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HOMES

The benefits
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WOMBLING FREE
Celebrate 50 years of The Wombles

Davina
MCCALL

Popular presenter celebrates 30 years on our screens

V

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AFTER



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BEFORE



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FEBRUARY 2023

Editor's notes...



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** Chelmsford Beaulieu. We're into February now - that fateful month when New Year's resolutions begin to scurry away like a thief in the night, never to be seen again. I admit that rarely does the start of a year go by without me promising to make either my own or someone else's life healthier or happier. This year I didn't, even though I'll be the first to admit that my fitness levels have taken a dive after the buoyant festive period. That's not to say I don't want to get back to a routine of regular exercise. I've already started, in fact. I'm on my bike every other day, choosing to walk over driving when I can and have cut out those sneaky snacks. The difference is that I want to get away from this being a New Year thing. I know so many people fall down on a resolution and believe the game is up. Not true! Not only should we take failure in life as just a temporary blip, but we should also be solid in the belief that good habits, new initiatives and a drive for self-improvement can and should happen at any time of the year. My advice is therefore to do something good in 2023, but use the whole of 2023 to do it.

Nik Allen

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KEEP ON WOMBLING

WOMBLING FREE, THE WOMBLES OF WIMBLEDON COMMON ARE WE

To celebrate 50 years since *The Wombles* first appeared on our screens, we explore how Orinoco and his furry chums were well ahead of their time.

The early 1970s was an era of rising food and fuel costs, political and social unrest, and dubious fashion choices. It also marked the moment when the very first episode of *The Wombles* aired, at 5.40pm on February 5, 1973, on BBC One.

Based on Elizabeth Beresford MBE's 1968 beloved children's book, the five-minute stop-motion masterpiece was titled *Orinoco and the Big Black Umbrella*, and was voiced by British actor Bernard Cribbins OBE. It told of a blustery day on Wimbledon Common, which corresponds perfectly with the story of how the Wombles came to be. When Beresford took her daughter Kate for a walk on the same common, the young girl mispronounced it as 'Wombledon', and the rest is history.

'There is still much to be appreciated and even learned from *The Wombles*'

Though we have moved on in terms of animation styles and childhood heroes, there is still much to be appreciated and even learned from *The Wombles*. Back in 1973, Britain didn't have recycling bins and nationwide initiatives to reduce waste, making the Womble mission to "make good use of bad rubbish" an almost revolutionary concept.

The seven Wombles, including Great Uncle Bulgaria, Orinoco and Madame Cholet, were highly creative in the way they recycled and gathered rubbish – even fronting a Keep Britain Tidy campaign – and would certainly be applauded by environmental activists today.

So let's mark their half-century on our television screens not just by introducing our children to their adorable 35 mini-adventures – and, of course, their hit theme tune *The Wombling Song* – but also by passing on their teachings.

From Wimbledon Common and beyond, let's keep making "good use of bad rubbish".

Know YOUR snow!

Who doesn't like that crunching noise as you walk on a patch of fresh snow? And what place doesn't look a little prettier with snowy roofs and trees? But what exactly is snow, and how does it happen?

WHAT'S SNOW MADE FROM?

When it's 0°C or under, the water vapour in clouds freezes into minute ice crystals. These crystals stick together. And if enough of them do it, they become heavy enough to fall out of the cloud and float to the ground as snowflakes.

HOW COLD DOES IT HAVE TO BE TO SNOW?

It won't snow unless it's 2°C or under. The snow will be powdery if the temperature is 0°C or below and the air is dry. When the temperature's slightly warmer and the atmosphere is moist, the flakes will be bigger because they melt around the edges and stick together. This sort of snow is perfect for making snowballs and snowmen.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SNOW, SLEET AND HAIL?

If the water vapour in the clouds freezes but the air temperature exceeds 2°C, the snowflakes melt and become sleet. At around 5°C, it'll become rain. Hail forms in thunderclouds when water droplets are blown up to the tops of the cloud, where they freeze. When the updraughts in the thunderclouds can't hold up the frozen droplets, they fall to the ground as hailstones.

WHAT DO SNOWFLAKES LOOK LIKE?

Under a microscope, snowflakes can look very different from each other. It all depends on how the ice crystals form and stick together. In 1951, the International Commission on Snow and Ice divided snowflakes into seven main types. These are plates, stellar crystals, columns, needles, spatial dendrites, capped columns and irregular forms.

Snow there you have it!



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TILE *and smile*



HOME & DIY

HOW TO CHECK IF YOUR ROOF TILES ARE KEEPING OUT THE ELEMENTS IN WINTER

Roof tiles are said to last for anything between 30 and 50 years which, considering the battering they take from weather conditions, is a notable achievement.

However, while we may think we can leave our roofing materials to their own devices, proper and regular maintenance of these terracotta, clay, concrete, slate and metal tiles is essential – after all, without them, we would be living a rather soggy existence.

They are most susceptible to damage after a storm, though can be compromised even from birds dropping stones from above.

Here are four ways to check your roof tiles are still in order.

GROUNDING

Look around your garden and pathways for any fragments of tiles that have slipped from your roof.

If you find anything on ground level that should be on the roof, you have a problem.

I SPY

Get a pair of binoculars and examine the roof from a reasonable vantage point. This is an easy way to spot chipped or cracked tiles. Once the deterioration begins, the damage will only worsen over time, so it's vital to get this repaired as soon as possible.

MOSS BROS

You may also spy moss or green matter on the roof – this is a key indication that water is remaining in gaps and not running into gutters.

INSIDE OUT

In daylight hours, get up in your loft and into the eaves. By looking out through the roof, you will spot gaps or holes in tiles and can direct a professional to where cracked or damaged tiles need replacing.

It's best to let professionals attend to any tile repairs. They have all the necessary insurance and safety knowledge that ensures the job will be done without any mishaps.



Awesome décor, dude!

It's time to get groovy with your home décor, as 70s style makes a humungous comeback. To many, it's the era that fashion forgot, but are we due a 70s revolution, five decades on?

Appliances that pop

If you've ever coveted a Smeg toaster or fridge, you'll appreciate the allure of a coloured appliance. Surfy blue or pastel pink, it all works when integrating this bodacious trend into your worktop or (not-so) white goods.

Hey crochet

Crochet may be one of the oldest artforms, but in the 70s it was really hot – like, all over your bellbottoms, tablecloth and curtains hot. So don't fear as it makes a long-awaited comeback – perfect for placemats or to protect your coffee tabletop. Crochet away knowing you are bang on trend, my friend.

Rattan again

Think rattan furniture is only for the outdoors? Not so in the swinging 70s. Rattan is cool, rattan is comfy and rattan is also reasonably cheap if you're on a budget.

Velvet overground

Velvet gets a rough ride. Synonymous with a certain type of 70s cinema, you may think velvet has a sleazy reputation. That is, until you remember that it is gloriously soft and cosy and comes in all kinds of sumptuous colours.

Lino Ritchie

Don't be dancing on the ceiling when you have some lovely lino to tap your toes on. That's right, lino is cool again, so say: "Hello, is it me you're looking floor?"

Don't teak

Those of us lucky to inherit teak sideboards from family members can now feel smug. Any unit made in teak rosewood by G Plan or crafted in Denmark during the 70s, is now rather valuable and effortlessly cool.



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HOME & DIY

5 STYLISH WAYS TO STORE COOKBOOKS

Whether you can't resist treating yourself to the latest celebrity cookbook or you were gifted a few culinary classics at Christmas, you may be wondering how you can store and showcase your latest additions.

LINE THEM UP AGAINST THE BACKSPLASH

If you want to proudly display your collection of cookbooks for all to see, then why not line them all up in a row against your backsplash? Providing easy access and a visually appealing feature, this is a great option for all kitchens.

ADD BUILT-IN SHELVES TO THE ISLAND

A kitchen island provides the perfect space for storing all your favourite cookbooks, especially if you have a vast collection. Choose to either take advantage of existing shelving or incorporate new storage space that accommodates all your books.

STORE THEM IN THE PANTRY

Pantries are a godsend for many families, providing additional space and somewhere to keep items out of sight. If you're lucky enough to have one in your home, then designate an eye-level shelf for your cookbook collection so that all your favourite recipes are within reach.

DISPLAY YOUR FAVOURITE WITH A BOOK HOLDER

If you have a go-to cookbook that you use on a regular basis, you can keep this on display at all times using a simple book holder. Enabling you to create the perfect culinary focal point in your kitchen, you can even prop the book open at your favourite recipe.

INVEST IN A MULTI-TIER BASKET STAND

For smaller kitchens where space is tight, a vertical storage solution such as a multi-tier basket stand is the ideal choice. There are many different styles and sizes on the market or, alternatively, you could create your own if you have a set of storage baskets lying around your home.



Photo credit: Blue Copper Design, Studio Peak, Neat by Meg, Amy Lefterink at Interior Impressions, Asan



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HOME & DIY

HOW TO CHOOSE THE PERFECT BATH TOWELS

With so many different types of bath towels available on the market, it can be difficult to know which to choose. Here's everything you need to know about picking the perfect towels for your home.

LOOK AT THE TOWEL
Although you may think that touching the towel will help you determine its overall quality, manufacturers apply special finishes to make them feel softer. Instead, visually inspect the towel and make sure the edges are neatly folded and secured with close stitching.

CHECK THE FIBRE CONTENT
The first thing you need to look at when buying new towels is the fibre content. If you want a towel that is super-soft and absorbent, then 100 per cent cotton is the best choice. While you may be tempted by premium options such as Egyptian cotton, these are a lot more expensive and don't have much effect on the overall quality. If you are on a tight budget, opt for a cotton/polyester blend.

UNDERSTAND THE LINGO
Towel lingo can be confusing, so here are a few key phrases to look out for:

- > **COMBINED COTTON** – this is where the cotton is brushed to remove short fibres, resulting in a softer and more durable towel.
- > **RING SPUN COTTON** – this means that long and short fibres are tightly twisted to make the towel loops strong and smooth.
- > **TWIST** – a high twist results in a more durable towel and a low twist makes the towel more plush and absorbent.

CONSIDER THE WEIGHT
Towel weight is measured in grams per square metre (GSM), with the higher the weight, the denser and more absorbent the towel. A lightweight towel is 300-400 GSM, medium weight is 400-600 GSM, and 600-900 GSM is the heaviest.

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT
Ultimately, choosing a towel is down to personal preference. If you want a soft and absorbent towel, then look for 100 per cent cotton, plush loops of yarn on the surface and a higher GSM. However, if you need a more durable or quick-drying towel, a cotton/poly blend with short loops and a lower GSM is a better choice.



CELLAR DWELLER

NO MATTER HOW DARK IT SEEMS, ANY BASEMENT IS A GIFT IN THESE SPACE-SPARSE TIMES

When space is at a premium, dig down. Both modern homes and those dating back hundreds of years have benefitted from the extra space offered by a basement. Here are a few ideas for how to use the space:

MAN CAVE

A man's home is his castle and a man's cave is his, err, cave. Even the dreariest space can become a great hangout spot for the lesser-spotted male. Just add a neon light, a pool table and some kind of beer conduit for maximum happiness for most men.

UTILITY ROOM

If you can plumb a washing machine into your basement, then you're in business. Anyone who has lived with laundry clogging up every available radiator will confirm that a dedicated washing and drying space is the future. Just make sure the room is well ventilated to avoid damp.

HOME GYM

What could be a better use of your excess space than creating a home gym? It's the perfect place to disappear to when the world gets too much. With a few weights, a punchbag, a bench press and maybe even a rowing machine, the humble basement becomes a sanctuary of transformation.

OFFICE

If you're easily distracted, then a below-ground office is a good way to focus on what matters. Invest in reliable Wi-Fi, a comfy office chair and art that inspires you – especially if windows are scarce. You might be surprised by how your productivity soars.

WINE CELLAR

It may be an obvious use of an underground space, but a wine cellar is vital for the kind of enthusiasts who like to buy in bulk and let their investment age in both price and flavour.

HOME CINEMA

If you've got a big, blank wall, then a home cinema may just be the thing that elevates your home to A-list level. Popcorn machine optional.



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LOCAL NEWS

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Photo credit: Essex Police

Two people jailed for aggravated burglary

A man and woman who carried out an aggravated burglary in Chelmsford have been jailed for a combined total of 13 years.

Gary Haliben, 39 (pictured left), was jailed for nine and a half years while Sarah Hooks, 42 (pictured right), was jailed for three and a half years at Chelmsford Crown Court on Monday, January 16.

The pair were charged with aggravated burglary and had denied the charges at Colchester Magistrates' Court on February 2, 2021.

Haliben and Hooks attended the victim's address uninvited on January 30, 2021. As the victim opened the door, Gary pushed him inside.

Over a two-hour period, the victim was repeatedly assaulted and threatened by Gary, who wielded a

knife and demanded cash.

Sarah and Gary took turns to search the property in the hope of finding cash, but left with only £40 from the victim's wallet and a few personal possessions.

When officers arrived at their Andrews Place address, Haliben and Hooks were watching TV and claimed to have been there all evening.

Detective Jack Mabbett said: "This was a prolonged and terrifying ordeal for the victim, who suffered at the hands of Gary Haliben and Sarah Hooks for at least two hours.

"He must have been terrified as he had a knife held to his throat and was instructed not to tell police. Today, justice has been served and the victim can move on with his life knowing that the pair are jailed."

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Clarets knocked out of FA Trophy as form falters



Photo credit: Roger Robinson

Chelmsford City FC risk falling out of the play-off positions after a difficult January saw the Clarets knocked out of the FA Trophy on penalties and win only three games out of seven.

The cup fixture against National League side York City saw Chelsea loanee Eddie Beach (pictured above left in green) handed his debut in goal, making several saves to keep the Clarets in the game.

Unfortunately for Chelmsford, York City took the lead, but this didn't last long, with Eduino Vaz scoring his first goal for the Clarets in the 36th minute. Although the Clarets were edged out on penalties, manager Robbie Simpson said he was "so proud" of the team.

He said: "Amazing effort, so proud of them. I thought we were the better team. I thought we could have won the game and probably should have."

Later in the month, Chelmsford controversially lost to Welling United after they were awarded a penalty. Adam Drew, club head of recruitment (pictured above, front right), was shown a red card for his protests.

Chelmsford will now be looking to improve as games rescheduled from December and January are played.

School reverses hugging ban after criticism

A Chelmsford school that appeared to ban hugging seems to have made a U-turn on the policy.

Parents at Hylands School received a letter saying the school did "not tolerate physical contact", including hugging and holding hands.

In the letter, assistant headteacher Catherine McMillan said: "We will not tolerate any physical contact within our community. This includes any aggressive physical contact, hugging, holding hands, slapping someone, etc."

"This is in order to keep your child safe. If your child is touching somebody else, whether they are consenting or not, anything could happen. It could lead to an injury, make someone feel very uncomfortable, or someone being touched inappropriately."

A second letter sent a week later then said that hugging was acceptable if children needed emotional support from friends.

The second letter said: "If your child is hurt, upset or needing emotional support, we would expect their friends – an important support network – to act with compassion and kindness. For example, a hug."

"For us, 'hands off' is to ensure that all young people are in a position to feel safe in school without anyone invading their personal space or them receiving unwanted physical interaction."

While some criticised the policy, others believed that the response was excessive, with one student saying: "It's not as big of an issue as people are treating it to be."

Pensioner missing for more than a month

Essex Police are urgently appealing for information about a vulnerable 69-year-old pensioner with dementia who has been missing since December 18.

Timothy Hatcher (pictured below) was last seen at The Star pub in Baddow Road, Chelmsford, before going to the Aldi supermarket off Parkway, where he was recorded on the store's CCTV footage wearing a yellow high-vis jacket and black beanie hat.

Police have carried out a number of searches, including an area close to the A1114 and the River Chelmer.

Enquiries continue and a 50-year-old man arrested on suspicion of kidnap has been re-bailed until April 1.

Detective Superintendent Scott Egerton said: "Since Timothy's disappearance, we have been running a significant search operation to give us the best chance of finding him."

"I would again ask for anyone who believes they could have information on Timothy's whereabouts to please come forward and speak to us."

Anyone with information should urgently contact Essex Police at www.essex.police.uk or by calling 101, quoting incident 754 of 20 December.



Photo credit: Essex Police



Police seized £350,000 of drugs last year



Photo credit: Essex Police

Specialist officers targeting drug gangs across North Essex seized an estimated £350,000 worth of drugs during 2022, new information has revealed.

The figure includes a cannabis cultivation in Chelmsford where officers executing a warrant recovered cannabis plants with a street value of £150,000.

North Disruptor is one of three teams in Essex working with other local and specialist teams that target organised criminal activity and behaviour, seeking to bring offenders to justice.

North Disruptor officers arrested 156 people on suspicion of a variety of offences during 2022 and seized approximately £200,000 in cash suspected to be the proceeds of crime. They also recovered several weapons, including machetes and knives.

Sergeant Bull, of the North Disruptor team, said: "Drug use, drug dealing and drug supply is associated with serious violence and causes a great deal of harm to our communities and to vulnerable people.

"Stop and search is a good tactic to help keep people safe because it disrupts and deters criminal activity, particularly dealing of drugs in public.

"But it's the warrants which really enable us to tackle the dealers and suppliers at source and take large quantities of drugs off our streets."

LGBTQ+ community to share stories in museum exhibition

Members of Essex's LGBTQ+ community are invited to share their stories for *Behind the Rainbow*, an exhibition coming to Chelmsford Museum in June.

The exhibition will share the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in Chelmsford and Essex, with local artists, photographers and writers invited to share content that reflects their journey.

Sofia Rojas, the Essex Pride Committee lead, said: "We deserve our stories to be heard and to see ourselves represented, and this is an opportunity to

make that happen."

Sarah Davies, manager of Chelmsford Museum, said: "It's so important that the stories we tell are inclusive and progressive. Giving LGBTQ+ people the opportunity to share their stories helps increase awareness and appreciation of the challenges they face, while pushing audiences to consider their role in creating positive change."

Submissions close on Wednesday, March 15. The project team will contact successful applicants by March 31. To make your submission, visit www.essexpride.org

Theatre holds first show following refurbishment

Chelmsford Theatre welcomed the return of audiences on Saturday, January 14, as the venue's doors reopened following a six-month refurbishment.

The £3.25million revamp of the council-owned theatre transformed the venue into a sleek and stylish space.

Delays in the refurbishment meant the theatre's Christmas pantomime production of *Jack and the Beanstalk* had to be cancelled. Its first show back was *9 to 5: The Musical*, based on the 1980 film and featuring music by Dolly Parton.

A new café with an outdoor terrace will also open at the theatre in time for the summer. A membership scheme will be launched, with several workshops and masterclasses set to take place.

Councillor Marie Goldman, deputy leader of Chelmsford City Council, said: "Following a challenging renovation process which saw some unexpected delays, it's wonderful to see the theatre's lights on, the stage set and an audience buzzing with joy once more.

"This makeover has absolutely transformed the theatre's front-of-house spaces, presenting a stunning contemporary venue for Chelmsford."



Photo credit: Chelmsford City Council

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VICKY FORD MP

Member of Parliament for Chelmsford



LOCAL NEWS



It is great news that construction is now starting on Beaulieu Railway Station. Infrastructure is vital for our growing city.

Last month, I brought together the Essex County Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and the Roads Minister for a meeting in Parliament to discuss the Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package. The Outline Business Case for the package was submitted by Essex County Council to the Department for Transport in October. It is now awaiting ministerial approval. As well as a new junction, the package includes improvements to Park and Ride facilities as well as to bus, cycle and pedestrian routes. The total cost is estimated to be around £80million and we are asking the government for £66.8million of funding. I

have explained to the Roads Minister how essential this project is for the future of Chelmsford and have invited him to visit the site.

Tackling crime and improving safety, especially of women and girls, is also one of my priorities. Seventy new police officers completed their training and joined Essex Police in January. It is great news that we continue to level up the number of police in Essex, helping to keep people safe. Essex Police is on track to have 3,755 officers by March 2023 due to investment from the government's Police Uplift Programme.

I continue to receive a large number of queries from Chelmsford residents on many different issues. If you have a problem you need help with, then please do email me at vicky.ford.mp@parliament.uk

Tax to rise as budget approved

Chelmsford residents' council tax bills could rise by 12p a week after Chelmsford City Council's cabinet approved the proposed 2023/24 budget.

The three per cent increase will raise £400,000, an amount cabinet member councillor Chris Davidson said they "can't do without".

The council has also sourced nearly £1million of "savings and efficiencies", with other charges such as for parking and leisure centres set to increase and bring in an extra £620,000.

Certain investments will also increase, with an additional £6.5million going toward the council's Green Initiatives Fund.

Money will also go towards lighting up some parks

and car parks to help people feel safer, and the refurbishment of public toilets. The city's crematorium is also on the list for approval, along with an expansion of the gym at Chelmsford Sports and Athletics Centre.

The proposed budget will now be discussed at the full council meeting on Wednesday, February 22.

Councillor Stephen Robinson, Leader of Chelmsford City Council, said: "At around 10 per cent, inflation is higher than we've seen for decades. This causes huge cost increases and is outside the council's control.

"However, careful management means that we have produced a balanced budget, kept crucial services going and allowed for spending on some new investment projects."

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APPY DAYS

While our reliance on technology becomes greater every year, so too does our interaction with the world around us. For all the criticism levelled at them, our communications devices and, specifically, the apps on them, have offered us a far greater understanding of the world.

With that in mind, here are five apps that offer you the chance to broaden your horizons in 2023.

BACKDROP

Backdrop isn't a wallpaper app, as its name may suggest. Instead, it's a location discovery platform that aims to help you become more familiar with your surroundings. Rather than listing businesses and attractions, it turns the spotlight on interesting houses, colourful spaces and quirky local elements.

CENTER STAGE

A US app that can instantly help you value trading cards. Although the technology is still in its infancy, with identifiable cards in the sports of NFL, baseball, basketball and hockey, the plan is to incorporate UK sports, as well as Pokémon and other games-based card collectables.

OTTERNAL LIFE

A habit-tracking app that goes well beyond the norm of health and fitness. Instead, Otternal Life gives you the opportunity to input everything from studies to collections, guiding you and reminding you of daily tasks, while helping you steer clear of temptation elsewhere.

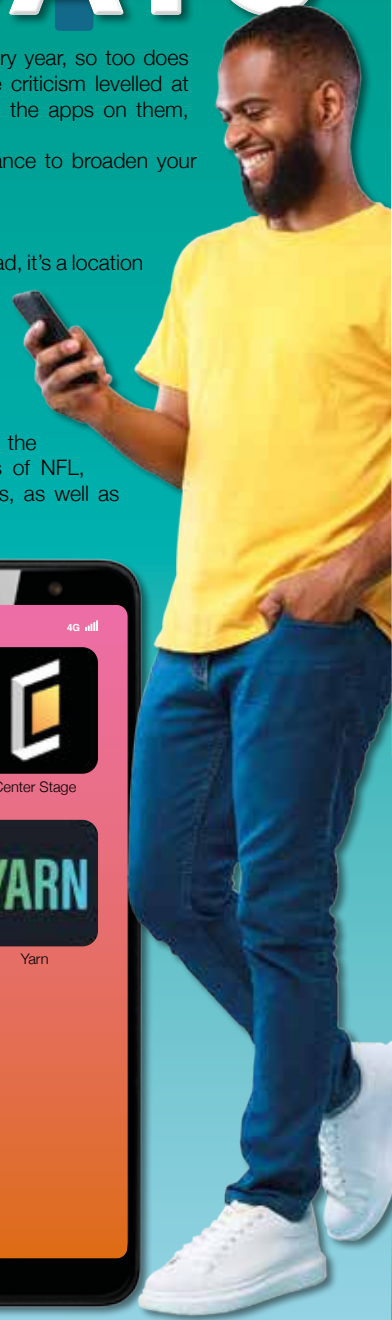
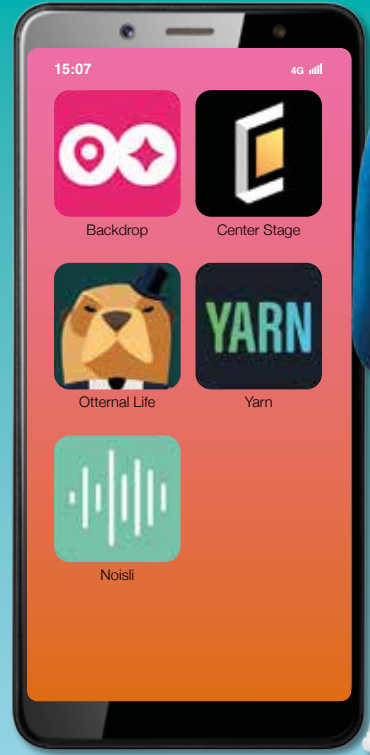
YARN

Go back to basics with this app that aims to help readers revisit the simple pleasures of storytelling.

Rather than elaborate videos, films or animations, Yarn offers app users a simple choice of stories presented in text message form. Episodes and conversations are updated daily, and you can enjoy stories from several categories, including mystery, romance, comedy, sci-fi, fantasy, and more.

NOISLI

We can all recognise that our ability to concentrate is affected by the sounds around us. Noisli mixes together a number of samples and sounds, from birdsong to rain to waves to wind, to surround you with effortlessly excellent and personalised audio inspiration.



FlowerPOWER

FOUR FANTASTIC FLOWER SHOWS IN THE UK TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2023

There's nothing that feels more like summer than the blooming buds and luscious lawns of a flower show, and in the UK we're treated to an incredible array of events that cater for every type of green-fingered enthusiast.

Harrogate Flower Show: April 20-23

One of the earliest shows on the calendar, this Yorkshire gem is great for children looking to build a knowledge of outside spaces, with a variety of activities designed to inspire young minds. For adults, there's the floral art marquee, the largest in Britain, as well as a wealth of displays and presentations – many with a practical edge.

Chelsea Flower Show: May 23-27

A royal favourite, the Chelsea Flower Show represents the pinnacle of our horticultural passions in the UK, showcasing an array of award-winning designs, an abundance of experts and a wealth of demonstrations designed to inspire. More than 150,000 people attend

the show every year, so booking early is recommended.

Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival: July 4-9

This festival claims to be the greatest flower show on Earth. Set in the grounds of Hampton Court Palace, with architecture, history, opulence and Britishness in abundance, it's difficult not to be wowed by beautiful show gardens, interactive activities for children, amazing flower displays and live music.

There's also shopping, demos and expert advice – offering a modern show in a traditional setting.

Tatton Park Flower Show: July 19-23

If you fancy venturing up north, head to Knutsford in Cheshire for a flower show that is much more a garden party than an exhibition.

With shopping, dining and music, the bamboozling range of horticultural heroics acts as a brilliant background to the party atmosphere. All you require is sunshine.



Photo credit: theenglishgarden.co.uk, yourharrogate.co.uk, Edinburghmorn/shutterstock.com, PHSNELL-HEPWORTH via housebeautiful.com

Spring is on its way –

and we have never needed it more!

At this time of year, most of us are eager for winter to end and for spring to arrive. Records suggest that recent Springs are occurring about 11 days earlier than they did a century ago, even though the promise of increasingly warm and bright days ahead seems a little way off following the recent cold snap.

Meteorologists hail the beginning of spring on the 1st March but in recent years we have had snow as late as March and April, and whilst the local kids might have welcomed the opportunity for a 'snow day', the keen gardeners amongst us might not have been quite so pleased, since drifted snow can crush delicate new plants, and the weight can even damage larger conifers or even garden structures like fences, sheds and greenhouses. This said, according to Royal Horticultural Society's (RHS) chief horticultural adviser Guy Barter, a blanket of snow later in the year is not always a bad thing, flowering bulbs can be delayed slightly, prolonging the flowering period and leading to a more impressive show as they all bloom together. You may even be treated to seeing hardy



spring flowers like primulas and anemones flowering alongside your hellebores and winter pansies as the late winter blooms are prolonged.

So, you have provided a bit of extra food for the winged garden visitors and mother nature seems to have the borders sussed giving you an even more colourful garden this spring - but where does this leave the hardscape elements of the garden? Well if your fence was groaning under the weight of drifted snow and struggling to stand against the accompanying icy winds then you could consider an alternative that is tougher than traditional wooden fencing – such as ColourFence. This type of fencing needs very little aftercare and can stand up to 130mph gusts leaving you more time

to knock the snow off the roof of the greenhouse! Oh and it makes for a very attractive decorative feature in your garden too.

Did you know too, that 'Astronomical Spring' is due a little later in March so maybe we can hope for some more sunshine then. Keep a look out for bumblebees and butterflies waking from their winter slumber, frog spawn in ponds and garden birds collecting nesting materials, all of which hail sunnier days to come!

And if you're not looking to replace a fence, but you're looking for a beautiful new gate, or garden rail to



add even more beauty to your Spring garden, we do those too, as well as garden sheds that also won't groan under the weight of a thousand April showers, some late snow and a gust or two of wind!

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GARDENING

Springing INTO LIFE

THE CHANGES YOU NEED TO BE MAKING TO YOUR GARDEN BEFORE SPRING COMES AROUND

We may bemoan dropping temperatures and wet weather, but the good news is that spring is edging ever closer.

And while the realities of sunny mornings and technicoloured flower beds are still a distance away, we need to be preparing our outdoor spaces for spring now, if 2023 is to be a fertile year. Here are six ways you can start preparing your garden for the sunnier days to come.

Plan and purchase: There's nothing like planning the first steps on a task, so even though it's cold and wintry outside, now is the time to be selecting and ordering the summer-flowering bulbs and seeds that will make your garden look splendid. You'll be planting these in early spring, so get them ready now.

Sow good: Some of your summer seeds will require longer in the soil, so you may want to consider sowing some now. Included in these are geraniums, begonias, peppers and aubergines. Start them off in a heated propagator to give them a head start.

Tip-top tidy-up: It's cold out, but that shouldn't stop you getting beds and borders in order. Removing debris and decaying matter will be the biggest job, but consider the need to repair wood, cut back bushes, and give a new lease of life to paths and walkways.

Green clean: If you have a greenhouse, now is the time to take it back to its bare bones, ready for what you're about to bring in during the spring.

A clear-out and clean-up will leave your transparent studio ready to go.

The rain game: You may as well take advantage of the rainy season by installing a water butt and collecting water in time for the spring. Not only is it better for the environment compared to using the tap or a hose, but a number of plant varieties actually grow better with rainwater, including camellias and rhododendrons.





DYNAMIC

Davina

HOW DAVINA MCCALL CONTINUES TO PROVE HERSELF AS A MODERN NATIONAL TREASURE

Davina McCall this year celebrates three decades on our screens. From her early break – a female voice dubber for Channel 4's Friday night sleaze bonanza *Eurotrash* – through *Don't Try This at Home*, *Streetmate*, *The BRIT Awards*, *Big Brother*, *Stars in Their Eyes*, *The Million Pound Drop*, *Long Lost Family* and so many more, the now 55 year old has remained relevant, resplendent and always radiant on our screens.

The Wimbledon-born presenter, who has just returned as a judge in the fourth series of *The Masked Singer*, is immaculate in her appeal to multiple age groups and all genders. She carries a confidence and assurance that is effortless and puts contestants at ease, while also knowing when to reveal a more sensitive and emotional side to her character.

From uncovering her ancestry in *Who Do You Think You Are?* to fronting documentaries on the language of love and the mental pain of the menopause, Davina is truly one of terrestrial TV's modern national treasures. At a time when our broadcasters are desperate for consistency and longevity in the face of competition from streaming channels, Davina continues to provide an enduring and vital influence.

"I've just tried to present in a way that feels genuine and accessible," says Davina, who is currently in a relationship with hairdresser Michael Douglas, having previously been married twice. She has three children – Holly, 21, Tilly, 19, and Chester, 16.

"I am incredibly grateful to have been given the opportunity to sustain my career with new and exciting shows and concepts.

"I don't doubt it's probably time to step to one side and let some others have a go, but I'll keep on going until I'm told I'm not needed anymore, because TV still gives me the feeling of having the time of my life, and that's very special to me."

The fact that Davina is someone not just admired by the general public, but trusted too, is arguably what's behind the success of her latest book. In *Menopausal*, she discusses the apparent embarrassment, shame and fear behind the change, blowing away perceptions and encouraging openness and discussion about the subject.

This isn't the first time the presenter has been vocal about life's true challenges. In her own autobiography, she lifted the lid on the highs and lows she has encountered, including drug addiction and a fractured relationship with her mother.

The presenter has also been outspoken recently in criticising the trend for cancel culture. Speaking on entrepreneur Steven Bartlett's podcast, *The Diary of a CEO*, she slammed the failure of those in the public eye to express real feelings for fear of finding work projects binned or sidelined. She added: "No one says what they think or believe anymore."

If anyone can put a sense of honesty back into the discourse, it's Davina. Never one to shy away from deliberation or debate, she refuses to toe the media line.

In fact, while the brilliant brunette has contributed so much to UK culture over the past three decades, it could be said that her most important work is yet to come...

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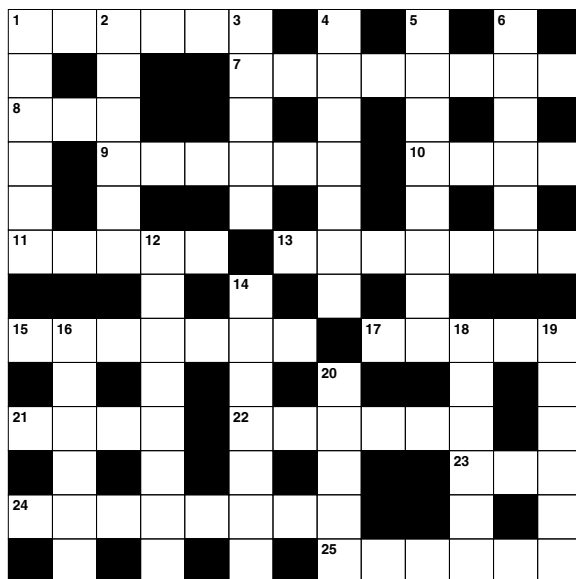
PUZZLES & TRIVIA

ACROSS

1. Mexican cloak (6)
7. Swamping (8)
8. Belgian town (3)
9. Of the immediate past (6)
10. Place with temporary accommodation (4)
11. Standards (5)
13. Sharply (7)
15. Give up (7)
17. Draw or bring out (5)
21. Percussion instrument (4)
22. Popular round fruits (6)
23. Annoy (3)
24. Non-functioning period (8)
25. Thin candles (6)

DOWN

1. Points (anag) (6)
2. Closer (6)
3. Proposal; suggestion (5)
4. Act of touching (7)
5. Taught (8)
6. Hard tooth coating (6)
12. Memorial (8)
14. Pertaining to plants (7)
16. Subatomic particle such as a nucleon (6)
18. Bearlike (6)
19. Calls forth (6)
20. Surprise result (5)

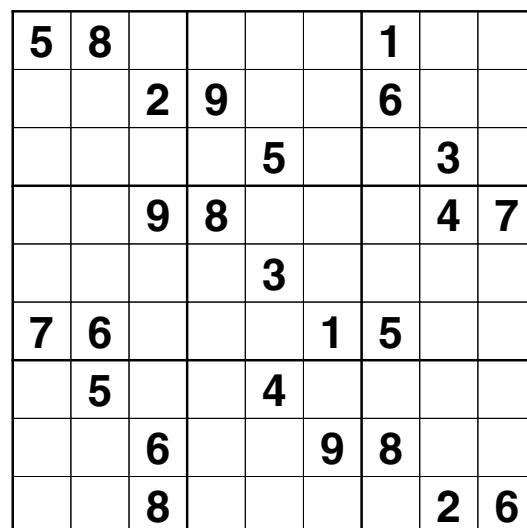


DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Valentine's Day was first declared a holiday by a pope. In 496 AD, Pope Gelasius I made the feast of Saint Valentine an official holiday.
- ▶ The first known official celebration of Saint Valentine's Day took place in Paris on February 14, 1400.
- ▶ Each year, 10 per cent of all marriage proposals happen on February 14.
- ▶ Around 25 million Valentine's cards are sent in the UK every year.
- ▶ UK pet owners will spend £200million on Valentine's gifts for their animals.
- ▶ Valentine's Day is the second biggest 'event' of the year following Christmas. It is estimated that the UK will spend around £880million on Valentine's Day.

Facts courtesy of Funky Pigeon

SUDOKU



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BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO OWNING A hamster

A HAMSTER IS A GREAT CHOICE FOR A FIRST PET, COMING IN A SMALL PACKAGE BUT DELIVERING LOTS OF FUN. HERE'S SOME TOP TIPS ON HOW TO CARE FOR THEM

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT BREEDS OF HAMSTERS?

There are 24 different species of hamsters, with the most popular ones for pets including the Syrian, Russian dwarf, Campbell's dwarf, and Roborovski.

WHAT ENVIRONMENT DO HAMSTERS THRIVE IN?

Hamsters need a comfortable, dry and clean place to live. They do not like draughts or damp. Also, they need to be in a room where the lights go on and off at more or less the same time each day. As they are solitary animals, hamsters prefer to live alone but, with the right care, dwarf hamsters can be housed together.

WHAT DO HAMSTERS EAT?

Hamsters need a good-quality, balanced diet that contains all the essential nutrients and minerals. They can get this from a compound pellet ration, a mixture of seeds and small quantities of greens, clean root vegetables and fruits.

DO HAMSTERS NEED COMPANY?

Although hamsters are generally solitary animals and often showcase timid behaviour, they can enjoy interacting with people who handle them carefully. Hamsters can find the presence and scent of other pets stressful, so you should keep their cage away from other animals in the home.

HOW TO KEEP YOUR HAMSTER HAPPY AND HEALTHY

A hamster needs to sleep undisturbed during the day and have plenty of space to play and exercise at night. They also need a deep layer of litter so that they can dig and construct a burrow. Many hamsters enjoy a running wheel.

HAMSTER FACT FILE:

- > Hamsters can catch a cold from humans
- > Hamsters hoard their food
- > Hamsters' teeth never stop growing.



FERRY GOOD



WHY OUR LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE HUMBLE FERRY IS RETURNING, AND THE BENEFITS OF TRAVELLING ON ONE

To many, the ferry brings back pre-Eurotunnel days when, barring the process of boarding an airplane, our only connection with mainland Europe and beyond was via boat or ferry.

The ease with which tunnelled travel (including the Eurostar) now connects us with Europe has diminished the slow, clunky, often clumsy nature of the ferry; yet in the past couple of COVID-affected years, we've once again embraced this old-school method of travel, and here's why:

EXPERIENCE

Boarding a boat, particularly with a young family, can be a thrilling experience, with the excitement of setting sail and views across open seas. For a small child, arriving at a port bustling with industry and movement can be mesmerising. Effectively, your holiday starts as soon as you board the boat.

COST

The cost of travel has risen across the board. While ferries are sometimes noted as being expensive, they can still be one of the most affordable methods to reach the mainland if you book off-peak and look around for promotions and offers. This is particularly

true if there are multiple people in one car.

POST-COVID CONSIDERATIONS

Unlike aircraft, ferries offer ample space, with wide passenger areas, the privacy of your own vehicle when boarding and departing and, most importantly, access to ample fresh air.

FACILITIES

While not quite at the grade of the cruise ship megavessels that roam our seas, many ferries have an assortment of cafés, restaurants, bars, music clubs, cinemas, entertainment lounges and, in some cases, even splash pools.

LUGGAGE

Unlike most other modes of transport, there are no restrictions on luggage when taking a ferry. In short, if you can pack it, you can take it.

RELIABILITY

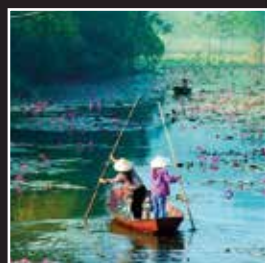
In (almost) all weathers, your trusty ferry will keep going, and with providers having invested hundreds of millions of pounds in new fleets, ferries have also never been safer.



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My top tantalising trips to feed your travel curiosity

A longing to visit the most delectable destination or the deep desire to soak in an unfamiliar culture. Much like the ingredients that are carefully combined to create your favourite dish, your travels must contain a few essential elements: a dash of authentic exploration, a pinch of reconnection with those dearest, a sprinkle of rest and relaxation, and we instantly feel the nourishment a holiday brings.



Dan Salmon,
Owner

Wherever your journeys take you, there's something to be said for truly slowing down and savouring the experience. Indulge in the pleasure of time spent offline, or loved up luxury in faraway lands; find health and happiness in your own sweet sanctuary, or expand your mind as you feast on the heritage and history of the places you visit. Served with passion and inspiration, this collection is dedicated to those with an appetite to be out in the big wide world.

appears like a jaw-dropping mirage. Come sundown, romance is turned up a notch with a desert barbecue enjoyed under a twinkling night sky.

COMO Shambhala Estate, Bali

A few miles from Ubud, next to the jungle strewn hillsides that flank the River Ayung, lies a place that is simply good for the soul. Perfect for those who seek a personalised path towards a healthier lifestyle - Be Active, Cleanse, Sleep or Glow.



NIHI Sumba, Indonesia

From the hypnotic sight of surf crashing onto the shore to the rhythmic canter of the native horses clipping the sand, a visit to this remote slice of paradise will sharpen all your senses. Without the noise and distractions of

everyday life, you can centre yourself firmly on the present and let your curiosity run wild.



Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora, French Polynesia

As far removed from modern life as you can get, and all the more alluring for it, from spa to bar, sunrise to sunset, this is the place to live the castaway dream. Savour decadent Polynesian-inspired cuisine while admiring phenomenal sunset vistas.

Qasr Al Sarab Desert Resort by Anantara, Abu Dhabi

Voted the world's most instagrammable hotel and about as remote and romantic as it comes, this desert settlement



Mahali Mzuri, Kenya

Twelve luxury tents nestled within the game-rich Mara conservancy allows for an experience quite like no other. Thrilling game drives await as does the serenity of sitting back and soaking up the views from camp. Guests are able to visit one of the Maasai villages in the local area where they can learn about the local Maasai Tribe who still practise their traditional customs.



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Love is an Inside Job

Until you learn to love and value yourself, it is unlikely you can love another person, nor can anyone else successfully love you.

You cannot give what you don't have, and you cannot appreciate what you do not know. Love is an inside job. It starts with self-love, and overflows out to the world.

So, if there is one thing you do this Valentine period, let it be to love yourself first. Be grateful for what you have, and who you are. There is no one else like you. You are an original, you are special! Is your life perfect? Of course not, can it be better? Absolutely! But you've also got a lot going for you.

Look inside, get cracking.

Austine – founder, Jerk Station

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How to make a warming BEAN & TOMATO SOUP

Set your pulse racing on World Pulses Day this February, with this delicious bean and tomato soup. It's thick, creamy and suitable for vegans. It's also an absolute doddle to make, though you will need a blender or food processor.

BEAN AND TOMATO SOUP (Serves 4-6 people)

You will need:

2 tbsp olive oil | 1 clove of garlic (minced) | ½ tsp dried oregano | ½ tsp dried thyme | ½ tsp fresh chopped rosemary | ¼ tsp chilli flakes | Heaped tbsp tomato purée | 1 tsp brown sugar | 400g tin of finely chopped tomatoes or sieved tomatoes (passata) | 500ml vegetable stock | 400g tin butter beans | Salt and pepper | Chopped parsley to decorate

How to make:

- > Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan.
- > Add the garlic, oregano, thyme, rosemary and chilli flakes, and cook gently till the garlic is soft.
- > Add the tomato purée and sugar, and cook over a medium heat for 3-4 minutes.
- > Pour in the tomatoes and stock and give it a stir.
- > In a blender, purée the beans with the liquid from the can till the mixture is completely smooth (if it seems very thick, add a tablespoon or two of water). Pour the bean purée into the tomato mixture, and stir well.
- > Bring the mixture to a boil, then simmer for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- > Add salt and pepper to taste, pour into bowls, sprinkle with parsley, and enjoy.

Health benefits of pulses:

- > Pulses – such as lentils, dried beans, peas and chickpeas – are a good source of protein, vitamin B, iron, zinc, potassium and other micronutrients
- > They are low in calories, low in fat and rich in fibre
- > They contain complex carbohydrates, so you feel fuller for longer
- > The fibre in pulses helps improve heart health and lowers blood cholesterol.

(Source, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 2021)





TEETHING TERRORS

HOW TO KNOW WHEN YOUR BABY IS TEETHING AND USEFUL TRICKS TO HELP THEM

It's one of the biggest anguishes for any parent – seeing a baby or child in pain and not knowing what to do about it.

One such pain that all our youngsters have to go through is teething, and while there's nothing you can do to stop those gnashers appearing, here are some useful tips for helping your child get through the discomfort.

DETECTION

In babies, the appearance of drool – and lots of it – is a tell-tale sign that teeth are on their way. Many parents opt for the handy neck cravat to prevent clothes from getting soaked.

Also keep an eye out for your baby gnawing or chewing on any available surface, with red and sore gums showing that there's activity lurking below.

A loss of appetite can indicate dental pain, but perhaps the biggest signal is the distress, grumpiness, moaning and sleeplessness that accompanies this stage.

HELP

We all look to quickfire solutions when our children are ill, but teething is something you have to let progress in its own time, so really your only option is to try to limit the discomfort. Paracetamol and ibuprofen will take the edge off pain, while a number of parents opt for teething powders.

A teething chew – usually made out of rubber or silicon, and which can be kept in the freezer for a great cooling sensation – will undoubtedly provide relief. Teething gel and even some frozen banana can also offer those troubled gums a bit of light relief.

Of course, the biggest cure of them all is one we can all give in abundance and is completely free every time – a nice big hug.



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Did you know that most mass-produced toothpastes include ingredients that can be found in shampoos, soaps, hand sanitisers and even antifreeze? Not the most pleasant of thoughts, so why not consider a more natural way to clean your teeth?

Essential oils

Essential oils such as peppermint, cinnamon and eucalyptus are all known for their ability to improve your oral health. All you need to do is mix a few drops of essential oil with the same quantity of water and then use this liquid to clean your teeth.

Baking soda

Baking soda is highly effective at removing plaque and stubborn stains caused by coffee, wine and smoking. Simply dip your brush in baking soda and then brush your teeth as normal. Mix in a few drops of peppermint oil if you miss that minty fresh taste.

Coconut oil

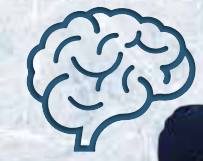
Are you familiar with the term 'oil pulling'? This is an ancient oral health technique that involves swishing a tablespoon of a carrier oil around your mouth for up to 20 minutes a day. Research has shown that coconut oil used in this way can reduce plaque and fight gingivitis.

Sea salt

Salt is antibacterial, making it a good choice for removing bacteria, plus it has the ability to naturally whiten your teeth. As with baking soda, dip your brush in sea salt and then clean your teeth gently to avoid abrasion. Alternatively, mix with water to create a chemical-free mouthwash that can help to prevent gum disease and soothe toothache.

Turmeric

Although this bright yellow spice may not seem like the best solution for achieving shiny white teeth, it is actually highly beneficial for your oral health due to its anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial and anti-plaque properties. Create your own DIY turmeric toothpaste by mixing ¼ tsp of turmeric powder with just enough mustard oil to make a paste. Brush and then rinse thoroughly.



FEEL THE CHILL!

ARE YOU READY TO EMBRACE THE COLD WEATHER AND EXERCISE OUTSIDE THIS WINTER?

While 'feel the burn' is a phrase you're likely to hear when it comes to physical activity, working out in cold temperatures comes with a whole host of benefits.

Read on to discover the top four reasons why you should exercise outside this winter.

BURN MORE CALORIES

If you are looking to lose weight, then working outside in the winter can help you to achieve your goals. This is because colder temperatures force your body to work harder in order to regulate its core temperature. As your body works to get warm, your metabolism goes into overdrive and burns more calories and fat.

BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Bugs and viruses are everywhere in the winter months, so it can be a good idea to look at ways to boost your immune system. Not only can exercising outside help to fight off the symptoms of a cold, but it also forces your immune system to work harder.

BETTER CARDIO WORKOUT

When you exercise in colder temperatures, your blood vessels narrow and your heart and lungs work harder. This means that you can enjoy an enhanced cardiovascular workout, which helps to maintain good heart health. Plus, you don't have to exercise for as long to enjoy the same results.

IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH

If you are affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder, which makes you feel down during the darker months of the year, then exercising outside can help to boost your mood. In fact, research suggests that a good workout can be four times more effective than taking antidepressants in improving the symptoms of depression. Getting outside can also help to replenish your vitamin D levels.





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FASHION

BRACE



WHY THE ERA OF THE BRACELET IS COMING BACK, FOR BOTH MEN AND WOMEN

For some of us, bracelets may be confined to our youths, conjuring memories of an armful of neon bangles, faded friendship bracelets and even the odd festival wristband. And yet bracelets are fast becoming a hot fashion statement once more, for both sexes.

In recent years, much of this resurging trend can be credited to high street jewellery brand Pandora, whose signature heart clasp snake chain bracelet graces the wrists of tens of thousands of women in the UK.

Making the ideal gift for any woman in your life, the bracelet's genius lies not in its simple and stylish design, but in the hundreds of different charms that can be added to it, making it utterly unique to the wearer. From Mother's Day motifs, birthstones and even special edition collaborations – *Harry Potter*, *Disney* and *Star Wars* to name a few – there really is

a charm for every occasion.

For men, Pandora sells a range of stylish leather bands that can be adorned with charms. There is also a wealth of online retailers selling beautiful wristwear that can be engraved with a personalised message or child's name. More stylish than a 'best dad in the world' key fob, bracelets are a modern and fashionable way for a father or husband to wear a token of love.

Even the humble friendship bracelet has had a makeover in recent times, with jewellers such as Oliver Bonas and Monica Vinader creating woven cord bands that almost look homemade, were it not for the solid gold beading or diamond-studded charms that adorn them.

In short, the bracelet is the ideal fashion accessory for those who prefer something a little more understated, while still boasting sartorial kudos.

YOURSELF



Humidifier HERO

Do you suffer with a dry complexion? Or maybe it's ageing skin that's your main concern? Either way, a humidifier has the ability to transform the look and feel of your skin in a matter of weeks.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING A HUMIDIFIER FOR YOUR SKIN?

1. Reduce water loss

If you suffer with dry or ageing skin, then a humidifier can help to reduce water loss and keep your skin looking plumped up and moisturised by balancing out low levels of moisture in the air.

2. Manage skin disorders

Skin conditions such as atopic dermatitis, rosacea and psoriasis can all be made worse by dry, air-conditioned or centrally heated rooms. However, by using a humidifier, moisture is added to the air, and you should see a vast improvement in your skin.

3. Prevent skin infections

Certain bacteria and viruses thrive in both high and low humidity and these can lead to skin infections. A humidifier can help to balance out the humidity levels in a room and prevent microbes from affecting your complexion.

4. Protect the skin from allergens and irritants

Low humidity levels affect the barrier function of the skin, which leaves you susceptible to irritants and allergens in the air. A humidifier can help to increase humidity levels and keep your skin protected from external factors.

TOP TIPS FOR USING A HUMIDIFIER

- > Use bottled or distilled water as these contain fewer microorganisms and a lower mineral content
- > Clean your humidifier regularly – once every 3-4 days
- > Switch on your humidifier before you start your daily skincare routine

BEST HUMIDIFIERS 2023

- > Best all-rounder: Aennon Cool Mist Humidifier
- > Best for winter: Vicks VH845 Warm Mist Humidifier
- > Best budget buy: Pro Breeze Premium 3.5L Ultrasonic Cool Mist Humidifier
- > Best for large rooms: Elechomes Top-Fill Ultrasonic Humidifier.

Are you looking for an ECO HOME?

IS THE GRASS ALWAYS GREENER WHEN IT COMES TO ECO HOMES?

We live in an era of eco sustainability in our homes, yet is eco design all it's cracked up to be, and do the negatives balance the positives for conscious consumers looking to create a home that has environmental excellence at its heart? Here, we look at the pros and cons of green homes.

PROS OF ECO HOMES

- > **Cost:** The trend for going green with our homes is supported wholeheartedly by local government. That means grants, subsidies and initiatives will bring certain costs down. If your structure benefits from elements such as rainwater harvesting and solar panels, your running costs will undoubtedly be lower than for a standard home.
- > **The planet:** Prioritising the homes in which we live can also help us feel as though we are playing a part in the bigger picture. After all, the commitments we make now are setting up the next generation for a better life.
- > **Regulations:** Future-proofing our homes for rules and regulations that may come about in the years ahead means we are investing now rather than paying further down the line.

CONS OF ECO HOMES

- > **Cost:** While green initiatives can save us money, the sourcing of some eco-friendly materials comes at a higher upfront cost. After all, going green is very rarely the cheapest option.
- > **Longevity:** While we know a lot about standardised building materials that have helped us map out huge communities, some of the newer green fabrication technologies are untested over the long term. Without the benefit of longevity testing, they may be more liable to having to be replaced or repaired as time goes on.
- > **Ratio:** While every environmental action makes a difference, the cost of investing in our homes may be at the expense of green initiatives we can undertake elsewhere (like buying an electric car) that would make a greater overall impact.



5 BENEFITS OF CO-WORKING

Do you want to foster a flexible and collaborative company culture? Make networking a breeze and promote innovation? If yes, then you need to know all about co-working spaces and how they can revolutionise your business.

And if you're wondering what co-working is, it simply means that staff from different companies share the same office space.

spaces is that they are optimised for productivity and are designed to adapt to different working styles. They are also ideal for remote workers who want to get away from the distractions of home.

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

A co-working space provides the perfect space for networking. You can even find co-working spaces that hold networking events to help companies find new business partnerships.

FLEXIBLE WORKING

In today's modern world, high-calibre candidates demand flexible working conditions. When you operate from a co-working space, your employees can create office hours that suit their schedule and yours. Plus, if you have a candidate who works outside your area, then a co-working space allows them to work for you without having to relocate.

MORE COST-EFFECTIVE

When you rent a co-working space, you only have to pay for the areas that you plan to use.

Furthermore, some co-working offices come with additional perks such as on-site cleaning staff and printing services at no additional cost.

Co-working spaces are also great for small businesses that want to grow without the pressure of committing to a long-term lease.

MORE CREATIVITY

Co-working spaces offer both private and shared offices, with traditional cubicles replaced with bright and colourful meeting rooms that encourage maximum creativity, hot desks and expansive lounge areas.

INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

What business doesn't want to see an increase in productivity levels? The beauty of co-working



...but one day it may be too late.

It's time to make an LPA. There is a common misconception that Lasting Powers of Attorney only need to be put in place when an individual gets older. In fact, it is always wise to put LPAs in place earlier in life. By doing so, you will gain peace of mind that your affairs – both financial and health – can be looked after if you are ever unable to do so. You will also be ensuring that your loved ones are not left in an impossible position, unable to deal with your affairs, if the worst should happen.

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Is your suspension letting you down?



Suspension has a hard life, and with the road festooned with pot holes, it comes as no surprise that your suspension won't last forever.

It's not always obvious when a road spring fractures. You may be driving along the road, hit a bump and then hear a loud bang from your car. It may feel alright, so you carry on driving and think nothing of it. A fractured spring however can be big trouble, as it may not be correctly seated and can adversely affect your cars stability and handling, so it always best to err on the side of caution and have the cause of any unexplained noises from your car investigated as soon as possible.

The continuous flexing of the spring causes it to fatigue and microscopic cracks begin to form within the metal. Corrosion also causes pitting of the springs surface, and cracks can start to radiate out from these. Once a spring is old or severely corroded it just a matter of time before a severe mechanical shock such as driving over a deep pot hole in the



road causes these cracks to travel right through and the spring to fail.

Broken springs and leaking dampers account for quite a few MOT failures. Replacing just the broken spring is sufficient to pass the MOT, but as the characteristics of the remaining old spring and the new replacement spring will not be identical its good practise to replace springs, or shock absorbers, in pairs, so that the handling and balance of the car is not upset.

By Mike & Stefan at RALLY TEC
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MOTORING

CAR SEAT mistakes

While most parents wouldn't dream of driving around without securing their kids in a car seat, many are inadvertently putting them at risk. Here's how to avoid the four most common car seat mistakes.

Facing forward too soon

Children have relatively large heads and weak necks which means that, if they are facing forward during a collision, their head can jerk forward suddenly and violently. This can result in spinal injuries. Keep your children in rear-facing car seats until they reach the maximum height and weight limit. This is typically around the age of 15 months or up to 13kg (29 lb).

Twisted or loose harness straps

As many as one in three children are at risk because they are strapped into their car seats incorrectly. Harness straps should lie flat, not twisted, and they need to be tight enough to hold your child safely in an accident. Pull the harness so that it is nice and snug. If you can pinch any excess fabric, then it is too loose.

Too many clothes

Children should not wear coats or other bulky clothes when in a car seat. This is because, if there is a crash, these garments will compress and loosen the harness. Even a hoodie can push your child's head too far forward if the hood is down. Instead, cover your child with a blanket once they are secured if you are concerned about the cold.

Buying a used car seat

Ideally, you should buy a new car seat, as these are safer than used ones. However, if you do buy a used one, then you need to ensure you do your homework. Choose one that comes with instructions, hasn't been recalled, is no more than six years old, has no visible damage or missing parts, and has never been involved in a crash.



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BULLSEYE

ENGLISHMAN MICHAEL SMITH BECOMES DARTS WORLD CHAMPION AFTER PLAYING HIS PART IN THE GREATEST LEG OF DARTS EVER SEEN

They say that to be the best, you have to beat the best, and Michael Smith's elevation to world number one – as he took the 2023 world title in January – certainly made true that statement.

Not only did he see off three-time champion Michael van Gerwen at Alexandra Palace in a memorable final, but he also gave the sport what is being described as the most memorable leg of them all.

It came during the second set, and saw two of the sport's titans begin by scoring treble-20 maximums. The next throws also saw the players hit their respective trebles, setting up each on a legendary nine-dart finish. Van Gerwen went first, knocking off treble 20 twice, before faltering on double 12.

With the crowd barely able to reset, Smith stepped up – taking the more conventional nine-dart finish route of treble 20, treble 19, then nailing the double 12, for arguably the most amazing leg of darts in the competition's 29-year history. Smith seized the momentum, rallying thereafter to take the title 7-4 in sets.

While 'Bully Boy', from St Helens, is excelling in what is a modern, showbiz era of professional darts – with packed arenas, primetime TV billing and a semi-celebrity status for the game's major stars – Smith epitomises something reassuringly old school about the sport. He is a 'larger' man, is adorned with tattoos, and reassuringly doesn't possess any of the media training associated with those in other sports.

For example, having come through his semi-final with Belgian Gabriel Clemens, Smith revealed that he'd spend most mornings during the tournament in bed watching repeats of *Catchphrase* and *Supermarket Sweep*.

What's clear, though, is that when the evening comes around, the only programming on display was three decades of dedication to his craft, where laser-like hand-to-eye coordination has made the 32 year old the best darts player in the world.



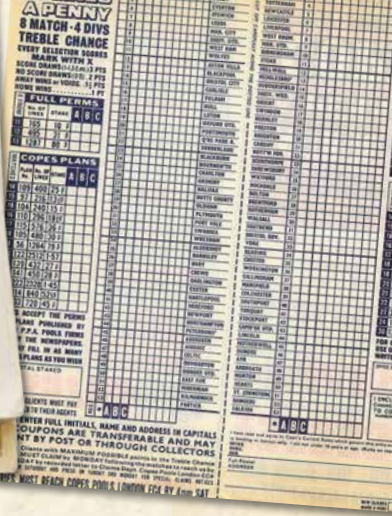
SPORT

Photo credit: ANDY PAIN/PA/EF/SHUTTERSTOCK





HISTORY



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE FOOTBALL POOLS?

Back in 1961, Viv Nicholson won more than £152,000 (around £3.5million in today's money) on the football pools. She promised to "spend, spend, spend". And that's what she did, splurging on luxuries like a pink Cadillac and exotic holidays before the money dried up.

The pools were launched 100 years ago this month, and in its heyday, 14 million people took part each week, hoping to win a fortune. Here's how it all started.

Football became increasingly popular in the years after the First World War, but betting on match results was illegal.

Liverpudlian telegraph operator Sir John Moores CBE, eager to make money, heard about a system devised by John Jervis Barnard from Birmingham. The idea was that punters bet on the outcome of matches, with the winnings coming from the 'pool' of money gambled – minus 10 per cent to cover 'management costs'.

But Barnard's business was failing. Moores and two of his friends reckoned they could do better and started distributing coupons outside Manchester United's football ground. To take part, punters had to predict 'score draws' – games that would end in a draw with at least one goal. Because Moores claimed it was a game of skill and only accepted postal orders, not cash, he managed to get around strict gambling laws.

At first, the new company lost money, and Moores' friends gave up. But Moores' wife said she'd "rather be married to a man haunted by failure than one haunted by regret". So Moores carried on – and less than a decade later had earned £1million (£82million in today's money).

Moores, who was knighted in 1980, died aged 97 in 1993. A year later, the National Lottery was set up, and the popularity of the pools faded. While you can still play the game online, there are now easier ways to dream big – without predicting football scores.

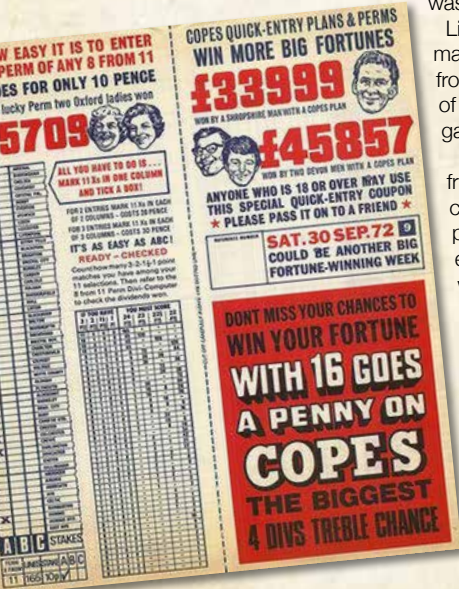


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