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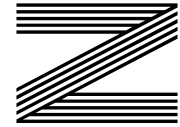
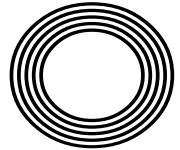
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SIR CLIFF RICHARD OBE
A look back at his career as he turns 80

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Presenter celebrates her return to the limelight



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Editor's notes...



Brett Shohet, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION**Hornchurch. I truly hope everyone is doing well, especially when, COVID-wise, things are beginning to feel disheartening again. However, I don't want to be too doom and gloom - many of you will no doubt be reading **VISION** as an escape of sorts - but I would just like to say that it's an absolute honour for us to serve the businesses in our community. At a time when local high streets are eerily quiet and many business owners are struggling, we are proud to be giving them some form of lifeline.

Despite being physically separated as per the guidelines, we must remember to stay unified as a community. I've noticed when I go to visit local businesses in our towns, because we're all wearing masks, we're looking into each other's eyes more and reading them for emotion. It means there's been more of a connection between us, and I do hope that's something we retain after the pandemic. Another hope of mine is that we can all spend Christmas with the people we love. I've been waiting three months for a dining table I've bought to turn up, in the hope that, as well as making me feel a bit more 'grown up', it can be fully surrounded by my family (and occupied by a turkey!) this December. If you have any queries or contributions you would like to share with us please get in touch. And as always, stay safe.

Brett



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FOUNDER | Nik Allen CREATIVE DIRECTOR | Misha Mistry
CO-ORDINATORS | Rebecka Fryer, Amy Pollard
CONTRIBUTORS | Andrew Wilkin, Tabatha Fabray, Tim Green, Geraint Roberts, Ketan Dattani

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YOU'RE THE VOICE

AS SIR CLIFF RICHARD OBE PASSES 80, HIS STAR IS STILL CHARTING HIGH

Let's begin with a stat: for a long while, Sir Cliff held the record for scoring number one songs in consecutive decades in the UK. He'd hit the top spot twice in the 1950s and on seven occasions in the 1960s. The following decade he left it late, with *We Don't Talk Anymore* his solitary chart-topper in the summer of 1979.

Reinventing himself for the 1980s, spoof track *Living Doll* hit the heights in 1985, followed by *Mistletoe and Wine* in 1988; before *Saviour's Day* in 1990 and *The Millennium Prayer* in 1999 ensured he preserved a most unique chart first.

"I became aware of the run back in the 1970s but it was never an intention to churn out tracks just to keep it going," he says. "I think if you focus too much on that it becomes a bit of a vanity project and you're losing sight of the music itself; but while it went on, it was fun."

These days, the charts aren't for the likes of Sir Cliff. In 2020, they are almost solely the domain of youngsters, both in terms of the record-buying public and the artists themselves.

"Obviously the internet has created major change in the record industry and revised entirely how everything operates.

"It's a shame the charts don't represent the excitement of old when new releases would move around and we'd all follow their progress at home on our radios. I know a lot of people are sentimental about the change that's happened, but as long as people are out there making good music, that should be enough."

'YOU WORK HARD. YOU DO YOUR BEST. AND YOU JUST WANT SOME PEACE: AND THAT'S ALL I WANTED'

For Sir Cliff these days, new music often takes the form of festive tracks.

"I have inadvertently built a reputation for putting Christmas music out there," he admits. "It really all started with *Mistletoe and Wine*.

"Do I mind the association? Of course not – it's such a magical time of the year."

Of course, recognition solely as a musician does a disservice to so many other things Sir Cliff has become renowned for in a celebrated career that began way back in 1958 as lead singer of British group The Drifters. As his pop career exploded, film roles also came his way (famously in *Summer Holiday*) and, beyond that, a passion for wider showbiz projects, faith, philanthropy and a clean-living bachelor lifestyle, even though he came close to marrying on more than one occasion (notably to former British tennis number one Sue Barker).

A proud, kind-hearted and sincere exemplar of a golden age of British entertainment, Sir Cliff found himself in the news for the wrong reasons in 2014 when the darkness surrounding Operation Yewtree began enveloping a number of well-known names.

Almost immediately it became clear that there was no story to be had, and he successfully went on to sue South Yorkshire Police and the BBC for their parts in the media pursuit that followed.

"You know, you get to the point, especially after all these years, where you just want a quiet life," he says. "You work hard, you do your best, and you just want some peace; and that's all I wanted."

Whether Sir Cliff gets peace as he passes 80 is unclear. In socially distancing terms, he will, but as a worldwide base of adoring fans continues to follow his every move, it's clear this is someone who will stay in our admiring consciousness for quite some time yet.

THE WORLD AROUND US *Part 1*

In the first of a new four-part environmental series, we look at the key drivers in the health and well-being of the planet. In this issue, it's animal life, and in particular, the humble cow.

It's not easy being a cow. While farmers are eyeing you up for a trip to the abattoir, those on both sides of the eco debate are ready to slap the blame tag on a little embarrassing flatulence.

Scientists believe the average cow releases between 70kg and 120kg of methane per year. A greenhouse gas, like carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide, methane forms a dangerous blanket around the planet.

A molecule that lasts a decade, in real terms what it contributes to the atmosphere can be equated to little more than two cups of water inside a swimming pool, yet its chemical shape is remarkably effective at trapping heat, thus it has a big impact on how much, and how quickly, the planet warms.

And with 1.5 billion cows on the planet, it's clear there's real environmental interest in reducing the emissions of these animals, who can also lay claim to being the source of two-thirds of all

ammonia in the atmosphere.

In 2019, an experiment in New Zealand saw cows given a vaccine to rid them of certain gut microbes responsible for producing methane. Further development of this could drastically reduce cows' impact on the planet, while still allowing our ravenous consumption of meat and dairy foods.

In the UK, farmers mainly use grass-based silage. By changing to a maize compound, a one-tenth drop in methane production could be achieved.

As ever, environmental aims must be balanced with commercial sense. The UK agricultural industry is worth £25billion per year, yet it's clear less-fibrous diets, further vaccine research and other subtle changes – such as introducing seaweed and higher-quality constituents into the food mix – can lead to more refined systems... and less windy livestock!



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Shoe care



FASHION

Whether you live in your trusty trainers or you favour a more sophisticated leather shoe, caring for your chosen footwear can be a bit of a nightmare. Fortunately, we are here to help.

Suede & Leather

The first thing you should do if you buy a pair of leather or suede shoes is to treat them with a specialised spray protector, as this will help preserve them for longer.

In terms of cleaning, suede should be gently brushed with a suede brush to remove any dirt or dust without damaging it.

Leather is best cleaned with shoe polish as this will not only clean but also moisturise it, which helps to lengthen the lifespan of the shoes.

If your leather shoes get caught in the rain, place them upside down on dry paper (not newspaper) and leave to dry naturally.

Canvas & Fabric

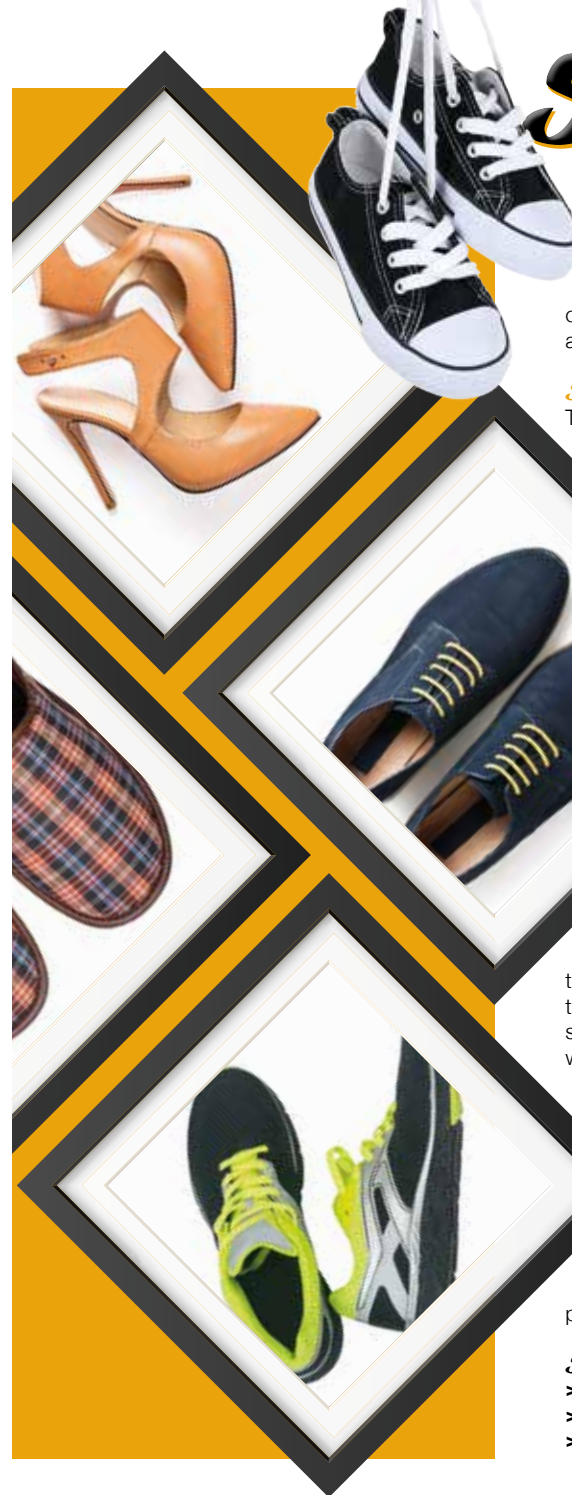
Slightly easier to take care of, most canvas shoes can be washed in the washing machine, although be sure to let them air dry and never place them in the tumble dryer as this will ruin their shape. If there is only one spot of dirt on your fabric or canvas shoes, simply brush it off with a toothbrush or wash with a sponge dipped in soapy water.

Trainers

Some trainers can be washed in the washing machine, although always check their label before doing so. It can be a good idea to place your trainers in a pillow case before washing and to wash them with a few towels to avoid your footwear banging around and becoming damaged. Liquid detergent is preferable as powder can get stuck in your trainers.

Signs your shoe soles need replacing

- > The centre of your soles feel weak or spongy
- > They start to feel thinner in some areas
- > You notice a circle emerging





5 natural BATH SOAKS



Is there anything more relaxing than soaking in a warm bubble bath during the winter months? Arguably not, but have you ever stopped to think about all the harsh chemicals that you are exposing your skin to each time you reach for your preferred products? Here are five natural alternatives to try.

1. Honey

Honey is an antibacterial substance that can help prevent infections and heal minor skin abrasions. It is also full of natural antioxidants that can help boost your immune system and help combat the signs of ageing.

Simply add two tablespoons of raw honey to a running bath and then soak for a minimum of 15 minutes.



2. Green tea

A popular choice for a bath soak, green tea can help to reduce muscle pain, soften skin and reduce any redness. Loaded with antioxidants, it also has anti-ageing benefits. Just fill your bath as normal, pop in six green tea bags, leave to steep for 15–20 minutes and remove.



3. Lavender

You may already be using a lavender-scented bath product owing to this herb's ability to instantly soothe and relax. However, why not cut out the chemicals and use pure lavender essential oil instead? All you need to do is add between six and eight drops to running water.



4. Baking soda

A store cupboard essential, also known as sodium bicarbonate, this natural ingredient is found in most bath products owing to its exfoliating properties.

Simply mix five tablespoons of baking soda into a warm bath and allow to dissolve.



5. Epsom salt

Not actually a salt but a naturally occurring mineral, Epsom salt is made up of magnesium and sulphate. Ideal for counteracting stress, Epsom salt can also help to ease pain and alleviate sore muscles. Add one or two cups to your bath five minutes before you plan to get in.

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FLAWLESS

flicks

With the Christmas party season fast approaching, even if this year it is looking to be a bit more virtually festive, what better time to learn how to create the perfect eyeliner flick? Especially as your eyes are the one part of your face that is not covered by a mask!

THE NATURAL FLICK – Best for all eye shapes

Ideal for those who want an understated look, the natural flick should be subtle and slightly smudged. It is best created using a pencil eyeliner.

THE ALL-AROUND FLICK – Best for upturned or hooded eyes

Slightly more dramatic and perfect for an evening occasion, as the name suggests, this flick goes all around your eyes. Best achieved with a pencil eyeliner.

THE LONG FLICK – Best for small eyes

If you are wanting to look elegant, yet edgy, this long line flick is the look for you. Best for those who feel confident in their flicking abilities. Use a precise gel liner.

THE FISHTAIL FLICK – Best for round eyes

A more futuristic flick, this look requires clean and precise lines, so you need to bring your make-up-applying A game. Opt for a skinny gel liner and practise until perfect.

THE REVERSE FLICK – Best for almond eyes

Who says that the perfect flick has to be on the top of your eyes? Become an exotic goddess with a reverse flick that is subtle, yet seriously sexy. Make sure you add lashings of mascara to your top eyelashes to avoid looking tired.

TOP TIPS FOR ACHIEVING THE PERFECT FLICK

- Use a hairpin for more precision | Create a dot sequence if you struggle to draw a fluid line | Use a magnifying mirror | Prime oily eyelids first | Use a combination of pencil and liquid liners | Be bold with colour – blue eyes suit greens and brown eyes look great with navy.

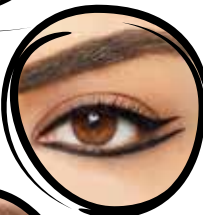


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- A** for *Apple*: Choose whole fruit over juices – the sugar content is less and the fibre will fill you up.
- B** for *Boredom*: Be aware whether you're eating out of hunger or simply for something to do.
- C** for *Calories*: Keeping a check on calories is a restraining belt to excess.
- D** for *Doughnuts*: 'Dough nut' undo your good work with empty processed calories.
- E** for *Exercise*: The best counter to obesity of them all.
- F** for *Fats*: Know your good fat from your bad.
- G** for *Goals*: Set them, make them achievable and stick to them.
- H** for *Holiday*: Have a cheat day each week.
- I** for *Inspiration*: Surround yourself with positive examples and role models.
- J** for *Juice*: Beware of the sugar content of supposed healthy juices and smoothies.
- K** for *Keep a diary*: Log fitness progress and also the foods that make you most energetic, bloated and gassy.
- L** for *Lemon*: Great for cleansing the gut, hot water and a lemon is a winner.
- M** for *More not less*: Fill yourself up with bowls of healthy, nourishing food.
- N** for *Night-time*: Don't eat after 7pm.
- O** for *On the money*: Stick to the fundamentals rather than wasting money on fads.
- P** for *Prep*: Meal prep is essential to prevent you reaching for the easy microwave option.
- Q** for *Quit*: Choose five things to categorically strip from your diet.
- R** for *Rest*: Sleep is an important part of stabilising metabolism.
- S** for *Shout*: Announce your success with like-minded people.
- T** for *Takeaways*: Fast food and takeaways are the evil of good health.
- U** for *Undermine*: Keep self-doubt – as well as fatty foods – at arm's length.
- V** for *Vitamins*: A vitamin supplement will boost your health quickly and easily.
- W** for *Wholefoods*: Go for wholefoods and avoid anything processed, if possible.
- X** for *X-treme*: ... dieting never works.
- Y** for *Yesterday*: ... is gone; look only to the future with your health.
- Z** for *Zinc*: Zinc is a brilliant mineral that helps control your metabolism.



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Are you getting enough VITAMIN D?

After enjoying an unseasonably warm and sunny spring and a pretty typical British summer, people's thoughts are now turning to the cold, and probably wet, winter ahead. Yet have you thought about how you are going to get sufficient vitamin D into your body during the months when sunlight is sparse?

Why is vitamin D important?

Vitamin D helps to regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body, both of which are needed for maintaining healthy teeth, bones and muscles. It is also known for improving brain development and reducing inflammation.

A vitamin D deficiency can lead to a loss of bone density which makes you more prone to fractures and osteoporosis. In children, it can cause rickets.

How much sunlight do I need to get sufficient vitamin D?

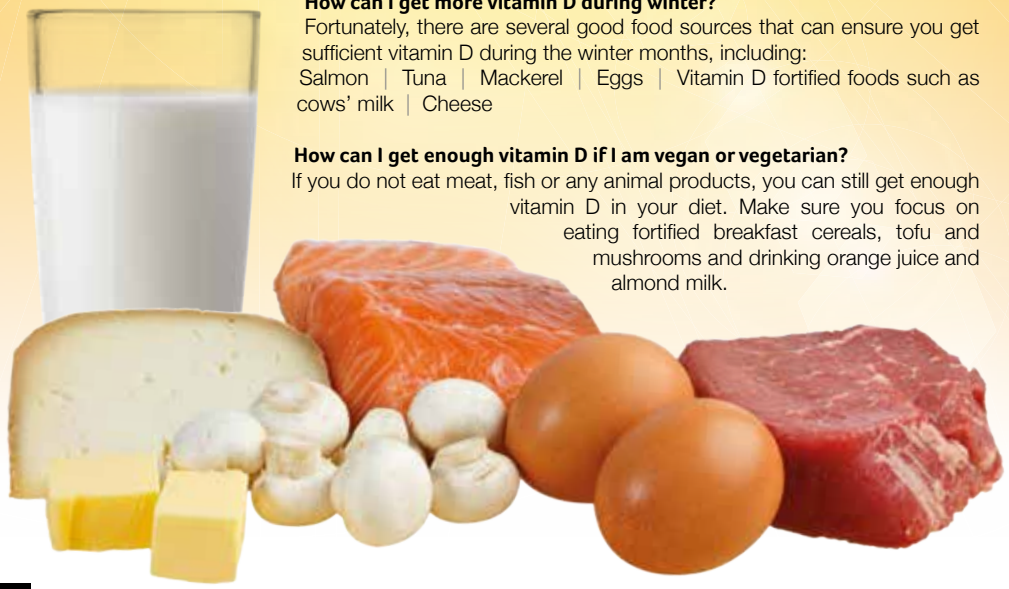
The main source of vitamin D for our bodies is the sun, yet in winter in the UK we do not get sufficient sunlight to meet our daily requirement of this vital vitamin. In the summer months, a mere 15 minutes of sun at midday is enough exposure, although people with darker skin, such as those of African or South Asian origin, may require a little longer.

How can I get more vitamin D during winter?

Fortunately, there are several good food sources that can ensure you get sufficient vitamin D during the winter months, including: Salmon | Tuna | Mackerel | Eggs | Vitamin D fortified foods such as cows' milk | Cheese

How can I get enough vitamin D if I am vegan or vegetarian?

If you do not eat meat, fish or any animal products, you can still get enough vitamin D in your diet. Make sure you focus on eating fortified breakfast cereals, tofu and mushrooms and drinking orange juice and almond milk.



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Eating right ISN'T COMPLICATED

Top tips on how you can achieve a healthy and balanced diet

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good health, and can help you feel your best. Some basic rules to follow are:

> **Have a meal or small snack every three to four hours.** This fuels your metabolism and helps prevent binges, and blood sugar levels stay balanced.

> **Combine protein and fibre at every meal.** This formula provides long-lasting fuel and necessary nutrients for brain, bone and muscle growth.

> **Get up, move around.** Sitting for long periods slows the metabolism, which affects the body's ability to regulate blood sugar and blood pressure and to break down body fat.

> **Drink water often.** There are specific times throughout the day when drinking water can boost your overall health and cognitive functioning. Drink one glass of water 30 minutes before a meal to help digestion. Remember not

to drink too soon before or after a meal as the water will dilute the digestive juices.

Remember to vary your diet because healthy eating isn't necessarily that healthy if you eat the same things over and over again. Having a healthy, balanced diet is about getting the right types of foods and drinks in the right amounts.

As a rough guide, try to base your portions, with 200g (one cup) being one portion, around these healthy food groups:

- > **Fruit and vegetables:** 5+ portions per day
- > **Starchy carbohydrates:** 3-4 portions per day
- > **Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins:** 2-3 portions per day
- > **Dairy and alternatives:** 2-3 portions per day

Ultimately, in the short term, eating a healthy diet can help us to feel good, look our best and stay at a healthy weight. In the long term, a healthy, balanced diet can reduce our risk of heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers.



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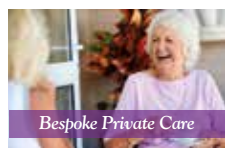
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FOOD & DRINK

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TOASTER

If you don't have the time, energy or expertise to make a home-cooked meal every night of the week, these six surprising snacks can be cooked to (almost) perfection in the humble toaster.

POTATO WAFFLES

Loved by parents across the nation as a quick and filling accompaniment to your kids' lunch or dinner, no longer do you have to wait for the grill to heat up. Simply pop them directly from your freezer into your toaster.

VEGETARIAN BURGERS

Although you don't want to be putting beef burgers into your toaster owing to their high fat content, veggie burgers work just fine. No sogginess in sight.

SWEET POTATO CHIPS

If you love chips but are looking for a healthier option, this sweet potato variety is just what you need. Simply cut your sweet potato into 1cm wide slices and toast for 10-15 minutes. Alternatively, why not try sweet potato toast? Slice thickly, toast and top with avocado and feta.

LEFTOVER PIZZA

Who hasn't been indulging in a few too many takeaways in recent months? Rather than throwing away leftover pizza, or worse still, heating it up in the microwave, simply pop it into a toaster bag, toast and you're good to go.

HOMEMADE TORTILLA CHIPS

If you have ever made your own tortilla chips in the oven using wraps or flour tortillas, you will know how much tastier these are than the shop-bought ones. However, for a real time-saver, tear a wrap in half, put in the toaster and then break into snack-sized bites.

ASPARAGUS

Arguably the most surprising ingredient that you can cook in the toaster. Place a few pieces in a toaster bag with a drizzle of oil and your preferred herbs or spices, and hey presto, delicious roasted asparagus.



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FOOD & DRINK



Return TO YOUR ROOTS *part 2*

Last month we celebrated the carrot, praised the parsnip and tackled the turnip. Now it's time to explore the culinary delights of three more tasty and nutritious root vegetables.

BEETROOT

Instantly recognisable by its bright purple hue, the beetroot often gets a bad rap as some believe that it tastes a little too much like the soil in which it is grown. However, it is worth sampling for its health benefits alone, with this root vegetable being rich in antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

HOW TO STORE: Place beetroots in a perforated plastic bag in the vegetable drawer of your fridge. Lifespan: 3 weeks.

HOW TO COOK: The most famous beetroot dish is borscht, an eastern European winter warmer. Alternatively, roast in olive oil and cumin seeds.



JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE

Full of iron, potassium and vitamin B1, the Jerusalem artichoke is reported to be both an aphrodisiac and a natural digestive. In season from November to March, choose artichokes that are firm to touch and pale brown in colour.

HOW TO STORE: Keep in the fridge or in a cool, dark place. Lifespan: 1-2 weeks.

HOW TO COOK: Cook Jerusalem artichokes in the same way that you would a potato or parsnip: roasted, sautéed, dipped in batter and fried or puréed into a soup.



SWEET POTATO

Seen as a healthier alternative to potatoes, this root vegetable contains iron, calcium, selenium, vitamin A and C, plus it's full of fibre.

HOW TO STORE: Avoid storing in the fridge as this will result in an unpleasant taste; instead, place in a dry, well-ventilated container away from heat. Lifespan: 3-4 weeks.

HOW TO COOK: Although baking sweet potatoes will result in a richer taste, when boiled they have a low glycaemic index (GI).



THE perfect pud

Packed with delicious dried fruit, drenched in brandy and served with lashings of cream, it wouldn't be Christmas without a rich and decadent Christmas pudding. Although you can purchase a shop-bought variety for as little as £2, there is something special about taking the time to make your own.

a heatproof pudding bowl | Pour in the mixture | Cover with baking paper and tie on securely with string | Place the pudding in a large pan and pour in boiling water until it reaches halfway up the outside of the bowl | Cover with a lid | Steam the pudding for 4 hours making sure it does not boil dry (add water if necessary) | Test if the pudding is cooked by inserting a skewer into it; if it comes out dry, it is done | Leave to cool | Cover with fresh baking paper and wrap tightly in cling film | Store in a cool, dark place for up to 6 weeks | When ready to serve, steam for a further 2 hours | Light using a ladle of warm (not boiling) brandy

VARIATIONS ON THE TRADITION:

Instead of brandy, try adding rum, stout or sherry | For a vegan pudding, leave out the eggs and use vegetable suet with a little bit of soya yogurt | Substitute traditional raisins, currants and sultanas for cherries, figs or crystallised ginger

If you are going to add coins, wrap them in tin foil first to avoid choking.

YOU WILL NEED:

120g suet | 20g breadcrumbs | 100g flour | 175g soft dark brown sugar | 500g dried fruit (raisins, sultanas, etc) | 25g flaked almonds | 25g candied peel | 1 tsp mixed spice | ½ tsp nutmeg | ½ tsp cinnamon | 1 grated cooking apple | zest of ½ orange | zest of ½ lemon | 150ml brandy | 2 eggs | optional: coins

HOW TO MAKE:

Combine suet, breadcrumbs, flour, sugar, fruit and spices in a bowl | Add the rest of the ingredients and mix well | Butter



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Thrills ON WHEELS

CORONAVIRUS FUELS A RECORD RISE IN CAMPERVAN HOLIDAYS IN THE UK

It's been a year like no other, where overseas travel has either been ruled out completely or become fraught with danger and the threat of quarantine.

So with that in mind, it's little wonder the UK has experienced an exponential rise in campervan holidays. They offer freedom, seclusion in safe groups, affordability and safety, plus a wanderlust that was sparked in most of us from having spent so many weeks in lockdown.

Consider as well what has been a beautiful British summer, and experts believe our appetite for UK holidays on wheels has truly been reignited thanks to coronavirus.

The numbers speak for themselves – the rise in people hiring campervans is up 170 per cent, and that's despite a lack of bookings that would usually come from trips to Glastonbury and other music and culture festivals. And the caution that

appears to have been placed on every aspect of our lives hasn't stretched as far as four wheels, with 69 per cent trying out a campervan for the first time.

Perhaps we shouldn't be so surprised – these vehicles are virtual mobile hotels and a far cry from the flimsy caravans of decades past. With the ability to comfortably accommodate up to seven people, with large kitchen spaces and almost as much internet access as you'd get at home, people can feel detached from real life, yet still perfectly connected.

The biggest draw, however, is almost certainly the thrill of waking up in a new location each day. And as for where we're headed to in these magnificent motorhomes, the Highlands, predictably, top the list. Cornwall and the Peak District are other go-to locations for families and groups looking to get away, with the trend for campervan holidays now on the increase all year round.



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KIDS

Kids love making music. From the moment they are able to hold a spoon and start banging it on your pans, to the time when they are able to learn a real instrument.

So why not encourage this natural passion and challenge them to make their own band?

Get organised

This initial step will be dependent on your children's ages, although it can be a good idea to get your older kids to help the younger ones. You can set them the task of deciding what type of music they would like to make, what name they want to give their band and who is going to play what.



Make your own instruments

Some great ideas for DIY musical instruments include:

- > **A HARMONICA.** This can be easily made by sellotaping different-sized straws together and blowing in the holes.
- > **SENSORY BIN SHAKERS.** A great option for little ones. Fill different-sized containers with rice, buttons, pasta or anything else you have to hand, secure and shake.
- > **CEREAL BOX GUITAR.** If someone is keen to be the lead guitarist in the band, then all you will need is an old cereal box, a pair of scissors and a few elastic bands.
- > **CAN DRUMS.** Simply take some old tin cans, stretch a cut-up balloon over the open ends and hit with a spoon or stick.

Start practising

Again, this will be dependent on your kids' ages and attention spans and can range from half an hour to a full day. Keep them motivated by creating a 'show time' when they will be able to perform to the rest of the family.

Ideas for simple songs that they can try to play along with:
Jingle Bells | *Twinkle, Twinkle* | *Hickory, Dickory, Dock* | *Incy Wincy Spider* | *Baby Shark*

NB: Please make sure all instruments are safe for babies and young children. Avoid or cover safely all sharp edges and small choking items. Remember to secure or seal all tubs tightly.



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ARTIST RESIDENCE, LONDON
Based in the diverse Pimlico area, this unconventional hotel mixes vintage chic with a modern twist. Ideal for those who want a bit of luxury, enjoy its stunning roll-top baths and tin ceiling tiles. It is owned by stylish couple Charlotte and Justin Salisbury, who also have three other hotels which can be found in Cornwall, Brighton and the Cotswolds, with another in Bristol opening in November.

THE PIG-IN THE WALL, SOUTHAMPTON
With 12 unique bedrooms, deli-style dining and plenty of cosy corners to relax and unwind in, THE PIG-in the wall is quite unlike any hotel you have been to before. In terms of interior design, enter with an open mind and take in the eclectic range of rooms that boast original wooden beams, slanted ceilings and walk-in monsoon showers.

STRATTONS, NORFOLK
If you hate generic hotels, you will love Strattons. Located in a quiet lane in a conservation area within the town, this family-friendly hotel prides itself on offering luxury, comfort and inspiring interior design. With 14 individual rooms, expect open fires, original period features, a free-standing bath at the foot of the bed and even mermaid mosaic.

CRAZY BEAR, BEACONSFIELD
Flamboyant and luxurious, Crazy Bear combines dramatic architecture with never before seen features such as the copper bath that is filled directly from the ceiling. Perfect for leather lovers, more than 50 different types were used to create its unique atmosphere, with leather featuring on the upholstery, walls, ceiling and even the doors.

Photo credits: artistresidence.co.uk, thepiginnthewall.com, strattonshotel.com, crazybeargroup.co.uk



DIY headboard designs



Photo credit: craft-lovers.com, sarahshermansamuel.com, sweetparrishplace.com, Poppytalk.com

The right headboard has the power to transform a boring bed into a thing of beauty, but with many shop-bought varieties costing hundreds of pounds, surely there must be a cheaper alternative?

Fortunately, there is. Simply check out these DIY designs that will help you create a stylish sanctuary without busting your budget.

DIY Pillow Headboard

To create this super simple and soft headboard in less than an hour, all you need is a copper pipe, some leather or faux leather and two floor cushions or several smaller cushions.

Simply use the leather to create two straps for each of your chosen cushions, thread them along your copper pipe and attach above your bed.

DIY Woven Headboard

To make this rustic, home-made headboard, you need six woven placemats, two jute table runners or small rugs, a hammer and some small finish nails. Once you have your supplies, all you need to do is secure the

two runners directly above your bed, one on top of another, and then attach a placemat next to each end of the runners and you are done.

DIY Lego-inspired Headboard

Create this cool kid's headboard using just four 3D wall panels, some plywood, caulk, paint and four pieces of decorative wood trim. Start by gluing your 3D panels to a 40x40-inch piece of plywood. Once dry, glue your chosen trim around your plywood and seal with caulk. Paint your panels in your preferred colour. Hang using a French cleat.

DIY Plywood Headboard

Natural wood is the ideal material for those wanting to create a minimalist vibe in their bedroom. Simply purchase a pre-cut sheet of plywood for the headboard and then add three shelves for additional functionality.

Other DIY Headboard Ideas

Jute headboard | Pallet headboard | Pegboard headboard | Woven vertical blinds headboard

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FEATHER DUSTERS

Commonly associated with maids in stately homes, feather dusters are best for cleaning delicate or expensive objects such as artwork, figurines or jewellery.

- Pros of feather dusters:** Will not scratch surfaces, objects or furniture | Offer non-invasive contact
- Cons of feather dusters:** Not the best at collecting dust | Unethical as feathers are plucked from live animals

MICROFIBRE DUSTERS

Becoming increasingly popular in recent years, microfibre dusters are great for general cleaning and dusting wooden furniture, tile counters and any other hard surfaces.

- Pros of microfibre dusters:** Excellent at picking up dust and dirt | Hypoallergenic | Environmentally friendly and sustainable
- Cons of microfibre dusters:** We couldn't find any!

VACUUM DUSTERS

By attaching the dusting piece to your vacuum cleaner, you can enjoy fast and effective cleaning of larger surface areas in your home or to clean up after building work.

- Pros of vacuum dusters:** Ideal for concentrated areas of dust and areas that are hard to reach | Dust can be disposed of easily
- Cons of vacuum dusters:** Handheld vacuum dusters are not very powerful | Can be expensive

COMPRESSED AIR DUSTERS

This type of duster is used to remove dust from electronics, plug holes and other small, inaccessible areas. Perfect for dusting your keyboard if you are working from home.

- Pros of compressed air dusters:** The best option for all computer accessories, electronics and office equipment
- Cons of compressed air dusters:** Can be expensive



Photo credit: Keith Homar/Shutterstock.com, alexpress.com



HOME & DIY

BRICKING it

LEARN HOW TO EXPOSE, PREPARE AND LOOK AFTER A BRICKWORK FEATURE WALL

It's the design feature that flipped on its head the old adage of plastering over walls for a smooth, 'complete' finish.



These days, exposed brickwork is all the rage – a modern take on a feature wall that circumnavigates modern, industrial and rustic.

Preparing an exposed brick wall and looking after it isn't difficult if you follow a few simple steps.

Exposing

Chip away a small section of plaster to check your brickwork is in good order. Cover the floor with sheeting, as removal of plaster will throw up considerable dust. Wearing a dust mask, chisel away sections and finish using a wire brush.

Preparing

Use a mild solution comprising equal parts water, dish soap and salt. Use a clean cloth to apply, allowing the solution to soak into the wall. Leave for 10 minutes so the salt dissolves any remaining plaster particles, then wipe the entire wall using a sponge or wet cloth.

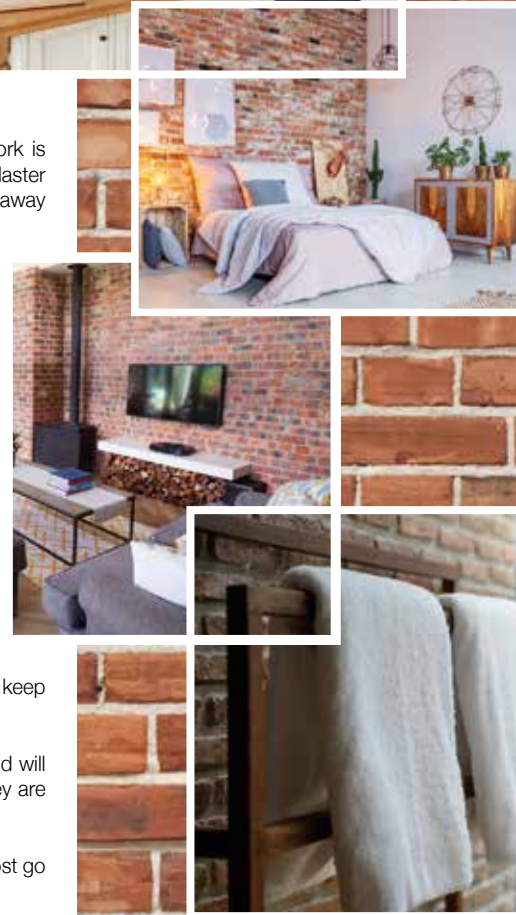
When dry, use an industrial sealant across the entire wall. An acrylic-based application will mean your wall is resistant to scratches, spills and dirt. You'll need to apply at least two coats, ensuring you work the solution into all the gaps.

Looking after

With your pristine wall the envy of visitors, you'll need to make sure you look after it properly. It's inevitable that parts may be fragile and flake off over time, but light cleaning (even with something as simple as a feather duster) will keep particles at bay.

Remember, all brick walls are different, and how they respond will depend on their age, the room temperature and whether they are interior or exterior walls.

The good news is that the matt finish and unpolished look most go for will hide a multitude of sins.



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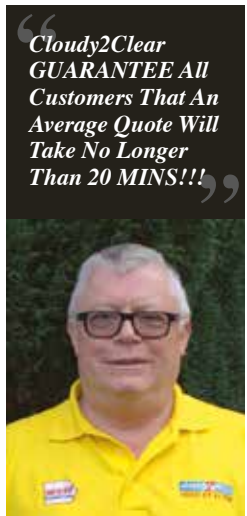
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PLASTIC BAGS

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Even though you know you should take them with you when you go shopping, somehow you always seems to forget and come back with even more plastic bags.

Fortunately, there are several other uses for these non-biodegradable land fillers.

Protect your plants

If you worry about your delicate plants over winter, you can easily protect them from frost by gently tying a plastic bag around them. The bag will not only safeguard them from the wind, but will also trap warm air inside, ensuring their roots stay insulated. Plastic bags can also be used to protect your outdoor taps and your car's wing mirrors.

Make a skipping rope

Yes, this can be done. Simply cut off the handles so you are left with just rectangles and cut 12 long strips. Take six strips and tape them together, then tape to the back of a chair and start braiding. Repeat with the second strip of six and then twist the two braids together to create your

skipping rope. Use duct tape to add handles.

Create a textured paint surface

If you are wanting to create a textured effect on your walls, there is no need to buy any special paint. All you need to do is cover a clean paint roller with a plastic bag, roll it in your chosen colour and apply it to the walls.

Stuff cushions

Instead of buying traditional stuffing when your cushions start to look a little flat, simply fill them with plastic bags for a similar effect. This money-saving trick can also work wonders for pet beds.

Other quick uses

- > Line your bathroom bin
- > Car sickness bags (check the bag doesn't have air holes)
- > Parcel padding
- > To prevent paintbrushes from drying out



CANCEL CULTURE

The BBC TV licence – do you need to pay?



Photo credit: Willy Barton/shutterstock.com

The BBC has never felt pressure like it: a new director general looking to shake things up, accusations of political and social bias, and the move to begin charging over-75s for TV licences – it has left 'Auntie' scratching about for relevance in a changing world where digital and premium channels are taking our attention... and our money.

While the BBC remains one of our country's finest institutions, and excellent value for those who regularly enjoy its diverse range of programming, there have been recent moves to defund the organisation – a Twitter campaign rapidly gained 100,000 followers and continues to apply pressure across social media.

This has led to many looking at the criteria for paying the licence; namely, whether you do indeed need to pay the £157.50 annual charge (£53 for a black and white TV). The answer is yes, if...

> ... you watch or record live TV as it is being transmitted, on any channel

> ... you watch or stream programmes live on an online service (such as ITV Hub, All 4, YouTube, Amazon Prime Video, Sky Go, etc)

> ... you download or watch programmes on iPlayer And the above applies to use on any device, from television to computer to games console.

The good news is that the BBC's brilliant range of national and regional radio is exempt.

If you believe you don't need a licence, the process for opting out is simple – simply declare to TV Licensing via its website and cancel any direct debits. That will stop what many describe as a barrage of threatening letters. However, the onus is, of course, on you to reapply for a licence if your watching habits change.

What's clear is that in a changing world the BBC's stranglehold on compulsory payment may well be coming to an end – even more so if Prime Minister Boris Johnson's move to decriminalise non-payment continues to gather pace.

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Kirsty Gallacher



...A GOOD SPORT

From fashion undergraduate to Sky Sports presenter, it was a curious career trajectory for Kirsty Gallacher, who seemingly had the world of light entertainment at her feet.

That was, until a series of events knocked the Edinburgh-born beauty off track.

Her recent return to the limelight is tribute to the strength and perseverance of the 44-year-old, but also a marker for us all in these difficult times.

The die was cast relatively early for Kirsty, as the daughter of Scottish Ryder Cup champion Bernard Gallacher, with a career in sport seeming the obvious choice. In reality, however, the presenter endeavoured for the cut and thrust of fashion, even when, still a youngster, the family upped sticks and moved to Wentworth to help her father's golfing ambitions.

Swapping Scotland for Surrey, Kirsty came to count Bruce Forsyth as a neighbour when growing up. And with a golf star for a dad, she was hardly unfamiliar with larger-than-life personalities popping in for coffee.

"I think maybe there was a pressure for me to do something grand," she begins, "but for many years that wasn't really me. I guess in the end I fell into it, but there was no nepotism going on – I was just lucky."

Kirsty recalls the time as a broadcaster with BSkyB when, having climbed to the position of editorial assistant, there came the opportunity to do a screen test.

"I was horribly nervous, but I've always been of the mind that once you are offered something you should always give it a try. Plus, back then, there was still a sense of adversity from traditionalists who didn't believe in women fronting sport, although that has clearly changed now."

Her time on *Sky Sports News* led to onward recognition as she went on to front shows including *Kirsty's Home Videos*, *Kirsty and Phil* and *Soccer Extra*.

So for someone so happy, it was perhaps surprising to see Kirsty's light fade in the midst of her father's poor health, and a painful divorce to ex-rugby pro Paul Sampson, her partner of 13 years, of which they were married for five.

"There were some tough things to process, though rather than take some time off to regroup and look after my boys, I threw myself into work, into new ideas and new projects."

A stint doing *Strictly Come Dancing* saw Gallacher looking desperately thin, and when a drink-driving incident saw her lose her driver's licence for 18 months, the star had hit a new low.

"It's actually really interesting how just when you think you are calm and settled, the carpet can be swept from beneath you," she admits. "It was horrific at the time, truly horrific – but at least now I can see that it was just a few life events colliding together. We are human beings for our ability to ride the rough waves and emerge out the other side stronger, and that's what I've done."

Her focus these days is on celebrating a return to the front line of presenting duties. Her successful podcast, *Stripped Back Sport*, is back on our screens at prime time, and even in a few short years she has witnessed a real evolution in television.

"As far as gender goes, it's definitely played out on more of an equal footing now," she says. "Broadcasting has really undergone a fantastic change over the past 20 years and British television remains the very best in the world. From a purely selfish perspective, it's so great to be back."



LOCAL NEWS

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Man convicted after homophobic behaviour

A man from Hornchurch has been convicted of a public order offence after Metropolitan Police officers investigated homophobic behaviour at a West Ham United football match.

Police investigated reports of several men shouting homophobic comments or making homophobic actions towards visiting supporters at the West Ham vs Brighton & Hove Albion game on February 1, 2020.

Two men were arrested during the fixture at the London stadium on the day of the game.

Samuel Marshall, 21, of Hornchurch and Thomas Hill, 25, of Slough appeared recently at Thames Magistrates' Court. They pleaded guilty to an offence under Section 5 of the Public Order Act and were each fined £200 plus costs.

The investigation continued and two other men were summonsed at a later date. At Thames Magistrates' Court, Damian Critten, 24, of Rainham and Jack Wood, 25, of London also pleaded guilty to a public order offence. They were each fined £120 and given three-year football banning orders.

Chief Inspector Chris Green of Met Operations said: "This investigation and these convictions show that we will not tolerate homophobic behaviour or hate crime at football matches and more broadly in our city.

"If you have information about people committing these types of despicable offences, please share that information with police. These offenders may happen to support the same football team as you, but they do not deserve your support."



Leisure centre sets up hub to support community

A leisure centre in Hornchurch is helping the local community by operating a food and PPE support hub out of its sports hall.

The team at Hornchurch Sports Centre, which is managed by Everyone Active in partnership with Havering Council, worked with the local authority to set up a support hub at the centre during its lockdown closure, to provide food packages to shielding residents, local foodbanks and children's centres, and PPE packages to local care homes and key workers.

The support hub facilitated the delivery of more than 3,000 food packages and more than 500 PPE deliveries.

During this time, the Everyone Active team took receipt of all the deliveries organised by the council, put together all the food and PPE packages, controlled

all the stock coming in and out of the centre, and prepared the deliveries which were then distributed by the council, all while maintaining a COVID-secure system to ensure social distancing was adhered to.

Tom Fletcher, contract manager at Everyone Active, said: "I am so proud of the teams at both Hornchurch Sports Centre and Havering Council who have worked so well together on setting up and operating the support hub.

"There was a core team of four at Everyone Active who were manning the support hub seven days a week, from 6am to 6pm during its peak, and offered out-of-hours cover when it was required too.

"It was fantastic to be able to utilise the centre during the closure to help the local community through such a challenging time for everyone."

Green Flags flying as park gets recognition

Hornchurch Country Park is now flying a Green Flag after it was awarded the accolade for 2020.

It joins the borough's 15 other parks which also hold the prestigious honour, taking the total number of green flags to 16, the most Havering has ever had.

A Green Flag Award means a park boasts the highest possible standards, is well maintained and has excellent facilities. The recognition is awarded by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy.

The Green Flag is Hornchurch's second award of 2020 after it retained a Gold Award in this year's London in Bloom.

Councillor Osman Dervish, Havering's Cabinet Member for Environment, said: "We are extremely proud, as I am sure all our residents are, that we now have 16 Green Flags in our parks. Some of our parks have now held this award for many years, so we're delighted that Hornchurch Country Park has joined this elite list.

"I want to thank all our parks teams and ground maintenance staff who work extremely hard on a daily basis to keep our parks well maintained and safe for everyone to use."



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Double trophy delight for racing driver at Silverstone

Hornchurch racing driver Bobby Thompson was celebrating a second Jack Sears Trophy victory in six rounds as the Kwik Fit British Touring Car Championship headed for Silverstone last month.

Thompson and teammate James Gornall were confident after free practice demonstrated the potential of the GKR TradePriceCars.com team's Audi S3, but Thompson qualified in 19th place. In the first race itself, he battled his way to 18th place.

The second race of the weekend saw Thompson once again fight back from losing places in the early stages to push towards the points, and a battling drive saw the 24-year-old rewarded with 13th place.

The final race had to be restarted after a car rolled out, when the action resumed, Thompson ended his

weekend with a solid twelfth place finish that ensured a second points score and also made him the Jack Sears Trophy winner for the weekend.

Thompson commented: "It's great to have won the Jack Sears Trophy for a second time, and to now be leading the standings is a big bonus."

The next event saw the team travel to Croft in North Yorkshire. In the first race, Thompson produced his best result of the year with an eighth place finish before he walked away unscathed from a dramatic crash in the second race. At the time of print he still leads the field by nearly 30 points.

A fundraising page to repair his badly damaged car was set up at [gofundme.com/f/help-bobby-thompson-rebuild-his-btcc-race-car](https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-bobby-thompson-rebuild-his-btcc-race-car)

Help needed to keep charity going

People in Hornchurch are being asked to support a fundraising appeal in aid of a local charity that's been in existence for more than 30 years.

The call comes from Stephen James of Stephen James Residential & Commercial Estate and Letting Agents, who has started a fundraising appeal in aid of First Step, a charity that has supported youngsters with disabilities and special needs since 1988.

Like other charities, it has been hit hard by the pandemic.

Stephen said: "It provides many services for families,

and support for babies and children with special needs, providing support information and encouragement to families of preschool children.

"The residents of Havering have been so kind in supporting First Step, and my agency also wanted to try to help. I know First Step is very grateful for people's generosity."

Stephen has now started the Great Smarties Appeal and is asking for donors to take tubes of coins to his office. All tubes will be taken to First Step. People can also pay direct on the charity's website [firststep.org.uk](https://www.firststep.org.uk)



Police partner with college for students' safety

Police attended Havering Sixth Form Colleges in Hornchurch recently as part of a borough-wide initiative to discourage youngsters from getting involved with gangs.

At the college on Ardleigh Green Road, knife arches were put up and a large number of students were searched at random. No students were found in possession of any weapons, drugs, alcohol, stolen property or any other prohibited items.

Sergeant Lisa Ryan, safer schools supervisor for Havering, said: "The fact that we didn't find anything on anyone should provide some reassurance to the college community."

"We will continue to keep up the high visibility patrols

and ad-hoc weapons sweeps across Havering with a view to disrupting and preventing youth violence."

Ian Budge, Havering Colleges assistant principal, said: "This is something we do from time to time in conjunction with the police to make sure we remain one of the safest colleges in London. The safety of our students is our prime concern. Carrying any prohibited items will not be tolerated. Some colleges have problems with these issues, but in comparison, we do very well."

"On the day, students cooperated in a very mature way and the fact that nothing was found is a tribute to the incredibly impressive body of students we have in the college."

The Urchins cup run comes to an end

Hornchurch FC's FA Cup journey this season came to an end in the third qualifying round at the hands of higher division Hampton & Richmond Borough on penalties.

The Urchins went one round better than the last campaign, beating Bowers & Pitsea FC in the first qualifying round, which was followed with a comfortable away victory against Walthamstow.

Mark Stimson's men undoubtedly went into the third qualifying round against Hampton & Richmond Borough away from home as underdogs, and will

have been proud to have taken the National League South side as far as a penalty shootout. They were even leading the game up until the 85th minute.

Despite a positive cup run, there hasn't been much else to shout about for the Urchins so far this season, with the side failing to build on their opening day win against Merstham.

There have been a few disappointing defeats, most notably where they lost 3-2 at home against Wingate & Finchley despite taking a two-goal lead in the first half.

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LOCAL NEWS

JULIA LOPEZ MP

Hornchurch and Upminster



As we grapple with the economic impact of the pandemic, my team and I want to do what we can to support residents in finding work. Earlier this month we joined up with our local Jobcentre to hold the first in a series of online events to showcase immediate vacancies with local employers, including Network Rail, British Transport Police and UPS. The event went really well, and if anyone wants further information on the opportunities discussed during our first event, alongside notice of future events, please visit my website – www.julialopez.co.uk

I know many constituents are worried about delays in getting blood tests. My team and I have been talking to local GPs, our hospital's executive team and the North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT) to find out what has been happening. Constituents can see the response I have received from NELFT's chief executive on my website. They are working up a long-term plan to speed up blood testing. However, I am aware of the immediacy of this issue and continue to push the local NHS for improvements in the meantime.

These difficult times have been made harder to endure by the stopping of many of the things we love, like sports, music and theatre. We are anxious to make sure that vital local organisations can get through this period and are delighted that Hornchurch Football Club has been awarded a £10,000 grant from the Premier League's Matchday Support Fund. This funding will help prepare the club for the resumption of football and the physical return of supporters. The government also announced a new Culture Recovery Fund this month, and I am really pleased that we have been able to get £245,000 in grant funding for Queen's Theatre.

I have been catching up with Nelmes Primary School and the First Step charity in Hornchurch, and we have discussed how we can best support teachers, schools and families with disabled children through the next period.

Now that I am a Minister in the Cabinet Office, I have been getting stuck in with improving governance structures across Whitehall. This month, I launched the



new COVID Fraud Hotline with Crimestoppers to help people report any concerns they have about those who might be misusing the government support schemes that have been put in place during the pandemic. It is an affront both to hardworking taxpayers and to those in genuine need that some people have been exploiting pandemic support schemes to line their own pockets. Criminals and fraudsters must not be allowed to profit from this time of national crisis. If you have any information on COVID fraud that you would like to report anonymously, call Crimestoppers for free on 0800 587 5030.

Finally, several residents have been in touch to express their frustration with the state of the footpath that joins Hillview Avenue with Osborne Road. This footpath is used to get across to the 193 bus stop and public transport to Queen's Hospital and Romford, and by parents taking their children to school. I am pleased to report that this will now be repaired after we made representations. Havering Council will be carrying out maintenance work soon and I hope it makes the crossing easier to use as we head into the wetter autumn weather.

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LOCAL NEWS



Pupils receive new book promoting construction careers

Primary school pupils in Hornchurch are among the first to receive a unique new children's book designed to inspire them to work in the construction industry.

Key Stage 2 pupils from Towers Infant and Towers Junior Schools (The Federation of Towers Schools) received a free copy of *What Do... Construction Workers Do?* by Emma Juhasz. The new book aims to increase diversity in the sector by supporting learning and providing a more accurate illustration of the wide-ranging jobs available in construction.

The development and printing costs for the book have been funded by Havering Council's joint venture

partner Wates Residential.

Children can use the book to learn how construction workers build structures, as well as the different kinds of jobs available.

Leo, a student at Towers Junior School, said: "I'm really happy about the books because they are going to help us learn about construction and how we can build things in the future."

Souriya Gad, a teacher at Towers Junior School, said: "It is so important for children to choose a career they love and are passionate about; this book is going to help support their big adventure when the time is right in the world."

Colleges mark World Mental Health Day

Students and staff at Havering Colleges joined thousands of schools, offices and community groups in the #HelloYellow campaign for World Mental Health Day last month.

In an effort to raise awareness, open up and get people talking and listening about mental health, there were several activities arranged – and even a virtual mindfulness session live-streamed from the college's film studio.

The #HelloYellow campaign was organised nationally by the Young Minds charity to support young people's mental health and show them they are not alone – at a time when it is needed most.

Students were asked to write messages of hope and encouragement on yellow leaves that were then hung on a special Affirmation Tree in The Square. In return, they were given goody bags containing stress-relieving gadgets and information about physical and mental well-being.

The live-stream session was made possible with the help of four of the Colleges' Media Production students.



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ANDREW ROSINDELL



MP for ROMFORD



LOCAL NEWS

This month I was proud to present to the House of Commons proposed legislation which I know people in Havering will deeply sympathise with, as we are an animal-loving borough.

In what's called a Private Member's Bill, I highlighted the terrible impact that "no pets" policies can have on individuals and families, many of whom are forced to give up their beloved pets when moving into rented accommodation.

More often than not, these policies are completely unnecessary. In cases where the accommodation is suitable and the owner is "responsible" (meaning the pet is vaccinated, microchipped, neutered and so on), I cannot see why landlords should be able to prevent tenants from living with their faithful friend in their new home.

My legislation, to be known as "Jasmine's Law", is backed by a huge number of organisations, including the RSPCA and Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, the former calling my Bill "a big step forward". With more and more in the south of England – including in Havering – moving into rented accommodation, it is so important that pet owners have the faith and reassurance that they will be able to keep their beloved pets when they move.

As one of Havering's best-known dog owners, I have great pride that I could bring this proposal to the House of Commons. I hope the government will take this on board and support my Bill, or perhaps bring forward a change of law within their own legislation soon and end this injustice once and for all.

Charlie is living his TikTok dream

Former Havering Colleges student Charlie Davis has become a world-wide TikTok influencer and is now living his best life making social media videos for a living in sunny Spain.

Charlie has 1.3 million followers with more than 35 million views on TikTok, and has just set up Europe's biggest 'content creators' house' near Alicante.

He and his friend Nicholas Murray chose eight other up-and-coming social media stars who now all live together and make videos for big brands such as Puma, Skechers, PrettyLittleThing, Oreo and Boohoo in a villa named The Jet House.

Charlie, who is also a professional magician, said: "A few months ago I was at college, going to class, living in Havering – now I am in the hills in the Spanish countryside in a huge villa with a group of friends."

Charlie is also in talks with Amazon Prime about a TV programme to showcase his magic skills, and *Britain's Got Talent* has been in touch offering him an audition for next year's series.

Charlie started the Level 3 Media Production course at the Arleigh Green campus in Hornchurch, in 2018.

He said: "I loved college and was looking to go to university afterwards to continue studying media, but then my TikTok went crazy and so myself and Nick started looking at the idea of setting up a creators house with other people who were popular on TikTok."

He started to think about how he could make his passion for social media his actual job, and his dream came true when he moved to Spain in August and set up The Jet House.



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News from Councillor Paul Middleton

St Andrews Ward, Hornchurch Residents' Association

October has nearly passed and the usual festivities of Hallowe'en will be lacklustre. I take it Bonfire Night will also be cancelled. How many can congregate safely in parks? How would you try to enforce social distancing?

On to council-related matters – if you were following the gerrymandering issue raised against the leader of the council, you may well be disappointed with the 'hearing outcome'.

A hearing with a panel of three councillors was set up to review the allegations and decide whether this issue should move forward or not.

The panel was made up of two Conservative councillors and one Independent councillor.

It was known that concerning the issue to be heard, at least one of the two Conservative councillors selected for the hearing was present at the 'secretly recorded' meeting (councillor Ryan was heard speaking, I believe) where gerrymandering was potentially exposed. (The leader was boasting how the CEO of the council was allowing him to make changes that should not happen, and how certain changes were advantageous to the Conservative party.)

Was cllr Ryan picked especially for the panel, knowing he would have to step down from the



Stock image

meeting? Would the two Conservative councillors vote to rule that their boss was guilty? (This could potentially lead to them being removed from their posts and losing their additional payments.) Would it be a fair and equitable hearing?

Regardless, as soon as the meeting started officially, the councillor whom we knew had been present at the recorded meeting announced he had to disclose an interest, and so could not sit at the hearing, and the meeting was adjourned. Was this just pure incompetence? Was this set up to delay the hearing?

Either way – this meeting cost the taxpayer money. Are these really the people you want in charge of running the council?

Festive trail coming to town

The director of an estate agent in Hornchurch will be coming together with a local school to spread some much-needed festive cheer later this year.

Before lockdown closed schools for months earlier this year, Niall Hebron, of Hunters at 39 Station Lane, Hornchurch, had agreed to sponsor Ardleigh Green Infant and Junior Schools on Ardleigh Green Road.

The school will be running a Christmas Trail and Hunters will provide boards which will be located around Hornchurch, and these will contain clues and letters. Participants will be required to come up with words and phrases associated with Christmas. There will be prizes for those who submit the most answers.

Any people taking part will be asked to dress up in a Christmas theme and post their photos to social media, while Niall will also be offering two Fortnum & Mason hampers as prizes.

Niall explained: "I used to support a local school, so when Ardleigh Green reached out to see if I would be interested, I was delighted to offer support, initially for the next three years. We're always happy to support local businesses, schools and charities and we are also offering a special discount for parents, teachers and key workers at the school who are looking to sell their property."




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NOVEMBER BIRTH FLOWER OF THE MONTH

Chrysanthemum

For those born in November, your birth flower is the cheerful chrysanthemum. Often referred to as just “mums”, these beautiful blooms have a long and rich history. One of the most popular autumn garden flowers, chrysanthemums are easy to grow and will come back year after year.

WHAT DOES THE CHRYSANTHEMUM SYMBOLISE?

Native to Asia, the chrysanthemum is considered by both Japan and China to be an emblem of youth. The flower is also said to help prevent grey hairs, and a single petal placed at the bottom of a wine glass is believed to aid longevity.

When presenting the chrysanthemum as a gift, the colour you choose conveys a particular meaning:

- A red or pink chrysanthemum means “I love you”
- A white chrysanthemum symbolises innocence and purity
- A yellow chrysanthemum represents unrequited love

WHAT DOES THIS BIRTH FLOWER SAY ABOUT YOUR PERSONALITY?

If your birth flower is the chrysanthemum, you are said to be friendly, cheerful and loyal. Although at times you may appear tough on the outside, you are a compassionate person who is fiercely protective of your loved ones.

HOW CAN I GROW CHRYSANTHEMUMS?

If you love these vibrant flowers, you will be pleased to hear that they are relatively easy to grow. They thrive in moist but well-drained soil, so choose a sheltered and sunny spot and add plenty of compost or well-rotted manure. However, chrysanthemums do tend to break at the base, so they will need staking. Once they finish blooming in autumn, mulch them with straw to protect them from frost.

ARE CHRYSANTHEMUMS POISONOUS TO PETS?

Unfortunately, chrysanthemums are toxic to pets, and to cats, dogs and horses in particular. If your animal does ingest the flower, they may experience vomiting, skin inflammation and hyper-salivation.



HORTICULTURE HEROES:

Frances Tophill



It speaks volumes when someone who has ascended the horticultural heights of Alan Titchmarsh tips you to become the next big thing in green-fingered greatness; though to her credit, Frances Tophill hasn't yet allowed the praise to go to her head.

Tophill, a regular on *Gardeners' World*, offers a fresh, young, dare we say stylish take on the earthy, sometimes grubby surrounds of our lawns, beds and shrubbery. She is a presenter who articulates and conveys a sense of calm, with a modus operandi that is always to embrace anything that comes her way. That is, after all, how she got into gardening in the first place.

"I was 19 years old and desperate really just to reach out and do anything. I'd never given gardening a second thought, nor did I know much about it, but I saw an apprenticeship advertised and, when I read up further, quickly fell in love with everything to do with the outdoors."

Frances' energy on screen is infectious. "My advice to people is just to get out there and enjoy yourselves," she says. "Get some dirt under your fingernails, perhaps pull up some weeds, or even just lie down on a lawn and soak up what it feels like to be in a pure, green space."

"Our gardens are very different environments to our local parks, and for the most part are private spaces where we can create our own world. I think that's what excited me the most, and once I realised how much was there and available, I never really looked back."

That brand of enthusiasm and endless excitement has seen her move to the top table of terrestrial gardening.

"I am the example of someone making it up as they go along, and we all know that's the secret to great gardening."

Photo credit: Pinterest

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For those of us lucky enough to have an English country garden, the greatest joy is being surrounded by the many delights of nature. However, some of the guests that wander through our outdoor spaces are prone to leaving smelly little surprises in their wake. While there are chemical aids that can be used to deter these funky felines, these natural alternatives are equally effective...

SHARP OBJECTS: No one likes finding poo in their flower beds, which is why you need to make these secluded, cosy spots a little less appealing to Felix. Egg shells, branches and holly cuttings are a simple way to deter the defecator, without disrupting your plants.

MOTION-ACTIVATED SPRINKLERS: Cats hate getting wet. Fact. And while this may not be the cheapest option, it is incredibly effective and a sure-fire way to protect your wildflowers from being watered by other people's pets.

CERTAIN SCENTS: Cats have keen noses and a natural dislike for some smells. Lavender, citrus and mint are among these, which is ideal as lavender and mint plants make glorious additions to your herb garden. Alternatively, you could try simply spritzing these particular fragrances about the place, though this requires constant maintenance.

ULTRASONIC SOUNDS: Like a feline burglar alarm, these motion-activated devices emit a high-pitched sound when disrupted, which is very unpleasant to cats.

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Microsoft celebrates 25 years of Windows

Microsoft's launch of Windows back in 1995 marked a true turning point in personal computing. Not only was it fresh, accessible and affordable, but as something called 'the World Wide Web' gradually came into focus, it connected us with the rest of planet Earth in a way we'd never before thought possible.

In many ways, Bill Gates and his team of boffins simply took a customer-focused approach to software, where previously it had been the domain of tech nerds and those who loved the intricacies of computing. A start button, a menu, a task bar and better naming and labelling systems for files do not today seem like revolutionary steps, but as the Millennium approached, our reliance on computers increased, and with that, a need to make them as user-friendly as possible.

Perhaps the most defining feature of Windows, however, was MSN. Offering chat rooms, email,

newsgroups and, crucially, the ability to type those holy characters 'www' into a URL box, we were truly the masters of our own tech destiny.

Windows' popularity also saw use of the Internet Explorer browser exceed anything else out there, and by 2003 a whopping 95 per cent of consumers were using it to access the web. While its decline since owes much to rivals Mozilla and Google Chrome upping their game, Windows itself has stuck.

Yes, Mac and Linux have mixed things up in a market that is distinguishable by its refusal to sit still, but what is certain is that Windows 95 (and its various updates over the years... 7, 8, 10, XP, Vista and 2000 to name a few) is regarded as being as innovative and revolutionary today as it was then.



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PETS

From basic microchipping to gadgets that can detect your dog's moods, pet ownership has never been more advanced.



It's fair to say that man now has two best friends: the beloved pooch and the trusted smartphone. It makes sense, then, that our canine companions ought to have their own line of gadgetry to keep them on trend.

For many mutts, the tech adventure begins when they are just a few weeks old when they are implanted with a microchip. Now a legal requirement in the UK, these grain-of-rice-sized tags will save you much heartache should you ever lose your beloved pet. Better still, they are inexpensive and will last a lifetime, enabling you to update your personal information through the microchip database.



For dog owners seeking a more comprehensive device, there is a variety of activity trackers on the market that can be attached to your pup's collar. Fully waterproof, these 'Fitbits for Fido' not only boast advanced location services, but they can also give you an idea of how much exercise your dog is getting each day, as well as logging sleep patterns.

Many of us have one-sided chats with our dogs, and while the dream of reciprocal conversation is yet to be realised, we are now one step closer to at least understanding how they feel, thanks to Japanese company Langualess that has developed the Inupathy harness. Using data based on heart-rate patterns, this snazzy wearable changes colour to interpret your dog's moods.



Finally, there is a piece of kit designed purely for the owner's amusement – the dog harness that mounts an active camera. Retrace your pet's paws as they trample through the undergrowth and excitedly chase balls. Beware they don't catch you in an uncompromising position, though, or you just might end up being the star of your dog's very own YouTube channel.

Photo credit: wearable.com, kron4.com, thegadgetflow.com



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Getting
back to

BUSINESS

The unexpected upturns coronavirus brought about for small businesses

One has to be careful with any mention of a global pandemic in some way being good for business. Clearly what enveloped the world over the course of 2020 was a set of circumstances and outcomes we would never want repeated, and they carry on today. Yet while COVID-19 called time on the legacy of thousands of businesses, for others it has provided new vision, renewed focus and a world of opportunity.

Most of these have come in the form of directors, managers, sole traders and other decision-makers having a rare opportunity to step back and reassess.

In the early days of the lockdown, so profound were the circumstances around us and so urgent was the need to strip back, downgrade and economise, that businesses reverted to skeletal structures just to survive.

So when the UK began to emerge out of the famine of lockdown, many owners realised they could survive on these new,

low levels of efficiency. From reverting to four-day weeks to cancelling direct debits for subscriptions, software and other resources we actually didn't use; from encouraging working from home, embracing tech such as video conferencing, right through to enriching staff by asking them to adopt fresh ideas, tackle wider tasks or embrace new skills in order to get additional jobs done, there was a new take on what we needed.

In total, we found that COVID-19 brought about a need for transparency none of us could pull a curtain across. Unequivocally, it changed our attitudes towards everything from money to socialising to personal space, but also altered our perception of business – what it is, how we utilise it and, in some cases, how little we need the bells, whistles and fanfare. We are a simpler, more efficient nation because of coronavirus, and once we're out of the woods that will surely help us to flourish again.



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SEO 101

A beginner's guide

To the uninitiated, SEO, or search engine optimisation, can seem like a daunting task, and enlisting the services of a professional can be expensive. However, there is no reason why you can't learn to master the art of SEO yourself.

SEARCH FOR KEYWORDS

The foundation of any SEO campaign, keywords are ideas and terms that describe what your content is about and they are designed to help increase your visibility online. You can come up with the right keywords for your business by:

- > Brainstorming with your team
- > Checking out your competitors' sites
- > Using Google Ads Keyword Planner

OPTIMISE YOUR TITLES AND META DESCRIPTIONS

This is where it gets a little bit more technical. Once you have your list of keywords, you need to optimise your page titles using these keywords in as natural a way as possible. Page titles and meta descriptions are shown in search engine results and therefore these need to clearly convey what each page is about. You can optimise these via your content management system or in your SEO plug-in.

OPTIMISE YOUR PAGE CONTENT

Your next step is to add your keywords to your website text. These include your header tags (your headings and subheadings) and the rest of the text on the page. Again, try to do this in as natural a way as possible and don't overstuff your content with keywords as both Google and searchers are put off by this technique.

BUILD LINKS

If you want your site to get on that much-coveted first page of Google, you need to focus on getting high-quality backlinks, i.e. hyperlinks from other websites to your own. There are several techniques that you can use to build backlinks, including:

- > Be active on social media
- > Write competitive content
- > Create an infographic
- > Write testimonials for other websites

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The **PARTEY IS OVER**



SPORT

Arsenal's decision to lay off club mascot Gunnersaurus on the day they splashed £45million on midfielder Thomas Partey has furthered the debate of just how connected our Premier League sides are to the real world.

The decision to release the Gunners' iconic mascot, who has been parading around home games for 27 years, was announced at the start of October. That meant lifelong fan Jerry Quy would have to find something else to do on matchdays.

In the club's defence, it was accepted that dressing as a dinosaur and parading around the pitch in front of empty stands was probably a waste of time; but Arsenal, just like so many other clubs who have cut back in the wake of coronavirus, have scored a spectacular own goal in their failure to see the bigger picture.

From north London neighbours Tottenham Hotspur to Premier League champions Liverpool, an insistence on micromanaging rarely ends well when we are, as a nation, looking for togetherness and unity as we are during the time of this pandemic.

When players' astronomical wages are paid in full yet staff on the minimum wage are furloughed and, in some cases, made redundant, you wonder if the disconnect can ever be bridged.

When a 126-year-old club such as Macclesfield Town, who played in the Football League last season, are allowed to be wound up for the sake of less than two weeks of Arsenal midfielder Mesut Özil's wages, surely we've lost sight of the game.

Speaking of Özil, who hasn't played competitive football for the club in seven months but continues to pick up his full wage, the German did at least begin to repair his reputation with Gunners fans perennially underwhelmed by his energy and application, by offering to front up Gunnersaurus's wage himself.

It's troubling that a player has to make that move, and that his employers cannot see that abandoning the little man – or in this case, dinosaur – is a PR faux pas that becomes far more costly.

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THE BATTLE OF BERLIN

REMEMBERING THREE DECADES SINCE MODERN GERMANY WAS UNITED ONCE AGAIN

Celebrating the collapse of the Berlin Wall signifies something so expansive and important in the context of both the past and the present, that even some 31 years on, it is a milestone that must not be forgotten.

The Wall has now been removed for longer than it stood – it was constructed in 1961 and pulled down some 28 years later – but the social and political explanation of everything it stood for lives on. Indeed, it shapes the way Germany and Western Europe is today.

To understand the Berlin Wall, it's first necessary to know its purpose, and to discover its foundations ultimately had a lot to do with us here in Britain.

At the cessation of the Second World War, Germany was divided into zones, reflecting the four Allied powers: the United Kingdom, the United States, France and the Soviet Union. Berlin, the capital, despite being fully in the Soviet zone, was similarly split up.

While the principle was to keep the country under the administration of four 'allied' powers, in truth they all stood for very different things. In the developing years under Joseph Stalin, the Soviets attempted to place a firm communist imprint on their East Germany territory, which included the eastern part of Berlin.

Britain, the US and, to a lesser extent, the French, adopted a fierce consumer- and business-driven capitalist method, where control, freedom, ambition and self-improvement was presented to the people.

In the decade after the end of the war, East Germans could see their Western counterparts not just rebuilding, but flourishing under new principles, in the same way that on mainland UK the green shoots of recovery really took hold in the 1960s.

What logically followed then was a mass migration from East Germany to West, much to the chagrin of Stalin, who began to impose tougher restrictions and quotas on those wishing to relocate.

Things reached a head when, in 1952, Stalin created an inner-German border, thus cutting off travel between the two. Berlin, however, represented a major loophole in this plan, given that movement was easily facilitated, not least by train.

When these routes were eventually removed, the Soviets accelerated plans to limit further movement – by 1961, 3.5 million East Germans had fled, totalling 20 per cent of the population. Left behind was an older, poorer demographic, hamstrung by a regime that repressed and stifled capitalism.

The Berlin Wall (in many places two walls and a no man's land) therefore came to represent a physical and social barrier for a divided nation. At a height of 3.6 metres, it spanned 96 miles around West Berlin, containing 20 bunkers and more than 300 watchtowers. Across 28 years its 'death strip' accounted for the lives of 140 people desperate for freedom, yearning to be reunited with loved ones.

However, the opening of the Iron Curtain between Austria and Hungary in August 1989 set in place a chain of events whereby the Eastern Bloc had disintegrated and East Germany, as an entity, was no more. By November 9, the call came for guards to allow free passage of movement, and by that evening tens of thousands took to the streets to begin breaking, hammering and dismantling the Wall.

The united Germany is now an even more enriched, prosperous and tolerant country for its past ills, and the Wall, still present in places, sits as a reminder of past mistakes.



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The concept is great – cleaner, cheaper, some may even say smoother driving. Electric cars have given us a new way of getting from A to B, but for many considering investing in one of the greenest advancements ever conceived, the need to recharge at such regular intervals has been a major stumbling block.

And yet, improvements in technology have meant the range of our electric vehicles is better than ever. Take this year's Tesla Model S, for instance. Elon Musk's pioneering vehicle brand is ripping up the rule book and this shimmering, humming piece of tarmac tech will take you 402 miles on a single charge... that's right up there with petrol and diesel vehicles. The only downside is the £75,000 price tag.

And if you fancy a hybrid of electric and traditional fuel, check out the 2018 Toyota Camry LE. This will get you an almost mind-boggling 689 miles – that's the equivalent of driving from London to Amsterdam... and back.

If you want to go for a purely electric car without needing to remortgage the house – in other words, steer clear of Teslas, who occupy four of the top five positions for range, with their X (351 miles), 3 (322 miles) and Y (316 miles) models – then have a look at the Chevrolet Bolt EV. You'll be looking at around £30,000 for a car that will take you well over 250 miles on one charge.

Hyundai (the Kona Electric also hits 250 miles) and Kia (the Niro Electric will take you 230 miles before you plug in again) both represent good value, and 2018 models can be picked up second-hand for around £15,000. For those seeking a bit more status, there is of course the ever-popular Jaguar I-PACE. Up to 300 miles in a car that balances eco and image perfectly... what's not to like?

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PUZZLES & TRIVIA

PUZZLES

Answers can be found on the Contents Page 4

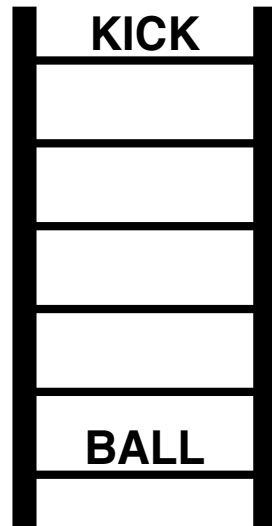
- ▶ ARCHERY
- ▶ ATHLETICS
- ▶ BADMINTON
- ▶ BOXING
- ▶ DIVING
- ▶ EQUESTRIAN
- ▶ FENCING
- ▶ FOOTBALL
- ▶ GYMNASTICS
- ▶ HANDBALL
- ▶ HOCKEY
- ▶ JUDO
- ▶ ROWING
- ▶ SAILING
- ▶ SHOOTING
- ▶ SWIMMING
- ▶ TENNIS
- ▶ VOLLEYBALL
- ▶ WATER
- ▶ POLO
- ▶ WEIGHTLIFTING

G	N	I	T	F	I	L	T	H	G	I	E	W	U	L
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I	I	U	Y	G	I	M	O	O	A	W	N	M	R	G
T	T	S	B	N	S	M	F	P	O	B	N	T	N	Y
O	E	A	A	D	A	I	C	R	H	A	D	I	O	A
O	L	I	L	Y	G	W	S	E	S	O	X	N	G	N
H	H	L	L	J	Z	S	A	T	S	O	C	L	A	Q
S	T	I	J	U	D	O	I	A	B	C	X	K	N	H
A	A	N	R	O	R	C	B	W	S	O	O	L	E	S
T	Q	G	R	G	S	R	T	G	N	I	V	I	D	Y
N	A	I	R	T	S	E	U	Q	E	Z	R	I	P	R

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Vatican City is the smallest country in the world
- ▶ The Gotthard Base Tunnel in Switzerland is the longest rail tunnel in the world
- ▶ E is the only vowel not used as the first letter in a US state name
- ▶ Russia is the largest country in the world
- ▶ The African continent has three deserts: Sahara, Kalahari and Namib
- ▶ Peninsulas are surrounded by water on three sides, for example Spain and Portugal
- ▶ Angel Falls in Venezuela is the world's largest uninterrupted waterfall
- ▶ Canberra is the capital city of Australia
- ▶ The Trafalgar Square Christmas tree is donated by Norway every year

WORD LADDER



THE AIM: Change the word at the top of the ladder one letter at a time to make the word at the bottom.

HOW TO: Change one letter on each step to make a new word. By the time you reach the end, you should have created the new word.

DO NOT rearrange the order of the letters.

TIP: There is usually more than one way to solve this puzzle.

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