

Feature **your weekend** Taste



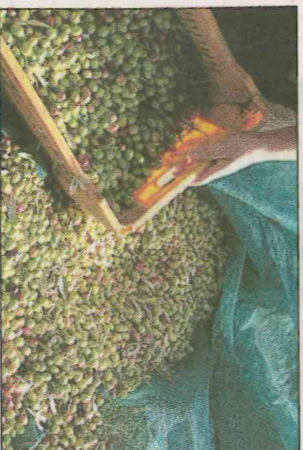
IT'S HARVEST TIME: Dario and Luigi Caraceni work to gather the crop that will produce delicious olive oil.



HAPPY: Bob Powell at work on his beloved Italian olive farm. Below: Sunflowers bring colour to the rolling hills around his beautiful new home.



IN THE HEAT OF THE DAY: This traditional way of harvesting the olives using nets has not changed much at all down the centuries.



END PRODUCT: Olives ready for pressing.

Evening of Clairvoyance

Unitarian Chapel, Oat Street.
Saturday 19th October
with Les Brettle
£5.00 on the Door
 Doors open at 6:45pm
 For 7:15pm Start Raffle

Hard work sees Bob's olive oil dream finally bear fruit

ROBERT HALE talks to a man who swapped Malvern water for Mediterranean olive oil – and whose reputation among artisan food producers is growing fast.

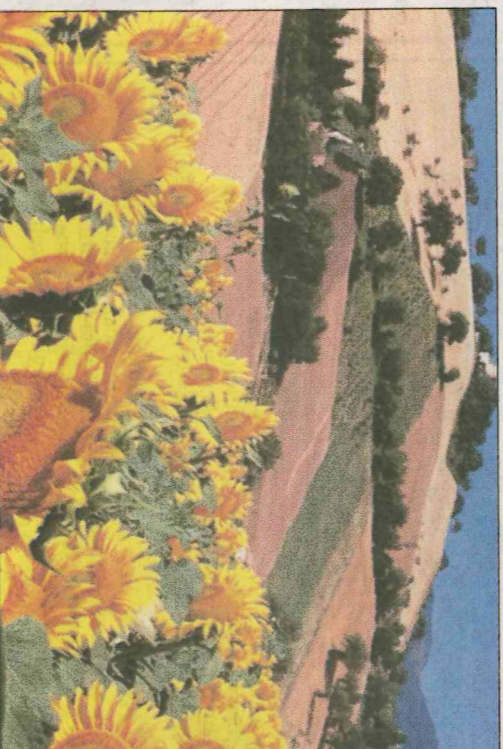
A MAN who swapped Malvern Water for Mediterranean olive oil has spoken of his mission to create the golden liquid.

Bob Powell, formerly of Worcester, was the chief engineer at the Malvern Water bottling plant at Colwall but now has successfully produced another product.

He moved to the Le Marche region of Italy three years ago, buying a farmhouse and olive grove called Casale Delle Rondini. After learning the art of making olive oil, he is now selling his product commercially and is offering foodies the chance to adopt an olive tree.

He said: "My partner, Francesco Russo, is Italian and we had visited Italy lots of times so always wanted to live here, but I wouldn't leave my father, who was in his 90s.

"When he passed away, we decided the main olive-growing region in Puglia was too hot in the summer, so picked Le Marche. "It is in central Italy and also a very good olive-growing area – plus beautiful countryside – half-way between the mountains and the coast." They bought an olive grove, but



it had been neglected for decades and it took many weeks of hard work to bring it back into a usable state. The help and advice of two knowledgeable locals, Dario and Luigi Caraceni, was invaluable in learning skills such as pruning and the secrets of how to make the oil.

Mr Powell said: "What followed was, for Francesco, an intensive course in the art of olive tree pruning and a lesson in the secrets that the masters had learnt during decades of caring

for what they had such a passion for – the exceptional olive oil made from olives grown in Le Marche.

"We knew then what our goal was, to get these tired and neglected trees back to their prime, as they would have been somebody cared enough to plant them so perfectly spaced apart to allow them to capture every ray of sunlight that was available." Mr Powell said the first harvest two years ago in the middle of

November was a memorable experience, with friends and relatives all helping, sharing picnics and wine as they worked. And the pressing of that first crop was even more memorable. He said: "We waited at the end of the line, crusty bread all ready to catch those first drops of amazing greeny golden liquid that now flowed into the containers that we had brought."

"We had done it, all that work had come to fruition in those three of 100 per cent pure virgin olive oil that smelled so good and tasted like nothing else.

"We have spent the last three years perfecting our skills and absorbing the local knowledge. We now want to share that knowledge and the end result with other discerning people who will appreciate a product that is so genuine and special."

All the effort has paid off, with extra virgin olive oil from the grove now for sale, and for those who want to get more involved, the chance to adopt a tree. For £58 a year, you will get an adoption certificate, a photo of your tree, a personalised olive wood keyring, olive oil from your tree and a collection of special recipes. To find out more, visit olivetree.com.