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Letter from the Editor

Hello again and welcome...

As much as you might prefer to 'buy local', there will always be national retail outlets you have to use. Supermarkets like Tesco, Sainsbury and Asda will inevitably get your custom. Likewise, furniture retailers and clothing stores offer low prices and lots of choice, so big businesses remain part of everyday life.

However, particularly in service-based sectors, independent businesses are not just valuable but essential. Trades such as roofers, electricians and bathroom fitters; personal services like hairdressers and beauticians; and professionals including solicitors, funeral directors and will writers are inherently local.

These businesses rely on trust, reputation, local knowledge and personal relationships. They are rarely scalable or profitable enough to operate nationally, which is why there are so few "chain" providers in these sectors.

That micro-business model also means they don't have the budget for TV ads or billboards, and they won't appear on your social media feeds every day.

They do still need new customers to survive though, and that's where you come in. If you've had good service from a small business, it costs nothing to recommend them to friends, family, or in a local Facebook group or Google review.

Many also promote themselves in this magazine, because it reaches exactly the people who buy from them. Finally, this is us too. We're a small, independently owned company. When you use our advertisers, you support us as well. Thank you!

And the thought I will leave you with this month:-

*"Good things come
To those who shop local"*

Until next time...

Sheila

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The Village Breeze is a local community magazine and business directory distributed monthly to 8,000 homes and businesses in Appleby Magna, Donisthorpe, Linton, Measham, Moira, Oakthorpe and Overseal.

Deadline for next issue
15th February, 2026

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The Secret Admirer

FEBRUARY 14th: Thankfully, Tom is at work when the postwoman unexpectedly delivers the bumper-sized card. It drops through the letterbox onto the coir mat with a resounding "Plop!" Debbie goes to the door, bends down, and cautiously picks up the white box.

She peers suspiciously at the name and address scrawled in CAPITAL LETTERS on the lid. How odd! The words look like a young child has written them. Or someone's feeble attempt to hide their identity?

'DEBBY HOPKINS' she reads. But hold on a moment – something's not right! The sender has spelt Debbie with a Y! And her correct surname is HAWKINS.

Returning to the kitchen, Debbie finds a pair of scissors and cuts through the Sellotape that seals the cardboard box. Inside, she finds:

A large Valentine's Day card! She runs her slender fingers over the big red love-heart boldly emblazoned on the front: "BE MY VALENTINE", it declares. Debbie feels her heart racing as she reads the amazing words inside:

"WHEN YOU REALISE YOU WANT TO SPEND THE REST OF YOUR LIFE WITH SOMEBODY, YOU WANT THE REST OF YOUR LIFE TO START AS SOON AS POSSIBLE".⁽¹⁾

So lovely! But no signature! Somehow, the quotation seems

familiar. Where has she heard it before?

'If only Tom was half as romantic . . .' she thinks to herself.

They had celebrated their Silver Wedding Anniversary the previous year. Debbie enjoyed fond memories of the evening she'd first met her future husband. When he smiled, her heart had melted. After a whirlwind romance, the sweethearts were married in a little chapel in Las Vegas. Elvis would have been proud of them.

But that was twenty-five years ago. People change.

Over time, the lovers grew slowly apart – each pursuing their own interests: Debbie joined the village choral society, and was out most evenings. Tom became a couch-potato, devouring old films on the telly.

The arrival of the Valentine's card has set Debbie's mind whirring. Who is her secret admirer? Could it be Geoff – one of the tenors in the choir? Did he fancy her? Or maybe the man in the grocery store? He was always giving her the roving eye.

Who could be her mystery man? Only time would tell.

Then she finds additional words on the back of the card:

"I WOULD RATHER SHARE ONE LIFETIME WITH YOU, THAN FACE ALL THE AGES OF THIS WORLD ALONE".⁽²⁾

Debbie presses the card to her lips. Whoever has written those heart-felt declarations of love is certainly a great romantic – if not a little old-fashioned. And, finally: "TO ME, YOU ARE PERFECT".⁽³⁾

Debbie wipes a tear from her cheek. Who is this marvellous, poetic creature?

Should she show the card to Tom? After all, it's a joke. Right?

Later that afternoon, her reverie is abruptly interrupted by the sound of car tyres crunching on the gravel driveway. Hubby! Home from work! Early!

Tom steps over the threshold and throws his arms around his wife, taking her by surprise.

'The rest of my life starts now . . .' he begins. A grin on his face.

Wow! Those words certainly sound familiar! Debbie is sure she's heard – or READ them – somewhere before.

Recently.

Then, she remembers!

'To me, you are perfect!' she replies.

'So . . . you got my Valentine's card, then?' Tom says, winking mischievously.

'I wondered if you'd spot the famous quotes from the old movies I've been watching!' he laughs.

Maybe, romance isn't dead, after all, Debbie thinks!

'Happy Valentine's Day, darling!' she whispers, and kisses her husband passionately.



ANSWERS: (1) When Harry Met Sally (2) The Lord of the Rings (3) Love Actually



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Raspberry Bars

These are packed full of vitamin C from the raspberries and healthy fats from the nuts, seeds, butter and coconut oil. You can add extra oats instead of any seeds you're missing or just use one type of seed.

Detail...

Makes 10

Preparation time 15-20 minutes

Cooking time 10-15 minutes plus cooling

You will need...

- 350g oats
- 25g flax seeds
- 25g pumpkin seeds
- 25g chia seeds
- 50g virgin coconut oil
- 50g organic butter
- 50g honey
- 250g raspberries
- 25g coconut or oat flour

Method...

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C, fan 160°C, gas mark 4. Line a 20 x 4cm square cake tin with a large piece of non-stick baking paper, snipping diagonally into the corners so that the paper fits snugly over the base and up the sides of the tin.
2. Grind the oats and seeds as this makes the mixture slightly finer and helps it stick together – these flapjacks tend to crumble more than regular ones as they are lower in fat.
3. Melt the coconut oil, butter and honey in a saucepan and add to the dry ingredients. Add the oil/honey mix in stages, stirring well to make sure it's all incorporated.
4. Spoon two-thirds of the mixture into the prepared baking tray and press it down firmly into the edges, ensuring it's at least 1cm deep. Bake in the preheated oven for 5 minutes. While it is baking, blitz the raspberries in a blender or mash with a fork. Add the flour to thicken the consistency and mix together.
5. Remove the base from the oven and smooth the raspberry mixture over the top. Sprinkle the remaining oat mixture on top of the raspberries and press it down gently so it sticks into them. Return to the oven for a further 5 minutes or until brown on top.
6. Leave to cool before cutting into pieces.

For more recipe inspiration, visit www.lovefreshberries.co.uk

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Treat yourself to timber



Step into style with our guide to the underfoot elegance of wood flooring.

What do you picture when you think of wood flooring? Cool and understated in a Scandi-style room? Dark and distressed for an urban, industrial vibe? Limewashed in a country kitchen? Wood floors look great in any home and almost any room. They're also warmer underfoot than stone, easier to keep clean than carpet and become more attractive as they age.

The beauty of solid wood

Solid-wood floorboards have one type of wood running all the way through. As well as the most popular, European oak, with its beautiful grain and inherent durability, other species include walnut, beech, maple, cherry, ash and pine, giving you endless options for colour and



character. Choose from different grades of board, which range from almost flawless surfaces to ones with knots, cracks and splits.

Floors with history

If you're lucky, you'll be able to recondition an existing wooden floor. If not, you may want to consider the environmentally friendly option of buying pre-loved floorboards from an architectural salvage yard. These have years of characterful patina. Restored ones don't come cheap but otherwise they often need work to address issues such as woodworm, dirt, colour variation, nails or damage. But it's possible to buy new boards that have been seasoned and finished to give instant character.

The advantages of engineered floors

Engineered boards, sometimes known as multi-layer or laminated, are made from several layers of timber, laid in different directions and pressed together (cross-bonded). They offer excellent stability and are less prone to warping, cupping or gapping than solid boards. Installed, they look identical to solid timber and, because they handle temperature changes well, they're a good choice for homes with underfloor heating.



Planks, parquet and more

Both solid and engineered wooden flooring come in a variety of formats: classic boards (in varying widths), slender strips (less than 10cm wide), blocks (which are extremely strong) and parquet (which is like blocks, but thinner). Parquet can be installed in intricately patterned shapes that create a real wow-factor.

Style and finish

Waxes, oils and varnishes each give a subtly different surface, from matt to high gloss, and can be clear or tinted. Wax finishes give a soft, low-sheen finish that feels natural underfoot. Hard-wax oils (a blend of wax and oil) soak into the wood, bringing out its natural grain and giving a warm, natural finish. Oil finishes also penetrate deeply for an understated, organic look. Varnishes are tougher, making them a good choice for high-traffic spaces.

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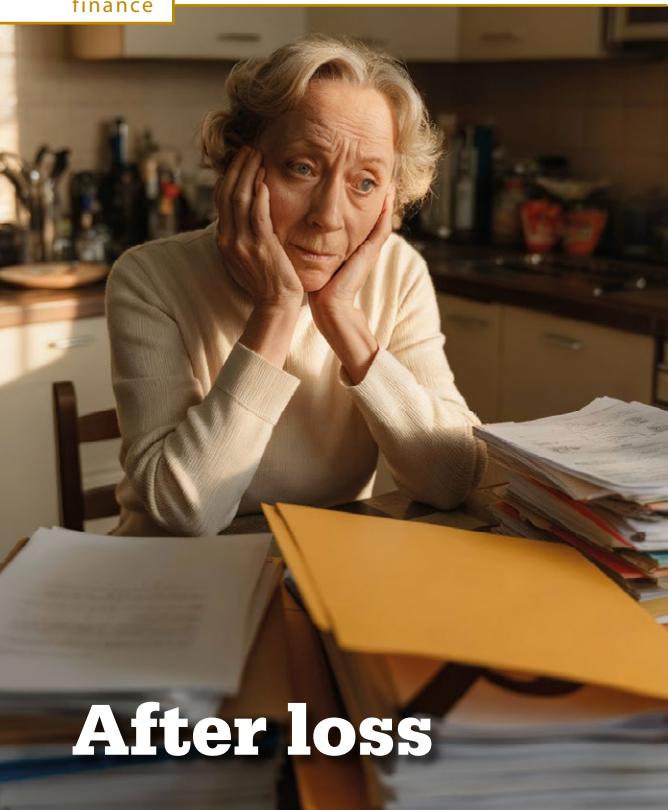
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After loss

It's hard when a partner dies but understanding how to cope with your new financial situation can make things a little easier.

When your other half dies, it's very common to feel unsettled because they used to handle the finances and it's suddenly your responsibility. Feeling confused or overwhelmed in this situation is perfectly normal but it can help to bear a few key things in mind.

Take your time

Both your income and spending will change significantly when you move from being a couple to a single person. It can take six to 12 months to get the true picture of your finances.

For example, it may take a full summer and winter before you get a better handle on your heating costs as a single householder. Similarly, your food costs might not be predictable for a while.

Make lists

Understand the distinction between cash flow vs wealth. As you wade through paperwork, try creating two lists. One is all your regular income

and expenses, and the other is all your savings, investments and assets, plus any debts.

Using these two documents together is key to understanding your financial position. For example, you may see that your outgoings are slightly higher than your income and start panicking about the need for cutbacks. However, knowing how much you have in savings and other easily accessible money may give you more insight. Having some breathing space before you get your cash flow back on track is a priority.

Get to grips with pensions

Be prepared for the figures to keep changing as you uncover more information. For example, today's generation of retirees will often have a complex history of private pensions. While many pensions stop paying out when the person dies, you may find you're entitled to a payout (which could be a lump sum or small annual amount), particularly if you were married.

Factor in single allowances

Don't exceed your ISA allowance. There's no restriction on how much you have across all your ISAs, but you can now only put in one person's allowance – £20,000 for over 65s – in a year.

Similarly, each person is covered for £120,000 saved with the same financial institution under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme. Now you have one person's allowance rather than a couple's, check you don't have more than £120,000 saved (including in cash ISAs) in one place. The same institution can cover more than one bank and the limit will apply to savings across all of them.

Don't race to sell Premium Bonds

Premium Bonds can stay active for up to 12 months after somebody dies and continue to win prizes for the beneficiaries of their will.

Ask for help

Don't be embarrassed to ask for help or information from banks, pension providers and other financial organisations. Many have a dedicated bereavement team trained to support people who are bereaved and with expert knowledge of the specific financial upheavals they face.

Several Pension Pots, what should I do?

We often get asked what should I do with my different pension pots? There is no hard and fast rule, however one option is to consolidate them together.

Consolidating pension pots involves combining multiple pension plans into one single, easy-to-manage account. This can simplify administration, potentially reduce fees, and provide a clearer view of your retirement savings, but it requires careful consideration of potential drawbacks like losing valuable benefits.

Benefits of Consolidation

- Simpler Management: You will only have one provider to deal with, one set of login details, and fewer statements, making it easier to track your savings.
- Potential Cost Savings: Older pensions may have higher annual management fees or administration charges. Merging into a single, lower-cost modern plan could save you money over the long term.
- Clearer Picture & Control: With all savings in one place, it is easier to see if you are on track to meet your retirement goals and to make necessary adjustments to your investment

strategy or contributions.

- Wider Investment Choice: Newer pension schemes often offer a broader range of investment funds (including ethical funds or Self-Invested Personal Pensions (SIPPs)), allowing you to better align your investments with your risk profile and values.
- Flexibility at Retirement: Modern pensions typically offer more flexible options for accessing your money (such as flexi-access drawdown) than some older plans.

There are some potential drawbacks and key considerations as consolidation



is not universally the best option. You should be aware that older pensions - especially defined benefit (final salary) schemes - offer valuable guarantees like a guaranteed lifelong income, a guaranteed annuity rate, or protected tax-free cash entitlements. These are usually lost upon transfer.

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Roast lamb with stem ginger, plums and port

Enjoy this delicious fruity version of a Sunday roast.

Detail...

Serves 6

Preparation time 10 minutes

Cooking time 1 hour 30 minutes

To cook medium 25 minutes per 450g, plus 25 minutes

To cook well done 30 minutes per 450g, plus 30 minutes

You will need...

- 1 x 900g-1.3kg lean lamb leg joint
- 25-30g stem ginger, drained and finely chopped
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary leaves (stalk discarded), chopped
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 300ml port
- 15 Victoria plums or similar, halved and stoned
- 2 tbsp stem ginger syrup

Method...

1. Preheat the oven to 180-190°C, fan 160-170°C, gas 4-5.
2. In a small bowl, mix together the chopped ginger, rosemary, garlic and oil.
3. Place the lamb on a chopping board, season and make several slits over the surface of the joint. Stuff with the rosemary and ginger rub.
4. Season and place on a metal rack in a large non-stick roasting tin and open roast for the preferred calculated cooking time, basting occasionally with any lamb juices.
5. Forty minutes before the end of cooking, add the plums and the port. Then, 20 minutes before the end of cooking, glaze the joint with the stem ginger syrup.
6. Remove the lamb from the oven with half the plums and keep warm. To make the sauce, spoon off any excess fat from the roasting tin and sieve the remaining plums, port and lamb juices into a pan. Season if required.
7. Spoon a little over the lamb and serve the remaining sauce in a sauceboat.
8. Serve the roast with the remaining plums, roasted parsnips and seasonal vegetables.

For more meaty recipe inspiration visit www.simplybeefandlamb.co.uk

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Numbers you might need to know...

In a crisis, knowing who to call or text really matters. Here are the key contacts you might be glad you saved.

112

We all know to call 999 for the police, ambulance, fire or coastguard service, but did you know that 112 is a universal number for any emergency service, and this can be used anywhere in the UK and Europe? It will connect you to the emergency services in the country you're in.

116 000

This is another pan-European number, available in 32 countries. It's the hotline for missing children and can be used by children or their families. In the UK, 116 000 connects to the Runaway Helpline, run by the Missing People charity. You can text or call the number.

999 press 55

If you're in danger and unable to speak, you can dial 999 from a mobile and then press 55 when prompted. This silent 999 call will then be transferred to the police, who should be able to find your location. From a landline, just remain silent and follow any instructions.

Text to 999

Not only can you call the emergency services, you can also send an SMS using Relay UK's EmergencySMS service. But you need to register first. Send a text to 999 with the word REGISTER and follow the instructions. However, only use it if you have no other option, as it might be slower than a 999 call.

101

This number is for non-emergencies only. Use it to report a minor crime, antisocial behaviour or for a general police enquiry.

111

Most people are aware that 111 is the NHS number for non-urgent medical help. But you can also use it for dental emergencies, for an emergency supply of prescription medicine and for 24/7 crisis mental health support.

Text SHOUT to 85258

This is a free, confidential text messaging service for anyone requiring urgent mental health support. Run by the charity Mental Health Innovations, Shout is available 24 hours a day.

116 123

If you are feeling suicidal, 116 123 is an important number to know about, being the free 24/7 Samaritans' helpline. Calls are answered by the charity's trained volunteers.

159

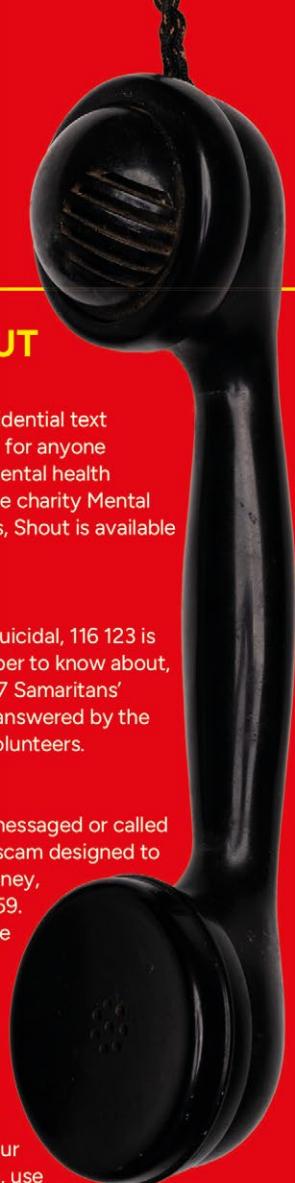
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Call the free 24/7 National Emergency Gas Service number immediately if you suspect a gas or carbon monoxide leak. The operator will give you advice and despatch an engineer.

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BEFORE YOU BUY

Arm yourself with these tips and tricks to make choosing a new car as easy as possible.



Image Blackball Media

Whether it's a brand-new vehicle or a pre-owned model, shopping for a new set of wheels should be as exciting as possible. But with the sheer variety out there, things can quickly start to feel overwhelming, so bear these points in mind before you start your search.

ESTABLISH A BUDGET

Making sure you know how much you're willing to spend will help narrow down your search. As well as the headline price of the car, factor in running costs, servicing and insurance. It's worth investigating whether you're looking to pay with cash or finance too.

PICK OUT 'MUST-HAVE' FEATURES

A lot of modern cars come equipped with a vast array of features, so think about which ones you'd really like. It might be smartphone mirroring systems like Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, or something more basic like a variety of USB charging points.

DECIDE ON A POWERTRAIN

There are more options than ever before. Petrol and diesel are still there, of course, but mild hybrid, self-charging hybrid and plug-in hybrid powertrains – as well as electric – are also available now.

Think about the type of driving you're doing. For instance, if you potter around town but don't have the ability to charge at home, then a hybrid could be your best bet. If you're able to access home charging

or a reliable nearby charge point, then an electric vehicle could be a great way of reducing running costs. For a high-mileage driver, petrol and diesel could still be the best bet.

CONSIDER SIZE AND SPACE

The best way to find out the capacity of a boot is by seeing the car in person. Consider how easy the boot is to access, how high it is and also whether the rear seats can be folded down easily.

RESEARCH ONLINE

As well as general information, you can check a car's history online. There are a variety of reputable sites that can do background searches for a small fee and you can look at a vehicle's previous MOT results via the Government's free online system.

Check out reviews and owner testimonials to find out if a car will fit your needs. An online recall checker will let you see if a car you're looking at has previously been recalled.

MAKE THE MOST OF A TEST DRIVE

A test drive is when you get a proper feel for a car. Find out if you can easily get comfortable behind the wheel and if all the major controls feel natural and intuitive to use. You may also want to try folding down the rear seats or loading something into the boot. You can also use the test drive to find out how easy it is to park.



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Fake pet meds

Counterfeit pet medicines sold online are now such a problem that the Government recently issued a warning. Knock-off meds can include tick and flea treatments, and supplements. There are reports that fake meds sometimes contain toxic insecticides, arsenic, mercury, rat poison and cement. Some animals have become dangerously ill as a result.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

If you buy products for your pet online, watch out for these red flags:

- Poor quality or damaged packaging
- Spelling or grammar errors
- Instructions not in English
- No expiry date
- Suspicious smell, colour or texture
- Badly made tablets, capsules, vials or pipettes

It's also important to make sure you're buying from a legitimate source. Be wary of:

- Goods that are much cheaper than elsewhere
- Any seller asking for sensitive information or requesting payment by bank transfer
- Fake websites and social media profiles, which might contain original brand names. Always check seller details and reviews.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

It's best to buy all treatments for your companion animal from your vet. But if you do turn to the internet, make sure you fulfil any prescriptions from companies listed on the Veterinary Medicines Directorate's (VMD) register of online retailers. If you see suspected fake pet products being offered for sale, contact your local Trading Standards (www.gov.uk/find-local-trading-standards-office) or Crimestoppers (www.crimestoppers-uk.org or call 0800 555 111). You can also report them to

the VMD Enforcement team (www.gov.uk/guidance/report-illegal-animal-medicines).

Should your furry friend fall ill after they've had a treatment bought online, contact your vet immediately.





Proud heritage

Five of Europe's best UNESCO World Heritage cities.

In 1978, the first UNESCO World Heritage sites were established. Almost 50 years later, 1,248 locations make up this ever-growing list of protected places. Ranging from natural wonders and ancient relics to entire cities, each site is selected for its cultural, historical or scientific value.

Looking for inspiration for your next city break? Here are five of Europe's best UNESCO World Heritage cities.

BATH, UK *(pictured right)*

Bath on our own doorstep is one of the most beautiful UNESCO World Heritage cities. Named after the Roman Baths built on the city's thermal springs around 43AD, it's recognised globally for its extraordinarily well-preserved architecture.

While you can't bathe in the Roman Baths, you can take a dip in the same natural spring water at the nearby Thermae Bath Spa. Also included in UNESCO's listing are the Royal Crescent and Pulteney Bridge, offering a glimpse into the city's elegant Georgian architecture.

ROME AND THE VATICAN CITY, ITALY

Bursting at the seams with over 3,000 years of history, Rome's historic centre was first inscribed onto UNESCO's World Heritage list in 1980. Today, the listing features a catalogue of classical wonders, including the Colosseum, the Forums and the Pantheon.

When in Rome, it would be a crime not to visit the Vatican City – a UNESCO-listed site nestled within the Italian capital itself. Gaze in awe at Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel and go to St Peter's Basilica, the largest church in the world.



PARIS, FRANCE

Added to UNESCO's list in 1991, the French capital's World Heritage site curves around the banks of the river Seine, encompassing celebrated landmarks such as Notre-Dame Cathedral, the Louvre and the Musée d'Orsay.

Jostle for a view of Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa in the Louvre and finish your visit with fine dining on the Eiffel Tower. Parfait!

VALLETTA, MALTA *(pictured top)*

Joining UNESCO's World Heritage list in 1980, the tiny city of Valletta manages to cram over 300 historic

monuments covering 7,000 years of history into just 55 hectares.

St John's Co-Cathedral is its crown jewel. You'll also want to explore Valletta's meandering old town, with its honey-toned limestone buildings, narrow streets and centuries-old stone walls.

PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC *(pictured below)*

The historic centre of Prague, inscribed by UNESCO in 1992, is often described as a fairytale city, with a skyline punctuated by Gothic towers and Baroque domes.

Included within this UNESCO World Heritage site is Prague Castle, one of the largest castle complexes in the world and the traditional seat of Czech kings and presidents. The Lesser Town, Malá Strana, which unfolds below, is a picturesque maze of pastel-coloured houses.



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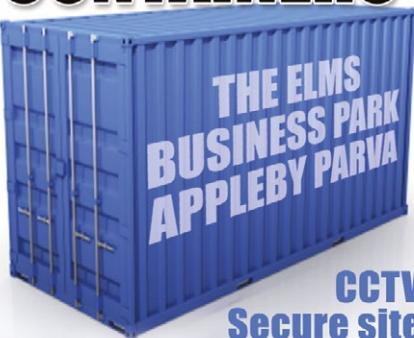


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THE COOLEST GAMES

Showcasing some of the most exhilarating and challenging winter sports, the Winter Olympics have been bringing together athletes from across the globe for a century.

Ever since the first Olympic Winter Games were held in 1924 in Chamonix in the French Alps, the Winter Olympics have continued to evolve, embracing new sports and technological innovations. The 'International Winter Sports Week', initially an integral part of the Olympic Games in Paris, hosted 258 athletes from 16 nations, competing in 16 events across nine disciplines. Today it is a global spectacle, encompassing 116 medal events across 16 disciplines.

This year, 2,900 to 3,500 athletes representing over 90 countries will arrive in Italy, where the Games will be held across the cities of Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo. Each one will be dreaming of winning a medal at Milano Cortina 2026, which takes place from 6 to 22 February.

The 1924 International Winter Sports Week of the VIII Olympiad was established to host snow and ice sports that couldn't be included in the Summer Games. Now held every four years, the Winter Olympics have been hosted by cities in Europe, North America and Asia, each adding its unique cultural flavour to the event. Milano Cortina aims to offer a fresh vision of Italian beauty imbued with a new energy.

Cortina d'Ampezzo



Rising to challenges

Hosting the Winter Olympics presents unique challenges, including ensuring sufficient snowfall, building state-of-the-art venues and maintaining environmental sustainability.

While some host countries have faced criticism over costs and environmental impact, the Games often leave a legacy of improved sports facilities and tourism.

Beyond competition, the Winter Olympics promote values of friendship, respect and excellence, bringing athletes and fans from diverse backgrounds together, and fostering international understanding and unity.

Paralympic power

Featuring six sports, the Milano Cortina Winter Paralympics will take place from 6 to 15 March 2026. Up to 665 athletes will compete in 79 medal events, including wheelchair curling mixed doubles, which will feature for the first time. These Games will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Paralympic Winter Games.

Whether you're a lifelong fan or new to winter sports, the Winter Olympics offer excitement, drama and a celebration of athletic excellence.

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Notable Milestones

- **1948 St Moritz** Post Second World War Olympics, symbolising resilience and international unity
- **1952 Oslo** Introduction of the Olympic flame relay for winter sports
- **1976 Innsbruck** Debut of the giant slalom alpine skiing event
- **1992 Albertville** The last Winter Olympics held in the same year as the Summer Olympics
- **1998 Nagano** Snowboarding debuts with men's and women's giant slalom and halfpipe events
- **2002 Salt Lake City** Giant slalom is replaced by the parallel giant slalom
- **2006 Turin** Snowboard cross is added as a new event
- **2018 PyeongChang** Big Air makes its debut

Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Torch Relay

- 63 days from 6 December 2025 to 6 February 2026
- 10,001 torchbearers. An intense, engaging journey that is open to all
- 12,000 kilometres – a journey across Italy and its people, taking in 110 provinces
- 20 regions – the relay will cross every Italian region and see celebrations in 60 cities, uniting people and local communities under Olympic values



Keep up to date with all the news from Milano Cortina 2026 at www.olympics.com/en/milano-cortina-2026.

CHILDREN'S PUZZLE PAGE

LETTER MIX-UP

How many words can you make by rearranging the letters in the words

WINTER OLYMPICS

Scoring: Give yourself 1 point for each 3-letter word, 2 points for each 4-letter word and 3 points for each word with 5 or more letters.

Total points:

What does a cyclist ride in the winter?
An icicle

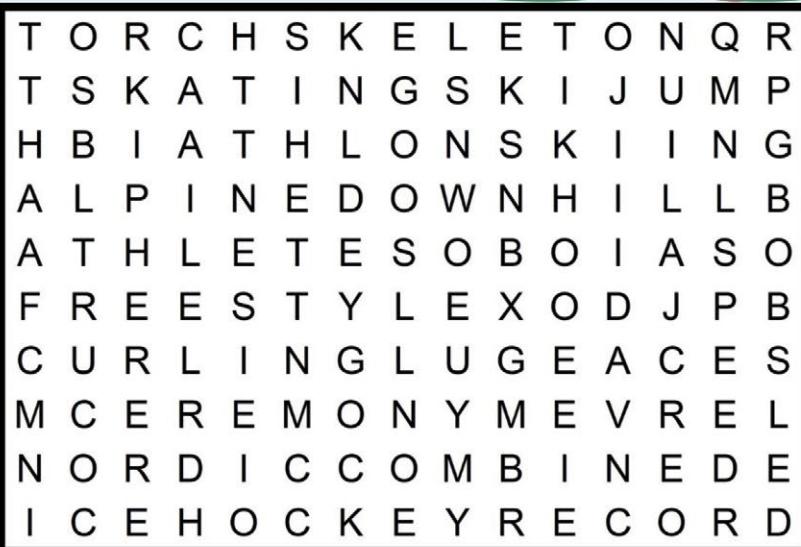
What do you call a slow skier?
A slope-poke

What do snowmen win at the Olympics?
Cold medals



WINTER OLYMPICS WORDSEARCH

ALPINE
ATHLETES
BIATHLON
BOBSLED
CEREMONY
CURLING
DOWNHILL
FREESTYLE
ICE HOCKEY
LUGE
MEDAL
NORDIC
COMBINED
RECORD
SKATING
SKELETON
SKI JUMP
SKIING
SNOWBOARD
SPEED
TORCH



JOKES

When I was in a bookshop, I found a book entitled 'How to Solve 50% of Your Relationship Problems'. So I bought two copies.

Can anyone tell me what the lowest military rank is? Every time I ask someone, they say, "It's private."

Why was the penguin's head so cold?
He was wearing an ice cap.

A fortune teller told me that in about 12 years I'd suffer a terrible heartbreak. To cheer myself up, I went out and bought a puppy.

Why did the physics teacher split up with the biology teacher? There was no chemistry.

A friend decided to get involved in the snow globe industry – just to shake things up a little.

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Go wild in the garden

Gardens in the UK extend to an estimated 520,000 hectares (around 2,007 square miles, or 5,198 square kilometres). This is a huge area for a small nation and even a courtyard or small garden can make a big difference to wildlife, biodiversity and ecology.

Winter in the UK is a great time to work out how your own garden can contribute to the bigger picture. Every small step you take to improve your patch truly makes an impact.

Six-point plan

This simple plan will help improve biodiversity and have a positive effect on the landscape around you:

1. Plant as many different species of shrubs, trees, perennials and even fruit and vegetables, as you can. A wide range of plants is better for wildlife (provided you avoid invasive species).

2. Choose plants that provide flowers, fruit and seed at different times. This gives wildlife a chance to find food throughout different seasons.
3. Add some cover and habitats. Just a pile of sticks, a small pond, a hedge or a collection of leaves are valuable.
4. If you have a vegetable garden, use the same principles and plant as wide a range as you can fit in.
5. Make a compost heap and use it.
6. Stop using any form of pesticide and use natural fertilisers rather than artificial.

A draw for dormice

Some wildlife is particularly precious, and there are certain 'umbrella species' that show a good standard of habitat and biodiversity. One of these is the dormouse. These small creatures are fully protected by law and termed a Biodiversity Action Plan species. They have suffered an intense decline of up to 70% over the last 25 years. You need to have a licence to disturb or handle these rodents, so keeping a good distance away is essential. In February, dormice should be hibernating.

Can you help them within your own garden? It depends on where you live and the appropriateness of your setting. Dormice should be located away from predators, such as the family cat! They need direct access to appropriate wildlife corridors, which enable them to forage for food throughout different seasons.

Help for hedgehogs

Hedgehogs also need protection from household pets, in particular, dogs. The best things you can provide for these prickly characters are spaces under or through fences. These act as 'hedgehog highways', so they can travel between gardens. Shelter and water are important too. A log pile is valuable for food and protection, as these creatures eat invertebrates as well as worms and fruit.

While dormice often favour the base of hedges for hibernation, hedgehogs like log piles, compost heaps, dark places under sheds and dense bushes.



COMMUNITY GARDENING GROUP

DON'T KNOW ONE END OF A SPADE FROM ANOTHER?

Whether you do or not, you would be welcome at our friendly community gardening group. Formed initially as one of Measham Medical Unit's Social Prescribing groups, we aim to offer exercise and social contact as a means to bolster physical and emotional well-being and improve our public spaces at the same time.

We currently look after 3 sites in Measham, meeting on a Monday at 10am, to work until 11.15am or so, when we head to the Age UK Cafe on Measham High St for tea and biscuits. (Own cost : £1)

Some members also tend an allotment in Appleby Magna — organic, zero air miles, fruit and veg!

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Heart of the Matter



When it comes to your cardiac health, a little knowledge is a crucial thing.

There are many different heart conditions but the most common is coronary (also known as ischaemic) heart disease, which affects about 2.3 million people in the UK. Coronary heart disease occurs when a build-up of fatty substances known as atheroma or plaque causes the arteries to narrow. This process, atherosclerosis, can prevent enough blood from getting through to the heart. A blood clot can form, blocking the artery and triggering a heart attack.

But being aware of certain key facts about heart health can help reduce problems or nip them in the bud.

What's your risk?

There are different risk factors for heart problems, some of which we can change and some we can't:

- Family history
- Getting older
- Ethnicity - Black Africans, African Caribbeans and South Asians are at higher risk of high blood pressure or type 2 diabetes
- Your lifestyle – being physically inactive, smoking and drinking too much, and eating a diet high in saturated fats
- Being overweight
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Air pollution, both outside and inside the home

What signs should you look out for?

If you have coronary heart disease, the most likely signs are chest pain (angina) and feeling breathless, though some people have no symptoms. A heart attack, on the other hand, is a medical emergency, so

it's important to know the range of symptoms and understand, too, that they can vary from person to person:

- Chest pain or discomfort that doesn't go away
- Pain that spreads to your left or right arm, neck, jaw, back or stomach. The pain might feel more like tightness, heaviness or heartburn
- Feeling or being sick
- Sweating
- Feeling lightheaded or faint
- Shortness of breath
- Sudden intense anxiety
- Coughing or wheezing

What can you do yourself?

If you think you're having a heart attack, call 999 immediately. While waiting for an ambulance, chew on a 300mg aspirin tablet to thin the blood and improve blood flow.

It's important to take up any health checks you're offered. For example, if you're 40 to 74 and live in England, you'll be invited for a free NHS health check every five years, where your risk of heart and circulatory disease will be assessed. Meanwhile, Scotland has recently introduced a heart health check-up for people aged 35 to 60 with no known history of cardiovascular disease.

You can keep an eye on your own blood pressure too. Invest in a home monitor and see your GP if your readings are consistently above 135/85. It's also wise to take your pulse to check whether you have a normal heart rate – usually between 60 and 100 beats per minute – and if your heart is beating regularly.

If you're worried you have any heart-related symptoms, always consult your doctor.

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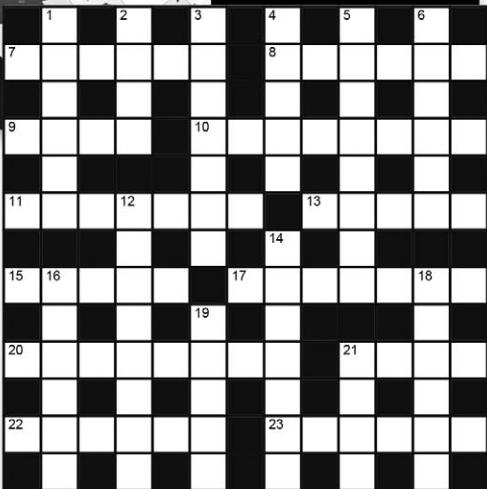
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CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 7 Red fruit (6)
- 8 An agreement (6)
- 9 Water activity (4)
- 10 Pieces (8)
- 11 Non-attendance (7)
- 13 Slightly inebriated (5)
- 15 Quarrel (5)
- 17 Brine (7)
- 20 Holding tightly (8)
- 21 Pain (4)
- 22 Customer (6)
- 23 Soak up (6)

DOWN cont.,

- 6 Smells badly (6)
- 12 Supplied with (8)
- 14 Line drawing (7)
- 16 Infrequently (6)
- 18 Cling to (6)
- 19 Unclean (5)
- 21 Plus (4)

Each letter in this puzzle is represented by a number between 1 and 26. The codes for three letters are shown. As you find the letters enter them in the box below.

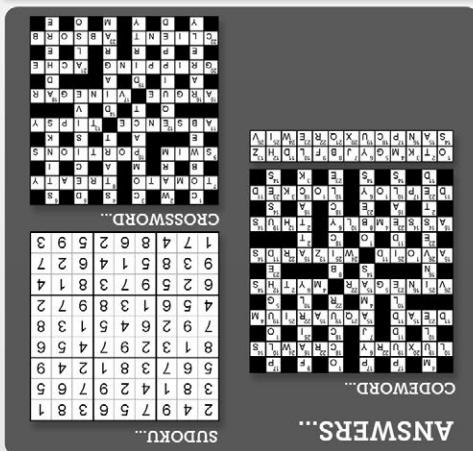
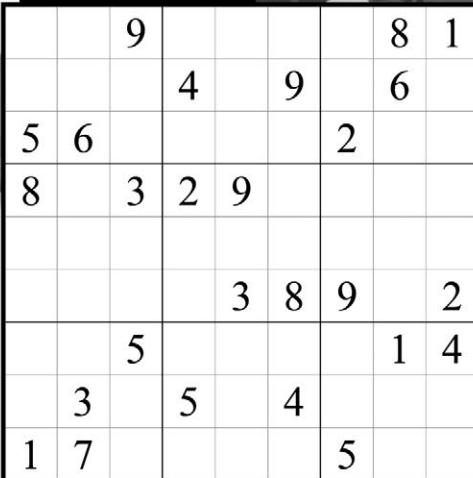
DOWN

- 1 Spider's trap (6)
- 2 Tepid (4)
- 3 Neat (7)
- 4 Begin (5)
- 5 Determined (8)

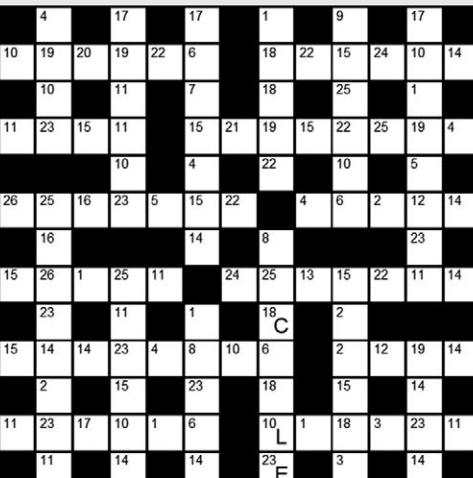
CODWORD

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26		

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GOOD NEWS

HAIR TODAY – TEETH TOMORROW

in skin, hair and wool, can repair teeth affected by enamel erosion and decay. This could pave the way for a toothpaste made of your own hair that would regenerate enamel and arrest the process that can eventually lead to tooth loss. When it comes in contact with saliva, keratin forms a dense mineral layer that protects the tooth and relieves sensitivity. The discovery, made after the scientists extracted keratin from wool, represents an important, eco-friendly advance in regenerative dentistry.



DOGGY DETECTIVES Wessex Water claims to be the first water company to use dogs to protect the environment. Its two detection dogs, Bluey and Bandit, guided by their handler, Nikki Glover, an ecologist, sniff out leaks where wastewater seeps into watercourses, causing pollution and harming wildlife. Operating across Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, the canny canines also use their powerful sense of smell to detect great crested newts, a protected species, so they can be moved to a safer location before construction begins on a site.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME A modern take on the traditional almshouse, which aims to combat loneliness among older people, has won a prestigious architectural award. Appleby Blue Almshouse in Southwark, London, designed by architects Witherford Watson Mann and run by United St Saviour's Charity, whose history goes back 500 years, won the 2025 Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Stirling Prize for Britain's best new building. Offering attractively designed, affordable flats for over 65s, the project set out to remedy isolation by creating spaces where people can meet up and spend time together.

VET SET GO!



Noel Fitzpatrick's Channel 4 series, *The Supervet*, has made him the nation's favourite animal doctor.

Noel Fitzpatrick is a modern-day Doctor Doolittle. But 'do-little' is far from the truth – his compassion towards animals and his willingness to push the boundaries of veterinary surgery are unquestionable.

Away from the small screen, he's the founder and clinical director of specialist veterinary practice, Fitzpatrick Referrals in Surrey, which he opened in 2005. It's one of the UK's pre-eminent independent small-animal orthopaedic and neurosurgical facilities.

He's also a speaker advocating for advancements in veterinary care and animal welfare, and an author with numerous titles to his name. His most recent is the moving picture book, *'Over the Rainbow Bridge'*, about a young child, Sam, who has to face the loss of his beloved pet, named Dog.

Noel wrote it in the wake of the death of his 'best friend', Border Terrier, Keira, four years ago. He was heartbroken, but, as a veterinary surgeon with 35 years' experience, dealing with mortality is simply a part of life. In 2023, Noel released an illustrated book sharing the story of his life with his canine companion, the bestselling *'Keira & Me'*.

BOYHOOD AMBITION

Growing up on a farm in County Laois, Ireland, Noel spent much of his time caring for cattle and sheep. Led Zeppelin fan Noel recently revealed: *"I remember losing a lamb as a young child. I lay on the grass, looked up to heaven and wished I'd been better. When I got into Led Zeppelin, I imagined there was an actual stairway to heaven. I built a superhero in my head called Vet Man, who would save the world, and set about getting myself educated."* He was ten.

After qualifying as a veterinary surgeon, Noel, 58, trained at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, because he wanted to learn to communicate. His credits include horror film, *'The Devil's Tattoo'*, drama *'Live for the Moment'* and small screen series such as *'Heartbeat'* and *'The Bill'*.

In early 2020 Noel was on the receiving end of medical attention himself after breaking his neck falling down a flight of stairs at night while half asleep. Fortunately, he was able to avoid surgery but ended up with a neck brace.

SPREADING THE WORD

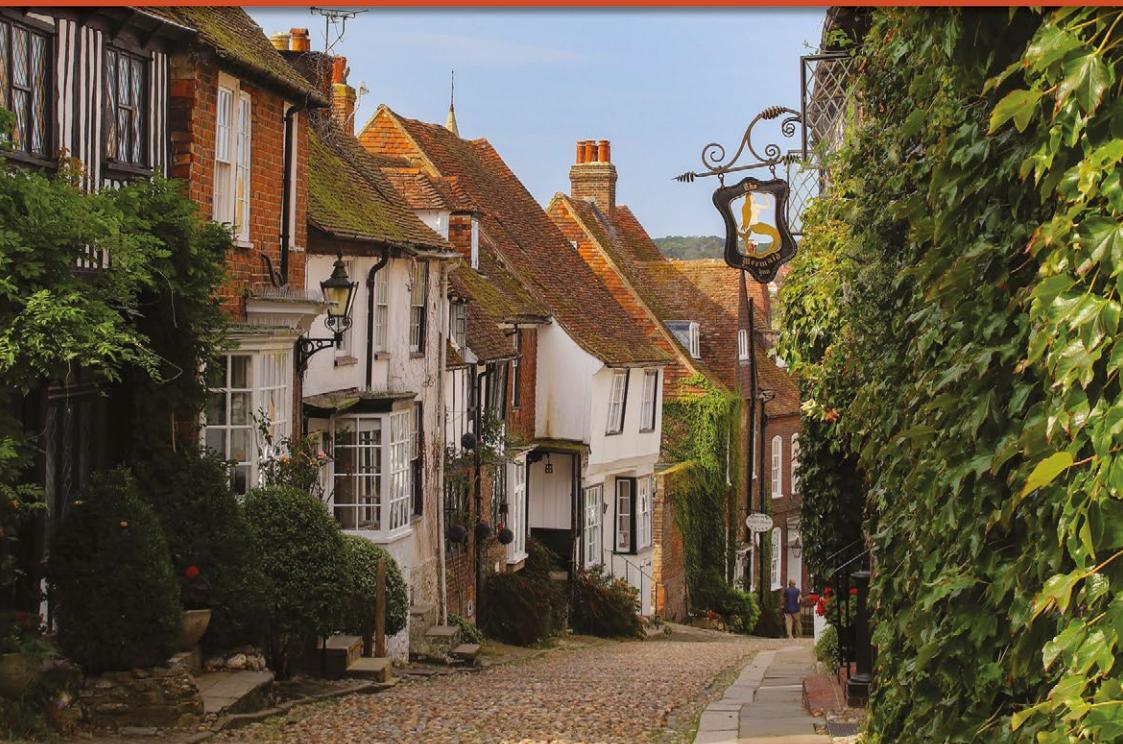
Noel has now taken his show, *'Supervet ER'*, to YouTube and, in September, he will be kicking off a UK tour, *'Medicine & Music'*, with his rock band Fitzpatrick. (Visit www.awaywithmedia.com/tours/noel-fitzpatrick for more information.)

Noel's pioneering surgeries have made him one of the world's foremost animal doctors. In 2009, he was recognised by *Guinness World Records* for becoming the first veterinary surgeon to successfully apply an amputation prosthesis to a cat that had lost both hind feet.

"If I have one function on planet earth, it's to act as a conduit for more kindness to animals," he says. *"Don't be arrogant. Don't be an a-hole. Be somebody who gives a damn about this world we live in. Animals have as much right to it as we do."*

'Over the Rainbow Bridge', by Noel Fitzpatrick and illustrated by Alison Brown, is published by Simon & Schuster Children's Books. Image credits - RAY BURMISTON

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