

NEWS in brief

Fly fishing for cancer sufferers

WOMEN affected by breast cancer are being encouraged to take up fly-fishing by South West Fishing for Life, whose qualified instructors can teach them the finer points. Specialists have confirmed that the action of casting a line is helpful in rebuilding tissues and muscles affected by the cancer, and breast cancer units at regional hospitals support the initiative, to be launched at Wimbleball Lake on Exmoor on Sunday. It will be a free taster day and further days are scheduled throughout the year. Anyone who would like to take part is invited to contact Gillian Payne at Holworthyfarm@aol.com

Just for girls

TWO free events for girls will be held at Plymouth libraries this month. The city council's library service's Girls' Night-In Tour for 11 to 18-year-olds includes live music from Tavistock folk singer Jenny Keegan, free hair styling from Creations Nail and Beauty and GHQ hairdressers and make-up sessions with the Body Shop. City Museum and Art Gallery staff will showcase fashions of bygone years and there will be "chick lit" to borrow. The fun is at Efford Library on Thursday at 3.30pm and St Budeaux Library on Thursday, April 17, at 4pm. To sign up, call Efford Library on 01752 308 985 or St Budeaux Library on 01752 306 237.

Virtual tour

MEMBERS of Kingsbridge Estuary Decorative and Fine Arts Society (KEDFAS) in South Devon were recently taken on a virtual visit to the Czech Republic with slides showing castles, mansions and a vast array of paintings. Presenter Barbara Peacock warned that the treasures, which have withstood political upheaval and neglect, are threatened by investors who want to turn them into hotels and sporting centres. For more information on KEDFAS lectures, tours, visits and study days, visit www.kedfas.org.uk or e-mail kedfasinfo@yahoo.com

Parking leaflet

A NEW leaflet explains how civil parking will be enforced in Cornwall if police relinquish responsibility next month. The county council has applied to the Department for Transport for civil parking enforcement powers and, if successful, will be responsible for enforcing on-street parking from May 5. To get the leaflet, visit www.cornwall.gov.uk/parking or call 01872 222000.

Classic thriller

A CRITICALLY acclaimed adaptation of Alfred Hitchcock's classic 1935 spy thriller *The 39 Steps* is on at Theatre Royal Plymouth from April 28 to May 3. Fresh from the West End and Broadway, it sees four actors play 139 roles in 100 minutes. Tickets are £10 to £21 and concessions are available. To book, call 01752 267 222 or visit www.theatreroyal.com

Love food, hate waste

CORNWALL County Council's waste awareness team has visited supermarkets across the county giving out free shopping lists and advice on reducing food waste, as part of the Love Food Hate Waste campaign.



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MNI20308_EWW02_03

● **SHIPSHAPE:** The Iron Maid on the water, above, and gig builder Brian Nobbs outside one of his two workshops with the repainted Iron Maid, left



MNI20308_EWW02_08



MNI20308_EWW02_05/PICTURES: EMILY WHITFIELD-WICKS

● **LABOUR OF LOVE:** Gig builder Brian Nobbs repainting the Iron Maid, which is going to the Isles of Scilly, and inset, Brian turning the gig's thole pins

Lovingly crafted gig will do crew proud at world championships

IT was a labour of love which has finally found a home. Two years ago, Brian Nobbs spent four months carefully crafting his second ever gig, the Iron Maid, at his workshop near Launceston.

But although there were plenty of people joining the blossoming sport, it never seemed to find a home.

A gig team on the beautiful Scillonian island of St Martins were desperate to have a championship standard gig.

However, the meticulously crafted boats all cost money and that part of the equation was missing for the small team. Until now.

In a poignant signing-off ceremony, Mr Nobbs and his wife Ginette travelled to St Martins to formally hand the boat over and wish all who row in her the best of luck.

"It was a bit sad to see her go," Mr Nobbs said. "She is a lovely boat, but they are a good bunch at St Martins. I know they will treat her well, and I think she will do them proud."

The boat represents a subtle shift in career for Mr Nobbs, who has a successful kitchen and furniture-making business in Launceston.

Although the 61-year-old trained as a shipwright on the Thames, his business was a decidedly landlubberly one.

And such it might have remained had Mr and Mrs Nobbs not gone for a breath of fresh air along the Cornish

coast. "There was a gig out on the water and I just stopped," he said.

"I thought it was a beautiful boat. I hadn't been near a boat for years, but I just stumbled across gig racing that day and I was bitten by the bug."

With his training as a shipwright, it wasn't hard for Mr Nobbs to build a boat and the opportunity to do so came quite by chance.

"My youngest daughter was at university, but working in a surf shop in Tavistock," he said.

"A guy had come into the shop with some flyers to see if anyone was inter-

ested in joining a gig club. He got talking to my daughter and then she came home and said 'look dad, they're trying to raise funds for a boat. You could build them one.'

"Well, I left it for a couple of days, then I phoned the chairman and put myself forward to volunteer to build their boat."

"They took me at my word and they had confidence in me, and gave me the chance of building their gig."

After some four months of hard labour – during which his friends joked that when he wasn't working on the

boat, he was asleep – the club had its new gig.

The Ginette, named after Mr Nobbs' wife – who also hardly saw him during its construction – was launched, and has helped propel the Tamar and Tavy Gig Club into the popular organisation it is today.

Mr Nobbs started on his second boat, Iron Maid, soon afterwards, and through a contact at the Tamar and Tavy club found that there was a crew based on St Martin's who were keen to have her.

The small team – one of two on the island – had previously built their own gig, Dauntless.

However, it wasn't constructed to the strict guidelines set down by the Cornish Pilot Gig Association and therefore could not be used in championships.

The Dauntless crew rowed the Iron Maid in the World Pilot Gig Championships in the year that it was built, and finished a very creditable tenth overall.

Two years later – and with the help of a grant – the Dauntless Rowing Club were able to buy the Iron Maid.

Richard Morton, whose family helped build the Dauntless and whose three sons will row in Iron Maid, said they were looking forward to rowing in the new boat.

They will get their first proper chance

How gig racing was revived

GIG racing can trace its roots back to the thriving Cornish and Scillonian ports of the 1800s.

Back then, the trim, agile boats were the workhorse of the harbour.

It is rumoured that gig racing began when crews would compete to get to an incoming large ship in order to win the purse of guiding it into port.

Whether this is myth or reality, it is certainly true that what probably started as necessity became a sport which could attract big crowds and handsome rewards.

In the 1840s, it was estimated that there were 400 gigs in Cornwall.

But by the turn of the century they were old hat, with one used for the last time on the Cornish main-

land, in St Ives, in the 1920s, and on the Scillies in 1938.

In the 1950s, gig racing was no more than a curiosity, as Newquay had the only pilot gig boats on the circuit.

And it might have remained such had it not been for Devoran boatbuilder Ralph Bird. He borrowed a few historic gigs and set up the Truro Three Rivers Race.

Within five years, four pilot gig clubs had been formed and, as a result of a meeting at Mr Bird's cottage in 1986, the Cornish Pilot Gig Association was formed two years later.

The CPGA is one of the country's fastest-growing sports and now boasts clubs as far as Bristol and Lyme Regis.

next month when the World Pilot Gig Championship will again turn the Isles of Scilly into a magnet for rowing enthusiasts.

The championships, which will be covered in depth by the WMN, kick off on Friday, May 2, with the main races taking place the following day.

"They are really excited about the Iron Maid and they're looking forward to competing in the championships," Mr Morton said.

"You have to feel at one with your boat, and the team certainly do.

"I know they will give it good home and will look after it."

Children to help cook Sunday roast at festival

FAMILIES will be shown how to cook a traditional Sunday roast at a food and drink festival this month, then encouraged to go home and try it themselves.

As part of the Year of Food and Farming, schoolchildren will help produce the traditional Sunday meal with The Well Hung Meat Company.

The South Devon organic meat retailer has announced it will return to the successful Exeter Festival of South West Food and Drink, now in its fifth year. It will be promoting its monthly meat box scheme and cold meat sales of its award-winning produce.

The highlight of the event will be production manager Julian Hodge taking part in the Food is Fun Marquee Roast.

This was created by Food from Britain and Taste of the West as part of the Year of Food and Farming initiative to reconnect children with locally grown produce. It aims to encourage families to cook a traditional Sunday lunch using local ingredients.

Chef Ron Hedicker will stage a Sunday lunch cookery demonstration, working with four children from a local school to cook a Sunday roast in front of a live audience.

The Well Hung Meat Company will provide organic lamb and Mr Hodge will give a butchery demonstration and discuss the importance of sourcing good quality local meat.

Alex Harris, Food is Fun Marquee organiser, said: "This has been a great opportunity to communicate with schoolchildren on how important it is to sit down to a family meal at least once a week and to use local, organic produce whenever possible.

"Everyone who is involved in this project has embraced the idea and willingly given their time to help get the message over.

"It's great to know that the children are looking forward to getting stuck in on Sunday, and I'm sure it's going to be really great fun."

The organisers are also producing a Sunday Roast recipe card, so those at the show can go home to recreate the dishes they have sampled.

The Exeter Festival of South West Food and Drink will be held at Northernhay Gardens in central Exeter from Friday to Sunday. Further information is available at www.visitsouthwest.co.uk/exeterfoodfestival/index.cfm

Monkey home goes green

MONKEYS in South East Cornwall will become more environmentally friendly thanks to a grant towards a solar water heating system.

The Monkey Sanctuary Trust in Looe has received £1,800 under a new community initiative from Energy company E.on.

Jane Branscombe, from E.on, said: "We're delighted to be able to contribute towards this exciting project for The Monkey Sanctuary Trust as part of our new SOURCE scheme, which is designed to help community groups get sustainable energy projects off the ground."

The sanctuary is introducing sustainable heating, water, energy and waste disposal throughout its site.