

# GRIDLINE

*The magazine for landowners*

Winter 2015

## Keep on the grass

London's parks: their greatest challenge

## Car boot revolution

The veg empire started from a Citroën

## Inside

The grantors taking the higher ground to pony perfection

Protecting your assets: meet the team keeping you safe

WIN a luxury new year spa break

# Berries from heaven

'Tis the season to be jolly so don't forget the 12 reasons to deck the halls... with mistletoe

**nationalgrid**

## Some useful contact numbers

The Land & Business Support team are responsible for acquiring all rights and permissions from statutory authorities and landowners needed to install, operate and maintain National Grid's electricity and gas transmission networks.

The group acts as the main interface for landowners who have gas and electricity equipment installed on their land. Your local contacts are listed below.

### **ELECTRICITY AND GAS**

» Land teams – all regions  
0800 389 5113

### **WAYLEAVE PAYMENTS**

» For information on wayleave payments, telephone the payments helpline on 0800 389 5113

### **CHANGE OF DETAILS**

» To inform National Grid of changes in ownership or contact details, telephone 0800 389 5113 for electric and 01926 654844 for gas, or email [grantorservices@nationalgrid.com](mailto:grantorservices@nationalgrid.com)

### **ELECTRICITY EMERGENCY**

» Emergency calls to report pylon damage to National Grid can be made on 0800 404090. Note the tower's number – found just below the property plate – to help crews locate it

### **ELECTRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS**

» For information on electric and magnetic fields, call the EMF information line on 08457 023270 (local call rate). Website: [emfs.info](http://emfs.info)

### **GAS EMERGENCY**

» 0800 111 999

### **DIAL BEFORE YOU DIG**

» Before carrying out any work in the vicinity of gas pipelines, overhead power lines or underground electric cables, you should contact Plant Protection on 0800 688588 so that searches can be made to determine the exact position of any National Grid assets

### **CUSTOMER COMMENTS**

» Write to Land & Development, National Grid House, Warwick Technology Park, Gallows Hill, Warwick, Warwickshire CV34 6DA. Or email [ld.customercomments@nationalgrid.com](mailto:ld.customercomments@nationalgrid.com)



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Expect the unexpected. London's parks are a hiding place in the sprawling metropolis for young and old, places where memories are made and where the parakeets meet. But these grantors face a new financial challenge to keep the parks alive



# Welcome



**Instead of waiting for the new year, we've made a few changes to Gridline in the run-up to what**

**we hope will be a very merry Christmas for you all.**

We've given your magazine a little bit of a facelift as well as a truly festive feel, but we're not stopping there.

We've got exciting plans for 2016 when we hope to be able to bring you even more content, so look out for details in the first edition of next year.

The Christmassy feel starts with a look at the centuries-old power of mistletoe and how it could provide a seasonal sideline for some grantors.

We've also been talking to the team at Riverford Organic Farms, who

explain how they are working hard to ensure vegetables steal the limelight from turkey this year.

Once the festive fun is over, why not work off the excess with a stroll around some of London's hidden grantor gems at the Royal Parks? We'll show you the best bits if you only have a day.

On a more serious note, we've paid a visit to the National Grid team that works

around the clock to make sure you can carry out work on your land with peace of mind and without risking your safety and your business. We've focused on gas safety this edition, but we will be chatting to the team responsible for overhead line safety next year.

All that remains is to wish you all a peaceful Christmas and prosperous New Year.

*Dawn*

**Dawn McCarroll  
Editor, Gridline**

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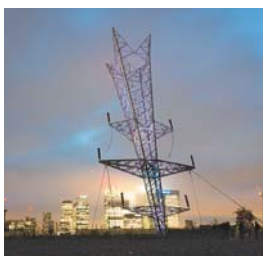


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## ONE-MINUTE INTERVIEW

Caroline Suttlng, regional administrator – south-east

**BACKGROUND** I started my career at the Central Electricity Generating Board, working in administration and HR roles in a variety of areas such as power stations and transmission. I moved into financial services before having a family and later worked at a primary school for nine years, followed by a year at the NHS in Continuing Healthcare.



**CURRENT FOCUS** I joined Land and Business Support in February 2015, supporting land officers in the south-east region and being the first point of contact for grantors in the area.

**NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW** As a child I attended ballet classes for five years.

**FICTIONAL HERO** Gru from the film Despicable Me – he's outwardly evil but inwardly a big old softie. Anyone who can nurture Minions must be wonderful!

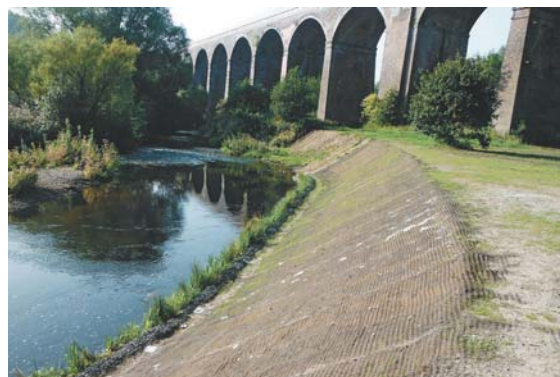
**WHO WOULD PLAY YOU IN THE MOVIE OF YOUR LIFE** Bette Midler – there's a similarity in that she's not a classic beauty and has a great sense of humour.

**DREAM JOB** Chauffeur to the stars (with a different car each week) or a rally driver.

**FAVOURITE FILM** My Cousin Vinny. It has a fantastic script and a great story, as well as being hugely entertaining and funny.

**MOST PRIZED POSSESSION** Not being particularly materialistic, weirdly I would say my driving licence because my life would not be the same without it.

**ADVICE TO A CHILD** Treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself.



The reinstated riverbank after National Grid used rock armour to stabilize ground in the vicinity of the gas pipeline

Denton and Manchester area. In consultation with the Environment Agency and Stockport Council, National Grid has improved the riverbank with rock armour, using divers where the pipeline crossed the riverbed.

The company has also made a donation towards the cost of planting trees along a 110-metre stretch of the bank to improve its stability.

The local Friends of Reddish Vale group are so impressed with the outcome that they have arranged for a plaque to be displayed on the site to mark National Grid's completion of the work.

## Bank on us!

**Engineers** from National Grid have completed a £250,000 project to shore up a riverbank in Lancashire after erosion threatened the safety of a high-pressure gas pipeline.

The erosion to the banks of the River Tame in the Reddish Vale country park posed a risk to the 24-inch iron pipe, which is a vital part of a network of pipelines supplying the Stockport,

# NEWSLINE

*The latest news from National Grid and its landowner partners*

## Disappearing pylons

**Four locations** in England and Wales have been prioritised by National Grid in a project to reduce the impact of power lines in nationally protected landscapes using undergrounding.

The selected landscapes in England and Wales are the Dorset AONB near Winterbourne Abbas, the New Forest National Park near Hale; the Peak District National Park near Dunford Bridge, and the Snowdonia National Park near Porthmadog. The locations were selected from a shortlist of 12 identified last year by the project's independently chaired Stakeholder Advisory Group.

National Grid's Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project is backed by a £500-million allowance made available by Ofgem until 2021. Visit the project website at [www2.nationalgrid.com/UK/in-your-area/visual-impact-provision/](http://www2.nationalgrid.com/UK/in-your-area/visual-impact-provision/)



## WASTE NOT WANT NOT

The government has awarded an £11-million grant to a consortium of companies – including National Grid – to develop and build the first-ever plant of its kind to turn waste from homes and businesses into a sustainable fuel to power HGVs.

The new plant will take residential waste and convert it into compressed biomethane.

Enough gas will be produced to power 75 HGVs, equivalent to all buses operating in Swindon.

Biomethane is significantly less carbon-intensive and less polluting than diesel and has the potential to cut carbon emissions by up to 96%.



Image © Pete Smith



Image © Mike Williams

A new book aims to protect the Marbled White (main picture) and Brown Hairstreak (above)

## Just champion

**National Grid** has become a species champion for the rare Brown Hairstreak butterfly and the more common Marbled White.

Both butterflies have been identified in good numbers at National Grid sites, and a number of actions have been taken as part of the company's sustainability strategy to preserve their habitats.

Details about the two species appear in a new book on the region's butterflies by West Midland Butterfly Conservation (WMBC), which is due to be published in the Spring.

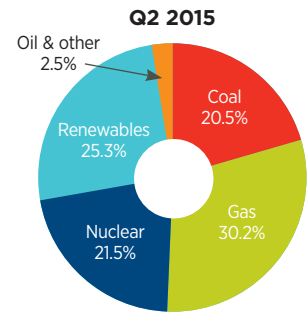
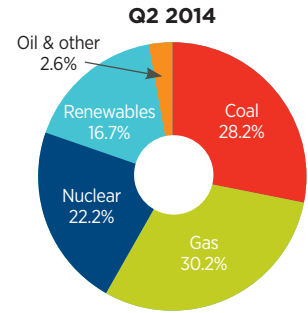
The organisation runs conservation programmes for over 100 threatened species and

manages over 30 nature reserves.

"The aim is to celebrate and raise awareness about the 44 different species that people can enjoy in their gardens, nature reserves and the countryside," said Mike Williams for the organisation.

"It is only with the help of species champions such as National Grid that we can raise the funding needed to push this exciting project forward."

Visit [westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk](http://westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk) for more information. WMBC is also looking for high-quality photos to include, particularly of eggs, caterpillars and chrysalises, and suggestions for favourite butterfly walks.



## Renewables outshine coal for the first time

Renewable energy has overtaken coal in supplying the UK's electricity for the first time, new government statistics show.

Technologies such as solar, wind and bioenergy contributed a record 25.3% of electricity generation in the second quarter of 2015 (up from 16.4% last year) as a result of more renewable capacity coming on-stream and favourable weather.

Gas-fired power stations provided the most electricity (30%), with renewables second and nuclear power third (21.5%). Coal, the most polluting fuel, fell back to fourth (20.5%) as renewable fuels grew.



**IT'S A FACT!** IN JUST FIVE MINUTES OF THE CREDITS ROLLING, A GREAT BRITISH BAKE OFF FINAL CAN TRIGGER A SURGE IN ELECTRICITY DEMAND EQUIVALENT TO BAKING 9 MILLION CUPCAKES AT ONCE - THAT'S ABOUT 12 TIMES A TYPICAL HOUSEHOLD'S ANNUAL ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION OR ENOUGH TO LIGHT OVER 22 MILLION LIGHT BULBS.

# HIGHLAND FLING

GRANTORS JEAN AND WILLIE RALSTON SHARE A LIFELONG LOVE OF THESE SPECIAL PONIES



The phone hasn't stopped ringing all morning at Moss-side Stud in Methven, a small village nestling in the scenic Strathearn valley, close to Perth.

It's a red letter day for gas grantors Jean and Willie Ralston. A pony called Moss-side McLaren, bred at their stud, has just been named overall champion in the Highland pony category of the Horse of the Year Show and friends and family are offering their congratulations.

For 30 years the couple have produced a string of Highland stallions and mares with renowned bloodlines and outstanding performance records.

One of only two native pony breeds in Scotland, along with the Eriskay, today's animals are the descendents of crofters' ponies that worked on a variety of tasks such as hauling timber, peat and game, as well as ploughing.

Today its boundless stamina, calm nature and sure-footed agility means it can turn its hoof to most things, including in-hand showing, riding, dressage, driving, jumping and endurance riding.

## BOISTEROUS YOUNG PONIES

"I've been hooked on the breed ever since a neighbour rode a magnificent dapple grey through the farmyard when I was a child," said Jean. She bought her first Highland in 1980 as a family riding pony, followed by two weaned foals and decided to start breeding from the mares.

The Stud's foundation stallion, Domhnach, was bred in 1994, and he has since been joined by Iain Mor, a magnificent black stallion from a different bloodline, and his son, Uilleam Mor.

Willie's parents came to Moss-side as tenants

of the Methven estate in 1945. The Ralstons purchased the farm in 1986.

Over the years, surrounding land has become available for rent or purchase, increasing the farmed area to 1,200 acres. Willie has installed drainage to transform what was a water-logged landscape into productive arable fields.

"In the 1970s I also worked as a drainage contractor as a sideline and put in all the drainage for three National Grid pipelines that came through the valley," he said.

On average, four or five foals are born each

(left and below) Mares and their foals graze on higher ground; (right) Moss-side stallion; Uilleam Mor; (below right) the foundation stallion, Domhnach; and (bottom right) Willie with the magnificent Iain Mor



## PONY POINTS

- ▶ Highlands are one of the largest of Britain's nine native pony breeds.
- ▶ The Highland remains on the Rare Breed Survival Trust's watchlist (category 4: At Risk), with only 200 or so foals born each year.
- ▶ From the 1950s, as the use of tractors took over their traditional roles, the breed became popular for pony trekking.
- ▶ Highlands will take centre stage at the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations in May 2016, when a 90-minute spectacle featuring 550 horses takes place at Windsor Castle.

year at the farm, usually between April and June. Weaned from their mothers at six months, they spend their first winter in a barn, being turned out into the fields when the weather allows.

"Handling the ponies at this early stage in their development is vital," said Jean. "Boisterous young ponies can quickly turn into dangerous large animals if not taught some manners."

Colts are assessed at one and two-year intervals, and those not retained and licensed for breeding are sold or gelded. A decision is made on which fillies to retain for breeding after two years.

### DESIRABLE TRAITS

Jean is on the council of the Highland Pony Society, which maintains the stud book and licenses all approved stallions for breeding. She is also a showing judge and is well-placed to assess if a pony has the required breed characteristics.

Desirable traits in a pony include a pleasing overall conformation (structure), plenty of bone, a good length of stride, a good length of hair on the mane, tail and feathers, together with a deep jawl, broad forehead and large expressive eyes.

Their height is usually less than 14.2 hands and they come in a variety of colours, ranging from various duns to grey and black.

"They are highly intelligent and even-tempered," said Jean. "Once several of the ponies broke a gate down and escaped. One of the yearlings had its foot stuck in the gate, but it waited patiently for somebody to come along and free it. Other breeds might have panicked and injured themselves."

Besides breeding and showing their own ponies, the Ralstons take in visiting mares to mate with their purebred stallions in controlled, safe conditions. "I always say that owners of mares should try to match up with a stallion that will



## BEAST OF BURDEN

A number of ponies bred at Moss-side have been employed in the time-honoured task of carrying culled deer off the hills.

Ponies used for stalking on estates wear a specially designed saddle for transporting the deer carcass and must be strong enough to carry a 16-stone animal.

From youth they are used to the smell of deer so they are not scared. As well as being able to reach places inaccessible to vehicles, they can read terrain and know the best route home.



Image © Melissa Volpi

*"I've been hooked on the breed ever since a neighbour rode a magnificent dapple grey through the farmyard when I was a child"*

improve their weak points," said Jean.

"It's so important to maintain the breed characteristics because if you lose them, you lose the elements that make a Highland unique."

In October the mares are moved to higher ground, where they spend the winter. Extremely hardy, they thrive on poorer-quality grazing and can forage even in snow up to 18 inches deep.

They have a double coat of badger-like hair with an outer layer that repels rain and snow in winter, and which is then shed in spring.

Moss-side ponies have been sold to breeders all over the world. Jean said: "Many owners keep in touch and it's like having an extended family. Highland ponies are in our blood. Family comes first, of course, but the ponies are a close second."

## Mistletoe



# 2

## Kissing under the dung twig

Its name is thought to have derived from the Anglo Saxon words mistle and tan, for dung and twig, because birds would leave their deposits on the tree branches to start the process. The Mistle Thrush feeds on the berries, green until the end of October, and the seeds inside droppings attach themselves to a branch, eventually fusing and growing with the tree for up to four years until they are fully established. In winter, the Mistle Thrush – Blackcaps are another big fan of the berries – defends the round ball-like clumps of mistletoe as a food reserve for when times are hard.

*The Blackcap and Mistle Thrush help to ensure one of our finest kissing traditions survives*



### UNCOMFORTABLE CHRISTMAS CONNECTIONS

3 It's still considered a pagan plant by the Christian Church and is often banned from decorations, but its presence as evergreen growth on a deciduous host is symbolic of the continuing 'life-force', vitality and fertility.

When Christians came to Western Europe, some tried to ban the use of mistletoe as a decoration.

# PUCKER



### It's actually a parasite

The original mistletoe, or *Viscum Album* (sticky white, after its trademark berries), lives on host trees such as Hawthorn, Lime and Poplar but prefers older apple trees rich in nutrients and water that it can extract and feed off. An evergreen, it produces some of its own energy through photosynthesis but left to flourish can kill its host. Original mistletoe, with distinctive berries and leaf pattern, is prolific in a corridor of land across England and northern Europe.

LONG SYNONYMOUS WITH SHY CHILDREN RUNNING FOR SAFETY FROM DEMANDING AUNTS AND COUPLES CANOODLING BY THE CHRISTMAS TREE, THERE'S A LOT MORE TO MISTLETOE THAN MEETS THE LIPS, SO WE TAKE A LIGHT-HEARTED LOOK AT THE KISSING PLANT







## It's cold outside

The south and West Midlands cider-making counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Somerset are the main growing areas, largely because mistletoe loves mature orchards. But the warm climate and good altitude are other big factors.

Jonathan Briggs, of Mistletoe Matters, said: "The decline in the ranks of established orchards is affecting mistletoe, but in recent years we've had reports of it further to the east, possibly due to subtle changes in climate or the presence of continental Blackcaps, who have been staying here for winter rather than migrating."

### WHAT'S YOUR POISON?

**5** Mistletoe, while toxic if used in excess, has been used as a herbal remedy for centuries, with the Druids favouring it in rituals and medicine as a 'heal all' and to enhance fertility, cure nervous disorders and relieve high blood pressure.

Analysis of Lindow Man, a Roman-era bog body found preserved in Cheshire, found mistletoe grains in his stomach suggesting he may have taken it as a medicine.

Nowadays mistletoe is still regularly used in herbal tea form, skin cosmetics and shampoo, and even to stimulate the immune system alongside cancer drugs.



### Saucy stuff

Mistletoe's links with fertility are enhanced by its appearance, with forking paired branches, – paired leaves and berries resembling the sexual organs.

By the end of the 19th century the idea of mistletoe as a fertility symbol had taken root, with women regarding it as a way of encouraging fertility or finding a husband.

For the ritual to be complete, a single berry should be removed from the sprig after each kiss, but that has been forgotten because it eventually stopped all the fun.

### MAGICAL POWERS

The Druids worshipped mistletoe where it grew on their sacred oak trees and harvested it by cutting it with a golden sickle, making sure the berries' magical powers were protected by catching the cut mistletoe in a cloak. If it hit the floor, the powers were lost.

Norse god Baldr was killed with an arrow made of mistletoe by jealous rival Loki and the pearlescent white berries are said to be the tears of his mother who decreed that from then on, mistletoe should become a symbol of peace, friendship and love.

During the last war British soldiers sent embroidered 'silk' postcards from the front at Christmas as a symbol of peace.

### MALE OR FEMALE?

**8** If you're holding the mistletoe aloft, it's almost certainly female... the male picked from boughs growing on the branches doesn't have berries. "It does mean we have to separate the harvest because the genuine, organic mistletoe we supply has to have the white berries," said Mark Adams, who runs [kissmistletoe.co.uk](http://kissmistletoe.co.uk) from his farm in Eastham near Tenbury Wells in Worcestershire.



*Christmas 1897. Her first mistletoe kiss (left) and (below) December 1882. Hanging up the mistletoe*





# 9

## Boxing (Day) clever

A team of eight work through November to Christmas Eve to pick and package at Mark's farm. The engineering graduate, who works with dad Mike on the 750-acre arable farm, which also breeds ewes and cattle, said: "We use poles or ladders to get it out of the branches so that the apple trees can flourish through to spring.

Our 30-acre orchard is certified fully organic, so perfect for the best-quality mistletoe. We sell apples to cider-makers Stowford Press but the mistletoe is a good by-product for months, although worthless by Boxing Day.



## KNOWING YOUR MARKET

**10** When he took over the mistletoe side of things from his dad

in 2009, Mark pushed the wholesale element by promoting freshness and organic, but said: "A lot of my contacts in the organic area went bust, so I launched the public website in 2011. We sell at a fixed price, so whether it's a good, dry year or a bad, wet one, we sell quality at a set price. We harvest four tonnes of mistletoe a year but only pick in batches, so we have a one-day turnaround to ensure freshness."

# 12

## THE MISTLETOE CAPITAL

Tenbury Wells has hosted the month-long Mistletoe Festival since 2004, maintaining a century-old auction that now includes art exhibitions, concerts, children's entertainment and the crowning of the Mistletoe Queen.

Local growers sell their boughs in bulk at the auctions, which are also attended by the Druids, who hold a ceremony of thanksgiving.

## Where are the secret smoochers?

**11** Most of the farm's customers are in northern England where producers are scarce, but Mark does have a healthy customer base across the EU, especially Spain. "It must be the ex-pats living there looking for a little Christmas tradition without the hassle of buying a tree," said Mark. "The older generation are big fans of mistletoe and increasingly we're seeing people asking about it for their winter weddings and young people looking to buy it for Valentine's Day."



For more information:  
[kissmemistletoe.co.uk](http://kissmemistletoe.co.uk) and  
[mistletoe.org.uk/homewp](http://mistletoe.org.uk/homewp)

# One call could save a life

WHEN A LETTER FROM NATIONAL GRID ARRIVES ON GRANTORS' DOORSTEPS IT'S ALL TOO EASY TO PUT IT TO ONE SIDE. RICH HOWARD WOULD RATHER YOU DIDN'T

**“Landowners who have worked their fields with gas pipelines beneath them for years might think they know their route and see us as an unnecessary intrusion,” admits Rich Howard.**

But grantors ignoring the letter reminding them of their duty to contact National Grid if they are planning any work could court catastrophe if damage leads to corrosion, a gas escape or, worse, a full rupture.

Rich’s Asset Protection team do just that... protect the assets of National Grid – in this case high pressure underground pipelines – to ensure the safety of British grantors.

Corrosion of a pipeline through contact from third party works can threaten its integrity, so the Warwick-based team continuously monitor the full 7,700km. Rich said: “With no rolling checks there’s a risk that safety could be compromised by third party activities, and when you are talking about high pressure gas that’s simply not an option for us. In this instance ‘activities’ is a fairly broad term for anything that might affect the pipeline, however insignificant or routine it might be.

Rich said: “EAGLES, the Electricity and Gas Location Enquiry System, allows grantors to let us know if they are planning work on their land. They can also carry out searches online and get an initial response to a search within minutes.”

## IN THE KNOW

97%

ANNUAL CONTACT RESPONSE RATE

85,000

INCREASE IN THIRD PARTY ENQUIRIES, UP 11% ON 2013

### Gas Emergency

Call the National Gas Emergency Service 24 hours a day on **0800 111 999**.

For more on gas emergencies visit [www2.nationalgrid.com/UK/Safety/Gas-emergency/](http://www2.nationalgrid.com/UK/Safety/Gas-emergency/) or for Plant Protection visit [www2.nationalgrid.com/Contact-us/Plant-protection/](http://www2.nationalgrid.com/Contact-us/Plant-protection/)

Planning is the watchword, and Rich insists any delay caused by the required 14 days notice period can be avoided with a little forethought.

The Plant Protection line on 0800 688588 can initiate a free pipeline technician visit to peg out the course of the pipeline, assess its depth and establish safe distances for all works, which the owner is obliged to tell National Grid about.

“Pipelines don’t run in straight lines and are safe until affected by movement of heavy plant and machinery, drainage and ditching, fencing or excavation,” said Rich.

The team sends letters to 11,000 gas grantors each year asking them to confirm they are the owner and to contact National Grid if they are planning works. If they fail to respond the process is escalated.

“We know grantors have businesses to run and form-filling can be a pain, but we have to make sure the infrastructure – and more importantly the people working near it – are safe,” Rich added.

Engineers walk the length of the network every four years for close-up inspections, alongside fortnightly helicopter fly-overs.

Rich said: “Landowners are increasingly using our free advice which we thank them for. Why put your life, and those of your family and staff, at risk?”



Rich Howard,  
Asset Protection Team Leader



Lisa Goodwin,  
Asset Protection Assistant



Kam Liddar,  
Asset Protection Officer



Wayne Smith,  
Asset Protection Assistant



Bhupinder Purba,  
Asset Protection Assistant

# BIG CAN STILL BE *beautiful*

IT'S THE ULTIMATE RAGS TO RICHES STORY, BUT DESPITE THE PHENOMENAL GROWTH OF A SIMPLE IDEA, THERE ARE NO AIRS AND GRACES ABOUT GUY WATSON

**W**e're debating how carrots should really taste with the MD of the nation's leading organic vegetable supplier when a chap ambles by with a slightly battered rucksack slung over his shoulder, wearing a weathered jumper ripped at both elbows and rust-coloured Dr Martens boots.

He looks slightly lost, so we pause the interview as Riverford MD Rob Haward turns to him, then back to me and offers: "This is Guy. He's the boss". It also turns out he's not lost but has got the wrong day for a speech he's supposed to be giving.

He's not quite what you'd expect from the creator of the rags-to-riches Riverford Organic Farms empire, which started with him selling home-grown veg to friends from the boot of his Citroën in the early 90s. But then outspoken, self-confessed 'vegetable nerd' and grantor Guy Watson has always bucked the trend.

His passion for making vegetables our dinner-time stars has turned his fledgling venture into a £45-million business, whose 500 staff at four sites across the UK work with a passion to send out 47,000 veg boxes each week. And his relaxed demeanour and connection with the ethical

foundations of his enterprise remain undiminished despite that success. He is, he insists, just a farmer besotted by veg.

Minutes later, as we tuck into a hearty winter plate of sumptuous veg accompanied by pork belly, he plonks himself down on the next bench to eat and chat with the guys from the warehouse.

That's the secret of the enduring appeal of Riverford, the 1,300-acre farm nestling in Devon's beautiful Dart Valley, where Guy was born and where he and his four siblings all now work on the venture. He's approachable, friendly and part of the team – and it's no act.

Food scares, growing public awareness, desire for provenance and the quest for healthy eating have, down the years, cemented Guy's decision, but there is still much to be done.

Harvest manager Martin Gainsborough hunkers down and beams. "That's a stonking leek... a megaton, about 35mm in diameter," he declares.

His smile is triumphant. He is the man responsible for forecasting the perfect storm where the number of available vegetables matches the predicted demand.

"The logistical side is the hardest part of the job. We plant based on long-term projections and then pick two

*"People are becoming more aware that vegetables can quite easily become the main attraction on a plate if they taste great"*





Guy Watson with one of his boxes and (above) it's all go in the packing shed



With public demand for fresh, organic food, that tastes like it's meant to, at an all time high, the Riverford team are dedicated to making sure the veg is picked, loaded and on our kitchen tables in hours... and the team are delighted to be playing a part in changing the nation's attitudes.

weeks ahead, always trying to match the variables. But that sea of detail isn't something the customer needs to worry about," he said.

"All they need to know is that the time their curly kale, brassica, savoy cabbage or spinach is picked, to the time it lands on their doorstep is less than two days."

Unlike many supermarkets, Martin and his pickers do not discriminate on what the crop looks like, here, it's all about the flavour.

"Appearance is largely irrelevant. We want to grow carrots that taste of carrot, not the high yield Nairobi that's judged solely on how resilient it is," he said.

"People are becoming more aware that vegetables can quite easily become the main attraction on a plate if they taste great, but many are just not green-fingered or don't have time to grow their own. That's where we help, growing it for them, suggesting simple recipes and even tailoring boxes to those recipes."

His boss's take on the movement against mass-produced, tasteless veg taking place in the kitchens of Britain was reinforced by one visit to a farmer in the Fens.

Guy said: "I bent down and picked some lettuce to eat





Harvest Manager Martin (right) is passionate about the taste – not the aesthetics – of his Christmas dinner table crop



and he said ‘I shouldn’t do that boy’. They’d been sprayed for aphids. This was a farmer growing food who wouldn’t eat the stuff he was growing, which is crazy. Food should be fit to eat straight from the field.”

Martin concurred: “Our lettuces are lettuce and nothing more. There are no pesticides. We use natural predators, hedgerows and nets. A plant will only struggle when it’s stressed, so we get the ergonomics right and the rest follows.”

Price is the main factor stalling the uninitiated, and that disappoints Rob. He said: “Of course people have budgets, but often it’s the perception of what they can do with vegetables that deters them and that saddens me a little. Good organic vegetables, at little extra cost, can be amazing.”

“Vegetables have been taken for granted, but with a slight tweak, a good organic cabbage, for example, can be the star of the show without doing a lot to it.”

Rob is the business overseer behind the smooth-running plant, pick and package process, which is complemented

by a marketing team who are equally as passionate about their product.

“That’s the key. We all believe in it, everyone is happy to be here and that comes from Guy at the top who has maintained the values that he had right at the outset. The enthusiasm for growing great veg is in our DNA and it’s infectious,” said Rob.

“Every business decision we take has to connect to the original values and that is how we maintain that authenticity, which is quite rare these days.”

Comparisons with an allotment on a larger, tooled-up scale are welcome here and, surprisingly, Rob and the team applaud those who grow their own.

He said: “If you do, it’s fantastic, but if you have a bad year or are busy, we are the next best thing. We’re showing that veg doesn’t have to be a boring accompaniment by explaining what you can do with it through our recipe boxes, recipe apps, cookbooks and seasonal recipe guides.”

Mouthwatering dishes like dhal with crispy sweet potato and quick coconut chutney or venison and mushroom stroganoff are made foolproof by the website and in-box instructions because, Rob insists, education has to start in the kitchen.

He added: “Next year we’re launching a new website, we’re going to raise awareness by getting out into communities more and will be expanding our product range. The message will remain the same though: try our veg – you’re not tied in – and if you don’t like it, go back to what you were eating before.”



For more information:  
[riverford.co.uk](http://riverford.co.uk)

## A FEW MORE ORGANIC FACTS AND FIGURES

- ▶ Riverford guarantees local, fresh produce by having farms and packaging centres in Devon, Peterborough and Yorkshire (and a distribution centre in Hampshire), so varied products can move between the three.
- ▶ The lull in growing between March and June is filled by a farm in the Vendee, western France, which also allows for continental vegetables to be included in boxes.
- ▶ Pickers in Devon range in number from 40 up to 75 in the summer.
- ▶ Guy has created and supports farmers’ co-operatives – the first covered Torquay, Exeter and Plymouth – to help meet the increasing demand and allow Riverford’s land to be rotated.



# BY ROYAL COMMAND

COMPETING DEMANDS ON LONDON'S MAGNIFICENT ROYAL PARKS REQUIRE A SKILFUL JUGGLING ACT BY THE GRANTOR TEAM THAT MANAGES THEM



The challenge to make London's parks an attractive proposition for the capital's tourists is getting tougher as financial cuts bite but it's one Greg McErlean and his team are relishing

The 5,000 acres of historic parkland that make up the eight Royal Parks provide a precious green haven in the heart of London.

With 77 million visits a year, they are among the most popular attractions in the UK, drawing tourists from all over the world.

Originally royal hunting chases for the kings and queens of England, the parks were later developed into ornamental gardens, with public access being allowed from the early 17th century.

Today veteran oaks and rare wildflower species share the space with listed historic landscapes, protected views, important monuments, boating lakes and sports pitches.

Helping to mitigate climate change, the parks, crossed by a number of National Grid underground cables, are a green lung for the capital, cooling urban temperatures, absorbing pollution and reducing wind speeds.

These precious national assets are managed on behalf of the Crown by an organisation called The Royal Parks

(TRP) – an executive agency of the Department for Culture, Media & Sport.

The agency has the challenge of balancing the need to preserve precious historic landscapes and habitats with an obligation to provide public access for entertainment and recreation. It's a task that has become even tougher in today's climate of austerity and financial cutbacks.

“Our grant from government has been cut by about a third in recent years, requiring us to self-fund about 65% of the annual £36-million cost of running the parks,” said Greg McErlean, director of programmes and projects.

He's based at TRP's headquarters in the heart of Hyde Park, where he has worked for 18 years after a career in the historic environment sector, including a spell with English Heritage. “While the outlook seemed bleak at one point, we've been very successful growing new funding streams through the provision of improved services such as new catering facilities, and



# AN OASIS OF GREEN

PELICANS, PAVILIONS AND TALKING STATUES...  
THE AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO LONDON'S ROYAL PARKS



## KENSINGTON GARDENS

As well as Kensington Palace, the Albert Memorial and the Serpentine Galleries, the 242-acre park also hosts the Diana, Princess of Wales memorial playground. Based on the centrepiece of a huge wooden pirate ship, it attracts a million visitors a year. Nearby are the 150-year-old Italian Gardens, created as a gift from Prince Albert to his beloved Queen Victoria.



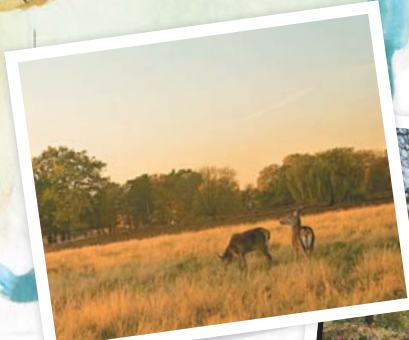
## BUSHY PARK

The second largest park at 1,099 acres, it has been a designated SSSI since 2014. At its heart is the famous Chestnut Avenue – a mile-long avenue designed by Sir Christopher Wren as a formal approach to nearby Hampton Court Palace, as well as a baroque water garden, and the beautiful bronze statue and fountain of the goddess Diana.



## RICHMOND PARK

At 2,500 acres, larger than all the other parks put together, it is a National Nature Reserve and SSSI, and home to 650 roaming red and fallow deer. At its heart is a 40-acre woodland garden (Isabella Plantation) with azaleas, ponds and streams. A recent £1.5 million project funded by the National Lottery has revitalised the gardens, as well as providing improved access for wheelchair users, new toilet facilities and educational resources.



Anne Marie Briscoe © The Royal Parks  
Greywolf © The Royal Parks  
© The Royal Parks





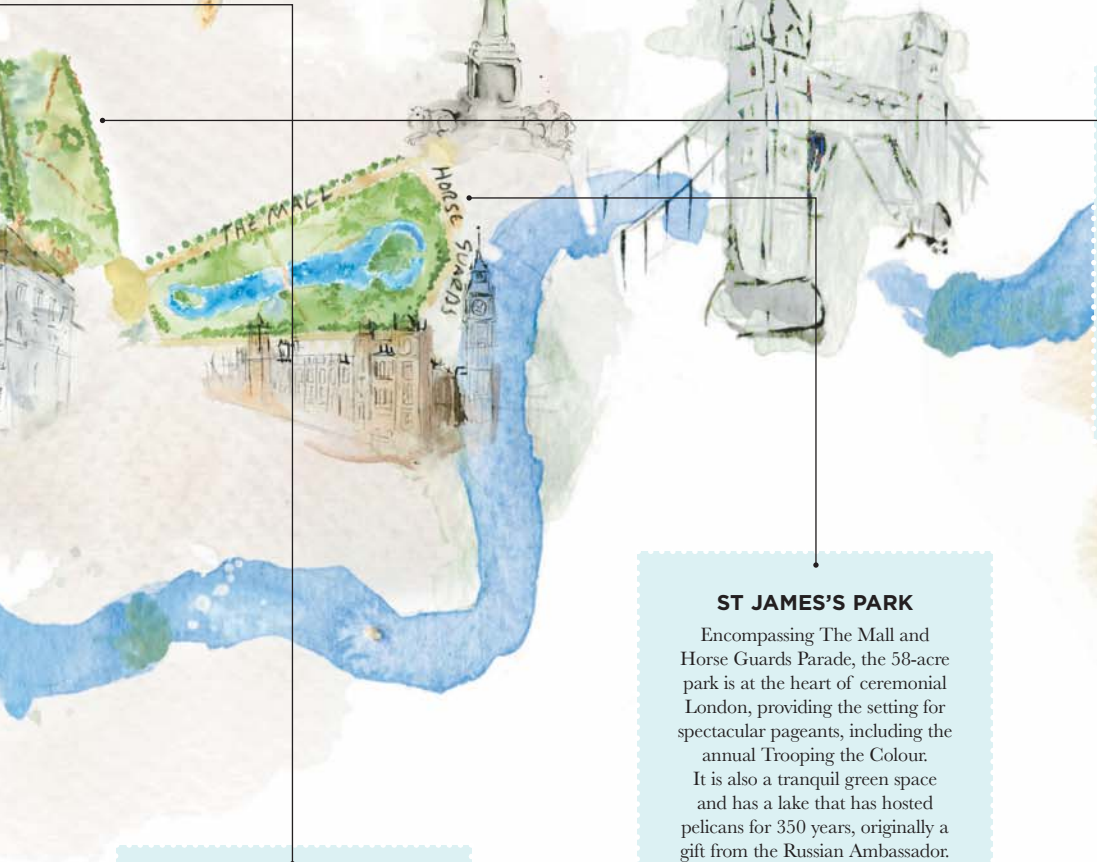
### THE REGENT'S PARK AND PRIMROSE HILL

The 395-acre park contains central London's largest wetland area and last remaining resident hedgehog population. But it also encompasses London's largest outdoor sports facility in the Hub, a 100-acre site with a pavilion and 44 pitches. Other attractions include Queen Mary's Gardens, which has 12,000 roses, London Zoo and the Open Air Theatre.



### THE GREEN PARK

The smallest Royal Park at 40 acres is an elegant and peaceful space close to Buckingham Palace. Notable modern landmarks include a memorial honouring the 55,000 airmen of Bomber Command who died during World War II. Popular for sunbathing and picnics in fine weather and as a healthy walking route for commuters.



### ST JAMES'S PARK

Encompassing The Mall and Horse Guards Parade, the 58-acre park is at the heart of ceremonial London, providing the setting for spectacular pageants, including the annual Trooping the Colour. It is also a tranquil green space and has a lake that has hosted pelicans for 350 years, originally a gift from the Russian Ambassador. Feeding time for the Pelicans is at 2.30pm every day.

### HYDE PARK

This 350-acre park in the heart of London is the stage for open-air music concerts in the summer. The 18ft-high Achilles statue, which pays tribute to the Duke of Wellington, is just one of a number of Talking Statues brought to life using innovative mobile phone technology. Visitors swipe their smartphone on a nearby tag to receive a personal callback from the Greek hero of the Trojan War.

### GREENWICH PARK

The most historic of all Royal Parks, the 73-acre green space in south-east London dates back to Roman times, and later in the Tudor age became the hunting grounds for the royal palace at Greenwich. The Royal Observatory is home to the Greenwich Meridian Line, which represents the Prime Meridian, relative to which world time is calculated and the distance to every place on earth is measured.



## Royal Parks



by staging popular events,” he added. TRP also cares for the Grade-I-listed Brompton Cemetery, Victoria Tower and Grosvenor Square Gardens, and the gardens of Nos 10-12 Downing St, as well as a 12-mile artificial waterway from near Heathrow Airport to supply water features in Bushy Park.

### THE ROYAL PARKS HOST MORE THAN 30 WORLD CLASS EVENTS EACH YEAR

The core team of 120 employees manages the parks in conjunction with a small army of contractors in various specialist areas from landscape gardening to catering.

Around 30 major events are held in the Royal Parks each year – including, in recent years, the start of the Tour de France, the Diamond Jubilee celebrations for the Queen, the British Summer Time pop concerts and Proms in the Park.

Perhaps the highest-profile event was the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, which saw 11 sports competitions staged in six of the parks. “It was a fantastic experience to represent the TRP on the multi-agency planning team for that,” said Greg. “It was a hugely complex logistical task preparing the venues, making sure other park users were not impacted, and then ensuring sites were reinstated in as-good or better condition.”

One of the most popular events in the Royal Parks calendar is Winter Wonderland – a free to enter event in Hyde Park with a host of Christmas-themed fun and activities, including big top shows, an observation wheel and a huge market.

All contribute enormously to the running of the parks, as well as the wider London economy, particularly in the tourism, hospitality and retail sectors.

“That said, we impose strict limits on the number of major events held, and work hard to liaise with local resident groups and park users to minimise any impacts,” said Greg.

### THE TEAM HAS HAD TO BE INNOVATIVE AND INVENTIVE TO CREATE NEW REVENUE

Each park has unique characteristics that help determine the extent of public access and the nature of activities. For example, Richmond Park is an SSSI and National Nature Reserve with sensitive habitat areas that have restricted access.

Regent’s Park, on the other hand, hosts one of the largest outdoor sports areas in London, while Hyde Park, known for centuries as ‘the peoples’ park’, has a long tradition of staging

*“We’ve been very successful growing new funding streams through the provision of improved services, such as new catering facilities, and by staging popular events”*



major events stretching back to the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Besides also attracting lottery funding for specific projects, additional income comes from renting out 21 restored lodges and other buildings for residential and commercial use, as well as by licensing filming and photography, and the activities of groups such as professional dog walkers and fitness instructors.

TRP also works with a wide range of partners, including the Royal Parks Foundation, ‘Friends of the Park’ groups, and the Royal Parks Guild. An independent registered charity, the Foundation fundraises particularly in the areas of heritage, education, wellbeing and nature. It also enlists volunteers to work on wildlife conservation and landscape restoration, and encourages donations by corporate sponsors and individuals.

These have included a £784,000 grant by jewellers Tiffany to support works to restore ornamental and drinking fountains throughout the parks. The agency has also outsourced arts and education services to third-party specialists.

The new Serpentine Sackler Gallery, housed in The Magazine, a former gunpowder store, is an example of where a third-party operating company has invested significant sums in a new cultural centre. TRP and the Royal Parks Foundation have recently announced an intention to merge in 2016, enabling the new body to benefit from the greater fundraising freedoms and efficiencies afforded by charitable status.

As a new year beckons, major events like the Queen’s 90th birthday celebrations and Trooping the Colour on Horse Guards Parade will keep the Royal Parks team on their toes.

Working together with agencies and charities is key to ensuring the long-term future of London’s beautiful green heirlooms



**For more information:  
about The Royal Parks  
go to: [royalparks.org.uk](http://royalparks.org.uk)**

# And for my next trick!

Unlike any other pylon you will have seen, this 35-metre-high steel lattice tower is entirely upside down, as if piercing the ground from a great height.

The striking sculpture of an inverted pylon by Alex Chinneck, which stands on industrial wasteground between the Millennium Dome and Canary Wharf in London, is being exhibited as part of London Design Week.

'A bullet from a shooting star' weighs 15 tonnes and comprises nearly 2,000 metres of steel, with foundations stretching 25 metres underground. More than 120 tonnes of concrete and 350 tonnes of rubble provide a

counterpoint to keep the structure in place.

The artist, who specialises in architectural installations featuring optical illusions, was inspired by the industrial landscape that surrounds the site – including the lattice steelwork of a nearby National Grid gasworks.

The sculpture, illuminated at night, can be seen by passing vehicles, the Thames boat services and the Emirates Airline cable car over the river.

The empty plot on which the semi-permanent structure stands has been earmarked for 15,000 new homes over the next 20 years.



*The upside-down pylon - the shape of things to come?*

## HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

*National Grid – making a difference*

### Operation makeover

Volunteers from National Grid's Isle of Grain LNG facility have made a real difference to a local community hall, with a major revamp of the building and grounds.

The 26 employees improved wheelchair access to Cross Park Community Hall in Allhallows with a new pea shingle drive, replastered and painted the main hall and supplied new noticeboards.

They also gave the facility's exteriors a makeover by cleaning the wall and benches, resetting block

paving, and pruning and planting the garden.

Event organiser Scott Atkinson, a training team leader at Grain LNG, said: "It was fantastic for the team to make a difference and make this facility more attractive and accessible for the local community."

Commissioned as an LNG import facility in 2005, Grain LNG can now receive and process up to 20% of gas used in the UK.



### COMMITTED TO THE LIVING WAGE

National Grid has been accredited by the Living Wage Foundation (LWF) following our pledge that all those who work on our behalf will be paid at least the Living Wage (£7.85), a higher figure than the official National Minimum Wage. All National Grid employees are already paid above the Living Wage, and since September, so have all apprentices, interns and graduates. John Pettigrew, executive director at National Grid, said: "As a responsible business, we believe that everyone should be appropriately rewarded for the vital work we do to safely and reliably connect people to the energy they use."

### It's a promise

National Grid has reinforced its commitment to an inclusive and diverse workforce by signing up to the government's Disability Confident Pledge.

The company's pledge comes at a time when it is also expanding its Employability – Let's Work Together – programme to partner special schools and colleges in providing internships to those with additional learning needs.

National Grid has four schemes operating across the UK, with 70% of interns going on to secure paid employment. Chief executive Steve Holliday said: "We are all different. It's important we celebrate those differences and create opportunities for individuals and teams to work together."

Since the launch of the government's Disability Confident campaign, the number of disabled people in work has increased by 350,000 to 3.2 million.

# LASTWORD

Your chance to enter two great competitions



Get in Gridline!

It couldn't be easier.  
Call 01926 656325 or email  
gridline@nationalgrid.com



## GAULD'S GOLDEN MOMENT IN TIME

John Gauld won a £150 John Lewis shopping spree with this stunning shot that summed up the 'Winter's Coming' theme near his home in Poynton, Cheshire. He captured the perfectly still November morning, the first frost of winter on the towpath and the golden leaves still on the trees during a morning stroll. John said: "It was such a beautiful morning for a walk. November sunshine and not a breath of wind and I had my camera with me. Luckily I was in the right place at the right time and near home. I never usually win competitions so this is a lovely surprise."

## YOUR TURN TO WIN! A £150 SPREE

After all the Christmas activity, what better way to ease into the new year than with a spot of retail therapy.

We've got £150 worth of John Lewis vouchers to give away to the grantor who grabs the best picture on the themes of 'winter wonderland' or 'first signs of spring'.

You can spend them on that present you never got or a healthy meal from Waitrose.

Either way, send your high resolution shot to [gridline@summersault.co.uk](mailto:gridline@summersault.co.uk) before 18 January 2016 to be in with a shot of winning.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THESE LUCKY GRANTORS WHO WON £50 LOVE TO SHOP VOUCHERS FOR RESPONDING WITHIN 28 DAYS TO THE GAS GRANTOR LETTER 2015 PROCESS.

Mr and Mrs Forsyth, Greater Manchester; Mr D Fan, Cambridgeshire; Mr T Frampton, Ilchester, Somerset; Mr D Freeman, Cotehill, Cumbria; Mr K Fletcher, Perth, Scotland; Mrs H Evans, Wolseley Bridge, Staffs; Mrs J Fleet, Slapton, Devon; Mrs and Mrs S Bradley, Quebec, Durham; Mr J Abbott, Upholland, Lancs; Mr K Fraser, Newburgh, Fife; Mr M James, Doynton, Gloucs.

## WIN! A LUXURY SPA BREAK

Are Christmas and New Year taking their toll? Escape the stress and washing up with a one night spa and leisure break for two at a choice of 35 luxury hotels around the UK. The package includes a night in a stylish room as well as spa access and breakfast.

Anne Roberts, from Denbigh in North Wales, won a National Parks break in the last edition.

To follow her and relax your way into 2016 in style, simply answer this question.

How many people make up The Royal Parks' core team?

Email your answer, name and contact details to [gridline@summersault.co.uk](mailto:gridline@summersault.co.uk)

Alternatively send it to Summersault Gridline Luxury Break Competition, Victoria Court, 8 Dormer Place, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5AE.

Closing date for entries is 18 January 2016.



**COMPETITION TERMS AND CONDITIONS: LUXURY BREAK:** The winner will be the first entrant selected at random who correctly identifies the answer (to be featured in the next edition) and who is a National Grid grantor at the time of the draw. The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Gridline reserves the right to change the prize without prior notice. The prize is not transferable and cannot be exchanged for cash. Closing date is 18 January 2016. **PHOTO:** The winning image will be the one judged to be the most visually appealing, original and relevant to the theme and will feature in the next edition. The winner must be a National Grid grantor. The editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Gridline reserves the right to change the prize without prior notice. The prize is not transferable and cannot be exchanged for cash. The closing date is 18 January 2016.

nationalgrid