

RURAL

Jersey Country Life Magazine

Issue 54 | Spring 2026

A college for recultivating rural life

Jess McGovern tells us about the 'Cultivate' education programmes she has initiated as ways of educating young people in rural skills and knowledge

The urban garden

Making the best of limited space

Our special theme for this issue:
Educating young Islanders about the countryside

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...Our daily Jersey bread, made from Jersey wheat grown on a Jersey farm

WIN

Dinner and overnight stay for two at the Somerville Hotel





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Welcome

‘We don’t need no education...’ the opening words of a pop or rock song from, I think, the 1970s, that at the time infested radio music programmes.

Anyway, that insidious opening line has somehow stayed in my subconscious, and has drifted upwards to conscious thought during the time that I compiled this edition of RURAL, which has a special theme of ‘Educating Young Islanders about the Countryside’.

‘We don’t need no education — about the countryside’ could be the motto of a deprived modern generation; deprived because too many children believe food comes only from the supermarket, deprived because too many don’t have normal childhood adventures, getting dirty, climbing trees, meeting animals; deprived because from a too young age they become addicted to mobile phones and social media; deprived because for too many their only knowledge of the outdoors could be a trip to the beach in summer... and sometimes there might be no possibility of a beach outing at all.

There is surely a responsibility and duty on all of us to remedy this poverty of experience whenever we encounter it. Fortunately, there are educators in the Island who have gladly stepped up to this responsibility, and all credit to them. There is every opportunity for young people to be educated — properly educated — to enjoy and appreciate the natural environment. Little primary children can go to Forest School, slightly older ones to Farm School, secondary school children and school leavers can join one of the Cultivate courses, which might inspire them into considering a future career in, say, farming or gardening.



There is, perhaps, a wider point to all this. All of us have too little knowledge of where our food comes from, and the link between town and country has become attenuated or entirely broken. Once, the Markets in town were supplied mainly by local farmers and growers; the Island’s countryside was a major source of daily provisions; whereas in effect our ‘countryside’ nowadays is in Argentina, or Spain or some other far away place. Not very wise, nor very healthy in a world that, both environmentally and politically, seems at times to be veering off the tracks.

I hope you find our selection of countryside courses, clubs and schools in the issue inspirational, and I will leave you to enjoy the magazine’s contents, whilst I try to get rid of that ear-worm.

.....
Alasdair Crosby | Editor
www.ruraljersey.co.uk



Front cover image:

Jess McGovern, who has initiated the ‘Cultivate’ courses on rural education
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In each issue of RURAL we aim to publish poetry written by Islanders, past and present, that celebrates our home. For this issue, we have a poem by the late Aidan Smith



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Dinner and overnight stay for two at the Somerville Hotel
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Alasdair Crosby has the last word (for once)



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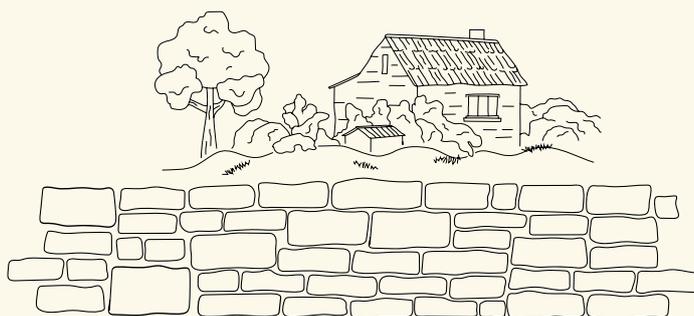
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Over the wall

A RURAL view



Throughout its history, Jersey has always had an offshore industry, at times, highly successful. But it has had nothing to do with finance. Perhaps better to call it the ‘off the shore industry’ — fishing.

As a small island, it might be expected that local seafood would be abundant, and although there are plenty of seafood lovers in Jersey, as a whole the Island does not eat much seafood... witness the decline of the Fish Market in town.

Furthermore, there are many challenges. Climate change is having an effect on the availability of local fish stocks, most of which have reduced to very small quantities, especially lobster and brown crab.

The only fishing species at the moment with healthy stock levels is scallop, but, of course, focusing on scallop means that their numbers are driven down, as well.

There are, however, increasing numbers of octopus, which are hitting the other stocks harder. Octopus may be a result of climate change; it may be a passing phase, we don’t yet know, and only time will tell. These octopodes may be little, but they are voracious and very hungry! They eat lobster, scallops... anything they can get. Fortunately, they are small, otherwise they might be eating us, rather than vice-versa.

They could be a product for the Jersey fishing industry, but it would need a blast freezer to store them on unloading. There needs to be a scheme such as the Agricultural Loan Scheme, or a better business support package, to invest in a blast freezer to enable the Island to exploit the octopus stock. But there is also a crying need for new infrastructure if we are to have a successful fishing industry.

Anyone who has had occasion to visit the Victoria Pier in recent times will have seen how very run down it has become, and it is hard to describe it as fit for purpose. The fishing industry is making the best of a difficult situation, but if there is going to be investment in fishing and investment in refitting the Victoria Pier, then there must be confidence that the fishing industry will grow as a result.

In recent years, there have been positive changes in the economic state of agriculture in Jersey. That is not yet the case with fishing. The reasons for this are quite diverse – and just as diverse is the framework of the industry itself. The Jersey Fishermen’s Association does not have the same cohesiveness as the farming and dairy industries have developed.

The proper title of the Rural Support Scheme, which has benefitted farmers, is the Rural and Marine Support Scheme. For the first time it is providing small amounts of subsidy to fishermen, and is similarly based on ‘public goods’ that they deliver.

But what is inhibiting this growth? At the time of Brexit there was a real desire, both in the UK and in Jersey, to take control of our own waters; that was part of the Brexit story. And Jersey does now control its waters — partly. There are huge French fishing interests, and Jersey can get caught up, as we saw a few years ago, when Royal Navy vessels were being sent in the Island’s direction. Our fishing industry can get caught up unintentionally, in bigger geopolitical moves.

It would seem that the best option for Jersey would be to re-engage again with Brittany and Normandy to create our own way of working in this corner of Europe, and move back to the Baie de Granville Agreement which was signed in July 2000 but came into force four years later.

This was hailed as being a very successful agreement at time of signing. But it had a fatal flaw. As there were three participants in any vote — Jersey, Brittany and Normandy — it meant that Jersey could be outvoted all the time.

In the course of informal conversations between government and Brittany’s fishing representatives, the Bretons have expressed a desire to move back towards a Baie de Granville Agreement type of situation. One of their representatives agreed that the original agreement wasn’t fair on Jersey because of the voting system, and there needed to be a different system that didn’t allow Jersey to be always outvoted.

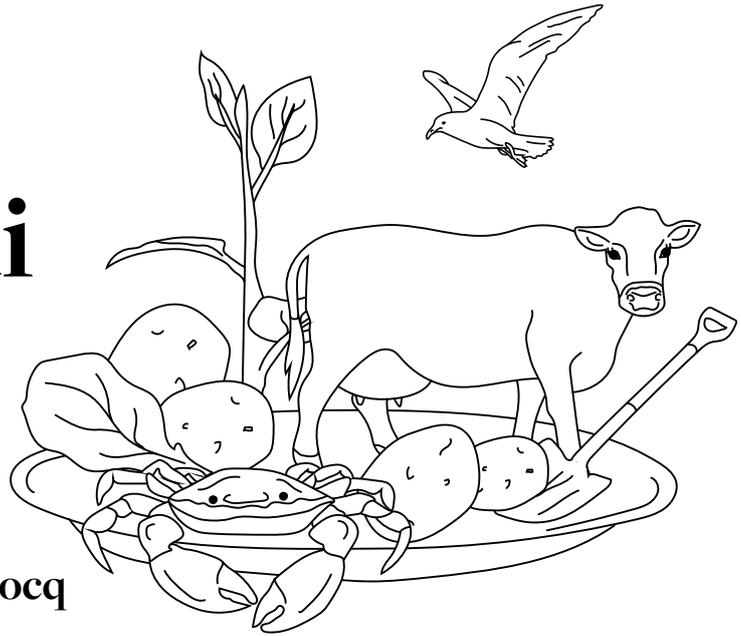
Government still needs to engage with Norman fishermen as well as to strive towards an agreement that would enable Jersey to be treated more fairly.

It will entail a lot of discussion, as might well be imagined, but it’s worth doing, because otherwise Jersey runs the risk always of being dragged into these big geopolitical spats between the UK and the EU. If Jersey’s own fishing waters could be carved from such discussions, it would be much better for Jersey fishermen.

But there are not too many fishing vessels left. So, there is an urgency, now that the state of farming has improved, to develop a similar rescue plan for fishing.

The Jersey Salmagundi

A mixed salad of events and news, with a bit of this, that and the other thrown in.
Salmagundi editor: Ruth Le Cocq



On the road to greater safety

A movement-based safety network created to protect all road users but focusing on those most at risk, such as pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, is currently being trialled in Jersey.

LUSYi – short for ‘Let Us See You Intelligently’ – uses everyday devices, such as smartphones or wearables, rather than roadside infrastructure or cameras, to help road users become aware of each other.

It was created by Somerset-based co-founders Will Tinney and his daughter, Millie Venner. They believe road safety should focus on prevention rather than response after harm has occurred.

Will explained that when the system identifies a potential collision risk, it sends an early warning alert – through sound, vibration or on-screen notifications – giving users valuable extra seconds to slow down, adjust their position or take evasive action. These alerts adapt dynamically based on movement, speed, weather and many more points of data, so higher-risk situations trigger earlier warnings. The system is fully encrypted and anonymised.

Millie explained: ‘The aim is to help everyone truly see each other on the road – drivers, cyclists, horse riders, walkers and delivery vehicles. Everyone becomes part of the same safety network, with their phone or watch acting as a movement-based node.’

She added that the system continuously assesses risk in the background.

‘If someone is approaching quickly, or there is a significant speed difference between road users, LUSYi recognises that and adjusts the alert timing so people are warned earlier when the risk is higher.’

The trial follows early testing in rural UK lanes and overseas, and aligns with the Government of Jersey’s Collision and Casualty Reduction Plan, which aims to reduce serious injuries and fatalities on the Island’s roads.

Will and Millie have been working with the Minister for Infrastructure, St John Connétable Andy Jehan, to deliver the four-month trial.

Looking ahead, the founders hope LUSYi could become a normal part of everyday road use, helping to reduce collisions through awareness rather than enforcement.

‘Everyone knows somebody who has been affected by a road accident,’ said Millie. ‘No parent deserves to live without their child and no child deserves to grow up without a mum or dad. If technology can help prevent that pain for even a small number of families, it is worth doing.’



Jersey’s next Island-wide election is on Sunday 7 June 2026

On Sunday 7 June, Islanders will return to the polls for this year’s general election.

The move to a Sunday date aims to provide greater flexibility and ease for Islanders wishing to vote, avoiding the time-pressures that often dominate the working week.

There are some other notable changes to this year’s election. Firstly, Senators will be returning, following approval from the Assembly last year to reintroduce the role. This means you will now be able to vote for three different types of States Member: Senators, Constables, and Deputies.

You will be able to vote for up to nine Senators to represent the whole Island: one Constable to represent your Parish; and between two and four Deputies depending on your constituency (visit Vote.je to find out yours).

Secondly, Automatic Voter Registration is being introduced, meaning Islanders will no longer need to register to vote.

You will need to have lived in the Island for one year on Election Day, or for 6 months as well as a period that total 5 years – and be aged 16 or older – to be automatically added to the electoral register.

Election Day has always been an exciting, community-driven occasion. From the declaration of candidates and the circulation of manifestos to the bustle of hustings, the road to the 7 June will be full of opportunities to listen to, question and consider your new prospective States Members. Some key dates for your diary include:

27 April: Official announcement of election Candidates

29 April: Candidate Fayre at Oakfield – an opportunity to meet your candidates

5 May – 3 June: Hustings (full schedule to follow on Vote.je)

26 May – 1 June: Early voting (pre-poll) at St. Paul’s Centre

7 June: Election Day (Polling stations open 8am – 8pm)



Remember, you don’t need to attend a polling station on Election Day to cast your vote. You can submit your votes via post, or through pre-polling at St. Paul’s Centre from 26 May – 1 June.

If you’re new to Jersey and/or voting, book onto one of the free ‘Elections Explained’ tours of the States Chamber. These are politically neutral introductions to Jersey’s political system and the practicalities of voting in the Island.

The quickest way to stay up-to-date on all election news is signing up to the Vote.je e-newsletter. For more information on this year’s election – including standing for election – visit Vote.je, follow our social channels, or email contact@vote.je.

Take action today – Be a Voter!

A bond of love and respect

It takes real courage to ride a dressage test on an unknown horse and it takes true skill to then win and take part in the Riding for Disabled’s national competition and qualify for the British Dressage Para Championships.

Para-athlete Ryan Le Monnier did exactly that, not just once but twice, fulfilling the saying that ‘there is no secret so close as that between a rider and his horse’, particularly when both speak the same language of unconditional love and respect.

Ryan, who is autistic and was once told that he would never be able to talk or achieve much, can’t stop smiling as he listens to his mother, Karen, recounting how his taking part in online dressage competitions in 2019 progressed to annual visits to compete in the RDA’s regional qualifiers in Cornwall and, when a horse was available, in the national championships at Hartpury.

This success is an even greater feat because Ryan has only ridden intermittently in recent times because his beloved horse, Flynn, has been injured.

As a result, Karen is searching for a suitable horse so Ryan can continue to progress and compete at the highest national and international levels.

‘We would really like sponsorship, not necessarily to buy the horse, but so Ryan can train over here and take the horse over to the UK for the month in between the nationals and the para-championships,’ said Karen. ‘That way he can do his tests on his own horse.’

Ryan, who continues to benefit from Jersey Sport’s Performance Sport Programme, now has his UK classification for Virtus, which is the national governing body for intellectual disabilities, meaning his dream of competing at the global games could become a reality.



That said, Karen highlighted how it is the day-to-day interactions with horses that have helped Ryan in so many ways, from boosting his self-confidence to encouraging him to develop a sense of calm.

‘Horses just honestly have changed Ryan’s life,’ she said. ‘Sometimes, when he is really stressed, he will just go and put his hands around Flynn’s neck and he will rub his face into his mane and say that the horse smells lovely before adding: “I feel so much better now.”’

Special garden seeks a home



A location is being sought for a garden from this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show, which is being given to Jersey to raise awareness of gynaecological cancers.

The Lady Garden Foundation is creating the 'Silent No More' garden sparked by Emily Plane, who grew up in the Island and lived in London, before ovarian cancer claimed her life in 2023, aged 28.

Her mother, Penny, explained that Emily became an advocate and speaker for the charity while enduring cancer treatments. Her daughter talked about the symptoms of gynae cancers – uterine/endometrial, ovarian, cervical, vulvar and vaginal – and the urgent need for earlier detection.

'Emily got cancer at 23.' said Penny. 'She visited her GP monthly throughout 2018 and took all the medicine they prescribed for IBS but this did nothing to alleviate the increasing pain. In November, Emily finally went to A&E with severe abdominal pain and was soon given the devastating news that she had advanced stage III ovarian cancer.'

Penny, who is passionate about gardening, took Emily to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2023.

'Emily was in a wheelchair and she was in a bad mood and in pain. I was beginning to feel so guilty because this was what I wanted to do and not what she wanted to do.

'Suddenly, she saw Horatio's Garden and her whole demeanour changed and she said: "Oh goodness me, to have a garden like this – imagine sitting in this garden and just feeling the love".'

Emily then contacted the Lady Garden Foundation urging them to feature a show garden at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, while Penny's task was to find funding for the project, which includes a donation from a Jersey trust.

The garden is being designed by Darren Hawkes, who found inspiration from Emily's story and, in her memory, both Darren and the Lady Garden Foundation would love to donate all or part of the garden to a site in Jersey after the end of the show.

The charity is looking for a publicly accessible space where the garden can be warmly received and enjoyed for many years to come, an important part of its legacy. Please contact Rural at editorial@ruraljersey.co.uk if you are interested in being part of this legacy project, or know of a suitable location.

Emily's story can be read here – <https://www.ladygardenfoundation.com/patientchampions/blog-emilyu-plane-2m9c2>

Penny and some of Emily's close friends will be part of a group of charity volunteers at the Lady Garden Foundation's show garden located on Main Avenue at MA323 at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show between 19-23 May 2026.

Do you recognise this farmhouse?

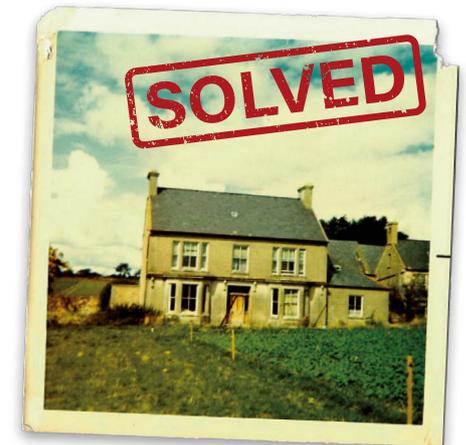
Here is another photograph, taken using a very basic camera by Tommy A'Court during his time at Maillards, of an extensive farm property which was sold in 1973, with five surrounding fields measuring 29 vergées, 25 perches and nine pieds, for the sum of £62,500.

Once the sale was completed, the vendor's family delivered six cooked lobsters to Maillard's office. Anyone having information regarding this farmhouse please write to Alasdair Crosby at editorial@ruraljersey.co.uk.



Mystery Solved

For those readers whose curiosity was piqued by the farmhouse featured in the winter edition of Rural, it was Longfields, La Rue de Dielament, Trinity.



The wind it did blow.... again. And Storm Gorette has caused a lot of annoyance around the Island, to put it mildly

At La Croix organic farm and regeneration centre, in Trinity, it blew over a shed inhabited by a cow, Razzle, and her baby bull calf, Gabriel. Fortunately, they were not inside it.

‘The wind literally picked up the shed and turned it upside down,’ said Nikki de Gruchy, the farm’s owner. ‘Luckily a big sycamore at the back stopped it, otherwise it would have ended up in the next hedge. It’s not a light construction, and there was quite some force of wind to cause it to do that. It’s on slides, because the whole idea is that you can move it around.’

But the storm moved it around without bothering to use slides. Fortunately, a team of volunteers and helpers, with the aid of a tractor, were able to restore the shed to its normal upright position.

The mother and baby animals were moved to a shed on the farm, and were safe and well.

The shed was a reclaimed structure, taken apart and set up again at its new location on the farm, and the work was not even finished when the storm came.

Razzle and Gabriel are the only cattle in Jersey to follow ‘calf-sharing’ practices, where a farmer shares a cow’s milk with the calf instead of separating the calf from its mother in the hours after birth.

This is part of a broader sustainable ethos on the farm, which aims to develop organic farming in the Island while bringing people, some with no farming or countryside experience, to work on the site.

Nikki is a former Environmentalist of the Year finalist at the Pride of Jersey Awards.



Firm support for charity’s tunnel vision

Several local businesses have pledged funds towards rebuilding Grow Jersey’s £12,000 polytunnel, which was destroyed by Storm Gorette in January, just eight months after it was built.

The St Helier-based community smallholding, which recently became a registered charity, provides opportunities for school groups, charitable organisations and members of the public to access nature, engage in sustainable food growing and outdoor learning.

Sheena Brockie, the co-founder and designer of the Grow model, described the damage to the polytunnel as ‘devastating’ but added that the help and support from the Island’s community had been ‘incredible’ with over £1,900 raised through their Jersey Giving page.

‘Also, Ogier and Jersey Mutual have pledged £2,000 each and we received a donation from Altair for £500. We are in discussions with several other businesses who may help once we know the extent of the costs and the shortfall,’ she said.

Sheena explained that the polytunnel frame is covered by insurance but, unfortunately, the polythene cover is not included.

‘We are investigating whether we need to change the way the polytunnel was built or if we need to change to a different type. Our preference is to get it replaced in the same style, just better and stronger, as this will be the quickest way to get it back up and running, ready for the new growing season.’

Sheena added that the long-term plans for Grow include two polytunnels, a community building with a workshop, a small production kitchen and a community space, raised beds, a minibus parking area, a sensory garden, a wildlife pond, a forest school, bee hives and a composting area. A yurt, funded by the Howard Davis Farm Trust, is soon to be built.



End of an era for dairy farm

One of the oldest established family dairy farms in the Island, Blanc Pignon at La Haule, is closing down. It is ceasing dairying and ceasing the production of all its dairy and meat products.

The decision to do so has been taken after much painful deliberation, according to the two directors of the farming company, Alice Le Cras and her sister, Caroline Leng.

The herd will be dispersed over time. Decisions will be taken, with the help and advice of the RJA&HS, about which animals will become part of other herds in the Island, or which would be the best and most appropriate herds in the UK to which the animals could be sent.

‘We will manage everything to the best of our ability to give the cows the best possible chance,’ said Ms Le Cras.

She added: ‘At one time, Blanc Pignon Farm was one of the biggest herds in Jersey, now it is one of the smallest. We have only 51 milkers, plus youngstock.

‘We have remained small and become really a boutique operation, and we have had a real go at diversification. We love our farm, but I think what is really important to remember about dairy farming is that you need to have big, very up-to-date facilities, and need frequently to invest and re-invest. We have become too small and, as the industry continues to change, it is no longer suitable for us to continue dairying.’

The present beef animals will continue to be kept until their finishing term is complete.

Blanc Pignon Farm employs three workers on the dairying side, and a further three on the production of its dairy products that are found in retail outlets throughout the Island. These products will now cease production.



The Liberation International Music Festival

This annual celebration marks Jersey’s Liberation through music, heritage, and community engagement. Delivered by the charity Music in Action, the festival combines international artistic excellence with local participation, education, and outreach, raising funds to support music projects for children, young people, and older residents across the Island. Proceeds from the 2026 festival will directly support this work.

For further details see the website www.musicjersey.com



Sunday 7 June

IS ELECTION DAY

Be a Voter

You can be on the register to vote if you:

- Have lived in Jersey for the last 12 months* AND
- Are aged 16 or over

There are three ways you can vote:

- By post OR
- At pre-poll OR
- On Election Day

Take action today:

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You can vote for **3** different types of States Member

Senator

You can vote for up to nine candidates to represent the whole Island.

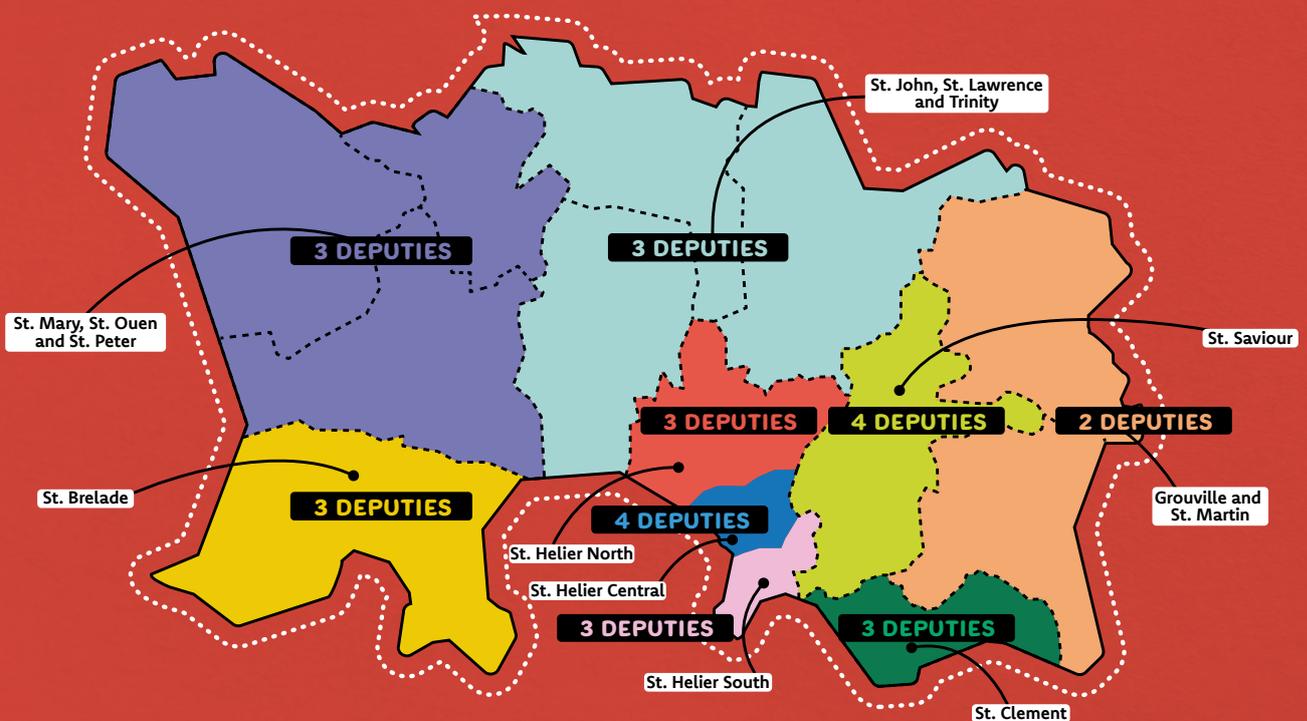
Connétable

You can vote for one candidate to represent your Parish.

Deputy

You can vote for between two and four candidates depending on your constituency – see the map below.

Constituency map for the role of Deputy



For everything you need to know about voting and standing for election, visit Vote.je

*Or have lived in Jersey for 6 months up to 7 June 2026 as well as periods that total 5 years.



anneville
FARM SHOP

FARM

Cultivating young minds

Jess McGovern talked to Alasdair Crosby about the ‘Cultivate’ education programmes she has initiated as ways of educating young people in rural skills and knowledge

Could Jersey be a centre for education in rural skills and knowledge? That question has been asked for years. Jersey has very fertile land for agriculture and horticulture, and there are growers and farmers possessing world-class skills with generations of knowledge behind them, many of whom are now retired. Would they not be excellent mentors for students interested in rural skills and who, with the right encouragement, might wish to help impart their store of knowledge?

Enter Jess McGovern. She is a Jersey girl, born and bred. Her family farmed at Cambrai, Trinity. Her grandfather, Michael Hickey, owned the Forget-me-not breeding line of Jersey cows.

‘I grew up with my sisters and I helped my father on the farm,’ she said. ‘Even though my father became a teacher, I have always felt very connected to the countryside, and this connection back to food and farming as an adult, has shaped how I see community, responsibility and society.’

Jess’s path, however, led first into education. She studied criminology and sociology and then qualified as a teacher at the Institute of Education in London, worked as a teacher in the UK, then returned to Jersey to teach at De La Salle College and JCG.

‘Education has always been a real passion of mine,’ Jess said. ‘There are seven of us in my family and five of us are qualified teachers. My own interest in education links back into sociology and how to improve human society.’

After seven years teaching, she took up a role at the RJA&HS as head of education and development, part-funded by the Howard Davis Farm Trust. And so, the ‘Cultivate’ programme was born.

She ran it for four years, until her contract came to an end. Farm Jersey has now taken on and relaunched Cultivate, and she has been running it for the past year.

‘This is something much bigger than my former role at the RJA&HS,’ Jess said. ‘When I worked there, I realised quite quickly that there were very limited pathways available for educating young people in agriculture and horticulture.’

“**It was a very successful collaboration, bringing together members of Jersey’s agricultural and horticultural sectors for 100 students**

Within six months of joining the RJA&HS, she put on her first big Cultivate event. It was a very successful collaboration, bringing together members of Jersey’s agricultural and horticultural sectors for 100 students aged between 14 and 15. An event that will be happening again this May in collaboration with the Rural Connections Programme, which is run by Jersey Heritage.

‘We had a whole day together with workshops and teaching. It was excellent, and the students were so engaged and interested. It was a real immersion into what life was like as a farmer or as a horticulturist, or environmentalist. There are so many more varieties of jobs that fall under those categories than they had understood.

‘On the whole, I think that young people don’t know what horticulture or agriculture mean. They often have caricatures of what a farmer is, something along “Farmer Giles” lines.

‘Becky Houzé was there, demonstrating that farmers could be female as well as male. There can be young farmers, farmers with degrees, farmers that are soil health experts. ‘The event opened their eyes to different career possibilities. But although their interest was obvious, I realised that there was no pathway for them to pursue that interest for a career. There was nothing in Jersey to enable them to do that. That focused my passion for education into countryside education.

‘At the end of the day’s programme, we asked: “Who would want to know more about agriculture?” 88 out of the 100 students said yes. To me, that was a clear message. They want to know more, so what can we do to help them? What can I do to create an apprenticeship scheme into which this enthusiasm can feed?’

Her contract with the RJA&HS ended in its fourth year, after she had compiled a report following a survey of the farming industry and sent it to government. Thanks to the work of the Department for Sustainable Economy (led by John Vautier), Cultivate was picked up as an ongoing workflow, funded by Farm Jersey through Hypha. So, Jess was able to resume Cultivate, supported by Taylor Smythe and India Hamilton. Jess is now working directly for Farm Jersey, headed up by John Garton, and this now sits within Jersey Business.

There are two parts to Cultivate. One is 'Cultivate Connection' which communicates the message of healthy, local food through different sectors, such as hospitality and health. An event at Highlands enabled Island chefs to meet farmers and discuss what they needed in their kitchens.

In Jess's words: 'It was a way of connecting the farming industry with sectors to which they are directly related but do not often meet. As a result, some chefs are now using certain farmers to supply them.'

Another event in collaboration with brain health physician, Juan Melendez, celebrated the role of food in health. Cultivate Connection also now includes a monthly meet-up at a different pub on the last Thursday of every month, open to everyone. Contact Jess for further details.

'The meet-up is really a special moment every month for people to gather. There is such a variety of people there, of different ages, different backgrounds, different priorities in terms of food. Some want to learn how to grow.

Some have a passion project – chillies, for example – and some want to grow their business. Others just love the community of it and enjoy proper pub chats, about everything from mushrooms to politics.

“ It was a way of connecting the farming industry with sectors to which they are directly related but do not often meet

'I think food does that. Cultivate Connection highlights that food touches every part of our lives. Farmers work in the countryside and produce food, but there isn't always much connection between them and everyone else. Cultivate Connection aims to develop that, and it's been a really beautiful journey.'

The second strand is Cultivate Skills, which focuses on developing skills, education, and tangible pathways for people to learn more about the land. An example is the Cultivate Horticultural Apprenticeship Scheme that was launched last September. It was inspired by the highly successful Trinity Manor Apprenticeship that Cultivate helped former Trinity Manor estate manager David Room to launch. This was an apprenticeship supported by Skills Jersey and the owners of Trinity Manor, Pam and Paul Bell. The qualified apprentice Wills Baker is now a qualified garden designer and horticulturist. Wills Baker and David Room are also Cultivate's horticultural apprentice tutors, with Mark Foley.

This current scheme has again been funded by the Howard Davis Farm Trust, long-time supporters of environmental and land-based initiatives, whom Jess described as 'very understanding and very supportive.' Many meetings were shared between Michael Frazier from CA Frazier group and tutor Mark Foley, before launching, to discuss the concept and the structure of the scheme.

Mark Foley teaching propagation skills to the Horticultural Apprentices and students





A group photo of the Cultivate horticultural apprentices from A1, Trees for Life, DG Studios, and LOMAH Farm, the Cultivate Horticultural Students and Cultivate Tutors including Mark Foley and former apprentice Wills Baker

‘I went out to certain employers and said: “Would you like to take on an apprentice?” and the first people I went out to said “yes” – some even said they wanted two!’

Apprentice employers include DG Studios, A1 Landscaping, LOMAH Farm and Jersey Trees for Life. Eleven people are currently enrolled on a Royal Horticultural Society course; some are apprentices others are just students who are doing the course out of personal interest. Jess hopes that the training enables the apprentices to work on larger estates and smallholder farms that require horticultural skills.

‘We have lots of plans to expand upon that offering, and offer different apprenticeships and short-term courses. It’s really about what people need. It’s about building relationships with farmers and employers, not saying, “This is what we can offer”, but asking, “What do you need? What skills do your staff need? How can we help?”

“ We’d love to partner with universities in the UK... that’s work in progress. Effectively, we are becoming the Island’s rural college

‘The Cultivate Apprenticeship Programme is about celebrating the local experts and learning from them.

The last such course was held at the Philip Mourant Centre 20 years ago; that was the last time the Island had something like this to offer. ‘It feels really special to be able to pass down expert knowledge from the Island’s passionate farmers and growers. It’s wisdom we have to respect, and it’s good to create a platform where that knowledge can be shared.’

Looking ahead, Jess hopes to develop short introductory courses for young people, or anyone, who wants to understand the breadth of farming life and gain a flavour of rural work.

‘We’d love to partner with universities in the UK... that’s work in progress. Effectively, we are becoming the Island’s rural college.’

Asked whether she felt optimistic about the continuance of rural life in Jersey, Jess replied: ‘I’m very positive. I have nothing but optimism. I’ve always said that.

‘It’s been so special to be part of the industry, and to be part of what feels like a renaissance, a growing optimism, a blossoming, a rise from the feeling of hopelessness – it’s full of hopefulness now.’

Jess.McGovern@jerseybusiness.je



Going to School is fun!

Well, going to Farm School is fun!
Alasdair Crosby met Grace Crake to
learn about her Sprouts Farm Club,
now in its 11th year

What should be the aim of school education? Not just teaching how to live, how to learn and how to reason, but also — especially in our modern world where a child's links to nature and the countryside can easily become attenuated or completely broken — to learn about where food comes from (ie not from the supermarket) and how it is grown and how to grow food for oneself; useful skills in a darkening and uncertain world.

All of that is what Sprouts Farm Club is about, the initiative of Grace Crake and her family at La Cornetterie Farm, St Martin, which is now in its 11th year.

Put simply, the club encourages children to learn, to play and to grow (both in maturity and in the literal sense of growing food).

In Grace's words: 'Schools are already making big changes to help children make healthier food choices, but we wanted to take this one step further, by showing children they can grow their own produce. Students can develop their understanding in farming, where their food comes from and also the value of growing.'

'Coming to a working farm to learn and grow can also be linked with so many core areas within the curriculum (not to mention being really fun as well!)

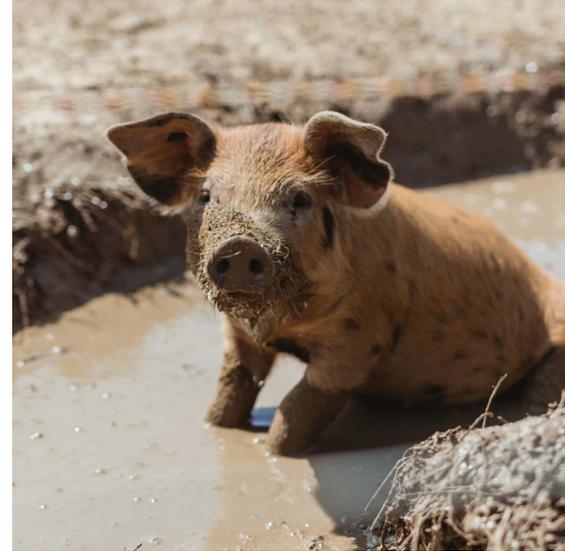
Wearing another hat, Grace does the marketing for the Market Traders' Association, of which her father, Bill Davies (of the 'Just William' fresh produce stall) is the chairman. The Davies family are deeply rooted in local food production and local farming; Sprouts Farm Club comprises courses for school pupils that take place on their own land in St Martin, as well as holiday clubs, Saturday clubs, and after-school activities.

'I like working on the land,' Grace said, 'it's in my genes. 'But it didn't make sense for me to go full pelt into an apprenticeship and I thought it made more sense to do something that I know I was really good at – teaching. Also, I had access to land and an open space that schools do not necessarily have... it all seemed to fall into place.'

“**Students can develop their understanding in farming, where their food comes from and also the value of growing**”

The club focuses on how to grow vegetables and how to look after farm animals (there is a big flock of chickens and several pig families). But there is also considerable open space for the children to enjoy: a picnic area, an old lavoir, a natural amphitheatre suitable for presentations, an area where they can hold their own market and sell their own fresh produce, and lots of opportunity to learn about the countryside: woods, fields and the little animals for which this part of the Island is their home.





There is plenty of flexibility to include different projects, or suitability of content for primary and secondary level students, or different focuses – environmental or horticultural.

‘What do I remember most from school?’ she asked, ‘It was when I was outside. Children don’t get enough of that: unstructured play, just being outside, getting their hands dirty and being inquisitive about the natural environment.’

‘Farm school is really educational, but without them realising it.’

The core aspects of the courses include growing produce – organically. At the start of a six-week course they can plant their vegetables, and by the end they can dig them up and take them home. They learn to grow 12 different types of produce from a selection, from planting to harvesting, and they learn the routine of looking after farm animals.

‘Maybe when the kids first arrive, they really don’t want to be on a farm; they think at first, it’s not really their thing. Then they find activities that interest them. It might not just be plants or animals, but designing egg boxes and marketing eggs, for example, or other aspects of agriculture, not just the hands-on stuff.’

And then there are the pigs: ‘The piglets are really friendly with the kids,’ Grace said. ‘I wanted to be a pig farmer when I was little, and I went to help our neighbour, Di Best, look after her two beautiful Gloucester Old Spots.’

“**Farm school is really educational, but without them realising it**”

The pig enclosures are rotated around the farm and the pigs turn over the ground – the best sort of field preparation you can get.

‘If I can get one kid to think differently about their food, or get mum to shop differently, I will feel I have achieved something,’ Grace said, ‘and if, as a result of this, they decide to buy local, so much the better.’

***For more information about Sprouts Farm Club, see the website: www.thefarmschoolinitiative.com/sprouts-farm-club**



Power to the (young) people



**Erin Cowham,
senior education
officer, National
Trust for Jersey,
describes how the
Trust is building on
a legacy of outdoor
learning**

A rare sense of wonder takes hold when you guide a child through their first exploration of the natural world. In that moment, the abstract concept of 'biodiversity' transforms into a vibrant green bush cricket or the delicate petal of a native wildflower. Since 2020, leading the Trust's outdoor education programme, I have been lucky enough to witness this transformation thousands of times over.

It all began with a simple but bold title 'We Have the Power' for our children's booklet that was the spark for our expanded Education Programme, designed to give the Island's youth simple tools to tackle climate change. As an environmental scientist, my mission was to build upon the Trust's well-established outdoor learning programme and evolve it to meet the urgent realities of biodiversity loss and our changing climate.

The response has been nothing short of extraordinary. To date, an incredible 14,000 children have joined us for school workshops and holiday events. Whether we are wading through rock pools or exploring the gentle buzz of our wild flower meadows, being part of their journey is and has been a genuine privilege.

Our schools' programme covers five vital pillars - biodiversity, seas, woodlands, pollinators, and climate change. By using the Trust's diverse natural sites and expertise, we offer immersive activities within the five themes that bring the curriculum to life. For many years, we have been proud to offer these workshops to every school in the island at no cost thanks to the wonderful support of Jersey Electricity. As this successful partnership reaches its natural conclusion and we look toward a new chapter, we are exploring fresh ways to continue to provide these vital educational sessions to schools.



“ To date, an incredible 14,000 children have joined us for school workshops and holiday events. Whether we are wading through rock pools or exploring the gentle buzz of our wild flower meadows...

This spirit of discovery extends far beyond the classroom. Our school holiday events have harnessed the energy of Jersey's families, creating a true force for good in the wild.

From 'shark-egg hunts' that have added hundreds of records to the Shark Trust's national database to 'Waste-Free Wednesdays' that turn potential landfill into art, these hands-on experiences continue to make a tangible impact. We've even seen small hands hauling away tonnes of invasive purple dew-plant to give our native flora room to thrive. In fact, our young conservationists are so passionate that they caught the eye of the national media, appearing on the BBC's Countryfile in 2022 to teach the UK a thing or two about protecting our environment.

On a personal note, returning to this role in 2024 after maternity leave has given me a fresh perspective.

Those solitary (and often sleepless) hours with a newborn provided an unexpected headspace for nostalgia and new ideas. I've discovered a wonderful crossover between my two worlds; my

professional life informs my parenting, and being a mother has given me a more intuitive connection with the families and care givers I work with.

As we look towards 2026 and approach our 90-year anniversary, the energy within the National Trust family is higher than ever. We are committed to ensuring that Jersey's natural heritage isn't just something children read about in books, but is felt under their boots and carried in their hearts.

The future of our Island's landscape is in young hands, and based on what I've seen out in our wild spaces, we have every reason to be hopeful. Keep an eye out for our 2026 calendar - there are plenty more adventures on the horizon.

Get Involved.

To learn more about the Trust's work and support us, visit The National Trust for Jersey's website at www.nationaltrust.je.

Inspiring thought for food

Head of education at Jersey Heritage, Tahnee Blakemore, explains how its Rural Connections programme links the history of farming to sustainable farming and how farming has influenced landscape, identity, culture and traditions of the Island



Jersey Heritage's head of education Tahnee Blakemore with an Early Years student at La Hougue Bie

Jersey has a unique history and it's our job as Jersey Heritage's education team to bring it to life for students of all ages to enjoy. There is a wide range of stories to draw on, different eras to delve into and, of course, our amazing heritage sites to visit.

These include Hamptonne Country Life Museum. As we enter spring, the historic site is also one of the main locations for another term of our Rural Connections programme that is aimed at primary school children.

Rural Connections (formerly known as Farming for the Future) was created in partnership with Le Tâcheron farm, with support from the Roy Overland Charitable Trust. The programme links the history of farming to sustainable farming and how farming has influenced the landscape, identity, culture and traditions of the Island. The three broad curriculum-linked topics that are covered are food and farming, the importance of healthy soils and biodiversity.

We have discovered that many students have spent a surprisingly limited amount of time in nature and know little about where their food comes from, or the processes involved in producing it. Rural Connections provides these young Islanders with a wonderful opportunity to get out into the countryside, be immersed in nature and to make meaningful connections while having fun.

“ We believe that sparking their interest in the different aspects of our heritage and culture at a young age means they are more likely to be invested in where they live as they grow up

As part of the programme, they enjoy hands-on activities, such as bug hunts, bird watching, plant identification, soil sampling, apple juice making (and tasting) and wool carding. They also visit Le Tâcheron, a sustainable heritage farm and rare breed centre, where they learn about the animals on the farm, their needs and produce, as well as how the farm plants, harvests and processes its crops. This visit involves memorable activities, such as being allowed to sit on tractors and meeting some of the animals. They also watch a flour milling demonstration and this year, we will make use of the new resident bakery, Lucie's Boulange, so the children can be shown the whole process, from preparing the soil to making bread, including a hands-on baking session.

All of these activities give the students an understanding of the role Jersey farmers played in the past but also have in the present, making them more aware and appreciative of the importance of the countryside and ecosystems within it.



Students looking at soil under a microscope during a Rural Connections session



A student sitting on a tractor during a Rural Connections visit to Le Tâcheron

This also promotes a sense of belonging and interest and we hope this will help to contribute to a vibrant rural heritage in the Island in the future.

The feedback from schools taking part in Rural Connections has been amazing and we plan to continue to build on the programme in the years to come. One of the ways we are enhancing it in 2026 is with the opening this summer of an exciting new exhibition at Hamptonne called Field to Fork that shares the story of food and farming in Jersey, which continues to unfold.

Students will be able to engage with the exhibition in a memorable and interactive way for lots more meaningful learning sessions in the future. We also have plans to connect with secondary school children by collaborating with the Cultivate programme for some events – watch this space.

The Rural Connections programme fits into the broad spectrum of work we carry out with schoolchildren in Jersey. We believe that sparking their interest in the different aspects of our heritage and culture at a young age means they are more likely to be invested in where they live as they grow up and become the next generation of adults charged with protecting it.

In addition to rural heritage, we teach about 35 different topics, ranging from Jersey’s Ice Age right through to the Occupation years and during an average academic year, we see over 10,000 students.

“**Students will be able to engage with the exhibition in a memorable and interactive way**”

Jersey schools can visit for free during term time and for the past three years we have engaged with every school in the Island.

Easy to spot in our bright yellow uniforms, we spend most of our days based at the Jersey Heritage sites – as well as Hamptonne, these sites include Mont Orgueil, Elizabeth Castle, La Hougue Bie, the Maritime Museum and Jersey Museum.

Adults can sometimes feel disconnected with the Island they call home, and we aim to inspire people of all ages about Jersey’s incredible history, which is all around us. You don’t have to travel far to experience it, whether you’re in town or out in the countryside.

Whatever age our audience is, all of our education work is about creating connections and positive experiences so that people understand and care for our special heritage in the future.



Jersey Heritage education officer Sarah Huelin with students at Hamptonne Country Life Museum

A green approach to better health

Stephen Sellers of 'Green Care' writes on exploiting the full potential value of the countryside for wellbeing and natural therapy

At one end of the scale the countryside is just somewhere to go for a breath of fresh air but at the other end, it is key to reaching a desired quality of life, with some admitting it has even saved their life.

Most would say that a walk in the countryside is agreeable but a deeper dive — a regular daily or weekly structured visit, ideally making connections with a rural activity such as animal care, growing, planting trees or wildflowers or bird watching — can significantly extend those benefits with outcomes delighting many first-time participants. This is collectively known as Green Care (GC).

In order to build awareness of the many diverse sites that have GC potential in the Island and to encourage more, a WhatsApp group called 'Green Care Jersey' was set up last Autumn.

The subject matter of group posts can vary widely around the GC theme with the central aim of improving:

- visibility of the different options and activities
- information available to GC site managers
- the beneficial outcomes for participants.

This WhatsApp initiative has been shown to work well in UK regions where site managers, participants and others have generously shared their knowledge and experience.

“**And what is Green Care? This is an umbrella term for nature-based health interventions and therapeutic approaches that use contact with nature**”

The Jersey group, curated by myself, has already attracted a nucleus of prominent GC site managers, therapists, charities, interested landowners and others including The Grow Project, Jersey Trees for Life, Bramble Farm, Finni's Ark, Birdsong Garden, Wild Days, Naturebase, National Trust and Jersey Mencap.

Membership of the group is open not only to other sites with GC potential but also to the general public, relevant government employees, charities and health professionals, in fact anybody who wants to stay in touch with the countryside route to wellbeing, whether for themselves, their family/clients/patients or purely out of academic interest.

Who am I? Well, I am a volunteer based in Hampshire, who has spent the last 15 years sustainably promoting the expansion of Green Care in the South of England, without grant dependence.



In the last three years, this has involved curating three successful regional WhatsApp groups of Green Care providers and encouraging further co-operation between providers and other interested parties by holding biennial regional conferences with international keynote speakers.

I lived and worked in Jersey for ten years, from 1975 to 1985 and I retain strong family and other social connections in the Island.

And what is Green Care? This is an umbrella term for nature-based health interventions and therapeutic approaches that use contact with nature — such as plants, animals, gardens, farms, or outdoor environments — to promote physical, mental, and social well-being.

You can join the ‘Green Care Jersey’ WhatsApp group at any time by texting me on 07596077261 or e-mail stephen@farmbuddies.org.uk with a first name and preferred mobile number.

There is no obligation or cost.



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“ The farming industry is on the up. It is in a very different place from where it was five years ago



Grounds for optimism in Jersey's farming future

The Minister for Sustainable Economic Development, Deputy Kirsten Morel, talked to Alasdair Crosby about the improvement in the state of Jersey's agricultural industry

The farming industry is on the up. It is in a very different place from where it was five years ago, when Deputy Kirsten Morel became an Assistant Minister. In fact, it is one of the successes of the last four years.

'We have changed the narrative,' he said. 'Agriculture is no longer facing an imminent demise, which was a real threat back in 2020/21. The main way we sorted that was through the Rural Support Scheme. That was very much designed to not only support existing farmers, but to create a route for new farmers to come into farming. Today, we sit with 100 farms of different sizes; when we took over there were only 40 farmers.'

'Ultimately, this success is down to the £8m a year of government support. I am fully on board with free enterprise, but in agriculture, Jersey's farmers are competing against farmers from European nations who are highly subsidised. It is still not a level playing field. Jersey farmers still receive a lot less in relative terms, but it's enough now to give them hope. Two or three years ago they didn't have any hope; now they really do.'

The Agricultural Loan Scheme is something that has also helped farming turn a corner, he said, because not only are they getting Rural Support payments that help with their revenue income, but the Scheme enables them to invest.

'If you are a farmer in Jersey, it's not easy to get lending. Therefore, the government does need to step in in this case and provide it. We shall be coming to the States this year before the elections, with some more legislation around the scheme just to make it more flexible. We need to get the legislation over the line to make sure that the scheme is there for the future.'

He knew of one farmer whose investment through this scheme has meant that one of his family members is now willing to take on the farm, whereas that was not case previously. And if another farmer hadn't been able to invest in a new milking parlour, he would have been looking at closing the farm.

“ Back then, government’s limited support reached just 36 businesses of which only six were smallholders. In 2025, we supported 166 businesses, including 46 smallholders



A lot of new farmers are small scale, however. ‘Most importantly, smallholders help us solve the big problem of succession in farming. For centuries, there were no problems with farming succession, because if you didn’t pass the farm on to a family member, there would be farm workers willing to take over your farm. Jersey land owners were always willing to sell to their workers. That’s how many people got into farming.

‘But four years ago, we had a real problem with succession because no one was coming into farming. Today, that corner’s been tuned, and whilst not all smallholders may stay in farming, by providing them with support they have the opportunity to try it and to see if it suits them and see if they can make a living from it. Those who do can carry on to become commercial farmers of the future.’

In any conversation about farming with the minister, the statistics keep on coming: ‘Five years ago the government was spending just over £1m per year on our agricultural sector and 16% of that was on the administration of the grant scheme. In 2025 we deployed more than £10m in support to this sector and despite having additional support mechanisms and more recipients than ever before, our administration costs this year were actually lower than they were in 2019.

‘Back then, government’s limited support reached just 36 businesses of which only six were smallholders.

In 2025, we supported 166 businesses, including 46 smallholders.

‘In 2019, productivity in the agricultural sector was £39,000 per full-time equivalent; today it’s closer to £60,000 – and nearly twice that of the UK.’

It has been a tough old time for farmers – everywhere. The Russian invasion of Ukraine hasn’t helped; Russia is the world’s largest wheat exporter and Ukraine the fifth largest. The conflict has had a seismic effect on global agriculture prices.

‘We saw the cost of animal feed rise by more than 40% in the first six months of 2022 at a time when Jersey’s own very hot summer weather meant our dairy industry needed 20% more feed than usual – this left more than half a million pounds in extra in-year costs to the Island’s dairy farmers.

‘Within my first hundred days as minister, we were able to find this money and get it out of the door via the Quality Milk Payment to help meet this urgent pressure.

‘Despite all the challenges of recent years Jersey’s agricultural sector has grown more productive and more resilient.’

Last year, he said, the agriculture sector grew by six percent, outperforming most other private sector industries. Potato growers have also benefitted; Albert Bartlett invested £3m in 2025, to market Jersey Royals, which was a significant vote of confidence in this sector.

But more importantly, it lay the groundwork for future sales and raised brand awareness for one of Jersey’s most famous exports.

Effectively, Jersey is in partnership with Albert Bartlett to market Jersey Royals in the UK. But Jersey also needs to move into other markets, hence Deputy Morel is really pleased that this is happening, with Doug Richardson’s export drive into Europe, and Ireland and even as far away as Dubai., just as Jersey Dairy is moving into new markets as well in the Far East.

But farming is about more than just growing or raising produce, of course. Farming is integral to Jersey’s history, its culture and its landscape, and as he said: ‘If we want our countryside to stay green and beautiful, we need to ensure agriculture remains viable.

‘I fundamentally believe that farming in Jersey can succeed without the level of subsidy but again, it’s important to realise that the subsidy just doesn’t put money in farmers’ pockets; the subsidy is there for services rendered. It’s essentially there for looking after the hedgerows; they get payment for improving the soil - payment for so-called “public goods” - the public good that farmers deliver to the Island as a whole. I think our countryside is Jersey’s biggest public good. The word subsidy is not necessarily the right term.’

There has been massive backing for support for farming that has been shared by all (mostly all) of his States Member colleagues. But there are elections on the way.

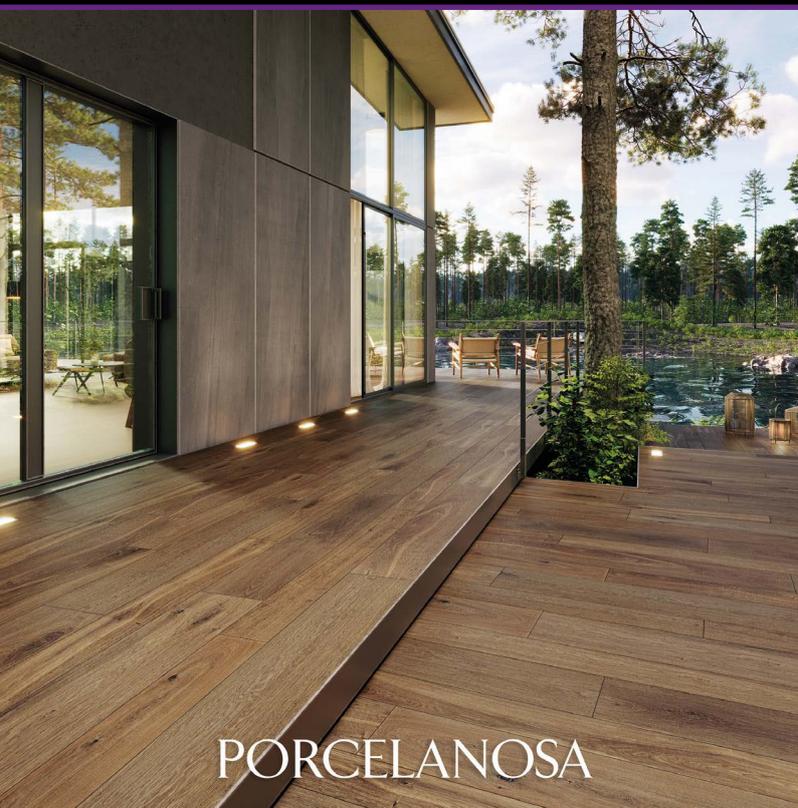
Who will be elected? Will the new Assembly feel the same level of support towards farming? Fingers crossed.

‘It has been a pleasure to watch our rural economy grow and to navigate the many headwinds which have come our way in recent years.

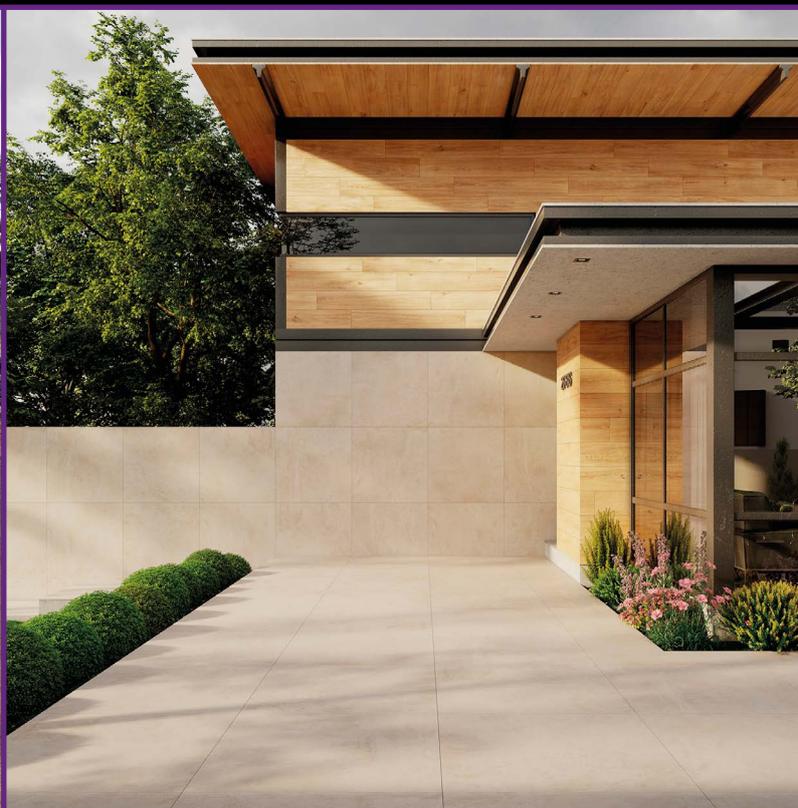
‘People need to understand that farming is in a better place. I’m really proud of what we have done in farming. The threat to farming has been whooshed away. Not so for the Island’s fishing industry. That is the work in hand now, to remove the equally grave threats to that.’



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Alasdair Crosby went to Le Tacheron Farm in Trinity and spoke to the farmer, John Le Maistre, and the baker, Lucie Gatignol-Duval

John Le Maistre, and his two cousins make up 'Le Tacheron' a Jèrriais word for 'the team' – a group of three workers, usually working together in the potato fields. The three family members are united by a belief not just in traditional farming, but in its applicability to farming in the 21st century.

They have been growing wheat since 2017, traditional varieties grown in Jersey in the 19th century and another heritage variety, Maris Widgeon. Other grains they are growing are einkorn and spelt – originally harvested in prehistory by the earliest farmers.

They own a stone mill imported from Austria and mill once or twice a week after the harvest, making a variety of flour types. If they had to name a mentor, it would probably be the eminent 19th century Jerseyman, Sir John Le Couteur, who undertook a sustained scientific study of wheat and produced several books on agriculture, among them *On the Varieties, Properties, and Classification of Wheat* (1836).

They are growing Le Couteur's grain – they had it released from a seed bank in the UK, the John Innes Centre. John said: 'We are trying to make all our growing methods replicate what was done at that time. We followed Le Couteur's books, planting on the same dates that he did.'

'No one has grown the old Jersey grain since the 1830s, so we thought that we'd be doing something pretty special. Le Couteur's work inspired us to try to combine sustainable agriculture with preserving Jersey's historic and traditional methods of farming.'

“ people are behind us, and they support us because they believe in the message. Farming is in our blood, part of our lifestyle, but we are working hard to make it a commercial success

So, not an everyday Jersey farming story. Why did they choose to farm in this way? John said: ‘Everyone queried what we were doing. When we planted wheat, the general consensus was that unless you were planting thousands of acres of wheat in East Anglia or America, you couldn’t make it work financially and it wasn’t worthwhile. They thought we were mad! But when people started to worry about securing local food production and what Jersey could produce – and when they realised that we were making Jersey flour – there was a complete reversal.

‘With us, this has been a hobby that’s grown into a farm. We started by using horses, but as we have expanded, we have had to become a bit more commercial. We’ve done it, because we love it — it’s just something we believe in.

‘People have eaten wheat for thousands of years, seemingly without issue. In recent times there has been a reported increased incidence of gluten intolerance and celiac disease. Heritage grains are inherently lower in gluten and thus may be more beneficial in that respect.

‘A lot of people are behind us, and they support us because they believe in the message. Farming is in our blood, part of our lifestyle, but we are working hard to make it a commercial success.’

In addition to processing on the farm, they provide wheat for threshing at the Samarès Manor Summer Fair and grain for milling at Le Quétivel Mill twice a year; the National Trust sells a small amount of flour made from their wheat in their shops. Their flour is also stocked at Scoop and The Pantry.

‘The nice thing is that people are really enjoying it, so they are not just buying our flour for the sake of it. It turns out that it’s good flour as well. We knew that we had really good heritage grain, and that milling it with a granite mill is very different from modern stainless-steel mills. It is the quality of the flour that counts – that’s not just a marketing slogan.’

He continued: ‘We decided that as we had this grain, we’d better do something with it. Grain isn’t worth very much, so we thought we would make flour to add a bit of value. So that’s when we bought the mill. It is not the fastest mill in the world, but it doesn’t heat up the grain, so you don’t lose a lot of nutrients as you do in a more modern milling process.’

In 2025 they harvested around 30 tonnes of grain, but the amount of flour milled depends on whether they are creating wholemeal or white flour. The bran – the wheat husks — get fed to their livestock so nothing is wasted.



To add further value, the obvious thing to do would be to create baking products. Unfortunately, neither John nor his cousins have any baking knowledge, so they felt it would be better to get a baker, someone who knew what they were doing when it comes to producing bakery products, and someone who shared their philosophy.

“ To add further value, the obvious thing to do would be to create baking products

At this point, enter Lucie Gatignol-Duval. As the name might suggest, she is French, and although her education and early career were in the sphere of art and museums, she loves baking. It was in her museum work that she met her husband, Hervé, an archaeologist, and after he secured a job with the Société Jersiaise, she moved to Jersey with him.





“ I have always loved bread, and in France I gained experience by working with bakers and farmers and seeing the production process from grain to flour. I also did an apprenticeship at a baking school and worked at a traditional artisanal bakery. My aim was always to start my own business

‘I had always baked for fun, as a hobby, but mostly cakes rather than bread,’ Lucie said. ‘I have always loved bread, and in France I gained experience by working with bakers and farmers and seeing the production process from grain to flour. I also did an apprenticeship at a baking school and worked at a traditional artisanal bakery. My aim was always to start my own business.’

Once in Jersey, she started work at Scoop, and the bakery expanded and moved to the Dough Rye Me bakery in St John’s Village. Lucie began to look around for a kitchen to rent. It was there that she was introduced by Taylor Smythe (organiser of the annual Regen Gathering at Le Tacheron Farm) to John and his cousins, who had space at the farm to instal a kitchen and were looking for a baker. For the past few months she has been working on the installation of the kitchen for her new business, Lucie’s Boulange.

‘I knew what sort of bakes I wanted to do and which type of equipment I would need. I intend focusing on traditional French bakery products, with really authentic recipes that enable me to use this type of flour from heritage varieties of wheat, and using exclusively local ingredients. I want to do sourdough bread, pastries, and what we call patisserie boulangère, with some recipes from the 19th Century.’

She added that if she were to make croissants, the flour that she would use would not make them as light or as fluffy as customers might expect; the flour from these heritage varieties is not ideal when used for that sort of item, but Lucie said she was determined to use only Jersey products to create pastries, and was close to creating a good recipe for it.

John explained that as the wheat is grown organically, without massive inputs, trying to get the protein levels in the grain to be consistent is very difficult, resulting in possible variations in taste between one baking batch and another.

And Lucie added: ‘But we have something new for Jersey. It is a case of educating people, for them to understand why the products we produce are different to and better for the health than what they might be using, as they contain low gluten levels, or none at all.



I know that the offer of NGCI (No Gluten Containing Ingredients) products in the Island is quite low, especially ones made only from artisan and local ingredients.'

“ I am working directly with local artisans and limiting myself to only using sustainable and organic ingredients, according to their seasonality

Le Tacheron Farm is just a bit tucked away in the depths of the countryside; roughly halfway between Victoria Village and the Zoo, on the Rue de Diélament. So, she has plans to open the bakery on a Saturday morning, serve coffee and make a shopping trip a bit more of a social occasion. She is also starting baking workshops: 'teaching everything from scratch, telling participants where they can find natural ingredients, how to make and shape the dough, prove and bake it. 'I give them a recipe and some dough, which they can take home and then bake in their own kitchen.

'I am working directly with local artisans and limiting myself to only using sustainable and organic ingredients, according to their seasonality.'

She sells to private customers, farm shops and small coffee shops. In John's words: 'We are part of a new approach, taking the best of the past to improve the future.'

Lucie's e-mail:
luciesboulange@gmail.com

Her Facebook page for all the latest news and the link to the WhatsApp business page, which details her catalogue of products:
www.facebook.com/luciesboulange/



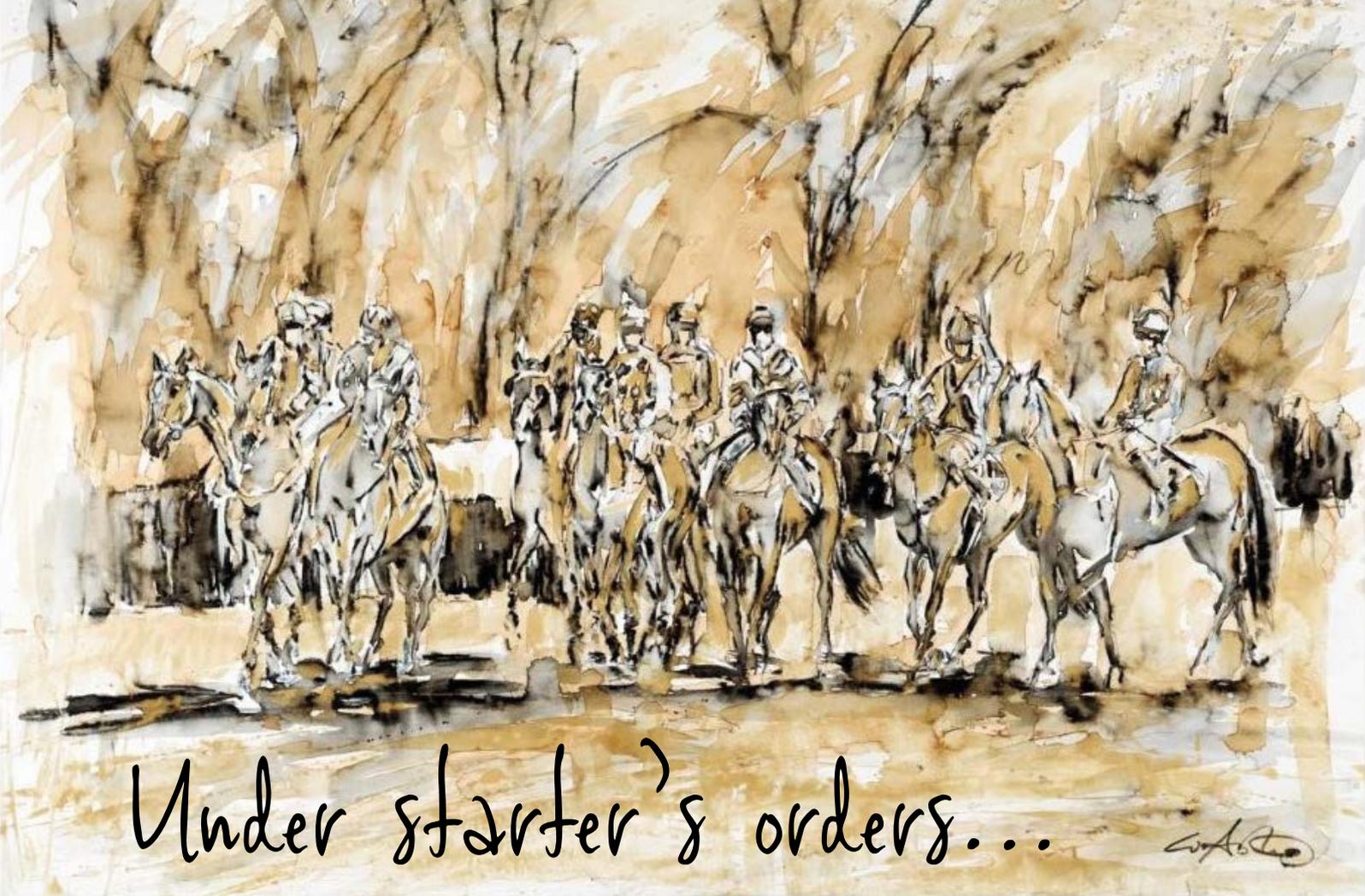
Time for Tea and Cake!

TEA TIME
1984
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www.thepoplarstearoom.com



...Well, almost, if not quite, at the time of publishing the Spring edition of RURAL. The opening race date is Sunday 26 April, and the season is previewed by racing enthusiast John Henwood. We are also delighted to include these pictures by the eminent equine artist, Elizabeth Armstrong, who has close connections to Jersey and will be present at some of the meetings this season. She introduces herself and her art to RURAL readers

My connection with Jersey goes back to the mid-1990s, when I encountered Godfray Amy, the thoroughbred horse owner and author, in an office in St Helier.

We connected as he had a horse named Daintree, in training with Hugh Collingridge in Newmarket. My interest was sparked and he encouraged me to create my horses in an art portfolio, thus becoming my mentor to this day.

Having graduated from Goldsmiths Art College in the early 1980s, I left the UK to live and work in Spain for the next seven years, and drew and sketched horses around me.

Once returned to England, I focused on becoming an established equine artist. With a great deal of encouragement from the late Sir Johnny Weatherby, I was invited by Ascot race course to show and demonstrate my art skills on certain race days.

The then manager, Matthew Foxton-Duffy, invited me to become the Artist in Residence at Royal Windsor race course, where I create art for the race course and show my art to the general public.

Also, the Jockey Club in 2015 commissioned me to create art for the new Princess Royal Stand at Cheltenham race course.





“ Once returned to England, I focused on becoming an established equine artist

As well as work being in private collections in England and abroad, I have shown art with the CCA Galleries International in Jersey in September 2025 in their ‘Equus’ exhibition.

For more information please contact Elizabeth Armstrong on 07976 800 002
Email: info@elizabetharmstrong.co.uk
www.elizabetharmstrong.co.uk

I’m very much looking forward to the start of the racing events at Les Landes race course this year, where I can sketch and take part in the fun days this Summer.



If you have diabetes, regular checks will prevent minor cuts or blisters developing into something serious.

Speak to your doctor or healthcare provider for a check up.

diabetesjersey.com



And they're off!



Racing enthusiast John Henwood is at the starting gate of the Jersey Race Club's 2026 season heralding some fixture changes that will be of benefit to all

Traditionally the opening race meeting of the season at Les Landes has been held on Easter Monday. Early Easters, accompanied by inclement weather and consequent unsafe conditions, have led to the fixture being abandoned in the past. This year, with Easter at the beginning of April, the Jersey Race Club is taking no chances and the first meeting will take place on Sunday 26 April.

This will be welcomed by trainers who will have an additional three weeks to get their charges ready. There is nothing like spring sunshine and some warmth to help racehorses shed their winter wooliness and put a shine on their coats.

This season will see some changes to the annual programme with three Friday evening mid-summer fixtures. These have proved popular with younger racegoers whom the race club is keen to encourage. One of the objectives in the club's three-year plan is to engage better with young people and instil an appreciation of how enjoyable an afternoon or evening at the races can be.

One of the initiatives is the introduction of a concessionary annual membership rate for 18 to 30-year-olds from £190 to £135. Nine days racing with full membership benefits for £15 a meeting should prove attractive.

There are also plans for a Family Fun Day at the end of May with attractions for children. Some years ago, the late Neville Ahier would arrange a funfair with rides and all manner of entertainment, but the encroachment of new regulations and the heavy hand of the health and safety executive made the event non-viable. Now it's hoped a new approach will revive the initiative and draw families with children of all ages.

“Now it's hoped a new approach will revive the initiative and draw families with children of all ages

Looking further ahead, among the club's ambitions is to hold a multi-day racing festival. The idea isn't entirely new. Older local racegoers will remember each season ending with a two-day fixture on the Saturday and Monday of the late August Bank Holiday. The problem was always the shortage of horses with not all Saturday's runners able to turn out again on the Monday. The longer-term plan is to generate enough interest to attract a level of sponsorship sufficient to draw international participation.

That is for the future. This year there are expected to be around 40 horses with local trainers, but horses from overseas will still be needed to ensure competitive racing. An innovation this year will be the introduction of a valuable race, perhaps worth as much as £10,000, on Champions' Day, the last meeting of the season. Instead of making the race open to a one-time raider from overseas, the race conditions will require non-local horses to have run twice previously at Les Landes earlier in the season. The move should provide an incentive to raiders from the UK and elsewhere.

2026 Les Landes
race dates:

Sunday 26 April – The Season Opener
 Sunday 10 May – The Liberation Meeting
 Saturday 30 May – Family Day
 Friday 12 June - Jersey St Leger (evening)
 Friday 26 June – Champion Hurdle
 Friday 10 July – The July Meeting
 Sunday 26 July – Jersey Derby
 Sunday 16 August – Ladies' Day
 Sunday 30 August – Champions' Day

Creature comfort for those in need



Profiling the charity, Therapy Dogs Nationwide, which offers, through visiting dogs, emotional support to people in difficult or stressful periods of their lives. Alasdair Crosby met the area coordinator for Jersey, Ro Cox

It has been called ‘a glimpse of normality’ for people who might be old, lonely, in hospital or hospice. But also for children, who perhaps have been previously startled or nipped by a dog, and need reassurance through meeting a calm and friendly one.

There are many people in all walks of life or in all circumstances who find emotional support through the charity, Therapy Dogs Nationwide.

Valerie Johnson first started Therapy Dogs in Jersey, but moved the volunteers across to Therapy Dogs Nationwide a few years ago. It is now coordinated by Ro Cox. The number of volunteers is constantly growing.

‘I have been doing therapy dog work for over 30 years,’ Ro said, ‘since I first came to the Island with my Irish setter. I was a teacher for a long time, until I had to give that up because of poor health.

‘We now have over 40 volunteers, and we work in a wide variety of areas across the community, everything from the Hospital’s Intensive Care Unit, on the wards, and even behind the scenes with some of the staff. We visit a number of care and residential homes, along with primary and secondary schools; Highlands College and Mont-à-l’Abbé School. We also visit the prison — it means so much to the inmates, and for them, it really is a glimpse of normality.’

Then there is the Women’s Refuge, Acorn, Pain Support Jersey, Dementia Jersey, Eye Can, Samaritans, and a wide variety of other places. They are also invited into corporate offices and do talks with groups across Jersey.

‘We also go into both the Island’s public libraries. Parents know about this and bring in their children, just so they can meet a calm and friendly dog. So, the increased footfall in the libraries has increased accordingly, which is brilliant!

‘One of the dogs snores, and the children ask: “Is the snoring dog coming in today?”’

The TDN team also do evening visits at examination times to help relieve students’ stress.

Ro said that all the volunteers’ dogs go through a rigorous temperament assessment to see if they are suitable — not all dogs like to be petted by strangers, and dogs must remain calm.

‘Our dogs are not assistance dogs, like guide dogs and drug detection dogs, but they are more than just a family pet. Once a dog has passed its assessment, it is allocated to one of our visiting locations. We are insured and we wear a uniform with our logo on it, so we can be identified as Therapy Dogs Nationwide, and similarly our dogs wear TDN bandanas, coats and TDN branded leads and collars .

‘If people see us going into the Hospital, for example, with a dog, they might think “Oh, well if these people can take a dog inside, so can we.” But that is not the case. We are only there because we have express permission and follow specific protocols.’

Asked what sort of dogs are suitable, she replied: ‘Any breed or type of dog — big dogs, small dogs, fluffy ones, crossbreed and pedigree dogs.

It doesn’t matter what sort, so long as they have a suitable temperament. People are often drawn to a specific dog due to a memory of a dog they had when they were younger, so it’s good to be able to offer a variety.

Does TDN take dogs that are fed raw food? ‘We do, but we are just very careful where they go. It is only at the Hospital that we do not take raw-fed dogs to visit.’

New volunteers and their dogs are always welcome, and the volunteers are supported for their first few visits.

It can be quite sobering, she said, bringing dogs to see hospital or hospice patients, so matching volunteers to the right establishment is very important.

‘Our wonderful therapy dogs are doing amazing work across the Island. I met one person who asked me: “Did you used to go to Overdale?” I said “yes, but over 20 years ago”, and she continued: “You used to visit my husband with a dog when he was a patient there.

“It was the only time that he ever smiled.”

If you are interested in Therapy Dogs Nationwide and would like more information please contact Ro Cox: jersey@tdn.org.uk



Your support
helps us care
for animals

The JSPCA has faced several challenges over recent years and is asking Islanders for their support to turn a corner. Kieranne Grimshaw met Pam Aubert, the CEO of the JSPCA, to discover how we can make a difference

With a population of over 100,000 and increasing pet ownership, it may be a surprise to learn that membership of the JSPCA has been in decline. Pam Aubert, the charity's chief executive officer, explained that each year they have raised just enough to get by but cannot survive on luck alone.

With ever increasing costs of living and demands on their services, the charity needs constant financial support. Membership can enable people to make a difference and engage them in the charity's regeneration plan for a more sustainable future. They can donate as little as £2 per month. 'That's the cost of vaccinating one ferret,' said Pam. 'It's about joining a community of like-minded animal lovers.'

Members' contributions also help ensure that the Shelter's team can operate. 'Last year we had over 17,000 phone calls to the landline and over 12,000 people came through our reception. Our biggest asset is our people.'

Just £10 a month - the price of a couple of gym classes - will vaccinate two rabbits. In the height of summer, the JSPCA regularly cares for injured or displaced baby rabbits.

An animal lover named Sarah explained: 'I adopted two rabbits from the JSPCA which were actually born at the Shelter, and they've brought so much love and happiness, not just into my life, but into our family's lives ever since. Supporting the JSPCA through membership feels like a meaningful way to give back and help other animals experience the same care and chance at finding their forever home.'

“ As a very weak young cat with severe health issues, Milo arrived at the Shelter where he needed to be tube fed and given weeks of medical care. Thanks to the veterinary team's expertise and dedication, he made an astonishing recovery and has been re-homed

“ Supporting the JSPCA through membership feels like a meaningful way to give back and help other animals experience the same care and chance at finding their forever home

Veterinary costs are a considerable part of the charity’s expenses. Some circumstances can be quite critical, as in Milo’s case.

As a very weak young cat with severe health issues, Milo arrived at the Shelter where he needed to be tube fed and given weeks of medical care. Thanks to the veterinary team’s expertise and dedication, he made an astonishing recovery and has been re-homed.

‘It’s all about giving animals a second chance,’ Pam said.

Volunteers, supporters and members all contribute to such cases. With Milo’s treatment costing over £1,500, just two lifetime one-off memberships of £750 would have helped significantly in his success story.

As well as domestic pets, the JSPCA provides veterinary care and rehabilitation to wildlife, such as baby birds, including birds of prey, squirrels and rodents. Their onsite space needs updating and members’ contributions will make a vital difference to help regenerate the animal facilities.

It’s not only animals who benefit. The great outdoors is good for our wellbeing. By caring for our habitat and supporting the JSPCA, experiences such as listening to the dawn chorus or catching sight of a squirrel can be sustainable.

As the famous anthropologist and primatologist, Dr Jane Goodall, said: ‘We’re not, after all, separate from the animal kingdom. We’re part of it.’

Contact: www.jspca.org



All dogs are sniffer dogs

As dog owners, we all know that our dogs spend a large portion of their day sniffing, but have you ever wondered why? In this article, clinical animal behaviourist Becka Whitehead, from Companion Conundrums Ltd, outlines the anatomy of the dog's nose and explains the function and importance of sniffing for our dogs



When a dog breathes in, scent particles in the air move towards their nose.

Tiny bony scroll-like structures called turbinates control filtration and air flow into the respiratory tract while warming the air; the turbinates are covered by epithelial tissue which contains scent receptors and mucous to trap scent particles. The receptors send signals to the brain which converts the signals to scent and assists the dog in detecting odours.

Dogs do not only rely on scent, they also have an organ in the hard palate of their mouth called the vomeronasal gland, or Jacobson's organ, which allows them to detect invisible chemical substances called pheromones; it is thought that this sense is somewhere between taste and smell. Additionally, dogs have a vertical indented groove called the philtrum, located between their nostrils that runs down to their upper lip; when a dog licks their nose, they collect particles which have become trapped in saliva at the site of the philtrum and deliver them to the vomeronasal gland. Dogs that are nervous may lick their noses more frequently to gain more information about their surroundings.

Pheromones provide dogs with information and aid communication, they assist with social bonding, identification, signalling, regulation of emotional state and reproduction. Pheromones are produced by various glands located in the skin, face, ears, mammary glands, feet, genitals, and anus; although sometimes embarrassing, this explains why dogs often show interest in these sites when meeting someone new. Pheromones are species specific, for this reason, dogs may become confused or frustrated when they are unable to obtain this chemical information from people, which may lead them to display undesired behaviours.

“ Sniffing also helps a dog learn about their environment, which is vital for a puppy's development

Nervous dogs may freely allow other dogs to collect this information by rolling onto their back and exposing the mammary glands or by urinating. Conversely, dogs that are fearful may attempt to protect this information by displaying reactive behaviour to achieve space or covering their anal glands by tucking their tail closely over the anus. When a dog eliminates, pheromones are deposited in the urine or faeces, which provide useful information such as health and sexual status as well as emotional state.

Pheromones are long lasting, so a dog does not need to be physically present for the exchange of this information to occur. When a dog is collecting the scent of pheromones, they typically go still, raise their head, the lower jaw drops and the upper lip curls, they inhale deeply and the teeth may be exposed, they may also chatter their teeth or salivate; this behaviour is called the phlemon response and often causes the dog to look disgusted or perplexed.

Research has suggested that when dogs sniff, the brain releases endorphins such as dopamine which are associated with reward, pleasure, and improved mood. Sniffing can also assist with emotional regulation by triggering the parasympathetic nervous system to reduce heart rate and blood pressure, in turn, reducing stress and supporting a calmer state of mind. Sniffing also helps a dog learn about their environment, which is vital for a puppy's development and is a great source of mental stimulation, particularly for our older dogs who may have reduced physical activity or may suffer from anxiety-related behaviours due to poor health.

So, next time you are out walking with your dog, remember to pause and allow them to take that opportunity to sniff.

A poet's view of Island life

In each issue of **RURAL** we aim to publish poetry written by Islanders, past and present, that celebrates our home. For the Spring 2026 issue, we have a poem by the late Aidan Smith

Aidan Smith OBE was born in Jersey in 1933 and educated at Vauxhall Boys' School, St Helier, and at De La Salle College (Les Vauxbelets), Guernsey.

He trained as a teacher at Redland College, Bristol, and spent 40 years in education in France, Jersey, the Seychelles, and Belgium, where he was deputy head of the European School in Brussels.

Aidan was talented in many ways. In his retirement, he was instrumental in the campaign to produce the sculptures of Jersey cattle that now stand in West's Centre in town. His book, 'The Glass Rainbow, celebrated the life of the Jersey artist Thomas Bosdet whose finely executed coloured glass windows adorn many of the Island's churches. He was also president of the association, Les Amitiés Franc-Britanniques.

He was also a fine poet. Many of his poems celebrate the Island's nature and countryside, and a way of farming that was disappearing during his own lifetime.

His collected poems have been gathered together by his son, Helier, and can be read on aidansmith.je

We look forward to hearing from Jersey poets who would like to contribute one of their works for a future edition of **RURAL**.

Jerseys

At the end of their long chains

The cows lie chewing.

Surrounded by pale circles

Of closely cropped grass,

They slowly regurgitate

The morning's grazing.

Soft eyelids blink drowsily

Over wet round eyes,

Gazing into grassy voids

Or calling up warm

Visions of stone milking sheds

Bedded with clean straw.

Fields I Know

I come again to fields I know

And laugh and cry that every tree

And gate seems so familiar.

The turnings in the country lanes

Hold no surprise, no hidden threat,

And tides, twice daily, flow and ebb,

And sunshine follows after rain

With rhythms, smells and sequences

From ages set. All this I love!





Sophie Harris and Hayley Gibaut

Putting the community in the picture

Sophie Harris' and Hayley Gibaut's studio workshop, 'The Stoodio', allows art to be created by the public – whether they have any artistic experience or none. They talked to Alasdair Crosby

What is the function of art? That is, perhaps, quite an intellectual question.

But bringing art to the community, rather than bringing the community to art, and to help people who never thought of themselves as artistic, actually to discover art, is a concept that drives Sophie Harris and her studio partner, Hayley Gibaut. Together, they run 'The Stoodio' from a small space at Cyril Le Marquand Court (where the old Ann Street Brewery used to be).

'Art doesn't have to be a luxury,' Sophie said. 'Art is a primal instinct to make anything.'

Every single art form, be it art or music, or sounds or smells, or whatever, the creation of art transmutes natural forms so that they can be shared and experienced by other people.'

Hayley agreed: 'Art is a tool for well-being and communication; it really does transcend all barriers, in terms of language or culture.'

“ We look at it as an umbrella — as a hub for all types of creativity, all types of people, no matter your experience or your background

'The function of art, actually, is to open the eyes. Art is crucial: without it we wouldn't have architecture, or interior design, or the clothes that we wear, or i-phones. It all stems from art.'

The two of them have opened up their studio in the new development at the far end of Phillips Street. In front of their studio is the recently created paved area; Charles Street car park is very nearby, the Jersey Arts Centre is a moment's walk away from them. In other words – a place where there is considerable footfall of passers-by.

'We wanted to make an artistic cultural hub for people, be they beginners, complete novices, experienced painters; for professionals, emerging artists and people who have never touched art, or are terrified of art, because they have never done it before,' Sophie said. 'We want to be a bridge for all to come to art and to be a hub for creativity, in the heart of town.'

'We look at it as an umbrella — as a hub for all types of creativity, all types of people, no matter your experience or your background.'

OK: but what do you do, exactly?

'We are quite experimental, our personal artistic practices include biro drawing, photography, oil pastel, paint media and ceramics, and these are the areas from which we draw continuous inspiration for our workshops. These currently focus on printmaking, mixed media collage, sculptural collage, mark making, paint and air-dry clay.

'We just want to encourage people to create; they might have not thought that they would or could create, but people say "it's like being a child again".'

'We are in such a good footfall area, next to Charles Street car park, people can book on our website for an event, be it one-to-one tuition, a party, or some sort of event, such as a hen party ... there are so many different areas. Every Wednesday we do a "Sketch Social", for which we have now got our regulars.

'It's been a really beautiful thing to see, people thriving in an artistic space. We are sourcing all the information that we need to provide further workshops.'

They are being supported by ArtHouse Jersey and Andium (who provides the location for them). 'Connect Me' provided a grant to support the means of initial materials and the project. Then they make a charge for hosting private lessons or functions.

“We wouldn't have been able to do it without it. Beautiful to see how many people find the need of a place like this

Hayley continued: 'We were looking for a studio space, where we could both do workshops. We saw that ArtHouse Jersey and Andium had joined together to invite proposals from potential users of this space who would be interested in collaborating with the community, provide access to art, and to re-energise aspects of Jersey.



Sophie and I knew that we had always wanted a space in Jersey where we could have a sense of belonging. So, we both jumped on that and applied.

'We told them how we would envision this space and what we hoped to add and contribute to the community, and about both of our artistic experiences and passions. How we were keen on reinvigorating a space for the community and providing a sense of vibrancy for Jersey.

'Our application was accepted, and we are on a one-year lease, which we really hope will be extended.'

Both Hayley and Sophie have always loved art and first met as school friends in the same class. They grew up in artistic households, and studied art at college.

'I think we always knew we wanted to do art together,' Hayley said, 'and we realised that we both self-expressed through art.'

Sophie added: 'We have had so much support. We wouldn't have been able to do it without it. Beautiful to see how many people find the need of a place like this. They really believe in what we are doing. Being able to find these like-minded people and to have that rapport is crucial to us.

'We need to shout about ourselves. This is so beneficial for Jersey, and for the well-being of Islanders.'



Recent books by authors from Jersey, or written about Jersey, in which the authors introduce their works to RURAL readers

One of the few

By David Sharp, Jersey forms the backdrop to a cold case for his neurodivergent police protagonist, DI Lancaster.

David Sharp is a retired gardener turned author, who comes from Dorset. He says: 'During a visit to Imperial War Museum Duxford, I learnt tales of the photo-recon Spitfire pilots. Information enhanced by the fact that my wife's father was a pilot who flew Spitfire's in the very same missions. Delving into these exploits, I needed to somehow fit them into a modern story.

The historical events that occur during the telling of *One of the Few* are based on fact: the D-Day Landings and advance on Brest, the resistance that operated within Brittany, the discovery of a shipment of weapons in the 1980s, caught heading for the IRA, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the flood of East Germans heading into the West.

All these events give historical depth to the suspect characters stories, and give DI Lancaster plenty to unpick to find which is wheat and which is chaff.

His uniquely autistic way of looking at things, his way of working through detail making never-ending lists, makes him the ideal candidate for investigating complex cold cases.

'One of the Few', follows DI Lancaster and DS Vidêt as they uncover more than they bargained for while secretly investigating a decades old suspicious death.

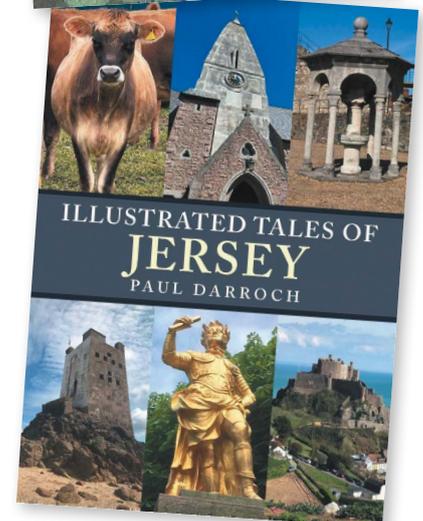
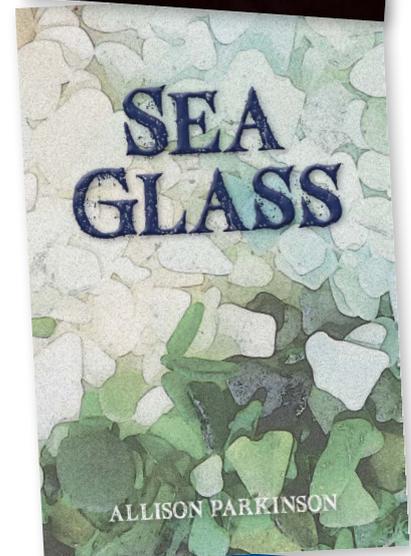
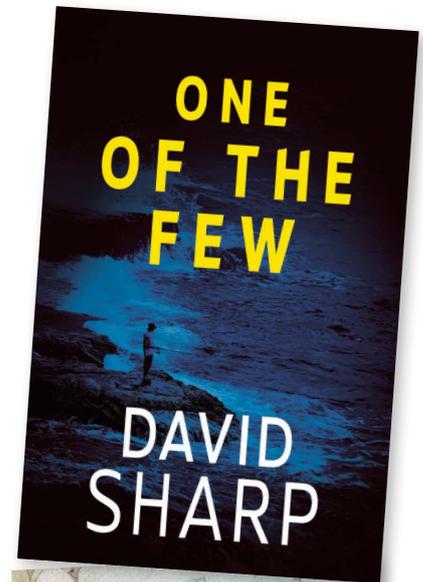
Classified as 'accidental', the circumstances surrounding the death of a well-loved and respected World War II Spitfire pilot, living in Jersey since the close of the war, have remained hidden, until now. But, as with all myths and legends, the team must root out the answers from the ever-growing smorgasbord of lies and half-truths.

With his daughter, Lady Pamela Stottard, adamant that her father died in suspicious circumstances, can these two detectives investigate without ruffling any feathers? Can they pick apart the facts and route out the clues to prove his death was not an accident, when said facts and clues have lain buried for 20 years?

When their enquiries trigger a visit from British Counter Terrorism operatives, the case becomes even more complicated, and they are left wondering how an IRA terrorist, a French boatyard owner, and an ex-East German STASI officer fit into their case.

Sharp portrays the complexities of neuro-divergence through protagonist DI Lancaster, whose different way of thinking is a valuable asset to the case, and whose methodical research pays off in the end. Set in Jersey, the novel demonstrates that murder can indeed occur in the most picturesque of places, committed by those least likely.

This book will be enjoyed by fans of crime fiction and readers of Sharp's debut novel, published in 2024, 'For All Your Endeavours'.



Sea Glass

By Allison Parkinson, who describes it as
'a love letter to Jersey'

The author says: 'I have so many happy memories of growing up in Jersey - spending hours exploring rock pools, beachcombing for sea glass, pebbles and shells; crafting castles, boats and creatures from the sand, splashing in the waves without a care in the world, counting coloured fairy lights during evening walks along the seafront and standing at the quayside waving to holidaymakers as the mailboat docked in the harbour. It was an idyllic childhood, centred around the sea.'

Imagine yourself on the beach at the water's edge. You spot a small piece of sea glass, half buried in the sand. You reach down and trace your fingers along its frosted surface. Suddenly, something extraordinary happens - something magical! This is the premise for *Sea Glass*, the latest book written and illustrated by Jersey-born author Allison Parkinson.

'Sea Glass has been in my heart for many years,' says Allison, who now lives in south London with her husband and family.

'I wanted it to be many things - a message of hope an encouragement, a collection of magical short stories and a book for all generations. But, most of all, I wanted it to be a love letter to Jersey. I wanted to tell people about the breathtaking beauty of the Island and encourage them to see it for themselves.

Suitable for children, teenage and adult readers, the book consists of three richly illustrated short stories, which can be read in any order. Each tale begins with a chance discovery of a piece of sea glass. As the glass is rubbed a magical story unfolds.

'Blue, green or white sea glass, I'd love people to choose the colour they are most drawn to and read that story first.

I hope the messages within the book will resonate with them, whatever their age, and I hope people will want to return to the stories time and time again.

Jersey really is a beautiful, magical place - and *Sea Glass* is my small way of telling the Island just how much it means to me.'

Sea Glass is available in hardback, paperback and e-book formats via Allison's website: www.tigerseyebooks.co.uk Paperback copies, costing £7.99, are also on sale in a variety of shops locally, including The Harbour Gallery in Saint Helier, Creative Cottage in St Peter and Jersey Artisans in St Aubin.

Illustrated Tales of Jersey

By Paul Darroch

Jersey's landscape and history are steeped in its folklore and legends, and in this book I explore a multitude of mysterious myths and strange tales from centuries past.

Jersey might be a mere nine miles by five, doubling in size with its lowest tide, yet it is rich in ancient tales, handed down through the generations in its native tongue of Jèrriais. The terrifying power of the sea, as a force of mutability and destruction, lies behind so many of Jersey's ancient myths.

The churning seas brought successive waves of terror: raiding parties, smugglers, ferocious storms, and the fear of the rising tide. Many of the ancient legends recounted in this book - of the Bull of St Clement, the Cris des Tombelènes and the Black Dog of Bouley Bay - give voice to these ancient, lingering fears.

In the wake of the fall of the Roman Empire, the world seemed chaotic and frightening. The land and sea were teeming with mystery. Stories were one way to bring sense to a terrifying world.

Thousands of miles of clear cold ocean lie between St Ouen's Bay and the nearest westerly shore. In ancient times, Jersey seemed to be poised on the edge of eternity, an Island shrouded in fog, peppered with mysterious dolmens. The Island stands at a threshold, where sky, sea and earth fuse into one.

The book reveals the legends of the dragon that once tormented Jersey, the giant storm hound that preyed on Bouley Bay, and the long-lost bridge across the water to France.

The tales span the Island, from Geoffrey's Leap in St Martin to the manor of La Brecquette in St Ouen, which was swept away by the waves and became Jersey's very own Atlantis.

The author tells of the martyrdom of Saint Helier and the day that de Carteret's horse made its impossible leap across the void.

True tales from Victorian times include the heartbreaking tragedy of the SS Stella, and the curious reign of Philippe Pinel, the Hermit King of the Ecréhous. These strange and remarkable stories are accompanied by almost a hundred of my own photographs of places featured, making, I hope, for an engaging and entertaining read.

Illustrated Tales of Jersey is available on Amazon UK and in Jersey bookstores, including the Harbour Gallery, Société Jersiaise and Jersey Museum.

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In recent years there has been a thirst for creativity and beauty and an appetite for all things green. Be this a general gravitation towards more time spent in nature, choosing varying hues for home décor and art and growing plants for pleasure and health. Juanita Shield-Laiguel explores



Rolling acres may not be beyond the imagination of many, however, reality is likely to be rather more circumspect for most; one may even be in a season of property, and therefore horticultural dearth. But that shouldn't preclude us from making the most of the space we do have available, no matter how modest.

Historically the ubiquitous town gardens were an opportunity for growing and sharing produce, and with companion and underplanting, displaying a riot of colour. Hanging over the garden wall, chewing the cud, enjoying a cup of tea – that was the norm.

Our modern urban gardens have largely morphed into a conglomeration of astro turf, decks, paving and garden furniture. However, the tide is changing and raised beds, pots and even vertical walls are bringing back living (not fake) green.

We are often reminded how important our small spaces are for providing pollinator corridors and as such, roofs, balconies, and the tiniest of yards are all playing their part, but just how ambitious can we be?

“ But that shouldn't preclude us from making the most of the space we do have available, no matter how modest

There is a rising trend of such things as permaculture, food forests and tiny house living. Ideas consigned previously to ‘alternative lifestyle’ interests, such as self-sufficiency, sustainability, food security and small-space living, are now muscling their way into mainstream language.

Permaculture sounds very grand and can require lots of space but at its core it is about soil; glorious, rich, earthy smelling, dark brown, beautiful soil.

We are learning so much about how nature affects our mood and general wellbeing and science is even discovering how our microbiome (the collection of all microbes, such as bacteria, fungi, viruses, and their genes, that naturally live on our bodies and inside us) is linked to our environment including soil health, indirectly via the plants we eat and directly by getting literally stuck in with our bare hands. Healthy soil, healthy us.

Beyond that, permaculture focuses on observing natural patterns to create self-sustaining systems encouraging minimal waste and reducing pollution and is based on the ethics of ‘Earth Care, People Care, and Fair Share’ – the idea of sharing surplus – just like our great-grandparents did back in the day.

These principles can be applied to the smallest of spaces; it’s amazing how many cucumbers can be grown in a terracotta pot filled with the lushest loam. And those wanting to condition and enrich their soil without the space traditional composting bins occupy, will find a wormery to be a worthy substitute.



The basic premise of a food forest is multi-layered edible planting, mimicking nature with trees, shrubs, herbs and groundcover and yes this can be emulated in pots and small raised beds with thrillers, fillers and spillers. The historic three sisters planting of Native American fame demonstrates this beautifully. Tall corn is scaled by nitrogen fixing climbing beans and squash provides ground cover for weed suppression. So, one tiny patch can produce a lot of home-grown food at the same time providing much needed habitat.

Tiny house living, a minimalist lifestyle designed to reduce costs and environmental impact can also provide ideas for the modern urban home and garden. Making the most of every inch, plants are nestled into nooks on stairs, found entwining banisters and cascading from over-head beams.

Creating vignettes offers moments of welcomed beauty. Inside, a few potted plants, displayed with a small pile of books and a much-loved ornament creates beauty and interest and outside, groups of different sized and textured pots can be artfully displayed next to collections of stones or shells and driftwood. Even the smallest tub of herbs can provide a beautiful fragrant interlude.

“ However, the tide is changing and raised beds, pots and even vertical walls are bringing back living (not fake) green

Urban residents with a penchant for intentional living, who want to begin growing their own food—regardless of space, experience, or budget can easily be catered for. These days garden centres stock so many innovative solutions, beginner-friendly growing methods for apartments, balconies, and indoor spaces, vertical planting walls, troughs on legs, vertical pods, shelving units designed especially for small spaces, and all maximising any opportunity for foliage, making our tiny spaces more verdant. There really is no excuse to not surround oneself with nature.

So, as spring wraps her soothing arms around us in a welcome embrace, go forth and plant seeds, no matter how small your patch.

Happy planting!



The green oasis

This summer Richard and Sarah Miles, owners of Seafield House, Millbrook, are opening their gates to visitors as one of JAYF Open Gardens on Sunday 28 June, when visitors will be invited to explore this fascinating garden. Anna Bradstock was given a preview

Seafield House – imposing and elegant – hides discretely behind a high wall on the St Aubin’s Road, Millbrook. It is a country house and garden, set amid suburban sprawl but totally secluded from it; secret, fascinating and mostly unknown.

At one time, the gardens of Seafield House stretched down to the sea, merging into dunes and beach. A defensive wall was built and was unearthed a few years ago – but that was not to make more difficult the incursions of the sea, just the incursions of the French.

It was an affluent leading banker, merchant – and smuggler, François Giffard, who decided, in 1809, to make his mark by building a Greek revival Regency villa, Beau-Mur in a prime location, among the dunes overlooking St Aubin’s Bay.

A contemporary, the Baron de Frénilly, wrote of him: ‘He brought up his children in fear of God and in horror of Customs men.’ Giffard had made much money through the then prosperous fishing trade with Newfoundland.

“ It is a country house and garden, set amid suburban sprawl but totally secluded from it; secret, fascinating and mostly unknown

The influence of those intrepid fishing fleets of the late 18th and early 19th Century remains in the bricks and mortar of the so-called 'cod houses' throughout the Island.

Beau-Mur was purchased by Maxwell Vandeleur Blacker-Douglass in 1921 for £7,000. He was the great-grandfather of Richard Miles who lives there with his wife Sarah, and who relishes his role as custodian for future generations.

“ It was an affluent leading banker, merchant – and smuggler, François Giffard, who decided, in 1809, to make his mark by building a Greek revival Regency villa

The northern façade presents the formal house entrance as a triumphal arched portico with Ionic columns, flanked by wings either side. Marcus Binney, in his *Country Life* article of 1989, was quick to recognise that the architect, Robert Lugar, could have been influenced by Nash when designing the rotunda on the southern elevation. This soars forcefully above the parapet like the Nash pepper-pot corners of Regent Street and the Strand. Giffard, could spy his fleet returning home from this magnificent vantage point, while admiring his new garden stretching down to the sea, predating the Victorian railway. A substantial collection of pines and evergreen oak now hide the gardens from view, leaving the green oasis a mystery to commuters on Victoria Avenue.

The original Regency layout of island beds containing shrubs and flowers, stretches from the formal lawns below the house to a view now framed by a magnificent pair of Canary Date Palms (*Phoenix Canariensis*).

Perhaps Richard's childhood moments playing in a treehouse built in his favourite ancient black poplar instilled a lasting passion for trees, displayed by the number of exotic and rare trees he has planted in the garden.

This ancient black poplar straddles a fast-flowing public watercourse, marking the boundary of St Helier and St Lawrence (the house situated in the latter). The tree has flourished over a couple of hundred years to be an Island champion, reaching over 60 feet with a gargantuan trunk.





Following gravel paths bordered by Brazilian gneiss, brought back as ballast on Jersey's cod trade vessels from Rio de Janeiro, one enters a large Victorian walled garden with immaculate beds edged with box. Vegetables and cut flowers are surrounded by climbing and shrub roses and an ancient Italian fig struggles to escape the confines of a fine old glasshouse.

“ The shelter canopy of evergreen oak, bay and Monterey pines underplanted with choice camellia and variegated hollies, opens to canopies of sunlight where further exotic plants thrive

The shelter canopy of evergreen oak, bay and Monterey pines underplanted with choice camellia and variegated hollies, opens to canopies of sunlight where further exotic plants thrive. Here we discover a Loquat tree (*Eriobotrya japonica*), Indian bean tree (*Catalpa bignonioides*), two dinosaur trees (*Wollemi Pine*), a Peruvian pepper tree (*Schinus molle*) grown by Richard, tree ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*), an ancient arbutus with its white flower and red fruit that is used to make Aguardente de Medronho, the very strong Portuguese fruit brandy, and a banana plantain (*Musa bajoo*), the flesh of which is used in Japan for specialised paper.

A magnificent monkey puzzle towers to the height of the house. It appeared expensive to Richard's mother, when she bought it for £60. But it shows what an early investment can produce in the majestic world of trees.





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Chaumont-sur-Loire possesses an attractive chateau, but also, for anyone who loves gardens, it is the home of an important international garden festival. RURAL's gardening writers, Fabienne Maitland-Robinson and Toby Magee, will be there

Nestled in the attractive Loire Valley, near Blois, sits Chaumont, one of the area's lesser-known but charming châteaux. The impressive 15th Century estate, once home to Catherine de Medici and Benjamin Franklin, has for the last 35 years been the proud home of the Festival International des Jardins.

High above the river banks, overlooking the gentle meander of the Loire, sits the chateau and its impressive 35 hectares of 19th Century landscaped grounds à l'anglaise, which are an impressive reason to visit in their own right. But it's the annual garden creations that draw us here, built around their own meandering path throughout the grounds. This is Chaumont's annual international garden festival, which runs from 22 April to 1 November.

It hosts landscape designers from around the world and this year there will be six nations represented across 25 gardens. In 2024, we were two visitors among the 550,000 that travel to visit the festival each year. By contrast, the Chelsea Flower Show typically receives 145,000 to 168,000 visitors (albeit in a much-condensed time frame); the visitor numbers are testament to Chaumont's quiet popularity.

“ In 2024, we were two visitors among the 550,000 that travel to visit the festival each year



'Générosité de la Nature' garden, 2024

FolkFlore garden 2024



Each year the festival gardens have a theme for designers' interpretation, creating spaces that change and develop throughout the duration of the show and its seasons. Thus, it remains true to the concept of a garden — a space that is never static. This is certainly one of the major appeals of this garden festival. There is a strong focus on sustainability and a genuine interest in wider environmental questions and concepts, without being too preachy.

The festival is created with the visitor at the heart of each exhibition, as one can journey through each garden, rather than experience them from behind a cordon. The annual theme encourages fresh, conceptual designs, where there is a sense of boldness and desire to create spaces that push boundaries and provoke thoughts. The exhibits vary in size but typically average 210 square metres, with approximately 20 to 30 gardens on show each year.

We visited last in 2024, when the theme was 'The Life-Source Garden'. In particular, three gardens which impressed us were 'Générosité de la Nature', a garden focusing on water management as a vital part of design in an urban environment.

'Le Jardin des Murmures', with its striking structures and drought tolerant planting, imagined a city that is primarily designed and planned around flora and fauna. And finally, 'FolkFlore,' designed in collaboration with Chaumont to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Quebec's Jardins de Métis festival. The design, intended to be relocated to Canada as an expanded public space, used the concept of weaving (considered 'living heritage' in Quebec) to enhance shadow play and create ever-changing spaces for visitors, as the sun progresses through its day.

We took an entire day to view the show, including a lunch at one of Chaumont's five restaurants. This was perhaps a sign of how thoroughly captured by each garden we were. But the estate is vast; there is also an additional permanent collection of contemporary gardens added to each year by a guest designer. There is an art season, pop-up cultural displays and myriad creative residences, and the wider, beautiful grounds — all accessible with an adult ticket costing €21, children's ticket for €6 or a family pass for €42.

For this year's 35th festival, the theme is 'The garden star of the show', where designers and visitors are encouraged to reflect on the connection between gardens and cinema as 'places of memories, seasonality, presentation and emotion'.



'Le Jardin des Murmures' in 2024

“ The annual theme encourages fresh, conceptual designs, where there is a sense of boldness and desire to create spaces that push boundaries and provoke thoughts

Story-telling and temporality connect cinema and gardens, and perhaps viewing gardens in the way that we view films encourages us to look at landscapes in a different way.

Ultimately, as design becomes more homogenised, particularly within the public realm, Chaumont's annual festival reminds us that there is a good reason to overcome that trend, so as to ensure we work in collaboration with, instead of against, the natural world — for that always has been, and will continue to be, our life's stage and screen.

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Open Gardens 2026 season



Saturday 21 March
Eric Young Orchid Foundation
 La Rue du Moulin de Ponterrin
 Victoria Village, JE3 5HH

Open Day 11 am - 4 pm serving soup with rolls (£5) and tea and cake (£5).

Re-potting demonstrations and tours provided by the Eric Young Orchid Foundation staff.

Explore one of the world's finest and most significant orchid collections with its dazzling collection of vibrant orchids in their revitalised Display House as it celebrates 40 years.



Sunday 17 May
Domaine Des Vaux
 Rue de Bas, St Lawrence, JE3 1JG

Set in a secret valley with meandering paths down a valley of Magnolia, Camellia and Rhododendron to ponds below. Enjoy tea on the house terrace by the fountain with beds of exquisite planting and a white flowered Wisteria. Plant Stall.

Open by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Marcus Binney.



Sunday 28 June
Seafield House
 La Route de St Aubin,
 St Lawrence, JE3 1LL

Usually hidden by towering Pines, Evergreen Oak, this Regency Greek revival villa was built in 1809 by a leading Jersey merchant. Cream teas will be served on the lawn below the house with a view to the extensive garden. The beautiful walled garden leads onto further exotic plants, trees and secret garden areas and the Island's largest Black Poplar.

Open by kind permission of Mr and Mrs Richard Miles.

Very limited parking so please use Victoria Avenue, Glass Church car park (strictly from 2pm) and the many bus services or cycle.



Sunday 19 April
Government House
 St Saviour, JE2 7JH

The beautiful formal gardens around expansive lawns lead to a wooded valley of natural and ornamental trees with two lakes.

Open by kind permission of His Excellency Vice Admiral Sir Jerry Kyd KBE and Lady Kyd



Sunday 31 May
Woodlands Court
 La Route des Côtils, Grouville, JE3 9AP

A magical garden with glorious views of Mont Orgueil Castle. The immaculate sweeping lawns surround flowerbeds full of roses, peonies with paths to garden 'rooms' full of Mediterranean and exotic plants and trees.

Open by kind permission of Jurat and Mrs Robert Christensen.

Gardens open from 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm
 Eric Young Orchid Foundation
 11.00 am – 4.00 pm

Admission £7.00;
 Children under 12 free;
 Cream teas £5.50; regret no dogs.

Some gardens will offer guided nature walks and tombola

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Into the woods

Anna Bradstock went to Egypte but not — as in the musical ‘Joseph and the Technicolour Dream Coat’ — to see brother Jo. This is far nearer: the wooded area on the Island’s north coast

Why ‘Egypte’ Woods? It could be that it was once a home for gypsies, but there is little evidence of Roma communities in Jersey. Who knows? But the walk down to the small dwelling named Wolf’s Lair is through dense and dark woodland, and holds a certain chill in my own childhood memory!

Trees cover a modest 8.4% of the Island (2011), the highest amount for many centuries. Woodland clearance began in the Neolithic period, with farmers developing smallholdings in the woods. A national decree from the Crown in 1558 seeking timber to supply the expansion of British shipbuilding reported that ‘timber cannot be had on the Isle’, the scarcity leading a local use of gorse, bracken and seaweed as fuel.

The race to plant apple orchards to supply the thriving cider industry from 16th century, meant woodland retreated to the valleys.

Most trees in the Island are less than 100 years old as an estimated 200,000 trees were felled in the Occupation, when timber became a vital and valuable resource. Some trees escaped the German axe, and one magnificent beech commands centre stage in the main ‘bowl’ of Egypte Woods.

The woods contain 25 different tree species, beech, sweet chestnut, sycamore, hazel, ash, lime, the predominant being English oak, *Quercus robur*, the nation’s favoured tree for its strength, endurance and evolved ecology to host hundreds of dependant species.

A recent woodland report carried out by local ecologist John Pinel reveals a staggering 880 land species living in Egypte Woods: 322 species of invertebrates (bugs, worms and snails in layman’s terms), 52 species of mammals, birds, bats, mice and squirrels and - to the relief of the more squeamish - only 2 amphibians and 1 reptile!

Foragers need to be savvy while choosing from the 82 types of fungi, while we can applaud Jersey’s low levels of air pollution in finding 32 varieties of lichen along with 93 mosses and liverworts.

“ **Most trees in the Island are less than 100 years old as an estimated 200,000 trees were felled in the Occupation, when timber became a vital and valuable resource**

Starting at sea level we find Wolf’s Lair, a Napoleonic guard house where ‘Operation Hardtack’, a British Commando raid was carried out on Christmas Day 1943. There is a memorial stone where a very moving annual Remembrance service is held for the lives of servicemen, in particular Capt. Philip Ayton, who died in the operation.

“ With biodiversity as a term frequently championed, it is here that it thrives, as time has nurtured the symbiotic relationship of species in a wide range of forms

Leaving the sea behind to walk up the steep track to a ford in the lane, a ‘Lord of the Rings’ vignette is revealed. A fern-lined stream flowing through moss covered boulders can rage like a torrent after heavy rain. It exemplifies the conditions of high humidity and mild temperatures for this temperate rainforest.

With biodiversity as a term frequently championed, it is here that it thrives, as time has nurtured the symbiotic relationship of species in a wide range of forms. We have learnt in recent years that trees communicate through networks in the soil. The term Wood-Wide-Web was coined to describe the intricate system of mycorrhizal fungi living on the tree roots which stretch for metres under the soil, to provide a warning system against jeopardy.

Oak roots are usually quite shallow, with most in the top 30cm of soil, and extend well beyond the tree’s crown, so it is vital that they are not damaged to ensure the healthy process of photosynthesis to soak up all the CO₂ that our modern lifestyles produce.

These oak woods have taken a battering over recent years with Storm Ciarán and subsequent gales, most damaging when the trees are still in leaf. The steep còtills of moist ground and leaves acting as thousands of mini sails, oak, beech and tenacious *Quercus ilex* (evergreen holm oak) were uprooted or torn at branch level, leaving devastating amounts of debris.

Thankfully, we now appreciate the merits of leaving deadwood (stumps, trunk and branches) on our land. Not just for the obvious habitat requirements of birds and mammals, but in decay supporting thousands of dependant species and contributing to nutrient recycling and soil health.

John Pinel presented Jersey Trees for Life’s plans for their future management of Egypte Woods to a packed parish hall in Trinity in early October. Working with the landowners and Greening Jersey, volunteer parties have marked safe paths and created dead hedges for wildlife habitats and help reduce soil erosion. They will continue with maintenance and planting to regenerate the health of this woodland for a flourishing future.

Please get in touch if you would like to help so that we can all continue to ‘calm our cortisol’ in this beautiful thriving woodland:
admin@jerseytreesforlife.org





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Going with the flow



The Head of Water Resilience and Emergency Planning at Jersey Water, Mark Bowden, talked to Alasdair Crosby about their plans to ensure that there will always be water available when we turn on the tap



Readers with long memories will remember the controversy over the construction of the Queen's Valley Reservoir in 1992 and the constant pleas to 'save water' in the period before the new reservoir came into operation.

Mark Bowden, the Head of Water Resilience and Emergency Planning at Jersey Water (JW), was not living in the Island then. He moved to Jersey ten years ago from the Manchester area, where he had been working for 20 years in the operational side of the water industry, and had gained considerable experience in maintaining water quality and supply.

'I often think about my predecessors and the challenges they must have had before Queen's Valley Reservoir was built. In 1992, Jersey was almost at the point of running out of water; there was only two weeks' worth of water in storage.

I don't know how my predecessors slept at night, in terms of the stress and the pressure.'

He continued: 'No one will forgive us for running out of water! It's the one thing that we can't do without. So, our core purpose at Jersey Water is to supply water for the Island to thrive today and every day, under any kind of drought circumstances.'

Mark looks after what he calls 'water resilience', looking after reservoir safety, and the integrity of these large structures that hold the water, and that they comply with the law. His job is to anticipate any shocks and stresses and respond to them if the worst happens, and that JW's operational system is as resilient as it can be to any emergency – be it geopolitical, or infrastructure or climatic emergency.

He has been instrumental in preparing a 'Water Resource and Drought Management Plan' that looks ahead and plans for the next 40 years, and also a more immediate strategy for the next five years until 2030.

It forecasts that within the next ten years, Jersey could face water shortages of as much as 8.6 million litres a day during a severe drought; nearly a third of the Island's average daily supply over the summer months.

Climate change, limited water storage and changes in population are all contributing factors and, without action now, there may not be enough water to supply the Island in the future.

At the same time, global focus and understanding about PFAS (poly and perfluoroalkyl) chemicals has accelerated. As scientists and health professionals investigate the health effects of these man-made chemicals, governments around the world are introducing new stricter water safety standards, as a first step in tackling this environmental pollution.

Currently, the water supplied by JW is well within the existing water quality safety limits set by the EU and UK, in fact on average, nearly 70% lower. However, the Government is proposing to adopt new, stricter precautionary regulations — something the utility welcomes and for which it is preparing.

'We are aware that there is considerable public concern about water quality. We just want to assure everybody that the quality of the mains water supply in Jersey is very good. Last year we had 100% compliance with the water quality standards set by the UK and the European Union. In my 30 years working in the industry, I know of no other water company that has achieved that.'

Over the next five years, JW is planning to invest £48 million in essential upgrades to infrastructure and operations, focusing on three key priorities: ensuring that there is enough water for the Island during dry periods and drought; investment in infrastructure; and taking steps to make sure drinking water stays clean, safe and fully compliant with future Government water quality standards.

'The strategy and report are quite foundational pieces of work, looking at the long-term supply for the Island, and whether we can continue to supply the drinking water for our Island in the long-term.'

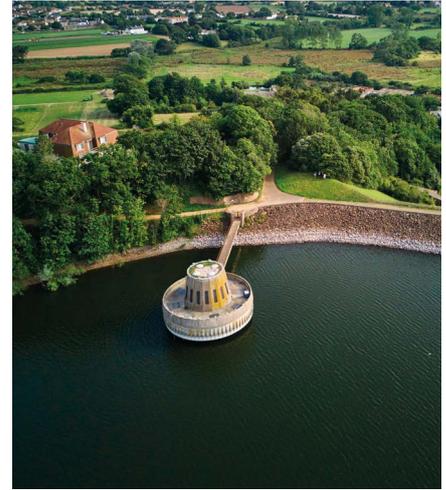
'We looked at the hydrology of the Island, and how much rainfall could Jersey capture. The water industry benchmark is to be resilient to a one in 500-year drought event, so that is 0.2% chance of happening in any given year. In other words, a really severe drought, the likes of which we have never experienced — but we are very much risk averse!'

Prominent among JW's preparations to avoid the worst is the continued expansion of the desalination plan. It was expanded to double its capacity in 2015, and as part of plans for the next five years, they will carry out another expansion, to make it 50% bigger again.

“No one will forgive us for running out of water! It's the one thing that we can't do without. So, our core purpose at Jersey Water is to supply water for the Island to thrive today and every day, under any kind of drought circumstances

'In the event of an extremely dry year, we absolutely need a bigger desalination plant. The reason for having the desalination plant is that relative to the size of the population we only have limited storage capacity and the reservoirs are quite small — he joked 'that's why we do a rain dance every year!'

The twin threats of population change and climate change are the real challenges that we face, Mark said.



'There is unpredictability of the climate and a lot of the talk about "key tipping points" that could bring wholesale change, such as changes in ocean currents or melting of polar ice. We can't gamble with such potentially serious issues; we have to take a risk-averse approach.'

'The failure of long-term water resource planning is a ticking time bomb for societies in parts of the world today, as it has been throughout history.'

'We are just doing the right thing by the Island: providing the right quantity of water, the right quality, at the right place at the right time, and at the right price.'

Mark added that the reservoirs need to be full on 1 April for the Island to stand a chance of having enough water to last the typically drier summer months, so he must be jolly pleased with the weather this February and the seemingly almost constant rainfall — surely good weather for both ducks and water utility companies?

'There is always too much or too little water,' he said. 'We are always watching the storage level — it's either going up or going down. It's always an interesting line of work; we're always busy. Never a dull moment.'

**For further details, see:
Our 2026-30 strategy - Jersey Water
Our 2025 Water Resource and Drought Management Plan - Jersey Water**

Photography inspired by nature

A magazine should always be as much about pictures as it is about words and much of the success of RURAL magazine over the years has been the photographs taken of Jersey's rural life and landscapes by our photographic editor, Gary Grimshaw.

Throughout the year, we are featuring four pictures from him, one in each of our quarterly editions, that show the Island and Island life in the four seasons.

For this Spring edition, we present this view of Jersey Royals being planted in soggy ground.

To view a full range of Gary's pictures, see his website at www.photoreportage.co.uk, or contact him at contact@photoreportage.co.uk





Lights. music. action!

Terry Neale meets the team behind a charity bringing music to young and old alike

It's the question on the lips of most parents today: 'How do I tempt my child away from phones and screens and into more wholesome and rewarding pursuits?'

A gentle nudge in the direction of making music could be one answer; and if it is, then James Mews, the chairman of Music in Action, is the man who knows the path to follow.

'Our core objectives are to inspire and educate children and young people through high-quality music education opportunities such as workshops, interactive school sessions and singing programmes,' he explained. 'Between January and March this year, there were some 25 outreach programmes in schools with initiatives linked to rhythm, singing and learning about music and dementia. Nothing warms the heart more than a child saying "I just loved it."'

Formed in 2006, Music in Action has always operated as a registered Jersey charity and uses the power of music to enrich lives and strengthen the wellbeing of the community. The charity develops pathways for young children to use music to help improve lives with bursaries and the Young Artist Development Programme, which assists talented locals to pursue a career in music.

'We have some very inspirational children and it's a joy to help them to achieve their dreams,' James enthused. 'For those who benefit from free lessons the evidence shows that it makes them want to get up and go to school and improves their academic performance. That's really impressive.'

In his role as chairman of Music in Action, James sets out to provide strategic leadership and governance for the charity, working with the board, artistic advisers and the team to shape the charity's vision and delivery of its objectives.



James Mews and Deborah Anderson

'My role includes artistic input into championing our key events, including the Liberation International Music Festival coming up in May, Jersey Sings Across the Bay, the Jersey Chamber Orchestra concerts and our education initiatives,' James said.

“Nothing warms the heart more than a child saying “I just loved it

'For the Liberation Festival, we programme a range of artists and different instruments so that the Island sees string players, pianists, singers and jazz artists. I am delighted that, on 12 May, we will have Juho Pohjonen, a highly acclaimed Finnish pianist, who has captivated audiences playing piano duets with Wu Qian, the remarkable Chinese pianist.

'And the day before, on Monday 11 May, the legendary singer Sir Willard White will give the second of two performances in an intimate setting with piano and violin, singing folk songs and popular songs from spirituals to humorous skits. Before that, he will have sung show tunes with the Jersey Chamber Orchestra on Liberation Day. I think that this shows the sheer variety of what we do.'

Indeed, 2026 offers a veritable feast to satisfy the appetites of Island music lovers, no matter how diverse their tastes may be. 'I always look forward to Jazz at Hamptonne,' said James. 'On 16 May, we welcome Jon Regan, a song writer from New York, and he will be playing standards.

'And on 17 May, we have an immersive set of rotating concerts at Hougue Bie, from solo cello suites by Bach in the mound, to violin by Harriet Mackenzie, harpsichord in the chapel and poetry in the longhouse.'

James is not just the organisational brain behind Music in Action; he is also an accomplished musician himself.

'My life has been shaped by a deep passion for music, both as a performer and an educator. I owe much to my mother who encouraged me to play the violin, running me to Lancashire's County Youth Orchestra and singing with the Northern Cathedral Singers as a teenager,' James revealed.

'Later, I got to tour the UK as a violinist with the Young Musicians' Symphony Orchestra – a professional training orchestra performing with Yehudi Menuhin at the Barbican in London. Then, I was privileged to sing on three continents with remarkable singers as a bass with Clare College Choir, Cambridge.'

In addition to chairing Music in Action for nearly 20 years, James has also served as artistic director for major events such as the Liberation International Music Festival and the International Guitar Festival, duties that involve guiding artistic programming and championing the role of music in the life of the community.

‘Though my professional life focuses on law and organisational leadership, music remains close to my heart; from performing and curating inspiring concerts to supporting young musicians and bringing music into schools and care settings.’

But as James is quick to stress, Music in Action is not a one-man band. He is backed by a highly dedicated and committed team who share the workload. Deborah Anderson is the charity’s development executive, a role that focuses on strengthening the organisation’s long-term sustainability by building partnerships, raising vital funds and supporting the growth of the education, outreach and community programmes.

‘A large part of my work involves developing relationships,’ Deborah explained. ‘This can be with donors, local businesses, trusts, foundations and community partners. I prepare funding proposals, co-ordinate sponsorship opportunities and help to ensure that our programmes are well supported financially.’

‘I also work closely with the rest of the team to identify new opportunities for Music in Action, whether that’s expanding our education projects, strengthening audience engagement, or planning future events. My aim is always to secure the resources we need to keep delivering meaningful experiences across Jersey.’

A background in secondary teaching has helped Deborah to ease into her role, as the profession enabled her to develop a commitment to supporting young people and helping them to build confidence through creativity.

‘I later founded my own lifestyle brand, Becoorie, which promotes healthy wellbeing through community care and connection,’ she said. ‘I also have experience in promoting events and initiatives, which has helped me to develop skills in engagement and outreach.’

Not surprisingly, music is also important to Deborah. ‘I love all kinds of music and my preferences often depend on my mood,’ she said. ‘Music has been a constant companion in my life and has helped me through some difficult times. I enjoy discovering new genres and artists and I particularly value music’s ability to connect people, evoke emotion and create a sense of community.’

A third member of the team is Thibault Blanchard, the charity’s development and operations manager. Born in France, he studied in Paris, Belgium and London, training as a cellist while developing a strong interest in event production and videography.

‘I joined Music in Action in 2022 and now lead on operations,’ he said. ‘I also collaborate on festivals across Europe and produce my own festival in France.’

Back in Jersey, 2026 holds much musical promise. Bass-baritone Sir Willard White returns to the Opera House in May and, on 19 June, a ball will be hosted in what Deborah promises will be an exciting location. ‘This is shaping up to be a save-the-date moment for the Island, celebrating local talent and visiting artists,’ she added.

Perhaps the last word, however, should go to James Mews who last year received an MBE for services to the community and music.

‘It was an honour,’ he said, ‘and a recognition that I share with all those who make the work of Music in Action possible.’

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Holiday homes from home

With warmer weather (hopefully) around the corner, many Islanders will be looking forward to spending quality time with their families. While this may be a holiday abroad for some, following changes to the Planning and Building (General Development – Short-term Holiday Lets) (Jersey) Amendment Order 2024, it could be an Airbnb staycation in Jersey’s picturesque countryside for others. By Laura Shirreffs

Since April 2024, Islanders can let out their property (or a part of their property) as short-term holiday lets for up to 12 weeks in each calendar year. This legislative change not only offers locals (and tourists alike) a greater choice of properties for their holiday, but also the opportunity to earn a few pennies.

Before this legislative change, Islanders wanting to Airbnb their homes faced a big legal barrier. They could not use a dwelling house (or any part of it) for short-term holiday lets without obtaining prior Planning permission for a change of use under the Planning and Building (Jersey) Law 2002 as it did not fall within the Planning and Building (General Development) Jersey Order 2011.

The General Development Order provides consent to certain stated classes of development and changes of use without the property owner needing to apply for planning permission, but it was limited.

The amendment updates the General Development Order to permit a change in use of a building, or part of one, from a dwelling only to allow for accommodation stays, for leisure, for a combined duration of no more than 12 weeks in the calendar year.

It is important to note that:

- the accommodation is for leisure purposes only; it cannot be used as a main dwelling during those 12 weeks
- the 12 weeks maximum limit covers the total combination of visitors; it is not a limit per visitor
- should you wish to let your property, or part of it, out as a short-term holiday let for more than 12 weeks per calendar year, then planning permission for a change of use will still be required.

While this amendment to the legislation is fantastic news for tourism, other requirements for homeowners wishing to register with Airbnb to host short-term lets are still in place. These include...

Title restrictions

If the property is a share transfer or flying freehold apartment, it is necessary to ensure the relevant articles of association / declaration of co-ownership and any house rules and regulations have no restrictions on Airbnb or short-term lettings. With Airbnb becoming more popular over recent years, these restrictions are appearing more in legal documents for apartment blocks.

Assisted buyer schemes

For those who have purchased their homes using an assisted buyer scheme, it is highly likely your scheme documents prohibit any form of leasing or sharing of occupation without first obtaining consent through the terms of the scheme, which may or may not be granted.

Lending restrictions

Some mortgages and loans contain restrictions on letting or sharing occupation of the property without the lender’s consent, so check your paperwork carefully. These restrictions are very commonplace where a homebuyer’s mortgage has been entered into (rather than a buy to let).

Failure to comply with the terms of the mortgage and obtain the lender’s consent risks triggering an event of default which would result in the lender being able to call in the loan.

Lease restrictions

If you rent your property, it is essential to consider whether you have the authority to sub-let the home or a room within the property. Residential leases in Jersey often contain restrictions over subletting, either absolutely or without first obtaining the prior written consent of your landlord.

Listing your property on Airbnb in breach of the terms of your lease may have serious consequences. It could lead to the landlord seeking a court order for early termination of the lease, recovering possession of the property, and a claim for damages to compensate for any loss they have suffered.

Insurance considerations

In addition to the restrictions set out above, it is necessary to inform your home and contents insurer that you are considering registering with Airbnb to take on paying guests. Failure to seek prior consent of the insurer may risk the insurance company refusing to pay out if the property is being used against the terms of the insurance policy.

For more information on how the team can help you on your property journey, visit www.ogierproperty.com

Laura Shirreffs, Senior Associate



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Designing timeless country houses for modern lives

A house in the Cotswolds redesigned by Joanna Wood offers a masterclass in adapting a historic house for modern family life.

By Hattie Hansard



Country houses are, by their nature, layered places. They evolve slowly over generations, shaped by changing patterns of family life, shifting social structures and the practical realities of rural living. Yet many historic houses were never designed for the way we live today. Their layouts often prioritise formality over comfort, separation over flow, and service over sociability. The challenge for modern country house design lies in adapting these buildings for contemporary life without erasing the character that makes them special in the first place.

For the Joanna Wood studio, this balance sits at the heart of its work. With decades of experience designing and restoring country houses, the practice is known for a thoughtful, contextual approach that prioritises longevity over fashion and substance over showmanship. A recent Cotswolds project demonstrates how this philosophy translates into practice.

“Successful country house design lies in evolution, not reinvention

A house frozen in time

When the studio first encountered the property, it had not been meaningfully altered since the 1960s. While this meant many original features survived, it also revealed the scale of intervention required. The roof was slipping, the façade crumbling and the foundations unstable. Even the electrics remained largely untouched, with round-pin plugs still in use.

Internally, the layout reflected an outdated social structure. Formal reception rooms dominated the plan, linked by corridors that separated service areas from family life. The kitchen, for example, was a narrow galley with minimal amenities, tucked away behind closed doors and disconnected from the rest of the house. The layout reflected a traditional hierarchy of rooms that simply did not work for contemporary living.

Rather than approaching the house as a decorative exercise, the studio recognised that it required a fundamental rethinking of how it functioned. The aim was not to reinvent the building, but to enable it to serve modern family life while retaining its historic identity.

Planning within a protected landscape

The property sits within one of the most closely protected villages in the Cotswolds. Any intervention required careful navigation of a complex and lengthy planning process. Proposals were scrutinised not only for their architectural impact but also for how they would affect the wider community and landscape

Working in such conditions demands patience, precision and collaboration. Materials, sightlines and scale were all carefully considered. New additions had to feel entirely sympathetic, almost inevitable, as though they had always belonged.

This approach has direct relevance for Jersey. The island’s historic buildings and landscapes are similarly protected, and planning frameworks are notoriously rigorous. Designing well within these constraints requires more than creative flair; it requires an understanding of context, respect for heritage and the ability to work constructively with planners and consultants. In both settings, sensitivity to place is paramount.



Repair before replacement

Structurally, the house required extensive work. The guiding principle throughout the renovation was to repair rather than replace wherever possible. The building was dismantled in stages, its foundations stabilised and its roof structure reinforced, before being carefully rebuilt.

Original panelling, fireplaces and stonework were preserved wherever feasible. Where removal was unavoidable, elements were catalogued and reinstated. The objective was continuity. When complete, the house should appear as though it had simply matured, not undergone wholesale transformation.

This philosophy reflects a broader ethos within the studio: historic houses should feel as though they have evolved naturally over time. Interventions must be measured and purposeful, supporting the architecture rather than competing with it.

Reworking the heart of the house

The most significant shift came through the reorganisation of the internal layout. The original U-shaped layout felt poky and fragmented. A key decision was made to open up the centre of the house and the addition of a discreet link along the rear of the building, drawing the two sides of the house together and transforming circulation.

This architectural adjustment allowed the centre of the house to open up into a more connected sequence of rooms. Movement now feels intuitive rather than constrained. Spaces relate to one another visually and practically, supporting modern patterns of living.

At the heart of the new layout sits what was once the dairy, now converted into a full-height family kitchen. No longer a hidden service space, the room was designed as the social centre of the house, it is a space for cooking, eating, working and gathering. Banquette seating encourages everyday use, while French doors fling open directly onto a terrace, reinforcing the connection between house and garden.

Indoor-outdoor living

A defining feature of contemporary country living is the relationship between interior spaces and the landscape beyond. In this project, the garden was recalibrated to become an extension of the house and encourage daily use.

Carefully designed pathways lead from the kitchen to outdoor dining areas, the pool and informal seating spaces. The layout supports entertaining on both large and small scales, allowing guests to move easily between the house and garden.

This emphasis on indoor-outdoor living has particular relevance in Jersey, where climate and lifestyle place a strong emphasis on entertaining, long evenings and a close relationship with the landscape. Designing country houses that respond to this way of living requires careful planning, durable materials and an understanding of how spaces will be used throughout the year.



Modern comfort without compromise

While the house retains the aesthetic language of an English country house, it is fully equipped for contemporary life. A dedicated TV room provides a relaxed, informal living space for all the family. A substantial mud room and utility area accommodate the practicalities of country living, helping to keep the rest of the house clean and orderly.

Bathrooms were added to ensure that guest bedrooms have easy access to en-suite or dedicated facilities, allowing the house to function comfortably for family and visitors alike. Throughout, materials were chosen for their durability and honesty, ensuring the house could be lived in fully rather than preserved as a showpiece.

A broader philosophy

This project reflects a wider approach that defines the Joanna Wood studio. Country houses, whether in the Cotswolds or on the island of Jersey, require a careful balance between progress and preservation. They demand an understanding of planning constraints, a respect for landscape and an ability to design spaces that support modern life without undermining the past.

For the Joanna Wood studio, successful country house design is about enabling buildings to continue their stories. Homes designed not simply for today, but for the generations that will follow.

Joanna Wood Interiors
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Strong foundations
for the year ahead



An update on the Jersey property market, by John Quemard, president of the Jersey Estate Agents Association



As president of the Jersey Estate Agents' Association, reflecting on 2025 provides important context, but it is our expectations for 2026 that matter most now.

The final quarter statistics released by the Government of Jersey confirm that 2025 was a year of stabilisation. After the adjustment period of 2023–2024, transaction levels improved, buyer confidence strengthened, and pricing began to find firmer ground. While values have not returned to peak levels, the market has clearly regained momentum.

So far, 2026 is shaping up to be a year of measured optimism. Interest rates remain central to sentiment. The rapid rises of previous years appear to have plateaued, and even modest reductions, or simply continued stability, provide reassurance to borrowers.

Buyer attitudes in 2026 are pragmatic rather than speculative. Purchasers are now well rehearsed, mortgage-ready, and focused on value. They expect realistic pricing and quality presentation.

Properties that are competitively priced continue to generate the strongest interest, often within the first few weeks of marketing. Conversely, aspirational pricing without supporting evidence is quickly challenged by today's informed buyer and such properties will remain stagnant unless this is addressed.

“**The rapid rises of previous years appear to have plateaued, and even modest reductions, or simply continued stability, provide reassurance to borrowers**

For sellers, 2026 presents opportunity but discipline will remain key. The era of automatic over-asking offers is well behind us. A balanced pricing strategy, aligned to current data and comparable evidence, will be essential.

Although agents have a responsibility to guide clients with transparency and realism, it is ultimately the seller that needs to listen to the agent's valuation and expert advice to ensure transactions remain steady and sustainable.

Supply levels will also play an important role. Jersey's structural constraint on housing stock continues to underpin long-term stability. If listing volumes remain controlled while buyer demand strengthens, we may see gradual, sustainable price growth through 2026 rather than sharp fluctuations.

Overall, the mood within the industry is positive. Economic stability, improving sentiment, and renewed activity point towards a healthier, more sustainable housing market. If 2025 restored balance, 2026 has the potential to deliver confidence, a year characterised not by rapid spikes, but by steady progress grounded in realism and long-term fundamentals.

Located down a quiet country lane in rural St. Ouen

This impressive granite residence offers over 6,000 sq ft of versatile accommodation. Ideal for multi-generational living or a two generation setup, the property is exceptionally well proportioned throughout, providing a rare combination of space, character and potential. The home features expansive reception rooms and a generous 28 ft kitchen. With eight bedrooms laid out over three floors the main house can become bigger or smaller dependant on your families requirements. Outside, the extensive gardens are mainly laid to lawn, with many mature trees.

Asking £3,750,000

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Inside knowledge is a good thing

Some interior design tips if you have renovations in mind for the spring. By our interior design writer, Bryony Richardson



Unique and interesting pieces to make a home feel curated rather than "catalogue"

Original Features

Keys to your new home in hand, make note of the bones of the house and use these as lynch-pins to your design scheme. Be it a characterful fireplace, some original built-in joinery, floorboards, beams or wall panelling or even a singular vista from a particular window. Unique and arresting interiors often begin with a point of difference, and character and atmosphere are more apparent in authentic spaces.

Lighting

How your home is lit can lift it from perfectly fine to sublime. Engaging a professional who understands lighting is money you will not regret spending. They will ensure rooms are not mercilessly blasted by too many downlights, they'll ensure particularly special paintings and artworks are illuminated, they'll ensure lighting that enables full potential of a space with layers of optionality. Excellent lighting enables rooms to switch (literally) from day light, task mode to softly lit evening mode which help calm the senses. Considered lighting requires pre-planning so make this a priority from the outset.

Storage

A house that is easy and enjoyable to live in is a house you'll never want to leave. One way to make a house easy to live in is to ensure that everything you want around you has an accessible and considered home. Ensure that you allow for more storage than you think you will need.

Time

Spend time considering how you really want to live in a house and ensure that your designer fully understands that is crucial to optimise the makeover.



A restored original fireplace

Maximise utility of your home with generous and considered storage



Playful intentions

Don't take a too serious approach to your interiors. Embrace the opportunity for some playful elements within your home. Be it in the fabrics, wallpapers or perhaps even bookcases concealing doors - these are guaranteed to add a spring to your step every day.

Invest in the bones

There are some things you should be prepared to dig deep for. They will offer you a lifetime of enjoyment as a testament to their quality and craftsmanship. Well-made joinery is one such obligatory investment. A quality kitchen, made to your personal requirements, for example, will reward you with perfectly gliding drawers and beautiful pantry cupboard interiors with handmade dovetail elements that will spark joy every day.

Knowing that a room has been created for exactly how you wish to live in it will have a deep resonance. Bespoke joinery in other parts of the house - dressing rooms, wine cellars etc - all made to your specification - will also deliver this profound resonance that you will not get from generic flat pack alternatives.

Curate

Treat your interiors like a display of the smorgasbord of your life. To feel truly at home; somewhere we need to have elements of our personality on show. A one-stop catalogue-shop scheme - however glamorous you may initially feel it is - is never going to feel deeply personal and true to you as the occupier. Challenge your interior designer to incorporate objects from your past and to specify elements within your scheme that have personal relevance.

Embrace a sustainable element

Bringing reclaimed items into your interiors scheme infuses an immediate 'always been here' grounding rightness to a scheme. Where possible ask your designer to consider sourcing some reclaimed flooring and antique furniture elements to your interiors.

Natural materials

Opting for natural materials - marble worktops, sisal flooring, linen fabrics, stone flooring, lime plaster etc - provides the frame for an interior that feels like a good and healthy place to live. Non-toxic paints - like Paint and Paper Library, Farrow and Ball and Edward Bulmer also help to reinforce this beneficial sanctuary vibe with paints that are non-reflective and contain no plastics.

Support an Artisan

Consider walls as backdrop for paintings commissioned by up-and-coming artists. Consider windows as an opportunity to source fabric from fabric printed in the UK. Choices like this can have really positive impacts on small businesses and help create a soulful and unique interior.

Please e-mail any interior design quandries and questions to br@bryonyrichardson.com



A considered lighting scheme can elevate both exterior and interior spaces

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Old cutlery takes flight to a new life

Aurum has designs on disused knives, spoons and forks, as Julie and Alexa Blampied, of Aurum Jewellers, told Alasdair Crosby

What a shame people no longer use silver cutlery, mused Julie and Alexa Blampied, at the family firm of Aurum Jewellers, at Charing Cross in town. Spoons and forks just sit around in drawers, barely, if ever used. In due course, they get sold for the cost of scrap silver and maybe end up in an antique shop, sold on for minimal prices.

Well, at Aurum, old cutlery rises phoenix-like from the design crucibles of goldsmith Derek Uren to enjoy a new life in the form of elegant birds.

Meet Peter and Paul, Robin and Honeysuckle, now gracing the showroom of Aurum, all created from cutlery, all fashioned in sterling silver.

Peter and Paul are stylised birds, reminiscent of birds that can be seen every day in the garden; Robin is, of course, a robin; Honeysuckle is a hummingbird, positioned in midair, enjoying a taste of nectar from a flower.

Julie described them: 'It's taken a while to get the concept, depending on the cutlery available. Everything we use is old table silverware, except for the birds' legs, which are silver wire. The body, the wings and the tail are all made from spoons and forks. It's nice to give somebody's beloved cutlery a new lease on life.

'I think we've all got cutlery at home that we have been given or inherited. If you like, we have upcycled old cutlery, or, as we prefer to put it, "rewilded" it.



‘Obviously, it’s something very new for us, very different. We thought it was a perfect way to showcase what we can create. We are not deviating from our main professional function of making jewellery; this was just a bit of a playful exercise for us, just to see what we could create if we wanted to.’

‘We’ve had some fun and enjoyed the challenge of the creative craftsmanship.’

The head of Robin is the back of a spoon, and his red breast is from a spoon’s decorative embellishment. The more detailed the cutlery, the more embellishment can be incorporated in the pieces. The flower from which Honeysuckle is drawing the nectar is silver and enamel. Local wood forms the base that supports the birds, the ‘branch’. Each piece is unique, of course.

‘These are not so much sales items, more a reminder to people of our workshop, the craftsmanship, and the talent we have available in our team of designers. Currently, we are excited to be working on our new fine jewellery collection, which is in its early stages and will be launched later in the year.’

Aurum are not the only creative jewellers or artists to make animals out of metal, as Alexa readily points out.

‘These are sterling silver, she said. ‘We have seen similar items, such as garden ornaments or animals and birds made from steel, sometimes created on a bigger scale... but silver is much nicer to work with.’

‘Our longest-standing goldsmith, Derek Uren, has been with us for over 40 years. He is our head craftsman, and these birds are his babies. He looks at the cutlery and sees how he can put them together. He is very, very talented. He makes sketches of how he thinks the pieces would work best. Once he knows exactly what he is doing, it probably takes him a few days to create each bird.’

Julie added: ‘This really started as festive fun with Robin. Then along came Peter and Paul, and then Honeysuckle. A lot of our work is centred around people coming into our showroom, wanting to commission something specific. Alexa is given the parameters of what she needs to design; the goldsmiths then need to create what she has drawn.’

“ We’ve had some fun and enjoyed the challenge of the creative craftsmanship



We do commissions all the time. But for the goldsmiths, it is quite rare just to be given free rein, to create anything they fancy.’

So, that is the answer to what to do with rarely used silver spoons and forks.

Julie and Alexa were asked: ‘So, what about fish knives?’ They seemed quite taken with the idea.

‘That would be great, if we could find enough of them. Wouldn’t the blades make beautiful wings?!’

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The story told by your blood

By Dr Effie Liakopoulou of Jersey Haematology

Blood is an extraordinary organ. It sustains life by carrying oxygen and nutrients to every cell, while safeguarding us through its complex immune defences. It is also a mirror of health: subtle changes in the blood often provide the earliest clues that something in the body is amiss. When blood itself is affected, the consequences can be far-reaching, influencing vitality, resilience, and even longevity.

In Jersey, many people experience fatigue, anaemia, or iron deficiency without ever identifying the underlying cause. These symptoms are frequently accepted as part of modern life, yet a straightforward consultation and tailored treatment can, in many cases, restore wellbeing with remarkable results.



Specialist expertise on the island

Jersey Haematology was established to bring world-class haematology expertise directly to our island community. Under the direction of Dr Effie Liakopoulou, an internationally recognised consultant haematologist, the clinic offers immediate access to advanced diagnostics, targeted treatments such as iron infusions and venesections, and comprehensive support for those living with complex or chronic blood conditions.

Our ethos is to deliver the standard of care one might expect in a leading international centre, while ensuring it is available locally, discreetly, and without delay.

Individualised, seamless care

We collaborate closely with local GPs and, where appropriate, international colleagues to design the most effective treatment pathways for each individual. Whether recovering from illness, managing a long-term condition, or seeking clarity on persistent fatigue, patients are guided through a highly personalised process of diagnosis and treatment.

Often, the outcome is transformative. Correcting a simple imbalance such as iron deficiency can restore energy, concentration, and quality of life in ways that many never thought possible.

A clinic with a philosophy

At Jersey Haematology, we believe that exceptional care should combine scientific precision with compassion. Each patient's journey is unique, and we dedicate time to listening, explaining, and supporting every step.

For those who value both excellence and accessibility, Jersey Haematology provides the reassurance of specialist care here at home.

To learn more, please visit www.jerseyhaematology.com, contact the clinic directly, or ask your GP about referral

What is 'a good education'? and what should be its purpose?

Would-be Education Commissar Alasdair Crosby has the last word (for once)



As the special theme of this issue of RURAL magazine is 'Educating Young Islanders about the Countryside', this question is an appropriate one to ask.

One of the important things about a countryside education is that it should not just be 'an add-on' to schoolwork, like a school chess club or drama club, but be an integral part of a child's or young adult's schooling.

There are several unarguable aspects to a good education on which everyone could agree. It should not be entirely about the accumulation of academic facts, for example, or be just an exam factory, or be all about I.T. and squatting over a computer immersed in the virtual reality of the on-line world. Nor should it be about how to use AI to do one's thinking for one – that miserific vision is the polar opposite to what real education should be about.

For several centuries, a university education provided further learning for the cream of academically gifted school leavers. More recently, it has become almost expected that the vast majority of school-leavers should attend some sort of college of further education.

After two or three years at Beste-Le-Hole University (formerly Technical College), they leave with a degree and find that their qualification has not enabled them to find the job that they had once expected to find with relative ease. And, if they are UK citizens, they are also saddled with considerable debts that will take decades to repay.

Might there be a better way to educate the young and to equip them for a useful and satisfying adult life?

In my ideal world, young children would be helped to understand reading books, writing and arithmetic. Stories of young children swiping at a book as if it were a phone screen, because they don't know how to turn a page, the appalling ignorance of spelling and grammar that one seems to find in many official or public communications ('Oh, we did spell-check it before releasing the communication'), and shop assistants reaching for a calculator to work out the price of 5 items at £2 each, would become part of the horror story of 'the bad old days' before Crosby became the Commissar for Education.

Those children whose aptitude for academic success and facility for passing exams has been spotted could always proceed up the educational ladder, just as they do at present. We will always continue to need doctors, teachers, engineers, architects and similar professionals.

But, for all ability levels, Commissar Crosby would dictate that education was based on handicrafts, the arts, and agriculture. The aim of this would be that every child should leave school with some working knowledge of all the crafts that are worth practising, and of agriculture and stockmanship, but also with a very good knowledge of one particular craft.

Thus the system would turn out educated craftsmen and craftswomen, young adults who could produce their own family's food from their own holdings, if need be, and far less regularly have to rely on purchases from the shops.

At the same time, such a smallholder society would be largely composed of members who could turn their hand to one skilled craft, to produce superbly some article that their neighbours wanted.

The other stream of education would be the making of art, teaching children to sing, to play instruments, to make instruments, to paint, to weave to pot, to sculpt, to carve, to make up songs, to compose poetry. All these activities make for happiness, for people well integrated in their local society and for true culture as opposed to imposed culture.

Would not this be better than to than producing young adults, their heads stuffed with facts and figures, their fingers skilled at nothing but pressing buttons, or slaves to notions of wealth produced by the chimera of screens full of flashing figures, and totally divorced from the earth, that profound source of natural wealth, health and happiness?

For a small community like Jersey, such an alternative education would benefit both the Island and young people, and the local economy.

Oh well, I am most unlikely ever to be made a Commissar of Education, so everyone can breathe a sigh of relief and carry on using their phones.

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