

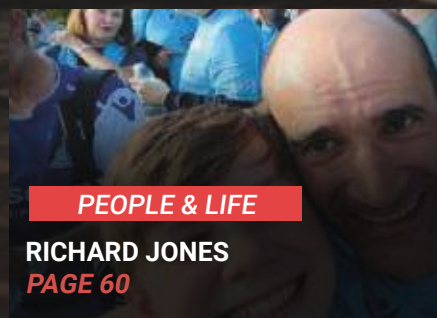
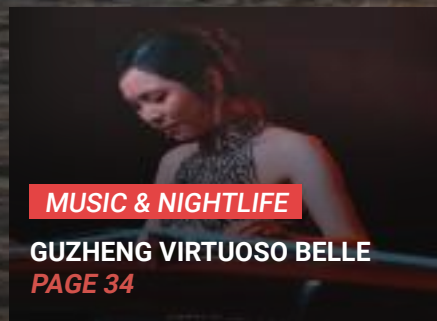
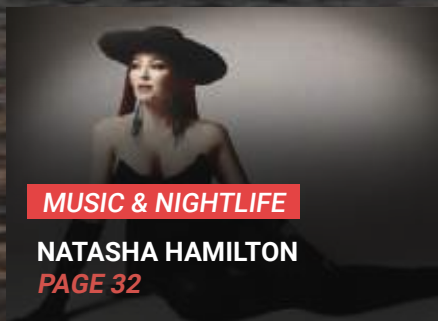
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WELCOME

A FEW WORDS FROM OUR EDITOR

It doesn't feel like almost five months since I was writing this column for the Summer/Autumn edition of La Vida Liverpool print magazine -- yet here we are, in December and with Christmas just around the corner! And with this, I welcome you to the seventh installment of this A4, glossy positive news magazine -- I hope it finds you well!

My name's Justin Hopper and I created La Vida Liverpool in April 2018. What started as an online magazine has now evolved into a radio show on Wirral Wave Radio, this wonderful print magazine and a dynamic marketing and PR operation -- getting many of La Vida's stories in local and national news.



I do all this singlehandedly and because I'm good at what I do and don't charge much for the marketing and PR services, I am always busy and work long hours. This means I can help as many people, businesses, charities and events as possible -- getting them out there in a big way that's affordable.

I must give a big shout out to my graphic designer, Alec Lawley, though for his sterling work bringing this print magazine to life and also to printer Joseph from Print Pro Consultancy. I would also like to thank my friends Mark Taylor, Andy Sampson, Tim Butcher and others who help me deliver 5,000 magazines throughout the region -- it takes us days!



It's certainly been a very busy few months since the last print magazine and as ever, so much has happened! On a personal level, I fell in love and got my heart broken (again) and after some deep sadness I decided to pick myself up and practise some self care. I ate well, put my energy into training hard at the gym and spent quality time with friends. Friends truly are incredible and really can be key to helping you through the dark times.

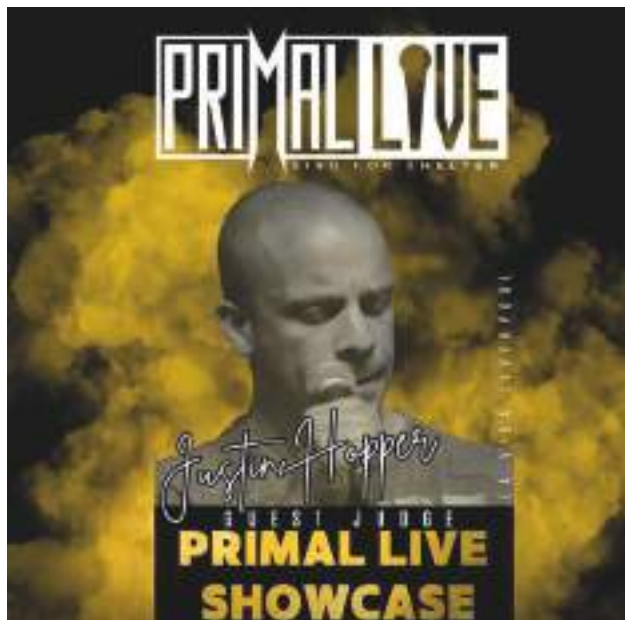


I am super proud to have hosted the inaugural Liverpool Book Festival on Sunday 7th September! This incredible event featured over 60 of the region's finest authors signing and selling their books directly to book lovers, publishers, celebrity special guests, talks, workshops, live music, artisan stalls, street food, children's activities and more!

It was such an amazing event and BBC news even covered it! Liverpool Book Festival has also been shortlisted as a Finalist in the Liverpool City Region Tourism Awards -- incredible considering it was all organised by little me! The next extravaganza is happening at Box Park on Sunday 8th March and you can read all about this on page 40.



I have continued to be involved in the amazing Primal Live charity song contest (page 36) -- promoting it, helping the music artists with marketing and PR and also as a judge of the competition itself. This fantastic initiative has helped musicians and bands get to the next level, whilst raising tens of thousands for homeless charities. It really does fill my heart with joy to be part of things like this!



I was honoured to visit another prestigious awards ceremony in London with Masterchef Kemal Coskuncay and the team at Casa Rima -- this time to pick up a Restaurateur Of The Year Award at the CEFTUS Awards. You can read about this on page 11. I was also grateful to attend The Guide Liverpool's Heroes Awards -- celebrating 10 years of The Guide Liverpool and shining a light on the region's superheroes! You can read about this on page 58.



I've continued my work with students -- giving talks at schools, colleges and universities and teaching them about marketing, PR and the art of storytelling. But more importantly, teaching them about finding a purpose in life and going about it ethically -- we all have the ability to be game changers and make a real difference in the world. I've also been working with Laura Teare and her amazing Get Shit Done Club networking group -- you can find a dedicated section for them on page 78.



In November I was thoroughly delighted to take the stage as host and compere of the huge Light Up Liscard Christmas tree light switch on! This momentous event that hit national newspapers and television was a response to the town being mocked for having a rubbish tree last year and thanks to ASDA, this year's was the biggest and best yet. It was incredible to work with Natasha Hamilton from Atomic Kitten, who switched the lights on, and as a result I have an exclusive interview with her on page 32. I also hosted Light Up New Brighton -- another brilliant Christmas light switch on event!



Anyway, enough from me and here's to the wonderful people, businesses, charities and events showcased in this magazine! I'll just leave you with one last thing -- when you're facing dark times practise self-care, do things that make you feel good and foster a deep drive and determination to come back stronger, better and wiser! Things may seem awful at that time but the feeling will pass -- just take it one day at a time. And friends -- they really are so very important!

Look after yourselves,

Justin x



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FOOD & DRINK

la vida liverpool

MAGAZINE

FOOD & DRINK

MORE THAN A PUB: HOW THE CLOCK FACE IS A COMMUNITY LIFELINE!



In the heart of Prescot stands a pub unlike any other – The Clock Face, a Grade II Listed sandstone gem with centuries of history and a modern mission: to bring people together, combat loneliness and rebuild the sense of community so many feel is missing today. Whilst many hospitality businesses struggle, The Clock Face is changing the game.



Ran by Karen Bullen and her team, this iconic venue has become far more than a place to eat or drink. It is a thriving community hub filled with warmth, friendship, creativity and purpose. In 2026, The Clock Face is set to become an even greater lifeline for local people – introducing Together Tuesday entertainment afternoons for pensioners on Tuesdays and community coach trips with a difference.



A Pub with History – and a Heart for the Future

Once the residence of Lord Derby, The Clock Face carries the charm and character of its heritage, standing proudly as one of Prescot's most recognisable historic buildings. When Karen and the team took it over six years ago, she embarked on a significant refurbishment – not just restoring the building, but restoring its place in the community. Despite being located on a main road and 'down the

hill' from the heart of Prescot, the pub is thriving. And that success has little to do with chance. It comes from the forward-thinking of Karen and her daughter Linzi, with their unwavering belief in the power of community spaces to change lives.

Food, Music and Friendship – A Place for Everyone



The Clock Face offers quality home-cooked food seven days a week, drawing visitors from all over the region. Do check out their homemade pastry pies – with minted lamb, creamy chicken with leek and gammon or steak and Thwaites ale choices – and they're often fully booked for Sunday roasts. Afternoon tea is also a big hit, as are themed bottomless brunch events.



At weekends, the pub offers quality live music, making it a lively and welcoming space for families, friends and music lovers alike. Upstairs, it offers sumptuously decorated cosy rooms. But what truly makes The Clock Face special is what happens between the meals, the music and the pints.

Events That Make a Difference

On Thursday afternoons, the Knit & Natter group offers a warm refuge from the cold winter and a chance to connect with others and there's a weekly quiz. During the summer months you'll find 'Ibiza Chill' afternoons with a Cafe Del Mar vibe in the carpark, whilst there are various seasonal events such as Christmas and Easter activities.



Throughout the year, there are pop up markets in the carpark showcasing local independents and events such as wine tasting evenings and cutest dog competitions. The pub also offers free venue hire — with a sectioned off room for special occasions and of course, gorgeous rooms upstairs for guests who have travelled.



New for 2026: Two Incredible Community Initiatives

2026 will see The Clock Face launch two groundbreaking community offerings. Every Tuesday from 1pm until 3pm, starting 6th January, Together Tuesday offers older people free entertainment — from vintage and jazz singers to historians and talks. The Tuesday afternoon includes the offer of a delicious 2 course meal for just £9.95 — all set in a safe, warm, welcoming space.

The Clock Face recently hosted a Community Coach Trip to York — for just £25, people enjoyed a breakfast roll at the pub, a day out to York with return travel and a party back at the pub upon return. The feedback was that good they've already planned more for 2026 — with a trip to Bury Markets on Saturday 31st January for just £25, including a breakfast roll, tea and coffee before leaving and a party upon return.

More Than a Pub

Landlady Karen Bullen said: *"We've created something really special here and we're definitely more than a pub. There's always something going on and we have a jam packed schedule of events and community initiatives. With loneliness, isolation and mental health all issues today, as well as financial hardship, we've designed ongoing, affordable activities and initiatives in a time when community spirit is so important."*

She continued: *"We already have older people coming in for Knit & Natter, or just for a respite and some company, but Together Tuesday will take this to the next level — we're even going to offer educational and safety talks from the likes of the police. Our first coach trip was an incredible success too and the feedback has been amazing — we can't wait for more adventures for the community in 2026!"*



The Beating Heart of Prescott

In an era where loneliness is rising and community spaces are disappearing, The Clock Face stands as a shining example of what a pub should be — a place that enriches people's lives, fosters connection and brings joy to the everyday. Through their dedication, vision and commitment to serving others, Karen Bullen and the team have turned The Clock Face into a cornerstone of local life.

The Clock Face is more than a pub — it is a sanctuary, a social hub, a support network and a beloved gathering place. With more events, more community support and more innovative initiatives on the horizon, The Clock Face isn't just preserving history — it's shaping the future of Prescott's community spirit.

The Clock Face / 54 Derby St, Prescott L34 3LL / 0151 271 8038

FOR THE MENU, WHAT'S ON, TOGETHER TUESDAY AFTERNOONS, COACH TRIPS, VENUE HIRE, ROOMS AVAILABLE & MORE VISIT WWW.CLOCKFACEPRESCOT.CO.UK OR CALL 0151 271 8038

Follow The Clock Face on FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM



FOOD & DRINK

NEW OWNERS CREATING 'SOMETHING SPECIAL' AT THE SCRAPYARD!

Liscard's much-loved venue, The Scrapyard, has entered an exciting new chapter under the ownership of Richie and Hazel. Already known as a unique hotspot with a big personality, The Scrapyard is quickly becoming the go-to destination for entertainment, community spirit and quality food and drink in the Wallasey area.

Open seven days a week, the venue offers something for everyone including — Big Screens with Sky Sports showing all the live football action, quality Live music every Friday and Saturday night, Open Mic Sundays on the last Sunday of every month and Thursday Night Quiz (coming soon) with a £100 jackpot prize up for grabs.



For food and drink lovers, The Scrapyard delivers in style. Guests can enjoy a quality breakfast and brunch menu Wednesday to Sunday, complete with free coffee top-ups and heavenly cakes. Their drinks list is impressive too — 24 taps of rotating craft beers and 2 cocktails for £12, making it the perfect spot to relax with friends.

But what really sets The Scrapyard apart is its heart for the community. Richie and Hazel have launched a Breakfast Club, offering free breakfasts to those in need — a thoughtful initiative that shows their commitment to making a difference locally. On top of that, they provide free venue hire for special occasions and community groups, making the spacious interior and stunning garden available for everyone to enjoy.



Richie said: "Previous owner Claire did a great job here and built a great reputation for The Scrapyard over many years, whilst we've been running The Coffee Roast at Vale Park. When we heard The Scrapyard had closed we just had to step in and continue Claire's great work here and we've made some exciting new additions too. It's been a fantastic first few months and we believe we're creating something special here."



Richie continued: "There are few places around that offer the wide range of things we do. We've worked hard to create an inclusive space with something for everyone, whether you're coming in for breakfast, brunch or coffee with friends or for a night out with live sport, live music, craft beer and cocktails. We offer free venue hire and have had many private events here too — from community groups to weddings and birthdays."



Whether you're there to catch the match, enjoy live music, tuck into brunch or simply connect with others, The Scrapyard truly is a community gem — and there's nowhere else quite like it. The venue offers free hire for special occasions, whether that be for a community group or a special occasion.

The Scrapyard / 68-70 Wallasey Road, Liscard, Wirral, CH44 2AE / 07925 084117

FOR FREE VENUE HIRE CALL 07925 084117

Follow The Scrapyard on FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM



FOOD & DRINK

MASTERCHEF KEMAL AND CASA RIMA SCOOP ANOTHER AWARD!

Masterchef Kemal Coskuncay and the talented team at Halewood's Casa Rima have scooped yet another award – this time Restaurateur Of The Year at the prestigious CEFTUS awards! The 14th annual CEFTUS Excellence Awards Gala Dinner was held at Sheraton Grand on Park Lane in London and was a celebration of success amongst the Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriots in the UK.



The award topped off an incredible year for Masterchef Kemal Coskuncay and the Casa Rima team. Earlier this year, Masterchef Kemal was crowned Chef Of The Year at the British Kebab Awards for the second time, after the restaurant won Restaurant Of The Year at the Knowsley Business Awards. The continued recognition is testament to the restaurant's quality and growing reputation.



The restaurant, located on Bailey's Lane in Halewood, has become a huge hit since opening in September 2023 and is frequented by football players and celebrities. With countless 5 star reviews, Casa Rima offers a range of sublime starters, pizzas, pasta and specials such as steaks, lamb, duck, seabass and more. It has become a big hit with the South Liverpool community and is popular for birthdays and special occasions.

On a personal level, 2025 has been particularly memorable for Masterchef Kemal Coskuncay. In addition to winning awards with the restaurant team, he has also been travelling the country and the world to take part in culinary meetings and events. In September, he gave a talk at the House Of Commons – addressing leading figures from across the UK hospitality industry about the need to support the industry.

The past year has also seen him selected as a judge for a Culinary World Cup event in Tunisia, as well as being recognised as one of the world's best chefs at the International Gastronomy Star Awards. He has attended huge culinary festivals in Japan and Egypt and was also part of a project that broke a Guinness World Record for the world's largest sucuk and egg dish in his native Turkey.



Masterchef Kemal said: *"It's been an incredible year! When I started working as a dishwasher in Didim all those years ago, I could never have imagined a life like this! It is a great honour to win such prestigious awards, attending events at the House Of Commons and travelling the world to take part in culinary festivals – it is all fantastic! And to have my father over from Turkey to witness this award was very special!"*

He continued: *"I would like to thank Ibrahim Dogus and of course, all this is only possible thanks to the amazing team I work with at Casa Rima. Head Chef Ali Kavlak is a magician in the kitchen and has cooked for the world leaders at the Turkish Embassy during his career. My cousin Ibrahim and everyone at Casa Rima, it is a team effort. And of course, our customers -- without their support and recognition we wouldn't exist."*

Casa Rima / 9A Baileys Lane, Halewood, L26 2XB / 0151 245 8599

TO BOOK A TABLE AT CASA RIMA CALL 0151 245 8599 OR VISIT WWW.CASARIMA.CO.UK

Visit Casa Rima's WEBSITE and follow on INSTAGRAM



FOOD & DRINK

FAMILY FRIENDLY MEXICAN RESTAURANT OPENS IN HESWALL

Heswall has a bright new addition on Telegraph Road – offering good vibes and good times for both kids and adults alike. Vecino is a fun, family-friendly new Mexican restaurant that's both an affordable option for children's parties and a great destination for a night out.



Owner Chris Williams came up with the concept after taking his own children to a well-known chain restaurant and walking out wondering why family dining had become so pricey. Vecino is his answer: a vibrant, welcoming concept that keeps the bill sensible while still delivering an experience families actually get excited about.



Kids are front and centre at Vecino, and the dedicated children's menu is designed to be interactive from start to finish. Young diners can Build Their Own Tacos for £7.95, choosing from fillings like pulled chicken tinga, grilled chicken, steak, pulled pork, fish goujons, barbacoa beef, butternut squash and more. Each meal comes with soft flour tortillas, fries, cheese, guacamole and sour cream to assemble however they like.



There's also a bottomless soft-drink option for £3.50, with choices including classic favourites and fresh juices like pineapple, apple and orange. For dessert, kids can Build Their Own Ice Cream Sundae, picking sauces (chocolate, caramel, strawberry or Biscoff), ice-cream flavours from vanilla to mint choc chip, and toppings like Smarties, sprinkles, fudge and Oreo pieces.



Birthday parties are where Vecino really leans into the fun. The birthday child gets their own cake, everyone celebrates in colourful sombreros, and the staff join in dressed as the restaurant's mascots, Tina the Taco and Tony the Taco. It's a setup that takes the stress off parents and gives kids a party they'll talk about for weeks.



And the grown-ups aren't forgotten. Vecino has a weekly schedule packed with offers! Tuesdays mean a taco and a margarita cocktail for £14. Wednesdays bring 3-for-2 small plates, and Thursdays offer two fajitas from just £25. Weekends step things up even further: live music kicks off at 9pm on Fridays and Saturdays, paired with 2-for-1 cocktails, creating a lively atmosphere once the kids' mealtime winds down.



Saturday daytime features one of Vecino's hero offerings: a Mexican Bottomless Brunch with unlimited drinks and a selection of dishes over 90 minutes for only £35 per person. It's ideal for adults looking for a weekend fiesta in Wirral and once again proving that dining out in Heswall doesn't have to be an expensive affair



Owner Chris Williams said: "As the owner of *Silk Road* and *Voisin*, I'm proud to have played a part in shaping Heswall's vibrant food and drink scene, which just keeps getting better. However, I felt there was space for something with a bit more colour, energy, and fun — a place that families, friends, and food lovers alike could enjoy without the hefty price tag. That's where Vecino comes in — a bold, Mexican-inspired restaurant bursting with flavour, personality, and warmth, bringing a whole new vibe to the town."



Open Tuesday to Saturday, Vecino has quickly positioned itself as a family-first restaurant built with both budgets and fun in mind. Whether it's a kids' party, a relaxed weeknight dinner or a lively weekend outing, the restaurant brings colour, affordability and a sense of play to the heart of Heswall.

Vecino / 168 Telegraph Road, Heswall, Wirral, CH60 0AH / 0151 332 5333

TO BOOK A TABLE OR PARTY CALL 0151 332 5333 OR VISIT WWW.VECINO.CO.UK

Follow Vecino on FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

Images courtesy of Nick Mizen



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FOOD & DRINK

HOYLAKE'S SRI LANKAN GEM LAUNCHES NEW DISHES!

Hoylake's Sri Lankan gem, The Hut, has developed an incredible reputation since opening in 2023 — with people travelling for miles to experience their mouthwatering Ceylon cuisine and countless 5 star reviews. The quaint little family owned restaurant has just got even better — launching some exciting new dishes just in time for December dining! If you're looking for something a bit different now's your chance....



The Existing Menu

The existing menu at The Hut has been winning over hearts (and taste buds) for some time now! Devilled Corner has been a big hit amongst those who like spicy dishes — a delicious dish that packs a punch, with succulent meat marinated in a fiery blend of spices. Their Colombo style Nasi Goreng is also a popular pick — fried rice with a mixture of carrots, chicken and prawn, served with a fried egg and chilli paste.



Coconut Roti Combo is another authentic Sri Lankan dish that you won't find anywhere else — coconut flat bread (coconut Roti) with mild dhal curry, coconut sambol and either chicken, mutton, pork or fish curry all wrapped in banana leaf and baked. A medley of flavours and a feast for the taste buds!

Meanwhile, The Hut offers a range of mouthwatering curries like nothing you've ever tasted in an Indian or Bangladeshi restaurant. Whether you're looking for something mild or something spicy, The Hut has a dish for everyone.



Sweet Chili Chicken Wings — A Perfect Starter

You've had chicken wings, but have you ever had Sri Lankan style chicken wings? Crispy, juicy chicken wings tossed in a homemade Sri Lankan sweet chili sauce — sweet, spicy, and full of flavour. A perfect starter, this delicious addition is now available at Hut Hoylake!



Mild Potato Curry – The Sri Lankan Way

Comforting, creamy, and full of flavour, Sri Lankan-style mild potato curry is a true home classic. Tender potatoes are gently cooked in coconut milk with turmeric, mustard seeds, curry leaves, and a touch of onion and garlic. The result is a beautifully golden curry that's mild yet deeply aromatic. Perfect with rice, roti, or even bread, this humble dish brings a taste of Sri Lankan warmth to any table — simple ingredients, soulful flavor, and a little tropical magic in every bite.



Sri Lankan Mild & Creamy Chicken Curry

Tender chicken on the bone simmers in fragrant spices and creamy coconut milk, releasing rich, aromatic flavours. Mild, smooth, and subtly sweet, this curry is perfect with rice or roti – simple, soulful, and irresistibly comforting. This ain't no ordinary chicken curry – this is curry the Ceylon way!



Fish Ambul Thiyal – A Tangy Sri Lankan Classic

A beloved dish from Sri Lanka, Fish Ambul Thiyal features tender tuna fish cooked in a tangy, spiced gravy that's rich with flavour. Traditional spices, black pepper, and a hint of tamarind give this curry its signature sour and aromatic taste. Perfectly paired with steamed rice, this dish is a vibrant example of Sri Lankan home cooking – bold, flavourful, and unforgettable.



Authentic Sri Lankan Cuisine In Hoylake

Hoylake's Sri Lankan gem, The Hut, has introduced some incredible new dishes to its mouthwatering Ceylon menu. Located on Market Street and open Tues-Sun from 5pm, the charming little restaurant has received many 5 star reviews – with people travelling from far and wide to sample their intriguing and truly unique dishes.

**The Hut / 88 Market Street, Hoylake, Wirral,
CH47 3BD / 0151 632 0223**

**TO BOOK A TABLE CALL 0151 632 0223 OR VIA
THE WEBSITE**

For the menu and more visit thehut-hoylake.co.uk

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FOOD & DRINK

THE EASTHAM GEM WITH THOUSANDS OF 5 STAR BURGER REVIEWS!



Tucked away on Mill Park Drive in Eastham, Like Creperie & Burgers is rapidly earning a cult-like devotion amongst burger aficionados across the Wirral and beyond. With literally thousands of 5 star reviews across all platforms, people are travelling from near and far to sink their teeth into their meticulously crafted smash burgers that are bursting with flavour.



The magic begins with Owner George Gogo and Manager "Bunny", who lead a passionate, tight-knit team. These burger virtuosos smash, season and stack each creation with precision and a whole lot of personality, whilst slow cooking the meat to perfection. The result? Burgers so satisfying, they're become legendary and attracting burger connoisseurs from across the region.

The boutique restaurant, soon to celebrate its 5th birthday, has super friendly staff and an industrial look with vintage collectibles and art for sale. Like Creperie & Burgers offers a fun menu of club sandwiches, wraps, crepes, waffles, dirty fries, milkshakes and desserts, all carefully curated by the team, but it's the messy, mouthwatering burgers that fall apart in the mouth that have people talking the most.



George and the team view burger crafting as an art. Using the finest meat, seasoning and ingredients, jam packed and gooey in slightly toasted brioche buns, they create masterpieces that have attracted thousands of 5 star reviews across Google, Facebook, Trip Advisor, Just Eat, Uber and other platforms. They average 4.9 from thousands of reviews on Just Eat and Uber — a mightily impressive achievement.

A few recent customer reviews state:

"Still the best burgers and loaded fries about, I have travelled far on my burger adventure I always return here!"

"Everything about this place is excellent. Staff are so friendly and service is outstanding. The food is delicious we always come away satisfied. The quirkiness of the place adds to dining experience. They also do takeaway. If you haven't been yet you are missing out."



Owner George Gogo, 37, has plans to grow the business on the back of all the glowing reviews and its incredible reputation — with a vision of having multiple Like Creperie & Burgers outlets across the region. One thing for sure is if you love burgers and haven't yet tried these gourmet masterpieces, you're in for an absolute treat if you do.

George said: *"We take so much pride in everything we create and in terms of the burgers, we see crafting them as an art. Unless the meat is tender, they're packed with flavour and they messy as hell you're not doing it right. I have a great little team here and we're all very proud of the 5 star reviews that keep coming in. We've created something very special here and I'm currently planning a second restaurant in Liverpool."*

Like Creperie & Burgers is located at 12 Mill Park Drive in Eastham and is open 7 days a week for dining in, takeaway or delivery. The restaurant offers gourmet burgers, club sandwiches, wraps, crepes, waffles, dirty fries, milkshakes, desserts and more.

Like Creperie & Burgers / 12 Mill Park Drive, Eastham, Wirral, CH62 9DL / 0151 327 3233

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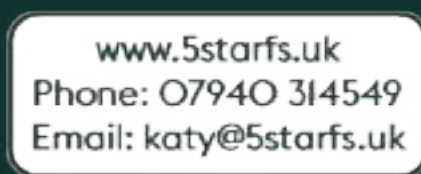
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MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

la vida liverpool
MAGAZINE

MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

HOW VICTORIA ROAD BECAME WIRRAL'S MOST VIBRANT STREET!



It's 2018 and Victoria Road in New Brighton feels dilapidated and depressed. A number of commercial properties are empty, whilst the pubs are overlooked by day-trippers headed to the promenade down the hill. New Brighton was no longer the booming seaside resort of yesteryear and as the big chains created a corporate utopia down on the front, Victoria Road remained a forgotten victim of the town's decline.



But then a revolution happened. Local visionary and fire starter Dan Davies decided to make a stand. After years of success in the alcohol licencing industry, instead of choosing to live lavishly he decided to put all his money, time and effort into his hometown. Fuelled by his frustration towards how New Brighton had regressed from being one of the UK's most thriving resorts, he took action.



It started with street art — employing local and internationally renowned artists to breathe colour and life into the underdog that was Victoria Road. Estate agents became art galleries, old banks became bars and boarded up buildings became eateries. The Victoria Quarter was born. As the project gathered pace, a unique eco-system of independent businesses developed and a new sense of community was instilled.



Today, almost eight years after Dan's mission to spark an independent revival in his hometown, Victoria Road is a thriving hotspot of colour, character and community. Countless good times have been enjoyed, new friendships formed and a deep sense of pride has become unbreakable — as we stand together in defiance whilst the tyrants that run the country try to break us down.



If you're visiting Victoria Road for the day, there are some great options for breakfast or brunch. Becky's Brekky offers incredible value hearty breakfasts, whilst a couple of doors down the super cool Social 114 is more of an avocado on sourdough bread kind of vibe. Meanwhile, Paula's Smuggler's Cave cafe sits somewhere in the middle and has won an award. All three are great choices to get your day started.



If craft beer is your thing and you're looking for some alternative beverages, The Bow Legged Beagle and Home Brew Tap both provide a welcoming atmosphere and every kind of beer, ale, stout and cider imaginable! During the summer months they become rather continental — with connoisseurs sat outside, enjoying their drink of choice whilst basking in the rays.



There are some cracking pubs on Victoria Road! The Perch Rock and The Harbour must be given huge respect as these charismatic venues have been standing strong on Victoria Road long before the Victoria Quarter was a thing. Standing the test of time, both The Perch Rock and The Harbour are legendary amongst locals and laughs are guaranteed!



New Brighton Hotel Bar & Lounge has also been a long-standing feature on Victoria Road and it has evolved into a top destination alongside the street's vibrant new energy. The stylish venue offers great food and drinks, live sport, live music, venue hire and a hotel upstairs if you fancy staying making it a proper seaside break. Just over the road you'll find The Olive Tree – a restaurant offering quality cuisine.



Dan's flagship venue back in 2018 was The James Atherton – a modern tavern named after the man who founded New Brighton in the 1800s. The 'JA' is a great destination for a good pint and live sport, whilst you'll likely find it booming with great tunes on Friday and Saturday nights. In an act of defiance against the government, Dan made this pub famous by renaming it The Three Bellends and The Two Helmets during Covid and then The George Orwell in response to Digital ID.



His other venue, Rockpoint Records, is the epitome of what The Victoria Quarter is about. With stripped back brick walls, graffiti and a soundtrack to match, Rockpoint Records is a cool coffee shop by day and a vibrant hotspot by night. Some of the best solo artists in the region perform at weekends and it's also home to Hella Dough, whose wood fired pizzas are the best in Wirral according to many reviews!



Riptide next door is the latest addition to the street – a vibrant bar with live music that also offers pool and darts on the second floor. Riptide's large events space to the rear has already hosted some incredible gigs – with the likes of Space and Headfeeder putting on sold-out gigs. Riptide stays true to Victoria Road's independent ethos and also its creativity – with art displayed on the walls.



Victoria Road, with all its colourful street art and colourful characters, has become somewhat bohemian and this has attracted Hatch art gallery and exhibition space. Meanwhile, its neighbour District House is an 'art deli bar' that offers retro art, artisan food and premium drinks – owned by music legend Jayne Casey, the vibe is on point and the DJ nights are off the scale!



Speaking of which, a visit to Victoria Road isn't complete without experiencing Tallulah's Emporium — a quirky off-the-wall hangout that hosts funky vinyl DJ nights and some of the finest jazz musicians in the region. Check out their imaginative cocktail list, including their intriguing range of Old Fashioned twists, and get your groove on to music of the highest order!



Thanks to Dan Davies' vision some eight years ago, Victoria Road has been revived and transformed into a vibrant destination — indeed, huge public events and mini festivals have taken place on the street, with thousands of people in attendance. Dan has battled cancer and financial struggles in recent times, yet the concept and community he has built stands strong.



Finally, whilst this is a feature about Victoria Road's revival, let's not forget all the other fantastic businesses that have been working hard to make New Brighton a go-to destination once again. You'll find gems by the train station, off the beaten track, on the promenade, on Magazine Lane, Seabank Road and further up on Rake Lane, Telegraph Road and Albion Street — too many to mention, but I urge you to explore!



New Brighton is a truly amazing place to live and I encourage anyone to visit. Once one of the UK's most popular seaside holiday resorts, it became run down — but it's fighting back! With the promenade, beach and captivating views over to Liverpool, beautiful parks, a cinema, theatre, loads of fun things to do, so many incredible places to eat and drink and a strong sense of community, it's safe to say New Brighton is most definitely back on the map!



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Sunday 7th: The Undertakers (6:30)
Friday 12th: Amazing Kappa Band (9:30)
Saturday 13th: Dr Strangelove (9:30)
Sunday 14th: Park Lane (6:30)
Friday 19th: The Mysterons (9:30)
Saturday 20th: Lovable Rogues (9:30)
Sunday 21st: Old School (6:30)
Saturday 27th: The Swillers (9:30)
Sunday 28th: Mule Train (6:30)
New Year's Eve: Collider (free entry) (9:30)

JANUARY

Friday 2nd: Acme Soul Co (9:30)
Saturday 3rd: The Band-Its (9:30)
Sunday 4th: The Undertakers (6:30)
Friday 9th: The Nowhere Men (9:30)
Saturday 10th: Hard to Handle (9:30)
Sunday 11th: Hello Felix (6:30)
Friday 16th: The Klubbs (9:30)
Saturday 17th: Faith Healer (9:30)
Sunday 18th: The Oil Chickens (6:30)
Friday 23rd: Hijinx (9:30)
Saturday 24th: The Mysterons (9:30)
Sunday 25th: Funk Skunk (6:30)
Friday 30th: Amazing Kappa Band (9:30)
Saturday 31st: The Clan (9:30)

FEBRUARY

Sunday 1st: Stolen Property (6:30)
Friday 6th: Collider (9:30)
Saturday 7th: Hurricane Blues Band (9:30)
Sunday 8th: Mule Train (6:30)
Friday 13th: Free Spirit (9:30)
Saturday 14th: Old School (9:30)
Sunday 15th: The Species (6:30)
Friday 20th: Indiemand (9:30)
Saturday 21st: Stranglehold (9:30)
Sunday 22nd: The Undertakers (6:30)
Friday 27th: The Vinyls (9:30)
Saturday 28th: Lovable Rogues (9:30)
Sunday 1st March: Day of Music Charity Day (2:00)

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What's On Guide



Ultimate Christmas Tribute Show - Nya King
Brilliant Whitney Houston Tribute - Chinese Buffet Included

@ Liverpool Naval Club

📅 Saturday, 13th December 2025



Ultimate Christmas Soul & Motown Show -
The Reflections plus Lascal - Includes Chinese Buffet

@ Liverpool Naval Club

📅 Friday, 19th December 2025



Ultimate Christmas Party Night - THE FOUR
D's - Fantastic Jersey Boys - Frankie Valli
Tribute Show - Chinese Buffet

@ Liverpool Naval Club

📅 Saturday, 20th December 2025



New Years Eve 2025 - Ebie Isaac's - Chinese Buffet Included

@ Liverpool Naval Club

📅 Wednesday, 31st December 2025



Ultimate Soul & Motown Show - Robin Lee
plus the Outstanding Tabi Gazele

@ Liverpool Naval Club

📅 Saturday, 31st January 2026



Ebie Entertainment Presents... Valentine's
by Candlelight

@ Liverpool Naval Club

📅 Saturday, 14th February 2026



Ultimate Soul & Motown Show - Ebie Isaac's
plus the Outstanding Sheila Diamond

@ Liverpool Naval Club

📅 Saturday, 28th February 2026



ABBARELLA - Ultimate ABBA Tribute Band

@ Liverpool Naval Club

📅 Saturday, 7th March 2026



Ultimate Soul & Motown Night - Soul Station
- Mother's Day Weekend

@ Liverpool Naval Club

📅 Saturday, 14th March 2026



Mothers Day 2026 - The Fat Monty's - CECE
Monsoon - Ebie Isaac's - Hot Food Included

@ Liverpool Naval Club

📅 Sunday, 15th March 2026



Ultimate Soul & Motown Show - Soul Legend
plus Cherelle

@ Liverpool Naval Club

📅 Saturday, 28th March 2026



Nya King - Brilliant Whitney Houston Tribute

@ Liverpool Naval Club

📅 Saturday, 11th April 2026

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MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

WACK PACK VALENTINE'S SHOW AT THE ADELPHI!



A huge 'Wack Pack' event for Valentine's Day is coming to The Adelphi Hotel Ballroom on the afternoon of Sunday 15th February 2026 and tickets are selling fast! The 'dress to impress' showcase will be hosted by the charismatic Ricky Tomlinson and will feature swing hits from Liverpool legends Asa Murphy, Steve Charles and Joe Speare.



The afternoon extravaganza will be filled with timeless classics from the likes of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davies Jnr, whilst peppered with humour from comedy genius and compere Ricky Tomlinson. Taking place at one of Liverpool's most historic and iconic venues, it's set to be a very special Valentine's Day event indeed.

With a sell-out expected, Wack Pack brings you three of the best entertainers in the city alongside one of the finest Scouse comedians of all time. In addition to the top class entertainment and comedy on the day, there will be a few surprises in store at this sensational cabaret-style Sunday afternoon showcase!



The event is being produced by Tram Productions, who have been putting on huge showcases throughout Merseyside — packing out venues with some of the best acts around. The previous Wack Pack events have always been hugely popular events and almost 150 tickets have sold for this one in the first few days of going on sale.



Tram Productions' Tony Cook said: "We're really excited for this event as they are always absolutely incredible. At Tram Productions we don't do things by halves — we go all out to bring you the very best acts in style! If you've been to one of our Wack Pack events before you'll know how special they are and the Adelphi ballroom is stunning. Ricky, Asa, Steve and Joe are all class acts and it's going to be an amazing Valentine's Day experience."



A huge 'Wack Pack' event for Valentine's Day is coming to The Adelphi Hotel Ballroom on the afternoon of Sunday 15th February 2026. The 'dress to impress' showcase will be hosted by the charismatic Ricky Tomlinson and will feature swing hits from Liverpool legends Asa Murphy, Steve Charles and Joe Speare. Tickets start from £25 via TicketSource.

The Wack Pack Valentine's Day Special / The Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, L3 5UL / Sun 15th February from 2pm

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR TICKETS

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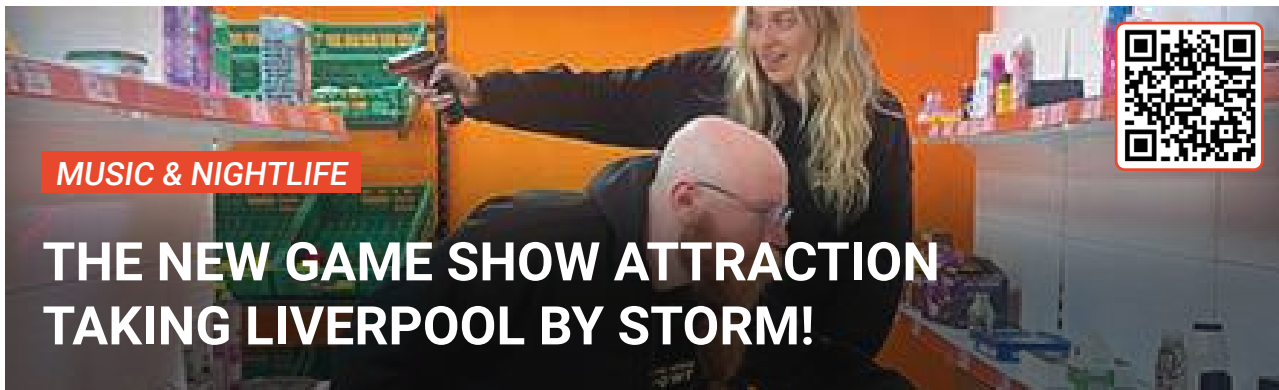


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MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

THE NEW GAME SHOW ATTRACTION TAKING LIVERPOOL BY STORM!

If you've ever fancied yourself as a contestant on a TV game show, now's your chance! A brand-new attraction has landed in Liverpool – Challenge Point Liverpool – and it's taking the city by storm! Located at 7-11 Sir Thomas Street (L1 6BW), the venue is brought to you by the creators of the popular escape room attraction Breakout Liverpool.



What's the Experience?

At its core, Challenge Point Liverpool is an immersive, game-show-style challenge where teams go head-to-head across a series of mini-games. Yet there's more – you can win actual prizes! Some of the prizes given out at the recent grand final were: £500 cash, a giant teddy bear, Cineworld vouchers, vouchers to Victoria Street Collective Food Hall and a Gold Pass to Breakout Liverpool.

- Teams of 2 to 6 players compete against other teams in the same session (though you only play with people you pre-book) for a total game time of about 70-90 minutes.
- You'll tackle six distinct mini-games, each approximately 5 minutes long, covering a mix of physical, mental and skill-based challenges.
- If your team racks up the highest score in your slot, you earn the chance to play the climatic "Bonus Game" (The Point) for bigger prizes.

Some Of The Games

- Supermarket Beep: Inspired by "Supermarket Sweep", you'll run, scan and rack up points across a wild shopping spree-style challenge.
- Laser Maze: Think blacked-out room, lasers to avoid and levels to beat as time ticks down.
- Guess Who: A communication-based game where your team must pick the same character from a set, under pressure.
- And a few more!

Who Is It For?

Pretty much anyone looking for an activity that blends fun, teamwork and adrenaline:

- Friends or couples looking for a different kind of night out.
- Families with kids aged 6+ (under-16s must be accompanied by an adult on-site).
- Work teams or corporate groups aiming for a memorable team-building experience.
- Hen/stag parties or special occasions that want something beyond the usual.

Why It's A Must Visit

- It's brand new to the Liverpool scene (opened August 2025) and part of an expanding concept that already had success in Manchester and Chester – with top TripAdvisor and Google ratings.
- You become the stars of the show – no sitting back and watching others. You're in the action.
- The variety of games means you'll likely find something that both your adrenaline-seeking friends and more laid-back family members can enjoy.
- The building's location is central (Liverpool city centre), making it convenient for combining with dinner or drinks.
- You can win really cool prizes such as £500 cash!



Challenge Point Liverpool / 7-11 Sir Thomas Street, Liverpool, L1 6BW / 0151 236 3207

**FOR MORE INFO OR TO BOOK VISIT
CHALLENGEPOINTLIVERPOOL.COM OR CALL
0151 236 3207**

MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

LIVERPOOL INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL RETURNS IN 2026!



The hugely celebrated Liverpool International Jazz Festival returns to Liverpool Hope University's Capstone Theatre this February! The festival, established in 2013, brings some of the world's finest acts to the city and the next incarnation will take place from Friday 26th Feb to Sun 1st March 2026 inclusive.



Liverpool International Jazz Festival 2026 will comprise of concerts from a stellar line up of artists including Tim Garland and Geoffrey Keezer, David Helbock and Julia Hofer, Zoe Rahman and Arun Ghosh, Robert Mitchell's Little Black Book, Martin Taylor and Marius Neset Quartet. The festival is fantastic value for money, with Early Bird and Festival Bundle tickets now on sale.

Tim Garland and Geoffrey Keezer: Thurs 26th Feb, 7.30pm



In Spring 2025 in New York, Grammy award-winning musicians Tim Garland (saxophone) and Geoffrey Keezer (piano) recorded a brand-new duet album, Mezzo. Both seasoned players have globe-trotted with some of the most famous players in music and show their crystalline lyrical maturity as well as incendiary virtuosity in a set that features one new and rare instrument after which the album is named.

Throughout an international career starting in the late 1980's, Grammy-winning saxophonist Tim Garland has become known as a unique polymath in the UK's music scene. Meanwhile, Geoffrey Keezer is a Grammy-winning pianist, composer, arranger and producer who has toured and recorded with Sting and a host of big names.

David Helbock and Julia Hofer: Fri 27th Feb, 7.30pm



David Helbock, a prominent figure in Austrian jazz, captivates audiences worldwide with his projects at festivals across all continents. His virtuosity and creativity have earned him numerous awards, including several prizes at the world's largest jazz piano solo competition in Montreux (CH) as well as the "Outstanding Artist Award" from the Austrian government.

In his latest project, Helbock has teamed up with the versatile electric bassist and cellist Julia Hofer from Vienna as his duo partner. Hofer has gained recognition primarily in the pop world, whether through tours with the No Angels or appearances on German TV shows like those of Stefan Raab.

Milap Presents Zoe Rahman and Arun Ghosh: Sat 28th Feb, 1pm



Milap and Liverpool International Jazz Festival jointly present a unique collaboration between two of the brightest stars on the contemporary jazz scene. MOBO award winning Zoe Rahman is a vibrant and highly individual pianist and composer. Her style is deeply rooted in jazz yet it reflects her classical background, British-Bengali heritage and her very broad musical taste.

Meanwhile, Arun Ghosh is an award-winning clarinetist and composer, and a charismatic performer. His lyrical and sonorous musical style draws together jazz, folk and South Asian influences. A treat for audiences, the pair are a match made in heaven and will be fusing some truly beautiful sounds together for Liverpool International Jazz Festival 2026.

Robert Mitchell's Little Black Book: Sat 28th Feb, 7.30pm



Diversity is at the heart of Robert Mitchell's remarkable career. His recent tenure as Artist in Residence at Morley College provided the setting for a new venture that builds on all his previous legacy while sounding quite unlike any of it.

Drawing inspiration from the heavy fusion of Chick Corea and Allan Holdsworth, the psychedelic bluesy swagger of Jimi Hendrix, and the fearless multimedia explorations of Cecil Taylor, Little Black Book brings together three bravura players in an uplifting celebration. Laurie Lowe on drums and Zayn Mohammed on guitar bring the exact combination of power, accuracy and unbounded imagination to make the project come alive.

Martin Taylor: Sun 1st March, 1pm



Award winning guitarist Martin Taylor MBE has established a unique musical career as an internationally acclaimed musician, and his inimitable style has seen him recognized as the world's foremost exponent of solo jazz guitar playing.

As well as being a true guitar innovator, he is also a master concert performer, dazzling audiences with his solo shows, which combine virtuosity, emotion, humour, with a strong stage presence. He has also collaborated with musicians from many different musical genre including Stephane Grappelli, Jeff Beck, Gary Burton, Chet Atkins, Bill Wyman, George Harrison, Dionne Warwick, Diane Schuur and Jamie Cullum.

Marius Neset Quartet: Sun 1st March, 7.30pm



Marius Neset made an astonishingly powerful impression when he first emerged onto the European jazz scene as a young saxophonist of protean gifts more than a decade ago. Widely regarded as one of the best saxophonists of his generation, The Telegraph once stated: *"Marius Neset is a marvel. He makes his instrument dance like a gazelle and soar like an eagle"*,

The Norwegian has now received well over twenty awards and award nominations including the prestigious Edvard prize and Spellemannprisen in Norway, and the ECHO Awards and the Preis der Deutschen Schallplatten Kritik in Germany. He was also the only European to be listed as one of "25 for the Future" by Downbeat in 2016.

With Liverpool International Jazz Festival announced and tickets now on sale, it is advisable to secure yours early. Discounted Early Bird tickets are available until 31st December 2025, including the Festival Bundle Ticket for just £60 that grants access to all concerts. More announcements regarding additional city-wide events will be coming soon too.

Liverpool International Jazz Festival / Fri 26th Feb – Sun 1st March 2026 / The Capstone Theatre, 17 Shaw Street, Liverpool, L6 1HP

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR TICKETS

**For more information visit
capstone.hope.ac.uk/jazzfestival**

**For updates follow The Capstone Theatre on
FACEBOOK**



MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE



NATASHA HAMILTON LAUNCHES NEW RECORD LABEL!

In this La Vida Liverpool exclusive, we talk to Atomic Kitten star Natasha Hamilton about her solo career, her new record label, Morpho Records, and the importance of supporting young artists and mental health in the industry. La Vida owner Justin Hopper hosted the big Christmas tree switch on in Liscard with Natasha and what a lovely lady she is!



LA VIDA: So, how are you and what have you been up to recently, apart from the big Liscard Christmas event of course!

NATASHA: I'm really good! Life is full, creative, and moving fast, which is exactly how I like it. I'm spending a lot of time in the studio at the moment working on my solo music, and I feel the most connected to my artistry I've been in years. Alongside that, launching Morpho Records has opened up a whole new dimension of my career. It's been a beautiful mix of building, creating, learning, and leading.

LA VIDA: Tell us about your recent solo music and the debut EP!

NATASHA: This new music feels like a complete rebirth for me. The EP explores a journey through darkness, surrender, awakening, and stepping into your power again. It's the most honest work I've ever made – vocally, lyrically, emotionally. There's a rawness to it, but also a clarity and strength that comes from everything I've lived through. It marks a new era for me, one where I'm not just singing a story, I'm owning it!

LA VIDA: And this record label, what's that all about?

NATASHA: *Morpho Records is a dynamic new label focused on the development of future pop stars and is a continuation of the home I had as a young artist. I was signed to a label who felt like family and that's what I wanted with Morpho. It's a future-focused, artist-first label built around creativity, nurture, and genuine care. I wanted to create a place where artists feel heard and empowered. Not rushed, moulded or treated like a product.*

LA VIDA: What are you offering artists?

NATASHA: *Real support. Development. Honest guidance. A space where their individuality isn't just accepted but celebrated. We work closely with artists to understand who they are, what they want to say, and how they want to say it – creatively, visually, strategically. It's about building sustainable careers, not quick wins. And because I've lived the highs and the hard lessons myself, I bring a perspective that's grounded in experience.*

LA VIDA: What does it mean to you to give rising artists an opportunity through your label and connections?

NATASHA: *It means everything. I know how it feels to be young, talented, and hungry, but unsure where to turn or who to trust. To be in a position now where I can open doors for others is a privilege. Helping an artist step into their potential, protecting them, guiding them, and watching them grow, it's one of the most fulfilling things I've ever done.*



LA VIDA: Do you think it's more difficult for talent to come through today compared to when you started?

NATASHA: *In some ways yes, in some ways no. There are more opportunities than ever, but there's also far more noise. The pressure to be constantly visible, constantly "on," can be overwhelming. When I started, the path was narrower but clearer. Now the path is wide open, which is exciting – but artists can feel lost in it. That's where the right support system makes all the difference.*

LA VIDA: What was it like for you as a young teenage artist from Kensington suddenly becoming a big star?

NATASHA: *Surreal. Thrilling. Intense. I was just a girl from Liverpool who loved to sing, and suddenly my whole world changed overnight. I didn't fully understand the scale of what was happening at the time, you can't at that age. It was incredible, but it also came with pressures I wasn't prepared for. Those early experiences shaped me, and they're a big part of why I care so deeply about supporting young talent now.*



LA VIDA: Do you think enough is done to protect artists from the impact of fame on mental health?

NATASHA: *Not yet. The industry has improved, but there's still a long way to go. Fame amplifies everything, the good and the painful and without the right support, it can become overwhelming very quickly. Young artists especially need safeguarding, education, and people around them who aren't afraid to have the difficult conversations. Protecting mental health should be as fundamental as vocal coaching or rehearsal time.*

LA VIDA: What are your most memorable and proud moments with Atomic Kitten?

NATASHA: *There are so many. Hearing our songs sung back to us around the world. Topping charts in countries I'd never even visited. The sisterhood, the madness, the laughter. But the proudest part for me is how those songs have lived on. Even now, new generations are discovering them. That's a rare gift – and I don't take it for granted.*

LA VIDA: Any advice for young artists coming through? Or warnings about the industry?

NATASHA: *Know who you are before anyone else tries to tell you. Protect your voice – not just your singing voice, but your inner voice. Surround yourself with people who genuinely care about you, not just what you can do for them. Learn the business. Trust your instincts. And understand that longevity isn't about being the loudest in the room, it's about being the truest to yourself.*



LA VIDA: What are you hoping to achieve with the label, and how can artists reach you?

NATASHA: *Morpho Records is about building a new generation of Pop artists who are brave, self-aware, imaginative, and supported properly. I want to help create careers that last, not moments that flash and fade. We're already working with our first signing and will be opening the doors for more very soon. We're always listening for authentic voices. Any Pop artists who feel Morpho might be the right home for them can share their music with our talent scout Ross, who leads our A&R scouting email ross@morpho-records.com*

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THE GUZHENG VIRTUOSO REDEFINING CULTURAL BOUNDARIES!

When Belle steps onto a stage, she brings with her more than an ancient Chinese instrument — she brings a living, breathing bridge between cultures. The Hong Kong-raised guzheng player, whose real name is Erin Lam, has become one of the UK's most exciting new artists, blending tradition with bold creativity.

In September 2025, she stunned audiences at Manchester's huge Primal Live song contest, winning Best Original Song and Top Fundraiser, raising thousands for the Booth Centre supporting the homeless. But her success is more than a musical milestone. It marks a deeply personal journey — one shaped by loss, rediscovery and an unbreakable connection to her roots.



A Mother's Legacy

Belle's incredible song contest win is dedicated to her mother. Belle lost her mother to blood cancer in 2015, after a year-long battle following her 2014 diagnosis, and was sadly unable to witness Belle's success — from reaching Grade 8 on the piano and completing her Music Masters at the University of Manchester to winning Primal Live.

Speaking of this, she says: *"My mother was a great, elegant and kind woman. She raised seven children, and I am the fifth. Because my father was often away for business, it was always her and us — we shared a very close bond. It saddens me that she cannot see my achievements but she is always with me everything I do is in her honour."*



A Journey With The Guzheng

With Grade 8 piano already under her belt, Belle sought something that would connect her to her heritage. The guzheng — an ancient Chinese zither with a history spanning over 2,500 years — captivated her instantly. *"I fell in love with its shimmering, expressive sound and the graceful movements of the player," she explains.*

The guzheng is a traditional Chinese string instrument with 21 or more strings, which has thousands of years of history. The origin of the instrument dates back to the Spring and Autumn (770-476 BCE) and Warring States periods (475-221 BCE). However, the string instrument did not become prominent until the Qin Dynasty (210-206 BCE).



What began as a new challenge became a calling. More than ten years later, the guzheng is now her profession and platform for innovation. Belle is boldly pushing the instrument into new spaces — covering Western songs, experimenting with modern genres and collaborating with UK artists. Her recent groundbreaking project with Liverpool singer Sophie Mac — Redemption — features the guzheng as the lead instrument in a rap song.



The Day Belle Made Guzheng Famous!

On Sunday 21st September 2025, Belle competed at the huge Primal Live song contest alongside 35 other musicians and bands — a competition that was oozing with talent. In a packed and lively event at Band On The Wall, Belle silenced the fervent crowd with her spinetingling performances that blew the audience away — raising hairs and creating goosebumps in the process.

Belle's first ever original composition — Emerging — is an instrumental story of transformation. It mirrors her own journey: moving from darkness to light, from doubt to renewal. Its structure is unconventional — no chorus, no bridge — just evolving verses that build toward a luminous glissando symbolising rebirth. She knew instantly that its premiere belonged on the Primal Live stage.

For the final, Belle delivered a Jay Chou martial-arts classic — Fearless. Performing in a custom qipao, she honoured both her heritage and her family — who share a deep love of Jay Chou's music. Her guzheng technique became almost percussive, driving the song with sweeping gestures and explosive energy. "It captures the martial arts spirit — staying true to yourself and turning fear into strength," she explains.



What Next For The Forward-thinking Virtuoso?

By winning Primal Live song contest, Belle has broken down cultural boundaries and made history. But what now for the forward-thinking virtuoso? Belle is now focused on expanding her musical footprint in the UK — through performances, collaborations and creating more original music. She is soon to release Redemption — the groundbreaking guzheng rap song with Sophie Mac that might well be the first collaboration of its kind.

Belle is also looking to work with venues to bring something unique to events, theatres who want a stunning showcase and also schools and organisations who wish to learn about the cultural significance of the instrument. A true visionary, Belle isn't just redefining tradition — she's rewriting the possibilities of contemporary music. And all in the name of her mother.

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MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE



LIVERPOOL MUSICIAN SET FOR BIG THINGS AFTER WINNING PRIMAL LIVE!

Just months after picking up his first guitar, 28-year-old John Roche from Huyton has taken home the top prize at this year's Primal Live song contest, a major music event supporting local charity The Whitechapel Centre. The talented country artist has been tipped for big things after blowing the audience and judges away.

Held on Saturday 25th October at the Invisible Wind Factory, the event featured 36 artists and bands and raised over £5,000 for the Liverpool homelessness charity. But it was Roche's heartfelt performance and raw songwriting that stole the show – and the hearts of everyone in the room – as the hundreds of people in attendance were mesmerised by his stunning songs.



John's journey into music began less than a year ago. What started as nervous posts of himself singing on social media soon turned into a passion he couldn't ignore. In June, he began writing his own songs, and by September, he'd bought his first guitar. Just two months later, he stood on stage at Primal Live – performing live for the very first time.

Despite his inexperience, Roche captivated the audience with two original songs, "All That I Need" and "Weekend Dad." His emotional delivery and storytelling earned a standing ovation and glowing praise from the judging panel, fellow performers and the crowd alike – with people singing along with him to All That I Need during his celebration performance at the end.

The victory marks a remarkable turnaround for John, who admits that just a year ago, he was struggling with depression, low confidence and uncertainty about his future. *"I didn't really know what I wanted to do with my life,"* John said. *"I was in and out of jobs, feeling lost. Then I started singing online, and something just clicked. Music gave me purpose again – it helped me through some really dark times."*

His first song, "All That I Need," was born out of heartbreak and written as a form of self-healing. That creative spark quickly grew into a passion – John has now written ten songs, with "All That I Need" and "Weekend Dad" being his first completed works. Though still unreleased, John plans to record and release "All That I Need" in the new year, with hopes that his music will bring comfort to others facing tough times.

Compared by many to country and folk-inspired artists like Luke Combs, Zach Bryan, and Noah Kahan, Roche's sound blends emotional honesty with relatable storytelling. But for John, success isn't just about the music – it's about connection. *"My goal now is to make music people can really relate to,"* he said. *"If my songs can help someone else the way music helped me, that's all I could ever ask for."*

From battling depression and self-doubt to winning Primal Live in his first ever live performance, John Roche's story is one of courage, resilience and the transformative power of music – proving that sometimes, the hardest beginnings lead to the brightest stages. Keep your eyes peeled, as the next big Liverpool star is well and truly in the making.



The event was another incredible showcase from Primal Live -- with some top talent on display. A special shout out must also go to Autumn B Woods -- who overcame adversities and homelessness to win Best Performance of the song contest. Her victory epitomises everything Primal Live is about, as the team gear up for another big event in March 2026.

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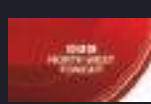


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ARTS & CULTURE



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MAGAZINE

ARTS & CULTURE

LIVERPOOL BOOK FESTIVAL SET TO BE ANOTHER HUGE EVENT!



Liverpool Book Festival is BACK after a massively successful inaugural event that saw over 1,000 attendees and coverage from BBC News! The next huge event is taking place at BoxPark in Cain's Brewery Village on Sunday 8th March 2026, from 11am until 5pm, and is an absolute must for book lovers!

The festival will feature over 60 of the region's finest authors signing and selling their books directly to book lovers, publishers, celebrity special guests, talks, workshops, live music, artisan stalls, street food, cosplay characters, children's activities and more! After the incredible success of the first event in September, the next one is set to be even bigger and better!



Earlybird & Standard Tickets

Earlybird tickets are flying out already – with only a limited amount remaining! After selling out the price will rise slightly as they become Standard Tickets. Earlybird tickets are incredible value at just £15 which includes a £7.50 drink token and a goody bag and here's what you receive....

- Meet over 60 of the region's finest authors who are selling and signing their books
- Meet bestselling authors such as Caroline Corcoran and Jane Costello
- Meet celebrity special guest authors such as Ricky Tomlinson, Stan Boardman and SAS national hero Rusty Firmin
- Meet comic editors, writers and illustrators such as Tim Quinn and Alan Cowsill (Marvel, DC Thomson & others) and Nigel Parkinson (The Beano, The Dandy & others)
- Browse artisan stalls selling artsy products and even live tarot readings
- Enjoy street food from Box Park's traders
- Enjoy live acoustic music from talented local artists

VIP Tickets

VIP tickets are for those who want an elevated experience and a chance to connect with the celebrity special guests in an intimate setting. VIP tickets are just £40 which includes a £15 food voucher, a £7.50 drink token and a goody bag and here's what you receive....

- Everything detailed above that Earlybird and Standard tickets receive
- A designated VIP area and breakout room with a private bar
- Access to intimate talks and Q&As from special guests including – comedy legends Ricky Tomlinson and Stan Boardman, viral crime podcaster Shaun Attwood, comic legends Tim Quinn, Alan Cowsill and Nigel Parkinson, hypnotist Alan Bates, bestsellers Caroline Corcoran and Jane Costello, SAS national hero Rusty Firmin, chef Dave Critchley and others



Children's Tickets

Liverpool Book Festival is a fun, family friendly event and there will be a dedicated Kids Zone — featuring a wide variety of fun activities suitable for ages 4 to 15. Children's tickets are just £10 (children aged 3 and under may come for free) and include....

- Storytelling from Wish Upon A Party characters
- Positivity Club — positive mental health games with Jess
- Creative Writing & Illustration Workshop with author Helen Poole
- Poetry Workshop from Zonked
- Art & Poetry Workshop from Ali Harwood
- Interactive Book Reading & Eco Education with Walter The Wheelie Bin
- Bertie Bird's Adventures Book Reading with Becci Cleator
- A special visit from Indy The Therapy Dog
- Cosplay Characters in full attire
- Children's authors selling their books

Another Huge Event This March

After the incredible success of the first event in September, Liverpool Book Festival is set to be even bigger and better on Sunday 8th March 2026! From 11am until 5pm at BoxPark, the event will feature over 60 authors signing and selling their books, publishers, celebrity special guests, talks, workshops, live music, artisan stalls, street food, cosplay characters, children's activities and more!



Liverpool Book Festival / Sun 8th March 2026,
11am-5pm / BoxPark, Cains Brewery Village,
Stanhope Street, Liverpool, L8 5XJ

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POETS' CORNER

The Liverpool region isn't short of wordsmiths and in this section we bring you a poem from one of our region's greatest wordsmiths. From the poignant and profound to the silly and surreal, here you'll find poetry at its finest...

Christmas In The Gutter

*He's down on his luck and people go by,
Most don't look him in the eye.
He'd never have dreamt that he could end up
Begging for change holding a cup.
He's invisible with no fixed abode,
And this city's streets aren't paved with gold.
No room at the inn for a man of no means,
In a state of confusion on a cold Christmas eve.
He's in the same doorway where he slept last night,
Just a sleeping bag as the chill starts to bite.
It's cold and damp now it's starting to rain,
And he's scared some drunks will think he's fair game.
He's been spat on, kicked and abused...
If only they'd walked a mile in his shoes.*

A Christmas Night's Work

*It's far too cold, I'm too fat and old,
My pension is well overdue.
It's Christmas Day, I've abandoned my sleigh,
Freezing and soaked right through.
With my sack on my back, I climbed down the stack,
Rudolph was parked on the slates,
When I lost my foot, dislodging the soot,
And tumbled into the grate.
I just lay groaning, wheezing and moaning,
And sat in the hearth for a bit.
Then a pain in my bum, which was frozen and numb,
Made me jump as the fire was lit.
I leapt from the grate, in a critical state,
As soot spewed down from the flue.
Next thing the sack hit my head with a wack,
Leaving burnt black and blue.
My all red attire and beard were on fire,
As I made a bolt for the door,
And proceeded to throw myself in the snow,
Which was now beginning to thaw.*

BY PHIL WOOD



ARTS & CULTURE

GED SAID

Ged Thompson is a one-man literary force, a world-renowned performance poet, storyteller, author, and a true bard of the oral tradition. His titles including 'Middle Earth Magic' & 'Diaries of A Man Who Believes in Angels' have touched the hearts and minds of readers around the globe, daring them to hope, to love, and to be kind – wherever and whenever they can.



FRED'S STORY

I try to get into the café on Green Lane every day; you meet a lot of characters there, so-ya-do. Today it was Fred's turn to talk to me, to tell his story.

Now I've been dodging people like Fred because I'm no longer in the random story-collecting business, no longer taking on drive-by stories. Stories are not required from others at this time, thank you very much. I'm trying to reduce my empathy, because empathy can be draining, and if not regulated – toxic even. But today, when there was only me, Fred, and Bobby (the café owner) there, and Fred said that his mum had died yesterday, and looked like he needed to tell a story, I very reluctantly came out of retirement.

Back story: I've been pestering Petrol Bomb Pete from the café to let me write his biography for a few years now. I've even offered him money for it, and a promise to only publish it posthumously, because I feel it's such an interesting tale. Peter won't give it up, but I keep making the offer anyway, hoping that he will, and Fred must have overheard these exchanges.

Fred said today, "You write stories on people's lives, don't you?" He then explained how he'd heard me asking Peter if I could write his biography. Fred said he wanted to make a book out of his life because he's pretty much skint and needs the money. I said I wasn't really interested in writing his story – but Fred was starting to tell it anyway. He was eager to reveal his life to me, and as I said, his mum had died the day before, which (via decency) warrants him a little grace, so here the three of us find ourselves, witnessing the unravelling of Fred's story.

At the time this story is unfolding, I'm alone at my own table wiring together some lights for Petrol Bomb Pete's flat; Bob is in and out of the kitchen, and Fred is talking at his own table about five metres away from mine.

Fred's story starts off pretty mundane if I'm honest, and I'm sympathetically giving the appearance of listening, but just vaguely granting grace and space, while not really being emotionally involved in the narrative. He tells me of his love of football and how he loves his dog Rory more than anything in the world – he calls Rory his baby. Fred has this unassuming innocence and child-like manner about him, more suited to a child than a grown man.

He tells how he's always lived around older people and never anyone his own age. Then at one point he says, "And there's obviously this thing", and I hear him double-tap with his hand. Not looking up from my task of wiring the lights, I reply, "What thing?" and he says, "This thing", and taps his upper thigh again under the table.

He then invites me to stand up and look at what he's talking about, and I ruefully tell Fred that I can't be arsed standing up, and that he should just tell me. Just then, a customer enters to collect a takeaway order, and Fred looks across at him and says, "I don't want to say just now, give us a min." I'm guessing he's got a false leg or something and he's a bit embarrassed to say in front of random strangers, so I keep wiring and Fred halts his narration and waits patiently for the guy to leave.

The unknown customer gets his sandwich from Bob and leaves, freeing Bob to come sit down at the table next to Fred. At this point Fred stands up and taps his leg again, revealing a massive lump in his tracksuit bottoms. I'm like, "What's that lump, kid?" and Fred says, "I've got one giant bollock, haven't I!"

So (me being me), with the default setting of laughing in any awkward situation, I just double up in hysterics, don't I.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Then Bob starts laughing, then even Fred starts laughing in turn, because I'm in tears at Fred slapping his giant gonad in the middle of... Bob's café. I manage to compose myself for a second to say, "Is that really your bollock?" with the intention of apologising. But then when Fred says, "Ye, that's my giant bollock", with another double tap on the bollock bongos, and I say, "That's fucking nuts, that!", I realise what I've said... and start howling again.

Eventually the three of us catch our breath, compose ourselves, and a kind of soberness creeps into the moment. A shadow of reverence for Fred's feelings is rightly cast over us.

Fred has our attention at last.

He starts really telling his story. And by then, I've made a cast-iron promise to myself to really listen to Fred, and not to start laughing again, because one thing is quickly becoming apparent: Fred hasn't just got an oversized testicle – he's got an oversized heart, a shedload of stoicism, and the ability to laugh at his own misfortunes. Even on the day after his mum had just died.

Fred said to me today (after we'd all stopped laughing about his bollock) that, "When the going gets tough – the Scousers start laughing." And that's true. It's a very Liverpudlian thing: to assuage and heal awkwardness through laughter. Laughter not at each other – but with each other.

Fred told me one of the saddest life stories I've ever heard today. It was a story of disadvantage, of neglect, of heartache, of bad health, and of often not belonging. He told me how, "We all have our problems, but we need to be kind to each other", because that's how we make the world a better place.

Fred turns up with a smile on his face every day. He shows up for life like we all do – all with different stories, some happy, some sad, some with big balls, some with little balls, some with no balls – but we show up. Fred has the will to try to be happy despite circumstance, and I think in this world, where it's so easy to choose misery and self-pity, that just turning up and smiling despite circumstance is one of the bravest things we can do. And when we're courageous enough to do so, it lights the whole world around us up, and everyone that we touch too.

I felt it happen today.

Thanks for reminding me, Fred.

G x

04 November 2020

So today Bob from the café messaged and said that Fred had died, and it hit me pretty hard. I wondered if maybe he'd just run out of things to live for; wondered if he'd died of a broken heart when his mum, who he lived with, had passed. I wondered if he maybe just wasn't well, and I hoped that he'd gone in his sleep without pain.

I thought about how reluctant I was to give him my time initially, and how important it might have been for him to have Bob and me hold that space for him to tell his tale.

I wondered a lot of things, some poignant, some silly. Then I wondered if he knew. If he was just searching for a place to leave his story with somebody because he, somewhere deep inside himself, knew that he'd not be around to tell it in a week's time. That he'd be going to join the sunsets, and that all of his pain, and hurt, and laughs, and smiles would be just words on a page and memories in our minds.

Night and God bless, Fred. I hope you're born again into a better life, or get to play with Rory on a cloud, or just get to be at peace. I hope the best for you wherever you are, kid.

I hope this goes some way to remembering you properly too.

G x

17 November 2020

So today was Fred's funeral. We got word how he died: apparently his heart had just stopped. They found his body sat up in his favourite chair. He was rolling a joint when he passed, and there was an open can of lager next to him. This comforted me to know; I guess that's not a bad way to go out.

Bob had told his friends that before Fred died, he'd passed his life story on to me, and I'd written about him in my journal. Fred didn't get a chance to read it, obviously, but Bob passed it to his friend last week, and just messaged to say that they used it as Fred's eulogy in the funeral service. All his friends said I'd described him perfectly, told his story well, and that it had made them both laugh and cry.

I get now how important what I do is: the listening, the writing. Stories heal people; sometimes stories are all we are.

Fly well, Fred.

x

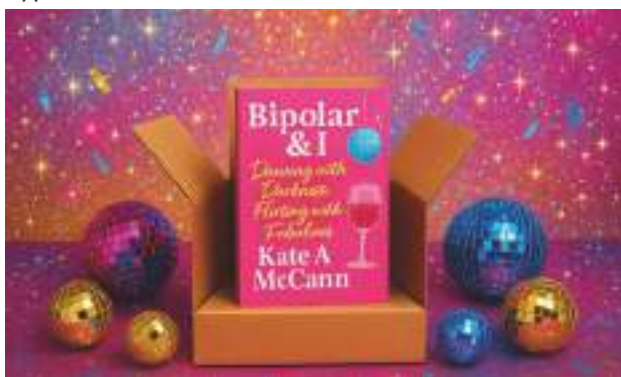
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ARTS & CULTURE

WIRRAL AUTHOR RELEASES BOOK ABOUT HER BI-POLAR JOURNEY!



When it comes to mental health, honesty and humour rarely share the same page. But in *Bipolar & I: Dancing with Darkness, Flirting with Fabulous*, Wirral author and mental health advocate Kate A. McCann manages to weave both into a refreshingly candid and uplifting book about living with Bipolar Type 2 disorder.



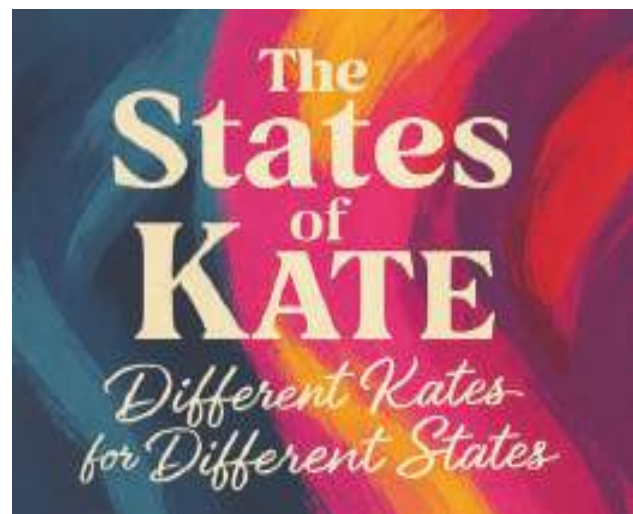
Part memoir, part survival guide, Kate's book is a brutally honest yet ultimately hopeful exploration of life with a condition that affects around one million people in the UK. Through her sharp wit and raw storytelling, she shines a light on the realities of bipolar disorder – not just the darkness of depression or the chaos of hypomania, but the moments of resilience, creativity and sparkle that can coexist with them.



A Journey from Diagnosis to Discovery

In her opening chapter, *Journey to the Dreaded Diagnosis: Bipolar Wasn't on My Vision Board*, Kate recalls the moment a doctor gave her chaos a name. What follows is a series of deeply personal yet universally relatable reflections on identity, self-worth, and survival.

She personifies her illness as an unruly “*mood-swinging sidekick*,” taking readers through the highs and lows in vivid, sometimes hilarious detail. From *The States of Kate* trilogy, which explores the depths of depression and the dizzying peaks of hypomania, to *Pill Pop Princess: Life on Lithium*, Kate balances brutal honesty with a disarming sense of humour.



Finding Light in the Mess

While *Bipolar & I* doesn't shy away from the harder topics – self-harm, alcohol misuse, burnout and anxiety – Kate's tone is never one of defeat. Instead, she reframes survival as an act of everyday heroism. In chapters like *Boss Bitch Energy (Even in PJs)* and *The Magic of Self-Care: Be Your Own Hero (Without a Cape or a Clue)*, she reminds readers that strength can look like getting out of bed, showing up for yourself or simply taking a nap without guilt.

Her writing style is fun, lighthearted and conversational, often poking fun at herself while offering practical wisdom. Every chapter is laced with empathy and relatability – whether you're living with bipolar, supporting someone who is, or just trying to navigate the rollercoaster of being human.

Creativity as a Lifeline

Kate also celebrates the creative spark that often accompanies bipolar disorder. In *Little Old Creative Me*, she reflects on how writing became her salvation and how creativity offers both expression and escape. “Many with bipolar are blessed with creative traits,” she notes, highlighting how art, words and humour can become tools for healing.



Breaking Stigma Through Storytelling

According to Bipolar UK, the condition affects roughly 1 in 50 people in the UK, yet it remains one of the most misunderstood mental illnesses. Kate’s book helps to break that stigma – not through clinical explanations, but through storytelling that is heartfelt, funny and unfiltered.

Her memoir serves as both education and empathy. It reminds readers that mental illness doesn’t discriminate – as she puts it, “Same shit, different stain.” Whether you’re a CEO, a parent or an artist, bipolar can impact anyone, anywhere.



A Voice of Hope and Humour

In the final chapters, particularly *Help & Hope: A Hug in Chapter Form*, Kate offers compassion and solidarity to those who feel broken or “too much.” She writes not as a distant expert, but as a friend who’s been through the fire and found her way back – sometimes crawling, sometimes dancing. Her message is simple but powerful: even in the darkest moments, there’s always room for light, laughter and fabulousness.



Beyond the Book: Talking About Bipolar

Following the book’s successful launch at Liverpool Book Festival, Kate is now offering free talks to businesses, organisations and charities to raise awareness about bipolar disorder and workplace mental health. Through open dialogue, she hopes to help others understand the condition, reduce stigma and inspire compassion in professional and personal spaces alike.



A Must-Read for Everyone

Bipolar & I: Dancing with Darkness, Flirting with Fabulous isn’t just for those with bipolar disorder. It’s for anyone who has ever felt anxious, exhausted, imperfect, or overwhelmed. Kate’s ability to find humour in hardship makes this book a profound, relatable and genuinely enjoyable read. Above all, it’s a celebration of survival, self-acceptance, and the messy magic of being human.

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ARTS & CULTURE

THE GALLERY



Welcome to La Vida Liverpool's art gallery, where we showcase some of the incredible art from our region's finest artists! From abstract and modern to watercolour and canvass, we bring you ingenious creations from local artists every quarter.

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ARTS & CULTURE

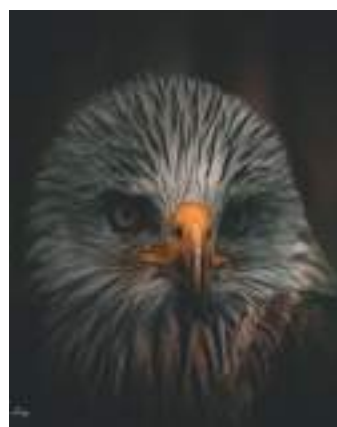
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE QUARTER



In this section we showcase some of the wonderful photographs from local photographers. The Liverpool region is a photographer's paradise -- from urban and industrial backdrops to stunning coastal settings. Our area inspires many local photographers and in turn they inspire us with their captivating captures. So sit back, relax and enjoy this season's selected photographs....

SHARON LONG

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To submit your photographs for future editions please email lavidaliverpool@gmail.com

ARTS & CULTURE

UNDER THE MERSEY MOON RETURNS TO THE FLORAL PAVILION!



Heartwarming country musical 'Under The Mersey Moon' is set to return to the Floral Pavilion in 2026 with three special dates on the main stage over Valentine's weekend. The show was a huge success when it was premiered at the theatre in 2025, becoming its best-selling new musical and enjoying sell-outs and standing ovations.



Due to popular demand and following rave reviews, Under The Mersey Moon is returning to the Wirral theatre in 2026 – this time in its 800-seat auditorium, with performances on Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th February, including a Saturday matinee. After such a resounding debut success, another incredible production is in store for audiences.



Radio legend Billy Butler and actress wife Lesley Butler are set to reprise their roles in the hit show, with more casting yet to be announced. The production is created by well-known Merseyside songwriters Jimmy Rae and Pete Davies and features 13 original songs which are performed by a live, six strong band and cast of 12. It is directed by Birkenhead's Brian McCann.

The play follows the story of Danny Rogers, a struggling country music-obsessed songwriter who is inspired by a secret from the past to follow in the footsteps of his beloved grandfather to Nashville, USA. He dreams of his music being discovered at last but the trip proves to be a very different journey of discovery and changes his life in a way he never expected.



Under The Mersey Moon is an uplifting story about love, home and family that will have you laughing one minute and holding back tears the next. A must for lovers of country music and theatre, its highly anticipated return has been well received – with tickets already flying out in advance.

The play received huge acclaim when it was staged at the Floral Pavilion's Blue Lounge with critics calling it "a fantastic production that truly had everything – emotion, drama, humour, great music and twists" and music broadcaster and writer Spencer Leigh describing the musical as having "the potential to be another Twopence to Cross the Mersey." Generous audience members also raised more than £600 for the Friends of Clatterbridge Cancer Charity.

Under The Mersey Moon / 14th-15th Feb 2026 / The Floral Pavilion, New Brighton, Wirral

SCAN THE QR OR VISIT FLORALPAVILION.COM FOR TICKETS

Destiny called him away, but his heart would always belong...

UNDER THE MERSEY MOON

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BY JIMMY RAE & PETE DAVIES

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Valentine's
Gift**

SPECIAL GUEST
APPEARANCES BY
BILLY AND LESLEY BUTLER

DIRECTED BY BRIAN MCGANN

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ARTS & CULTURE

HUGE ROBIN HOOD PANTO COMING TO THE FLORAL PAVILION THIS JAN!

This January, one of Wirral's most cherished theatrical traditions returns to the Floral Pavilion Theatre in New Brighton. The Chrysanthemums Pantomime Society — affectionately known as The Chrysanthums — is back with its 2026 production of Robin Hood and the Babes in the Wood, from 8th–11th January. As ever, expect a large scale production of a professional standard!

Packed with adventure, comedy, magic and heart, this year's show promises to be a perfect post-Christmas treat — and fantastic value for money at just £12 per child and £15 per adult. Whether you're looking for an ideal Christmas present, a family outing or simply a way to beat the January blues, The Chrysanthums' annual panto is a firm local favourite.



A Classic Tale with a Chrysanthums Twist

This year's story brings together familiar faces, slapstick humour and a wonderfully whimsical retelling of a well-loved tale. Harry and Holly — the young heirs of the Duke and Duchess of Nottingham — are left orphaned after a tragic shipwreck. As the only surviving children of the noble family, they stand to inherit a vast fortune on their eighteenth birthdays. What lies ahead is a thrilling battle for the inheritance!

Featuring a hilarious plot including the Sheriff of Nottingham, his hilariously inept henchmen Swiggit and Scoffit, the Wicked Witch, Maid Marian and of course, Robin Hood & His Merry Men, this panto is a blockbuster hit! As ever, audiences can expect music, laughter, slapstick antics, and magical storytelling, crafted by a company that lives and breathes pantomime.

A Century-Long Tradition of Laughter

The Chrysanthemums Pantomime Society is a multi-award winning production company celebrating an astonishing 107 years of continuous performances. Incredibly, the group are one of the longest-running pantomime societies in the UK—possibly even the world.

The group's origins date back to the summer of 1918. Nearing the end of World War I, a group of amateur performers staged an out-of-season pantomime in the garden of a home on Vaughan Road, New Brighton, framed by a stunning backdrop of chrysanthemum flowers — giving the society its distinctive name.



Multi-Award Winning Panto

Over the decades The Chrysanthums have performed across multiple venues, including long-gone local landmarks such as New Brighton Pier, The Tivoli and the Little Theatre in Birkenhead — winning many awards along the way. They've even been invited to perform at Portmeirion in North Wales. Their home, however, is now the Floral Pavilion, where generations of families return to their shows year after year.

Many cast members have spent years perfecting the traditions of the genre, and regular audiences love the combination of familiar performers and fresh faces. For scriptwriter and co-producer Graham Leigh, The Chrysanthums' enduring success comes from dedication to the art form itself: *"Pantomime is all we do. We don't do musicals, we don't do plays — pantomime is what we know."*

Book Your Tickets

The Chrysanthums' 2026 production of Robin Hood and the Babes in the Wood runs from Thursday 8th January to Sunday 11th January at the Floral Pavilion Theatre. Tickets are incredible value and expected to sell quickly as this is one of the most popular annual events on the Wirral calendar, so early booking is strongly advised.

SCAN THE QR TO BUY TICKETS FROM THE FLORAL PAVILION WEBSITE



ARTS & CULTURE

A CHRISTMAS CAROL AT ST GEORGE'S HALL THIS DECEMBER!

Exciting news for Liverpool theatre lovers as GINIFICENT Theatre Company are bringing their acclaimed production, A Christmas Carol, to St. George's Hall this December! A must-see this Christmas, the company steps into the awe-inspiring Great Hall with a brand-new haunting interpretation of Charles Dickens' timeless classic.

Running from 12th–24th December 2025, this atmospheric retelling marks GINIFICENT's 23rd consecutive year of performing Dickens' ghostly tale – in their signature 'true to the book' authentic style with language of the era. For the past eight years, the company has enchanted audiences in the Concert Room, but this year they're spreading their wings in the grandeur of the Great Hall.

With a cast of 14 talented performers, including four musicians creating a live cinematic soundscape, the audience will be transported back into the very heart of Victorian London's most famous ghost story. Embracing the darker origins of Dickens' tale, GINIFICENT's A Christmas Carol is truly captivating and this year's production is costing almost £250,000 to put on – such is the quality of its delivery.



With an in-the-round set-up, every audience member will have a unique vantage point, surrounded by the eerie atmosphere of the Great Hall. Add theatrical effects and a few tricks up the company's sleeve, and this is not your average Christmas production – expect bone-chilling confrontations, supernatural surprises lurking in the shadows and festive shivers.

Director and Producer Liam Scott can hardly contain his excitement: *"We're thrilled to be working in the breathtaking Great Hall this year. The space allows us to create something truly special – we have lots of new changes planned and we can't wait to share them with our audience."*

Scott himself provides seamless narration, guiding audiences chapter by chapter through the novella's ghostly twists and moral revelations. At the heart of

the performance, Ken McConnell takes on Ebenezer Scrooge in a chilling portrayal that, according to the company, *"delves into the darkest corners of his soul."*



GINIFICENT's A Christmas Carol production is always a big hit, but this year's production in The Great Hall may well be the best yet. As one attendee last year put it: *"We've seen it three years on the run – fantastic performance in the beautiful St. George's Hall. Christmas wouldn't be the same without it. Looking forward to seeing it in 2025."*

The production has received countless testimonials and 5 star reviews over the years. Another attendee from last year said: *"I don't know how many times we've been. A truly magical experience for all and a wonderful way for the Christmas festivities to begin. See you next year!"*

GINIFICENT Theatre Company's haunting and thrilling production of A Christmas Carol is coming to St George's Hall's Great Hall from 12th–24th December 2025. Third Release Tickets are available from £27 via Eventbrite and securing yours early is highly recommended, with another sell-out year anticipated.

A Christmas Carol / The Great Hall, St George's Hall, St George's Place, Liverpool, L1 1JJ / 12th–24th December 2025, Various Times

SCAN THE QR OR VISIT GINIFICENT.COM FOR TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Follow GINIFICENT on FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

Please note: This production may include flashing lights and immersive theatrical effects.

Images courtesy of Andy Von Pip and Nat Scott



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PEOPLE & LIFE

la vida liverpool

MAGAZINE

LA VIDA Q&A WITH LORD MAYOR OF LIVERPOOL BARBARA MURRAY!

In this feature, La Vida Liverpool talks to Lord Mayor Of Liverpool Barbara Murray about her role and what she hopes to achieve during her tenure. Much more than just attending events, her role is an important one — with lots of charity initiatives and work for great causes. Here's our exclusive Q&A....



LA VIDA: Firstly, congratulations on your role. How does it feel to be Lord Mayor Of Liverpool?

LORD MAYOR: *It's a great privilege and it feels wonderful compared to the working life of a councillor.*

LA VIDA: Please tell us more about yourself and your career leading up to this point?

LORD MAYOR: *I have had a varied career in the civil service, retail, education and housing which has been useful in political roles and appointments.*

LA VIDA: How and why did you become Lord Mayor Of Liverpool?

LORD MAYOR: *It is an appointment by the leader of council and was supported by cabinet, Labour group and full council. I believe some of the criteria are length of service, positions held and record as a ward councillor.*



LA VIDA: Please tell us more about the role and what it entails.

LORD MAYOR: *The Lord Mayor of Liverpool is known as the first citizen and is the chosen representative of the city, acting as a focal point for the community as well as promoting Liverpool and forging national and international links. The Lord Mayor of Liverpool is always a serving councillor, elected by the full city council at its Annual General Meeting which is held each May, and stands for one year in office.*

The Lord Mayor's duties include:

- Representing the city at civic functions/engagements
- Promoting the city nationally and internationally
- Supporting local charities and community groups
- Attending religious events of all denominations
- Meeting delegates from twinned cities
- Chairing meetings of the Full Council
- Conferring Honorary Freemen and Freedom of Associations and Institutions



LA VIDA: What are your aims and goals during your term?

LORD MAYOR: *To promote Liverpool as a creative city and to regenerate youth provision for our young people.*

LA VIDA: What charity initiatives are you championing?

LORD MAYOR: *Liverpool Education Grants Charitable Trust; Liverpool Literacy Cycle; Youth Works Apprenticeships; Liverpool Poetry Space*



LA VIDA: What do you love the most about Liverpool?

LORD MAYOR: *The river, the buildings and of course our wonderful people so warm and welcoming.*

LA VIDA: What do you think are the biggest challenges Liverpool faces?

LORD MAYOR: *Reducing the number of people and children in particular living in poverty. Getting more people into better paid jobs. Having a well qualified work force.*



LA VIDA: Tell us more about Liverpool Literacy Cycle and your role with that.

LORD MAYOR: *The Liverpool Literacy Cycle started in January 2020 with a Year of Reading and since then has evolved into an annual reoccurring focus on one of the main literacy skills: reading, writing and spoken word. The Liverpool Literacy Cycle aims to upskill everyone, in schools and in our many varied communities because literacy skills are important human tools that can be rewarding at a personal creative level or crucial as the means to economic recovery.*

Behind the cycle is a well-established network, connecting and creating collaboration between organisations, projects and free-lance creatives working to improve literacy skills in the city. The network is supported by a partner group of volunteers who meet monthly to co-ordinate, plan and promote literacy events.

All partners agree that more can be achieved together to improve the outcomes needed to upskill our workforce for better paid jobs. Throughout this time, the partner group has been committed to shared values, always striving to be inclusive by engaging with all our communities, especially as over 120 languages are now spoken in Liverpool.

The Liverpool Literacy Cycle is committed to developing local creative industries with paid opportunities for performers and writers, plus a longer-term aim to grow and sustain industries such as printing and publishing in the North West. There is great talent in the city and the region, and we need creatives working together and alongside each other to help literacy thrive for everyone.

LA VIDA: What is your message to the people of Liverpool?

LORD MAYOR: *Join my campaign #ChainReaction – are you a link in the chain?*



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PEOPLE & LIFE

LOCAL LEGENDS HONoured AT THE GUIDE LIVERPOOL HEROES AWARDS!

The Guide Liverpool celebrated 10 years of being a beacon of light in Liverpool's media world by hosting their inaugural Guide Heroes Awards at The Titanic Hotel on Friday 21st November 2026. The stellar event shone a light on some of the region's super heroes — with many profound moments throughout the evening.



There were tears, joy and a standing ovation when the city came together to honour the families of Southport victims Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice Da Silva Aguiar. The parents of the youngsters, who lost their lives in the tragedy in August last year, were each given a Special Award at The Guide Liverpool Heroes to recognise the courage and resilience they have shown since the attack.

Each of the families have set up charities in memory of their little girls to make lives better for others: Bebe's Hive offering a grief support service for children; Elsie's Story providing medical care, community events, and bereavement support for children and families, and Alice's WonderDance Foundation delivering dance programs, resources, and community events for those who need it most.



The Special Award, presented by former Chief Constable of Merseyside Serena Kennedy, was the climax of an emotional and inspirational evening honouring all those who make our city better. Others celebrated at the first ever Guide HEROES awards held at the Titanic Hotel included:

- Speedo Mick who was given the Liverpool City Region Superhero award in recognition of the incredible work he has done, overcoming homelessness, addiction, and mental health issues to raise more than £1m for charities
- Claire House Children's Hospice which won Charity of the Year for helping seriously and terminally ill children live life to the full while offering specialist nursing and end of life care, and support for the children and their families
- Mark King OBE, who launched the Oliver King Foundation after the death of his 12-year-old son to see life-saving defibrillators installed in public places



Hundreds of people attended the sparkling awards evening launched to mark 10 years of The Guide Liverpool, but more importantly to celebrate and reward all those whose stories it has shared throughout the decade. The event featured many individuals, fundraisers, organisations and businesses of Liverpool who have made the City Region the outstanding place it is.

Jay Hynd, founder and director of The Guide Liverpool, was delighted with the response to the inaugural awards event, and overwhelmed and humbled by all the finalists — not just the winners who received their accolades. While many of the awards were voted for by the public, the special awards were decided for by Jay and The Guide team, who are 'constantly in awe of the people we feature who make us and our city better'.



Jay, who hosted the evening along with The Guide presenter Gemma Cutting, said: "It was through sharing the stories and reading about all the amazing people in the Liverpool City Region that made us realise it was time to honour them. I knew it would be difficult because there are so many, but I truly hadn't realised just how difficult it would be."

"The evening itself was such a moving occasion, and it was an absolute privilege to shine a spotlight on everyone who has made a massive difference to so many people and to Liverpool, and to honour them and celebrate them in one very special night. There were tears – tissues were needed – but there was lot of laughter and cheering too. We are grateful to all our sponsors and to Liverpool Cruise Port and San Carlo Restaurants with whom we brought the event, but mainly to the award winners and finalists to whom we all owe so much."

The Guide Liverpool HEROES 2025 winners are:

- **The Guide Liverpool HEROES 2025 Special Award:** The families of Southport victims Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice Da Silva Aguiar
- **Liverpool City Region Superhero:** Speedo Mick
- **Child of Courage – sponsored by Gaskells Waste:** Jessica Dowle – Jessica's Stoma Journey, Henry Brammer – who has raised £30,000 for Alder Hey while being a patient, Zachary Kewley – who saved the life of a three-year-old girl on holiday in Mexico, Maximus 'Mighty Max' Johnson – a posthumous award to honour his brave cancer battle
- **The Inspiration Award – sponsored by Liverpool Cruise Port:** Mark King OBE – Oliver King Foundation.
- **Unsung Hero – sponsored by Wild Thang:** John Hughes – Liverpool Nightlife CIC
- **Business Hero – sponsored by Morecrofts Solicitors:** Anthony Grice – FIKA
- **Business of the Year – sponsored by Liverpool BID Company:** Mowgli
- **Charity of the Year:** Claire House Children's Hospice
- **Community Project – sponsored by Sedulo:** A Celebration for Zoe's Place Concert
- **Community Hero – sponsored by Greatest Hits Radio:** Fans Supporting Food Banks
- **Sustainability – sponsored by Liverpool ONE:** Zero Waste Liverpool
- **Emergency Services:** North West Air Ambulance
- **Fundraising Hero:** Olly Harrison
- **Inspiring Influencer – sponsored by San Carlo:** Tyler Daclaire
- **Sports Hero – sponsored by BOXPARK Liverpool:** Weapons Down Gloves Up
- **The Make A Difference Award – sponsored by Radisson RED:** Tim Edwards & John May, Joanne Colleran, Kieran Shingler, Cheryl Korbel, Alfie Fitzsimmons



Here at La Vida Liverpool, we'd like to extend our huge congratulation to all the winners and finalists for their outstanding work to make the world a better place. We'd also like to say a big WELL DONE to The Guide Liverpool for all their work during the past 10 years and for putting this amazing showcase on – it was great to attend and here's to working together to spread positive news throughout the region!

FOR MORE INFO ABOUT THE GUIDE HEROES AWARDS VISIT [THEGUIDELIVERPOOL.COM](https://theguideliverpool.com)

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WIRRAL FINANCIAL ADVISER WINS BIG AT WORLD TRANSPLANT GAMES!

An Independent Financial Adviser from Wirral has brought home four Silver Medals at the World Transplant Games in Germany, following his five Gold Medals at the UK Transplant Games. Richard Jones, 46, has had his life saved three times through kidney transplants and now competes as a swimmer in the UK and World games for transplant survivors.



Many people in his Wirral hometown will recognise Richard as Director of Smart Independent Financial Advice Ltd — his financial advice practice that offers a friendly drop-in service. With over 20 years' experience, he is a trusted and respected local expert — specialising in inheritance tax planning, retirement planning, and estate planning including Wills and Lasting Powers of Attorney — however his latest achievements have made him the talk of the town for other reasons.



Two years ago, the father-of-four received a life-saving kidney transplant — his third one — this time from his sister, Lynsey Hockings, from Heswall, Wirral. After losing two previous kidney transplants due to a rare virus, this new gift restored his health and opened the door to a life full of purpose, passion and achievement. With renewed health and energy, Richard returned to his love of swimming after enduring 7 years on daily dialysis.

"My first kidney came from my dad, the second from a donor on the NHS Organ Donor Register, and the third from my sister," Richard shares. "I'm incredibly thankful for each of my gifts, and fortunate that my third and final kidney has been successful with no return of the virus that damaged my previous kidney transplants — it has given me a normal, healthy life again."



Now, with renewed energy and focus, he trains with Hoylake Swimming Club and Liverpool City Masters, and is a member of the Transplant Sport Swimming Club. In 2024, he competed in the UK Transplant Games in Nottingham and brought home an incredible five gold medals in 200m Freestyle, 100m Freestyle, 100m Backstroke, 100m breaststroke and the Freestyle relay event.



Richard's stellar performance at the UK Transplant Games earned him a coveted place on Team GB for the World Transplant Games, held in Dresden, Germany, in August 2025. Competing against top transplant athletes from around the globe, he took part in seven events — and proudly brought home four silver medals in 50m Backstroke, 100m Backstroke, 200m Freestyle and the Relay Event.

The UK and World Transplant Games are about more than winning — they're powerful celebrations of life after illness. Every athlete is living proof of what organ donation makes possible. Recipients that have received a kidney, liver, heart or bone marrow can all compete and help promote the benefits of organ donation. They highlight what transplant recipients can achieve, both physically and mentally.

"It was an incredible honour to represent Team GB and compete alongside other transplant recipients from all over the world," says Richard. "Each of us has our own unique journey, but what unites us is gratitude –for our donors, and for the second chance we've been given."



On a day-to-day basis Richard Jones is a Chartered Independent Financial Adviser who gives people invaluable financial advice, yet behind the suit is a survivor who is truly grateful to be alive. He now not only competes internationally to help raise awareness, he is also about to become a trustee of the Wirral and West Cheshire Kidney Patient Association — a new charity in affiliation with the National Kidney Federation.

"The charity is run by kidney patients, for kidney patients," he explains. "We'll be providing financial support and practical equipment, but above all, we'll be offering a supportive community to help families through the challenges they face."



Richard's journey — from a life-threatening kidney disease to transplant recipient and international swimming success — is one of perseverance, gratitude and hope. With the support of his family, the gift of a working kidney and a determination to serve his community, Richard is a true example of how organ donation is one of the greatest gifts you can give.

For more information or to arrange an appointment, visit Smart Independent Financial Advice Ltd at 164 Banks Road, West Kirby, or get in touch today. WWW.SMART-IFA.CO.UK, 07944 648080. Richard@Smart-ifa.co.uk.

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For more information on the World Transplant Games visit www.wtg2025.com

To find out more about how to become an organ donor, please visit www.organdonation.nhs.uk

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PEOPLE & LIFE

CHRONICALLY ILL WOMAN BUILDS THRIVING CLEANING BUSINESS!



A chronically ill woman from Wallasey is proving that determination can overcome even the most daunting obstacles. Despite living with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME), also known as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), Jacqui Bevington has built one of the region's most impressive new cleaning enterprises.



With over 20 fully vetted and insured cleaners on the team, Jacqui's Nationwide Cleaners offers both domestic and commercial services, covering everything from weekly household cleans to deep cleans to business premises cleaning. Her business has quickly developed a reputation for professionalism, attention to detail and a personal touch that sets it apart.



One of the most meaningful aspects of Jacqui's work is her commitment to supporting elderly clients. Beyond cleaning, she often goes the extra mile — helping with home assistance and offering practical support to people who need a little extra care. For many of her customers, Jacqui's service provides not only a clean home but also companionship, reliability and peace of mind.

Jacqui launched her Nationwide Cleaners franchise with her husband Darren in March 2025, and within just a year they have achieved remarkable success. They now run the operation in Liverpool, Wirral, Chester and Flintshire — with new clients coming on board constantly and an ever growing team of cleaners. However, this success is quite astonishing given the journey Jacqui has been on.



Jacqui has achieved this whilst suffering from ME/ CFS — a long-term condition that causes extreme fatigue, pain, and a range of debilitating symptoms that can make day-to-day life challenging. Yet Jacqui has poured her energy, passion and resilience into building a reliable, people-focused business that is now thriving across the region.



Jacqui explains: "My journey with ME started in 2016 when I was in my first year of university at LJMU studying English Literature. I began to feel generally unwell and became unsteady when I was walking. After a few months of seeing the doctor I was diagnosed with ME. I had to start using a manual wheelchair with my husband pushing me everywhere. Quite quickly I realised that if I wanted my independence then an electric wheelchair would be the best option."

She continues: *"The ME was a terrible time in my life. Some days I was sleeping 20 hours a day and had a day bed in the lounge so that I didn't feel cut off from everything like I would have been in the bedroom for all those hours. I didn't mind using my wheelchair as it meant I could go to university and get on the train and do life as I wanted. But it was tough — we even had to move house for wheelchair accessibility."*



Her first year in business has exceeded expectations, not just in terms of growth but in impact. Jacqui's story is an inspiring example of overcoming adversity, redefining limits and building something extraordinary in the face of a chronic condition that often forces people to scale back their ambitions. The glowing testimonials from clients make it all worthwhile for her.



As her Nationwide Cleaners business continues to expand, Jacqui is a shining example of the power of perseverance, purpose and heart — showing that even on the toughest days, success is possible with courage and commitment. Whilst she cannot work long hours herself, she is building a formidable team of cleaners who are developing a growing reputation every day.



Speaking of her strength and resilience, she summarises: *"I came out of my wheelchair in 2022 with the love and support of my family. I completed my degree and was awarded a 2:1 in English Literature. Even today I still feel the effects of ME. I can get tired easily and sometimes my legs feel heavy and like they don't want to work, but I rest and usually feel better after that. It's been a long journey but the business is thriving and I'm really proud!"*



Jacqui Bevington owns Nationwide Cleaners — covering Liverpool, Wirral, Chester and Flintshire. Through her business she offers weekly household cleans, deep cleans, business premises cleaning and a specialist service to elderly people — often going the extra mile and helping with home assistance, running errands and offering practical support.

Jacqui Bevington / Nationwide Cleaners

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PEOPLE & LIFE

WIRRAL KITCHENS & INTERIORS CELEBRATES SUCCESSFUL FIRST YEAR!

Wirral Kitchens & Interiors is celebrating a 'fantastic' first year of trading, marking a successful start for the Hoylake-based company. Located on Carr Lane Industrial Estate, the business has quickly built a reputation for delivering stylish, high-quality kitchens and interiors tailored to every home and budget.

The company is led by Steve Wilbraham, a highly experienced kitchen fitter with more than 30 years in the industry. Steve's wealth of knowledge and hands-on expertise has helped establish Wirral Kitchens & Interiors as a trusted choice for homeowners across the Wirral and beyond.

Offering a complete service from design through to supply and installation, the business specialises in creating luxury fitted kitchens to suit all styles and budgets. From modern, sleek designs to timeless classics, each kitchen is carefully planned to maximise both beauty and functionality – with stunning worktops and innovative space solutions too.



At Wirral Kitchens & Interiors, smart home technology blends seamlessly with timeless British craftsmanship. Every kitchen is designed for effortless living, with intuitive control of lighting, temperature, and appliances at your fingertips. From professional-grade ovens, hobs and statement fridges to wine coolers and handcrafted splashbacks, each detail is tailored to your lifestyle. The result is a space that balances elegance, comfort, and innovation. A kitchen that's uniquely yours, built for modern living with traditional values at its heart.

In addition to kitchens, Wirral Kitchens & Interiors also provides media rooms, home offices, fitted bedrooms, living rooms and more. The company offers comprehensive building services in house, including extensions and structural alterations, making it a one-stop solution for homeowners looking to transform their living spaces.

Reflecting on the milestone, Steve said: "We're absolutely delighted with how our first year has gone. Our aim has always been to provide customers with not just beautiful kitchens, but also the peace of mind that comes with expert installation and full project management. I'd like to thank all of our customers for their trust and support, and we look forward to many more years of creating dream kitchens."



With its commitment to quality craftsmanship, personal service and attention to detail, Wirral Kitchens & Interiors is fast becoming a go-to name for homeowners throughout the North West. Testimonials and 5 star reviews have been flying in and the company has even been nominated for the Kitchen Bedroom & Bathroom Awards.

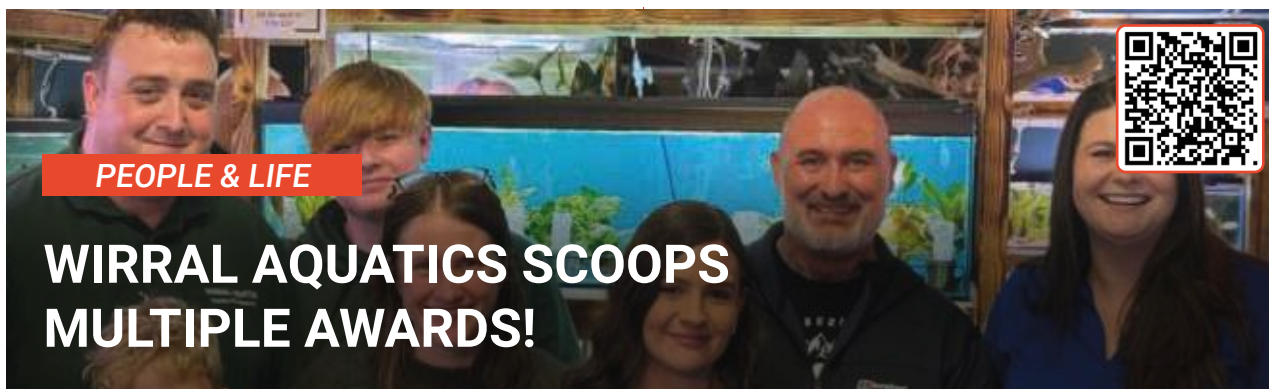
One customer recently said: "Steve and his team did an excellent job creating our dream kitchen – nothing was too much trouble and the attention to detail was outstanding."

Wirral Kitchens & Interiors are based at Unit 11, Hilbre Business Park, on Carr Lane Industrial Estate in Hoylake. The company offers a free quote and full design, supply and installation of high end kitchens and interiors to suit all budgets – complete with guarantees and warranties.

Wirral Kitchens & Interiors / Unit 11, Hilbre Business Park, Carr Lane Industrial Estate, Hoylake, Wirral / 0151 721 0827

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Follow Wirral Kitchen & Interiors on [FACEBOOK](#) and [INSTAGRAM](#)



PEOPLE & LIFE

WIRRAL AQUATICS SCOOPS MULTIPLE AWARDS!

When Wirral Aquatics opened its doors in September 2024, few could have predicted how quickly it would make a name for itself. Less than 18 months later, the independent fish shop has scooped multiple accolades in the latest Practical Fishkeeping (PFK) Awards – a remarkable achievement for a newcomer.

The Wirral store, located at 20 Upton Road, Moreton, has won the following:

- Discus Retailer of the Year – Wirral Aquatics earned top honours in this specialist cichlid category, underscoring the quality of its discus stock and expertise.
- Runner-up, Independent Retailer of the Year – In a fiercely competitive national poll, the Moreton shop impressed enough to claim second place overall among independent aquatic retailers.
- Regional Runner-up in the Readers' Poll – Among northern UK retailers, Wirral Aquatics secured a top regional spot, reflecting strong community and customer support.
- Named among the UK's "Top 40 Stores" – A badge of honour reserved for the country's leading aquatic shops; Wirral Aquatics' inclusion so soon after opening speaks volumes about its reputation.



This string of awards is striking – especially given the shop's youth. Indeed, Wirral Aquatics has become the first Wirral fish shop to be recognised by these prestigious industry. The recognition is particularly meaningful to owner Stephen Halsey, who fulfilled his dream of opening the shop after overcoming a horrific car crash.

Stephen survived a horrific car crash in 2016, which left him wheelchair-bound for years. During his recovery, Stephen turned to tropical fish as a source of calm and solace and over lockdown, he built a home-based fish room with around 100 tanks – a labour of love that eventually inspired him to launch Wirral Aquatics.

A lifelong lover of fish, in September 2024 he fulfilled his dream of opening his own aquatics store and it quickly made a big name for itself. Employing friendly, knowledgeable staff and with a commitment to ethical fish-keeping and breeding, Wirral Aquatics quickly developed a formidable reputation amongst tropical fish enthusiasts.



Furthermore, Wirral Aquatics has hosted talks and workshops from leading industry experts, children's education sessions and has also led regular community litter picks. Back in August, Stephen and the team fixed £5,000 worth of repairs to the fish tank at Arrowe Park hospital's children's ward – completely free of charge.

The awards and recognition for Wirral Aquatics are more than just trophies: they reflect a broader shift in the aquarium hobby. As PFK's 2025 Readers' Poll underscores, votes come from real hobbyists and customers – meaning Wirral's success stems from genuine community support.



The success of Wirral Aquatics is a powerful reminder: with passion, ethics and dedication, even a small independent shop can become a beacon for quality and care. Their PFK Awards haul celebrates not just commercial achievement – but a vision for responsible, hobbyist-driven fish-keeping.

**Wirral Aquatics / 20 Upton Road, Moreton,
Wirral / 07946 659242**

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PEOPLE & LIFE

LAST 8 RENTAL PROPERTIES AVAILABLE AT NAVAL RETIREMENT ESTATE!

Following their significant development featuring new luxury properties, naval retirement estate Mariner's Park now has just 8 apartments available for any retired Merchant Navy, Royal Navy and Maritime professionals. The stunning estate, located on the banks of the River Mersey, has just 8 two bedroom properties available to let.



Until now, the stunning Mariners' Park Estate was designed for retired Merchant Navy servicemen and women of over 20 years' service, however due to the fact that those serving 20 years at sea is now very rare, eligibility for property will be managed based on the length of service, situation and care needs. The luxury properties available are ideal for retirees living independently.

The estate has state of the art facilities, excellent levels of service, stunning views over the Mersey and comes in much cheaper than most privately rented apartments — with rent starting from just £809 per calendar month for 2 bed properties. There are excellent transport links and the estate is located just a couple of miles down the coast from the seaside town of New Brighton.

At Mariners' Park Estate there's an on site bistro, snooker room, gym, salon, beauty spa and more. With immaculate grounds maintained by an excellent gardening team, a bowling green and lots of activities on site, Mariners Park Estate is a place to retire in luxury — with excellent levels of service and support from the staff who work there.

The on-site hub hosts a weekly meeting of the Mersey Maritime Radio Officers' Association who operate out of a specially designed room allocated by Nautilus Welfare Fund. The charity has also secured funding for an external travel company who will be organising regular off-site activities and days out, as well as trialling a mini bus shuttle to local amenities — further enabling independence.

Should your care and support needs change, the estate has a wide range of properties available — with an apartment complex staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There is also an excellent on-site care home, meaning whatever your situation, Mariners' Park Estate will be able to support your needs — whilst the ethos is to maintain your independence for as long as possible.

Director Andrew Jones said: *"We have recently had a huge development with new properties and the uptake has been fantastic — with most of the new properties now taken. We now have just 11 properties left to fill and welcome new applications. We have excellent facilities with an award winning team and our site is suitable for any retired seafarer of any length of service — from fully independent people to those with advanced care needs."*

He continued: *"Our new criteria is a game changer for retirees who have served in the Merchant Navy, Royal Navy or as a maritime professional. We deliver top quality care, staff and facilities and our recent Gold Investor In People Award is a fine example of the dedicated work we've been doing here. The remaining properties are likely to be filled quickly so we'd advised to register interest as soon as possible."*



Following their significant development featuring new luxury properties, naval retirement estate Mariner's Park now has just 8 apartments available for any retired Merchant Navy, Royal Navy and Maritime professionals. The stunning estate, located on the banks of the river Mersey, has just 8 two bedroom properties available to let.

Mariners' Park Retirement Village / Egremont, Wirral, CH44 0HN / 0151 346 8840

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For more information on Nautilus and their work visit www.nautilusint.org

PEOPLE & LIFE

UNSUNG HERO PRAISED FOR SERVICE TO VETERANS



In a modest drop-in centre in Liverpool, one man is making a profound difference to the lives of those who have served their country. Craig Donoghue, 40, is a British Army veteran who has dedicated himself wholeheartedly to helping fellow veterans through his work with The Block Armed Forces Foundation.



Though officially employed part-time as a Case Manager, Craig's impact goes far beyond any job description or contracted hours. Over the past four years, Craig has poured countless voluntary hours into his work at The Block, becoming a vital support system for veterans in crisis.

Whether it's mental health support, helping secure financial aid, arranging addiction rehabilitation through Tom Harrison House or moving rough sleepers into accommodation, Craig is on the front lines every day – tackling some of the most harrowing and high-risk cases imaginable.



What makes his contribution even more extraordinary is that he does it all while managing his own chronic pain. Craig suffers from a serious back injury sustained during his time in service with the Royal Corps of Signals. The injury eventually led to his medical discharge.

Among his many roles in the Army, Craig completed a gruelling 7-month operational tour of Iraq – an experience that shaped his deep understanding of the challenges veterans face after leaving the military. Despite the toll on his body and spirit, Craig continues to show up – day after day – with compassion, determination and unwavering commitment.

The Block's Co-Founder, Colin Eastaway, said: *"Despite his own physical struggles due to his injury, Craig continues to dig out for other veterans across The Liverpool City Region who are less fortunate than himself. He often leaves the centre physically and mentally exhausted, yet never lets that stop him from doing what needs to be done. His selflessness and grit have quite literally saved lives."*

He continued: *"As a drop in service we are currently overwhelmed with homeless veterans. On average, Craig meets face to face with around 2-3 complex homeless veteran cases a week and hundreds more have been given Mental Health Assessments after Craig has sat down with them, looked them in the eye and chatted veteran to veteran. Who knows how many lives this man has saved over the last few years and who knows how many families he has helped stay together."*



The Block Armed Forces Foundation, which operates with very limited funding, provides vital support to veterans across Merseyside. Craig's dedication is one of the key reasons the organisation continues to make such a significant impact. He is not only a cornerstone of the charity's success – he is the beating heart of its mission.

To many, Craig Donoghue is an unsung hero who deserves more recognition. But to the veterans whose lives he has touched, he is a lifeline, a brother-in-arms and a true embodiment of what it means to continue serving – even after the uniform is folded away.

The Block CIC / 241-243 Walton Road, Kirkdale, Liverpool, L4 4AR / 0151 281 4837

TO HELP SUPPORT THE BLOCK'S WORK CALL 0151 281 4837 OR EMAIL ce@theblockaff.org – OR DONATE VIA THE WEBSITE

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PEOPLE & LIFE

THE WIRRAL ANGELS HELPING WOMEN BREAK FREE FROM ABUSE!



In February 2025, a powerful force for change emerged on the Wirral – Reverse North West CIC, a Community Interest Company founded to help women break free from the devastating impacts of domestic abuse. The Wallasey based organisation offers a wide range of free services and is ran by a team of volunteers that many describe simply as angels.

At its welcoming hub on Withens Lane, Wallasey, Reverse North West operates a free drop-in centre, open Monday to Friday from 9am to 3pm. With an open-door policy, women can walk in without judgment, without fear and without cost – a rarity in an overstretched and underfunded domestic abuse support system. The hub building has been kindly provided by Liscard Primary School.

Here, women who have been subject to domestic abuse – whether that be physical, sexual, mental, emotional or financial – can access a wide range of free services, from trauma-informed counselling and psychotherapy, to a range of wellbeing and healing treatments.

It's not just therapy – it's a holistic approach to rebuilding lives. The counselling at Reverse North West CIC is rooted in trauma-informed practice, which recognises the complex effects of abuse and prioritises safety, empowerment and trust. Whether a woman is seeking one-to-one counselling or group workshops, the environment is designed to help her regain her sense of safety, self-worth and autonomy.

Psychotherapy sessions offer deeper insights into how a person's thoughts, behaviours and emotions may be impacted by trauma, helping women make sense of their experiences and reclaim control of their futures. Reverse North West CIC also offers practical advice and signposting wherever necessary so that women know their options.

What makes Reverse North West CIC truly special is the people behind it. Run entirely by a dedicated team of volunteers, these are individuals who selflessly give their time, energy and compassion to make sure every woman who walks through their door feels seen, heard and supported. They don't do it for pay. They do it because they care.

At the heart of Reverse North West CIC is Eve Donnelly, who is living experience of domestic violence survival. Through years of healing and recovery, Eve has found her voice – and now uses it to speak to schools and organisations, helping others understand the realities of domestic violence and how to spot the signs. She has also created a new educational video for schools. Reverse North West CIC is her way of giving back – to offer other women the kind of support she wishes she had in those dark moments.

Every counselling session. Every healing treatment. Every drop-in conversation over a cup of tea – it's all free for the women who need it most. But this only continues to be possible through donations and community support. Reverse North West CIC is calling on individuals, local businesses and larger organisations to support their mission so that these life-changing (and often life-saving) services remain free and accessible.

Whether it's £5 or £500, every donation directly funds frontline support for women breaking free from abuse. Reverse North West isn't just a CIC. It's a sanctuary. A community. A lifeline. And behind it all? A team of volunteers who are, in every sense of the word, angels.



**Reverse North West CIC / Withens Lane,
Wallasey, CH45 7NQ / 07568409294**

**TO SEEK FREE SUPPORT CONTACT
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TEAM SCAN THE QR CODE**

**For more information visit
www.reversenorthwest.org.uk**

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PEOPLE & LIFE

NEW MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY OFFERS FREE SUPPORT!



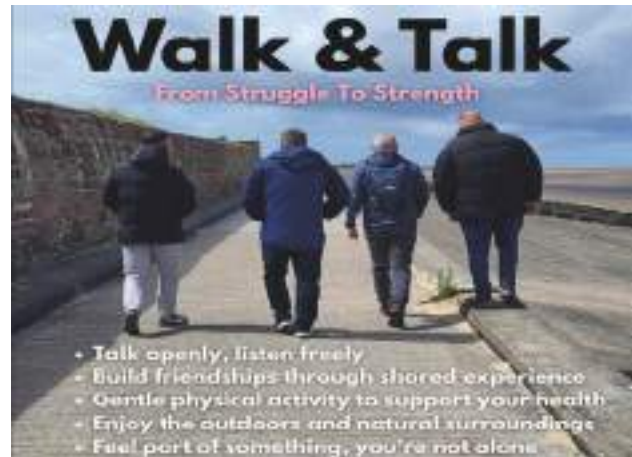
A brand-new men's mental health charity has launched in Wirral, aiming to tackle loneliness, isolation and the growing mental health crisis among local men. Mersey Mind Project is focused on early intervention and building a supportive community – offering many free services and activities.



The charity will host completely free drop-in sessions every Tuesday evening at The Sandbrook Centre in Moreton. Running from 6.30pm to 8pm, the sessions are designed to be informal and welcoming, giving local men a safe, non-judgemental space to chat, connect and unwind. Alongside conversation, attendees can enjoy free refreshments, board games and more.

The charity's mission is to grow a strong network of local men who can support one another through the ups and downs of life. Beyond the Tuesday drop-ins, the organisation is also running a variety of free activities to help boost wellbeing through social connection and physical exercise. These include:

- Free football sessions on Monday and Thursday evenings in Prenton
- Upcoming walk-and-talks and group hikes
- Free social events such as going out to watch live sport
- Cycletherapy' bike rides launching in spring



With suicide still one of the leading causes of death among men under 50 in the UK, the charity hopes that by creating regular opportunities to connect, more men will feel comfortable speaking openly about their mental health and seeking support before reaching crisis point. The charity also has a wider network of mental health experts and professionals, should any members require additional support.



The organisers encourage any local man who may be struggling – or simply looking for some positive social connection – to come along and give it a try. The weekly meet-ups on Tuesday are supported by Magenta Living, who have donated The Sandbrook Centre space without a hire charge, and the sessions are completely free to attend.

TO SIGN UP FOR MORE INFO VISIT
WWW.MERSEYMINDPROJECT.CO.UK OR CALL
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Football photo credit George Podmore



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Sara Lawton
Founder RISE
Construction Framework



Carly Openshaw
Founder Tiny Tools
for Big Feelings

WWW.MERSEYMINDCONFERENCE.CO.UK

PEOPLE & LIFE

FREE CHILD MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AFTER SUCCESSFUL CIC LAUNCH!



A brand-new Wirral-based Community Interest Company (CIC) is now offering child mental health support groups after its successful launch event that raised over £2,500. Tiny Tools For Big Feelings, founded by child mental health expert Carly Openshaw, is on a mission to help children, young people and families navigate the growing mental health crisis.

The CIC offers six-week programmes for children aged 6+, providing tools to manage anxiety, grief and neurodivergent conditions. Sessions are available 1-2-1 or in groups, with group courses currently priced at just £70 for the entire course. Thanks to the successful launch event, these programmes are currently fully funded and free to families.

On Saturday 4th October 2025, The Queen's Hotel in New Brighton was filled with laughter, music and heartfelt emotion as over 80 guests came together for the launch of Tiny Tools for Big Feelings CIC. The night was a huge success, raising £2,504.90 after costs. These funds will directly support more than 60 local children and young people to access anxiety and wellbeing programmes across Wirral and Merseyside.

Former Premier League goalkeeper Chris Kirkland shared his powerful mental health journey to a standing ovation, while the Mayor of Wirral joined guests in celebrating this milestone event. The raffle sold out, the auction exceeded expectations, and guests filled the dance floor as the live band and DJ kept spirits high throughout the night.



Within days, Tiny Tools For Big Feelings has already begun delivering its first funded courses. Two anxiety-support groups for ages 5–10 and 11–18 welcomed children struggling with anxiety, school refusal and neurodiverse needs. There are now plans to create more support groups for children and parents alike.

Alongside children's services, Tiny Tools For Big Feelings also provides family support and parent-focused courses, ensuring that caregivers are equipped with the strategies they need too. Led by a team of experts, Tiny Tools For Big Feelings is dedicated to creating real change for children, overwhelmed families, carers and neurodivergent young people.

With 1 in 6 children between 5 and 15 suffering from some sort of mental health disorder, families stretched and the NHS child mental health waiting list over 12 months, the new CIC is bridging the gap in a major way. Any parents or care givers struggling with the pressures of child mental health problems are encouraged to get in touch free of charge to see what help is available.

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LINDA B: DEALING WITH REJECTION

Welcome to our quarterly feature from our resident life coach, Linda B! Linda B is a leading international life coach from Iceland and is a LET Communication Consultant, Trauma Resiliency Model expert, Former President of the Icelandic Coaching Federation and Board of Icelandic Women's Business Association.

To feel unacknowledged in our society or by those who should love us the most, cuts the heart in a way nothing else can. To feel that we are not good enough or important enough for those to whom we offer our hearts on a silver platter is painful, and we can feel our hearts being crushed beneath the tidal wave of rejection.

Rejection can come from anyone, society, the workplace, family, friends, or a partner and nowhere does it hurt more than when it comes from those we are bonded to through love in one way or another. Those who experienced rejection or uncertainty about their place early in life are likely to spend much of their adulthood seeking approval from the people they connect with.



With every inevitable rejection they meet along the way, their hearts may harden or grow more wounded until the day comes when they stop giving anyone the chance to hurt them again. And then, they reach to the point of rejecting their own need for love and care.

It is very common for those of us who have been single for some time to have gone through a number of rejections from the opposite sex. These rejections have caused some of us to stop taking the risk of loving at all and I believe that very often, it is our inner fear of rejection that drives that decision. We find endless escape routes to avoid feeling emotional pain:

- Our primary escape route, in love and in all relationships, is simply not giving anyone the chance to get close enough to reject us. As soon as we feel a relationship becoming too intimate, we're quick to run.
- Another escape route is closing our hearts completely, letting no one in, growing hardened and bitter.

Both of these strategies are disastrous and they dramatically reduce the quality of our lives.

- First of all, life simply does not offer us the luxury of having everyone liking us. We will face rejection and there's nothing to be done about that, and it says nothing about our own worth. And we should never allow it to define us in any way. For example, it does not diminish the beauty or qualities of Brad Pitt if I personally would rather go on a date with George Clooney! Brad just might not be my type, it's as simple as that.
- Secondly, when we are searching for intimate connection, it is quite clear that we need to kiss a few frogs before we find the prince or princess of our dreams. Are we truly willing to let a few rejections or frogs who refused to transform, destroy our search for the moments of joy and happiness in the company of the right person? A person who respects, loves, and cherishes us?



Are we willing to spend our lives alone and abandoned because a few individuals did not see that we were a match for them? (Out of 8 billion people) If we look beyond our love life for a moment, the world would be poorer today if those who gave us magnificent stories and discoveries had given up because of early rejections from the society, colleagues, or friends.

- Do you know how many publishers rejected the story of Harry Potter? Not one or two, but 12 publishers who saw no potential in this magical story about a the young wizard. And yet, one publisher finally saw what others had missed and the story went on to conquer the world and bring unimaginable success to its creator.

- KFC would not exist today if Colonel Sanders had given up on sharing his recipe. He travelled across the entire United States chasing the opportunity that would eventually feed millions of people around the world. His determination changed everything.
- Charles Darwin was around fifty years old when he finally received recognition for his work. I would love to know how many rejections he faced, and how many people actually thought he was mad.



I could go on listing names of people who stood up again and again despite rejection until they finally succeeded. So let's not give up and never allow a few rejections to define us as people or as active creators in our own lives. I know that when I reject something or someone, it is simply because the person, project, or job doesn't fit my life's definition or my life pattern. Nothing more. Full stop.

And although all of this sounds simple, it does not mean we don't feel pain when we are rejected. We are human, after all and rejection often makes us question our worth. And who wants to question their own worth?

Today I am fully aware of my value, and I know



I deserve only the very best and nothing less. If someone rejects me, then that person, workplace, or friendship was simply not meant to be part of my life. But I continue walking forward and create new opportunities for myself.

Because I believe wholeheartedly that people and circumstances enter our lives with a purpose, even from those who reject us. Some bring them tough but essential lessons. Some stay only briefly but leave important wisdom behind. And then there are the diamonds, those who remain with us through all seasons of life, teaching us about goodness, loyalty, and grace.

So let us thank those who rejected us, my loves, they most likely brought us the most valuable lessons. They showed us our insecurity and taught us what we needed to learn, change, and strengthen. Let us simply remember: Never allow yourself to close your heart.



In my opinion, that is not an option if we want a joyful and meaningful life. What gives life its true value is the giving and receiving of love, friendship, and all the beautiful human connections available to us at any given time. And that happens only in an open and willing heart, ready to let the beauty of the inside flow outward.

Few things are a greater poverty than losing the ability to show what lives really is at the core of our being and missing the joy that comes from allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and to love with our whole heart. Let's love, give, and enjoy each day in gratitude for those who didn't reject us, and who remain by our side. And as Oprah says: "I no longer want anyone who doesn't want me."

What is meant for me in love, friendship, and work will show up at right time and right season, and I will recognize it with my heart when it arrives.

As always, I am just one appointment away from you if you need my guidance on your life journey.

Yours, Linda



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PEOPLE & LIFE

HEARN'S HISTORY: HAMILTON SQUARE

In this regular La Vida Liverpool feature, guest writer and historian David Hearn educates us on some fascinating local history. With a wealth of knowledge, David gives talks and walking tours on subjects such as the history of Liverpool, wars, slavery, maritime, Liverpool's links with America and more. In this feature he talks us through the Wirral gem that is Hamilton Square....



There are a number of places on the Wirral that can rightfully be referred to as "gems" and surely one of those has to be Hamilton Square in Birkenhead, a square that would not look out of space in any of the smarter areas of London or Edinburgh. Indeed, the square was designed by James Gillespie Graham – the Edinburgh architect who designed St Andrew's Cathedral in Glasgow and elements of Edinburgh's New Town.

Hamilton Square was envisaged by William Laird as the first step in the creation of an important and sophisticated town centre for Birkenhead. The name, Hamilton, comes from the maiden name of his mother in law and his wife's brother William Hamilton who was one of Laird's business partners



In Hamilton Square there are 61 properties listed by Historic England as Grade I – the highest level of rating meaning that they are "of exceptional interest". Only Trafalgar Square in London has more Grade I Listed Buildings.

When the square was laid out a space was intentionally left on the East side for Birkenhead's Town Hall to be built. Although work started on Hamilton Square in 1825 it would not be until 1883 that work started on the Town Hall. The Town hall is a fitting addition to the square and is, itself, listed Grade II meaning that it is a "particularly important building of more than special interest".*



Hamilton Square is also home to both Lionel Budden's First World War Grade II Listed memorial which is 100 years old this year and the dramatic modern war memorial created by Jim Whelan dedicated to the 88 "Old Boys" of Birkenhead Institute who died in the First World War.*



In the centre of the square is a memorial to Queen Victoria designed by Edmund Kirby in the style of an Eleanor Cross and unveiled in 1905 just two years after the gardens were bought by the council from the owners of the properties who previously enjoyed them as a private garden.



It is fitting that there is a statue to John Laird, first Member of Parliament for Birkenhead and the owner of 63 Hamilton Square, on the West side of the square. The square has many other memorials and it is a fitting place for them with its many trees, shrubs and a general air of calm.



Built in 1886 and on the edge of Hamilton Square is the station that takes its name from the square and was one of the first two – James Street being the other – that were the first deep underground stations in the world and the first two stations linked by a railway tunnel under a river.



The building of Hamilton Square was started 200 years ago this year and has the solid appearance of properties that will last another 200 years, although there are some empty properties it is difficult to see that these will remain empty for long if they came on the market.

TO BOOK A HISTORY TALK OR WALKING TOUR WITH DAVID CONTACT HIM ON 07739386367

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GET **IT DONE CLUB

Showcasing some of the amazing independent businesses we've met at the networking group!

la vida liverpool

MAGAZINE



GET **IT DONE CLUB

LAURA TEARE: FROM PMDD TO HORMONE COACH & NETWORKING LEADER!

At 35, Chester-based hormone and mindset coach Laura Teare has become a powerful voice for women navigating the often-overlooked world of hormonal health. In addition to helping women understand and manage hormonal challenges, Laura is also the founder of the rapidly growing GET **IT DONE CLUB — a fun, relaxed networking and co-working concept.

After years of battling Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD), Laura now mentors women through hormonal struggles and has helped improve the lives of hundreds of women. Going one step further, she founded GET **IT DONE CLUB in 2023 — organising relaxed and informal business meet-ups across Wirral, Liverpool, Chester and Wrexham. Her achievements are remarkable given her journey with PMDD....

Laura's journey with Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder began long before she had the language to describe it. She had her first period at 14, and while her cycle appeared "normal" on the surface, the emotional landscape was anything but.

From her early teens, Laura experienced intense depressive phases that came and went with rhythmic regularity — though she didn't yet know they were linked to her menstrual cycle. The feelings were overwhelming, cyclic, and frightening. Instead of receiving answers, she received dismissal.

At 15, while seeking help for what she now recognises as cyclical disordered eating, she was simply handed a leaflet about healthy foods. She internalised the shame, believing she was the problem — not her hormones.

For the next 14 years, the pattern repeated. Each month brought crushing lows, self-blame and confusion. "I punished myself with unhealthy behaviours," Laura reflects. *"I blamed myself for not being able to 'fix' something I didn't understand."*

Everything changed at age 28 when Laura stumbled upon a social media post describing PMDD. It was a moment of revelation. With years of mood-tracking notebooks already in hand, she recognised the cyclical nature of her symptoms immediately.

She began tracking her menstrual cycle alongside her

moods and took her findings to her GP. After ruling out other health issues, she finally received a formal diagnosis. *"There's no cure for PMDD," Laura says, "but with the right treatment, I've found a way to live more fully than ever before."*

Diagnosis wasn't the end of the journey — it was the beginning of learning how to manage a misunderstood condition. Initial treatment recommendations weren't right for her and finding an effective plan took time and persistence. Laura now uses luteal-phase dosing of SSRIs, alongside deep self-awareness and compassionate self-care, to manage her condition.

Rather than let PMDD define her, Laura has channelled her experience into supporting others. Today, she coaches women through a wide range of hormonal issues, blending education, empathy and lived experience. Her support, advice and strategies have helped hundreds of women feel seen and heard — also equipping them with practical tools and advice to manage their conditions.

Meanwhile, her GET **IT DONE CLUB is a vibrant, community-driven networking and co-working organisation designed for people who want to build businesses, confidence and connections without the pressure or pretension of traditional corporate environments. What started as an idea to help connect lonely business owners now sees hundreds of people meet up each month.

Through her work, her honesty and her unshakeable commitment to women's wellbeing, Laura Teare is turning her hardest battles into a lifeline for others — proving that even through the most challenging adversities, empowerment and success can still be achieved.

Laura Teare / Hormone & Mindset Coach and Founder of GET **IT DONE CLUB

FOR A FREE CHAT WITH LAURA ABOUT HORMONES OR TO ATTEND A NETWORKING EVENT CALL LAURA ON 07538 878786 OR VISIT www.lauratearejones.com

Follow Laura on FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

Images courtesy of Maira Sheikh



GET **IT DONE CLUB

LOUISE LYNCH: HELPING WOMEN THRIVE THROUGH MOTHERHOOD!

When Wirral mother Louise Lynch founded The Relaxed Mama Club in 2020, her vision was clear — to create a nurturing space where women could feel supported, seen and empowered through one of life's biggest transitions: motherhood. Since then, she has helped hundreds of women navigate the emotional, physical and mental challenges that come with pregnancy, birth and life beyond.

Louise's approach is holistic and deeply personal. As a yoga teacher, cognitive behavioural hypnotherapist and mother of two, she draws on her own experiences of motherhood to guide women with compassion and understanding. Her services include counselling, pregnancy yoga, hypnobirthing, workshops and retreats — all designed to help women reconnect with their bodies and regain balance in their lives.

Introducing Birth Debriefing — Healing After Birth

Louise's newest offering, Birth Debriefing, addresses a growing but often overlooked need among mothers. For many, birth can be a profoundly emotional — and sometimes traumatic — experience. One in five mothers are diagnosed with postnatal depression, yet countless others struggle quietly with anxiety, nervous system dysregulation or a sense of loss after childbirth.

With the NHS under increasing pressure, many new mothers find themselves without the time or space to process what they've been through. Louise's Birth Debriefing sessions bridge that gap. In a safe, supportive environment, she helps women unpack their birth experiences, make sense of their emotions, and begin to heal. The process allows mothers not only to come to terms with their experiences but also to move forward with renewed confidence and calm as they navigate early motherhood.

A Personal Journey Turned Professional Passion

Louise began her yoga journey in 2018, later tailoring her practice to reflect her own path into parenthood. She is now a qualified Pre- and Postnatal Yoga, Children's Yoga and Fertility Yoga specialist, as well as a Cognitive Behavioural Hypnotherapist (Dip CBH), Hypnobirthing Practitioner (Dip HB) and qualified teacher.

Her multidisciplinary expertise allows her to combine the physical benefits of yoga, the mindset tools of hypnotherapy and the emotional support of counselling — a blend that helps women thrive rather than just survive their journey into motherhood. Whether she's working with a woman going through pregnancy or a new mother post-pregnancy, she tailors sessions to suit the individual.

Community, Connection and Conversation

Beyond her one-to-one work, Louise has built a strong online and community presence. Her popular podcast resonates deeply with mothers who appreciate her honesty, empathy and evidence-based approach to maternal wellbeing. Each episode explores real-life motherhood — the highs, the lows, and everything in between — creating a space for women to feel less alone.

Supporting Mothers to Feel Whole Again

Motherhood is often described as beautiful, but it can also be bewildering and overwhelming. Through The Relaxed Mama Club, Louise reminds women that it's okay to seek support, to pause and to reconnect with themselves. Her mission is simple but powerful: to help mothers feel relaxed, resilient and ready to embrace each stage of their journey.



Louise Lynch / The Relaxed Mama Club

**FOR A FREE DISCOVERY CALL WITH LOUISE
CONTACT HER ON 07943 841 660 OR VISIT
[www.therelaxedmamaclub.com](http://www therelaxedmamaclub.com)**

**Follow The Relaxed Mama Club on FACEBOOK
and INSTAGRAM**

Images courtesy of Maira Sheikh



GET **IT DONE CLUB

MONIQUE THISSEN: FROM SELF-HEALING TO CHESTER'S LEADING YOGA HUB!

In the heart of Chester city centre, located at 19A Upper Northgate Street, a warm and welcoming sanctuary has been quietly transforming lives. Soul Space, a yoga and wellbeing hub founded by mother-of-three Monique Thissen, is proudly celebrating its first birthday after opening its doors in November 2024 – and what a year it has been!

A Dream Born from Healing

Mo's journey to creating Soul Space is deeply personal. After experiencing mental health struggles linked to childhood trauma, she discovered yoga at 18 and then during lockdown began studying online. What started as a tool for her own healing soon grew into a passion to support others. She began by running community classes, and in November 2024, her dream of opening her own studio became a reality.

A Vibrant Yoga Offering, Seven Days a Week

In just one year, Soul Space has blossomed into one of Chester's most loved wellbeing hubs – with over 100 people through the doors every week. The centre offers classes seven days a week and caters to all levels and preferences. The timetable features a wide range of styles and these thoughtfully curated offerings reflect Mo's belief that yoga should be accessible, varied and welcoming to all.

More Than a Yoga Studio

What truly sets Soul Space apart is its commitment to cultivating community and creating a safe, nurturing environment. It has become a hub where people connect, unwind, and rediscover themselves. Beyond yoga classes, Soul Space hosts a wide variety of wellbeing events and experiences, such as:

- Breathwork sessions
- Sound healing
- Ecstatic dance gatherings
- Workshops led by visiting experts
- Massage therapy
- Counselling
- Yoga retreats in Wales and abroad

Mo explains: *"I found my 'calm' through yoga after battling with childhood trauma all of my life and I now want to help others. Soul Space is more than*

just a yoga studio – I wanted to create a safe space where people can connect and feel seen, heard and supported by a likeminded community. I'm so delighted with our first year and how the community has grown. Together we've created something truly special."

Incredible Value for Everyone

Soul Space's mission is rooted in accessibility, and its pricing reflects that. For those attending daily, the unlimited plan works out at under £3 per class – making high-quality yoga more affordable than ever! The studio offers an excellent range of affordable options as follows:

- **Introductory Plan:** Unlimited classes for 2 weeks – £22
- **Pay-as-you-go:** £13 per class
- **1-class-a-week membership:** £42 per month
- **Unlimited classes membership:** £77 per month

A Community, a Safe Space, a Way of Life

As Soul Space marks its first year, its impact is clear. It has become a place where individuals feel supported, seen and uplifted – a space where healing and connection thrive. For many, it's more than a studio; it's a lifestyle, a refuge and a growing community built on compassion and shared wellbeing. With Mo's vision and Soul Space's rapidly growing following, the next year promises even more magic.



**Soul Space / 19A Upper Northgate Street,
Chester, CH1 4EE / 07754153059**

**FOR THE INTRO OFFER OF UNLIMITED
CLASSES FOR 2 WEEKS FOR JUST £22
VISIT soulpacechester.com OR CONTACT
07754153059**

**Follow Soul Space on FACEBOOK and
INSTAGRAM**



GET **IT DONE CLUB

KRISTENE WILDE: CHANGING LIVES THROUGH BREATHWORK

For many people, breathwork is a calming practice – something to help them slow down, refocus and release tension. But for Kristene Wilde, a 52-year-old mother of two from Widnes, it became far more than that. It became the lifeline that pulled her from one of the darkest chapters of her life and inspired a new mission: to help others achieve profound, life changing breakthroughs.

Kristene has spent the past two decades working in housing and teaching, dedicating her professional life to supporting others. But a few years ago, her own world collapsed. Within a short span of time, she experienced severe postnatal depression and lost her grandma, father and auntie – grief piling on grief. Her marriage broke down soon after, leaving her emotionally overwhelmed, anxious and suicidal.

“I tried everything,” she recalls – antidepressants, counselling, therapy. While each offered pieces of relief, none delivered the deep transformation she needed. Desperate to move forward in life, Kristene began exploring alternative modalities, and that journey led her to belief coding and then, profoundly, to breathwork.

She enrolled in a six-week Conscious Connected Breathwork course with renowned facilitator Josh Connolly. That experience changed everything. *“It cracked me open,”* she says. *“It helped me access and release emotions I didn’t even know I was holding. It helped me feel safe again, hopeful again.”*

Inspired by her own transformation, Kristene founded Walk Tall Healing & Wellness, and over the past two years, she has supported hundreds of people through the power of breathwork. Clients report profound realisations, emotional breakthroughs and long-lasting shifts in their mental and physical wellbeing. Kristene now offers a range of services, including:

- 1:1 Breathwork Sessions (online or in person)
- 8-week Breathwork for Anxiety programmes
- Group sessions
- Healing and wellness retreats

But one of the most special parts of her work is her big community breathwork events – accessible, affordable gatherings designed to offer a supportive entry point for anyone curious about breathwork.

These events combine guided sessions with community connection and reflection, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere. And now, these community experiences are expanding.

Monthly Community Breathwork in Widnes – Starting January

In January 2026, Kristene is launching a new series of monthly community breathwork events at The Yoga Lounge in Widnes. The first event – The January Blues Breathe – is designed to beat the dreaded ‘January Blues’ and will take place on Sunday, 11th January, from 6pm, strictly limited to 30 places.

Spanning two hours and set in a gorgeous space, this immersive guided breathwork journey is ideal for beginners and seasoned breathers alike. Attendees can expect deep relaxation, emotional release, reflection time, connection with others and in some cases profound breakthroughs. Group sessions cost just £25 to attend and many people take it a step further by going on to have 1-2-1 sessions.

Following January’s session, Kristene will host a themed community breathwork event at The Yoga Lounge on the first Sunday of every month throughout 2026, each offering a fresh focus and unique emotional experience.



Kristene Wilde / Walk Tall Healing & Wellness

TO FIND OUT MORE OR BOOK A 1-2-1 OR GROUP BREATHWORK SESSION CONTACT KRISTENE ON 07720305379 OR VISIT www.walktallwellness.co.uk/lvl

Follow Walk Tall Healing & Wellness on FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM



GET **IT DONE CLUB

KAREN MILLS: TRANSFORMING WORKPLACES THROUGH NLP

For almost 10 years, Karen Mills has dedicated herself to helping people overcome stress, anxiety, loss and a wide range of personal and professional challenges. Today, she is recognised as a leading NLP Practitioner and Occupational Health Consultant, with a reputation for transforming the wellbeing and performance of individuals and entire organisations.

But Karen's journey into Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) began long before she founded her thriving business, Zen Occupational Health. It started with a deeply personal chapter of loss — and a life-changing discovery that reshaped both her future and the futures of thousands of others.

A Life-Changing Discovery in the Midst of Loss

Karen discovered NLP 20 years ago following the death of her mother. Like many people navigating grief, she sought out counselling and therapy, hoping to find something that would help her move forward. While valuable, they didn't create the profound shift she was searching for. That transformation came when she encountered Neuro-Linguistic Programming.

Within just six sessions, Karen experienced a powerful breakthrough. NLP not only helped her process her grief — it removed long-standing fears, emotional blockages, and unhelpful patterns she had carried for years. The impact was so profound that she knew she had found something extraordinary. Karen went on to earn a Diploma, followed by full NLP Practitioner certification, committing to mastering the tools that had made such a difference to her own life.

From Nursing to Leading Workplace Wellbeing

Before launching her business, Karen spent years in healthcare as a nurse and hospital ward manager, where she saw firsthand the pressures, burnout and emotional strains faced by individuals in demanding roles. Driven by a passion for prevention rather than crisis response, she founded Zen Occupational Health.

Through her consultancy, she assists with staff wellbeing while helping businesses effectively manage sickness and absence. Working with SMEs and larger organisations, Karen supports employers

in creating healthier, happier workplaces. But it is her groundbreaking integration of NLP into occupational health that has set her apart as a true innovator.

Bringing NLP Into the Workplace — A Groundbreaking Move

Karen has introduced NLP into workplace settings with remarkable results. Through tailored coaching and practical NLP-based strategies, businesses have seen:

- Higher employee engagement
- Reduced workplace stress
- Improved attendance
- Enhanced communication and collaboration
- Stronger results across teams and leadership groups

By helping employees understand how the brain processes language and how this shapes thoughts, behaviours and decisions, Karen equips teams with the tools to work more consciously, confidently, and effectively.

Introducing Karen's New 6-Week Programme for 2026

In response to growing demand — and the increasing need for healthier, more resilient workplaces — Karen has developed a new six-week NLP Coaching Programme, launching in the new year. Her new programme is suitable for individuals or businesses wanting to change their mindset.

Book In A 6 Week NLP Programme Today

Whether you're an individual looking for clarity or wanting to overcome blockages or things holding you back, or you're a business leader wanting a healthier workplace, contact Karen to find out more.

Karen Mills / Zen Occupational Health

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT KAREN'S 6 WEEK NLP PROGRAMME CONTACT HER ON 07766331418 OR VISIT www.zenoccupationalhealth.com

Follow Zen on FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

Main image courtesy of Maira Sheikh



GET **IT DONE CLUB

KAREN WILLIAMS: THE FORMER TEACHER TURNED ENERGY BILL GURU

A 60-year-old former teacher from Chester has found her passion and purpose in life again after becoming a partner with Utility Warehouse. Like thousands of partners throughout the UK, Karen Williams helps others save money on their gas, electricity, internet and phone bills — a new career that she absolutely loves!

For over 25 years, Karen dedicated her life to teaching in Cheshire primary schools. For the last decade of her career, she specialised in inclusive education, supporting children in challenging circumstances as a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo). It was a role she loved — one rooted in empathy, psychology, and communication.

Then, life threw Karen an unexpected challenge. A sudden detached retina left her blind in one eye and facing two major operations at the Royal Liverpool Hospital. “I had two surgeries and six months off work,” she recalls. “It was a scary and uncertain time. I didn’t know if I’d ever see properly again.”

The recovery was slow and mentally exhausting. Despite her natural optimism, Karen found herself battling depression and panic attacks. *“It was a long battle but finally my sight was restored,” she explains. “Thanks to the support from occupational health, CBT therapy, and the love of my family and friends, I came through the other side. It was time to think about what came next.”*

In October 2020, Karen made the difficult decision to retire early from teaching. She took some time out but it wasn’t long before a new opportunity caught her eye. “I saw my Salsa teacher sharing some interesting posts on social media about Utility Warehouse (UW),” says Karen. *“I signed up as both a customer and a partner — and it turned out to be one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.”*

Now, Karen works as an independent UW partner, helping households save hundreds — often thousands — of pounds each year on their essential services, from energy and broadband to mobile and insurance. *“Many of my customers save between £500 and £1,500 a year,” she says proudly. “For some, that means clearing debts, taking a family holiday, or simply being able to manage rising costs more easily.”*

What Karen loves most about her new career is the freedom and balance it offers. “There’s no boss, no performance management, and no mountain of paperwork. I can work from anywhere — even while travelling. I’ve got plans to spend some time as a digital nomad, and UW makes that completely possible.”

The company’s supportive environment and strong sense of community remind Karen of her teaching days — but without the stress. *“I used to mentor a team of teaching assistants in school, and now I mentor new UW partners. I’m using the same skills to encourage and guide others, helping them to build confidence, financial freedom, and belief in themselves.”*

Today, Karen is thriving again — not in a classroom, but still changing lives. Her story is a reminder that even after life’s toughest setbacks, it’s possible to rebuild, rediscover purpose, and make a difference in new ways. Karen summarises: “UW gave me back something I’d lost — my sense of purpose and the joy of helping others.”

Whether you’re interested in saving on your energy, mobile and internet bills, or whether you would like to know more about being a partner of Utility Warehouse — either as a full time or part time career — contact Karen today! Karen can offer a free quote on your bills or help guide you through the process of starting a new career with Utility Warehouse.



Karen Williams / Utility Warehouse

**FOR A FREE QUOTE ON YOUR ENERGY, MOBILE
& INTERNET BILLS OR TO LEARN ABOUT A
NEW CAREER WITH UTILITY WAREHOUSE
CALL KAREN ON 07932935738**

GET **IT DONE

20 UNIQUE GIFT IDEAS FROM INDEPENDENTS!

With Christmas around the corner, you may well be looking around for some last minute gifts! Here at La Vida Liverpool, we love championing independent businesses, so with that in mind here are some unique gifts (or gift vouchers) you can buy from wonderful independents! Whether it be for Christmas, a birthday or just because you care, check out these fab gift ideas....

Cavern Menswear



Nestled behind the hustle and bustle of Lord Street, Cavern Menswear on Harrington Street offers luxury designer clothing from international and local brands. Placing quality local and UK brands alongside well-known international brands such as Missoni and Valentino, Cavern Menswear has brought these brands international success, whilst making men look and feel great in the process. Caps are flying out – with over 170 different styles.

**Cavern Menswear / Harrington Street, Liverpool
L2 6RE / 0151 345 6799**

**VISIT THE CAVERN MENSWEAR ONLINE SHOP
CAVERNMENTSWEAR.COM AND FOR SALES
AND OFFERS FOLLOW THEM ON INSTAGRAM**

**Check out Cavern Menswear on FACEBOOK and
INSTAGRAM**

Cherry Blossom Cookbook by Dave Critchley



Do you have a loved one who likes cooking? Cherry Blossom is the debut cookbook from Liverpool's celebrity chef Dave Critchley of the BBC's Great British Menu and Come Dine With Me: The Professionals. The book features dishes he developed from his experiences of Tianjin, where he spent time with national level master chefs learning the skills and culture of the region's famed culinary delights. Dave also offers private dining services!

**FOR MORE INFO AND TO BUY THE BOOK
EMAIL DAVE director@yeschefrecruitment.co.uk**

Daniel Meakin Art



Internationally renowned abstract artist Daniel Meakin has been selling internationally for over 30 years – with bright, bold and colourful urban landscape creations. Widely regarded as one of the best in his field, he has sold to avid collectors all over the world, including investment tycoon JP Morgan. If you're looking to buy someone a striking piece of art that will be a talking point in their home, check out Daniel's art!

**FOR THE FULL RANGE VISIT DANIEL'S
INSTAGRAM DANIELMEAKINART**

**Follow Daniel Meakin on FACEBOOK and
INSTAGRAM**

D Stress Massage



Give the gift of massage with D Stress Massage, located on Old Hall Street in Liverpool. Founded by Sri Lankan Daniel Ebenezer, D Stress Massage offers a range of therapies — from head, foot, back and shoulder to sports and full body. Incredible value, a 1 hour full body massage costs just £36 with their winter offer and the team have received many 5 star reviews since launching in 2024.

D Stress Massage / No.1 Old Hall Street, Liverpool, L3 9HF

TO BOOK A TREATMENT OR VOUCHER CONTACT 07842 260023 OR VISIT WWW.DSTRESSMASSAGE.COM

Follow D Stress Massage on FACEBOOK

Hope Street Hotel & Spa



The gorgeous Hope Street Hotel's award winning spa offers a number of packages — with use of their spa facilities, pools, saunas and steam rooms, in addition to a wide range of massage and beauty treatments. Treat your special person to a relaxation package at the spa and if you want to really push the boat out then why not book a meal at their highly rated The London Carriage Works and 1931 restaurants or even stay over?

Hope Street Hotel / 40 Hope Street, Liverpool, L1 9DA / 0151 709 3000

TO BOOK A SPA PACKAGE VISIT HOPESTREETHOTEL.CO.UK

Ivy Bee Glass



If you're looking for something super cute and affordable check out Ivy Bee Glass! Artist Amy Teasdale creates the most beautiful handmade stained glass, fused glass and ceramic pieces — with no two pieces the same and bespoke, custom commissions available too. From ornaments to necklaces to completely tailored items — Amy offers incredible value glass pieces expertly crafted by hand.

CHECK OUT AMY'S RANGE OR REQUEST SOMETHING BESPOKE VIA IVYBEEGLASS.MYSHOPIFY.COM

Follow Ivy Bee Glass on FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

Joalliere Silver



Located on Market Street in Hoylake, this gem of a silversmith offers gorgeous silverware pieces — including rings, pendants, necklaces, bracelets and more. With a wide range of designs and stones to choose from, Joalliere brings you beautiful, heartfelt treasures that don't break the bank! Stunning gifts that are super affordable!

Joalliere / 28A Market Street, Hoylake, Wirral, CH47 2AF / 07594 919463

CHECK OUT JOALLIERE ON FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

Liverpool Book Festival Tickets

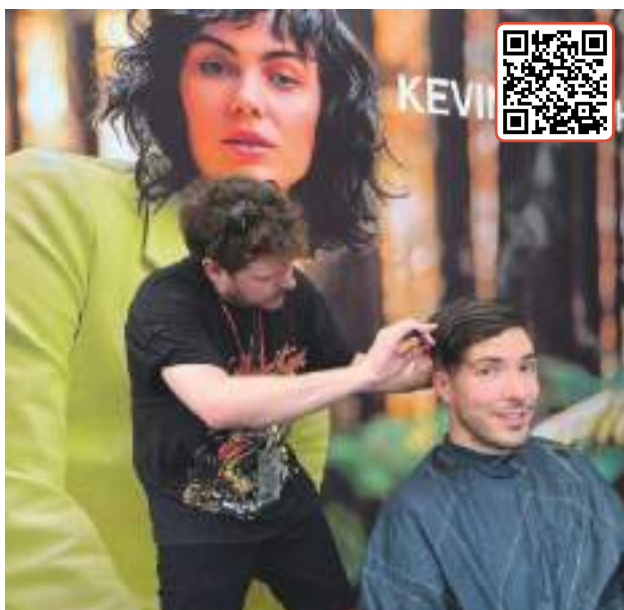


An ideal gift for book lovers, Liverpool Book Festival is coming to BoxPark in Cains Brewery Village on Sunday 8th March 2026! The event will feature over 60 of the region's finest authors signing and selling their books, celebrity special guests, talks, workshops, live music, artisan stalls, street food, cosplay characters, a Kids Zone and more! Tickets start at just £15, including a £7.50 drinks token and goody bag!

**Liverpool Book Festival / Sun 8th March 2026,
11am-5pm / BoxPark, Cains Brewery Village,
Stanhope Street, Liverpool, L8 5XJ**

SCAN THE QR FOR TICKETS TO THE FESTIVAL

Michael Franks Salon



Treat your loved one to a gift voucher for Liverpool's highest rated salon, Michael Franks! Located on The Strand on the edge of Liverpool One, the multi award winning salon has countless 5 star reviews. Celebrity stylist owner Michael is a true magician — with clients such as NBC News, the Irish President and top music and sports stars. You'll be in the good books with this gift!

**Michael Franks / 33 Strand Street, Liverpool, L1
8LT / 0151 345 6148**

**TO BOOK A TREATMENT OR VOUCHER VISIT
michaelfrankshair.co.uk OR CALL 0151 345 6148**

**Check out Michael Franks on FACEBOOK and
INSTAGRAM**

Penn Road Studio Photo Shoot



Give the timeless gift of a photo shoot from Jacqueline — photographer of Queen Elizabeth II, The Mayor Of Liverpool and celebrities such as Danni Minogue! From her boutique studio in Woolton Village, Jacqueline offers stunning photographs of individuals, families and even pets such as dogs! Gift vouchers available and Jacqueline's shoots are both fun and unforgettable experiences!

**Penn Road Studio / 27A Woolton Street, Woolton
Village, Liverpool / 07909 515191**

**FOR MORE INFO VISIT PENN ROAD STUDIO'S
WEBSITE WWW.PENNROADSTUDIO.CO.UK**

**Follow Penn Road Studio on FACEBOOK and
INSTAGRAM**

Prospect Piano Tuition



Give the gift of music with Prospect Piano Tuition — ran by the lovely Melanie Worthington! Based in Heswall, Melanie has over 10 years experience teaching a wide range of people from various backgrounds the wonderful art of piano. Through Prospect Piano Tuition, Melanie offers affordable lessons from just £30 for people of all ages and experience and what an absolutely incredible gift to give someone!

**Prospect Piano Tuition / Prospect, 37 Whitfield
Lane, Heswall, Wirral / 077837 00308**

**TO ENQUIRE VISIT prospectpianotuition.co.uk
OR CALL 077837 00308**

**Follow Prospect Piano Tuition on FACEBOOK and
INSTAGRAM**

Revitalaser



Treat your loved one to some TLC with groundbreaking aesthetics and skin treatments at the multi-award winning Revitalaser clinic! Revitalaser's impeccable reputation has attracted clients including Cheshire Housewives stars, celebrities such as Gail Porter and footballers' wives. A Revitalaser gift voucher allows your loved one to choose their own treatment that will make them look and feel fabulous!

Revitalaser, 182A Telegraph Road, Heswall, CH60 0AJ / 0151 342 2409

FOR MORE INFO VISIT www.revitalaser.co.uk OR CALL 0151 342 2409

Follow Revitalaser on FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

Rhi's Vintage Book Nook



If you're looking for a quirky and unique gift for an avid reader, Rhi's Vintage Book Nook is a treasure trove of rare, vintage old books! Check out her revolving range, with rare copies of books such as Robinson Crusoe, Grimm's Fairy Tales and Moll Flanders — with some of her finds dating as far back as the 1800s! A quirky, unique and classy gift for book lovers and antique collectors alike!

BROWSE RHI'S BOOKS ON INSTAGRAM OR ETSY

The Chapel Apartments Mini-Break



Why not treat your loved one to a mini-break in a converted chapel near the coast? The Chapel Apartments in Crosby are nestled within the historic walls of St Mary's Church and offer a transcendent retreat infused with timeless elegance. The apartments partner with local fine dining restaurants so you can tailor a break to include sightseeing, seaside walks and great food and drink!

FOR MORE INFO AND TO BOOK VISIT chapelapartment.co.uk OR CALL 07984 426114

Follow The Chapel Apartments on FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

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True Plasma Aesthetics Liverpool / Port Of Liverpool Building, Pier Head, Liverpool, L3 1BY

CONTACT PAULA ON 07465823555 OR VIA INSTAGRAM

Follow Plaxel Plasma & Aesthetics Liverpool on FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

Ty Cerrig Break



Why not treat someone to a relaxing break at Ty Cerrig Barn in North Wales? Situated in a remote location just outside Corwen, near Llangollen, Ty Cerrig Barn is a beautiful converted dwelling surrounded by countryside and mountains. The holiday retreat is ideally placed in the heart of Wales – with Snowdonia, Bala and the Welsh coast all within a 30 minute drive – and features a luxury hot tub and alpacas!

FOR A 15% DISCOUNT THROUGH LA VIDA LIVERPOOL CALL DANNY ON 07789991541! SCAN THE QR TO TAKE A VIRTUAL TOUR

Check out the Alidan Holiday Cottage & Retreats **WEBSITE** www.alidan.co.uk

Check out Ty Cerrig Barn on **FACEBOOK**

Vintage Interior Fairy Furniture Painting Workshop



A lovely experience to gift someone, gift vouchers can be purchased for furniture painting workshops at New Brighton's Vintage Interior Fairy is a fun and creative experience! At Lindsay's workshops, people bring an old piece of furniture and learn how to paint and restore it – costing just £65 with Frenchic paint and specialist materials supplied. Alternatively, why not pop into the shop and choose a vintage antique item as a gift?

The Vintage Interior Fairy / 124 Seabank Road, New Brighton, CH45 1HG

TO BOOK A WORKSHOP OR VOUCHER CALL LINDSAY ON 07939 536 638

Follow The Vintage Interior Fairy on **FACEBOOK** and **INSTAGRAM**

Wardrobe at The Cross



Looking for gift inspiration that feels thoughtful and stylish? Wardrobe at The Cross have curated a divine selection of gifts for her – whether you're shopping in their cosy Wirral boutique or browsing online. Discover heavenly soaps and candles from End of the Avenue, made just down the road, and pampering gift sets from the ever-lovely Lily and Me. Wrap her in joy with scarves, gloves, hats, and knits – and don't miss handpicked jewellery from Tarka, Ibu, and Rosie Fox, celebrating local creators. It's gifting, the Wardrobe way – personal, beautiful, and effortlessly special.

Wardrobe at The Cross / 25a High Street, Neston, CH64 9TZ / 07786856886

TO VIEW THE RANGE AND ONLINE SHOP VISIT wardrobeatthecross.co.uk – AS A FESTIVE TREAT ADD WATC10 TO YOUR BASKET WHICH WILL GET 10% OFF YOUR FIRST ORDER!

Follow Wardrobe At The Cross on **FACEBOOK** AND **INSTAGRAM**

Wide Welly Company



Looking for a practical gift for a dog walker, countryside lover or festival-goer? Hoylake's Wide Welly Company stocks quirky and stylish boots for people who struggle to find wellies that fit at the calf. Verity's evolving range features some fascinating designs – such as paw print, purple polka dots, stars, fish, orange and octopus designs. Meanwhile, the new ankle wellies are becoming a big trend and are available in various colours.

The Wide Welly Company / Unit 6 Carr Lane Industrial Park, Hoylake, Wirral, CH47 4AZ / 07836243779

TO VIEW THE RANGE AND ONLINE SHOP VISIT www.thewidewellycompany.co.uk

Follow Wide Welly Company on **FACEBOOK** and **INSTAGRAM**

YNNY Natural Skincare Products



Multi-award winning natural skincare brand, YNNY Ltd, offers natural, organic skincare and haircare products that have had remarkable effects on people. With countless 5 star reviews and testimonials, Georgina Tang's Elixir serums are magic formulas that make people glow, including — Anti-Aging & Skin Rejuvenation, Eyelash and Brow Growth, Enhanced Collagen Booster, Stretch Mark serums and more! Elixir floral – aka botox in a bottle and Enhanced collagen booster can be bought as an antiaging duo for £34.99 – £54.99.

FOR THE FULL RANGE AND ONLINE SHOP WITH A 10% DISCOUNT AVAILABLE VISIT www.ynny.co.uk/collections/serums

Follow YNNY Ltd on FACEBOOK and INSTAGRAM

Support Your Local Independents



When thinking about choosing a gift for someone, before you look at big corporate companies be sure to check out the many wonderful independent businesses out there! From artsy gifts and clothing to beauty and experiences, we hope this list has given you some inspiration — whether it's for Christmas, a birthday or just because you care!



la vida liverpool

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HEALTH & BEAUTY

la vida liverpool

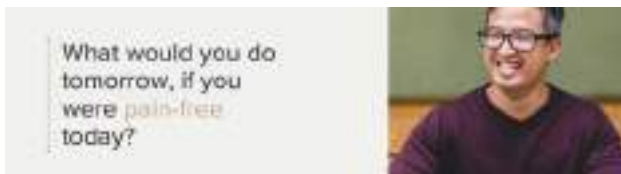
MAGAZINE

HEALTH & BEAUTY

THE CHRONIC PAIN 'MIRACLE WORKER' GIVING PEOPLE THEIR LIVES BACK!



A chronic pain 'miracle worker' is transforming the lives of hundreds of people suffering from a range of conditions. Venard Fong, owner of The Venard Clinic in Wirral, uses specialised neurology techniques and methods to resolve pain for good and has a remarkable 95% success rate with the people he works with.



Through his science-backed unique approach, Venard has helped many clients solve their chronic pain, migraine, sciatica, arthritis, bulging discs and various other conditions. These same clients have tried many other approaches in the past from physio to yoga to chiropractor. Venard uses an integrated approach including eyes and vision science, functional neurology, cranial work and gait repatterning to name a few.

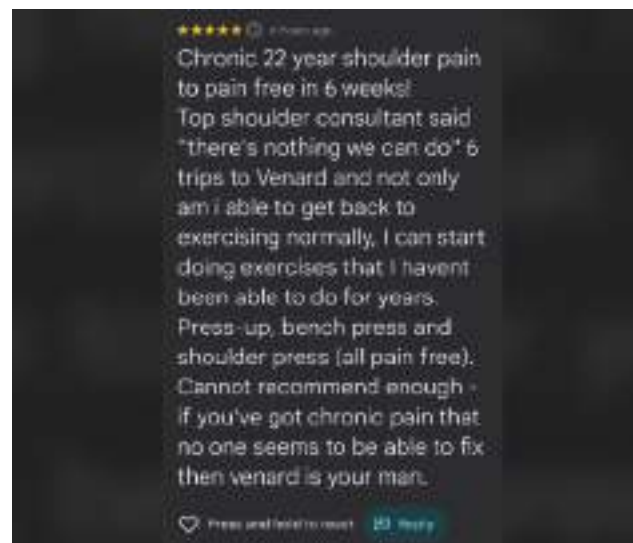
Venard offers an initial 30 minute video call to discuss your issue, establish if you are a good fit for his work and whether he can help you. The next step is booking an in-person assessment session where he maps out what is going on, why the pain is there, likely causes and a projected outcome where you get to see and feel the improvements and changes that are possible.

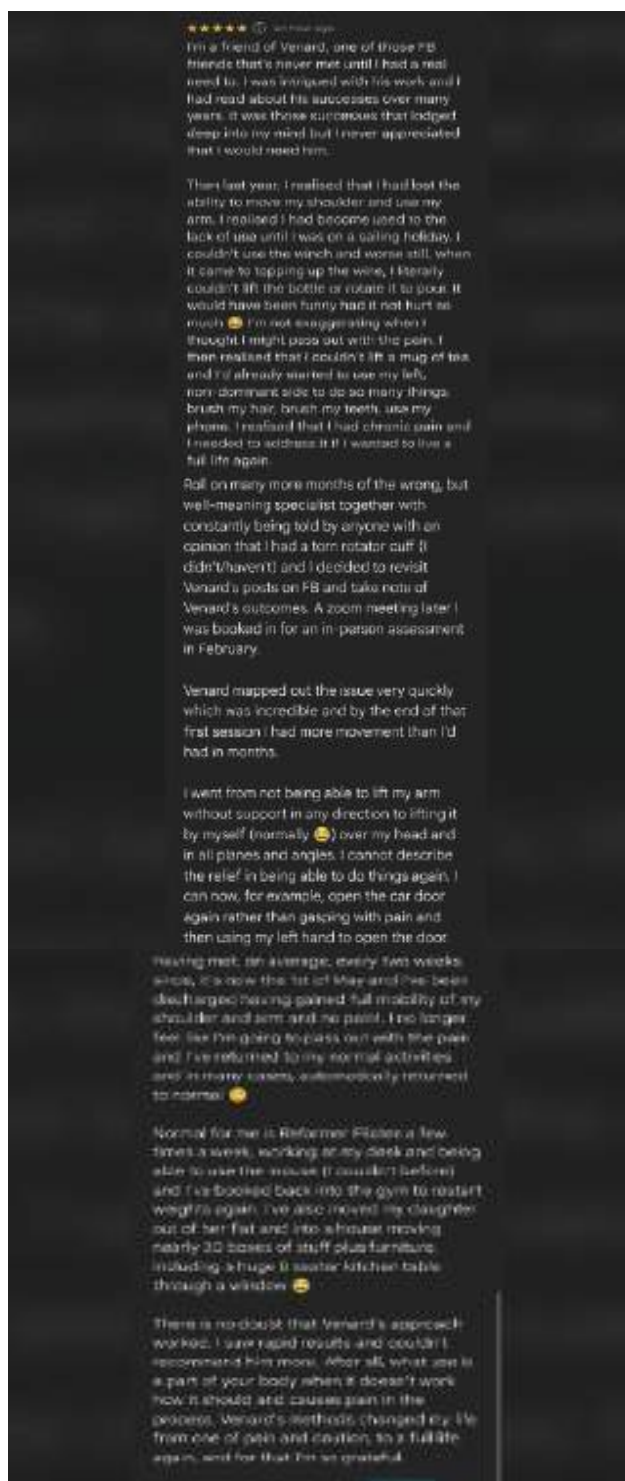


Venard offers a money back policy if he feels he is unable to find the cause and help your case in the assessment session. If he can find the causes, you then plan your case and the most suitable treatment plan that meets your goals in the fastest time possible. Venard has helped a wide range of professionals and athletes including double Commonwealth gold medallist and former Olympian Chris Cook.

Treatments are bespoke for each individual. This is best suited for those who are serious about their health and future and are ready to invest in themselves to regain their freedom and independence. This is also for those who want long term results quickly without never ending follow ups or having to do daily exercises to keep on top of the progress.

Results can be as quick as within a few hours and countless clients have come forward to say this is and has been the best investment and worthwhile for their physical health. Many have even said not only have they saved tens of thousands of pounds on other treatments and therapies, but the time commitment they have spent on those sessions.





Emma said: *"I approached Venard with chronic back pain that was getting progressively worse, leading to me being stuck in bed for a week with sciatica. With my wedding on the horizon in four months, I wanted to be pain-free for my big day. The results were astonishing! After treatment, I could lift heavy items at work, carry my children and, of course, enjoy my special day with no back pain weighing me down."*

Ben runs a luxury pool building company. He was suffering for 8 years with constant pain and other approaches haven't helped. With his busy schedule he opted for a 2 day fast track clinic. His 8 years of pain was solved on day 1, we spent day 2 pressure testing all the work to make sure nothing unravels. A few years later and he's still pain free from those 2 days.

Dubbed by many as 'The Pain Free Ninja', Venard has been in the same position that his clients find themselves in. As a Tae Kwon Do black belt competing at World Championship level, he struggled with lower back pain for years, spending thousands on physio, chiropractic treatment, massages and more, before booking in with a man advertising a new method of pain relief as a last-ditch effort.

Within 24 hours he found himself able to hit the gym, lift weights effortlessly and completely pain free — whereas 48 hours earlier he struggled to lift just one repetition. He now combines his background of eyes and vision science (orthoptics) with sports therapy, biomechanics and functional neurology to help his clients solve their pain too — and get back to the life they desire.



Venard summarised: *"The speed of the results come from knowing what to treat. Muscles and joints don't tighten up and give out pain unless the nervous system tells it to. Working out why the nervous system is sending these signals is key and saves you a lot of time and unnecessary costs long term. Finding the causes and solving them is pretty straightforward. How fast you get your life back and what memories and experiences you get to make is up to you."*

Venard Clinic / 1 Thursby Road, Bromborough, Wirral, CH62 3PW / 0151 346 2004

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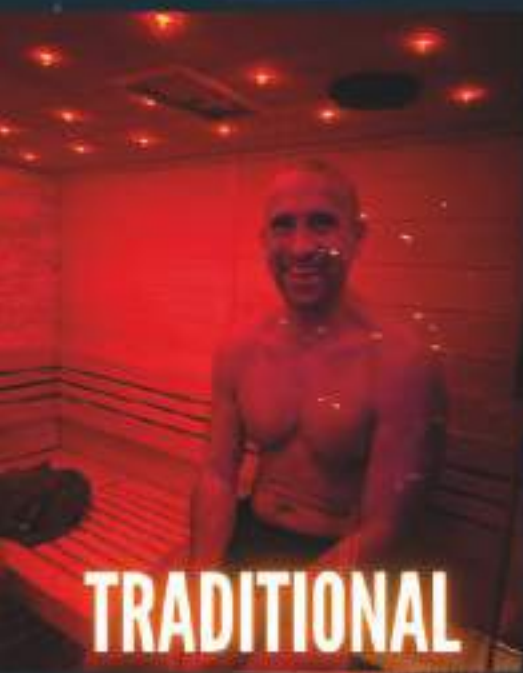

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Men'sHealth



HEALTH & BEAUTY

NORTH WEST'S LARGEST WOMEN'S WELLBEING FESTIVAL RETURNS!

Exciting news as the North West's largest women's wellbeing festival, Womanifest, is back for its 6th year! On 4–5th July 2026, the gates at Cherry Orchard Farm in Oakmere, Cheshire will open once more for a weekend of empowerment, connection, self-care and celebration, as women and teen girls from across the UK come together to recharge, reflect and rediscover their strength.

Set in a stunning location, Womanifest is not just another festival — it's a heart-led movement designed around wellbeing, empowerment and community. Over two magical days, attendees enjoy a festival-style experience filled with inspiration, growth, creativity — with a wide range of activities to nourish the body, mind and soul.



At Womanifest you can expect....

- Expect more than 60 workshops and multiple empowering talks, offering everything from self-care, mindfulness, goal-setting, to personal development.
- The festival blends fun and transformation — from yoga, meditation, breathwork, sound healing and spa-style pamper sessions, to creative workshops and inspirational conversations.
- Entertainment is a big part of the magic — think live performances by singers, dancers, comedians, plus music, dancing and silent disco during the festival's signature "EMPOWER HOUR."
- For those seeking a bold push outside their comfort zone, Womanifest even offers liberating experiences such as firewalks (hot coals) or walking on broken glass — a powerful metaphor for courage and transformation.
- Plus: an artisan-style marketplace of female-led businesses, offering a chance for some retail therapy and connection with inspiring entrepreneurs.



Womanifest 2026 is shaping up to be more than a festival — it's a celebration of sisterhood, diversity and empowerment. The organisers emphasise their commitment to an inclusive environment, welcoming women and teens from all backgrounds, identities and abilities, with an "Inclusive Champion" on hand throughout the weekend to ensure a safe, respectful, welcoming space.

It's also a real opportunity to connect — whether you come with friends, family, or on your own, Womanifest is built on community, support, and shared experiences. As the organisers say — it's a weekend to reset, realign and believe in yourself.



And for those working in the public sector or charitable organisations, Womanifest offers special gestures of gratitude — collaborating with Tickets for Good to offer complimentary festival tickets for staff in the NHS, charities or those involved in cost-of-living support work. A powerful nod to the incredible work they do day in, day out.

Since forming in 2019 as a way for women to come together and connect at a wellbeing event, Womanifest has grown to be a movement — with a community of thousands of women supporting each other and a number of projects running alongside the annual festival itself.



Founded by Jodie Salt and now led by Lisa Williams, Tracy Cawthray and Sara Hughes, Womanifest now has annual awards that celebrate female leaders and game changers throughout the North West. Their recent book, *Ripples Of Resilience*, showcases the stories of inspiring women and how they've overcome adversities and it has just become an Amazon Bestseller.



Womanifest's Lisa Williams said: *"In a world that often asks women to do more, be more — sometimes at the expense of their own well-being — our festival offers something deeply restorative: permission to pause, reflect, recharge, connect and nurture oneself. It's a space where strength, vulnerability, community and empowerment live side by side."*

She continued: *"We're really excited about the next festival and it may well be the biggest yet! We've introduced more activities and workshops and there's a record number of guest speakers. The response has been unreal and Earlybird tickets have sold out in days! We're also looking forward to our first Womanifest Awards in February — a celebration of the many incredible women in our community."*

Womanifest returns to Cherry Orchard Farm in Oakmere, Cheshire on 4-5th July 2026 offers a weekend to reclaim energy, reconnect with your inner self, meet new friends and celebrate womanhood in all its beautiful diversity. Weekend tickets are on sale, with Earlybird tickets already sold out.

**Womanifest / Cherry Orchard Farm, Abbey Lane,
Northwich, CW8 2HN / 4th-5th July 2026**

SCAN THE QR FOR TICKETS & MORE INFO

**For more info about Womanifest visit
www.womanifest.co.uk**

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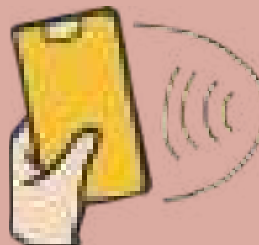
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FASHION

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FASHION

BOHO FASHION BOUTIQUE THAT WOMEN TRAVEL MILES TO VISIT!



In the heart of Prescot, just a short stroll from Shakespeare North Playhouse, you'll find a little treasure trove of colour, creativity and charm. Want That Dress, owned by former musician and teacher Jane McNally is a quirky gem of a fashion boutique that women travel miles to visit — including celebrities and footballers' wives.



Stepping through the doors on Market Place feels like being whisked away to a sun-drenched bazaar in Morocco or the bohemian markets of Spain. Rails of flowing gypsy skirts, chic boho dresses, statement boots, quirky jackets and vibrant jewellery fill the space, each piece telling its own story — whether you're looking for festival clothes or occasion wear.



Jane, who personally sources her collections from across the world, has built a loyal following of customers who travel miles — sometimes from across the country — to visit her shop. Even celebrities and footballers' wives have been spotted browsing her rails, looking for that perfect one-off outfit.

From Musician to Boutique Owner

Jane's journey into fashion wasn't a traditional one. A former musician and teacher, she began selling clothes during lockdown — initially as a creative outlet and a way to share her love for unique, beautiful pieces. What started as a small online venture quickly flourished, growing into a thriving business with a passionate community of women who adored her eclectic style.



"It just snowballed," Jane says with a smile. "People were craving something different — clothes that made them feel joyful and confident again. Like many people, I started an online business during lockdown — doing something that I love, fashion. For things to grow and to have my own gorgeous boutique is a dream and I've build a great community of women and regular customers here."



Today, Want That Dress has become a must-visit boutique for anyone who loves bold, expressive fashion. Stocking sizes from 8–24, Jane's collection celebrates women of all ages and shapes — from young festivalgoers hunting for something bohemian and free-spirited to older women embracing a more vibrant look.



Globetrotting for Style

Jane's passion for sourcing truly unique fashion often takes her far beyond Merseyside. She's known for hopping on a flight to Morocco or Spain, scouring local markets and artisan workshops for standout designs — sometimes returning home with her finds just 24 hours later.

"I love the adventure of it," she says. "There's nothing better than finding that one beautiful piece that I know my customers will absolutely adore. I have some wonderful suppliers who I've built a great relationship with over the past few years but I'm always keeping my eyes open for new opportunities whilst on my travels."



A Life in Colour and Compassion

What makes Jane's story even more inspiring is her heart for giving back. Alongside running her boutique, she regularly organises large charity events and fashion shows at Prescott Parish Church, raising tens of thousands of pounds for women's charities. Her fashion shows and fundraising nights have become beloved fixtures in the local community calendar.

A Bohemian Haven in Prescott

Open six days a week, Want That Dress offers a shopping experience unlike any other. Each visit feels like a burst of sunshine — full of laughter, colour and the kind of personal touch that only an independent boutique can offer.

Jane's boutique isn't just a place to shop — it's a celebration of individuality, creativity and community. Whether you're hunting for a statement festival outfit, a gorgeous boho dress or just something that makes you feel fabulous, there's only one place to go: Want That Dress, Prescott.



Want That Dress / 7 Market Place, Prescott, Liverpool, L34 5SB

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TRAVEL

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MAGAZINE

TRAVEL

7 ALTERNATIVE TRAVEL DESTINATIONS TO VISIT IN 2026!



As global travel continues to rebound and evolve, more travellers are seeking destinations that offer authenticity, sustainability and a break from the usual tourist circuits. While iconic cities like Paris, Rome and Tokyo will always attract crowds, 2026 is shaping up to be the year of the alternative getaway — rich with culture, natural beauty and unique experiences without the overwhelm of mass tourism.

Here are seven underrated destinations that deserve a spot on your travel list for 2026....

1. Georgia's Svaneti Region – A Medieval Mountain Escape



Nestled in the Caucasus Mountains, Svaneti feels like stepping back in time. Medieval stone towers, glacial valleys, and the UNESCO-listed villages of Mestia and Ushguli offer a rare combination of natural splendour and ancient culture. In 2026, improved infrastructure and new hiking routes are making the region more accessible while still maintaining its off-the-beaten-path charm. Don't miss: The multi-day trek from Mestia to Ushguli.

2. Albania – Europe's Rising Mediterranean Escape



Albania has quietly become one of Europe's most intriguing destinations. With its turquoise Ionian beaches, rugged mountain landscapes and ancient Ottoman towns, the country offers a Mediterranean vibe without the crowds or high prices. Why 2026? Improved infrastructure and growing eco-tourism options make it an ideal time to visit.

3. Salento, Colombia – Caribbean Vibes Without the Crowds



Colombia remains high on travellers' radars, but few venture beyond its famous cities and beaches. Salento, known for its colourful architecture and lush coffee farms, blends tranquility with vibrant culture. The towering wax palms of the Cocora Valley create some of the most surreal landscapes in South America. Perfect for: Coffee lovers, hikers and travellers seeking nature and culture in equal measure.

4. Kazakhstan's Almaty Region – Central Asia's Hidden Adventure Capital



Rising in popularity, Almaty offers cosmopolitan energy surrounded by dramatic landscapes. In 2026, major ecotourism initiatives and trail developments are giving new life to destinations like Charyn Canyon, Big Almaty Lake and the Tian Shan Mountains. Unexpected highlight: The colourful wooden Ascension Cathedral — entirely built without nails.

5. Slovenia's Soča Valley – An Emerald Escape



For travellers seeking pristine rivers, alpine scenery and small villages, the Soča Valley is a dream. The emerald-green Soča River — one of the cleanest in Europe — is ideal for kayaking and rafting, while nearby towns like Bovec and Kobarid offer a peaceful retreat with top-tier outdoor adventures. Sustainability bonus: Slovenia is one of the world's greenest tourism destinations.

6. Uruguay – South America's Most Understated Gem



Often overshadowed by its larger neighbours, Uruguay offers a relaxed and modern alternative for travellers. Montevideo charms with its beachfront rambla and artsy neighbourhoods, while Punta del Este provides upscale coastal escapes. Tip for wine lovers: Inland, visitors can enjoy quiet countryside estancias and wine regions known for bold Tannat varietals.

7. Tasmania, Australia – Wilderness Meets Creativity



While mainland Australia draws the spotlight, Tasmania offers dramatic coastlines, ancient forests and one of the world's fastest-rising food and art scenes. The island's national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and the iconic MONA museum make it a haven for culture and nature lovers alike. Why 2026? Major trail expansions and eco-lodges are improving access to remote wilderness areas.



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SPORT



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SPORT

WIRRAL MAN MAKES COMBAT HISTORY

Standing under the sweltering sun of Katsina, northern Nigeria, Luke Leyland's hand gripped the kara tape bound around his hand — a hard rope which is said to turn a Dambe warrior's fist into a weapon. He stood in anticipation, cheers erupting from the crowds of spectators as drums echoed in the air. In this moment, Leyland became not only a fighter, but a trailblazing pioneer for Westerners in the Dambe martial art.



Leyland, 38, an avid martial artist from Birkenhead, became the first ever white Westerner to have competed in Dambe — a Hausa martial art which originated around the 10th century. Traditionally practiced by butchers and fishermen around harvest time when exchanging meat and fish, there would be a festival followed by a fight as a trial of courage.

Dambe later became a warfare technique and sometimes a test before marriage. The sport levels as a traditional style of boxing which incorporates traditional and cultural rituals such as Juju. Dambe fights last a maximum of three rounds and the aim is to land a brutal blow that knocks the opponent to the floor through a hard punch or kick.



Despite Leyland having taken part in taekwondo in his youth and having been a professional wrestler for around four years in his early 20s, his Dambe bout was the first time he had competed in a boxing contest. Curious about finding the right martial art for him, he found the sport on YouTube.

Luke explained: *"When I first came across Dambe I thought it was a scene out of an action movie. I remember thinking that if it was possible for me to take part in it, it would be an amazing journey to share the sport with the rest of the world."*



Indeed, his journey was never just about fighting — it was about breaking barriers, earning respect and showcasing a sport that had initially remained largely unknown outside West Africa. Training for Dambe was very difficult, as there were no established training centres for the sport outside Nigeria — he had to train in the UK, creating and adapting a training and sparring routine to prepare for the fight under a "great" coach called Kallum Paul.



When Luke arrived in Katsina, he was only able to procure one or two training sessions with the Dambe coach in Katsina due to the overwhelming media attention. That said, Dambe warriors are known for their agility and explosive powerful hits, as well as intense mental fortitude, so amount of preparation could have primed Leyland to step into the hot sand against a seasoned Dambe fighter.

Luke said: *"I learnt there was no actual way I could have prepared for this in the UK as the sand in the arena was completely different and my opponent, Shagon Yellow, seemed to move his feet through the sand so quickly and easily like a shark in water. I just had to grit my teeth and try my best. Shagon defeated me in a fair Dambe fight and I have all the respect in the world for him and this sport."*

In the introduction to the fight, Leyland was introduced as 'Dan Bature Kudawa', loosely translated as the 'White Man of House Kudu'. This fighting title later became the title to Leyland's documentary on Dambe, which was officially selected for the AFRIFF film festival (the biggest film festival in Africa). He is currently preparing to release the documentary in the UK and is searching for a channel to release it on.

Despite his ultimate loss in the Dambe match, Luke was surprised by spectators. On his arrival, many were shocked by his participation in Dambe, with some being sceptical of his intentions. However, by the end, thousands cheered him on, with fans wanting pictures and chanting his name.



On a live phone-in TV show, more than 380 people waited to connect with him, with fans in Katsina, Kano and even in the airport supporting and wanting to meet him. "I understood that I had done something amazing for the sport. Even though I had lost the fight, I had won the hearts of the people," he reflected.



Luke had arrived in Nigeria with little knowledge of what to expect and with many odds stacked against him. On arrival he realised his bag — and malaria medication — were missing. The fear of contracting malaria, which could be fatal if caught, was compounded with dehydration and the inability to connect with people due to initial miscommunications.

However, the knowledge of how historic his Dambe bout was fortified his will. He explained: *"In the heat of any battle — physical or mental — a martial artist must stay calm. Control over the mind is the key to mastering any challenge."*



Before his fight, Dambe was a sport that largely remained confined to its Hausa roots, being practiced only within Nigeria and neighbouring states in Africa. Though its popularity had been rapidly growing, gaining millions of views online, Luke's participation has opened the floodgates to a wave of new overseas Dambe fighters, with combatants from Poland, Algeria and Russia having begun to compete.

This is the story of how a man from Birkenhead stepped into the unknown and changed a sport forever. This is the story of 'Dan Bature Kudawa'. Luke summarised: "The whole experience was amazing and I am extremely proud to say that the first white Western Dambe fighter came from Birkenhead".

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