



♥ LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE ♥

BRUCE MCMICHAEL IS THE MANAGER OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS FARMERS' MARKET AND A FOOD AND TRAVEL WRITER. HERE, HE TELLS US WHY HE LOVES WHERE HE LIVES...

Where do you live?

Close to the centre of Tunbridge Wells.

How long have you lived there and what made you decide to move there?

I originally moved here over 20 years ago, before relocating to Shropshire for ten years. I returned to Tunbridge Wells in Spring 2014 as I have work, family and friends in the area. It's a thriving town with a supportive community with lots of cultural activity (I'm involved with TEDxRoyalTunbridgeWells which is very well supported from within the town, and speaking at the Women Work event this March); is easily accessible to the coast, London and even France, and has great countryside for cycling.

What's your favourite shop locally?

The Basement on the High Street for men's fashion; Velo House and Velocipede for bike stuff, and Trevor Mottram for kitchen gadgets and inspiration. Hoopers and Fenwick are great for choice and gifts. And of course I love the Farmers' Market where I stock up fish, fresh fruit and veg, bread and cakes!

Where's the best place to go for a Sunday stroll?

I have a little dog Maisie, my English Springer-cross, and am always looking for new walks. We enjoy Hargate Forest; the Tunbridge Wells Commons with a cricket match and a coffee in the Pantiles, or a walk around the lake at Dunorlan Park. This summer, I am doing the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk, which includes beautiful countryside around Groombridge and Pembury.

The best place to get a cup of coffee?

Coffee lovers have an amazing choice of cafés in Tunbridge Wells. At the top of town, I often visit Velo House or Scallywags, or Basils at Fiveways; Juliets or Fine Grind on the High Street and The Cake Shed and Rosemary Shrager's down on the Pantiles. I have a wallet full of loyalty cards!

Are there any nice views nearby?

The view from the top of Mount Ephraim overlooking the town is lovely; looking

north from a couple of sightseeing spots on Bidborough Ridge is spectacular and, as a keen stand-up paddle boarder, looking at the countryside from the middle Bewl Water is inspiring.

If you're looking to relax and unwind, where's your favourite place to go?

Walking with Maisie, across the Commons, or to Grosvenor & Hilbert Park for a quick fix of fresh air. For a outing slightly further away I'll jump on my bike and head out to Hever; Beals Barn near Wadhurst, or Café 1809 in Hildenborough. There's usually coffee and cake involved on a bike ride!

Where's the best place to meet friends and socialise?

Socialising in the evening will see me in Fuggles; listening to popular local bands such as Higgs & The Bosons, The Paul Dunton Orchestra or Kachi at the Forum or The Grey Lady – both are great for atmosphere and bumping into friends.

What do you do when you spend a weekend or day off in the local area?

I enjoy standup paddle-boarding on the River Medway and Bewl Water, or cycling around the Weald with friends, and ending up at the cycle-café Velo House. Otherwise I enjoy browsing charity shops for classic cookbooks, cooking for family and friends and practicing my saxophone. I play with the Invicta Jazz Orchestra, and we do around ten concerts across the year.

Why do you love where you live?

Tunbridge Wells is a friendly, welcoming place to live with great shopping including plenty of independent retailers, cafés and places to eat from Italian and Portuguese to classic British and Asian. There are lovely town parks, history in The Pantiles and High Street area and inspiring architecture, including houses and public buildings designed by Decimus Burton.

Traffic permitting, delightful countryside is on our doorstep and we're only an hour from the coast or London.

www.thelemongrove.net