

COMMUNITY & LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

LOCAL LIFE

JUN | JUL 2025



*Nature's Inspiration:
Captivating Jewellery*

FREE

— CM —

Caroline McInally

...page 8

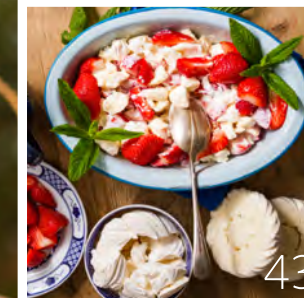


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34



43

Editor's LETTER



Things slow down in summer. And, when I look back on summer memories, I picture my six-year-old self with a sticky chin from

an orange popsicle, paddling in the sun-dappled lake, beach barbecues as a teen, or full body sweating on underground platforms and tube trains in London.

Work, of course, doesn't completely halt (unless you've reached the heady days of retirement), but it's time to prioritise life. We are pulled to spend more time outdoors, have more time to soak up new experiences and revisit old favourites, eat delicious

food, and generally pack in as many adventures as we can before the first leaf falls from the tree in autumn.

This is roughly the scenario we had in mind when we started planning this issue – a reminder to take a breath, let the pace slow a little, get some sun and make the most of summer in East Lothian. We want this issue to be one you can flip through while sitting in the garden after dinner or roll up and pop in a bag when heading to the beach.

So the varied articles offer everything from a selection of literary escapes to summer interiors, fashion, health and gardening advice. In summer, East Lothian comes alive as a myriad of activities take place across the county, and the fields put on their own show featuring bountiful produce from local growers. So, we tell you what's happening,

where, and when, and we have easy recipes for enjoying alfresco. Among the captivating topics is an interview with Caroline McNally, who meticulously crafts one-of-a-kind jewellery inspired by nature, and David Hicks tells us the stories behind some of East Lothian's historic properties.


Whatever adventure you have this summer, be sure to slow down and soak it all in. Because before you know it, another season will have passed – and you don't want to miss it.


Enjoy the issue, enjoy your local life.

Kim x

LOCAL LIFE

COMMUNITY & LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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CONTENTS



44



23



50

- 3 EDITOR'S LETTER
- 4 CONTENTS
- 7 FASHION
Dress to Impress
- 8 COVER STORY
Nature's Inspiration:
Captivating Jewellery
- 11 HEALTH
It's Never too (Pi)Late(s)
- 12 Embracing Youthful Skin
- 14 MIND BODY SOUL
Yoga for Grief
- 16 In The Stars
- 18 Making Mistakes is
an Essential Part of
Being Human

- 23 HOME
Personal Space
- 27 MONEY MATTERS
Downsize and Thrive
- 28 Golden Child
- 30 OUT & ABOUT
Fringe by the Sea is
Making Waves Again
- 32 Book Reviews
- 34 To Do List
- 36 STORIES IN STONE
Relics of the
Second World War
- 38 OUT & ABOUT
Discover Scotland's
Seabirds

- 40 Weekend Tide Times
- 41 FOOD & DRINK
A Slice of Napoli
- 42 Savour Summer
- 44 GARDENING
Your Garden,
A Home for Nature
- 46 A GREENER WORLD
New Life or Landfill?
- 49 MOTORING
Ready, Set... Check
- 50 AND FINALLY...
Island Escape



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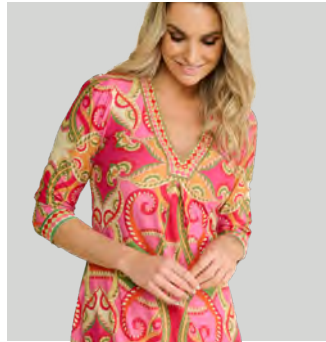
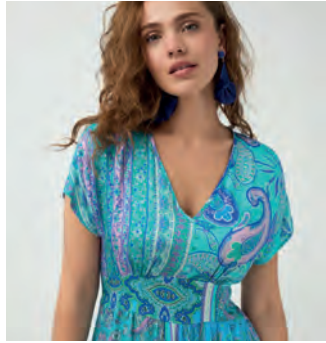
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Summer can be a whirlwind of events, from weddings to birthdays, beach breaks to garden parties. And with each invitation comes the inevitable dilemma: what to wear? But the one-and-done ease of a dress makes summer dressing effortless – leaving you free to go forth and enjoy.

Occasion

Embrace the summer vibe with floral prints or pastel patterns – flowy, bohemian-style dresses with pretty details are perfect. Add a pop of colour with accessories such as a bright bag or bold earrings.

left: V-neck maxi dress £95

£95

£100

£135

above: Pink or floral leather handbag £45

Destination

Choose dresses that are easy to pack and don't wrinkle easily – a skirt and matching top allow versatility and can be a great option. Add sunglasses and a crossbody bag for practicality and to add flair to your look.

Beach

Opt for light floaty dresses in breathable fabrics that can be dressed up or down to take you from beach to bar. Accessorise with a wicker or crochet bag and take a shawl in case it gets chilly.

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right: Ivory and black maxi dress £290

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LOCAL LIFE | 7

Nature's Inspiration: Captivating Jewellery

Mention 'bespoke, unique and jewellery' in the same sentence and the words 'out of reach' might spring to mind. But hand-crafted, unique jewellery may be more affordable than you might imagine. We speak to jewellery designer **Caroline McNally**, who meticulously crafts one-of-a-kind jewellery from her Gullane workshop.



How did your love affair with jewellery begin?

It didn't start with diamonds or gold – it began with dress-up boxes, plastic beads, and a wild imagination. I fell in love with the idea that jewellery could transform you, even for a moment. That feeling never left.

What inspired you to become a jewellery designer and start your own brand?

After studying Fine Art, I found myself feeling a bit lost – like I was searching for a path that truly excited me. I knew I wanted to do something creative, something hands-on, but I hadn't found the right fit. That moment of uncertainty was a turning point thanks to my youngest sibling, who suggested I try making jewellery. They knew how much I loved fashion and design and how important self-expression was to me; somehow, jewellery

felt like the perfect way to bring it all together.

Once I started experimenting, something clicked. I fell in love with the process – the details, the materials, the way a single piece could tell a whole story. Starting my own brand felt like the natural next step; I wanted to create personal, playful, and powerful pieces that made people feel something.

Can you talk me through your design process?

My design process usually begins with loose sketches – just letting ideas flow and experimenting with different shapes, stone placements, and colour combinations. I love playing with contrasts and balance, finding ways to bring together unexpected elements that still feel harmonious.

Once I've settled on a design that excites me, I start creating a wax

model. This is one of my favourite parts – it's where the design really starts to come to life in three dimensions. From there, I cast the piece in my chosen metal, refining the details and finishing it by hand to bring out its final character.

Every step feels like its own creative journey, and I love how the process blends freedom and precision.

What are some of the materials you use in your jewellery collection?

I work primarily with precious metals, such as sterling silver and gold, and pair them with a carefully chosen selection of semi-precious and precious stones.



I love exploring the contrast between metal and gemstone – how the colours, textures, and finishes can complement each other and bring a design to life.

Where do you draw your inspiration from?

Having grown up near Loch Lomond, I was always surrounded by nature – its stillness, its textures, and the quiet beauty in the details. That sense of calm and connection to the natural world has stayed with me, deeply influencing my work. From organic shapes and soft curves to the colours and patterns found in stone, water, and wild landscapes, my jewellery is a reflection of the beauty I've always found in nature.

Why should people commission a piece of jewellery?

Commissioning a piece of jewellery from me is a truly personal experience. I work one-on-one with each client to bring their vision to life – whether it's a piece to mark a special moment, celebrate a loved one, or simply something they've always dreamed of wearing. From the initial ideas to the final polish, every step is collaborative and carefully considered, ensuring the finished piece is beautifully made and deeply meaningful.

What do you want people to feel when wearing your jewellery?

When someone wears a piece of my jewellery, I want them to feel like they're wearing something that's truly their own – something unique, meaningful, and made just for them. Each piece is crafted with care and intention and is more than just an accessory.



I want it to carry a sense of story, connection, and quiet confidence – something special they can treasure for years to come.

Finally, do you have a favourite jewellery item you have created?

One of my favourite pieces I've made over the years is a heavy, solid gold ring set with a striking ocean-blue topaz. The stone is held in such a way that it appears to be growing out of the gold – like it's emerged naturally, just as organic forms rise from the earth. It's a piece deeply inspired by nature and the raw beauty found in the world around us. I love how it feels both powerful and grounded, with a sense of movement and life that makes it feel like more than just a ring – it's like a tiny sculpture, a piece of art for the hand.

Caroline McNally
carolinemcnallyinfo@gmail.com
carolinemcnally.com

What to expect from a complimentary hearing assessment at The Edinburgh Hearing Practice

First and foremost, we will listen to you. Hearing loss is personal and we take the time to listen to your experience. We recommend that you bring someone with you as they can often provide useful information and support. Our hearing assessments usually take about 90 minutes.

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At each stage, we will explain the results really thoroughly to you and make sure that everything is completely clear. Occasionally we may feel that onward referral is required – this is unusual, but you can trust us to always do the right thing. If hearing aids would help, we will discuss all the different solutions that are available to you based on your hearing loss, lifestyle, cosmetic preference and ease of use. All the results and recommendation are given to you in a report. If appropriate we can make a recommendation on next steps, to help you continue on your journey to better hearing.

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It's Never too (Pi)Late(s)

Pilates may be low-impact exercise, but it builds core strength, flexibility and overall body awareness. Here's why and how to join the strong and lean crew.

One of the primary benefits of Pilates is the emphasis on core strength. The core, often referred to as the body's powerhouse, includes the abdomen, lower back, hips and pelvis muscles.

Pilates exercises are designed to target these muscles, leading to improved stability, posture and overall strength. It incorporates various stretching exercises that help increase flexibility and range of motion, which is crucial for maintaining joint health, preventing muscle imbalances and reducing the risk of injuries. Pilates is also an effective way to tone and sculpt the muscles without adding bulk. The exercises involve controlled, precise movements that engage various muscle groups, leading to lean and defined muscles.

EXERCISES

The Hundred

A classic Pilates exercise that warms up the body and activates the core muscles.

- Lie on your back with your legs in a tabletop position (knees bent at 90 degrees)
- Lift your head, neck and shoulders off the mat
- Extend your arms alongside your body, palms facing down
- Pump your arms up and down while inhaling for five counts and exhaling for five
- Repeat for a total of 100 counts

Roll-up

Designed to increase spinal flexibility and strengthen the abdominal muscles.

- Lie flat on your back with your arms extended overhead and legs straight
- Inhale to prepare, then exhale as you slowly roll up, reaching for your toes



- Inhale at the top, then exhale as you roll back down, one vertebra at a time
- Repeat 6-8 times

The Swan

Ideal for strengthening the back muscles and improving spinal extension.

- Lie face down with your arms bent and hands placed under your shoulders
- Engage your core and press through your hands to lift your chest off the mat
- Keep your head in line with your spine and avoid overextending your neck
- Lower back down with control and repeat 5-8 times

Single-Leg Circles

This exercise targets the abdominal muscles and improves hip mobility.

- Lie on your back with your left leg extended on the mat and your right leg up
- Circle your right leg clockwise, then counter-clockwise, with core engaged
- Complete five circles in each direction, then switch legs

For further information about local Pilates classes:

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At North Berwick Dental Centre, highly skilled and experienced dentists Clara Reid (middle) and Ceire Blair (bottom) deliver a range of facial aesthetic treatments

Embracing Youthful Skin

Our skin naturally reflects our experiences as we journey through life – from laughter lines to deeper expression marks. Thanks to continued advancements in aesthetic medicine, there are now more options than ever to help rejuvenate and refresh your appearance in a subtle, natural-looking way.

North Berwick Dental Centre offers a full range of facial aesthetic treatments delivered by highly skilled and experienced dentists Clara Reid and Ceire Blair. Among the most popular treatments are anti-wrinkle therapies and dermal fillers.

Anti-wrinkle therapies involve minimally invasive procedures that work to soften the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles. Clara and Ceire, with their extensive knowledge of head and neck anatomy, offer treatments that aim to relax targeted muscles and smooth dynamic facial lines – helping to create a refreshed and youthful look. They can also treat

tense and painful jaw muscles due to tooth clenching or grinding. What's more treatments can also be hugely helpful in the managing the pain of debilitating chronic headache.

The Role of Fillers and the Innovation of Profhilo

Clara has extensive experience administering a wide range of dermal fillers, helping restore lost volume, enhance facial contours, and improve skin texture. One of the most exciting advancements in this field is Profhilo – a unique injectable treatment based on stabilised hyaluronic acid that works to bio-remodel the skin.

Unlike traditional fillers that add volume, Profhilo stimulates the skin's own collagen and elastin production, leading to firmer, more hydrated skin over time. The result is a subtle yet noticeable improvement in skin tone, texture, and elasticity – making it an excellent option for those seeking natural and long-lasting results. Clara explains: “*Profhilo is a really exciting product because it enhances natural features without the risk of overfilling, and it's suitable for areas beyond the face, including the neck and upper arms. What's more, results can last up to two years, offering long-term value, plus there's minimal personal downtime, with noticeable results after just two sessions.*”

With minimal disruption to daily life, these procedures are an accessible option for those looking to enhance their appearance. But remember, choosing a qualified healthcare professional is crucial to ensure the safety and efficacy of facial aesthetic treatments.

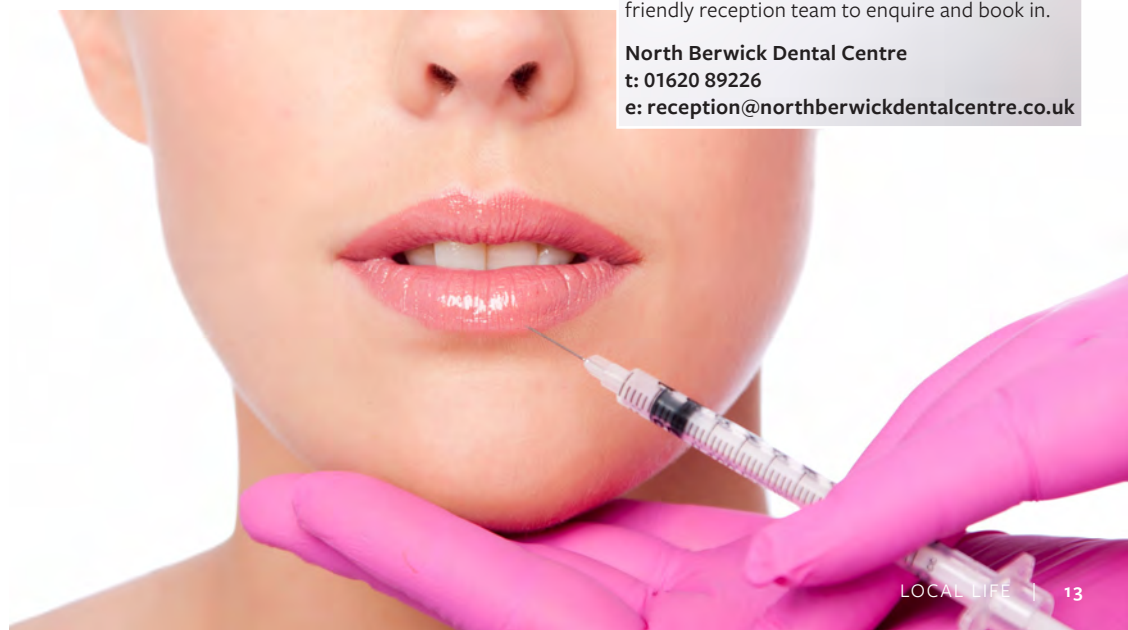
Clara adds, “*You are in very safe hands when you book a thorough consultation with either Ceire or me. We can help you understand the options available to you and create a customised plan tailored to your aesthetic goals. Plus, our consultation fee is redeemable against treatment.*”

So as you embrace life's journey, you don't need to embrace every wrinkle that comes with it. With the right treatments, the North Berwick Dental Centre team can smooth the path ahead and help you **Smile With Confidence**.



North Berwick Dental Centre welcomes all enquiries; you don't have to be a registered dental patient to benefit from their aesthetic treatments. Call the friendly reception team to enquire and book in.

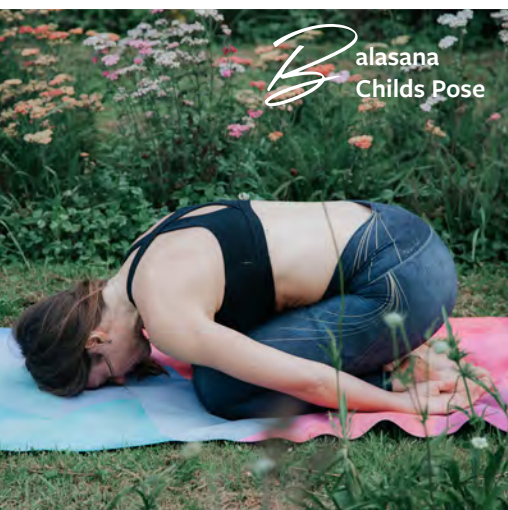
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e: reception@northberwickdentalcentre.co.uk



Yoga for Grief

words: sally jean rankin | pictures: lindsay scott

There are going to be times in your life when you experience grief; sometimes, it's not easy to identify the enormity of our emotions when they are embroiled in grief, and we all manage and express them in different ways. From an Ayurvedic perspective, key ways to help move through the grieving process are practising yoga, writing in a journal, getting out in nature as much as possible, going for Ayurvedic massages and meditating. Sitting in contemplation/meditation can help connect to complex feelings, and writing them down in a journal can help with the reflection and digestion process. Practising yoga can help move any stored trauma through the body and offer group support. The power of touch can help with feelings of isolation and loneliness, and getting out in nature's rhythm is healing and can be immensely powerful and transformative. Here are two yoga poses that can help with the grieving process.



If you can take your mat outside into the fresh air or open your windows, light a candle and find your way into tabletop position on all fours. Take a deep inhale; as you exhale, sit back on your heels and bring your knees together. Now, bring your arms by your sides or extend them out in front of you. Make sure you are warm and comfortable using cushions, folded blankets or yoga blocks. Allow yourself to relax and let go. If you want, completely cover yourself with a blanket; this can feel especially comforting and relaxing. Stay here for as long as you need just be mindful of your knees. When you are ready, gently move out of child's pose into downward-facing dog, stretch your legs, then come to sit in a cross-legged position. Child's pose is therapeutic; it helps balance emotions and is grounding, relaxing, calming, and energising. It fosters self-awareness and focus, and stretches, strengthens and lengthens the body helping with flexibility and range of motion.

Come to a comfortable seated position: cross-legged, on your heels, on a chair, or, if you are advanced in your practice, the lotus pose. Sit with a straight spine to help the nerve impulses travel up and down your spinal column; make sure you are warm and comfortable, and close your eyes. Take a few minutes to practise either anulmoa viloma or nadi shodana pranayama before coming to meditation. Now, focus on your root chakra at the base of the spine; keep focusing on this space, gently breathing in and out through your nose. After two to three minutes of stillness with your eyes lightly closed, shift your awareness up your spine to your eyebrow centre, which is known as the ajna chakra. This is the space between your eyebrows and is known as the space between your thoughts. Focus on ajna chakra for two to three minutes, then open your eyes. Now lie on your back in Shavasana for relaxation. Meditation can help regulate emotions, relax the mind and body, improve focus and concentration, lower blood pressure, improve cognitive function, and boost the immune system, creating space for a deeper connection with yourself. After relaxation, you might want to write down any thoughts and feelings that emerge. Talking things through can also help.



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Moira Johnston

hypnotherapy

about me

I am a Clinical Hypnotherapist and Psychotherapist based in East Lothian. My background as a lawyer in a global law firm has enabled me to bring a wealth of experience to my hypnotherapy practice. My hypnotherapy journey began by training with the prestigious Clifton Practice for a diploma in Solution-Focused Hypnotherapy, which provided me with a highly effective therapeutic framework utilising a Solution-Focused Approach.

Every time, I emerged from the session feeling amazingly calm and ready to 'take on the world'!

These sessions have completely changed my life. I am so much more positive and content which in turn has made my family life so much better. The sessions have not only taught me how I can get the best out of myself but they also gave me some much needed relaxation time.

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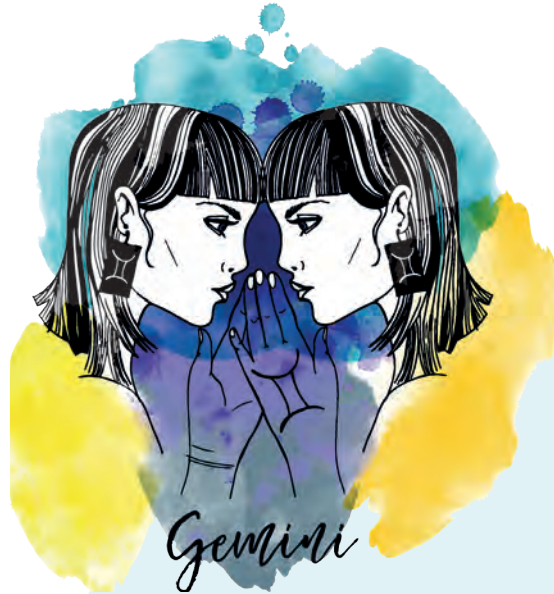
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In the Stars

Bernie Rowen-Ross tells you
what's in your astrology charts
for June and July.



21 May – 20 June

It is a good time to learn something new and to engage with people from different cultures. There may even be benefits in learning a new language or you could begin writing to sharpen your mind. Perhaps just start journaling if you don't already, as jotting down your thoughts in the morning often gives you a clearer perspective on the day.



Cancer

21 June – 22 July

Home is certainly where the heart is, and the energy spent on the home will be rewarded now. Invite friends around and celebrate the summer. You are the decision-maker about what you want in your social life, so you are the one to make it happen – relax and enjoy yourself.



Leo

23 July –
22 August

It's time to take the lead and make bold decisions; dallying around is only going to frustrate you. Be careful not to be too demanding; otherwise, you will put other people's backs up. Just gently and persuasively lead with all good intent for a positive outcome. Make decisions based on compassion and understanding for all.



Virgo

23 August –
22 September

Dear Virgo, you should focus on your health and well-being at this time. It's a perfect time to increase your outdoor activity, go for more walks, enjoy the beauty that is surrounding you, and embrace nature. Join a walking group if that is what it takes to enthuse you. You can also have a spa day with a friend and relax into summer.



Libra

23 September –
22 October

Libra, you should accept help from others when it is offered: there is a wonderful energy when we let down our very independent guard and allow others to take care of the 'small stuff'. Give yourself the time to be creative and to express yourself. You will be rewarded by allowing a more balanced way of experiencing life.



Taurus

20 April – 20 May

Earthy Taurus, this time is about embracing change and moving forward; the past does inform our attitudes and how we deal with life, but there comes a time when we can move ahead with certainty, and this is the time to grab that opportunity and forge ahead. Exciting times are ahead, and as your surroundings change, so does your attitude – embrace the positive.



Scorpio

23 October –
21 November

Scorpio, in every area of life, change is inevitable, and this change is coming your way, even if it is a minor adjustment or a huge life-changing experience. The planetary energy advises that you embrace change and delve into your psyche; this facilitates acceptance and the ability to bend with the inevitable. Transformation is a great freedom.



Sagittarius

22 November –
21 December

Life might feel as though it is all about the 'other' person or people, but it is because our lives are not lived in isolation. This period is about relaxing into the wishes of others. I don't mean door mat-like submission, but more like relaxed edges and not being rigid in our ideas. If we practice understanding different points of view, our own life experiences will be expanded.



Capricorn

22 December –
19 January

Career planning and effort put into that area of your life may pay off as you are in the right place and right time for some dynamic thinking to come to fruition. If, on the other hand, you are retired, you would benefit by becoming engaged in a commitment to a lifelong dream – did you want to write that book, paint that picture or sew a garment? Put your ideas into practical action and reap the benefits.



Aquarius

20 January –
18 February

It might feel that life is all about routine, and you feel a bit stifled. Allow your innovation to take over, and give yourself a chance to do things differently, discover a new hobby or enhance your creativity by reading a different type of book. Change what you usually do and allow new experiences to feed your imagination.



Pisces

19 February –
20 March

Your intuition is vitally important to you, and it is now that you can learn to follow it and give yourself the tools to make decisions based on your heart and not your mind. Our authentic selves are better off with heart decisions. The connection of heartfelt thinking is closer to our authentic feelings than a whole lot of 'should and should not's'.



Aries

21 March –
19 April

Aries, in the next few weeks, your attention will be drawn to matters of the home. It might feel that you are negotiating about important issues; this is a good time because your thinking and communication are clear. Hold on to your temper, though, as any sudden outburst from you might rock the boat more than you want. Keep a clear head, and you can achieve miracles!

Bernie Rowen-Ross is
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Complementary Therapist
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Making Mistakes is an Essential Part of Being Human

Mind Body Soul Columnist **Bernadette Petrie** lost her battle with cancer at the end of last year. Her husband, Dave, has graciously allowed us to keep sharing excerpts from her book for this column.

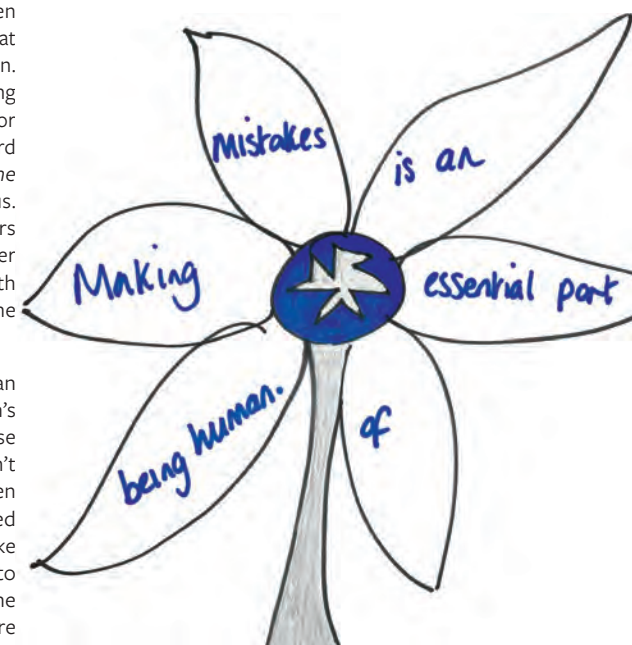
This time, Bernadette tells us that to be truly human, we must acknowledge that mistakes are a natural part of our existence, and accepting their inevitability allows us to learn and evolve into better versions of ourselves.

I've written about the embarrassment and paralysis I felt as a young school child when I got things wrong. Of course, now I see that making mistakes is essential to being human. However, as a child, any time I got something wrong, my default was to feel embarrassed or ashamed or blame someone else. Ever heard the words, "Now look at what you made me do?" That is a line deep in my subconscious. Indeed, one of my primary school teachers had an interesting approach to mistakes; her favourite was two strikes on the hands with a metre ruler. No doubt that was where the embarrassment factor came from.

As a parent, I wish I could say I had an enlightened approach to my children's mistakes when they were small. But because of my own perspective, this simply wasn't always true, and it wasn't until my children were six and eight that things changed massively for me. I'm sure all parents make mistakes; we learn from them and try to improve things next time. However, the more loving we are to ourselves, the more we can be truly present with our children and show up fully, ensuring we understand that mistakes are essential.

In one of his books, American author and motivational speaker Jack Canfield shares a story he'd heard in a radio interview. A famous researcher attributed his successful career to knowing it was okay to make mistakes from an early age. At age two, feeling thirsty and using his own initiative, he tried to take a large bottle of milk from the fridge. He lost his grip and spilt the milk all over the kitchen floor. His mother didn't scold him but actually praised the mess. She let him play in the spilt milk before they cleared it up – together. Referring to the experience as a failed experiment in how to carry a large bottle of milk with two tiny hands! He also learned how to clean up after his mistakes. They then went outside to the garden so he could repeatedly practice carrying the bottle of milk. That morning, he claims, he learnt it was safe to make mistakes, and there is always an opportunity to learn from them.

For me, this story affirmed two things. Firstly, making mistakes is essential for success, and it really can make a difference if you are taught from a young age that it's okay and safe to make them. Secondly, being self-loving leads to being a more present parent. We may not have had such a positive early learning experience in our own lives, so the fear of making mistakes keeps



us stuck. It certainly never leads to progress; it denies us the opportunity to feel our way through things and grow from our very valid experiences. Yet, making mistakes is an essential part of being human, and it means we cannot fully embrace our humanity if we do not accept that mistakes are inevitable.

During my stint as a radio presenter, I made the classic radio presenter mistake. I left the microphone on as we went to an ad break. My guest and I chatted away, thinking we were off the air when I suddenly realised my mistake. Just as I switched off the mic, I received a few texts confirming that our chat was being broadcast for all to hear! This error permitted me to own, 'I'm only human on air; I will inevitably make mistakes. It's simply part of being human. After all, no one truly believes in absolute perfection.' It also allowed me to practice self-compassion, stopping my inner critic in her tracks. It made me see that the young girl, terrified of getting things wrong in primary school, was no longer in the driving seat. Finally, it made us laugh, and if anything else, it helped me remember that most of our mistakes are never worth getting our knickers in a twist over!

Article adapted from Bernadette's book *Permission to Shine* – Chapter 21
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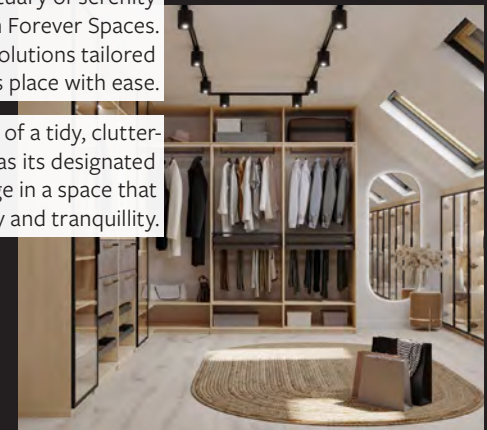
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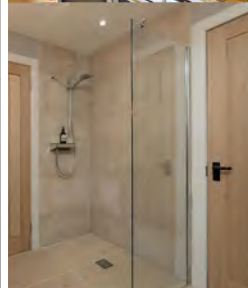
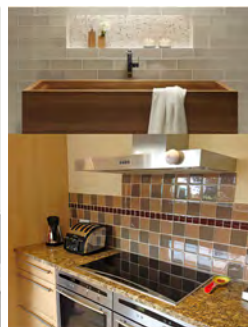
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Personal Space

Select a home interior style that best suits your personality.



Creating a space that feels authentic to you and your style can often seem overwhelming, especially when design trends are constantly changing and social media bombards you with various interior styles. As many designers will tell you, following trends doesn't always create a space you'll feel comfortable in. Instead, focusing on your unique tastes and preferences is the best approach to designing a space that feels right for you, year after year.

PURE AND SIMPLE

You like simplicity. Everything has a place in your home, work and mind, and this is the centre of your calm mindset. You aren't clinical; there is a warmth and homeliness to you, but fundamentally, clutter and any system which doesn't function as it should drives you crazy.

Dream décor: Scandinavian design is known for its minimalism, functionality, and connection to nature. It often features light colours, natural materials like wood and leather, and simple, well-crafted furniture. This style aims to create a cosy and inviting environment while maintaining a clean and uncluttered look, making it ideal for your equally uncluttered mindset.



FREE SPIRIT

If you find yourself constantly daydreaming and have a somewhat idealistic view of the world, then you are one of the free-spirited among us. Eternally optimistic, you seek a life of romance, kindness and beauty; in fact you can see the good in almost anything and anyone.

Dream décor: Bohemian, or boho, design is eclectic and artistic, often incorporating a mix of patterns, textures and colours. It embraces an open-minded and relaxed atmosphere, with an emphasis on handmade or unique items. Layered textiles, plants and vintage pieces are common in bohemian interiors, making it ideal for someone who loves taking in the waifs and strays of the world.



AN OLD SOUL

You have a penchant for pipes, typewriters and vintage wines; it's out with the new for you and in with the magnificence of days gone by. "What's wrong with the world?" you cry in the face of all this modern madness as you retreat to your boudoir with a dram of whisky and a good book.

Dream décor: Traditional interior design draws inspiration from 18th and 19th-century European interiors. It features rich colours, ornate details and classic furniture



pieces. Symmetry and balance are key elements, and wood, silk and velvet make it a luxurious place to escape – far from the madding crowd.

BRUTALLY HONEST

You call a spade a spade, and your forthright manner is legendary from the boardroom to the pub. There is no time for frivolities for such a person, and every minute of your day is spent seeking truth and realism as you bowl through life with confidence and candour.

Dream décor: Inspired by factory and warehouse aesthetics, the industrial style embraces raw, unfinished elements. Exposed brick walls, ductwork, and metal beams are characteristic features. Furniture is often made from reclaimed wood and metal, and the colour palette includes earthy tones and greys, ideal for keeping it real.

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Downsize and Thrive

Downsizing your home when your children have left can be a significant and emotional transition. But, it also presents an opportunity to simplify your life and improve your financial situation. Here are some points to consider when making this significant life change.

Evaluate your current financial situation

Before making any decisions, it's essential to have a clear understanding of your current financial situation.

Take stock of your assets, liabilities, income, expenses and savings. This evaluation will help you determine how much you can realistically afford to spend on a new home and, of course, what you can expect to gain from selling your current one.

Assess your mortgage

Check the terms and conditions if you still have an outstanding mortgage on your current abode. Understanding any mortgage payoff amount plus potential penalties for early repayment will ensure you have a clear picture. Remember, you're looking to create less stress in your life, not more, so this is important.

Review your monthly expenses

Create a detailed list of your monthly expenses, including utilities, maintenance, property taxes and insurance. Downsizing often leads to significant savings in these areas, so knowing your current costs will allow you to make accurate comparisons.

Determine your goals

Clarify your reasons for downsizing and what you hope to achieve. Whether it's reducing expenses, freeing up equity or simplifying your life, having clear goals will guide your decisions and help you stay focused.

Also, consider the type of lifestyle you want in your new home. Do you prefer a smaller house in a bustling urban area or a cosy cottage in a serene rural setting?

Budget for the move

Moving can be expensive, so budgeting for all associated costs is essential. These can include hiring a removal firm, purchasing packing supplies, and any repairs or updates needed to make your current home market-ready. Also, factor in costs such as estate agent commission, solicitor fees, plus exchange and completion costs.

Ask for advice

Finally, ensure you consult with financial advisors, property experts, and financial advisors – they can provide valuable insight that can lead you towards the most informed decision.



Golden Child

How much does it really cost to raise a child in the UK through to adulthood?

According to research from investment experts, it now costs over £220,000 for a lone parent and £165,000 for couples – the disparity coming due to economies of scale and bulk-buying – to nurture children up to the age of 18.

Early years

Nappies cost around a £1,000 for the average duration of a child

before being fully toilet-trained. Full-time pre-school costs average out at around £11,000 annually. Even halving this for perceived part-time hours will mean over £20,000 spent across four years before school, though free nursery hours can reduce the total.

Ongoing Costs

Food and drink is believed to total around £26 a week – that's

£25,000 until 18 years. Housing-related expenses – such as the relative cost of an extra bedroom (be that through renting or as a mortgaged property) and utilities – add on £34,000 until adulthood.

Transport (£31 a week), recreation, lessons, clubs and cultural activities (£42), clothing and footwear (£19), and the dreaded pocket money (in 2024, the average amount paid was around £7 a week!) add up to £90,000 per child. On average, one-off costs such as Christmas, birthdays, holidays, and other events cost another £2,500 a year.

No refunds

Of course, while none of this investment is returned financially, what's returned to you, as a parent, is more valuable than anything monetary. You cannot put a price on life, love, companionship and the memories having children brings, so spend and enjoy!

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Fringe by the Sea is Making Waves Again



Top: North Berwick and Fringe by the Sea, 2024 © Mr Smith Drones Photography
Middle: Ezra Collective © Aliyah Otchere

Left and bottom: Wavelength takes place as part of Fringe by the Sea in North Berwick this August

FRINGE
BY THE SEA
1-10 AUGUST 2025

WAVE
LENGTH
A MUSIC FILM FESTIVAL

The award-winning Fringe by the Sea festival returns to North Berwick from the 1st to the 10th of August, bringing ten packed days of music, comedy, talks, family fun – and a brand new film strand.

Proudly rooted in our community, recently named *The Sunday Times'* Best Place to Live in the UK (2024), it's the perfect excuse to make the most of summer right here on Scotland's stunning east coast.

This year's music line-up features some serious heavy hitters. Ezra Collective, in their only Scottish date of the year, bring their genre-busting jazz to the seaside – with special ticket prices for under-16s. French icons Air will perform their seminal album *Moon Safari*, while The Boomtown Rats, led by punk legend Bob Geldof, are sure to cause a stir. Also on the bill are rising Scottish star Hamish Hawk, indie favourite Billy Nomates, Eddi Reader, and internationally acclaimed folk band Mànran. The Royal Scottish National Orchestra closes the festival in cinematic style with



a night of James Bond themes – black tie and martinis optional.

Famous faces are no stranger to East Lothian, and this year's comedy and talks programme keeps the tradition going. Alan Davies (Jonathan Creek, QI) returns to his stand-up roots, joined by the ever-insightful Ruby Wax. Talk highlights include Olympic legend Sir Chris Hoy, fitness guru Joe Wicks, Judy Murray with the popular Fi and Jane podcast, and TV architect George Clarke.

Families are well catered for, with shows from Flawless and their jaw-dropping dance routines, Brainiac Live!'s explosive experiments, and Artie's Singing Kettle singalong.

Plus lots of drop in activities to keep the little ones entertained.

This year also marks the debut of Wavelength, a film strand supported by Screen Scotland. Celebrating the powerful connection between music and film, it invites audiences to explore the role of cinema in Scotland's musical story – expect Seaside Screenings, director Q&As, music-themed movies, and live gigs inspired by film.

As always, the Lodge Grounds will be transformed into a vibrant festival space, with the North Berwick Trust Festival Hub at its heart. Enjoy local food and drink, free live music, the ever-popular Coulter's Makers Market, Lynn Hill's



Clockwise from top left: Flawless, Eddie Reader, Joe Wicks © Desiles Photography, Ruby Wax © Andrew Crowley, Boomtown Rats

Garden Oasis, and the colourful Pom Pom Project by Chandlers.

Whether it's a day out with the family or a catch-up with friends, this year's Fringe by the Sea has something for everyone.

Fringe by the Sea
1st to 10th August 2025
For the latest line-up and ticket info, follow us on socials or visit fringebythesea.com

JUST BRILLIANT SUMMER READS

As warmer days begin to ebb our way, why not elevate the senses further with something from this great selection of books out in June and July.



Shiny Happy Singles
by Lucy Meggeson
Statistically unmarried, childfree women are the happiest demographic in society. So why does being single still come with such a stigma? With one in five adults choosing to be childfree, Lucy Meggeson believes it's time to level the playing field and ask the fundamental question: what the hell is going on?

Part investigation, part celebration, *Shiny Happy Singles* explores what it means to thrive as a single, childfree woman in a world that insists happiness only comes in pairs.

It is a book that invites women everywhere to embrace their independence, let go of shame and live fabulously. You are not alone, and you already have everything you need to shine.

Published by Bloomsbury on 19th June



Long Island
by Colm Tóibín
Long Island is Colm Tóibín's masterpiece: an exquisite, exhilarating novel that asks whether it is possible to truly return to the past and renew the great love that seemed gone forever.

A Book of the Year everywhere from *The Times* to *The New Yorker*, *The Economist* to *The Daily Telegraph*, it is a love story for the ages torn apart by a stranger and a revelation that needs to be embraced or discarded, and quickly.

Published by Pan Macmillan on 5th June

Men in Love
by Irvine Welsh
Choose life. Choose love? Cultural icon and bestselling author and Irvine Welsh returns with a new novel that has echoes of old. Opening in the late 1980s as rave culture is born and moving into the 1990s, *Men in Love* reunites the *Trainspotting* crew for a riotous new journey.

Renton, Spud, Sick Boy and Begbie leave heroin behind and seek joy and the hope of redemption on the dance floor. Each wants to feel alive in the closing years of Thatcher's Britain, and they fill their days with sex and romance and trying to get ahead. In Edinburgh, London, Amsterdam and Paris, the group charges towards an unexpected event: Sick Boy's wedding day.

But is falling in love the answer or just another doomed quest?

Published by Vintage Publishing on 24th July



After We Burned
by Marieke Nijkamp
She deserved more. They all did. A gripping and emotional new suspense novel from the number one *New York Times* bestselling author of *This is Where it Ends* takes the form of a terrible accident, a horrible loss and a regrettable tragedy.

It's all anyone in Fenix can talk about when a fire consumes the local high school, taking the life of a student. The town mourns, except who really knew and cared about Eden when she was alive? And why was she in the building that night?

Published by Sourcebooks Fire on 1st July



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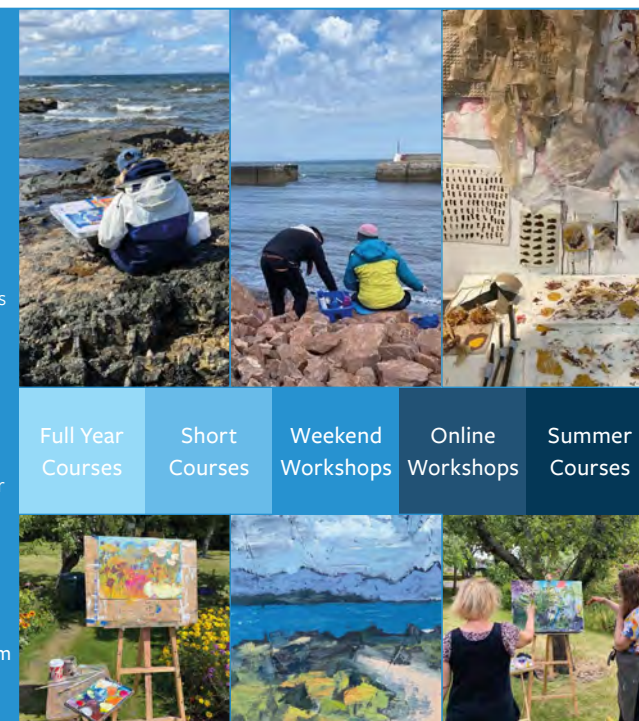
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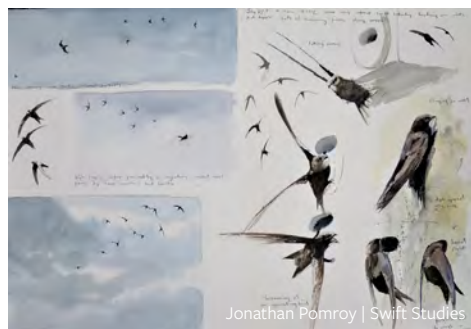
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Darren Rees | Guillemot Ledge, St Abbs



Jonathan Pomroy | Swift Studies



Katie Warner | Woven willow basket with foraged handle

Watercolours and Willow

Enjoy the fluid nature of watercolour paintings and willow sculptures, with paintings by Darren Rees and Jonathan Pomroy shown alongside stunning basketry from Katie Warner at the Scottish Ornithologists' Club.

Darren describes his love of watercolour painting as having “a freshness and immediacy that is perfect for working outside”. His beautiful paintings are a celebration of his time out in the field, documenting a personal, emotional and visual response to his encounters with wildlife. Darren combines a variety of watercolour techniques, including transparent washes, alongside areas where paint has been ‘sponged out’, and bolder brushwork added to describe colour, texture and tone. Having painted wildlife for nearly 40 years, it is no surprise that Darren’s work has received many awards and honours, most recently Wildlife Artist of the Year from the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation and BBC Wildlife Magazine.

Jonathan also places great importance on spending time in the field, observing the behaviour of birds and watching the weather and its effect on the landscape. He finds his time sketching outdoors to be the most enjoyable aspect of his work, bringing “great excitement and fascinating insights into the behaviour of many species”. Quick pocket-sized sketches are made using pencil, building up a visual library of ideas for compositions. Larger sketchbooks are used for more in-depth watercolour studies, capturing details of his subject matter, including proportions, plumage, character and surroundings. Jonathan often makes written notes alongside his sketchbook paintings, and the combination of these visual and written studies gives Jonathan the information he needs to paint his final artwork.

The beautiful work of local willow weaver Katie Warner is woven into the exhibition. Combining contemporary style with traditional skills, Katie creates unique and characterful baskets and sculptures. For this exhibition, a murmuration of willow swallows swoop amongst the paintings, leading you through the gallery space.

7 June – 27 July 2025
Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC)
Waterston House,
Aberlady
Open Wed – Sun (10 am – 5 pm), free entry
the-soc.org.uk



All the Fun of the Fair

Dirleton Fête and Games is a traditional village fête for all ages and is believed to have been held in the village every year since the early 1900s, with only a couple of exceptions during World War II and the COVID pandemic.

The fête on the village green includes musical entertainment, children’s races, an array of stalls and a raffle. Don’t miss the tea tent with home baking and burgers from the BBQ. Classic cars will be on display, and there’s even a fun dog show – so bring the pooch too.

21 June 2025 | 1 pm – 5 pm | dirletonvillage.org



F1

Starring Brad Pitt as a former driver who returns to Formula 1, alongside Damson Idris as his teammate at APXGP, a fictional team on the grid. F1 was shot during actual Grand Prix weekends as the team competes against the titans of the sport. This groundbreaking movie features the entirety of last season’s F1 driver’s championship stars, including Brits Lewis Hamilton and Lando Norris.
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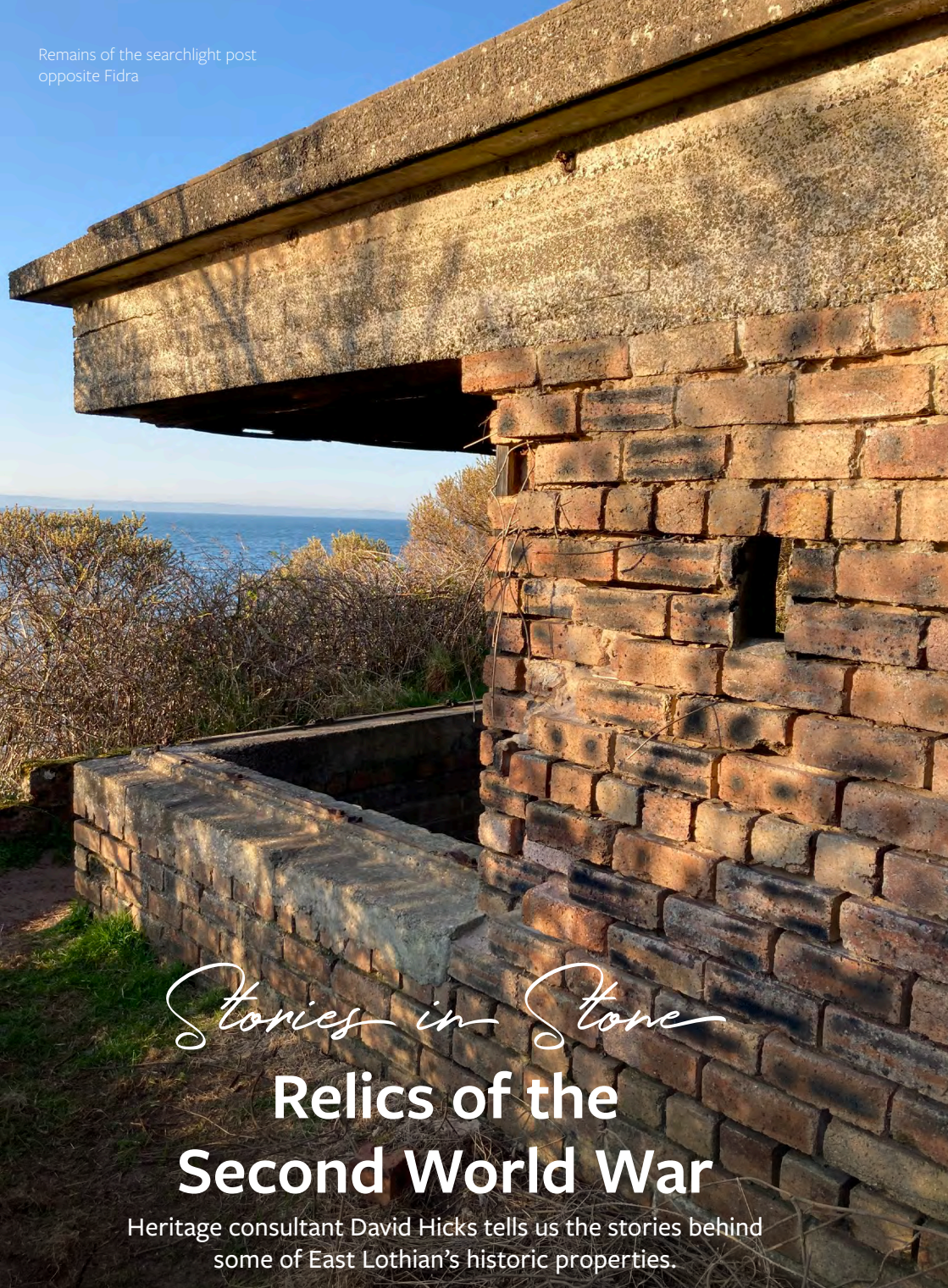
Ignite Your Creativity: Explore creativity through art, writing, and innovative thinking, while integrating different aspects of your psyche for wholeness.

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Join Our Community: Engage with like-minded women, share experiences, and delve into the symbolic language of dreams and myths.

Last Thursday of the month, from 26 June | 7–9 pm
Location: Gullane | Cost: £10 donation recommended
For further details contact Bernie Rowen-Ross:
e: bernierrowen@yahoo.co.uk
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Remains of the searchlight post
opposite Fidra



Stories in Stone

Relics of the Second World War

Heritage consultant David Hicks tells us the stories behind
some of East Lothian's historic properties.

Solitary confinement block
at Gosford



There were also three airfields in East Lothian, at Drem, Macmerry, and East Fortune, now the Museum of Flight. RAF Drem was closed after the war, but there are still traces left. For example, the accommodation for the station's Women's Auxiliary Air Force personnel is now the shops and showrooms of Fenton Barns village.

As the tide of war finally turned, East Lothian saw an influx of prisoners of war. The existing military camp on the Gosford estate was turned over to about 3,000 prisoners captured after the

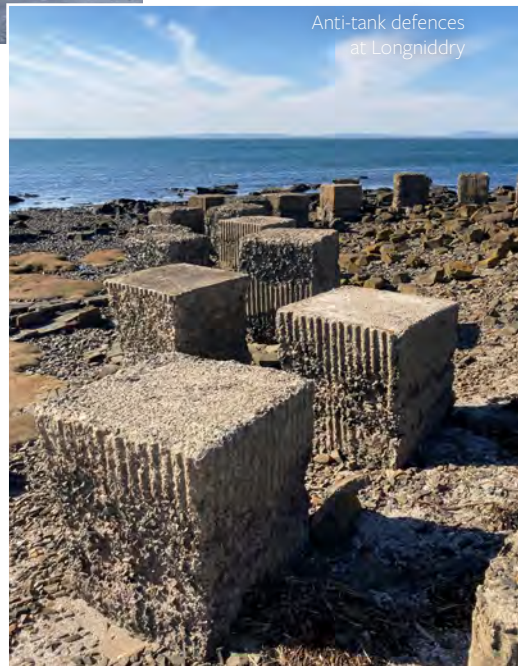
Can you imagine a troop of enemy tanks advancing across Luffness Golf Course? It is an odd thought today, but this was exactly what was being envisioned in May 1940. The coastline of East Lothian was considered a prime risk for an enemy landing and became a militarised zone with residents requiring a special pass to travel. The evidence for this time of crisis is everywhere in the county, but the utilitarian and hastily built structures are often hidden in plain sight.

The splendidly named General Ironside took charge of planning anti-invasion defences in May 1940, intended to slow down an enemy attack. Traces of these 'stop lines' still litter the East Lothian coastline, like the lines of concrete anti-tank blocks still surviving at Longniddry Bents and on Gullane Point.

There were also pre-prepared roadblocks, and one still exists just off the road between Gullane and Aberlady, a concrete block with slots to fix a barrier in place. Sometimes, these had a 'flame trap', a reservoir of petrol which the Home Guard could ignite. It is easy to dismiss all this as something out of *Dad's Army*, but there is a real sense of ruthlessness in much of these plans.

One surprised resident was given only 24 hours' notice to leave his cottage on the Archerfield Estate. The site had been identified as the position for a battery to protect the approaches to the naval base at Rosyth. The guns are long gone, but the associated searchlight post still exists on the coastal footpath near Yellowcraigs.

Anti-tank defences
at Longniddry



Normandy landings. Some camp buildings, such as the old solitary confinement block, still exist.

In contrast to these anonymous-looking buildings, the headstones in the little cemetery by Dirleton offer some names. Mostly pilots stationed at nearby Drem airfield, it is striking how many had come from across the Commonwealth to serve. In this, the anniversary year of the end of the Second World War, it is worth remembering and reflecting on the stories these relics can tell.

Discover Scotland's Seabirds



The seabird breeding season is reaching its peak, and the local islands around North Berwick are teeming with life. Species, including puffins, guillemots, razorbills and, of course, gannets, are busy feeding their hungry chicks. Experiencing this wildlife spectacle up close is hard to beat, and the Scottish Seabird Centre has a brilliant range of guided wildlife boat trips that leave daily from North Berwick Harbour.

Their exhibition space, located in the boat office, is currently hosting the fantastic Underwater Photographer of the Year Exhibit featuring a diverse, fascinating, and beautiful range of creative images. From gentle giants to colourful critters, this gallery will inspire you to get out and see the incredible species that call the ocean home.

If you're unsure how to recognise the feathered creatures that inhabit our seas or simply want to brush up on your identification skills, the Scottish Seabird Centre's Seabird ID Sessions are a fun and easy way to learn this. Join their Conservation Officers for this indoor class identifying the seabirds that can be spotted around Scotland's coasts in summer – focusing on those you're likely to see locally in and around North Berwick. This event even offers an



Boat Trip in the Firth of Forth © Andy Smith



Guillemot © Jamie McDermaid

option to book an additional trip out on their Seabird Catamaran Cruise to test your newly learned skills among the spectacular seabird colonies of the Firth of Forth.

Visit seabird.org/events to find out more
Scottish Seabird Centre
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Top image: Puffins © Greg Macvane

Experience the sights, sounds and smells of the world's largest northern gannet colony on a guided wildlife boat trip

www.seabird.org/boats

Image © Pete Ivin
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 SCOTTISH CHARITABLE INCORPORATED ORGANISATION REGISTERED NUMBER: SC026844

Weekend TIDE TIMES

| JUNE | | High Water | | Low Water | | JULY | | High Water | | Low Water | |
|------|-----|------------|------|-----------|------|------|-----|------------|------|-----------|------|
| | | AM | PM | AM | PM | | | AM | PM | AM | PM |
| 1 | Sun | 0712 | 1950 | 0039 | 1325 | 4 | Fri | 1015 | 2239 | 0316 | 1602 |
| 6 | Fri | | 1210 | 0534 | 1818 | 5 | Sat | 1112 | 2335 | 0432 | 1711 |
| 7 | Sat | 0040 | 1303 | 0626 | 1900 | 6 | Sun | | 1213 | 0542 | 1813 |
| 8 | Sun | 0126 | 1350 | 0713 | 1939 | 11 | Fri | 0340 | 1610 | 0940 | 2152 |
| 13 | Fri | 0432 | 1703 | 1031 | 2243 | 12 | Sat | 0417 | 1647 | 1022 | 2233 |
| 14 | Sat | 0508 | 1742 | 1110 | 2323 | 13 | Sun | 0453 | 1726 | 1104 | 2314 |
| 15 | Sun | 0546 | 1823 | 1152 | | 18 | Fri | 0831 | 2121 | 0157 | 1432 |
| 20 | Fri | 1007 | 2301 | 0347 | 1625 | 19 | Sat | 0934 | 2227 | 0257 | 1536 |
| 21 | Sat | 1116 | | 0455 | 1733 | 20 | Sun | 1049 | 2336 | 0416 | 1703 |
| 22 | Sun | 0003 | 1221 | 0559 | 1838 | 25 | Fri | 0331 | 1600 | 0956 | 2206 |
| 27 | Fri | 0427 | 1658 | 1051 | 2303 | 26 | Sat | 0415 | 1644 | 1041 | 2245 |
| 28 | Sat | 0515 | 1747 | 1138 | 2343 | 27 | Sun | 0458 | 1726 | 1121 | 2318 |
| 29 | Sun | 0603 | 1834 | | 1221 | | | | | | |

These are predicted tide times for Fidra, given in GMT and no liability can be accepted.



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RESTAURANT
Spy

Putting thoughts of the Americana aside, we tried the more classic margarita, the iconic double pepperoni and spicy honey, and, in the interest of research, the vegan option. If none of these appeal, there are around

If you find yourself in Edinburgh, wanting a leisurely lunch – or looking for a uniquely engaging atmosphere for a night out – then look no further, Pizza Pilgrims ticks everyone's box.

LOCAL LIFE | 41

Savour Summer

Embrace the warm summer days by eating outside with these delicious al fresco recipes; there is no better way to enjoy food.

YOTUM OTTOLENGHI'S PAPPARDELLE WITH ROSE HARISSA, BLACK OLIVES AND CAPERS

"There is no better dish to eat in the summer evenings than pasta. Al fresco, with the late sunshine and a glass of wine, I struggle to think of a better combination to while away those elongated evenings. 'Pappare' means 'to gobble up' in Italian, which is the destiny of this dish. I like it spicy, but the quantity of harissa can easily be reduced. Make the sauce three days ahead if you want, and keep it in the fridge until needed."

METHOD

1. Put the oil into a large sauté pan (one that has a lid) and place it on medium-high heat. Once hot, add the onion and fry for 8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until soft and caramelised.

2. Add the Rose Harissa, tomatoes, olives, capers and ½ teaspoon of salt and continue to fry for 3–4 minutes, stirring frequently, until the tomatoes start to break down. Add 200ml of water and stir through.

3. Once boiling, reduce the heat to medium-low, cover the pan and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove the lid of the sauce and continue

to cook for 4–5 minutes, until the sauce is thick and rich. Stir in 10g of the parsley and set aside.

4. Meanwhile, fill a large pot with plenty of salted water and place on a high heat. Once boiling, add the pappardelle and cook according to the packet instructions until al dente. Drain well.

5. Return the pasta to the pot along with the Harissa sauce and 1/8 teaspoon of salt. Mix well, then divide between four shallow bowls. Serve hot, with a spoonful of yoghurt and a final sprinkle of parsley.

INGREDIENTS serves 4

2 tbsp of olive oil
1 large onion, thinly sliced (220g)
3 tbsp Rose Harissa
400g cherry tomatoes, halved
55g pitted Kalamata olives, torn in half
20g baby capers
500g dried pappardelle pasta (or another wide, flat pasta)
15g parsley, roughly chopped
120g Greek-style yoghurt
salt



ETON MESS TRAYBAKE

The classic twist on the quintessential pavlova gets reimagined once more in this mouth-watering traybake – ideal for outdoor summer soirées, classic cream teas or even just your afternoon coffee.

INGREDIENTS makes 12

For the sponge

200g unsalted butter, softened
200g caster sugar
180g self-raising flour
1 tbsp vanilla extract
4 medium-sized eggs
100g ground almonds
5 tbsp double cream

200g mixed berries (strawberries must be hulled and sliced)

For the topping

250g double cream (whipped)
4 shop-bought meringue nests (broken up)
200g mixed berries
Icing sugar to decorate

METHOD

1. Grease and line a 20 x 30 cm brownie pan with baking paper. Heat oven to 160°C/140°C fan/gas mark 3. In a large bowl, beat the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the vanilla essence and then the eggs, one by one, mixing as you go. In a separate bowl, mix the flour and ground almonds. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet until you have a thick batter. Finally, gently stir in the double cream and the berries.

2. Pour the batter into the prepared tin, distributing the berries evenly across the cake.

Bake for 35–40 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the centre of the cake comes out clean. Leave your sponge in the pan for 10 minutes before tipping out onto a wire rack to cool.

3. Once cool, spoon over the whipped double cream and meringue pieces before decorating with the berries. Dust with icing sugar before cutting into 12 even pieces to serve. If not eating immediately, it can be kept in the fridge for a few hours but take out 15 minutes before serving.



RECIPE Tip

Though the final cake has fresh elements, you can prepare the sponge a few days before: let it cool and wrap tightly in clingfilm before storing in the fridge.

Your Garden, A Home for Nature



Award-winning garden designer **Lynn Hill** suggests easy ways to help turn your garden into a wildlife-friendly haven.

Imagine a garden full of scent and colour, where the planting feels as though it is giving you a warm embrace as you sit and enjoy the summer sunshine. Gardens mean the world to us, and when thoughtfully designed, they bring immense joy. However, it is not only people who benefit. With careful planting, gardens can become havens for wildlife, providing vital nourishment and shelter.

Individual gardens connect to form a rich tapestry of landscapes, creating essential wildlife corridors. As animals and insects move across boundaries, gardens become much more than the sum of their parts. Even the smallest of spaces can offer remarkable contributions to nature.

Across the United Kingdom, the combined area of private gardens is greater than the total area of all the nature reserves. Gardens can and do play a significant role in supporting biodiversity. Crucially, encouraging wildlife does not have to be complicated.

My tips for welcoming wildlife into your garden: Provide food for pollinators throughout the seasons, using plants such as *Campanula*, *Cirsium*, *Veronicastrum*, *Asters* (*Eurybia* and *Symphyotrichum* species), and *Viburnum tinus*.



adored by pollinators © Lynn Hill Garden Design

Above: Install a bug hotel © Lynn Hill Garden Design

Select 'single' flower varieties wherever possible. Bees find it difficult to access pollen in 'double' varieties, so opting for single flowers, such as *Rosa* 'Kew Gardens', can make a real difference.

Allow parts of the garden to grow naturally, and create nooks and crannies for shelter. Leaving some areas of long grass and undisturbed corners with simple mown pathways provides a valuable refuge



for a rich variety of wildlife. Introducing wildflowers such as *Achillea*, which bees and butterflies love, will also enhance the visual beauty of the garden.

Install bug hotels among your planting. These are easy and enjoyable to make and provide an excellent way for children to engage with nature.

Incorporate a water source, whether a small dish or a larger pond. Any addition of water will be highly beneficial for birds, insects, and amphibians alike.

As the sun reaches its highest point and we embrace the fullness of summer, enjoy your garden in all its glory. And remember, if you need a helping hand, I am here to inspire and bring your dream garden to life.



Far left: Stunning wildflowers
© Lynn Hill Garden Design

Left: Splish splash – a bird enjoying water

Below: A bee visits an Aster
© Lynn Hill Garden Design



Lynn Hill Garden Design

For more information about Lynn's garden design services please contact:
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New Life or Landfill?

From old fridges and phones to knackered TVs and PCs, how do we know how much is actually being recycled?

White goods or bad?

The recyclability of white goods (large household appliances like fridges, washing machines, and ovens) depends on the materials they are made of, how they are processed, and local recycling facilities. In general, metals (60-70% of the appliance) and plastics (10-20%) are highly recyclable, but the latter require sorting and processing to separate types.

TVs and tech

Older CRT (cathode-ray tube) TVs contain leaded glass, which is harder to recycle, and newer LCD and LED screens have recyclable glass panels but contain complex components like mercury backlights, making disassembly labour-intensive.

Smartphones and tablets contain precious metals like gold, silver, platinum, copper and rare earth

elements (used in batteries, circuit boards, and components) and are recoverable, although lithium and ion batteries require special handling. In general, around 80-90% of computers are recyclable.

Car trouble

Modern cars are highly recyclable, with approximately 75-85% of a vehicle by weight being reusable. However, this relies on carefully dismantling them to separate recyclable materials from hazardous components like airbags and batteries. Companies like BMW, Toyota, and Tesla have programs to recycle old vehicles and recover valuable materials.

Ways to improve

Ultimately, by choosing brands that take responsibility for their carbon footprint and by advocating for local councils and governments to improve recycling facilities, we can move forward in a direction that benefits both us and the planet.



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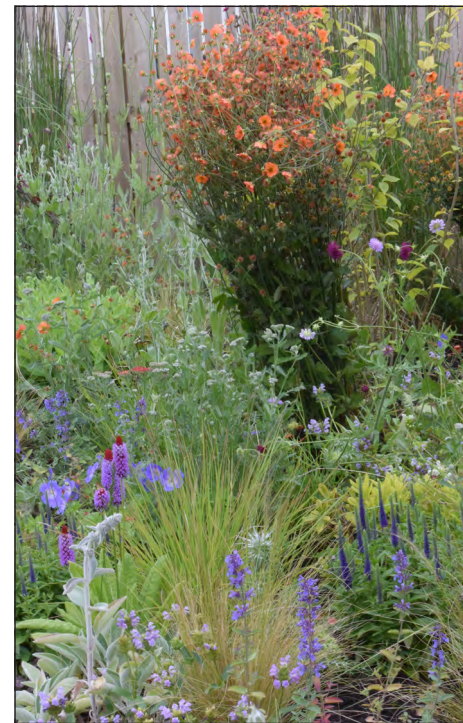
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Ready, Set... Check

Ensuring your car is in fine fettle before its journey is not just advisable – it could be the difference between a holiday and staying put!

Here are six checks to make before you leave the driveway.

Tyre pressure

Maintaining the correct air pressure in your vehicle's tyres is crucial for optimal braking, traction, and steering performance, so don't take any chances.

Tyre tread depth

Balding tyres can affect everything from swerving around squirrels to hitting the brakes in time. Before you set off on an epic road trip, it's good to check that tyre treads are adequate. If you don't own a fancy gauge, use a 20p coin – its raised edge measures 2.5mm, so slot it into your tyre tread, and if you can't see the outer band, you're good to go.

Wipers and screen wash

Screen wash is vital for clear visibility when driving, but it's useless without fully functioning wiper blades. Additionally, watch for any damage, such as cracks or

chips on your windshield. Small issues, if neglected, can quickly escalate into major concerns.

Lights

Ensuring that all your vehicle's lights are operational is crucial for visibility and communication with other drivers on the road.

Oil

Oil is the lifeblood of your car's engine. No oil, no journey. While topping up is smart, don't overdo it, as too much of the stuff can impact your running efficiency.

Engine coolant

Many newer cars have a closed cooling system which means they don't need topping up, but with older motors the fluid level in the reservoir is easily located and it's simple to top it up.



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And
Finally...

Island Escape

How to select the perfect Scottish isle for your summer hols.

You might be astounded to learn over 800 Scottish islands exist, but only around 100 are inhabited. The Inner and Outer Hebrides and the Orkney and Shetland isles make up this stunning archipelago, each a gem with something to offer every taste and desire.

Barra

Barra is famous for its unique beach airport, where planes land on the sand during low tide. In fact, the white, sandy beaches and rugged cliffs are so spectacular that you would be forgiven for thinking you were actually in some jewel of the Caribbean rather than the northern reaches of the UK. There is plenty to keep you entertained, from a rather unique golf course to kayaking and surfing, plus an abundance of natural life, such as otters and seabirds.

Orkney

Mainland Orkney is home to the capital, Kirkwall, and the UNESCO

World Heritage site known as the Heart of Neolithic Orkney. This site includes the ancient village of Skara Brae (half a millennia older than Stonehenge), the Ring of Brodgar, and the Maeshowe chambered cairn, not to mention spectacular sea views and seafood fresh from the local boats.

Isle of Skye

The Isle of Skye is renowned for its rugged landscapes, picturesque villages and rich history. The start of the 2012 sci-fi film *Prometheus* was shot there thanks to its otherworldly beauty. Yet a lesser-known aspect of this wondrous isle is its reputation as a foodie destination. Skye has the added bragging rights of several Michelin-starred dining spots, including Michael Smith's Loch Bay Restaurant, which is famed for its sumptuous seafood.

Unst, Shetland Islands

Known for its Viking heritage, scenic beauty and wildlife, including puffins and otters, this



Barra

Orkney

far-flung destination is well worth the journey. Discover a Viking longship at the local museum, spy gannets and gulls at Hermaness National Nature Reserve (a globally significant bird reserve), marvel at killer whales off the coast, and, if you're fortunate, bask under the Northern Lights. Sending a postcard from the northernmost post office in the UK is also a must... although you may get home before it does!

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