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Editor's notes...



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** BillericayShenfield.

We're now entering the final chapter of 2020, a year with many 'unprecedented' times. In fact that word unprecedented I have heard more times this year than

ever before.

The message has certainly become more positive recently, with the hope of a vaccine being close to being rolled out. It really does feel like the positive ending to a Hollywood style 'disaster' movie, and hopefully it's the positive news we all need to end 2020 and write it off as a year most would want to forget.

For me, I'm taking the positives (as always). We've made a lot of changes in business and in our personal life, and some of the old ways (pre-COVID) I don't want to go back to. I've certainly enjoyed the flexible working from home more; in fact, my team and I have found that we are more productive than working in an office at times.

In our personal life, we've enjoyed more walks as a family exploring more of the beautiful Essex countryside we have on our doorstep. At home we sometimes get caught up in the day to day, and weeks go swooshing by, but these months of lockdowns and more time at home certainly make me appreciate the little things in life that are most special.

However your year's gone, let's look forward with positivity to 2021. Wishing you all the very best.

Nik

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At 77 years young, Joe Biden's journey to the White House has been a long one, but the US Presidential Election winner won't delay in attempting to bring back together a fractured nation.

After a tumultuous four years as the most powerful man in world politics, it perhaps shouldn't have come as too much of a surprise to find Donald Trump refusing to go quietly in the aftermath of a US Presidential Election defeat that left Democrat Joe Biden at the door of The White House... albeit without a set of keys.

Republican Trump's assertion of ballot box fraud in light of what, admittedly, even his fiercest critic would deem a farcical voting process, will mean the intricacies of the November 3 election will play out in the Supreme Court. And yet, where US politics is concerned, we shouldn't be surprised – four years ago all similar accusations of malpractice were shot across the bow by those same Democrats who are now up in arms over Trump's claims. His suggestion was that thousands of new voting papers were added to the mix, that some were in the name of people long deceased, and that many duplicated votes were received after a chaotic postal vote system that allowed individual states to decide their own rules.

When the dust settles, however, 77-year-old Biden will be inaugurated as the leader of the free world. A lifetime ambition, the Pennsylvania-born former lawyer has been at the forefront of politics for well over five decades, having become a senator in January 1973. Re-elected six times, he was vice president to Barack Obama for eight years, and considered running in 2016, but made way for Hillary Clinton.

He is a passionate advocate of raising the minimum wage and investing in green energy, notably in rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement that Trump controversially left. He promotes criminal justice reform and grants for minority communities, and will also look to expand Obamacare, enlarge the free college system, and challenge China's questionable environment and trade practices. And, most notably, he brings with him to the top table of world politics Kamala Harris, America's first female, first black and first South Asian vice president.

Here in Britain we will look on with interest to see if prime minister Boris Johnson can configure the same buoyancy, trust and commercial parallels he enjoyed with Trump. Our long-term alignment with the States on corporate, social and political levels has been essential for the economy, and now more than ever before the government will be seeking reassurance that this can continue under a new regime.

Despite a desperately narrow winning margin, Joe Biden will enter The White House having achieved the most votes ever for an incoming president – more than 77 million. And yet those celebrating the supposed new dawn of American politics should be wary. Putting aside the somewhat ambitious legal claims that will fill the scrolling new tickers over the coming weeks and months, it remains the case that, even in defeat, Trump's vote total was more than any other elected president in history, Obama included. The brand of confrontational, partisan politics that he popularised continues to resonate with America, and with the Senate still under the control of the Republicans, Biden knows he'll have to fight hard to steady the United States' uneasy global reputation.

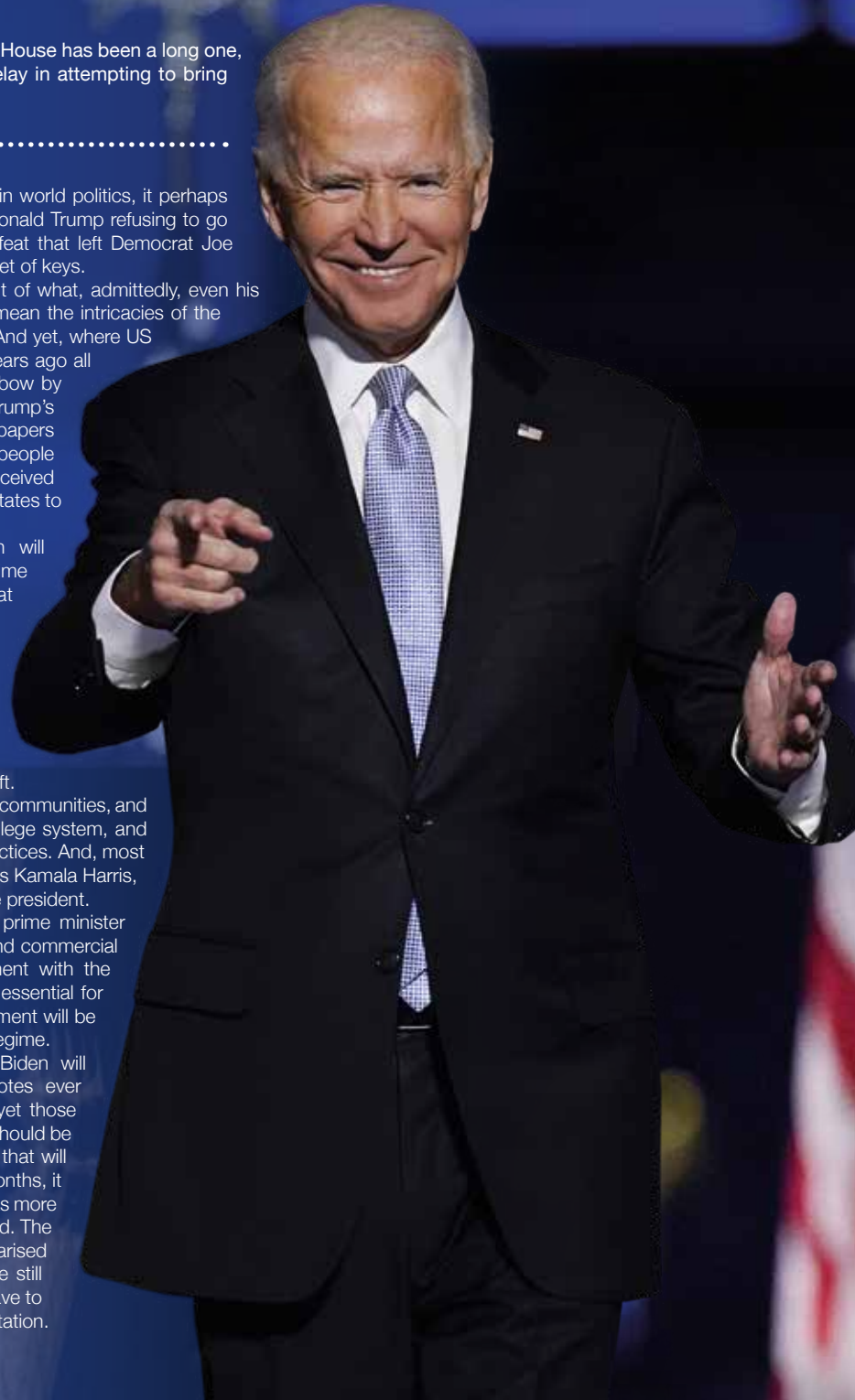


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BIDEN
N
his time

THE WORLD AROUND US

Part 2

In the second of our environmental series that looks at the key drivers in the health and well-being of the planet, we're looking at the legacy of our rainforests.

At the end of the 1980s, the realisation that the world's rainforests were being removed at an alarming rate truly propelled a green revolution – one that continues to thrive today.

Where eco awareness and the preservation of our planet are now a part of everyday life, the way we embraced the saving of the Amazon rainforests had never before been seen.

The realisation that deforestation was claiming an area the size of 20 football pitches every minute – for the acquiring of timber and repurposing of land for cattle ranching – was profound, but the deafening screams of those early environmentalists are now just faint murmurs. So what has happened to those green expanses?

Sadly, the problem still exists. A quarter of the Amazon has disappeared, probably never to return, while some speculation suggests the remainder may be felled within 50 years if tighter restrictions are not forthcoming.

Globally, one in four people depends directly on forests for their livelihood, and as many as 120 prescription drugs worldwide are derived directly from rainforests.

And yet, there are two sides to every story. Many South Americans will point to the economic necessity of monetising a natural resource, just as the UK has done with oil and gas. Even the Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro has called the destruction of these plant- and animal-rich expanses “cultural”; and in a country that has more than 20 million people living in poverty, it's not difficult to see why resistance is strong.

To conclude, it seems that while the days are gone where almost every other charitable programme was driven towards preserving these incredible habitats, it's simply a case of having our attention diverted to other ills. Three decades after we first reached out to our rainforests, the battle to save them lives on.

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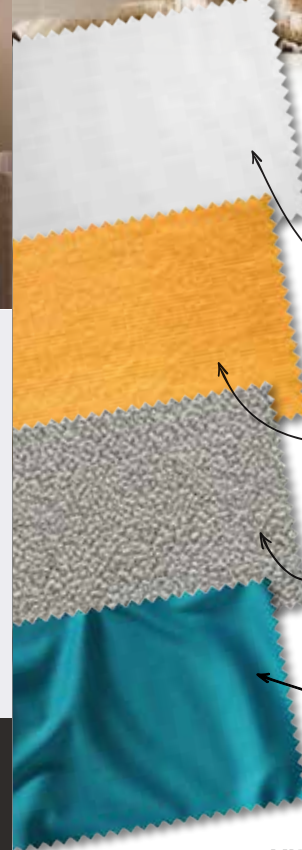
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Banish the brrr!



HOME & DIY



If you spend all day every day in the winter months longing to return to the comfort and cosiness of your bed, then you may be interested to find out what the best bed sheets are for winter warmth.

From fleece to flannel, cotton to silk, keep reading to discover what fabric you should choose for your winter safe haven.

Cotton: Although you may think that cotton is more fitting for the summer, if you are the type of sleeper who ends up kicking off your covers halfway through the night, then cotton might be the ideal material for you all year round. A natural fabric, cotton is known for its moisture-wicking abilities, meaning it is great for regulating your overall body temperature. If you have sensitive skin, opt for organic cotton sheets which are both breathable and good for the environment.

Flannel: Synonymous with warmth, flannel is one of the most popular choices for winter bedding. A cross between cotton and fleece, this fabric is soft, airy and breathable, making it the perfect choice for anyone who loves a bed that is warm but not overwhelmingly so.

Fleece: Arguably the warmest material you can choose for your bed sheets, fleece is a synthetic fabric that is ultra-soft and built for insulation. Often used in winter sports gear, fleece is designed to insulate heat in even the coldest conditions, meaning it is ideal for those below-freezing winter nights.

Silk: This may be the last fabric that you would think of when it comes to choosing winter bedding, but silk has the unique ability to retain heat while at same time remaining lightweight and smooth to touch. Opt for pure silk bedding if possible as this has moisturising properties; something that your parched winter skin so desperately needs.



HOME & DIY



Chic OR UNIQUE

THE RETURN OF SHABBY CHIC AND HOW TO PULL IT OFF

The revolving circle of décor and design has, over the years, gripped a nation of amateur interior designers. Shabby chic, a style that first came to prominence in the 1980s, is making a concerted return to prominence.

Its invention was as a rebellion to the hard, shiny, ultra-modern, clean-cut image of three decades ago, when yuppies and electronica ruled the roost. The term 'shabby chic' was thought up by fashion journalist Min Hogg.

And the concept hasn't strayed too far since – from distressed furniture to unmatching fabrics and colours, a rustic, rugged essence that's based on comfort and quantity, rather than image and minimalistic posturing.

To achieve the shabby chic look really is to open your imagination, either by pooling existing items or exploring flea markets, thrift stores and antique shops.

Many people think repainting and running a grooved spatula across an old set of drawers is the sum total of shabby chic, but it's about much more than that. Soft background colours flatter furniture and make items the focal point of a room, so think about using whites, beiges or even light greys.

Pastels – baby blues, pale pinks, grainy greys and warm yellows – work best, while that base of brightness means retro, darker shades of wood can match and contrast, be that on tables or chairs. Meanwhile, wicker and throws soften edges and enhance comfort, and wrought iron provides structure.

As far as the walls and surface tops go, flowers, mirrors and pictures using worn frames will assist you in topping off the perfect shabby chic room, with knick-knacks, signs and cushions adding to the mix.

Past that, the only limit is your imagination. And the best thing about shabby chic is that it needn't cost the earth – adding wear and tear to your own items is cheap, if not free.

Photo credit: Spike Powell and Lisa Cohen via idealhome.co.uk



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HOME & DIY

DIY Glass art

Nobody likes to look at a big, bare wall, but there are only so many family pictures that one room can take, so why not have a go at this simple, yet stunning, DIY glass wall art? You only need a few basic craft materials and a little bit of creative flair and you are good to go.

YOU WILL NEED

- > Multipurpose, water-based craft paints (small pots) in your preferred colours
- > Masking tape
- > Glue gun
- > 1 glass picture frame
- > Paint brush – soft acrylic or watercolour brushes work well

HOW TO MAKE

- > Ensure the glass within the frame is secure; if not, use a glue gun to stick it in place
- > Allow the glue to fully dry before continuing
- > Mask the edges of the frame and use a clean, dry cloth to dust the glass
- > Decide upon your design – you could use your initial, a flower or a simple inspirational quote
- > If using a stencil, position your chosen design under the glass or go freehand
- > Paint your design in layers, allowing the paint to dry between each coat
- > Once your design is fully dry, remove the masking tape and display proudly on your chosen wall

TOP TIPS FOR PAINTING ON GLASS

- > Always clean the surface before painting
- > Handle the glass carefully to avoid fingerprints
- > Choose the right brush – synthetic brushes can create visible brushstrokes, whereas natural hair brushes allow for more paint to be applied in one stroke and provide a smoother coverage
- > Do not apply too much pressure with your brush
- > Avoid overworking the paint
- > Always blot your brush after rinsing it to eliminate any excess water
- > Clean away imperfections while the paint is still wet, using a wet brush, toothpick or paper towel
- > When the paint has dried, use a razor blade to scrape or trim off any imperfections

OTHER IDEAS FOR DIY GLASS ART:

- > Use markers to write out your favourite quotes
- > Press flowers (two pieces of glass required)



Photo credit: heartformmag.co.uk, theapollobox.com, GoldPetallettering via etsy.com



HOME & DIY



Time to breathe better

To keep out the cold and to keep energy costs down, buildings have become increasingly airtight, with improved insulation and high-efficiency windows and doors. Although this is good for your bank balance, it is not so beneficial to your health.

Fortunately, there are ways in which you can improve the air quality in your home this winter.

KEEP YOUR HOME CLEAN

During the winter, when you are unlikely to have your windows open, dust, animal dander and mould can become a problem. Therefore, you need to stay on top of your cleaning regime. Vacuum at least twice a week, regularly wash your bedding and clear away any clutter.

CHANGE YOUR AIR FILTERS

If you have a forced-air heating system in your home, you need to ensure you are changing the filters on a regular basis. This is because electrostatic filters work to trap dust and other airborne irritants rather than

allowing them to circulate around your home.

INVEST IN AN AIR PURIFIER

If you struggle with allergies but can't control the source of the problem, for example you do not want to give up a family pet, an air purifier can help to catch some of the irritants that trigger your symptoms. A dehumidifier can also be a great idea if your home is prone to damp as it can help prevent the growth of mould.

HAVE YOUR CHIMNEY SWEPT

Wood-burning fires are lovely in winter but they need to be used responsibly. Avoid burning wet logs or coal as these can produce hazardous particles. You should also ensure that your chimney is cleaned at least once a year so that smoke can escape.

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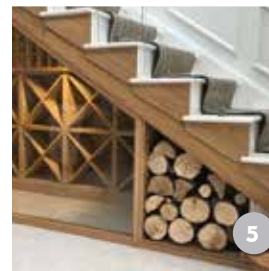
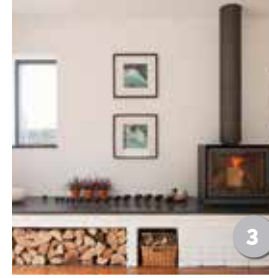
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HOME & DIY



If you are lucky enough to have a wood-burning fire in your home, then you probably can't wait to start torching some timber and heating it up. However, where are you supposed to keep all your lovely logs?

1. Fill any gaps: If you have supporting pillars of wood, or you are using a partial dividing wall to separate two rooms, why not take advantage of any hollow spaces or gaps and fill them with logs? Not only does this look stylish, but it is also a great way of using up an otherwise wasted space.

2. Pile high: For those who want to make a statement with their logs, this big and bold solution is for you. Effectively building a feature wall of firewood, you can utilise any unused alcove in your home to create this eye-catching display. This is not advised if you have young children owing to the risk of injury.

3. Create a cubbyhole: If you have a wood-burning stove rather than an actual fireplace and you are looking to build a surface for it to sit on, you should remember to factor storage into your design. This multitasking brick stage includes both room for both logs and kindling.

4. Go rustic: One of the simplest ways to stylishly store your logs is to use a large, country-style basket. Make sure you pick one that is big enough to fit all your log-burning supplies and is both sturdy and strong. Alternatively, for a more contemporary look, opt for a metal design.

5. Be sneaky: If you have an outdoor storage area for your logs, you only need to display a handful in your home, so look for unused space in your property, such as under the stairs or eaves where you can create a bespoke storage space.

Photo credit: shelterness.com, idealhome.co.uk, vanillersheryn.com, aplaceforeverything.co.uk, houzz.com



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HOME & DIY



Wrap it up!



Reduce, reuse and recycle: the three Rs that can help you clear your home of the vast quantities of leftover Christmas wrapping paper, while at the same time doing your bit to help the environment.

Check out these four creative ways to make use of unwanted gift wrap.

1. Beautiful bunting or baubles

Whether you have traditional Christmas wrapping paper, kids' character paper or a metallic variety, you can easily create your own bunting using just a pair of scissors and some string, or get a bit more creative and make some DIY baubles (watch online videos for instructions). Perfect for New Year, a 2021 birthday party or even for simply jazzing up a coffee morning.

2. Cute confetti

How often have you had to make a last-minute dash to a card shop to buy confetti for a party? Why not make your own instead by simply shredding leftover wrapping paper or even

cutting out shapes using a cutter.

3. Perk up serving trays or drawers

Festive wrapping paper is perfect for injecting some life into an old, boring serving tray. Alternatively, bring some life into your cupboards and line your drawers with gift wrap and feel uplifted each time you open them.

4. Magical magnets

A great idea for kids: cut out a small circle of your chosen piece of wrapping paper, affix to the bottom of a flat marble, add a magnet and stick to your fridge for a festive feel all year round.

How to reuse your wrapping paper

If you are keen to reuse your Christmas wrapping paper, and your kids haven't destroyed it beyond repair, you can iron the paper before you use it to transform it back to its original glory. Make sure you set your iron to the lowest setting and cover the paper with a towel before applying any heat.

Photo credit: centsationalgirl, offbeatandinspired, iheartorganizing, thoughtfullysimple, youaremyfave.com, instructables.com, momshavequestionstoo

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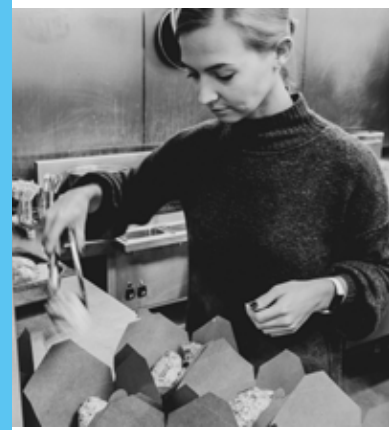
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Community thanked for backing free meals scheme

A bar in Billericay was left overwhelmed after the community rallied behind a scheme to help provide meals for hungry local children.

Players Lounge, in Radford Way, put out an appeal to the Billericay community to ask for support over the October half-term, so it could provide free meals to families and children who may need them.

Supported by local businesses and donations from the community, it was able to provide more than 370 lunches and 200 dinners for anyone who needed help.

It also raised more than £800 for the Billericay Food Bank.

The offer was open to anyone, with no questions asked, and people could either collect or have the food delivered.

Local businesses helped provide the food, while Swift Cars Billericay delivered the meals every single day.

Celebrating the success of the event, Players Lounge thanked the community on its Facebook page.

It said: "Billericay you absolutely smashed it, wow."

"To everyone who made donations and to everyone who gave their time to help - it is very much appreciated. Thank you everyone for making this happen."

"We'd also like to send some special thanks to local businesses who joined us and we encourage future donations to Billericay Food Bank, especially during these times. They provide an invaluable service throughout our community, every day of the year."

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Photo credit: Nicky Hayes Photography

LOCAL NEWS BILLERICAY

Jake makes history

Billericay Town FC finally got their season up and running thanks to a hat trick by Jake Robinson, who is now the club's second all-time top goal scorer. He bagged a hat trick away at Hemel Hempstead Town in an impressive 4-1 victory, in what was the club's first success of the season.

Robinson has now scored 115 goals in 150 appearances, leapfrogging Leon Gutzmore. It was also his 12th hat trick for Billericay.

However, he trails Fred Claydon, who is the club's all-time leading scorer, with 260 goals and 15 hat tricks.

Speaking after the win, manager Jamie O'Hara

couldn't hide his delight.

He said: "I'm delighted with the performance and happy for the boys. It's been a painful few weeks where I've started to question myself, but the players proved they will put everything in for me and for the club."

O'Hara also singled out Robinson. He said: "Jake is phenomenal. To score that many goals at any level is incredible, and on top of that he has been a great servant to the club on and off the pitch.

"I'm learning how to get the best out of him. He doesn't run around as much as he used to but he can score some goals; he's always in the right place."

Pupils told to wear thermals this winter



Photo credit: Ruby Ward @theartofjondonn

Pupils at a Billericay school are being told to wrap up warm over the winter as the school will be leaving windows open in a bid to tackle coronavirus.

In the latest newsletter to parents and pupils, The Billericay School urged those who attend the school to wear warm clothing.

The school said guidance from the government has "emphasised the importance of ventilation" and so steps would be taken to ensure airflow inside classrooms.

Headteacher, Ahson Mohammed, said: "In reality, this means that classroom windows and doors will need to remain open in order to ensure a reasonable circulation of air into classrooms.

"I would again ask parents to consider the issue of suitable layered clothing for students who will be studying in such conditions.

"Items may include a school jumper to be worn under the school blazer or a thermal t-shirt to be worn under the school shirt.

"If a teacher in any given lesson judges the room temperature to be such that it is appropriate for students to keep their outdoor coat on during the lesson they will allow students to do so."



Photo credit: Ruby Ward @heartoflondon

Trespass incidents on the rise since pandemic hit

Trespass incidents on the railway have been on the rise since the pandemic hit, with the latest incident near Billericay causing more delays.

When people trespass on the railway, trains have to be stopped or slowed, with each incident costing the taxpayers thousands of pounds as Network Rail has to compensate train operators for the delays.

On top of that, it takes up the time of the emergency services, such as on October 17 when a person trespassed between Billericay and Shenfield.

A Greater Anglia statement said: "Due to a trespass

incident between Shenfield and Billericay trains have to run at reduced speed on all lines.

"Train services running through these stations may be delayed or revised.

"Emergency services attended."

Becky Crocker, Network Rail's community safety manager, said: "The safety of people on and around the railway is our priority, and those who deliberately trespass fail to understand the real dangers.

"That's why it's so important that our safety messages get out to schools and communities across Essex."

Pair to bring festive cheer to community



Getting ready for Christmas is going to be easier for people in Billericay this year thanks to two friends who have set up a festive delivery service.

Alex and Tom both worked in the events industry until COVID hit, have joined forces to create Deliver Me Christmas.

Deliver Me Christmas deliver Christmas trees, wreaths and luxury accessories to the Brentwood and Billericay area.

All of their trees are sustainably grown Premium Nordmann Fir (non drop) and grown in Wales. Then Deliver Me Christmas offer a recycling service before putting the trees through a chipper so it can be used as fertiliser.

The Christmas trees are due to be delivered in the first half of December. Wreaths and accessories can also be ordered for delivery anywhere in the UK.

Alex and Tom told **VISION**BillericayShenfield: "The pandemic changed everything but we are really excited about Deliver Me Christmas and the feedback we've had so far."

For more information visit www.delivermechristmas.co.uk

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NEWS FROM YOUR LOCAL POLICE TEAM



LOCAL NEWS BILLERICAY

Billericay Community Policing Team have been working across the town this month, in particular supporting retailers with the latest COVID-19 regulations. We are aware that there are those who would like to target vulnerable or elderly shoppers, particularly in the run-up to Christmas. To reduce your risk of being targeted:

- > Do keep purses and bags closed and secure at all times.
- > Do carry bags in front of you or diagonally across your chest.
- > Do return cards to your purse or wallet quickly and zip it up or button it.
- > Do use a bag that's difficult to open. One that zips or snaps shut is best, and keep it closed.
- > Do use a money belt if you're carrying a significant quantity of cash.

- > Do conceal your wallet in a buttoned or zipped pocket where it doesn't bulge.
 - > Do keep a list, separate from your wallet and phone, of family contact numbers in case your phone is stolen.
 - > Use a purse bell; these give you an audible warning as the bells jingle, alerting you to any movement.
- Owing to the COVID-19 regulations, we have not been able to run face-to-face events where we can provide crime prevention advice and purse bells. Therefore, we have provided Waitrose in Billericay with a quantity of purse bells for elderly and vulnerable shoppers. If you would benefit or know someone who would, pop into the store and ask at the Customer Service Desk.

Pair set sights on £100k target



A Billericay man is on a mission to raise £100,000 for Cancer Research UK in memory of his son who died of cancer at just 23 years old.

James Van Cleef, 53, and his brother-in-law, Mark Bayliss, are raising money for the charity after James' son, Adam, died of soft tissue cancer.

The pair have so far raised more than £50,000 by completing a series of cycling challenges. They include cycling from John O'Groats to Lands End in 2018, the 500-mile pilgrimage from St-Jean-Pied-de-Port, France, to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, in 2019 and a 500-mile cycle around the Scottish Highlands North Coast.

The couple have sadly had to take a year off their epic challenges because of the pandemic.

However, they are planning a mammoth 3,400-mile trip from New York to Chicago, and along Route 66 to Santa Monica, California, beginning in August next year.

Mark, who lives in Cornwall, has also decided to add to the fundraising pot his annual profit from his holiday home in the south west.

James said: "Whatever money we raise will not be for our Adam, but it will be for all those whose young lives will be changed because of cancer. It is for them, and their families, so they can hold on to the hope that cancer is conquerable."

Jessica Allchin, Cancer Research UK's local fundraising manager for Essex, said: "We are absolutely blown away by the efforts that Mark and James are making to achieve their goal of raising £100,000."

To support the pair's fundraising, visit fundraise.cancerresearchuk.org/page/marks-giving-page-124

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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood

LOCAL NEWS SHENFIELD



School crowned national champions after epic final

Shenfield High School is celebrating after winning a national football cup and reaching the final of another.

The school's U13s boys team were crowned Elite Schools National Cup champions while the U14s girls narrowly lost in the final on penalties.

It's the second year in a row the sides have reached the final.

Shenfield's boys team reached the final, being held at Lilleshall National Sports Centre, having beaten Northampton School for Boys in the March semi-final.

The long wait for the final to be played was worth it as they triumphed 11-10 on penalties against Sandwell Academy, which is partnered with West Bromwich Albion.

In the second half, Sandwell saw two shots superbly saved by inspired goalkeeper Martin Wicher, before the referee blew the final whistle at 0-0.

The drama was prolonged more than ever as every outfield player took and scored their penalty.

At 10-10 it was down to the goalkeepers as Wicher stepped up and smashed his shot into the top right-hand corner. He then pulled off a brilliant save to seal the cup for Shenfield.

This title was Shenfield's first in the ESFA's Elite Schools category, where schools can play unlimited numbers of academy footballers.

Meanwhile, the U14s girls met Hodgson Academy from Blackpool in their final.

Elise Jennings scored an incredible four goals in the game, but Hodgson won 5-4 on penalties.

Team manager, Garry Sapsford, said: "We are so grateful to the ESFA for getting the finals organised, and each of our players will have memories for life.

"We are equally proud of our boys' and girls' teams for making the finals."



Residents have their say on future of play park



Residents have had their say on the future of Hutton Recreation play area after Brentwood Borough Council asked them to help shape what it will look like.

The play area is set for a refurbishment under the council's five-year Play Area Strategy, which has already seen improvements at King George's Playing Fields and the play area at River Road.

Plans for Hutton are already under way, and the second phase of the consultation with residents ran from November 3 to 20.

Residents had different play equipment options to choose from, including three different roundabouts, and these options were marked under a scoring system to gauge the response.

Now the second consultation phase has been completed, the final design will be created before being made available on the council website.

Chair of community and health committee, councillor Cliff Poppy, said: "The new consultation was the ideal opportunity for residents to give their views and to really shape how the new Hutton Recreation play area will look, and the type of play themes that it will offer.

"We have already completed King George's and River Road and they are smashing parks now with lots to interest children and encourage them to try out all sorts of play."

Groups win funding to develop community projects

Two projects aiming to reconnect people to the local landscape in and around Shenfield have won a share of £26,100 in funding.

Visitors to Shenfield Common will benefit after the Conservators of Shenfield Common received money to open up the woodland area and create a safer and more accessible environment.

Meanwhile, the Essex Rock and Mineral Society, which is based in Shenfield, will use the funding

to restore the geological section and associated geological items at Thorndon Country Park.

The money comes from the Land of the Fanns Landscape Partnership Scheme. Over the last four years, it has awarded £75,000 to projects across the Land of the Fanns area, helping local groups and organisations both big and small to protect, restore and preserve important community assets, opening up new opportunities for local people to discover the heritage and environmental treasures on their doorsteps and improving the environment for wildlife and for everyone to enjoy for years to come.

Have your say on library's next chapter

Residents are being asked for their views on plans to redevelop and modernise Shenfield Library.

Essex County Council (ECC) has launched a public consultation, which will run until mid-December.

The new plans would see the current library building replaced with a larger one and would include a commercial unit and a community meeting space.

The outdoor public area at the front of the library would also be significantly enhanced.

The council says that the "existing library building is expensive to maintain, in need of significant repair and is an inefficient use of the space available".

The new-build library would address these issues and be funded through the development of up to 10 residential apartments above the ground floor.

Councillor Tony Ball, ECC cabinet member for economic development, said: "Our exciting proposals to redevelop the Shenfield Library site would deliver a new, modern library as well as other potential commercial and community uses, and vastly improved outdoor public space.

"They have been developed in close consultation with the library service and local stakeholders to ensure the new library will deliver on the needs of library users and staff."

The plans and more information will be available on ECC's website.



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DR NING ON



In the first instance, an obsession for hobbyists, nerds and those looking to reap havoc around airports for the lucky few jetting off on holidays. Yet how we perceive drones in 2020 is beginning to change, not least in their ability to save lives.

More and more now, search-and-rescue teams are using drones to survey huge areas quickly and efficiently. Predominantly this is because missions – at sea, on mountain ranges or even in remote wildernesses – are dangerous, time-consuming and particularly expensive. They can demand huge quantities of manpower and can be exhausting.

Drones provide an efficient, versatile, unmanned resource that can take on the workload of what could be hundreds of volunteers, and in a way that is much quicker too. Whether across trees, water or rocks, a drone has the range and the ability to get close to the ground in a way that a rescue helicopter would never be able to.

From specific events, such as the recent wildfires across Australia, to flood and avalanche disasters in China, to missing person searches in any location, it's estimated that it takes 25 people 35 hours to

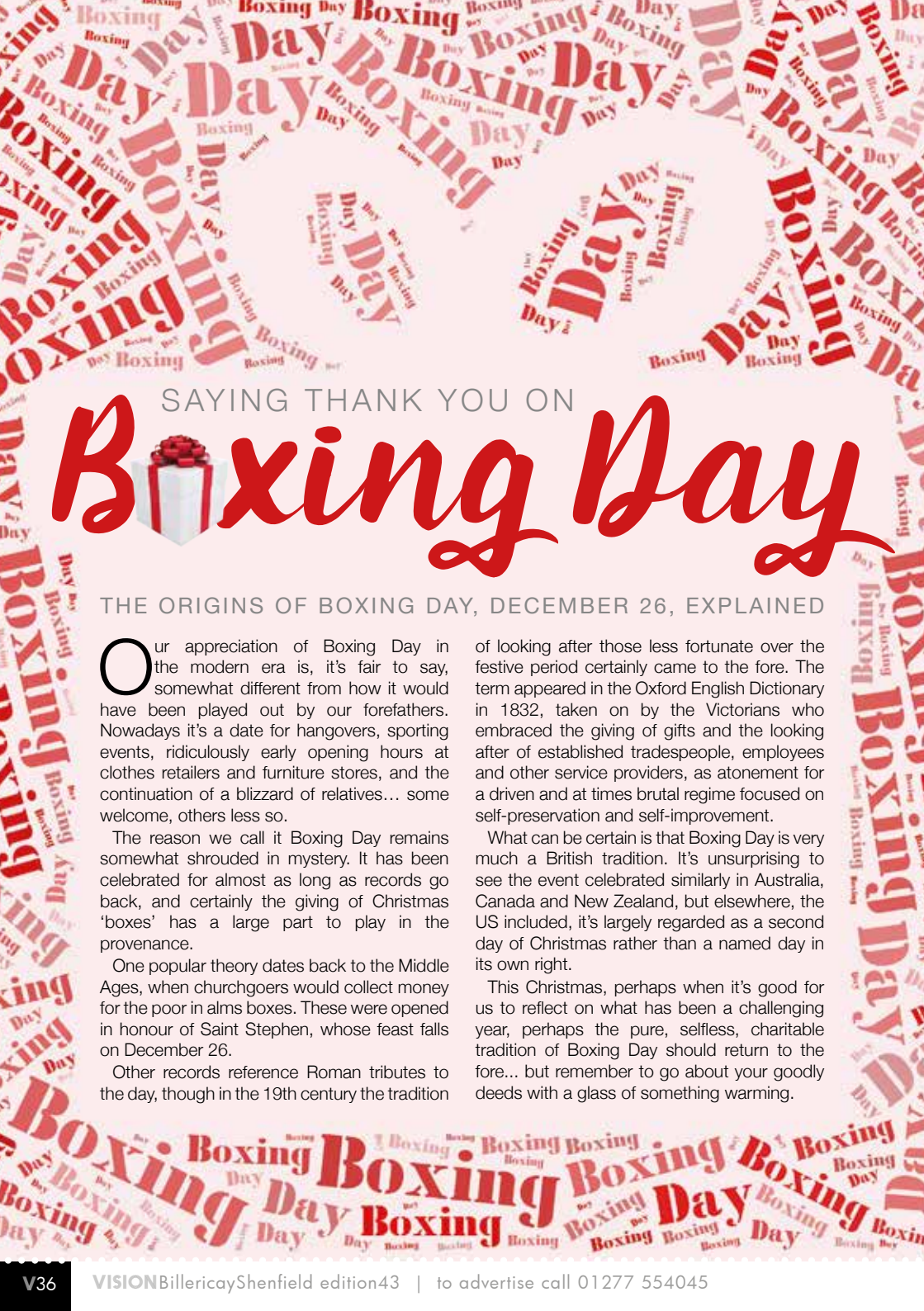
search one square mile for missing persons, compared to the 30 minutes it takes a drone to cover the same area.

It's little wonder the producers of this tech are seeing the value of their companies rocket, with emergency services, the police included, ordering drones in huge quantities in order to make their work easier.

Some drones even have built-in delivery capabilities, enabling urgent blood supplies to be transported to hard-to-reach areas. This was particularly effective with the delivery of 7,000 units of blood – that's 25 per cent of the national blood supply – outside Rwanda's capital city Kigali in 2018, which saved more than a thousand lives.

From geek toys to go-to devices for emergency services, the popularity of drones will continue to ascend.





SAYING THANK YOU ON

Boxing Day

THE ORIGINS OF BOXING DAY, DECEMBER 26, EXPLAINED

Our appreciation of Boxing Day in the modern era is, it's fair to say, somewhat different from how it would have been played out by our forefathers. Nowadays it's a date for hangers, sporting events, ridiculously early opening hours at clothes retailers and furniture stores, and the continuation of a blizzard of relatives... some welcome, others less so.

The reason we call it Boxing Day remains somewhat shrouded in mystery. It has been celebrated for almost as long as records go back, and certainly the giving of Christmas 'boxes' has a large part to play in the provenance.

One popular theory dates back to the Middle Ages, when churchgoers would collect money for the poor in alms boxes. These were opened in honour of Saint Stephen, whose feast falls on December 26.

Other records reference Roman tributes to the day, though in the 19th century the tradition

of looking after those less fortunate over the festive period certainly came to the fore. The term appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1832, taken on by the Victorians who embraced the giving of gifts and the looking after of established tradespeople, employees and other service providers, as atonement for a driven and at times brutal regime focused on self-preservation and self-improvement.

What can be certain is that Boxing Day is very much a British tradition. It's unsurprising to see the event celebrated similarly in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, but elsewhere, the US included, it's largely regarded as a second day of Christmas rather than a named day in its own right.

This Christmas, perhaps when it's good for us to reflect on what has been a challenging year, perhaps the pure, selfless, charitable tradition of Boxing Day should return to the fore... but remember to go about your goodly deeds with a glass of something warming.

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Channel HOPPING

Celebrating the 30-year anniversary of the breakthrough on the most ambitious construction project of them all

It is a piece of engineering that many thought impossible, some considered economically unfeasible, and a few even purported was largely unnecessary; and yet, three decades after contact was made between English and French engineers deep under the sea, the Channel Tunnel continues to celebrate linking and uniting the UK with mainland Europe.

It is estimated that more than 400 million people have ventured deep below the channel, either as a first step towards business or pleasure on mainland Europe or as venture in the opposite direction.

The idea was first conceived way back in 1802, where oil lamps would light the route for horse-drawn carts to make the dark, dank descent under the sea. But it wasn't until 1987 that some significantly updated plans saw the first boring of the tunnel.

In connecting the UK and France, the engineers were finally doing away with outdated and overstretched ferry and boat services across the channel. Indeed, it's now the case that 30 per cent of all goods traded between the UK and continental Europe go through the 'Chunnel', worth more than £150 billion each year.

It was on the night of December 1, 1990, that one of the 11 mighty boring machines carving a way through rock, which last saw the light of day during the Jurassic period, finally broke through. In doing so, it linked Britain to mainland Europe for the first time in more than 50,000 years, dating way back to before the English Channel swamped the deep valleys that intersect our two great nations.

In that moment, a project that cost £18 billion, the most expensive construction project ever attempted, and a unique three-way 25-mile rail link (for Eurotunnel Shuttle, Eurostar and freight trains), moved a step closer to becoming reality. Engineers Graham Fagg and Philippe Cozette shook hands through a 30-inch hole some 50 metres below the seabed, celebrating a unique act of engineering unity.

Now, some two and a half decades after it opened to passengers, it's still natural to wonder at the design (which is actually three large cavern pipes, one in each direction and a service tunnel in the middle). It all means that, whether departing Folkestone in an old banger or London St Pancras in first class, mainland Europe is never more than an hour away.

It has transformed not just our ability to holiday on mainland Europe, but also our perception of travel as a whole – an island nation finally connected to its continent.

As time has gone on, the Channel Tunnel – one of the seven wonders of the modern world – has only ever felt its reputation enhanced. Perhaps it is the ease with which we can board a train to France, effectively without even leaving our car; perhaps it is the relatively low cost (a one-way trip can be taken for as little as £60); perhaps it is simply the customer-friendly approach adopted by Eurotunnel – namely that if you miss your allocated crossing you can simply hop on the next one – or the salubrious pleasure of boarding Eurostar.

Or perhaps it's simply the case that no matter what other emotions have been stirred up through Brexit and our nation's desire to return to a more independent existence, we will always embrace our European cousins and the adventures that lie beyond the tracks.

Since completion in 1994, the equivalent of six times the population of the UK has crossed through the Tunnel.

6x Each shuttle is almost 800 metres long, that's the length of seven football pitches.

7x The earth they dug out to create the Tunnel could fill Wembley Stadium.

Since the year 2000, over **2 million** dogs and cats have travelled with Eurotunnel, representing 80% of all pets crossing the Channel.

Some 300,000,000 tonnes of freight have been transported via the Tunnel on Eurotunnel shuttles, and on freight trains since it opened.

Over **300,000,000 tonnes** of freight have been transported via the Tunnel on Eurotunnel shuttles, and on freight trains since it opened.

The UK crossover (between the two rail tunnels) is a cavern, and is tall enough to stand 3 London double-decker buses on top of each other.

The excavated earth from the Tunnel is mostly from the Calais region, which was once a marshy area. It was used to create the White Cliffs of Dover in Kent, and a hill at Le Fond Pignon in France which offers panoramic views over the coastal town of Calais.

4.9 million cubic metres of chalk and shale were excavated during construction and used to create Calanque Park, a 30 hectare nature reserve located at the foot of the White Cliffs of Dover in Kent, and a hill at Le Fond Pignon in France which offers panoramic views over the coastal town of Calais.

1 million e-commerce express delivery parcels travel through the Tunnel each day.

The concrete rings that line the tunnels are made of some of the strongest concrete in the world.

For Valentine's Day, 26 million red roses were delivered through the Tunnel to the UK.

13,000 engineers, technicians and workers helped construct the Tunnel.

The service tunnel runs between the two rail tunnels – it is mainly used by maintenance workers, but some staff have also run through it for charity. Chris Froome has cycled through it, and it's been used for filming – from the drama series 'The Tunnel' to an Audi TV ad.

80 million vehicles have boarded the Shuttle since it opened (cars, motorcycles, camper vans, coaches, trucks and more).

55 metres and a depth of 68 metres It was large enough to contain the Arc de Triomphe.

The original shaft in Calais, France, had an internal diameter of **55 metres and a depth of 68 metres**. It was large enough to contain the Arc de Triomphe.

11 boring machines were used to make the Tunnel. In total they weighed 12,000 tonnes – **that's even more than the Eiffel Tower weighs.**

The passenger service Eurostar, one of Eurotunnel's biggest customers, has travelled through the Tunnel since the start.

£12bn of fresh fruit and vegetables are carried every year by Eurotunnel.

The most expensive car to travel on the Shuttle was a Ferrari, worth **£5.7m**.

8,500 years ago People were walking between what is now the UK and Continental Europe.

That's over 477,710 miles If you put all the vehicles that have been through the Tunnel bumper to bumper, the line would be almost long enough to reach the moon and back from Earth.

20% of goods traded between the UK and Continental Europe go through the Channel Tunnel, which represents a value of **€138bn** per year.

We work with specialist transporters to relocate all sorts of animals as part of conservation and breeding programmes. These have included: giant tortoise, cheetahs, snakes, penguins, eels, tigers, sharks, butterflies and lizards.

Cheetah Snake Giant Tortoise Penguin

4G mobile services are available in the Tunnel.

Did you know One of the boring machines is buried under the sea. It was too big to back out, so it turned left and got stuck in!

37.9km (25 miles) The longest undersea tunnel in the world.

EUROTUNNEL le shuttle

EUROTUNNEL A WONDER OF THE MODERN WORLD

Photo credit: www.eurotunnel.com



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PUZZLES

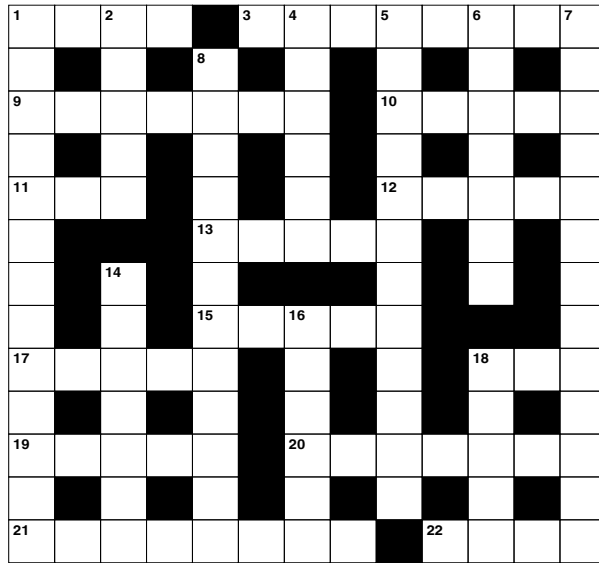
Answers can be found on the Contents Page 4

ACROSS

- Set of playing cards (4)
- Neck injury (8)
- Genuine (7)
- Kick out (5)
- 17th Greek letter (3)
- The beginning of an era (5)
- Enclosed (5)
- Bird sound (5)
- Turned to ice (5)
- Statute (3)
- Exposes secret information (5)
- Country whose capital is Reykjavik (7)
- Longing (8)
- Refuse to admit (4)

DOWN

- Shamefully (13)
- Showing a willingness to achieve results (3-2)
- Doglike mammals (6)
- Planned in advance (12)
- Sanction (7)
- Unenthusiastically (4-9)



- Food shop (12)
- Proportionately (3,4)
- Banner or flag (6)
- Lessen (5)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Hummingbirds are the only birds that are able to fly backwards
- ▶ The short-horned lizard squirts blood from blood vessels around its eyes when defending itself. This is because the blood vessels rupture under pressure
- ▶ A giant panda will typically eat for around 12 hours a day
- ▶ Elephant ears help to keep the animals cool by radiating heat
- ▶ Young jaguars are blind at birth. They learn to hunt by living with their mother for two years or more
- ▶ Wolves can go for more than a week without eating
- ▶ A fox can communicate with other foxes by using its tail
- ▶ The bald eagle has a wingspan of around eight feet

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As film icons go, there are few to rival James Bond; and as Bond actors go, there are none to rival Sir Sean Connery.

In a year that has been unkind on so many levels, fans of film perhaps felt an added sense of injustice at the end of October when it was announced that Sir Sean Connery had passed away, at the age of 90.

Of course, in many respects, the actor's work was done. Connery was the smooth-talking, sumptuously styled Scot who legitimised, developed and truly delivered 007 into the golden era of film. The first man to step into the secret agent's shoes, with 1962's *Dr No*, Connery, a former bodybuilder who finished third in Mr Universe in the early 1950s, proved to author Ian Fleming that he had the fervour and finesse to carry off the role, having previously been dismissed as "an overgrown stuntman".

It seems perverse that someone who would go on to become so decorated in the indulgence and luxury of 1960s cinema may have been cast aside before it even began, but it's fair to note that the actor's previous engagements had been in rather less salubrious guises, notably in crime drama *Hell Drivers*, fantasy adventure *Darby O'Gill and the Little People* and outward-bound action flick *Tarzan's Greatest Adventure*.

That, within a decade, Connery would have elevated his worth from tracking the movements of a man swinging through the jungle to starring in iconic movies such as *From Russia with Love*, *Goldfinger*, *Thunderball* and *You Only Live Twice*, is remarkable.

What made Connery's sumptuously smooth portrayal of Bond so impressive was that, unlike the modern-day 007s, he interspersed international espionage with an array of other lead roles. Seventeen movies were made across the nine years he portrayed Bond, a sequence that ended in 1971 with *Diamonds are Forever* (although he did agree to reprise the character in 1983's *Never Say Never Again*).

"I got to the point where I felt I had nothing left to prove as far as Bond was concerned," said Connery. "It was a delightful run where the evolution of 007 and everything around him had gathered such pace with every new movie; yet in myself I thought I had probably evolved as much as I had wanted, and it was time to let someone else have a go."

Away from Bond, twice-married Connery flourished in the likes of *Murder on the Orient Express*, *A Bridge too Far*, *Highlander*, *The Untouchables*, *The Hunt for Red October* and as Indiana Jones' father in *The Last Crusade*.

There are the ones that got away too – he turned down the role of Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings* despite being offered a \$30million bounty; he also rejected playing Architect in *The Matrix* trilogy. The truth is, Connery, who was knighted in the year 2000, was always focused on how he saw himself – as an actor, and as a person... how else can you explain turning down a direct invitation to join Manchester United by legendary manager Sir Matt Busby.

"I was 23 at the time and although I had the contract offer in front of me, I had long decided that football would take a backseat to acting. I felt I had more chance of doing something special, something unique, in the acting world; I felt I could give more and put smiles on more faces, my own included."

Sir Sean, you succeeded.

The Ultimate Bond?



Photo credit: pv.brothers/Shutterstock.com



TRAVEL

Walk This way



SOME OF THE BEST PLACES TO VISIT FOR WALKING HOLIDAYS IN THE UK

In troubled times, there's nothing nicer than putting on a pair of sturdy walking boots and disappearing off into the yonder; and the UK has some of the most stunning scenery ready to be explored.

Here are five very different walking holidays that will help you blow away the cobwebs:

For art... Talk to the Welsh about Dylan Thomas and they may well point you around his home town of Laugharne, with spectacular views over the Taf Estuary. His *Poem in October* documents a walk he took on that very route, and now outdoors philosophers can do the same.

For wildlife and nature... The wilds of Cumbria offer spectacular views wherever you are, but head to Howgill Fells for a hike that brings you out at the highest waterfall in the UK. Peaceful, breathless and beautiful in every way, it's a wondrous place to relax.

For foodies... Cornwall's love of everything homely

and rustic extends through to its walks, with the route along the South West Coast Path greeting intrepid walkers with all manner of villages and enclaves. From five-star restaurants to cosy pubs and comfy cafés, fantastic food is around every corner.

For geology... When the Earth was created and rock types were being dished out, Dorset was clearly hogging space at the front of the queue, with the 27-mile route along the Jurassic coast from Weymouth to Swanage providing all manner of stunning ecological features, not least the spectacular Durdle Door.

For wild winter walks... If you're brave enough to venture out to the Highlands, then you'll find a variety of walks, low climbs and vistas that are simply unparalleled. With a backdrop of lochs, remote islands, wild forests and icy peaks, there is little clean-air inspiration Scotland cannot provide.



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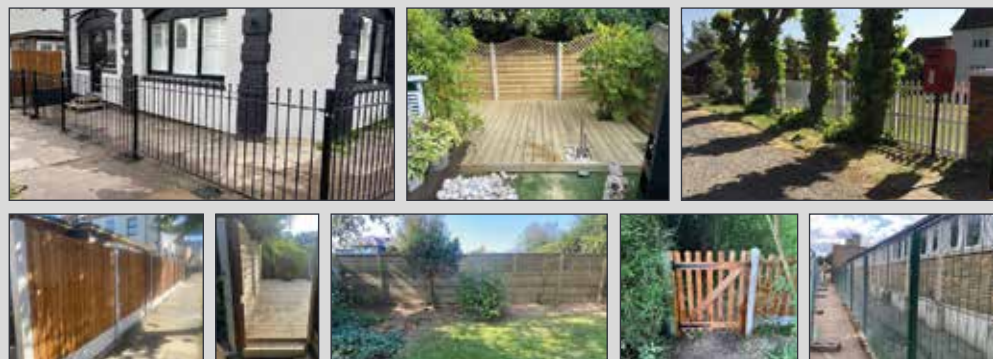
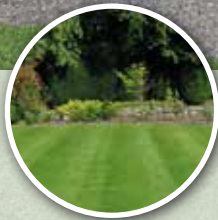
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GARDENING

Holly

DECEMBER BIRTH FLOWER
OF THE MONTH

If you were born in the same month as Christmas, your birth flower is the festive holly. A popular plant for the season of winter, holly is instantly recognisable by its prickly leaves and ruby red berries. Plus, it's easy to grow and is great for garden security.

What is the symbolic significance of holly?

In ancient Celtic cultures, the Druids regarded holly as a symbol of fertility and believed it to have magical powers. Today, holly has been adopted as a symbol of Christmas by Christians, with the sharp leaves said to symbolise the crown of thorns worn by Christ and the berries representing his blood.

What does this birth flower say about your personality?

Those born in December are said to be fiercely protective. Not a fan of criticism, you are naturally defensive and are not afraid to stand up for yourself when required. You also love to make a home feel warm and inviting, both your own and those of your friends and family.

How to grow holly in your garden

The holly plant is fairly easy to grow and will thrive in both sun and partial shade, although it prefers moist but well-drained soil. You can choose to grow holly on your lawn, in a shrub border or even to make some hedges. Holly does not require much pruning, although if you want to cut some as a festive decoration, do so in early winter before its berries are eaten by birds.

Interesting facts about holly

- It is evergreen
- It can be grown in pots and containers for up to five years
- The berries are mildly poisonous
- Legend says that holly protects from thunder, lightning and witchcraft
- Real holly plants bloom scented flowers in spring



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HORTICULTURE HEROES:

Diarmuid Gavin

Expert gardener Diarmuid Gavin made his name as the host of BBC teatime hits *Gardeners' World* and *Home Front in the Garden*, but he's been busy tending to different fields of late.

The Chelsea gold-medal-winning designer has tried his hand at ballroom in *Strictly Come Dancing*, proved a degree of culinary expertise on *Come Dine With Me* and made ripples on ITV's celebrity diving bonanza *Splash*.

The 56-year-old's flirtation with mainstream TV perhaps, for a while, threatened to take him away from a professional passion for horticulture that stretches back to the late 1980s.

Indeed, the Irishman has reinforced his commitment to returning to the innocence of the humble garden by refusing to exhibit for the past few years at the Chelsea Flower Show.

"I think with all these things there has to be a practicality to it – there has to be a take-out.

"If I am exhibiting an idea that is preposterously unachievable to the average gardener, then what is the point?"

Diarmuid's reconnection with his horticultural roots has restated the charismatic gardener with what truly thrills him, and his Instagram feed provides an almost daily delve into the passions of our plots.

"People always ask me for advice, and in terms of our own gardens, I'd just advise that people are careful when they plant," he says.

"Plants that are too tender will die very quickly, so spend longer planning and plant later – that's the golden rule... never rush things. Better to be exuberant once rather than spend the same amount by buying lower-priced items twice, because the first lot have died."

At his extroverted peak, Diarmuid produced a Willy Wonka-inspired giant garden that was deemed too big to enter the historic Chelsea Flower Show.

"I have calmed down since," he laughs. "It was way too big... nearly the size of a football field. I knew after that it was time to rein it in."



A GUIDE TO Rose pruning

If you want to ensure that your roses are as happy and healthy as possible, you need to make sure you prune them annually. You can carry out this task any time between November and March, although getting out the clippers in late autumn can help to stimulate new growth over winter.

STEP ONE: DE-HEADING

The first thing you need to do is prune off any dead or fading flowers from your rose bush as this will ensure your bush looks tidy. You can choose to leave every second flower if you want hips to decorate your bushes over winter.

STEP TWO: REMOVE BROKEN STEMS

Now you should look to remove any dead or broken stems and branches from your rose bushes, as a harsh winter could rip them off and cause damage to the healthy stems. Aim to cut any broken or diseased stems at least six inches into healthy wood.

STEP THREE: CUT OUT SUCKERS

Suckers are shoots that grow directly from the rootstock and rob the energy supply from your roses. Therefore, it is vital that you cut out suckers as close to their point of origin as possible. It is also a good idea to seal the area of the cut with some tree wound sealer.

STEP FOUR: CLEAN UP

You must always make sure that you remove all leaves and cut branches from the surrounding area after pruning as you never know what diseases and pests could be lurking in there.

TOP ROSE PRUNING TIPS:

- > Never prune newly planted roses as they need at least one growing season to become established
- > After pruning, spray with lime sulphur to eliminate fungal spores and eggs from pests
- > Use bypass shears rather than anvil blades to achieve a cleaner cut.



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Christmas

plants that care and cure

There are several plants that are synonymous with Christmas, from the decorative poinsettia, to the “kiss me quick” mistletoe, to the evergreen holly and ivy. However, did you know that each of these plants has its own healing properties?

Holly: Often used to decorate your table for Christmas dinner, in terms of medicinal use, you should only use the leaves of the holly as the berries are poisonous. Holly leaves have been known to treat digestive issues, rheumatism, fever, bronchitis and high blood pressure.

HOW TO TAKE: Dry out your holly leaves, crush and add a few teaspoons to a cup of hot water.

Mistletoe: Either a blessing, or a curse depending on who you are standing in close proximity to, mistletoe has been used for centuries to treat medical conditions such as epilepsy, hypertension, headaches and the symptoms of menopause.

HOW TO TAKE: Only use the leaves and stems as the grains are poisonous. Steep in cold water for 12 hours, strain and drink up to three times a day.

Poinsettia: The perfect plant to decorate your home over Christmas, the poinsettia is known for its ability to clean air, and in particular, to remove formaldehyde from insulation, plastic bags and other household items.

HOW TO TAKE: Simply place a poinsettia in your home and let it work its magic.

Ivy: The leaves of ivy are both anti-inflammatory and anti-rheumatic, plus they contain antioxidant properties. Ivy is also said to help settle your stomach, boost your immune system and increase oxygenation of the body.

HOW TO TAKE: The leaves of ivy can either be consumed or applied topically. To make ivy tea, simply soak 4 fresh ivy leaves or 2 tbsp of crushed dried ivy in 1 litre of cold water, bring to the boil and then filter immediately.



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FOUR COMMON

WINTER AILMENTS

AND HOW TO TREAT THEM

As well as the common cold and seasonal flu, not to mention COVID-19, there are several ailments that many people suffer with during the cold winter months.

Let's take a closer look at them and their most effective treatments.

1. PAINFUL JOINTS

If you suffer with arthritis, you may find that your joints become even more painful and achy in the colder months. Although there is no way to avoid the effects of the cold completely, ensuring you partake in regular exercise, manage your weight and continue to take any prescribed medication can lessen any pain or discomfort you are experiencing.

2. COLD SORES

If you are prone to cold sores, you may find that you are particularly susceptible in the winter when your immune system is compromised. Try to ensure you get as much rest as possible, keep your lips moisturised and use a topical treatment when needed.

3. ASTHMA

The dry and cold air in winter can make the symptoms of asthma worse by irritating your airways and causing your muscles to spasm, resulting in loss of breath. You can counteract this by limiting your time outside, wearing a scarf when you do go out and always having an asthma action plan in place.

4. SINUS INFECTIONS

If you have a weakened immune system, are a smoker or suffer with seasonal allergies, you are more likely to suffer with sinus infections. Symptoms include a runny nose, headaches, pain or pressure in your face and a sore throat. Try placing a warm compress on your face, using a decongestant and breathing in steam from a hot shower.

TOP TIPS FOR KEEPING HEALTHY THIS WINTER

- > Eat more fruit and veg
- > Embrace natural daylight
- > Wash your hands regularly
- > Stay hydrated



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Bob's story – Knee replacement surgery



Bob McLintock had knee replacement surgery at the Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital after 10 years of pain in his left knee.

Bob McLintock has been involved in sport as a participant, teacher, coach, facility manager and event organiser for over 50 years.



Bob McLintock

Active Essex

Bob, former chief executive of Brentwood Borough Council, is currently chairman of the Active Brentwood sports partnership.

10 years ago, Bob's left knee was beginning to limit his opportunities to participate in physical activity. By the end of 2019 he was restricted to a

15-minute walk only. In January 2020 he came to the Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital and met with consultant orthopaedic surgeon and knee specialist, Mr Sunil Kumar. Bob was immediately seen for x-rays which identified the problem as severe bone on bone arthritis.



Mr Sunil Kumar

He was told that a total knee replacement would be the best course of action to get him back to his old self.

Bob was offered physiotherapy during his time at the hospital and was given a tailored exercise programme to support him back to fitness after surgery.

Bob saw his surgeon, Mr Sunil Kumar, daily during his three day stay in hospital, and saw him for two follow up appointments to check his progress after. He undertook a month-long programme of physiotherapy and an on-going recovery exercise programme.

Post operation, Bob experienced some pain but exercised regularly, as instructed by the Nuffield Health physiotherapy team, to restore the maximum movement. Eight months later, Bob is delighted to say "I have the same range of movement in my new left knee as I have in my

right. I am exercising and walking without pain and can play football with my grandsons".

Mr Sunil Kumar is a consultant orthopaedic surgeon at Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital. He specialises in all aspects of knee surgery including minimally invasive partial and total knee replacements, cruciate ligament surgery reconstruction, cartilage surgery and sports injuries.

Mr Kumar is just one of a number of specialist consultants at the hospital who between them have countless years of experience in orthopaedics, general surgery, men's and women's health, children's services and cosmetic surgery.

Brentwood Hospital offers a wealth of exceptional clinical services for both patients who have private medical insurance and the self-pay market.

Tracey Howson, Brentwood Hospital director, said: "Our Hospital has established itself as one of the leading not-for-profit providers of private



healthcare, looking after people for more than 60 years from Brentwood and the surrounding areas."

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"With excellent patient satisfaction rates, we are proud of our reputation for clinical excellence and outstanding care. Many of the most experienced, skilled consultants and healthcare professionals in the region choose to practice at our hospital."

For further information or to book an appointment with Mr Sunil Kumar, contact Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital on **01277 554 181** www.nuffieldhealth.com

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HANGOVER CURES

from around the world

When it comes to hangovers, prevention is always preferable to cure, but that is easier said than done, especially with the festive season already upon us. Fortunately, the world is awash with hangover cures – some more palatable than others.

PICKLE JUICE FROM POLAND

Long before sports energy drinks hit the market, athletes used to drink pickle juice to replenish the electrolytes in their bodies after a workout. This effective, yet slightly disgusting, remedy works in the same way for hangovers.

Hangover cure rating: 4/5



question should also be soaked in hot water, with the idea that the wearer will sweat out the booze from the night before.

Hangover cure rating: 2/5



AMERICAN IV DRIPS

This increasingly popular hangover cure originated in Las Vegas, aka Sin City. The premise is simple: clients are hooked up and left to relax and recover as they are tube-fed a selection of hangover-busting vitamins, minerals and nausea medicine.

Hangover cure rating: 5/5



OTHER BIZARRE HANGOVER CURES FROM AROUND THE GLOBE INCLUDE:

- > Raw eels and almonds from medieval England
- > Sheep's brain from South Africa
- > Pork spine, ox blood and cabbage leaf soup from South Korea
- > Green ant tea from Australia
- > Kvass – a fizzy drink made from rye bread from Russia
- > Menudo – a spicy tripe soup from Mexico

SPARROW DROPPINGS IN BRANDY FROM HUNGARY

A variation on the traditional "hair of the dog" remedy, Hungarians decided somewhere along the line that this hangover cure would work even better with the addition of bird poo. Yuck.

Hangover cure rating: 1/5



VODKA SOCKS CREATED BY ESTONIA

An incredibly bizarre tradition that is highly popular in this northern European country. After too many alcoholic beverages in Estonia, the hungover reach for a pair of vodka-soaked socks. The socks in

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Loose skin, wrinkles and fine lines may give away one's age or make them appear older than they are. Fortunately, skin elasticity can be restored using radio frequency therapy. Collagen takes 14-21 days to synthesise, therefore you may see the best results in the 3rd/4th treatment.



Men's skin toning & tightening after one treatment

Men's stomach after one treatment

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WAYS TO JAZZ UP YOUR Christmas beard



Whether you have designer stubble or a full-on Santa beard, there is no excuse not to get festive when it comes to your facial hair this Christmas. From baubles to bells, sweets to knits, check out these six fantastically festive beard decorations.

1. Beard Baubles: If you want a weird and wacky Christmas beard design, then look no further. Mini baubles hanging from your whiskers will ensure you start trending on social media sooner rather than later.

2. Beard Glitter: A simple yet highly effective idea, a glitter beard will ensure you are the centre of attention for all the right reasons. Simply apply some glitter glue to your beard and then sprinkle with your chosen glitter. Why not use multiple colours for even more oomph?

3. Beard Candy: If you or your kids love candy canes, then this

is the festive beard design for you. Best for bushy beards, all you need to do is adorn your beard with canes and you are good to do.

4. Beard Jingle Bells: For those who don't mind being heard before they are seen, beard bells provide a fun and frivolous way to jazz up your face. Ideal for Christmas carolling.

5. Beard Knits: Does your mum love to make you an annual Christmas jumper? If so, why not ask her this year to knit you a beard warmer instead? It's festive and perfect for keeping out the winter chill.

6. Beard Lights: Last but definitely not least, it wouldn't be Christmas without some well-placed fairy lights, and what better location for these colourful decorations than on your face? Just make sure you buy a clip-on set to avoid a terrible tangle in your bristles.



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DIY UGLY Christmas Jumper

National Ugly Christmas Jumper Day falls on the third Friday of December each year and offers participants the chance to showcase the worst possible festive jumper they can find. However, why not steer clear of the shops this year and make your own original ugly jumper?

COFFEE SHOP UGLY CHRISTMAS JUMPER
If you love nothing more than a Starbucks first thing in the morning, why not showcase your devotion by sticking a coffee cup directly onto your jumper? Start by cutting your cup in half lengthways and gluing it to the lid. Then glue two pieces of felt to the inside of the cup, glue Velcro tape to the felt and to your jumper and attach.

COUPLES' UGLY CHRISTMAS JUMPERS
What could be more cringe than you and your significant other wearing matching garish glittery Christmas jumpers? Using hot glue, stick on sequins that say "Mr" and "Mrs" and then add as much tinsel, glitter and baubles as you can stomach.

LIGHT-UP UGLY CHRISTMAS JUMPER
Whatever design or slogan you choose for your DIY ugly Christmas sweater, the addition of Christmas coloured fairy lights will only ever make it more tacky. Simply turn your jumper inside out, decide where your battery holder should go and then sew in your LED lights.

SNOW GLOBE UGLY CHRISTMAS JUMPER
One of the more inventive options. All you need is a plastic bowl, a selection of cheap Christmas decorations and a glue gun to create your very own 3D snow globe on the front of your jumper.

CUTE KIDS UGLY CHRISTMAS JUMPER
If your children are taking part in national ugly Christmas jumper day, then this DIY Christmas tree jumper is just the ticket. Plus, they can help you make it. All you need is some felt, mini shatterproof baubles, festive beads and hot glue.

Photo credit: ilovetocreate.com, creativefashionblog.com, thesamanthashow.com, brit.co, countryliving.com



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FOOD & DRINK

Cooking UP A treat



FOOD FINESSE WITH POPULAR CHEF JAMES MARTIN

When James Martin bade an extremely tearful farewell to his *Saturday Kitchen* colleagues in March 2016, it was imagined the chef would be turning his hand to new projects after 10 years fronting the popular BBC weekend cookery show.

Of course, as these things often materialise, the popular Yorkshireman reappeared less than six months later fronting a copycat culinary conflag over on ITV.

Regardless, the 48-year-old's switch to commercial TV has also spawned a run of cookery series, reaffirming his place as one of the most popular chefs on television.

Of course, life on the small screen is already a secondary career for Martin, who excelled with wooden spoon in hand from a young age. Indeed, he was almost asked to leave a cookery class at the age of 12 for serving flambéed chicken and mangetout while his prepubescent classmates struggled to create fairy cakes. He went on to study catering at Scarborough College, coming

top of his class for three consecutive years, and was then offered a job working in London with Antony Worrall Thompson, one of the judges for his final exam.

His accomplishments, however, weren't served up to him on a plate – as a Yorkshireman, Martin was taught from birth that “you don't get owt for nowt”. The hard graft paid off, it seems, as he was made head chef of the first Hotel du Vin in Winchester when he was just 22.

Two years later, he began to appear on our screens in shows such as *James Martin: Yorkshire's Finest* and *Ready, Steady, Cook* – his affable nature and dry, self-deprecating humour making him an instant hit with viewers.

From weekend shows to cooking adventures at home and overseas, the chef's fascination with food is unrelenting, as evidenced in his recent return to our screens for *Saturday Morning with James Martin*.

“It's been a great ride so far,” he says, “and the stove is still warm.”



Photo credit: Ken McKay/ITV/Shutterstock

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Let's get Saucy

Even if you pride yourself on making your own roast potatoes and stuffing your own turkey, not many people take the time to make their own sauces for their Christmas dinner.

So, let's change that. Check out these three popular Christmas sauce recipes that are both simple and delicious.

Easy Peasy Bread Sauce

YOU WILL NEED: 600ml milk | 50g butter | 1 onion | 6 cloves | 6 peppercorns | 2 garlic cloves | 1 bay leaf | 3 sprigs of thyme | 100g white breadcrumbs | 4 tbsp single cream | Pinch of nutmeg (optional)

HOW TO MAKE: Simmer the milk, butter, onion, cloves, peppercorns, garlic and herbs in a pan for 15–20 minutes | Strain and return liquid to heat | Add breadcrumbs and simmer for a further 4 minutes | Stir in cream | Season with nutmeg if desired, and serve

Super Simple Cranberry Sauce

YOU WILL NEED: 200g white sugar | 4 cups of fresh or frozen cranberries | 250ml water | Zest of an orange | Optional spices – cinnamon, nutmeg and allspice

HOW TO MAKE: Rinse cranberries | Boil water and dissolve sugar | Add cranberries and simmer on a low heat until most of the berries have burst | Grate in some orange zest and add a small pinch of your preferred spice | Leave to cool

NB: Cranberry sauce will continue to thicken as it cools.

Perfect Turkey Gravy

YOU WILL NEED: 2 chopped onions | 1 large chopped carrot | 1.3 litres stock – preferably turkey, but chicken will do | 3 tbsp plain flour | 5 tbsp white wine | Turkey neck (optional)

HOW TO MAKE: Add the onion, carrot and turkey neck to a pan | Pour in stock and simmer for one hour | Strain to remove the vegetables and meat, then return liquid to pan | Combine flour with white wine and then add to stock | Heat gently until thickened | Season to taste | Leave to cool and chill



Ageless Aims

ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL ENTERTAINMENT IDEAS FOR FAMILIES WITH KIDS OF VERY DIFFERENT AGES

Having children across a broad age spectrum can often be taxing when it comes to keeping them all amused and happy, but here are a few ideas that work right across the board, from tiny toddlers to troublesome teenagers.

Cooking up a treat

Whether baking a cake, preparing a stew for dinner or simply working together to get a few sandwiches on plates, the kitchen has always been a staple for family life (and the odd party).

Cooking creates a true bond among children, not least because they can enjoy the fruits of their labour afterwards.

Scooters, bikes and trikes

From balance bikes to mountain bikes and any sort of wheeled machinery in between, venturing out on a ride is a great way of connecting our kids with the outdoors. Follow an established route, explore a new area, set up a treasure hunt or simply go off-piste into wooded areas – getting outdoors is great fun.

An English country garden

What better way to embrace the best playground of them all than by getting the kids involved in tending to the garden? From mowing the lawn to planting, clearing out the shed or even trimming back the bushes, the view from your window will be all the better for a family afternoon in the yard.

Paint it black

Whether it's throwaway pieces of art on paper or a more serious dollop of paint on canvas to be hung on the wall, being creative makes a fantastic family bond. And because art is subjective, you can tell your competitive brood with absolute sincerity that those Pollock-like splashes of colour that come from your two-year-old are in no way inferior to the Picasso-esque portrait painted by your eldest, the art student.



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Christopher - London

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Tea - London

I contacted Mike through recommendation for my life and critical illness cover. I didn't have any knowledge of the market as this was something I had never looked into before. Mike took me through all of the options, giving me clear advice and was really helpful. It was great to know that Mike worked closely with the market as he was able to explain lots of information that I wouldn't have been able to find myself online. Mike was available by email and telephone whenever I had questions, which made the experience really personal. Mike was able to secure cover for me on both of my requirements, which had great benefits and a competitive price.

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BUSINESS & PROPERTY

Why the Help to Buy: Shared Ownership continues to create homes out of houses

For all its speculation, criticism and conjecture, the housing market represents one of the most stable industries in the UK. Only amid the perils of negative equity in the 1990s did the bricks and mortar of people's fortunes really begin to crumble; yet for large periods outside that time, investment in property has largely been deemed a safe one.

Of course, as a result of this, the market has become much more competitive, and the growing difficulty with which first-time buyers, in particular, are able to get on board means the government's introduction of Help to Buy schemes has gone a long way to guiding people along the footpath to realising those dreams.

The concept is simple – if you cannot afford the mortgage on what would be 100 per cent of a home, Help to Buy: Shared Ownership will allow you to buy a share of the property, which could be anywhere between 25 and 75 per cent of its value.

You would effectively pay rent on the remaining share. This means the initial deposit is smaller and mortgage finance more accessible. On the plus side, owners still enjoy a decent proportion of true investment and, along with that, benefit from rises in market price over time.

The criteria to get involved is sensible. Those applying need to earn less than £80,000/year (£90,000/year in London). Furthermore, you would need to be a first-time buyer, or have owned before while being unable to buy now; or perhaps are in an existing shared ownership arrangement and are looking to move.

Variations to the rules exist for the over-55s and disabled applicants, but for the most part the success of the scheme, which is being repackaged and relaunched for 2021, is evident in the millions of people who have stepped onto the property ladder since its launch four decades ago.

SMALL ISLAND LIVING – REDISCOVERING WHAT WE ALREADY HAVE

In recent weeks, there has been an 800 per cent rise in Brits searching for 'Staycation UK', as the uncertainty surrounding international travel during the pandemic continues to prevail¹.

APPRECIATING WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE...

Destinations such as Plymouth, the Isle of Wight and Exeter are expected to recover quickly due to the staycation tourism boost, according to new research². It would seem that the pandemic is allowing Brits to rediscover and appreciate the thousands of beautiful destinations that we already have on our doorstep.

...INCLUDING YOUR FINANCES

This attitude of appreciating what we have extends to our finances. Over the years, life gets busy and it's easy to lose track of our money. A reported one in five savers have lost track of their pension pot – and the situation is likely to get worse. Meanwhile, other research³ suggests that 43 per cent of us have lost track of a bank account,

17 per cent don't know what's happened to their Premium Bonds and 15 per cent have been separated from an ISA – leaving them needlessly out of pocket.

In these troubled financial times, taking stock of your finances and appreciating what you have can give you a sense of financial control during a period of uncertainty.

It's time for a financial review if you feel like you've lost a grip on your finances. Appreciating what you have can help you make the most of what you've already got.

At HCR we take the time to understand our clients' unique planning needs and circumstances, so that we can provide you with the most suitable solutions in the most cost-effective way. For a free review of your current financial situation, please contact Karyn Vogel on 01277 654153.

¹ Staysure 2020; ² Colliers International 2020

³ NS&I 2018



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Q How Can You Save Money On Your Insurance?

A Whether combining multiple risks on to a single policy or simply looking at your cover levels, there's plenty of ways you could save money on your insurance. Why not get in touch with us and see if we can save you money?

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In the UK, headlamps are configured to shine to the left, towards the edges of the road and away from the middle. This is to guide motorists away from curbs and ditches, while preventing oncoming drivers from being blinded by our lights.

That means in France, or any country that drives on the right, that same light is actually being shone directly into drivers' faces.

With various advancements in headlamp

technology over the years, new cars are often fitted with a switch control that automatically redirects the headlamps for driving abroad. However, many cars still don't have this function, therefore it pays to know what to do when driving abroad, for both your own safety and that of others.

If manual headlamp realignment cannot be done from the control panel of your car, the most common solution is to buy a set of headlamp unit lenses (or glasses). These deflectors are attached and block out a small amount of your beam, thus keeping light away from other drivers.

These days, it's not a request that headlamps are configured properly, it's the law. 'Do it yourself' beam deflectors – the sort your dad might have made out of black sticky tape in the 1970s – are no longer legal, and deflectors must be operational as soon as you head off the ferry, even in daylight hours.

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SEASON TO BE JOLLY

BOXING DAY 1963 – WHEN FANTASY FOOTBALL BECAME REALITY

If there's one thing that's characterised the opening exchanges of the new Premier League season, then it's goals. It seems defence-minded football has been banished to the substitutes' bench and instead our teams are simply aiming to outscore each other.

Though even the likes of Harry Kane, Raheem Sterling, Mo Salah and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang will have to go some if they are to match the achievements of the rugged footballers of old who trotted out onto veritable mud baths of pitches on December 26, 1963.

They wouldn't have known it at the time, but these old-school soccer stars were about to take part in a day of festive football goal gluts, and an afternoon that's gone down in sporting folklore.

In total, 66 goals were scored across the 10 First Division matches. Six sides shared six goals as Chelsea triumphed 5-1 at Blackpool, while

Nottingham Forest and Sheffield United drew 3-3, as did Wolves and Aston Villa.

West Brom and Tottenham trumped that with a 4-4 draw at The Hawthorns, while both Liverpool and Burnley romped to 6-1 home wins, against Stoke City and Manchester United respectively.

Pity those poor fans at Filbert Street and Hillsborough who saw their Leicester City and Sheffield Wednesday sides win by relatively normal 2-0 and 3-0 scorelines (against champions Everton and Bolton Wanderers respectively).

But on a day on which it appears it wasn't just the supporters unable to shake off the large amount of Christmas Day merriment, Blackburn Rovers hit a magnificent eight away from home at West Ham United; and Fulham arguably snatched the ultimate plaudits from a festive flurry of worthy contenders with a magnificent 10 at home to poor Ipswich Town. Jürgen, Pep, Frank, José... over to you.



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