

YOUR

APRIL 2025

# ALMHOUSE

MAGAZINE



  
THE  
Richmond  
CHARITIES  
Almshouse Community Living



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# Welcome

to our new resident:

Olha Yemets, Church  
Estate Almshouses

## Your Words and Photos! Contribute to our Next Issue

If you would like to contribute to our next issue, the deadline is Thursday 17th April.

As a guide on word count, a half page article is ideally about 170 words. Give the article to your Scheme Manager, or email to [c.richards@richmondcharities.org.uk](mailto:c.richards@richmondcharities.org.uk)

### Photo Credits:

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Back cover: *Deer in Richmond Park* by Mick Tinson

Contents page: *Cherry Blossom* (Adobe stock)

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& Mike Townsin.

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This magazine is recyclable.  
Please feel free to share your  
magazine with others.

# Dates for Your Diary

## Tuesday 8th April

**Food Glorious Food**  
11am at 3C Adelaide  
Road  
Details on page 6

## Tuesday 15th April

**Eloysia String Quartet**  
Hickey's Chapel  
Details on page 8

## Wednesday 16th April

**Film Club**  
*The Miracle Club*  
Details on page 8

## Wednesday 23rd April

**Syon House Outing**  
Details on page 8

## Tuesday 29th April

### Juliet's Leaving Service and Party

Hickey's Chapel and  
Lawn. Details on page 5

**The 'Special' Film**  
Club for 30th April has  
been postponed until later  
in the year.

## Thursday 8th May

### VE Day Celebrations

Details on page 4

## Tuesday 20th May

### Welcome Tea for Emma

Hickey's Chapel. 2pm

## Tuesday 22nd May

**Quiz Night**  
Hickey's Chapel  
Details on page 8

## Tuesday 24th June

### Residents' Summer Outing to Brighton.

## Sunday 20th July

### Almshouses in Bloom Judging Day

Details on page 7



## Thursday 14th August

**Annual Summer Party**  
All residents are invited.  
The event will be on  
Hickey's lawn.

### Forthcoming Out and About Days

**Tuesday 8th April**  
**Painted Easter Egg  
Hunt in London.** Meet  
10am Richmond Station.

**Tuesday 13th May**  
Trip to **Henley on  
Thames** to the Rowing  
Museum and a Space  
Exhibition. Outing will  
cost about £12.

**Tuesday 10th June**  
**The Chelsea Pensioners  
Museum.** Meet 10am  
Richmond Station.



# The Mulberry Centre Visit

by Debbie Flaherty and Jo Davison

Michelle Wheeler kindly visited us to highlight the Mulberry Centre and the services it has to offer. The session was very informative and Michelle explained that the services are not only for those suffering with cancer but also anyone affected in some way including family and friends.



Those who attended found the information given very useful and we enjoyed a cuppa and a cake. Sadly, Michelle's job as a Community Engagement lead for the Mulberry Centre has come to an end due to funding not being secured for her role. [www.themulberrycentre.co.uk](http://www.themulberrycentre.co.uk)

**The Mulberry Centre**  
for anyone affected by cancer  
© Nov 2024

## Cancer Support Services

Face-to-face and remote services offered free of charge

<b>One-to-One Support</b> Counselling and Coaching Emotional Support Legal Advice Soul Midwife Support Welfare and Benefits Support	<b>Complementary Therapies</b> Acupuncture Aromatherapy Aroma Sticks Massage Reflexology Reiki Shiatsu
<b>Support Groups</b> Bereavement Support Group Patient Support Group Men's Support Group	<b>Wellbeing Classes</b> Art Classes Creative Writing Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Health Walks Men's Yoga for Prostate Health Pilates Yoga for Breast Cancer Seated Yoga Tai Chi Yin Yoga
<b>Workshops</b> Wig Information Workshop How People Grieve Look Good Feel Better Nutrition and Cancer Relaxation and Breathwork (online) ...and many more!	

For more information, the timetable, and to register, please visit our website.

The Mulberry Centre  
West Middlesex University Hospital Campus  
Twickenham Road  
Uxbridge  
Middlesex TW7 5AF

The Mulberry Centre  
The\_Mulberry\_Centre  
@MulberryCentre

Registered Charity No. 1108999  
For more information  
call 020 8321 6300  
[www.themulberrycentre.co.uk](http://www.themulberrycentre.co.uk)

## VE Day Celebrations: Thursday 8th May Eighty Years of Peace Since the End of WWII in Europe

Please let your Scheme Manager know if you would like to celebrate VE Day with your friends and neighbours on the lawn at Hickey's Estate.

Staff will arrange gazebos, tables and chairs if there is enough interest from residents.

Please note: this event will be led by residents, gather whom you wish, bring a picnic and perhaps a bottle of something chilled. Leave the décor to us!

# VE DAY

80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

A SHARED MOMENT OF CELEBRATION

8 M A Y 2 0 2 5

# My Departure and Our New Chief Executive

by Juliet Ames-Lewis



As you will have read in the recent letter sent to you by our Chair, Jeremy Williams, the Trustees have appointed Emma Halford to be the charity's new Chief Executive.

I know that under Emma's leadership the charity will continue to go from strength to strength. Emma is passionate about the work that we do here and is very much looking forward to meeting with you all and getting to know those of you that she hasn't already met. Emma has written a piece for this month's magazine (see right).

My last day in post as Chief Executive will be Thursday 1 May. Emma will be taking up the post of Chief Executive from Tuesday 6 May but she and I will be doing a full handover during April so that she can hit the ground running!

Saying goodbye to you all will not be easy – I have loved getting to know you all over the last 10 years – but I would be delighted if you were free to come to a farewell service and party on Tuesday 29 April at 3.30pm in Chapel. The service will be for about an hour and then we will have a party with refreshments hopefully on the lawn if the weather is good, or if not in the Chapel, from 4.30pm. If you would prefer just to come at 4.30pm for the party, that is absolutely fine. I very much look forward to seeing you all then.

***Juliet's Leaving Service and Party  
Tuesday 29th April  
3.30pm Farewell Chapel Service  
4.30pm Party on Hickey's Lawn***

And then looking ahead, we will be holding an afternoon tea in Chapel on Tuesday 20th May at 2pm as a 'welcome to Emma' – this will be a chance for all residents to meet and chat with Emma. Again, I very much hope that you will be able to attend.

by Emma Halford



Yesterday on my way home from Richmond station I walked past Hickey's and Church Estate. The sun was shining and the buildings looked beautiful with spring just starting to unfold in the gardens. A new beginning, particularly for me as I prepare to take up my new role as CEO of The Richmond Charities. In a few weeks' time I will have responsibility for all of our Almshouses, our staff team, and you, our residents, who call them home. It was, I confess, a 'pinch me' moment.

My background is in property as I have always worked for property companies overseeing all the insurance and risk management arrangements. As I continued home past the soon to be completed Queen's Road development (which is looking magnificent), I started to think about how I will put all that knowledge and experience to good use as, with the support of the Trustees, the staff team and I continue to maintain our special properties and look for more opportunities to build new ones.

It is always the people who bring buildings to life, and as a former Trustee of the Charity I already know what a special place The Richmond Charities is to live and work. What I loved most about being a Trustee was getting to know so many of you at various events. My particular favourite being our Almshouses in Bloom competition where I got to spend a morning walking around all of the Estates admiring your handiwork, and the colourful displays you create for us all to enjoy. Sadly, my new role means I will have to pass over my judging hat, but it is in safe hands, and I will look forward to the prize giving when we will celebrate all of the spaces you have created within the community.

The next few months are going to be busy and exciting, and I am particularly keen to get to know those of you that I haven't met, and to hear what is most important to you. I can't wait to get started.



# Update on The Elizabeth Doughty Almshouses

by Mick Tinson



Significant progress is being made and it's impressive to see how the various trades coordinate so seamlessly — it must feel like a giant game of Twister at times!



Internally, levels 1, 2, and 3 are really taking shape. The wiring that had been hanging from the ceilings for months has finally been tucked away, with lighting, sockets and switches now installed in preparation for the electrical connection to the main supply, which took place a couple of weeks ago.

Seeing the flats illuminated has made a remarkable difference: not only are we no longer relying on the blinding workers' lamps, but we can now fully appreciate the spaces and get a much clearer picture of the craftsmanship to both the kitchens and bathrooms.

Externally, most of the scaffolding has been removed, revealing the majority of the building for the first time. The Juliet balconies are now in place at the front, while the side and rear balconies are currently being installed. Meanwhile, gas meters are being connected to the mains supply on both sides of the building, marking another crucial step toward completion.



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## Food Glorious Food Group

by Rev Canon J Prasadam

This photo is from the last meeting of Food Glorious Food where we discussed spices for healing. They include fenugreek, fennel, cardamom, ginger, cumin, cloves, cinnamon and more.

Ginger is known for its ability to soothe nausea, reduce inflammation, and boost the immune system. Cinnamon has similar anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and antimicrobial properties, and may help regulate blood sugar levels.

Our next group meeting will be on Tuesday 8th April at 11am, 3C Adelaide Road.



# The Opening of The Elizabeth Twining Almshouses

by Juliet Ames-Lewis

We are much looking forward to the official opening of The Elizabeth Twining Almshouses on 2 April 2025.

Our VIP is His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO who is Vice Patron of the Almshouse Association. The Duke of Gloucester will be attending to meet staff, trustees, local dignitaries and members of the project team, and to visit and meet with new residents in The Elizabeth Twining Almshouses.

We will be having a reception on the front lawn of Church Estate Almshouses where His Royal Highness will meet more invited guests. He will then unveil a plaque, which will be put up on the side of The Elizabeth Twining Almshouses at a later date, and short speeches will be made.



This is an exciting event for The Richmond Charities which, as well as celebrating the achievement of building a new almshouse estate, will also generate publicity for the charity so that more people in need of affordable and supported homes in later life in our borough will know about us. We will share photos of the event in the May edition of Your Almshouse Magazine.

## The Richmond Charities Almshouses in Bloom 2025

We're changing things again this year!

**You will no longer need to enter the competition yourself!**

**'JUDGES PICK RULES' WILL APPLY!**

Our judges will be visiting every estate and judging every garden, hanging basket and pot and they will decide who wins.

There will still be trophies and garden vouchers for first, second and third places in the main categories. Firstly, individual gardens, and for those who don't have gardens there will be a category for pots and hanging baskets, and if a particular garden or two catch the judges' eyes there will also be 'special commendation' prizes awarded.



If you do not want your garden to be judged, you must let your Scheme Manager know in advance of the judges visit.

**Judging will take place on Sunday 20th July**

All entries will be marked and rated by our judges and a prize-giving event will be arranged to present the trophies and gift vouchers to the winners.



**An evening of Classical Music by candlelight**

Following on from the huge success of the last concert which was held on the lawn at Michel's we have invited back the Wonderful Eloysia String Quartet.

Please arrive early so that you are seated before the music starts.

Cheese and biscuits, wine and soft drinks will be served.

If you wish to attend, please let your Scheme Manager know.



with the  
**THE ELOYSIA STRING QUARTET**

Tuesday  
**15**  
April  
2025  
Hickey's Chapel  
Music starts at 4.30pm

**Film Club:  
The Miracle Club  
Wednesday 16th April at 2pm**



**The plot:** Ballygar, Dublin, Ireland, 1968: close friends Lily (Maggie Smith), Eileen (Kathy Bates), and Dolly (Agnes O'Casey) win the trip of a lifetime — a pilgrimage to Lourdes. With each woman desperately in need of a personal miracle, the trip seems like an answer to all their prayers.

Refreshments during the interval.

**Cast:** Laura Linney, Kathy Bates, Maggie Smith, Agnes O'Casey, Stephen Rea.

**Director:** Thaddeus O'Sullivan.

**Rating:** 12.

**Runtime:** 1h 26m. IMDb: 6.4/10, Rotten Tomatoes: 68%

**Outing to Syon House**

by Derrick Thompson

Places are filling up for our outing to Syon House on Wednesday 23rd April. Travelling by minibus from Richmond we will arrive in plenty of time for a one hour guided tour of the house at 2pm.



After that there will be time to wander the grounds in the spring

sunshine, have some refreshments in one of the cafes and be back in Richmond by 5pm.

Details of pick-up points and times will be given nearer the time. Places are limited so give your name to your Scheme Manager soon!

**The outing is free, you only have to pay for your own refreshments.**

**Quiz Night  
by Margaret Goddard**

**WHAT?**



**WHEN?**



6.30pm

**WHERE?**



Hickey's Chapel

**WHO?**



**Everyone!**  
Teams of up to 6

\*Please note the change of date from 15th May to Thursday 22nd May.



# Annual Summer Outing Tuesday 24th June

by Gennie Thompson

We're thrilled to announce this year's summer outing will be to Brighton! By popular demand, we're heading to the vibrant seaside city on **Tuesday 24th June**.



Roxanne, Derrick and I are delighted to be your companions for the day. The coach will be picking us up at 9am, and we'll be departing from Brighton at 4pm.

This year, the charity is kindly going to treat us to a sit down lunch — location, time and cuisine to be confirmed.

Joining us for lunch is completely optional, but if you'd like to partake, please let your Scheme Manager know, along with any allergies, dietary preferences or requirements.

As always, places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, so don't delay — let your Scheme Manager know if you'd like to go to Brighton!



## Croquet is coming back!

by Linda  
Prendergast

The new season of croquet begins on **Monday 5th May at 2pm**, on the front lawn at Church Estate. Even if you have never played before, come and join this friendly group of residents and have a game.

You will meet your neighbours, make new friends and have some fun at the same time. More information will also be in the monthly events leaflet.

# Join us for our Summer Party!

by Gennie Thompson



We are excited to invite you to our Motown themed Summer Party on Hickey's Lawn!

This year, we're bringing the vibrant energy of Motown to life with an afternoon of music, fun, and great food.

**Date: Thursday 14th August**

**Time: starting at 12noon**

**Location: On Hickey's Lawn**

What's in store?

- Motown music to get your feet tapping and your spirits lifted!
- Drinks to keep you refreshed throughout the afternoon.
- Fish and Chips – a classic treat to enjoy in the sun!
- A boogie on the lawn – whether you're a dancer or just enjoy the rhythm, you're sure to have fun.

Feel free to come dressed in your best Motown-inspired outfit or simply bring your enthusiasm for a day of celebration. Whether you're there to dance, chat, or just soak in the good vibes, we can't wait to see you there.

Please mark your calendars – invitations will be arriving very soon!

# Chaplain's Chat

by **Derrick Thompson**

Spring has sprung! The sun is shining, Easter is approaching, and it is going to be a busy month!

We would love to see you at the Easter Services in the Chapel of St. Francis. Details are in the separate leaflet being delivered with Your Almshouse Magazine.

At the end of the month there will be a special Farewell Service for Juliet, followed by a party on the lawn at Hickey's. All residents are invited, look out for details!

I look forward to meeting you out and about in the sunshine!

*All are welcome to join us.*

Morning Prayer, Tuesdays at 10am.  
Thursday Fellowship, at 2pm.

For more information email  
Chaplain Derrick on:  
[d.thompson@richmondcharities.org.uk](mailto:d.thompson@richmondcharities.org.uk)

# Chapel Schedule April 2025



<b>Sunday 6th April</b>	<b>10.30am Holy Communion</b> <i>Followed by refreshments</i>
<b>Sunday 13th April Palm Sunday</b>	<b>11am Holy Communion</b>
<b>17th April Maundy Thursday</b>	<b>4.30pm Holy Communion, with foot washing</b> <b>5.30pm Watching in silence</b>
<b>18th April Good Friday</b>	<b>2pm The Way of the Cross</b> <b>3pm Communion</b> <i>Followed by refreshments in Chaplain's House</i>
<b>Sunday 20th April Easter Sunday</b>	<b>10.30am Easter Communion</b>
<b>Sunday 27th April</b>	<b>10.30am Holy Communion</b>

# My Prayer

by **Steve Harbud**

I'm so grateful when I wake up to another brand new day,  
So grateful for that sunrise and you'll be there come what may.  
So grateful for my freedom and the choices I can make,  
So grateful for the wisdom I can choose to give and take.

I'm so grateful for the food upon my table.  
So grateful for the things that I can share.  
So grateful for my family that I was truly blessed.  
So grateful just to know they're always there.

So grateful for my safety and the roof over my head,  
So grateful to look forward and enjoy the day ahead.  
I'm grateful that I make mistakes for lessons I can learn,  
I'm grateful for the love that I can give you in return.







## Festivals of Faith

by Derrick Thompson

### RAMA NAVAMI

**Sunday, 6 April.** (Hindu). The birthday of Rama, the seventh avatar of Vishnu, is marked by extremely colourful ceremonies. It is one of the most important festivals for Hindus.

### HANAMATSURI

**Tuesday, 8 April.** (Buddhist [Japanese]). This flower festival marks the Japanese celebration of the Buddha Shakyamuni's birthday. Flowers accentuate the tradition that the Buddha was born in a garden. Flower shrines are made in which an image of the infant Buddha is placed and bathed.

### PASSOVER/PESACH

**13th April - 20th April.** (Jewish). This major eight-day Jewish festival commemorates the liberation of the Children of Israel from slavery in Egypt. The highlight is the Seder meal, held in each family's home at the beginning of the festival, when the story of their deliverance is recounted.

### PALM SUNDAY

**Sunday 13th April.** (Christian [Western Churches]) (Orthodox date: 9 April). The final Sunday of Lent, when Christians remember Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, where, later, he would be arrested and crucified.

### VAISAKHI / BAISAKHI

**Monday 14th April.** The Sikh New Year Festival (Sikh). On this day Sikhs are initiated into the Khalsa, committing themselves to a discipline that includes daily prayers and the wearing of the external markers of Khalsa identity. Outside each gurdwara the Nishan Sahib (the Sikh pennant) and its flagpole are taken down, ceremonially bathed and then re-erected.

### MAUNDY THURSDAY

**Thursday 17th April.** (Christian [Western Churches]). Christians remember the night before Jesus was crucified when he shared a Passover supper with his disciples. He washed his disciples' feet in demonstration of his humility, gave them bread and wine and told them to partake of it in remembrance of him. The sharing of bread and wine is the basis of today's Holy Communion.

### GOOD FRIDAY

**Friday 18th April.** (Christian). This day commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus. It is called 'Good Friday' since, for Christians, it is 'God's Friday' and recalls how Jesus chose to give up his life for others.

### EASTER DAY

**Sunday 20th April.** (Christian [Western])/ PASCHA [Orthodox]. The most important festival of the Christian year when Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. The day is marked by special religious services and the lighting of Easter Candles, symbols of the resurrected Christ as the light of the world.

### St GEORGE'S DAY

**Wednesday 23rd April.** (National). St George is the patron saint of England. His particular significance to England is not clear since he lived and died in the Middle East as a martyr for his Christian faith.

### YOM HA-SHOAH

**Thursday 24th April.** (Holocaust Day/Jewish). A day of remembrance when Jewish people remember the six million Jews, and others, who were victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Memorial candles are lit and special services are held.





# Your Photos



Clockwise from top: ***Kestrel*** by Louisa Allard; ***St Mathias Church*** in Richmond by Gwen Archer; ***Virginia Woolf statue*** by Alan Shirley; ***Lily*** by Sue McAnena; ***Snowdrops*** and ***Crocus*** by Gennie Thompson; ***Spring at Hickey's*** by Alan Shirley and ***View towards Leg of Mutton Pond in Bushy Park*** by Chantal Richards.



# Art Corner

## My Artistic Journey by Steve Harbud

To tell you about my artistic journey I need to go back about 40 years. I wasn't exactly a youngster when I started. No art school, college or evening classes. One day I bought a canvas and some oil paints and that's what I still do today. There's no right or wrong way to create a piece of artwork. I have a vision of how I want the finished piece to look and work towards that, whatever it takes! It's good fun creating abstracts or even daft stuff like Van Gogh in pyjamas and slippers! You're the artist — you choose what you want. The world is your lobster. It's always nice to paint something special for someone from a photo — something that holds fond memories.

The important thing is to immerse yourself into that special zone and just go with the flow. It's a beautiful place.



# Tracing My Ancestry

by Jenny Ruff

When I decided with the help and encouragement of an old school friend of mine, Ian Powell, to trace my ancestry, in the first instance I only ever wanted to know who my great grandparents were on my father's side. Never ever thinking I would be able to follow the line back to Wiltshire in the six-teen hundreds.

I found that my great grandfather's name was Teman Vivash born 1849 and died 1927. The Vivash name I did not know or had never heard mentioned growing up. I have since learned from research that on documentation i.e. census, birth and death records that the spelling of Vivash was often written as Fiveash (obviously written as heard) which was quite common in those days.

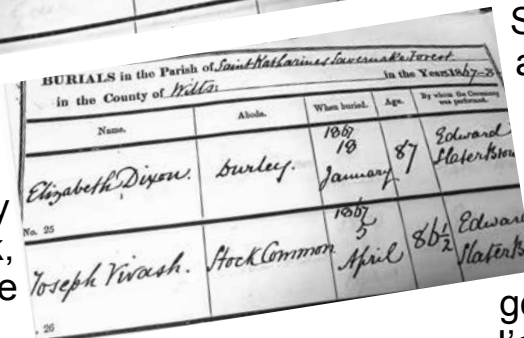
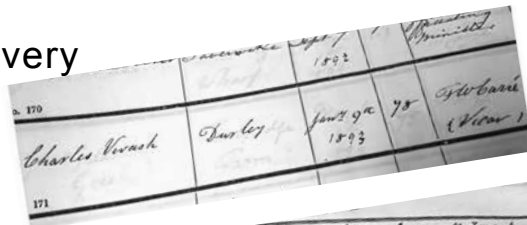
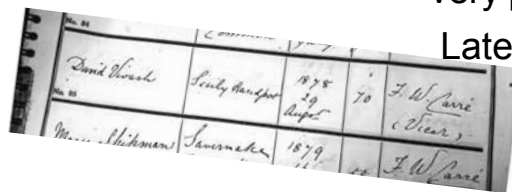
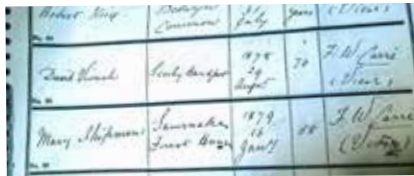
I found they were very poor folk but lived in a beautiful village called Great Bedwyn in Wiltshire. My son and I found a lot of evidence of the Vivash family there. It seems the men worked in the stone quarries, very hard and poorly paid work, the women working on the land equally as hard.



Emma Vivash, daughter of David Vivash. 1849 Great Bedwyn



William Charles James Vivash and Elizabeth Haywood after they were married taken at Lake Hill Lodge, Pedmore, Stonehenge 4th June 1927



Close by was Wolf Hall where the Seymour family lived and their daughter, Jane, who was visited and pursued by King Henry VIII who after beheading Anne Boleyn married Jane Seymour.

Great Bedwyn is on the edge of the Savernake Forest, an area with St Katherine's church at the heart of it which was first consecrated in 1861.

I was allowed to see the very fragile leather bound death record books – which to actually hold them made my son and I very emotional and tears were shed by both of us – a very special moment.

On further research I found that the family re-located to Sunbury where, on the war memorial on Green Street, the Vivash name stands proudly of two Vivash brothers who were killed in action at Ypres during WWI; also much information contained on plaques in the local church – very proud.

Later research enabled me to meet a first cousin living in Kingston, not seen for over sixty years. Sadly she is blind but has had happy lunches under the pergola on Church Estate. She also had never heard of the Vivash name.

Still lots more for me to explore about these ancestors of mine: it is time consuming but such an exciting thing finding out about people's lives – my people's lives. Glad I did it and if you decide to 'have a go' and I can help with tips etc, I'd be happy to.



## Your Pets

A new column featuring amusing stories about your pets — past and present! We would love to hear about your cheeky or naughty pet!

### Princess by Gerry Wilson

Once upon a time, a black fur ball no bigger than a rolled-up glove arrived at the Porter's Lodge for a week's holiday.

That sojourn has now lasted sixteen years and despite my impatience towards domestic pets and their place in the world, the challenge is now on as to which one of us will finally claim that chair, uncontested, through the triumph of longevity.

Happenstance very nearly deleted Princess Rhianna when, after four days, she disappeared like The Beatle song (*She's Leaving Home*) and left home to meet a Tom from the motor trade — or so I tried to convince my distraught granddaughter.



Two days later whilst vacuuming the Axminster I heard the faint sound of meowing and immediately panicked that "Henry" may have inhaled more than runaway peas and nail clippings.

In fact, a hole in the floorboard made for the purpose of running cables and then covered over, had enticed and entombed this kitten and her curiosity. Helping to lift her through the re-opened portal, Princess experienced a dusty rebirth amidst loud and indignant protests at her incarceration.

That's what I mean about domestic pets — not even a thank-you!

## Getting To Know You



### Michael Brien

**Where did you grow up?** I grew up in Dublin and came to England in 1967. I worked in the travel industry for a while and then became a GPO trained telephonist in the Continental Telephone Exchange in London where I had the opportunity to use my French having learned the language at secondary school in Ireland.

**As a child, what did you want to be?** I wanted to be a doctor.

**If you could travel back in time, where would you go and why?** I would go back to the Swinging Sixties. I liked the music at that time.

**Can you describe yourself in 3 words?** I would describe myself as friendly, approachable and considerate.

**If you were an animal, what would you be?** I would be a cat!

**Can't get through the day or weekend without?** I can't get through the day or weekend without phone calls from my friends and lots of tea!

**What film or play makes you cry?** I always cry when I watch *The Elephant Man*.

**Who would you invite to your fantasy party/lunch and why?** I would love to invite William and Kate — The Prince and Princess of Wales — to lunch because they are such interesting people and I'm sure the conversations would be fascinating.

**What is your guiltiest pleasure?** My guilty pleasure is chocolate...lots of chocolate!

**Who is your celebrity crush?** My celebrity crush has always been Audrey Hepburn. What a beautiful woman!

## SIT STOP *A local project to benefit our community*

The idea of SIT STOP began in 2005, after an initiative set up by the Royal Society of Arts and Richmond to start a local project that would benefit the local community. The idea is to provide more places to sit down when people are out and about.

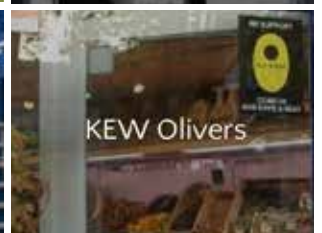
The aim of SIT STOP is to ask suitable shops and businesses to display the sign below so that people know they can go inside and sit down without having to buy anything. It's a very simple concept and Richmond has roughly 100 SIT STOPS in the borough.

It is run by a community group in Richmond who visit shops and businesses, check they have a seat and easy access. If the owner is happy, they put up the sticker with the SIT STOP logo.

The group also take seats to summer fairs and give talks at local events to highlight the scheme and the fact that people need to sit down when out and about.

It is also on Facebook where new places are shown.

For more information see [www.sitstop.co.uk](http://www.sitstop.co.uk)



### Cost-of-Living Advice Project.

Citizens Advice can advise you on how to access help with the cost of living crisis such as applying for grants, checking if you are getting the correct benefits and helping you with debts. For further advice you can visit: **Whitton Library**, every Wednesday from 10am to 1pm. **Ham Library**, every Friday from 1.30 to 4.30pm. No appointment needed.

### Royal Kew Palace. Using our free Kew Garden Tickets



**you can have a tour inside the Kew Palace for just £5.** Join one of the costumed hosts on a daily 30 minute tour featuring some of the key rooms in the palace to hear their stories and learn more about life for the royal family at Kew. Various dates: 22nd April to 28th September, 2pm - 2.30pm. Tickets are £5 per person and can be booked in person at Kew Palace up to 10 minutes before the tour starts. More info: [www.hrp.org.uk/kew-palace](http://www.hrp.org.uk/kew-palace)





# Local News and Events

This month's round-up of local news and events that are relevant to you.



This spring, **OSO Arts Centre is celebrating its 25th anniversary** with a packed line-up of events and shows. Big Barnes Quiz, 25th Anniversary Ball, and two theatre shows: ***Being Seen*** and ***Things I Know To Be True***. OSO Arts Centre on 49 Station Road, Mortlake SW13 0LF. Find all their events online: [www.osoarts.org.uk](http://www.osoarts.org.uk)

**The Friends of Richmond Park** is delighted to announce that **Annabel Croft** (former British number 1 tennis star and broadcaster) has been appointed as a patron of the charity.

**Tree Tour at Marble Hill, Twickenham.** Come to Marble Hill and learn about our trees and the work we've done in regard to trees across the park! Meet at the cafe at 1pm. FREE Event. Friday 11th April. 1pm - 3:30pm.



**Free minibus service** is returning to Richmond Park. The volunteer-run service will return to Richmond Park on Monday 17th March 2025, giving all park visitors better access to enjoy the natural park. Timetable online. [www.royalparks.org.uk](http://www.royalparks.org.uk) The FREE minibus has disabled access, and runs between all the Richmond Park car parks, Ladderstile Gate, Richmond Gate, Pembroke Lodge and Isabella Plantation.

**Curtains up! A Play Reading Group.** Join other theatre enthusiasts for a reading of a chosen play and broaden your knowledge of excellent writing at this friendly and spirited reading group. You are welcome to take part, or simply listen and enjoy the reading! Suitable for all ages, and no preparation is required. Date: Third Thursday of the month. Time: 2pm to 4pm at Twickenham booking required.

## Bingo Extravaganza

Need a midweek pick-me-up? Eyes down and have a bit of fun! Weekly prizes to be won! Last Wednesday of each month. Time: 2 to 3.30pm. Location: Ham Library, Ham Street, Ham. TW10 7HR. Price: Free, no booking required

## Open Gaming Meetup.

Whether you are a board game enthusiast or new to the scene, come and join us for a new monthly open gaming event and have fun, meet new people and try a new game or two. Choose from the dozens of games available or bring along your favourite to share. Sessions run from 10am to 4pm on the following Saturdays each month:

- **First Saturday** - Whitton Library
- **Second Saturday** - Twickenham Library
- **Third Saturday** - Richmond Old Town Hall, Whittaker Ellis Suite.

This event is free and no booking is required. Please email [library@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:library@richmond.gov.uk) for more information.



**Coffee and Crafting** at Museum Of Richmond, Old Town Hall, Whittaker Avenue, Richmond, TW9 1TP. Always wanted to try a new craft but don't know where to begin? Excited to meet fellow craft enthusiasts? Join us for an afternoon of crafting and creativity. Each workshop dives into the fascinating story behind a beautifully crafted object from the Museum's collection. Use them as inspiration for your very own craft project!

**Wednesday 16 and Saturday 19 April:** Basket Making inspired by Dolls House Miniatures.

**Wednesday 14 and Saturday 17 May:** Lace Knitting inspired by a Lambrequin (a short piece of decorative drapery)

More info: [www.visitrichmond.co.uk/events](http://www.visitrichmond.co.uk/events)



# World News

## Blessed Carlo Acutis

by Mike Townsin



In our February issue we reported how a London-born young Italian, Carlo Acutis, was shortly to be anointed the first millennial Saint.

Carlo was noted for his cheerfulness, computer skills and devotion to the

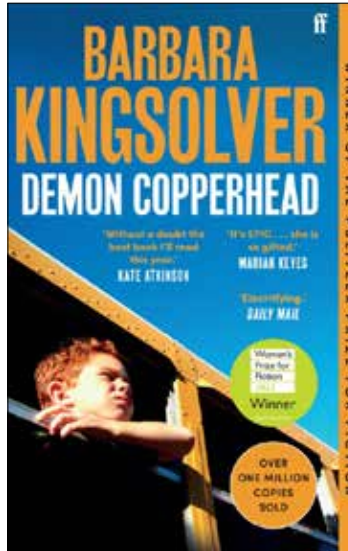
Eucharist, which became a core theme of his life.

He died of leukaemia age 15 on 11 October 2006 and was beatified by Pope Francis in 2020 after a second miracle was attributed to him and recognized by the Vatican.

The canonisation will take place on 27 April at 10.30am during the Jubilee of Teenagers in the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, Assisi.

# Page Turners

Book Review by Kate O'Brien



## Demon Copperhead

by Barbara Kingsolver

**D**emon Copperhead is loosely based on Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*. Set in the Appalachian Mountains, where Kingsolver lives, many families survive in great poverty following the loss of the mining industry. Some of those injured have succumbed to the opioid crisis, causing much addiction and countless deaths. (For a more factual account of this I would recommend *Empire of Pain* by Patrick Radden Keefe which focuses on the role of the Sackler family).

If you have some knowledge of the Dickens' novel you will recognise a lot of the characters such as Steerforth, Mr Micawber, Uriah Heep (all renamed). It is fascinating to see how Kingsolver weaves them into such an up-to-date plot.

But the key skill is her ability to create Demon's voice, that of a young working-class boy, so deftly that we understand and empathise with him, despite his many flaws and astonishing ability to make terrible choices. The scariest aspect is the how she can so closely align a story set in today's America with conditions in Victorian England.

Demon Copperhead is not an easy, or a short, read, but it is well worth the effort. Well deserving of its Pulitzer Prize!

**Petersham Passion**

St Peter's Church  
Petersham TW10 7AB  
Sunday 6 April 2025  
5 pm

Arias from JS Bach  
St John Passion and  
St Matthew Passion  
with words from  
the King James Bible

Conductor:  
Jeremy Summery

Orchestra:  
Petersham Camerata

Soloists:  
Miranda Johnson (Soprano)  
Anna Boucher (Alto)  
Martin Johnson (Bass)

Stuart Turnbull (Narrator)

Proceeds to St Peter's church & local community projects  
Suggested donation £15 ([tinyurl.com/PetershamPassion](https://tinyurl.com/PetershamPassion))  
Enquiries: [events.stpeterspetersham@gmail.com](mailto:events.stpeterspetersham@gmail.com)



## Advisory: Online Fraud

by Mike Townsin

With all the convenience the internet brings, it's important to be aware of potential online risks.

Most frauds nowadays involve computers or other technology, and many criminals use the anonymity of the internet to deceive, hack and steal whether via email or text.

They do this in several ways: search for insecure devices; send an email containing malicious software; set up fake websites or links.

***A few simple security measures can reduce your chances of becoming a victim.***

- Whether email or text, beware unusual sender information, grammatical errors, suspicious links, and unsolicited messages – especially if they claim you've won something or require immediate action.
- Be wary about personal information you post online, and ensure you check your



privacy settings on social media.

- Use random words to make sure your password is strong, e.g. SmilingTigerMummy.
- Have a strong and separate password for your email account.
- Use anti-virus software on all devices and update regularly (note, Apple devices have built-in antivirus protection).
- Back up your important data regularly using an external device or cloud storage.
- Secure your tablet or smartphone with a screen lock.

And if in doubt about any of this computer jargon, ask a professional like our Age UK trainers, or someone you know and trust as a user!

## World Events

### Earth Day Tuesday 22nd April



by Rebecca Evans

The theme for Earth Day 2025 is **OUR POWER, OUR PLANET**, inviting everyone around the globe to unite behind renewable energy, and to triple the global generation of clean electricity

by 2030.

How? By joining us in Earth Action Day, encouraging all to take action — educate, advocate, and mobilise. Pledge an Earth Action on social media. What will your action be?

## VE Day - 80th Anniversary

### Open Afternoon at The Poppy Factory

A chance to chat to the expert hosts and volunteers, watch special VE Day presentations and view lesser-seen parts of the historic factory. Hot drinks, refreshments and a special VE Day 80 Victoria sponge cake will be on offer, with music from the era adding to the spirit of celebration.

Timed **free** tickets for the open afternoon are available (maximum 4 per booking).



The Poppy Factory, 20 Petersham Road, Richmond, TW10 6UR [www.poppyfactory.org](http://www.poppyfactory.org)

## And the Good News is...

Curated by Mike Townsin

- After more than 700 years a rare bible has been returned to Salisbury Cathedral where it was created by Sarum Master, who was one of the finest artists of the 13th century. The bible was written in Latin on vellum and lavishly illustrated. It has been on display for the first time in its history.



- A smartphone that can protect children from harmful content is to be launched this summer. It can detect such content using AI technology, and then automatically blocks it. The tech is embedded in the phone's operating system and so can't be evaded.

- A collection of some of the earliest and finest photographs of English landscapes has been acquired by Historic England. The 8000 black and white photos were assembled by Janette Rosing who died in 2021 and had dedicated her life to studying and preserving 19th and 20th century images.



- Aughton, a village in England (10 miles north of Liverpool), now has the highest per capita number of Michelin stars in the world, across three restaurants serving a population of only 8,300.



- Metal detectorists found a record number (95%) of archeological finds in 2023. In total 74,506 were reported to the British Museum's Portable Antiquities Scheme, including Roman coins, 7th century gold pendants, a ring attributed to Elizabeth I, and a Bronze Age hoard in Wiltshire.

## Wit and Wisdom

Curated by Mike Townsin

When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do Sir? *John Maynard Keynes's defence when he was accused of inconsistency*

There is nothing permanent except change. *Heraclitus, Greek philosopher*

Falsehood flies, and the truth comes limping after it. *Jonathan Swift*

We tell ourselves stories in order to live. *Joan Didion*

Conscience is a mother-in-law whose visit never ends. *H.L. Menken, US journalist*

There's no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing. *Alfred Wainwright, British author*



Alfred Wainwright's Memorial Tablet in St James' Church, Buttermere, Lake District.

Credit: Martin Kirk

Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts. *Danial Moynihan, US senator*

I wish I could tell you it gets better. But it doesn't get better. You get better. *Joan Rivers*

I'm not wild about holidays. They always seem a ludicrously expensive way of proving there's no place like home. *Jilly Cooper*



## On This Day...

**1st April 1875** - The Times became the first British newspaper to publish a daily weather chart.

**14th April 2003** - The Human Genome Project completed its work to sequence human DNA.

**20th April 1981** - Steve Davis won his first World Snooker Championship at 23 years old.

**21st April 1983** - £1 coins replaced paper banknotes in Britain.

## Miscellany

Curated by Mike Townsin

- It is illegal to get into a black London taxi if suffering from food poisoning, anthrax, measles or leprosy.
- In 2015, a woman was shot in the foot by her dog, Trigger.
- February was known to the Anglo-Saxons as Solmoneth, or 'mud month'.
- The oldest human settlement in Australia was found by a man looking for a lavatory.
- The exclamation mark was originally called the 'point of admiration'.
- A Dutch designer has invented a chair that gives an electric shock to people who say "Yes, but..." in meetings.
- In 2015, a Southampton to Dublin flight had to turn back after a bee got stuck in the flight instruments. It was a Flybe airlines flight.
- A butcher in Totnes who got trapped in his freezer in 2018 had to batter his way out with a frozen black pudding.
- The pioneers of the French naturist movement were a married couple called Lecoq.



- Under a US law signed by Ronald Reagan, July is National Ice Cream Month and 15th July is National Ice Cream Day.

## What's the Origin of..?

A new regular column tracing the origin of sayings.  
Curated by Mike Townsin

- **Sing for your supper:** on sugar plantations the kitchen was always 12 to 15 yards from the house down a walkway for fire safely reasons. When the slaves carried the cooked food from the kitchen to the house along the walkway, they had to sing loudly all the way otherwise they would get no food that night. Thus, you had to 'sing for your supper'.

- **He's as pleased as Punch:** comes from the 17th century *Punch and Judy* puppet shows in which Mr Punch takes great pleasure in murdering everyone: Mr Punch had a saying as he killed people – "that's the way to do it".



- **Pig and Whistle:** this pub name started as the 'piggin and wassail' as 'piggin' in earlier times was an earthenware container from which drinkers would fill their mugs, and 'wassail' meant to be fortunate and in good health.

- **He's out for a duck:** is said in cricket about a batsman who is 'out' without scoring. The original saying was 'out for a duck's egg' which is a circular O and meant his score was nothing.

- **Who pays the piper calls the tune:** in Medieval times musicians toured the country and whoever gave them money could choose the tune.

# The Power of the Brain

by Lorraine Bradley

Have you ever wondered why some people are able to learn faster, retain information better, and solve problems more quickly than others? It all comes down to brain power.

## **BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS BRAIN POWER, AND HOW CAN YOU INCREASE IT?**

Brain power is a term used to describe the potential of your brain to take in, process, and use information. This includes everything from learning new skills to solving complex problems and making quick decisions. Your brain power is determined by a variety of factors, including genetics, environment, and lifestyle choices.

If you're looking to boost your brain power, there are several things you can do. Below are some scientifically proven strategies that can help you unlock the full potential of your brain.

**EXERCISE REGULARLY**  
Exercising can improve cognitive function, increase the production of neurotransmitters, and stimulate the growth of new brain cells. Aim for 30 minutes per day.

**GET ENOUGH SLEEP**  
Lack of sleep can result in decreased cognitive function, impaired memory and learning. To increase your brain power, aim for 7-8 hours of sleep per night.

## **EAT A BALANCED DIET**

Certain foods, such as those rich in omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and vitamins, (chia seeds, salmon, walnuts, sardines, oysters, and eggs) can help improve brain function and boost brain power.

## **PRACTICE MINDFULNESS**

Mindfulness meditation increases brain power by improving cognitive function, memory, and emotional regulation. Even just a few minutes a day can have a significant impact on your brain power.

## **LEARN SOMETHING NEW**

The brain is like a muscle – the more you use it, the stronger it gets. Learning new skills or taking up new hobbies can help stimulate your brain and increase brain power.

## **CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

Challenging yourself mentally with activities like puzzles, brain teasers, or learning a new language.

## **TAKE BRAIN POWER SUPPLEMENTS**

There are several supplements on the market that claim to boost brain function, such as omega-3 fatty acids, ginkgo biloba, and bacopa monnieri.

## **LISTEN TO BRAIN POWER MUSIC**

Music has a powerful effect on the brain, and some types of music have been shown to help increase brain power.



Classical music, in particular, has been shown to improve cognitive function and increase productivity.

## **USE BRAIN POWER SYNONYMS**

Using brain power synonyms or related words in your daily conversations can help stimulate your brain and increase brain power. Instead of saying “smart,” for example, you could say “intelligent” or “cerebral.”

## **INCREASE OXYGEN SUPPLY TO THE BRAIN**



This can be done through activities like deep breathing exercises, yoga, or spending time in nature.

## **WHAT SOUNDS INCREASE BRAIN POWER?**

Certain sounds have been shown to help improve brain function and increase brain power. These include:

### **Classical music**

### **Nature sounds**

**White noise** - A mix of all sound frequencies creating a steady “shhh” sound.

**Binaural beats** - A perceived third tone that occurs when two different tones are played in each ear.



## Debbie's LIFE HACKS

- Stay active – walk 30mins per day.
- Put a wooden spoon across a boiling pot of water to keep it from boiling over.
- Take a photograph of your medication on your phone so if you need to see a doctor you have it there with you.
- Take pictures of friends holding items you've lent them with your iPhone, so you will remember down the road.
- Put a paper towel under your fruit and vegetables in the fridge. This way, it will soak up all the water and help them to last for longer.
- Ensure your ginger stays fresher for longer by storing it in the freezer. Cut it into pieces beforehand so that when you take it out you're only taking out what you need.



## Small Changes ... To Make Your Meals More Nutritious

### **Add raw shredded kale to a salad to bolster nutrient intake.**

Yes, it's a superfood, but boiling, steaming, or microwaving kale was shown by food scientists at Universidade de Vigo in Spain to reduce its total antioxidant and mineral content significantly. There were also reductions in levels of calcium, potassium, iron, zinc and magnesium.

Cooking kale can also destroy an enzyme called myrosinase, which helps to boost its antioxidant properties.

Raw kale is best chopped or shredded with lettuce for a salad or prepared with minimal cooking such as with flash stir-frying.

## Vitamin Alert

by Mike Townsin

Vitamins are essential nutrients that help the body function properly. The body can't produce enough on its own, so they must come from food. There are 13 vitamins.

Each month we will feature one, together with the signs of vitamin deficiency and its main food sources.

### Vitamin B

#### The main functions of Vitamin B

- There are eight types of vitamin B, from B1 to B12; all help release energy from food. For example: Thiamin for a healthy nervous system; Riboflavin for good skin, eyes; Niacin for nervous system and skin; Pyridoxine helps store energy; Folate helps form healthy blood cells.

#### Signs of vitamin B deficiency

- anaemia
- scurvy
- tiredness
- weight loss
- skin rash
- hair loss
- appetite loss

#### The best food sources are:

\*vary depending on which vitamin and which deficiency; they include:

- fruit
- nuts
- peas
- milk
- eggs
- mushrooms
- meat
- fish
- avocado
- bananas
- broccoli

**\* Consult GP or pharmacy if in doubt.**

**Next month: Vitamin C.**



## Competition Winners

Thank you to everyone who sent in entries for the February competitions. Picked at random, our £10 M&S voucher winners this month are:

**Mary Bronks — Crossword**  
**Jenny Ruff— Wordsearch**  
*Congratulations!*

## Who Am I? (Member of Staff)

Solve the cryptic clues to identify this member of staff.

- I have lived in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Toronto before moving to London.*
- I love being outside — spending time in nature is my happy place.*
- My first job was being a dog walker, I started aged 11 after putting flyers around and walked the same dog till it sadly died when I was 18.*
- I am the youngest member of staff here!*
- My favourite food ever is dosa.*

My guess is:.....

Answer in next month's issue!



## Brain Exercises: Anagrams: TV Shows

- Ins Therebetween.....
- Art Elephant.....
- Coffee Hit.....
- Flattery Wows.....
- Forename Ghost.....
- Berlins Keypad.....
- True Bleep.....
- Needs tears.....
- It quotes mine.....
- Stage Candy Vein.....

## Answers: General Knowledge Quiz by Heather Keeler. February issue.

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Iran                              | 7. <i>Sunset Boulevard</i> , 1950. Directed by Billy Wilder, starring William Holden & Gloria Swanson |
| 2. Sand                              | 8. Sweden 267,570   |
| 3. Caravaggio                        | 9. Unwelcome person   |
| 4. Germany                           | 10. Harold Pinter   |
| 5. Morgan Robinson — <i>Futility</i> |   |
| 6. Mexico                            |   |

## Answers: Up Close and Personal. Picture Quiz. March issue.

- |                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. beetroot                  | 9. lighthouse            |
| 2. toilet seat               | 10. seahorse             |
| 3. blackbird pie funnel      | 11. crumpet              |
| 4. knife with snap off blade | 12. foil milk bottle top |
| 5. coat hanger               | 13. guitar               |
| 6. National Trust sign       | 14. TV remote control    |
| 7. tortoise foot             | 15. gear stick           |
| 8. Facebook app              | 16. sunflower            |

## Wordsearch Answers for March

Y B I N I L L E P P A C R A D E J I J N U B N U  
 T A O O C I T E R P A Z Z O R T S C L S T A E P  
 G N U J O I X V P Y I V X E O P P L B O E L X T  
 R G I J H I N I T O R N L T J J F I L O I B X S  
 P A I H T O J F D C J L I L N G M J C B N V N Z  
 F S U L S D M Y G R E D D T O J J A C I G S A E  
 C A C L L J I F T D A B D U A M G O C M X E E R  
 X I E J P I Z J R I O S E S M C S V C A N I F A  
 H N S A B G S A I R Y D A N Y A U M U S R F Z H  
 Z T J Y V P U Z J K L I O I C N B S V M O R X  
 O N O P W P C O F V O T P E K C K I E M Q S N J  
 R O R P A O B B R G T R J T Q F C D C M T G J I  
 E L T P I Y F A E E M Z I F F H L U L O E K L U  
 C L E Q R Z X R H J Q K R C A I E C T N T J V K  
 C E L R O B E G I Q G C G I L G A G N T G T S L  
 H N L A I R A G N U F A R J I P O E S H E R J A  
 I N I D E P I K O L X V Y O N G P T U C A F O Q  
 E A N I S T H R T R I A T A G L I A T E L L E W  
 T C U A Y M C O A V T T L Z U E C P E I O G P  
 T L S T C Y C S G Y M E I C I W F K U C N T F Q  
 E Z R O A V O C I F D L K I N Y T N H S R J G W  
 S F Z R A G N Q R C Z L V O E F W E V L R U Z V J  
 R M F M W G X R O E U X A M O B H W L I G Y D

## Who Am I?

Answer for March issue is *Becky Evans*.

Answers for Brain Exercises  
will be in next month's issue



# Easter Treats!

Can you guess the brand?



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



9.



10.



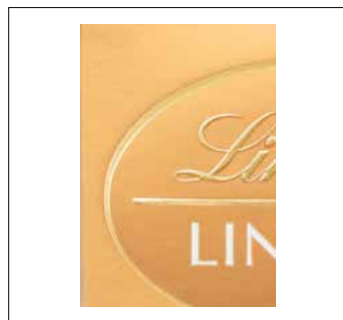
11.



12.



13.



14.



15.



16.

**Your chance to win a £10 M&S Voucher! Identify all 16 brands.** Please submit this page to your Scheme Manager, or place in the suggestion box **before Thursday 17 April.** Name:

# Wordsearch: Classic Card & Board Games

P S R E K C E H C H P I N O C H L E H P Y Q J P  
 L Y J U I K Q M W R S A A I S E E H C R A P Z V  
 C Z R O I A S B S S N B Z J X U O E K U T S K X  
 P W J E M A M I M J E A C A G C P M H E A R T S  
 I A O Y R J Q X R I E O Y Z Q H H S N C R W L G  
 R E T J M W B P C C H K H K I R J J P S F K N S  
 E U E I B M P E L X C B N U I E P S I A E X C R  
 M P O R E S U U G A Q C E V S S E H C P O R U M  
 D Y K F Q N E R J A M Z S E B Q H B G D A G Y F  
 L B A X T R C K V O B E R G Q M V Z X B G A C A  
 M G C H A C C E N F L B U D W F H S B O O H O R  
 X O O K T A E O G G Z G I I U J E L U O I V N S  
 U F F N L Z P N G R A N U R Z I E O N N L P O X  
 P I V B U O E O N T W G J B C H N C E L M V S C  
 Y S U D L N B E S O A P W H I S T S K P O S S T  
 H H S Y Q A C A R S C O W M F I E P R W J G E S  
 P U A X Y Y N P A O Z M U C K C I Q K S N N D K  
 I V V C S A H Y I L D F C A H D K D U Q H G A E  
 Q K E G C M Y A P I O M A E I Z I O U T A O P D  
 U D V Y N Z C O M T N X C Y J M P A M U Q V S M  
 E Z R Y V U K F B A C K G A M M O N M F O D S Z  
 T M A T E E Y L I I E A W X M D L H L D P X F I  
 B F W U R B G N J R F M T H P G U G D J L S X R  
 Q M U Q R J G B S E B J X R N A N A Q G Z O I F

Backgammon

Canasta

Clue

Go Fish

Parcheesi

Poker

Solitaire

Whist

Blackjack

Checkers

Connect Four

Hearts

Patience

Risk

Spades

Yahtzee

Boggle

Chess

Cribbage

Monopoly

Pinochle

Rummy

Uno

Bridge

Chinese Checkers

Euchre

Old Maid

Piquet

Scrabble

War

**Your chance to win a £10 M&S Voucher! Find all 30 words** and submit this page to your Scheme Manager, or place in the suggestion box **before Thursday 17 April.**

Name:



# Poetry Corner

by Nigel Davis

“Breathes there a man  
with soul so dead

Who never to  
himself has said

This is my own, my  
native land!”

Many people would associate themselves with these lines of Sir Walter Scott. Robert Browning (1812-1889) certainly would have done.

In this famous poem, written when he was living in Italy, he expresses a nostalgic yearning for his country England. But it is not so much a poem about his country England but more about the countryside of England. And is there anything to match the glorious English countryside in spring, with its hedgerows and budding trees and blossom, and with the birds hammering away with their birdsong? Browning captures it perfectly, I think, with wonderful lyrical language.

One need not be too concerned for Browning, by the way. He subsequently returned to live in England but always remained very fond of Italy. In later life, when fame and fortune had come his way as a poet, he and his son purchased a grand palazzo in Venice by the edge of the Grand Canal. It remains open to visitors to this day.

## Home Thoughts from Abroad

by Robert Browning

Oh, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest bough and the brushwood sheaf  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England — now!

And after April, when May follows,  
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows!  
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
Blossoms and dewdrops — at the bent spray's edge —  
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could recapture  
The first fine careless rapture!  
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew  
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
The buttercups, the little children's dower  
— Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower!



