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# Editor's notes...

JANUARY 2023



Nik Allen, Editor

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

If December wasn't busy enough, we had a tremendous World Cup to distract us from the usual Christmas build-up. The lead-up to the event was of course filled with controversy surrounding the hosts, but away from that, they sure did put on a great show for us all back at home. I'm glad we were able to focus on the impressive athletics on display.

I thought England gave a great account for themselves in the tournament, including Gareth Southgate, whom I'm pleased has decided to carry on until after Euro 2024. You can feel this team improving on past

failures and being stronger together, which certainly bodes well for the future. It does feel like real success is closer with Gareth than under previous managers.

The Final was one of the greatest we've seen in recent years, with Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappé showing why they are both considered to be amongst the world's elite. Congratulations to Argentina on a hard-fought and well-earned third World Cup.

I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and spent some quality time with Friends and Family. Finally, I wish you every success for this new year.

*Nik Allen*

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# SPARE?

AMID THE RELEASE OF HARRY AND MEGHAN'S TRIO OF PROJECTS, WE LOOK AT HOW THE 'SPARE' AND HIS WIFE HAVE BEGUN TO TELL THEIR TRUTH

Since their unexpected flight from both British shores and the working Royal Family in January 2020, Prince Harry and his wife Meghan have caused quite the stir, constructing a new narrative that neither they nor the Royal Family can be certain of recovering from.

First came a biography of the pair, *Finding Freedom*, written by close confidante Omid Scobie, which hinted at unease within the royal ranks. Then, in March 2021, their shock interview with TV talk show maven Oprah Winfrey aired to global comment on both sides of the Atlantic.

Since then, things have been reasonably quiet and calm as the Sussexes have settled into their Los Angeles lifestyle and adjusted to family life with their two children, Archie, aged three, and 18-month-old Lilibet. However, as several multimillion-dollar deals reach their point of fruition, our red-headed prince and his raven-maned wife are once again back in the spotlight.

Last month, their six-part Netflix documentary *Harry & Meghan* was released, which saw the Duke and Duchess of Sussex attempt to tell their side of the story. Capturing the couple from their earliest days together right up to the period after Prince Philip's death, the series has certainly split opinion. While some find it to be insightful and informative, others believe it to be shocking and villainous. Or in some cases, opinions have flipped completely, and those who might not have supported them before have now gone to the other side and have begun to empathise with the pair.

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'I'VE HAD TO MAKE PEACE WITH THE FACT THAT WE'RE PROBABLY NEVER GOING TO GET GENUINE ACCOUNTABILITY OR A GENUINE APOLOGY'

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To add to any nerves the Royal Family may have already been experiencing, Harry's book, *Spare*, is released this month. The title alone conveys the Duke's deep disconnection from his own family, one that doesn't appear as if it will be healed anytime soon.

All things come in threes, and Netflix has announced it is also behind the couple's other new project, entitled *Live to Lead*. It showcases inspirational figures – from climate change activist Greta Thunberg to New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, to South Africa rugby star Siya Kolisi, the first-ever black captain of the side. Harry was inspired by the efforts of Nelson Mandela, and true to the former president's lifelong aspirations, the series of interviews is positioned to offer hope, vision, perspective and understanding... arguably at a time when the world needs it most.

Hopefully Harry himself will find in 2023 ways to reconcile what has been a turbulent and heart-wrenching year for the royals. He and Meghan's latest moves won't have done much to repair relations, but his transparency and clarity over how he feels hard done by may indeed act as a line in the sand, from where a new vista may emerge for the outliers, even if he questions the possibility of that.

"I've had to make peace with the fact that we're probably never going to get genuine accountability or a genuine apology [from my family]," says Harry in the documentary. "My wife and I, we're moving on. We're focused on what's coming next."

Such sentiments have been uttered by many of us regarding our own families, and unequivocally this shows us that when it comes to matters of the heart, the Windsor family, for all their wealth, prestige and glory, really are just like the rest of us. But is this family's broken relationship past the point of repair?

Photo credit: Tim Pook/ Shutterstock







# Winnie-the-Pooh

## A bear of very little brain

Winnie-the-Pooh might not seem smart, and he certainly gets himself into some scrapes. But there's no doubt he's also friendly, kind and thoughtful – and comes up with some great ideas to get his friends out of trouble.

And did you know he has his own special day on January 18? All things Pooh Bear are celebrated then because it's when Pooh's creator A.A. Milne was born, back in 1882. To join in the fun, why not organise a teddy bears' picnic, watch a Pooh movie, or just eat a load of honey?

Pooh was named after the teddy owned by author A.A. Milne's son, Christopher Robin – who also stars in the Pooh books. But the original drawings were based on Growler, the teddy owned by the son of the book's illustrator, E.H. Shepard.

Milne's tubby creation made his first appearance in print in a 1924 edition of *Punch* magazine. And two years after that, the first collection of Pooh stories appeared in an eponymously titled book, *Winnie-the-Pooh*.

Piglet, Eeyore, Kanga, Roo and Tigger – as well as Pooh – were all based on toys owned by young Christopher Milne. But Owl and Rabbit were the author's own inventions.

The Hundred Acre Wood, where Pooh and his friends lived, is Milne's version of Ashdown Forest in East Sussex, where the family bought a house in 1925.

Perhaps Pooh's most outstanding achievement was inventing the game of Pooh sticks. Standing on a bridge over running water, each player drops a stick on the upstream side, and the winner is the one whose stick appears first on the downstream side.

Or perhaps his greatest achievement was being one of the highest-earning literary characters ever. The rights to Pooh were sold to Disney in 2001 for a staggering \$350million.

Not a bad achievement for a bear of supposedly very little brain.

Photo credit: winniepoohshow.co.uk; Disney; E. H. Shepard; Wikipedia



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### THE SMALL DÉCOR CHANGES YOU CAN MAKE TO YOUR HOME FOR 2023

**Outdoor indoor:** With all the stresses of modern life, the natural hues of the great outdoors are a perfect way to de-stress. So bring the outside in with wood, lush plant life and a colour scheme rooted in nature.

**Aqua calm:** Similarly, anything reminiscent of the sea works to ground those of us who are in thrall to modern life. Turquoise, tranquil blue and anything suggestive of the azure depths will soothe and calm the busy mind.

**Homely habitat:** Another trend expected to be prevalent in 2023 is being sympathetic to your local community. So rugs shorn from local sheep, furniture crafted from upcycled wood and art, and sculptures from resident artists.

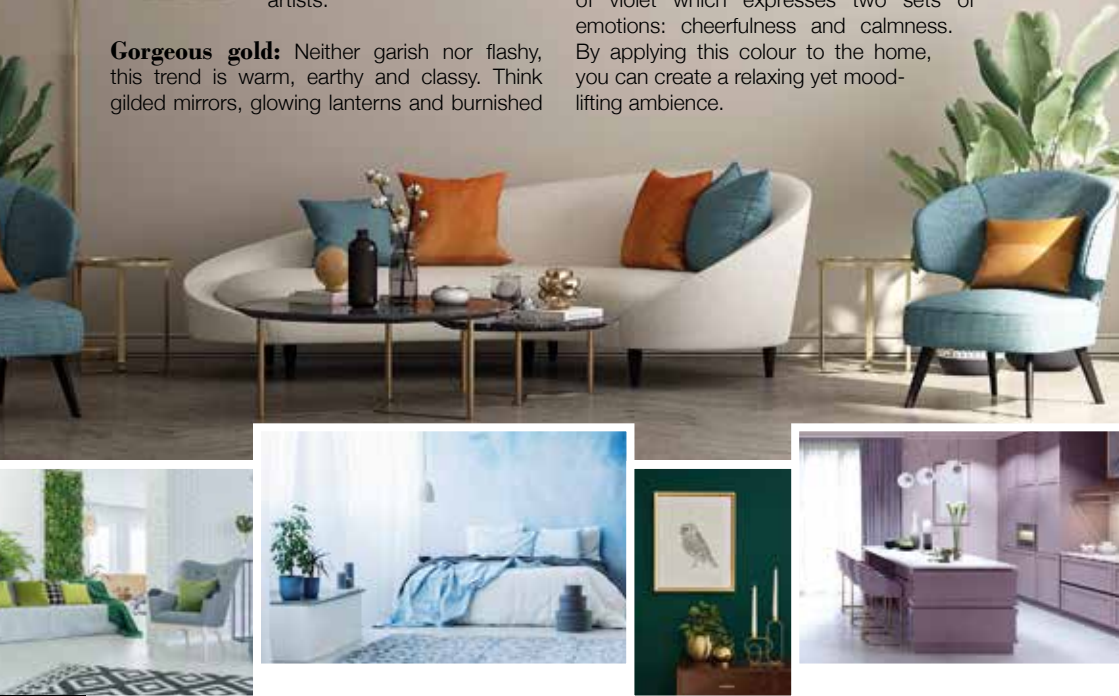
**Gorgeous gold:** Neither garish nor flashy, this trend is warm, earthy and classy. Think gilded mirrors, glowing lanterns and burnished

candlestick holders. Anything that exudes warmth will work.

**Largesse lampshades:** Does anything tie a room together quite like a lampshade? Looming over us in all their glory, larger lampshades are having a moment. Beautiful brass or the purest paper, some are even crafted from nothing but feathers, and yet the impression they leave endures.

**Craving curves:** Sensuous, soft and languid, straight lines are eschewed in 2023 and replaced by curves. Sofas, tables, chairs and mirrors – everything needs to have that gentle touch and slightly out-of-focus edge.

**Lavender love:** According to predictions, the Colour of the Year in 2023 is going to be Digital Lavender. This is a light shade of violet which expresses two sets of emotions: cheerfulness and calmness. By applying this colour to the home, you can create a relaxing yet mood-lifting ambience.



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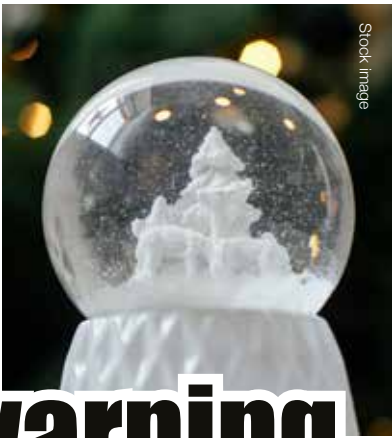


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# LOCAL NEWS

*from your neighbourhood*



Stock Image

## Dog trainer's warning

A Rayleigh dog trainer was left devastated when two of her dogs died after ingesting snow globe liquid. Caroline Osbourne (pictured left), director of K9ology – Dog Psychology and Training, has urged others to throw out their snow globes after the incident.

In early December, one of Caroline's dogs pulled a snow globe from a shelf, causing it to smash. Dogs Lexi and Milo began licking the liquid, and Caroline looked online to see what it was. She discovered that many snow globes contain antifreeze, which can be extremely dangerous and even fatal to dogs if ingested.

Caroline immediately took Lexi and Milo to the vet. She said: "Treatment began very quickly; induced vomiting, antidote and then they were put on drips as a precaution. With antifreeze poisoning, the window for treatment is very slim, but we all acted fast.

"Regardless, Lexi passed away 28 hours later, followed by Milo six hours after.

"I never knew some snow globes contained antifreeze. It only takes a very small amount to poison a dog or cat, and it's poisonous for us too. The liquid is apparently sweet, so pets will lick it.

"If you have any snow globes, be careful with them."

## Hundreds of trees planted for cleaner future

Rayleigh Council's Open Space team has begun planting nearly 500 saplings in Rayleigh as part of the ambitious Parks for Nature project.

The planting of 480 trees at Fairview Playing Field is part of the initiative to create new woodland areas and help the council achieve its aim of being carbon neutral.

A further 960 trees are being planted in Ashingdon and 960 in Great Wakering.

The team was joined by councillor David Sperring, portfolio holder for environment (pictured left), and councillor Danielle Belton, portfolio holder for climate and economy (pictured right).

Cllr Sperring said: "Parks for Nature is creating new meadow and conservation areas, woodland habitat and wetland areas. Our aim is to create a balance between recreational and environmental areas in our beautiful open spaces."



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# MARK FRANCOIS MP



Member of Parliament for Rayleigh and Wickford



LOCAL NEWS RAYLEIGH

At the end of November, I introduced a Ten Minute Rule Bill (TMRB) in the House of Commons, entitled the Roadworks (Regulation) Bill. As the name suggests, a TMRB entitles the MP proposing the Bill to a speech, lasting up to 10 minutes, to outline their case for why a new law is required.

The aim of the Bill would be to give local highways authorities much stronger powers to control the granting of permits to anyone who wanted to dig up the highway network and would mandate highway authorities to take all practicable steps to 'deconflict' roadworks in their areas. It would also increase fines for roadworks that overrun.

Given the large number of complaints that I now regularly receive about Essex County Council

(ECC) Highways, not least about the frequency of roadworks in our county of Essex, I resolved to pick this subject for my Bill.

Historically, it is difficult to get a TMRB onto the Statute Book, so I have now written to the Transport Secretary, Mark Harper MP, to see whether it might be possible to pass at least some of these proposals (which ECC Highways is now also supporting) into law – either via primary legislation or enhanced government guidelines – and I am now hoping to meet the Transport Secretary early this year.

Either way, I have sought to highlight an issue that I know is of growing concern to my constituents, and which I intend to continue to press, to try to achieve progress in this area.

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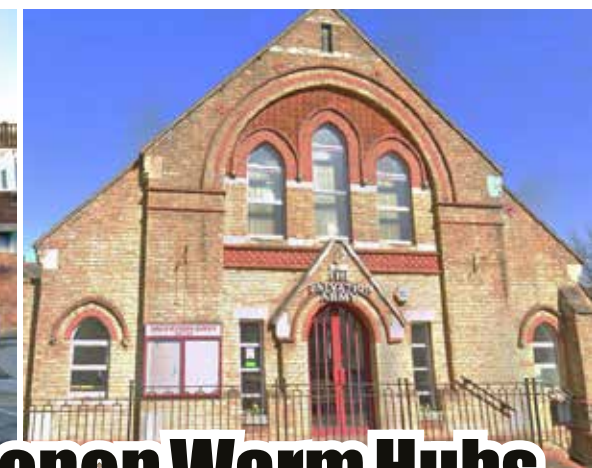


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# Organisations open Warm Hubs

Winter can be a challenging time for many, and with energy prices soaring, this year may prove to be extra difficult for those struggling financially.

Many organisations in Rayleigh are opening their doors to provide Warm Hubs – places where people can come to keep warm and connect with others throughout the coldest months of the year.

The Warm Hubs in Rayleigh include:

> The MegaCentre, Brook Road, Rayleigh, SS6 7UT.

Open on Tuesdays from 9.30am to 3.30pm.

> The Salvation Army, High Street, Rayleigh, SS6 7BU.  
Open on Wednesdays from 10am to 1pm.

> Rayleigh Library, High Street, Rayleigh, SS6 7BX.  
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> Christ Church URC, Crown Hill, Rayleigh, SS6 7HA.  
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> Holy Trinity, Rectory Garth, Rayleigh, SS6 8BB.  
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# Home Storage Trends for 2023

The New Year is synonymous with fresh starts and, of course, the big January house declutter which gets us all thinking about how we can make changes to the way we organise our homes. If 2023 is the year you plan to give your home a stylish lift, here are some top home storage trends from Sliderobes, that are set to dominate the world of interiors in the months ahead.

## Home office order

With the shift to home working, people have been looking at ways to create an organised home office that's free from distraction. The new trend for home offices is storage solutions that are built in and bespoke, when it comes to their shelving, drawers and desks. Not only does this give it a personal touch but also makes the area feel like a functional workspace, to promote productivity.

## Sustainable storage

2023 will be the year for sustainable storage. Eco-friendly options aren't anything new but this trend is gaining momentum and it's likely that more people will be opting for natural materials and aesthetics such as rattan and bamboo, glass and wood for their storage, whether it's baskets, boxes, shelves or wardrobes.

## Crittall doors

In terms of styles, Sliderobes have seen a huge increase in crittall style doors for their customers' wardrobes and this trend is here to stay. It's easy to see why, as it's chic and minimal but has a bit of a modern edge. It's also versatile enough to suit any room style; from mid century to Scandi.



## Bespoke for you

The ultimate trend for storage in 2023 will be personalised design. Everyone wants their home to feel unique and reflect their character and this will be integrated into storage solutions too. After all, everyone has individual storage needs. Whether it's a bookworm who wants a library of shelving or a shoe lover who needs a built-in shoe-rack in their wardrobe to protect, show-off and store their collection, storage that's fit for your lifestyle and your belongings, makes it much easier to keep a space calm and organised, as everything will have its own place.



## Blue is back

Grey has long been the interiors shade of choice but colour is making a comeback. Last year saw the resurgence of green but this year blue will be the perfect pick. Depending on the shade, blue can suit any room and style.

Rich deep blues will look luxurious, whilst grey toned denim blues can create a sense of peace and calm.



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# LOCAL NEWS

*from your neighbourhood*



Photo credit: Jimjwili/Shutterstock.com

## Disappointment as station plans left abandoned

A multimillion-pound project to transform Wickford Station has come to a standstill amid the post-pandemic financial climate.

In 2020, Greater Anglia's announcement that it would be leading a £4million overhaul of the train station was met with enthusiasm. In its plan, it proposed to make a number of changes, including new male and female toilets, new and improved accessible toilets, a modern ticket office with a new bank of ticket machines, a new accessible waiting hall including seating areas and charging points, and new and improved CCTV.

Fast forward three years, and progress appears to have come to a halt.

Wickford Park councillor George Jeffery has led the criticism on this matter, arguing that while the new trains and the extension to the rail platforms are appreciated, more needs to be done to transform the station into "a welcoming entrance to our great town".

Cllr Jeffery said: "As a user of trains to and from London, I appreciate the new trains, but what I want to see is the new station and ticket office completed as promised after the historic building was demolished."

"Crucially, during the winter months, travellers should be able to purchase tickets and use a fully functional train station as promised by the operators."

A Greater Anglia spokesperson said: "The significant funding challenges facing the rail industry, as we emerge from the pandemic, have meant that so far we have not been able to make further progress in redeveloping Wickford station, following on from the platform extension project."

"We will look at the practicalities of taking forward additional improvements over the next two financial years, subject to obtaining the necessary funding and approvals. In the meantime, potential options for putting in additional customer shelters at the station are being examined."

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Photo credit: Winicar Klevenaar Architects Ltd

## Construction work begins on 123 new homes

The construction of a major new housing development in Wickford is now underway.

The Sanctuary development on Runwell Road will see the erection of two six-storey blocks to provide 123 apartments, with 113 parking spaces and associated infrastructure.

Mark Francois, MP for Rayleigh and Wickford (pictured right), joined Sanctuary staff to mark the start of construction at a recent ground-breaking ceremony.

Mr Francois MP was given a tour of the site and viewed plans for the new development, which will provide 76 one-bedroom and 47 two-bedroom affordable rent and shared ownership flats with

sustainability features including air source heat pumps.

The development has received grant funding from Homes England.

Mr Francois MP commented: "This semi-abandoned site on the entrance to Wickford has been an eyesore for years, so I welcome this exciting new development by Sanctuary to provide more than 100 sustainable new homes, both for rent and sale in my constituency."

Sanctuary Group chief executive Craig Moule (pictured left) added: "We were delighted to welcome Mr Francois MP to see the exciting project we will be delivering. The development will deliver high-quality, affordable, energy-efficient homes for local people."

## Iconic community record store closing down

An iconic record store in Wickford is closing its doors after more than 50 years in the community.

Adrian Rondeau (pictured right) first began trading records in Essex markets in 1969. When his acting career began to take off in the Seventies, he had to decide which profession to pursue. In the end, he decided to go full-time selling records in 1980, and hasn't looked back since. Adrian's store became an icon in the Wickford community, and at one point he owned four shops in the area. Now, he believes it's the right time to take a step back.

He said: "The shop does so well, it could just carry on and carry on, but I don't think I can."

Adrian has received offers from other stores for his huge reserves of records and CDs, but he wanted to give his loyal customers the chance to buy the records first, so has cut prices for a major sale. The store will close sometime in early 2023, though an exact closing date has not yet been announced.



LOCAL NEWS WICKFORD



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# DYER STRAITS

## DANNY DYER'S EXIT FROM *EASTENDERS* MARKS ALMOST A DECADE OF THRILLING DRAMA IN THE SQUARE

That Danny Dyer evolved so admirably from regal cockney to Queen Vic landlord Mick Carter is one of the more celebrated evolutions of British celebrity culture.

The East London-born West Ham United superfan has waved goodbye after almost a decade on Albert Square – a solid commitment to E20 and the drinks industry that has seen the once-derided actor and presenter rise to the cream of the soap opera fraternity.

Dyer emerged as a spiky, punchy, salt-of-the-Earth type who passed up an interest in usual working-class opportunities to embark on acting classes. Bullied at school for his passion for drama, Dyer soon had the last laugh, appearing in *Prime Suspect 3* at the age of 16.

Terrestrial gigs in *Cadfael*, *A Touch of Frost*, *Loved Up*, *Highlander*, *Soldier Soldier* and *Skins* followed, before his big film break came in *Human Traffic*, an iconic coming-of-age clubbing movie that also saw the emergence of John Simm.

Soon after, he was asked to front Bravo documentary series *The Real Football Factories* (a real-life take on *The Football Factory* movie he had previously starred in), which proved to be a big hit in an era where terrace casuals were still prevalent in the Premier League and beyond (as the subsequent *The Real Football Factories International* proved).

This was followed by *Danny Dyer's Deadliest Men*, in which he interviewed Britain's most notorious gangsters.

He turned down the chance to join the cast in Walford in 2009, citing fears of being too exposed in the public eye, but having experimented with a number of low-budget film projects, was lured to *EastEnders* in 2013 as Queen Vic landlord Mick Carter.

Enjoying a bevy of controversial storylines, he has clinched three awards in the role, including Best Serial Drama Performance at the National Television Awards. Along the way, he has made the change from the rough and ready hard man of the Square to someone capable of carrying through a wealth of poignant and emotive storylines. Having spent years developing his skills, he now looks to take that forward with other projects.

"*EastEnders* has been amazing for me," says Dyer. "I'm grateful for the beautiful years I've had there. I'm going to miss the people massively."

Talking about what comes next, the 45 year old says: "I know the landscape has changed slightly, but I want to go out there and have another go, and the only way I can do that is if I decide to walk away from the job."

Dyer will next be seen in a four-part Channel 5 drama called *Heat*, for which filming is to begin shortly in Australia.

Ahead of his Albert Square exit, executives were tight-lipped on how the storyline would develop, but there was all the drama expected of an *EastEnders* Christmas special – including a car chase, a cliff-top brawl, and ultimately tragedy as Mick met his watery end.

Perhaps the true tragedy is that one of the true mainstays of the British landscape is gone... for now, but maybe not forever.

Photo credit: BBC/Jack Barnes/Kieron McCarron





# BRITISH BUSINESS *survivors*

## FIVE AGE-OLD BRITISH COMPANIES STILL WITH US TODAY

Staggeringly, between 350,000 and 400,000 British businesses close their doors for good every year. But some companies have been up and running for centuries.

The oldest surviving British company is The Royal Mint. It opened in 1279 and, for several hundred years, was based at the Tower of London. In the early 1800s, it moved over the road. But by 1975, it had completed its move to its current home in Llantrisant, Wales. The Mint makes more than 3.3 billion coins and blanks yearly – for the UK and more than 30 other countries.

With the dwindling use of cash, the Mint has expanded into other areas, including precious metals investment, historic coins and luxury collectibles. And it's doing pretty well.

Cambridge University Press, the world's first publishing company, was founded in 1534 and publishes academic and educational texts.

Moving down the years, Royal Mail, as it's now known, was founded in 1586. For almost 500 years, it was owned by the state. But by 2015, it was fully privatised. At one stage in the early 20th century, the company had 22,000 pigeons. And someone's gone to the trouble of counting how many elastic bands it currently uses to bundle mail – apparently 342 million a year.

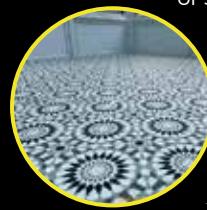
Barclays Bank was founded in London in 1690. The institution's long history is contained in an archive of photos, letters and curiosities housed in the Barclays Group Archives in Manchester.

In 1706, Thomas Twining bought a coffee shop in London's Strand and began to sell tea. Back then, tea was very costly. But Twining spotted a trend. And when he started selling loose tea leaves, as well as cups of the beverage itself, business boomed. By 1717, he'd bought additional space next door – and the shop's still open for business today.



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# PUZZLES & TRIVIA



PUZZLES

Answers: see end of The VISION Listings

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- ▶ AMETHYST
- ▶ AQUAMARINE
- ▶ DIAMOND
- ▶ FELDSPAR
- ▶ JADE
- ▶ JASPER
- ▶ LAPIS LAZULI
- ▶ MALACHITE
- ▶ MOONSTONE
- ▶ OBSIDIAN
- ▶ OLIVINE
- ▶ OPAL
- ▶ QUARTZ
- ▶ RUBY
- ▶ SAPPHIRE
- ▶ TANZANITE
- ▶ TOPAZ
- ▶ TOURMALINE
- ▶ TURQUOISE

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

## DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ More than one million animal species have been identified on earth.
- ▶ There is only one species of Koala in the world.
- ▶ In the wild, red pandas are mainly active during the twilight period and until the early hours of the morning. They can then be found resting.
- ▶ Like domestic cats, giant panda bears have vertical slits for pupils.
- ▶ It's thought there are more tigers in captivity than are left in the wild.
- ▶ Lions can eat up to 40kg of meat in a single meal. That's around a quarter of their body weight.
- ▶ You can tell the species of an elephant by the shape of their ears.

## WORD LADDER

MAKE

ROTA

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

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

DO NOT rearrange the order of the letters.

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





# WINTER Wonderland

## HOW TO GET THE BEST OUT OF YOUR GARDEN IN THE COLD WINTER MONTHS

Some of us may regard winter as the season when our desire to venture out into the garden wanes completely. Yet whether we're negotiating a path across a frosty lawn, or simply viewing nature from the warmth and comfort of the indoors, making your garden into a winter wonderland is a rewarding task.

So while you may not have the summer sorcery of flower sprays, sun loungers and an abundance of fruit and produce, these tips will help keep your outside space special even in the depths of winter.

### STRUCTURAL STATEMENTS

A winter garden is one that's lighter on detail, so create new space and interest with some cool man-made structures. From trellises to metalwork, benches to rockeries, winter provides a great opportunity for man-made materials to enter the fray.

### CALL FOR COLOUR

The assumption that the colour drains out of our gardens in winter is, ultimately, wrong. There are many stem-like winter plants that are radiant and

beautiful – consider the pinky purple of dogwood, evergreen rhododendrons and the shining white trunks of a birch tree.

### TAKE FORWARD TRADITION

Planting a number of hardy winter varieties will give your garden presence as well as helping to carry forward the legacy of a traditional English garden. Use hellebores and snowdrops to create a classic, elegant effect.

### TREMENDOUS TREES

Stripped of their summer decoration, let skeletal trees stand out against a snowy backdrop. Mixed up with evergreens, you can create a brilliant contrast.

### FANTASTIC FEASTS

Finally, don't assume your winter garden can't put produce on the table. Carrots and fava beans will still thrive throughout the winter, and you can extend the growing period of a number of other varieties of fruit and veg if you keep your greenhouse operational throughout the cold months.



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# PRUNED TO *perfection*

If you want to enjoy a good fruit cycle, you need to prune your apple and pear trees over the winter. For those who are new to fruit pruning, this step-by-step guide tells you all you need to know.

### GET THE RIGHT TOOLS

You need to have clean, sharp tools that are designed for pruning, such as secateurs, loppers or a pruning saw if you have a larger pear or apple tree. Make sure you sharpen them before use.

### CUT BACK SUCKERS AND LOWER BRANCHES

Use secateurs to cut back any suckers. These are unwanted shoots that grow near the base of the trunk. Also, cut back lower branches as these do not get sufficient light to bear good fruit.

### REMOVE DEAD OR DISEASED WOOD

Remove all branches with discoloured or flaking bark towards the base of the branch by making a cut above an outward-facing bud (one that is on the opposite side of the stem to the main trunk). If there are no buds, remove the entire branch.

### CREATE A VASE SHAPE FRAMEWORK

Ideally, you want four or five main branches that help

to create an open vase shape. If you have more than five, remove some at the base by cutting 6mm from the branch collar – this refers to the bulbous area that is attached to the trunk.

Avoid removing more than 25 per cent of the branches in one go as this can affect the tree's health and fruit production.

### REMOVE CROSSING OR RUBBING BRANCHES

Remove any branches that are growing into the centre of the tree as this will allow for better air circulation. If two branches are crossing, keep the one that best retains the vase shape of the tree and remove the other one.

### SHORTEN THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S GROWTH ON EACH BRANCH BY ONE-THIRD

Cut just above an outward-facing bud on each main branch so that new branches grow outwards. This will help the tree to develop into a healthy shape and prevent congestion.



GARDENING



# Colour me calm

Are you looking for a new hobby? Sales of adult colouring books have surged since the pandemic as people look for ways to relax, de-stress and enjoy some much needed me-time. Not convinced that colouring should be your new pastime? Discover five benefits of picking up pens and pencils below.

## Colouring relaxes your brain

Does your brain often feel frazzled by the end of the day? As colouring is a focused activity, it can help to relax your mind and keep worries at bay. It has also been shown to improve brain function as it activates the creative part of your mind.

## Colouring improves your motor skills

Adult colouring books often feature complex designs which require you to hone your hand-eye coordination and motor skills. This can be particularly beneficial if you spend a lot of time looking at screens.

## Colouring aids sleep

As many as one in three people suffer with insomnia, which is characterised as not being able to get to sleep or not staying asleep for a sufficient amount of time. Colouring before bed, rather than being exposed to blue light from your phone or tablet, can help to release melatonin and enable you to easily drift off to sleep.

## Colouring reduces anxiety

Studies have shown that colouring can help to reduce anxiety in adults. Simply by colouring for 20 minutes a day, you can lower your heart rate and decrease feelings of stress or anxiety. Colouring can also help to improve your mood.

## Colouring can be therapeutic

Similar to art therapy, colouring can be therapeutic as it helps to put your mind into a meditative state. This enables you to focus purely on the present and remove any negative thoughts from your mind.

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# BURN, baby, BURN

We know sport is great for reducing stress and boosting confidence, but let's be honest: for most of us, the biggest lure of exercise is to get fit and trim some fat.

With that in mind, here are the seven sports that burn the most calories per minute. Calorie expenditure is based on a healthy, able-bodied person of average build.

## ▲ RUNNING (UP TO 1,000 CALORIES/HOUR)

Running is great for burning calories, and even those hitting the pavements at a slow pace can burn around 700 calories per hour. And as logic dictates, the faster you run, the more calories you vanquish.

## ▲ SQUASH (UP TO 900 CALORIES/HOUR)

The best all-round sport of them all, squash combines energy bursts with stamina, power, competitive spirit and mental awareness, and is great for burning fat.

## ▲ CYCLING (UP TO 700 CALORIES/HOUR)

Despite the fact that cycling affords you the chance to step off the gas, it remains an excellent exercise for burning calories.

## ▲ BOXING (UP TO 700 CALORIES/HOUR)

It's quick bursts of energy that make boxing such a great exercise, with power, constant motion and the need to stay aware all combined in this fun, fast-paced workout.

## ▲ SWIMMING (UP TO 600 CALORIES/HOUR)

Not only is swimming excellent for putting every part of your body to use, but the continued resistance against water means additional calorie burn.

## ▲ ROWING (UP TO 600 CALORIES/HOUR)

While some may assume rowing is primarily a strength challenge for the arms, this exercise also requires leg flexibility and movement. The more muscles being used, the more calories you'll burn.

## ▲ AEROBIC DANCE (UP TO 550 CALORIES/HOUR)

Aerobic dance is not only a fun way to exercise, but is also effective at improving your fitness.

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# KISS A Ginger

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GINGER DAY THIS MONTH

On January 12, it's Kiss A Ginger Day – the perfect time to show redheads some love. But you might need to take a good look around – because red hair is rare. Only two in every 100 people are natural redheads, making it the rarest hair colour in the world. And the rarest people of all are redheads with blue eyes.

The genes responsible for red hair are recessive. This means that to have a red-haired baby, both parents must carry a red-haired gene. If both parents carry the gene but don't have red hair themselves, they'll have around a one in four chance of having a red-haired baby. If one of the parents is a redhead and the other is a carrier of the gene but doesn't have red hair, the chances go up to around one in two. And if both parents have ginger locks, chances are that all their children will have red hair too.

Hundreds of years ago, redheads were thought

to be witches and were shunned by society.

These days, things have thankfully improved – although some people still think natural gingers are brash and hot-headed. That's not true, of course. But recent studies have shown that redheads require more anaesthetic than people with other hair colours. Their response to painkillers is also different – for the medication to work, they need more of some types of painkillers and less of others.

So how are you going to celebrate on January 12? If you've got a natural ginger among your family and friends, show them how much you appreciate their extraordinary tresses. And if you're not that lucky, listen to some music by redheads – Ed Sheeran or Florence and the Machine, anyone? Or how about a film starring Julianne Moore or Jessica Chastain? The choice is yours.







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# NO-SPEND JANUARY

Did you overspend during the festive period? Is your bank balance looking a little bleak? Then no-spend January could be just what you need to get your finances back on track for 2023 and beyond.

### WHAT IS NO-SPEND JANUARY?

No-spend January is a money-saving challenge that is designed to help people get their finances back in order after splurging over Christmas. It can also help you to reset your budget, reassess where your money is going and break bad spending habits. Although called no-spend January, you are allowed to cover the cost of essentials.

### WHAT YOU CAN SPEND MONEY ON:

Mortgage/rent | Credit card repayments | Utilities such as gas, electricity and water | Urgent maintenance costs for your home or car | Food shopping | Pet supplies

### WHAT YOU CANNOT SPEND MONEY ON:

Takeaways/eating out | Clothes shopping | Entertainment such as the cinema or bowling | Beauty expenses such as the nail salon or hairdressers

### OUR TOP TIPS FOR NO-SPEND JANUARY:

1. Cut down on non-essential food and drink items such as alcohol and treats
2. Use up store cupboard and freezer food before going to the supermarket
3. Don't use your credit or debit card; instead, use cash only
4. Visit your local library for free books
5. Consider a car share to cut down on petrol costs
6. Declutter your home and see if there are any items you can sell
7. Ask family and friends to participate
8. Visit free local attractions such as museums and parks
9. Organise a clothes swap with friends

### HOW TO MOVE ON FROM NO-SPEND JANUARY:

If you don't want to revert back to unhealthy spending once January is over, it can be a good idea to introduce a no-spend week or no-spend day once a month. Also, avoid rushing out to buy new things right away as this can undo all your hard work – wait until the sales instead.





# National Eye Care Month



January is National Eye Care Month, so what better time to learn how to take care of your pet's eyesight? Sight is an essential sense that enables your pet to navigate their environment, communicate with other animals and even express emotion, so find out how to look after your pet's vision below.

## WHAT CAUSES EYE PROBLEMS IN PETS?

Sadly, eye problems are relatively common in pets and can be caused by many different things such as exposure to chlorinated water or saltwater, fungal infections from a change in climate or humidity, genetics, and ageing. Some breeds are also more susceptible to certain eye conditions than others.

## HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR PET'S EYE HEALTH

### 1. Regular maintenance

One of the easiest and most effective ways to keep your pet's eyes in good condition is by preventing any issues before they occur. You can do this by periodically cleaning their eyes with a soft, damp cloth or a specially formulated rinse and regularly trimming the hair around their eyes. Also check for any debris or contaminants in and around the eyes.

### 2. Purchase eye vitamins

You can help to support your pet's eye health by giving them eye vitamins. A more long-term approach to eye health, these are packed with antioxidants that work hard to fight harmful free radicals. Research shows that these can help to prevent the onset of age-related and hereditary macular degeneration.

### 3. Use gentle grooming products

While it is important that you keep your pet clean and well groomed, some grooming products can irritate their eyes. Use chemical-free shampoos and soaps and avoid air fresheners in the home if your pet has sensitive eyes.

### 4. Be vigilant

Many eye problems cause watery or mucus discharge, so make sure that you look out for this as well as any swelling or redness. Sensitivity to light, rubbing at the eye and holding the eye closed are also signs of a potential infection or issue.





While no one expects to be involved in a car accident, these types of incidents can happen in the blink of an eye and, if you don't know what to do next, can cause you untold stress and expense.

Here's everything you need to know about making a claim following an accident.

WHAT INFORMATION DO I NEED TO MAKE A CLAIM?

If you are involved in a motoring incident with another person, you should do your best to obtain the below information on the scene:

- > Their full name
> Their vehicle registration
> A contact telephone number

It can also be a good idea to find out their address and details of their insurance provider. If there are any witnesses, try to get their details as well. When you phone your insurance company, they are likely to ask you for your policy number, so make sure you have this to hand.

WHEN DO I NEED TO MAKE A CLAIM?

Although it can vary from one insurance provider to the next, typically you have 24 to 48 hours to inform them if you are involved in a motoring

accident. This is regardless of whether the incident was your fault or caused by another party. Where possible, you should call them while still at the scene.

DO I HAVE TO MAKE A CLAIM AFTER AN ACCIDENT?

There is no rule that says you have to make a claim after a road accident, but you are required by law to tell your insurer about what has happened.

DO I NEED TO CALL THE POLICE AFTER A CAR ACCIDENT?

According to the Road Traffic Act, you must report a car accident to a local police station within 24 hours. You can do this using the non-emergency number 101. If there is an injury or the road is blocked, call 999 immediately.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T WANT TO MAKE A CLAIM?

You may choose not to make a claim. This will allow you to keep your no-claims discount intact, although you will have to pay for any necessary repairs to your vehicle yourself. It is worth knowing that, even if you do not make a claim, the other driver involved may still do so.

Quick Fix FAMILY GARAGE advertisement. Includes logo, MOT Centre location, services (Air Conditioning, Tyres, Servicing), and contact details (01268 767 300, 69 Runwell Road, Wickford, Essex SS11 7HL).

Garolla Roller Shutter Doors advertisement. Features a large image of a white garage door, pricing (From £895), and contact information (01268 350 816, 07537 149 128).





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# ENGLAND'S FINEST?

## BEN STOKES OBE HAS TRANSFORMED HIMSELF AND THE GAME OF CRICKET

It's only five years since Ben Stokes OBE found himself facing not just exclusion from the sport he loved, but also potentially a prison sentence, having been charged with affray outside a Bristol nightclub.

The incident – in which the brilliant all-rounder was defending a homosexual couple – cost Stokes his place in the 2017/18 Ashes team, and sent the Durham cricketer on a journey of self-discovery that, ultimately, has led him to the heights he finds himself at now.

Stokes roared back from the Bristol incident, inspiring England's 2019 World Cup win, batting sensationally at Headingley in that year's Ashes to win the third Test when all seemed lost, and being named Player of the Series in South Africa that winter.

Last year, Stokes was instrumental in bringing England T20 World Cup glory, yet it is his ascent as Test captain that is truly captivating a nation at the moment.

England clinched an away Test series in Pakistan – a country in which they had only ever won two matches in their entire history – yet it is the manner of the cricket being played that truly reflects a new dawn for the sport.

'Bazball', as it is referred to, is a driven, dynamic and outlandishly positive method of playing the game, the like of which five-day Test cricket has never seen. This cricket revolution epitomises not just Stokes' captaincy, but also his approach to life itself.

As inspirational English sportspeople go, there are few who can rival Stokes' efforts.

Further proof of this was offered when Stokes was named as runner-up in the 2022 BBC Sports Personality of the Year Award. Though he didn't win, his nomination is evidence enough of his incredible success.



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