

# OVERSEAS

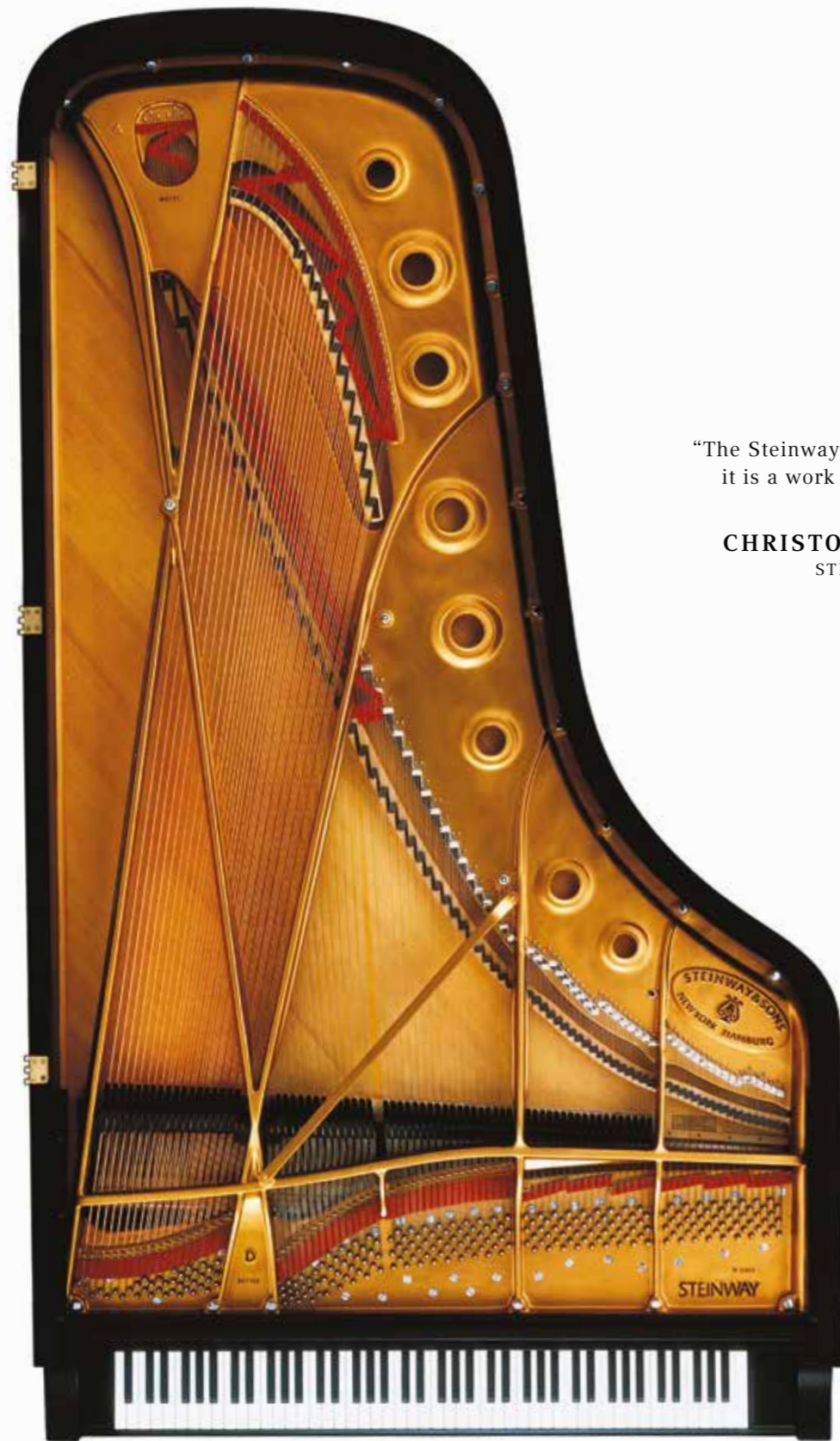
THE JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL OVER-SEAS LEAGUE



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The Royal Over-Seas League is dedicated to championing international friendship and understanding through cultural and education activities around the Commonwealth and beyond. A not-for-profit private members' organisation, we've been bringing like-minded people together since 1910.

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WELCOME



‘As I lay the wreath on the memorial, I'll be reminded again of ROSL's commitment to its ties with the Commonwealth’

March brings with it an exciting new season of events at ROSL and beyond. I am looking forward to attending the Commonwealth Day service at Westminster Abbey, which is attended by King Charles III and other senior members of the Royal Family, the Prime Minister, the Commonwealth Secretary General and other key Commonwealth dignitaries. Earlier that day I will be laying a wreath at Memorial Gates. It will be a time to remember ROSL's founding principles and commitment to the Commonwealth and international friendship, an ethos that remains at the heart of all that we do. At the Clubhouse our spring season of events is an exciting and eclectic mix of talks, music and dining. Our wonderful Annual Music Competition finals are in full flow, showcasing the very best of young musical talent – please do come and support this important competition. We'll also be joined by former President of the European Commission and former Prime Minister of Portugal José Manuel Durão Barroso, who'll be a fascinating guest speaker at the next instalment of our popular Public Affairs series.

The theme of this issue focuses on the importance of the botanical world. Our own garden is beginning to bloom – we remain one of the few clubs in Central London with our own garden – and we're planning a spring and summer full of al fresco dining. Executive Chef Elliot Plimmer and the kitchen team are busy working on a new menu of fresh flavours and seasonal ingredients. I hope you enjoy this issue, including another interview with the head of an iconic institution, Professor Joe Smith, Director of the Royal Geographical Society who provides some thoughtful insight into the challenges and opportunities facing both the planet and institution as 2024 progresses.

**Dr Annette Prandzioch**  
DIRECTOR-GENERAL

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# From the EDITOR

March feels like a refreshingly transient month, wherever in the world you might be. Here in London the proverb 'in like a lion and out like a lamb' rings true, with the biting colds and frosts of winter's last gasp softening into the fresh promise and new buds of early spring by April. The cycle of plants and their appearance throughout the year give us reassurance and hope, whether the tentative white heads of snowdrops that punctuate the frosty February soil; May's blousy abundance of roses, peonies and pansies; July's lush foliage in full throttle, and even November's blood-red droplets of berries, stark against the nakedness of winter trees. They impart a sense of ritual and comfort in a world that is largely becoming seasonless thanks to industrial agriculture, and an abundance of unseasonable produce year-round, or the warmer winters that are reducing snowy days in the UK to a rarity. They're also vital to us in a more-than spiritual sense as we discover in this issue, which is dedicated to the extraordinary power of plants and botanicals.

On page 14, Abi Millar takes a look at the use of botanicals in both traditional and cutting-edge medicine, while I learn more about their role to play in carbon sequestering and how genetically modified 'super' plants might be the key to saving the planet. Inspiration for your yearly travels can be found in our exploration of the world's most intriguing botanical gardens. Elsewhere, my interview with Director of the Royal Geographical Society Professor Joe Smith reveals a refreshing approach on its mission to promoting purposeful travel in an increasingly connected world, Hugh Morris explains the story behind Holst's *Planet Suite* and outgoing Arts Curator Robin Footitt tells us how to start an art collection.

Wishing you a wonderful start to the new season wherever you may be

**Rosie Allen**

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# 10

The deserts of America's south-west possibly conjure hazy images of haunting sandswept vistas... let Arizona's Desert Botanical Garden turn your preconceptions upside down

# CAN PLANTS SAVE THE PLANET?


Why the power of photosynthesis could be the planet's saviour

Recently, an image went viral on social media that showed a stark choice for the future. On the left-hand side was a computer-generated image of a gleaming cityscape, full of sleek, futuristic buildings. It was a sterile utopia of skyscrapers and cars suspended on invisible highways in the sky; a vision of a man-made utopia towards which humankind has been relentlessly striving.

On the right-hand side was a series of smaller images showing a pair of muddied hands turning over soil; a mossy, craggy forest-scape; a selection of herbs laid out on a stone table and an abundance of green plant life. The caption said 'if we want to survive, then we need to move away from a version in which progress

looks like this [the cityscape] and back towards a world which looks more natural; this is progress.'

The image was widely reshared, a celebration of a feeling that's pervasive right now; that maybe to move forward we need to steer away from the shiny android future that the 20<sup>th</sup> century promised us, and that going back to a lifestyle akin to one our ancestors lived could be the new progress.

For scientists at the cutting edge of carbon-capture technology though, this choice isn't binary. What if we could harness the power of Mother Nature and use plants, wetlands, forests and fungi combined with modern technology to combat the climate crisis in a new way? 





**Plants as world-champion carbon storers**

Natural carbon sequestration happens in the natural world all of the time; photosynthesis, the process by which all living plants must survive, requires plants to pull carbon out of the air and store it as energy. 'Plants are the world champions of capturing carbon,' explains Wolfgang Busch, Professor and Executive Director of the Harnessing Plants Initiative at the SALK Institute of Biological Studies. 'Powered by sunlight, they catch CO<sup>2</sup> through tiny openings in their leaves and fix it into sugar and other carbohydrates. With these carbohydrates they build their own body, including leaves, flowers, stems, trunks and roots, feed the microbes in the soil and provide us and almost every other ecosystem on earth with energy and nutrients. Plants capture many times more carbon dioxide each year than we emit by burning fossil fuels.'

Recent research from Western Sydney University's Jürgen Knauer suggested that plants could actually be absorbing around 20% more carbon than we'd previously thought predicting a 'stronger and sustained carbon uptake up until the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century'.

According to a 2021 scientific report from the King Saud University, biological carbon sequestration – or the process of storing carbon dioxide in vegetation, whether trees, grasslands or marine plants – can also be undertaken by fungi, algae, yeasts and bacteria, all which thrive as part of a healthy plant ecosystems, as well as traditional agricultural plant life, making the potential for biological storage even more potent.

However, while the notion of planting more crops and encouraging the health of the soils and bacteria that keep them healthy sounds idyllic, biological carbon storage isn't a straight-forward solution for the heating planet. Because as plants break down, these carbon-storing power-houses can become as much a part of the problem as the solution. 'Much of plant-fixed carbon gets released as bacteria and fungi, and animals decompose or consume the plant materials that contain this fixed carbon,' says Wolfgang. 'These consumers breathe CO<sup>2</sup> out and it gets re-added to the atmosphere.'

'However,' he adds, 'while plants are already very good at capturing carbon, plant decomposition can be optimised and help us to store away carbon that will not go back into the atmosphere.'



**The 'greenwash' effect**

The concept of 'enhanced' carbon storage as a way of offsetting the emissions of industry – removing carbon dioxide from industrial and domestic processes to be stored in a different form, to remove the substance from the earth's atmosphere – is one whose effectiveness has been hotly contested for decades.

Critics suggest that industry's heavy reliance on carbon storage initiatives are a tick-box solution to show that they're fulfilling their green obligations and suggest that there's a heavy amount of 'greenwashing' going on in their marketing. Last year, UN General Secretary António Guterres publicly criticised fossil fuel industries for apparently prioritising carbon capture and storage technologies

over reducing emissions themselves, calling some of these corporations 'planet wreckers'. 'Current carbon offset programmes are out of sight, out of mind, and that's what makes them problematic,' agrees Dr Tiffany Yap, a Senior Conservation Scientist at the Center for Biological Diversity in San Francisco. 'Developers, corporations and governments get away with destroying habitats and polluting communities on the premise that they are protecting habitats faraway to make up for it.'

But the reality is these offset programs are failing. Recent studies show that carbon offset projects are not being properly enforced and are not sequestering enough carbon to offset emissions. Developers, corporations and governments are being over-credited for continuing to release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere while local communities suffer and climate change intensifies.'



**Reforestation and rewilding**

Forests have long been seen as the heroes of plant-powered carbon sequestration; according to the National Grid, 'forests store twice as much carbon as they emit, while an estimated 25% of global carbon emissions are sequestered alongside forests in other vegetative forms, such as grasslands or rangelands'. The Woodland Trust reports that in the UK alone 213 million tonnes of carbon are being sequestered in trees right now, with over 400 tonnes per hectare potentially able to be locked up in a mixture of young wood with mixed native species. And it's not just carbon storage that makes forests an important ally in the face of climate change; their ability to enrich soils and encourage mycorrhizal diversity, and their role to play in preventing flooding makes them a valuable tool in the arsenal of plant-forward solutions to the crisis.

So why aren't we just replanting forests on a mass scale? While in recent years, the concept of reforestation and replanting has been sold as an attractive concept, the idea that we can effectively 'disappear' the effects of carbon emissions if only we're able to plant enough trees, sadly doesn't tell the whole picture.

Yap adds that 'trees are



**HOW TO MAKE YOUR GARDEN GREEN**

By taking a fresh look at your garden planting, you can help encourage carbon storage in your own outside space (and make it look wonderful too). Here are some ideas for turning your garden into a fully functioning carbon sink this spring

**Go wild by leaving at least parts of your garden untamed** this not only helps to preserve the integrity of your soil structure and support the plant life living in it, but you'll also be enhancing the biodiversity of microbes, insects and other life that calls the soil its home.

**Plant a diverse range of flowers, shrubs and grasses** different species of plants have roots that will grow to different depths and provide varying levels of ground cover in the space – all enabling the soil to better draw in carbon.

**Plant trees and hedges** that actively sequester carbon as well as providing a home for other wildlife. Of course, young trees will take many years to grow to a reasonable size, so think of it as an investment in the future; good options include conifers as well as hardwoods such as oak, maple and beech (if you have the room!).

**Grow your own vegetables to supplement your diet** and you'll be cutting down on the carbon emissions from air-freighted produce grown in industrial greenhouses overseas; permanent additions such as fruit trees and perennials are best for carbon storage, with annuals added in for interest.

**Nurturing perennial shrubs and long-lived plants** mean less soil cultivation needed in planting, thereby keeping carbon locked underground, as well as protecting the soil ecosystem.

For more advice visit the Royal Horticultural Society website at [rhs.org.uk](https://www.rhs.org.uk)

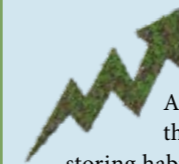
amazing and important for a lot of different reasons. When it comes to carbon storage and sequestration, they're incredible, but the fact of the matter is that trees alone won't solve the climate crisis.

We are starting to see some trees and forests struggling because of climate change. Higher temperatures and extended drought are making trees more susceptible to other stressors, like insects, disease and wildfire. And researchers estimate that about 30% of described tree species are threatened with extinction.

Luckily, trees aren't the only plants that store and sequester carbon. Shrublands, grasslands, deserts, wetlands and riparian areas are also

**Shrublands, grasslands, deserts, wetlands and riparian areas are also incredible carbon sinks that are right in front of us**

incredible carbon sinks that are right in front of us. Some may not look like much above ground, especially during the summer in California when grasslands are all dried out, but below ground they can pack in a lot of carbon in their roots and soils. Native grasslands can store as much or more carbon as trees! So in addition to protecting forests, we can protect other diverse habitats that also store and sequester large amounts of carbon. While more research is needed, it's clear that there are multiple ways to store more carbon and effectively combat the climate crisis. We just need to be innovative and follow the science.'



**Breeding a new generation of carbon-storing powerhouses**

As well as taking better care of the planet's natural carbon-storing habitats, there's more hope to be found in the realms of advanced plant biology – welcome to the world of super plants, specifically genetically modified to allow for greater carbon capture than we thought possible.

'Carbon that is funnelled by plants into their roots already remains much longer in the soil compared with the carbon from above ground parts of the plants. Therefore, we are working on changing root characteristics that will lead to more carbon being stored for longer in the soil,' says Wolfgang, whose company SALK are one of the front runners of this kind of carbon-capture technology. 'We are working on three different root characteristics. Root mass (more roots

in the soil means more carbon that is transferred into the soil), deeper roots (the carbon that roots deposit in the soil – either the carbon that is contained in the root body itself, or carbon that they exude into the soil – will take longer to degrade and thus will be stored for longer), and by increasing the amount of carbon containing molecules that will take longer to decompose. Depending on the crop species, the increase in carbon in the soil will differ. Not only will the amount of

newly added carbon be important, the duration that the carbon can stay in the soil without being decomposed by microbes.'

Given that the increase of monocultures and destruction of grasslands and forests in order to accommodate plant agriculture is one of the key drivers of climate change, an important focus is adapting plants already used for agriculture to achieve this aim.

'Key for global impact is that we target plant species that are globally cultivated on a large acreage,' Wolfgang adds. 'Thus, even if a single plant will add only a little carbon for longer, the hundreds of millions of hectares that the major crop species occupy will have an enormous effect on drawing down carbon from the atmosphere and storing it for longer in the soil.'

People have altered plant properties such as rooting through domestication and breeding for thousands of years already. There are reasons to believe that more extensive root systems can positively improve nutrient contents in plants.'

Echoing Dr Yap's sentiments that the protection of all plant-supporting ecosystems is crucial in this process, he adds; 'we have learned that wetland species sometimes contain a lot of suberin in their root systems in a special form that might resist decomposition even better.'

While these technologies are still some way from becoming mainstream in the fight against climate change, there's much to be hopeful about as scientists combine the latest technology with nature's most powerful assets; and by taking better care of the plant and tree life around us, we can help maximise the power of plants in our outside spaces too.

# Exploring EDEN

Discovering the world's most intriguing botanical gardens

Nothing revives the senses and lifts the spirits like taking in a beautifully curated garden, so to inspire your new-season travels we've rounded up some of the world's most intriguing to discover this year; from a collection of poisonous plants in the north of England, to a fashion-dynasty-inspiring cubist's dream in Morocco, we hope these gorgeous spaces motivate you to explore the green places in your corner of the world.

#### **Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden, Cape Town, South Africa**

If grandeur and drama are your thing, look no further than the immense beauty of the Sanbi gardens, Kirstenbosch, South Africa for endless inspiration. Set against the the majesty of the eastern slopes of Cape Town's Table

Mountain, it's considered one of the most beautiful botanical gardens in the world and features a kaleidoscopic array of flowers and plants to enjoy throughout the year.

Established in 1913, Kirstenbosch was world-leading in its aims to preserve and protect species of flora and fauna native to South Africa, a philosophy that would eventually come to underpin the aims of many botanical gardens worldwide. You'll find sculpture and artworks hidden among the dramatic plant life, including five life size and anatomically correct tin sculptures of dinosaurs and a pterosaur, set among a natural theatre of cycads – ancient slow growing, palm-like plants which have changed little since the Jurassic period. *The website provides a useful guide to the best times to visit, with average weather and temperature information at [www.sanbi.org/gardens/kirstenbosch](http://www.sanbi.org/gardens/kirstenbosch)*

South Africa's Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden overlooks the stunning Table Mountain, a famous landmark that rises over 1,085 metres above sea level





**Desert Botanical Gardens, Phoenix, Arizona, USA**



The deserts of the US south-west possibly conjure hazy images of haunting sandswept vistas, with an errant tumbleweed or lonely cactus punctuating the sparseness of the undulating plains; but let Arizona's Desert Botanical Garden turn your preconceptions upside down.

Founded in the late 1930s by a group of local citizens who fortuitously saw the value in preserving the incredible plant life of the local environment, this lush and beautiful collection of desert-based botanica celebrates the plants that thrive in one of the planet's most inhospitable environments with over 140 acres and 50,000 plants displays to explore. As you might expect, cacti and succulents are plentiful, but also expect dazzlingly colourful displays of blooms that attract bees, butterflies and even hummingbirds.

You can get an in-depth guide with a holistically themed tour (such as the Happy Tour which 'guides you to six tranquil locations in the Garden where you can experience the natural beauty and peace of the Sonoran Desert') or guide yourself round the surprisingly varied mix of trails, including the calming, water-feature filled Desert Oasis, or learn about the diverse habitats of indigenous Sonoran peoples on the Plants and Peoples of the Sonoran Desert Trail.

It's essential to bring plenty of water, sunscreen, and a sunhat and glasses to make the most of this sun-soaked paradise.

Discover more at [www.dbg.org/](http://www.dbg.org/)

**Jardin Majorelle, Morocco**



If azure blue buildings shining in the Moroccan sunlight sounds like your idea of heaven, then the gorgeous Jardin Majorelle is the botanical escape for you. Created by French artist Jacques Morelle, the garden's blend of Moorish and Art Deco stylings, sprawling corridors and staggered levels made a lasting impression on the iconic fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent, who claimed the garden was 'an endless source of inspiration and for many years I have dreamt of its unique colours'. And it surely can't be coincidence that bold splashes of cerulean have cropped up many times in the fashion house's collections and branding since.

While the garden may be famed for the exuberantly blue cubist architecture of its buildings and its celebrity connections (the aforementioned Yves Saint Laurent purchased the space in the 1980s), the plants are a wonder to behold too; expect swaying palms and bamboo, lush succulents and cacti, pretty jasmine, agaves and regal waterlilies to add verdant interest to the man-made elements of the garden.

Visit [jardinmajorelle.com/en](http://jardinmajorelle.com/en) for more information.



Photo: The Alnwick Garden

**Alnwick Poison Gardens, England**



Nestled away in the pretty market town of Alnwick, Northumberland, England's most northerly county, is an eerie botanical jewel that you might not expect to find among the town's cobbled streets and quaint stone buildings. Looking every inch the Tim Burton film set, Alnwick poison garden hosts over 100 poisonous plants within the confines of its ominous black iron gates, ranging from the horribly toxic to the bewitchingly intoxicating. As you might expect, visiting is allowed by guided tour only and touching or tasting the plants is strictly forbidden, but that doesn't mean you can't allow your senses to be enveloped by the darkly beautiful array of specimens you'll find here. Expect some of the world's most dangerous plants (which are kept, evocatively, inside cages), and plenty of other fascinating blooms such as the bewitching opium poppy; the pretty-but-deadly laburnum, aka Golden Chain tree, characterised by its waterfalls of yellow blooms; the almost-mythical Atropa Belladonna, aka Deadly Nightshade; and the nodding violet blooms of Monkshood along with many more.

Visitors can also find a ghoulishly fascinating guide to the world's most high-profile poisoning cases, and a guided tour helps foragers understand what not to pick on their own nature expeditions.

Visit [alnwickgarden.com/the-garden/poison-garden/](http://alnwickgarden.com/the-garden/poison-garden/) for more details.



**Arctic-Alpine Botanic garden, Tromsø, Norway**



Experiencing the world's most northerly botanic garden ablaze with floral colour during the 24-hour sunlight of a midsummer day is the stuff of bucket-list fantasy. From May, when the first blooms of purple star-petalled saxifrage begin to emerge in the landscaped rock garden, through to October, the gardens are filled with Arctic and Alpine plants from all across the world, including special collections of rhododendrons, aster, roses and alliums. No fences, gates or admission fees mean you can visit anytime you like.

The shrubs and rockeries are still worth seeing in winter too; 'however,' the website warns 'if the snow cover is deep, you will have to bring your skis.'

Expect some of the world's most dangerous plants and other fascinating blooms such as the intoxicating opium poppy and the pretty-but deadly laburnum

**Enjoy the ROSL garden**

Don't forget that ROSL is one of the few London Clubhouses with its own garden, and it will be coming into its own over the next few months. The garden opens for drinks and dining on May 1 – why not spend a few hours enjoying this beautiful outside space overlooking Green Park this spring and summer?



# Miracle PLANTS

The use of botanicals and plants in medicine is as old as humanity itself, but can often be written off as 'alternative' in our modern world. However, scientists are seeing increasing potential for plant compounds to assist in the creation of disease-fighting drugs.

Abi Millar explores how the combination of mother nature and cutting-edge science could be the answer to some of the medical issues that blight the 21<sup>st</sup>-century world

In 1969, the Chinese chemist Tu Youyou was assigned a mission by Chairman Mao: to find a novel treatment for malaria. The mosquito-borne disease, which was rampaging among soldiers at the time, had become resistant to the standard line of treatment. Something new and cutting-edge was required.

But it wasn't in the lab that Tu made her breakthrough. Rather, it came from perusing ancient medical lore. Deep in a 1,700-year-old text called 'A handbook of prescriptions for emergencies', Tu found a reference to 'intermittent fevers', which were treated with a plant called sweet wormwood.

Investigating further, Tu isolated a compound in sweet wormwood called artemisinin. This turned out to be highly effective against the malaria parasite – when given to 21 test subjects, all of them recovered.

Today, artemisinin combination therapy is recommended as the first line of defence against malaria, and is thought to have saved millions of lives. Tu Youyou, who won a Nobel Prize for its discovery, wrote in 2011 that artemisinin 'is a true gift from Old Chinese medicine'. In her view, it wasn't the only one. She cited the herbs *huperzia serrata* and *shenlian*, which have shown promise against Alzheimer's disease and atherosclerosis respectively, as other ways that 'the wisdom of Chinese medicine has borne fruit.'

Of course, not every traditional remedy has a modern pharmaceutical equivalent. But as stories like Tu Youyou's will attest, natural

treatments should not be dismissed as the province of prescientific times. Rather, plants and botanicals have always supplied a rich repository of cures, many of which are now being shown to have a rational scientific basis.

Dr Melanie-Jayne Howes, senior research leader at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, researches the ways that plant chemistry might inform drug development.

'Plants and fungi are brilliant chemists,' she says. 'Some plant chemicals are so complex that they cannot be synthesised from scratch in the laboratory on a practical scale, so we still rely on plants to source some chemicals that are developed into pharmaceuticals.'

She adds that people have been exploring the properties of plants as medicines for thousands of years. Much like their Chinese peers, the ancient Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Arabs and Indians were well acquainted with herbal remedies. Following the invention of the printing press, botanical encyclopedias called 'herbals' were widely disseminated across Europe, mixing an observational component with what we would now describe as superstition.

Until the early 19th century, people typically relieved their maladies using

extracts from the whole plant. Many herbal medicines and botanicals remain on the market today – although it's important to note that these 'alternative medicine' products are distinct from pharmaceuticals like artemisinin. They are regulated differently, and do not have to demonstrate their effectiveness in the same way as a conventional drug.

'There are no traditional herbal medicines that are used in modern medicine to treat serious clinical conditions,' remarks Dr Richard Middleton, director of the British Herbal Medicines Association. 'However, this does not mean that there is not a place for traditional herbal medicines to be used to treat

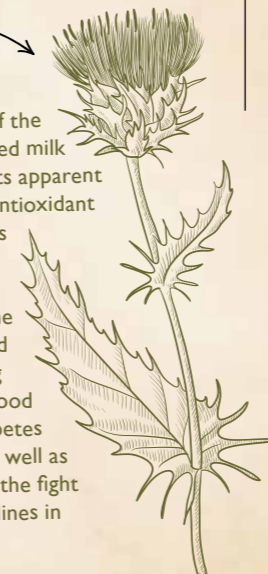
## Lavender

Lavender's beautiful and potent scent has long been known for its soothing effect and help in relieving anxiety and fatigue. One study showed that it helped produce deeper sleep in a trial involving post-partum mothers. But the oil of this wonder plant is also known to have other healing properties, including antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory uses and as such has been used as a treatment for acne and other skin issues.



## Milk Thistle

The silymarin content of the distinctive purple-petalled milk thistle is said to give it its apparent anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Supplements made from the extracts of milk thistle have long been used to protect the liver, and is also believed to have some promising potential in lowering blood sugar in those with diabetes or insulin resistance, as well as possibly being a tool in the fight against age-related declines in brain function.



**Today, of all the medicines the World Health Organization deems 'basic' and 'essential', 11% derive from flowering plants, while more than two-fifths of all pharmaceutical formulations are based on natural products**

self-limiting minor ailments. Established herbs such as echinacea, St John's Wort, milk thistle and valerian continue to do well in the market, while in recent years, CBD (cannabidiol) products have mushroomed in sales.'

The division between the two categories emerged in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when scientists first learned to isolate compounds from plants and manufacture them in drug form. The first of these was the painkiller morphine, which was extracted from the opium poppy in 1803.

'This revolutionised the way that people used plants as sources of medicine,' says

Howes. 'Later that century, many other drugs were isolated from plants, for example the analgesic codeine, also from the opium poppy, the antimalarial quinine from cinchona bark, and the cardiovascular drug digoxin from foxgloves. Since then, pharmaceutical companies have often been inspired by plants for drug discovery.'

Today, of all the medicines the World Health Organization deems 'basic' and 'essential', 11% derive from flowering plants, while more than two-fifths of all pharmaceutical formulations are based on natural products.

These include vinblastine and vincristine (childhood cancer drugs derived from the Madagascar periwinkle); shikimic acid



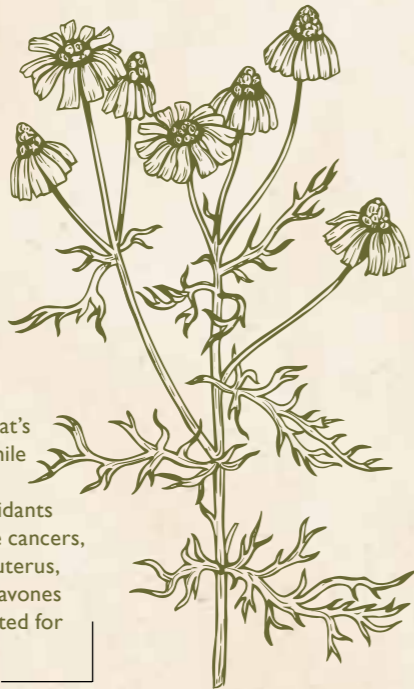


*Ginkgo*

The ginkgo, or maidenhair tree, native to China, is used to make a supplement that's been used for centuries in traditional medicines. Packed with free-radical fighting antioxidants, ginkgo is often taken in the form of a tea, and is reputed by some to have uses in treating blood pressure problems, premenstrual syndrome and anxiety. Though studies testing for its effectiveness have had mixed results, there have been laboratory studies showing that it can improve blood circulation by opening up blood vessels

*Chamomile*

This pretty daisy-like flower is another remedy that's full of antioxidants, and a delicious cup of chamomile tea is often used as an aid in the treatment of digestive issues and sleep problems. Those antioxidants have also been linked to lower incidences of some cancers, including those of the thyroid, skin, prostate and uterus, however more study is needed in this area. The flavones present in chamomile tea have also been investigated for their potential to improve heart health too



*Echinacea*

Related to the sunflower, echinacea is native to the east of the United States and has been used in traditional medicine for generations in treating the common cold. It's thought to boost the immune system thanks to the polysaccharides and alkamides it contains, and is also sometimes used to treat small cuts, burns and other wounds



*Aloe Vera*

If you've ever been sunburnt then you'll probably be acquainted with the amazing cooling and soothing properties of the gel which aloe vera leaves produce; but the juice of this plant native to the Arabian peninsula is a healing powerhouse too. It's been thought to help reduce heartburn and also contains some laxative properties in treating constipation, and has a soothing effect on the symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome. However, modern research shows that it's not safe to take or apply aloe vera in the long term or in large quantities – so please do consult a doctor first



*Coltsfoot*

A controversially used plant remedy, coltsfoot is a natural anti-inflammatory that's linked to a host of positive benefits as well as some potential downsides. Traditionally the flower has been used to treat respiratory issues such as bronchitis, coughs, whooping cough and asthma. However, extreme caution needs to be taken in its usage due to its containing compounds that have been linked to liver damage; so, as always, speak to your GP before trying this remedy for yourself



Please consult the advice of your GP before trying herbal medicines, and follow medical advice on its safe usage

(a component of the flu drug Tamiflu, from star anise); and silymarin (used in liver disease, from the seeds of the milk thistle). Galantamine, extracted from snowdrops, is used to treat dementia, while aspirin was inspired by a chemical in willow bark. 'Phytochemists are continually analysing plants for their active principles,' says Botanist Dr Shahina Ghazanfar, co-author of the new book *An Ancient Mesopotamian Herbal*. 'Research into the use of plants for medicinal purposes in historic manuscripts, and from communities that still adhere to plant-based medicines, can give us invaluable data on plants and the conditions they are used for.' Ghazanfar's book explores what the ancient Assyrians and Babylonians knew about medicinal plants, and how that knowledge maps on to modern remedies. For instance, they understood which plants could be used to treat skin injuries, how to lower fever, and what effect a medication

would have on the body. They also distinguished between about 200 plants for symptom relief, including black nightshade for fever, sesame oil cake for gangrene of the feet, red bryony as an emetic and pomegranate juice for ear infections. 'There is an overlap of the plants used in Ancient Mesopotamia and modern herbal medicine,' says Ghazanfar. 'For example, red bryony is recorded to be used as a diuretic and a laxative in modern day Iraq and neighboring countries. It is also mentioned in the earliest Arabic pharmacopoeia to have been used as a medicinal herb.' Howes agrees that ethnobotanical data of this kind can be harmonised with scientific approaches, so long as any resulting benefits are shared fairly with

**It's clear that the plant kingdom contains a rich repository of cures, and that natural cures and ancient wisdom may only be the tip of the iceberg**

knowledge holders around the world. For instance, one Kew study surveyed plants that were used traditionally for malaria, then mapped this dataset on to the plant evolutionary 'Tree of Life'. (The 'Tree of Life' uses DNA sequencing to show how different species are related.) 'It was found that plants used traditionally for malaria were concentrated in certain clusters on the Tree of Life,' says Howes. 'Therefore, other plants in those clusters could be potential sources of bioactive compounds because they are closely related to plants which are used medicinally for malaria.' These kinds of techniques could be invaluable in the future, as we continue to tap the natural world for solutions to our most pressing health challenges.

As Howes explains, there are thought to be over 350,000 vascular plant species, only a few of which have been used as sources of medicine to date. In our quest to find others, we need ways to narrow down the search. Scientists are turning to artificial intelligence, genetic sequencing, and other cutting-edge tools for unlocking the secrets of plant chemistry. As well as aiding in drug discovery, these tools could be useful from a conservation perspective. With the biodiversity on our planet under threat, we can't necessarily rely on trekking into the rainforest and sourcing plants in the quantities we'd need. A more sustainable and efficient approach might be 'yeast cell factories', in which yeast cells are genetically programmed to convert sugars and amino acids into drugs. 'There is potential for the biosynthetic pathways in plants to be expressed in other organisms, such as yeast,' says Howes.

'It offers new hope to safeguard essential medicines for the future, in harmony with biodiversity conservation measures.' This approach has already been used successfully to boost yields of artemisinin, in a neat bridge between the very old and the very new. It's clear that the plant kingdom offers a rich repository of cures, and that ancient wisdom around natural remedies may only be the tip of the iceberg. However, if we want to go further down this road, we'll need to show deep respect for the plants themselves and the ecosystems in which they're embedded. 'My hopes for the future are that new and novel drugs for current and emerging diseases can be identified or inspired by compounds in plants and fungi and that they can be sourced sustainably,' says Howes. 'This would not only benefit people, but would demonstrate the value of biodiversity and inspire people to protect it for future generations.'

RECOMMENDED READING

**An Ancient Mesopotamian Herbal**  
Barbara Böck, Shahina A. Ghazanfar, Mark Nesbitt  
Dive into this fascinating illustrated guide to the rich herbal lore of ancient Mesopotamia, blending history and botany to explore the uses of herbs and plants in ancient medicines.



**Kew Gardens' The Gardeners Companion to Medicinal Plants**  
Monique Simmonds, Melanie Jayne Howes, Jason Irving  
A beautiful A-Z of over 270 plants used for their medicinal properties, packed with ideas for practical projects you can try at home.



**This is Your Mind on Plants**  
Michael Pollan  
A New York Times bestselling author takes a deep dive into the mind-bending world of consciousness-altering plants; caffeine, mescaline and opium, learning more about the cultures that use them and looking at where the borders between acceptable and illicit are blurred.



**Concise Foraging Guide**  
Tiffany Francis-Baker  
Previous Overseas contributor Tiffany brings us a practical pocket guide to 194 edible fruits, nuts and seeds, flowers, greens and vegetables, herbs, roots, whole plants, fungi and more that you can forage in the UK and Europe.



# THE SECRETS OF GREEN PARK

As the weather begins to warm up in our corner of Mayfair, and spring flowers emerge, the view from Over-Seas House reveals Green Park in all its glory, with spring buds giving a taste of the lush loveliness of the Royal Park in the months to come. Here we celebrate the beautiful wilderness on our back doorstep with a look at the history and myths of Green Park – be sure to explore for yourself next time you're at ROSL

### Green, green grass

While you'll see plenty of cheery yellow daffodils waving their heads in the park in spring, you may have noticed that there are no formal flowerbeds in Green Park, making it unique among the Royal Parks. Unlikely legend has it that this is because Queen Catherine, wife of King Charles II, ordered all the flower beds to be ripped up following a discovery that the famously philandering King had been picking bouquets for his mistress, and that the park has been 'green' ever since.

### A ring of trees

As you stroll through the park you'll notice a tightly huddled ring of plane trees, a species that's a hybrid of American sycamore and Oriental plane. They thrive throughout

London, being adept at adapting to urban conditions and tolerating pollution. For more than a century this baker's dozen has been a central landmark of the park, but no one knows exactly why they were planted in such an enigmatic ring and in such a storied number; one theory is that they mark the site of the Temple of Concord, a flamboyant folly that was erected to mark the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1814 but which was destroyed the following year (coinciding with England's fragile peace with France coming to an end too).

### Sweet simplicity

Compared with some of the other more flamboyant Royal Parks, Green Park is beautiful for its simplicity, featuring no buildings or bodies of water (if it's that you



want, then head around the corner to the more ornate splendour of St James's). Its origins might give us a clue as to why; the park had originally been open meadows and then later a burial ground for lepers from the nearby St James's hospital, until King Charles II appropriated the land in the 1660s in order to link St James's Park with Hyde Park. Part of this land was portioned off as a hunting ground, and was known as Upper St James's Park until the mid-1700s when it was finally christened with its current name of Green Park.

### Duels and ne'er do wells

Relatively rural until the 1700s, the park once had a reputation for being the haunt of thieves, highwaymen and violent criminals, with even locals swerving a path through the park after dark. The relative remoteness also made it a popular choice for duellists to draw pistols at dawn, including one in around 1730 between John Hervey, 2nd Baron Hervey and William Pulteney, 1st Earl of Bath, whilst another tale tells of a fatal match between Sir Henry Dutton Colt and Robert Fielding, an alleged womaniser, and that the ghostly clash of swords and sounds of fighting can occasionally be heard on still nights.



**250,000**  
daffodils pop up  
each spring



**620**  
trees call Green  
Park their home



**47 ACRES**  
of Green Park stretch  
between St James's  
and Hyde Park

# THE CHANGING FACE OF BEAUTY

How a beauty expert is trying to help clients cut through the misinformation of the cosmetic surgery landscape to make safer choices

**W**ith cosmetic procedures on the rise every year, and social media ‘experts’ muddying the waters in regards to advice and recommendations, beauty consultant and journalist Olivia Falcon saw a need for safe guidance through a complex industry. Here she tells us how The Editor’s List is helping to contribute to a more considered approach to cosmetic procedures in the ‘Wild West’ that is the UK cosmetic procedures industry.

‘Since The Editor’s List started, there have been more and more cosmetic clinics popping up, hundreds more cosmetic practitioners and with a rise of social media many unqualified influencers weighing in with advice too – these days it seems

everyone considers themselves an expert! I think the industry has got far more crowded and is more confusing than ever.

When it comes to cosmetic procedures, the UK is like the Wild West, pretty much anyone can wield a needle of Botox, it’s very unregulated and I think this is where a lot of problems have arisen, so I feel it’s important now to have a reputable, trusted service that

guides people to the very best and most qualified practitioners. The way The Editor’s List works is that I have a list of services that range from the £100 question that sorts a simple problem through to more comprehensive handholding through a procedure and fast-tracking services. I charge clients for my time and I don’t take any kickbacks from the surgeons or doctors I recommend. I think this kind of honest, impartial advice is invaluable.

I first started The Editor’s List in 2017, after my friend and colleague from Vogue, Fiona Golfar asked me to help her source a great surgeon for a neck and lower facelift. I organised the whole procedure for Fiona with surgeon Rajiv Grover, and I joined her as a sounding board on all the consultations, did all the bookings, took her to the hospital, and organised a recovery plan. She felt so reassured by this help that this encouraged

**I think TikTok, while highly entertaining, often dumbs down the risks and complications of cosmetic procedures**

me to start The Editor’s List to help others navigate the often confusing and overwhelming world of cosmetic surgery as we both knew what a minefield it can be to really get a trusted recommendation that has the patient’s best interests at heart rather than someone else’s agenda.

I think TikTok, while highly entertaining, often dumbs down the risks and complications of cosmetic procedures. There is an element of education which is great, but also I think it can make people a little bit too gung ho. It has opened the world of tweakments to a much younger

audience, who are looking to have tweaks to beautify themselves, or ‘prejuvenate’ rather than to correct or reverse the signs of ageing. While some TikTok reels can be helpful, I’ve seen many that often skew the true results of treatments with filters, which I think has given rise to a lot of unrealistic expectations, which is not helpful at all. I think it also puts a lot of unnecessary pressure on young people to want to look a certain way with TikTok trends.

**Bakuchiol, a botanical ingredient derived from the seeds of the Bacci plant has also been gaining a lot of traction as an alternative to retinol, as it tackles all signs of ageing**

I think there is a very interesting move in the world of aesthetics towards wellness and longevity through rejuvenation, rather than this notion of anti-ageing. For example, in the UK there is definitely a move away from faking it with facial fillers which have often been overused to plump and volumize. These are being replaced with bio-regenerative injectables such as polynucleotides and exosomes that work to stimulate the cells in the body to act younger.

Interestingly, in some areas, there is a movement towards reversal of cosmetic procedures such as breast implants. There are a lot of forums where women feel that issues such as breast implant illness and problems associated with implants are not sustainable in the long term and a lot of surgeons have been talking to me about patients coming in asking for implant removal. There is a general trend for smaller breasts than 20 years ago, and surgeons are more commonly utilising techniques such as fat grafting and gland repositioning to restructure and lift breasts using the patient’s own tissues.

Regarding the power of plants, I think there are

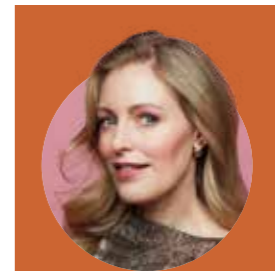
many active botanical ingredients that have shown real promise and stand up to, as well as enhancing, cutting-edge scientific formulas. One example of this is centella asiatica more commonly known as Indian pennywort – a herbaceous plant found in Asia, it is used as a star ingredient in a lot of top cosmeceutical brands from iS Clinical to

Dr Jart. This ingredient has many benefits including antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties as well as increasing the microcirculation of blood in the skin and preventing excessive accumulation of fat in cells so it is often found in cellulite creams too.

Bakuchiol, a botanical ingredient derived from the seeds of the Bacci plant has also been gaining a lot of traction as a popular alternative to retinol (vitamin A) as it tackles all signs of ageing from fine lines and wrinkles to pigmentation, refining the texture of skin, without causing irritation which is common when using retinoids.

My advice for those seeking to have a cosmetic procedure, is that for the best outcome there are a few simple ground rules. Firstly pick your practitioner carefully, if you are doing your own research invest in a professional with a medical background for injectables and ask to see pictures of their last concurrent six or seven cases of the tweakment you want, rather than be swayed by random Instagram before and after photos, that are often best case scenarios.

I advise always leaving a four-day window for recovery for tweakments just in case you bruise. Never book a tweakment the day of a party or event, (best to leave three days either side) as alcohol thins the blood, which can exacerbate bruising and delay healing. Finally manage your expectations these are ‘tweaks’ that refresh rather than drastically change your features.’



**Olivia Falcon**  
Olivia Falcon is the Founder of The Editor’s List, a service that offers expert advice on where to find the industry’s top cosmetic practitioners and procedures. She is also an award-winning, freelance journalist and consultant. Her work spans the worlds of health, beauty, travel and luxury lifestyle

# 72<sup>ND</sup> ROSL ANNUAL MUSIC COMPETITION EST 1952



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SCAN TO SIGNUP  
FOR OUR LATEST  
OFFERS AND NEWS

## INSIDE THE Royal Geographical Society

From supporting some of the earliest pioneering explorers to advancing discussions around the big issues facing environments and communities globally, the Royal Geographical Society is a truly unique institution. Rosie Allen speaks to Director Professor Joe Smith about the role of storytelling in the fight against climate change and why social media could be a positive force for purposeful travel

**Could you give our members a bit of background on what the RGS stands for and what you do as an institution?**

For me the Royal Geographical Society and its family of enthusiasts is here to gain a greater understanding of the world and to make it a better place and I like to think that we're here to try to get humanity to the end of the century in better shape than it started it. That's my version of our founding mission which is the 'advancement of geographical science'. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century – we were formed in 1830 and got a Royal Charter in the 1850s – we were a key part of Britain's colonial mission, primarily through holding a collection of maps and supporting and enabling expeditions. Today advancing geographical science means understanding the world better and sharing what we know, but obviously our purpose and audiences are very much wider and there are a number of expressions of that. As an example, we hold an Annual International Conference which attracts more than 2,000 geographers from around the world, we publish five academic journals a year and we've got a collection of around a million maps and a million other artefacts that can help to tell the story of pretty much any place in the world you could throw at us, which is quite a powerful thing.

And then we've got a popular programme of events

including a Monday night lecture series that run weekly in three 'terms'. Those cover a mix of purposeful travel, of new publications and films and policy themes. With investment in cameras and other kit, they have essentially turned into a broadcast channel for enthusiasts of geography, environment and sustainability. So that means that we are also a great place for enthusiasts about global themes to come to.

**In recent years there's been more expectation of accountability from historic institutions in regards to their pasts – how have you been navigating that?**

I've given you a clear and positive account of our role in the world today, but at the same time we don't want to pretend that a complex past didn't happen. Indeed many of the stories associated for example with Edwardian expeditioning are incredibly inspiring – I defy anyone not to be energised by the trials of Shackleton's crew escaping what looked like certain death and managing to bring back scientific samples with them on the Endurance expedition. But at the same time we shouldn't be frightened of walking right up to the fact of the institution's role in Britain's colonial project. That's part of who we are. So as part of our work, we're doing an interpretation project where we'll rehang pictures in the building, and



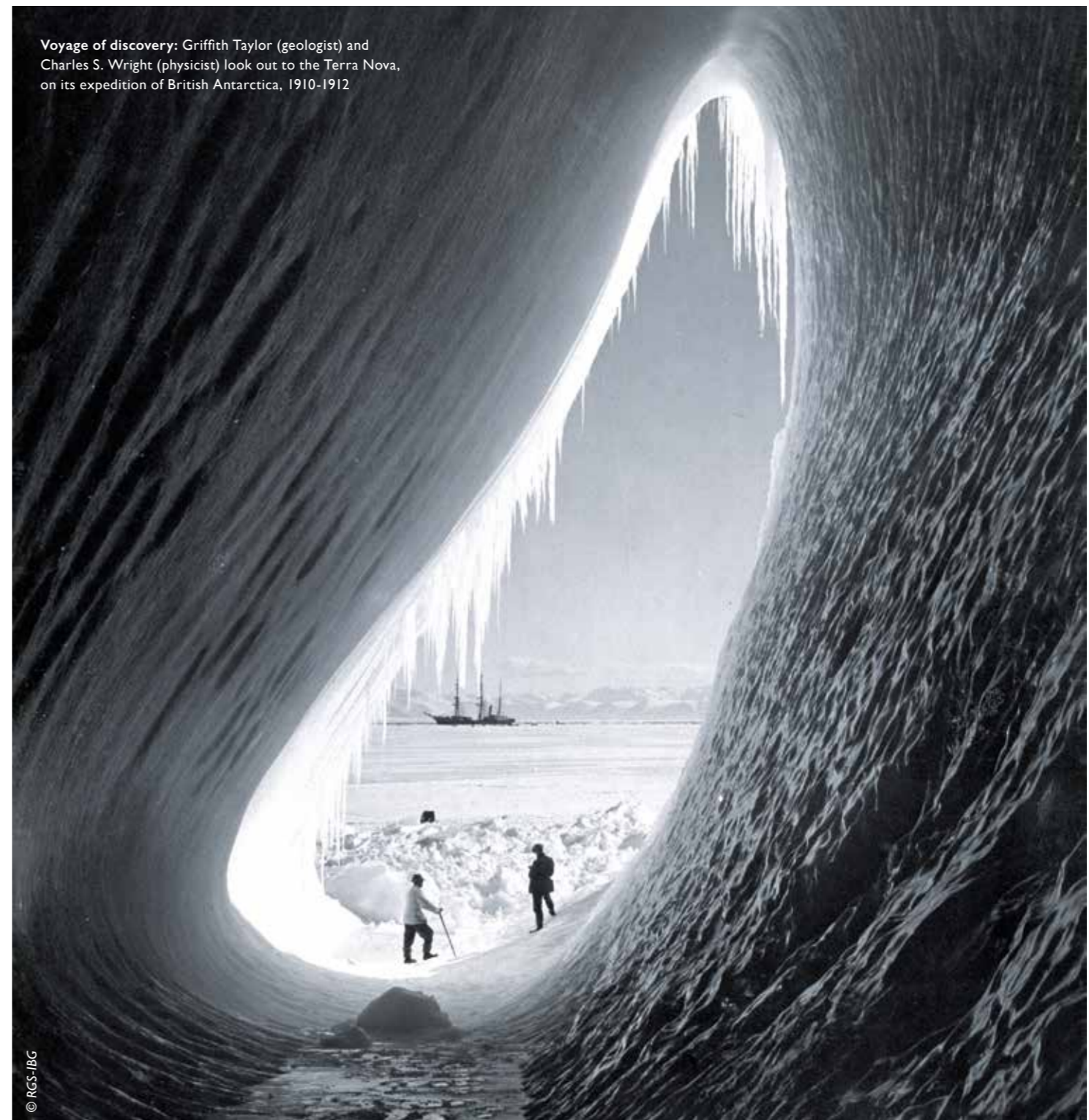
**“We're doing an interpretation project where we'll rehang pictures in the building, and introducing more contemporary art and photography”**

introducing more contemporary art and photography, and in doing so we're not wrapping difficult figures in plastic and hiding them in the basement; we're adding interpretation to explain why they were important at the time. Also we plan to add additional layers of interpretation that will be accessible online to add context and explanation. The key thing we want to do is to get people engaging with what we stand for today, which is particularly sustainability-driven problem-solving, understanding and addressing issues caused by migration, resource depletion and other global challenges we're facing.

**Your background is in academia, notably as Professor of Environment and Society, and Head of Geography at the Open University. What appealed to you about the role of Director at RGS and was there anything that surprised you or confounded your expectations about the organisation when you began working there?**

My father never knew what I did as a Social Scientist, or what it was for, but he did know what the Royal Geographical Society was, and I wanted to please him! In addition to that I'd worked in and with the Society before, and I saw interesting potential for it to play an even bigger role in some of the big issues of the day and I think we're making some progress with that. I think it's got great potential for its convening power, and I was interested in its positive work back in the 80s and 90s, helping set the agenda for conversations around biodiversity and climate change issues and I think it's got more to give today in relation to those themes.

Voyage of discovery: Griffith Taylor (geologist) and Charles S. Wright (physicist) look out to the Terra Nova, on its expedition of British Antarctica, 1910-1912



© RGS-IBG

**I defy anyone not be energised by the trials of Shackleton's crew escaping what looked like certain death and managing to bring back scientific samples with them on the Endurance expedition**

**Given that the term 'geography' covers such a broad range of subjects, from the human to the physical/ landscape, which projects have you overseen at RGS that you find most exciting and rewarding? What's your particular passion in this area?**

Tomorrow (7 December 2023) we'll be bringing together commissioners from all of the major broadcasters and streaming channels to engage with complex global issues; climate, sustainability, migration and

demography (the science of populations), to refresh their storytelling about these issues. Earth Stories is the name of the project, and it connects specialist knowledge with people that reach mass audiences. I was aware that the broadcast industry is struggling about where to take these stories next, and specialists are struggling with how to engage audiences; broadcasters aren't about to go and do a PhD in climate change. So, I think the RGS is perfectly well placed, partly

because of our fantastic building but also because of its distinctive history of convening people; it can offer a neutral ground for those conversations to take place. A separate example is that we have an exceptionally interesting and lovely site with these amazing collections within a fantastic cultural estate in Kensington; I want the building to work harder for us and to do that we need to invest in it. We have some great ideas for that to make what's already a fantastic place to visit an even richer and more rewarding and inclusive place to come to.

**Social media has made the world feel a lot smaller, shining a spotlight on some of the world's lesser-known regions and cultures, while also accelerating the rise of a more consumerist-focused travel; to what extent do you think it's been a positive influence on our broader understanding of the world, and what are the downsides? Does this affect your education work in schools for example, where students might have a preconceived notion of certain areas of the world due to a wider availability of media?**

One of the things we know about social media and particularly the fact that the visual is so important within it, is that it generates an appetite for millions of people to think they want to go to Venice or Antarctica, and I don't think either of those things can sensibly happen. At the same time it can and should be possible for people to 'sip not gulp' their kerosene, to think really hard about making their investments in travel to be as rewarding and meaningful as they can be, and organisations like us can help with that.

But we can also help people communicate experiences effectively so that we don't all have to travel to a place to 'get close to it'. So personally I don't think I'll go to Antarctica, but I know some ways to have a really rich experience of what that place is like; and actually that's where

**In that sense I think that climate change – for all the difficult things it means – might encourage an outbreak of wisdom**

I think social and digital media can go next to give us a richer documentary experience from those people who do make journeys so that the rest of us don't necessarily have to. Hence we could all be given incredible experiences of distant places without having to leave home, and in parallel, I think an organisation such as ours can help keep



people engaged and curious, to support their ambitions for thoughtful travel near where they live. Get interested in your commute, your local park, find ways that you can make the places you live more rewarding and their journeys through them more satisfying. I think that we can be an agitator for purposeful travel whether it's very local or global, and I think emerging media forms will be really interesting from that point of view.

**The theme for this edition focuses on the power of plants and their potential to play a large role in alleviating environmental issues. Your role as Co-Founder of the Culture and Climate Change Group must have given you some insight into this subject; what do you think harnessing the power of plants might do for us and the planet?**

I think that the knowledge that's emerged in the last few decades about sustainability and resource depletion, but particularly climate change helps us to 'finish Darwin's sentence'; one way of reading his work is that he was forcefully reminding us that human beings are in and of the natural world. We've spent

a few hundred years thinking of ourselves as separate from it; thinking of the natural world as a resource for humans to exploit, an endless resource pool we can draw upon without

having to pay the bill. I think that climate change particularly forces us to rethink our place in the world – it demands that we find a more modest account of who we are. Our relationship with plants for example, becomes one where we recognise that we're dependant on plants for our own health. In that sense I think that climate change –



for all the difficult things it means – might encourage an outbreak of wisdom. It might be a tipping point where we recognise that we need to think of ourselves and our place in the world very differently. I think there are signs of it already happening and that might see us really move to a much more imaginative relationship, both as seeing humans as being more modestly placed in a network of existence and also, I think a truer, more accurate representation of who we are.

**How do you see the evolving role of RGS in an ever-changing world and what's next for the organisation?**

One of the most regularly asked questions of us by journalists is 'is there anything left to explore?'. One answer to that is a very grand thought, which is that human beings have just made the planet a lot more dynamic again, intensifying the relationship between us and the living world. We are changing the world dramatically and quickly so there's a big job for our researchers, teachers and learners, professors and communities but also the enthusiastic non-specialist members of whom we have many (and would welcome new members from ROSL too!) for all of us to play a part in making a better world.

*Find out more about the Royal Geographical Society, including how you can get involved, at [www.rgs.org/join-us](http://www.rgs.org/join-us)*

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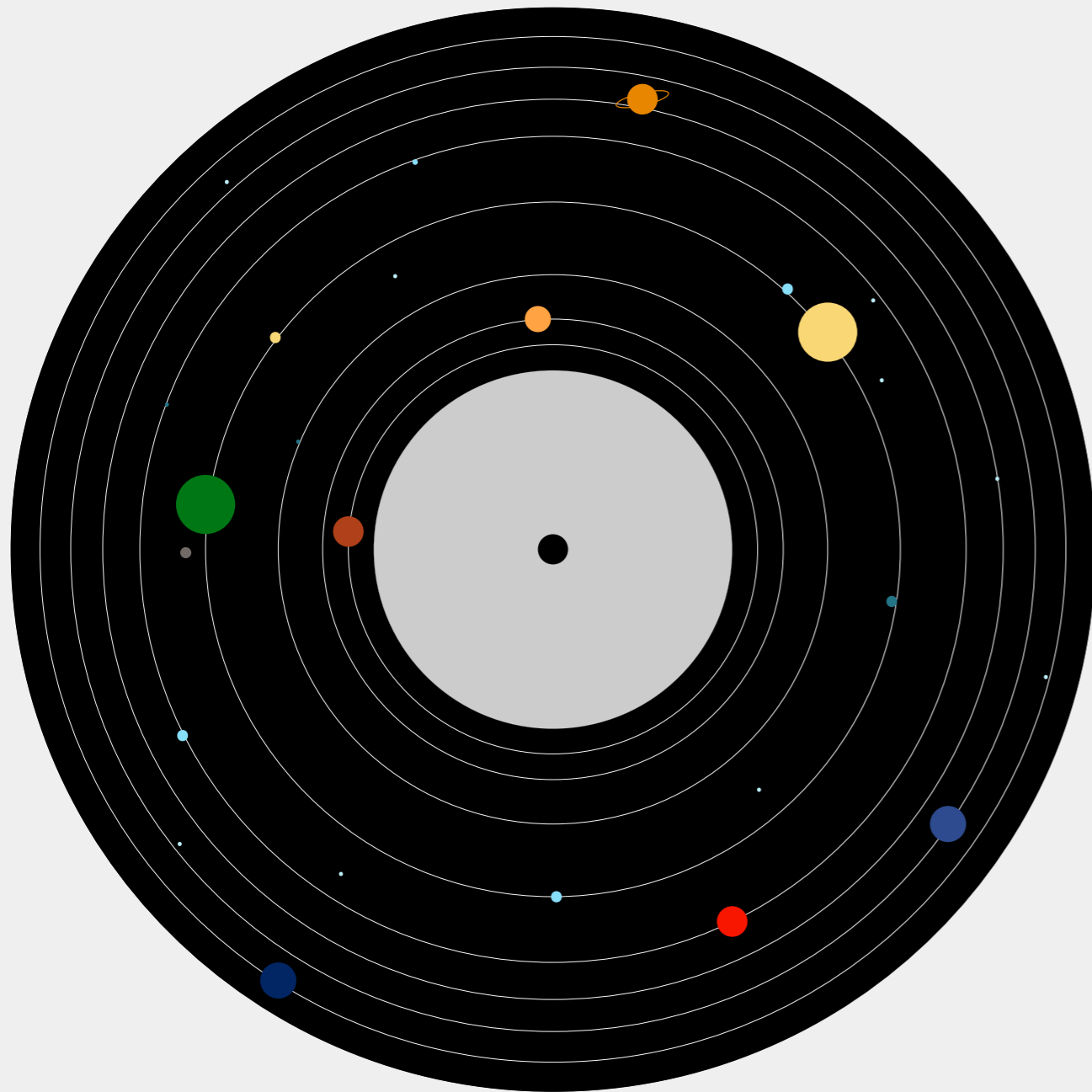


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# CONJURING THE COSMOS

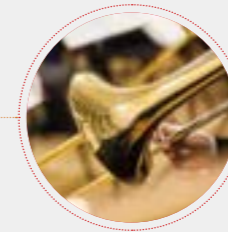
The magic behind Holst's Planet Suite

As we celebrate Holst's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday with a special concert, musician and writer Hugh Morris discovers the inspiration behind the composer's best-loved works



## Holst's birth

Gustav Theodore Holst was born on 21 September 1874 in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, from three generations of musicians in his family



## A composer's life

Holst played trombone professionally to help support his studies, performing at seaside resorts in the summer months



## Lifelong friends

Ralph Vaughan-Williams and Holst became lifelong friends, and would each play their compositions to each other for their companion to critique



## Folk song

Much like his friend Vaughan-Williams, Holst had a deep interest in folk song, resulting in a suite called a *Somerset Rhapsody* which was based on four folk themes

A speck appears on the horizon, approaching at speed. Marching forward juggernaut-like is 'Mars, the Bringer of War', the first of the seven-movement orchestral piece 'The Planets', written by the composer Gustav Holst between 1914 and 1917. In the seven minutes of 'Mars', faint becomes blunt, miniscule becomes massive, and terror reigns.

By far his most performed and most popular work, 'The Planets' has become the calling card for Holst. But past the fame of 'I Vow to Thee My Country' (a setting of part of the 'Jupiter' movement, with solemn, patriotic lyrics added by Sir Cecil Spring Rice), the piece also represents something of the man himself.

Unlike his colleague and firm friend Ralph Vaughan Williams, Holst struggled with the musical architecture of larger forms – symphonic forms in particular – preferring instead to write smaller musical spans (the

chamber opera *Sāvitri* and the Suites for Military Band are two celebrated examples of that tendency.) Though one of the longest and most complex pieces he wrote, that sensibility is on show in 'The Planets' too. United by a loose programme of titles rather than any sort of musical development or theme, each movement of 'The Planets' is remarkably different from one another in terms of tone colour, texture, character and mood. There's an essential originality to the work too, particularly with the way it is proportioned, with its fearsome opening ('Mars') exuberant middle ('Mercury', 'Jupiter') and its extended inward retreat at the close ('Neptune').

Perhaps the main reason that 'The Planets' is held so fondly is for its strength as an orchestral canvas. An extravagant statement for large

orchestra first performed in full in 1920 – at a time when resources were thin on the ground following the First World War – it requires a big, committed orchestra and a women's choir to realise this most excitingly colourful of scores. But it was thanks to two dedicated pianists in Hammersmith that it even exists at all.

After graduating from the Royal College of Music and pursuing work as a trombone player in orchestras around the UK, Holst eventually found a job as Director of Music at St Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith. (Holst's eerie rhapsody for wind band 'Hammersmith' is one of a number of pieces that carry references to this time.) Years later, the piano duo (and former staff members at the school) John and Fiona York would

**Holst was influenced by the broader aims of the Theosophical movement, which engaged in a reassessment of cultural values, encouraging areas like spiritualism and mythology**

uncover a leather-bound score for 'The Planets', scored for four-hands piano. But was it arranged? Or sketched? Or might it have existed for piano beforehand? Unable to properly play the piano due to neuritis in his right hand, Holst enlisted

two colleagues, Nora Day and Vally Lasker, as his 'scribes'. Day and Lasker would play the music of the ailing composer on the school's Broadwood grand, helping Holst to realise the ideas in his head, while also conducting a lot of the menial work of copying and arrangement. The single piano version of the score – that clocked in at almost an hour of music – was dedicated to them both; without them, what would eventually become the full score would likely never have seen the light of day.

Today, there's a very literal understanding of the kind of media that might accompany 'The Planets': NASA-fied scientific images, underscored by extremely characterful if somewhat eccentric music. But, as Anthony Tommasini wrote in *The New York Times* in 2010, 'what the planets might actually be like

was not the point' for Holst.

That 'The Planets' has little basis in science or space travel is plain to see; in what scientific realm is Jupiter 'the bringer of jollity', or Uranus 'the magician'? Titles like 'Mercury, the Winged Messenger' or 'Neptune, the Mystic' initially suggest a basis in astrology, but the inspiration for 'The Planets' goes further than star charts and horoscopes. Holst was influenced by the broader aims of the Theosophical movement, which engaged in a re-assessment of cultural values (encouraging areas like spiritualism or mythology) and investigated other, non-European cultures and religions. Holst delved into this world as a way of both broadening his mind (to forms of thought including occultism and gnosticism) and his horizons, especially towards Indian philosophy. There are traces of all of these philosophical adventures in Holst's music: 'Sāvitri', which sets a section of the Mahābhārata, the gnostic-influenced 'Hymn of Jesus' and 'The Cloud Messenger', a setting of Sanskrit poet Kālidāsa.

This vein of thought influenced the construction of 'The Planets' too. The particular structure of the titles are closely linked to headings in a booklet by Alan Leo that Holst was reading at the time, called *What Is a Horoscope?* And, while scientifically, the route Holst takes through the solar system makes no logical sense. But, astrologically speaking, 'the pattern is clear', Raymond Head wrote in *TEMPO* in 1993: 'The order of the planets symbolis[es] the unfolding experience of life from youth to old age.' There's brio, vigour, and melancholy in 'The Planets', but something distinctly unusual too. As the score retreats into the distance, some of Holst's other worlds come into view.

*We'll be holding a special concert to celebrate the birth and works of Holst in 2024; please keep an eye out on our events page [www.rosl.org.uk/events](http://www.rosl.org.uk/events), and email newsletters for more information.*

Previous Page: Aelfred Hillman –  
The Painter's Mother.  
This page: clockwise (L-R): Sabrina  
Rosenheim – Thaismina in the Kitchen;  
Niall MacCrann – The Untold



## Picture this

### HOW TO START YOUR OWN ART COLLECTION

With RBA RISING STARS returning to the Clubhouse at the end of April, we sat down with Visual Arts Curator Robin Footitt asking him how one should go about starting an art collection, illustrated with some wonderful artwork from last year's show

With RBA RISING STARS returning to the Clubhouse at the end of April, we sat down with Visual Arts

Curator Robin Footitt asking him how one should go about starting an art collection.

'RBA RISING STARS has proven to be a very popular exhibition and it's easy to see why,' says Robin, who has curated all of ROSL's varied and popular exhibitions over the past two years. 'This annual shortlist of 40 young artists based in the UK are producing some of the most skilled and exciting figurative work available. Last year ROSL sold 12 of the pieces on display for an excess of £12,000 – many purchasing work for the first time. Painting has always been a popular medium to collect but I have noticed a growing interest in works on paper, which are a more affordable means to buy something unique and original.'

Held as an open call by the Royal Society of British Artists (RBA) for any artist under the age of 35 working in the UK, the opportunities for those selected for RBA RISING STARS include exhibitions with ROSL and Mall Galleries, significant prize money (increasing to a £5,000 main prize plus two additional runner-up prizes worth £1,000 each this

**Artwork exists to open up new ways of seeing the world around us, it's full of hope**




year) and a prestigious Rome Scholarship month-long residency at Sala Uno, an arts centre in the heart of Rome.

Robin has participated in the selection process over the past two years as a part of the RBA Committee, linking ROSL even further with the talented artists on view.

His contribution hasn't gone unnoticed by our members it seems, with many encouraged to take the steps to find a space in their own homes and bring a part of the exhibition home with them.

'My advice would always start with encouragement; thank you for taking an interest in creativity!' says Robin. 'Artwork exists to open up new ways of seeing the world around us, it's full of hope and largely overlooked as something of a necessity in the modern world of appliances and devices. By connecting with art, you are seeing something of an imaginative spark in real time, it's a lasting impression that endures and stays with us long after looking away.'

Secondly, it's good to be aware of your own available space – artwork does need room to breathe (although I do admire the veracity of art collectors who adorn their walls using every inch available). Think about your interests and reason as to why something is particularly interesting or speaks to you personally' he adds.

As well as the purchase of Aelfred Hillman's 'The Painter's Mother' (opposite) which was awarded the main prize in 2023, 





Clockwise (L-R) Emilia Chubb – Beigel Bake-11pm; Hettie Inness – A Warm Intrusion; Joshua Donkor – The Professor. I have more souls than one; Katrine Lyck – Peak; Zoe Lambert – British Summertime 2



many of the other artists' works that were bought during RBA RISING STARS have gone on to receive significant success in the past 12 months.

**Joshua Donkor** (shortlisted for the main prize) received a highly commended prize awarded by the Artists Collecting Society during Frieze Art Fair as well as having a commissioned portrait of the writer Eric Ngalle Charles enter the National Art Collection of the National Library of Wales.

Royal College of Art 2023 MA Painting Graduate **Hettie Inness** participated in the group exhibition 'The Painted Room', curated by artist Caroline Walker at GRIMM Art Gallery, Amsterdam. She has also been commissioned by the Tate Collective (Tate's scheme open to 16-25 year olds worldwide, connecting people to art) to respond to a piece in their collection and has recently completed a January residency at Palazzo Monti in Brescia, Italy.

'Buying from an artist at the early stages of their career, between graduating and the first few years of a professional art practice, can be hugely rewarding' says Robin. 'I know as an artist myself that it goes beyond purely a financial transaction, you can watch the growth and development of that talent which can often result in unexpected, surprising pathways. Even if you just have an appreciation for

their technique, style or visual language rather than the work that is on display you can show support by following their social media for updates every now and then. Many collectors continue to add to their collection alongside artists whose work has become familiar, eventually following groups that show together in exhibitions or friends they had previously studied with.'



### RBA RISING STARS Exhibition

RBA RISING STARS 2024 is on view from 26 April until 7 July 2024. There is a Private View Opening on Thursday 25 April, 6-8PM in the Central Lounge, see [rosl.org.uk/events](https://rosl.org.uk/events) for further details and to RSVP.

*Robin has moved on from his time at ROSL this January; we'd like to thank Robin for all of his hard work, creativity and inspiration over the past two years, and wish him all the best in his future career.*

COMING SOON



# ROSL

SUMMER  
PLACE  
FESTIVAL

4 – 7 September 2024

ROSL's festival dedicated to the arts; a programme of talks, concerts and workshops, all expertly curated by our Arts and Food & Beverage teams. We'll be fusing ROSL's unique heritage with spectacular music, theatre, art, food, wine, wellness and much more, as we lift the curtain on a truly special four-day extravaganza of all things cultural. Open to all, come and sample our surroundings with events sure to inspire and delight in one Summer Place. Keep an eye on our website and email newsletters for updates on the exciting events and speakers you'll find at Summer Place later this year

# NEWS & EVENTS

The latest from our Clubhouse; branches; art, music, and announcements

## Kenyan National Youth Orchestra Residential Course December 2023

ROSL Arts Manager Cerys Beesley reports on another successful year supporting the students of the Kenyan National Youth Orchestra (KNYO) during their 2023 residential course.

We set off from Heathrow very early on a chilly December morning, and with no snow on the runways this year, we were already off to a much better start. The UK Tutor team made it safely to Nairobi later that day, to enable to us to join the students at the start of the course the next day.

The course took place in a school called Mount Kenya Academy, which is about two hours north of Nairobi in a town called Nyeri,

where the orchestra and tutors were to spend the next week. Despite a few hiccups due to travel delays and the infamous roads of Nairobi, we were all delighted to be back together, meet the new members of

the orchestra and marvel at how tall some of the returning students had gotten in a year!

Our UK tutor team: Jordan Black (woodwind), Jane Lindsay (lower strings), Joe Richards (percussion) and Jamie Smith

(brass) quickly found their stride, finding ways through the varying learning levels to help each member of their sections. Jamie Smith (A4 brass, Grimethorpe Coillery Band) was a new and invaluable addition to the team this year, despite some initial problems with the students understanding his Huddersfield accent, he quickly set about making sure that he would be well remembered by the wind and brass sections by overseeing their warm ups and teaching them breathing techniques, that a lot of them found very exhausting in the mountain air, but improved their sound quality immediately. Clarinettist Jordan Black marvelled at the

**Clarinettist Jordan Black marvelled at the improvement his sections had made and how the wisdom he had imparted the year before had already reached the new members of the section**

improvement his sections had made and how the wisdom he had imparted the year before had already reached the new members of the section. Cellist Jane Lindsay had a lovely week with the lower strings, with a few new

members of varying skill levels, they quickly found their groove and became one of the most improved sections. Joe Richards's percussion section were also a mixture of new and returning members who had a great week learning new techniques and instruments with Joe, and they ended up opening the final concert with a brilliant section piece called Synders Lot, which the audience loved. The team were also able to make room for



members of varying skill levels, they quickly found their groove and became one of the most improved sections. Joe Richards's percussion section were also a mixture of new and returning members who had a great week learning new techniques and instruments with Joe, and they ended up opening the final concert with a brilliant section piece called Synders Lot, which the audience loved. The team were also able to make room for

some individual lesson time during the week to work on specific areas of technique which will prove invaluable to the young musicians, many of whom do not have regular access to music teachers.

The team overall found it a lot easier this year, without the disastrous journey to start us off, but having a familiarity with the team and some of the students enabled us to get to grips with the repertoire, technique and culture. The week culminated in a brilliant concert featuring sectional pieces alongside bigger repertoire including the Band of Brothers suite, Cockleshell Heroes, The Barber of Seville Overture, Tchaikovsky's March Slave and Mussorgsky's Great Gate of Kiev. KNYO also have a great commitment to playing and supporting Kenyan music and composers and as such original works and arrangements of famous Kenyan songs are also a great part of the repertoire, including a brilliant arrangement of Angels We Have Heard on High, which features the famous carol alongside African and jazz inspired rhythms and countermelodies. The gathered audience loved the concert and the music kept drawing

**What was great to think about was how unifying music really is and how far a musician can get without access to private instrumental lessons or even in a lot of cases, an instrument**

in bypassers from the local community, so that by the time the rousing encore was played the hall was full. The children in the audience were then invited to come and see, touch and try the orchestral instruments; recruitment is definitely starting earlier and earlier!

Our final evening with the orchestra was an informal concert and Q&A with the UK and Kenyan tutors and students, talking

about careers, pathways, importance of practice and listening to as much music as they can find. In a world where access to training and instruments is limited, what was great to think about was how unifying

music really is and how far a musician can get without access to private instrumental lessons or even in a lot of cases, an instrument. There was so much passion in that room, and I hope that all the students, regardless of whether they choose to pursue careers in music, still get as much out of music once they are too grown up to be a member of KNYO.

As Jamie had to dash back to the UK to play in the final Christmas gigs for Grimethorpe Colliery Band, the tutor team made a very early start on the final day to make sure he could see

as much of Nairobi before getting on a flight home. The whistle stop tour included the Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage, the Giraffe Centre and an afternoon game drive in Nairobi National Park which was a fantastic conclusion to a lovely week with KNYO.

This partnership which began in December 2022 and provides excellent quality teaching from our music alumni on the KNYO residential course for over 50 music students, has been made financially possible thanks to a generous legacy. If you'd like to contribute to projects such as this and our other educational, artistic and musical endeavours, please visit [www.community.rosl.org.uk/s/store](http://www.community.rosl.org.uk/s/store)

News & views  
ROSL NEWS

## Support Us

To allow ROSL to continue funding art and music education projects in the UK and around the Commonwealth, please consider donating at [www.rosl.org.uk/supportus](http://www.rosl.org.uk/supportus)

### ROSL's Annual Lecture 2023 featuring the Rt. Hon. William Hague

We were delighted to host the Rt. Hon. William Hague as our guest speaker during December's Annual Lecture, where he took part in a Q&A with ROSL's former Chairman the Rt. Hon. Alexander Downer and gave a speech addressing many of the pressing concerns facing the world today. For those who couldn't make it, we've transcribed and summarised some of Mr Hague's speech below, including a reminiscence about a very ominous meeting that he and former PM David Cameron had with Vladimir Putin back in 2011.

Russia offered a gas pipeline to the UK – you could imagine what we said. But it felt like a test of friendship; would we submit to his leverage. And that's what happened in Ukraine. They would not submit to his leverage in any way. And that's his version of friendship. We were still in a world that we thought was the 'normal' world, where globalisation was proceeding relentlessly, liberal democracy was steadily advancing; we could surely improve relations with Russia if we worked at it a bit, the Chinese would have no choice but to become more like us and we knew where the world was heading. Now think about how different it is.

Now in 2023 we're waiting for the answers to some very big questions in the balance – is climate change going to be sorted or out of control? Is AI going to be a huge boom for productivity? What is going to happen in the Ukraine-Russia war and are we entering a darker time in Europe where Russia is able to do that and get away with it? Is the Chinese economy going down cyclically or permanently? Is the US going to elect a president who might be very disruptive of the whole Western alliance? All these and many other things are in the balance today and by 2030 we hope we'll know the answers to these questions. But ten years ago we weren't waiting for the answers to any questions because we knew them, or thought we did.

We're in a different geopolitical as well as economic cycle now. History does go in those cycles, so we have to understand that the normal world has come to an end and now we're in a sustained period of much greater uncertainty and geo-political competition. That has many effects, including ten for a start. One is structurally higher inflation, something that central banks have been slow to appreciate because it interrupts supply chains. Second is the whole flow of energy has changed; those pipelines from Russia are standing empty now and some of them have been sabotaged. Third is that this is going to happen to the flow of critical

**We need a new space treaty for instance, as the outer space treaty of 1967 did not envision thousands and thousands of satellites going up there**

minerals in the world because now seeing what's happened with gas the Western world need to ensure their supply of minerals in a period of energy transition... Fourth is massive defence expenditure, for a long time into the future. Fifth is arguments about ESG (environmental, social and governance) and whether security is part of it; we've seen these big political debates, in the US about this. Sixth is a big decline in global governance, the ability to agree on treaties globally that solve pressing problems. We need a new space treaty for instance, as the outer space treaty of 1967 did not envision thousands and thousands of satellites going up there. But there's no chance of a space treaty, it's going to be the Wild West up there for a long time. Seventh



means the rise of more powerful networks of national allies. That might mean the strengthening of existing allies such as AUKUS for example, but there might be whole new networks. One I find intriguing is the I2U2 network, who talk every week; that's Israel, India, the United Arab Emirates and the US; not a network that you'd have seen ten years ago.

Eighth is the coupling of certain key technologies of the US and China which started in 5G and is now in semiconductors. Ninth it means resilience is much more important for countries than in the past; and tenth means there's much more state-sponsored innovation. In such a competitive world you have to be in the lead; in intelligent weapons systems or artificial intelligence, or in renewable energy. And so you have new state-sponsored programmes of innovation such as the inflation reduction act in the US, or our own tremendous programme of Quantum Research in the UK.'

**Our Public Affairs series features high-profile guest speakers throughout the year. Keep an eye on our events calendar for more at [rosl.org.uk/events](http://rosl.org.uk/events)**



### From the archive: ROSL's castle next door and drama on the roof

Margaret Adrian-Vallance looks at old prints of Over-Seas House showing the Gothic castle next door and a drama on the roof

In June 1851 a hot air balloon carrying Mr and Mrs Graham crashed onto the roof of Rutland House (then known as 16 Arlington Street) and caused considerable damage as depicted in a lithograph of the same year. The balloon then bounced off onto some chimney stacks where the basket and the Grahams became stuck.

Damaged on take-off from a racecourse near the Great Exhibition, the balloon had managed to skim the trees in Kensington Gardens and nearly landed safely in the Park before a 'boisterous wind' took it ever upwards.

Hundreds of people watched as the Grahams were eventually rescued by the police via Park Place.

Although hot air balloons were not unknown at the time – the first was launched

in 1783 by Pilatre De Rozier with a sheep, duck and chicken as passengers – this precarious flight was big news.

As the agitated Grahams approached 16 Arlington Street in their basket, they would have seen the Gothic splendour and turrets of Pomfret Castle looming up at no 18.

The castle was commissioned in 1757 by the Countess of Pomfret, nee Henrietta Louisa Jeffreys, granddaughter of the famous 'Hanging Judge' Jeffreys. Her love of all things Gothic made for a wonderfully incongruous addition to the skyline.

Nestling between the Castle and Rutland House is The Gatehouse which was then the

main entrance to Rutland House. It can still be seen at the end of Arlington Street, just past Le Caprice restaurant.

When it was built in 1736 it was a great novelty to have a gatehouse with a courtyard and stabling at the front of a house.

These were usually positioned at the back. The design by the architect James Gibbs caught on in a big way. It was convenient, gave a house privacy and muffled the sounds from the street.

Although the fairy tale castle has been replaced by modern buildings and a cavernous car park, Rutland House, Vernon House and William Kent House are still pleasingly recognisable today.

**Although hot air balloons were not unknown at the time – the first was launched in 1783 by Pilatre De Rozier with a sheep, duck and chicken as passengers – this precarious flight was big news**



## NEW WEBSITE COMING SOON!

After many months of hard work, we're delighted to reveal that members will be able to access a new and much improved ROSL website in the coming weeks. With an easily navigable and attractive design, you can browse our events and talks and purchase tickets, find out what's coming up at the Club, read past editions of

Overseas Journal and much more.

'We are delighted with how our vision has translated to the new site' says Dr Annette Prandzioch, Director General, 'We were keen to retain and promote the unique heritage and purpose of ROSL, while providing a modern, functional and seamless online and mobile experience for members.'

**We shall announce the launch date soon and encourage you to take a look. We request that those members who have not yet provided us an email address to do so, this will enable you to access the site in its entirety, book rooms and dining and enjoy dedicated members' content. Please email the membership team at [membership@rosl.org.uk](mailto:membership@rosl.org.uk).**

## In Memory of Joseph O'Connor

It's with sadness that we report the death of Honorary Lifetime Member and active member of the Bournemouth branch of ROSL, Joseph O'Connor

Joe O'Connor was born in Blaydon in the north-east of England on 9 December 1926 where he spent some of his childhood. He was keen at a variety of sports, but the ones he loved most and excelled at were billiards and snooker. He took these skills into competitions and was crowned the English Schoolboy Snooker Champion. The other continuing thread in Joe's life was travel and that too was ignited as a child when he went with his parents and brothers to live in Sudan while his father worked there. He also served in the Royal Signals regiment in the army

in Sudan. The north-east of England was where he met May (née Dawson) and where they forged a strong loving relationship that kept them together for 71 years with an incredibly happy marriage and adventures all round the world. He also later on in life became an avid follower of Formula One motor racing. Joe is survived by his beloved wife and constant companion, May, his daughter Helen and son-in-law Chris, two grandsons, Tom and Nick and recently two great grandchildren, Oskar and Mia. Joe's funeral was held in September 2023 in Corpus Christi Church, Bournemouth with friends and family in attendance. He is fondly remembered as a loving, very modest and charming man with a wickedly dry sense of humour who would never say a bad word about anyone. He will be very much missed by family and friends.



# 1910

DINING ROOM

## A NEW SEASON OF DELICIOUS EATING AT ROSL

Spring is here and so is our new 1910 Dining Room menu; along with a delectable new selection of seasonal dishes concocted by Chef Elliot Plimmer, we're also introducing new cocktail options and a refreshed wine list to help you make the most of the season at the Clubhouse.





## Diplomacy and Wine: In Conversation with the Ambassador of Hungary

Wednesday, 13 of March 2024, 6.30pm, Over-Seas House

Discover the brilliance and beauty of Hungarian wines at this fascinating event hosted by His Excellency Ferenc Kumin, Ambassador of Hungary. You'll try a unique selection of wines including the refreshing native grape variety Furmint, the legendary Bikavér, also known as 'Bull's Blood', a classic Hungarian red cuvée and the iconic Tokaji Aszú, known for centuries as 'the wine of kings and the king of wines', and considered to be the best natural sweet wine in the world. Canapés with Hungarian cheese, charcuterie and desserts will accompany the wines.



## Nittardi Chianti Dinner

Wednesday 10 April, 6.45pm, Over-Seas House

Immerse yourself in the rich scents and flavours of Tuscany, and delight in an authentic Italian menu, thoughtfully curated by our talented Italian Chef, Vincenzo Vasca. Each dish will be expertly paired with an exquisite wine from our partner, Nittardi Chianti. From a historic estate, once a defensive fortress, the wines are renowned as 'Nectar Dei' or The Nectar of the Gods.



## Annual Music Competition Finals

Every week until 19 March, Over-Seas House

An absolute treat for music-lovers, our AMC finals will be the musical jewel in our late-winter calendar, featuring the brightest and best rising music stars. Now in our 72<sup>nd</sup> year, the competition boasts £75,000 in awards and has provided a springboard into the industry for scores of musicians. Join us to see who will enter the illustrious ranks of our ROSL Annual Music Prizewinners and support the brilliant young musicians who take to the Princess Alexandra Hall stage: Strings Final (5 March), Ensemble A (12 March), Ensemble B (19 March), AMC Overseas Final (26 March).

Season tickets are available, or purchase individual tickets at [rosl.org.uk/events](http://rosl.org.uk/events) Annual Music Competition finals.



## EVENTS LISTINGS

Settle in for the new season with our vibrant calendar of book talks, art exhibitions, concerts and much more at ROSL. Visit [rosl.org.uk/events](http://rosl.org.uk/events)

ROSL AMC Section Final – Strings  
Tuesday 5 March

Exclusive Opening Tour of Arundells  
Saturday 9 March

ROSL AMC Section Finals – String Ensembles  
Tuesday 12 March

ROSL AMC – Overseas Awards  
Tuesday 26 March



Exclusive Opening Tour of Arundells  
Saturday 9 March

Public Affairs Series  
Thursday 14 March

ROSL AMC Section Finals – Mixed Ensembles  
Tuesday 19 March

ROSL AMC – Overseas Awards  
Tuesday 26 March

Brahms, Fauré & Ravel with Michael Foyle & Maksim Štšura  
Thursday 25 April

Hitchcock Book Talk  
Wednesday 1 May

## RBA Rising Stars Private View

Tuesday 23 April, 6pm, Over-Seas House

Immerse yourself in a stunning collection of work from the stars of the future at this exhibition celebrating the bright young things of the contemporary art world. Hosted in partnership with the Royal Society of British artists, this collaboration, now in its sixth year, showcases the extraordinary talent of 40 artists, all under 35, shortlisted for RBA Rome Scholarship 2024. Amongst other awards for the finalists is a one-month residency at Sala Uno, an arts centre in the heart of Rome.

To confirm your place please RSVP at [rosl.org.uk/events](http://rosl.org.uk/events)



## MEMBER EVENTS

Get involved with a programme of events and activities at Over-Seas House

### London Group

Back in November the London group visited the Linnean Society at its purpose built home in Burlington House. Our visit began with our expert guide telling us about Linnaeus, his collection and the work of the Society. Linnaeus, best remembered for his binomial system of taxonomy, played a fundamental part in the development of natural science and it was a great privilege to be taken into the underground store to see the Society's collection of his original manuscripts, correspondence, and publications, and his specimens of plants, insects, shells and even whole dried fish! Our visit included a tour of the building with its impressive library. Our thanks to our guide and the Linnean Society for an extremely interesting and enjoyable event.

We have planned a London Group talk by Tim Potter on the London area of Clerkenwell with a focus on how its south-west corner came to be called Little Italy. The talk will be in the second half of March, with a walk organised for mid-April, so please keep an eye out for ROSL's email newsletters for more information nearer the time.  
**Anne Wilkinson, London Group Executive Secretary**

### Member-led Activities

#### Book Group

The Book Group meets in person at the Club, as well as on Zoom for overseas members and those unable to attend at the Club, on Wednesdays, once a month, to discuss primarily novels. The discussion begins at either 11.15am or 5pm, and we meet afterwards for lunch or dinner (optional).

The Zoom discussions, are at 6pm-7.30pm, also on Wednesdays.

Dates of meetings and books to be discussed: 27 March, 11:15am, *Notre Dame* by Victor Hugo: 24 April, 11:15am, *The Talisman* by Sir Walter Scott: 22 May, 11.15am, *A Moveable Feast* by Ernest Hemingway: 26 June, 11.15am, *Cousin Bette* by Honore de Balzac.

#### Bridge Club

The Bridge Club meets at ROSL every Monday 2pm-4pm (except on Bank Holidays) to play ACOL Bridge. Once a month there is a refresher course with a truly excellent tutor £20pp, all other play is free. New members are welcome. Lunch at 12.30pm is optional. We occasionally have both face to face and online courses. If you are interested please contact Eve (contact below).

#### Backgammon Club

Meets on Wednesdays 2pm-4pm and for lunch (optional) at 12.30pm. New members are welcome.

#### Theatre & Opera Group

We go regularly to the theatre, opera, ballet and modern dance. We also go to Glyndebourne every year.

To join any of the Member-led activities, please contact Eve at [E.Mitleton-Kelly@mitleton-kelly.org.uk](mailto:E.Mitleton-Kelly@mitleton-kelly.org.uk)

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