

BRIDPORT

Care home beyond its lifespan

Dorset Care has announced that Sydney Gale House in Bridport is beyond its lifespan and the site has been earmarked as Dorset Council's reablement and residential care hub for West Dorset. It is to be used to support residents who are discharged from hospital or are recovering after a fall or illness in their own home. In order to redevelop the site the current 12 residents are to be moved to another location which is appropriate to their needs.

BEAMINSTER

Retired GP breaks record

Tim Robinson, a 64 year old retired GP and grandfather from Beaminster has become the oldest contestant to complete the eight-day Cape Wrath Ultra run in Scotland. Running with his son Will, Tim was one of only 57 athletes out of 175 starters to complete the 259 mile run from Fort William to Cape Wrath. Tim has been recognised as the oldest person to complete the 400km race through the Highlands of Scotland.

BRIDPORT

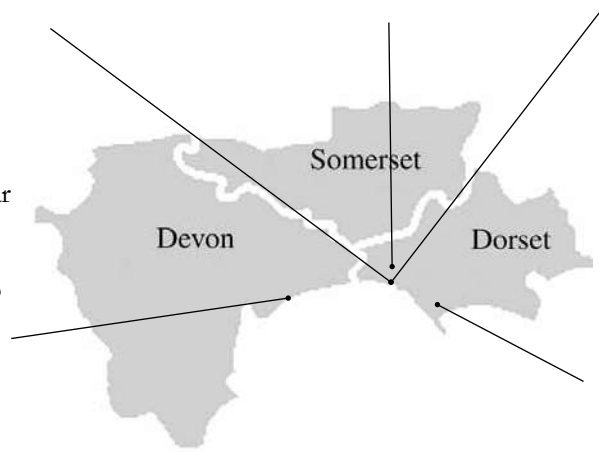
Animal sanctuary complaints

Local Food Links (LFL) in Bridport has been awarded the catering contract for the Wessex Multi Academy Trust Schools, following a thorough tendering exercise run by the Wessex MAT and the Department for Education. The new contract will commence in September 2024. LFL is excited to be working closely with 10 First, Primary and Middle Schools in the MAT and providing delicious meals for pupils in Dorset.

SEATON

Folk Festival gets ACED

Art & Culture East Devon (ACED) has announced the winner of their inaugural ACED Volunteer of the Year award which recognises a volunteer's outstanding contribution to an arts / heritage organisation or festival. It also recognises the impact they have made to the East Devon cultural landscape. This year's winner is Colin Trussell from Sidmouth Folk Festival. To find out more ACED visit aced.org.uk.



DORCHESTER

Lord Fellowes at DNHAS

Dorset Museum & Art Gallery has announced that Lord Fellowes of West Stafford, D.L., the multi award-winning screenwriter, actor, novelist and director, will be presenting himself for election as President of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society (DNHAS) this autumn. The organisation's purpose is to collect, preserve, research and exhibit objects relating to the culture of Dorset.

West Bay—That Was The Year That Was

A new publication highlighting harbour life, events, people and the history of West Bay in Dorset, as recorded in a journal of 2012, has been published by local writer Sylvia Stafford. Daily events and meetings with local residents, workers and visitors to the area were recorded against the background of what was happening, both within Dorset and nationally for *West Bay—That Was The Year That Was*.

In retrospect, the author found 2012 turned out to be an excellent year to have chosen, with major national events, such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games, a royal jubilee, the filming of the first of the acclaimed TV series, *Broadchurch*, as well as the usual calendar of local events including the Melplash Show, West Bay Day, and the Torchlight Procession.

Less welcome events saw some of the heaviest rainfall and worst flooding in the area since 1974, a near disastrous incident during the annual dredging of the harbour, and serious rockfalls and accidents.

Many entries highlight the fascinating history and heritage of the historic harbour and local area, and the author has attempted to include all of the major listed and historically significant buildings, as well as

more recent developments.

West Bay remains a busy working harbour, and fish and fishing in the area feature prominently in the journal, together with the tourist industry and local businesses, which support the fragile coastal economy. Local developments during 2012 were recorded, particularly the work on the sea defences and coastal monitoring, as well as the completion of the West Bay Regeneration Scheme, with what turned out to be, a very controversial development of the local road system.

Other local life was not forgotten, whether flora or fauna, and in particular the many birds and butterflies, and so many breeds of dogs met on walks around the harbour in this snapshot of a year in the life of the West Bay community.

Twelve years on, the author hopes that this record might contribute in a small way to the recent social history of the area.

West Bay—That Was The Year That Was, at £15.00, is available from: The Book Shop Bridport; Bridport Tourist Information Centre; Waterstones Bridport and West Bay Discovery Centre.



JS Bach and the nightingale (Luscinia megarhynchos)



Nature Studies By **Michael McCarthy**

An incomer's discovery of the natural world in the West Country

This month Marshwood, being in its online format, is able to present in Nature Studies something extraordinary—the blending of two of the most beautiful sounds in the world, which you can hear by accessing the link below.

One will be recognised instantly by birders—it is the song of the nightingale, the most famous of all bird vocalisations, celebrated across Europe as the quintessence of birdsong for at least 3,000 years.

The other will be similarly recognised by lovers of classical music and especially of Johann Sebastian Bach—it is his lovely *Prelude No. 17 in A flat major*. And you may have your own view on hearing them together, but personally I find it magical. Each sets off remarkably the beauty of the other.

The blend is a Dorset creation. Both bird and Bach were recorded (though not simultaneously) by the Dorset-based poet and songwriter Virginia Astley, whose own love for music is matched by her enthusiasm for wildlife. The nightingale was singing at Alner's Gorse, the Butterfly Conservation reserve near Hazelbury Bryan, one of the shrinking number of sites in the county where the birds can still be heard; the piano was being played by Virginia's musician daughter Florence in their house at Maiden Newton. And the mix was brought to my attention by Nigel Spring, the well-known conservationist who is the Alner's Gorse reserve warden.

The stunning combination is typical of Virginia's imaginative creativity: she has published a book of poems and matching photographs of The Thames, and another book of poems on West Dorset church porches, accompanied by sketches of the porches by

her sister Alison Bunning—because it was a covid lockdown project, when the porches were usually the only parts of the churches that were open.

But even Virginia would not claim that the inspiration to pair a nightingale with classical music is her own. That takes its origin in a remarkable event whose centenary we have just witnessed—the BBC outside broadcast of May 19, 1924, when the famous cellist Beatrice Harrison played her instrument while a nightingale sang along with her in her garden in Oxted in Surrey. That broadcast was a national sensation, so much so that the BBC repeated the event every year until the Second World War.

Nightingales, alas, have crashed in numbers in England since then—they have dropped by more than ninety per cent in the last fifty years, so Alner's Gorse is a beloved site for enthusiasts. Although it might be hard to get a live recording of a nightingale and a piano, Florence Astley is a harpist as well as a pianist, and she and her mother took her harp to the reserve this spring to try and record a live duet with one of the birds, as it were. They were frustrated by the rain—as was I when I went with Nigel Spring to hear them myself—although lots of other people were successful.

But you can hear one of them here—one of the world's greatest songbirds, paired with the work of one of the world's greatest composers. Click on the link below and listen to the magic.



Recently relocated to Dorset, Michael McCarthy is the former Environment Editor of The Independent. His books include Say Goodbye To The Cuckoo and The Moth Snowstorm: Nature and Joy.