The magic of bluebells
Let the enchantment begin

The Editor’s Easter Quiz
Military dogs: saving lives, saving soldiers
Great cakes in literature
A river runs through it

The waterways of London provide ample inspiration for new property developments

The lost waterways of London—which, although long forgotten, often inspired the names of areas and streets that run their course (Fleet Street, Conduit Street, Bayswater (above) and Clerkenwell spring to mind)—will be celebrated in a new exhibition. ‘Secret Rivers’ will be at the Museum of London Docklands from May 24 to October 27 and should be well worth a visit, especially as, after hundreds of years, today’s new-builds are still shaped by the capital’s underground rivers.

Take Clivedale’s The Mansion, a contemporary Georgian block of 23 homes currently in development at 9, Marylebone Lane, W1. The site is directly above the River Tyburn, a major Thames tributary that supplied the capital with water from the 13th century. Relatively untouched until the 18th century, the watercourse defined the lane’s shape and architect DDSHA has mindfully designed the building’s balustrade lines and floor slabs to follow the course of the river below.

By the same developer, 73, Brook Street, W1, on a road that takes its name from the underlying Tyburn Brook, which once flowed in its path between Hanover and Grosvenor Squares, pays homage to its origins with an undulating light installation in the lobby, simulating flowing water (www.clivedale.com).

The much-anticipated 12.8-acre Chelsea Barracks, SW1 (www.chelseabarracks.com), featuring apartments and town houses around seven garden squares atop the River Westbourne, makes a nod to history with a 1,300ft-long rill by landscape architect Kim Wilkie and Squire & Partners. Once it’s been completed, it will run the entire length of the Chelsea Bridge Road boundary. This water feature ‘will create a visual and sensory buffer’, say the developers.

In the early 18th century, the Westbourne was pooled to create an ornamental lake that formed part of the Ranleigh Pleasure Gardens (now partly appropriated by the Chelsea Hospital’s grounds), but was redirected underground following the development of Belgravia in the early 19th century, so its re-emergence is particularly poignant.

Feeling fruity

Pineapples, figs and other exotic fruits once thrived in the village of Mentmore, Buckinghamshire. The 19th-century owner of Mentmore Towers (the 5th Earl of Rosebery) was partial to the fruits, which were grown in greenhouses fuelled by steam from the former smithy. The site of the smithy is now home to a cutting-edge, eco-friendly modern property: The Forge.

With four bedrooms and flooded with natural light, it features a vaulted hallway and an oak-and-glass staircase and is the first new-build in the village for 30 years. Renewable energy and Green technology are integral to its design, with hot water and heating provided via an outdoor air-source heat pump. $1.6 million through Michael Graham (01296 336227).