

HENLEY

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Life



PANTO TIME
AT THE KENTON
WITH
Peter Pan

Featuring

Father Christmas, fashion ideas and much more



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December 2025



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HENLEY
Life

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Don't miss out as they go fast!

IT'S December and, of course, that means we are all gearing up for Christmas.

Henley really embraces the festive season with a variety of events being staged for all to enjoy, particularly for children and families.

The annual pantomime at the Kenton Theatre is this month's cover feature. Immersion Theatre is back with an adaptation of the Peter Pan story. Natalie Aldred speaks with James Tobias, who runs Immersion with his wife and fellow actress Rochelle Parry, about what to expect.

The Living Advent Calendar is back and comprises performances in different locations across the town on 24 days, like an Advent calendar. Each night will be in aid of a different charity. We have a map of where each performance is taking place. It's arrival for 6pm for a 6.15pm start.

We meet the man affectionately known as Henley's Father Christmas, who will be appearing at events across Henley throughout the month, while the Crooked Billet pub has provided a suitably festive recipe for you to try at home.

Amanda Stewart speaks to some Henley independent shops about this season's fashion favourites and author Kirsten Hesketh tells us about her latest novel, which would make the perfect stocking filler.

Dr Shilpa McQuillan gives some tips on how to stay healthy and enjoy the festive period and Lottie Pheasant, manager of the Kenton, is the subject of this month's My Henley Life.

We wish you all a very happy Christmas.

The Henley Life team

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HENLEY-ON-THAMES

Living Advent Calendar

2025 SCHEDULE

THE Henley Living Advent Calendar brings the magic of the festive season to life in the heart of town. Inspired by an original idea from Stockholm, the event first began here in 2011 and was one of the very first of its kind in the UK.

Running every evening from December 1st to 24th, it captures the excitement of a traditional advent calendar – but with a live twist. At 6:15pm each evening, a new “window” or “door” opens somewhere in town to reveal a surprise 20-minute performance.

These enchanting moments might include songs, carols, poetry, music, readings, dance, or even snippets of local

folklore; all celebrating Christmas and the winter season.

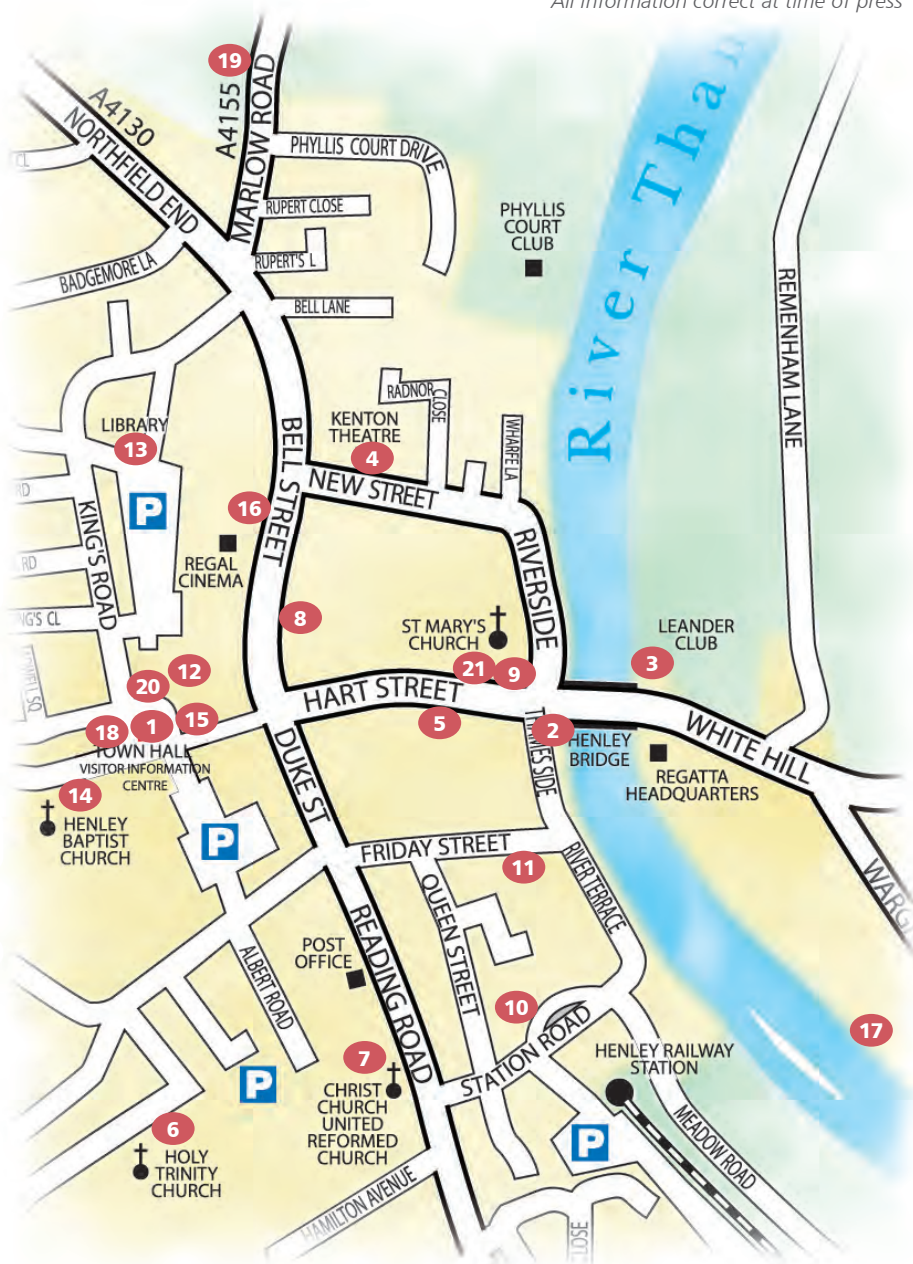
Each venue is carefully paired by the Organising Committee with a local performer or group, creating a unique and community-driven event.

Originally launched by the Henley Business Partnership and now proudly run by Henley Town Council, the Living Advent Calendar continues to promote Henley as a vibrant winter destination for residents and visitors alike.

Collections and raffle ticket sales take place every evening, with all proceeds donated to local charities and good causes. As you enjoy the performances, please don't forget to be generous to the fantastic charities taking part.

All Information correct at time of press

DATE	VENUE	FUNDRAISING
01/12/25	1 Town Hall	RBL/Mayors Charities
02/12/25	2 Angel on the Bridge	Regatta for Disabled
03/12/25	3 Leander Club	Leander Charity
04/12/25	4 HAODs Studio	HAODs
05/12/25	5 Hart St Tavern	Henley Youth Festival
06/12/25	6 Trinity Church	CAP Debt Centre
07/12/25	1 Town Hall	Bell Surgery
08/12/25	7 Chirstchurch Centre	Henley Music School
09/12/25	8 The Old Bell	Shelter
10/12/25	9 Le Relais	Alexander Devine Children's Hospice
11/12/25	10 Chiltern House	Riverside Counselling
12/12/25	11 The Anchor	NOMAD
13/12/25	12 Echoes	TBC
14/12/25	4 Kenton Theatre	Kenton Theatre
15/12/25	13 Henley Library	MyVision Oxfordshire
16/12/25	14 D Two	D:Two
17/12/25	15 Christmas Tree Market Place	Rotary Club/ Sonning School
18/12/25	16 The Bull on Bell Street	The Burnt Chef Project
19/12/25	17 Eyot Centre	Eyot Centre
20/12/25	18 Flyte Bar	Cancer Charity
21/12/25	19 Henley Rugby Club	Woodland Trust/ Camp Mohawk
22/12/25	15 Christmas Tree Market Place	Chiltern Centre
23/12/25	20 Hofs	Henley Gospel Trust
24/12/25	21 St Mary's Church	Mayors Charities



Diary Dates

DECEMBER 2025

**SATURDAY 6TH TO
TUESDAY 30TH DECEMBER**

Immersion Theatre presents Peter Pan

KENTON THEATRE, HENLEY



From the team behind last year's Snow White and Jack and the Beanstalk the year before comes The Further Adventures of Peter Pan (and the Revenge of Captain Hook!). Captain Hook and his all-singing, all-dancing pirate crew are trying to steal Fairyland's happy thoughts. Fortunately, Peter Pan, best friend Tink and the gang are ready to take action. On Monday, December 15th, there is a peaceful performance at 6pm and on Monday, December 15th there is a signed performance at 2.30pm. There are meet and greets after shows on selected days (£2 extra per child on booking). Tickets cost £28.75 adults, £22.75 under-16s, £26.75 concessions.

For more information, call the box office on (01491) 525050 or visit thekenton.org.uk

SATURDAY 6TH DECEMBER

Henley Symphony Orchestra Christmas concerts

CHRIST CHURCH, HENLEY

Henley Symphony Orchestra's two festive concerts, conducted by music

director Alexander Walker, feature special guest, actor Jeremy Drakes, as the narrator for Prokofiev's symphonic tale, Peter and the Wolf. The earlier, shorter concert, specially devised for children under 10, will take place from 2.30pm to 3.15pm (tickets cost £5 adults, £3 children, free for under-tuos), with the later concert from 5pm to 6.30pm (tickets cost £15 adults, £7 under-16s, £3 under-10s). The later concert includes Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite and Leroy Anderson's Sleigh Ride, along with traditional carols where the audience can sing along. There will be mulled wine, soft drinks and mince pies.

For more information, call 07726 459261 or email boxoffice@henleysymphonyorchestra.co.uk

**TUESDAY 9TH TO
WEDNESDAY 10TH DECEMBER**

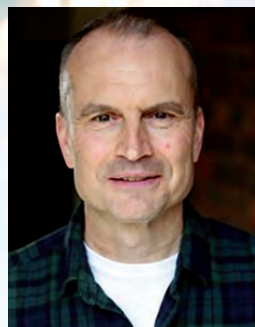
Ben Waters' Big Balls

CROOKED BILLET, STOKE ROW



Boogie pianist Ben Waters started out in music when he joined Shakin' Stevens's band at the age of 14 in 1980 to take over the piano playing from Chris Holland, brother to Jools. He went on to form his own band and work with greats such as Jools, Chris, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Charlie Watts, Ronnie Wood and Jeff Beck. Ben and his all-star boogie-woogie honky-tonk big band will play the Crooked Billet for two nights of Christmas celebrations. Tickets cost £99 for a winter party menu and as a music cover charge.

For more information, call (01491) 681048 or visit thecrookedbillet.co.uk



SUNDAY 14TH DECEMBER

Henley and District Theatre Organ Trust presents Andy Quin

HENLEY TOWN HALL



Composer and jazz pianist Andy Quin has written music for hundreds of television shows such as Coronation Street and Holby City, as well as Hollywood films and advertisements. There will be a lively mix of jazz, ragtime, bebop and more. The concert starts at 3pm (doors open at 2.30pm). Admission is £10 (cash at the door) which includes refreshments.

For more information, call David Rusman on 0118 972 4988 or visit www.henleyorgantrust.org.uk

MONDAY 15TH DECEMBER

Nettlebed Folk Club presents St Agnes Fountain

**THE VILLAGE CLUB, HIGH
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St Agnes Fountain, comprising Chris While, Julie Matthews and Fairport Convention's Chris Leslie, have played Nettlebed annually since 2001. The Aggies return to play their gig with

its Christmas classics. Tickets for the show, which starts at 7.30pm, cost £24 in advance, £25 on the door.

For more information, call 01628 636620 (between 10am and 8pm only) or visit www.nettlebedfolkclub.co.uk

ONGOING EVENTS

TO FRIDAY 19TH DECEMBER

Rock Legends Live

HYPERGALLERY, HENLEY

Rock Legends Live, photographer Zoe Wilson's residency at Hypergallery in Market Place, has proved so popular that it has been extended. Featuring the collections Rock Vandal, Rock Pimp and new Rock Light — miniature backlit lightbox artworks — this is an archive of late Eighties lost media transformed into fine art. The gallery will be open every Saturday and Sunday until Christmas, from



11am to 4pm. On Fridays, up to and including December 19, there will be Friday evening Christmas drinks.

For more information, email zoe@rocklegendslive.co.uk or emily@hypergallery.com

TO SATURDAY 17TH JANUARY 2026

Lerner and Loewe's My Fair Lady

MILL AT SONNING

The Mill at Sonning's musical Christmas extravaganza features big numbers such as Wouldn't It Be Lovely?, On The Street Where You Live and I Could Have Danced All Night. Directed by Joseph Pitcher and based on George Bernard Shaw's play Pygmalion, professor of phonetics Henry Higgins takes on Cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, to give her elocution lessons and see if he can pass her as a lady in high society.

For more information, call the box office on 0118 969 8000 or visit millatsonning.com



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Award winning pantomime comes to Henley —

guaranteed to get audiences hooked...

BY NATALIE ALDRED

IMMERSION Theatre is back with this year's Kenton Theatre panto and a Peter Pan story with a twist, one that is guaranteed to get audiences, err, hooked...

James Tobias, who runs Immersion together with his wife, Rochelle Parry, is keen not to give away any plot spoilers for *The Further Adventures of Peter Pan (and the Revenge of Captain Hook)*.

However, rest assured, it will have an air of familiarity in relation to J M Barrie's original story, where Wendy Darling and her brothers fly to a mysterious land with Peter Pan, a boy

who can fly. "We still have all the characters that we know and love, such as Captain Hook, Peter and Tink," says James. "It just follows a different character instead of Wendy, in which they take her over to Fairyland because of Captain Hook..."

Captain Hook (played by Charlie Bryant) is up to no good and Peter Pan (Louis Gladman) and his gang have to put a stop to their mischievous plans. Tink is played by Shelby Speed, Lily by Keri Rae, Sally Starkers by Jess Jones and Silly Sammy by Tom Isted.

The panto has an all-new cast and has been made bespoke

'We're so aware to make it local to the community but also not to alienate anyone from surrounding areas'



for Henley, after an award-winning iteration at Harrow Arts Centre last year, which starred James and Rochelle.

The couple got married last October, having got engaged on the stage of the Kenton back in 2015, appropriately enough when they were in a run of *Peter Pan* by a different company. James played Captain Hook and Rochelle played Tinkerbell.

"It seems we've got a real affinity with the title," says James.

"Last year was our last year actually performing in panto for the foreseeable future, so it just so happened to be a really lovely bookend, getting engaged to *Peter Pan* and then stepping off the stage in a production of *Peter Pan* by pure coincidence."

He describes the current cast, who were on-hand for the Christmas lights switch-on in Henley, as "absolutely fabulous". "We've got a brand-new cast this year at the Kenton and I'm really excited. A lot of them are quite new to the company but they are incredibly experienced, this is just a new cast that we've wanted to work with."

"Tom, who plays the comic this year, is someone that we've worked with before. He actually played our comic when we did *Peter Pan* as an outdoor tour the year before last. He's fabulous and I'm so excited to work with him again."

"Tom is such a joy to work with and he's so funny and he's so talented – audiences are definitely going to love him."

"We're very lucky to have someone like Shelby as well, who has come over from the Mercury Theatre in Colchester which is where she's been doing panto for a number of years. The fact that she's coming over to grace us is really exciting. We've got a genuinely phenomenal cast."

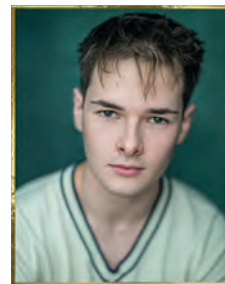
Known for their high-energy, interactive pantos, including last year's *Snow White* and the previous year's *Jack and the Beanstalk* at the Kenton, Immersion will be presenting a show jam-packed with action, comedy and Henley references. "We're so aware to make it local to the community but also not to alienate anyone from surrounding areas, so regardless of where they're coming from there's definitely something for everyone."

"There might be the odd mention to Slough, Maidenhead or Reading, I don't know, who's to say?"

This time around, there is a special emphasis on the tunes. "This is certainly one of my favourites in terms of the music that we've got in the show," says James.

"It's probably one of my favourite scores in all the pantos. I think we've got some of the most electric songs that we have in any of our show catalogues. We've got everything from Queen to Matilda for the little ones which will go down an absolute storm."

"It's real rock 'n' roll, we've got the *Time Warp* in there, we've got *Don't Stop Me Now*, we've got *Revolting Children*, a bit of Elton John. So this one is a real get-up-and-dance kind of show."



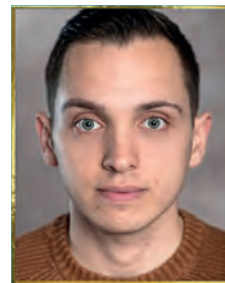
LOUIS GLADMAN



SHELBY SPEED



CHARLIE BRYANT



TOM ISTED



KERI RAE



JESS JONES

Having had two highly successful pantos at the Kenton, tickets are selling fast. "It seems that we've really developed a loyal following in Henley and it's just building every year so it's really lovely," adds James.

Immersion Theatre presents *The Further Adventures of Peter Pan (and the Revenge of Captain Hook)* at the Kenton Theatre in New Street, Henley, from Saturday, December 6 to Tuesday, December 30. There is also a chance to meet some of the cast and get photos after shows on Friday, December 12 (4.30pm), Friday, December 19 (6pm), Tuesday, December 23 (6pm) and Sunday, December 28 (2.30pm). The meet and greets cost just £2 extra per child and they will take place on the stage immediately after the shows. Tickets cost £28.75 adults, £22.75 under-16s (or £24.75 with meet and greet), £26.75 concessions. Family discounts are available and there is a relaxed performance on Monday, December 15 at 6pm (tickets cost £14.75). There is a signed performance on Monday, December 22 at 2.30pm.

For more information, call the box office on (01491) 525050 or visit thekenton.org.uk/events/peter-pan



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Meet the big man himself – Santa Claus is coming to town

BY JOHN JACKLIN

THE man affectionately known as Henley's Father Christmas has literally grown into the role over the past 40 years after being almost press-ganged into the job.

Mike Facherty, 74, a grandfather and dad to two adult sons, first took up the reins of Santa Claus soon after becoming a member of the parent-teacher association at his children's school.

He recalls that the chairman of the association said they were looking for a volunteer to be Father Christmas at the school fair. "And I was the new guy," Mike says.

"I was only 34 years old and I was skinny then and had a ginger beard that was going to show. And I looked around at all these guys who were older than me and clean shaven as well so they could get away with wearing a white beard... but they all started getting busy, scribbling away on their notepads and nobody looked up.

"The chairman said 'Mr Facherty you are the new guy, would you do it?' I felt obliged to say yes.

"When I went home and started wingeing to my wife, she said 'Don't worry, you'll probably love it'. And she wasn't wrong, I did love it. Since that first kid came over and said 'I love you Father Christmas', that was such a great feeling and I thought what a wonderful job this is – even better than being an AA man." And possibly even better than when he worked in financial services for Prudential.

Mike, who lives in Caversham with

Cont'd



‘These days I dream of having to use a false tummy like some of the younger Santas.’

his wife Sue, a former Emmer Green primary teacher, laughs when he reveals how he has grown into the job: “From being a skinny person with a big thick ginger beard, I’ve now got the belly and the white beard as well as a lot of experience.

“These days I dream of having to use a false tummy like some of the younger Santas.”

He has been in training for Christmas time, attending a Santa training school last month in London. “We generally have a refresher course every year in saying Merry Christmas in different languages plus, for youngsters with hearing problems, in British sign language and in Makaton.

“It’s a way of touching base with other Santas, sharing ideas and stories because when you think about it, being a Santa is a very lonely job, you don’t normally work with another one.

“At Hamleys they may have up to four Santas, but they never overlap and at Lapland UK where there are a lot of Santas working, the people tend to be people without a beard so that they can all look alike, with the same uniform and the same beard, which helps with all the photos being taken at booths.”

Mike’s philosophy is that you have to want to be a father Christmas to spread joy and happiness and you have to put the youngsters first. “If you don’t love children, don’t do it and don’t do it because you could make a bit of money, that’s not the motivation.”

Children and what they want still amaze Mike. “One of the most moving requests I have had was from a party for Berkshire Vision, I was asking the children, who were blind, ‘Can you remind Santa what it was you want for Christmas? Obviously I know what you want but Santa is old and sometimes forgetful’.

“And one little girl, who must have been aged about nine said ‘The thing is I don’t want anything, I’ve got absolutely everything that I need. Would you give my wish to somebody who does need something’.”

He recalls: “It was so moving, as you can imagine, my eyes were filling up.”

One of his magical powers as Father Christmas includes the ability to repair rifts. “I was in a school in Liverpool where a little girl came up and said ‘I’ve got a new nephew, but my mum and my sister have had a huge fight and I have never seen him and he was born a few months ago, can you arrange for me to see my nephew?’.

“I said to her, that’s going to be a difficult one, but why don’t you say to your mum that it would be really lovely if that could happen, I said because grown-ups can be a bit silly sometimes can’t they.”

Mike adds: “Well that would normally be the end of it, but a few weeks later I got a letter from the headmistress of the school saying that she didn’t know what I had said, but the little girl’s sister and her nephew spent Christmas in the little girl’s house with her mum. I was so chuffed.” He smiles. “At the other end of the spectrum a young man said to me ‘Well Santa, there are four of us and I don’t think that we spend enough



time together as a family, so what I want for Christmas is a four-way controller for my computer game’.”

And of course Mike has come across the non-believers. “It is rare,” he says. “But some youngsters do say you’re not the real Father Christmas, but when they do I say ‘Are you sure? Because people who don’t believe in Father Christmas tend to get underwear and socks for Christmas’ ... and they suddenly go ‘Oh no, no, I realise now’.”

After four decades in the business Mike has a great pedigree, but not as good as some. “I’m certainly nowhere near being one of the most experienced Santas. We have a thing called a Santa Convention and there was a chap there who was in his eighties and had been doing the job since he was in his teens.”

Dress is important to Mike, who will be sporting a spanking new Santa uniform this year. “The suit I wear has got better over the years after I started off with a grotty cloak-type thing and then a scruffy red suit.

“I have just had a new suit made by Henley Tailoring and it is a thing of real beauty. It has fabulous brass-type buttons with reindeer on and it’s loosely based on the one worn by Richard Attenborough in the 1994 film *Miracle on 42nd Street*.

“Some of the American Santas pay four or five thousand dollars for a Santa suit, they have all sorts of cloaks and fancy things attached to them. Me? I’m very, very happy with my suit, it was made by Felicia, Felicia Grecu at Henley Tailoring. She’s the creative director.”

He adds: “It’s not about the suit that you are wearing but about the heart that you are wearing. I worked with one Santa who really had a scruffy suit, but the children loved him because he put his heart into it – and that’s what is important.”

Among his other talents are a previous spell as a stand-up comic and being part of a record-making group of story tellers. In February Mike was one of 100 people who performed together at the Marrakech International Storytelling Festival in Morocco to set a Guinness world record for continuous storytelling.

Their session lasted 80 hours, 32 minutes and 58 seconds with the participants representing 33 countries. The record attempt took place in Jemaa el-Fnaa, a Unesco World Heritage site and the main square in Marrakech.

Last month Mike took a break from preparations for Christmas to attend a British-American Society gathering at the House of Lords. He was presented with a certificate to mark the record by Hakim Hajoui, the Moroccan

Ambassador to the UK. Mike says: “That was special being presented by the ambassador as opposed to another storyteller. He also sent me a lovely letter thanking me for helping the cultural ties between Britain and Morocco.”

Mike said storytelling came naturally to him and he started

before he took up being Santa. “I used to do the stand-up years ago but I struggled to remember the jokes and things but with stories, once you get going, the flow tends to carry you through.”

He adds: “But my main storytelling is as Father Christmas where I tell stories about the North Pole and also ones about people being kind to each other.”

And he has one piece of advice for would-be Santas. “At times you will need the patience of a saint – Saint Nicholas.”

Mike has been in and about Henley over the past few weeks and will be part of Hobbs of Henley’s Santa Cruises from December 20 to 23.

‘I have just had a new suit made by Henley Tailoring and it is a thing of real beauty’



2026 Brings fresh energy to The Kenton

THE Kenton is ringing in 2026 with a vibrant new season, offering a rich mix of comedy, music, theatre and community events that showcase the very best of live performance.

Comedy fans have plenty in store. **Al Murray** returns for two nights in January with his trademark wit and bar-room banter. The quick-thinking **Mark Watson** also returns, while **Marcus Brigstocke** brings Henley his latest show *Vitruvian Mango*, asking "What are men for?" Fresh from the *I'm A Celebrity* jungle, **Ruby Wax** will share her

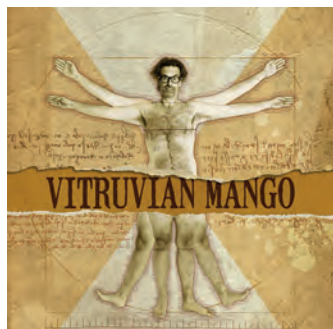
distinctive blend of humour along with behind-the-scenes anecdotes. And with a strong line-up of additional comedy nights, Henley audiences can expect a season filled with sharp writing and big laughs.

Music lovers can enjoy a series of tribute nights celebrating chart-topping favourites, from the pop hits of **Ariana Grande** and the powerhouse sounds of **Totally Blondie** and **Yourhythmics** to the vibrant Latin flair of **Oye Santana**.

The drama programme includes *My Life With Kenneth Williams*, a moving biographical piece; a new one-man reimagining of *Animal Farm*; and *Glitch*, a tense drama inspired by the Post Office Horizon scandal. Families are well catered for too: Immersion Theatre returns with *Rapunzel* this February half-term, joined by the high-energy *Ultimate Bubble Show* and the spectacular *Exciting Science*.

The Kenton will also host the inaugural HoT Podcast Festival in February and welcome broadcaster **Kate Humble** for a special fundraising evening in April in support of the theatre's future.

Visit thekenton.org.uk for the full line-up and to book tickets



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thekenton.org.uk

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01491 525050

Rare rock around your Christmas tree!

Rock legends live extends its rock music residency in Henley's Hypergallery until Christmas

THIS December, *Rock Legends Live* extends its popular residency in Hypergallery and opens its doors for Christmas shopping weekends introduced each week by three special Friday-night events on **5th, 12th and 19th December**.

Visitors on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays in December can explore Zoe's acclaimed **Rock Legends, Rock Vandal, Rock Pimp** and **Rock Light** collections – a vibrant mix of rare, intimate, and previously unseen live-performance shots from the world's biggest names in music. These are moments captured on 35mm film and hidden for nearly 40 years before re-emerging as highly collectible and incredibly rare fine-art editions.

Looking for a showstopping Christmas gift? There is still **plenty of time** to commission something personal and rare. Zoe is accepting **bespoke Christmas commissions** – including portraits of a favourite rock star for that super-fan in your life, personalised artworks, and custom **Rock Light** light-boxes. Many limited-edition pieces can be taken



from the gallery on the day of purchase or delivered before Christmas. A Rock Legend piece of art, or Zoe's stunning book **THAT SHOT** all make for the ultimate Christmas gift!

Zoe said: "Visitors can see the rarest of intimate portraits and art that I have shot and produced of artists such as **Prince, Whitney Houston, Tina Turner, the Rolling Stones and Springsteen** - alongside **Sting, Depeche Mode and a-ha**. These shots have been untouched for nearly 40 years - this is the chance to own some truly exclusive rock history and art, and is of course the perfect gift!"

Expect laid-back rock chats, the opportunity to buy the ultimate Christmas gift for the music-love or art collector in your life, festive drinks, and a delicious soundtrack of pure 80s nostalgia – all hosted by rock photographer **Zoe Wilson**, who's rediscovered 80s rock photography archive has been creating incredible interest from collectors and music fans internationally.

Whether you're a collector, a music lover, gift-hunter or simply up for a festive time with great stories and great art, the gallery is for you and is open every **Saturday & Sunday (from 10.30am)** – and for December only, **Friday evenings** for relaxed rock and art conversation and Christmas cheer.



Location: Hypergallery, Henley-on-Thames,
47 Marketplace, RG9 2AA

Dates: Every weekend from 10.30am | Fridays from 6pm —
5th, 12th & 19th December

More: hypergallery.com | [@rock_legends_live](https://www.instagram.com/rock_legends_live) | 07919 541841

Party fashion and gift ideas, all on your doorstep



HENLEY Life FASHION & BEAUTY



By Amanda Stewart
amandastewart@henleylife.co.uk

IT'S CHRISTMAS time and I love little more than a day-out shopping in Henley and for us ladies there is a variety of sensational dresses from **Facy** with more than a hint of bling and sparkle starting at the extremely reasonable price of £59.

If you are looking for something more comfortable the store in Market Place retails a variety of jeans and Italian knitwear in a wide variety. They stock about 15 styles that come in approximately 25 different colours, which they reorder weekly throughout the year.

Robell kick-flare suede effect and check trousers are elegant to wear, easy to care for and elongate the wearer's leg, which probably explains why Facy says they have flown out of the door.

Faux-fur jackets are seriously popular this season, especially with the recent cold snap and you will find a good assortment. Facy supplies coats in subtle shades, creams, beiges, soft grey as well as chocolate and burgundy closely followed by fuchsia, red and baby blue, particularly in the knitted vests which have proved to be a massive favourite.

Jewellery always makes a popular gift at this time of year, and Facy tend to buy pieces that will co-ordinate with their clothing and you have only to glance in the shop window for outfit ideas. Gold and

silver necklaces are always good sellers, but pearls are top of the wish list this year.

Laurence of **Laurence Menswear** in Duke Street never disappoints with his seriously tempting offerings such as the **floral shirt by Giordano** at £110.



FACY

Arla boucl blend blazer, dark-brown (£55)

FACY

Moda in Pelle loafers (£79.95)
Bags (59.95)



FACY

Aveline front ruched jewel belt maxi dress, brown (£59)



FACY

Aureline sequin wrap long sleeve midi dress, black or brown (£65)

FACY

Verenna sequin batwing belted mini dress, silver or gold (£59)



Scotland is these season's theme so, on that basis alone, it is well worth taking a serious glance at the **Fish Named Fred tweed-style jacket at £275** (it is actually not a Harris tweed, but similar and with contemporary features). Laurence likes Fish Named Fred, a Dutch brand, as a supplier because they are what he terms a "no expense spared" type of company. The tweed-style jacket sports a pheasant-pattern lining, which is in keeping with this season's theme and that, combined with the **pheasant patterned shirt at £105**, creates an outfit that really is the epitome of smart-does-casual-does-Scotland.

Laurence Menswear are proud of their boast that they don't do "boring" clothing and are not afraid of patterns and/or colours.

The popular menswear colours at the moment range from the slightly bolder oranges through to ochre, plum and olive, but the shop has found that the leading colour is all levels of brown.

When it comes to socks, which everybody needs at this time of year whether to wear or as presents, Laurence Menswear live up to their not-boring tag. The shop stocks socks in bamboo fabric among an assortment of bright coloured other pairs.

For those rugby fans who want to support the Henley Hawks, you surely will not be disappointed in a purchase of the tidy **Henley Hawks socks** that make excellent stocking fillers at **£10 a pair**.



LAURENCE MENSWEAR

Eden Park micro bow cotton oxford shirt (£125)



LAURENCE MENSWEAR

A Fish Named Fred tweed style jacket (£275) and and pheasant shirt (£105)



LAURENCE MENSWEAR

Giordano floral pattern shirt (£110)



LAURENCE MENSWEAR

Olymp mountain print shirt (£95)

LAURENCE MENSWEAR

Brax multi stripe lambswool knit (£145)



STOCKISTS

Facy in the Market Place, Henley

Laurence Menswear on Duke Street, Henley, or visit laurencemenswear.co.uk

WOMEN'S
HEALTH

By Dr Shilpa McQuillan,
accredited menopause
specialist, GP and
community gynaecologist

Enjoying the Festive Season

without the Hormone Meltdown

DECEMBER is here — the month of Christmas festivities. But while it's “the season to be jolly,” many women approach January feeling sluggish, bloated, and regretful about the festive indulgence.

If you're navigating hormonal conditions such as polycystic ovaries, pre-menstrual symptoms or (peri) menopause, you may already be managing challenges such as hot flushes, poor sleep, exhaustion, bloating, anxiety, and weight gain — and Christmas excesses can intensify them.

But with a few mindful tweaks, you can still enjoy the celebrations without dread or guilt, starting the new year feeling balanced, bright, and recharged.

HIT THE RESET BUTTON

Seeking a “perfect” Christmas can be exhausting, especially with hormone changes thrown in the mix. Fluctuating or lower oestrogen levels can affect the brain's emotional centres, triggering anxiety and low mood. Add festive stress, and it's a perfect storm for emotional overload.

Stress hormones also disrupt sleep,

energy, and weight regulation, so finding ways to decompress is essential.

Why not schedule some relaxation time. This could mean taking a few minutes for breathing exercises or mindfulness (apps like Calm or Headspace can help) booking a massage, joining a yoga class, or simply going for a peaceful walk.

And don't go at it alone! It's important to share the load. Opening up to loved ones about how you're feeling can help them understand and support you — and it's the perfect moment to delegate a few tasks while you have their attention!

‘What matters most is finding small moments of peace and joy that feel right for you’



CARE FOR YOUR GUT

Festive buffets and endless snacks are hard to resist, but constant grazing on sugary or fatty foods can upset digestion and worsen bloating, reflux and constipation. A sluggish gut can also affect mood, sleep and energy.

That doesn't mean cutting out the joy of Christmas food, just balancing indulgence with nourishment. Here are some tips for a happier gut:

- Try stick to three meals a day to curb those cravings and avoid the temptation for constant nibbling.
- Include fibre and protein-rich snacks like nuts, fruit, or crudités with hummus instead of crisps and canapés.
- Chew slowly — it aids digestion and reduces bloating.
- Sip on warm water with ginger or lemon which activates digestive enzymes and improves digestion and bloating.
- Add fermented foods (kefir, sauerkraut, live yoghurt) or a probiotic supplement to support healthy gut bacteria. Don't forget your prebiotics too, found in onions, flaxseed, berries, and those famous Brussels sprouts.

BE MINDFUL OF DRINKS

Alcohol and even many non-alcohol alternatives are often overlooked as being unhealthy as they are not food. They are surprisingly high in sugar and calories, leaving us feeling bloated and sluggish, so it's worth checking the labels.

Alcohol is also a depressant, increasing anxiety and low mood; a diuretic, leading to dehydration and overactive bladder symptoms; and for many women, can intensify perimenopause symptoms such as disrupted sleep, night sweats and hot flushes.

That's not to say, go tee total, just pace yourself. Alternating between alcohol and water improves hydration digestion, boosts energy, and even helps with dry skin, symptoms all heightened around menopause.

KEEP MOVING — EVERY LITTLE HELPS

When the weather turns cold and dark, motivation to exercise can seem impossible. Be kind to yourself but try and be consistent. Even a short walk, stretch, or light home workout can lift mood, support metabolism, and ease symptoms like fatigue and poor sleep. Every step truly counts.



PRIORITISE REST

Between late nights and early mornings, sleep often becomes the first casualty of the holiday season. Combine that with hormonal fluctuations, and insomnia can hit hard. Burning the candle at both ends leaves us feeling run down and low in mood.

If some late nights are inevitable, balance them with early nights when you can and try to keep to a gentle bedtime routine.

REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT

Whilst December is often portrayed as a month of joy and togetherness, the reality can feel very different for many. The pressure to be festive, the emphasis on family gatherings, and memories of “better Christmases” can make this time of year particularly tough.

If you're coping with grief, loneliness, financial strain, or simply feeling disconnected, remember you're not alone — and it's okay not to feel merry. Taking care of your mental health is more important than any seasonal preparation.

If you need support:

- **Mind** offers advice and resources for

coping during the festive season: www.mind.org.uk

- **Samaritans** are available 24/7, offering free and confidential support — call **116 123** anytime.
- If you're struggling with hormonal conditions, consult a women's health specialist for tailored advice — we are here to support you.

MY GOLDEN TIP — BE KIND TO YOURSELF

However you spend this December, be gentle with yourself. The holidays don't have to look or feel a certain way. What matters most is finding small moments of peace and joy that feel right for you.

Wishing you all a calm, healthy, and joy-filled Christmas.

Dr Shilpa McQuillan leads the Berkshire Menopause Clinic in Henley and is an accredited menopause specialist, community gynaecologist and women's health GP.

For more information, email info@berkshiremenopauseclinic.com or visit www.berkshiremenopauseclinic.com



CROOKED BILLET Christmas Kitchen

PAUL CLEREHUGH, CHEF, THE CROOKED BILLET, STOKE ROW. 01491 681048



POSH BIRD — I once bought a second-hand Renault 5 for less than our turkey. Although there's sensible mileage in buying something decent. Cheaper supermarket birds are super-fast reared, with incredible weight loss during cooking. Free range birds take 3 times longer to develop, whilst costing more, there's little weight loss during the roast, excellent yield & taste fantastic.

I'm determined to keep Christmas Day lunch simple this year — not overly complicated — don't over-gild the lily. Brussels, roast carrots, parsnips & potato. Spiced red cabbage, chestnut, sage & onion stuffing, chipolatas in streaky and good gravy. Don't let me fiddle with it anymore.

Christmas Day lunch; it's like a badly extended house. What originally started as a pretty little cottage — add on a downstairs bathroom, kitchen, extension, new porch, conservatory, gym, uPVC windows, crazy paving, satellite dish, couple of gnomes. How did a simple celebration feast of roast goose with baked cider apples get so horribly complicated? Each generation



leaving their mark. Turkey from the Americas, cranberry from Canada, sprouts from Brussels.

2025: you couldn't invent it. Brussel sprouts, brandy butter, cranberries & sausages. Apricot, sage & pecan stuffing. Mince pies, gravy, marzipan carrots, plum pudding. Dirty martini aperitif with guacamole & nachos. Quality Street, stilton & Baileys with the King's speech. God bless our hearts & our colons.

Christmas Day lunch, keep it simple. Stick to your shopping list. Write a timeline for the big day — food prep & decide what gets cooked & when.

Turkey shopping, consider one of our local high street butchers — they'll sort you out with an excellent bird. Work to a 500g per serving from the original butcher's shop weight. Honestly you don't need a Jurassic flying dinosaur; shame they're bred so big & tasteless — otherwise we might cook them more often. 500g per serving gives you sufficient leftovers for Boxing Day turkey sandwiches or my favourite — turkey curry.

However! I bet we'll all over cater, eating Christmas leftovers off buffet knee until it grows blue fur. Even the labrador is tired of giving the Christmas cake an occasional lick.



CROOKED BILLET Turkey Curry

Ingredients (serves 4)

- 1 large onion roughly chopped
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and chopped
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled, squashed and chopped
- 2 medium green chillies, de-seeded, finely chopped and 1 tbsps freshly grated ginger
- Juice from 1 lemon
- 2 heaped tsp Sherwood's medium curry powder
- 200g red split lentils
- 600ml chicken stock (from a cube is fine)
- Fist full of picked coriander leaves
- Olive oil
- 500g bite sized pieces of leftover turkey, Malden salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

- Heat a little olive oil in a large heavy saucepan.
- Sweat the onion and carrot, without colouring until soft.
- Add the garlic, chilli and curry powder, stirring with a wooden spoon for a couple of minutes.
- Add the lentils and chicken stock, bring to boil and allow to simmer for 30 minutes or until the lentils have cooked to dhal consistency, thick pulpy soup.
- Whilst the dhal is cooking, skim off the scummy foam from the top. Add hot kettle water if necessary.
- Add the turkey pieces, lemon and ginger allowing to simmer a further 5-6 minutes.
- Finally add coriander just before serving.

SUPPORT HIGH STREET BUTCHERS AND FARMGATE

Gabriel Machin – 01491 574377
7 Market Place, Henley-on-Thames
Shiplake Butchers – 01189 402728
Lower Shiplake, Henley-on-Thames
Calnan Brothers – 01491 612240
3 High Street, Watlington
Goring Village Butchers – 01491 872501
5 The Arcade, Goring
Farmgate Copas – 01628 499980
Copas, Kings Coppice Farm
www.copasfarmshop.co.uk
Farmgate – 01491 638224
White Pond Farm, Stonor
info@whitepondfarm.co.uk



Your December Hideaway: Music and Cocktails at FLYTE

HENLEY'S newest speakeasy-style bar, FLYTE Bar, is turning up the volume this December with a run of live music nights designed to bring even more energy to the festive season.

Located in the heart of Market Place, FLYTE Bar, Henley's home for the curious, is a moody, intimate space built around the idea of "flights" of discovery, from cocktails and wines to beers and bites. This December, the bar will host three special nights of live music on 6 December, 7-9pm, 14 December, 2-5pm, and 20 December, 6-7pm, featuring incredible artists who will fill the room with soulful sounds and smooth, atmospheric sets.

Guests can also raise a glass for a good cause with FLYTE's two charity cocktails: the 5 of Clubs, supporting The



Kenton Theatre, and the signature Flytini, supporting Diana Brimblecombe Animal Rescue Centre. For every one sold, 25 pence goes directly to the respective charities; a simple way to enjoy a great drink while doing a little good.

To round off the month, FLYTE will host an unmissable New Year's Eve-Eve Party on 30 December, promising music, cocktails, and a lively crowd ready to toast the end of the year in true FLYTE Bar style.

For tickets, menus, and updates, follow @flytebar, or visit www.flytebar.com

PS. Keep an eye out for FLYTE Bar's Christmas Display on 10 December.



The history girl

Author tunes in to family's war memories for novel inspiration

BY JOHN JACKLIN



AUTHOR and Henley resident Kirsten Hesketh is a child of the Sixties but writes her novels set in the world war years with an authority born from painful family experiences.

Kirsten, 62, has just published a fifth book set during the wars, a coming of age saga called *The Poppy Girls*, which is her first

set during the Second World War.

"Many people of my generation that didn't live during any of the wars grew up with family stories about them, which brought the conflicts alive in my mind," she says.

"The main story for me was my grandfather, who fought in the First World War and had a good war by all accounts, but when he died in the seventies my dad was by his side and as he died he was right back in the trenches kind of screaming from the shells and I remember my father being very upset to see his dad going through that.

"His father had probably never spoken about the war growing up but it had been there lodged in his brain for the subsequent fifty years. I was ten at the time and it shocked me."

Some of Kirsten's forebears suffered as civilians during the Great War because of their heritage. "One half of my family is of German origin," she says. "And the First World War was not a good time for my grandmother to have a German surname.

"The family had a bakery in Brick Lane in London and the family had come over to England from Germany fifty years before so they were British for all intents and purposes but with a German sounding surname. The shop was attacked and

they ended up being interned on the Isle of Man until the war was over - or the men did at least."

Her parents lived through the Second World War and felt its impact. "My father was doing his O levels, or whatever the equivalents were, and he was blown off his bike by a bomb blast, as was everybody else around him. But you know, then there were no like mental health days, they just all got up and dusted themselves down and went on and did the exam all cut and bruised."

Kirsten adds: "My mum is 93 now, my dad has died, but mum was evacuated during the war to North Wales so it's stories like that I have grown up with and provided my inspiration. I feel more exposed writing about the Second World War because it remains clearer in people's memories.

"I remember growing up in the Sixties and stories about the Second World War seemed to be everywhere. My mum would talk about rationing as if it had only just stopped and it had stopped ten years or so before ... but now when I look back ten years, ten years is just like yesterday.

"There was also that waste not want not kind of attitude from the war that permeated my childhood."

Kirsten adds: "So there are loads and loads of stories that are not necessarily in this book, but they piqued my interest in writing about the world wars as did the idea of normal people living through extraordinary times and how do you cope with that kind of thing."

"What strikes me is just how close the world wars

were together. There was the Great War, the war to end all wars and then just twenty years later another world war."

She smiles: "We have got it easy these days when you compare what young people and that generation went through in those times."

The Poppy Girls is set at the Poppy Factory in Richmond, south-west London, which was founded in 1922 to provide work for soldiers wounded in the First World War and is still

'We have got it easy these days when you compare what young people and that generation went through in those times'

operating more than a hundred years later. The story revolves round three of the daughters of First World War veterans working at the factory as they come of age as the Second World War starts.

The trio have nothing in common except their injured fathers and differ in their views about war but are thrown together as the Blitz in London begins, when everybody on the Poppy Estate has to muck in.

Kirsten had an international upbringing. She was born in London but “spent much of my early childhood in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia” where she recalls she and her younger sisters “tapped rubber trees, climbed papaya trees and crawled through monsoon drains unfazed by the occasional snake. And we were too young to understand when the late 60s brought violence and curfews and shut the schools.”

She and the family moved to London and settled down in Buckinghamshire. She read geography at Cambridge University then worked in advertising in London. She recalls on her website: “Advertising gave way to market research and eventually I set up my own research consultancy, interviewing the great British public on everything from Rolos to razors, Lenor to the Lib Dems.”

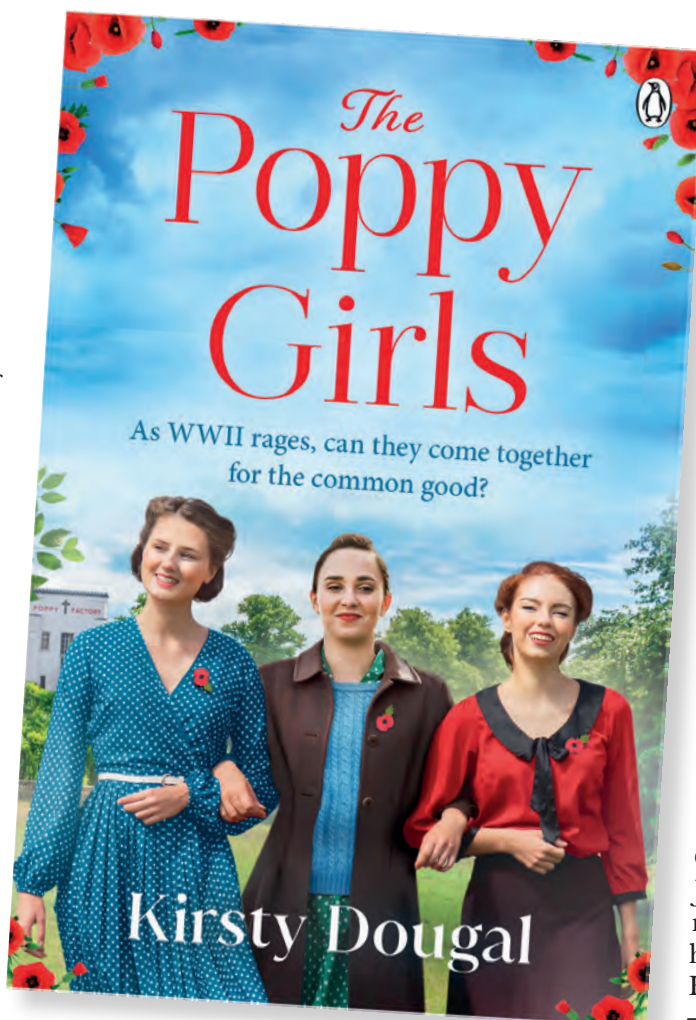
She adds: “In 1995, I went backpacking in Peru, met a Scouser [John] and everything changed. We married, moved to Henley in 1998 and acquired two gorgeous bouncing babies and two exceptionally fluffy moggies.

“Apart from a few sunny years in California, we’ve been here all those years. I love the lazily meandering River Thames and the under-rated Chilterns and the gentle rhythms of the seasons and the years.”

A look at the details of all Kirsten’s books reveals that she has three noms de plume: The Poppy Girls, A Christmas Miracle on Sanctuary Lane and Wartime on Sanctuary Lane were written under the name Kirsty Dougal. A Post Office Christmas and The Post Office Girls were written under the name Poppy Cooper and her first book, Another Us, was written as Kirsten Hesketh.

“I don’t really have a lot of say in it to be honest, that is all publisher led,” she says. “My first book was a contemporary novel so has my real name, or married name Kirsten Hesketh.

“My next books were different genres... I quite liked Poppy



‘The Poppy Girls is set at the Poppy Factory in Richmond, south-west London, which was founded in 1922 to provide work for soldiers wounded in the First World War’

farmstead, but it turns out that it was a temple. We got really hooked on archaeology, my husband runs digs now.”

The book will be “about a woman who is an empty-nester, and recommended to go on a dig as a kind of therapy, like service people. It’s a kind of a love story.

“The settings are inspired by places that I have dug with the archaeology group. Since the High Woods dig, which ended

in 2020, we have dug at Greys Court, we dug up the lawn with the help of the National Trust, but the new book is kind of about the Binfield Heath dig. It’s a lovely setting in a wood and when we were there the bluebells came out, it’s really pretty.

“All the people that I dig with are saying ‘Are we going to be in it?’ so I have tried really hard to create the characters so hopefully they aren’t real...

well I joke with them that in my book there are an unseemly number of hunks.” She roars with laughter again.

“The settings are definitely inspired by places I’ve dug and things that we have found. But it is all exaggerated because there is a hoard discovered in the book... and I have never found one.” Well not yet.

The Poppy Girls is published by Penguin and available from leading bookshops.

Christmas Greetings from The Veterinary Centre

As the festive season fast approaches, everyone at The Veterinary Centre, Henley-on-Thames & Twyford would like to wish our wonderful clients and their pets a very Happy Christmas and a healthy, Happy New Year. We are extremely grateful for your continued trust and support throughout 2025, and it remains our privilege to care for your fantastic pets

This time of year, is also a great opportunity to think about your pet's wellbeing. Our Health Plans may be the perfect Christmas present for your pet, our Plans focus on overall health which is why they include Unlimited Free Consultations as well as all the vaccinations, flea, worm and tick preventative treatments your pet will need plus attractive

discounts on neutering and dental treatments. Please don't hesitate to get in touch to find out more.

We'd also like to offer a gentle seasonal reminder - many festive foods can be dangerous for dogs. Mince pies, Christmas puddings and Christmas cakes that contain raisins, currants or sultanas are toxic to dogs as are grapes, chocolate and blue cheese! While turkey and chicken bones can splinter and cause obstructions. So please keep all of these foods well out of reach (even if they are wrapped up!) and get in touch urgently if your dog manages to eat an unscheduled snack of this nature!

Wishing you and your pets a safe, warm and joyful Christmas.



The Veterinary Centre Henley & Twyford



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The Point, Where coastal luxury meets active living

Set between Polzeath, Rock, and Daymer Bay in North Cornwall, The Point is a destination where guests can eat, play, and stay – all in one unforgettable location. Combining the spirit of a seaside escape with the comfort of contemporary living, it feels both luxurious and laid-back; familiar yet special.

At its heart you'll find a sea-view restaurant and bar, health club, padel and tennis courts, and an 18-hole championship golf course. It's a place to recharge, move, and unwind, perfectly placed for exploring Cornwall's beaches, surf, and South West Coast Path.

What's more, The Point Holidays offers a curated collection of self-catering properties both on-site and across Polzeath, Rock, and Daymer Bay, where guests enjoy discounted access to golf, gym, and swim. From morning padel sessions and leisurely breakfasts to sunset swims and suppers overlooking the sea, every stay is designed to feel effortless.

Family-run and proudly Cornish, The Point blends community, comfort, and connection to nature – celebrating relaxed luxury, active days, and the simple joy of time by the coast.



THE POINT

EAT | PLAY | STAY

Escape to North Cornwall with The Point

Our collection of self-catering properties in and around Polzeath, Rock, and Daymer Bay combine coastal luxury with the comforts of home. Enjoy discounted use of our golf course, health club, and pool – and dine with sea views in our restaurant and bar

The Point is best seen to be believed



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Fundamental Change for Landlords and Tenants

FROM 1 May 2026, existing tenancies and all new tenancies will change as a result of the Renters' Rights Act. Fixed term tenancies will disappear. Instead, there will be rolling periodic tenancies. Section 21 Notices will be abolished. Landlords will only be able to evict tenants if they have evidence to support one of the "grounds" for possession.

The grounds, in summary, are;

- The landlord intends to sell the property,
- The landlord intends to move into the property, or
- The tenant is in breach of the terms of the tenancy.

Landlords cannot use the first two grounds within the first 12 months of the tenancy and they cannot let the property in the subsequent 12 months, including AirB&B.

Tenants can bring the tenancy to an end with two months' notice.

The changes will have a significant impact on rent as, currently, landlords can evict tenants who do not agree to a

rent increase. Landlords will have to use a Section 13 notice to increase the rent and tenants can challenge the rent level in the Property Tribunal.

Other changes:

- A written tenancy is required, a verbal agreement will not be legal.
- Landlords will not be able to object to pets, unless with good reasons.
- Landlords cannot object to tenants on benefits or with children.
- Landlords must register both themselves and their properties on a public register.
- Councils given powers to penalise landlords for non-compliance with fines up to £40,000

The new rules do not apply to lodgers.

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Dolphin School has exciting plans to expand into years 9-11

FOR over half a century, Dolphin School has stood apart from the educational mainstream. Founded on the belief that children learn best through exploration, curiosity and experience, Dolphin pioneered an approach that placed the learner – not the lesson plan – at the centre of education. Its emphasis on experiential learning and its rich trips programme have become the school's defining features, setting it apart from more traditional prep schools built on routine and conformity.

Today, much of the wider educational landscape has caught up. The child-led, hands-on methods that once made Dolphin unique are now more commonplace in classrooms across the country. In many ways, the sector has come round to 'the Dolphin way of thinking' – valuing curiosity, creativity and connection to the world beyond the classroom.

Now, as the school embarks on an exciting new phase of expansion, Dolphin is once again looking ahead – this time to secondary education and the introduction of Years 9-11 at the top of the school, starting with the first cohort of Year 9s in September 2026. With the dominance of the GCSE system leaving little room for innovation, Dolphin has chosen a different path: the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme (MYP).

The MYP offers a globally recognised alternative to GCSEs for students aged 11 to 16. Built around eight subject areas, it emphasises critical thinking, interdisciplinary learning and an international outlook. Rather than prescribing rigid content lists, it develops the skills and concepts that enable young

people to understand the world deeply and act responsibly within it.

'The MYP aligns perfectly with our philosophy,' says Adam Hurst, Head of Dolphin School. 'It preserves our students' "Freedom to Learn" while ensuring academic challenge and rigour. It is a natural progression from the Dolphin habits our children develop in the primary years.'

The programme includes annual interdisciplinary projects and community initiatives, ensuring that students' learning remains rooted in real-world experience. This approach allows Dolphin to continue its renowned trips and outdoor learning programmes as a fully integrated part of the curriculum. With flexible timetabling and opportunities for collaboration across subjects, teachers are empowered to design lessons that respond to their own areas of expertise, student interests and current events.

As the only school in the area to exclusively offer the MYP, Dolphin's expansion represents a bold and forward-thinking step that provides meaningful choice for local families. It ensures that teenagers can access an education that is both internationally recognised and deeply connected to the school's long-standing values.

In choosing the MYP, Dolphin School is not simply growing in size; it is reaffirming its founding belief that education should inspire, challenge and liberate young minds.

To learn more about the exciting plans for Years 9-11, or to arrange a visit, please scan the QR code or email admissions@dolphinschool.com.



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Scan the QR Code to book your place at our Information Evening on Monday 10 November at 5:30pm!



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Gillotts tops the tables!

GILLOTT'S School in Henley-on-Thames has been named as the top school in Oxfordshire in the Government's recently published performance tables.

There are no Progress 8 scores for the academic years 2024/25. This is because there is no KS2 assessment data available to calculate the baseline for Progress 8 for these years due to Covid-19 disruption. Whilst comparing progress is the fairest comparison, nevertheless the school says it is 'thrilled' to have come top in Oxfordshire on all the key measures.

76% of students achieved grade 5 or better in both English and mathematics, compared with a national average of 45% and an Oxfordshire average of 48%. The second best score in Oxfordshire was that of Didcot Girls' on 72%.

Headteacher, Catharine Darnton, said, 'We are so proud of all our students have achieved, and so grateful to our staff for the incredible hard work that sits behind these outcomes. We also recognise the contribution of our parents, working in partnership with the school.'



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Lottie Pheasant

MANAGER OF THE KENTON THEATRE

LOTTIE Pheasant became manager of the Kenton Theatre in Henley almost three years ago when it was in financial difficulty and is part of the team that has revived it, ensuring it remains a community asset.

She used to manage Shiplake Memorial Hall while also providing charity law and governance support to the trustees at the Kenton and Jimmy's, the homeless charity in Cambridge. She still advises Jimmy's and has joined the UK Pantomime Association as a trustee.

Lottie lives in Lower Shiplake with her three children — Bee, Camilla and Charlie. Bee works for the insurance brokers Manning UK in Henley. Camilla and Charlie are pupils at Gillotts School.

1 What brought you to the Henley area and why do you stay?

I grew up in Caversham and attended Queen Anne's School. My first proper introduction to Henley and the Kenton was when I returned from the US, aged nine, after two years. I was struggling with school and life in England, but Mike Hurst, who was running Henley Children's Theatre Group, said the theatre would give me the confidence I needed. How right Mike was. As I married someone from the area, it was natural to come home 20 years ago to be near our parents who also live in Shiplake.

2 What would you change about Henley? The parking. But I do feel grateful for the train, and I use it to travel to work.

3 How do you spend your leisure time locally?

I love walking — there are so many stunning walks in and around Henley — and I love swimming in the river as well as paddle boarding.

4 What are your top three local haunts? I adore the Kenton and even when I'm not working I watch shows there with family and friends. The Bull on Bell Street is gorgeous and



Thames Lido is my happy place — it's such a wonderful urban oasis.

5 Do you have a favourite song?

I'd struggle to name one song as I enjoy so many music genres and eras, but Jackson Browne's Sky Blue and Black might be one of my favourites.

6 Which film or play has inspired or moved you the most?

I read more than I watch films. I love biographies and as a child *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang and *The Diary of Anne Frank* stayed with me for a long time. Visiting Anne Frank's house was incredible.

7 What do you treasure most about life in the UK?

Our beautiful and diverse countryside. I also value our changing seasons and the distinct character of each one and I feel very proud of our rich culture and heritage.

8 If you could live anywhere else in the world, where would it be?

I love visiting new countries, but I can't imagine living anywhere but here.

9 Is there anyone, or anything in the area that you particularly admire, would recommend or think deserves a mention?

I admire all the people who support our local organisations and charities by volunteering. Volunteers will always be

the unsung heroes in our community. At the Kenton, we are nothing without them.

10 What did you want to be when you were a child?

I probably imagined myself as a director or playwright in the West End. I spent much of my childhood bossing around my younger sister and best friends in my latest play.

11 Which things do you wish you had known when you were younger?

The art of gratitude and appreciating the glimmers in life — those small moments of joy and connection — and knowing that life is, indeed, too short.

12 Which three people would you choose to have dinner with, if you could?

That's a tough question. My incredible younger sister and best friend, Hannah, died three years ago and I would give anything to have one last family meal together without the empty chair at the table.

13 Where do you like to travel to on holiday?

I love walking adventures. The Laugavegur Trail in the Icelandic wilderness this year was incredible despite the basic camping conditions and next year I'm tackling Mount Toubkal in the Atlas Mountains, Morocco.

14 What are your ambitions?

I'd love to see the Kenton continue to thrive — I feel proud to be part of this particular chapter in its long history. In any future role I have, I'd love for it to be something else in the local community.

15 Do you have any regrets?

I'm not one for dwelling on regrets but the one regret I do have is not spending more time with my sister when she was alive — it always felt that there would more time together until there wasn't.



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