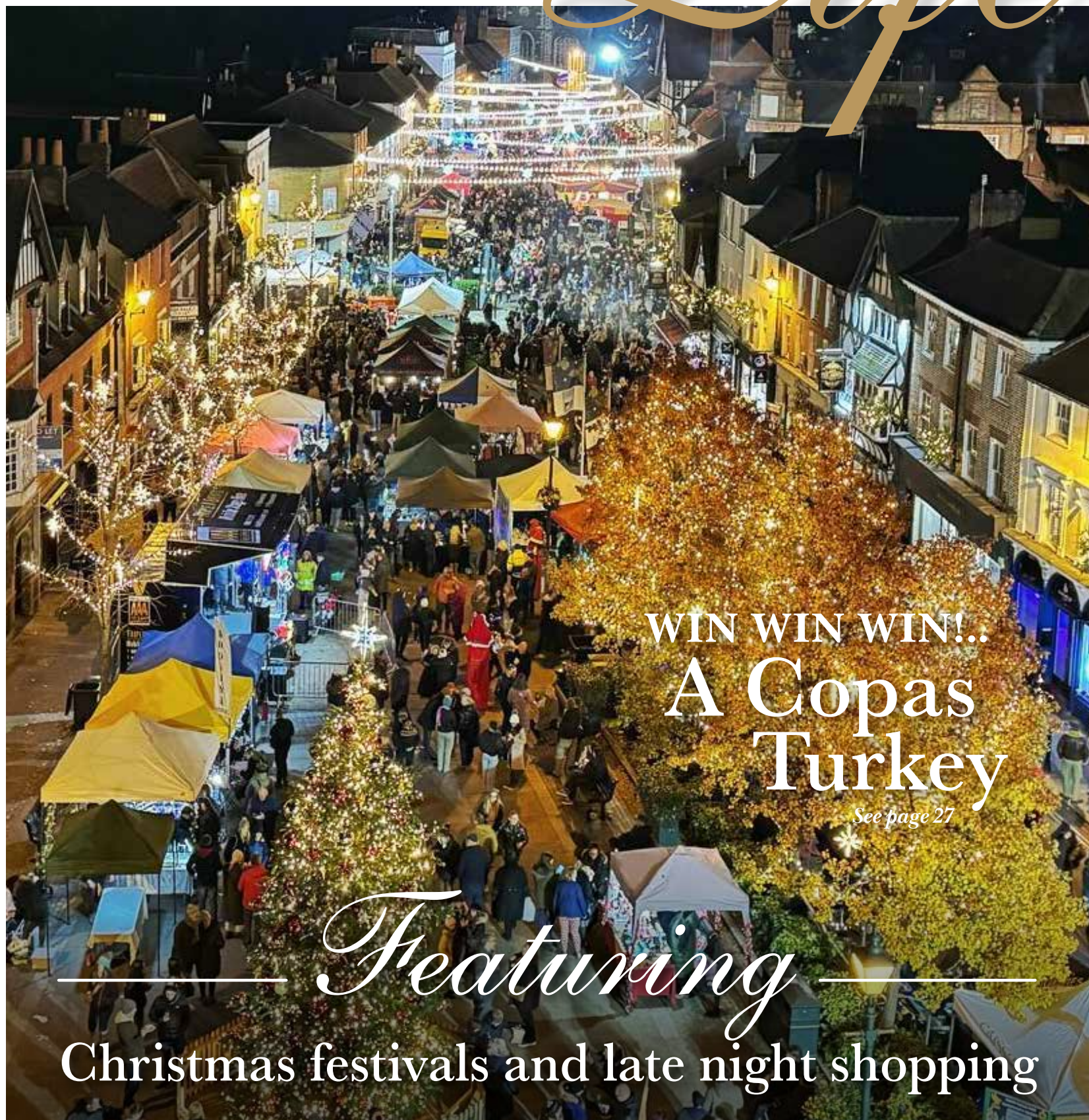


HENLEY

henleylife.co.uk | November 2025

Life



WIN WIN WIN!..
A Copas
Turkey

See page 27

Featuring

Christmas festivals and late night shopping

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Festival and Late Night
Shopping event

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HENLEY
Life

HENLEYLife is a Baylis Community Media CIC publication, hand delivered to more than 10,000 homes in South Oxfordshire and Berkshire

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HENLEY
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Free monthly lifestyle magazine for local residents, businesses and visitors.

CIRCULATION INFORMATION

10,000 copies are hand-delivered to homes in South Oxfordshire and Berkshire each month and into high footfall areas and outlets by our professional team. Another 1,000 copies are available to pick up in many establishments across town and are also available at most Henley events. We can also deliver on request to an out of area business/event.

- Henley on Thames RG9 – 5409 copies • Caversham RG4 – 1433 copies
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Pop into the office at 1 Station Road, Henley, for your copy.
Don't miss out as they go fast!

IT'S November and the party season and countdown to Christmas has begun.

With that in mind, we preview forthcoming Christmas festivals and late-night shopping events that will get you in the festive spirit.

For those who love all things preloved, we interview Lola Adams, a recent graduate who is looking to expand her sustainable clothing business, which she launched at university.

John Jacklin speaks to Jennifer Johnston, a voiceover artist and disc jockey, who goes by the name Vinyl Jen. She has appeared in pubs and bars in Henley offering a "tactile" vinyl experience that she calls unique.

With all those chocolates and mince pies starting to make an appearance, a dental nurse from Woodcote tells of her new YouTube channel in which she promotes the benefits of brushing for children (and adults).

We also speak to husband and wife kitchen creators Mick Taplin and Sarah Dunkason, who have spent 30 years working together and have fitted 150 kitchens in Henley.

Our women's health columnist, Dr Shilpa McQuillan, talks about hair loss during perimenopause and father and son Alan and Jacob Wilson, founders of Henley Distillery, are the subject of this month's My Henley Life.

We hope you enjoy!

The Henley Life team

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Independent Hospital**
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Nurse launches channel to show benefits of brushing

BY ALEX CARTER

ADENTAL nurse from Woodcote has launched a YouTube channel to educate children about oral health.

Amy Beckwith, 40, who lives in the centre of the village, identified a need for engaging videos to encourage people to look after themselves.

She drew from her experience as a mother of three children, aged 16, 17 and 18, and their anxieties of attending the dentist. Mrs Beckwith, who works at Croft House Dental Surgery in Wallingford, also treats children within the practice and makes weekly school visits.

She hopes to reduce the number of children suffering with tooth decay, which is the leading cause of hospital admissions among children aged five to nine in England.

From 2024 to 2025 there were more than 21,000 hospital admissions with tooth decay.

Mrs Beckwith, who qualified and joined the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses in 2018, came up with the idea for an online channel after writing an interactive book.

She wrote but did not publish *Amy the Toothling* — Let's learn about teeth to help children learn fine motor skills so that they can use a toothbrush effectively.

Realising the potential to make the initiative more interactive for both children and parents, she set up the Amy the Tooth Lady YouTube channel.

Mrs Beckwith said: "I feel really passionate about children's oral health as the statistics relating to tooth decay are quite worrying.

"I wanted to do something to help children learn and understand why brushing twice a day is so important.

"Dentistry has changed so much throughout the years and it shouldn't be a scary experience but a positive thing for young children.

"In the practice, children sometimes bring teddies in and I normally give teddy a check-up too — anything to keep the child calm and familiar with the practice."

Mrs Beckwith's videos use animated characters, such as Toothling, which she uses to target children aged three to seven. Her first 10-minute episode, *Why We Brush Our Teeth*,



explains the importance of good oral health by reducing bacteria and plaque through effective brushing.

It includes a two-minute story at the end of the video, which doubles as a brushing timer.

Mrs Beckwith said: "Each episode, released every Sunday, is about making children comfortable, aware and familiar with oral health.

"The next episode is about how to brush your teeth, with others being about baby teeth,

wobbly teeth and getting your adult teeth.

"Special episodes will be released with themes on Halloween and going back to school, with all having free downloadable links."

Mrs Beckwith hopes that by encouraging parents to teach their children about teeth health and hygiene from a young age, it will help remove the stigma about attending routine check-ups.

She said: "The main aim is to highlight the importance of oral health and taking your children to see the dentist.

"When they come in from a younger age, they're acclimatised to the environment and it removes that stigma and reduces the preventable statistics around kids' tooth decay by starting with good daily habits at home."

As the idea continues to develop, she hopes to aim the channel at older age groups.

Mrs Beckwith said: "I want to grow the channel to target children aged seven and older, going into more detail and providing more scientific information."

She designs, shoots and edits her content using her Apple iPad in her garage set-up, learning as she goes along.

Mrs Beckwith said: "I do everything myself, from the characters to the stories, filming and editing. I am still making mistakes but I'm learning.

"When I created Toothling as the main character my creativity just took off.

"I just kept adding more characters, such as sugar bugs to explain plaque and bacteria, illustrating to children in a way that they wouldn't feel scared or worried."

To subscribe to her channel, search on YouTube for:
AmytheToothLady

Diary Dates

NOVEMBER 2025

SATURDAY 8TH NOVEMBER

Aliquando Chamber Choir — Glorious Melodies

ST MARY'S CHURCH, HENLEY

Aliquando Chamber Choir's concert will be a celebration of all things melodious. The music has



been especially chosen to showcase some of the most glorious melodies to be found through the ages, from Renaissance through to Baroque with Sweelinck, Hassler and Charpentier. There will be famous duets from operas Delibes' Lakme & Bizet's Les pêcheurs de perles (the Pearl Fishers) and songs by Elgar, Eric Whitacre, Karl Jenkins and Matthew Coleridge. Four soloists, soprano Meryl Davies, mezzo-soprano Rosemary Clifford, tenor Alex Haigh and bass baritone Daniel Tate will be accompanied by an orchestra, led by Amanda Sadler, keyboard player Ian Westley and conductor Anne Evans. The concert starts at 7pm (doors open at 6pm). Tickets cost £25 for reserved seating and £20 unreserved. The concert is in aid of Helen and Douglas House children's hospice.

For more information, call (01491) 578238 or visit www.aliquando.co.uk

WEDNESDAY 12TH TO SATURDAY 15TH NOVEMBER

HAODS presents We Will Rock You

KENTON THEATRE

Henley Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society is the first adult



amateur musical theatre company to put on Queen and Ben Elton's show, which is set in a futuristic dystopia. Featuring songs such as Bohemian Rhapsody, Another One Bites the Dust, Somebody to love and the title track, this is a powerhouse of choreography and musical direction and an immersive experience. Show times are 7.45pm with a Saturday matinée at 2.30pm. Tickets cost £25 adults, £24 seniors and £16 students and under-16s.

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

SATURDAY 15TH NOVEMBER

Henley Symphony Orchestra concert

ST MARY'S CHURCH, HENLEY



Henley Symphony Orchestra's next concert, which starts at 5pm, will feature guest soloist, baritone Efim Zavalny and is conducted by Alexander Walker. Music will include Borodin's Polovtsian Dances, Mussorgsky's Songs and Dances of Death, Mahler's Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen and Rachmaninov's Symphonic Dances. Tickets cost £22 reserved (central aisle), £20 unreserved (side central aisle), £18 unreserved (side aisles), £10 reserved/£8 unreserved under-16s and students.

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

SUNDAY 16TH NOVEMBER

Henley and District Theatre Organ Trust presents Elizabeth Harrison

HENLEY TOWN HALL



Described as the farmer's daughter from Lancashire, Elizabeth Harrison plays for all tastes and is equally at home on electronic and cinema organs. Her performances are full of life and expression and her choice of music is interesting and varied. 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 17TH TO SATURDAY 22ND NOVEMBER

StageWorks presents The Wizard of Oz

KENTON THEATRE



Celebrating its 25th anniversary, StageWorks performing arts school will tell the story of Dorothy Gale and her friends, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man and the Lion, as they journey through the magical land of Oz, to find the Wizard so that he can grant their wishes of a brain, a heart, courage and a safe return

to Kansas. Shows start at 7pm with a Saturday matinée at 1pm and tickets cost £20.75 adults, £17.75 seniors, £14.75 students and under-16s (family tickets for two adults and two children £61).

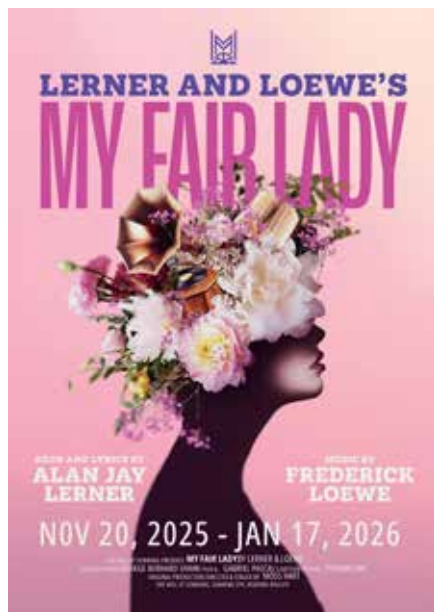
For more information, call the box office on (01491) 525050 or visit thekenton.org.uk

**THURSDAY 20TH NOVEMBER TO
SATURDAY 17TH JANUARY 2026**

Lerner and Loewe's My Fair Lady

MILL AT SONNING

The Mill at Sonning's musical Christmas extravaganza is the show with *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 pet project Eliza Doolittle to give her elocution lessons with unexpected results.

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

TUESDAY 23RD NOVEMBER

Raise the Curtain! Raise the Roof!

MILL AT SONNING

Veteran Mill performers, Peter Egan, Simon Williams, Tam Williams and Mark Curry will be among those supporting the gala fundraiser at the riverside dinner theatre. There will be comedy, music and drama for the event, which starts with lunch from 1.30pm and a performance at 4pm.

Tickets cost £150 for lunch and the show and further donations are welcome.

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



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Christmas in Henley

— looking better than ever with the launch of ‘Shop Under the Stars’

BY JOHN JACKLIN

THOUSANDS of revellers are expected to swell the streets of Henley on Friday November 28 for the town's Christmas Festival and late-night shopping event.

Jerry Hall, the model and former partner of Rolling Stones singer Mick Jagger and ex-wife of press magnate Rupert Murdoch, is due to turn on the lights at 7pm. Hall, 69, lives in Binfield Heath. Last year Henley resident and Bake Off presenter Mary Berry had the honour.

The festival, from 5pm to 9pm, will mean the town centre is

closed to traffic from 3pm to 11pm so that stalls and rides can be set up ready for the evening.

The Christmas tree lights will be switched on at 7pm by Tom Buckley, the mayor of Henley, and Hall alongside characters from the Kenton Theatre pantomime, which this year is Peter Pan, and Christmas sponsors, all rounded off with carol singing and Christmas music from the Woodley Concert Band. Santa's Grotto is open at the King's Arm Barn from 4.30pm.

The mayor said: "The lights switch-on and Christmas Festival is one of my favourite nights of the year when the town

‘It's going to be a fantastic few weeks in town; lots to see and do, loads of reasons to come together and celebrate, I can't wait’





Some highlights from last year's Christmas festival, including turning on of the tree lights with guest Mary Berry, Christmas Carols and much more

looks absolutely magical, everyone's out enjoying themselves, and it really kicks off the season with a buzz.

"It's going to be a fantastic few weeks in town; lots to see and do, loads of reasons to come together and celebrate, I can't wait."

The festival last year attracted 8,000-10,000 people, according to police figures, which led to overcrowding in Market Place and some bottlenecks. In January the town's events committee agreed to move the stage to just left of the Town Hall and discussed extra marshals to help alleviate any possible overcrowding this year.

The festival is the precursor to the Henley Christmas Market in the square from December 4 to 14. Independent retailers and crafters ply their wares in Alpine huts offering everything from handcrafted gifts, decorations, festive treats, local food, mulled wine, mince pies all set against a backdrop of live music, carols and what the council has said are "surprise performances".

The Grinch will be causing mischief in Market Place and the nearby shops on Saturday December 20 from 11am to 1pm. The market opens from 10am to 4pm across the ten days. Henley also launches a late-night shopping evening called Shop Under the Stars on Friday December 5.

'Shop Under the Stars' is all about celebrating Henley's festive charm and supporting our amazing high street retailers'

Elsewhere in the build up to Christmas, Santa on the Run is under starter's orders for Sunday December 14 from 10am to midday beginning and finishing at Leander Club. It is a family event with routes of 1km or 4km and prizes for 1st and 2nd place finishers; best-dressed family and best-dressed under 10 year old.

Rupert House School is sponsoring the run, with proceeds going to the mayor's charities — Nomad Youth & Community Project, The Chiltern Centre and Lowland Rescue.

Peter Johnson, who lives on Reading Road, Henley, said:

"I'll absolutely be at the festival because it is the start of the Christmas season for me. At night the town looks absolutely perfect when it is all dressed up with those lights and decorations. "Henley is a town made for Christmas time."

This year's event promises an enchanting evening of shopping, sparkle, and community spirit. 'Shop Under the Stars' is all about celebrating Henley's festive charm and supporting our amazing high street retailers. It's a chance to shop local, enjoy the atmosphere, and start the Christmas season in style."

Henley's Christmas 2025 offering is looking bigger and better than ever....

CROOKED BILLET November Kitchen

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



NOVEMBER — Guy Fawkes & King Charles birthday. Beaujolais Nouveau, incredible local wild mushrooms, left over Halloween pumpkins & roast turkey's Christmas dress rehearsal — American Thanksgiving 27th November.

Amazing to think The Crooked Billet built in 1632 before we discovered America & dreamt up Thanksgiving. 1632 we'd yet to see turkey in Britain — hadn't arrived from the Americas. Geese, swans, herons & peacocks being

the celebration bird of choice. Fancy tail feathers stuffed back into their sorry over cooked back sides.

Perhaps turkey, not eagle should be America's symbol of strength & freedom.

I'll offer Thanksgiving dinner at The Crooked Billet Thursday 27th November — roast turkey with all the Yankee Doodle accompaniments: corn bread, yam mash, roasties, collard greens, macaroni cheese, roast roots. Cranberry (if you must) why do we put jam on turkey?

Obviously, local Copas bronze organic free range privately educated turkey.

Pecan pie, delicious. Pumpkin pie — use up those Halloween lanterns.

Thanksgiving probably my last chance to shift the Beaujolais Nouveau that hit the shops the previous Thursday 20th November.

I reckon British cooks, not the French invented coq au vin — use up all that left over Beaujolais France shipped over. Beaujolais — Gamy grape — jolly good in a chicken casserole (stew = pan on the hob. Casserole slow cook in the oven).

We occasionally host music evenings at The Crooked Billet. Both November's bands enjoy a glass of red, help us finish the Nouveau.

Fairport Convention's Dave Pegg & Megan Henwood 13th November. Chris Jagger & friends 25th — hope Chris brings his big brother for coq au vin & a glass of Beaujolais.



CROOKED BILLET Coq Au Vin

Method

- Marinate chicken legs, onion & bacon overnight in red wine. Drain legs & reserve the wine. Coat legs in flour, shake off excess & fry in 40ml of oil until golden.
- Caramelise bacon & onion in a thick-bottomed pot with remaining oil. Add chicken, garlic, bouquet garni, wine & stock to the onion & bacon. Bring to boil, skim & simmer for 2 hrs.
- Remove chicken legs & pass stock through a sieve, then reduce to a glossy sauce. Adjust seasoning, pour over legs & reserve.
- Fry the garnish lardons, mushrooms & onions in oil & add to chicken legs. Sprinkle with parsley.

Ingredients

- 6 chicken legs
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 100g smoked bacon
- 500ml red wine
- 100g flour
- 60ml vegetable oil
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 bouquet garni in leek leaves
- 1L chicken stock
- salt & pepper

UPCOMING MUSIC NIGHTS

Chris Jagger & Friends (yes, he's Mick's brother) – Tues 25th November. Deliciously entertaining mix-bluesy-Cajun-folky roots.
The Animals – Tues 1st December. Starring original founder member John Steel. All-star line-up performing all their hits.
Fairport Convention's Dave Pegg & AJ Clarke with special guest **Megan Henwood** – Thursday 13th November. Extremely funny, consummate entertainers

Christmas in Caversham and supporting your local shops this winter

BY ADRIAN WILLIAMS

SMALL businesses are the beating heart of communities up and down the country.

Shopping locally enriches communities and adds value to people's lives. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy nationwide, but crucially are the cornerstones of our local communities.

Preserving the heart of the community — A thriving high street is key to boosting the potential of a village or town where people can socialise as well as shop.

Enjoy personalised experience, tailored customer service and build meaningful relationships with shop owners which stock items which are made locally and aren't available elsewhere, providing a great range of choice and unique products that bring much-needed originality and variety into communities.

Consumers can lend a hand by shopping locally and supporting local companies and jobs.

Run-up to Christmas in Caversham:

Live reindeer and a 'reverse Santa' are set to descend on Caversham for its much-anticipated late-night Christmas shopping event. Once a year, the precinct comes alive with

twinkling lights and festive music, while shops will have special offers and unique treasures for filling Christmas stockings.

On December 5, various vendors around St Martin's Precinct will be opening their stores up well into the evening.

The night will feature artisan market stalls and food and drink vendors running from about 5pm to 9pm — though this is fairly flexible and depends on the shop owners, and whether business is still booming.

Now in its sixth year, one exciting difference for this year's late-night Christmas shopping event is the presence of live reindeer in the Precinct, expected to make a 'huge' splash.

Jodie Anderton, event organiser and manager of Caversham's artisan and farmers' market, said:

"We've never had reindeer before, so we're really excited about that one. I mean how can you not be excited about reindeer?"

"It's a really lovely event. Everyone comes out for it and the Christmas lights will be on by that point, so it will feel very festive.

"It brings together the community and, for the traders, it's a real chance for them to get a bit of visibility." Another change

Cont'd

'Live reindeer and a 'reverse Santa' are set to descend on Caversham for its much-anticipated late-night Christmas shopping event'



EVENTS

this year is the presence of Spill, the wine and cocktail bar on the corner where House of Cards used to be, also run by Ms Anderton.

“That kind of adds a bit more of a drinking vibe — it was just an empty space last year,” she said. “Now there’s going to be more of a buzz on the corner.”

Within the Precinct, a selection of market traders will be dotted around offering locally made gifts and Christmassy bits and pieces.

Some local schools and choirs will be coming to do some 15-minute sets of singing, or some sing-along nativity performances.

There will be free mulled wine for shoppers and the businesses will be decking their shops out in Christmas finery to get into the festive spirit.

Ms Anderton owns Nood Stores in Church Street, which sells environmentally friendly gifts, and as well as being lavishly decorated for the festive season, it is looking into perhaps having a wreath-making section in the store on the night.

The event largely buoys up independent businesses, though this year Costa is also throwing its weight behind the night by offering a hot chocolate stand out the front of its store.

One of the returning shops this year is Fourbears Books on Prospect Street, whose main attraction will be its famous ‘reverse Santa.’

Rather than giving children a gift, Reverse Santa accepts gifts from children — either new items or like-new — which are then passed along to youngsters in need.

This Santa is working to support Reading Family Aid, which helps children living with poverty and other disadvantages in the Reading area.

If visitors wish to offer a gift but do not have a suitable one, Fourbears will sell them its books at cost so they can be donated then and there.

Alex Forbes, owner of the shop, says the Reverse Santa has proven ‘really popular’ over the past several years, fetching ‘a van load’ of gifts for less fortunate children.

“Reading Family Aid do such a fantastic job — it’s heartbreaking that they’re in a position they have to help thousands of children,” he said.

“[The Reverse Santa] is just a small thing that we can do to do our bit.”

It was Santa himself who came up with the idea of offering his services as a Reverse Santa for this event, saying he would do it for free as long as the shop wasn’t charging a ticket price.

“We were really excited by the idea and we were blown away by the response in the first year,” said Mr Forbes. “It’s been great ever since.”

“It’s one of our most successful nights — it competes with any of the Christmas Saturdays in the lead up to Christmas.

“We’ve got a great Santa as well,” he added. “I know all Santas are great, but our one is brilliant and the kids absolutely love him. So, it’s something we really look forward to.”

Santa is set to head to Fourbears at 5pm, which expects to trade until about 8pm. The plan is for Santa to ‘pop down to just check on his reindeer’ after he’s been to Fourbears.

Record store Pop Classics is another one of the shops taking

part in the late-night Christmas shopping event.

This is run by Damian Jones, ‘a life-long record collector’ who also works as a consultant for the Record Collector Price Guide and Channel 4’s ‘Posh Pawn.’

Pop Classics, also located in the Precinct, is making the event an occasion by having live music in the store, just like last year.

“[Last year] was brilliant, it was really buzzing,” said Damian. “We had a Portuguese food stall down — and we’ll probably have them again this year.”

“We get a lot of curious people who haven’t been to the shop before [during these events]. Especially when there’s music in the store, they come to see what’s going on.”

“It’s a nice opportunity to offer our services to people at later time and bring new people to the shop.”

The late-night Christmas shopping event, organised by the Caversham Traders group, will be held in Caversham on Friday, December 5.

Caversham Baptist Church will also host an indoor market for small businesses.

From mid-November to December, shoppers will also be able to collect stamps in return for shopping at Caversham’s independent businesses.

Once they have collected 10 stamps, shoppers will be entered into a raffle to win a hamper put together by the businesses taking part.

‘The plan is for Santa to ‘pop down to just check on his reindeer’ after he’s been to Fourbears’



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Graduate who sees value in selling preloved clothes

BY ALEX CARTER

A GRADUATE from Goring hopes to expand her sustainable clothes reselling business to bridge generational gaps in fashion. Lola Adams, 21, graduated from the University of Leeds in July with a degree in philosophy, politics and economics.

She launched her business, Dolly, after her childhood nickname, in her final year with the help of friends to increase her income.

It began by reselling imported clothes from Pakistan, mostly denim, which would have otherwise gone to landfill, on platforms including Depop and Vinted.

Now Miss Adams, who lives in High Street, wants to expand her business in the Chilterns and further afield, shifting her focus to sourcing goods locally by offering a personalised wardrobe clear-out service.

She said: "My degree was a lot straighter than fashion but I always wanted to do something in it. I wasn't really 100 per cent sure what that was, so I kept it quite broad.

"I was living in my bank account and didn't want to invest in crypto because I had no experience, so I decided to spend the money on clothes and resell them at a higher price.

"I had always sold clothes online but it really took off with the help of friends at university."

Miss Adams unintentionally realised the opportunity to expand her business locally after a client, from her other ongoing side business of ironing, expressed her frustration with her unwanted clothes. She said: "It started when one of my



Lola Adams set up a clothes reselling business while studying at University of Leeds



ABOVE: Miss Adams, aged eight, burgeoning fashionista
RIGHT: With denim stock from Pakistan



consultation, deciding with the client which pieces they'd like to keep, donate or sell.

She will then photograph the items and take care of listing, marketing and reselling on platforms, receiving a commission when the item sells.

She also wants to convey an authentic pre-loved narrative by encouraging clients to share their clothing stories with her, for her to share on social media channels, such as Instagram.

Miss Adams said: "I want to tell the story behind people's favourite pieces that they've resold with Dolly.

"It could be a coat that they got in the 2000s that they wore when they were pregnant and with their three children, that they don't fit into anymore.

"It could be quite a fun activity for them, telling a story which connects the whole pre-loved narrative, making it feel authentic and bringing them to life."

Miss Adams was influenced by conversations with her father, Justin, 53, who works in sustainability, that there was a gap. She observed that older generations may be less familiar with reselling platforms and the concept of fast fashion, sometimes viewing pre-loved items with a stigma.

She said: "As my dad worked in sustainability, it was always quite a big dinner table conversation, which I think was instilled in my growing up from childhood and into my adolescence.

"I'm getting people of a different generation to recognise sustainability in a way that's not abstract, especially for those of the age of 65 and above who aren't so tech-savvy and I know have some great pieces.

'Miss Adams aims to demonstrate that reselling is a viable and positive alternative to mass consumption and fast fashion'

"It's all in the name of sustainable fashion and I think being able to source more locally would fit better with the brand."

Miss Adams aims to demonstrate that reselling is a viable and positive alternative to mass consumption and fast fashion.

She said: "I want to get people to be more fashion

sustainability-conscious and aware by bridging those generations by making the process much easier for them.

"Fast fashion is a difficult market to break because it's so cheap to make and buy but people need

and want clothes.

"Having said that, I do think that fast fashion is on the decline and pre-loved will take over the market in the next 10 years with people's minds shifting to being more conscious about shopping and what they are buying."

WOMEN'S
HEALTH

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

Hair today... gone tomorrow

Your ponytail feels thinner, your parting looks wider, more hair is gathering in the shower drain. Sound familiar? You're not alone.

Many women experience changes in their hair during perimenopause — and at other hormone-shifting times, like after having a baby.

In fact, studies suggest that around 40–50% of women notice some degree of hair thinning by menopause. The good news? These changes are common, explainable, and there are things you can do to help.

WHY IT HAPPENS

Oestrogen (one of our main female hormones) helps keep hair in its growing phase for longer. As oestrogen levels start to fall (and testosterone can become

relatively more active), hair growth may slow down.

As a result, you might notice that hairs grow for a shorter time before shedding, new hairs come through finer, and individual strands become thinner as some follicles “miniaturise.”

These changes can appear as general thinning all over the scalp, or more noticeably on the crown or along your part line.

There are many causes of hair loss, and the truth is it's complex. Regrowth depends on the underlying cause.

Around perimenopause, two common types of hair loss include:

- **Female pattern hair loss:**

The most common cause of thinning hair in women. It's partly genetic and linked to hormone changes, where hair follicles gradually shrink over

time. Hair becomes finer, especially around the top of the scalp.

- **Telogen effluvium:**

This occurs when many hairs shed at once, often after stress, illness, surgery, or major hormonal shifts, all of which can happen during perimenopause. The good news is that this type of shedding usually grows back once the trigger settles.

FIRST STEPS

Simple, everyday changes can make a real difference. If your hair loss is linked to a temporary trigger, you may notice regrowth within a few months.

For hormonal or patterned thinning, a combination of treatments and lifestyle habits can help slow or even partly reverse the process — but it takes patience and consistency. Most people



need at least 3–6 months to see visible improvement. While results vary from person to person, the following simple steps may help support healthier, fuller hair.

Be kind to your hair:

Avoid harsh bleach, high heat, and tight hairstyles or hairbands that pull on fragile areas. Applying a few drops of coconut, argan, or jojoba oil to the mid-lengths and ends at least twice a week can reduce dryness and add shine. Ideally, leave it on for a few hours but avoid overnight use or applying to the roots, as this can clog follicles and restrict growth.

Feed your hair from within:

Healthy hair starts with good nutrition. When your body lacks certain nutrients, it prioritises vital organs over hair, meaning follicles can weaken, leading to dryness, brittleness, slower regrowth, and increased shedding.

Aim for a balanced diet rich in protein, iron, zinc, omega-3s, and vitamin D, all of which support strong, healthy hair growth. Staying well-hydrated also helps keep your scalp and hair in good condition.

Consider blood tests to check thyroid function, iron stores (ferritin), and sometimes vitamin D, as these deficiencies are common, treatable causes of thinning.

Boost blood flow:

Regular exercise and gentle scalp massage (even 10 minutes a day) can improve circulation to the hair follicles, supporting healthy growth. Some research also suggests that caffeine, used in topical shampoos or serums, may enhance blood flow and gently stimulate follicles.

Microneedling creates tiny, controlled micro-injuries on the scalp, triggering the body's natural healing response. This boosts blood flow, stimulates follicles, and can enhance the absorption of topical treatments, making them more effective. For safety and best results, it should be performed by a trained professional, such as a dermatologist.

Minoxidil is the most proven treatment for women with thinning hair, available as a lotion or foam. It boosts blood flow, extends the growth phase, and can awaken dormant follicles, helping hair grow longer and thicker. Improvement usually appears within 4–6 months,



and ongoing use is needed to maintain results. Effectiveness depends on the type and cause of hair loss, so it's best to consult a specialist before starting.

Treat scalp conditions:

A flaky, itchy, or irritated scalp (whether from dandruff, psoriasis, or dryness) can cause inflammation that weakens hair follicles. Vigorous scratching can also lead to breakage or even increased shedding. Addressing and treating the underlying scalp issue is key to restoring balance, supporting healthy hair growth, and preventing further problems.

Support your scalp and block DHT:

Some studies suggest that pumpkin seed oil (either taken as a supplement or gently massaged into the scalp) may help with hormonal hair loss by blocking DHT, a hormone linked to follicle shrinkage.

Other options, such as DHT-blocking shampoos (for example, those containing ketoconazole, like Nizoral), may also support scalp health and reduce hair thinning.

That said, be cautious with marketing claims. There are countless serums, supplements, and “miracle” hair growth kits out there. Some may help, but results vary. Before spending heavily, look for evidence-based products or ask a dermatologist for guidance. Often, simple, consistent care and proven treatments make the biggest difference.

Manage stress:

Hair loss and stress often go hand in

hand. If you're struggling to cope, speak with a doctor or specialist for support.

HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) could be an option:

Oestrogen helps support the hair's natural growth phase, and some women notice improved hair thickness when using HRT. However, everyone responds differently, and it's not a guaranteed fix. It's best to discuss your options with a menopause specialist.

When to get checked

If you've tried the basics for six months or more with little improvement, it's worth seeing a hormone specialist or dermatologist, who focus on hair and scalp conditions. They can provide a more detailed diagnosis and discuss advanced options, such as anti-androgen medications or other targeted treatments, which need specialist guidance and regular monitoring.

My Take-Home

Perimenopausal hair thinning is very common — and there's a lot you can do to help. With the right mix of healthy habits, gentle care, good nutrition, and targeted treatments, your hair can gradually regain its strength and shine.

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

Party On...

Vinyl Jen's putting a new spin on things

BY JOHN JACKLIN

PARTY-GOERS in Henley and South Oxfordshire have been dancing the night away at a back to the future “tactile” vinyl music experience that its creator calls unique.

Jennifer Johnston, a voiceover artist and disc jockey who goes by the professional name Vinyl Jen, staged her Select & Spin show at Hof's, the former Station House pub on Market Place, last month having previously appeared at Badgemore Park and Hart Street Tavern.

In her show, party guests browse Jennifer's hand-picked vinyl record collection and set the sounds agenda for the night. She says: “It's an interactive experience without a computer or digital sounds. It also makes for a sociable experience and a really great icebreaker — customers at Hof's absolutely loved it. I do love the Henley crowd, they are such a nice bunch of people.”

Jennifer said she “loved DJing at Hof's the other night and I have a girl crush on Sophie the landlady, she is awesome”.

The eureka moment that inspired Jennifer to set up her “tactile” show came after a request from a wedding planner Antonia Roskill. “Antonia asked me early last year to come up with an interactive idea with vinyl for a couple she was working for and that's when the concept of Select & Spin was born,” Jennifer says.

“She's great. She was the one that made me think of the concept, or it was going to be a case for me of this DJing ends now.”

“I did my Select & Spin show at the wedding in July and it has evolved into something amazing since then, it has literally changed my disc jockey career and life. I've done a few weddings this year and have countless booked in for next year already, specifically for Select & Spin.”

She believes that the concept is the only one in this country, which is why it is proving popular. “Word is getting out about my unique concept and I can barely keep up with enquiries.”

“I was considering giving up being a disc jockey before I came up with Select & Spin, can you imagine.” Jennifer



Jennifer Johnston is also available for Weddings and other private parties

says: “Vinyl records are tactile little beasts, people just love to touch and talk about them ... guests can flick through my vinyl records and choose a track for me to play. They select and I spin.

“Other DJs might wince at the idea of me letting people anywhere near my vinyl collection, but I’m the opposite of that and just love seeing the looks on people’s faces when they realise they can not only touch the records but choose them for me to play. It’s such a great feeling.

“No drinks have been spilled on the discs yet either even though I’ve had close calls — in a nice way I do keep a close eye on where people’s drinks are.”

Jennifer believes her vinyl collection is less vulnerable to damage because she works mainly at private parties, away from the general public who might walk in off the street. “I’m lucky that most of the gigs I do are in a controlled environment so I have never had a bad experience,” she says. “People don’t try to steal the vinyl, the biggest risk is guests spilling wine over the records.”

Generally people are really respectful. “The other night a couple were choosing some great records to play, but then I saw panic on their faces because a disc rolled onto the floor.

“Ironically it was Queen Greatest Hits, which was a replacement disc for the only record broken since I started Select & Spin — curiously, the person who broke that record was me.”

She adds: “The couple thought they had broken it, but luckily it was fine – that album just wants to roll away all the time like a Babybel cheese.”

Jennifer adds: “The concept works for several reasons — my record collection is one because it’s a trip down memory lane for some people and yet even young people love the music because of social media where many of them are hearing songs for the first time — it’s new to them and they are loving it.

“I’m quite popular for fiftieth and sixtieth birthdays, my music is quite nostalgic. But at parties the young people are choosing the same records as the oldies — it is amazing. Village People and YMCA, Bonnie Tyler, Whitney Houston, Wham!. They love all that stuff.” Jennifer believes that being a

‘Guests can flick through my vinyl records and choose a track for me to play. They select and I spin’

female disc jockey helps what she calls her “act”. “But another reason it works is because I have a sociable personality. Not all disc jockeys do and although they might admire what I do, they can’t necessarily execute it in the way that I do because they don’t all have people skills.

“I am saying that with my tongue very firmly in my cheek! What I do is very interactive and not all DJs are.”

She adds: “I forfeit the fancy DJ mixing to talk to people. I love talking to people, it’s far more valuable than gimmicks. The downside is that my party trick is talking too much and missing the end of a record and I often have to leg

Cont’d



SATURDAY NIGHT: Jennifer on the decks with Sophie, from Hof's bar in Henley

INTERVIEW

it across the floor because I forgot I had a single on and not a 12 inch.”

Being so gregarious is in sharp contrast to the young Jennifer, who was born in Glasgow and raised in Lanarkshire. “I was painfully shy as a teenager but I just grew out of it and now I am the jazz hands of the family.”

She started work at BBC Scotland aged 17 as a floor assistant in the studios and dealing with well-known actors and musicians. “So from a very young age I have been in those kind of high-profile environments and more so when I became a floor manager, which involves learning to deal with people. Sometimes you have to be bossy and assertive.”

Before her career as a voiceover artist she moved to London to work for the BBC sport and events department as an outside broadcast floor manager “and had a staple diet of football matches and horse racing”. “I became the favourite floor manager of the commentator John Motson, which had possibly something to do with the wee Scotch I put in his coffee at half time.” Motson, affectionately known as “Motty” to his many fans, died in 2023 aged 77 after 50 years with the BBC.

Jennifer, who cut her eye teeth as a disc jockey on hospital radio, went on to work as a freelancer for other channels including Disney, Nickelodeon, Channel 4, ITV, Sky TV, MTV, VH1 and independent channels and production companies.

Her best music claims to fame are standing on stage with James Brown, the so-called Godfather of Soul, at the V Festival and persuading “a rather relaxed George Michael out of his dressing room at MTV, as he was up there smoking weed and they needed him on the studio floor. Amazing memories.”

She says that “my Scottish accent is nice and neutral”. It’s a voice that might be recognisable from the fact that Jennifer has established herself as “the voice of the almighty Apple Store phoneline”. “I’ve had to phone myself on a number of occasions and it is weird having a conversation with yourself. I’m still on there until they replace me with artificial intelligence... I work full time from the comfort of my home



Jennifer has DJ residencies at The Knox “Speakeasy”, Sloane Square Hotel and Soho Farmhouse, Oxfordshire.

voiceover booth, lending my native Scottish tones and soft English tones to my work,” she says.

“I have an eclectic mix of records spanning four great decades, the Seventies to the early noughties. From Eighties and Nineties pop, to disco, R&B, soul, hip-hop and some rap and I’ve even got a few mashups [where pre-recorded songs are blended together] in my collection too. If I’ve got it, I’ll play it.”

She adds that: “My record collection has been hand-picked over the past 24 years.”

Jennifer’s husband Adam is her honorary roadie and “makes all locations and venues accessible and means I don’t have to turn down some gigs, I couldn’t do it without him”.

“I still use the same, precious Technics 1210 turntables I bought back in 2001 from the West End. I’m so old school that I’ve only ever DJed with vinyl, even when it went out of fashion I still played only vinyl, and have never used electronic playing devices to DJ. I never will.”

‘Born in Glasgow and raised in Lanarkshire, I was painfully shy as a teenager but I just grew out of it and now I am the jazz hands of the family’

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Celebrating 30 years of working together

and more than 150 kitchens fitted in Henley

BY AMANDA STEWART

HUSBAND and wife kitchen creators Mick Taplin and Sarah Dunkason set up their design and fitting company Elements in 1995 and as well as marking 30 years in business are celebrating 150 high-end kitchens installed in Henley alone.

But Sarah has also left her mark on houses via her remarkable skill as a decorative painter and artist.

She explains that after secretarial college she “went to the Pardon School of specialist decoration. The Pardon School was run by Leonard Pardon who had been responsible for such places as No.10 Downing Street and various Sultans’ palaces.

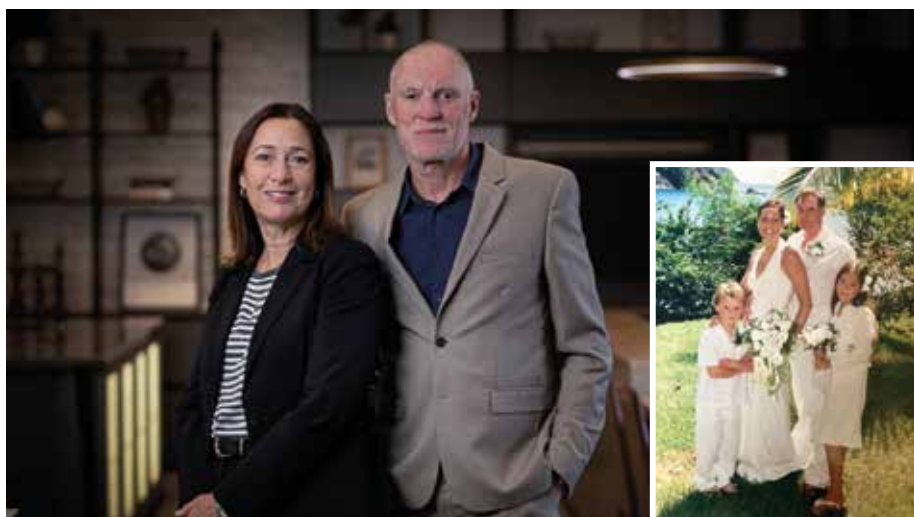
“I discovered my love and passion for decorating and learnt to paint in a marble effect as well as many other ways.

“I helped renovate various period houses around Henley as some of the properties when being refurbished were later discovered to have fireplaces that looked like marble, but, in fact weren’t and I was sent to ensure they looked perfect. I could paint a wall to make it look as if it was made of marble.

“These days I often drive into Henley and see some of the properties that I have worked on, especially around the Reading Road, St Marks Road and St Andrews Road.”

Sarah, who originates from Southampton but moved to the area because of her father’s work as a marine engineer, adds: “When I was at school I had wanted to be an architect, but discovered that I was better at design and less talented at maths, which was a requirement for being an architect.”

The couple met when Sarah was 17 and Mick was 19 and admits he “went out of his way” to walk her home after a Christmas party at the former Top Rank club in Reading. They have been together ever since. Mick says he knew “straight away that she was the one”.



Mick Taplin and Sarah Dunkason, founders of Elements Kitchens and inset on their wedding day with children, Frankie and Isaac

‘If you have an eye for detail, you really can tell straight away whether you are looking at a quality product and good design’

After school Mick, 62, took up an electrical apprenticeship then went on to join Moben Kitchens as a self-employed fitter. He says: “It was during the eighties and people were starting to feel affluent. There were lots of cooking programmes being shown on the television at the time, *Floyd and Ready Steady*

Cook and those sorts of things and suddenly having a fabulous and sociable kitchen was extremely popular.”

The company “was a natural progression from growing my base of recommendations as a self-employed kitchen installer, then we

thought it would be a great idea to open our own showroom. The name came from one of my brothers who runs his own graphic design and branding company”, Mick says.

“We started trading from home and carrying out site visits with kitchen samples in the back of my car.”

It was not the most conventional way to starting a business, but Sarah says that Mick has been trustworthy, direct and honest from the get go and she thinks those qualities have always stood them in good stead.

Mick says: “The reputation of the company began to grow

and eventually we rented a warehouse, showroom and offices in Reading. Twenty years ago, as their previous offices began to look shabby, they purchased large premises and a warehouse on the Portman Road in Reading where they have remained ever since.

The good aspects of running your own business, says Sarah, is “being able to make personal and business decisions without any hierarchy or politics. Mick is managing director and very hands-on. He likes interviewing the designers and sets them a task to design his kitchen as part of their interview process.

“He says that he can really see who has got flair.”

Sarah, who was once the personal assistant to a property director at Thames Water “when they were possibly more popular than of late”, specialises in the accounts side of the business, particularly the payroll and credit control.

Sarah, who has two sisters, and Mick, who has two brothers, have a daughter Frankie, 29, an architect and a son Isaac, 27, a mechanical engineer.

“Another one of the plus sides of your own business is being able to plan any holidays as we love to travel and have just returned from the most awesome safari in Tanzania and Zanzibar for Mick’s birthday. Plus we have enjoyed taking the children around the United States in a recreational vehicle, places like San Francisco and Las Vegas. The children loved it.”

But of course there are downsides too, such as the long hours and sometimes the economy. Sarah recalls: “During Covid, we saw many kitchen companies collapse and Mick and I would go and sit in the showroom, lock the doors and wonder how we were going to survive financially along with our employees.

“We have about 25 to 30 staff at any given time and some of those people have been with us for 20 years. We employ all our own fitters, and decorators as well as designers because we don’t just do private kitchens, we do housing estate and private developer kitchens too. It was all extremely worrying.”

An onlooker might be forgiven for thinking that the hard work and long hours were the reason why the couple waited decades before getting spliced, but it was in fact Sarah’s mother.

“She was quite a feminist, which was not so usual back then, and would not have allowed us to marry so young. So, we refurbished houses, had children and concentrated on the business before we decided while on a planned holiday in St Lucia to actually go through with getting married,” Sarah says.

“It was beautiful and not being too religious really worked for us, plus, by that time the options of either a church wedding or registry office had been lifted, so we had more choice and well, who wouldn’t want to get married in the Caribbean.

“My mum made us silk purses with our initials on for our two children to carry the rings in. Mick’s parents joined us. It was all very spontaneous and relaxed.”

Mick smiles: “We got married after our 23-year trial period.”

But work is never far away and sometimes business and pleasure do make a good match. Mick says: “We are happy to travel certainly nationally, but, we recently installed a kitchen



ABOVE: Jumping the kitchen sink! Sponsoring an equestrian event at Royal Windsor. LEFT: One of many examples and styles of their bespoke high quality fitted kitchen.



in the French Alps, which was great fun as we managed to squeeze in some skiing at the same time. We both are keen skiers, some of the team came too and it was the

ultimate work/fun experience.”

The couple love Henley “from the abundance of good restaurants to a quiet walk along the river. We are also regular visitors to The Regatta, Henley Festival and, due to our age, Rewind”. And Henley appears to love them.

The couple say: “We have a great reputation in the town for quality, service and choice and have been installing kitchens in Henley for 30 years. We have fitted more than 150 kitchens in round the town and have many customers coming back to us for their next installation or even another new one elsewhere.”

The couple add: “The suppliers we’ve chosen align with our love of quality furniture and design from around Europe and the UK, hence our tagline which says ‘For the finest collection of British, German and Italian kitchens’.”

With designers that have worked with Sarah Beeny, the broadcaster and business woman who fronted Property Ladder, the couple have a sharp eye for what makes a good kitchen designer.

“First and foremost, to ask lots of questions and listen to what people are saying, then more questions and keep digging,” they say. “A good designer will have a flair for creating something different or the unexpected but still work within the brief.”

After so many successful years in the industry, what do they think will sustain the business? “Hard work and dogged determination and listening. We are both very keen on interior design and food.”

Mick adds that what the couple have learnt about kitchens and design over the years is almost ingrained in them: “If you have an eye for detail, you really can tell straight away whether you are looking at a quality product and good design.

“It travels with you everywhere, sometimes I go into a pub and can’t help thinking wouldn’t the place work better if the bar was over there or maybe they could have spent a bit more on the table and chairs. It is a way of life.”

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with FLYTE

HENLEY'S newest spot, FLYTE bar, has landed at 48 Market Place bringing a fresh, flight-themed twist to the town's social scene.

Founded by Liz, Nacho, Daniel B and Dan C, FLYTE bar blends the warmth of a neighbourhood hangout with the intrigue of a modern speakeasy. The space combines moody lighting, rich textures, and a laid-back sophistication that encourages guests to linger, laugh, and explore new flavours.

At the heart of FLYTE's concept is the idea of "flights"; curated tasting experiences that invite discovery. Whether it's flights of cocktails, wines, beers, chocolates, or bites, each experience is designed to celebrate craftsmanship and conversation.



Deeply rooted in community, FLYTE partners with a wide range of local producers including Hawkridge Distillers, Renegade Brewery, JoJo's, Fairmile Vineyard, Harrow & Hope, Oaken Grove, Stanlake, and SUR Chocolates. Even the décor features work from local artisans, reflecting the team's commitment to supporting independent talent and showcasing the best of our region.

"FLYTE Bar is ultimately experiential," says co-founder Daniel B. "We're focused on the art of the flight, the joy of tasting and discovering, and creating a home for the curious right here in Henley."

Opening party on November 20 tickets are available.

For updates, events, and collaborations, follow @flytebar or visit www.flytebar.com

Grand Opening 21-11-25
48 Market Place, Henley on Thames
www.FLYTEbar.com

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Alan AND Jacob

FATHER AND SON FOUNDERS
OF HENLEY DISTILLERY, BINFIELD HEATH



ALAN Wilson has been a resident of South Oxfordshire for 50 years and is a professional sculptor who loves a game of golf, walking and birdwatching in the local woods and valleys.

His son Jacob was, and possibly still is, the youngest Master Distiller in the country.

Beyond his passion for spirits, he has just welcomed his first child into the world — Ozzy Wilson, born on the 12th of October — so any hobbies and interests he may have enjoyed can take a back seat for the next 16 or so years.

Jacob and Alan founded and run The Henley Distillery in a collection of 18th century barns in Binfield Heath.

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

Jacob: I was born and raised in and around Henley. I couldn't think of anywhere better to have our distillery.

2 What would you change about Henley?

Alan: A mini ring road would be nice so the town centre could be all pedestrian... more trees, outside dining, and live music!

3 How do you spend your leisure time locally?

Jacob: My wife and I are big foodies so we love visiting the many fantastic local restaurants and pubs before then seeing something at the Kenton.

4 What are your top three local haunts?

Alan: Menza Café at The Rugby Club, Pavilion Foods in town & The Crooked Billet.

5 Do you have a favourite song?

Jacob: Superstition by Stevie Wonder.

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

Alan: The Life of Brian — though hardly inspirational (Always look on the Bright Side of Life).

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

Jacob: This may be a silly trivial thing but I think the overall "British sense of humour". The ability to be seen the humour and occasionally laugh in the face of adversity is a brilliant thing.

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

Alan: France — for the countryside, culture, and history.

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

Jacob: This is a tough one. I think there are a lot of people in the local area who I admire and think are doing fantastic things. Picking one I would say Micah & Jack who run Pavilion Deli. I think their attention to detail and quest for the best quality in everything they do is something to be admired and also something we try to do at the Distillery.

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

Alan: My only serious interest was in Art — finding a way to make a living creatively has been a blessing, often difficult, but wonderful none the less. Nothing else could have been so

fulfilling — except maybe Gin, it turns out making spirits is a lot of fun too!

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

Jacob: Lottery numbers...? I was very ill when I was younger with M.E. I think knowing for certain that it would eventually get better and there was light at the end of the tunnel would have been a big help mentally.

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

Alan: I'll go with Jacob's choice — cool group.

Jacob: David Attenborough, Stephen Fry and Peter Kay

13 Where do you like to travel to on holiday?

Jacob: I like to explore but also recharge. So anywhere with fantastic weather for lazy days whilst being close to historical sights (and good food!)

14 What are your ambitions?

Alan: Short term — we are looking at lots of new projects for The Henley Distillery — watch this space! Long term — get back to making art!

15 Do you have any regrets?

Jacob: I'm not a big believer in regrets. I have plenty of things that I wish I did differently and have made my fair share of mistakes, but ultimately, I wouldn't change them given the opportunity as that would risk changing what I have now.

The craft, the artistry and the experience awaits you at **THE HENLEY DISTILLERY**



In the heart of South Oxfordshire, The Henley Distillery is where craftsmanship meets creativity. Founded by father-and-son duo Alan and Jacob Wilson, the distillery produces small-batch gins and rums that capture the spirit of Henley in every bottle.

Using four traditional copper stills — each named after Jacob's grandparents — and hand-selected botanicals, every spirit is carefully distilled, bottled, and labelled on-site. The result is a collection of beautifully smooth, characterful gins, rums, and limited edition liqueurs perfect for enjoying neat, in cocktails, or as a thoughtful gift.

Visitors are invited to step inside the distillery and

experience the craft first-hand. From guided tours and tastings to the renowned Henley Gin Experience — where guests create their own bespoke bottle to take away on the day — every visit offers an intimate glimpse into the artistry behind each spirit.

Whether you're seeking a memorable day out, a unique gift, or simply a taste of local craftsmanship, The Henley Distillery offers an experience as refined and distinctive as its spirits.

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