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Welcome



Today it's January 15th. The sweetly smiling weather girl on Sky News has just told us with more positivity than called for that we're in for a week of cold, wet and icy winds from the frozen north. It's enough to make you take to your duvet for the rest of

January. By the time we've finished compiling this magazine however, got it printed and distributed it to you, we'd like to think that spring is but a lamb's hop and a skip away. Let's hope so at any rate.

Between these pages we'd also like to think that there's a modicum of warm-hearted articles to keep you snug. If you fancy the languorous temperatures of Italy, then we can recommend Italian language lessons with Rosemarie at inavanti Learning Solutions. Or if it's real warmth and comfort you're after then you've only to pay a visit to Tony DeFusto's company Avanti Windows to see how they can keep the heat in and the cold out, after all he knows a thing or two about Italy's temperate zones. Even Floor Designs can inspire you in ways to keep your feet warm.

Our aim though is always to give a comprehensive cross-section of businesses that bring positivity to our town.

Finally before you get stuck into Grantham Now, how do you fancy being a member of our army of distributors? It's a good way to earn money and keep fit. We do have rounds coming available every so often, so why not be on the list so we can fix you up with some earning potential? We're looking for responsible people to get our magazine out there; if that's you, we'd love to hear from you.

Enjoy the spring and we'll see you in the summer.
All the best

Andrea & Richard Coppin

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Grantham Then

By Malcolm G Knapp

Malcolm's interesting book 'A Grantham Walk-About' makes even the smallest street seem fascinating. This time we walk with him down Guildhall Street, a route we often drive down in a few seconds oblivious to the changes it's gone through or the history woven around it. Malcolm however is the master at unearthing little historical gems and once again he's done us proud with this minor thoroughfare.

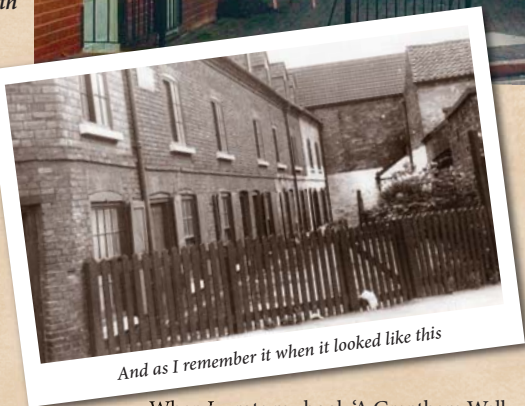
Ask anyone today who knows Grantham reasonably well where the Guildhall is and they'll direct you to St. Peter's Hill and show you the fine façade of that imposing Victorian building. The puzzling thing for many people is why Guildhall Street has that particular name when it's so far away from St. Peter's Hill. This is where history likes to play little tricks on us. If you go for a pint of beer at the 'The Goose' (even that's changed; it used be called 'The Goose at the Bank'), you'll be standing where for many years people went to put in or draw out their money, as this building was in fact Barclays Bank. Long before it became a financial business however, this building was once The Guildhall. So now things are beginning to make sense.

Even the name of the street has gone through a few changes. High up on a wall at the west end of Guildhall Street is a street name made of slate; Blue Lane it says. Why Blue you ask? This is to do with the once powerful Manners family. They were Liberals and in those days the colour of the Liberals was blue. The Manners practically owned the entire street in the 1800s, so Blue Lane it became. So influential were the Manners in fact that a great many pubs and other streets were prefixed with 'Blue'; The Blue Bull, Blue Gate and Blue Court to name but three.

Long before then the street was known as Old Shop Lane. Was this because there were a great many old shops on it? Well, there might well have been but that's not the reason. If you are familiar with the phrase 'To be shopped', you'll know that it means to be betrayed to the police and put in gaol. Old Shop Lane therefore was where the town gaol was situated; enough room to detain thirty prisoners. In those days prison was not a cushy number. To keep the prisoners occupied they erected a treadmill in the prison in 1823. Depending on your crime you could spend hours walking inside the treadmill just like a hamster!



Blue Court as it looks today.



And as I remember it when it looked like this

When I wrote my book 'A Grantham Walk-About' in 1981, I described Blue Court as follows: 'This unhappy row of late 18th century houses is all that now remains of an 'L' shaped development of eleven houses that curved into a much larger Rowley Court. This was all altered later to give Guildhall Street its present route'. Today I'm glad to say that it's a thriving set of individual shops with a cafe at the far end. It doesn't look so unhappy now. Even the Knightingales Cafe was once a store for wines and spirits dating back to 1878. A lot of what I wrote about back then has now been superseded by modern developments and some of the features I described at that time are no more.

Guildhall Street isn't very long, but you'd have to agree, it's got quite a long history attached to it. We're off down Westgate next time where there's more history to explore!

The original Guildhall, from which the lane got one of its many names



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Itching to get rid of shingles

It's hard to imagine a scorching hot day as we climb out of the winter cold, but one day in June last year we had a Saharan heat wave which for most of us was just what we wanted. For Alicia Swaithe the warmth was uncomfortable as she drove her car along the road. Quite naturally she turned her air conditioning on and was met by a flow of super heated air instead, and she realised that the cooling system had failed. She remembers cursing the red lights that seemed to crop up all too regularly and by the time she arrived at her destination she was in a high state of heat fatigue.

Well, she got out into the warmth of a beating sun and began to walk. The next thing she remembered was picking herself up off the ground; she'd fainted and fallen. Worse still her arm had become entangled in her glasses' chain around her neck during the fall so that when she'd impacted the road her elbow had slammed into her ribs; she'd also hit her head on the tarmac. Understandably Alicia was shaken up and in a lot of pain. What followed over the next few days was not a gradual recovery but an acute attack of shingles; immensely painful going from her left eye, over her skull and round the back of her head. It was agonising to touch; even allowing hair to stroke the skin was unbearable. Sleep was almost impossible too, even her ability to walk properly had been impaired.

Her doctor gave her a cocktail of five different pills to manage the pain side of things and a mixture of oils and creams for the skin irritation. The big worry was that the shingles would move beyond the skin itself and invade her left eye. It was a great concern for a while that she would have become blinded if that had occurred. It was a very difficult time to live through and Alicia is quite adamant that she would have done anything to get better. Life closed in on her usual



Alicia and David, the couple who defeated shingles, along with five thousand years of Chinese medical knowhow of course!

vivacious personailty and she became a self-made recluse just to cope. Even eating had lost its appeal and she began to become very thin and drawn. Trying to stop scratching the affected area became a daily battle. Oddly enough the way ahead came through the experience of David, Alicia's husband. Previously David's back pain had been cured through acupuncture and so he suggested they nip into Grantham to see what the Chinese Herbcare and Acupuncture Centre on the High Street could do. David had gone in

for acupuncture in great pain and poor mobility. After just one session he'd felt as if he could have jumped over a wall. Everything hung on what acupuncture could do for Alicia.

She arrived looking very frail and grey and lay on the couch hoping this would be her salvation. Dr. Ma, the centre's resident practitioner placed the micro-thin needles in Alicia's brow and the back of her ear. After the first session a great amount of pain had begun to fade. The Chinese medicine in pill form did the rest, putting back into her body the necessary elements that were needed to reverse the illness. Amazingly it all worked. There's no sign that the shingles had ever been there, she's putting on weight and feeling like meeting people again. More importantly she has rediscovered the vibrant sense of herself, much to the delight of her husband, who feels as if he's finally got the woman he loves back again. Together they faced this awful illness as a team and with a bit of ancient Chinese knowhow managed to find a way back to health and happiness once more.



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My very first lesson in Italian

By Richard Coppin

Like many people I have little or no memory of learning to speak. The best I can recall is listening to my parents in conversation and hearing words that meant nothing to me; longer words beyond my limited vocabulary. If I cast my mind back I knew that I had so much more to pick up, but without any pressure, in the fun of an idyllic childhood, my knowledge of English grew. I know that I even somewhat enjoyed it when I recollect those far off days.

That's why when Rosemarie of inavanti Learning Solutions invited me to take part in one of her Italian language lessons I jumped at the chance. One damp evening in January I went along and met her and one of her students Angela Sutton.

Rosemarie is a very welcoming lady, offering us a variety of refreshments, with tea and coffee (I love Kit Kats and biscuits) and soon we were sufficiently relaxed to begin.

Rosemarie teaches languages in a way that I wish my senior school had adopted. My French lessons were a mixture of reading and writing, going through alien grammar rules; we even had a language laboratory complete with tape decks and headphones, it looked more like mission control and it bored me silly.

Rosemarie has developed her methods however over many years, infusing them with common sense, good coaching, an emphasis on motivated effort on the part of the student, but a great deal of fun nonetheless. We were both asked what we wanted to learn to say in Italian. Angela and I pretty well agreed that learning to ask for things and how to greet people was a good way to start and so that's how we proceeded. I don't want to go into the finer points of Rosemarie's lesson except to say that she was brilliant at bringing out the best from us. We pretended that we were sitting at separate tables in a cafe and learned how to order a tea and a coffee. The play-acting imagined that we finally met and we learned to say hello and what our names were.

Within my own mind, for I can only speak for myself, I felt like a child again; unsure and somewhat vulnerable in a safe kind of way, with my usual supply of self-confidence set aside for a while. It was actually quite liberating to put my trust in my teacher just as I had done as a four year old umpteen years ago. After all, I had arrived with an open mind and this had served me well. Just like the infant 'me' had done, I was hearing strange words; trying them out without a clue how they were spelt or why they came in the order they did. I simply accepted them until it began to become a part of me. As I write this the following morning I can still say in my primitive Italian head; 'I want', 'my name is', even 'a tea with milk please'. In a strange way this has gone beyond mere remembrance;



Angela finding my attempts at Italian pronunciation a little amusing and to be honest so did I. By the time our lesson was over however we were beginning to feel a sense of fluency. What great fun it was too.

these phrases roll of my tongue just as if I was thinking about how cold and dull it is outside right now. It's very rewarding and satisfying, making me realise that Rosemarie's system is so special. I know too that if I carried this on over a serious length of time my 'oneness' with Italian would blossom. I feel that if I became a long-term student then by this time next year I could have meaningful conversations with other students in my group.

In fact Angela and I were able to have a very simple chat with each other; we greeted each other, said who we were and that it was a pleasure to make each other's acquaintance. Rosemarie as the 'waitress' then came and took our order; Angela had a coffee with sugar but no milk and I had a tea with sugar and milk, then being the polite people we are, we said thank you. This was all done eventually without help from Rosemarie; not bad for an hour's work. Oh yes, we had to work; our brains were never still for a moment. It was however highly enjoyable, satisfying our desire for personal development and giving us a language lesson far better than any I've ever had. Why not try it? You'll never know what you're missing.

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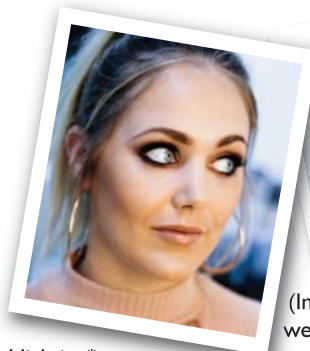


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Don't be a technophobe; call Superman

They say that a dog is not just for Christmas, and they'd be right of course. Your dog will give you so much joy and satisfaction but at the same time you soon discover that you have a lot to learn too. The same is true of a computer; using a PC is brilliant for looking into things which interest you, for researching a hobby or booking a holiday but not all of us though are gifted enough with an in-built knowledge of how to use this wonder machine; and just like our four-legged friend; it seems we have a lot to learn about computers too.

If like many people you've thrown your hands up in defeat, then please put them down, people will think you're in the middle of a hold-up. Instead, call Grantham Computer Centre and ask them for advice. You probably didn't know that they're able to send someone out to show you how to drive your computer, but they do. Richard Creedy, who's also a master computer repair expert, of which more presently, can easily guide you through getting on the internet, surfing the World Wide Web; he'll even show you how to switch your machine on and turn it off or show you how to print things. They're very helpful like that at Grantham Computer Centre. In no time at all you'll be getting really stuck in. Chances are you'll soon be able to help your mates who are scratching their heads over their own computer question. Like anything in life though, things

Richard Creedy; the man to call when you need the right kind of computer help and advice.



can go wrong and when they do it's good to have someone standing by to sort things out. When it comes to your computer Richard Creedy is on hand like a Marvel superhero to save the day. Maybe you'll have been hit by a virus, or perhaps you're worried about being infected by one. Sometimes you'll find you need more memory or else the machine might be slowing down too much. To many of us aspects like this represent the irksome part of owning a computer. However with just one phone call to Grantham Computer Centre you'll soon have Richard flying out to your home to find the cause of the problem and fix it, there and then in most cases. He can install antivirus software to keep you protected he can even streamline the inner workings of your machine to speed it up if it's getting sluggish. In some cases he can do a better job by calling and collecting your computer to bring it back to his workshop. In instances where you've lost data for example, he can often as not re-discover it and retrieve it for you.

The thing to remember is to never say die; just pick up the phone and get the help you need.

For those of you who have had a laptop as a Christmas present you'll find this kind of help invaluable. Maybe you've not even dared to take it out of the box. For your part, all you need to do is find a place to put it; near a mains socket is the best place in a convenient part of the room. Secondly, call Richard at Grantham Computer Centre and arrange for him to visit you. You'll be amazed at the service you receive and before long you'll be able to find all kinds of things using your computer. Richard will show you how to e-mail your friends. It always gives him a thrill to see your first e-mail reply. Bit by bit it will come as second nature to write to friends this way, or to arrange a meet up at a favourite restaurant. Learning how to do all this with Richard's great help and advice can enable anyone to become computer literate and in so doing, open up a whole new and exciting world.



Grantham Computer Centre
Tel: 01476 404400
12 Guildhall St, Grantham
www.thegcc.co.uk

In a galaxy..

...not far away

Imagine you're this alien approaching Earth after travelling thousands of light years to get here. It's fair to say that you'd be a bit peckish, so you beam down and find yourself at the Galaxy Fish Bar just off Trent Road in Grantham.

You've chosen this place because the aroma of freshly fried fish and chips attracted you out of orbit. Martin Richards who knows a thing or two about creating mouth watering food isn't a bit surprised to find a wide-eyed being from another world dropping into his Fish Bar; his human customers come in all shapes and sizes too! 'What'll it be Sir,' he asks, 'Fish and Chips, a Steak and Kidney Pie, maybe a chicken burger and mushy peas, chicken breast wraps, nuggets, or how about a kebab, a wrap or a tasty meat tray?' Well, not understanding the language yet you take your knobbly finger and point to something nice. 'Ah, yes Sir, our Big Foot Pork Sausage, and a stellar choice if you don't mind me saying,' says Martin. Being an alien being you're able to detect quite a bit about the food

being freshly cooked here. You can tell that the fish are prime examples of Atlantic cod and haddock, deep steaks of solid, white meat wrapped in a delicious batter. You can see an option for smaller meals and realise that humans begin their lives as tinier creatures. These kids' meals are priced at just £3 which is perfect for an alien as little as you. The

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chips you can tell are grown locally in Lincolnshire soil. They arrive at the Galaxy Fish Bar straight out of the ground, are washed, peeled, made into chips and freshly fried to perfection.

Your time-shift sensor tells you that there has been a fish & chip shop here for twenty seven years. Martin took it over in 1st December last year and has brought his highly acclaimed

'Indulgence Delivered' business here too where the yummiest cakes are delivered straight to your door whenever you want. Talking of delivering, Galaxy Fish Bar will deliver their delicious food within a three mile radius of the shop, which virtually covers all of Grantham. Deliveries begin at 5pm, seven days a week and costs

between £1.00 and £1.50. Well it's haddock and chips for you in the end. Off you go, back to your AF901 B Series spacecraft and head off to Alpha Centauri to tell them about the great Fish Bar you've just discovered. After analytical tasting you have to agree, the fish & chips from the Galaxy Fish Bar are simply out of this world.

Galaxy FISH BAR

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Tel: 01476 40 20 10

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At Tudors Restaurant and Wine Bar we make sure you have a delightful experience to savour. First of all you're warmly welcomed into our ground floor wine bar; a place where you can enjoy a favourite tippie of your choice or wind-down with a finely prepared cocktail before heading to our main restaurant upstairs. Once there the sight of our oak panelled rooms spanned by age-old beams mingles with the aromas of fine cuisine pervading from the kitchen to tantalise your expectations yet further. A glance at our menu gives you a delectable choice of starters, main courses and desserts. If you're visiting with family or friends you can be assured of a high standard of table waiting service, allowing the freedom to let conversation flow as you wallow in the delights of spending time with those whom you love.

When our Tudor building was a new addition to Grantham, along what had just become The Old Great North Road, you'd have discovered an entirely different menu. The juicy steaks that we serve today would have been soaked in salt to keep them fresh in Tudor times or else hung for several days to let the meat 'mature'. During dinner, you'd even have grabbed the food with your fingers, slicing bits off with a sharp knife; table forks were yet to be introduced to England. Meat like this could just as easily have come from oxen, deer, calves, wild boar or rabbit. Failing that you might have ordered a slice of badger or pig. Any chicken you'd have found on your plate would have been scratching round in a farmyard only a few hours before. A quick bit of butchery and a busy time plucking out the feathers would have been done before the cook got hold of it and boiled it ready to eat.

Other poultry came in the shape of pheasants when in season or pigeon, sparrow, heron, crane, pheasant, woodcock, partridge, blackbirds and even peacock.

It's all a far cry from the sophisticated kind of dining which we like to lavish on our customers today. The ambience of the surroundings certainly lends itself to making you feel prepared for something special. In the winter months a roaring log fire crackles and glows its warmth into our hearts as well as our bodies. Then as the frosty days give way to springtime your dining table is brightened with light cascading in through the old leaded

windows. A sumptuous delectation of choice is there on the menu at your command which arrives in good time; all piping hot, full of flavour and succulent texture, brought to your table by waiting staff who have your dining pleasure uppermost in their minds.

The aim is to give you something wonderful to remember, a time which the moment it has passed you'll want to repeat again. This can only be achieved of course with the

warmest welcome, the finest food and the best attention throughout your visit. It's something which we at Tudors, insists upon and take impeccable pride in. You'll leave happily satisfied and ready to enjoy the remainder of your leisure time. Speaking of which, the Tudors were a bit funny about leisure. In 1512 they banned working people from playing sports like tennis, bowls and skittles by law, so that they would play less and work more. We like to think we've struck the right balance here at Tudors; taking the historic name forwards whilst maintaining a firm hold in the dining pleasures of the present day. With that in mind, we hope to be able to serve you with the best we have to offer in the not too distant future.

Opening Hours

Sunday to Monday 9am – 3pm

Tuesday to Saturday 9am – 10pm



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Focus on... Avenue Veterinary Centre

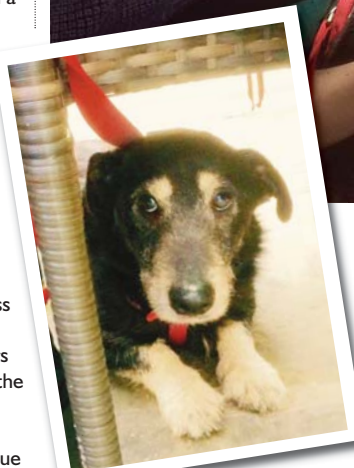
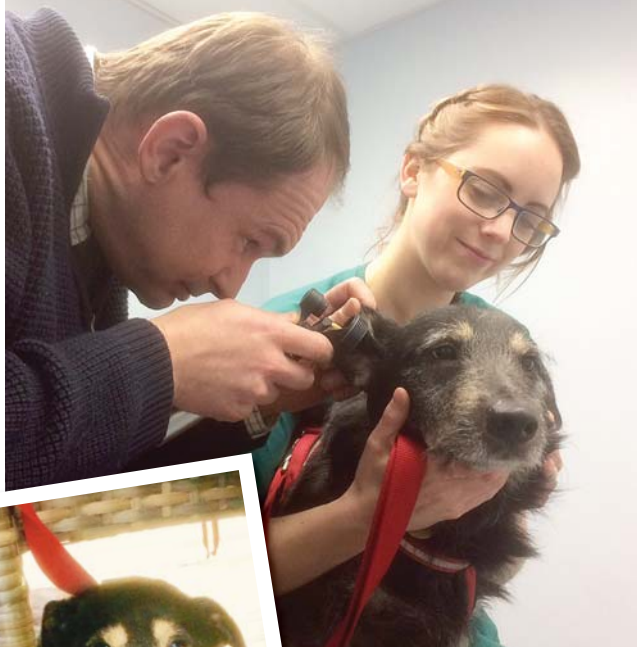
Richard Huddart is having a short break following heart surgery and this time has used a ghost writer to pen the following:

If I was to mention Transylvania to you, what would first flash across your mind? Terrified innkeepers, horse drawn carriages racing through dark forests, eerie castles atop sinister mountains and hidden coffins containing 'you-know who'.

From the land of myths

Well you can add to that a frightened little dog called Flynn, a rescue dog who just happens to have been born in Transylvania in the centre of modern-day Romania. Flynn is a young male who seems to have all kinds of breeds in his make-up; Dachshund crossed with Jack Russell, a touch of German Shepherd in his face and Basset Hound judging by his front feet. For days he quietly sat in his new home not daring to move or play with his pristine toys. One can only guess at the dreadful experiences he'd had to endure throughout his young life. Gradually though he took to his new owners and settled into what to him must have been a paradise. Going for walks is a different matter altogether. He snaps and growls at other dogs even if they're on the far side of the road. Was he set upon by a pack of dogs in his past feral life or was he baited in organised fights in Romania? We'll never really know. His behaviour is definitely triggered by fear which can only be overcome with patience, kindness and training. One of the first things the owners did when they bought him from the Halfway House Dog Sanctuary in Collingham near Newark was to get him registered with the Avenue

Veterinarian Matthew Payne gives Flynn a thorough ear examination with the help of nurse Kelly Perry.



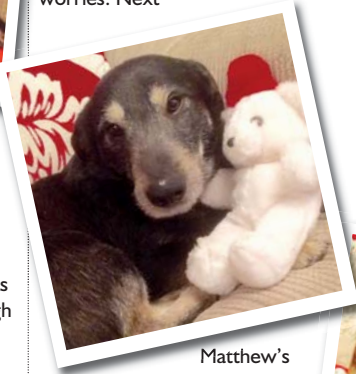
Veterinary Centre. Matthew Payne, a vet who's been with the practice since 1998, took a good look at him to assess his age and state of health especially the condition of his joints. The next thing he did was to scan his chip which checked out correctly. He could also see from his 'Dog Passport' that all of his inoculations, as well as his



worming and flea treatments had been done since coming to the UK. Seeing this made us all wonder what a piece of luck he'd had getting into this country alive and well.

The passport stated that Flynn was two years old, and after a thorough check of his teeth Matthew was happy to agree. The check up continued with a palpation of Flynn's abdomen. This is a good way to spot any tumours or

hernias. He then had his feet, eyes and ears seen to; along with a quick check of his breath which might have indicated any digestive worries. Next

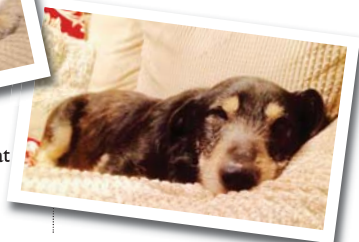


Matthew's stethoscope confirmed that his lungs and heart were of sound condition. Thankfully

Flynn passed his medical with flying colours.

The owners left the surgery safe in the knowledge that they had acquired a young and healthy dog to care for and welcome into their family.

Bit by bit, Flynn has felt more and more settled in his new home compared to when he initially arrived there on his first bewildering day. At least the owners know that he's in good physical shape thanks to the comprehensive check up we gave him.



On site 24 hour emergency service available at reduced prices for our regular clients.

OUR PET HEALTHCARE PLAN

As you can expect, pets like Flynn are the mainstay of our practice, along with cats and rabbits. Looking after your pet is our top priority which is why we've set up our Pet Healthcare Plan. This helps to spread the veterinary cost to clients over each year as well as giving you savings on things like vaccinations, worm and flea treatments as well as big discounts on other fees too. We also offer Puppy and Kitten Packages and out of town emergency care at our own premises (the only practice to offer such a service). All this combines to create a top class service for the pets of Grantham. Were you impressed Flynn. He's barking happily, so we'll take that as a yes!

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Testimonial

Dear Rachel and Paul,

We are delighted with our lovely new kitchen which was converted from a garage. The planning process was great fun as we shared lots of ideas with the ever-patient Paul before coming up with the final design. The work which followed was completed on time and with the minimum of fuss and mess. Paul's team was really efficient and worked to a high standard and tight schedule. Our new kitchen works well, looks good and came in on budget; it has been much admired and we have recommended Estu Designs to several friends. The after-sales service has been excellent, nothing is too much trouble!

Pam and Tony Townsend

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Read All About It

By Richard Coppin

Well, now Archie and the Boss know Amelia to be a 'what' and not a 'whom'; an aeroplane no less and they've just got out of Grabham Manor and arrived at the Boss' house with this nugget of information to do with as they see fit. And that just it, what do they do? With the breaking of dawn, the time has come for planning to unfold.

Chapter Twenty-One

The morning began for Archie with the sound of whistling. 'Hearts of Oak' was the tune and it was being performed with gusto. When his eyes opened he beheld a room laid out with such precision and order he felt guilty even moving the sheets to get out of bed. As if obeying a command without words, he made the bed back to what he hoped was its usual recumbent state. Once dressed, he ventured into the landing where paintings of sailing ships and naval battles were hung. The whistling, now louder, came from behind a door that Archie immediately assumed was the bathroom; taking his assumption from the echoing aspect of the melody's acoustic quality.

"Good morning, Sir," said Archie.

The whistling stopped, followed by the sound of an instant disturbance of bath water.

"It certainly is my dear fellow," said the Boss. "You've no idea."

"Something I should know?"

"I'll tell you over breakfast," replied the Boss. "Do you want fried eggs and bacon or porridge?"

"Fried eggs and bacon, please," said Archie.

At this request, Archie heard the rattle of something metal, followed by the sound of blowing. Far away, somewhere on the ground floor Archie could just hear the faint sound of a whistle blowing. The distant, muffled voice of a lady could be made out answering, upon which the Boss ordered two eggs and bacon and a pot of tea.

After a vigorous amount of splashing and a brief moment of silence, the bathroom door flew open and there stood Noel Blockhead in his dressing gown, slippers on and his hair sticking up after just being towel dried. Archie had never seen his Boss like this before and was lost for words. The Boss didn't give him chance to form any and made haste to another room. "Come on Archie, you've got to see this," and he led his protégé into his bedroom. Here was another chamber so military in its precision. A dresser stood near the window where brushes and combs were set in exact locations. There was an old oak wardrobe, next to which was a long black wooden chest. On the side was a shiny, brass plate, inscribed with the words Captain

N. R. Blockhead R. N. The bed was a huge four poster with drapes that hung from a pelmet edged with decorative tassels. Nothing was out of place except for the folder that had been removed from the aeroplane the night before. The Boss grabbed it and spread its contents on the counterpane.

"What do you make of this stuff my boy?" he said; his eyes on Archie, who bent nearer to take a closer look. He recognised the map with the chinagraph pencil marks on it, but there were half a dozen photographs too, taken from a high altitude that showed the town of Grabham far below, mainly focussing on the great factory, the town's main employer; the vast complex of buildings that formed the Mayor building company. Archie picked up the map and followed the lines marked on it. A red line showed three sizeable rectangles placed adjacent to the main factory buildings, whilst a black one showed a dotted line that flowed back and forth over the map as if suggesting a route of some kind. Upon this line were six crosses placed at intervals. Finally, as if cutting through the rectangles, a thick blue line was drawn in a robust and heavy manner.

"What do you make of it?" said the Boss combing his hair.

Archie picked up the photographs and compared them to the map.

"These crosses seem to indicate where the photographs were taken judging by the position of the factory buildings. They must have been taken by that Aeroplane. I don't know what the red rectangles are though.

"I do, I think. They're the proposed new buildings for the factory. I've been hearing talk about a new brick kiln. And this blue line I fancy is the line of where the Frogmarch's want to build their road."

"Well I'll be blowed!" said Archie. "So they're hatching a plan too."

"Intriguing, hey?"

"Not half, Sir," said Archie amazed as the picture of local politics began to develop. His ruminations were interrupted by a razor being thrust into his hand.

"Get a quick shave, wash and brush up," said Blockhead. "And meet me in the dining room in five minutes. We've got plans to make."

This struck Archie as a seminal moment. It was the first time he'd been invited to actually take part in the planning of things and that, taken with the surroundings of the Boss' house, made him feel that he was finally on the road to manhood.

When Archie arrived downstairs he came face to face with the voice that the Boss had been communicating with from his bath. It appeared to be his housekeeper. He hadn't dared to imagine what kind of creature Blockhead had been in contact with via his speaking tube earlier. It was just as well. Gone were visions of a sombre middle-aged valet, an oversized fish wife with bosom to match or a naval rating from his days at sea. All imaginings evaporated as he beheld the sweetest English Rose he'd ever see; a young woman in the prime of her loveliness.

"Meet Elizabeth," said Blockhead as he sat down at a large, well-worn table, "Me only daughter, God bless her." The Boss took a napkin and thrust it into his shirt collar. "Lizzy me dear, this is Archibald Crimm. He's a photographer; stayed overnight on account of a late job we had to do. Is that breakfast ready yet? I could eat a porcupine's eyeballs."

"You are silly Daddy," she said with a voice as soft as silk. "Good morning Mr. Crimm." And she handed out two plates of bacon and eggs to accompany the toast, butter, marmalade and tea already present.

"Good morning Miss Blockhead," said Archie like a lost soul; lost in wonder

"Right, that's enough billing and cooing young man. Have the morning papers come Lizzy?"

"I'll go and see," she said.

The Boss stove into his bacon and eggs as if he were demolishing the plate.

"So, Archie my boy," he said with his mouth full, "What would you do with information like this? Tell you what I'll rephrase that. Now you know about the Anderson Plan and this juicy piece of intelligence, where would you go from here?"

Archie placed a modest piece of bacon in his mouth, chewed and thought.

"Same thing anyone would do with a couple of sticks of dynamite; make explosions," said Archie, unable to think any deeper.

The Boss belted out a laugh that filled the room.

"I couldn't have put it better myself," he said when he'd calmed down. "Ah, but the question is; how?"

Back and forth ideas flowed. Blockhead's notions were full of intrigue and strategy. Archie's on the other hand were fragments of ideas which mainly wanted to cause mischief; any mischief just for the fun of it. And then Archie said that it might be a good idea if they waited until there were more developments. He mentioned that a clearer picture would form; they'd know how

each was playing one off against the other. He became prosaic, talking of more sticks of dynamite, and a bigger bang, so to speak. The Boss listened intently on Archie's little speech and when he'd done, sat back and beheld 'his' young man.

"My word Archie," he began, "And to think you'd have wasted all your days in the Comp. Room."

"What do you reckon though Sir?"

"It's a runner all right, only we have to know when to 'light our fuse' to borrow your metaphor, and what kind of 'bang' we want to make. The latter will become clearer as events unfold. But we must be ready with a few choice methods."

"What, like exposing the story in the paper?"

"That depends on who we expose. If little 'Amelia the aeroplane' was exposed as an agent of the Frogmarch family, we might as well shut the Advertiser down here and now," said Blockhead.

"Then how about exposing the Anderson Plan?" suggested Archie.

"I'm not sure. Something tells me that all we'd end up with is a legal wrangle and a wasted opportunity."

"It's all down to timing," said Archie failing to out-think his Boss. "We have to know when both parties have stuck their necks out too far and then....Kaboom, knock 'em both out together."

"Good gracious Archie dear fellow; read a lot of melodramas and Penny Dreadfuls perchance?" said the Boss.

"Sherlock Holmes Sir; oh, he's top notch. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; he's the writer for me. The chap's a whizz character; always comes out on top he does; Holmes I mean."

"You surprise me at every turn," said the Boss.

"I'll lend you my copy of; '*His Last Bow*,'" said Archie eager to prove his literary leanings. "It's very good; all about German spies during the War and how Holmes and Watson out-foxed them."

"Thank you dear chap," said the Boss slurping his tea, "I'd love to read your book. We could all benefit from a learned man like Holmes, eager to educate us in the ways of out-foxing I fancy."

"Elementary, my dear Boss," said Archie, attempting to lengthen the lease on his display of maturity.

"Good man," said the Boss smiling at the effects of his mentoring. "We'll do as you think and wait, a short while mind. Now let's get off to work."

Blockhead popped the folder in his safe, kissed his daughter on the forehead, allowed Archie to shake her gently by the hand and off they went to the Newspaper office in Blockhead's car. What a night it had been.

Now what will 'Midshipman' Crimm be involved in next!



A Q&A about Wills

with Emily Lister

Here's a question for you. How many people in the UK don't have a Will? Incredibly, it's three out of five would you believe. So many myths and untruths surround Wills and often people believe that a private agreement, lovingly made, will be enough to take care of things when we die. Not so; the state gets involved if you don't have a Will. I thought I'd share with you five of the most common questions we're asked at JMP about Wills. See if you know the correct answer.

Q I made a Will five years ago but got married in December 2017. Does this mean that I'll have to re-write my Will?

A Getting married revokes any previous Will. Your assets will now automatically pass on to your spouse who's now your next of kin. That's good to know, isn't it?

Q My partner and I have lived together now for years and believe that a marriage certificate wouldn't change our relationship. Even though we're both independent, we feel that sharing everything is one of those unwritten rules. What does the law say with respect to having a Will?

A If you've not got a Will, the 'Rules of Intestacy' will not recognise your 'Common-Law' partnership. Complex rules will kick in after you die and all of your assets will pass to your next of kin, like your Mum and Dad if they're still alive or else a sibling perhaps. Legally there's no such thing as a 'Common-Law' spouse. If you want to recover any assets, you will need to apply to the Courts.

Q Our kids are under eighteen. Without a Will what would happen to them if, say, we were both killed in a car crash?

A Ughh, what a dreadful thought. It's a rare possibility but worth thinking about. If this were to happen without a Will, your kids would end up in foster care while the courts decide on whom, if anyone is to be their guardian. In a Will you can state who has agreed to take care of them in such a circumstance. Without a Will, money could also be a problem. Make a Will and drive carefully.

Q We are both in a 'second-time-around' marriage (thankfully) and have bought a house together. We do have children from our previous marriages and have had two girls as a married couple ourselves. How does a Will help in this situation?

A If you bought the house as "beneficial joint tenants", the property passes outside your Will and automatically goes to your spouse, in effect disinheriting your children. A safe way to ensure your other children are financially looked after is to own the property as "Tenants in Common" giving both of you an equal share. You can then use your Will to gift your half to whom you choose.

Q I've been thinking about making a Will for ages but have been told that it's mind-bogglingly complicated to do.

A I don't know who told you that, but making a Will is easy. It's like anything in life, the more thought you put into it beforehand, the better a Will is able to serve you. Employ a Will Writer or a solicitor to tie things up properly. At JMP we have a good questionnaire to flag up a number of important points you ought to think about. Completing this saves time when you come to us to put your Will together. It really is that simple. You then forget all about it and get on with living your life.

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Without realizing it, our doors and windows play a massive role in our lives. Every day we pass in and out of the doors to our house, relying on them to keep in the warmth and create safety and security, whilst the natural light which streams through our windows into our homes also keep out the cold, the noise and the intruder.

Most of today's doors and windows are a far cry from what used to be a block of wood swinging on a couple of hinges or a single pane of glass in a timber casement. uPVC construction and state-of-the-art locking mechanisms make contemporary openings reliable on multiple levels. At Avanti Windows and Doors those advances in technology come with a further essential attribute; a thorough, proven and sincere sense of looking after each and every customer.

This has been the mind-set of managing Director Tony DeFusto since the very beginning of Avanti, thirty years ago this year in fact. Back in 1988 there were only two ways to build up new customers; supply and fit the best on the market and look after each customer as if they were all that mattered. Today Tony and his staff can only work this way; it's as if the mantra of 'customer first' has become part of their DNA.

The range of options they offer has grown exponentially too with an ever-increasing choice of frame layouts some with attractive stained-glass designs, to a number of

window and door frame colours complete with increasingly sophisticated locks that have been developed to foil anyone intent on house breaking.

This choice really comes alive when you get Avanti to look into building you a conservatory. They make the job of designing this new room to your home so much fun, looking into the space you have to play with, the options for French Doors and windows, the finials for the ridge, the type of glass available, whether you'd like a central fan to use in the summer or where to locate the heating you'll rely on in the winter, the lighting aspects; it all comes together as a sort of collective enterprise with you in charge of all the decision-making merged with Avanti's expertise and experience making your dream conservatory come true just the way you imagined it.

It can't be stressed enough, but right at the core of what Avanti does, there exists pure

professionalism. "That will do," is never part of the company's thinking. From the moment you make that initial phone call to them, you become the centre of their universe. Whilst they are certainly not the most expensive company around, they're not the cheapest either. The words cheap and nasty are often found linked together; definitely not the Avanti way. What they do offer is excellent value for money coupled with thirty years of superb knowhow and craftsmanship. This makes choosing Avanti a very wise move indeed because every one of us wants to know that whenever we spend our hard-earned money on, it will go towards an end result we'll for ever be pleased with and proud of.

Thirty years is a long time to keep a local business at the top of its game. A local reputation kept in this good shape for so long says a lot about the people who make that company happen. It's fair to say that Avanti would not have endured for three decades without that central seam of gold, that very special yet simple thing; real, sincere and constant customer care.

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Thank goodness that the world we live in was built on the passing-on of experience.

Experience makes us who we are. It makes businesses what they are too. So when you put you and them together and the experience is a good one, then everyone wins. The trick for businesses of course is to make that experience a fantastic one from beginning to end. It's exactly this which makes Floor Designs such a pleasure to do business with; the experience is purposely designed to be a pleasurable one from the moment you hear them say 'hello'.

Often that first voice you hear on the phone or in person at the showroom is that of Kathryn. You might not have a clue what you need or you might have a precise idea about the kind of floor you want. Either way, Kathryn patiently helps you to find the flooring solution you're looking for, be it a carpet, a vinyl laminate, real wood or else the incredible Karndean range they display. It's an exciting experience looking at all the options available, but when you're ready, Floor Designs is ready with the next great experience; getting a date for installing your new floor. Booking in a fitting date is one of those pleasures that make dealing with Floor Designs so good. Their job is to fit in with your life. How many times have you had a company attempt to impose its calendar on you? No, that's not the Floor Designs way; everything revolves around you.

When the fitting day arrives, you'll find craftsmen who are proud of their professionalism ready and

Tricky jobs like this require experienced fitters, just like the professional team at Floor Designs



These tools have seen a lot of skill employed in experienced hands...

keen to make a great job of bringing a new floor to your home. And that's the point; it's

your home and as such they respect it. If this sounds a bit Edwardian and of another age, it's because these ideals should never have gone out of fashion in the first place. Forget the American idea of 'Customer Care' as if it's part of a 'mission statement'; at Floor Designs the mindset of everyone in the company is simply to take pride in doing a great job. So there's no disrespect, no blaring radio and whatever mess is created during the fitting is always nicely cleared away. They'll usually help you put your furniture back where it

belongs afterwards too.

When Floor Designs have left and you feel the new floor beneath

your feet, when you smell its newness and touch the texture with your fingers, when you see how it changes the room for the better and gives it a new character,

then you'll have that great satisfaction to be found at the end of a Floor Designs experience. For these reasons you'll find Floor Designs a busy and dynamic business. Richard Malley who runs Floor Designs travels the length and breadth of the country; the demand for his services being so much sought after. It's taken a great deal of experience to offer you this kind of experience, maybe it's time you experienced it for yourself. You'll find it quite an experience and once experienced, you'll want to experience it again and again.



...usually used by the main man; Richard Malley himself.

Richard Malley

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Prevention is better than cure

By Simon Pell

We all know that aching moment so well; we thrust our car keys into the ignition, give it a twist and hear that pathetic churning noise as the engine fails to start. Often as not we keep trying until the battery dies from the exertion; at which point we curse ourselves for not putting the car in for a service. Little wonder that poor old Basil bashed his car with the branch of a tree on one memorable episode of 'Fawlty Towers'; it can feel like the revenge of the machines when they don't do what they're supposed to.

It's not so easy though to think of our computers as machines in the same way. Neatly encased in their metal boxes they don't appear to have any mechanical aspects to them at all. Why would such an innocent piece of kit need servicing? Well, I'm going to tell you why.

You don't need me to remind you that your PC performs millions of bits of work each second. They're very tiny bits of work I'll grant you, but collectively this effort creates a

great deal of heat. Dust is attracted into the central chip, the hard drive and the rest of the circuitry as well as the small fan which is spinning there to keep cooling air circulating. Usually the main silicon chip has a thin film of gel to dissipate the heat it generates but when a good layer of dust has covered it the heat builds up. Along with a slowdown of the ventilating fan you can sense that your PC is slowing down too. In extreme cases your computer can pack up altogether.

Other kinds of servicing are not so obvious though. Using the motoring metaphor again, just imagine you're on an adventure trip. Naturally you'd take along some jerry cans of spare fuel. In a way you should be doing something similar by saving your data somewhere else. This is something that ought to be done at the end of each day – backing up your data. Cloud storage is best because let's say your house burns down. Any USB memory sticks of backed up data are still going to get destroyed.

With cloud back up your documents and sentimentally valuable photos will still be salvageable. Even away from such an extreme case, let's suppose your computer is hacked; cloud storage is perfect for keeping your data away from this kind of harm.



That brings me nicely on to a topic that is definitely not nice at all; malware. I've lost track of the number of times customers of mine have allowed their virus protection to lapse. In a way this is also part and parcel of your computer's maintenance. Just as you'd make sure your car tyres were fit for purpose, so too should your virus protection be in tip-top shape. All the various kinds of malware can do either temporary or permanent harm to your PC. A service of your system therefore is a good time to make sure that this is in place to do its vital job.

Sometimes, especially when a computer is getting on in years, it will have accumulated a plethora of bits of software. As your computing experience evolves some of this extra stuff is no longer required. A service is a good time to review the things you have on your desktop and to decide what's worth keeping and what you no longer need. Amazingly I find customers in raptures that such a little thing has helped to speed their computer up and elbow in more memory. Tidying up, cleaning out, streamlining and generally giving your PC a good overhaul makes sense when you think about it. Well, now you've thought about it, why not get it done? In the end your computer will love you for it, and you'll be so much happier too.



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Listen up you dogs!

Ah, this is the life you know; long walks in the country, tons of great new smells and then to cap it all my favourite dinner bang on time when I get back to 'The Hotel'. The owners of this place even know how to rub my tummy in the evening, just like my family does at home and play with my favourite toy. Today I went straw rolling in a field. I don't know why this is such great fun; I guess I'm just barking mad.

Actually, that's who arranged for me to stay with John and Helen; Barking Mad of Grantham. Colin and Jacqui who run the company sort everything out for me; I don't have to do much at all; I just jump in the back of the Barking Mad vehicle and in a short while I'm safely settled in a new home ready to begin a great holiday. I haven't a clue why my folks can't stay poor things, but for me it's the start of two weeks of pure doggy bliss.

John and Helen are called hosts (the hosts with the most I call them) and they've been specially chosen to look after me. Their house is on the edge of a village with a secure garden and they have a very comfy home; Colin and Jacqui made sure it was just right for yours truly. All through their lives John and Helen enjoyed the company of dogs until the last one went on the great Dog Walk up there. I can still pick up their scents here and there if I sniff hard enough. Anyway, now that they've retired they love having dogs in their lives now and again and that's where I come in. I wag my tail when they fuss me, snuggle up next to them when they have a cup of tea and sit by their feet at TV time. Oh it's quite a responsible thing being a super dog like me let me tell you. I have a pet schedule that lists all of my likes and dislikes, which is why my hotel is just like a home from home for me.

I've overheard that Barking Mad are seriously looking for additional hosts like John and Helen so more dogs can have a fantastic holiday like I'm having. Maybe you're in the same situation as them and have the time and the yearning to have a dog's company to appreciate. Do you think you'd be interested? Apparently you just talk to Colin and Jacqui using that telephone



device to find out more or else employ that strange machine that goes on-line whatever that means. Having more hosts means that Barking Mad can offer so much more to all kinds of dogs; little ones for hosts who can manage small dogs like 'Titch the Timid Terrier' and stronger people who can tackle dogs like Patrick, my old Irish Wolf Hound mate from Barrowby. As you'd expect, everyone who shows an interest will be vetted so that there are no security issues. Some dogs are escape artists. The owners of these dogs would understandably get a bit miffed if their dog got out and set off on an adventure of its own. Ultra prevention sums up Barking Mad's approach, though it's not necessary with a fine dog like me, oh no; I mean I'd have to be barking mad myself to think of escaping from all this luxury. As for humans using the Barking Mad service when they go away themselves I don't really know what to say as I wasn't listening to that bit. I've just had a rummage around in Colin's briefcase though and found a few details which you might be able to make head or tale of. For a start there's something called a one-off

registration fee of £35.00 which includes the completion of a pet schedule. Then they just charge a £35.00 transport fee and £23.00 per day to have their dog looked after in the home of a host best placed to provide individual care. I know nothing about money but I've heard it said that this is great value for a premium service. I'll say it is, I'm pampered, walked at a pace and time I am used to, fed my preferred cuisine and settled into my favourite bed with all my best toys around me. Most importantly I'm surrounded by so much love that I feel at peace the moment I arrive.

Colin and Jacqui work very hard to make Barking Mad such a success. They reach out as far afield as Mansfield, Newark, and Sleaford as well as here in Grantham too. So listen up you dogs out there. Make sure you get your owners to read this article, plonk this magazine open at page 31 so they can't miss it. Then when it's their holiday time or they have to go away, you get to have fun times too. Sorry I'll have to go they're getting my dinner ready. Bye!



Contact Colin Murphy & Jacqui Benzie.
Call 07384 252 920 or
01636 302636
Or email murphy@barkingmad.uk.com

A show that's scrumptious; truly!

The 1910s was the age of invention; talking radio, the zip fastener, stainless steel; even the pop up toaster just made it into the decade in 1919. The world seemed to have gone mad with 'invention fever', and none had it with more gusto than Caractacus Potts who lived in a windmill with his eccentric father and two children; Jeremy and Jemima. Rusting away in the yard were the remains of a once famous racing car which the children adore playing on. Just as it's being towed away for scrap the children implore their father to save it. By a series of misadventures he does just that; using all of his inventive skills to bring the car back to her former glory, even going a bit too far you could say.

One thing he manages to do quite easily is fall in love with the daughter of the local owner of the sweet factory; the lovely Truly Scrumptious. Caractacus and the children invite Truly out for a picnic in their new car, and off they go to the seaside. They notice how the engine has a rhythmic sound, two rapid piston compressions followed by two muffled noises from the exhaust. To everyone in the car it sounds like the vehicle is saying Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang, so that's what they call the car. Of course, you can't have a moment like this without a song, and the chances are that you can hear it in your head right now.

Well, Caractacus has done better than he could have imagined. As the tide cuts the four of them off from the coast, the car magically becomes a speed boat. This attracts the attentions of pirates sailing nearby who are working for the silly Baron Bomburst. They try to steal this amazing machine but not before she puts her floats away, sprouts wings, propellers and flies her passengers off to the country of Vulgaria ruled by an



immature megalomaniac; the very same Baron Bomburst himself. The Baron is a childlike creature; his wife the Baroness indulges him and makes no secret of hating real children. She orders the childcatcher to rid the country of all youngsters. The city people have therefore hidden their offspring in secret caves beneath the city. Caractacus father has also been arrested and forced to create a replica of Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang though he has no idea how to do it. The stage therefore is set for Caractacus, Truly, Jeremy and Jemima to free the innocent and arrest the Baron, his wife and the childcatcher. Of course, as in all good stories, everything ends on a happy note and the feel-good factor we experience is just what we need to put smiles on our faces. This April New Youth Theatre is holding its Easter Camp in Grantham and Sleaford where the focus will be on producing this timeless classic of a show. So, which of you could bring the wacky inventor Caractacus to life? Who has the ability to be the eccentric grandfather and sing: 'Oh the Posh, Posh, travellin' life, the travellin' life fer me'? Then again you might have it in you to be the pompous Baron Bomburst or his nasty wife the Baroness; you might just be evil enough (in character that is) to be the....childcatcher! Even if you don't think you're quite ready for a leading part, there's a huge amount of scope as one of the hidden children or the toymaker or one of the spies and pirates. The thing is if you love acting on stage, dancing and singing,

you'll find more of it in this show than you could shake your old bamboo stick at.

Just as magical as Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang is, so too is the effect of the show on you. After all the rehearsals, the learning of lines, dance steps, song lyrics and putting it all together as a show, something wonderful happens to you. Oh, the applause is great; the experience is amazing, but quietly, in the back of your mind a new you will begin to emerge. For some it's an explosive realisation, for others it's a slow release of something good; it's the growth of self confidence. Knowing that with nothing more than your own abilities you were able to entertain an audience of two hundred people has a profound effect on how you see yourself.

It's enough of a change that when, in the future, you sit in a job interview or find your place at university, you'll have grounding in your character that will see you through. Stagecraft doesn't just belong to the theatre at all. In fact, long ago, a person who was familiar with creating plays once said that; 'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players.' His name was William Shakespeare. His quote stands as true today as it did then. You'll find the Easter Camp very welcoming, you'll make some good friends but more importantly, you'll put some magic into your life, to last you your whole life through.

Truly Scrumptious
the musical



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Rehearsals require Patience

By Richard Coppin

I love listening to performers in rehearsal. It's my only chance to see a work in progress, so when I was invited to visit the Grantham Operatic Society polishing up the finer points of their production of Gilbert & Sullivan's *'Patience'*, I knew I was going to be in for a treat. Incredibly, they've been working on this opera since September last year. I'll hold my hands up now and confess to being a G&S fan; however *'Patience'* had never really showed up on my radar much before now. Prior to dropping in on the principal players' rehearsals I did a bit of homework to learn more which was just as well. I'll get to that later.

The room contained a single keyboard, an arc of chairs in front of it and a fine bunch of very talented performers. The musical director, Caroline Jones began with a vocal warm up session which I listened to as memories of my chorister days flooded back. It was then time to begin a number, ushered in by the most exquisite piano intro one could hope for. Taking their collective breath as the music settled on the time to sing was four of the 'Rapturous Maidens' (Jane Richardson, Helen Gray, Marie Hibbert and Suzanne Webb) with Daniella Bridge as Patience herself. The voices which filled the room sent shivers down my spine; the term 'delightful' doesn't come close to describing it; I was spellbound as Sullivan's score and Gilbert's clever word-play were joined together in the sublime rendition of; *'I cannot tell what this love may be'*. Halfway through, as I sat in rapture myself the song stopped abruptly. The musical director had picked up on a few minor but necessary points; breathing, phrasing, even a slight hang up on repeated notes that Sullivan liked to put in but which catch out many a singer. Attentive as ever the brilliant singers resumed, adding these running repairs into their performance. Did it make any difference? You bet it did. What followed sounded to me like pure perfection.

The opera is a Mickey-take on the English 'Aesthetic movement' that prevailed in the 1870 and 80s; when creative people turned their back on the stuffy ways of the artistic establishment and struck

out with prose, poetry and painting which were created as 'Art for Art's Sake'. This phrase forms the title of a 1975 song by 10cc, so it's not surprising therefore that in the era of the sixties and seventies when a resurgence of a similar rebellious movement was in full swing against post war austerity that this period setting works so well. Adam Bishop the director has cleverly reworked the staging of *'Patience'* to convey this period when Britain was swinging, although it should be stressed to the purists that the Gilbert & Sullivan music and libretto has been carefully ring-fenced and kept sacrosanct. Nevertheless there will be the sight of the odd miniskirt, kipper tie and a few disco moves on stage to take in. Like most Gilbert & Sullivan operas, there is star-crossed love everywhere. Two diametrically opposed poets; Bunthorne (Stephen Blanchard) and Archibald Grosvenor (Adam Bishop) form the foundation of the piece; the aristocratic Bunthorne claims to be an 'Aesthetic' poet and the lovesick

Daniella Bridge's exquisite voice brings the character of *Patience* to life during rehearsals



Caroline Jones the Musical Director putting the ladies and gentlemen through their vocal paces

maiden can't get enough of him. His 'Art for Art's sake' stance however is a sham. The other poet; Archibald Grosvenor is the real deal and is therefore too perfect in the eyes of the central character, the lovely young Patience to fall in love with. The course of true love can never run smooth in a G&S opera and of course the plot is so much more complicated than that. The only way to make sense of it is to come and see the show for yourself; though judging by the rehearsal I saw, you're going to be in for a masterpiece of entertainment.

Grantham Operatic Society Presents: Gilbert and Sullivan's **'PATIENCE'**

Performances on Thursday 4th, Friday 5th and Saturday 6th April at the Guildhall Arts Centre Theatre.

Curtain up at 7.30pm prompt.
Tickets £12.00 each (Concessions on Thursday only £10.00) All tickets available at the Guildhall Arts Centre Box Office.

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Turning your Winter Garden into a Springtime Paradise

Snow, ice, frost, wind and rain; what delightful things can impact on our garden over the winter. Add to that the partially damaging effects of rotting autumn leaves on our lawn and the lack of sunlight over the dark winter months and it's easy to see why our garden emerges into early spring feeling a bit sorry for itself.

The trouble with frost and ice is that it expands before it melts; a process powerful enough to split rock and brick with as much force as a hammer and chisel. Wind gusts of eighty miles per hour push wooden fences with the same force that sailing ships depend on, causing more damage to your garden, often at the expense of your security. With rain bringing the effects of damp and accelerating the rotting of wooden structures like sheds and fence posts, you'd be forgiven for thinking of winter as nature's battlefield, with us homeowners usually being on the losing side.

Springtime gives us time to regroup however and tend to our wounded garden as we launch a counter attack. It's a time when Martin Clapton comes to the rescue with his garden repair service and redesign jobs. The great advantage of getting Martin on your side is that he can see through the damage and chaos to visualise the opportunities it brings. This really is a case of a winter cloud having a springtime silver lining.

A pathway ruined by frost can be re-laid with stone or cobbles. Even the direction of an uninspiring pathway can be redesigned to meander and curve its way through your lawn, it might even encourage you to think of installing a patio where summer barbecues can be held, hard as summer days are to imagine right now, but they're on their way so why not be ready for them?



Flower beds are sometimes decimated by winter rain, with all their shape further destroyed by the onslaught of the frozen season. Raising these beds up using stone or brick walls not only helps to maintain their shape for good but helps the human body too when planting and weeding need to be done.

Martin and his team will also take a look at the wooden buildings in your garden; the poor old shed, Wendy House, a pergola that's seen better days or even the fence that's taken a battering. Deciding on repair or replacement will be fairly obvious, but either way Martin has the expertise and time to see to jobs like these. And there's another factor, modern life leaves little spare time to tackle these sorts of things and anyway, it's a fallacy that men were born with DIY in their DNA. Not having the building skills to fix up things like this in your garden usually means that they never get done. By dialling the number below you'll be treated as a VIP, ASAP.

It doesn't take long as you begin to

think about how Martin can transform your garden before your imagination takes hold and other ideas begin to develop. Water features to make a babbling brook in your patch of green could be created. Light set in cosy corners can make summer evenings that bit more special, even romantic with a bit of creativity. You might like the idea of a calm part of your garden to sit in to listen to birdsong, to meditate on life or simply to sit and read in the fresh summer air. This can be created with a summer house for example with a simple paved area in front. In front of this you could have an area made with block, bricks or stone. You could even use Clapton's famous patterned concrete that he uses on his driveways to make a special effect.

Yes, the ravages of winter might just have done you a favour, so you can revitalise a worn out garden with the rejuvenating effects of Martin Clapton's many years of experience. Come the summer you'll have a garden ready to stand up to the army of winter days to come.



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Our house hates us

Dear Michael

Don't get me wrong, our house isn't like something out of the Amityville Horror story, it's just that it always wants stuff doing to it. Needy, that's how I'd describe it. In a recent rainstorm the conservatory gutters began leaking in two places. The day I went into the loft to get the Christmas decorations down I discovered that the ivy which grows up our house had actually sent tendrils into the loft space. Looking closer I saw how they had damaged the mortar slightly. Then, when the wind got up the other night, the wire from the television aerial started to flap about on the roof which kept me and my wife awake all night long. Ironically, it's not even connected to our TV anymore. See what I mean, the house has it in for me? Breakfast time, I go and get the cereal bowl out of the cupboard and the whole door comes off in my hand. I looked out of the window in despair only to see two fence panels have blown over in the wind during the night. Despondent I head off to have my Crunchy Whatnots in front of the TV news only to

trip over the bent kitchen door threshold and give the hall carpet a new design called Milky Crunch. What with yellowing paintwork, squeaky doors, latches that don't work and mould round the bath I'm out of my depth. Ok house- you win. There's no hope for me, is there?

When things get broken...



**Yours sincerely,
Desmond Perate, Grantham**

Dear Des,

Well I'm no Ghostbuster but I am a problem fixer. All those things which you describe happen in most homes. Often it just a lack of spare time to get stuck into them that prevents things from getting done. Think of me as your spare pair of hands to use whilst you're at work. Or else I'm the extra set of skills that would like to have. Then, as well as all the jobs that need doing in the 'House of Horrors' I can also get to grips with other things, for example; I can put locks on toilet doors and even 'childproof' kitchen cupboards if need be. I'll paint and gloss any room you like. If

...I'm always here to fix them

misaligned toilet seats drive you mad let me fix them so that they fit. Or let me replace or re-paint your bath panels. Should your bath and sink plugs fail to work properly, I'll make them behave in no time. It might be that you need bath or shower handles fixing, let me know and they'll be in place in a jiffy. And when it comes to cracks in ceilings, well consider them filled; you'd never know they'd been there. See, I can soon get your home to like you again. Outside I can repair pot holes in your driveway thereby doing your car suspension a favour, fix you up a washing line, mend a path, lay gravel; all kinds of outdoor repairs come to think of it. I can cut away rotten wood wherever it turns up and replace and paint it so it looks as good as new. In fact I take great pride in all kinds of wood preservation work on structures like sheds, summer houses and fences. You know, most houses are needy from time to time, so give them what they want, a bit of TLC from TGH.

Kind regards Michael

For all those jobs you can't get round to, get Michael round to get them done.

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The Gardener of the Future

By Richard Coppin

I can remember one afternoon in late spring, years ago, mowing my father-in-law's lawn with his hover mower. It was gliding effortlessly over the grass, and, seduced by the sun's warmth and the sound of songbirds heralding the approaching summer, I allowed my concentration to lapse. Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a flash of light illuminating the flaying cuttings under the mower which instantly came to a stop. Knowing immediately what had happened I turned the machine over to find that I had indeed sliced through the cable. The next hour was spent fixing it up and changing the fuse.

At LRS these sorts of accidents are a thing of the past, thanks in the main to the quiet revolution in battery technology improvement. Ever since Alessandro Volta came up with a workable battery in 1799 (we owe the term 'volt' to him) the race has been on to reverse the electrochemical process by re-charging it so it can be re-used over and over again. The first lead-acid storage battery was invented in 1859 by Gaston Planté and improved upon by Edison using alkaline electrolytes instead of acid as we have in a present-day car battery. These batteries were cumbersome and heavy, so inventors had to find chemicals that could perform this process better whilst being lighter. The pinnacle of this development is the Lithium-Ion battery and it's this technology that makes the equipment at LRS so portable and long performing.

A fully charged-up lawnmower from LRS can keep going for a long time. Besides which it remains light, making the job of cutting the grass a pleasure. With fewer moving parts than a petrol-driven machine there's an improvement in efficiency too. Environmentally it's also a no-brainer to use this kind of 'green' battery power. With cars being powered by



The amazing range of battery operated garden machinery from Stiga

these kinds of batteries it's easy to see that the future for garden maintenance is also going to be based on Lithium-Ion power.

They have in fact designed a wide range of garden machinery each with a standard power interface so that the same battery becomes interchangeable with each application. With this in mind it's easy to see the effectiveness of such a brilliant system. Chain saws for instance become lighter and easier to get into position at the top of a tree. Likewise, lightweight hedge trimmers allow the user to reach over a wide hedge to make a nice neat job whilst avoiding the kind of arm and shoulder ache that comes from using cumbersome machinery. To give the user as much choice as possible, Atco and Stiga mowers have designed a range of battery packs for their machines each giving out a muscular 80 volts of serious power.



Stiga's amazing backpack for creating mobility

For example their 5 Amp/Hours battery pack gives up to an hour from one single charge and can be re-energised in just 75 minutes, whilst the smaller pack, though giving out 4 Amp/Hours of current takes only

sixty minutes to re-charge.

For added convenience and to make the equipment you're working with even lighter Stiga has created a battery harness which is able to carry either the 4.0 Amp/Hour, or the 5.0 Amp/Hour power pack. It's essentially a back pack battery with a power adaptor providing a great deal of safety and comfort to the user.

As if this is not impressive enough, the design of these

machines are state-of-the-art both ergonomically and in the mechanical heart of each piece of equipment. Pay a visit to LRS's showroom and see for yourself. Maybe 2018 is the year you go from petrol to electrical and become a gardener of the future!

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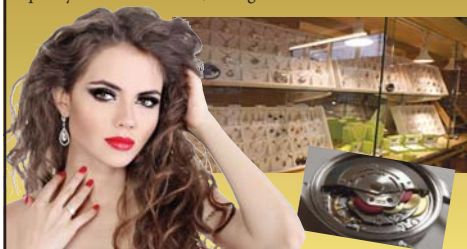
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TERM TIME REHEARSALS COMMENCING APRIL 2018

From roof tiles to garden styles

Of all the things that rain is good for, one of the unfortunate ones is discovering holes in your roof. Even the tiniest gap in the roof tiles or a split in the chimney flashing is enough to send rainwater cascading into the loft and on to our bedroom ceiling below. During a cloudburst, untold thousands of litres of water pelt down on your house, and if there's the slightest opening it only takes a few dozen litres to do a whole lot of damage.

Making sure that this never happens to you is a master of all kinds of building work, especially when it comes to roofing. His name is Kevin Oakes, and what he doesn't know about the subject isn't worth writing about. After all, if he's not thirty or forty feet up on a roof, he's down on terra firma building a garden wall or laying some decking. Back to the roofing side of things, Kevin is well able to take a whole roof apart and build a completely new one if needs be. Getting simple repairs done therefore is seemingly straightforward. However Kevin has to be a bit of a Sherlock Holmes to understand the idiosyncrasies of each roof. Sometimes the water isn't getting into the loft space where you'd have expected, so finding the root cause takes a combination of detective work linked with the benefits of many years of roofing experience. Once done though, you can say goodbye to the heap of builders bills you might have had. Caught in time a roof repair can save you a great deal of money in the long run.

It's easy to see that Kevin's roofing skills are perfectly transferable to a host of other types of building work. Replacing wooden rafters on a roof takes the same skills used in the installation of wooden decking in a garden for example. We covered Kevin putting up some decking back in 2012. That particular job had to take into account a distinct slope in the garden. Since the decking had to be level, Kevin set heavy wooden timber posts where the garden sloped downwards to keep the surface level. He even built some attractive steps so the homeowners

could easily get onto their new garden feature and enjoy their family get-togethers.

It only takes a bit of imagination to see how you could use Kevin to build you a pergola or an attractive fence. Come to that, if you ever wanted a bespoke garden shed erecting then Kevin's skill as a roofer could be brought to bear on putting this kind of thing in your garden. You could even design this to meet certain specifications; so if you required a workshop with a workbench then you only have to discuss it with Kevin to make it come true. If you liked, and you have the ability to do it, you could provide Kevin with working drawings and get him to create the kind of shed that really does suit your needs.

When it comes to fixing a roof or putting some decking down you obviously want to know the pedigree of the person you're choosing to do it. Kevin has more years of experience under his work belt than he'd ever care to admit. His reputation in town is well-respected, which in Grantham counts for a great deal. As spring is just around the corner, now's the time to ask Kevin to see where that roof of yours has been causing you problems. It's also a good time to put all those garden ideas into motion too. Why not have a chat to Kevin. After all, it won't cost a penny to find out what he can do. As far as your roof is concerned you might well save a packet with Kevin's help, so when those April showers arrive, you can let them do their worst.



KEVIN

OAKES

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Remember the name!

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