

MAY/JUNE 2021 sussexlifemagazine.co.uk

SUSSEX LIFE

VICTORY AGAINST ALL ODDS

*Brighton actress
plays the first British
woman to swim the
English Channel*

Sparkling staycations

*Sip and sleep at
these vineyards
from Chichester
to Battle*

ARUNDEL PAINTER

Piers Ottey's adventures in art

PLUMPTON PIG FARMER

Meet Flavian Obiero

EASTBOURNE'S SARAH TAYLOR

*The cricket star on
making a comeback*

17 pages of garden inspiration

Tips to help your roses bloom

Perch Hill's Sarah Raven on growing edible flowers

The great estates: From West Dean Gardens to Wakehurst

£4.50



Welcome

One of the many lessons I've learned over the course of the past year is that, while it's easy to get thrown off course by factors that are out of our control, it's important not to lose track of the things that make your heart sing. For many people, finding those hobbies and passions that make you want to jump out of bed each morning with a smile of your face brings an exciting new dimension to life – even if that means stepping out of your comfort zone. For me, although it was many years ago now, learning to scuba dive was a revelation. Not only did it push me to test my limits by fighting my natural urge to panic underwater, but it ended up being so much fun that, when I close my eyes, I can still remember the feeling of discovering the treasures of the sea.

With this in mind, I was pleasantly surprised to discover the growing number of water sports available in West Sussex. From stand-up paddle boarding along the River Arun to kitesurfing in Littlehampton there is something for all ages and abilities and our experts say that even being by the water can have a positive effect on your mood. Now that all of this is possible again, it may just be the boost you need to get back out there. Turn to our feature on page 36 for all the motivation you need.

Speaking of the great outdoors,



Photo: Adur and Worthing Councils

Take a look at these wildflower patches, which are ready for new growth across Worthing

this issue packed with great garden inspiration. Whether you've been toiling away in your garden during lockdown or simply appreciate the way a stunning floral display can brighten your day then we have plenty of suggestions for things to see and do. From our choice of 25 glorious gardens to visit in the county (page 12), to ideas for dressing your garden in time for summer (page 156) and Sarah Raven's tips on growing edible flowers (page 162) – enjoying our green spaces while the sun shines, and even when it doesn't, is food for the soul.

An important date on the calendar is Sussex Day on June 16. It was founded by Worthing resident Ian Steedman in 2006. Ian and I had a wonderful chat – thanks Ian! – about how

the day came about: 'I received a letter from a retired vicar in Hove suggesting St Richard's Day as Richard of Chichester is the patron saint of Sussex,' he explained. While you may see some events popping up in the county as well as the Sussex flag flying on that date, Ian says there's no set guidance on what people should or shouldn't do to celebrate. 'I like to think that having an official day serves as a reminder for people to feel pride in where they live,' he says. 'It's a day for us all'.

I hope you enjoy this issue. ♦



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MEET OUR CONTRIBUTORS



Leigh Clapp

Leigh delights in exploring the gorgeous gardens of Sussex. Check out her 25 glorious gardens cover story. **Page 12.**



Jeremy Blackmore

This month, freelance writer Jeremy meets cricket legend Sarah Taylor on the verge of a comeback. **Page 50.**



Ese Odetah

Lifestyle journalist Ese chats to Piers Ottey about his love for painting and what inspires him after nearly 50 years. **Page 80.**

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Making waves

By Faye Bartle

Brighton actress Kirsten Callaghan, star of forthcoming Sussex film *Vindication Swim*, talks about her love of sea-swimming, the hero she is bringing back to life, and the challenges of lockdown.



Photo: Studio Essay

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Go on dive in!

By Faye Bartle

As summer comes around its time to take to the water – we uncover the variety of exciting watersports taking place off the Sussex coastline, from wing foiling to mermaiding.



Photo: James Jagger photography

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Keeping it real

By Jeremy Blackmore

Why former England wicketkeeper Sarah Taylor turned her back on cricket, and how coaching at Bede's and Sussex Cricket has encouraged her to make a comeback.



Photo: Courtesy of Bede's



ON THE COVER

A view of the 100-metre-long Edwardian pergola at West Dean Gardens, West Sussex. Photo: Christopher Nicholson/Alamy Stock Photo
We have tried to keep up with the closures and lockdown rules surrounding COVID-19 but with such a fast-changing situation it is inevitable that certain guidelines may have changed since *Sussex Life* went to print.

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KEEPING *it real*

Former England Women wicketkeeper, Sarah Taylor talks tackling her demons, making history by joining the coaching staff at Sussex Cricket and why she's making a comeback

WORDS: Jeremy Blackmore

After dusting off her cricket bag following a two-year pause, it took Sarah Taylor just one practise session at the nets to rediscover her love for the game and convince her to make a return to competitive action this summer.

Widely regarded as one of the sport's greatest ever wicketkeepers – she earned 226 England caps during a 13-year international career and has the most wicketkeeping dismissals (227) in the history of women's international cricket, backed up by achieving more than 7,000 international runs – Sarah retired from the professional game in 2019, citing her ongoing battle

'I felt like I just blinked and all of a sudden two years have gone by, but I was still having a hit'

with anxiety. She embraced a new role as sports and life skills coach at Bede's in Eastbourne, the school she once attended, and discovered a new passion for coaching.

However, she had not closed the door completely on a return to playing domestic cricket. In the spring, despite not picking up a bat for 18 months while being furloughed during lockdown, she decided to reclaim her kit from the Bede's storeroom and return to the nets to see if she



Photo: Courtesy of Bede's

ABOVE: Sarah embraced a new role as sports and life skills coach at Bede's in Eastbourne

LEFT: Sarah competing against Australia at the 2017 ICC Women's World Cup Finals

missed playing. It was enough to recapture the feeling she had when debuting for Sussex and England. Now, she is poised to play for franchise side Welsh Fire in new short-form tournament, the Hundred, this summer.

'It's weird because I didn't feel like anything had changed,' says Sarah. 'I felt like I just blinked and all of a sudden two years have gone by, but I was still having a hit.'

'So, yeah, I hit them well. I

was just doing it for the love of it really, which was really nice. I felt like I was the young girl that I was back when I debuted for England. That kind of no-nonsense, no-fear, just experiment, just do whatever I wanted to do and play with confidence.

'I'd lost that towards the end of my career. My confidence with my keeping was so high, but with batting my confidence was so low. And you can see that in how I batted. I carried a lot of demons. ▶



Photo: Courtesy of Bede's

They say you're best when fresh. So, I didn't have many demons going into that net. It was just really nice.'

FINDING HER STRENGTH

Raised in Seaford, Sarah first discovered cricket as an after-school activity at Telscombe Cliffs Primary School in Peacehaven and soon found herself in the Sussex age group pathway.

An England debut followed in summer 2006 at the age of just 17. Three years later, Sarah was already a World Cup and World T20 winner, as well as a member of two successful Ashes sides.

She was a mainstay of the England side for the next 10 years. Her lightning reflexes with the gloves and her elegant, commanding strokeplay saw her named in the team of the decade by the game's world governing body. She has spoken candidly about her battles with anxiety, which saw her first step away from cricket in 2016 and seek support before returning to play a key role in England's World Cup win the following year.

More recently, she has been a passionate supporter of Sussex Cricket's Mental Health & Wellbeing Hub, an online

ABOVE:
Sarah Taylor
(centre) with
Bede's students
Freya Kemp (left)
Alice Capsey (right)

BELOW:
Sarah Taylor is
the first female
coach of a men's
county side at
Sussex Cricket

platform launched in January that's backed by the NHS. It was designed to help the local community in response to data from the Office for National Statistics that showed almost one in five adults were likely to be experiencing some form of depression during the pandemic – that's nearly double the pre-COVID-19 level.



Photo: Courtesy of Bede's

Sarah tells her story on the platform's Champions Cinema, an ever-growing collection of thousands of videos where people from all walks of life across Sussex share their experiences of mental health and wellbeing to try and help others. The initiative is a world-first for a professional sports club, drawing upon the power of shared experiences to provide support and hope.

On the hub, she talks about first experiencing anxiety as a teenager. By her mid-20s, social anxiety had started to spill over into her cricket. In her worst moments, she would shut herself away, unable to catch her breath.

She understands how important it is to talk. Opening up to a teammate on a tour of India was the first time she admitted she had a problem. From then on it was easier to speak about.

'I know from my own experiences how helpful it is to share how we're feeling when it comes to looking after our mental wellbeing,' says Sarah. 'I thought I was the only one going through something and it's a really lonely place to be. So, to actually go on the Hub and see thousands of videos of people who are potentially going through exactly

the same kind of feeling helps you realise how normal it is. And to know something is quite normal actually eases that pressure a little bit of trying to deal with it.'

BACK IN THE GAME

Sarah's role at Bede's builds upon not only her sporting achievements, but also her vocal advocacy for positive mental health and wellbeing. In addition, she is breaking new ground at Sussex Cricket.

She first worked with the club last year to see how a professional environment operates at the men's level and to be there if one of the players needed someone to talk to as a mentor.

Having enjoyed the experience, in March she gladly accepted the offer of a role as Sussex wicket-keeping coach for the season, becoming the first female coach of a men's county side in the process.

'In her worst moments she would shut herself away, unable to catch her breath'

'Honestly, at the time, I didn't think anything of it. I just thought okay, well, I've worked with them in the winter, really enjoyed it and got on really well,' she says. 'I understand what Brownie [club captain/keeper Ben Brown] wants. I understand what Sussex are looking for. I can fit that mould, so I thought okay, let's go.'

'In an interview a couple of days before it was going to be announced someone said to me, "Sarah, you're going to be the first woman" and I couldn't believe it. It just felt so normal in the path that I was going on. I'm really, really honoured and thankful to Sussex for having that faith in me.'

A busy year awaits leading up to the inaugural Hundred competition. Before then, Sarah



Photo: Tom Shaw/England and Wales Cricket Board

is hitting the gym and the nets as often as possible before she joins up with Welsh Fire in the school holidays.

She is excited about what lies ahead, believing the Cardiff-based side is a good fit for her. She is particularly looking forward to playing in the same team as Australian captain Meg Lanning and two other Australian internationals: Beth Mooney and Georgia Wareham.

'I was like, do you know what, I've got an opportunity here to play in a brand-new tournament, a brand-new franchise, in the

first year as well,' she says. 'So, I thought, absolutely. Okay, I could do this.'

'I just want to enjoy my cricket. I had a good chat with Motty [head coach Matthew Mott] and he's very much about that for me,' she adds. 'He understands the path that I'm on and the path that the team is on. You take away the international players and we're a pretty young side, so it just fit. It was too good to turn down really.' ♦

To find out more about the Sussex Mental Health & Wellbeing Hub, see sussexcricket.frog.net

ABOVE: Sarah with her England teammate Anya Shrubsole at Lord's Cricket Ground in London for the 2017 ICC Women's World Cup Final

MY SUSSEX LIFE

Sarah shares some of her favourite things to see and do in the county...

I'm a Seaford girl at heart. I grew up there and we lived right near the beach, so I could literally walk to the beach in two seconds, turn left and just head straight up onto the cliffs. There's a bench right at the top that looks back over Seaford. I would sit there for hours. That was my happy place. If I was

stressed or trying to deal with anything, I'd take a book or some music and go sit up there. And that would be me. I'd be good for a few hours. That is literally one of my favourite things to do.

I enjoy walking along the beach in Eastbourne, where I live. It's just the most chilled, beautiful

beach. I don't care whether a beach has pebbles or sand. I will literally sit there all day with a cup of coffee and read and that is what calms me down. I could have lived in Brighton, but it's a bit too manic for me. I'm a foodie and Isaac At in Brighton is one of my favourite places to eat.