

ISSUE 16 WINTER 2022

REAL ROCHDALE

FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH

RESIDENTS RECEIVE LOCAL HONOUR

D-DAY VETERAN TURNS 100

CENTENARY FOR WAR HERO

CHARITY MILESTONES

ROCHDALE CONNECTIONS TRUST & RKT TRUST

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EDITOR'S WORDS

A warm welcome to Real Rochdale



Hello and welcome back to the latest edition of Real Rochdale.

Our cover image this time is Healey Dell, one of our most-loved beauty spots, which has recently benefitted from one of its main routes – Dell Road – reopening after being closed to vehicles for 11 months.

This edition we commemorate two homegrown charities hitting incredible milestones: Rochdale Connections Trust mark 25 years of supporting people who find life difficult and the RKT Trust has donated over £100,000 to other local charities and good causes.

Ken Wright, a war hero believed to be Rochdale's only surviving D-Day veteran, celebrated turning 100 years old by being treated to a golf tournament in his honour, whilst the Pennines villages of Littleborough, Milnrow and Newhey dressed their windows in pink to raise money for Cancer Research UK.

Once again, Rochdale picked up multiple awards at the Royal Horticultural Society's Britain in Bloom competition with the Rochdale borough also winning big at the regional contest.

We have two wonderful Christmas-themed recipes to keep our bellies full this season. Enjoy The Gallows' bestseller of delicious braised brisket plus two sides including sprouts with bacon and honey-glazed carrots with walnuts. For dessert, tuck into Natasha Brown's warm chocolate chip stollen with cream.

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

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River Spodden in Healey Dell
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D-Day veteran from Rochdale celebrates his 100th birthday



The Wright family: daughter-in-law Lorraine, grandson Adam, Ken, grandson Dean, granddaughter Laura and son Alan

A war hero believed to be Rochdale's only surviving D-Day veteran has celebrated his 100th birthday.

Ken Wright was treated to a golf tournament in his honour at Castle Hawk golf club, where he was greeted by an officer from his old regiment, the Suffolks, piper escorts and standard bearers from the British Legion.

He was chauffeured in a World War Two jeep to the first hole at the club, where he teed off the tournament – aptly named the Ken Wright Cup.

It is believed Ken is the only surviving veteran who landed on Sword Beach with the 8th brigade, part of 3rd British Infantry Division on 6 June 1944; the Royal British Legion has said that Ken is Rochdale's only D-Day veteran that they are aware of.

One of five children, Ken was born to his Rochdale father, Fred – who served in World War One – and his Shropshire mother, Mary-Ann, on 10 October 1922.

Ken attended Newbold Comprehensive until he was 14 when he went to work in a cotton mill. After a run in with a lorry on the first day of spring when cycling to work, he moved into construction before he was called up to the Army on 15 January 1942.

Ken was called up to the Suffolk regiment, 1st Battalion, where he served until he was demobbed after five years and one week.

Fortunate enough to make it through the war unscathed, he went back into construction before retiring, aged 65.

On 20 March 1948, Ken married Nellie Cockcroft, and they had a son, Alan, in 1954. Alan and his wife, Lorraine, have three children, Dean, 36, Adam, 35, and Laura, 30, and one great-grandchild.

Ken and Nellie were married until her death at the age of 81, on 20 December 2010.

Ken picked up golf as a hobby when he was 50, thanks to his younger brother, and joined Castle Hawk two years later, after picking up a full set of golf clubs from a second-hand shop for £18.

Reflecting on his time in the army as a private, Ken revealed he was one of the first soldiers to land on Sword Beach during the D-Day landings with the 8th

brigade, which consisted of 1/ Suffolk regiment (made up of A, B and C companies), 2/ East Yorkshire and 1/South Lancashire.

1/Suffolk was the last battalion of the brigade to land, acting as a reserve and with further instructions beyond the taking of the beach itself.

Part of C company, the rifleman sniper believes he may be one of the few survivors still alive today to have landed on the first day.

The Royal British Legion said that the charity was "aware" of a few D-Day veterans from other regions and platoons who landed on other beaches, but none from Ken's.



Private Ken Wright, in Egypt in 1945

In 2008, Ken made his first return to France since the war, where he and his family visited the grave of Private John Sidlow, his best friend who had been killed in action.

"I didn't know what town or cemetery he was buried at," Ken said. "We were driving when we saw a sign saying there was a British cemetery, so we parked up and went to look. Alan and my grandsons were off – and they somehow walked straight to John's grave, like they knew where he was."

He has since returned to Normandy for the 70th and 75th anniversaries of the D-Day landings, and plans to return for the 80th in 2024.

In 2016, Ken was appointed to the rank of Chevalier (Knight) in the prestigious Legion of Honour, France's highest honour.



Ken Wright being interviewed by Rob Smith from ITV

25 YEARS OF ROCHDALE CONNECTIONS TRUST

Rochdale Connections Trust is a local charity which provides a range of valuable support services to young people, adults and families who are finding life difficult.

Established in 1997 by a group of youth court magistrates – concerned by the number of young people coming before them who had little or no family support – RCT set about to help them return to education and training via a range of social inclusion intervention programmes.

Since then, it has evolved to include work with socially isolated adults and those with complex needs, whilst remaining highly committed to their original targeted youth support programme.

Referrals are received from a range of agencies, services and statutory bodies, including social services, the youth offending service, probation, schools and CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services).

A range of services are provided by fully trained staff and volunteers, including young people mentoring, female and male 'Freedom Programmes', literacy and numeracy courses and parenting courses, to name but a few.

It takes around £600,000 to keep the charity running for a year, with funding coming from a range of places, including Lloyds Bank, the National Lottery and small private funders.

Here they demonstrate their success across various demographics with these two case studies.



CASE STUDY: REFERRAL FOR GAMBLING PROGRAMME

At her initial assessment with RCT, we established that she had a daughter removed into care when she was younger. She said she still struggled with the emotional trauma this had caused and had not dealt with it. She also disclosed that she was isolated and lonely.

Due to this, we offered her the option of attending one of our groups for isolated and vulnerable women and subsequently our in-house counselling service.

She has now been attending since February and has grown in confidence within the group. As part of the group, we have supported her with personal issues she's had in a previous relationship which ended in 2021 but was still causing her some issues, due to emotional manipulation.

We have also supported her to put boundaries in place in her strained relationship with her son which has now improved immensely. This lady also has some issues with the property she currently lives in: we have been working with her and her housing officer to start a home exchange so she's happier in her home.

When this lady started in the group, she said she had no hope for the future. As part of the group she has written goals she wants to achieve over the next year and has started feeling hopeful and positive about her life.

The peer support provided in the group has made her realise she isn't alone in her situation and is allowing her to heal from the past. She does still have her bad days but will reach out to group facilitators for support.

CASE STUDY: YOUNG PERSON B

B presented with high levels of anxiety due to his position at home and was unable to label or express his emotions.

From a very young age, B was relied on as 'the man of the house' whilst his dad was in prison. He cared for his younger sister and took on many responsibilities. They were sometimes left unsupervised, and he had to prepare food and settle his sister into bed. B is very protective over his sister and has little time to be a child.

He was withdrawn around other children and often felt lonely in group settings as he felt unable to connect with others. B had very low self-esteem and a lack of confidence, was struggling to make eye contact and was unable to start conversations. Due to this, B was easily led by his older friends and had little awareness of how to play safely in his neighbourhood. B had a negative self-outlook and never believed that he was good enough at anything and often said that he 'can't do it' or 'is rubbish'.

Since joining the programme, B has experienced lots of changes in his home life: his dad has returned and his mum became pregnant. B has mixed feelings about these changes. So much change and uncertainty at such a young age, together with a lack of coping skills, has been the main focus for B's support.

After joining the youth group with his sister, it was identified that B needed a space away from his sister that was just for him, where he could express himself and play more freely. Therefore, B was referred for 1-2-1 person-centred 'thera-play' sessions with a keyworker.

During his 1-2-1 sessions, B is provided with a safe space where he can share his thoughts and feelings, practise emotional regulation, learn coping skills and resilience, and grow his confidence and self-esteem, whilst being creative and being a child. He is becoming more confident at naming different

emotions, but struggles when discussing coping mechanisms for difficult feelings.

He has responded well to consistent support, allowing him to recognise and have confidence in his strengths. His social anxiety has reduced and his self-esteem increased.

Following on from B's increased self-esteem, B has explored what he enjoys and what makes him happy, so that his hopes and dreams for the future can be used as a coping mechanism. B created a 'Dream Jar', which he can keep in his bedroom and 'charge' with happy dreams when he is feeling worried or upset. B enjoyed having something special that he made himself to take home and use, and was confident in naming what his hopes for the future are.



INTERVIEW WITH VIVIAN CARTER

Vivian Carter, one of RCT's founders who is now chair of the board of trustees, told us more about the charity's work.

A former teacher in Heywood, Viv also worked at British Coal and British Gas before working in her partner's engineering workshop. She has also taught English to French students.

What was the original aim for RCT – and has it achieved it?

Absolutely and miles besides. I chaired the youth court in Rochdale, and we had loads of kids coming in, offending, and they weren't at school. They weren't at school because they chose not to be – and realised if they escaped the school system at 11, nobody noticed they had gone. But that leads to offending because they need guidance and occupation and all those things they weren't getting.

The whole youth bench was up in arms, saying we had to do something. I went to see the deputy director of education at the council and he knew exactly what I was talking about. So, we drew in the head of youth services, and head of children's services and we formed a bit of a group and decided that we've got to do something.

The local authority gave us a place to work and we managed to get £20,000 from The Prince's Trust so we employed two people. One worked with children in school and the other one worked outside on the social side - mentoring. We decided mentoring was the way forward because they weren't being mentored at home.

It grew very quickly. I remember speaking to John Kay [the current secretary of the charity] and telling him that although the council had been kind enough to put us up and look after

us, we needed to be able to take the kids somewhere neutral where we could look after them.

Not long after, he showed me the premises on Drake Street, where I'd actually worked for a very short time. It was empty after becoming a furniture shop, but it was for sale – I didn't know how we'd pay rent, never mind buy somewhere. John said, "leave it to me."

He managed to find support from the bank and get us a mortgage. It was the making of us because we had a place to work from and it was a big office in those days. Now it's not big enough, but it was amazing.

How many mentors does RCT have now?

We have about 28, who all work one-to-one with kids. We soon discovered that it was alright mentoring the young people but actually, you needed to work with the parents as well and – very often – that was where the problem lay.

We quickly discovered one of the bigger family problems was women who were being abused and not talking about it, which affects the kids. Two of our staff went on a course to learn how to help these women; supporting them in standing up for themselves and enabling them to be able to take their own lives in hand. They were brilliant and one of them still works here.



It became obvious that we needed to do more: we were then working in schools with kids who were not settled and needed mentoring so then that grew.

Do you run a course for men who feel they are at risk of committing abuse?

Yes. We couldn't have men in here when we had women in who had problems. So we had to dedicate a day where it is men only. You have to refer yourself: you have got to want to change your ways, otherwise we can't do anything for you. It took us a while to get funding for this because nobody believed we could do it.

If you were starting RCT today, would you do anything differently?

I don't think we would. It was – and still is – based in the community. We follow the community's needs to do what we do. We try to follow what the community has a need for. Our new project on Darnhill in Heywood is a good

example; we have to be based in the community, they won't come here, so we have to go to them. It takes time because we have to build up trust.

Have you got any aims over the next five years?

Our next move must deal with knife crime – somebody has to deal with all these kids who are wandering around with a knife in hand.

Our projects present themselves: we don't particularly think we want to do 'this'. Something will come up and then we make a plan and try to get funding, so really, we just take it step by step.

To find out more about
Rochdale Connections Trust
or become a volunteer mentor
visit www.r-c-t.co.uk

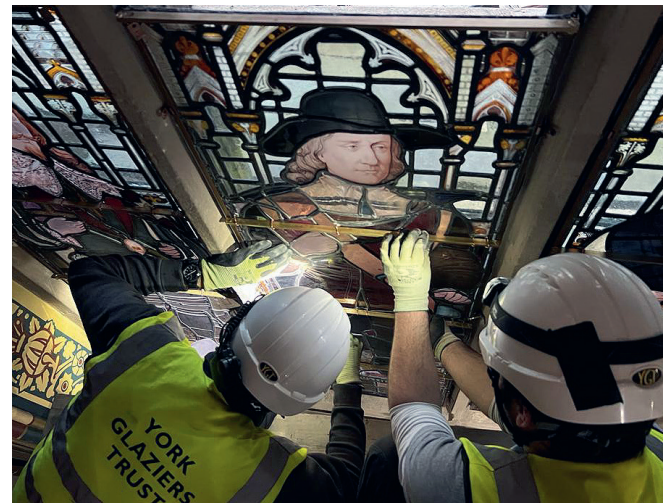
Striking stained glass window restored and reinstalled in Rochdale Town Hall

A striking stained glass window featuring Oliver Cromwell has been reinstalled in Rochdale Town Hall after six months of restoration. The impressive Cromwell window in the Great Hall was removed in April and reinstalled in October after receiving a protective glaze.

The stained-glass window, which depicts Oliver Cromwell centrally between Charles I and Charles II, has been conserved by York Glaziers Trust under the direction of Professor Sarah Brown. The trust looks after historic buildings throughout the UK, but is particularly known for its work to care for and conserve the stained glass in the world famous York Minster.

Restorers worked on the window, using high-definition binocular microscopes to clean the glass with a mixture of deionised water, ethanol and acetone on cotton swabs before repairing it using edge bonding where necessary.

Heavily discoloured or brittle bonds were also rebonded whilst any large spreading or loose



cracks were stabilised using epoxy resin. The original 19th century lead has been maintained and kept intact where possible.

Made by Heaton, Butler and Bayne of London, the portraits in the Great Hall date back to when the town hall was built in 1871. They form part of a continuous depiction of the line of rule in the hall.

The work comes as part of a multi-million pound restoration of the town hall, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



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CARL ABRAHAM



Carl Abraham is the founder of the Rochdale Masters Rugby League team, a non-competitive side for anyone over the age of 35 which trains weekly at Rochdale Mayfield and Soccer Factory through the winter months.

He has been chosen to play for the England Masters in this year's Rugby League World Cup Festival on 13 November in York.

Carl told us: "The aim of Rochdale Masters is purely sociable and gets people back into grassroots sport. I didn't want it to be affiliated with any club, so it's open to anyone from the borough with no club rivalry or history.

"We get small grants to help run the club, but the money we raise from player subs goes into a charity pot for the end of the season. This time, we're putting the money back into the Mayfield youth teams."

Having reached the most senior soldier rank of Warrant Officer Class One in the British Army, Carl retired from the military in 2019 after just over 24 years of service, having enlisted straight from high school in September 1995.

Whilst serving in the UK, the army veteran would return home at weekends and stand-down periods to represent Rochdale Mayfield. The 43-year-old father of three grew up playing rugby from a young age, starting the sport representing local side Spotland Rangers before retiring from playing first team rugby in 2012 after the birth of his youngest son Isaac.

During his time in the forces Carl represented various regiments, The Corps of Royal Engineers and the British Army. Although both his parents were ex-military, he says this did not influence his career.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do. I didn't really like school, so I didn't want to go to college. I saw the 'Army be the Best' advert in the local paper and enquired at the local Army Careers Office. Four

weeks from my first visit I had passed army selection, been accepted into the Corps of Royal Engineers and had been issued a start date to my new career."

On retiring, Carl set up Rochdale Masters in 2021 before quickly taking over the reins of the Masters Veterans team, a group of Veterans within the Masters community that come together to commemorate poignant events through the military calendar year.

He was nominated for the England Masters side this summer, after leaving the decision up to the club's committee.

"Each masters club has to nominate one player, and you can only play for an age group once," he explained. "The team is made up of all ages because it's non-competitive. You don't necessarily have to be the best player to be chosen!"

In addition to the Masters RL World Cup Festival in November, Carl is also looking forward to welcoming the Canadian Masters to Rochdale in early November but admitted he's mainly looking forward to the annual veterans' fixture where veterans from all over the country come to Rochdale in a fixture to commemorate Remembrance Day.

"I jumped at the chance when the Masters committee asked if we were interested in hosting the Canadian team: it's a big deal to host an international team in the borough. Rochdale Masters was chosen because the Canadian side are staying in the North West and needed a fixture before attending the international festival!"

After the success of his Masters work, Carl was approached by the Rochdale Hornets Sporting Foundation, and together they've created a schools' programme that has recently provided 10 local primary schools with five weeks of free coaching and the chance for the schools to play in two festivals. The children this time also had the opportunity to be present at the England/Fiji friendly match on 7 October and take part by being matchday mascots, flag bearers and playing on the pitch at half-time as part of the Bula Rochdale programme.



Carl also coaches the Hornets Wheelchair team, and has run wheelchair rugby sessions at Redwood School.

He recalled: "There was one girl who required the use of a wheelchair, and her face lit up when I brought all these other wheelchairs out for the other students. It was then that I realised how inclusive it can be, and helps create a pathway for people with disabilities to become involved."

"I'm only able to do what I do because I'm retired. My wife said I needed to find something to do that I enjoyed. It allows me to do the school run and watch my youngest play football – although he's becoming more interested in rugby now.

"I'm very fortunate and proud to do what I do and provide a platform for so many in what I enjoy."

If you're interested in getting involved in any of the programmes, please contact Carl on carl.abraham@hornetsrugbyleague.com



Carl playing for Rochdale Masters



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Dell Road reopens after major works to save route from collapse

A road that leads to one of Rochdale's most popular beauty spots has re-opened 11 months after a major engineering project to save it from collapse.

Dell Road provides direct access from Shawclough Road into Healey Dell nature reserve, which is also home to Healey Dell Heritage Centre & Tea Rooms and Aunt Mary's Day Nursery.

It was closed following an inspection by the council's bridges and structures team in February 2021 after more than 90 metres of tension cracks appeared in the carriageway.

A decision was made on the grounds of public safety to close the road to vehicles in order to avoid a full collapse and the potential loss of the route forever.

The large-scale works began in November 2021 and were undertaken by F W Sherratt Ltd.

The council invested £1m in saving the road, which included a full restoration programme that saw the installation of 24 metres of deep retaining wall supported on cantilevered reinforced concrete foundations installed five metres below ground level.



A further 60-metre mass concrete wall founded on bedrock at a shallower depth was also constructed.

Almost 200 large hand-filled gabion baskets filled with stone now line the newly surfaced road to help prevent further landslides and 200 metres of new underground drainage pipes and six highway gullies installed to ensure adequate drainage have been installed.

Councillor Daniel Meredith, portfolio holder for highways and housing at Rochdale Borough Council, said: "I would like to thank local residents and businesses for their patience while works were ongoing.

"The in-depth work undertaken on Dell Road has been a long process, with the bulk of it not actually visible to the naked eye, but now back open thanks to investment, the road provides safe access for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motorists.

"I encourage visitors to take advantage of the beautiful surroundings, which include the River Spodden, delightful scenery, an award-winning tea room, walking trails and spectacular waterfalls."

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£100K DONATED BY RKT TRUST

After nine years of work in the local community, Newhey charity The RKT Trust Fund has donated over £100,000 to other local charities and good causes.

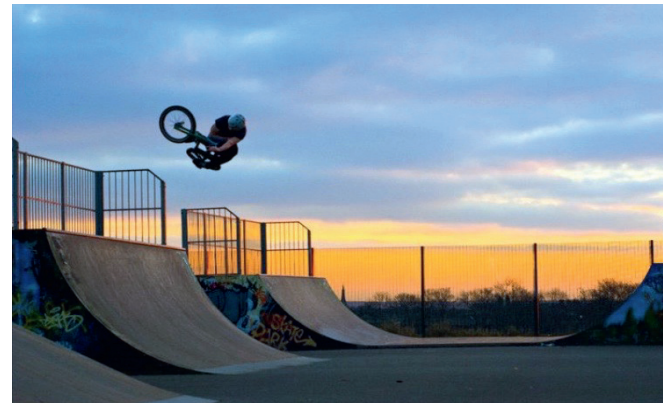
The RKT Trust Fund was formed following the tragic death of 19-year-old Ryan Kristian Taylor, who took his own life in October 2012.

An apprentice mechanical engineer, Ryan was an extremely popular young man loved by family and his many friends, with a passion for sports – in particular, BMX biking – and an active social life. Ryan enjoyed playing cricket at Milnrow Cricket Club, where he also worked as a glass collector, barman and playing football at the former Milnrow Soccer Village.

His parents Diane and Kenny describe him as “always having a smile on his face” and a “thrillseeker” whilst other trustees of the charity say Ryan was “the one his friends would go to with a problem.”

“He was such a bubbly person,” Diane said. “We had the best relationship and he would talk to me about anything. Ryan never shared any thoughts on ending his life, he didn’t say anything. He didn’t talk to anyone about it and we don’t know why.”

“He was so open and friendly, he got on with everyone and had been brought up to communicate with people of all ages.”



Pictured: Ryan on his BMX

The RKT Trust Fund committee is comprised of Diane Taylor, Rebecca Owen, Lynne Higgins, Neil Shelmerdine, Donna Williamson, Karen Clancy, Dan Blair and Pete Thomas with core volunteers including Kenny Taylor, Helen and Kenny Smith, and Liz Shelmerdine.

The fund originally set out to raise money in the 12 months following Ryan’s death – starting when the family asked for donations to charity in lieu of flowers.

It was only fitting that the RKT Trust Fund’s first project came in supporting the Friends of Milnrow Park in building a BMX and skate park for young people in the area – a long-time dream of Ryan’s.

In 2007, he wrote a letter to Rochdale Council asking for a skate park to be built in the area – which came to fruition in 2013.

With the backing of ward councillors and the input of young people from Hollingworth Business and Enterprise College and Newhey Community Primary School, the skate park was built in Milnrow Memorial Park, giving

skateboarders, BMXers, scooter riders and mini skaters a space just for them.

Since then, the trust fund has given over £100,000 back into the local community through fundraiser events like the annual T20 cricket match in Ryan’s honour, various sponsored sporting events, Milnrow’s Got Talent, casino nights, golf days, comedy nights and individual donations. It aims to raise as much as possible for young people who are, in their words, “less fortunate than Ryan.”

“We wanted to have a positive impact and raise money for young people’s charities and projects in the north west,” trustees Rebecca Owen and Lynne Higgins said. “The T20 was one of our earliest events.”

Some other projects that have stemmed from Ryan’s legacy include the children’s play area at Milnrow Cricket Club, along with Ryan’s Den at Rochdale Children’s Moorland Home, one of the trust’s main beneficiaries.

The Rochdale Children’s Moorland Home provides holidays for less fortunate children who may not otherwise have one. To date, RKT has donated £27,000 to the charity, which provides the welcome breaks between April and October.

Other beneficiaries have included the Friends of Milnrow Park, Milnrow Cricket Club, Milnrow Preschool, Trewan Sands, Petrus, Jolly Josh, Papyrus Prevention of Young Suicide, the Red Cross, Positive Steps, Milnrow girl guides,



The charity has organised many different fundraising activities

a Morris dancing troupe and many other local football and rugby teams.

“We couldn’t do it without the volunteers we always rely on, and the local businesses in the local area which have sponsored us over the years, donated prizes and made monetary donations,” Diane said.

Rebecca and Lynne agreed, saying: “Ryan will never be forgotten, we constantly talk about him between our close friends and family. We make sure we still remember what a fantastic person he was.”

Diane added: “So many people have helped and done so much, and myself Kenny and Alex along with all the committee would like to thank everyone for their generosity and support because they’ve all played a massive part.”



Donations can be made to the RKT Trust using the following bank details:
Sort code: 05-02-77
Account number: 20659023



RKT Trust has donated money to many local charities

Help and support

HOPELINEUK is Papyrus’ confidential helpline service providing practical advice and support to young people with thoughts of suicide and anyone concerned about a young person who may have thoughts of suicide.

HOPELINEUK is staffed by trained professionals, offering a telephone, text and email service.

For practical, confidential suicide prevention help and advice please contact PAPYRUS HOPELINEUK on 0800 068 4141, text 07860 039967 or email pat@papyrus-uk.org

For more details about the online HOPELINK service, visit: www.papyrus-uk.org/hopelink/

Civic honours bestowed on 12 for outstanding contributions

Twelve local people who have made outstanding contributions to the borough have been bestowed civic honours by Rochdale Borough Council.

Six community champions and charity workers, a local businessman and a former medical director have been given the freedom of the borough, while four former councillors were made aldermen. Rochdale-born England and Barcelona midfielder Keira Walsh is also to be awarded freedom of the borough at a later date.

Sheila Acton was awarded freedom of the borough in recognition of her remarkable contribution to community and voluntary activities for over 50 years. She has been volunteering locally, supplying countless hours of her time, beginning with the Girl Guides movement in 1970.

Sheila is chair of Syke Community Base which opened in 2002, vice-chair of the Voluntary Sector Partnership, a member of Friends of Rochdale Town Hall, Rochdale Rotary and a recipient of the prestigious Paul Harris fellowship award.

A former Rochdale Woman of the Year, in 2007 she received the Greater Manchester Community Star award for her contributions to the community and voluntary sector across the borough.

Described by Councillor Ashley Dearnley as “a bright star in the borough,” Sheila said: “I am so proud and happy to receive this accolade.”

John Kay, consultant at Molesworth, Bright, Clegg Solicitors and former president of Rochdale Rotary Club, also received the freedom of the borough.

Involved with several charities, he was a director of Rochdale Enterprise Agency, chairman of the NSPCC Rochdale business group, director of Rochdale Deaf Society, the Children’s Rights and Advocacy Service and Rochdale Connections Trust.

A member of Greater Manchester Chamber and deputy chair of the local strategic partnership, John has had many other roles over the past 40 years, including supporting Littleborough Civic

Trust and Littleborough Coach House. In 2018 he was named Man of the Year by Springhill Hospice.

He described the honour as “a wonderful surprise.”

Razia Shamim was also awarded the freedom of the borough. She is the first Asian woman in Rochdale to be awarded the freedom of the borough, and was the first Asian woman in Rochdale to be awarded an MBE.

She received the MBE in 1998 for services to housing and community relations and is chair of the Pakeeza Women’s Group, as well as a member of other local voluntary organisations aimed at reducing isolation among women, promoting cohesion, health and wellbeing.

Razia has helped raise thousands of pounds for various organisations, both in the UK and abroad.

Dr Musharraf Hussain, was made a freeman of the borough. He served Rochdale for over 40 years as a hospital doctor and then as GP at

Healey Surgery until his recent retirement. Musharraf was also the clinical director of Rochdale Primary Care Trust and continues to be a proactive community ambassador, supporting several local community enterprises involved in healthcare and mental wellbeing.

Ghulam Rasul Shahzad was also made a freeman of the borough. A recipient of an OBE from the late Queen Elizabeth II for his services to the community, the retired magistrate is a member of several local voluntary groups.

Saeed Dar was made a freeman of the borough in recognition of his significant contribution to education and the community.

Javed Akhtar and Ali Asghar were also made freemen of the borough in recognition of their significant and continued contribution to the community, and their voluntary activities.

Former councillors Tom Bailey, Mohammed Sharif and former mayors Keith Swift and Ian Duckworth were made honorary aldermen.



Photos, clockwise from top left:

- Sheila Acton being presented with her award by mayor councillor Ali Ahmed.
- Dr Musharraf Hussain being presented with his award.
- John Kay being presented with his award.
- Ghulam Rasul Shahzad being presented with his award by mayor councillor Ali Ahmed, alongside council leader Neil Emmott (left) and consort Sultan Ali (right).
- Razia Shamim was presented with her award by mayor councillor Ali Ahmed, alongside council leader Neil Emmott (left), councillor Janet Emsley and consort Sultan Ali (right).



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MysonPages conquers Yorkshire Three Peaks

IT specialist MysonPages has raised over £6,000 for Springhill Hospice after scaling the Yorkshire Three Peaks in terrible weather.

Six members of the MysonPages team and Zen Internet chairman Richard Tang set off to conquer the Yorkshire Three Peaks challenge, expecting a tough but pleasant hike. Tackling the Three Peaks involves walking 24 miles and climbing 5,200 feet in under 12 hours.

However, the team picked what was probably the worst day this summer to attempt the Yorkshire Three Peaks. The rain started early and didn't stop; at one point, the walkers were up to their shins in muddy water – and the guides said the weather was in their top five worst conditions.



Managing director David Brereton said: "The money we've raised has been sensational, but the best bit has been seeing how it impacted people in the team, and them recognising their personal achievements.

"There's already an assumption that this won't be a one-off."

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CHOCOLATE CHIP STOLLEN

by Natasha Brown - owner of Brown's Cakes

Traditional stollen is good but I think this chocolate chip stollen is even better!

There is a bit of preparation/waiting time needed for this recipe but don't worry as it will all be worth it in the end. You'll need to spend some time kneading and weighing but most of the time will be spent simply waiting for the dough to rise.

A warm room helps so choose a day when you have the heating on (I know those days are rare now with the price of fuel!) or place your dough near 'ish' a heater - you don't want the chocolate chips to melt! I've got to say though, the biggest tip is to use recently bought yeast because old yeast, even if still in date, won't work effectively.

Ingredients

For the pastry:

- 300g strong bread flour
- 2 teaspoons easy bake yeast.
Make sure it's easy bake otherwise it will need activating. Also make sure it's well in date as the yeast has to work really hard in sweet bread.
- Pinch of salt
- 40g sugar
- 110g butter (nice and soft so room temperature)
- 100ml warm milk
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 50g milk chocolate chips
- 50g dark chocolate chips
- 50g white chocolate chips
- 50g glace cherries (cut into quarters)
- 175g marzipan

For the glaze:

- 110g icing sugar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

Dough preparation:

Place the flour in a bowl, add a pinch of salt to one side of the bowl and the yeast in the other side so they don't go in together.

Warm the milk (I give it 30-45 seconds in the microwave, it needs to be warm but not hot) and stir in the sugar, vanilla, lemon zest, warm butter (again a short blast in the microwave can soften the butter) and 1 egg.

Gently stir the milk mixture into the flour until it is combined then knead the dough for a good 5 minutes (use a mixer with a dough hook if you have one, if not knead well by hand).

Add the chopped cherries and chocolate chips to the dough. If you can't find (or don't want) all three types of chocolate chips use more of the other types to make up 150g in total. It's not easy to keep the chips in so put them in the middle and keep bringing the outside of the dough over and knead gently.

Place the dough in a large, greased bowl and cover with cling film (also greased) and a tea towel. Leave the dough in a warm place until it doubles in size. This can take two hours or more.



Once the dough has doubled in size, tip it on to a floured worktop and gently knead the air out. Shape it into an oval, roll the marzipan into a sausage shape slightly shorter than the dough and place it in the middle of the dough. Dab a little milk on to one long edge of the dough then carefully fold the dough round the marzipan so that the milk sticks the dough together. Lay the dough (join side down) on to a lined baking tin.

Cover lightly with greased cling film then leave to double in size again. This should take around one hour in a warm place.

Warm the oven to 200°C/180°C(fan)/Gas 6. Bake the stollen for approx. 30 minutes, checking after 25 minutes to make sure it's not burning. It's tricky to tell when it's done as you can't pick it up easily like a bread loaf due to the weight of the marzipan but it should have a nice crust and a skewer should come out clean if inserted - watch out for chocolate or marzipan on the skewer, it can be misleading.

The glaze:

Mix the icing sugar with the lemon juice then drizzle this over the surface of the warm stollen.

Stollen is traditionally served cold but it's amazing pretty much straight out of the oven! It's lovely on its own or with cream if you are eating it warm.

However you choose to serve it, chocolate chip stollen is so delicious... I hope you enjoy it.

WARDLE SCARECROW FESTIVAL

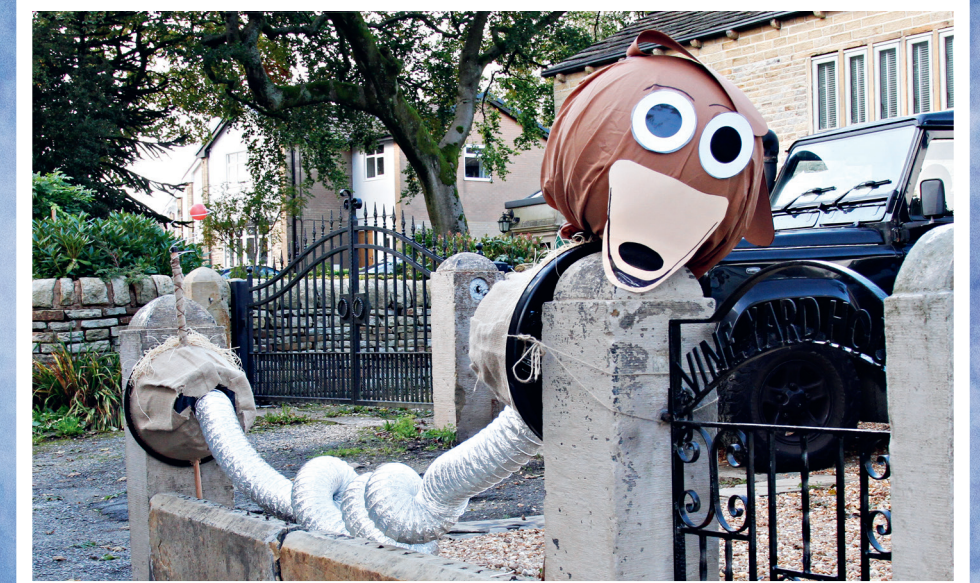


Creative residents of Wardle put on an amazing show for this year's Scarecrow Festival, organised by Craft Cottage.

Over 40 scarecrows were entered into the festival by local businesses, families and community groups.

There were also nine letters hidden around the village to find and solve a mystery word.

Maps were available at a cost of £1, with £450 raised for local charity Jolly Josh.



ROCHDALE SWEEPS UP AT IN BLOOM AWARDS



Rochdale in Bloom scooped gold in the finals of the Royal Horticultural Society's Britain in Bloom competition and was chosen as the best entry in the Small City category, representing the North West.

Finalists were judged according to strengthened environmental criteria that encourages groups to consider sustainability issues and implement planet-friendly gardening techniques within their community projects.

Nominated for the Small City category, and up against titans Bath, Canterbury and Burton, Rochdale in Bloom represented the North West nationally, after winning its fifth consecutive gold in the 2021 regional competition.

It's the second time Rochdale has represented the region at the nationals, taking home gold in

2018. The Rochdale team steamed ahead to take the gold and also best in category in this year's competition with the three other competitors in the category taking home silver gilts, the next best on the score chart.

This year's floral designs across the town were influenced by the war in Ukraine, planting sunflowers along the route, and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

For both regional and national comps, the team choose a selection of sites for the judges to visit that showcase the best of Rochdale, but at the same time meet all aspects of the judging criteria.

However, the national competition is widely acknowledged as being much stricter and expectations and standards are much higher.

Regionals

The regional North West in Bloom competition consists of two judging days. The first is a guided tour taking in areas of interest; the second allows for visits to community-based projects – 'It's Your Neighbourhood' – that include local schools, allotments, health and well-being projects and conservation areas.

A record number of outstanding entries across the local In Bloom groups – Rochdale, Norden, Middleton, Heywood and Pennines – secured the council, local businesses and the many community gardeners a very impressive 20 gold awards across the borough.

Rochdale In Bloom

83 awards including eight golds and 48 It's Your Neighbourhood entries.

Rochdale was once again chosen as the pick of the bunch, taking gold and the overall winner in the 'small city' category, plus gold for 'town centre' and the trophy for 'best town'.

Other superb achievements included the best mosque for Jamia Masjid Bilal for the attention to detail and environmental efforts, plus the best hospice in the North West for Springhill Hospice, including an outstanding contribution award for Nick Dent, head gardener at the hospice who retired last year.

Heywood In Bloom

19 awards including five golds and nine It's Your Neighbourhood entries.

- Best large park (Queen's Park)
- Outstanding contribution 2022 (Sandra Trickett, who runs the café at Hopwood Park)
- Young bloomer of the year (Ava and Elias Avellanet)

Middleton In Bloom

18 awards including three golds and 13 It's Your Neighbourhood entries.

- St Michael's Garden Gang received a judges' discretionary award for all the work they do with young people
- St John's Thornham PFTA received a schools' award



Planters at The Crown & Shuttle pub



Britain in Bloom judges visited The Growth Project



Elias and Ava Avellanet with Councillor Rachel Massey and Mayor of Rochdale, Ali Ahmed

Norden In Bloom

12 awards including four golds and five It's Your Neighbourhood entries.

- Best new landscape (Birtle Brook Village)
- Best large accommodation (Birtle Brook Village)
- Best commercial (Pavilion)

Pennines In Bloom

24 awards including a silver gilt and 22 It's Your Neighbourhood entries.

- Outstanding contribution 2022 (Ray Smith, chairman of Pennines in Bloom)

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Milnrow Balti crowned North West Restaurant of the Year at Britain's top Asian Restaurant & Takeaway Awards



The Milnrow Balti has been crowned the North West Restaurant of the Year at Britain's largest celebration of Asian restaurants and takeaways.

The Dale Street restaurant and takeaway fought off tough competition to be crowned the best in the region at the Asian Restaurant & Takeaway Awards ceremony in London, which celebrate the UK's best South Asian cuisine across a series of prestigious regional and national categories.

The winners were selected from over 2,370 nominations by an esteemed panel of ambassadors and judges comprising of Chand Rahman, executive chef and multi award winning celebrity chef; Mohammed Mujibur Rahman, ex-Mayor of Corby; and Graham Taylor, senior chef lecturer, Cambridge Regional College.

Restaurants were awarded based on three key factors: quality of food, quality of service, and value for money, followed by the ARTA score,

which includes food hygiene rating and reviews from websites like TripAdvisor and Google.

Restaurants that made it through the gruelling first phase were judged and invited to participate in a cook-off competition. The score included various factors including flavour, appearance, texture, hygiene, and aroma.

Owner of The Milnrow Balti, Mohammed Rahman said: "It's an honour and absolute joy to have won the regional restaurant of the year at the InterContinental O2 Arena Hotel. "We would like to thank all those who nominated us and made this possible. Thank you to all our customers for the continued support through thick and thin and for always putting Milnrow Balti first when ordering an Indian."

The Milnrow Balti has previously been awarded Best Indian Restaurant (Euro Asia Curry Awards 2021), Best Restaurant (Curry Life Awards 2019) and Best Chef (Euro Asia Curry Awards 2021).

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Self-taught autistic artist shortlisted for award

LoveArtPix, from Middleton, creates art on his phone using free app, Picsart.

Artist Dez – known as LoveArtPix – has been creating art for four years using the free phone app to help him cope with daily life and give him focus.

Now from having public art unveiled by mayors and high sheriffs, and raising thousands of pounds for charities, Dez, 43, has been shortlisted for the Rising Star/ Emerging Talent award in this year's 'This is Manchester' awards.



Dez



Let it out, let it in... by LoveArtPix

Dez was originally diagnosed with bipolar disorder when he was in his 20s, but has since been diagnosed with autism, and is in the process of being diagnosed with ADHD.

He said: "I use art as my own personal therapy to express my emotions when they become too overpowering. Art helps me to focus and to channel my erratic thoughts. This has become a positive pattern that I use daily as a life skill and coping strategy which I feel many others could benefit from.

"My autistic diagnosis has changed my life in so many ways and everything finally makes sense in relation to how and why I see the world in the way I do."

Earlier this summer, Dez was commissioned by Northern to create a 30-metre mural at Manchester Victoria station to bring some colour to the bridge to platforms 4, 5 and 6.



Photo: www.paulmoorephotography.co.uk

Artwork by LoveArtPix on the overbridge at Manchester Victoria

The mural was unveiled in August by the High Sheriff of Greater Manchester and depicts the words I LOVE MCR VICTORIA in bright yellow letters, surrounded by 22 Manchester bees, one for each panel on the overbridge.

His work also features on the columns of the memorial to commemorate the victims of the Manchester arena bombing in 2017.

Dez's artwork can also be seen at Oxford Road Station and the Nag's Head pub on Jackson's Row, as well as Blackpool, around Cumbria and even in France, at the Normandy Memorial Trust.

Dez plans to get his name out there and continue raising awareness for autism.

He added: "Art has really changed my life and I have met

some amazing inspirational people who have been very supportive and continue to help me with my endeavours to spread awareness of neurodivergent conditions.

"Since I am self-taught, this is a huge achievement for me."

Winners are due to be announced at a ceremony at the Hilton Hotel in Manchester on 3 November.



Photo: www.paulmoorephotography.co.uk

Chef David Hayden and wife Rachael run The Gallows in Milnrow, winners this summer of Come Dine With Me The Professionals.



David, who has catered for premiership footballers, TV stars and other celebs, shares his recipe for braised brisket which is a best-seller at The Gallows. He has also provided recipes for two side dishes that go perfectly with the brisket or you can use to jazz up a roast dinner.



Braised brisket

- 2kg boneless brisket
 - 1 bulb of fresh garlic
 - 1 tsp wholegrain mustard
 - 2 tsp tomato purée
 - 2 pints stock & apple cider vinegar or 2 pints red wine
 - 1 tin chopped tomatoes
 - Fresh thyme
 - Dried oregano
 - 1 tsp garlic powder
 - 1 tsp paprika
 - 2 tsp brown sugar
1. Brown the brisket on the hob in a casserole dish. Try not to move it, other than to flip it once. Once browned on both sides, take the meat out of the pan and set it aside.
 2. Sauté the garlic, mustard and tomato purée, then pour in the red wine (or stock and vinegar mix) and chopped tomatoes. Return the brisket to the pot, fatty side up.
 3. Stir together the spice mix (thyme, oregano, garlic powder, paprika, brown sugar) and sprinkle it over the brisket then put the lid on and put it into the oven at 160°C for three hours.
 4. Start checking the meat after two hours by using a meat thermometer. You could take it out when the meat reaches 90°C, but some say that as high as 95°C is the sweet spot for braised brisket. Remember, braising is all about using low-and-slow heat to transform your brisket into something moist and meltingly tender.
 5. When it's done, take the meat out of the pot. Cover it with foil to keep warm while you make the brisket sauce.
 6. To make the sauce just put the pot on the hob on a medium heat and simmer for about five minutes to reduce.
 7. Place the brisket on buttered mash potatoes, circle with the reduced sauce and serve with the honey glazed carrots, and brussel sprouts with bacon.

Sprouts with bacon

- 1/2 pound bacon cut into small pieces
 - 2 dozen Brussels sprouts trimmed & halved
 - Salt & pepper to taste
1. Fry the bacon in a skillet over a medium-high heat until crispy.
 2. Take the bacon out of the pan (set aside until needed), leaving the bacon fat in the pan.
 3. Add the sprouts to the pan, stir them until they're nicely coated in the bacon grease, and cover the pan with a lid. Reduce the heat to medium-low. Cook for five minutes.
 4. Add the bacon back into the pan. Cook, uncovered, for a few more minutes or until the Brussels sprouts are as tender and/or browned as you want. You can cover the pan again if you wish; just keep an eye on them.

Carrots with walnuts & honey glaze

- 6 fresh carrots, sliced
 - 1 tbsp butter
 - 100g walnuts, chopped
 - 2 tbsp honey
 - 1/8 tsp ground black pepper (to taste)
 - 1/8 tsp cinnamon
 - Salt
 - 1 -2 tbsps of lemon juice (optional)
1. Steam the carrots for about 15 minutes until tender.
 2. In a small skillet, heat butter and sauté the walnuts for 3-5 minutes until lightly browned.
 3. Add the seasonings, honey and the lemon juice if using. Stir well then add the steamed carrots tossing gently to coat.
 4. Add the fresh chopped parsley just before serving.



GEM APPEAL STRAWBERRY SPARKLE LUNCH

The 2022 Strawberry Sparkle Ladies Lunch at Rochdale Golf Club raised a record-breaking £3,878 for the GEM Appeal charity.

Guests enjoyed a fabulous afternoon in the name of raising money for research into rare genetic diseases.

Singer James Cockerill provided entertainment, whilst special guests, actors David Lonsdale (best known for his role as David in Heartbeat) and Jason Done (Merlin and Waterloo Road) assisted with the raffle.

Karen Johnson, chairman of the GEM Appeal, gave a heart-rending speech, explaining how pioneering research at Royal Manchester Children's Hospital has resulted in enzyme replacement therapy treatments being developed.

Research at the hospital's Willink Unit laboratory, named after her sons Simon and Mikey, means rare genetic conditions, such as Hunter Syndrome – which both Karen's boys suffered with – no longer means a death sentence, as it did for them.





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ADVERTISING FEATURE

Keeping financial control during the cost-of-living crisis

There's a misconception that financial advice is only useful when you receive an inheritance, a windfall or have a lot of extra money.

Staying on track with your financial goals is more difficult with the high cost of living, but there are strategies to help.

This year has been a difficult one, financially speaking, for households in a range of income brackets and investment markets have been choppy, which has been an additional source of stress for those planning their financial future.

You may think that we can't do anything to help, but it's during the hard times that the value of financial advice really shines through.

Here, we explain the ways that seeking advice can help you not just to survive, but thrive during economic storms.

What does a financial adviser do?

The purpose of financial planning is to help you manage your income and assets in the best way, aiming to achieve your life goals.

You may think that it's only worth talking to us if you have a specific goal in mind, such as early retirement, or after a big financial event such as divorce or receiving an inheritance, when you have a large sum of money to manage.

Although that's part of our role – and these are all key moments when good advice is important – in reality, we can help you tackle a whole range of money-related issues. The ultimate goal is for you to reach a place of financial wellbeing, which can include:

- Making the most of your money on a day-to-day basis
- Being financially capable of dealing with the unexpected
- Feeling confident, empowered and knowledgeable
- Making smart use of debt, investments, insurance policies, tax reliefs and financial products to help you on your journey



ABOUT THE WRITER

As director of Front Row Financial, Steven Worrall provides a truly holistic approach that demystifies financial advice and puts you in control, with tailored solutions and ongoing support to help you achieve your financial and lifestyle goals.

Why financial planning is important

You've probably already put in place structures and routines to help you reach your goals. These may include budgeting, savings goals, monthly contributions to pensions or investments, and insurance or income-protection policies.

The challenge in the current environment is that some of these best-laid plans fall apart.

We spend every day creating specific, actionable plans to help people reach their aims, based on realistic calculations of how much they'll need. We can tweak and fine-tune these so that people who may feel they cannot afford to save for retirement, for example, or keep up their financial commitments, are able to do so.

Whatever the situation, rest assured that there will be a financial solution – and a financial adviser can make sure you find it.

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Tickled pink! Best window displays for Cancer Research UK

Three winners have been chosen as having the best window displays for the annual Little'Pink'Borough and Milnrow'Pink'Hey cancer awareness campaigns.

The Gallows pub and Rebecca's Café were named as joint winners for Milnrow'Pink'Hey, whilst The Ark Nursery won the title for Little'Pink'Borough.

Littleborough's displays were judged by councillors Ashley Dearnley and John Taylor, whilst Milnrow and Newhey's were judged by councillors Andy Kelly and Dave Bamford, and Kath O'Donnell, one of the organisers.

Councillors Dearnley and Taylor were very impressed with the amount of work, time, effort that had gone into the many windows at The Ark, each with different messages of hope, awareness, joined by the children in creating fantastic displays.

Rebecca's Café had many messages in their window display and also made homemade cookies in love heart shapes with pink bras on them; each cookie sold saw a donation made towards the charity.

The Gallows featured hand-painted windows featuring a tree of life and hope, the Cancer Research logo, different bras on washing lines,



as well as other pink displays. They also held two afternoon teas and a raffle to raise funds.

The event is organised by The Three Amigos FUNdraising Group, Tracey Jacobs and Suzanne Gumbley, who said: "Thank you to everyone for taking part. We have had lots of supporters again this year including nurseries and schools, who have done various fundraising events.

"There were some outstanding displays and we are extremely grateful for all who have supported us and taken the time to create the pink displays that really brighten the villages up and is a talking point raising awareness."

Littleborough's pink campaign is in its seventh year and Milnrow'Pink'Hey is in its second year. Last year's event raised a combined £18,000 for Cancer Research UK.



HAIRDRESSING TREND

by GREG COUZENS

CHAMPAGNE POP

From the Kardashians to Billie Eilish, blonde is becoming so popular this winter, but there are a few things to consider before you take the plunge.

The condition of your hair is vital to achieve the best look, but you also have to take your skin tone, its undertone and your eye colour into consideration.

There is a blonde shade for everyone who has the confidence to wear it.

Cooler skin tones with dark eyes tend to look beautiful with ashier cool-toned blonde; warm skin tones with pale eyes look fabulous with a hint of golden honey.

Hayley Forbes, a senior stylist and technician at Gregory Couzens, has created this stunning colour by mixing warm tones of champagne blonde with beige blonde.

The result? A beautiful creamy blonde.

Hayley said: "Beige blonde and champagne blonde both have an intense shine which is why many people confuse the two.

"Beige has an ash blonde hue with sandy undertones, while champagne can be worn super light or on the darker side depending on your skin tone.

"Over the past two years, grey hair has been incredibly popular, but requires a lot of maintenance with regular toners, champagne pop blonde is much softer, easy to maintain and compliments Karla's warmer complexion and brightens her eyes.

"This low maintenance look seamlessly flows from a close-to-your-natural-colour shadow root to a combination of champagne and beige tips. The contrast is eye catching and grows out incredibly well."

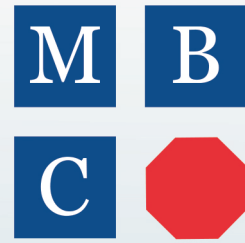
The mixture of these colours is new, so if you feel like you need a boost, ask your technician to recommend the right shade for you.

Always ask about ongoing maintenance and cost, especially in this present climate.

Model: Karla Ptackova
Hair: Hayley Forbes
Photo: Gregory Couzens



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NO FAULT, NO BLAME

MOLESWORTHS BRIGHT CLEGG trainee solicitor, Katy Dunn, reviews the most significant change to divorce law since 1973.

Divorce is a painful and stressful process. Legislation governing divorce law and marriage in England & Wales had, for a long time, been governed by The Matrimonial Causes Act (1973). This had placed apportioning fault and blame within relationships as the central ground within divorce, arguably adding to the already unpleasant nature of divorce.

On 6 April 2022, a new and long-campaigned for piece of legislation brought major changes, when the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 came into force.

The Old Law

Under the 1973 Act, the ground for divorce was the 'irretrievable breakdown of marriage' based on proof of one of five 'facts'. 'Facts' included the respondent's adultery, unreasonable behaviour, desertion (if deserted for two years continuously without consent), two years' separation with the respondent's consent or five years' separation without.

The first three 'facts' required the respondent to be blamed for the breakdown of the marriage. Despite this, many couples understandably continued to proceed to divorce, based on one of the first three fault-based facts, to avoid the need to wait two to five years to divorce. Additionally, the most common application was 'unreasonable behaviour', often used even if the applicant believed their spouse had committed adultery as this still needed to be proved if denied.

In today's society we expect different things from marriage than we perhaps once did. To many people, individual happiness is valued with higher regard than remaining in a relationship simply because it is the 'right thing to do'. Commonly, fault is not a factor of marital breakdown at all. Attributing fault, which may in reality be non-existent, to one party for marital breakdown inevitably created tension, added further unpleasantness to an already difficult situation and often made agreeing arrangements for the children of the family and reaching a financial settlement difficult to achieve.

The New Law

The introduction of the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020 has been the biggest reform of divorce law for almost fifty years. The act now allows parties to apply to court for divorce by stating that their marriage has broken down irretrievably without apportioning any blame. A divorce application can now

be issued by one party to the marriage or as a joint application. Instead of using one of the five facts to support their application, the only requirement is for one party to confirm that they believe the marriage has irretrievably broken down.

The new act has created a twenty-week period of reflection allowing time for couples to agree financial arrangements and providing opportunity to reconcile. If separation is inevitable, relations can perhaps still be maintained.

Conclusion

Divorce will never be anything other than difficult and stressful for all parties concerned. However, no-fault divorce has reduced the amount of hostility and conflict that the old law inevitably created between parties by placing often exaggerated and undeserving blame for relationship breakdown entirely on one party.

GARDENING TIPS FOR WINTER



ABOUT THE WRITER

Roy Down is an engagement and development worker at Petrus as well as the chairman of Rochdale In Bloom. His role at Petrus is to help improve the mental health and wellbeing of volunteers through gardening, as well as those referred via NHS social prescribing.

Despite the chill of approaching winter, there's still plenty to do in the garden to keep it looking good and to protect plants from any frosts.



Clean and clear

The leaves have changed to beautiful autumnal colours – and now they're falling off the trees in abundance! Clear dead leaves from your garden and add them to your compost pile. If you have a grass lawn, give it a final cut of the year to keep it looking neat and tidy. It's also a good time to prune back roses and tidy up and cut back any ornamental grasses and bamboo plants.

Looking after wildlife

Winter can be tough on wildlife, with food becoming hard to find. Give birds, such as house sparrows and goldfinches, a tasty meal by leaving seedheads on herbaceous plants like fennel and echinacea. If possible, leave mature ivy, which will provide nectar and pollen for insects and berries for birds. Some species of butterfly will use the leaves for roosting and hibernation.

Taking care of plants

With the chance of frost on the increase, it's important to protect tender plants by bringing them inside or putting them in a greenhouse. If you can't bring them indoors, wrap them in fleece to keep them safe from the cold.



What to plant

You don't need to wait for spring to start planting – get a head start by sowing in November. Plant crocus bulbs and tulips, ready for the bees when the seasons change. Give bare-root fruit trees a head start by planting apple, pear, cherry and plum trees – they'll get a full season's growth if planted now! If you fancy adding alpine to your garden, December is a good month to plant alpine seeds. The seeds need a spell of cold weather to allow stratifying (so seeds can germinate later on) to take place. Try to avoid any areas that may get waterlogged.

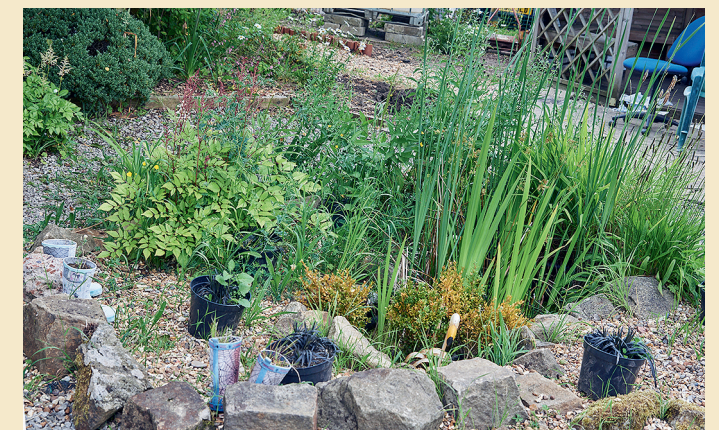
Harvest your crop

When the days get shorter, harvest any root vegetables that are still in the ground, including leeks, parsnips and other remaining vegetables. December is a good time to move shrubs around and the digging and lifting will keep you warm! Prune any pear or apple trees that need tidying up.

Green fingers, no garden?

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TOGETHER WE CAN TAME THE ILL WIND

Winter is traditionally a time of warm greetings – with every faith from Christianity to Hinduism celebrating hope.

So, it is with no pleasure at all, that I bring tidings of what I predict may be the most difficult winter we have experienced for many, many years.

The cost-of-living crisis allied to rising energy prices has resulted in the vulnerable struggling for fuel and food. Debt also brings with it anxieties around money and family, which could precipitate a mental health tsunami.

As if that was not catastrophic enough, we have the ever-present spectre of Covid, which contrary to popular belief, hasn't died.

Hope lies in our community and our ability to show fortitude, one of the strongest traditions our country displays. We must also take responsibility to protect our own health as never before, because demand on our NHS is set to be humongous.

With the vulnerable hit hardest, those of us fortunate enough to enjoy good health and plenty to eat, have a duty to look after our neediest neighbours. Please make sure you pop-in and see that the frail are healthy and heated properly and if not, intervene and call health and social care services. Ergo we should have a compunction to look out for the homeless. Sadly, a cold snap may result in hypothermia and serious illness.

Speaking with our friends and neighbours may also reveal mental health issues. The dire situation the country finds itself in will do

nothing to calm the increased misery caused to those with conditions traditionally associated with winter such as Seasonal Adjustment Disorder or acute depression.

Speaking of cold weather illness there is the growing threat of flu, pneumonia and, of course, Covid. There are inoculations to prevent all three, please make sure you get them. An increase in vitamin C intake to boost the immune system will help here, too. Make this part of a renewed drive to care for your own health, rather than simply expect the NHS to fix you.

The cold weather can also promote a dangerous sense of idleness, as we abandon exercise regimes to stay lounged indoors. Remember, even a short walk can do you good physically, and mentally.

Lastly, 2023 will be upon us before we know it and its beginning will herald a set of often unrealistic New Year's health resolutions. Laudable though they are, crash attempts to lose weight can result in dangerous complications, as can drastic attempts to become teetotal and get fit. It is better to consult a medic before embarking on such a journey, they are likely to help you make your change healthy and sustainable.

It is with a heavy heart that I warn you that we have a tumultuous winter ahead. The pressure on our doctors, nurses and heroic health service will be onerous. But we can at least reduce that burden by caring for ourselves and each other, so that we may see the more optimistic, brighter days that surely lie ahead.



ABOUT THE WRITER

Dr Chauhan OBE is a respected GP, health and social care campaigner, and champion of social justice and charity. As a local GP, he has become a powerful advocate for his patients and introduced innovative methods to improve their care. His work mentoring and employing young people has won national recognition and he was awarded an OBE in 2020 for his creation of the Homeless-Friendly charity.

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MEMORY LANE



Legendary former Joy Division and New Order bass guitarist Peter Hook unveiled two blue plaques in Heywood and Rochdale on 24 September 2009.

The plaques celebrate the musical contributions of Joy Division and DJ John Peel and the roles they played in the local music scene.

One of the plaques is on the former Tractor Sound Studios in Heywood. The studio was

financed by John Peel in 1973, after local band Tractor had sent him a demo tape.

The other can be found at the Kenion Street Music Building, formerly a home to Cargo Studios and Peter Hook's Suite 16 Studios. Joy Division were among the bands to use it, and even had their bass equipment custom built on the ground floor. It was also used as a filming location for the film '24 Hour Party People'.

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