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Located on the edge of the private Homesteads Development is this stylish detached four bedroom chalet bungalow offering spacious living accommodation, two bathrooms, conservatory and private established rear garden. Situated in the vicinity of St Peters school and Brentwood mainline station.



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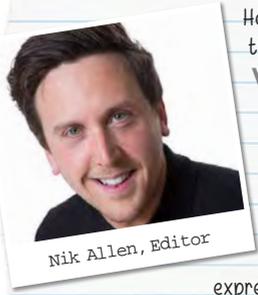
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# Editor's notes...



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to the ninth edition of **VISION**Brentwood.

This month love is all around us as we look back at the history of Valentine's Day and how it became what it is today. If you want to

express your love this month, we have some great gift ideas for you and your child to create.

In gardening we help your flowers bloom in the cold weather and we show you how small spaces can be transformed.

Internationally recognised fashion designer Ralph Lauren shows off his beautiful and extensive car collection and *The Apprentice* winner Alana George shares her tale of becoming ridiculously rich.

In fashion we show how big is beautiful and we have the perfect item to keep your wardrobe looking fresh.

If you want to get fit but spend your days at a desk, we have the perfect routine to beat the slump, as well as great way to make running fun again. Team up your exercise with our simple delicious breakfast ideas, which is a great way to start the day.

In local news, former pupils of Brentwood School have raised over £100,000 to help one of their own and plans for a new garden village near Brentwood have won government support.

Wishing you a happy Valentine's Day and enjoy,

*Nik*



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 19. INLAY, 20. ART DECO, 21. GARDENER, 22. URNS,  
 DOWN  
 1. PENNY PINCHING, 2. MOTET, 4. ABSORB, 5. POSTGRADUATE, 6. CURTAIL, 7. OVERAMBITIOUS,  
 8. FORMALDEHYDE, 14. TRAILER, 16. MORALE, 18. SMEAR,

# VALENTINE'S DAY

## A HEART-SHAPED HISTORY

February 14 is traditionally the day that flowers and chocolates will be winging their way to loved ones across the Western world. But how did this annual expression of affection come to occupying a permanent spot on our calendars, and just who was this Valentine in whose name we send cards and presents?

It's a day on the calendar that elicits high emotion, whether that be a boyfriend's sudden panic that he's forgotten to get his partner a present and will subsequently be consigned to the doghouse, or the disinterest of a singleton facing the prospect of amorous couples engaged in very public displays of affection. Although not a global phenomenon, in America, Canada, Mexico, France, Australia and, of course, the UK, Valentine's Day is an annual event celebrated via the exchanging of gifts and cards between loved ones.

But where did this tradition begin? Well, there are multiple

stories about the origins of the mysterious saint to whom the February 14 owes its name. The Catholic Church currently recognises three different saints by the name of Valentine, or Valentinus – all of whom were martyred.

Could Valentine's Day be named after the man who defied the Roman Emperor Claudius' decree that marriage be outlawed for young men, as single men made better soldiers, and continued to perform marriages in secret? Or could it be the Valentine who allegedly helped captured Christians escape from the Romans, and may have sent handwritten notes signed 'From Your Valentine' to his love interest while he himself was imprisoned?

Whatever the truth of the matter, all sources agree that Valentine was a sympathetic and romantic hero... and wouldn't we all love to be that.

It was in the Middle Ages, however, when the notion of courtly love meant that the figure of Valentine became one of the most popular patron saints. The oldest concrete appearance of the relationship between Valentine's Day and romantic love was in Geoffrey Chaucer's 1382 poem *Parlement of Foules*, which made a link between this holiday and the mating season of birds. The oldest known valentine letter is from the Duke of Orleans to his wife after his imprisonment in the Tower of London following the Battle of Agincourt. Written in 1415, the greeting is now housed in the British Library in London.

Modern Valentine's Day is less about Chaucer and more about

cards, with the Greetings Card Association estimating that one billion cards are sent each year on February 14, making Valentine's Day the second-largest holiday of the year – with women purchasing around 85 per cent of all cards. The battle of the sexes evens out, however, when it comes to giving floral favours, with over 70 per cent of flower buyers being men.

One man who has also turned Valentine's Day into an annual cash bonanza is Richard Cadbury – he of the famous purple-wrapped chocolates. Cadbury was the first person to package chocolate up in heart-shaped boxes to be sold for Valentine's Day, and these days more than 35 million of these boxes will be sold each year around this time.

Despite such a patterned history of romantic reverence, just remember, the real question isn't whether you dare send something on Valentine's Day... it's whether you dare not!



# NEW MONEY SAFER THAN EVER



Look out for a change to your change from March 28 as the Government introduces the new style 12 sided £1 coin into circulation.

The slogan 'the pound won't be round for much longer' is being used to publicise the £1.5 billion of coins being made by the Royal Mint.

The new coin is apparently one of the hardest to counterfeit in the world. Its security features include:

- ▶ **12 sided** – its distinctive shape makes it instantly recognisable, even by touch.
- ▶ **Bimetallic** – it is made of two metals. The outer ring is gold coloured (nickel-brass) and the inner ring is silver coloured (nickel-plated alloy).
- ▶ **Latent image** – it has an image like a hologram that changes from a '£' symbol to the number '1' when the coin is seen from different angles.
- ▶ **Micro-lettering** – it has very small lettering on the lower inside rim on both sides of the coin. One pound on the obverse "heads" side and the year of production on the reverse "tails" side, for example 2016 or 2017.
- ▶ **Milled edges** – it has grooves on alternate sides.
- ▶ **Top secret - Hidden high security feature** – a high security feature is built into the coin to protect it from counterfeiting in the future.

Securing the pound's future was the reason why the coin has been changed for the first time in 30 years.

According to the Royal Mint one £1 coin in thirty in circulation is a fake.

However many businesses are angry about the change as those who use machines to take payment will have to re-figure them to accept the new coins.

From October 16 onwards businesses can refuse the 'old' round pound.

The round £1 coin will continue to be allowed to be deposited into accounts of most high street banks and Post Offices.

For more information visit [www.thenewpoundcoin.com](http://www.thenewpoundcoin.com)

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HOME & DIY

# PUT A SPRING IN YOUR STOOP

Shaking off those lingering winter blues with a good old-fashioned spring clean is a perfect way to gear up for a productive year, but it's important not to forget that the outside of your home needs to be just as spick-and-span as the interior. If you think that this seems like a mammoth job, try these handy tips for putting a gleam in your guttering and a shine in your soffits.



### UNDER PRESSURE

If extricating those cobwebs from out of the corners of your bedroom is difficult, try taking on the dirt, grime and moss that has been almost inextricably slammed into every crack and crevice of your roof and walls by 12 months of erratic weather! This is a job suited to a pressure washer, which retail at around £50-100 and are the ultimate tool for sluicing away that mud and muck in no time at all – it's a real blast!

### HANGING OUT

Hanging baskets make beautiful decorations throughout the summer, but that's no reason to let your front-of-house flower arrangements go untouched before the sun comes out fully. Create an eye-catching display of hardy winter plants with shrubs and conifers to provide height; or rosemary, euonymus or New Zealand cabbage palm to provide evergreen colour and interest. Finally, tumbling ivy or periwinkle can soften the edges of your display and add some interesting texture to your display.



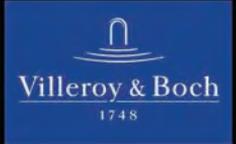
### ROLL WITH IT

If your home's exterior has taken a bit of a battering, now may well be the perfect time to give your doors and window frames a new lick of paint. This can be as simple as touching up whites that don't seem so bright anymore, or as daring as going for that iconic red door you've always dreamed of owning. Bronze house numbers and door knockers are also a nice touch – either buy some new fittings or smarten up your current ones with soft cloths and a mixture of baking soda and lemon juice, rubbed on in small, circular motions.



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# Forget the FEATHER DUSTER



HOME & DIY

The dreaded necessity of a Spring Clean will soon be looming at the forefront of many homeowners' to-do lists, but in an age of gadgets and technical wizardry to assist you with all your menial tasks, why not switch out that tired old duster and antiquated vacuum for the latest in high-tech home-sprucing assistance?

perpetually surrounded by a raging blizzard? Then the Winbot 730 (RRP £169) is surely for you. This nifty little gadget contains a damp pad, a squeegee for wiping and a second pad for 'on the go' drying, and attaches to the glass pane, meaning it can reach those 'hard to get to' places with automated ease.

## Eyevac Professional Bin Vacuum Cleaner



Ditch that dustpan for something much, much snazzier with the Eyevac Professional bin-vacuum (RRP £175) – designed specifically to get every last bit of rubbish from off your floors. This 1400 watt beauty combines both bin and vacuum to ensure for a spotless home; simply brush all dirt under the gadget's base and see it magicked away into thin air by an automated sensor-activated vacuum.

## Motorised Grill Brush

Sure as summer follows spring, so too is the toil of spring cleaning followed by the beer-sipping, burger-flipping BBQ season, but getting your grill free of grime and dirt so it's ready to be the talk of the town can be a difficult job. That job just got a bit easier with the aid of the motorised grill brush (RRP £45) which uses battery-powered bristles and an in-built sprayer to blast away even the staunchest residue so that you'll be back to your best as soon as the sun peaks its head out in February.



## Winbot 730



## Sonic Scrubber

Not to be confused with Dr Who's sonic screwdriver, the Sonic Scrubber household cleaner (RRP £16.99) is the spring cleaning equivalent of an electric toothbrush, and is a sure-fire way to cut down on time spent attempting to force your way into the most recessive of dirty spots.



Tired of spending hours cleaning your windows only to realise you've somehow managed to leave streaks so large that it appears your house is



HOME & DIY

# NOUVEAU NURSERIES

Just because you're decorating for a little one doesn't mean you need to sacrifice your style aesthetic entirely. In fact, a nursery is a place where you can really let your creativity run wild.

## KEEP IT CHIC

Eschew the saccharine pinks and blues and keep the colour palette neutral. Choosing a white crib and dresser allows for creative flourishes in other areas and creates a rustic, French feel. Or for a really contemporary look go monochrome.

## CHIC CAN BE CHEAP

You don't have to spend a fortune to have a beautiful and stylish space. Ikea do fantastic furniture that comes in white, including changing tables and dressers. They also offer the Gulliver crib with a side that can be lowered when your little one gets older, saving you money in the long run.

## BE BOLD WITH PRINTS

Add some bright pops of colour with printed child-friendly bedclothes. Land of Nod does

fantastically quirky and stylish linens, like blue whale, dinosaur or polka dot prints. Alternatively choose a vibrant patterned rug or wallpaper.

## TAKE A TWIST ON A CLASSIC

Stylish doesn't mean your child has to miss out on the essentials like a mobile for over their crib. Not on The High Street have some wonderful ideas, some of which can be personalised.

Alternatively, give your child the whole galaxy with Secret Craft House's silver and gold mobile with the added wonder of unicorns; or if you love them to the moon and back consider Little Clouds' moon wall-hanging in Liberty print. Nursery toys have also had a makeover, with many brands offering stylish rocking horses and Tepee's over Wendy Houses.

## GET AN EARLY START ON ART

Ever thought some abstract art looked like it was painted by a toddler? Well get them started early with some creative prints. Etsy do some adorable one-offs that can be personalised, giving them craft they can cherish forever and gaze at as they grow.



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ADVERTORIAL

# Cloudy2Clear Announce Trusted Trader Partnership



Consumer champions Which? have now joined the thousands of customers who recognise that Cloudy2Clear Windows really are a business that you can TRUST. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has received the coveted ‘Which Trusted Trader’ status after going through a rigorous accreditation process entirely focussed on customer service.

Group Managing Director Marcus McGee believes that Which? have endorsed Cloudy2Clear’s long standing company policy of delivering the

highest standards possible at all times. ‘Our service is simple. If your double glazing has misted up we can replace the glass at a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 25 year guarantee. But it’s not just about saving people money, although that obviously helps. Whilst a number of tradespeople perhaps don’t focus on customer care as much as they should do, we make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle.

Locally Cloudy2Clear service Billericay, Brentwood, Shenfield, Hutton Mount, Ingatestone,

Ingrave & Herongate and manager Chris Miller agrees that this approach is a major factor in his success. ‘The truth is that it’s not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people I’ve done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated as both my customers and, obviously a body as nationally important as Which? now recognise.’

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give Chris a call for a free quotation on **0800 61 21 118** and he’ll be happy to help!



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Not everyone has the luxury of living somewhere with rolling green spaces and expansive gardens in which to flaunt their green fingers, but these easy tips will make sure you make the most of your space no matter how limited the lawn or petite the plot.

jungle-like impression, or set up a trellis with hanging IKEA pots and hangars to fill with plants that tumble down your walls.

### GOING UP

If you want to create a garden that maximises all available space, the best thing to do is to start moving upwards instead of outwards. Why not form stacked herb gardens out of concentric pots, which diminish in size as they go upwards? Or expand this onto a bigger scale by purchasing a batch of wooden boxes that you can arrange one above another with slats in the middle to form a 3D shelving unit in which to plant all manner of flowers.

### HANGING OUT

Tomatoes can take up a load of space, but are fantastic plants if you're looking to start living a life where you can eat things fresh from your garden. If you've got some plastic bottles, however, you can cut them in half, slide the tomato plant through the neck of the bottle and fill the rest with soil. Finally, attach some strong string to the bottle's cut edge and the string to a nail so that your tomato vines hang down in all their glory.

### WHEELY GOOD

One great way to keep your green space as fresh and invigorating as the flowers within it is to attach wheels to the bottoms of your raised beds – that way, if you feel like a change in scenery, you can switch up the look of your garden without any effort at all.

### WALL TO WALL

Create the illusion of space by using your garden's walls to their maximum. Hang mirrors that reflect the greenery within to form a dense





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# LATE BLOOMERS



GARDENING

As February finally rears its head from out of the wintery darkness, every humble horticulturalist should be brimming with excitement at the idea of a spring garden full of blooming plants and lush vegetation. Here's how to prepare your plot this month to get the very best out of your fruit, flowers and veg.

porch, conservatory or garage will suffice if you don't have a greenhouse. When your potatoes start chitting they should display greeny-purple knobles. But be warned, if you end up with white sprouts, you haven't given your veg enough warmth!

## LOOKING ROSY



While you can leave pruning until next month, February is an ideal time to start planting roses, as the gradually warming soil will encourage growth. If you're planting on a patch where you have already been cultivating roses, however, make sure to avoid replant disease by adding a covering of mycorrhizal fungi, which coats the roses' roots and helps them absorb vital minerals from the soil.

## POTATO PREP



Now is the time to start sprouting or 'chitting' your taters in order to give them a head start when it finally comes to planting. Place the seed potatoes in an egg cup or container, with the end with the most eyes facing up. The trick is to place the container somewhere with light and heat – a

## SEED SORTING



Gearing up to get out in the garden can even be done from the comfort of your armchair, with February providing the perfect opportunity for organised gardeners to order your seeds. You can then grade your produce in order to create a sowing calendar through spring, meaning you'll be ready for any unexpected eventuality should it arise.

## SLOW GROWERS



Although the idea of planting in February may seem odd, as the cold recedes it's a good time to start with any slow growing annuals and perennials, including pelargonium, begonia and osteospermum, which are all easy to seed on a warm windowsill or in a corner of your greenhouse. These seeds can take up to three weeks to germinate, meaning that by the time March arrives and the light improves, you'll already be seeing results!



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## A RIDICULOUSLY RICH *taste of apprentice success*

Alana Spencer was the latest lucky entrepreneur to scoop the £250,000 investment from Lord Alan Sugar on BBC's *The Apprentice*, but who is this Aberystwyth girl set to partner the indomitable Lord in a sweet-tasting bakery business?

The BBC may have lost the rights to *The Great British Bake Off*, but as interest in culinary technique continues to rise, they may well have just uncovered a new star in the bakery business – and now she has the financial clout of a certain Alan Sugar to back up her ambitions. Alana Spencer won the most recent series of *The Apprentice* to secure Sugar's large investment, and is hoping to turn over a profit of £465,000 in the first year of working with the mogul to grow her bakery business, Ridiculously Rich.

Spencer started off on the path to business success early on, with an idea in secondary school to make cards and sell them to classmates. She once sacked a school friend from her card venture for being too slow. This ruthless streak exhibited itself as Spencer sought to prove her suitability for the role of Sugar's business partner, with the 24-year-old saying that, if forced, she would indeed fire the only employee currently working for her - her boyfriend, Bart.

At 16, Spencer began making and selling chocolates for her family, before going on to make corporate gifts. This taste of professional treat-selling continued to snowball, with Spencer leaving school after her A Levels to set up a kitchen on the side of her parents' house, and later a business that would evolve into 'Ridiculously Rich': Narna's.

Narna's provided luxury homemade tray bakes to cafes and delis, and made regular appearances across the UK at fairs and festivals. Spencer was making rocky roads for just 16p before selling them on for £3 – and that's the kind of profit that even the largely sceptical Lord Sugar can get behind.

Spencer hopes to take her baking company into 2017 with the plan to get ridiculously rich, and she follows in the footsteps of 11 other lucky winners. The original winner of the show in its fledgling series, Tim Campbell, was even kept on by Lord Sugar beyond their contractual agreement before starting up a charity that helps budding entrepreneurs.

Lord Sugar doesn't get it right every time, but *The Apprentice* has been a reality show true to its word, and in its latest winner the sweet taste of success is surely not beyond Alana's appetite.





# Tales from the BUSINESS GHOST



## DON'T LET A FAILED ROMANCE RUIN YOUR BUSINESS!

In this, the most romantic of months, where valentines are sent in earnest and declarations of love span from a single red rose to a weekend of exorbitant extravagance, where does your heart lie?

You see there is a difference, a massively important one, between falling in love and being in a steady relationship. In one state you are prepared to do unfathomable things, go to extraordinary lengths, and spend inordinate amounts of time and money for one moment of romance. In the other, you enjoy the deeper feelings of security, companionship and the warmth of shared experience. The first is fired by passion; the latter fuelled by familiarity.

The truth of the matter, sad as it may be, is that too many relationships which start with fireworks end in frustration and an anguished puff of smoke. Don't get me wrong here: 'being' in love is a great ambition and a natural destination for those who are 'falling' in love. Likewise, any business that starts with dreams, passion and desire must surely look for a future where steady security, operational efficiency and continual growth is at its core.

The secret in both love and business is to keep the passion alive, even as the familiarity sets in. Fall deeper in love with your ambition each day and stay romantic until the very end. Happy Valentines.

### But what has this to do with your business?

Most people started out in business or to pursue a chosen career with the enthusiasm of an infatuated young lover, hopelessly lost in the romantic notion of a lifetime of adventure ahead. Their heart beat quickly inside of them as promise and proposal lit a blazingly insatiable appetite for success. But for many the thrill of the chase would dwindle over time, replaced by routine and a regular job. Either the career stagnated as a rut began to form beneath their feet or the romantic horizon of entrepreneurial success played just a little too hard to get.



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Storyteller and specialist ghostwriter of blogs and business books.

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## Top tips for getting a job at IFDS

### What makes a CV go into the "yes" pile?

- A well set out, clear and concise CV automatically makes it engaging and appealing
- An opening paragraph that sells you (even if you don't have all of the work experience we are looking for, think about the transferable skills and experience you do have and how this would benefit the role you are applying for)
- Good spelling and grammar
- Documenting specific technical skills and months/years for past employment (as a financial services company we also need this information for pre-employment screening checks)

### What experience and/or skills do you need when applying for a customer service based role at IFDS?

- Someone passionate about customer service - ideally in a similar environment (likewise some experience in financial services helps - but isn't always essential!)
- Administration skills with a strong eye for detail and the ability to quality check your own work in the first instance
- Good communication skills - be it on the telephone or in writing
- A real team player
- The ability to follow set processes and procedures (key in a financial services organisation)
- Being flexible - sometimes our business requires overtime at short notice

### What wows you in an interview?

- Someone passionate about getting the job and working for IFDS.
- Someone who has researched both our company and the job and can name a few facts - even better come with notes and pre-prepared questions!
- Someone that can engage in conversation and elaborate on past experience with conviction (it doesn't matter if you are nervous, this shows it means something to you and it's our job to make you feel comfortable!)
- Ability to listen and take information on board
- Dress smartly and appropriately
- Someone polite and good mannered
- Positive body language

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(Source: Money Marketing magazine)

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At IFDS, we provide specialist technology and outsourced customer servicing solutions on behalf of many of the largest and most recognisable organisations in the financial services industry covering Investment, Pensions, Insurance and Savings providers.

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# If you buy one thing: VELVET BLAZER



Shimmering, soft and warm – it's the big trend this winter as fashion aficionados can't get enough of perhaps the most versatile item in your wardrobe – the legendary velvet blazer. Dressed up or down, in simple black or brilliant vermillion, this one item can help you make a big fashion statement, or instead leave you gloriously understated, all depending on your mood.

## Out On The Town

Strap on your highest heels and don those skin-tight leather jeans for a look that begs for attention. You can channel your inner rock chick with a scruffy band T; or, if you're feeling more daring, wear nothing at all underneath your blazer. This outfit works best with sleek hair and smoky eyes and a discreet, envelope clutch.

## Date Night

What can be more romantic than luxurious velvet over a long and flowing dress? Go for a bright cotton print, sensual silk or even matching velvet for a fully bewitching look. The focus here should be on accessories, so layer up on bracelets and necklaces. One look and he'll be crushed.

## Work It

Make like Florence Welch and invest in some matching trousers to go with your jacket for some serious office attire. Thanks to Hillary Clinton, pant suits are back in a big way and, teamed with a silk blouse and heels, you'll be the belle of the boardroom.

## Party Like It's 1979

From Cher at New York's Studio 54 in the 1970s to Kate Moss in the noughties, the blazer and the party dress have gone together like disco and disco balls. This look is all about effortless glam as your mini dress, whether simple or sequinned, peeks out from the folds of velvet. Hair should be loose and undone, eyes smoky and legs on show.

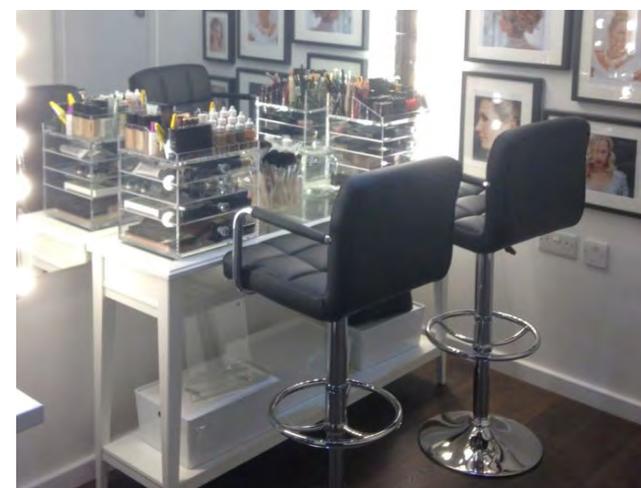
## The Morning After

This outfit is made for a slouchy Sunday stroll, when you want to feel comfortable but still be stylish. Invest in an oversized scarf to keep you cosy, and add a leather satchel, blue flared jeans and felt fedora for maximum Seventies vibes.

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# BIG IS BEAUTIFUL

It's fair to say 2016 had its detractors, but while it appears to have taken away many of those we cherished, what it offered back in return was a celebration of uniqueness. Whether big, small, lumpy or bumpy, women are beginning to embrace the beauty of their individual curves.

For years women have had to flick through the pages of magazines looking at tall, willowy models whose body types have been termed the ideal of feminine beauty. While these women are wonderful in their own right, they don't fully represent the diversity in shape, size and stature that the fabulous female-kind embodies, and as a result the rebellion has begun. So, let us introduce three fashion industry bombshells leading the charge for 'plus-sized' beauties everywhere: Ashley Graham, Iskra Lawrence and Barbie Ferreira.

Ashley Graham was the first plus-sized model to be featured on both the cover of British *Vogue* and the famous *Sports Illustrated Swimwear* issue. The 28-year-old has gone on to become the most recognisable face of plus-sized beauty – from visiting US schools to promote a message of body positivity, to launching her very own lingerie line with Canadian clothing chain Addition Elle.

Aside from gracing us with their lustrous beauty, this new breed of beauties are more vocal than ever. One example is Iskra Lawrence – a size-14 stunner who has opened up about the effects of seeing skinny models growing up.

"I thought there was something wrong because I didn't have a thigh gap, I had cellulite," she told *The Independent* earlier this year. "That is the media making a small standard of beauty when we are so much more than that."

Proving plus-sized models can come in all shapes, sizes and even ages, Barbie Ferreira started modelling when she was just 17. Now 20, Ferreira has joined fellow beauty Lawrence as one of the brand models for Aerie, and has recently signed to internationally acclaimed modelling agency Wilhelmina's, all the while refusing for any of her images to be retouched or edited in any way.

So 2016 brought us these amazing voluptuous women, cellulite and all. With models like Ashley, Iskra and Barbie carving the way, 2017 looks set to be the year that models of all sizes are setting the standard of beauty for fierce and fearless young girls everywhere.

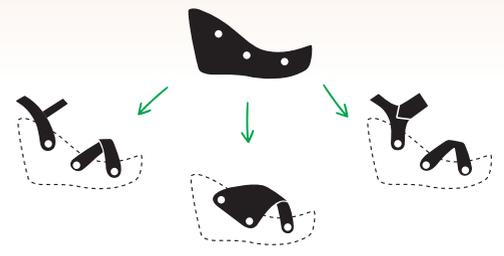


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Photo Credits: PA Images

**B**ros, founders of the original 'boy band' concept in the 1980s, are reuniting to mark their 30th anniversary. So what took them so long to join forces again after so long out of the spotlight? Twin brothers Luke and Matt Goss reveal all to **VISION** magazine.

'When will I, will I be famous?' they asked in their breakthrough hit single back in 1987. The answer came quickly – almost too quickly – and the boys from Peckham ascended to become one of the biggest bands of the time. Indeed, by the time 'Brosmania' began seeping away at the start of the 1990s, the band had shifted 17 million records.

But with the turning of that new decade came a change in the musical slant in the UK, and once it gathered pace, the brothers' decline was arguably as swift as their ascent, particularly after poor sales of their third album, *Changing Faces*.

As Matt and Luke went their separate ways, what was left behind by the bottle-blond heroes was a sizeable impact on the industry. Indeed, to appreciate Bros is to understand that at a time of manufactured pop they were the most prefabricated of the lot, and this was something fresh and unique.

"I think we realised it was a bit of a shift in how the record industry was promoting talent," begins Matt. "Up until then music had generally come along and been taken up organically. There was a very casual approach to getting signed and getting music in the charts.

"I think, being the way we looked and how we carried ourselves, our label saw the Bros project as a way to fire this entire boyband image, from the music at the outset to a look and an image that fans loved. And for the first time, the promotion and marketing was driven to produce results – it was really quite unique back then, however normal that sounds now."

Indeed, being a Brosette back in the late 1980s for the teenage girl demographic was likened to being a part of the coolest

clique in the UK. How else can you explain fan club numbers exceeding six million members, or 130,000 screaming fans turning up at HMV in Oxford Street to see the band?

"They were great days – very exhausting, but great," says Luke. "We travelled the world, saw some incredible things and loved every minute, but I think a couple of years in you begin to crave normality again, and perhaps it was right we went our separate ways when we did."

Wind forward over two decades and after acting and modelling projects, the brothers feel recharged and ready to tour again.

"I think it's natural to wonder if people would turn up for these shows," Luke says. "Bros was a long, long time ago and those teenagers following us around in the 1980s are now over 40 and with responsibilities to their families."

"You just never know in this game," seconds Matt, who has enjoyed considerable success as a solo artist, selling over five million albums and claiming a residency at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. "To feel wanted again is really very special and we hope we can repay that faith by putting on some outstanding shows this year."

Their reunion announcement was so well received in fact, that one date has expanded into a full UK tour, including a second night at London's O2.

"We haven't always seen eye to eye," says Matt, "but to consider that me and my brother are going to get back on stage, and that we've made amends – are best friends again – is wonderful. It's a really beautiful thing.

"And for us, it's far more than just a reunion. We are ready as men and we've come back together at a good time in our lives."

Bros play London, Manchester, Nottingham, Birmingham, Newcastle and Glasgow on a tour that begins on August 19th – check online for tickets.





# LOCAL NEWS

*from your neighbourhood*



## Green light for garden village

Proposals for a new garden village housing up to 2,500 new homes, with the possibility of further housing being built in future decades, along with new schools, employment and commercial space together with community and healthcare facilities, received financial backing from the Government last month.

The announcement that Brentwood Borough Council's application for initial funding from the Government's Garden Village Scheme means Dunton Hills Garden Village will have access to part of the £6million allocated to develop new communities and garden villages countrywide.

Leader of the council, councillor Louise McKinlay, said: "We want to provide the best and we can deliver something truly exceptional with the help of this financial investment. Together with our development partners Commercial Estates Group, we can continue to scope details of the plan for this hugely significant scheme."

The council forecasts the new Dunton Hills Garden Village will create thousands of jobs, increase local investment, build affordable and high class housing, ensure leisure and health facilities will complement and be integral to both the garden village and the natural landscape.

## Marathon effort to help brave Lennon



Over 50 people will be putting their best foot forward to help a young boy with cerebral palsy when they take part in the Brentwood Half Marathon and other races next month.

In 2014, Lennon and Layla Coady were born after just 28 weeks, weighing just 2.10lbs and 3lbs respectively. Layla was diagnosed with global developmental delay and mild cerebral palsy affecting the left hand side of her body. She is currently able to sit, crawl and pull to stand. She is also able to walk a few steps with support.

Meanwhile Lennon has cerebral palsy affecting his lower limbs and, although he can walk a few steps on his own, it's hoped he may be a candidate for an operation costing around £40,000 which would enable him to walk independently. The operation is not funded by the NHS and the same amount of money would be needed for the aftercare and physiotherapy following the operation.

Nicola Dunn, who lives in Brentwood, is best friends with Zara and Joel, the twins' parents, and is leading the fundraising campaign which has already raised £28,500 since it started last year. The money has been raised from a variety of events.

To donate to the campaign, go to [https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/LLCSDR?utm\\_id=61](https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/LLCSDR?utm_id=61) or for more information, search Little Legs Coady on Facebook.

He said: "I don't know how many times I've mentioned our support. It's so important that 'we all stick together' as we try to get through this period. I know that as we slowly get our squad back to full strength we'll pull away from where we are."

Upcoming home fixtures against fellow strugglers Wroxham on February 7 and Ware on February 11 await the Blues before an away game to Waltham Abbey on February 18. The final match of the month will be played at home to Norwich United on February 25.

## Former pupils help gunshot victim



Former pupils of Brentwood School have raised over £100,000 for one of their number who was shot in the head during a robbery at his parents' restaurant in Antigua on Christmas Day.

Chris Tester, who attended the school between 1990 and 1997, is now back in the UK receiving specialist medical care thanks to a crowd-funding campaign which has so far raised over £105,000.

It was launched to pay for Chris' return as he did not have travel insurance and initially aimed to raise £90,000. The fund-raising target has now been stretched to £120,000 to cover air ambulance costs and ongoing specialist treatment.

Thirty-seven-year-old Chris, who grew up in Brentwood but now lives in Torquay, was spending three weeks with his parents at their restaurant, the Boxer Shack, when the shooting took place.

He was immediately taken to hospital in Antigua but due to lack of facilities or expertise, Chris was taken to the neighbouring island of Guadeloupe.

Headmaster Ian Davies said: "This is a heart-warming story of generosity and lasting friendship which shows a continuity of community spirit long after school days. Chris and his family will remain in the thoughts and prayers of the whole school community."

The link to the crowd funder is <http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/chris-tester-urgent-appeal>



## Double lottery luck

A Brentwood woman shook off the January blues last month with a double lottery win.

Helen Gallagher, 44, scooped the £1,000 jackpot on the Saint Francis Hospice lottery, and then won one of the £10 prizes two weeks later.

And while she has never had any personal connection with the hospice, based in Romford, the mother-of-two says she has always been aware of the valuable care and support services it provides to the community.

"I know what a great cause it is and what a difference it makes to peoples' lives," said Helen, who works in HR at the High Courts in London. Helen has put her winnings to good use on home improvements as well as treating her family to a meal to celebrate her birthday.

David Holmes, head of individual giving at Saint Francis Hospice, said: "Thanks to our regular players like Helen the lottery raises hundreds of thousands of pounds to help fund our nurses and doctors."



BEAUTY

# The look *of Love*

What is it men find so attractive about big hips and full lips? Far from being a product of perversion or societal condition, the fascination with certain physical traits actually dates back to ancient times, and has more to do with genetics than you would think.

Society and modern media have often been scolded for their unrealistic and stereotypical portrayal of women: cartoonish breasts, miniscule waists and pouting cherry red mouths, for example. But while beauty is undoubtedly in the eye of the beholder, and men will admit to finding many weird and wonderful things attractive, the truth is there are certain traits that men are inexplicably drawn to, and apparently with good reason...

They say that hips don't lie and wide hips are a sexually dimorphic trait. Hip bones push out during puberty meaning a woman with wider hips is ready for making babies. Similarly, men find slim waists attractive because it means a woman's oestrogen is high and her fat is being distributed properly. Big bottoms, big hips and breasts all suggest good hormone balance and therefore good baby making, whereas belly fat is usually a sign testosterone is too high.

So what about facial features like full red lips and symmetry? Well this is all to do with genetics. Symmetrical features generally suggest a person's jaw is well developed - a good sign of genetic health. To the same effect, full lips indicate straight teeth. The attraction to red lips is a bit weirder, but does explain why lipstick can drive men wild. Essentially, when women apply red lipstick they're unknowingly mimicking a big sign of arousal in primates, suggesting...she's up for making babies.

Whilst these primordial inclinations do extend beyond physical traits, they do all lead to the same conclusion. For example, a man is often drawn to a woman's kindness, compassion and empathy, but mostly because they suggest a maternal instinct, and that the woman is therefore - you guessed it - up for making babies.

So, in short, the things that might at first appear perverse could actually mean your man is ready to settle down. Now where are those slippers...?



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KIDS

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For your fun and quirky friends, or children, why not make these adorable character gloves? Take an ordinary pair of gloves and create a face by gluing on goggle eyes and felt for ears.

## Chocolate truffles

Easy to make and delicious, these handmade truffles make a decadent and charming gift. Simply mix chopped chocolate, double cream and butter (and perhaps a drop of brandy!) in a bowl over boiling water to make a ganache, let it cool, then roll into balls and finish by rolling cocoa powder or chopped nuts.

## Friendship bracelets

You can't beat a classic, and nothing says 'I love you' like jewellery. Keep the kids entertained for hours as they get creative and layer up beads on ribbon or elastic. Perhaps they'll even start a new fashion trend!

## Cookie mix jars

Also known as deconstructed cookies, take a basic cookie recipe and, instead of mixing, layer them up in a mason jar. Start with flour and baking powder, follow up with brown sugar and spices and top with chocolate chips. Write the recipe on a gift tag and finish with a bright ribbon. Who needs Tiffany & Co?

## Bath salts

A simple and stunning way to make a jar of ordinary bath salts into a fabulous gift, divide up your Epsom salts and add to each a combination of essential oils (lavender and peppermint work well together), food colouring and some bicarbonate of soda to create a fizz. Layer up the different colours in a jar and for added luxury top with dried lavender or rose petals.





Essex Private Doctors, Brentwood.

### Hello and welcome to February 2017's edition of 'Call The Doctor!'.

The year is flying by isn't it? By now you will be well into your new year resolutions-promises to eat better or exercise more?

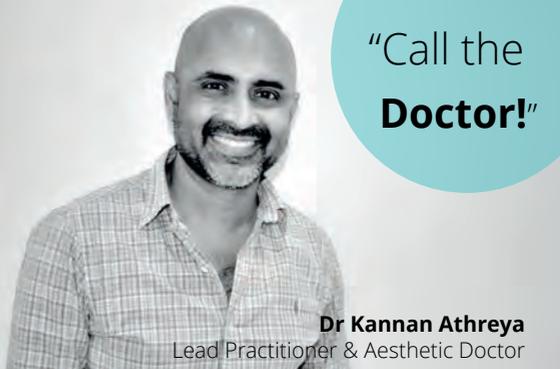
However, if you are struggling with motivation, then this month we are discussing a medically prescribed weight-loss solution that not only will make losing weight a little easier, but will also help you to maintain your weight-loss long term.

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"Call the Doctor!"

Dr Kannan Athreya  
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# A DESKERCISE A DAY *keeps the doctor away*

After a long day at work the last thing we want to do is slog away in the gym! Try these simple tricks instead so that you can keep lean, fit and healthy without having to move from your desk.

### CARDIO:

Take the stairs  
It may seem obvious, but if you want to crunch a few calories then take the stairs! To get your heart rate really going, tackle two stairs at a time every other flight and don't stop until you reach the top. And if you only have one flight of stairs, why not run up and down them a few times?

### GLUTES:

The secret squeeze  
Perhaps the easiest way to tone up at work is with this secret isometric glute exercise sequence. Squeeze the buttocks together, hold for 5-10 seconds and then release. Repeat this until you tire, and make sure you do it daily. Get ready for some perky results.

### ARMS:

Pray for power  
Ever wondered how to get rid of those bingo wings without having to leave your seat? Make sure your

feet are flat on the floor and bring the palms of your hands together in front of your chest. Push both hands together and as powerfully as you can until you feel the arm muscles contract. Push for 20 seconds, release and repeat.

### CHEST:

Shrug it off  
Note: do not attempt this exercise if your boss is near – it may not show you at your most enthusiastic! Raise both shoulders towards your ears, hold for five seconds, relax and repeat. If you are feeling extra stealthy, try these shoulder shrugs standing up whilst holding a paper ream in each hand to add some extra weight.

### CORE:

The core issue  
Perfect posture is essential if you're sat at your desk all day; it helps to prevent back pain or issues that often occur from slouching. Adjust your chair height to make sure your feet, hips and arms are at a 90-degree angle to the floor. Engage the core to keep your back straight and stomach muscles tense – now keep this going all day.



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### Tough Mudder

If you like good clean fun, then Tough Mudder might not be for you, but if you fancy a fitness challenge that is both exhilarating and a bonding experience, lace up those (preferably old) trainers! With the option of 5 or 10-12 miles, each race promises around 500,000 litres of Grade-A mud, 40 tons of ice and a pint of ice-cold cider at the finish line. With the motto that the strength of one person is nothing compared with the power of a team, expect to haul and cajole each other over slippery ramps, hills and trails, finding comfort in the knowledge that you will likely leave with more friends than when you came. Events held nationwide, see [toughmudder.co.uk](http://toughmudder.co.uk) for dates and prices.

### Xtreme Obstacle race: Water Wipeout

Much like the wacky TV show with the same name, this race will leave you soaking wet and gasping for air as you navigate water slides, tigtropes, tunnels, hurdles, giant walls, cargo nets, spider webs, balance beams and the white-water assault course. Hosted by the National Water Sports centre near Nottingham. See [Xrunner.co.uk](http://Xrunner.co.uk) for more info.

### Reebok Spartan Race

One for the would-be warriors, this obstacle race is in a league of its own. Offering three main options: Sprint (5k), Super (13k) and the mighty Beast (20k), each challenge is packed with some truly insane obstacles, proving the Reebok Spartan race is not for the faint-hearted. It's also the most competitive of the lot, with open and elite heats, plus global rankings providing a proving ground for everyone from novices to pros. If you're up to the challenge join #TeamIncredible. For more info see [Spartanrace.uk](http://Spartanrace.uk).

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# Start the day off... UNBEATABLE BREAKFASTS

**D**itch the sugary cereal and buttered toast in favour of starting off your day in the best possible way with these morning power-ups...oh, and they're delicious too!

## OAT SMOOTHIE



Is it a drink or is it porridge? Frankly, when it tastes this good who cares? Cook water and oats in the microwave then blend with milk, banana, dates, vanilla, cinnamon and ice and top with a dusting of nutmeg. Slightly more substantial than your average smoothie, this is perfect for those wintery mornings when you crave something quick and nourishing.

## AVOCADO ON TOAST



Ditch the margarine, because if you want something truly delicious and nutritious atop your toast, it has to be avocado. Supremely versatile, you can slice, mash and even blend them. Add a poached egg and some bacon for a post-workout protein boost, mash with feta and olive oil for a delicious and quick spread, or add some chilli flakes for a bit of early morning heat. Deliciously simple.

## SHAKSHUKA



This Turkish treat is perfect for a weekend brunch, and unlike a fry-up you can throw everything in the one pan. Simply fry garlic, onions and peppers, add a tin of chopped tomatoes and simmer until reduced, then make a hole and crack eggs into your sauce and poach. Serve with pitta and Greek yogurt mixed with crushed raw garlic and olive oil.

## BULLETPROOF COFFEE



If you're still not convinced by the nutritional benefits of brekkie and rely on caffeine to get you through, then consider supercharging your morning Americano, paleo-style. Blend high-grade organic espresso with coconut oil and butter for a brew that claims to give you a prolonged energy hit, as well as sharpening your focus and keeping you feeling full. With the fat slowing down the absorption of the caffeine this is more fuel than food, and is not for the faint-hearted.

# Party time



Fete means to party and you will find plenty to celebrate at Fete Lounge with its irresistible mix of Caribbean zest and British charm

From their humble beginnings, Nooreen and Joshi, had always had a dream to make an impact on a local high street. After a visit to the Caribbean where they witnessed how the locals celebrated life and enjoyed their surroundings, Nooreen and Joshi knew they had to bring back this easy going rustic charm to the UK. That was when the idea for Fete Lounge was born.

Putting a twist on the 'Rum Shops' as they are known in Trinidad and Tobago, Fete Lounge takes the rustic, decorative charm of the Caribbean and from there serves up the British favourite, afternoon tea, which is complemented by a tea inspired cocktail menu.



The six level afternoon tea, served on a delightful miniature picnic table, features a warm course of chocolate twist and pain au raison followed by a selection of sandwiches and rolls, tea infused scones served with jam and clotted cream along with a variety of cakes and tarts with ever changing flavours

to compliment the season. If that isn't enough to tempt your taste buds, to finish up Fete Lounge offer a complimentary chocolate fountain with copious amounts of strawberries and marshmallows for dipping. They also serve all day platters.

The extensive tea menu includes favourites such Earl Grey, Chamomile and Royal Breakfast, but why not try a more unique blend such as Iranian Rosebud (a personal favourite), or Indian Chai. Whichever you pick, you can guarantee the flavours will not disappoint as Nooreen and Joshi have sourced all tea served at Fete Lounge from the same supplier of London's Harrods and Fortnum&Mason.

Fete, pronounced Fet, means to party – and open till late you'll find classic cocktails, gin cocktails and tea infused cocktails being served up alongside champagne and shorts all evening long at Fete Lounge.

Whether you're popping in for coffee or afternoon tea, want to hold a baby shower or end the day with an evening drink, the relaxed and inviting atmosphere at Fete Lounge will leave a lasting impression and you will be sure to make a return.



# BAKE OFF QUEEN NADIYA: 18 months on

**B**ake Off Queen Nadiya Hussain cooked up a very special dish as she brought out her first novel last month.

She is hoping *The Secret Lives of the Amir Sisters* will end up being a bestseller. The book is based on creative writing she penned as a seven-year-old about four sisters who are the only young Muslims in a village.

Nadiya, 32, says: "I've been writing since I was little but I didn't think any of it would ever see the light of day."

Nadiya won *The Great British Bake Off* in 2015, when her lemon drizzle wedding cake pipped rivals in the showstopper round.

Since then she has signed publishing deals for recipe books, novels, been on her own TV show *The Chronicles Of Nadiya* and baked the Queen's 90th birthday cake.

She says: "I got the phone call asking me to make the Queen's birthday cake. When she saw it she asked what kind of cake it was and which tier she should cut. Then Prince Philip came over and she introduced me to him. I was like, 'Oh my God, that's the Queen introducing me'."

"She said, 'This is the young lady who won the bake off'."

"And he said, 'Yes dear, I know who she is, but what flavour is the cake?'"

Nadiya praised her husband Abdal, who has been forced to take on more household chores and childcare since her career has taken off.

Nadiya is also cooking up a romantic dish for Abdal, 32 by getting married again to her husband.

The happy couple have three children following an arranged marriage after just ONE meeting. The couple married in Bangladesh when she was 19.

Nadiya, originally from Luton, said: "We're married Islamically but we've never done the proper vows here."

"So we're talking about making it all 'official'. It's a great excuse for a party."

She admits that she cried on her wedding night but now says she actually likes him now.

Her husband encouraged her to enter the BBC show to 'do something for you' after dedicating her 20s to rearing their children Musa, nine; Dawud, eight; and Maryam, five.

Neither of them realised just how much it would change their lives.

*The Secret Lives of the Amir Sisters* by Nadiya Hussain, £12.99, is out now.



Why not join us for high TEAS, homemade cakes, TARTS and cockTAILS.



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Any restaurant boasting awards such as The Anchor is enough to excite the taste buds of any diner and our head chef Daniel Watkins is certainly leading the way in Essex gastronomy. His menus reflect the seasons wonderfully, with each dish perfectly balanced in both flavour and texture, whilst some of the techniques used in the kitchen at The Anchor are rarely seen outside of London. Combine this with a clear eye for detail and it is no wonder that each dish resembles a work of art.



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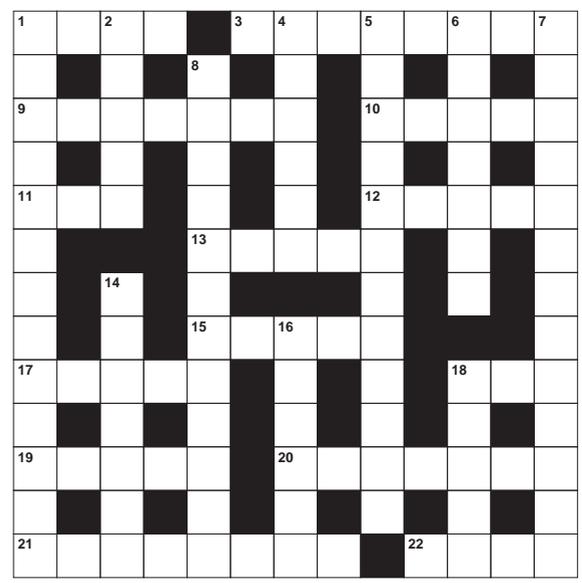
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### ACROSS

- Large US feline (4)
- Cold Spanish tomato soup (8)
- Ideas (7)
- Bout of extravagant shopping (5)
- Nevertheless (3)
- Tropical fruit (5)
- \_\_\_ Valletta: actress (5)
- Vaulted (5)
- Long for (5)
- Drunkard (3)
- Printed insert supplied with a CD (5)
- Decorative style of the 1920s and 1930s (3,4)
- Horticulturist (8)
- Pots (4)

### DOWN

- Miserly (5-8)
- Short choral composition (5)
- Soak up (6)
- Person studying after a first degree (12)
- Cut short (7)
- Excessively striving (13)
- Preservative chemical (12)
- Vehicle towed by another (7)
- Spirit of a person or group (6)
- Damage the reputation of (5)



### DID YOU KNOW

- When hippos are upset, their sweat turns red.
- A flock of crows is known as a murder.
- It would take a sloth one month to travel one mile.
- Cows kill more people than sharks do.
- The word "gorilla" is derived from a Greek word meaning, "A tribe of hairy women."
- A tarantula can live without food for more than two years.
- Cockroaches can live for several weeks with their heads cut off, because their brains are located inside their body. They would eventually die from being unable to eat.
- Butterflies taste their food with their feet.
- Hamsters run up to eight miles at night on a wheel.

### SUDOKU

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		7			2			6
	8	4						

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# WHAT'S ON

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**Becontree Brass Band**  
 Brentwood Theatre, CM15 8AG  
 Saturday, February 18



Music conducted by Nigel Taken. This exciting concert of music is to celebrate Valentine's Day. The evening starts at 7.30pm and tickets cost £15, and a concession ticket is £12. For more visit [www.becontreebrassband.wixsite.com](http://www.becontreebrassband.wixsite.com)

who can't talk; two who won't – are thrown together. For more visit <http://essexbookfestival.org.uk/event/shtum/>

**EBA Boxing**  
 Brentwood Centre, Doddinghurst Road, CM15 9NN  
 Saturday, February 18

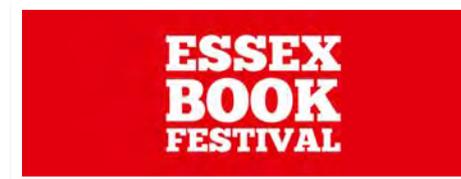


Launched in 2014 as a brand new boxing platform for local British based boxers to compete on, the EBA has firmly established itself as one of the best organisations in the south of the UK. EBA is attracting some of Essex and Ipswich's top fighters who have joined forces with EBA to help them push on with their careers. EBA looks to establish itself as one of the leading semi pro organisations in the country within the next couple of years. Tickets for the upcoming even cost £30.

**The Big Yellow Q**  
 Brentwood Centre, CM15 9NN  
 Friday, March 3

Saint Francis Hospice are delighted to announce that Big Quiz is back. It'll be big and brilliant and the perfect evening for quiz lovers. Tickets cost £12 per person which includes one free prize draw ticket. Doors open at 6pm for a prompt 7.15pm start. You are welcome to bring your own food and drink. For more information and to book a table please visit [www.sfh.org.uk](http://www.sfh.org.uk)

**Shtum**  
 Brentwood Library, New Road, CM14 4BP  
 Wednesday, March, 8



Essex Book Festival will present Jem Lester's powerful, darkly-funny and heart-breaking debut novel *Shtum*. It is a poignant story of father and sons, autism, and dysfunctional relationships as three generations of men in one family – one

**February Business Breakfast**  
 Marygreen Manor Hotel CM14 4NR  
 Friday, February 10

The February Business Breakfast is kindly sponsored by Katy Brown, St. James's Place Wealth Management. Brentwood Chamber of Commerce Business Breakfast Meetings are an excellent opportunity to meet your fellow members and find out what is happening in the world of business in Brentwood. It starts with tea and coffee and informal networking between 7:30am and 8am and then sit down for some more structured networking and a full breakfast.

Non-members are welcome to join us and discover one of the many benefits of being a member of Brentwood Chamber of Commerce.



# TALKING TRAVEL

by Janette Bell of The Travel Boutique, Billericay



## Spotlight on Asia – Vietnam

Asia in recent years has certainly become one of the most “must do” places to visit for both couples and families wishing to explore its hidden delights unspoilt beaches and wonderful cuisine. With many destinations in Asia able to offer the combination of culture and beach holidays a lot of our clients are moving away from the traditional short haul holiday to Europe and The Med or even hoping over the Water to The Americas and now diving into these pastures new.

Options to discover these new destinations are plentiful, this month I am going to give an insight into Vietnam which has all the things needed to make one fantastic destination to travel to. Turning its back on a turbulent past, it is a country very much on the up and attracts many travellers with a combination of unique heritage, enchanting natural scenery, stunning beaches and seriously delicious cuisine.

Vietnam’s culture is a bit of a mishmash of influences, but all the more fascinating for it. Under the influence of China for a millennium and part of French Indochina for 70 years, this is a country where half of the population live from agriculture. As you can imagine the Vietnamese people’s way of life, beliefs and values are very different from the world that we are in, ancestor veneration is part of everyday life and plenty of people still wear traditional dress. To get a taste of the country through the ages I suggest Hanoi, a compelling mix of traditional, crumbling grandeur and the contemporary, whilst Saigon is the powerhouse city driving the country forward.

The natural beauty of Vietnam is stunning with landscapes which are wonderfully diverse, stretching from the mountains and rice terraces of the northern highlands to the magnificence of Halong Bay’s karst towers, to the rich lush greenery of the Mekong Delta. One of the most wonderful things about all this beauty is how easy it is to access and an overnight from Hanoi up to the spectacular views of Sapa a couple of hours by road from Saigon into the heart of the Mekong Delta. In Southern Vietnam, the River Mekong unravels into nine sprawling rivers, forming the fertile Mekong Delta.



It’s here the river rules. Daily life flows with the ever-changing waters, fisheries thrive during the annual flood and rice fields are quickly dug as the waters recede.

The towns bustle with vendors trading their fresh produce, an endless flow of river traffic passing through daily. Veer off into a smaller stream and you’ll find orchards, Buddhist temples and family homes clinging to the banks of the river. A perfect way to explore the Mekong Delta is by taking a one or two night cruise. The vessels are beautifully crafted and retain their charm, the cabins are well sized and beautifully furnished with local fabrics. The best time to be on the Mekong is between October and March when the waters are at their highest.

Vietnam’s beaches are surprisingly overlooked but, because of it, quiet and relatively untouched. The coastline sweeps in a 3,000km S-shape from China in the north to Cambodia in the south. It passes through three different micro-climates along the way, which means dry, sunny weather is always to be had on either the central or south coast, whatever time of year you travel.

And, if I had to pick out just two of Vietnam’s beach resorts? Would be Phu Quoc Island with its bright white sand and busy fishing community, which is situated close to the Cambodian border it offers an alternative beach option for those wishing to get a little off the beaten track, the island is now seeing more visitors, the



Traffic in Hanoi



Nha Trang beach

development is much slower which means that beautiful sandy beaches and clear pristine waters remain unspoilt. The island’s remoteness and lack of infrastructure gives a feeling of seclusion and a great place to recharge your batteries.

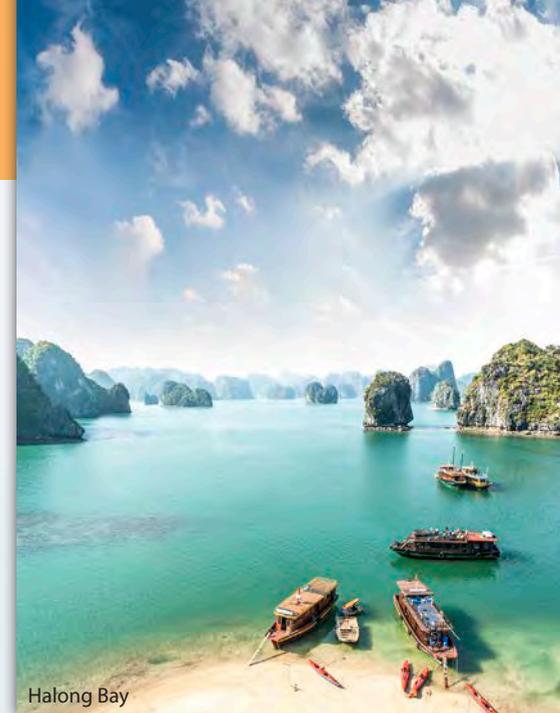
The second would be Con Dao a collection of islands set in a protected marine park known for quiet sweeping beaches and enticing clear waters. The World Wildlife Foundation has been based here for more than ten years and have established a programme for protecting the country’s sea turtle nesting grounds and the rare dugong. The largest island is Poulo Condore which dates back as early as the 16th century by Europeans and two centuries later the British East India Company. The island is culturally rich and has a politically intense history.

Under French rule Con Son was a penal colony for opponents of French colonialism and saw the imprisonment of many Vietnamese revolutionary heroes. Right up until the American War when US troops joined the South Vietnamese government who had captured the island from the French, Con Son had become infamous for its mistreatment and torture of its detainee’s. The many prisons, now desolate shells, scatter the island along with manicured gardens and photogenic French villas.

Today Con Son has a sleepy and tranquil atmosphere with several lovely beaches and a beautiful untouched interior. The island can be reached by air just 45 minutes from Saigon.

The central beaches tend to be better from March to August when the wet weather disappears, and the southern beaches are drier from October to April.

Vietnam’s cuisine is not only one of the worlds healthiest but also one of the most delicious! Full of distinctive flavours created by perfectly balancing salty, sweet, sour and hot, it is the use of plentiful fresh ingredients, herbs and spices that make it so good. Whether you are eating in a high end restaurant, or find something mouth-watering snack on one of the plentiful street stalls, your food is prepared and cooked to order,



Halong Bay

whether it is summer rools, pho or a banh mi. The banh mi perfectly encapsulates Vietnam’s colonial past in several tasty mouthfuls – a French style baguette filled with beautifully cooked pork belly, Vietnamese sausage, Pâté, egg or tofu with pickled carrots, coriander and cucumber.

With many tailor-made and pre-organised itineraries, available the options of what to include in your stay is almost endless however to begin – a 7-day Tour to Vietnam capturing the highlights and wonders of this country and its dramatic history combined with its wonderful beach locations can be arranged from £2329 per person. Whilst you can visit Vietnam all year round the best time is January to March, however with that will come the higher prices, if you are looking at something on a budget, looking at the end of September (end of monsoon season) could be a good option.

For more information on Vietnam & Asia. Pop in and see me at The Travel Boutique, 9 The Walk, High Street, Billericay to pick up some more information ask me to put together a tailor-made itinerary for you to capture all the wonderful elements of this country and other parts of Asia too. Please email me [janette.bell@thetravelboutique.co.uk](mailto:janette.bell@thetravelboutique.co.uk) or give me a call on 01277 563193

*Janette Bell* Owner of **The Travel Boutique**, Billericay

# RALPH'S GARAGE



Ralph Lauren is a globally recognised name in fashion, but the billionaire designer has a secret source of inspiration: his expansive car collection, featuring some of the most exquisite and exotic automobiles from throughout history.

Ralph Lauren's famed catwalk creations may be flashed in front of the world's media on some of the world's most beautiful models, but his real pride and joy remains hidden inside an unassuming garage door in Westchester, New York. Concealed within this inconspicuous building is a car collection rumoured to be one of the most expensive ever assembled on Earth, containing some of the rarest examples of automotive engineering ever crafted by human hands, and with a collective price tag of at least \$300million.

The vehicles' ages range hugely - there's a 1929 Bentley 4.5-litre 'Blower' which participated in the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1930, 1932 and 1933; and a 1955 Jaguar XKD Long-Nose, one of only 10 ever made and the fastest car of its generation. Then there are more modern automotive landmarks such as the Bugatti Veyron and the Ferrari LaFerrari - the brand's first-ever hybrid sports car.

The real gem of the collection, however, remains the Bugatti 57SC Atlantic. Built in 1938, with a 3.3-litre supercharged engine, this car is one of only two in existence today - and only four were ever built by the Italian auto-manufacturer. That car won Best in Show at the 1990 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance and the 2012 Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este - two of the world's most

renowned car shows - and has been given a potential price-tag, should Lauren ever sell, in excess of \$50million.

Of course, as you would expect, some of the 77-year-old's motors have been tweaked and perfected in accordance with their owner's universally renowned style. A 1933 Type 59 Grand Prix Bugatti was changed from light blue to black, and his Mercedes Gullwing had cream added to the traditional Merc silver. Ralph even dared to put his own twist on the hallowed British Racing Green - a move only the most daringly confident of petrol-heads would dare to undertake.

The vintage mechanics of the older models from the Golden Age of the automobile industry also provide the muse for Lauren's accessory designs, most notably in the namesake Ralph

Lauren RL Automotive Skeleton Watch. This \$35,000 timepiece draws its inspiration from Lauren's Bugatti 57SC, and the wood ring that circles the intricate watch face is made from Amboyna burl, itself a popular choice for car makers of yore when it came to creating the instrument panels of luxury vehicles in the 1930s.

These cars are art - although they do perform a function in Lauren's day-to-day life, such as the 966 Porsche Turbo that he uses to visit the dentist. The Louvre even went so far as to exhibit 17 of his cars in a standalone exhibit in 2011, and some of his automobiles turn up at times during Ralph Lauren adverts. They are, after all, a key part of the 'Ralph Lauren' world - the perfect ideal, sewn together inextricably with his personal and professional brand.



# CHINA

# THE NEW FOOTBALL SUPERPOWER

Move aside La Liga and the Premier League, there's a new absolutely minted kid on the global football block.

The Chinese Super League has made big headlines over the last year and especially the last couple of months.

By signing some high profile names the Chinese clubs have made a very clear statement of their intent to be taken seriously across the world.

Chelsea's Brazilian born players seem to be a particular favourite.

Last January Ramires signed for Jiangsu Suning for a reported fee of £25million.

Fast forward 12 months and fellow Brazilian Oscar made the move east for a reported £52million and weekly wages of £400,000.

At the time this magazine was going to print the Chinese club Tianjin Quanjian were reported to be circling armed with a bag of cash to turn star striker Diego Costa's head.

Talk of wages of £570,000 per week have been reported as the Brazilian born Spanish

international fell out with Chelsea boss Antonio Conte.

Conte apparently shouted at Costa to 'go to China' during a training ground row.

The 'go to China' message is increasingly being whispered in the ear of a host of top class players by their agents.

The Chinese Super League has already successfully targeted the following:

Axel Witsel – Belgian international.

Carlos Tevez – Argentinian international and former Manchester United and Manchester City star – reportedly now the world's best paid player on an eye watering £600,000 a week.

Gervinho – Ivory Coast striker and former Arsenal player.

Hulk – The burly Brazilian forward joined Shanghai SIPG and is earning around £320,000 a week.

Just like many of their European counterparts, the top Chinese clubs are backed by billionaires with very deep pockets, despite average

attendances of only 24,000 per match.

It now seems bizarre that back in 2015 the then Chancellor George Osborne gave £3million of tax payers' money to help fund the growth and development of Chinese football.

That's roughly around seven weeks' wages for the likes of Oscar.

Some experts are concerned that the Chinese clubs pose a future threat to the Premier League.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said: "The money being ploughed into Chinese football is potentially a threat to the Premier League, which has been the most powerful financial force in the market for many years.

"Basically when you're a football player you want to combine the quality of the competition with the quantity of your wages. The quality of the game over there is a long way behind the Premier League and Spain but the lucrative deals will tempt more and more players."

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has little sympathy for English clubs worried about the

Chinese effect. He said: "You know that the rest of Europe thinks the same thing about England.

"I think in this moment it's not a league you want to play - the only way to get players to go there is the money. In all the big European leagues you can earn a lot of money, it should be enough.

"It's not an option for me. Maybe for a holiday but it's absolutely no option for me. I don't think we should say it's a danger, it's another opportunity."

Last month the Chinese Football Association introduced a rule restricting the number of non-Chinese players who can be fielded to three, in response to government concerns that the spending on foreign stars is getting out of hand.

Whether this will draw the curtain on the Chinese raids on European clubs and high profile international players remains to be seen.

It looks like being a very interesting time ahead and could potentially change the face of global football in the years to come.



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