

Special Feature

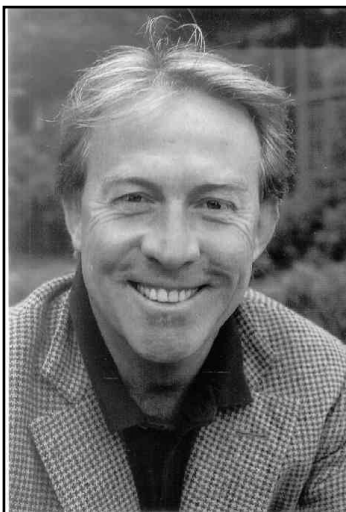
Roddy Llewellyn

Unearthly guidance

In 1986 I went to a clairvoyant in London. A previous visit had resulted in some extraordinary revelations, so I couldn't wait for a second instalment. As the cards were laid out on the table by those elegant, long fingers topped with pristine painted nails, she started to tell me about how the rest of my life was to unfurl.

At the time Tania and I and our three young daughters aged five, three and a few months had recently moved to the country from London. We had always planned to bring the children up in the country, as we had been. After all, I was in a position to be able to continue my career in horticulture away from the city. We had bought a delightful house in a village in north Oxfordshire in the knowledge that the girls could grow up able to see the stars and sunsets, breathe fresh air, have their own little gardens and mess about getting gloriously muddy on the river bank.

The tarot cards were now spread all over the table and, of all the predictions, the one that struck me as being the most unlikely was the fact that we would, in the near future, move to a place beginning with 'L'. I said nothing but felt sure she had made some sort of mistake because we were happily ensconced



where we were. As things turned out, she proved herself to be right. Here we are still in Leafield where we have been living happily since 1995.

Moves afoot

It all happened like this. Children have a horrible habit of growing up and the day dawned when we found ourselves waving them off to school on the bus to Oxford, a long and circuitous route that

took about one-and-a-half hours each way. After a while this daily journey proved to be too tiring for them, so we decided to move closer to Oxford. We started looking at villages close to railway stations to enable us to commute. The Paddington to Hereford/Worcester line went through some very pretty country as it marched west from Oxford and we concentrated on this area. A rather smudgy photograph of a promising-sounding house that appeared in the Oxford Times one week has given us the family home we craved.

Settling in

Everything needed doing to the property, supposedly one of the first built in the village about 600 years ago, including the garden that sported a very healthy population of nettles and brambles when first we arrived.

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Though exposed to the prevailing wind I am growing a huge variety of plants from all over the world. I occasionally give talks and ‘Gardener’s Question Time’-like sessions to raise money for the church, do the occasional stint in the village shop, now run as a community project and contribute to the village community as much as I can.

Roddy Llewellyn

Roddy Llewellyn is hosting the ‘Llewellyn Lectures’ at the Burford Garden Company, every Thursday throughout most of the winter until March 2004. The first term culminates with Alan Titchmarsh on December 11th 2003. Every effort has been made to choose popular subjects and speakers in a special ambience. For further details please ring 01993 823117.

Ascott Fun Run

First fun run

On a gloriously sunny Sunday morning in September the Wychwoods’ fittest turned out in force to compete in the first ever Ascott Fun Run. Dozens of runners, dressed in sweaty old T-shirts, groovy sports gear and (in one memorable case) zip-up Lycra, jiggled around at the start line on the Ascott -under -Wychwood playing field.



A very professional-looking man with a starter pistol got things started and they were away! Down High Street, up, up over the fields to Chilson (spectacular views if you could see through the sweat), down the road to Pudlicote and back across the fields via The Mill, to the Playing Field. It was 5km (3.2 miles) of gentle jogging for most and a bit of a competitive kick for others.

First home

The first man back was Andy Sears (Mr Zip-up Lycra himself) who covered the

distance in 20 mins 39seconds (not bad considering the hill and one stile to be climbed) and the first woman was Ascott’s Elysia Ridley in 21.36. The veteran man medal went to Andy Parker who

crossed the line in 24.09 (he wasn’t sure whether to be pleased with his award or upset to be considered a veteran just because he’s over 40), closely followed by Dr David Nixon in 24.26. Both have vowed to wear Lycra next year in a bid to beat the youngsters. Veteran woman winner was Sue Richards in 33.06.

Fun for all

Everyone hung around in the sunshine to enjoy the children’s races and barbecue, comparing blisters and cool-down techniques, vowing to train harder for what is to be an annual fixture in aid of the Ascott Village Shop.

Kathy Pearce

The Ascott shop is now open!
Editor