

THEY'VE GOT IT COVERED

*In a city that thrives on festivals, weddings and entertainment, spare a thought for the professionals who toil ceaselessly to make it all happen. **Hannah Newton** meets some of the faces behind the big events*

In the middle of a glamorous and sophisticated three-day wedding, the bride is ready for her close-up; hairdressers, florists, mojito bars are at the ready when BOOM! the electrics go down – what do you do?

Or your waiting-staff are on hand to serve 200 perfect, chocolate puddings – when a gust of wind takes out the entire table. How do you handle it?

Challenges like these are all in a day's unflappable work for the city's great event organisers, faced with such mammoth tasks as organising road closures, securing the attendance of first aiders, recruiting armies of volunteers, carrying out rigorous health and safety checks for the council – oh, and making sure there are toilets to cope with 30,000 people.

These are but a handful of tasks hardworking events companies and teams do behind the scenes to create public spectacles enjoyed by crowds, as well as arranging elaborate weddings with rooms full of roses, complicated menus, dealing with the vagaries of the British weather and managing an entourage to ensure a sense of order and perfection is maintained with artful discretion.

Who are the people behind these prestigious high-profile events?

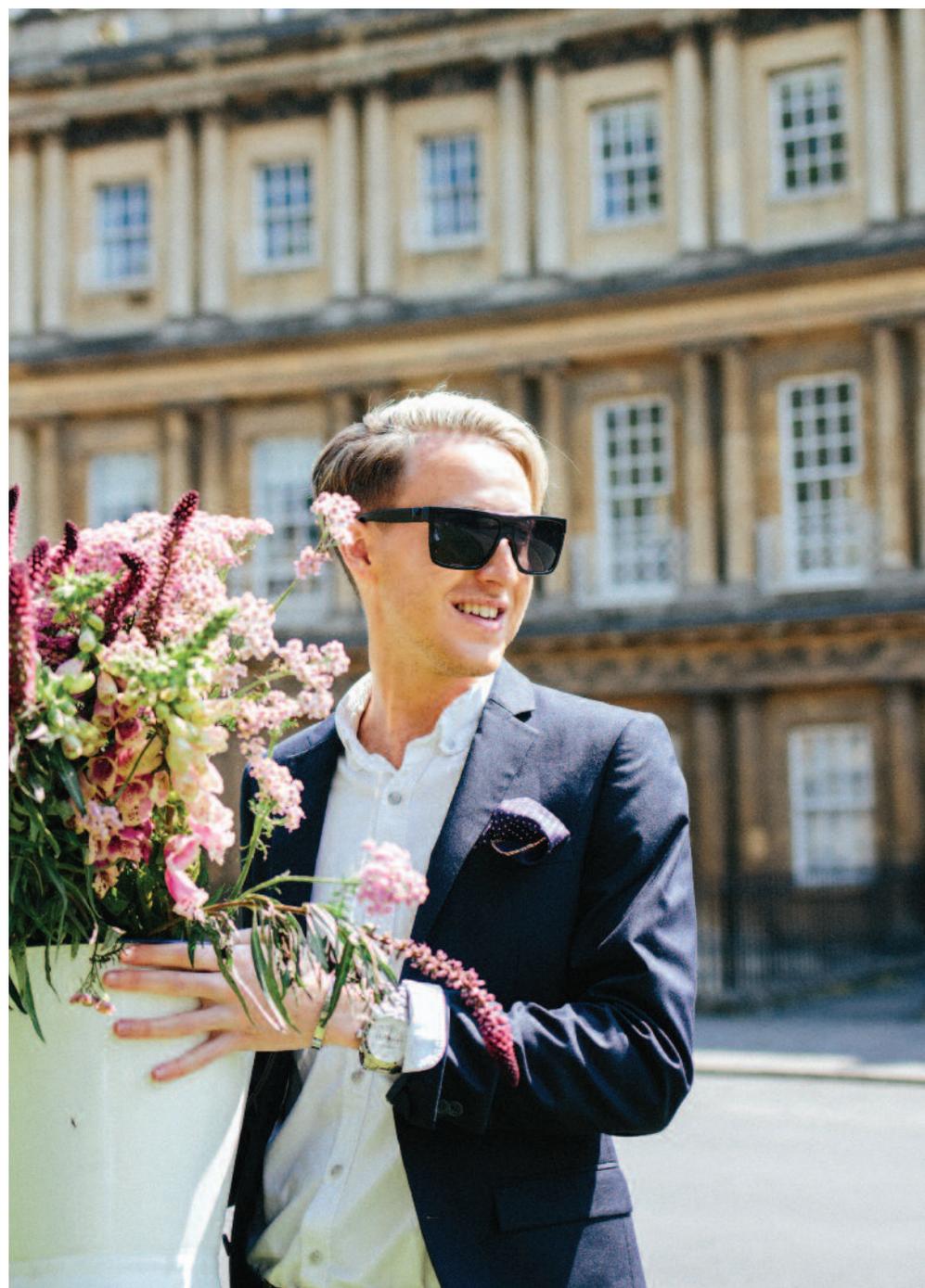
THE HOLBURNE MUSEUM LANTERN PROCESSION

This will be the ninth year the Holburne Museum has held its annual Lantern Procession, an atmospheric spectacle held on the streets, which has gathered pace, energy and people year on year.

The parade, which lasts no more than two hours in the run-up to the opening of the Bath Christmas Market, takes months of painstaking planning, preparation and hard work, involving thousands of metres of paper, Sellotape, glue and gritted teeth.

The Holburne Learning Team works alongside artists, schools and community groups – encouraging, helping, developing, sticking and creating sheer magic from paper and willow.

The team, which also runs drop-in, lantern-making workshops, oversee the development and evolution of hundreds of lovingly crafted paper lanterns. From full-scale elephants to a sea of tiny



bobbing fish, all hand-made and, I will add, hand-carried, and please, do not doubt, the weight of a paper and willow life-size elephant or sea serpent.

The lanterns are borne aloft through the closed streets to the infectious beat provided by samba musicians who lead the procession piper style, gathering spectators, dancers, children, teenagers, families and bemused tourists along the way. The evening has developed into one of the largest free participatory events the city has the good fortune to include in its build up to Christmas. But the enormity of planning is arduous as central streets are closed to traffic and hundreds of people, small children and

MAKING IT HAPPEN:
Josh Tully, Concierge
and events organiser

Flowers courtesy of
Tallulah Rose Flower
School, Bath, visit:
tallahrose
flowers.com

Photography: Nell
Mallia
Nellmalliaphotography.co.uk

dogs included, are co-ordinated to ensure it begins on time and conducts itself safely in the dark.

Despite, the logistical nightmare, every year the Learning Team at the Holburne, and its generous sponsors, pull it off, sending forth a spectacular procession into the gloom and cold of a winter night, setting the city alive with light, art, magic and music and finally culminating in a mini-festival in Parade Gardens.

THE BATH HALF MARATHON
Andrew and Mel Taylor have already started planning the Bath Half for 2017 and beyond. The husband and wife team



COOL AND HOT: above, one of Josh Tully's events, the stage set for the guests

Top right, thousands of runners set out on the Bath Half marathon

Below, the team behind the Holburne Museum's annual lantern procession

Bottom, Andrew and Mel Taylor, directors of Running High, race organisers



took on the half-marathon in 2000 when the event had just 2,500 runners – today Bath Half has 15,000 athletes of all abilities taking part, and this year it raised more than £2m for charities.

The event, which has grown in both respect and size since its first incarnation in 1982 – after the first London Marathon – was originally created by a local running club.

Andrew and Mel work in a team of four, including them, though during the Bath Half this swells on the big day to 850 people including staff, volunteers and 16 local community groups.

Andrew said: “We actually start planning two years ahead or more and there is a phenomenal amount of work that happens behind the scenes.”

The team work extremely closely, not only with Bath and North East Somerset Council across a host of its departments, but also with key authorities including police, ambulance services, hospitals and local health care providers, local residents and

associations to ensure all boxes are ticked and the event can run smoothly and safely.

Several years in advance, the team will book additional train services for the weekend and secure commercial sponsorship. Contractors and suppliers are in place well in advance of the run – the team has already secured most of these contracts and

sponsors for 2017 and even 2018.

And with more than 30,000 spectators and thousands of runners in Bath over the March weekend of the Bath Half, the city's hotels and restaurants do brisk trade.

Andrew: “To run on traffic-free streets in the city centre enables our community to reclaim their rights to the public highway... the absence of any vehicular traffic creates a very different sound to that we are used to. It's an amazing experience and a great celebration of our city.”

JOSH TULLY, CONCIERGE

Josh Tully, of Josh Tully Concierge, has had his fair share of high profile clients over the years. He was formerly employed to look after the elite private members and high profile celebrity guests at Babington House, country club to the uber cool private members club in London: Soho House.

He has organised weddings for Sam Taylor Wood, Aaron Johnson and Amanda Lamb, to namedrop just a few, and has consequently perfected his ability to be calm in a sea of wedding nerves, turning negatives into positives and gently reassuring a stream of highly-strung brides.

His Bath-based concierge business includes organising weddings, unique personal and bespoke lifestyle planning, private and brand events. Concierge demands can and will include anything and have seen clients request a fully working, complete fairground, people dressed as jumping kangaroos, three-day weddings and setting up a bar serving mojitos.

Josh shares his secrets of staying on top of the planning: “The devil is in the detail, stay calm and focused and everything falls into place. Don't be scared of last minute changes – just go with them. They will always happen, no amount of planning can change that.”

Josh is working with a number of brands in the city at the moment and is also creating a coffee table book, bringing together independent businesses, contemporary photography

and design across Bath, he says: “Watch this space, by the time I am finished it will be all over the city...”

Visit: joshtullyconcierge.co.uk

FOREST OF IMAGINATION

The Forest of Imagination was born out of a conversation that saw a need for Bath to have a permanent contemporary arts space that offered: a space to play and create, exhibit, a workshop, a meeting place and more. To show Bath the need for such a place, Penny Hay, artist, educator, senior lecturer and director of research at 5x5x5x, architect Andrew Grant of Grants Associates, and Wayne Lindsay founder and creative director at Imaginnovation, began designing a four-day contemporary arts event to showcase the city's creative talents.

In 2014, the Forest of Imagination was held at Sion Hill, but this year took place in the centre of the city, where it exploded into Queen Square, taking the city's creative heart by storm.

This year the event doubled in size, with almost 7,000 people of all ages passing through its portal. But like every great event the core team behind it were central to making it happen.

Lucy Loveday, Forest curator and co-ordinator, worked alongside the creative team. Her tasks included making sure that artists were booked, had the space they needed, she worked with the council to secure the venue, ensure health and safety procedures were in place, sponsors were secured and looked after, while partner schools, businesses, volunteers and associations were managed.

The BRS LI (Bath Royal Scientific and Literary Institute) on Queen Square got involved and Forest expanded its plans to include a day of talks, workshops and films focusing on the importance of play and creativity in childhood and beyond. They invited guest speakers and artists from children's charities across the UK to take part too.

This cross-fertilisation and wide-ranging spectrum of participants and creative businesses made for





complicated logistics for it to succeed and also, essentially, for the public to embrace it.

Lucy said: “It is important that all voices are heard, and feedback taken on board – as we want the city of Bath to feel as much ownership of the project as those in the planning meetings. The planning, design, curation and production are organic processes that are continually evolving from initial meetings right up until the event, and over the event itself.

“An event like this takes time, hard work and energy, but working on a project that is not-for-profit and meant entirely as a gift to the city means the team all invest their time because everyone believes in the project. All those working on the project give up their time – and go above and beyond to ensure the success of the project.”

With Forest’s resounding success this year the city would like it again

SPECIAL PLACE: main picture, children delighted in the giant inflatable rabbit in the Forest of Imagination in Queen Square

Below, Ed May of EatFiveStar hospitality

next year, but, where or when or what or how, no-one knows yet.

GREEN PARK STATION

Since the 1980s Green Park Station has been supporting local businesses and events in the city from farmers, vintage and artisan markets to vintage swimwear, fashion shows, to independent traders and shops, all of these backing local and independent traders, charities, fundraisers, businesses, and the people of Bath, by providing a space to house an array of equitable companies and events.

The site, which is managed by the Ethical Property Company, boasts the oldest farmers’ market in the country and supports a range of events.

Rebecca Leach, marketing and venue manager, said: “We are very lucky because there is a great sense of community here with lots of local contributors, who invest both time and money into transforming the venue into a thriving and exciting space on a regular basis. It takes a lot of work to put on weekly and monthly events on this scale, and sharing that load enables us to widen our net when it comes to encouraging people to engage with small independent businesses and social projects. We are starting to see a return to ‘shop local’ ideals.”

what Green Park Station has to offer, alongside our established retail success. For these events we work closely in collaboration with many of our tenants such as Green Park Brasserie and Beyond the Kale. We try to support one another wherever possible with a cooperative approach in the belief that we are all working towards a common goal. There is a lot to offer here for people and there is no limit to our drive and ambition to be an innovative and responsible venue for all to enjoy.”

EATFIVESTAR HOSPITALITY

Ed May is the MD of EatFive Star and Deluxe Hospitality. At just 32, Ed’s client list reads like a who’s who in Debreets and includes the Duke and Duchess of Somerset, HRH Prince Edward, not to mention an array of international clients, which might see him jetting off to the South of France to oversee a high profile elegant wedding or hobnobbing with wealthy New Yorkers over their Christmas plans.

Ed launched his businesses, which include a five star event catering company and a luxurious, event and venue planning company, in 2008 after training in five star hospitality with leading hotels in both the US and France.

Currently, work for Ed includes designing a week’s worth of activities for an international client for Christmas; including a circus and a full sized grotto with real reindeer, this, by the way, all for just one family.

Ed is the exclusive wedding and private events manager at the family home of the Dukes of Somerset: Bradley House. He is also, among other things, managing a private wedding reception on the lawns of the Royal Crescent after a ceremony in the Bath Abbey. True to form, you can bet that whatever happens, Ed will ensure all these events are utterly, perfectly run – presided over by his retinue of well trained staff. This is his secret weapon: his staff and his suppliers, he advises: “Most importantly employ the brightest and best staff you can find.

“When you think you have created the perfect event, think again. There really are no limits. Even on tighter budgets you can give clients the sparkle they need.”

Visit: deluxehospitality.co.uk.

So next time you shimmer in your Sunday best toasting the happy couple, cheer on the runners at the Bath Half or delight in the wonders of a life-sized, paper sailing ship lit-up with tiny LED lights and carried aloft through the streets of Bath, ensure you offer a small prayer of goodwill and thanks under your breath to all the workers behind the scenes for the enormous amount of planning, logistics and immense organisation that is behind each and every one of these fantastical occasions. Thank you all! ■

Most importantly, employ the brightest and best staff you can

Rebecca adds that more and more shoppers want to cut out the middle man and buy directly from source, add to this the growth of up-cycling and pre-loved possessions, all the events help to transform this venue on a regular basis into a community hub promoting the work of local designer-makers, artists and skilled craftspeople.

The Ethical Property Company aims to build and support the community and not-for-profit companies by providing affordable events space. It advises small traders, charities and events people on the planning, promotion, marketing, logistics, licensing, risk-assessment, health and safety and management so that a smaller business or charity can develop their event or brand.

Rebecca said: “We have the Bath Folk Festival joining us for five days in August. Festivities will include market stalls, busking, live music performances and a large ceilidh. We hope that this will become an annual event for the Bath social calendar, and that people will engage with the cultural side of

