



Test your knowledge

Quiz of the week

1. What is the collective noun for a group of peacocks?
2. What would you hang on a rannel-tree?
3. Which British animal is brown in summer and white in winter?
4. What is a cruciverbalist?
5. Who is Sherlock Holmes's notorious nemesis?

Unmissable events

Exhibitions

September 11–12 'Branching Out', the Arboretum, Castle Howard, Yorkshire. More than 120 works of art made of oak branches by celebrities and craftsmen, will be auctioned in aid of The Arboretum Trust (01653 648650; www.kewatch.co.uk)

September 12–18 '13 Paint and Beauty', Seawhite Studio, Partridge Green, West Sussex. Contemporary paintings by 13 local artists (www.emilyballatseawhite.co.uk)

September 7–October 10 'Drawn to the Soul', Nature in Art, Gloucester, Gloucestershire. A retrospective of the art of Gary Hodges (01452 731422; www.nature-in-art.org.uk)

Festival

September 10–19 The Lammermuir Festival, various venues, East Lothian. Classical and contemporary music event (www.lammermuirfestival.co.uk)

Country Fair

September 3–5 Chatsworth Country Fair, Chatsworth House, Derbyshire (01328 821821; www.chatsworthcountryfair.co.uk)

Horse trials

September 9–12 Fidelity Blenheim Palace International Horse Trials, Woodstock, Oxfordshire (01993 813335; www.blenheim-horse.co.uk)



Dressage

September 9–12 The British Dressage Championships, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire (07791 318721; www.bdchampionships.com)

Book now

October 19 'Some modern gardening myths', RHS Wisley, Woking, Surrey. A talk by Ken Thompson, £10 (www.rhs.org.uk/Gardens/Wisley)

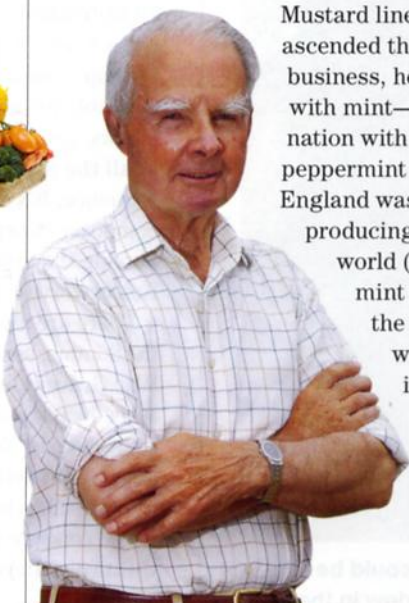


Country walk

The incredible journey begins in earnest

Telephone wires up and down the country are suddenly becoming crowded with row upon row of starlings and martins, all ready for the annual expedition in search of sunnier climes. Meanwhile, in the opposite direction, the geese are back and already prevalent on our ponds and lakes. To the untrained eye, nothing seems further from their minds than hunkering down for the chillier months, but rest assured that plans are afoot, and already winter abodes are being chosen. The cuckoos have also already made their voyage, and you'll be lucky to see any in our hedgerows now. With the clement start to August, early breeding species all naturally headed north, where food and daylight hours were still to be found in abundance. It's all change in the skies. **AC**

We love... The Hampshire mint man



Sir Michael Colman is of Colman's Mustard lineage, but, having ascended the ranks in the family business, he started to experiment with mint—14 years later, his fascination with the rare Black Mitcham peppermint has yet to be subdued. England was once renowned for

producing the best mint in the world (the French still call peppermint *menthe Anglaise*), but during the Second World War, the pressure to grow essential crops meant that mint fields were consigned to the past. Sir Michael put this to rights in 1996, and there are now more than 80 acres of Black Mitcham at Summerdown Farms. The leaves are mainly processed into oil or dried leaf for tea. The farm won a 2010 Great Taste Award for its latest addition; Chocolate Mint Thins (£7; www.summerdownmint.com)

Sir Michael's Black Mitcham has flourished since 1996



100 years ago in COUNTRY LIFE



Graceful dahlias

It is interesting, and not a little curious, to note the change in public taste concerning the dahlia. Ten years ago the large, double show and fancy varieties, with their symmetrical dense heads of cone-like petals, were most in demand, yet they are seldom seen at an exhibition now. At the Royal Horticultural Society's Hall on Tuesday last *Dahlias* were very largely shown, yet very few of the type mentioned above were to be seen. The more graceful single varieties have been so greatly improved during recent years, and their value for cutting is becoming so much better known, that it is not surprising to find these shown more extensively each year. The cactus varieties, which look so beautiful when exhibited, are most of them disappointing in the garden, as their flowers are usually found low down in a thicket of leaves. In the paeony-flowered dahlias we have the latest type, characterised by large, ragged-looking flowers which are produced in abundance, and for this reason, and on account of its robust habit, this type has its value for massing in large groups where a bold splash of colour is required.