

# MENU

NUMBER 12 • JANUARY 2020

**Torrison**  
Scotland's *has-it-all*  
mountain landscape.

FOOD AND  
PHOTOGRAPHY  
RETREATS

*with the Benries*

*Which font?*  
Choose the right one  
for your photo project.

*Charlotte makes*  
Salmon mousse and  
walnut soda bread.

*Introducing*  
Lars Andreas Dybvik.

**new series**

THE STORY OF OUR RETREATS IN 50 OBJECTS



Cornfield composite. Scotland / France.

## *Hello from Charlotte and Niall*


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Those of you who have travelled with us will be well aware of Niall's fondness for the reverse gear. And now it's even happening in our new-look newsletter where "Niall and Charlotte" has become "Charlotte and Niall" reflecting, we think, the importance of her contribution to making our Retreats what they are. We also thought that we'd give you a bit less philosophy and a bit more insight into our Retreats by shamelessly borrowing Neil MacGregor's *History of the World in 100 Objects* format. In each edition, we'll share the stories behind some of the objects (400 kg of them) that travel with us on our Retreats - everything from mushroom brushes and fish-bone tweezers to tick lassos and a 55" OLED TV - featured here. We believe this attention to detail puts our Retreats in the top league - while providing plenty of work for our local physiotherapist.

It's not only this newsletter that has changed; so too has our [website](#). We

think it makes our "offer" much clearer, including that for non-photographer partners, as well as being more explicit about what we do for beginners, experienced photographers and experts. There are also some ideas for bespoke holidays with us in France.

We have pinned down most of the weeks for our 2021 Retreats to help those of you who plan well ahead and will confirm dates once we hear from all our accommodation providers. Photographs of our base in the Queyras will become available in July once we have inspected properties and likewise, Spain. We are also pursuing collaborations with other photographers following the popularity of Willi Rolfes. There's no moss growing under our feet!

We have two final spaces left on [Harris](#) and have also had a major upgrade to the magnificent [Borve Lodge](#) this year. But you'd better be quick! 




## *The story of our Retreats*

### THE BIG SCREEN



Used in conjunction with a Macbook Pro, our Sony AF8 TV screen is the bee's knees when it comes to demonstrating post-production or for viewing guests' photos. With a resolution of 3840 x 2160 pixels, you've probably never seen your pictures so big, sharp and so bright before.

I wouldn't have considered using a TV to display photographs in the past but the image quality far surpasses that of all but the most expensive beamers. And 55" is quite big enough for our size of group. We know of at least one guest who has gone home and bought one of the strength of what they saw. But while we are resigned to carrying the 22 kg screen around Europe, you'd be better advised to park it up at home and leave it there.

It didn't take much tweaking to get the colours and contrast as I wanted - the controls made this easier than on the LG equivalent. If you need some guidance, just ask Niall. 

## *The story of our Retreats*

### CHANTERELLE STOPPER

Sometimes on Retreats guests pool their wine supplies. At other times, everyone has their own bottle(s) and that's when we bring out our stoppers and Sharpies. Not content with the cork it came with (France, in particular, avoids screw tops) we use our collection of quirky stoppers to make it easier for the guest to identify their own bottle. Each year, we set aside a modest budget to buy well-made craftwork when we travel. When we found [La Fontaine aux Bois](#) in Autun during a Burgundy Retreat and saw the beautiful, toadstool stoppers created by its owner, Thierry Clément, we were enchanted and added some to the collection. We like that they are recognisable as chanterelles rather than just generic "mushrooms".

Talking of chanterelles, they are something I occasionally cook on Retreats when asked. It's easy enough to buy "girolles" in French markets, but it's more exciting when Niall brings some home from a beech wood. I carefully check that they are not false chanterelles (which are more orange, have gills closer together, coloured, rather than white, flesh and smell like sour milk if you try to cook them) then bring out the butter and white wine. Soon, the kitchen smells divine. MC



# *Our Retreats programme*

2020 - 2021

2020

*February*

15 - 22nd

Harris, Scotland. 2 places.

*April*

18 - 25th

The Cairngorms, Scotland. Full.

*June*

12 - 19th

Austrian Tirol. 2 places.

*September*

27 - 4th October

Burgundy, France. 4+ spaces.

*October*

10 - 17th

Slovenia. 2 places.

*November*

4 - 11th

Torricon, Scotland. 4 places.

14 - 21st

Islay, Scotland. 4+ spaces.

2021

*February*

3rd week\*

Islay - Coastlines and creativity.

*March*

1st week\*

Harris - White sand, turquoise sea.

*April*

3rd week\*

Extremadura, Spain. Birds and macro.

*May*

3rd week\*

Queyras, France. Orchids & marmots.

*June*

3rd week\*

Austria. Magical alpine meadows.

*July*

3rd and 4th week\*

Burgundy - open for bespoke Retreats with us. Tell us what you'd like to do.

*September*

4th week\*

Burgundy - Rural life in old France.

*October*

3rd week\*

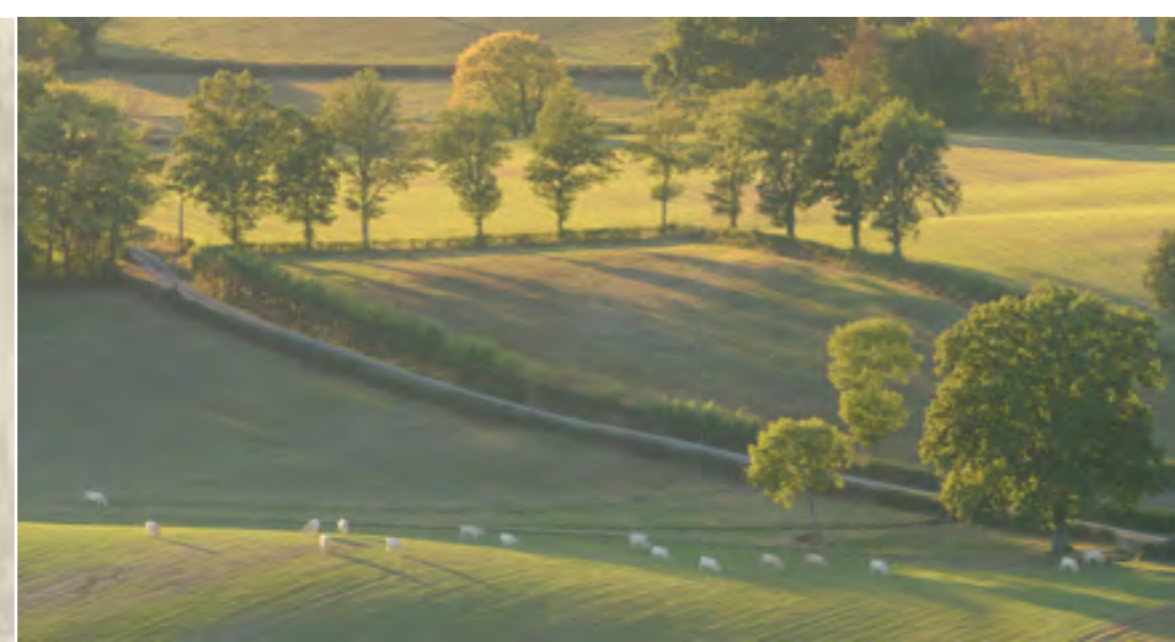
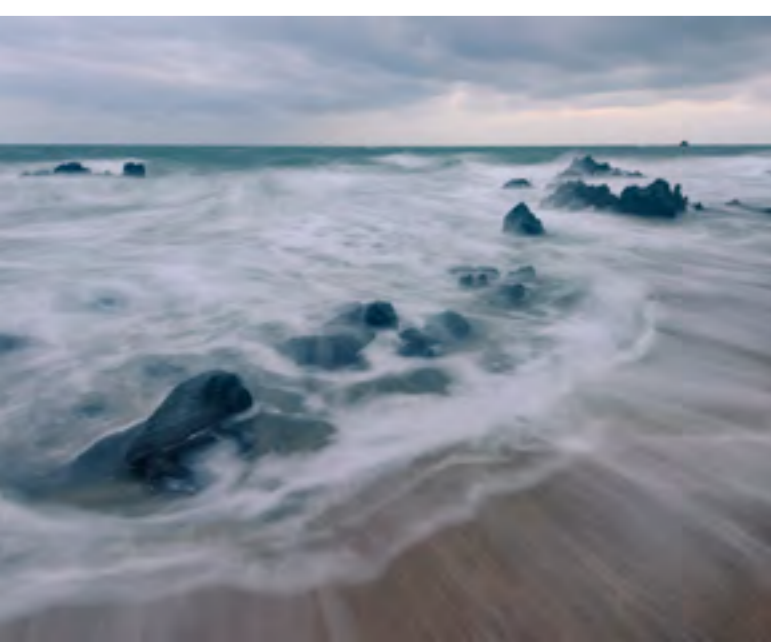
Slovenia - Old churches, misty lakes.

*November*

2nd week\*

Cairngorms - Forest and loch, mountain and glen.

*\*Final dates to be published once accommodation is confirmed.*



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## WHICH FONT?

I've been an keen combiner of words and photographs ever since my teens when I applied Letraset to 5" x 7" prints. And what I don't know now about fonts - could fill a book. My approach has always been that of a designer rather than a type-setter *per se* so much of the knowledge that goes into making a beautifully laid-out page - the sort of beauty that goes unnoticed by lay people - awaits me. What I have worked on, instead, is developing a sense of how different fonts work. What feelings they stir in the viewer; which associations they recall; how different fonts and their families can be used to create a hierarchy of information in an image and how the placement of text becomes a crucial part of an image's composition. But never forget we photographers are paddling in someone else's pool when we stray into the garden of graphic design and if we leave something unpleasant there, like a non-ironic use of **Comic Sans**, we

will be found out and shamed. I cringe when I reflect on my teenage fondness for American Uncial. If you are tempted to Google it, delete your search history afterwards.

It's not that some fonts are grotesque *per se* (although *Curlz* - *Trumpish* - certainly is) it's just that they get around too much. Helvetica (**Boring**) was a classy font until it hung out with, well, everyone - from Apple and BMW to NASA and in the process become way too visible. Too generic. And if you want your [word pictures](#) to look distinctive, communicating your message clearly, the last thing you need is a generic font getting involved and putting the viewer off.

We live in an image-illiterate age. Few people are schooled to interpret images, looking only at what pictures show rather than consider what they might be about. Words bridge the gap. **■**

*Historical* Contemporary  
Old New French *cliche*  
PREDICTIBLE GREEK Childish  
MOVIE TITLE Grungy Never  
Road Sign *Hand-written*  
Gothic **CIRCUS IN TOWN** SEVENTIES  
CLASSY *Trumpish* *Pretentious*  
Authentic Simple SOPHISTICATED  
Nordic Fantasy **WILD WEST SALOON**  
*Super casual* Formal **Breakdown**  
**MILITARY** Civilian *Glitzy* Boring  
**Super-sized** sub-sized *Lazy*  
Dangerous Faux Egyptian  
Flaky **Reliable** *Artist* **Engineer**

*Charlotte makes*

## SALMON MOUSSE AND WALNUT SODA BREAD

*But first, some thoughts on walnuts from Charlotte.*

Once, returning home from a Retreat in Torridon, a box awaited us on the door step. There was no note, just dozens of loose walnuts. I say "just" but really I thought, "Wow - someone has just sent me a load of one of my favourite ingredients. Brilliant!" Then I




remembered that the lovely Petrina, during a foodie discussion during the Retreat, had promised us a boxful of walnuts and now here they were.

My love of walnuts goes back quite a few years to when my parents first moved to France and inherited a walnut grove. These were like no walnuts I'd tasted before - luscious, sweet and not dry like those in British supermarkets. My mother's divine tart, which combined delicate pastry with honey-sweetened walnuts, sealed my affection for this superfood. Many years later, when I took the plunge and entered Masterchef, I decided that however far my "journey" in the contest, walnuts would be my signature ingredient. In response to my entry, I was phoned by one of researchers, asked more questions, emailed then called again. Each contact put me a stage closer to being considered. Then,

one day when we were going round a French supermarket, I got the call; "We would love to meet you and for you to cook for us." I tried not to shriek too loudly! Once home, I tootled off to Edinburgh where I made a smoked salmon and orange mousse paté served with a loaf of walnut bread, for the judges. Nervously, I plated up the dish for the two ladies who were filming it - who then tasted it. "Mmmm..." was a good reaction as far as I was concerned. "We'll be in touch if we want to take you further on the Masterchef journey. But in the meantime, can we have another bit of that bread, please - it's delish!" Well, they did call me and after a couple of weeks, I was taking the train to London. Here I prepared an assiette of walnut and blackberry desserts for a blind tasting by the show's presenters, John and Greg. Thick blackberry and cassis fool, caramelised walnut halves, walnut biscotti, a compot of poached blackberries and a dark chocolate walnut truffle all magically

appeared on the stark white plate - a delicious taste of autumn. It was devoured and I returned to Scotland on the sleeper. What an adventure it had been - including meeting other hopefuls. It turned out to be the end of my Masterchef run - I'd got into the last 70 out of about 25 000 applicants but didn't make it on to the show. Well, that's not quite true... Not long before it was due to air I got a call from one of the researchers. "Just watch the opening - we're sure you'll enjoy it," she said cryptically. Intrigued, I turn on and almost straight away, there was my dessert (before Greg got to it) on screen heading up the opening credits. I was more than pleased!

So, I'm glad to share with you my recipes for the walnut bread and smoked salmon mousse and in future issues of MENU, no doubt, there will be other walnut-inspired dishes. We've planted some orchard trees already in France but the next will be a walnut, for sure. 



*Charlotte makes*

## SALMON MOUSSE AND WALNUT SODA BREAD

### The salmon mousse

#### For 4 to 6 people, you will need:

- 200 g of smoked salmon
- 200 g of hot smoked salmon
- 100 g of cream cheese
- 75 ml of creme fraiche (you can use double cream if you can't get creme fraiche)
- Zest of one orange, very finely grated
- Juice of half the orange and that of half a lemon
- Two chopped tablespoons of dill (fresh, if you can get it)
- Seasoning to taste.

#### How to:

- This is dead easy. Put all the ingredients in a bladed food processor then pulse until they are properly blended. Don't over-do it - you want to preserve some texture.
- Taste to check the seasoning. Grind in some fresh black pepper and add more orange juice if it's needed.

### The soda bread

#### For this group:

- 450 g of coarse wholemeal flour
- 50 g of rolled oats
- One teaspoon of low sodium salt
- One level teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda
- One tablespoon of treacle
- One tablespoon of honey
- 75 g of chopped walnuts
- 450 ml of buttermilk (or the same amount of milk with a teaspoon of lemon juice).

#### How to:

- Pre-heat the oven to 200° C / Gas 6 and grease a baking sheet.
- Put all the dry ingredients into a large mixing bowl and whisk them until they are combined.
- Make a well in the middle. Stir the treacle, honey and buttermilk until they are well mixed then pour into the well. Work it together tho



with a flat-bladed knife quickly until you have a sticky dough. Make sure you don't over-work the mix.

- Form into a ball and place on the baking sheet. Cut a deep cross in the dough.
- Bake for 35 - 45 minutes or until the loaf feels hollow when you tap underneath.
- Transfer the loaf to a wire rack and drape a dampish cloth over it to cool.

*Featured Retreat*

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TORRIDON

*An autumn landscape and macro photography Retreat in the north west highlands of Scotland*

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4 - 11<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2020

## *Featured Retreat*

### TORRIDON




Confession: I've only ever once photographed in Glen Coe and would never go back again. Why? Because I know Torridon exists. I know that its mountains loom as impressively, that it has much more picturesque lochs, quirky pine trees and intriguing geology. I know too that its quartzite summits, which shine like snow on a sunny day, conjure just as masterfully with weather systems coming in from

the Atlantic to produce mists and wisps and rainbows. And best of all, I know that we can work away from the crowds, plant our tripods and listen in peace to roaring stags as we wait for first light to graze the summits.

We have a brilliant base for our Retreat in Torridon at the head of Upper Loch Torridon in the village of Annat (above, at left). We are within easy reach of all

our key locations and the house itself is spacious, comfortable and has en-suite for each room. As usual, we bring not only the Big Screen and a large stack of books but also flash equipment to let us shoot white background elements for composites should the weather take a turn for the worse. There will still be plenty of autumn colour around too and in the late afternoon we have a couple of excellent light painting locations to

visit. All this, capped with Charlotte's "rustic-with-style" cooking makes for a stimulating, creative and fun week.

We still have four places available (five if a couple books). You can learn more about the Retreat from the [brochure](#) on our website. 

## *Introducing*

### LARS ANDREAS DYBVIK

I first met Lars Andrew Dybvik on a stock-shooting trip to Norway in 2007 when I stopped off in his hometown of Trondheim. He'd picked up on the [field studio](#) idea and had already produced an interesting spin on it (the collection was called *Studio Natura*). In the years that followed he has continued to push the boundaries of what are normally considered "nature photography" to create a portfolio that is at once distinctively Nordic in its subject matter but Dybvik in approach. On his [website](#), he modestly states that he is "fond of images that are not plain documentary" but that understates the imagination and acute observation that is evident in his work. From curled leaves that look like a green eagle's head, to ice patterns with an uncanny resemblance to a male eider duck and, right, a mysterious dancer in a sinister forest, Lars's work is both whimsical and complex. There is also a confidence typical of a photographer

who has worked through his influences and found his own voice. If influence is evident, it comes from painters and graphic artists. He says, "There is a lot of inspiration available if one looks a little bit over the photographic horizon." The idea that photographers need to be freed of the creative restraints many believe themselves bound by is a recurring theme in his workshops. Lars, after all, has been successful at distancing his own work from literalism and simple representation, instead producing images that are often ambiguous, or, at the very least, prompt closer scrutiny and questioning. His images are rarely "obvious".

In addition to teaching, Lars focuses much of his efforts on the exhibition of his beautiful prints, mainly in Norway but also in the US, the UK and Australia. He is represented by [Art Gallery SG](#) in Trondheim.

Images © Lars Andreas Dybvik  



*Guillemot impressions.* Pointing towards the sparkling sea and moving the focus off the birds rendered this alternative view of much a photographed subject.





*Dancer in the woods.* We've all seen these sorts of trunk reflections in pools but it takes a particular perseverance and openness to find characters like this one.  
See more work at: [www.uskarp.no](http://www.uskarp.no)

## *Bonus footage*

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**M**y project, *Nostalgia for Snow*, is an on-going one started 12 years ago. This picture, from Riisitunturi NP in Finland, was taken soon after. The project has three main topics: sea birds; alpine flowers; and cultural activities reliant on snow and ice. Each faces its own existential crisis as climate warming continues. The pictures are created in a way that immediately suggests they belong to the past to encourage the viewer to see these things as historical curiosities and reflect on how they might feel about their loss.

I use a variety of techniques to create the vintage feel - in this case, a lot of fiddling around with colour channels and textures in Photoshop to mimic a Polaroid transfer print.  



*Traversing Finnish Lapland on skis*

# MENU

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Words in [turquoise](#) are linked to external web pages.

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*with the Benvies*