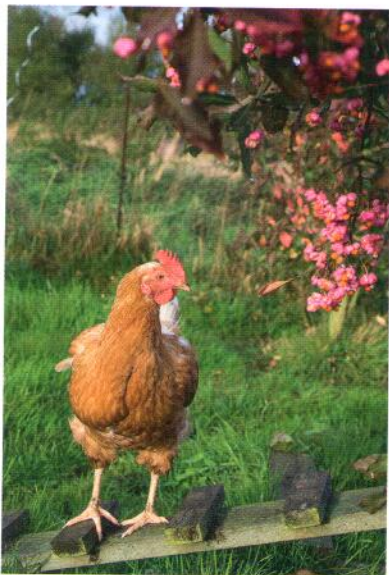


Charity celebrates egg-cellent result

ONE of our most charming animal charities celebrates its 10th birthday this year. The British Hen Welfare Trust (BHWT), set up in 2005 by Jane Howorth, whose original inspiration was a 1977 *Panorama* documentary on battery hens, has rehomed more than 450,000 hens after their commercial egg-laying lives were over. 'Our hens make wonderful pets and are usually more than happy to keep popping out eggs in their retirement,' says Mrs Howorth.

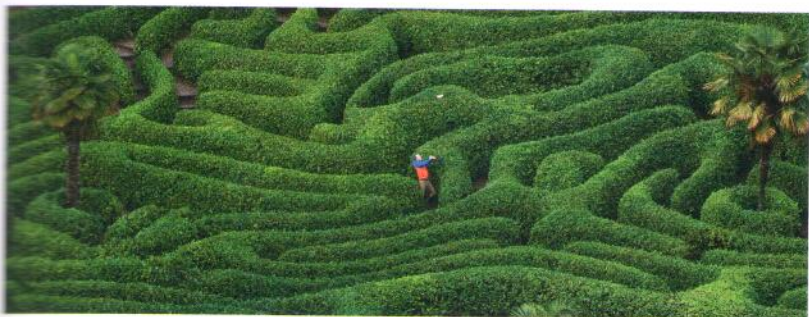
The charity now has some 300 volunteers; it will soon be welcoming its 500,000th hen and aims to rehome more than 50,000 birds a year. Much of its success is down to Mrs Howorth's constructive, non-combative relationship with the farming industry—in 2009 (*September 2 number*), *COUNTRY LIFE* named her the 82nd most influential person in the countryside.

'I am particularly proud of our relationship with the egg industry,' says Mrs Howorth. 'It's taken time to build trust, but I believe farmers now understand that we, too, want to see a strong and successful UK egg



Can you give a hen a happy home?

industry. Britain ranks among the best in the world in terms of laying-hen welfare and this is reflected in the support shown for our farmers, whose free-range hens now produce 50% of the eggs consumed in the UK each year.' To rehome a hen, telephone 01884 860084 or visit www.bhwt.org.uk



It's a toss-up: Glendurgan launched its maze appeal on Shrove Tuesday

Hedge fund needed for maze

THE National Trust's Glendurgan Garden on the Helford River in Cornwall has started an appeal to raise funds to maintain its 182-year-old maze, which is a major feature of the garden and is planted on a slope so that onlookers have a fine view of those inside running up the many dead ends. The horticultural puzzle, which was planted by Glendurgan's Quaker owners Alfred and Sarah Fox to amuse their 12 children, needs work to remove dead wood, improve paths and promote new growth from the cherry-laurel plants that make it up.

The idea is to create a £50,000 'hedge fund' for ongoing maintenance so that it won't have to be closed—some 80,000 visitors a year try to find the three-quarter-mile direct route to the centre. Donations can be made when visiting or online at www.justgiving.com/Glendurganmaze



Country Mouse *This little piggy*

NEVER shine the torchlight in a fox's eyes, but just above them. Then, they'll keep coming.' This pearl of wisdom was delivered by our new friend as we stood in the middle of his farmyard surrounded by geese, ducks and chickens of all colours and varieties. Useful though this vermin-control tip was, we were really there to inspect a litter of saddleback pigs and to choose two of them to pick up in a couple of weeks' time. We fell in love with the two gilts straight away, but decided against having any boars. Their mother seemed very good-natured and the charming oinking of her diminutive offspring was utterly winsome. We will keep them over the summer and early autumn, when our surfeit of apples will form their diet before slaughter.

The British saddleback is an amalgamation of the Essex and Wessex saddlebacks, the latter having been improved by Lord Western when he brought back a pair of Neapolitans from Italy in the mid 19th century, when he must have been on the equivalent of a farming Grand Tour. Unmistakable by their black markings fore and aft with a white band round the middle, it's their famed good nature that also appeals to us. We now have a week to make sure their shelter and field are up to standard for an iconic British breed. **RU**

Town Mouse *Music to my ears*



DID you hear Sir András Schiff's lecture recitals on the complete cycle of Beethoven piano sonatas at Wigmore Hall, London W1, a few years ago? I'm sorry to say that I didn't. Imagine my delight then when a friend told me that they can be downloaded from the Wigmore Hall website (<http://wigmore-hall.org.uk/podcasts/andras-schiff-beethoven-lecture-recitals>). Not surprisingly, the news that he will be giving a lecture recital on Schubert's last piano sonata in B flat major D960 at 22, Mansfield Street on March 18 is causing considerable excitement among musicians. Rarely do emotion, virtuosic skill and intellectual rigour march so well together, let alone in such elegant surroundings.

The house was built by Robert and John Adam from about 1770 to 1772. After the Adam brothers, the lease was taken by a rickety MP called Sir Edward Dering. Partly remodelled before the First World War, the house remains a private home and Sir András's lecture and performance will be in aid of his charity, the International Musicians Seminar at Prussia Cove in Cornwall, founded in 1972 to allow young musicians to make music together away from the hurly-burly of big cities. Lucky those who can secure a ticket (price £250; www.i-m-s.org.uk/concerts/fundraising). **CA**