



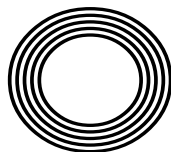
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**MARK WRIGHT MAKING
HIS FOOTBALL COMEBACK**

Valentine's Day traditions
FROM AROUND THE WORLD

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The TV presenter emerging into the spotlight



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BEFORE



AFTER



AFTER



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER





FEBRUARY 2021

Editor's notes...



Nik Allen, Editor

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

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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CONTRIBUTORS | Tabatha Fabray, Tim Green

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



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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 word 'Crawley' is partially visible on the shirt. 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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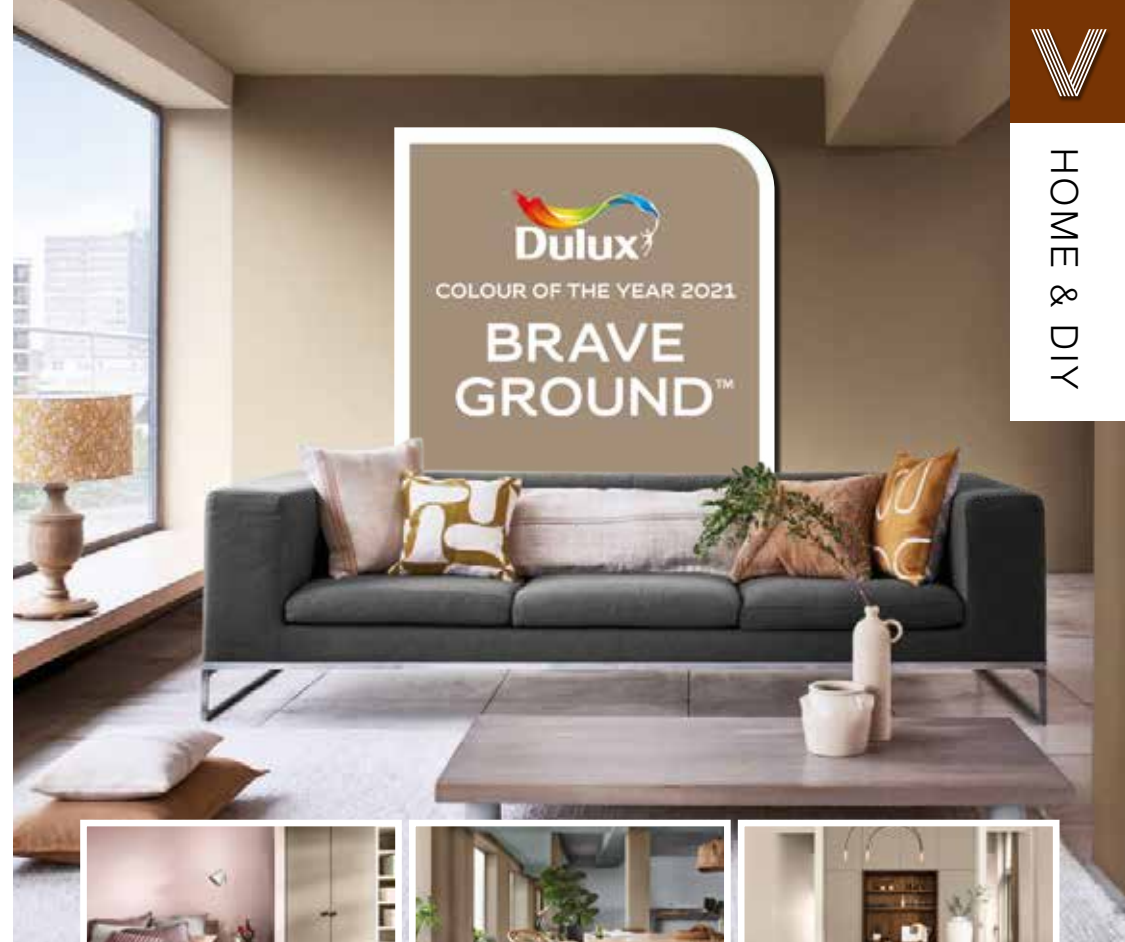


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HOME & DIY

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 Piñatelt, 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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⊕ **Symptom:** I find it hard to close my door or window.

Diagnosis & Solution: This could be a number of problems and could be as simple as a small adjustment to your hinges.



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Understanding

THE DOS AND DON'TS TO ACHIEVING PERFECT UNDERFOOT CONDITIONS

You think splashing the cash on a swanky new length of carpet is the first and last bit of expense you need to worry about, before someone reminds you that carpet without underlay is akin to a new motor without tyres on the wheels.

It's recommended that you change your underlay whenever you change your carpet – after all, years of wear, tear, and no small amount of gravity will have squashed the best life out of it.

New underlay will provide for you a number of things – firmness, bounce, insulation, noise reduction, preservation of your new flooring, as well as reinforcing the feeling that your new piece of carpet is worthy of something you'd find on the way into a film premiere.

Premium underlay will set you back up to £10 per metre square, though perfectly good brands can be picked up for less than half that. It's true to say the higher quality your underlay, the longer it will, in

turn, look after your carpet.

Typical depth is around 10–13mm, with a lower grade on the stairs. You'll also have to consider the tog rating – anything higher than 2.5 tog will insulate nicely, though if you have heated floors then switch back down to a lower tog of around 1.0.

As for the fabric, PU foam is the most common underlay on the market. It offers a soft feeling underfoot, is made from recycled materials and is a good insulator. Other types are made from rubber, sponge rubber and crumb rubber, the latter being made from car tyres. Felt and wool carpet underlay also come well recommended.

And if you're fitting wood or laminate flooring, then consult a specialist who can bring forward a range of hardfloor-specific underlays that are lighter and thinner, and respect what is an intentionally solid top layer.

UNDERLAY



PU FOAM



SPONGE RUBBER



CRUMB RUBBER



WOOL FELT

Photo credit: www.diydoctor.org.uk



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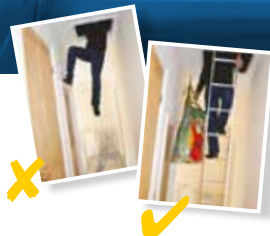
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HOME & DIY

ARE YOU READY TO

Wabi-sabi YOUR HOME?

Although it may sound like that spicy green paste that you get with sushi, wabi-sabi is actually a Japanese term that means "finding beauty in imperfection".

The perfect interior design trend for people who prefer their house to look lived in rather than like a showroom, wabi-sabi is all about embracing authenticity, flaws and all.

Showcase homemade décor

Whether you are an artist yourself or not, homemade décor items or things that you have collected over the years on holiday or at local craft fairs are ideal for creating a wabi-sabi home. Allowing you to foster feelings of warmth and originality, even just proudly displaying your children's artwork contributes to the characteristics of this Japanese philosophy.

Clear away clutter

Just because wabi-sabi values imperfection, that doesn't mean you can let your home become a cluttered and chaotic mess. To achieve wabi-sabi, your home should be a calm and peaceful place where you and your family can relax, so make sure you stick to your cleaning regime.

Embrace nature

With a focus on simplicity, bringing elements of the outside into your home is a key component of wabi-sabi. Whether you choose to put some freshly cut flowers in a vase, invest in a house plant or two, or you decide to incorporate natural materials into your home such as stone or wood, nature will always be able to lift your mood.

Be a partial minimalist

Although a wabi-sabi home is not fully minimalistic by nature, it does invite people to keep their possessions to a minimum by only allowing things in their home that offer nostalgia, beauty or utility. This means that you can keep an item that does not necessarily match the décor of your home, as long as it makes you happy.

Photo credit: David Britain via idealhome.co.uk, home-designing.com, Simon Scarborough via idealhome.co.uk, behance.net

HOME & DIY

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.

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.

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.

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BETTER SAFE than sorry

Whether you are investing in home security for the first time or you want to upgrade your existing set-up, the below guide will ensure you pick the perfect home security system for your property.

Determine the purpose: The first step in choosing a security system for your home is to determine its primary purpose. There are three types of home security systems: home automation, intruder protection and environmental monitoring.

Home automation is the most advanced option, where all your devices are connected to each other via the internet of things. Intruder protection is designed to protect your home from burglars, and environmental monitoring systems detect anomalies like fire and leaks.

Choose the right components: There are many different home security packages on the market and you need to decide which elements you want in yours to make you and your family feel safe and protected. Popular choices include smart

doorbells, motion cameras, burglar alarms, smart lights and window sensors.

Pick a monitoring system: If your budget allows it, you could invest in round-the-clock call centre monitoring for your home. Your chosen provider will call you if they notice anything strange or to alert you of a natural disaster. Alternatively, you could use DIY monitoring and opt to receive notifications to your phone.

Select a network: Every home security system needs a network to function. You can choose either a wired or a wireless one. Wireless networks are becoming increasingly popular as all they need is a Wi-Fi or cellular connection and they are good to go.

Decide about installation: You can either install your home security system yourself or pay a professional to do it for you. Professionally installed systems tend to be more reliable but will obviously cost you more money than doing it yourself.



HOME & DIY

LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Artist honours NHS with new mural outside pub

Tributes to the NHS are commonplace these days, and one of the latest comes from a mural specialist from Chelmsford.

Danny Bench came up with Crown our Heroes after he was contacted by landlord Joshua Gibson of The Crown in Billericay. The stunning piece of artwork shows a keyworker being crowned.

Danny, 46, told **VISION**ChelmsfordBeaulieu that he's very proud of the work.

He added: "After I painted a Remembrance Day piece last year, Josh contacted me again and asked if I'd do something for the NHS. He got the window boarded up and prepped and I found a picture which I replicated.

"Anything with the NHS is going to do well, but I

have been blown away with the reaction. This has got more than 300,000 likes on Facebook.

"I love my art and did a piece for Southend Hospital last March for free. It means a lot at the moment and I was more than happy to be able to do something which shows how much we all appreciate the NHS."

Joshua said he was thrilled with the finished mural.

He commented: "We feel so strongly in supporting the NHS workers in all the hard work and hours you do in these dark times.

"We had the amazing Danny Bench help bring this to the front of our beautiful pub.

"We respect and appreciate all the hard work that all of you NHS workers are doing right now. Keep your spirits high and we thank you at The Crown."

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Budget gap could see station go off the rails



Plans for a new station in Beaulieu could be scrapped because of financial concerns, a report to Essex County Council's (ECC's) cabinet has warned.

Beaulieu Park Station would be in the north-east of the city and would serve the Beaulieu Park development. If it goes ahead, the station will include 1,470 car park spaces and a bus interchange to north Chelmsford and the wider Essex area.

The total cost of the project is £171million, £14million more than the funding available for the project, but the report suggests that the station and the Chelmsford North East Bypass, which is linked to the station project, are both under threat.

The report warns that contracts with Homes England for Homes Infrastructure Funding (HIF) must be in place before the government authorises the project and says there are still a number of issues to be resolved.

It reads: "These are being progressed but there is no guarantee that the contract negotiations will be successful. If ECC is unable to enter into contract with Homes England GRIP4, the wider Beaulieu Railway Station project will be unable to progress and will be cancelled.

"The Beaulieu Park project through the HIF bid is linked with the Chelmsford North East Bypass, which is the subject of a separate decision. Failure to secure HIF will likely mean cancellation of the bypass and writing off all historic expenditure."

Police issue COVID-19 fines to people driving to takeaway

Police in Chelmsford fined four people from four different households who travelled together from Maldon to Chelmsford to get a takeaway last month for breaching COVID-19 restrictions.

Officers reported the incident on the Essex Police – Chelmsford District Facebook page.

The post read: "They asked if we were going to issue

a warning first. Haven't the last nine months been enough of a warning? Thank you to everyone who is complying with the rules."

Visitors to the page unanimously backed the action.

One comment read: "Glad they were caught hope they receive a substantial fine well done Essex Police."

Businesses benefit from nearly £5million funding

Businesses in Chelmsford have benefited from nearly £5million funding to help with the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic since October 2020.

The city council is administering the business grants from cash and guidance supplied by central government for the Chelmsford area. The council has made more than 3,935 payments to local businesses.

Businesses that have applied for a grant since November do not need to reapply for any additional grants announced as the council will work out which grant payments each business is eligible for.

Businesses that only applied for grants between April 2020 and September 2020 do need to apply for any additional grants they think they are eligible to receive.

Councillor Chris Davidson (pictured), cabinet member for Fairer Chelmsford, said: "We understand local businesses are experiencing a challenge like no other and are relying on the grants to keep them going. Our teams are working flat out to make sure businesses receive the funding they are eligible for as soon as possible, and that the most up-to-date information and advice is being given. We encourage all eligible businesses to apply for grants if they haven't already."

For more information and to apply, go to www.chelmsford.gov.uk/coronavirusbusiness



Photo credit: Chelmsford Lib Denis



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I think we can all agree that the sooner we see the back of 2020 and this dreadful corona virus the better. That said, there are also some heart warming positives that we can take out of this situation. It has often been said that we can only really get to know one another and realise what is truly important in times of crisis. I think few would argue that in this case what has proven to be important is local community spirit.

When talking to the Manager of Cloudy2Clear windows Chris Miller it became clear that these values have been held dear for a number of years. Since starting the business some years ago Cloudy2Clear have remained true to their core values of

supporting the local community by providing a service that saves the public money.

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Drugs crackdown leads to 11 arrests



Police targeting drug dealers arrested 16 people in a series of raids in Chelmsford, Colchester and London earlier this month.

Essex Police joined forces with the Metropolitan Police and Hertfordshire Constabulary to swoop on addresses and seized crack cocaine, heroin and cash with a total value of around £15,000.

Detective Chief Inspector Lewis Basford, of the Serious Violence Unit, said: "Gangs operate across borders and wherever there is demand, so we are dismantling them at every level and severing their links, making it even harder for them to operate."

Those arrested include six people from Chelmsford. Tony Wilde, 53, and Kevin Wilderspin, 44 of Widnes Park, Chelmsford along with Keith Webb, 49, of St Mary's Mead and Dejah Henriques, 22, of Violet Close, Chelmsford will appear at Chelmsford Crown Court on March 2 to enter a plea to a charge of conspiracy to supply crack cocaine and heroin.

Deborah Stacey, 56, of Meadgate Avenue, Chelmsford entered a guilty plea on February 4 to two counts of supplying crack cocaine and will be sentenced at Chelmsford Crown Court on March 4.

Finally, Kye Garnier, 19, of Bishop Road, Chelmsford will appear at Chelmsford Crown Court on March 5 after he was charged with being concerned in the supply of crack cocaine and heroin and supplying crack cocaine and heroin to enter a plea.

Marathon set to make a comeback

Marathon runners could return to the city later this year with the seventh Chelmsford Marathon.

This event, due to take place on October 17, will include a new half marathon and will raise funds for Havens Hospices, an Essex-wide charity that provides nursing and care to children and adults living with complex or incurable conditions.

The 26.2-mile and 13-mile routes will take runners from the start at Shire Hall on the High Street, out through the countryside and then across the finish line

in Central Park.

Jane Hopkins, area team leader at Havens Hospices, said: "These past 10 months have been very different for Havens Hospices as we have tried to adapt our services around the pandemic. We are really looking forward to continuing to put on events so we can continue to raise vital funds for our hospice care across Essex."

Please visit www.havenshospices.org.uk/chelmsfordmarathon for more information.

Options set out for road junction development

Plans to transform the way people travel in Chelmsford have moved closer after improvement options for the Army and Navy junction were agreed.

Essex County Council has been evaluating three options – a hamburger roundabout, an enlarged roundabout, and separate T-junctions. An assessment has looked at the effects on congestion, journey times and use of sustainable modes of transport, as well as environmental and construction impacts.

The three options will go to public consultation later this year. Each option also includes improved walking and cycling facilities at the junction.

Councillor Kevin Bentley, deputy leader of Essex County Council and cabinet member for infrastructure, said: "The Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package represents an opportunity to provide people with greater travel options and to encourage safer, greener and healthier ways of getting around Chelmsford.

"I am delighted that we have taken another significant step forward with the project and look forward to asking the public their views.

"By focusing on fewer options now, we can concentrate on those that could make a real difference and people can have a more valuable input at public consultation."

Construction is currently expected to start in summer 2024 and be completed in early 2026.



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VICKY FORD MP

Member of Parliament for Chelmsford



LOCAL NEWS

My thoughts are with the many residents who have been sick or have lost loved ones due to this dreadful pandemic. However, it is good news that, at the time of writing, all our GP practices are working together in networks to deliver the COVID-19 vaccine.

They were initially running centralised clinics at Whitley House Surgery, Rivermead Gate Medical Centre and Parkside Medical Centre (Melbourne). GPs are prioritising their over-70s, front-line care staff, care home residents and clinically extremely vulnerable people. Many Chelmsford residents have already received the vaccine at other sites, for example at the centre that was rapidly established at Basildon Hospital in the first week of the programme.

Our Covid Winter Grant Scheme provides food and

help with other essential bills at this difficult time. It supported children over the Christmas period and is there to give support this term and during half-term.

More than £4million has been allocated to Essex County Council from this scheme. If you need urgent assistance you can call them on 0300 7900124 between 8.45am and 5pm.

Our Holidays Activity and Food scheme will be offering disadvantaged children fun activities as well as food all across the country in the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays this year.

I would like to thank all NHS and front-line staff; it is vital we continue to follow the guidance in order to protect them. I am in regular contact with our local NHS and the Essex Resilience Forum and post updates on my Facebook page.

Clarets defender makes big move

Chelmsford City defender Danny Imray completed a dream move to the Premier League earlier this month when he joined Crystal Palace for an undisclosed fee.

The right back, 17, has joined the Eagles' development squad.

He made his Clarets debut when he started against Concord Rangers in the Essex Senior Cup Final in February 2020 at the age of just 16.

Prior to his latest transfer, he featured regularly in Robbie Simpson's side and racked up 21 appearances for City. He captained the side in this season's FA Youth Cup run.

Imray told the Crystal Palace website he was delighted to make the move.

He commented: "Coming from non-league it's big. The facilities are brilliant – it just shows the club is moving forward and going places. I don't think there's a better academy to be at."

"I have spoken to Shaun (Derry) quite a bit about the transition and I am very happy to be playing under him in the U23s. I like the way Shaun and Stephen Rice play – I feel like it will suit me, and I will thrive off it."

"I cannot wait to get started and showcase my ability."

Photo credit: Matt Bradshaw



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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."



PUZZLES & TRIVIA

PUZZLES

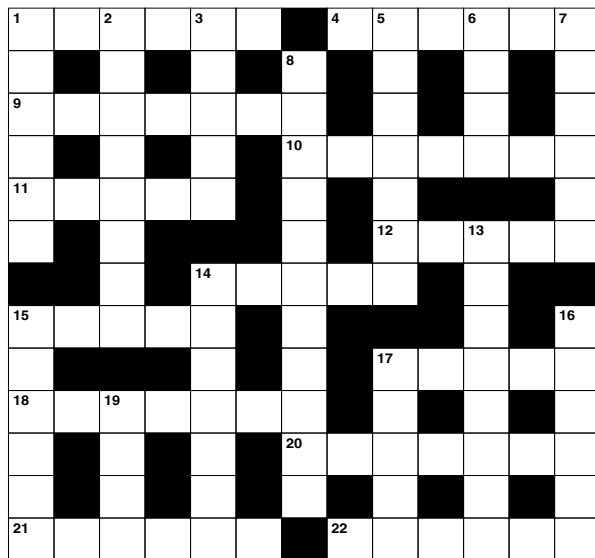
Answers: see end of The Vision Listings

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

		8					7	3
1		7		2	3			
		5			4		8	
	8	1		7		5	9	
	4		3			7		
			1	9		2		5
4	6					9		

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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



Violet

FEBRUARY BIRTH FLOWER OF THE MONTH:

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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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.

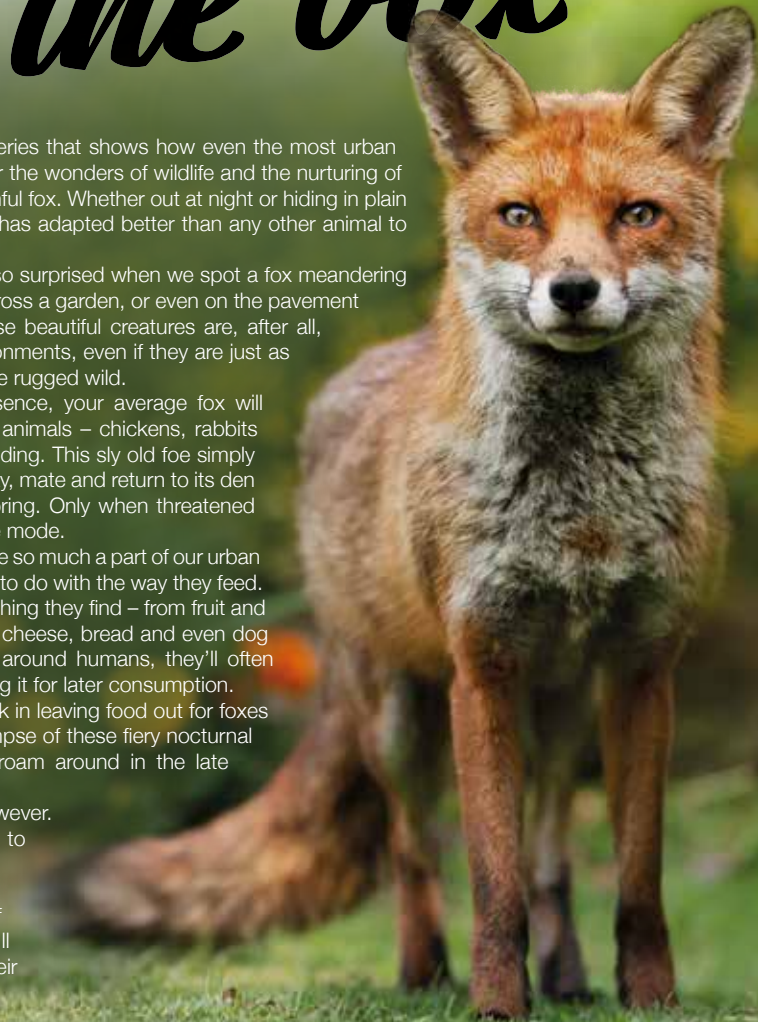
Perhaps we shouldn't be so surprised when we spot a fox meandering its way through the park, across a garden, or even on the pavement outside where we live. These beautiful creatures are, after all, past masters in urban environments, even if they are just as accustomed to survival in the rugged wild.

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.



GARDENING



St Abbs



Selkirk



Peebles



Kelso



St Boswells

THE WONDERFUL WEE VILLAGES THAT MAKE A TRIP TO THE SCOTTISH BORDERS WORTHWHILE

There's something about the Scottish Borders that transports minds back to heavy conflict, deep patriotism and bloody warfare, with emperor Hadrian, way back in AD128, constructing a literal divide between two countries that has lasted ever since.

It's peculiar, then, that the battles that existed in this huge belt of masonry are totally at odds with the picturesque villages that decorate a swathe of land that you could spend a lifetime exploring, without ever conquering.

Here are five picture-postcard villages and towns that will grab your attention if you ever find yourself on the Scottish Borders:

St Abbs: A stunning fishing village on the south-east Berwickshire coast, the journey up through Northumberland holds beauty that can rival any coastline in the UK. When you arrive at St Abbs, sample still waters, characterful pubs and the beautiful expanse of the North Sea.

Selkirk: Selkirk combines industrial power with royal heritage, a gateway to the north that dates back to the 13th century. The closeness of the streets offers a feel that likens itself to the Cotswolds, but the open expanses beyond remind you of rich Scottish countryside.

Peebles: Strange sounding but beautiful looking, Peebles has royal roots and is based on the River Tweed. Golf, fishing, mountain-biking and walking are popular pursuits, with the Victorian architecture offering hotels and hostleries to relax in after a day in the wilds.

Kelso: A sleepy market town that has the potential to burst into life at any moment, Kelso is a holidaymakers' dream, with great accommodation, impeccable dining, stunning architecture and a horse racing track that's the envy of the rest of Scotland.

St Boswells: Community is the buzzword in sleepy St Boswells – this place was recently named one of the top 10 places to live in Scotland. Flanked by stunning countryside and the River Tweed, and featuring a number of artisan independent businesses, this cosy village is worth a visit.



Photo credit: credit Frank Gaertner/Shutterstock.com

Beautiful countryside, stylish hotels... Why not stay in the UK?

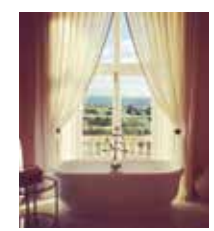
Staycations are booming this year, with Google searches for holidays in the UK doubling over the last six months. If you're hoping to book a much-needed break, I've got plenty of ideas to help you plan a unique stay without venturing too far...



Dan Salmon, Owner

BEAVERBROOK, SURREY

Nestled amongst the Surrey Hills, Beaverbrook offers a glorious escape for couples, families, or groups of friends. Stand-out features include the uniquely-designed spa and the Japanese Grill headed by ex-Nobu chef Taiji Maruyama. Steeped in history past guests include Elizabeth Taylor, Rudyard Kipling, Ian Fleming and Sir Winston Churchill!



WILDERNESS RESERVE, SUFFOLK

Tucked away in a forgotten East Anglian corner is Wilderness Reserve, where pure countryside meets luxury staycation – a collection of exclusive luxury farmhouses. Enjoy a glass of mulled wine (or Pimms depending on the season) from the back of the Land Rover by a roaring bonfire as the sun goes down. An idyllic end to a day in the Suffolk countryside, sausage rolls and marshmallows for toasting are the finishing touches to this rustic countryside version of a sundowner.



CHEWTON GLEN, HAMPSHIRE

It's been voted 'Best Hotel in the British Isles' and the traditional British restaurant has garnered numerous awards, but don't let that sway you – Chewton Glen has to be experienced personally to be enjoyed properly. With a staff-to-guest ratio of two-to-one, it's impossible not to feel like pampered royalty at this world-renowned boutique hotel in Hampshire. Take your holiday to new heights in one of the treehouse suites!



THE FISH HOTEL, COTSWOLDS

The flawless stylings of The Fish Hotel in the Cotswolds ticks all of the boxes when it comes to relaxed country getaways. Borrow a pair of wellies and roam the glorious grounds. The Hilly Huts complete with private hot tub, offer the perfect hideaway!



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f i t



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



Supermarket Savings

THE BEST TIMES OF THE DAY TO HEAD TO OUT TO GRAB A BARGAIN

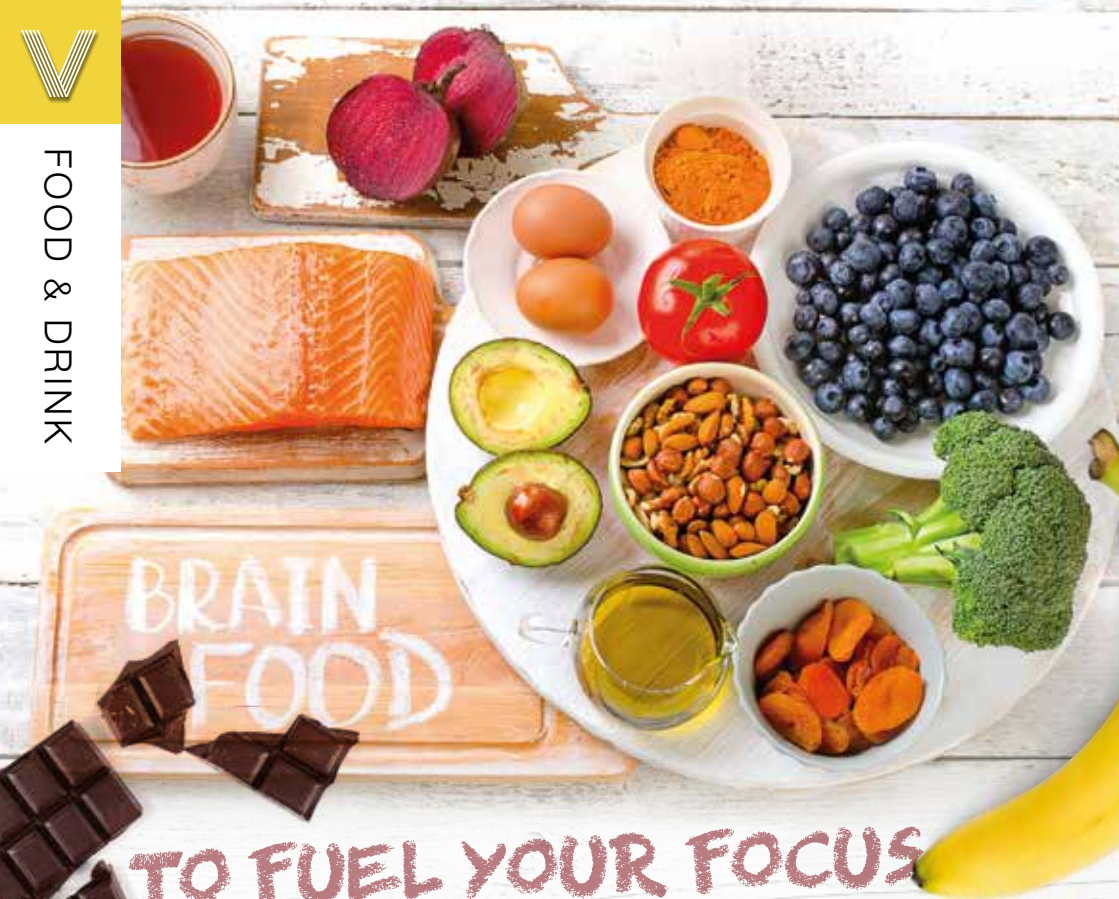
As a percentage of our annual food bill, saving 50p on a carton of fresh soup, or picking up a pack of crumpets for an amount taken care of with just a handful of coppers, doesn't make any real imprint. And yet, that unique feeling of satisfaction that only comes with landing a bargain is something we all crave, and knowing when's best to land sneaky supermarket snips has become a fine art. While different food retailers have slightly different rules, there are a few general trends you can follow:

The mid-afternoon discount
For items going out of date that day, you can expect a token discount (perhaps between 10 and 20 per cent) around mid-afternoon.
Supermarkets here are attempting to lure shoppers who would have purchased those items anyway into a small saving, in exchange for goods that aren't quite as fresh.

The teatime tease
You can expect up to 50 per cent off as soon as early evening comes around. The target market is people grabbing a bargain for their dinner, or who are happy to consume something later in the week that's past it's best before or use-by date.

Closing time
In the last minutes up until closing time, prices fall like water cascading out the bottom of a sieve. The major supermarkets will discount up to 90 per cent in order to save on the cost of waste disposal.

The final freebie
And for those of you who shop at the more salubrious stores – this is common for Waitrose and M&S – it's not unknown for staff to approach customers at the till to offer free items, usually immediate perishables such as fruit, veg, dairy and cheese. Yum.



TO FUEL YOUR FOCUS

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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dress to impress
pierre cardin

Remembering and reflecting on the life of designer
Pierre Cardin, who passed away in December.

Mention the name Pierre Cardin and a modern generation of fashionistas will most likely point you to a range of smart casual shirts and t-shirts adorning the racks of retailers over the UK, from House of Fraser to TK Maxx. And yet, to think that the French clothing label should end up in such safe, formal surrounds is to besmirch the work of a designer who fairly revolutionised high-street style in the Swinging Sixties.

Cardin passed away at the end of December having cast an artistic pencil over the fashion world for more than seven decades. His passing was met with genuine sadness by a list of admirers and proteges, including designer Jean-Paul Gaultier, but his legacy is one to be admired and celebrated.

For starters, Cardin was one of the first designers to display a logo on garments, and a self-titled brand logo at that. The idea of giving a piece of clothing its own status well beyond the cuts of cotton or cashmere was something the industry had not seen before, and it led to a host of other licensed products emerging from the Paris-based fashion house, from pens to perfumes, sunglasses to food.

Cardin's idea was to bring ready-to-wear, premium-looking clothes to the everyday market, and at a price that meant people could indulge in the image and grandiosity of the catwalk. Always looking to be different, he revolutionised design with sharp edges, outlandish curves and stylings that border on architecture as much as clothing. Inspiring so many, he dressed everyone from Bardot to The Beatles, all the while satisfying his own desire to be different.

What we see in so much of today's collections is more than a little influenced by a humble Frenchman with big ideas, Pierre Cardin.



FASHION

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CLEANSE ME...

quick

BEAUTY

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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WHAT IS CAVITATION?

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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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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

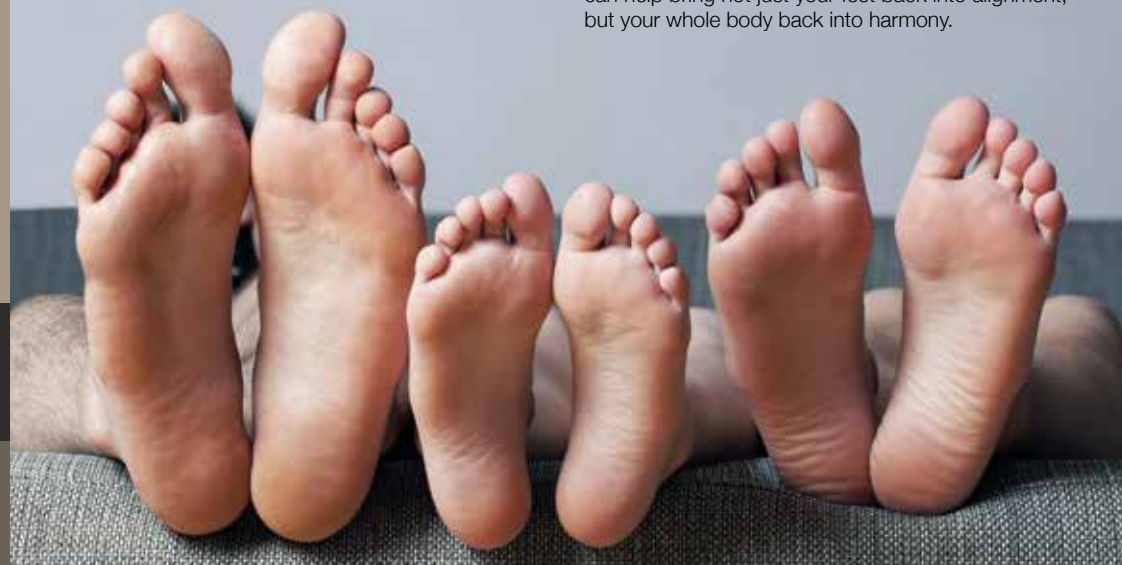
Balance in the human body is finely configured so that any imbalances can have negative effects on general health, from wobbliness through to vertigo-type symptoms.

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.



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ON THE SNAIL TRAIL IN NUTTY NORFOLK

While Gloucestershire prides itself on its annual cheese-rolling race, and mid-Wales will claim to be the spiritual home of bog snorkelling, both still have a way to go to catch up with Norfolk's take on leisure pursuits. Often with a lingering hint of ale and wine in the air, the flatlands to the east have found themselves chiefly responsible for some bizarre takes on entertainment, with perhaps nothing more peculiar than snail racing.

The 'sport' – the true polar opposite to Lewis Hamilton's record-breaking efforts in a racing car – first came about in the 1960s in the quaint village of Congham, although its true roots lie, predictably, in France. Hosted as part of the annual fete, snails are positioned on a flat, circular table. The first gastropod to make it to the outer boundary is determined the winner.

Times are recorded and recent years have seen more than 200 snails entered into the 'blink and

you'll miss it' tournament.

The popularity of the pursuit even led drinks brand Guinness to depict snail racing in its Bet on Black ad campaign back in the year 2000.

Unfortunately, the 2020 event had to be cancelled owing to COVID-19, leaving the slithery creatures that usually enter the race with very little else to do but, one would imagine, munch on some lettuce.

Rival competitions have emerged – the Grand Championship Snail Race in the appropriately named Snailwell, Cambridgeshire, celebrates its 30th anniversary next year, and regularly attracts 400 people to the village, doubling its population.

What's best about the annual snail trials, wherever they are held, is that there's no monotonous dominance, no Hamiltons or Schumachers on show; for the simple reason that with an average snail lifespan of around nine months, you're guaranteed a new 'gastropod great' each year.



SPORT

Our Chelmsford Community Window Unveiled

Well, we've made it through January.

It was a long month for everyone, especially those homeschooling heroes (AKA hard-pressed parents), but we're into February and looking forward to brighter times.

Talking of heroes, we wanted to do something to celebrate the superheroes of our NHS.

The positive responses led us to commission the artist to create a new community window display each month throughout 2021. February's theme is around Valentine's Day, so look out for a very famous couple appearing on our window.



Stephen Frost,
Martin & Co



Computers for Schoolchildren

In addition to the window, last month we donated ten computer tablets to families within the community.

Many children in the local area do not have access to the technology and equipment they need for homeschooling. We're also offering a free printing service for anyone who needs to print off homework.

And what better way to do that than to turn our office window in Duke Street over to a very talented artist who created the NHS superheroes' mural you see on this page.

It's been very well received, and the feedback people have given us is it brings a little cheer to the community.

Several years ago, I was the beneficiary of others' generosity and kindness when I really needed it, so I see all of this as my opportunity to pay it forward.

PS: Do you have an idea for a mural for our community window? Let us know by emailing stephen.frost@martinco.com

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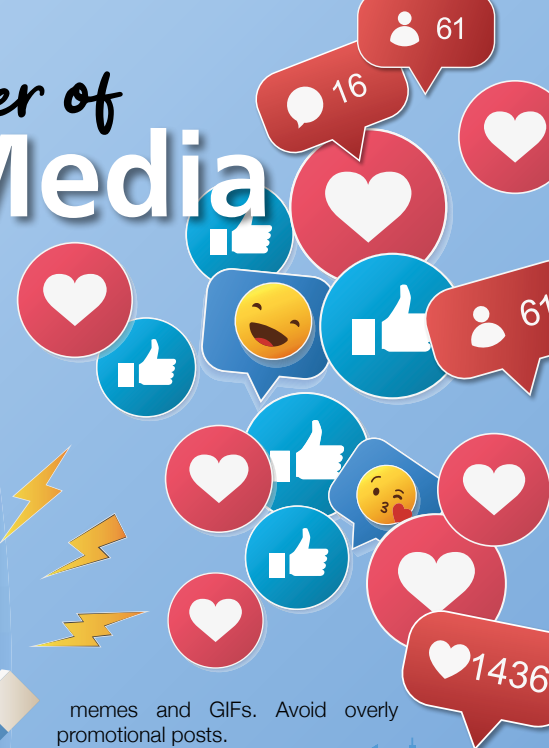
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The Power of Social Media



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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WINDOW dressing

Tricks that will upgrade your home and help you achieve top market price

When it comes to making our homes as presentable as possible for sale, there are a few tips and tricks worth putting into practice, and no, just brewing up some fresh coffee won't suffice.

TIDY HOUSE, TIDY MIND: House viewers need to imagine their own possessions in your house, so the brighter and emptier your rooms are, the easier it will be for them to make that connection.

It may mean you need to give up a weekend or two to repaint a couple of rooms, and that mass of clutter can find a new home in the loft – or the bin – but the rewards could be huge.

TIGHT IS RIGHT: Your house needs to give off a feeling of quality – it will all add to a sense of your potential purchaser stepping up a level when they move in. With that in mind, tighten and make sparkle door handles, taps and bannister rails. No wobbles, no worries.

A MEAN CLEAN: While it sounds obvious, any appearance of dust is hugely off-putting for those looking around a home. Paying professional cleaners to really give your rooms a spruce may be one of the best investments you make.

(VERY) FIRST IMPRESSIONS: Most people think first impressions are made when someone walks through the front door, but the process begins way before that. Is the lawn mown? Is the front door wiped down? Can you convince your neighbour to move his rusty Ford Mondeo around the corner?

WEATHER WITH YOU: Try to book viewings when the sun is there to light up your home. Open windows to let heat and the breeze in, and consider delaying if torrential rain may see your potential buyers soaked through before they even enter the property.



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For a free initial consultation, please contact me to book an appointment.

I'm based in Chelmsford and look forward to meeting you!

Louise

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