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Editor's notes...



Misha Mistry, Design Editor

Hello and welcome to December's edition of **VISION** Hemel.

The year has flown by and, before we knew it, we're already in December.

With Christmas on its way, we show you the top tips for preparing

for the festivities, decorating the home and four crafty ways to wrap your gifts.

Take a peek inside to see three pages of exclusive content on how the Queen and Royal Family celebrate the Christmas period.

While the school holidays may be looming, **VISION** has the ultimate delicious, fun-filled activity for kids to try.

In food and drink, we have the perfect mulled wine cocktail recipe, but, with all this delicious temptation around, we've equalled it out, sharing the best ways to watch that winter waistline.

In local news, Christmas is well underway in Hemel Hempstead. Our local pages this month are packed with the latest news including an exciting story about a man from the town who has set an unusual and thrilling world record. Turn to page 32 to find out more. Local news and stories are important to us so if you have something you would like to share, email holly@visionmag.co.uk

Merry Christmas and an even happier new year to all our advertisers and readers.

Happy reading and see you in 2017,

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Christmas with the Queen

...an orderly affair

Around 30 members of the Royal Family will soon be under starter's orders to spend Christmas with Her Majesty the Queen.

And it will all run like a military operation as they experience the Victorian splendour of Sandringham House in Norfolk.

Each adult member of the Royal Family will have to navigate the quicksands of protocol that surround the festive ritual.

First, guests are told what time they should arrive at Sandringham — most junior Royals first, most senior last.

By early afternoon on Christmas Eve, however, everyone will be in attendance.

They will be ushered to their rooms, with some "second tier" royals being billeted in the servants' quarters, doubling up and sharing rooms.

At 4pm, all having changed into suitable outfits for tea, the family gathers in the White Drawing Room, where the Queen will encourage the young Royals to help put the finishing touches to the Christmas

tree — a 20ft Norfolk spruce taken from the 1,000-acre estate.

Over home-baked scones and Earl Grey tea, each member will also exchange presents — not on Christmas Day, which the Queen regards as a religious festival.

Trestle tables are laid out in the nearby Red Drawing Room, with sections marked off with tape showing where each family member's gifts should be placed.

Princess Diana long ago realised what a minefield giving presents can be to the family that already has everything.

Generously, she bought cashmere and other luxury items for her in-laws, only to discover that the key to success in royal present-giving is cheapness. Joke gifts, the cheaper the better, are the order of the day.

The Queen has an unwritten rule that gifts are to be as simple as possible, partly so that the real reason for Christmas is not forgotten in a sea of wrapping paper.

One year Kate is believed to have bought Harry a plastic grow your own girlfriend kit, hand-made fishing flies for Prince Philip and a simple silver picture frame for the Queen. At least this year Kate will have to think of a more novel gift for her brother-in-law as he is now dating Canadian actress Meghan Markle, who is not expected at Sandringham.

Another year, one guest gave the Queen a rubber chicken, which sat on the table and squawked.

Prince Charles is said to still use a white leather loo-seat given to him by his sister, Princess Anne. Prince Harry once gave his grandmother a bath hat with the slogan "Ain't life a bitch!" on it.

Some years ago, the Queen also received a singing Billy Bass which is reputedly on a piano in Balmoral.

Presents exchanged, they will all move through to the hall for drinks — Martinis mixed by a servant are popular, while the Queen sips her usual gin and Dubonnet.

Her Majesty will also be keen that the row between Prince Charles and Prince Andrew, who has demanded a more Royal role for his daughters Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie, will be put to one side for the time being.

Then it's back to their rooms for baths and a second change of clothes.

Kate has admitted she does feel nervous about the wardrobe pressure, confiding to a fellow guest at a charity event that she would have to change five times on Christmas Day alone.

For dinner, the men will be dressed in black tie, the women in evening gowns and jewels. After a gong at 8pm for pre-dinner drinks, the family will sit down to a candlelit, three-course dinner at 8.15pm, usually made from local produce such as Norfolk shrimp and game.



WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

CHRISTMAS MASSACRE IN 1066

Medieval folk were no strangers to Christmas excitement – in some cases certainly not the sort we know today.

William the Conqueror was crowned King of England in Westminster Abbey on Christmas Day in 1066 – 950 years ago.

This was such a momentous occasion that the cheering inside the Abbey made the guards outside think the king was being attacked. They feared the cries were the signals of violence within the building. With the brutality that would mark the Norman rule for decades to come, they slaughtered all the bystanders they could before the area cleared, and set several buildings alight, their bloodletting only stopped by William appearing alive and well, and dressed in his ceremonial garb, at the door to the Abbey.

A few months earlier in October that year, William, Duke of Normandy defeated King Harold at the Battle of Hastings. But he failed in an attempt to capture London from the South.

William led his army around London and reached Berkhamsted. It was here the Anglo Saxons surrendered the crown of England. He received the surrender of Edgar of Aetheling, heir to the English throne, which allowed him to march into London to celebrate his coronation on Christmas Day.

But William did not let the deaths at his coronation spoil his Christmas festivities.

He celebrated with a huge banquet. But what was eaten on Christmas Day 1066?

Certainly not turkey. Turkeys naturally come from America and only got to Europe after the discovery of that continent in the late 15th century.

The rich would have eaten goose and, with the King's permission, swan. To make a roast bird look even more tasty, medieval cooks used to cover the cooking bird with butter and saffron plant. This would give the cooked bird a golden colour.

Christmas puddings in Medieval England were spicy porridge and known as "frumenty". This was considered a real treat, sometimes made of boiled wheat with currants and dried fruit stirred in. The yolks of eggs were also added. The mixture was left to cool and set before being served.

And for the poor, Christmas Day was also a "quarter day". This meant they had to pay their rent on this day!



Afterwards, at around 10pm, the women move to another room for coffee, while the men are offered liqueurs.

The Queen normally doesn't go to bed until midnight, and no one may leave the party until Her Majesty retires.

On Christmas morning, each member of the family wakes to find stockings at the foot of their bed, filled with small gifts and fruit chosen by the Queen.

Christmas Day starts with a full English breakfast, before the annual outing to Sandringham parish church at 11am, where a crowd of up to 1,000 well-wishers are expected to gather to see the family arrive together.

The sermon must never exceed 12 minutes, in case the sovereign's eyes should glaze.

The crowds which gather outside will be hoping that Kate and William will bring children Prince George and Princess Charlotte with them on the traditional walkabout.

Unseen by guests, however, lunch at Sandringham is a drawn-out affair – with staff and different Royals eating in at least five separate meal sittings.

After a lobster dish starter, the head chef joins the Royal Family in the dining room where he carves the turkey. Apart from when the Queen hands him his Christmas present, it's the only time of the year he will see his employer.

Crackers are pulled, and all the family wear paper hats – except the Queen.

Then everything comes to a halt so all can watch The Queen's Speech on TV at 3pm.

Her Majesty is the only one not present – she prefers to view the programme in private.

Only afterwards do the senior footmen and butlers get the chance for lunch, with the royal chef the last to eat at around 4pm, while the royals go for a walk with the dogs, play charades or watch TV.

Tea is served with an enormous iced Christmas cake, and then at 8.15pm everyone eats again – a candlelit meal, usually lamb, while the staff are given cold meats.

Boxing Day sees a kedgeree breakfast, followed by the traditional pheasant shoot on the estate, with the men shooting and the Queen picking up the birds.

As usual, Camilla is expected to be among the first to leave Sandringham, travelling to Ray Mill, her house in Wiltshire, where her children and five grandchildren will be waiting.

As much as she loves Sandringham Christmases, there is another incentive for Camilla to go to Wiltshire. She's an addict of Strictly Come Dancing.

Friends say: "Her difficulty is that Strictly's Christmas Special is screened when she'll be taking part in the royal festivities – so she's recording it to make sure she can see it. She just can't miss a single show."

The remaining guests depart after the shoot.

But the Queen remains at Sandringham until the beginning of February.

Bizarrely, the Christmas decorations stay up throughout that time, at her insistence.

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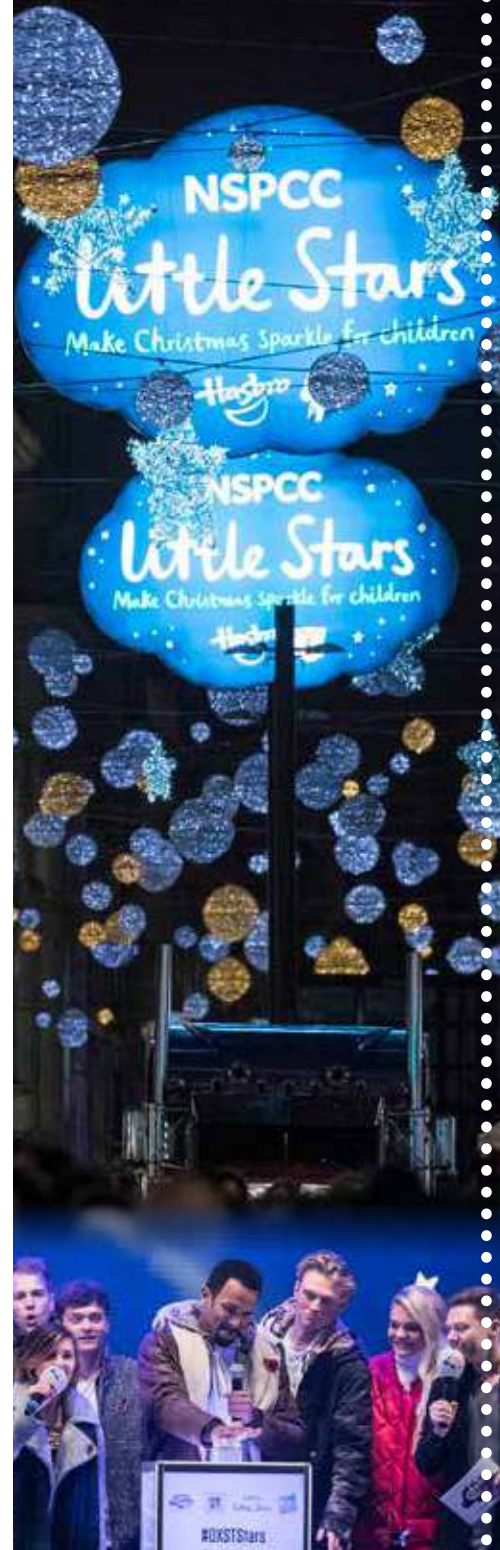
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CRAIG DAVID *lights up* Oxford Street

Back in the limelight after a three year break and fighting for the stardom he achieved in the early naughties, is R 'n' B sensation Craig David.

The star lit up Oxford Street on Sunday, November 6 when he turned on the famous Christmas lights alongside a number of other music celebs including last year's *X Factor* winner, Louisa Johnson.

Oxford Street's light switch-on is now an event in itself, featuring entertainment for a number of stage and screen stars and is hosted by main sponsor, Capital FM.

Craig said: "It's a great honour to be switching on the lights and lighting up Oxford Street. I hope everyone has a great Christmas and an incredible 2017."

This year, Oxford Street have partnered with charity the NSPCC and toy company Hasbro to launch its Little Stars campaign. For the first time, members of the public can donate a light to a loved one or someone special by pledging a suggested £5 to the charity. All funds will go to the NSPCC's life-changing services that aim to help keep children across the country safe.

The Brit-born singer-songwriter returned to fame in 2014 with a string of live appearances on BBC 1XTRA and BBC's Live Lounge. After a year of rebuilding his profile, he made a splash with single, *When the Bassline Drops*, featuring UK rapper Big Narstie. Although it only peaked at number 50 in the charts when it was first released, it clawed its way up the ladder to the top 10 by February 2016. Sixteen years after his *Born to Do It* album debuted at number one, Craig David's latest, *Following My Intuition*, is back at the top of the charts. The album features an array of hits, including chart topping singles *Ain't Giving Up* and *Change My Love*.

During his three year break, fans will be surprised to hear the singer was spinning tunes Stateside as a DJ in Miami. Now known as TS5, he opened the doors of his Miami pad to host a weekly show which not only included party tunes and remixes of his own talents, but also some vocal sets that his fans closer to home know and love him for.

As well as raising his profile Stateside, Craig has also penned tracks for a number of top names including the Backstreet Boys and Katy B.

After a pretty successful year to date, he is marking 2016 by teaming up with BBC Children in Need to produce this year's official single, *All We Needed*. Next year, his UK tour kicks off in March, starting in Cardiff with 12 dates.



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Wrapping your hot water tank, and the pipes around it in an insulating blanket, or even using an old duvet will help to keep the heat in, saving up to a whopping 9 per cent on heating costs.

SEAL WINDOWS AND DOORWAYS

Keep draughts out using draught excluder tape. This inexpensive fix is certain to save on heating bills, and keep you warm in the colder months.

CUT BACK ON WATER USAGE

Simply by turning the tap off while brushing your teeth, you can save up to 200 gallons of water per month. Replacing baths with showers saves approximately 45 to 60 gallons of water per shower.



SHOPPING

Keep an active shopping list to keep you on track to buy what you need, rather than what you may need. Check out the free app Wunderlist which enables you to not only make a shopping list, but share it with others so they can also add items from their phone.

REDUCE UNUSED EXPENSES

Take a look at what you do not use. If you do not use all of your television channels, a simple downgrade can save hundreds of pounds. Cancel unwanted magazine subscriptions, online automatic account renewals and unused gym memberships.





A COMFORTING

hygge

What springs to mind when you think of Denmark? Pastries, perhaps. A frozen fjord, and the liberal linguistic use of Ks and Js? Quite possibly. But this past year has thrown up a word that is as intrinsically Danish as a Mute Swan chowing down on a Kringle as it floats serenely through a mountain river: hygge.

Having worked its way onto the *Oxford English Dictionary* Word of the Year shortlist, hygge is roughly translated as the crucial part of Danish culture that revolves around comfort and contentment. It's all about making the ordinary special; take some time out of your hectic everyday life in order to eschew technology in favour of lighting candles, brewing tea and gathering the whole family for a meal.

Of course, the origins of hygge are enshrouded within the eternal struggle between the Danish people and the country's harsh winters. With up to 17 hours of the day in darkness during winter, hygge has helped alleviate the potential for negative effects on Danes' mental health due to the all-encompassing cold season. Having said that, perhaps it is through hygge that the people

of Scandinavia have achieved their enduring status as some of the world's happiest people despite a winter that would even have the cast of *Game of Thrones* reaching for their long-johns.

If you've ever settled down with a cup of hot chocolate to watch *The Killing* dressed in abundant knitwear of varying thicknesses, you're already a practitioner of hygge. If you like to banish the icy tendrils of a December night with a duvet, some scented candles and a vat of pumpkin soup, you're in the midst of hygge.

So pull that oversized scarf around you and get ready to see the world beamed at you from every festive shop display this Christmas, enticing you inside to indulge in all manner of cinnamon-scented haberdashery and soft furnishings. It appears hygge is here to stay...



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Christmas at home

It may be cold and grey outside but with Christmas just around the corner there is no reason why the interior of your home can't be a riot of colour and light. Here are some decorative ideas to make your home feel special over the holiday season.

Nordic nuance



This lovely lantern mixes Scandinavian tradition with contemporary design. The effect of the candle light shining through the little cut-out windows is strikingly beautiful. £20 from www.scandinavianshop.co.uk

Berry nice



This circular wreath is made up of intertwined twigs with contrasting winter berry and green moss bands. It's weather resistant and made from acrylic. £26 from the www.tch.net

Sweet suggestion



This Gingerbread Man bunting garland is fun and a little bit different to traditional Christmas designs.

Perfect for a child's bedroom,

the kitchen, wrapped around a Christmas tree or looped on a window. Bunting is £11.95 from www.prezzybox.com

Vintage baubles



Add an elegant touch to Christmas with this set of glass Antique Hema Christmas Baubles.

They are mouth-blown by artisans, adding a striking finish to a rustic Christmas tree. £12.95

for a set of three from www.dassie.co.uk

A bit crackers



No Christmas is complete without crackers... www.idyllhome.co.uk bring a refreshing change to the traditional green and red, with their sparkly words, neon colours and fringe detail. Pack of six costs £17.50.

Wrap it up!

When it comes to wrapping you really don't need to break the bank. There are some great gift packs out there which represent value for money, while still stylish and eye-catching. But why not be a bit different and either make your own or use up some old paper you already have with these great budget-busting ideas?

NEWSPAPER

You are probably thinking this is useless. Fear not, this will save paper, look unique and add texture to your presents.

- Use larger sheets to wrap boxes
- Cut sheets into six or seven equal strips. When you have a few that look like large laces or spaghetti, you're ready to make bows
- Hold all the strips together so they are equal widths apart in your hand. Pinch in the centre of the bunch and stick with tape. Stick the centre to the centre of your present box
- You'll now have flowing strips either side, carefully tuck them under each other and fan out and stick the ends together and to the top of the present box. be sure to make sure the tape is hidden under the bows/fan
- Add a pre made bow in a metallic colour to the top. Hey presto!

BROWN PAPER

Wrapping paper from the post office is usually used to wrap parcels and home shopping returns. But it makes for smart-looking festive wrapping. Team with red or gold for a great Christmas look.

SCARVES

Scarves make for a great finish to any wrapped gift. Use them instead of ribbon to finish pre-wrapped gifts. Silk scarves work best as they have a slinky feel and luxurious look when tied in a bow.

If you are wrapping something round or oval, use scarves to wrap the entire present, no need to pre-wrap in paper. Envelop your egg, ball or round shaped item in the middle of the scarf. Bunch up the top and tie tightly so you have lots of the material fanning out at the top. Either tie in a big bow, or use another scarf or ribbon to tie around the gathered material.

Complement the colours, combining heavy patterns with plain and solid colours.

TISSUE PAPER

Tissue paper is not used often enough when wrapping. It's cheap, easy to find, comes in an array of colours.

- If you are wrapping a box, use at least three layers of tissue paper as it tears easily
- Always finish off your tissue wrapped box or gift with a contrasting material for the ribbon or bow
- For egg-shaped items, oval or circular, wrap like a Christmas cracker

So there you have it, wrapping can be fun and creative and you can even delve into your old wardrobe for material to wrap with! It's really simple and wrapping gets easier with practise.



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Feng Shui FOR BEGINNERS



HOME & DIY

Feng shui is an ancient art and science developed over 3,000 years ago in China. It takes the approach that your surroundings affect not only your level of material comfort, but also your physical and mental health, relationships and success.

Composed of two Chinese words; feng (wind) and shui (water), it is thought that a living environment should be designed in harmony with these two basic elements.

Here are some helpful feng shui steps for beginners:

1. Clear Out Your Clutter

Get rid of anything you no longer love in your house, enabling you to re-organise and create a harmonious environment for feng shui energy.

2. Use Natural Light and Improve Air Quality

Open windows and introduce plants to freshen the air. Allow natural light into the house, or use full-spectrum lights.

3. Define Your Bagua

As shown in the diagram, your house is split into eight sections named 'Bagua'. These are determined by the direction they face. Each section of the house is connected to specific areas of your life.

4. Understand the 5 Feng Shui Elements

To create balance in all areas of your home, you should introduce the correct elements. The five elements; wood, fire, earth, metal, and water each link to an area of your life. For example, the wood element relates to natural growth and vibrant health.

5. Find Out Your Birth Element and Kua Number

From this, you can find your own element and embrace it, using particular colours and directions to support your energy and create feng shui within your home.

After you have mastered these five home feng shui steps, you can explore the deeper levels of feng shui. Start with the basic steps, have fun and enjoy the process.





HOME & DIY

A FIREPLACE TO *light up your life*

There's nothing quite like snuggling up in front of a fire on a cold winter night with friends, family and loved ones. Fireplaces are found in homes of all sizes and make for the perfect centrepiece, adding a cosy feel to any room.

Incorporating a fireplace into your home will not only provide heat and light but bring ambience. For the desired effect, choose the perfect fireplace to fit your style and needs.

The main thing to consider before settling with a fireplace is the purpose you intend to have it for. Are you looking for a reliable source of heat, or the perfect centrepiece for the room?

There are a variety of fireplaces available, from the classic wood-burning to purely decorative fireplaces, and each has their own strengths and drawbacks.

The lowest-maintenance is the electric fireplace. Ideal for smaller rooms and usually ready-built, electric fireplaces will bring the beauty of a fireplace with no need for a chimney. But beware;

they may increase those electricity bills.

The traditional wood-burning fire will bring an authentic, rustic feel to any home. The crackling sound of logs burning on the fire, and radiating heat is bound to bring cosy warmth. The drawbacks of having a wood fire indoors include heat flowing back up the chimney, constant provision of fuel, and having to have the chimney regularly cleaned.

Gas fires provide a radiant heat without the inconvenience or smell of burning wood. It is important to choose a gas fireplace with the highest efficiency rating to avoid an increase in gas bills, as fireplaces can be fuelled by either gas lines or gas tanks.

There are a range of options in terms of appearance, from the insert to the trim. For example, light colours are more likely to discolour over time, especially in wood-burning fireplaces.

There is a lot to consider when choosing your perfect fireplace, but these tips should set you well on your way to making the right decision for you.



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CREATE YOUR OWN...

Edible cookie wreath

Every year, homes are decorated for Christmas, with many hanging wreaths on their doors. Originally a symbol for everlasting life, **VISION** has a recipe for a wreath with a difference. But be warned, it may taste so good it won't last forever.

MAKING THE COOKIES

Ingredients

- 125g butter, softened
- 100g light brown soft sugar
- 125g caster sugar
- 1 egg lightly beaten
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 225g self-raising flour
- ½ tsp salt
- 200g chocolate chips

Method

- Preheat the oven to 180°C/ 350°F/ Gas mark 4
- Cream butters and sugars. Then combine with the egg and vanilla, mixing well
- Sift in the flour and salt, adding the chocolate chips. Fold mixture together
- Roll the mixture and flatten, cutting into your desired leaf shapes using leaf shaped cutters
- Place on ungreased baking paper, cooking in the oven for seven minutes for delicious doughy

cookies, or 10 minutes for a more crunchy cookie

- Take cookies out of the oven, leaving to harden for a minute before transferring to a wire cooling rack.

DECORATING YOUR COOKIES

You will need:

- Coloured ready to roll icing blocks
- Icing sugar paste
- Leaf shaped Cutters and toothpicks

Method

- Roll out the icing thinly, cutting into leaf shapes
- Apply a thin layer of icing sugar paste to the cookies, then place your rolled out leaf shape icing onto the cookie
- Decorate your cookies using toothpicks to create your leaf affect.

CREATING THE WREATH

You will need:

- One nine-inch diameter cardboard circle
- Your cookies
- Icing sugar paste and a ribbon

Directions

- Apply blobs of icing to your cardboard and arrange your cookies in a wreath shape, leaving to set
- Add a ribbon to decorate.



FEARLESSLY Festive

The smell of roast chestnuts and mulled wine, trays of warm mince pies with brandy butter and enormous dinners are some of the many joys that make Christmas special. But if you're someone who struggles with their weight, those same things can evoke fear.

Well fret not, with these handy tips you can survive the party season whilst still having fun.

Smart Swaps – If your calendar is chock-a-bloc with festive soirees, the calories and alcohol units can really start to accumulate. Choose prosecco and champagne over wine as they are lower in sugar (and calories), and vodka with soda and fresh lime is a far healthier option than creamy cocktails and eggnog.

Fat absorbs alcohol far better than carbs so go for canapes like shrimp or pate that are high in protein, and alternate each glass of booze with water.

Fill Up On The Good Stuff – For all the decadence, there are also plenty of healthy festive foods. For Christmas lunch have a soup

starter to fill you up and make sure your main plate is piled high with roasted veg. Try snacking on fruit and nuts throughout the day, and remember, Christmas pudding is packed with fruit so you can afford to indulge (just go easy on the brandy butter!).

Think Whilst You Eat - Recent research suggests we consume around 3,000 calories in our Christmas dinner – more than an entire day's recommended intake! Try eating slowly and be aware of when you're full, even taking an eating break mid-meal.

Don't Be A Christmas Couch Potato – Crimbo telly may be enthralling but try to get some exercise. Go for a big walk, play an elaborate game of twister or charades and dance to Slade.

Don't Stress – Stress raises blood sugar which in turn makes you eat more. Whilst gift buying, hosting and family navigating can be stressful it's not worth losing your mind over all the tasks that fall on you. So breathe, make time for yourself and enjoy the season.



Roast Chicken with Lemon



The classic roast chicken is always a family favourite. Although it can be intimidating to cook, once you've learnt the timings and how to check your chicken is ready, it's a recipe you can use for life. Here's a recipe for lemon roast chicken, which is a delicious twist on the classic.

INGREDIENTS:

1 whole chicken | 1/2 lemon | Butter
Salt and pepper

METHOD:

- ▶ Pre-heat the oven to 200°C/392°F/Gas mark 6.
- ▶ Take the chicken and remove any giblets that

may be in the cavity. You can of course buy whole chickens with the giblets already removed. Put the half lemon into the chicken cavity and smear butter over the whole bird. Season with salt and pepper

- ▶ Cook the chicken uncovered for 20 minutes per half a kilo, with an extra 30 minutes for good measure. Sometimes the chicken packet may actually tell you the cooking time but this is a great guide nonetheless. To make sure the chicken is cooked, give the legs a prod to see if the juices run clear or cut into the breast to see if the meat is white.

SERVINGS AND TIMINGS DEPENDS ON THE SIZE OF CHICKEN.

The Perfect Roast Potato

If you nail cooking roast potatoes, you're half way there to making an amazing roast. Here are our top tips for making the best crispy roast potatoes.

INGREDIENTS:

SERVES 4 | 1 HOUR | EASY

1kg potatoes (such as Maris Piper), peeled and chopped
Olive oil or goose fat | 1tbsp semolina

METHOD:

- ▶ Heat your oven to 200°C/392°F/Gas mark 6. It's important that the oil is hot, hot, hot. Put the fat in a roasting pan, making sure it covers the entire pan. If you don't have Goose fat you can use olive oil or rapeseed oil, it works just as well

- ▶ Heat the oil in the roasting pan in the oven for a good 15 minutes, or while you are preparing the potatoes

- ▶ Parboil your potatoes; place them in a pan cover with water and bring to the boil for five minutes

- ▶ Once parboiled, drain the potatoes and return to the pan. Shake a tablespoon of semolina over them. Put the lid on the pan and then shake so all the potatoes are coated with the semolina. This will give them a crispy outside. Remove the roasting pan from the oven and carefully tip the potatoes into the hot fat – if you're fat is hot enough, the potatoes will sizzle and spit

- ▶ Once cooked, place potatoes onto kitchen paper, to absorb excess oil or fat.



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FOOD & DRINK

Mulled Wine Cocktail

INGREDIENTS:

- 100g light muscovado sugar
- 1 star anise
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 4 cloves
- 250ml water
- 1 lemon
- 2 clementines
- 150ml Cointreau
- 750ml/1 pint bottle light red wine, such as Beaujolais
- Twist of orange zest and a star anise, to serve

METHOD:

- ▶ Put 100g light muscovado sugar in a pan with 1 star anise, 1 cinnamon stick, 4 cloves and 150ml water
- ▶ Bring to the boil slowly and keep stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Works well in a mug or tankard
- ▶ Simmer for two mins, then pour into a large jug and leave to cool
- ▶ Add one lemon and two clementines, both thinly sliced, to the jug along with 150ml Cointreau and a 750ml bottle light red wine, such as a Beaujolais. Stir well, then cover and chill for at least two hours but overnight works best
- ▶ This can be served over ice, or warmed up. Either way, garnish with star anise and orange zest.

Amaretto Fizz

INGREDIENTS: 400ml Disaronno (or Amaretto flavoured spirit), 600ml orange juice, 2 bottles of sparkling wine or Prosecco, orange zest

METHOD: This is an easy one. Mix the Disaronno or Amaretto flavoured alcohol with the orange juice, stir well. Ideally use a flute.

To with the sparkling wine and garnish with orange zest. Now drink and enjoy!

White Christmas

INGREDIENTS: 100ml vanilla vodka, 160ml coconut cream, 1/2 tsp nutmeg, 1 tbsp Creme de Cacao, desiccated coconut for decoration

METHOD: Another easy one. Pop all the ingredients into a shaker, or a blender if you don't have one. Shake well with cubes of ice, or blend with one cube of ice so you don't make it too watery.

Once combined, pour into milk bottles or glass jars. Stick in a straw, sprinkle with nutmeg and desiccated coconut and enjoy!



JENNIFER ANISTON

She's Still Standing

Photo Credits: PA Images

As the magnificent Jennifer Aniston returns to the big screen in laugh-out-loud comedy *Office Christmas Party*, she reveals just how she keeps her cool in the face of adversity and why this is a new phase for the ex-*Friends* star.

"I'm like the Grinch, who wants to steal Christmas away from these hard-working employees who are not doing as good of a job as they should be doing. I know that I'm right. I just don't go about it the right way," says actress Jennifer Aniston, referring not her own festive crankiness, but the character she plays in her new film, *Office Christmas Party*.

In reality, the 47-year-old star is irrepressibly breezy and upbeat; a miracle considering the beating she has taken from the media in the last decade. Constant scrutiny over her appearance, pregnancy status and, of course, relationships, would drive a lesser person insane. Even the recent frenzy over her imagined delight at the divorce of ex-husband Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie is offensive to a woman who has in her own words, "worked too hard to be reduced to nothing but tabloid fodder".

"I consider myself a very optimistic and positive person," reveals the California native.

"I want to be able to be caring and understanding of the people I love. I want to enjoy their company and spend good time with people. It's so easy to find things to worry about or complain about and I've learnt over the years that you don't need to waste time being negative. You can choose to enjoy your life and not struggle so much."

Returning to her finest comedy form, Aniston plays the tough-minded CEO who is tasked with closing down an ailing branch of the company. She comes up against two hapless employees – including her *Horrible Bosses* co-star Jason Bateman – who are convinced an epic Christmas bash can save their jobs. Aniston is hilarious as the uptight CEO and it's refreshing to see her cut loose having become synonymous with playing the sweet, loveable 'girl next door' since her breakout role on *Friends*. Yet, on reflection, the star has only love for the beloved sitcom: "It was awesome. It was the greatest 10 years. It struck a nerve with people and continues to be a hit. It's so special to be a part of something like that."

In her private life Aniston is markedly more relaxed compared to the roles she occupies in public view, and appeared effortlessly contented in her relationship with actor Justin Theroux, whom she married last year. "We have so much fun together. It was nice to learn how to relinquish control and let someone really care deeply for you... it's quite wonderful," she says openly.

Aniston has also learnt to enjoy the little things in life, too. "Having a good conversation over a bottle of wine is about as magical an experience as you can have when you're in the moment and allowing yourself to enjoy things.

"This is the happiest time in my life. It's pretty extraordinary!"



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A TREE IS FOR LIFE

not just Christmas

If the yearly street-dumping of your beloved Christmas tree always makes you sad and pondering an eco-friendly alternative, then read on.

The yearly Christmas tree conundrum. A choice between dragging a synthetic, tangled mess out of box from under your stairs only for it to sit sadly in the corner of your lounge for a month; or, paying a fortune for some magnificent fir that will slowly wither and die all over your carpet.

If only there existed an option that had festive lustre and (hopefully) longevity, like a potted Christmas tree you can replant then use again next year...

PICKING YOUR TREE

Try to find a good, reputable grower, and remember, organic is always better. Choose a tree that has a good, well-developed root ball - a mark that the tree has been well cared for and is more likely to thrive. Make sure the needles are in good condition - if they're already dropping, it's a bad sign. And go for the hardier option over beauty. Douglas Fir and Norway Spruce, whilst looking lovely, are not as resilient as the less-attractive Thuja.

CARING FOR YOUR TREE

For the length of time your tree is inside all you need to do is make sure that it is well watered (with drainage) and has enough earth. If you have time and space, put your tree in a shed for a few days to bridge the gap between the chilly outside world and the warmth inside your home, before planting.

REPLANTING

Unsurprisingly, a Christmas tree is not unlike most outdoor plants and for it to survive only two conditions need to be met. Firstly, an intact root system is essential, for obvious reasons. Secondly, you must ensure your triangular triumph gets the right amount of water throughout the year.

Follow the advice above and, all being well, your fabulous fir will be bringing you festive cheer for many years to come. Well...at least for longer than that pair of Paisley socks.



GARDENING



LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Christmas starts with a bang

Hemel Hempstead officially started the build up to Christmas last month with a huge community celebration to mark the lights being switched on along The Marlowes.

A flurry of free activities kicked off the show at 12pm on November 27 for both older and younger children. There were snowboarding taster sessions, real reindeer and even Santa himself.

Acts appeared live on Hemel's Rainbow Stage in New Town Square throughout the afternoon. Magician and entertainer Dave Allen compered and performed himself, while sirens of swing The Rockabellas and local group The Rock Choir pulled in the crowds.

New Town Square was at full capacity by the time headline act and *Britain's Got Talent* finalist Balance Unity took to the stage. Balance – also known as Taylor Goodridge – performed a specially choreographed dance routine for his hometown of Hemel Hempstead

and spent time meeting and dancing with local fans.

Both Balance and Allen then organised the light countdown while filming a mannequin challenge with volunteers on stage. A fireworks finale ended the day with a bang.

Councillor Graham Sutton, portfolio holder for planning and regeneration at Dacorum Borough Council, attended the event. He said: "Everything was perfect, the entertainment, lights and fireworks – and it was enjoyed by thousands. I've never seen so many people in the town, which is a real testament to the effect of Dacorum's Hemel evolution regeneration work, and to the efforts put in by local businesses. What a way to start the festive season."

If you were unable to attend the special day, you can still enjoy Christmas activities at The Marlowes and Riverside shopping centres throughout December.

Hemel children's charity boosted after donation



Local children's charity Playskill was presented with a cheque for £2,500 at their Hemel Special Needs Playgroup last month.

The donation came from TK Maxx in Watford after Eszter Ellis, business charge manager of the town branch, made an application to the TK Maxx Community Fund.

She revealed: "My daughter has developmental delay, she started at Playskill when she was 18-months-old and she learnt to stand up, walk and sign her needs. It's the best intensive therapy we could dream of."

The £2,500 cheque was accepted by Andrea Clarke, founder and director of Playskill.

She said: "The money raised will go towards invaluable services provided by Playskill, a specialist chair and other equipment to support the children's access to therapy, learning and play opportunities."

You can register your interest in Playskill's services online at www.playskill.org or by calling on 07572 465504.

Police return over £20,000 to victim of conmen

A woman in Hemel Hempstead who was conned out of £23,000 by fraudsters has had the money returned to her.

In April 2015, officers from Herts Police Operation Manhunt unit started an investigation into a series of fraud offences against elderly victims in the town.

Police received reports that a group of men had approached the occupants at three addresses and stated that urgent roof repairs needed to be carried out. The work was completely unnecessary.

No money was handed over by any of the victims and two men were arrested in connection with the offences a short time later.

Subsequent enquiries identified an incident in Aylesbury where a couple aged 86 and 84 were defrauded out of £23,000 in a similar roofing scam.

Both men pleaded guilty to the offences at

Harrow Crown Court in June this year and were sentenced to two years in prison.

Last month, all £23,000 was ordered to be paid back to the victim.

The victim, said: "I was completely astonished when I found out the money was being returned to me. I am enormously grateful to the police for the support they have given me throughout, to get the money returned."

She added: "Even though you may feel foolish that you have been taken advantage of, I would urge people to report these incidents to police, to try prevent offenders targeting anyone else."

Magician's tricky skydive breaks world record



Guinness World Record? Check. Money raised for charity? Of course – it was just another day in the life of Hemel magician Martin Rees, who took the phrase 'two birds with one stone' to new heights last month.

At GoSkydive in Wiltshire, the 28-year-old set an incredible new record for the most magic tricks performed in a single skydive.

The thrill-seeking entertainer completed an amazing 11 magic tricks while on a 15,000ft skydive over Salisbury on November 17, otherwise known as the Guinness World Records Day.

The attempt was overseen on the ground by official Guinness World Records adjudicator Pravin Patel, with the help of GoPro footage taken from Martin's helmet and another skydiver.

Martin took on this challenge to raise money for Spread a Smile, a charity which brings entertainment to children at hospitals including Great Ormond Street Hospital.

You can donate to the cause on Martin's Go Fund Me page by visiting <http://bit.ly/2fOAMjW>

This is the second time Martin has made history with his magic tricks this year. The inspirational magician made history in May, having performed eight tricks in a 144mph wind tunnel.





Man sentenced to 12 years in prison for rape



Leys Road on Easter Monday, this year. It is common for locals who have been to the pub to give others a lift to the bottom of the hill. Padure, who was not known to the victim, pulled up near to her and offered her a lift home. The victim gave directions but Padure ignored her and drove her to the rear of a shopping centre before raping her. Following the attack, Padure acted as though nothing had happened and drove the victim home. She asked if she could borrow his phone to call her son but dialled 999. The call was terminated. As they approached the woman's house, her husband was waiting outside and so Padure drove on some distance before letting the woman out. Detective Sergeant David Taylor, from the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Major Crime Unit, said: "This was an absolutely horrendous and violent attack during which the victim believed Padure may kill her. Understandably she was terrified and at one point considered opening the door of the car whilst it was moving to escape. "She has been extremely brave in supporting the investigation and ensuring this very dangerous man is facing a long time in prison. I would like to thank her."

A man was sentenced to 12 years in prison last month for raping a woman in Hemel Hempstead. Stefan Padure, 31, of Windmill Road, attacked his victim when he was giving her a lift home after she had spent the evening in the Greenacres Tavern in



'I took them out of the darkness and made their memory alive again'

Until recently, many people in Hemel Hempstead and beyond wouldn't have known that there was a war memorial just opposite the steps to Apsley station. But thanks to the efforts of a local woman and a team of volunteers, people can now stop and pay tribute to dozens of employees from the John Dickinson Mill who made the ultimate sacrifice in the First World War. Denise Osler Briden stood proudly on recently as she and local MP, Mike Penning recently opened the new war memorial and landscaped area. Denise told **VISION**Hemel that the story started when her cousin began researching her family tree. She explained: "I had two great cousins who served as privates in the First World War along with a great uncle. I also found out that the cousins worked at the John Dickinson Mill, the biggest local employer at the time at three different sites. There is a roll of honour in Nash Mills and my parents had a picture of the cross and plaque in Apsley. I told my dad I would drive to Apsley and look for it." After Denise saw the tip of the memorial poking over a thick hedge, she walked round to the stone structure and found her relatives' names. She said: "All I felt was sadness. They fought for our freedom and liberty, never came home and here

they were in the shadows. Their memory was in darkness." After winning the support of The Paper Trail, who own the land, Denise set about renovating the garden as a serene, peaceful place and appealed for volunteers. She said: "The response was fantastic but on the first day it was just me and one other lady. We had just two weeks to do this and we never gave up." When the memorial was unveiled recently, Denise said she had some mixed emotions. She explained: "I was so happy because it was in such a mess and I'm really proud of everyone who helped me. This started out as a personal thing but ended up being for everyone listed on that memorial. I took them out of the darkness and could feel them all smiling. Their memory was alive again. "It was a true honour. They were so young and they deserved to be remembered." Mike Penning, Hemel Hempstead MP, said he was thrilled to attend the ceremony. He commented: "I am delighted to have been invited to open the memorial garden. Denise has done a terrific job. It is vital that we remember the sacrifices made on our behalf and learn the lessons so that we never again see war in Europe on such a massive scale."

Max Whitlock nominated for BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2016



Max Whitlock has been nominated for the BBC Sports Personality of the Year Award 2016. The Hemel Hempstead born and raised gymnast, 23, broke several records at the Rio Olympics this summer. One memorable day saw him secure two golds in the space of 90 minutes. He gained Britain's first Olympic gymnastics gold with victory in the men's floor before later pipping teammate Louis Smith to triumph in the pommel horse. Earlier in the Games, Whitlock had won Team GB's first all-around gymnastics Olympics medal in 108 years, taking bronze. Whitlock has been nominated twice before, coming seventh in 2014 and eighth last year. A gymnast has never won the award, so residents will be hoping that he breaks yet another record. Although betting agencies have Whitlock at the forefront of most Olympians and Paralympians on the shortlist, it seems public opinion greatly favours Andy Murray to complete the first Sports Personality hat-trick in history after his incredible run over the calendar year. The award ceremony is broadcast live on BBC One on December 18. The winners have yet to be revealed at the time of going to press.

Jess Stretton earns Young Sports Personality of the Year nomination



Max Whitlock wasn't the only local athlete with a nomination from the BBC, as Paralympic archer Jess Stretton got a nod for the BBC Young Sports Personality of the Year Award.

The Rio Games were the 16-year-old's first taste of Paralympic glory. She smashed the competition by winning an individual gold in the Q1 archery event, setting a new Paralympic record despite being the youngest competitor on the field.

Jess had also claimed silver at the Faza International Para Championships, setting a world record in an earlier round.

What is remarkable is that Jess only took up the sport back in 2012 when she attended a Wheelpower Junior Games camp.

With both Jess and Max Whitlock being former Longdean School pupils, many will be asking what the teachers put in the water.

Regardless, it's been a year to remember for Hemel residents and hopefully the town's sporting cabinet can claim one more trophy.

Traveller who exposed himself to schoolgirls is jailed

A traveller who exposed himself to two schoolgirls in Hemel Hempstead has been jailed.

Thomas Calladine, 41, carried out the act in front of the young teenagers while smiling and waving.

Prosecutor Laura Blackband said that the girls, aged 15 and 13, were walking home from school along Fletcher Way on April 30, 2014.

She said: "The defendant was standing next to a white van. His trousers were around his ankles. He waved at them, but they ignored him.

"They said he raced off in his van but returned,

opened a window and threw a pornographic magazine of a naked adult woman at them while still exposing himself.

When Calladine turned his vehicle around, the younger girl was able to take a picture on her phone and it was later used by the police to identify him.

Calladine appeared for sentence from HMP Altcourse where he is serving a 12 week sentence for driving while disqualified, drink driving, obstructing an officer and having no insurance.

At a trial in his absence last November (2015) he had been convicted of exposure.

Defending, John Marchant said his client was of previous good character. He said he was married with two children, had no history of sexual offences and had always worked.

Jailing him for seven months, the sentence will be consecutive to the one he is serving. Calladine must also register as a sex offender for five years.

Tragic death at railway station 'not suspicious'



A person was pronounced dead after being struck by a train at Hemel Hempstead railway station last month.

Police and paramedics were alerted to the incident at 2.32pm and the victim was declared dead at the scene. At the time of writing, officers are now working to identify the person so they can inform their family.

British Transport Police confirmed that the incident is not being treated as suspicious and a file was being prepared for the coroner.

However, Hemel Hempstead was soon closed off to the public. Coaches were ordered to cover the shortage of trains in the area.

One commuter told **VISION**Hemel: "The train delays from Hemel into London were a nightmare as I was planning to attend a concert. I ended up having to drive, which took three and a half hours. However, another friend commuting a similar distance took six hours to get into London."

Transforming Day to Night

As winter sets in and the days get shorter, so does the working day. Out come the Christmas parties and the end of year drinks and, of course, you are left with a packed diary that doesn't allow you the usual couple of hours to get your glad rags on.

Women tend to travel with their make-up bags as close to them as possible so, when the occasion arises, they can touch and retouch and so forth.

During the festive season, there are endless opportunities to glam yourself after work and this can often be tricky if you don't want to take your entire vanity case and treasure trove of make-up and hair straighteners to work.

Here are some tips and tricks to transform your look from day to night in a matter of minutes:

1. TIDY UP

After a day at the office your make-up can often look a little faded and creased in places such as on the eyelids and under the eyes. Use blotting papers to take away the sheen and use your foundation or bronzer brush to sweep over your entire face.

2. DARK EYE SHADOW OR LINER

Always vamp up your daytime make-up as it makes you look more glamorous. Use a darker shade of

all over your eyelid or for just the corners, or apply a dark top and bottom liner. This will make your eyes more visible and appear less tired.

3. WHITE LINER

A white liner is usually used on the inside of your bottom eye lid to make your eyes appear wider. If you don't have a white liner use a normal eyeliner to accentuate the inner corner of your eyes.

4. BRONZER OR ILLUMINATING POWDER

Apply all over your face remembering to re-brush your eyebrows so they don't have make-up in them. This will give you a glow. Don't bother with blusher unless you already had some on, as this gets lost in the evening.

5. GLITTER

Now you don't need to go overboard, but if you have a pot of it, dab it in the far corner of your eyes or along the cheekbones. Try and use a neutral or gold colour, rather than a bold colour or black. If you only have black glitter, just use a little on the eyelids on top of your eye shadow.

6. GLOSS

Now this is a must. Use a highly pigmented or glittery gloss to finish your look.





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CHRISTMAS Jumper CRAZY

At this time of year there's nothing more tempting than to break out your winter wardrobe and of course, the obligatory festive woolly. For many, the Christmas jumper has become a staple for the festive season and even stretch to updating their wardrobes with a new one every year. Some say that the winter woolly may have overtaken the turkey in the most popular items in the season.

The high street are not exempt from the craze, most retailers bring out a new range of Christmas jumpers as part of their Winter offering for men and women.

What was for the kids has now become an all-round fashion must-have every winter and the weirdest and wackiest prints and accessories are all up for the taking.

There is a difference between the genders however, the women's versions tend to be a lot more reserved, with winter and animals being the main focus. Men's Christmas jumpers are a lot more adventurous, going whole-heartedly for the festive theme and even adding attachments, bells, bobbles and humorous slogans.

The one thing it doesn't have to be is distasteful, with more glitter and tinsel than a Christmas tree. The craze isn't contained to the UK, the Christmas jumper market has also taken the US by storm and as well as the high streets, they can be found littering market stalls across the UK, continental Europe and the US.

Businesses are getting involved more and more and with charity campaigns such as the Save the Children's Christmas Jumper Day, there are endless reasons to don one at least once or twice over the period.

So come on, get involved, don't be shy and see how cute, cuddly or damn right bizarre you can be! It's only here for a few weeks, so don't miss the fun!



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Watch your *waistline* this winter

When the mercury drops and the nights draw in early, the temptation is to hibernate. But before you put your feet up for the month of December, stop and consider how you will look and feel in January. A study from Georgetown University has shown that taking three to eight weeks off from your regular exercise regime can decrease fitness levels by 20 per cent. If you have made a real effort all year, don't let your hard work slide in the lead up to Christmas. Here are some tips to keep fit and healthy this winter.

Set some goals

Rather than wait until January 1 for new year resolutions, start early by signing up to an event or race. Commit to a 10k or half marathon in February or March so you have to keep training through the winter.

Try something new

If traipsing to the gym a couple of times a week fills you with dread, try something new. Indoor climbing, Bikram yoga, squash or spinning are ideal options which will keep you moving.

Warm up

Your body has to work harder, meaning more calories are burnt to adjust to the cooler air outside. Make sure you warm up properly, jogging on the spot or doing star jumps indoors before you head outside.

Stay hydrated

You don't see your sweat losses in the winter like you do in the summer, but it is still important to stay hydrated so drink plenty of water.

Spice up your life

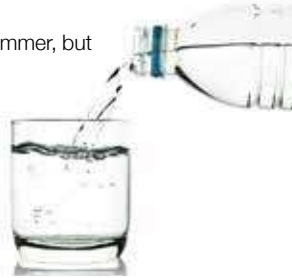
When it's cold, it's tempting to reach for the stodge. Make an effort to turn instead to spices to add interest to your food. Cinnamon, cumin, coriander, turmeric, peppercorns, chilli and mustard seeds are all worth a try.

Reward yourself - but not with food

When you reach a goal, whether it is a certain number of workouts or distance, then treat yourself. But don't do this with food. Splurge on a piece of kit or clothing you have had your eye on.

Eat before you party

If you are heading out for Christmas drinks, eat something healthy and filling before you go, so you are less tempted by the sausage rolls and crisps floating around.



COOL RUNNINGS

Ten reasons the winter weather shouldn't put you off your finest running form.

* ONE

You burn more calories: The onset of winter usually means more unpredictable weather and whilst those pesky blusters can be initially frustrating, the extra wind resistance means more effort and greater rewards.

* TWO

You sweat less: The colder the weather, the less heat stress on the body, which makes it significantly easier to run. Running in hot and humid weather is extremely taxing on the body, which is why most marathons are held away from those scorching summer months.

* THREE

Breathing's easier: If you suffer from hay fever, running in summer is almost impossible, but in winter pollen is at its lowest.

* FOUR

You'll be less SAD: If you're prone to Seasonal Affective Disorder, then running can be a great mood booster, releasing those dreamy endorphins and providing some much-needed head space.

* FIVE

Tech is essential: What better reason to invest in a running watch or new iPod than fitness motivation? And these gadgets are at their cheapest as winter approaches.

* SIX

It's a sensory experience: The leaves are golden and crisp underfoot, there is a light mist in the air and the lingering smell of burning wood. Far from being bleak, running in winter can be magical. It's also a fact that running in the dark feels faster and is better for the brain, so off you go!

* SEVEN

You'll be Crimbo party ready: Whilst everyone else is squeezing into their party outfits after weeks of gorging on chocolate and Netflix

marathons, you'll be toned, glowing and rocking those leather trousers.

* EIGHT

You look cooler: With such an array of stylish winter sportswear on the market, exercise has never been more on trend. So pull on those printed thermal leggings, layer up with high-tech sweaters and rock that snood.

* NINE

The streets are empty: If you've ever fantasised about waking up in an abandoned city like Cillian Murphy's character in *28 days Later*, going for a run at 5am in December is about as close as you'll ever get.

* TEN

Christmas is guilt free: Festive bragging rights are yours, as is that last mince pie...



HEATHROW

TAKE-OFF



Now the government has given the go-ahead for the implementation of a new runway at Heathrow, dividing opinion and prompting the resignation of former Mayor of London candidate and Conservative MP Zac Goldsmith, the question remains: after years of demands, debates and dragging of feet, what impact will this latest ruling have on the ongoing Heathrow hullabaloo?

Essentially, the latest decision means Heathrow has been officially chosen as the site of the proposed runway, but there will still be a whole host of public consultations and debates between MPs before the scheduled end to the planning process in 2020.

The target is to have a new 3,500m runway operational by 2026, at a cost of a whopping

£17.6billion. The scale of financial investment has been a topic of hot debate. Currently, airports are funded by their passengers rather than the taxpayer, and both the Airports Commission and airline trade body BATA have made it clear that air travel prices should not rise exponentially to cover the cost of a runway that won't be available for at least a decade.

It is hoped that with a third runway in place, Heathrow will be able to compete with larger international rivals, but the plan has been hit by snag after snag. First up is the space needed, which will probably see many residents in the Longford, Harmondsworth and Sipson areas of London having their properties compulsorily purchased to make room. Then there is the question of convoluted flight-paths: pilots say the

descent into Heathrow is already a bit difficult, and the increased capacity will only further muddle the paths they can take into London's biggest airport.

Then there are the arguments from opposing MPs – including Education Secretary Justine Greening and former Mayor of London Boris Johnson – and a fierce backlash from environmental campaigners who cite the greater air and noise pollution a third runway would invite, especially as pollution in the area around Heathrow already exceeds legal levels. While the government has assured the public that stringent environmental regulations will be met, these standards will need to be watertight in the face of likely legal challenges.

The economic benefits of expanding Heathrow are clear, with the airport currently running at 98 per cent capacity and handling 75 million

passengers a year, but another issue is that airports in France, Dubai and the Netherlands are threatening Heathrow's status as a major hub for passengers to transfer onto other flights.

What are the alternatives? Many campaigners have argued that high-speed rail networks such as those seen across Europe may provide a suitable replacement for the majority of short-haul flights, and Boris Johnson briefly mooted a new four-runway airport in the Thames Estuary. Though the commission's recent ruling solidifies Heathrow as airport-of-choice for this runway expansion, there's still an abundance of red tape to cut through – and BoJo's apparent pledge to lay down in front of the first bulldozers may well throw a belated haystack-haired spanner into the mix...





WINTERescapes

If the cold weather is getting you down why not treat yourself to a break in the sun? Here are four top destinations that will shatter the winter monotony without breaking the bank.

CUBA



Having recently thawed its relations with the US, Cuba is a popular destination once more. The biggest of all the Caribbean islands, it has all the balmy charms of its neighbours but less of the commercialism, making it a truly magical place. Head to Havana to marvel at the 16th century Hispanic architecture, or for a more leisurely experience there's the resort town of Varadero with over 20km of white sandy beaches.

LANZAROTE



Once branded with the unfortunate moniker 'Lanzagrotty' this stunning volcanic island has, over recent years, become a hotspot for the independent and adventurous traveller. Only four hours away by plane, this Canary Island boasts some spectacular, otherworldly scenery, making it ideal for hiking and scuba diving.

Of course there is still plenty of traditional sunshine isle fun to be had here, including the wild-west-themed Rancho Texas water park and the enormous Lanzarote Aquarium, making it the all-round family destination.

CANCUN, MEXICO



Whilst it has a reputation for being a party destination for drunk and unruly Spring-breakers, Cancun also reveals a relaxed and family friendly side. Many resorts host kids' clubs and some even have onsite water parks. For parents there are swathes of flawless beaches with aquamarine surf, ideal for snorkelling or simply relaxing. This Yucatan paradise is also the gateway to the ruins of Tulum and Chichén Itzá.

MOROCCO



If it's romance you're after, then head to Morocco. Bordered by Mauritania and Algeria, the climate, whilst not as warm as the Caribbean, is moderate and subtropical year-round. The main reason to visit though is to sample the country's rich, vibrant and largely unique culture. From the Labyrinthine and ancient Fez Medina to in Marrakesh's seemingly endless souks to the metropolitan bustle of Casablanca, Morocco cannot help but seduce the senses. Bazaars burst with aromatic foods and spices; narrow alleyways open out to magnificent squares with ornate fountains. and the whole country thrums with the music and rhythm of North Africa.

Your local travel agent will offer some great deals on these winter escapes.



The communication game raises a smile

I share a birthday with Jack Dee (although he is seven years older and approximately seven years grumpier than me). Apart from the fact that I do find his dry, sarcastic wit and deadpan delivery amusing, having this date in common creates an imaginary kinship in my mind. So when he appears on the telly, I always look up and smile. What has that to do with you (I hear you think in an uninspired, slightly bored, Jack Dee-style voice)?

Well, loads really, because you will know people (famous or not) that you share a birthday with too and will have formed a similar feeling of affinity with them. And I guarantee that someone will read this article and think 'that's odd, today is my birthday' (if that is you: have a good one). But this is not really about shared birthdays at all: my gift to you today is about harnessing familiarity to help build relationships.

Being conscious of this subconscious attraction to people (however tenuous) can significantly enhance the power of your communication: at home, at work, on the bus or in the queue at the supermarket. Clearly, birthday coincidences are a blue moon, but there will always be others: some subtle, some more obvious. Your job is to identify, highlight and engage those

seemingly serendipitous links and make the connection mean something.

Perhaps a new customer mentions a love of jazz, your neighbour always wears purple, or you could find a flavour of familiarity in your son's latest computer craze. Simply find the feeling, point it out if necessary, smile, and see what happens...

Powerful communication is an intricate game; but if performed well, maybe even Jack Dee might be persuaded to share a smile.



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Do you **UBER**?

Since its launch in 2009, the ride-sharing app Uber has not only revolutionised the taxi industry but also the way we think about public and private transport. So what's it all about?

Uber is an app that hands its users the power to hail a car from their location. It also negates the frantic night-time dash for taxi cash as Uber users can settle up via a card that is linked to their account. After the ride, both passengers and drivers are invited to rate each other on a scale of 1-5, thereby creating a network of trusted Uber users in order to foster a harmonious ride-sharing community.

Now worth a staggering \$70 billion, Uber is officially the world's most valuable start-up company in history, operating in over 60 countries. In the UK, Uber drivers can be found in London, Birmingham and Bristol among others – and that coverage is growing all the time.

But despite these incredible achievements, Uber has already divided opinion among both travellers and taxi drivers. Why?

First and foremost, an air of antagonism has appeared between taxi drivers (especially London's black cabbies) and Uber drivers. While Uber drivers can be everyday people, much like the app users who ride with them, London's taxi drivers pride themselves on knowing every avenue and alleyway of the city – this 'knowledge' can take up to four years' hard graft to learn by heart.

Transport for London has also waded into the fight with a raft of proposals – such as all bookings being confirmed five minutes before pick-up – that have been touted as ensuring high standards across all private-hire car firms, but are being resisted by disgruntled customers who feel the new regulations directly oppose Uber's business model.

Is Uber the Netflix of the taxi world? With Uber and its subsidiaries – including UberPool, which allows you to share your Uber with other interested passengers – growing, there seem to be no signs that the app-based transport revolution is hitting the brakes just yet.





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PUZZLES & TRIVIA



PUZZLES

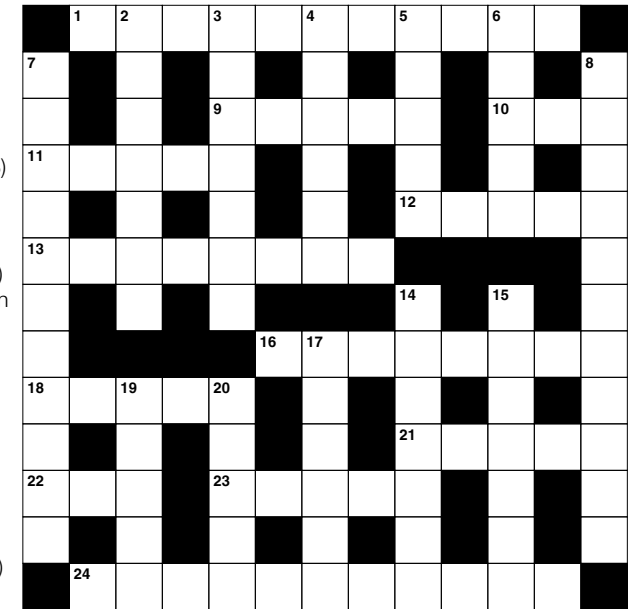
Answers can be found on the Contents Page 5

ACROSS

1. Switched off (11)
9. Deceives or misleads (5)
10. Roe (anag.) (3)
11. Angry (5)
12. Annoy (5)
13. Changing from water to ice (8)
16. Ozzy ____: Black Sabbath vocalist (8)
18. Ice home (5)
21. Barack ____: US President (5)
22. Midge ____: Ultravox musician (3)
23. Locomotive (5)
24. Affiliation (11)

DOWN

2. Large tracts of land (7)
3. Virtuoso solo passage (7)
4. Call into question (6)
5. Greek writer of fables (5)
6. Bring to the conscious mind (5)
7. Forever (2,9)
8. Deception (11)
14. Seed with a fibrous husk and edible white flesh (7)
15. ____ Bloom: English Actor (7)
17. Highly seasoned sausage (6)
19. Looks slyly (5)
20. Exceed (5)



DID YOU KNOW

- ▶ The flea can jump 350 times its body length. This is the equivalent of a human jumping the length of a football field.
- ▶ An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain
- ▶ Camels have three eyelids to protect themselves from blowing sand.
- ▶ The average lead pencil will draw a line 35 miles long or write approximately 50,000 English words.
- ▶ Coca-Cola would be green if colouring weren't added to it.
- ▶ The name Wendy was made up for the book Peter Pan, there was never a recorded Wendy before!
- ▶ There are no clocks in Las Vegas gambling casinos.
- ▶ Ketchup was sold in the 1830s as medicine.

SUDOKU

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

KING MURRAY

IS TOP OF THE WORLD



For years the cathedral town of Dunblane, just north of Stirling was famous for just one thing – the massacre of 16 children at the local primary school.

Killer Thomas Hamilton put it on the map so to speak in March 1996, when he walked into the school and callously shot down a class of five and six year olds and a teacher in the school gym.

Many children ran for cover and hid under desks to escape the madman. One of them was a youngster waiting in line to go into that very gym. It was the luckiest escape ever for young Andy Murray. Another to escape was his older brother Jamie.

Now they have made the town famous again for altogether much happier reasons. Both play professional tennis and both have just become the number ones in singles for Andy and doubles for Jamie.

What made it even more poignant is that his mother Judy said the family knew the 43-year-old unemployed former shopkeeper, and had even given him lifts in their car.

Andy said the incident had affected him deeply, but hoped his triumphs on the tennis court had had a positive influence on the town.

He said: "It is just nice that I've been able to do something the town is proud of."

Andy has certainly proved himself on the tennis courts of the world.

It is often joked that when he loses he is Scottish, but when he wins he is British.

Well he certainly is British through and through now after consolidating his position as the world number one.

Among the 46 victories he has had are three grand slams (including Wimbledon twice), two Olympic Gold medals and a silver medal, a Davis Cup champion and of course his latest victory is the 2016 ATP World Tour Finals.

He was first ranked as British number one in February 2006, which is not bad as in 2005 he was ranked 407th in the world.

He achieved a top 10 ranking by the ATP for the first time in April 2007. Andy became world number one in November this year, as the first new player to top the rankings since Novak Djokovic in 2011.

At the 2012 US Open, Andy became the first British player since 1977, and the first British man since 1936, to win a Grand Slam singles tournament, when he defeated Djokovic in the final.

In July 2013, Andy won the Wimbledon Championships, becoming the first British player to win a Wimbledon senior singles title since Virginia Wade in 1977, and the first British man to win the men's singles title since Fred Perry, 77 years previously. This year, he won his second Wimbledon title to become the first British man to win multiple Wimbledon singles titles since Perry in 1935.

He is the only tennis player, male or female, to have won two Olympic singles titles.

Andy partnered with his brother Jamie in the doubles as part of Great Britain's Davis Cup winning team in 2015 securing the first Davis Cup title since 1936.

Following his first Wimbledon title, Andy was voted the 2013 BBC Sports Personality of the Year. He repeated the feat in 2015.

Andy has a pretty good chance of picking up the same award again this year.

He has also earned a massive £45million in career winnings and he has the world at his feet.

His success has earned him an OBE.

2016 has also been pretty good in his private life – the tennis champion welcomed his first child Sophia Olivia in February with his wife, Kim Sears in June.



JOSE MOURINHO

THE (NOT SO) SPECIAL ONE?

With two Champions League medals and three Premier League trophies under his belt, it would be foolish to question the managerial capability of a certain Jose Mourinho. Cast your mind back to December 2015, however, and that's certainly what people were doing: Mourinho's Chelsea had lost nine of their opening 16 games and the man who had returned to such fanfare was unceremoniously herded towards the Stamford Bridge exit.

It wasn't long though before the self-styled 'Special One' was back among football's elite; except this time he was in charge of Chelsea's rival Manchester United – who were themselves going through a period of unpredictably following the dour regimes of David Moyes and Louis Van Gaal. The signing of Mourinho was a statement by the world's richest club – languishing in relative obscurity compared to the glory days of Sir Alex Ferguson's reign – and the signings of Zlatan Ibrahimovic and £89 million midfield maestro Paul Pogba were a further cry of intent from a club that had frustrated its fans for three seasons.

Despite initial musings that his United team were good enough to be lifting the Premier League trophy at the end of the season, the reality remains a little starker. With almost a third of the season already elapsed, United sit well adrift of the pacesetters.

What's going on? Traditionally Mourinho has caused an immediate impact at every club he has managed. As part of Roman Abramovich's

Chelsea revolution, it took him just one full season to secure the title; so too at Inter Milan, with whom he also engineered a masterful Champions League win. At Real Madrid and also during his second spell at Chelsea, however, Mourinho only took the top honours in his second season – and taking into account the state of Manchester United's turgid play last year under Van Gaal, it could be argued that Mourinho's latest job is his hardest to date.

Mourinho's controversial behaviour and tendency to leave any post after three seasons (his eventual tenure at Chelsea, Inter and Real), however, may cause concern. His second spell at Chelsea was marred by a war of words with his own physio that escalated into a legal battle. At United, Mourinho has already been charged twice by the FA and his continued criticism of players in public has also drawn parallels with his terrible second stint with Chelsea, where the media delighted in accusations of animosity between Mourinho and some of his top stars.

The good news for United is that Mourinho has always brought success – he still has some way to go in the transfer market before he brings together his desired team, and United's three-year-long dearth of confidence isn't helping. The bad news is that an astounding technical victory one week could be followed by a petty verbal spat the next. Whether by fair means or foul, Mourinho is not done dividing opinion – and his vision for United is surely just getting started.

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