



## Roaming Pen Roger Oh no, it's the Olympics!

**New Year's Day:** Now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual. So said Mark Twain, he got it just about right.



A New Year means that change is in the air, the wind of the dying year has blown across the yellowed fields and over the bare hills, it can be a melancholic time. But we need to be positive; there are many things to look forward too. Just a minute, I need to remind myself. Of course it's twenty-twelve and there is some sort of large sporting event happening in August. Unless you are fanatical about sport and I'm not one of those, then thinking about the next eight months fills me with dread. But I am in a tiny minority here so I

am hoping for some really good holiday deals for August.

On the theme of change and new beginnings we should welcome the brave folk who, in these difficult times, are launching new businesses in Kemp Town. Firstly it's great to see the old Wilson's Laundry on Arundel Road, empty for many years, now the home of the Fabric Warehouse, relocated from George Street. This little independent shop has an amazing range of fabrics and materials; we need to get down there and give whatever support we can. There is a new coffee shop along in St George's Road as Alice's, a Kemp Town tradition, has made way for a new coffee emporium, going even further to satisfy our seemingly insatiable thirst for designer coffee. Just a little further along we await the arrival of a Turkish barber, very curious, maybe having your hair cut in a Turkish hamman, could be interesting. Then we have the new Kemp Thai takeaway restaurant which has taken over the premises formerly occupied by Khans which was an excellent Indian takeaway.

To local travel news, our 'wonderful' Brighton & Hove Buses are introducing a new way of paying their high fares; it's called the Key smartcard. It should be similar to London's Oyster card where you cannot pay for your ticket on the bus. With Brighton's 'Key' you load your card upfront and just swipe it on boarding the bus. Technically a brilliant way of improving the service, no more people standing and trying to find out from the driver the cost of the journey and then fiddling around looking for the right money. We will be flying through the town, fantastic! But of course that may not happen as tickets will still be available from the driver and so not a lot of change really, we wait in hope.

Back in early December, which seems like ages ago, I had planned on this column being my valedictory, time for change and possibly time to move on but many friends have persuaded me to soldier on for the time being at least. It's very nice to know that some of the trivial facts that I have mentioned over the years appear to have been useful, so you will have to put up with me for a little while yet. Don't forget that if you want to know what I'm getting up, visit my website [www.theroamingpen.co.uk](http://www.theroamingpen.co.uk)

Take it easy during 2012, there will be changes, but we need to embrace change and not be scared of it. Enjoy yourself, it's later than you think.

[roger@kemptownrag.co.uk](mailto:roger@kemptownrag.co.uk)



## News from the Coach House

**"Evergreens in winter thyme evergreens in every time."**

The term evergreen means a plant that has its leaves throughout the year - metaphorically continuously renewing or self-renewing. Evergreens provide an important shelter for our wildlife friends in the winter months with their high tannin property making them unpalatable from predators. Traditionally it is therefore of no wonder that these plants were thought to be powerful and protective.

**HOLLY** - *Ilex aquifolium* also known as the Holy tree & Christ's thorn. Once thought to have magical powers over horses - hence whips being made from the wood. The tree was thought to protect one from lightning and therefore beneficial to grow one near your home. In Suffolk there is a holly tree reported to be seven feet wide in girth!

**IVY** - *hedera helix* also known as love stone. Traditionally herbalists believed ivy berries were good for curing a hangover which is perhaps why I have so much growing outside my door! Goblets were made from the wood in hope of curing bad wine. In medieval times ivy poles marked local taverns and a law had to be passed that the pole should be no more than seven feet tall as to control the competitive tavern owner! When food stocks run dry in cold winters months ivy berries provide an important food source for our birds. The flowers are one of the bee's last and final forages before they home down for the winter months.

**YEW** - *Taxus baccata*, *Taxus baccata*, is an ancient tree species that has survived since before the Ice Age. Traditionally it was associated with immortality, renewal, regeneration, everlasting life, rebirth, transformation and access to the 'Other World' and our ancestors. Hence often found growing in graveyards! We have a wonderful Yew Tree Forest in Kingley Vale near Chichester with trees up to 2000 year old - a days out and forever never forgotten.

**BAY** - *Laurus* Traditionally bay leaves and laurel berries were valued as being astringent, stimulant, and stomachic. The leaves and fruit made into a powder were applied to stings and bites. According to legend the Delphi oracle chewed bay leaves, or sniffed the smoke of burning leaves to promote her visionary trances and in ancient Greece and Rome poets, emperors and heroes all used Bay leaves as a form of triumph. Hence the bacca-laureate means "laurel berries" which signifies the completion of a bachelor degree. Today we find Bay used in oils for rheumatism and homemade stews!

The Coach House, 22 Walpole Road BN2 0EA. Contact [atthecoachhouse@googlegmail.com](mailto:atthecoachhouse@googlegmail.com) for more info and to be added to our newsletter.



St Georges Clinic

66-67 St Georges Road,  
Kemptown, Brighton, BN2 1EF  
01273 694411  
[www.stgeorgesclinic.co.uk](http://www.stgeorgesclinic.co.uk)  
[info@stgeorgesclinic.co.uk](mailto:info@stgeorgesclinic.co.uk)

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