



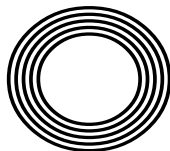
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**MARK WRIGHT MAKING
HIS FOOTBALL COMEBACK**

Valentine's Day traditions
FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Alisan
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The TV presenter emerging into the spotlight



FREE

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FEBRUARY 2021

Editor's notes...



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** BillericayShenfield. Do you ever get the impression that people don't want to talk to you? As an Everton supporter, I get it a lot. But I'm talking about wider society and our apparent unwillingness, at times, to simply pick up the phone. Of course, I'm not blind to the many other ways we communicate with each other. On text, WhatsApp, email and social media, we are more conversational than ever, and to a broader sweep of people than ever in the past. And yet, my fear is we're in danger of actually becoming lonelier if we don't restore the basic form of picking up the phone. This month, let's all make an effort to put in a call. It's powerful, it's genuine, it's personal, and it's not an experience you have to inadvertently share with 400 Facebook followers. Our lack of one-to-one conversation - a simple voice down the phone - is something a lot of us are beginning to miss, particularly in lockdown. It's that desire to talk, to hear someone's voice, to share a laugh. If you want or perhaps need a chat, for whatever reason, give someone a call. In fact, you can even give me a call. It's good for you, for us, for society - oh, and I promise not to try to sell you an ad.

Nik Allen

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CONTACT US: www.visionmagessex.com | billericay@visionmag.co.uk | 01277 554045
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 CONTRIBUTORS | Tabatha Fabray, Dean Shaw

At the time of print all content in **VISION** was relevant and up to date according to COVID-19 government guidelines

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A full-page background image of Mark Wright in a red Crawley Town football kit, captured in motion on a green pitch. The kit features a red long-sleeved shirt with white trim and a red shorts with white trim. A crest is visible on the shorts. The background is a blurred stadium setting.

The WRIGHT STUFF

HOW ONE OF OUR MOST ADORED REALITY TV STARS WENT BACK TO HIS ROOTS... GRASSROOTS

It's a fantasy that has crossed the mind of every grown man in his late twenties who has a normal, run-of-the-mill, everyday job. It's the thought, 'Perhaps it's not too late to realise every boy's dream and become a professional footballer; perhaps I can still make it.'

That reality TV star and Heart DJ Mark Wright still held those very unfulfilled ambitions is perhaps less of a surprise. He was, after all, on the books of West Ham, Arsenal and Tottenham as a youngster. When released at the age of 18, the left back was picked up by Southend United, but drifted into non-league football as the distractions of nightclub promotion and reality TV came about.

After spells in then Conference with Grays Athletic, Crawley Town and Rushden & Diamonds, the charismatic Essex-born star joined the cast of *TOWIE*. One of the original cast members, he was only with the ITV show a year, but the die was cast, and from *I'm a Celebrity...* *Get Me Out of Here!* to *Take Me Out: The Gossip*, through presenting jobs on *Mark Wright's Hollywood Nights*, *The Bachelor* and *This Morning*, the husband to actress Michelle Keegan has been a permanent fixture on our screens for a decade. And when adding in his Heart radio show duties – a gig he's had since 2012 – it's any wonder he has any spare time...

But what about those football ambitions?

"I've never got over the fact I didn't make it in the game," he says. "And despite everything I achieved elsewhere, being a professional footballer now would top it all."

In October last year, Wright set out to make one final crack at the game he loves, and a call to John Yems, his former manager at Crawley, saw the now 33-year-old invited to West Sussex to train with the club.

The presenter describes the three months that followed as a whirlwind, combining media duties with a punishing physical routine designed to get his fitness up to League Two standards. His every move has been followed by a BBC film crew, whose iPlayer series *Mark Wright: The Last Chance* has proved a huge hit.

"I never had any expectations, but I always knew I'd give it everything I had, and the welcome I got at the club was tremendous from day one."

In December, Wright's dreams moved a step closer – he signed a contract until the end of the season. And being named on the bench for Crawley's FA Cup fourth round clash with Leeds United on January 10, just two days after his brother Josh signed for the club, set up the most impossible of scenarios. Could he make the comeback of all comebacks?

Crawley strode 3-0 up against their star-studded Premier League visitors, on their way to grabbing all the weekend's giant-killing headlines. A perfect day could only be topped by a call to the bench for a substitution. And so it happened... he may have only come on in the 91st minute, he may have only touched the ball

three times, but a dream was realised on that cold Sunday lunchtime at the People's Pension Stadium.

And it doesn't stop there – the Reds are eyeing up promotion from League Two and there will be no resting on his laurels for Mark Wright... a reality star in every sense.



THE WORLD AROUND US

Part 4

In the last part of our environmental series, we look at the final key driver in the health and well-being of the planet: global warming.

The phrase 'climate change denier' has become commonplace in conversations about the gradual warming of the planet and the causes of this. Scientific opinion points to humans and our explosion of population, industry and consumption as the real effects of the Earth increasing in temperature by 1° Celsius since 1880.

It doesn't sound a lot, does it? And yet, a one-to two-degree drop was all it took to plunge the Earth into the Little Ice Age in the Medieval Period.

The platform climate change deniers have generally sees their voices amplified well beyond what they should be. The results of various studies often level out at around the same rate – namely that only two or three people out of 100 will dispute the scientists' theory that humans are the cause of global warming.

With such a large accepting consensus, the drive to combat this gradual warming of Earth has

accelerated in recent years. Equipping ourselves with data, while ensuring we have the ability to interpret it, is vital.

Temperatures across a timespan of a year, five years or even a decade might rise four degrees in one region and drop six in another (which is why anomalies occur, such as Greenland's Jakobshavn Glacier actually increasing in mass since 2016), but overall, there is trouble ahead.

The next, vital step the Earth faces is a willingness of its people to do something about it. For all the UK's action over the past couple of decades, for all the destruction global warming has already contributed, such as coastal erosion, moorlands fires, floods and more, we contribute just 1.2 per cent of the world's total emissions.

It means that, as if it were ever in doubt, a global solution requires a true global investment of action from the planet's inhabitants.



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HOME & DIY



DULUX LOOKS TOWARDS SAFE GROUND IN NAMING ITS COLOUR FOR 2021

There's only one contradiction at play as far as Dulux's Colour of the Year goes – namely that in establishing a tone that speaks quietness, calmness, unassuming peace and tranquillity, the paint manufacturer is treading safe ground and not, as the shade's name implies, Brave Ground.

And yet, despite Dulux failing to state what is courageous about this tone, we can at least revel in its ability to encapsulate the mood of the world. It pleads for calm, reflection and philosophical thoughts, and offers a serenity to interiors that is very different from the intention borne out in Pantone's Colour(s) of the Year.

This warm beige shade is one that will work beautifully when matching with light woods, particularly in the bedroom or living room.

Combined with white it reclines elegantly into the

background, and as a flat shade, it can find itself offset by fabrics and furniture that offer depth and detail.

The tones of grey present in Brave Ground are also earthy enough to take interiors away from the overtly beige patterns of the 1970s that often strayed too far in the way of oranges and browns.

Consider also mixing with pastels, or sharpening the edges with blacks and greys, particularly in cushions, throws, curtains or lampshades. Ultimately, Brave Ground is a colour that will bring lightness while offering a knowing nod to dark luxury.

Indeed, perhaps in adopting a shade that is the very epitome of neutrality, perhaps in offering a platform on which we can place our existing belongings as well as bring in new renovations, Dulux is showing itself to be brave after all.

Photo credit: Ideal Home.co.uk, Dulux.co.uk



Magic MATERIALS



Tencel bedding

In a world where sustainability is not just desirable, but necessary, these alternative fabrics and leathers are presenting as viable options for global brands who want to do their bit for our planet.

TENCEL

Already a ubiquitous eco-fabric, Tencel is used by several major design brands linked to both interiors and fashion.

Produced by environmentally responsible processes from the sustainably sourced natural raw material wood, Tencel is not only a wonderfully soft and breathable material, it also combines beautifully with other fabrics such as cotton, silk and polyester for maximum versatility.



Econyl chairs

ECONYL

Fabric recycling has come a long way since the days of simple reupholstering that saw tired sofas and chairs less reinvented and more clumsily repurposed into something you could palm off to the kids or into the guest bedroom.

Econyl regenerated nylon is made from, you guessed it... nylon waste, and with an emphasis on closing the loop, this brilliant and innovative brand confesses to having an appetite for creating an infinite quantity of new products, but all using existing resources. In short, we've come a long way since the 1980s.

With 10,000 tonnes of Econyl raw material saving 70,000 barrels of crude oil, this fabulous fabric is being used to create everything from carpets to swimsuits.



Piñatex furniture

PIÑATEX

Piñatex is a leather alternative made from the leaf waste of pineapples. This fluff-like leaf fibre (PALF) gets mixed with a corn-based polylactic acid (PLA), undergoing a mechanical process to create Piñafelt, a non-woven mesh that forms the base of all Piñatex collections.

Coloured using natural pigments and coated with resin to give additional strength, durability and water resistance, this luxurious leather alternative is already doing its bit to lessen the environmental impact of mass leather production and chemical tanning.

Photo credit: westelm.co.uk, econyl.com, 21gstudio.com



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making MEMORIES

Whether you are looking for a birthday present, graduation gift or unique anniversary offering, a memory quilt is the perfect choice. Allowing you to create a personalised and completely original gift, expect tears of joy when you present one of these to your loved one.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- > Your chosen clothing or fabric for quilt squares
- > Fusible interlining
- > Batting
- > Backing fabric
- > Adhesive spray, such as Elmer's Multi-Purpose Spray Adhesive
- > An iron
- > Scissors
- > Pins
- > Sewing machine
- > Ruler or tape measure

HOW TO MAKE:

Step 1: Gather the fabrics you want to make your quilt with. This could be t-shirts, blankets or baby clothes.

Alternatively, you can make your own personalised fabric by transferring photos onto a piece of white or coloured cotton.

Step 2: Determine the desired size of your squares and quilt. For a large quilt, use 25 t-shirt squares 5x5 – see step 4.

Step 3: Cut your fusible interlining slightly larger than your quilt to allow for cutting back later.

Step 4: Cut off the necks and sides of your t-shirts. You will be left with two squares from each one.

Step 5: Following the manufacturer's instructions, lay the fusible interlining on the back of your squares and fuse using an iron.

Step 6: Once all pieces are fused, cut to size.

Step 7: Decide upon the layout of your squares and pin together before starting to sew.

Step 8: Using your sewing machine, start to sew each row together before attaching the rows to complete your quilt top. Remove pins.

Step 9: Make a quilt sandwich using backing and batting which needs to be 5cm bigger on all sides. Fuse the batting using an iron and then attach your backing with an adhesive spray.

Step 10: Complete your quilt using the stitch-in-the-ditch technique using your sewing machine, or use free-motion quilting.

Congratulations. Your memory quilt is complete.



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Top tips for Loving your Cooker this month



Invest in a non-stick oven liner

They help to catch all of those annoying drips that stick to the bottom of your cooker, which later can become a burnt-on mess. Easy to wash or pop in the dishwasher.

Do not use harsh chemicals inside your cooker.

Instead, try a safer homemade option using items found around your household. For an all-purpose cleaner and deodorizer, mix together four tablespoons baking soda with one litre warm water.

Get the wiping habit!

Wipe away any spillages immediately with a damp cloth. Don't give the mess a chance to stay. I know this sounds easy and as hard as you try it is a chore, the oven can still be hot and some of the stuff just doesn't want to come off but stick with it. Get a microfibre cloth and use it wet with washing-up solution.

Cover your roast!

You need to stop the grease spitting all over your lovely clean oven. To do this just put a lid on your roast tin or cover with foil or try a roasting bag. This way the inside of your oven and your grill (if it's inside your oven) won't become completely coated in grease when you are cooking. This grease, if left in the oven, becomes burnt on carbon in the long term and is very difficult to get off.


Get a professional in to Glean It!

If you really can't get all the dirt and grime out of your oven yourself then maybe call and book someone that can. A newly cleaned cooker will be sparkling and clean and if you follow our other tips you will keep it clean, won't you?

Need some professional help? Then call Rob at OvenGleaners on 01277 361760 or go to www.ovengleaners.com for more details.


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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Photo credit: ITV

Harriet beats the Chasers to win £30,000

A woman from Billericay is £30,000 richer after winning on the ITV quiz show *Beat the Chasers*.

Harriet Quirk took centre stage on the evening prime-time show, which is a spin-off of *The Chase*, and made an impressive start after earning £3,000 in her cash-builder round.

She was then offered the chance to take on three Chasers for £30,000. As part of that offer Harriet would have 60 seconds on her clock while the trio of Chasers would start with 44 seconds.

Harriet and the Chasers would then take it in turns to answer questions, with each respective clock ticking down until each provided a correct answer.

Impressively, the Chasers' clock ran out while Harriet still had 39 seconds on hers, meaning she had won the £30,000 prize money.

Harriet told ITV: "I just can't believe it. I'd done loads of revising and I knew that once I got through to that stage, I'd probably be reasonable at the questions that were asked."

"But my biggest fear and my nightmare that I kept dreaming was that I'd get the first question wrong and wouldn't even get a chance to beat the Chasers."

"Afterwards I texted my daughter and I didn't tell her what I'd won at first. When I said £30,000 she literally couldn't believe it. She was so proud of me."

"I watch *Beat the Chasers* every evening and it's good as you get to take on all five Chasers and the winnings are big, as you don't have to share with a team. You muck it up it's down to you, and if you win, it's down to you."

The episode is available to watch on the ITV Hub.



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Photo credit: Nicky Hayes Photography

New boss chosen to take the helm at New Lodge

Billericay Town FC have named their new manager to replace the outgoing former Spurs player Jamie O'Hara.

Ricay announced Kevin Watson as their new manager on January 7, and he arrived with a wealth of experience having played for Spurs, Swindon Town, Rotherham United and Reading, among others.

He has also managed Ebbsfleet and Bishop's Stortford and has been assistant manager at Stevenage and Hungerford Town.

The club said: "On completion of a thorough selection process, involving circa 50 candidates, we have pleasure in announcing that Kevin Watson has been appointed as our men's first team manager with

immediate effect.

"Kevin brings a wealth of playing, coaching and managerial experience to the club. He shares our one club vision and the board's ambitions for Billericay Town FC. Kevin will be joined by Tristan Lewis as assistant manager.

"We'd like to take this opportunity to thank Danny Brown and Ash Goss for their excellent work in standing in at a critical time. They gave us the space to be able to work through the managerial selection diligently.

"They are a credit to the club and will return to their roles in the U23 and Colts set-up."

Watson enjoyed his first win in his new role on January 16 when Ricay beat Dulwich Hamlet.

Plans for 200 new homes revealed



Photo credit: Gleeson Strategic Land Ltd

A planning application has been made for 200 new homes in Billericay, with developers saying it will "help meet the borough's growth needs".

The homes are proposed to be built on land north of Kennel Lane, with almost one-third set to be affordable housing.

The application, submitted by Gleeson Strategic Land Ltd, has been made to Basildon Borough Council (BBC), with the properties to be made up of 21 one-bedroom flats, 27 two-bedroom flats, 32 two-bedroom houses, 80 three-bedroom houses and 40 four-bedroom houses.


As part of the construction it is expected that an access point will be created just off Laindon Road.

The planning statement says: "The development would create a new neighbourhood at the south of Billericay, with new public open space together with homes to help meet the borough's growth needs."

A decision is expected on the plans in March, with the proposal available to view on BBC's planning portal by searching 20/01614/OUT.

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NEWS FROM YOUR LOCAL POLICE TEAM



LOCAL NEWS BILLERICAY

Last year was certainly a challenging year and Essex Police thank those who have followed the rules to keep Essex safe. We understand that there have been and are likely to be further changes to restrictions throughout 2021. To help keep Essex safe, the Essex Police website has the latest information and a link to the government website. You can report any violations of the rules on our website; we particularly want you to tell us about large gatherings of people obviously from lots of different households. Our officers and staff will continue to patrol and respond to crime and antisocial behaviour as we've always done. They will be following all the latest regulations too. The new strains of the virus are reported to be fast-spreading and some people may be infected without displaying symptoms.

Essex Police will continue to use the same

common-sense approach to the regulations that we've had throughout the pandemic – we'll engage with people, explain the regulations and encourage them to do the right thing.

We will also continue to respond to clear and blatant breaches of the regulations in order to protect and serve the county.

You will see officers patrolling as normal and tackling crime as we do every day of the year.

Between 7am and 11pm, you can make an online report directly to one of our Digital 101 operators, by selecting the 'Live Chat' button at the bottom of the web page.

Alternatively, you can submit an online report or call 101.

By doing the right thing and staying safe, you give our officers more time to help people, keep people safe and catch criminals.

Residents receive vaccine



Residents in Billericay were among the first in the country to get a COVID-19 vaccine after Emmanuel Archer Hall (EAH) was turned into a vaccination centre.

Use of EAH meant family doctors and other primary care staff from the NHS could vaccinate the most vulnerable people in Billericay from January 4.

It is one of 16 GP vaccination services across south Essex, with those aged 80 and over, as well as care home residents and staff, among the first to get the jab.

The AstraZeneca vaccine is administered at EAH, which can be stored at higher temperatures than the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. The roll-out in Billericay is being led by Anglian Community Enterprise Community Interest Company (ACECIC) which provides services to the NHS.

EAH welcomed the vaccine being given locally.

It said: "It's really great to see the ACECIC vaccination centre at Emmanuel running so smoothly, with support from local volunteers and Rotary, Lions and Round Table members.

"This is a wonderful way to serve the community at this time, and these vaccinations will be life-changing for so many of the most vulnerable people in Billericay."

People are reminded that they will be told by the NHS when it is their turn to be vaccinated, and only those with appointments will receive the jab.

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
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New chapter begins in town council's history

Billerica Town Council (BTC) has a new home after moving into the Chantry Centre.

It made the move on December 29, marking the end of an era, as it had operated out of rented premises just off the High Street since its creation.

The move is eight years in the making, as discussions with Basildon Borough Council started in 2013 and proposed transferring the Chantry Way Day Centre to BTC, and in 2015 a 99-year lease was signed.

Initially the council continued to hire out the Day Centre; however, its dilapidated condition made it a prime candidate for redevelopment into a building that

would allow the transfer of the BTC office into its own property while offering expanded community facilities for local groups, charities and businesses.

BTC told **VISION** BillericaShenfield: "As with any move we have been busy unpacking boxes and finding homes for all of our equipment.

"Unfortunately, owing to the current restrictions, we are unable to welcome visitors to the building but we are busy getting it ready for all the clubs and groups that would like to use it. In the meantime, we are still available for telephone and email enquiries from residents."

Man hospitalised after being hit by a car

Police are appealing for information after a man was hospitalised after a collision on a Billerica residential street.

The pedestrian was rushed to hospital on January 6 after being hit by a car on Hillside Road.

Emergency services were called to the residential street just after 4pm.

After medical teams assessed the male patient, they decided he needed hospital treatment as he had sustained a head injury.

Essex Police are looking for anyone who may have

any information about the collision to come forward.

A spokesperson for Essex Police said: "We were called shortly after 4.10pm on Wednesday, January 6, with reports of a collision involving a Honda CR-V and a pedestrian in Hillside Road, Billerica.

"The male pedestrian was taken to hospital with a head injury.

"Enquiries remain ongoing into the circumstances behind the collision."

Anyone with information can contact Essex Police on 101, quoting incident 714 of January 6.





LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Stock Image

Residents given a shock as sonic boom sounds

Residents in Shenfield were given a shock after a sonic boom caused some homes to shake.

On January 12, RAF Typhoon aircraft were launched to intercept a plane that had lost communications, causing a loud boom.

Residents said it gave them a "fright", with one claiming it caused their home to shake while another joked that they thought it had come from their housemate in the bathroom.

The RAF jets were deployed after a private aircraft, believed to have been flying from Germany to Birmingham, had communication issues.

They were able to safely navigate the private plane back to Stansted, but in their recovery mission they

caused a sonic boom as they approached the speed of sound.

Shocked by the noise, Tomas Williams said: "I'll admit it did give me a fright as I was just about falling asleep on the sofa.

"I don't think it's the first time it's happened here but it's still a shock every time."

Another resident said: "That was incredible. I swear it caused my house to shake and my dog was going nuts."

An RAF spokesman said: "The aircraft was intercepted and safely escorted to Stansted.

"The Typhoon aircraft were authorised to transit at supersonic speed for operational reasons."



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Former pupil earns big move to the Bluebirds

A former Shenfield High School pupil has earned a big-money move to Championship football side Cardiff City after a prolific start to the season.

Max Watters, 21, recently earned the League Two Player of the Month award after a blistering start to the season for Crawley Town, which saw him score 16 goals in just 19 games.

That award was followed by Watters playing a role in Crawley's FA Cup win over Premier League side Leeds United, which was arguably the shock of the round, before making his move to the Welsh capital on January 16.

Watters, who had been linked to Swansea City, has

played for a variety of non-league clubs and joined Crawley after being released by Doncaster Rovers.

He has joined Cardiff until 2024 and he was delighted with the move.

He said: "When I first found out about Cardiff's interest I was immediately attracted to it. Wales is a lovely place to live, so it came down to that really.

"As a striker, you've got to score goals, and that's what I'm here to do.

"It's a big game at home against QPR in midweek. It's a shame that fans can't be here so I can play in front of them. Hopefully I'm involved and hopefully we can get the win."

Firefighters put out fire after early morning call

Firefighters had to rush to a house in Hutton after a fridge freezer caught fire.

Crews were called to a detached house in Rayleigh Road, at 4.08am on December 29.

The occupant was made aware of the blaze as he had smoke alarms in his property. He then discovered his fridge freezer alight and got himself and his mum out of the property before calling 999.

Watch manager Peter Dunn said: "The occupant did exactly the right thing when he saw the fire – he got out, stayed out and called 999.

"He also managed to shut the kitchen door on the

way out, which reduced how much smoke spread throughout the property.

"As this incident shows, it is worth getting a smoke or heat alarm in your kitchen to act as an early warning.

"It was lucky the occupant woke up when he did because if he hadn't, the fire would have caused much more damage."

Crews extinguished the fire, which caused severe heat and smoke damage to the kitchen, by 5.06am and then used a fan to ventilate the property, which sustained a small amount of smoke damage.

The cause has been recorded as accidental.



Charles & Diana

40 years on

Looking back to 1981, and the 40th anniversary of the engagement of Prince Charles and Lady Diana.

February 6, 2021, marks the 40th anniversary of when Lady Diana Spencer made a step into the public spotlight from which, inevitably, she would never return.

At just 19 years old, her engagement to Prince Charles, at 32, was celebrated the world over; 40 years on, with the benefit of hindsight, we look back on the union in a rather different way.

The fact the pair met in peculiar circumstances perhaps should have been a sign – Charles originally dated Diana's sister, Sarah. And in later years it was revealed that the pair had only been together on 13 separate occasions, across six months, before becoming engaged.

Of course, peculiarity and the royal family are common bedfellows. In fact, February 2021 marks another interesting anniversary – the 50th anniversary of the first time Charles met Camilla, his now wife.

So while February 6 certainly won't be looked on as a date in history to be cherished, it is at least a mark in the sand. The couple brought two boys into the world who, in their own way, have made significant contributions; and while their marriage – which was confirmed on July 29, 1981, at St Paul's Cathedral – lasted only 15 years, it's appropriate to remind ourselves that time mends most ills.

Diana, up to her death in 1997, did so much to cultivate her own life away from the stranglehold of the royal epicentre, and largely succeeded; while Charles has reinvented his persona across philanthropic, environmental and entrepreneurial projects, and enjoys a higher grade of popularity now in 2021 than he has at any point in the past.

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Valentine's traditions AROUND THE WORLD

Love is in the air with these beautiful, and in some cases bizarre, Valentine's Day traditions from around the globe.



SOUTH KOREA: In this country in east Asia, lovers celebrate the day of love on the 14th of every month. May 14 is the "day of rose", June 14 is the "day of kisses", and there is even a "black day" in April when couples eat black noodles together.



PHILIPPINES: Young couples in the Philippines are sponsored by the government to get married as a form of public service. Well, there are worse ways to serve your country.



GHANA: Known as National Chocolate Day, February 14 is used to increase tourism in Ghana, one of the largest cocoa-producing countries in the world.



BULGARIA: A simple yet highly enjoyable tradition, in Bulgaria, couples young and old celebrate their love by sharing a glass of local wine.



WALES: Lovers from Wales celebrate Valentine's Day on January 25, and rather than exchange cards and flowers, they

give their partners handcrafted wooden spoons.



SPAIN: The day of love in Spain falls on October 9 and is known as the feast of Saint Dionysius. On this day, men gift their women a "macadora", which is a marzipan figurine.



ESTONIA: Still taking place on February 14 but with a slight twist, Estonians celebrate all relationships on this day rather than just romantic ones.



JAPAN: A country that prides itself on being unique, Valentine's Day in Japan is quite unlike anywhere else in the world. On February 14, women buy gifts for men, but men are not allowed to return the favour until March 14, known as the "white day".

HOW TO SAY "I LOVE YOU":

- > South Korea: Saranghae
- > Philippines: Mahal kita
- > Ghana: Me do wo
- > Bulgaria: Obicham te
- > Wales: Rwy'n dy garu di
- > Spain: Te amo
- > Estonia: Ma armastan sind
- > Japan: Aishiteru





PUZZLES & TRIVIA

PUZZLES

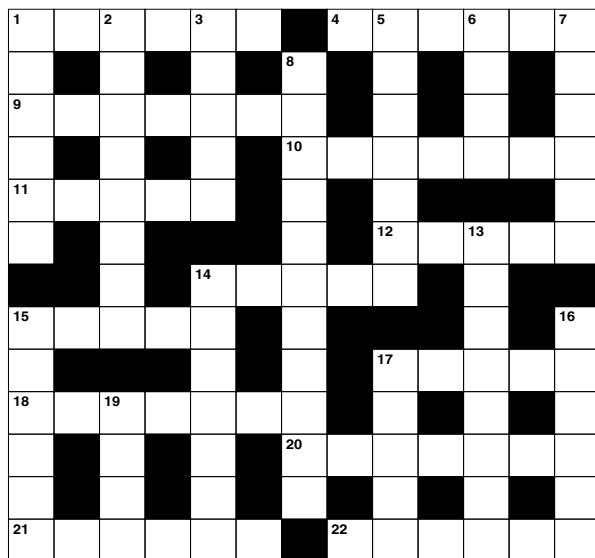
Answers: see end of The VISION Listings

ACROSS

1. Straighten out (6)
4. Vocalist (6)
9. Animal fat (7)
10. Not friendly (7)
11. Oozes (5)
12. Compassion (5)
14. Expect; think that (5)
15. Word of farewell (5)
17. Wedding assistant (5)
18. Supervisory worker (7)
20. Burdensome work (7)
21. Short choral compositions (6)
22. Entertains (6)

DOWN

1. Except when (6)
2. Musical pieces for solo instruments (8)
3. Regulations (5)
5. Annoying (7)
6. Large desert in Asia (4)
7. Make less dense (6)
8. Residents (11)
13. People with auburn hair (8)



14. Furthest away (7)
15. State publicly (6)
16. Tremulous sounds (6)
17. Deprive of weapons (5)
19. Speak in a wild way (4)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Adélie penguins breed and raise their offspring in Antarctica
- ▶ Puffins can flap their wings up to 400 times a minute. They can fly at around 55 miles an hour
- ▶ The bald eagle, which was once on the brink of extinction, has been the national symbol of the United States of America since 1782
- ▶ Once a flamingo lays an egg, the parents take turns sitting on it to keep it warm. The egg usually hatches in around 30 days
- ▶ The ostrich is the tallest and heaviest of all the birds
- ▶ As a male snowy owl gets older, it turns whiter. Males are often whiter than females
- ▶ Red-tailed hawks can spot a mouse from 30 metres up in the air

SUDOKU

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	4		3			7		
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4	6					9		



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The infectious personality of ALISON HAMMOND

The presenter who has chuckled, chortled and guffawed her way through almost two decades on camera... and we're all better off for it.

The Brummie whose laugh-a-minute approach to presenting has won her admirers across the entertainment world... and we include Harrison Ford and Ryan Gosling in that number.

As if proof were needed that Alison Hammond, while always kind, enthusiastic and respectful, does not subscribe to the idea that celebrities and film stars are unreachable demigods not worthy of our time, in a hilarious 2017 interview for *This Morning*, Hammond charmed and bewildered two of Hollywood's finest in a recording that had more than 12 million YouTube views. You could say she upstaged her two guests by laughing them into submission.

Having first appeared on our screens as a contestant in the *Big Brother* house, Hammond is another example of a reality star who has maximised the possibilities out of what is a very simple and short-lived platform.

She has swept her way through a variety of entertainment shows over the past decade, appearing in *Celebrity Fit Club*, *Celebrities Under Pressure*, *Stars in Their Eyes*, *Celebrity Ready Steady Cook* and many, many more; she has been a panellist on *Loose Women*, and made it to the seventh week of *Strictly Come Dancing* when she partnered Aljaž Škorjanec.

"I've always been someone who wants to grab life by the horns and go for a ride," she laughs. "It's very rare that I'll turn down an opportunity, and if I do it's because it's taking me too far from home and being around the people I love, and those are the ones who must always come first."

And Hammond's reputation as a brilliant reporter on *This Morning* has borne fruit in a way she wouldn't have imagined – in the middle of December 2020 it was announced that she and Dermot O'Leary would take over full presenting duties on Fridays from regular incumbents Eamonn Holmes and Ruth Langsford.

The shake-up is further evidence of a nation embracing those down-to-earth personalities who reflect our own thoughts, ideas and sensibilities.

"A long time ago I realised that to get on in the world you just need to be yourself," she says. "I think in the early days of getting TV work there was a temptation to be the person you thought people wanted to see, and when you do that you lose an edge."

"What people see is what they get, but it is all me – an uplifting, fun, sparky person who treats everyone as equals."

Indeed, geographically, Hammond, 46 in February, has stayed true to herself as well. Despite *This Morning* being filmed at Television Centre in White City, the presenter still lives in 'the second city', commuting to the capital for work. "I couldn't ever leave Birmingham behind – it means everything to me, as do the people."

"It's also my son's home, and I want him to grow up a proud Brummie like me... who likes to laugh."



SPORT

NEW OLYMPIC SPORT:

BREAKDANCING

THE NEW SPORT SET TO DEBUT AT THE 2024 OLYMPICS IN PARIS... BREAKDANCING!

While the postponement of the Olympic Games in Tokyo proved one of 2020's most frustrating episodes, hosting the Games this coming summer has at least given the International Olympic Committee (IOC) the chance to run its eye over prospective new sports that could be showcased.

And fans of breakdancing – a pursuit created and styled on the mean, urban streets of New York in the 1970s before being exported to a truly global audience – will be glad of the extra time, albeit the first we'll see of it will be in 2024 when Paris hosts.

A movement centred as much on music as it is dance, there are distant similarities with other performance events at the Games, such as synchronised swimming and dressage.

In the Olympic format, competitors look likely to go up against each other 1v1, as was

the case at the 2018 Youth Olympics in Argentina. The success of the event there, some significant backing by Red Bull and a desire by organisers for the Olympics to speak to a younger, more urban demographic, means breakdancing – or 'breaking', as it will be called in event terms – sailed through the trial on its way to debuting at the world's biggest sporting tournament.

It's also significant that the IOC has embraced breaking despite some of the activity's leading purveyors insisting that it needs to retain its artistic and cultural edge, and shouldn't be bracketed in with the Olympics' sometimes rather formal take on sport.

Whether breaking will inspire anyone older than the teenage market to take it up is unclear. If it does, expect sales of paracetamol to soar.



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FEBRUARY BIRTH FLOWER OF THE MONTH:

Violet

The February birth flower is the vibrant violet. People born in this month tend to be both modest and mild mannered, hence the popular expression “shrinking violet”. Sweet violets are regularly found in the UK in woods and hedgerows and are often candied and used to decorate cakes.

WHAT DO VIOLETS SYMBOLISE?

Violets have been around for centuries and were first cultivated by the Greeks around 500BC. According to Greek mythology, violets were created when one of Artemis’ nymphs was pursued by her twin brother Apollo. To protect her, Artemis turned her into a violet, which in turn led to this flower being known to represent modesty.

WHAT DOES THIS BIRTH FLOWER SAY ABOUT YOUR PERSONALITY?

If you were born in February, you are said to be wise beyond your years. A private person, you are also prone to being a bit of a dreamer. It can take you a while to warm up to people, but when you do, you are fiercely loyal.

CAN I GROW VIOLETS IN MY GARDEN?

Violets typically grow in the wild, although they are decreasing in numbers owing to habitat loss, which means if you want to grow them in your garden, you need to recreate these conditions. Violets thrive in winter and spring sun but need summer shade, so their ideal spot is under a deciduous tree or shrub.

Violets will self-sow, but growing your own from seed is a challenge as the seeds need to be fresh. Instead, buy plants during the spring and plant immediately in moist but well-drained soil.

WHAT PESTS ARE COMMON TO VIOLETS?

If your violet leaves turn yellow, this could be the result of an attack by red spider mites. This pest strikes when your plant becomes too hot or dry.

The best remedy is to defoliate the plant completely.



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GARDENING

GARDEN OF LIFE

FOX IN *the box*

In the first of a four-part series that shows how even the most urban garden can be a haven for the wonders of wildlife and the nurturing of nature, we look at the faithful fox. Whether out at night or hiding in plain sight, this sly urban dweller has adapted better than any other animal to human environments.

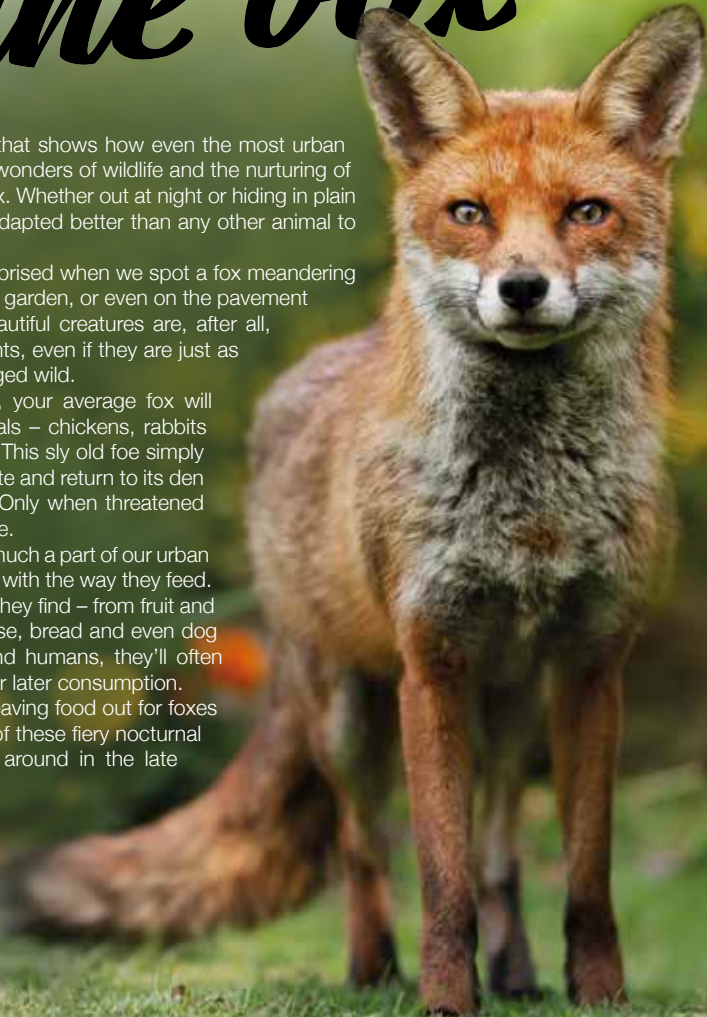
Perhaps we shouldn't be so surprised when we spot a fox meandering its way through the park, across a garden, or even on the pavement outside where we live. These beautiful creatures are, after all, past masters in urban environments, even if they are just as accustomed to survival in the rugged wild.

For all its impressive presence, your average fox will rarely approach humans or animals – chickens, rabbits and guinea pigs notwithstanding. This sly old foe simply wants to hunt for scraps, play, mate and return to its den to rest and tend to its offspring. Only when threatened will a fox move into offensive mode.

The fact foxes have become so much a part of our urban and suburban lives has a lot to do with the way they feed. They'll consume almost anything they find – from fruit and veg, raw and cooked meat, cheese, bread and even dog biscuits. Increasingly brave around humans, they'll often take food for storage, burying it for later consumption.

That means there's little risk in leaving food out for foxes if you're hoping to get a glimpse of these fiery nocturnal beauties, who will happily roam around in the late afternoon as well.

There is a downside, however. From fouling the garden to chewing shoes left outside, to trampling lawns and even digging up deceased pets, if you encourage foxes in, you'll have to go along with their inquisitive, playful habits.



Squirrelled Away

PROS AND CONS OF ATTRACTING SQUIRRELS TO YOUR GARDEN

It's one of the cutest and most beautiful sights in nature – a squirrel bounding around the back garden, scaling trees, leaping from branches, and finding any possible hiding place for acorns and hazelnuts.

And yet, opinion is divided over whether or not these immaculate grey creatures are good for our green spaces. Let's look at the evidence:

THE GOOD:

Nature's gardeners... Squirrels are known as 'nature's gardeners', meaning they are chiefly

responsible for shaping plant composition. Their constant removal, replanting and redistribution of nuts means nature flourishes where they live.

Entertainment... squirrels are a constant source of entertainment and they'll let you get relatively close to watch.

Education... there is no better garden dweller for helping kids learn about animal behaviour – from food preservation (including rubbing their nose on an acorn to leave a scent they can come back to) to evading the threat of cats and foxes; from mating to playing, there is so much to savour.

THE BAD:

Bark... squirrels are known to peel bark off trees, resulting in sometimes extensive damage, as well as causing branches to die.

Wires... they are often the culprits of chewed wires or gnawed joists in lofts, although proper insulation and plugging of gaps in buildings can prevent this.

Bad for birds... we often see these hoarders stealing food left out for birds, or hanging from feeders.

What's certain is that attracting squirrels to your garden means you have a friend who will keep coming back. Loyal and dependent, they will return looking for food frequently, all the while leaving a trail of pellet poos that will quickly decorate any immaculately paved area.



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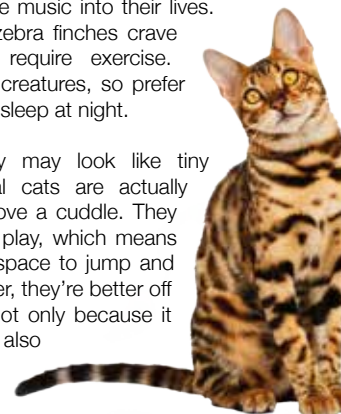
LEOPARD GECKOS: A reptile may not be the first pet you have in mind when considering a companion for your older years, but the leopard gecko is actually a fantastic little friend who's also easy to look after. Requiring little more than a cosy, heated habitat in the form of a tank, insect edibles and a bowl of water, these big-eyed beauties are not only calm and friendly, but also happy to be handled by gentle hands.

they are arguably far more desirable to look at than your common or garden goldfish.

ZEBRA FINCHES: Originating from Australia, these feathery little friends are fantastic pets for those wishing to bring a little music into their lives. Prone to loneliness, zebra finches crave companionship and require exercise. They're also daytime creatures, so prefer to play in the day and sleep at night.

TROPICAL FISH: You may not be able to cuddle a koi carp when you're feeling low, but bright-coloured, beautiful tropical fish are clinically proven to have a calming effect on our minds. From gorgeous, fantailed guppies to bright little neons, you can buy tropical fish in an array of dazzling colours, even creating your own underwater paradise with the addition of ornaments and plants. Tropical fish, of course, require a little more in terms of heating and pumping systems, but

BENGAL CAT: They may look like tiny leopards, but Bengal cats are actually incredibly tame and love a cuddle. They are agile and love to play, which means they do need a little space to jump and run around in. However, they're better off being kept indoors, not only because it is far safer there but also because of their high value.



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WHAT IS BODY SCULPTING?

Body sculpting is a non surgical and non invasive, pain free and completely relaxing treatment. It is a revolutionary procedure which combines cavitation and radio frequency for a sculpted result on desired body areas.

WHAT IS CAVITATION?

Cavitation is a revolutionary procedure that uses ultrasound technology to, in simple terms, 'melt' fat. During a cavitation procedure the machine targets specific and desired body areas, then comfortably heats the skin sending shock waves that penetrate through the derma layer.

This causes a micro bubbling in the liquid surrounding the adipocytes (fat cells). Under pressure the adipocytes rupture and release glycerol (fatty acid) 40% safely goes into your blood stream to be used or stored as energy. The other 60% goes to your liver to be metabolised and then finally your body is able to process these glycerol through its proverbial waste-disposal plant: the lymphatic system.



WHAT IS RADIO FREQUENCY

Radio frequency is used to improve skin elasticity, remove cellulite, renew muscles and enhance skin rejuvenation by applying electromagnetic high frequency waves.

The goal of radio frequency treatment is to tighten the skin of the body and dilated pores, smooth fine lines and wrinkles. Collagen and elastin are boosted, cellulite is removed.

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.

RADIO FREQUENCY / CAVITATION BENEFITS

- ✦ Fat Reduction ✦ Cellulite Removal
- ✦ Boosts Collagen & Elastin Process
- ✦ Skin Tightening & Toning ✦ Skin Rejuvenation
- ✦ Improves Skin Texture
- ✦ Smooths Fine Lines & Wrinkles

AREAS TREATED

- ✦ Buttocks ✦ Stomach ✦ Chest ✦ Legs ✦ Arms
- ✦ Face ✦ Hands ✦ Décolletage ✦ Mummy Tummy



Men's skin toning & tightening after one treatment



Men's stomach after one treatment

Clients can see improvements after three sessions. The recommended course is six treatments, however some clients may need additional sessions depending on the individual.

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CLEANSE ME...



Whether you are looking to remove stubborn mascara, thick sun cream or the dirt and impurities that your skin has picked up over the course of the day, a cleansing balm should be your go-to product, providing a delicate, yet effective, way to clean the skin on your face.

WHAT IS A CLEANSING BALM?

Cleansing balms are creamy and rich cleansers that gently remove any make-up, dirt and impurities from your skin without leaving it stripped of its natural oils. Unlike oil cleansers, which can be a bit messy, cleansing balms deliver oils to melt make-up, in a solidified form, meaning portion control is easier.

Furthermore, cleansing balms can be used around the eyes to remove make-up, as they are made with natural ingredients and are therefore suitable for this delicate area.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BENEFITS?

- > They provide a deep cleanse which can help to prevent breakouts
- > They hydrate your skin
- > They are suitable for sensitive skin

- > They provide quick results
- > Many contain antioxidants
- > They are high in oils, meaning you can skip daily moisturiser if you wish

HOW TO USE CLEANSING BALMS

1. Take a 10p-sized amount of balm and warm it between your fingers
2. Apply to dry skin in circular motions
3. Once the make-up starts to break down, add warm water to your skin
4. Continue to massage
5. Remove with a warm, damp cloth or muslin

WHAT ARE THE BEST CLEANSING BALMS?

- > Clinique Take The Day Off Balm – best all-rounder, suitable for all skin types
- > ESPA Nourishing Cleansing Balm – best for dry skin
- > Pond's Makeup Remover Cleansing Balm – best for sensitive skin
- > Slaai Makeup Melting Butter Cleanser by Drunk Elephant – best for removing waterproof make-up
- > Emma Hardie Moringa Cleansing Balm – best for ageing skin



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NO MEAN FOOT

Why our humble feet may be the lynchpin to overall body health alignment

Never underestimate just how fantastic our feet are – sure, they will get you around the house, to work, or down to the pub, but more than that, they are the lynchpin to overall body health too.

Consider 10 toes, more than 50 bones (that's around a quarter of all those in the human body), and more than 60 joints, plus more than 200 muscles, tendons and ligaments, and it's clear why your feet are the cornerstone to overall body health.

Mobility

In the most obvious sense, your feet are the tools that move you around. Essential for almost every form of exercise, health and well-being, which begins at ground level.

Back and joint issues

The way we walk ultimately affects the way the rest of our body functions, and this is no truer than in people who suffer with flat feet. This condition causes a misalignment with the ankle, which can move up through the body into the knees, hips, spine, neck and other joints.

Balance

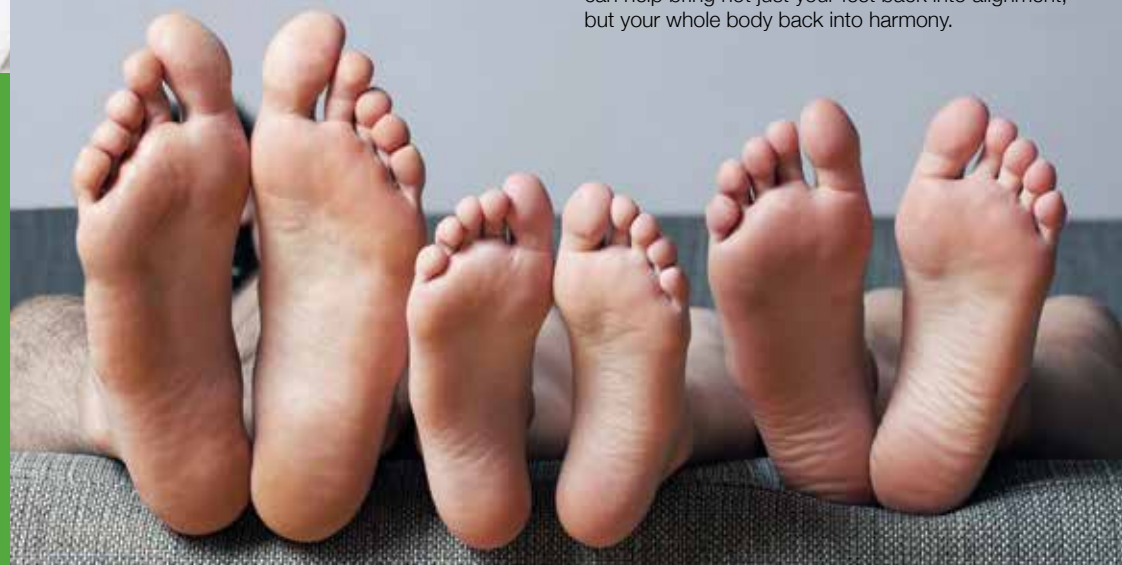
Balance in the human body is finely configured so that any imbalances can have negative effects on general health, from wobbliness through to vertigo-type symptoms.

Organs

In the most extreme cases, when the mesh of nerves and touch receptors in our feet are blocked, insufficient messages can send disruptive adjustments through the body, including into our organs.

It is for these reasons that looking after our feet is pivotal to good health. Sure, get the pumice stone out in the bath, but more than that, ensure you are wearing properly fitting shoes. That might mean accepting that narrow styles are not going to work for your wide feet, or that perhaps you will need to buy flip-flops with a little more support.

Also consider a whole variety of foot exercises that can help bring not just your feet back into alignment, but your whole body back into harmony.





THE REAL PiLL

Placenta encapsulation: is it gross or full of goodness?

We all know the value of a mother's placenta. A rich, nutritious, nourishing source of life that feeds, grows and sustains a baby in the womb. As the miracles of nature go, it's right up there with the best of them – in fact, we wouldn't be here without the placenta.

It follows, then, that some mothers are loath to let the placenta go, post-birth. From using it to make jewellery or picture frames to donating it to medical science, through to something rather more symbolic such as planting it, there are a number of ways to respect this incredible organ.

Of course, given its goodness, reingesting the placenta makes perfect sense too – welcome to the world of placenta encapsulation.

In this process, the placenta is put into ice then sent off to a lab where it's made into pill form. Many mums feel a physical and emotional boost when consuming their placenta as a daily supplement,

saying that it helps with general well-being, limits the ups and downs associated with those immediate weeks and months after giving birth, gives an energy boost, and helps with breast milk production.

And that all makes sense – the placenta is loaded with vitamins B6 and B12, plus iron and reproductive hormones that drop after birth. To repackage those and put them back into the body makes sense.

However, there are risks. There aren't any standards in place for the process, meaning poorly encapsulated pills may harbour bacteria. There are also environmental toxins such as heavy metals – like lead and arsenic – that accumulate in the placenta, while a theory exists that the progesterone present in the pills may actually slow down milk supply.

Placenta encapsulation remains one for the scientists to unpick, but in the meantime it continues to increase in popularity.

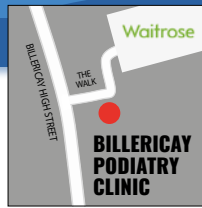


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WORKOUT TIMEOUT

HOW LONG VARIOUS EXERCISES TAKE TO BURN 300 CALORIES

You're carrying a bit more timber than you'd prefer, but you're busy, right, and don't have huge amounts of time to invest in a new fitness regime? Don't worry, we've all been there. Backed by a sensible diet, of course, what you need to know are the methods of exercise that will burn the most calories most quickly.

Well, we're happy to help out. And because none of us are Joe Wicks and we need to keep this realistic, we've compared time taken to exercise to the calorific content of a Mars bar, which you might promptly reward yourself with afterwards... however counterproductive.

Skipping Rope: At an expected rate of two jumps per second, this old playground favourite is actually the best possible exercise you can do.

Time required to burn 300 calories: 20mins

Sprinting: You'll find embarking on some eye-bursting sprinting around tracks, pavements, fields and more is just as effective... whether you can sustain it is another matter.

Time required: 20mins

Kickboxing: Upper body strength, big on cardio and an exercise that, despite the name, actually gives your legs a break from high-impact activity (such as running).

Time required: 25mins

Spinning: A spin class is big on knees and hamstrings, and with good posture is great for burning fat – just try not to ease off too much on the pedals when the going gets tough.

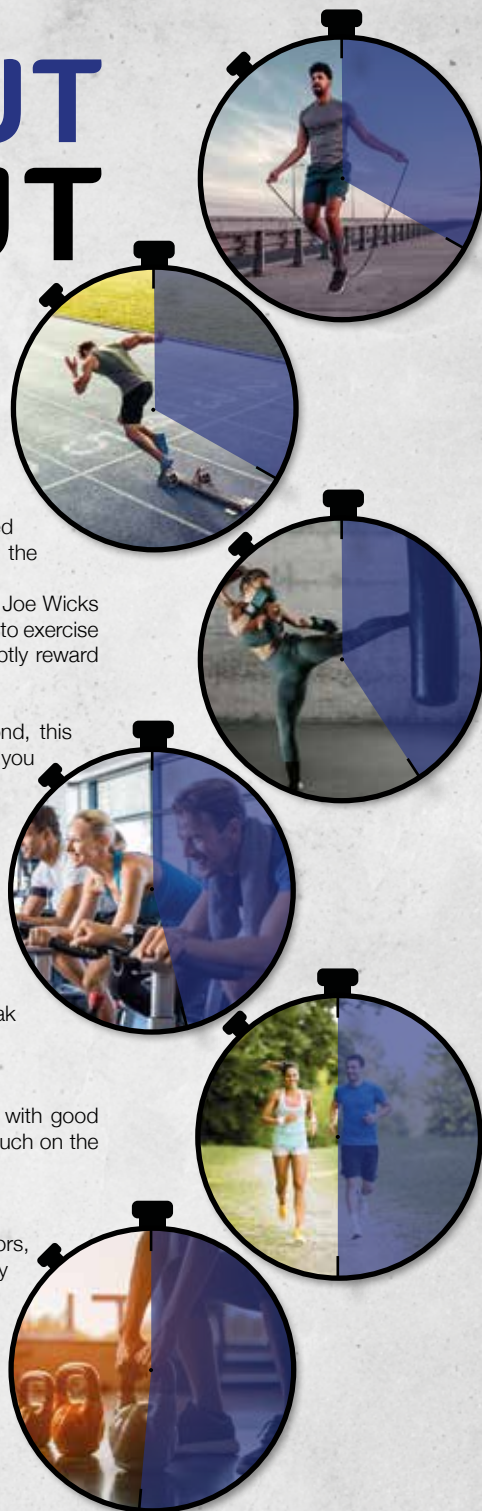
Time required: 28mins

Running: Calorie burn by running depends on a number of factors, such as pace, incline and your environment, but generally speaking you're burning off a Mars bar every half-hour.

Time required: 30mins

Kettlebell Circuits: Arguably the newest fitness fad, kettlebell circuits improve strength and boost metabolism, and keeping the heart rate high is great for all-over body health.

Time required: 32mins



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BRUSH UP

on children's oral health

February is National Children's Dental Health month, so what better time to tackle any tooth-brushing issues your child has?

Discover the top five reasons why your child doesn't want to brush their teeth below. Plus, how you can encourage them to practise good oral hygiene.

WHY DOES MY CHILD HATE BRUSHING THEIR TEETH?

1. They are sensitive to having their teeth brushed

Some children experience a gag reflex when brushing their teeth that can be unpleasant. Others might not like the feel of the brush against their teeth or in their mouth. Sensitivities are more common in children with autism or attention disorders.

2. They are asserting their authority

If you find yourself caught in a battle with your child every morning and evening when it comes to brushing their teeth and there is no physical reason why they won't brush, they could simply be pushing boundaries.

3. They have become anxious

You may not be able to determine the initial reason why your child started to hate brushing their teeth, but if it has become a daily issue in your household, your child may now feel anxiety around this daily activity.

4. They don't like the taste of the toothpaste

It is always a good idea to ask your child if they would like to choose a different flavoured toothpaste if they do not like the one you are currently buying.

5. They are a picky eater

Children who are picky eaters are more likely to not like the texture and taste of a toothbrush and toothpaste in their mouth.

How can I encourage my child to brush their teeth?

- 👉 Stick to a routine
- 👉 Make it fun
- 👉 Provide choice in terms of what products they use
- 👉 Stand behind younger children
- 👉 Allow your child to hold a toy they can squeeze to calm them
- 👉 Offer a reward such as an extra bedtime story

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If you enjoyed an alcohol-free January, here are some alternatives to alcohol to try...

It's that time of year when we reflect on our bad habits and do our best to become healthier, happier and wiser, and if giving up alcohol is your New Year's Resolution, then all is good. Low-booze business is booming, and that means there are plenty of delicious, low-calorie options to help keep you motivated.

BEER

Any designated driver will tell you that the previous offerings from major breweries fell a little flat in the flavour department. But just as burgeoning independent brewers have completely transformed our ale habits, they too have tasked themselves with creating exciting low-alcohol options that don't skimp on that gloriously hoppy flavour. With 'endless session' IPAs, low-alcohol lagers and sobering stouts and sours, craft beer connoisseurs have a raft of options for their refined palates.

SPIRITS

For those lamenting their 5pm gin and tonics or pre-dinner Negronis, there are even more options as teetotallers use distilling alchemy to create potions that offer all the depth and nuance of an expertly concocted spirit with none of the units. There are juniper and bergamot blends that perfectly complement tonic water for that G&T experience, luxurious citrus and herb creations that mimic the dry bitterness of vermouth, and even elegant elixirs containing herbs such as lemon balm and valerian root – ideal as a soporific nightcap for those who would otherwise drink whisky.

WINE

In the past these underwhelming alternatives have often had their alcohol violently removed, leaving an unsatisfying liquid that would barely satisfy as grape juice. Now, canny cultivators have turned to nature in order to create wines that are naturally lower in alcohol by halting the fermenting process earlier. With red wines this can often lend a natural sweetness, whereas whites have a more delicate profile. The best low-alcohol wines, however, are the ones with a natural fizz, such as Pet Nat, which offer all the celebratory joy of champagne without the hangover.

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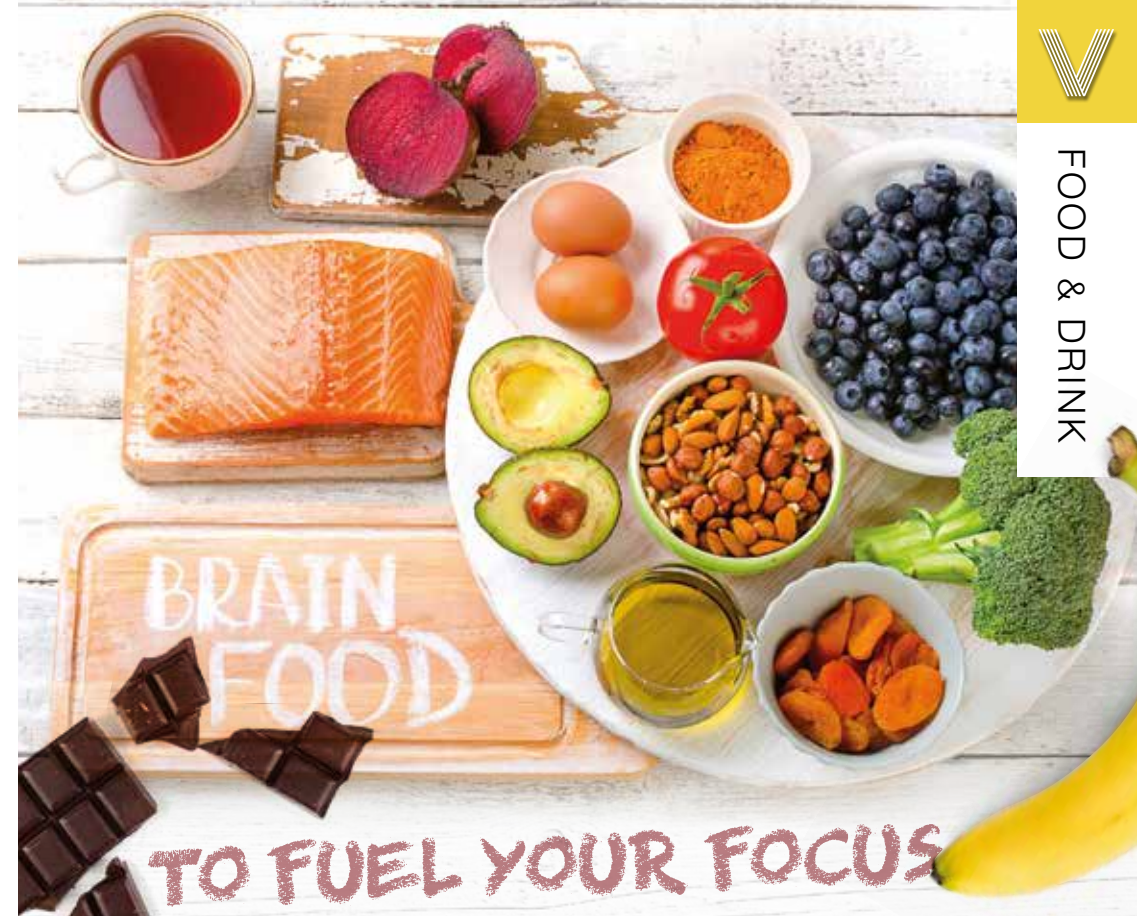
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Your Monthly Lifestyle Magazine **VISION**



If you are still struggling with getting back into a routine and could do with some help improving your concentration levels, these foods will boost your brain power and motivate your memory.

SUPER SALMON: Providing a concentrated source of omega-3 fatty acids, salmon can help to rebuild your brain cells, slow cognitive decline and strengthen the synapses in your brain that are responsible for memory.

BEETROOT: A shockingly underused root vegetable, beetroot contains nitrates that increase blood flow and oxygen to the brain, resulting in improved mental performance.

BANANAS: Cheap, filling and high in potassium, bananas are the ideal afternoon pick-me-up for times when your concentration levels are waning.

SPINACH: Spinach is known as the ultimate brain food and it's not hard to see why. Rich in folate,

lutein and beta-carotene, this leafy green has been linked to the prevention of dementia. Aim to eat three portions a week for optimal results.

AVOCADOS: Avocados are a bit like Marmite – you either love them or you hate them. Fortunately for those who fall into the former category, this fruit can fire up your brain cells and keep hunger pangs at bay.

NUTS: The best thing about nuts is that you only need a very small serving to enjoy all the benefits of this super snack. Both nuts and seeds are great sources of vitamin E, which is associated with a reduction in cognitive decline. Plus, they contain essential oils and amino acids that help you focus.

DARK CHOCOLATE: Because we all deserve a treat from time to time, dark chocolate makes a great alternative to coffee in the morning, having the ability to boost your serotonin and endorphin levels which are both associated with increased concentration.



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LOOKING FORWARD TO A BETTER YEAR

Last year, as a new decade dawned, little did we know how the next 12 months would unfold. Now, as another year begins, there are growing shoots of optimism but, whatever the year does bring, a crucial lesson from 2020 is the need to prioritise financial wellbeing to ensure we can cope with life's trials and tribulations.

KEY LESSONS

The coronavirus pandemic has laid bare our fragility and vulnerabilities and presented challenges on many different levels. It has also reinforced several key financial lessons, from the importance of budgeting and building up an emergency savings fund, to investment diversification and holding appropriate life and protection policies.

In short, the pandemic has demonstrated the value of maintaining sound financial planning principles and the peace of mind this delivers. In effect, by getting into good financial habits, it is possible to ensure you are cushioned against the shock when crisis does strike.

FINANCIAL WELLBEING

Another key takeaway from last years' experience has been the entwined relationship between financial

wellbeing and emotional wellbeing: while a lack of financial stability typically leads to stress and anxiety, sound finances can provide mental peace. Research conducted by insurer Royal London also highlights the critical role expert advice plays in improving emotional wellbeing by increasing clients' financial confidence and resilience. According to the study, advised customers who have an ongoing relationship with their adviser were nearly twice as likely to feel in control of their finances as those who didn't.

HELP AT HAND

The new year period provides the perfect opportunity to take stock of your finances and build foundations for a better financial future, and seeking professional advice is a vital step in achieving those objectives. So, get in touch and we'll help you develop sound plans designed to ensure you hit your short and long-term financial goals and ultimately provide a boost to both your financial and emotional wellbeing.

For a free review of your current financial situation, please contact Karyn Vogel on 01277 654153.

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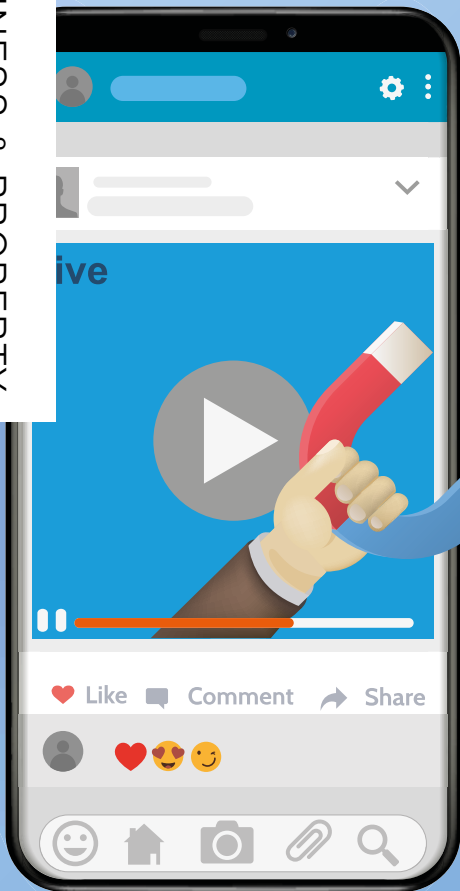


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The Power of Social Media



memes and GIFs. Avoid overly promotional posts.

Increased interaction: Video continues to be one of the strongest social media strategies, with an estimated 78 per cent of users watching video content on a monthly basis. Ideal for grabbing people's attention, conveying your brand personality and showcasing your passion as a business. You could even try live-streaming an event.

Improved customer service: Although social media can be a blessing for your business, it can also cause a lot of damage if you don't keep an eye on it. Remember that, first and foremost, social media is a customer service channel, so you need to monitor your mentions and keep tabs on your reviews. Always respond to comments asap and deal with any problems via private messaging.

If you only implement one digital marketing technique to boost your business and build brand awareness this year, then make sure it involves social media.

Providing you with the chance to improve customer service, drive traffic to your site and even spy on your competitors, the power of social media should never be underestimated.

Enhanced engagement: Social media is the perfect technology for engaging with both your existing customers and potential new ones. Make sure you take full advantage of social capability and encourage interaction through competitions, industry news, tips and advice and humorous

The lowdown on the popular social media platforms:

- > **Facebook.** Best for generating leads and building relationships
- > **Twitter.** Perfect for businesses with a younger audience
- > **Pinterest.** Great for driving sales and for brands with visual appeal
- > **Snapchat.** Ideal for building relationships with influencers and driving brand recognition and loyalty
- > **Instagram.** The best option for e-commerce sites and for telling your brand story
- > **YouTube.** To help you get seen by Google and tap into YouTube traffic

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