

NEW YEAR CHEMISTS

ASDA, Orbital Shopping Centre, Abbey Meads (New Year's Eve: 8am to 6pm, New Year's Day: 10am to 4pm, Monday January 2: 9am to 6pm.)

ELDENE HEALTH CENTRE (New Year's Eve to Monday January 2: closed.)

GORSE HILL HAWTHORN PHARMACY, Cricklade Road (New Year's Eve to Monday January 2: closed.)

GREENBRIDGE BOOTS, Unit 5-6 Greenbridge Retail Park, (New Year's Eve: 6pm to 11pm, New Year's Day: 10am to 4pm, Monday January 2: 9am to 6pm.)

HAYDON WICK MORRISONS, Thames Avenue, (New Year's Eve: 9am to 5pm, New Year's Day and Monday January 2: closed.)

HAYDON WICK HOME GROUND PHARMACY, North Swindon Practice, Thames Avenue, (New Year's Eve: 5pm to 8pm, New Year's Day and Monday January 2: closed.)

HIGHWORTH HOME FARM PHARMACY, Newburgh Place, (New Year's Eve: 9am to 16.30pm, 2pm to 5.30pm, New Year's Day: closed, Monday January 2: 9am to 6pm.)

LAWN PHARMACY, 56 Guildford Avenue, (New Year's Eve: 8.30pm to noon, New Year's Day and Monday January 2: closed.)

OLD TOWN LLOYDS, Victoria Road (New Year's Eve: to Monday January 2: closed.)

PARK NORTH KINGSWOOD PHARMACY, Kingswood Avenue (New Year's Eve: 9am to noon, New Year's Day and Monday January 2: closed.)

PENHILL PHARMACY, 257A Penhill Drive (New Year's Eve to Monday January 2: closed.)

PURTON LLOYDS, The Parade (New Year's Eve: 9am to 1pm.)

RODBOURNE TRAINS PHARMACY, 167 Rodbourne Road, (New Year's Eve: 9am to 1pm, New Year's Day and Monday January 2: closed.)

SHAW LLOYDS, Shaw Village Centre (New Year's Eve: 9am to 1pm, New Year's Day and Monday January 2: closed.)

STRATTON ST MARGARET SAINSBURY'S, Oxford Road (New Year's Eve: 6am to 7pm, New Year's Day: 10am to 4pm, Monday January 2: 9am to 7pm.)

TAW HILL CO-OP Pharmacy, 24 Aiken Road, Taw Hill Village Centre (New Year's Eve to Monday January 2: closed.)

TOWN CENTRE SWINDON HEALTH CENTRE, Carfax Street (New Year's Eve to Monday January 2: closed.)

TOWN CENTRE TESCO, Ocotal Way (New Year's Eve: 8am to 6pm, New Year's Day and Monday January 2: closed.)

TOWN CENTRE BOOTS, 3 Brunel Centre (New Year's Eve: 8am to 6pm, New Year's Day: 10.30am to 4.30pm, Monday January 2: 9am to 5pm.)

WEST SWINDON SAINSBURY'S PHARMACY, Ashworth Rd, Bridgmead, W Swindon (New Year's Eve: 6am to 7pm, New Year's Day: 10am to 4pm, Monday January 2: 9am to 7pm.)

WEST SWINDON ASDA, West Swindon Centre, Tewkesbury Way (New Year's Eve: 6am to 7pm, New Year's Day: 10am to 4pm, Monday January 2: 9am to 6pm.)

WEST SWINDON SPARCELLS PHARMACY, Midwinter Close, Peatmoor (New Year's Eve: 8.30pm to 6.30pm, New Year's Day and Monday January 2: closed.)

WOOTTON BASSETT LLOYDS, Boroughfields Shopping Centre (New Year's Eve: 9am to 5.30pm.)

WROUGHTON JEPHSON'S, Wroughton Health Centre, Barrett Way (New Year's Eve: 9am to noon, New Year's Day and Monday January 2: closed.)

WOOTTON BASSETT CML JONES, 102 High Street (New Year's Eve: 8.45am to 1pm.)



WORKS OF ART David and Sandra Barrett upped sticks and moved from Wroughton to the Rockies to start up a blacksmith's business



FIRE

ENCIRCLED by craggy, pine covered mountains and with smoke drifting languidly from the chimney, David and Sandra Barrett's wood-paneled house could easily be mistaken for a backwoods homestead on the set of a John Ford western.

Several inches of snow cover the couple's ten acre plot in the Elk Valley where bears, deer, elk, coyotes and skunk are not uncommon.

"Yes, it looks idyllic, especially in this weather - just like a Christmas card," grins former Swindon school librarian Sandra, 57. "Until, that is, you have to shovel two feet of overnight snow off the driveway before you can get onto the highway."

It is certainly a contrast from Wroughton, nearly 5,000 miles away, where the couple and their two children, Henry and Florence, spent their lives before they "followed our dream" and started anew in the Canadian Rockies.

It is there, in far flung British Columbia, that David and Sandra are continuing a tradition which their family have specialised in for more than 250 years - as traditional blacksmiths.

David, 59, is a fifth generation blacksmith while Sandra joined the male-dominated world of hammers, anvils, tongs, pokers and pliers when she took advantage of a one-off course in Swindon ten years ago.

Together they run the Fernie Forge in Hosmer (pop 600) where they produce all manner of beautifully fashioned wrought iron items, from decorative works of public art to ornamental railings and sweeping staircases.

The couple say there is an old fashioned feel to life in the wilderness town, which grew up around the mining and railway industry some eight miles from the city-cum-skiing resort of Fernie.

"Village life here seems to be like England in the 1950s. Everyone helps each other out in our small community," says Sandra.

"The biggest adaptation, though, is coping with the wildlife. We even saw a wolverine's footprints in the snow near the house once."

Temperatures vary from +30C to -30C, while David has two Alaskan husky dogs, which pull him along on his skis in the winter.



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BARRY LEIGHTON catches up with a couple who brought their skills from Wroughton to the Rockies... and are forging ahead as blacksmiths
Pictures: HENRY GEORGI



IDYLLIC The Barrett's wood-panelled home in Hosmer in the Canadian Rockies, and right, Henry Hungerford Barrett who started Barrett's of Wroughton in 1893

... AND ICE



"The huskies are great at keeping the wildlife away," says David: "And they only growl when a bear comes along." Their "call of the wild" life can be traced back to 1743 when one of David's ancestors, Hungerford Barrett was a blacksmith at Coate near Cirencester

The trade passed from father to son and in 1893 David's great grandfather, Henry Hungerford Barrett, after moving from Ashton Keynes, founded Barrett's of Wroughton, a blacksmith, wheelwright and engineering company.

An experienced engineer, David took over the business exactly 100 years later, upon his father Eric's retirement in 1993. The blacksmith side of the business ground to a halt in the 1960s when the practice was replaced by welding.

Sandra meanwhile worked for 27 years as a librarian in Swindon, first at Wyvern Architects and then Oakfield School.

The old anvil and smithy's tools lying idle at the company workshops had always intrigued her.

Coincidentally – and with Oakfield due to close – a one-off EU-funded, women only course for blacksmiths was introduced at Swindon College.

Sandra leapt at the "amazing opportunity" and, unlike the five others on the course, went onto become a fully-fledged smith, receiving further training at Bridgwater and Salisbury.

Shaping wrought iron in the old fashioned way with hammers and tongs, she made intricately-patterned weather vanes, lamps, garden ornaments, copper work and iron railings.

Sandra also became the first woman to win a prestigious national smithy's award for forging metal.

In 2004, however, the Barretts made the momentous decision to leave their detached Wroughton bungalow to relocate to the Rockies. The company's Moormead Road wagon works needed to be re-built so they thought they would "have an adventure before we were too old to move," says Sandra.

"We always wanted to build a forge and continue as blacksmiths. We'd been skiing in the Rockies and loved it."

They were further prompted during their skiing trip when a local preacher suggested: "Why don't you do what you're doing over there over here?"

Their solicitor in Swindon had also heard of a new scheme in British Columbia encouraging skilled workers to relocate there.

Says Sandra: "We followed our dream. We were the fourth family from Britain to be accepted on this programme."

She and the children moved to the Rockies in 2004, while David followed a year later after selling the Barrett's site for housing. When their equipment arrived from Wroughton they built a forge, which opened in October 2005.

The couple's legacy to Wroughton includes copper doors for the village Methodist Church and the Jubilee Gates at the entrance to Weir Field.

Among an abundance of work they have produced in the Rockies are David's giant ants and other creatures in a Miners' Walk while Sandra is especially proud of an intricate copper falcon plaque.

Bizarrely, David also created an arched gate resembling Newcastle's Tyne Bridge for a nostalgic Geordie.

Meanwhile, Henry, 25, has his own business creating trails for mountain bikers while Florence, 23, is in her final year at Vancouver university, and working part-time as a theatrical costume designer.

The couple, whose family still live in the Wroughton/Swindon area, keep in touch with news back home from the Advertiser's website.

Sandra misses her friends and family back home, as well as singing with the Wroughton Methodist Choir, but has no regrets about the move.

Taking a brief break from the sparks, heat and burning coals of the forge, she positively glows when asked about the buzz she continues to derive from her work.

"Forging is all about changing the shape of metal while it's hot. The anticipation and thrill of achieving the desired shape is the same now as when I first started.

"One of the hardest things is achieving beauty with simple lines. There is a quiet satisfaction in producing a well-made unique piece, whether it has a simple functional use or is intended to be admired as an artistic creation.

"Somehow my energy and personality is transferred to the object I'm forging to the extent that someone else can identify that work as being mine. It's an indefinable passion that's forged into a static piece of metal.

"That," she adds, "is the joy for me" – regardless of whether it is in Wroughton or the Rockies.

● Further information on the couple can be found at their website: www.fernieforge.ca

It looks idyllic – until you have to shovel two feet of snow off the driveway before you can get on to the highway

A little bit of Hosmer history

- Hosmer is a small town at the foot of Mount Hosmer in British Columbia in the Canadian Rockies.
- Named after railway official Charles R Hosmer, it was established by the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1906.
- It became a vital link in a long line of coal mining communities and by 1910 1,300 people lived in the town, which even had its own red light district.
- Local miner Fred Alderson became known as the Hosmer Hero after losing his life while trying to save colleagues after an explosion.
- The mine closed during World War One and the majority of townfolk moved away.
- Most of the old town is now gone but nearby are the ghostly ruins of the mine site, 46 coke ovens and the pioneer's cemetery where Alderson lays.
- Hosmer residents are campaigning for the ruins to be declared as historical sites