



## End of an era

**A**LUMNI of major auction house Christie's are reacting with dismay to news of the probably closure of the South Kensington premises it has occupied since 1975, known as CSK. Alongside a scale-back in Amsterdam, this will result in 250 job losses and leave King Street as its only UK saleroom. Despite the fact that CSK is 'the busiest saleroom in the UK' ([www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com)), the two London sites are said to be not currently operating at full capacity.

'If you go through the alumni of CSK, there are so many people in the London art world who got their start at the valuations desk there, says Jo Baring, director of the Ingram Collection and former head of Modern British art at CSK.

Michael Jeffery of Woolley & Wallis and former specialist at CSK is one of them: 'Like many people, I owe my career to Christie's South Kensington. I joined in 1992 straight from university as a porter. CSK was a wonderful educational environment.'

'I don't know what will take its place now,' adds Miss Baring. 'Perhaps one of the regions

**Christie's South Kensington saleroom is to close its doors after 42 years on the site**

will step up, but I remember when Olympia closed, it was thought that all that business would go to CSK and, in the end, it just dissipated.'

The auction house says that the closure is the result of a 'global review'—indeed, new flagship offices and exhibition spaces were opened in Shanghai in 2013 and Beijing in 2016 and, last year, 35% of its new-buyer revenue came from Asia; next month, Christie's will open in Los Angeles. In 2016, sales fell 16% from £4.8 billion in 2015 to £4 billion, but the eCommerce platform increased sales by 109%, with total online sales reaching £161million.

'Christie's continues to adapt to meet the needs of our clients and plan for the future as every business must,' comments CEO Guillaume Cerutti. 'Following our success in leading the development of online-only art sales and growing our global client base... we are considering shifting more sales into our key regional hubs and online.'

Understandably, the news has received a mixed response across the art and antiques industry—and not just for sentimental reasons. Catherine Manson of Christie's maintains that the remaining London saleroom will still offer specialist sales 'that are broad and varied in categories and price points. We will also add to our online sales calendar some of the themed pop-up sales that CSK specialises in—I know there are many in the trade who feel that this means full closure of certain areas alto-

gether, but that is not the case'. Nevertheless, Roland Arkell, contributing editor at *Antiques Trade Gazette*, points out that 'the once strong ties that bound together the different strata of the antiques trade will be weakened without CSK'. He adds that 'few will celebrate the demise of another of London's middle-market salerooms', which the *Times's* Richard Morrison estimates serve 99% of collectors.

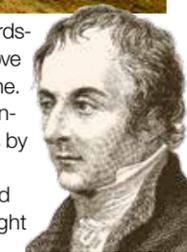
COUNTRY LIFE's saleroom correspondent Huon Mallalieu, whose career started at Christie's, is sorely disappointed by the closure of what has been 'the entry point for new collectors and the training place for the next generation of expertise'. 'By sacking 250 employees,' he says, 'and shutting down virtually every specialist department other than Contemporary in order to concentrate solely on multi-million-pound sales, the long-term effects will be catastrophic.'

'Not too long ago, CSK's specialist sales kept the loss-making Contemporary market afloat,' he continues. In his Art Market pages of January 29, 2014, Mr Mallalieu reported on the much trumpeted \$58.4 million (£47.2m) sale of Jeff Koons's *Balloon Dog* of the previous year. The result was that a market value was established for the remaining four in the edition that far exceeded the \$2 million–\$6 million believed to have been originally paid for each. 'Christie's no longer seems interested in the art market, but in fashion, which is a completely different thing.'



A new photography exhibition at the childhood home of Lake District poet William Wordsworth (*right*) celebrates the dying dialect of Britain's landscape. 'The Word-Hoard: Love letters to Our Land' has been curated by award-winning nature writer Robert Macfarlane. It follows his 2015 bestseller *Landmarks*, which explored the regional dialect words connected to nature, terrain and weather, and brings together 25 dramatic photographs by his parents, Rosamund and John Macfarlane (*above*).

The words in Mr Macfarlane's vocabulary include shreep, an East Anglian word for mist clearing slowly, and sun-scald, a Sussex word for a patch of bright sunlight on water. Until September 3 at Wordsworth House, Cockermouth, Cumbria.



### Pocahontas remembered

To mark the 400th anniversary of the death of Pocahontas, Historic England has announced the re-listing of the bronze statue that commemorates her life in the churchyard of St George's, Gravesend, Kent (*left*).

Pocahontas, the daughter of an Indian chieftain of the Algonquian tribes, was born towards the end of the 16th century and was connected with the establishment of the English colonial settlement at Jamestown, Virginia. It was said that she saved the life of an Englishman by placing her head on his at the moment of execution. Converting to Christianity, she married colonist John Rolfe in 1614, who brought her to England, where she was received at the Court of King James.

Making their return journey in March 1617, the pair got no further than Gravesend; Pocahontas was taken ill and brought ashore, where she died. She is thought to have been buried in a vault beneath the chancel of St George's. In 1923, a Virginian made an unsuccessful search for her remains. The statue is a replica cast in 1957 from the original statue by W. A. Partridge, unveiled in Jamestown in 1922.

Historic England has also announced the listing of the Virginia Quay Settlers Monument in Blackwall. This stands close to where the founders of the first English colony of Virginia set sail in 1606. *Jack Watkins*

### Good week for Natterjack toads

Breeding numbers have increased by 400% in three years at RSPB Mersehead, Dumfries & Galloway

### Knole

The National Trust has carried out its largest restoration project to date, costing £19.8 million and securing the future of hundreds of historical objects at Knole House, Kent

### Charity

The NGS has announced a record donation of £3 million in this, its 90th anniversary year

### Bad week for Haddock

It's no longer on the Marine Conservation Society's green list of fish to eat, as there aren't enough of breeding age in the North Sea and west of Scotland

### Songbirds

More than 800,000 blackcaps, song thrushes, robins and warblers were illegally killed by poachers on a British military base in Cyprus last autumn to supply restaurants with a local delicacy, says the RSPB

### Lambs

UK livestock producers are urged to submit lambs with suspected Schmallenberg virus, transmitted by midges, for post-mortem, as the number of cases grows



### Listen up!

**I**HAVE sent you a disgusting object,' wrote Auberon Waugh. 'You may be able to identify it as a telescopic ear trumpet as used by my Father in his later years... it may be of some whimsical interest to an obsessive collector.'

Said obsessives should head to The Westbury hotel, Mayfair W1, on March 30, or visit [www.forumauctions.co.uk](http://www.forumauctions.co.uk), where Evelyn Waugh's telescopic ear trumpet (*above*), estimated at £1,000–£1,500, will be offered at Forum Auctions' Fine Books and Works on Paper sale, alongside a collection of first-editions and letters.

Waugh famously used his old-fashioned ear trumpets for dramatic effect—'I don't think I hear any better for them, but I look more dignified,' he admitted to the Duchess of Devonshire—and to make people uncomfortable, unscrewing them when bored during speeches or dull conversations.



Classic Image/David Blecker/Mike Booth/Alamy; Rosamund & John Macfarlane; John Twine/Associated Newspapers/Rea/Shutterstock; RMarrion/Dreamstime

# UK's 'rain of nitrogen' reaches critical levels



Levels of reactive nitrogen have tripled in Europe in the past century, meaning plants like harebells and orchids are under threat

A NEW study by Plantlife has revealed that air pollution is not just a public health issue—it's having 'a devastating impact' on our plants and wildlife, too.

*We need to talk about nitrogen*, which is backed by the National Trust, Woodland Trust and the RSPB, among others, shows that 90% of sensitive habitats—such as heathlands, grasslands and sand dunes—in England and Wales are suffering from the 'global pools of reactive nitrogen in the atmosphere', which, says Plantlife's Dr Trevor Dines, present 'a far more immediate threat' than climate change.

That figure is 63% across the UK as a whole, but the problem is worldwide. As the report

states: 'Levels of reactive nitrogen have tripled in Europe and doubled globally in the last century.'

The reactive nitrogen comes from transport, power stations, farming and industry emissions and the result is that hardy plants such as nettles are overpowering their more rare and endangered rivals, which has a knock-on effect for wildlife. The worst-affected areas of the UK include East Anglia, due to intensive agriculture, and the Borders, Pennines and Welsh mountains, where there are few substantial local emission sources, but rainfall is high.

'We are force-feeding the natural world a diet of nutrient-rich junk food and it's having a devastating impact,' explains Dr Dines. 'Once-diverse habitats are becoming mono-

tonous green badlands where only the thugs survive and other more delicate plants are being bullied out of existence.'

Those on the risk list include lichens, mosses, harebells, bird's-foot trefoil, fungi and orchids. As this is a threat to our biodiversity and ecosystems, experts are calling for both restorative and preventative action, nationally and internationally.

'It is now vital that landowners, industry and politicians come together to urgently address this mounting problem,' concludes Dr Dines. 'The very fabric of our countryside is changing under this rain of nitrogen and, if the damage continues, it will harm the ability of our most precious wildflower habitats to cope with other pressures, such as climate change.'

## A fishing legacy

THE name Anne Voss-Bark is synonymous with West Country rivers and preserving their health; the dedicated fisherwoman (*left*) and legendary hostess of the Arundell Arms on the edge of Dartmoor was president of Salmon & Trout Conservation UK, which has set up an award in her memory for students of aquatic science. This year's challenge is a 2,500-word discussion piece on 'Hatcheries: good or bad for wild fisheries?'

The successful applicant will spend a week at the Arundell Arms and a week with the West Country Rivers Trust learning about fishery management and water science, starting on September 25.

Last year's winner, Vicky Fowler, a graduate in biological science from Exeter University, is working towards a PhD and studying with the British Antarctic survey team. Apply to the S&TC UK's Janina Gray ([janina@salmon-trout.org](mailto:janina@salmon-trout.org)); entries close on May 31. *KG*

## Cockerels seek love

THEY make anti-social noises and don't always understand when their attentions are unwelcome, but, says the British Hen Welfare Trust (BWHT), cockerels deserve loving homes, too. The charity, which rehomes battery hens at the end of their commercial laying lives, has been inundated with calls from poultry owners trying to find homes for unwanted cockerels and, for £3, they can place a 'lonely heart' notice on the BWHT website ([www.bhwt.org.uk](http://www.bhwt.org.uk)).

Among the handsome boys touting their wares, mainly because they live in built-up areas, is a Blue Orpington and a Booted Bantam, plus some Barred Plymouth Rocks and a pair of Wyandottes called Nandos and KFC. One, Cyril from Yorkshire, is described as having 'handsome good looks, sporty type, full of personality, enjoys early mornings and kitchen treats... Dislikes offers to become Sunday dinner and quiet-loving neighbours'. *KG*



Captain Hook's nightmare: a celebration of the Harrison clock will feature 2,000 working clocks, synchronised to form a musical cacophony

## Tick, tock

NOSTELL PRIORY, West Yorkshire, is commemorating the 300th birthday of the long-case Harrison Clock—one of only three in existence built by inventor John Harrison, who was born in Nostell village in 1693—with a sound-and-sight installation of 2,000 working clocks.

Organised by artist Luke Jerram, they will be carefully arranged, with each one set to a different time so that the ticks and tocks will form a musical cacophony for visitors to enjoy. As well as examples gathered by Mr

Jerram, the Nostell community is donating 500 clocks.

Harrison made wooden clocks throughout his youth, but was most well known for inventing the marine chronometer, which saved many seafaring lives.

'Harrison's Garden' will make its debut at Nostell on Saturday, March 25, until July 9, before travelling on to Castle Drogo in Devon, Gunby Hall in Lincolnshire and Penrhyn Castle in Wales. Visitors will have the opportunity to donate clocks to the installation. Visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/nostell](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/nostell) for further information. *Rachael Davies*

## Sing when you're winning

GARSINGTON OPERA—the annual open-air festival held at Wormsley Park in Buckinghamshire with an award-winning Japanese-style opera pavilion (*above*) overlooking a lake, deer park and woodland—has announced the expansion of its summer season to four productions and a new five-year partnership with the Philharmonia Orchestra.

This year's season will open on June 1 with Handel's seductive masterpiece *Semele*; followed by *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Debussy's only opera and 'one of the most original in the history of music', with the Philharmonia; Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*; and a revival of Rossini's *Il turco in Italia*. Also new this year is a large-scale community opera, *Silver Birch*, a love story using Siegfried Sassoon's First World War poetry, some of which was written at Garsington Manor (where the festival began).

The season runs from June 1 to July 30 and public booking opens on March 28. Visit [www.garsingtonopera.org](http://www.garsingtonopera.org) or telephone 01865 361636 to book tickets.

## Country Mouse

*The trout are rising*



WITH the shooting season long gone and hunting winding up in most parts of the country, my thoughts turn to the delights of fishing. As I walked along the Itchen near Alresford in Hampshire in anticipation of the forthcoming season, there was a hive of activity both on and off the water. I didn't notice the insects at first, but the constant looping flight of a pair of flycatchers told me something was about. Wrens busied themselves in the reeds beside the water's margins and sang from the alders like lusty angels; a kingfisher flashing past left a streak of azure in its wake; a patient white egret stood like a ghost in the shallows.

The emerging insects were beyond my scope of entomology, but of a size to make a significant meal. The water temperature had reached a critical point and their appearance triggered the trout. A trout's table manners depend on the size of the portion: small insects are delicately sipped from the surface, leaving an ephemeral halo in the water, but larger morsels, like these, are slashed at greedily with a characteristic plop and splash.

Our chalkstreams are as precious as any of the world's rainforests; it was good to see one come alive for another year. *MH*

## Town Mouse

*Esprit de corps*



WHEN the sun first properly warms London, as it did last week, the city palpably relaxes. People walk more slowly and the traffic seems appreciably less aggressive. While waiting at traffic lights, I was cheerfully addressed by other cyclists on three occasions in the course of a single day, an unprecedented occurrence. Two of them commented on the weather, that time-honoured neutral subject of British small talk.

The third, however, was flamboyantly dressed with a boom box mounted on the back of his bike. He pulled round the front of the waiting *peloton* just before the lights changed. Smiling back at us all, he called out 'Brothers! We're all small-wheelers! Cool!' before pedalling off at impressive speed, taking his music with him. It took a moment for the *peloton* to recover and follow. I think he was remarking on the fact that everyone in it was on a folding bike.

Hopefully, the warmth will bring to a close an unusually long run of sickness in the house. Sleeping arrangements with small, sick children inevitably descend into farce. I start the night in my own bed, but with no confidence that I will remain there. By morning, I may be in a child's bed or ejected to the spare bedroom or even onto the floor. *JG*

Nigel Sawyer/David Chapman/Timothy Smith/Steve Bloom/Atamaj; Bryan Cotton/Hutton Archive/Getty; Ben Moljinecz/Atamaj; Mike Hobson; Helen Lisk