

# THIS IS your (new) life

It's easy to talk about changing your life but how does it feel to actually do it? **Jonathan Trew** meets three people who leapt into the unknown

## David Wilson

Was a Harley Street osteopath and became a restaurateur on the Isle of Skye

"Not long after I was offered everything I had ever wanted, I had to say no to it. I was brought up in Perth by a strict father, but rebelled and had a bit of a wild time in my twenties.

When I calmed down and made the decision to study osteopathy, I threw myself into it. I had taken out hefty loans to pay my way through my course so I was working to service the debts at the same time that I was studying.

After I graduated, I worked harder and harder to pay off my debts. I bought a practice rather than working for anyone else as I thought this would mean I could pay off my debts faster. After that I got another two practices up and running and I was offered a partnership on Harley Street eight years ago.

It was all incredibly stressful and it seemed as though I had been working 24 hour days, seven days a week for ever. I was running three practices; teaching at one of the major clinical colleges and doing the Harley Street work, which was mostly writing medical reports for court cases. If you got one word wrong, that could be your career down the tubes.

I was unhappy but I'm not sure that even now I could articulate quite what I was unhappy about. I was unhappy with no sleep and all that work but I was making good money which, in the 1980s and 1990s, was the fashionable thing to do.

Every now and then I would drive all the way up to Skye to my friend Mark's house. I would get there, fall on his sofa and not move for three days. When I did wake up I would be shaking. I was well on the road to a full physical and mental breakdown.

One of the times I went up to Skye I felt well enough to drive into Broadford to get cigarettes and a paper. I came back with a restaurant.

I had seen an advert in the paper saying 'restaurant

for sale' and had phoned the number. The owner answered and told me to come on over. It was a beautiful, bright April morning and I could see across the Sound of Sleat to Applecross from the restaurant windows. I thought to myself, this could be my work, so I wrote out a cheque on the spot. It was my 40th birthday.

A few days later I met up with an old friend of mine, Ann. Both of our marriages had finished and we spent the evening telling each other how we would never have another relationship. We ended up in bed that night and 13 days later Anne moved to Skye. Two months later I asked her to marry me.

It took me another year to get to Skye permanently. Had I hung on in London for a further six months then I could have made another £85-£90,000, but I don't know that I would have been alive to spend it. In the end, Mark and Ann came down, packed up my house and effectively kidnapped me.

Ann has professional catering experience. I had always loved food, but that's a different thing. I used to cook for relaxation. If I had half a day off then one of the most relaxing things I could do would be to potter around the kitchen.

I've always had a sensitive palate. I can put together tastes and textures in my mind in a way that, apparently, most people can't. I always thought everybody could do it. Some of the most successful dishes in the restaurant, such as the seafood gumbo, have been things that I've done almost for a laugh but enough people seem to like it to make it a house special.

People say running a kitchen must be stressful, but now everything is so much easier. I work 12 hours a day at the most but usually it's seven or eight and there is no stress. There is pressure, but it is not stress in the same way as my old life.

I'm happier because I don't work 20 hours a day any more and when I have time off I am in one of the world's most beautiful places."

*Creelers of Skye Seafood Restaurant, Broadford, Isle of Skye, tel 01471 822281, [www.skye-seafood-restaurant.co.uk](http://www.skye-seafood-restaurant.co.uk)* ▶