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LIST
2024**

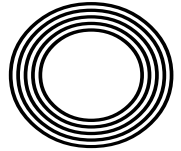
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SWEET EMBRACE
Dulux Colour of the Year 2024

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for adrenaline junkies in the New Year

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Photo credit: Channel 4/Dave King



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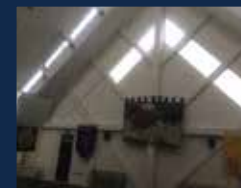


AFTER

AFTER



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER



Editor's notes...

DECEMBER 2023



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** LeighThorpeBay. Recently, I had an eye-opening conversation at a local networking event. As we discussed our respective businesses, it struck me just how impactful our print editions have been over the years.

Since the launch of our very first **VISION** magazine in Brentwood back in June 2016, we've embarked on an incredible journey. Today, we proudly publish 14 monthly editions across Essex and East Herts.

These 14 editions combined boast a monthly print run of more than 91,000 copies.

But, when I reflected on the bigger picture, I couldn't help but be amazed. Since 2016, we've put our heart and soul into this venture, and the numbers tell an incredible story: more than five million copies printed! I'm particularly proud that our magazines are 100 per cent recyclable.

In a world increasingly dominated by digital content, this impressive figure is a testament to the enduring power of high-quality printed media. There's still a place at the table for the tactile, the tangible, and the timeless. I hope you enjoy reading this month's edition... and have a very merry Christmas!

Nik Allen

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The harmonic voice of ALED JONES

From the almost impossibly angelic beginnings of teenaged Aled Jones MBE's first steps into the limelight, the Welshman has forged a career well beyond *Walking in the Air* and the limitations of chorister melodies.

Now 52, the presenter and actor has presence and popularity... and retains the ability to knock out a chorus or two!

Aled Jones was the 15 year old with the pitch-perfect voice whose icy vocal tones enchanted the public when Raymond Briggs' *The Snowman* was released back in 1982.

Walking in the Air was a track that became a festive anthem every bit as perfect and poignant as *White Christmas* or *Jingle Bells*, sitting as a symbol of childhood enchantment for an entire generation.

While others have confronted fame early, only for it to fade away, this was just the start for Jones. In adulthood, he gained acclaim hosting programmes such as *Songs of Praise*, where his likeable persona and warm, engaging demeanour endeared him to audiences.

In radio, Jones found a different but equally impactful avenue for his talents. As a presenter on Classic FM, he has brought the genre to a broader audience, with a tone that's knowledgeable yet approachable.

The star, who is married to Claire Fossett with whom he has two children, Emilia and Lucas, has also presented *Cash in the Attic*, *The One Show*, *Daybreak* and *Weekend* on terrestrial television.

Despite such a prolific and diverse array of work, Jones still strives to capture new audiences – as well as satisfying his loyal fans – and his latest musical endeavour is arguably his most innovative yet.

The Welsh singer recently released an album, *One Voice – Full Circle*, that transcends mere songs; indeed, it harmonises both his past and the present in that he duets with his younger soprano self.

The result is a hauntingly beautiful collection of tracks that showcases the evolution of an artist, proving beyond doubt that the singer has lost none of his talent along the way. From *Bright Eyes* to *Ave Maria* and *Scarborough Fair*, the mix of innovation and imagination is real.

"This project was like a journey through my own life – revisiting the voice that introduced me to the world, but with the perspective I have now," he explains. "It's a celebration of how far I've come and the enduring love I have for music."

Looking ahead, Jones, who appeared on *The Masked Singer* in 2022, is set to embark on a tour next year to promote the new project.

"Music is a very personal thing to a lot of people, and most of us listen to music by ourselves, and that is a lovely thing because it feeds our own interpretation and imagination in what we hear.

"Ultimately, though," he continues, "when the time comes to share songs and immerse ourselves in the collective celebration of music, we reach much further into our understanding, and from that can draw out very special memories.

"That's the thing that keeps me coming back!"

Photo credit: Ken McKay/TV/Shutterstock

THE ULTIMATE FESTIVE FLICKS

TAKING A LOOK AT THE TOP FIVE HIGHEST-GROSSING CHRISTMAS FILMS OF ALL TIME

Christmas movies have long been a staple of holiday cheer, embodying the spirit of warmth, family and festive joy. Many films have graced the silver screen, but a select few have transcended typical holiday fare to become phenomenal box office successes.

(All figures adjusted for inflation)

ONE: HOME ALONE (1990)

Box office takings: £1.1billion

Kevin McCallister, a mischievous and resourceful eight-year-old, is accidentally left behind by his family during Christmas vacation and turns his home into a fortress to fend off bumbling burglars.

This family comedy, starring Macaulay Culkin, blends slapstick humour and holiday warmth, becoming a perennial favourite and the highest-grossing Christmas film ever.

TWO: HOME ALONE 2: LOST IN NEW YORK (1992)

Box office takings: £915.95million

The sequel to the original hit follows Kevin as he mistakenly boards a flight to New York while his family heads to Florida. In the Big Apple, he again encounters his previous assailants and must outwit them in this hilarious, uplifting adventure.

THREE: DR SEUSS' HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS (2000)

Box office takings: £587million

This live-action adaptation brings the whimsical world of Dr. Seuss to life. Jim Carrey's portrayal of the Grinch offers a perfect blend of comedy and emotion, exploring the true meaning of Christmas beyond the commercial frenzy.

FOUR: A CHRISTMAS CAROL (2009)

Box office takings: £552million

This animated rendition of Charles Dickens' timeless classic uses state-of-the-art motion capture technology. It narrates the tale of Ebenezer Scrooge's transformation from a miser to a kind-hearted man after being visited by three supernatural beings on Christmas Eve.

FIVE: THE GRINCH (2018)

Box office takings: £544million

Illumination's 2018 adaptation of Dr Seuss' classic tale reimagines the iconic green recluse with a heart two sizes too small. Voiced by Benedict Cumberbatch, the Grinch's journey from a Christmas-hating hermit to a holiday hero has charmed audiences worldwide.

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HOME & DIY

Dulux Colour of the Year 2024 Sweet Embrace



This is one of the most greatly anticipated announcements in the world of interior design: Dulux Colour of the Year 2024 has been revealed as Sweet Embrace.

What colour is Sweet Embrace?

Sweet Embrace is a delicate pale pink that is both soft and comforting. A metamer colour, meaning it changes tone with the light, in the early morning it appears crisper before turning into a more blush pink as the day goes on. Referred to as a 'modern neutral', Sweet Embrace can help to unite the different elements in a room and create an uplifting atmosphere.

Why was Sweet Embrace chosen?

This colour was chosen by the experts at Dulux as a shade that represents the global mood and a universal need for clarity and joy. Marianne Shillingford, colour expert and creative director at Dulux, said: "While being a beautiful stand-alone colour, it's a hue that matches perfectly with so many other shades, so that decorators can use it as

a backdrop to build a totally individual space upon."

Ways to use Sweet Embrace in your home

- 1 Paint your window frames**
As a metamer colour, Sweet Embrace is a perfect colour choice for painting your window frames, enabling you to capture its light-changing qualities throughout the day.
- 2 Colour-drench a room**
Colour-drenching involves drenching a whole room in one shade to create a sense of calm cohesion. This means painting all the surfaces rather than just the walls, and it can make a room appear more spacious and contemporary.
- 3 Update your woodwork**
This versatile shade is ideal for use as an alternative to white to update the woodwork in a room, such as the skirting boards and door frames.
- 4 Embrace the ombre paint technique**
Ombre is making a big comeback in 2024 and, as a neutral colour, Sweet Embrace has the ability to seamlessly blend into other soft shades to create a stunning sunset effect.

Photo credit: duluxdecoratorcentre.co.uk, AkzoNobel



Midas Touch

ADDING A TOUCH OF GOLDEN GLAMOUR TO YOUR HOME THE AFFORDABLE WAY

Looking to add a touch of contemporary sparkle and charm to your Christmas decor? You're in for a treat! In this DIY project, we'll show you how to transform plain glass vases, jars and votives into dazzling gold masterpieces. The best part? You don't need any special skills, though a steady hand is useful! And it's an ideal project to do with older children.

Get ready YOU WILL NEED:

Gold foil sheets | Gold foil adhesive | Adhesive brush | A large brush (like a powder brush) for removing excess gold foil | Small glasses or votives (make sure they're clean and dry – washing-up liquid and a piece of dry kitchen towel should do the trick).

All these items are available online or in most arts and crafts shops.

Apply the adhesive

Carefully apply the gold foil adhesive to the areas on your glasses where you want the gold foil to stick. The adhesive will need some time to become tacky.

The time can vary with different makes, so follow the instructions on the packaging carefully.

Apply the foil

Once the adhesive is tacky, apply the foil directly from the paper it comes on. Press the sheet onto the glass where you've applied the adhesive. Then, carefully remove the paper backing, leaving the gold foil attached to the glass. If necessary, use your fingers to smooth it out.

Brush away excess and leave to dry

Using the large brush, remove any excess gold foil and let your decorated objects dry for a few hours. For extra protection, you can seal them with a suitable clear sealant or varnish specially made for glass and delicate surfaces – following the manufacturer's instructions.

Once complete, fill your glass items with a candle, fairy lights, flowers, winter twigs or pine cones. Sit back, admire your creations, or consider giving them as gifts to help spread the festive feeling.

Photo credit: giffenquid.net/files.wordpress

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CARE *for your* SPARE



HOME & DIY

Having a spare room is a luxury. If you're lucky enough to have one, but it needs some TLC, see our tips below for how you can revive it before your next guests arrive.

A COMFY BED: Sleep for a night on your existing spare room bed to check if it's okay for your guests. If it isn't, but you can't afford a replacement, get a new mattress or mattress topper.

SOMEWHERE TO WRITE: Every guest room needs a work surface of some kind to use as a dressing table or desk. If space is tight, think about a drop-down version or even a thigh-level wide shelf.

THE PERFECT CHAIR: A big armchair is a lovely idea if you've got the space. If you haven't, choose a compact version and add some inviting cushions.

HANG IT UP: Hanging space is more useful than a chest of drawers. If there's no space for a wardrobe, get some coat hooks or a clothes rail. A rail with a shelf is ideal.

SOFT, WARM LIGHTING: A good bedside lamp is essential. A slim, unobtrusive floor lamp is also a great addition.

MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE WALL: A good-sized mirror, preferably full-length, is a fundamental element for a spare room.

SAVVY SUITCASE STORAGE: Your guests will want somewhere to easily access their bags. Foldable luggage racks are great and can be hidden away when not in use.

FINAL TOUCHES: A rubbish bin is always practical for any guest room – but choose something pretty. And don't forget a carafe of water. Add seasonal decorations such as fairy lights at Christmas; Easter eggs for spring; low-maintenance green plants like snake plants, succulents and orchids in summer; and pumpkins for Halloween.





INTERIOR DESIGN PROFILE

MADDUX CREATIVE



Sophisticated, playful, beautiful. That's how Maddux Creative describes its decorative style. Full of life and colour, each space it creates is unique, with designs that have won acclaim all over the world.

If you love bold colours, patterns and textures, then Maddux Creative will serve as the perfect inspiration to bring your interior aspirations to life.

THE STORY BEHIND MADDUX CREATIVE

Maddux Creative is run by Scott Maddux, originally from Tennessee, and Jo Le Gleud from the UK. They met on a dancefloor in the 1990s, and brought their shared creative experience together in 2011 when they founded their Peckham-based studio.

The pair describe their work as "an alchemy of design: an intricate tapestry of form and texture. A celebration of colour." Throughout their designs it's clear that these elements are central, using the features of the room to create spaces that are striking and unique. They take inspiration from a range of influences, which keeps things wonderfully refreshing.

RECREATING MADDUX CREATIVE'S STYLE

What's great about Maddux Creative's aesthetic is that there are no set rules, allowing you to recreate

their style in your own home. Some tips to give you a dash of inspiration include:

- > Be brave with colours and textures. Mixing and matching styles can add a quirky touch that keeps spaces fun and unique, so choose the pieces that you're drawn to and which reflect your personal style. Popular colour combinations include pinks and greens, blues and yellows, and reds with greys or gold.
- > Tonal looks can make a striking impression. Choose a solid base colour such as blue or green and add lighter/darker accents in the same shade – using furniture and accessories in different shades to create a multilayered look.
- > Plants and flowers add life and can make your space feel more lived-in – an affordable way to transform your decor.
- > Floral patterns add a classic touch that still feels modern in the right setting. From patterned lampshades to tapestries and cushions, you can use florals or stripes to add some individual touches that will bring the different styles in your space together.

Wonderfully unique and making colour popular again, Maddux Creative provides the perfect inspiration to go bold and have fun with your interior design.

Photo credit: madduxcreative.com



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LOCAL FEATURE

'Essex has always been a part of who I am'



Photo credit: BBC/ Jack Barnes/ Kieron McCarron

While Adam Woodyatt owes much to his long-standing role as Ian Beale in the BBC soap opera *EastEnders*, we reveal why the actor likes to heap equal praise on the influences of his childhood, and in particular, his time spent in Essex.

Adam Woodyatt was born in Walthamstow in 1968. Although the Victoria Line suburb had renounced its ties with Essex three years previously, the outgoing schoolboy would soak up the influences of Chingford and South Woodford in his early life.

Perhaps it is an appreciation for that simple 1970s suburban upbringing – Woodyatt attended Forest School in Epping Forest, before the family relocated to Wales – that permeated so perfectly into his authentic portrayal of the rugged, pessimistic businessman Ian Beale.

"Essex has always been a part of who I am," he begins. "It's in my blood and has significantly shaped my approach to life and acting. I love its honesty!"

The actor, who is half Welsh, frequently travelled to London for castings as an aspiring young actor, and was working as a butcher when the call to join *EastEnders* came. Since 1985, his portrayal of Beale has captivated viewers, and his return to Albert Square this year excited fans.

"Ian is hapless in many ways, though ultimately always trying to do the right thing, and I think there's a fair amount of that in me too," says the actor, who recently volunteered to work in a fish and chip shop in Southend-on-Sea to pass the time.

Beyond the confines of Albert Square (and serving up cod), Woodyatt's versatile talent has illuminated stage and television screen alike. And recently, his stint away from full-time acting has offered the star the chance to tour his native Essex... in a camper van, no less!

He said: "Feeling free, getting on the road, and hunting out all those childhood places of old, has been a magical ride for me, and one I want to continue taking."



An ancient structure of remarkable history

Discover Greensted Church in Ongar, a unique hidden gem with a story that spans more than 1,000 years.

Celebrated as the world's oldest wooden church, its walls have stood for more than a millennium, offering a glimpse into the early periods of English Christian heritage.

Tracing its origins to the ninth century, the church's earliest timbers, dating to around 1060, mark it as a distinguished survivor from before the Norman Conquest. These timbers, visible even today, underscore the church's enduring presence and historical significance.

Originally a modest structure, perhaps built for a Saxon nobleman, Greensted Church has evolved through the centuries. It bears the marks of various architectural styles and religious practices that have influenced its design over time.

The church's walls, crafted from vertically set split oak trunks in a technique known

as 'stave construction', are particularly noteworthy. This method is complemented by the 19th-century brick chancel and Victorian restorations, together presenting a harmonious blend of various historical periods.

Greensted Church's connection to St Edmund, the martyred king of East Anglia, further elevates its historical importance. As the site where his body reputedly rested in 1013 en route to burial, the church has long been a focal point for pilgrimage and reflection.

More than a religious site, Greensted Church stands as a cultural beacon, embodying the continuity of faith and community. It serves as a serene witness to the evolving landscape and societal changes surrounding it.

Venturing into this sacred space, visitors are transported beyond the confines of the present. Each step within its walls is a journey through time, connecting the present to a past that remains vibrantly alive. Greensted Church is not just an architectural marvel; it's a living narrative of faith's resilience and the understated elegance of history.



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YOUR LOCAL EVENTS



WHAT'S ON

MANDALA POT & PANSY WORKSHOP

Create98, 98 Broadway, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 1AB
Tuesday, December 12, 7pm – 9pm



Photo credit: LoveDotting

Love Dotting Mandala Workshops is offering guests the chance to learn how to decorate plant pots in the style of a dotted mandala. Each visitor will take home a beautifully adorned pot and a pansy to go inside.

All materials are provided and coffee and cake will be available.

Tickets cost £35 from www.create98.co.uk/event/mandala-pot-pansy

TENNIS CLUB CHRISTMAS PARTY

Thorpe Bay Lawn Tennis Club,
Thorpe Bay Gardens, Thorpe Bay, SS1 3HL
Thursday, December 14, 6.30pm

Thorpe Bay Lawn Tennis Club are hosting a Christmas party including a three-course meal, live entertainment from a saxophonist and a DJ. Bring your dancing shoes!

Tickets cost £38 and can be booked by calling 01702 585245 or emailing admin@tbltc.co.uk

AOIFE'S BUBBLES CHARITY CHRISTMAS MOVIE MORNING AND AFTERNOON

Leigh North Street School, 23 Canonsleigh Crescent, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 1RJ
Saturday, December 16, 9am – 5pm

Aoife's Bubbles Charity is hosting a family-friendly day of festivities including glitter tattoos, a workshop on letters to Santa, arts and crafts, and refreshments.

Two movies will also be shown on the day: *The Stickman* at 10am and *The Polar Express* at 2pm.

Tickets for each screening cost £3, while the other activities on offer will incur a small extra cost. Find out more at www.bit.ly/4700aAH

NAVARRO @ THE BROADWAY

The Broadway, 12 Broadway,
Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 1AW
Saturday, December 30, 8.30pm
Come on down to The Broadway to catch Navarro covering some of the best rock, pop and party anthems out there!

No tickets or booking required.

NEW YEAR'S EVE GALA DINNER

Thorpe Hall Golf Club, Thorpe Hall Avenue,
Thorpe Bay, SS1 3AT

Sunday, December 31, 7.15pm

Guests are invited to a five-course meal at Thorpe Hall Golf Club, featuring a live eight-piece band. The menu includes prawn and crab bisque, rack of lamb, and black forest roulade.

Tickets cost £95 per person and can be booked by calling 01702 582205.

BEGINNERS MOSAIC COURSE

Mrs Mosaic Studios, 101 Tankerville Drive,
Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3DB

Thursday, January 18; Thursday, January 25;
and Thursday, February 1, 2pm – 5pm

Join Mrs Mosaic for a beginner's course in mosaic making, where you will be introduced to the wonderful world of arts and crafts. Learn how to make a colour wheel, grout coasters, cut pieces and learn the necessary skills to create your own mosaic creations.

The course takes place over three, three-hour sessions from 2pm to 5pm on January 18, January 25 and February 1.

Tickets cost £70 for the three sessions. Book your place at www.mrsmosaicart.co.uk/events/beginners-mosaic-course



Photo credit: Mrs Mosaic

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The magic of **MERLIN**

FIRST DATES BARMAN MERLIN GRIFFITHS HAS A RENEWED TASTE FOR LIFE

It's perhaps slightly crass to state that many a romantic liaison has been made comfortable with the aid of an alcoholic loosener, but the evidence is there in pubs, bars and restaurants the length and breadth of the country, every day of every week.

One dining space in particular – that of the *First Dates* restaurant – has used the expertise of a master mixologist to great effect. This responsibility fell to Merlin Griffiths, who this year celebrated a decade on our screens.

“The time has flown by in a haze of romantic splendence,” jokes the 48 year old. “I’ve seen thousands of people pass through, and it’s a thrill to witness a happy ending.”

And many there have been – a recent study found that three per cent of first dates ended in marriage, with the Channel 4 show boasting numerous weddings and even the patter of tiny footsteps.

As the trusty barman charged with easing the nerves of hopeful romantics, Griffiths – who has a wife, Lucile, and young child – knows his role is significant; though as a pub owner himself, he is used to the responsibility bestowed on a good host.

“It’s an underrated occupation, I think. It’s a job that requires you to be present, engaging, interesting, knowledgeable on a wide range of subjects and, on occasion, firm with how punters are behaving! There are also extreme antisocial hours and it’s a physical job where you’re always on your feet, but I love it.”

Griffiths’ sense of perseverance was put to the test in 2021 when the *First Dates* barman was diagnosed with bowel cancer. He underwent surgery and recently celebrated the milestone of a year ‘all clear’.

“It has been a tough road, but one I am now emerging from. While there have been some very sombre moments in there, what the experience has done is to reinforce in me a desire to appreciate everything around me, to fight, and to achieve.”

Treatment has meant Griffiths has been unable to engage in one of his favourite hobbies. A keen cyclist, he previously completed the John O’Groats to Land’s End cycle ride in nine days. Many years ago, before his big break, he was a cycle courier in London.

“I love cycling” he comments. “It was a great way to stay fit, but you were taking your life in your hands on a daily basis.”

“Dealing with a rowdy pub customer or a feuding couple of *First Dates* seems tame in comparison!”

Griffiths’ taste for innovation was played out at Royal Ascot last year when he launched the first no-alcohol bar.

He’s also set his ambitious sights on opening a new pub, The Dog & Gun in Walton, which is expected to open soon.

He says: “It seems to be a time when opportunities are coming along, and for the first time in a couple of years I can fully commit to them.”

“I am lucky that I work in an industry that will always be here. We are social creatures – certainly in this country! – and there’s nothing better than watching people converse and interact.”

To keep up to date with everything Merlin is up to and ship his bar kits, visit www.merlingriffiths.com



new year monthly GARDENING CALENDAR

- January**
 - Plan and prepare for the year ahead.
 - Take stock of inventory (seeds, pots, etc) and assess your garden layout.
 - Put out water and seeds for the birds.
- February**
 - Start sowing seeds indoors, such as tomatoes, peppers and aubergines.
 - Add compost or organic matter to your garden soil.
- March**
 - Sow cool-season crops such as lettuce, spinach, carrots and beetroots directly in your garden.
 - Protect tender plants from late frosts.
 - Clean and tidy your greenhouse.
- April**
 - Transplant seedlings that require a longer growing season, such as tomatoes, peppers and herbs.
 - Plant perennial flowers and pot-grown fruits, such as strawberries.
 - Turn over the soil in your garden to loosen compaction.
- May**
 - Regularly water your garden and apply mulch around your plants to conserve water and stop weeds.
 - Use bedding plants to fill your garden with colour.
- June**
 - Monitor your garden for weeds and remove them.
 - Regularly fertilise your plants with organic fertiliser.
 - Water and mow your lawn frequently.
- July**
 - Water your plants deeply and less frequently.
 - Monitor plants for aphids and spider mites.
 - De-head bedding plants.
- August**
 - Harvest your summer crops, preserving excess produce through canning, freezing or drying.
 - Start planning your autumn garden by removing spent plants and amending the soil.
- September**
 - Directly sow seeds of salad greens, rocket and Swiss chard.
 - Harvest mature summer crops.
- October**
 - Prepare your garden for winter by harvesting the remaining autumn crops, removing any debris and dead plants and adding compost or organic matter to replenish nutrients.
 - Trim and shape your hedges.
- November**
 - Clear up fallen leaves, especially from lawns, ponds and beds.
 - Plant tulip bulbs for a spring display next year.
 - Wrap young plants and trees to protect them from frost.
- December**
 - Reflect on your year's gardening journey and plan for the year ahead.
 - Order seeds and supplies for the year to ensure you have everything you need.

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GARDENING

DRAIN ME!

Is your garden flailing rather than flourishing? If yes, this could be because you have not implemented a good drainage system. Essential for preventing waterlogged soil, erosion and unhealthy plant growth, here's how to improve the drainage in your garden.



SPIKE YOUR LAWN

If the soil in your lawn becomes compacted, then this can cause winter waterlogging. To prevent this from happening, spike or aerate the soil so that rainwater can flow down into the ground more easily. This can be carried out with either a garden fork or a lawn aerator tool.



GROW MORE PLANTS

One of the simplest ways to improve the drainage in your garden is by growing more plants. For best results, plant vegetation that is compatible with your soil type. For example, some hydrangea species are great for regulating wet soils, while clay soil benefits from species such as geranium.



BUILD RAISED BEDS

Raised beds that are made from either bricks or timber provide a great solution to poor garden drainage and offer a much better environment than the boggy earth below. Make sure you fill them with lots of quality, free-draining topsoil to help your plants thrive.



CREATE YOUR OWN COMPOST

Soil that has high organic matter content is better for drainage as it allows excess water to easily drain through it. By creating your own compost, you can have unlimited access to organic matter that is perfectly suited to your garden and its soil.



INCORPORATE SLOPING SURFACES

Surface water is a problem in many gardens but can be easily managed with the use of sloping surfaces. For example, you could combine steps and raised beds, create depth with tiered planters, or arrange large slabs of rocks to help direct water.



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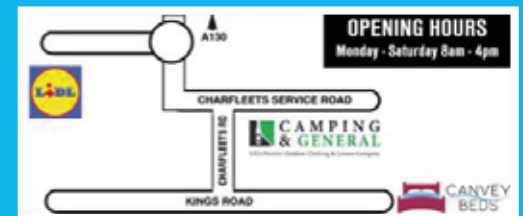
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PUZZLES & TRIVIA

PUZZLES

Answers: see end of The VISION Listings

ACROSS

- 1. Object that gives out heat (8)
- 5. Capital of Norway (4)
- 9. One side of a gem (5)
- 10. Guilty person (7)
- 11. Unfriendly (12)
- 13. In a careless manner (6)
- 14. Requesting (6)
- 17. Importance (12)
- 20. Flexible athlete (7)
- 21. Show triumphant joy (5)
- 22. Obstacle (4)
- 23. Formal curse by a pope (8)

DOWN

- 1. Crack (4)
- 2. Propriety and modesty (7)
- 3. Relating to horoscopes (12)
- 4. Hold a position or job (6)
- 6. Small woody plant (5)
- 7. Be heavier than (8)
- 8. First part of the Bible (3,9)
- 12. Corridors (8)
- 15. Have as a part (7)
- 16. Heed (6)

1		2		3		4		5	6		7
							8				
9						10					
	11										
12											
13						14			15		
						16					
17		18									
										19	
20								21			
22						23					

- 18. Third Greek letter (5)
- 19. Volcano in Sicily (4)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Reindeer hooves are specifically adapted for their environment. The cloven shape spreads their weight more evenly, helping them to walk across snow and soft ground, while their sharp edges provide traction in icy conditions.
- ▶ Some types of reindeer do actually have red noses as a result of densely packed blood vessels, which help to regulate their body temperature.
- ▶ In spring, reindeer sometimes form super-herds of 50,000 to 500,000.
- ▶ Reindeer fur is hollow, helping to trap air and providing insulation to stay warm. This also makes them excellent swimmers.
- ▶ Reindeer migrate an average of 12 to 34 miles per day, travelling as much as 3,100 miles each year in their search for food.

SUDOKU

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



BEAUTY

PROTECT your locks

NINE TOP TIPS TO WINTERPROOF YOUR HAIR THROUGH THIS COLD SEASON

Winter can challenge your haircare routine before you know it, with cold temperatures and harsh conditions transforming your silky tresses into a dry, tangled mess. But it doesn't have to be like that. Follow these tips to keep your hair looking healthy and vibrant all season long.

1. **Wear a hat:** Cold weather can damage your hair, so when it's chilly, wear a hat with a soft lining.
2. **Cut back on shampooing:** Daily shampooing removes natural oils, so aim to shampoo your hair no more than two or three times a week.
3. **Dry your hair before going out:** Wet hair can freeze and break in cold weather, so always make sure your hair is dry before stepping outside.
4. **Eat a balanced diet:** Foods rich in vitamin C (e.g. citrus and berries) and omega-3 fatty acids (e.g. salmon and walnuts) will help keep your hair healthy.
5. **Limit heat styling:** Tools like curling tongs and

straighteners can dry out your hair. In winter, try embracing the natural look or, if you've got long hair, experiment with braids and buns. You might be pleasantly surprised by your styling skills!

6. **Tame the frizz:** Use a laundry dryer sheet to smooth pesky static flyaways.
7. **Use nourishing products:** Winter is the time to indulge in good-quality moisturising conditioners, hair masks and oils.
8. **Avoid bleach:** Many hair dyes, particularly blonde shades, can seriously dry out your hair. So think about going natural for the winter – or choose a darker shade.
9. **Stay hydrated:** Drinking plenty of water will keep your hair hydrated, making it shinier and less prone to breakage.

Winter doesn't have to mean bad hair days. With these straightforward tips, you can keep your hair healthy and glowing all season, whatever the weather.





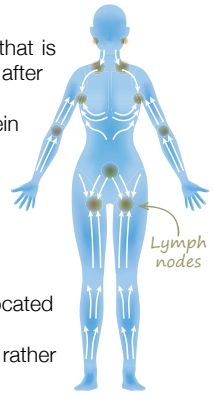
A guide to LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE MASSAGE

A gentle form of massage that is used to remove toxins from your body and improve circulation and blood flow, lymphatic drainage massage is becoming increasingly popular among people looking to reverse the effects of a poor lifestyle.

WHAT IS LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE MASSAGE USED FOR?

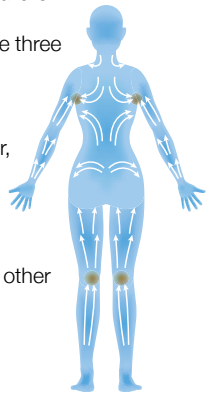
Lymphatic drainage massage is used to relieve painful swelling in the arms and legs that is caused by lymphoedema. This type of massage is often used to relieve lymphoedema after breast cancer surgery, but it can be beneficial for other conditions, including: Rheumatoid arthritis | Fibromyalgia | Chronic venous insufficiency | Lipoedema | Deep vein thrombosis

More recently, lymphatic drainage massage has become popular as a cellulite-busting treatment owing to its ability to boost the stimulation of lymph circulation. It can also be used to improve digestion, aid sleep, and support faster muscle recovery after exercise.



HOW DO YOU PERFORM LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE MASSAGE?

- 1. Use a light touch:** Be careful not to press too hard as the lymphatic vessels are located right under the skin.
- 2. Stretch the skin:** Unlike most other types of massage, you should stretch the skin rather than move along it.
- 3. Massage with the normal lymph flow:** To stimulate natural flow, make sure you are massaging towards your trunk and heart.
- 4. Go slow:** As you massage the lymph vessels, make sure you do so slowly. Ideally, take three seconds to perform each stretch.



WHERE ON THE BODY CAN YOU DO LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE MASSAGE?

Most commonly, this type of massage is carried out on the legs or the arms. However, it can be performed all over the body, including on the neck, shoulders, chest and stomach area.

ARE THERE ANY ASSOCIATED RISKS?

In most cases, lymphatic drainage massage is a safe treatment for lymphoedema and other health concerns. However, you should not undergo this treatment if you have: A heart condition | Blood clots | Kidney failure | An infection
If you are pregnant, speak to your doctor before undergoing this treatment.

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Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital has a dedicated endoscopy unit that performs a wide range of camera-led procedures to investigate and therapeutically treat conditions.

Why choose Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital for your endoscopic treatment?

The endoscopy unit is home to a team of expert consultants who have many years' experience performing endoscopy procedures.

Following a referral from your GP, your consultant will make arrangements for your procedure in endoscopy. Your dedicated consultant will be with you throughout your treatment journey, ensuring everything goes smoothly.

Endoscopic procedures are performed as day cases, so you won't need to stay overnight. As a day case patient, you will have access to the new Endoscopy Day Unit which will offer you:

- Brand new facility, enhancing the patient journey
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- A dedicated team of Endoscopy nurses

- Reduced time in hospital
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- Most procedures are carried out under sedation or local anaesthetic. Your consultant will discuss the options with you as well as any pre-operation instructions to follow.

Typical endoscopic procedures that are carried out at Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital include:

- Colonoscopy
- Gastroscopy
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy
- Flexible cystoscopy
- Paediatric gastroscopies and colonoscopies

The paediatric gastroscopies and colonoscopies are carried out under general anaesthetic in the operating theatre. In addition to the theatre and endoscopy teams, there is a dedicated paediatric nurse present for these procedures.



Don't put your life on hold

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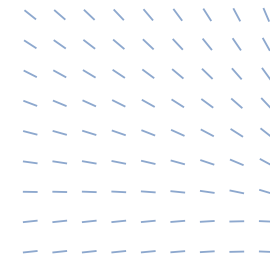
At Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital our experienced general surgeons specialise in a range of diagnostic and repair procedures. They are experts in their field and can provide rapid access to treatment.

Why choose Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital for your general surgery?

Whether you are seeking results from a diagnostic procedure or looking at treatment options to remove a painful hernia, our team of experienced general surgeons at Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital are experts in their field, providing you with rapid access to a personalised treatment plan.

Some of the general surgery treatments available in Brentwood Hospital include:

- ◆ Appendix removal
- ◆ Colonoscopy
- ◆ Flexible sigmoidoscopy
- ◆ Gall bladder removal
- ◆ Gastroscopy
- ◆ Haemorrhoid removal
- ◆ Hernia repair
- ◆ Thyroid surgery
- ◆ Varicose vein surgery
- ◆ Weight loss surgery.



For any enquiries, to book an initial consultation or to request more information, please contact the dedicated hospital enquiry team at Nuffield Health Brentwood Hospital on 01702 898 036.

Website: www.nuffieldhealth.com/hospitals/brentwood

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 16th Bluewater
 18th Essex Countryside with lunch
 20th Crafting at Sandown
 23rd Museum of the Home
 26th Ardingly Quilt Festival
 27th Norwich

- FEBRUARY**
 3rd Saffron Waldon on Market Day
 8th Horniman Museum
 11th Birmingham International Tattoo
 13th Gainsborough & afternoon tea
 14th Anglesey Abbey Snowdrops
 15th Bluewater shopper
 20th Natural History Museum
 20th Science Museum
 20th Victoria & Albert Museum
 22nd Tower of London
 24th Chippenham Park Snowdrops
 28th Ruxley Manor Garden Centre

- MARCH**
 2nd Norwich
 5th Polhill
 6th Ardingly
 7th Cambridge
 7th Ely
 9th Crufts
 10th Bicester
 11th Epping on market day
 14th Mystery Tour
 17th Festival of Railway Modelling
 18th Essex Countryside with lunch
 19th Milton Keynes
 20th Hever Castle
 21st & 22nd Stitch Festival
 22nd & 26th Ideal Home Show
 24th Columbia Road Flower Market
 26th Bluewater
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 29th Canterbury
 30th Brighton
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 15th Mar Emmerdale weekend - 3 days £275
 18th Mar Bournemouth - 5 days £398
 18th Mar Warners Lakeside - 5 days £260
 25th Mar Eastbourne - 5 days £445
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Patagonia



Iceland



The Dolomites

For many, the thrill of going on holiday is enough. For a proportion of others, though, it's only half the attraction, and venturing away from home to push levels of bravery and bravado is much more the ticket. With that in mind, then, here are four all-adventure destinations for dynamic daredevils to tick off their bucket list.

ONE: Patagonia. Split between Argentina and Chile, Patagonia is a huge area that surrounds the Andes mountain range, showcasing everything from National Parks to glaciers, hikes, caves and volcanoes. Combining staggering natural beauty with all the risk and reward of different landscapes and a very different culture, going off-piste in Patagonia could just be the most daredevil thing you can do.

TWO: Iceland. A country of extremes, Iceland is as beautiful as it is challenging, and many adventurers cannot resist the urge to hike and climb around glaciers, waterfalls, geysers and volcanoes. While dealing with the ice or diving deep into the Silfra fissure is a thrill a minute, it's also rewarding to hire a car and venture off on the Iceland Ring Road (also known as Route 1) – an 800-mile highway that circles the country.

THREE: The Dolomites. We associate Italy with relaxing, restorative experiences around great food and passionate people, yet the Dolomites – and a vast array of climbing, mountain-biking and hiking options – will take you off the beaten track, inviting you to test your mettle against some punishing terrain. The rewards for adventure seekers are stunning views and crisp-clean air.

FOUR: South Africa. We know Cape Town as a beautiful, cultural city, but it also has a reputation as an adventure junkie hotspot, with surfing, abseiling (off Table Mountain, no less), diving with great white sharks and a prevalence of gyrocopter aircraft flights that can be taken as a way of enjoying the area's stunning coastline.





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how to make MELTING SNOWMEN BISCUITS

If you're after a tempting but simple festive cookie to make this Christmas, look no further than these cute melting snowmen biscuits. They taste delicious and are a great way to involve kids in the kitchen – but be prepared to get sticky! The below recipe makes 10 biscuits.

YOU WILL NEED:

For the biscuits: 100g butter | 100g caster sugar | ½ tsp vanilla extract | ½ a beaten egg (about 2 tbsps) | 200g plain flour (and a bit extra)

For decorating: 10 standard white marshmallows (not the mini ones) | 100g icing sugar | A tube of black writing icing | Some ready-to-roll orange fondant icing | Chocolate beans

HOW TO MAKE THE BISCUITS:

- Heat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6 and line a baking tray with parchment paper.
- In a large bowl, beat the butter and sugar together till smooth using a wooden spoon. Then beat in the vanilla extract, egg and finally the flour to make a dough. Chill in the fridge for 15 minutes.
- On a floured surface, roll out the dough with a rolling pin to roughly 5mm in thickness.
- Using a 9cm biscuit cutter or the rim of a 9cm glass, cut out 10 shapes.
- Bake for 8-10 minutes till golden, then cool.

HOW TO DECORATE:

- Put the icing sugar in a bowl. Add cold water, a teaspoon at a time, till the icing is just runny.
- Spread the icing on the biscuits and pop a marshmallow near the edge of each one.
- Use the black icing pen to draw the arms and eyes.
- Use the orange fondant to create a carrot nose.
- Then add the chocolate beans for the snowmen's buttons.

Photo credit: recipesfromapantry.com

MINCE PIE

Mania

In the 13th century, Crusaders returned to Britain from the Middle East with a novel pie idea: minced meat, dried fruits, spices and wine. By Victorian times, the meat had vanished, and the modern mince pie emerged. To create your own version of these timeless treats, follow the recipe below. Remember, as well as the ingredients, you'll need a standard 12-hole muffin tin and two round pastry cutters – one measuring 9cm in diameter for the pie bases and one measuring 7.5cm for the lids.

MINCEMEAT

YOU WILL NEED: 225g mixed dried fruits (raisins, currants and sultanas) | 110g Bramley apple (peeled, cored and finely chopped) | 110g shredded vegetable suet | 150g demerara sugar | Zest and juice of 1 orange and 1 lemon | ½ tsp ground cinnamon | ¼ tsp ground nutmeg | ¼ tsp ground cloves | 2 tbsp brandy or rum (optional)

1. Mix dried fruit, apple, suet, sugar and citrus zest in a bowl.
2. Add citrus juice, spices and alcohol (if using) and mix well.
3. Cover and let it sit in a cool place for a day or two to enhance the flavours.

PASTRY

YOU WILL NEED: 175g plain flour | 85g unsalted butter, cold and diced | 2-3 tbsp cold water | A pinch of salt | A little extra flour for rolling

1. Combine the flour and salt in a large bowl.
2. Rub in the butter until the mixture looks like fine breadcrumbs.
3. Gradually add the water, mixing until the dough forms.

ASSEMBLING AND BAKING

1. Preheat your oven to 190°C/180°C fan/ gas mark 5.
2. Roll the pastry out until it is about 3mm thick.
3. Using the cutters, cut out 12 bases and 12 lids.
4. Press the bases into the muffin tin and fill almost to the top with mincemeat – no need to grease the tin as the pastry's high fat content will stop it from sticking.
5. Brush the top edges of the pastry bases with a bit of cold water, cover with the lids and press the edges to seal.
6. Bake for 20-25 minutes until golden.



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DODGEBOW®

The classic 2004 box office comedy film *Dodgeball* involved what most people thought was a new sport, yet its roots actually go right the way back to the turn of the 20th century.

And yet, there is now a new take on the idea that has emerged in recent years. Utilising foam-tipped arrows that are fired from low-poundage bows, competitors created something of a hybrid between dodgeball and archery – dodgebow.

The sport was invented by three friends from Montreal, Canada. The trio had played combat archery and wanted to develop the idea further. Subsequently, the company Dodgebow was created. The sport sees two teams of up to 12 members battle for 45 minutes in a weapon-laden arena filled with inflatables which can be used as obstacles or objects to hide behind.

The aim is for the teams to gather weapons from the centre of the arena, position themselves strategically, and then eliminate each of the

opposing team's players by shooting them. A player can bring back an eliminated teammate by catching an arrow.

Dodgebow, also known as archery tag, is a rapidly growing sport and is already played in more than 30 countries around the world.

There are also extensions to the game, including Bullseye (all opposing team targets can be hit instead of striking out players), No Loyalty (a 'Blue on Blue' hit means the receiving player must change teams), and Capture the Flag (one of three opposing team flags must be taken back to your own base).

Using safe equipment means dodgebow is fun and exciting to play, with emphasis on both working as a team and individual brilliance.



Winter SURVIVAL KIT

YOUR WINTER CHECKLIST TO ENSURE YOU'RE PREPARED FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

If your car broke down or you got stuck in a really bad traffic situation during the winter months, would you be able to keep yourself and your family warm and safe until help arrived or you were able to be on your way again?

What to keep in your car during winter:

- ✓ A torch and batteries – do not think that you can rely on the torchlight on your smartphone
- ✓ Warm clothes such as a coat, hat and gloves, and blankets
- ✓ Ice scraper and de-icer to keep your front and rear windscreen clear
- ✓ In-car phone charger
- ✓ High-visibility clothing
- ✓ Jump leads or jump-start cables
- ✓ An empty fuel can
- ✓ Food and drink, including a hot drink in a flask
- ✓ Shovel in case of a snowstorm or blizzard
- ✓ Two warning triangles
- ✓ A pair of sunglasses to minimise glare from the winter sun

POWDERY checklist

Before each journey during the colder and darker months of the year, it can be a good idea to go through the POWDERY checklist.

P is for petrol (or diesel). Do you have enough petrol/diesel? Do you know where you can fill up?

O is for oil. Check your oil levels before you leave.

W is for water. Check both your radiator and your screen washer.

D is for damage. Check your wipers and lights for signs of wear and tear. Make sure your windscreen and windows are free from snow and ice.

E is for electrics. Check that your lights, indicators and controls are working as they should.

R is for rubber tyres. Make sure that your tyres are well inflated and free from damage.

Y is for you. Are you fit to drive? Have you slept well? Are you taking any medication that could affect your ability to drive safely?



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The online betting industry has radically changed not just our lifestyle habits, but the way we view competitive sport too.

From an era where betting was only ever the domain of somewhat scruffy men in high street bookmakers, often with the smell of beer and cigarettes lingering in the air, to a modern reworking where the option of placing money on a sporting event can be done from the comfort of one's armchair.

The online betting market is always a topic of much debate and conjecture. Whether or not you believe there is a moral issue at play, the success of those who pioneered the industry is undisputed. When Denise Coates – who was awarded a CBE in 2012 for her services to community and business – registered the bet365 domain name in the year 2000, neither she nor co-founder John, her brother, could have foreseen the incredible changes to the industry that were to follow.

In fairness, Denise did have some previous knowledge of the industry – her father, Peter Coates, known for his chairmanship of Stoke City Football Club, had run a successful bookmaker firm, Provincial Racing, which she joined after graduating from university with a first-class degree in ergonomics.

Using a £15million loan secured against the company's betting shop estate, bet365 was one of the first to try out the untested online market, at a time when the internet was awash with uncertainty and suspicion over online transactions.

Wind forward 20 years, and bet365 is one of the leading players in the market with annual revenues of more than £2billion, thanks to more than £36billion in betting transactions each year.

Coates rewards herself tidily – her wage in 2020 was said to be £421million, which is higher than all FTSE 100 Index CEOs combined.

It is an amount that reflects perhaps not her workload, but certainly the game-changing element brought about by one of the UK's most powerful female entrepreneurs.

Photo credit: bet365



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