

The Inspiring People issue - FREE

re:story

FASHION, FAMILY, CULTURE, LIFE



Meet your Winners!

NORTH DEVON'S INSPIRING PEOPLE 2017

The Archers effect

HOW THE RADIO SOAP RAISED
AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

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Want to be a friend of NDADA?

Welcome

I'm thrilled to welcome you to the second annual inspirational issue of **re:story** magazine.

Following the success of our Inspiring Women campaign in 2016, this year sees the inclusion of men, too. We asked North Devon folk to get involved by nominating their local inspirations across a range of categories. And it was a pleasure to celebrate the six winners at a fab social soirée at Boston Tea Party on March 17.

We've included men in this year's Inspiring People Awards because we feel it's important to recognise that domestic abuse is an issue which affects everyone – regardless of gender, social standing or background.

On the subject of men, I'm very pleased to announce that our board of trustees has been joined by Paul Trueman who is on a mission to encourage men to be 'part of the solution'. Read all about him on page 20.

Susan Wallis
CEO NDADA

NDADA
NORTH DEVON AGAINST DOMESTIC ABUSE



Designed and written in north Devon by www.saltmedia.co.uk Fashion styling by Alessia Sheldon Photography by Paula Davies, Guy Harrop Photography and Mike Southon Thank you Castle Hill for providing photography location. **re:story is available free of charge** at selected retailers, salons, children's centres and waiting rooms, and is funded by our advertisers. **For copies or to advertise**, email admin@ndada.co.uk or call 01237 472939. **Disclaimer:** the opinion expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of North Devon Against Domestic Abuse, and products and services advertised are not endorsed by the charity or its trustees.

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Meet your Inspiring People 2017

INSPIRE ME

Thanks so much to all of you who nominated your local heroes in our Inspiring People Awards 2017. Your winners – each of them with an illuminating and deeply inspiring story to tell – were announced during an uplifting bash at the Boston Tea Party in Barnstaple in March

 Boston
Tea Party

A photography exhibition of winners remains on show at Boston Tea Party until the end of March. Photographs by Guy Harrop

Inspiring In the arts

Actors **Bill Buffery** and **Gill Nathanson** (aka multi story theatre company) became inspired to set up Barnstaple's Fringe TheatreFest (see page 14 for details) after taking part in Canadian fringe festivals.

'We absolutely loved the Canadian festivals and decided that we could do it in our home town of Barnstaple,' says Gill. 'Of course, participation in a festival is very different to running one and our learning curve has been like the north face of the Eiger sometimes. With each year presenting its own new challenges, this award gives us the determination to keep pursuing new possibilities.'

What inspires you? 'Our team of 50 volunteers come back year after year to make TheatreFest happen - some people even take unpaid holiday to work on the festival,' says Bill. 'It's humbling and a reminder that it's people's kindness and selflessness that makes good things happen.'

Describe yourself in three words 'Let's do it!'

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white moose
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Inspiring Person under 21

Liv Bennett, who has been a member of Croyde Surf Life Saving Club for 11 years, started to help coach at Women on Waves at the age of just 14.

'The group was mainly made up of mums who wanted to learn sea safety and gain some confidence. Most wanted to learn so that they could take their children in the ocean safely.'

Liv enjoyed the coaching so much she volunteered to help at the Wave Project. 'The Wave Project is a charity organisation that helps disadvantaged children learn to surf and be safe in the sea. The young people who get referred to the Wave Project have a range of physical, mental or emotional disorders, and the surf therapy helps empower them and enable them to overcome challenges and develop self worth.' Liv also helped set up a girls' surf club called Wave Wahines.

What inspires you? 'Many people have inspired me, but foremost my older sister, Jasmine. She is always positive and so busy. She showed me that there is always time in the day to fit in something more.'

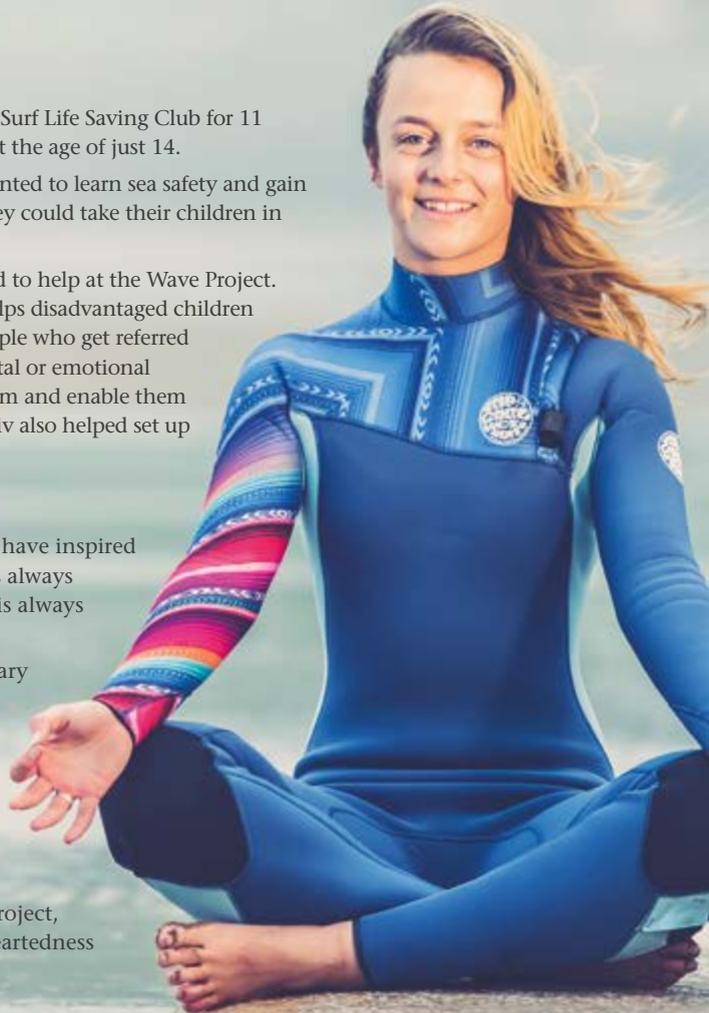
'I also found inspiration from one of my secondary school teachers, the late Olaf Rinvoluceri. He showed unending passion and was never judgmental or dismissive of ideas, no matter how "out there" they were. He taught me that it's not about what you do, it's about how much love and enthusiasm you can put in to what you do.'

'And, of course, the young people at the Wave Project, who show relentless determination and open-heartedness in the face of adversity.'

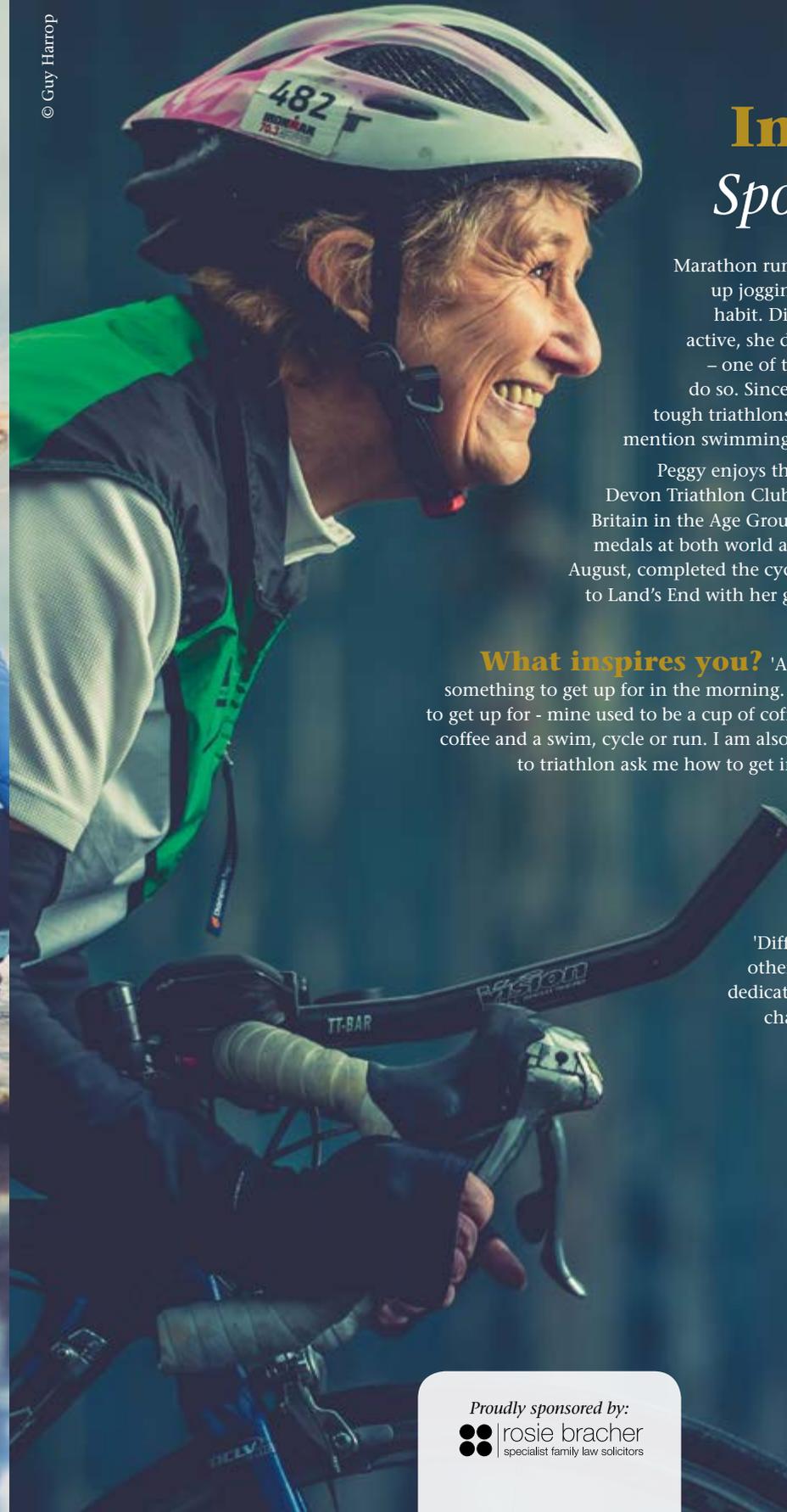
Describe yourself in three words

'Enthusiastic, compassionate, free-thinker.'

© Guy Harrop



© Guy Harrop



Inspiring Sportsperson

Marathon runner Peggy Crome, 73, took up jogging to help kick her smoking habit. Discovering she adored being active, she decided to tackle a triathlon – one of the first people in the UK to do so. Since then, she has competed in tough triathlons all over the world – not to mention swimming in some pretty rough seas.

Peggy enjoys the camaraderie of the North Devon Triathlon Club and has represented Great Britain in the Age Group team. She has won many medals at both world and European level and, last August, completed the cycle ride from John O'Groats to Land's End with her granddaughter Hannah, 13.

What inspires you? 'A training schedule gives me something to get up for in the morning. Everyone needs something to get up for - mine used to be a cup of coffee and a cigarette. Now it's coffee and a swim, cycle or run. I am also inspired when people new to triathlon ask me how to get involved, where to start and how to progress.'

Describe yourself in three words

'Difficult to describe myself but others might say, "inspirational, dedicated (to triathlon) and love a challenge" (oops that's eight).'

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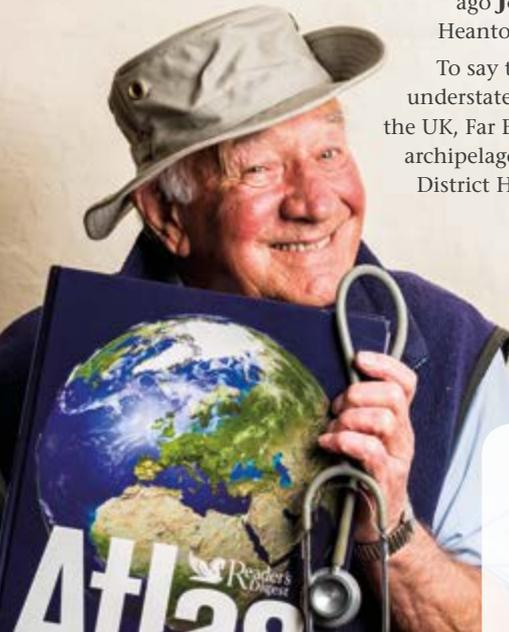


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Inspiring Person over 70

He's a rugby and hockey enthusiast (he's played at county level for Gloucestershire and West of England), a qualified pilot, a member of Heanton art group and chairman of the Chaloners Educational Foundation. And if that's not enough to inspire you, two years ago **John Howell**, 86, abseiled 90ft down St Augustine's church tower at Heanton Punchardon, in aid of North Devon Hospital Chemotherapy unit.

To say the octogenarian has lived an adventure-filled life is somewhat of an understatement. Having qualified in medicine in 1954 he served in the RAF in the UK, Far East and Europe with detachments to the Middle East, the Maldivian archipelago before working as a GP and assistant paediatrician at North Devon District Hospital. Along the way he's acquired five children, 11 grandchildren and four great grandchildren.



What inspires you?

'Other people's achievements.'

Describe yourself in three words

'Very lucky man.'

© Guy Harrop

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Inspiring Community Work

Lisa Wallis created ChemoHero in 2014 after being diagnosed with invasive breast cancer. After eight rounds of chemotherapy and radiotherapy, she wanted to 'make sure that everyone going through chemotherapy knows they are not alone'.

At the end of 2015 she had the news that her cancer had spread to the opposite side of her body. The tumour was removed and she had further treatment.

'As soon as I was re-diagnosed I realised that I needed to make having cancer have a purpose in my life so I began developing ChemoHero.'

Lisa, with help of businessman Steve Boden, began delivering ChemoHero Boxes of Kindness to the new chemotherapy Seamount Unit at North Devon District Hospital. The feedback was wonderful.

'Our boxes are filled with useful and luxury items that help a patient through their first treatment. We pop in bottled water, health bars, bristle toothbrushes, pill pots, diaries, colouring in books and more.'

What inspires you?

'I am truly inspired by those who are given obstacles in their lives but who still manage to see good in life and use it to make great things happen to them.'

'I have worked with supported learning students for just under 16 years and every day I see them overcome difficulties in their lives. It gives me such fight to grab each day I am given as, despite the cancer, I am truly very lucky.'

Describe yourself in three words

'Determined, realistic, generous.'



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Inspiring Environmentalist

Martin Dorey started 2 Minute Beach Clean after the storms of late 2013 and early 2014. 'I felt so overwhelmed with the mess on the beach at Crooklets that I decided I should try and do something. Unfortunately I couldn't make it to all the local beach cleans so each time I went to the beach I started cleaning up a little and using the hashtag #2minutebeachclean. Somehow it got traction and became, for want of a better word, a "global movement"! It's bonkers.'

The idea is now being used in Ireland, Israel, Puerto Rico, Norway, Spain and Greece, and 220 beach clean boards have been installed at beaches in Ireland and the UK.

What inspires you?

'Anyone who posts their #2minutebeachclean.'

Then there's the idea of leaving this planet nicer than it was when I got here, if that's possible. That's enough to drive anyone, right?'

Describe yourself in 3 words

'Dad, ocean-lover, writer.'

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TAKE FIVE

Do you see her?

'Many would not believe that the relationship could be abusive'

A hard-hitting short film created by Ridley Scott Associates and Women's Aid highlights that domestic abuse isn't just a problem faced by young women. NDADA and Splitz (the commissioned domestic abuse service for Devon) have both reported an increase in the number of mature women seeking help. Many others, they suspect, are suffering in silence

As a society we have become much more aware of the fact that violence and abuse affects younger women in their relationships. However, the domestic abuse experienced by older women is nowhere near as recognised.

'Older women don't know where to go to get help and in Devon there are no specific services for them,' says NDADA CEO Sue Wallis. 'Many of our community's older people live in isolated rural areas to which they have re-located for retirement. Often seen as an idyllic way to

live, they are isolating themselves from friends and family at a time when they are more likely to suffer from illness and age related disability. Imagine being the victim of domestic abuse when the abuser is actually your carer?' Women cared for in the NDADA refuge come from all ages and backgrounds.

'One recent resident, now thankfully moved on to settled and secure accommodation, arrived with us seeking safety from her husband of many years who had become her carer since her diagnosis of a life threatening illness. Apart from restricting her visitors and making life unpleasant for her in many ways, he also withheld her medication, making her more and more vulnerable to her illness. We need to be more aware of the possibility that we might know people in this position – especially in our more rural, close-knit communities where it is more difficult for people to reach out for help.'

Women's Aid and leading production company Ridley Scott Associates have joined forces to make *Do You See Her*, a short film

about older women and domestic abuse starring Anne-Marie Duff and Phil Davis, which can be found on YouTube. The powerful film, less than two minutes long, depicts an older married couple being visited by their daughter and their young grandchildren for lunch. It's a comfortable, middle-class home and many would not believe that the relationship could be abusive.

'The film is a stark reminder that even those closest to a woman who is being abused may not know what goes on behind closed doors,' says Sue. 'Any woman, of any age, can be forced to live in the invisible prison of domestic abuse – including those with adult children and grandchildren. Victim stereotypes are simply not relevant to our understanding of domestic abuse.'

North Devon and Torridge has a high proportion of over sixties (30% and 32% of the population respectively compared with 22% nationally).

'We all need to become more aware of the implications of trying to keep our communities safe and healthy,' adds Sue.

GET INVOLVED

NDADA news

All aboard the NDADA bus

Get ready for fab deals on four wheels. Thanks to a Big Lottery Fund, **re:store** is taking to the road, bringing boutique fashion at bargain prices right to your doorstep. The **re:store** bus, will be touring festivals this summer and visiting outlying north Devon parishes.

Alongside glam clothes and gorgeous accessories, the branded motorhome, complete with awnings and a tent, will offer a chance to chat over tea and coffee.

It's hoped that, in the same way that women and girls have found the **re:store** charity shops useful as an information hub about domestic abuse, the bus will be another discreet point of contact for those seeking help.

'A regular visit from the **re:store** bus will afford women and girls an additional way to make contact with the service and gain the information and support they need,' says NDADA CEO Sue Wallis.

According to Sue, remoteness and isolation often compound the problem of domestic abuse, which is why the bus will be operated by trained support volunteers.

'For those in the countryside, in comparison with urban areas, there are not the services or information to help women and girls realise that what they are going through is wrong and that they shouldn't have to accept it.'



▲ Barefoot ball

The NDADA bus will be rocking up at the Barefoot Ball on Saturday June 3. The laid-back bohemian inspired summer festival will be set against the mesmerising backdrop of Croyde and Putsborough beaches.

'This gorgeous event offers fabulous food, a beautiful setting and incredible music. It's a chance to dress up boho style, catch up with friends, unwind, chill, feast, be merry and party,' said Tracy Edwards of Blue Fizz Events. 'We are totally delighted to have NDADA as our chosen charity and look forward to welcoming its bus along to this unique celebration.'

 enquiries@bluefizzevents.co.uk
 07845 147563

▼ Going forward together

NDADA has been selected by Women's Aid/SafeLives to be a partner in national research, funded by Big Lottery, looking at ways to respond to and prevent domestic abuse. The initiative will allow deeper insight and understanding into how to be effective when supporting domestic abuse survivors.



▲ Flower power

If you made a ceramic flower for the White Flower Field in 2015, it might now be part of the gorgeous Flowerbed, which is on tour around north Devon. The bed, which has been hand painted by volunteers, is a symbol of healthy family relationships, comfort, warmth and love, and helps to raise the profile of NDADA's mission to keep families safe and relationships healthy.

If you'd like to make a donation, text **NDAD40** £amount to **70070**

GET INVOLVED

▲ Fashion fantastic

Barnstaple boutique Private Collection II will be holding a fashion show in aid of NDADA this later this year. Watch our website for an announcement: www.ndada.co.uk.

Vote for us!



We are thrilled to be one of 300 charities across England and Wales invited to apply for a grant of up to £25,000 to celebrate the launch of the Masonic Charitable Foundation. **Don't forget to vote for us** during June and July at www.mcf.org.uk

Acting

with street cred

All the world's a stage – and this summer you can enjoy extraordinary shows in a plethora of quirky settings. From stately home gardens to a loft above a solicitor's office, anything goes when it comes to pop-up theatre



Barnstaple's Fringe TheatreFest is taking to the streets. In celebration of its 10th birthday, the popular four-day summer festival is spilling out of the theatres and onto the High Street and The Square, with loads of extraordinary informal performances taking place in the most unlikely of places

Fringe TheatreFest is programming its usual mix of eclectic shows – from the sublime to the ridiculous and back again – at the Baptist Hall and the Golden Lion Tap. Yet this year entertainment also takes place in a tent on The Square, in a loft above a solicitor's office, in the museum, the library, the pannier market, in shops and coffee houses and out in the streets.

As usual, performers from all over the country will descend on Barnstaple, yet there will be plenty of home-grown companies and performers on show too: a 100-strong choir drawn from two local schools; a tea-dance led by local dance company Project:Dance!; stories of the lurid underbelly of Barnstaple's past told by someone with family connections.

'Sharing the fun more widely is what we've always wanted to do,' says organiser Gill Nathanson. 'We want to excite as many people as possible about the stories that Barnstaple can tell. We've been asking local shops for snippets of information about the

buildings they occupy, stories about the business itself and the people who work there.

'We've passed on these stories and snippets to performers who are finding ways of bringing them to life. They're creating little events that will take place in those buildings. And we hope that in the process we'll all see Barnstaple and each other in a fresh light.'

Barnstaple's Fringe TheatreFest recently received a major boost with a grant from the Celebrate England Big Lottery Fund.

'We want to excite as many people as possible about the stories that Barnstaple can tell'

'The funding helps us to get the news out there,' adds Gill. 'The event will not just be visible but unmissable with banners of all shapes and sizes.'

Some of the funding will support the volunteer force that provides box office and stewarding. To volunteer, head to the website. Get ready to join in the fun from June 29-July 2.

www.theatrefest.co.uk
Details 07974 569849

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Action al fresco

Pack the picnics and Pimm's. North Devon audiences embrace fresh air and uncertain weather to enjoy the thrill of theatre at its magical and elemental best

It's a north Devon phenomenon. Each summer more than 4,000 adults and children head outdoors to watch well-loved novels and story books come off the page and onto the stage.

The Plough Arts Centre's open-air season has become a must-do theatrical experience on the cultural calendar.

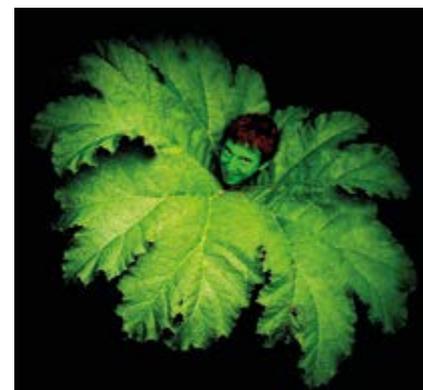
Families pack picnics and rugs – or even chairs and tables – for food al fresco while enjoying laughter, literature and librettos against the backdrop of some of north Devon's most beautiful stately homes and gardens.

'The popularity of these shows has taken us all by surprise,' says Plough director Richard Wolfenden-Brown. 'There is clearly an appetite for open-air theatre in this region, come rain or shine, and it is wonderful to witness the enjoyment that is generated at each performance.'

This season's line-up includes classic tales such as *Wind in the Willows*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Secret Garden* as well as Shakespeare plays and Gillbert and Sullivan operas.

There are a few zany surprises in the programming, too. The Handlebards (pictured) version of *As You Like It* promises to be charming and chaotic fun.

'The all-female troupe perform Shakespeare on bikes, and travel between performances on bikes too,' says Richard. 'We have chosen locations just off the Tarka Trail (Tapeley Park and The Vicarage Garden in Torrington) so people can travel to their shows by bicycle if they wish.'



With 31 performances in 10 outdoor locations there is plenty to choose from including *A Comedy Of Errors* (RHS Rosemoor and Hartland Abbey), *Northanger Abbey* (Arlington Court) and *The Emperor's New Clothes* (Castle Hill and Badock Gardens). It's probably expedient to book early – some shows last year attracted almost 500 people.

'The relaxed atmosphere, high quality productions and beautiful north Devon locations

combine to create some special summer memories for people of all ages,' adds Richard. 'Our pre-show workshops for children and families at some performances add an extra dimension which proves very popular.'

www.theploughartscentre.org.uk
Box office 01805 624624



▲ Statement cuffs

For conversation-starting wristwear, check out April Doubleday's made-to-order bracelets and cuffs. Artful in their simplicity, they look stunning whatever your style of outfit. And it's a thumbs up from us that this jeweller from Monkleigh uses only Fairtrade and ethically sourced gold, silver and gemstones.

www.aprildoubleday.com

▼ Get into the groove

We love the sleek lines and stylish detailing of this chair in American black walnut. Working to commission, contemporary furniture maker Edward Wild of Bideford creates unique handmade pieces in rare and stunning woods.

www.edwardwildcontemporaryfurniture.co.uk



▲ What a turn on

The curvaceous lenty (bendy in Devonshire) light makes such a playful design statement that it even does away with the need for a shade. Furniture designer Samuel Wood from Monkleigh steam-bends solid pieces of timber and uses bright cable to create a fun and funky way to brighten your bedside table.

www.samuelwoodfurniture.co.uk

Crafty ideas for your home

North Devon is fast becoming a hotspot for stylish, cutting-edge design. Interior designer Janelle Edwards-Spear reveals her pick of this season's most stunning hand-crafted homewares, jewellery and furniture



▲ Stationery geeks take note

Whether you're a sketcher, a writer, a doodler or a list lover, you'll love these hand-crafted notebooks by Tran Stephenson from Barnstaple's Ngo&co.

f - ngoandco

► Botanical beauty

Sam Pickard's award-winning, botanically-inspired fabrics lend a fresh, bold touch to cushions and curtains. The South Molton print designer's quality linens feature everything from rustic roses and creeping vines to doe-eyed fawns and vivid ferns.

www.sampickard.co.uk



◀ All fired up

No surprise that international auction house, Bonhams of London, has commissioned potter Roger Cockram to create gorgeous one-off works of art. However, it's his day-to-to-day range of bowls, mugs and casseroles that hold the key to domestic bliss.

www.rogercockramceramics.co.uk



► Willow weaves its magic

Willow artist Woody Fox lets loose his creativity on wonderful withies – nature's own flexible and versatile art material – to create animated sculptures. The north Devon artist makes show-stopping animal-inspired designs which look pretty awesome in both the back garden and inside the home.

www.woodyfoxwillow.co.uk



The Archers **effect**

Inspired by a radio soap opera, north Devon copywriter Paul Trueman has raised thousands for victims of domestic violence. Now as a new trustee of NDADA he tells us about the campaign – and why he thinks men must be part of the solution

Paul Trueman admits to having wept tears of joy and sadness after reading the thousands of comments left on his JustGiving page, set up in the wake of the harrowing domestic abuse storyline on Radio 4's *The Archers*.

From heart-stopping testimonies by survivors of domestic abuse to searingly painful memories of those who were not so fortunate, the page makes for poignant reading. 'I am a copywriter, who is used to making people feel and think, but I could never put these things as powerfully as the people who have been leaving the comments,' says Paul, head of social media at Bray Leino.

Activated by The Archers

As a long-time fan of the BBC Radio 4 soap opera, Paul decided to set up the JustGiving page in response to the powerful storyline of Helen Titchener's abuse by her husband Rob.

'I just thought: "What would I do if Helen was real? How would I help her get away from Rob?"'

His Helen Titchener Rescue Fund captured the imagination of thousands of people, deeply touched by her plight.

'People joke that Archers' fans think it's all real,' says Paul. 'But radio can be powerful in that way. We all have an idea of how The Archers are in our minds. I have spent more time with David Archer than I have chatting to my own mother.'

The initial goal was to raise £1,000. Yet within 24 hours the fund had made £18,000 for Refuge, a charity supporting abused women and children.

Refuge is the real hero

To date, the fund has raised more than £200,000.

'People have said incredibly kind things about my JustGiving page and efforts but it's the people who work for Refuge and run the refuges that make a really big difference. I am honoured to support them.'



Men must play their part

After becoming part of a national conversation about domestic abuse – Paul's campaigning efforts

have been picked up by national newspapers and magazines - he feels privileged to become a trustee of local charity NDADA.

'I was shocked to hear that NDADA runs the only refuge left in Devon. It's a brilliant charity that changes people's lives.'

'It's time for men to start doing our bit, rather than leaving it to women to deal with the fallout'

His mission is to encourage other men to be 'part of the solution'.

'It's clear that men are part of the problem. In the vast majority of cases men are the perpetrators of domestic abuse. That's not opinion, that's fact. Two women a week in England and Wales are killed by a current or former partner – an astonishing, shameful statistic. It strikes me that it's time for men to start stepping up and doing our bit, rather than leaving it to women to deal with the fallout of such appalling figures.'



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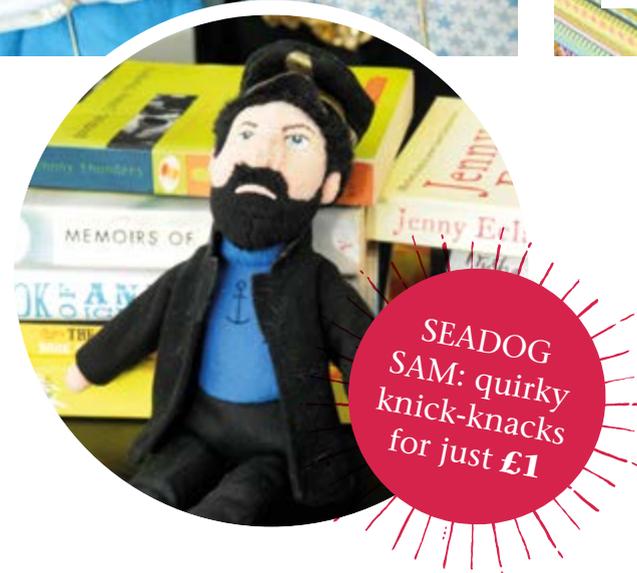
Find more gems and bargains on our Facebook pages (**re:store** Charity Shop). Like us to get the heads up on what's new in all our stores – and don't forget to tag us on your **re:store** bargains.



PRETTY IN PINK: Phase Eight jacket and ASOS purple party dress create a fresh summer wedding look



SHADES OF GREY: shimmering Wallis dress with Monsoon jacket and faux fur M&S snood



SEADOG SAM: quirky knick-knacks for just £1

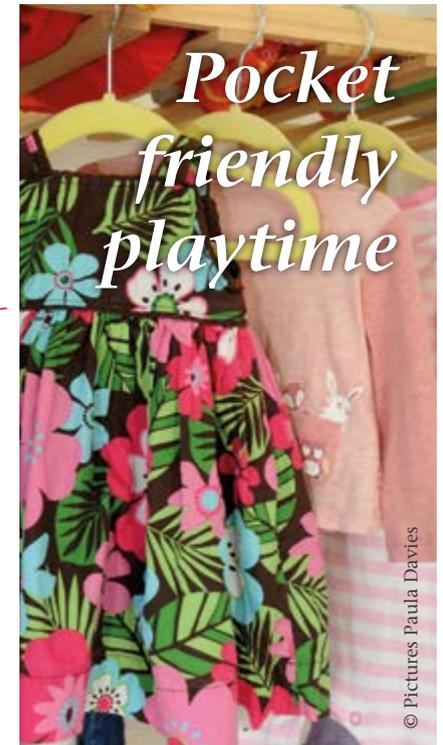
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Pocket friendly playtime

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Here's our at-a-glance guide to instant pick-me-ups



Caption: Green Goddess by Patrick Jones

▲ Re-vamp your image

Is your wardrobe in the doldrums? Get inspired, discover your colours and make 2017 the year you put the wow back into your wardrobe.

'The best and most uplifting colours are the ones that look good on you,' says style consultant Penny Blower from Atherington, who offers a bespoke service to help you discover which shades and shapes flatter you.

www.pennyblower.co.uk

▲ Feed your creativity

Need creative inspiration? Feast your eyes, soul and senses on work by top contemporary artists at Barnstaple's White Moose, then have a go yourself. The gallery on Trinity Street shows work that can be provocative and challenging, yet always inspiring and stimulating.

Started in 2013 by Stella Levy and Julie Gavin, it's a friendly, exciting art space with exhibitions, talks, workshops and various events by local emerging artists, as well as national and international names. The fun POP sessions make a great platform for young people to get creative.

www.whitemoose.co.uk



▲ Banish aches and pains

As exercise classes go, it's pretty unusual. No dynamic stretching, no sweating, no pushing to the limits with weights, no cardio, no music and no shape throwing. Instead, Somatic Movement Education is all about relaxing, releasing and allowing your body to move gently with inherent ease. Offered by Debbie West Pilates, based in Barnstaple, it's great for stress release and ideal if you suffer from chronically tight muscles.

www.northdevonpilates.co.uk

Penny Blower

Image consultant

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Drills with thrills

© North Devon Journal - Mike Southon

Add an adrenalin-spurting, blood-pumping, endorphin-raising edge to your exercise routine by peppering up your workout with props. Rosanna Rothery checks out two prop-tastic north Devon classes

High on aerial arts

TRY IT

© North Devon Journal - Mike Southon

Hanging out (and I mean quite literally) with Miranda Goldring is a heady experience. She's beguilingly draped upside down while showcasing the splits. The rest of us are looking more like deranged bats – as spreadeagled as we dare – with blood pooling in our heads. Ah well, we've all got to start somewhere.

Aerial Arts is a set of high-flying acrobatic tricks that Miranda was lucky enough to learn from top instructors at Cirque Du Soleil. Initiation into these skills begins on the silks – two long swathes of ribbon hanging from the ceiling.

'The joy of the silks is that you can make wraps around your body to help you create beautiful shapes and transitions in the air,' says the owner of Pole Affinity. 'It's great for building the upper body and strengthening your core.'

There is something intoxicating about flipping the wrong way up. Noticeably, gravity seems to work in your favour and you can suddenly stretch further than you thought you could.

'You get a real sense of satisfaction and achievement with each new shape and line you make,' says Miranda. 'It's always a thrill to hang upside down, weightless, your whole body supported in the air by fabrics.'

We move on to the yoga hammock and Miranda, who also teaches pole fitness, once again demonstrates how to drape with style, strength and remarkable bendability.

'The hammock is especially good for those with back problems as it decompresses and lengthens the spine, releasing tension,' says Miranda. 'It's a brilliant way to work on flexibility, while supporting your weight and letting gravity assist in lengthening your muscles.'

Lastly we move on to the hoop. Even if you are not great with heights, Miranda is excellent at assessing which exercises are appropriate for your strength, flexibility and nerves, starting newbies off on a lower hoop if necessary. Phew!

Even hauling up into a low-hanging hoop can test upper body muscles to the max. Trying to maintain balance once inside, meanwhile, will have your core muscles shrieking out for mercy.

Aerial arts is a powerfully challenging but utterly engaging way to work out. Not only will you – eventually – create stunning mid-air shapes but you'll get an absolute buzz as you build core strength.



 **Aerial Arts is at Barnstaple's Pole Affinity on Mondays at 5.30pm and Wednesdays at 7.30pm**



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Hula hooping

Rosanna Rothery goes cock-a-hoop for the hula

Give it a whirl...

TRY IT

© North Devon Journal - Mike Southon

Does wildly gyrating a day-glo hoop around your middle give you a waspish waist? In the Fifties – when, incidentally, women’s waists were on average six inches smaller than they are today – they certainly thought so. Housewives went hysterical for the hula.

Yet it’s not just your waist that benefits from a swirling session, according to teacher and talented twirler Marcela Almond who initiates me and other students into the science of circumvolution.

‘It also tones your bottom, thighs, back and abdominals so it’s a full-body workout,’ she says. ‘Not only that but it gives a boost to your energy levels and increases blood flow to the brain.’

At the Seagrass Studio in Braunton it doesn’t take long before everyone turns into a giddy and giggly gyrating five year olds. This is pure playground style fun. Marcela has us all trying out all kinds of cool tricks: spinning the hoop from ribs to hips, walking and spinning at the same time (much harder than it sounds), twirling the hoop from one hand, rotating it above the head and skipping through it.

It’s great cardio – ‘as effective as an hour on a treadmill’ according to Marcela, who stresses you don’t need to be athletic or good at dance to hula hoop.

‘You feel protected by the hoop so you can be less self-conscious than you might be at other sports or fitness classes, allowing you to move with freedom and expression. You can switch off all the stuff that

is going on in your mind and just move with the hoop.

‘Often my students say it’s the quickest hour of the week as they get to play and not have to worry about work or the kids.’

The class is something of a cross between exercise, dance, circus skills and performance art – and it’s a joyful sight to watch shimmering multi-coloured hoops swooshing through the studio.

‘I admit I’m addicted to buying hoops as I love how colourful and sparkly they are,’ adds Marcela.

Of course, as with any coordination skill, it takes practice and patience. You need to get your body in tune with the rhythm of perpetual motion – I’m sure it must have happened once or twice during the class before that inevitable thud to the ground. And it’s pretty addictive too.

Hula Hooping is at the Seagrass Studio in Braunton on Mondays, 6pm



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We've been busy bees creating a very useful new campaigning-style website. Look it up this spring as a source of information about domestic violence, the services that NDADA offers, news on our campaigns and for ways in which you can get involved with, and support the charity. **Find it at www.ndada.co.uk**

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white moose

contemporary art gallery



Patrick Jones No Pasaran III (Delft) 2005

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