

Boughton's

COFFEE HOUSE



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September 2012

Starbucks goes for self-serve sales

Starbucks has at last announced its response to the growth of Costa's mobile and self-service coffee business - it will open 'thousands' of 'Starbucks On The Go' machines, beginning with units in four Sainsbury's sites.

The brand has claimed that the move is worth a multi-million-pound opportunity for the company, in giving customers 'the opportunity to get Starbucks coffee wherever they are'. A Starbucks senior manager has been quoted as saying that the most common thing he hears from the public is the need for 'a Starbucks closer by'.

A curiosity of the new machines is that they feature a touchscreen control, and that while Starbucks has said that the machines will serve coffee in less than a minute, it has also provided the opportunity for users to play a game while waiting.

In America, Starbucks has been reported to be selling half-price discount deals for drinks purchased through Coinstar vending machines, leading Forbes magazine to observe: "Starbucks is starting to act like there's something wrong with its expensive coffee". In Switzerland, Starbucks is to work with the Selecta vending company on the pilot of an office coffee vending service. Selecta provides office coffee service to more than 100,000 workplace locations in Europe.



The flat whites get smaller!

There has been an interesting trend in coffee sizes this month, sparked by a newspaper columnist who commented approvingly on the customer service of the Kaffeine coffee bar in London, which made him 'an entirely new drink'.

He reported: 'the barista noticed that I'd come in, order a flat white, work for an hour or so - but never finish my coffee. He asked me why, and I replied that espresso leaves me too wired to write, but paradoxically, I always need a little.'

"He proceeded to create an entirely new drink for me, on the spot, a mini flat-white."

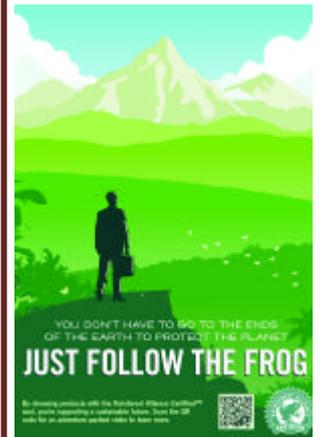
"It was simple, really," Kaffeine's owner Peter Dore Smith told us later. "We made him a single-shot flat white in a 3.5 oz espresso cup." (Kaffeine's

usual flat white is a double shot in a five-ounce cup).

At the same time, the Harris and Hoole coffee bar, the new artisan business in which Tesco has a stake, shows a 'three-quarter flat white' on its blackboard, at £2.30. It is a double-shot flat white, but with less milk.

"I doubt it will be as small as ours!" laughed Peter Dore Smith. "In Australia a new trend is for 'half lattes', a double shot in a 7.7 oz glass but only half full. Another recent trend is 'long macchiatto', a double-shot mac with extra milk."

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New grading service for meeting-friendly coffee bars



Extract from a Woffee listing for a Costa site

A new turn in the matter of wi-fi in coffee houses has come with the invention of an online service which seeks to rate and grade venues which are suitable for working in and for holding business meetings. The service includes a novel feature by which users can e-mail each other with meeting times and a note of the venue's location and facilities. The idea is chargeable to chains, but free for cafes with three sites or less.

The founder is venture capitalist Stephen Findlay, who tells us: "everybody now wants to sit down and work for an hour, and there are probably 100,000 venues which offer facilities, if you include pubs and hotels - but how do you know if they are good to use, particularly if you're in a strange town?"

The Woffee.com site allows venues to list their various work-friendly facilities, such as free use of power points, and these venues are graded. At first, the Woffee founders are doing the assessment, but in time it is intended that users will do online reviews of a venue's suitability.

"We have a checklist, which includes such subjective items as coffee quality, and the staff attitude towards someone who sits down and opens up a laptop!"

"The charge varies from £10 to £30 per month depends on the kind of listing, but if you have less than three sites, you can sit on Woffee for free, but you don't get all the services. If you sign up to pay, you have a six-month free period to assess the traffic. The first target is for 1,000 sites listed by October."

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The latest in a line of attempts at the Guinness record for the world's biggest cappuccino has been in Zagreb, where a 440-gallon brew apparently beat the existing record by a hundred gallons. Rather curiously, a spokesman for the attempt said: "this cappuccino was made exactly how it should be, in the traditional Italian way." The award ceremony was reportedly held on the biggest La Cimbali machine ever built - ten metres long! Interestingly, the major reaction to all this from several people in the British trade was something we have often wondered about, but never liked to raise - the horrifying amount of waste.

Another court case has arisen in America over hot-drink spillage - Starbucks is reportedly being sued after a Texas customer claimed she was scalded in her lap by hot tea due to a lid not being properly secured by the barista. The claimant's lawyers have reportedly alleged that Starbucks 'knew of defects in its cups that left other customers burned'. Readers will recall that we have recently reported warnings by suppliers who say that coffee houses must make absolutely sure that their lids and their cups make a perfect fit.

Benders, the Welsh-based paper cup manufacturing company, has been bought by the group of cup-making companies that already includes Flo, Nupik and Dopla. The acquisition creates a six-country group with sales of twenty billion cups and a turnover of more than 400 mil-

lion euros. Managing director Andy Cunliffe has said that he has 'received real commitments to support the continued growth and development of the Benders business', and has reportedly said that he now wants Benders to become Europe's leading paper cup manufacturer.

The Michelin-starred chef Phil Howard has worked with Nespresso to create a series of recipes which, we are told, are 'aimed at helping chefs understand how to use coffee in different dishes'. He owns The Square in London's Mayfair, and has made the unusual suggestion that said chefs should experiment with the versatility of coffee, and instead of using it in desserts, should try it in sauces, marinades, stocks and crusts. He reports being surprised to find that he could pair coffee with shellfish. The project was undertaken to mark the opening of the first Nespresso boutique in the UK, in London's Regent Street.

Following recent criticisms of the Scores on the Doors café hygiene rating scheme, an entire Welsh district's ratings are to be re-checked after it was found that ratings for food businesses in Ceredigion were incorrectly displayed - one café, which believed it had been rated as four, discovered that on the public website, it was shown as just two.

An entire café has been stolen in Derbyshire. The Blue Box mobile café operated at the roadside five days a week - until a thief simply towed it away.

Juicafe aims again for the smoothie title

This year's British Smoothie Championships will be held on Friday 21st September at the Lunch show in London, and we are assured of a new champion, as the title-holder, Sylvie Parcot of Crussh, will not defend her crown — however, what will be intriguing will be to see if Juicafe in Lancaster can take it, because this café holds the interesting distinction that both the husband and wife of the business have taken second place in the last two years!

There are several trade-relevant launches which seem worth a look at the show: Suki tea will introduce its first triple-certified tea and a new tea gift set.

Kimbo UK will be offering tastings of authentic Neapolitan espresso blends, and the Coffee Machine Company will be making very little noise... its new Ceado grinders are both low-volume and feature the intriguing 'anti-clumping' feature, which avoids the annoying lumpy bits which can occasionally occur in normal grinding. (Silence will probably also be a feature of the Magrini stand, where their Vitamix blender also features exceptionally low noise levels).

In soft drinks, we can expect an interesting new taste from Breckland Orchard, the 'posh pop' people - this will be the new plum and cherry drink.

It is in packaging that we expect to see some good café-relevant ideas - Tri-Star will show its new Nibble Box, and also its version of a popular new



Oli Wilson-Fish



Packaging will be a big interest for takeaway operators - this is the Dempson bag

idea, packaging which allows for wet and dry ingredients to be kept separate in the same overall container.

Planglow has a new collection and promises a 'sneak peek' (at an open show?!) of a new collection of premium 'deli-style' packaging and labelling products promised to be 'unlike anything else currently available on the market'. This, we hear, is fully compostable, including the laminate film which can go in a home compost heap.

For what we think is the second show in a row, Bunzl promises to unveil a new product, part of the Metro range of disposable hot cups - at Caffè Culture, the new product turned out to be

a lid with soft edges.

An interesting arrival may be the Dempson Crooke carrier bag concept for larger takeaway food and drink items - it has a fold-over seal and a strong but flexible base.

Lunch! 20-21 September, Business Design Centre, Islington, London.

Single-cup coffee bags on the way



The experienced competition barista and judge Danielle Hadley, who has worked beside celebrity chefs Rick Stein, Marcus Bean and Martin Blunos, is involved in a new product which is expected to launch in October. This is the invention of a new individual coffee bag, created by Carrie Bates of The Little Coffee Bag Company, Shropshire. The product is an individually-packed bag of ground speciality coffee (provided by Danielle's Coffee) which looks rather like a teabag in appearance but is bigger and slightly more tightly packed, and which is to be infused in the cup for three minutes.

The Pull-Brew-Melt festival, due to be held at Waddesdon, near Aylesbury, on the last weekend of this month, now has a list of exhibitors. The coffee section includes James Gourmet Coffee, Monkshood (the show organiser), Mad About Coffee of Norwich, Conti, the Espresso Room of London, and Colonel Grumpy's Guatemalan coffee bus. VegWare will be showing its compostable takeaway cups and foodware. The tea exhibitors are Postcard, Solaris Botanicals, Revolution, Sherston and Yum-Cha. The chocolate exhibitors are Baruzzo, Auberge du Chocolat, Cherish, Kokoa Collection, and Jaz & Jul's, who offer hot chocolate made with spices and fruit oils.

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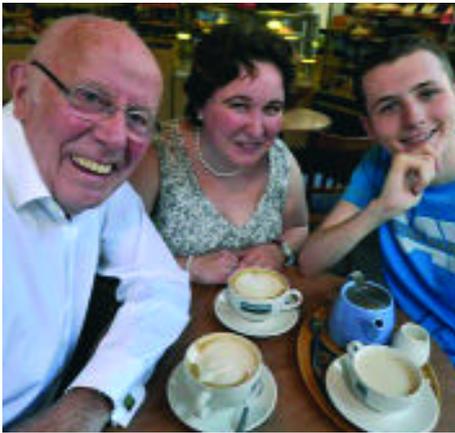
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Coffee houses support local groups

Esquires coffee house in Glasgow was picked for an interesting business meeting recently - the actor Richard Wilson chose it for his first meeting as ambassador for leading charity the National Autistic Society of Scotland.

In similar vein, Costa is again involving high street cafes with local churches - the branch in Andover is providing the venue for the Alpha Course, an immense worldwide project aimed at answering questions of faith in the evenings for people who do not attend a church, and probably have no intention of doing so. Costa will give the use of the café for ten consecutive Thursday evenings.

Age before quality?

A café in Faversham has unwittingly caused an equal rights row by inviting applications from potential staff aged 16 to 24, who have been jobless for 12 weeks or more.

The owner said that he was following the requirements of a Government scheme to tackle youth unemployment, which offers cash incentives to employers who recruit young jobseekers.

However, a spokesman for the Equality and Human Rights Commission has said that it is illegal to put a maximum age limit on jobs, and a middle-aged jobseeker has said the offer is 'discrimination'.

The café owner has remarked that there are flaws in the scheme, in that while he approves of giving chances to youngsters, he also believes the senior unemployed to be more motivated.



Caber Coffee of Aberdeen has launched its Mission Motorsport charity. Company head Findlay Leask (above) says that his company will make a donation of £5 in respect of every case of coffee sold, to support a project in which injured forces personnel are helped through rehabilitation by motorsport opportunities. The activity is run by serving military officers and retired professional motorsport drivers.

The cafe meets the art movement

We have always been in favour of progressive cafe design, we really have - but this took our breath away. This is the Movement Café, a temporary café and performance space in Greenwich, London. It features what might reasonably be called 'vibrant' typography as part of the design, but equally is a perfectly legitimate coffee venue. It comes from designer Morag Myerscough who was asked by property developers to make use of a disused corner of a former industrial site, which will soon become a mixed-use scheme of flats and retail units (to be called The Movement). Her answer was this café, which will be there until Christmas. The same designer was responsible for the Deptford Project, a street corner café which is built from an old railway carriage.



Bringing home the bacon latte

Some months ago, when we reported that Torani had brought out a bacon-flavoured syrup, the concept was greeted with some derision by our readers... it was generally wondered what on earth anyone would use it for.

We now have the answer - in Des Moines, Iowa, a woman has won a \$10,000 prize for 'the most imaginative drink in America', which is a pumpkin pie-spiced coffee with added bacon syrup and a garnish of bacon bits. The drink will be featured at Seattle's Best Coffee locations across North America.

Elsewhere in America, it is reported that Burger King has now created a 'bacon sundae', with caramel sauce and soft ice-cream - it has 510 calories, 18 grammes of fat and 61 grammes of sugar.



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Cherizena, the supplier of flavoured coffee, has received a grant of £3,000 from the Food and Drink iNet, which is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund to support innovation in businesses in the food and drink sector in the East Midlands. The grant has provided a new e-commerce website linked to a full-colour label printer, giving easier provision of bespoke printed labels to its trade customers wanting their own-label coffees.

A twelve-person team from United Coffee, including the managing director, has taken up the challenge of a 460km bike ride to Paris in aid of the Royal British Legion.

Eleven contenders from around the world are in this year's Caffè Ritazza barista championship which will be held in Vienna later this month. For the first time the competition will be screened live online. Syrup-maker Monin is giving a special prize for the best signature drink. The British hopes are Laura Timpany from UK Air (who has been in the finals before) and Tomas Bruckus from UK Rail.

Starbucks has launched a prototype system to recycle its food waste into plastic products and laundry detergent. At a bio-refinery in Hong Kong, university researchers are testing stale pastries and coffee bean bits produced by the chain on the island - believe it or not, that's over four thousand tonnes of rubbish a year! The organic matter is blended with a mixture of fungi, whose enzymes break down carbohydrates in the food into simple sugars. The result goes to a fermenter, where bacteria convert the sugars into a material that can then

be formulated into a range of products.

The well-known Chocolate Cafe of Ramsbottom, the chocolatier and coffee house which is a leading light in one of the UK's best chocolate festivals, is to expand - Paul and Emma Morris make several hundred bars a day in what is quite a compact little shop, and have appointed an agent to look for a 4,000 sq ft site within 10 miles of Ramsbottom. Paul has said: "we want to create an interactive chocolate factory, where visitors will be able see how the chocolate is created, from a cocoa bean to an edible bar." The business has a surprising corporate trade - last Christmas, they sold 3,000 hampers as business gifts.

Tetley says it has achieved a 'first' with an advertisement which appears whenever a viewer pauses a digital TV programme. The action of pausing triggers the appearance of a commercial inviting the viewer to make a cup of tea.

An American news team visiting Britain for the Olympics has unilaterally named a Shropshire tearoom 'the best in England'. The team from Channel 13 News, Indiana, was so impressed by the Rocke Cottage Tea Rooms in Clungunford that it awarded the title for the benefit of its viewers at home. Under both its current name, and the previous name Bird on the Rock, the venue has continually won awards from the Tea Guild.

Costa Express is to move into cycling sponsorship by supporting the Olympic medallist Ed Clancy and his team Rapha Condor Sharp during the Tour of Britain this month.

Costa may not be invited to take 'the Totnes pound'

The latest incidence of Costa upsetting local residents and traders with plans to start up in a small town has come from Cottingham, near Hull.

Local traders have claimed that local councillors went against their word by supporting the Costa scheme - the change of use application had already been recommended for refusal by Cottingham Parish Council, who also cited concerns over traffic congestion and the lack of any fire escape.

There are currently five independent coffee shops within a few hundred yards of the proposed unit - the owner of one said: "I can accept new competition and adapt to it, but it is disappointing when councillors say one thing and then do something completely different when it comes to the vote."

Elsewhere, the local paper in Purley organised a 'best local coffee' contest to follow the news that the chain is 'trying to take over' Purley, opening its sixth site in the town. The paper bought Americanos in all the local coffee shops, and then served them in unmarked cups to a tasting panel.

Although two voted Costa's their favourite, the town's Cafe Nino was judged the overall winner on a highest aggregate score across all the factors being judged. Costa finished second in the paper's ratings.

The paper came up with several interesting other findings. Two of its local cafes failed to be rated as a favourite drink provider by anyone, and the panel observed that all the Americanos served in Purley are different sizes - Costa's was largest and also the most expensive at £2.40, while the cheapest was £1.40.

Meanwhile, at another Costa battleground in Totnes, there has been the entertaining suggestion that Costa may not be able to successfully trade in the town because it cannot take the local currency!

The Totnes Pound is a version of something which has been used in several modern communities - the 'banknote' is sold to local customers through certain approved outlets, and is redeemable only through independent traders who have taken part in the scheme. It is of course printed by a local printer, and the essential point is that it keeps money circulating within the local community.

When *Coffee House* enquired



The Totnes Pound

whether Costa would be permitted to trade in the Totnes Pound, the reaction was that in all probability, the chain would not, and would thus miss out on a very active part of local commerce.

In the matter of recent stories about Costa's alleged 'bullying' tactics, the chain has said very little, and so we felt it only right to press the chain for a comment. A spokesperson told us, in what was probably an unintentional and accidentally loose phrase, "we honestly do not think that anyone should see Costa as a threat."

More seriously, however, the chain went on to say: "our offering is very different to local independent coffee shops and we believe that people will use both."

"The number of empty shops in Britain is doubling as consumers are spending away from the high street. An estimated 10,000 more shops are likely to close in the next couple of years and already, nearly one in six shops stand vacant.

"We strongly believe that coffee shops like Costa have a role to play in local investment and employment. We honestly think that people would rather see a disused building turned into a thriving business and attracting visitors than to remain empty. Coffee shops are popular meeting hubs and benefit surrounding business, bringing people into the town centre and spending.

"We do not go in for any underhand bully-boy tactics when we secure planning permission. When we open in a new location, we do all we can to integrate ourselves with the community, getting involved with events, providing the store as a meeting space and helping with fundraising."

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One of the most entertaining questions which coffee machine suppliers can never answer is - 'where is all the demand coming from?' Many brands will acknowledge that they are having quite a healthy time, even if they haven't a clue where the business is coming from.

One area which is recognisable is the continuing number of new café starts, which has accounted for a remarkable amount of business in reconditioned espresso machines... and a lot of that is going the way of the Martin Carwardine business, near Bristol.

These are reconditioned machines with an interesting history - they come from the Costa chain.

To be involved in such an unexpected business is quite typical of the Carwardine family, who have been groundbreakers in several ways... not least in that deep in the family history is a story which turned out to have big repercussions that still resound in the world of entertainment, and indeed in music played in cafes.

"Back in the 1930s, the family decided it might be nice to put a few seats in, because customers might like to sit down while they had a coffee or an afternoon tea," explains Martin Carwardine. "Then grandfather decided it might be nice for them to listen to some music, so we would put records on.

"One day a musician came in and remonstrated with him about using recorded music this way. He told the musician where to go - and the musician took him to court, where we lost.

"As a result of that court case, it was decided to set up a system of paying musicians for recorded work - so the Performing Rights Society came about as the result of the Carwardine family being sued!"

The Carwardine approach to machine work has come directly from the family's individualistic approach to coffee roasting.

"I took over in 1991, as a family-trained roaster, working on 1930s shop roasters. This was proper roasting - get it wrong, and you had a fire. I still have the burns!

"In the 90s, our coffees were typical filter coffees of the day. We did our first espresso as a novelty - it was twenty per cent robusta and a bit of central American."

He is all in favour of the relatively modern trend for 'artisan' roasting companies to spring up in all kinds of country towns.

"I think it's great that there is now such a lot of diversity in roasting, and so many local roasters. And that is why it annoys me so much when people start a coffee shop and want to put Illy in!

"One thing I do not like at the moment is the machine-like approach of the big brands. This is only happening because people are buying into it, and the excuse is: 'we need an interna-



The case for reconditioning

One of the most active players in the refurbishment of used espresso machines is an independent coffee roaster

tional brand because people want it'. Well, the great number of independent roasters should now get us all out of that corporate thing!"

The Carwardine involvement in machines came about as a result of his catering customers leaning on him more heavily for coffee advice.

"We had more of them relying on us for 'a complete package'. I'd love to spend time talking to them about coffee, but they simply say 'we'll put our trust in you', which is of course very flattering. So we end up advising on menus, cup sizes, pricing, the lot... and occasionally we've even pitched in working behind the counter for them.

“ We have all been told that the Ferrari days are over...
- Martin Carwardine ”

"This began to happen a lot for start-up café businesses, and it is still frightening how many people still call up and say: 'my café's opening in a week - what shall we do about some coffee? And... how about a machine?'"

What this led to came as a surprise.

"When these operators came to us wanting to buy machines, of course we would recommend companies... and then we realised that too many machine-selling companies just want to put a machine in and run away, which is the point when really a whole amount of after-sales service needs to kick in.

"We realised that there were so

many start-ups relying on us as a foundation block of their business, that some kind of 'total solution' had to be part of the deal, and that would include machines.

"We started with nice Italian machines, but had problems with cost - people just couldn't afford them, and we ourselves were on very tight margins. So we turned to buying in some other foreign ones which turned out to be just not good enough quality, and we realised that there were makers who had cheapened the whole subject.

"Then I was given a CMA machine, and as I believe that the only way to understand a machine is to rip it to pieces and get to see the quality of the pipework and everything else, that's what we did.. and that kicked us off down the route of becoming a distributor for CMA Astoria, which was fine, except that we were back to square one, quoting on new machines to café owners who replied: 'oh no, we can't afford that'.

"Well, as we have all been told, 'the Ferrari days are over', and we hear more and more operators who tell us they've been quoted nine thousand for a machine and a grinder, and you think: 'yes, right...!' Well, if you want a classy east-end London coffee bar and you don't mind if you drop £12,000 on a machine, fine. But this is not the position that every café is in!"

The answer turned out to be, of all things, in the high street. Rather to Carwardine's own surprise, he was given the opportunity of reconditioning vast amounts of machines previously used by Costa.

The image of reconditioned machines in the trade has been widely questioned, acknowledges Martin

Carwardine. The Sainsburys incident brought the whole matter of machine safety into question, and there have been some quite irresponsible cases of specialist equipment being handled by completely unqualified people.

"Yes, the E-bay image of pre-used machines has caused a lot of problems - and indeed, we have picked up a lot of the pieces for people who have suffered from that. But it is now the case that people are asking for reconditioned machines.

"Costa had been collecting a lot of old machines with a view to refurbishing them 'one day'. Well, there are a lot of Costa machines at places like Heathrow which get through a vast amount of work and have to be renewed quite regularly, so their pile of machines grew and grew, and one day they found they had a warehouse full of them, and that their storage was getting expensive.

"Now, a lot of companies would say 'just scrap them', which is the easy way out. It is convenient for self-preservation, because it avoids a lot of problems. But the responsible attitude is that re-use is better than scrapping.

"They asked me because they knew we were into reconditioning work, and I think they wanted someone responsible who would take them - they couldn't just load them on to any Joe Bloggs who wouldn't refurbish them properly, because these machines still had 'Costa' on them! They must have assured themselves that this Carwardine guy was going to be OK, and over the years, we have proved that we are working responsibly."

What are the pros and cons of reconditioned machines? The question provokes some thought before Martin Carwardine suggests that the principal downside is that the café owner who buys a pre-owned machine is unlikely to get the very latest bells-and-whistles model. Equally, the big brands are currently deeply into work on eco-friendly machines, and these are not only extremely expensive, they have yet to reach the end of their first life and enter the reconditioning workshop. By contrast, he observes, the ones which come to him for attention are good solid workhorses which, while they have already seen a lot of life, will be capable of standing up to a lot more - which is just what the average café owner wants. And, of course, they can be one third of the price of a new one.

The main thing, he observes, is that reconditioning is a big job.

"If you're going to recondition a machine, there are things you must change, whether the existing parts seem to be working or not.

"Refurbished machines should be treated with the same care, and serviced just as well, as a new machine. We have had international sales managers from machine brands look at our reconditioned work and say: 'that looks like a new machine'.

"We reply: 'yes - that's the point!'"



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fracino

"Frankly the finest for cappuccino"

There is a very strange story behind the launch of one of London's newest coffee-houses. As we have often observed, there is currently no shortage of directories of 'the best coffee shops in London', and one of the most recent of those was by author Jennie Milsom.

And so is the new café With Jam and Bread, in Lea Green, south London - the writer of a coffee guide has turned into a cafe owner!

Bearing in mind her history as a food writer (as well as *Cafe Life London*, she wrote *Cupcake Heaven*), which came first - the idea of the book or the desire to open a cafe?

"The book came first," Jennie told us. "I was commissioned to write it in the summer of 2010 and started researching and writing it over the nine months that followed, during which time I had my second baby too - the baby came along for some of it!"

"That opened my eyes to the number of places serving excellent coffee - I had always known about the iconic Antipodean cafes that I knew about, many of them championing new brewing methods, with siphons and so on, but a big revelation was how the same beans can taste very different depending on where it's served, who brews it, and the milk that it's served with.

"During this I started to think about whether I could do this myself - could I design and run a café? In the end, the answer was yes!"

She did, of course, have a great



A coffee house reviewer tries the trade for herself...

advantage over other start-up cafe operators - in researching her book, she picked the brains of the owners of London's top coffee houses.

"I was privileged to have so much first-hand information, from all these fantastic cafe owners, who have made such a success of what they set out to do. If I hadn't been writing the book and had that chance, I would have just sat in their cafes anyway and observed them for weeks.

"I had also trawled round at least three times the number of cafes which appeared in the book. The experience of seeing things that didn't work was probably as important as pinpointing the things that did."

Her cafe guide identifies various cafes by character - 'neighbourhood cafes' and the like. What is the charac-

ter of Jennie's own business?

"The space we inherited is a period terrace building with predominately white walls and knackered old wooden floor boards which I couldn't afford to replace. I wanted an oak counter and table tops so it looked nice and solid, but then I have tried to keep it as simple as possible with some splashes of red in the cushions in the window, a pillar and the red pendants over the counter. I didn't use a designer."

Having been round so many cafes, Jennie was in a good position to pick her suppliers.

"The tea is Jing, based in South London. It's loose-leaf and we serve it in pots for one - no-one else in the area does that. We found Jing through tasting lots of samples from various suppliers and there was no contest -

opening a gold foil bag of Jing tea is quite a revelation, and the freshness and depth of flavour just blew us away. It has even converted me to Earl Grey - the real thing is nothing like the bags you get in the supermarket."

Coffee came straight from book research.

"I knew Dark Fluid coffee from going to their tiny coffee stall at Lewisham market most Saturdays. I knew and loved their coffee already.

"The milk is from Northiam Dairy, a farm on the Kent/Sussex border - they only have about 80 cows, the milk is unhomogenised and is pasteurised as little as possible to retain its goodness. It's really creamy... like the good old-fashioned doorstep milk used to be.

"As for brewing methods, it was always going to be espresso. That's where my experience lies, and I think most people have the expectation of seeing the machine on the counter.

"I also had some experience from working in espresso cafes in Auckland to draw on.

And there is the clue. This café is not one opened on a whim by 'just' a writer on coffee - Jennie has a background in espresso. She was trained in New Zealand by one of the country's main barista competitors and judges.

That training may have been more demanding than many baristas undergo - she had to make over two hundred coffees before he let her serve one to a customer!

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When will Cafedirect make its move for the general high-street café trade? And when it does... will the trade take it seriously?

Cafedirect has a confusing image in the coffee trade. It is undoubtedly big, and it speaks of being perhaps the 5th largest coffee brand, and 7th largest tea brand in the UK - but at the same time, it is not a brand brimming with credibility in the modern coffee-house trade. The idea of a cool and hip coffee house branding itself Cafedirect, or putting the brand's Fairtrade coffee through a brew bar, is an idea which would raise eyebrows in the café trade.

The brand can certainly point to a lot of acknowledged expertise - its food-service trade distributor is the very highly-regarded Peros, and the roaster is no less than Bewley's of Dublin, but within the company itself there has been a shortage of something which resounds with the coffee trade.

Many of the brand's senior members have CVs which are full of very impressive backgrounds in blue-chip organisations, yet without significant coffee relevance. And the last three chief executives have not been remarkably visible in the trade - they have received a lot of coverage in the quality press, but not been seen in the café world.

This may be about to change.

"The brand has been going through massive changes!" acknowledges commercial director Nicola Pearson. "For us, what we have had to recognise is that just being a 'good' brand is not enough - now we need to be as famous for our quality as for our ethics."

In this regard, it is intriguing to see that Cafedirect is going through yet another packaging re-design. The last two Cafedirect re-designs came in for some interesting criticism... first there was a logo which suggested that a designer, having run out of other ideas, had simply slapped a 'C' and a 'D' together. Then there was the extremely bizarre set of packs illustrated by shovels and trowels.

"Those tools actually were authentic," points out Nicola Pearson. "They were the actual tools of the growers themselves. Unfortunately, nobody knew what we were getting at when we put them on the retail shelf!"

And now, we are to have the latest packaging re-design - in the strange kind of language that marketing designers use, it has 'earthy, natural colours to evoke a desirable, contemporary brand feel' and the strapline of Made the Small Way is 'a message based on key insight that premium foodie consumers believe food made with care and attention tastes better'... which may not sound a ground-breaking discovery.

"What is lovely is that there are lots of consumers who are into the trend of provenance," says Nicola. "The growing belief that what is grown better, tastes better, is right in line with our principles. Our schemes are generally about improving quality, which turns out to now be what resonates with consumers - so we go back to saying that the best ways of producing coffee give you the best taste."

Very creditably, Cafedirect has been extremely firm about its new packaging.

"We were the first with the Fairtrade logo, and for ten years our growth and Fairtrade's growth were synonymous and interchangeable - in many ways that was great, but there has always been more to what we do - direct trading, which is the more exciting element of our business model, got lost and overtaken by Fairtrade."

"We are still a Fairtrade company, but we think Fairtrade is part of the solution - it is absolutely not the whole solution."

A linked shift in attitude is of which comes first in Cafedirect's image - the quality or the cause.

"Another massive change has been the huge evolution of consumer inter-

Being ethical is not enough...

The Fairtrade brands have always relied heavily on the marketing value of their ethical credentials. As Cafedirect enters another image redesign, there is a major change in attitude with regard to product quality

est in coffee quality and origins," says Nicola Pearson. "For us, what we have had to recognise is that just being a 'good' brand is not enough - now we need to be as famous for our quality as for our ethics."

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ing. As even the head of Fairtrade has agreed, there is a limit to the number of times ethical brands can have pictures of grinning farmers staring out from the shelves.

"This is an evocative category, but packaging needs first of all to convey confidence in quality," argues Nicola Pearson. "When you turn to the back you can get more of the story, but the front is all about reassurance of product quality."

"This is the reverse of what it used to be. Previous packaging was all about trying to bring the grower to the front of the pack. This comes from the old days when fair-trading ethics were a badge of honour, and consumers would like to be seen to be buying for the cause, even though the products might have been awful."

"Well, consumers won't stand for that any more, which is why we have spent a lot of time debating whether we are

an 'ethics and quality' brand, or whether we are 'quality and ethics'.

"I am not in favour of grinning faces on the front of the pack. It certainly would reinforce our status as a brand synonymous with social justice... but still, the front of the pack must reinforce quality."

"We do have great shots of the growers, but they're on the back. Quality first, understanding second!"

The retail shelves are only one of Cafedirect's routes, but the one which has taken all the glory. It is the foodservice route, including the coffee-house sector, which has failed to be given attention. How many cafes use the brand? How many coffee shops? How many tea-rooms? Candidly - is the café trade yet adequately interested in the brand?

"Our three routes are major multiples, specialist retailers like Oxfam or Traidcraft, and foodservice... and all three are fairly equal. In foodservice, the key routes are universities and contract caterers. We do have 'bits of business' with coffee shops and restaurants, and this is the part we need to get into - it is an ambition to have relationships with these people."

"Is Cafedirect a good enough brand for the coffee house trade? I think it is, but we do have major image issues. We know the product delivers, but the expectation in the trade is that it won't."

"It's time for us to get in with this - we will soon have the right products for them in the right packages, and we need discussion of what cafes want from us. We're already working with one café in Liverpool, and there are many such places where we want to go in and talk face-to-face, and start showing our new branding."

But can the brand do so with credibility? From the CEO down, where are the coffee credentials which will get the brand through the doors of independent coffee houses? Do Cafedirect yet think that it has a standing which will command the attention of the coffee-house trade?

"We have made significant steps forward in this, though whether this has come across to the coffee trade is a big question mark!"

"We have an internal upskilling programme, and everyone is going through it. We are now cupping in the

"We have had to recognise that just being a 'good' brand is not enough - now we need to be as famous for our quality as for our ethics"

- Nicola Pearson

office, we have regular coffee house tours, and we now roast our own pre-shipment samples in the office.

"We had a big cupping session with a contract caterer recently, and when they left, they said it had been nice for them to meet and talk with 'coffee people'. That meant a lot to us!"

And there is the nub of it. Although Nicola herself commented recently that Cafedirect's well-regarded Macchu Picchu filter coffee would perform well as a coffee-house's filter through a brew bar, the kind of baristas who use a brew-bar are not the kind of baristas who would readily turn to Cafedirect.

They certainly want the idea of a single-origin from an impenetrable jungle which can only be found by Indiana Jones fighting his way through head-hunters... and then, preferably, roasted by someone covered in tattoos.

Macchu Picchu coffee has been given 'Denomination of Origin' status, which means all coffee branded with that origin must come from the co-operative that Cafedirect works with. So the coffee has credibility, but Cafedirect may not.

That particular coffee certainly has its merits, and brewed through a V60 or even a siphon, might return a very decent result. How can Cafedirect bridge this credibility gap? Can they actually say - 'look, this coffee of ours is terrific through an Aeropress, we know it works'?

"We are now doing this," comes the quick response. "We are now brewing our single origins like this for credibility. I believe that some independents can see a real opportunity with these coffees through different brewing methods - these are really interesting times for filter coffee, and our challenge is to make Cafedirect a part of it."

The challenge exists with the brand's other products as well. Although the tea is said to be the seventh-biggest brand in the UK, very little is heard of it. There is no Cafedirect 'speciality' tea, and the main product is a standard teabagged African black 'cuppa'.

Astonishingly, even the Cafedirect website included the recent admission that 'our tea sales are not doing so well - despite winning a gold medal in the Great Taste Awards, and coming up trumps in repeated blind tastings, it just isn't flying off the shelves in quite the way we wish it would.'

"It's a big 'work in progress,'" acknowledges Nicola Pearson. "We have to work out how to break the brand inertia. Until then, we will stay in the 'everyday cuppa' sector."

The same challenges exist, but with rather more potential, in Cafedirect's chocolate. Both the San Cristobal 'add milk' product and the café-quality Sao



The changing look - the new image (left) and the old agricultural image

Tome (from an island off the west of Africa) have received a certain amount of attention, if not fully exploited. The San Cristobal has two Great Taste awards, and the Sao Tome, as an 'add water' product, is promoted as a particularly 'clean' chocolate, and should work well in the coffee-house sector.

However, Cafedirect has understated its work, with such curious statements as 'single origin cocoa accounts for 40 per cent of the ingredients, making it one of the highest cocoa contents on the market today', which this magazine has protested is nonsense.

"It is in the supermarkets that 40 per cent cocoa is the highest on the shelf," comes the qualification from Nicola Pearson. "We just haven't worked out how to exploit this out-of-home."

Although the brand certainly has not put in any work to show how the chocolate products can work in the typical coffee-house situation, Cafedirect did almost create a quite super winter promotion on its chocolate last year - its Choc Force was an idea which was almost brilliant, and would have been a coup but for lack of publicity.

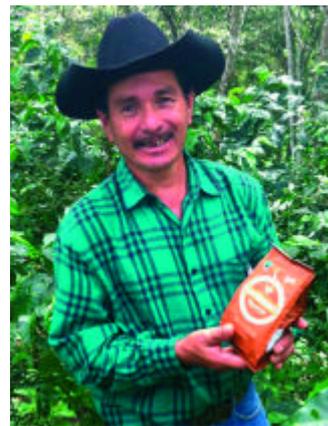
In this, the brand responded rapidly to a very cold snap by sending teams out on the streets of London to hand out free Sao Tome hot chocolate to commuters, and also encouraged London office workers to check Twitter to see if the free giveaway teams were anywhere nearby.

"The street giveaway was a last-minute, low-budget idea," reports Nicola Pearson philosophically.

"It was 'let's get out there and create some noise on social media'.

"It was the seed of a great idea, but of course that's why you have pilot schemes, to see if things work.

"We'd love to do it again on a better thought-out basis... and that's the key from now on, to be seen for our products as much as for ethics, and to be seen really getting out there."



What do you think of the new look? Adolfo, president of the Miraflor co-operative in Nicaragua, on his farm with Cafedirect's new Full Roast pack

In its latest annual report, Fairtrade International has said that it has increased the number of participating producer groups to 991 co-operatives, representing over 1.2 million farmers and workers. The organisation has reported the 'historic' decision to increase producer representation in its general assembly to fifty per cent, the vice-chair position is now held by a producer representative, and 47 per cent of the budget is now spent on direct services for producers. There is to be a pilot programme on what is curiously termed 'a new child labour training programme for producers'.



We rarely seem to praise Starbucks, but this is quite a novel idea. Starbucks has created a unique promotion in Russia - a take-away sleeve grip which hides the identity of other brands. The idea came from its advertising agency, which observed that in Moscow, Starbucks is in the unusual position of being a relative newcomer to the market. So they created an eco-nomical idea using postcards which fold into a cup grip... and display the Starbucks logo, irrespective of the brand of coffee actually being held!

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In an extremely novel move, Regency Coffee of Manchester is to develop its newly-won distribution of the Ghirardelli chocolate brand by hiring what may be the café trade's first chocolate equivalent of the barista trainer.

"We'll be going out and training in chocolate," confirms the company's Jarrod Normie. "The chocolate version of barista training is not something you generally see offered, and so this will be a big unique feature for us.

"The practical difference is that we will be showing how to make a great chocolate, a great mocha, and a great sauce."

The adoption of one of the world's biggest chocolate brands has come as quite a coup for Regency. The value of it for the trade, suggests Jarrod Normie, will be a refreshing look at the concept of just how much chocolate can mean to a caterer's business.

"We're not just taking a punt on this, we're not just in it to sell a box of chocolate powder - we're in it for the long run. The list I have of Ghirardelli products runs to 44 pages, and the initial training for the brand alone takes three days in San Francisco!

"I don't think any of our trade customers will be wanting to devote an entire day's training to chocolate, but the exciting thing for the trade is that when we've got into this, the trade is going to be able to offer a great deal more than 'just hot chocolate'.

"This brand is not just about chocolate sauce and chocolate powder - there are smoothies, frappes, and lots of new lines that have never been run in the UK before."

The brand is, without doubt, a big one. It is the second-oldest chocolate brand in America, and today is owned by Lindt.

"It's a huge brand which is deep in the American psyche," agrees Jarrod Normie. "There's even a Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco!" (In 1893, Domingo Ghirardelli purchased the entire city block in order to make it into the HQ of his company - he also ran a coffee shop.)

"In the UK, the trade had begun to ask 'where do we get Ghirardelli from?' The attraction of Ghirardelli is partly the quality, and partly the features - such as dairy-free chocolate."

This is possibly a significant issue. It embraces the growing subjects of vegan diets, of lactose-intolerant diets, and in some cases the matter of kosher diets. Certain of Ghirardelli's products are guaranteed to contain absolutely no milk content at all - the question of brewing with soy milk, coconut milk or almond milk is one which Regency considers very much worth discussion with the trade. (Asked if the guarantee of dairy-free was absolute, the company replied: "This is a \$400 million company... when we say it's clear, it's clear!")

Equally significant is the fraught matter of quality in the modern chocolate trade.

"Gone are the days when you could get away with chocolate which is mainly sugar," remarks Jarrod Normie. "Although there's still a lot of ten per cent cocoa content around, nobody in the trade will stand for sub-standard chocolate any more. We are looking at a high content of good-quality cocoa."

One of Ghirardelli's major products in this respect is the Sweet Ground Chocolate and Cocoa Mix, which is for both standalone chocolate drinks and mochas, and which can also be used for cold chocolate beverages.

There are products which probably may not be appropriate for the UK, but which show imaginative twists for chocolate - such as the *Save Me, San Francisco*, a dark chocolate infused with sea salt and roasted almonds. It has 'signature hot cocoas' which combine chocolate and a flavour, typically vanilla or hazelnut, and in America retails some imaginative



The trade has to be able to offer a great deal more than just 'hot chocolate'

- Jarrod Normie

Regency launches chocolate-themed barista training

combination packages of coffee and chocolate.

The arrival of Ghirardelli may result in a higher general trade recognition for Regency, which is already a trade supplier of some significance in the north of England, while keeping a very deliberately low profile. It is, among other things, one of the biggest suppliers of takeaway cups in the UK.

"We're the biggest supplier you've never heard of," confirms Jarrod Normie. "We've flown below the radar for a long time."

The company was set up by chance when Jarrod Normie's father was offered a pallet of coffee thirty years ago. Today, it distributes several brands which are meaningful in Europe, if not here. Typical is Darboven, the 'health and wellness' coffee from Hamburg which undergoes a steaming process prior to roasting - the effect is to remove certain substances which can irritate the stomach.

"A stomach-friendly coffee is not something a coffee

shop generally comes looking for," acknowledges Jarrod Normie philosophically. "However, there are people who can only drink this coffee. It is an aggravation for people who want to find it, and for us it is often a sale of one pack at a time - but if someone has taken the trouble to look for it, we'll supply it. We'll probably set up a web shop for it soon."

Another unusual brand is the Alfredo coffee, which can be found in Michelin-starred venues in Germany, advertises on European television, and is familiar in supermarkets there - but not here.

"It's harder to take a brand that nobody knows," agrees Normie. "We have to physically take it to customers to get them to taste it... but when they do, they love it."

"The same goes for Movenpick coffee, which is the same brand as the ice-cream. That's another brand which has Fairtrade and organic options, and is really going forward."

Traceable chocolate getting bigger, says Kokoa

The trend for traceable, high-cocoa chocolate products is continuing to progress in the café trade, says Paul Eagles. He is the man who quite recently set up the Kokoa Collection, to concentrate specifically on a limited number of chocolates of recognisable origin, all of which can be combined with milk or coffee.

"Are people going to better chocolate? I saw a customer in a coffee shop recently who asked for a hot chocolate, and on seeing they used an 'add water' one, walked straight out! If the customer does not want a sweet hot chocolate then their default action is not to order chocolate at all.

"Customers are now very interested in the content of their chocolate. The UK's most familiar product probably has 25 per cent cocoa, 25 per cent sugar, and the rest is creamer and thickener. By contrast, our 70 per cent Ecuador is the one that the artisan coffee shops use.

"This is why, if you want to make significant business from chocolate, you put the information on your menu, and those



who like chocolate will get to know about you. Some of our clients like to ask 'which chocolate do you want in a mocha?', and others prefer to say 'this is the one which goes with our house espresso'... but for coffeehouses in general, the item is still just generic 'hot chocolate'."

The Kokoa Collection has four major origins - a 58 per cent Venezuelan, the 70 per cent Ecuador and a similar Fairtrade one from Peru, and the distinc-

tive 82 per cent Madagascar. Most coffee houses use these in tablet form for 6-8oz drinks, but there are cases of cafes serving a four-ounce straight chocolate shot.

A new option is the flake format, which some operators find easier to work with.

"There are several aspects to flakes," observes Paul Eagles. "I find it harder to portion-control, but some find it easier. Most people use tablets - you can melt the lump in seconds with hot water, then add the cold milk and steam them together in the jug.

"There is another argument which says the best way of all is to put it in the cup first for mocha - the espresso shot melts the chocolate and combines with it."

Some years ago, the film *Black Gold* created a considerable stir by highlighting the lot of coffee growers and their workers... it appears that the same is about to happen for the chocolate industry, with the film *Nothing Like Chocolate* receiving a public premiere as a part of this year's Chocolate Week.

This year's Week will run from October 8-14. The event is intended to give the opportunity for retailers and caterers to take part in talks, tastings, demonstrations and samplings, but the main attention this year may well come from the film featuring 'anarchist chocolatier' Mott Green.

This is the man who formed the Grenada Chocolate Company, as a distinct rebellion against 'the entrenched industry practices of irresponsible corporate greed, and tasteless, synthetic products' and child labour and slavery, which we learn are still going on.

In the rain forests of Grenada, he has used solar power and small-scale antique equipment in a genuine worker-owned co-operative, to turn out what is now not just a high-quality chocolate, but also an extremely expensive one. (It is available to the trade here through Rococo).

Incredibly, it is reported that one of America's most famous chocolate brands recently said it 'cannot guarantee slave-free cocoa in its chocolate', and this film promises to 'expose the practices and politics of how chocolate has moved from a sacred plant to corporate blasphemy'.

Along the way, we learn that while 70 per cent of the world's chocolate comes from one African region, much of its harvesting is dependent on not just slave labour, but child-trafficking to provide the workforce, and that cocoa bean prices are blamed for actually causing civil war in west Africa... to which, it is alleged, western governments have turned a blind eye, being influenced by the capitalism of chocolate.

The film's producer, Kum Kum Bhavnani, told *Coffee House* that she did not entirely agree with the *Black Gold* comparison, as her film focuses on the sustainable and ethical creation of chocolate. "It explains why this is necessary – but the focus is on

The chocolate 'tell all' film is here



The anarchist chocolatier, Mott Green, gets down to physical work hauling sacks at the Grenada chocolate factory.

people doing it ethically," she told us.

"What people should take away from seeing the film is that it is a great idea to purchase ethically made chocolate as that ensures that enslaved children were not used to harvest the beans. If you do not know how the beans are grown, you cannot guarantee that they are ethically grown, as cocoa beans are mixed up with each other once they are purchased by the big companies."

This film may, therefore, be a benchmark in the trade's attitude towards chocolate.

Chocolate Week will again finish with the consumer show, *Chocolate Unwrapped*, which now moves to a bigger venue, at Covent Garden's original Flower Cellars.

Scientists have reportedly found a way to replace up to half of the fat content of chocolate with fruit juice. At the University of Warwick, experiments have been tried on removing cocoa butter and milk fats, substituting them with tiny drops of juice, typically orange or cranberry. This, says the chemists, retains the 'mouthfeel' of chocolate, which usually comes from the fatty ingredients, and also keeps the shiny appearance and texture. Vegetable juice has the same effect, said the scientists. The result could be lower-fat, but equally tasty, chocolate.

*

The Valrhona brand claims to have invented the world's first 'blonde' chocolate, a colour never seen before. The product is said to have been formed by accident - at the brand's coffee school, someone put some Ivoire chocolate in a bain marie but then, in a moment of absent-mindedness, completely forgot about it. Ten hours later the white chocolate had become blonde, a colour he had never seen.



"The fragrance was extraordinary," says the company. "It smelled of toasted Breton shortbread, caramelised milk and unrefined sugar, and had a fresh-out-of-the-oven scent that was simply irresistible. Taste was a pure delight. The next day, he tried to replicate the accident, and succeeded - a natural colour which looked like nothing he'd ever seen. The company fell in love with it, but the recipe proved impossible to reproduce on a large scale. Eight years later, they finally did it!"

The result is Valrhona Dulcey, 'the fourth chocolate' - after dark, milk, white, comes the blonde.

*

Archaeologists think they have found the oldest evidence of chocolate as a human food - they have found traces of it on a 2,500-year-old plate in the Yucatan peninsula. Historians have long said that cacao beans and pods were used in pre-Hispanic cultures as a beverage, mainly reserved for the elite. The new discovery suggests that chocolate may have been used as a condiment - there is, we learn, a Mexican chocolate-based sauce which is still served with meats.

Is the UK ready for the Newcastle Brown drinking chocolate?

It is a ridiculously under-exploited subject in the café trade, but a very useful tactic with chocolate drinks is the matter of added flavours. At the very simplest, it is always recommended that orange in a mocha works superbly, and so does mint.

Now, one of the country's big retail chocolate brands has worked to encourage the theme, with some quite bizarre results.

Thorntons has created a Great Chocolate Britain competition. The idea is that the country has been divided into eleven regions, and for each region there are three new flavoured-chocolate recipe ideas for which the public are invited to vote.

Thorntons' story is that the recipe ideas have all been created by members of the public, and that the person behind the winning idea in each region will be invited to work in the brand's kitchens with a chocolatier, to try and put their idea into practice.

Candidly, some of these entries look a little as if they have been dreamed up by PR people. From the Irish region, the combinations all involve Irish whiskey, and from the south-west they involve cider and clotted cream. From Scotland comes the bizarre concept of combining chocolate and Irn-Bru, the Glaswegian fizzy drink. From the lakes comes the idea of chocolate with parkin or Pontefract liquorice cake.

From Newcastle, comes an alleged idea which would be fascinating to recreate in drinking chocolate

form - the Newcastle Brown chocolate.

We have enquired of Thorntons whether any have actually been created, and have received no reply.

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The second running of the Rainforest Alliance's 'follow the frog' awareness week is due this month, and this has, once again, raised the interesting question of how much the consumer public know about the ethical labels used by the coffee trade.

Last year, this magazine was critical of the work put in by the Rainforest Alliance, which effectively pleaded lack of resources and concentrated entirely on a project through Twitter and blogs. The result, it was observed, was that an awareness week failed in that nobody was aware of it.

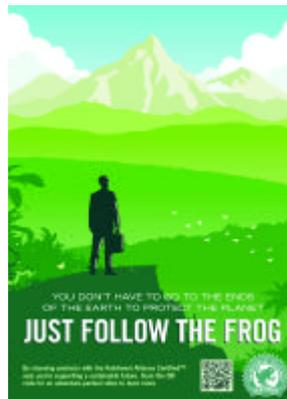
This year, exactly the same debate has resumed, with the coffee trade and the ethical organisation both looking to each other to take the initiative - and, more crucially, the cost - of an awareness campaign.

The Rainforest Alliance is a long-established ethical mark - it recently held a celebration of 25 years work in the field. It is unlike Fairtrade, in that it does not concentrate on a minimum crop price - rather, it concentrates on the true meaning of 'sustainability', in seeking to put in place the best possible farming methods beside proper treatment for farm workers.

As the Alliance's president has pointed out, the business community has finally realised that conditions which lead to drought, famine, poverty, low productivity and even civil war, are having an effect on sales and profits. For whatever reasons brands want to put the frog logo on their packs, nature needs a hand.

Frog week - who's following who?

Just follow the frog, says the Rainforest Alliance's promotional poster to highlight its awareness week. But is the frog giving the coffee trade enough leadership to make the most of this ethical standard?



Generally, the trade approves of Rainforest Alliance work.

"It plays second fiddle to Fairtrade, probably due to the big Fairtrade PR machine," remarks Café du Monde. "Rainforest Alliance majors on sustainability of farms, farmers and their families, rather than concentrating just on a 'fair' price. In a world where we are struggling to grow enough produce whether it be coffee, sugar or bananas, surely this sustainability has to be the priority."

It is for that reason the Alliance created its first 'awareness week' last year, with underwhelming results.

"The trap we got caught in was of a

young event for which we have no huge resources - we have no budget," says Per Bogstad, the UK manager of the Alliance's 'sustainable value chains' work. "This year's theme is the same one of electronically-promoted information - we decided arbitrarily that we will tweet and blog more, and after that, it will develop a life of its own."

"The Rainforest Alliance, in its current form, will always rely on the initiative and support of those who choose to buy sustainably-sourced coffee. We have received good support - Masteroast have told 300 of its trade customers about it, and Tetley is promoting it through Facebook - they have 70,000 visitors, which dwarfs us. Bettys and Taylors will do the same."

"Our website, blogs and Facebook and Twitter streams will all be buzzing. We will write blogs and tweet every day of the week, including guest blogs from representatives of companies sourcing from certified farms and from the farmers themselves. On Facebook we will reach out to our friends and encourage them to post images, experiences and stories relating to certified products."

This has not gone down entirely well with the coffee trade. Where is the trade support, ask the roasters - who is going to equip the retailers and coffee-house owners with their point-of-sale materials? Are they expected to fund it themselves?

One of those who supports the Alliance but is critical of their work is Ian Balmforth of Bolling Coffee, roaster of the Grumpy Mule brand.

"I recently said in a 'profile' feature that with my retirement, I would go out and work, free of charge, for the Rainforest Alliance and help coffee farmers develop and promote their crops to buyers around the world. I meant it - and even I haven't a clue about the Week."

"There is no point in having the best product in the world if you don't shout about it. Rainforest Alliance is good for many reasons, but they don't realise that the consumer doesn't have a clue about them - they have a far better

message than Fairtrade, and Fairtrade walks all over them in awareness.

"The Rainforest Alliance message is not sustainable, if they don't get the message out."

One of the biggest trade supporters of the frog is Lavazza.

"RA certainly have a close relationship with Costa and McDonalds and that covers a fair slice of the UK coffee market," remarks marketing director Barry Kither.

"The relationship with us has taken them into a number of decent-sized high street groups - JD Wetherspoon, KFC, Little Chef, Pontis, etc. So the frog has had a respectable amount of exposure and most consumers would probably say that they recollect seeing it... but whether they know much about the organisation behind it is another matter."

"JD's have made an enormous effort to communicate the story behind the coffee, if mostly based on stories provided by us. I think the Rainforest Alliance could help the trade more by providing operators with endless information and stories and promoting their ideals and aspirations directly to consumers. The frog can't be expected to do this on his own!"

The giant trade roaster Masteroast has attempted to encourage its trade customers this year, says the company's Derek Burgess.

"Whether that awareness of the logo translates into understanding of the work that the RFA are undertaking around the world in coffee growing regions, I have my doubts. I'm sure most consumers would be vaguely




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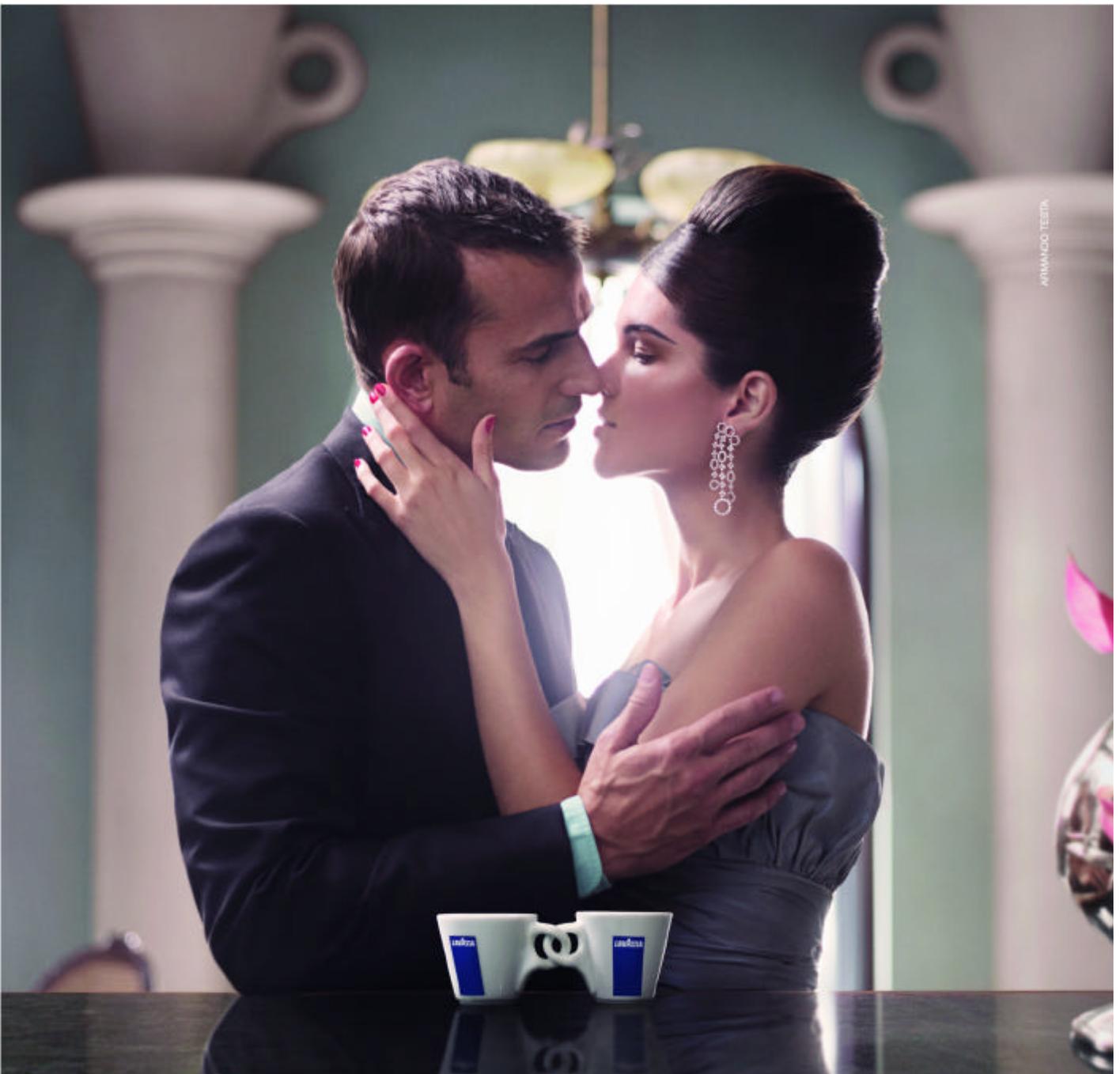





“ The consumer's realisation that your 'great coffee' has been picked by child labour, in terrible conditions, will probably mean that suddenly the coffee doesn't taste that great to them any more... ”
 - Mike Riley

aware that it means something positive somehow, but the continued challenge for the RFA is to get their message across and understood.

"Their consumer-level work is one thing but they also have to continue and improve their dialogue with the trade. There is an increasing demand from our trade customers for traceability 'back to farm', and that fits very well with the RFA, whose coffees are not just traced back to a co-operative or a region, but directly back to farms themselves. This will be a great strength for



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OUT OF HOME

them as the industry looks to go beyond the independent ethical badge on a bag of coffee and find out more about how farmers and their families are directly benefitting."

But, say his fellow-roasters, they can't do all the work.

"The truth is - we need help from the Rainforest experts themselves in doing this," comes a typical comment. "The Rainforest Alliance got their thing going in the UK some years ago by touring the roasters and sitting down and talking with the trade. Today, the Rainforest Alliance has got to get back out there into the trade."

The same applies in tea, says Nick Kilby of Teapigs. "Our Everyday Brew is Rainforest Alliance certified, and we're very happy with what they stand for - but we do think that they need to communicate this better to consumers. Trying to promote within the coffee bar trade would be a start. What they need is education, leaflets, posters, etc., for cafes where Rainforest certified teas and coffees are being served."

An extremely experienced Rainforest Alliance operator is Mike Riley, once the coffee buyer for Taylors of Harrogate, and now a partner in Falcon, the very new importer of 'new and interesting' coffees.

"When I was at Taylors of Harrogate I was impressed with the standards of Rainforest Alliance, and now at Falcon, the majority of our coffees are RFA.

"The results of their work are highly visible at origin - my slight concern is whether the average consumer really understands what the little green frog actually means.

"At Taylors, we used to carry out similar work at origin, and it was great experience, even if shocking. We had decided that a policy on pricing wasn't enough by itself, so we got involved in 'social audits', talking to the people picking the coffee about their treatment and their wages... out of the hearing of the farmers who employed them!

"We created an improvement in conditions, but then we looked at those who were already doing it, and saw

“ Rainforest Alliance is good for many reasons, but the consumer doesn't have a clue about them - they have a far better message than Fairtrade, and Fairtrade walks all over them in awareness.

- Ian Balmforth ”



Mike Riley

that they were doing it better than us. The Rainforest Alliance certified farming was better, the water for washing the coffee was better... it was the real deal. I thought that if I had to be a picker, I'd prefer to be on an RFA farm, because conditions are considerably better.

"The thing is, they're doing great work at origin, but the communication isn't there. I wonder if the consumer who sees the little badge ever thinks beyond it.

"They need something, maybe even a one-page leaflet, so that when the customer says 'what's it all about?', the person behind the counter can hand it over. It's a real shame if good work is going on and not being communicated. It's frustrating.

"They need to get out and talk - otherwise, it's as if they're saying 'we've got this great business secret for coffee - and we're not telling you!'"

Although the Alliance says that it has a web page devoted to 'helping coffee businesses develop communications and marketing activities and materials to assist them in their promotion of the initiative', this is largely downloadable



Ian Balmforth

posters and a few basic hints on local PR. It does, again, rely on the coffee trade actually doing the work.

If there is to be a major move forward this year, it may come from the new video film. Again, this is not being 'made available' to the trade, being published first only on YouTube.

"The video is interesting - it's based around a man who decides to drop everything to become an eco-warrior," says Per Bogstad. "It's fast, funny, creative, and poignant, a breakneck stream of narration, text and visuals.

"We see the main character, an early 30s, moderately-hip, city-dwelling hus-

band/father, quit his job, say goodbye to his perplexed family, trek to the rainforest, become one with a tribe, throw himself in front of bulldozers, only to return some time later to find his wife and kids enjoying an opulent spread with products that have the frog logo on them.

"The argument of the film is that while it appears that this guy is doing everything the rest of us cannot, because we have jobs and families, we can all do something by buying certified products."

For a survey done by this magazine, nobody in the trade doubts the value of the work - it is the communication of it which is causing disquiet. However, the Rainforest Alliance is in London in October, which is said to be a 'listening exercise' to find what contribution the Rainforest Alliance can make to the trade.

If the organisation could only work better with the coffee trade to put a combined message out, says Mike Riley, the result could be extremely powerful.

"To a consumer, the realisation that your 'great coffee' has actually been picked by child labour, in terrible conditions, will probably mean that suddenly the coffee doesn't taste that great to them any more...

"The Rainforest Alliance work does make a difference to things like this.

"We need them to get out and talk about it."



A promotional tote bag created from a coffee sack by Lindsay Tron, USA. We need more work like this to get the Rainforest frog known, says the coffee trade.

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Americans coffee houses turn to the cash-free tip

A very American idea is the new Dip Jar, which relates to the custom there of virtually always tipping the barista, who generally relies on tips to boost a fairly low hourly wage.

The invention was conceived when New Yorker Ryder Kessler was at his favourite coffee shop in a big crowd on a particularly busy day. He asked the exhausted baristas if they could at least be sure of getting a lot of tips that day, and they replied not - because more people are now paying by credit and debit cards for small purchases, so less cash goes into the tip jar, even on the busiest of days. The result is that coffee-house staff are effectively taking less money home.

The new product is a credit card scanner which allows the customer to quickly make an automated one-dollar donation to the staff. Seven sites in New York have taken the prototypes, which have been provided free except



for a processing charge. In fairly typical New York style, reactions have been mixed - customers like it, but some baristas are reportedly suspicious of it, not seeing any 'real money' in the tip jar.

The theory of coffee being 'appreciated' by the various sensory areas of the tongue has received a blow in work by the University of London. A professor has told the British Science Festival that there is a reason why coffee never tastes as good as it smells. It is because we have two senses of smell, and the act of swallowing sends a burst of aroma up the back of the nose from inside the mouth, activating a 'second sense of smell' in the brain that is less receptive to the flavour, causing a completely different and less satisfying sensation. The professor also said that although we have sensors on our tongues, 80 per cent of what we think of as 'taste' actually reaches us through smell receptors in our nose. The true taste of coffee, he added, is further hampered by the fact that 300 of the 631 chemicals that combine to form its complex aroma are wiped out by human saliva, causing the flavour to change before we swallow it.

Kaldi is obliged to the local media of Berwickshire for an intriguing but rather disturbing item of news concerning objectors to the closure of a council-owned beach café. Protestors presented a petition of 2,000 signatures to their local authority, as a result of which they received the following less-than-encouraging response: "a spokesperson for Scottish Borders Council said the local authority supported the sentiment of the petition, and were keen to maintain catering fatalities."

With a rather typical concentration on the capital, the Qype consumer reviews website has announced that nine London cafes feature in its users' top-ten list of best-reviewed cafes. The London entrants are more or less the names you would expect to see - but what Qype has not highlighted is that the top-performing coffee house isn't in London at all - it's Artisan, of Edinburgh!

In the month of Macmillan Nursing's annual 'biggest coffee morning' charity event, burglars have broken into the coffee shop at Viaduct Nurseries, Coalpit Heath, and stolen hundreds of pounds destined for the cause. An understandably distressed owner reportedly said that the thieves had also stolen some cake, 'which the police took away, so hopefully they will get some footprints'.

Cafes in Folkestone have reported losing money for an unexpected reason - thefts by seagulls. Seagulls have been becoming more aggressive this year, and there have been many cases of birds landing on tables and stealing food while customers are still eating - the Grind n' Bake café says that it has identified one particular bird which sits on a nearby roof, waiting for opportunities to pounce on food. Owner Brett Ainsworth has a 'no quibble' policy of replacing anything stolen by the gull, and says he is losing hundreds of pounds as a result. However, he is unable to do anything - despite asking advice from all relevant authorities and experts, he comes up against the problem that gulls are protected, and it is illegal for him to even try to 'relocate' his particular offender.



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