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FIRST WORDS  
FROM THE EDITOR



February feels...

...firmly fixed in the realms of winter and yet there are already signs of spring. In this issue we cover all bases, with a comprehensive feature on clever ways of lighting your home (page 64) alongside planting ideas to brighten the dark corners of a garden (page 122). We celebrate your talents and skills with features on three enterprising women - a printmaker (page 78), a pie baker (page 40) and a creator of exquisite paper flowers (page 54). And, as it's the month for lovers, we bring you romantic retreats, a way to give your Valentine cards a special touch and news of the upcoming BBC TV series, *Love in the Countryside*, inspired by our rural dating website, [country-loving.co.uk](http://country-loving.co.uk) (page 49). Finally, don't forget to buy tickets for our Spring Fair now and get two for the price of one (page 23). I hope to see you there.

Dory Smith



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**COVER CREDITS**  
Photograph by Sussie Bell.  
Styling by Selina Lake.  
Vintage glass bottles, Packhouse. Milk bottles, Raj Tent Club. Plant pots, Petersham Nurseries.  
Vintage botanical prints, Peony & Thistle. Painted wooden garden table, Sunbury Antiques Market



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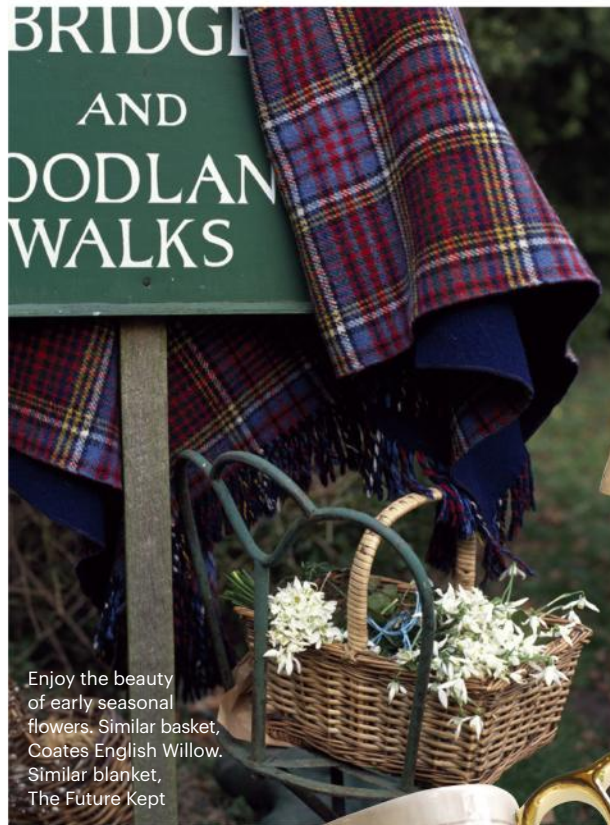
# emporium

Use pretty tones, such as deep heather, fresh green and rich yellow, in your home and on accessories for seasonal character and charm

COMPILED BY ALAINA BINKS



Tapestry tote in Welsh double cloth made from British wool, available in four colourways, from £95, The Welsh Girl



Enjoy the beauty of early seasonal flowers. Similar basket, Coates English Willow. Similar blanket, The Future Kept



Rattan and teak bar stool, £130, Garden Trading



Snowdrops jug made by potter Sue Dunne, from £45



Elegant velvet armchair with hand-turned legs, crafted in England, £774, Rowen & Wren



Slip-cast mugs, hand-decorated with gold lustre, from £30, Miranda Berrow



Linen check pinafore dress with crossover back, two oversized pockets and a tie waist, £75, Seasalt

PRICES AND AVAILABILITY CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS

Zinc-top extendable dining table with a rustic finish, £825, Barker & Stonehouse



Handmade shallow terracotta bowl (diameter 50cm) by Silvia K Ceramics, £350, The New Craftsmen



Wool-mix fine-stripe carpets in neutral tones, £32.99/sq m, Alaska range from the Country Living Collection by Carpetright

Wool cushion with check pattern front and coordinating plain back, £35, Bronte By Moon



Knitted textures and rich tones of burnt orange evoke a sense of warmth. Similar socks, Plümo. Similar scarf, Catherine Tough. Similar rug, Heal's. Teapot, Emma Lacey

\*CUSHIONS SOLD SEPARATELY



The Loch Leven leather Grand sofa\* comes in three tones, brown (shown), tan and charcoal, £2,699, Country Living sofas exclusively at dfs



Pestle and hand-thrown mortar by Topsy Jewell, £24 from Atelier 51

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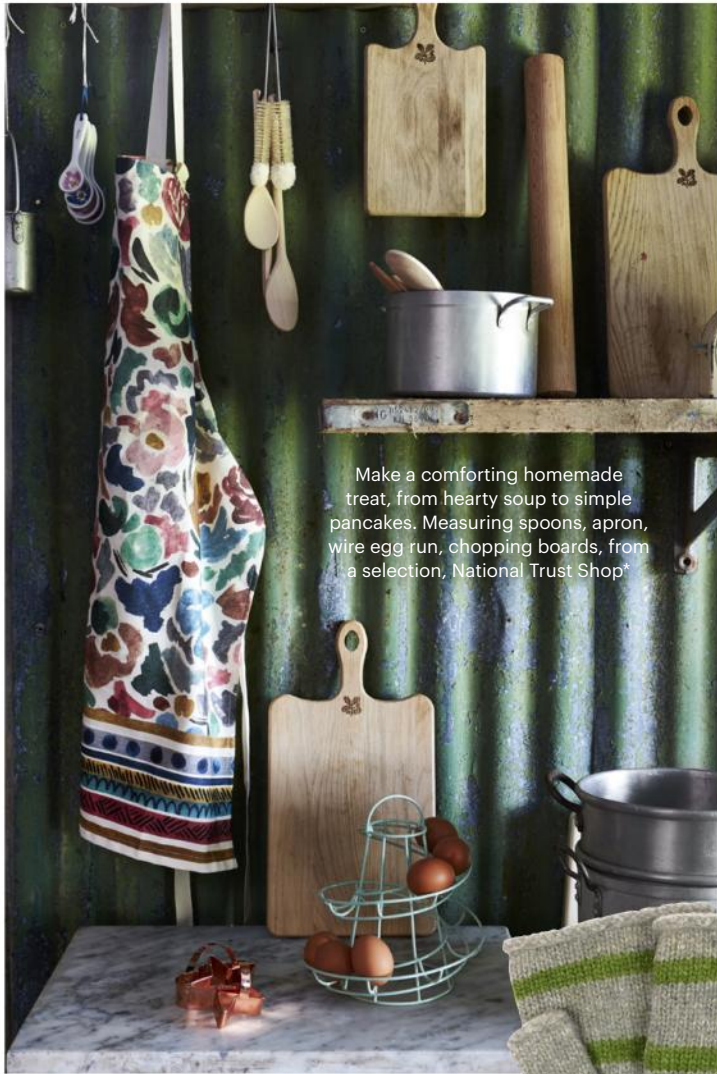


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NEPTUNE



Make a comforting homemade treat, from hearty soup to simple pancakes. Measuring spoons, apron, wire egg run, chopping boards, from a selection, National Trust Shop\*



Heat milk or porridge in this handy enamel pot with lip, £22, Labour and Wait

Spring soap with organic oils and herbal extracts, £8.50 from Trill Farm in Devon

Striped fingerless gloves by Katie Mawson, made in her Lake District studio, £38



Traditionally woven Welsh double-cloth weave blankets in fresh modern colours, £245 each, and cushions, £60 each, Fforest



Anne Barrell handcrafts unique sgraffito ceramics using mixed glazes, from £55 for a small jug

Hand-drawn sea holly design porcelain plate, from £50, Justine Munson



\*WHILE STOCKS LAST. CARPET SWATCHES AND PESTLE AND MORTAR PHOTOGRAPHED BY GRAHAM WALSER AT HEARST STUDIOS. LIFESTYLE IMAGES PHOTOGRAPHED BY CHARLIE COLMER AND RACHEL WHITTING



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# A Month in the Country

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN FEBRUARY

### CRACK A FEW EGGS FOR PANCAKE DAY



On the day preceding Ash Wednesday, the toll of the 'pancake bell', often rung by the town crier at 11am, would traditionally signify the time for Christians to attend confession and be 'shriven', or absolved, of their sins – hence the name Shrove Tuesday.

Although the confessional element of the day is now less commonly practised, the ritual of using up indulgent storecupboard ingredients in advance of Lent is still going strong – and on 13 February the nation will be flipping up a frenzy. Some believe that the pancake's ingredients are Christian motifs: eggs representing creation, salt for wholesomeness, milk for purity and flour being the staff of life – though we're not quite sure where lemon and sugar fit in...

COMPILED BY LAURAN ELSDEN AND SARAH BARRATT



### Identify catkins

AFTER MONTHS OF BARE BRANCHES AND MUTED COLOURS, there's something almost magical about spotting the first delicate signs of a new year in nature beginning to emerge. Catkins are a classic example of this – appearing on bare branches, their whimsical shape is full of the promise of what's to come. In fact, they have been present since the previous autumn, but it's only in late winter that they develop their distinctive, dangling shape, designed to catch the slightest of breezes and distribute their pollen far and wide. A feature of various trees, including birch, willow and sweet chestnut, they are most commonly seen on hazel (*Corylus avellana*). Their name, which is very much part of their charm, has evolved from the old Dutch word *katteken*, meaning 'kitten', in reference to their resemblance to a feline's tail.

### IN THE FIELDS THIS MONTH



When vegetation is scarce in colder months, farmers rely on silage to feed their livestock. Often seen 'fermenting' in summer fields in characteristic black plastic-wrapped rolls, this dense, 'pickled' grass provides the animals with the extra calories they need to get through winter.



## QUIRKY COUNTRYSIDE

### St Blaise's Feast Day

What better way to mark the feast day of St Blaise – patron saint of the woollen industry (and also, interestingly, sore throats) – than with a parade featuring a giant lantern in the shape of a ram, which takes place in St Blazey, Cornwall? Revived in the early 21st century, the celebration on 3 February involves a church service, Cornish music and indulging in one (or two) saffron buns. ➔

# A Month in the Country

*A simple make...*

## FABRIC-COVERED NOTEBOOKS

*Create unique stationery with pretty textiles and ribbon*

PROJECT AND STYLING BY KRISTIN PERERS  
PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES MERRELL

- 1 Iron your chosen piece of fabric and place it face-down onto a flat surface.
- 2 Place the book onto the fabric and draw round it using a pencil or tailor's chalk, adding 4cm all round.
- 3 With the notebook closed, apply strong craft or fabric glue to the back cover and stick in place to the fabric, ensuring it is smooth and the right way up.
- 4 Before covering the spine in fabric, cut the excess fabric at the top and bottom (up to the edge of the notebook) and fold the flaps to the main body of the fabric and glue in place.
- 5 Cut a length of ribbon about 2.5 times the height of the notebook. Apply glue and attach it to the fabric that will cover the spine, folding the bottom end under to create a neat edge.
- 6 With the book closed, glue the fabric over the spine and front cover.
- 7 Cut the four corners at an angle, then fold over the edges and glue in place to the inside of the covers.
- 8 Attach a gem or bead to the end of the ribbon bookmark to finish.



## A WALK TO TAKE SEE THE FIRST SNOWDROPS

After nature's yearly slumber, these little white droplets popping up all over the country are a delightful sign that spring is on its way. Between January and March, their delicate blooms bursting through the icy ground are a cheerful sight on cold days. The dazzling display of more than 50 different varieties at Rode Hall in Cheshire attracts visitors from far and wide – and, throughout February, its traditional Snowdrop Walk is a delightful way to explore the glorious grounds. At about a mile long, the route is a gentle one, and taking it slowly to appreciate the beauty of the flowers is encouraged. Afterwards, you can warm chilly hands with a cuppa in the tearoom (rodehall.co.uk).

## An ingredient to enjoy OYSTERS

*Designer, cook and author Sophie Conran shares her favourite seasonal flavour*

Celebrated as a delicacy around the world, renowned varieties include the rock-like English native and the delicious flat Fines de Claire from France – just make sure to eat them when there's an 'r' in the month, as this is when they're at their best. Mostly served on ice and eaten raw with lemon or shallots in red wine vinegar, they have a fresh briny taste. They are also heavenly cooked – try oysters Rockefeller, baked in the shell with finely chopped greens and lashings of butter, or add to a steak and kidney pudding for a decadent twist. For more information, see [sophieconran.com](http://sophieconran.com). ➔



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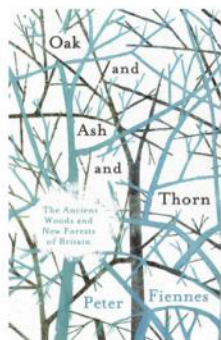


## A BOOK TO READ



### **Custard, Culverts and Cake (Emerald Publishing, £14.99)**

Perfect for anyone who is a fan of *The Archers*, this book is written by a group of professors who provide an academic insight into the themes of the show, such as food, faith and geography (and the Helen and Rob drama, of course).



### **Oak and Ash and Thorn: The Ancient Woods and New Forests of Britain (Oneworld, £16.99)**

From ancient folklore to modern literature, our woodlands have long been a source of fascination, but sadly, these natural sanctuaries are under threat. In this book, Peter Fiennes laments their loss while celebrating their wonder.

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## STAY IN... A ROMANTIC RETREAT



### *For glamour*

*Foxhill Manor, Broadway, Worcestershire*

With views over the Vale of Evesham and the Black Mountains, Foxhill Manor (top) combines retro-style interiors with opulent features, such as four-poster beds and claw-foot baths, and access to the pantry for homemade cake.

*Double B&B from £310 per night (foxhillmanor.com).*



### *For foodies*

*Cliveden House Hotel, Taplow, Berkshire*

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### *For escapism*

*Gilpin Hotel & Lake House, Windermere, Cumbria*

Windswept walks around Lake Windermere are sure to leave you in need of some rest and relaxation. Return to the luxurious Gilpin Hotel where you can enjoy a dip – glass of fizz in hand – in your own cedarwood hot tub under the stars. *Double B&B from £385 per night (thegilpin.co.uk).*



## NEWS YOU CAN USE

### LETTERS FOR LOVERS

February is the perfect month for reviving the art of letter writing, and the Wiltshire village of Lover is offering a way you can support a rural community at the same time. Capitalising on its romantic name, it has set up a pop-up post office where volunteer 'cupids' will receive Valentine's Day correspondence and process it with a special cachet hand stamp before forwarding it, so it arrives, postmarked 'Lover', in time for 14 February. Alternatively, pay a visit and pick out one of four exclusive cards to send. Money raised will go towards the village pre-school and community centre. For more details, see [lover.org.uk](http://lover.org.uk).

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# the good life

*Inspiration and advice for aspiring smallholders*



## *How to...*UPCYCLE OUTDOORS

SAVE MONEY AND ADD A UNIQUE TOUCH TO YOUR ALLOTMENT OR VEGETABLE PATCH BY RE-USING OR 'UPCYCLING' EVERYDAY OBJECTS.

**PLANTERS** Old Belfast sinks, tin bath tubs, even worn-out vintage suitcases – there is no end to the list of potential planters for your plot, many of which are far more interesting than a terracotta pot. You just need to make sure that anything you use has drainage and will keep soil contained, otherwise you can let your imagination run wild. Wooden wine crates make attractive herb planters when grouped together (put hanging basket liners inside them first), and a row of large empty tomato tins filled with basil or parsley makes a great alternative to a windowbox. Old tyres are especially good for containing potatoes,

as you can simply add another tyre on top to 'earth up' the plants and get a bigger crop.



Spend winter evenings by the fire perusing seed catalogues and planning the year's produce

**SEED TRAYS** Don't bin plastic fruit containers when they could be used as seed trays instead. Old bits of guttering, meanwhile, are perfect for starting off rows of peas or salads in the greenhouse. Simply seal up the ends with tape, then, when the time comes to plant, dig an identical-sized trench, remove the tape and slide the seedlings straight in. Sweet pea seeds can be sown in toilet rolls filled with compost – roots won't be disturbed on planting, as the cardboard degrades into the soil.

**LABELS** Lolly sticks have a long tradition of being used in gardeners' sheds, but attractive plant labels can be created using a variety of items. Painted smooth pebbles →

# the good life

or stones are super-simple but make for a wonderfully colourful addition – children will love making them, too. Use a non-toxic acrylic paint for safe handling and to prevent any impact on the crop. If you're fond of a glass of wine, then bamboo skewers pushed into old corks – written on with a marker pen – make good labels for small pots and seeds. For something that's both striking to look at and durable in all weathers, invest in a metal stamp kit to transform old spoons. Simply flatten them out with a hammer and then press the letters into the flat face.

**CLOCHES** Used to keep frost and slugs away from young seedlings, glass cloches look beautiful but can be expensive to buy. Large plastic drinks bottles do the job just as well – simply cut off the bottom of a bottle and invert it over the plant, then poke a few holes in the top to help with ventilation.

**i** For more ideas, see *Garden Notes* in this issue.



## BREED OF THE MONTH Eriskay pony

These tough little characters were once the working ponies of crofters in the Hebrides, carrying baskets of peat for fuel and seaweed to fertilise the land. A dense waterproof coat in winter enables them to live outdoors in harsh weather, and their strength means that most can carry a light adult. Foals are born black or bay, but tend to turn grey as they get older. Eriskays love people, and their gentle nature makes them perfect riding ponies for children.



## Go on a course: HEN-KEEPING

ANYONE APPROACHING SARA WARD'S BRENTFORD HOME, AKA 'HEN CORNER', might find it an unusual location for a chicken-keeping course. But beyond her beautiful Victorian terraced house, her surprisingly large garden – complete with fruit trees, well-stocked vegetable patch, two beehives and at least 20 hens – will transport you to the depths of the countryside.

Over tea and egg mayonnaise on brioche (delicious, with rich yellow yolks), Sara explains the history of Hen Corner – she's funny, frank and friendly, which puts everyone at ease. After a short tour around her garden, she begins a straightforward description of the feeding, housing and medical needs of household chickens. We even get to take a turn holding one, as Sara shows us how. A gorgeous Buff Orpington called Butternut proves to be a bit of a handful, but one tiny bantam happily nestles sleepily in the crook of my arm while Sara answers our final questions. We're sent away with our own box of eggs, a set of invaluable course notes and a new enthusiasm for all things hen-related.



**i** *Urban Chicken Keeping Course, £45, Brentford, Middlesex. For details of further courses, see [hencorner.com](http://hencorner.com).*

## OTHERS TO TRY...

- **FOR A BEAUTIFUL LOCATION** *Cotswold Chickens – Getting Started with Chickens, £25 ([cotswoldchickens.com](http://cotswoldchickens.com)).* Claire Taylor has been teaching a range of hen-keeping courses in the midst of the Warwickshire countryside for 12 years now, so she knows a thing or two about getting you started.
- **FOR REHOMING HENS** *Humble by Nature – Caring for Ex-Batt Hens, from £105 ([humblebynature.com](http://humblebynature.com)).* Pay a visit to TV presenter Kate Humble's farm near Monmouth and learn why ex-commercial birds can be both brilliant layers and great family chickens.
- **FOR A RANGE OF BREEDS** *Hollywater Hens – Beginner Chicken Course, £40 ([hollywaterhens.co.uk](http://hollywaterhens.co.uk)).* As well as writing for *Country Living* and penning two books on smallholding, Suzie Baldwin has 300 organically raised hens roaming on her Hampshire holding. So, after learning the basics, you can pick out your favourites to buy and take home.



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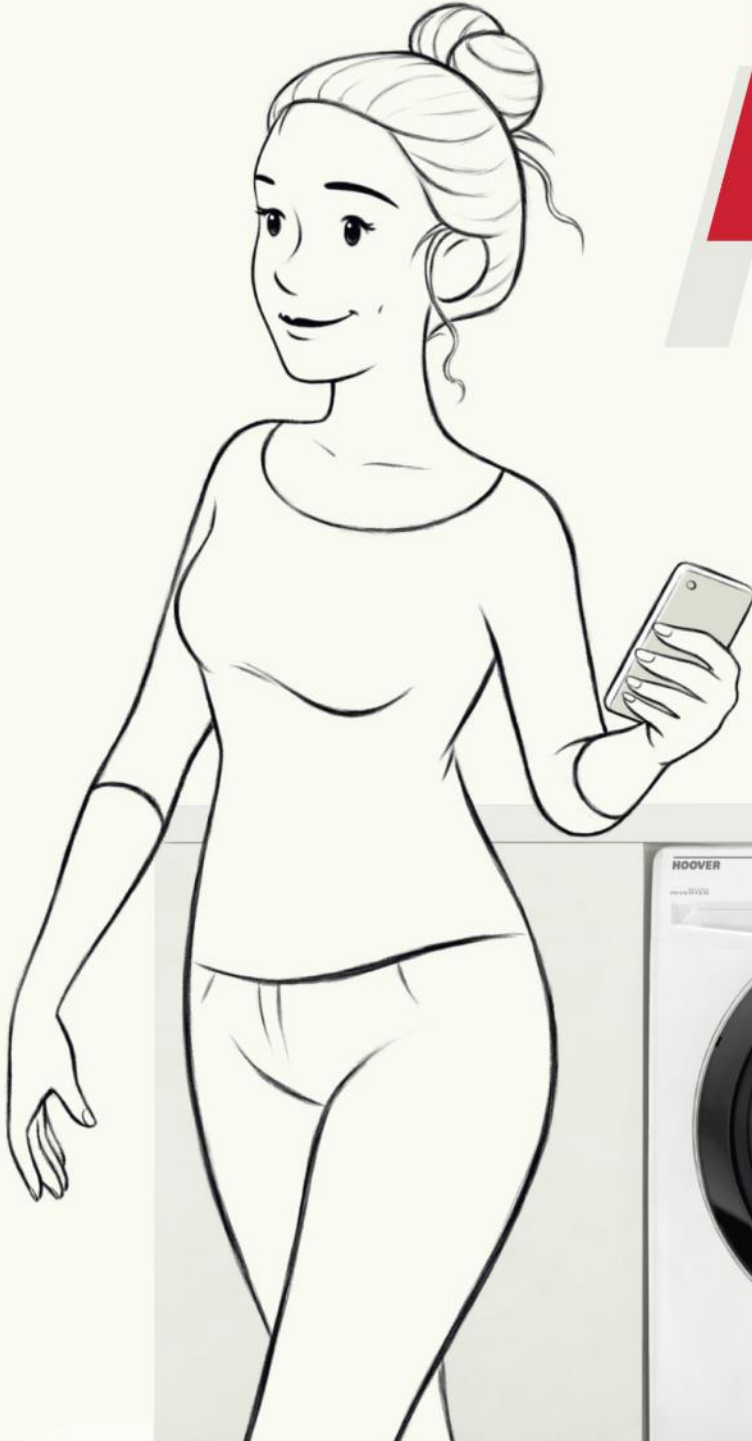


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# COUNTRY LOVING

A cavorting cow lives up to her name and ruins Imogen Green's plans for a romantic rendezvous

**MY LATE HUSBAND TOLD ME THAT, WHEN HE WAS A CHILD,** there used to be a privy in the farmhouse garden, and he dreaded using it in the dark. One night he was sitting there, terrified, when he got the horrible sense that he wasn't alone. He stretched out a trembling hand – and felt feathers. A friendly hen had decided to roost there. As if she sensed his fear, she suddenly started squawking in an alarmed fashion (sending my husband fleeing back to the house) and in the morning he found an egg perched on a ledge by the loo. I see this as an example of how, if you spend enough time on a farm, the livestock will begin reacting to your moods.

This evening, when I was letting the cows back in after milking, one of our youngest ones – named 'Rebel' on account of her playful nature – was studying me with interest. Perhaps she could sense the excitement and fear coursing through my veins. I've liked my handsome neighbour Matthew for over a year, and last month he kissed me. But now I was anxious about the next stage – scared that a love affair might feel disrespectful to my husband's memory.

Cows could probably give some good advice about love. They are experts in hopeless, long-term devotion. On a dairy farm they may be parted from their calves early, but they never stop caring about them. Even two years later, they'll recognise them joyfully – our herd is full of mothers and daughters who have reconnected, and now graze and milk side by side, as if they have never spent a moment apart.

Tonight was our first proper date, and Matthew was taking me to a Valentine's Day supper at a smart restaurant. When he came to pick me up, he was quiet and on edge. Then, as I was getting in his car, I heard an ominous bellowing from the stalls. I rushed there to find the wire stamped flat and Rebel missing. I told Matthew he didn't have to help, but he insisted. So, clad in wellies and old coats, we set off across the churned-up pasture. Rebel was on the horizon, and as we got closer she skipped with delight – charging through a hedge. At that point, Matthew fell and I had to help him up. It was an exceptionally slippery, muddy field. A few paces further on, I also found myself sliding along on my back. By the time we finally dragged Rebel back home (by way of wading through a swollen stream and a dramatic visit to her latest calf), it was gone ten, and Matthew and I were soaked, pricked, muddy and frozen.

We slumped either side of the kitchen table – any smartness achieved at the beginning of the evening now expunged by a generous covering of mud. This was not how I had hoped the evening would go. Eventually, the heat from the Rayburn thawed me out enough to break the silence by offering him a glass of wine. He smiled, creasing the dried mud on his face in the process, which I took as a yes. "Cows always seem to know when it's a special time,"

I said. "You wouldn't believe the Christmases they've ruined."

"I would," he said. "I saw what they did to my garden, remember." I'd forgotten we'd met when my herd trashed his shrubbery. Then I realised he was shaking with laughter, bits of twig falling from his hair. "I don't suppose we can still go to that restaurant?" I said, looking down at our bedaubed attire, before dissolving into giggles myself. After that, everything seemed ridiculous – the peculiar Spanish omelette we cobbled together from the contents of my fridge, even our final, mud-caked embrace before Matthew set off home. But, then, that's what happens when animals interfere. 🐄



**DON'T MISS OUR RURAL DATING SERIES ON BBC TWO**

*Love in the Countryside*, inspired by *Country Living's* dating site [country-loving.co.uk](http://country-loving.co.uk), will be airing soon. To find out more, see page 49.

**'Cowgirl seeks partner who knows how to see the funny side'**



A photograph of a bedroom interior. In the center is a light-colored wooden chest of drawers with three drawers. On top of it sits a lamp with a pleated, patterned shade, a vase of red and orange flowers, and a small framed picture. To the left is a white upholstered armchair with a red cushion and a floral patterned pillow. To the right is a bed with a white tufted headboard and a colorful, fringed blanket draped over it. An open book and a small floral arrangement are on the bed. The walls are covered in patterned wallpaper, and there are floral curtains on the left. The overall atmosphere is warm and inviting.

# READY FOR *bed*

For a serene sanctuary in a timeless country scheme, team pretty linens with vintage styles and instill a restful sense of calm

WORDS BY ALAINA BINKS



## DECORATION

Subtle shades such as neutrals, pale blues, dusky pinks and chalky greens tend to work best in a bedroom, as they have a gentle, calming effect. However, when used sparingly, stronger tones can add distinctive character without becoming overbearing – try a yellow lampshade or a side table painted in an emerald green or bright blue. As there are several ways you can introduce pattern – on linen and cushions, a Roman or roll-up blind at a window – the walls can be left relatively

plain by painting them in a single colour. Wallpapers in small-scale prints such as a faded floral, sprig motif or fine stripe can also add pretty decoration. Mix and match coordinating patterns elsewhere in the room in a variety of scales, all chiming with the colour of the paper, but stick to a limited number of prints if it has a dominant design. Alternatively, a stencil or collection of paintings and prints will instantly bring visual interest in a simpler way. ➔

## WHERE TO BUY

BLITHFIELD [blithfield.co.uk](http://blithfield.co.uk)  
 CABBAGES & ROSES 020 3696 1310; [cabbagesandroses.com](http://cabbagesandroses.com)  
 COLEFAX & FOWLER [coifax.com](http://coifax.com)  
 FARROW & BALL 01202 876141; [farrow-ball.com](http://farrow-ball.com)  
 THE LINEN GARDEN [thelinengarden.co.uk](http://thelinengarden.co.uk)

RAPTURE & WRIGHT 01608 652442; [raptureandwright.co.uk](http://raptureandwright.co.uk)  
 SANDERSON AT THE STYLE LIBRARY [stylelibrary.com/sanderson](http://stylelibrary.com/sanderson)  
 THE STENCIL LIBRARY [stencil-library.co.uk](http://stencil-library.co.uk)  
 ST JUDE'S [stjudes.co.uk](http://stjudes.co.uk)  
 SUSIE WATSON DESIGNS 0344 980 8185; [susiewatsondesigns.co.uk](http://susiewatsondesigns.co.uk)  
 VANESSA ARBUTHNOTT 01285 831437; [vanessaarbuthnott.co.uk](http://vanessaarbuthnott.co.uk)

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BEDROOM SPECIAL



## BEDS & HEADBOARDS

For best results, choose a bed frame with a timeless style that is sympathetic to the look and period of your home and complements other pieces of furniture. A carved ornate bedstead – often with upholstered sections in a simple stripe or check fabric – has a classic and pretty feel and can lend itself well to a French or Gustavian scheme. A wrought-iron bed brings elegance to a country cottage, while an upholstered design feels more indulgent and sumptuous in both a

traditional and modern setting. Even a simple divan base can be transformed by introducing a headboard to add colour and charm. Upholstered options are available, and many can be covered in a material of your choice. You could get creative by hanging a length of fabric, floor-to-ceiling, behind the head of the bed – this effect can also be achieved by using paper cut into a decorative shape and pasted to the wall, or a painted wooden panel cut to size. ➔



### WHERE TO BUY

**BUTTON & SPRUNG** 0333 320 1801; [buttonandsprung.com](http://buttonandsprung.com)

**DESIGN VINTAGE** 01243 573852; [designvintage.co.uk](http://designvintage.co.uk)

**THE DORMY HOUSE** 01264 365808; [thedormyhouse.com](http://thedormyhouse.com)

**FEATHER & BLACK** 01243 380600; [featherandblack.com](http://featherandblack.com)

**THE HEADBOARD WORKSHOP** 01291 628216;

[theheadboardworkshop.co.uk](http://theheadboardworkshop.co.uk)

**LEPORELLO** 01483 284109; [leporello.co.uk](http://leporello.co.uk)

**LOAF** 0845 468 0713; [loaf.com](http://loaf.com)

**NORDIC STYLE** [nordicstyle.com](http://nordicstyle.com)

**SCUMBLE GOOSIE** 01453 731305; [scumblegoosie.co.uk](http://scumblegoosie.co.uk)

**WROUGHT IRON & BRASS BED COMPANY** 01485 542516;

[wroughtironandbrassbed.co.uk](http://wroughtironandbrassbed.co.uk)

**OPPOSITE** The check fabric on the headboard and cushion lends this bedroom a classic, homespun feel  
**THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP** A painted wooden single bed looks smart;

subtle patterns enhance a wrought-iron headboard and cushion lends this bedroom a classic, homespun feel  
an unexpected panel of wallpaper hangs at the bed head; floral fabric from Cabbages & Roses has been used to add a feminine touch behind the bed

## STORAGE & FURNITURE

For a calming effect, furniture should be easy on the eye while concealing any clutter, so consider the size of your room and the items you have to store, then tailor your choice to suit. A wardrobe or a run of built-in cupboards gives you space to hang clothing at full height, and a chest of drawers or trunk at the end of the bed can be the perfect place for extra linen. If space allows, a concealed study-cupboard or bureau can turn into a desk, while an

armchair can provide a spot to rest and read. Mix together old and new – antique pieces with a natural patina will look great next to contemporary styles.

Alternatively, if your room is small, consider made-to-measure built-in options, or streamlined pieces such as a peg rail spanning the width of one wall to create a compact hanging system. Make the most of space under a bed by using it to store items in baskets and crates. ➔



**THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP** Children's toys can be kept in personalised wooden boxes under the bed; position a trunk or basket at the end of the bed for even more storage; a bureau with drawers

offers compact extra storage space and adds character; wallpaper the inside of a wardrobe for decorative detail **OPPOSITE** Painted in a subtle mint shade, this run of cupboards looks both rustic and elegant

### WHERE TO BUY

**THE DORMY HOUSE** 01264 365808; [thedormyhouse.com](http://thedormyhouse.com)

**HEAL'S** [heals.com](http://heals.com)

**HOME BARN** 01628 474011; [homebarnshop.co.uk](http://homebarnshop.co.uk)

**JAMES MAYOR** [jamesmayor.co.uk](http://jamesmayor.co.uk)

**LOAF** 0845 468 0713; [loaf.com](http://loaf.com)

**NEPTUNE** 01793 427427; [neptune.com](http://neptune.com)

**PIMPERNEL & PARTNERS** [pimpernelandpartners.co.uk](http://pimpernelandpartners.co.uk)

**ROWEN & WREN** 01276 451077; [rowenandwren.co.uk](http://rowenandwren.co.uk)

**SCUMBLE GOOSIE** 01453 731305; [scumblegoosie.co.uk](http://scumblegoosie.co.uk)



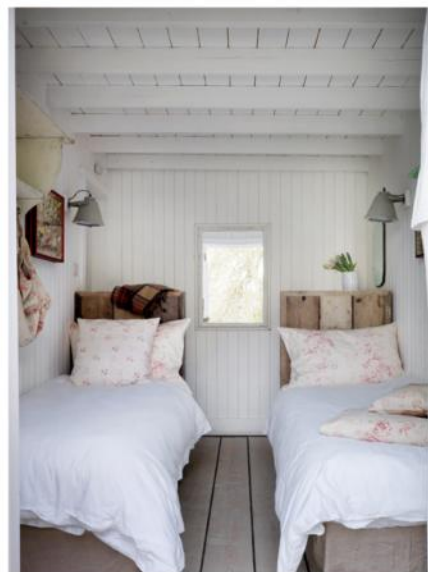
## LINEN & BEDDING

Whether you favour rustic soft linen, crisp, breathable cotton or delicate embroidery, choosing bedlinen should be relatively simple, especially with the reassurance that it is easy to change if you tire of the look. If you prefer patterned designs, try heritage prints of stripes, gingham checks, pretty florals and other small-scale motifs in colours that work well together in a country bedroom. It's sensible to have several sets that you can mix and match when others are being laundered. Offset simple white bedding by layering plenty of vibrant cushions, blankets, quilts and eiderdowns on top, again that complement other features in the room.



### WHERE TO BUY

**BRONTE BY MOON** [brontebymoon.co.uk](http://brontebymoon.co.uk)  
**COLOGNE & COTTON** 0845 262 2212; [cologneandcotton.com](http://cologneandcotton.com)  
**DECORATIVE COUNTRY LIVING** 01400 273632;  
[decorativecountryliving.com](http://decorativecountryliving.com)  
**HARRIET HARE** [harriethare.com](http://harriethare.com)  
**JOHN LEWIS** 0345 604 9049; [johnlewis.com](http://johnlewis.com)  
**LINEN ME** 020 8133 3853; [linenme.com](http://linenme.com)  
**THE LINEN WORKS** 020 3744 1020; [thelinenworks.co.uk](http://thelinenworks.co.uk)  
**MELIN TREGWYNT** 01348 891644; [melintregwynt.co.uk](http://melintregwynt.co.uk)  
**POPPY AND HONESTY** [poppyandhonesty.com](http://poppyandhonesty.com)  
**SUSIE WATSON** 0344 980 8185; [susiewatsondesigns.co.uk](http://susiewatsondesigns.co.uk)  
**TOAST** [toa.st](http://toa.st)  
**WELSH BLANKETS** 01570 493241; [welshblankets.co.uk](http://welshblankets.co.uk)



**CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT** Add interest to your bedding with a bold-coloured, textured throw and vintage-style cushions; painting a bedroom yellow will lift the spirits – team it with grey for a

contemporary look; florals mixed with stripes can complement each other when they adhere to the same colour palette; make white bedlinen appear brighter by adding patterned cushions and pillows

CABBAGES & ROSES BEDLINEN. SELECTION AVAILABLE FROM JOHN LEWIS

## FLOORING

Being soft underfoot, carpet is the most comfortable choice for a bedroom. A tight loop or luxurious cut pile in a neutral shade has timeless appeal, while a patterned design offers more impact. For a rustic look, go for natural flooring such as soft jute. Alternatively, soften painted wooden floorboards with one large rug or a group of smaller ones, or one placed each side of the bed. ➔

## WHERE TO BUY

**THE BRAIDED RUG COMPANY** 01654 767248; braided-rug.co.uk

**BRINTONS** brintons.co.uk

**CARPETRIGHT** 0330 333 3444; carpetright.co.uk

**COX & COX** 0330 333 2123; coxandcox.co.uk

**CRUCIAL TRADING** 01562 743747; crucial-trading.com


**IKEA** ikea.com/gb/en

**TED TODD** tedtodd.co.uk





## MATTRESSES, DUVETS & PILLOWS

Choosing the right mattress, duvet and pillows can make a huge difference to the quality of your sleep. All too often, though, these carry hefty price tags, so must be carefully considered. It's best to buy a mattress from a retailer where you can try it out, as there are several options – firmness, for example – that should be tailored to individual needs. Natural-filled duvets and pillows, often using duck or goose down or wool, give a plump, luxurious feel and finish. 



**ABOVE** Natural fillings, such as cotton, wool and mohair, ensure mattresses are comfortable and long-lasting **LEFT** A range of pillows is handy for a variety of needs – embroidered cushions create a vintage feel

### WHERE TO BUY

**DEVON DUVETS** [devonduvets.com](http://devonduvets.com)

**DFS** 0808 159 5904; [dfs.co.uk](http://dfs.co.uk)

**DREAMS** 0800 652 5090; [dreams.co.uk](http://dreams.co.uk)

**HARRISON** [harrisonbeds.co.uk](http://harrisonbeds.co.uk)

**HERDY** [herdysleep.com](http://herdysleep.com)

**JOHN LEWIS** 0345 604 9049; [johnlewis.com](http://johnlewis.com)

**SILENTNIGHT** 01282 813333; [silentnight.co.uk](http://silentnight.co.uk)

**VISPRING** [vispring.com](http://vispring.com)

**WARREN EVANS** 020 7693 8988; [warrenevans.com](http://warrenevans.com)

**THE WHITE COMPANY** [thewhitecompany.com](http://thewhitecompany.com)

SELECTION OF MATTRESSES: COUNTRY LIVING COLLECTION BY DFS; PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLINE ARBER; TIM BEDDOW; SIMON BEVAN; MARK BOLTON; SIMON BROWN; CHARLIE COLLIER; JAKE EASTHAM; CATHERINE GRATWICKE; LUJ JEFFERY; JAMES MERRELL; LUCINDA SYMONS; NATO WELTON; RACHEL WHITING

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*Kitchen  
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# Kitchen Table Talent

THIS MONTH:  
THE NORFOLK PIE MAKER



In this series we celebrate the home-grown entrepreneurs who have turned their hobby into a thriving business

WORDS BY LAURAN ELSDEN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALUN CALLENDER

SEW • COOK • WRITE • DRAW • MAKE • GROW

# Kitchen Table Talent



A NORFOLK  
BUSINESS

**"There's a beautiful diversity of flora and fauna here. Spring is my favourite season - I love the acid green of unfolding leaves.**

**When out walking, I often stop to look at flowers or watch insects. One of the reasons I invented our wild garlic pork pie was to have a good excuse to go foraging.**

**You can eat exceptionally well here. We have marvellous brewers, cheese and chutney makers, butchers and bakers."**





With a clang, Sarah Pettegree opens one of four sturdy oven doors. As steam billows out, she removes a baking tray laden with 30 golden pork pies, each individually scored to indicate the flavours within – one hole for onion marmalade, three for piccalilli. There may be a chill in the air outside, but it’s warm in the kitchen – the buttery smell of cooked pastry wafting through the room. It’s a scent that few people can resist, possibly because it stirs up a sense of nostalgia. In fact, the British love of pies dates back as far as the 14th century, when the first ‘pyes’ became popular. However, the delectable savoury creations that Sarah makes for her business, Bray’s Cottage Pork Pies, couldn’t be further from those early versions. With beautifully embellished pastry crusts and carefully selected fillings, they turn the humble pie into something altogether more special.

Sarah first started her business – based in Holt in the north Norfolk countryside – when she spotted a gap in the market for high-quality, hand-raised artisan pies. “I didn’t want to lean too much on the past,” she says. “So I started from scratch with my

**OPPOSITE AND THIS PAGE**  
Sarah makes her contemporary artisan pies from scratch, using locally sourced and foraged ingredients to create imaginative fillings such as

brandy and prune. She rented a converted hay barn in the grounds of Bayfield Hall to accommodate her new business after moving to the countryside

recipes.” Distancing herself from more traditional butcher’s shop-style creations, she hoped to make something that could be enjoyed by everyone and also reflected her own palate, which meant, for a start, that no jelly would be included in her creations: “I found that there was a strong demographic – mainly made up of younger people and women – who just don’t like it.”

Sarah’s fascination with flavour first began when she was a child helping her mother in the kitchen of the farm she grew up on. “I’ve always been interested in the alchemy of cooking,” she says. It’s a love that’s clearly evident in her experimental approach to her pie fillings – one featuring black pudding from Wisbech has quickly become a bestseller, while the addition of prune and brandy during the winter months is also a big hit. There are, of course, certain combinations that haven’t proved so popular. “I always wanted to have a go at making pies with seaweed, to get that nice umami flavour that’s very on trend,” Sarah says. “I tried mixing it through, but let’s just say the outcome was not nearly as appetising as I’d wished for!”

Despite her early interest in cooking, it took years for Sarah to revisit this passion. Instead, following a humanities degree, she embarked on a career in the Civil Service, working as a management accountant in Norwich. Although she admits the city was “no heaving metropolis”, the urban life left her craving a return to the countryside of her childhood: “The only wildlife I’d see were pigeons. I missed walking over rutted ground instead of concrete pavements.” Eventually, she decided to make the move – and in 2007, she, her partner Derek and their cat (called Mouse) moved into a cottage outside the Georgian market town of Holt. The relocation provided the perfect opportunity ☺



## “I’ve never had an overdraft or any loans – I just sat down with a spreadsheet”

to put her dream of starting a pie business into action. Aware of the limitations of her tiny kitchen, Sarah used savings to rent a space in a converted flint hay barn in the grounds of the nearby country house, Bayfield Hall. This not only gave her the chance to work somewhere surrounded by meadows frequented by barn owls, marsh harriers and summer swallows, but also meant that she had neighbours, based in the house’s other converted outbuildings, who were fellow food and drink producers.

Drawing on the skills she’d acquired as an accountant, Sarah set about getting the business off the ground: “I’ve never had an overdraft or taken out any loans. I just sat down with a spreadsheet, put in various scenarios and worked out how much we needed to sell, and at what price, to stay afloat.” Although she didn’t have any culinary qualifications, she started small, developing her own recipes and selling her pies at local markets, where she listened carefully to any feedback. As her confidence grew, she researched and approached nearby pubs and delis,

**ABOVE, FROM LEFT** A delicious buttery smell of warm pastry fills the barn when Sarah removes her freshly baked

pies from the oven; Sarah frequently receives orders for four-tier ‘wedding pies’ through her online shop

asking if they would like to stock her creations. Many said yes. Any early profits were reinvested, while Sarah turned to social media as a means of free promotion: “Twitter is a great way to tell our story – people like to help each other out, too. If you’ve got a question, no matter how mundane, someone will usually get back to you with an answer.” Now, just over ten years later, Sarah’s pies are available at hundreds of independent shops up and down the country (although keeping fellow Norfolk businesses well supplied still remains close to her heart). She also has a thriving online shop, where customers can order four-tier ‘wedding pies’ and personalised celebration pies (inspired by those historically served at banquets) as well as an array of more traditional sizes.

A busy working week – baking on Mondays and Thursdays, mixing up new batches on Wednesdays and deliveries every day in between – means lunch hours have become sacred for Sarah. When she can escape, she uses this time to explore, and occasionally gather special ingredients to work into her recipes. Today, that means a walk down the valley to hunt for wild garlic growing on the woodland floor. “I love foraging,” she says, “but I’m a bit of a hostage to the weather – the garlic doesn’t come until it wants to!” Back in the barn, a small team of helpers – mainly recruited from local villages and headed

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WHAT I'VE LEARNT...



**That I should trust my business judgment.** My instincts, backed up by a dollop of common sense, turned out to be right surprisingly often.

**It's a human need to feel that what you do is appreciated.** My heart sings every time someone tells me how much they enjoy what I make.

**Having a small business means flexing your creative skill.** From writing tweets to posting on Instagram, you're always trying to make things as appealing as you can.

**Working harder than you've ever done in any other job** means other aspects of your life can take a back seat. I often used to paint before I set up, but I'm so busy now that my studio has become a little neglected.

**You shouldn't feel bound by tradition.** We make a contemporary product by hand, which means we have to experiment - there are some rules we won't compromise on, though. For example, we only deal with independent stockists, never supermarkets.

**There will be surprises along the way.** One of my Twitter followers congratulated us for being named one of the Top 100 UK Brands for Social Media - I hadn't even realised we'd been nominated...

up by Sarah's partner Derek - are neatly packaging up boxes for delivery. With a customer base ranging from pubs to wedding parties, they never know what kind of order will come in next. "We made one for the Colman's Mustard Shop in Norwich recently," Sarah says. "The mayor came along and cut a slice with his ceremonial sword!" Her recipes have also proved popular with the likes of Heston Blumenthal and Jimmy Doherty and, since 2013, she has been invited to feed the well-heeled guests at Soho House's annual festival in London. "There's nothing better than being told 'That's the nicest pork pie I've ever tasted'," Sarah says, smiling. "When I was an accountant, no one ever said, 'That's the best spreadsheet I've ever seen', so it's a great feeling when people are so full of praise - that's what makes it all worthwhile." 🇬🇧

Sarah enjoys foraging for wild garlic while out walking, and often uses it in her pies

**i** For more information about Bray's Cottage Pork Pies and to buy Sarah's products, visit [perfectpie.co.uk](http://perfectpie.co.uk). CL readers can receive a 10 per cent discount by using the code CLPIE10 at the checkout (offer ends 31 March 2018).

**i** See other makers and bakers at the Country Living Spring Fair. If you are starting your own business and would like to apply for a free stall at our Pop-up Market, see opposite.



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# Looking for love *in the countryside*

When *Country Living* published an article in 1999 about lonely farmers, little did we know it would lead to years of love stories. Now inspiring a new BBC television series, we're starting the next chapter

**f**rom the overwhelming response we received to that article to the latest exciting TV project our campaign has inspired, this is how nearly 20 years of rural romance has unfolded...

**August 1999** "Let *Country Living* help you find the love of your life!" This was the bold offer we put at the end of an article in one of our summer issues. The piece, called *The Farmer Wants a Wife*, was an in-depth discussion of the challenges farmers face when looking for love. "Years ago, this problem wouldn't have existed," we pointed out. "Back in Thomas Hardy's day, the farm was a teeming workplace, most villages had a weekly dance and there would have been plenty of partners to choose from. But post-war, there has been a drift to towns, and farmers have become an endangered species." We invited

readers to write in if they knew of any eligible countrymen or women who were seeking a partner – and were amazed when an avalanche of letters arrived.

**November 1999** We decided something needed to be done – so, just before Christmas, we published the profiles of 13 male farmers, asking women who would like to meet them to write in.

**February 2000** So many people responded (some of the farmers received

more than 200 letters), we decided to set up a matchmaking service. It launched just in time for Valentine's Day, and included more than 1,000 country-loving lonely hearts.

**Summer 2000** The first *Country Living* weddings took place – of the original 13 farmers we featured, two tied the knot. Flush with our success, we did it all again – this time with 20 farmers featured.

**November 2001** ITV turned our experience into a programme. Called *Farmer Wants a Wife*, presented by *Country Living* staffer Catherine Gee and filmed partly in our offices, it proved hugely popular and went on to be nominated for a BAFTA Award.

**March 2004** Following the success of the UK version, Belgium produced its own show, and 30 more countries followed...

**February 2001-2009** Over the next eight years, we featured 74 further farmers (including five women). The campaign



# COUNTRY LOVING

continued to be a success – at the last count, 18 of the farmers we featured are now married (and have 21 children between them!), with dozens of others happily paired up.

**February 2016** In keeping with the trend for finding love online, we unveiled our own dating website, Country Loving ([country-loving.co.uk](http://country-loving.co.uk)). This sparked national interest, with an article appearing in *The Telegraph* and interviews taking place on BBC Radio.

## A ROUND-THE-WORLD SUCCESS STORY

Producer Howard Huntridge, who worked on the first *Farmer Wants a Wife* spin-off in Belgium, went on to produce versions in more than 30 countries over the following 15 years. “After our success in Belgium, we were asked to do one in Holland,” he says. “Then it spread like bushfire across Europe! Last autumn it aired in 16 different territories and it’s become the highest-grossing Dutch TV show.” Howard says he’s not surprised it

appeals to so many people. “I think there are countless instant ways of meeting people via apps and social media, so they can become meaningless. But *Farmers Wants a Wife* really means something. These people want to meet someone and settle down. It’s genuine romance – which is why the show has since led to 189 weddings and nearly 100 babies. Even when these relationships happen across thousands of miles, which is often the case in countries such as Canada and Australia, love always finds a way.”

## More happy endings?

A new chapter of country matchmaking will soon begin with BBC Two’s new primetime show *Love in the Countryside*, inspired by the work of *Country Living* and hosted by Sara Cox. Here’s a sneak peek at some of those taking part



### HEATHER

**28, equine vet, Yorkshire**

**Why did you decide to apply for *Love in the Countryside*?**

My practice manager put me forward for it, so I have her to blame.

**How are you feeling about being on the show?**

I’m definitely nervous – it’s really taken me out of my comfort zone.

**How long have you been single?**

For about seven years. Until recently, I haven’t been in one place – because of university, veterinary school and placements in the summer. Now I’ve

stopped running around like a headless chicken, I’d really like to meet someone.

**Do you go for looks or personality?**

I think an initial attraction is really important, but I hate using the love word in terms of ‘love at first sight’. For me, it’s based more on a woman’s intuition.

**Would you like to have a family some day?**

One step at a time! Having said that, it does put the pressure on when everyone I know is getting married or buying a house. I’m just going to see what happens.



### MARK

**52, farrier, Norfolk**

**Does working on a farm make it harder to meet women?**

It’s definitely more difficult to find someone when you work for yourself. Then, if you do, they’re either spoken for or not interested!

**Who would you like to meet?**

A girl who can sink a pint or two. It doesn’t matter if she’s blonde, brunette or a redhead. I’ve been single now for 15 months, and I just want to find someone who will put up with me.

**What sort of boyfriend do you think you’d make?**

I am gregarious and

kind, and I do have a bit of a romantic side.

I like to buy flowers and am sure I would make someone a good husband – or so people tell me! It’s just about finding the right person.

**So how are you feeling about being on the show?**

I have thought about the fact I will be going on a date on television, but my friends have sat me down and rightly told me: “You will never get this opportunity again, so enjoy it.” It’s all really exciting. 🍀

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## WENDY

59, pig farmer, Herefordshire

**What outcome are you hoping for on *Love in the Countryside*?**

I'd love to find a partner – also it sounded like a lot of fun and a great way to meet new people!

**Do your children think going on the show is a good idea?**

One of my daughters is wildly enthusiastic about it, while the other thinks I've gone round the twist. My two sons, on the other hand, think it's quite fun.

**Have you had any dating disasters?**

After weeks of fancying a local man who I'd become quite good friends with, I plucked up the courage to ask him out, only for him to run a mile. It's tough



because you don't meet anyone outside your circle of friends or family.

**Are you a romantic?**

I used to believe in love at first sight when I was 18 but, when you get to my age, it is hard to fall in love that way. Now, I prefer a relationship that blossoms naturally.

## RICHARD

39, sheep and cattle farmer, Dumfries and Galloway

**Is this one of the boldest things you have ever done?**

For me, one of the biggest things was coming out. I didn't do it until I was 32, and I'm 40 this year. But I'm fortunate – when I did, everyone was so supportive.

**How long have you been single?**

Four years, but I've got hardly any spare time to meet anyone. I'm on the panel for a children's charity, and I work in a bar at the weekend.

**Does being a farmer make it more difficult?**

Yes – I work long hours and I live two-and-a-half hours from Edinburgh and Glasgow, where the nearest gay scene is.



**What do your friends and family think about you appearing on the programme?**

Some of them are a bit surprised, as I usually keep my personal life very quiet. They're all looking forward to watching me, though – I'll probably cringe!

## PAUL

33, farmhand, Worcestershire

**Why did you apply to go on *Love in the Countryside*?**

After asking my friends for their opinion, I thought: what have I got to lose – and what have I got to gain?

**Do you think it is harder to meet someone in the countryside than in the city?**

Yes, with a nine-to-five office job, you do get more free time to meet people, especially in the city. I've never been out in London but, from what I gather, Londoners are out every single night of the week!

**What kind of boyfriend would you make?**

I'm quite traditional and old-fashioned. On the first date, I would take a lady for a meal to get to know her



– I like to pay rather than go half and half.

**What else do you want to get out of this experience?**

To promote what it's like to work in the farming community. I think a lot of people don't have much of an idea about what we actually do.

## ED

25, dairy and arable farmer, Lancashire

**Do you have an idea about the sort of person you would like to meet on the show?**

I'm going to go with the flow. I want to read the letters before looking at the photographs.

**What kind of boyfriend would you make?**

I've probably been an awful partner over the past couple of years, because I was busy with other stuff and my head was elsewhere. But now I like to think I would be generous and caring.

**Have you been on a blind date before?**

No, I haven't – or done online dating. It will certainly be intriguing. This is very much a case of



jumping in at the deep end!  
**How would you feel if you met someone on the show?**

I would be chuffed, but I don't want to get my hopes up in case I'm disappointed.  
**Will you be watching yourself?**

I'm sure I will – and I'll have a good laugh! 🍷

*Watch out for the first episode of **Love in the Countryside** airing early this year on BBC Two. For more information about the show, visit [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk).*



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# The romance *of the rose*

Combining her love of the natural world with delicate papercraft, Suzi Mclaughlin creates exquisite blooms, from single stems to bouquets of buds and blossom

WORDS BY SARAH BARRATT • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW MONTGOMERY





**A**

fter the excitement of the festive season comes a lull – the trees are bare and the colours of nature muted as we wait and watch for the first signs of spring. But in paper artist Suzi McLaughlin's Northamptonshire studio, spring has already arrived. Swaths of delicate white daisies are draped over an oak bed frame suspended from the ceiling, jars of pale peach peonies perch on the windowsill and clusters of soft-pink cherry blossom are scattered across the desk. Sitting in the midst of this floral cornucopia is Suzi, carefully curling cut-out petals around a piece of wire before securing them to a twine stem. She is constructing one of her signature roses, which, with Valentine's Day approaching, are in high demand.

Few gestures are more romantic than the simple act of giving blooms, and Suzi's work brings a modern touch to this time-honoured tradition. "The thing that makes paper flowers so special is that they can be kept," she smiles, slotting another finished rose into a waiting jar. "I'm often asked to make bridal bouquets that can be handed down to the next generation. You can even spritz them with a signature fragrance – the paper holds the scent well." Her passion for working with paper began (like so many great love affairs) at university, when she was studying textiles in Falmouth. "I made samples out of paper and would end up preferring the practised versions to the real thing," she recalls. "I love working with it because you can make anything – it's so versatile." Having always enjoyed art, Suzi knew she wanted to do something creative, but was never quite sure what that thing was: "I remember my parents saying, 'You won't get a job doing art – perhaps keep it as a hobby and do something more practical'". In her parents' defence, it does take a special set of skills to turn paper cutting and a hot glue gun into a lucrative career. But Suzi's innovation, originality and attention to detail set her on a path to do just that.

Simple though it may seem, her talent is an incredibly sophisticated one, honed through years of study. Entirely self-taught, she would spend hours in her partner's mother's garden, plucking flowers from the border that she would carefully pull apart in order to see precisely how each bud was formed. From there, she would reconstruct every petal in paper form, experimenting with layer upon layer until the finished product was perfect.

What was originally just a hobby took a more serious turn in 2010, when Suzi made the controversial decision to abandon textiles and create a paper display for her final degree show. Her bold originality paid off when she was selected to exhibit at the New Designers exhibition in Islington. There her work caught the attention of the *Gardeners' World* team, who asked her to create an entire garden from paper for their annual event. After that, ↻



**FROM ABOVE** Suzi's workspace is surrounded by paper art, patterns and reference books that she uses for inspiration; several elements are combined to create each flower; a pair of her signature roses





Piles of coloured paper are transformed into blooming magnolias and roses – Suzi also creates flowers from old music scores





A pastel wreath includes intricate laser-cut butterflies – tweezers help with the delicate assemblage. Suzi's finished designs look just like an authentic bunch of posies



commissions came flooding in. "I was so excited, I couldn't believe it," she remembers. "I decided I wanted to work for myself, but didn't know whether it would be possible. Years later, though, projects are still coming in."

In fact, Suzi's little flowers have garnered the attention of some seriously big names, including Harvey Nichols, Harrods and John Lewis to name just a few. But the partnership she says she's most proud of is her ongoing work for Jo Malone, which has involved creating a dazzling window display in the flagship store made up of thousands of tiny white osmanthus. As demand grew, so did Suzi's need for space: "Flowers would gradually spread through every room in our house until they reached our bathroom. That was when my boyfriend told me I needed to get a studio space." So she gathered her blooms, transporting them from the kitchen table to an airy outbuilding in the Oxfordshire countryside.

Now living in Northamptonshire, Suzi begins each day with a long walk through the fields, accompanied by her 'completely mad' collie-cross, Huey: "It's important for me to be outside among greenery, plants and flowers. These are the things that inspire my work, and I'm always in search of fresh ideas." After stretching her legs, she will complete orders for [Notonthehighstreet.com](http://Notonthehighstreet.com), often crafting roses from pages of poetry or sheets of music for a special touch: "People ask me how I have the patience, but I find it so relaxing. I'm always daydreaming, and I practically work on autopilot. I'm very lucky to get to do this every day." Her rural lifestyle is occasionally punctuated by exciting trips to London, Birmingham or Manchester to visit shops and meet clients. But Suzi finds that the best thing about going away is returning home: "When I get back, I appreciate the peace and quiet even more. Friends say they couldn't be alone all day, but I love it."

While undeniably idyllic, no job is without its difficulties. "Deadlines can be quite overwhelming," Suzi admits. "If I'm given a really tight one, I know I won't be sleeping for a couple of weeks, but I do get it done in the end." During particularly chaotic periods, all the family – plus some willing friends – are recruited to help out – cutting petal after petal until the early hours. "Over Christmas, my partner took all his annual leave to come and help me," Suzi says. "Crafts aren't really his forte, but he did really well." Then there are the health and safety issues: when you're crafting hundreds of flowers a day, repetitive strain injury is an occupational hazard. Despite this, the sound of scissors snipping through card, combined with the excitement at being allowed to use the hot glue gun, no doubt reminds her helpers of days spent crafting as children. "When I teach my friends, sometimes they tell me they haven't done these things since they were young," Suzi says. "At school we all used to do arts and crafts, but when the others stopped I just carried on."

There's someone Suzi is particularly excited to teach her crafting skills to – her baby daughter, Ava, born last April as the bluebells and daffodils were blooming. They'll soon be here again but, until then, inside Suzi's studio spring always reigns supreme. 🇬🇧

**To see more of and buy Suzi's products, visit [etsy.com](http://etsy.com) and [notonthehighstreet.com](http://notonthehighstreet.com).**

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY CRISTIAN BARNETT; JASON INGRAM;  
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HYACINTH

DAFFODIL



1st February: Longing for a contrast to nature's grey & brown winter palette, I step out in search of spring colour - signs of warmer days to come.

# An artist's nature journal

## February

Each month, painter Kelly Hall illustrates the flora and fauna she has spotted near her East Sussex home

7th February: Sunlight bounces off silky 'pussy willow' catkins.

Goat willow  
(*Salix caprea*)

grey partridge (*Perdix perdix*)

8th February: A handsome grey partridge with a rusty-orange face & throat.

winter aconite  
(*Eranthis hyemalis*)

11th February: I see drifts of sunshine-coloured winter aconites glowing gently in the dark undergrowth.

[kellyhalldesigns.com](http://kellyhalldesigns.com)

12th February: I make chlorophyll-green nettle soup & swirl in cream & pretty pink peppercorns - a wonderful winter warmer.





Lords-&-ladies  
(*Arum maculatum*)

14th February: Exotic, furred, leaves shoot up from the ground like lime-green spears.



Barn owl  
(*Tyto alba*)

15th February: Dusk is falling & the wind has dropped. My heart skips a beat as a beautiful barn owl, silent as a ghost, swoops out from a disused barn.



Lesser celandine  
(*Ranunculus ficaria*)

18th February: Shiny buttercup-yellow flowers sit among heart-shaped leaves.



Sweet violet  
(*Viola odorata*)

20th February: Tiny, humble sweet violets peep up through a carpet of dried twigs & leaves.



Great spotted woodpecker  
(*Dendrocopos major*)

24th February: I hear a great spotted woodpecker 'drumming' in the treetops & glimpse its striking 'pied' plumage & bright scarlet tail.



Primrose  
(*Primula vulgaris*)

27th February: I spot early primroses growing out of a sheltered, sunny stone wall.

Kelley Hall.



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# LIGHT & *shade*

From industrial-style pendants to classic chandeliers, clever use of lighting can bring focus, warmth and atmosphere to any room

WORDS BY BEN KENDRICK



LIVING ROOM

KITCHEN



PHOTOGRAPH BY ORIGINAL BTC

DINING ROOM



HALLWAY



BATHROOM



# LIGHTING SPECIAL



## LIVING ROOM

For a relaxing atmosphere on a winter's evening, living areas need an attractive level of light. A collection of freestanding lamps dotted around the room works best, creating soft pools of warmth and making the space appear larger by drawing the eye out to the edges. Collectively, a number of them will create an adequate amount of ambient illumination, then task lighting, such as a style for reading, can be added to the mix. Ceiling-mounted lighting has the opposite effect - by emitting a harsh glare, all the focus is concentrated into the middle of the room, which tends to make it seem much smaller. However, if you wish to have pendants, think about where to position them and only use them when you need to see well.



**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** A low-slung pendant focuses light on a coffee table; industrial-style task lamps lend a modern edge to a vintage-theme living

room; a turned-wooden lamp with a linen shade provides a softer look; place an adjustable floor lamp behind a sofa to aid reading and limit glare

Renarp floor lamp, £39, Ikea



## KITCHEN

Light sources in this area should be carefully planned from the outset, as this is the hardest-working area of the home. Many kitchens now are open-plan and often part of a larger living room, so, although this makes for a sociable cooking space, the lighting you install should be flexible and work equally well for these different requirements. Dimmable designs can really help here, making for a more versatile set-up that can easily change the mood from a working area to a relaxing space. Recessed spots are a good choice, too, while under-cabinet strips are safe and unobtrusive. Remember to have crisp, focused lighting directed onto worktops where food is prepared and also above the cooker - these need to be precisely placed so you are not working in your own shadow. You can augment this with flexible clip-on lighting or more decorative pendant lights (utility styles are easy to keep clean). ☺



Antique-brass Balmoral pendant, £86.60. Jim Lawrence

## DINING ROOM

A dining area benefits from lighting placed low down, often suspended from the ceiling for a concentrated but atmospheric glow over a table. Again, a dimmer is a great addition, as, while you might want lots of warmth from a concentrated source for a convivial family meal, the kitchen table almost always doubles as a base for other activities, such as reading, homework or creative projects. For these and other tasks, a low-level pendant can be turned up to much brighter levels. This can give enough surrounding light, too, for the rest of the room, but usually a few well-chosen table or floor lamps dotted around will help banish any gloom and result in a more attractive set-up. Fairy lights can also lend an upbeat and magical feel, while amplifying the brightness of the space. ➔



**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT** Pendants that cast light down onto the table, such as this three-armed design, work well and look effective in a country

kitchen, as do a pair of reclaimed enamel shades; these paper globes have been customised with petals cut from old gardening journals

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# LIGHTING SPECIAL

## HALLWAY

Here, lights need to be bright and welcoming, and, as we tend just to pass through this area, it can be more strongly lit than other rooms in the house. A lantern or chandelier that makes a visual statement is a good choice. However, keep in mind that this isn't always the most flattering source of light (those with an exposed bulb rarely are, unless they have special low-watt filaments). Wall lights or sconces make a good alternative and don't take up floor space. Otherwise, a console table with a pair of table lamps can create an inviting, classic scheme, which gives a gentler light than an overhead source. Or you could combine these for flexibility through the year. ➔

Hector pendant lamp, £20, Ikea



PHOTOGRAPH BY NEPTUNE



**CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP RIGHT** A decorative chandelier is a good choice in a high-ceilinged hallway; table lamps can be an attractive feature,

with decorative shades and wooden stands lending a traditional look; a circular pendant set high near the ceiling adds industrial chic

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## BATHROOM

Lights need to meet specific safety standards here, so your choices are much more limited than elsewhere. Ideally, the bulb should be covered so it is protected from any moisture, splashes and spills, and the light must be wired to a pull cord. This obviously rules out a dimmer system, unless you arrange it outside the room or have a special pull cord that can be used with specific recessed ceiling lights. As a rule, place lights well away from water, such as a sink, shower or bath, and use an electrician who is registered in a government-approved scheme to advise you. For safety, bathroom lights have an IP rating that specifies how close they can be used to a water source. As these rooms are often small and short on floor space, wall-mounted lights or recessed spots are generally a good idea. ➔



PHOTOGRAPH BY FRITZ FRYER LIGHTING

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVEY LIGHTING



**THIS PAGE** Wall-mounted lights are the best option in a bathroom where floor space can be limited. Soft lower lighting is most appealing, and can be combined with focused brighter styles at a sink, where good illumination is required



Coloured glass bathroom wall light, from £445, Holloways of Ludlow

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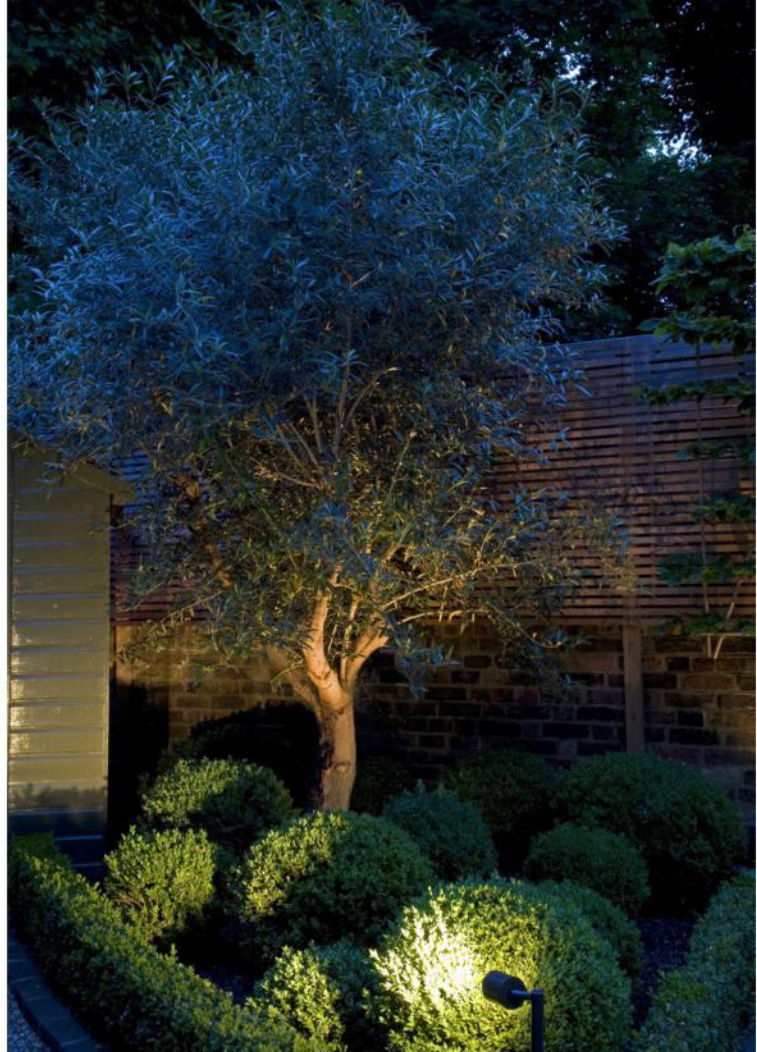
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PLUS: GARDENS

To illuminate your outside space, choose designs that are robust and watertight, and designed specifically for exterior use. Good lighting can transform the look of a garden or indoor/outdoor living area if well placed, and will make it feel much larger by creating engaging views of the outside world. Use uplighters to brighten paths and terraces, spotlight a specimen tree or shrub and lead the gaze across or down the garden. A qualified electrician must fit these and run wiring through an armoured cable system. For low-level lighting along a path, inexpensive solar designs can create enough radiance. Strings of festoon or fairy lights lend a soft ambience, and can be strung through trees or used to highlight planting. Equally, shining the way to your front door with path lights or LEDs embedded in pathways or steps can look striking and have a safety benefit.



In a country garden, understated outdoor lighting is usually best – an overlit plot can look too dazzling – so train the focus instead on areas of hard landscaping, paths and doors for safety, and highlight a few key features,



such as a specimen tree; these obelisks in a traditional walled garden create additional drama and lead the eye down the outdoor space, accentuating the symmetry of the scheme

Brass bulkhead light with cross guard, £319, Davey Lighting

DIRECTORY

**B** BHS (bhs.com)

Now online with a wide selection of lights, including table and floor-standing, chandeliers and sleek, modern designs, at affordable prices.

**C** CHRISTOPHER WRAY (christopherwray.com)

Large collection of lighting including glamorous chandeliers. Store in London's King's Road and online. Also undertakes restoration.

**D** DAR LIGHTING (darlighting.co.uk)

Contemporary styles, from table lights to wall lighting for every room, indoors and out. Factory shop in Oxfordshire and online.

**DAVEY LIGHTING** (davey-lighting.co.uk)

Clean-lined, high-quality, functional lights inspired by utilitarian designs, produced in Oxford. Part of the Original BTC group (see right), which

has a showroom in Chelsea Harbour, London.

**DAVID HUNT** (davidhuntlighting.co.uk)

Long-established family-run business based in the Cotswolds. Varied designs from decorative to utility, in glass, metal and wood, and also cast-resin, which resembles brass, carved wood or horn.

**F** FRITZ FRYER (fritzfrayer.co.uk)

Herefordshire-based lighting manufacturer with a wide selection of stylish modern lighting, as well as more traditional styles, including historic reproductions and ornate chandeliers.

**H** HECTOR FINCH (hectorfinch.com)

Broad spectrum of beautifully made styles. Manufactures its own designs and has a shop in London.

**HOLLOWAYS OF LUDLOW** (hollowaysofludlow.com)

Stylish selection of smart lighting in clean shapes and functional styles. It has shops in London and Ludlow.

**I** IKEA (ikea.com)

Wide range of lamps and lights in simple modern styles and all at very low prices.

**J** JIM LAWRENCE (jim-lawrence.co.uk)

Exclusive lighting produced in Suffolk in classic modern and traditional styles and mainly in glass and metal. Good selection of accessories, including switches and flexes, brackets and sockets.

**JOHN LEWIS** (johnlewis.com)

Great selection, from country classics to sleek, modern and fashionable styles.

**N** NEPTUNE (neptune.com)

Lamps, pendants, wall lights and shades in a selection of modern country styles.

**O** ORIGINAL BTC (originalbtc.com)

Contemporary metal lights made in Oxfordshire, some with porcelain shades, which illuminate elegantly and are produced in Stoke-on-Trent.

**P** POOKY (pooky.com)

A selection in an array of styles in brass, fabric, glass, iron and ceramic. Wide variety of fabric-covered shades in a selection of profiles.

**S** SKINFLINT (skinflintdesign.com)

Website with large stock of reconditioned vintage lights and shades, from industrial styles including enamelled pendants to retro-look and glass. Based in Cornwall. 

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CAROLINE ARBER; DAVID BRITAIN; GAP INTERIORS/CAROLINE MARDON/COLIN POOLE; THE GARDEN-COLLECTION/STEVEN WOOSTER; HOUSE OF PICTURES/HELENE FORESDOTTIR; LOUPE IMAGES/EMMA MITCHELL; CLAIRE RICHARDSON; VANBELKOMPRODUCTIONS.COM/HENNY VAN BELKOM; RACHEL WHITING



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## A HISTORY OF... *the teacup*

Seemingly as British as fish and chips, the humble teacup's origins actually stretch back centuries and halfway round the globe. The earliest-known tea receptacles were hand-formed ceramic bowls made in China. Even today, they are still used in traditional tea ceremonies and recently have enjoyed a surge in popularity in the West, thanks to the modern taste for matcha green tea. It was during the 1600s that the English took to tea with zeal, when it finally started to arrive on British shores via the East India Company.

Because this new commodity was initially only available to the upper classes, a suitably elegant vessel was required, as tea bowls were considered far too messy and impractical. The solution was a delicate teacup on a saucer made with porcelain imported from China – hence the name chinaware – decorated with a border, floral pattern, pearlescent lustre or all three. Teacups remained largely unchanged until Josiah Wedgwood

invented jasper, an unglazed stoneware, in 1774. Often created in his signature shade of blue, the cups were embellished with reliefs of classical or godly figures. His 'demitasses' (small half-cups) were especially popular, even catching the eye of royalty – Queen Charlotte commissioned some for her own use.

By the 18th century, the thirst for tea had travelled to Russia, and who else could have dreamt of elevating the teacup to a glass flute in a holder made from silver and enamel employing a *plique-à-jour* technique (French for 'letting in daylight'), but Fabergé, the design house famous for its bejewelled eggs?

Today, thanks to their meandering evolution, there's a plethora of teacup designs to choose from. Whether you go for a floral-patterned vintage find, sleek designer creation or satisfyingly chunky Emma Bridgewater set, they can all elevate your everyday cuppa into something a little bit more special. 🍵

# *A natural* pace

For artist and printmaker Lou Tonkin, slowing down to notice the details in the hedgerows and shorelands near her Cornish home is part of her creative process

WORDS BY JO LEEVERS  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALUN CALLENDER





OPPOSITE AND THIS PAGE  
At her workshop in Penryn,  
Lou carves her designs into  
lino blocks before carefully  
printing them on paper or linen



## RURAL ARTIST

Lou Tonkin is gently tracing a path through waist-high reeds along the riverbank, looking for a secluded spot where she can sit and sketch. Once she finds a nicely hidden nook, she settles down and begins. "A lot of my work is around what I see when I discover quiet areas like this," she explains. "It is about sitting patiently and watching nature emerge." Lou's prints – populated by birds, wild flowers and leaves – all start in this way, with a walk in the Cornish countryside in search of minute details to capture in her initial drawings. "I begin with pencil marks – dashes that catch the angle of a bird's cocked head or the curve of its wing in flight," she says.

Later, back at her workshop, she will add more details in ink and work those images into stylised scenes. These designs are later painstakingly carved into lino blocks and then hand-printed on paper or linen. The idea for the larger

design tends to come together as Lou heads home after a morning's sketching. "As I retrace my steps, it takes shape in my mind's eye," she says. And even that steady act of walking is part of the creative process. "If I have to get in the car afterwards and drive, it's never quite the same – I lose my thread," she explains. "To draw, I need to be immersed in nature and to follow its slow, steady rhythms."

Lou's love of rural wanderings first began in childhood. "My best memories are of exploring the narrow lanes and hedgerows around St Erth with my grandpa," she says. "It wasn't about getting somewhere; it was more of an idle dawdle. We'd carry thumb sticks to swish away stinging nettles, or I'd pick little posies of wild flowers. It was all very gentle, very kind. He slowed everything down to my child's pace." Lou and her grandfather called their outings 'hedgerow grazing' and that habit of literally combing the foliage to seek out small





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## RURAL ARTIST

creatures, buds and flowers has stood her in good stead for her career as an artist: "I think taking time to look really closely helped develop my eye for detail."

Lou grew up in Crowan, a village in Cornwall's former mining heartland, and then the wilder coastal setting of St Just. "My school reports tended to dismiss me as 'lazy' or said I had a 'poor attitude to learning'. But I could always draw well," she says. It was only once she began studying illustration at Falmouth School of Art that Lou was diagnosed as dyslexic. "I now view it as a talent," she says. "Less helpful for getting to grips with school textbooks, but invaluable for seeing the world around me in a more complete way; as an illustrator but also as a printmaker, better able to envisage how several layers of ink can come together to make one visually rich artwork."

Now Lou lives in Penryn with her three children, Ned, 15, Billy, 13, and Rosie, ten, in a Georgian home above her shop, Seven Broad Street, where she sells her work alongside pieces by like-minded artists. Her flagstoned workshop is located at the back in the building's older core, which dates from the 16th century. "I immediately loved the feel of its bare brick walls and the pitted stone lintel," she says. "I'm drawn towards earthy pigments and textures, so I'm absolutely in my element here." It is in



*"To draw, I need to be immersed in nature and follow its steady rhythms"*


**ABOVE RIGHT** Lou's designs start as sketches made in the countryside that she develops further once she returns home  
**RIGHT** Her personal stamp features a delicate single feather



this space that Lou spreads out her printmaking tools – which include wooden-handled blades, lino prints mounted on blocks of wood, stacks of unbleached linen and sheaves of paper. She either prints directly onto paper or uses her 19th-century iron press, which was once employed to create small books and tracts.

Making a print requires the same calm absorption as those initial sketches that Lou creates while sitting by a riverbank or on a secluded beach. She begins by drawing the larger design onto a block of lino, then slicing away its soft surface to recreate the image. "While I'm guiding the cutter, the tool feels like an extension of my arm," she says. "It's slow, considered work – and it can't be rushed. There's no chance to go back and correct a mistake."

Then comes the inking, applied with a roller – just the right amount – before Lou places the block and a fresh piece of paper into the press. "The smell of the ink, even the sound of the heavy metal pressing down, it's all part of the pleasure," she says. Her daughter Rosie sometimes helps: "She knows just the right number of turns of the handle to apply the correct amount of pressure," Lou says. "Press too hard and the ink goes all 'blobby'".

When she makes prints that involve three colours, separate blocks are cut, each inked with a different shade and then pressed into the paper in turn. "It takes a particular skill to be able to envisage how these images will eventually merge into a single picture," Lou says. That moment when she peels the paper away from the final block always 

HAND-LETTERING BY RUTHROWLANDCOUK



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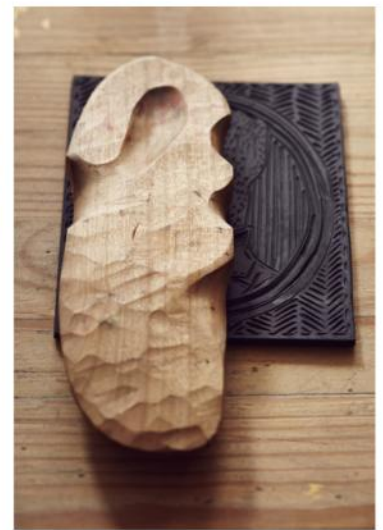
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**LEFT** Peeling the print away from a block of lino **ABOVE** A handmade burnisher is used to push the paper onto an inked lino block **BELOW** Hedgerow tea towels, available from Lou's shop, Seven Broad Street; a 19th-century press



gives her a bubble of joy: "It still makes me feel like doing a little run around the room!"


Cards, prints and sketch-pad covers are all printed here by hand, but Lou enlists the help of local family-run companies for larger items. Her tea towels and aprons are screenprinted by Lorna Wiles Textiles in Lostwithiel, while Cut By Beam in Mylor laser-etches Lou's designs onto enamelware. "They might use new technology, but it is all run from the family's farm," she says. "When I went to collect my latest batch of mugs, the first calf of the season had just been born."

Because Lou makes a living from her work, every design has to earn its keep. "When I create a print, I also think about how it could look on homeware," she adds. Her single-feather motif, for example, is now used on napkins and enamel soap dishes, and etched into the wooden backs of scrubbing brushes. "Even the most ordinary household objects can be made beautiful," she smiles.

A three-year stint as artist-in-residence at the Lost Gardens of Heligan helped Lou understand which designs customers love, and also kept her rooted in her chief inspiration, the Cornish landscape. "During that time, I kept a words-and-pictures diary, noting what was being planted, changes in the season or how a song thrush was building its nest," she says. That diary simply put the observations Lou has been making since she was a child into a more structured form, following the natural rhythm of the countryside.

Right now, the signs that winter is slowly giving way to spring fill Lou with a sense of excitement. "Some

people look out and see only bare branches, but actually, there's so much change happening already," she says. She is planning soon to head out to some nearby woods with her sketchbook.

"I know the air will be heavy with bosky scents and the light will be crisp and perfect. I'll find a spot, settle in and then simply wait for the smallest movement to catch my eye..." 

 See Lou's work at [sevenbroadstreet.com](http://sevenbroadstreet.com) and follow @loutonkin on Facebook and Instagram.



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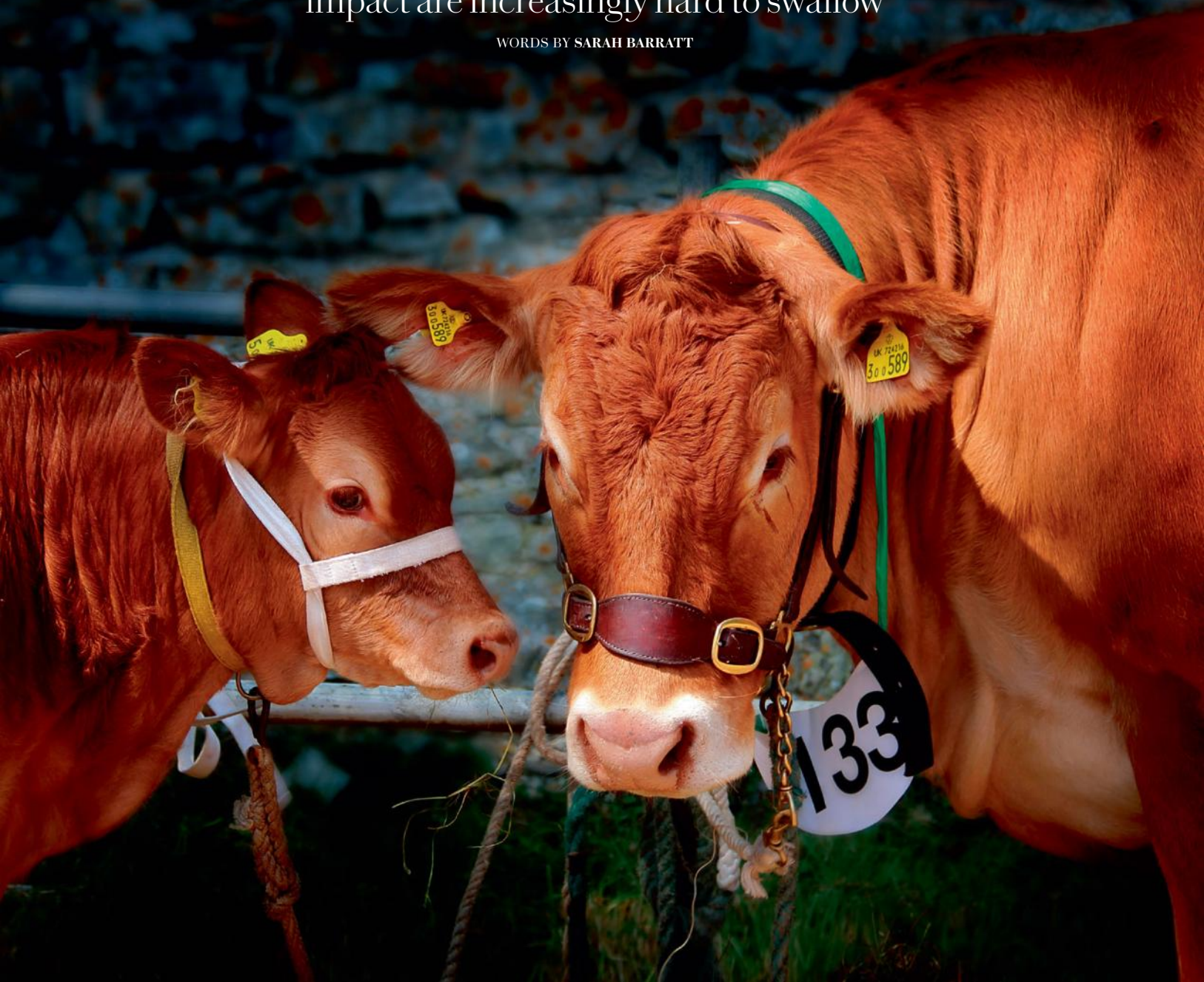
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# SHOULD WE BE EATING *less meat?*

Meat is a key part of farming and our diets, but troubling reports on the industry's long-term impact are increasingly hard to swallow

WORDS BY SARAH BARRATT



It's well documented that the demand for competitively priced meat often comes at the cost of animal welfare, but, in addition to this, the global meat industry stands accused of driving deforestation and contributing to climate change. The routine use of antibiotics in livestock is also cause for alarm, as scientists fear this could lead to resistant strains of bacteria emerging.

This adds to existing concerns that eating large amounts of processed or red meat can lead to an increased risk of developing bowel cancer. Clearly, this is a complex and far-reaching issue but all factors seem to be pointing towards one question: do we need to change our attitude towards eating meat?

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

As population figures grow, it's no surprise that some of the planet's resources are struggling to keep up with demand, and it appears the meat industry is an area where this is being felt particularly keenly. Almost one-third of the earth's land is used for raising livestock and, as requirements increase, vast swathes of habitats are being destroyed in order to grow crops for animal consumption. "Rainforests are being cleared in South America to produce soya protein to feed animals," explains Hayley Coristine, press manager at the Soil Association.

Meat production also requires more land, energy and water than crops do – it takes about 15,415 litres of water to produce one kilogram of beef, but only 322 litres to grow the equivalent amount of vegetables<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization found that livestock account for 14.5 per cent of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately for this island of beef eaters, cows are particularly culpable as they emit large amounts of methane (which is 25 times more potent than CO<sup>2</sup>). With around 1.5 billion cows worldwide, each emitting up to 500 litres of methane a day<sup>3</sup>, it's becoming a global problem. And while 'grass-fed' cattle are believed to enjoy a better quality of life compared to those reared on intensive farms, some research suggests they produce more of this gas.

Paul Cusack, owner of carbon-neutral farm Cottage Farm Organics, says this analysis is too simplistic. "Our organic cows are slaughtered at 25-28 months, whereas corn-fed commercial calves mature faster and are slaughtered as early

There are many organic meat producers now selling direct to customers to keep prices down



as 18 months – so contribute half a year less pollution. However, the corn to feed them is grown on land that could have been used for production of food for people – using fertiliser and pesticides. Grazing cattle require grass and nothing else." Cusack stresses that methane, although more damaging than CO<sup>2</sup>, is also short-term, lasting around 12 years in the atmosphere. "It's part of the carbon cycle – it was absorbed from the atmosphere by the grass – which animals eat, then release back into the atmosphere. If there is an increase owing to methane, it's temporary."

## ETHICAL CONCERNS

Intensive systems are usually the only way supermarkets can stock a wide variety of meat at competitive prices. Animals kept in US-style mega farms (which house more than 40,000 chickens or 2,000 pigs, of which there are almost 800 in the UK<sup>4</sup>) are grown quickly, given little space and are rarely allowed to feel the sun on their backs.

And while organic free-range chickens require four square metres of space per animal, intensive farms typically keep 15 chickens per square metre. "The average 'free-range' birdhouse contains around 33,000 birds, but organic birdhouses contain about 2,000 – all encouraged to go outside. With caged birds, there are often up to 200,000 per house," Coristine explains. "The average non-organic chicken weighs about 30 grams when hatched and in its 35 days before slaughter will grow to two kilos – that's unnatural growth. These birds can't move around, so stay plump, while organic ones do move

and shed calories. An organic bird will lead a life that's more than double the length of a non-organic one. They grow slowly and farmers will feed them for twice the length the time." This, Coristine emphasises, is why organic meat is often more expensive.

Large commercial farms are also putting a strain on small-scale, family-run businesses. "Big farms have more capacity, so they can sell produce cheaper than small farms, which have to ask for a reasonable price," explains Pippa Woods, a founder of the Family Farmers' Association. Between 2010 and 2016, 4,000 small farms in the UK closed and yet large-scale farms have increased by 25 per cent since 2011<sup>5</sup>.

## HEALTH IMPACT

Globally, antibiotics are used to promote livestock growth (in some countries, it's believed that up to 80 per cent of antibiotics are used on animals) and concern has been raised by the World Health Organization (WHO) that overuse could cause drug-resistant strains of bacteria to develop<sup>6</sup>. It is important to note, however, that use of antibiotics for growth was banned in Europe in 2006, and now drugs are used only to treat and prevent disease. But there is still concern about the level at which antibiotics are dispensed in bulk to animals with no disease as a form of prevention rather than cure.

Gwyn Jones, chairman of the Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance (RUMA), stresses that while there is excessive use globally, the UK has a low




In the UK, around 17.5 million chickens are consumed each week. Meeting this demand means that not all birds are farmed humanely

every day so they don't keep eating in the same areas. Therefore, diseases have little chance of spreading." In addition to concerns about the consequences of the overuse of antibiotics, a study conducted by WHO in 2015<sup>7</sup> discovered links between eating large amounts of processed or red meat and developing bowel cancer. Today, the NHS acknowledges that, while red meat is still a good source of protein, zinc and iron, lowering the amount we consume to under 70g a day will significantly reduce this risk<sup>8</sup>.

**WHAT'S THE ANSWER?**

Although it is difficult to do more than scratch the surface of such a complex issue, the evidence appears to be pointing to two things: we should consider eating less meat and we should choose the meat we do buy carefully. Studies have already shown a decline in the amount being purchased<sup>9</sup>, which suggests that these concerns are already having an impact on buying trends. When choosing meat, while not without fault, organic carbon-neutral farms appear to be the preferable option, being more eco-friendly and kinder to the animal. It's true that they tend to be more expensive - because they have to be. To keep prices down, Cusack, like many others, sells directly to the customer. He also operates a nose-to-tail approach that avoids a huge amount of wastage while providing cheaper, but no less tasty, cuts. Coristine recommends trying alternative options such as brisket (beef) or chump (lamb and pork), and also suggests lowering costs by buying meat in bulk, then freezing it.

Last year saw the first reports of companies that are developing lab-grown meat in the hope of overcoming some of these pressures. That may be one solution for the future, but for now it's down to the consumer to make a responsible and carefully considered choice. 

usage in comparison. "Farmers can't use antibiotics unless the vet prescribes them - the regulations are tight. While RUMA is opposed to routine preventative use, if an animal is sick within a group, sometimes the vet will advise this in order to protect the others." It is important to emphasise that while meat purchased in UK shops will not contain antibiotics, this doesn't mean the animal will have never been treated with them but, rather, none will have been in its system at the time of slaughter. A farm that is completely antibiotic free, Jones points out, raises questions about animal welfare - while in some cases farmers brilliantly reduce disease pressures, if they're not treating unwell animals it's a concern.

Although by no means a guarantee, free-range organic animals tend to have ingested fewer antibiotics than their intensively farmed counterparts. "While we would always treat a sick animal, we manage ours in such a way that they are much less prone to diseases," Cusack explains. "We encourage mob grazing - allowing the animals access to fresh grass

**GOOD PLACES TO BUY FROM**

By sourcing produce from all these organisations, you can be sure of where your meat is coming from  
**BigBarn (bigbarn.co.uk)** Reconnecting consumers with local producers, this company gives farmers a better deal and shoppers accountable food.

**The Food Assembly (foodassembly.com)** A social enterprise that enables consumers to purchase high-quality food while supporting small-scale local producers.

**Farmdrop (farmdrop.com)** This ethical online grocer is 'rehumanising' the food-supply chain - making delicious sustainable food more accessible.

**Riverford Organic Farmers (riverford.co.uk)** Delivers big fresh boxes of certified organic, grass-fed meat right to your door.



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email us at [country.living@hearst.co.uk](mailto:country.living@hearst.co.uk).

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAMY; CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

<sup>1</sup> REPORT BY INSTITUTION OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERS ENTITLED 'GLOBAL FOOD: WASTE NOT, WANT NOT' (2013). <sup>2</sup> UN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) STUDY (2013). <sup>3</sup> THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR BIOTECHNOLOGY (US) STUDY (1995). <sup>4</sup> INVESTIGATION BY THE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM (2017). <sup>5</sup> DEFRA. <sup>6</sup> WHO ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE FACT SHEET, UPDATED NOVEMBER 2017. <sup>7</sup> STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL AGENCY FOR RESEARCH ON CANCER, THE CANCER AGENCY OF THE WHO, ENTITLED, 'IARC MONOGRAPHS EVALUATE CONSUMPTION OF RED MEAT AND PROCESSED MEAT', PUBLISHED 26 OCTOBER, 2015. <sup>8</sup> NHS. <sup>9</sup> DEFRA'S NATIONAL FOOD SURVEY, LAST UPDATED NOVEMBER 2017.

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MEET AN URBAN ARTISAN

# London Cloth Co

By reclaiming and rehousing unloved looms, Daniel Harris is helping to revive the country's rich textile heritage

WORDS BY SARAH BARRATT



**OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS**, in step with a growing consumer demand for unique handmade creations, the great craft revival has been steadily gathering pace. Embracing this trend to the full is Daniel Harris, founder of the London Cloth Company – the first mill in the capital to open in a century. Driven by his passion for textiles, he has not only founded his own company producing them, but is also rescuing a key part of our industrial heritage, one salvaged loom at a time.

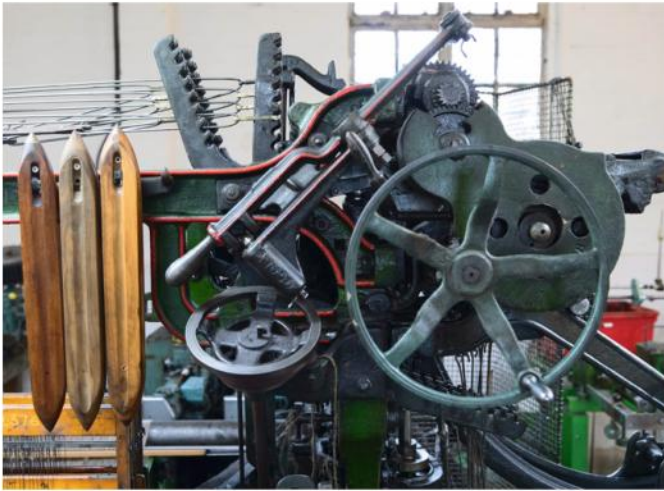
Stepping inside Daniel's warehouse – located on the border of Epping, where city meets country on the threshold of one of Britain's most famous forests – is like entering a bygone era. There's a deafening clatter coming from a cast-iron loom as the shuttle hurtles back and forth, noisily transforming cones of yarn into reams of thick tweed in a range of beguiling colours. Most of us associate creativity with serenity and calm, but this is no ordinary craft. In fact, according to Daniel, it's no craft at all.

"These 40-tonne machines were at the forefront of the Industrial Revolution," he points out, gesturing towards his 30-strong

collection of shuttle looms, some of which date back to 1870. Until recently, these relics of past industry were rusting in long-forgotten outbuildings, but Daniel has gone to great lengths – hiring cranes and travelling to the northernmost parts of Scotland – to save them and bring them back to the capital to create what he describes as "a working museum". Here, he restores his finds to their former glory, using spare parts from old machines to make fully functional versions. Once they're up and running, he and a small team of freelance helpers put them to work.

Given his in-depth knowledge, it's surprising to discover that Daniel's interest is actually a relatively new one. Having worked in the costume business for ten years, he became increasingly fascinated with the process of making fabric, and then, with no previous weaving experience, decided to rescue a loom from a derelict Welsh farmhouse. Installing it into his east London sewing studio, he taught himself to use it over the course of a year.

It wasn't long before he found himself turning from part-time amateur to full-time micro-mill professional. However, as



## “Sustainability is key to everything we do here”

Daniel explains, the process wasn't exactly straightforward: “You might think that all you need is a loom, but I quickly realised I'd also need a pirn winder and a cone winder to prepare the warp. And then, once the orders started coming in, my loom was too narrow for the fabric I wanted to produce, so I had to get a bigger one... It's never-ending.”

This might sound like a lot of trouble to go to, but, Daniel says, there's method in the madness. Although slower, these vintage machines are, in many ways, easier to use than their modern counterparts. “You can see every working piece,” he explains, pointing toward his foot-pedalled Hattersley hand loom, “so you can follow the process. But this,” he says, indicating a computerised 1989 edition, “where do you begin with it? It's overcomplicated.”

Craft or not, Daniel has certainly acquired a huge amount of skill in a very short time to be able to carry out the complicated process. “In the beginning, our cloth was a bit rubbish. Now it's so good that no one believes I make it myself,” he says, laughing. The quality of Daniel's work is evidenced by the London Cloth

**ABOVE** Daniel has collected and refurbished many different looms, using them to produce heritage tweeds, twills, checks and denims

Company's impressive client list, which includes Ralph Lauren, Denham and Lavenham to name but a few.

Despite working with such big names, Daniel is determined that his products should remain as ecologically sound as possible. “Our wool is sourced very carefully – sustainability is key to everything we do.” Rejecting quick fixes, his process is something of an antidote to fast-fashion – and although some clients can be demanding, he refuses to be swayed from the principles that his company was founded on: “They might want something to be made quickly, but it doesn't work like that. It requires patience – we have to source the wool, have it spun into yarn, weave the fabric and then have it washed.” It may not be a craft as such, but this time-honoured procedure, steeped in tradition, couldn't be truer to the saying: good things come to those who wait. 🇬🇧

**📍 Find out more at [londoncloth.com](http://londoncloth.com). Daniel offers one-day weaving courses for £125; email [info@londoncloth.com](mailto:info@londoncloth.com) for details.**

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# 10 of the best... *island escapes*

Packed with spectacular scenery, wonderful wildlife and historic sites, our surrounding isles are calm, captivating places to visit, and all just a boat trip away

WORDS BY SARAH BARRATT

## 1 ARDROSSAN TO ARRAN

Take a ferry from the North Ayrshire town of Ardrossan and you can reach the Isle of Arran in under two hours. Often described as 'Scotland in miniature' - with mountains, forests, beaches and glens to rival the mainland - Arran offers beautiful walking spots, diverse wildlife and wonderful island hospitality. It's also a great place to see otters and eagles and there are even basking sharks in the surrounding waters. [calmac.co.uk](http://calmac.co.uk)

## 2 HEYSHAM TO THE ISLE OF MAN

Rising up from the Irish Sea, halfway between Great Britain and Ireland, the self-governing Isle of Man is home to rugged cliffs and rolling moorland. You can catch a three-and-a-half-hour ferry from the coastal village of Heysham in Lancashire to the capital, Douglas, where a horse-drawn tram carries visitors along the Victorian promenade. [steam-packet.com](http://steam-packet.com)

## 3 POOLE HARBOUR TO BROWNSEA ISLAND

For such a diminutive island, Brownsea has a remarkably varied history, having been pillaged by Vikings and blitzed by Nazi bombers. Thankfully, it has made a full recovery and is still home to red squirrels, wading birds and sika deer - with spectacular views across the Purbeck Hills. Board a boat from the bustle of Dorset's Poole Quay to be there in 20 minutes. [nationaltrust.org.uk](http://nationaltrust.org.uk)

## 4 ULLAPOOL TO THE ISLE OF LEWIS

The town of Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis is the largest in the Hebrides. With it as your base, you can experience all that this wild island has to offer - from ancient stone circles and rugged, windswept landscapes to the Gaelic traditions still observed there today. Set sail from the Ross-shire village of Ullapool and you'll arrive in about two-and-a-half hours. [calmac.co.uk](http://calmac.co.uk) ➔

### 5 ABERDEEN TO LERWICK

If you really want to get away from it all, jump on board a boat to the otherworldly Shetland Islands – where Scotland meets Scandinavia and the North Sea meets the Norwegian Sea. An overnight ferry travels daily from Aberdeen and will deliver you to Lerwick, the main Shetland port. Here, you can expect to see seals, porpoises and otters – and perhaps even the Northern Lights, known locally as ‘merry dancers’. [northlinkferries.co.uk](http://northlinkferries.co.uk)

### 6 PLYMOUTH TO MOUNT EDGCUMBE

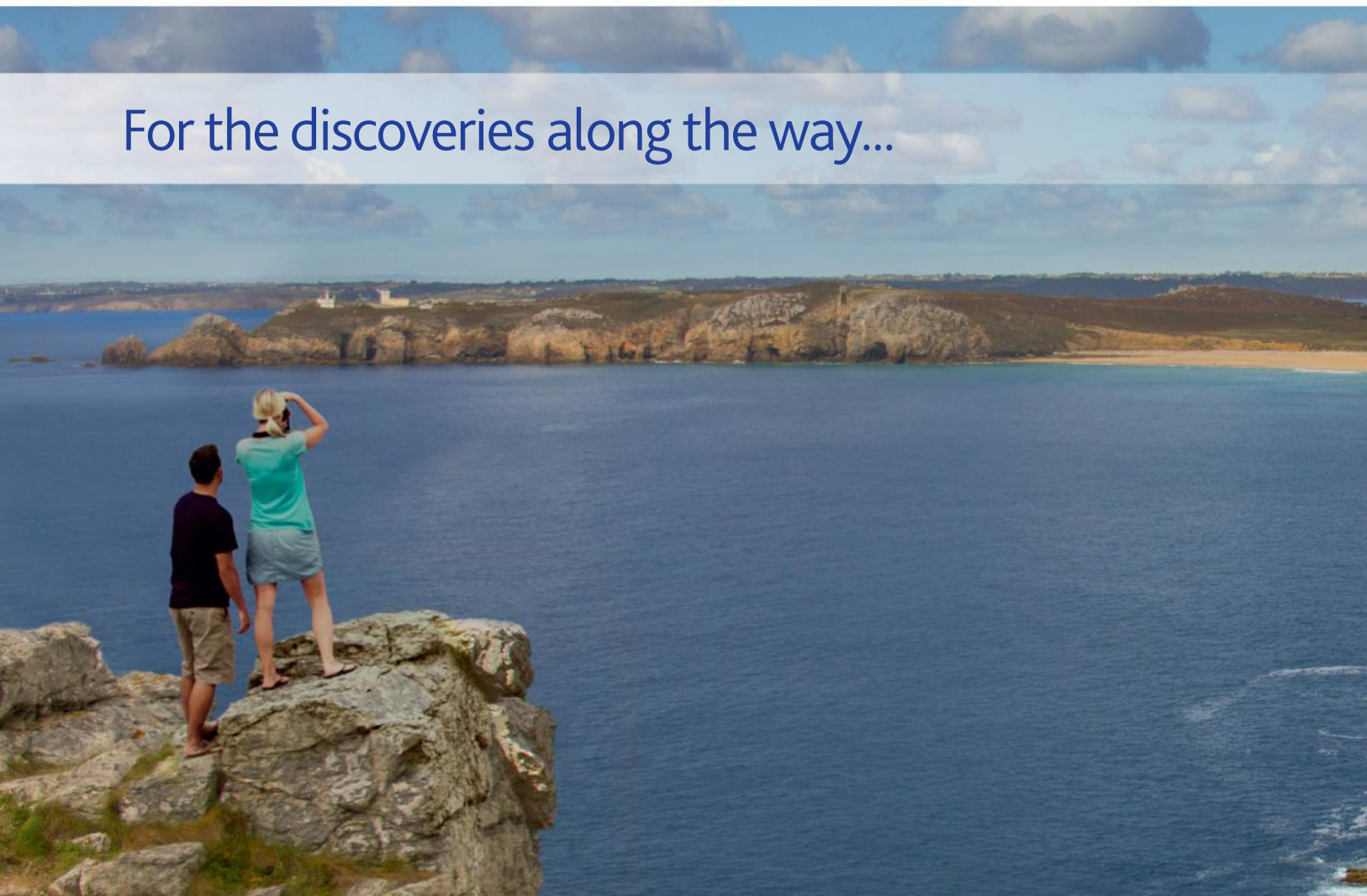
We know this destination might not be an island, but it certainly has the feel of one. A ten-minute foot ferry across the River Tamar – with views of Royal William Yard – will transport you from the hubbub of the Devon coastal city to the serenity of Cornwall’s Mount Edgcumbe. Here, shady woodlands, ancient barrows, secret beaches and smugglers’ coves all await exploration – along with the grand former home of the Earls of Mount Edgcumbe. [plymouthboattrips.co.uk](http://plymouthboattrips.co.uk)



### 7 BIDEFORD TO LUNDY

Lundy Island’s small size (it’s only three miles long) belies the huge amount it has to offer in terms of history and ecology. Just off the North Devon coast, its position, where the Bristol Channel and the Atlantic Ocean meet, has made it home to such diverse wildlife that it’s been compared to the Galápagos Islands. Day visitors can travel via the *MS Oldenburg*, Lundy’s own ferry, which is an experience in its own right. You may even be escorted by a pod of dolphins. [landmarktrust.org.uk](http://landmarktrust.org.uk)

For the discoveries along the way...



## 8 ST JUSTINIANS TO RAMSEY ISLAND

The islands lining the Pembrokeshire coastline are all rich in wildlife-watching opportunities. From late spring, you can see a huge community of puffins on Skomer and, in late summer, the RSPB-owned isle of Ramsey hosts the largest colony of grey seals in southern Britain. At St Justinians, you can take a traditional boat, from which you can enjoy spotting sea mammals, birds and fantastic scenery. [visitpembrokeshire.com](http://visitpembrokeshire.com)

## 9 BALLYCASTLE TO RATHLIN ISLAND

Don't be put off by the many wreckages lining the coast of this ancient isle – the six-mile boat trip from Ireland's north coast, across the Sea of Moyle to Rathlin, is completely safe (and, if you take a RIB, exhilarating). Home to only 150 people – and almost as many seals – the tranquil L-shaped island has been the subject of many arguments about ownership, owing to its close proximity to Scotland. [rathlinballycastleferry.com](http://rathlinballycastleferry.com)



## 10 PORTSMOUTH TO SARK

It might take two ferries to reach the Channel Island of Sark (a seven-hour ferry to Guernsey, then a further 55 minutes from there), but the end result is definitely worth it. Stepping ashore this small, car-free, granite outcrop, home to just 600 residents, you'll feel as though you've travelled back to a simpler age. Visitors travel by horse and cart or bike along idyllic country roads, the beautiful beaches are peacefully empty and there are great walks to be had along the cliffs. [sark.co.uk](http://sark.co.uk)

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GETTY IMAGES



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A mix of antique pieces adds informal grandeur to the spacious hallway



*Enchanted*  
ELEGANCE

Pretty decorative touches bring grace and style  
to an inspiring eco-home in Somerset

WORDS BY JANE STACEY ● PHOTOGRAPHS BY HUNTLEY HEDWORTH ● STYLING BY BEN KENDRICK



A 'spur-of-the-moment whim' is how Louise Gray describes her move back to south Somerset, where she grew up, a few years earlier than planned. "I was living happily in Derbyshire at the time with two successful businesses," she recalls, "but while I was visiting my mother, who is still here, I noticed that a nearby cottage was up for auction. It was 200 years old, with an attached barn - I particularly liked the fact that it hadn't been altered in any way. So I threw caution to the wind and made a bid that fortunately turned out to be successful."

However, it wasn't until Louise and her Derbyshire architect, Nick Marriot, started to look closely at the property that it became clear it was even more dilapidated than it had appeared, so she asked the local heritage officer to check whether she would run into planning permission difficulties if she altered the structure. He confirmed there was nothing of interest to preserve, so Louise decided to knock down the cottage and build a two-storey, timber-framed eco-home instead. The only proviso was that the front of the building had to line up with the houses on either side.

Nick had previously worked with Clays of Skipton, a company that specialises in providing structural insulated panels. He designed the house to incorporate these extremely heat-efficient sheets for the walls and ceilings, complete with spaces pre-cut for windows and doors. "I wanted new ideas inside, but for the outside to look similar to the original building," Louise says. "It's on the same footprint, while incorporating a sunroom to add light and a sense of space between the cottage and adjoining barn. Clays had the panels made up in Germany to our exact measurements. I remember when they were delivered - they

**OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** A floral cushion provides pretty detail; Louise relaxes on a settle, one of the weathered pieces that bring

character to the house; a display of faux ranunculus **THIS PAGE** Flower paintings from an Amiens flea market add charm to the living room



Pale linens, antique painted furniture and dried floral displays set the tone



came down the lane on an enormous lorry with a huge crane that lowered them into place. Then the builders constructed the house within ten days. It was incredible.” Louise’s cousin plastered all the walls, while a joiner from the area laid the wooden flooring and installed the windows, and local builders tiled the roof and clad the exterior walls with stone from a nearby quarry.

Continuing the eco theme, there is underfloor heating on the ground floor and a heat-recovery system in place that sucks in hot air from downstairs and pumps it upstairs, eliminating the need for radiators anywhere in the house. “It’s wonderful,” Louise says. “In fact, the house is so warm that we hardly ever need to have the heating on.”

When it came to the challenge of creating a home full of traditional charm inside a new-build, Louise knew that the pale linen-covered sofas, painted antique French furniture and arrangements of dried flower heads in large vintage ceramic bowls, all of which she had brought with her, would help to set the tone. She had plain linen curtains made in muted colours, scrunching up the fabric to take away its crisp newness. She also bought a set of oak dining chairs that she painted with an off-white undercoat and roughly sanded to give them a distressed appearance.

A variety of doors were then fitted to help ‘age’ the property, while also adding character – those selected for the bathrooms and bedrooms are made from oak with rustic latch handles. “I think they help create a cottage feel,” Louise explains. A pair of old

**OPPOSITE** Etched-glass doors from a French hotel open onto the dining room, where a mix of classic and contemporary pieces creates a sophisticated

rustic look **THIS PAGE** Quirky vintage finds and a treasured painting by Arthur Maderson have been grouped to form decorative still-life displays





**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE**

A vintage ladder provides useful shelving; antique meat covers and ceramic storage jars bring an original look to the kitchen; Louise loves offbeat pieces such as this quirky vintage papier-mâché hat stand


**OPPOSITE**  
The bedroom has a French feel, with an ornate bed, ormolu side lights and pretty floral linen

etched-glass doors, from a hotel in France, have been put in the entrance to the sunroom, while the embossed wooden panel attached to the living room door was part of an antique armoire.

One of the businesses Louise had in Derbyshire sold antique furniture and collectable vintage items. This took her to France on regular buying trips to the markets in Lille and Amiens: "You have to be there at 5am – that's when you get the best stuff. I also started to buy offbeat, distressed pieces for myself – this was when I began to collect flower pictures and antique doors."

To complete the transformation of her new home, Louise teamed painted walls in her favourite off-whites and greys from Farrow & Ball with whitewashed wooden floors. "I first discovered the pleasing combination of Hardwick White walls with Old White woodwork in 2003 when I had a fashion shop in Bakewell," she says. "Clothes show up well against calm colours. I find these shades bring a soft, timeworn feel in a room."

The light-filled sunroom, which connects the two parts of the house, is one of Louise's favourite spots. Adjoining the kitchen, it accommodates the large dining table, which she and fiancé Tim use for entertaining. It also doubles up as her office in the daytime, as well as offering views of the front and back gardens.

As her taste has developed over the past decade, Louise has slowly got rid of all of what she calls her 'shiny brown furniture'. "Unfortunately, my partner Tim, who has been living with me for the past couple of years, loves it," she says, with a sigh, "and he has a garage full of Georgian furniture from his previous home. We're going to move towards a mix." With her clear sense of style and vision, there's no doubt she'll succeed in creating a welcoming fusion of elegant antique pieces and quirky flea-market finds. 

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“Calm colours bring a soft,  
timeworn feel to a room”



## PART THREE

ELEMENTS  
OF DESIGN*Hedges • Fences • Screens • Walls • Trellis*

Lend structure and depth to your garden by choosing characterful boundaries and screens

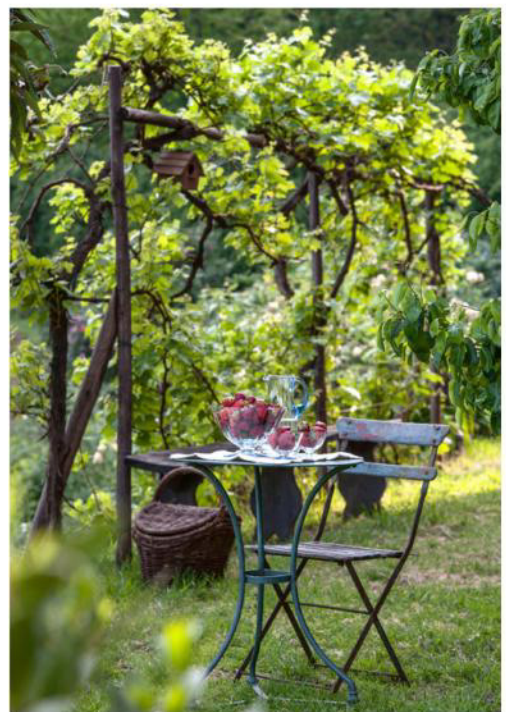
WORDS BY PAULA McWATERS

*A*long with defining the boundaries of your garden, walls, fences and hedges help set the scene for features and planting within it. Before settling on a style, consider the vernacular architecture and what would fit best with your surroundings. Hedging can be clipped and sculptural or composed of a mixture of plants to create a looser effect. A low wall might be topped with trellis to gain privacy, then softened by a scramble of roses or clematis. If disparate types of wood have been used for

fencing, a single dark paint colour can unite them. The space within the garden can also be manipulated with judicious use of screening. Eyesores such as compost bins can be hidden behind wooden, willow or hazel panels, for example. Designer George Carter ([georgecartergardens.co.uk](http://georgecartergardens.co.uk)) recommends repeated pairs of screens – used in the same way as pieces of scenery jutting in on either side of a stage to add depth. These can be either hedges, low walls or trellis screens, depending on how much you want to see through them.

MAKING A  
DIVISION

Separating the space in a garden with screening immediately creates a sense of intrigue and usually has the effect of making the whole plot appear larger than it is. Rustic pole screening or trellising, with an opening or archway in it, helps to frame and soften the view of your outdoor space and draw visitors to explore beyond. It can also be used effectively where privacy is needed – to shield a seating area from prying eyes of neighbours, for instance, or encircle a space where you want to dine out.





## USING CLIMBERS

A living screen in the form of climbing plants is one of the best options. Use a low-key timber support, such as trellising or rustic poles with wire stretched between them to create a framework, then choose flowering climbers to suit. Roses such as 'Madame Alfred Carrière' give wonderful scent and masses of flowers, while 'Mortimer Sackler' is strong and reliable. 'Félicité-Perpétue', 'Bobbie James' and 'The Garland' all have the RHS Award of Garden Merit. ➔



## CHOOSE SOME RUSTIC FENCING

Timber fences are endlessly adaptable to suit the style of your property and garden. A white-painted picket is a country cottage staple, while a darker colour such as sage green, russet or black can give it a more contemporary edge. Various designs are available, so shop around a bit to find something unusual. Chestnut paling is relatively inexpensive and looks good in a rural setting, as does chestnut post-and-rail fencing, particularly with a froth of plants weaving through it. Try [coppice-products.co.uk](http://coppice-products.co.uk) to find local suppliers or go to a specialist woodworker such as [edbrooks.com](http://edbrooks.com) or [greenmanwoodcrafts.co.uk](http://greenmanwoodcrafts.co.uk) to commission a bespoke design. Reclaimed timber, including driftwood, adds a textural, coastal feel.

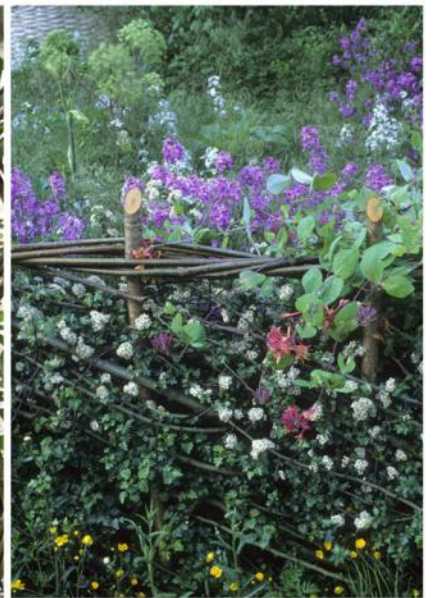


## HEDGES ON STILTS

If you want a certain degree of screening but would still like to have some transparency, a so-called hedge on stilts is perfect. This is a line of pleached standard trees, leaving a bare trunk for about the first six feet but providing full leaf cover higher up. *Phillyrea latifolia*, *Ligustrum lucidum*, Portuguese laurel (*Prunus lusitanica*) and holm oak (*Quercus ilex*) all lend themselves to this treatment, according to architecturalplants.com, as do beech and hornbeam.



## Woven willow and hazel hurdles are attractive features in their own right



## WEAVING INTEREST

Woven willow and hazel hurdles are attractive features in their own right, so are ideal for disguising a garden's working area or for creating a decorative edging for flower or vegetable beds. Online, [primrose.co.uk](http://primrose.co.uk), [musgrovewillows.co.uk](http://musgrovewillows.co.uk) and [willowfence.co.uk](http://willowfence.co.uk) have a good selection. Living willow can be woven on site in a criss-cross lattice effect to create a 'fedge' – a cross between a hedge and a fence. Use one- or two-year-old whips of the golden willow (*Salix alba var. vitellina*) or scarlet willow ('Britzensis') for a striking effect and plant in winter to late spring. 🌱





## UP THE WALL

The initial financial outlay for stone or brick walls may be high, but the sense of permanence they offer to a garden scheme is unrivalled. Dry-stone walling is especially effective in a rural setting. If mortared joints are used, ensure they are made as subtly as possible with a mortar colour that blends with the stone. Encourage moss and lichen to colonise the stones or introduce rambling plants such as nasturtiums to drape over them and add colour.



## EDIBLE SCREENS

If you need a screen between the more ornamental parts of your plot and the vegetable garden, or to provide privacy, there is no reason why it shouldn't earn its keep by being productive. Espaliered fruit trees, such as apple, pear and quince, lend

themselves beautifully to this purpose, providing lovely blossom in the spring and a space-saving way of growing fruit. A training system of taut horizontal wires between posts will help to establish the framework and annual pruning is needed

in late summer. A hedge can be edible, too. Try hazels (food writer and grower Mark Diacono at [otterfarm.co.uk](http://otterfarm.co.uk) recommends *Corylus avellana* 'Webbs Prize Cobb'), elder and *Rosa rugosa* for its long-lasting ruby-red hips in autumn.





## GREEN BORDERS

Tightly clipped hedges make some of the best boundaries and dividers, providing a lush green backdrop for other planting. Depending on how the light falls on them, you get colour and texture changes as well as attractive shadow play, especially when they are trimmed into exciting shapes or undulating curves. Yew is a favourite evergreen hedging plant and faster to grow than you might think, putting on about a foot or more of growth a year. Hornbeam and beech give a more open look and can be trimmed to give an equally neat geometric finish. To frame a view, why not cut a window? For topiary, an alternative to box (*Buxus sempervirens*) is *Phillyrea angustifolia*, a member of the olive family, which is tough and clips beautifully. In spring it offers the bonus of tiny, fragrant, off-white flowers. 🌿

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# A WINTER'S TALE

Set in a hamlet in the Warwickshire countryside, a 17th-century farmhouse has been thoughtfully renovated to create a modern home that's true to its historic roots

WORDS BY HAZEL DOLAN ● PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRENT DARBY









Shakespeare country in winter has a character all of its own – a landscape of briar hedges and churned fields, scattered copses of ancient woodland, frost pockets and ice-edged canals and riverbanks. When Paul Clarke and his wife Alex headed there to find a home, Paul, who is originally from north London, was struck by its wide, starry skies and lack of streetlights, all to the amusement of Alex because, for her, it was a homecoming.

They were living in London at the time and were feeling a little bruised by having missed out on a house in Sussex, where they had intended to set up an estate-agency business. “I grew up around this area, so it seemed the natural place to come and take stock,” Alex remembers. Gradually, the idea of staying close to her family took hold, and she and Paul began to look at the local market with increasing interest.

Then, in the midst of a cluster of farm buildings at the edge of a tiny hamlet, the couple found their home: one half of a brick-and-tile farmhouse. Originally a pair of cottages, its confusing layout and dated interior were offset by its glorious setting. “It had been on the market for quite a long time,” Paul says. “I think people were wary of the Grade II listing. Also, three plots were being sold, so it needed all three purchasers to fall into line.” But, suddenly, their plans began to coalesce. “We did buy this house still wondering ➔

**PREVIOUS PAGE** Pendant lights are hung from looped lengths of twisted flex over the vintage French farmhouse table **OPPOSITE** In the sitting room, a pair of Victorian

trestles and floorboards create a simple shelf unit **THIS PAGE** Earthy tones and soft leather bring depth to the neutral scheme, while old and new finds sit together beautifully





**THIS PAGE, FROM ABOVE** Kitchen units in Farrow & Ball's Hague Blue provide a bright contrast to the room's rustic touches; original plank-and-batten

doors have been kept throughout the farmhouse **OPPOSITE** Alex and Paul with Bluebell, who provides two eggs a day, and Marlowe, their Labrador

where we might end up," Alex admits. "And we had the business to set up, too." This didn't ruffle the couple though, and neither did taking on a period house. "Everyone kept asking, 'Are the beams OK?' 'Is there woodworm or rot?'" Alex says. "But our view was, it's been standing for a few hundred years, so it's fine."

Even so, making sense of the floorplan was a challenge. The farmhouse's past life meant there were two front doors and an awkward bathroom dividing the ground floor. A second bathroom upstairs had two doors, both opening onto one bedroom. A further strange legacy was a staircase that began in the kitchen and led nowhere. "The builder said it would be simpler to just strip everything back and start again," Alex says.

The couple set about reworking and reinvigorating the space: opening up the kitchen and giving it character with a run of cobalt-blue cabinets, adding a new storm porch to make a proper entrance, redesigning the upper floor so the three bedrooms and bathroom were clearly defined, and landscaping the garden.

Having local contacts certainly paid off. The team of builders shared Alex and Paul's sympathy for period buildings, and enjoyed the couple's willingness to be imaginative and take a few design risks. Pendants loop from the ceilings on lengths of long flex - "so we can easily move the lighting around if we need to in future," Alex points out - and one bedroom window is now framed by bare pink plaster and brickwork. "All the bricks had been





## The essence of the finished house is simplicity and purpose

damaged around it and the plasterer asked if he could have a go at making it pretty. We liked it so much, we left it as it was," Alex says.

The couple's rough-cast kitchen floor was another happy accident. "It's just what was underneath when we ripped up the old lino," Paul says. "We thought of having wooden floorboards or polished concrete, but we were told that wouldn't work because the floors are so wonky, so it's just stripped back with rugs on top. You can see the old bitumen and patches of screed – everyone who has visited has admired it."

Downstairs, hidden beams have been uncovered and others sandblasted clean of thick black paint. Upstairs, taking down two false ceilings in the biggest of the three bedrooms has made the space feel lighter and more open. Walls are all in the palest of grey-whites – a clear backdrop for Alex and Paul's eclectic mix of vintage and contemporary furniture. "A lot of it has come from reclamation yards and antiques shops," Paul says. "I like that they all have stories. It's the same with the house. It's lovely to think about who has lived in it before – and who is going to live in it next."

There was never any grand plan, Alex explains. "When we're looking for pieces for the house, we buy things we love, knowing

that wherever we put them they will fit in. If you love something, it will always work." She has faith in instinct and acting fast. "It's the only area where she is impulsive," Paul says. "With everything else, Alex is so organised and methodical, but when it comes to buying things for the house, she makes quick decisions."

The essence of the finished house is simplicity and purpose: light-filtering linen at the windows, soft leather seating, weathered woods throughout, earthy woollen rugs to lend warmth, and utilitarian accessories. "Maybe we're just frugal," Paul says, laughing. The work was complete in time for baby daughter Theodora's christening. "It was really low-key, but wonderful," Paul continues. "Afterwards, we had a big barbecue with trestle tables in the garden. We see far more of our family and friends now than we used to, because they all love coming here. I don't know if we would get that from another house. In our business, we usually say to everyone, 'Move, find other houses!' but when you discover somewhere you love, you want to stay there." 🇬🇧

**THIS PAGE** Striking blown-glass chandeliers emphasise the simple beauty of the beams, with bare bulbs

chosen for the bedside lighting

**OPPOSITE** An ornate picture frame is used as a quirky headboard in the guest room

📍 *For more information on Alex and Paul's bespoke estate agency, Mr & Mrs Clarke, visit [mrandmrsclarke.com](http://mrandmrsclarke.com).*

📧 *Enjoy house features, interiors inspiration and more in CL's free weekly newsletter. To sign up, go to [www.countryliving.co.uk/newsletter](http://www.countryliving.co.uk/newsletter).*





STYLE

*Naturalistic planting and a romantic walled garden*

SEASONS OF INTEREST

*Mainly spring, summer and autumn*

SIZE

*Nine acres in cultivation*

SOIL TYPE

*Naturally acid, improved over time with cultivation*



# *A wellspring of* **IDEAS**

The Garden House at Buckland Monachorum in Devon has become a byword for inspirational planting, which is particularly evident in its beautiful early spring displays

WORDS BY PAULA McWATERS • PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK BOLTON



A north-facing wooded hillside might not sound like the most promising place to create an ambitious garden, but the grounds around this one-time vicarage on the edge of Dartmoor have been a magnet for visitors for decades, with a succession of fine plantspeople making their mark here.

Most are drawn to The Garden House in summer, but in February it holds subtler charms, not least of which is a stunning bulb meadow running down a mossy bank to the woods below. Studded with countless *Crocus tommasinianus*, the wild species crocus from central Europe, it is a carpet of slender, goblet-shaped lilac flowers backed with a hint of silver, that open obligingly when low-slanting sunlight catches them. Sprinkled through these are sunshine-yellow winter aconites, with their ruffs of green leaves, snowdrops, scillas and the emerging flowers of hellebores, hovering on long stems.

Natural as the contours of this area seem, they are earthworks created with a mini-digger by legendary head gardener Keith Wiley, whose extraordinary naturalistic planting schemes inspired by his travels have startled and thrilled the horticultural world with their originality. He toiled at The Garden House for 25 years until 2003, when he left to start his own garden and nursery, Wildside, a few miles up the road. The bulb meadow is just one of the many new areas he pioneered, breaking out from the original walled garden that Lionel and Katharine Fortescue started with when they bought the vicarage and ten acres of land in 1945. Fern-edged gullies run through here, where Keith also fashioned imaginative stone structures, one resembling a meteorite, another a beehive shape and, some distance away, a granite stone circle.

Further up, near the house, are lawns edged with fine herbaceous plants, including a special collection of snowdrops brought by galanthus authority Matt Bishop, who followed Keith and stayed ➔

“I want every bit of ground to earn its keep, with spring, summer and autumn interest”



**TOP** *Galanthus* 'Percy Picton' hangs from a long, graceful pedicel **ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT** Early-flowering *Camellia transnokoensis* is semi-hardy; *Galanthus* 'Hippolyta' has double flowers marked with fresh green; *Cyclamen coum* thrives beneath a skimmia

Several shrubs of *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire' create a splash of colour in the borders around the main lawns near the house





**THIS PAGE, ABOVE** Tussocks of *Chionochloa rubra* grass form dramatic shapes en route to the house **LEFT** Snowdrops and hellebores grow together

in the spring border; lichens colonise granite stonework as well as trees in the clean Devon air **OPPOSITE** The dovecote was built by Keith Wiley

for nine years, redesigning large parts of the walled garden and creating a new arboretum on the site of the former plant nursery. Current head gardener Nick Haworth, who arrived in 2013, respects the plans of his predecessors but, as a down-to-earth Yorkshireman, he is shot through with a strong practical streak. "We have different projects every year and one of mine has been to widen the paths, enabling me access on a tractor and trailer. The bulb meadow used to be dressed with a 50/50 peat-grit mix. Now we bring in great bales of bracken mulch and spread them about – it's much lighter and deters the moss growth that can smother small plants over the very wet winters here. The plants are responding well."

Nick has also been charged by the Fortescue Garden Trust, which was set up in 1967 to ensure the estate's long-term survival, with "raising the skirts" of the gardens to let in more light where areas have become overcrowded – opening up the views, restoring the quarry garden and replanting the former South African garden with the aim of maintaining colour and impact for longer. "I want every bit of ground to earn its keep, with spring, summer and autumn interest," he says. Last spring, one hundred clematis were planted to scramble through shrubs and add a layer of colour.

New plants he introduces need to be interesting and notable, in keeping with the garden's ethos, but Nick doesn't fight the prevailing conditions, as this would require a management ↻





regime too intense to keep up: "We have some wet areas, some drier, but as this is the side of the moor where the rain falls when it comes in from the west, most plants here are going to need to have enough oomph and vigour to get over the damp."

In February, bright-stemmed cornus shine out around the main lawn. The fine-twigged and decidedly bonfire-like 'Midwinter Fire' is one of them, along with *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica', underplanted with winter aconites and snowdrops. The first snowdrops, *Galanthus reginae-olgae*, appear in October, while many more of Matt Bishop's fine collection come through in January and February. Other highlights of colour are provided by *Cyclamen coum* and a very early, semi-hardy *Camellia transnokoensis*, with clusters of small white flowers opening from pink buds.

In the cottage garden, which was known as the Cretan garden in Keith's day, Nick recognises the need to "garden by steering with a light hand on the tiller", maintaining a balance between the wild charm that makes it one of the most photographed areas here and the more prosaic practical considerations that allow it to be managed by Nick and his team. "I think of myself as a restorer of gardens rather than a creator," he says. "I don't feel a strong desire to stamp my own imprint on a place." He still nurses ambitions – such as installing a Victorian-style greenhouse for visitors to wander through and building a mound to open up a view right across the garden to the stone circle, should funds ever allow – but with a garden as widely loved and recognised as this one, it is no wonder he elects to take a softly, softly approach. 🇬🇧

📍 *The Garden House, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon, is open every weekend in February, 11am-3pm, and then daily from 3 March to 28 October 2018, 10.30am-4pm (01822 854769; thegardenhouse.org.uk).*

“Sometimes you need to garden by steering with a light hand on the tiller”



**TOP** *Crocus tommasinianus* rapidly self-seed in the right conditions **ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT** Hellebores spring up among the crocus; dwarf narcissus 'February Gold' naturalises easily and flowers early; *Iris histrioides* has bold jewel-like flowers on short stems



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## RARE BEAUTIES

I find that dull days can be enlivened with some online browsing through lush, well-illustrated plant catalogues. Growwild is a case in point, an Ayrshire mail-order nursery run by Lisa Wesley and Andrew Blackwood, specialising in rare and unusual plants. They can introduce you to all sorts of covetable things, such as this *Impatiens oxyanthera* 'Milo' (left), £8.50, which is a clump-forming hardy perennial that grows to about 40cm with shell-pink orchid-like flowers ([growwildnursery.co.uk](http://growwildnursery.co.uk)).



## BONE SHAKER

Creaking knees and an aching back need careful handling after a long day's gardening, and rural osteopath Georgina Jones, based in North Wales, has formulated a range to tackle them. Jones The Bones Muscle and Joint Oil (£13.60 for 100ml) is made from blended plant oils, including St John's Wort, camomile, lavender and rosemary to soothe sore muscles. Also try her Jones The Bones Bath Salts, £10 for 600g, and Gauntlet Hand Salve, £9.60 for 30ml (01824 790641; [bathing-beauty.co.uk](http://bathing-beauty.co.uk)).

# garden notes



## Everything you need to know to get the most from your plot in February

WORDS BY PAULA McWATERS

most ironic discovery last year was the label for *Dianthus* 'Memories'. Sadly, memories (and the label) were all I had left, since this pretty little garden pink had given up the ghost.

I've started using an A4 page-a-day hardback diary in which I copy out or stick in the labels as I plant, with a note of where I've put things. My garden isn't huge, so this is sufficient for now, coupled with handwritten labels tucked into the earth beside the plants.

Wooden markers always seem to rot, so now I'm using black plastic ones from [labelsnthings.co.uk](http://labelsnthings.co.uk), with a waterproof silver or white marker pen. The Sakura Pen-Touch paint marker seems to last, as does the Zig Kuretake Posterman White Chalk marker (both available at [amazon.co.uk](http://amazon.co.uk)).



## WHAT TO DO

**Check** that any protective fleece on borderline-hardy plants is still in place

**Cover** soil in vegetable beds with plastic to warm it in readiness for sowing

**Feed** birds regularly and ensure they have fresh water

**Plant** hardy climbers as long as the ground isn't frozen or too wet

**Cut** some salix and cornus stems to near ground level to ensure colourful new growth

**Weed** borders before new shoots of perennials emerge

**Dig up** overcrowded snowdrops and replant in smaller clumps

**Cut down** the canes of autumn-fruiting raspberries to the ground

**Pot up** lily bulbs and put them either in a cold frame or an unheated greenhouse

**Clean** seed trays and pots so they're ready for use

I ALWAYS MARVEL at anyone who keeps immaculate records of what they have planted. I've interviewed gardeners for this magazine who open smart ring binders, detailing every plant purchased and where it is. One even had her plants catalogued on her laptop, with an image and care instructions for each one.

A certain degree of record keeping is definitely something to aspire to. This is especially true where labelling is concerned – as well as helping you keep track of what's where, it can also flag up what may have been lost. Perhaps my



*Tip* Show off hellebores beneath deciduous shrubs such as *Ribes sanguineum* 'White Icicle' and Japanese cornelian cherry (*Cornus officinalis*)\*

## Out & about

From 17 to 25 February it is Snowdrop Week at Easton Walled Gardens in Lincolnshire, which have been painstakingly restored since 2001 by Ursula Cholmeley and her team. Wander freely to see snowdrops, hellebores and aconites or book ahead for a guided tour. Growing advice is available and a botanical art exhibition, *A Year in the Garden*, runs at the same time. Admission is £7.25 for adults, £3.25 for children (01476 530063; eastonwalledgardens.co.uk).



## PLANT UNDER GLASS

Indoor plants of all kinds are having a bit of a moment, especially cacti and other succulents, and this is a particularly attractive way to display them. This glass terrarium (above), in antiqued zinc, has a hinged lid so you can plant it up quite easily from one side. It measures 30cm

x 25.5cm x 25.5cm and costs £49.95 from The Worm That Turned (0345 605 2505; worm.co.uk). *CL* readers quoting code **CLROTT10** can claim a ten per cent discount until 28 February 2018.

## 1 HOUR to make a difference

*If time is short, focus on one satisfying task – and the rest of the garden can wait*



Every garden should have an easy-care witch hazel and now is a good time to check out the flowers to find a variety that appeals to you. Looking like short tassels or shredded ribbons on the bare branches, they come in all shades of yellow and orange. *Hamamelis* 'Arnold Promise' and 'Pallida' are perhaps the most widely available. They are both sweetly scented, as are 'Orange Peel' (golden orange) and pale yellow 'Imperialis'. Find an open sunny position to plant one, preferably somewhere sheltered from strong winds that can scorch the young leaves as they emerge. Keep it well watered until established.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GAP GARDENS / ROBERT MABIC; HOWARD RICE; LISA WESLEY / GROWILD NURSERY; RACHEL WHITTING; ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARIANA JO; JOHN MASSEY / ASHWOOD NURSERIES.COM



## Expand your knowledge

Cambridge University Botanic Garden is a great place to visit to get up on plants, and the education department runs a programme of courses throughout the year – in garden history, plant identification and science, botanical art, gardening and more – to help you build on what you know. Some are classroom-based, while others include a walk-and-talk session outside. Gardening classes include a Learn to Garden weekend, £135, a four-part Introduction to Garden Design, £250, and a Grow Your Own Vegetables day, £65 (01223 331875; botanic.cam.ac.uk).

EVENT Thai-inspired Orchids Festival at The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 10 February–11 March. Includes talks, tours and courses (020 8332 5655; kew.org).



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# BRITISH IN PARTICULAR

In our new series, we celebrate some of the delicious, quintessential ingredients that are farmed, fished, made and grown up and down the country, and meet the remarkable producers who help bring them to our table

*This month: rhubarb*

WORDS BY RUTH CHANDLER ● FOOD AND DRINK EDITOR ALISON WALKER  
LOCATION PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW MONTGOMERY ● RECIPES BY HEARST FOOD NETWORK



The rhubarb harvested by Janet and her family (above right) is grown in darkness to prevent acidity levels rising – light for the farmers is provided by candles atop metal poles stuck into the ground



Yorkshire  
LEADS THE WORLD IN  
FORCED RHUBARB  
PRODUCTION

Just outside the village of Carlton, West Yorkshire, on this icy-bright February day, something peculiar is occurring in the sheds of Ashfield Farm. Step inside and all is dark, save for the soft light of long candles held on metal poles stuck into the ground. It's cathedral-quiet, too, despite the fact there are 15 men working away, carefully harvesting sticks of rhubarb. The peacefulness is spellbinding, the silence punctuated only by crackles and pops as the waxy buds burst open – listen carefully and you'll hear their stems creak as they grow (up to an inch a day). The plants themselves aren't in the soil – their roots simply sit on the floor next to each other. "Some people say they look like triffids about to march forwards," says Janet Oldroyd-Hulme, a fourth-generation farmer who, alongside her husband, Neil, and two sons, Lindsay and James, is responsible for this unusual environment. "By growing the crop in the dark, we can stop acidity levels rising – which leads to a tartness we don't want," she explains. "This means that the inner flesh of the ruby red sticks remains tender, white and far sweeter than that of tougher outdoor-cultivated rhubarb, which is what makes these so prized."

Janet, whose background is actually in microbiology, runs one of just 11 farms still forcing an indoor crop in the famous Rhubarb Triangle – a nine-square-mile area that exists between Leeds, Wakefield and Bradford. Her family has done this in the same spot ever since her great-grandfather, market gardener John Oldroyd, exchanged his strawberry-growing skills for the knowledge of a local rhubarb farmer. The technique is said to have been discovered in the Chelsea Physic Garden in 1817, when the plant's roots were accidentally covered with soil and the resulting shoots thought so delicious that the current agricultural system was eventually developed – in Yorkshire 60 years later. This land of big skies and undulating hills

has a climate not unlike that of the vegetable's (it is often thought of, wrongly, as a fruit) native Siberia – with high rainfall and frosts – and the ideal soil type of medium to heavy loam and 'shoddy', a nitrogen-rich waste product of the county's wool industry used to fertilise the fields.

In order to produce the roots required for forcing, plants are raised outside, 40cm apart, for two years, during which time no stems are picked. This ensures maximum energy is stored within for the optimum production of tender shoots once in situ in the seven sheds. After a measured amount of frost in the third winter, the roots are ready to transfer indoors. Lindsay and his team use their unique machine – a cross between a leek cutter and an old potato harvester – to lift them out of the soil and gently shake off the excess earth. A single plant can be so heavy that it requires three men to heave it onto a trailer with specially made three-pronged forks, designed to avoid damage. It then takes up to three days for them to fill each shed, after which the roots are power-hosed to remove the possibility of infections from fungal spores and grit, which could scratch the delicate sticks, 200 tonnes of which are produced each year and supplied to supermarkets – including Sainsbury's – as well as the wholesale market in Covent Garden. The sheds are cleared in late March and the spent roots composted to be replaced the following year by fresh virgin stock.

Originally, there were 200 farms in the Rhubarb Triangle practising this specialist,



*The peacefulness is spellbinding, the  
silence punctuated only by crackles and  
pops as the waxy buds burst open*





*A single plant can be so heavy that it needs three men to lift it*



labour-intensive form of agriculture, but the crop declined in popularity following World War II due to the rationing of sugar – a key component in many rhubarb dishes – and then afterwards because of the increasing availability of imported exotic fruits and access to refrigeration. Many went out of business, but the Oldroyds continued to grow rhubarb, indoors and out – not just that, but they expanded to become one of the largest producers. This was due to the unwavering belief of Janet's father Ken, who had been enchanted by this mystical plant from the age of ten. "He had great faith in rhubarb – he bought up land with the special soil structure he was looking for from those who were leaving the industry," Janet says. He suggested his daughter return to the farm when her job at a hospital in Leeds didn't allow her the flexibility she needed as a mother of two small boys: "Being handy with a scalpel, I could help with a new technique for splitting roots." She eventually took over the running of the farm with her older brother Graham (who is now retired), though their father was always around to dispense invaluable advice until he passed away aged 84: "I often wish he was here now, so I could ask him questions."

Thankfully, Ken lived to see rhubarb begin to make a comeback in the 1990s. His daughter continued his ambassadorial role, too, being instrumental in obtaining the Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) mark in 2010 for farms in the triangle. "That status isn't saying that you can't force rhubarb anywhere else, but that stems under the PDO label are of the quality and flavour expected of Yorkshire Forced Rhubarb," Janet explains. In fact, she is an all-round champion of this curious plant, doing everything from welcoming visitors to the farm during the forcing season and giving talks and tours around the sheds, to helping gardeners who call her for advice about growing their own plants at home.

Another boost for the formerly humble food's reputation is that it has been hailed for its health-giving properties, being high in calcium and antioxidants, and great for metabolic stimulation (it has even been included as a possible ingredient in the development of cancer-fighting drugs). Due to her underactive thyroid, Janet has greater reason to be a fan of her own produce and, during the forcing season, enjoys it cooked in pure orange juice and topped with yogurt for breakfast.

With both sons involved in the business – not to mention a promising apprentice in Lindsay's four-year-old daughter, Ayda – and a loyal clientele, including several celebrity chefs, E. Oldroyd & Sons' future is as bright as the scarlet stems of its famous forced rhubarb. *Read on for a selection of delicious recipes that feature rhubarb in a starring role.* ➔

**1** *E. Oldroyd & Sons, Hopefield Farm, Leadwell Lane, Rothwell, Leeds (0113 282 2245; yorkshirerhubarb.co.uk). CL readers can enjoy a ten per cent discount on forced rhubarb (minimum 4kg) when quoting CLMO98 by 16 February 2018, plus a ten per cent discount on a family or individual tours when quoting CLTOUR98 throughout the season. Not to be redeemed in conjunction with any other offer.*

The Oldroyd family supplies  
200 tonnes of rhubarb  
to supermarkets and  
wholesalers every year



## RHUBARB GALETTE

*Preparation 1 hour, plus chilling Cooking about 45 minutes*

*Serves 8*

There's no need to line a tin – the beauty of making a free-form tart is that it looks rustic and relaxed.

250g plain flour, plus extra for dusting  
100g caster sugar, plus 3 tbsp  
150g unsalted butter, chilled and diced  
1 large egg yolk, beaten with 3 tbsp ice-cold water

700g rhubarb, cut into 2cm diagonal slices  
1 tbsp vanilla extract  
3 tbsp semolina  
1 medium egg, beaten to glaze  
2 tbsp demerara sugar  
custard, to serve

1 In a food processor, pulse the flour, 3 tbsp sugar, the butter and a large pinch of fine salt until the mixture resembles breadcrumbs. (Alternatively, rub these ingredients together in a large bowl until it resembles breadcrumbs.) Gradually add the yolk mixture to the flour, stirring it in quickly with a flat-bladed table knife, or with the food processor

- motor running, until the mixture just comes together into large flakes.
- 2 Turn out the pastry onto a lightly floured work surface and gently bring together with your hands, kneading briefly. Flatten to form a disc shape, then wrap in clingfilm and chill for 30 minutes.
- 3 In a large bowl, mix the rhubarb with the 100g caster sugar and set aside for 1 hour, stirring occasionally, until juices are released from the fruit. Use a slotted spoon to lift out the rhubarb into another large mixing bowl and stir in the vanilla extract. Set the juice aside.
- 4 Heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan) gas mark 4 with a flat baking tray inside to preheat. Lightly flour the worksurface and roll out the pastry into a circle about 35.5cm wide. Trim 1cm off the edge to neaten. With the rolling pin, to lift the dough onto a large piece of baking parchment. Use a 20.5cm cake tin to gently press an indent in the centre of the pastry to mark out a circle. Evenly sprinkle the semolina inside the circle and pile the rhubarb on top. Brush the pastry border with the beaten egg. Then fold the border up and over the edge of the fruit, pinching a seam at 5cm intervals. Chill for 15 minutes.
- 5 Brush the pastry rim with the remaining egg and sprinkle with Demerara sugar. Carefully slide on to the preheated baking sheet and bake for 30-40 minutes until golden.
- 6 Before serving, simmer the reserved rhubarb juice and 3 tbsp water in a small pan for 3-4 minutes until reduced to 1 tbsp. Brush over the baked fruit to glaze. Serve warm, with cream or custard.



**RHUBARB AND GINGER CHEESECAKE***Preparation 30 minutes, plus chilling**Cooking about 2 hours Serves 8*

The warmth of the ginger in this dessert complements the tartness of the rhubarb beautifully.

450g rhubarb, cut into chunks  
 4 tbsp caster sugar  
 2 balls of stem ginger, syrup reserved  
 175g ginger biscuits, finely crushed  
 60g butter, melted  
 450g cream cheese  
 3 medium eggs  
 1 tsp vanilla extract  
 4 tbsp icing sugar  
 ½ tsp arrowroot

- 1 Put 225g of the rhubarb chunks in a pan with the caster sugar, 3 tbsp ginger syrup and 2 tbsp cold water. Simmer for 5-10 minutes until tender. Whiz until smooth in a food processor and set aside to cool.
- 2 Finely chop the stem ginger and combine with the biscuits and butter. Press into the bottom of

an 18cm round springform cake tin. Chill until firm.

- 3 Heat oven to 150°C (130°C fan) gas mark 2. Whisk together the cream cheese, eggs, vanilla extract and 3 tbsp icing sugar. Fold in two-thirds of the rhubarb purée and pour into the cake tin. Stir the remainder of the purée through the filling, making swirls and ripples. Bake for 1½ hours until just set. Leave in the oven with the door ajar until cool. Chill overnight.
- 4 Put the remaining rhubarb in a pan with 150ml cold water, the remaining icing

sugar and 2 tbsp ginger syrup. Gently poach for 5-10 minutes until just tender. Remove the rhubarb and strain the liquid into a bowl. Return to the rinsed-out pan. Mix 1 tbsp of the liquid with the arrowroot until smooth, then add to the rest. Bring to the boil; remove from the heat as soon as it is slightly thickened. Leave to cool.

- 5 To serve, remove the cheesecake from its tin and top with the poached rhubarb. Drizzle with sauce and slice. ➔





## ROAST HOWTOWDIE CHICKEN WITH RHUBARB

*Preparation 10 minutes*

*Cooking 1 hour Serves 4*

Howtowdie is a traditional Scottish name for stuffed chicken, and by filling the bird with rhubarb and ginger you get incredibly sweet and flavourful meat. The stuffing itself becomes like a chutney – tangy, sharp and delicious.

5 rhubarb stalks  
1 heaped tbsp grated ginger  
2 garlic cloves, crushed  
1 small chicken  
2 tsp butter

- 1 Heat the oven to 200°C (180°C fan oven) gas mark 6. Chop three of the rhubarb stalks finely, put them in a bowl and add the ginger and garlic along with a large pinch of salt and freshly grated black pepper. Fill the cavity of the chicken with the rhubarb mixture, then transfer to a roasting tray.
- 2 Loosen the chicken skin around the breast and push a couple of knobs of butter underneath. Sprinkle with more salt and pepper and roast in the oven for 30 minutes.
- 3 Chop the remaining rhubarb and scatter it around the bird to roast in its juices. Return to the oven for another 30 minutes, or until the juices run clear when you pierce the thigh with a knife.
- 4 Leave the chicken to rest for 20 minutes before carving and serving with the stuffing, roasted rhubarb and seasonal vegetables. ➔

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**LAMB AND RHUBARB CASSEROLE**

*Preparation 30 minutes Cooking 2 hours 35 minutes Serves 4*  
 Rhubarb is often used in Middle Eastern cookery, particularly in Iran, where it is added to a stew at the end of cooking time. In this recipe, its sour flavour balances the sweetness of the lamb.


2 tbsp sunflower oil  
 1kg lamb shoulder, cut into bite-sized chunks  
 2 medium onions, sliced  
 2 garlic cloves, crushed  
 1 tbsp plain flour  
 2 tsp ground coriander  
 1 tsp ground cumin  
 1 litre hot lamb stock  
 300g rhubarb, trimmed and cut into 5cm lengths

1 tbsp each of chopped coriander and mint  
 saffron rice, to serve

- 1 Heat the oven to 170°C (150°C fan oven) gas mark 3. Heat 1 tbsp oil in a large pan and brown the lamb in batches. Transfer to a casserole dish.
- 2 Heat the remaining oil

in the same pan and gently fry the onions for 10 minutes until softened. Turn up the heat slightly and continue stirring until golden. Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute.

- 3 Stir in the flour and spices, then cook over a medium heat for 1 minute. Gradually stir in the stock. Bring to the boil, then pour over the lamb in the casserole. Cover and cook in the oven for 2 hours until tender.
- 4 Transfer the casserole

to a medium hob. Add the rhubarb and simmer for 10 minutes until tender but still holds its shape. Check the consistency of the sauce: if it's too thin, strain the meat and rhubarb and keep warm. Return the liquid to the pan and bubble rapidly until thickened and slightly syrupy. Check the seasoning and return the lamb and rhubarb to the sauce. Stir in the chopped herbs and serve with saffron rice. 



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# *Eat your* GREENS

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kale and chard bring a  
burst of versatility and  
variety to the winter table

RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY ALICE HART ● PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
JONATHAN GREGSON ● STYLING BY SARAH KEADY

Baked halibut with  
wilted kale, chard,  
tahini sauce and  
pine nuts

**PAPPARDELLE WITH KALE AND WALNUT PESTO***Preparation 20 minutes Cooking about 20 minutes Serves 4*

If you want to make this pasta dish suitable for vegetarians, use a Parmesan alternative and leave out the pancetta. You could even replace it with drained borlotti or butter beans, folded through to finish. The pesto also works well in sandwiches or with roast chicken – it will keep in the fridge for a few days if you cover the top with a thin film of olive oil.

150g kale  
 2 small garlic cloves, peeled and chopped  
 150g walnut halves, lightly toasted and roughly chopped  
 small bunch of basil leaves  
 50g Parmesan, finely grated, plus extra to serve  
 100ml extra-virgin olive oil  
 160g smoked pancetta, diced  
 300g egg pappardelle

- 1 To make the pesto, bring a large pan of water to the boil, add a good pinch of salt and blanch the kale for around 45 seconds. Drain and refresh under cold water. Squeeze any excess moisture from the kale and roughly chop.
- 2 Put the garlic cloves in a food processor with 90g walnuts, the basil leaves, Parmesan and the chopped kale. Pulse to chop finely, then gradually add the oil with the motor running. Finish with 3 tbsp

water, then season to taste (remembering that the pancetta will be salty). The pesto should still retain some texture.

- 3 Put the pancetta in a dry frying pan and set over a low heat. Cook slowly for 5 minutes, until the fat begins to run, then turn up the heat and cook until golden and crisp. Drain on a piece of kitchen towel.

- 4 Cook the pasta in plenty of boiling, salted water, according to the packet

instructions. Reserve a mugful of the cooking water before draining. Return to the pan with the pesto and a few tablespoons of the reserved cooking water to loosen. Use tongs to turn the pasta to coat it, adding half the crisp pancetta.

- 5 Divide the pasta between four warm bowls and finish by topping with the remaining walnut halves and pancetta, and more grated Parmesan to taste. ➔



## CHANNA MASALA WITH CHARD AND SPICY MANGO CHUTNEY

*Preparation 20 minutes*

*Cooking 45 minutes Serves 4*

A quick and easy vegetarian curry that only gets better if you make it a day ahead of time, though you will sacrifice a little of the chard's vibrant green colour. The recipe is easily doubled if you need to feed a crowd, and freezes well.

### FOR THE CHUTNEY

1 tbsp groundnut oil  
2 shallots, finely chopped  
1 red chilli, deseeded and finely chopped  
2cm piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated  
2 tsp nigella seeds  
1 large mango, peeled, destoned and cut into small cubes  
squeeze of lemon juice  
1 tsp caster sugar (optional)

### FOR THE CHANNA MASALA

2 tbsp groundnut oil  
2 onions, finely sliced  
2 garlic cloves, crushed  
4cm piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated  
1½ tsp cumin seeds  
1 tsp each ground coriander and chilli powder  
3 green cardamom pods, lightly crushed  
2 x 400g tins peeled plum tomatoes  
1 tsp caster sugar  
2 tsp garam masala  
2 x 400g tins chickpeas, rinsed and drained  
250g bunch Swiss chard, rinsed and roughly chopped (both stalks and leaves)  
small handful of coriander leaves

1 To make the chutney, heat the groundnut oil in a frying pan and add the shallots, chilli and ginger. Cook for 8 minutes until soft. Stir in the nigella seeds, mango and a splash of water. Turn up the heat slightly and cook for 5 minutes until the mango begins to break down. Add

the lemon juice, taste, then add sugar if needed. Cover and set aside for at least 30 minutes to allow the flavour to develop. It will keep for up to five days in the fridge.

2 To make the channa masala, put the oil in a casserole dish and set over a low to medium heat. Add the onions with a pinch of salt and cook, stirring often, for at least 15 minutes until they are soft, golden and sweet. Stir in the garlic, ginger, cumin, coriander, chilli powder and cardamom pods, and toast for a minute.

5 Add a splash of water

and cook until it has evaporated. Follow with the tomatoes, breaking them down in the pan. Add another pinch of salt and the sugar, and bring to the boil. Simmer for 5 minutes, then reduce the heat and add the garam masala and chickpeas. Simmer for another 5 minutes, adding a splash of water if the mixture looks dry.

4 Stir in the chard with 4 tbsp water and cook for a further 5 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Stir in the coriander.

Serve with lemon wedges, steamed basmati rice and the mango chutney.



## WARM KALE AND ROOT VEGETABLE SALAD WITH A WINTER HERB SALSA VERDE

*Preparation 30 minutes Cooking 35 minutes Serves 4*

The feta in this salad is entirely optional, but it makes a delicious addition. If you do use it, bear its saltiness in mind when seasoning the salsa verde.

750g sweet potatoes, peeled and sliced into thick batons  
10 baby beetroots, scrubbed and trimmed  
2 tbsp olive oil  
200g Puy lentils  
100g kale  
150g feta cheese, drained and broken into large pieces

### FOR THE SALSA VERDE

150g kale, tough stalks removed and leaves

roughly chopped large handful of flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped  
2 tsp rosemary leaves, finely chopped  
1 garlic clove, peeled and roughly chopped  
1 tbsp capers, rinsed and drained  
2½ tbsp red wine vinegar  
120ml extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for dressing

- 1 Heat the oven to 190°C (170°C fan oven) gas mark 5. Toss the sweet potato and beets with the olive oil. Season generously and spread them out in a lined baking tin. Roast for 30-35 minutes until caramelised and soft.
- 2 Meanwhile, make the salsa verde by blitzing all the ingredients together in a food processor with 3 tbsp water to make a textured dressing. Taste and add a little more red wine vinegar, oil or seasoning, if necessary.
- 3 Place the lentils in a medium pan and cover with plenty of cold water. Bring to the boil, partially

cover and simmer for around 20 minutes until they are tender, but retain a little bite. Drain and return to the pan. Stir in a heaped tablespoon of the salsa verde with a glug of olive oil and season well. Keep warm.

- 4 Bring a pan of water to the boil, add a large pinch of salt and plunge in the kale. Boil for a couple of minutes, until just tender, then drain and dress with a little olive oil. Fold the kale, sweet potatoes and beets through the lentils with the feta and serve with extra salsa verde on the side. ➔



**CHEESE AND CHARD TART**

*Preparation 40 minutes, plus chilling*

*Cooking 50 minutes Serves 8-10*

This tart makes the most of the chard's mineral notes with toasted almonds, lemon zest, capers and plenty of pecorino cheese. It's lovely served warm with buttery potatoes, and also works well cold with a crisp salad.

**FOR THE PASTRY**

- 300g white spelt flour
- 2 tbsp golden caster sugar
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 3-4 tbsp milk

**FOR THE FILLING**

- 50g blanched almonds
- zest of 1 lemon
- a good grating of fresh nutmeg
- 75g pecorino, finely grated
- 2 tbsp capers, rinsed and drained
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tbsp crème fraîche
- 600g rainbow chard (2 large bunches)
- 280g jar charred artichoke hearts (halved) in oil, drained
- 1 tbsp milk, to glaze

- 1 Pulse the flour, caster sugar, baking powder and salt together in a food processor to mix. Add the oil, eggs and milk (starting with 3 tbsp and only adding the rest if needed) and pulse again to form a dough. Divide it into two discs and wrap each in clingfilm. Chill for at least an hour or overnight.
- 2 Heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan oven) gas mark 4. Toast the almonds in a frying pan for 3-4 minutes,

stirring often, until golden. Cool and roughly chop. Put in a large bowl with the lemon zest, nutmeg, pecorino, capers, eggs and crème fraîche. Mix well and set aside.

- 3 Remove the chard leaves from the stalks and slice the stalks into 1cm pieces. Bring a large pan of water to the boil, add the stalks and simmer for 2 minutes. Add the chard leaves and simmer for about 8 more minutes, until soft. Refresh under cold water in a colander and drain thoroughly, squeezing the water out tightly with your hands. Wrap in a clean tea towel and wring out firmly to extract every last drop of

moisture. Chop the chard leaves and stalks and stir into the almond mixture.

- 4 Roll out both rounds of dough on a lightly floured surface, until both are slightly larger than a 23cm tart tin with a removable base. Use one round to line the tin, leaving the edges overhanging. Spoon the chard filling in and arrange the artichoke hearts on top in concentric circles. Cover with the second round of pastry and press firmly around the edges to seal. Trim the overhang with a knife and brush with the milk. Bake the tart for 30-35 minutes. Allow to cool for at least 30 minutes before slicing.



## BAKED KALE CHIPS WITH SMOKED PAPRIKA AND CHILLI FLAKES

*Preparation 10 minutes*

*Cooking 10 minutes*

*Serves 4-6*

You can buy kale chips ready-made from health food shops, but, as with most things, homemade tastes so much better and is cheaper by a country mile. Vary the seasonings to taste – celery salt and curry powder are particularly good.

**300g kale, washed and dried**  
**1 tbsp olive oil**  
**1 tsp salt**  
**1 tsp sweet smoked paprika**  
**½ tsp dried chilli flakes**

- 1 Heat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan oven) gas mark 4. Line a baking tray with baking parchment. With a knife or kitchen scissors, carefully remove the kale leaves from the thick stems. Discard stems and tear leaves into bite-size pieces. Spread out on the baking tray in one layer and drizzle with olive oil, salt, paprika and chilli flakes, tossing to coat evenly.
- 2 Bake for about 10 minutes until the edges brown slightly, but are not burnt, shaking halfway through the cooking time. The kale chips should be very crisp once cool.

## BAKED HALIBUT WITH WILTED KALE, CHARD, TAHINI SAUCE AND PINE NUTS

*Preparation 25 minutes*

*Cooking about 15 minutes*

*Serves 4*

Halibut has a firm yet delicate texture, and is robust enough to stand up to flavours such as sesame. If you can't get it locally, try turbot. The creamy sauce and garlicky greens go equally well with roast or griddled lamb, or a seared beef steak with sautéed



Baked kale chips with smoked paprika and chilli flakes

potatoes. Alternatively, try them with charred aubergine slices.

**4 x 175g-200g halibut steaks with bones**  
**3 tbsp olive oil**  
**FOR THE TAHINI SAUCE**  
**4 tbsp light tahini, stirred well**  
**1 garlic clove, crushed**  
**a pinch of sugar**  
**juice of 1 lemon**  
**50g pine nuts**  
**FOR THE GREENS**  
**2 tbsp olive oil**  
**2 garlic cloves, finely sliced**  
**a good pinch dried chilli flakes**  
**300g kale, leaves stripped from their stalks and roughly shredded**  
**squeeze of lemon juice**  
**lemon wedges, to serve**

- 1 Heat the oven to 220°C (200°C fan oven) gas mark 8. Start by making the sauce. Whisk the tahini, garlic, sugar and lemon juice together. Season with salt and gradually whisk in 120ml hot water to form a smooth sauce with the consistency of double cream.
- 2 Toast the pine nuts in a dry frying pan over a medium heat, shaking the pan often until evenly golden. Set aside.
- 3 Put the halibut steaks in a roasting tin, spaced well apart. Drizzle with the olive oil, season well and roast for 7-9 minutes, depending on the thickness of the fish.
- 4 Meanwhile, cook the greens. Warm the olive oil in a large wok or frying pan, set over a low heat. Add the garlic and chilli and cook gently for 5 minutes to infuse the oil. Turn up the heat and throw in the greens. Stir-fry for 5 minutes until the greens have wilted, throwing in a splash of water if they begin to catch. Season well with salt, freshly ground black pepper and a squeeze of lemon juice.
- 5 Serve the fish with wilted greens, a few spoonfuls of sauce, a scattering of toasted pine nuts and a lemon wedge.



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## Friends with fitness

Whether it's Zumba in the village hall or a hike with the local rambling club, regular exercise in a group will not only boost your fitness, but reduce your stress levels, too. A recent study by the University of New England found that people who did this at least once a week for 12 weeks lowered stress levels by 26 per cent and also reported an increase in their quality of life. By contrast, solitary exercisers would work out on average for twice as long as the groups but, even though they had put in more effort, didn't see any changes to perceived stress levels.



## TREAT YOURSELF

With the River Windrush flowing along the edge of its 65 acres of gardens, a large vegetable plot and hen house, the Old Swan & Minster Mill, a former coaching inn and mill in the Oxfordshire countryside, really does feel like a slice of old England. Set in the grounds, the recently opened Garden Spa reflects its surroundings. The Ultimate Hero Signature Treatment (85 minutes; from £105) uses plant oils and natural ingredients in ESPA products to banish winter blues. It begins with a back scrub, followed by a soothing massage featuring a choice of body oils. After a bespoke facial, a cooling hair and scalp mud is applied with a head massage. Then, all that's left to do is sip herbal tea and snuggle under a blanket by the fire pit outdoors. *Minster Lovell, Witney, Oxfordshire. Double B&B from £115 (oldswanandminstermill.co.uk). Country Living readers can enjoy dinner, bed and breakfast, including a glass of champagne, from £179 per room. \*\**

# health notes



## NEW FAVOURITE

*For skin that's looking dehydrated and tired, try BRYT (bryt.skincare.co.uk). Start and end the day with BRYT Cleanse (£12.99), followed by BRYT Night (£18.50) before bed. Team them with Boost Serum (£22), packed with jojoba and baobab oils to nourish, and hyaluronic acid to lock in moisture.*

Boost your wellbeing the natural way with our round-up from the world of health and beauty

**NOTHING QUITE EASES** an aching back or neck like a hot water bottle – and the YuYu bottle, which has a long shape and fastenings either end, can be tied in place around the waist, shoulders or wherever it's needed. Choose from the new range of Liberty-print covers (£65; yuyubottle.com).

**HELP KEEP WINTER BUGS AT BAY** with a combination of immune-boosting plant extracts in Dr.Dünner Nasturtium, Rosehip and Elderflower capsules with Vitamin C (£25.99; drdunner.co.uk).

**FORGET POPCORN AND PROTEIN BALLS**, the latest healthy snack is made from popped lotus seeds. Revered in traditional Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine, the seeds of the lotus flower are rich in protein and minerals. Karma Bites (£1.59; karmabites.co.uk) combine them with flavours such as wasabi and Himalayan pink salt. *For more tips and products, visit netdoctor.co.uk.*

## NATURE'S MEDICINE CABINET

**Oats** Eating a bowl of porridge daily could change the health of the nation, according to new nutritional advice. Oats are rich in fibre and contain minerals such as manganese, copper and iron – and, when made simply with milk, it's a low-fat, low-sugar breakfast. Porridge oats also contain a type of soluble fibre called beta glucan. The swollen grains form a gel-like substance in the gut, which helps to reduce the absorption of cholesterol. A study found that eating 3g of beta glucan a day (the amount in an average bowl of porridge) can reduce levels of harmful cholesterol by seven per cent.\*



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## Take a more holistic approach to ageing for naturally radiant skin

If you want a more youthful complexion, you need to do more than apply a cream. The way your skin ages is affected by what you eat, do and even think. Increasingly, experts are revealing how our lifestyle can impact on the rate at which skin starts to lose elasticity and tone. "Trying to take wrinkles away on the surface is like putting on a sticking plaster," says naturopathic doctor Nigma Talib.

We've all witnessed someone age seemingly overnight when they have been through a stressful life event. "Our adrenals - tiny almond-shaped glands on top of the kidneys - produce the 'fight or flight' hormone, cortisol, as a defence mechanism. It's a good thing in the short term, as it helps us remain alert when we're threatened, but it can become a drain if we don't relax," Nigma explains. Cortisol also increases blood sugar levels, and a 2011 study published in the *Journal of the American Aging Association* found that those with high blood sugar levels look ten years older, with skin more prone to sagging.

Other natural processes happening at a cellular level in the body also affect the

# GLOW

*from within*

ageing process. “Free radicals – unstable molecules that can create a lot of damage – are caused by stress as well as UV exposure, smoking, pollution and a bad diet. They can lead to what’s known as ‘oxidative stress’. Like rust on a shiny metal box, they increase pigmentation, so our skin looks yellow and dull, and they cause wrinkles,” says former surgeon Dr Terry Loong, who combines her Eastern roots with Western medicine for her anti-ageing programmes at The Skin Energy Clinic, London.

Inflammation is yet another age accelerator. It’s your body’s normal response to injury caused by trauma and infection, but it can also be a response to pollution and certain foods, such as sugar and processed items, and can become chronic.

Fortunately, there are simple changes you can make to minimise the damage these factors can cause and reveal a healthier, more radiant and younger-looking you.

## CALM YOUR MIND

A study at the University of California Davis Center for Mind and Brain showed that conscious breathing and meditation may help to reduce cortisol levels. Holistic facialist Marie Reynolds recommends these simple techniques: “Think of your happiest memory and visualise every tiny detail – the place, sounds, smells and colours. Keep bringing this image to the front of your mind as you relax. Or concentrate on a candle flame in a conscious way.” Try the Neom Real Luxury Intensive Skin Treatment Candle (£36; neomorganics.com), with lavender, jasmine and rosewood oil to aid relaxation. The melted oil it produces can be massaged into the skin afterwards, too.

## FEED YOUR SKIN

Antioxidant-rich foods help ‘mop up’ damage caused by free radicals. At this time of year, kale, purple-sprouting broccoli and cauliflower are in season and packed with nutrients. Or look for dried goji berries, frozen blueberries and raspberries and raw dark chocolate to add to smoothies.

Eating low-GI foods can help reduce blood sugar levels. “The easy way is to have a bit of protein with every meal or snack,” says nutrition therapist Ian Marber. “If you’re having an apple, eat some almonds as well.”

Omega fatty acids are also essential for skin health. Incorporate oily fish, such as salmon and mackerel, into your meals twice a week or drizzle Udo’s Choice Ultimate Oil Blend (£12.99; udoschoice.co.uk) over salads, soups and baked potatoes.

## MINDFUL CLEANSING

Massage can be a youth booster, too. A tight neck and shoulders restrict blood flow to the face, causing grey, sallow skin. “The way we apply products to our skin makes a huge ➔

Stress, as well as environmental factors and inflammation, can affect how your body ages



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difference,” says skincare expert Annee de Mamiel. “Massaging them in helps counteract stagnation, increases circulation and delivers fresh oxygen and nutrients to cells. Pausing and creating space for a few minutes a day to engage with ourselves also makes us mindful of what we’re doing, creating a feeling of wellness.” Swap a face wash for a cleansing oil, such as de Mamiel Pure Calm Cleansing Dew (£50; demamiel.com), which can be slowly massaged into skin as you inhale the scent of cypress and blue tansy oils.

### HORMONES IN HARMONY

“When we have an optimum hormone balance, our skin looks smooth, radiant, hydrated and firm,” Dr Terry Loong says. “Hormonal changes during peri-menopause and menopause create a lack of internal skin boosters, as well as affecting sleep, moods, energy levels, libido, concentration and gut function – all of which speed up the ageing process more than we’d like.” Supplements such as black cohosh and wild yam may help with symptoms such as hot flushes and night sweats, but they won’t have a strong or targeted effect on bones, muscle, soft tissues or skin. “See a hormone specialist, who can create a plan according to your symptoms, alongside your GP.”

### PERFECT PROTECTION

At this time of year, an SPF might seem pretty low down on the priority list, but a sunscreen is one of the best creams you can buy. “The skin on our faces, necks, décolletage and backs of hands is exposed to UVA/UVB damage, even on a day that is cloudy,” says Nigma Talib. Try new bareMinerals BarePro Performance Wear Liquid Foundation SPF 20 (£29; bareminerals.co.uk), which contains a non-chemical sunscreen along with papaya enzymes to gently improve the skin’s texture over time. 

### OTHER GLOW BOOSTERS TO TRY



**L'Occitane Divine Cleansing Balm** (£34; loccitane.co.uk) removes make-up and nourishes skin.  
**Vichy LiftActiv Vitamin C Brightening Skin Corrector** (£28; vichy.co.uk) contains a strong dose of pure vitamin C.  
**Elemis Cellular Recovery Skin Bliss Capsules**

(£66; elemis.com) has essential-oil-rich capsules for night and day.  
**Swisscode Bionic Stem Cell Age Control** (£160; pureswissboutique.com) has plant stem cells to brighten skin and preserve the collagen structure beneath.



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# Run Your First Mile

Whatever your fitness, you can discover the transformative, life-enriching and social-bonding power of running with the *Runner's World* First Mile programme



**R**unning your first mile is magical. Both a worthy achievement in itself and the beginning of a longer journey to a lifetime of enjoying all the physical, mental and spiritual benefits that running has to offer. And if you make your mile a 'country mile', it also becomes a perfect way to immerse yourself in the wonderful scenery and wildlife that's all around us.

You may not even remember when you last ran a single step. And you may also look back on wintry school

cross-country runs with a distinct absence of fondness, but the *Runner's World* team will inspire, guide and support you every step of the way. We'll show you how to get started, how to progress safely and enjoyably, and how to sidestep every obstacle.

## Why should you run?

Scientific research has found that running delivers myriad health benefits for body and mind, including lowering your risk of heart attack and stroke,

lowering blood pressure, reducing anxiety and stress, boosting your immune system, improving your sleep and combating – or even reversing – cognitive decline. If running is beginning to sound rather like a miracle drug, that's because it is. Runners have a far lower risk of type 2 diabetes and many cancers, including breast, colon and lung. And, contrary to the popular misconception, it won't wreck your knees: in fact, research shows that runners show less wear and tear on their joints than non-runners, and that the weight-bearing nature of running also helps to safeguard bone density, reducing your risk of developing osteoporosis.

Then there's the dramatic effect on your waistline. A 66kg woman will burn twice the calories by running at a 10-minute-mile pace as she would by walking for the same time at a 15-minute-mile pace, which is why research has shown those who take up running lower both their BMI (body mass index, a measure of body fat) and waist circumference.

## How do I start?

Our First Mile programme gently eases you into regular activity, gradually increasing in time and intensity. You'll start with a mix of walking and short segments of light jogging, and, depending on your starting fitness level, the plans will take you to running your first mile in six or 10 weeks. You'll find the complete training plans, and all the expert advice and support you need, at [runnersworld.co.uk/first-mile](http://runnersworld.co.uk/first-mile). Plus there's a chance to win a place to run in the dedicated *Runner's World* First Milers' wave at the Vitality Westminster Mile, on May 27. Your running journey starts with a single step – take it today.



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*next month in*  
**COUNTRY LIVING**

*Our March issue is on sale from 31 January*



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to see our latest subscription offer*



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### CHRISTOPHER TOWNSEND SCULPTURE

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# Home sweet home Where the heart is



### DAVID GEE CERAMICS

David has developed printing techniques transferring motifs, textures and patterns onto earthenware clay prior to forming, firing and glazing his unique bowls, canisters and boxes. The decoration is inspired by natural processes which include the formation and erosion of rocks, the flow of water and the patterns of bark and animal skins. All are captured, fossil-like, within his remarkable surfaces. [davidgeeceramics.co.uk](http://davidgeeceramics.co.uk)



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### THE COTSWOLD STUDIO

The Cotswold Studio is a collaboration of artists, Maureen Gillespie and Marie Shepherd who share a passion for capturing the essence of nature, whether it be exquisite sculptures of animals who inhabit the countryside or stunning paintings of land and seascapes. To find the perfect addition to your home, office or garden call 01993 882402 or visit [www.thecotswoldstudio.co.uk](http://www.thecotswoldstudio.co.uk)



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*Special offers  
for January*

# Had enough with being overweight?

**Hands up all those who feel they're in a constant battle to achieve a healthy and sustainable body weight. How many diets have you tried and failed, feeling totally frustrated and not knowing what to do next?**

Having had a weight problem for 35 years, Rachel was desperate to find a way of being able to lose weight once and for all. 'I had just about resigned myself to the fact that I would be overweight for the rest of my life, when I came across the principles of the Metabolic Weight Loss Programme. I followed these and to my amazement, I lost 3 stone in just over 3 months and then went on to successfully maintain my weight. The relief was enormous to have found something that finally worked for me.'

Rachel became passionate about wanting to help as many people as possible with their weight problems, which led her to become a qualified weight loss consultant. In the last 15 years, she has helped over 5,000 clients from all walks of life to help bring their dieting days to an end once and for all. 'My clients' ages range from from 8 to 90 years old, so there is hope for everyone!'

*One of the popular aspects of the Metabolic Weight Loss Programme is there's nothing faddish about it. There are no meal replacements, diet shakes or diet pills. All the foods on the programme are easily obtainable. Clients frequently say just how easy it is to follow, they don't feel hungry and are not having to constantly battle with cravings. The four stages of the programme are tailored as necessary to provide the maximum results for each client.*

Rachel and her team give weekly one-to-one consultations, guiding you through the programme with personalised support, lots of empathy and total conviction in the success of the programme. Email support is available in between consultations.



Rachel Ricketts, Weight Loss Consultant

## *Recent success*

*"I was desperate to lose weight and you really were my last resort. Thanks to you and your team's wonderful support I lost 3 stone. I no longer get out of breath and can now run around after my grandchildren! My blood pressure and cholesterol are finally in a normal range. My doctor is delighted with my health improvement and so am I! I would recommend the Metabolic Weight Programme to anyone."*

*Christine from Hampshire*

'This isn't an open-ended slimming club,' says Rachel. 'We set your target weight at the beginning and then get on with the business of helping you lose the weight, addressing any difficulties along the way, then we concentrate on keeping it off – for good!'

For those who are not able to visit, a very successful remote support service is provided throughout the UK - distance is no object!

Clients often comment on how impressed their doctors are with their results. 'My doctor is very happy- I've been able to come off blood pressure and cholesterol medication,' says one. Another doctor said, 'All my lady patients on thyroid medication are struggling to lose weight, but you've lost 2 ½ stone despite being on thyroxin – well done!'

With an expected weight loss of 7-14lb a month for clients and hundreds of hand written testimonials, Rachel's results speak for themselves. 'I see real results daily, time after time I see people's lives change in front of me.'

**Call now for a free consultation.**

**01342 327396**

**Email [rachel@rachelrickettsweightloss.co.uk](mailto:rachel@rachelrickettsweightloss.co.uk)  
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# IDYLIC ESCAPES



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# IDYLIC ESCAPES



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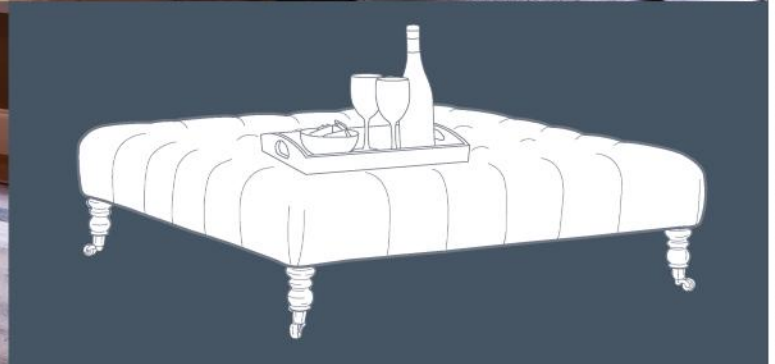
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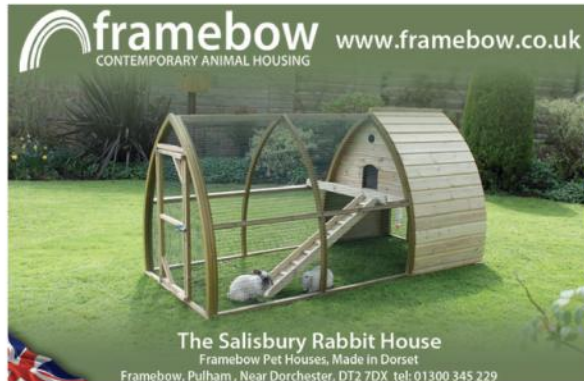


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Scotland's landscapes have played a central role in Alastair's life, including Balephetrish Bay on the Isle of Tiree and Ben Nevis (below)

# MY COUNTRYSIDE ALASTAIR CAMPBELL

The journalist, broadcaster and political aide on how the Scottish Highlands revive his spirit

**My dad was a vet and would often take us on his rounds.** He had a practice in Keighley and a branch in Bingley, West Yorkshire, and covered a big area, so we would get out among some of the most beautiful scenery in the world, such as the area around Haworth. I don't know if I was aware of how beautiful it was then, but some of my earliest memories are of those trips round farms. Dad was a real lover of horses, and at one time he had his own pony and trap, which we used to go out on, too.

**All of our holidays were in Scotland, usually weaving from one relative to another, and always ending in the Hebridean island of Tiree.** Uncle Hector and his wife, my auntie Mairi, lived there in the croft where my dad was born. I was always struck by how long the days were, as Tiree gets more hours of sunshine than most places in

the UK. The beaches are incredible and never busy. I used to borrow my cousin's bike and just head off round the island. I was back there recently for Auntie Mairi's funeral, sadly the last of my dad's generation on the island.

**I like hills, fast-flowing rivers, wildness in scenery** and changing, clashing colours. The view of Ben Nevis is my screensaver, so I guess that must be my favourite view anywhere. We regularly go to a place near Ardgour, just over the water from Fort William. But, to be honest, wherever you are in Scotland you're not far from fantastic landscapes, especially in winter. As I heard someone say once, when we were going out for a walk in wild rain, "There is no such thing as bad

weather... There are just bad clothes and boots".


**When I'm out in great countryside, especially on my bike, my mind is more active afterwards.** Some of my best work comes at these times. Often, if I'm writing, I deliberately go somewhere quiet and beautiful, and just wait for thoughts and ideas.

**My bike is often on the roof of the car so I can find places to cycle en route.** Yorkshire and Lancashire are fabulous for hills. So is Scotland and, winter or summer, I often take the bike to the Highlands. In London I tend to join all the MAMILs [Middle Aged Men In Lycra] in Regent's Park, and I sometimes venture out in Hertfordshire and Essex.

**I think the biggest issues facing the countryside are jobs being killed by automation, poverty, access to decent schools and good transport.** And I believe Brexit will be a total disaster for our agriculture. I also have a passionate loathing of litter, and cannot for the life of me understand why that is not universally shared – it

is even more infuriating in rural areas!

**I don't need an excuse to get the bagpipes out.** There are many tunes I love, and I also write my own, or, more accurately, make them up as I go along. As a child, I used to rebel a bit when Dad was teaching me how to play, thinking there were better things to do, but I'm so glad

I did it now. I love playing them. 

## I like hills, fast-flowing rivers and clashing colours

**Alastair Campbell is a speaker for Head Talks ([headtalks.com](http://headtalks.com)), which hosts short talks aimed at informing and inspiring those interested in improving and maintaining their mental wellbeing.**

INTERVIEW BY KATE LANGRISH. PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAMY, EYEVINE

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