

**KEW
GARDENS
EVENTS IN
2024**

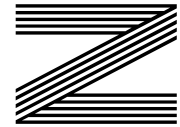
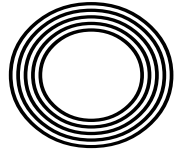
**10 KEY
SIGNS OF
BAD HEART
HEALTH**

MOTHER'S DAY
How to make a blooming lovely gift

Michelle Keegan
Actress enjoys success of Netflix show

**LUKE
LITTLE**

Teenage darts prodigy continues to break records



FREE

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From award-winning care provider Avery Healthcare, Braintree Mews Care Home offers residents a home-from-home while giving families and friends peace of mind that support and care are available 24/7, with residential, dementia and respite care services available.

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Well-being Co-ordinators produce a varied programme of activities and events. Residents are supported with personal interests not already covered in the calendar and memory, physical and sensory-based activities are designed with therapeutic outcomes in mind, including trips out in the minibus, creative workshops, exercise classes

and live entertainment.

As winners of Best for Nutrition, Food and Dining at the 2023 Care Home Awards, Avery Healthcare chefs pride themselves in producing nutritious meals for residents with varying needs and dietary requirements. Our focus also includes innovative cutlery-free dining choices. By adapting everyday meals into cutlery-free options, residents who find manipulating cutlery a barrier can enjoy food independently and in a dignified way.

Recently, the team welcomed friends, family, and local community members for a complimentary cheese and wine evening, allowing them to meet the friendly team and view the impressive facilities. Braintree Mews will also host a Financial

Planning Seminar on 27th February, hosted by Stephen Crisp, APFS Chartered Financial Planner of Watch House Financial Planning, where you can discover valuable insights into managing your finances in later life.

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To find out more, visit facebook.com/BraintreeMewsCareHome 01376 778169 | averyhealthcare.co.uk



BRAINTREE MEWS CARE HOME

Something for Everyone

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- Day trips • Creative writing classes • Art classes
- Gardening club • Live entertainment • Yoga and exercise classes

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Editor's notes...

FEBRUARY 2024



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** Halstead Braintree. I hope you have had a great start to the year.

I was recently shocked to learn about the Post Office scandal and the immense suffering it caused. The TV drama has helped to raise awareness of the scandal and has given a voice to those who have been affected by it.

The series recounts one of the biggest miscarriages of justice in British history, where hundreds of subpostmasters were wrongly accused of theft, fraud, and false accounting due to a defective IT system.

Since the series began airing on January 1, more than 100 new potential victims have contacted lawyers. The series has renewed mass interest in the scandal, with more than nine million viewers tuning in so far.

The government is now under pressure to overturn wrongful convictions and deal with compensation, with ex-Post Office boss Paula Vennells agreeing to hand back her CBE in response to public outcry. The series has also prompted a Parliamentary inquiry. It will be interesting to see how this unfolds over the coming weeks.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the magazine - it has something for everyone, whether you're looking for some interior design inspiration or interested in exciting new events to attend in 2024.

Nik Allen

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CONTRIBUTORS | Tabatha Fabray, Fiona Goble, Bryn Holmes

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MICHELLE KEEGAN: NOBODY'S FOOL

MAKING THE LEAP FROM SOAPS TO SERIOUS DRAMAS IS NEVER EASY, BUT FORMER *CORONATION STREET* STAR MICHELLE KEEGAN HAS TAKEN IT ALL IN HER ELEGANT STRIDE

Most television actresses would be thrilled at winning the Sexiest Female gong at the various soap award ceremonies they are obliged to attend, but for Michelle Keegan – who was awarded the coveted title more times than she cares to remember during her stint on *Coronation Street* – the novelty had worn off.

The beautiful brunette was only 20 when she landed the role of Tina McIntyre on the iconic soap, and over her six-year tenure, became one of the most popular characters of all time. A feisty and dramatic presence in *Weatherfield*, Tina was at the centre of many pivotal plotlines, featuring everything from lurid love affairs to abortion and surrogacy. And yet, best actress awards always eluded her.

Fans of soap operas will be familiar with the tale of the celebrity who quits at their peak of primetime glory only to flounder in the larger world of showbusiness, but following Keegan's dramatic exit from the cobbled streets of *Corrie*, she has only blossomed into a bigger star.

In 2018, the Stockport sweetheart finally won her *TV Choice Awards* Best Actress gong for playing Sergeant Georgie Lane in the BBC drama series *Our Girl*, and has since wowed in comedy drama *Brassic* and BBC's *Ten Pound Poms*, which highlights British citizens who migrated to Australia following the Second World War.

However, it's her latest role as the lead in the new Harlan Coben drama, *Fool Me Once*, that

everyone is talking about. Not only is the show itself significant as the latest of the American crime writer's TV adaptations after Netflix acquired Coben's bestselling novels in a multi-million-pound deal, but Keegan herself dazzles throughout the twisty, complex thriller.

In the eight-part series, the 36-year-old actress plays Maya Stern, a military pilot suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, whose wealthy husband is murdered. That's when things start to get a bit odd – like when, for example, her dead hubby pops up on the nanny cam in her home – and Maya must work out whether she is the one unravelling or if it is part of a larger plot she must uncover.

The success of *Fool Me Once* has meant that

Keegan has gained 132,940 new Instagram followers since the series was released on January 1, and it is estimated that the actress will earn up to £33,900 per sponsored Instagram post. She now has more than seven million followers on the platform – a number that is only set to increase as Keegan's star continues to rise.

Fortunately, Keegan's personal life is blissfully lacking in drama. She has been wed to *The Only Way is Essex* heartthrob, radio DJ and former professional footballer Mark Wright since 2015. The couple recently finished work on their £3.5million dream home in Essex, where, no doubt, they are busy plotting their next foray into entertainment superstardom.

THE WORLD OF KEW

Kew Gardens, home to 50,000 plants, is just a 30-minute Tube ride from central London. But it's not all about flowers!

ORCHIDS AFTER HOURS: Selected Friday and Saturday evenings throughout February 2024

While you wander among vibrant orchid displays in the Princess of Wales Conservatory, enjoy live music and dance from Madagascar (home to 194 orchid species) and experience the local cuisine.

SOUNDS OF BLOSSOM: March 23 – April 14

To boost your wellbeing this spring, take a stroll among the blossom trees while listening to specially commissioned music from London's Royal College of Music.

KEW THE RUN: March 30-31

Run 10km or a half marathon amid the cherry blossom, past the beautiful Palm House and Temperate House. Entry includes two free adult tickets and two children's tickets to the gardens.

KEW THE MUSIC: July 8-14

Enjoy great music and conversation in a stunning setting. This year's performers include Monty Don,

Mika, Passenger, Richard Ashcroft, and JLS. More performers will be announced nearer the time.

KEW'S SUMMER CYCLE: August 1

Cycle around the site and experience an array of entertainment and fabulous food and drink stalls.

THEATRE ON KEW and **KEW THE MOVIES** will also return in August.

CHRISTMAS AT KEW: November 2024 – January 2025

Soak up the holiday spirit amid stunning light illuminations, including the Christmas cathedral and fire garden. There'll be plenty of tasty festive treats – and a visit from Father Christmas, too!

ALL YEAR ROUND

Throughout most of the year, there are organised garden walks, including specialist tours for people with hearing loss, sight loss or dementia. There are also yoga and Pilates classes, art exhibitions, gardening courses, and craft sessions.

Check www.kew.org for details on all events and how to get to Kew.

Photo credit: kew.org, raceconnections.com, kewthemusic.org, RGB Kew via kew.org, Ollie Dixon via kew.org



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MOTORING

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This year looks set to offer an array of motoring magnificence in the form of shows and displays that will captivate motoring enthusiasts across the world. From classic car shows to high-octane motorcycle races, the year is set to be a thrilling ride.

Isle of Man TT (May 27 – June 8)

The pinnacle for motorcycle racing fans, as the world's top road racers navigate the 37.7-mile Mountain Course, a challenging circuit on the island's public roads.

Le Mans (June 15-16)

Car racing fans can look forward to the iconic endurance race in June, where top manufacturers like Ferrari, Toyota, Porsche, Cadillac, BMW and Alpine compete for what many deem the ultimate prize.

British Grand Prix (July 5-7)

Silverstone will see Formula 1 champion Max Verstappen defending his title against top British drivers such as Lando Norris and Lewis Hamilton.

Goodwood Festival of Speed (July 11-14)

This prestigious event features, among other things, the exhilarating Timed Shootout, a highlight of the 2023 festival won by the McLaren Solus GT.

London Classic Car Show (August 15-18)

The Evolution arena at Battersea Park will host the UK's largest car show for its 10th anniversary, featuring a diverse range of vehicles, including historic and iconic cars.

CarFest (August 23-25)

Created by Chris Evans, the annual event takes place at Laverstock Park Farm in Hampshire, with a mix of exhibits, races, live music and funfair rides. All proceeds go to UK children's charities.

IAA (September 17-22)

Hanover showcases the latest in German automotive design and technology for the commercial vehicle industry in its annual week-long event.

British Motor Show (TBC)

Hosted at the Farnborough International Expo Centre, the British Motor Show blends the past, present and future of motoring, featuring stunt shows, pro-drifting and a technology hall.

Motorcycle Live (November, but dates TBC)

The UK's largest motorbike show at the NEC Birmingham will provide motorcycle enthusiasts with an array of displays, live events and interactive experiences.



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HOME & DIY

HYDROPONIC PLANTS

everything you need to know

Hydroponics is one of the latest indoor plant trends, providing the perfect way to add greenery to your home without the need for soil or maintenance. Find out everything there is to know about hydroponic plants, with our top picks for the best ones to plant at home.

WHAT IS HYDROPONICS?

This term refers to a method of growing plants in nutrient-rich water as opposed to soil. Enabling you to showcase the beautiful roots of your chosen plants, hydroponic plants grow quicker, require less care and produce greater yields than their soil-growing counterparts.

HOW TO GROW HYDROPONIC PLANTS

1. Choose a plant or cutting.
2. Fill a vase or bowl with spring water or tap water (room temperature) and add plant food.
3. Place the cutting in the vase or bowl.
4. Make sure only the roots are submerged in the water.

HOW TO CARE FOR A HYDROPONIC PLANT

- > Keep your plant in a bright room but out of direct sunlight.
- > Change the water every two weeks, making sure the roots are dangling in it but not fully submerged.
- > Check the water levels every few days to make sure they remain at the correct level.
- > Check the pH levels of the water using a pH tester – a range of 5.5 to 6.5 is suitable for most plants.
- > Add a small amount of nutrient solution or liquid fertiliser, such as ammonium sulphate fertiliser, boric acid or azomite powder.

WHAT ARE THE BEST HYDROPONIC PLANTS?

Spider plant | Lucky bamboo | Pothos plant | Velvet leaf philodendron | Coleus plant | Monstera plant | Peace lily | Arrowhead plant

You can also grow almost any crop hydroponically, but the most common are lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, strawberries, and herbs such as basil or mint.

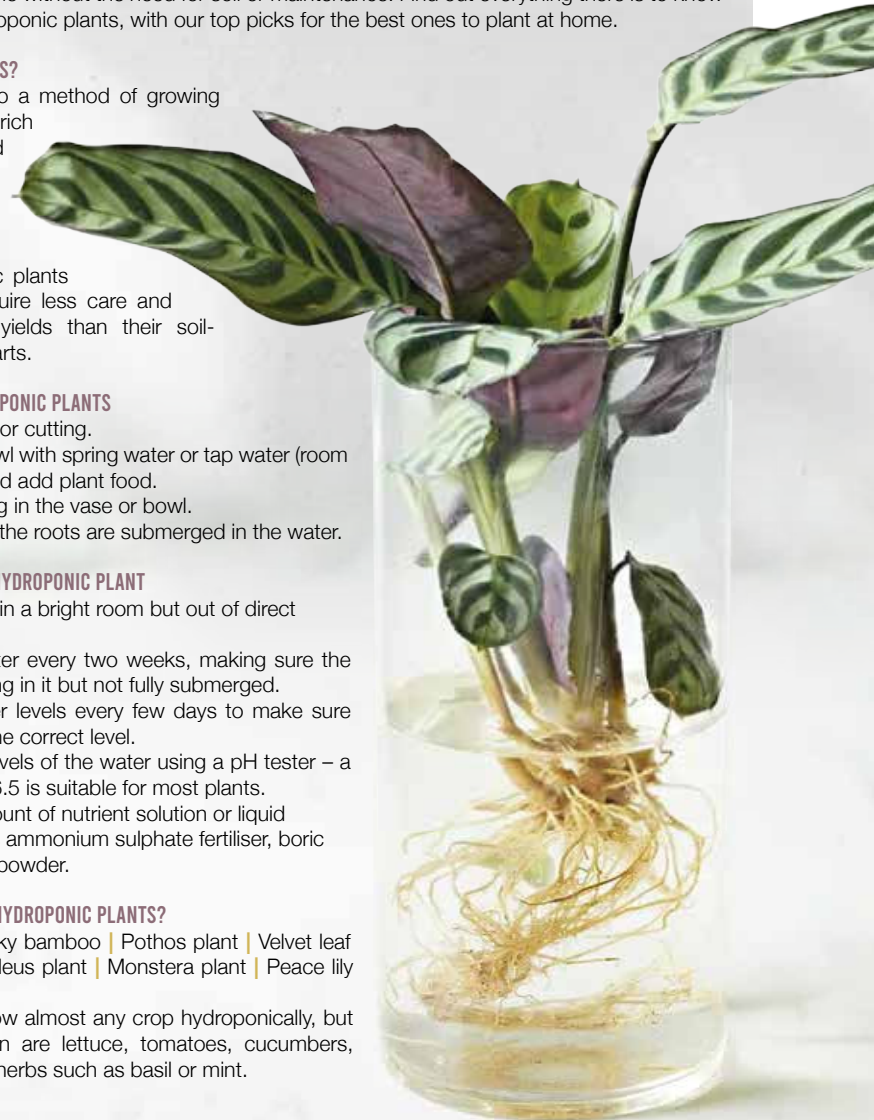


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— studio —

PEAKE



HOME & DIY

Studio Peake is a London-based design studio run by Sarah Peake, where the old and new are brought together to create beautiful and surprising designs that are full of personality.

With Studio Peake, no two spaces are alike. The aim is to create a space that looks lived in, with details that could have been built up over time. This can provide you with a lot of inspiration for your own home, helping you work with your existing décor to give things a little refresh.

STUDIO PEAKE'S UNIQUE STYLING

Each of Studio Peake's designs is unique and interesting; each project is treated individually, meaning every look has its own personality. The studio says: "Bringing spaces to life involves a playful blending of opposites and an interplay between old and new – a dash of unexpected colour or detailing; that element of surprise."

From patterned curtains and panels to pops of colour, each project is designed to work with the client's personality, ensuring the space is both fun and functional.

A LITTLE PEAK AT STUDIO PEAKE'S STYLING

If you love the Studio Peake aesthetic, you'll be pleased to know it's something you can recreate easily in your own home. Some top tips include:

- > Don't be afraid to use colour in unexpected ways. The simplest of accents, from table decorations to lampshades, can help tie different elements of your space together. Muted walls in shades of sage or duck egg look fantastic with some coral red or yellow accents.
- > Bring old and new elements into your living space to create beautiful contrasts. Ornate antique furniture with modern accessories such as statement light fittings can help you blend different styles to create a visually appealing space.
- > Patterns are a simple way to add interest and bring life to your room. Consider using multiple patterns across your space, such as a wallpapered accent wall, patterned cushions and wall art, to help keep things fun and exciting. Floral patterns are an excellent way of adding a little colour without becoming overpowering.

Studio Peake's style is something that can be built up over time, so keep an eye out for new pieces you can add to your space to create an ever-evolving look that's full of life and personality.



CAUTION! RISK OF FIRE!

If you often put off cleaning certain items and appliances in your home, you are far from alone. However, you may think twice about forgoing these tasks when you find out just how potentially dangerous avoiding them can be.

TOASTERS: If you do not regularly clean your toaster, crumbs will start to accumulate at the bottom of your appliance. When you use your toaster again, these crumbs could start to smoke and potentially cause a fire. Clean away any crumbs after each use.

HEATERS: Over time, dust starts to accumulate around any heaters in your home, which could ignite and spread. Dust once a week to prevent house fires caused by dust ignition.

BATHROOM EXHAUST FANS: If your bathroom exhaust fan is old and dirty, this can cause the motor to overheat and lead to a fire. Clean once a year or invest in a new fan that comes with a thermally protected motor.

UNWASHED RAGS: Oily rags (covered in oil-based paints, paint thinners or varnishes) are a common cause of fires in the home/garage and are the result of a chemical reaction between cotton and certain oil-based stains, which produces energy in the form of heat. Place any rags used for staining in a metal can filled with water and washing detergent, secure with a lid and leave to soak for three days.

CHIMNEYS: Wood-burning fireplaces need to be regularly serviced as any build-up in your chimney can be a fire hazard. Inspect your chimney for tar deposits after use and call a professional chimney sweep if needed.

HAIRDRYERS: When you use your hairdryer every day, debris, dust and hair start to build up, which can become hazardous. If you smell burning when drying your hair or your hairdryer burns or shocks you, this is a sign that it needs to be cleaned or replaced.

LAWNMOWERS: Debris and dry grass can easily get stuck in the mower deck of your lawnmower, which can pose a fire risk, especially during the warmer months of the year. Prevent this by cleaning your mower after each use.



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HOME & DIY

MIRROR

on the wall



WHAT NOT TO DO WHEN USING MIRRORS IN THE HOME

When used correctly, mirrors can make your home feel more light, spacious and stylish. However, there are certain pitfalls that you need to avoid when decorating with mirrors. Discover them all below.

MOUNTING ABOVE A FIREPLACE

Although the space above your fireplace may seem like the perfect place to hang a mirror, this only works if the fireplace is 160cm or under. If you have a tall fireplace, then a mirror large enough to fill the space will reflect less desirable elements of the room such as the ceiling, door frame or a bare wall.

HANGING NEAR YOUR BED

Did you know that hanging a mirror opposite your bed can actually disrupt your sleep? A mirror opposite, above or next to your bed will bounce more light around the room, which is not conducive to a restful environment.

PLACING OPPOSITE YOUR FRONT DOOR

According to Feng Shui practices, placing a mirror opposite your front door is bad luck as it reflects the good energy of the natural world back out of your home. Instead, you should place the mirror perpendicular to your front door.

IN THE KITCHEN

If you are thinking about hanging a mirror in your kitchen, you should know that this is also considered to be unlucky. Furthermore, mirrors in this room can easily become grubby and greasy. For better results, hang mirrors in your dining room.

NOT CONSIDERING REFLECTIONS

When hanging a mirror in your home, you must always think about what it will be reflecting. Ideally, you want a mirror to reflect the natural view outside a window or a beautiful design element within your home. Remember, the purpose of a mirror is to enhance a room, not distract from it.



LOCAL FEATURE

Comedian's rise from rural surrounds to TV screen

Discover comedian Alan Davies' unique connection to Loughton, which not only underscores his personal journey but also highlights the town's influence on his career.

Alan Davies was born in Loughton in 1966. Known historically for its blend of rural beauty and urban convenience, it provided a unique backdrop for his early life and helped shape his worldview, a factor often reflected in his humour and storytelling.

Though he spent his childhood in nearby Chingford, Davies received his primary and junior education at Staples Road School in Loughton, before attending the independent Bancroft's School in Woodford Green, achieving eight O Levels.

The educational journey continued at Loughton College, adding four O Levels and two A Levels in Communications and Theatre Studies. Subsequently, he began to dabble in stand-up comedy as he graduated from the University of Kent in 1988 in Drama and Theatre Studies. In recognition

of his achievements, he was awarded an honorary doctorate in 2003.

His relatable style – combining observational comedy with personal experiences – resonated with a wide audience. In the late 1980s, Davies began performing stand-up in London comedy clubs and pubs, quickly earning a following.

That talent for humour soon attracted the attention of producers, though apart from turns as a TV funnyman he also became widely recognised for the role as the quirky and lovable Jonathan Creek in the eponymous BBC mystery crime series. His portrayal of the creative and unconventional crime solver won him critical acclaim and a devoted fanbase and elevated his status as a household name in British entertainment.

Perhaps Davies' most accomplished role is as team host on boffin panel show *QI*. He joined the production at its launch in 2003 and has appeared in every episode.

A staunch Arsenal fan, he now lives in Islington with his writer wife Katie Maskell and their three children.



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The architectural elegance of Chelmsford Cathedral

As far as cathedrals go, this country is adorned with a host of spectacular, awe-inspiring, and, in some cases, excessive displays of architectural ecclesiastical excellence.

Think of St Paul's, Westminster, Winchester, Lincoln, Ely and others, and there are presented some incredible expressions of faith through architecture.

Yet while Chelmsford Cathedral certainly doesn't compete alongside those other locations' achingly big domes, roofs and arches – nor in its age, as it was only given its current status in 1914 – it does sit as a true British architectural gem.

Originally a parish church dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, it was elevated to cathedral status at the dawn of the First World War, and perhaps the timing was fitting, as a nation found itself striving for peace.

In the way it's built, it showcases a variety of styles that reflect the changes it has undergone over the centuries, with Norman and Victorian elements

blending seamlessly with modern additions (even if it's classified as one of the youngest cathedrals in England).

Inside, Chelmsford Cathedral is more than just a place of worship – it's a beacon of history, community and spirituality in the heart of Essex. It boasts beautiful stained-glass windows, an impressive organ and a warm, intimate atmosphere.

Meanwhile, its active congregation and vibrant programme of events, from concerts to workshops, ensure it remains a hub of community life.

With around 60,000 visitors a year, in 2024 it welcomes in all faiths, all beliefs, all persuasions. This is particularly prevalent during the summer when the annual festival takes place, and at Christmas.

In everything Chelmsford Cathedral does, it reinforces customs, behaviours, support and hope, celebrating the traditions of the past and, of course, the purpose and potential of the future.



Photo credit: Rob Altherton/Shutterstock, Chris Lawrence/Travel/Shutterstock, Chelmsford Cathedral – Facebook



LOCAL FEATURE



WHAT'S ON

YOUR LOCAL EVENTS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Black Notley Community Association,
Recreation Hall, John Ray Gardens,
Black Notley, Braintree, CM77 8NE
Sunday, February 18, to Saturday,
February 24, various times



Photo credit: Pantaloons Theatre

This classic pantomime is presented by the award-winning Pantaloons performance group, celebrating their 40th anniversary year. Telling the famous French fable throughout February half term, this is a show for all the family to enjoy.

Tickets cost £12.50 for adults and £10.50 for over 65s and children under 15. To purchase tickets, visit www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/braintree/black-notley-community-association

SUPPER CLUB

Tuffon Hall Vineyard, Sible Hedingham,
Halstead, CO9 3LL
Friday, February 23, 7pm

Created in collaboration with Michelin-starred chef Mick Binnington, this delicious treat is not one to miss. An intimate and sumptuous five-course meal, combined with the vineyard's own wines, is a match made in heaven.

Tickets cost £100 and include a welcome drink on arrival. To book, head to www.allevents.in/halstead/supper-club-23rd-february/200025956748316

THE ELO ENCOUNTER

The Institute Braintree, 15 Bocking End,
Braintree, CM7 9AE
Saturday, March 2, 7.30pm

If you're a fan of the iconic Electric Light Orchestra, then this is a must-see tribute. Alongside the hit tunes,

including *Evil Woman*, *Telephone Line* and *Mr. Blue Sky*, expect a light show of dazzling proportions, with laser and effects transporting you back to those heady days of the 1970s.

Tickets cost £23.50 and can be bought online from www.bit.ly/49m718x

SHINRIN-YOKU: FOREST BATHING FOR YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Broaks Wood, Sible Hedingham,
Gosfield, Halstead, CO9 1UP
Sunday, March 3, 10am – 12pm

A wellbeing practice that emerged from Japan, this is a walk through the woods with a difference. Take a gentle, immersive stroll that engages with the natural world, led by a certified guide. Expect to come back feeling less stressed and anxious.

Tickets cost £25 per person. To book, please visit www.bit.ly/3HAPxpV

SHAPE OF YOU – THE MUSIC OF ED SHEERAN

The Institute Braintree, 15 Bocking End,
Braintree, CM7 9AE
Thursday, March 14, 6.30pm

This hit stage show features songs from one of the best current singer-songwriters in the UK, Ed Sheeran. Expect to hear all the soulful acoustics and heartfelt vocals you'd expect, all to the tune of some of the biggest songs around, including *Lego House*, *Thinking Out Loud* and *Perfect*.

Tickets cost £26 for adults and £16 for under 16s. To buy tickets, visit www.bit.ly/300K2Z1



Photo credit: The Music of Ed Sheeran via Facebook



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LUKE THE NUKE LITTLE

THE TEENAGE DARTS SENSATION WHO IS DEFYING AGE, APPEARANCE AND THE EXPECTATIONS OF A FERVENT DARTS FANBASE



While the popularity of darts has arguably never been greater – a sport reinvented from smoky, dusty, dirty pubs to high-octane, precision entertainment on Sky, the world's most polished sports broadcaster – it does still require the odd paradigm shift in order to keep its momentum going forward.

While Phil 'The Power' Taylor oversaw an unapologetically long period of domination as the growth of the Professional Darts Corporation (PDC) led to an acceleration in the popularity of darts, and Dutchman Michael van Gerwen assumed the mantle upon The Power's retirement, it was unclear where the next bastion of bullseye brilliance would emerge from.

That all changed over the festive period when Alexandra Palace, the annual base for the PDC World Championships, ushered in a rather unassuming 16 year old from the industrial heartland of the north. Born in Runcorn but raised just down the road in Warrington, Luke 'The Nuke' Littler picked up a set of darts at the age of just 18 months, and won the Youth Grand Prix aged 12.

His early foray into professional darts saw him clinch the Irish Open title in 2021 (when still only 14), and he has since picked up other senior titles along the way, including last year's British Open. Yet few had heard of the teenager until he began bulldozing his way through the early rounds of the World Championships; destined, as we know now, to make it all the way to the final, where he finally succumbed to new world number one Luke Humphries.

With a fanbase and global attention that has grown from a little to a lot, the now 17 year old has taken everything in his stride, approaching both the success he's had and the scrutiny of the media with effortless ease.

"I know, for a lot of people, it seems like I have come from nowhere, but in truth I've been doing this a while," he laughs. "I've pretty much had a set of darts in my hand permanently for the past seven or eight years, so it feels very natural to me to be hitting treble twenties and closing out doubles."

And while the sporting star has endured notable comments about his appearance and persona that bely his teenaged years, Littler is happy to go along with the joke. "I always have my passport in my back pocket these days as every other question is about my age!" He's also revealed the pre-match diet that helped propel his journey to success: a ham and cheese omelette for breakfast, followed by a pizza for lunch.

As if Littler's reputation couldn't have risen further following his battling 7-4 defeat in the Ally Pally final on January 3, the youngster then nailed a sensational nine-dart finish on the first leg of the first set at the Bahrain Open in the middle of January, then aged just 16. "I don't think I'll start a match like that ever again," he said afterwards... yet you wouldn't bet against it!

He went on to take the title, beating former world number one van Gerwen in the final.

As for the future, Littler has a place in this season's Premier League Darts, and his eye on securing yet more major tournament success. The bad news for The Nuke is he's still almost a year away from toasting his success with a celebratory pint!



WEEDS WELCOME

Although you probably spend a lot of your time trying to banish weeds, did you know that some part weeds are actually beneficial to the environment, local wildlife and the overall condition of your garden?

NETTLES: Nettles are a highly beneficial weed to have growing in your garden, helping to support a wide array of wildlife including butterflies, ladybirds, hedgehogs and birds such as blue tits and chaffinches. You can also harvest and eat nettles in the spring, using this weed to make delicious dishes such as wild nettle pesto.

SORREL: If you notice sorrel growing in your lawn, you may see it as an annoyance rather than an advantage, but this weed has lots of beneficial uses. For example, it is great for growing near strawberries, cabbages and tomatoes, acting as a diversion and drawing pests away from the plants you are trying to protect.

DANDELIONS: Dandelions grow in abundance in many UK gardens and have long since been a source of irritation for gardeners. However, these weeds provide food to many pollinators including bees, hoverflies and butterflies. Also, owing to their long taproots, they can help to loosen hard soil and bring nutrients up to the surface.

WILD CARROT: Wild carrot has historically been classed as a weed, but this perennial plant can help your garden in many ways. First, it attracts hoverflies which eat the aphids that feast on your vegetables. Second, they make an attractive addition to your outside space, with their pretty white flowers and ferny foliage.

CHICKWEED: Chickweed tends to show up in disturbed soil such as garden beds and highly tilted areas. As a beneficial weed, it attracts pollinators, helps to accumulate potassium and phosphorus which is good for your soil, and boasts edible, lettuce-like greens.



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Holmes & Hills

Moving home in 2024? What's the risk of your transaction falling-through?

It is probably more likely than you think but your choice of conveyancer can amake all the difference.

Give yourself the best chance of a successful completion on your home purchase or sale by working in partnership with Holmes & Hills Solicitors. Benefit from our successful completion rate that is 22% higher than the national average reported by Rightmove1.

What number of property transactions fall-through?

Rightmove report that, on average across the country, approximately 30% of property transactions fall-through2. It is a much higher percentage than most buyers and sellers expect it to be.

Reduce the risk of your transaction falling-through

Those using Holmes & Hills Solicitors' conveyancing services benefit from a 22% higher successful completion rate compared to the national average. This means your transaction has an increased chance of successfully completing when Holmes & Hills is advising and representing you in your property transaction.

Why do property transactions fall-through?

Your transaction might fall-through for a number of reasons, including your buyer finding another property; a surveyor identifying issues with the property; or a buyer's solicitor identifying issues surrounding matters such as rights of way, covenants, lease terms, easements, overage, options or boundary issues.

Why is Holmes & Hills' successful completion rate 22% higher?

Holmes & Hills has a large department of 22 property lawyers dealing with second-hand, new-build and shared ownership property across the country. The size of the department means there is unlikely to be an issue the team hasn't seen and resolved before. Proactively identifying and resolving problems means we can keep your transaction on course, reducing the risk of your property transaction falling through and securing you a successful completion.

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As well as an increased chance of your transaction successfully completing, Holmes & Hills provides fixed-fee residential conveyancing quotes with no hidden charges.

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¹Holmes & Hills' successful completion rate is calculated using sample data for 526 residential property transactions started between July 2022 to September 2022 and is compared to the national average successful completion rate of 70.3% (provided by Rightmove, 13/02/2023).

²Rightmove data supplied on 13/02/2023.



Have you written a LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT?

Although nobody likes to think about their demise, writing a will is the only way that you can ensure your money, property and possessions go to the people or causes that you care about.

WHY SHOULD YOU WRITE A WILL?

1. To name your children's guardian
2. To ensure your children are provided for financially
3. To provide for your dependants, including stepchildren
4. To protect your partner if you are not married
5. To safeguard your family home
6. To prevent family disputes
7. To avoid paying more inheritance tax than you need to
8. To decide who you would like to settle your affairs
9. To say who you want to look after your pets
10. To support a charitable organisation

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T WRITE A WILL?

If you do not write a will, you are said to have died intestate, and this means that your estate may not go to the people you want it to.

Intestacy rules are as follows:

- > If you are survived by a spouse or civil partner and children, your spouse or civil partner will inherit all your personal possessions and at least the first £270,000 of your estate, plus half of anything above this amount. Your children are entitled to the other half.
- > If you are survived by a spouse or civil partner and you don't have children, your spouse or civil partner will inherit your entire estate.
- > If you are survived by children but not a spouse or civil partner, your estate will be divided equally between your children.
- > If you do not have a spouse, civil partner or children, other relatives will inherit your estate in a certain order.
- > If you have no surviving relatives, your estate will pass to the Crown.

HOW TO MAKE A WILL

You can choose to make a will yourself or with the help of a solicitor or will writer. There are also certain charitable organisations that provide free advice, such as Age UK.



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WRITE AWAY

The History of the Humble Pencil



Back in the 1600s, when Henry VIII was on the throne, locals in Borrowdale in Cumbria discovered a massive deposit of pure graphite. The graphite was sawn into sticks and wrapped with string or sheepskin to make a useful writing tool.

The word 'pencil' comes from the French word 'pincel', which means small paintbrush – because that's what the 'new' writing sticks looked like. In Tudor times, English was changing, and borrowing French words was quite common.

THE FIRST MODERN PENCILS

A German cabinetmaker, Kaspar Faber, started one of the world's first pencil businesses in 1761. He was the first pencil maker to encase graphite in wood – though his pencils were still handmade.

By the early 1800s, French chemist Nicolas-Jacques Conté had developed a method of mixing graphite with clay. This made graphite much more durable. It quickly became the industry standard and remains the basis for pencils today.

THE FIRST BRITISH PENCILS

In 1832, Cumbrian entrepreneur, Joseph Hardcastle, set up Britain's first pencil factory in Keswick – just a few miles from Borrowdale and its graphite supplies.

The business, which later became the Cumberland Pencil Company, is still in business today.

However, the factory moved to Lillyhall, near Workington, in 2008 because the old site couldn't cope with modern production processes. But the company's Pencil Museum is still based in Keswick and is well worth a visit if you're planning a trip to the Lake District.

You'll enter the museum through a replica graphite mine, and once inside, you can feast your eyes on pencils and pencil-making throughout the ages – from primitive versions to the modern precision instruments we know today. For more information, visit www.derwentart.com/en-gb

In this digital age, most of us still love pencils. Their simplicity, reliability and eco-friendliness have made them cherished tools for creators of all ages.



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The menu is kept short and changes frequently to reflect seasonality and sustainability, using only the highest quality ingredients.

With a dedicated restaurant area, the pub still remains a pub, where you can enjoy unique drinks, wines and a selection of real ales at the bar or on the terrace.



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Raising the bar

for low-alcohol drinks

Low-alcohol drinks are gaining in popularity, so is this the end of Britain's drinking culture as we know it?

There has been a huge shift in drinking culture in recent years as we become more health aware, with the younger generation, in particular, turning their backs on booze.

Fortunately, as low-alcohol drinks are becoming trendier, they are becoming tastier too. Low-alcohol beer is far more than the watery, light lager offering it used to be, with much craft brewery hop-based ingenuity on offer. You can get fruity IPAs, crisp Japanese lagers, and Bavarian beers all as low as 0.5 per cent. Best of all, some of them still come by the pint.

Wine drinkers needn't feel left out by this teetotal trend. Not only are there some excellent wines that have had the alcohol gently removed, but there is also a rise in tea-based kombucha, which is a worthy substitute for bubbles given its natural fizz and acidic taste.

Finally, there is the spectacular rise of spirit alternatives. Many brands have managed to match

the mouthfeel and warmth of alcohol by using herbs, spices and roots to build layers of complex flavour, mimicking everything from the botanical depth of gin to the spicy heat of golden rum and even the bitter complexity of negroni.

For many of us, though, drinking is about more than just taste: it is a culture, a social experience. Fortunately, not only are many bars offering these tasty alternatives, but some venues are also popping up that eschew alcohol altogether.

If in Brighton's Kemptown area, why not pop in to Tørstigbar ('tørstig' being the Danish word for 'thirsty'), or if in London the first alcohol-free bar has just opened in Hoxton. Also in London, head to the Cocco Grill & Lounge in Tower Bridge, where you can tease your palate with delicious food as well as a variety of alcohol-free drinks. And finally, consider the perfectly named Café Sobar if heading north towards Nottingham.

Get out there and raise the bar on your social sensitivities!





NUTS ABOUT

chocolate

FOOD & DRINK

After the Second World War, cocoa was in short supply. So baker Pietro Ferrero, from Piedmont in Italy, created a recipe for a creamy hazelnut paste that contained just a hint of the precious powder. In 1964, Pietro's son Michele adapted the recipe, and the first jar of Nutella went on sale. These days, a whopping 365,000 tons of Nutella are produced every year, and the spread is manufactured in Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Italy, Mexico, Poland and Turkey. This month, why not celebrate World Nutella Day on February 5 by conjuring up one of the treats below?

Nutella Brownies (Makes 12-20, depending on size)

You will need:

100g Nutella | 5 medium eggs | 250g butter plus extra for greasing | 300g plain chocolate (broken into pieces) | 250g hazelnuts, coarsely chopped | 180g plain flour (sieved) | 340g caster sugar | A 23cm x 33cm cake tin | A sheet of baking parchment

How to make:

Grease the tin and line it with baking parchment | Preheat your oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas mark 4 | Toast the hazelnuts in the oven for 2-3 minutes | In a saucepan, melt the chocolate and butter over a very low heat, then mix in the Nutella | In a bowl, whisk the eggs and sugar together till light and creamy | Fold the chocolate mixture into the egg mixture, then add the flour and hazelnuts | Pour the mixture into the tin and bake for 20-25 minutes until set | Chill the brownies in the tin before cutting them into squares.

Nutty Nutella Bites (Makes 40)

You will need:

For the main mixture: 100g Nutella | 15g plain chocolate | 35g milk chocolate | A 450g silicone loaf tin (16cm x 11cm x 7cm)

For the coating: 500g plain chocolate | 100g chopped almonds | A sheet of baking parchment

How to make:

Preheat your oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas mark 4 | Toast the almonds in the oven for 3-4 minutes | Melt the main mixture chocolate in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water | Add the Nutella and stir it well | Pour the mixture into the tin and chill well before cutting it into 2cm squares | Melt the coating chocolate as before, add the almonds and stir | Dip each square into the coating mixture and leave them to set on the baking parchment.



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BEAUTY



A popular staple of the 1990s, you may have noticed the return of ombré lips when scrolling through recent social media posts. A fun and easy make-up trend to try, here's how to achieve this look at home.

WHAT ARE OMBRÉ LIPS?

Ombre lips involve blending two or more standout colours on the lips. Sometimes referred to as two-toned lips, there are lots of different ways that you can experiment with this beauty trend depending on the finish you want to achieve.

HOW TO GET OMBRÉ LIPS

1 Prep your lips

Make sure that you gently exfoliate your lips using either a lip scrub or a mixture of sugar and olive oil, before applying a lip moisturiser such as a lip balm. This will ensure you have a good base to work with and help your chosen lipstick stay put for longer.

2 Apply a lip liner

Outline your lips with your choice of lip liner. This should be slightly darker than your lipstick. After tracing your lip line, shade in the corners of your lips with the pencil to add some dimension.

3 Apply a lighter lipstick

Use a lip make-up brush to carefully apply the lighter shade of lipstick in the centre of your lips for a highlight.

4 Apply a darker lipstick

Apply the darker shade of lipstick on the outside corners of your mouth that you previously shaded with lip liner during step 2.

5 Blend the two colours

Use a lip make-up brush to carefully blend where the two colours meet to create a smooth ombré effect. Do not blend too much as this can lose the effect of the gradient altogether.

OMBRÉ LIP COLOUR COMBINATIONS FOR 2024

- 🌀 An electric orange with a vibrant fuchsia
- 🌀 A nude with a deep brown
- 🌀 A neon pink with a neutral beige
- 🌀 A shimmery and matte lipstick in similar shades.

OMBRÉ IT UP!

HEART HEALTH

10 signs never to ignore

Heat diseases kills around one in four people in the UK, yet many are ignoring some of the key signs of poor heart health. Discover the top ten below.

1 CHEST PAIN: One of the most well-known signs of a heart attack. If you have chest pains and you feel extremely unwell, you should dial 999 immediately.

2 FEELING SICK: Of course, not every bout of nausea means you are having a heart attack. However, if you are experiencing chest pain and nausea, then you need to call for an ambulance.

3 STOMACH PAIN AND/OR INDIGESTION: An indigestion-type pain or a burning sensation in your chest or stomach could indicate a heart attack or be a sign of a related heart problem.

4 FEELING SWEATY: If you feel hot and clammy without having done any physical activity and you are experiencing chest pain, this is a sign that you need medical attention.

5 LEG PAIN: A gripping, cramping sensation in your calves when you are walking could indicate that you have peripheral arterial disease. This is most common in smokers and diabetics.

6 ARM PAIN: Pain going down your arm, especially your left arm, can be a sign of a heart attack.

7 JAW OR BACK PAIN: As well as chest pain, jaw and back pain that doesn't go away can be a sign of a heart attack. This is more common in women.

8 A CHOKING SENSATION: The word 'angina' actually means choking and can cause tightness or pain in the throat.

9 SWOLLEN ANKLES: Very swollen ankles are a marker of heart failure, but they can also be caused by blood pressure medication. Make an appointment with your GP to be safe.

10 EXTREME FATIGUE: Feeling tired all the time can be a sign of heart failure. If you are experiencing extreme fatigue and your lifestyle has not changed, see your doctor.

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POUR & PLANT

Are you looking for a fun and simple craft project for Mother's Day? Perfect for children of all ages and abilities, these pour paint pots are guaranteed to go down a treat.

YOU WILL NEED:

A terracotta pot or several (these can be bought at your nearest garden centre or you may be able to find some for free on local social media selling sites) | Acrylic paint – various colours | Masking tape | Nylon or cotton gloves | Plastic sheet or cover (to protect work surface) | An old cooling rack | An old tray | Mod Podge (optional) – this is a water-based adhesive

HOW TO MAKE:

1. Cut a piece of masking tape (enough to cover the hole in the bottom of your pot).
2. Cover the hole with the tape on the inside and press down firmly to ensure it sticks.
3. Put down the plastic sheet or cover to protect your chosen work surface.
4. Place the pot upside down onto an old cooling rack on top of the old tray – this should help catch the dripping paint and prevent too much mess.
5. Put on the gloves. Take one paint colour at a time and carefully squeeze the paint over the bottom of the plant pot.
6. Choose your next colour and repeat the last step. You are looking to create a 'dribble' effect.
7. Keep building up different colours until you are happy with the design.
8. Leave to fully dry for up to 24 hours.
9. If you want to use your terracotta pot outside, then apply a layer of Mod Podge as this will help to protect it from the elements.
10. Remove the masking tape.

You can choose to simply pop your painted pot in a gift bag, or fill it with soil and add a couple of seasonal bulbs such as daffodils, tulips or lilies. Alternatively, you could craft your own artificial flowers using tissue paper and then place these in your newly painted pot.



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PUZZLES

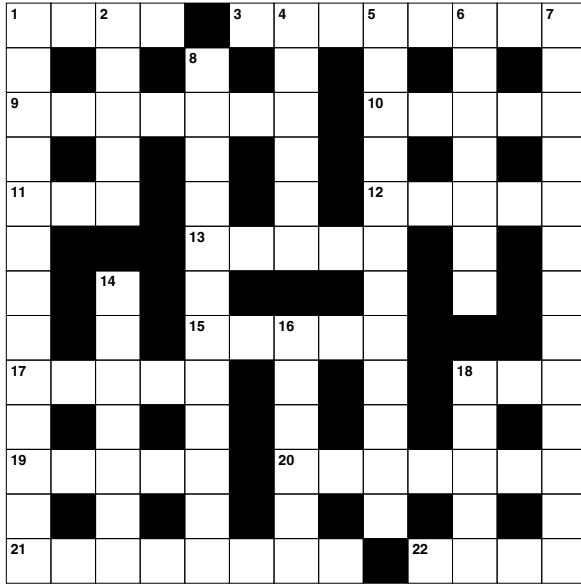
Answers: see end of The Vision Listings

ACROSS

- 1. Logical division; rank (4)
- 3. E.g. physics and biology (8)
- 9. Poisonous metallic element (7)
- 10. Solid blow (5)
- 11. Sorrowful (3)
- 12. Wedding official (5)
- 13. Cuts (5)
- 15. Tiny pore on a leaf (5)
- 17. Snow and rain mix (5)
- 18. Excessively (3)
- 19. Form of expression (5)
- 20. Coolness (7)
- 21. In these times (8)
- 22. Refuse to admit (4)

DOWN

- 1. Violation of a law (13)
- 2. Became less difficult (5)
- 4. Bird; crazy (6)
- 5. Very eager; keen (12)
- 6. Defeated heavily (7)
- 7. In a manner that exceeds what is necessary (13)
- 8. Not familiar with or used to (12)
- 14. Trailer (7)



- 16. Eccentricity (6)
- 18. Recurrent topic (5)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Mary, Queen of Scots, was born to King James V of Scotland and Mary of Guise on December 8, 1542. Six days later, baby Mary officially became Queen of Scotland when her father died in battle.
- ▶ Mary married three times: first to Francis II of France, then Lord Darnley, and finally the Earl of Bothwell. None of the marriages lasted longer than two years.
- ▶ Mary was executed in 1587 after being found guilty of treason against her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I. At her execution, she wore red petticoats underneath her dress, as red is the colour of martyrs.
- ▶ Mary requested to be buried in France, but was instead buried in Peterborough Cathedral. In October 1612, her body was exhumed at her son's request and her remains buried in Westminster Abbey.

SUDOKU

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