

skyride Local

CAROLINE Gilbert, British Cycling recreation manager for Cumbria, is working with the Go Lakes Travel programme to bring a series of free, fun guided bike rides to the Lake District this summer



LAST week it was announced some of the world's best cyclists will race around the streets of Barrow when the Pearl Izumi Tour Series comes to town.

We're in for a fantastic summer of cycling! In the coming weeks we will announce this year's programme of Sky Ride Local rides in the Lakes in partnership with Go Lakes Travel, and, new for this year, Carlisle.

If you're an experienced, enthusiastic cyclist and you fancy exploring a bit further afield, we're on the look-out for confident recreational cyclists to lead rides in Carlisle this summer. There are still a few spaces on our British Cycling Ride Leader training course in Carlisle on Saturday.

To apply for a free place, visit www.skyride.com. And if you're ready to get out on your bike right now, this week's column is all about how to plan your own great cycling routes:

Weather check

Some of the best cycling routes out there are only at their best at certain times of the year. Mountain biking through the woods is fantastic in the height of summer, not so much in the rainy winter when the muddy bog sets in. It's worth factoring in the seasonal weather when planning your route.

Round in circles

Are you longing for a well-rounded cycling experience? Well, then plan a circular cycling route as opposed to a there and back outing. It's far more enjoyable to discover lots of new places and spaces while out on your bike, rather than seeing the same things twice over.

Plan a mid-way pit stop

Whether you plan on riding 10 miles or 50 miles, scheduling in a mid-way pit stop is definitely worth it. It will give you and your cycling buddies a well-deserved break and the chance to have a bite to eat, if you happen to stop at a cafe or pub.

Is there room for two?

If you're planning a new route for your next outing with friends or family, give some thought to how much room there is to ride together. Riding side by side and having a chat along the way is much more fun than cycling in single file all the way around.

A sneaky short cut

When the time comes to brave the unknown and cycle farther than you've ever done before, it's a good idea to plan a sneaky short cut home. This works when your legs aren't quite up to the challenge or you need to get home sharpish for some reason.

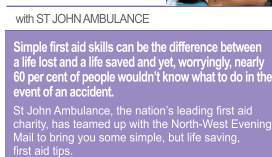
Time to turn around

Our final top tip for planning a great cycle route is, where possible when riding on the road, cycle-anti clockwise. If you ride an anti-clockwise loop you'll avoid the need to make lots of right hand turns and crossing potentially busy traffic. So that's left, left and left again.

If you need a little more inspiration to get the creative cycling route planning juices flowing, Sky Ride Local will be here soon. There are some cracking routes to inspire you to keep cycling all year round.

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First Aid



Simple first aid skills can be the difference between a life lived and a life ended and the worryingly nearly 60 per cent of people wouldn't know what to do in the event of an accident.

St John Ambulance, the nation's leading first aid charity, has teamed up with the North-West Evening Mail to bring you some simple, but life saving, first aid tips.

INJURIES sustained to the soft tissues around the bones and joints – the ligaments, muscles and tendons – are commonly referred to as strains and sprains.

They occur when the tissues are overstretched and partially or completely torn by violent or sudden movements. Strains and sprains should be treated initially following the RICE procedure:

- R** – Rest
- I** – Ice pack
- C** – Comfortable support
- E** – Elevation

Follow these simple steps to help:

- The casualty may have pain or tenderness or difficulty in moving the injured part
- There might be some swelling or bruising around the injured area

- Help the casualty to sit or lie down and support the injured part in a comfortable position, preferably raised
- Cool the injured area by applying a cold compress such as an ice pack
- With the cold compress in place, wrap the area in a layer of soft padding such as cotton wool

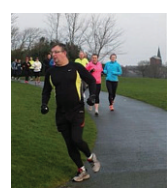
- Secure with a support bandage
- Support the injured part in a raised position and check circulation underneath the bandage every 10 minutes. If circulation is impaired, loosen the bandage
- If the pain is severe or

the casualty cannot move or use the injured part, arrange to take or send them to hospital, otherwise advise the casualty to rest and to seek medical advice if necessary.

Free to download, the St John Ambulance first aid iPhone app has been downloaded by more than 100,000 people and is available from the Apple App Store and is also available for android phones.

For more first aid advice or information about courses please call 08700 10 49 50 or visit www.sja.org.uk.

Park run



BARROW PARKRUN, SATURDAY MARCH 1

WINTER seems to be clinging on and following the weeks of rain, it was debatable whether Saturday's run would go ahead due to a severe hail storm which made the course slippery in parts.

A decision was taken for the event to go ahead but runners were advised to exercise caution due to the testing conditions. It meant Sarah Grisdale was able to complete her 100th parkrun – a fantastic achievement celebrated with post run cake.

Due to the conditions, times were slower than normal but five people still achieved personal bests. Well done to Samantha Mawhinney, Rebecca Shuttleworth, James Beaton, Johanna Springthorpe and Samantha Jayne Hodgson.

It must be said that parkrun is not just about achieving PBs but getting out of bed on a Saturday morning for a pleasant run/jog/walk round our beautiful park, with a varied collection of people running all different times.

There will surely be someone to go round with you at your level and everyone is always cheered on by our ever committed gang of volunteers who ensure each run goes ahead each week.

At the parkrun this week there were five first time runners but unfortunately no tourists. No matter how you want to do it just go to www.parkrun.com, register your details, print off your barcode and join us on Saturday morning. Following the run come to the cafe for a brew and chat with the other runners/ volunteers.

Next week's run will see the total distance ran at Barrow's parkrun exceed 50,000km.

Men's results:
First man home was Danny Bouffer in a time of 20:50, followed by Ian Crook in 21:51 and hot on his heels, Neil Grace in 21:56.

Women's results:
It was a double whammy for Sarah Grisdale, who marked her 100th run by finishing first in 23:20. Emma Johnston came second in 26:09, followed by Samantha Jayne Hodgson in 27:17.

If you are a first time runner wanting to join us it is recommended that you register at <http://www.parkrun.org.uk/register/barcode> and arrive at the bandstand at 8.45am for the pre-run briefing. Please bring along your barcode if you want your time to be registered and all under 11s must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

Keep on running,
ELLA AND DAVID HARKER

Acupuncture

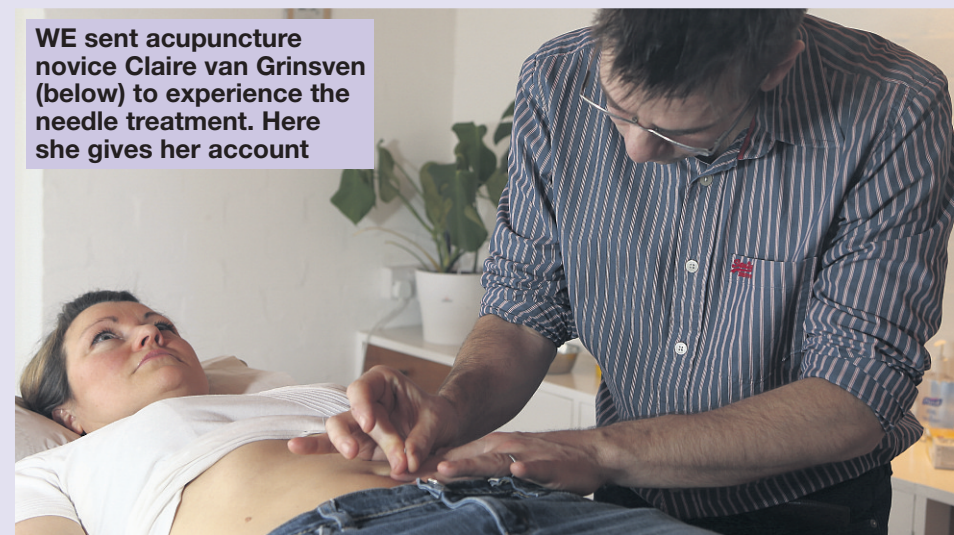
THIS week is National Acupuncture Awareness Week. We sent reporter HELEN PERKINS to meet South Cumbria practitioner Hugo Brasher, and find out more about this ancient health therapy



Pictures by MILTON HAWORTH

AT EASE Acupuncturist Hugo Brasher with his patient Claire Grinsven REF: 50059086B04

WE sent acupuncturist novice Claire van Grinsven (below) to experience the needle treatment. Here she gives her account



Patient recommends treatment

EVEN though I had heard of others having acupuncture and am quite interested in alternative therapies myself, I didn't really know what to expect.

Hugo's place is in the countryside near Kendal, and certainly had a peaceful ambience when I pulled up in the car.

There's always an awkward moment when you realise that someone you don't know too well is going to be sharing your personal space, and then also in this case sticking needles into your body.

But Hugo was very calming and it all felt quite relaxed

and unembarrassing. Firstly, Hugo had a chat and explained the principals of acupuncture and then he took my pulse on each wrist.

Interestingly from my various pulse points and from looking at my tongue, he could see that I had a weakness in my spleen and lungs, both points being connected with hayfever which was initially what I had asked Hugo to help me with.

Hugo was soon putting in the needles and asking me if it felt "sharp" or "dull". The sensation of the needles being put in felt just like a tapping sensation on my body and not

really painful at all – in fact I couldn't feel anything in some areas, just a tap.

The two points that felt the strongest reaction were connected with my spleen, again indicating a weakness in that area.

After the treatment was finished I felt very relaxed but also uplifted which, I have to say, I didn't expect to feel.

It's amazing also to experience a treatment that has been developed over thousands of years, and makes use of all that experience – I think we have a lot to learn from it and would highly recommend it.

Ancient therapy treats host of problems

IF we wake up with a headache, most of us will reach for the painkillers and perhaps a cup of coffee.

However, there is another option. The traditional Chinese practise of acupuncture – where small needles are applied to the skin – has been used for millennia in the East. Now, the practice is growing in popularity here.

South Lakeland expert Hugo Brasher has a good grasp of the value of the treatment. The Crook-based practitioner, who treats patients across Cumbria, has spent the last four years working to improve the health of individuals suffering from a range of health complaints.

Headaches is just one of them.

Today the National Institute for Clinical Excellence also recommends acupuncture for the treatment of lower back pain.

Individuals have turned to the therapy, which archaeological evidence shows has roots stretching back possibly 7,000 years, for issues ranging from stress, to muscle injuries, to period and fertility problems.

Hugo explained some of reasons the treatment attracts people.

The 39-year-old said: "Some people view western medicine as a way of 'fire-fighting' symptoms; you wait till you become ill, then go to the doctor.

"Acupuncture has a more preventative approach, and it's not something you have to take instead of medical advice, you can

have it alongside western treatment. In contrast to medication, there are hardly any side effects. The worst is that occasionally there can be slight bruising. People tend to feel calmer afterwards, which is a good effect on top of whatever issue they are hoping to treat."

The preventative focus of acupuncture sees practitioners take a holistic approach to their patients – and consultations tend to include a deep discussion on the overall health and lifestyle of each individual.

Through this, along with diagnosis of pulse points and the patient's tongue, Hugo aims to try to support the body by channelling the body's natural energy and blood flow to the regions, muscles or organs that

require added attention from the body itself. The aim is to build up the health of the patient – so you avoid getting to the stage where you wake up with the back pain, or the headache.

Hugo said: "It was said that the emperor would only pay his health advisers when he was well – because when he was sick it meant they hadn't done their job properly. That is the whole attitude of acupuncture.

"For example, instead of waking up with a headache and taking painkillers, acupuncture tries to tackle the cause by understanding how your body works and why this happens."

While the NHS does not yet prescribe acupuncture for all types of pain, it has added head-

aches to the list of ailments it is effective at treating. Meanwhile, last year Arthritis UK did a large study on complementary treatments and, while they could not recommend several other alternative therapies, they recognised acupuncture as a valuable treatment for pain relief.

It is a specialism that sees men and women with every type of ailment and health issue, head to Hugo's treatment rooms, by Kendal's Brewery Arts Centre, and at his Grasshopper Clinic, in Crook.

He qualified four years ago, with a degree in Chinese medicine from the London College of Traditional Acupuncture, and has already seen a vast array of different health issues.

Hugo said: "Every patient is treated differently – because on a fundamental level you treat the person and not the disease.

"You have to try to work out why that person is ill. It's very interesting from my point of view and there's lots of interesting things to study all the time.

"I first had it when I was 11 and a few times in my teens. However, I never thought of it as a job."

This week, for Acupuncture Awareness Week, Hugo will be running free Tongue and Pulse Diagnosis sessions, at Kendal Marketplace.

He said: "You can learn a lot about the health of someone simply by looking at the tongue; by gauging colour, coating,

whether there are any spots, how wet it is. The same applies to someone's pulse, which for an acupuncturist gives detailed information of how a body is functioning."

He added: "It's a lifelong study. I will always be a student; there are a lot of things to take into account.

"As amazing as western medicine is, there are still medical conditions that experts here have trouble explaining. There are many common ailments they aren't sure why occur in the first place.

"You don't have to be ill to take an interest in your health – just like you don't have to be training for a marathon to go to the gym. You do both to stay healthy."

Eye Health



with JULIE DIXON

OPTOMETRIST at Specsavers in Barrow, JULIE DIXON, looks at how lifestyle choices can affect your eyesight.

MANY of us will find our vision worsens as we age. It's not uncommon to find that holding things at arm's length becomes the only way to see them in focus as we get older – this is age related long-sightedness, or presbyopia.

Presbyopia affects the crystalline lens of your eye, resulting in a loss of flexibility, which makes it difficult to focus on close objects. It is not a disease, but a natural part of the aging of the eye.

When the lens becomes too flexible and muscles behind the eyes too weak, it is harder for the lens to refract the light to allow a perfectly focused image to appear on the retina. With presbyopia the light becomes flat or bent and it may be more difficult to focus on close objects or to change focus quickly.

Presbyopia usually becomes apparent when people reach their mid-forties. It affects almost everyone and combines with other eye conditions such as long and short sightedness – although those who have short sightedness may find that presbyopia doesn't cause them as many problems.

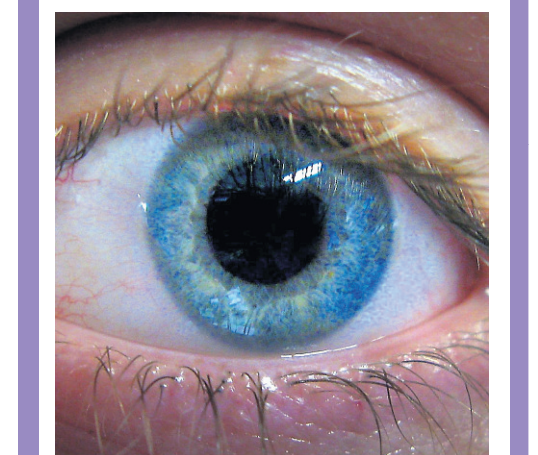
People who unknowingly have presbyopia often say that words snap back into focus when they hold reading material at arm's length. Other symptoms include a need for brighter or direct light, headaches or even fatigue.

Optometrists at Specsavers in Barrow test for presbyopia at every eye test and suggest practical methods of dealing with the condition.

Reading glasses, bifocals, trifocals, varifocals and contact lenses can all help make living with presbyopia easier.

A declining ability to focus is inevitable with presbyopia, so regular eye tests are important to diagnose problems quickly to allow for comfortable and clear vision.

If you are concerned about the effects of presbyopia or any other eye problems, book an appointment at Specsavers, in Dalton Road, Barrow, by calling 01229 836 836 or visit www.specsavers.co.uk/stores/barrow if you're unsure.



VISION Presbyopia affects the crystalline lens of the eye



70 Dalton Rd, Barrow
Tel : 836836



EXPERTISE Hugo Brasher in his clinic at Crook REF: 50059086B000