

**SPOOKY
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CRAFTS**

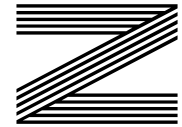
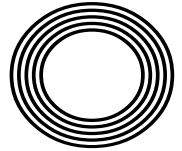
**FIVE
TV SETS
YOU CAN
VISIT**

*Beauty treatments
using seasonal veggies*

SOUP SEASON
How to build your own recipe

BEN STOKES OBE

Legendary cricketer sets his sights on World Cup victory



FREE

Photo credit: Simon Dael/Shutterstock

From Banking Hall to Curtain Call

Following the closure of Barclays Bank in Tiptree Curtain Call Interiors have taken over the former bank building and transformed the space into an inspirational home interiors showroom and new workroom.

The new space showcases a wide range of designer fabrics, curtain displays as well as home accessories including, a beautiful home fragrance range, cushions, lamps, furniture and tableware.

Curtain Call specialise in making hand finished bespoke curtains, Roman blinds and soft furnishings all made by their experienced team of curtain makers. With their new workroom located adjacent to the Showroom, it allows



owner Natalie and her team of makers and designers to assist customers in finding the right fabric and style for their decoration projects.



Offering a free estimating and consulting service, using the vast library of fabric samples and pattern books, they can help bring your ideas to life with advice in choosing the right fabric and style for your space.

Curtain Call are open Monday to Friday from 9am until 5pm and 9am until 3pm on Saturdays, with free customer parking available at the rear of the building.

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Editor's notes...

OCTOBER 2023



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** Halstead Braintree. I'm excited to share my recent customer service encounters that have left an indelible mark on me. As the saying goes: "You don't truly appreciate good customer service until you've experienced the opposite."

On the brighter side, a recent visit to a local bookstore demonstrated the magic of outstanding service. The staff's knowledge, willingness to assist and genuine enthusiasm made my visit not just enjoyable but also memorable. It's a powerful reminder of how good service can elevate a mundane task into a delightful experience.

However, not all tales are as sunny. A frustrating experience with a telecom provider left me grappling with automated phone systems and impersonal support. It's a stark reminder that poor customer service not only erodes trust but also tests our patience.

Customer service is the cornerstone of our consumer experience. It's our privilege to bring you stories that shed light on the importance of striving for excellence. As we navigate the customer service spectrum, let's remember the impact it has on our daily lives and the potential for change it holds.

We at **VISION** strive for excellent customer service when working with local businesses.

Nik Allen

This is your town's hyperlocal magazine, delivering to homes and businesses every month.

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Sooty™

Turns Seventy-Five

In an era where a fad is lucky to last a full five minutes, the enduring magic of hand puppet Sooty must be something of a mystery to young audiences. And yet, when faced with his snuggly yellow fur, button eyes and sweet, shy demeanour, they inevitably melt with adoration as generation upon generation of children before them have done.

Discovered by Harry Corbett OBE in a joke shop on Blackpool North Pier on July 19, 1948, 'Teddy' – as he was then known – was purchased for seven shillings and six pence.

Having long harboured ambitions for the stage, Bradford native Corbett first appeared with the silent bear in a 1952 BBC TV show, *Talent Night*. The act was an instant success and Sooty soon became the star of his very own show featuring magic tricks, slapstick comedy and songs – a nod to Corbett's former ambitions as a concert pianist which were thwarted by his being deaf in one ear. Soon afterwards, he was joined by his pals: there was Sweep, a grey male dog who communicated with a squeak, and Soo, a female panda with a human voice.

After suffering a heart attack in 1975, Corbett's son Peter (stage name Matthew) took over as Sooty's friend and keeper. In the ensuing years, and with the character now a mainstay on *Rainbow*, Corbett Senior would make occasional guest appearances on spin-off *Sooty Show* (by this point now airing on ITV) until his death in 1989.

Under Matthew Corbett, Sooty and co. would enjoy enormous success. He changed the format of the show to one of a sitcom but kept the integral elements. Namely, Sooty's wand, the catchphrase 'izzy, wizzy, let's get busy', and the silent bear's enduring love of water pistols and mayhem in general.

In 1998, Corbett was succeeded by Richard Cadell. Only a few weeks into his new role, he found himself at 10 Downing Street for a special awards ceremony honouring brave children, hosted by then Prime Minister Sir Tony Blair and his wife Cherie – who Sooty dutifully squirted with his water pistol.

Sooty and Sweep were also guests at the birthday party of His Majesty Prince Charles, as he was then, in 2018 (Sooty actually being a few months older than our now King). The pair have courted numerous other politicians, musicians and celebrities and even – on the hand of Harry Corbett – shared a giggle with Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

So how is it, then, that a premise so simple remains so beloved in an age of CGI and swanky animation?

"I think the great thing with Sooty – and this is a famous Harry Corbett quote – is that he's never really been in fashion, so he's never really been out," laughs Cadell.

"It's not like one of these children's things that spike and then disappear," explains the 54 year old, who will embark on *75th Birthday Spectacular* – a special UK national tour that kicks off on October 21 at Bradford's Alhambra Theatre and runs through until April 2024.

He adds: "Sometimes the things we cherish most as children, and adults, are based in simple entertainment, and I am delighted that fact has held true despite so much else around us changing."



Photo credit: Moviestore/Shutterstock

BEHIND *the scenes*

Are you a complete TV addict? What would you say if we told you that there are iconic sets all across the UK that you can visit? From *Coronation Street* to *Only Fools and Horses* to *Downtown Abbey*, here are some locations from popular shows that are open for visitors today.

Coronation Street – ITV Studios, Manchester

This walking tour of *Coronation Street*, the UK's longest-running soap, is a must for any Corrie fan. Complete with an expert guide, you can take a closer look at all the iconic shops and businesses on the street, including The Rovers Return, Roy's Rolls café and Webster's Auto Centre.

Only Fools and Horses – Bristol Temple Meads Train Station

One of Britain's most-loved comedies, who wouldn't want to take a closer look behind the scenes at this legendary sitcom? The *Only Fools and Horses* three-and-a-half-hour coach tour takes you to filming spots of more than 10 episodes and includes a look at Nelson Mandela House, Sid's Café and the road where the iconic Batman and Robin scene took place.

Peaky Blinders – Central Liverpool

A gritty masterpiece, *Peaky Blinders* was filmed in Liverpool even though it is set in Birmingham, owing to this city's well-preserved Victorian industrial architecture. Hop on either the half-day or full-day guided coach tour and see the homes of Polly and Field Marshal Russell, Garrison Lane and so much more.

Downtown Abbey – Bampton, Oxfordshire

Become Lord or Lady of Grantham for the day, with the *Downtown Abbey* and Village group tour. Visit the charming village of Bampton, which fans will know as Downtown Village. Then head to Highclere Castle, where you will be able to explore the estate and the rooms within and enjoy a spot of lunch.

Bridgerton – The Abbey Hotel, Bath

Channel your inner Daphne or Duke of Hastings with a guided *Bridgerton* tour. Explore many of this popular show's filming locations during this two-hour tour, including Lady Danbury's mansion, Gunter's Tea Shop and the modiste dress shop.



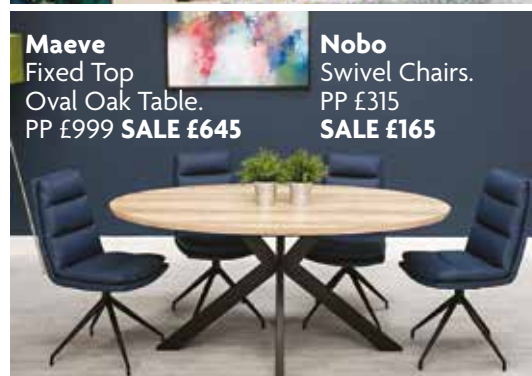
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EXPANSION



Regardless of your thoughts on the controversial expansion of London's Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ), there is a wide selection of cars out there ready to help you bypass this expensive charge.

The extension of ULEZ to encompass the whole of Greater London became operational at the end of August, and not without considerable objection.

Now, petrol vehicles must meet Euro 4 standards, with even tighter Euro 6 requirements for their diesel cousins.

Entering the ULEZ with a non-conforming vehicle invites a daily charge of £12.50, so Mayor of London Sadiq Khan's £2,000 grant for Greater London residents looking to change to a ULEZ-compliant motor is appealing, as are some of the cars that fit the criteria.

For instance, for those desiring a premium touch, the Mercedes-Benz A-Class hatchback is a worthy contender, boasting advanced technology and a luxurious interior. Models from 2013 hover around the £10,000 mark.

The widely admired Ford Focus has numerous ULEZ-compliant variants. One with fewer than 50,000 miles could be yours for less than £6,000.

Or what about the iconic Mazda MX-5? The Japanese brand is revered for superb driving experience and affordability. However, look out for some older versions, as these may not meet ULEZ requirements.

Lastly, the VW Polo, particularly the 1.2 TDI BlueMotion edition of the Mk5, is famously fuel-efficient, boasting up to 91.1mpg on motorways and 67.3mpg in urban settings. With no emission zone charges and some high-mileage models available at under £4,000, it's a sound option.

While virtually all petrol cars sold after 2005 are ULEZ compliant – along with petrol vans after 2006 and motorbikes registered after July 2007 – it ultimately pays to check your vehicle, as well as the status of a potential new one, online at tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/check-your-vehicle



MOTORING

Photo credit: mercedes-benz.co.uk, ford.co.uk, mazda.co.uk, volkswagen.co.uk

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HALLWAY to HEAVEN



Is your hallway looking more shabby than stylish? Has it become a place to dump everything and anything that doesn't have a proper home?

Discover five simple ways to transform the entrance to your home, with inspiring ideas to suit all hallways.

1. ADD POPS OF COLOUR

If you have a small hallway, you may be tempted to stick to white paint to make the space appear bigger. However, by adding pops of bright colours such as yellow or green, you can create visual interest and fashion a vibrant space. If you don't want to go all out with colour on the walls, why not add a few bold accessories instead, such as brightly coloured coat hooks, colourful floor tiles or a piece of bold artwork?

2. MAKE THE MOST OF MIRRORS

Dark hallways can make the entrance to your home feel gloomy and unwelcoming. Counteract this by creating the illusion of light with a few well-placed mirrors. Don't be afraid to experiment with different sizes and shapes, as this can help to make more of a style statement.

3. INVEST IN FUNCTIONAL FURNITURE

Most hallways are narrow, which means they offer little in the way of space. Therefore, if you want to add a piece of furniture, then you need to make sure it is both stylish and practical. For example, a seating area that doubles up as a storage unit. It can also be a good idea to make use of any available vertical space, for example by hanging a wall cupboard above your coat hooks.

4. EMBRACE CONSCIOUS STYLING

As a transitional space in your home, it is important that your hallway is clutter free, well lit, and, most importantly, that it is styled in keeping with the rest of your interiors. Take a walk around your home and see what design elements you can incorporate into your hallway.

5. LAYER LIGHTING

You can transform a dark hallway with the right lighting, with layered lights offering a stylish and practical way to illuminate this key space. Try combining multiple pendant lights with directional wall lights for maximum impact.

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HOME & DIY

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HOME & DIY

Let's get ready to TUMBLE!

Did you know that there are many more uses for tumble dryer sheets than just to reduce static and make your clothes smell nice? Discover five surprising uses for the humble dryer sheet below.

TO REMOVE FOOD RESIDUE FROM POTS AND PANS

If you have forgone the washing up in favour of more enjoyable activities, then you are likely to be left with food residue that simply won't budge. To remove this with minimal effort, simply place a dryer sheet in the middle of the pot or pan, add warm water and some washing-up liquid and allow it to soak. After an hour, remove the sheet, drain the water and wipe away the stains with a sponge.

TO PICK UP PET HAIR FROM CLOTHES AND UPHOLSTERY

Does your pet leave dander all over your clothes and upholstery? When it comes to removing stubborn pet hair, nothing beats a tumble dryer sheet. More effective than a lint roller, all you need to do is rub a fresh sheet against the item and watch the dander disappear.

TO CLEAN YOUR TV AND COMPUTER SCREENS

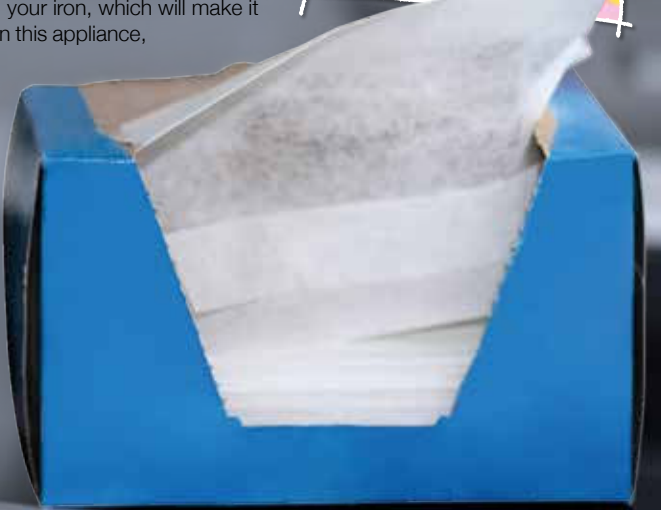
Out of screen-cleaning wipes? Don't panic, as you can use a tumble dryer sheet with equally impressive results. Designed to reduce static cling, a dryer sheet can effectively remove dust and prevent it from resettling.

TO REMOVE RESIDUE FROM YOUR IRON

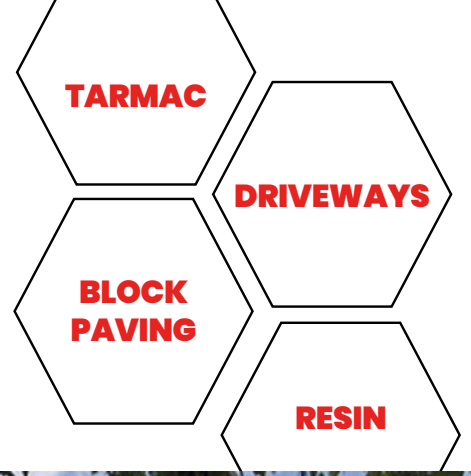
Over time, residue will start to build up on your iron, which will make it less effective at removing creases. To clean this appliance, turn it on to a low heat setting and carefully rub a tumble dryer sheet over the surface, making sure not to touch the iron plate with your bare fingers. The heat will soften the residue and make it easy to remove.

TO SHARPEN SCISSORS

About to start a new craft project or wrap a present and realise your trusty scissors are blunt? Carefully run a tumble dryer sheet against the dull blade and enjoy restored sharpness in an instant. Be sure not to touch your finger directly to the blade!



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Laura Hammett is an award-winning design house, run by Laura and her husband Aaron since 2008. With more than 25 years of experience between them, they are known for creating contemporary interiors with classic touches, resulting in stunning elegance.

Laura Hammett's work spans the globe and even includes a private jet. You can also enjoy the Laura Hammett look with a creative approach.

A CLASSIC STYLE FOR THE MODERN ERA

When you examine Laura Hammett's style, you're instantly transported to modern London. The designs are full of light and detail, creating beautiful looks that would be right at home in any design coffee table book.

Colour palettes include lighter shades of grey and taupe, paired with darker details to add contrast. Light upholstery, rich walnut and subtle marble are some of the styles that have been used in the Laura

Hammett portfolio, adding character and elegance to all kinds of homes.

CREATING THE LOOK

With these simple tips, you can transform your home with a modern look the Laura Hammett way.

- > Enhance the natural light in your home by keeping walls light. Think greige, off-white and white.
- > Adding details such as cushions and throws in rich fabrics can make your interior look more upmarket, without designer price tags.
- > Statement light fittings and abstract wall art in your colour scheme can complete your space, helping you create some interest without filling the room with clutter.
- > Search antique shops and second-hand stores to find high-quality furniture items you can restore to their former glory.

Laura Hammett's style is on trend and attainable, a look that can you can adapt to your own home to create subtle modern elegance.



Photo credit: laurahammett.com, @laurahammettinteriors via Instagram



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FROM YOUR AREA

Residents take part in Big River Watch initiative



Photo credit: The Rivers Trust

country lanes that are not easily accessible by vehicles. They are therefore well placed to spot when something doesn't seem right.

A spokesperson for Essex Police said: "We're keen to hear information about any crimes or anti-social behaviour in our rural communities.

"However, it is very important that you don't confront hare coursers or put yourself at risk. We need your information to build a picture of criminal activity so we can find solutions."

Find out more at www.t.ly/iPNj7

Care home resident enjoys the paw-fect day out

A resident at Colne View Care Home in Halstead was delighted when her wish to spend more time with her favourite furry creatures came true.

Kathy Knopp, 66 (pictured below), first found a love for cats when she was a child, growing up with her family's pet cat, Frisky. To help make Kathy's wish a reality, the team arranged for a trip to the newly opened Meow Cat Café Essex on Halstead High Street.

The visit was part of the home's Wishing Tree initiative, which encourages residents to put wishes forward to allow them to reconnect with a past hobby or try something completely new.

Kathy said: "The cats at the café were adorable – they were so inquisitive! I fell in love with one cat in particular called Alfie; he has such a grumpy face but was so content being stroked by us."

Monica Boldeata, home manager at Colne View, said: "Our Wishing Tree initiative is a great way for residents to share their dreams, and it's incredibly rewarding to be able to make these a reality."



Police ask residents to join horse rider scheme

The Braintree branch of Essex Police is asking residents to join the Essex Horse Rider Volunteer Scheme.

The scheme, which involves horse riders helping the police tackle anti-social behaviour, is expanding countywide. Riders have a unique vantage point and regularly use bridleways, footpaths and narrow



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NEWS FROM HALSTEAD FC...

THE HUMBUGS



LOCAL NEWS

Photo credit: Halstead FC



At the time of writing, the Humbugs have completed a quarter of this season's league fixtures and have dropped into the bottom half of the table, having gained 16 points from their first 12 games.

On September 23, the Humbugs ran out 4-0 winners away at Burnham Ramblers in the FA Vase to set up an attractive home tie against local opposition in Stanway Pegasus, scheduled to be played October 21. Kane Gilbert scored a very impressive goal of the season contender, whilst recent signing Adi Funbi scored two goals against his former club.

The Humbugs would like to thank all those who regularly attend games at the Milbank Stadium and

remind supporters, both old and new, that the current membership scheme offers reduced admission costs, as well as a significant discount on drinks purchased at the bar.

Away from football, the club will again be hosting its annual firework display on Saturday, November 4, gates opening from 6.30pm. There are a number of options for ticket purchases and the club is pleased to announce it has held its pricing from last year.

For more information on this season's fixtures, as well as how to book your fireworks display tickets from just £5, please visit Halstead FC's website at www.halsteadtownfc.com

WWW.HALSTEADTOWNFC.COM



From rural surroundings to entertainment icon



Photo credit: BBC/Ryan Burniston

You wouldn't expect to find a buoyant behemoth of modern primetime entertainment lingering in the leafy, rural, countryside surrounds of Stanford, yet Rylan Clark-Neal's life in Essex is indeed the epitome of serenity, and a world away from the flashbulbs and entertainment excesses that pattern his day job.

Born Ross Clark and raised in Stepney, East London, the presenter we now know as Rylan got his big break when he auditioned for the ninth series of *The X Factor* in 2012. Though his singing skills may not have been the strongest among the contestants, his magnetic personality quickly captured the hearts of both the audience and assembled judges.

Finishing in fifth place, his time on *The X Factor* provided a solid foundation for his future career in television.

Celebrity Big Brother followed, with audiences won over by the star's vibrant personality and natural charm.

Presenting duties proved an obvious route for someone who, while never turning his back on his reality TV roots, was keen to explore other areas. These have included *Big Brother* spin-offs, plus daytime TV (*This Morning*), game shows (*Supermarket Sweep*), panel shows (*Celebrity Juice* and *Would I Lie to You?*) and *Eurovision*.

Rylan is openly gay, and while he uses his influence to good effect in terms of fundraising and providing exposure to minority groups – such as the LGBTQ+ community – the 34-year-old remains grounded and sincere.

The current voice of car retailer Cinch, the presenter is set to embark on a busy schedule of work in the coming months, including a rumoured *Big Brother* return.

Clark-Neal recently swapped Stanford for Brentwood, where his mother Linda lives, and remains loyal to his Essex image.

As he says: "There is no better place on Earth – the people, the places, the vibe. It's always Essex."

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WHAT'S ON

YOUR LOCAL EVENTS

MISS DISCO'S HALLOWEEN THRILLER
The Bocking Arts Theatre, 15 Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9AE
Friday, October 27, 7.30pm



Photo credit: Miss Disco

Miss Disco are the UK's premier live disco band. With decades of experience playing together at concerts around the UK and Europe, their show is second to none. Now, Miss Disco will be heading to Braintree for a spooky evening of fun, songs and dance. Ghoulish fancy dress is encouraged.

Tickets cost £16 and can be purchased by visiting www.missdisco.co.uk/tickets

GARY DELANEY – GARY IN PUNDERLAND
Empire Theatre, Butler Road, Halstead, CO9 1LL
Friday, October 27, 7.45pm

There's something about Gary, and that something is he likes to write jokes. An awful lot of them. His new tour show is not only great for people who like lots of jokes but also fun for people who enjoy getting offended by jokes.

In addition to being a regular on *Mock the Week*, Gary is a double Sony Award winner and a Chortle Award nominee.

Tickets start from £20.90 and can be booked at www.manchestertheatres.com/event/gary-delaney/halstead

A DRAGON'S TALE PUPPET SHOW
Hedingham Castle, Bayley Street, Halstead, CO9 3DJ
Sunday, October 29, 11.30am – 4pm

Watch Paul Batten of Theatrix Arts perform a magical story based on the legend of the Lambton Worm

through puppets, changing scenery, music and sound effects. Then meet the puppets and create your very own dragon puppet.

There is a small charge of £1 per child for the workshop, payable on the day. The performance and workshop are suitable for families and children aged four-plus. The puppet show is 40 minutes long and the workshop is approximately one hour.

For more information, visit www.hedinghamcastle.co.uk/events/a-dragons-tale-puppet-show

GREAT BARDFIELD FIREWORKS 2023
Great Bardfield Playing Field, Bendlowes Road, Great Bardfield, Braintree, CM7 4RR
Saturday, November 4, 5.30pm

Great Bardfield Fireworks is back for 2023. Come along for an open bar, barbecue and hog roast. Light-up toys will be available to buy. All proceeds raised will go to Great Bardfield PTA, Great Bardfield Pre-School, Little Bardfield Cricket Club and the playing field pavilion.

Book your tickets for £7.50 via www.ticketsource.co.uk/bardfieldfireworks

ESSEX CHRISTMAS SHOPPING FAIR
Cressing Temple Barns, Witham Road, Cressing, Braintree, CM77 8PD
Friday, November 10, to Sunday, November 12, 10am – 4pm

Enjoy a huge range of stalls set within the historic barns as well as within marquees and outside stands. You can enjoy browsing, sampling and buying as well as a variety of demonstrations, including cookery.

To find out more, head to www.ukcraftfairs.com/craft-events/24113/essex-christmas-shopping-fair



Photo credit: Cressing Temple



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BIG BEN

BEN STOKES OBE'S INCLUSION IN THE WORLD CUP SQUAD IS GREAT NEWS FOR ENGLAND CRICKET... LESS SO FOR OUR OPPONENTS!

When Durham and England all-rounder Ben Stokes OBE decided that the gruelling cricketing schedule was too much for him and his body to take, a collective sigh of relief from those who cherish the clack of leather on willow must have been heard all around the world in the sport.

It was July 2022. Stokes had spent the previous three months leading his country in Test cricket after succeeding Joe Root MBE as captain, and things in that regard had started perfectly, with four wins in a row.

However, after commenting that he felt playing all three of cricket's formats – Test, ODI and T20 – was “unsustainable”, Stokes' last 50-over tussle came against South Africa at his home ground, Durham's Riverside.

Yet a year is a long time in sport, and even longer in the seesaw nature of the Christchurch-born all-rounder's career. So roll on 12 months, and despite a huge summer Ashes series ahead, Stokes began speaking to his limited overs captain Jos Buttler MBE and coach Matthew Mott about a quickfire return to the ODI circuit.

Stokes says: “The closer this World Cup got, the more I was becoming interested in having those discussions. And when you consider that we are the defending champions, it almost feels right to want to ensure you defend that crown.

“At the same time, I had to remind myself of the original reason for choosing to retire from this format of the game.”

Return he has, with a pledge from the 32-year-old to listen to his body, perhaps better than he has in the past when the almost constant demands of the game have had an impact on not just physical abilities, but the star's mental wellbeing too.

“Let's see how this World Cup goes,” he adds, “and I'll decide then if it's my last hurrah.”

Had Stokes not chosen to return to the fold, we would have been denied his record-breaking knock against New Zealand in the third ODI at The Kia Oval in September. Coming into bat alongside Dawid Malan with England compromised on 13/2, Stokes was about to rev it up against the Kiwis.

His 15 fours and nine sixes contributed to an almost unimaginable personal total of 182, beating Jason Roy's 180 against Australia in Melbourne in 2018. His efforts saw England reach a mammoth 368 off 48.1 overs. New Zealand could only muster 187 all out and Stokes took a further leap into the echelons of iconic status.

“I need more time to get used to its rhythm, but I think I managed well this time,” he said, referencing that spectacular knock. “The announcer mentioned my record just before I was done. I didn't even know about it until then. Jason congratulated me, and I apologised to him,” he laughs.

Does Stokes feel that England can become world champions again, and in the process become only the third side to defend the title since its inception in 1975?

“Everyone recognises our team's strength, and it's not boastful to admit we have a talented line-up. We're optimistic about our chances, but in World Cup matches, it's all about handling pressure.”

Photo credit: Kieran McManus/Shutterstock



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HALLOWEEN PUMPKIN LANTERNS

An Illuminating and Spooky Tale

The origins of Halloween go back around 2,000 years to a Celtic festival called Samhain (pronounced 'sow-in'). The Celts believed that when the harvest ended and winter took hold, the barrier between our world and the spirit world became blurred – and this meant that dead spirits could come back to haunt us. But why pumpkins?

AN ENCHANTING STORY FROM IRELAND

Stingy Jack is a character from Irish folk tales who liked playing pranks, even on the devil. One day, Jack tricked the devil into turning into a coin, so he could pay for their drinks. Jack then pocketed the coin, and the devil was trapped. Eventually, he set the devil free but made him promise not to claim his soul. So when Jack died, he couldn't go to hell or to heaven. He was stuck roaming the world with a glowing coal inside a turnip to light his way.

LANTERNS FROM TURNIPS

As time passed, Samhain mixed with Christian traditions such as All Saints' Day (or All Hallows' Day)

on November 1 – and All Souls' Day, the day after. By the 16th century, the festival was already known as Halloween, taking its name from All Hallows' Eve. And as part of their Halloween celebrations, people in Ireland carved turnips into lanterns to ward off spooky spirits.

PUMPKINS WORK BETTER

When Irish people moved to America in the 1800s, they took their Halloween tradition with them. But they soon discovered that pumpkins were much easier to carve than turnips. In honour of Stingy Jack, the carved pumpkins became known as Jack-o'-lanterns.

Today, as we carve our pumpkins to light up the night, we continue to honour customs that have journeyed through time, from our Irish neighbours to America – and, in the 1990s, back over the seas to Britain.



How to grow SNOWDROPS



Snowdrops are one of the first signs of spring and can make a wonderful addition to any garden. Instantly recognisable by their small, white, bell-shaped flowers, snowdrops are easy to grow and will come back year after year.

WHERE TO PLANT SNOWDROPS

Snowdrops thrive in moist but well-drained soil and in partial shade. If you plant snowdrops in soil that is too dry, you risk the bulbs drying out and failing to flower. Choose to grow snowdrops beneath deciduous shrubs or along the front of borders where herbaceous plants can provide ground cover when these flowers are dormant. They also do well planted in grass, in spring border displays and in rock gardens.

HOW TO PLANT SNOWDROPS

Dry snowdrop bulbs can be planted in autumn, but these are often hard to establish. Instead, opt to plant snowdrops in the green in January or February. Simply lift snowdrop plants just after flowering and before the foliage has turned yellow, and replant somewhere else. You can buy snowdrops in the green from your local garden centre or online.

HOW TO CARE FOR SNOWDROPS

Once snowdrops are established, they require no maintenance. Allow the foliage to die back naturally as this will help to ensure that the nutrients from the leaves are returned to the bulbs. Once every two years, divide any established clumps to avoid overcrowding.

HOW TO PROPAGATE SNOWDROPS

To propagate snowdrops, lift and divide established clumps after flowering in either March or April. Using a fork, carefully lift the bulb with the roots intact and the foliage still in place. Replant in the garden immediately and water well. The foliage may appear a little sorry, but it should look healthy by next winter.

TOP SNOWDROP VARIETIES:

Galanthus nivalis | Galanthus elwesii | Galanthus woronowii | Galanthus Armine | Galanthus Cordelia.



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HOW TO BUILD YOUR *own soup*

Soup is cheap, filling and the perfect antidote to the cold weather. Sadly, supermarket offerings can be both costly and underwhelming. So we thought we'd share with you our foolproof method for prepping the perfect soup every time.

- 1. CHOOSE A FAT:** Butter | Olive oil | Palm oil | Sunflower oil
- 2. SELECT A BASE LIQUID (1 OR 2):** Beef/chicken stock | Vegetable stock | Cream | Tomato purée
- 3. PICK A PROTEIN:** Chicken | Fish | Tofu | Lentils | Beans
- 4. DECIDE ON A GRAIN:** Rice | Noodles | Pasta | Barley
- 5. CHOOSE YOUR VEGGIES (UP TO 3):** Carrots | Onion | Peppers | Sweet potatoes | Parsnips | Spinach | Broccoli | Mushrooms
- 6. ADD SOME FLAVOUR:** Garlic salt | Cayenne pepper | Cumin | Basil | Thyme | Chilli powder

How to make your soup

STEP 1: Heat your fat and sauté your aromatic veggies, such as onion and garlic, for 3-5 minutes.

STEP 2: Add your chosen protein and cook until browned or softened.

STEP 3: Add any other vegetables and allow them to soften for 5-10 minutes.

STEP 4: Pour in your base (unless using a cream base; if so save this until step 6), your grain and your selected spices and mix well.

STEP 5: Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and allow to simmer for around an hour.

STEP 6: Add cream if you are making a cream-based soup.

STEP 7: Allow to cool, and blend if you want a fully puréed soup.

STEP 8: Garnish with croutons, cheese or a herb-infused oil.

Freezing your soup

You can freeze your soup, ideally on the same day you make it, in an airtight container or freezer bag for 2-3 months. Most soups freeze well, with the exception of cream- or milk-based soups, which tend to separate. Add any fresh herbs or starchy elements such as rice or pasta once thawed and reheated, not before freezing, for optimum results.



FOOD & DRINK

SEASONAL & EXCEPTIONAL FOOD

MICHELIN RECOMMENDED

The Windmill Chatham Green is a charming family-run and dog-friendly restaurant and pub, surrounded by the beautiful Essex countryside, just outside of Chelmsford on the route to our city's racecourse.

Michelin star chef Tom Clarke and his partner Nancy Witte officially opened the doors a year ago in October 2022. Ever since, guests are invited with a very warm welcome by Nancy and her front-of-house team to enjoy and discover Tom's exceptional talent, creating different flavour combinations by using foraged and seasonal ingredients.

Earlier this year, it was announced that they are now officially recommended in the Michelin guide.

Both have worked at some of the best restaurants in England and France. Tom, born in Chelmsford, has started his career in some very well-known local restaurants, such as Le Talboth in Dedham before moving on to work at Ramond Blanc's Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons in Oxford, Le Strato Hotel in France, and the legendary L'Oustau de Baumaillère.

In 2015, he took over the head chef position at L'Ortolan in Reading where he was awarded one Michelin star and three AA rosettes, which he retained for five years until leaving to open his own restaurant.

Nancy, born near Berlin, has worked at the famous Sacher Hotel in Vienna, before moving to England to work at the private members club Mosimann's in the centre of London, as well as the Michelin-starred restaurant L'Ortolan in Reading, where the couple met.

Tom and Nancy found their true passion for foraging at the small experimental restaurant Forage Kitchen in



Bury St Edmunds, where they worked for two years prior before moving to the hamlet.

It is not so farfetched for the pair to choose this very location for their own venture when you realise that the family roots run deep here for Tom.

His uncle and grandparents ran The Bakery in the nearby village in Great Waltham, selling freshly baked goods to the local community until closing in 1991.

The restaurant has the cosy feel of a county pub with a rustic chic and original features. There is a well-stocked bar with a quite unusual offerings of sprits and cocktails.

The menu is kept short as dishes change frequently with the seasons. Menu descriptions are deceptively and don't reveal the full complexity of cooking until the actual dish arrives, served and described by the chefs and the front of house.

A clear feature as you arrive is the original windmill building next to the pub where Henry Challis, the last miller, stopped grinding wheat to start selling beer back in 1904. Since arriving, the couple have transformed the downstairs room into a very charming private dining room, offering the perfect space to celebrate any special occasion, from birthdays to a smaller wedding reception.

For those who are looking for a mini break, there are two individually designed ensuite bedrooms, which are accessible via a well-hidden secret garden overlooking the English countryside.



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AUTUMN COCKTAILS

Just because summer now seems like a distant memory, doesn't mean that you can't still enjoy a delicious cocktail or two after work or when the kids are tucked up in bed. Why not have a go at making one of these recipes below, and warm your cockles on a chilly night?

PUMPKIN WHITE RUSSIAN

You will need: 25ml pumpkin spice Kahlua | 50ml vodka | 25ml double cream
How to make: Pour the ingredients into a glass over ice | Stir lightly and serve.

CARAMEL APPLE MULE

You will need: 50ml vodka | 15ml caramel | 30ml apple cider vinegar | Ginger beer to top | 1 apple | 1 cinnamon stick
How to make: Shake the vodka, caramel and apple cider vinegar with ice | Strain into a mule mug over ice | Top with ginger beer | Garnish with an apple fan and cinnamon stick.

SLOE GIN FIZZ

You will need: 50ml sloe gin | 25ml lemon juice | 2 tsp sugar syrup | Sparkling water | Lemon slice | Fresh or frozen blackberry
How to make: Pour the sloe gin, lemon juice and sugar syrup into a cocktail shaker and top with ice | Shake well | Strain into a tall glass with more ice | Top with sparkling water and stir gently | Garnish with a lemon slice and a blackberry.

CAMPFIRE SLING

You will need: 50ml rye whisky | 7ml maple syrup | 3 dashes of chocolate bitters | Orange peel twist
How to make: Add all the ingredients to an old-fashioned glass with one piece of ice | Stir thoroughly | Scorch a piece of orange peel over the glass to release the oils.

MULLED APPLE JUICE

You will need: 1 litre apple juice | 1 cinnamon stick | 3 cloves | Orange slices | Sugar or honey to taste
How to make: Simmer the apple juice with the orange peel, cinnamon and cloves for 5-10 minutes | Sweeten with sugar or honey | Serve with some orange slices and a cinnamon stick.





Incy wincy spider

Halloween provides the perfect opportunity for you to get crafty with your kids, and this spooky spiderweb doesn't disappoint. Suitable for little ones and older children alike, discover how to make your very own salt and glue spiderweb craft below.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- Black paper or card | A pencil | A ruler | PVC or Elmer's glue | Table salt | Watercolour paints | A soft brush

HOW TO MAKE:

1 Draw your spiderweb design: Your child can do this by hand themselves, depending on their age and ability, using a pencil or ruler, or you can help them with this step. Alternatively, you could print out a spiderweb template to use.

2 Trace the shape with glue: The next step is to trace glue along each line of your spiderweb. Again, young children may need help with this if they want to achieve a good spiderweb shape. To make the glue lines as smooth as possible, do not allow the tip of the glue bottle to touch the paper but instead, hover slightly above it.

3 Cover the spiderweb with salt: Fill a ramekin or small bowl with table salt and then use two fingers to pinch the salt and sprinkle it over the glue. Make sure that you cover each line and curve with enough salt. Leave the glue to fully dry, ideally overnight, before moving on to the next step.

4 Paint your spiderweb: Now comes the really exciting part: adding colour to your spiderweb. Watercolour paints are perfect for this as they spread well on dried glue and salt. Using a soft brush, plenty of water and your chosen watercolours, add a drop or two of colour to a salt line. Use a light touch and do not scrub as this may dissolve your spiderweb.

MAKE A HANGING SPIDERWEB

Take your craft to the next level by applying the glue and the paint, minus the salt, to a thin plastic sheet, gently peel it off and then fix it to your preferred surface using sticky glue dots or hang around the room with string. Make sure you allow the glue to fully dry before peeling.



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The GLOBAL ZOO

Animals unique to one place and how to see them

The ability of animals to explore the world is only bettered by the wanderlust of humans, yet there is still a clutch of species who have never ventured from their home continents and, in some cases, countries. While the Galápagos Islands typically take credit for the planet's most unique array of life, here are some others worth celebrating.

GELADA, ETHIOPIA

A monkey that looks like it's wearing a tuxedo, the gelada is native to the highlands of Ethiopia and has rarely strayed. While other monkey species are known for swinging from trees with reckless abandon, these are happiest on the desert floor, eating grass, seeds, roots and insects.

INACCESSIBLE ISLAND RAIL, INACCESSIBLE ISLAND

Yes, there is a place called Inaccessible Island – it's in the South Atlantic – and it requires little description. To describe the world's smallest flightless bird (which also takes the 'Inaccessible' name) is undoubtedly to make a straightforward link

to how this little creature has never made it to the mainland.

THORNY DEVIL, AUSTRALIA

This lizard looks like something out of a Marvel comic, albeit it's never been exported any further than the Aussie outback. It can drink water through its skin, which is just as well, as there is precious little of the stuff about in the summer heat of the Southern Hemisphere.

TEXAS BLIND SALAMANDER, USA

Without eyes or skin colour, this peculiar amphibian detects prey by virtue of vibrations around it. It has never made it out of US waters and you're highly unlikely to ever see one in the flesh, since it lives deep underwater in cave networks.

MANX CAT, ISLE OF MAN

Lastly, there's the famous Manx cat. Although these have been brought across to the mainland, they stand apart from other cat species owing to a rare genetic mutation that means they are born with no tails.



VEGGIE vision

Most people know that fruits and vegetables are good for your complexion when eaten regularly, but not everyone knows that they can also be applied to the skin and hair to achieve amazing results. Here are four of our favourite veggie-based beauty treatments.

PUMPKIN FOOT MASK – Best for dry, cracked heels

You will need: ½ cup of pumpkin purée | 1 whole egg | 1 tsp honey
How to apply: Combine all of the above ingredients in a bowl | Massage into the feet and ankles | Cover with cling film or put on a pair of old socks | Leave for 15 minutes and then rinse with warm water

BUTTERNUT SQUASH HAIR MASK – Best for dull or dry hair

You will need: ½ large butternut squash | 3 tbsp honey | ¼ cup of plain yogurt
How to make: Peel and cook the squash until soft enough to remove the inner contents | Mash the squash | Combine with the honey and yogurt | Apply the mixture to damp hair and put on a plastic shower cap | Leave on for 20 minutes and then rinse with warm water

BEETROOT FACE MASK – Best for ageing skin

You will need: 2 tsp beetroot juice | 1 tsp yogurt | 1 tsp lime juice | 2 tsp gram flour
How to make: Mix the beetroot juice with the flour and then add the yogurt and lime juice | Mix until you have a smooth paste | Spread the mixture evenly over the face and leave for 15 minutes | Rinse off with warm water | Pat your face dry

POTATO CLEANSER – Best for acne-prone skin

You will need: 1 potato | 1 cucumber | 1 tsp baking soda | 1 tsp water
How to apply: Peel and chop the potato and the cucumber | Blend in a food processor or blender for 20 seconds | Add the water and baking soda | Apply to the face daily to cleanse and remove make-up, dirt and impurities.



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HEALTH & FITNESS

Signs you are **ADDICTED** to **CAFFEINE**

Do you love an energy drink? Can't get out of bed without your morning cup of coffee? If the answer is yes, then you are far from alone. It is suspected that as many as three out of four regular caffeine consumers are addicted to the substance.

1 You get headaches if you miss your caffeine fix: Caffeine is a vasoconstrictor, which means it makes the blood vessels narrower and restricts blood flow. This in turn relieves headaches, so if you miss your morning fix, you may develop a pounding head as a result.

2 You're bad-tempered before you get your first dose: Not a morning person? This could be because you are too reliant on caffeine. Caffeine stimulates the dopamine receptors in the brain, which makes you feel good. Therefore, if you don't get your morning hit, you are much more likely to experience a bad mood.

3 You struggle to concentrate without being caffeinated: Caffeine is known for helping you feel more alert and focused. However, if you are used to getting that boost every day, you may struggle to concentrate without the help of this popular stimulant.

4 You've built up a tolerance: Do you feel like you need more and more caffeine to enjoy the same effects? This is likely because your body has started to become immune to the effects of this substance.

5 You feel constantly on edge: Do you often get the jitters? High doses of caffeine can cause you to feel jumpy and can even cause anxiety and panic attacks.

How to reduce your caffeine intake:

- ☛ Keep a caffeine diary
- ☛ Switch to herbal teas
- ☛ Check labels for other sources of caffeine, such as fizzy drinks and chocolate
- ☛ Gradually cut down your daily intake rather than going cold turkey.



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Get BALANCED!

Did you know that National Work/Life Balance Week takes place this month, with the aim of generating awareness of the importance of a healthy balance between your professional and personal life?

If you struggle to switch off after leaving work or you find the lines between your work and home life have blurred, then we are here to help you.

Why is a good work/life balance important?

A good work/life balance involves finding a harmonious relationship between your home life and your working life. This is vital

to your overall wellbeing as people need to engage in a wide range of activities, as well as rest, in order to thrive. If you work too hard or work very long hours, you are more likely to experience high levels of stress and suffer from insomnia, depression and/or anxiety.



WORK CAREER FAMILY LIFE

What is an unhealthy work/life balance?

The most common signs of an unhealthy work/life balance are:

- > Regularly working long hours, including evenings, weekends and holidays
- > Neglecting your personal/family life owing to excessive work demands
- > Experiencing burnout, which causes physical, emotional and mental exhaustion
- > A lack of time for self-care, including sleep and leisure activities
- > Strained relationships owing to work commitments

How to achieve the right balance between work and home life

1. SET BOUNDARIES: Make sure that you establish clear boundaries between your work and personal life by defining specific working hours and sticking to them.

2. FOCUS ON TIME MANAGEMENT: Sometimes people are guilty of working hard rather than smart, which can mean they have to spend longer at the office and less time at home. Instead, prioritise the most important tasks both at home and at work.

3. BE FLEXIBLE: At times, you will need to have to adjust your work schedule to accommodate unforeseen personal circumstances or emergencies, so don't feel guilty about doing this.

BAD SPORTSMANSHIP:

ERIC CANTONA

With true skill, finesse and regular glimpses of genius, when Eric Cantona was good, he was very good. Yet the Frenchman was tainted with a self-destructive element that permeated his game.

Cantona was ever the mercurial talent, and was an iconic figure for Manchester United during the club's early glory years under Sir Alex Ferguson CBE.

From the outset of his career, Cantona's undoubted flair was plainly evident, yet so too was his lack of composure.

During a match in 1988 between his club, Auxerre, and Nantes, the Marseille-born forward kung fu kicked Michel Der Zakarian, landing him a three-month ban which was later reduced after the club threatened to withdraw him from French national team selection.

As it would turn out, this would not be an isolated incident. A string of other disciplinary issues in France prompted a move to England, with Leeds United the beneficiaries as they clinched the final First



Division title before the inception of the Premier League in 1992. A tempestuous time at Elland Road then saw him move to hated rivals Manchester United for a cut price £1.25million.

Talent and turbulence would continue at Old Trafford, but never more so than one night in January 1995 in South East London. After being sent off for his kick at opposition defender Richard Shaw, Cantona was confronted by Palace supporter Matthew Simmons, who had run down 11 rows of the stand to confront and racially abuse the Frenchman. Cantona responded by launching into the crowd with another of his trademark kung fu kicks and followed this with a series of punches.

The sultry, softly spoken Frenchman's reaction to his subsequent eight-month ban went down as one of football's famous quotes. "When the seagulls follow the trawler," he said, taking a sip of water, "it's because they think sardines will be thrown into the sea."



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12. START, 13. RECYCLES, 15. TREMORS, 19. SPIRE, 20. LARD, 22. ANY



PUZZLES & TRIVIA

PUZZLES

Answers: see end of The VISION Listings

ACROSS

- 1. Light blast of wind (4)
- 3. Fast runner (8)
- 9. Not tense (7)
- 10. Written agreements (5)
- 11. Opposite of amateur (12)
- 14. Decay (3)
- 16. Lacking meaning (5)
- 17. Wonder (3)
- 18. Incessantly (12)
- 21. Concerning (5)
- 22. Mound made by insects (7)
- 23. Shows (8)
- 24. Snake-like fish (pl.) (4)

DOWN

- 1. Sweat (8)
- 2. Leaf of parchment (5)
- 4. Collection of many sheets of paper (3)
- 5. Enhancements (12)
- 6. Musical composition (7)
- 7. Repose (4)
- 8. Based on untested ideas (12)
- 12. Set out (5)

1		2		3	4		5		6		7
			8								
9							10				
11					12						
											13
14		15		16					17		
		18							19		
20											
21					22						
23								24			

- 13. Uses again (8)
- 15. Slight earthquakes (7)
- 19. Part of a church tower (5)
- 20. Edible fat (4)
- 22. Nay (anag) (3)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ A hummingbird beats its wings up to 70 times per second.
- ▶ Hummingbirds are the only birds that can fly backwards.
- ▶ There are reportedly more than 350 known species of hummingbird, from the giant hummingbird weighing around 20g, to the bee hummingbird which measures less than three inches.
- ▶ Hummingbirds use their long, thin tongues like straws to drink nectar from flowers.
- ▶ Rufous hummingbirds migrate 4,000 miles from Mexico to Alaska every spring.
- ▶ Female hummingbirds use spider silk to weave together twigs and leaves for their nests.
- ▶ Hummingbirds have no sense of smell.

SUDOKU

2				7				
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