

ISSUE 21 SPRING 2024

REAL ROCHDALE

ROCHDALE TOWN HALL
REOPENS AFTER MAJOR RESTORATION

MAN OF ROCHDALE
WESLEY DOWD

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EDITOR'S WORDS

A warm welcome to Real Rochdale



Hello, and welcome to our first Real Rochdale issue of 2024.

The cover of our spring edition features Rochdale's finest venue, the newly refurbished town hall, which reopened to the public on 3 March after being closed for extensive restoration four years ago. I'm sure you will be just as astonished as us at the remarkable difference!

Michelle Kight interviewed the latest Man of Rochdale, Wesley Dowd, who – with his little dog, Finley – has raised over £100,000 for hundreds of local children across the Rochdale borough, and also learnt more about the stellar work from the volunteers at the Rochdale Soup Kitchen over the last 10 years.

Two local businesses have marked significant milestones, as the Garden of Eden florist in Norden has been in business for a decade, and Littleborough's The Dog Shop grooming salon has marked an amazing 30 year anniversary.

Natasha Brown has prepared a delightfully delicious recipe for Easter: hot cross buns with a chocolate chip and pumpkin spice twist!

Speaking of food, two new venues have been welcomed to the borough – Amor, a family-run Indian in Bamford, and the all-day café and bar, Pionero Lounge, in Rochdale town centre.

Spring is the perfect time to work on the garden, and Petrus' Silvana Devine shares her best tips with us ahead of the warmer coming months.

As always, thank you to our advertisers and contributors – and we hope you enjoy this issue.

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Rochdale Town Hall
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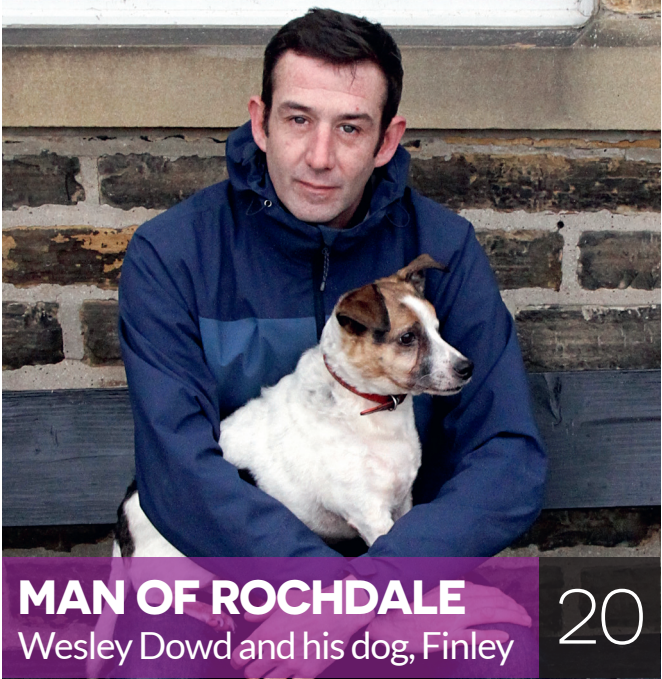


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MULTI-MILLION-POUND REVAMP OF ROCHDALE TOWN HALL

Rochdale Town Hall is one of the North West's finest historic buildings. Built in 1871, the iconic Grade I Listed building closed in 2020 to allow for extensive restoration.

The project, which was supported by a £8.9m grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, has restored many of the building's historic features and created brand new community spaces in rooms which were previously out of bounds to the public.

Some of the most dramatic changes have taken place in the Great Hall, where specialists used a variety of equipment to painstakingly restore the 350 panels which cover the room's ceiling.

Decades of grime has been removed, unveiling hundreds of intricate red and gold designs, featuring imagery, including the English lions and Scottish thistle.

In the Exchange, the main entrance to the building, Minton floor tiles, which depict a hanging fleece and other insignia of Rochdale, have been repaired. The elaborate vaulted ceiling and sweeping staircase in granite and marble have been cleaned and restored.

Stained glass windows, painted surfaces and wood panelling and furniture throughout the building have also been brought back to their former glory.



Delicate work on painted surfaces



Angel on the ceiling of the Great Hall

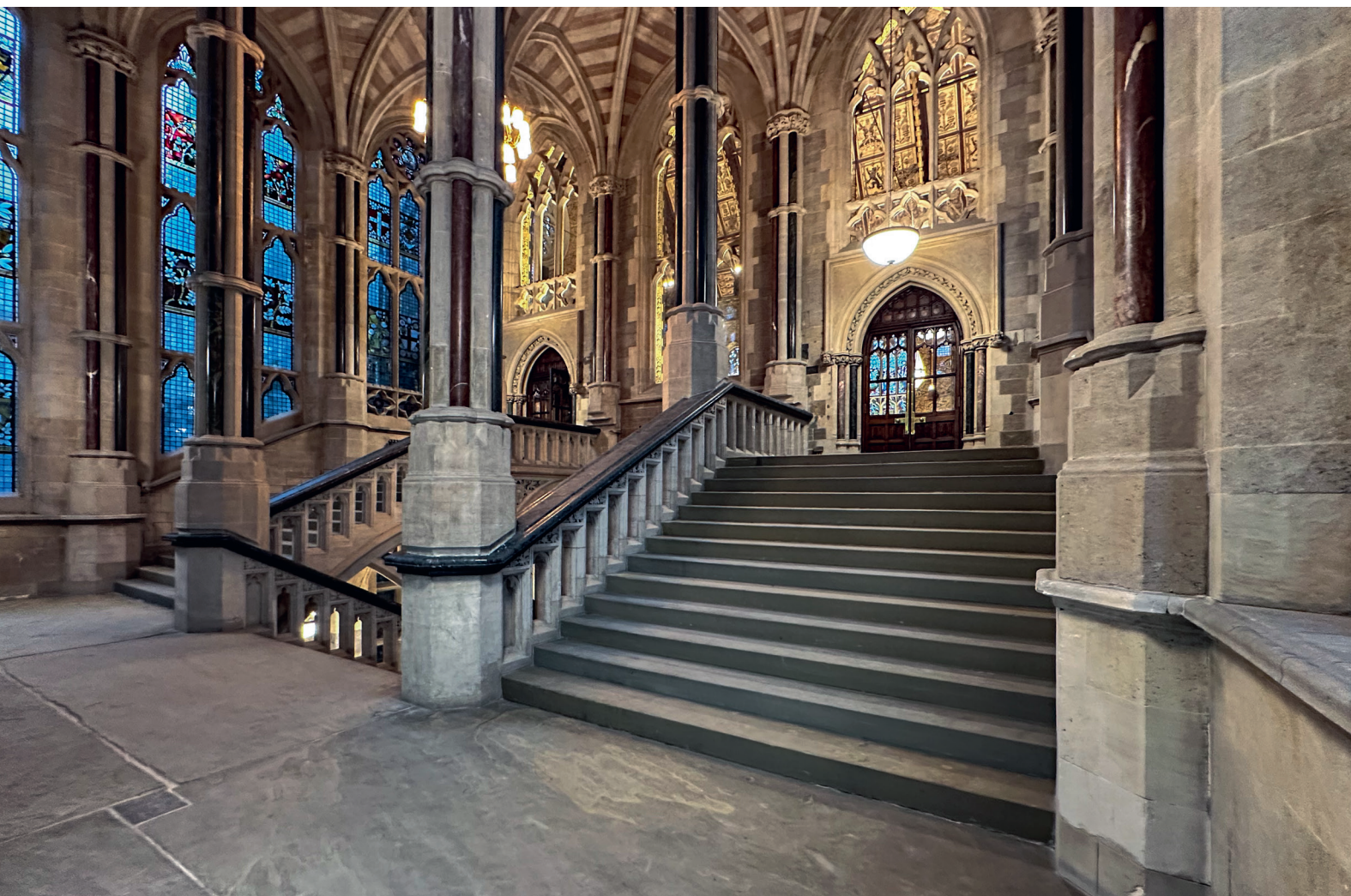
On the first floor, a room which was previously used as office space has had years of unsympathetic additions – including partition walls and a mezzanine floor – removed to reveal a double-height ceiling, angels along the walls and a previously hidden window with views directly down into the Great Hall.

This room, named the 'Bright Hall' after the late Rochdale-born MP and social reformer, John Bright, will be used by community groups and for events.

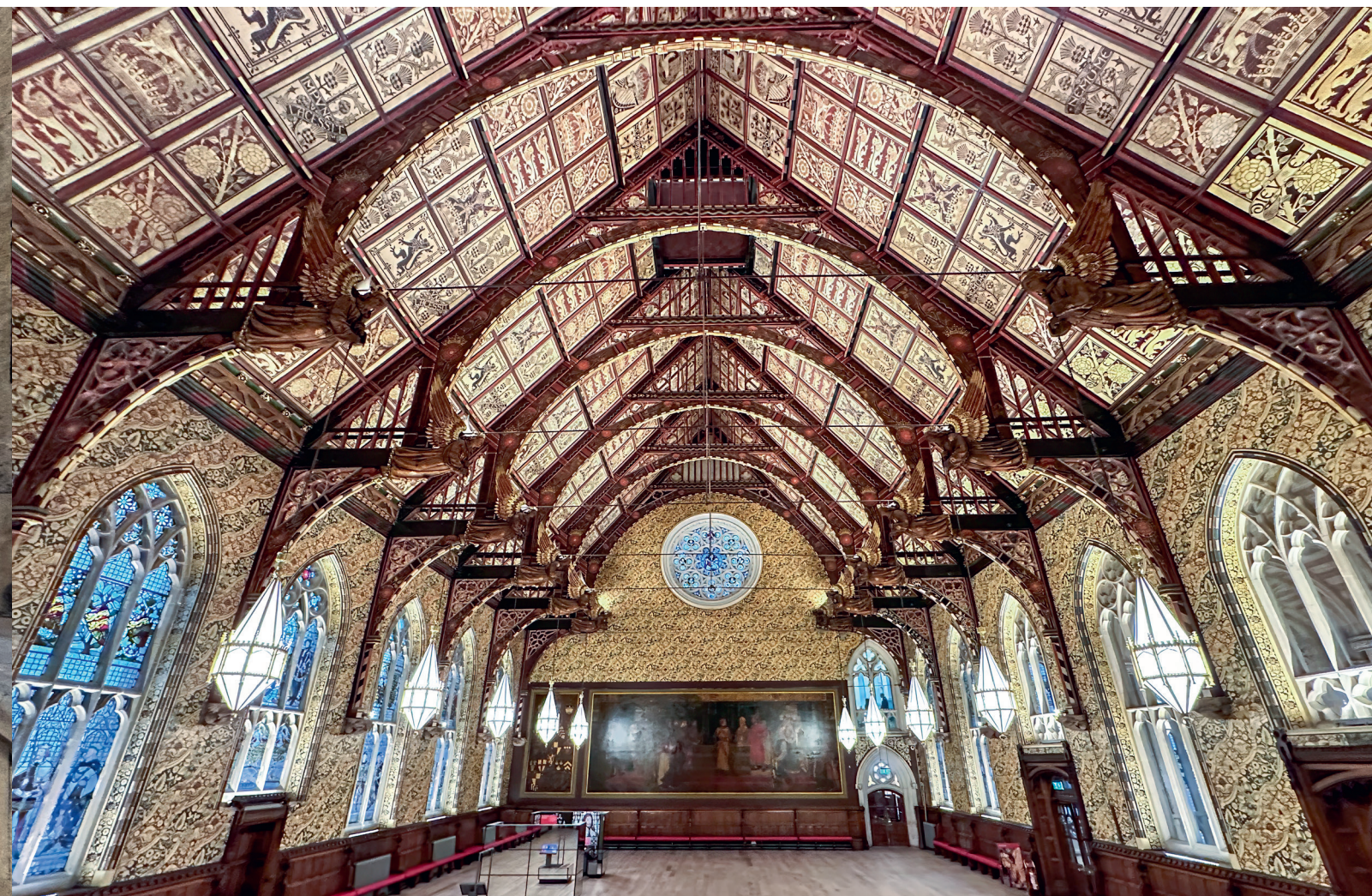
A former council meeting room on the ground floor has been transformed into a permanent exhibition space, known as the Welcome Gallery, which tells the story of Rochdale, its people and its past, through objects, interactives and imagery.

In addition to experts, over 500 volunteers got on board with the project, with Rochdale residents from the ages of 15 to 82, supporting with everything from historical research to cleaning and conservation.

Staircase to the Great Hall



The Great Hall



Photos above right, below and left: Gregory Couzens



Stained glass window



Staircase in the clock tower

In addition to the aesthetic changes, crucial additions, including more lifts and entrances, will make the building fully accessible for the first time.

Other major changes have included the repair of the roof and the installation of newer, more efficient heating systems.

A brand-new restaurant, The Martlet Kitchen, will be opening later in the year, in the space which was formerly occupied by the Clock Tower dining room.

Outside, the Town Hall Square has also been revamped, with new seating, decorative paving and landscaped areas framing the building and creating a new events space in the town centre.

Restoration work will continue in 2024 with work to restore the west wing of the building, which includes the council chamber and public gallery.

Council leader Neil Emmott said the building looks “incredible” and that he has been “blown away by the quality of the work and how good everything looks.”

Eilish McGuinness, chief executive of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: “The town hall has been part of Rochdale’s story for over 150 years, and is already a treasured building, so I am delighted that National Lottery funding has helped restore and protect its spectacular heritage, made the building fully accessible for the first time, and created new community spaces, ensuring that Rochdale Town Hall continues to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future.”

Councillor Janet Emsley, cabinet member for Equity, Safety and Reform at Rochdale Borough Council, added that the transformation was about more than how it looks: “It’s about opening it up and making it more relevant to the public than ever before, with guided tours, increased opening hours, and new exhibition and community spaces, so everybody knows this place is for them.”

The town hall reopened to the public on Sunday 3 March 2024.

For more information, including booking weddings and events, go to: rochdaletownhall.co.uk



The Bright Hall

Photos: Gregory Couzens

Ceiling of the Exchange on the ground floor



New family-run restaurant Amor opens in Bamford

A new restaurant in Bamford is offering a “modern Indian” cuisine and cocktails after opening in December.

Amor on Bamford precinct is family-run, with the team behind it having successfully run restaurants for over three decades.

At the helm of the culinary team is Mohammed Rahman, a highly experienced chef with a diverse background. In addition to his role as the head chef at Amor, Mohammed also serves as the founding executive director of Rochdale Science Initiative C.I.C.

Prior to his current roles, Mohammed spent over five years as the head chef at The Pavilion, where he honed his skills. With decades of experience in the restaurant industry and a passion for culinary innovation, Mohammed brings a unique blend of expertise to his role at Amor.

Amor’s vision is to introduce more home-style cooking with a modern twist and “meticulous” attention to presentation.

Mohammed said: “We are committed to providing a memorable dining experience for



our patrons and we aim to elevate the dining experience by infusing it with a contemporary touch.

“Overall, Amor represents a blend of tradition and innovation, drawing on our decades-long legacy in the restaurant industry and multifaceted expertise to deliver a fresh approach to subcontinental cuisine in the heart of Rochdale.”



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 R E S I D E

10 Years of Rochdale Soup Kitchen

It was a cold December night in 2013, when two women armed with a pan of soup began a venture that would go on to help hundreds of less fortunate people each week.

Dishing up pea and ham soup from the boot of a car on Rochdale Town Hall car park, Marilyn Jones and Vida Slater didn't dream just how big their venture would grow in the space of a decade.

"We thought all the world would eat pea and ham soup," Marilyn said. "That first night we had two visitors, and one of them was a vegetarian. We've made vegetable-based soups ever since."

That night – the date long forgotten – was the birth of the Soup Kitchen Rochdale, a service which has grown from Vida and Marilyn serving soup on a car park one night a week to now having an army of committed volunteers helping run the organisation from its own premises three days a week.

"It was two weeks before Christmas, but we didn't make a mental note of the date – we didn't realise we'd still be here 10 years later,"

Marilyn said. "We knew there was a need, but we didn't think it would still be going."

In the early days, the Soup Kitchen ran every Tuesday night for three months. The two women knew there was an alternative provision on a Monday night, and so opted to provide a second hot meal for Rochdale's hungry people in need. Before long, demand was such that they began to provide meals on Wednesdays, before adding Fridays and then Saturday lunchtimes, providing a two-course cooked meal from a local hostel.

After three years, they were offered space at the Parish Church of St Chad, a stone's throw away from the town hall car park, providing shelter from the elements.

Marilyn continued: "We were out in the wind, the rain, the snow, the sun, whatever weather was being thrown at us. The vicar of St Chad's came to see what we were doing and asked if we fancied using the church as a shelter, so people could come inside and eat."

The Soup Kitchen remained at St Chad's for a year before finding premises behind



Champness Hall in the former High Level building.

"It seemed to be exactly what was needed: seven rooms on three floors. What we wanted to do was offer doctors and nurses space when it was open so people could seek medical advice, have their bandages changed, etc. We wanted to include a shower, a washer and dryer and a computer room so people could apply for jobs and benefits: that was the dream," Marilyn explained.

The venue was slowly renovated and "all was doing well" with the Soup Kitchen Rochdale open each evening from Tuesday-Friday from 6pm to 7pm, as well as Saturday lunchtime.

Marilyn added: "We had a proper dining room with a good kitchen. We were feeding an average of 50 people per night with hot pasties, sandwiches, cake, soup, and whatever else we could find."

She sighed: "Then Covid happened."

"We started working with other agencies like the Sanctuary Trust to get parcels of food delivered in lockdown. At the height of it, we were sending 230 bags three times a week. Each bag had enough supplies to last a couple of days such as bread donated from the supermarkets and a microwaveable meal.

"After the first lockdown, we opened again but couldn't reopen the dining room [due to guidelines at the time]. We reopened with a

table at the front and a Perspex screen and handed out bags at the door."

It's a model which has survived post-lockdown for the Soup Kitchen – a result of the number of people attending on a drop-in basis, with over 100 bags of food being given out each time it opens its doors.

"We can't reopen the dining room because we have too many people. It has a maximum capacity of about 50 but we are thinking of ways to reopen this," Marilyn explained.

The Soup Kitchen also changed its hours, instead opening in the middle of the day every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, giving out one of two bags. One bag, earmarked for rough sleepers and homeless people, typically features items that require no preparation, whilst other bags for people struggling who are not homeless, will typically feature a hot meal which they can microwave. Other items can include sandwiches, hot pasties, bread, cake, biscuits – although there is some scope for fresh produce.

"If possible, we give people another bag with fresh fruit and vegetables, yoghurts, whatever the supermarkets donate to us," Marilyn explained, before adding how donations are shared with their other non-profit operation, the foodbank-esque Whitworth Lighthouse Community Foodshare.

The Lighthouse was set up in September 2020, an idea which stemmed from the first lockdown





where Marilyn, Vida and Steve Gough realised - due to redundancies and furlough - there was going to be a need for a foodsharing facility in Whitworth.

Based at 551-552 Market Street, The Lighthouse runs on an appointment basis on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays with Steve as front of house. The service operates out of the old methodist church premises, and is run in partnership with Thrum Hall Methodist Church.

If you think you would benefit from the Whitworth Lighthouse Community Foodshare, you can refer yourself by calling 07922 951096 or email lighthousefoodshare@gmail.com.



You can also be referred through your local doctors' surgery, school, social services, dentist, council offices and councillors.

Marilyn continued: "Whatever food we are given goes to whichever venue is open, then anything left over is taken to the other. If there's still anything remaining then, we donate it to hostels. Most supermarkets in Rochdale give us donations and nothing goes in the bin.

"If anything is too far gone for human consumption, it goes to a man in Bacup for his animals."

In 2022, the Soup Kitchen Rochdale's volunteers were recognised by the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, and Marilyn says their zero-waste approach "struck the assessor."

"We pride ourselves on nothing going in the bin. We have a magic army of volunteers who pick up donations from the supermarkets and they don't ask for any expenses.

"We are always looking for more volunteers for both ventures. We need drivers and volunteers for bag packing and service at the Soup Kitchen, as well as people to help out at the Lighthouse."

Interested in becoming a volunteer at the Soup Kitchen or Lighthouse?

The Soup Kitchen at Champness Hall, Great George Street, Rochdale OL16 1PQ is a drop-in service and is open every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 12.30pm to 2pm.

The Whitworth Lighthouse Community Foodshare at 551-553 Market Street, Whitworth, OL12 8QW is open every Tuesday and Thursday from 10am to 4pm, and every Saturday between 10am and 3pm.

If you want to get involved as a volunteer at either organisation, you can contact Marilyn on 07817 150327.



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 Hopwood Hall College & University Centre

 The Queen's Anniversary Prizes 2023

Hopwood Hall College and University Centre is holding its first 'Access All Areas' Open Event since being awarded the prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize.

Hot on the heels of having the highest honour in further education bestowed upon them, the college will be throwing open its doors from 4:30pm - 6.30pm on Thursday 18 April 2024. This will give people of all ages the amazing opportunity to experience some of the many reasons why the college picked up such a coveted accolade.

Those in attendance can look forward to seeing state of the art facilities, as well as talking to the expert tutors who are skilled at bringing out the best in every student.

Visitors will be able to explore the full range of courses on offer, which, for school leavers, includes the game-changing new T-Levels, and other vocational study options.

In addition, there is plenty in store for adult learners who are looking to gain new skills and boost their career prospects.

This includes Access and Higher Education courses, all of which are taught at Hopwood's

thriving University Centre.

Furthermore, those aged 19+ can look forward to exploring a wide range of part-time options - such as in-person pathways, flexible learning and short online courses.

Then, of course, there are the ever-popular apprenticeship training routes that can be undertaken by anyone aged 16+ and allow people to earn as they learn.

The 'Access All Areas' Open Event takes place at the college's campuses in Middleton and Rochdale.

In recent years these campuses have undergone multi-million-pound investments to ensure they continue to have industry-leading facilities.

Just some of the cutting edge teaching spaces visitors can explore include the newly-extended Advanced Technology and Construction Centre, the high-tech media editing suites and the contemporary Riverside Salon.

To register your attendance for this hotly-anticipated event, please visit hopwood.ac.uk.

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Pet First Aid

As pet owners, we will have likely already, or will in the future, experience our pets injuring themselves. This can be a really worrying experience and can cause us to panic. The two most important things to remember when helping your pet are:

- An animal that is scared or in pain may scratch or bite.
- You cannot help your pet if you get injured, so make sure it is safe for you to go to your pet and help.

Bleeding

Small wounds and grazes (not bleeding) - clean the wound by running water over it for as long as your pet will tolerate (up to 10 minutes). You can clean the wound with salt water (1 tsp of salt to 1 pint of cooled, boiled water). If your pet is licking/scratching at the wound, then cover it lightly with a dressing.

Bleeding wounds - check the pet and find the injury. If you can, without getting hurt, apply pressure to the wound using a clean towel or dressing. Call your vet immediately and they will be able to advise you of the next steps.

Heatstroke

Heatstroke can occur in any animal that gets too hot. If you are worried your pet may have heatstroke, then follow these steps:

- Move them indoors or into the shade.
- Soak them in cool water, water from the tap is fine. Do this slowly so they do not panic and avoid the mouth and nose.
- Lie your pet on a cold, wet towel; do not cover them in the wet towel as this will make them hotter.
- Create a breeze - open windows/doors or place a fan near them.
- Offer them a drink of water, but do not force them to drink.
- Call your vet immediately for advice, they will likely want you to bring the pet into the clinic. Remember, WET THEN VET.
- Transport the pet in an air-conditioned car.



ABOUT THE WRITER

Gemma Broome recently opened a new vet practice in Milnrow with her fellow vet, Clare Farnsworth. Between them, they have over 25 years of veterinary experience.

Bites and stings

Allergic reactions to bites and stings are reasonably common in pets, especially dogs. Most reactions are minor causing swelling (commonly on the face), redness/rash, itching and lameness if it affects the leg/foot. In severe cases, the allergic reaction may cause them to have difficulty breathing.

If you see any signs of breathing changes then you should take your pet to the vets immediately, calling ahead if possible. If the signs are mild, then call your vet for advice as they may need medication to prevent the reaction getting worse and make them more comfortable.

First Aid Kits

The PDSA website (pdsa.org.uk) has information about pet first aid kits and there are many options available. Here is a guide on things to keep in a pet first aid kit, but the contents may need to be adjusted depending on your needs: bandages, blunt-ended scissors, wound wash, cotton wool, tweezers, tick tweezers, wound dressing, self-adhesive tape, dressings, vinyl gloves, a foil blanket, antiseptic wipes and a blanket to use as a stretcher.

CHOCOLATE CHIP HOT CROSS BUNS

by Natasha Brown - owner of Brown's Cakes

I love hot cross buns, but my family just don't do dried fruit. So here we have – tried and tested on my family – a hot cross bun recipe with chocolate chips, which, to be honest, tastes pretty good. I don't even miss the sultanas, but if you want to substitute the chocolate for sultanas, you can do, and it will make classic hot cross buns.

Only start this recipe in the morning as it takes at least 3 hours of proving time. You don't need to be watching the buns for 3 hours, but you will be doing a bit of kneading here and a bit of mixing there. It's best to do on a day when you've got the heating on and you're going to be in for most of the day.

Ingredients

500g strong bread flour
2 ½ teaspoons pumpkin spice (either bought as a mix or make your own, see recipe below)
1 teaspoon salt
7g easy blend yeast (make sure it's got plenty of shelf life left, old yeast won't rise)
60g golden caster sugar
50g melted butter
125g chocolate chips (you can substitute for sultanas if you like)
50g mixed peel
1 egg (beaten)
250ml whole milk (warmed)
Olive oil

Pumpkin spice recipe (mix all these together)

1 ½ tablespoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon nutmeg
¾ teaspoon ground allspice
¾ teaspoon ground cloves

For the crosses

50g plain flour
Cold water

For the glaze

25g golden caster sugar
50ml water
½ tsp pumpkin spice

Before you start, prepare a large bowl by greasing it with olive oil then put to one side.

Mix together the flour, salt, caster sugar, pumpkin spice and yeast in a clean bowl.

Warm the milk for 1-1½ minutes in the microwave before melting the butter in the microwave for just 20 seconds or so, then pour the butter into the warm milk and mix.

Make a well in the dry ingredients, pour in the warm milk and butter, then pour in the beaten egg. Begin mixing with a large spoon then use your hands to bring it all together into a sticky dough.

Tip the dough on to a lightly floured surface and knead, repeatedly stretching the dough and bringing it back on itself. You will be kneading for at least 5 minutes. Make a mental note of the time so that you don't take a shortcut and finish kneading too early. The aim is to make the dough smooth, elastic and springy.

Once you've finished kneading, place the dough in the oiled bowl and cover with oiled clingfilm. The bowl now needs to be placed in a warm place for 1 hour until the dough has risen to twice its original size.

When the dough has risen, tip the chocolate chips and mixed peel onto the dough and gently knead it again to knock out the air and mix in the

added ingredients. Place the dough back in the oiled bowl and cover again with clingfilm. This now needs another hour in a warm place (not too warm or you will melt the chocolate) to double in size again.

Line 2 baking trays with parchment, ready for the next step. Once the dough has doubled in size again, tip it out on to a lightly floured surface and cut it into 12 pieces. Roll each of these pieces into a ball and place them on the baking trays; two rows of three on each tray with a 2cm gap in between each ball. Cover the dough with greased clingfilm and leave it again for an hour to rise until doubled in size again.

Preheat the oven to 180°C.

While the oven is warming up, mix the plain flour and a tablespoon of cold water together. Keep adding water a teaspoon at a time until

you've made a runny paste. Pour the paste into a piping bag and then snip the end so that you can squeeze a cross over each bun before baking. If you don't have a piping bag, just use a small plastic bag and snip a corner when you're ready to add the crosses.

Place the dough balls in the oven for approx. 18-20 minutes until golden brown. While they are in the oven, make the glaze by gently heating the water, sugar and spice in a pan.

Brush the glaze over the baked hot cross buns as soon as they come out of the oven and then leave to cool.

These are best cut in half, spread with butter and eaten on the same day. They also work well toasted but be careful with the chocolate chips if you are toasting them.

Happy baking and Happy Easter x



MAN (AND DOG) OF ROCHDALE: Wesley Dowd and Finley

Hundreds of children have been helped over the years by the latest Man of Rochdale, Wesley Dowd – and his faithful Jack Russell, Finley – but they won't know about it as he doesn't take credit for anything. Michelle Kight went to meet the 2023 Man of Rochdale and Finley.

Over the last nine years, Wes and Finley have raised over £100,000 for the borough's children with their long-distance fundraisers and mountain climbs, such as the Cumbria Way, Dales Way, Pennine Way.

The primary beneficiary has been Wes' baby, the Rochdale Children's Moorland Home at Nab Farm, which provides holidays to around 1,300 disadvantaged children each year.

Wes said: "I did community service there when I was a young lad. First time I'd ever seen the place, I cut the grass with a lawnmower and thought what a brilliant place that it was. I wanted to give them something back."

When he was named Man of Rochdale in November, Wes promptly presented his dad, the inspiration behind all that he does, with the trophy.

"My father was fostered everywhere, brought up in care and children's homes. That's 100% why I do what I do. It was an awful time. I've sat there when he told me the stories. That's why I passed him my trophy when I got it. I said to him, 'there you go, dad, that's for you.'

"The Dowd name, my name, was the mud name, basically, and I turned it around and now it's the biggest name for helping children."



Wes and Finley at Rochdale Children's Moorland Home

In addition to the tens of thousands raised for the Moorland Home, electrician Wes also raises funds to send children with cancer or disabilities on holidays, Christmas present collections for needy children, and provides furniture, clothes and food for local families in need. He's also worked with Parents Against Grooming UK on fundraising fun days and bike rides.

"The children don't know anything about me; I want to be a ghost," he explained. "They don't see me. My job is to give them some school uniform, nice trainers and a console, because that blends you in with the other children. I want them to think their mum and dad have done it."

"If they go to school and other children find out they're being supported by you, they bully them because you're a charity kid. You can't allow that; children can be cruel to other children."

"I was that kid who rips on you, who'd go 'state of them trainers, man, I wouldn't put them on my feet.' I was that kid because I was spoilt, and I didn't realise."

Wes isn't shy about his past. An only child who attended St Cuthbert's, he says his teachers said he "wouldn't amount to much" as he spent 18 months in juvenile detention following an incident when he was 15.

"Even though I went because of a bad thing, I didn't go in with a bad attitude," he said. "I had good people around me, and I let a lot of people down; that's why I never went back."

Finley came into Wes' life by chance when he was three after his former owner had a double heart bypass. Wes admits he didn't want a dog – "I was working 12-hour days and I wasn't that kind of guy" – but the little Jack Russell is now his best friend. He retired from distance fundraisers in 2023 after needing an eye removed.

With Finley's retirement, Wes adopted his second dog, Butch, from Pennine Pen Animal Rescue.

Wes thinks for a moment: "Without that little dog coming into my life, this wouldn't have happened."



The Mayor of Rochdale, Mike Holly with Dave Richardson, Wesley Dowd and Kieren McDonnell, chair of the Man of Rochdale committee



Last year's winner Dave Richardson with Wes

"I wish I could explain my dad, Finley, the Moorland Home, the other children I help, but I can't. It was like some mad movement and people got behind me. A lot of people help and I'm so lucky for that."

"I go round and make sure children have uniforms and go to school, make sure they're not getting looked down on for having dirty clothes and ripped trainers... My dad went to school like that and got ripped to death. He always said if he'd had a bit of help, he wouldn't have gone into care – and that's what drove me on."

He added: "When you get in trouble when you're young, don't think you can't do anything about that or change your life. Because you can: focus on what you want to do and don't let anyone get in your way. It's nice when people see what you've gone and done, 'cause no-one's perfect."

"If I can inspire another lad in this town to possibly do what I've done, to do stuff for children, that would be it for me."

Wes' 2024 fundraisers will include the West Highland Way and the 500-mile Camino de Santiago pilgrimage to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela through France and Spain.



MAN OF ROCHDALE LUNCHEON

PHOTOS: KEN ROWLATT





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21st anniversary of Rochdale's Parent Carers Voice

One of the first organisations set up to ensure local services meet the needs of children with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) and their families has celebrated its 21st anniversary.

Run by parent carers with lived experience, Rochdale Parent Carers Voice held an event at their Spotland Bridge Mill premises and asked families to nominate their community heroes.

The group aims to gather the views of local families and share them with local services to make positive changes and improvements. It sits under the National Network of Parent Carer Forums and is a community interest company supporting children and young people with SEND up to the age of 25.



Co-chairs of Rochdale Parent Carers Voice, Katie Berrisford (left) and Jackie Ellis (right) presenting Justin Axon, from Redwood School, with a community hero award

The Rochdale Parent Carers Voice also celebrates good practice and success and works collaboratively with the local authority, health, local services, and support groups and charities to help meet families' needs.

Garden of Eden florist celebrates 10 years

The independent florist in Norden is celebrating 10 years of business, after opening a week before Valentine's Day in 2014.

Garden of Eden on Edenfield Road is run by Christine Campbell, who has over 40 years' experience in the industry, and her daughter, Natalie, who brings fresh ideas to the business.

The family-run business survived the Covid pandemic and lockdowns working behind closed doors and delivering directly to customers' doorsteps. Throughout the warmer months, Garden of Eden runs craft workshops for children, as well as popular Christmas wreath workshops in December.

Christine said: "In the last 10 years, we have gained many customers who have



become lifelong friends but also lost some very special friends along the way too. They will always be in our hearts.

"Thank you to all our loyal customers for their continued support and for being part of our journey."

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Racing driver from Rochdale set to create 'super team' pairing for Club Enduro season

Rochdale racing driver Sandro Ballasteros is set to pair up with a fellow autistic driver to create a 'super team' for the 2024 Club Enduro Championship.

The 16-year-old will pair up with Team BRIT's Bobby Trundley, 22, to drive an Audi TT in the 750 Motor Club's championship. Team BRIT is the world's only competitive team of all-disabled racing drivers.

Both Sandro and Bobby have found motorsport to have a major impact in helping them deal with the challenges of severe autism, which they were both diagnosed with in childhood.

Sandro recently progressed from a winning track record in karts to race in cars,

competing in the Junior Saloon Car Championship (JSCC) before his last season in the BMW116 Trophy.

The pair, who have known each other for years, both describe autism as their 'super power' when it comes to racing. They will both feature in a forthcoming US-produced documentary 'Racing on the Spectrum' which follows Bobby and Sandro, as well as two successful young American drivers with autism.

Sandro said he was "thrilled" to pair up with Bobby, adding: "He is a friend who I have always looked up to and can learn a lot from. It will be great to take my racing to the next level with someone who has his experience, and truly understands."

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GARDENING TIPS FOR SPRING



ABOUT THE WRITER

Silvana Devine is a social and therapeutic horticulture practitioner at Petrus Incredible Edibles Rochdale (PIER) which is a community allotment on Belfield Road in Rochdale.

PIER is a community allotment and gardens located on Belfield Road (next to the Croft Shifa Medical Centre) in Rochdale, which belongs to homelessness charity Petrus. It is a beautiful, relaxing and therapeutic oasis that grows fruit and vegetables and is a member of the wider Incredible Edibles network representing Rochdale. It is open to the public and people are welcome to visit and take a look around this award-winning garden.

Petrus' vision is to create kind, confident and connected communities through the power of growing food. Here are some tips for this growing season. Happy gardening!



Changing climate

The weather is a constant battle for gardeners and at PIER, we understand the importance of being prepared for the different weather conditions this season brings. Frosts can affect any tender plants you may have in the garden. Keep an eye on the weather forecast and ensure you keep your tender plants fleeced and covered. Gardeners can sometimes be impatient, particularly towards the end of the season, but a late frost might kill those tender plants you've been carefully looking after, so our tip is to keep plants covered at night and remove the fleece whilst the weather warms through the day.

Water conservation: It seems odd to be talking about water conservation at this time of year, but spring is a good time to think about water collection and how you

can make the most of this essential and valuable resource. With most water falling in winter (even in Rochdale) it makes sense to collect water now ready for those drier months ahead. If you have space, you may wish to install a water butt with rainwater diverters from the down pipe, or simply have a water trough to collect rainwater. A water trough can be anything from an old bucket to a galvanised tank that can be a feature of the garden.

Mulching: mulching is any material that is spread or laid over the surface of the soil and used as a covering. Mulch can be organic matter like well-rotted manure, chipped bark, or if you make your own compost, use that to cover bare soil.

Preparing growing beds

As the demands of winter begin to recede, planning your beds, borders and planters for growing is vital. Spending time now preparing the beds is one of the most useful things to do at this time of year. Weeds will begin to grow as the



temperature warms, and clearing all growing areas of weeds will save time and frustration later.

Once beds have been weeded, applying mulch will keep weeds at bay. A great tip when you begin to sow seeds is to sow in straight lines. Weeds and seedlings look very similar in their early stages, and weeds don't grow in straight lines, so it will be easier to weed once the growing season begins!

Now is a great time to check all equipment and make necessary repairs. At PIER, we have over 25 raised beds which are checked for rot and repaired if need be. We regularly check tools and dispose of any that are faulty or repair what we can. Tools can be cleaned and sharpened ready for the growing season (if this wasn't done at the end of last year).

Refresh plants

We work to a very tight budget, and we always look for ways to get more plants for free. At this time of year, it is a good idea to take a closer look at the plants that you have.

Are some plants taking too much space and could be split and divided? Spring is a great time to do this and perennial plants such as geraniums, buddleia, ferns, crocosmia and hostas can be split to get more plants for free!

At PIER, we appreciate the benefits of being outside and in nature, so above all, take time to enjoy your garden.

Come and visit us to find out more about PIER, our charity and take a look at our award-winning garden!

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30 years of The Dog Shop

The Dog Shop in Littleborough celebrates 30 years of business this summer.

Owner Christine Lewthwaite knew she wanted to work with dogs from a young age, landing a job at the Poodle Corner under its "very talented dog groomer" when she was 14.

After many years and after meeting her husband and having children, she decided to go back to dog grooming. In 1994 she found "the perfect little shop" on Calderbrook Road with a front yard and good parking for customers.

Christine, who has also bred her own dogs and won second place at Crufts with one, has never used grooming tables, slings or cabinet dryers so she set up her salon to her needs and the way she was taught at the Poodle Corner.

Twelve years ago, her daughter Janine McGregor-Stead – who also worked with animals after leaving school – joined the



Christine Lewthwaite with her dogs Rocky and Peaches

business and learned Christine's unique grooming method.

Janine said: "We love that our customers can't wait to come to our salon, and we say how it's a pamper spa day for them, they walk out feeling a million dollars and it shows!"

"We have many customers that travel fair distances for our services; we love to get recommendations through word of mouth. Our motto has always been 'your work is your advert' so even if the job is challenging, we make our best efforts to do the best job we can.

"Our customers, both human and canine, make our job most enjoyable and Christine even has customers still visiting that used the Poodle Corner all those years ago.

"We are extremely proud of our family-run little business, 30 years is such an achievement.

"It just shows a little passion can fuel a successful lifetime career."



Janine McGregor-Stead

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Health and wellbeing during Wood season

Spring is a time of renewal, growth, flexibility and increased energy, and, in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), is associated with the wood element.

A holistic approach to health, TCM views the body as a balance of five elements: wood, fire, earth, metal and water.

To stay healthy, these elements – which are associated with specific organs and their related functions – need to be in harmony.

Emotionally, wood is linked to feelings of expansion, vision, and forward movement. When the wood element is in balance, our energy flows smoothly, shown by emotional stability and the ability to adapt to changes. On the flip side, an imbalance in the wood element can show as feelings of frustration, irritability, impatience, or feeling stuck.

Physical and emotional health go hand in hand, so looking after emotional wellbeing helps restore overall balance. Find healthy ways to express emotions, such as journalling, art, or talking with a trusted friend. Deep breathing exercises and meditation can also calm the mind and promote relaxation.

The wood element is associated with the liver and gallbladder organs: as nature undergoes a renewal process in spring, it is an ideal time for us to do the same with a gentle detox to support the liver's natural functions.

Diet and nutrition align with the seasons, so choose foods that are fresh, seasonal, and mainly green. Sour-tasting foods (such as citrus fruits or cranberries), fermented foods (like pickles and sauerkraut) and apple cider vinegar are also good as they add flavour and improve your natural energy flow.

Fermented foods are wonderful for gut health, as they contain probiotics that promote



ABOUT THE WRITER

Suzanne Cooper is a complementary healthcare therapist using the principles of traditional Chinese medicine.

digestion and boost the immune system. They enhance nutrient absorption, support a diverse gut microbiome, and produce short-chain fatty acids that keep the digestive system happy.

TCM also associates the liver with the eyes, and it is advisable to take breaks from prolonged screen time, practise eye exercises, and spend time outdoors to support eye health.

With spring being a time of increased energy and vitality, regular exercises which promote flexibility are a good choice: tai chi and qigong with their graceful moves can make you feel balanced and flexible.

If you are into yoga and Pilates, go for poses that involve twists; these bring a refreshing stretch for your body and can help your liver to detox and aid digestion. Stretches for your hips, thighs and sides are great to prevent stiffness and enable better movement.

Outdoor activities like hiking or walking are good, as being out in nature is a boost for your overall wellbeing.

Think of spring as a time to refresh your body, keep it flexible, and strike a balance between how you feel and how your body is doing.

Chef David Hayden and wife Rachael run The Gallows in Milnrow.

They were winners of Come Dine with Me: The Professionals last year.



David, who has catered for premiership footballers, TV stars and other celebs, shares his recipe for stuffed chicken breast to serve two people.

Ingredients

- 3 chicken breasts
- 1 butternut squash
- 1 egg white
- 200ml double cream
- 100g parmesan
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 jacket potato
- 250g butter
- 2 sprigs of parsley
- 3 carrots
- Rapeseed oil
- Salt and pepper

- Peel and deseed the butternut squash, dice and roast at 180°C for 8/10 minutes until tender.
- Blend the cooked squash with 25ml double cream until smooth.
- Dice one raw chicken breast and blend until smooth with one egg white and season.
- Mix the chicken purée with the butternut squash purée.
- Put the mixture in a piping bag and place in the refrigerator until you're ready to use it.
- Peel and cut the potato into two round shapes.
- Pan fry both sides of the potato until golden brown with a teaspoon of rapeseed oil.
- Add the butter to the potato with a clove of garlic and sprigs of parsley.
- Baste the potato with the melted butter and place in the oven until tender, 20/25 minutes at 180°C.
- Make an incision (pocket) in the chicken breast and pipe in the butternut squash mousse.
- Cook for 10/12 minutes in a non stick pan until golden brown and finish in the oven for 10 minutes.

Chicken breast stuffed with butternut squash mousse, potato fondant, carrots and parmesan cream sauce



- Peel the carrots, then cut them into four long pieces and divide diagonally, blanch in boiling water for four minutes until soft, and then add to the chicken pan in the oven.
- To make the sauce, reduce 175ml double cream over a medium heat with a crushed garlic clove until thickened, then add the parmesan cheese and some black pepper.
- Present the dish with the potato in the centre of the plate with the carrots around the outside; slice the chicken breast on top and encircle with parmesan sauce.

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SPRING IN YOUR STEP? WATCH WHERE YOU ARE WALKING

Longer days and warmer weather lead to better physical and mental health, as cold and flu are banished, and lethargy is swapped for energy.

In fact, there is enough evidence out there to suggest spring is a bright season for mental health as dopamine – a neurotransmitter associated with motivation, attention, pleasure, and mood – increases with more exposure to sunlight.

But for some, it isn't yet the season for an end to the sniffles and whilst undoubtedly it does you good, exercise comes with a health warning.

Careful off the blocks

You should be aiming at 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every week. That could mean 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

For those with underlying health issues, particularly around the heart, overdoing the exercise at first may lead to two major problems. Firstly, you are more likely to give up, as the thought of intense exertion isn't always pleasant. And secondly, too much jolt on the joints and organs could have serious consequences, especially if you are carrying excess weight. If you are beginning a regime, try the NHS Couch to 5K, which is safe, achievable for most, and extremely popular.

Rambling is a beneficial pursuit many of us enjoy. Being in the great outdoors boosts our vitamin D levels, improving our immune systems, and can help us become fitter, but try not to cross a tick at springtime! Our misuse

of antibiotics has meant that treating infected insect bites is not as effective as it once was.

Reduce the chances of getting Lyme disease by staying on clear paths wherever possible. Developing a serious infection like this remains unlikely and there is advice on how to avoid a bite on the NHS web site. Search for Lyme disease at www.nhs.uk

As I will expand upon in summer, long-sleeved shirts and pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunscreen with at least factor 15 protection, can prevent skin-related conditions, including cancer.

Nothing to sniff at

New research has shown that over 200 viruses can cause colds and flu, so you are not out of the woods when it comes to catching a chill, even in spring. The old adage "coughs and sneezes spread diseases" is so true. Cover your nose and mouth if you are unlucky enough to develop a spring cold; drink plenty of water and get some rest.

Spring is also a time for healthy food choices including fruits, vegetables, wholegrains, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products. Keeping alcohol levels down remains a must.

Become well sprung

For all that I am advocating precautions, spring is a time for psychological and physical rebirth, a brighter, optimistic opportunity to get out there and exercise the winter blues away. All it takes is a little impetus – from you.



ABOUT THE WRITER

Dr Anita Sharma is a published women's health expert, the founder of the charity Endometriosis Awareness North and the president of the Rochdale Inner Wheel club.

As a GP, she previously coordinated the NHS pessary service for Greater Manchester. She also works closely with Rochdale medics to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescribing.



Model: Karla Volavkova
Haircut & colour: Hayley Forbes
Photo: Gregory Couzens

HAIRDRESSING TREND

by GREG COUZENS

BAROQUE BOB

The bob hairstyle reached the pinnacle of its popularity when it was introduced by the re-nowned Vidal Sassoon in the 1960s. Now, I'm thrilled to unveil the hair trend that is destined to dominate the upcoming season.

Enter the baroque bob: a fusion of chic and classic elements with a contemporary twist. This sophisticated haircut boasts a shorter length adorned with layers and texture, often styled to perfection with a soft, tousled finish, lending it a gentle, romantic allure.

The distinguishing feature of the baroque bob is its sleek collarbone-length cut, elevated by the addition of elaborate curls, evoking the unmistakable glamour of Old Hollywood. A prime example of this style was expertly crafted for Karla by Hayley, showcasing precision cutting techniques and a beautiful texture that adds volume and luxurious waves.

Inspired by the opulent art and flamboyant styles of the Baroque era, this bob offers a more dramatic and voluminous interpretation of the classic long bob, or 'lob'. While it is particularly well-suited for individuals with thicker, curlier hair, it's also an excellent choice for those seeking a change but who are not quite ready to commit to the traditional bob with shorter layers.

Whether you're looking to enhance your natural curls or simply longing for a fresh and sophisticated look, the baroque bob is the perfect style to consider. Don't hesitate to bring this photograph to your favourite hairstylist to recreate this stunning look with meticulous attention to detail.

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POST OFFICE HORIZON SCANDAL

This is the first in a series of articles in which Molesworths' dispute resolution team will review the Post Office Horizon scandal, the issues arising from it, and what might happen next.

The Post Office Horizon scandal was catapulted back into the media spotlight following the ITV drama series 'Mr Bates vs The Post Office'. The convictions of hundreds of sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses for false accounting and theft between 2000 and 2014 resulted in some people going to prison, loss of livelihoods, and tragically, in a few cases, loss of life. Even though a public inquiry is ongoing, it is already being described as the most widespread miscarriage of justice in English legal history.

The background

In 1999 the Post Office ("PO") introduced the Horizon IT system, which had been developed by ICL Pathway, owned by Fujitsu. The new software was rolled out to its branches and sub-post offices.

Self-employed sub-postmasters, who ran branch POs under contract with the PO, were contractually responsible for any shortfalls in their branch accounts.

They faced immense pressure to make up for unexplained shortfalls, which, in many cases, were due to faults in the Horizon system.

The PO consistently denied that the Horizon system was faulty and resisted the sub-postmasters' reports of faults in the system. In many cases, they falsely claimed to complainants that no other sub-postmasters had reported problems.

Under English law, every individual and organisation has the right to bring a private criminal prosecution against another individual or organisation.

The PO used its team of employed investigators and external lawyers to prosecute more than 700 sub-postmasters for crimes like theft and false accounting, based on the faulty data from

the Horizon system. Many were sent to prison, and others faced severe penalties like community service, electronic tagging, and heavy fines.

Second Sight, an independent investigative organisation, was appointed in 2012 to conduct a separate inquiry into these issues. Their reports revealed software defects in the Horizon system. However, the PO initially claimed that whilst defects were in existence, the system, overall, was effective.

Legal battles in the form of a group litigation action followed and in 2019, the case was settled out of court for £58 million. However, this settlement left many claimants with a fraction of their losses after legal costs were accounted for.

In April 2021, the PO announced that the Horizon system would be replaced by a new IT system. This came as an acknowledgement of the need for a more reliable and user-friendly system.

What happens next?

1. The government has said that those wrongly convicted will have their convictions overturned quickly. The legal mechanism for doing this is still unclear.
2. The government has set up a compensation scheme, which, it says, will expediate full and fair compensation for the those wrongly convicted. But the scheme is attracting widespread criticism.
3. There is an ongoing public inquiry led by retired High Court judge Sir Wyn Williams. His report is unlikely to be available before 2025, but - when published - it is likely to call for extensive reform of the many facets that have resulted in the Horizon IT scandal.

In the next article we will consider the function and use of private prosecutions by commercial organisations.

Pionero Lounge opens in Rochdale



Pionero Lounge at Rochdale Riverside has become the latest new café and bar in Rochdale town centre.

Operated by the Loungers group, Pionero is the 211th such 'lounge' – combining elements of coffee shop culture, the British pub and dining – and follows similar venues in Bury and Oldham.

Two units have been transformed to create Pionero's drinking and dining areas, which feature heavily patterned wallpapers, tiling and stripped wooden floors alongside oversized vintage sofas, upholstered lounge chairs, eclectic artwork and statement wall and pendant lighting.



All tastes are catered for with a varied and innovative all-day menu, everything from tapas and salads to burgers and fried chicken, plus extensive specialised vegan and gluten-free menus.

There is also a selection of games, books, colouring pencils and pads on offer for children, as well as a full kids' menu, high chairs and baby-changing facilities.

Speaking before the opening, Gemma Irwin, community manager at Loungers, said: "We are delighted to be opening Pionero Lounge in Rochdale Riverside.

"Our lounges strive to put community at the heart of hospitality and our teams always go the extra mile to make a difference.

"They are actively encouraged to connect with their communities by working with local groups, charities, organisations and businesses that are at the heart of the fabric of local life.

"We are very much looking forward to welcoming local residents and shoppers to Pionero Lounge."



SASSY CUB



Discover the magic of personalised style and heartfelt gifting with Sassy Cub, a family-run online retailer that brings your imagination to life. Specialising in personalised clothing and gifts, Sassy Cub was born in January 2023 with a collective mission to redefine the custom product experience.

At Sassy Cub, we are passionate about crafting products that stand the test of time. Using only the best materials and production methods, all products are printed, pressed and packaged in-house so we can ensure each item meets the highest quality standards. From newborn to 5XL, our diverse range includes babywear, T-shirts, jumpers, and hoodies, all waiting for your creative touch.



Immerse yourself in the creative process with our 'live preview' option, allowing you to visualise and personalise your chosen product effortlessly. Whether you delve into our design catalogue or upload your own images and text, let your creativity run wild.

Elevate your gifting game with our personalised gift bags/boxes, new baby gifts, and a captivating array of photo gifts, perfect for every occasion. Add a personal touch that transforms ordinary moments into extraordinary memories.

Whether you're on the hunt for a heartwarming gift for a new addition to the family or a special treat for yourself or a loved one, Sassy Cub has something for everyone.

Stay connected - Follow us on social media for updates on new products, exclusive offers, and local pop-up events.

info@sassycub.co.uk - www.sassycub.co.uk





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