

The Duchy Vixen

....it's got bite

A quarterly magazine about life on the Duchy

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Minimalism, Mush, Raku, Rocks and a suitcase of keys.....Share your stories with us by email duchyvixen@gmail.com

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Artwork by Sarah Pease

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2 Duchy Community

Minimalism - tossing out every useful but ugly thing?

by Martha Mitchell

I want to live simply. To simplify my life. To be more about being than owning. To have space and time for myself and others.

Minimalism, mindful living, meditating; there are many of us wanting to slow down and simplify. I believe this leads to less stress, fewer debts, and more breathing space. To be honest, I'm also hoping that it might increase my generosity. Who was it who said 'live simply that others may simply live'? Ah yes, Gandhi; thanks, Google (I'll get round to reducing screen use... another day)

One way I've embraced a streamlined life is by downsizing from a 4-storey house to a 2-bed flat on the Duchy and this necessitated getting rid of lots of household stuff. I joined a local Facebook page selling items and even made a friend of one of my buyers: she had a fabulously priced French farmhouse

table, I had money in exchange, and we both gained friendship; wins all round.

I'm not sure if I've now caught a decluttering bug or am riding the crest of the latest craze but reducing my possessions gives me a definite buzz. So much so that I lapped up global sensation Marie Kondo's tidying philosophy... the most striking point from the KonMari Method has been touching each thing I own and asking myself simply 'does this spark joy?' Ironically, I spent money as a result, realising that my dinner plates just didn't do it for me... so I needed a replacement set pronto! I now have 4 plates that charm me daily when I'm doing the washing up. Ha ha! It looks suspiciously like I am heeding William Morris (whose wallpaper sparks joy on my walls!) and his rule 'have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful'. Although I'm wondering if the KonMari Method pushes this further as I toss out every useful but ugly thing.

I've been a fan of minimalism for ages; choosing a monochrome black wardrobe definitely makes for a simplified life. I don't really have to think much about what I wear and I know I'll have footwear, outerwear and handbags to match! Coco Chanel famously wore all black, saying "women think of all colours except the absence of colours. I have said black has it all". My own style has none of Chanel's elegance but hey! It's still fun to quote her...

Even my cooking is minimalist, if that's at all a thing. I don't cook, I simply steam vegetables and pulses. No recipe books, no weird and wonderful (read-hard to find) ingredients, 10 minutes preparation, and it's healthy vegan nosh. Simple.

www.konmari.com



MUSH

I'm Fiona. A 31 year old first time Mum to a gorgeous, happy little girl called Felicity. She's 10 months old and is my whole world!!!

When I was pregnant, my husband and I moved to Harrogate. As I hadn't been living in Harrogate very long when my little girl was born, I didn't know anyone in the area. The early days of maternity leave were lonely and I knew I had to do something about it. I was out walking three times a day and needed some adult conversation! You do meet a lot of mums at all the baby classes but it's not the same. That's when I discovered the free app MUSH!

Mush is a free app that connects mums with other local, like-minded mums with kids the same age. It's mission is to make the lives of mums more sociable and fun, enabling meet-ups in real life with other mums who know what you're going through!

MUSH definitely was my life-line. Since downloading the app I've been able to make loads of new mummy friends that all live within or near Harrogate. We use the app to arrange coffee mornings, walks and even the odd mummy night out so we can enjoy a glass of vino!

If you're a mum and fancy making some more friends, then download the free app and hopefully our paths will cross at one of the up coming coffee mornings.

www.letsmush.com



www.theduchyvixen.com

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FOVG: Restoration of King Edward V11 Memorial Gate



Funding is still underway for this project. The estimated cost of the project is £60,000, £34,000 has been raised. The Green Park Entrance is in a dilapidated state with one pillar virtually non-existent, another in a poor state of repair, remaining. The King Edward VII Gate was originally sited at the entrance of the Rose Garden on Kings Road, is to be installed at the present Green Park Entrance site. The pillars were sourced from the Harrogate Borough Council storage depot and the Gate discovered in a field above Pateley Bridge. Restoration work is needed on the gate, surrounding railings and the road entrance leading into Back Lane refurbished. Disabled parking allocations will be provided at the Valley Drive, Harlow Moor Drive junction. King Edward VII was known as 'The Peace Maker' endeavouring to prevent war in Europe. The adjacent rose beds to the Gate will be planted with memorial roses, the varieties selected are Peace, Tommys Rose and Flanders Field. The last two roses are WW1 memorial roses. We hope to complete fund raising for this project in time to plant by 11.11.18 the centenary of the end of WW1.

www.friendsofvalleygardens.co.uk
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Organised by Friends of Valley Gardens to raise funds for the restoration & development of Park facilities.

www.harrogate1940s.com
Further information & stall bookings:
Jane Blayney, Tel: 01423 505 231
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4 Duchy Schools

New Headmaster for Ashville College

Mr Richard Marshall, will succeed Mr Mark Lauder as the 10th Headmaster of Ashville College with effect from September 2017.

Peter Whiteley, Chair of Governors at Ashville, said "we had a very strong field of applicants for the Head's post; but Richard was the standout candidate for the Governing Body and the staff and pupils who met him during the selection process. He brings with him genuine experience of running a very successful school and we were all very impressed by his ambition, energy and drive, and also his commitment to the values that make Ashville special.



Richard Marshall comes from the Bury Grammar School Boys, an HMC school which was rated double 'Excellent' by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in November 2016. He has been at Bury since 2006, having joined the school as Head of Chemistry, he gained promotion to Head of Science, with subsequent promotions to Deputy Head Academic (2008), Second Master (2010) and ultimately Headmaster in March 2013. Prior to joining Bury, Richard was Head of Sixth Form at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Blackburn. . On his appointment as the 10th Headmaster of Ashville College, Richard comments, "I am honoured and privileged to be appointed as the next Headmaster of this prestigious and forward looking school. Ashville College is truly unique, a successful day and boarding school with a global identity and perspective. I look forward to building on the successes of previous Headmasters and leading the school in the next exciting stages of development."

Brackenfield

Following an impressive performance at the Music for Youth Regional Festival in Halifax, Brackenfield School Junior Choir was invited to open the Tour de Yorkshire, Eve of Tour celebrations on April 27th at the National Railway Museum in York.

The choir performed "Medley for Yorkshire" especially arranged by Musical Director, Helen Leaf, at the VIP reception for over 200 guests including Sir Gary Verity, Chief Executive of Welcome to Yorkshire, Her Excellency, Sylvie Bermann, French Ambassador to the UK, and Christian Prudhomme, General Director of the Tour de France. The audience was captivated by Brackenfield's medley of songs to celebrate "God's own County" including the familiar anthem "Ilka Moor Baht 'at" and "Sing a Song of Yorkshire" written by Muilt-Award-Winning British composer, Benjamin Till. Following the performance, Sir Gary Verity tweeted that the choir "were brilliant."

Headteacher, Pat Sowa



Harrogate District Biodiversity Action Group

HDBAG recorded the first Wood Warbler in the Harlow Carr Gardens for 12 years. It was heard calling at the beginning of May on the streamside along with the first swifts of the year.

www.biodiversityaction.org



Wood Warbler drawing by Beverley Drury

Ashville




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ASHVILLE
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Junior Choir

commented: "Brackenfield is a school which is proud of its heritage and also encourages its pupils to expand their horizons to explore the diverse and rich world we live in. As such, being involved in the Tour de Yorkshire was a great honour. It is a testament to their teachers and, in particular, Helen Leaf, Head of Performing Arts, that they have reached such a high standard of performance."

Brackenfield School Junior Choir is an enthusiastic, non-selective choir of children aged 7 to 11 years. In June 2017, the choir will perform in a charity event "danSing for Shine" with comedy legends, Cannon and Ball, at the Harrogate Theatre.

Brackenfield School's next Open Mornings are on Friday 6th October and Saturday 7th October from 10am to 11.30am. Alternatively, please phone the school to arrange a visit at any time.

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"Excellent All Areas" for HLC Family



Pupils and staff at Harrogate Ladies' College, Highfield Prep School and Bankfield Nursery are celebrating receiving an Excellent in All Areas rating by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).

The family of three schools, located in the Duchy area of Harrogate, was inspected by the ISI over a three-day period and was given the highest possible rating at the end of it – Excellent in All Areas from 2 to 18 years.

The inspection included lesson observations, meetings with a large number of pupils and staff, detailed parent questionnaires, analysis of assessment and examination data and a review of academic planning.

The team of independent inspectors from ISI, the Ofsted equivalent for independent schools, concluded, "The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent. A very positive culture of learning permeates the school. Even the youngest pupils recognise that they must take responsibility for their own learning. Pupils of all ages demonstrate high levels of initiative in their studies."

The inspectors went on to report that, "The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent. The school provides a consistently nurturing culture which allows pupils to develop self-confidence, embrace new challenges, discover talents, respect themselves and others, and understand the wider world."

Sylvia Brett, Principal of all three schools for children aged from 2 to 18 years, said, "We have been awarded the highest rating possible for an independent school and I am absolutely delighted that the ISI has confirmed what we already knew, that we are an excellent family of schools!"

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6 Duchy Food

Prologue: A Tour de Force +/- lycra



Article

by Alex le Bek

I think I am right in saying Prologue is Cold Bath Road's first 'concept store'. Connoisseur small, precision racking and the 'black edition' of something fast and light in the doorway - and it's not a cat - may throw you - but you are in the right place. The Prologue Café, unexpectedly (because this shop has TARDIS-like qualities), is substantial. A curation of performance frames and the quiet presence of big screen cycling blend with café culture in a natural and organic way.

Rachael and her partner, John, opened Prologue three years ago, bravely abandoning steady state for an adventure (and undoubtedly stress) to combine John's passion for cycling and Rachael's passion for good food into a business. They work together in what has become an innovative mix of food, bikes and events.

The menu reflects the same careful curator's eye with unpretentious quality and attention to detail; homemade, local products underpin superfood salads, wraps, avocado, egg and bacon toasted quesadillas, coffee and smoothies. Everything is available to pre-order or take away. If you plan a visit Harrogate's

Turkish Baths pre-order Prologue food to eat in the orangery after your treatments!

The La Spaziale coffee machine delivers conviction in a mug; the philosophy is one of 'do it properly or not at all!'

It is mid-morning, mid-week and the lycra free clientele, some tapping away on laptops, are enjoying the relaxed atmosphere. The sun shines in bright through the large windows and people watching is a real possibility. My delicious beetroot and feta wrap turns out to be a snack next to the All Day Prologue Breakfast. Slightly raised up above the street on its own patio the outside seating area, complete with a bike rack, is a great place to watch the world go by and enjoy a coffee and locally baked cake.

The community experience that has

grown out of Prologue's extensive social calendar is nothing less than a tour de force. The success is testament to the energy John, Rachael and their team bring to Prologue's numerous activities whether they are group rides, club events, corporate rides, evening talks or nothing at all to do with cycling such as a venue for local businesses or family and friends to meet!

A recent corporate day out with Prologue kicked off with the Prologue Breakfast (eggs, avocado, and bacon, spinach and sourdough bread), coffees and energy slices, followed by a ride returning back to Prologue for lunch. That's not all! Feeling weary or achy? Book yourself in for a Prologue sports massage which, as Rachael points out, is a nice experience that can be enjoyed by anyone - you don't have to do sport!

You will find Prologue on the lower reaches of Cold Bath Road - easy striking distance. Find out what's going on and make contact through Prologue's web site and social media links. Surprisingly, you won't find many images of the Prologue Café, but take it from me, non-bikers, if you love coffee, food and are lazily curious to get up close to a performance frame then the Prologue Cafe is the next stop on the Cold Bath culinary trail.

www.prologuecycling.co.uk

www.facebook.com/prologueperformancecycling

www.twitter.com/prologuecycle



Luigi's - step into Italy

By Adrienne Dyson

We dined early at Luigi's, 6 pm, and not surprisingly we were the first diners in. We were offered an attractive table in the window and given menus to peruse. The dulcet nostalgic tones of Roger Miller singing King of the Road and friendly service from the two gentlemen serving created a great ambience. Two glasses of the house red wine arrived promptly and our food orders were taken efficiently.

Luigi's has been open for 25 years and it really is a gem of a restaurant, just 100 metres from the entrance to the beautiful Valley Gardens.

As soon as you step into the restaurant it's like stepping into Italy. Round tables with red table cloths and terracotta walls.

We were eating off the early bird menu offering fantastic value for money at £12.80 for 2 courses and £15.30 for 3. I thoroughly enjoyed my starter of pepper stuffed with rice in a cheese sauce. My partner had calamari and that must have been tasty as he didn't offer me any!

For mains I enjoyed a delicious fillet of salmon in a lemon sauce and my partner chose the lamb shanks, accompanied by a generous portion of green beans, saute potatoes and a swede and carrot mix. The lamb shank would have satisfied the hungriest carnivore.

As we were enjoying the ambience and the occasion we decided to share a dessert – cherry cheesecake. Sheer bliss! We left happy and resolved to return very soon!

Luigi's is open Tuesday to Saturday from 6 pm until late. Early Bird Menu available Tuesday to Friday from 6 pm to 7 pm. 1 Valley Drive. Tel: 01423 560311.



Harrogate International Festival



Star of the operatic stage Sir Bryn Terfel, the John Wilson Orchestra, and Armonico Consort feature at the 2017 Harrogate Music Festival.

Delivered by Harrogate International Festivals, the month-long summer Festival runs in venues across the town throughout July. General booking opens at 10am on March 28, with priority booking now open for the 'Friends of the Festival'.

2017's theme is 'Generations'. Brian O'Regan, Music Festivals Manager, explains: "We are celebrating music's universal power that crosses the generations. Through our 'Library of Live' scheme, we are offering a limited number of free tickets for under 18's to encourage young people to attend and try out new experiences. The Festival team is passionate about promoting classical music by inspiring the next generation of audiences, as well as supporting the next generation of young musicians through our renowned Young Musicians Series."

Harrogate International Festivals has built a reputation for showcasing new talent. There will be a special concert featuring BBC Radio 3 New Generation

Artists at the Royal Hall, which will be recorded and broadcast on BBC Radio 3. Also, BBC's Young Musician Finalist Benjamin Goldscheider will feature in a performance exploring the great dynasties of the Mozart and Haydn families with the European Union Chamber Orchestra.

Audiences of all ages are invited to its Family Concert, with the Harrogate Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Bryan Western, which will feature music from movies, cartoons and even popular video games.

This year's Artist in Residence is the leading choir ensemble, Armonico Consort. Alongside an evening combining wine tasting and music with TV personality and wine critic, Oz Clarke, they'll perform Monteverdi's Vespers in an atmospheric 'Concert by Candlelight' at St. Wilfrid's Church.

www.harrogateinternationalfestivals.com

www.theduchyvixen.com





Plumpton Rocks

Photograph by Andy Marshall: Architectural Photography

www.theduchyvixen.com

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Andy Marshall: Architectural Photography



*View of Plumpton Rocks by J M W Turner RA
Courtesy of Harewood House Trust*

Article

by Rosemary Johnston



Robert de Plumpton Hunter

The Vixen heard that there had been some award winning restoration at Plumpton Rocks so we got in touch with the owner, Robert de Plumpton Hunter, who was kind enough to offer to show us around. Kate and I tootled off there one afternoon in the Easter holidays, having a general moan about the length of school holidays while my son in the back pretended not to hear us.

Rob was waiting for us there looking very much the country squire in his green jacket and wellies. We started to walk down the path towards the lake while Rob explained to us that there has been a settlement at Plumpton Rocks since Anglo Saxon times, and it has been the seat of the de Plumpton family since William the Conqueror. A crenelated manor house was built on the site by the family in 1462.

In front of us now are the rock formations, natural features of millstone grit. They rise up by the side of the lake. The highest one is known as Lover's Leap. There is a lovely view across the lake to a field of yellow rapeseed.

Rob explained that his family had suffered for their Roman Catholic beliefs during the Reformation and because of their support for the Royalist cause during the Civil War. The crenelated manor house was badly damaged after the Battle of Marston Moor in 1644, at which John Plumpton was killed. This left the family in need of money. So in 1749 the land was sold to Daniel Lascelles of Harewood for £27,000.

John Carr, the architect of Harewood House, was commissioned to build another large house like Harewood. As part of the redevelopment, the crenelated manor house was knocked down. The lake we can see was created by John Carr from two medieval fishing ponds and the masonry damn was built.

However, Daniel Lascelles then got divorced and, knowing that there would not be heirs, he lost interest in creating a large estate and bought Goldsborough Hall instead. So the new house was never built, leaving just the stables and parkland that Plumpton is essentially today.

As we walk by the lake, my son amuses himself by throwing sticks into the water at which point Rob explains that part of the restoration involved desilting the lake which had turned into bogland. I wished at that point that we had brought a dog that could have been sent to fetch the thrown sticks!

At the southern end of the lake, Rob shows us the view that had been painted by Turner, who had first visited Yorkshire in 1797, where he was employed by the Lascelles family to teach painting to the children.



Andy Marshall: Architectural Photography

Turner was commissioned to paint two oils of Plumpton rocks by the 1st Earl of Harewood, Edward Lascelles. Turner charged the Earl £32 for the pair which both now hang at Harewood House. They were Turner's first commissions in oil.

That view had become obscured by trees over the centuries. The recent works have returned the view to almost how it was in Turner's day. The restoration was made possible by grants from Natural England, Historic England and the Country Houses Foundation.

In front of us is a little island which Rob explains was rediscovered once the trees were felled. In the 1780's there was a little Chinese tea house on the island.

As we circumnavigate the lake, I ask how the land came to be returned to Rob's family? He explains that following the death of Henry, 6th Earl of Harewood, in 1947, the Harewood estate needed to raise some money to pay inheritance taxes and so the Plumpton estate was put up for sale. However, the Rocks were separated from the rest of the estate and sold back to Rob's father, Edward de Plumpton Hunter, in 1952, for £5000.

Rob's early years were spent in a cottage on the estate, contentedly playing Cowboys and Indians until the tragic death in a road accident of Rob's half-brother, William, who was just seventeen years old. After that, Rob's mother did not feel she could continue living so close to a permanent reminder of her son's death and the family moved away. Rob only returned once he learned to drive and his plans to restore the gardens took root once Rob had inherited the land in 2010.

I ask Rob what it feels like to own such a special place. Rob says that he feels a deep connection to Plumpton, his family's involvement there goes back twenty eight generations. It also makes him feel close to his father. He has planted two cedars of Lebanon in memory of his parents. And Rob shows us where he planted thirty-six trees, a mixture of oak, beech, lime

and Scots pine, in memory of his good friend, Kate's husband, Toby Price.

Rob says he always considered it one of his principle objectives in life to restore the gardens, a task he thought might be beyond him. I can only imagine what it is like to have your place in the world so well defined and a connection to it so rooted in history. Yet for all that, Rob seemed to me a very unassuming and self-effacing man, admirably keen to honour friendship, family, history and landscape. It must be very satisfying for Rob to have protected the land for the next generation. Rob says he feels very proud of the work he has done which has enabled the restoration to be carried out. And so he should - the restoration has earned Best Hidden Gem by Hudson's Heritage Awards.

We return to the top part of the estate over the masonry dam which has also been restored. It has been repointed, the broken finials repaired and the missing ones replaced. This work has earned Plumpton Rocks a Commendation for Restoration by The Georgian Group.

Kate and Rob reminisce a little about the picnics they used to have there. From their quiet giggling, I assume they must have been memorable affairs. It is a lovely spot for a picnic, so go along and make your own memories. The Rocks are open at weekends and bank holidays from now til the end of October, and every day in August. The entrance fee is £3.50 per adult and £2.50 per child, the money being used for the upkeep of the site.

www.plumptonrocks.com



Andy Marshall: Architectural Photography



Artwork by Sarah Pease

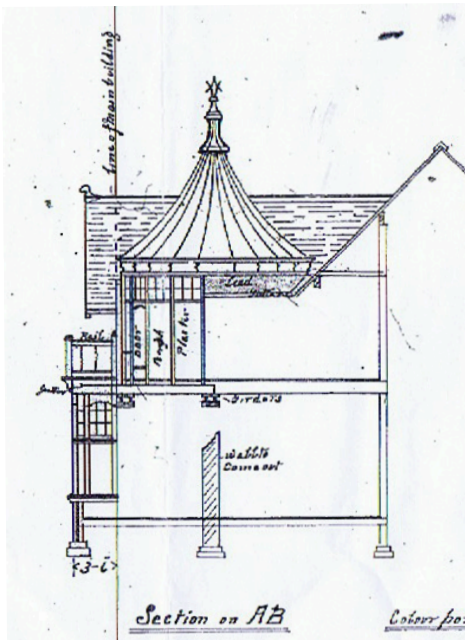
Pineheath: the Bombay Connection

Article

by Richard Thomas

Pineheath is a property which has always caught the imagination.

It was one of the earliest properties to be constructed on the Duchy Estate after the area was made available for housing and was probably constructed in the



1890's for a Mrs G G Sayner, in what was then known as Irongate Bridge Road but by 1904 became Cornwall Road. The change of road name to a Royal Duchy was a reflection of the Duchy of Lancaster on whose land the houses were being built. The house looked South across the Irongate Bridge Waterworks, which have recently been replaced by the new Sussex Drive estate (Queen Victoria's uncle was the last Duke of Sussex).

Mrs Sayner was content with a large but fairly standard home but her successor, Mr W E Cary, conceived and had built the present splendid bay window and minaret/domed roof, which is such a well-known feature of the house. He also extended the building with verandas and downstairs bedrooms. He may have intended to use the house as a nursing home where the property would have had greater access to the pine-scented air from its high-up location adjacent to the Pinewoods.

Sir Dhunjiboy Bomanji, a wealthy ship owner and owner of allied industries in Bombay was a frequent visitor to England and owned a large house,

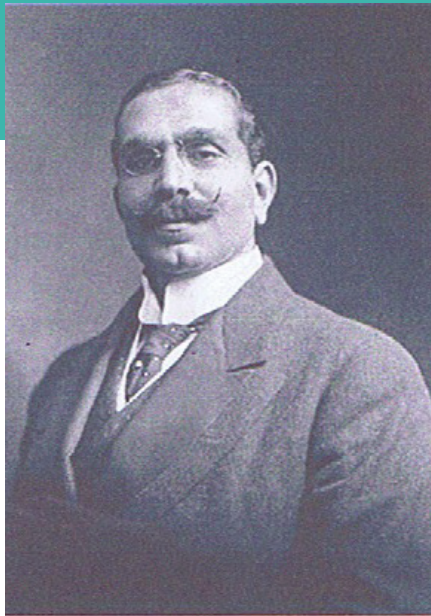
known as The Willows in Windsor. He was knighted in 1922 for services to India and the war effort. He was advised by the famous physician, Lord Dawson of Penn, to 'take the cure' in Harrogate in 1920. He and his wife Frainy came for this purpose and in 1927 bought Pineheath and became well known figures in the neighbourhood. They enjoyed their drives in a spectacular white open car driven at a very slow and stately speed. This was interrupted on one occasion when the chauffeur fell asleep and crashed in to a wall. After the Bomanjis purchased Pineheath it became larger and grander with servants quarters at the rear on Rutland Drive, a tennis court and chauffeur accommodation. They continued with a lifestyle based both at the Willows (which has been described as an oriental mansion in miniature), in Harrogate and in India.

During the 1939-1945 war years the Willows was handed to the Red Cross and after the death of Sir Dunjiboy Bomanji in 1937 Lady Bomanji spent an increasing amount of time at Pineheath when not in India at Bomanji Hall in Warden Road, Bombay. It was described as 'a beautiful cream and white confection' in which, after the war, Lady Bomanji and her daughter Mehroo Jehangir hosted some splendid occasions. On the 16th July 1957 the 'SS Strathmore' docked at Tilbury and Lady Bomanji, her daughter and a small entourage disembarked with 40 trunks, to take up more permanent residence in Britain, which Lady Bomanji declared was because 'I have a very special place in my heart for its people. The cold climate does not worry me as it is the people not the climate which matters'. If she had decided to reside in India where she had a very beautiful house she said 'the laws are now such that I would not be able to take sufficient money out of the country to make visits to Europe possible'.

Lady Bomanji died in 1986. She had been involved in very many of Harrogate's

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activities including the Concert Society which led directly to the Harrogate Festival, now the Harrogate International Festival. She supported the construction of the Hampden House nursing home on Duchy Road, including the demolition of the



Sir Dhunjibhoy Bomanji

original house, and held a fund raising evening at Pineheath where the Committee wore saris and turbans and dined on what was described as a 'real Indian curry'. Lady Bomanji was much in demand as a speaker and at one time was attending such events at an average of 3 times a week.

The house was furnished with French period furniture, huge paintings, gold leafed monogrammed wallpaper and an internal telephone system. The grand piano in the drawing room had been ordered by the Kaiser before the First World War but was purchased by Sir Dunjiboy Bomanji in the 1920's. It was recently sold following the death of Mrs Jehangir in 2012 and the subsequent clearance of the house. The piano had had to be delivered and removed through the Drawing Room window. A marble statue, formerly in the front garden, was donated to the town and has been installed in the Montpellier Gardens. What happened to the marble statue 'La Verita' which was moved from The Willows and donated to the town in 1959?



Lady Bomanji

The house was purchased by its present owner in 2013, who was handed two suitcases filled with door keys to the 40 rooms in the house. He has permission to convert and extend the house, chauffeur's accommodation and garage into twelve apartments. It will be interesting to see the effect on the area by the re-awakening of this 1.3 acre site and its buildings after such a long period of quiescence.

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14 Duchy Arts

Fast and

brutal : local ceramicist Eric Moss talks about his work and the raku process, in conversation with Sarah Pease

For years ceramics and pottery has meant lovely handmade earthenware for the breakfast table, but Eric Moss's ceramics fall into a different category. Distinctive, and sculpturally dramatic, his work has evolved into both convoluted and complex assemblies and simple, subtly sculptural forms often inspired by flowers, seeds, nuts and even jet engines! Early evolution was by natural selection as raku's punishing firing techniques led to 40% losses to thermal shock - when red hot pots crack as the kiln door is



Can you describe the raku process?

Raku firing is an ancient Japanese technique which is an extremely fast heating and cooling process unlike any other. The pots may only spend 25-30 minutes in the already hot kiln, heating from ambient temperature to almost 800C during that period. The kiln's top vent doubles up as a spyhole to view the state of the glazes on the pots and, when visibly shiny, the kiln will be opened to the air and the pots quickly removed, a fresh batch loaded and the kiln closed. Traditionally, the extracted pots are left to air cool or undergo a second thermal shock by being quenched in cold water.

Most Western raku potters perform an additional 'post-firing reduction' step. The hot pots are quickly placed in a container with sawdust and/or newspaper, which ignites immediately. A lid seals the burning material and keeps its smoke contained to permeate the unglazed areas of the pots and reveal any glaze crackle. This helps create the characteristic appealing tracery of black lines. Once pots are cool enough to remove from the container, they are washed, dried and finally sealed or waxed before display.



opened at 800 degrees C or when the still hot, smoked pots are plunged into cold water to complete their birthcycle.

So how did you get into ceramics?

I made my very first pot in 1968 at the age of eight, a ghastly parrot bisque fired, painted and varnished to imitate glazing. I kept it in my toybox until its beak, feet and wingtips had been knocked off by the other toys, then buried it in the garden!

I learned the rudiments of slab building, coiling and throwing pots at comprehensive school and other ceramics processes, such as plaster mouldmaking and slipcasting at college (where ceramics was my subsidiary subject under silversmithing and jewellery making). I did a foundation year at York and then a 3D design degree at Manchester where I won a number of design awards.

Although I sold every piece of my degree show ceramics (none of my silverwork!), it just didn't 'click' for me and I entered

a career in graphic design, although I continued honing my potting skills by almost continuous night classes, for pure pleasure, over the next 20 years.

Then in 2005 I took a two week specialist course in raku ceramics. The technique takes the pot (earth) on an elemental journey, a fast and brutal firing technique employing fire, air and water. My tutor praised the quality of my raku pots, and queried whether I had considered showing them to galleries and so it began. After a few disappointments, within a year of me going commercial, Yorkshire Sculpture Park were stocking my work and I've done regular showcases there ever since.

I then cut my 'direct selling' teeth in 2006 by hiring a stall at 'Potfest in the Pens' ceramic shows in Penrith and Perth soon advancing to prestigious 'by selection' shows like 'Potfest in the Park', 'Earth & Fire' and 'Ceramics in the City'

Why clay?

Clay is a very versatile, accessible material, marvellously recyclable before it is fired. But once it has been transformed by fire into immutable ceramic, it has the curious property that it can endure for millennia or be destroyed in an instant.

I learned, around the age of 48 (some 40 years after I'd been introduced to clay, and 2 years after 'going commercial' with my raku ceramics) that my great grandfather had been a master potter at a pottery factory in Norton on Tees, though which of the six, now non-existent, factories he worked at I may never discover. I know that the factory made 'brown ware' but that may refer to sewer pipes or to domestic cooking pots, bread crocks and such.

What leads you to want to make the shapes in the first place?

I think for many artists there is an inherent need, perhaps even a compulsion, to create. I'm much more interested, and comfortable working in, three dimensional form than in two dimensional decoration and I delight in simple forms which initially appear easily 'read' but which further observation is rewarded with visual intrigue.

What is your working process?

I start with observation, analytical drawing (or photography) or simply a stream of consciousness approach which leads from observation, through analysis for production and to imagining which manufacturing processes would best suit realising the form in clay.

The result may be a combination of processes: for example, my 'Ceramicano' assemblies theme was initially inspired by a physalis fruit in its 'paper lantern' sepal case. The spherical fruit could be wheel thrown and, initially, the separate segments of its case were also thrown on the wheel, then cut and modified. But the brutal raku firing process is very unforgiving of complex joints - thermal shock would very often result in failures along those joints. My solution was to sidestep the problem altogether by making the segments as single pieces in plaster moulds, raku firing all elements separately and then simply bolting parts together at the end of the process. The addition of 'bobbin' spacers between segments was a practical



"Seed pod"

"Ceramicano assembly"

solution to reveal the interior surfaces of the segments. My 'waveform', best described as a cubic cylinder, sprang from a flag iris seed found bobbing in my wildlife pond. I simplified the natural form into one which could be slab/built from two identical curved sheets. This results in a three dimensional form, with only two sides and just one edge - rather intriguing!

You talk about nature but some of your work looks more industrial?

Observations from nature are the starting point for my work, but I don't seek to imitate nature. My keen interest in manufacturing and engineering processes come into play in design. I distill what I have seen into simpler geometries of spheres, cubes and cylinders with thoughts of what techniques or processes would be

best suited to create the form in three dimensions. Once I have the essential form, I may modify it further.

In what direction do you see your work developing?

I delight in the chance discovery and in the elegant resolution of difficulties in manufacture. There remains a lot of mileage in the forms I currently make, either in motion, decoration, lighting, video, use of materials other than clay and other, perhaps industrial, manufacturing processes.

Eric's work is on sale in selected galleries around the country and can be found in private collections across the globe, particularly in New Zealand, Australia and the United States.

www.ericmossceramics.co.uk



"Seed pods"

Eric and his wife Christine (a fellow artist, whose wire sculptures will be featured in the September issue) are looking forward to welcoming visitors for North Yorkshire Open Studios 2017 (Sat/Sun 3/4 June & Sat/Sun 10/11 June) at their new rural location in Asenby, near Thirsk. Find full information and contact details at: www.nyos.org.uk/chris-moss and/or www.nyos.org.uk/eric-moss

I Go Back to May 1937

I see them standing at the formal gates of their colleges,
I see my father strolling out
under the ochre sandstone arch, the
red tiles glinting like bent
plates of blood behind his head, I
see my mother with a few light books at her hip
standing at the pillar made of tiny bricks,
the wrought-iron gate still open behind her, its
sword-tips aglow in the May air,
they are about to graduate, they are about to get married,
they are kids, they are dumb, all they know is they are
innocent, they would never hurt anybody.
I want to go up to them and say Stop,
don't do it—she's the wrong woman,
he's the wrong man, you are going to do things
you cannot imagine you would ever do,
you are going to do bad things to children,
you are going to suffer in ways you have not heard of,
you are going to want to die. I want to go
up to them there in the late May sunlight and say it,
her hungry pretty face turning to me,
her pitiful beautiful untouched body,
his arrogant handsome face turning to me,
his pitiful beautiful untouched body,
but I don't do it. I want to live. I
take them up like the male and female
paper dolls and bang them together
at the hips, like chips of flint, as if to
strike sparks from them, I say
Do what you are going to do, and I will tell about it.

Sharon Olds



Artwork by Sarah Pease

Deadline

The deadline for the next issue is 9th August 2017

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