



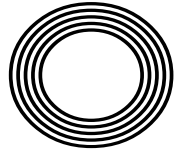
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29th April  
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# Editor's notes...

FEBRUARY 2023



Nik Allen, Editor

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

We're into February now - that fateful month when New Year's resolutions begin to scurry away like a thief in the night, never to be seen again.

I admit that rarely does the start of a year go by without me promising to make either my own or someone else's life healthier or happier.

This year I didn't, even though I'll be the first to admit that my fitness levels have taken a dive after the buoyant festive period.

That's not to say I don't want to get back to a routine of regular exercise. I've already started, in fact. I'm on my bike every other day, am choosing to walk over driving when I can and have cut out those sneaky snacks.

The difference is that I want to get away from this being a New Year thing. I know so many people fall down on a resolution and believe the game is up. Not true! Not only should we take failure in life as just a temporary blip, but we should also be solid in the belief that good habits, new initiatives and a drive for self-improvement can and should happen at any time of the year.

My advice is therefore to do something good in 2023, but use the whole of 2023 to do it.

*Nik Allen*

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# KEEP ON WOMBLING

## WOMBLING FREE, THE WOMBLES OF WIMBLEDON COMMON ARE WE

To celebrate 50 years since *The Wombles* first appeared on our screens, we explore how Orinoco and his furry chums were well ahead of their time.

The early 1970s was an era of rising food and fuel costs, political and social unrest, and dubious fashion choices. It also marked the moment when the very first episode of *The Wombles* aired, at 5.40pm on February 5, 1973, on BBC One.

Based on Elizabeth Beresford MBE's 1968 beloved children's book, the five-minute stop-motion masterpiece was titled *Orinoco and the Big Black Umbrella*, and was voiced by British actor Bernard Cribbins OBE. It told of a blustery day on Wimbledon Common, which corresponds perfectly with the story of how the Wombles came to be. When Beresford took her daughter Kate for a walk on the same common, the young girl mispronounced it as 'Wombledon', and the rest is history.

---

**'There is still much to be appreciated and even learned from *The Wombles*'**

---

Though we have moved on in terms of animation styles and childhood heroes, there is still much to be appreciated and even learned from *The Wombles*. Back in 1973, Britain didn't have recycling bins and nationwide initiatives to reduce waste, making the Womble mission to "make good use of bad rubbish" an almost revolutionary concept.

The seven Wombles, including Great Uncle Bulgaria, Orinoco and Madame Cholet, were highly creative in the way they recycled and gathered rubbish – even fronting a Keep Britain Tidy campaign – and would certainly be applauded by environmental activists today.

So let's mark their half-century on our television screens not just by introducing our children to their adorable 35 mini-adventures – and, of course, their hit theme tune *The Wombling Song* – but also by passing on their teachings.

From Wimbledon Common and beyond, let's keep making "good use of bad rubbish".

# Know YOUR snow!

Who doesn't like that crunching noise as you walk on a patch of fresh snow? And what place doesn't look a little prettier with snowy roofs and trees? But what exactly is snow, and how does it happen?

## WHAT'S SNOW MADE FROM?

When it's 0°C or under, the water vapour in clouds freezes into minute ice crystals. These crystals stick together. And if enough of them do it, they become heavy enough to fall out of the cloud and float to the ground as snowflakes.

## HOW COLD DOES IT HAVE TO BE TO SNOW?

It won't snow unless it's 2°C or under. The snow will be powdery if the temperature is 0°C or below and the air is dry. When the temperature's slightly warmer and the atmosphere is moist, the flakes will be bigger because they melt around the edges and stick together. This sort of snow is perfect for making snowballs and snowmen.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SNOW, SLEET AND HAIL?

If the water vapour in the clouds freezes but the air temperature exceeds 2°C, the snowflakes melt and become sleet. At around 5°C, it'll become rain. Hail forms in thunderclouds when water droplets are blown up to the tops of the cloud, where they freeze. When the updraughts in the thunderclouds can't hold up the frozen droplets, they fall to the ground as hailstones.

## WHAT DO SNOWFLAKES LOOK LIKE?

Under a microscope, snowflakes can look very different from each other. It all depends on how the ice crystals form and stick together. In 1951, the International Commission on Snow and Ice divided snowflakes into seven main types. These are plates, stellar crystals, columns, needles, spatial dendrites, capped columns and irregular forms.

*Snow there you have it!*



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# HOW TO CHOOSE THE PERFECT BATH TOWELS

**W**ith so many different types of bath towels available on the market, it can be difficult to know which to choose. Here's everything you need to know about picking the perfect towels for your home.

**CHECK THE FIBRE CONTENT**  
The first thing you need to look at when buying new towels is the fibre content. If you want a towel that is super-soft and absorbent, then 100 per cent cotton is the best choice. While you may be tempted by premium options such as Egyptian cotton, these are a lot more expensive and don't have much effect on the overall quality. If you are on a tight budget, opt for a cotton/polyester blend.

**UNDERSTAND THE LINGO**  
Towel lingo can be confusing, so here are a few key phrases to look out for:  
> **COMBINED COTTON** – this is where the cotton is brushed to remove short fibres, resulting in a softer and more durable towel.  
> **RING SPUN COTTON** – this means that long and short fibres are tightly twisted to make the towel loops strong and smooth.  
> **TWIST** – a high twist results in a more durable

towel and a low twist makes the towel more plush and absorbent.

**LOOK AT THE TOWEL**  
Although you may think that touching the towel will help you determine its overall quality, manufacturers apply special finishes to make them feel softer. Instead, visually inspect the towel and make sure the edges are neatly folded and secured with close stitching.

**CONSIDER THE WEIGHT**  
Towel weight is measured in grams per square metre (GSM), with the higher the weight, the denser and more absorbent the towel. A lightweight towel is 300-400 GSM, medium weight is 400-600 GSM, and 600-900 GSM is the heaviest.

**KNOW WHAT YOU WANT**  
Ultimately, choosing a towel is down to personal preference. If you want a soft and absorbent towel, then look for 100 per cent cotton, plush loops of yarn on the surface and a higher GSM. However, if you need a more durable or quick-drying towel, a cotton/poly blend with short loops and a lower GSM is a better choice.

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HOME & DIY

## 5 STYLISH WAYS TO STORE **COOKBOOKS**

**W**hether you can't resist treating yourself to the latest celebrity cookbook or you were gifted a few culinary classics at Christmas, you may be wondering how you can store and showcase your latest additions.

### LINE THEM UP AGAINST THE BACKSPLASH

If you want to proudly display your collection of cookbooks for all to see, then why not line them all up in a row against your backsplash? Providing easy access and a visually appealing feature, this is a great option for all kitchens.

### ADD BUILT-IN SHELVES TO THE ISLAND

A kitchen island provides the perfect space for storing all your favourite cookbooks, especially if you have a vast collection. Choose to either take advantage of existing shelving or incorporate new storage space that accommodates all your books.

### STORE THEM IN THE PANTRY

Pantries are a godsend for many families, providing additional space and somewhere to keep items out of sight. If you're lucky enough to have one in your home, then designate an eye-level shelf for your cookbook collection so that all your favourite recipes are within reach.

### DISPLAY YOUR FAVOURITE WITH A BOOK HOLDER

If you have a go-to cookbook that you use on a regular basis, you can keep this on display at all times using a simple book holder. Enabling you to create the perfect culinary focal point in your kitchen, you can even prop the book open at your favourite recipe.

### INVEST IN A MULTI-TIER BASKET STAND

For smaller kitchens where space is tight, a vertical storage solution such as a multi-tier basket stand is the ideal choice. There are many different styles and sizes on the market or, alternatively, you could create your own if you have a set of storage baskets lying around your home.

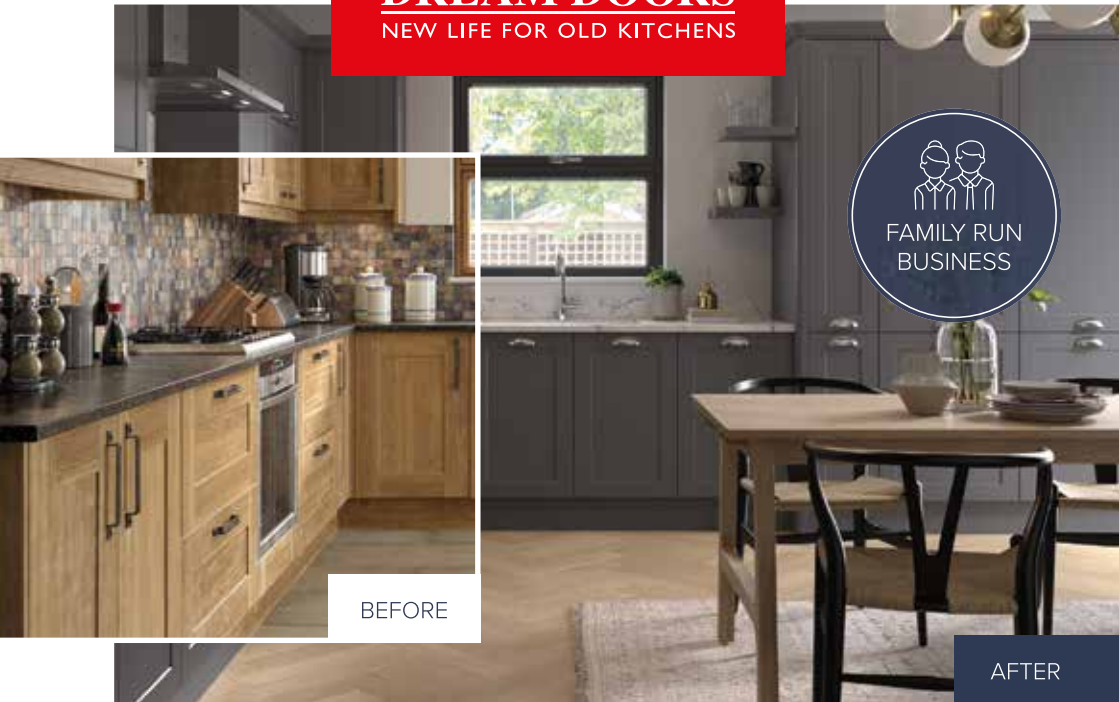
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# LOCAL NEWS

*from your neighbourhood*



LOCAL NEWS LEIGH-ON-SEA



Photo credit: Google Maps

## Runner finds 'beaten' homeless man on the ground

A homeless man found "calling for help" as he lay on the ground in Leigh-on-Sea had been "beaten up badly".

In a post on the Nextdoor app, a Southend resident posted that her husband came upon the homeless man while on a run in the woods near Belfairs Inn on Tuesday, January 17.

The post said: "He was laying on the frozen ground calling for help. He had been beaten up badly and asked for my husband to call an ambulance, which he did.

"My husband managed to find his belongings and covered him over with a blanket and waited with him until the ambulance arrived."

Councillor Martin Terry, Southend-on-Sea City Council's cabinet member for public protection, said: "It is very disappointing to hear of an attack on a

vulnerable person and I hope he recovers.

"Anyone with any information should contact police at [www.essex.police.uk](http://www.essex.police.uk) or by calling 101. With the cold weather, those on the streets are having a difficult time. This is just awful."

Temperatures across the south of England plummeted last month, reaching as low as -10°C in parts of the UK.

In response to the extreme temperatures, HARP, Southend's leading homeless charity, offered emergency housing to those sleeping rough at its base at Bradbury Day Centre.

Speaking at the time, Vanessa Hemmings, CEO of HARP, said: "As we head into another cold snap, we have reopened our emergency pop-up shelter to make sure that no one is forced to sleep out in the dangerous forecasted conditions."

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## Residents named in New Year Honours List



Photo credit: ITS Shutterstock.com

Two Leigh-on-Sea residents have been named in King Charles III's first New Year Honours List.

Laura Thurlow, chief executive of the Community Foundation for Surrey (CFS), was awarded a BEM for services to the community.

During her 12 and a half years at CFS, the foundation's income doubled and it was able to distribute more than £2.7million in funding to charitable organisations, supporting those impacted by COVID-19.

Jim Glover, chair of CFS, said: "Everyone associated with CFS joins me in expressing our delight in the news that Laura's considerable contribution to the organisation has been recognised in such an appropriate manner."

Another local resident, Dr Andre Jan Imich, a special educational needs and disabilities professional advisor for the Department for Education, was awarded an OBE for services to children and young people.

Southend resident and former chairman of the Southend Lifeboat Management Group Jim Mackie was awarded an MBE for his services to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and to charity, having raised £1million for Southend's inshore lifeboat station.

## Council tax increase proposed in draft budget

Leigh residents could face a 4.99 per cent increase in council tax after Southend-on-Sea City Council announced its new draft budget for 2023/24.

The council claims not to have taken the decision lightly. The council tax increase would pay towards support and care for vulnerable people.

Leigh Ward councillor Carole Mulrone said the council is continuing to "provide advice to those affected by the cost-of-living crisis and energy costs".

Cllr Mulrone also outlined that "the budget addresses a vast range of issues, some of which will affect Leigh more than others".

For example, £1.5million will focus on the environment, finding nature-based solutions to erosion and enhancing Old Leigh's fishing ports. Additionally, £1million will be spent on upgrading public parks, including Leigh Library Gardens.

Councillor Stephen George, leader of the council, said: "We're taking tough decisions while protecting the most vulnerable. No councillor wants to raise council tax or make savings, but councils are in the unenviable position of needing to do both. The government expects us to raise council tax by 4.99 per cent and that is what we must do. This will raise £4.5million, but that won't even cover our expected extra energy costs of £4.6million, for example."

## MP calls for changes to law after 'zombie knife' found

Anna Firth, MP for Southend West (pictured below), is calling on the government to amend the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 to make it easier for police to confiscate dangerous weapons.

This comes after a 17-year-old boy from Leigh-on-Sea purchased a 'zombie knife' online. The police, who seized the two-foot blade from the boy's home, could only do so after they found the packaging it came in.

Under the Offensive Weapons Act, you cannot possess, bring into the UK, or sell, hire, lend or provide certain knives to someone else should they have a cutting edge, a serrated edge, and images or words on either the blade or handle that suggest they are to be used for the purpose of violence.

Ms Firth MP, who spoke in Parliament on January 12 regarding the matter, wants to remove the "descriptor of violence", which can block prosecution and confiscation of zombie knives by police if the knife does not have violent imagery on the blade or handle.

She said: "I cannot stand by while a legal loophole is being abused by reckless retailers to cash in on crime and peddle dangerous weapons."

"Let's have a safer Southend and take zombie knives out of the community once and for all."



Photo credit: Anna Firth MP

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# LOCAL NEWS

*from your neighbourhood*



Photo credit: Rachel Riley MBE

## Star awarded MBE

Countdown star and antisemitism campaigner Rachel Riley (pictured right with Holocaust survivor Sir Ben Helfgott MBE) has been awarded an MBE for services to Holocaust education.

The presenter was raised in Thorpe Bay and attended Thorpe Hall School.

The 36 year old, whose mother is Jewish, was an outspoken critic of Labour's handling of the antisemitism crisis that plagued the party during much of the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn.

In January 2019, she spoke at a Westminster reception for the Holocaust Educational Trust,

addressing abuse she had received.

Rachel wrote on social media: "Incredibly proud to have just been awarded an MBE for services to Holocaust education.

"This is very much shared with so many people who also dedicate their time to fighting anti-Jewish racism."

Stephen Duckitt, the headteacher at Thorpe Hall School, said: "It's wonderful that Rachel's work to raise Holocaust awareness and combat antisemitism has been recognised with an MBE.

"It's so important that we all share the responsibility of teaching the lessons of the past."

## Council approves plans to replace lake fencing

Southend-on-Sea City Council has approved a report to replace a section of fencing around the lake at Southchurch Park.

At a council meeting on Thursday, January 12, councillors considered a report that recommended the replacement of sections of the former shin rail based on an agreed risk assessment. The suggestion that the entire lake be fenced off was rejected.

Councillor Carole Mulrone, cabinet member for environment, culture and tourism, said: "Southchurch Park is one of our many award-winning Green Flag parks and boasts several facilities, making it very popular with local residents and visitors.

"As such, the council needs to ensure we minimise any risk to public safety, while enabling visitors to enjoy the vista of the lake."



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# SIR JAMES DUDDRIDGE MP



LOCAL NEWS THORPE BAY

Last month, I took a trip to the High Street for an evening of mini golf at Caddies and had a fantastic night of putting.

We know all too well that in recent years, people have changed their shopping habits, and going to the High Street solely to shop is no longer a draw. But whenever I visit the High Street, I am always optimistic about the future and the opportunities for our city.

More and more people want somewhere to go for entertainment, a meal with their families or a place to go in the evening with friends. In recent months, more independent enterprises have started, and more restaurants are opening. As a young city, we should galvanise and embrace the many business opportunities this brings to regenerate our High Street.

With 2023 in full swing, I wanted to take this opportunity to remind you that you can contact me regarding any issues or problems that you feel I may be able to help you with.

The best way to contact me is by email at [james@jamesduddridge.com](mailto:james@jamesduddridge.com) or by calling my office on 01702 616135.



Alternatively, you can send me a message by simply visiting my website at [www.jamesduddridge.com](http://www.jamesduddridge.com) or by writing a letter to Sir James Duddridge KCMG MP, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA.



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## New data on home ownership

More than half of households in Thorpe Bay own their homes outright, compared to just 30 per cent of Southend-on-Sea residents, according to new data recently published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

The ONS published the Census 2021 data in January 2023, revealing interesting information about communities across the country.

More than 16.1 per cent of Thorpe Bay households are privately rented or live rent free. In Southend

Central, 54.7 per cent of households are rented.

An average of 32.8 per cent of households across England and Wales own the accommodation they live in outright, and 29.7 per cent own their accommodation with a mortgage, loan or shared ownership.

Councillor Stephen George, Leader of Southend-on-Sea City Council, said: "This data is useful because it helps inform how we deliver our services, to make sure we meet the needs of our residents."



# DYNAMIC

## Davina

**HOW DAVINA MCCALL CONTINUES TO PROVE HERSELF AS A MODERN NATIONAL TREASURE**

**D**avina McCall this year celebrates three decades on our screens. From her early break – a female voice dubber for Channel 4’s Friday night sleaze bonanza *Eurotrash* – through *Don’t Try This at Home*, *Streetmate*, *The BRIT Awards*, *Big Brother*, *Stars in Their Eyes*, *The Million Pound Drop*, *Long Lost Family* and so many more, the now 55 year old has remained relevant, resplendent and always radiant on our screens.

The Wimbledon-born presenter, who has just returned as a judge in the fourth series of *The Masked Singer*, is immaculate in her appeal to multiple age groups and all genders. She carries a confidence and assurance that is effortless and puts contestants at ease, while also knowing when to reveal a more sensitive and emotional side to her character.

From uncovering her ancestry in *Who Do You Think You Are?* to fronting documentaries on the language of love and the mental pain of the menopause, Davina is truly one of terrestrial TV’s modern national treasures. At a time when our broadcasters are desperate for consistency and longevity in the face of competition from streaming channels, Davina continues to provide an enduring and vital influence.

“I’ve just tried to present in a way that feels genuine and accessible,” says Davina, who is currently in a relationship with hairdresser Michael Douglas, having previously been married twice. She has three children – Holly, 21, Tilly, 19, and Chester, 16.

“I am incredibly grateful to have been given the opportunity to sustain my career with new and exciting shows and concepts.

“I don’t doubt it’s probably time to step to one side and let some others have a go, but I’ll keep on going until I’m told I’m not needed anymore, because TV still gives me the feeling of having the time of my life, and that’s very special to me.”

The fact that Davina is someone not just admired by the general public, but trusted too, is arguably what’s behind the success of her latest book. In *Menopausal*, she discusses the apparent embarrassment, shame and fear behind the change, blowing away perceptions and encouraging openness and discussion about the subject.

This isn’t the first time the presenter has been vocal about life’s true challenges. In her own autobiography, she lifted the lid on the highs and lows she has encountered, including drug addiction and a fractured relationship with her mother.

The presenter has also been outspoken recently in criticising the trend for cancel culture. Speaking on entrepreneur Steven Bartlett’s podcast, *The Diary of a CEO*, she slammed the failure of those in the public eye to express real feelings for fear of finding work projects binned or sidelined. She added: “No one says what they think or believe anymore.”

If anyone can put a sense of honesty back into the discourse, it’s Davina. Never one to shy away from deliberation or debate, she refuses to toe the media line.

In fact, while the brilliant brunette has contributed so much to UK culture over the past three decades, it could be said that her most important work is yet to come...



# Are you looking for an **ECO HOME?**

## IS THE GRASS ALWAYS GREENER WHEN IT COMES TO ECO HOMES?

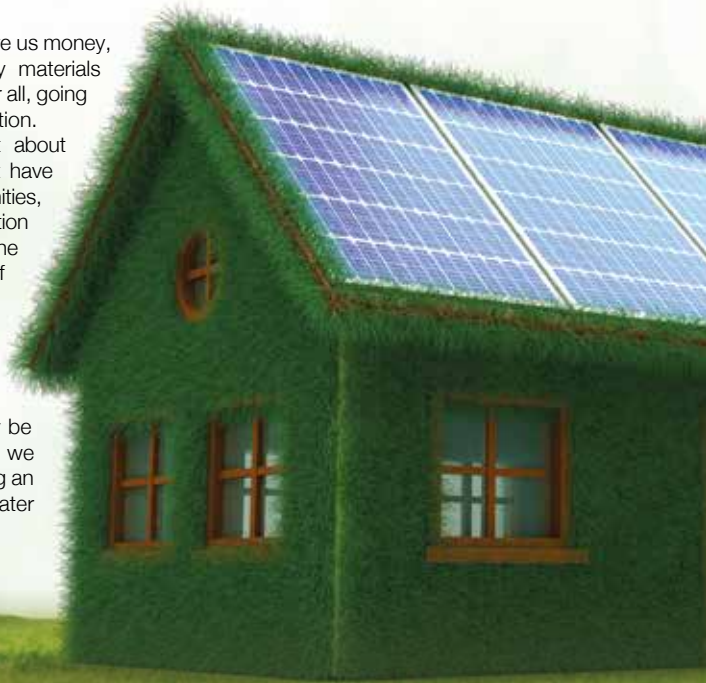
**W**e live in an era of eco sustainability in our homes, yet is eco design all it's cracked up to be, and do the negatives balance the positives for conscious consumers looking to create a home that has environmental excellence at its heart? Here, we look at the pros and cons of green homes.

### PROS OF ECO HOMES

- > **Cost:** The trend for going green with our homes is supported wholeheartedly by local government. That means grants, subsidies and initiatives will bring certain costs down. If your structure benefits from elements such as rainwater harvesting and solar panels, your running costs will undoubtedly be lower than for a standard home.
- > **The planet:** Prioritising the homes in which we live can also help us feel as though we are playing a part in the bigger picture. After all, the commitments we make now are setting up the next generation for a better life.
- > **Regulations:** Future-proofing our homes for rules and regulations that may come about in the years ahead means we are investing now rather than paying further down the line.

### CONS OF ECO HOMES

- > **Cost:** While green initiatives can save us money, the sourcing of some eco-friendly materials comes at a higher upfront cost. After all, going green is very rarely the cheapest option.
- > **Longevity:** While we know a lot about standardised building materials that have helped us map out huge communities, some of the newer green fabrication technologies are untested over the long term. Without the benefit of longevity testing, they may be more liable to having to be replaced or repaired as time goes on.
- > **Ratio:** While every environmental action makes a difference, the cost of investing in our homes may be at the expense of green initiatives we can undertake elsewhere (like buying an electric car) that would make a greater overall impact.



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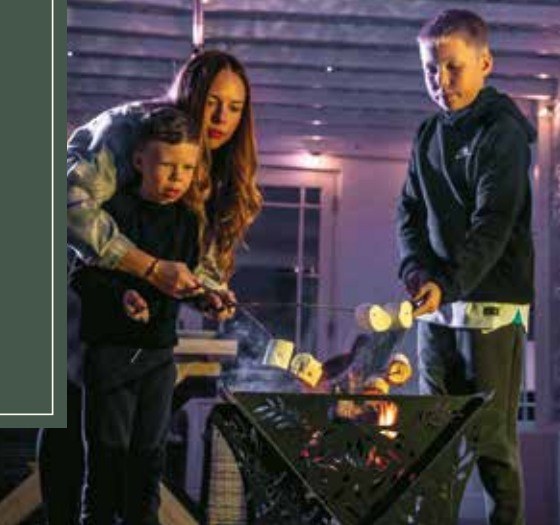
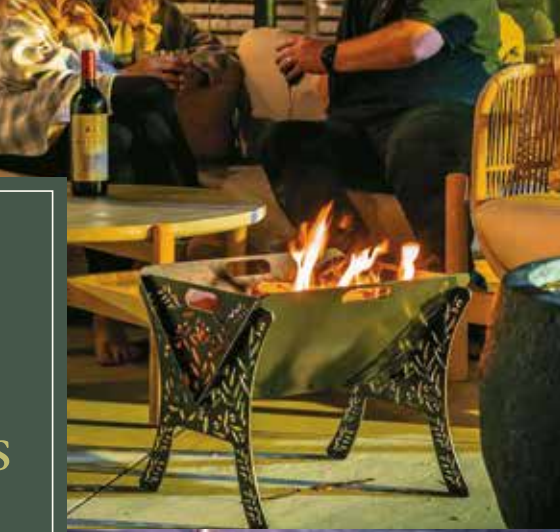
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# PUZZLES & TRIVIA



PUZZLES

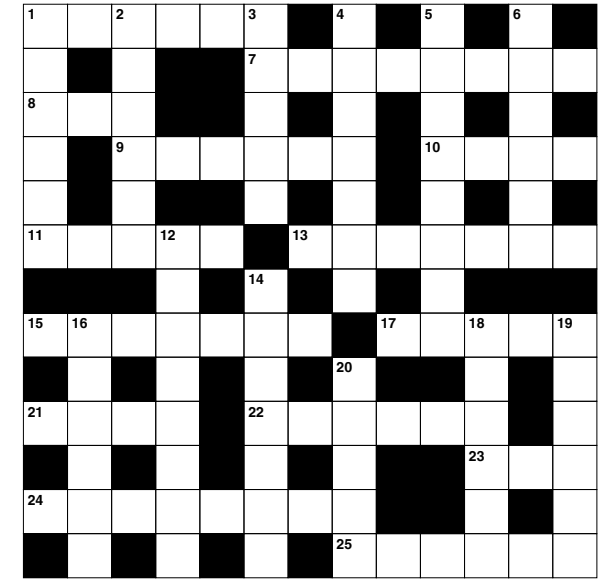
Answers: see end of The VISION Listings

## ACROSS

1. Mexican cloak (6)
7. Swamping (8)
8. Belgian town (3)
9. Of the immediate past (6)
10. Place with temporary accommodation (4)
11. Standards (5)
13. Sharply (7)
15. Give up (7)
17. Draw or bring out (5)
21. Percussion instrument (4)
22. Popular round fruits (6)
23. Annoy (3)
24. Non-functioning period (8)
25. Thin candles (6)

## DOWN

1. Points (anag) (6)
2. Closer (6)
3. Proposal; suggestion (5)
4. Act of touching (7)
5. Taught (8)
6. Hard tooth coating (6)
12. Memorial (8)



14. Pertaining to plants (7)
15. Calls forth (6)
16. Subatomic particle such as a nucleon (6)
17. Surprise result (5)
18. Bearlike (6)
19. Calls forth (6)
20. Surprise result (5)

## DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Valentine's Day was first declared a holiday by a pope. In 496 AD, Pope Gelasius I made the feast of Saint Valentine an official holiday.
- ▶ The first known official celebration of Saint Valentine's Day took place in Paris on February 14, 1400.
- ▶ Each year, 10 per cent of all marriage proposals happen on February 14.
- ▶ Around 25 million Valentine's cards are sent in the UK every year.
- ▶ UK pet owners will spend £200million on Valentine's gifts for their animals.
- ▶ Valentine's Day is the second biggest 'event' of the year following Christmas. It is estimated that the UK will spend around £880million on Valentine's Day.

Facts courtesy of Funky Pigeon

## SUDOKU

5	8					1		
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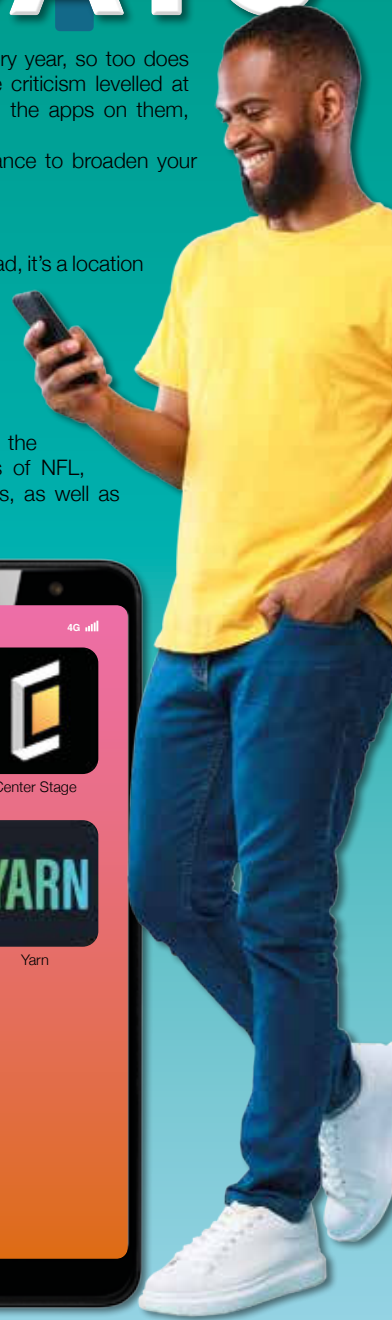




# APPY DAYS

While our reliance on technology becomes greater every year, so too does our interaction with the world around us. For all the criticism levelled at them, our communications devices and, specifically, the apps on them, have offered us a far greater understanding of the world.

With that in mind, here are five apps that offer you the chance to broaden your horizons in 2023.



## BACKDROP

Backdrop isn't a wallpaper app, as its name may suggest. Instead, it's a location discovery platform that aims to help you become more familiar with your surroundings. Rather than listing businesses and attractions, it turns the spotlight on interesting houses, colourful spaces and quirky local elements.

## CENTER STAGE

A US app that can instantly help you value trading cards. Although the technology is still in its infancy, with identifiable cards in the sports of NFL, baseball, basketball and hockey, the plan is to incorporate UK sports, as well as Pokémon and other games-based card collectables.

## OTTERNAL LIFE

A habit-tracking app that goes well beyond the norm of health and fitness. Instead, Otternal Life gives you the opportunity to input everything from studies to collections, guiding you and reminding you of daily tasks, while helping you steer clear of temptation elsewhere.

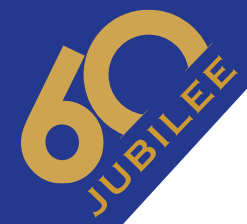
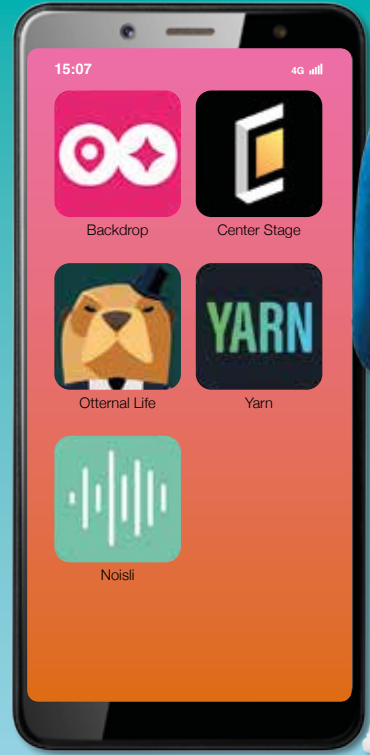
## YARN

Go back to basics with this app that aims to help readers revisit the simple pleasures of storytelling.

Rather than elaborate videos, films or animations, Yarn offers app users a simple choice of stories presented in text message form. Episodes and conversations are updated daily, and you can enjoy stories from several categories, including mystery, romance, comedy, sci-fi, fantasy, and more.

## NOISLI

We can all recognise that our ability to concentrate is affected by the sounds around us. Noisli mixes together a number of samples and sounds, from birdsong to rain to waves to wind, to surround you with effortlessly excellent and personalised audio inspiration.



COHEN TV AERIALS ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THAT THEY ARE CELEBRATING 60 YEARS AS A LOCAL FAMILY BUSINESS, WITH A REPUTATION FOR GOOD SERVICE AND RELIABILITY.



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# BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO OWNING A hamster

**A HAMSTER IS A GREAT CHOICE FOR A FIRST PET, COMING IN A SMALL PACKAGE BUT DELIVERING LOTS OF FUN. HERE'S SOME TOP TIPS ON HOW TO CARE FOR THEM**

### WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT BREEDS OF HAMSTERS?

There are 24 different species of hamsters, with the most popular ones for pets including the Syrian, Russian dwarf, Campbell's dwarf, and Roborovski.

### WHAT ENVIRONMENT DO HAMSTERS THRIVE IN?

Hamsters need a comfortable, dry and clean place to live. They do not like draughts or damp. Also, they need to be in a room where the lights go on and off at more or less the same time each day. As they are solitary animals, hamsters prefer to live alone but, with the right care, dwarf hamsters can be housed together.

### WHAT DO HAMSTERS EAT?

Hamsters need a good-quality, balanced diet that contains all the essential nutrients and minerals. They can get this from a compound pellet ration, a mixture of seeds and small quantities of greens, clean root vegetables and fruits.

### DO HAMSTERS NEED COMPANY?

Although hamsters are generally solitary animals and often showcase timid behaviour, they can enjoy interacting with people who handle them carefully. Hamsters can find the presence and scent of other pets stressful, so you should keep their cage away from other animals in the home.

### HOW TO KEEP YOUR HAMSTER HAPPY AND HEALTHY

A hamster needs to sleep undisturbed during the day and have plenty of space to play and exercise at night. They also need a deep layer of litter so that they can dig and construct a burrow. Many hamsters enjoy a running wheel.

### HAMSTER FACT FILE:

- > Hamsters can catch a cold from humans
- > Hamsters hoard their food
- > Hamsters' teeth never stop growing.





# How to make a warming BEAN & TOMATO SOUP

Set your pulse racing on World Pulses Day this February, with this delicious bean and tomato soup. It's thick, creamy and suitable for vegans. It's also an absolute doddle to make, though you will need a blender or food processor.

## BEAN AND TOMATO SOUP (Serves 4-6 people)

### You will need:

- 2 tbsp olive oil | 1 clove of garlic (minced) | ½ tsp dried oregano | ½ tsp dried thyme | ½ tsp fresh chopped rosemary | ¼ tsp chilli flakes | Heaped tbsp tomato purée | 1 tsp brown sugar | 400g tin of finely chopped tomatoes or sieved tomatoes (passata) | 500ml vegetable stock | 400g tin butter beans | Salt and pepper | Chopped parsley to decorate

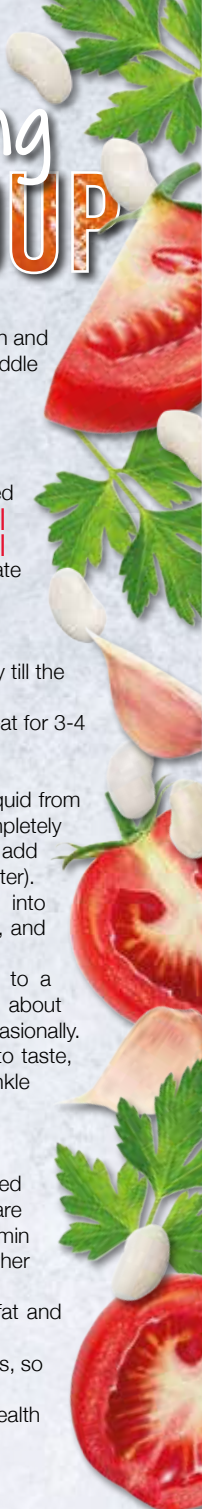
### How to make:

- > Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan.
- > Add the garlic, oregano, thyme, rosemary and chilli flakes, and cook gently till the garlic is soft.
- > Add the tomato purée and sugar, and cook over a medium heat for 3-4 minutes.
- > Pour in the tomatoes and stock and give it a stir.
- > In a blender, purée the beans with the liquid from the can till the mixture is completely smooth (if it seems very thick, add a tablespoon or two of water). Pour the bean purée into the tomato mixture, and stir well.
- > Bring the mixture to a boil, then simmer for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- > Add salt and pepper to taste, pour into bowls, sprinkle with parsley, and enjoy.

### Health benefits of pulses:

- > Pulses – such as lentils, dried beans, peas and chickpeas – are a good source of protein, vitamin B, iron, zinc, potassium and other micronutrients
- > They are low in calories, low in fat and rich in fibre
- > They contain complex carbohydrates, so you feel fuller for longer
- > The fibre in pulses helps improve heart health and lowers blood cholesterol.

(Source, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 2021)



# TEETHING TERRORS

## HOW TO KNOW WHEN YOUR BABY IS TEETHING AND USEFUL TRICKS TO HELP THEM

It's one of the biggest anguishes for any parent – seeing a baby or child in pain and not knowing what to do about it.

One such pain that all our youngsters have to go through is teething, and while there's nothing you can do to stop those gnashers appearing, here are some useful tips for helping your child get through the discomfort.

### DETECTION

In babies, the appearance of drool – and lots of it – is a tell-tale sign that teeth are on their way. Many parents opt for the handy neck cravat to prevent clothes from getting soaked.

Also keep an eye out for your baby gnawing or chewing on any available surface, with red and sore gums showing that there's activity lurking below.

A loss of appetite can indicate dental pain, but perhaps the biggest signal is the distress, grumpiness, moaning and sleeplessness that accompanies this stage.

### HELP

We all look to quickfire solutions when our children are ill, but teething is something you have to let progress in its own time, so really your only option is to try to limit the discomfort. Paracetamol and ibuprofen will take the edge off pain, while a number of parents opt for teething powders.

A teething chew – usually made out of rubber or silicon, and which can be kept in the freezer for a great cooling sensation – will undoubtedly provide relief. Teething gel and even some frozen banana can also offer those troubled gums a bit of light relief.

Of course, the biggest cure of them all is one we can all give in abundance and is completely free every time – a nice big hug.





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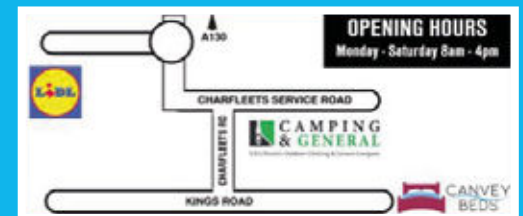
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GARDENING

# FlowerPOWER

FOUR FANTASTIC FLOWER SHOWS IN THE UK TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2023

There's nothing that feels more like summer than the blooming buds and luscious lawns of a flower show, and in the UK we're treated to an incredible array of events that cater for every type of green-fingered enthusiast.

**Harrogate Flower Show: April 20-23**  
One of the earliest shows on the calendar, this Yorkshire gem is great for children looking to build a knowledge of outside spaces, with a variety of activities designed to inspire young minds. For adults, there's the floral art marquee, the largest in Britain, as well as a wealth of displays and presentations – many with a practical edge.

**Chelsea Flower Show: May 23-27**  
A royal favourite, the Chelsea Flower Show represents the pinnacle of our horticultural passions in the UK, showcasing an array of award-winning designs, an abundance of experts and a wealth of demonstrations designed to

inspire. More than 150,000 people attend the show every year, so booking early is recommended.

**Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival: July 4-9**  
This festival claims to be the greatest flower show on Earth. Set in the grounds of Hampton Court Palace, with architecture, history, opulence and Britishness in abundance, it's difficult not to be wowed by beautiful show gardens, interactive activities for children, amazing flower displays and live music.

**Tatton Park Flower Show: July 19-23**  
If you fancy venturing up north, head to Knutsford in Cheshire for a flower show that is much more a garden party than an exhibition. With shopping, dining and music, the bamboozling range of horticultural heroics acts as a brilliant background to the party atmosphere. All you require is sunshine.

Photo credit: theenglishgarden.co.uk, yourharrogate.co.uk, EdinburghGarden.com, Shutterstock.com, PHS NELL HEPWORTH via housebeautiful.com



**MARTIN HOLMES**

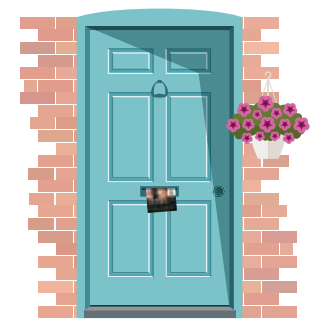
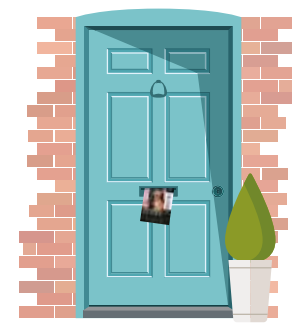
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TRAVEL

# FERRY GOOD



## WHY OUR LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE HUMBLE FERRY IS RETURNING, AND THE BENEFITS OF TRAVELLING ON ONE

To many, the ferry brings back pre-Eurotunnel days when, barring the process of boarding an airplane, our only connection with mainland Europe and beyond was via boat or ferry.

The ease with which tunnelled travel (including the Eurostar) now connects us with Europe has diminished the slow, clunky, often clumsy nature of the ferry; yet in the past couple of COVID-affected years, we've once again embraced this old-school method of travel, and here's why:

### EXPERIENCE

Boarding a boat, particularly with a young family, can be a thrilling experience, with the excitement of setting sail and views across open seas. For a small child, arriving at a port bustling with industry and movement can be mesmerising. Effectively, your holiday starts as soon as you board the boat.

### COST

The cost of travel has risen across the board. While ferries are sometimes noted as being expensive, they can still be one of the most affordable methods to reach the mainland if you book off-peak and look around for promotions and offers. This is particularly

true if there are multiple people in one car.

### POST-COVID CONSIDERATIONS

Unlike aircraft, ferries offer ample space, with wide passenger areas, the privacy of your own vehicle when boarding and departing and, most importantly, access to ample fresh air.

### FACILITIES

While not quite at the grade of the cruise ship megavessels that roam our seas, many ferries have an assortment of cafés, restaurants, bars, music clubs, cinemas, entertainment lounges and, in some cases, even splash pools.

### LUGGAGE

Unlike most other modes of transport, there are no restrictions on luggage when taking a ferry. In short, if you can pack it, you can take it.

### RELIABILITY

In (almost) all weathers, your trusty ferry will keep going, and with providers having invested hundreds of millions of pounds in new fleets, ferries have also never been safer.



# CAR SEAT mistakes

While most parents wouldn't dream of driving around without securing their kids in a car seat, many are inadvertently putting them at risk. Here's how to avoid the four most common car seat mistakes.

### Facing forward too soon

Children have relatively large heads and weak necks which means that, if they are facing forward during a collision, their head can jerk forward suddenly and violently. This can result in spinal injuries. Keep your children in rear-facing car seats until they reach the maximum height and weight limit. This is typically around the age of 15 months or up to 13kg (29 lb).

### Twisted or loose harness straps

As many as one in three children are at risk because they are strapped into their car seats incorrectly. Harness straps should lie flat, not twisted, and they need to be tight enough to hold your child safely in an accident. Pull the harness so that it is nice and snug. If you can pinch any excess fabric, then it is too loose.

### Too many clothes

Children should not wear coats or other bulky clothes when in a car seat. This is because, if there is a crash, these garments will compress and loosen the harness. Even a hoodie can push your child's head too far forward if the hood is down. Instead, cover your child with a blanket once they are secured if you are concerned about the cold.

### Buying a used car seat

Ideally, you should buy a new car seat, as these are safer than used ones. However, if you do buy a used one, then you need to ensure you do your homework. Choose one that comes with instructions, hasn't been recalled, is no more than six years old, has no visible damage or missing parts, and has never been involved in a crash.



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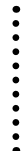


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ARE YOU READY TO EMBRACE THE COLD WEATHER AND EXERCISE OUTSIDE THIS WINTER?

While 'feel the burn' is a phrase you're likely to hear when it comes to physical activity, working out in cold temperatures comes with a whole host of benefits.

Read on to discover the top four reasons why you should exercise outside this winter.

### BURN MORE CALORIES

If you are looking to lose weight, then working outside in the winter can help you to achieve your goals. This is because colder temperatures force your body to work harder in order to regulate its core temperature. As your body works to get warm, your metabolism goes into overdrive and burns more calories and fat.

### BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Bugs and viruses are everywhere in the winter months, so it can be a good idea to look at ways to boost your immune system. Not only can exercising outside help to fight off the symptoms of a cold, but it also forces your immune system to work harder.

### BETTER CARDIO WORKOUT

When you exercise in colder temperatures, your blood vessels narrow and your heart and lungs work harder. This means that you can enjoy an enhanced cardiovascular workout, which helps to maintain good heart health. Plus, you don't have to exercise for as long to enjoy the same results.

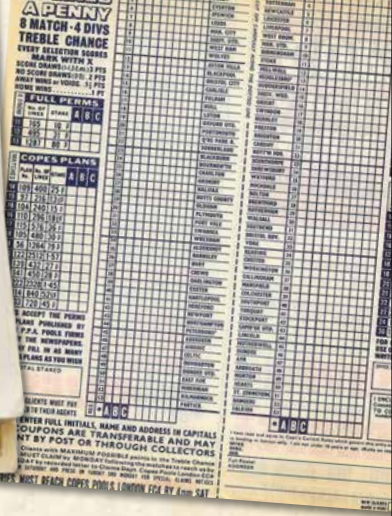
### IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH

If you are affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder, which makes you feel down during the darker months of the year, then exercising outside can help to boost your mood. In fact, research suggests that a good workout can be four times more effective than taking antidepressants in improving the symptoms of depression. Getting outside can also help to replenish your vitamin D levels.



HEALTH & FITNESS





# WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE FOOTBALL POOLS?

Back in 1961, Viv Nicholson won more than £152,000 (around £3.5million in today's money) on the football pools. She promised to "spend, spend, spend". And that's what she did, splurging on luxuries like a pink Cadillac and exotic holidays before the money dried up.

The pools were launched 100 years ago this month, and in its heyday, 14 million people took part each week, hoping to win a fortune. Here's how it all started.

Football became increasingly popular in the years after the First World War, but betting on match results was illegal.

Liverpudlian telegraph operator Sir John Moores CBE, eager to make money, heard about a system devised by John Jervis Barnard from Birmingham. The idea was that punters bet on the outcome of matches, with the winnings coming from the 'pool' of money gambled – minus 10 per cent to cover 'management costs'.

But Barnard's business was failing. Moores and two of his friends reckoned they could do better and started distributing coupons outside Manchester United's football ground. To take part, punters had to predict 'score draws' – games that would end in a draw with at least one goal. Because Moores claimed it was a game of skill and only accepted postal orders, not cash, he managed to get around strict gambling laws.

At first, the new company lost money, and Moores' friends gave up. But Moores' wife said she'd "rather be married to a man haunted by failure than one haunted by regret". So Moores carried on – and less than a decade later had earned £1million (£82million in today's money).

Moores, who was knighted in 1980, died aged 97 in 1993. A year later, the National Lottery was set up, and the popularity of the pools faded. While you can still play the game online, there are now easier ways to dream big – without predicting football scores.

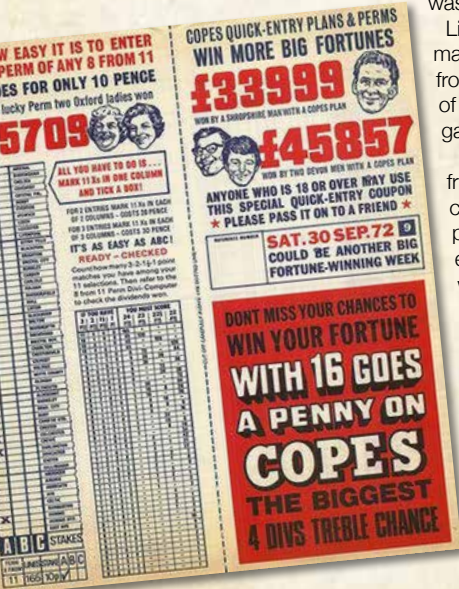


Photo credit: onlinebetting.org.uk/betting-guides/football/the-football-pools



# BULLSEYE



ENGLISHMAN MICHAEL SMITH BECOMES DARTS WORLD CHAMPION AFTER PLAYING HIS PART IN THE GREATEST LEG OF DARTS EVER SEEN

They say that to be the best, you have to beat the best, and Michael Smith's elevation to world number one – as he took the 2023 world title in January – certainly made true that statement.

Not only did he see off three-time champion Michael van Gerwen at Alexandra Palace in a memorable final, but he also gave the sport what is being described as the most memorable leg of them all.

It came during the second set, and saw two of the sport's titans begin by scoring treble-20 maximums. The next throws also saw the players hit their respective trebles, setting up each on a legendary nine-dart finish. Van Gerwen went first, knocking off treble 20 twice, before faltering on double 12.

With the crowd barely able to reset, Smith stepped up – taking the more conventional nine-dart finish route of treble 20, treble 19, then nailing the double 12, for arguably the most amazing leg of darts in the competition's 29-year history. Smith seized the momentum, rallying thereafter to take the title 7-4 in sets.

While 'Bully Boy', from St Helens, is excelling in what is a modern, showbiz era of professional darts – with packed arenas, primetime TV billing and a semi-celebrity status for the game's major stars – Smith epitomises something reassuringly old school about the sport. He is a 'larger' man, is adorned with tattoos, and reassuringly doesn't possess any of the media training associated with those in other sports.

For example, having come through his semi-final with Belgian Gabriel Clemens, Smith revealed that he'd spend most mornings during the tournament in bed watching repeats of *Catchphrase* and *Supermarket Sweep*.

What's clear, though, is that when the evening comes around, the only programming on display was three decades of dedication to his craft, where laser-like hand-to-eye coordination has made the 32 year old the best darts player in the world.

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