

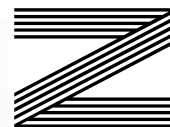
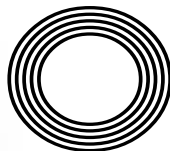
ED SHEERAN
MAKING HISTORY

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Editor's notes...



Misha Mistry, Design Editor

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

This month love is all around us as we look back at the history of Valentine's Day and how it became what it is today.

If you want to express your love this month, we have some great gift ideas for you and your child to create.

We pay tribute to the legendary former England manager Graham Taylor and hear how musician Ed Sheeran has made history with his new singles.

Internationally recognised fashion designer Ralph Lauren shows off his beautiful and extensive car collection and *The Apprentice* winner Alana George shares her tale of becoming ridiculously rich.

In Fashion we show how big is beautiful and we have the perfect item to keep your wardrobe looking fresh.

If you want to get fit but spend your days at a desk, we have the perfect routine to beat the slump, as well as a great way to make running fun again. Team up your exercise with our simple delicious breakfast ideas, which is a great way to start the day.

In this month's local news, Hemel Hempstead celebrated its 70th birthday earlier this month and find out which film star has opened a new business in the town. Local news and stories are important to us so if you have something you would like to share, email tim@mynewsmag.co.uk

Wishing you a happy Valentine's Day and enjoy,

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8. FORMALDEHYDE, 14. TRAILER, 16. MORALE, 18. SMEAR,

VALENTINE'S DAY

A HEART-SHAPED HISTORY

February 14 is traditionally the day that flowers and chocolates will be winging their way to loved ones across the Western world. But how did this annual expression of affection come to occupying a permanent spot on our calendars, and just who was this Valentine in whose name we send cards and presents?

It's a day on the calendar that elicits high emotion, whether that be a boyfriend's sudden panic that he's forgotten to get his partner a present and will subsequently be consigned to the doghouse, or the disinterest of a singleton facing the prospect of amorous couples engaged in very public displays of affection. Although not a global phenomenon, in America, Canada, Mexico, France, Australia and, of course, the UK, Valentine's Day is an annual event celebrated via the exchanging of gifts and cards between loved ones.

But where did this tradition begin? Well, there are multiple

stories about the origins of the mysterious saint to whom the February 14 owes its name. The Catholic Church currently recognises three different saints by the name of Valentine, or Valentinus – all of whom were martyred.

Could Valentine's Day be named after the man who defied the Roman Emperor Claudius' decree that marriage be outlawed for young men, as single men made better soldiers, and continued to perform marriages in secret? Or could it be the Valentine who allegedly helped captured Christians escape from the Romans, and may have sent handwritten notes signed 'From Your Valentine' to his love interest while he himself was imprisoned?

Whatever the truth of the matter, all sources agree that Valentine was a sympathetic and romantic hero... and wouldn't we all love to be that.

It was in the Middle Ages, however, when the notion of courtly love meant that the figure of Valentine became one of the most popular patron saints. The oldest concrete appearance of the relationship between Valentine's Day and romantic love was in Geoffrey Chaucer's 1382 poem *Parlement of Foules*, which made a link between this holiday and the mating season of birds. The oldest known valentine letter is from the Duke of Orleans to his wife after his imprisonment in the Tower of London following the Battle of Agincourt. Written in 1415, the greeting is now housed in the British Library in London.

Modern Valentine's Day is less about Chaucer and more about

cards, with the Greetings Card Association estimating that one billion cards are sent each year on February 14, making Valentine's Day the second-largest holiday of the year – with women purchasing around 85 per cent of all cards. The battle of the sexes evens out, however, when it comes to giving floral favours, with over 70 per cent of flower buyers being men.

One man who has also turned Valentine's Day into an annual cash bonanza is Richard Cadbury – he of the famous purple-wrapped chocolates. Cadbury was the first person to package chocolate up in heart-shaped boxes to be sold for Valentine's Day, and these days more than 35 million of these boxes will be sold each year around this time.

Despite such a patterned history of romantic reverence, just remember, the real question isn't whether you dare send something on Valentine's Day... it's whether you dare not!



NEW MONEY SAFER THAN EVER



Look out for a change to your change from March 28 as the Government introduces the new style 12 sided £1 coin into circulation.

The slogan 'the pound won't be round for much longer' is being used to publicise the £1.5 billion of coins being made by the Royal Mint.

The new coin is apparently one of the hardest to counterfeit in the world. Its security features include:

- ▶ **12 sided** – its distinctive shape makes it instantly recognisable, even by touch.
- ▶ **Bimetallic** – it is made of two metals. The outer ring is gold coloured (nickel-brass) and the inner ring is silver coloured (nickel-plated alloy).
- ▶ **Latent image** – it has an image like a hologram that changes from a '£' symbol to the number '1' when the coin is seen from different angles.
- ▶ **Micro-lettering** – it has very small lettering on the lower inside rim on both sides of the coin. One pound on the obverse "heads" side and the year of production on the reverse "tails" side, for example 2016 or 2017.
- ▶ **Milled edges** – it has grooves on alternate sides.
- ▶ **Top secret - Hidden high security feature** – a high security feature is built into the coin to protect it from counterfeiting in the future.

Securing the pound's future was the reason why the coin has been changed for the first time in 30 years.

According to the Royal Mint one £1 coin in thirty in circulation is a fake.

However many businesses are angry about the change as those who use machines to take payment will have to re-figure them to accept the new coins.

From October 16 onwards businesses can refuse the 'old' round pound.

The round £1 coin will continue to be allowed to be deposited into accounts of most high street banks and Post Offices.

For more information visit www.thenewpoundcoin.com

NOUVEAU NURSERIES

Just because you're decorating for a little one doesn't mean you need to sacrifice your style aesthetic entirely. In fact, a nursery is a place where you can really let your creativity run wild.

KEEP IT CHIC

Eschew the saccharine pinks and blues and keep the colour palette neutral. Choosing a white crib and dresser allows for creative flourishes in other areas and creates a rustic, French feel. Or for a really contemporary look go monochrome.

CHIC CAN BE CHEAP

You don't have to spend a fortune to have a beautiful and stylish space. Ikea do fantastic furniture that comes in white, including changing tables and dressers. They also offer the Gulliver crib with a side that can be lowered when your little one gets older, saving you money in the long run.

BE BOLD WITH PRINTS

Add some bright pops of colour with printed child-friendly bedclothes. Land of Nod does fantastically quirky and stylish linens, like blue whale, dinosaur

or polka dot prints. Alternatively choose a vibrant patterned rug or wallpaper.

TAKE A TWIST ON A CLASSIC

Stylish doesn't mean your child has to miss out on the essentials like a mobile for over their crib. Not on The High Street have some wonderful ideas, some of which can be personalised.

Alternatively, give your child the whole galaxy with Secret Craft House's silver and gold mobile with the added wonder of unicorns; or if you love them to the moon and back consider Little Clouds' moon wall-hanging in Liberty print. Nursery toys have also had a makeover, with many brands offering stylish rocking horses and Tepee's over Wendy Houses.

GET AN EARLY START ON ART

Ever thought some abstract art looked like it was painted by a toddler? Well get them started early with some creative prints. Etsy do some adorable one-offs that can be personalised, giving them craft they can cherish forever and gaze at as they grow.



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ALL SPACES GREAT & SMALL



HOME & DIY

Not everyone has the luxury of living somewhere with rolling green spaces and expansive gardens in which to flaunt their green fingers, but these easy tips will make sure you make the most of your space no matter how limited the lawn or petite the plot.

jungle-like impression, or set up a trellis with hanging IKEA pots and hangars to fill with plants that tumble down your walls.

HANGING OUT

Tomatoes can take up a load of space, but are fantastic plants if you're looking to start living a life where you can eat things fresh from your garden. If you've got some plastic bottles, however, you can cut them in half, slide the tomato plant through the neck of the bottle and fill the rest with soil. Finally, attach some strong string to the bottle's cut edge and the string to a nail so that your tomato vines hang down in all their glory.

GOING UP

If you want to create a garden that maximises all available space, the best thing to do is to start moving upwards instead of outwards. Why not form stacked herb gardens out of concentric pots, which diminish in size as they go upwards? Or expand this onto a bigger scale by purchasing a batch of wooden boxes that you can arrange one above another with slats in the middle to form a 3D shelving unit in which to plant all manner of flowers.

WHEELY GOOD

One great way to keep your green space as fresh and invigorating as the flowers within it is to attach wheels to the bottoms of your raised beds – that way, if you feel like a change in scenery, you can switch up the look of your garden without any effort at all.

WALL TO WALL

Create the illusion of space by using your garden's walls to their maximum. Hang mirrors that reflect the greenery within to form a dense





HOME & DIY

PUT A SPRING IN YOUR STOOP

Shaking off those lingering winter blues with a good old-fashioned spring clean is a perfect way to gear up for a productive year, but it's important not to forget that the outside of your home needs to be just as spick-and-span as the interior. If you think that this seems like a mammoth job, try these handy tips for putting a gleam in your guttering and a shine in your soffits.



UNDER PRESSURE

If extricating those cobwebs from out of the corners of your bedroom is difficult, try taking on the dirt, grime and moss that has been almost inextricably slammed into every crack and crevice of your roof and walls by 12 months of erratic weather! This is a job suited to a pressure washer, which retail at around £50-100 and are the ultimate tool for sluicing away that mud and muck in no time at all – it's a real blast!

HANGING OUT

Hanging baskets make beautiful decorations throughout the summer, but that's no reason to let your front-of-house flower arrangements go untouched before the sun comes out fully. Create an eye-catching display of hardy winter plants with shrubs and conifers to provide height; or rosemary, euonymus or New Zealand cabbage palm to provide evergreen colour and interest. Finally, tumbling ivy or periwinkle can soften the edges of your display and add some interesting texture to your display.



ROLL WITH IT

If your home's exterior has taken a bit of a battering, now may well be the perfect time to give your doors and window frames a new lick of paint. This can be as simple as touching up whites that don't seem so bright anymore, or as daring as going for that iconic red door you've always dreamed of owning. Bronze house numbers and door knockers are also a nice touch – either buy some new fittings or smarten up your current ones with soft cloths and a mixture of baking soda and lemon juice, rubbed on in small, circular motions.



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Forget the FEATHER DUSTER

The dreaded necessity of a Spring Clean will soon be looming at the forefront of many homeowners' to-do lists, but in an age of gadgets and technical wizardry to assist you with all your menial tasks, why not switch out that tired old duster and antiquated vacuum for the latest in high-tech home-sprucing assistance?

perpetually surrounded by a raging blizzard? Then the Winbot 730 (RRP £169) is surely for you. This nifty little gadget contains a damp pad, a squeegee for wiping and a second pad for 'on the go' drying, and attaches to the glass pane, meaning it can reach those 'hard to get to' places with automated ease.

Eyevac Professional Bin Vacuum Cleaner



Ditch that dustpan for something much, much snazzier with the Eyevac Professional bin-vacuum (RRP £175) - designed specifically to get every last bit of rubbish from off your floors. This 1400 watt beauty combines both bin and vacuum to ensure for a spotless home; simply brush all dirt under the gadget's base and see it magicked away into thin air by an automated sensor-activated vacuum.

Winbot 730



Tired of spending hours cleaning your windows only to realise you've somehow managed to leave streaks so large that it appears your house is

Motorised Grill Brush

Sure as summer follows spring, so too is the toil of spring cleaning followed by the beer-sipping, burger-flipping BBQ season, but getting your grill free of grime and dirt so it's ready to be the talk of the town can be a difficult job. That job just got a bit easier with the aid of the motorised grill brush (RRP £45) which uses battery-powered bristles and an in-built sprayer to blast away even the staunchest residue so that you'll be back to your best as soon as the sun peaks its head out in February.



Sonic Scrubber

Not to be confused with Dr Who's sonic screwdriver, the Sonic Scrubber household cleaner (RRP £16.99) is the spring cleaning equivalent of an electric toothbrush, and is a sure-fire way to cut down on time spent attempting to force your way into the most recessive of dirty spots.



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Out On The Town

Strap on your highest heels and don those skin-tight leather jeans for a look that begs for attention. You can channel your inner rock chick with a scruffy band T; or, if you're feeling more daring, wear nothing at all underneath your blazer. This outfit works best with sleek hair and smoky eyes and a discreet, envelope clutch.

Date Night

What can be more romantic than luxurious velvet over a long and flowing dress? Go for a bright cotton print, sensual silk or even matching velvet for a fully bewitching look. The focus here should be on accessories, so layer up on bracelets and necklaces. One look and he'll be crushed.

Work It

Make like Florence Welch and invest in some matching trousers to go with your jacket for some serious office attire. Thanks to Hillary Clinton, pant suits are back in a big way and, teamed with a silk blouse and heels, you'll be the belle of the boardroom.

Party Like It's 1979

From Cher at New York's Studio 54 in the 1970s to Kate Moss in the noughties, the blazer and the party dress have gone together like disco and disco balls. This look is all about effortless glam as your mini dress, whether simple or sequinned, peeks out from the folds of velvet. Hair should be loose and undone, eyes smoky and legs on show.

The Morning After

This outfit is made for a slouchy Sunday stroll, when you want to feel comfortable but still be stylish. Invest in an oversized scarf to keep you cosy, and add a leather satchel, blue flared jeans and felt fedora for maximum Seventies vibes.



BIG IS BEAUTIFUL

It's fair to say 2016 had its detractors, but while it appears to have taken away many of those we cherished, what it offered back in return was a celebration of uniqueness. Whether big, small, lumpy or bumpy, women are beginning to embrace the beauty of their individual curves.

For years women have had to flick through the pages of magazines looking at tall, willowy models whose body types have been termed the ideal of feminine beauty. While these women are wonderful in their own right, they don't fully represent the diversity in shape, size and stature that the fabulous female-kind embodies, and as a result the rebellion has begun. So, let us introduce three fashion industry bombshells leading the charge for 'plus-sized' beauties everywhere: Ashley Graham, Iskra Lawrence and Barbie Ferreira.

Ashley Graham was the first plus-sized model to be featured on both the cover of British *Vogue* and the famous *Sports Illustrated Swimwear* issue. The 28-year-old has gone on to become the most recognisable face of plus-sized beauty – from visiting US schools to promote a message of body positivity, to launching her very own lingerie line with Canadian clothing chain Addition Elle.

Aside from gracing us with their lustrous beauty, this new breed of beauties are more vocal than ever. One example is Iskra Lawrence – a size-14 stunner who has opened up about the effects of seeing skinny models growing up.

"I thought there was something wrong because I didn't have a thigh gap, I had cellulite," she told *The Independent* earlier this year. "That is the media making a small standard of beauty when we are so much more than that."

Proving plus-sized models can come in all shapes, sizes and even ages, Barbie Ferreira started modelling when she was just 17. Now 20, Ferreira has joined fellow beauty Lawrence as one of the brand models for Aerie, and has recently signed to internationally acclaimed modelling agency Wilhelmina's, all the while refusing for any of her images to be retouched or edited in any way.

So 2016 brought us these amazing voluptuous women, cellulite and all. With models like Ashley, Iskra and Barbie carving the way, 2017 looks set to be the year that models of all sizes are setting the standard of beauty for fierce and fearless young girls everywhere.



The look of Love

What is it men find so attractive about big hips and full lips? Far from being a product of perversion or societal condition, the fascination with certain physical traits actually dates back to ancient times, and has more to do with genetics than you would think.

Society and modern media have often been scolded for their unrealistic and stereotypical portrayal of women: cartoonish breasts, miniscule waists and pouting cherry red mouths, for example. But while beauty is undoubtedly in the eye of the beholder, and men will admit to finding many weird and wonderful things attractive, the truth is there are certain traits that men are inexplicably drawn to, and apparently with good reason...

They say that hips don't lie and wide hips are a sexually dimorphic trait. Hip bones push out during puberty meaning a woman with wider hips is ready for making babies. Similarly, men find slim waists attractive because it means a woman's oestrogen is high and her fat is being distributed properly. Big bottoms, big hips and breasts all suggest good hormone balance and therefore good baby making, whereas belly fat is usually a sign testosterone is too high.

So what about facial features like full red lips and symmetry? Well this is all to do with genetics. Symmetrical features generally suggest a person's jaw is well developed – a good sign of genetic health. To the same effect, full lips indicate straight teeth. The attraction to red lips is a bit weirder, but does explain why lipstick can drive men wild. Essentially, when women apply red lipstick they're unknowingly mimicking a big sign of arousal in primates, suggesting...she's up for making babies.

Whilst these primordial inclinations do extend beyond physical traits, they do all lead to the same conclusion. For example, a man is often drawn to a woman's kindness, compassion and empathy, but mostly because they suggest a maternal instinct, and that the woman is therefore - you guessed it - up for making babies.

So, in short, the things that might at first appear perverse could actually mean your man is ready to settle down. Now where are those slippers...?

A photograph of Ed Sheeran performing on stage. He is wearing a blue plaid shirt and a brown guitar strap, smiling as he plays a light-colored acoustic guitar. The background is dark with a bright purple light source on the left.

ED SHEERAN

Makes Music History

Flame-haired balladeer Ed Sheeran is back making chart history after becoming the first artist to land the two top spots with new releases. Add to that a headline slot at this year's Glastonbury and 2017 has already been a triumphant return to form for this songwriting heavyweight.

When Ed Sheeran announced his intention to take a year-long hiatus at the end of 2015, many feared they would never see their Suffolk songwriting sweetheart again. Fortunately for them, Sheeran is back with not one, but two typically tight tracks – *Shape of You* and *Castle on the Hill* – and plans to release a highly-anticipated third album *÷* (spoken as “divide”) in March. Cementing his status as the king of British pop, Ed, who is 26 this month, has also seen the two effortlessly catchy tracks break Spotify's UK and global streaming records, exceeding 13 million combined streams in 24 hours, toppling One Direction as record breakers.

Down-to-earth Ed has garnered a reputation as the most prolific songwriter in the world, with his 12-month sabbatical actually proving to be one of his most fruitful yet as he scored a multitude of awards as an artist, plus co-wrote *Cold Water* – a track released by Major Lazer and Justin Bieber – as well as Bieber's *Love Yourself*, both of which reached the coveted top spot in the UK. Proof, as if it were needed, that even when the *Drunk* singer takes a holiday, he is more productive than most people in an entire lifetime.

Innovative, enigmatic and extremely affable, Sheeran's rise has been meteoric, albeit perhaps not that surprising. His 2011 debut

single, *A-Team*, was a monster hit worldwide – winning him an illustrious Ivor Novello Award – and his first album, *+*, sold more than a million copies in the UK in the first six months alone. His sophomore album *x* topped charts on both sides of the Atlantic, achieving 3.4 billion streams, and he was also the first artist to headline Wembley stadium without a band, wowing audiences, for three sold-out nights with his trademark loop pedal and acoustic guitar combo. But what appeared like overnight success had actually taken three years of non-stop gigging, with the singer – who moved to London at the tender age of 16 – sometimes sleeping rough when funds dried up.

A huge fan of social media, Sheeran was one of the first musicians to properly engage with his fan base on a direct level, making that sudden announcement that he would be taking a much-needed break all the more devastating. “I'm taking a break from my phone, emails and all social media for a while,” he wrote on Instagram. “I've had such an amazing ride over the last five years but I find myself seeing the world through a screen and not my eyes, so I'm taking this opportunity of me not having to be anywhere or do anything to travel the world and see everything I've missed.”

While it's unclear exactly what the unlikely heartthrob got up to on his hollibobs, whatever it was it seems to have done him the world of good, as he effortlessly saunters to the uppermost echelons of the charts once more. Just don't mention those tattoos...!

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This Turkish treat is perfect for a weekend brunch, and unlike a fry-up you can throw everything in the one pan. Simply fry garlic, onions and peppers, add a tin of chopped tomatoes and simmer until reduced, then make a hole and crack eggs into your sauce and poach. Serve with pitta and Greek yogurt mixed with crushed raw garlic and olive oil.

OAT SMOOTHIE



Is it a drink or is it porridge? Frankly, when it tastes this good who cares? Cook water and oats in the microwave then blend with milk, banana, dates, vanilla, cinnamon and ice and top with a dusting of nutmeg. Slightly more substantial than your average smoothie, this is perfect for those wintery mornings when you crave something quick and nourishing.

BULLETPROOF COFFEE



If you're still not convinced by the nutritional benefits of brekkie and rely on caffeine to get you through, then consider supercharging your morning Americano, paleo-style. Blend high-grade organic espresso with coconut oil and butter for a brew that claims to give you a prolonged energy hit, as well as sharpening your focus and keeping you feeling full. With the fat slowing down the absorption of the caffeine this is more fuel than food, and is not for the faint-hearted.

AVOCADO ON TOAST



Ditch the margarine, because if you want something truly delicious and nutritious atop your toast, it has to be avocado. Supremely versatile, you can slice, mash and even blend them. Add a poached egg and some bacon for a post-workout protein boost, mash with feta and olive oil for a delicious and quick spread, or add some chilli flakes for a bit of early morning heat. Deliciously simple.



FOOD & DRINK

BAKE OFF QUEEN NADIYA: 18 months on

Bake Off Queen Nadiya Hussain cooked up a very special dish as she brought out her first novel last month.

She is hoping *The Secret Lives of the Amir Sisters* will end up being a bestseller. The book is based on creative writing she penned as a seven-year-old about four sisters who are the only young Muslims in a village.

Nadiya, 32, says: "I've been writing since I was little but I didn't think any of it would ever see the light of day."

Nadiya won *The Great British Bake Off* in 2015, when her lemon drizzle wedding cake pipped rivals in the showstopper round.

Since then she has signed publishing deals for recipe books, novels, been on her own TV show *The Chronicles Of Nadiya* and baked the Queen's 90th birthday cake.

She says: "I got the phone call asking me to make the Queen's birthday cake. When she saw it she asked what kind of cake it was and which tier she should cut. Then Prince Philip came over and she introduced me to him. I was like, 'Oh my God, that's the Queen introducing me'."

"She said, 'This is the young lady who won the bake off'."

"And he said, 'Yes dear, I know who she is, but what flavour is the cake?'"

Nadiya praised her husband Abdal, who has been forced to take on more household chores and childcare since her career has taken off.

Nadiya is also cooking up a romantic dish for Abdal, 32 by getting married again to her husband.

The happy couple have three children following an arranged marriage after just ONE meeting. The couple married in Bangladesh when she was 19.

Nadiya, originally from Luton, said: "We're married Islamically but we've never done the proper vows here.

"So we're talking about making it all 'official'. It's a great excuse for a party."

She admits that she cried on her wedding night but now says she actually likes him now.

Her husband encouraged her to enter the BBC show to 'do something for you' after dedicating her 20s to rearing their children Musa, nine; Dawud, eight; and Maryam, five.

Neither of them realised just how much it would change their lives.

The Secret Lives of the Amir Sisters by Nadiya Hussain, £12.99, is out now.

LATE BLOOMERS

As February finally rears its head from out of the wintery darkness, every humble horticulturalist should be brimming with excitement at the idea of a spring garden full of blooming plants and lush vegetation. Here's how to prepare your plot this month to get the very best out of your fruit, flowers and veg.

porch, conservatory or garage will suffice if you don't have a greenhouse. When your potatoes start chitting they should display greeny-purple knobles. But be warned, if you end up with white sprouts, you haven't given your veg enough warmth!

LOOKING ROSY



While you can leave pruning until next month, February is an ideal time to start planting roses, as the gradually warming soil will encourage growth. If you're planting on a patch where you have already been cultivating roses, however, make sure to avoid replant disease by adding a covering of mycorrhizal fungi, which coats the roses' roots and helps them absorb vital minerals from the soil.

POTATO PREP



Now is the time to start sprouting or 'chitting' your taters in order to give them a head start when it finally comes to planting. Place the seed potatoes in an egg cup or container, with the end with the most eyes facing up. The trick is to place the container somewhere with light and heat – a

SEED SORTING



Gearing up to get out in the garden can even be done from the comfort of your armchair, with February providing the perfect opportunity for organised gardeners to order your seeds. You can then grade your produce in order to create a sowing calendar through spring, meaning you'll be ready for any unexpected eventuality should it arise.

SLOW GROWERS



Although the idea of planting in February may seem odd, as the cold recedes it's a good time to start with any slow growing annuals and perennials, including pelargonium, begonia and osteospermum, which are all easy to seed on a warm windowsill or in a corner of your greenhouse. These seeds can take up to three weeks to germinate, meaning that by the time March arrives and the light improves, you'll already be seeing results!





Photo Credits: PA Images

Bros, founders of the original 'boy band' concept in the 1980s, are reuniting to mark their 30th anniversary. So what took them so long to join forces again after so long out of the spotlight? Twin brothers Luke and Matt Goss reveal all to **VISION** magazine.

'When will I, will I be famous?' they asked in their breakthrough hit single back in 1987. The answer came quickly – almost too quickly – and the boys from Peckham ascended to become one of the biggest bands of the time. Indeed, by the time 'Brosmania' began seeping away at the start of the 1990s, the band had shifted 17 million records.

But with the turning of that new decade came a change in the musical slant in the UK, and once it gathered pace, the brothers' decline was arguably as swift as their ascent, particularly after poor sales of their third album, *Changing Faces*.

As Matt and Luke went their separate ways, what was left behind by the bottle-blond heroes was a sizeable impact on the industry. Indeed, to appreciate Bros is to understand that at a time of manufactured pop they were the most prefabricated of the lot, and this was something fresh and unique.

"I think we realised it was a bit of a shift in how the record industry was promoting talent," begins Matt. "Up until then music had generally come along and been taken up organically. There was a very casual approach to getting signed and getting music in the charts.

"I think, being the way we looked and how we carried ourselves, our label saw the Bros project as a way to fire this entire boyband image, from the music at the outset to a look and an image that fans loved. And for the first time, the promotion and marketing was driven to produce results – it was really quite unique back then, however normal that sounds now."

Indeed, being a Brosette back in the late 1980s for the teenage girl demographic was likened to being a part of the coolest

clique in the UK. How else can you explain fan club numbers exceeding six million members, or 130,000 screaming fans turning up at HMV in Oxford Street to see the band?

"They were great days – very exhausting, but great," says Luke. "We travelled the world, saw some incredible things and loved every minute, but I think a couple of years in you begin to crave normality again, and perhaps it was right we went our separate ways when we did."

Wind forward over two decades and after acting and modelling projects, the brothers feel recharged and ready to tour again.

"I think it's natural to wonder if people would turn up for these shows," Luke says. "Bros was a long, long time ago and those teenagers following us around in the 1980s are now over 40 and with responsibilities to their families."

"You just never know in this game," seconds Matt, who has enjoyed considerable success as a solo artist, selling over five million albums and claiming a residency at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. "To feel wanted again is really very special and we hope we can repay that faith by putting on some outstanding shows this year."

Their reunion announcement was so well received in fact, that one date has expanded into a full UK tour, including a second night at London's O2.

"We haven't always seen eye to eye," says Matt, "but to consider that me and my brother are going to get back on stage, and that we've made amends – are best friends again – is wonderful. It's a really beautiful thing.

"And for us, it's far more than just a reunion. We are ready as men and we've come back together at a good time in our lives."

Bros play London, Manchester, Nottingham, Birmingham, Newcastle and Glasgow on a tour that begins on August 19th – check online for tickets.



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HEALTH & FITNESS

A DESKERCISE A DAY

keeps the doctor away

After a long day at work the last thing we want to do is slog away in the gym! Try these simple tricks instead so that you can keep lean, fit and healthy without having to move from your desk.

feet are flat on the floor and bring the palms of your hands together in front of your chest. Push both hands together and as powerfully as you can until you feel the arm muscles contract. Push for 20 seconds, release and repeat.

CARDIO: Take the stairs

It may seem obvious, but if you want to crunch a few calories then take the stairs! To get your heart rate really going, tackle two stairs at a time every other flight and don't stop until you reach the top. And if you only have one flight of stairs, why not run up and down them a few times?

CHEST: Shrug it off

Note: do not attempt this exercise if your boss is near – it may not show you at your most enthusiastic! Raise both shoulders towards your ears, hold for five seconds, relax and repeat. If you are feeling extra stealthy, try these shoulder shrugs standing up whilst holding a paper ream in each hand to add some extra weight.

GLUTES: The secret squeeze

Perhaps the easiest way to tone up at work is with this secret isometric glute exercise sequence. Squeeze the buttocks together, hold for 5-10 seconds and then release. Repeat this until you tire, and make sure you do it daily. Get ready for some perky results.

CORE: The core issue

Perfect posture is essential if you're sat at your desk all day; it helps to prevent back pain or issues that often occur from slouching. Adjust your chair height to make sure your feet, hips and arms are at a 90-degree angle to the floor. Engage the core to keep your back straight and stomach muscles tense – now keep this going all day.

ARMS: Pray for power

Ever wondered how to get rid of those bingo wings without having to leave your seat? Make sure your



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RUN FOR FUN

Bored of breezing through marathons? Tired of 10ks? Inject some excitement back into your workout, and even raise money for a good cause, with these awesome adventure runs.

Tough Mudder

If you like good clean fun, then Tough Mudder might not be for you, but if you fancy a fitness challenge that is both exhilarating and a bonding experience, lace up those (preferably old) trainers! With the option of 5 or 10-12 miles, each race promises around 500,000 litres of Grade-A mud, 40 tons of ice and a pint of ice-cold cider at the finish line. With the motto that the strength of one person is nothing compared with the power of a team, expect to haul and cajole each other over slippery ramps, hills and trails, finding comfort in the knowledge that you will likely leave with more friends than when you came. Events held nationwide, see toughmudder.co.uk for dates and prices.

Xtreme Obstacle race: Water Wipeout

Much like the wacky TV show with the same name, this race will leave you soaking wet and gasping for air as you navigate water slides, tighotropes, tunnels, hurdles, giant walls, cargo nets, spider webs, balance beams and the white-water assault course. Hosted by the National Water Sports centre near Nottingham. See Xrunner.co.uk for more info.

Reebok Spartan Race

One for the would-be warriors, this obstacle race is in a league of its own. Offering three main options: Sprint (5k), Super (13k) and the mighty Beast (20k), each challenge is packed with some truly insane obstacles, proving the Reebok Spartan race is not for the faint-hearted. It's also the most competitive of the lot, with open and elite heats, plus global rankings providing a proving ground for everyone from novices to pros. If you're up to the challenge join #TeamIncredible. For more info see Spartanrace.uk.

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Don't have a fortune to spend on presents? Why not round up the troops and make these terrific treasures with your little ones to create a gift that's unique and truly thoughtful.

Chocolate truffles

Easy to make and delicious, these handmade truffles make a decadent and charming gift. Simply mix chopped chocolate, double cream and butter (and perhaps a drop of brandy!) in a bowl over boiling water to make a ganache, let it cool, then roll into balls and finish by rolling cocoa powder or chopped nuts.

Bath salts

A simple and stunning way to make a jar of ordinary bath salts into a fabulous gift, divide up your Epsom salts and add to each a combination of essential oils (lavender and peppermint work well together), food colouring and some bicarbonate of soda to create a fizz. Layer up the different colours in a jar and for added luxury top with dried lavender or rose petals.

Character gloves

For your fun and quirky friends, or children, why not make these adorable character gloves? Take an ordinary pair of gloves and create a face by gluing on goggle eyes and felt for ears.

Friendship bracelets

You can't beat a classic, and nothing says 'I love you' like jewellery. Keep the kids entertained for hours as they get creative and layer up beads on ribbon or elastic. Perhaps they'll even start a new fashion trend!

Cookie mix jars

Also known as deconstructed cookies, take a basic cookie recipe and, instead of mixing, layer them up in a mason jar. Start with flour and baking powder, follow up with brown sugar and spices and top with chocolate chips. Write the recipe on a gift tag and finish with a bright ribbon. Who needs Tiffany & Co?





6 simple steps to TEACH YOUR CHILD TO READ

1. Read to your child

It is through hearing stories that children are introduced to a wide range of words, which helps them build their own understanding of the world. They are improving their vocabulary and at the same time stimulating their imagination. Most importantly this instills in them a love for books.

2. Encourage and ask questions while reading

This is crucial in helping your child to comprehend what they are reading. For younger ones ask "Can you see?" questions and for older children ask questions before, during, and after the book, like "Why do you think the boy is angry?" Identifying emotions, and asking the child if they have ever felt that way is a great way, for them to connect with a story.

3. Set an example and read too!

Show your child that adults need to read too. Read around the house in front of them, we must not forget that children learn by example, so treat yourself to an attention-grabbing book and put your feet up.

4. Identify letters in their natural settings

Encourage your child to take in all the writing they are surrounded by, for example labels, traffic signs and billboards. Children are naturally curious about their surroundings and use this to your advantage and teach away.

5. Teaching phonics

Using various games like alphabet crafts, snap, tossing a small stone on the appropriate letter, and practicing writing the various phonics onto paper encourage your child to learn all the sounds.

6. Blending

After saying the individual sounds, the ability to hear the dynamic of a word (known as blending) follows, for example P-I-G is Pig. If you practice your child will eventually be able to blend words independently. Once they are confident blending consonants and vowels, you can move onto sight words and word families like hop and pop.

For any more information on teaching your child to read please like and follow us on Facebook, or contact The Rainbow Club directly.

LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Town celebrates 70 years since post-war expansion

Residents were in birthday spirits as Hemel Hempstead hit the 70 year mark this month.

The platinum anniversary on February 4 celebrated the year Hemel was declared a 'New Town'.

It was 70 years ago – in 1947 – that the town was earmarked for expansion, coming to the rescue of Londoners living in slum housing or whose homes had been bombed during the Second World War.

An ambitious building programme began and the first New Town residents moved into their homes in Adeyfield in 1950. Over the next four decades, Hemel Hempstead grew – developing eight new neighbourhoods, a new town centre on The Marlowes and a thriving industrial estate around Maylands Avenue.

According to the national census, Hemel's population grew from just over 20,000 in 1951 to over 55,000 in 1961. At the last census in 2011 the population was 94,932, but is now estimated to be over 100,000.

Councillor Andrew Williams, leader of Dacorum Borough Council, said: "Hemel Hempstead's 70th New Town anniversary coincides with the start of a new chapter in our history. We're just completing our Hemel Evolution regeneration of Hemel Hempstead, which has transformed the town centre and taken it to the finals of the Great British High Street Awards 2016.

"Staying true to our roots, we're also fulfilling an ambitious £50 million programme to build 300 new homes by 2020. And as a newly designated Enterprise Zone, Maylands will continue to provide major employment opportunities for our residents as they have since the first factory was built there in 1950."

Cllr Williams continued: "Looking back over our New Town heritage shows us just how far we've come.

"I'm confident that Hemel Hempstead is in the best possible position to welcome in the next 70 years, allowing the communities of Dacorum to thrive and prosper."



Photo credit: Hoss Photography

Get floored by Vinnie at new business

If you think Vinnie Jones' career has hit the floor, you are very much mistaken.

That's because the former football and current Hollywood A-lister has teamed up with long-time friend and flooring specialist Danny Deacon to set up Deacon Jones, a fine flooring business with clients including Bradley Cooper, Robbie Williams, Jose Mourinho and Jonathan Ross, among others.

Although the business is still in its infancy, Vinnie said he is delighted to be involved as the business gave him a link to his roots. Before making his name in football and films, Vinnie worked on a building site and refurbishes houses in Hertfordshire and LA today.

He said: "I was born in Watford, bought my first home in Hemel and used to play football for a lot of the local teams. This is a great opportunity to give something back to the community and maybe create a few more jobs along the way. We want to encourage traders and fitters to come in and see what we do. We've both been in the building trade and we know what people want."

The business is not aimed at members of the public – the focus instead is on fitters and retailers.

Deacon Jones can be found at Unit 5 Saracen Industrial Area, Mark Road, Hemel Hempstead Industrial Estate, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 7BJ.

Incredi-bubble event is back

Due to popular demand Bubble Rush Herts is back and is expected to be bigger and better than ever.

Last April over 2,000 people experienced the sheer joy of running through hundreds of foamy bubbles to raise funds for The Hospice of St Francis and the event is coming back to Gadebridge Park on Sunday, April 30.

Registration for the 5km run has just opened and local people are advised to snap up their places quickly as last year's inaugural event sold out in record-time.

Everybody from tots to teens and grown-ups to grandparents can take part and enjoy running, walking or dancing through safe, frothy, foam at different coloured bubble stations.



Greggs to open new store in Hightown's Maylands Plaza scheme



National bakery chain Greggs is the latest retailer to confirm one of its branches will be opening on the 130 home development which Hightown Housing Association is building in the Maylands area of Hemel Hempstead.

Sainsbury's has already confirmed it is including a new 'Local' store as part of the new Maylands Plaza scheme, which is rapidly taking shape on the site of a redundant call centre on Maylands Avenue.

Negotiations are also taking place with a national coffee chain about one of the other commercial units included in the parade of shops on the development, which Hightown hopes will become a vibrant hub for businesses and staff working in Maylands.

Adeyfield Free Church is moving to the new development from its current home in nearby Leverstock Green Road this summer. Its new home will include a crèche, café and meeting rooms.

Don't give up on giving up alcohol



People in Hemel Hempstead are being encouraged not to give up on their New Year's resolutions to reduce the amount of alcohol they drink.

A new public health campaign seeks to address a pattern that will be familiar to many residents –

making a decision to drink less or give up for a month, but returning to old habits. Search "One You" online to find out more information about how to manage your drinking and download a free drinks tracker app to help you. You can also follow the hashtag #dontgiveup.

For more information about the campaign search "Herts Alcohol Campaigns" online.

Majority of town schools are below national average



Photo credit: Google

Most schools in Hemel Hempstead were below the national average for pupil progression, new figures revealed.

Data released by the Department for Education (DfE) last month indicated how schools across the country have been performing.

However, instead of focussing on A* to C grades, the DfE has created the Progress 8 system which judges pupils on their performance across eight subjects from primary school to GCSE.

The national average is zero.

Out of all the schools in the town, only the John F Kennedy School achieved a positive Progress 8 result, clocking in a pupil average score of 0.08.

Meanwhile, The Cavendish School's score of -0.60 propped up the bottom of the table. Just 39 per cent of pupils were achieving a C grade or better in English and maths GCSEs, a figure shared with Adeyfield School.

Attainment 8 scores were also released. This is a scoring system that adds up all GCSE results before creating a pupil average – the maximum score is 80, which would equate to eight A*s.

The standout performers were independent school Abbot's Hill beating John F Kennedy by 13.8.

Apart from The Hemel Hempstead School, every other institution in the town was below the national average of 48.5.



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RALPH'S GARAGE



Ralph Lauren is a globally recognised name in fashion, but the billionaire designer has a secret source of inspiration: his expansive car collection, featuring some of the most exquisite and exotic automobiles from throughout history.

Ralph Lauren's famed catwalk creations may be flashed in front of the world's media on some of the world's most beautiful models, but his real pride and joy remains hidden inside an unassuming garage door in Westchester, New York. Concealed within this inconspicuous building is a car collection rumoured to be one of the most expensive ever assembled on Earth, containing some of the rarest examples of automotive engineering ever crafted by human hands, and with a collective price tag of at least \$300million.

The vehicles' ages range hugely - there's a 1929 Bentley 4.5-litre 'Blower' which participated in the 24 Hours of Le Mans in 1930, 1932 and 1933; and a 1955 Jaguar XKD Long-Nose, one of only 10 ever made and the fastest car of its generation. Then there are more modern automotive landmarks such as the Bugatti Veyron and the Ferrari LaFerrari - the brand's first-ever hybrid sports car.

The real gem of the collection, however, remains the Bugatti 57SC Atlantic. Built in 1938, with a 3.3-litre supercharged engine, this car is one of only two in existence today - and only four were ever built by the Italian auto-manufacturer. That car won Best in Show at the 1990 Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance and the 2012 Concorso d'Eleganza Villa d'Este - two of the world's most

renowned car shows - and has been given a potential price-tag, should Lauren ever sell, in excess of \$50million.

Of course, as you would expect, some of the 77-year-old's motors have been tweaked and perfected in accordance with their owner's universally renowned style. A 1933 Type 59 Grand Prix Bugatti was changed from light blue to black, and his Mercedes Gullwing had cream added to the traditional Merc silver. Ralph even dared to put his own twist on the hallowed British Racing Green - a move only the most daringly confident of petrol-heads would dare to undertake.

The vintage mechanics of the older models from the Golden Age of the automobile industry also provide the muse for Lauren's accessory designs, most notably in the namesake Ralph

Lauren RL Automotive Skeleton Watch. This \$35,000 timepiece draws its inspiration from Lauren's Bugatti 57SC, and the wood ring that circles the intricate watch face is made from Amboyna burl, itself a popular choice for car makers of yore when it came to creating the instrument panels of luxury vehicles in the 1930s.

These cars are art - although they do perform a function in Lauren's day-to-day life, such as the 966 Porsche Turbo that he uses to visit the dentist. The Louvre even went so far as to exhibit 17 of his cars in a standalone exhibit in 2011, and some of his automobiles turn up at times during Ralph Lauren adverts. They are, after all, a key part of the 'Ralph Lauren' world - the perfect ideal, sewn together inextricably with his personal and professional brand.





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A RIDICULOUSLY RICH

taste of apprentice success

Alana Spencer was the latest lucky entrepreneur to scoop the £250,000 investment from Lord Alan Sugar on BBC's *The Apprentice*, but who is this Aberystwyth girl set to partner the indomitable Lord in a sweet-tasting bakery business?

The BBC may have lost the rights to *The Great British Bake Off*, but as interest in culinary technique continues to rise, they may well have just uncovered a new star in the bakery business – and now she has the financial clout of a certain Alan Sugar to back up her ambitions. Alana Spencer won the most recent series of *The Apprentice* to secure Sugar's large investment, and is hoping to turn over a profit of £465,000 in the first year of working with the mogul to grow her bakery business, Ridiculously Rich.

Spencer started off on the path to business success early on, with an idea in secondary school to make cards and sell them to classmates. She once sacked a school friend from her card venture for being too slow. This ruthless streak exhibited itself as Spencer sought to prove her suitability for the role of Sugar's business partner, with the 24-year-old saying that, if forced, she would indeed fire the only employee currently working for her - her boyfriend, Bart.

At 16, Spencer began making and selling chocolates for her family, before going on to make corporate gifts. This taste of professional treat-selling continued to snowball, with Spencer leaving school after her A Levels to set up a kitchen on the side of her parents' house, and later a business that would evolve into 'Ridiculously Rich': Narna's.

Narna's provided luxury homemade tray bakes to cafes and delis, and made regular appearances across the UK at fairs and festivals. Spencer was making rocky roads for just 16p before selling them on for £3 – and that's the kind of profit that even the largely sceptical Lord Sugar can get behind.

Spencer hopes to take her baking company into 2017 with the plan to get ridiculously rich, and she follows in the footsteps of 11 other lucky winners. The original winner of the show in its fledgling series, Tim Campbell, was even kept on by Lord Sugar beyond their contractual agreement before starting up a charity that helps budding entrepreneurs.

Lord Sugar doesn't get it right every time, but *The Apprentice* has been a reality show true to its word, and in its latest winner the sweet taste of success is surely not beyond Alana's appetite.



Tales from the BUSINESS GHOST



DON'T LET A FAILED ROMANCE RUIN YOUR BUSINESS!

In this, the most romantic of months, where valentines are sent in earnest and declarations of love span from a single red rose to a weekend of exorbitant extravagance, where does your heart lie?

You see there is a difference, a massively important one, between falling in love and being in a steady relationship. In one state you are prepared to do unfathomable things, go to extraordinary lengths, and spend inordinate amounts of time and money for one moment of romance. In the other, you enjoy the deeper feelings of security, companionship and the warmth of shared experience. The first is fired by passion; the latter fuelled by familiarity.

But what has this to do with your business?

Most people started out in business or to pursue a chosen career with the enthusiasm of an infatuated young lover, hopelessly lost in the romantic notion of a lifetime of adventure ahead. Their heart beat quickly inside of them as promise and proposal lit a blazingly insatiable appetite for success. But for many the thrill of the chase would dwindle over time, replaced by routine and a regular job. Either the career stagnated as a rut began to form beneath their feet or the romantic horizon of entrepreneurial success played just a little too hard to get.

The truth of the matter, sad as it may be, is that too many relationships which start with fireworks end in frustration and an anguished puff of smoke. Don't get me wrong here: 'being' in love is a great ambition and a natural destination for those who are 'falling' in love. Likewise, any business that starts with dreams, passion and desire must surely look for a future where steady security, operational efficiency and continual growth is at its core.

The secret in both love and business is to keep the passion alive, even as the familiarity sets in. Fall deeper in love with your ambition each day and stay romantic until the very end. Happy Valentines.



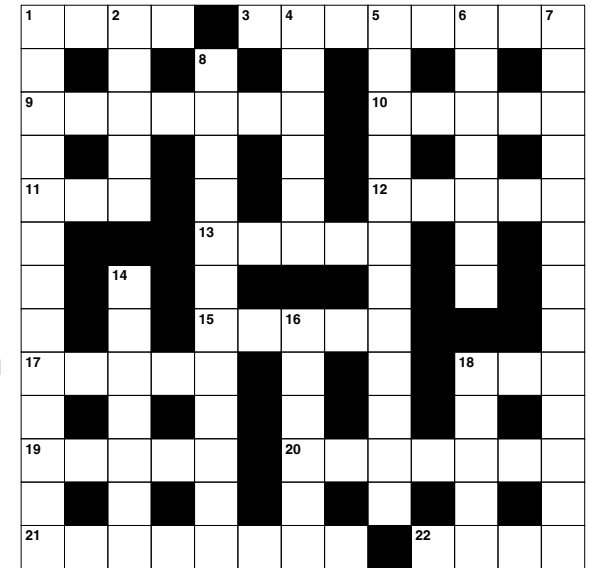
PUZZLES & TRIVIA

ACROSS

1. Large US feline (4)
3. Cold Spanish tomato soup (8)
9. Ideas (7)
10. Bout of extravagant shopping (5)
11. Nevertheless (3)
12. Tropical fruit (5)
13. ___ Valletta: actress (5)
15. Vaulted (5)
17. Long for (5)
18. Drunkard (3)
19. Printed insert supplied with a CD (5)
20. Decorative style of the 1920s and 1930s (3,4)
21. Horticulturist (8)
22. Pots (4)

DOWN

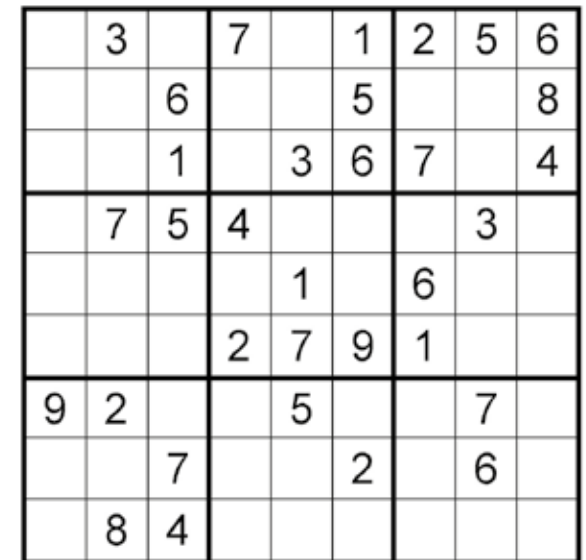
1. Miserly (5-8)
2. Short choral composition (5)
4. Soak up (6)
5. Person studying after a first degree (12)
6. Cut short (7)
7. Excessively striving (13)
8. Preservative chemical (12)
14. Vehicle towed by another (7)
16. Spirit of a person or group (6)
18. Damage the reputation of (5)

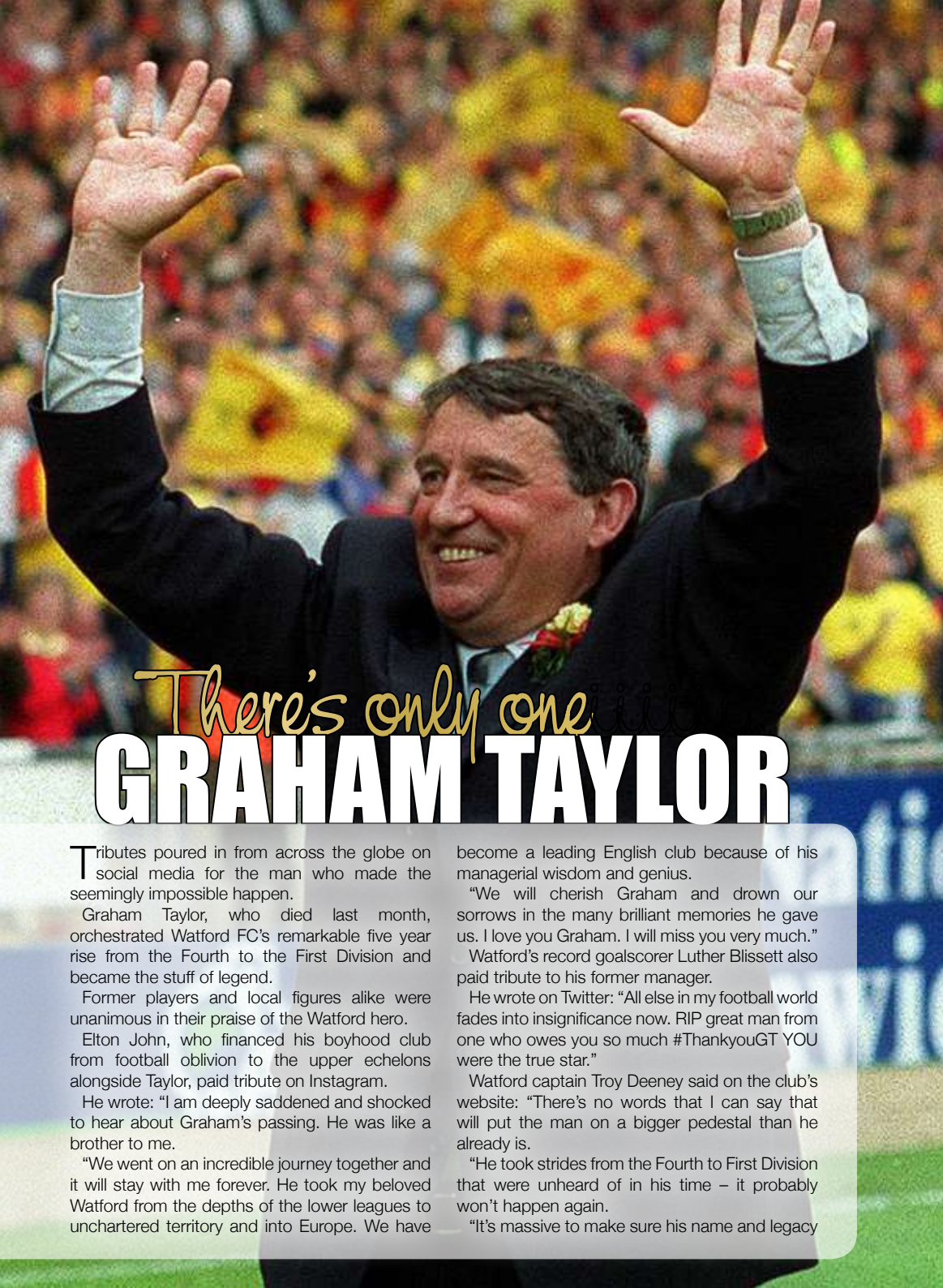


DID YOU KNOW

- ▶ When hippos are upset, their sweat turns red.
- ▶ A flock of crows is known as a murder.
- ▶ It would take a sloth one month to travel one mile.
- ▶ Cows kill more people than sharks do.
- ▶ The word "gorilla" is derived from a Greek word meaning, "A tribe of hairy women."
- ▶ A tarantula can live without food for more than two years.
- ▶ Cockroaches can live for several weeks with their heads cut off, because their brains are located inside their body. They would eventually die from being unable to eat.
- ▶ Butterflies taste their food with their feet.
- ▶ Hamsters run up to eight miles at night on a wheel.

SUDOKU





There's only one GRAHAM TAYLOR

Tributes poured in from across the globe on social media for the man who made the seemingly impossible happen.

Graham Taylor, who died last month, orchestrated Watford FC's remarkable five year rise from the Fourth to the First Division and became the stuff of legend.

Former players and local figures alike were unanimous in their praise of the Watford hero.

Elton John, who financed his boyhood club from football oblivion to the upper echelons alongside Taylor, paid tribute on Instagram.

He wrote: "I am deeply saddened and shocked to hear about Graham's passing. He was like a brother to me.

"We went on an incredible journey together and it will stay with me forever. He took my beloved Watford from the depths of the lower leagues to uncharted territory and into Europe. We have

become a leading English club because of his managerial wisdom and genius.

"We will cherish Graham and drown our sorrows in the many brilliant memories he gave us. I love you Graham. I will miss you very much."

Watford's record goalscorer Luther Blissett also paid tribute to his former manager.

He wrote on Twitter: "All else in my football world fades into insignificance now. RIP great man from one who owes you so much #ThankyouGT YOU were the true star."

Watford captain Troy Deeney said on the club's website: "There's no words that I can say that will put the man on a bigger pedestal than he already is.

"He took strides from the Fourth to First Division that were unheard of in his time - it probably won't happen again.

"It's massive to make sure his name and legacy

lives on."

Hornets manager Walter Mazzarri added: "I am very sorry for the news about Graham Taylor. I know what he meant to the fans and the club and I know he had beaten all the records for Watford while he was here."

Much has been told of Taylor's kind-hearted nature.

Andrew French, who was head of communications at Watford FC from 1998 to 2003, told **VISION** one particular memory stood out.

He said: "My warmest memory was the day of the 1999 Play-Off Final. He knew I was a fan long before I worked there, so he made sure I had breakfast with him and the squad, travelled to Wembley on the team coach, walked the pitch with the players and then stayed in the dressing room before the game and at half-time.

"When we won I was suddenly a fan again, jumping around on the hallowed turf and celebrating wildly. When we got back to the dressing room, Sky Sports were waiting to do interviews. I tried to get back into 'job mode' but Graham just said to me 'I've got this sorted Frenchy, you go and soak the day up son'."

Andrew wasn't the only fan to share his memories on social media.

Many fans at the game were quick to praise the Middlesbrough away support, showing that Taylor was undoubtedly loved by all involved with the beautiful game.

Jason Hall wrote: "When one entire Watford stand stood and applauded the Boro fans for singing 'One Graham Taylor', that's what football is all about!"

Others simply had words of praise.

Matt Crow wrote: "Genuinely gutted to hear about the passing of Graham Taylor. A true Watford legend, where would the club have been without him."

Simon Ricketts wrote: "An actual hero of mine who did so much for our town."

Sam Chedgzoy even shared a letter he received from Taylor in 1990.

Sam had wanted Taylor's Aston Villa to beat Liverpool to the First Division title, but Taylor responded: "Although one can never be certain in football, I have to say that at the time of answering your letter, Liverpool are firm favourites to win the title again and therefore, it looks as if you will have to take a bit of 'stick' from your friends. Never mind, as they say, it's all in the game!"

Family, friends and fans alike will miss a man who truly was a gentleman of the game.



CHINA

THE NEW FOOTBALL SUPERPOWER



SPORT

Move aside La Liga and the Premier League, there's a new absolutely minted kid on the global football block.

The Chinese Super League has made big headlines over the last year and especially the last couple of months.

By signing some high profile names the Chinese clubs have made a very clear statement of their intent to be taken seriously across the world.

Chelsea's Brazilian born players seem to be a particular favourite.

Last January Ramires signed for Jiangsu Suning for a reported fee of £25million.

Fast forward 12 months and fellow Brazilian Oscar made the move east for a reported £52million and weekly wages of £400,000.

At the time this magazine was going to print the Chinese club Tianjin Quanjian were reported to be circling armed with a bag of cash to turn star striker Diego Costa's head.

Talk of wages of £570,000 per week have been reported as the Brazilian born Spanish

international fell out with Chelsea boss Antonio Conte.

Conte apparently shouted at Costa to 'go to China' during a training ground row.

The 'go to China' message is increasingly being whispered in the ear of a host of top class players by their agents.

The Chinese Super League has already successfully targeted the following:

Axel Witsel – Belgian international.

Carlos Tevez – Argentinian international and former Manchester United and Manchester City star – reportedly now the world's best paid player on an eye watering £600,000 a week.

Gervinho – Ivory Coast striker and former Arsenal player.

Hulk – The burly Brazilian forward joined Shanghai SIPG and is earning around £320,000 a week.

Just like many of their European counterparts, the top Chinese clubs are backed by billionaires with very deep pockets, despite average

attendances of only 24,000 per match.

It now seems bizarre that back in 2015 the then Chancellor George Osborne gave £3million of tax payers' money to help fund the growth and development of Chinese football.

That's roughly around seven weeks' wages for the likes of Oscar.

Some experts are concerned that the Chinese clubs pose a future threat to the Premier League.

Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said: "The money being ploughed into Chinese football is potentially a threat to the Premier League, which has been the most powerful financial force in the market for many years.

"Basically when you're a football player you want to combine the quality of the competition with the quantity of your wages. The quality of the game over there is a long way behind the Premier League and Spain but the lucrative deals will tempt more and more players."

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has little sympathy for English clubs worried about the

Chinese effect. He said: "You know that the rest of Europe thinks the same thing about England.

"I think in this moment it's not a league you want to play - the only way to get players to go there is the money. In all the big European leagues you can earn a lot of money, it should be enough.

"It's not an option for me. Maybe for a holiday but it's absolutely no option for me. I don't think we should say it's a danger, it's another opportunity."

Last month the Chinese Football Association introduced a rule restricting the number of non-Chinese players who can be fielded to three, in response to government concerns that the spending on foreign stars is getting out of hand.

Whether this will draw the curtain on the Chinese raids on European clubs and high profile international players remains to be seen.

It looks like being a very interesting time ahead and could potentially change the face of global football in the years to come.



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