

CONSERVATION NEWS

Kent

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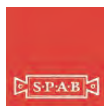
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Natural swimming pools

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WELCOME

SUMMER 2024



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According to the calendar it's officially summer, even if the weather is a bit slow to catch up! That means longer days, school holidays, and lots of fantastic trips out in our wonderful county.

It's also a great time to do things around the house, or finally get the builders for that extra special project. We've got some brilliant articles to guide you if you're thinking of making changes around your home, including tips on greenhouses and gardens, natural swimming ponds and ranges, and even the low down on choosing the right four-poster bed for your period home.

Add to this two scrumptious summer recipes and the chance to win a cookbook; and there's also a tour and tasting at Mereworth Wines to be won! Don't forget to enter both competitions and follow us on social media.

We'll be back with all your favourite features in autumn; in the meanwhile, enjoy everything summer has to offer!

Dawn

Competition winner from spring issue: Hilary Furley, Maidstone



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conservationnews.co.uk

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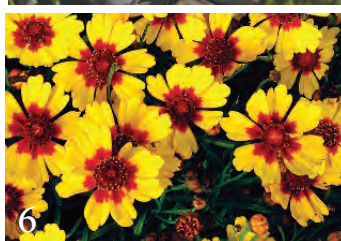


SUMMER 2024

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Amazing butterflies

As a county, Kent supports 42 different species of butterfly. Some of these are rare or vulnerable, which places great importance on their conservation. Spot them in your garden, in churchyards, local parks or open countryside, where there is a mix of flowering plants, grassland, hedgerows and trees. Suggested sites to spot butterflies in parks and open countryside include: Trosley and Brockhill Country Parks and Woodland Trust's Hucking Estate between Maidstone and Sittingbourne.

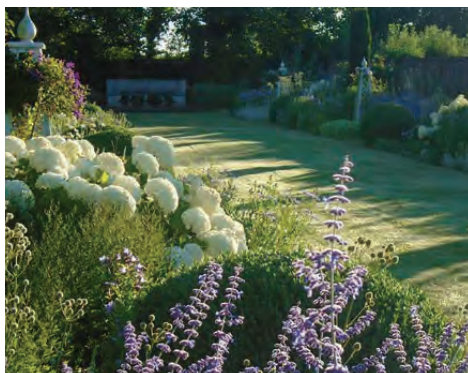


LET'S GROW...

Beetroot seed can be sown any time up to mid-July and sowing at two-week intervals will give you lots of this crop over a long time. A row of beetroot takes up very little space in a veg patch, and it can also be grown in containers on a sunny patio or balcony. Packed with antioxidants, carbohydrates, potassium and folic acid, it's one of the healthiest vegetables you can eat.

GARDEN NOTES

For lazy afternoons in the sun and long evenings socialising, there is no better time to enjoy your garden than the summer months. Make the most of the warm weather by creating a beautiful space to relax in, whether that's with blankets of vibrant lowers or an impressive focal point.



NEW NGS GARDENS IN KENT

The National Garden Scheme, which sees private gardens open to the public for exclusive access, has revealed its list of locations for this year, with 10 beautiful new gardens opening across the county including:

Chapel Farmhouse, Deal

This farmhouse garden is small but bespoke and designed by award-winning designer Kristina Clode.

99 High Street, Tenterden

This private garden boasts plants and flowers that have been meticulously grown and cared for over 25 years. The narrow garden includes a long brick path, outdoor 'rooms' and seating areas.

Old Bladbean Stud, Canterbury

For people who love to smell the roses, this garden is worth a visit.

findagarden.ngs.org.uk



What to plant now

June is the last month of the year for sowing coreopsis outdoors. They are bright and cheerful summer-flowering annuals and herbaceous perennials that bear daisy-like blooms. Annual coreopsis creates sparkling summer colour in large pots and borders. Tall varieties are best grown in the ground while shorter, bushy varieties are ideal for large pots and borders. Tall varieties are lovely mixed with other annual flowers to create brightly coloured mixed plantings.

Summer bulbs

Summer bulbs span tubers, corms and rhizomes. Our top five are dahlias, lilies, eucomis, crocosmia and begonia.

How to plant:

Plant the bulb with its tip pointing upwards and roots pointing down. This may seem obvious, but it's not always easy to tell which end of a bulb is which. A rule of thumb with planting bulbs is to plant them twice the depth of the bulb. Most bulbs prefer a well-drained fertile soil but always add a handful of grit to the hole before dropping in the bulb. If your soil is very wet and heavy, consider planting bulbs in pots. Fill in the hole and compact gently.



What to do in the garden now

- Cut back plants. It's a good idea to trim your perennials so that they flower for longer
- Deadhead flowering plants. Always consider letting some go to seed for interest and wildlife
- Avoid over-watering
- Limit digging during dry periods
- Plant autumn bulb.
- Take cuttings for next year
- Use blinds or apply shade paint to prevent your greenhouse from overheating. Remember to open vents and doors on warm days
- Keep an eye on your onion and garlic. When the leaves start to yellow and die back, they're ready to harvest
- If there hasn't been much rain, raise your lawn mower blades to reduce stress on the grass

Rejuvenate iris plants

Once they've flowered, it's good practice to divide clumps of iris to reinvigorate your plants and increase stock. You may be able to simply pull plants apart, but if the roots are tough use a knife. Discard very old, unproductive pieces of rhizome. Replant in groups about 30cm apart, with the rhizome just below the surface. Firm soil around roots and water well.





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THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT

We take a look at the history and development of what for some gardeners is an essential part of a garden, and try to identify what's available in the marketplace for discerning customers in search of a high-quality greenhouse that's a real 'glass' act!



There can't be many keen gardeners who haven't thought at some point that what they really need is a greenhouse to make their gardening life easier, for any number of good reasons like: making it cheaper, more fulfilling and more productive, or just tidier... the list could go on.

So yes, of course we all know greenhouses, they are fundamental to serious and amateur growers alike, allowing the ability to extend the growing season and to propagate seeds earlier so the evil frosts don't wipe out tender young seedlings, or later in the year protecting crops that might perish at the dip in night-time temperatures in the autumn.

They are a fundamental part of the gardener's toolkit. A specially-designed structure, whether big or small, can allow the temperature and humidity to be regulated. They all have areas of transparent material, usually glass or maybe

these days polycarbonate, that allows sunlight and heat to be captured and thereby providing a sheltered environment for plants.

Basic stuff, certainly not rocket science, but it was a giant leap forward for gardening-kind when someone noticed that giving plants a bit of protection in the shape of a light semi-transparent covering boosts their growth. Who actually invented greenhouses is a bit murky, but there are tales of the Romans around 30 AD growing cucumbers in wheeled containers with oiled cloths spread over them for the Emperor Tiberius.

Later the Romans got much more ambitious, making heated stone structures for cultivating plants in so-called speculariums, with transparent roofs made of mica or selenite, which is a type of translucent colourless crystal. From there we can fast forward to 15th century Korea, where there were mentions in manuscripts of artificially heated greenhouses

The Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew



supplying the royal household with fruits, notably mandarin oranges, and vegetables through the winter.

Forward again to the Netherlands and England in the 17th century, when experiments in greenhouse growing moved up a gear with improvements in technology that meant glass was now a very useful alternative to previous attempts at glazing. In fact, the Palace at Versailles boasted a sizeable and elaborate greenhouse structure of nearly 500ft long.

Greenhouses continued to develop throughout the 18th century in Europe; however, it was the Victorian era that saw a marked change in their purpose, from agricultural to horticultural. Due to British colonial expansion, there was a growing fascination with exotic plants brought back by plant collectors to display to the public, to

show the might of the Empire and to represent far-flung locations that had been 'conquered'. Enormous glasshouses were created to house these curated collections of tropical and mysterious hitherto unseen specimens.

The trend in the 19th century was for building glasshouses and palm houses in public parks, with the advances in building technology combining iron and glass which was used for all sorts of large buildings like market halls and railway stations with the growing rail network beginning to open up the country for general travel. These iron and glass structures were readily adopted by designers and architects to create magnificent glasshouses like the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, still popular today, and of course the Crystal Palace in the mid-1800s.

In more recent times, technological advances in building materials' durability and versatility have obviously seen greenhouse design move

This example from Griffin shows a beautiful and aesthetically pleasing greenhouse on a sturdy brick base that would be a delightful and very useful addition to any property's garden.



griffinglasshouses.com

This interior shot from hartley-botanic.co.uk shows the attention to detail the company adds, like the decorative eaves spandrel so reminiscent of the Victorian era glasshouses.



berkshiregardenbuildings.co.uk



Western red cedar, gabrielash.com



forward, and many different materials are now used dependent on their end use, whether commercial or domestic. On the commercial side, these are more likely to be galvanized steel or aluminium structures with covering materials of glass, acrylic, polyethylene or polycarbonate.

It's a staggering thought that commercial greenhouse businesses are growing at an alarming rate (excuse the 'growing' pun). These are high-tech production facilities for fruit and vegetables, and it is estimated that worldwide there are an estimated nine million acres (about thirty-six and a half thousand square kilometres) of greenhouses. We don't have to look too far afield to see an example of this large-scale production, as Thanet Earth here in Kent is currently the largest glasshouse complex in the UK, covering 90 hectares or 220 acres of land.

However, if you are the owner of a period or listed property and you have a yearning for a greenhouse, you may be more interested in what's available in the market today that would be in keeping with your home and that

THERE ARE SEVERAL HIGH-QUALITY COMPANIES THAT HAVE RANGES OF BEAUTIFULLY-DESIGNED MODELS IN STYLES THAT ECHO THE ELEGANCE AND GRANDEUR OF THE VICTORIAN ERA GLASSHOUSES.

will complement the style of your garden. It's great news that there are several high-quality companies that have ranges of beautifully-designed models in styles that echo the elegance and grandeur of the Victorian era glasshouses.

Greenhouses have come a long way since the cumbersome kits of previous years and have been brought up to date with advances in new technology and modern materials. One of the most notable introductions in material, as we've previously mentioned, is aluminium. It's a lightweight and very strong alternative to timber or iron, which allows for slim-line framing and



therefore letting in more light and, of course, has the added benefit that it will not rust.

It can also be powder-coated different colours to suit personal preferences, which is a very definite bonus when designing your overall garden scheme. Another popular choice of material for greenhouse construction is wood and there are many fine examples available in the marketplace. We've found some superb specimens from Gabriel Ash manufactured from Western Red Cedar which is a beautiful, durable hardwood, PEFC certified and sourced from Canada. It offers a long-lasting alternative with a natural and attractive appearance for those who would rather not go for aluminium.

All these greenhouse suppliers will be able to help you plan your greenhouse project and help you consider all the aspects of designing something that suits you perfectly from their extensive ranges, with advice on ventilation. This can be manual or automated and thermostatically controlled, giving you peace

of mind if you go away. They can also supply bespoke designs, which sometimes actually end up being more economical, so it's definitely worth talking to them if you have a unique idea and need help realising your dream greenhouse.

But what about those of us who aren't looking for a Victorian-style greenhouse, who may have something more modern in mind to suit our type of home and garden? The good news is that many of these suppliers have a range of different styles: there are less decorative models with sleek, clean lines that fit beautifully with contemporary properties like the Opus glasshouse from Hartley Botanic, which brings us bang up-to-date.

A final word of advice for those property owners who may be lucky enough to live in an area of outstanding natural beauty, a listed building, or a national park or conservation area: you will need planning consent prior to building a greenhouse, even if it's a small one or a replacement, so always check with your local council's planning department.



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HOME SWEET HOME



Along with feeders and bird baths, a nest box is high up on the list of a bird's basic needs. As well as providing a home for birds to bring up their families in spring and summer, a nest box will also provide shelter in the winter.



We all need a safe place to live and for wildlife it's no different. One of the biggest causes of wildlife declines is a lack of suitable habitat.

In addition to providing insect-attracting plants on which they can feed, we can give birds a helping hand by offering cosy bird boxes and nest sites. Whatever the size of your outdoor space, this is a really easy way to help the nature on your doorstep.

A nest box is a man-made enclosure provided for animals to live in. Placing nest boxes can be used to help maintain populations of particular species.





Why do birds need nest boxes?

It seems so simple, but providing nest boxes is one of the easiest ways to help birds in your outside space. Putting out bird food is great, but if birds don't have access to nesting sites, they won't have anywhere to raise their young. It's also key that the nest sites are nearby to foraging locations, where they can find plenty of food without leaving the nest for too long.

Different birds prefer different-sized nest boxes and entrance holes – it's all about safety and shelter. The diameter of the opening has a very strong influence on the species of the birds that will use the box. Many small birds select boxes with a hole only just large enough for an adult bird to pass through.

Where to site a bird box

Once you have chosen your bird box you need

to decide where to site it. You will also need to carry out some routine maintenance on it to keep it free of disease and ensure you prevent predators disturbing or even moving into your nest box.

Some birds prefer their nest box to be at an optimum height. For many birds, orientation relative to the sun is of importance, with many birds preferring a position away from direct sun and sheltered from the prevailing rain.

Where you site a nest box also depends on the species it's made to attract: multi-use bird boxes will attract all small garden birds if sited in a quiet spot. Likewise, a sparrow box needs to be sited high up under the eaves, so does one for swifts.

Site your nest box anywhere from 3 to 4 metres high, and a wall backing is the best area to fix a box, followed by a solid tree.



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MAKE A SPLASH

We take a look at the world of natural swimming pools and immerse ourselves in the important benefits they bring for us, wildlife and the environment.



The desire to be close to water with its calming and restorative effects must surely be high on the wish list of most people if they were asked: 'What do you envision as the perfect relaxing setting to bring you a sense of well-being and inner peace?'

It's no coincidence that holiday destinations by the sea, lakes or rivers have been topping the charts for centuries, as the restorative pursuits of swimming, walking by the banks of a river, or maybe just taking the air and enjoying the quiet contemplation that water brings us, are undoubtedly good for our physical and mental health.

In recent years there has been a marked increase in the number of people who have taken up 'wild' or 'natural' swimming, instead of the more 'municipal' style of going to the local indoor swimming pool.

NATURAL SWIMMING POOLS ARE ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY ALTERNATIVES TO THE CHLORINATED POOLS WE ARE USED TO, AS THEY PROVIDE A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WHICH WILL ATTRACT WILDLIFE

Previously this type of hardy soul may have been seen as a trifle whacky for plunging into un-chlorinated, unheated bodies of water, which they then enthuse about, citing the fantastic and invigorating benefits of cold water that result in a feeling of euphoria. They may also mention the added benefit of feeling at one with nature that is good for the soul. It's definitely not rare these days, as more and more people are partaking in this activity, some even on a daily basis.

gartenart.co.uk





Running almost in parallel with these anecdotes are reports that rather than being uplifting, are very much more depressing. These are hard-hitting accounts of the dire state of our rivers, seas and lakes, due to disastrous pollution caused by sewage overflows, chemical run-offs from fertilisers, and harmful bacteria building up in rivers, all of which are damaging both the health of wildlife that lives in the water, and the health of the people taking a dip.

We've all seen news stories of people becoming ill because of 'not-so-fresh water swimming'. Most recently, the crews of the Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race were warned not to throw the winning cox into the water, as this could cause them to end up swallowing river water and getting a nasty infection.



elements-of-nature.co.uk

We have to hope that the huge amount of press attention this is now getting will mean steps will be taken to clean up our waterways and we will arrive at a happier and healthier place, but meanwhile how can we safely satisfy the natural urge to immerse ourselves in restorative and invigorating waters?

Here's something to consider: if you have the space and the funds - could creating a natural swimming pool in your garden be the answer? Two of the most obvious benefits are that you can take a refreshing dip in your own natural pool any time you want, and that they can look absolutely stunning in your garden, so there are two boxes ticked.

This certainly has been a solution that more people are turning to, and with several

companies already established in the UK that specialise in designing and building natural swimming pools, this idea looks like a growing trend that is gaining momentum.

If this idea has captured your imagination, here are the benefits and some key points to consider.

Natural swimming pools are environmentally-friendly alternatives to the chlorinated pools we are used to, as they provide a natural environment which will attract wildlife including plants, invertebrates and animals, helping improve bio-diversity because the water is crystal clear and chemical-free due to the natural combination of aquatic plants, micro-organisms and bacteria.

By creating this type of habitat, you are



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not only doing something great for your environment but, if you have children, it is a wonderful way of encouraging them to learn about ecology, and have fun as they engage with the many creatures a natural pool can attract like tadpoles, frogs and newts, insects like dragonflies and water boatmen, and of course the many birds that will stop by to drink and bathe. However, the usual warning applies to children always being supervised by adults and never left unaccompanied by any body of water.

If you live in a conservation area or own a listed property, planning permission may be required so it is always advisable to check with your local planning department.

As previously mentioned, this is a burgeoning market and there are specialist natural swimming pool companies out there, so seriously consider contacting two or three for quotes to compare, and to find out what their thoughts are on the suitability of your site and their recommendations.

The recommended size for a natural pool is for a surface area of between 110 – 180sqm, or even bigger. The larger the surface area the better it is for the biological balance, an important factor that makes self-cleaning more effective. Smaller pools may need mechanical filters, but this is something specialists can help with.

The beauty of a natural swimming pond is that it can look as natural as you want, so cast out all thoughts of traditional pools with hard lines and straight edges, concrete, and sparkling blue tiles. Aim for something that integrates within your garden area as more of a beautiful, natural feature, with a wilder look to it that could have been there for many years and that blends harmoniously with its surroundings. That said, it's a matter of personal taste, so you could go for a fluid shape with a brick edge, or choose a more informal shape, with edging that is grass, gravel, or decking to dive in from. You could even create a little beach at a shallow end for paddling in from.

An essential requirement is to create your pool on ground that is well-compacted. It's important to consult an engineer to do calculations for ground loading, especially on sloping sites. The correct building method is vital, so a concrete screed should be laid on the main swimming area of the pool. On top of this should be an artificial liner, with underlay beneath to protect the liner from puncturing and ensure it remains watertight.

Another very important feature of these natural pools is the distinction between the swimming area, which is a plant-free zone, and the regeneration area – which needs careful balancing. These areas must be clearly separated. This can be achieved with walls made from blocks, timber or sandbags. In the regeneration zone the aquatic plants are used as a living filtration system, which absorbs nutrients to clean and purify the water. They aren't just there to look good; they produce oxygen and remove excess nutrients, along with the gravel they are planted in which is home to micro-organisms and bacteria and is also a vital part of the cleaning process.

In addition to this, a series of perforated pipes run through the bottom of the biological filtration system, drawing water through with the help of a concealed suction pump. Water passing by the aquatic plant roots allows more nutrients to be absorbed, encouraging them to grow and further removing organic matter that has entered the filtration bed. The clear purified water is then re-circulated back into the depths of the swimming area and the cycle begins again.

Choosing the right selection of aquatic plants to maintain the correct balance is



possibly something you may want to get an expert's advice on, but you could do a bit of research and learn about the five main categories they fall into. These are: submerged plants, floating plants, deep and shallow marginals, and waterside plants.

What is good is that the maintenance side of having a natural swimming pool is much less labour-intensive than a traditional chemical pool with all the chlorine balancing associated with it. There are a certain number of things to consider like cutting back old plant growth and removing it in the autumn, plus scooping out fallen leaves, so it's a good idea to keep a net handy for this. Also try not to build your pool directly below trees. Obviously it's nice to have them nearby, but you'll be making a rod for your own back if you situate your pool right underneath. It's also important to vacuum the pool, usually after the autumn leaves have fallen and before the start of the swimming season, to remove any silt from the bottom of the swimming area.

We hope we've managed to whet your appetite and that you've been inspired to take a closer look at natural swimming pools. As previously mentioned, there are several companies around the UK that specialise in what's becoming a popular eco-friendly leisure activity, with something that adds great value to your home, your garden and your life.

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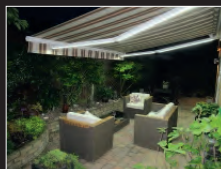
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Whether you are designing a new patio or improving an existing one read on for The Patio Warehouse's

top tips. Building a new patio? Things to consider when planning your patio design:

- Patio layout should be based on how you wish to use your patio so it's a functional space.
- Watch how the sunlight moves across your garden throughout the day and find out what direction your garden faces.
- Think about where you wish to put furniture and how much room that will take up. (Top Tip, leave at least 1m of space to be able to pass furniture easily).
- When considering patio size, consider how many people you wish to accommodate.
- Do you need space for a barbecue or kitchen

area? Ensure your cooking space is not on top of the seating area.

- Consider adding design features to your patio, pergolas, planting, water features, wall cladding and built in benches and kitchens.
- Tip – use some rope or a hose to mark out the patio on the ground – is it big enough? Do a scale drawing adding in your furniture: it's amazing how quickly you can fill the space.

Where to position your patio?

Think about how you want to use the patio – if it's for dining a shady spot would be better. If you are a sun worshipper then you'll want full exposure. Consider privacy, is there an area that isn't overlooked? Look at the complete garden design and ensure your patio compliments it – where would it look better? Traditionally patios

were just outside the back door, but we are finding more and more that our customers want a second patio to utilise the sunlight or privacy that their garden offers.

Which patio materials should you choose?

This is the most common question that we are asked, it's a personal choice based on design and function needs. With many of us treating our gardens like an extension to our homes you may feel it is important to design your patio to tie in with the interior of your home, so modern homes will suit contemporary materials and more period homes will appreciate a more authentic material. We are often asked to create a seamless look running the same tile from inside to outside which has a dramatic space enhancing effect and many outdoor tiles having a matching indoor tile.

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COOKING WITH STYLE

At the heart of every home, the kitchen stands as a sanctuary of culinary creativity and communal gathering, and what is its most important feature? The cooker: a fixture that not only serves as a means of preparing delectable meals, but can also add a touch of timeless elegance to the space.



Everhot 100i from £11,096 (rubyandjo.co.uk)

From traditional farmhouse kitchens to sleek modern interiors, range cookers come in a variety of styles and configurations, each offering unique features and functionalities to suit the diverse needs and preferences of homeowners.



agaliving.com

Professional-style range cookers

For home chefs who aspire to culinary greatness, professional-style range cookers offer the perfect blend of performance and precision. Inspired by the sleek designs and high-powered capabilities of commercial kitchens, these cookers are equipped with professional-grade features such as dual-fuel systems, high-output burners and convection ovens. With their robust construction and chef-inspired functionalities, professional-style range cookers empower users to unleash their culinary creativity and tackle even the most ambitious recipes with confidence.

“FROM CLASSIC FARMHOUSE CHARM TO PROFESSIONAL-GRADE PERFORMANCE, RANGE COOKERS COME IN A VARIETY OF STYLES AND CONFIGURATIONS TO SUIT EVERY TASTE AND LIFESTYLE.

Rangemaster Professional (rangemaster.co.uk)



Classic freestanding range cookers

Embodying the charm of country kitchens and rustic farmhouses, classic freestanding range cookers exude a sense of timeless elegance and warmth. These traditional cookers typically feature a spacious oven, multiple gas or electric burners, and sometimes a separate grill or warming compartment. Crafted from durable materials such as cast iron or stainless steel, they are designed to withstand the rigours of daily use while adding a touch of vintage flair to any kitchen.

Gas range cookers

Gas range cookers offer precise heat control and rapid response, making them ideal for tasks that require precise temperature adjustments. With their classic appeal and dependable performance, gas range cookers are favoured by home cooks who appreciate the authenticity and versatility of gas cooking.

Electric range cookers

Electric range cookers, on the other hand, boast advanced features such as programmable



Lacanche range cooker (rubyandjo.co.uk)

ovens, induction hobs, and multifunction cooking modes. Equipped with innovative technologies like fan-assisted cooking and pyrolytic self-cleaning, electric range cookers offer convenience and efficiency without compromising on performance. Whether baking, roasting or grilling, these cookers provide consistent results with minimal effort, making them a popular choice for modern kitchens, although perhaps less so with traditionalists.

Dual-fuel range cookers

Combining the best of both worlds, dual-fuel range cookers feature a gas hob for responsive cooking control and an electric oven for even heat distribution. This versatile configuration allows home cooks to enjoy the benefits of both gas and electric cooking methods, providing

flexibility and precision for a wide range of culinary endeavours.

Induction range cookers

Induction range cookers harness the power of electromagnetic technology to deliver fast, efficient and precise cooking results. By generating heat directly within the cookware, induction hobs offer rapid heating and precise temperature control, reducing cooking times and minimising energy consumption. With their sleek minimalist design and effortless performance, induction range cookers are perfect for modern kitchens that prioritise style, efficiency and innovation.

Compact range cookers

In smaller kitchens, compact range cookers offer a practical solution without sacrificing style or

esse.com



functionality. These slim-line cookers feature a scaled-down footprint while still providing essential cooking capabilities, including oven baking, stovetop cooking and grilling. With their space-saving design and versatile performance, compact range cookers are perfect for urban apartments, cosy cottages or any home where efficiency and aesthetics are equally valued.

Aesthetic appeal

As for appearance, range cookers come in myriad colours, making them as much a design piece as a functional one. Ask your local supplier for advice, as a range is a long-term investment and one that deserves professional installation.

From classic farmhouse charm to professional-grade performance, range cookers come in a variety of styles and configurations to suit every taste and lifestyle. Whether you prefer the timeless appeal of a freestanding gas cooker, the sleek sophistication of an induction range or the compact efficiency of a mini electric cooker, there's a range cooker to fit your needs and elevate your culinary adventures. With their versatility, reliability and enduring appeal, range cookers continue to reign supreme as the heart and soul of the modern kitchen, inspiring culinary creativity and bringing families together one delicious meal at a time.



Everhot 110 in Fandango Pink from £12,500 (rubyandjo.co.uk)



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THE FOUR-POSTER BED

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DESPITE THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH HISTORICAL PERIODS, FOUR-POSTERS POSSESS A TIMELESS QUALITY THAT TRANSCENDS TRENDS AND STYLES.

With its majestic presence and rich historical heritage, this iconic furnishing has transcended centuries, gracing the chambers of royalty, nobility, and lay people alike. From Tudor manors to Victorian villas, the four-poster remains a symbol of opulence and sophistication, offering not only a luxurious place to rest but also a captivating focal point for period homes.

A glimpse into history

Dating back to medieval times, the four-poster bed emerged as a practical solution to combat the cold and draughty conditions of large stone-built castles and manors. Its distinctive design, featuring four tall posts at each corner supporting a framework for draping curtains or other fabric, provided warmth, privacy and a sense of security to its occupants (as well as shelter from any creepy critters that might drop from the ceiling!)



The state bed in the Green Velvet Bedchamber at Houghton Hall



Oak and walnut four-poster bed c.1485, hevercastle.co.uk

Throughout the centuries, the four-poster evolved in style and structure, reflecting the prevailing tastes and design trends of different epochs. From the ornately carved oak beds of the Tudor period to the sleek, embellished designs of the Baroque and Rococo eras, every iteration carried with it a unique charm and character.

Tudor style

Characterised by its robust construction and intricate carvings, the Tudor-style four-poster bed exudes an air of medieval grandeur. Crafted from richly grained oak or walnut, these beds often feature elaborate motifs inspired by nature, heraldic symbols, or religious iconography. With their imposing presence and timeless appeal, Tudor-style four-poster beds are quintessential additions to period homes with a penchant for historical authenticity.

Georgian elegance

During the Georgian era, four-poster beds underwent a transition towards neoclassical elegance and refinement. Influenced by the architectural principles of symmetry and proportion, Georgian-style beds were marked by their graceful lines, restrained ornamentation and fine craftsmanship. Mahogany, with its lustrous finish and warm tones, became a favoured material for crafting these beds, complementing the understated luxury of Georgian interiors.

Victorian splendour

In the Victorian era, the four-poster bed reached new heights of extravagance and opulence. Characterised by its lavish ornamentation, towering proportions and intricate detailing, the Victorian-style four-poster became synonymous with wealth and status. From elaborate crests and carved

finials to sumptuous draperies and valances, no expense was spared in adorning these beds with luxurious embellishments. Ideal for period homes seeking to evoke the romanticism and grandeur of the Victorian age, these beds serve as focal points of unparalleled beauty and elegance.

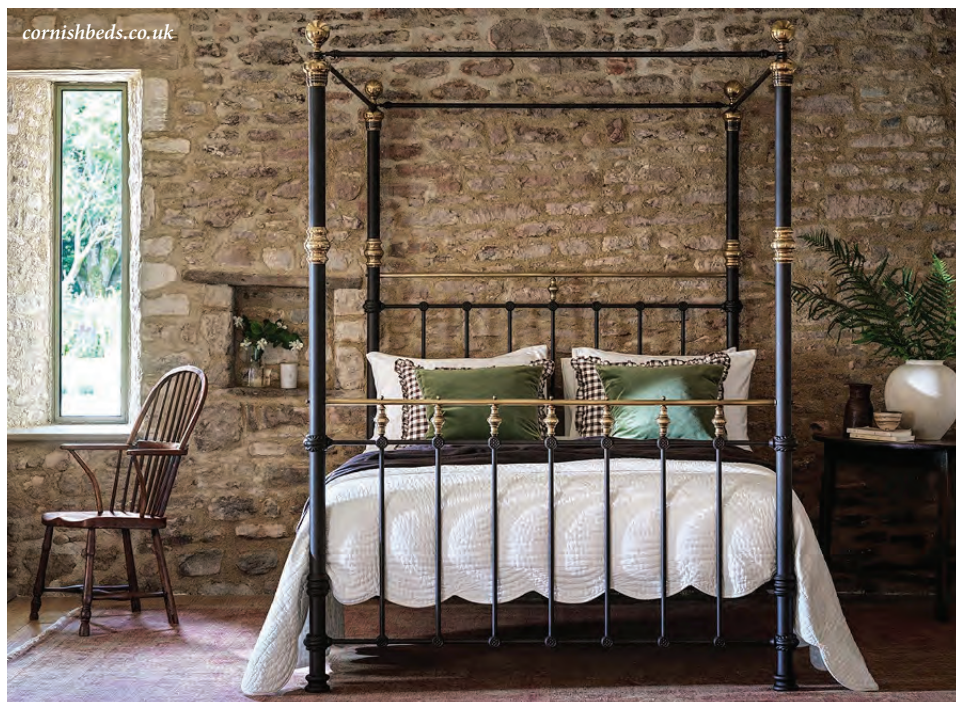
Edwardian simplicity

With the dawn of the Edwardian era came a shift towards simplicity and refinement in design. Four-poster beds of this period embraced clean lines, gentle curves and lighter finishes, reflecting the influence of Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau movements. Oak, ash and maple were favoured materials, chosen for their natural beauty and versatility. Edwardian-style four-posters exude a sense of understated elegance, making them well-suited for period homes with a preference for a more subdued yet sophisticated aesthetic.

“FOR PERIOD HOMES SEEKING TO EVOKE THE CHARM AND SOPHISTICATION OF YESTERYEARS, THE FOUR-POSTER BED OFFERS A TIMELESS APPEAL THAT TRANSCENDS THE BOUNDS OF TIME AND FASHION.

Why they're perfect for period homes

Four-poster beds evoke a sense of history and tradition, making them ideal choices for period homes seeking to capture the essence of a specific era. Whether it's the rustic charm of Tudor architecture or the refined elegance of Georgian interiors, these beds serve as authentic representations of past design styles, enriching the historical narrative of the home.





andsotobed.co.uk

In period homes where architectural features may take centre stage, a four-poster bed adds a compelling focal point to the bedroom, elevating the space with its commanding presence and timeless allure. Its towering silhouette and ornate detailing draw the eye, inviting admiration and conversation, while also imparting a sense of luxury and sophistication to the room.

Despite their association with historical periods, four-posters possess a timeless quality that transcends trends and styles. Whether paired with traditional furnishings or incorporated into contemporary interiors, these beds effortlessly adapt to diverse design schemes, adding

character and charm to any space. With the versatility to be dressed up with sumptuous fabrics or pared down for a more minimalist look, they offer endless possibilities for customisation and personalisation.

The four-poster bed stands as a testament to the enduring allure of historical craftsmanship and design. It's also a piece best sourced from master craftsmen, who can use authentic materials to create the perfect bespoke furniture. For period homes seeking to evoke the charm and sophistication of yesteryears, the four-poster bed offers a timeless appeal that transcends the bounds of time and fashion.

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Soft furnishings are designed with the primary purpose of providing comfort. Whether it's sinking into a plush sofa after a long day or resting your head on a velvety cushion, these pieces elevate the overall cosiness of your home.



In the world of interior design, the significance of soft furnishings cannot be overstated. They encompass a diverse array of textiles and materials, from cushions and throws to curtains and blinds, all designed to infuse spaces with both comfort and style.

To achieve a harmonious living space, it's essential to strike the right balance between hard and soft furnishings. By thoughtfully selecting and combining these two types of décor, you can create a functional, comfortable, and visually appealing environment that reflects your taste and lifestyle.

Pluma collection by Romo, emanuels.co.uk



Newby green peony by Sanderson, emanuels.co.uk

medwayblinds.co.uk





juliabrendel.com

Soft furnishings are a great way to add colour and style to your home. They can be used in many ways, from curtains and cushions to throws and rugs.

- **Cushions and throw pillows:** Add comfort to seating areas, introduce colour and pattern, easily changeable for a fresh look.
- **Curtains and blinds:** Control light and privacy, enhance visual appeal, contribute to a room's thermal insulation.
- **Rugs and carpets:** Provide warmth and sound

insulation, anchor furniture, add visual interest and texture underfoot.

- **Throws and blankets:** Offer cosiness, serve as decorative accents, tie together colour schemes and design elements.
- **Bedding (sheets, duvet covers, and pillowcases):** Ensure comfort during sleep, create a focal point in bedrooms, contribute to the overall design aesthetic.
- **Upholstery (for chairs, sofas, and other furniture):** Enhance comfort, showcase fabric choices, provide opportunity for customisation.
- **Decorative floor cushions:** Offer additional seating, create a casual and inviting atmosphere, introduce playful elements.
- **Table linens (tablecloths, placemats, and napkins):** Protect surfaces, elevate dining experiences, complement a dining area's design.
- **Wall hangings and tapestries:** Add visual interest to walls,

showcase personal style and artwork, provide a soft textural contrast to hard surfaces.

Aesthetic enhancement

Beyond their functional role, soft furnishings in interior design are powerful tools for enhancing the visual appeal of a space. Strategically placed cushions with complementary hues can tie together disparate elements, creating a cohesive and harmonious design scheme. The tactile qualities of soft furnishings in interior design also contribute to a sensory richness that elevates



New Toulain fabric range by Romo.com available at www.karenperryinteriors.co.uk



mulberryash.com

the entire design experience. Soft furnishings provide an opportunity for personal expression. From custom-made curtains to hand-picked cushions, these elements allow you to infuse your unique style into your living space.

Texture and dimension

Incorporating a variety of textures adds depth and dimension to interiors. Plush carpets, velvety curtains, and textured upholstery create a tactile landscape that engages the senses. The juxtaposition of different textures adds visual interest and prevents spaces from appearing flat or monotonous.

Versatility

One of the remarkable aspects of soft furnishings in interior design is their versatility. They can be easily updated or replaced to reflect changing design trends or personal preferences.

Functional elegance

Soft furnishings in interior design contribute not only to the aesthetics but also to the functionality of a space. Well-chosen curtains, for instance, can regulate natural light, providing both privacy and ambience control. Additionally, strategically placed rugs define specific areas within a room, creating visual boundaries and enhancing the overall organisation of space. The combination of form and function in soft furnishings demonstrates the thoughtful integration of design elements to meet practical needs.

Easy maintenance

Contrary to what one might expect, many soft furnishings are designed for easy maintenance. With proper care, they can retain their beauty and functionality for years, making them a practical investment.

Colour coordination

Harmonising the colours of your soft furnishings with the overall colour scheme of the room can create a balanced and visually pleasing atmosphere.

Learn upholstery

Whether you have a well-loved piece of furniture at home with upholstery in bad shape, or you've acquired a thrifted piece for a great price but not-so-great style, you can completely change the look of your furniture through reupholstering. Although the process can be time-consuming, reupholstering furniture at home can save hundreds of pounds and give you a piece completely unique. Wells & White (wellsandwhite.co.uk) in Ashford offer a range of courses from award-winning tutors for beginners and more experienced enthusiasts.

In the intricate tapestry of interior design,



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soft furnishings have the innate ability to enhance visual appeal, create inviting atmospheres, and adapt to evolving taste. By recognising the art and impact of soft furnishings, one can unlock the transformative potential of these elements, turning ordinary spaces into extraordinary expressions of style and comfort.

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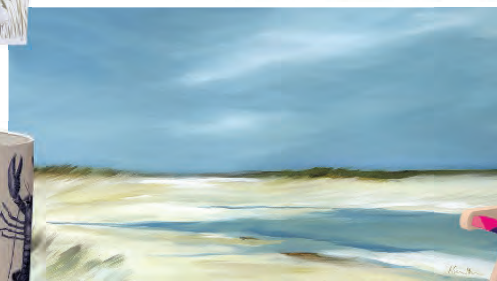


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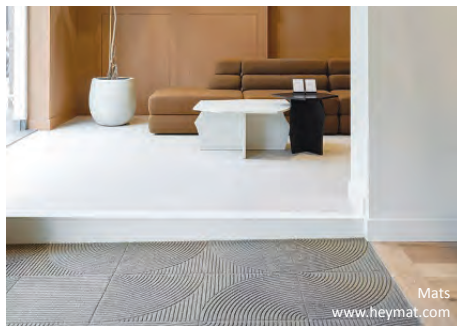
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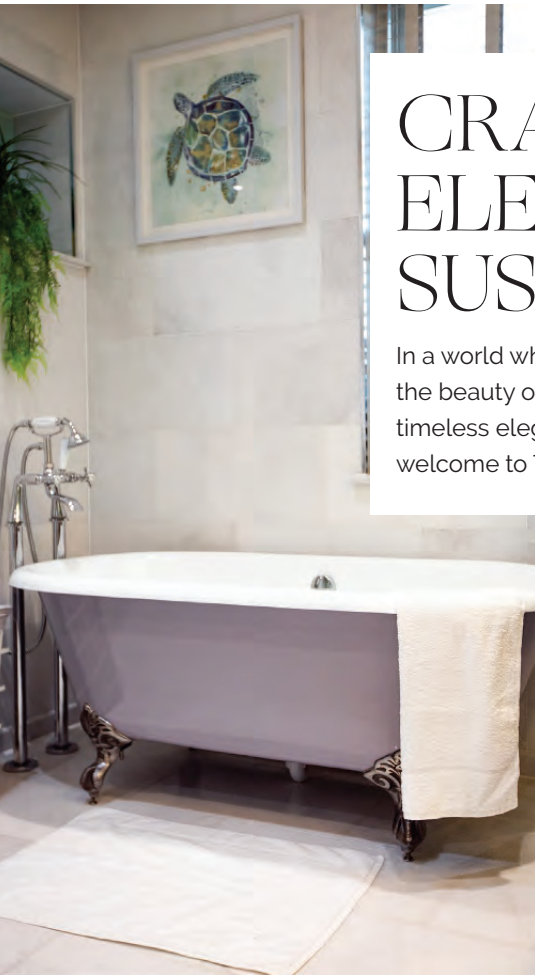
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‘If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere’:

Vincent van Gogh

WORDS: LOUISE TOMLIN

It's always a pleasure writing artist profiles for this magazine, as you get to meet some very interesting people and find out how they embarked on their creative career and just what makes them tick. Here's one that is certainly no exception...

Ceramicist Joanna Terry works from her studio in Beckley, East Sussex, although the inspiration for her beautiful and delicate porcelain pieces stem from her immersion in the natural world she surrounds herself in on her daily walks. From this comes an intuitive and instinctual response as she casts clay directly in the landscape, capturing lasting impressions of the grasses, stones, plants, bark and wildflowers which emerge from that rich environment.

These sculptural pieces have a fragile, translucent quality and seem to hover in an alternative dimension between the solid world and an ethereal other-world. Once fired, the highly translucent forms capture a moment in time that represents Joanna's elemental reaction to the landscape she loves.

It is an unusual way of working, but one that certainly pays dividends, producing stunning sculptural results. It is a process that has evolved over a long period of time, on a journey that began when she was just a young



I LOVE THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF IT. IT'S ALMOST AS IF THE CLAY IS DOING ITS OWN THING REALLY, IT'S YOU AND THE PORCELAIN WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP...

girl. Joanna says that at around the age of seven, she got a lot of pleasure from making plaster-cast figures of Beatrix Potter characters and lovingly hand-painting them.

She was obsessed with all things 'crafty'. Her father, who was keen on DIY, made his daughter a desk from an old door which, once installed in her bedroom, became her creative space as it was filled with her crafting materials, like lumps of clay that she would fashion into shapes and many other natural objects she collected from

woods and beaches, things she thinks most people would consider rubbish but to her it was treasure. It seems her creative side was already attuned to nature then, as it is today.

When she watched children's TV, she remembers being inspired by some spider puppets called Itsy and Bitsy that used to craft things, and she laughingly recounts how she was convinced she would be a Blue Peter presenter when she grew up. She would sit at her desk and make-believe she was on TV, saying, "Today, children, we will be making...". Her interest in fashion and textiles also began at this stage, as she designed and made many outfits for her dolls.

The fantasy of becoming a Blue Peter presenter was eventually replaced by an ambition to study art and become an art teacher in primary school. However, the plan of going to university went out of the window when she met her husband Karl at the age of 16 on a holiday in Lanzarote. Instead, she went to work, they travelled, and their lives together just took them on a different journey. It was a very creative household; they renovated properties, she made curtains, created gardens and later the children came along. The creative urge was still there and found an outlet in studying upholstery and throwing pottery at evening classes.

She began to realise when the pots started to spin out of control that she found the oddly-shaped results much more captivating. Her tutor at the time would implore: "Hey Jo, you nearly had it then and you let it go!"



Her response was: “I don’t want to just throw something like a pot I could buy in Ikea, I like it a bit wonky”. He would insist: “But you’ve got to be able to learn to throw a pot and then you can learn to do a wonky pot!” Maintaining that she preferred the wonky approach, she decided that throwing wasn’t for her.

From there she went to a class at Hastings College under an amazing sculptor called Tony Bennett, who is a member of the Rye Society of Artists. He was the most patient teacher, she says, who never touched students’ work and would just let everyone run with their ideas. It was from him that Joanna started hand-building in clay.

“I then realised that with this method, you have so much more control over the clay without throwing being involved. He also taught me about firing and not necessarily following the rules, for instance under-firing and over-firing to just experiment, see what happens and go with it. He was a free spirit and encouraged you to be more free as a result.”

At this time Joanna and Karl’s children were at secondary school and she was a teaching assistant, a job she loved. This allowed her to spend one day a week at her art classes. Her tutor eventually persuaded her to do a degree; she dithered for a few years though, for various reasons, thinking she was too old, then sadly her mum died and her creativity dried up – she just didn’t feel creative at all for a couple of years.

The creative drought came to end when on visiting an open day at Hastings College, which was linked to Brighton University, she ended up signing on to a BA Designer Maker Degree, which was multi-disciplined: metalwork, textiles, print, glass, and ceramics. Studying part-time two days a week while continuing her work at school was perfect, and it was this degree in



contemporary craft that opened her eyes to clay’s potential and allowed Joanna to channel her creativity.

The course let her explore many materials, but it was always ceramics that held her attention. She initially worked in terracotta, into which she pressed plants collected from her morning walks and experimented with oxides and different firing ranges to produce varied glazing effects.

During one module, she discovered the translucent quality of porcelain and its ability to move and warp during firing. She realised again the fascination with wobbliness that had always intrigued her. “I love the unpredictability of it. It’s almost as if the clay is doing its own thing really, it’s you and the porcelain working in partnership together and just seeing what happens with the flux and pull of the firing. People say that porcelain has a memory and without support, it will try and revert to its original shape.”

We’ve mentioned Joanna’s husband, who is an artist as well. Karl Terry is no stranger to this magazine; we featured him and his much-

acclaimed paintings in another of our artist profiles a couple of years back. Karl's work is always En Plein Air, which means he paints outside in all weathers, creating works that are his immediate response to the landscapes he finds himself in. He has enjoyed much success and has had many exhibitions.

It was accompanying Karl on his painting expeditions outside which inspired Joanna's current way of working directly in nature. It's a wonderful creative partnership; in fact, the couple are both exhibiting their work this summer at The Old Gaol Studio in Wittersham from 14th June (details found on the South East Open Studio Guide at SEOS-ART.org).

Joanna exhibits regularly at ceramics fairs, with an upcoming curated event at The Hepworth gallery in Wakefield; she enjoys the opportunity to showcase her work and talk to visitors about her process of making. Last year, she taught a wildflower meadow casting workshop at King John's Nursery, hosted by Greenfinch Gallery of Ticehurst, and similarly a beach-combing session at The Gallivant Hotel, Camber. She finds that sharing her creative process with people is incredibly rewarding.

Through her ceramics, Joanna hopes to highlight the richness of our native local landscapes, capturing the changing seasons, sharing the joy of being outside amongst nature. "I want to shine a light on the beauty and fragility of our natural spaces. I hope my work will help others see wild plants in a new light and encourage people to look after our fragile earth," she says.

For more information on Joanna's work and all upcoming events go to:
joannaterryceramics.co.uk



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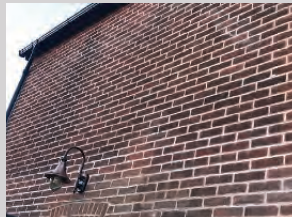
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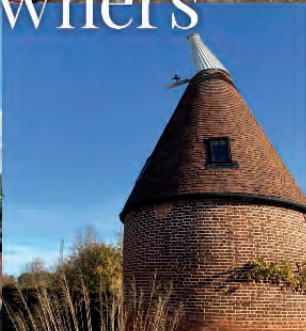
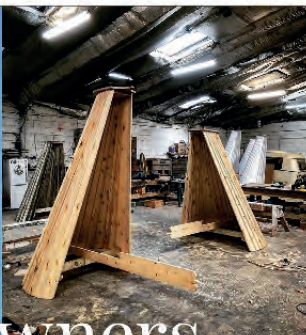
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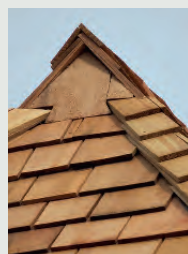
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FROM FIRM FOUNDATIONS INTO THE FUTURE...

Louise Tomlin takes a look at a recent project by AT Palmer that shows the full breadth of the workforce's talents, skills and amazing attention to detail.



We have featured the specialist heritage building company AT Palmer Ltd previously in this magazine, notably and most recently last year showcasing their fascinating Carriage House restoration project at Chipstead near Sevenoaks. This showed the extent of works needed to make the building usable again, and the lengths to which

AT Palmer Ltd went in carrying out a sensitive conservation project on this listed building. It was a stunning example of their work.

This year sees the company's 75th anniversary, so it seems an opportune moment to celebrate this landmark in their history by looking into how the highly-respected historic building and specialist conservation company came about, their

continuing success, and to highlight a project that has come to fruition this year that illustrates the important work they continue to achieve in the field of historic conservation.

Three quarters of a century ago, a young man had a vision of owning his own business. He discussed this with his wife, as without her help it would have been impossible. She readily agreed to be 'the office', and together they bought a small business in Headcorn with six tradesmen and a dilapidated van. The couple were Arthur and Myra Palmer, and the company became known as AT Palmer (Builders & Contractors) Ltd.

There's been a lot of water under the bridge since Arthur and Myra, the grandparents of current MD Simon Palmer, seized the moment and founded AT Palmer Ltd. From those humble beginnings, this family business has grown into a thriving company, now employing 42 dedicated staff: highly skilled trades people, three contracts managers, two estimators, office administration, company directors and company secretary. They also have an approved list of tried and trusted subcontractors.

AT Palmer Ltd has built up an enviable reputation over the years as one of the most highly regarded historic building conservation and restoration specialists, and has been involved in many prestigious heritage projects. They have accrued an enormous amount of experience working on period properties, resulting in understanding the importance of recognising that restoration is a sensitive process: it entails combining modern construction technology and sustainable building methods with time-honoured crafts and artisanal skills, employing traditional and authentic materials, and most importantly

“AT PALMER LTD HAS BUILT UP AN ENVIABLE REPUTATION OVER THE YEARS AS ONE OF THE MOST HIGHLY REGARDED HISTORIC BUILDING CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION SPECIALISTS...

remaining sympathetic to the historic fabric of the buildings at the centre of their projects.

This multi-generational family firm has a heritage to be proud of. What began with Arthur's modest ambition to start his own building company grew exponentially and he became a well-respected individual in the building industry, a Fellow of the Institute of Builders in 1959, and a pillar of the community as Mayor of Ashford. Arthur and Myra's son, Marcus, has had a long and notable career in the company and is chairman. His son Simon, the MD, with wife Natasha, the company secretary, now run the business. Until recently the company could boast three generations, and happily that has now increased to four, with Liv, daughter of Simon and Natasha, taking responsibility for the firm's online and social media presence. They all operate from their HQ on Smarden Business Estate.

Always with an eye to ensuring the company keeps up-to-date or even ahead of the curve, they invest in their personnel, recognising the importance of maintaining ongoing training for all staff, including up-to-date health and safety regulations, and training specific to individual roles. And, perhaps most importantly, they are investing in future generations of the workforce by offering apprenticeships, with up to six apprentices training at any one time.





THIS BEAUTIFUL FARMHOUSE SET IN APPROXIMATELY SIX ACRES IS THOUGHT TO BE CIRCA 1500, ORIGINALLY A WEALDEN HALL HOUSE OF TIMBER CONSTRUCTION WITH PLASTER INFILL AND A PLAIN TILED ROOF THAT HAS SEEN MANY EXTENSIONS AND ALTERATIONS OVER THE CENTURIES.

It's an interesting thought that AT Palmer Ltd quite rightly is invested in and looks to the future to ensure they do all they should to stay up-to-date, whilst so much of their work is focused on the past and authentically maintaining elements of the historic properties they work on. One such example is Pullens Farmhouse near Tonbridge, where the house had suffered a disastrous flood caused by the river that runs through the garden, only five weeks after their clients had moved in.

This beautiful farmhouse set in approximately six acres is thought to be circa 1500, originally a Wealden Hall house of timber construction with plaster infill and a plain tiled roof that has seen many extensions and alterations over the centuries. It has a wealth of period features and is Grade II listed.

A T Palmer Ltd started work in September 2022 and began a full refurbishment to the interior and exterior, including constructing a small rear extension with a link to the original house. The plans were drawn up by award-winning architectural practice John Bullock Design, based in Tunbridge Wells. The build and renovations were led by Kelvin Tooth, the contracts manager, and a team of A T Palmer's skilled staff. As the property had a history of flooding, insurers insisted the original timber suspended floor be replaced throughout the ground floor with special limecrete, a combination of natural lime and lightweight aggregate or sand which is used as an alternative to a conventional concrete slab. It

has insulating properties and offers a breathable moisture-managing surface, ideal for period properties suffering damp issues. Limestone flooring was laid on top of this.

The ground floor of the property is constructed from brick, with a timber-framed upper level. Brickwork repairs were completed using lime mortar, recommended for repairs to historic buildings and in keeping with the original. Timber repairs and plastering were needed where the back corner of the house had fallen away. This was carried out using a mix of lime and traditional plastering.

Worries about further floods were obviously a concern for the owners and it was decided to secure the property from future damage by installing flood defences. Planning permission was sought to install flood gates, flood defence walls and a large bund, whilst works on the house continued.

The small extension with a four-pitched roof was built, designed to fit in with the look of the existing house's brickwork and tiles, and custom-built sash windows and double doors leading out into the newly-created patio area. The windows and doors on the ground floor of the main house have all been renewed with matching bespoke replacements. The kitchen windows were replaced with double doors leading out on to the patio, mirroring those of the extension.

The new addition is connected to the main house with a purpose-built link of brickwork and glazing with a flat lead roof. A large roof





light was installed in the ceiling of the new extension on the side that faces the link. This was supplied by Arc Glazing Ltd; it's an unusual shape and, as you can see from the photos, it creates a dramatic effect, opening up a view to the sky and allowing light in.

Another stunning feature is the custom-made oak porch that's been added to the front of the property, built by A T Palmer Ltd's carpenters with a Kent peg-tiled roof. It creates a wonderful and welcoming first impression, and looks like it's been there for centuries.

The works carried out by this outstanding building company are extensive: new plumbing and rewiring, a beautiful new kitchen,

cloakroom, and utility room, and with the flood defences installed the client's home is now secure and beautifully restored for them to enjoy.

This is just one project that shows the full breadth of the workforce's talents, skills and amazing attention to detail. It is a fitting example to showcase this great Kentish company, A T Palmer Ltd, in their 75th year and to applaud everyone who has been instrumental in their success over the years.

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HOW TO... MAINTAIN STAIRCASES



■ **PAINT:** Removing old layers of flaky paint can help you to see the bones of your staircase. This is particularly important if the staircase is old, as it'll likely have layers and layers of paint. Make sure to protect yourself if your home was built before 1960, as the paint may contain lead. Once the paint is removed, you can sand it, then prime and paint the wood. You can also paint over old layers of paint, although this can give uneven results.

■ **STRIPPING:** Historically only expensive hardwoods were left bare, while pine and other softwoods were painted. It's important to bare this in mind if you're considering stripping back a staircase, as soft woods can often prove disappointing when stripped back.

■ **SANDING:** Whether or not your staircase was painted, sanding is essential to create a

smooth, even surface. This will help to give your staircase a flawless finish and prepare the timber for painting or sealing.

■ **WAXING:** To achieve a natural, authentic finish, waxing your staircase is a great option. You can also use oils.

■ **POLISHING:** Using French polish can help to build a more durable surface while still showing off the beauty of the wood.

■ **FIXING STAIRCASE SPINDLES**

Where spindles or balusters are split or broken, it may be possible to glue and temporarily 'splint' them. The other option is to reinforce a broken spindle by using a dowel drilled into the end of the two halves. Where they are missing, a near match might be found at a salvage yard; alternatively, a woodturner can sometimes make copies.



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The main house is traditionally styled with a porch opening to the striking central reception hall with its natural stone flooring, eye-catching 1920s fireplace, ornate turned stairway and galleried landing. From here double doors flow to the capacious sitting room with its bay window and detailed cornice and impressive Tudor style fireplace; the room opens directly

to the rear terrace. Adjacent is a formal dining room with stone fireplace and beams also opening to the grounds. There is a further cosy family room off the hall.

The main hallway flows past the cloakroom and larder/storage room, with access to cool wine cellar, to the sociable open-plan kitchen and casual dining area. The kitchen benefits from a wide range of bespoke kitchen units with granite worktops; there is a central island/breakfast bar with inset sink. Doors from the kitchen lead through to a fitted laundry room and to a rear exit comprising a boot room and cloakroom.

The staircase rises to the galleried first floor landing with four elegant bedrooms and a





family bathroom; all the bedrooms benefit from extensive fitted wardrobe space and two enjoy contemporary en suite shower rooms.

The principal suite has a balcony overlooking the grounds, a fully fitted dressing room and a deluxe en suite bathroom. The second floor offers two further bedroom suites.

Office and leisure complex: The office/leisure complex has an impressive 39ft TV/bar/snooker room. The generous indoor pool with jacuzzi has triple folding doors to the grounds and is served by a changing room, together with a steam room and gym. A spiral staircase rises to the sizeable office/boardroom occupying the first floor.

The annexe: The annexe is totally self-contained, although attached to the main house. It comprises a sitting/dining room, and kitchen on the ground floor and a bedroom with shower room on the first floor.



The cottages: The cottages are remote from the house and enjoy private parking, terraces and share access to a paddock and woodlands.

The vineyard: The Chalksole Estate vineyard, planted in 2007 over 6 acres, comprises circa 9,000 vines being a mixture of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier which represents the typical constituents for English sparkling wine.

The barn: Also included in the sale of the Chalksole Manor Estate is an extensive 3,600+ sq ft barn.

Outside: The property sits in grounds of about 34 acres nestled among picturesque Kent countryside. The main house is approached through electrically controlled gates with a large sweeping gravelled driveway giving access to the four-car garage.

The landscaped formal gardens have paved terraces, large lawns herbaceous beds, topiary and feature trees. There is a summer kitchen, Victorian style greenhouse, vegetable garden and a natural duck pond leading into paddocks and extensive ancient bluebell woodland with oak, ash and beech trees.

In addition to the main house there is a separately accessed attached annexe and two separate well-appointed properties with private terraces, a working vineyard with large barn, and adaptable outbuildings currently being used as a workshop, log and implement store.

The details

Guide price: £ £3,750,000

Viewing by appointment only

Strutt & Parker, 2 St. Margarets St,

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www.struttandparker.com



Oxney Court, St Margarets-At-Cliffe

A sensational Grade II* listed Queen Anne village house,
with exceptional leisure facilities and cottage.

This exceptional property presents a rare opportunity to acquire a truly unique residence in the form of a historic Grade II listed Baronial Style Gothic Manor House. Enveloped in an intriguing history, this castle-like manor dates back in parts to the 17th century and has undergone significant restorations and improvements in the late 1990's and also in 2013. The property boasts a total of six bedrooms, each with its own en-suite bathroom, as well as five elegant reception rooms which exude both grandeur

and charm. Additionally, the estate features a separate two-bedroom staff cottage and a detached guest house with four bedrooms – perfect for accommodating guests or extended family members in utmost comfort and privacy. Former stables have been meticulously transformed into a veritable retreat, complete with a kitchen, laundry room, cinema room, poolside bathroom complete with walk in shower and a studio style bedroom with a kitchen and en-suite bathroom. This astounding property is believed to have once served





as a preparatory school and was even requisitioned during World War I, adding a layer of historical significance to its already remarkable allure.

Set within an expansive 35-acre estate replete with meticulously manicured gardens and woodlands, this property offers an unparalleled opportunity for outdoor enjoyment and relaxation. The Oxney Court estate benefits from a total of 13 bedrooms. The grounds encompass a wealth of amenities, including a swimming pool, tennis court, fully equipped gym, and stunning treehouse with chimney, rope bridges and zip wire, catering to a lifestyle of leisure and entertainment. The outdoor dining room and entertaining space, complete with a fireplace and barbeque kitchen, provide an inviting setting for al fresco gatherings and soirées amidst the serene natural woodland surroundings. A walled private garden, with a lush lawn and rose garden, offers a secluded sanctuary for moments of tranquillity. Convenient features such as electric security gates, integrated smart house system with CCTV and fire alarms, ample parking space for numerous vehicles, ensure both security and convenience, while a circular driveway in front of the principal house further enhances the property's grandeur and accessibility. Experience the epitome of luxury living in this captivating estate that seamlessly blends history, elegance, and modern amenities to create a truly unparalleled living experience.

The main residence offers over 9000 sq. ft of accommodation which briefly comprises to the ground floor an impressive octagonal reception hall, five opulent reception

rooms, a large well-appointed kitchen, conservatory, and cloakroom. To the first floor there are five-bedroom suites each with their own en suite facilities as well as a family bathroom. To the second floor there are two large loft/storage rooms which subject to planning permission could provide extra living accommodation if required. The tower staircase leads to the third floor sixth bedroom again with its own ensuite. In the basement there is an impressive arched wine cellar and additional storage room.

Location

St. Margaret's Bay is situated on the South East coast between Dover and Deal. The charming village has several local shops, a 12th century parish church, village hall, primary school, post office, a number of pubs and stunning picturesque rural scenery. The beach at St. Margaret's Bay, just a three-minute drive from Oxney Court, is famous for being the closest point to France and is consequently where most Channel swimmers begin their marathon 21-mile swim. The white chalk cliffs above the bay are said to be the first place the sun reaches each morning on mainland Britain and offering some delightful walks. There are golf courses at nearby Kingsdown and Deal with St George's at Sandwich, a British Open venue.

The details

Guide price: £6,000,000

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TUESDAY

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THURSDAY

United Church, Preston Street, 7pm

Tel: Sally, 07778 068769

Tel: Suzanne 07769 255616

CANTERBURY GROUPS

THURSDAY

St Andrews URC, 5.30 pm

SATURDAY

Canterbury Academy, 8.30am & 10am

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Tel: Kerry, 07813 679145

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5.30pm & 7pm

TUESDAY

St Bartholomews Church Hall,
9.30am & 11am

WEDNESDAY

St Mary's Retreat Hall, 5pm & 6.30pm

St Peters Church Hall, Greenhill, 9.30am

THURSDAY

St Andrews Christian Centre,
5.30pm & 7pm

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SATURDAY: 1st

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Penshurst; Reuthe's Sevenoaks;
Tunbridge Wells; Wye

SUNDAY: 2nd

Bearsted; Tunbridge Wells

TUESDAY: 4th, 11th, 18th & 25th

Capel-le-Ferne; Hildenborough

WEDNESDAY: 5th, 13th,

18th & 25th Rye

THURSDAY: 6th, 14th,

21st & 28th Hastings; Rolvenden;
Shipbourne

SATURDAY: 8th

Bridge; Deal; Gravesend; Hythe;
Reuthe's Sevenoaks; Sevenoaks;
Tunbridge Wells

SUNDAY: 9th

Lenham; Tonbridge; Tunbridge
Wells; Elham

SATURDAY: 15th

Deal; Gravesend; Hawkhurst;
Reuthe's Sevenoaks; Sevenoaks;
Tunbridge Wells; Wadhurst; Wye

SUNDAY: 16th

Aylesford; Rochester; Staplehurst;
Tunbridge Wells; Watlingtonbury

SATURDAY: 22nd

Bridge; Deal; Gravesend;
Hawkhurst; Hythe; Reuthe's
Sevenoaks; Tunbridge Wells;
Whitstable

SUNDAY: 23rd

Tunbridge Wells

SATURDAY: 29th

Deal; Gravesend; Hawkhurst;
Reuthe's Sevenoaks; Sevenoaks;
Tunbridge Wells

JULY

TUESDAY: 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd & 30th

Capel-le-Ferne; Hildenborough

WEDNESDAY: 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th & 31st Rye

THURSDAY: 4th, 11th, 18th & 25th

Hastings; Rolvenden; Shipbourne

SATURDAY: 6th

Chatham; Deal; Gravesend;
Hawkhurst; Penshurst; Reuthe's
Sevenoaks; Sevenoaks; Tunbridge
Wells; Wye

SUNDAY: 7th

Bearsted; Tunbridge Wells

SATURDAY: 13th

Bridge; Deal; Gravesend;
Hawkhurst; Reuthe's Sevenoaks;
Sevenoaks; Tunbridge Wells

SUNDAY: 14th

Lenham; Tonbridge;
Tunbridge Wells

SATURDAY: 20th

Deal; Dover; Gravesend;
Hawkhurst; Reuthe's Sevenoaks;
Sevenoaks; Tunbridge Wells;
Wadhurst; Wye

SUNDAY: 21st

Aylesford; Rochester; Staplehurst;
Tunbridge Wells; Watlingtonbury

SATURDAY: 27th

Bridge; Deal; Gravesend;
Hawkhurst; Hythe; Reuthe's
Sevenoaks; Sevenoaks; Tunbridge
Wells; Whitstable

SUNDAY: 28th

Cliftonville; Tunbridge Wells

AUGUST

THURSDAY: 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd & 29th

Hastings; Rolvenden;
Shipbourne

SATURDAY: 3rd

Chatham; Deal; Gravesend;
Hawkhurst; Penshurst; Reuthe's
Sevenoaks; Sevenoaks; Tunbridge
Wells; Wye

SUNDAY: 4th

Bearsted; Tunbridge Wells

SATURDAY: 10th

Bridge; Deal; Gravesend;
Hawkhurst; Hythe; Reuthe's
Sevenoaks; Sevenoaks; Tunbridge
Wells

SUNDAY: 11th

Lenham; Tonbridge;
Tunbridge Wells

SATURDAY: 17th

Deal; Dover; Gravesend;
Hawkhurst; Reuthe's Sevenoaks;
Sevenoaks; Tunbridge Wells;
Wadhurst; Wye

SUNDAY: 18th

Aylesford; Rochester; Staplehurst;
Tunbridge Wells; Watlingtonbury

SATURDAY: 24th

Bridge; Deal; Gravesend;
Hawkhurst; Hythe; Knockholt;
Reuthe's Sevenoaks; Sandgate;
Sevenoaks; Tunbridge Wells;
Whitstable

SUNDAY: 25th

Cliftonville; Tunbridge Wells

SATURDAY: 25th

Deal; Gravesend; Hawkhurst;
Reuthe's Sevenoaks; Sevenoaks;
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Sun July 21st - Gumboots
Sun July 28th - Bill, Saxby and the Dan
Sun Aug 4th - Fran McGillivray
Sun Aug 11th - Squeeze Gut Alley
Sun Aug 18th - Native Oysters
Sun Aug 25th - Altones (bank holiday)
Sun Sept 1st - Nylon Tigers
Sun Sept 8th - Project F
Sat Sept 14th - Deep river blues
Sun Sept 15th - The Heads
Sun Sept 22nd - Autumn Stone
Sun Sept 29th - Ozzie and The Uglies

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"The pretty leaves of the chicory and radicchio bring some autumnal colour to the table. I choose the firm persimmons, which are sweet and have a good texture. If you really can't find persimmons, try using pears, apples or even slices of roasted squash. Serve this as a starter or a simple lunch with a few cheeses on a board and bread."

A YEAR IN THE KITCHEN

“These are the recipes I cook at home, dishes that I turn to throughout the year because they answer a craving for a particular thing to eat at a particular time. The recipes evolved from ideas for what to cook and what I chose to include in the food pages of House & Garden each month: a reflection of our appetites, the food growing then, the weather, how we are living and eating each season.”

BLANCHE VAUGHAN

SERVES
6

YOU WILL NEED

3 heads of white
chicory
3 heads of red chicory
1 head of radicchio
small bunch of flat-leaf
parsley
a few sprigs of tarragon
3 persimmons
100g (3.oz) hazelnuts,
roughly chopped

For the dressing

1 small garlic clove,
crushed
3 teaspoons balsamic
vinegar
4 tablespoons extra
virgin olive oil
sea salt and freshly
ground black pepper

CHICORY, PERSIMMON AND HAZELNUT SALAD

METHOD

Cut the chicory in half lengthways and separate the leaves. Halve the radicchio, remove the core and slice finely.

Roughly chop the herbs. Lay the leaves in a large serving bowl.

Slice the persimmons into small wedges, removing the cores and any stones.

To make the dressing, mix the garlic and balsamic vinegar in a bowl and whisk in the oil. Season with salt and pepper.

Toss the leaves in the bowl with most of the dressing and more salt and pepper to taste.

Lay the persimmon wedges on the leaves and scatter over the hazelnuts, drizzling the remaining dressing over the top.



SERVES
6

ORANGE, YOGURT AND OLIVE OIL CAKE

YOU WILL NEED

For the syrup

150g (5½oz) caster sugar

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

juice

of 1 orange

For the cake

100g (3½oz) olive oil,
plus extra for greasing

150g (5½oz) filo pastry
(5 sheets)

zest and juice of 2

oranges 300g (10½oz)

natural yogurt 80g (3oz)

caster sugar

3 teaspoons baking
powder

6 eggs, whisked until
bubbles appear

METHOD

Preheat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan), 350°F, Gas mark 4. Put the syrup ingredients into a saucepan (including the squeezed orange halves) with 120ml (4fl oz) water. Heat slowly to dissolve the sugar, then boil briefly to make a thin syrup. Remove and discard the orange skins, then leave the syrup to cool.

Oil a 30 × 20cm (12 × 8in) baking tin. Tear the filo into pieces about the size of a business card, scrunch them up to make an airy pile, then put in a bowl.

Put all the other ingredients in another bowl and whisk together. Scatter a quarter of the filo over the tin bottom, then add a quarter of the cake mixture. Repeat with the rest of the filo and cake mixture.

Bake for 30–40 minutes until puffy and browned. Remove from the oven, pour over the syrup and leave to soak in for at least 30 minutes before serving.



WIN A COPY OF HOUSE & GARDEN A YEAR IN THE KITCHEN

For your chance to win a copy of *A Year In The Kitchen*, please email your name, address and telephone number to:

dawn@conservationnews.co.uk

Closing date: Friday 16th August 2024

This is an extract from House & Garden A Year in the Kitchen: Seasonal recipes for everyday pleasure by Blanche Vaughan. Published by Mitchel Beazley. Hardcover £35.00





"I first ate this cake in Greece and was intrigued by the soft, layered texture. I then discovered that it is made with yogurt, eggs and olive oil rather than butter and flour. The result is something like lightly set custard held together with leaves of soft filo. I like to eat it warm, with crème fraîche."



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MEREWORTH WINES

Our wine columnist Rowena Hawtin (Dip WSET) pays a visit to Mereworth Wines: an innovative and impassioned winemakers, producing award-winning world-class English sparkling wine from the fruit grown in their own vineyard.

I went to visit Scott Gebbie, head of production at Mereworth, to find out more about this vineyard and winery which is a relative newcomer compared with some of the more established wineries in Kent.

It has a prime location, just off the A26 on the way to Tonbridge with plenty of on-site parking and, whilst it might appear at first sight a little rustic, that just adds to its charm.

The owner, William Boscawen, first planted vines here back in 2015 and as it takes at least three years for them to take root, the first commercial harvest was in 2018 with a production of just 3,000 bottles. The vineyard area has grown considerably from just 0.5 hectares in 2015 to over 2 hectares today, and the 2024 harvest is predicted to produce around 15,000 bottles – so a fivefold increase in the last six years.

Their wines are all sparkling, made in the traditional Champagne way as with most English sparkling wines: a White from White



(often known as a blanc de blancs) made from 100% Chardonnay. Matthew Jukes, the well-known wine writer, has described it as 'biscuity, lemon rind, stewed apples and Asian pears with a creamy texture'.

There is a sparkling rosé made from a blend of Meunier, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir: 'A pale copper sparkling that greets you with notes of wild strawberries, honey, peaches, and brioche – it's soft, creamy and fruity with a medium body and a gentle finish' according to connoisseurs www.JamesSuckling.com.

Finally, there is a White from Black – a blend of Meunier and Pinot Noir: 'An attractive nose of honey, lemon tea, peaches and marmalade on toast with a medium body and a soft, creamy finish' ([JamesSuckling.com](http://www.JamesSuckling.com))

Scott tells me they are very proud that all their grapes are estate grown and the wine is all made on the premises, so they have total control over their final wine. Since 2019, they have made a huge investment in new





“THE VINEYARDS ARE IDEALLY SITUATED ON THE GREENSAND RIDGE OVERLOOKING WATERINGBURY, WITH SANDY LOAM AND WELL-DRAINED, ROCKY SOILS – PERFECT FOR THE GRAPES TO SLOWLY RIPEN...

equipment that has enabled them to take full control of production right through from planting, harvest, production and bottling.

The vineyards are ideally situated on the Greensand Ridge overlooking Wateringbury, with sandy loam and well-drained, rocky soils – perfect for the grapes to slowly ripen whilst retaining a balance of sugar and acidity – vital for good quality sparkling wine.

But it is not only wine they make. They also produce gin to which they add juniper, coriander seed, angelica root and black pepper, and it is then aged with French and American oak. If you are a gin fan, why not head over there and sample a little of this delicious spirit!

Furthermore, they make what they call Marourde, an aperitif similar to what we know today as Aperol. The base is from honey, and it has a kind of bittersweet taste; they recommend trying it as a spritzer, in a negroni or simply on the rocks. Why not pop in and have a glass with lunch, or even after a long day at work to relax!

You can drop in to the café any time from 10am Wednesdays to Sundays (open late on Friday until 10pm) and they also have a

new lunch menu – no need to book for this. You can enjoy lunch with a glass of sparkling wine or maybe a craft beer, and now the weather is warmer, why not sit outside in their large seating area to enjoy! They also offer a fabulous Sparkling Afternoon Tea, but it is recommended to book for this in advance (bookings can be made online through the website).

Brewers Hall is where the café/bar is situated and where wine tastings take place on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, though it is advisable to contact them beforehand to check times and availability. This large area is packed with character and is available for private hire too – weddings, parties and all kinds of celebrations – the team at Mereworth will be happy to assist you, so please do enquire.

EVENTS AT MEREWORTH

Mereworth offer a range of events throughout the year from live music, supper clubs, markets, festivals and more. Please see the events page on their website for more details.

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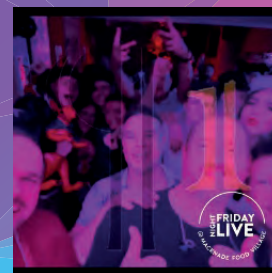
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