22, Kiwi; 23, Nepotistic; 25, Doolittle; 26, Inure; 27, Unchallenged.

DOWN: 1, Predict; 2, Inactivity; 3, Ringer; 4, Straight; 5, Poem; 6, Tea leaf; 7, Vacuum-packed; 10, Double decker; 13, Retraining; 16, Pedestal; 18, Low down; 20, Astound; 21, Cohere; 24, Nigh.

Winner of 4457 is Simon Way, Worcester.

Bridge Andrew Robson

THE Schapiro Spring Fours is probably the most eagerly awaited event on the British circuit, these days attracting many top players. Occurring as it does in Stratford-upon-Avon on the first May Bank Holiday, it rather bridges (excuse the pun) the winter months with those long, balmy days that is (in one's dreams, if not reality) British summertime.

My team usually underperforms in the Spring Fours, although we were given the top seeding again in the 2016 event. You're allowed to lose one match and stay in the event, but, effectively, must win eight out of nine. We lost our life on the very first match. It looked like a short weekend. However, then our finesses started to work—or perhaps we worked out which ones to take.

to repeat the finesse, declarer cashed the Ace of Diamonds and ruffed a Diamond. Delighted to see the fall of East's King, declarer no longer needed to risk the Club finesse.

He crossed to the Ace of Clubs, both following low, then led the promoted Knave of Diamonds and discarded dummy's losing Heart. All the defence could win from here was the King of Clubs—slam made.

The crucial card on our second Stratford slam deal was the seven of Clubs.

Dealer North North-South vulnerable

♠ A J 7
♥ K
♦ A 7 5 3
♣ K Q 10 7 2

♠ 10 8
♥ J 9 8 6 4 2
♦ 10 8 4
♣ 8 5

♠ Q 9 6 3
♥ Q 7 3
♦ 9 6
♣ A J 6 3

♠ K 5 4 2
♥ A 10 5
♦ K Q J 2
♣ 9 4

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

(1) A little good for Three Notrumps, South probes with Three Spades, although he knows partner cannot have four Spades.

(2) Showing his precise 3-1-4-5 shape.

(3) Loves the singleton Heart opposite.

Declarer won West's Heart lead with dummy's King. He crossed to the King of Diamonds, then led a Club to the King and East's Ace. He won East's passive trump return and drew a third trump. At trick six, he led the nine of Spades and run the Queen of Clubs (the best odds in the suit being the finesse). That would have resulted in a swift down one, West winning the King and cashing the Queen of Hearts.

Declarer looked deeper and realised that, even if the Club finesse succeeded, he would need the Diamond finesse. However, if the Diamond finesse worked and there was a short King of Diamonds onside, he would not need the Club finesse.

At trick two, declarer led a Spade to the Ace, then a Diamond to the Queen, the finesse succeeding. Unable to return to dummy

Dealer South Neither vulnerable

♠ A Q 5 3
♥ 8 7
♦ 7 5
♣ Q J 5 3 2

♠ J 10 4 2
♥ K Q 5
♦ 10 8 6 4
♣ K 7

♠ K 8 7 6
♥ J 9 6 4 3
♦ K 9 2
♣ 8

♠ 9
♥ A 10 2
♦ A Q J 3
♣ A 10 9 6 4

South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	4♣(1)	Pass
4♥(2)	Pass	6♣	End

(1) Jumping to show his fine support and slammy hand.

(2) Ace-showing cue bid, looking for Six Clubs. Note that South prioritises the Ace of the unbid Hearts.

West found the best lead of the King of Hearts and declarer won the Ace. It looks superficially tempting to cross to the Ace of Spades and run the Queen of Clubs (the best odds in the suit being the finesse). That would have resulted in a swift down one, West winning the King and cashing the Queen of Hearts.

Declarer looked deeper and realised that, even if the Club finesse succeeded, he would need the Diamond finesse. However, if the Diamond finesse worked and there was a short King of Diamonds onside, he would not need the Club finesse.

At trick two, declarer led a Spade to the Ace, then a Diamond to the Queen, the finesse succeeding. Unable to return to dummy

the directory

COUNTRY LIFE classified advertising guide

To advertise in the
classified section
please call 01252 555 308
email: robert.spencer@timeinc.com

Property Directory


STATONS
FROM COTTAGES TO COUNTRY ESTATES

BARNET	020 8449 3383
RADLETT	01923 604321
TOTTERIDGE	020 8445 3694
HADLEY WOOD	020 8440 9797
BROOKMANS PARK	01707 661144
PREMIER LETTINGS	020 8441 9796
NEW HOMES SHOWCASE	020 8441 9555

www.statons.com Incorporating BLADP

Antiques

Sir William Bentley
Billiards



BESPOKE BILLIARDS
HANDMADE IN THE UK

WWW.BILLIARDS.CO.UK
+44 (0) 1264 731 210

Antiques

**Ancient oak barns,
35 in stock dating from
1480 - 1750**

Our skilled craftsmen specialise in the re-erection and conversion of these frames into wonderful homes. Large stock of period building materials.

Preservation in Action.
Established 40 yrs.

www.etwebsterpia.co.uk
(01502) 478 539.

Antique Buildings Ltd
Dunsfold, Surrey GU8 4NP. Tel: 01483 200477

We have immense stocks of:
RECLAIMED OAK BEAMS, WIDE FLOORBOARDS,
HANDMADE BRICKS & ROOF TILES,
WHOLE BARN FRAMES FOR RE-ERECTION

Please see: www.antiquebuildings.com

Gardens & Outdoors



**Why dredge it!
We will pump it.**

Unique silt pumping system new to the industry

- Ponds • Water Courses
- Lakes • Rivers & Reservoirs

Solids transfer pump Capable sucking silt upto 70-80% solid

- Lagoon pump out silt

PONTOON DREDGING & PONTOON SILT PUMPING

Office: 01553 611834
Home: 01553 672310
Mob: 07768 234336

Website: www.jexplantukltd.co.uk
Email: bossjex@btinternet.com


NATURAL ENGLAND APPROVED CONTRACTOR

Where should I sell my...?

For free, unbiased, independent advice go to
www.wheretosell.co.uk


COUNTRY LIFE classified

Pets



I stay content while you're away


Who will pamper your pets, secure your home, baffle the burglars and reduce your insurance premium?

 **Homesitters®**
We stay while you're away

To book, or for a brochure call 01296 630 730 or visit www.homesitters.co.uk

Gardens & Outdoors

Nationwide service

 **clearwater**
pond & lake management

All the answers for ponds and lakes, using environmentally friendly methods. Specialising in algae and bulrush control, aquatic weed removal and other aquatic maintenance services. Large pond and lake construction. Jetties and bridges built to order.

Desilting works. Aeration specialists. Japanese Knotweed Specialist.

Please ring for a brochure
Tel: 01442 875616
Mobile: 07971 263588.
www.clearwaterplm.com

Gardens & Outdoors



pool design

Indoor and outdoor
pool consultants

March House, Charlton Down,
Tetbury, Glous GL8 8TZ

T 01666 840065

MB 07973 525318

saxton@poolarchitecture.co.uk
www.poolarchitecture.co.uk



GILLHAMS GRAVEL RAKE

The revolutionary GILLHAMS GRAVEL RAKE is easy to use,
delivers a perfect finish and cuts out weed problems.

Available in two sizes as exhibited at RHS Hampton Court

email: gillhamsgravelrake@gmail.com tel: 07960 975 123
www.gillhamsgravelrake.com

Interiors

GENERATIONS
1841
AGED OAK FLOORING

Fully compatible with under floor heating
Every board is entirely planed by hand
Carefully aged and polished by hand to simulate years of wear
01509 210 321 WWW.GENERATIONS.CO.UK

Travel

Close Encounters WITH WILDLIFE

25 years experience in
creating exceptional
wildlife holidays

- ✿ Handcrafted tailor-made holidays
- ✿ Expert led small group tours
- ✿ Specialist photography trips
- ✿ Over 300 locations worldwide

REQUEST OUR NEW BROCHURE

wildlifeworldwide.com
01962 302 088 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com

WILDLIFE
WORLDWIDE

Interiors

Thoughtfully made functional furniture

unfitted.co.uk

Whether its traditional or classic, fitted or freestanding, our kitchens
and bathrooms are refreshingly different.
Visit our showroom at Moreton in Marsh in the heart of the Cotswolds,
or register online for a brochure and free no obligation home visit.
Commissions fulfilled throughout UK, Europe and worldwide.

Interiors




WILLOW & HALL
BEAUTIFULLY BRITISH HANDMADE FURNITURE



THE
Buttermere

SOFA OR SOFA BED

from £952 or £1,128

START YOUR NEW YEAR IN STYLE...SAVE UP TO 30% UNTIL 31ST JANUARY

Call us on 0845 468 0577 or visit our London showroom | willowandhall.co.uk

Interiors

WESTLAND ★ LONDON
ANTIQUÉ PRESTIGIOUS CHIMNEYPICES ★ FIREGRATES ★ ORNAMENTATION ★ ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

St Michael's Church, Leonard Street,
London, EC2A 4QX Tube: Old Street, Subway 2

www.westlandlondon.com
+44 (0) 207 739 8094 westland@westlandlondon.com

"Family Stories"



WHEATHILLS

A Wheathills Memory Box is a beautiful piece of art where precious personal family memories will always be safe.

"Is where the heart is"



More than this each individual hand crafted Box is a true token of love, celebrating a defining moment in life.

"Living a passionate life"



Truly a wonderful gift to be cherished, admired and remembered by.

"50 and fabulous"



"Legacy"



"Special celebrations"

"for generations"

"Love"



Genuine British Craftsmanship

"A moment of elation"



For further information or to request a free Little Book of Memories, please call +44(0) 1332 824819 or visit www.exquisitememorybox.com or email janet@wheathills.com

Regtransfers.co.uk
PERSONAL NUMBER PLATES

01582 967777
8am-10pm 7days

RMI
CHERISHED NUMBERS
DEALERS ASSOCIATION

THE UK'S LARGEST PRIVATE NUMBER PLATES DEALER
Established 1982 • Over a Million Satisfied Customers
Over 48 Million Numbers Online • Free Celebrity Magazine

NAMES AND WORDS

DAII RYL	100 YD	BRA 555S	C21 PPS	FAL 660N	GWII YMS
BE66 LEY	A810 DUN	BRO I2E	C120 SSS	F42 LEY	HAL I3LL
GEO 29IA	ACT 700R	82 OOM	CU17 LUM	F488 ELL	H415 ALL
TO17 GUE	ADE 31E	820 WNE	CI17 LER	FAR 23N	HAM 32R
MAI7 GAN	FAD 14N	B27 DEN	DAG I5H	8 FED	HAM 3S
JE17 NER	AKT 42R	BUI2 DON	DAR 23IL	F31 LOW	HAM 137T
WE17 HAM	AMO 2R	BUR 263R	DAII RYL	FEN 50M	HAI2 DEN
RE17 TON	A26 HER	BUT 70N	DAT 7A	FER 2N	H421 AND
PA17 TER	B466 OTT	CAB IIE	DAV IIOE	FLA 6K	H42 ROP
MCL 823N	B411 TWO	CAL I3R	DAY 50N	FI4 XEN	HEA 4L
CO11 PON	B428 OUR	CAL I3R	D3 NNS	FRA 73R	HEA IE
LYN 4M	B428 OUR	CAR 3E	DAR 23K	FUII ARD	HEA I6Y
	B42 LOW	C42 RON	D8 BLO	GAB 21GL	HEA 27S
	BAR 220W	C45 SON	D15 CDS	GAM 813S	HEC 670R
	B42 TON	CEC IL	DOR 2E	G422 ATT	HER 30I
	B427 RAM	CHA I13L	DOW IIS	GAI2 THS	HOL I13Y
	BAT 3S	CHA IIG	DUC 6K	GEA 2R	HOP 600D
	BAT 7H	CHE 3N	DUI2 ANT	G31I TLE	HOW 4T
	I2 BED	CHE 32IE	EAR 3	GEO 29IA	H118 BLE
	BE66 LEY	COI1 BOY	EDG 9E	G11I LEN	H118 BLE
	B311 NET	CII4 NCY	II NTH	G11I HAM	JAY 7IIE
	I3 ENT	CII1 NGE	ELS 3Y	60I DEN	JE17 NER
	BEEI TON	COL I42D	EI VES	GOL I1IE	JOG I T
	BER I2Y	COI1 BOY	EVE 235T	PGR 33D	JUN 6G
	83 TTY	C10 RKE	EVE 270N	G23 ENE	KAR 2IIN
	BEZ I	COI2 SER	EYE 84IL	GRE 66G	KER 2R
	80 DDY	COU I70N	FAB 814N	G2I GGS	KHA I10A
	BOT I14M	COU 2T	F4 BRE	G120 VES	KI13 RAN



Great number

Great investment

MEII DES	PAL I37T	ROO I13Y	T12 OLL
M312 CER	P44 NSY	ROS 4IIE	TUC 6K
MER 217T	PAI7 TER	ROS I1IA	TUR 2K
MER 70N	P42 ESH	BRO 5S	TWY 5T
MER 77L	PAT 216A	ROW 3IL	T72 ONE
ME5I BOB	PAX 70N	20 XY	T722 ELL
MOO 23E	P34 ACE	RUII DLE	VAR I37Y
MOR 264N	PEA 25E	S411 DOR	VAS 3Y
MOY 7A	PEII ETS	S411 CES	VEI OUR
MOY 3R	P60 PLE	S314 MUS	VEN 70N
MUT 6H	POII DER	SEL I16K	V0G 4N
MUT 5Y	POII AND	SPR 477T	V40 UOL
NAL 50N	POP 6E	STE 2N	W8 LKY
NAP I32R	P24 SAD	S70 KOE	W8 90IE
NAS I1H	PUII TER	S724 NGE	WAS 533M
NEW 80N	PUI2 VES	S72 OUD	W3 ALE
NEW 64R	PUT 7Y	SI16 DEN	WEI7 HAM
NEW 31L	R438 URN	SUJ 4N	WH4 I3Y
NOE I1IE	RAM 503N	SUT 3R	WHII NES
NOR 233N	R411 DLE	TAI1 BOY	WOI1 BE
NUG 317T	R47 NOR	TAI1 EST	W0G 6G
NUR 25E	R342 DON	TAN I13R	W00 I64R
ODD 80Y	REB 366A	TEA 555E	W005 NAM
OFF I6E	I2 EES	TE57 EYE	W012 GAN
OLL I3Y	REI7 TON	TII3 LMA	WRE 57IE
OMA 22R	2 EO	TII1 CKY	Y34 TES
OYS 70N	R164 RDO	TOI7 GUE	YEU IIG
PAL 46E	R100 AST	TOII CAN	Y014 NDA



FREE MAGAZINE
Sir Steve Redgrave



This could be your YEAR
www.regtransfers.co.uk/year

The Perfect Gift
CHRISTMAS SALE 20% OFF
Selected registrations

INITIALS

I EHF	AAW I	84 BJJ	CNJ I	52 DPB	I EFR	9 GAD	I GYG	JGS I	KJC 93	I LPJ	NKZ I	I PKF	RLG 20	SNK II	TPR 2	I WCB
6 FAD	ABF 4	20 BJR	37 CRM	6 DRD	I EHF	I GCA	I HDF	JHN 80	I KJK	LPS 6	I NLE	6 PLD	I RLW	SPR 58	TPS I	I WCV
I CJV	6 ABW	36 BK	32 CSL	18 DU	EJA 6	I GCD	HDP I	I JHV	I KKE	3 LRP	I NPD	3 PLJ	3 RN	II SRJ	I TRV	I WDD
GSW 66	I2 ADL	I BLF	95 CV	60 DV	I EYJ	II GDB	HET I	I KRH	I KRH	I LTP	NS I	I0 PLM	I RNF	SVC I	I TSK	I WEG
I BKN	I AER	78 BMS	I CVD	DWG 23	I ENB	I2 GDC	75 HF	5 JNC	I KSO	I LWP	5 NSA	I5 PMS	ROJ I	5 SWJ	I TTK	I WFH I
AAS IO	9 AHD	BPS I	I CVE	I DYB	I ENF	GDN I	I HFD	I JNH	KWC 3	98 ME	I NSJ	PO I	I ROP	T 97	I TTP	I WGI I
2 WP	I AHE	BPW I	CVH I	E 67	I9 EO	GEB 35	I HHP	59 JPJ	I LAT	I MFA	I NWA	I2 PRG	RP 2	TAA 3	6 VA	I WJL I3
PWW I	I AHV	II BRD	I CVR	6 EAP	EPD I	GGM IO	HHS I	44 JPR	6 LBC	MFF I	000 78	6 PSA	RPA 69	I TBL	2 VAD	I WKA
	93 ALW	I BVH	78 DAH	I EAS	I EPM	I GHF	6 HJL	9 JRJ	I LKB	I MFO	32I OT	PSD I	I RVR	I TCK	VAG 9	I WNC
	I AOC	I BVM	DAO I	EAW I	I ESO	I GJY	I HMK	I JRS	700 LD	MGM 77	I OXR	PTG 77	2 RWF	7 TGD	I VAP	I WRM
	ATS 99	88 BWP	17 DBF	32I EB	92 EW	I GKV	HN 4	I JVK	94 LE	I MNF	7 PBD	9 PV	I RYK	I TGE	I VEL	WS 872
	I ATT	I2 CDJ	3 DDW	IO EBC	FCF I	4 GLE	HNZ I	I JYB	3 LGP	I MVN	I PBM	6 SFD	I PWH	THG I	I VML	I WSK
	4 AVP	CE 8	DFB I	I EBT	FCL I	38 GN	HOF I	KA A 97	38 JNC	I NAS 29	I0 PCR	RBC I	4 SGJ	I THK	VMR IO	WSS I
	3 BCT	CHG I	3 DFL	II ECJ	8 FMT	9I GPB	I HTP	I KFA	I LKF	I NBJ	9 PCA	9 RCA	SKE I	I TLD	9 VN	I YAH
	9 BDB	I CKM	6 DGR	II EFE	I FNB	8 GSK	I JBG	I KFG	2 LKT	94 ND	I PFN	RDG I	60 SKS	I TLE	I VSG	YEG I
	BEK I	5 CL	16 DGS	II EFH	I FNH	II GSP	89 JCA	I KFR	LLS I	I NFF	I PFT I	I RGT	I4 SMJ	I TLJ	8 WAG	YGR I
	I BGE	16 CLJ	DL I2	I EFK	I FPN	I GUD	8 JFJ	KG 44	I LMG	NGM I	I0 PGR	RJT 8	44 SMJ	2 TMO	I WBE	I YJL
	II BGM	I CNF	DMM 95	EFL I	I FVR	99 GV	66 JFR	I KHS	I LPA	6 NJJ	I PHF	98 RLB	I SMU	TNM I	I WKB	I YW

Luxury Life

Heavenly Wine Cellars
Which Won't Cost You the Earth

Most wine drinkers want to spend on their wines rather than their wine storage. At Wild Grapes we subscribe to that view as well, which is why we're dedicated to creating the most beautiful and affordable wine rooms in the world.

Tel: 01252 712265
Email: info@wild-grapes.co.uk
Website: www.wild-grapes.co.uk

Polly Gasston
GOLDSMITH

01843 448291
www.pollygasstongoldsmith.co.uk

HARRY FANE
wishes to purchase vintage
CARTIER
Jewellery, clocks, objects, watches, etc.
www.harryfane.com
T:020 7930 8606 E:info@hfane.com
harryfanelondon

Gale Furs
We will sell your unwanted furs at auction.
Call for free valuation.
Cold storage, remodelling, repairs.
A selection of fine new and vintage furs.
4 Blenheim Terrace, St John's Wood, NW8 0EB
020 7722 5870
www.galeoflondon.co.uk

Motoring

CLASSIC CARS & PARTS WANTED
UNLOVED & UNWANTED
ALSO DECEASED ESTATES.
ANY CONDITION/ANYWHERE
CASH WAITING
WAYNE 07768393630

Personal

dating4grownups
Private consultations and dating introductions for the discerning over 40's, with no upper age limit. London/South East & East Anglia.
Please call David, who is the 'Matchmaker Extraordinary' on 01728 635064 or 07986 213120
www.dating4grownups.co.uk



Going crackers

IT'S quite clear I think, as I stare out of the car window, how far into our hearts we've taken the house and garden Christmas lights: the bright-blue stars flashing in windows, each doorway, roof and tree awash with frantic twinkles.

We pass a garden in which huge white reindeer, lit from within, have been arranged in a forest-glen ensemble and I'm wondering, not without admiration, what made the owners see one in a shop and think 'we need eight of these'. Zam responds 'I know, where on earth would you *store* them?', which only illustrates once again that he's a practical man.

'What are you doing,' he asks as I slice an inch of Sellotape into six tiny slivers. 'Extending my snaps,' I say, although I'd have thought this was perfectly obvious. As someone who has said he'd choose a box of broken things as his luxury on *Desert Island Discs*, he can't help giving me advice on how to do this.

I must make a small reverse circle of tape to go inside the

join, which will then be bound by more tape, like a fishing fly—but more fiddly. Each cracker snap is therefore taking a very long time and I remain concerned that they won't ever go bang because, when I test one, my ends fall off.

'The secret is don't use last year's tape,' advises my crafty friend, who's an expert. I then tell her that I've solved the problem of sticking the ribbon, the cracker waistband, with a secret weapon. 'I've bought glue dots,' I tell her triumphantly, before reading aloud from the packet that these 'work on speciality gift wraps and ribbons where sticky tape just will not stick'. There's a puzzled pause. 'As opposed to a Pritt Stick?' she says.

She's having a bad day, because, having volunteered to make angel wings for the Christmas service, when she collected a sack of goose feathers from the farmer, they smelt so bad, she began retching on the way home. She tried washing them in a pillowcase, but they emerged

still filthy but now ragged. 'Do you think I should gently scrub them? Or shall I try PVA and white cotton instead?'

'What are you putting in the crackers?' I bring her back to the craft in hand. 'Well, it was supposed to be Lindt Christmas bears, but I ate them all last night.'

‘If the extended snaps, in fact, go bang, they may ignite the party popper’

I decide not to voice my other concern, which is that, should these extended snaps, in fact, go bang, they may ignite the party popper, which was the only thing I could find in the supermarket that will fit inside.

A popper and a miniature tube of Super Glue, although now I wonder if the possible after-

math of this trio may make my sister's concern over glitter on the hats (and therefore her house) the least of our problems.

I also worry that I ought to undo the one with the £5 note inside in case it's one of four notes with a 5mm portrait of Jane Austen engraved on it by Graham Short and thus worth more than £20,000. Sometimes, someone else's nice idea is another person's new worry.

'What are you doing?' Zam has now found me trying to remember how to do chain stitch so that I can embroider initials on the socks that are going in the stockings and that I'm pleased to think will eradicate sock wars in 2017.

'Why don't you just get different coloured socks for them instead?' he asks before adding 'And I never found out why you are extending the snaps anyway.'

'Because I made the hats too long,' I explain, eyeing my last crafting disaster of the year that will, when this is printed, be in the bin. That's it from me. Happy 2017!

TOTTERING-BY-GENTLY By Annie Tempest

Visit Tottering-By-Gently on our website: www.countrylife.co.uk/tottering



Conditions of Sale and Supply: This periodical is sold subject to the following conditions, namely that it shall not, without the written consent of the publishers first given, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise disposed of by way of trade at a price in excess of the recommended maximum price shown on the cover (selling price in Eire subject to VAT); and that it shall not be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise disposed of in a mutilated condition or in any unauthorised cover by way of trade; or affixed to or as part of any publication or advertising, literary or pictorial matter whatsoever. COUNTRY LIFE (INCORPORATING LONDON PORTRAIT) is published weekly (51 issues) by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, Blue Fin Building, 110, Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU (020-314 8 5000). Website: www.timeincuk.com © Time Inc. (UK) Ltd. Printed by in the UK by Wyndeham Group ISSN 0045 8856. Distributed by MarketForce UK Ltd, 5, Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London E14 5HU (020-3787 9001). COUNTRY LIFE® is a registered Time Inc. (UK) Ltd trademark. ©Time Inc. (UK) Ltd 2011.

Time Inc.

Member of the
Audit Bureau of Circulation

recycle
When you have finished with
this magazine please recycle it.

BRIGHTS OF NETTLEBED

1,500 DESIGNS OF CLASSICAL FURNITURE IN STOCK
CABINETRY, UPHOLSTERY, LIGHTING, MIRRORS, PAINTINGS & SILK RUGS



The Dartington has an entirely hand carved mahogany show wood base frame with lion paw feet. The hardwood internal frame is traditionally upholstered by British craftsmen using only the finest materials with webbed back and arms and a mesh coil sprung seating unit. The arm fascia is hand nailed with individual studs available in a choice of finish, or can be piped on request.

Sofa £3,195 plus fabric. Chair £1,595 plus fabric

Illustrated: Sofa in Weymss Hayworth Otter, an elegant shimmering velvet £4,070.
Chair in Wemyss Lombard Platinum weave £1,960. Both with antique studs. **IN STOCK**

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE EXCLUSIVE UPHOLSTERY



HOME APPROVAL SERVICE

As period and country house furnishing specialists, we offer a unique ability to completely furnish homes from our unrivalled stock holdings and access to over 5,000 classic designs. Our home approval service offers you the opportunity to view items in situ prior to final purchase. From a single piece to complete home furnishing, your choice of can be brought to you by our delivery team who will always be accompanied by a senior consultant.

*At this time of year we reflect on those who have made our activities possible.
In this spirit we thank you for your support and wish you a happy and healthy new year.*

LONDON

608 King's Road · London · SW6 2DX | Telephone 020 7610 9597
Open Monday to Saturday 10am - 5.30pm

OXFORDSHIRE

Kingston House · High Street · Nettlebed · RG9 5DD | Telephone 01491 641115
Open Tuesday to Saturday 9am - 5.30pm

RESERVE ONLINE AT
WWW.BRIGHTSOFNETTLEBED.CO.UK



HARTLEY  BOTANIC

HANDMADE WITH PRIDE SINCE 1938

For The Hartley Sale prices call 0800 783 8083 or visit www.hartley-botanic.co.uk

THE FINEST GLASSHOUSES MONEY CAN BUY