

# Reader's digest

JANUARY 2022

## AN ARCTIC ADVENTURE

One Polar  
Bear Family's  
Daring Journey

Richard  
Armitage  
Hollywood's  
Shyest  
Leading Man

6 Hobby Hacks  
To Keep You  
Healthy



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# BECOME A CARBON REDUCING HERO

Worcester Bosch has launched its latest sustainability campaign to encourage the nation to become Carbon Reducing Heroes.

**But how can you become one?**

Many of us would agree that we could do more to reduce our personal footprint upon the world, with statistics revealing that 71% of us worry about climate change every single day.

But, whilst in reality there are lots of ways we can make a difference, knowing how to do this is often a real difficulty.

This is why the UK's leading boiler manufacturer **Worcester Bosch** has introduced its latest sustainability campaign, which looks to inspire consumers to become 'Carbon Reducing Heroes'. The new initiative aims to educate homeowners on the choices they can make to reduce their carbon footprint, including when it comes to home heating and hot water. And the smallest changes really can make the biggest difference.

On average, over half of your annual household energy bills come from heating our homes. Added to the fact that 15% of the UK's carbon emissions come from home heating, we need to find solutions that allow us all to make greener choices when it comes to keeping warm. The good news is, Worcester Bosch are

already years into this process – but they need your help.

By choosing to make the switch to a newer, more efficient boiler, you will have taken the first big step to heating your home more sustainably, as well as future proofing your home for emerging greener technologies.

Worcester is actively encouraging installers across the UK to support the campaign in order to offer you the advice and confidence to start making greener choices when it comes to home heating.

To become a Carbon Reducing Hero, head over to the Worcester Bosch website and receive hints and tips on the small changes you can make to live more sustainably at home. You can also find information on the company's Future of Heating Hub. ■

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CARBON REDUCING Hero** please visit [www.worcester-bosch.co.uk/future](http://www.worcester-bosch.co.uk/future). You can also view the company's new ad on its YouTube channel, social channels and on your TV screens throughout November.

 **WORCESTER**

 **BOSCH**

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PARTNERSHIP  
PROMOTION



## Kickstart your 2022 with a **Lifetime Mortgage**

There's no better time to get your finances in check than at the start of a new year. 2022 brings a prime opportunity to make proper plans to tick off your long-held goals, whether they involve travel, improving your home, or enjoying retirement free from your current mortgage payments.

If you've not fully considered how your home could factor into your budget planning moving forward, now could be the perfect time to do so.

Low interest rates and customer-focused safeguards mean that a Lifetime Mortgage, the UK's most flexible equity release tool, is growing in popularity as a way for over 55 homeowners to release tax-free cash to spend on their wishes.

With a Lifetime Mortgage, you can access the value of your home without having to make any repayments, although you can often do so voluntarily. Instead, interest accrues and this, plus the initial loan, is

usually settled when the last homeowner has passed away or moved into long-term care and the property is sold.

Taking from your estate now will reduce its future value and may affect your entitlement to means-tested benefits, but Reader's Digest Equity Release can help you understand the implications of a Lifetime Mortgage by offering you a free, no-obligation appointment with a fully qualified adviser.

Your personally assigned adviser will guide you and your family through the whole process at your own pace to achieve a result tailored to your needs.

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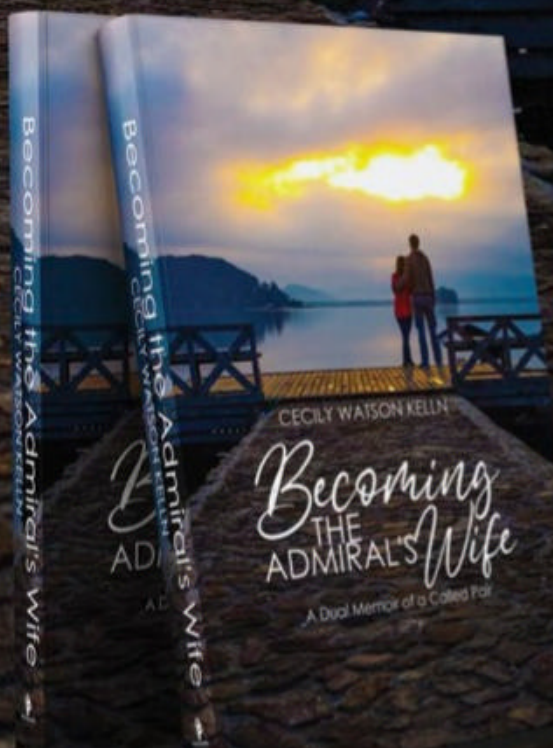
# Becoming THE ADMIRAL'S Wife

A Dual Memoir of a Called Pair



A story of inspiration to patiently trust God's divine plan.

**"Becoming the Admiral's Wife: A Dual Memoir of a Called Pair"** is a confessional memoir by Cecily Watson Kelln that involves travel, humor, and adventures. Confronted by divorce and rejection, she fights a hard battle to find love and security. "Becoming the Admiral's Wife" is a beautiful testimony of the author's search to know God, and how she finds Him in several dramatic encounters with Jesus Christ. By God's mercy and grace, she ultimately meets the loving Christian man who becomes her husband. Parts of the Admiral's memoir appear between the pages of her story. The book illustrates the power of a Christ-centered marriage and inspires readers to patiently trust as God's divine plan unfolds in their lives.



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# Urgent appeal

## HELP OLDER PEOPLE THROUGH THE COLD, LONELY WINTER MONTHS

People like Frank have very simple wishes; to be safe, warm and have food this Christmas.

*"It was always a choice between eat or top up the gas and electric for the hot water, the heating, the cooker, the stair lift. I never had enough money. I don't know what I would have done without your grant. Probably died I expect."*

Frank, 72

Never has our help - and yours - been more critical.



**SCAN to donate**



**OR call 0207 881 1169 or visit  
[www.fote.org.uk/WinterAppeal](http://www.fote.org.uk/WinterAppeal)**

Every heart-warming gift will be doubled by our match-funding partner and help pay for essentials like warm clothing, heating and hot water for older people living in poverty.

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# In This Issue...



A mother polar bear pushes her shiny black nose out from her icy cave into the subzero air of the Arctic outside. She is ready to begin a journey, after months without leaving the confines of the cave—and six months without food—to bring her babies into the world for the very first time. Discover this extraordinary adventure on p80.

It's a timely reminder that the sense we humans have, of starting afresh in the new year, is far from unique in the animal kingdom. Take heart from the bravery of this mother bear to consider your own rebirth in the new year—we've all survived a long, metaphorical winter in the grips of the COVID pandemic. How you make those first steps into the unknown of 2022 is up to you...

*Anna*



...However, among the hobbies you decide to take up, and bad habits you vouch to kick, the one thing you should definitely prioritise is your health. If you've been putting off going to the doctor about something that's bothering you, make 2022 the time to get it checked out, as it can prove to be life-saving.

Take Garry Maddox, for example, who tells his story on p34. A young, healthy man training for an upcoming triathlon, he booked in to see his doctor about a lump under his arm. What he did not expect was metastasised melanoma. Luckily, after months of intensive treatment and a life-affirming mentality, Garry was given the all-clear by his doctors.

Don't forget, early diagnosis can lead to more effective treatment, so don't wait to get medical attention.

*Eva*

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# Over To You

LETTERS ON THE *November* ISSUE

We pay **£50** for Letter of the Month and **£30** for all others

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

I was so pleased to see you spotlight trees in the November issue. Standing firm amidst life's storms they give, while asking for nothing in return, continually caring for us in myriad ways.

We are lucky enough to have an extremely old, and incredibly gnarled apple tree and it has been very good to us—providing shade for the paddling pool in summer, knotted twigs for baubles in winter and the perfect spot for our bird feeders.

The thick trunk was the first that my children tried to climb, is perfect for concealment during games of Hide and Seek and has also been the



location for many of our homemade bug hotels. And while the boughs are a little too creaky to support the treehouse we dream of, they are strong enough to provide a delicious crop of

Bramley apples, which we freeze and then enjoy in crumbles all year round.

And so, each morning, when we open our front door and see this beautiful tree, we feel thankful. Its constancy reassures us, and we feel gladdened by its presence; it was here long before us and will hopefully be here long after us—standing firm as life continues to swirl around it.

JENNIE GARDENER, *Bath*

## PUPPY LOVE

Dr Max's piece on pets broke my heart. Tears come to my eyes whenever I think of the thousands of dogs put down when their owners go into care homes. Everybody knows that pets are the best

therapy—we have proof that animals enhance the quality of elderly lives, so there is no excuse for depriving our citizens of their companionship and source of joy. With this knowledge, what excuse do care homes have for

denying their residents—to whom they owe care and respect—not only a loving friendship but something that's been proven to boost physical and mental health?

ANNABEL BARKER,  
*East Sussex*



## LEST WE FORGET

The feature in your November issue celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the Poppy Appeal was very interesting and incredibly moving.

The phrase “Lest We Forget” of course, is intended to warn people against forgetting those who fought and died for their country. The literal translation is “it should not be forgotten”. This is why it is often heard during Remembrance Day commemorations and it is often inscribed on war memorials and graves.

We should never forget, otherwise we become a nation that does not know its roots. I have a couple of relatives who died in the war. Family members have kept things around them, pictures, gifts given, clothes of the relatives who died, to keep fresh their remembrance of them. So many brave and amazing people gave their lives in the protection of our country. I am grateful not only to my own relatives but to everyone else who fought in a war and sacrificed their lives for ours.

ALICE HARDING, *Cambridgeshire*

## ROCKING WREXHAM

Thank you for your brilliant article on Wrexham. I am from Wrexham and I will defend it to the hilt and won't have anyone say anything bad about it, and no-one did! It was really lovely reading more about my hometown.

Wrexham is a great place, the town centre has just about everything and you'll never struggle for something to do. And if you're after a little more nature, there's beautiful history; for example, Erddig Hall, which is a National Trust property filled with lots of history and family events throughout the year.

There are many reasons why my hometown of Wrexham is a great place. It's got a little bit of everything and a whole lot of character.

ADAM BURTON, *Clwyd*



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Include your full name, address, email and daytime phone number. We may edit letters and use them in all print and electronic media





**SEE THE WORLD...**  
*turn the page* →

## ...DIFFERENTLY

**For 200 years** the inhabitants of Gowahori in Bangladesh have been celebrating the *Polo Bawa Utshob Fish Festival* in January. During the dry season the water level of the local marshy land is so low that fishers can reach the best spots on foot. Armed with polos, clever fish traps fashioned from bamboo, they go on the hunt together. Luckily, the ample amount of fish corralled by the shallow water means that seldom must a fisher go home empty-handed.





# Lasting Impressions

*Smartphones have changed the way we take photos forever but, says Olly Mann, we've lost some charm along the way*

I 'VE ONLY SEEN one photo of my great-great grandparents, because only one photo exists. She is half-smiling, in a black dress with grey-white pearls, caked in powdery makeup. He is bald, stern, with spectacles, and a woollen waistcoat. I can't, off the top of my head, recall their names but, without a moment's pause, I can summon their image to mind. My entire life, they've gazed out at me from Grandma's "occasional table", framed in light mahogany; the pristine linen tablecloth underneath their portrait mirroring the table they're sitting at, captured in monochrome.



Olly Mann presents *Four Thought* for BBC Radio 4, and the podcasts *The Modern Mann*, *The Week Unwrapped* and *The Retrospectors*

My austere ancestors came to mind today when I heard that—even taking into account the small downward blip in photographic activity that accompanied the global COVID lockdowns—we Earthlings now create over 1.4 trillion photographs per year. That's quite some statistic when you consider that, at the turn of the 21st century, Kodak's estimate that 80 billion photos would be taken in the year 2000 was considered newsworthy enough to herald in a press release.

The proliferation of smart phones changed the game, of course. Nowadays, rather than ask as we did in the analogue era, "should I take a photo of this?"—with all the time and financial cost that implied (developing, printing, purchasing new film...) we now find ourselves asking, "why NOT take a photo of this?! I have a camera in my pocket! Hold it, flash bang wallop!"





A torrent of images are subsequently shared, with a profound impact on our culture. Prospective tourists browse candid holiday snaps uploaded by strangers on TripAdvisor. Teens with body dysmorphia compare themselves to their digitally-enhanced peers on Instagram. Even wry observations about typos in newspapers are only tweeted when an illustrative screen grab is attached. "Pics, or it didn't happen."

On balance, when I weigh up the pros and cons of keeping tens of thousands of photos in my pocket—preserving, for example, almost every historical activity of my children's young lives—I am, in general, appreciative that such technology exists. On what day did it snow in 2018? What was the name of that cocktail that we drank on holiday in 2016? What did my older son look like when he was exactly the same age as my younger son? The answers to these questions can be accessed, in full colour, at a flick of the wrist. I'm grateful for that.

However. When I consider how much time I actually spend looking, really looking, at these images; considering their context, musing upon their resonance and tone (as I have for decades with that sole shot of my great-great-grandparents)... the answer is: very little. The purpose of spontaneous, point-of-view smartphone photography



is seldom posterity (at least, until Facebook Memories dredge up your archive). And some smartphone photography (on Snapchat, for instance) is deliberately designed to self-destruct. Hardly a time capsule.

Which is why I make photo albums. I don't do them in the modern photobook style—ie, upload my visual library to some company in California, who then sort them algorithmically and beam the results back to a printer in Britain, the result of which enters my house only as a fully-fledged hardback. No: I still get my photos developed, and then personally arrange them in old-fashioned albums.

I started when I was 16, and now I have 13 matching volumes.

(Each year, I pray WHSmith never discontinue my preferred series: 7x5, slip in, 50 pages, with note-writing cards for photo captions. Indeed, the captions are an important part of the attraction. I appreciate that the digital tags within smartphone photos can pinpoint the GPS

co-ordinates of the exact location any image was taken. Yet, somehow, my handwritten scrawl—"Trip To Nando's, for Jenny's 27th Birthday"—is substantially more evocative. The human touch.)

The bit I like the most—the bit that makes me sound a trifle obsessional, I grant you, but, honestly, it's a great way of making sense of the world—is curating the photos. Whittling them down. Each double-page spread, you see, can only hold four photos. And each album needs to showcase at least two years of my life (or else I'll run out of shelf space). So, each January, I lay out the prints from the previous year on the carpet in front of me, and select the 4, 8, or 12 examples that best reflect the handful of events that I consider

most worthy of memorialising.

This requires, for example, choosing either a shot of the Colosseum, or one of me standing in front of it. There's simply not room, in my system, for both, as my entire trip to Italy will only be granted eight precious spaces. Only gold makes the cut (12-space spreads are reserved for truly seminal occasions. Our wedding just about qualified)!

I think this is the best of both worlds: my photographs are indisputably better for having been taken digitally (experimentation, editing, enhancement), but their display is more considered than a stream of scrolling pixels. Although, let's be honest: would my great-great grandchildren prefer I left behind a single photo? Probably. ■

---

## Funbelievable Food Facts

*Pineapple eats you back. It contains an enzyme called bromelain, and that tingly feeling you experience after eating pineapple is the enzyme breaking down some of your proteins.*

Peanut butter can make diamonds. German scientist Dan Frost found that, as it contains carbon, under the right conditions, peanut butter forms diamonds.

*Apples are part of the rose family. As are cherries, pears, strawberries and peaches!*

Broccoli was created by humans, bred out of the wild cabbage plant.

*Oysters are alive when you eat them. Once oysters die, the quick accumulation of bacteria means they're no longer safe to eat.*

Source: [buzzfeed.com/hannahdobro/wildly-interesting-food-facts](https://www.buzzfeed.com/hannahdobro/wildly-interesting-food-facts)

# *Richard Armitage*

## On Hollywood, *The Hobbit* And Hard Work

By Simon Button

From bursting onto the musical theatre stage, the prolific actor has gone on to star in Hollywood blockbusters and hit TV shows—all while being “shy”

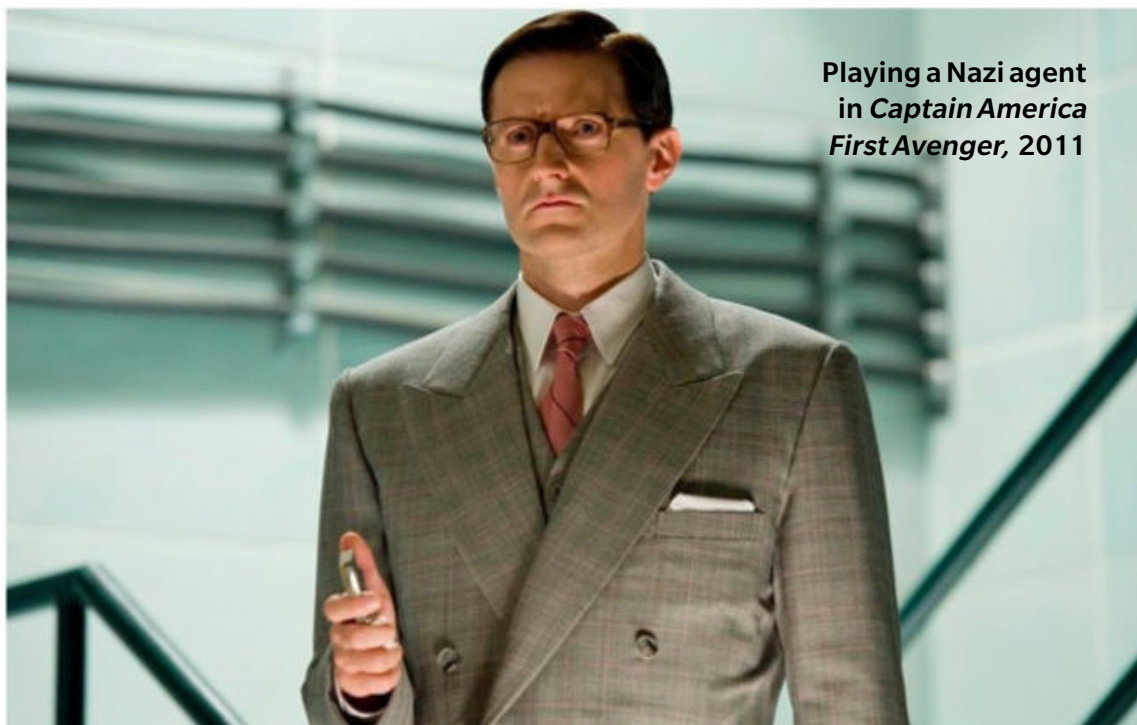
**H**E'S BEEN IN *The Hobbit* franchise, featured in the Marvel universe and has a string of acclaimed TV performances under his belt. But having got his start in musical theatre, Richard Armitage never envisioned a career beyond the stage.

“I wasn't sure somebody like me had a place in film or television,” the now very much in-demand actor admits to thinking when he was growing up in Leicestershire. “I thought I might be able to do something on stage but I never

dreamed about working on screen and it was only later in life when people started giving me chances that I thought, *Maybe I can do this.*”

I ask him what he means by “somebody like me” and Richard elaborates: “Somebody who's a bit shy and not necessarily a show-off. I felt like you had to have this supreme confidence to be an actor in film and TV, but having met a lot more people in the business who are like me I've realised there are two kinds of actors—people who have big personalities and enjoy putting them on film, then other people who





Playing a Nazi agent  
in *Captain America  
First Avenger*, 2011

## “I’M SOMEBODY WHO’S A BIT SHY AND I FELT LIKE YOU HAD TO HAVE THIS SUPREME CONFIDENCE TO BE AN ACTOR IN FILM OR TV”

use character as a skin to hide in or escape to. I fall under the latter category and it’s provided me with the most incredible adventures.”

Those adventures include playing an assassin in the huge-budget *Captain America: The First Avenger*, filming the *Hobbit* trilogy in New Zealand and being directed by Tim Burton in *Alice Through the Looking Glass* on the big screen, while also starring in *Spooks*, *The Vicar of Dibley*, *Robin Hood* and *Hannibal* on the small one. And when we catch up via Zoom, 50-year-old Armitage is dialling in from Seville, where he’s

currently filming crime drama *The Man From Rome*.

**The subject at hand, though,** is the new eight-part Netflix thriller *Stay Close*, which is based on the Harlan Coben book of the same name and centres around three people—working mum Megan (Cush Jumbo), former documentary photographer Ray (Richard) and detective Broome (James Nesbitt)—whose pasts come back to haunt them.

Having previously been in another Coben adaptation, last year’s *The Stranger*, he was drawn to *Stay Close*

*In Stay Close*

because it meant being reunited with the same team. Plus, he saw Ray as a fascinating, dishevelled, heavily tattooed, and ultimately down-on-his-luck character.

Richard's hair is shorter and tidier when we chat and his arms aren't covered in tattoos, but the actor

says there is some common ground between him and Ray.

"There's a slight solitude to him, although that's through circumstance rather than choice, but I understand that side of him because I have a tendency to be a recluse or an introvert. Ray also has quite an



artistic brain and an artistic mind, which I related to and enjoyed.”

**Born in the village of Huncote**, near Leicester, Armitage mastered the cello and played in local orchestras before studying drama and dance at Pattinson College boarding school, recalling: “It was quite strict but that served me well because it gave me discipline and it made me a very hard-worker.”

Having worked in Budapest for six months to gain his Equity Card (Equity is a UK trade union for actors), he then returned to the

UK and did lots of musical theatre, appearing in the likes of *42nd Street*, *Annie Get Your Gun* and *Cats*. “Then I started thinking about what the rest of my life might shape up to be and I didn’t want to just move around the various musicals in the West End before ending up teaching somewhere—not that there’s anything wrong with that, but I felt there was something else in me, another facet to my personality that wasn’t being fulfilled. I felt I needed a career with more longevity.”

So he enrolled at LAMDA and after graduation worked for the Royal





*The Hobbit:  
An Unexpected  
Journey, 2012*

Shakespeare Company before slowly inching his way into television, eventually landing the role of John Thornton in the BBC's 2004 *North & South* (notably his first and so far only period drama).

Two years later he was Guy of Gisborne in *Robin Hood* and also got to romance Dawn French in *The Vicar of Dibley*, saying: "That was like a little diamond in a field of coal. When they asked me, I was like 'Really? Have they seen what I usually do? That's not my bag'. But it was great fun and it was my first experience of a live studio audience,

seeing the marriage of theatre and TV together and how brilliant Dawn was at bringing the audience in."

After a regular gig as MI5 protegee Lucas North in *Spooks* he then found himself playing dwarf leader Thorin Oakenshield under the direction of Peter Jackson. "I was obsessed with his *Lord of the Rings* films and wished I'd been in them. Then I managed to get in a room with him and by some bolt of lightning he decided I was right for the role. That was one of those life-changing moments where I had to pick myself up off the floor."



Also in the *Hobbit* trilogy was Richard's *Stay Close* co-star James Nesbitt. "So we reminisced a lot about being in New Zealand for nearly two years, having this extraordinary experience." He laughs. "Most of my memories are about surviving the costume and the make-up because it was so hot and heavy. Most of the time you were sitting in a chair wheezing and trying not to collapse."

*Stay Close* was filmed in Manchester, Blackpool and the west of Lancashire. "And it was a really interesting period," Armitage says of getting back to work after lockdown.

"Productions had started up again and we came in at a time when COVID was feeling a little bit more controlled. The world was slowly opening up but we were still in this strict bubble, getting tested twice a week, with masks everywhere. That was an asset having worked with this crew before because meeting people from behind a mask is a bit of a challenge but it was like meeting up with old friends."

He's been labelled a Method actor but doesn't really know what that means, although he does a lot of preparation for a role and writes character diaries to fill in their



## “A PAINTER DOESN'T PAINT A PORTRAIT, PUT IT ON THE WALL AND STAND IN FRONT OF IT. THEY GET OUT OF THE WAY”

backstories. “Maybe some people just learn the lines and turn up but when you’re given a role you start working and you have a plan. That’s my method, I suppose, to read as much as I can, find as many influences as I can and try to get the work done before shooting so when you’re on set your brain can be completely focused on the scene.”

**When it comes to his private life,** he keeps it very private indeed, not because he’s a guarded interviewee but because of actors he admires like Gary Oldman, noting: “The thing

that’s great about actors like him is that you only really know them for their characters and you don’t know much about their lives. Likewise I don’t want my life to get in the way of the thing I’m trying to create. If people know less about me and more about the character then I’m doing my job well.”

Richard smiles. “A painter doesn’t paint a portrait, put it on the wall and stand in front of it. They get out of the way.” ■

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*Stay Close* is available to watch on Netflix from December 31



# I REMEMBER...

## Don McLean



Best known for “American Pie”, singer-songwriter Don McLean is celebrating the song’s 50th anniversary. He looks back on his childhood in New York, his determination to succeed and what he made of Madonna’s take on his signature hit

**BING CROSBY ALWAYS SEEMED TO BE ON THE RADIO** when I was three or four years old. During Christmas, his song “White Christmas” was on constant rotation, and it felt like such a magical time to me growing up in New Rochelle, New York. Eventually we got a television, around 1953—about two years after everyone else. My father thought TV was just a fad so he figured I



Baby Don with  
father Donald  
McLean, mother  
Elizabeth and sister  
Bette Ann

could visit other people's houses to watch but finally we got our own set. I remember being glued to Duncan Renaldo in *The Cisco Kid*. That was my favourite.

**THERE WASN'T REALLY ANY FUN IN OUR HOUSE.** My father was Scottish and he was kind of always up against it—always worried about money and so on, and also he was sick. He died when he was 56 and he had been suffering the effects of advanced heart disease for years before that. I was about ten years old when he realised he wasn't going to be around for long but he didn't tell anybody that. He was struggling but

not revealing to anyone why, because he was very stoic.

**LUCKILY MUM WAS ATTACHED TO A LARGE ITALIAN FAMILY,** so there was a lot of energy and happiness on that side of the family. But I didn't relate to either side of my family. The Scottish side was too cold for me and the Italian side was a little too warm for me. I've never said that before but it's true. I was somewhere in the middle.

**ELVIS PRESLEY GOT ME HOOKED ON MUSIC.** Before he came along there were a lot of children's records around, like "I Saw Mummy Kissing



Santa Claus”, and in the 1950s children were children and adults were adults. Kids weren’t paid attention to; their musical tastes or whatever movie they wanted to see was irrelevant. Coming out of the Second World War, it was an adult world. Then Elvis came along in 1956 and everything changed. I lived in a fancy neighbourhood where he was considered a bit trashy but I just loved the guy. Because we were not paid attention to as youngsters no-one noticed that I was combing my hair like him and rolling up my sleeves.

**I WAS 12 OR 13 WHEN I FIRST GOT HOLD OF A GUITAR.** That’s when I knew what I wanted to do with my

life. My sister also paid for me to have opera lessons because I had childhood asthma and I swam a lot. Both of those helped me with breath control, which would come in useful when I started singing, and also helped with my asthma.

**DAD DIED WHEN I WAS 15.** It pretty much happened right before my eyes. He had a heart attack and I had to call the doctor, even though he didn’t want me to. They had him all swaddled up, they took him away and I never saw him again. But as I came down the stairs when they were taking him to hospital he smiled at me and I knew he was



saying, “You did well son. You’re a man now.” It was pretty powerful and something I’ll never forget.

**WHEN I WAS 16 AND SET ON A CAREER IN MUSIC** I became friends with Erik Darling, singer with the folk group The Weavers. Eventually he asked me to join the group but I said no because I didn’t like his music. I told him, “I don’t think your songs are any good” and that was the end of our friendship for a long time. But I just had to be truthful and say, “You guys suck”.

**PETE SEEGER WAS INSPIRATIONAL** but also a disappointment. He was in

The Weavers too, and I knew him for about seven years but I couldn’t understand his hatred of America and of rock ‘n’ roll music. He’s been given every award you can think of by the American government and he’s in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame so I think it’s funny. He was a terrific human being in other ways. There’s a saying that goes, “To keep a friend you have to close one eye”, so you could say I had to close one eye.

**FOR SIX YEARS I PLAYED AT CAFES AND COFFEE HOUSES** and it was incredibly exciting and challenging. But ignorance is bliss and there’s something to be said for that. I’d





form groups with friends and we felt like the biggest stars in the world, because we'd get to sing and we'd get an applause and a few bucks. It was a thrill. I was in college at the time and I'd get a call going, "Come down to Greenwich Village, we need an opening act at the weekend" and I'd be like, "No problem."

**MY FIRST ALBUM *TAPESTRY* WAS TURNED DOWN BY 30 RECORD LABELS.** It's been said it was turned down by 72 labels. That's not true, but still it was painful. However, my Scottish blood means that if you p\*\*s me off I'm just going to get mad and my attitude was, "This album is going to come out," which it did in 1969. I was also savvy enough not to give up my publishing rights. If I hadn't done

that I would be less successful today because I own most of my recording masters and all my songs.

**"AMERICAN PIE" WAS MY FIRST BIG HIT** when it came out in 1971 but if you want to know the real Don McLean you've got to go to my albums. People talk about "American Pie" all the time and that's fine by me, but I have so many albums. If you look at Spotify statistics I'm played every day in 92 countries and there are probably 260 million downloads. It's much bigger than that one song, but people are still obsessed with it—and let me tell you, I'm happy with that they are!

**I WROTE "VINCENT" BECAUSE** I had always loved Van Gogh. It's



interesting because his work is so accessible, to the point that he's almost a caricature of himself. It's so childlike and it touches you, almost like a cartoon and yet there's this poignancy and depth to it. I was fascinated by the idea of it being a song that he would write about himself. I wanted it to be as sensitive, ethereal, ephemeral and gossamer-like as the wind. I didn't want a song with just some dumb lyric about being an artist.

**BECOMING A PARENT WAS FASCINATING.** I have two children, Jackie and Wyatt [from his second marriage], and when they came along I was pulled into structured

society. It meant doctor visits, education, all those sort of things, and if you get a healthy child you get down on your knees and thank God. Also when my children were young and growing up I felt invincible. I felt youth and energy, like love and strength was all around me. It made me feel ageless for decades. My daughter is a singer now and my son is becoming an expert on fine books.

**MY GIRLFRIEND [PARIS DYLAN] WAS A FAN FOR A LONG TIME.**

Then after my divorce we got together. And we've had such a blast. Over the last few years she's come with me to probably 300 one-

At a Berlin concert in 2018 (Left); Don with his ex-wife Patricia and children Jackie and Wyatt in 2004



nighters all over the world and she's been very good for me. She's supportive and right there by my side all the time.

#### WHEN I HEARD MADONNA'S VERSION OF "AMERICAN PIE"

I loved it. I loved the video and I think she's a very tall timber in the forest. I could have met her but I didn't want to. I don't like meeting people too much. It's funny because one time I needed a new bass player, I rehearsed about five of these guys, then I went to my musical director and said, "I don't want to meet any more people. Let's find someone and settle on them. Enough already!"

BEING INDUCTED INTO THE SONGWRITERS HALL OF FAME in 2004 was major. I was in a room full of famous people and Garth Brooks said some nice things about me, I sang a little and it was a marvellous evening. Then earlier this year I got a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and there was quite a crowd, as well as "Weird Al" Yankovic—whom I've been friends with for many years and he's a wonderful man, very down-to-earth. ■

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#### As told to Simon Button

Tickets are on sale now for Don McLean's 50th Anniversary of "American Pie" tour from [donmclean.com](http://donmclean.com)

Gary Maddox:  
"It's OK if there  
isn't a future...  
What really  
matters is that I'm  
here now"



# SURVIVING MY SHOCKING DIAGNOSIS

*As a young man, I overcame non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Twenty-six years later, I faced a terrifying new challenge*

BY Garry Maddox

FROM THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

It's late June 2019, and I have no indication of what's ahead. Family life and work as a senior writer for a newspaper in Sydney, Australia, are going well, and I'm enjoying training for a triathlon in Lausanne, Switzerland, in September. Since taking up the sport six years ago, I've come to love getting outdoors to swim, run or cycle nearly every morning

I book in to see my doctor about a lump under my left arm. He thinks it's a harmless cyst. I get back to work and training. In early July a second lump emerges on the left side of my chest. The GP thinks it's another cyst but, because it's more noticeable and I'll be overseas soon, I ask to have it removed. He sends me to a surgeon who wants a biopsy before operating.

So on a wintry afternoon in late July, I have a series of scans and a needle biopsy at a clinic. It goes on much longer than expected. After the doctor glumly studies the X-rays and does another biopsy, I ask if he thinks it's cancer. He nods.

Whatever either of us says next is a blur.

Arriving home, I tell my wife, Heather, as calmly as I can what the doctor said. Just as stunned as I am, she's immediately practical: suggesting we wait till we know more, and take things day by day.

I break the news to my son, Kip, 27, who is on his laptop in his bedroom. He takes it in slowly and calmly. We all know there is no point wasting tears now.

We have a quiet dinner, silently resolved that, as a family, we will do everything possible to beat this thing.

Two days later, the surgeon confirms it's cancer. "If you're lucky, it's lymphoma," he says. "If you're unlucky, it's melanoma."

I still hope to race in five weeks

**From the beginning, Gary's son Kip and wife Heather were with him in his fight against cancer**

and get treatment when I return home. But after more scans and biopsies, an oncologist calls. It's late on a Friday in August, and I'm walking home after having my biopsy stitches removed.

The doctor admits to being shocked: it's melanoma, metastasised. I ask whether she's shocked because of how much cancer there is or how far it has advanced. "Frankly, both," she says. There are tumours all around my chest, stomach and legs.

It's a sombre walk home.

I talk through the diagnosis with Heather and Kip, trying to stay positive but unable to forget those words, "Frankly, both." We go to a favourite Thai restaurant, and talk about anything but the diagnosis in a bid to stay cheerful. The surreal thing is how fit I feel. Without those lumps, I would have had no idea that I was dangerously ill.

I work the following Sunday, write a couple of stories, then tell the executive editor about the diagnosis. It's a tough, awkward conversation for both of us, but I'm relieved and grateful when he offers whatever support I need to get through it.

I have no idea when or where treatment will start. Over the next



few days, I steel myself for what I expect will be chemotherapy. I try not to get too distressed. Whatever happens next, it will take time, and that's time I should try to enjoy.

**T**WENTY-SIX YEARS EARLIER, a similar experience made me grow up fast. After being diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma, I went through six months of sometimes brutal chemotherapy. The treatment worked, and I came out of the experience a better, more grateful person. Heather and I had just bought a house, and with Kip a toddler I was determined to stay alive to be a good father.

Stepping back from work, I learned to live in the moment, appreciate what I had and make the most of life. Getting well again, I was determined to live with intensity, give back, have fun.

Now it's a different challenge. Melanoma. "Australia's cancer", as

my oncologist calls it. With high UV levels and outdoor lifestyles, Australia and New Zealand have the world's highest incidence of melanoma. Despite decades of sun-awareness campaigns, one Australian is diagnosed with melanoma every 30 minutes. It killed more than 1,400 in 2018, according to the Melanoma Institute Australia.

The cascade of bad news continues. Five pathologists are

**SOME VERY ILL-  
LOOKING PATIENTS  
ARE HERE. I WONDER  
IF THIS IS HOW  
I'LL LOOK SOON**

unable to specify what type of melanoma I have, other than by a terrifying and indecipherable phrase: “undifferentiated malignant neoplasm with prominent lymphohistiocytic reaction.”

From a form given to me to sign in a waiting room, I discover I have “stage four” melanoma, meaning it has metastasised extensively around the body. Googling on my phone, I’m horrified to learn there is no stage five.

Six weeks after the first lump but before any treatment begins, another lump emerges on my stomach, and

my thighs begin to ache ominously.

Strange as it might sound, I realise how lucky I am. Only one tumour—in my lung—is affecting a vital organ, and, crucially, the doctors don’t think the cancer has reached my brain. And there’s a really touching amount of support from family and the friends and work colleagues who know about the diagnosis.

I tell as few people as possible. If a friend is upset when I tell them, it upsets me. If someone says how confident they are I’ll get through it, that also upsets me. *Don’t they know how serious this is?* In calmer moments, I realise people are just doing their best to respond without knowing what to say.

The nights are the worst. There’s a lot to think about in the darkness: *This will end badly. There will be pain. Why didn’t I do more with my life?* Eventually, some time past five every morning, our kelpie, Kody, barks to be let in. As he jumps around and follows me back up the stairs, sniffing and snorting, the dark thoughts disappear.

**O** NCOLOGIST ALEX MENZIES works out of a modern clinic in North Sydney, headquarters for Melanoma Institute Australia, the world’s largest not-for-profit organisation devoted to the disease’s clinical care, research and teaching.

Energetic, laser-focused and





Gary found peace swimming at his local aquatic centre

practical, Dr Menzies says that after further testing there's still uncertainty about exactly what type of cancer I have. He thinks it's most likely melanoma, and says the best treatment is not chemotherapy but immunotherapy.

Two powerful drugs, Opdivo (or nivolumab) and Yervoy (ipilimumab), will aim to activate my own immune system to kill the cancer cells. To start, there will be four treatments, three weeks apart. Only 50 per cent of patients get through all four because of side effects, but even one treatment can have a positive effect.

The staggering £140,000 cost over two years is covered under the Australian government's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

The drugs are available at a centre across the road so I can start immediately if I want. I can hardly say "absolutely" quick enough.

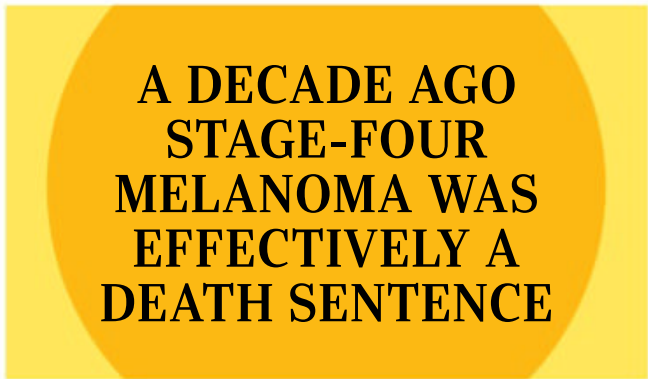
Half an hour later, I'm sitting in a leather armchair with a drip in my arm for the first treatment: 30 minutes of Opdivo, 30 minutes of a saline solution, 30 minutes of Yervoy. Some very ill-looking patients—pale and thin—are being treated in armchairs in various rooms. I wonder if this is how I'll look soon.

Two weeks into treatment—just after I was due to race in Switzerland—it's clear immunotherapy is nothing like chemotherapy. Instead of being knocked flat, then gradually recovering before the next treatment, each day is different. Some days I feel

good; others, tired and sick. Sleep is fitful.

I've worked out my own approach to getting well: enjoy every day, stay in the moment, relish time with family and friends, eat well, stay engaged with the world, exercise, have fun and keep mentally stimulated.

I love reading books and watching films when I feel well enough. Swimming is helping, too, even just



**A DECADE AGO  
STAGE-FOUR  
MELANOMA WAS  
EFFECTIVELY A  
DEATH SENTENCE**

sliding into the cooling water at a nearby aquatic centre. Calmness comes as the laps pass.

By late September, a month into my treatment, my side effects have been limited to skin rashes and thrumming aches in my hands, legs and feet, mostly at night. I start the day by walking the dog. Even if I don't feel like it, I head to the pool.

An easy 20 laps becomes 30 some days. I decide on a project: using treatment time to improve my swimming. I try to convince myself—almost trick myself—that there will be a future. I can sometimes stretch to 40, even 50, steady laps.

As the weeks pass, I come to terms with two aspects of having cancer that settle the overnight anxiety. Instead of baulking at being a patient, I accept that I'm part of this twilight world of medical struggle. I start wearing the rubber wristband I've been given that tells doctors and paramedics the drugs I'm taking. Instead of feeling different from other patients, I feel a kinship. I try to smile instead of avoiding eye contact.

And I decide that it's OK if there isn't a future. I've been a good father and I've made the most of the time I've had since getting through lymphoma. What really matters is that I'm here now.

In October, after the third treatment, my sleep gets worse as my legs, feet and hands ache again at night. By the afternoon, I need a nap.

Swimming gets me through it. One morning I swim four kilometres. The next week, five. Three weeks later, six. Focusing on a smooth style and a low heart rate, I'm enjoying swimming so much that the laps pass easily.

Soon it's November—time for scans to see how the four treatments have worked.

**H**EATHER AND I have barely sat down when Dr Menzies breezes into the clinic. The scans, he says, show the treatment is working “spectacularly”.

I'm confused. "In a good way?" I ask.

He smiles. Of the possible results from immunotherapy, "This is as good as it gets."

With further treatment—Opdivo every four weeks—he expects the tumours to continue to shrink, even disappear altogether. He thinks that I'm heading towards being effectively cured.

I'm stunned. Heather and I have a coffee together in the hospital garden, trying to work out whether to believe what has just happened. I'm relieved but bewildered.

Over the coming weeks, progress continues, and scans show the treatment will need to continue once a month well into 2020. But now when Kody barks to be let in at 5am, it's no longer a relief that the night is over. It's the start of a new day.

It's not until I interview Menzies for this story that I learn exactly how lucky I've been. A decade ago, he says, stage-four melanoma was effectively a death sentence. With chemotherapy of little value, I would have been given just six to nine months to live—even less if it reached my brain.

Menzies says 50 per cent of stage-four melanoma patients now survive long enough to be effectively cured. "It's been an absolute revolution," he says.

The two drugs that are saving me, Opdivo and Yervoy, were

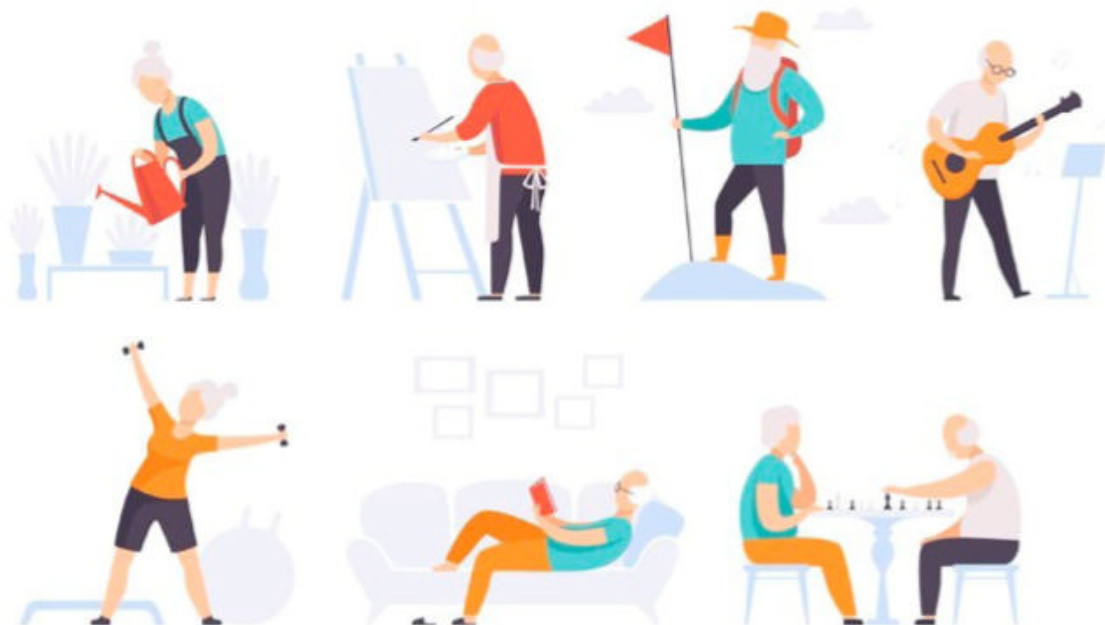
administered as a combined treatment for the first time in 2016. Among a suite of immunotherapy treatments that are revolutionising the way many cancers are fought, they are proving useful for certain types of breast, lung, head and neck, bladder, bowel and stomach cancers, as well as melanoma.

According to Menzies, the only cancers this type of immunotherapy is not beneficial for are pancreatic, prostate and brain cancers. "Immunotherapy is the biggest breakthrough in medicine in our generation," he says. "Across the whole body of medicine, it's been the biggest breakthrough potentially since penicillin."

IT'S 5:30AM ON a February morning, almost exactly six months since I started treatment, and I feel strong as I arrive at the pool. I start swimming in darkness and keep swimming as a sparkling morning emerges, reaching 10 kilometres for the first time. The sky, I can't help but notice, seems especially blue.

*Garry Maddox says that his doctors have given him the all-clear and he has stopped his treatment. In October 2020, he competed in a "comeback triathlon". ■*

FROM THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD (APRIL 3, 2020),  
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# Take Up A Healthy Hobby

*Making time for leisure activities can have a truly positive effect on your physical and mental wellbeing*

**Why do we need hobbies?** A 2015 US study in the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* found that people were more positive, less bored, less stressed and had a lower heart rate when engaged in a leisure activity. Numerous other studies have shown that hobbies reduce stress, and boost mood, wellbeing, life satisfaction and even heart health. Scientists think they might help stave off dementia too.

Joining a class or a team gives you a chance to meet other people. Meanwhile, learning something new or improving a skill gives you a sense of achievement. Hobbies let you switch off, forget your worries, overcome boredom—and, yes, have fun.



Susannah Hickling is twice winner of the Guild of Health Writers Best Consumer Magazine Health Feature

**How do you choose the right hobby?** Start with what you enjoyed in the past. Did you once play football? Take it up again or start something else which satisfies your competitive spirit or the fun you derive from being part of a team, such as a local community group. Experts recommend a healthy mix of hobbies that give you physical, social and cognitive benefits.

Try something and if you find it isn't for you, stop and take up something else.

**Which leisure activities are good for physical health?**

It's clear that exercise is going to be good for you physically. Even regular brisk walking can bring benefits for fitness, while dancing is a great cardio workout, and it's sociable too. A review of 94 studies found that dancing three times a week improved balance in older people. And a Swedish study found both gardening and DIY could reduce the risk of a heart attack or stroke by up to 30 per cent among over-sixties.

**Which hobbies help you unwind?**

Getting out in nature is great for de-stressing, whether you're hiking or doing something less active. Birdwatching, for example, aids mindfulness by requiring you to be at

one with your surroundings and focused on the moment. Yoga can lift mood and ease depression, as well as improve strength and cardio health. Music, whether that's playing the piano or listening to your favourite band, can also relieve depression and anxiety. A 2016 US study found that creating art reduced levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

**Which pastimes keep your mind active?**

Learning a language or an instrument and reading are associated with a lower risk of dementia, along with board games, which are perhaps more sociable than screeching on a violin! Older choir singers have better verbal flexibility, indicating better cognitive flexibility, than

people of a similar age who don't sing in a choir, according to a recent Finnish study.

**Physical activities can boost cognition too.**

One study of 2,805 people aged 60 or above in Australia found that gardening reduced the risk of dementia by 36 per cent. Dancing is also good for your brain, research has found. ■

JOINING A  
CLASS OR A  
TEAM GIVES  
YOU A CHANCE  
TO MEET  
OTHER PEOPLE

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*For more weekly health tips and stories, sign up to our newsletter at [readersdigest.co.uk](http://readersdigest.co.uk)*

# Warm Welcome

**Panicking because energy bills are astronomical and it's the middle of winter? Chill. Here are ways to maintain body heat at home**

**Wear layers** Invest in some thermal underwear and then keep your core warm to ensure the rest of you stays toasty. Layers are the way to go, finishing off with a fleece. Cosy socks and slippers are a must too.

**Keep moving** Be as active as possible to keep your circulation going. Get up and move around at least once an hour. Light exercise will help you keep warm and fit. Try some yoga—there are even some exercises you can do seated—or home-grown circuit training. This could include repeatedly standing up from the sofa and sitting down again, step-ups on the stairs and press-ups against the wall. Do ten of each.

**Build muscle** If you thought body fat would protect you from the cold, think again. A 2018 Cambridge University study found people with more

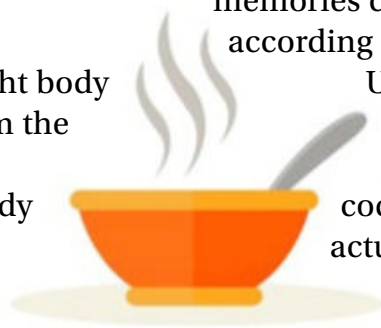
muscle mass were less likely to lose heat when exposed to severe cold and more likely to heat up faster. Another good reason, if you needed one, to increase muscle strength.

**Do the housework** Want to kill several birds with one stone? Housework—especially vacuuming or vigorous cleaning—will heat you up, make your home look nice and give you a workout.

**Put your feet up** When you do sit down, keep your feet off the floor. It's always colder nearer the ground.

**Have a cuppa, and drink soup** Regular hot drinks will heat you up, but alcohol's never a good idea. It warms you initially because blood vessels in the skin expand, but this actually pulls heat away from your vital organs, so the effect is temporary. Eat hot meals, as digesting food will make you feel hotter. And who doesn't love a bowl of steaming soup when it's chilly?

**Remember the good times** Surprisingly, being nostalgic and listening to music that evokes nice memories can make you feel warmer, according to research from the University of Southampton. Proof perhaps that warming the cockles of your heart is actually a thing! ■



# Ask The Expert:

## Long COVID

Psychologist Dr Sue Peacock is co-author with Sheila Grainger of *Coping with Long COVID and Other Long Term Health Conditions*

### How did you become an authority on long COVID and similar conditions?

I'm a chartered consultant health psychologist and have worked with people with long-term health conditions for 25 years, including 20 years in an NHS pain clinic. Recently, people have been contacting me about their long COVID symptoms. They are desperate and some feel disbelieved by health professionals, while others are unable to access services if they have less severe symptoms.

### What is long COVID?

The most up-to-date definition is COVID symptoms lasting for over 12 weeks. There are more than 200 symptoms. I'm mostly seeing people with milder symptoms such as pain, fatigue, breathlessness, anxiety from the illness itself, and brain fog, including impaired memory and forgetting words. Some of my clients were experiencing trauma from being in intensive care.

### How can people cope mentally?

Pacing is great, making sure you plan



and prioritise the things you have to do so that you mix activity with rest. Do enjoyable things,

not just what you have to do. Spending time outside, in the garden or even sitting by a window, is good for your mental health. Being kind to yourself is key, as is good communication with family and friends. But a lot of the psychological challenge relates to managing physical symptoms effectively.

### How can people relieve their physical symptoms?

Sleep is great for healing. Engage in gentle movement. For those with mild brain fog, try puzzles and quizzes. You might improve but then have a recurrence of symptoms, so have a setback plan. This might involve taking medication as prescribed, heat and ice, a TENS machine or breathing exercises, as well as psychological things such as pacing and relaxation.

### What can people do to relax?

Visualise walking along a sandy beach, or by relaxing all of your muscles progressively. ■

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*Coping with Long COVID and Other Long Term Health Conditions* is available at [amzn.to/3hYx6OW](https://amzn.to/3hYx6OW)

# Action On Addiction

*Dr Max argues for a major shift in how we treat addiction*



“**I** REMEMBER FALLING AND thinking, *This is it, I’m going to die,*” said Malcom and he paused, consumed by the memory. “It might have been easier if I had,” he added quietly. I was sitting in an outpatient clinic at the drug dependency unit where I worked. He shifted in his chair and winced as he did. Before he became a drug addict, Malcom had been an electrician. But one day, 15 years ago, he had been up a ladder fitting a burglar alarm to the outside of his house when he lost his balance and fell from his ladder on to the stone paving slabs of his drive below, breaking his back and fracturing his pelvis. At

that moment, his life changed. In constant pain, he was prescribed high doses of painkillers and soon became addicted. When the GP became concerned about the number he was consuming and not knowing what else to do, he stopped the prescription. Malcom then began buying the tablets off the street and progressed to smoking heroin to satisfy his cravings. By the time I saw him, he was well and truly addicted to heroin.

While most people assume that rehab refers to a specialist residential facility where people stay for weeks or months on end in an attempt to get clean, in fact, the most common place to receive treatment is in a community-based clinic as an outpatient and it was in one of these that I met Malcom.

While I think much could be done to improve services for those addicted to illicit drugs—not least focusing more on psychological



Max is a hospital doctor, author and columnist. He currently works full time in mental health for the NHS. His new book, *The Marvellous Adventure of Being Human*, is out now



therapies rather than simply on the physical addiction—I think it is justified to place parameters around who receives a residential placement. These are incredibly expensive programmes, costing thousands of pounds a week, and there must be assurances that those who are referred will be the ones who most benefit. But there is another aspect of drug services that truly is wanting and that receives next to no coverage or discussion. This relates to a group of people who really need help and yet there is a dearth of specialist provisions for them. People addicted to prescription medications. This group are roundly ignored by drug services. This is despite their addiction often being just as severe and debilitating as those addicted to illicit drugs.

It would be easy to blame GPs for this—after all, it is they who are providing the prescriptions. But drug addiction is a tremendously complex and time-consuming condition to tackle. Often patients conceal their addiction and broaching the subject requires skill and patience that is not compatible with a ten minute GP appointment. What is needed is specialist help within the drug services for these types of patients, yet this rarely exists.

## GPs HAVE NEXT TO NO TRAINING IN MANAGING ADDICTION

Drug services prioritise hardcore illicit substance use because it's this that is associated with crime and high levels of mortality, leaving those with prescription drug addiction to flounder. People are left to their own devices and have to manage with improvised assistance, mainly from GPs who have next to no training in managing addiction. It seems bizarre that you can get help for being addicted to heroin, but not if you're addicted to painkillers containing codeine, even though they are in the same pharmacological group. I've seen patients addicted to painkillers that are using the equivalent of two bags of heroin a day and yet drug services are unwilling to help because they are

only mandated to manage heroin addiction. As a result, GPs are placed in an impossible position—either continue prescribing the medication or, in the case of Malcom, simply stop, thereby forcing the patient to buy them off the street and pushing them into the criminal underworld.

We really need to rethink how we manage drug services in this country and this should start with opening up the criteria for who can receive specialist help. We need improved access to rehab services for all those with addiction, not just those addicted to heroin. ■

# The Doctor Is In

*Dr Max Pemberton*

**Q: Around a year ago I broke one of the vertebrae in my spine. Although it's healed, it's left behind an unsightly stoop which makes me look far older than I feel. I've seen back braces advertised on Facebook that claim to fix posture—are these a good idea or just a social media fad? I'm not sure how else to get my old posture back and look less like an old man!**

*- Arnold, 81*

**A:** Goodness, what an unpleasant thing to have happened. As I'm sure you know, a vertebral fracture is a break to one of the bones in your spine. Your spine runs from the base of your skull to your pelvis. How this is treated depends on a number of factors such as where along your spine you have fractured and the number of spinal fractures you have. Depending on where the fracture is, if the nerves become bruised or pinched then people sometimes experience shooting pains or numbness particularly in the legs or buttocks. Thankfully, the majority of fractures heal without complication, although they can still be jolly painful while they heal. Most of the time you don't

need any specific treatment except for rest and painkillers. Unfortunately, sometimes it results in the spine becoming curved or shorter. This can result in a “stoop” or hunched back.

It's true that braces are sometimes used to stabilise the spine while it heals. However, these have to be carefully fitted by a specialist and I'd strongly advise *against* buying one off the internet. I spoke to a friend who is a spinal surgeon about this and he was quite horrified that they were being sold in this way. He suggested asking your GP to refer you to an orthopaedic surgeon to get advice on what the best course of action would be. So please don't buy a back brace off the internet and instead see your doctor. It also worth thinking about why this has happened as it can be a sign of osteoporosis—thinning of the bones. A bone scan can tell you if you have this and, if so, then you should be on treatment to try to halt the progression, strengthen the bones and reduce the risk of further fractures. ■



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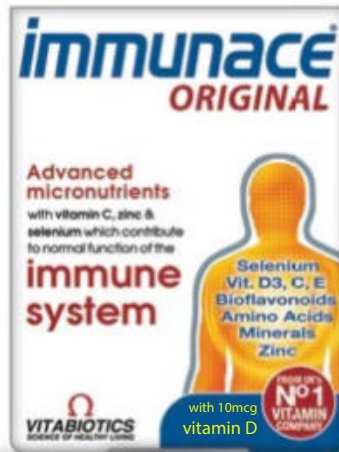


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# Follow These Memory Tips To The Letter!

*Shortcuts to sharper recall from our memory expert, Jonathan Hancock*

**H**ERE'S AN EXPERIMENT. What are the capital cities of Peru, Colombia and Venezuela? Maybe you know one or more of them instantly. But if you don't, see if this helps: their initial letters are L, B and C. Most people do much better when they know the initials (did they help you to remember Lima, Bogota and Caracas?).

Initials can “jump start” our brains, and they're behind some of the most popular memory prompts:

- **Acronyms** like “scuba” (Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus) pack lots of details into memorable single words.
- **Initialisms** like PDF and CPR also act as communication shortcuts—and handy clues if we ever need to remember the full information: Portable Document Format; Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation.
- **Repeated initials** can help us to recall everything in a group—like the “Five Cs of Credit” in the world of finance (Character, Capacity, Collateral, Capital and Conditions).

- A list of initials can be turned into **memorable words**. The five Great Lakes of North America spell out HOMES, for example: Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior.
- Another popular mnemonic technique is to create whole **sentences** from initials. Like many people, I know the rainbow because “Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain” (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet).

## My three top tips are:

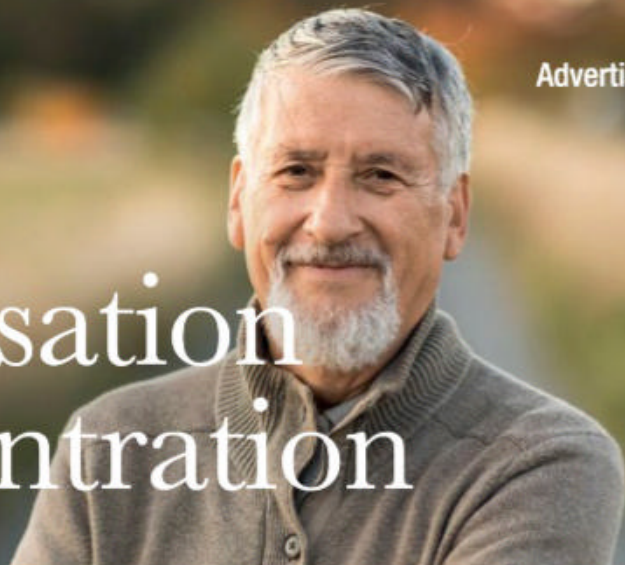
- 1) Make your sentences as visual as possible. It's always easier to remember things that you can “see”.  
Science students often visualise King Philip Coming Over For Great Spaghetti to remember the “taxonomic ranks” of Kingdom, Phylum, Class, Order, Family, Genus and Species.
- 2) Be funny or bizarre, to give your memory the best chance of working.  
Medics remember the four fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K) with the sentence All Dogs Eat Kittens!
- 3) Connect your sentence to the real information in some way—to remind you where to look for your clues!  
My Very Easy Method Just Speeds Up Naming is a highly appropriate mnemonic for Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus—the planets in our solar system, in order from the sun.

See whether you already know more just by reading this page. And then why not start using letters to simplify some of your own learning? ■



Advertisement

# Memorisation & concentration



At 82, Eugène is a retired schoolteacher.

## **I had trouble memorizing since I was a teenager**

“Due to medical problems that started in my teenage years, I was often very tired and had difficulty memorizing everyday things. With a lot of hard work, I still managed to get my teacher’s diploma. I loved my job but I was exhausted and previous military service also didn’t help. I went through very difficult times and my lack of concentration was really impacting my life.

## **I became interested in natural products**

I began to take a keen interest in natural products with the help of my pharmacist, who made me try a number of food supplements. When retirement came, I continued my research. After reading an advertising article about the product Clear Brain™, I gave it a try, which was very conclusive. I will absolutely be taking my daily tablet of Clear Brain™ for the rest of my life.

## **I am fully satisfied with Clear Brain™**

Without Clear Brain™, I would not have been able to write this testimony. My only

regret is that I didn’t find out about it sooner. If Clear Brain™ had been available 50 years ago, everything would have been very different. I am fully satisfied with it.”

- Eugène



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# THE BIKER WITH A BIG HEART

A male cyclist is shown from the waist up, riding a road bike on a paved road at dusk. He is wearing a white and blue cycling jersey with 'FACTORY TEAM' and 'FLIE' visible, blue shorts, a white helmet with sunglasses, and blue gloves. The background shows a dark sky with a few lights and power lines.

Her son's organ donation  
saved his life. So he rode  
2,300 kilometres to meet her

BY *AC Shilton* FROM BICYCLING MAGAZINE

Mike Cohen, left,  
with Christine and  
David Cheers



# IT TOOK SEVERAL

drafts to get the letters right. To distill her boy's life into the two dimensionality of words on paper. To paint a picture of someone full of energy and love, so that the beneficiaries of his death, the recipients of his organs, would know just how lucky they were.

Three weeks earlier, the thread that held Christine Cheers' world together had been ripped away. On February 21, 2018, someone on the other end of the phone had said the words that bring parents to their knees: "There's been an accident."

Her son, James Mazzuchelli, 32, a flight surgeon with the United States Navy, had been injured in a helicopter training mission at a military base in California. If she wanted to see him while he was still alive, she needed to get on the next flight from Florida.

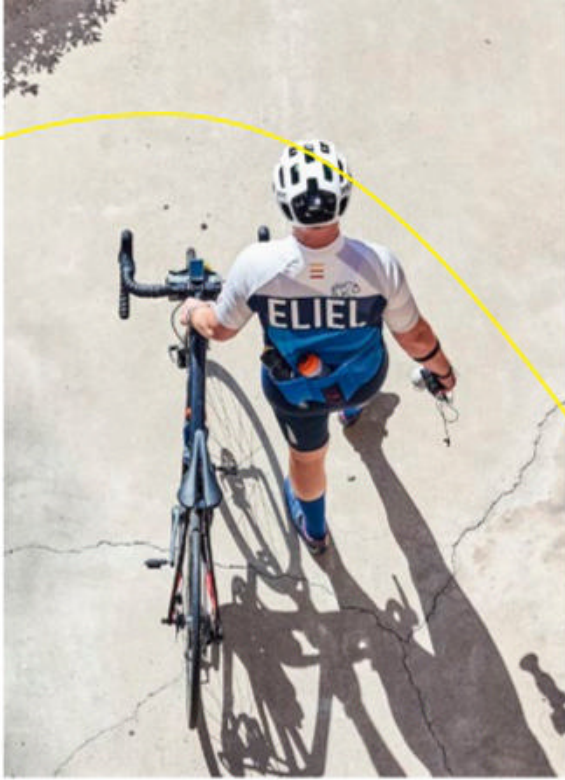
James was still breathing when Christine and James's stepfather, David Cheers, arrived at Scripps Memorial Hospital in La Jolla, California, the next morning. Machines were keeping him alive, and the doctors told Christine that what she was seeing was likely his future—that her scuba-diving, world-travelling, overachiever of a son was

never going to wake up. He would never breathe on his own. He would never smile at her again.

It was time for Christine to honour the spirit of a man who had switched from studying commerce engineering to medicine because he wanted to help people. It was time to make her very worst day a stranger's best one. Christine instructed the hospital to begin the organ donation process. These few words, as hard as they were to say, would soon ripple outward, allowing a man to return to work, a veteran to regain his health, and an ailing cyclist to get back on his bike.

**Mike Cohen was just 18** when he'd been diagnosed with an aggressive form of leukemia in 2004. Doctors warned him that the treatment protocol could cause lasting damage to his heart. At the time, surviving cancer seemed like the more pressing concern. He took his treatment seriously, doing the radiation and chemotherapy and even moving from New York to California because his oncologist felt that mild weather would be easier on his body. The risk had paid off—two years after his diagnosis, he was cancer-free. And





the move had been a good fit, too. As soon as he was healthy enough to get outside, he was hiking or riding his bike. A casual cyclist as a kid, Mike became bike-obsessed. To celebrate his sixth year without cancer, Mike decided to ride his bike to New York. From the start, it was a grind.

What he didn't know during that ride was that his heart was beginning to fail, and in the years that followed, his health continued to deteriorate. Even on days he didn't ride his bike, he always felt tired. Then one evening in 2017, he started having chest pains.

His brother, Dan, rushed him to the emergency room, where doctors discovered a clot the size of a golf ball lodged in his left ventricle. They tried blood thinners, but the clot wouldn't budge. Soon hospital staff were preparing him for open-heart surgery to install a left ventricular

assist device (LVAD), which would do the pumping that his heart couldn't accomplish. The implanted LVAD required constant access to an electrical outlet, which meant Mike was literally tethered to the indoors by a cord that ran out of his abdomen. Even with an emergency backup battery pack, "You couldn't go out in public because you couldn't trust that someone wouldn't knock into the cord," he says. His old active life seemed like a thousand lifetimes ago.

Doctors had told him the device could work for eight months or eight years. Six months later, though, Mike was in hospital with another clot. His heart was failing. He would need a new one.

Heart transplant priority lists are tricky. You have to be sick enough to truly need the new organ but not so sick you can't withstand the lengthy surgery or the immunosuppressant drugs heart transplant patients take to sustain the new organ. Mike was at the top of the list. Now he just had to hope he survived the wait.

On the plus side, Mike's blood work showed the clot had dissolved enough that he could safely go home. As he packed his bag on February 24, a nurse walked in. "I have good news and bad news," she said. Mike asked for the bad news first. "You're not going home today," she said. The good news? They'd found him a heart.

The next morning, Mike woke up in a hospital bed with a new heart

beating in his chest. His energy seemed to improve immediately: he took his first steps around his hospital room just five days later and was walking the hallways shortly after. “The old heart was like a two. With the LVAD my energy was like a five,” he says. “This heart is a ten.”

After two weeks, he was sent home with instructions to report to cardiac rehabilitation, where he was limited for the first few days to slow walking on a treadmill. Across the room he spied a stationary bike. He knew he wasn’t ready yet, but it became a beacon. And two weeks later, with his doctor’s permission, he threw a leg over and soft-pedalled.

**Christine Cheers wasn’t leaving** the hospital until every last one of her son’s organs left the building. She and David watched as his kidneys, pancreas, and liver went to various recipients. His corneas went to an eye bank; tissue and bone went to tissue and bone banks. That left his heart.

“That was the one I cared about most,” Christine says. As a serviceman and physician, James embodied the ideals of bravery and altruism. “James had such an amazing heart,” she says.

When a hospital representative delivered the news that James’s heart was headed out of the hospital, David and Christine watched as the cool bag was taken away. In the ensuing weeks, Christine descended into a grief so deep that climbing out seemed

impossible. Her lone consolation, she knew, would be to find out that James’s organs had helped people. That the recipients were doing all right. So she wrote them letters.

The part Christine wanted to get right was the one about what organ donation had meant to her son. How glad he would be that his heart and kidneys and tissue were helping others. She didn’t want the recipients to feel guilty about the heft and gravitas of the gift they’d got.

**Two months after** his surgery, Mike Cohen got a call from the organisation that had coordinated the transplant. There was a letter for him. When he got it, he unfolded the typewritten pages and took a breath.

Christine described her son’s love

**“THE OLD HEART  
WAS LIKE A TWO.  
THIS HEART  
IS A TEN”**



for serving his country, the fact that he considered everyone a friend and never judged a soul. He was selfless, she wrote, had a quirky sense of humour, and was a brilliant and gifted doctor. She described his love for scuba diving, snowboarding, and motorcycles. As he read Christine’s letter, Mike began to understand just how special his new heart was.



FROM TOP: PAT HEINE/BICYCLING MAGAZINE. COURTESY CHRISTINE CHEERS

Eager to know more about James, Mike googled him. They had a lot in common. They were both athletic, and practically the same age. James was 32 when he died, while Mike had turned 33 on the very day of James's accident. Another thing he learned about James: he was buried in Jacksonville, Florida.

Back in rehab, Mike had hatched a plan to take another cross-country trip as soon as his doctor said it was OK. The end point of that ride now came into focus. He wanted to pay his respects. It seemed fitting to make the journey by bike—to show just how transformative his new heart was.

He took his time before responding to Christine: a week to process her letter and another week to compose

his own. He wanted to get the tone just right, to accurately express how grateful he was for James's heart and how determined he was to keep it beating for years to come. He communicated his desire to stay in touch with James's family, if that's what they wanted.

Of the four letters Christine had sent, she got a response to two. The first was from the man who got one of James's kidneys and his pancreas. He thanked her, saying how the organs had changed his life—that he could go back to work and provide for his family. But his letter subtly hinted that the thank-you note was all the contact he wished to have. Mike's letter was a balm for a wound that Christine felt would never heal. And so began the emails and texts, which proved comforting to her. She even began avidly following Mike's Instagram posts. "Knowing he was doing well really helped," she says.

By September 2018, Mike was back to riding. His doctors were impressed by his progress and his cautious approach, so much so that they ultimately gave their blessing for the cross-country ride he was planning for the following year. The trip would be slow in order to not overstress his heart and immune system: four hours of riding a day maximum, keeping his heart under 150 beats per minute—doctor's orders.

Mike recruited Dan (who had become certified as a medical

assistant so he could care for Mike after his first open-heart surgery) to tag along in an RV as support. Then Mike asked his friend Seton Edgerton to ride with him. They figured the trip, starting from the cardiac ward at the San Diego hospital that treated Mike and finishing at James's grave, would take just under two months. They would bike most of the way and ride in the RV only on the busiest roads.

When Mike announced on social media that he was riding to his donor's grave site, the Cheers family decided they would meet him there.

**It was only day one** of a 1,430-mile bike trip, and, as with his first cross-country trip, Mike's heart was not cooperating. Perhaps he hadn't eaten enough or hydrated properly. Whatever the cause, it didn't really matter. What mattered was that he had to keep his heart rate under 150 beats per minute, but the steep Cuyamaca Mountains east of San Diego were sending it sky-high.

Seton had rigged Mike's heart-rate monitor so he could see the readout on the computer attached to his bike's handlebars as they rode. He watched helplessly as the beats-per-minute number shot up. Both men were thinking to themselves: *this is just the first day. Should we even be attempting this?* But on they rode. Across Arizona and then on to Texas, Mike and Seton rolled along in matching blue tops, the struggles of



that arduous first day behind them as Mike's heart rate settled down. Still, somewhere in the desert, they took a wrong turn and ended up slogging through deep sand. In the first 990 miles, they got a 24 flat tyres.

From Florida, Christine and David followed along on social media, worrying about traffic and dogs and all the things that can befall a rider in the middle of nowhere. A few times, when Mike and Seton couldn't find roads suitable for riding, they detoured onto an interstate highway, causing Christine to wince at the thought of trucks whizzing by those boys—and that heart. If it had been her son, she might have called him and scolded him. But Mike wasn't; he



**Left: Mike recovering from the operation. Right: Mike and Seton (left) on the road beside the RV that trailed them**

Seton coasted into the cemetery and rode toward the couple at James's grave. Mike got off his bike, handed it to Seton, and walked straight to Christine. At a loss for words, he managed a quiet, "Hi." In that moment, Christine felt a deep sense of calm, as if she'd known Mike her entire life. They hugged. Then came the tears. They weren't tears of grief. They were relief, from a mother who knew she'd done right by someone she'd deeply loved, and from a grateful man who'd been accepted by the family whose worst day was his best.

Together, the two then walked the few steps to James's headstone. Mike squatted down and took a deep breath, feeling the strong pulse of James's heart in his chest. Silently he told James how thankful he was for his sacrifice and how sorry he was they'd never get to be friends. He promised to take care of his heart.

Someone ran back to the RV to grab a stethoscope. Christine slid the cold metal head underneath Mike's blue jersey and listened.

And there it was, loud and clear. The best part of her son, still very much alive. ■

was a stranger with her son's heart.

On November 20, 2019, Mike and Seton pedaled the last few miles of their trip. All Mike could think about was what a gift it was to be healthy. He had doubted his body for so long, but now he finally felt that there could be a normal life ahead. As he got closer to the cemetery, Mike grew nervous, unsure what kind of emotions may be attached to meeting strangers who had already come to mean so much to him. "It's just such an intense moment to share with someone I've never met," he says.

Christine and David got to the grave site early. They wanted time alone with their son first. It was a perfect day: sunny and warm. Then Mike and

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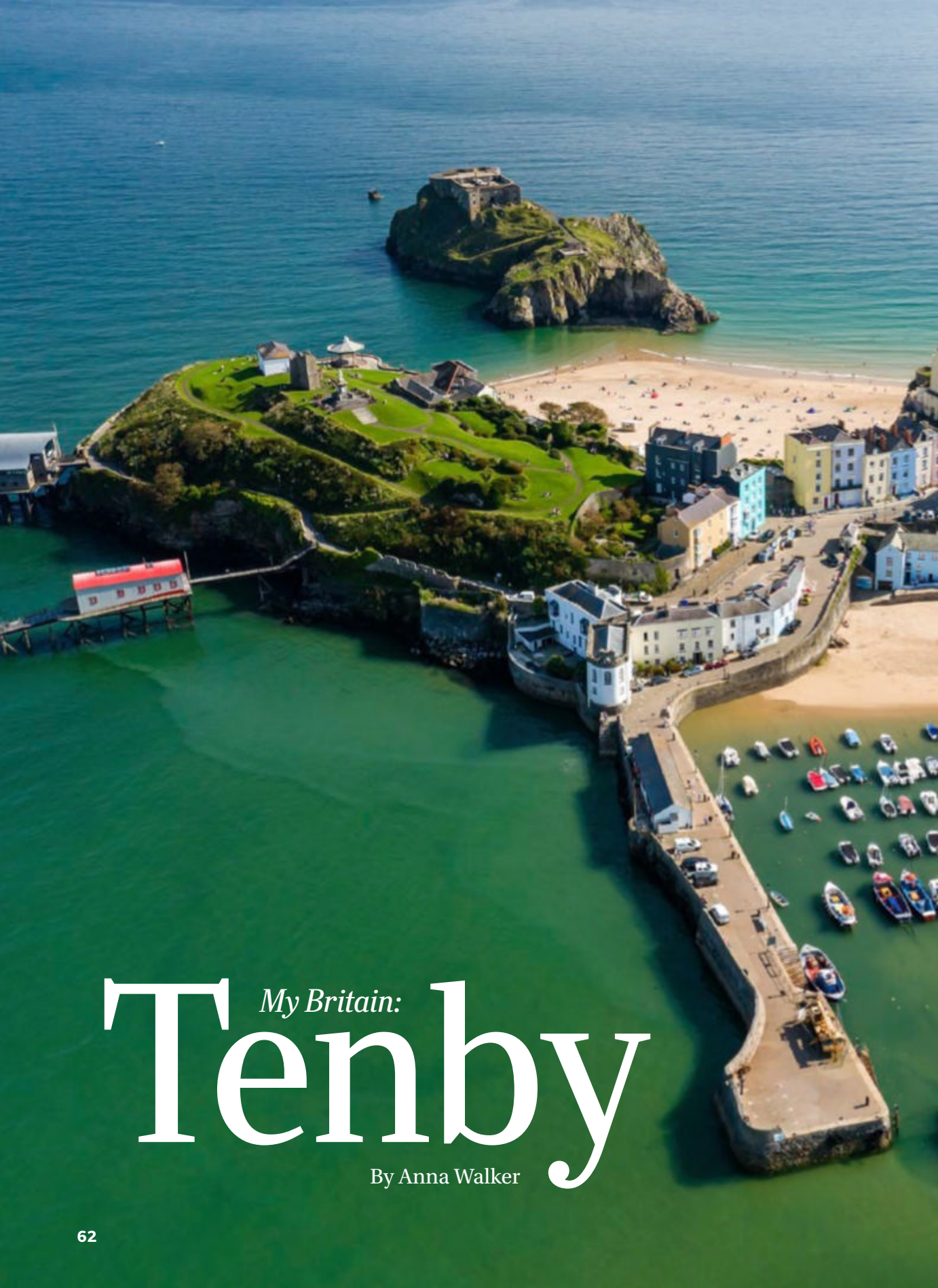
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*My Britain:*  
**Tenby**

By Anna Walker





Are you one of the thousands of Brits with cherished memories of childhood holidays to the postcard-pretty harbour town of Tenby? If so, you won't need convincing of the Welsh town's quaint charm. If not, you'll want to add it to your staycation bucket list post-haste. With chocolate-box painted houses lining its promenade, sandy beaches, traditional fish and chip shops and rows of fine Victorian architecture, Tenby has a reputation as one of the best holiday spots in the UK. Indeed, in August 2020, it came second in a survey by FBM Holidays of the prettiest towns in Britain, losing out narrowly to Keswick in the Lake District. But this harbour town is not just for tourists. Residents of Tenby point to its close sense of community camaraderie, ever-changing seasonal delights and fascinating history as some of many reasons that it's a great place to live.

If you do choose to pay Tenby a visit this year, be sure to take a boat trip out to the nearby Caldey Island from the harbour, a tiny calm island owned by a community of Cistercian monks, ideal for relaxing as you watch the seabirds stretch their wings overhead, or taking a refreshing dip in the sea.

## Marion Davies

**Wales Blue Badge Guide Marion Davies shares her love for Tenby and the surrounding area. Visit [guidedtourswales.co.uk](http://guidedtourswales.co.uk) for more information**



**I arrived in Tenby from mid-Wales in 1975** for a misspent youth—it met all my expectations and then some! I left in 1981 to go to college but was back in Tenby by 1996. I've spent time in various places around the UK, but Tenby was always the place I regarded as home, the hub of my wheel and I returned as often as possible. When I divorced in 1996, I came home to Tenby.

I don't think that there is anything I don't love about Tenby, except that sometimes it seems a little far away from other friends and family and other places. However that distance can also be blessing when it comes to feeling part of a community. The sea and beaches, the local folk and *hwyl* [fun] make it a very special place, and I know I am lucky and privileged to live here.

**Tenby people have always been able to rise to survival** in what is a



changeable and challenging life. This goes way back to the creation of the resort in the mid-18th-century.

I think there is an inbuilt ability to take the long view, to accept seasonality and understand that it will kind of work out, and that long and hard work will result in the ability to survive until next year. It's just a part of life in a seaside town. I don't think most people have a luxurious life, but that is not to confuse it with a good, quality life. You only have to pause and look over the railings at the raging or calm sea, the glorious colours of the changeable Pembrokeshire sky to know that we are truly blessed.

### **I became a Blue Badge Guide**

for Wales after several gruelling but enjoyable years of study. Obviously, I have a particular leaning towards Pembrokeshire, but Wales generally is an enchanting country of myth, legend,

song and devastatingly beautiful coast and countryside. What's not to love? Historically the Welsh were extraordinarily talented, adventurous and enterprising people. Despite historical challenges and changes, they took their skills and spirit around the world.

### **My favourite place in Tenby is**

**Castle Hill.** From here you can see across the county on a fine, clear day. Actually, you can see across the channel to Southern England. No wonder our early Iron Age relatives lived here, and our enterprising boatmen went yonder to the South! You can also see North, East and West Wales, far and near.

What a vantage point, the whole town and coast lying beneath you. Depending on the time of year it can be dramatically wild or fabulously calm, but of course always picturesque.



## Chris Salisbury

**Chris Salisbury, 47, has been Tenby's Harbour Master for four years, and was deputy for 14 years before that. He was born in Tenby, and has spent almost all his life in the town**



**Tenby is a beautiful place to live.** It has the best of both worlds with some of the best beaches and coastline in all of the UK and lush green countryside all on your doorstep.

I'm very proud of our town and the harbour is a big part of it. I get great satisfaction knowing that yachtsmen and women talk fondly of Tenby Harbour when navigating the Bristol Channel, and it's great to see returning visitors each year, some that have been sailing into Tenby for decades.

During summer the harbour can be a very busy area for visitors and locals

alike, it means a lot to see and hear that people are enjoying the area.

**Tenby's history is fascinating,** it's a walled town which was renowned for trading and smuggling. The harbour once held the largest fishing fleet in Wales, before tourism took off with the arrival of the railway around 1890. There's also the fact that nearly everyone you talk to has a holiday memory that came from our seaside town Dinbych-y-Pysgod (which translates as Little Fortress of the Fish).

I'm very privileged to be a Tenby



resident, but like many picturesque coastal communities, house prices and second homes have had an effect on the spirit of the town, especially during the winter months.

**My role as Harbour Master** is to oversee all activity that takes place within the harbour limits. Primarily it's to ensure that the harbour is safe, clean and enjoyable for all who use it. There is no typical day in this role. You have to adjust because the ever changing tide, wind and weather will always have an effect on what you can do, and it can

bring some unexpected surprises with it! I never thought I'd have to deal with a walrus in the harbour limits, but in 2021 we had a visitor by the name of "Wally".

I spend a lot of time on the water with work, so I like to get into the countryside and woodlands. There are so many favourite spots of mine that it's impossible to name one. And things change, too. An area that might be a favourite in summer can become bleak in the winter, and vice versa. ■

*To plan a future trip to Tenby, visit [visitpembrokeshire.com](http://visitpembrokeshire.com)*



## If I Ruled The World

# Gregory Porter

Gregory Porter is a US jazz singer and songwriter. His latest album *Still Rising* was released in November 2021 and he tours the UK in May 2022

**Everybody would get free healthcare.** I remember when I didn't have good health care. I was quite young, just out of college, and I was trying to figure out where I could go to get dental work, or to check on some stomach-ache. In some ways, going to a waiting room and waiting eight to ten hours to try and fix some ailment seems wrong. You see many people walking around with curable ailments and it just seems wrong.

I think people should have the right, at the very least, to the best health they could possibly have. You should be able to live without pain if it's curable.

**I'd eliminate single-use plastic.** We have to find a way because we can't destroy the planet. We must have clean air, and we must stop making plastic for everything that we consume. Everything that we consume is one-use plastic. We have to do something, as once this beast

[plastic] is created, it's hard to slay. We keep hearing about these microplastics that are part of us, in our heart, in our bloodstream, in the oceans, in the fish we eat. Not acting at all is a terrible route to go down.

**I would implement financial incentives for kindness.** Wouldn't it be nice if people could just be nice to each other all the time? If people had a personal incentive to be nice to other people, whether it's allowing somebody to go before you in a car, opening the door [for someone] or just generally slowing down; if everybody could agree on being agreeable, the traffic would flow better, we could walk on the streets with more ease.

It seems that a financial incentive for kindness would actually be a boon for the economy because maybe there would be less traffic, fewer lawsuits, and we'd have less money spent on incarceration.

**Gender equality would be a reality.** My mother was a preacher and in church there's always a hierarchy of what women can do. She was a better and more relatable speaker than the headliners, but because she was a woman she could never be a headliner. This and a million other

things make me strive for gender equality. Men can be so self-important, but we're all here through the grace of a woman.

**Childcare should be valued more—as should the work of a woman and the gifts of a woman.** The characteristics that are attributed to women, such as reasoning, grace and compromise, are the things that we need in business—and they are the things we need to heal the planet. Greater appreciation of the

characteristics that we attribute to women, whether they're expressed by a man or a woman, is important.

**I would require that scientists concentrate on making bad things good for you.** That way we could eat all the ice

cream, biscuits, cakes, and popcorn in the world. Why must everything that tastes so good be so bad for you? Can somebody think about that for a moment please?

I'm all here for the fake meat thing, but somebody needs to concentrate on making that fake meat tastier. And can somebody make a fake sugar that tastes like sugar but doesn't rot your liver or kidneys? That's all I ask. ■




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As told to Marco Marcelline

# Dogs Alone At Home

*How to reduce or prevent separation issues*

BY *Dr Katrina Warren*

**T**ODAY, PEOPLE are working from home more than ever. As a result, many dogs are enjoying a lot more time with, and attention from, their owners. Dog adoption rates have skyrocketed as people seek enjoyment and extra companionship. But what will happen when life eventually returns to normal? These tips will help you raise a puppy or train an older dog to be content when you are not around.

## Teach Puppies Alone Time

Dogs are social creatures and need to learn coping skills to be comfortable when they are left unattended. Otherwise, they may become anxious when they are alone, which can result in destructive behaviour such as chewing on furniture and digging up plants in the garden. Teaching your puppy to be comfortable alone right from the start will help you avoid separation issues in

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future. As tempting as it is to let your cute puppy follow you around, this can lead to them becoming overly dependent and potentially anxious when left alone.

## **Set Up a Playpen Or Crate**

An enclosed space will keep them secure when you're not in the same room. Allocate some time each day to leave your puppy alone—after playtime is perfect. Allow them an opportunity to toilet and then give them something safe to chew on to help them settle. If you are planning for your dog to spend time outside during the day, it is essential that you set this up from the beginning.

## **Create a Routine**

It's important for adult dogs to also spend time alone. When you are home, put your dog outside for short periods while offering a chew toy, or encourage them to settle on their bed or in a crate while you move around different parts of the home. Dogs like routine because it makes them feel secure.

Setting up and maintaining an exercise routine will be important once you start leaving home more, or your dog may become bored and possibly destructive. This is especially important for adolescent dogs and active breeds. Think about the amount of exercise you are giving

your dog now and ask yourself how much exercise you will be able to maintain if circumstances change.

## **Establish Good Chew Habits**

Teach your puppy or dog what is acceptable for them to chew. Only give them toys that are clearly distinguishable from household items. Chewable toys that can be stuffed with a treat like peanut butter are a good option. When you want your dog to have some quiet time,


# **MAINTAIN AN EXERCISE ROUTINE, OR YOUR DOG MAY BECOME BORED AND DESTRUCTIVE**

give them a safe chew toy so they learn to associate this time with something positive. When you leave home, give them a chew toy to help them relax and keep them occupied.

## **Train Your Dog**

This should include teaching the basics of “sit,” “stay,” and “down” but also training them to go to their bed and stay in position when requested. Trick training is also a wonderful way to use any extra time to develop the bond with your dog. ■

# SAVING ITALY'S OLIVE TREES

A close-up portrait of a man with short, light brown hair, wearing blue-rimmed glasses and a light blue button-down shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with green foliage.

Giovanni Melcarne  
is on a mission to  
ensure olive trees  
are as healthy as  
this one

The future of  
olive oil  
could depend  
on one farmer's  
fight against  
a fast-spreading  
bacteria

BY *Agostino Petroni*  
FROM ATLAS OBSCURA

**I**N EARLY 2016, Giovanni Melcarne, an agronomist and owner of an extra-virgin olive-oil farm in Gagliano del Capo, walked through the countryside in southern Italy's Puglia region. He was with a fellow olive-oil farmer who had called and told him there was something he had to see.

The two approached a centuries-old olive tree growing along a traditional stone wall. All around, the olive trees that covered the red clay were either dead or dying, filling

Italian regions and Mediterranean countries, and upending Puglia's production of olives and olive oil, symbols of the Mediterranean.

When the men reached the tree, the farmer pointed at a live green bough on the otherwise dead trunk.

"The man told me that his father had grafted the tree with a Barese olive variety," Melcarne says. Grafting is common practice in the area: People take a twig of a different variety and insert it on the trunk of an older tree, where it will grow and bear the kind of olives of the tree it came from.

Melcarne immediately suspected that

## SOME OLIVE TREES STANDING TODAY WERE ALIVE WHEN COLUMBUS VOYAGED TO AMERICA

the landscape with an unnatural greyness. Melcarne was not surprised: At least 2 million olive trees in Puglia looked this way, including many of his own.

The cause of the blight was *Xylella fastidiosa*, a bacteria that researchers believe arrived around 2010 from Latin America, possibly from Costa Rica on an ornamental plant. Today, *Xylella* has infected at least one-third of the 60 million olive trees in Puglia, which produces 12 per cent of the world's olive oil. There is no chance of survival: once a plant is infected, it's doomed to die within just a few years. In recent years, *Xylella* has spread fast across Puglia, crossing into other

the grafted branch was resistant to *Xylella*. It seemed to be keeping the olive tree alive.

"And then I thought, *Could it be that grafts could save the oldest and grandest olive trees?*" Melcarne says.

At the time, efforts to contain the *Xylella* blight were going poorly: Italian media and politics were dominated by vicious fights, accusations, and conspiracy theories about the blight that prevented a coordinated response. But seeing that bit of green, Melcarne felt hopeful. The agronomist was already exploring ways to fight the disease with a team of scientists, and that visit showed there might be some hope against the



**Above: a grove in Lecce, in Italy's Puglia region, where vast numbers of olive trees are dying. Right: olives and their oil are beloved around the world**

olive-tree apocalypse. "If we don't try to save at least some of the oldest olive trees," Melcarne asks, "what identity will be left for this region?"

**W**HETHER YOU ARE in New York, London, Melbourne, or any other major city in the world, chances are good that the extra-virgin olive oil you use to dress your salad, drizzle over fresh mozzarella, or sear a sea bass comes from Puglia.

In Puglia, olive trees are everywhere. They have populated these lands since 1,000 BC, when the ancient Greeks brought them. Some trees still growing today saw ancient



Romans passing by or welcomed Emperor Frederick II on his way to the Sixth Crusade in the 13th century; many more were already old when Christopher Columbus stumbled upon the Americas. The trees have always been present in their corrugated fairy shapes, and they are part of the local culture. Each family owns a few olive

trees and treats them like beloved relatives, like immortal grandparents. The people of Puglia have taken their presence for granted for a long time, but *Xylella* is now crushing that idyllic timelessness.

*Xylella fastidiosa* is carried by a sap-feeding spittlebug called *Philaenus spumarius*. When the insect bites an infected leaf, it gives *Xylella* a free ride to the next plant it feeds on. Through the bite, the bacteria enter the xylem—the plant's vascular tissue, where water and

these eternal trees. So in 2015, thousands of people campaigned to stop the uprootings. Farmers chained themselves to infected trees, blocked railways and traffic, protested in city centres. They got full support from a number of TV personalities, singers, and politicians, including Michele Emiliano, the region's president.

Much like the millions of people who would later resist pandemic lockdowns or call COVID-19 a hoax, the protesters believed that what was happening was part of a conspiracy.

## MANY BELIEVED THAT WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO THE TREES WAS PART OF A CONSPIRACY

nutrients flow—traveling away from the roots and toward the canopy. As the bacteria reproduce, they create a gel that clogs the channels, preventing water and nutrients from passing through. Once the plant is infected, it slowly starts dying.

The disease's symptoms appeared around 2010, but at first Italians didn't know what was killing their trees. In 2013, scientists realised that it was *Xylella*; the first detection in Europe, and the European Union and Italian government planned containment measures, which involved eradicating infected trees. Speed was crucial: stopping the spread would only get harder as it dispersed across Italy.

But many Pugliesi could not believe that a bacteria could kill

Some blamed Monsanto, saying that the American agrochemical and agricultural biotechnology corporation wanted to sell seeds for immune, genetically modified olive trees to farmers (the company denied all the accusations). Others said it was entrepreneurs and the Mafia, who wanted to build where the trees stood.

Public opinion led by an anti-science movement became so enraged that in December 2015, government prosecutors from the city of Lecce started investigating the scientists studying the disease, blaming them for having brought it to Puglia, and for its subsequent spread (all charges were later dropped).

"I do not expect to be thanked,



On the left is a successful graft; Giovanni Melcarne points to a failed one

but being pilloried by the media for having done my work with passion is a paradox,” says Donato Boscia, a plant pathologist and head researcher for *Xylella* at the National Research Council of Italy (CNR).

**W**HILE CONSPIRACY THEORIES FLOURISHED, the disease advanced north at a speed of 2,000 hectares a year. *Xylella* has long been known for attacking grapevines in countries worldwide, including France, Spain, Portugal, Iran, Taiwan, Brazil, Argentina, Canada, and the United States. But before arriving in Puglia, *Xylella* hadn’t caused significant damage to olive trees.

“We could not wait for somebody else to deal with it,” says Pierfederico La Notte, an agronomist and researcher at CNR with Donato Boscia. In 2016 Melcarne brought Boscia and La Notte to the town

of Gallipoli to check the green and thriving graft his fellow farmer had shown him, which was confirmed as *Leccino*—one of the only two olive varieties known to be resistant to the bacteria (the other is *Favolosa*).

“That plant lit up lots of lightbulbs,” La Notte says. Grafting, a technique as old as agriculture, seemed to show promise, just like it did a century ago when it saved European grapevines from *Phylloxera*, a tiny aphid that nearly destroyed the continent’s wine industry. If a resistant variety of olives could be grafted on the trunks of the oldest trees—those at least 1,000 years old—the plant appeared to have a chance of survival.

In April 2016, while local politicians were delaying scientific research by withholding funding, Melcarne invested 130,000 euros—his life savings—to graft 14 hectares

**In Italy, harvesting olives is a centuries-old practice**

of his olive trees. His family had been in the olive business since 1583, so Melcarne took the enormous financial risk not only to save his company, but to maintain



his family's tradition. He and the CNR researchers wanted to see if the two known *Xylella*-resistant varieties could be grafted on older trees, and if other types had some resistance too. La Notte called on greenhouses and producers from every corner of the globe, and this international community of scientists and farmers responded by shipping samples of their olive varieties to Puglia. In a short time, they grafted 270 different types on Melcarne's fields. While still solely funded by Melcarne, their work advanced with trial and error. Grafts died from disease, broke during inclement weather, and were vandalised: one morning Melcarne found that dozens of his grafts had been snapped during the night. He suspected conspiracy theorists were behind it.

Word of the group's experiment spread. Vanzio Turcato, a northern

Italian who had decided to build his house in Puglia, on land home to a few dozen olive trees, became an early adopter of Melcarne's grafts. He and his wife couldn't stand the idea of seeing their 54 monumental olive trees die, so, in 2017, Melcarne grafted them all with Favolosa. But only two grafts out of 250 worked. It took two more years of trials to understand that crown grafts—chopping the old branch clean and inserting the grafts on the mutilated extremity—was the way to go. They had finally perfected a grafting protocol.

"I'd be happy if we managed to save even 50 per cent of the trees," Turcato says. But while some trees are still struggling, many are looking robust, in contrast to his neighbours' vast fields of grey, dead olive trees.

Around 90 miles from Turcato's fields, Armando Balestrazzi, the owner of Masseria Il Frantoio, a



boutique hotel and olive-oil farm, was well aware of the problem about to hit. And according to La Notte and Melcarne, olive trees have a higher probability of surviving if they are grafted before getting infected. The more advanced the infection, the less likely the grafts will work.

"When I heard about the grafts, I decided to run a test," Balestrazzi says. His area was part of the disease's buffer zone—and Balestrazzi had on his property 300 Leccino trees resistant to the disease. So, in 2019, he used their twigs to graft 50 of his 2,600 trees, all at least 1,000 years old. "I couldn't stand with my arms folded while the scourge hit my home. I had to try to save them. And after more than two years, I know that it works." Balestrazzi says that 70 per cent of his grafts have survived, and all 50 of his trees are flourishing. He has 2,550 more trees to work on.

**G**RAFTING CANNOT SAVE every olive tree in Puglia, though. While it's difficult to know for sure, it could take decades, as well as a lot of money. According to Melcarne, what's needed to save Puglia's olive groves is a long-term, coordinated plan led by politicians and scientists that stops the northward spread of the disease while investing in finding resistant varieties and grafting the oldest olive trees.

After three long years, the region's

government recognised the value of Melcarne and La Notte's work, co-funding a 2-million-euro project to support their research.

Besides leading the grafting crusade, Melcarne is currently looking to reproduce wild Puglian olive trees that are still alive in places where Xylella has killed others. The quality of local olives distinguishes the region's extra-virgin olive oil from others, and farmers are wary of planting resistant varieties such as Favolosa that do not belong to that area and taste different. While they have found a grafting technique to save the region's grandest trees, it is this search for local, resistant varieties that could protect Puglia's beloved olive oil and the industry and food culture it supports.

Thanks to the thousands of tips he receives on social media, Melcarne has checked about 30,000 wild olive trees, covering some 370,000 miles in his car in the process.

He dreams of finding the local olive variety to replant the orchards destroyed by the bacteria. He picked 30 of them for reproduction, and he says there are some good candidates.

"I think we found one," Melcarne says proudly. The future of olive trees in this part of the world might well be in his hands. ■

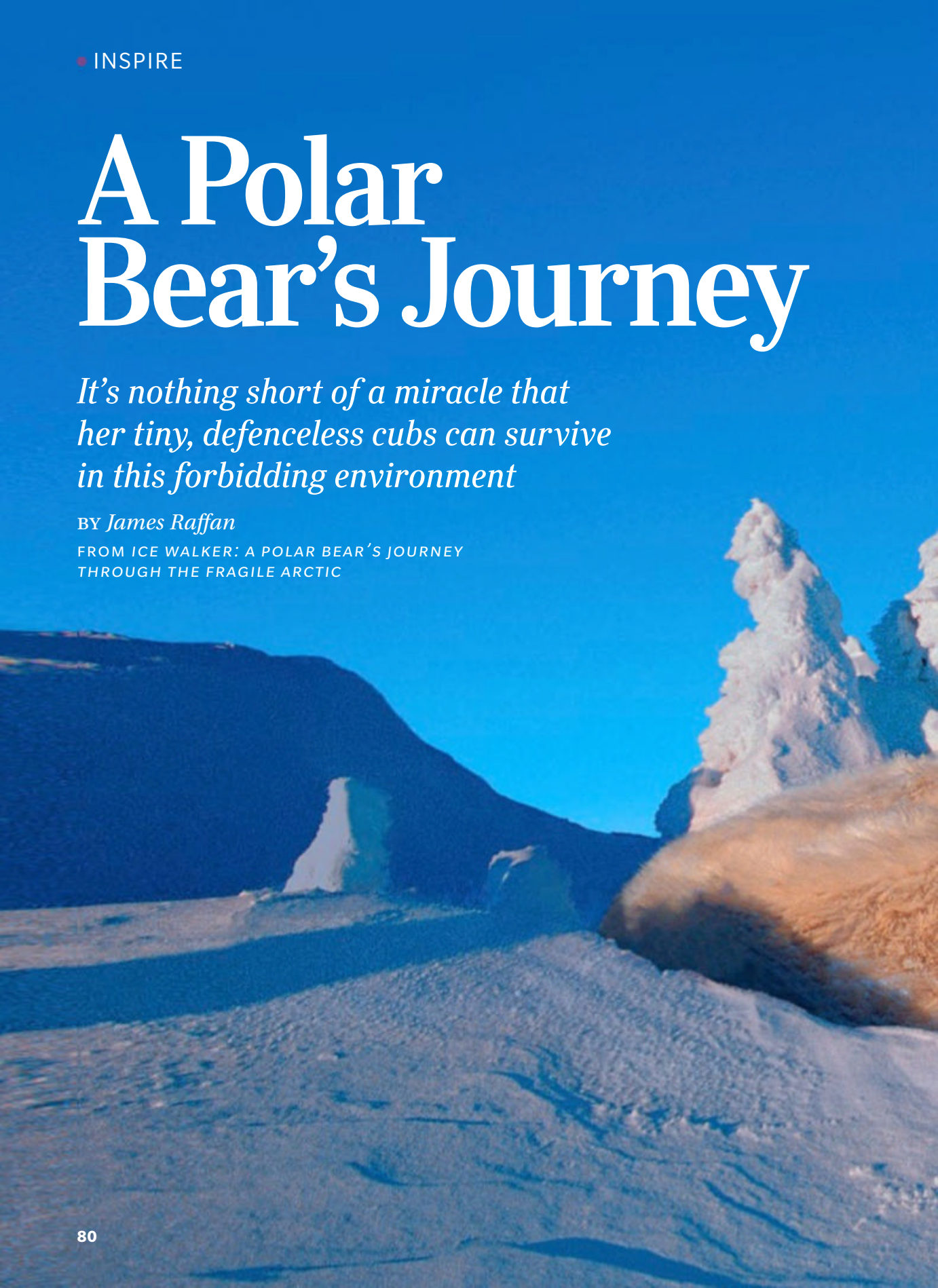
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# A Polar Bear's Journey

*It's nothing short of a miracle that her tiny, defenceless cubs can survive in this forbidding environment*

BY James Raffan

FROM ICE WALKER: A POLAR BEAR'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE FRAGILE ARCTIC





N

anu, a nine-year-old female polar bear, lives on the barrens of the Hudson Bay lowlands, south of Churchill, in the Canadian province of Manitoba.

Her den, which she dug into a creek bank, is nearly two metres in diameter and a half-metre higher than the exit tunnel. Air warmed by her body and breath rises into this upper space, bringing it to just below freezing. To save energy, she is able to lower her body temperature slightly from its normal 37°C.

A mother who has not eaten for three months is able to nourish her cubs *in utero* and still keep her metabolism quiet enough to conserve energy for three more months of fasting. That's because, in addition to her own considerable insulation—two inches of thick downy underfur combined with a

full mantle of long, hollow guard hairs—every polar bear has a layer of fat below the skin.

In December, in a state of suspended animation in her darkened den, Nanu delivers two blind, deaf, toothless, downy-haired young who are less than one per cent of her size, with no body fat to speak of. The cubs, Siu and King, are immersed in the warm air trapped in the fur of Nanu's belly. Mother's rich milk, with 32 per cent fat, not only keeps these helpless newcomers alive but allows them to thrive when temperatures outside can be as far below zero as their mother's body temperature is above.

At three weeks, the fine hair is replaced by a dense undercoat and longer guard hairs. By 25 days old, the soles of their little five-toed feet start developing hair as well, completing the insulation they need for moving around the den.

Before their eyes open early in the second month, they learn to navigate with other developing senses, often with Nanu's gentle guidance. They start to differentiate the textures, smells, sounds, and rhythms in the den. Their ears open by their second month, and their baby teeth come in. By their third month, they are able to raise themselves up on their hind legs in preparation for learning to walk.

The cubs go from one to two kilos in January, from two to four in February. By March, they are about 11 kilos and increasingly aware of their surroundings.

The constant proximity of the three bears is creating a family bond that will see them through to separation and independence that is at least two years off.

Outside, the air is dry and supremely cold. The cubs may perceive the presence of a white fox outside the den rousting small mammals, like lemmings, that eke



out a living in the tundra grasslands under the snow. One day, the piercing sound of a helicopter dropping grid stakes for a mining claim in the area startles the cubs, and they cluster back into Nanu's bosom.

By March the cubs are getting their lower incisors and canine teeth, and their hearing is becoming much more acute. They can now hear the fox walking over the den. And, as they pounce and roll together, they try out different voices and calls.

With all this activity, Nanu must rouse herself from her sleepy state to scrape the frost that builds up on the walls and poke at the air vent.

After the equinox on March 21, when the sun is visible for 12 hours, the days lengthen quickly. For the first



time Nanu can see her cubs. Soon it will be time to get the three of them on their way to the bay, 43 miles away.

There is nothing but uncertainty ahead, as there has been for every emerging mother bear since the beginning of time. But now, who knows? Will they be able to deal with the threats?

By the end of March, Nanu is fully awake. The cubs, fearless little fur balls with claws and teeth, are ready to enter the wider world, a world where tradition and progress collide. Until very recently, the speed of change—whether in hunting traditions or in the seasons, the weather, the local conditions—was such that the bears could mostly adapt.

With the onset of climate change, which has accelerated in lockstep

with technological “progress,” change is happening much more rapidly than any plant or animal’s ability to respond. Nanu and the cubs are living in circumstances that at almost every turn will challenge their survival.

**T**HE ADULT BEAR who punches through the snow to the April sunshine is a scant 250 kilos, a shadow of her ample self. The cubs have gone from 1/500th of their mother’s weight when they were born to 1/20th of her current weight. Sunlight on crystalline snow drifts leaves them squinting as they tumble from the den.

With just her head and shoulders hanging out of the exit, Nanu sniffs the air and scans slowly in all directions. Stiffly, she drags herself

out of the den, shakes vigorously, and stands fully upright for the first time in five months. She heads up over the den, chuffing for the cubs to follow. Working her way to a gravelly ridge a few dozen metres uphill from the creek, she stands looking first one way and then another. Scanning the distance. Sniffing the air. She knows instinctively how vulnerable she and the cubs are.

That first foray out of the den lasts no more than half an hour. Over the next week, Nanu and the cubs work their way up the ridge, stopping at a place where the wind has exposed alpine grasses. Nanu grazes on them to reduce her hunger and to reawaken her digestive system.

Forays in these early days build and tone the cubs' muscles for the journey that is about to begin. But these walks are also about readying Nanu's own body for the long walk to the bay.

Nanu decides it is time to move. In the ten days since she opened the den, the sea has been there on the wind, particularly from the east. Silhouetted against the strengthening sun, the three bears walk away, the cubs roaming among Nanu's feet, getting sidetracked, being called back.

The route they're taking is similar to the one Nanu first walked with her mother almost nine years ago. It isn't long before they are crossing a pattern of ridges, each one a little lower in elevation than the previous one.

The cubs play less now because when they are not walking or nursing, they are sleeping. Developing lungs take in new ground with every breath, building body awareness of place. The sun moves from in front to behind them as the days progress. For Nanu, they

## THEY ARE ENTERING A DANGEROUS WORLD OF ADULT MALE BEARS. NANU HAS TO BE VIGILANT

are familiar sensations from her memory, like the melodies of a much cherished song.

King will likely never come back this far inland. As a male, he will den during the winter. Siu, by contrast, will come here by heart, by the look and feel of the place—the ground-hugging spruce on the beach ridges, the faint smell of diesel from the trains running between the towns of The Pas and Churchill, the pungent dens of foxes—retracing the line they are etching in the snow.

Suddenly Nanu stops with every muscle in her body flexed and ready. The cubs, too, tumble to a stop. Nanu sniffs and utters a high-pitched grunting sound that the cubs have never heard at that intensity. She stands and sniffs, first in one direction, then in another and



another, finishing with a long stand facing downwind. In the distance, three grey wolves are making their way upwind.

Encouraging the cubs to keep close, she stands again so that the wolves can see her before she takes a few vigorous running steps in their direction. She drops down and continues walking toward the wolves, cubs behind her. Driven by a mother's combination of fear, caution, and courage, Nanu chooses to pose a threat of her own.

Again, she stands, radiating the confidence of size. This time the wolves stop, look, and then look away. Suddenly they turn and lope off. For now, at least, the threat is gone.

At this point in their lives, the cubs have no real capacity to run. Nanu won't leave them, except to fight on their behalf. The best she can do to protect them is to

encourage the cubs to listen and to stay by.

**D**AY SIX, THEY crest a ridge. The cubs, riding on their mother's back, sniff the air and sense that something is different. For the first time, Siu and King are smelling the odour of muddy ice on the foreshore flats of Hudson Bay. Mixed with the familiar scents are old oil, which may have washed in, and acrid plastic flotsam brought here by the slow rotations of the Hudson Bay's waters.

At the beach, Nanu breaks into a short canter. Stopping suddenly, she flops onto her back and rolls with her feet in the air and the cubs clambering all over her. She gets up, shakes and sniffs along a crack in the ice. She disappears momentarily down through the crack and reappears with a great tawny snake



of bull kelp, full of alginates and fibre that will fill her digestive system and ready it for the meal to come. The little ones tire of it quickly and butt their way in for a drink of milk instead.

They continue out onto the ice. Nanu stops and sniffs and stands much more often than she did while they were on the land. She and her cubs are entering a dangerous world of adult male bears.

**T**HE THREAT FROM MALES is extreme. If they aren't attacking a trio like this for nutrition in a lean year, then they are attacking the cubs to kill them, in the hope that this might bring the female back into heat. As hungry as Nanu is, she has to be ever vigilant.

The voice of a raven and the squawks of a glaucous gull draw Nanu's attention to a place far along a pressure ridge. She finds the remains of a ringed seal whitecoat. It is mostly just furry skin left behind by another bear, but she eats it and keeps moving along the crack.

Suddenly she stops. She has located an aglu, a seal's breathing hole in the ice.

Nanu nudges Siu and King a few metres away and does her best with gestures, low chuffing sounds and gentle encouragement to get them to lie still while she moves back to prepare for the kill.

With precision and care that seems

to belie the size and strength of her paws, she scrapes away some of the snow covering the thin layer of ice on the inside of the lair.

King is going to sleep, but Siu is soon back beside her mother. Nanu pushes Siu to her side and then, in a sitting position with her feet almost on what would be the apex of the dome of the aglu, she stiffens. Siu settles down quietly as well.

Nanu can hear the quiet mewling of a baby inside the lair. But that is not the meal that she is hoping for. Eventually, she feels a puff of condensed air come up through the air hole in the aglu, followed by the hollow swoosh of water below. Finally, the mother seal crawls up out of the water into her lair to nurse her pups.

In one smooth movement, forelegs braced, Nanu rises up and crashes down through the aglu, front feet followed by her head. Then, to Siu's amazement, she recoils back above the surface of the ice with a seal four times the cub's size.

Nanu keeps her grip on the seal's fragile head with her teeth. When it stops moving, she rips through the grey-silver fur and into the rich blubber that she has been craving. In no time, the cubs have started feeding on the carcass as well. Life on the ice has begun in earnest. ■

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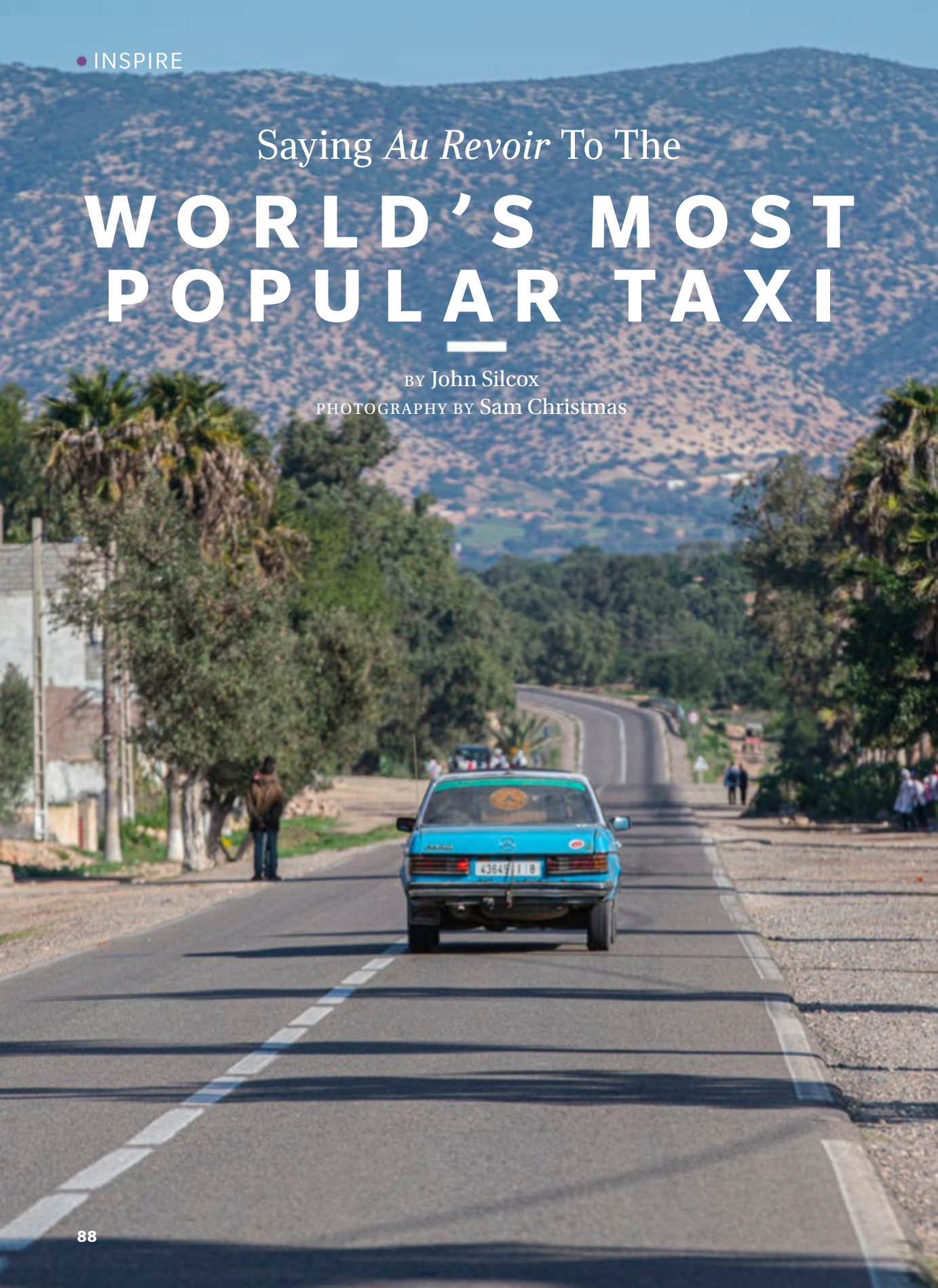
Saying *Au Revoir* To The

# WORLD'S MOST POPULAR TAXI

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BY John Silcox

PHOTOGRAPHY BY Sam Christmas





**IN MOROCCO LOCALS TRAVEL BY GRAND TAXIS**, battered but colourful old diesel Mercedes that never let them down. With the government trying to force them off the streets, we hitch a ride to understand their cultural significance, while shedding light on the suffocating legacy of the West's new car market and the rapid expansion of North African automotive production

### END OF AN ERA

Morning at Essaouira's Place des Grand Taxis is a unique scene. Long before daybreak, drivers start demisting cracked windscreens with filthy wads of old newspaper while oil-covered mechanics coax weary engines back to life, through clouds of blue smoke. Groups of travellers huddle together, dotted among cars. They are waiting for a ride, their faces concealed from the cold by hooded woollen cloaks called *Djellabas*.

Along the many lines of battered and bruised diesel relics being readied to hit the road, one in particular stands out. It's a 1974 Mercedes Stroke 8 belonging to Hassan Mesfar, a well-known character in the neighbourhood.

In the UK, such a vehicle would



grace a motor museum, but in Morocco it's just another rolling ruin, albeit one that boasts the dubious honour of being the oldest taxi in town.

Far from being unique, this car is among thousands of Mercedes 240Ds from the 1970s and 80s that have spent their twilight years in the sun, shipped over when deemed too old for the European market. Here they are woven into the fabric of society, providing an essential long-distance travel link for locals as well as a colourful snapshot for tourists, much like the old American cars in Cuba.

Sadly the days of the Mercedes



Grand Taxis are now numbered, as the Moroccan government is keen to rid them from the country's roads. In 2014, it launched an incentive scheme offering Grand Taxi drivers 80,000 Diram (£6,500) to scrap their old vehicles. So far, more than 56 per cent of the 45,000 grand taxis in service have been updated thanks to this programme; something the government aims to increase to 100 per cent by mid 2022.





“It’s the end of an era,” says Mesfar, ruefully. “The government is offering us money to update our cars for shiny new ones but they’re not the same as my old Mercedes. It’s the best car I have ever driven—so solid, so reliable, so comfortable—and never lets me down. That’s why around here we call them *Merci dix*.”

In Moroccan French this literally translates as “thanks times ten”, but there’s also a play on words with the local pronunciation of Mercedes / Mersids /, which Mesfar delivers with a smile and a shake of the hand.

## LE GRAND TAXI

It’s easy to understand why the Grand Taxis play such a vital link in the country’s long distance transport system when you consider there is, on average, just one private car

registered for ten Moroccans. There is also a near complete lack of public transport alternatives.

So with that in mind, the Place des Grand Taxis is more than a simple taxi rank: it’s a main transport hub and every city in the 1000-mile long country has one. They are all organised in a similar manner: a chief broker, usually found in a prominent position surrounded by assistants, orchestrates operations. Travellers going to a particular city up north are ushered into one taxi, those going south into another and so forth. And then, when all the seats in a car are taken, it can set off.

“Look at the green taxi parked over there,” says Mesfar. “That’s stayed overnight from Taroudant and that one over there is from Rabat, as it’s white. Each city in Morocco has its

own taxi colour scheme that makes it easy to spot.”

Essaouria boasts a unique shade of blue that originally came from crushed seashells. Nearly everything in the city has been painted with it: from horse drawn carriages, to people's front doors—even the Petit Taxis. This last point is unusual as most other Moroccan cities chose different colours to differentiate Petit Taxis, which are smaller cars (usually French hatchbacks) that are only allowed to take a maximum of two passengers on much shorter rides within the urban perimeter.

## AFRICA: THE WORLD'S SCRAPYARD

“In the 1980s Africa started to experience an influx of second hand Mercedes cars,” says Flavien Neuvy, an economist specialising in the African automotive industry. “Moroccan taxi drivers simply started catching on to what cab owners in Europe had understood: diesel Mercedes were built to last.”

Mesfar's Mercedes W114 Stroke 8 model was a game-changer for the Stuttgart-based manufacturer and 1.9 million rolled off the line during its eight years of production. Its successor, the W123, appeared in 1976 and even more were produced with 2.9 million of these cars being built in the nine years that followed.

Back in the 1970s and 1980s the average age of cars in Europe was

less than seven years. So millions of robust and reliable Mercedes were soon swapped for newer cars by their original owners and sold on the used car market. Finally when deemed too old for the European buyers they were picked up at discounted rates by exporters and

## IN THE 1980s AFRICA STARTED TO EXPERIENCE AN INFLUX OF SECOND HAND MERCEDES

shipped to emerging countries, with African nations being the favourite destination by far.

In 2000, more than 70 per cent of all cars imported into Morocco were more than five years old, including many old Mercedes, which have enjoyed incredible longevity thanks to their robust mechanics, simple maintenance requirements and an abundance of salvaged spare parts. It was estimated 35,000 W123 240Ds alone were still on Moroccan roads in 2011, more than 30 years after the last car rolled off production lines.

“Africa is a hotbed of mechanical resourcefulness,” says Neuvy. “Everything has a value, even if we'd deem it rubbish in Europe. When things break, people always find a way to fix them. Local taxi drivers

have many tricks up their sleeves to keep their vehicles on the road: from bits of string and wire to rocks in the boot to fix a driveshaft—they know it all.”

### CLEARING THE AIR

The downside of this longevity is while European drivers have enjoyed generations of cleaner, more efficient vehicles, Moroccans have been suffering from increasingly bad air pollution. According to the Barcelona Institute for Global Health, mortality due to air pollution in the country has increased by 50 per cent since 1997. Vehicle emissions are the most significant source of air pollution in Moroccan urban centres, accounting for nearly 60 per cent in total.

“Some developing countries have some pretty hideous pollution problems in their cities,” says Mike Berners-Lee. “With old Diesel engines there are two types of pollution. The type of pollution that clogs up your lungs and kills you and passers by with particulates; and then there’s carbon emissions which affect climate change. In the UK alone, 40,000 people per year die of this first kind of pollution, so it’s definitely something that needs to be taken seriously.”

The Moroccan government’s



response has been to implement a series of measures to improve matters. In 2010 they banned the import of all cars more than five years old as well as increasing tax duties on the sale of second hand vehicles. Then in 2014, they brought in the first cash incentive scheme aimed at Grand Taxi drivers.

Critics are calling out the government for having other motivations for subsidising new car purchases: notably the country’s recent heavy investment to develop extensive automobile production facilities. The North African kingdom aims to become one of the world’s





big players in the automotive sector with an industry worth approximately £10 billion within the next five years.

French manufacturer Renault is historically linked with the territory and benefits from considerable support from the Moroccan government, operating two plants in the North of the country. Production at these sites includes the seven-seater Dacia Lodgy, which is now the most commonly bought taxi in the country; representing one in every two new sales.

"From an embodied carbon perspective, keeping these old Mercedes on the road is actually better than replacing them with new ones," argues Berners-Lee. "People often forget that producing new vehicles generates a lot of unseen carbon emissions, even though

the end product spits out less from its tailpipe. The

direct savings from the previous model must be significant enough to warrant renewal, otherwise we are simply offsetting the problem onto just another different part of the vehicle's life-cycle."

Regardless of all this, for now back in Essaouira, as far as Hasan Mesfar is concerned, it's going to take more than a few thousand Diram and a shiny new car to make the veteran driver change his ways.

"I'm too old for anything new anyway," he says. "I'll be retiring in a few years so it would be a waste of money to upgrade. I also don't think my customers would like it and for me, it wouldn't be the same job without my Mercedes."

He pointedly adds: "We've been on unforgettable adventures so it's only fair we reach the end of the road together." ■

# WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

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*My Great Escape:*

# Sunny Sorrento

*Our reader Barbara Hull from York takes a charming coastal trip*

**A**FTER ENTHUSIASTIC RECOMMENDATION from many friends, I finally made it to Sorrento, a coastal town facing the Bay of Naples in southwestern Italy. The name itself had been imprinted on my psyche since childhood, mainly through hearing various renditions of the song “Come back to Sorrento”.

The town is, deservedly, tremendously popular for American weddings, creating a feel of non-stop celebration. Many brides choose to have a photo taken overlooking the magnificent bay of Naples, with the veil billowing in the sea breeze. Sometimes there’s even a queue for the best spot.

Perhaps the most sensuous memory I have of Sorrento is of their lemons. The fruits provide the raw materials for that amazing lemon soap on sale everywhere and, even





better, for the delicious Limoncello liqueur, sometimes offered gratis as a digestif after a restaurant meal.

The town of Sorrento has its own art galleries and museums, which are all well worth a visit, but perhaps the greatest advantage is its proximity to the major historical treasures of Naples, Pompeii and Herculaneum, which are all within easy reach by road or rail, and Capri and Ischia are just a boat trip away.



Film legend Sophia Loren was raised in nearby Pozzuoli and has an abiding spiritual presence in the town, especially at the harbour.

A very proud citizen pointed out to me the window in her house where Sophia had looked out across the bay, during the filming of *Scandal in Sorrento* in which she starred with Vittorio de Sica, in 1955. A restaurant where the actress once dined keeps a table permanently reserved for her!

The place has always had powerful influence on visitors even inspiring Harriet Beecher Stowe to write a novel about the town, *Agnes of Sorrento*, back in 1862.

I spent two weeks in Sorrento and still did not see everything the town has to offer. I definitely must *Torna a Surriento* (return to Sorrento) soon. ■



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# IDIOM INSTALLATION

## *Prague*



Library-going tourists in Prague usually visit the Czech Republic's ancient Clementinum complex. Regularly cited as the world's most handsome, the mammoth National Library here has dazzling ceiling frescoes depicting scientific, artistic or religious images above gold-lined rich mahogany walls.

Alternatively, they might check out the Theological Hall, a 17th-century library within the imposing Strahov Monastery. Similarly baroque, similarly beautiful and similarly acclaimed, this den has still more frescoes across arched ceilings, plus giant globes and a display case whose narwhal tusk which was originally thought to belong to a unicorn.

Far less obvious a destination is the old town's Municipal Library. Yet there's one especially good reason to come here: the art installation inside its entrance hall.

Named "Idiom", this is a cylindrical Jenga tower of 8,000 stacked books. It's eye-catching from the outside, but wait until you peer through a teardrop-shaped opening: trick mirrors in the tunnel suggest an infinite spiral of paperbacks.

Designed by Slovakian artist Matej Kren, "Idiom" perhaps refers to the concept of infinite knowledge—or perhaps simply the impossibility of reading all the world's books?

Available to inspect from Monday to Saturday, it's far from Prague's only attention-grabbing installation piece. Look for David Žerný's politically-charged "Brown-Nosers", 17-foot models of human bottom halves at the Futura art museum. One can climb a ladder to look into their rectum, inside which TVs show Czech politicians spoon-feeding each other. Then there are Kampa Park's line of 34 plastic yellow penguins, referencing climate change, close to three giant, faceless babies also by Žerný. ■

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By Richard Mellor



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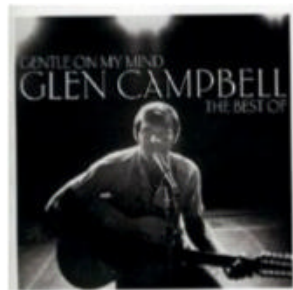
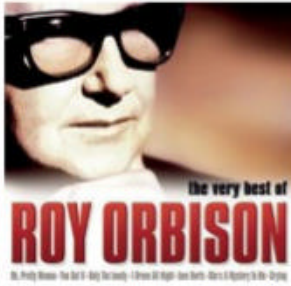
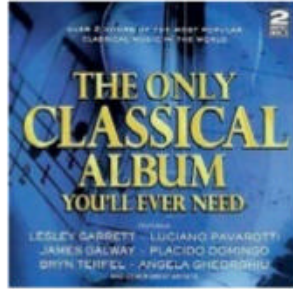
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**Roger Whittaker** *The Very Best Of*

**Andy Williams** *The Very Best Of*

**John Williams** *Spanish Guitar Music*



# Coping With A Higher Cost Of Living

*With winter bills soaring, Andy Webb has a plan on how to best mitigate any financial damage*

**F**ROM RECORD PETROL pump prices and surging energy bills to sizeable supermarket spends and costlier clothes, the last few months of 2021 saw big jumps in how much we pay for things. And I'm afraid that trend is likely to continue in 2022.

But don't panic (too much). There are ways you can find savings and boost your budget. Combined, these should minimise some of the damage to your bank balance caused by creeping inflation.

Give some or all of these a go and you'll hopefully manage much better.

### Shop around

I use online tools to help me find the lowest price. For everyday purchases there's PriceSpy. It's essentially a price comparison site, but I love the feature to see the recent price history—it's a great help in working out if there could be a discount just around the corner.

### Downshift brands

If you're always buying the leading brands at the supermarket, give some own brand alternatives a whirl. Often similar products are made at the same factories and while they might not taste exactly the same, the money saved might incentivise you enough to make the change.

You could also look to change supermarket completely, with some

of the discounters offering much lower prices than you're used to.

### Earn cashback

Everytime you shop online, go via either **Quidco** or **TopCashback**. These cashback websites will earn a small commission on your purchases, and then pass most of that back to you.

You can double down on this with a cashback debit or credit card. Chase Bank UK offers one per cent for 12 months on purchases via its current account, while American Express welcome offers can be worth five per cent or more for the first three months.

### Get the best interest rates

Though it might seem like there's no point comparing rates on savings, there are accounts available that'll significantly boost what you make in a year. Head to **becleverwithyourcash.com/savings** for the highest paying ones.

It's also worth seeing if you can lower what you pay on your mortgage. If interest rates rise significantly this year, we'll see the end to the record low home loans.



Andy Webb is a personal finance journalist and runs the award-winning money blog, *Be Clever With Your Cash*

Make sure you factor in any exit fees on your current mortgage and arrangement charges on new ones when you're comparing deals.

### Stop overpaying on your bills

Some of the biggest costs every month are ones we think we can't go without—broadband, TV and mobile phone bills. As long as you are out of contract you should be able to downgrade and pay less.

Mobile phone data is one of the worst here. Check your account online to see how much you actually use each month and choose a SIM which is closest to that.

Similarly, if you find you're mainly watching channels such as BBC, ITV and Channel 4, then you could look to scrap pay TV subscriptions—even if it's just for the short term.

### Use what you've got

Take an hour to have a look at what's lurking at the back of cupboards around your home. There could be clothes, food and gadgets that you've forgotten about but are all perfectly good to use—and they might mean you don't need to buy anything new.

Even items that need some TLC could prove cheaper to mend than replace.

Take the same approach to your wallet. Search for gift cards, credit on bills and old accounts that could provide some fresh spending money.

### Find out if you are entitled to help

Pay a visit to sites such as [Entitledto.co.uk](http://Entitledto.co.uk) and [turn2us.org.uk](http://turn2us.org.uk) in order to see if you could be claiming any benefits or grants that could boost your income.

### Cut back where you can

If everything is more expensive, then it stands to reason that you'll probably also need to cut back in places. When you're shopping, consider whether the item is a "need" or a "want". If you don't need it then it might be time to give it a miss—or look out for a cheaper alternative.

You don't need to drop all your luxuries—unless you can't afford them of course. But spending less on these will mean you have more cash available for the essentials like food and heating. ■

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## Starstruck

Our star, the sun, is so dense that it accounts for a whopping 99 per cent of the mass of our entire solar system

Source: Mashable.com

# On The Money

Help with money worries

*Andy Webb*

**Q: I know compared to a lot of problems right now this isn't huge, but my anxieties over my financial worries have started to spiral and I'm having no sleep. I'm a single parent with outgoings that I can't keep up with. Where can I turn to for independent advice on managing my money in a way I feel in control of?**

- Aiden

**A:** Hi Aiden. First up, don't diminish how you're feeling about your finances. Mental and financial health are strongly linked, with a bad experience with one often then impacting the other.

So the fact you're asking for help is brilliant—it's the most important step to fixing both.

I think a great organisation to approach first is your local **Citizens Advice Bureau**. Or see if there's a free money management course near you from **CAP** (Christians Against Poverty).

The Trussell Trust provides a national network of food banks, so if



you are worried about putting food on the table, search its website to get details on how you can get a food voucher.

If you're struggling with existing debts then there are some brilliant free and independent charities who will be able to take you through the options. These include **StepChange** and **National Debtline**.

Easing your money worries should help with your mental health, but you can also seek support for your anxiety from organisations such as **Mind**. Like I said, the two are interlinked, so reducing your stress levels could put you in a better place to tackle your finances.

And I'd also recommend **Gingerbread**. It's a great charity for single parents. They not only have information about financial support but there will be resources that could be useful in other areas of parenting, including access to local groups.

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Got a money question for our resident expert? Email it confidentially to [onthemoney@readersdigest.co.uk](mailto:onthemoney@readersdigest.co.uk)

# Totes Reversible

*This craft project makes a great gift for yourself or a loved one*

**A** S A SEWER, I have a pretty big collection of fabric off cuts that I've accumulated over the years. To help use some of them up, I designed this simple tote bag. It uses two types of fabric, and is totally reversible (thanks to a technique called a French seam). This is a project for confident beginners—you should be able to make one of these totes in under an hour.

## You will need

- **Two fabrics** (82cm x 42cm of each)
- **4cm wide fabric webbing** (70cm)
- **Ruler**
- **Fabric scissors**
- **Pins**
- **Sewing machine and thread**

## What to do

**1** Cut both of your main fabrics into long rectangles (82cm x 42cm each). Cut out two 35cm lengths of fabric webbing.

**2** Lay one of your main fabric pieces face side up. Position the ends of



one 35cm length of webbing along the short edge of the large fabric piece. Align the ends of the webbing approximately 14cm from the outer (long) edges of the larger fabric piece, with the rest of the webbing pointing inwards.

**3** Put the other large piece of fabric on top (face side down), so it sandwiches the strap in the middle. The two large fabric pieces should be aligned neatly, right sides facing, with one strap in between.

**4** Pin then sew along the top (short) edge of the two larger fabric pieces together with a 1/2 inch seam allowance, going through the ends of the webbing too. Do not sew down the longer sides.

**5** Repeat the same process for the other end of the large fabric pieces. This time, sandwich the second strap in the middle—again, make sure that it points inwards, so it's completely hidden between the two large fabric pieces.

**6** When the second edge is sewed in place, turn the whole thing inside out through one of the long edges to reveal the straps and hide the raw edges on the short sides.

**7** Fold the piece in half, so the two straps meet. It doesn't matter which side faces outwards, as the finished bag will be reversible.

**8** Pin the folded piece together along the sides. Sew them with a 1/2 inch seam allowance, removing the pins as you go. Trim these ends, leaving approximately 1/4 inch allowance.

**9** To add the French seams, turn the whole bag inside out and sew the sides of the bag again, this time 1/2 inch from the edge. Because this seam allowance is larger than the one you trimmed it to in step 13, the raw edges will be trapped and hidden and the bag will be reversible.

I like the idea of using a very bright and colourful fabric for one side of this tote, then a more neutral fabric for the other. That way, you get the ultimate versatile bag! These totes would make a really good gift too, especially if you find a bold fabric that the recipient would love. Because even if you misjudge it slightly, they can always turn it inside out and use the other side...



Mike Aspinall runs one of the UK's most popular craft blogs, *The Crafty Gentleman*, where he shares free DIY tutorials

# The Style Resolutions We Should All Be Making For 2022

*How to build a better, more wearable wardrobe and put your best fashionably clad foot forward in the new year*

**A**NOTHER YEAR HAS come to a close and 2022 stands before us like a fresh chapter in a book. As the new year begins, it's only natural to want to embrace the "new year, new start" mindset; to leave behind old problems and bad habits and make positive changes in our lives. So we set New Year's resolutions. But, keeping them is often easier said than done. Therefore, this year I'm suggesting we all make a few resolutions that are easy to keep. Specifically, resolutions relating to personal style; an area in our lives that perhaps doesn't always get the attention it deserves. Considering the fact that we have to deal with our wardrobes every single day, it makes sense to ensure that they're working as effectively as possible for us, guaranteeing that we look and feel great every day.



Bec Oakes is a Lancashire-based freelance journalist with particular passions for fashion and culture writing

I've pulled together a selection of fashion resolutions designed to help you cultivate a wardrobe that works for you and avoid having to contend with style meltdowns, both in the new year and beyond.

It starts with making the most of what's already in your wardrobe and you can't do that without knowing what's there. Set aside a day for a full wardrobe clear-out. Get rid of anything that doesn't fit, doesn't suit you or hasn't been worn within the past 12 months. Then, create an inventory of everything that's left, making it easier to keep track of what you own and select an outfit each morning. There are *Clueless*-style apps dedicated to the process like **Whering** or you can simply take a photo of every item you own and place them in a dedicated folder.

It really is easier to get dressed when you can find everything in your wardrobe. So avoid wasting time trying to find a long-lost cardigan by creating a wardrobe organisation system that's easy to maintain, whether that be by category or colour. And, keep your wardrobe organised by making a point of



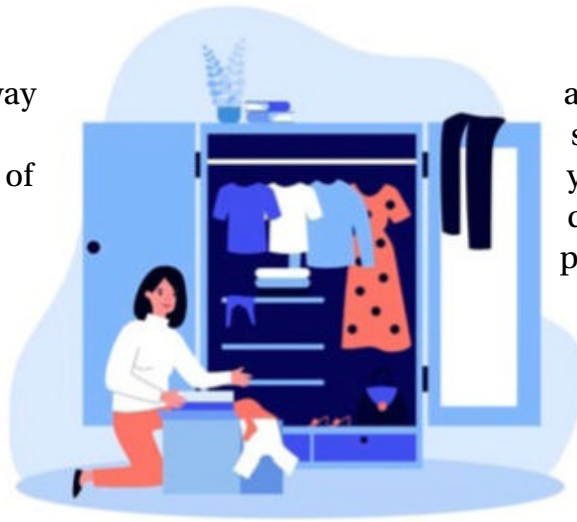
putting things away in their proper places at the end of each day.

On top of this, vowing to form better shopping habits wouldn't go amiss. We're all guilty of impulse-buying but by shopping with a clear purpose, we're more likely to curate a wardrobe with longevity.

If you're looking to reinvigorate your wardrobe with new clothes, make a conscious effort to buy elevated classics that are well-made and built to last. They may cost more, but high-quality staples are going to work a lot harder and for a lot longer than any thoughtless fast fashion purchase.

And, with the ongoing climate crisis, try to take a more sustainable approach when shopping. Buy from brands that focus on sustainability—**Raeburn**, **Pangaia** and **Reformation** are all great examples—or delve into vintage and secondhand shopping. With online marketplaces like **Depop** and **Vinted**, it's never been easier.

Lastly, vow to only buy pieces that suit and fit you well. You may love the effortlessly cool appeal of



## SET ASIDE A DAY AND PERFORM A FULL WARDROBE CLEAR-OUT

a voluminous puff-sleeved dress, but if you look like you're drowning, you'll probably never wear it. And, don't buy clothes you'd need to lose or gain weight to fit into. I have a long history of buying pieces that are too small and I developed some less than healthy nutritional habits in my plight to fit into them. So, this year, I'm pledging to only buy clothes that fit me how I am in the moment, not how I once was or someday hope to be.

As for styling, it's all about fun. Think outside the box and take some risks. Try new silhouettes. Invest in a statement piece to elevate your everyday style. Or embrace a bit of colour. Not only can it take your style in an exciting new direction, but it's scientifically proven to brighten up your day as well as that of everyone around you.

So, whether it's shopping more sustainably, bypassing unflattering trends or simply organising your wardrobe, add a style-centred resolution to your 2022 plans and make this the year you cultivate a wardrobe that truly serves you. ■

# In The Pits

*Do we really need to be unclogging our armpits? Jenessa Williams sniffs out the truth...*

## What are they?

With the central heating on high and natural deodorants selling better than ever, it can take our bodies a little while to acclimatise to a change in underarm care. Enter pit scrubs—a skin "detox" project that is sold in stick and tub formula, with an array of different scents and treatment properties.

## What are the supposed benefits?

Sold as a kind of skin "detox", many pit scrubs are formulated to unclog pores, to smooth skin and to get rid of bacteria that contribute to lingering smells. If your pits feel as if they are constantly sticky even after washing, a pit scrub can be a good way to remove stubborn residue, allowing a natural deodorant to take to the skin.

Depending on formula, some pit scrubs can help with pigmentation (the darker skin colour we sometimes find in our more sensitive areas), or to gently unlock razor bumps and ingrown hairs that can linger after shaving.

With this in mind, some scrubs can also be used on the face or bikini line, but as always, be mindful of



ingredients and instructions. For best use, apply before deodorant, but not right after shaving or other forms of hair removal so as not to risk irritation. Underarm skin can be delicate, so try not to scrub too hard; pit creams can solidify in between uses, but instead of dragging against the skin, add a drop of water or warm in your hands to ease application.

## Do they actually work?

If you find yourself to be particularly sweaty, aren't getting on with natural deodorants or are especially bothered by pigmentation, a pit scrub can be a handy tool to have on hand.

Otherwise, the results it yields aren't hugely different from that of a regular hygiene routine—washing regularly with a good quality soap, drying the skin properly and then moisturising/applying deodorant as your skin type requires. In a real pinch, take a look at the ingredients list; with most scrubs based on a combination of baking soda, sugar and shea butter, you might even be able to create your own product from ingredients you already have. ■



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SAUVIGNON BLANC 2020**

(£13.99) A lovely organic number that's full of citrus zing, gooseberry intensity and lovely mouth-coating richness, this is an absolute taste sensation.



# New Year, New Wines...

For many a new year symbolises the perfect time to try something new, so in 2022 why not give some lesser-known types of wine a swirl!

## Opt for Organic

Organic and biodynamic wines are growing hugely in popularity. Organic wines are produced without the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or other artificial chemicals. Biodynamic relates to a way of farming that follows a sustainable approach that views the vineyard as a closed, diversified ecosystem that harnesses the natural cycles of the earth. Expect an element of grit and earthiness from organic and biodynamic wines, they are often a pure representation of the grape type and full of raw, powerful flavour.

## Regional flair

There are always new wine regions to try too. Lebanese wine has been produced for thousands of years, and it's excellent quality. Greece's indigenous red Agiortiko grape isn't well-known, but in a blind tasting you'd be forgiven for thinking you were sipping on a top-end red from Bordeaux. Then there's the Tokaj in Hungary, a region specialising in top-notch sweet wines made from their leading grape Furmint.

## Say yes to no alcohol

Low ABV% and non-alcoholic wines are a great alternative for those looking to lower their alcohol consumption without missing out on the enjoyable taste of a glass of vino. Lower alcohol wines don't always get the best reviews which is why selecting a good one is key. Look out for labels that say the drink is made from fermented grapes, as those are more likely to taste of wine.

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A TASTE OF  
**HOME**

**RUDIE'S CURRY GOAT**



# Michelle Miah

Co-owner of Rudie's Jerk Shack

My parents both came from Jamaica and the first time I went there, I felt I'd become complete as a young person. I'm Black-British, but I felt my roots were there, in family, culture and food. Curry goat is real traditional Jamaican fare, and this recipe and way of cooking has been passed down the generations. I watched my mum and nan cook dishes like this, and their houses were always full of people, music and, of course, the amazing sights and smells of Jamaican cooking. I was always curious about food and learned to cook things like rice and peas, yams and cornmeal porridge, as well as this curry goat dish which we serve in the restaurant today.

## METHOD:

1. Blend all the curry ingredients together to make a fine paste.
2. Rub the paste into the diced goat meat (and preferably leave it to marinade for 24 hours if possible).
3. Add the oil to the pan and cook the marinated meat for 30 minutes (or until the meat and spices are cooked through).
4. Add water to cover meat and a third of the potatoes.
5. Let it simmer on medium-high heat for 30 minutes.
6. Add the remaining potatoes.
7. Cover the pot and leave to cook on medium heat for another 30 minutes until done.
8. Season with salt and black pepper to taste.
9. Garnish with fresh thyme and chopped spring onions.
10. Serve with steamed white rice.

## INGREDIENTS:

### Serves 4-6

- **1 kg goat**  
(diced on the bone preferably)
- **340g curry paste** (see below)
- **250g waxy potatoes**  
(peeled and diced)
- **120g fresh thyme**
- **120g spring onions**  
(green tips only)
- **1 tsp salt and black pepper**

### For the curry paste

- **12g sea salt**
- **7g black pepper**
- **80g curry powder**  
(preferably Jamaican)
- **600g onions**
- **50g garlic**
- **150g spring onions**
- **7g fresh thyme**  
(remove hard bottoms)
- **7g Scotch bonnet pepper**
- **50g vegetable oil**



Rudie's offers an extensive food menu at its Brixton restaurant site, set across two floors with eating inside and out. Rudie's Brixton is the ideal venue to explore the depths and rich culinary heritage of Jamaican food

Rudie's Brixton, Unit 10, Market Row, Brixton, London SW9 8LB

[rudieslondon.com](http://rudieslondon.com)



# World Kitchen

**Romania:**

## *“Meaty” Stuffed Peppers*

This month, nutrition and lifestyle coach Diana Sutac introduces us to a vegan take on her mum’s traditional stuffed peppers recipe...



“ Stuffed peppers are always present at a traditional Romanian festive dinner. It wouldn't be Christmas or someone's birthday without them. This dish is quite time-consuming, but it is so worth it. The traditional pork meat has been replaced here with ground walnuts for a plant-based spin on the traditional recipe, and the combination of rice, sautéed vegetables, walnuts and peppers always reminds me of home”

### Method:

1. Heat 4 tbsp of olive oil in a pan on a medium-high heat. Add the carrots, celery, onion and saute them for 3-4 mins, mixing often with a wooden spoon, making sure they don't burn.
2. Add the tomato paste and cook for 1 extra minute. Add the rice, walnuts and mix it well with the carrots, onion and celery.
3. Pour the tomato passata on top, season it with salt and pepper. Cover the pan with a lid and let it simmer for 5 mins.
4. While the stuffing is cooking, wash and deseed the peppers. Shred the white cabbage.
5. Take a big pot and pour 1 tbsp of olive oil in it. Cover the base of the pot with white cabbage so can't see the bottom of the pot anymore (approximately 1-2cm of cabbage).
6. With a spoon, fill the peppers with the stuffing until they are 90 per cent full. Top them with 1 or 2 tomato slices (depending on how wide the peppers are). Continue until you stuff all the peppers that fit into the pot.
7. Cover the stuffed peppers with shredded white cabbage. Add enough water to cover the peppers. Place a heat-resistant porcelain plate on top to keep everything in place during cooking.
8. Bring the pot to boil on high heat. When they start to boil, turn to medium-low heat and let them cook for about 50 mins to 1 hour. Taste after 50 mins—if the rice is cooked, the peppers are ready to eat!

**Serves: 6-8**

**Cooking time: 2 hours**

### Ingredients:

- **8 medium-sized bell peppers**, deseeded
- **3 medium carrots**, finely chopped
- **3 celery stalks**, finely chopped
- **1 big brown onion**, finely chopped
- **5 tbsp olive oil**
- **2 tbsp tomato paste**
- **400ml tomato passata**
- **1 ½ cups arborio rice**
- **1 ½ cups ground walnuts**
- **3 medium tomatoes**, sliced
- **300g white cabbage**, shredded (about ½ medium cabbage)
- **1 tsp sea salt**
- **Pepper to taste**



For more recipes from Diana, visit [dianasutac.com/recipes](https://dianasutac.com/recipes)





## State Of The Art: Gianfranco Meggiato

The Italian sculptor and creator of the “Introsculpture” on his new show

### How would you describe your art?

My work explores the labyrinth, the tortuous and tormented path that Man travels in his search to find himself and his precious inner sphere. This led me to coin the concept of “Introsculpture”. I want to bring viewers into my sculptures and their obscured depths, instead of just being preoccupied with its external surface. To do this, I create space within my sculptures which almost makes them seem to breathe—in this way, the void becomes as important as the solid form itself. In my work, I like to try to focus on that which is essentially invisible to the eyes. One cannot touch ideals, feelings or dreams—one can only live them.

### What are your main influences?

The classical sculptors of antiquity, like Donatello and Michelangelo, have played an important role in my artistic training, but I also am inspired by great modern masters of sculpture. Romanian sculptor Constantin Brâncuși for his research into the essential, British artist Henry Moore for his fascination with motherhood, and Alexander Calder for the way his works unfurl into space.

### What do you hope visitors glean

**from your new show?** My exhibition at the Valley of Temples was inspired by one of the best-known experiments in quantum physics: the double slit, where subatomic particles are fired through two slits, changing them from beam to wave depending on whether or not an observer is watching. I then set this experiment in relation to the famous phrase engraved on the pediment of the Temple of Apollo in Delphi: “Know Thyself”. I see a direct relationship between this motto on the Greek Temple and modern experiments in quantum physics: who is, or rather, what truly is Man if he is able to modify, by observation alone, the behaviour and status of subatomic particles? This question is succinctly posed by the sculpture “Quantum Man”, giving the exhibition its title by nodding to the theories of quantum physics.

At a first glance, combining classical Greek architecture and contemporary sculpture may seem a little strange, but it’s precisely this perceived discrepancy which best induces closer thought. In my opinion, contemporary art must always play an active role and be a tool stimulating the growth of awareness as regards the great scientific, cultural and social changes taking place. ■

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Gianfranco Meggiato’s “Quantum Man: There is No Future Without Memory” is at the Valle dei Templi Agrigento, Sicily, until January 4, 2022



## THE ELECTRICAL LIFE OF LOUIS WAIN

**W**hether you've heard of Louis Wain before or not, you've most likely seen at least one of this Victorian artist's silly anthropomorphic cat drawings. The early versions depicted ludicrous felines engaged in all sorts of human activities, while the later works morphed into psychedelic portraits of wide-eyed kittens on abstractly patterned backgrounds.

This manic biopic starring Benedict Cumberbatch focuses on the largely forgotten artist's tumultuous life and his many obsessions. Fast spoken and always on the move, he constantly drew sketches, dabbled in opera, pursued boxing and tirelessly theorised about harnessing the mysterious powers of electricity.

He also worked as a part time illustrator to support his five sisters and ailing mother. Claire Foy stars as his sisters' governess whom Wain fell in love with and married, much to the outrage of the family, as she was ten years his senior (her age wittily referred to as "geriatric" in the film.)

Director Will Sharpe's film is as vivid and feverish as Wain's life itself. A farrago of bright colours, eerie music and hammed up performances, it twists and twirls across the entire spectrum of human emotion like a kids' film on acid. It occasionally loses its footing, leaning on unnecessary slapdash montages and pointless star cameos from the likes of Taika Waititi and Richard Ayoade. However, it is anything but boring.

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By Eva Mackevic

## Also Out This Month...



### AILEY

Though this elegant documentary puts the primary spotlight on the life of the prolific US dancer and choreographer Alvin Ailey, it will no doubt engross anyone with the slightest interest in music and dance. A bubbling, poetic ode to his creative genius and legacy, *Ailey* weaves together elements of performance footage, archive audio clips, as well as colourful interviews with those who knew him best—colleagues, students and fellow artists.

We follow Ailey from his humble beginnings—a deprived childhood in rural Texas where he was raised by a single mother—to the highest of peaks, when he founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, one of the most important modern dance companies, honouring Black culture through movement. Success came with a cost though; the self loathing and fear of being judged for his homosexuality drove him to drugs, alcohol and mental illness. In 1989, he tragically succumbed to the AIDS epidemic, making the featured audio clips—all recorded in his final year of life—so moving.

But there's so much light to this documentary, too. The interviews with the original dancers of the company are full of goofy anecdotes and warm memories of their demanding but big-hearted teacher, whose communication style they likened to an embrace.

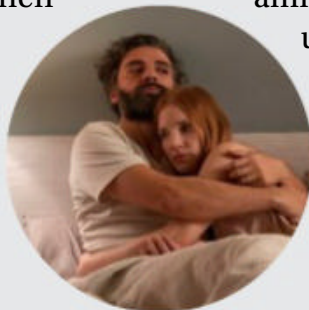
There's also loads of fascinating insight into dance as an art form—the amount of gruelling work and sacrifice that goes into it, its important role of bringing history to life through movement, and why a *plies* needs to be “felt, not danced”. It's a brilliant jumping off point for a deeper understanding of this extraordinary human being and his work that lives on 30 years later.



## • TELEVISION

Late last year, Sky Atlantic aired *Scenes from a Marriage* (NOW TV), an HBO-backed update of Ingmar Bergman's miniseries of 1973. Exactingly written and directed, and skilfully performed by Oscar Isaac and Jessica Chastain, this was prestigious appointment TV, bound for awards in the months ahead. Trouble was, it was then instantly overwritten by the grabbier, trashier third season of *You* (Netflix), offering scenes from a marriage where the squabbling spouses are also murderers. No awards here, just knowing, darkly funny soap that skewers romcom convention while satirising emerging real-world trends—this time out, the rise of online “momfluencers”. *Scenes from a Marriage* is what results when people set about making serious drama sincerely; *You* is a series made by creatives having an uncommon fun making television. Thankfully, we need not pick sides.

*You's* success—as a moral



compass-spinning serial narrated by a sociopath—might be one reason for the revival of the *Dexter* franchise, which lasted seven pleurably pulpy years before tanking in 2013 with one of the worst final seasons in TV history. In *Dexter: New Blood* (Sky Atlantic; NOW TV), Michael C Hall's anti-hero is rediscovered amid the snowy woods of upstate New York, living under a new identity and making tentative efforts to reconnect with his teenage son—only for the old animal instincts to kick in after he's confronted with a predatory industrialist.

It's having to work around the final season's wobblier decisions, reasonably well so far: just hope they stick the landing this time. Prefer your bloodshed comic? A brief push for *What We Do in the Shadows S3* (BBC2; iPlayer): the vampire-flatshare sitcom gets sillier and sillier, and ever funnier with it.

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by Mike McCahill



### *Retro Pick:*

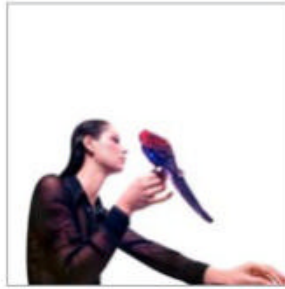
#### **Quantum Leap**

(Pick TV)

Steered by the late, great Dean Stockwell, Scott Bakula's research scientist Sam Beckett bounces round the multiverse again in this wholesome teatime time-travel treat.

**Album Of The Month:*****Storm Queen***

by Grace Cummings



If your ears are starved for an intimate heart-to-heart in the form of a music record, artist Grace Cummings' latest effort is just what you need. Despite its somewhat ominous title, there's not much tempestuous or imposing about it. A beautifully stripped down and personal album headed by Cummings' husky, muscular vocals, it really does feel like a much longed-for conversation with a dear old friend over a whiskey in a dimly lit pub.

The music itself is an affecting mixture of bluesy acoustic guitar, Irish folk-inspired fiddle and expressive piano, embellished with the occasional quiet chuckle or audible sigh from Cummings, making it that much more familiar and special. It's also remarkably timeless; "Heaven" sounds like a recording from a rousing Sixties peace protest, while the gentle "Always New Days Always" could easily be seen as a homage to Vashti Bunyan's cult 1970 record, *Just Another Diamond Day*.

But while the music may sound nostalgically familiar, Cummings' commanding vocals are anything but conventional. They're the true storyteller on this record, deftly slipping and swerving from note to note, from the highest shrieks to the most rumbling of growls. She doesn't just follow established patterns—she creates her own. A formidable artist whose heart clearly burns for the comforting grit of classic folk, we're dreaming of the day we get to see her live. Until then, we'll keep this record on repeat.

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 by Eva Mackevic
***Grace Cummings  
Recommends...******Laser Guided Melodies***

by Spiritualized



I always come back to this album. The first time I heard it was like it was made for my ears only; a little secret written just for me that encapsulated everything that was swimming around in my head. A lullaby just for me. "Spaceman" is classic Sinatra, a bed time melody and a symphony all at once.

"Shine a Light" is a song that "formed" me a bit, I suppose, as a musician... It starts from nowhere and builds up and up to a rip-out-your-heart-out kind of catastrophe. It's magnificent. That's what life is like, I think. When I hear it in music it all just starts making a lot of sense to me.

# January Fiction

*This month's pick is a thriller that has set both the publishing and film industries talking*

## **The Maid**

by **Nita Prose**

HarperCollins, £14.99

**M**olly Gray, the narrator of Nita Prose's startlingly good debut novel, is a young woman who knows her place—and who rather likes it. For “approximately four years, 13 weeks, and five days” she’s been working as a maid in the five-star Regency Grand hotel where she takes both pride and genuine pleasure in returning the guests’ rooms “to a state of perfection”.

As that very precise approximation indicates, Molly is on the autistic spectrum, not easily able to read social situations or understand metaphors. She does, mind you, know a dead body when she sees it—which she does one morning in Suite 410. A business



magnate by trade, the recently-deceased Mr Black was a regular guest, but not a well-liked one, given his hostility to more or less everybody. And that certainly included the trophy wife with whom he was often pictured in the society pages, where he was usually described as “a silver fox” (“though, to be clear,” Molly characteristically adds, “he is neither silver nor a fox”).

As you might imagine, Black hasn’t died of natural causes—and before long the police snap into action by following the not-known tactic of arresting the nearest oddball: ie, Molly. Much to her annoyance, this plays havoc with her room-cleaning schedules. But might it be that she knows more than she’s letting on?



James Walton is a book reviewer and broadcaster, and has written and presented 17 series of the BBC Radio 4 literary quiz *The Write Stuff*

*The Maid* has already caused quite a stir in the books' world, with six publishers bidding to have it and the film rights sold to Universal. Yet, however good the film might be, it will likely miss out on the novel's very real achievement.

True, the plot is neatly done—as are the below-stairs life of the hotel and Molly's gradual and shocked realisation that not everybody is as they seem. Even so, what makes this such a thoroughly beguiling read is something that movies simply can't do: the narrative voice.

In Prose's expert hands, Molly's account of her experiences and inner feelings perfectly captures the mixture of bewilderment, comic pedantry and fundamental (if sometimes misplaced) kind-heartedness with which she regards the world. It's also full of such offbeat charm that you will root for her all the way.

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## *Name the character*

**In our—slightly—new quiz for 2022, can you guess the fictional character from these clues (and, of course, the fewer you need the better)?**

1. He's the only fictional character ever to have an obituary in the *New York Times*.
2. The obituary followed his death in the 1975 novel *Curtain*.
3. It explained that he became a famous private investigator after retiring from the Belgian police force in 1904.

Answer on p126

## *Paperbacks*

### ***The Queen***

**by Matthew Dennison**

(Apollo, £12.99). A tactful, well-researched biography that's particularly good on the Queen's childhood.

### ***The City of Tears***

**by Kate Mosse** (Pan, £8.99).

The latest epic from the bestselling Mosse once again blends great storytelling with a fully-realised historical background in 16th-century France.

### ***Self-Contained***

**by Emma John** (Brazen, £8.99).

John, a terrific sports journalist, here turns more personal for an exploration of being a single woman in your forties.

### ***Would I Lie to You?***

**by Allya Ali-Afzal** (Aries, £8.99).

Warm and funny novel about a woman trying to fit in with the posh mums of Wimbledon, which also develops a good suspenseful plot.

### ***The Happiest Man on Earth***

**by Eddie Jaku** (Pan, £8.99).

Inspiring memoir from "Australia's answer to Captain Tom", who died aged 101 in October. As a Holocaust survivor, he saw the very worst of human behaviour, yet never lost his faith in people.

READER'S DIGEST RECOMMENDED READ:

# Shirting The Issues

*Legendary novelist Murakami has created an unconventional but fascinating memoir by way of his T-shirt drawer*

**Y**OU KNOW YOU'VE got some serious status as a writer when you can publish a lavishly illustrated book about your own T-shirts. Haruki Murakami began producing fiction in the late 1970s, but it was only with the 1987 book *Norwegian Wood* that he really hit the big time. A nostalgic tale of young love, it became a global bestseller and led to a level of adulation that few authors have ever had. In his native Japan, he was mobbed at airports. In America, his subsequent novels were given *Harry Potter*-style midnight launches in crowded bookstores. And with the appearance of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* in the mid-Nineties, his star rose, if anything, even higher.

Indeed, one way of reading *Murakami T* is as a picture of what a successful writer's life is like—which is to say pretty nice. Murakami hangs out in Hawaii, sees Bruce Springsteen in New York, watches

iguanas in the Galapagos islands, buying (or being given) T-shirts wherever he goes.

The result is undeniably a somewhat eccentric book. But it's also a very likeable one. Having divided his shirts by theme—bands, cars, drink, animals and so on—Murakami provides short, chatty essays about how he came to have them. He throws in various thoughts about whatever they depict, and ponders T-shirts more generally: which ones seem too boastful to wear (Porsche and BMW designs); and which, in his seventies, he now feels

***Murakami T: The T-Shirts I Love*** by Haruki Murakami is published by Harvill Secker at £14.99







## READER'S DIGEST

Beer's a little too watery, wine's a bit too refined, a martini too pretentious, brandy too mellow. The only choice is to bring out a bottle of whiskey.

I generally am an early-to-bed, early-to-rise type, but on the rare occasion that I do stay up late, it's usually with a whiskey glass in hand. Listening to old familiar

too old to be seen in (The Ramones). At one flattering point, he writes that a T-shirt produced by *The Economist* magazine has "a very stylish message, as you might expect of something British". The overall effect is not unlike sharing a conversation with a genial bloke in a bar.

Here he is, for example, discussing the crucial question of the best way to drink whisky...

“Do you like whiskey? Put me down as a fan. It's not like I drink it every day, but if the situation arises, I have been known to raise a glass.

Especially late at night, when I'm alone and listening to music, whiskey seems the perfect accompaniment.

LPs on the turntable. For me, it's got to be jazz. And not a CD. Old-school vinyl records fit the mood better.

If a bar has particularly tasty ice, I might have it on the rocks, but these days, when I drink at home, I usually have it Twice Up. It's easy to make. Just pour the whiskey into a glass (I prefer more formal stemware), and add an equal amount of water (at room temperature). Swirl the glass to get the two to mix and you're good to go. Couldn't be simpler.

When I visited the island of Islay in Scotland, the locals insisted that this is the best way to drink whiskey, and ever since, that's the way I've enjoyed it. I don't want to sound preachy, but if you drink whiskey

this way, you can enjoy it without losing any of its innate flavour. The local water in Islay has a special aroma that complements its single-malt whiskey. If you drink the same whiskey with Japanese mineral water, the taste is slightly different. Call it the power inherent in a place or whatever, but it's something that can't be helped.

Maybe it goes without saying, but this simple Twice Up way of drinking works even better the higher the quality of the whiskey, and the more robust the flavour. I mean, you're not about to take a 25-year-old Bowmore single malt and make a highball with it and chug it down, are you?

I also stayed on Jura, a tiny island next to Islay. They have a famous single-malt distillery there as well, and the local water is equally tasty, though with a different flavour than Islay's. Drinking it mixed with the local Jura whiskey made for a one-of-a-kind flavour. I stayed at the distillery's lodge, drank as much whiskey every day as I liked, enjoyed the local cuisine... Just spending a few days there made it feel like life was worth living.

I have quite a few T-shirts made by whiskey companies at home, though wearing a whiskey T and walking around in the morning seems a bit much... People might take me for some old drunk. Which is why these shirts are ones that, unfortunately, I seldom wear. ”

## A Little Less Conversation: More From *Murakami T*

“Thirty-five years ago, I was on an elevator in a hotel in New Orleans, decked out in a ‘Jeff Beck Japan Tour’ T-shirt, when a hefty older American man got on and turned to me.

‘My son’s Jeff Beck,’ he said.

‘Pardon me?’ I asked. For a moment, I had no clue what he was trying to tell me.

‘What I mean is, I’m John Beck, and my son’s Jeffrey Beck. We call him Jeff.’

‘But no relation to the guitarist?’

‘Nope, none. The name’s just the same, that’s all.’

Okay—how was I supposed to react to that? Where do you go from there in the conversation? It wasn’t like I could ask something like, ‘So—how’s your son doing?’ I’d never met the guy. As we got off the elevator and walked along, the silence was deafening.

I don’t have the T-shirt anymore.”



### *Answer to Name the Character:*

Agatha Christie’s **Hercule Poirot**. Poirot, in fact, wasn’t universally liked, with one critic calling him “a detestable, bombastic, tiresome, egocentric little creep”—that critic being Agatha Christie.

# Books

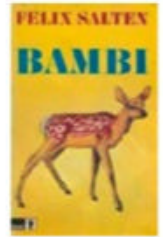
## THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

Known for *The Illustrated Child* and *The Book of Hidden Wonders*, British crime and thriller writer Polly Crosby's new novel, *The Unravelling*, is published on January 6 by HQ, HarperCollins



### *Bambi* by Felix Salten

My mum read this to me before I could read, and later I read it to myself again and again. In the Suffolk countryside where I grew up, I would often spot deer in the fields. This book made me stop and study the animal tracks on the ground and made me think about the world around me in a different way. The novel is nothing like the sickly animated movie that came later. It doesn't turn the deer into caricatures, rather, it gives nature a voice, letting us in on the mysteries of its beautiful, secretive world, where even the leaves have something to say.



### *Rings of Saturn*

by W G Sebald

I read this relatively recently when I was doing research for my novel, *The Unravelling*. Reading it feels a little like sitting by

the fire in a pub on a cold night, a pint of bitter in your hand, listening to one of the locals telling fascinating stories. At face value, the book is a written and photographic record of a journey across East Anglia. But within each nook and cranny, you discover other stories, a hidden history of the world you thought you knew, where folklore young and old meanders like a stream. Reading it made the landscape I have known all my life transform before my eyes.

### *Waterland*

by Graham Swift

I've read this book every couple of years since I studied it for English A Level. It is a novel about the intrinsic link between people and the land. Each chapter is a story in itself, a peculiar fairytale love letter to the Fens, embalmed by river water and reeds and marshland so real that you can smell it and taste it on your tongue. At 16 years old, it was the first novel I read that made me see the landscape as a character in its own right, and it was ultimately the novel that made me want to become a writer.



# The Future In Focus

*James O'Malley explains why smart glasses might be the next big thing*



**T**HIS IS AWKWARD for someone who writes about technology to admit but—whisper it—smartphones are getting a little boring.

Take the newest iPhones, which were released last September, for example. They were a little faster and had slightly better cameras, but they were basically indistinguishable from the iPhones already in our pockets.

This is why some people in the tech industry are itching for something new and are asking “What’s next?”. What will be the next revolutionary invention, which will transform our lives just as fundamentally as the smartphone or the personal computer? At the moment, a lot of clever people are betting that it will be smart glasses. The idea is pretty simple. Imagine if instead of having to pick up your phone and look at the screen like a caveman, all of the digital information you need instead simply appears floating right in front of you, in your glasses. Think

something like Arnold Schwarzenegger’s *Terminator* vision, but hopefully slightly less deadly.

If the technology can be cracked, the possibilities are endless. Imagine having satellite navigation directions appear right there on the road in front of you. Or having your glasses guide you to the right shelf in the supermarket. Or imagine being able to discreetly watch YouTube during a particularly boring meeting.

Smart glasses could be big in industry too. They could display detailed instructions to engineers, so they can fix things more quickly. Or a doctor performing surgery could beam live footage of exactly what they are seeing to a specialist consultant on the other side of the world, and be guided in real time by an expert.

This sounds like science fiction. But the reason smart glasses have captured the tech industry’s imagination is because, amazingly, most of the technologies needed to invent them already exist—and they can already be found in our phones. For example, one crucial technology

that will be needed is augmented reality (AR). That's the ability to have digital 3D objects appear as though they are part of the real world. We can already do this. If you've ever used a camera filter to wear a virtual hat on a video call, you've used AR.

## IF THE TECHNOLOGY CAN BE CRACKED, THE **POSSIBILITIES** **ARE ENDLESS**

Similarly, in recent years, huge advances have been made in spatial audio. This is when sound is processed to give it a sense of place. So that instead of simply coming from the headphones in your ears, it sounds as though it came from a specific place in the room. Some high-end headphones can already do that today—and will be crucial if we are to blur the line between the real and digital worlds. And future glasses will of course need speech recognition. Unlike a phone, it won't be possible to touch the screen on a pair of glasses, so we'll need an alternative means of interacting. Alexa and Siri show that we can already do this.

What's fun is that, as the tech analyst Benedict Evans observes, while our phones are not dramatically changing, if you squint hard enough you can still see small steps being

taken by the big tech firms towards technologies and features that will be directly applicable to smart glasses.

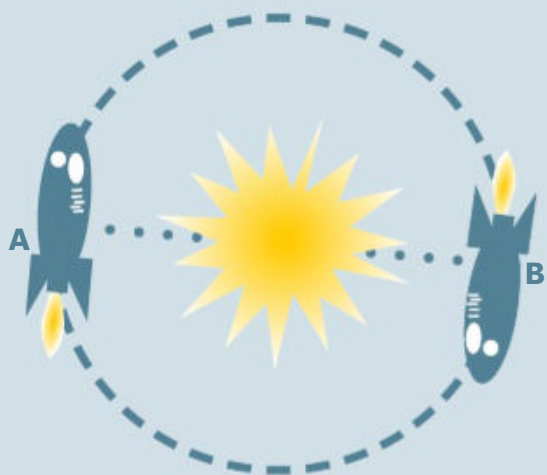
For example, on those boring new iPhones it is possible to use your phone's camera to copy and paste text from real life. If you point your phone at a number on a shop window, you can now just press on it to call the number on your phone. This might seem a bit pointless on a phone—why can't you just type the number in? But imagine you're wearing a pair of smart glasses instead, and you can immediately imagine why this would be more convenient.

So if the technology is here, why aren't we all wearing smart glasses yet? The reason is because there is just one stumbling block left: the screen. So far no one has invented a good way of projecting digital images on glass lenses. Though there have been a few attempts, such as Google Glass, they were disadvantaged by a very limited "field of view". Basically, while your eyes can see a 270-degree view of the world around you, the best smart glasses screens can only display images at around 30-40 degrees. This means that the virtual images can only appear on a tiny portion of your vision. This is a problem that, behind the scenes, the likes of Apple, Google and Facebook are pouring enormous resources into solving. So while I can't say exactly when smart glasses will arrive, they could come into focus much sooner than we think. ■

## £50 PRIZE QUESTION

### IN ORBIT

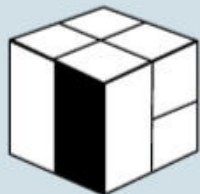
These two rockets are on a collision course in the same orbit around the sun. Rocket A is taking 15 months to orbit the sun, while Rocket B makes an orbit every 12 months. How long do the scientists have to reprogramme the rockets before they crash?



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### ANSWER TO DECEMBER'S PRIZE QUESTION



**CUBED**

**Cube D.**

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**NICK EVANS, Cheshire**

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**One day, when I was a teenager,** I came home from school and my mum and dad were out. I was hungry and couldn't find much food but I did find some bread, cheese and an onion so I made myself a sandwich.

When they later returned home with fish and chips, I explained, while eating, that I didn't know they were bringing back food and that I'd made a sandwich.

A while later my mum said, "I can understand the bread and cheese but where did you get the onion from?".

When I told her, she couldn't stop laughing: it wasn't an onion that I'd found, it was a daffodil bulb! The whole family said they probably wouldn't see me again till spring.

JANE WHITAKER, *Kent*

**I was having a cup of tea at a friend's house** one morning when my phone rang. It was my five-year-old daughter's school. She wasn't feeling very well.

The roads were busy, so I was late picking her up, and apologised.

"Don't worry, Mummy," my daughter said, "I told them that sometimes you drive, sometimes you walk and sometimes you're drunk."

I could hardly breathe. I liked a glass of wine at the weekend, but that was it.

"Drunk?" I blurted out.

"Yes, Mummy. At your friend's. You're always saying you get drunk on too many cups of tea."

ESTHER CHILTON, *Nottinghamshire*

**One time, I saw a sign outside a farm saying,** "Duck eggs, eggs, Toms". I always like to buy local produce so I knocked on the door, and said to the lady who answered that I'd like a dozen hen's eggs and a half a kilo of tomatoes.

She looked at me blankly and said, "Oh no, we don't sell tomatoes, Tom is my son and he looks after the hens."

ANDREW BERRY, *Lincoln*

**I was out with my teenage son,** chatting to a couple we'd met on a walk in the countryside. In the course of the conversation the woman asked what my husband did for a living. I told her he was a joiner.

Before I could answer, my son replied, "Whenever he sees someone going to the pub, he joins them." He wasn't wrong, he'd chosen the pub over a walk!

RIA HARDING, *Cambridgeshire*



"HAPPY NEW YEAR!"

**One time, my mother got to the restaurant early** and asked the young waitress to keep an eye out for my father, who would be joining her momentarily. She started to describe him: "He has grey hair, wears glasses, has a bit of a paunch..."

The waitress stopped my mother there. "Madam," she said, "It's Senior Day. They all look like that."

KENDRA SEVILLE, *Liverpool*

**Many years ago when I was a little girl** I used to suffer every winter from chilblains. My granny said that the only way to treat them was by dipping your toes in your own wee! Needless to say I never took her up on this. So imagine my shock when I bought a foot cream to treat my sore and cracked heels to see the main ingredient was Urea (the medical term for *Urine!*).

CAROL CASAN, *Devon*

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IT PAYS TO INCREASE YOUR

# Word Power

*Language can capture the outdoors just as vividly as a point-and-shoot camera. Here are some words to help you zoom in on every detail of the natural world*

BY ROB LUTES

1. **gloom**—A: twilight. B: cold, treeless area. C: flat-topped rock.
2. **pea-souper**—A: algae-laden body of water. B: dark, moonless night. C: thick, yellow fog.
3. **dingle**—A: small wooded valley. B: raccoon nest. C: feral dog.
4. **slatch**—A: patch of forest blackened by fire. B: area of quiet water between two breaking waves. C: narrow channel in a river.
5. **copse**—A: thicket of small trees or shrubs. B: narrow cave in a rock face. C: rodent burrow.
6. **moonbow**—A: crescent-shaped white flower. B: rainbow made by moonlight. C: semi-translucent long-horned beetle.
7. **estuary**—A: area where a river flows into the sea. B: small islet that serves as a stopover for migrating birds. C: open area in a forest left after a mature tree has fallen.
8. **derecho**—A: sandbar connecting two islands. B: natural hot spring. C: fast-moving windstorms.
9. **sylva**—A: forest trees of a particular region. B: luminous phytoplankton. C: white crystals found in sandy soil.
10. **ventifact**—A: swampy area. B: stone polished by windblown sand. C: windy outcropping.
11. **whitewash**—A: stains from bird excrement. B: vegetation beneath a forest's canopy. C: certain kind of fungi.
12. **snag**—A: edible roots of certain water plants. B: dead tree that's still standing. C: noise of wind through the trees.
13. **tarn**—A: mountain lake or pool. B: unfrozen patch of ground. C: narrow inlet.
14. **deciduous**—A: shedding leaves annually. B: blooming every other year. C: desert-like.
15. **erratics**—A: habitat for laying eggs on land. B: glacier-transported boulders that differ from local bedrock. C: a particular kind of weave of spiderweb.

# Answers

**1. gloam**—[A] twilight; Ricardo loved to watch the bats in the *gloom* of a summer evening.

**2. pea-souper**—[C] thick, yellow fog; It was a typical day in the old port city, right down to the *pea-souper* smothering the skyline.

**3. dingle**—[A] small wooded valley; Cecile tramped to the bottom of the *dingle* to dangle her feet in the stream, as she had done as a child.

**4. slatch**—[B] area of quiet water between two breaking waves; With winds churning the ocean, we carefully launched the boat in a *slatch* and quickly began paddling to the island.

**5. copse**—[A] thicket of small trees or shrubs; They followed the deer to the edge of a *copse* at the far end of the property, where the creature disappeared from sight.

**6. moonbow**—[B] rainbow made by moonlight; When the clouds cleared around midnight, Gina spotted a *moonbow*—a shimmering white arc in the sky.

**7. estuary**—[A] area where a river flows into the sea; Rich in nutrients, the *estuary* is densely packed with all kinds of shellfish.

**8. derecho**—[C] fast-moving windstorms; Jerry's video captured

the *derecho* as it cut a path of destruction across several farms.

**9. sylvia**—[A] forest trees of a particular region; Not historically part of the *sylvia*, the mountain ash was visible for miles.

**10. ventifact**—[B] stone polished by windblown sand; I spotted a *ventifact* in the shape of a pyramid.

**11. whitewash**—[A] stains from bird excrement; Fresh *whitewash* near last year's nest told us that the owl was back.

**12. snag**—[B] dead tree that's still standing; In the wild, Mihka explained, *snags* provide safe nesting sites for a wide variety of species.

**13. tarn**—[A] mountain lake or pool; The coldest *tarn* Levi ever swam in was in Kananaskis, Alta.

**14. deciduous**—[A] shedding leaves annually; With 14 *deciduous* trees in his garden, Hugo spends a week each autumn just raking.

**15. erratics**—[B] glacier-transported boulders that differ from local bedrock; The white and pink *erratics* at Chimney Bay look like dinosaur eggs.

## VOCABULARY RATINGS

**7-10:** fair

**11-12:** good

**13-15:** excellent

# TRIVIA

BY *Beth Shillibeer*

1. Actors Dolph Lundgren, Ken Jeong, Mayim Bialik, and Rowan Atkinson share what educational background?
2. What bird is the national symbol of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador, yet is vulnerable to extinction?
3. Aiming to make fashion more inclusive, Aille Design uses Swarovski crystal pearls to create what design element for T-shirts and masks?
4. Mary Simon made history in 2021 as the first Indigenous person to be appointed to what position in the Canadian government?
5. What country has the most vending machines per capita?
6. Which were invented first: skis or wheels?
7. Which country invites the public to suggest comedic names for its snowplows, like "Sir Salter Scott" and "Lord Coldemort"?
8. Recent findings show that Earth has an eighth continent, though it's largely submerged under water. What is it called?
9. What country has the world's only non-quadrilateral national flag?
10. What six-member team made its official Olympic debut at the Tokyo games?
11. Lonar Lake in India, Kenya's Lake Nakuru, and Lake Van in Turkey are all what kind of lake?
12. Unesco statistics show that female researchers comprise 30 per cent of the global workforce in the sciences, but 63 per cent in what South American country?
13. King Louis XIX of France and Portugal's King Luís II Filipe share what royal record?
14. In 1844, Samuel Morse sent the first long-distance message ("What hath God wrought") using what new technology?
15. How many times can the New Year be celebrated as clocks strike midnight around the world?



**Answers** 1. Master's degree or higher in STEM. 2. Andean Condor. 3. Braille phrases. 4. Governor General. 5. Japan. 6. Skis, more than 10,000 years ago. 7. Scotland. 8. Zealandia. 9. Nepal. 10. Refugee Paralympic Team. 11. Soda lakes (high alkalinity). 12. Bolivia. 13. Shortest reign (20 minutes). 14. The telegraph. 15. 38 (because there are 38 different local times).

# BRAIN TEASERS

## Ships

**HOW TO PLAY:**

Determine the position of the ten ships listed. A square with wavy lines indicates water and will not contain a ship. The numbers indicate how many squares in that row or column contain parts of ships. No two ships touch each other, not even diagonally.

**EXAMPLE:**

## Star Search

**HOW TO PLAY:**

Find the stars that are hidden in some of the blank squares. The numbered squares indicate how many stars are hidden in squares adjacent to it (including diagonally).

**EXAMPLE:**

# SIXY SUDOKU

**1**

	5		3		
	3			4	
		5			1
3			6		
4	6			2	

**HOW TO PLAY:**  
 Insert the numbers 1 to 6 just once in each a) row, b) column, c) bold outlined area and d) white or grey rectangle.

**2**

2					
	4			5	
5					6
					3
6					
		1			

**3**

				2	
5					
			6		
1					
		3	5		4

**EXAMPLE:**

1	2	6	5	3	4
3	5	4	1	2	6
6	4	2	3	5	1
5	1	3	6	4	2
2	3	1	4	6	5
4	6	5	2	1	3

**4**

		2			
	3			5	
					1
		1			
6				4	

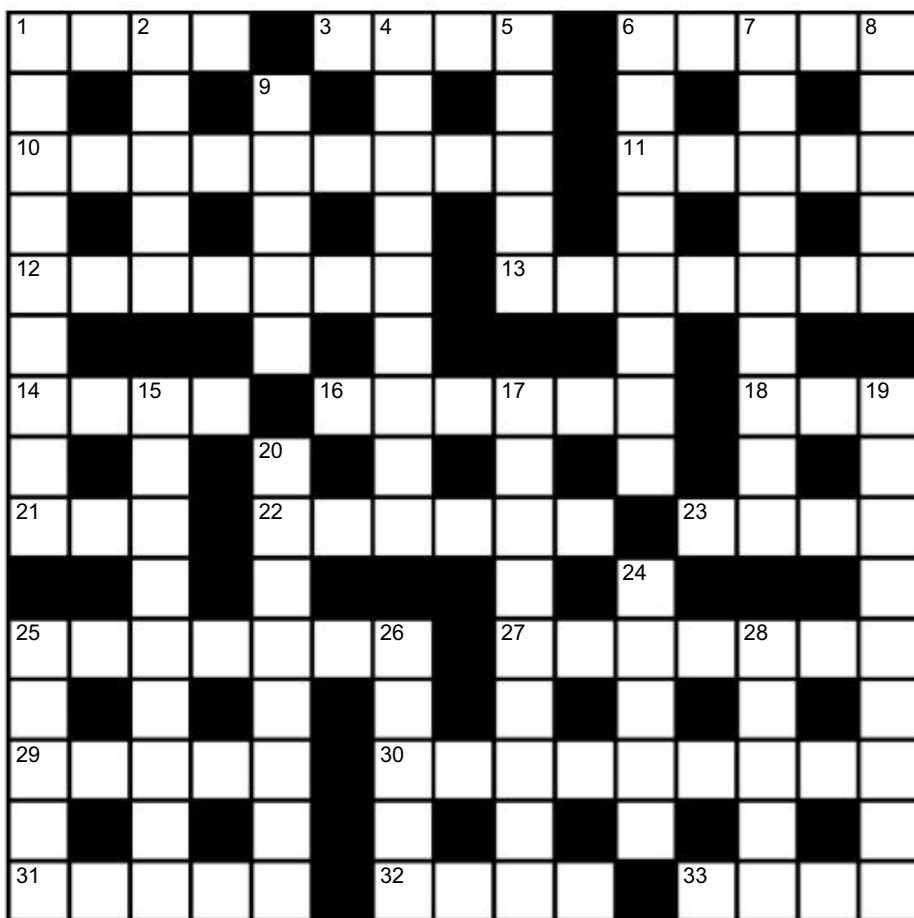
**5**

		6			
					4
			3		
		2			
				5	

**BEWARE!**  
 The bold outlined areas are no longer 2x3!

**6**

		1	6		
					3
		2			
5					4



## CROSSWISE

Test your general knowledge. Answers on p142

### ACROSS

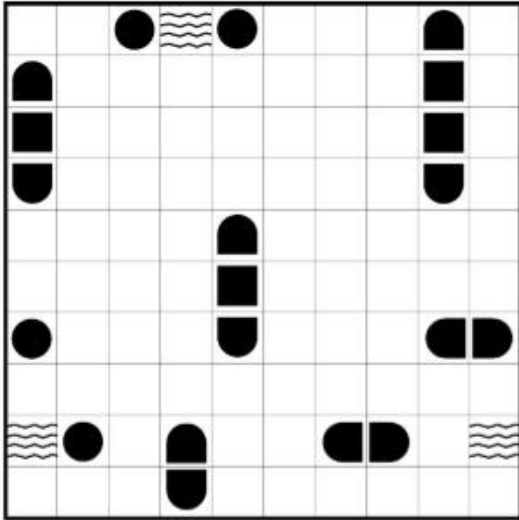
- 1 Tasks (4)
- 3 Thin layer (4)
- 6 Expiry (5)
- 10 Repentant (9)
- 11 Tooth top (5)
- 12 Possible cause of skin cancer (7)
- 13 Glitter (7)
- 14 Excess of expenditure over income (4)
- 16 Ignominious failure (6)
- 18 Conditions that are possible but uncertain (3)
- 21 Silent (3)
- 22 Long narrow excavation (6)
- 23 Version still being developed (4)
- 25 Slackens (7)
- 27 Animate (7)
- 29 Serious wrongdoing (5)
- 30 Icy pellet (9)
- 31 Snake (5)
- 32 Entertain in a public place (4)
- 33 Lugs (4)

### DOWN

- 1 Capital of Israel (9)
- 2 Started (5)
- 4 Childish (9)
- 5 Thaws (5)
- 6 Eg, Mussolini (8)
- 7 Adjoining (9)
- 8 Pivot (5)
- 9 Fix a computer program (5)
- 15 Use of metaphors (9)
- 17 Organisations (9)
- 19 Rust-resistant (9)
- 20 And so forth (2,6)
- 24 Sudden burst of light (5)
- 25 Doctor's replacement (5)
- 26 Indian form of address (5)
- 28 Violin's bigger sister (5)

## BRAIN TEASERS SOLUTIONS

### Ships



### Star Search

1	★	2		1	
1		2	★	2	
1			2	3	★
2	★	3	3	★	
	★		★	★	2
	1	2		2	1

## SIXY SUDOKU SOLUTIONS

1

1	5	4	3	6	2
2	3	6	1	4	5
6	4	5	2	3	1
3	1	2	6	5	4
5	2	3	4	1	6
4	6	1	5	2	3

2

2	6	5	4	3	1
1	4	3	6	5	2
5	3	2	1	4	6
4	1	6	5	2	3
6	2	4	3	1	5
3	5	1	2	6	4

3

3	6	4	1	2	5
5	1	2	3	4	6
2	4	5	6	3	1
1	3	6	4	5	2
6	2	3	5	1	4
4	5	1	2	6	3

4

1	5	2	3	6	4
4	3	6	1	5	2
2	6	5	4	3	1
3	4	1	5	2	6
6	1	3	2	4	5
5	2	4	6	1	3

5

3	4	6	5	2	1
2	1	5	6	3	4
6	2	1	3	4	5
4	5	3	1	6	2
5	3	2	4	1	6
1	6	4	2	5	3

6

2	3	1	6	4	5
4	5	6	2	1	3
6	1	5	4	3	2
3	4	2	5	6	1
5	6	3	1	2	4
1	2	4	3	5	6

# Laugh!

**WIN £30**  
for every reader's joke we publish!

Go to [readersdigest.co.uk/contact-us](https://readersdigest.co.uk/contact-us)  
or [facebook.com/readersdigestuk](https://facebook.com/readersdigestuk)

**I just contacted the spirit** of my dead window cleaner on a squeegee board.

*Comedian PHIL PAGETT*

**In Roman times CXX stood for 120.**

Nowadays it stands for "I love you but my finger slipped and I'm too lazy to tap delete three times and type it again."

*Comedian OLAF FALAFEL*

**My father used to make seven figures** a year, which is what got him fired from the toy factory.

*Comedian JAKE LAMBERT*

**Squid Game is basically Taskmaster** if Alex Horne were Satan.

*Comedian DAVID BADDIEL*

**I think the Rainforest Cafe is taking** its theme a little too far.

This one time I was enjoying my chicken when they bulldozed 40 per cent of the restaurant.

*Seen on Reddit*

**I'm dating a bin lady** at the moment.

But I can never remember if I'm supposed to take her out on a Monday or a Wednesday...

*Comedian WILLIAM STONE*

**A dad is listening to his daughter** say her prayers before bedtime. She says, "God bless Mummy, Daddy and Grandma, and goodbye Grandpa."

He asks, "Why did you say that?"





You know  
Orion's Belt?  
WAIST OF  
SPACE!

*Seen online*

"I don't know, I just felt like it."  
The next day, Grandpa drops dead.  
*Wow*, thinks dad, *that's a coincidence*.

A month later at bedtime, the daughter says goodbye to Grandma, and sure enough, the next day grandma breathes her last breath.

The dad realises this is no coincidence, but he is not sure what to do. Months go by and one night his daughter turns her head and looks straight at him, "and goodbye Daddy".

The man's heart begins racing and he breaks out in a sweat. The next day he goes off to work, but locks himself in his office. He takes the phone off the hook, cancels all his meetings and awaits the inevitable. Finally it's midnight and, drenched in sweat, he realises he has cheated death. When he gets home, his wife is up and waiting for him. "Where the hell were you today?"

He replies, "Don't shout, I've had an absolutely miserable day."



*Incredible Insects*

THESE WONDERS OF NATURE  
SHOW HOW SURPRISINGLY  
BEAUTIFUL CREEPY  
CRAWLIES CAN BE

via boredpanda.com



“You had a miserable day? I’m the one who had a miserable day,” she replies. “First, the milkman drops dead on the steps...”

*Seen on Reddit*

**A man just poked me with a fragrant stick—**  
I was incensed!

*Comedian OLAF FALAFEL*

**I forgot the word for toothpaste** earlier and called it “bone shampoo”.

*Seen on Twitter*

**“You won’t believe how easy it is to buy**  
maggots online”—Click Bait.

*Submitted via email*

**A religious woman goes to a pet store** to buy a parrot. Everything is fine until she brings it home. It begins to swear uncontrollably and finally the lady can stand it no more. She grabs the bird, shoves it in the freezer, and slams the door shut. Squawking and cursing come out of the freezer for a few moments and then it goes quiet.

The woman is scared that she’s hurt the bird and opens the freezer. The parrot walks calmly out and steps gently onto the woman’s outstretched hand. He looks into her eyes and says “Ma’am, I’m truly sorry if my language offended you. If I may ask, what did the chicken do?”

*Seen on Reddit*

## Fix Up, Look Sharp

**Twitter users share their ideas for fixing the world**

**@KansasBradbury:** They need to fix it so food has three expiration dates. One that’s “Best Before”, then “Still Pretty Good”, then finally, “Are You Feeling Lucky?”

**@BakeRoss1988:** Songs that have police sirens in them need a voice-over when you’re driving to say, “This is not real, do not pull over.”

**@BreeSweetAck:** Our phones are powerful, tiny computers that can fit in our pockets. But vending machines still can’t recognise a note with a crease in it?

**@OnufreyOnBoard:** They need to fix cinema toilets so that they have little screens showing the movie in the cubicles. That way, if you need to go you don’t miss anything.

### CROSSWORD ANSWERS

**Across:** 1 Jobs, 3 Film, 6 Death, 10 Regretful, 11 Crown, 12 Sunburn, 13 Spangle, 14 Loss, 16 Fiasco, 18 Ifs, 21 Mum, 22 Trench, 23 Beta, 25 Loosens, 27 Enliven, 29 Crime, 30 Hailstone, 31 Mamba, 32 Busk, 33 Ears

**Down:** 1 Jerusalem, 2 Begun, 4 Infantile, 5 Melts, 6 Dictator, 7 Alongside, 8 Hinge, 9 Debug, 15 Symbolism, 17 Societies, 19 Stainless, 20 Et cetera, 24 Flash, 25 Locum, 26 Sahib, 28 Viola

IN THE  
FEBRUARY ISSUE



*Ricky Gervais*

The infamous comedian on life, work, and his most recent TV hit, *After Life*



Richard Carpenter

**I REMEMBER...**

The iconic musician and half of the sibling duo The Carpenters reflects on his childhood, tumultuous career and losing his sister



**100TH ANNIVERSARY**

Join us in celebrating 100 years of the *Reader's Digest* magazine

# Beat the Cartoonist!




Think of a witty caption for this cartoon—the three best suggestions, along with the cartoonist's original, will be posted on our website in mid-February. If your entry gets the most votes, you'll win **£50**.

Submit to [captions@readersdigest.co.uk](mailto:captions@readersdigest.co.uk) by FEB 7. We'll announce the winner in our March issue.

NOVEMBER WINNER



Our cartoonist's caption, "**Wow, that's taken years off you**" successfully tickled our audience's pickle this week as he won the popular vote with an 80 per cent majority. Congratulations Cartoonist! Want to steal his crown? Enter the competition above and next month it could be yours...



Elizabeth Wathuthi,  
founder

## GOOD NEWS

FROM AROUND  
THE WORLD

# KENYA'S CLIMATE GUARDIANS

The Green Generation Initiative is a Kenyan charity that has been planting tree seedlings and countering deforestation and climate change in the East African nation since 2016. Founded by climate activist Elizabeth Wanjiru Wathuthi when she was 21 years old, the initiative's primary focus is on nurturing young climate activists through education in schools and addressing food insecurity in the region through planting fruit trees.

Since its inception, over 30,000 tree seedlings have been planted in Kenya, while thousands of school children have not just planted trees but adopted them to ensure that young people learn the importance of acting as a guardian over the earth. The trees have recorded a survival rate of over 98 per cent, as they remain tended to

from seedling to maturity.

Speaking to world leaders at the recent United Nations Climate Conference in Glasgow (COP26), Elizabeth issued a stark warning on the threat of climate change: "Over 2 million of my fellow Kenyans are facing climate related starvation. In 2025, half of the world's population will be facing water scarcity. By the time I'm 50, the climate crisis will have displaced 80 million people in sub-Saharan Africa alone."

She added: "I have been doing what I can. Inspired by the great Wangari Maathai, I founded a tree growing initiative that enhances food security for young Kenyans. So far, we have grown 30,000 fruit trees to maturity, providing desperately needed nutrition for thousands of children. Every day we see that when we look after the trees, they look after us. We are the adults on this Earth right now, and it is our responsibility to ensure that the children have food and water."

*greengenerationinitiative.org*

**BY MARCO MARCELLINE**



PARTNERSHIP  
PROMOTION

# Celebrate the power of small changes in 2022



Try a new activity,  
craft or learn  
about something  
completely new

New Year is traditionally a time for setting personal goals or challenges, or for planning exciting trips or adventures for the months ahead. While it's great to be able to look forward to these big events with renewed optimism, it's often some of the smaller changes we make to our everyday routines or habits that can make the biggest difference to our happiness and wellbeing.

That's why at Mirthy we're celebrating the power of small changes this January, encouraging everyone to try a new activity, craft or learn about something completely new through one of our hundreds of online lectures and classes. From cookery classes to singing workshops, book clubs to Pilates and history talks, Mirthy offers a place to share passions and interests and make

new connections in a friendly online community for over 50s.

So, whether your hopes for 2022 are to get a little bit fitter, to try your hand at a new skill, or just to spend more time socialising with like-minded people, taking the small step of signing up for a free session at Mirthy could lead to something a whole lot bigger. ■

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#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit Mirthy to try over 50 classes & events for free at [www.mirthy.co.uk](http://www.mirthy.co.uk)

# LIVING THE MIRACLES

Bravery is the audacity to be unhindered by potential failures. ***“Living The MIRACLES: A Sailor’s Life in the Nuclear Power Age”*** by Albert Lee Kelln is a candid memoir of a Naval officer and nuclear propulsion engineer. His years at the U.S. Naval Academy (Class of 1952) prepare him for destroyer and diesel submarine deployments during the Korean War. The book describes the Cold War bold Arctic adventures of the first nuclear attack submarine, the USS Skate, as it sails under and surfaces through the ice at the North Pole. The author’s entire retelling of his career is an excellent reflection of a deeply experienced Naval officer who serves his country well. After retirement, Admiral Kelln establishes the Naval Submarine League and several Christian endeavors, including a life-saving Pregnancy Center. He and his wife, Cecily, live in west Texas and continue their teaching ministries.

