

The Oracle

Bedfordshire

April 2021



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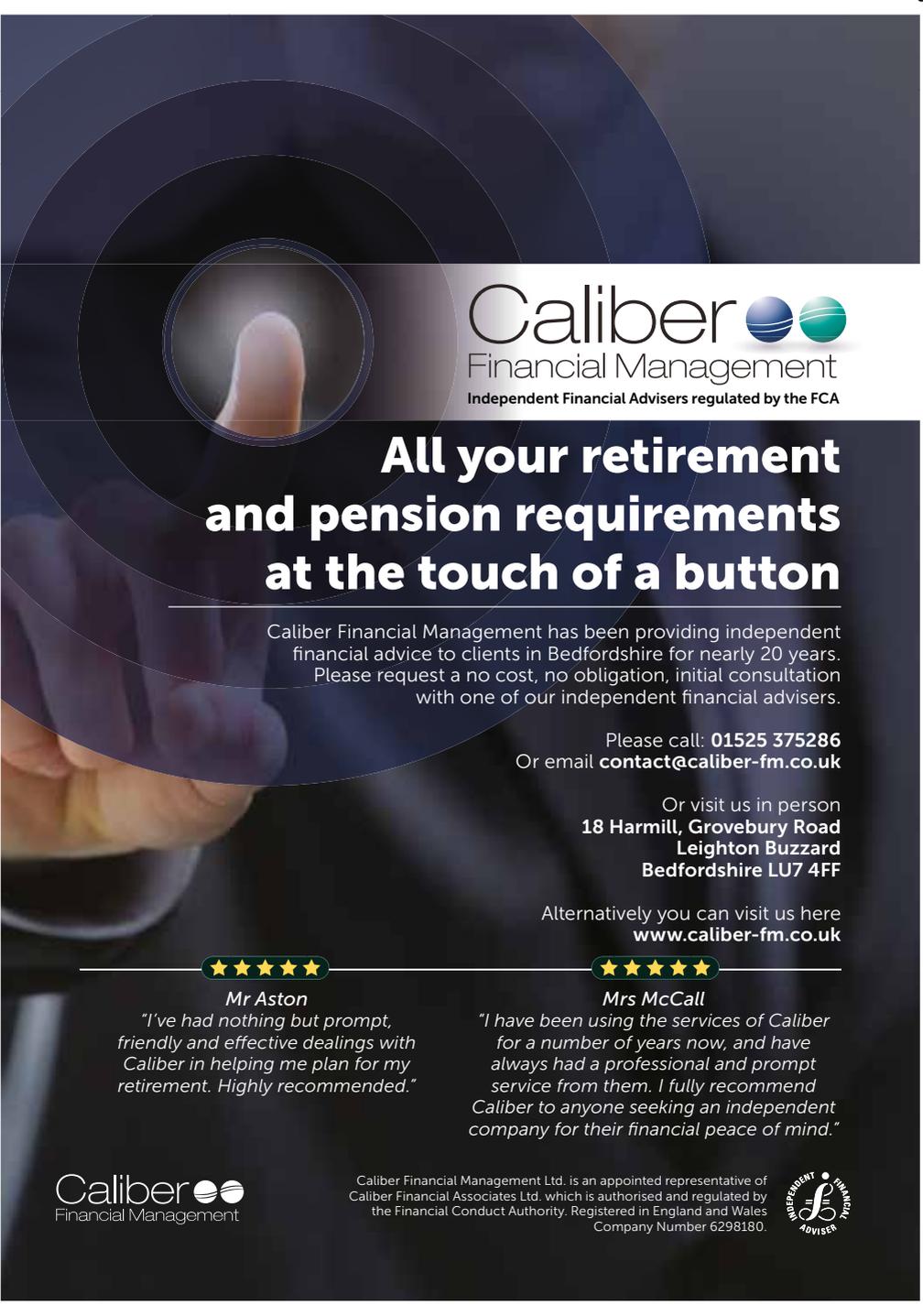
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Hello Readers

Even if you've been lucky enough to avoid contracting the Covid-19 virus, the pandemic has taken its toll on many of us in other physical and mental ways. This month we are featuring some different ways that you can try to help yourself with these issues.



If you are an Oracle regular, then you know Tamsin Cooper, our local, renowned Hypnotherapist. She has just published a small, accessible book on mental wellbeing and how you can help yourself to remove stress (see page 6).

We've also got advice from our regular contributor Anne Bryant of Lifespark Coaching on page 14 about how to 'de-busy' your brain.

For those of you who have been desk bound at home throughout lockdown and are feeling the downside of this, then read what Bourne Fitness has to say about starting your journey back to physical fitness. And see what help local fitness trainers are offering (pages 10, 11 and 12) as well as local sports clubs.

Last month's winner of the Mother's Day Quiz was Mrs Elisabeth Eve from Toddington. I know that our quizzes have been incredibly popular so I'm really sorry there isn't one in this issue. But don't worry - they will be back!

Take care, stay safe and HAPPY EASTER!

Kirsty

 [@BetsyDawsPhotography](https://www.instagram.com/BetsyDawsPhotography)

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Taking Back Control

I am a worldwide Master Hypnotherapist and I specialise in helping clients overcome stress and anxiety. Over the past year I've noticed a sharp increase in enquiries from people that are finding life particularly difficult due to these unprecedented times. I wanted to help and reach out to as many people as I could, so I've written a book.

When negative thoughts start to run free in your mind, you, unconsciously, condition your body to accept this thought- process as your 'normal'. In short, you're hardwiring your brain to accept these pessimistic feelings as your 'reality'.

Sometimes, you spend so much time worrying about all the 'what ifs' in life that you start living in constant fear and forget to 'live' life altogether. Every time you worry, you're releasing stress hormones into your body which have the ability to take over and shut down the immune system, either partially or completely.

The good news is: You may be powerless in controlling the stress but you can learn how to control the emotions resulting from stress.

I named my 'Enemy Within', Beryl; she constantly created anxiety, worry and depression and took away any joy of living life. In the book I share my personal journey, learning to control Beryl.

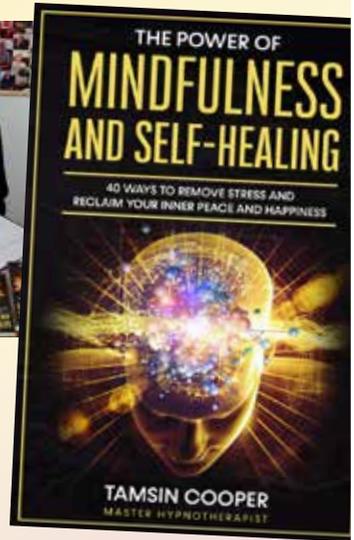
From the book: 'Ever since I was a child, Beryl has enjoyed whispering and sometimes shouting horrible things at me. She has stayed with me through my teenage years and into my adulthood. Sometimes her constant barrage would make me feel so low, so very low. At times, I would think that I was going mad. The truth is that I wasn't, I was just anxious and depressed. It's just how she 'made' me feel on so many occasions.

Beryl has made me doubt myself, take antidepressants and withdraw socially from the world. I also managed to get myself into all kinds of financial pickles as somehow, spending money made me feel happier and more in control.

So why didn't I tell Beryl to take a hike? I couldn't! Because Beryl resides within me; she is a part of me, she is my inner voice.



The book is packed full of easy step by step exercises to help you to cope, to relieve stress and anxiety, deal with pain, even how to lose weight!



An Exercise from the book: *Imagine a positive person. This could be someone that you know in your life or someone that you have read about or seen in a movie or a television programme. Someone you would wish to be like. Now imagine sitting opposite that person and telling them all of your problems. Imagine what that person would say to you, how they would advise you and how they would spin your thoughts around to positive thoughts. Imagine if that person was living your life, how they would remove all the negative aspects and replace it all with positive thoughts and solutions.*

The feedback I've received from the book has been heartwarming. So many people have told me that it is helping them navigate through life from a much calmer and happier place. I feel truly blessed that I can make a difference.

Tamsin Cooper

The Power of Mindfulness and Self-Healing, 40 Ways to Remove Stress and Reclaim Your Inner Peace and Happiness is available on Amazon in paperback and kindle. Included in the book are six audio meditations the reader can access absolutely free using a special code.



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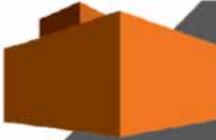
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Home Counties Loft Ladders, Quality You Can Trust!

These days most homeowners suffer from a lack of storage space. So many precious items that need to be kept – but where to store it all? That's where Home Counties Loft Ladders come in.

The company, based locally, offers homeowners the opportunity to maximise their storage space with a loft ladder, 50sqft of boarding and a light - all fully fitted in less than a day from just **£355!** But it's not just the affordability of the package that makes Home Counties Loft Ladders stand out, as manager Jamie Oakley explains: 'Our

watchwords are Quality, Integrity and Value. Quality in the materials that we use for all our installations and the fact that all our loft packages are fitted by time served tradesmen, so our customers are assured of the best job.

Integrity in that we will turn up at the time we say and make sure the house is spotless when we leave, and value in that we offer our services at a price people can afford.

Our business relies on referrals and we get a huge amount of our calls from people who have been referred to us by our existing customers

- that simply wouldn't happen if we didn't adhere to our overriding principles.

At the end of the day the old adage that happy customers lead to more happy customers is true and we work hard to make that happen for

every installation we carry out!

So, if you want to make use of your loft space, call Jamie free on **0808 301 9558** and he'll be happy to pop round and give you a no obligation quote so you too can make use of your loft!



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There's no better time than now!

Gyms are opening again

this month and, all being well and as planned, life could be starting to return to some semblance of normal within the next two.

This is undoubtedly cause for celebration and relief. But it's natural that there would also be a few concerns about the idea of returning to a lifestyle that's been pretty different for over a year now.

When it comes to health & fitness, the fact is that many people have found it tough to look after themselves in lockdown. In a survey of PureGym members nationwide, 86% said lockdown had had a negative effect on their physical well-being. And that's a sample of people who had a gym membership to begin with.

I think lots of people are probably pretty aware of that fact. And I also think there are lots of people out there thinking "I know I've let things slip over the last few months but I'll get back on it once life gets back to normal". And that's totally fair enough! There's been plenty of other things to worry about. Wanting to wait until there's one fewer thing on your list of worries before you start a new fitness programme is perfectly reasonable.

But be careful with that approach. There will always be a reason *not* to start something. There won't ever be a perfect time to take control of your fitness and go after the body you want.

If you're waiting for the right time, I'm here to tell you that the best time could be NOW.

Start making small changes to your lifestyle that will benefit you in the long run. Slowly introduce exercise so that it isn't such a shock to the system after that first trip back to the gym. Going back and realising you can't run for as long as you could before or can't lift the same weight can be disheartening, and could stop you in your tracks before you've even got going again.

Introduce one light workout a week for a couple of weeks. Then up the frequency to two per week. Try to increase your daily steps (this is actually something that should become easier for all of us once lockdown ends, as we'll be able to go places again). 10,000 isn't necessarily the magic number. Have a look at your day and your habits to find opportunities for movement. If you've gotten into the habit of jumping in the car to nip to the shops, try walking it a few times. If you used to go for a walk before work but have let that slip and started sleeping in later, now's the time to get back into that habit.

And get your nutrition in order. Try out new recipes for quick and easy meals that fit your goals. Batch cooking has fallen by the wayside a little bit during lockdown, but finding meals you can prepare in advance now will do you a tonne of favours for when the social calendar starts to fill up again and you'd rather not spend as much time at home cooking.

The last year we've all had restrictions placed on us. And I'm not saying that isn't a perfectly reasonable excuse. All I'm saying is you might have more control than you think, and there could be positive actions you can take right now that will benefit you long-term.

Give yourself the best chance of success. Give yourself a running start and get moving well before lockdown ends.

**BOURNE
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Jamie is a fitness coach helping people find ways to balance their lifestyle with achieving their fitness goals. Find Bourne Fitness on Instagram at @journfitness or email jbournfitness@gmail.com to enquire about a free movement assessment.



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As a child I remember clearly the freedom I felt running and doing cartwheels. Those remembered sensations have influenced my life ever since. I may not be able to do great cartwheels now, but my body still has fluid free movements and I remain pain free!

The reason that many of us have pain or discomfort is because we have developed patterns of movement based on a vast array of factors: your physical and emotional environment, your reaction to stress, your personality, the injuries you sustain, the sports you play, and any physical training you engage in will contribute to your habitual posture and movement. Your pattern is entirely unique to you.

Because you learned these patterns, they can be unlearned and healthy patterns replace them, at any stage of life.

When you are young, an unhealthy pattern doesn't hurt, but as you wear away the joint over time then the discomfort and pain will start. Somatics can prevent that from happening.

My journey as a teacher started with training at Body Control Pilates in London. I then studied the work of Tom Myers, a respected anatomist from the USA and became a qualified Structural Integrator.

My next training was about hands on visceral manipulation which is about feeling for adhesions and restrictions inside the body and releasing them.

It was then I discovered Somatics. What shocked was me that something so gentle could have such an amazing and profound effect on a body.

When you want to move the brain sends a message to begin the contraction phase of the muscles. This is the only type of message your brain can send to your muscles. It cannot send a message to release. When the movement is complete your brain stops sending the message to contract, and your muscles will automatically enter the relaxation phase and return to normal resting length. If your brain keeps sending a

'contract' message to your muscles the relaxation phase doesn't happen completely - or not at all. When the message is sent at a very frequent rate, the relaxation phase doesn't happen at all and the muscles are kept contracted. If you keep repeating the same posture or movement it gradually becomes automatic, and you cease to have conscious voluntary control over it. Remember, the brain cannot send a message to release - so you now have a problem!



Somatic movements are slow and gentle and are designed to address and release the accumulated tension via the central nervous system and the brain to bring the movements back to voluntary control again. This release of unknown and unwanted tension will allow the joints to move correctly.

It is a myth that as we age we will become stiff and stooped. It doesn't have to be like that. Somatics will help you to move in a way that keeps you supple and young. It will release muscular pain and discomfort and will also prevent problems later in life if you are young.

I run regular somatics classes via zoom. If you think that I can help you, please check out my website www.thinkingbody.co.uk.

Denyse Weiser

"I started pilates and then somatics with Denyse after my physiotherapist advised me to do exercises for my plantar fasciitis. I had been in such pain and after some weeks I started noticing the difference. Somatics takes time, it is a slow, deeply connected set of routines, that apparently look gentle, but actually re-wire your brain into understanding your body and activating healing processes."

Dr. Beatriz Acevedo, Bedfordshire

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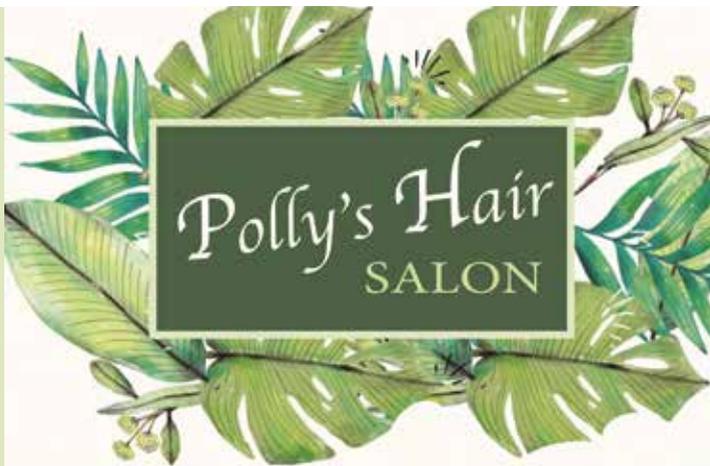
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Wellbeing

With Anne Bryant

Have you got 'busy brain' syndrome?

There was a meme on Facebook the other day that made me laugh. It said something like: 'My brain feels like a computer. There are 17 tabs open, three of them have frozen, and there's music coming from somewhere.'

Do you recognize that feeling? I know I do...

So what we're talking about here is 'busy brain'. That feeling that there is so much going on in our brains, and there seems to be a constant stream of mind-chatter happening.

With everything we are going through at the moment, it's not surprising that this happens. There is so much change taking place right now that is fundamentally affecting the patterns and habits in our life, and this means that we are constantly required to flex and adapt to these changes. And just when you think things have settled down.... there's another change!

And when change is coming down the track, we can spend a large amount of our time thinking about events that haven't even happened yet, playing out different scenarios that could happen and how we might react to them. We can even catastrophise about possible things that may happen in the future, really worrying about the worst case that could happen.

And this is really normal by the way.

But it just doesn't feel good, and it can make you feel stressed and overwhelmed, and you can end up

up snapping at your partner, bursting into tears at the smallest thing, or kicking the dog (don't kick the dog, obvs).

So what can you do to dial down the chatter? First things first. Lean into it.

Give yourself five minutes to allow the chatter to let rip. Grab a pen and paper and just write down any and all thoughts, worries, feelings and anything else that is whizzing around in your head. Doesn't have to be neat and tidy, we're just getting it out of your head and onto paper.

And then, destroy it. Burn it, rip it up, throw it away or shred it - whatever is most satisfying to you.

And then do something to just be in the present moment for five minutes. Have a nice cup of tea without looking at your phone. Really taste the tea and feel the warm mug in your hands. Coming back to the present moment creates a sense of calm and peace in the body and mind.

For self-development resources and to find out about my new Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction courses, visit www.lifesparkcoaching.net/mindfulnessbased-stress-reduction-courses or click on the QR code below.

*Wishing you
great wellbeing.*

Anne





Anne Bryson - Life Coach



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SWING INTO SPRING



Spring is around the corner and now is the perfect time to get out and breathe in the wonderful fresh air and enjoy the great outdoors. Many of us are taking less exercise following months of pandemic restrictions but as the rules are gradually being softened, now is the ideal time to launch yourself from the couch and get active once again.

And what could be more rewarding than dusting off your old racket and enjoying a game of tennis.

Tennis is an amazing workout for your entire body and all that moving around the court can burn up to 600 calories per hour! But it's not only about weight loss, tennis can also offer an array of physical, social and mental health advantages too.

- **Healthy Heart** – Tennis can be both aerobic and anaerobic, the constant stopping and starting continually changes your heart rate enhancing your vascular system helping circulation and blood pressure.
- **Full Body Workout** – One of the main benefits of tennis is that it provides a total head to toe workout. Leg muscles become stronger due to all that running, jumping and bending and the upper body benefits from the swings, twists and turns when hitting the ball.
- **Cognitive Development** – By continually thinking and making strategic decisions tennis encourages brain activity as you anticipate and respond to your opponent's game.
- **Stress Relief** – All that hitting the ball helps relieve frustration and as with other forms of exercise, tennis releases endorphins contributing to improved mood.
- **Flexibility and Balance** – Tennis involves your entire body, your feet and hands need to manoeuvre into the correct position and your torso and legs provide the power. Each shot requires flexibility, coordination and balance.
- **Bone Health** – Exercising regularly can improve bone health and slow the rate of decline which can help with falls and injuries that may damage fragile bones.

But of course tennis isn't only about the variety of health benefits on offer, it is also great fun!

It is an excellent opportunity to build new networks and widen your social circle or if you prefer, just play casually with your current friends. And age is not a barrier, many players continue to enjoy tennis in later life adapting their game to whatever level is comfortable for them.

So why not get in touch with your local club?

Flitwick and Amptill Lawn Tennis Club is based in Astwood Drive just off Windmill Road in Flitwick, new members of all ages and abilities are always welcome with coaching also available for all levels.

The club offers eight courts with floodlighting so members can play throughout the seasons. There are excellent facilities including a large clubhouse, pro shop, bar, toilets, changing rooms and ample parking.

So whether you are a budding Wimbledon Champion or a complete novice come along and join us for a friendly social session with likeminded players or for the more competitive, compete against other tennis clubs in local leagues. A range of membership options are available catering for under 10s to Veterans with a one month trial membership also on offer.

See you on court!

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Keech Hospice Care launches first urgent appeal in their 30-year history...

Keech Hospice Care, who celebrate 30 years of caring this year, are facing huge funding shortfalls as lockdown continues to have a devastating impact on the charity's income.

The charity provide free, specialist care for adults in Luton and south Bedfordshire, and children from Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Milton Keynes living with life-limiting and terminal illnesses.

Keech's doctors and nurses continue to play a vital part in the coronavirus effort. Standing shoulder to shoulder with the NHS on the frontline and providing care for their patients, families and friends both at the hospice and in people's homes. Wearing full PPE and dealing with an unprecedented number of patients, it continues to be a challenging and exhausting environment for the team to care in.

It costs Keech Hospice Care around £6 million a year to provide their specialist care for adults and children with life-limiting and terminal illnesses. Around 70% of that income is generated by supporters so with all 33 charity shops closed and fundraising events cancelled, the hospice is facing a funding gap of around £800,000.

The charity have done everything they can to reduce costs, take advantage of government support and have raised funds virtually but, faced with a funding gap of around £800,000 as they plan for the year ahead, they've decided to take the difficult decision and ask the community who built the hospice 30 years ago to help keep Keech caring.

If you can afford to give a gift today to help keep Keech caring, please donate at www.keech.org.uk/urgent or text URGENT to 70470 to donate £10.

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It goes without saying that during these uncertain times our mental health has been pushed to its limits as adults. The pandemic has had a big effect on us but also on our children.

Many of us parents have been home schooling to the best of our abilities. Some appeared to cope easily with the daily curriculum. Others of us felt like throwing our phones at the wall as we tried, in vain, to satisfy our children's appetite for snacks and keep them motivated in front of a screen. Now that schools are re-open and a roadmap has been laid out it feels as though the clouds are clearing. But what are the long term physical and mental effects of weathering this storm for us and our children?

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some physical exercise, build confidence and have fun at the same time. NEXTGEN allows our next generation to find new skills they can excel at and new ways they can express themselves to make them feel good.

At CrossFit Amphill, our main goal is to improve the lives of our members, their families and the local community through fitness. The pandemic has challenged that. Reduced physical activity and extended periods of isolation posed as much of a threat as the virus itself so we continued to confront this public health threat head on with our strength and conditioning programmes, whether it is online or back in our physical location on Station Road in Amphill.

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The Garden Diary

Colour for April

Getting colour into a garden early in the year is just as important as having a fabulous display in the height of summer. Evergreen shapes and the winter structure of deciduous grasses and herbaceous perennials give you a strong foundation, but flowers extend the season of interest, making your garden space work as hard as possible for you, and the pollinators looking for early sources of nectar. So if you're looking to add colour for April, then these suggestions might be a good place to start.



Amelanchier lamarckii

This can be grown as a shrub or small tree and is a fabulous addition to a sunny or slightly shaded border. Its white starry flowers look magical in March or April. Almost black berries - loved by birds - appear in autumn as its foliage turns a gorgeous bronze colour.

Aquilegia vulgaris

These tough perennials are often found self seeding in many borders, and I love the way they spread over time. If you're looking for something to wind its way through ornamental grasses or in a cottage garden theme, then choose from the 'Barlow' series, which is popular, or 'Nivea' for forming drifts.

Brunnera macrophylla

Perfect for a lightly shaded spot, this herba-

ceous perennial has delightfully intriguing blue-lilac or white flowers from March-May, but it's really the foliage that's the star. Cultivars such as 'Jack Frost' or 'Sea Heart' have veined leaves with a silvery dusting.

Daphne

These are some of the earliest shrubs to flower, with many producing their delicious scent during the winter months. But if you select a summer flowering cultivar such as *D. x transatlantica* 'Eternal Fragrance' or 'Pink Fragrance' you'll have flowers from April into the autumn.

Doronicum orientale

These daisy-like perennials provide a bold splash of yellow as the daffodils begin to fade. They are particularly good for areas where rabbits are present, as they won't go near them, and don't mind a bit of shade.

Magnolia

Famed for their eye-catching chalice-like flowers, the daintier pink and white blooms of *Magnolia x loebneri* 'Leonard Messel' or the smaller *M. stellata* are also worth looking out for. Forming small trees or shrubs, these flower in April.

See you back here in May!



Adrian Cole, Arcadia Horticultural Services



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It's easy to be BEE friendly

April is a very important month for bumble bees. The queens emerge from hibernation and start looking for food for themselves and to stock up the nests they build to start the next generation. As Spring temperatures are reached earlier each year, the queens can wake up ahead of their usual nectar supply, which is where our more resilient and responsive native plant species come in. We call them weeds and can spend a lot of time getting rid of them, but if they are all that's in flower, they are doing a very important job. Common Daisy, Field Woundwort, Germander Speedwell and Dead Nettle add to the bumble bee's early food supply, and no-one needs to cultivate them. They just pop up if we leave them space.

As a seriously fair-weather gardener, I only emerge with the bumble bees, and retreat again once temperatures top 20 degrees. I avoid all hard labour and always leave until tomorrow whatever can be safely left. It is a poor set of attitudes but it suits the bumble bee. Reducing mowing frequency, mowing a little less closely and being a bit more weed tolerant means low growth habit wildflowers like Vetch, Violet, Bird's Foot Trefoil, Wood Sorrell and Forget Me Not can establish. The lawn will not be a perfect green sward - it will be a colourful delight, and working for nature. As well as food for bees, which go on to pollinate all the other flowers in our gardens, crops in our fields and trees in our orchards, microhabitats are created for all the diverse creepy crawlies needed in the food chain.

As I have found out more about what our insect populations do for us, and need from us, I find it hard to get pleasure from a green lawn. It seems a waste of a space that could be so much more. The Ampthill Buzz is establishing Bee Friendly Zones, where vegetation will grow through the Spring and Summer, sometimes with extra planted wildflowers. The team has also worked with the Town Council to reduce mowing of all our street-side verges, which will contribute to supporting pollinators. Every gardener can also help bees, butterflies, hoverflies, bugs and beetles by leaving space for our native wildflowers in our borders and lawns.

To find out more about Ampthill Climate Change Group and The Ampthill Buzz please visit our website
www.ampthillclimatechange.co.uk, or email us at hello@ampthillclimatechange.co.uk

The Ampthill Buzz is supported by The Greensand Country Landscape Partnership. Find out about their work at www.greensandcountry.com

Susan Clinch





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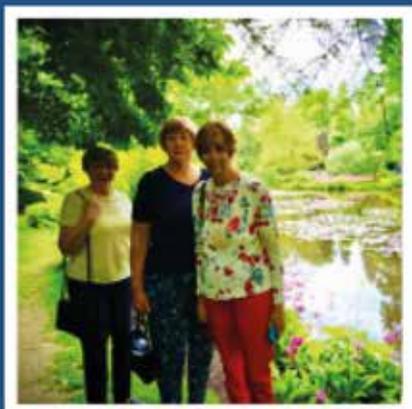
And we all have a variety of reasons for getting involved.

- We enjoy working together to help local, national and international charities - and are proud to have made a positive impact on the lives of many millions of people.
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What Our Clients Say About Us

I was very impressed with the level of thoroughness provided by Helen in reviewing and recommending on my pension and financial affairs. She is also very pleasant and takes the time in answering all your questions. I look forward to a long and financially rewarding relationship.

Ms. H, Amphill

We had concerns about choosing a financial adviser and did not have confidence in people we had initial discussions with. We felt confident in Helen from the outset and she explained our options very clearly.

Mr and Mrs. P, Maulden

Helen Vaughan and her staff are professional, knowledgeable and helpful in every area in which they advise me. Excellent Service. Thank you.

Mrs. S, Flitwick

I found Helen professional, but with a valuable personal touch, remembering important family details and understanding personal goals. Further advice and guidance provided outside the 1 to 1 meeting was provided promptly and in detail. Your support and administration team have also been efficient and professional. Thank you.

Mr. S, Shefford

At first it was a bit daunting for us to see a financial adviser, but Danielle made it really easy to understand and was very supportive, thank you!

Mr. and Mrs. B, Amphill

Danielle has always been proactive in dealing with things and made herself available when needed. The rest of the team are always on the ball with focus and applications too.

Mr. B, Amphill

Danielle and her team are extremely knowledgeable and helpful and we felt very confident in their advice.

Mr. and Mrs S, Amphill.

Danielle Fagot has been very helpful in explaining the investment market and the element of risk, as I am a new-comer to the investment market. It is early days and I am very satisfied with the service provided by Fiona Gray Financial Planning and the team.

Mr. C, Clophill

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HIGH FIVE FOR OLLIE



For Westoning mum, Lucy Sweeney, there's only one present she dreams about receiving – and that's to raise enough money to help her brave four-year-old son, who loves fire engines, cars, planes and Fireman Sam, beat cancer after a devastating relapse.

Lucy and her husband, Gary, need to raise at least £600k to give their

little boy, Ollie, the best chance of survival after he was diagnosed with high-risk neuroblastoma, an aggressive childhood cancer, just before his 2nd birthday in January 2019.

"We can't even describe the feelings we felt when we were told. It was quite simply the worst day of our lives," admit Lucy and Gary, who also have an eighteen-month-old son, Jake. "No one can prepare you for it, but we had to accept it and be strong for Ollie."

Shortly after receiving the shocking diagnosis, Ollie, a cheeky, happy go lucky boy, underwent invasive and intensive treatment, including high-dose chemotherapy, 12 hours of surgery, stem cell harvest, radiotherapy and blood transfusions. And initially the treatment did work with Ollie's parents told in Spring 2020, there was no evidence of the disease. Unfortunately, their joy was short lived. By July 2020, Ollie became unwell again and an MRI scan found his rare cancer had returned.

Undeterred, both parents remained incredibly strong. They explain: "We decided that no one was allowed to cry around him – if we felt ourselves feeling emotional, we left the room for a moment and just tried to be positive around him."

More surgery followed for poor Ollie with around 10-20% of the tumour removed. And then came more devastating news that the tumour was so aggressive it was unlikely he would survive. Transferred to Keech Hospice

in Luton, the family prepared themselves for the worse.

But still Ollie fought on and weeks later, the family had the biggest surprise they could ever dare to dream of when doctors told them Ollie's tumour was miraculously shrinking. Treatment continued and by January 2021, Ollie was once again in remission.

Now a big campaign – called High Five For Ollie (because the loving four-year-old is famous for giving out his High Fives!) – is underway to raise £600k needed to send Ollie to New York, where he could participate in a clinical trial, Bivalent Vaccine, as there is no additional treatment he needs available on the NHS. No other European hospital currently offers the Vaccine either due to the Covid pandemic.

This trial aims to prevent the cancer coming back and it is showing some promising results in those patients who have suffered a relapse with 54% remaining clear of the disease after the review period of 21 months and 90% of the children in the study surviving.

Currently, Ollie's chances of survival beyond five years are less than 10%.

Kind-hearted residents in and around Bedfordshire and beyond have already pulled together to raise more than £217k. Lucy says it would mean the world to them if anyone would like to make a donation. She adds: "No parent should ever have to go through this painful journey we are living, and with your help and support, you could be saving Ollie's life."

If you would like to donate, go to Ollie's fundraising page www.solvingkidscancer.org.uk/appeal/ollie





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Still helping animals in need – even during a pandemic

It's been a tough time for the whole world. Covid has stomped all over lives and livelihoods and it continues to affect everyone. Amidst all the chaos, animals have still needed our help and, here at Bedfordshire South RSPCA, we've continued to do the very best we can - in the most trying of circumstances. We have taken in 70

cats alone since the start of the pandemic. Distressingly, our main source of income – the charity shop in Amptill – has had to close several times. It's been closed completely since the last lockdown was announced late December 2020.

Everything ground to a halt, very suddenly, when the first lockdown was announced in March 2020. The shop was shut and the cats, dogs and rabbits in foster-care were unexpectedly in our care indefinitely as we all held our breath and waited to see what would happen. We all waited for things to get better and for infections and death rates to drop.

In the summer, as things began to move again, we were given guidelines from the Head Office. We were able to conduct 'viewings' and home visits via videoconference. Our fosters could only be rehomed locally and had to be delivered to their new home by local fosterers or our Branch Manager; at all times ensuring the highest safety standards were maintained. It felt clinical and distant for fosterers who loved their temporary wards so much but it meant they'd be moved to their new forever homes sooner rather than later.

The dedication of the fosterers on our team has always been incredible and it's been a

great joy that we've been able to increase the size of our fostering team. They soldier on, relentless, bringing new rescues into their homes, settling them, assessing them, loving them and finding them their new adopter families. We've had some real characters come in during this past year – some looking utterly filthy and downtrodden (like O'Malley, pictured), others full of sass, some terrified of their own shadow, others angry and lashing out. We've loved and cared for them all.



For the Branch, the Amptill shop is one of our main sources of income but the lockdowns have meant that the shop has been closed for months at a time. Thus, a loss of income for months at a time.

The RSPCA is a charity and, like all other charities, we rely on donations and fundraising. Each and

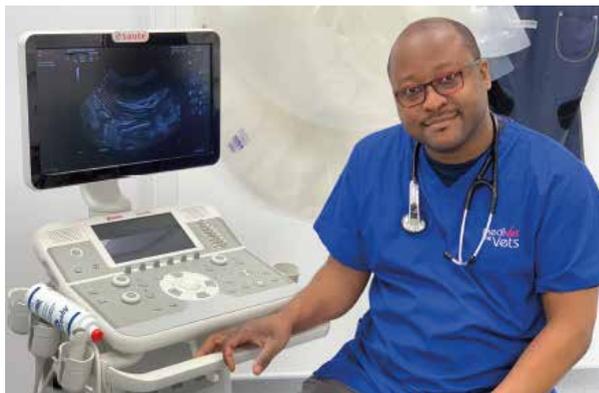
every branch of the RSPCA is treated as an independent charity, responsible for keeping itself afloat. We do not receive any government funding and our Branch relies heavily on our shop. The closing of the shop has been quite a blow.

We hope to be able to re-open the shop on 12th April 2021. Should you wish to book a slot to drop off donations, please email info@rspca-bedfordshiresouth.org.uk

We're also on the lookout for more cat, dog and rabbit fosterers as well as Trustees. If you would be interested in finding out more, please get in touch. And visit our Facebook page where we're hoping to do plenty more online fundraising soon!

Jo – Fosterer & Trustee





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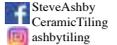
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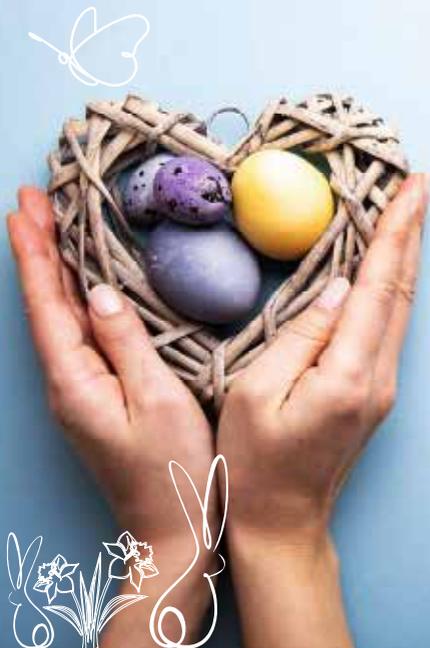
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