

# GRIDLINE

*The magazine for landowners*

*Autumn 2017*

## Inside

The pub landlord ripping up the 'last orders' rule book

**Horse therapy: 'Mumbo jumbo' or a mental health revolution?**

The drones reaching the lines that the helicopter can't

**WIN Your own weather station or experiences with a difference**

## The eternal harvest

We cut a path beneath Rachel Benson's self-sustaining forest canopy and find the secret to the good life



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 with gas and electricity equipment installed on their land. Your local contacts are listed below.

### ELECTRICITY AND GAS

» Land teams – all regions 0800 389 5113

### ELECTRICITY WAYLEAVE PAYMENTS

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

### ELECTRICITY EASEMENT ENQUIRIES

» Email [box.electricityeasements@nationalgrid.com](mailto:box.electricityeasements@nationalgrid.com)

### 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 & Business Support, National Grid House, Warwick Technology Park, Gallows Hill, Warwick, Warwickshire CV34 6DA. Or email [ld.customercomments@nationalgrid.com](mailto:ld.customercomments@nationalgrid.com)

Gridline is produced by

**SONDER**

Victoria Court, 8 Dormer Place,  
Leamington Spa, Warwickshire  
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*Grantor Philippa Stanley (right) is using horses to break down the taboos of mental health in a move she says will become the norm in the NHS within the next decade*

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# Welcome



**Whenever the Gridline editorial team sit down to discuss possible ideas for the next edition, we're always looking for the quirky and unusual.**

So when we discovered a pub landlord on the list of electricity grantors, our first thought was 'it's a tough job, but someone's got to do it'. Although, on the day we met Amer Bashlawi, no alcohol passed our lips.

Honest.

His story of how he revitalised his business epitomises the diversity of National Grid's grantors and their willingness to be a meaningful and vital part of the communities they serve.

We also met up with Rachel Benson whose decade-long crusade to create a multi-tiered forest garden is now literally bearing fruit. So much so that her 'good life' dream is now providing tonnes of produce, not just for her and her farmer husband but also for the local community.

It's always refreshing to see how landowners move with the times and innovate to ensure their business moves forward and National Grid is no exception, as trials of our new overhead line inspection drone show.

The new eye in the sky is definitely not an alternative to our helicopter – which will continue to do the vast majority of the work of making sure lines are safe – but it shows that National Grid will always explore every avenue to tailor our service to the people we rely on to ensure safe, reliable energy to the nation's homes and businesses.

Like our grantors, we are proud of the role we play in the communities we serve. Take a look at how we're making a difference on pages 4 and 5.

I hope you enjoy the read.

*Dawn*

**Dawn McCarroll**  
Editor, Gridline

## ONE-MINUTE INTERVIEW

Amanda May, land and acquisitions manager

### BACKGROUND

I joined the team in July. I'm a chartered engineer and have a background in electrical design and asset management.



### CURRENT FOCUS

Meeting the team, and listening to what works well and what frustrates people.

**LEISURE TIME** Running helps me unwind and reflect on problems that need solving.

### FAVOURITE FICTIONAL HERO

Margaret Hale in *North and South* by Elizabeth Gaskell really challenged stereotypes about the role of women in the 19th century.

### IF YOU COULD GO BACK IN TIME

Victorian England. The pace of change was huge, making it a really exciting time in history.

### FAVOURITE HOLIDAY

The Scottish Highlands for the beauty and peacefulness of the mountains.

### IDEAL DINNER GUEST

Henry VIII. I really enjoyed *Wolf Hall* by Hilary Mantel and I'd ask him if he really wrote *Greensleeves*.



**FAVOURITE FILM** *Sleepless in Seattle* for its feel-good factor.

### GREATEST EXTRAVAGANCE

When I was young it was difficult to find shoes to fit my feet, but I'm slowly building up a collection now.

### TREASURED POSSESSION

My grandmother's wedding ring.

## Charity partner

National Grid employees will be fundraising for dementia and raising awareness of the condition after Alzheimer's Society was named as the company's charity partner. Dementia costs the UK £26.3 billion a year, enough to pay the annual energy bills of every household in the country. Teams nationwide will join the fundraising drive for the care and research charity to help improve the quality of life for people with the condition and their carers.



Working in partnership with

**nationalgrid**

# NEWSLINE

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



## A day out with derrick

Schoolchildren took to the river to learn about safety, engineering and wildlife.

Year 6 students from a school in Deeside, north Wales, were joined by volunteers from the Quay Watermen's Association, which conserves Connah's Quay Dock and raises awareness about its maritime heritage.

The pupils learnt how cranes and derricks are used to move cargo and then put their science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills into action by building bridges using a range of materials.

The Goffryn school students also found out about the life cycle of the common tern,

which migrates from Africa to feed on the Dee, and took a river trip to discover more about the engineering of the many bridges.

"We want children to enjoy the river but also learn how dangerous it can be if they don't take care," said chair of the Quay Watermen's Association Paula Ellis.

"Besides the safety message, it was a way of showing that science is fun," said Glyn Sibson, project manager for the new Flintshire Bridge converter station across the river, part of a £1-million Western Link project to bring renewable energy from Scotland to England and Wales.

# Green army go to work

An ambitious programme of restoration and regeneration is taking place at a National Grid environmental education centre... with help from an army of volunteers.

The charity that operates the West Boldon Lodge Tyneside site for National Grid, Groundwork South Tyneside & Newcastle, has joined forces with IT company Sage to deliver volunteer action days to maintain and improve the nature site.

The grounds include 13 hectares of precious habitats, including open water, wet and dry meadows, grassland, woodland, coppiced willow areas and scrub woodland.

Groundwork delivers education programmes at the centre to schools, adults and families, as well as hosting community events and supporting a range of volunteers.

More than 350 Sage employees and Groundwork staff combined to get a huge amount of work done over just a few weeks.

The site's 2.5km of footpaths were resurfaced with wood chippings and more than 200 native trees planted in the woodlands. Groundwork is gradually naturalising the woods with a view to increasing biodiversity, having planted 1,000 trees and 12,000 bulbs in the past five years.

The volunteers built five new bug hotels, which will be used for educational purposes, and added a



new sensory footpath, storybook seat, wooden drum kit and fairy village. Invasive reeds have also been removed from an ancient ridge and furrow meadow, home to rare species including orchids and broad-leaved helleborine.

## Hair-raising fun

Youngsters enjoyed a hair-raising visit from a bunch of mad scientists during a special class on electricity.

National Grid is currently working on an overhead power line in the vicinity and organised the show to teach children about some interesting aspects of the science behind electricity.

The children from Broad Oak Primary School in East Didsbury near Manchester learned about static electricity by using a metal ball to show how static could make their hair stand on end.



They also had fun with a Van de Graaff generator to create electrostatic energy needed for the experiment.

Ryan Hatcher, National Grid project manager, said: "It was a fantastic opportunity to show the children the importance of the work we are doing locally to replace equipment with 30 new pylons to keep them working efficiently."

## A bright (yellow) idea to keep you safe



A vivid yellow plastic protection slab developed by National Grid will help keep farm and construction workers safe when working near gas transmission pipelines.

Traditionally, concrete slabs have been buried below ground to protect pipes from being hit during activities such as digging or dredging.

Made from high-grade polyethylene plastic, the new slabs are highly visible, less expensive and easier and faster to install. After installing the slabs at 30 sites, the business has saved £471,000.

"Unlike concrete slabs, they don't need to be transported across a grantor's land by heavy machinery to install," said National Grid's Paul Ogden, senior engineer, civil assets. "They're useful in shallow ditches, protecting pipelines against machine operators who may be clearing these areas, providing an early visual warning of their presence to reduce the chance of accidents."

# THE *fruitful* FOREST

.....  
RACHEL BENSON HAS SPENT A DECADE  
CREATING A FOREST GARDEN THAT  
PROVIDES TONNES OF EDIBLE PRODUCE  
FOR HER AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY  
.....

Imagine a plot of land that needs no watering, digging or feeding, little or no weeding, that can be left to itself for weeks on end but provides an all-year-round harvest of fruits, nuts, berries and edible leaves.

Too good to be true? Not in the case of Rachel Benson and her partner, Martin Baker, who have turned a two-acre field at Old Sleningford Farm, just outside Ripon in North Yorkshire, into a self-sustainable, highly productive forest garden.

Negotiating the narrow North Yorkshire footpaths that penetrate the lush green growth is like wandering through an outdoor pantry of edible foods. Above head height the tree canopy is festooned with top fruit such as apple, plum, pear, cherry, apricot and peach, with the occasional climber such as hops or hardy kiwi. Lower down, soft fruits and nuts predominate, such as blackcurrants, Nepalese raspberries, Worcesterberries, gooseberries, hazelnuts and almonds. Below that are under-storeys of perennial vegetables, salad leaves and ground-covering herbs including comfrey, lemon balm, fennel, marjoram, sorrel, sweet rocket and mint.

### LOW-IMPACT LIFESTYLE

The couple also keep honeybees, chickens, Hebridean sheep and pigs on the 17-acre smallholding, which they have rented from grantor Tom Ramsden, the owner of Old Sleningford estate, since 2004.

“We were attracted by the idea of living a low-impact lifestyle, growing our own food and then sharing our ideas and inspiring others to do the same thing,” explained Rachel, who previously worked in learning and development for a high street bank.

Forest gardens mimic the layered composition of plant life in immature woodland, with a focus on species that are edible or useful. The multi-storey arrangement makes the most of every available space, with perennial and self-seeding plants providing ground cover and bushes, shrubs and trees above.

Minimal maintenance is necessary once they are established because the ground is permanently covered. And although the primary focus is food, they



### IT'S A FACT

- ▶ One of the world's oldest forms of land use, forest gardens developed as people identified useful tree and vine species in the environment, protected and improved them, and eliminated undesirable species.
- ▶ Robert Hart pioneered forest gardens in the UK in the 1960s, adopting African ideas for his orchard in Shropshire. He claimed 95% of his diet was raw food from the plot.
- ▶ The amount of sunlight reaching lower layers is a limiting factor in temperate climates, but up to 13 layers are possible in tropical regions.
- ▶ There are more than 20,000 species of edible plants on the planet, but humans only use around 20 species to provide 90% of our food.
- ▶ The UK's 60 or so forest gardens range in size from tiny back gardens up to about 2.5 acres.

can also be a resource for medicines, plant dyes and woodcrafts.

Started in 2004, the couple's forest garden is now approaching maturity, with more than 300 fruit trees alone.

The project began with a blank canvas in a field, adjoining woodland, that had been set aside and previously cut for grass. The area was planted in phases over five years.

“It was hard work initially,” said Rachel: “Nature will always want to do its own thing, so you have to focus on the plants you want to grow.”

A windbreak was planted on the exposed side and rabbit and deer-proof fencing erected around the plot. Pigs were then brought in to root out deep-set weeds, the ground was mulched with cardboard, and fermented cattle fodder, manure, compost and straw used to exclude light and prevent the return of weeds.

### COMPANION PLANTS

The pioneering British forest garden exponent, Robert Hart, identified seven layers of planting; from the canopy layer to smaller fruit and nut trees; shrubs; a herbaceous layer of perennial vegetables and herbs; followed by layers of ground cover, climbers and tubers in the ground.

“We decided to focus on three to four layers, omitting the tall canopy because it would shade out other trees and plants and reduce output, and mixing shady areas with glades and open areas to maximise plant diversity,” said Rachel.

“The ground-covering plants like wild strawberries and sorrel, which initially covered the site, diminished as the canopy developed. We have never been very keen on below-ground planting because it disturbs the soil.”

Rachel says her personal approach is to leave things as much as possible to nature's inherent system of biological checks and balances.

The plot includes ‘companion plants’, which in addition to their crop carry out other functions. These plants include nitrogen fixers, like comfrey and sorrel, >>>



## Working with nature



which help fertilise the ground, as well as others with deeper roots that tap mineral sources in the subsoil and make them available to other plants.

The complex biodiversity of a forest garden attracts a great variety of insect species – including beneficial insects such as ladybirds that prey on pests.

Even the ever-encroaching nettles are put to good use, either chopped and dropped to re-fertilise the soil, or made into soup or cordial.

Rachel prunes only to remove disease or where plants stray on to the network of paths. The most time-consuming activity is harvesting, with the main soft fruit picking season running from May to late summer, followed by top fruit in the autumn.

### VITAL MAINTENANCE

By 2009 the forest garden was yielding so much produce that Rachel decided to stop new plantings, instead creating an open wildflower area, with a pond and bog garden that attract pollinators like bees that are needed to fertilise the fruits and other plants.

“There’s more than enough food to go round and the area just hums with insects and the chatter of birds,” she enthused. Rachel has installed a wooden hut, which she uses as a retreat where she can enjoy the natural surroundings and observe the wildlife.

In 2010 Rachel started a new venture – Old Sleningford Preserves – to utilise some of the surplus

produce, creating delicious jams, chutneys, relishes and apple juice.

“We couldn’t physically eat everything we produced and I hate to see good food go to waste,” she said. “On a good picking day, for example, we can collect 100 kilos of blackcurrants.”

The couple deliver to around 20 customers within a seven-mile radius on their trusty tandem and trailer. Every month people receive something savoury, something sweet and something to drink. The order varies according to the season and depending on which crops have done well.

Workdays each month enable volunteers to learn about forest gardens and help with vital maintenance work and harvesting. The couple also host courses that complement their approach, including pig keeping, sausage making, and curing and smoking meat.

“First and foremost, the forest garden is a hobby, and selling the preserves and holding courses help pay for it,” stressed Rachel. “I’m not interested in expanding the business by hosting pick-your-own or running a box scheme because it would then become a job and bring extra pressures.

“I grow and pick the fruit, walk it the few yards from garden to kitchen, make it into a preserve and hand it over to the person who will eat it. You can’t get less food miles than that – if I sold it to a shop, that connection would be lost.”



### NATURALLY BETTER?

Forest gardens follow the permaculture principle of working with nature, eschewing the use of fertilisers and pesticides or other inputs of chemicals or energy.

They avoid the use of energy-intensive methods of modern industrial agriculture, which are based on consuming finite fossil fuels such as oil that when burnt, contribute to climate change.

Forest gardens are also an example of a polyculture;

a mixed species of plant that is characteristic of the natural environment, as opposed to a monoculture, where single crops are grown intensively on a large scale to maximise yield at a lower cost.

With so many different species of plant, the ecosystem of forest gardens is thought to be more resilient to disturbances, such as climate change, than agricultural systems based on one species.





## DEMONSTRATE THE CONTRAST

Rachel and Martin enjoy an excellent relationship with their landlord, Tom Ramsden, who lives close by in Old Sleningford Hall and who farms 3,000 acres in the vicinity.

“Tom is a traditional arable and dairy farmer but he has embraced what we are doing here and promotes the idea of forest gardens to other landowners who have a scrap of marginal land available,” said Rachel.

From time to time Tom opens his gardens to the public and brings groups round the forest garden to demonstrate the contrast between formal planting in straight lines and a garden designed for food.

“Some people say forest gardens look too difficult to harvest or to make money from, but others get the point straightaway that the value of somewhere like this cannot be measured in money alone,” said Rachel.

“For us, it’s all about creating a beautiful, biodiversity-rich habitat where we can also forage for our own food. What could be better than that?”

(Clockwise from top left) produce is delivered by trusty tandem; the wildflower area; Rachel’s forest garden retreat; delicious jams from summer fruit; Rachel and Martin’s Hebridean sheep; and the blackcurrant crop



**For more information about the forest garden, volunteering opportunities or courses go to [oldsleningford.co.uk](http://oldsleningford.co.uk)**

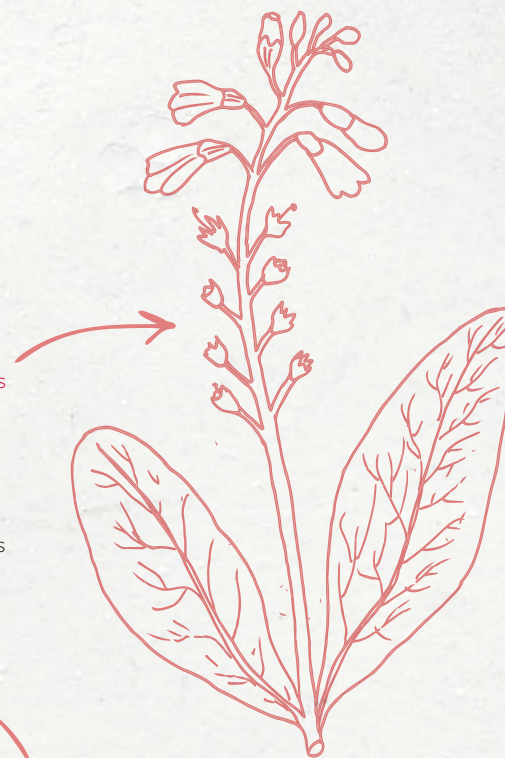
## STAR PERFORMERS

### COMFREY

Deep-rooting, it scavenges nutrients including potassium from deep in the soil and makes them available to other plants.

### PLUM BELLE DE LOUVAIN

A large purple culinary plum, it lacks enough juice to be an eating plum but makes excellent jam, retaining the fruit’s original texture well.



### NEPALESE RASPBERRIES

Producing raspberry-like fruit, this non-thorny creeper tolerates quite dense shade and is a great nectar plant for beneficial insects, especially honeybees, as well as being useful as ground cover.



### SZECHUAN PEPPERS

A hardy perennial that grows as a thorny bush, its pink peppercorns ripen in autumn and, after drying, carry a punchy, lemony flavour and an incredible aroma.

### WINEBERRY

Its small white flowers surrounded by bristly red sepals appear in dense clusters in summer followed by shiny, orange-red berries with a strong raspberry flavour.

### WILD ANGELICA

A fast-growing, tall, ground-cover biennial plant, its flowers attract bees, butterflies and beneficial insects such as ladybirds, and it has edible leaves, stems and roots. Once used as a preventative against scurvy.

### SIBERIAN PURSLANE

A perennial salad plant, low-growing with a green leaf, it is shade-tolerant and self-seeds. The young pods it produces can be eaten raw or cooked and have a mild taste.



# PILOT PROJECT

FLYING A REMOTE-CONTROLLED CAMERA SOUNDS LIKE FUN, BUT DRONE TECHNOLOGY IS BIG BUSINESS. GRIDLINE VISITED THE PILOTS MAKING NATIONAL GRID'S OVERHEAD LINE WORK EVEN SAFER

Call it what you will, but it's definitely the kind of gadget, gizmo or boy's toy that appeals to the big kid in all of us.

Yet when Mark Simmons and Matt Ward pull on their aviator sunglasses and get ready for lift-off, the serious business of safety is the only thing on their minds.

They are part of a small team of highly skilled commercial drone pilots keeping a close eye on technology and innovation to ensure the 4,500 miles of high-voltage overhead power lines and substations in England and Wales are operating safely and efficiently.

The team of nine, led by overhead line (OHL) condition monitoring team leader Mark Simmons, have been undergoing rigorous Civil Aviation Authority training, ready for the deployment of two small and one larger drone that are due to take to the skies in late autumn.

## DEVELOPING RAPIDLY

National Grid is already analysing data from outsourced drones that have been operating mainly in built-up areas difficult to reach by a helicopter, which monitors four pylons every hour instead of the drone's four a day.

"Research into drone technology and capability is still in its infancy, so the helicopter is the most efficient way of checking the lines and towers," he said. "But it's an area that's developing so rapidly it would be short-sighted of us not to investigate how we can use it to look after our grantors and the assets on their land."

The team currently practise with a small training drone no heavier than six or seven bags of sugar. Fitted with a gimbal to house the sensor equipment, it feeds video images back to a tablet device held by a support pilot and they are then sent back to the office for analysis by data analyst technician Matt.



If an essential part of the pylon or line looks to be nearing the end of its life, has a 'hotspot', is suffering wear and tear or is in danger of interference from vegetation, the details are added to a database for a team of engineers to action.

In that regard, the outcome is no different from the observer reports generated from helicopter patrols, but it's the flexibility of the new technology – the helicopter can only cover 75% of the network – that makes it a compelling alternative.

Matt, who used to fly radio-controlled choppers as a hobby, said: "Previously, where the helicopters couldn't fly, we'd send engineers out to grantors' land to climb the pylons and then report back. In some cases, the drone can avoid the need for that and is less invasive."

"It's definitely not a replacement, but it's another supplementary tool in our box in situations where the helicopter just can't get close enough."

The grandly named Electricity Transmission



Matt (left) and Mark test the drone and software at the National Grid Training Centre at Eakring in Nottinghamshire



Unmanned Aerial Systems team – Mark would like to shorten it – must give six weeks’ notice to National Grid’s Land and Development department, who in turn notify landowners in advance of any monitoring or work.

**STRICT LEGISLATION**

Research into the effectiveness of drones has been ongoing at National Grid’s Warwick HQ since 2014, and once Civil Aviation Authority is granted, there will be four units covering the north, south, overhead line delivery and substations delivery.

A new – and at 15kg, five times heavier – drone capable of housing more advanced optical sensors will be unveiled later this year and its extra weight and advanced GPS system will mean it can hover within centimetres of its target, regardless of heavy wind. But it isn’t cheap to run, with each flight costing around £16,000 once manpower and battery costs are added.

Mark said: “We’re currently not talking about a great volume of work with the drones. But in 10 years we’ll see miniaturisation alongside huge advances in the sensors that are available to give greater accuracy.

“We are currently evaluating LIDAR, laser technology that can scan vegetation below pylons, identify by name the trees growing there and tell us their growth rates. The technology coming down the track is incredible, so we must stay a step ahead.”

Strict legislation covers the data gathered from drones, which can only be used where the pilot – with a second pilot as backup – has clear line of sight to ensure the safety of people and livestock below.

Mark said: “That’s what it’s all about, safety for grantors and our engineers and the ongoing efficiency of the assets that keep power running to homes and businesses. It might look like fun and a bit of a boy’s toy – and it is – but it’s also a serious business.”

# HORSE POWER

.....  
A MORE HOLISTIC, GREEN APPROACH TO MENTAL  
HEALTH IS ON THE HORIZON. MEET THE GRANTOR  
BLAZING A THERAPY TRAIL  
.....

**G**aze deep into a horse's eyes and there's something other-worldly about the whole experience... a little like staring hypnotically into your own soul.

To the layman, there's something revelatory about being in a situation where a beast as powerful as it is gentle forms a near spiritual bond with the human of the herd.

Cynics might dismiss the notion as psychobabble, but it's a real primal connection that has been the energetic driving force at the heart of grantor Philippa Stanley's new venture for the past three years. And if Gridline's visit to her 26-acre therapy centre in Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, is anything to go by, it works.

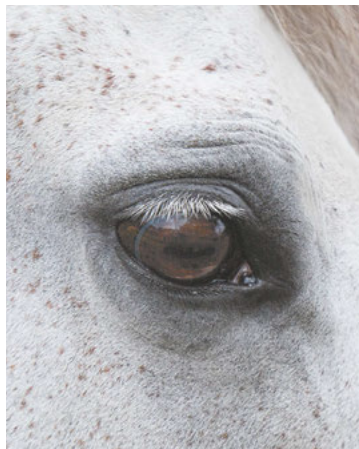
The fun-loving grandmother had always been a certified life and industry coach with a passion for horses since childhood, so when she met equine psychotherapist Lilwen Selina Joynson, the lure of mixing business with pleasure was too strong to ignore.

"I'd been working with corporate clients, focusing on relationships and teambuilding in the workplace and looking at how different levels of energy can lead to a glass half-full view, anger, inner conflict and victim mentality," said Philippa.

"I was urging clients to reframe situations, so if it rains when you plan a barbecue and you're forced to cook the food inside, change your mindset to look at the positives of that. It works well, and with horses you can take it to another level."

## GREEN PRESCRIPTIONS

Philippa eschews stuffy counselling rooms for her outdoor 'office', a ménage where her horses' every posture, gesture and expression – the result of 50 million years of evolution and ability to tune into and mirror our emotions – are minutely monitored for clues that could reveal their 'significant human's'



psychological state of mind. Philippa, whose name means 'lover of horses' in ancient Greek, insists that within the next decade, growing awareness of mental health issues will spark a surge in 'green prescriptions' and a more holistic approach than the traditional pill-taking philosophy. Her vision is to create resilience by being proactive with emotional wellbeing long before it becomes a mental health issue.

Her business partner and mum-of-three, Lilwen, added: "If you are medicating, you are simply holding down the individual's symptoms, but when we use the horses, we can have the whole family in the ménage



Lilwen (left) and Philippa say clients respond better in the open than they do in a cramped counselling room



and see how they all interact. For too long the NHS has been popping people full of drugs to deal with anxiety and depression, but it doesn't provide a long-term solution. Equine therapy is expensive in comparison, but its long-term benefits offer a real return on investment and the medical fraternity is starting to see that."

At around £250 per session, and 10 sessions the recommended number, it's not cheap, but Lilwen has brought results to people unable to leave their home or drive their car because they are so debilitated by anxiety and the dark cloud that often follows it.

Sally Boyton (right) isn't in that category. She's been overcoming hurdles while developing her online wellbeing business in a small Pembrokeshire community and is at Philippa's equestrian centre for a session with mares Foxy and Inky.

Lilwen and Philippa watch from a distance as a video captures the interactions between the horses and people as they take on apparently mundane tasks, the human responses to which are minutely dissected later



in the search for those 'light bulb moments' that could change someone's life.

### DICTATORIAL COLLEAGUE

Ian Morgan, who has been struggling with a dictatorial colleague who repeatedly undermines and holds him back, is asked to lead Inky in a figure of eight to a cone at the other end of the ménage, and the horse follows. He is triumphant.

"Now do it without touching or talking to her," urged Philippa. The horse stands stock-still and is going nowhere. He walks halfway and Inky remains, motionless. Ian walks to the first cone and then returns to cajole the mare. Still nothing. What happens next is small in the cosmic scheme of things but is incredible for Ian, who walks to the final cone regardless, then turns with a beaming smile. He shouted: "I've got here on my own and no one could hold me back."

Philippa said: "Because horses are herd animals, they have to be aware of imminent threats and that perception makes them ideal partners to help us





recognise our emotions. The horse responds to what we feel deep within, which is a fascinating thing to watch in others but such an incredibly powerful emotional experience to receive yourself.

“There will always be people who say it’s mumbo jumbo, but once they’ve experienced it, even the most cynical of them feel an instant and deep connection. They then find that other revelations come to them as the days go by and they can deal more effectively with the situations that were once troubling them.”



For more information go to [pstanleyassociates.com/horse-guided-learning/](http://pstanleyassociates.com/horse-guided-learning/)

### THE OUTCOME

**Sally Boyton reveals how she’s been struggling to turn the friendly chat of potential clients into actual business, as she tentatively accepts Inky’s lead rope.**

#### BEFORE

“I’m 41 but don’t look it, so I get treated differently by clients who look on me as a friend rather than a business owner. That then leads to trouble with decision-making, anxiety, stress and a lack of confidence. Because this area is so small and rural, I know many of my potential clients, so there’s a tendency to be more informal with them. I love animals but I’m not horsey, so this is all a bit weird.”

#### AFTER

“After the session I woke up with a burning energy to follow up calls where people said they were interested but nothing more. Successfully leading the horse around the cones by being more assertive translated into my work life. The day after, I called a lead I’d been chasing for months, who said she was interested but still busy. I took a bolder stance and convinced her that joining my hub would mean her being less busy with her marketing. She joined. Then I chased another lead and left a more forceful message that we needed to speak. She called back and became client number two. I feel more connected with the passion for what I am developing and have an energy to engage with my leads. I wasn’t expecting to experience such a dramatic change in my psyche. It was a unique, spiritual experience and I’d go back for more.”



# HE'S NOT THE MESSIAH...

... HE'S A GRANTOR FROM  
NAZARETH BRINGING A  
SMALL RURAL COMMUNITY  
BACK TO LIFE



## Pub landlord

Look up the word ‘messiah’ and you’ll find the definition: ‘a leader regarded as the saviour of a particular country, group or cause’.

It’s a moniker laughed off by Amer Bashlawi, despite the fact he was born in Nazareth and is now landlord of The North Star pub, whose regulars gather daily at the bar like disciples to laud his arrival in their midst.

The 51-year-old father of two isn’t exactly your regular pub boss and modestly concedes he’s had to shatter a few stereotypes to get where he is today, but he’s never been one to do things by the book.

“In the late 80s, my brothers and I opened a restaurant offering the first Asian-European fusion menu when no one had seen anything like kangaroo or crocodile steak before. It went on to do really well and since then I’ve never been afraid to try something different,” he said.

### CRACKED IT

The hamlet of Thorney has been grateful for the grantor’s pioneering character since he took over its run-down and unloved boozery on a through road in the first vestiges of Buckinghamshire countryside, a few miles north of Heathrow airport.

The youngest of six children, he’d made a success of running restaurants and bars – usually with innovative twists like singing waiters or jazz sessions – in swish Kensington and Richmond, but as his family grew, his vision of the future did too.

Amer, who has a diploma in wines and spirits and trained with a leading off-licence business, said: “We put our two children through school and college and then decided we had to move deeper into London or get out of town. We came here and just fell in love with the place and saw the potential.”



### IN NUMBERS



28

years’ experience in the licensing industry before finding his true pub passion



17

feedback surveys carried out by Amer to find out what customers wanted

Looking at the pictures and listening to the locals, it’s hard to see why. The former farm labourers’ cottage, built in 1837, was the epitome of a pub dying on its feet, with dirty, sticky furnishings, boarded-up kitchens and an overgrown 100-foot-long garden.

Now, just four years after taking the reins with a 25-year lease, Amer feels ‘very relaxed’ for the first time in his career: “I get up each day, open up, have a coffee, feed the hens and ducks in the garden, chat with people and then get on with trying to make the pub the best it can be. If you can combine work with pleasure, then it’s not really work.

“It’s been a hard slog to get here and I’ve had to overcome 70s-type attitudes that landlords had to be big white blokes with tattoos. In my previous life, I didn’t have time to spend with friends. Now my customers are friends, so I think we’ve cracked it.”

The secret of his success is listening to his customers and the wider community and then acting on their feedback... a simple but often overlooked technique he says is critical to the survival of all grantors’ ventures.

“When we came here we knew we were going into the unknown, so we did our homework and looked at what we could bring to the area. We spoke to people in nearby Iver, did surveys and people told us what they





(Clockwise from main picture) Amer has a loyal coterie of regulars, most of whom travel miles to the pub; chef Pharatee prepares the lunchtime menu; thank you letters from local charities adorn the walls



For more information visit [northstariver.co.uk](http://northstariver.co.uk) or [facebook.com/northstariver](https://www.facebook.com/northstariver)

*"It was a risk coming here, but people bought into it because we gave them ownership at the outset"*

wanted. We gave it to them and haven't looked back."

The pub's semi-rural location meant it had to offer something different and that came in the shape of a mouthwatering Thai menu created daily by chef Pharatee Moolthongchun, the proof of which wafts through the pub to constantly challenge the very idea of 'just a quick pint'.

### HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

A drab selection of two or three lagers was augmented by craft ales and a guest beer, fixtures and fittings were given a makeover to create a retro-modern feel and a pool table and dartboard brought in to a side bar.

It's now a destination pub run by a tight-knit team of six at the heart of its community. A fundraising event for a five-year-old cancer patient saw almost 1,000 people fill the garden to raise £2,000 needed to take him to Disneyland. The event raised three times that.

At this point, larger-than-life regular of 20 years Mark Connors bursts in and pulls Amer into his chest

with a paternal arm. He beamed: "This man has saved this place. He's a great bloke who does all the community stuff, not because it's good for business but because it's the right thing to do."

Halloween, Christmas, music and DJ sets, and a now-traditional summer festival – any excuse to get people together – make The North Star a magnet for families, tradesmen and even people who need an alternative delivery address for a parcel. As we leave, a cavalcade of vintage cars arrives, the monthly get-together of the Head Gas Gits Hot Rod Club.

"My son and daughter have shown me how powerful social media can be," said Amer: "But we don't lead the conversation. People tell us what they want and we offer it. It was a risk coming here, but people bought into it because we gave them ownership at the outset."

"Now, when I hear people whisper 'he's OK', I know I made the right decision, but to quote the Monty Python line from Life of Brian: 'I'm definitely not the messiah, I'm just a pub landlord doing his best'."





# A TIME TO SHINE

FROM DERELICTION TO A GLITTERING FUTURE - THE REMARKABLE STORY OF ONE FAMILY'S DETERMINATION TO BRING THEIR CORNISH MANSION BACK TO LIFE

At the end of a two-mile private drive that meanders through ancient woodland, Boconnoc House is immaculate, commanding stunning views across a valley to wooded hills and a lake beyond.

But this hidden 750-year-old gem near Lostwithiel in the heart of Cornwall's largest park wasn't always the idyllic country mansion it is today.

In 1995, when Anthony and Elizabeth Fortescue took over the house, it had been a dilapidated shell for nearly 40 years and a perfect brooding setting for the 70s version of Poldark. Rain dripped down through the rooms from a leaking roof, there was green weed in the library and whole floors were missing.



"Before we were married, Anthony drove me here and we looked down at the house which stood forlorn and empty," said Elizabeth, whose husband died two years ago. "Since the age of 16 he'd been determined that one day it would shine again with light."

## DEMOLITION CONSIDERED

Built in 1250, the house was purchased in 1717 by Thomas Pitt, founder of the great political dynasty. It has been home to the Fortescue family since 1864 when it passed to Anthony's great-great-grandfather.

During the Second World War the estate was occupied by American troops preparing for D-Day and although the family moved back after the war, the house never recovered.

Captain Desmond Fortescue, Anthony's father, chose to live elsewhere on the estate when he inherited in the 60s. Demolition of the house was considered and one wing was taken down in 1971.

In 2000 Anthony threw himself into a 12-year restoration of Boconnoc, supported by Elizabeth and their daughters, Clare and Sarah. Three barns on the estate were developed and sold to raise cash, with work halted twice during the project while extra funds were raised by holding a steam fair and other events.

"We had excellent local craftsmen who seemed to pop up whenever we were in need of a particular expertise," said Elizabeth. "And the project seemed to grip the public imagination, with people returning year after year to see the progress."

The entire slate roof was replaced and extensive work undertaken on the principal rooms, including the Grand Palladian-style staircase and its murals, influenced by the neoclassical architect Sir John Soane.



For more information:  
[boconnoc.com](http://boconnoc.com)

(Clockwise from top left) Boconnoc House and its striking 14th-century church; the beautifully restored painted staircase, which had suffered extensive damage during years of neglect; the 123ft-high obelisk erected in 1771 to honour the memory of benefactor Sir Richard Lyttelton; Angharad Rees as Demelza with Robin Ellis as Ross Poldark

*"People said the house was beyond repair but, as custodians, you feel a duty to preserve it for future generations"*

Anthony also reinstated the parkland bowl in front of the house as pasture, recreated the tree planting of the 18th and 19th centuries, and extended the medieval deer park. In 2012 the project earned two prestigious restoration awards. "It was a wonderful accolade for Anthony, whose vision, optimism and drive made it all happen," said Elizabeth.

The post-war decline of Boconnoc had been all the more poignant considering its distinguished history. The house acted as the headquarters for King Charles 1 for a time during the Civil War and later it was lived in by the families of three prime ministers – William Pitt the Elder, Pitt the Younger and the man who abolished the slave trade in 1807, Lord William Grenville.

### LUXURIANT FEEL

The estate is still run by the family. Clare looks after the estate's marketing and public relations while interior designer Sarah has given the house and holiday cottages a colourful and luxuriant feel.

Today the house pays for itself with weddings, corporate days, parties and other events, including an annual spring flower show, steam fair, music recitals and a motorsport carnival. Boconnoc hosts weddings most weekends from April to May: "They are happy occasions and it's great to see the house filled with people and laughter," said Elizabeth.



### GLITTERING CONNECTION

Boconnoc was purchased by Thomas Pitt in 1717 with the sale proceeds of the Pitt Diamond to Philippe II of France for £135,000. Thomas, a former governor of Madras, bought the 426 carat diamond in 1701 from an Indian merchant and it was later cut into a 140 carat cushion-shaped diamond.

In later years the Regent diamond (as it was also known) adorned the crown of Louis XV and a hat worn by Marie Antoinette and was incorporated into Napoleon Bonaparte's sword. Now displayed in the Louvre in Paris, it is worth an estimated £48 million.

TV series and films shot here include the 1993 version of *The Three Musketeers*.

"People said the house was beyond repair but, as custodians, you feel a duty to preserve historic properties like this for future generations," said Elizabeth.

Revitalised for the modern era, this gem of a property is well and truly shining once again.



# LASTWORD



Tell us your story

We love to celebrate National Grid grantors' diversity in Gridline, so if you'd like to feature, email [gridline@nationalgrid.com](mailto:gridline@nationalgrid.com)

Your chance to win three great prizes



## TAKE A PEEK TO WIN A PERSONALISED WEATHER STATION

Take the guesswork out of planning your day with an indoor weather station.

The Netamo Weather Station, which links to most smartphones, lets you accurately measure indoor and outdoor temperatures, relative humidity, sound level and air quality, and sends alerts when you need to ventilate

your home. It also allows users to check outdoor pollution levels as well as providing detailed seven-day weather forecasts.

A series of simple graphs allow users to observe nearby cycles and forecast variations and provides a more accurate idea of the weather environment over time.

Grantor Heather Ross, from Coleshill near Birmingham, won the 'a grantor's life is never dull' photo competition with this curious shot.

To have a chance of winning the weather station, send a high-resolution shot on the theme of 'love the land' to [gridline@madebysonder.com](mailto:gridline@madebysonder.com) – closing date 2 November 2017.

## JUST FOR FUN: SUDOKU

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.

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## TWO TRIPS WITH A DIFFERENCE

Two couples can take their pick from more than 500 fantastic UK short breaks, adventure days, pamper days or dining out experiences in this edition's Gridline competition.

Whether bungee jumping, afternoon tea, a gourmet meal or a lazy getaway is your thing, there are two treats to give away to the grantors who correctly answer the question below.

**Q How many fruit trees does Rachel Benson have in her forest garden?**

Email your answer, name and contact details to [gridline@madebysonder.com](mailto:gridline@madebysonder.com) or send to Sonder Getaway competition, Victoria Court, 8 Dormer Place, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire CV32 5AE. Closing date is 2 November 2017

**COMPETITION TERMS AND CONDITIONS TWO TRIPS** The winners will be the first entrants selected at random who correctly identify the answer and who are National Grid grantors 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 2 November 2017. **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 2 November 2017.

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