Your Mag

Steyning | Bramber | Upper Beeding

February 2026



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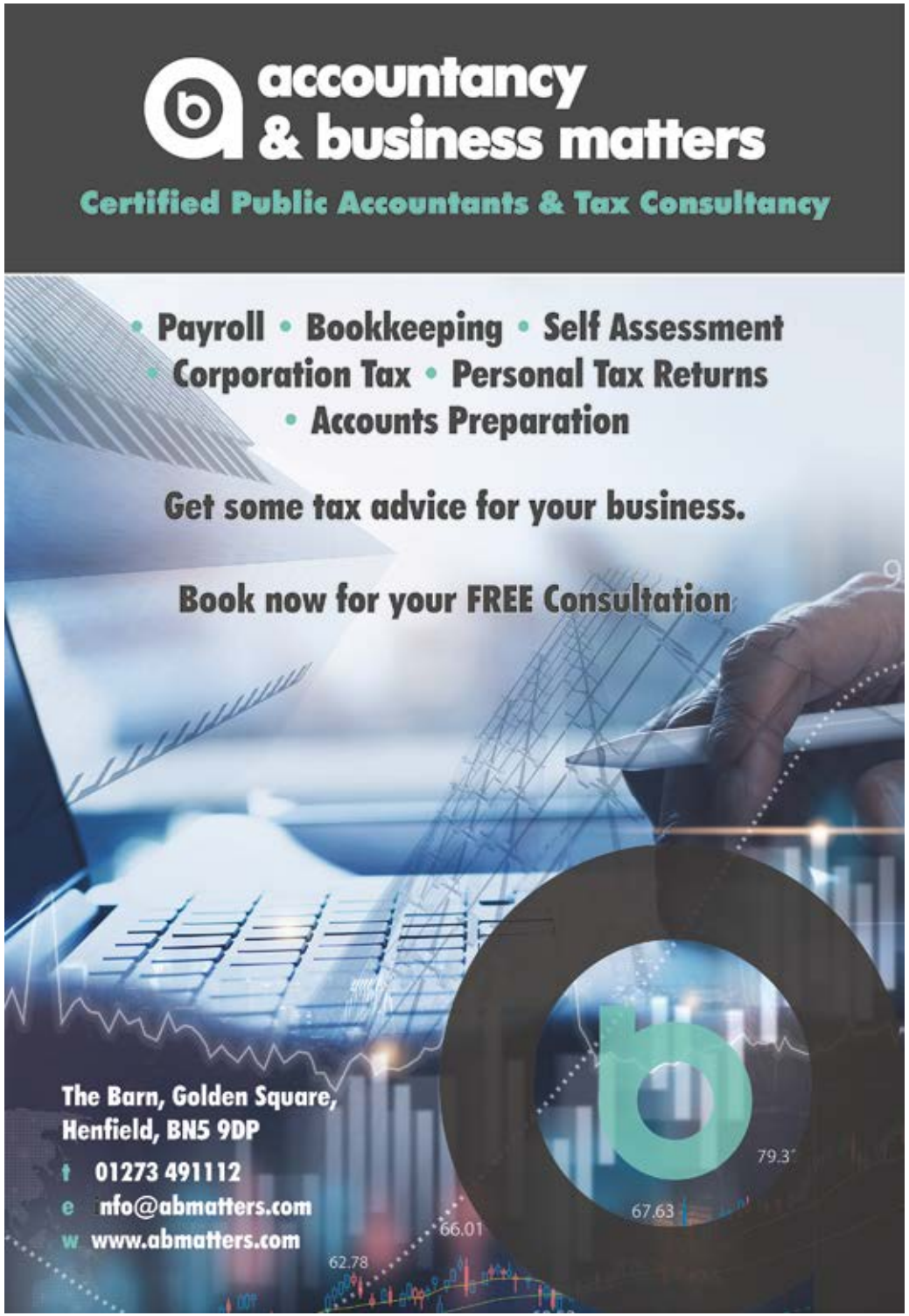

February might be the shortest month, but there's plenty going on locally.

In this issue you'll find details of events, talks and groups happening across Steyning, Bramber and Upper Beeding, along with regular features, local business news and what's on through the rest of winter.

There's a strong environmental theme this month, including fermentation and foraging at Green Drinks, updates from the Community Orchard, and practical gardening advice for the weeks ahead.

As always, Your Mag is delivered free to homes in the area thanks to the support of our local advertisers, so please do support them where you can. If you're organising an event, running a group, or have something you'd like to share with the community, I'm always happy to hear from you.

Thank you for reading and I hope you find this month's issue useful.

Mel
Editor, Your Mag

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Fun with Ferments!

GREENING
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For February's Green Drinks talk, Greening Steyning is turning to the wonderful worlds of fermentation and foraging. Two experts in the field will be joining us to share their passion for these ancient arts.



Roisin Merrow and Iside Turchetti are both Head Brewess's at local fermented drinks companies Wilding, and Old Tree, so they know their sauerkraut from their kimchi!

The ancient art of home fermentation is having a revival! A bubbling jar of sauerkraut on your kitchen counter is a miniature ecosystem working to support your health. Home fermentation offers profound benefits for gut health and immunity, according to leading nutritional scientists like Professor Tim Spector.

One reason to ferment at home is to use seasonal, local produce. Fermentation helps to preserve summer's allotment for winter consumption. British beetroot and carrots are used in autumn, spring cabbage as it comes into season, or summer berries into kombucha flavourings. This approach reduces food miles, captures produce at peak nutrition, and creates a rotating cast of fermented foods that keeps your gut microbiome encountering new beneficial bacteria throughout the year.

Local produce also carries its own wild yeasts and bacteria on its skins, contributing unique microbial profiles to your ferments - something you'll never find in commercially processed products.

Fermented Staples for Your Kitchen:
Sauerkraut, transforms humble cabbage into a probiotic-rich food through simple salt fermentation. The process requires nothing more than shredded cabbage, salt, and time, making it perhaps the most accessible entry point to home fermentation.

Kimchi, Korea's beloved spicy fermented vegetable dish, typically features napa cabbage alongside garlic, ginger, and chili. Beyond its gut benefits, kimchi provides vitamins A and C, and studies suggest it may have anti-inflammatory properties.

Kefir, a tangy fermented milk drink, contains a broader range of beneficial bacteria and yeasts than yogurt. Once you have kefir grains, they multiply and can be used indefinitely, passed between friends like a living heirloom. Our Co-chair, Vicci Johnson, has an endless supply of spare grains!

Kombucha, the fizzy fermented tea, requires a SCOBY (symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast) and offers a refreshing alternative to sugary drinks while delivering probiotics and organic acids that support digestion.

Water kefir, like kombucha, is a delicious fermented dairy free drink that can be flavoured as a low sugar drink on its own or as a mixer for alcoholic or non alcoholic spirits.

Sourdough bread, relies on wild yeasts and lactobacilli to ferment, breaking down gluten and phytic acid in the process. This makes sourdough easier to digest than commercial bread and potentially better for blood sugar control.

The beauty of home fermentation lies in its simplicity and accessibility. With basic ingredients, minimal equipment, and patience, you can create foods that taste extraordinary while genuinely supporting your health—a rare combination in our modern food landscape.

Come along to green drinks on **Wednesday Feb 25th** to hear Roisin giving a short talk on the science, craft and art of fermentation, how beneficial microbes are made and how these invisible allies play a vital role in supporting the human microbiome. She will explore how the microbiome influences digestion, immunity, and overall wellbeing, and how working with wild, living foods helps to restore balance between our inner ecosystems and the landscapes we live in. From there, the conversation will turn to foraging, with Isy guiding the audience into the sensory world of wild weeds. She will speak about the practice of identifying and gathering these edible and medicinal greens with awareness and respect for the environment. Together, they'll reflect on how foraging and fermenting are deeply intertwined, one rooted in the gathering of wild abundance, and the other in the nurturing of microbial life. How both invite us to slow down, observe, and reconnect with the cycles of nature.

There will be the opportunity for tasters throughout this talk and to buy kombucha or water kefir during the evening.

Tickets are £5 (free for students) and can be purchased from the Greening Steyning website: www.greeningsteyning.org/events

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Steyning Community Orchard: Winter Maintenance

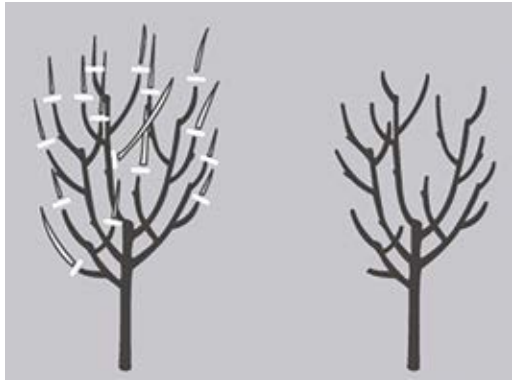
Late January/early February is the time that the Steyning Community Orchard will be pruning the mature standard apple and pear trees in the orchards. Cherries and plums (stone fruit)will be pruned in the summer, which helps reduce the risk of infection of these trees. Mid-winter (November-March) is the ideal time to prune, as it's before tree growth restarts and we can take time to assess the shape of the bare trees and decide what needs to be done.

But why prune trees at all, and why now?

By pruning, we can control/manage the health, shape, productivity and size of the trees.

First, we identify any diseased, dead or damaged wood and remove, before we move onto any pruning .(But fruit tree deadwood is a great habitat for all sorts of insects and bugs, so if it's not causing a problem, or likely to fall and damage anything, then perhaps leave it).

The shape we are aiming for is a goblet/ cup shape with an open centre with evenly spaced branches.



We remove any branches that are crossing or rubbing against each other, and any laterals (side shoots growing from a leader) which are facing inwards.

There is an old saying that you should *'be able to throw a hat up through the centre of the tree'*. The leaders (stems that grow upwards) and side laterals, we cut back by a third, although the RHS recommend vigorous leaders are cut back by a half. To keep the trees productive, it is advisable not to remove more than 10-20 % of the canopy.

Over pruning will result in a lot of new growth with little blossom and fruit developing. The pruning cut is a sloping one about ½ cm above an outward pointing bud. The slant helps water runoff and not collect around the bud.

Suggested tools – secateurs, long handled pruner/lopper and a pruning saw for larger branches. All tools must be sharp and clean. For taller trees you may need a ladder (preferably a tripod pruning ladder).

This is just a brief description of what the Community Orchard will be up to. There are different pruning regimes for neglected trees, cordon and espaliers. More detailed information can be found on the RHS website and in any good horticultural publication.

An interesting website to investigate is:
'The Orchard Project'
www.theorchardproject.org.uk.

We now have our new Steyning Community Orchard web site up and running:
www.steyningcommunityorchard.org.

Check it out for information about the orchards and fruit; and up to date details of our events and work parties.

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Adrian Ridley – Financial Adviser with Quilter

For over 30 years, I have worked as a Financial Adviser, helping clients gain clarity and confidence in their financial planning.

I was a partner in a long-established and successful financial advice practice in Brighton, where I worked for many years.

Following the sale of the business in 2022, I remained with the firm to support the transition before choosing to begin the next chapter of my career with Quilter.

This allows me to work with a smaller, select group of clients while continuing to provide thoughtful, tailored advice built on trust and long-term relationships.

I have lived in Steyning for many years and am actively involved in the local community, including volunteering at Steyning Town Football Club.

Being based locally allows me to work face-to-face with you, helping to build better conversations and better outcomes.

I believe the best financial advice comes from real conversations rather than screens.

To find out more about me and how I could support you on your financial journey, please visit my Quilter adviser profile: www.quilter.com/adrian-ridley

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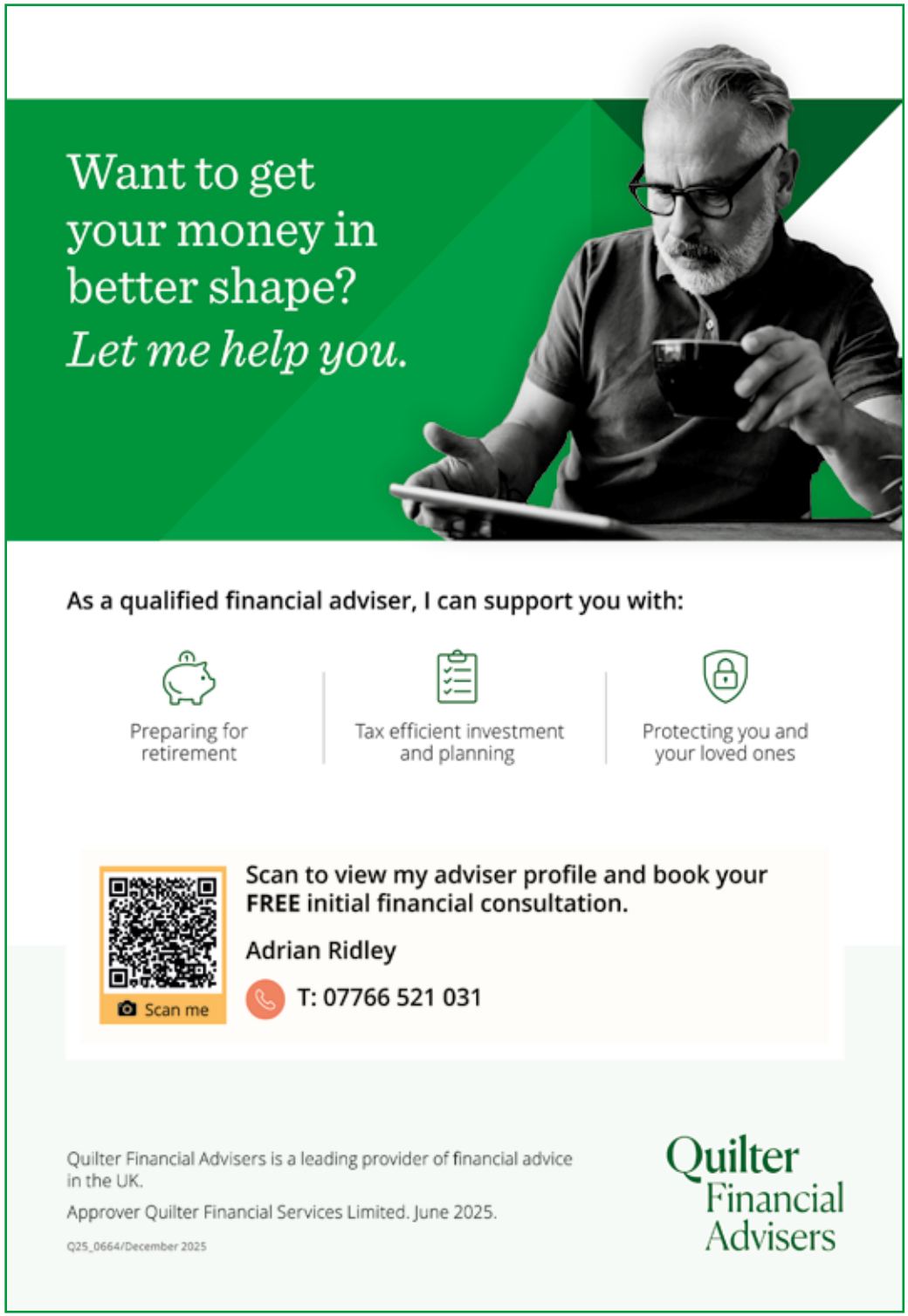

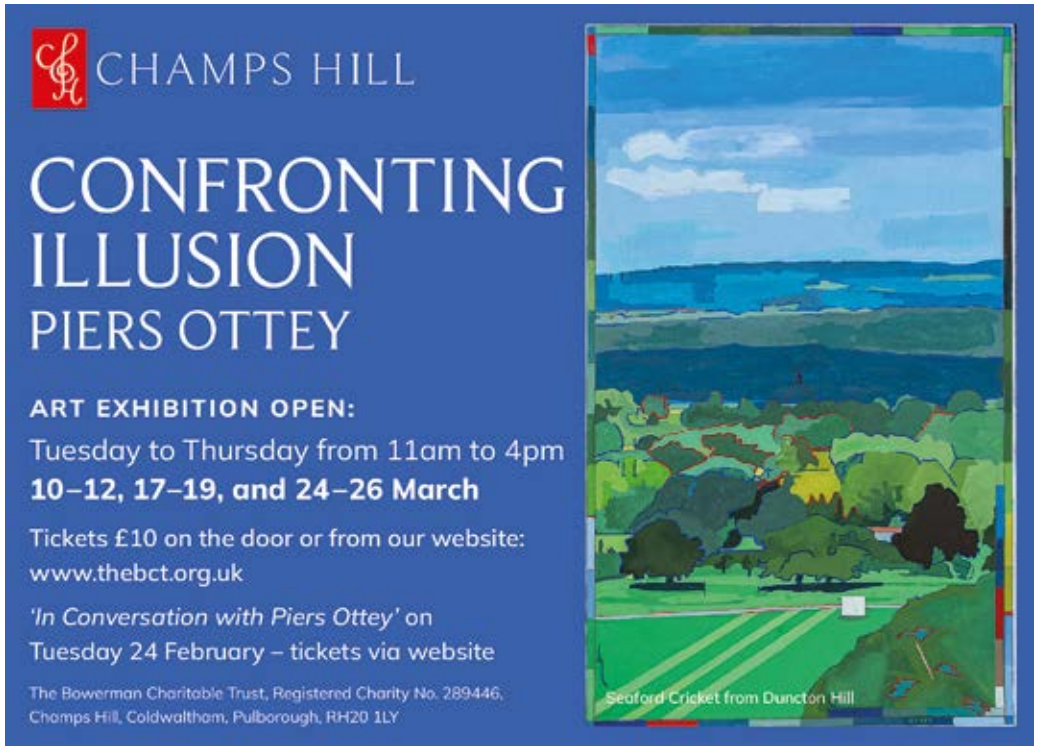

Art Exhibition – Spring 2026
Confronting Illusion - Piers Ottey

CHAMPS HILL

Confronting Illusion features stunning paintings by Sussex based artist Piers Ottey whose works are instantly recognisable. His trademark *'colour code'* around the edge of paintings, drawing marks and overpainting are all to be seen in these seemingly simple works.

The exhibition is open to the public at Champs Hill for three weeks in March: Tuesday to Thursday: 10-12 March, 17-19 March, 24-26 March - 11:00 – 16:00. Tickets £10* (on the door or via website) www.thebct.org.uk

** suggested donation includes tea/coffee/biscuits, parking and opportunity to explore the grounds.*

Champs Hill is delighted to present this striking collection of paintings by Piers Ottey. Much of Piers' work derives from visiting places at home and abroad. He has worked on images from the mountains of Switzerland to city paintings of San Francisco and London, where he was born and raised, but most often he returns to paint the Sussex landscape.

Piers works from his studio in West Sussex, on the edge of the Downs, and paints what he is passionate about – the local landscape, his travels abroad and even his motorbikes!

The process of painting is important, but so is the form: these paintings are characterised by rigorous structure, using geometry as well as varying surface textures and finishes.

To hear first-hand from Piers about the inspiration behind his work, tickets are available via the Champs Hill website www.thebct.org.uk for a special evening event on Tuesday 24th February at 19:00.

'In Conversation with the Artist' will enable you to explore the Confronting Illusion exhibition, with the added bonus of this rare opportunity to listen to what promises to be an engaging conversation with Piers, a great raconteur.

Private groups can also arrange a visit to view the exhibition, before Confronting Illusion opens to the public. Some dates are available in February and early March – enquire via www.thebct.org.uk

Piers Ottey is represented by Kevis House Gallery, Petworth.The Bowerman Charitable Trust.
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Every	Friday	9.00a.m	Steyning village	3.00
02-Feb	Monday	1.00pm	Holmbush	4.00
04-Feb	Wednesday	9.00am	Holmbush	4.00
04-Feb	Wednesday	1.00pm	Horsham	5.00
05-Feb	Thursday	9.00am	Henfield village	4.00
05-Feb	Thursday	1.00pm	Horsham	5.00
06-Feb	Friday	1.00pm	Vintage Years	3.00
09-Feb	Monday	12 noon	Bolney Stage lunch	5.00
11-Feb	Wednesday	1.00pm	Holmbush	4.00
12-Feb	Thursday	9.00am	Holmbush	4.00
17-Feb	Tuesday	1.00pm	Horsham	5.00
18-Feb	Wednesday	9.00am	Holmbush	4.00
18-Feb	Wednesday	1.00pm	Worthing	4.00
19-Feb	Thursday	9.00am	Henfield village	4.00
19-Feb	Thursday	1.00pm	Holmbush	4.00
23-Feb	Monday	1.00pm	Newbridge Garden Centre	5.00
25-Feb	Wednesday	1.00pm	Worthing	4.00
26-Feb	Thursday	9.00am	Holmbush	4.00

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February 2026: Diary Events

The following nonrecurring events are also in the What's On section on the Your Steyning, Bramber & Beeding website at: www.yourmag.co.uk

Monday 2nd February
13:00 – 14:45
Penfold Hall, Church Street, Steyning

Little Stars Bumps Babies & Toddler Group

There are two sessions of Little Stars! each week: Mondays 13:00 - 14:45 and Thursdays 09:30 – 11:30. Toys, crafts, singing and lots more. Cake and coffee for parents, carers and grandparents.
Forthcoming dates:
Mondays - 2, 9, 16, 23 February
Thursdays - 5, 12, 19, 26 February
Contact: Gary T: 01903813276

Friday 6th February
Steyning Museum
10:00 – 16:00
Steyning Museum, Church Street, Steyning

White Bridge / Bramber Brooks Display

Our latest display features two riverside projects recently much in the news: the White Bridge Link upgrade and Bramber Brooks improvements. Both are now finished and open to the public, so we thought it a good time to celebrate. As well as photos and a look back at their history, we also have a section of the old White Bridge on display. Open 10-4 every Wednesday to Sunday. Contact:
Ray Powell T: 07838262946
E: sussex-ray@hotmail.co.uk

Friday 6th February
Vintage Years Club
14:00 – 16:00
Steyning Centre, Fletchers Croft, Steyning

Alice Day - Chair Yoga

Doors open at 13:45. We are pleased to welcome back Alice who will teach us some simple chair exercises, to help keep ourselves fit this Winter. Refreshments will be served from 15:15 and we will celebrate February birthdays and draw the raffle. Entrance fee is £3 (£5 visitors). Annual membership is £10 (each April). Always contact Bev Francis-Hills before attending for the first time/returning after a long break, for transport needs or any other information. Contact: Bev Francis-Hills T: 01273493894 E: vintageyears2012@gmail.com

Saturday 7th February
The Hub
09:00 – 10:15
19, Church Lane, Upper Beeding

Breakfast talk: Maintaining Resilience, Hope and Action in the Climate Emergency

Come and enjoy a continental breakfast followed by Revd. Buff Forbes Stone, environment officer for the Chichester Diocese. Tickets £6.00 are available from Steyning Bookshop (cash only), the Hub Cafe and the local churches. Contact: Maggie:
E: BroadEvents@sdct.org.uk

Saturday 7th February
Steyning Town Football Club
15:00 – 17:00
Peter Humphreys Memorial Ground, The Shooting Field, Steyning, West Sussex

Steyning Town v Newhaven

The Dockers are in town for a top of the table clash. Get some friends and family together and enjoy an afternoon watching SCFL Premier Division football. Kitchen and Bar open. Up the Barrowmen! SCFL Admission: General £10, Concession £5, Under 16s Free.
E: secretary.stcfc@gmail.com

Monday 9th February
Steyning Gardening Club
07:30 – 21:00
Steyning Centre, Fletchers Croft, Steyning

Steyning Community Orchard

Roger Brown will be us to discuss our wonderful Community Orchard, covering its history, current status and future aspirations. He'll also share his extensive expertise on fruit trees. Non Members are welcome - £5 cash entry on the door. (Membership is £20 per year).
Contact: Alison Hamer:
E: steyninggardeningclub@gmail.com

Monday 9th February
The Arts Society
09:45 – 12:00
Steyning Centre, Fletchers Croft, Steyning

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Music and Art in the Age of Vermeer

Although musical instruments frequently appear in Dutch Golden Age paintings, their sound and symbolic meaning can often remain a mystery. This lecture explains how music evoked themes of love and intimacy in 17th century Dutch art, as portrayed by Vermeer, Jan Steen and Pieter de Hooch. Our expert lecturer, Adam Busiakievicz, is a recognised Art Historian and lutenist who is also accredited by The Arts Society. Free to members. Visitors are welcome - just pay £10 on the door. Contact Stephanie Savill T: 01903 815577
E: tass.publicity@gmail.com

Friday 13th February
The Parish Church of St Cuthman and St Andrew
14:00 – 16:00
Penfold Hall, Church Street, Steyning

Good Grief Cafe

Those who have experienced any sort of loss are welcome to join us for tea or coffee, biscuits and a listening ear. Second Friday of each month. Contact: Judie T: 01903813276

Saturday 14th February
Greening Steyning, Bramber,and Beeding
14:00 – 16:00
Bramber & Beeding Village Hall, High Street, Upper Beeding
Repair Cafe & Home Energy Helpdesk

Don't bin it - let us help you fix it! Bring along your items to repair, and anything you'd like sharpened. If you aren't sure whether we can help please email Robin at repaircafe@greeningsteyning.org for advice. You can also speak to one of our Helpdesk volunteers about how to save energy at home. Contact: Melissa Birch: T: 07971794792
E: greeningsteyning@gmail.com

Saturday 14th February
Steyning Town Football Club
15:00 – 17:00
Peter Humphreys Memorial Ground, The Shooting Field, Steyning, West Sussex
Steyning Town v Wick

Wick are our visitors. Come down and enjoy an afternoon watching SCFL Premier Division football. Kitchen and Bar open. Up the Barrowmen! SCFL Admission: General £10, Concession £5, Under 16s Free. Contact us via our website. E: secretary.stcfc@gmail.com

Tuesday 17th February
Steyning Parish Church
10:00 – 12:00
Vicarage Lane, Steyning, West Sussex

Shrove Tuesday Pancakes & Coffee

Join us for traditional pancakes before the beginning of Lent on Wednesday. Contact: Gary T: 01903813276

Wednesday 18th February
Steyning Parish Church
11:30 – 12:30
Vicarage Lane, Steyning, West Sussex

Ash Wednesday Service

Mark the beginning of Lent with this Communion Service with ashing. NOTE: There will be two services, one in the morning at 11:30 - 12:30 and an Evening Service at 19:00 – 20:00. Contact: Parish Office: T: 01903813276

Monday 23rd February
Steyning Parish Church
18:00 – 21:00
Penfold Hall, Church Street, Steyning

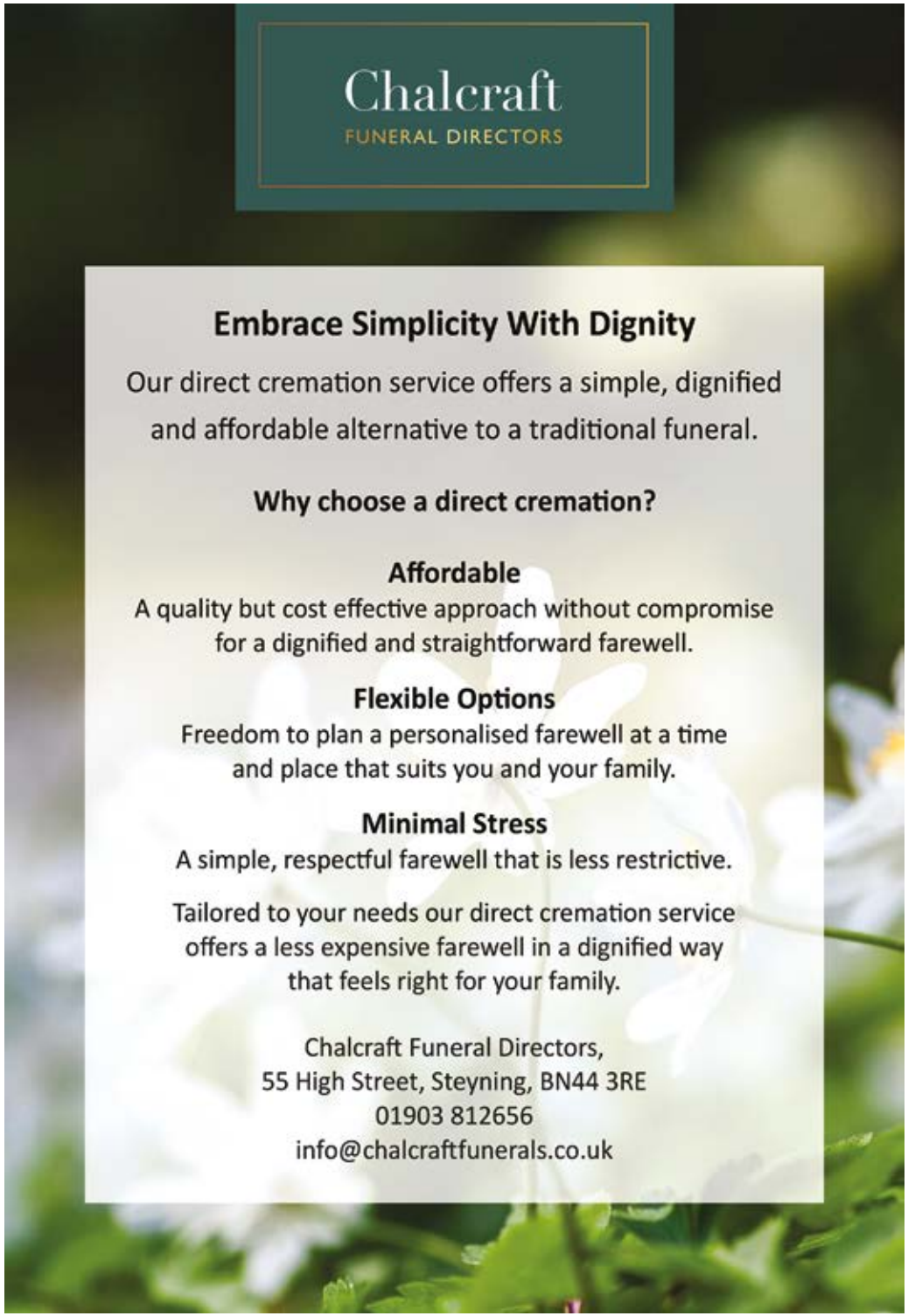
Board Game Cafe Evening Edition

Join us for a once a month night filled with board games, card games and endless laughter! Bring a game with you or join in with one that's already here. Hot drinks will be available throughout the evening. Contact: Gary T: 01903813276

Wednesday 25th February
Greening Steyning, Bramber,and Beeding
19:30 – 21:00
Steyning Centre, Fletchers Croft, Steyning

Green Drinks - Ferment and Forage

Roisin and Isy are both Head Brewess's at local fermented drinks companies. They share a passion for the wonderful worlds of fermentation and foraging and are experts in their field. At this month's Green Drinks they'll reflect on how foraging and fermenting are deeply intertwined, one rooted in the gathering of wild abundance and the other in the nurturing of microbial life. How both invite us to slow down and reconnect with the cycles of nature. There will be the opportunity for lots of tasters throughout this talk. Kombucha and Kefir will also be available to buy at the bar. Tickets are £5 (free for students) and can be booked



at: www.greeningsteyning.org/events. Contact: Melissa Birch: E: greeningsteyning@gmail.com

Wednesday 25th February
Steyning and District Flower Club
9:30 – 21:30
Steyning Centre, Fletchers Croft, Steyning

'Roses are Red or Are They?!'

Steyning and District Flower Club are excited to be welcoming popular local florist, demonstrator and freelance writer, Nina Tucknott to their first demonstration of 2026. You are warmly invited to come along for an enjoyable, friendly and inspirational evening. There is always the opportunity to win one of Nina's amazing creations in the evening raffle and refreshments will also be available. Doors open at 19.00. Members are free and visitors are £7.00 on the door. Contact: Valerie Hodges T: 07870 982699 E: val.hodges@yahoo.co.uk

Saturday 28th February
Greening Steyning, Bramber,and Beeding
10:30 – 12:00
The Castle Inn Hotel, The St, Steyning

Climate Cafe

A regular event on the 4th Saturday of every month except December, the Climate Cafe at the Castle offers a warm and inclusive space, to share friendship and mutual support for those holding questions and worries about the climate crisis and how it will affect us all. Whether you are feeling helpless and fearful about the future, or feeling positive and motivated to bring about change – you are not alone. So why not join us at 10.30 for a chat over coffee. Contact: Melissa Birch: T: 07971794792
E: greeningsteyning@gmail.com

Saturday 28th February
Steyning Town Football Club
15:00 – 17:00
Peter Humphreys Memorial Ground, The Shooting Field, Steyning, West Sussex

Steyning Town v Forest Row FC

We look forward to welcoming you to the Peter Humphreys Memorial Ground. Come and enjoy an afternoon watching SCFL Premier Division football. Kitchen and Bar open. Up the Barrowmen SCFL Admission: General £10, Concession £5, Under 16s Free. Contact us via our website 07984603745 E: secretary.stcfc@gmail.com

Sunday 1st March
Steyning Town Football Club
14:00 – 16:00
Peter Humphreys Memorial Ground, The Shooting Field, Steyning, West Sussex
Steyning Town Women v Sevenoaks Town FC

Come down and see our Women take on Sevenoaks Town in the L&SERWFL. It's always a good atmosphere. Kitchen and Bar open. L&SERWFL Admission: General £5, Concessions/U16s Free. Contact us via our website E: secretary.stcfc@gmail.com

Friday 6th March
Vintage Years Club
14:00 – 16:00
Steyning Centre, Fletchers Croft, Steyning

Crossing the Taklamakan Desert

Doors open at 13:45. Our meeting starts with a brief Annual General Meeting. Following this, we are delighted to welcome Caroline who will entertain us with her illustrated talk. Refreshments will be served from 15:15 and we will celebrate March birthdays and draw the raffle. Entrance fee is £3 (£5 visitors). Annual membership fee of £10 is due next month in April. Always contact Bev Francis-Hills before attending for the first time/returning after a long break, for transport needs or any other information. Contact: Bev Francis-Hills 01273493894 E: vintageyears2012@gmail.com





CCTV Consultation

Steyning Parish Council is consulting on the introduction of a new community-led CCTV system to help improve safety in key public areas of the town.

- The proposed locations for the initial cameras are Fletcher's Croft, the Memorial Playing Fields and parts of the High Street. There would also be the option to use small mobile units in specific problem areas, such as fly-tipping hotspots.
- The aim of the scheme is to help deter anti-social behaviour, support police investigations, protect public facilities, increase safety and provide reassurance to residents and visitors.
- Cameras would only monitor public spaces such as pedestrian routes, car parks and access points, and would not be aimed at private homes. All footage would be handled lawfully and in line with data protection rules, with strict controls on who can view recordings.
- The system would be managed by trained council staff and neighbourhood wardens, working in partnership with Sussex Police where necessary. Independent oversight, a clear complaints process and regular transparency reporting would also be in place.

Residents are invited to share their views on the proposal via the Parish Office or the online consultation form.

February 2026: Steyning for Trees



WINNER CPRE Sussex Countryside Awards 2020

SFT are so pleased to be helping the Parish Council work with the Primary School enabling them to obtain free hedging plants from the the Woodland Trust's FREE TREES FOR SCHOOLS and COMMUNITIES scheme.

We have been working with the Woodland Trust for many years and know their different generous schemes. With their expertise the Trust works diligently to provide the right mixes of hedging plants for different situations, soil types etc. Advising on how to plant, always a double row of 5 or 6 plants per metre to maximise effectiveness and create cover for so many species that depend on the shelter and protection a hedge gives.

The Woodland Trust with its 300,000 members, believes in the incredible benefits that come from hedge planting for biodiversity. and so does the Parish Council with their excellent work on their Pocket Nature Park at Chandlers Way and commitment to increasing biodiversity here. SFT is always happy to help them.

When mature this park will be a great benefit for nature in Steyning. Adding to the over 20 areas owned by all our friends planting hedges and working for wildlife creating the wonderful nature mosaic in and around the town.

Tea and Trees - Tour for the Festival
30th May, 2026 - 15:00 to 19:00.



Come and see these lovely hidden places with their wonderful secret views of Steyning, many of them birdlife rich, bring your binos. Have tea at Mouse Cottage with its lovely wildlife garden. An afternoon to look forward).

Mumurations - What an incredible sight, often seen near the Pier in Brighton.



It remains a mystery of how Starlings murmurate? An awe-inspiring phenomena and so magical. Prior to roosting for the night they gather in flight, creating vast numbers of both local birds and others that migrate from Europe for the autumn and winter months. The twists and turns, while in a swarm of so many birds together, is amazing.
To see the murmuration, arrive half an hour before sunset . Once the sun goes down the Starlings suddenly disappear into their roost under the Pier . Walking back along the boards you can hear the birds under your feet, scuffling over the best position.

Save our Hedgehogs - Hints:
Do be careful not to tidy up your gardens too much as piles of leaves can be home for hibernating hedgehogs. If you are having a bonfire, use a proper incinerator or move the pile to be burnt before setting fire to it.

Please don't use slug pellets at all. If you have to, put them under a slab raised slightly off the ground with pebbles and pick up the dead slugs and snails as soon as possible..

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February 2026: A Bundle of Winter Wrens

Someone once told me if you think you've seen a mouse it's probably a Wren. These diminutive brown birds make a habit of hopping about the undergrowth in stop-motion fashion, feeding on insects, spiders, and occasionally berries and seeds. Despite being the UK's most numerous breeding bird, they can be inconspicuous.

The similarity promptly ends when they open their mouth. Though weighing under 10g, the Wren's voice is bold and loud; a long, high-pitched whistle and trill, cutting through crisp morning air and reaching above that of larger songsters. If you watch a Wren singing, you'll notice the effort on its small body – beak wide and tail upturned.



Wren and blossom © Roger Wilmshurst

Woodland understory is an ideal nesting habitat for Wrens, and males establish clear territories in early spring, using that powerful voice. They build five or even six nests to try and attract a female and will aggressively deter other males that dare approach.



Wren © John Bean

However, when the chill of winter comes around, the male changes his tune. A balmy summer of successful shouting may have shown that a tiny body is no barrier to being heard, but it won't help with heat loss on cold nights.

So, the male starts collecting bedfellows. Flitting out on short trips, he again utilises his song, letting females and other males know they are welcome to join him for a platonic sleepover, starting after dusk and ending before dawn.

'Oh, that stuff I said in spring? Water under the bridge.'



Wren in nest © Alan Price

They gratefully accept, bundling into moss and leaf-lined woven grass, squidging tiny wings and bellies together to make room for just one more. Beaks in, bums out. Most consist of small gatherings, but records of dozens have been logged, and one count in the 1960s numbered 61 Wrens.

Not just super cute, the warmth-sharing of these communal roosts might be lifesaving. Although as anyone who shares a bed will know, there can be a waste of energy caused by the wriggling of others. Shuffling for space, preening, defecating in the roost; entirely unacceptable sleepover etiquette.

When warmer days thankfully return it's back to spring rules, and the male begins to banish other males from the roost, cosy winter cuddles forgotten until the cold starts to nip around tiny feet once more.

Next time you hear a winter Wren having a good yell, be sympathetic. It's survived the night, thank goodness, but it's had a terrible night's sleep.

By Kerry Williams:
Communications Officer - Conservation
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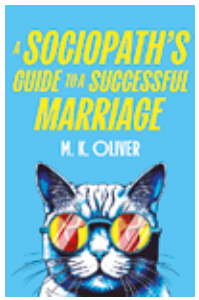
February 2026: Book Reviews

Adults Books

A Sociopath's Guide to a Successful Marriage by M.K Oliver



Harper Collins Books, hardback £16.99

A wildly entertaining, wickedly funny and razor-sharp thriller which I gulped down quicker than my Xmas Baileys!

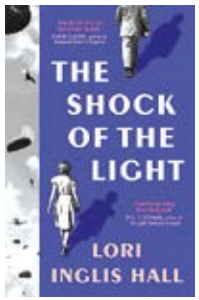
Meet your new favourite murderous heroine, Lalla Rook: a ruthless, stylish, upwardly mobile mother of two, married to an investment banker. Machiavelli has NOTHING on Lalla, as she plots and schemes to get her daughter into a prestigious prep school, upsize from Muswell Hill to her dream home in Hampstead, and get her husband promoted to partner at his bank.

There's just the small matter of the dead body on her living room floor to clear up, once her daughter's birthday party guests have departed.... Lalla has worked hard to create the perfect life, and she'll stop at nothing – even murder – to protect it.

Deliciously dark and hilarious, full of breakneck twists and turns, with a truly unforgettable main character, we predict this debut novel is going to be a BIG HIT!

The Shock of the Light by Lori Inglis Hall

Borough Press, hardback £18.99



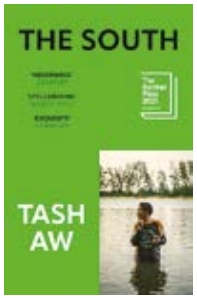
I was bewitched by this literary fiction debut novel, which is a compelling, emotional read set during the Second World War. The Shock of the Light is a delicately told study of twinhood, and the shattering impact of war on two ordinary lives.

Anglo-French twins Tessa and Theo have always had a deep bond, until Tessa leaves Cambridge to study at the Sorbonne, and the war sends them their separate ways – the RAF for Theo, clandestine operations behind enemy lines in France for bilingual Tessa.

Two years later, only one of them comes home. Has their interwoven thread been severed for ever by the dark violence of war? An intimate, tender story, with plenty of tension and page-turning plot development, which adds a fresh perspective to the wartime literature canon. **The author is based in East Sussex, so we are planning an event with her in March – watch this space!**

The South by Tash Aw

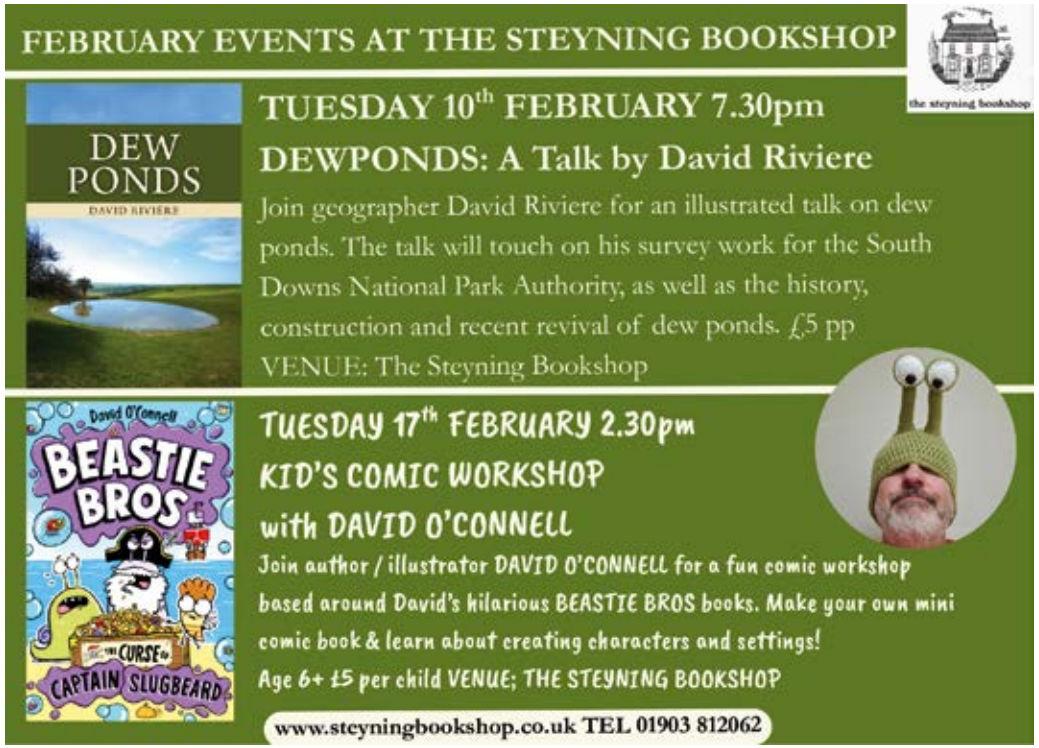
Fourth Estate, paperback £9.99



Our bookseller Gill recommends this poignant 'coming of age' novel, which follows the longing that blooms between two boys over the course of one hot, languid summer in Malaysia...

When Jay's grandfather dies, he bequeaths his once flourishing farm to Jay's family. Jay and his parents travel South to take over the farm, which has fallen into disrepair; the trees are diseased, and the fields parched from months of drought. Over the course of these hot, dense days, working the land, Jay finds himself drawn to Chuan, the son of the farm's manager, different from him in every way except for one. Out in the fields, and on the streets into town, the charge between the boys intensifies. Meanwhile, inside the house, the other family members confront their own regrets and begin to drift apart.

A sparsely-written yet heart-rending novel which looks at family, desire and inheritance, and the impact of the powerful march of 'progress' as it threatens to render traditional ways of living in the Global South obsolete.



Children's Books

The Blitz Sisters by Judith Eagle

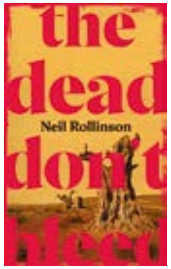
Faber Children's Books, paperback £7.99

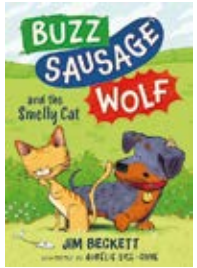


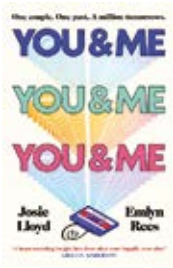
I ADORED this gorgeous novel for older children, which reminded me of classic children's writers like Noel Streatfield. It's a 'Little Women' style story of three sisters, each a separate narrative, set against the backdrop of London in WW2.

War has been declared and the lives of Lydia - a gifted cook, arty headstrong Peggy and clever little Teddy are about to be turned upside down. As bombs rain down on London, the girls will lose their homes, their things, and their loved ones. But they will also FIND so much .... lost kittens, friendships with fellow rebels, the need for art, their purpose in life, the strength and love to carry on, and a greater sense of family than ever. And with each other's help and with the radical changes to society that war brings, the three sisters will discover the essence of who they truly are. **A wonderful sweep of a story which brings history vividly to life and is sure to become a new classic of WW2 children's literature! Perfect for readers of 9-14 years.**









Chest and Rib Pain: When to Worry and How Chiropractic Care Can Help



Chest and rib pain can feel scary, but it is very often caused by irritated muscles and joints between the ribs rather than the heart or lungs. The important thing is knowing when it is likely to be a simple chest-wall problem that can be helped, and when it might be an emergency that needs 999 or A&E.

Everyday causes of chest or rib pain:

• Common *'mechanical'* causes include muscle strain, inflammation of the rib joints (costochondritis), rib irritation from stiffness in the upper back.

• Repeated twisting, lifting or reaching overhead can strain the small joints where the ribs meet the spine or breastbone, leaving them feeling sore and inflamed.

• A bout of heavy coughing, sneezing or laughing can overload the muscles and joints between the ribs, leading to sharp, catching pain when you move or breathe in deeply.

• Direct knocks or minor falls that do not cause a fracture can still bruise the ribs or sprain the surrounding ligaments, creating ongoing local tenderness.

• Sports or gym activities that involve sudden rotation (for example golf, tennis or throwing) can irritate the rib joints or intercostal muscles, especially if you *'over-do it'* or return to activity too quickly.

• Tension from stress and shallow, upper-chest breathing can keep the muscles between and around the ribs in a constant low-level spasm, making the area feel tight and uncomfortable.

• Lung problems such as heart attack, angina, pneumonia, blood clots in the lung or a collapsed lung can also cause chest pain and must be ruled out if symptoms sound worrying.

• Indigestion or acid reflux, anxiety, gallbladder problems and, rarely, cancers in the chest area can all show up as chest or rib-area discomfort.

Signs it may be a rib or muscle problem:

• Pain that is sharp or achy, easy to point at with a finger, and clearly worse when you press on the area, twist, reach, cough or take a deep breath is more likely to be from the ribs or muscles of the chest wall.

• Costochondritis, for example, often causes a tender spot where the ribs meet the breastbone, usually on one side, and can feel sore but is not dangerous and usually settles with time and the right self-care and treatment.

• Pain that started after a new activity, heavy lifting, a twist, a fall or even a long bout of coughing, and that is not accompanied by breathlessness or feeling generally unwell, is less likely to be an emergency.

Red-flag symptoms: when to call 999 or go to A&E

• Call 999 immediately if chest pain is heavy, tight or squeezing, especially if it spreads to your arm, jaw, neck or back, or comes with sweating, nausea, or feeling faint or *'not right'*, as this could be a heart attack.

• Get urgent help if you have sudden sharp chest pain with shortness of breath, fast heartbeat, coughing up blood or severe difficulty breathing, as this can indicate a blood clot or collapsed lung.

• See a doctor urgently if chest or rib pain follows a big accident, comes with high fever and a bad cough, or if you notice weight loss, night sweats or have a history of cancer.

How chiropractic care can help chest and rib pain:

• Once serious heart, lung and other internal causes have been ruled out, many people's ongoing chest or rib pain turns out to come from irritated rib joints, tight muscles between the ribs, or stiffness in the upper back.

• Chiropractic care can then include gentle hands-on treatment to the spine and rib joints, soft-tissue work to ease tight muscles, and simple exercises to restore movement and help the area heal.

• You may also be given practical advice on posture, desk and driving set-up, breathing, and how to return safely to normal activities protecting the ribs

What to expect at Well Adjusted Health:

• At Well Adjusted Health, chest and rib symptoms are always taken seriously, and the first step is to ask detailed questions and examine you to check for any warning signs that mean you should see a GP or go straight to urgent or emergency care instead.

• If your pain appears to be coming from the ribs, muscles or spine, we will explain the likely cause in plain language, agree a step-by-step treatment and exercise plan with you, and keep everything at a level that feels safe and manageable.

If you are unsure whether your chest or rib pain is something simple or something serious, it is always safer to get it checked; once the worrying causes have been ruled out, a careful assessment and gentle, hands-on treatment plan at Well Adjusted Health can help you move, breathe and live more comfortably again.

If you have a specific question regarding any pain or problem areas, or would like to book a Free 15 minute consultation for you or your family please call Well Adjusted Health on 01903 892171



February 2026: Gardening Journal

Article by Alex Bell
T: 01903 815065
M: 07866 747849

February i often the coldest and most trying month of the year. The days can feel endlessly grey, dark, and wet, and it's easy to think that winter will never quite loosen its grip. Gardens can look tired and lifeless, and even the most enthusiastic gardener may struggle to find much to inspire them outdoors. Yet, despite the gloom, February often brings with it a subtle but welcome shift. Almost unnoticed at first, the earliest spring bulbs begin to push through the soil, their fresh green shoots offering a quiet promise of brighter days ahead.

Plant of The Month: Eranthis hyemalis

Winter aconites (Eranthis hyemalis) are one of those plants that feel like a small miracle each year. Just when the garden seems frozen in time an d winter is dragging on, their bright yellow flowers suddenly appear, pushing through cold soil and sometimes even snow. They may be tiny, but their impact is enormous, bringing a much-needed lift to the garden at the bleakest time of year.
These cheerful little plants have a long history in British gardens. Native to woodland areas of southern Europe, winter aconites have been grown here since the late 16th century. That makes them one of our oldest winter-flowering garden plants. Early gardeners clearly recognised their value, as once established they are incredibly long-lived, often persisting and spreading slowly for decades without much help at all.
The flowers look rather like miniature buttercups, each one sitting in a neat collar of finely cut green leaves. They only grow to a few inches tall, but on a sunny day the flowers open wide and seem to glow against the winter gloom. When the weather turns dull or frosty, they close up again, protecting themselves until conditions improve.
To keep winter aconites happy, it helps to think of their natural woodland home. They thrive best beneath deciduous trees and shrubs, where they enjoy winter and early spring sunshine before the canopy fills in. A soil rich in organic matter that stays moist but drains well suits them perfectly, and they seem particularly content in neutral to slightly alkaline conditions. Once planted, it's best to leave them alone, as they dislike disturbance and can be slow to recover if moved.
They look at their best when planted in drifts rather than as isolated clumps. One of the classic combinations is with snowdrops, the white and yellow flowers appearing together to brighten up the ground. Crocuses also mix beautifully, especially soft purples and creams, while hellebores add structure and depth with their larger flowers and evergreen leaves. Early dwarf irises bring flashes of blue, and later-emerging ferns help cover the aconites' fading foliage in spring.
Winter aconites may be small and short-lived above ground, but their charm, reliability, and quiet persistence make them invaluable. Once they've settled in, they'll reward you every winter with a golden display that signals the gardening year has truly begun.

Jobs to do this month include:

Ornamental Garden

- In late February cut back hard (coppice) all the Cornus (Dogwood) to low buds.
- If snow falls – do not let the snow sit on the shrubs, gently shake off to prevent damage.
- Prune Roses creating an open outward facing framework.
- Prune Clematis (late/summer flowering)
- Shape borders to neaten edges.
- In late February – cutback deciduous grasses
- Remove weeds from borders as necessary.
- Prune out dead; diseased or damaged wood from trees and shrubs.
- Complete pruning of Apple/ fruit trees if not already done.
- Mulch borders if not already done in Autumn – taking care of emerging bulbs.
- Cut back Hydrangea Preziosa to first healthy buds on stems.
- Cut back Hydrangea Annabelle to a half/ third to retain a compact shape.
- Cut back side shoots of wisteria, pruning to two to three buds.
- Plant new climbers such as clematis / honeysuckle
- Prune summer flowering deciduous shrubs that flower on the current years growth – eg Buddleja, lavatera etc.
- Sow hardy annuals for summer colour.

Vegetable Garden:

- Buy seed potatoes and chit tubers by placing them eye end up in trays or egg boxes in a light, cool, frost free place.
- Sow crops like broad beans, lettuce etc and place in greenhouses or coldframes for an earlier harvest.
- Now's the time if you want to think about planting asparagus – keep weed free and mulch with a thick layer of organic matter.
- Apply general fertiliser like growmore / blood fish and bone to beds.
- Mulch tree and cane fruit after pruning.
- Plant garlic.
- Spray dormant fruit bushes with a plant oil based winter wash to kill overwintering eggs or aphid pests.







Article by: Chris Tod - Steyning Museum.

The 1790's – A Time of Uncertainty

It began with two disputed elections and an elaborate investigation by a House of Commons committee into who, in the town, had the right to vote and who did not. A good many old men with long memories climbed aboard one of the coaches that regularly trundled their way along the High Street on their way from the coast to London in order to give their evidence.

Just over the Channel the French endured their own decade of unrest with revolution, drastic changes to the structures of society and a great deal of bloodletting. War was declared against Britain and the Dutch Republic and Louis XVI was guillotined.

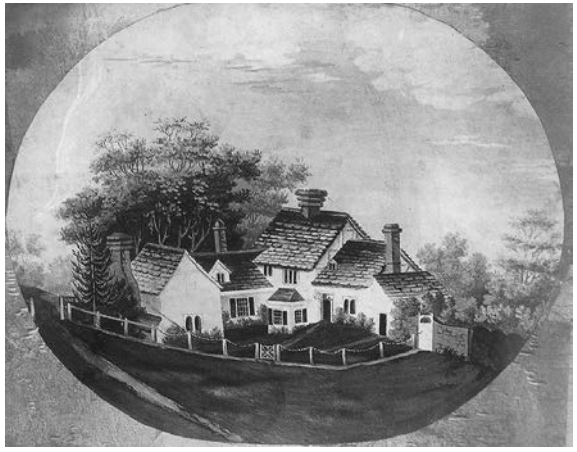
It is perhaps not too surprising that a number of the more conservative members of the parish calling themselves the '*Steyning Association*' committed themselves in 1792 *'to be highly sensible of the Blessings we enjoy under the present government . . . . and do hereby pledge ourselves to each other and our country . . . . it being our fixed determination to stand by and maintain the King and Constitution . . . . and each other in defence of our property.*' This was followed two weeks later by a meeting of another group, *'the Steyning Amicable Society'* at the White Horse on Boxing Day, where they agreed that the clerk should add their names to the Steyning Association pledge *'against Republicans and Levellers'*.

It was an opportunity for 28 year old John Penfold who had just been inducted as vicar of the parish to align himself with these sentiments.

He put his name to this and followed it up in succeeding years with various loyal prayers for the Princess of Wales and, in 1795, for *'the King's Escape'* (after the king's carriage had been attacked), his royalist sympathies being confirmed when he subsequently became chaplain to one of the royal dukes.

However, the vicar's main concern would have been with the people of Steyning. He would have known the names of those who had voted for particular parliamentary candidates and there is some evidence that he favoured tradesmen who had voted for his preferred faction when it came to choosing who should be asked to do work on the church.

Steyning had a population of some 1000 people and most of the adults among them will have attended his services. There were no other churches or recorded religious groups in Steyning at that time. So the vicar must have known, for instance, that William Downey of the Chequer Inn was the father of three illegitimate children by Elizabeth Leggatter (or Lidgetter) the latest being born in 1793 and that, on each occasion, Downey had had to indemnify the parish officers and the parishioners for any possible drain on the Poor Rate – on the first two occasions for £100 and on the last for £200; very substantial sums.



Vicarage

The baptismal registers make no reference to William Downey as the father of these children but the Indemnity Bonds show Elizabeth was in no doubt – and the parish believed her. Elizabeth was not actually Steyning born and bred but came to Steyning in 1780 on being hired by a Mrs. Wilson *'for a year for £3 wages . . . . and she was to have one guinea a year to find herself in Tea'* (not sure if I have read this correctly).

Because she had served her mistress for 15 months (well over the year required by the law) she qualified for settlement in Steyning and the parish became liable for her and her offspring – hence the concern to indemnify themselves when she had children born out of wedlock.

The vicar would have been involved in these issues through the Vestry, which was the body which ran the town, and because the Vestry records were kept in the parish chest in the church.

Some of those records will be the the subject of next month's article.

Richard Bates, local solicitor

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Rated People

Mike James: Wood turner

Mike is a self-taught Sussex wood turner (Over 40 years) specialising in using locally sourced but not necessarily native timber.

In recent years the effects achieved using mica coloured resins have become an obsession inspired by the Japanese philosophy of wabi-sabi.



Developing this technique has allowed Mike to create pieces that are striking, unique and of practical use.

mikethesussexturner@gmail.com



Local Resident: Jane Hersee: An early capture...

Photographed on my walk around town, this morning, after the snow.

Have you taken any interesting photographs in or around Steyning recently and would like to see these in the Your Magazine?

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