

The Richmond

Magazine Editor's blog
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YOU live and learn. Back in the distant, callow days of my youth, I found myself alone in Paris in search of good food and wine. Armed with A-level French and a palate that was more Marco Polo than Marco Pierre White, I settled on a sophisticated looking cafe – it had an awning – and boldly ordered *un coquelet au something* with a glass of wine.

Or so I thought. Unfortunately, however, accent has never been the most secure aspect of my grasp on the Gallic tongue. Scribbling down my order, the mature and sultry waitress shot me a look which could, conceivably, have been an involuntary response to my overpowering animal magnetism and charisma, but was more likely an expression of incredulity at the tastes of this *imbécile d'anglais*.

Five minutes later all became clear, when my 'coquelet' duly turned up. Except that it wasn't *un coquelet* at all – it was 'un cocktail'. Un socking great pink cocktail, as it happened, with a quite ludicrous orange umbrella. To accompany it, a glass of cheap red wine. And that was dinner. Welcome to the wonderful world of French cuisine.

If only I'd had someone like Raymond Blanc to guide me across the field of gastronomic dreams that is the enchanted city by the Seine. Too late, alas. But at least I'll be ok in Teddington now, thanks to the recent arrival of Raymond's *White Brasserie* chain. Read all about it in Helene Parry's highly entertaining interview with the acclaimed French chef (P8).

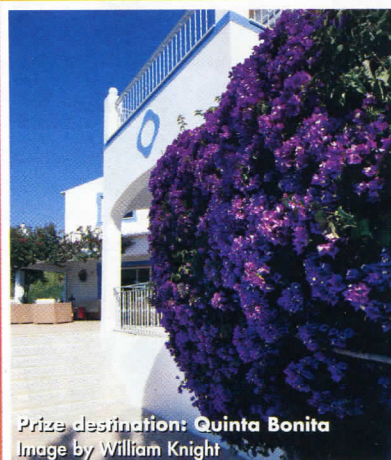
Nor is Monsieur Blanc the only *grand fromage* to feature in our pages this month. Stage legend Sir Derek Jacobi brings his long-awaited portrayal of King Lear to the Richmond stage this spring, once the production has finished its London run, and our Theatre Editor Lucy Johnston caught up with him during a pre-Christmas lull. Her resulting piece (p13) captures exquisitely the character traits of this shy, modest master of the craft.

Throw in some beautiful tigers, seductive lingerie – in itself enough to bring out the tiger in one – and the usual digest of local events, and you have all the makings of a good night in. Curl up and enjoy it. *Avec un cocktail*.



The wild geese. Winter evening sunlight falls across the Thames at Twickenham, catching a quartet of Canada Geese with its dying rays. Just one of a host of moving and entrancing images in *Wild About the Thames*, the latest book of photos by South-West London photographer Andrew Wilson. Billed as a celebration of the wide open spaces along the Thames from Battersea to Hampton Court Palace, the book is a loving tribute to local landscapes and wildlife, spun around the great, brooding centrepiece of the river. From Kew Gardens to Barn Elms, Ham House to Bushy Park, all your favourite places within wading distance of the Thames are here. A stunning follow-up to Andrew's previous volume, *Wild in the City*, this new publication is a coffee table 'must' for all who love the rural/urban blend that is London's south-western fringe.

■ *Wild About the Thames*, by Andrew Wilson, is published by Unity Print and Publishing. Tel: (020) 8487 2199. Foreword by The Duke of Northumberland



Prize destination: Quinta Bonita
Image by William Knight

Cash for kids: The Richmond Magazine Christmas Appeal and prize draw

There was an extra Christmas present for life-limited children this year, thanks to the generosity of the readers of this magazine.

The Richmond Magazine Christmas Appeal raised over £300 for two local charities: *Shooting Star Children's Hospice*, in Hampton, and *React – Rapid Effective Assistance for Children with potentially Terminal illness* – in Kew.

As a 'thank you' from us, all donors were entered into a draw for a long weekend at *Quinta Bonita Luxury Boutique Hotel* on Portugal's spectacular southern coast, the Algarve. The prize included free return travel, courtesy of award-winning low fares airline *Monarch*.

Congratulations to Maureen Byrnes, who runs the West London private tutoring agency *Progress Tutoring* and whose name was first out of the hat. Her donation of £40 – split between the charities – was among the largest received. A worthy winner of a great prize.

Once again, on behalf of the charities and ourselves, warm and grateful thanks to everyone who contributed.

■ Please note that, although the prize draw is now closed, the appeal remains open for anyone who wishes to support either *Shooting Star* or *React*. Please email editorial@sheengate.co.uk with a note of how much you wish to pledge, and to which charity. We will then send you details of how to pay the charity of your choice. Please do NOT send any money to us

Door of opportunity. London Welsh RFC Under 17s have received a boost, courtesy of London Door Company. The South-West London firm, which makes high quality period and contemporary doors, sponsored the shirt for the recent U17s game against a visiting South African Barbarians school side. It is also raising money for this year's U17s tour.



London Welsh U17s and the South African tourists