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Editor's notes...



Brett Shohet, Editor

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

I hope everyone has managed to navigate this second lockdown without too much trouble, as we now come through the other side of it.

The hope is now that families can be with their loved ones this festive season without too many restrictions - no one should be alone at this time of year.

I think life at the moment can be especially isolating for business owners, who are most likely trying to climb over the biggest hurdles they've ever faced. I must say, we local businesses are doing ourselves proud - I'm not saying we're all thriving, but we're surviving, and that's admirable.

As a fellow business owner, I always make myself available for a chat. Whether you're looking for someone to bounce ideas off or merely fancy a general conversation, it's always good to put your heads together and see what others are up to.

Network is net-worth, after all.

Times are tough, but it's important to know that we're not alone. In my most difficult moments, I always take a step back and think: we're in a storm right now, and no sailor ever became good by sailing in calm seas. This experience will harden us and make us more creative.

Thank you so much to all our readers and loyal clients - as with every year, you've been fantastic. I hope everyone has a great Christmas.

Brett



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At 77 years young, Joe Biden's journey to the White House has been a long one, but the US Presidential Election winner won't delay in attempting to bring back together a fractured nation.

After a tumultuous four years as the most powerful man in world politics, it perhaps shouldn't have come as too much of a surprise to find Donald Trump refusing to go quietly in the aftermath of a US Presidential Election defeat that left Democrat Joe Biden at the door of The White House... albeit without a set of keys.

Republican Trump's assertion of ballot box fraud in light of what, admittedly, even his fiercest critic would deem a farcical voting process, will mean the intricacies of the November 3 election will play out in the Supreme Court. And yet, where US politics is concerned, we shouldn't be surprised – four years ago all similar accusations of malpractice were shot across the bow by those same Democrats who are now up in arms over Trump's claims. His suggestion was that thousands of new voting papers were added to the mix, that some were in the name of people long deceased, and that many duplicated votes were received after a chaotic postal vote system that allowed individual states to decide their own rules.

When the dust settles, however, 77-year-old Biden will be inaugurated as the leader of the free world. A lifetime ambition, the Pennsylvania-born former lawyer has been at the forefront of politics for well over five decades, having become a senator in January 1973. Re-elected six times, he was vice president to Barack Obama for eight years, and considered running in 2016, but made way for Hillary Clinton.

He is a passionate advocate of raising the minimum wage and investing in green energy, notably in rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement that Trump controversially left. He promotes criminal justice reform and grants for minority communities, and will also look to expand Obamacare, enlarge the free college system, and challenge China's questionable environment and trade practices. And, most notably, he brings with him to the top table of world politics Kamala Harris, America's first female, first black and first South Asian vice president.

Here in Britain we will look on with interest to see if prime minister Boris Johnson can configure the same buoyancy, trust and commercial parallels he enjoyed with Trump. Our long-term alignment with the States on corporate, social and political levels has been essential for the economy, and now more than ever before the government will be seeking reassurance that this can continue under a new regime.

Despite a desperately narrow winning margin, Joe Biden will enter The White House having achieved the most votes ever for an incoming president – more than 77 million. And yet those celebrating the supposed new dawn of American politics should be wary. Putting aside the somewhat ambitious legal claims that will fill the scrolling new tickers over the coming weeks and months, it remains the case that, even in defeat, Trump's vote total was more than any other elected president in history, Obama included. The brand of confrontational, partisan politics that he popularised continues to resonate with America, and with the Senate still under the control of the Republicans, Biden knows he'll have to fight hard to steady the United States' uneasy global reputation.

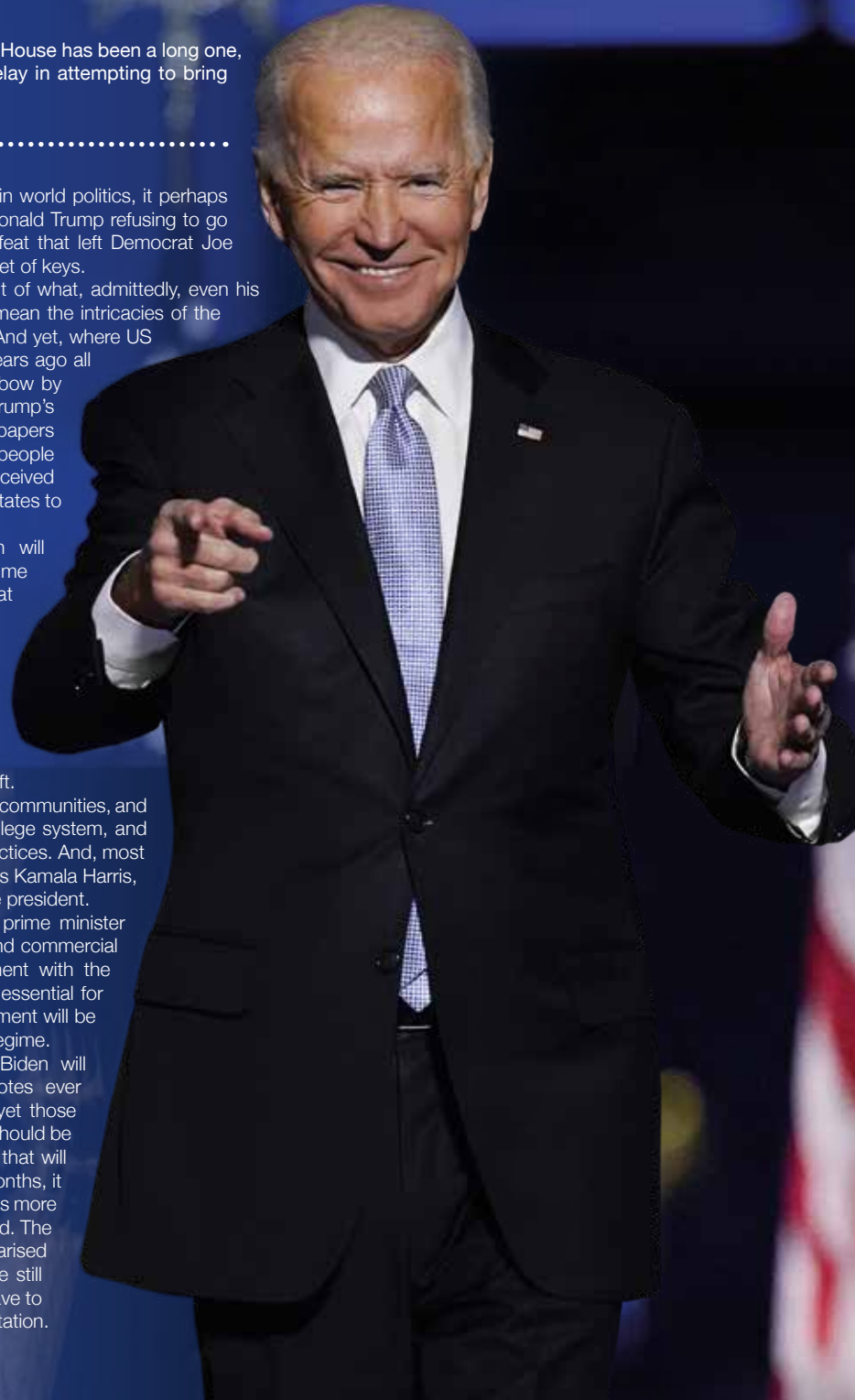


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BIDEN: His Time

THE WORLD AROUND US

Part 2

In the second of our environmental series that looks at the key drivers in the health and well-being of the planet, we're looking at the legacy of our rainforests.

At the end of the 1980s, the realisation that the world's rainforests were being removed at an alarming rate truly propelled a green revolution – one that continues to thrive today.

Where eco awareness and the preservation of our planet are now a part of everyday life, the way we embraced the saving of the Amazon rainforests had never before been seen.

The realisation that deforestation was claiming an area the size of 20 football pitches every minute – for the acquiring of timber and repurposing of land for cattle ranching – was profound, but the deafening screams of those early environmentalists are now just faint murmurs. So what has happened to those green expanses?

Sadly, the problem still exists. A quarter of the Amazon has disappeared, probably never to return, while some speculation suggests the remainder may be felled within 50 years if tighter restrictions are not forthcoming.

Globally, one in four people depends directly on forests for their livelihood, and as many as 120 prescription drugs worldwide are derived directly from rainforests.

And yet, there are two sides to every story. Many South Americans will point to the economic necessity of monetising a natural resource, just as the UK has done with oil and gas. Even the Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro has called the destruction of these plant- and animal-rich expanses “cultural”; and in a country that has more than 20 million people living in poverty, it's not difficult to see why resistance is strong.

To conclude, it seems that while the days are gone where almost every other charitable programme was driven towards preserving these incredible habitats, it's simply a case of having our attention diverted to other ills. Three decades after we first reached out to our rainforests, the battle to save them lives on.

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FASHION

DIY UGLY Christmas Jumper

National Ugly Christmas Jumper Day falls on the third Friday of December each year and offers participants the chance to showcase the worst possible festive jumper they can find. However, why not steer clear of the shops this year and make your own original ugly jumper?

COFFEE SHOP UGLY CHRISTMAS JUMPER
If you love nothing more than a Starbucks first thing in the morning, why not showcase your devotion by sticking a coffee cup directly onto your jumper? Start by cutting your cup in half lengthways and gluing it to the lid. Then glue two pieces of felt to the inside of the cup, glue Velcro tape to the felt and to your jumper and attach.

COUPLES' UGLY CHRISTMAS JUMPERS
What could be more cringe than you and your significant other wearing matching garish glittery Christmas jumpers? Using hot glue, stick on sequins that say "Mr" and "Mrs" and then add as much tinsel, glitter and baubles as you can stomach.

LIGHT-UP UGLY CHRISTMAS JUMPER
Whatever design or slogan you choose for your DIY ugly Christmas sweater, the addition of Christmas coloured fairy lights will only ever make it more tacky. Simply turn your jumper inside out, decide where your battery holder should go and then sew in your LED lights.

SNOW GLOBE UGLY CHRISTMAS JUMPER
One of the more inventive options. All you need is a plastic bowl, a selection of cheap Christmas decorations and a glue gun to create your very own 3D snow globe on the front of your jumper.

CUTE KIDS UGLY CHRISTMAS JUMPER
If your children are taking part in national ugly Christmas jumper day, then this DIY Christmas tree jumper is just the ticket. Plus, they can help you make it. All you need is some felt, mini shatterproof baubles, festive beads and hot glue.

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WAYS TO JAZZ UP YOUR Christmas beard



Whether you have designer stubble or a full-on Santa beard, there is no excuse not to get festive when it comes to your facial hair this Christmas. From baubles to bells, sweets to knits, check out these six fantastically festive beard decorations.

is the festive beard design for you. Best for bushy beards, all you need to do is adorn your beard with canes and you are good to do.

1. Beard Baubles: If you want a weird and wacky Christmas beard design, then look no further. Mini baubles hanging from your whiskers will ensure you start trending on social media sooner rather than later.

4. Beard Jungle Bells: For those who don't mind being heard before they are seen, beard bells provide a fun and frivolous way to jazz up your face. Ideal for Christmas carolling.

2. Beard Glitter: A simple yet highly effective idea, a glitter beard will ensure you are the centre of attention for all the right reasons. Simply apply some glitter glue to your beard and then sprinkle with your chosen glitter. Why not use multiple colours for even more oomph?

5. Beard Knits: Does your mum love to make you an annual Christmas jumper? If so, why not ask her this year to knit you a beard warmer instead? It's festive and perfect for keeping out the winter chill.

3. Beard Candy: If you or your kids love candy canes, then this

6. Beard Lights: Last but definitely not least, it wouldn't be Christmas without some well-placed fairy lights, and what better location for these colourful decorations than on your face? Just make sure you buy a clip-on set to avoid a terrible tangle in your bristles.



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Christmas

plants that care and cure

There are several plants that are synonymous with Christmas, from the decorative poinsettia, to the "kiss me quick" mistletoe, to the evergreen holly and ivy. However, did you know that each of these plants has its own healing properties?

Holly: Often used to decorate your table for Christmas dinner, in terms of medicinal use, you should only use the leaves of the holly as the berries are poisonous. Holly leaves have been known to treat digestive issues, rheumatism, fever, bronchitis and high blood pressure.

HOW TO TAKE: Dry out your holly leaves, crush and add a few teaspoons to a cup of hot water.

Mistletoe: Either a blessing, or a curse depending on who you are standing in close proximity to, mistletoe has been used for centuries to treat medical conditions such as epilepsy, hypertension, headaches and the symptoms of menopause.

HOW TO TAKE: Only use the leaves and stems as the grains are poisonous. Steep in cold water for 12 hours, strain and drink up to three times a day.

Poinsettia: The perfect plant to decorate your home over Christmas, the poinsettia is known for its ability to clean air, and in particular, to remove formaldehyde from insulation, plastic bags and other household items.

HOW TO TAKE: Simply place a poinsettia in your home and let it work its magic.

Ivy: The leaves of ivy are both anti-inflammatory and anti-rheumatic, plus they contain antioxidant properties. Ivy is also said to help settle your stomach, boost your immune system and increase oxygenation of the body.

HOW TO TAKE: The leaves of ivy can either be consumed or applied topically. To make ivy tea, simply soak 4 fresh ivy leaves or 2 tbs of crushed dried ivy in 1 litre of cold water, bring to the boil and then filter immediately.



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FOUR COMMON WINTER AILMENTS AND HOW TO TREAT THEM

As well as the common cold and seasonal flu, not to mention COVID-19, there are several ailments that many people suffer with during the cold winter months. Let's take a closer look at them and their most effective treatments.

1. PAINFUL JOINTS

If you suffer with arthritis, you may find that your joints become even more painful and achy in the colder months. Although there is no way to avoid the effects of the cold completely, ensuring you partake in regular exercise, manage your weight and continue to take any prescribed medication can lessen any pain or discomfort you are experiencing.



2. COLD SORES

If you are prone to cold sores, you may find that you are particularly susceptible in the winter when your immune system is compromised. Try to ensure you get as much rest as possible, keep your lips moisturised and use a topical treatment when needed.



3. ASTHMA

The dry and cold air in winter can make the symptoms of asthma worse by irritating your airways and causing your muscles to spasm, resulting in loss of breath. You can counteract this by limiting your time outside, wearing a scarf when you do go out and always having an asthma action plan in place.



4. SINUS INFECTIONS

If you have a weakened immune system, are a smoker or suffer with seasonal allergies, you are more likely to suffer with sinus infections. Symptoms include a runny nose, headaches, pain or pressure in your face and a sore throat. Try placing a warm compress on your face, using a decongestant and breathing in steam from a hot shower.



TOP TIPS FOR KEEPING HEALTHY THIS WINTER

- > Eat more fruit and veg
- > Embrace natural daylight
- > Wash your hands regularly
- > Stay hydrated

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FOOD & DRINK

Let's get Saucy

Even if you pride yourself on making your own roast potatoes and stuffing your own turkey, not many people take the time to make their own sauces for their Christmas dinner.

So, let's change that. Check out these three popular Christmas sauce recipes that are both simple and delicious.

Easy Peasy Bread Sauce

YOU WILL NEED: 600ml milk | 50g butter | 1 onion | 6 cloves | 6 peppercorns | 2 garlic cloves | 1 bay leaf | 3 sprigs of thyme | 100g white breadcrumbs | 4 tbsp single cream | Pinch of nutmeg (optional)

HOW TO MAKE: Simmer the milk, butter, onion, cloves, peppercorns, garlic and herbs in a pan for 15-20 minutes | Strain and return liquid to heat | Add breadcrumbs and simmer for a further 4 minutes | Stir in cream | Season with nutmeg if desired, and serve

Super Simple Cranberry Sauce

YOU WILL NEED: 200g white sugar | 4 cups of fresh or frozen cranberries | 250ml water | Zest of an orange | Optional spices – cinnamon, nutmeg and allspice

HOW TO MAKE: Rinse cranberries | Boil water and dissolve sugar | Add cranberries and simmer on a low heat until most of the berries have burst | Grate in some orange zest and add a small pinch of your preferred spice | Leave to cool

NB: Cranberry sauce will continue to thicken as it cools.

Perfect Turkey Gravy

YOU WILL NEED: 2 chopped onions | 1 large chopped carrot | 1.3 litres stock – preferably turkey, but chicken will do | 3 tbsp plain flour | 5 tbsp white wine | Turkey neck (optional)

HOW TO MAKE: Add the onion, carrot and turkey neck to a pan | Pour in stock and simmer for one hour | Strain to remove the vegetables and meat, then return liquid to pan | Combine flour with white wine and then add to stock | Heat gently until thickened | Season to taste | Leave to cool and chill



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Cooking UP A treat

FOOD FINESSE WITH POPULAR CHEF JAMES MARTIN

When James Martin bade an extremely tearful farewell to his *Saturday Kitchen* colleagues in March 2016, it was imagined the chef would be turning his hand to new projects after 10 years fronting the popular BBC weekend cookery show.

Of course, as these things often materialise, the popular Yorkshireman reappeared less than six months later fronting a copycat culinary conflag over on ITV.

Regardless, the 48-year-old's switch to commercial TV has also spawned a run of cookery series, reaffirming his place as one of the most popular chefs on television.

Of course, life on the small screen is already a secondary career for Martin, who excelled with wooden spoon in hand from a young age. Indeed, he was almost asked to leave a cookery class at the age of 12 for serving flambéed chicken and mangetout while his prepubescent classmates struggled to create fairy cakes. He went on to study catering at Scarborough College, coming

top of his class for three consecutive years, and was then offered a job working in London with Antony Worrall Thompson, one of the judges for his final exam.

His accomplishments, however, weren't served up to him on a plate – as a Yorkshireman, Martin was taught from birth that “you don't get owt for nowt”. The hard graft paid off, it seems, as he was made head chef of the first Hotel du Vin in Winchester when he was just 22.

Two years later, he began to appear on our screens in shows such as *James Martin: Yorkshire's Finest* and *Ready, Steady, Cook* – his affable nature and dry, self-deprecating humour making him an instant hit with viewers.

From weekend shows to cooking adventures at home and overseas, the chef's fascination with food is unrelenting, as evidenced in his recent return to our screens for *Saturday Morning with James Martin*.

“It's been a great ride so far,” he says, “and the stove is still warm.”

Photo credit: Ken McKay/ITV/Shutterstock



THE ULTIMATE Champagne GUIDE



With Christmas fast approaching, what better time of year to find out everything you need to know about champagne? From how to store it, to how long it lasts, to how to pick the best bottle for your celebration.

How to store

If you can manage to keep champagne in your home long enough to actually have to store it, you need to make sure you are doing it correctly. One hard and fast rule is that you should store champagne horizontally to keep the cork moist, as a dry cork can lead to shrinkage. You should also store bottles in a cool, dark and humid place.

How long can you store a bottle for?

If you have an unopened non-vintage bottle of champagne, it can typically last for between three and four years. Vintage champagne, however, can last up to 10 years. You will notice that champagne changes as it ages, becoming a deeper golden colour and losing some of its fizz.

Understanding the labels

If you have ever looked at the label on a champagne bottle, you will know that they are covered in confusing terms that can stump even the most avid wine lover, so let's take a closer look at what they all mean:

- > **Brut Nature** = Zero grams of residual sugar per litre
- > **Extra Brut** = Less than 6 grams
- > **Brut** = Less than 12 grams
- > **Extra Dry** = 12-17 grams
- > **Sec** = 17-32 grams
- > **Demi-Sec** = 32-50 grams
- > **Doux** = 50 grams or more
- > **Non-vintage/vintage** = Non-vintage denotes grape juice from multiple vintages; vintage will only be produced in a good vintage year and matured for at least three years before being released.
- > **Grand Cru/Premier Cru** = These refer to the classification of the vineyard. Grand Cru is top, Premier Cru is second.

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Ageless Aims

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Having children across a broad age spectrum can often be taxing when it comes to keeping them all amused and happy, but here are a few ideas that work right across the board, from tiny toddlers to troublesome teenagers.

Cooking up a treat

Whether baking a cake, preparing a stew for dinner or simply working together to get a few sandwiches on plates, the kitchen has always been a staple for family life (and the odd party).

Cooking creates a true bond among children, not least because they can enjoy the fruits of their labour afterwards.

Scooters, bikes and trikes

From balance bikes to mountain bikes and any sort of wheeled machinery in between, venturing out on a ride is a great way of connecting our kids with the outdoors. Follow an established route, explore a new area, set up a treasure hunt or simply go off-piste into wooded areas – getting outdoors is great fun.

An English country garden

What better way to embrace the best playground of them all than by getting the kids involved in tending to the garden? From mowing the lawn to planting, clearing out the shed or even trimming back the bushes, the view from your window will be all the better for a family afternoon in the yard.

Paint it black

Whether it's throwaway pieces of art on paper or a more serious dollop of paint on canvas to be hung on the wall, being creative makes a fantastic family bond. And because art is subjective, you can tell your competitive brood with absolute sincerity that those Pollock-like splashes of colour that come from your two-year-old are in no way inferior to the Picasso-esque portrait painted by your eldest, the art student.





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SAYING THANK YOU ON
Boxing Day

THE ORIGINS OF BOXING DAY, DECEMBER 26, EXPLAINED

Our appreciation of Boxing Day in the modern era is, it's fair to say, somewhat different from how it would have been played out by our forefathers. Nowadays it's a date for hangers, sporting events, ridiculously early opening hours at clothes retailers and furniture stores, and the continuation of a blizzard of relatives... some welcome, others less so.

The reason we call it Boxing Day remains somewhat shrouded in mystery. It has been celebrated for almost as long as records go back, and certainly the giving of Christmas 'boxes' has a large part to play in the provenance.

One popular theory dates back to the Middle Ages, when churchgoers would collect money for the poor in alms boxes. These were opened in honour of Saint Stephen, whose feast falls on December 26.

Other records reference Roman tributes to the day, though in the 19th century the tradition

of looking after those less fortunate over the festive period certainly came to the fore. The term appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1832, taken on by the Victorians who embraced the giving of gifts and the looking after of established tradespeople, employees and other service providers, as atonement for a driven and at times brutal regime focused on self-preservation and self-improvement.

What can be certain is that Boxing Day is very much a British tradition. It's unsurprising to see the event celebrated similarly in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, but elsewhere, the US included, it's largely regarded as a second day of Christmas rather than a named day in its own right.

This Christmas, perhaps when it's good for us to reflect on what has been a challenging year, perhaps the pure, selfless, charitable tradition of Boxing Day should return to the fore... but remember to go about your goodly deeds with a glass of something warming.



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Chic OR UNIQUE

THE RETURN OF SHABBY CHIC AND HOW TO PULL IT OFF

The revolving circle of décor and design has, over the years, gripped a nation of amateur interior designers. Shabby chic, a style that first came to prominence in the 1980s, is making a concerted return to prominence.

Its invention was as a rebellion to the hard, shiny, ultra-modern, clean-cut image of three decades ago, when yuppies and electronica ruled the roost. The term 'shabby chic' was thought up by fashion journalist Min Hogg.

And the concept hasn't strayed too far since – from distressed furniture to unmatching fabrics and colours, a rustic, rugged essence that's based on comfort and quantity, rather than image and minimalistic posturing.

To achieve the shabby chic look really is to open your imagination, either by pooling existing items or exploring flea markets, thrift stores and antique shops.

Many people think repainting and running a grooved spatula across an old set of drawers is the sum total of shabby chic, but it's about much more than that. Soft background colours flatter furniture and make items the focal point of a room, so think about using whites, beiges or even light greys.

Pastels – baby blues, pale pinks, grainy greys and warm yellows – work best, while that base of brightness means retro, darker shades of wood can match and contrast, be that on tables or chairs. Meanwhile, wicker and throws soften edges and enhance comfort, and wrought iron provides structure.

As far as the walls and surface tops go, flowers, mirrors and pictures using worn frames will assist you in topping off the perfect shabby chic room, with knick-knacks, signs and cushions adding to the mix.

Past that, the only limit is your imagination. And the best thing about shabby chic is that it needn't cost the earth – adding wear and tear to your own items is cheap, if not free.

Photo credit: Spike Powell and Lisa Cohen via idealhome.co.uk



HOME & DIY



Banish the brrrr!



If you spend all day every day in the winter months longing to return to the comfort and cosiness of your bed, then you may be interested to find out what the best bed sheets are for winter warmth.

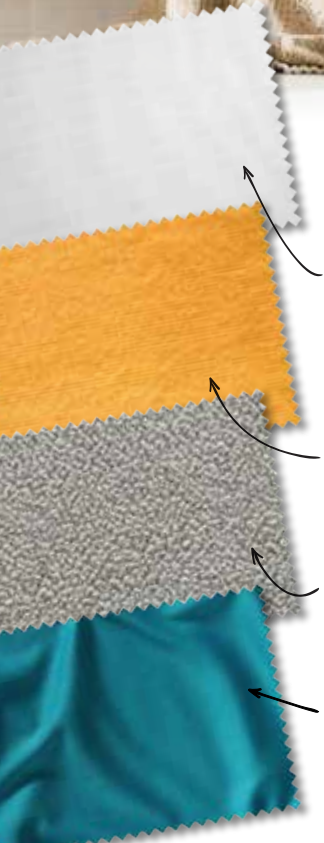
From fleece to flannel, cotton to silk, keep reading to discover what fabric you should choose for your winter safe haven.

Cotton: Although you may think that cotton is more fitting for the summer, if you are the type of sleeper who ends up kicking off your covers halfway through the night, then cotton might be the ideal material for you all year round. A natural fabric, cotton is known for its moisture-wicking abilities, meaning it is great for regulating your overall body temperature. If you have sensitive skin, opt for organic cotton sheets which are both breathable and good for the environment.

Flannel: Synonymous with warmth, flannel is one of the most popular choices for winter bedding. A cross between cotton and fleece, this fabric is soft, airy and breathable, making it the perfect choice for anyone who loves a bed that is warm but not overwhelmingly so.

Fleece: Arguably the warmest material you can choose for your bed sheets, fleece is a synthetic fabric that is ultra-soft and built for insulation. Often used in winter sports gear, fleece is designed to insulate heat in even the coldest conditions, meaning it is ideal for those below-freezing winter nights.

Silk: This may be the last fabric that you would think of when it comes to choosing winter bedding, but silk has the unique ability to retain heat while at same time remaining lightweight and smooth to touch. Opt for pure silk bedding if possible as this has moisturising properties; something that your parched winter skin so desperately needs.



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HOME & DIY

DIY Glass art

Nobody likes to look at a big, bare wall, but there are only so many family pictures that one room can take, so why not have a go at this simple, yet stunning, DIY glass wall art? You only need a few basic craft materials and a little bit of creative flair and you are good to go.

YOU WILL NEED

- > Multipurpose, water-based craft paints (small pots) in your preferred colours
- > Masking tape
- > Glue gun
- > 1 glass picture frame
- > Paint brush – soft acrylic or watercolour brushes work well

HOW TO MAKE

- > Ensure the glass within the frame is secure; if not, use a glue gun to stick it in place
- > Allow the glue to fully dry before continuing
- > Mask the edges of the frame and use a clean, dry cloth to dust the glass
- > Decide upon your design – you could use your initial, a flower or a simple inspirational quote
- > If using a stencil, position your chosen design under the glass or go freehand
- > Paint your design in layers, allowing the paint to dry between each coat
- > Once your design is fully dry, remove the masking tape and display proudly on your chosen wall

TOP TIPS FOR PAINTING ON GLASS

- > Always clean the surface before painting
- > Handle the glass carefully to avoid fingerprints
- > Choose the right brush – synthetic brushes can create visible brushstrokes, whereas natural hair brushes allow for more paint to be applied in one stroke and provide a smoother coverage
- > Do not apply too much pressure with your brush
- > Avoid overworking the paint
- > Always blot your brush after rinsing it to eliminate any excess water
- > Clean away imperfections while the paint is still wet, using a wet brush, toothpick or paper towel
- > When the paint has dried, use a razor blade to scrape or trim off any imperfections

OTHER IDEAS FOR DIY GLASS ART:

- > Use markers to write out your favourite quotes
- > Press flowers (two pieces of glass required)



Photo credit: heartformmag.co.uk, theapollobox.com, GoldPetallettering via etsy.com

Stylish storage solutions
FOR FIREWOOD



Photo credit: shelterness.com, idealhome.co.uk, vanellensieryni.com, aplaceforeverything.co.uk, houzz.com

If you are lucky enough to have a wood-burning fire in your home, then you probably can't wait to start torching some timber and heating it up. However, where are you supposed to keep all your lovely logs?

1. Fill any gaps: If you have supporting pillars of wood, or you are using a partial dividing wall to separate two rooms, why not take advantage of any hollow spaces or gaps and fill them with logs? Not only does this look stylish, but it is also a great way of using up an otherwise wasted space.

2. Pile high: For those who want to make a statement with their logs, this big and bold solution is for you. Effectively building a feature wall of firewood, you can utilise any unused alcove in your home to create this eye-catching display. This is not advised if you have young children owing to the risk of injury.

3. Create a cubbyhole: If you have a wood-burning stove rather than an actual fireplace and you are looking to build a surface for it to sit on, you should remember to factor storage into your design. This multitasking brick stage includes both room for both logs and kindling.

4. Go rustic: One of the simplest ways to stylishly store your logs is to use a large, country-style basket. Make sure you pick one that is big enough to fit all your log-burning supplies and is both sturdy and strong. Alternatively, for a more contemporary look, opt for a metal design.

5. Be sneaky: If you have an outdoor storage area for your logs, you only need to display a handful in your home, so look for unused space in your property, such as under the stairs or eaves where you can create a bespoke storage space.



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Time to breathe better

To keep out the cold and to keep energy costs down, buildings have become increasingly airtight, with improved insulation and high-efficiency windows and doors. Although this is good for your bank balance, it is not so beneficial to your health.

Fortunately, there are ways in which you can improve the air quality in your home this winter.

KEEP YOUR HOME CLEAN

During the winter, when you are unlikely to have your windows open, dust, animal dander and mould can become a problem. Therefore, you need to stay on top of your cleaning regime. Vacuum at least twice a week, regularly wash your bedding and clear away any clutter.

CHANGE YOUR AIR FILTERS

If you have a forced-air heating system in your home, you need to ensure you are changing the filters on a regular basis. This is because electrostatic filters work to trap dust and other airborne irritants rather than

allowing them to circulate around your home.

INVEST IN AN AIR PURIFIER

If you struggle with allergies but can't control the source of the problem, for example you do not want to give up a family pet, an air purifier can help to catch some of the irritants that trigger your symptoms. A dehumidifier can also be a great idea if your home is prone to damp as it can help prevent the growth of mould.

HAVE YOUR CHIMNEY SWEPT

Wood-burning fires are lovely in winter but they need to be used responsibly. Avoid burning wet logs or coal as these can produce hazardous particles. You should also ensure that your chimney is cleaned at least once a year so that smoke can escape.

INSTALL A CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR

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As film icons go, there are few to rival James Bond; and as Bond actors go, there are none to rival Sir Sean Connery.

In a year that has been unkind on so many levels, fans of film perhaps felt an added sense of injustice at the end of October when it was announced that Sir Sean Connery had passed away, at the age of 90.

Of course, in many respects, the actor's work was done. Connery was the smooth-talking, sumptuously styled Scot who legitimised, developed and truly delivered 007 into the golden era of film. The first man to step into the secret agent's shoes, with 1962's *Dr No*, Connery, a former bodybuilder who finished third in Mr Universe in the early 1950s, proved to author Ian Fleming that he had the fervour and finesse to carry off the role, having previously been dismissed as "an overgrown stuntman".

It seems perverse that someone who would go on to become so decorated in the indulgence and luxury of 1960s cinema may have been cast aside before it even began, but it's fair to note that the actor's previous engagements had been in rather less salubrious guises, notably in crime drama *Hell Drivers*, fantasy adventure *Darby O'Gill and the Little People* and outward-bound action flick *Tarzan's Greatest Adventure*.

That, within a decade, Connery would have elevated his worth from tracking the movements of a man swinging through the jungle to starring in iconic movies such as *From Russia with Love*, *Goldfinger*, *Thunderball* and *You Only Live Twice*, is remarkable.

What made Connery's sumptuously smooth portrayal of Bond so impressive was that, unlike the modern-day 007s, he interspersed international espionage with an array of other lead roles. Seventeen movies were made across the nine years he portrayed Bond, a sequence that ended in 1971 with *Diamonds are Forever* (although he did agree to reprise the character in 1983's *Never Say Never Again*).

"I got to the point where I felt I had nothing left to prove as far as Bond was concerned," said Connery. "It was a delightful run where the evolution of 007 and everything around him had gathered such pace with every new movie; yet in myself I thought I had probably evolved as much as I had wanted, and it was time to let someone else have a go."

Away from Bond, twice-married Connery flourished in the likes of *Murder on the Orient Express*, *A Bridge too Far*, *Highlander*, *The Untouchables*, *The Hunt for Red October* and as Indiana Jones' father in *The Last Crusade*.

There are the ones that got away too – he turned down the role of Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings* despite being offered a \$30million bounty; he also rejected playing Architect in *The Matrix* trilogy. The truth is, Connery, who was knighted in the year 2000, was always focused on how he saw himself – as an actor, and as a person... how else can you explain turning down a direct invitation to join Manchester United by legendary manager Sir Matt Busby.

"I was 23 at the time and although I had the contract offer in front of me, I had long decided that football would take a backseat to acting. I felt I had more chance of doing something special, something unique, in the acting world; I felt I could give more and put smiles on more faces, my own included."

Sir Sean, you succeeded.

The Ultimate Bond?



Photo credit: pv brothers/Shutterstock.com



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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



LOCAL NEWS

Photo credit: Shirley Utting



Town marks Remembrance Sunday with arches of knitted poppies

Some 1,000 knitted and crocheted poppies were created by volunteers after Pam Utting (right), chairwoman of the Woodlands branch of the Essex Handicrafts Association, came up with the idea of creating poppy arches for this year's Remembrance Sunday ceremony.

Mrs Utting, together with three friends, including fellow handicrafts enthusiast and Loughton Brown Owl Karen Myles (left), spent a morning fixing the donated poppies to three arches provided by Loughton Town Council alongside the war memorial on King's Green.

Mrs Utting, who has been with the Woodlands branch for 30 years, said: "We wanted to mark Remembrance Sunday [during lockdown 2] differently

from how it's been done in the past."

Miss Myles said they have received many "lovely comments" about the poppies.

Both women admitted that doing crafts has "kept them going" during the pandemic and that they have already been invited to do something similar for next year's Remembrance Sunday.

Dame Eleanor Laing, MP for Epping Forest, paid her respects by laying a wreath at the Loughton war memorial and also at the memorials in Theydon Bois, Waltham Abbey and Epping.

Loughton Mayor councillor Stella Murphy laid her wreath privately at the memorial on Remembrance Sunday.



LOCAL NEWS



Residents kick up a stink over food smells

Residents are concerned that retail units on the ground floor of a building dubbed the town's 'carbuncle' are being let to food and drink outlets or to businesses that create a disturbance.

Landmark House on The Broadway contains a mixture of ground-floor retail units and flats above.

Now owners are worried that smells and noise from businesses below will reduce the value of their properties and spoil their quality of life.

Epping Forest District Councillor (EFDC) Stephen Murray described Landmark House as "a carbuncle site" and "one of the worst buildings we have".

A spokesperson for EFDC confirmed that three

units will become a boxing gym and that terms have been agreed for one unit to become a tanning salon, pending planning permission.

The Hub public house occupies one unit and the unit rented recently by Wenzel's bakery is currently closed in line with COVID-19 guidelines.

Another unit is still to let with agents Hair & Son.

An EFDC spokesman said: "It's in our interest to maintain a sizeable business community on The Broadway.

"EFDC owns all the shops so anything we can do to improve footfall is good for the community, good for business and good for EFDC."

Surprise medals for war veteran

A Second World War veteran got a wonderful surprise when the medals he had never worn were restored to him last month, just in time for Remembrance Sunday.

Ken Batt, 99, who was originally from Swindon, has lived on Roding Road with his wife Joyce since 1953.

He served with the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry during the War, but has never worn the medals he received in 1945 because they were not professionally mounted.

This changed when his former regiment (now part of the Royal Wessex Yeomanry) heard his story and launched a covert mission, with the help of Joyce,

who 'smuggled' the medals out of the house.

The medals were then professionally mounted and returned to an astonished Mr Batt last month by Lieutenant Colonel David Utting.

Mr Batt said it was wonderful to see his medals restored in time for Remembrance Sunday.

He said: "They've made a lovely job of them and it's good to be able to finally wear them."

Mrs Batt, 93, said it was a marvellous thing to have done for her husband of 74 years.

"He's a wonderful lad and still a lad to me, even though he's 99," she said.




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Race is on to save remaining green space

There is still time to save one of Loughton's remaining green spaces. Loughton Residents Association Plans Group (LRAPG) is calling on residents to object to a development on Lucton's Field on Borders Lane, which it says will "adversely affect air quality" in the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

David Linnell of LRAPG said that until a government planning inspector rules on the future of the site, residents can still make their voices heard.

If the plans are approved, Fairview Homes will build 258 flats in five blocks, with 198 parking spaces.

Mr Linnell said: "There is increasing emphasis [nationally] on the effect of green spaces in towns and cities for the sake of the health of the general public."

He also expressed concerns about pollution from the increased number of cars driving so close to the SAC and about education provision.

He said: "It's barmy to thrust another 1,000 houses on Loughton [on Lucton's Field and other proposed sites], many of which will have young families."

LRAPG is hoping for objections from more than 300 households.

For more about LRAPG's objections, go to loughtonresidents.co.uk/featured-news/luctons-field.html

Objections should be emailed to appcomment@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

The plans (ref. EPF/0379/20) can be seen at www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Uncertain future for Debden Library

Photo credit: Anna Freeman-Bentley



Proposals for the future of Debden Library were discussed at a recent online meeting of Save Our Libraries Essex (SOLE).

Under these proposals, Essex County Council (ECC) will allow New City College (NCC) to create a community-run library on its premises, from early 2021.

Some 20 people joined the meeting, including Alan Fricker, who said the library faces an uncertain future if managed by NCC staff and called on residents to look at SOLE's Facebook page and "get involved".

Mr Fricker said: "Closure by stealth is a real possibility and we think the model proposed by ECC is designed to fail. A library can be a real anchor for, and an asset to, a community."

Councillor Susan Barker, ECC cabinet member for customer, corporate, culture and communities, who did not attend the meeting, said in a statement: "Rather than campaigning against a threat that doesn't exist, I encourage everybody who loves libraries to use and enjoy them."

An ECC spokesman said that the new library would have access to ECC's book stock and would offer adult education classes and children's activities.

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MP goes digital for school surgery



Pupils at Debden Park High School grilled their MP at a digital surgery recently and impressed her so much that she has passed their views on to the Minister for Schools.

Instead of a conventional face-to-face encounter, Dame Eleanor Laing, MP for Epping Forest, conducted a one-hour 'surgery' with Debden Park High students via videoconference.

Dame Eleanor MP's young constituents asked her a range of questions, from the role of an MP in general to the specific work she undertakes on their behalf in Parliament.

She said: "The students asked really good questions. "After the event they sent me a well-constructed article arguing against exams going ahead next year which I have sent directly to the Minister for Schools, who is pleased to have heard directly from such well-informed and reasonable students."

Dame Eleanor MP added: "I am really proud of Debden Park students [who] are, as always, making a great contribution to our local community."

The digital surgery was organised by The Politics Project, which aims to build relationships between young people and politicians by connecting school students with their elected representative – local, regional or national – via an online platform.

Driver crashes into garden wall

Residents of Alderton Hall Lane must have been horrified when a car failed to stop for the police and collided with a garden wall, knocking it down.

The collision occurred just after 4.30pm on Thursday, October 15.

Police arrested a man on suspicion of driving under the influence of drink and drugs following the incident.

A spokesperson for Essex Police said: "A 23-year-old man from Loughton was arrested on suspicion of failing to stop for police, dangerous driving, possession

of Class B or C drugs, drug driving, drink driving and driving without insurance.

"He has since been released under investigation."

Writer honoured with blue plaque

The former home of a South African anti-apartheid campaigner and 'freedom' writer has been honoured with a blue heritage plaque by Loughton Town Council (LTC).

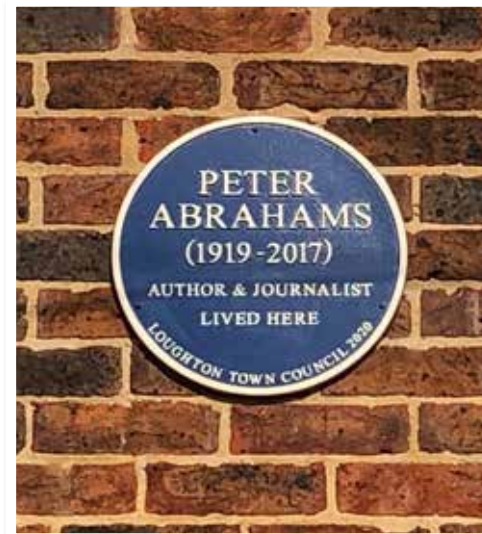
Peter Abrahams, who was born near Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1919, lived with his wife Daphne at 37 Jessel Green for several years during the 1940s and 1950s, during which time he met leading black writers and activists, including Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah, the future leaders of Kenya and the Gold Coast respectively.

Abrahams left South Africa in 1939 and worked first as a sailor and then as a journalist in London, where he made a name for himself for his sensitive exploration of apartheid and racial politics.

His published works included his 1954 memoir, *Tell Freedom*, and a novel about African independence, *A Wreath for Udomo*, published in 1956, both of which drew on his own experience of prejudice.

An earlier work, *Mine Boy*, published in 1946, was praised by scholars as the first African novel written in English to attract international attention.

Abrahams moved to Jamaica in 1956 and was found dead, possibly murdered, at his home there in 2017, when he was 97.



LOCAL NEWS

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Pupils set to benefit from partnership with sports club

A new partnership between an independent school and a sports club is set to offer pupils access to a variety of additional modern facilities. Pupils at Avon House Preparatory School will be able to take their PE lessons to the next level using facilities such as tennis courts and cricket pitches at

The Woodford Wells Club. Founded in 1865, The Woodford Wells Club is conveniently located just behind the school site. All pupils receive the added bonus of a free junior membership, which will encourage the implementation of a healthier lifestyle.

Complaint against police: call for witnesses

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) is investigating an incident where a man and a woman were detained by police officers on Loughton High Road at approximately 2pm on Saturday, October 3, and is asking for witnesses to come forward. A spokesman for the IOPC confirmed that it had received a complaint referral from Essex Police in relation to a man and woman who were detained and arrested by police, who sprayed CS gas into the man's face. The spokesman said that officers subsequently established that the man and the woman were innocent and de-arrested them at the scene. IOPC Regional Director Graham Beesley said: "We

are investigating the circumstances of this incident, including the identification, detention and arrest of the man and woman as suspects. "Our investigation will also examine whether the force used on the man was reasonable, necessary and proportionate, whether his treatment was influenced by his race and the aftercare provided to the man. "We have begun gathering statements from officers and witnesses and reviewing footage of the incident. "It is important we establish exactly what happened during the incident, and we are aware there were a number of people who may have seen or filmed all or part of the man and woman's interaction with the police officers."

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News from **THE ROTARY CLUB** of Loughton, Buckhurst Hill & Chigwell

LOCAL NEWS



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Please contact Pesh if you would like to get involved with Rotary or 3food4u in any capacity. Email pesh@londonresidential.co.uk or call 07973 166940.

Remember a loved one this Christmas

People in Buckhurst Hill are being invited to remember those they have loved and lost as Christmas approaches.

The invitation comes from the Buckhurst Hill Funeral Home, part of Harold White Independent Funeral Directors, on Queen's Road. Staff there will be putting up a Community Christmas Memorial Tree which will be blessed by local clergy.

Everyone is welcome to call in, pick up a memorial tag, write a personal remembrance message and hang it on the tree. There is no obligation to donate, but all donations received will help local charities.

The team will be delivering memorial tags to local care homes and nursing homes and inviting residents and staff to write their own special messages. These tags can then be hung on the tree by the residents or staff.

For more information, call 020 3903 7906 or email sbutler549@btinternet.com



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HORTICULTURE HEROES: Diarmuid Gavin



GARDENING

Expert gardener Diarmuid Gavin made his name as the host of BBC teatime hits *Gardeners' World* and *Home Front in the Garden*, but he's been busy tending to different fields of late.

The Chelsea gold-medal-winning designer has tried his hand at ballroom in *Strictly Come Dancing*, proved a degree of culinary expertise on *Come Dine With Me* and made ripples on ITV's celebrity diving bonanza *Splash*.

The 56-year-old's flirtation with mainstream TV perhaps, for a while, threatened to take him away from a professional passion for horticulture that stretches back to the late 1980s.

Indeed, the Irishman has reinforced his commitment to returning to the innocence of the humble garden by refusing to exhibit for the past few years at the Chelsea Flower Show.

"I think with all these things there has to be a practicality to it – there has to be a take-out.

"If I am exhibiting an idea that is preposterously unachievable to the average gardener, then what is the point?"

Diarmuid's reconnection with his horticultural roots has restated the charismatic gardener with what truly thrills him, and his Instagram feed provides an almost daily delve into the passions of our plots.

"People always ask me for advice, and in terms of our own gardens, I'd just advise that people are careful when they plant," he says.

"Plants that are too tender will die very quickly, so spend longer planning and plant later – that's the golden rule... never rush things. Better to be exuberant once rather than spend the same amount by buying lower-priced items twice, because the first lot have died."

At his extroverted peak, Diarmuid produced a Willy Wonka-inspired giant garden that was deemed too big to enter the historic Chelsea Flower Show.

"I have calmed down since," he laughs. "It was way too big... nearly the size of a football field. I knew after that it was time to rein it in."





Holly

DECEMBER BIRTH FLOWER OF THE MONTH

If you were born in the same month Christmas, your birth flower is the festive holly. A popular plant for the season of winter, holly is instantly recognisable by its prickly leaves and ruby red berries. Plus, it's easy to grow and is great for garden security.

What is the symbolic significance of holly?

In ancient Celtic cultures, the Druids regarded holly as a symbol of fertility and believed it to have magical powers. Today, holly has been adopted as a symbol of Christmas by Christians, with the sharp leaves said to symbolise the crown of thorns worn by Christ and the berries representing his blood.

What does this birth flower say about your personality?

Those born in December are said to be fiercely protective. Not a fan of criticism, you are naturally defensive and are not afraid to stand up for yourself when required. You also love to make a home feel warm and inviting, both your own and those of your friends and family.

How to grow holly in your garden

The holly plant is fairly easy to grow and will thrive in both sun and partial shade, although it prefers moist but well-drained soil. You can choose to grow holly on your lawn, in a shrub border or even to make some hedges. Holly does not require much pruning, although if you want to cut some as a festive decoration, do so in early winter before its berries are eaten by birds.

Interesting facts about holly

- It is evergreen
- It can be grown in pots and containers for up to five years
- The berries are mildly poisonous
- Legend says that holly protects from thunder, lightning and witchcraft
- Real holly plants bloom scented flowers in spring

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PETS



Festive treats

Although you may want your pet to be able to enjoy your festive food with you, the majority of Christmas fare is both toxic and dangerous for dogs and cats. However, that doesn't mean they can't tuck into a treat or two over the upcoming weeks.

Canine Crimbo Cookies

YOU WILL NEED: 2 cups wholewheat flour | 1 cup plain non-fat Greek yogurt | 1 tsp baking powder | 1 cup all-natural peanut butter | Water

HOW TO MAKE: Preheat your oven to gas mark 5/190°C | Line a baking tray with parchment paper | Mix ingredients together in a bowl to create a dough | Add a little water if too dry | Roll out your dough and cut into your chosen shape | Bake for 15 minutes until brown | Leave to fully cool

Festive Feline Titbits

YOU WILL NEED: 1 small chicken breast | 1 apple | 300g oat flour (you can make this by whizzing up oats in a blender) | 2 eggs | 1tbsp catnip

HOW TO MAKE: Preheat your oven to gas mark 6/200°C | Cook the chicken for 25 minutes until cooked through | Leave to cool and then shred into thin strips | Peel and cut the apple and slice into small pieces | Place the apple in a pan and add water until the apple is covered | Simmer for 20 minutes until the apple has softened | Add the chicken, apple, eggs, flour and catnip to a blender and whizz until combined | Roll out the dough to 1cm thick | Cut into your preferred Christmas shape or design | Place on a lined baking tray and bake for 15 minutes until golden | Leave to cool completely

Festive foods you should not give to your dog or cat include: Chocolate | Mince pies | Christmas pudding | Onion gravy | Bones from carcasses | Anything too fatty or salty




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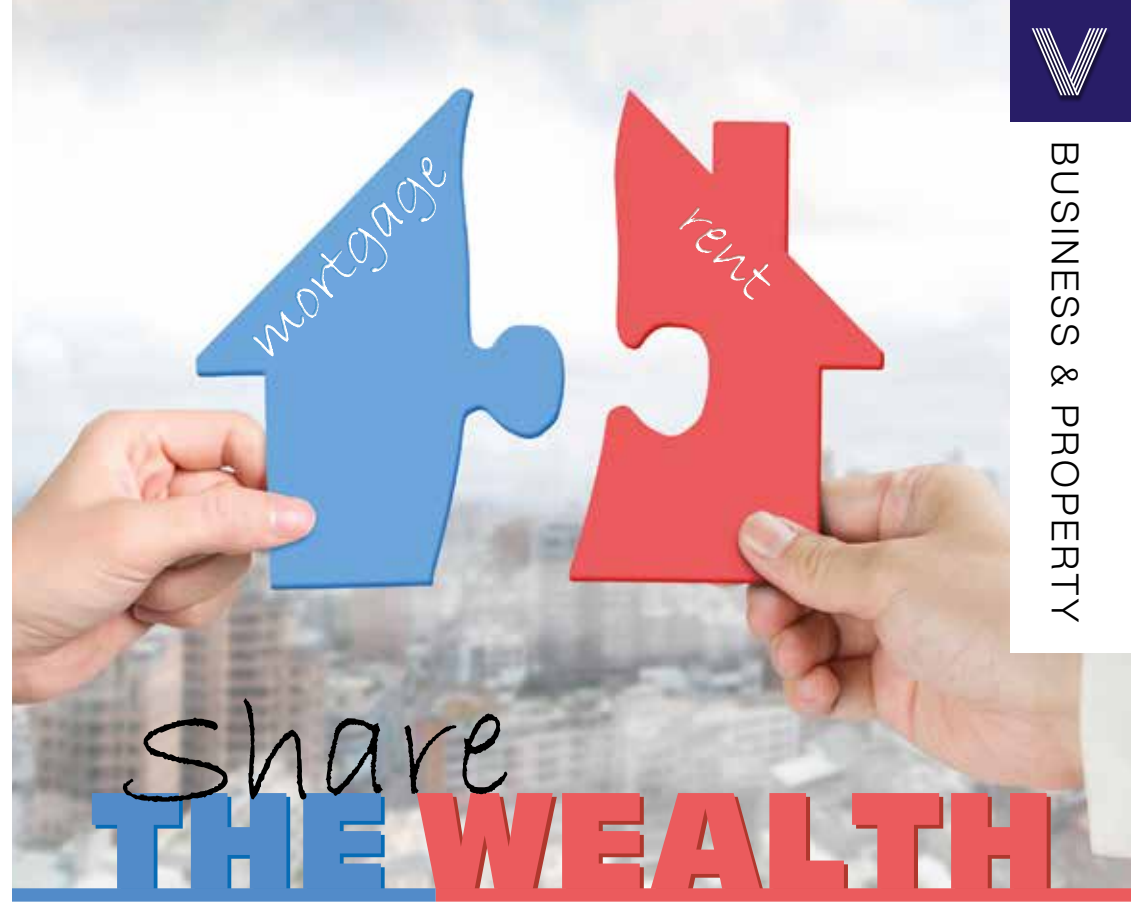
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Why the Help to Buy: Shared Ownership continues to create homes out of houses

For all its speculation, criticism and conjecture, the housing market represents one of the most stable industries in the UK. Only amid the perils of negative equity in the 1990s did the bricks and mortar of people’s fortunes really begin to crumble; yet for large periods outside that time, investment in property has largely been deemed a safe one.

Of course, as a result of this, the market has become much more competitive, and the growing difficulty with which first-time buyers, in particular, are able to get on board means the government’s introduction of Help to Buy schemes has gone a long way to guiding people along the footpath to realising those dreams.

The concept is simple – if you cannot afford the mortgage on what would be 100 per cent of a home, Help to Buy: Shared Ownership will allow you to buy a share of the property, which could be anywhere between 25 and 75 per cent of its value.

You would effectively pay rent on the remaining share. This means the initial deposit is smaller and mortgage finance more accessible. On the plus side, owners still enjoy a decent proportion of true investment and, along with that, benefit from rises in market price over time.

The criteria to get involved is sensible. Those applying need to earn less than £80,000/year (£90,000/year in London). Furthermore, you would need to be a first-time buyer, or have owned before while being unable to buy now; or perhaps are in an existing shared ownership arrangement and are looking to move.

Variations to the rules exist for the over-55s and disabled applicants, but for the most part the success of the scheme, which is being repackaged and relaunched for 2021, is evident in the millions of people who have stepped onto the property ladder since its launch four decades ago.



PENSION PARALYSIS

WHY INVESTING NOW MEANS BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

In these uncertain times, our ability to plan for the future has been tested to extremes. Record numbers of homeowners embarked on payment holidays this year as COVID-19 struck, and forward financial plans and projects have been put on hold across the board – much of it on the advice of government... except where pensions are concerned.

The idea of starting a private pension fund is something that would have confronted most adults, and yet still only two-thirds of us are said to be building a reserve that will service us in our retirement.

This lack of forward planning has brought about a concept known as pension paralysis. Many of us will recognise the idea of spending for now – and in many cases this is a

necessity, not a choice – and yet the accumulation of a pension fund, particularly when matched by employer contributions, can have dramatic uplift by the time we bid farewell to the daily grind of full-time employment.

As an example, someone in their thirties earning £35,000/year who manages to put away 20 per cent of their income, and have that matched by an employer, will end up with a pension fund that pays in the region of £1,200/month on retirement.

However, if the decision to begin to put money aside is left until we're in our forties, that drops to less than £850/month, dipping to below £500/month in our fifties.

While pension paralysis in the short term means providing for our home, our children or our social lives, the end effect can mean a drastic impact on our quality of life in retirement.

The advice from government is to put away even a small amount and to get into a routine that means you don't miss that sum coming out each month. Independent financial advisors can guide you on the correct path, while over-50s receive free advice from Pension Wise.



Office Fox Think Outside the Box

Businesses in Hertford and beyond are utilising Office Fox's extraordinary knowledge and experience to save vital funds during lockdown.



David Warrington, Client Services Director

The industry leading office solutions experts, based in St Andrews Street, Hertford, are using their innovative thinking and near-30 years of experience to help businesses navigate their way over some of the pandemic's most complex hurdles.

They're working with the top 20 lenders/banks in the UK to provide attractive finance rates, to terminate or settle existing contracts in place of agile work agreements due to customer volume decreases and will now offer options to decrease costs, as well as make pay as you go terms available.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of Office Fox is their ability to offer bespoke solutions to each individual client – they can review your contracts and see exactly what's going to suit you.

The vast majority of businesses are seeing a significant decrease in volume on telephony contracts, mailing, photocopiers and more. As a consequence, business owners are paying for equipment which is sitting dormant, with fixed contracts in place and seemingly no way out of paying them.



This is an asset which extends to all of Office Fox's services. They describe themselves as 'vender agnostic', meaning they aren't tied to any one manufacturer – this gives them the ability to scan the market openly for each client without being pigeonholed and find them the solutions which fit their individual needs.

Luckily, Office Fox know exactly how to bring down your needless costs for the duration of lockdown – however long it lasts.

So, if you're looking for a helping hand, whether you're an established business looking to cut costs or a start-up searching for the equipment you need to get going, you know where to go.

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Channel HOPPING

Celebrating the 30-year anniversary of the breakthrough on the most ambitious construction project of them all

It is a piece of engineering that many thought impossible, some considered economically unfeasible, and a few even purported was largely unnecessary; and yet, three decades after contact was made between English and French engineers deep under the sea, the Channel Tunnel continues to celebrate linking and uniting the UK with mainland Europe.

It is estimated that more than 400 million people have ventured deep below the channel, either as a first step towards business or pleasure on mainland Europe or as venture in the opposite direction.

The idea was first conceived way back in 1802, where oil lamps would light the route for horse-drawn carts to make the dark, dank descent under the sea. But it wasn't until 1987 that some significantly updated plans saw the first boring of the tunnel.

In connecting the UK and France, the engineers were finally doing away with outdated and overstretched ferry and boat services across the channel. Indeed, it's now the case that 30 per cent of all goods traded between the UK and continental Europe go through the 'Chunnel', worth more than £150 billion each year.

It was on the night of December 1, 1990, that one of the 11 mighty boring machines carving a way through rock, which last saw the light of day during the Jurassic period, finally broke through. In doing so, it linked Britain to mainland Europe for the first time in more than 50,000 years, dating way back to before the English Channel swamped the deep valleys that intersect our two great nations.

In that moment, a project that cost £18 billion, the most expensive construction project ever attempted, and a unique three-way 25-mile rail link (for Eurotunnel Shuttle, Eurostar and freight trains), moved a step closer to becoming reality. Engineers Graham Fagg and Philippe Cozette shook hands through a 30-inch hole some 50 metres below the seabed, celebrating a unique act of engineering unity.

Now, some two and a half decades after it opened to passengers, it's still natural to wonder at the design (which is actually three large cavern pipes, one in each direction and a service tunnel in the middle). It all means that, whether departing Folkestone in an old banger or London St Pancras in first class, mainland Europe is never more than an hour away.

It has transformed not just our ability to holiday on mainland Europe, but also our perception of travel as a whole – an island nation finally connected to its continent.

As time has gone on, the Channel Tunnel – one of the seven wonders of the modern world – has only ever felt its reputation enhanced. Perhaps it is the ease with which we can board a train to France, effectively without even leaving our car; perhaps it is the relatively low cost (a one-way trip can be taken for as little as £60); perhaps it is simply the customer-friendly approach adopted by Eurotunnel – namely that if you miss your allocated crossing you can simply hop on the next one – or the salubrious pleasure of boarding Eurostar.

Or perhaps it's simply the case that no matter what other emotions have been stirred up through Brexit and our nation's desire to return to a more independent existence, we will always embrace our European cousins and the adventures that lie beyond the tracks.

6x Since completion in 1994, the equivalent of six times the population of the UK has crossed through the Tunnel.

4G mobile services are available in the Tunnel.

7x Each shuttle is almost 800 metres long, that's the length of seven football pitches.

The earth they dug out to create the Tunnel could fill Wembley Stadium **7 times**.

Since the year 2000, over **2 million** dogs and cats have travelled with Eurotunnel, representing 80% of all pets crossing the Channel.

Some of the animals that have been through the Tunnel bumper to bumper, if you put all the vehicles that have been through the Tunnel bumper to bumper, the line would be almost long enough to reach the moon and back from Earth. **That's over 477,710 miles**

8,500 years ago People were walking between what is now the UK and Continental Europe.

26% of goods traded between the UK and Continental Europe go through the Channel Tunnel, which represents a value of **€138bn** per year.

The original shaft in Coquelles, Calais had an internal diameter of **55 metres** and a **depth of 68 metres**. It was large enough to contain the Arc de Triomphe.

11 boring machines were used to make the Tunnel. In total they weighed **12,000 tonnes** – **that's even more than the Eiffel Tower weighs.**

The idea of a fixed link between Britain and European mainland was first seriously considered in Napoleonic times, and there were many designs drawn up, and attempts made, between then and the opening of the Tunnel in 1994.

We work with specialist transporters to relocate all sorts of animals as part of conservation and breeding programmes. These have included: giant tortoise, cheetahs, snakes, penguins, eels, tigers, sharks, butterflies and lizards.

4.9 million cubic metres of chalk, marl and shale were excavated during construction and used to create Salsburgh Lake, a 30 hectare nature reserve located at the foot of the White Cliffs of Dover in Kent, and a hill at La Froid Pignon in France which offers panoramic views over the coastal town of the Calais region.

Did you know One of the boring machines is buried under the sea. It was too big to back out, so it turned left and got 'concreted in'.

The most expensive car to travel on the Shuttle was a Ferrari, worth **€5.7m**.

The passenger service Eurostar, one of Eurotunnel's biggest customers, has travelled through the Tunnel since 1994.

€12bn of fresh fruit and vegetables are carried every year by Eurotunnel.

The UK crossover (between the two rail tunnels) is a cavern, and is tall enough to stand 3 London double decker buses on top of each other.

1 million e-commerce express delivery parcels travel through the Tunnel each day.

The concrete rings that line the tunnels are made of some of the strongest concrete in the world.

For Valentine's Day we deliver **26 million** red roses through the Tunnel to the UK.

37.9km (25 miles) The longest undersea tunnel in the world.

The excavated earth from the Tunnel is mostly from the Calais region, which was once a marshy area. When the chalky marl was dug out, it was deposited.

The service tunnel runs between the two rail tunnels – it is mainly used by maintenance workers, but some staff have also run through it for charity. Chris Froome has cycled through it, and it's been used for filming – from the drama series 'The Tunnel' to an Audi TV ad.

13,000 engineers, technicians and workers helped construct the Tunnel.

80 million vehicles have boarded the Shuttle since it opened (cars, motorcycles, camper vans, coaches, trucks and more).

300,000,000 tonnes of goods have been transported via the Tunnel on road trucks, shuttles, and on rail freight trains since it opened.

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No, this isn't a friendly welcome from our continental neighbours, nor is it some kind of automobile backlash resulting from failed Brexit negotiations. Instead, what's happening is that you are blinding other road users with your incorrect headlamp alignment.

In the UK, headlamps are configured to shine to the left, towards the edges of the road and away from the middle. This is to guide motorists away from curbs and ditches, while preventing oncoming drivers from being blinded by our lights.

That means in France, or any country that drives on the right, that same light is actually being shone directly into drivers' faces.

With various advancements in headlamp

technology over the years, new cars are often fitted with a switch control that automatically redirects the headlamps for driving abroad. However, many cars still don't have this function, therefore it pays to know what to do when driving abroad, for both your own safety and that of others.

If manual headlamp realignment cannot be done from the control panel of your car, the most common solution is to buy a set of headlamp unit lenses (or glasses). These deflectors are attached and block out a small amount of your beam, thus keeping light away from other drivers.

These days, it's not a request that headlamps are configured properly, it's the law. 'Do it yourself' beam deflectors – the sort your dad might have made out of black sticky tape in the 1970s – are no longer legal, and deflectors must be operational as soon as you head off the ferry, even in daylight hours.

It's not worth taking the risk when driving abroad... be safe at all times.

OCTOPUSH

Splash of the day

WHY THE UNUSUAL SPORT OCTOPUSH IS MAKING WAVES

At first glance, the sport of Octopush looks a bit like ice hockey gone wrong, namely that the ice has melted and the playing arena resembles a swimming pool. That's actually because the playing area is a swimming pool, and rather than manoeuvring a puck across a surface of cool, slippery, frozen matter, competitors dive to the murky depths of a pool and attempt to score in their opponents' goal.

While it might be peculiar to label any sub-aqua sport as fast paced, in pushing, protecting and working the puck towards enemy territory, in this game of underwater hockey (to give it its formal title), the pursuit actually offers all the drive and drama of a competitive pursuit played on dry land.

There's also significantly more tactical intelligence at play than you might first imagine – it's all very well

shielding a puck from an opponent as you look for a competitor to pass to, but the need for air means that no one in possession can hang about for too long without having to return to the surface to refuel their lungs.

The other great thing about Octopush is a lack of potential injury. Of course, a mass of swirling, swarming bodies below the surface presents something of a hazard, but the cushioning effect of the water ultimately means any contact with opponents is minimal.

Octopush is rapidly growing in popularity, with more than 100 registered clubs across the UK. It combines agility, strength, stamina and teamwork, and our fascination with sport means we'll even take on characteristics of amphibians if we can savour that, sweet, slightly chlorine-laced taste of victory.

Photo credit: Mark Brakels via vbatnews.com

FIRST DIVISION – DECEMBER 26, 1963

SPORT

BLACKPOOL	1-5	CHELSEA
BURNLEY	6-1	MANCHESTER UNITED
FULHAM	10-1	IPSWICH TOWN
LEICESTER CITY	2-0	EVERTON
LIVERPOOL	6-1	STOKE CITY
NOTTINGHAM FOREST	3-3	SHEFFIELD UNITED
SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY	3-0	BOLTON WANDERERS
WEST BROM ALBION	4-4	TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR
WEST HAM UNITED	2-8	BLACKBURN ROVERS
WOLVES	3-3	ASTON VILLA

'tis the football SEASON TO BE JOLLY

BOXING DAY 1963 – WHEN FANTASY FOOTBALL BECAME REALITY

If there's one thing that's characterised the opening exchanges of the new Premier League season, then it's goals. It seems defence-minded football has been banished to the substitutes' bench and instead our teams are simply aiming to outscore each other.

Though even the likes of Harry Kane, Raheem Sterling, Mo Salah and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang will have to go some if they are to match the achievements of the rugged footballers of old who trotted out onto veritable mud baths of pitches on December 26, 1963.

They wouldn't have known it at the time, but these old-school soccer stars were about to take part in a day of festive football goal gluts, and an afternoon that's gone down in sporting folklore.

In total, 66 goals were scored across the 10 First Division matches. Six sides shared six goals as Chelsea triumphed 5-1 at Blackpool, while

Nottingham Forest and Sheffield United drew 3-3, as did Wolves and Aston Villa.

West Brom and Tottenham trumped that with a 4-4 draw at The Hawthorns, while both Liverpool and Burnley romped to 6-1 home wins, against Stoke City and Manchester United respectively.

Pity those poor fans at Filbert Street and Hillsborough who saw their Leicester City and Sheffield Wednesday sides win by relatively normal 2-0 and 3-0 scorelines (against champions Everton and Bolton Wanderers respectively).

But on a day on which it appears it wasn't just the supporters unable to shake off the large amount of Christmas Day merriment, Blackburn Rovers hit a magnificent eight away from home at West Ham United; and Fulham arguably snatched the ultimate plaudits from a festive flurry of worthy contenders with a magnificent 10 at home to poor Ipswich Town. Jürgen, Pep, Frank, José... over to you.

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PUZZLES

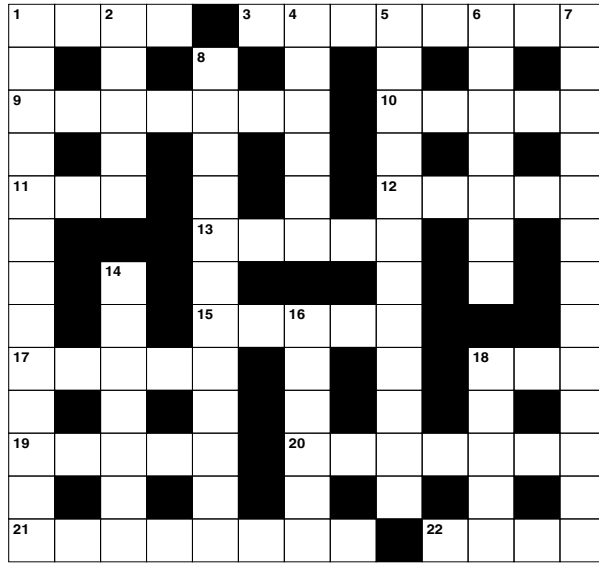
Answers can be found on the Contents Page 4

ACROSS

- Set of playing cards (4)
- Neck injury (8)
- Genuine (7)
- Kick out (5)
- 17th Greek letter (3)
- The beginning of an era (5)
- Enclosed (5)
- Bird sound (5)
- Turned to ice (5)
- Statute (3)
- Exposes secret information (5)
- Country whose capital is Reykjavik (7)
- Longing (8)
- Refuse to admit (4)

DOWN

- Shamefully (13)
- Showing a willingness to achieve results (3-2)
- Doglike mammals (6)
- Planned in advance (12)
- Sanction (7)
- Unenthusiastically (4-9)



- Food shop (12)
- Proportionately (3,4)
- Banner or flag (6)
- Lessen (5)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Hummingbirds are the only birds that are able to fly backwards
- ▶ The short-horned lizard squirts blood from blood vessels around its eyes when defending itself. This is because the blood vessels rupture under pressure
- ▶ A giant panda will typically eat for around 12 hours a day
- ▶ Elephant ears help to keep the animals cool by radiating heat
- ▶ Young jaguars are blind at birth. They learn to hunt by living with their mother for two years or more
- ▶ Wolves can go for more than a week without eating
- ▶ A fox can communicate with other foxes by using its tail
- ▶ The bald eagle has a wingspan of around eight feet

SUDOKU

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



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