

The Oracle

Bedfordshire

COVERING JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2022



NEW local
Dentist
Page 18

Want to write
a BOOK?
Page 22

Unhappy with
your JOB?
Page 16

Learn to
DANCE!
Page 10

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Since 2006 there have been many legal changes. Most recently we have been given a new inheritance tax allowance which may not apply if there is a discretionary trust in your Will. With the full use of our inheritance tax allowances many estates will not pay inheritance tax.

In many cases the family needs may have changed and there may have been births and marriages and even deaths.

You may have appointed an older person as executor and trustee of your Will. This is an onerous duty which may now be more willingly assumed by a younger family member.

Many of us are in second marriages or relationships and wish to provide for children of the first marriage as well as providing security for the second spouse or current partner. This can be done.

If you are in a lasting relationship but are not either married or a registered civil partner then you have no automatic inheritance rights. It is therefore extremely important that partners should protect each other by having Wills.

The incidence of bitter and costly legal battles within families has dramatically increased. This is often caused by home-made Wills or the use of Will forms. Real estate values are now very high and so often the amount of money in dispute is also considerable. Disputes split families and cost a lot.

Getting legal advice and having your Will drafted professionally is a 'one off' cost and can often result in lower inheritance tax being charged on your estate.

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LPAs enable your chosen attorneys to manage your affairs and pay your bills. Without them if you should suffer an accident or become ill or infirm and unable to manage, then even a joint bank account is frozen and a family member will have to apply to Court for a Deputyship Order. This is cumbersome and expensive.

If the Local Authority considers that an elderly person should move to a Care Home, a Deprivation of Liberty Order can be served. If the person has an LPA for Health and Welfare this decision rests with the chosen attorneys.

It is always best to discuss such matters with a professionally qualified person.

If you would like to discuss any of these issues please do telephone Susan Shaw on 01525 862053.

Susan has degrees from Kings College London University. She has worked in London as a corporate lawyer, has lectured in commercial law, followed by working for a Solicitors firm in Surrey prior to setting up on her own ten years ago.



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Hello Readers



The New Year is the time we take a look at our lives and contemplate making changes or starting something new. Well, I have been out and about getting some ideas for you!

If its more movement you're after, what about a dance class? Professional dancer and teacher, Elena, runs dance classes in Ampthill. As you can see, I can vouch that she is a brilliant teacher and the classes are great fun. Check it out on page 10 and then get dancing!

Or, have you always fancied yourself a singer? Local choir, Alive and Singing, is run by Barbara Fleet. Singing lifts your spirits, is good for you physically and mentally and all round good fun. Find out how you can join in on page 6.

What about a new sport? I give you Taekwondo on page 20. Bored with your job? Then Career Coaching with Anne Bryant, page 16, is a must. Or what about that book you've always wanted to write? We've got advice from local author, Cali Bird on how to get started on page 22.

There's no excuse now ... make it your mission to start something new in 2022!

But, if your mission is cutting back on the demon drink, you should have a look at the article by Dr Steve Garner on page 12 and you might want to rethink your strategy....

I am leaving for Senegal at the end of December to work on a hospital ship, the Africa Mercy. Because of this the current Oracle issue covers January AND February and the next issue will cover March and April.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of my 'crew' who are supporting me and enabling me to go; the people who are looking after my house, my family, The Oracle, my dog, my car, my garden etc whilst I am away. You all know who you are ...

If at all possible I will be reporting on my experiences in the March/April Oracle. But if you would like to follow me whilst I am away, I will be posting regularly on my instagram account @kirsty1bourne.

I hope you all have a happy and healthy New Year and wish you all the best for 2022.

Kirsty

QUIZ WINNER!

Thank you to everyone who entered the November Cities Quiz. The winner of £50 was Helene Bradshaw from Clophill The Quiz will be returning in the Spring!

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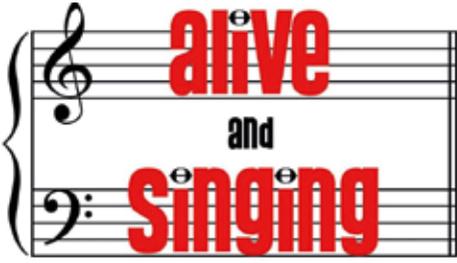
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A decade ago, any mention of a choir would probably have made you think of Sunday morning hymns. But there's been a sea change in attitudes perhaps due to the impact of Gareth Malone and the fact that more mainstream, modern music has been added to repertoires. It is estimated that an incredible 2.8 million Britons are now members of a choir.

This is good news for group singing not only helps forge social bonds but it has long been believed that music-making can create a strong sense of well-being, improving physical and mental health.

I run Alive and Singing mixed choirs for adults in Ampthill, Wootton, Stevenage and Milton Keynes. They meet weekly and sing pop, rock, Motown and gospel music for pleasure.

I did a degree in music then went on to teach music for twenty-six years and I've always loved singing in choirs. I started as a choir member of Alive and Singing and when our leader decided to emigrate to Canada, I took over because I didn't want to see the choir fold.

People come to the choir from all walks of life. Most can remember being in their school choir and haven't really sung since then. There is no audition, no experience is necessary and there is no need to read music. If you can speak, you can also sing!

Quite a lot of the members joined when the choir first started 11 years ago. Some

people stay for a year or two but most stay for much longer. There are many wonderful friendship groups that have formed in the choir and it's a great way to relax and forget your worries for a couple of hours a week.

We sing a real variety of songs, all the way from the 60's right up to the modern day in many pop genres. The choir members love singing Mister Blue Sky by ELO and Runaway by The Corrs and I think our latest one 'Sweet Child of Mine' by Guns and Roses will become a firm favourite too.

We have performed several times at The Stables and we've sung at various Christmas shows, including Center Parcs at Woburn, at fairs, fetes, Summer music festivals, and variety concerts. We also have our big end of year shows. The next one is on the 26th of June 2022 at the Corn Exchange.

The Ampthill Choir meets at 7.30pm on Monday evenings at Parkside Hall in Woburn Road. This is a Covid secure, air-conditioned venue with good facilities.

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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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Your Chance to Dance!



New Ballroom and Latin dance classes in Ampthill

Has the latest 'Strictly' season rekindled your desire to salsa like the celebrities yet again?

You've watched the progress of the contestants over the weeks and you can't fail to notice how hooked they all become as they realise that dancing is so much more than just learning the steps.

Dancing is a wonderful combination of physical exercise, mental therapy and fun! The gym just doesn't compare. And when it all comes together - the steps, the music, the costumes - there's a sense of achievement, elation and exhilaration that is difficult to surpass.

So, now YOU have the chance to experience the joy of dance - whether as a beginner or intermediate - at dance classes in Parkside Hall, Ampthill.

Dance teacher, Elena Cataeva started to dance at the age of 6 and now runs dance schools in South Herts and North London. She recently moved to Silsoe and realised quickly that what the area needed was its own dance school.

Elena was four times World and European Champion in Ballroom Formation and obviously has a passion for dance and teaching. She has more than 30 years of dancing experience, 20 of which have combined teaching and performing.

Elena teaches all the standard ballroom and latin dances in International or American Smooth/Rhythm style.



Additionally classes in Argentine Tango, Salsa, Bachata, Mambo, Merengue are available. You can join one of her group classes at Parkside Hall on a Thursday night or book private lessons. Here you will be able to gain the skills and confidence to help you to enjoy dancing as a sociable pastime.

And are you one of the many couples that have had to delay their wedding celebrations? Well, why not book Elena to coach you for your wedding dance? Nothing satisfies Elena more than seeing students progress, achieve their goals and experience the feeling of happiness that dancing can bring.

As so many of the celebrities on Strictly have said, dancing teaches you about yourself, it builds confidence, self-respect and discipline, it improves your posture and your ability to think, all whilst meeting new people, making friends and learning an enjoyable social skill.

So, if you've been thinking about giving it a go, why not take that first step, because inside every dancer, there is a beginner that fell in love.

**Don't wait for the next Strictly season...
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January ... Wet or dry?



We human beings certainly know how to punish ourselves.

After a festive month in which most of us will have over indulged either drinking or eating too much, and perhaps spent a little too much on Uncle Jim's Christmas present, do we take it easy? No we don't!

So, with joy and laughter in the rear-view mirror; what do we do?

January stretches ahead, dark and empty of fun with pay day a long 5 weeks away. So NOW we decide to forgo the simplest of life's pleasures; a glass of something warming or chilled to lighten up the long day. We make things worse for ourselves.

Dear reader, may I ask you to indulge me as I take an alternative view?

Increasingly, scientific research has linked the immune system to your gut AND your mind; it effects how we think and act. It is becoming apparent that these complex systems are more closely interlinked than we might have once assumed. The parts of the immune system communicate with each other using small molecules which are closely related to the neurotransmitters of the nervous system. These so-called signal molecules talk to each other. They link our immune systems to mood.

A similar conversation exists between some gut cells and our immune response cells. There is, then, a direct link between diet and gut health, the immune system and the mind. I have even seen it suggested that some of the components of red wine promote gut health.

Perhaps a tendency to self-flagellation stems from an Anglo-Saxon heritage: feast and fasting were common bed-fellows; periods of abstinence would follow

indulgence. Having been entertained and indulged, Lords and peasants alike would retire to lick their wounds and count the cost.

Or has our mostly dreadful climate a role to play? Let us suffer the long, dark and frosty nights without the balm of a cup of cheer. I have no proof of this, but I certainly can't imagine our Mediterranean cousins embarking on a month of self-denial.

No doubt news bulletins and papers will be full of stories of the NHS being overwhelmed and I am certainly not going to downplay the many instances of serious illness which will inevitably surface as a result of the epidemic we have all lived through.

But can't we just go a little easy on ourselves in 2022 and perhaps, with the help of a good diet, a little of what you fancy may just help us think our way into health. After all, as someone said, a day without wine is like a day without sun.

Cheers!

Steve Garner

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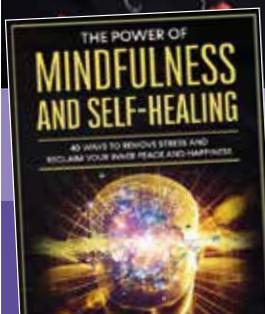
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How did I know there were 62, you ask? Well, most of them were drowsy or on their way out. Let's say they were 'having a lie down'. And any that were a bit more lively got sprayed, until they too, felt compelled to have a lie down.

Now, please don't think I'm an evil cow with a penchant for offing insects. I don't relish extinguishing the light of little souls, but quite frankly, they were in my house, and I needed them to not be.

If I find a spider in my house, I usher them out of the window using a hairspray lid and a postcard, and I've been known to feed drowsy bees sugar water until they are strong enough to fly away.

But wasps? Nope. Not on my watch, buddy.

But what has this got to do with career change?

We all have the capacity to tolerate a certain amount of stuff. We can cope with a certain level of circumstance that we don't like. But we have a threshold. A tipping point. And when that tipping point is reached, we do differently. We can act in ways that are vastly different to what we normally do.

Turns out my tipping point is 62 wasps. In normal circumstances, I wouldn't dream of harming a fly (literally), but my tipping

point got triggered: decisive action was required to dispatch those stingy-arsed invaders.

So let me ask you this: If you are in a job that you are still, somehow just about tolerating, what is your tipping point?

If you are doing your damndest to find ways to cope in that stressful / toxic / demotivating / meaningless job, what is the threshold that will have you acting differently? Taking decisive action?

What is the point at which you take that first step into finding a new career that you love?

Perhaps you have already? Or maybe your version of 62 wasps is just around the corner?

Either way, when it comes, recognise it for what it is: an invitation to do differently and decide if your capacity to tolerate that unpleasant situation has run out. Maybe you too might want to reach for the spray?

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Your New Local Dentist, Dr Salaman Iqbal

SILSOE DENTAL CLINIC



Dr Salaman is a well-known local dentist who has recently moved from Flitwick to Silsoe to launch his first private practice.

He studied Dentistry at Kings College London before moving to the University of Central Lancashire in Preston to complete his Masters in Oral Surgery. His first Dental Practitioner role within an NHS practice was in Kent. He moved to Essex in 2014 but a desire to practice closer to home brought him back to Bedfordshire in 2018.

"I love being a Dentist, no two days are the same. I enjoy connecting with my patients and putting them at ease if they are nervous. I believe that first impressions are so important, and a person's smile is a big part of that. Improving someone's smile and oral health contributes massively to their self-confidence. The satisfaction of achieving great results after treatment is really worth the time, effort and detail."

The importance of regular check-ups with a good dentist is vital as Oral Health is also linked to other common ailments. Sometimes poor Oral health is the first sign of a greater health problem such as Diabetes which can go un-detected if not monitored closely.

Outside of work, Dr Salaman is a black belt Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Instructor and trains 6 days a week. After surgery hours, he runs Luton Grappling Club for adults and an Academy for children.

Dr Salaman is heavily involved in charity work. He spent 6 weeks in an orphanage in Indonesia during the 2004 Tsunami, visited Pakistan regularly from 2005-2010 during the Earthquake and Flash floods and has been an Aid worker in Bangladesh providing aid to families living in some of the worst conditions this century has seen.

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Taekwon-Do as a sport has over 60 million practitioners in 184 countries. The name Taekwon-Do literally translates as the way of the foot and fist. It is a Korean military martial art which is characterised by its fast explosive movements and beautiful, dangerous kicks.

Although relatively modern it is essentially an art coming from a very ancient tradition. To the Korean people, Taekwon-Do is more than a mere use of skilled movements, it is also a way of thinking and life.

As well as the sporting and self-defence aspects to Taekwon-Do, the exercise one gets from martial arts training improves balance, flexibility, stamina, strength and posture. Unlike many other forms of physical activity, martial arts also have a mental element which

not only improves the minds focus but also helps provide confidence and self-control.

Recently two Instructors from Finch Taekwon-Do club in Ampthill were promoted at a grading held in Leicester by Grand Master Sahota 9th Degree. Jon Finch was promoted to 7th Degree Master and Jo-Anne Finch was awarded 6th Degree Black Belt. Both have been training in excess of 30 years and teaching in Ampthill for some time.

If you would like to learn more about Finch Taekwon-Do, and what it has to offer whether it be for fitness, self-confidence, a new challenge or just to join a local group, contact Master Finch 7th Degree on 07711349383 or email info@finchtaekwondo.co.uk

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Is This The Year You Write That Book?

Many people express a desire to write a book. These tips will help you get started whether you've got a fantastic story buzzing around your head or you want to impart your expertise with non-fiction.

Your writing does not have to be perfect

Whilst it's true that the first line or page of a book has to grab the reader, you don't need that killer sentence right now. Allow yourself to write whatever comes out and improve it later.

Sometimes it may feel that you are writing rubbish. This is normal. Keep going. There are times when I have spent days writing what feels like trash but then a wonderful idea emerges. If I hadn't persisted through the drivel, then I would not have revealed the golden nugget.

Remember that a first draft is exactly that — a draft. Books go through several drafts but you can't revise what isn't on the page, so just get it down.

Write in small chunks

It is tempting to think you have to quit your job to write a book but in reality it can be done in small chunks of time. I shoot for 500 words a day which I can do in twenty minutes.

Other people like to set a minimum of ten minutes a day. The average novel is 80,000 words so at 500 words a day you could get the first draft done in six months.

It is better to have a small target and achieve it than to be too ambitious and give up because your goal is unsustainable.

Fiction: to plan or not to plan

Some writers like to have a detailed outline of their story before they start the writing, others dump their characters in a sticky situation and start writing to find out what happens. There is no right or wrong method. You have to find your own way and you will only learn by doing.

I tend to take a hybrid approach where I will write a couple of scenes and journal as one or two of the characters. This gives me a few ideas of what might happen and then I create a rough plan before writing a first draft.

Non-fiction: definitely plan

A good way to structure a non-fiction book is to write the Table of Contents first. Each of your main strands of information will be a chapter and then you can



figure out what the subheadings in each chapter should be. You could even drill down to a further level of subheadings. When it comes to the writing, you'll have bitesize pieces in a logical flow that can be easily written in that 20 minute sitting or 500 words at a time.

Just start

Whatever it is that you want to write, just start on it. Expressing one's creativity is like building and exercising a muscle — it needs to be done regularly and the more you exercise it, the more responsive it becomes. Get writing, have fun!

Cali

For more tips to get started on a creative project go to www.gentlecreative.com

Check out Ampthill Writers Group at ampthillwriters.wordpress.com/

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January is National Walk Your Dog Month

Heading outside, rain or shine?

I've just enjoyed an uplifting walk around Coopers Hill and Ampthill Park with my dog, Meg. The views across to north Beds were magnificently clear yet the wind was bitterly cold across the top of the ridge in the park – definitely bracing! I called 'good morning' to numerous other dog owners and walkers as well as greeting and stroking many dogs.

Meg found several 'special' sticks around the walk that she repeatedly brought to me to throw. I find it truly joyous to watch Meg. She loves being out and about, nose down and tail wagging constantly.

The simplicity of her happiness is infectious and uplifting and the benefits to both of us are evident. We both get to expend energy and improve our fitness, enjoy the wonderful sights and smells of Ampthill and, most importantly, engage with each other. We have great demands put upon us in life: family, work and never-ending household chores! Yet getting outside, enables us to be free of these pressures. We can leave it all behind and focus on our dogs who thrive on our attention. We can focus on our dog's body language, talk to and play with them and also interact with other dogs and people.

We've always walked our Springer Spaniels twice a day. It's a big commitment and at times can feel restrictive but our dogs have always been the better for us sticking to the routine. Their energy levels are well managed as are their bodily functions! And in between, they're happy to chill out indoors.



The time/distance that each dog needs varies depending on their breed and for puppies, it's important to stick to the rule of 5 minutes for each month of their life each walk to protect their joints. Sadly, under-exercised puppies and dogs can display unwanted behaviours indoors and are much more difficult to train. Fighting against a cumulatively under-exercised dog with excessive pent up energy is no fun.

After the excesses of Christmas, we'll all benefit from an increase in exercise. We are tremendously spoilt with a plethora of walking routes in and around Ampthill that snake through Coopers Hill, Ampthill Park, Houghton House plus the newly created Katherine's Walk by Greensand Country that circles Ampthill and Steppingly (and conveniently takes you very close to Wooden Hill Coffee for a pit stop!). Varying our walking routes not only gives us the ability to enjoy the plentiful, stunning views available to us in our spectacular landscape but for our dogs to revel in the accompanying delicious scents and smells.

So whatever the weather, get toggged up and get outside for some invigorating fresh air, endorphins and vitamin D!

Katherine Patrick

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The Garden Diary

Year of the Tiger

It's a brand new year, and while many celebrations are over by the 1st January, the Chinese New Year starts at the end of January with the main event sparking to life in February. This year happens to be that of my Chinese lunar animal - the tiger - so in keeping with its adventurous characteristics, let's take a look at some of the plants in our gardens originating from China, and the courageous European collectors who brought them to the West.

Camellia sinensis var. sinensis

While many of the Camellia cultivars found in our gardens are from Japan, or are hybrids developed in Europe, Camellia sinensis var. sinensis certainly has its origins in China. Its leaves are used to make tea. 18th-century plant hunters had a heck of a job trying to find plants to bring back, and many attempts were foiled after they were given Camellia japonica to deliberately put them off the scent!



Magnolia campbellii subsp. mollicamata
Brought to Britain by plant collector George Forrest in 1924, this hardy subspecies was

'discovered' in the Himalayas. Forrest was an avid explorer, and made seven trips to East Asia, barely escaping with his life on some occasions, either because of illness or after being attacked.

Acer griseum

This tree looks superb all year round, with its copper-coloured peeling bark (it's common name is the paperbark maple). While it's becoming harder to find these trees in their native China through deforestation, it's a favourite with garden designers. E. H. Wilson is credited with sending seed back to Britain in the early 1900s.

Paeonia lactiflora

These herbaceous perennials were grown in China and surrounding areas for their medicinal value (the roots could be used to treat cramps - don't try this at home!). It was only after their introduction to Europe that they were cultivated, by gardeners such as James Kelway in the mid-19th century, for their fabulous blooms and fragrance. Kelways nursery still operates today, selling peonies and other plants.

*Wishing you all
a Happy New
Year - whenever
you celebrate it*



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Why plant a tree?

Getting someone else to plant a tree seems very easy. I can plant a tree by drinking beer, oatmilk or smoothies, by buying the right brand of petrol or diesel, flying with a particular airline or choosing a particular t-shirt. I'm not entirely sure all those things help tackle climate change though.

I read about the scale of deforestation and wonder if I can make a difference. In our towns and villages, we don't want trees. We want open space to play and picnic and we need land for houses and factories and roads. Pipes, pavements and foundations need to be kept safe from roots. We don't want our gardens to be shaded.

So why is Amphill Climate Change Group helping to have trees and hedgerows planted in our town?

Well here is the answer:

Bringing trees back into our built up spaces can protect us from noise and pollution, and bring insects, birds and other wildlife into our gardens and open spaces. Trees mark the passage of time and help us feel connected with place - 15 years ago my daughter's lower school class planted a tree in Westminster Field in Amphill Great Park: that tree is part of our family's sense of belonging here. Planting trees together helps us build links with neighbours and within our community.

Trees can be planted to remember loved ones and to celebrate family events. We will plant trees this year to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. They are an investment in the future as well as a reminder of our links to the past.

So, although it makes only the tiniest difference to climate change, ACCG will continue to find little spaces in our built-over parish to support residents wanting a few trees or a few metres of hedgerow. We will investigate how to help residents wanting trees on their streets. We will continue to work with Central Bedfordshire Council's Sustainability Department and the Forest of Marston Vale to find ways of funding tree planting.

One tree is a great and lovely thing, roots binding the soil, shade provided in the summer, fertility from fallen leaves after the winter, habitat, food, and nesting space for wildlife, but also providing joy and beauty for our communities.

We can't solve all the ills of climate change by planting a few trees, but we can get together as communities to make a statement about the sort of future we want. A tree says most of that.

To find out more about tree planting schemes and organisations mentioned, see www.queensgreencanopy.org/ www.treesforstreets.org/

www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/42/stronger_communities/678/community_grants/4
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You can find out more about Amphill Climate Change Group on our website www.amphillclimatechange.co.uk

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WHAT MADE YOU DO THIS?

I got made redundant just over a year ago and never wanted to go back to that environment.

WHAT WERE YOU DOING BEFORE?

I had various roles within the motor industry, starting as a sales executive and working my way up to general management.

WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

My biggest challenge was and still is trying to move people away from supermarket meat to a much better alternative.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT YOUR WORK?

I am passionate about good quality food and so spending the time seeking out good produce is fun. The feedback from my customers is what drives me, hearing that it was the best steak or joint they've ever had. That's what makes me tick.

WHAT'S THE HARDEST BIT?

I can't lie, the 2am alarm for the run to London's Smithfield market isn't fun.

WHAT'S YOUR DREAM?

I'm hoping to expand to national delivery so that more people can enjoy great meat!

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Kerry Large- KL Bedfordshire Sports Massaging

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WHAT MADE YOU DO THIS?

I love to help fix/reduce clients' aches and pains, and/or help clients achieve a goal.

WHAT WERE YOU DOING BEFORE?

I am an elite paratriathlete competing across the world for Great Britain. I have been World Champion. I felt I had a lot of personal experience with pain and injuries that I could pass on and help others.

WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

The pandemic was a big challenge but gave me time to expand my skills, meaning I had more knowledge when I re-opened.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT YOUR WORK?

I treat a variety of clients like a 15 year old national swimmer, an elite athlete, someone who works at a desk all day suffering with neck/back pain, an 85 year old with general aches and pains or a pregnant lady. Every day is different, and the job satisfaction is very high.

WHAT'S THE HARDEST BIT?

Seeing a client arrive at their first appointment in pain.

WHAT'S YOUR DREAM?

To keep growing my business and to keep learning.

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Meetings take place in the afternoons (in January, February, March, September, October and November).

Outings to National Trust places and other properties, gardens and places of interest are arranged during the year. We organise an increasingly popular annual lunch and also arrange spring and autumn holidays.

Membership is open to volunteers and members of the National Trust and to those interested in supporting the Trust. The annual subscription is £10 for the first member and £5 for additional members at the same address.

A warm welcome awaits you at the Bedford Association, so why not come along and sample the friendly atmosphere of our group? Non-members are welcome at our talks, so you can 'try before you buy'!

For details of upcoming talks and more, take a look on our website at: e-voice.org.uk/bedfordnt.

Our next meeting is on Tuesday 18th January 2022 at 2.15pm at the Addison Centre, Kempston MK42 8PN. The speaker is Ian Keable on 'The Century of Deception - The Birth of the Hoax in 18th Century England'



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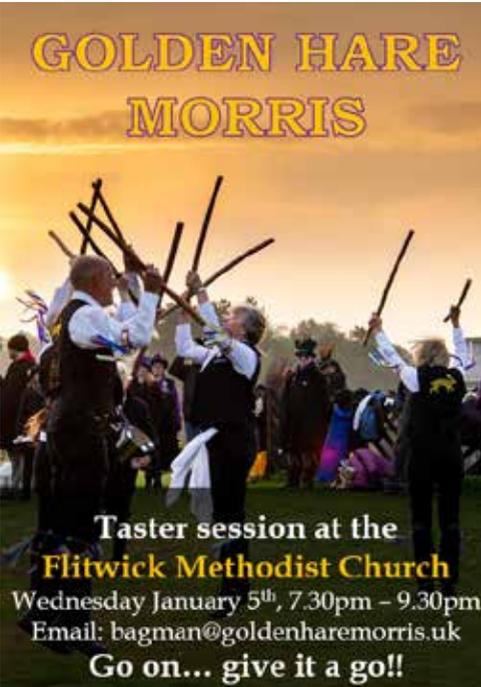
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ELECTRICIANS

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BBSC Electrical Services

David J Rose

DP Electrical

Flitwick Electrical Supplies

ESTATE AGENTS & PROPERTY

25 Country Properties

EVENTS

5 Diary Page

Emma Robbins Singer

8 Paul's Party Zone

FENCING & PATIOS

67 JE Landscapes

56 OC Fencing & Brickwork

59 Resolute Fencing

FINANCIAL/BUSINESS SERVICES

7 Caliber Financial Management

14 Hills-Howson Financial Planning

19 Mayflower Accountancy

Woburn Street Financial Services

FITNESS/SPORT/HEALTH

29 KL Sports Massage

52 La La Dancing

65 Paul's Combat Training

52 Taekwon-Do

FOOD/RESTAURANTS

8 French Horn

54 The Meat Club

65 Youngs Fish & Chips, Silsoe

FUNERAL & BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

49 AL & G Abbott

33 FURNITURE

AMc Furniture Restoration

GARDEN SERVICES

Dab Hand Lawn Care

37 David Harris

Gardens by Gary

28 JE Landscapes

Miles Landscapes

26 OC Fencing & Brickwork

Prestige Lawns

RAS Machinery

17 RJ Groundworks

15 SI Waterscapes

Stuart Brown

IRONING SERVICES

63 Pressed 4 Time

JEWELLERY

40 Jodie Gearing Bespoke Jewellery

JOBS

64 Community Voluntary Service

64 Financial Services Administrator

Teaching

KITCHEN SERVICES

18 & 19 Drawers 'n' Doors

51 Dream Doors

Luton Kitchens

LEGAL SERVICES

65 Austin & Carnley Solicitors

20 Machins Solicitors LLP

20 Maplebrook Wills

65 Shaws Wills

LOCKSMITHS

51 D & G Short

OPTICIANS

50 Ideal Eye

OVEN CLEANING

68 Ovensclean

OvenWizards

PAINTING & DECORATING

61 Adam Hancock

61 Florida Decor

62 JD Decorators & Maintenance

62 Little Pink Painting Company

69 MJP Decorating

62 NS Decorating

62 Paul Douglas

PET SERVICES

43 Dogs A Foot Amphill

43 Happy Pets at Home

PLASTERERS

Hunter Plastering

42 Mr Skim

PLUMBING & HEATING

17 171 Plumbing & Heating

54 Baileys Heating Company

65 Ben Abbott Plumbing & Heating

55 CMW Gas Plumbing & Heating

42 CSM Plumbing & Heating

13 Matthew Holliday

P Wilson

Puzzle Plumbers

37 SLH Plumbing & Heating

54 Tap Man

65 Wourn Heating

PLUMBING SUPPLIES

67 F & A Plumbing Supplies

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE/ HANDYMAN

34 50+ Home Repairs

64 Greensand Property Maintenance

64 Job Done

34 M S Giles

REMOVALS

33 Stephens Removals

REPAIRS & ALTERATIONS

63 Face T

64 The Stitchery

SECURITY

50 Maximum Security

TAXI/CHAUFFEUR

17 DLS Elite

TILING

38 Steve Ashby Ceramic Tiling

TREE SERVICES

33 Eden Professional Tree Services

63 Michael Martin Tree Services

63 Tree Surgery

VACUUM REPAIR

27 PJL Vacuum Repair & Service

WASHING MACHINE/ OVEN REPAIRS

63 Tim Downing

WINDOWS/CONSERVATORIES

47 Clearview Double Glazing

44 Cloudy2Clear

45 Flitwick Glass

45 Kings Windows

46 MJG

47 Nu-Look

46 Quality Windows

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