



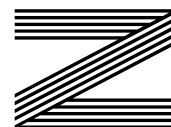
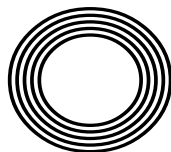
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**MARK WRIGHT MAKING
HIS FOOTBALL COMEBACK**

Valentine's Day traditions
FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Alisan
HAMMOND

The TV presenter emerging into the spotlight



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Editor's notes...

FEBRUARY 2021



Nik Allen, Editor

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

I'm pleased to announce from this month onwards we will be delivering to homes in Thorpe Bay.

Do you ever get the impression that people don't want to talk to you? As an Everton supporter, I get it a lot. But I'm talking about wider society and our unwillingness, at times, to simply pick up the phone.

Of course, I'm not blind to the many other ways we communicate. On text, WhatsApp, email and social media, we are more conversational than ever, and to a broader sweep of people than in the past. And yet, my

fear is we're in danger of actually becoming lonelier if we don't restore the basic form of picking up the phone. This month, let's all make an effort to put in a call. It's powerful, it's

genuine, it's personal, and it's not an experience you have to inadvertently share with 400 Facebook followers.

Our lack of one-to-one conversation - a simple voice down the phone - is something a lot of us are beginning to miss, particularly in lockdown. It's that desire to talk, to hear someone's voice, to share a laugh.

If you want or perhaps need a chat, for whatever reason, give someone a call. You can even give me a call - oh, and I promise not to try to sell you an ad.

Nik Allen

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CONTRIBUTORS | Tabatha Fabray, Dean Shaw

At the time of print all content in **VISION** was relevant and up to date according to COVID-19 government guidelines

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DENTAL HEALTH & AESTHETICS
BELFAIR'S CLINIC

A full-page background image of Mark Wright in a red Crawley Town football kit, captured in motion on a green pitch. The kit features a red long-sleeved shirt with white trim and a red shorts with white trim. A crest is visible on the shorts. The word 'Crawley' is partially visible on the shirt. The background is a blurred stadium setting.

The WRIGHT STUFF

HOW ONE OF OUR MOST ADORED REALITY TV STARS WENT BACK TO HIS ROOTS... GRASSROOTS

It's a fantasy that has crossed the mind of every grown man in his late twenties who has a normal, run-of-the-mill, everyday job. It's the thought, 'Perhaps it's not too late to realise every boy's dream and become a professional footballer; perhaps I can still make it.'

That reality TV star and Heart DJ Mark Wright still held those very unfulfilled ambitions is perhaps less of a surprise. He was, after all, on the books of West Ham, Arsenal and Tottenham as a youngster. When released at the age of 18, the left back was picked up by Southend United, but drifted into non-league football as the distractions of nightclub promotion and reality TV came about.

After spells in then Conference with Grays Athletic, Crawley Town and Rushden & Diamonds, the charismatic Essex-born star joined the cast of *TOWIE*. One of the original cast members, he was only with the ITV show a year, but the die was cast, and from *I'm a Celebrity...* *Get Me Out of Here!* to *Take Me Out: The Gossip*, through presenting jobs on *Mark Wright's Hollywood Nights*, *The Bachelor* and *This Morning*, the husband to actress Michelle Keegan has been a permanent fixture on our screens for a decade. And when adding in his Heart radio show duties – a gig he's had since 2012 – it's any wonder he has any spare time...

But what about those football ambitions?

"I've never got over the fact I didn't make it in the game," he says. "And despite everything I achieved elsewhere, being a professional footballer now would top it all."

In October last year, Wright set out to make one final crack at the game he loves, and a call to John Yems, his former manager at Crawley, saw the now 33-year-old invited to West Sussex to train with the club.

The presenter describes the three months that followed as a whirlwind, combining media duties with a punishing physical routine designed to get his fitness up to League Two standards. His every move has been followed by a BBC film crew, whose iPlayer series *Mark Wright: The Last Chance* has proved a huge hit.

"I never had any expectations, but I always knew I'd give it everything I had, and the welcome I got at the club was tremendous from day one."

In December, Wright's dreams moved a step closer – he signed a contract until the end of the season. And being named on the bench for Crawley's FA Cup fourth round clash with Leeds United on January 10, just two days after his brother Josh signed for the club, set up the most impossible of scenarios. Could he make the comeback of all comebacks?

Crawley strode 3-0 up against their star-studded Premier League visitors, on their way to grabbing all the weekend's giant-killing headlines. A perfect day could only be topped by a call to the bench for a substitution. And so it happened... he may have only come on in the 91st minute, he may have only touched the ball

three times, but a dream was realised on that cold Sunday lunchtime at the People's Pension Stadium.

And it doesn't stop there – the Reds are eyeing up promotion from League Two and there will be no resting on his laurels for Mark Wright... a reality star in every sense.



THE WORLD AROUND US

Part 4

In the last part of our environmental series, we look at the final key driver in the health and well-being of the planet: global warming.

The phrase 'climate change denier' has become commonplace in conversations about the gradual warming of the planet and the causes of this. Scientific opinion points to humans and our explosion of population, industry and consumption as the real effects of the Earth increasing in temperature by 1° Celsius since 1880.

It doesn't sound a lot, does it? And yet, a one-to two-degree drop was all it took to plunge the Earth into the Little Ice Age in the Medieval Period.

The platform climate change deniers have generally sees their voices amplified well beyond what they should be. The results of various studies often level out at around the same rate – namely that only two or three people out of 100 will dispute the scientists' theory that humans are the cause of global warming.


With such a large accepting consensus, the drive to combat this gradual warming of Earth has

accelerated in recent years. Equipping ourselves with data, while ensuring we have the ability to interpret it, is vital.

Temperatures across a timespan of a year, five years or even a decade might rise four degrees in one region and drop six in another (which is why anomalies occur, such as Greenland's Jakobshavn Glacier actually increasing in mass since 2016), but overall, there is trouble ahead.

The next, vital step the Earth faces is a willingness of its people to do something about it. For all the UK's action over the past couple of decades, for all the destruction global warming has already contributed, such as coastal erosion, moorlands fires, floods and more, we contribute just 1.2 per cent of the world's total emissions.

It means that, as if it were ever in doubt, a global solution requires a true global investment of action from the planet's inhabitants.



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Daughter of Resident, Admiral Court

Review excerpt taken from carehome.co.uk review 2020

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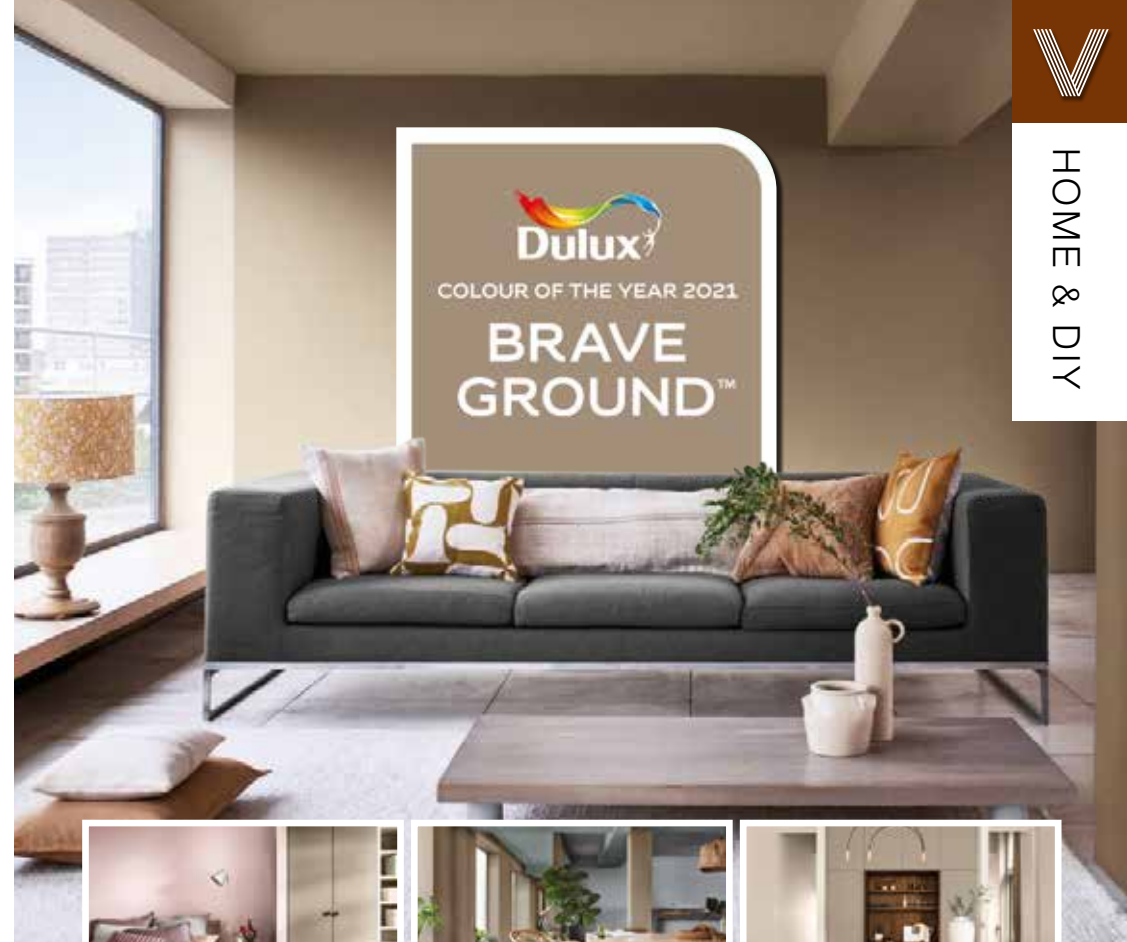
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DULUX LOOKS TOWARDS SAFE GROUND IN NAMING ITS COLOUR FOR 2021

There's only one contradiction at play as far as Dulux's Colour of the Year goes – namely that in establishing a tone that speaks quietness, calmness, unassuming peace and tranquillity, the paint manufacturer is treading safe ground and not, as the shade's name implies, Brave Ground.

And yet, despite Dulux failing to state what is courageous about this tone, we can at least revel in its ability to encapsulate the mood of the world. It pleads for calm, reflection and philosophical thoughts, and offers a serenity to interiors that is very different from the intention borne out in Pantone's Colour(s) of the Year.

This warm beige shade is one that will work beautifully when matching with light woods, particularly in the bedroom or living room.

Combined with white it reclines elegantly into the

background, and as a flat shade, it can find itself offset by fabrics and furniture that offer depth and detail.

The tones of grey present in Brave Ground are also earthy enough to take interiors away from the overtly beige patterns of the 1970s that often strayed too far in the way of oranges and browns.

Consider also mixing with pastels, or sharpening the edges with blacks and greys, particularly in cushions, throws, curtains or lampshades. Ultimately, Brave Ground is a colour that will bring lightness while offering a knowing nod to dark luxury.

Indeed, perhaps in adopting a shade that is the very epitome of neutrality, perhaps in offering a platform on which we can place our existing belongings as well as bring in new renovations, Dulux is showing itself to be brave after all.

Photo credit: Ideal Home.co.uk, Dulux.co.uk



HOME & DIY



Magic MATERIALS



Tencel bedding



Econyl chairs



Piñatex furniture

In a world where sustainability is not just desirable, but necessary, these alternative fabrics and leathers are presenting as viable options for global brands who want to do their bit for our planet.

TENCEL

Already a ubiquitous eco-fabric, Tencel is used by several major design brands linked to both interiors and fashion.

Produced by environmentally responsible processes from the sustainably sourced natural raw material wood, Tencel is not only a wonderfully soft and breathable material, it also combines beautifully with other fabrics such as cotton, silk and polyester for maximum versatility.

ECONYL

Fabric recycling has come a long way since the days of simple reupholstering that saw tired sofas and chairs less reinvented and more clumsily repurposed into something you could palm off to the kids or into the guest bedroom.

Econyl regenerated nylon is made from, you guessed it... nylon waste, and with an emphasis on closing the loop, this brilliant and innovative brand confesses to having an appetite for creating an infinite quantity of new products, but all using existing resources. In short, we've come a long way since the 1980s.

With 10,000 tonnes of Econyl raw material saving 70,000 barrels of crude oil, this fabulous fabric is being used to create everything from carpets to swimsuits.

PIÑATEX

Piñatex is a leather alternative made from the leaf waste of pineapples. This fluff-like leaf fibre (PALF) gets mixed with a corn-based polylactic acid (PLA), undergoing a mechanical process to create Piñafelt, a non-woven mesh that forms the base of all Piñatex collections.

Coloured using natural pigments and coated with resin to give additional strength, durability and water resistance, this luxurious leather alternative is already doing its bit to lessen the environmental impact of mass leather production and chemical tanning.

Photo credit: westelm.co.uk, econyl.com, 21gstudio.com



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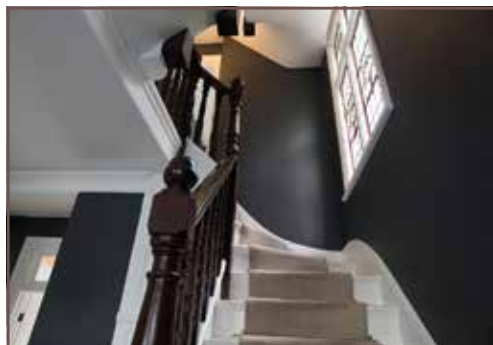
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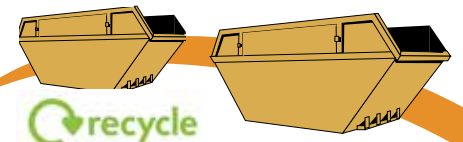
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ARE YOU READY TO *Wabi-sabi* YOUR HOME?



HOME & DIY

Although it may sound like that spicy green paste that you get with sushi, wabi-sabi is actually a Japanese term that means “finding beauty in imperfection”.

The perfect interior design trend for people who prefer their house to look lived in rather than like a showroom, wabi-sabi is all about embracing authenticity, flaws and all.

Showcase homemade décor

Whether you are an artist yourself or not, homemade décor items or things that you have collected over the years on holiday or at local craft fairs are ideal for creating a wabi-sabi home. Allowing you to foster feelings of warmth and originality, even just proudly displaying your children's artwork contributes to the characteristics of this Japanese philosophy.

Clear away clutter

Just because wabi-sabi values imperfection, that doesn't mean you can let your home become a cluttered and chaotic mess. To achieve wabi-sabi, your home should be a calm and peaceful place where you and your family can relax, so make sure you stick to your cleaning regime.

Embrace nature

With a focus on simplicity, bringing elements of the outside into your home is a key component of wabi-sabi. Whether you choose to put some freshly cut flowers in a vase, invest in a house plant or two, or you decide to incorporate natural materials into your home such as stone or wood, nature will always be able to lift your mood.

Be a partial minimalist

Although a wabi-sabi home is not fully minimalistic by nature, it does invite people to keep their possessions to a minimum by only allowing things in their home that offer nostalgia, beauty or utility. This means that you can keep an item that does not necessarily match the décor of your home, as long as it makes you happy.



Photo credit: David Brittain via idealhome.co.uk, home-designing.com, Simon Scarborough via idealhome.co.uk, behance.net

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HOME & DIY

Understanding

THE DOS AND DON'TS TO ACHIEVING PERFECT UNDERFOOT CONDITIONS

You think splashing the cash on a swanky new length of carpet is the first and last bit of expense you need to worry about, before someone reminds you that carpet without underlay is akin to a new motor without tyres on the wheels.

It's recommended that you change your underlay whenever you change your carpet – after all, years of wear, tear, and no small amount of gravity will have squashed the best life out of it.

New underlay will provide for you a number of things – firmness, bounce, insulation, noise reduction, preservation of your new flooring, as well as reinforcing the feeling that your new piece of carpet is worthy of something you'd find on the way into a film premiere.

Premium underlay will set you back up to £10 per metre square, though perfectly good brands can be picked up for less than half that. It's true to say the higher quality your underlay, the longer it will, in

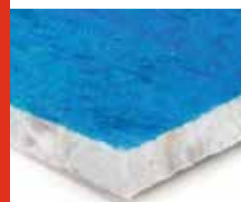
turn, look after your carpet.

Typical depth is around 10–13mm, with a lower grade on the stairs. You'll also have to consider the tog rating – anything higher than 2.5 tog will insulate nicely, though if you have heated floors then switch back down to a lower tog of around 1.0.

As for the fabric, PU foam is the most common underlay on the market. It offers a soft feeling underfoot, is made from recycled materials and is a good insulator. Other types are made from rubber, sponge rubber and crumb rubber, the latter being made from car tyres. Felt and wool carpet underlay also come well recommended.

And if you're fitting wood or laminate flooring, then consult a specialist who can bring forward a range of hardfloor-specific underlays that are lighter and thinner, and respect what is an intentionally solid top layer.

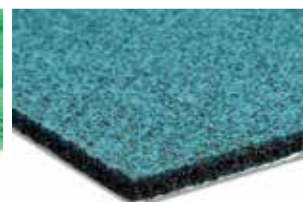
UNDERLAY



PU FOAM



Sponge RUBBER



CRUMB RUBBER



WOOL FELT

Photo credit: www.diydoctor.org.uk



LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Inspirational music man earns Honour from the Queen

A man from Leigh-on-Sea has been honoured with a British Empire Medal for his services to people with special needs.

David Stanley earned the award in the Queen's New Year Honours list, for the amazing impact The Music Man Project (TMMP) has had on many lives.

David is founder and CEO of TMMP, which is a charity offering music opportunities to children with special needs.

TMMP provides accessible music tuition for people of various disabilities, with some pupils going on to perform on some of the most famous stages in the country, including The London Palladium.

Run by volunteers, the charity also gives grants for accessible arts education, promotes equal access to performing, carries out research and raises awareness of the achievements of disadvantaged people in the arts.

Founded in 2000 by David Stanley, the project supports an average of 50 adults and 25 children

each week.

The inspirational success of David's vision is also making a difference all over the world, with projects reaching South Africa, India, Nepal, the Philippines and the USA.

David's ambition is to have the project in every county in England, in every country in the UK and in every continent in the world.

David said he was "over the moon" to receive the award in the Queen's latest Honours list.

He said: "I have taught in this industry for more than 20 years but I never imagined that my work would be recognised in this way.

"It is of course lovely to be personally commended, but the biggest reward is that it will open more doors for me to create even greater opportunities for my students in the future.

"With this honour I will double my efforts on behalf of musicians with learning disabilities, who I proudly describe as the best of humanity."



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Everyone had no doubt been looking forward to the new year with a spirit of optimism after what had been a truly awful 2020.

Regrettably, the number of people infected with coronavirus and, tragically, the number of deaths left the government with little option but to impose another lockdown, with all the havoc that wreaks.

All the signs are that the measures taken are having a real impact in our fight against the virus and, even more importantly, the vaccination programme locally is now in full swing. So much so that we are well on course to reach our target of vaccinating the four most vulnerable groups in society.

No one will be overlooked, and if anyone feels

that they have been missed out they should contact me immediately.

The vaccinators will now work their way through the rest of the population, so that by some time in the summer we should be fully protected. Until that point, we must continue to 'stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.'

I would like to thank everyone, whether they be employed publicly or privately, who has made, and is making, a contribution to the fight against coronavirus.

While lockdowns and vaccinations are progressing, I stand ready to help you with your problems. Feel free to contact me by calling 020 7219 3452 or emailing amessd@parliament.uk

Daisy helps kids access school

An inspirational schoolgirl from Leigh-on-Sea has raised funds to help other pupils who don't have access to a laptop or tablet.

Daisy Lawrence set herself a target of raising £1,500 to go towards the cost of digital equipment to help others who attend The Eastwood Academy.

Having seen on the news that many children could not access schoolwork as they don't have a laptop, she decided to do something about it.

She said: "I know that this is impacting children at my own school, so I contacted Mr Houchen, the headteacher, and suggested that I could start a fundraiser to purchase some devices for families that need them."

"He confirmed that the government has committed to assisting schools with providing access to technology, although this may not fully meet the need. He was happy for me to reach out to the local community to try to raise funds to address this issue."

Daisy then set up a JustGiving fundraising page and had almost reached her target at the end of January.

Speaking about the fundraising success, she added: "I am utterly amazed at everyone's support and generosity."

"I ordered eight tablets and I will take them into school. I will keep the fundraising page open for donations, and if there is enough to buy any more tablets then I will do so. If not, I'll donate any residual funds to the school."

To donate, visit www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/digital-technology-funds-for-eastwood-academy



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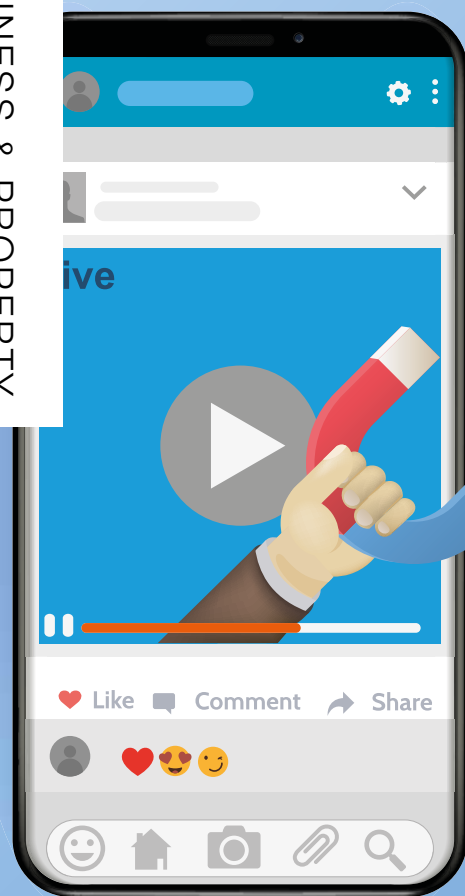
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The Power of Social Media



memes and GIFs. Avoid overly promotional posts.

Increased interaction: Video continues to be one of the strongest social media strategies, with an estimated 78 per cent of users watching video content on a monthly basis. Ideal for grabbing people's attention, conveying your brand personality and showcasing your passion as a business. You could even try live-streaming an event.

Improved customer service: Although social media can be a blessing for your business, it can also cause a lot of damage if you don't keep an eye on it. Remember that, first and foremost, social media is a customer service channel, so you need to monitor your mentions and keep tabs on your reviews. Always respond to comments asap and deal with any problems via private messaging.

The lowdown on the popular social media platforms:

- > **Facebook.** Best for generating leads and building relationships
- > **Twitter.** Perfect for businesses with a younger audience
- > **Pinterest.** Great for driving sales and for brands with visual appeal
- > **Snapchat.** Ideal for building relationships with influencers and driving brand recognition and loyalty
- > **Instagram.** The best option for e-commerce sites and for telling your brand story
- > **YouTube.** To help you get seen by Google and tap into YouTube traffic

If you only implement one digital marketing technique to boost your business and build brand awareness this year, then make sure it involves social media.

Providing you with the chance to improve customer service, drive traffic to your site and even spy on your competitors, the power of social media should never be underestimated.

Enhanced engagement: Social media is the perfect technology for engaging with both your existing customers and potential new ones. Make sure you take full advantage of social capability and encourage interaction through competitions, industry news, tips and advice and humorous

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PUZZLES & TRIVIA

PUZZLES

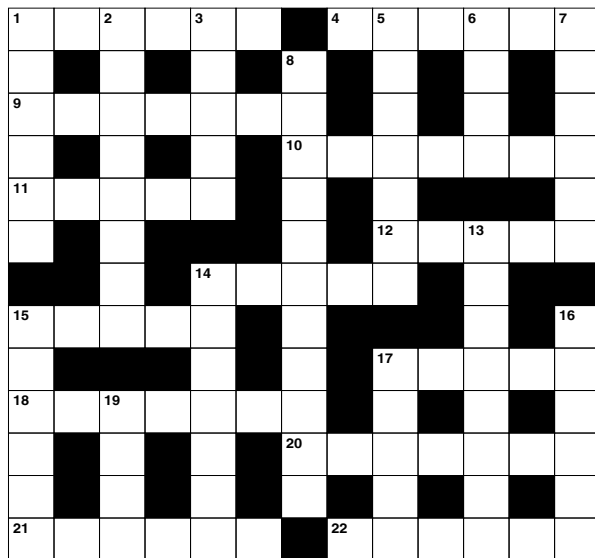
Answers: see end of The Vision Listings

ACROSS

1. Straighten out (6)
4. Vocalist (6)
9. Animal fat (7)
10. Not friendly (7)
11. Oozes (5)
12. Compassion (5)
14. Expect; think that (5)
15. Word of farewell (5)
17. Wedding assistant (5)
18. Supervisory worker (7)
20. Burdensome work (7)
21. Short choral compositions (6)
22. Entertains (6)

DOWN

1. Except when (6)
2. Musical pieces for solo instruments (8)
3. Regulations (5)
5. Annoying (7)
6. Large desert in Asia (4)
7. Make less dense (6)
8. Residents (11)
13. People with auburn hair (8)



14. Furthest away (7)
15. State publicly (6)
16. Tremulous sounds (6)
17. Deprive of weapons (5)
19. Speak in a wild way (4)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Adélie penguins breed and raise their offspring in Antarctica
- ▶ Puffins can flap their wings up to 400 times a minute. They can fly at around 55 miles an hour
- ▶ The bald eagle, which was once on the brink of extinction, has been the national symbol of the United States of America since 1782
- ▶ Once a flamingo lays an egg, the parents take turns sitting on it to keep it warm. The egg usually hatches in around 30 days
- ▶ The ostrich is the tallest and heaviest of all the birds
- ▶ As a male snowy owl gets older, it turns whiter. Males are often whiter than females
- ▶ Red-tailed hawks can spot a mouse from 30 metres up in the air

SUDOKU

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

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The infectious personality of ALISON HAMMOND

The presenter who has chuckled, chortled and guffawed her way through almost two decades on camera... and we're all better off for it.

The Brummie whose laugh-a-minute approach to presenting has won her admirers across the entertainment world... and we include Harrison Ford and Ryan Gosling in that number.

As if proof were needed that Alison Hammond, while always kind, enthusiastic and respectful, does not subscribe to the idea that celebrities and film stars are unreachable demigods not worthy of our time, in a hilarious 2017 interview for *This Morning*, Hammond charmed and bewildered two of Hollywood's finest in a recording that had more than 12 million YouTube views. You could say she upstaged her two guests by laughing them into submission.

Having first appeared on our screens as a contestant in the *Big Brother* house, Hammond is another example of a reality star who has maximised the possibilities out of what is a very simple and short-lived platform.

She has swept her way through a variety of entertainment shows over the past decade, appearing in *Celebrity Fit Club*, *Celebrities Under Pressure*, *Stars in Their Eyes*, *Celebrity Ready Steady Cook* and many, many more; she has been a panellist on *Loose Women*, and made it to the seventh week of *Strictly Come Dancing* when she partnered Aljaž Škorjanec.

"I've always been someone who wants to grab life by the horns and go for a ride," she laughs. "It's very rare that I'll turn down an opportunity, and if I do it's because it's taking me too far from home and being around the people I love, and those are the ones who must always come first."

And Hammond's reputation as a brilliant reporter on *This Morning* has borne fruit in a way she wouldn't have imagined – in the middle of December 2020 it was announced that she and Dermot O'Leary would take over full presenting duties on Fridays from regular incumbents Eamonn Holmes and Ruth Langsford.

The shake-up is further evidence of a nation embracing those down-to-earth personalities who reflect our own thoughts, ideas and sensibilities.

"A long time ago I realised that to get on in the world you just need to be yourself," she says. "I think in the early days of getting TV work there was a temptation to be the person you thought people wanted to see, and when you do that you lose an edge."

"What people see is what they get, but it is all me – an uplifting, fun, sparky person who treats everyone as equals."

Indeed, geographically, Hammond, 46 in February, has stayed true to herself as well. Despite *This Morning* being filmed at Television Centre in White City, the presenter still lives in 'the second city', commuting to the capital for work. "I couldn't ever leave Birmingham behind – it means everything to me, as do the people."

"It's also my son's home, and I want him to grow up a proud Brummie like me... who likes to laugh."

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Genius schoolgirl outsmarts Einstein and Hawking

A schoolgirl from Thorpe Bay is celebrating after scoring well above genius level in an IQ test.

Aanya Gupta, who attends Westcliff High School for Girls, scored 162 points in the Mensa IQ test.

The remarkable score places the intelligent 12-year-old above Stephen Hawking and Albert Einstein, as neither did as well as Aanya.

She scored two points higher than physicist Einstein, who is believed to have had the same IQ as Professor Stephen Hawking – who scored 160.

Anaya took the test by Mensa at The High IQ Society in Colchester.

Aanya was the youngest contestant in the room, and her score puts her in the top one per cent of the world in terms of intelligence.

She did the test in search of a new challenge after

she passed her eleven-plus tests a few years ago, which is a set of exams that governs admissions to grammar schools.

Priyanka Gupta, 42, Aanya's mother, said: "She said she wasn't sure what she got, but she was happy. It's hard for her to believe that she got full marks.

"She has always had a passion for reading and spends a lot of time with her head in books.

"She is also a passionate writer and publishes her stories and poems with 'Young Writers' on many occasions.

"She used to say she wanted to be a writer, then a doctor; it changes.

"She says, 'I will see where my destiny takes me.'"

In her eleven-plus exams in 2018, she scored 100 per cent in the maths and verbal reasoning papers.

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Tributes paid to Toby



Thorpe Bay Yacht Club (TBYC) has paid tribute to a member who did so much for the community before sadly passing away after contracting COVID-19.

Toby Speller was a member of the yacht club and a volunteer police officer and served in Essex Police's Marine Unit.

The special constable's death was announced by the police before the yacht club paid tribute.

Commodore Adrian Bunting said: "On behalf of TBYC I would like to pay tribute to one of life's true gentleman and fellow sailor of our club.

"He will be sadly missed by all those who had the pleasure to know him. Having joined the club as a cadet in the 1980s he has remained active at the club ever since.

"There is not one person who has been a member of the club over the years who has not been helped by Toby, and I don't think there's a single part of any of our rescue boats Toby has not had apart and fixed at one time or another."

Support for Post Office after complaint

A resident has supported Thorpe Bay Post Office after a frustrated user accused it of slipping "back to the 1970s" because it now closes for lunch.

The Post Office in The Broadway is closed so staff can have a lunch break on Mondays and Fridays, much to the disgruntlement of one man who took to social media to complain to the main Post Office account.

He berated it for closing for lunch, accused the break of being too long and then complained about queuing times.

The Post Office explained the closure is so staff can have a break when it is short staffed.

The exchange was seen by Leigh resident Hannah Smith, who told **VISION**LeighThorpeBay that the criticism was unfair.

She said: "They are really busy at the moment and they clearly display their opening times, so what's the problem? It can be frustrating when you have to wait, especially in the cold, but staff are trying their best and deserve to be able to have a break."

A Post Office spokesperson said: "Thorpe Bay Post Office is currently operating revised opening hours owing to staffing issues caused by the coronavirus pandemic. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause. Staff are working hard in challenging times to provide essential Post Office services."

Bid to find solution to burst drain problem under way

A water company says it is doing all it can to tackle flooding after drains in Thorpe Bay had water bursting out of them following heavy rainfall.

Anglian Water and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (SBC) say they are working to make the situation better after drains burst on January 14, including at Bournes Green.

Councillor Ron Woodley, cabinet member for transport, capital and inward investment, said: "When it is high tide, the rain cannot run out of the overflow pipes into the estuary and so we get a backlog of water which can cause pressure to build in the system and drain lids to be forced off, for example.

"We have completed work to reduce the pressure on the drainage system and we are currently investigating solutions."

An Anglian Water spokesperson said: "Drainage systems are complex and managed by a number of organisations including councils, private drainage companies, the Environment Agency and Anglian Water, among others, and we work very closely with all of them.

"We do all we can to help, but sewers are simply not designed to carry water from rivers that have burst or spilled over, or the volume of floodwater we've seen following such persistent rainfall."



Photo credit: Angela Crozier



FEBRUARY BIRTH FLOWER OF THE MONTH:

Violet

The February birth flower is the vibrant violet. People born in this month tend to be both modest and mild mannered, hence the popular expression "shrinking violet". Sweet violets are regularly found in the UK in woods and hedgerows and are often candied and used to decorate cakes.

WHAT DO VIOLETS SYMBOLISE?

Violets have been around for centuries and were first cultivated by the Greeks around 500BC. According to Greek mythology, violets were created when one of Artemis' nymphs was pursued by her twin brother Apollo. To protect her, Artemis turned her into a violet, which in turn led to this flower being known to represent modesty.

WHAT DOES THIS BIRTH FLOWER SAY ABOUT YOUR PERSONALITY?

If you were born in February, you are said to be wise beyond your years. A private person, you are also prone to being a bit of a dreamer. It can take you a while to warm up to people, but when you do, you are fiercely loyal.

CAN I GROW VIOLETS IN MY GARDEN?

Violets typically grow in the wild, although they are decreasing in numbers owing to habitat loss, which means if you want to grow them in your garden, you need to recreate these conditions. Violets thrive in winter and spring sun but need summer shade, so their ideal spot is under a deciduous tree or shrub.

Violets will self-sow, but growing your own from seed is a challenge as the seeds need to be fresh. Instead, buy plants during the spring and plant immediately in moist but well-drained soil.

WHAT PESTS ARE COMMON TO VIOLETS?

If your violet leaves turn yellow, this could be the result of an attack by red spider mites. This pest strikes when your plant becomes too hot or dry.

The best remedy is to defoliate the plant completely.



GARDEN OF LIFE

FOX IN *the box*

In the first of a four-part series that shows how even the most urban garden can be a haven for the wonders of wildlife and the nurturing of nature, we look at the faithful fox. Whether out at night or hiding in plain sight, this sly urban dweller has adapted better than any other animal to human environments.

Perhaps we shouldn't be so surprised when we spot a fox meandering its way through the park, across a garden, or even on the pavement outside where we live. These beautiful creatures are, after all, past masters in urban environments, even if they are just as accustomed to survival in the rugged wild.

For all its impressive presence, your average fox will rarely approach humans or animals – chickens, rabbits and guinea pigs notwithstanding. This sly old foe simply wants to hunt for scraps, play, mate and return to its den to rest and tend to its offspring. Only when threatened will a fox move into offensive mode.

The fact foxes have become so much a part of our urban and suburban lives has a lot to do with the way they feed. They'll consume almost anything they find – from fruit and veg, raw and cooked meat, cheese, bread and even dog biscuits. Increasingly brave around humans, they'll often take food for storage, burying it for later consumption.

That means there's little risk in leaving food out for foxes if you're hoping to get a glimpse of these fiery nocturnal beauties, who will happily roam around in the late afternoon as well.

There is a downside, however. From fouling the garden to chewing shoes left outside, to trampling lawns and even digging up deceased pets, if you encourage foxes in, you'll have to go along with their inquisitive, playful habits.



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Valentine's traditions AROUND THE WORLD

Love is in the air with these beautiful, and in some cases bizarre, Valentine's Day traditions from around the globe.



SOUTH KOREA: In this country in east Asia, lovers celebrate the day of love on the 14th of every month. May 14 is the "day of rose", June 14 is the "day of kisses", and there is even a "black day" in April when couples eat black noodles together.



PHILIPPINES: Young couples in the Philippines are sponsored by the government to get married as a form of public service. Well, there are worse ways to serve your country.



GHANA: Known as National Chocolate Day, February 14 is used to increase tourism in Ghana, one of the largest cocoa-producing countries in the world.



BULGARIA: A simple yet highly enjoyable tradition, in Bulgaria, couples young and old celebrate their love by sharing a glass of local wine.



WALES: Lovers from Wales celebrate Valentine's Day on January 25, and rather than exchange cards and flowers, they

give their partners handcrafted wooden spoons.



SPAIN: The day of love in Spain falls on October 9 and is known as the feast of Saint Dionysius. On this day, men gift their women a "macadora", which is a marzipan figurine.



ESTONIA: Still taking place on February 14 but with a slight twist, Estonians celebrate all relationships on this day rather than just romantic ones.



JAPAN: A country that prides itself on being unique, Valentine's Day in Japan is quite unlike anywhere else in the world. On February 14, women buy gifts for men, but men are not allowed to return the favour until March 14, known as the "white day".

HOW TO SAY "I LOVE YOU":

- > South Korea: Saranghae
- > Philippines: Mahal kita
- > Ghana: Me do wo
- > Bulgaria: Obicham te
- > Wales: Rwy'n dy garu di
- > Spain: Te amo
- > Estonia: Ma armastan sind
- > Japan: Aishiteru





CLEANSE
ME...
quick

Whether you are looking to remove stubborn mascara, thick sun cream or the dirt and impurities that your skin has picked up over the course of the day, a cleansing balm should be your go-to product, providing a delicate, yet effective, way to clean the skin on your face.

WHAT IS A CLEANSING BALM?

Cleansing balms are creamy and rich cleansers that gently remove any make-up, dirt and impurities from your skin without leaving it stripped of its natural oils. Unlike oil cleansers, which can be a bit messy, cleansing balms deliver oils to melt make-up, in a solidified form, meaning portion control is easier.

Furthermore, cleansing balms can be used around the eyes to remove make-up, as they are made with natural ingredients and are therefore suitable for this delicate area.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BENEFITS?

- > They provide a deep cleanse which can help to prevent breakouts
- > They hydrate your skin
- > They are suitable for sensitive skin

- > They provide quick results
- > Many contain antioxidants
- > They are high in oils, meaning you can skip daily moisturiser if you wish

HOW TO USE CLEANSING BALMS

1. Take a 10p-sized amount of balm and warm it between your fingers
2. Apply to dry skin in circular motions
3. Once the make-up starts to break down, add warm water to your skin
4. Continue to massage
5. Remove with a warm, damp cloth or muslin

WHAT ARE THE BEST CLEANSING BALMS?

- > Clinique Take The Day Off Balm – best all-rounder, suitable for all skin types
- > ESPA Nourishing Cleansing Balm – best for dry skin
- > Pond's Makeup Remover Cleansing Balm – best for sensitive skin
- > Slaai Makeup Melting Butter Cleanser by Drunk Elephant – best for removing waterproof make-up
- > Emma Hardie Moringa Cleansing Balm – best for ageing skin



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NO MEAN FOOT

Why our humble feet may be the lynchpin to overall body health alignment

Never underestimate just how fantastic our feet are – sure, they will get you around the house, to work, or down to the pub, but more than that, they are the lynchpin to overall body health too.

Consider 10 toes, more than 50 bones (that's around a quarter of all those in the human body), and more than 60 joints, plus more than 200 muscles, tendons and ligaments, and it's clear why your feet are the cornerstone to overall body health.

Mobility

In the most obvious sense, your feet are the tools that move you around. Essential for almost every form of exercise, health and well-being, which begins at ground level.

Back and joint issues

The way we walk ultimately affects the way the rest of our body functions, and this is no truer than in people who suffer with flat feet. This condition causes a misalignment with the ankle, which can move up through the body into the knees, hips, spine, neck and other joints.

Balance

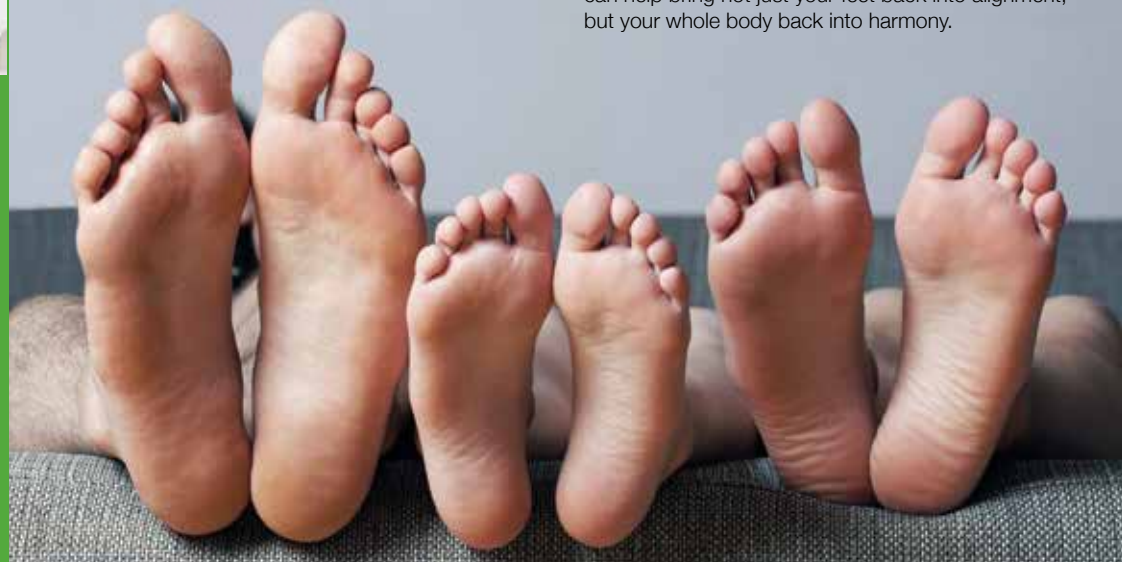
Balance in the human body is finely configured so that any imbalances can have negative effects on general health, from wobbliness through to vertigo-type symptoms.

Organs

In the most extreme cases, when the mesh of nerves and touch receptors in our feet are blocked, insufficient messages can send disruptive adjustments through the body, including into our organs.

It is for these reasons that looking after our feet is pivotal to good health. Sure, get the pumice stone out in the bath, but more than that, ensure you are wearing properly fitting shoes. That might mean accepting that narrow styles are not going to work for your wide feet, or that perhaps you will need to buy flip-flops with a little more support.

Also consider a whole variety of foot exercises that can help bring not just your feet back into alignment, but your whole body back into harmony.



THE REAL PiLL

Placenta encapsulation: is it gross or full of goodness?

We all know the value of a mother's placenta. A rich, nutritious, nourishing source of life that feeds, grows and sustains a baby in the womb. As the miracles of nature go, it's right up there with the best of them – in fact, we wouldn't be here without the placenta.

It follows, then, that some mothers are loath to let the placenta go, post-birth. From using it to make jewellery or picture frames to donating it to medical science, through to something rather more symbolic such as planting it, there are a number of ways to respect this incredible organ.

Of course, given its goodness, reingesting the placenta makes perfect sense too – welcome to the world of placenta encapsulation.

In this process, the placenta is put into ice then sent off to a lab where it's made into pill form. Many mums feel a physical and emotional boost when consuming their placenta as a daily supplement,

saying that it helps with general well-being, limits the ups and downs associated with those immediate weeks and months after giving birth, gives an energy boost, and helps with breast milk production.

And that all makes sense – the placenta is loaded with vitamins B6 and B12, plus iron and reproductive hormones that drop after birth. To repackage those and put them back into the body makes sense.

However, there are risks. There aren't any standards in place for the process, meaning poorly encapsulated pills may harbour bacteria. There are also environmental toxins such as heavy metals – like lead and arsenic – that accumulate in the placenta, while a theory exists that the progesterone present in the pills may actually slow down milk supply.

Placenta encapsulation remains one for the scientists to unpick, but in the meantime it continues to increase in popularity.

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BRUSH UP

on children's oral health

February is National Children's Dental Health month, so what better time to tackle any tooth-brushing issues your child has?

Discover the top five reasons why your child doesn't want to brush their teeth below. Plus, how you can encourage them to practise good oral hygiene.

WHY DOES MY CHILD HATE BRUSHING THEIR TEETH?

1. They are sensitive to having their teeth brushed

Some children experience a gag reflex when brushing their teeth that can be unpleasant. Others might not like the feel of the brush against their teeth or in their mouth. Sensitivities are more common in children with autism or attention disorders.

2. They are asserting their authority

If you find yourself caught in a battle with your child every morning and evening when it comes to brushing their teeth and there is no physical reason why they won't brush, they could simply be pushing boundaries.

3. They have become anxious

You may not be able to determine the initial reason why your child started to hate brushing their teeth, but if it has become a daily issue in your household, your child may now feel anxiety around this daily activity.

4. They don't like the taste of the toothpaste

It is always a good idea to ask your child if they would like to choose a different flavoured toothpaste if they do not like the one you are currently buying.

5. They are a picky eater

Children who are picky eaters are more likely to not like the texture and taste of a toothbrush and toothpaste in their mouth.

How can I encourage my child to brush their teeth?

- ▮ Stick to a routine
- ▮ Make it fun
- ▮ Provide choice in terms of what products they use
- ▮ Stand behind younger children
- ▮ Allow your child to hold a toy they can squeeze to calm them
- ▮ Offer a reward such as an extra bedtime story

THE WONDERFUL WEE VILLAGES THAT MAKE A TRIP TO THE SCOTTISH BORDERS WORTHWHILE

There's something about the Scottish Borders that transports minds back to heavy conflict, deep patriotism and bloody warfare, with emperor Hadrian, way back in AD128, constructing a literal divide between two countries that has lasted ever since.

It's peculiar, then, that the battles that existed in this huge belt of masonry are totally at odds with the picturesque villages that decorate a swathe of land that you could spend a lifetime exploring, without ever conquering.

Here are five picture-postcard villages and towns that will grab your attention if you ever find yourself on the Scottish Borders:

St Abbs: A stunning fishing village on the south-east Berwickshire coast, the journey up through Northumberland holds beauty that can rival any coastline in the UK. When you arrive at St Abbs, sample still waters, characterful pubs and the beautiful expanse of the North Sea.

Selkirk: Selkirk combines industrial power with royal heritage, a gateway to the north that dates back to the 13th century. The closeness of the streets offers a feel that likens itself to the Cotswolds, but the open expanses beyond remind you of rich Scottish countryside.

Peebles: Strange sounding but beautiful looking, Peebles has royal roots and is based on the River Tweed. Golf, fishing, mountain-biking and walking are popular pursuits, with the Victorian architecture offering hotels and hostels to relax in after a day in the wilds.

Kelso: A sleepy market town that has the potential to burst into life at any moment, Kelso is a holidaymakers' dream, with great accommodation, impeccable dining, stunning architecture and a horse racing track that's the envy of the rest of Scotland.

St Boswells: Community is the buzzword in sleepy St Boswells – this place was recently named one of the top 10 places to live in Scotland. Flanked by stunning countryside and the River Tweed, and featuring a number of artisan independent businesses, this cosy village is worth a visit.



St Abbs



Selkirk



Peebles



Kelso



St Boswells



Photo credit: credit Frank Gaertner/Shutterstock.com



If you enjoyed an alcohol-free January, here are some alternatives to alcohol to try...

It's that time of year when we reflect on our bad habits and do our best to become healthier, happier and wiser, and if giving up alcohol is your New Year's Resolution, then all is good. Low-booze business is booming, and that means there are plenty of delicious, low-calorie options to help keep you motivated.

BEER

Any designated driver will tell you that the previous offerings from major breweries fell a little flat in the flavour department. But just as burgeoning independent brewers have completely transformed our ale habits, they too have tasked themselves with creating exciting low-alcohol options that don't skimp on that gloriously hoppy flavour. With 'endless session' IPAs, low-alcohol lagers and sobering stouts and sours, craft beer connoisseurs have a raft of options for their refined palates.

SPIRITS

For those lamenting their 5pm gin and tonics or pre-dinner Negronis, there are even more options as teetotalers use distilling alchemy to create potions that offer all the depth and nuance of an expertly concocted spirit with none of the units. There are juniper and bergamot blends that perfectly complement tonic water for that G&T experience, luxurious citrus and herb creations that mimic the dry bitterness of vermouth, and even elegant elixirs containing herbs such as lemon balm and valerian root – ideal as a soporific nightcap for those who would otherwise drink whisky.

WINE

In the past these underwhelming alternatives have often had their alcohol violently removed, leaving an unsatisfying liquid that would barely satisfy as grape juice. Now, canny cultivators have turned to nature in order to create wines that are naturally lower in alcohol by halting the fermenting process earlier. With red wines this can often lend a natural sweetness, whereas whites have a more delicate profile. The best low-alcohol wines, however, are the ones with a natural fizz, such as Pet Nat, which offer all the celebratory joy of champagne without the hangover.

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Charles & Diana

40 years on

Looking back to 1981, and the 40th anniversary of the engagement of Prince Charles and Lady Diana.

February 6, 2021, marks the 40th anniversary of when Lady Diana Spencer made a step into the public spotlight from which, inevitably, she would never return.

At just 19 years old, her engagement to Prince Charles, at 32, was celebrated the world over; 40 years on, with the benefit of hindsight, we look back on the union in a rather different way.

The fact the pair met in peculiar circumstances perhaps should have been a sign – Charles originally dated Diana's sister, Sarah. And in later years it was revealed that the pair had only been together on 13 separate occasions, across six months, before becoming engaged.

Of course, peculiarity and the royal family are common bedfellows. In fact, February 2021 marks another interesting anniversary – the 50th anniversary of the first time Charles met Camilla, his now wife.

So while February 6 certainly won't be looked on as a date in history to be cherished, it is at least a mark in the sand. The couple brought two boys into the world who, in their own way, have made significant contributions; and while their marriage – which was confirmed on July 29, 1981, at St Paul's Cathedral – lasted only 15 years, it's appropriate to remind ourselves that time mends most ills.

Diana, up to her death in 1997, did so much to cultivate her own life away from the stranglehold of the royal epicentre, and largely succeeded; while Charles has reinvented his persona across philanthropic, environmental and entrepreneurial projects, and enjoys a higher grade of popularity now in 2021 than he has at any point in the past.

Photo credit: Getty Images, Shutterstock

BEAM ME UP



A level of gadgetry once reserved for Bond films or the mind of Jason Bourne might soon be coming your way, with boffins in Israel having found a way of beaming music into the brain without the need for speakers or headphones.

It goes by the name of soundbeaming, and this futuristic audio technique has the ability to transform the way we listen to music, play computer games, watch TV or process satellite navigation instructions forever.

The product is called a Soundbeamer 1.0 and is made by Noveto. It sits on a desktop and beams sound to the user – and not just any sound, but rich 3D, circling and weaving soundscapes that fill the ear, swirl around the head and infiltrate the brain, without really seeming to come from any one direction.

What's more, there are no implants required – simply, the 3D sensing module locates and tracks your ear position and sends audio via ultrasonic

waves, creating sound pockets next to the ear. And because there are no headphones blocking other sounds, you will still pick up what's being spoken in the room, so no need for those awkward taps on the shoulder.

The technology is so new and so advanced that even the company's CEO admits he has struggled to come to terms with it.

"The brain doesn't understand what it doesn't know," he says. "It sounds like a speaker but it is just you who can hear it, and that's quite something for the brain to come to terms with."

"We have other technologies that happen around us that are difficult to comprehend but vital to our lives – the internet is perhaps a good example – and I hope this will come to be regarded in the same way."

As for when we can get our hands on the Soundbeamer – the company hopes that the first will be available for sale by Christmas 2021.



How To CLEAN AND PROTECT your Car seats

Even with the best will in the world, your car seats will eventually succumb to stains and spillages. Fortunately, if you care for and clean them appropriately, they can be restored to their original glory.

FABRIC CAR SEATS

- > The first step when cleaning your fabric car seats is to vacuum the upholstery to ensure the area is free from dirt and debris. If pet hair is an issue, utilise a pet hairbrush to lift the hair before vacuuming.
- > Next you need to apply your chosen cleaner or shampoo. Try not to make the area too wet – damp is best – and then gently rub in the solution with a soft-bristled brush.
- > Top tip: Concentrate on small areas and an even spread of solution to avoid water stains.

LEATHER CAR SEATS

- > Leather car seats are less prone to stains than fabric ones but they are also more delicate and susceptible to abrasions. Therefore, when vacuuming you need to be extra careful and take your time to avoid any scratches or tears. You also need to purchase a leather-specific upholstery cleaner, which often comes as a cream rather than a spray or shampoo.
- > Apply the product and gently rub the area with a microfibre towel.
- > Top tip: The more matt your leather seats appear, the cleaner they are.

HOW TO DRY YOUR CAR SEATS

It is always advisable to clean your car seats early in the day and when no rain is forecast. If you can keep an eye on your vehicle, leave your windows slightly open to prevent trapped moisture and let your seats dry naturally.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR CAR SEATS

- > Condition leather seats to prevent cracks
- > Spray fabric seats with a fabric protector



NEW OLYMPIC SPORT:

BREAKDANCING

THE NEW SPORT SET TO DEBUT AT THE 2024 OLYMPICS IN PARIS... BREAKDANCING!

While the postponement of the Olympic Games in Tokyo proved one of 2020's most frustrating episodes, hosting the Games this coming summer has at least given the International Olympic Committee (IOC) the chance to run its eye over prospective new sports that could be showcased.

And fans of breakdancing – a pursuit created and styled on the mean, urban streets of New York in the 1970s before being exported to a truly global audience – will be glad of the extra time, albeit the first we'll see of it will be in 2024 when Paris hosts.

A movement centred as much on music as it is dance, there are distant similarities with other performance events at the Games, such as synchronised swimming and dressage.

In the Olympic format, competitors look likely to go up against each other 1v1, as was

the case at the 2018 Youth Olympics in Argentina. The success of the event there, some significant backing by Red Bull and a desire by organisers for the Olympics to speak to a younger, more urban demographic, means breakdancing – or 'breaking', as it will be called in event terms – sailed through the trial on its way to debuting at the world's biggest sporting tournament.

It's also significant that the IOC has embraced breaking despite some of the activity's leading purveyors insisting that it needs to retain its artistic and cultural edge, and shouldn't be bracketed in with the Olympics' sometimes rather formal take on sport.

Whether breaking will inspire anyone older than the teenage market to take it up is unclear. If it does, expect sales of paracetamol to soar.



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