

HENLEY

A full-page photograph of two women in a gym. The woman on the left has blonde hair, wears glasses, a white sports bra, and white leggings. The woman on the right has brown hair and wears a light blue sports bra and light blue leggings. They are both smiling. In the background, other people are visible on treadmills.

henleylife.co.uk
January 2026

Life

Featuring

New Year health, wellbeing and travel



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HENLEYLife Contents

January 2026



22 Roman holiday, weekend breaks



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Carine and Lia,
founders of
Nubodi Pilates (page 16)

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HENLEY
Life

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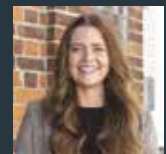
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HENLEY
Life

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
- Sonning Common RG4 – 1533 copies • Wargrave – RG10 1251 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!

JANUARY is the time for new beginnings. This month's issue embodies that mind-set as we feature the stories of people who have changed their life and those of others.

John Jacklin interviews Philly J Lay, who overcame an addiction to opioids and alcohol following a botched spinal surgery, which left her bed-bound for two years.

She has become a self-help advocate and produces a podcast called the "Wellness Way", which she records at home in Turville.

With research showing that singing helps with all manner of health issues, we meet musician and choir leader Jane Gatfield, who leads Sing Your Pain Away.

The concept was so popular that there are now 14 groups in the stable, with some run in conjunction with charities to help people they support.

We also visit the free drop-in health centre in Henley — the Human Repair Café — which helps to refurbish people, not objects, and its organisers have plans to grow it in the future.

The Crooked Billet in Stoke Row offers some healthy, budget-friendly cooking, which it calls "Frugal food", and our women's health columnist, Dr Shilpa McQuillan, tells of the importance of booking those screenings in the new year.

For those with thoughts heading to warmer climes, Amanda Stewart tells of her trip to Rome, while Henley MP Freddie van Mierlo is the subject of this month's My Henley Life. Happy New Year Henley.

The Henley Life team

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Hairstylist wins national award four years running

BY EMMA DODD

A HAIRSTYLIST from Henley has won a national award for the fourth time. Enrica Russo, 32, who works at Dorata Hairdressing in Hart Street, scooped first prize in the creative image category of the Salon Awards 2025 held at Hilton Bankside Hotel in London earlier this month.

It is the fourth consecutive year the stylist has taken the prize home after previously winning the award in 2022, 2023 and 2024.

Ms Russo submitted a number of hairstyles for the judges' consideration and was chosen out of hundreds of entries from across the UK.

Each submission was carefully reviewed by an independent panel of industry experts in hairdressing, salon business, marketing and design. The judging process focused on originality, client experience, professionalism and overall impact.

Ms Russo, who found out she was a finalist a couple of months ago, said that she was "very" surprised to have received the award.

She was unable to attend the ceremony due to work commitments but a video of the ceremony was captured by

her partner Andrea Dorata, who runs the business with his siblings, Angelo and Simona.

Ms Russo said: "It was quite surprising because I enter every year and this is my fourth year in a row winning the same award."

"Every year I think, 'I can't win another year, it's impossible'. 'I was speechless. I can't even describe it. It's so cool when you see such a big screen with your image from your collection and your name.'"

Angelo, who is the director of the Henley-on-Thames

branch of Dorata, trained in Italy and moved to the UK in the early Nineties, soon followed by his siblings Andrea and Simona.

Ms Russo, who previously worked in a salon in Chelsea before moving to Henley, is coincidentally from Syracuse, the same town in Sicily as the salon owners, whom she met in London.

She said her favourite design she submitted to the awards features intricate braids that she had styled on Afro-textured hair and then wrapped with colourful yarn.

Her designs come from her latest project, "Creatures", an avant-garde collection that explores themes of the wild, the whimsical and the unexplored. Each style took her several days to complete.

She has also won major international awards, including best international avant-garde collection at the International Hairdressing Awards 2023.

Ms Russo joined the Henley branch of Dorata, which is run by Angelo and Simona, at the beginning of June.

"I'm really happy to be here," she said. "It's a really nice family business and I love Angelo and Simona."

"They're really nice and really kind and moving from London was a big change for me."



Enrica Russo with her latest first prize in the creative image category from the Salon Awards.

'The judging process focused on originality, client experience, professionalism and overall impact'



Diary Dates

JANUARY 2026

MONDAY 5TH JANUARY

Andy Crowdy's Led Zeppelin Project

CROOKED BILLET, STOKE ROW



Henley double bass player and jazz aficionado Andy Crowdy will pick up the guitar, joined by Denny Ilett, Jerry Soffe, Ian Matthews and Ady Davey, for an evening paying homage to the Sixties rock band. Tickets cost £38 as a music cover charge.

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

FRIDAY 16TH JANUARY

Mark Watson: Before It Overtakes Us

KENTON THEATRE

Comedian Mark Watson has been busy touring the world, writing books and starting a podcast, but a recent exchange with a chatbot nearly stopped him in his tracks.



He will exchange some of his thoughts and feelings on the future of humanity, and much more, when he returns to the Kenton. Tickets cost £25.25 for the show, which is suitable for ages 14 and over and has a running time of an hour and a half.

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

THURSDAY 22ND JANUARY

The Man Who Was Magic

KENTON THEATRE



Award-winning magician James Phelan was the first magician in history to sell out a solo show at the Magic Circle. His shows have been selling out globally and through a combination of sleight of hand, illusion, trickery and the power of suggestion, audiences are left scratching their heads as to how he does it.

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

SUNDAY 25TH JANUARY

Gonçalo Maia Caetano — "Caprichos!"

NORTHEND VILLAGE HALL



The next in the Northend Concerts series welcomes award-winning

Portuguese guitarist Gonçalo Maia Caetano, who has been touring across Europe. The programme includes music from baroque to romantic through to contemporary pieces such as Brett Dean's Caprichos de Goya. Tickets for the concert, which starts at 3pm, cost £20.

For more information, visit northendconcerts.co.uk

THURSDAY 29TH JANUARY

Honk! live comedy night

THE RELAIS HENLEY



Sarah Roberts, Rosalie Minnitt and other comedians will take to the floor at the next live stand-up comedy night. Sarah's previous comedy nights include Cake

and Silkworm and she is a BBC New Comedy Awards finalist. Rosalie created hit comedy show Clementine, following a woman on her quest to meet The One. Tickets cost from £12.62 for the show, which starts at 7.30pm.

For more information, visit linktr.ee/honkhot

SATURDAY 31ST JANUARY

Henley Choral Society – Brahms Requiem Come and Sing Workshop

ST MARY'S CHURCH, HENLEY

Ahead of its music evening at Reading concert hall in March, Henley Choral Society is holding a "Come and Sing" workshop at the church,

from 10am to 4pm. Music director Richard Harker and society members will explore Brahms's choral masterpiece,



Ein Deutsches Requiem. The composer was inspired by the deaths of his mentor, Robert Schumann, and his mother and the text is derived from Luther's German Bible rather than Latin.

For more information, visit henleychoralsociety.org.uk/concerts

ONGOING EVENTS

TO SATURDAY 17TH JANUARY 2026

Lerner and Loewe's My Fair Lady

MILL AT SONNING

The Mill at Sonning's musical Christmas extravaganza features 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



Higgins takes on Cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, to give her elocution lessons and try to 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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Research shows singing helps with all manner of health issues

BY JOHN JACKLIN



MUSICIAN and choir leader Jane Gatfield has science on her side in knowing that her choir in Henley called Sing Your Pain Away does exactly what it says on the tin.

Jane conducted a so-called social prescribing study over seven weeks with a leading researcher in the field of singing for health, Professor Stephen Clift. He is a professor

emeritus at Canterbury Christ Church University and ran everything by the book, says Jane, 56. “I’m a musician not an academic, so I could not have done it without him.

“Some of the people in the study had been referred to us by the NHS,” she says. “On a week-by-week basis we measured a 24 per cent uplift in people’s mood and a 30 per cent reduction in anxiety.

“Across all the patients across all the sessions we did see a 13 per cent reduction in their physical pain. What was even more powerful was that we saw a 37 per cent increase in the participants’ capacity to handle their pain, which is just amazing. It was fascinating to see what a difference it had

‘What was even more powerful was that we saw a 37 per cent increase in the participants’ capacity to handle their pain, which is just amazing’



Henley group joining forces with the sister SYPA groups from Marlow, Bourne End and Chesham for some singing and socialising at Christmas

made to people's lives." She adds: "I could sense the Sing Away Your Pain sessions made a difference, but to see the figures and to see that difference measured was astounding."

Jane suffers from a long-term health condition called Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome that causes her joints to dislocate and was the catalyst for the start of the choir project 11 years ago. "I began the groups because I have always been keen and active in the community and I was diagnosed with Ehlers-Danlos."

"Many people including some medics had not, and have not, heard of it. They go what's that all about? Well, it is an absolute nightmare. It can affect the neck, the joints, everywhere."

"It makes your joints dislocate very easily and for me my normal daily routine was five or six joint dislocations a week and along with the pain and because of the pain I was unable to sleep well."

"It also incurs lots of practical difficulties such as not being able to walk far and I couldn't stand for probably more than two minutes as my ankles would dislocate. I couldn't sit unless I was on a specially adapted chair that supported every vertebra of my spine."

She adds: "I'd always loved singing, running choirs, running orchestras and so on and then I suddenly found myself excluded in all the choirs in the area because I couldn't stand, sit or drive any distance."

"The condition was unpredictable. I didn't know what was going to dislocate and when, so you could never commit to anything like a concert or a final rehearsal. Some joint would dislocate and I would end up in A&E."

"Singing became something quite negative instead of the positive that it had been — it became just something else that I could not do. It made me very sad at first."

That was when Jane started looking for an outlet that could work for her and her condition. "I was thinking there must be some choir or group that accommodates people with disabilities or health conditions or mobility difficulties."

"I looked and looked but could not find a thing, so I thought I would start something myself and advertised. Thirty people rocked up at the first meeting. I could not believe it. You could have knocked me down with a feather."

From the beginning, Jane was clear about her parameters for the singing group. "I said it would be different. We would not be performing so there was no pressure on people to get it note perfect for a certain day, it didn't matter."

"We made it so that the venues were accessible; people could sit or stand or walk around; perch on a table or even sit on the floor — they can do whatever they want that makes them feel comfortable. And if you become overwhelmed you can just step out of the room."

"There were people who were in pain like me, people with arthritis, people with cancer; there were people with breathing difficulties who thought that the singing might help them. They too couldn't sing in a traditional choir because they had to keep stopping to catch their breath. There was one lady with



Jane Gatfield, founder of Sing Your Pain Away.

an oxygen cylinder. There were people who were suffering from anxiety and were breathing into paper bags to help them calm down. There were also people with mental and emotional pain caused by bereavement."

"So all these people came and we started singing as planned - and I started learning about all these conditions too. So off we went."

Jane ran the sessions for the first five years "as a side hustle" on a Thursday night because she had a day job working in IT, as she had for many years. "I was finding it increasingly tough because of my own challenges and I was really enjoying the feedback from that singing group."

"The sessions were making people feel confident because it was something they could do and they enjoyed and looked forward to. It brought people out of their houses. One or two had been housebound."

"So that was when I decided that this was what I wanted to do, and in 2019 I started five more singing groups, including the one in Henley."

"We had the prototype working then so we replicated it, 45 minutes' drive from my house in Bourne End because that was as far as I could go without my back dislocating."

There are now 14 groups in the Sing Away Your Pain stable, with some run in conjunction with charities to help people they support. There are sessions for unpaid carers as well as

Cont'd

'I'd always loved singing, running choirs, orchestras and so on and then I suddenly found myself excluded in all the choirs in the area because I couldn't stand, sit or drive any distance'



Henley SYPA group leader, Colette Ashby (white top) at a singing session in the Over-60s club, and left, some of the group out socialising this summer.

the public groups, and three specialist choirs for people with dementia. “The effect of music for people with dementia is really quite powerful,” Jane says. “The way that it can unlock their brains and their memories and get them interacting. It is amazing.”

The sessions in Henley, which can be held over the internet, are lead by Colette Ashby, who began performing as a semi-professional singer at the age 15. Colette, who has been a wedding celebrant for the past five years, also sings with a band and in other choirs.

Jane says: “In Henley, as well as the singing, they are very gregarious. I was trying to find a picture on social media of the Henley crowd singing but I couldn’t find one. There were pictures of them going for lunch, in bars, in coffee shops you name it.

“That says it all,” she laughs.

“Singing has got that feel-good factor and promotes the production of endorphins but for many people just getting out of the house for the social side of life is as important as

‘The sessions in Henley, which can be held over the internet, are lead by Colette Ashby, who began performing as a semi-professional singer at age 15’

the singing.” She adds: “It’s predominantly women across all groups, although in Henley there are 40 per cent men. We have people who are divorced after years of being part of a couple and also some people in their teens and early twenties.

“We sing an eclectic mix of pop songs from the 50s, 60s and 70s, songs from the shows and some light classical stuff.

“We’ve got some downright silly songs just to make ourselves laugh, the odd sea shanty and last month it was all Christmas songs. The key things is that they are uplifting and upbeat.

“We are open to everyone and you don’t have to be in pain and you don’t have to be able to sing - we can easily teach people to do that.”

Annie Mortimer, a member of the Henley Sing Your Pain Away group, says: “The joy of singing is purely magical and the friendship we find in the group is priceless.”

Jane talks fondly of one person who thrived through Sing Your Pain Away. “They came with severe mental health problems, although they did not say so at the time, and they were struggling.

“I offered them the chance to help me out, to help improve their self worth. They became a real asset to the group.

Years later they confided in me that the night before the first session, they had written a note and stockpiled a stash of prescription drugs.

“That was moving. But the singing helped them. That makes it so worthwhile.”

The Henley singers meet on Thursdays from 11am to noon at Henley Over 60s Club. www.singyourpainaway.co.uk

Q&A with Moultsford

DID you know that Moultsford now welcomes girls as well as boys? Headteacher Ben Beardmore-Gray answers some frequently asked questions.

When did Moultsford go co-ed?

Our fabulous purpose-built Pre-Prep (for children age 3 – 7) has been co-ed since 2023, and we were delighted to welcome girls to Year 3 in the Prep School in September 2025. By 2030, there will be girls in every year group through to Year 8.

How has this impacted the school?

An important part of the Moultsford experience is living through its values of Kindness, Courage and Curiosity. Our teachers are passionate about nurturing children, whether boys or girls, building their confidence and self-esteem so that they get the most out of their learning both in and outside of the classroom. A co-educational Moultsford simply broadens the experience for all pupils.

What sports do girls play at Moultsford?

Sport is just one element of the all-round education provided, and all children are encouraged to try as wide a range as possible. For girls, hockey, netball, football



and cricket are played according to the season, with many additional opportunities offered from athletics and tennis to dance, judo and watersports on the river among others.

Which senior schools do girls progress on to?

Moultsford pupils already progress onto the UK's leading senior day and boarding schools age 13. For girls, excellent local options include all girls' SHSK, Headington Rye, Queen Anne's and The Abbey, as well as Abingdon, Shiplake and Pangbourne which are co-ed. Moultsford has longstanding experience of children progressing to the leading co-ed boarding schools, such as Wellington, St Edward's, Bradfield and Marlborough.

Wraparound care options are available and a daily bus service runs from the Henley area.

Open Morning: Friday 6th February September 2026



MOULSFORD

CURIOUS

From the river to the playing fields, from the classroom to the stage, every day at Moultsford is shaped by opportunity.

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by nature



Moultsford is an independent day and boarding school near Wallingford in South Oxfordshire. Kindness, courage and curiosity are at the centre of all that we do.



When the body says ‘No’ — finding healing beyond medicine

BY JOHN JACKLIN



AN EX-BALLET dancer has turned her back on Western medicine and become a self-help health advocate after spending two years in bed following botched spinal surgery.

Philly J Lay, who lives near Turville, became addicted to opioids and alcohol as her “health spiralled out of control” during two years spent in bed in pain. She fought back, she says, harnessing the power of the body

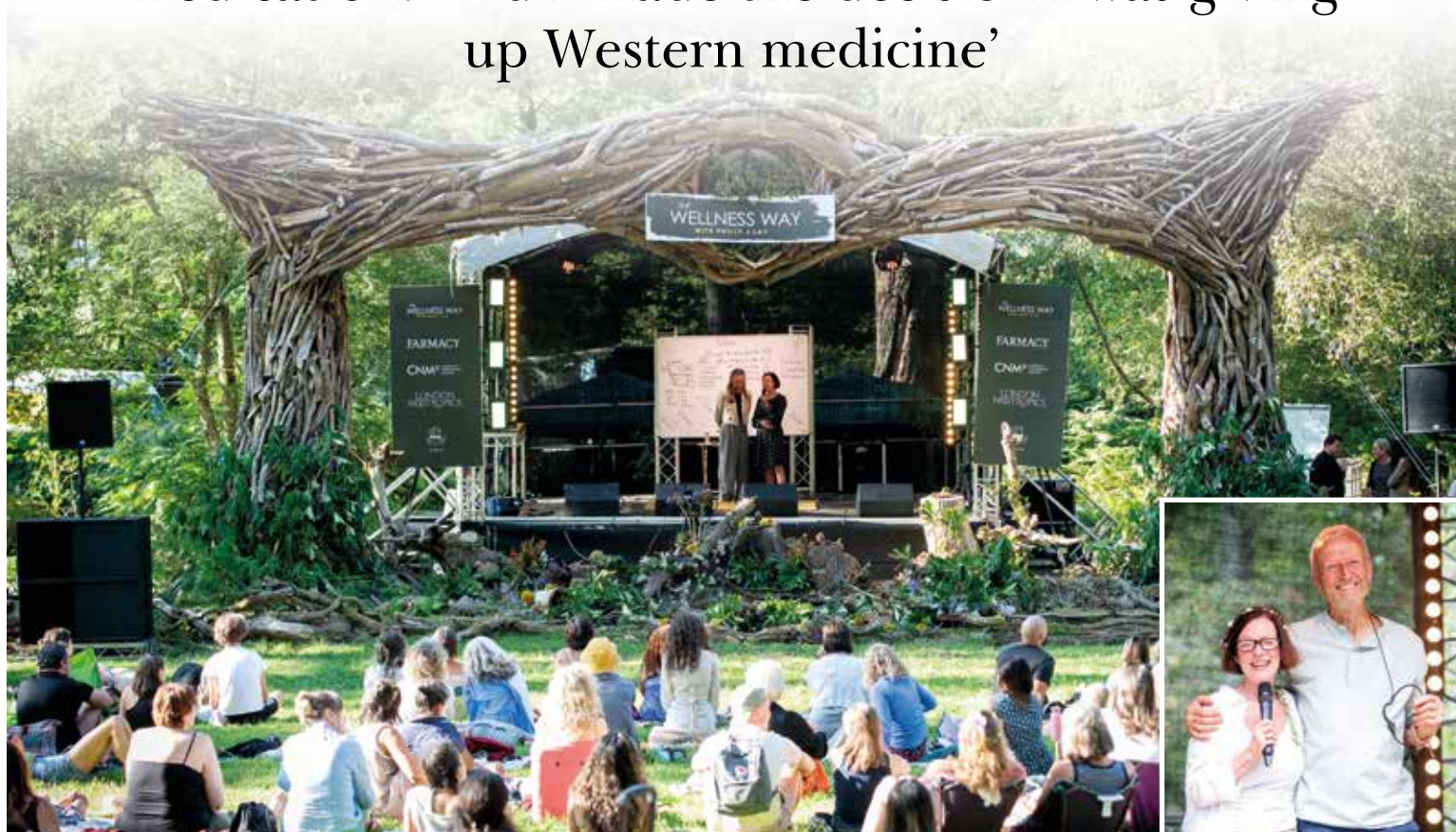
and mind, natural remedies, detoxification and emotional release to restore a natural balance.

She shares her experiences and what she learnt in the Wellness Way podcast and the annual Wellness Way Festival, which offer practical knowledge about healthy living from doctors, healers, scientists and organic farmers.

Philly, 62, grew up on a strawberry farm in Brightwell-cum-Sotwell, South Oxfordshire, and after a “pretty idyllic childhood” moved to London then Henley in the mid Noughties.

“Then 14 years ago my back went,” she says. “I assumed that it was just because I had trained as a classical dancer

‘I decided I didn’t want to be on long-term medication. And I made the decision I was giving up Western medicine’



and done a lot of damage to my body in those early years and this was the consequence. The last disc in my back had completely shattered and I had to have a spinal fusion but they missed my spine with the anaesthetic and I nearly died.

“What they are meant to do is put the epidural anaesthetic in your spine so you have pain relief when you come round, but they put me under before they put the epidural in so they could not test and check that it was in the right place — it wasn’t.

“The problem was that all the medication was in my body and they couldn’t give me more when they brought me round as they would have killed me. I remember the scream of pain that I let out.”

She adds: “My now ex-husband said we had to see a solicitor. But I couldn’t talk about it — I didn’t want to see anybody. I stayed in bed taking painkillers and drinking.”

Philly, a mother of two grown up daughters, adds: “The worst part was that I had been an all-singing all-dancing hands-on mother, and I never let my children see me work, I did that after they went to bed as I wanted to enjoy their childhood.

“So I went from that to being a really horrible woman in bed. I was in a bad way. I had all these auto-immune conditions popping up, I had chronic fatigue and chronic brain fog, frozen shoulder and post-traumatic stress disorder.

“To top it all, one day I noticed a large lump in my throat, and I thought ‘Okay I am going to have to go to a doctor now’, because I had kept away since my operation but I had gone from this size 8 woman to this size 16 woman.”

She says: “That doctor put me in touch with these four consultants. I kept sitting there with them and going ‘is so and so connected to what is going on in my body? Is it connected to the spinal fusion?’ None of them knew.

“I had the tumour taken out from my throat and they said I had to be on thyroxine for life because I had only half a thyroid.” [Thyroxine is a hormone produced by the thyroid.]

She adds: “I decided I didn’t want to be on long-term medication. And I made the decision I was giving up Western medicine.”

That was the start of Philly’s voyage back to the healthy lifestyle she had on the strawberry farm, where she was close to nature.

She says: “My dad Phillip started the farm when he came back from the Second World War. He had enough money to buy a field and plant strawberries but he and Mum had no money to harvest the crop and they were rotting on the plants.

“It was upsetting for them. One day mum went inside and came out with a sign. She said ‘I’ve got a sign here, Phillip. I



am going to pop it up on the road’. It simply said ‘pick your own’ and that was how we started pick your own.

“It was a very lively childhood, I am one of six children. My mother pretty much believed in house work and not home work. We were all very arty children of the Sixties, we either did ballet, played the piano or were artists.

“When I was 11 I went off to train in classical ballet at

Elmhurst ballet school in Birmingham and discovered that in the art of classical dancing you are never good enough and you suffer incredibly low self-esteem, always thinking that you are rubbish at everything.

“Unluckily, or luckily depending on how you look at it, at age 16 after I got into the Ballet Rambert Company I snapped a tendon, which was the universe telling me that I was not right for ballet dancing and it released me from that path.”

Although Philly went on to do musical theatre and a “bit of acting”, she also began developing property. “I moved to London when I was 16 – the house was £21,000 in Marylebone

Cont’d

‘Her tumour and the death of her two friends prompted Philly’s plan to turn her home into a retreat for cancer patients’



and had mushrooms growing out of the wall. I thought, never mind, I can do this up ... “I moved around a lot doing up my own home, but having to put it on the market when I finished to pay off the debts because working as an actor I didn’t earn any money.

“This wouldn’t happen nowadays, but in the early Nineties my bank manager in Wallingford phoned to advise me to go into business. So I started doing up houses and became a landlord.” And moved to Henley.

Tragedy has played a significant part in Philly’s redemption. “In the two years that I was lying in bed, the four women who kind of formed me, kind of formed my soul, all passed. My mum, my sister and two best friends.

“My mum died in a care home in Wallingford in a diabetic coma. She was very active and had a healthy diet, no sugar. I knew all about diet from my training as a dancer, so we had changed her diet.

“By the time she died she was on 17 types of medication. I had said to doctors can we look at this schedule and decrease it because she is having side effects. She was on warfarin, which is rat poison.

“My sister died of motor neurone disease, and my two best friends died of cancer. So I spent a big chunk of this time learning from health experts.”

Her tumour and the death of her two friends prompted Philly’s plan to turn her home into a retreat for cancer patients, but covid struck. “I thought what else can I do? So I wrote and published my book the Natural Wellness Journal — which teaches people the methods I used on my journey back to health.”

She adds: “Everybody is on a journey of one and what works for one does not necessarily work for all.

“Ten years of having half a thyroid and my bloods are fine and that is down to diet and nutrition, and walking again — with the dogs. I take my shoes off and put my bare feet onto



‘Everybody is on a journey of one and what works for one does not necessarily work for all’

the ground even if it is snowing and I get my breath working.”

She is candid about how recovery and turning her life round came at a price — her marriage. “I became very difficult to live with,” she says after making “a lifestyle choice” to banish chemicals from the home and diet.

“I was anti-aftershave, I was like ‘take the shoes off, what if you have got pesticides on them?’

“Serving dinner I was being told that it was a side vegetable and where was the main course. No shirts went to the dry cleaners because I did not want to have chemicals in the house. I don’t have heavy chemically-laden paints, any wood has been coated with natural oils.”

Philly believes that doctors need to ask their patients

about their lifestyles not just symptoms when considering their treatments.

She would never tell anybody not to go to her doctor, she says, but: “I believe that it is time for us to educate ourselves; for us all to stand up for our health and become less reliant on a doctor.

“My view is that the medical profession has, very sadly, lost its way.”

The Wellness Way: www.phillyjlay.com



Partnership deal to scatter ashes of pets (by drone)

BY ANAKA NAIR

A PET cremation company in Sonning Common has partnered with drone specialists to offer a unique and memorable way to bid farewell to beloved pets.

Tranquillity Pet Cremation is working with Aerial Ashes to help clients access “dignified” aerial scattering ceremonies using professional-grade drones.

Peter Baldwin, managing director of Tranquillity Pet Cremation, started the business in February 2023 and said scattering ashes by drone is a “very special” way of honouring their pets.

He said: “As we’re an independent cremation company, there’s nothing we haven’t heard.

“A lot of the time, people have very different, specific things they want to do for their pet and people are always looking to either keep or scatter the ashes. They’re not sure what to do but they want to do something very special.

“We saw what Aerial Ashes was doing and we thought working with them gives an option to people if they want to do something a little bit different — and it is different.”

Aerial Ashes was looking to move into the “pet world” and by Tranquillity joining their affiliate scheme, residents can explore aerial scattering ceremonies as a modern alternative to traditional ash interments.

Mr Baldwin added: “We’re thrilled to partner with Aerial Ashes. It adds something truly special to the services we already offer our community.”

Trained drone pilots conduct the ashes scattering ceremonies and include full planning, permissions and the option to create a tribute video.

Every ceremony is designed to reflect the pet’s life and favourite places.

Matt Young, managing director of Aerial Ashes, based in Christchurch, Bournemouth, said: “We love working with passionate local partners like Tranquillity.

“How it works, in reality, is we meet people at their special place, so that’s usually a beach or somewhere that they’d like to walk.

“Then they hand the ashes to us and we load them into a commercial drone.

“We’ll take off, have a fly around and, when they’re ready,

we scatter the ashes. It’s quite clever how it works — the ashes come out quite slowly, so we create a large ash cloud that dissipates in front of you. It’s like symbolising going to heaven. It just disappears, so it’s quite spectacular.”

Mr Young said that any reservations people have about the process are usually based on their misunderstanding.

“Ashes are inert,” he said. “It’s probably one of the most natural products you could get, so there is no impact on the environment but it’s certainly a question that people sometimes ask.

“We have people who say, ‘Oh, I don’t want to get covered in ashes if I’m going for a picnic’. Obviously, the reality is we’d never do it anywhere near to anyone.

“We do it very early in the morning when no one else is around to be discreet. We’d never risk that happening.

“Sometimes people try to do DIY scatterings and they get covered in it and breathe it in, which is quite traumatic and they regret it. We take that pressure and that possibility away from them.”

After announcing the partnership in the Tranquillity newsletter, Mr Baldwin said he has received positive feedback.

He said: “One person said it’s a great idea because their dog used to go out on the golf course and out in the field and they didn’t quite know where, but they could scatter over different areas.

“These days, people are looking for something different and special and I thought that we should embrace new technology and, so far, the response has been positive. A couple of people have said yes, they’re very interested, because they’ve never seen it before and never thought of it.

“I’m not going to sit here and say it’s everybody’s cup of tea because it’s not. Hopefully, people will see it as a new alternative.

“The benefit is that it’s unique in what it’s doing, and a few years ago, it probably wouldn’t have been possible because we didn’t have the technology to do it.

“I don’t think it’s going to change our world but if it gives something to clients, I like that.”

For more information or to book a free consultation, visit www.tranquillitypc.com or www.aerialashes.co.uk

What to look for when choosing a Pilates studio in the New Year?

BY CARINE AND LIA FROM NUBODI PILATES

IN 2025, Reformer Pilates has become a booming industry. All the celebrities — from Harry Styles to Adele — are doing it. Why? Because it delivers results you can see, feel, and live in. With Pilates, healthy movement becomes part of your DNA.

But with all the buzz, it can be overwhelming to know where to go and what to look out for. That's why Carine and Lia are sharing their 10+ years of expertise with the Henley community.

What is Pilates & Reformer Pilates?

Pilates is a mind-body movement method focused on strength, control, mobility, and breath. While Pilates can

be practised on everything from the Mat to the Cadillac, Reformer Pilates has really taken centre stage in studios worldwide. Its intuitive design allows every exercise to be tailored to all levels, helping to strengthen, tone, and improve flexibility.

The Benefits, Straight From Our Clients:

Our clients often describe noticeable and lasting results through Pilates at Nubodi. Most celebrate how their strength and posture have improved, while others are so grateful for the great support in injury rehabilitation. One very special client of eight years shared, “My body has completely changed, and I have a confidence I never had before. I’m 74 and recently had major surgery. In the week before my operation, I went

‘The best studios offer clear cueing, class levels, and personalised guidance, adapting exercises to your body and your needs’



to class three times — and my recovery was incredible. The doctors said it was all thanks to my fitness.” With consistency, regular classes build strength, flexibility, mobility, and overall wellbeing, leaving clients feeling “stronger and fitter” than they have in many years!

How you should feel after a ‘proper’ Pilates class?

With the abundant growth of Pilates, it’s really important to ground yourself in the Pilates method rather than a fitness class called “Pilates.” Your Pilates class shouldn’t feel frantic or confusing. Your mind should be meditative, and your body intelligently challenged. When leaving a class, you should feel balanced, energised, and more connected to your body — not broken. While muscle soreness may still occur, you shouldn’t feel wiped out or exhausted for days.

Pilates has a deep set of principles and an entire philosophy behind it. The main thing is the connection you have to your body. Movement control and precision become part of your DNA. Always aim to feel lifted and aligned rather than deflated and exhausted.

What to Look for When Choosing Your Pilates Studio:

When choosing a studio, it’s important to look for qualified teachers with internationally recognised certifications who really understand anatomy, bio-mechanics, and safe progression. The best studios offer clear cueing, class levels, and personalised guidance, adapting exercises to your body and your needs. At Nubodi Pilates, our nearly 10-year history reflects our commitment to excellence and the trust of our clients. Every teacher meets our high standards, and our clean,



supportive, welcoming space ensures you’re in expert hands. You’ll never feel lost, rushed, or left behind — each session is designed to leave you feeling confident, challenged, and nurtured from the moment you arrive.

Who is Nubodi Pilates?

Nestled in the heart of Henley-on-Thames, Nubodi Pilates is a boutique Reformer Pilates studio founded by Carine Cowley and her daughter Lia. Together, they deliver world-class Reformer Pilates in a welcoming, nurturing environment for all abilities, led by highly qualified teachers trained through STOTT Pilates and the London Pilates Academy. They’re ready to welcome you into the studio in the New Year.

NUBODI PILATES

Changing the Way Henley-on-Thames Moves



Nestled in the heart of Henley-on-Thames, Nubodi Pilates is a boutique Reformer Pilates studio founded by Carine Cowley and her daughter Lia.

Together, they deliver world-class Reformer Pilates in a welcoming, nurturing environment for all abilities.

Scan to join the Nubodi Community

3 Classes £55

Private Session + 2 Classes £95

Personalised, expert-led Reformer Pilates for strength, mobility, and confidence.



★ 5-Star Google Reviews | Henley-on-Thames | @nubodipilates | nubodi.co.uk

WOMEN'S
HEALTH

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

From cervical smears to gut checks: Why January is the month to book your screenings

JANUARY often feels like a fresh start — new goals, new routines, maybe even a new diary full of good intentions. But while many of us plan to eat better or exercise more, there's one kind of “reset” that often gets forgotten, our health screenings.

Yes, life is busy. And yes, tests and check-ups can feel a little scary or uncomfortable. But taking time to look after your health now is one of the most powerful ways to protect your future self.

This month is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, making it the perfect reminder to book your cervical screening “smear” test — and to take stock of the rest of your body's needs, from breast checks to gut health.

Let's take a closer look at the key screenings worth keeping on your radar this year.

CERVICAL SCREENING

Cervical screening (previously called a “smear test”) looks for early changes caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), changes that if left untreated, could lead to cervical cancer.

It's available free on the NHS for anyone with a cervix aged 25 to 64 and usually takes just a few minutes. The test doesn't diagnose cancer; instead, it helps prevent it by finding and treating abnormal cells before they have the chance to become serious.

It's completely normal to feel anxious or hesitant about booking your appointment. You might worry about discomfort, feel embarrassed, or have had a difficult experience in the past. If that's the case, reach out for support, you can ask your GP surgery for a pre-appointment chat, or

talk through ways to make the test more comfortable, and so you feel safe and informed every step of the way.

So, if your letter is sitting on the kitchen counter or you've been meaning to book, let January be the month you do it. A short, simple test today can give you peace of mind for years to come.

BREAST HEALTH: YOUR MONTHLY SELF CHECK-IN

Your breasts naturally change with your cycle, age, and hormones, so it's important to know what's normal for you. That way, you'll be more likely to notice any changes early.

Once a month, ideally at the same point in your menstrual cycle, take a few minutes to check your breasts, perhaps in the shower or while lying down. Look and feel for lumps, thickening, skin dimpling, nipple changes, discharge, or pain that doesn't go away.

If you're unsure what to look for, ask your healthcare professional to show you how to examine your breasts during your next appointment. They can guide you on what's normal and when to seek advice.

If you're aged 50 to 71, you'll be invited for a mammogram every three years through the NHS Breast Screening Programme. Most breast cancers found through screening are detected early, when treatment is most effective.

And if you ever notice something that feels unusual, no matter your age, don't wait. Speak to your GP. Regular checks help you understand your body, and getting any change looked at early is always the best step.

GYNAECOLOGICAL HEALTH — GET TO KNOW YOUR BODY

Your vaginal and vulval health is just as important as any other part of your wellbeing — but it's something many of us feel shy talking about. Taking the time to



get to know what's normal for you means you're more likely to spot when something isn't right. So, grab that mirror and get looking.

Watch for any new or unusual signs, such as changes in discharge (colour, smell, or consistency); persistent itching, burning, or irritation; lumps, sores, or thickened skin on the vulva; or bleeding between periods, after sex, or post-menopause.

It can be tempting to self-treat symptoms like itching or discharge with over-the-counter remedies, but if they don't improve or keep coming back, it's important to see a GP or women's health clinic. Correct diagnosis ensures you get the most appropriate and safe treatment.

Ovarian health also deserves attention, as early symptoms of ovarian problems can be subtle. Be mindful of persistent bloating or a feeling of fullness after eating small amounts; ongoing pelvic or abdominal discomfort; changes in urinary habits (needing to go more often or urgently, unable to fully empty your bladder); unexplained fatigue, weight changes (including unexplained weight gain around the middle), menstrual irregularities, changes to discharge especially after menopause.

These signs often have harmless causes, but if you notice them consistently, it's best to get checked.

BOWEL HEALTH — LISTENING TO YOUR GUT INSTINCT

Gut health plays a big role in how we feel day to day. It affects energy levels, hormones, mood, and even skin — yet it's often the part of our health we pay the least attention to.

If you're aged 60 to 74, you'll receive an NHS bowel cancer screening kit every two years. It's a simple, at-home test that looks for tiny traces of blood in your stool, often long before you'd notice any symptoms.

But bowel health matters at every age. While routine screening starts at 60, bowel cancer is increasingly being diagnosed in younger people too. That's why it's important to be aware of the early warning signs and to look after your gut even if you feel well.

You can support your digestive health by eating more fibre, drinking plenty of water, cutting back on processed and high-fat foods, not smoking, and staying active. These simple habits help keep your bowels regular and reduce inflammation in the gut.

See your GP if you notice: persistent bloating; changes in bowel habit such as looser stools, going more often, or the

opposite (ongoing constipation); blood in your stools; a feeling that you need to open your bowels but can't (tenesmus); lumps or discomfort in the rectum; or unexplained weight loss or tiredness.

These symptoms are often caused by minor issues, but it's always best to get them checked early, just to be sure.

VITAMINS & METABOLISM — A WINTER CHECK-IN

Feeling unusually tired, low, or sluggish this winter? You're not alone. Shorter days, less sunlight, and post-festive fatigue can leave anyone feeling off balance. Sometimes what feels like "just winter fatigue" can be a sign of low vitamin D, iron deficiency, or thyroid changes.

A simple blood test can help check what's really going on. If your energy, mood, or weight just don't feel like they've been playing fair lately, have a chat with your GP or pharmacist. These tests are easy to arrange and can offer real insight into how your body's doing.

Winter's also a great time for a general health check. Take a moment to check in with your routine — how's your diet, movement, and sleep? A few small tweaks can make a big difference to how you feel. It's also worth keeping an eye on things like blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar, especially if you're over 40 or have a family history of heart disease or diabetes. Prevention really is better than cure.

When it comes to supplements, be mindful. Marketing can sometimes promote unnecessary hormone panels or costly tests. Listen to your body, seek trusted advice, and remember—most vitamins and minerals come naturally from a balanced, varied diet.

MIND-BODY CHECK: DON'T FORGET YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

When we think of "health checks," we often picture blood tests or physical screening appointments. But mental health deserves a check-in too. Stress, anxiety, and low mood do not just affect how you feel, they can show up in our body in surprising ways.

Gut health is one of the first to respond — stress can upset digestion, trigger bloating and heart burn, or even flare up IBS. The same goes for vaginal health. Ongoing stress or low immunity can make you more



prone to irritation or infections like thrush and UTIs.

Sometimes, anxiety can make normal symptoms feel frightening — a racing heart that feels like a heart attack, or brain fog that sparks fears of menopause or dementia. These experiences are real, and while they can overlap with other changes like menopause, caring for your mental wellbeing alongside hormonal or physical support can make a huge difference.

Taking time to rest, breathe, and reset isn't indulgent — it's essential. Think of it as another kind of health screening: one that helps your whole system find balance.

MY TAKE HOME MESSAGE

January doesn't need to be about harsh resolutions or impossible goals. It can simply be a moment to pause, listen, and check in with your body. Think of booking your cervical screening, mammogram, or blood test as small but powerful acts of self-care, and important steps towards long-term health.

If you have questions or want to understand which screenings or checks are right for you, speak with a specialist. We're here to support you in making informed, confident choices for your wellbeing.

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@berkshirermenopauseclinic.com or visit www.berkshirermenopauseclinic.com

CROOKED BILLET January Kitchen

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



Frugal Food

AFTER stretching both waistlines & wallets over Christmas, January is time to rein it in a bit. New year, new you & all that.

With last month's indulgence, I'm up for some healthy, budget friendly cooking. Frugal food! Frugality is the new rock 'n' roll. Give me a bottle of plonk & a hearty stew any day.

Dry January — no way. Cold, wet, grey, muddy & skint. If there's ever a month for a glass of red, it's January. I'll do dry February 15th – March 15th, ready for a Guinness on St Patrick's Day, 17th March.

Henley's residents (you lot!) doing dry January will certainly make running pubs a frugal affair, along with November, killer budget — difficult times for independent pubs & restaurants.

I'm doing a series of frugal food cookery demos next month, demonstrating that inexpensive ingredients cooked with love & passion are just as delicious as their costly cousins. Crooked Billet frugal food cookery demos, February 10, 11 & 12.

My grandma taught me how to cook on a budget. Scrimping & rationing through the war, nothing wasted. These days, 30% of the nation's weekly supermarket shop ends up in the bin. Sitting at Nana Clerehugh's kitchen table stirring jam into rice pudding, I was introduced to the principles of thrifty home economics.

She had a sharp eye for the discounted dented tin of York ham, or squashed Battenburg at the grocers. Even took a punt on the tin with no label at the church 'bring & buy'. Delighted on saving a penny on food, vice like grip on her purse, handbag full of vouchers from magazines.

In her day, olive oil came from



the chemist, kept in the bathroom cabinet — she cooked with butter & dripping. Butler wrappers saved, rolled up with an elastic band in the fridge. Aluminium foil was re-used. Always a cup of dripping in the fridge, contained in the teacup with the broken handle. Dripping spread on thick sour dough toast, cornichons & a pinch of sea salt, sublime.

Frugal ingredients vs posh ingredients, to my mind, crab is more delicious than lobster. Shepherd's pie with a smack of HP sauce, more moreish than a rack of lamb. Mackerel with baked gooseberries equally gastronomic as halibut hollandaise. I'd prefer oxtail stew & buttery mash to steak bearnaise. Apple crumble & custard trumps passion fruit soufflé.

Sky are filming my Crooked Billet frugal food cookery demos February 10-12 — come along & heckle. Join me for lunch afterwards.

Paul Clerehugh is chef proprietor of
The Crooked Billet, Stoke Row
01491 681048

CROOKED BILLET Shepherd's Pie

Ingredients (serves 4)

- 600g quality minced lamb (not too fatty)
- 250g onions, peeled, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled, crushed
- 1 tbsp thyme leaves
- 1 tbsp GF flour
- 1 tbsp tomato purée
- 150ml red wine
- Good shake of Worcestershire sauce
- 500ml beef/veal/pork/lamb stock
- Salt & freshly ground pepper
- Vegetable oil for frying

Method

- Mash from 3 large King Edwards, old-fashioned hand masher, plenty of butter, easier to spread over mince if piping hot.
- Preheat oven to 200°C.
- Season the mince, heat some vegetable oil in a heavy based frying pan.
- Cook mince in small quantities, drain in sieve, remove fat. Same pan, heat more oil, gently fry onion, garlic & thyme until soft. Add meat, dust with GF flour, add tomato purée. Fry for 3 minutes, continuously stirring.
- Slowly add wine, stock & Worcestershire sauce. Bring to simmer for 30 minutes until liquid evaporates. Check seasoning. Put meat into sufficiently large serving dish.
- Spread or pipe mash over. Bake in pre-heated oven for 30-40 minutes until buttery mash is golden.
- Houses of Parliament (HP) sauce, perfect accompaniment.



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. Founded by Henley residents Jeremy and Eva Davies, it combines the spirit of a seaside escape with the comfort of contemporary living, feeling 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.



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Roman Holiday: packing it in on a short break

BY AMANDA STEWART



TAKING a 5am flight from Heathrow to Leonardo da Vinci Fiumicino Airport meant we could land in time to make lunch in Rome at the start of a weekend birthday celebration with friends.

Outside the airport in Rome the line of white taxis have fixed rates for the 30-40 minute journey to the city of €55.

We chose to stay in a boutique-style hotel in the centre of Rome called Morgana, which was close to the main station and a swift 15-minute jaunt to the

Trevi Fountain.

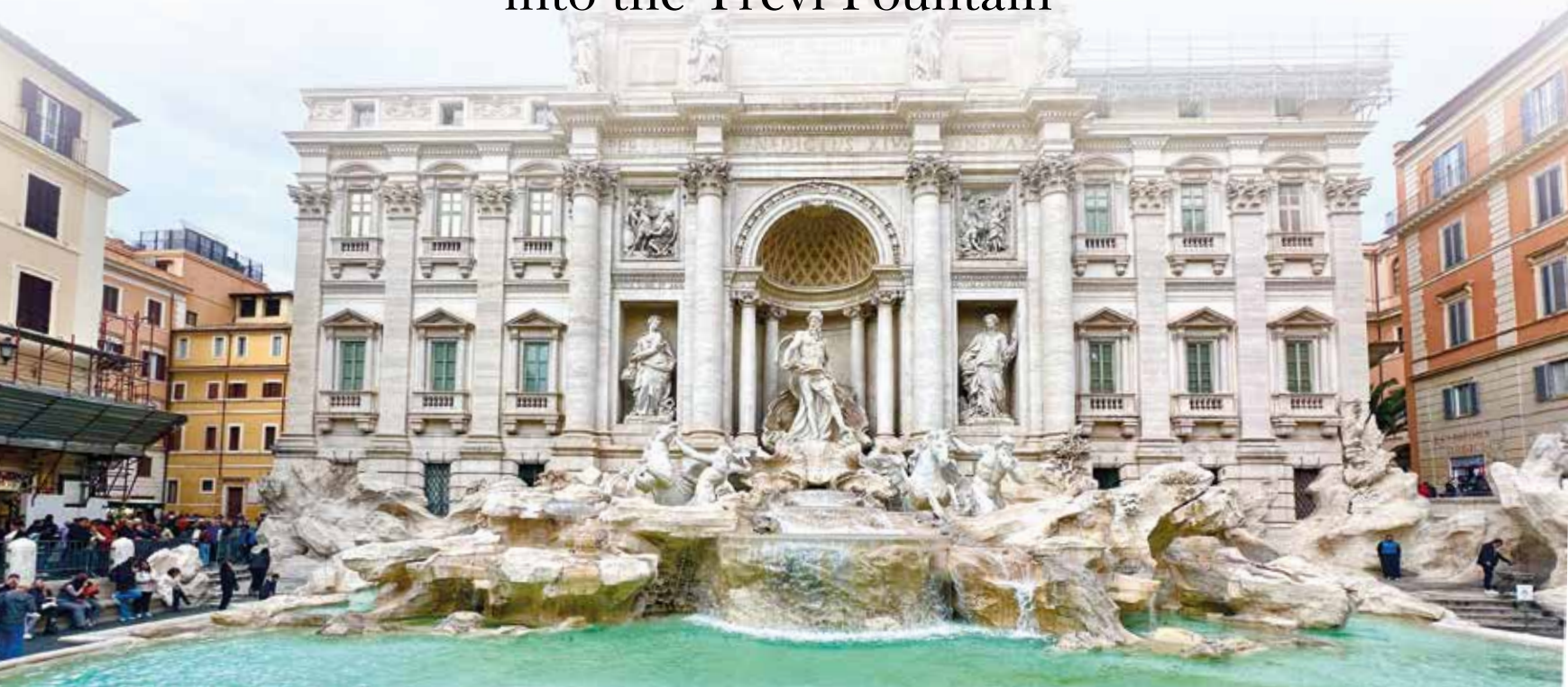
Named for its position at the intersection of three streets (tre vie), it has existed since 19BCE, but it was not until the 18th century that the magnificent monumental sculpture around it was built.

It has been said that about €3,000 a week is thrown into the Trevi Fountain by people making a wish and this money is used for donations to charities that help homeless people around Rome.

The 50-metre wide and 26-metre high sculpture of the sea god Oceanus was designed by Nicola Salvi in circa 1732 and is a masterpiece.

The tradition of tossing a coin into the fountain began with

‘It has been said that about €3,000 a week is thrown into the Trevi Fountain’





travellers as a sort of farewell gesture and soon it became a rite of passage for anyone who passed through the city.

There is a wrong and a right way to toss coins into the water. The correct way is to have three coins for three wishes, each to be thrown in separately. You must stand with your back to the fountain and fling the coins with your left hand over your right shoulder, taking care not to hit any of the other tourists, most of whom are laughing at everyone trying to get the throwing action correct.

That said, there were quite a number of people posing for pictures and these did hold up the queues at times. But not for too long as there are police monitoring the speed of the tourist queues.

The one downside to the fountain is that visitors have to be wary of pickpockets. My handbag was opened twice, although the would-be thieves must have been disappointed to find only gloves in my bag as I had bought a scarf that carries my phone.

Next day, we visited the Colosseum, which is an absolute must-see when in Rome. Entry tickets were €35 and we could take as long as we wanted to wander around and drink in the atmosphere.

Do take photo identification and it is far simpler to book tickets beforehand and bags will be scanned — think airport security. The Italians take it very seriously. One of our group was stopped and searched because the security staff were convinced she was carrying a knife. It was a fraught few minutes until the security people discovered that the knife was in fact a set of car keys.

The Colosseum was a mere 20-minute walk from our hotel, but took significantly more time because we kept discovering new shops. If you like fine goods, do take a large suitcase and be prepared to bend the plastic.

The Colosseum, as we know, is where gladiators fought to the death and 2,000 years on it remains a spine-tingling sight and Rome's most visited attraction. As majestic as it stands on the outside, the inside is just as entrancing with the internal layers falling open like a peeled onion.

Next we took a scenic route by taxi along the River Tiber heading for the Spanish Steps. We fell silent as the beauty of the city unfolded — Rome is quite simply breath-taking.

After a fabulous lunch we took in the steps. In 1725 a little-known architect Francesco de Sanctis was requested to design a bridge between the French La Chiesa della Trinità dei Monti and the Spanish Embassy at the bottom of the Pincian Hill.

A word of caution about the Spanish Steps. Do not sit on them as you will be asked to either move or be given a ticket/

fine depending on the humour of the police officers. Fortunately for us, the officers we dealt with were particularly friendly because we were in jovial spirits following lunch.

The queues to visit the Vatican the next day were formidable. Fortunately we had pre-booked but we still had a good 30-minute wait to get in. We paid about €55 for a guided tour that involved wearing ear pieces for the guide's commentary.

The Vatican tour was my personal request, coming from a Roman Catholic background, and I fully expected to be awestruck — I was. If you have ever wondered how much beauty mankind can achieve then look no further.

My advice is to take your time and soak in the Vatican. Our tour guide was a little too quick for us at times and, oh boy, was it crowded.

The statues and tapestries were indescribable, the masterpiece that is the Sistine Chapel, famously painted by Michelangelo, stays with you long after

leaving the Vatican. Sadly, visitors are barred from taking photographs and the crowds are closely monitored. The whole of the Vatican City is quite simply unique and raised for me, more questions than answers.

A special mention for the food in Rome. It must be hard for anybody to eat badly in the city and we certainly ate like royalty. We were recommended to dine at one particular restaurant called Da Etta, Roma and upon arrival, customers are not given a wine menu, but an entire book, which in itself looks like a work of art. The food was outstanding, the wine list, although a little overwhelming did at least contain wine that we had not only heard of but liked.

Truffle was the "flavour" of Rome, along with a special dish of pasta with anchovies and then there was the ice-cream. Alas, we did not sample all of the flavours and so we plan to return to Rome.

The three-night trip cost about £1,200 per person including the obligatory city tax — maximum £10 per night — and our food and drink.



'If you have ever wondered how much beauty mankind can achieve, then look no further'

For a more holistic approach to your health, visit the Human Repair Café

BY JOHN JACKLIN

A FREE drop-in health centre that helps to refurbish people not household objects is making plans to grow after a positive public response during a two-month trial in Henley.

The Human Repair Café has been held at the King's Arms Barn, near the town hall, every Thursday from 12.30pm to 2.30pm since the beginning of November.

The clinic is run by Seed Wellness, a network of health practitioners in and around Henley and South Oxfordshire,

who say they take a more holistic approach to people's wellbeing than might be the case at a GP surgery. Rachel Bernard, 54, a cognitive behavioural hypnotherapist and a former student at The Henley College, says: "We have had a good uptake since we started.

"The idea is that we have an umbrella of disciplines, so somebody could come to us and say, well I'm feeling like this, and we can say, well we've got this person that does that, we've got this person that does the other and we've got this person

'The GP was going to recommend either painkillers or an operation, but they wanted to find another way of treating'



FROM LEFT: Tiff Kertesz – Traditional Chinese acupuncture, Rachel Bernard – Cognitive behavioural hypnotherapy, Jemma Durrant – Spinal Flow / Reiki Neurodivergence Coach Henley, Naomi Woolfson – Fertility, pregnancy & birth hypnotherapist, Sarah Morris – Children and family nutritional therapist; traditional Chinese acupuncture, Debbie Lawrence – Aroma Reiki, Energy Healing & Essential Oils



ABOVE: King's Arms Barn, off King's Road, by the car park, Henley.

RIGHT: Rachel Bernard, a member of Seed Wellness and the Human Repair Café.



that does so and so.”

Rachel, a mother of four children, adds: “We’ve had a lot of mums come in, because there is a massive problem with children just generally health-wise, such as with mental health, but also parents wanting more support for things like sleep problems with their children.

“We’ve had quite a lot of elderly people, which has been lovely but also a bit of a surprise because elderly people are more used to seeing their GP.

“We’ve had all sorts of people really, we had a person with something wrong with their knee, and they didn’t want to go to the doctor even though their knee was painful.

“They knew that the GP was going to recommend either painkillers or an operation, but they wanted to find another way of treating it, and of course Seed Wellness has many people with varied specialisms such as an acupuncturist and a spinal flow practitioner.

“There are other avenues that we can choose to help people, if we know about their particular difficulty, to solve all of these problems. It’s been a really interesting mix of people that has come to the sessions.”

She adds: “The thing that I’ve loved about it is getting to actually speak to people, getting that link, that face-to-face connection to really understand what their problems are, what everyone’s problems are out there. While that has been great for me, people who visit us are getting something in return, such as health tips, advice and treatment, and it is free.

“It’s all voluntary, but what we get from it is that we are getting ourselves out there and people are learning about us, because it’s very difficult in the wellness industry to get noticed, get people to know what you do and how we can help you.”

Rachel, who was a teacher for 30 years before she retrained, stresses that the service is not a replacement for a GP, but acts as a support for people.

The group says on its website that “The Human Repair Café is designed to help people pause, connect and reset

during their day” and that “it brings inclusive, evidence-based wellbeing support right to the heart of Henley — complementing conventional healthcare and strengthening community connection. Visitors can expect a calm, non-clinical space with a friendly atmosphere.”

Rachel adds: “At the moment people drop in, they have a cup of tea, and they get to talk to the practitioners of Seed Wellness and they can have a treatment, and get advice or tips.

“But from January, we are going to change that up a bit, it is going to be like more focused on a particular theme for that month. I have a list of themes — none of this is written in stone yet — but we might have a theme on better sleep one month, and the next month we might do stress or burnout, then something

on hormones, or perimenopause, or women’s health, or gut health. There are so many different topics that we can cover, because we have so many really good practitioners as part of Seed Henley.

“The idea of doing the themes is to focus, be more specific with who we are targeting, and we have a Human Repair Café Henley Facebook page, where people will be able to find out what is on that month, and who it is aimed at.

“I’m quite enthused about it. We fix kettles and toasters at repair cafés, why not give humans the same chance to reset too? In a way we are reorganising human circuits.”

www.seedwellness.co.uk/seedhenley/
www.thenesthypnotherapy.co.uk

‘It’s all voluntary, but what we get from it is that we are getting ourselves out there and people are learning about us’

Rower who is making waves across the pond the 'right way'

BY ALEX CARTER

MEET the record-breaking rower who decided to give the sport a go while on a walk along the towpath in Henley.

Archie Lockett, 22, had a passion for endurance sports, taking part in cross-country and cycling from the age of 17 but fell out of love with it.

But while on a stroll walking past Leander Club in 2019, he became inspired to take up rowing after seeing athletes in the boats. "I wanted a new fix," he said. "I fell into rowing

completely by coincidence as I happened to see these boats on the river that day, which inspired me."

That same day, he spoke to neighbours in Binfield Heath, who happened to be friends with Mark Banks, the former director of Rowing at Leander Club.

He said: "Mark offered me a trial to see how my raw fitness and rowing technique were, as I had never touched a boat before. "It clearly went well enough as I was then given a



Strokes on the water: Archie Lockett in the stroke seat of the coxed eight in which he qualified for the IRA National Championships

position on the junior squad but the covid pandemic meant we were spending weeks training at home.”

After the easing of the restrictions, Lockett was coached by Jonathan Jackson and competed in the postponed Henley Royal Regatta in August 2021.

The junior boys’ quadruple sculls were beaten by inches in the semi-final to Windsor Boys A.

Lockett said: “There was no real talk about me racing or doing any big events at the time. It was more about it being a good opportunity for me to learn the basics.

“To get selected was completely unexpected. I jumped for joy when I found out. It was an awesome opportunity which set me up for the year.” After the regatta, he was asked to sweep instead of scull.

“Sweeping was different,” he said. “The expectation in the Leander senior squad is that you arrive there already a talented sweepsman and ready for the tough programme, so it was challenging.”

Lockett improved his 2,000m ergo score, a key metric for US university recruitment, to land him a scholarship to attend Jacksonville University in Florida where he is studying international business and marketing.

In his freshman year, he achieved 10th in the nation in the coxed four at the national championships, a programme best for the university.

In his sophomore year, when he was the captain, the team qualified for the national championships in the eight, marking a first for the university.

Lockett said: “That sophomore year, we achieved the small schools university dream by qualifying for the national championship, which is the top 24 teams in the nation.

“It was really special as I was captain but I think the team energy that we had drove us to that ultimate goal, which was awesome.”

In his junior year, Lockett experienced a challenging season, facing slipped rib syndrome, when the cartilage that attaches two lower ribs together becomes unstable.

He said: “I wasn’t able to breathe fully when I was training so I missed out on the boat I wanted that year.”

In his most recent year, Lockett achieved his most significant victory yet in the collegiate four category at the Head of the Charles Regatta in Boston last month.

Starting from 37th position, his crew navigated heavy traffic, overtaking seven crews, to win by five seconds. They set a new course record of 16 minutes and three seconds, nearly two seconds faster than any previous time.

He said: “There’s about 4,000 crews that enter this three-day race against the clock, where you race for time.



Triumph: Lockett, far left, after the Head of the Charles race in Boston

“If you’re a top US college that has guys who have done World Championships and U23s then they will probably enter the championship category but, for pretty much everyone else, you enter the collegiate form, so it felt pretty special to win.

“There was no way we could anticipate what anyone else’s speed was going to be like. We had to just train.

“There was a pretty nice tailwind down the straight section of the course, so the conditions were pretty idyllic, but we had to stop rowing at one point to try not to collide with another crew.”

Lockett praised the work of his cox, who kept notes and kept the team motivated down the river.

He said: “He did such a great job weaving us through some of that heavy traffic. It sounded almost impossible at one

point. He was obsessed with data for the weeks leading up and he was far more aware that we had beaten the record.

“Our rowing director was showing our time on the landing stage when we were coming in, and I thought he was having a joke.”

Lockett, who is the son of Nick and Georgie and has three brothers, Oscar, James and Olly, wants to focus on a career in banking when leaving university.

But for his final spring season, he will focus on qualifying for the eight for the Dad Veil Regatta in Philadelphia, where a top-four finish secures a spot at the national championships.

He said: “I thought rowing would end when I finished at The Henley College. It was fun for a short period of time and that was it.

“I’ve worked towards a goal and it came together, having been able to pay for my education, row and live out in Florida. It’s been a dream but exhausting for my body. I really feel satisfied that I’ve done it right.”

‘I fell into rowing completely by coincidence as I happened to see these boats on the river that day, which inspired me’

Local Hairdresser sets up on his own



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Working within the Henley on Thames community for the last decade he has enjoyed getting to know his clients personally and really working with what is going to suit them. He has recently become self-employed and working from a new space - upstairs at Ted James on Bell Street. Which has really thrown Louis into the heart of Henley. He has been so grateful to his existing clients that have followed him to his new space, and he is looking forward to meeting and getting to know some new clients also.



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Freddie van Mierlo

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR HENLEY & THAME

FREDDIE van Mierlo, the Liberal Democrat MP for Henley and Thame, was a member of Oxfordshire County Council from 2021-25 and South Oxfordshire District Council from 2023-25 before being elected to parliament. He was a director at the strategy consultancy Harwood Levitt Consulting, which specialises in public policy issues, and worked as an adviser to companies, non-government organisations, foundations and patient bodies. He grew up in Lancashire and lives in Henley with his wife and daughter, having moved to South Oxfordshire in 2020 from Belgium.



Aston is well worth it. In town, I am often found in one of our many great cafés, especially Daisy Love, on Station Road, and Berries, on Hart Street.

1 What brought you to the Henley area and why do you stay?
Happenstance, but I stay because I love it. Just before covid, my wife found a new job in Reading and we stumbled across a lovely cottage in Bix that served us well before we moved to Henley. I'd never seen this version of England – I grew up in post-industrial Preston and moved abroad for my early career. I was taken aback by the quaint villages bursting with character and excellent pubs.

2 What would you change about Henley?
We have excellent shops, cafés and restaurants, but even fewer empty units, with more dining options, would be great.

3 How do you spend your leisure time locally?
I enjoy walking the dogs and spending time with friends with similar-aged children so that we can share the burden of entertaining them and even hope they entertain themselves for a while so we can drink a glass of wine and chat.

4 What are your top three local haunts?
I enjoy a good pub lunch. A walk down the river to The Flower Pot in

5 Do you have a favourite song?
It changes all the time. My Spotify unwrapped says my favourite is The Wheels on the Bus, but at the moment my favourite artist is Self Esteem, and her song I Do This All The Time gives great advice. I enjoyed Chappell Roan at Reading Festival this year.

6 Which film or play has inspired or moved you the most?
Greyhound, starring Tom Hanks, is about the Battle of the Atlantic. I like history and found this film captured an aspect of the war that is underappreciated.

7 What do you treasure most about life in the UK?
I'm proud of the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, tolerant society. If you live and work here and make it your home, generally speaking you are seen as one of us. That's not true even for other European countries where you might be made to feel accepted but never part of the society. We should be proud of that and protect it.

8 If you could live anywhere else in the world, where would it be?
There are so many wonderful towns and villages in the constituency that I'd feel fortunate to live in any of them.

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

So many. Certainly Greener Henley do excellent work and I admire our town councillors and the mayor, Tom Buckley, for stepping up and working for Henley. The mayor gave a fantastic speech at Remembrance Sunday. His is often a thankless job (unpaid too) and time consuming.

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

A doctor. I did work experience in a hospital but aborted my application to medical schools after fainting as a doctor rooted around in a patient's finger for a piece of sewing needle.

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

Things work out in the end. My mother has a good attitude of not letting things bother her too much when they don't go to plan. I try to take that forward.

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

Keir Starmer, Rachel Reeves and Wes Streeting - a busman's holiday, but I'd grab a chance to chew their ears off.

13 Where do you like to travel to on holiday?

We go regularly to the Austrian Alps for summer as we have family there.

14 What are your ambitions?

Let's see what the future holds. You never would have said when I moved to Henley it would be anything but Conservative.

15 Do you have any regrets?

Many, but none I care to share.

FOCUS: Brings a fresh energy to fitness at Badgemore Park

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