

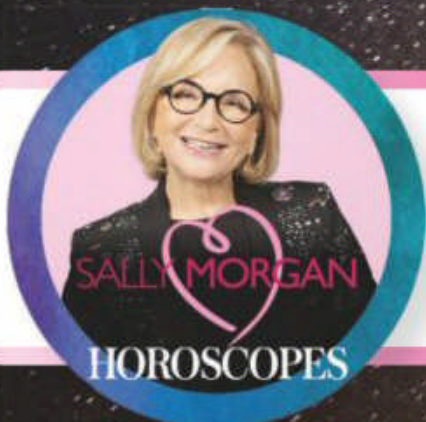
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fed up with  
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# chat

November special

Mum of triplets  
because I had

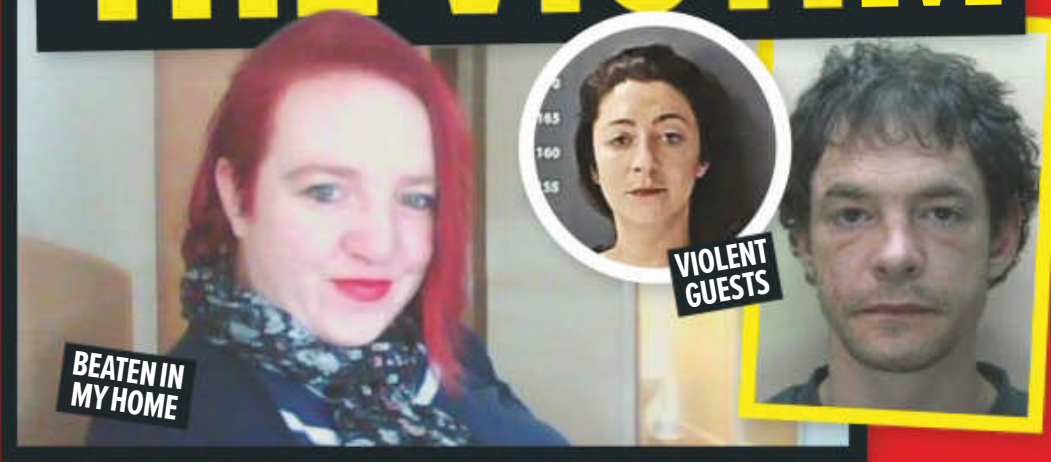
**FORBIDDEN SEX**



**FUN  
PUZZLES**

We watched  
a horror film  
together then

**I BECAME  
THE VICTIM**



I felt the needle  
in my back  
**AND MY LIFE  
CHANGED  
FOREVER**



**CRUEL TROLLS  
SAID MY BABY  
SHOULD DIE**

A wartime SOS  
sealed our  
**60-year  
romance**





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# chat

November 2020

## Come on in!

### Welcome...

**W**ith autumn in full swing and winter just around the corner, cosy evenings at home make for perfect plans.

This month, we're sharing with you our favourite films for a night in front of the television, along with a warming hot chocolate recipe to cuddle up with (pg14).

However, just because it's colder, doesn't mean we have to stay indoors. Ellie (pg56) has recently left home for university and she's planning on taking the world in her stride.

Making the most of the time we have is important. After both Atima and her mother were diagnosed with breast cancer (pg16), she was determined to live a healthy life. In order to raise money for Breast Cancer Now, this season she'll be stepping outside to take on many fun challenges.

And she's not the only one pushing herself. This month, Rob (pg26) tells us how he overcame his demons. After battling with PTSD, he used running to get back on his feet. Never one to do things by halves, Rob completed the North Pole Marathon, running 26 miles across snow and ice. Now that sounds cold!

As well as plenty more real lives, including Amanda's heartfelt goodbye to her dog (pg36), we have lots to get you through the month!

From Cliff Richard's autobiography (pg31), a hearty mac and cheese recipe (pg42), to the newest trends from George at Asda (pg12), this edition makes for perfect company on an autumn night.

Check out our cosy homeware (pg38), and don't miss your *Chat* December Special, on sale 29 October.

Enjoy!

Gail x

#### The Team

**Editor:** Gail Shortland **Senior Writers:** Laea Marshall, Hannah Poon **Feature Writers:** Rosie Crass, Nia Dalton **Senior Designer:** Victoria Elliott **Designer:** Emily Kelford **Junior Designers:** Yazz Williams, Hollie Moxham, Mel Walter

### Hide and seek

On which page in this month's *Chat* special can you find this goose?

Your answer:

Answer on page 60

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# VIOLENT

# MOVIE NIGHT

**The party was over, but the horror was just beginning...** Donna Volante, 37, Jersey

**A**s I pulled on my coat and headed out into the rain, I cursed my friends. They'd braved the storm to meet up at the local pub for a drink and had been begging me to come along.

Eventually, I'd given in and decided to join in the fun.

'This better be fun,' I grumbled to myself, soaked through within minutes of leaving my house.

As I plodded into the pub, I did a quick scan of the room and spotted my pals around a table.

My heart sank.

They looked absolutely wasted.

All I'd wanted was a catch up.

'Hiya,' I said, slapping on a

smile as I pulled up a chair.

'Here at last,' my friend Scott Furlong, 34, bellowed, wrapping an arm around my shoulder and pushing a pint sloppily towards me. 'Come on then, catch up!'

I took a small sip of my drink to shut him up and tried to inch out of his embrace as subtly as I could manage.

I'd met Scott nine years ago and, although we had a long history, with an on/off relationship, we'd always managed to stay friendly.

His sister Zoe Furlong, 33, was there too – though she looked too smashed to even register I'd joined them.

I stayed for a while, not wanting to dash off and look rude, but as the night descended into further chaos, I decided to hit the road.

'That's me done,' I announced, standing up to leave the pub.

'Oh Donna, you don't mind if we crash, do you?' Zoe slurred, nodding in Scott's direction. 'Your place is so much closer.'

'Erm, no I guess not,' I shrugged back.

I'd already agreed to let our friend Terry stay, so the four of us headed back to mine.

I silently prayed it



**Scott was volatile after a drink**

wouldn't become an after-party, and encouraged the group to keep the noise down as we collapsed in the living room.

'Let's stick this on,' Scott said bossily, putting *The Shining* movie onto the television.

'Bit gory isn't it...' I muttered, not keen on watching a horror movie so late at night.

I kept an eye on Scott as he watched the film.

We'd moved past it, but I knew he could be volatile after he'd had a

few drinks, so to see him enjoying such a creepy film was unsettling.

Suddenly, Zoe laughed maniacally, making me jump in shock.

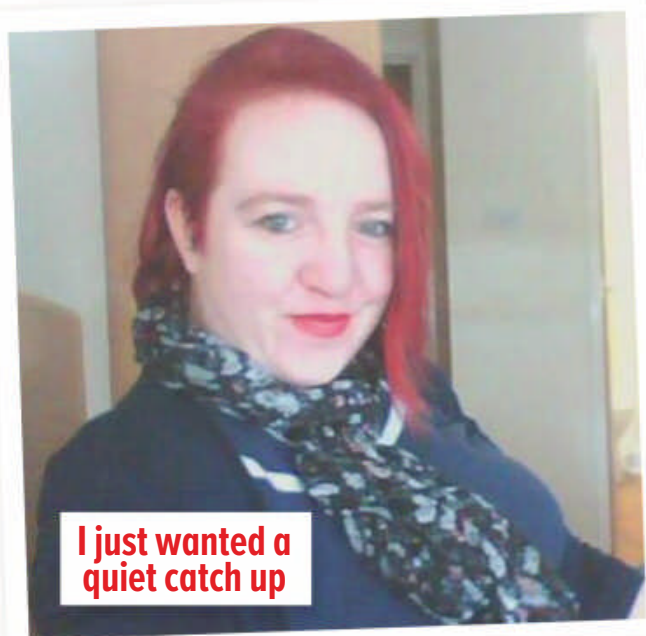
I heard the distinctive cracking open of a can and saw them both guzzle from it while Terry sat playing on his phone.

As they drank, they got rowdier and rowdier

until, finally, I had to speak up.

'I'm sorry but you'll have to leave,' I said firmly, standing up to open the door for them.

Zoe looked stunned as I bravely



**I just wanted a quiet catch up**

Words by Katie Pearson Photos: SWNS



## Beaten by sick siblings



**Zoe pounded me until I bled**

told them to go.

'I don't think so,' she hissed, getting to her feet.

'Come on, it's been a long day, I just want some peace and quiet,' I pleaded, shrinking away from her as she approached me.

I looked to Scott for help as she cornered me, and noticed that he was grinning.

'Let's just calm down...' I started to say, but suddenly Zoe lurched forward and punched me hard square in the face.

I screamed in shock and tried to squirm away, but before I could get far, Scott had leapt to his feet and reached over to hold me still.

'What are you doing?' I screamed, my limbs flailing around

as I tried to break free.

He had me in a vice-like grip as Zoe pounded me.

Tears and blood poured from me as I cried out for help.

My eye started to swell immediately and I was half-blinded as I sobbed.

I couldn't even protect my head from the blows as Scott wouldn't release me, his sickening smile still on his face.

'Stop...please...' I begged.

I was starting to feel faint and could barely hear Terry call for the emergency services.

'We need the police – and you better bring an ambulance too, she's losing blood!' he shrieked.

He pushed past Zoe and tried to rip Scott off of me.

Suddenly, I was dropped like a hot potato, left to crumple down the wall and onto the floor while they turned their attention to Terry.

Seconds later, police sirens wailed outside and Scott and Zoe scurried away from the house without a backward glance.

'Are you OK?' Terry asked, rushing to my side, his face white with shock.

I could barely speak as the police charged in, closely followed by paramedics.

I was carted off to Jersey General Hospital where doctors found the attack had caused a blood clot in my eye.

I spent the night there being monitored, the bruises and swelling developing with every passing second until I was practically unrecognisable.

The police came to take my statement and let me know they'd caught Scott and Zoe and

thankfully they had been arrested.

I was still too stunned by the whole ordeal to feel relief, but I knew one thing for sure – there was no way I could go home.

I was discharged the next day and went to a women's refuge, where I explained the situation.

Struggling to come to terms with what had happened in my own house, I couldn't face heading home to the scene of the horrible crime.

I spent the next eight weeks at the refuge, feeling constantly on edge and struggling with a

patchy memory ever since my head took a beating.

If my own friends could attack me, anyone could.

Eventually, I knew it was time to go home and face up to my scary demons.

'Come on Donna, you can do this,' I told myself as I stood nervously outside my front door.

Steeling myself, I opened it and went inside.

It was like a ghost town, still upturned from that awful night, with cans of booze scattered around the coffee table and rubbish all over the floor.

*The Shining* DVD case was even still out, a horrible reminder of the evil I'd faced while it played on TV.

I collapsed into floods of tears as I

took in the scene, horrified by what had happened to me in my own living room.

But slowly, my wounds started to heal, and I started to let myself feel comfortable in my home surroundings again.

In time, Scott and Zoe appeared at Jersey Magistrate's Court.

Scott Leonard Charles Furlong, 34, received two years and nine months in prison, after admitting one count of grave and criminal assault, and three counts of causing malicious damage.

While Zoe Leonara Furlong, 33, was jailed for just 21 months, after admitting to one count of grave and criminal assault and one count of common assault.

I couldn't face them so I didn't go, but I was devastated the minute I heard about their sentences – especially Zoe's.

These were people that had known me for years and, despite all we'd been through, we'd called each other friends.

If they could turn on me this way, they could turn on anyone.

I could never have anticipated what would happen to me.

I let people I thought were friends into my home, and I ended up having to leave myself.

Zoe is now out of prison and Scott is due out next month.

Since the assault took place, I fell pregnant and unfortunately lost my unborn baby due to the post-traumatic stress on my body and injuries to my head.

I've been let down more than I ever thought possible, but I am determined to move on.

I may have trust issues, but it's time to make some real friends.

This is a new chapter in my life.

**I couldn't go back to my own home**

**Their sentences weren't enough**



**Me now trying to rebuild my life**



# DON'T BE C

## Despite the ignorant trolls, I'm so proud of my brave little girl...

Racheli Goldman, 31, Manchester

**W**atching a woman lift her giggling daughter into the air and swing her around, I felt a dagger in my heart.

That unbreakable mother-daughter bond was something I desperately longed for.

Back home, I broke down in tears to my husband Naffi, 42.

'It'll happen for us one day,' he lovingly soothed.

But when?

It was 2016, and we'd already been trying for a baby for well over a year.

Ever since we got married in August 2015, starting a family had been all we'd wanted.

That's what you do, isn't it? Fall in love, get married, have babies.

But for us, it hadn't worked out

that way.

Back and forth to the doctors, they said we could eventually try ovulation drugs.

However, we put it off, hoping to conceive naturally.

And now we were just waiting, stuck in limbo, wondering whether to have ovulation drugs or keep on trying.

Every time I saw a pregnant woman or a baby in a pushchair, I'd tear up.

Then, in March 2016, I realised my period was late.

By now, I'd resigned myself to the idea that I wouldn't have babies, so a missed period didn't even startle me. 'Probably stress,' I

reasoned to myself and Naffi.

But when it still hadn't arrived days later, my mind started to wonder to the possibility.

'I don't want to get my hopes up,' I told Naffi as I bought a pregnancy test.

But hope was all I had left.

Still, as I waited for my results, I found myself praying.

And then, when I saw the result – a jolt of disbelief.

*No way!* I thought, and immediately did another.

Then another.

But all three were saying the same thing – I was pregnant!

As Naffi came through the door that evening, I quickly raced into his arms.

'We're going to have a baby!' I gasped.

'What?! But I thought... Wow!' Naffi said, barely able to get his words together.

Our jubilation was set in stone when our first scan, six weeks later, showed a healthy, growing embryo.

We were going to be parents!

And when a scan at 20-weeks showed we were having a little girl, I let my fantasies run riot.

Sweet pastel sleepsuits, dresses and baby dolls filled our home.

Then at 30 weeks, we were offered a 3D scan.

'Exciting!' I beamed. Only, as

we eagerly waited to see the final scan, the doctor walked into the room looking sombre.

'Your baby is very ill,' he told suddenly us.

I grabbed Naffi's hand as the doctor explained they'd found our baby had a rare disorder.

She had an underdeveloped and unusually large skull, and a twisted spine.

There was something wrong with her brain, but they didn't know what.

'We would advise you to have an abortion,' the doctor said.

If we didn't, our baby would most likely die during childbirth, or she'd live a difficult life in a vegetative state.

'Caring for her will be life-long and unbearable,' they said.

'This can't be happening,' I sobbed in disbelief.

Naffi and I had wanted this baby for so long.

'We've got to fight for her then,' I said, wiping my tears.

Leaving the hospital, Naffi and I spoke about our options, but we were both determined to give our daughter a chance.

Be it fate or God, there was a reason we'd fallen pregnant.

Finally, on New Year's Eve 2017, my waters broke.

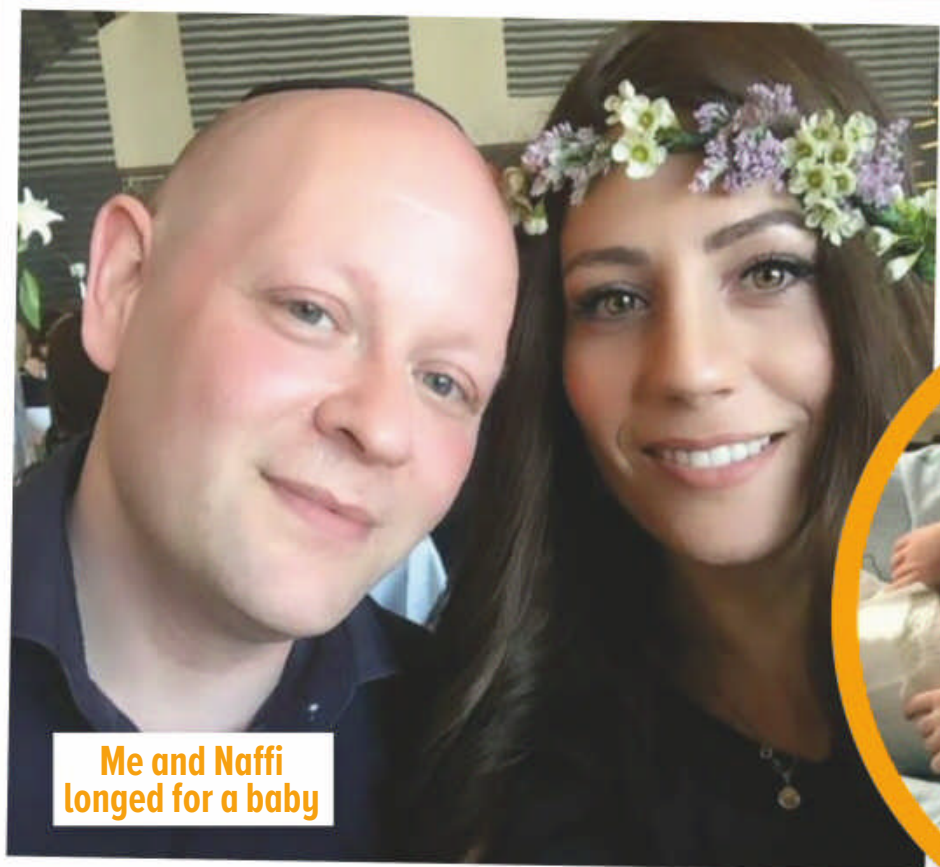
After three agonising days in the labour room, the child we'd desperately longed for arrived into the world.

However, we barely had time to glance at her before she was whisked off to Intensive Care.

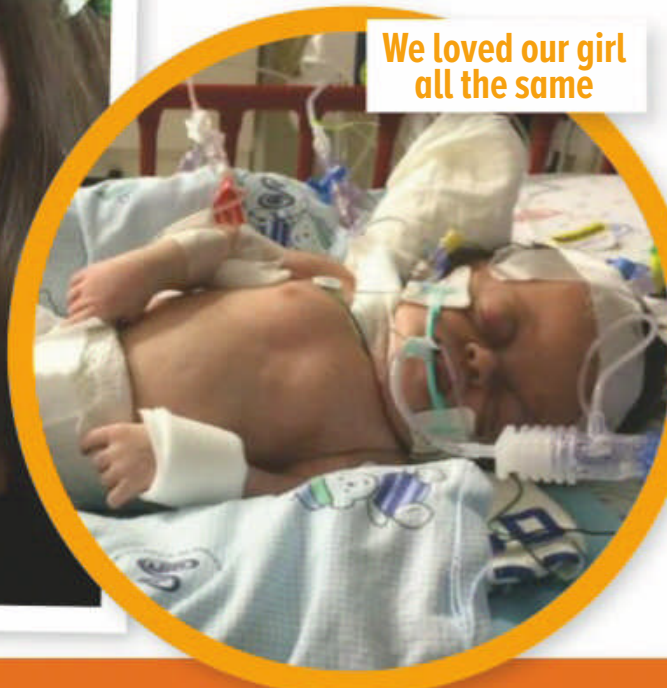
'It's going to be tough seeing her for the first time,' the doctor

I let my fantasies run riot

We loved our girl all the same



Me and Naffi longed for a baby





# RUEL



To me, Batya is absolutely perfect



We'll give her love and care

Naffi and I cried and cried until the tears dried up.

Batya was already struggling.

Doctors told us she was both deaf and blind – and over the next few weeks, she was resuscitated numerous times.

But they couldn't make a diagnosis.

Determined to get

to the bottom of it, the doctors eventually sent blood samples to a specialist in Germany.

And weeks later, Batya was diagnosed with spina bifida, Pfeiffer syndrome and Ardley Blister syndrome.

Pfeiffer syndrome meant the bones in her skull had prematurely fused, and Ardley Blister syndrome is a skeletal deformity.

It was the hardest start to her little life.

And she'd have to be on a ventilator forever.

At three months, Batya was stabilised and finally brought out of the coma.

'You're a miracle baby,' I told her, tears running down my face.

She'd defied the odds from the day she was born.

And a month later, doctors said she was stable enough to leave the hospital. She could move into

residential care or our baby could come home with us.

It was the toughest decision we ever made, but we followed our hearts and brought Batya home.

However, we needed intensive training before we could do so.

Learning how to keep Batya's oxygen saturation levels normal, performing sterile suction to prevent her airways becoming blocked – every procedure had to be perfected.

There was so much we'd relied on medical experts for, and now it was down to us.

Batya needed 24/7 care, meaning Naffi had to quit his job running a jewellery shop to help.

We took 12-hour shifts each, and it was exhausting.

But it was a labour of love.

Still, when friends and family visited, we were worried how they'd react to seeing Batya.

But like us, they all fell in love with her.

And despite her

struggle, Batya started to smile, laugh and even clutch our hands.

So, in December last year, I finally started sharing pictures of our darling girl on my Facebook page.

Due to all her equipment, we weren't able to take Batya out.

And I'd felt too protective to let many people see her.

But now I worried that it looked like I was ashamed.

And I wasn't.

Far from it.

I was so proud of my brave little girl.

My friends and family were proud, too – some sharing my posts.

But that's when the trolling started.

*She's a monster.*

*You are evil parents bringing her into this world.*

*She shouldn't be alive.*

Every comment hurt like a dagger to my heart.

'How can people be so cruel?' I cried to Naffi.

Furious, I vowed not to let the bullies win.

Instead, Naffi and I went public – I set up a website and started to raise money for Batya's care costs, standing defiant against the trolls.

With Naffi out of work, our savings are dwindling, and

we have to pay out for specialist equipment, food and medication.

While we'd love another child, right now, Batya is our focus.

Doctors have no idea how long she'll live.

She's defying expectations every single day.

Batya may be different.

But she deserves love, care and happiness like any other child.

We'll make sure she gets it.

**Visit: Go Fund Me – Help Batya**

warned us.

We knew he was right, but she was alive, here, and ours, and that's all that mattered to us in that particular moment.

We'd love her regardless of how she looked.

We named our precious girl Batya, meaning 'daughter of God' in Hebrew.

Though she was alive, Batya couldn't breathe on her own – so she was in a tiny incubator, attached to a ventilator.

She'd be in a coma until doctors could stabilise her.

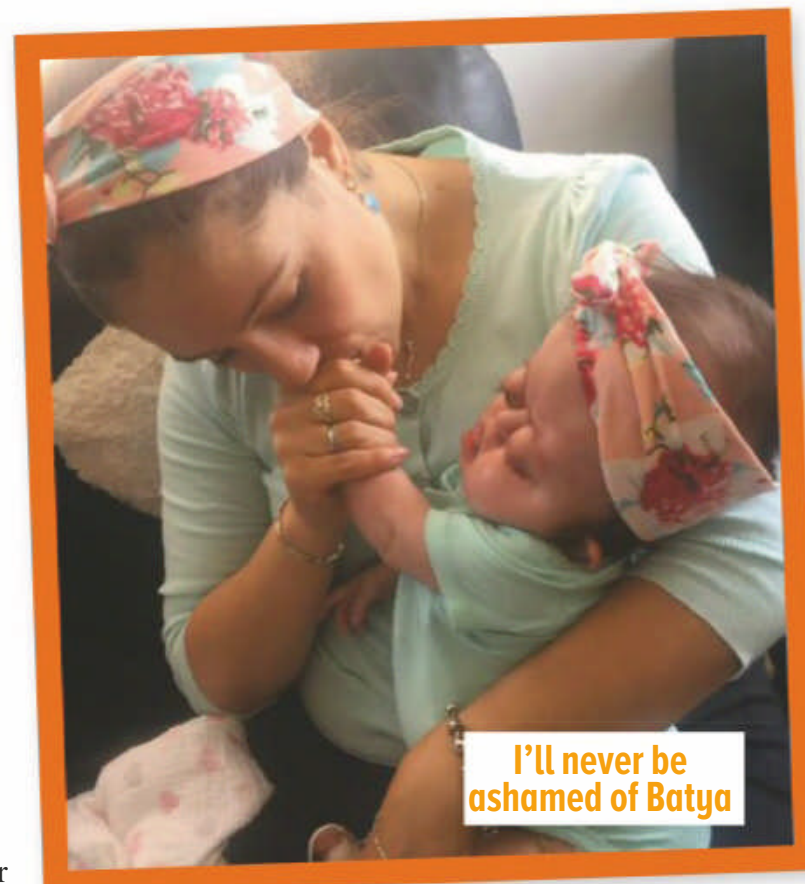
Seeing her for the first time the following day, I won't lie, was absolutely terrifying.

With a misshapen head and protruding eyes, she looked strange, like no baby I'd ever seen.

But I loved her completely.

Gazing at our precious child,

She'll be on a ventilator forever



I'll never be ashamed of Batya



# Quick chats

## Act of kindness



They brought happiness back



# DANCING QUEENS

## My daughter and her best friend love to get their groove on!

Susan Cook, Dunoon

**D**oing yet another fling along to the piper, Lois and Lily were cheering everyone up with their highland dancing.

They'd been doing it ever since they were four and absolutely loved it.

As best friends, they were always dancing together around town.

Then, when the Coronavirus hit, our local community hall and kitchen asked them to give a helping hand.

'Would you like to do it?' we asked them, and sure enough, they said yes.

Arriving at the sheltered accommodation, volunteers at Burgh Hall Dunoon Community Kitchen handed the residents some food, whilst the girls got ready to perform.

Standing two metres apart, they performed their spectacle with a live piper helping them.

The residents loved it so much, that the hall asked them to keep coming back every week to dance.

So, every Friday, they

would visit five different accommodation blocks, each time putting on a show.

The locals loved it and every week the crowds got bigger.

But it wasn't just the accommodation they went to.

One Thursday evening, at 8pm, they stood in their hospital car park and danced to the Clap for Careers.

And they even put on a little show for a 99-year-old lady on her birthday.

When they heard the lady would be spending the day

alone, they turned up with balloons, cake and performed from a distance.

Seeing the lady's face light up was an unforgettable moment.

During this incredibly lonely and difficult time, the girls helped to make our community smile.

No matter the weather, they were outside doing their flings for the crowds.

And to support the local community kitchen, they raised £1,125 by setting up a fundraising page.

That money was used to make hundreds

of two course meals for those desperately in need.

Our girls are so kind, and they'll keep doing what they can to cheer people up.

By doing something they love, they got to give back to their community.

Burgh Hall have now put a video together of the girls and it's truly remarkable seeing the smiles within the audience.

Coronavirus brought sadness and despair to many, but our girls hoped to change that, one dance at a time.

We're so proud of them.

## The crowds loved it



They danced no matter the weather

## My daughter's bird is a world-famous rock chick!

Carol Shute, 46, from Swindon

**L**aying back in bed, all I could hear was Barry chirping from his cage.

My daughter, Georgie, 14, had been begging for a bird for months before her dad, Nick, 45, finally caved in.

Since his arrival, he'd definitely been making himself known.

'How do you sleep at night?' I asked Georgie after one particularly loud sleep.

'Just do,' she shrugged, completely oblivious to the racket he'd been making during the night.

I guess she wouldn't care either way though, she was totally obsessed with birds.

Most girls her age are all over the latest phone or whatever it is kids are into, but not Georgie.

With stacks of books



# LOOKING FLY

**T**his amazing close-up photo shows the moment a damselfly appears to look happy as it stares straight into the camera – almost seeming to smile just for the shot.

The striking photo shows the tiny insect's vivid blue eyes popping out of its head, and its fine hairs standing on end, as it rests on a blade of grass in the early morning.

The macro picture was captured in July on the riverbanks of the Po River in Pomponesco, Northern Italy, by Italian photographer Alberto Ghizzi Panizza, 45.

Alberto said; 'I've been taking pictures of these insects for about 20 years, and this is one of the best ones.'

'The damselfly looked right at me as I was taking the picture.'

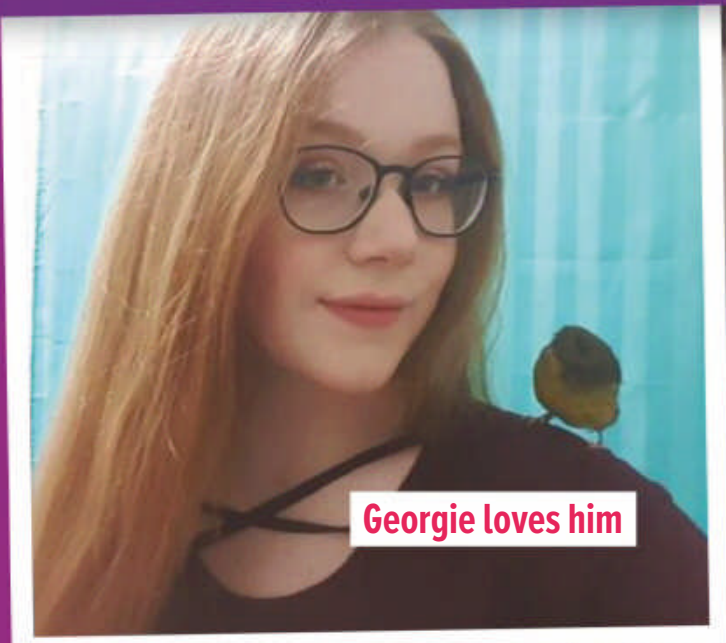
'I love how he looks so friendly and happy, almost as if he is smiling for the camera.'

And we have to agree with Alberto, this is one happy picture!



Words and images: SWNS

# ROCK 'N' ROLL



Georgie loves him

all about birds, it was her one true passion.

So, despite the sleepless nights, I was going to have to get used to Barry.

Nick and Georgie first brought him home in July of last year, and I could hear his chirps from the kitchen.

Going out to greet our new lodger, I had to choke back a laugh.

'Check out his hairdo,' I

lightly giggled.

Staring down at the little brown and yellow canary in front of me, his bowl-cut stood out like a sore thumb.

He looked like he should be in a Beatles tribute band!

With hair coiffed out in front of his eyes, I didn't know



Rock star

Chirping

chirping, he really had the whole package.

I guess that's why Georgie set up an Instagram account for him so everyone could see.

At first, he only had 70 followers, but after uploading a picture of him with a rainbow reflection on his mane, his figures rocketed.

Someone even shared it to Twitter, where it quickly racked in 320,000 likes and retweets.

He looks like Oliver Tree, one person commented, but I had no idea who he was on about.

Typing his name into Google, I came across a rather strange looking man in a rain mac with a heavy fringe just like Barry.

And true to the rock star image, Barry was a right little diva.

Refusing to perform for free on camera, we had to bribe him with food.

However, give him a bit of fruit or veg and he'll chirp away for hours.

Even I find it funny.

Now, with more than 9,000 followers, Barry is world famous.

Words and images: SWNS



# JUST FOR FUN

## Sudoku

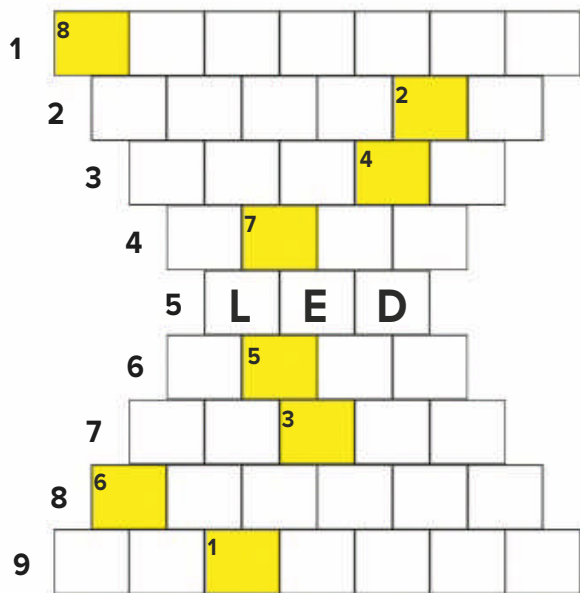
Each 2x3 box, each row and each column must contain the numbers 1 - 6.

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

## Brick trick



A group of which garden wild animal is called an 'array'? To find out, solve the puzzle... Enter the answers to the clues in the grid. Every word is an anagram of its neighbours, plus or minus a letter. Read the shaded squares in number order for the answer.



1. MADE A  
MENACING SOUND  
2. SHONE WITH  
WARMTH  
3. SMALL HOTEL  
4. SHARE OUT

5. DIRECTED  
6. HEAVY METAL  
7. WITH CARGO ON  
BOARD  
8. CARRYING GRIP  
9. BREATHED IN

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

Answer on page 60.



A happy reunion

# From t

## An unlikely pen pal helped me meet the love of my life...

Shirley Godley, 78, Sheffield

**D**ashing from my house to the post box, I posted my letter and wondered if I'd ever get a reply. It was July 1957 and I'd sent the letter after spotting an ad in the local newspaper.

'Pen pal wanted,' it said, and as I read on I discovered it was from a lonely sailor who was posted in Hong Kong with the navy.

While I was only 16, it didn't stop me from quickly scribbling off a letter to Able Seaman Williams before my parents - Joan and George Kerrigan - could see what I was doing.

And while I wasn't convinced I'd ever get a reply, I did like the idea of writing to someone in a foreign country - especially knowing they were a sailor!

But after a couple of weeks, I'd long forgotten all about my letter.

Only as I walked through the front door one afternoon, I spotted an airmail-stamped envelope on the front mat. Even better, it was

addressed to me!

Hiding it in my jumper, I ran up the stairs to open it on my own.

Only, as I started reading it I realised it wasn't from Able Seaman Williams at all.

Instead, I was greeted with someone entirely different.

'My name is Jack. I know that's not who you had been expecting to hear back from,' the letter said.

The sailor I'd originally been in touch with had apparently received so many responses to his advert that he'd passed mine on to his messmate Jack.

Jack - or 'Ginge' as he was called in the Navy - was from Sheffield, like me.

In fact, I soon realised that his house was just a five minute walk away from mine.

It even turned out that we'd both gone to the same secondary school.

I couldn't believe it!

In his letter, he told me he was 19 and also posted in Hong Kong and as I studied his beautiful



**My Mr Write!**



# the heart

engagement rings when he was home on leave for a week.

He'd written to my dad from Hong Kong without me knowing to ask for my hand in marriage.

Thankfully, Dad agreed and we soon planned to wed in February 1960.

But because of Jack's work abroad, we had to postpone three times.

Finally on 27 April 1960, Jack returned back to his base in Plymouth and I was there waiting to greet him with a kiss.

All his crewmates lined up for us and a wonderful photo was snapped!

Eventually, three days later, we tied the knot in a lovely little church in South Yorkshire.

I'd hoped Jack would wear his uniform, but he wasn't convinced.

'You know how much I like you in your uniform,' I pleaded, but he wasn't having any of it.

We had a wonderful day though, with 150 guests joining our celebrations.

We went to Blackpool for our honeymoon two days later and the sun shone the entire time.

It felt like a good sign to me!

Once home, Jack had to go back abroad with the Navy, so I stayed at home with my parents until he left the Navy in 1962.

By then, we had our daughter, Karen, now 59, so we could finally be a proper family.

I'd only planned on having one child, but we went on to have four more in the end!

Kevan, now 55, Dona, now 53, Lisa, 51 and Debra, 41, followed by 10 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

We've been married 60 years now and we still like to write each other cards and never go to bed on an argument.

On our diamond wedding anniversary in April, we celebrated with our favourite pudding - lemon meringues - and spent the evening reminiscing about old times.

Lockdown meant it wasn't what we had planned but it was perfect for us.

I still have that photo of Jack in my purse from the first letter he sent and it's been there since.

I think it was fate that meant my letter ended up with him and I'm so grateful that it did!

handwriting over and over again, I felt giddy with excitement.

He'd even included a small passport sized photo of himself, which I quickly slipped into my purse without my parents seeing.

He was so handsome and dapper and it soon became clear why they all called him Ginge!

From then on we wrote to each other as much as we could and I soon discovered that Jack was back from leave in just three months time.

'We can finally meet,' he wrote.

I was grinning from ear - barely able to hide my huge smile.

But as I arrived home one day a week or so later, I was expecting to find a letter from Jack.

Instead I was greeted by Dad sitting at the kitchen table.

'There's a letter here for you from airmail,' he said.

'Who's it from?'

This whole time I'd managed to hide my correspondence with Jack from my parents.

I was worried about what they might say, but as I began to realise just how important Jack was to me, I knew I couldn't hide it from them

much longer.

'I've been writing to a Seaman in Hong Kong,' I said, coming clean.

'He's coming home to Sheffield in three month's time and he wants to meet me.'

While my dad wasn't thrilled that I'd kept it from him, he agreed to meet the 'chap I was writing to' anyway.

And after a long three months, Jack came back to Sheffield in

December 1957.

Arriving at our house to pick me up and meet my mum and dad, it was incredible to finally get to see him.

I felt like I already knew everything about him after months of

writing to each other and luckily, my parents liked him as well.

And there he was, sat in my living room - the man I'd been talking to all this time!

I couldn't believe my luck and Jack clearly felt the same, too.

'I'm going to marry your daughter, Mr Kerrigan,' he told my dad as he left the house.

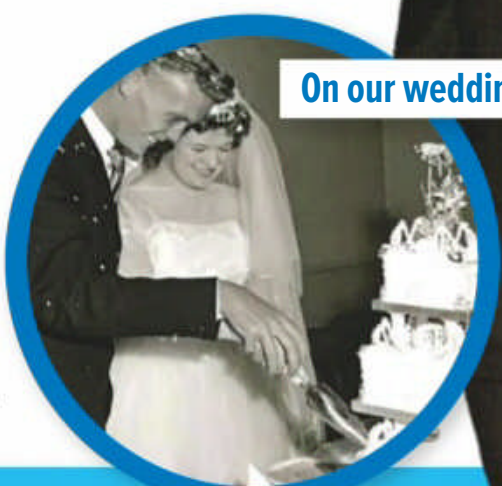
I was in complete shock!

But sure enough, Jack proposed in 1958, after suggesting we go to look for

**I think fate brought us together**

**On our wedding day**

**We've just celebrated 60 years!**





# Fashion

The best of what's new

## GEORGE AT ASDA

**G**et inspired and discover the latest trends with the new AW20 range at George at ASDA. Find winter staples, neutral tones and bold accessories – perfect for updating your wardrobe in preparation for the season. Best of all, every stylish piece is under £40. Affordable fashion at its finest!



Fur coat, £30



Beige coat, £40



Straight jeans, £14



Velvet dress, £18



Lace up boots, £28



Kettle bag, £16



Ankle boots, £16



Glitter boots, £22



Bag, £14



Jumper, £14

Jeans, £16

Boots, £20

Neutral tones are the base of every wardrobe





Coat, £24

Shirt, £15

Skirt, £16



Cream coat, £36



Shacket, £22

Get the look for less with faux fur



Fur coat, £36



Patent bag, £10



Cream trousers, £15



Velvet dress, £16



Aviator coat, £36



PU belt, £8



Hat and scarf set, £16

Animal print will never go out of fashion!



Grey knit, £18

## Joma Jewellery

Joma Jewellery is a brand with love and sentiment at its very core. Timeless jewellery filled with thought makes for the most magical gifting opportunities and perfect little indulgent treats. Starting from just £10, it can be collected, worn and loved now and forever. Shop the range online at [jomajewellery.com](http://jomajewellery.com)



Bracelet, £16.99



Bracelet, £19.99



Bangle, £29.99



Earrings, £17.99



Hoops, £18.99







Self-care is crucial for your mental health

# Chill time

As the dark nights draw in, nothing beats a cosy pamper evening. Light some candles, put on a film and snuggle up with our ultimate guide!

## PERFECT TUB TIME

**B**efore setting yourself up in front of the TV, nothing beats a soak in the tub during a cosy night in. Not only will it warm you up, but it instantly relaxes you, putting you in the perfect mood for an evening at home.

Westlab's Pharmacist and salt specialist, Karen Davis, is here with her expert guide on achieving the perfect soak.

### TEMPERATURE

'A warm bath of between 37-39 degrees is the perfect temperature to ensure that the body is in a state of relaxation and will enable the you to most effectively absorb the minerals. The heat of the bath also affects blood circulation, instigates the sleep hormone melatonin and relieves muscle aches and pains.'

### SOAK TIME

'20 minutes is the optimum time to bath, allowing salts to work their magic, while the body has time to increase circulation and lower blood pressure. It can often take half this time to switch off from the outside world and simply relax, so enjoy for longer if desired!'

### INGREDIENTS

'The perfect companion for a self-care ritual are Westlab's Mindful Bathing Salts and Sleep Bathing Salts to encourage users to step into a moment of peace and tranquility in a mineral-infused bath.'

Westlab bath salts, £6.99, ASDA



Soak for 20 minutes



## MOVIE DATE

### Top 10 fantasy films

1. Harry Potter
2. The Chronicles of Narnia
3. Frozen
4. Twilight
5. Beauty and the Beast
6. Percy Jackson
7. Nanny McPhee
8. Stardust
9. Mary Poppins
10. The Wizard of Oz

### Top 10 feel good films

1. When Harry Met Sally
2. How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days
3. 10 things I hate about you
4. Notting Hill
5. Pretty Woman
6. Bridget Jones
7. 50 First Dates
8. 27 Dresses
9. The Backup Plan
10. Never Been Kissed

### Top 10 comedy films

1. Bridesmaids
2. Meet the Parents
3. Just Go with It
4. Wedding Crashers
5. The Hangover
6. Bachelorette
7. I Love You Man
8. Hustle
9. Baywatch
10. Tammy



Pick your favourite

## You will need

Silver Waffle Throw, £8, Wilko

Multi Wick Candle Patchouli & Amber, £7, Sainsbury's Home

M&M's Crispy Milk Chocolate Bar, £2.50, Tesco

Aqua Stripe Pack, £10, F&F

Wellness Bamboo Headband, £2, Primark

Red Sherpa Faux Fur Cuff Closed Toe Mule Slippers, £12.50, Debenhams

Room Spray Brown, £3.50, Primark

M&S Collection Dressing Gown, £15, M&S

George Home Tickled Pink Mug, £1, Asda

## TASTY!

On a cold night, nothing beats a delicious hot chocolate. This Peanut Butter Hot Chocolate Float from Skippy Peanut Butter takes that experience to the next level.

- 2 cups almond milk
- ¼ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
- ¼ cup Skippy Creamy Peanut Butter
- 1 pint vanilla ice cream
- Chocolate syrup
- Decoration for the cups:
- 340g baking chocolate
- ½ cups finely chopped dry-roasted peanuts

1. To decorate the mug, turn it upside down and dip rim in melted chocolate, twisting to remove excess. Dip chocolate covered rim into peanuts. Drizzle mug with melted peanut butter. Refrigerate 30 minutes.
2. For the Hot Chocolate: In a medium saucepan, combine milk, sugar, cocoa

powder and peanut butter.

3. Heat, stirring constantly for three to five minutes or until heated through. Transfer mixture to four mugs.

4. Top each with one scoop of ice cream. Drizzle with chocolate syrup if desired or melted peanut butter.





# INNER STREET



**Raising strong women**

## Just 10 months after my mum's cancer diagnosis, I faced a shocking reality...

**Atima Bhatnagar, 40, London**

**M**other, daughter, wife, granddaughter, football coach, nail artist, charity fundraiser, director and karaoke singer.

I am all of those things, and I am a cancer survivor.

This October, I will wear it pink for Breast Cancer Now.

In honour of my mum's battle, my battle and my daughters' possible future battles.

Here is my story...

In February 2018, my mum Meena, 69, went for her regular annual mammogram.

'They've found something and want to do a biopsy,' she told me.

I offered to go with her, but Mum

is incredibly independent and wanted to go alone.

When she was due to find out her results, I was in a work meeting.

I remember constantly checking my phone with worry.

The house phone was engaged but I hadn't heard from her.

In my gut, I knew it must be bad news.

After work, I dashed home and walked into the living room to find her talking to a health insurance company.

My heart dropped.

She had been diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer.

'It's Stage 2, which is positive,' I

told my partner Mark, 32.

But it was aggressive – as was her treatment.

After three operations to clear her margins, Mum had horrendous chemotherapy and lost all her hair.

'We'll get through it together,' I promised her. Then she had six weeks of intense radiotherapy and began Zometa injections.

One of my biggest fears was the possibility of Mum's cancer being genetic, and the chance of me passing it down to my twin daughters, Riya and Aanya, eight.

Thankfully, a consultant confirmed that her cancer wasn't hereditary.

However, with our family history, I was recommended yearly mammograms from the age of 40.

Only, I never even made it to my 40th birthday...

Most of my life, I've suffered

with painful periods and extremely tender breasts.

My symptoms only got worse when Mum was diagnosed.

'It's nothing serious,' my GP had reassured me, after doing checks.

I wanted to speak to a specialist, but decided to hold off until Mum's treatment had finished.

Two of us couldn't be ill at the same time.

Then at the start of 2019, when Mum was recovering from her treatment, I decided to visit a gynaecologist.

'Let's get everything checked out,' she said.

Scans confirmed I had endometriosis – a common and painful chronic condition.

The diagnosis came as a relief.

It was comforting to finally have an answer.

What I didn't know was that endometriosis was only the least of my worries.

A biopsy of my breasts took me by surprise.

'They found abnormal cells,' my gynaecologist said.

I was diagnosed with ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) – the



**I felt like one of the lucky ones**



# NGTH



**My mum with Riya and Aanya**

earliest form of non-invasive breast cancer in two areas of my left breast.

'For some women, it may never form into a threatening cancer,' my breast surgeon explained.

'However, with your family history, it is likely.'

Hearing the news, I felt numb.

Whilst I had Stage 0 breast cancer, it was a high grade and growing fast.

Just 10 months after my mum had been diagnosed with breast cancer, I had, too.

Instantly, I was worried for my daughters.

How long am I going to be around? I thought.

I need to prepare the world for my children in case I'm not here.

They were still so young, I wasn't thinking about myself.

My mum took the news

badly and it made her feel down.

She'd never wish her painful treatment on anyone else – let alone her own daughter.

But there was light at the end of the tunnel – I had caught it early and it could be treated.

And so, I remained positive.

'Mummy won't be able to make it to your Valentine's disco,' Mark and I explained to the girls.

'I've got to go and have an operation on my breast,' I said.

'But you don't have cancer, do you Mummy?' they asked.

'I do, but not as bad as Grandma's,' I explained.

It was important to me to be open and honest with Riya and Aanya about my diagnosis.

They are so intelligent for their age, and with our family history, it could happen to them one day, too.

'We should be happy and celebrate that it's not as serious as Grandma's,' I told them.

'Okay, Mummy,' they said.

On 14th February 2019, I had an operation to remove two areas of breast tissue from my left breast.

Thankfully, I didn't need to have any chemotherapy.

It was a massive relief knowing that I wouldn't lose my hair.

Looking in the mirror at my long, dark waves, I felt like one of the lucky ones.

My six weeks of

radiotherapy was exhausting, but I still worked through the treatment.

Moisturising E45 cream into my skin every day, I napped often.

My family was such a good support network, and my work were extremely understanding.

They helped me stay positive and motivated me to never give up.

Now, I have been given the all clear by doctors.

I will have regular mammograms to check the cancer hasn't come back, and it's just my endometriosis that I need to worry about.

Since my treatment, I've looked into the health side of cancer a lot more and adapted my life.

I've stopped eating meat and reduced my intake of dairy.

I've tried to adjust our family lifestyle to reduce our intake of products that could elevate our oestrogen levels.

I have supported breast cancer charities for the past decade, prior to mine and Mum's diagnosis'.

My grandma dedicated her whole life to charities for women, and she made me want to do whatever I can to help.

My superwoman friend Kaz has been diagnosed with breast cancer twice, and inspires me daily.

She started up Wigs for Heroes, a charity that I love.

I regularly organise fundraisers to raise vital money for Wigs for Heroes and Breast Cancer Now.

**This October, to raise awareness**



**Raise awareness with me!**



**Everything I do is for them**

of Wear it Pink, me, Riya and Aanya will be doing fun challenges.

I want to show them that there is joy in the cancer community.

Everything I do is for them.

'If people keep raising money the way you are, your girls won't need to worry about breast cancer,' my oncologist told me.

We need as much money as possible to put into research for those suffering now and future generations of women to come.

I think it is so important to check your breasts regularly.

I check mine every day whenever I take my bra off, and do an in-depth examination of my collar bones and underarms on the first day of every month.

It doesn't take much time at all.

And if you catch it early, like me, it could prevent chemotherapy and save your life.

Please spread the word – check your breasts!

**You can follow Atima on Instagram @Allaboutatima**



## Wear it Pink

**H**elp make life-changing breast cancer research and care happen.

On 23 October, join thousands of others around the UK wearing pink and raising vital funds for Breast Cancer Now.

Wear it Pink manager Summer Kendrick says: 'The coronavirus crisis is having a devastating impact on our ability to deliver the progress and support that we know people affected by breast cancer rely on. If there was ever a time to find that pink top, grab that pink tie or dig out that pink tutu, that time is now.'

**Register at [wearitpink.org](http://wearitpink.org)**

**WEAR IT PINK**

**BREAST CANCER NOW**



# I conceived using IVF... But I was already pregnant with twins!

Beata Bienias, 36, Corsham

**D**riving to the fertility clinic in Bath, Somerset with my husband Pawel, 40, I was so excited.

We'd been trying for a baby ever since we got married in 2011 but, six years on, we'd had no luck and decided to get some professional help.

Making our way inside, we chatted excitedly about baby names and how we'd decorate the nursery for our little one.

'So, you're struggling to conceive naturally...' the doctor said when we sat down, rifling through my medical record.

'Yes, we've had a bit of bad luck I suppose,' I replied.

'Well, I have to tell you, your weight is not helping matters,' she said frankly.

I was stunned.

I knew I wasn't exactly trim at 17 stone, but I'd never thought it could actually be preventing me from having a family.

'Erm, OK...' I said, my cheeks burning with embarrassment.

'I'd recommend getting down to a healthier size before we proceed with IVF,' she continued.

We left the clinic in silence and I felt mortified.

'Had I been the problem all along?' I panicked.

That night I declared: 'I'm going to lose the weight, Pawel.'

I resolved to make sure I did everything to get healthy.

'That's great,' he smiled.

I committed myself fully to my mission, signing up to follow the Cambridge Weight Plan diet.

And I stuck to it like glue.

Each time I stepped foot on the scales I'd dropped more weight – it felt incredible.

Six months flew by, and in that time I'd shrunk to 11 stone, a healthy weight at last.

Finally, I got the green light from the doctor to get the ball rolling with IVF.

In February 2018, I started having blood tests.

Followed by the hormone injections to boost my egg supply in April.

With one final warning from the doctor to take it easy and not have sex until after the embryo transfer, we waited patiently for the big day.

On 2 May, it was finally time for our long-awaited embryo transfer.

'I can't believe we might finally get to be parents,' I grinned to Pawel. 'Today is the day!'

We made our way back to the



Our surprise family of five

My baby daddy Pawel

## TRIPLE W

fertility clinic once again.

'Our lives could change forever,' he said, squeezing my hand.

My heart started to flutter at the thought of a baby.

But at the time, we had no idea how right he was...

Trying to brush off my nerves, we headed inside.

I clutched Pawel's hand while

the catheter holding my precious embryo was inserted into me.

I found the process so emotional I was in tears – I just couldn't wait

to be a mum.

'Now, make sure you take it easy and wait 14 days before you take a pregnancy test!' the doctor said.

'Er, yep, we will,' I agreed quickly – but we'd already struggled with the strict IVF rules, especially when they'd asked us to abstain from sex...

We headed home and I followed the doctor's advice, resting up and trying not to daydream about my future baby too much.

But after nine days, the anticipation became too much and we decided to take a test.

I held my breath as we waited anxiously for the results.

'Oh my God, it's positive!' I cried, throwing my arms around Pawel in shock.

We both gazed down at the two blue lines.

'I can't believe it,' my husband said, his eyes lit up like he'd just won the lottery.

'Me neither... let's take another, just to be safe,' I said hastily.

I ended up taking six more tests. Eventually, I started to believe it!

Two weeks later, we set off for the clinic again for our first



I lost 8st to have IVF



Then I put the weight back on!





Life will never be the same again

# HAMMY

pregnancy scan – and to see our baby for the very first time.

‘Now don’t be nervous if we don’t see anything today, it’s still very early in the pregnancy,’ the sonographer warned.

But just a minute later, her eyes widened and I felt my heart drop.

‘What’s wrong?’ I demanded.

‘You might want to take a seat,’ she said to Pawel.

‘What is it?’ I exclaimed, starting to panic.

‘I don’t know how to tell you this... but there are three babies here,’ the sonographer said, the shock plain to see on her face.

I gasped.

‘How could that be?’ I thought to myself.

We’d only had one embryo transferred...unless....

‘Did you have sex before the transfer?’ she asked slowly.

Pawel looked awkward.

Our cheeks turned crimson.

‘Whoops,’ I mumbled, staring down at the floor.

It was true – we’d been unable to resist and had given in before the

embryo procedure.

‘Erm, we did two days before, yeah,’ he confessed.

‘This is extremely rare, but it looks like you conceived twins – and then fell pregnant again with the IVF!’ she shook her head slowly, unable to believe what had just happened.

I’d barely been able to wrap my head around becoming a mum of one – let alone three!

‘What does that make them?’

Just...siblings?’ I asked, really confused.

‘Yes – one baby is two days older, and then the others are twins,’ she nodded in response.

I was totally stunned, but despite my shock I started to feel an

overwhelming sense of love towards my babies.

All three of them!

Pawel couldn’t believe it either, but we both agreed it was nothing short of a miracle.

The doctor’s thought the same, and later told us they’d never even heard of something like this happening – the chances were slim.

I set about becoming the mother

hen I’d always wanted to be, getting everything organised before our triple arrival.

Suddenly, instead of needing one cot, we needed three.

Instead of a million nappies, we’d need a trillion.

But it didn’t matter one bit – we were far too excited to meet our three little bundles of joy.

My pregnancy seemed to fly by and I watched in disbelief as my stomach swelled.

‘I can’t believe I lost all that weight only to have it pile back on!’ I laughed, checking out my bump in the mirror at home.

But I was only joking – I cherished my round stomach and felt healthy, not like when I’d been heavy before.

Things went without a hiccup and I was thrilled to have no

pregnancy troubles at all.

When the news we were having three babies first sunk in, I had a niggling worry in the back of my head that something would go wrong, but luckily, it couldn’t have been smoother.

I was booked in for a caesarean section at the Royal United Hospital in Bath on 13 December 2018 – at 34 weeks.

Even the birth wasn’t nearly as harrowing as I’d expected, and in no time at all I finally clapped eyes on my precious babies.

Amelia was born weighing 5lbs 2oz, followed by her twin siblings Matylda at 4lb 5oz and my little Boris, weighing just 4lbs.

Tears filled my eyes as I gazed at them, my heart completely full of love and joy.

‘Hello, Mummy,’ Pawel whispered to me.

‘We did it!’ I beamed up at him.

Taking the babies home from the hospital was surreal – not least because we were now officially outnumbered by kids!

It was hard work from the start.

My hungry tykes need feeding every three hours – no mean feat when you’ve got three mouths and only two hands.

And three babies, it turns out, don’t make for a clean, tidy home.

But I don’t care.

I cherish every single moment with them.

Giving them cuddles, bathing them – even cleaning up after they’ve weed all over the bed!

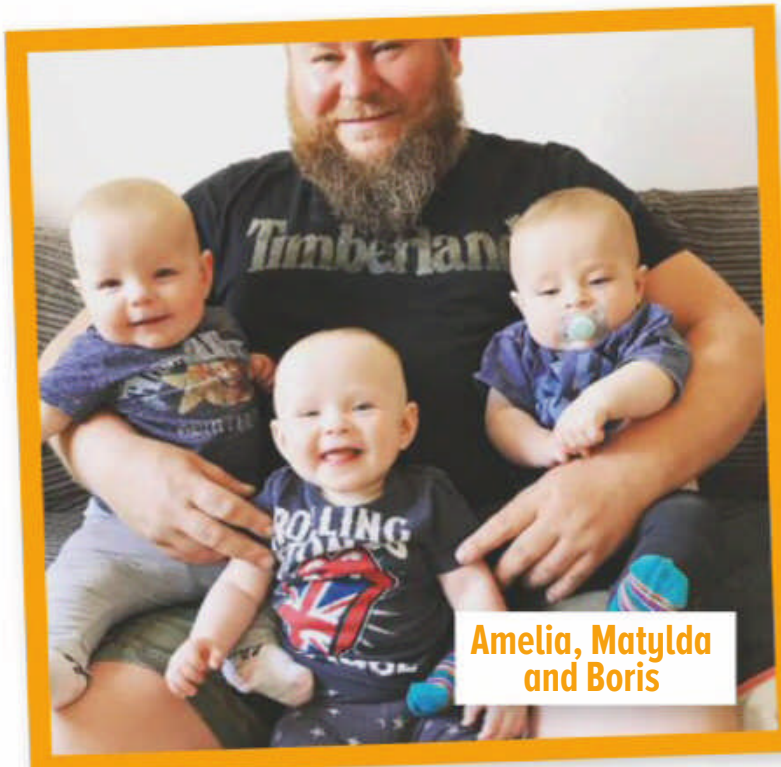
Pawel is the same and the first thing he does when he gets home from work every day is give them each a cuddle.

I could never have anticipated being a mum-of-three all of a sudden, but it has been the most incredible journey.

It’s hard to believe we jumped from being a duo to a unit of five and life will never be the same.

The joy Amelia, Matylda and Boris bring to us every day is completely irreplaceable – I wouldn’t change a thing.

We broke the rules to have sex!



Amelia, Matylda and Boris



# Blimmey

## Your tips are genius!



**QUICK HACK!**

### Fun wrap

I keep my wrapping paper tidy by using tiny hair elastic bands. **T. Marsh, Devon**

### Good as new

You should regularly clean your headphones with a cotton bud or cocktail stick to avoid wax building up. **S. Rudland, Reading**



### Memory jar 2020

Every year, I fill a glass jar with receipts, tickets and wine corks then look back on it at New Year. So nice! **Georgia, Weston**

### DIY job

My facemask was too big so I made the elastic shorter and sewed folds in the fabric. **Lillian, Newquay**



### Cheers!

I attached this bottle opener to my garage door so I never have to hunt for one in the drawer. **Andy, Swansea**



**CLEVER IDEA!**

### Multi-use storage

I bought this bathroom organiser from IKEA and use it to store my loose fruit and vegetables instead. **Melanie, Bath**





# WHAT IS AVAXHOME?



# AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,  
providing you various content:  
brand new books, trending movies,  
fresh magazines, hot games,  
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site



# AVXLIVE:ICU

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AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>





## Did you know?

If you return five clean and used Lush black pots to their shop, you'll get a free face mask in return!

Wendy, West Midlands

## Travel tip

I keep my empty toiletries and refill them when I next go away!

Sarah,  
Yorkshire



## Beauty babe

Save money on make-up brush cleaner and use your shampoo or conditioner to clean your brushes.

Kacey,  
Islington



# INSIDER TIPS

This month

## Preparing for retirement

It's important to plan for your retirement so you can enjoy it without the financial concerns it brings. TheMoneyPig.com share their top tips for planning for retirement...

### Retirement income

Work out your potential retirement income including state pension, private pensions, savings and investments.

### Get advice

A good financial advisor will be able to talk you through your options.

### Clear your debts

Aim to clear any debts before you retire if you can. Look at credit cards and mortgages.

### Daily spending

Think about what you'll spend when you retire. Factor in leisure and healthcare.

### Boost your pot

Think about paying in more to your pension if you can. To boost it further, you could set your retirement date later.

The average UK retirement age is 65!



BIT  
ON THE  
SIDE!

## WELCOME HOME

Add a fun little addition to your entryway with these quirky and bright doormats from RedCandy.co.uk!

Rainbow, £20



Lobster, £20



Tropical tiger, £25



Flamingo, £19.50

Ciao, £20



Tiger, £26



Love, £19.50

Stock images: Getty





JUST FOR FUN

# Code cracker

American actress Julianne Moore has admitted that the one thing she is addicted to is what? To find out, solve the puzzle... Fill in the grid. Each letter of the alphabet has been replaced by a number from 1 to 26. When you've completed the grid, the shaded squares will spell out the two-word answer. We've given you four letters to start you off.

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

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

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

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

# The slim one

A survey by a retirement advice service has found that most people think we should stop going to what when we reach the age of 45? To find out, solve the puzzle... Add a letter anywhere in each of the boxed-off words to fit the clue, eg, NECK CLOTH = SCAR + F = SCARF. Write the added letter in the space provided. Read down the added letters to spell out the answer.

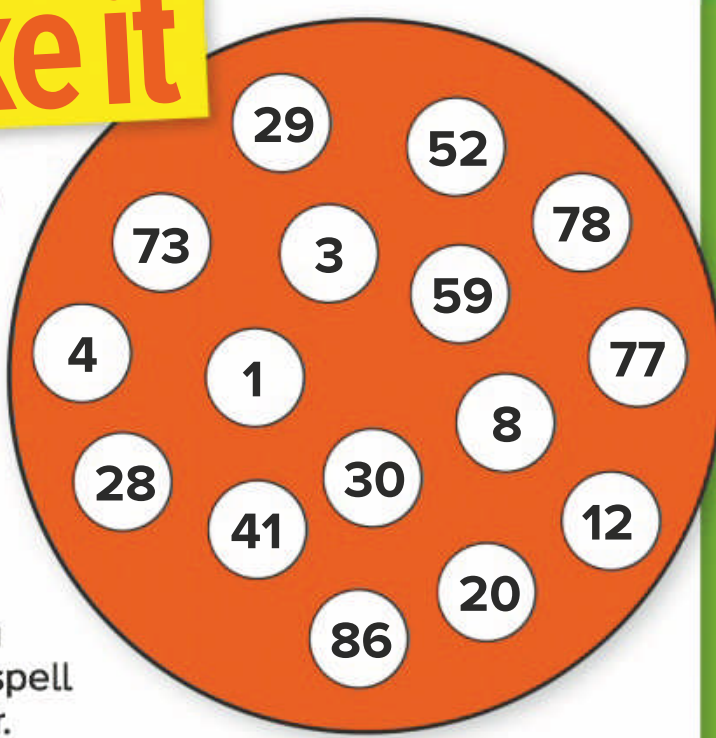
- NECK CLOTH
- ELITE
- BOBBIN
- NOT FRESH
- DAMP
- LUCKY NUMBER
- ISLAND
- MILL OUTPUT
- BIRD'S NEST

SCAR	F
CRAM	
POOL	
SALE	
MOST	
SEEN	
TOLL	
FOUR	
ROOT	

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

# Strike it

On your bingo card, cross out all the numbers that appear on the balls. Read the letters beside the remaining numbers on your card from left to right to spell out the answer.



P			D		D		A	L
3			30		51		73	86
F	A	R		I		E		N
9	12	27		44		66		87
	O	U	B		D		R	
	15	28	34		57		78	

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_





# By royal APPOINTMENT

Think you're looking at the Royal Family? Look again! We spoke to four Royal lookalikes to learn more about life on the job.

Keep  
calm and  
read on

## HERE'S TO YOU, MA'AM!

**It's been the biggest honour being Her Majesty's lookalike!** **Mary Reynolds, 87, Harrow**



**H**uddled under pieces of old newspaper, I tried to keep myself warm.

It was a November evening in 1947, and at just 14, my friends and I were camped outside Westminster Abbey.

Sleeping on the streets may have seemed like a crazy idea, but this night was different – the next morning, Princess Elizabeth was to marry the Duke of Edinburgh!

After a sleepless night, I caught a glimpse of the Princess as she headed to the church, and it was a dream come true.

I camped out again six years later for the Coronation, and watched as Princess Elizabeth was crowned the Queen.

I'd always been a huge fan of the Royal Family, so it was flattering when, as a teenager, people would tell me I had a striking resemblance to the young Queen.

Over the next few years, I met and married my husband Ron, and we had our son William.

It was around this time when I was shopping in John Lewis, and a stranger came up to me. 'Can I

have your autograph, Ma'am?' he asked politely.

He thought I was the real Queen!

After that, I got the idea that perhaps I could be her lookalike.

Ron took photos of me and sent them off to an agency, and before I knew it, I was dancing with a French pop group, dressed as the Queen!

After that, I was inundated with requests to appear at various events as Queen Elizabeth.

I would attend parties, dinners, weddings, and private birthdays – I was leading quite a celebrity life!

On the 25th anniversary of the Coronation in 1988, I starred in a special episode of *Dr Who*, and on her 80th birthday in 2005, I was incredibly busy.

But just like the Queen, I always made time for my family.

To celebrate, my grandchildren's school had all the kids dress up as princes and princesses.

As a surprise, I

rocked up to the school in full royal attire to greet everyone – the looks on their faces were priceless!

I spent the Queen's 90th birthday in 2015 at Andre Rieu's castle in Holland, and later flew off to LA, where I met Elton John!

Just before William and Kate got married in 2011, the three of us enjoyed a carriage ride through London, and even stopped off at a KFC in Piccadilly to say hello!

It's never been too hard transforming into the Queen.

I'd always admired her fashion sense anyway, so dressing like her is a privilege.

Even today, people

recognise me in shops or my local garden centre.

It's my main ambition to meet the Queen in person one day.

I think she's an incredible woman, and it's been such an honour to have been her lookalike.

Visit [www.getoo.co.uk](http://www.getoo.co.uk).



Dressing like her  
is a privilege

Turn page for more



# THE PARTY PRINCE

Royal couple said 'I do', I donned a Union Jack Speedo and climbed into a hot

## Prince Harry and I go way back...

Rhys Whittock, 37, London

**A**s any red-head would know, life can be tough.

Always the odd one out as a child, people would stare at my fiery locks, making me feel self-conscious.

But when you've got a famous lookalike, it makes things a lot easier.

My family have always been fans of the Royals, and I connected right away with Prince Harry.

Not only was he my age, but he also had that signature red hair.

And if a prince could handle it, then so could I.

As I got older, more and more people would tell me that I looked like the Prince.

'You should try lookalike modelling,' my mates would often tell me.

By then I was working as a property developer in



London, but I got to thinking.

In 2011, I contacted a few lookalike agencies and sent in my photos, but sadly, no one got back to me.

After that, I forgot all about it, but in November 2017, when Harry and Meghan announced their engagement, I suddenly got loads of calls.

'Any chance you still look like Harry?' an agent asked. I



sent in some new photos, and the rest is history really.

All of a sudden there was huge media interest in the new Royal couple, and it seemed there was a shortage of Harry lookalikes!

Harry wears blue suits a lot, so I bought one of my own, and soon headed to my first gig.

Standing outside Harry's Bar in London, I had to pose with handmade chocolates that had been made for the wedding.

Leading up to the wedding, I did loads of work with several Meghan Markle lookalikes, even one in Morrisons, who'd made a replica wedding cake.

Three weeks before the

tub on a boat just off Canary Wharf for a photo shoot.

It was a PR stunt all about what Harry's stag do would have been like.

The Prince William, Queen, and Prince Charles lookalikes joined me and we had an amazing time.

Hundreds of people gathered to wave us off as we posed with bottles of Champagne – I felt like the Prince himself!

As wedding fever reached its peak, I joined a Meghan lookalike for a carriage ride around London.

It was absolutely incredible – hundreds of people flocked the street to get a look at us.

Since then, I've done lots of media appearances as Harry – chatting on *This Morning* and *Loose Women*, attending parties and even hen dos.

I've even been flown to China to make public appearances – they love anything British over there, so

**I donned a Union Jack Speedo**

# BEING MEGHAN



## My whirlwind journey into royalty... and back again

Sylvia Lilford, 39, London

**I**t's hard to imagine reading the news without coming across a story about Meghan Markle.

But back in 2005, when my husband Chris, now 40, and I moved from South Africa to the UK, Meghan Markle was an unknown name.

In 2011, we had our son Jake, and working as a primary school teacher while being a mum, I barely had time for much else.

That year, I got a call from my aunt.

'Have you seen the show *Suits*?' she asked. 'The character Rachel looks exactly like you!'

I never got round to watching the

show, and soon forgot all about it.

It was only when Meghan started dating Prince Harry and was thrust into the media's spotlight that I noticed a resemblance.

And it seemed the more attention Meghan got, the more I got, too.

'You look just like her,' my fellow teachers would say. 'You should try lookalike modelling.'

In 2014, I had my daughter Emma, and there was just no time to be thinking about anything else.

It was only in June 2018 – after Meghan and Harry got married – that I really considered it.

A friend of mine had gone to a party, and had met none other than Prince Harry!

Well, a Prince Harry lookalike to be exact!

She gave him my number, and he soon got in touch to tell me how great this job could be.

With his support, I joined a lookalike agency, and it's been a whirlwind ever since! While

teaching during the day, I was attending lavish private parties dressed as Meghan at night.

I'd often be joined by other Royal family lookalikes, and we soon made good friends – like a little family of our own.

I've also done PR stunts, being filmed as Meghan doing weird and wonderful things around London.

In February this year, I was invited to appear on *This Morning*, which was quite an experience!

A private car came to pick me up, and I had my hair and makeup done in the studio – I felt like real royalty!

I also got to wear fabulous outfits – all provided by my agent – and got to feel like a real princess.

When Harry and Meghan left the Royal Family and moved to the US, the Harry lookalike and I did a load of skits where the couple were doing menial jobs, like making tea, and doing the washing and ironing.

It was kind of a mockery of the 'normal' lives they said they were going to lead, and was all just a bit of fun really.

Now that the couple have moved away, I'm not doing that many lookalike gigs.

Today, the only people who call me 'Princess Meghan' are



they were excited to be greeted by the Prince in a shopping mall!

Learning how to become Harry has been really fun.

I'm pretty good with accents, so when I speak as him, I just have to make my voice a bit deeper – and posher.

Harry also wears a lot of different coloured suits, so I've had to buy a few.

I've never had the honour of meeting the real Prince Harry, but hopefully that will happen one day.

Being his lookalike has been amazing, and I plan to continue.

Maybe I'll get to go out to LA next year and follow in his footsteps.

He may not actually know it, but me and Harry go way back.

He gave me the confidence to be myself when I was a shy, red-headed kid, and now I get to be his lookalike.

Hopefully this will be a job for life.

I'm sure Harry and I will grow old together!

Follow Rhys on Instagram @theprinceharrylookalike.



Taste of fame

the kids I teach.

Sometimes I get recognised on the street, but I've usually got Jake, now nine, and Emma, six, in tow, which gives the game up pretty quickly!

My lookalike work may have died down, but being Meghan Markle, even for a short time, has been so much fun.

I may have been late to the game in learning who she was, but today, Meghan is one of my role models.

And it's been an honour to have been her lookalike.

Follow Sylvia on Instagram @wimbledonsmeghanmarkle.



My double life

# WHAT THE DUKE?!

Being a prince makes people smile...

Simon Watkinson, 38, London

As my cheeks were squeezed together, primed for an unwanted kiss from a distant aunt, I tried to squirm away.

'You know, you look just like Prince William,' she cooed.

Growing up in Australia, my family and I would come to the UK often to visit relatives.

And every time, I was told over and over that I looked like the young heir to the throne.

Of course I'd heard of Prince William, but apart from the fact that he and I were the same age, I didn't really know much about him. It was only

when I moved to London in 2006 to work as a civil

engineer that things changed.

Almost every day, people would stop me on the street, asking for photos.

Each time I had to politely explain that I wasn't actually a Prince – but it did get the ball rolling.

'You could make money out of this,' my mates said.

'As a lookalike.'

I thought it was a bit strange, but when William and Kate announced their engagement in November 2010, I had a change of heart.

Being stopped on the street more than ever before, I realised that I could actually do this for money. 'I'll give it a

We needed a police escort!

Thankfully, Prince William's dress sense isn't that exciting, so I've never had to splurge on clothes.

Even now, people approach me on the street, thinking I'm the real thing.

'Are you really him?' they ask shyly.

'What do you think?' I reply with a smile.

I know it makes their day.

Sadly I've never had the opportunity to meet the real Prince William.

I have met photographers and journalists who have worked with him, so I'm sure he's heard of me.

He probably thinks it's funny – I hope he does!

I plan on working as a Prince William lookalike for as long as I can.

It may prove a challenge as time goes on – William is getting a bit bald in his old age, while I still have a full head of hair.

But I'll lap it up while it lasts – after all, living as a prince is pretty fun!

Follow Simon on Instagram @princewilliamlookalike.



With Grandma



# RUN WITH

## When my life fell apart, I just had to put one foot in front of the other...

**Rob Shenton, 48, Eastleigh**

**P**eeering down the barrel of my gun, I braced myself and took aim.

With careful precision, I calmly pulled the trigger.

'Bang!' I yelled, watching gleefully as my target burst into smithereens in front of me.

'Come on son, time to go,' a voice said, bringing an abrupt end to the battle.

As I carefully rested it against the wall, my assault rifle transformed back into a dirty old broom, and the war zone melted into a quiet school corridor.

At eight years old, I was obsessed with the Army. With my

dad working as a school caretaker, I'd often hang out with him in the afternoons, and turn his assortment of mops and brooms into my personal arsenal, each day whisking me away to an intense battle scene in a faraway country.

I was an active kid, always won the obstacle course races at school sports days.

I knew the Army had assault courses, so in a way, my training started early.

As I grew, so did my love for the Military, and in 1995, aged 23, my dream finally came true.

'Welcome aboard, son,' a firm voice said, offering up an equally firm handshake.

I'd joined the Armed Forces as an electrical and mechanical engineer, and I was in my element – my childhood dream had come true.

After my training, I toured Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Kosovo and Afghanistan, where my main job was to help civilians who'd been attacked by the Taliban rebuild their

homes.

It was rewarding work, but it was also incredibly tough, and I saw atrocities an average person will never see.

It took its toll on me, and so it was no surprise that by the year 2000, I was suffering with depression.

I kept it to myself, figured anyone in the Army would be dealing with similar problems.

I never wanted to make a big deal out of it, or worse, bring attention to myself.

But in 2008, when Dad called me up to say he'd been diagnosed with cancer, my mental health took a big blow.

Still, determined not to let it consume me, I put all my energy into running – my second love.

I trained religiously, and in 2011, I took part in the Marathon des Sables, a six-day 155-mile ultramarathon out in the Sahara Desert.

Running had kept me occupied, distracted me from my depression.

So much so, that just two years later, I set off to Nepal to take part in the Everest Marathon, considered one of the highest and toughest races in the world.

It was exhilarating, and with

each mile, I felt so free.

But by the following year, in 2013, my mental health finally caught up with me.

I'd used running to block out my depression, using each mile to get further and further away from it.

But there was only so far I could run – I was in denial.

I had a breakdown, tried to take my own life, and ended up in a mental hospital for a few weeks.

I tried to pick up the pieces, and a while later, in 2015, I met my lovely fiancée Martha, now 35, and life was looking up.

But my depression was still a big part of me.

Apart from Martha, I relied on the Army to keep me going.

It had been a constant in my life – my best friend – and I clung to it desperately. But in 2016, my best

Words by Leea Marshall Photos: SWNS



**Being in the Army was a childhood dream**



**I spent half my life in uniform**



**I had to start all over again**



# IT



## I took on epic challenges

never smiled.

In the Army, I knew who everyone was, knew where they stood in terms of rank.

Out here, with no uniforms to distinguish them, everyone looked the same to me.

And in the Army, you have to keep up with regular training to always remain in peak physical condition.

Out here, there wasn't much importance placed on fitness, and soon, mine had started to take a back seat.

It was a huge lifestyle change for me, and I was struggling.

As time went on, my mental health deteriorated, and eventually, I went from a man who ran ultramarathons to doing no physical activity at all.

I let myself go – I'd lost my love of running, and of life.

By 2017, I'd reached rock bottom. I didn't feel like there was

## I lost my love of running and my love of life

With an actual diagnosis, I had a goal in mind – to beat this.

Knowing of my love for running, the charity set me up on their Pathfinder programme, designed to get veterans like me, who had lost their way, active again.

Suffering from a mental illness meant I didn't have much confidence in my own ability, but Help for Heroes taught me how to surround myself with positive people, to see myself through their eyes.

With their support, I started training again.

And with each mile, I felt my old self coming back, slowly but surely.

By 2018, I was ready to compete again.

But as always, it had to be epic.

That April, I completed the North Pole Marathon, running 26 miles across snow and ice.

'That was incredible!' I said afterwards, feeling that familiar rush of adrenaline. It was just what

a place for me in life.

But when you reach rock bottom, there's only one way to go, and that's up.

Clutching at my last straw, I got back in touch with Help for Heroes.

That year, I started counselling sessions with them, and I was soon diagnosed with complex PTSD and depression.

I needed to get back on my feet, to face my depression and PTSD head on and fight it.

I'm doing much better today, and on the odd days when I do feel depressed, I just go for a run.

I've also joined an athletics club where I've made friends, and Martha and I are looking forward to our future together.

I hid my mental health issues for so long, but eventually they caught up with me.

I'm so glad I reached out to Help for Heroes.

They understood what I was going through and helped me in ways I didn't think were possible.

I wouldn't be here without them.

I have no regrets about joining the Army – that was my childhood dream, and I'll always be grateful for the experience.

But now it's time for a new adventure, and I'll have my running shoes ready.

## Go the distance

**G**et fit the fun way while raising vital funds for our Armed Forces heroes and their families. Join the Help for Heroes Step 2 It challenge and be as creative as you like to reach 10,000 steps a day, or a daily distance of your choice, over 30 days. Walk, skip, run or even dance your way to your daily target, knowing the charity will be with you every step of the way to keep you on track. Sign up at [step2it.helpforheroes.org.uk](http://step2it.helpforheroes.org.uk).



Martha and I have a happy future



# ONLY THE QUIET

**When Diane Staudte grew tired of her family, she reached for the anti-freeze.**

**C**hurch-going Diane Staudte was growing increasingly frustrated with her family.

Her love for husband Mark had turned to hate and she thought her son Shaun was lazy.

One of her daughters, Sarah, had just graduated from college, but according to Diane, she wasn't getting a job quick enough to pay off her student debts.

So she came up with a solution – kill them all, one by one.

But she needed help, so one family member escaped death and was enlisted to perfect her deadly plan.

Quiet and religious Diane, 51, lived in Springfield, Missouri, with her husband Mark, 61, their son Shaun, 26, and three daughters – Rachel, 25, Sarah, 27, and an 11-year-old.

Diane worked in healthcare while Mark was unemployed, spending his time playing in a local band.

Both Diane and Mark were active with the local church, but while Mark was the outgoing one, Diane remained far more private.

Turns out, Diane had plenty of opinions bottled up inside about her 'lazy' family.

Daughter Sarah had just graduated from college with language qualifications, but Diane didn't think she was looking hard enough for work.

She had student loans that needed paying off.

When it came to her jobless husband, Diane's love had turned into hate, and she thought her son Shaun, who had problems socialising, was 'worse than a pest.'

Incredibly, Diane came up with an extreme

answer to her problems.

She somehow managed to convince her other daughter Rachel to help her kill all three.

Together they methodically researched on the internet how to murder – and more importantly, get away with it.

Their choice of weapon was anti-freeze.

Its characteristic sweet flavour means it's easy to slip into sugary drinks without detection.

The harmful component is the

odourless ethylene glycol, which fatally slows down the central nervous system.

It's uncommon for it to be tested for during an autopsy, and the effects can mimic other common

health problems.

The first target was Mark.

Diane and Rachel spiked his Gatorade sports drink and he

consumed it without suspicion.

As the days passed, Mark grew ill, then on 8 April 2012, he died suddenly at home.

When the paramedics arrived, Diane told them that he'd been sick, but had stubbornly refused to go to a doctor.

She said that he'd had three seizures that day, which he'd never had before.

The medical examiner determined that Mark's death had been a result of natural causes, so there was no need to carry out an autopsy.

Mark was cremated – and Diane was elated. Loved ones

noted that at the funeral, she was more worried about being a good host than a grieving widow.

The family moved house, then Diane turned her attention to her next victim.

With Rachel's help, she slipped anti-freeze into Shaun's cola.

Five months after the death of his dad, Shaun was dead too.

Diane told emergency services that Shaun had suffered with health problems over the years, including seizures, and had just suddenly stopped breathing.

There was an autopsy, and the cause of death was determined as natural causes again.

Diane was swift with a cremation for her son.

Usually two unexpected deaths in a family would arouse suspicion, but the two cases weren't connected by police because they were under two different addresses.

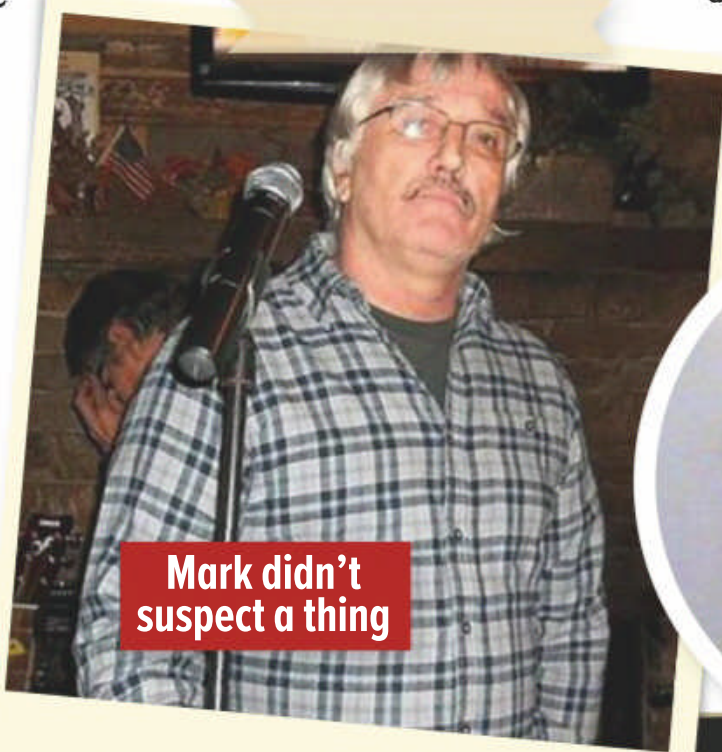
Diane and Rachel had killed twice and were getting away with

**She found her family irritating**



**DIANE STAUDTE**

**She chose the ideal weapon**

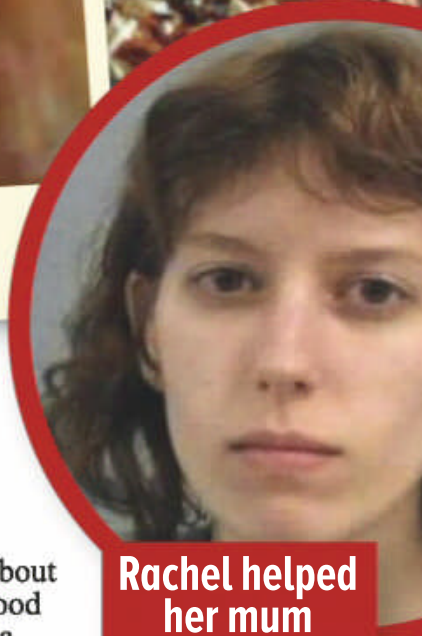


**Mark didn't suspect a thing**

**Shaun died five months later**



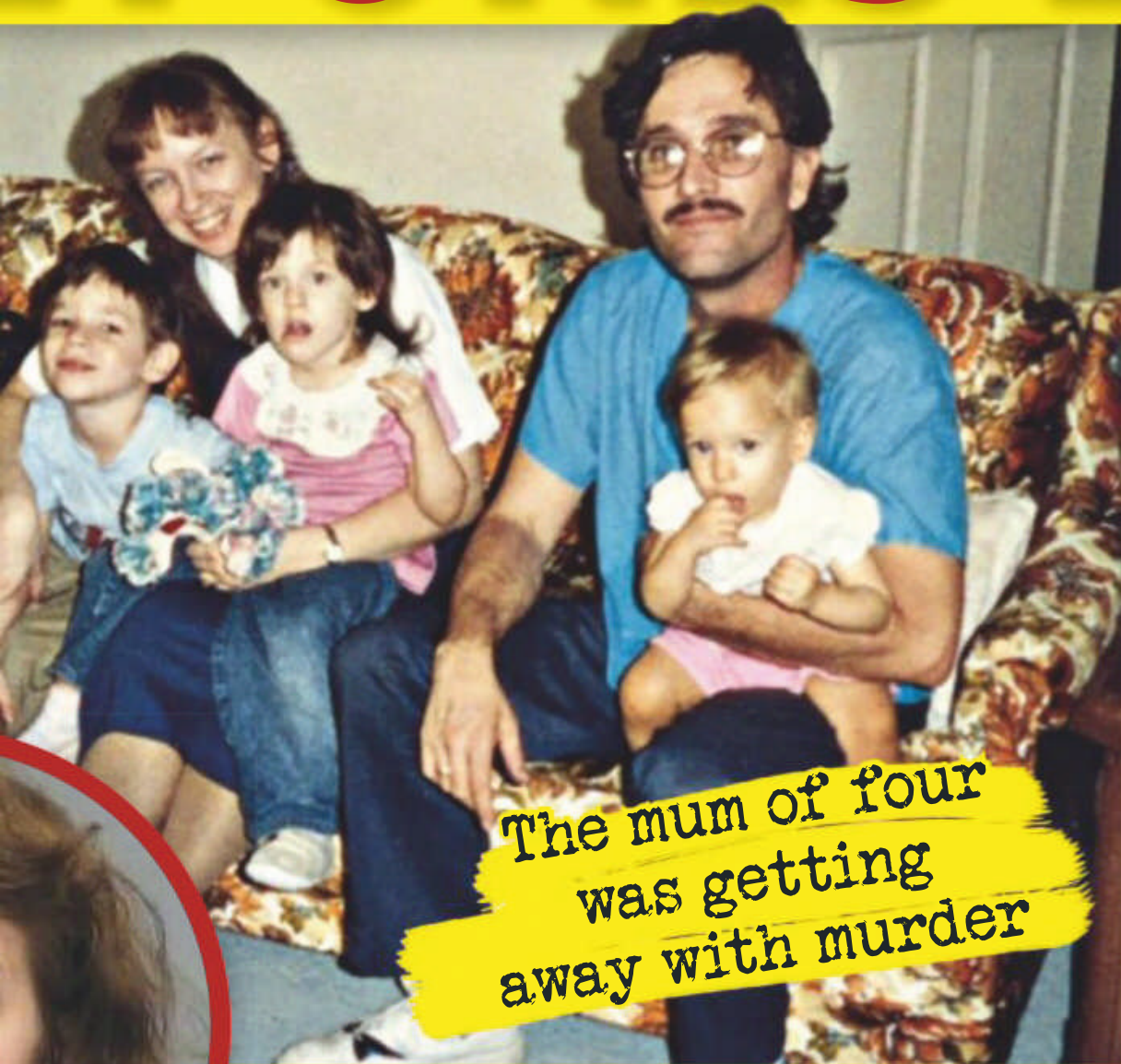
**Rachel helped her mum**





# ET ONES LEFT...

EXTREME  
EVIL



The mum of four  
was getting  
away with murder

the murders.

They'd wait another nine months before striking again.

In June 2013, after four days of getting increasingly sicker, Diane's daughter Sarah was rushed to hospital where she was admitted into intensive care.

It was touch and go whether she'd survive, but Diane was upbeat with staff and insisted it wouldn't disrupt an upcoming Florida holiday.

Police received an anonymous tip off, asking them to take a closer look into the Staudte family.

With two members dead, and another fighting for her life – it was beyond suspicious.

When officers spoke to nurses at the hospital, they admitted that Diane hadn't shown much concern for her daughter.

Doctors said that they suspected Sarah had been poisoned.

Investigators then looked through the records of Mark and Shaun – and blood taken from Shaun during the autopsy.

It tested positive for anti-freeze. Diane was arrested.

At first she denied everything,

but then admitted poisoning Mark, Shaun and Sarah.

At first she claimed that she'd worked alone, but Rachel was also questioned by police, and admitted everything.

When police looked inside Rachel's purse, they found a chilling poem that included the line; *Only the quiet ones will be left, my mother, my little sister, and me.*

They were both charged.

The youngest daughter was taken into foster care, while remarkably, Sarah pulled through.

Tragically, she was left with serious brain injuries.

The college graduate had to move into an assisted living facility with a full time carer.

In January 2016, Diane pleaded guilty to two counts of murder and was sentenced to life in prison without the chance of parole.

She chose to enter an Alford plea – where you can plead guilty but maintain innocence. It

enabled her to escape the death penalty.

Diane claimed she had post-traumatic stress disorder and couldn't remember all the details of what she'd done.

In court, Rachel testified against her mum and the prosecution named her as the driving force of the plan.

'The search of Diane's computer show that as far back as December 2011, she began to research poisons online, how to kill with poison, and how to not get caught,' they said.

Recovering Sarah wrote a statement that was read out in court.

'I prefer to be a survivor than a victim,' it said.

'I forgive my mum for what she did to me. But she not only took away my dad and brother, but she took away my lifestyle, livelihood and my independence.'

Outside of court, Sarah, who had dreams of being a translator,

said she was a Christian and believed in forgiveness.

She managed to speak in short sentences about her desire to raise awareness about anti-freeze poisoning.

Rachel went on to plead guilty to two counts of second-degree murder and one count of first-degree assault.

She apologised and said she should have stood up against her mother.

'Being scared is no excuse,' she said.

Rachel was tearful as she told the court that her injured sister Sarah was her inspiration.

'What's really amazing is that despite the bad, there are those who forgive,' Rachel said.

'Thank you for showing me what I can be.'

Rachel, 25, was sentenced to two life terms plus 20 years.

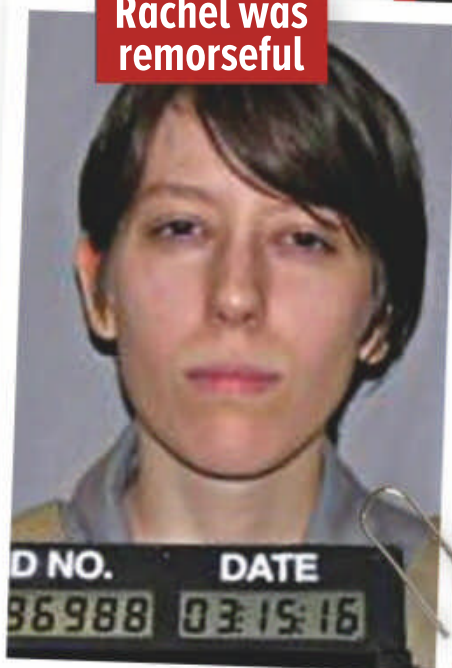
She was told she'd be eligible for parole in 42 years.

Mum Diane managed to kill and severely injure the three members of her family that irritated her, and the one she actually liked, she manipulated into becoming a killer.

Anti-freeze might have been the weapon, but really it was Diane who was the cold blooded assassin.

Sarah  
was brain  
damaged

Rachel was  
remorseful



Diane was  
sentenced to life

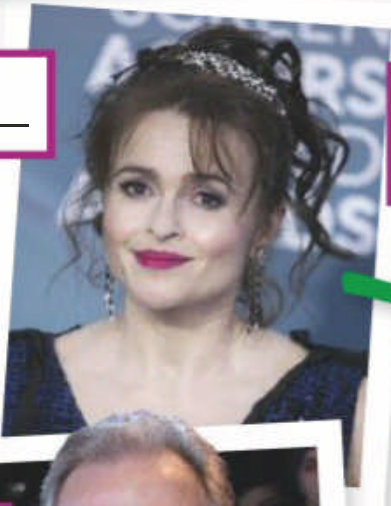




**JUST FOR  
FUN**

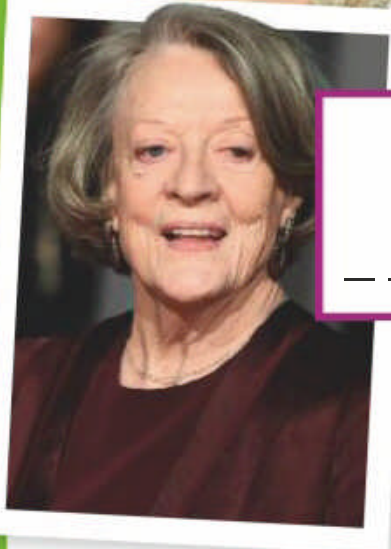
# Movie links

Name the films in which these stars appeared together to link Anne Hathaway with Dame Maggie Smith.

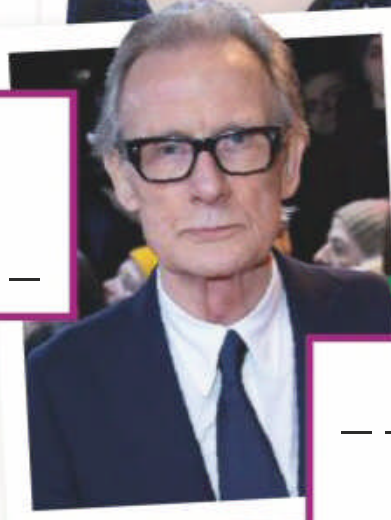


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*[Handwritten practice lines]*



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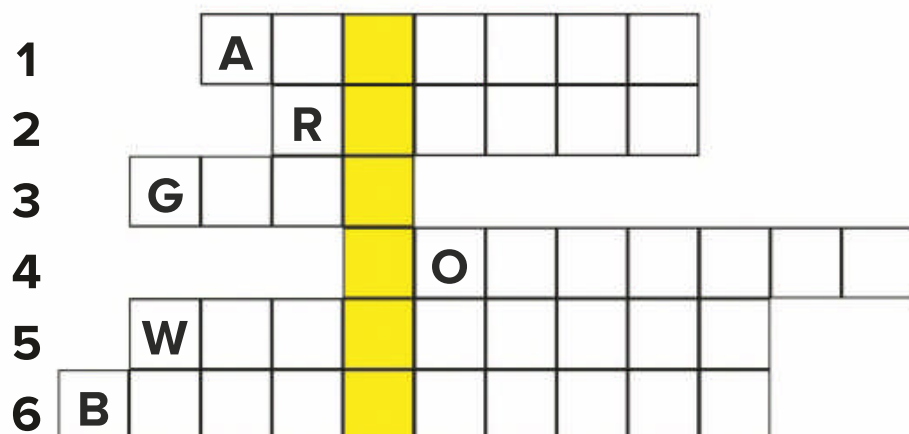
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# Word jumble

**In 1932, Brazil funded its athletes' participation in the Los Angeles Olympic Games by filling their transport ship with what to sell along the way?** Unscramble the six groups of letters to discover condiments. Then read down the yellow squares for the answer.



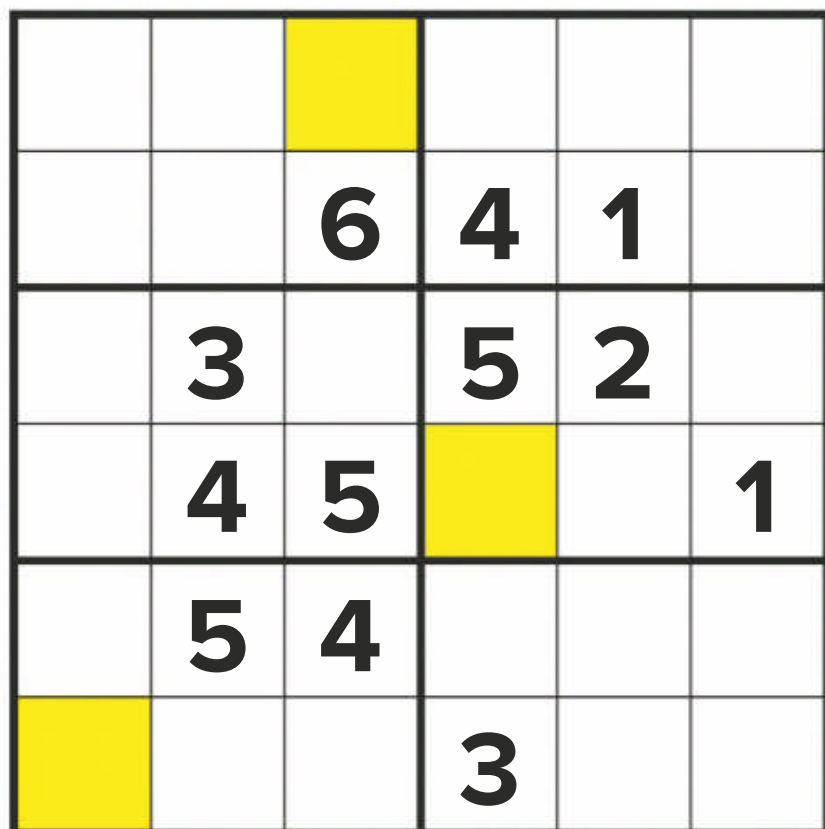
- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. HEAR CRY (4,3)  | 5. PATROL WOE (5,3)  |
| 2. OWN RIG (3,3)   | 6. BLEAK BLAST (5,4) |
| 3. FLOG            |                      |
| 4. LOB ALOFT (3,5) |                      |

**Your answer** \_\_\_\_\_

# Sudoku



Each 2x3 box, each row and each column must contain the numbers 1 to 6. Your answer is in the shaded squares.



**Your answer** \_\_\_\_\_



# HOT RIGHT NOW!

Check out these new books that we've shortlisted just for you

## The Twins of Auschwitz by Eva Mozes Kor

AVAILABLE FROM WATERSTONES FOR £7.99

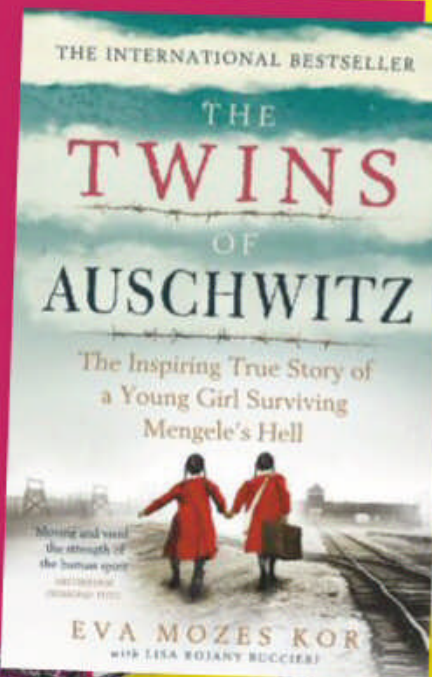
When the *Tattooist of Auschwitz* was released, the world was blown away by its honest re-tale of the horrors of Auschwitz. Since then, more survivors

have come out to tell their story – now it's Eva's turn to tell hers.

In the summer of 1944, Eva Mozes Kor and her family arrived at the concentration camp. Her parents and two older sisters were taken to the gas chambers, while her and her twin sister, Miriam, were herded into the care of the man who became known as the Angel of Death: Dr.

Josef Mengele. Subject to Mengele's sadistic medical experiments, they were forced to fight daily for their own survival.

On the 75th year of the Auschwitz liberation, this book shares the story of a child's endurance and survival in the face of truly extraordinary evil.



## The Dreamer by Cliff Richard

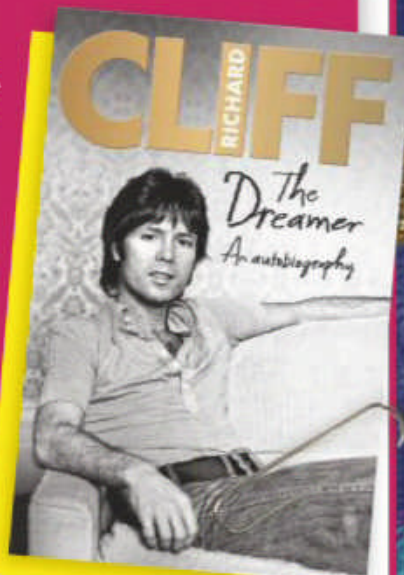
AVAILABLE FROM WATERSTONE FOR £20

With a hit in every decade since the 1950s, Cliff Richard certainly has a story to tell. Coming of age in 1950s London, beginning his music career playing at the Soho's legendary 2i's Café, and now approaching his 80th birthday with record sales of well over 250m.

Cliff Richard was a pioneer, forging the way for British rock'n'roll with his unique sound, exploding out of London's post-war scene. Cliff's incredible story takes us through his trail-blazing music career, onto TV's first pop show *Oh Boy!*, then through 40 years of *Top of the Pops*, with a constant backdrop of screaming fans along the way.

He's still making new music and will mark his 80th birthday with a new project for us.

This is the story of a great British icon, celebrating 60 years in music – in his own words.



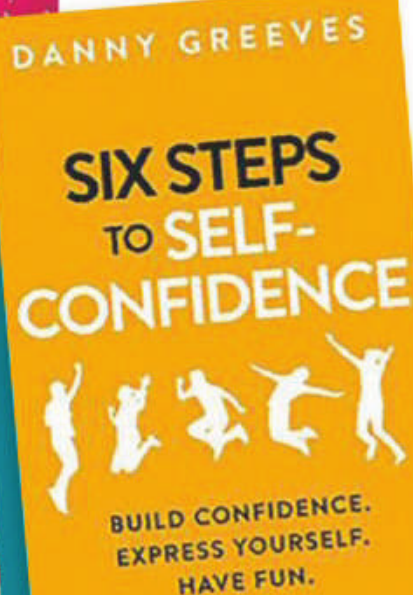
## Six Steps to Self-Confidence by Danny Greeves

AVAILABLE FROM £7.99 FROM AMAZON

In this book, you will learn the formula for living as the best version of yourself, resulting in increased self-confidence, freedom and emotional wellbeing.

Starting your day off in the wrong way can affect your confidence on every level. But what if genuine confidence could be learned and practiced? Even better, what if it could be learned using methods that exercise both brain and body, and that could be tailored to your unique life circumstances?

Well good news, it can. Professional coach Danny Greeves has made self-confidence his mission and now he's passing on his knowledge to you. With a practical morning routine that anyone can do, this book will change your life forever.



## POPULAR PODCAST

### Rose and Rosie: Parental Guidance

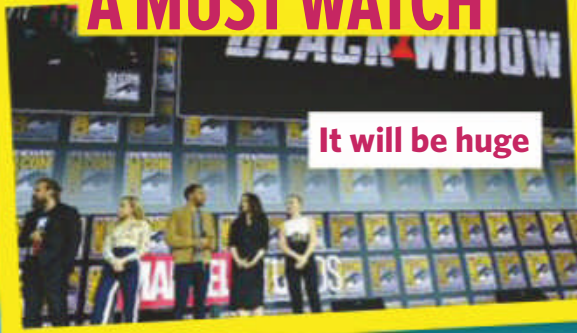
Married comedy duo Rose and Rosie have amassed a huge following of over three million fans due to their hilarious habit of oversharing, spilling the tea and infectious chemistry.

Fans have watched their whole relationship develop across their social channels, books and documentaries. Now, the pair are determined to start a family.

In true Rose and Rosie style, every topic is met with a healthy obsession to interrogate choices at every angle.

The couple hope that this podcast will help others in a similar situation to know they aren't alone in this journey that is notorious for being an unpredictable and emotional rollercoaster.

## A MUST WATCH



### Black Widow

Returning to her iconic role of Natasha Romanoff – aka Black Widow – Scarlett Johansson will appear on the big screen for Marvel Studios' latest action-packed spy thriller.

Confronting the darker parts of her ledger, a dangerous conspiracy with ties to her past arises. Pursued by a force that will stop at nothing to bring her down, Natasha must deal with her history as a spy and broken relationships left in her wake, long before she became an Avenger.

Directed by Cate Shortland, this is set to be the family film of the year.





# I felt so lonely when I became a new mum ...

Jessica Barker, 33, Birmingham

**A**s I fumbled around with oxygen tanks, tears rolled down my cheeks. It was the middle of the night and as my six-month-old daughter, Maisie, lay crying in her cot, I'd never felt more alone.

While most new mums feel the same at some point, for me, things were different.

My worries weren't the usual new mum stresses.

I wasn't panicking about milestones or worried about teething, my concerns were focused on Maisie's health.

Maisie had a heart condition which meant my days were filled with medicines and lots of medical terms.

Our little girl needed an oxygen tank to breathe and had to be fed through a tube.

For myself and my husband Adam, 34, everything had become so clinical and it certainly wasn't what I was expecting for my first few months as a mother.

And as I sorted out Maisie's oxygen, the loneliness of it all seemed to engulf me.

'There must be someone round here feeling the same,' I sighed, as Maisie finally settled back down to sleep.

All I wanted was to speak to another mum who was going through the same thing.

Someone who had a child with a serious medical condition.

Someone who could share in just how alone I was feeling.

And while my friends had been great, their experience of motherhood was far removed from mine.

When Maisie was born back in November 2015, our little girl seemed perfectly healthy.

'She's beautiful,' I beamed, as I cradled her in my arms.

But as we got ready to leave the hospital the following day, things suddenly took a scary turn.

'I'm not happy with her heart rate,' the doctor told us.

'I want to run a few tests.'

Before we knew it, Maisie was whisked off while doctors tried to work out what was wrong.

And it didn't take them very long

# TIME TO



With our wonderful girls



Maisie needed specialist care

to figure it out.

'Maisie's been born with half a heart,' the doctor explained. 'What does that mean?' I panicked.

'Well, you have two options,' he went on.

'You could either leave Maisie without treatment and allow her to die, or you can opt for surgery.'

It was a risky operation, but for me and Adam there was no doubt about what we'd do.

While the surgery wouldn't be a quick fix, and she would need more later in her life, including a heart transplant, we were determined to give her the best chance.

So, when she was just three days old, Maisie went into surgery.

The eight-hour op helped re-plumb her heart, to keep her alive for as long as possible. And

although the surgery went to plan, the aftermath wasn't smooth sailing at all.

Our little girl suffered from a cardiac arrest and was put into an induced coma.

While Adam and I tried to stay as positive as possible, things weren't looking good.

And as we sat at Maisie's bedside, my phone pinged away with messages.

'Another sleepless night,' one of the mums from my antenatal class messaged to our Whatsapp group.

Their messages went back and forth, but I couldn't relate to a word they were saying.

While they were adjusting to life with newborns, we were still stuck in hospital praying for Maisie to get better. Thankfully, her

condition started to improve and by the time she was six months old, she was able to come home.

'I never thought she'd make it home,' one of the nurses said as we got Maisie's things together in the hospital.

Her comment stunned me.

Although I knew it myself, hearing it from one of the nurses made everything seem more real.

Our little girl had fought so hard, but we knew her battle was still far from over.

At home, Adam and I soon adjusted to Maisie's needs.

While friends focused on play dates and catch-ups, I was consumed by medical terms and different treatments.

But that night, as I tried to soothe

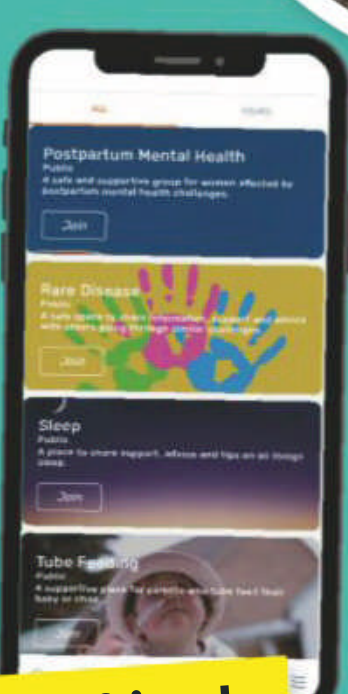
I needed someone to talk to



# CONNECT



Maisie with Florence



## A chance to make friends



Maisie still needs a heart transplant

my six month old baby to sleep, I felt at a loss.

I needed to speak to someone who was going through the same thing as me.

That was when I came up with the idea of creating an app to help other mums and dads.

It would connect parents who lived nearby and were going through a difficult time.

But with Maisie my priority, I put the idea on the back burner for a little while.

In the meantime, Maisie needed more surgery.

She was taken in at eight months

old for what should have been a routine procedure, but Maisie suffered from another cardiac arrest afterwards.

Our little girl had to be resuscitated and was in hospital for a further four weeks.

All over again, we were terrified we'd lose her.

But thankfully, she pulled through and was stable enough to come home.

She needed extra care, but as the months went by and Maisie started to reach her milestones, her infectious personality began to shine through.

While we knew she'd need a heart transplant later in life, to other people Maisie seemed like a completely normal toddler.

Only when she started toddling about would anyone notice her becoming short of breath or any sign of her struggling.

While life became one big blur of hospital appointments and caring for our little girl, we welcomed our second child, Florence in 2018.

Maisie revelled in becoming a big sister - her sassy personality really coming out!

And although life had got

even busier, in 2019 I finally got round to creating the app.

'I really want to help other parents going through the same thing as us,' I said to Adam.

'I want to escape all this clinical stuff and just talk to someone who understands how I'm feeling.'

And that's exactly what I set out to do.

Whilst juggling being a mum to my two little girls, I set about getting a loan from the bank.

And once I'd secured that I started working with developers to create the app.

It was a slow process and at the

same time we were preparing for Maisie to have her third open heart surgery last summer.

While Maisie suffered from complications and there were ups and downs in hospital, our little girl is now doing well.

We were so relieved.

She still needs a heart transplant at some point in the future, but for now she enjoys going to school part time and being a big sister to little Florence.

The Friendili app is now up and running and gives parents a chance to connect with others going through a similar thing with their little ones.

Speaking to other mums like me has made me feel that little bit less alone.

I just hope the app does the same for other parents.

Caring for a child with additional needs can be very lonely and I wouldn't want anyone to feel the same way I did at the start.

Having someone to talk to can make all the difference.

**Little Hearts Matter, the only charity in the UK specifically dedicated to children with half a working heart, have provided outstanding support to Jessica's family since Maisie was born. For more information please see [www.lhm.org.uk](http://www.lhm.org.uk).**

## About the app

**F**riendili is a brand new iOS and Android app that revolutionises the way parents and carers of children facing health and disability challenges make friends, get support and interact.

Founded by Jessica, the app will initially be available in the UK and Ireland and aims to bring people together to create a pocket-sized support network.

Users will be able to connect across shared interests, the age of their child and any health, special education needs or disability challenges they may have.

The free app is the first of its kind and hopes to bring together families who might otherwise feel isolated.

To find out more visit: [friendili.com](http://friendili.com).





# Fashion

The best of what's new

# NEXT

**S**tand out in style with Next's new range of women's fashion. Make a statement with pops of pink, classic navy and bright yellow. Printed dresses are in this season and are a trendy way to introduce colour into your wardrobe. Add your own stamp to an outfit by switching up accessories!



Wrap top, £22



Dress, £28



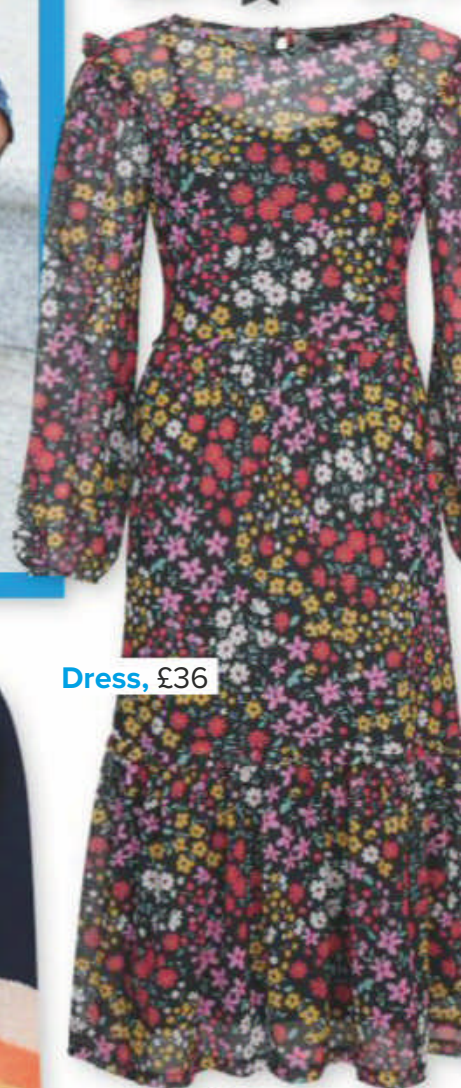
Tunic, £20



Jumper, £28



Skirt, £46



Dress, £36



Converse, £57

Invest in good quality pieces that will last years.



Dress, £38



# NEW SHOES

**W**e've all been there – you've bought a gorgeous new pair of shoes and can't wait to wear them out. But within minutes, you notice a strap is too tight, they're cutting into the backs of your heels, or they're making your feet a bit sweaty.

Instead of begrudgingly shoving the shoes in the back of your wardrobe, try some of these remedies from style experts at Public Desire to make them much more comfortable...

**High boots, £44.99,**  
PublicDesire.com



## 1. BLISTERS

Line each shoe with moleskin foam, which creates a cushion. The padding absorbs friction with a layer of cotton over the foam.

## 2. TIGHT STRAPS

While most straps stretch with wear, you can shorten the breaking-in process with water. Spritz them with a light spray of water to help gently stretch the leather.

## 3. CALLUSES

Avoid squeezing into shoes that are too small or narrow. Where possible, wear socks and tights. Soaking, pumicing and moisturising your feet can often treat painful calluses.

**Ankle boots, £39.99,**  
Public Desire



## 4. ARCH PAIN

If you suffer with arch pain, opt for wedges instead of stilettos or choose heels that are shorter than three inches.

## 5. SWEATY FEET

Try sprinkling baby powder in shoes before wearing them out, to soak up excess moisture.

## 6. HEEL CUTS

Shoes that dig into your skin can be some of the most painful to wear. The problem is likely that they're too big. Try taping heel pads into the back of your shoes to avoid this problem.

**Ankle boots, £39.99,**  
Public Desire



**Underwear, £18**



**Bra, £13**



**Bra, £13**

*It's always important to wear a well fitting bra!*

**Jeans, £28**



**Dress, £46**



**Dress, £45**



**Leggings, £26**



*Pleather trousers are a staple for winter.*

**Shirt, £28**



**Cardigan, £34**



**Trainers, £48**







In my heart forever

My gorgeous  
Toblemoss

# MY ALWAYS

**I will always keep my pup's memory alive.** *Amanda Large, 47, Belfast*

*Dearest Toby,*

**T**ravelling to the rescue centre in the car to collect you, I was so excited.

It was 5 November 2006.

Your elderly owner had gone into a hospice, and you needed a new home.

At four years old, you only had one eye, but that didn't matter to me.

I was anticipating all the cuddles and kisses I'd get from my cute, fluffy bundle of love.

Only, you weren't what I'd pictured at all, Toby...

Your filthy, matted hair and stubborn ways came as a shock.

Growling and snarling, I thought you'd never want to be my friend.

On the way home, I stopped at a

petrol station and bought you a breakfast roll – a peace offering.

You accepted it, until the food was gone, and then tried to savage me again!

That first night, you refused to let anyone in the sitting room.

You didn't bond with my daughters Alison, now 27, Zareh, now 23, and Corey, now 18, either!

'He hates us!' I told the girls, stressed.

The following morning, I found you unwell.

The vet diagnosed you with a very bad dose of kennel cough.

During that period, I nursed you and we bonded.

'I'll look after you,' I promised.

Somehow, you gained my trust

and from that point on, you were glued to me.

We did everything together and had so many happy adventures.

One time, I had to stay overnight unexpectedly on a work trip, and you were with me.

Sneaking you through hotel reception in a sports bag, I coughed

and sneezed to cover your growls.

It was such a laugh when we made it upstairs and collapsed on the hotel bed.

You had your own walk, Toby – shaking your bum with your tail up in the air.

I nicknamed you Toblemoss, after you secretly ate an entire chocolate Toblerone under the Christmas tree.

You were my best friend, my comfort and my saviour.

In 2009, I discovered that I was pregnant with a son.

When I came home from the hospital with my baby boy Thomas, you took to him straight away.

Sadly, after just three months, Thomas passed away with SIDS.

I was heartbroken and mourning, and you mirrored my moods.

Then when I had my son Phoenix, now nine, you protected him like you protected me.

Shih Tzu's are meant to be small,



We celebrated  
every birthday





**An incredible success**

your last little grunt, which you always did when you were happy.

Driving home with your body, my heart was ripped to pieces.

It really felt like I had lost a second child.

But this time, I didn't have my favourite shadow to comfort me.

I organised a memorial service at

the crematorium, and many came to say their goodbyes.

Sadly, it seemed that not everyone understood the level of pain and grief I was experiencing for a pet.

After time had passed, I decided to become a Shih Tzu foster mum.

You'd have been proud of me.

At one point, I had seven rescue pups in my care.

None of them were as special as you, but they were each lovely.

One elderly pup reminded me so much of you, Toby.

Through fostering, I met Olivia Kennedy, a veterinarian and owner of Lucy's Trust charity.

We talked about the loss of a pet, and to my surprise, she felt the same as I did.

When you lose a beloved animal, it is difficult to get closure in the same way as losing a person.

Together, we came up with the idea of holding an annual pet memorial service here in Belfast.

I wanted to do something in your memory, Toby, and this felt like the perfect tribute to you.

Advertising in the local paper and radio, I organised the

first pet memorial service in Belfast in June 2018.

It was a huge success.

There was music, tributes, poems and a candle lighting procession.

Over 60 people travelled to Belfast Castle, in honour of their cats, dogs, rabbits and even hamsters, holding ashes and photographs, sharing their memories of pets.

It was so amazing that we had to do it again the following year.

In June 2019, more than 100 people joined us at Dublin Unitarian Church.

We made sure it was non-denominational so that everyone felt welcome, no matter their beliefs, if any.

We sang 'See You Again' and comforted each other.

You were there in spirit, Toby.

Although tears still fill my eyes when I think about the day I lost you, I am very proud that you've made your mark in the world.

My special Toby.

Now, other people will not feel ashamed for showing their grief of losing a pet.

And every year, they will have an opportunity to keep their animal's memory alive.

You've helped so many.

Whatever the species, pets are family and a big part of our lives.

I will never forget you, Toblemoss my boy.

Our adventures I will always treasure forever.

**You inspired our yearly pet memorial**

**Love, your mum x**

**S**

but you were big and muscular and ever so strong.

You loved McDonald's and could sniff it out a mile away.

Barking your order at the drive thru, you scoffed on a

cheeseburger.

I spoilt you so much.

It was hard not to, when you refused to eat dog food!

Dining out of human bowls and mugs, you slurped sweet breakfast tea from your own cup.

You ate whatever I ate, just like you had always done with your first elderly owner.

The local Chinese knew your order off by heart.

'Boiled chicken and rice for the dog,' they'd say.

Your treat!

You loved walking on the beach, but you were lazy, too.

I had to carry you or push you in the pram often.

How we got some funny looks from passers-by!

As time passed, I could see that you were getting older and weaker.

In August 2017, you started getting nosebleeds and having trouble breathing.

I knew something was seriously wrong with you.

And I wanted to make your last few memories the best.

On 5 November, we celebrated

Pushing you to the surgery in your doggy pram, I said my final goodbyes to you.

'You can leave me now,' I whispered in your ear.

'If you do pull through, I promise I'll do whatever it takes for you to get better.'

Two hours later, I got a call from the vet.

'He's alive,' she said, shocked.

Relief quickly turned into my worst nightmare.

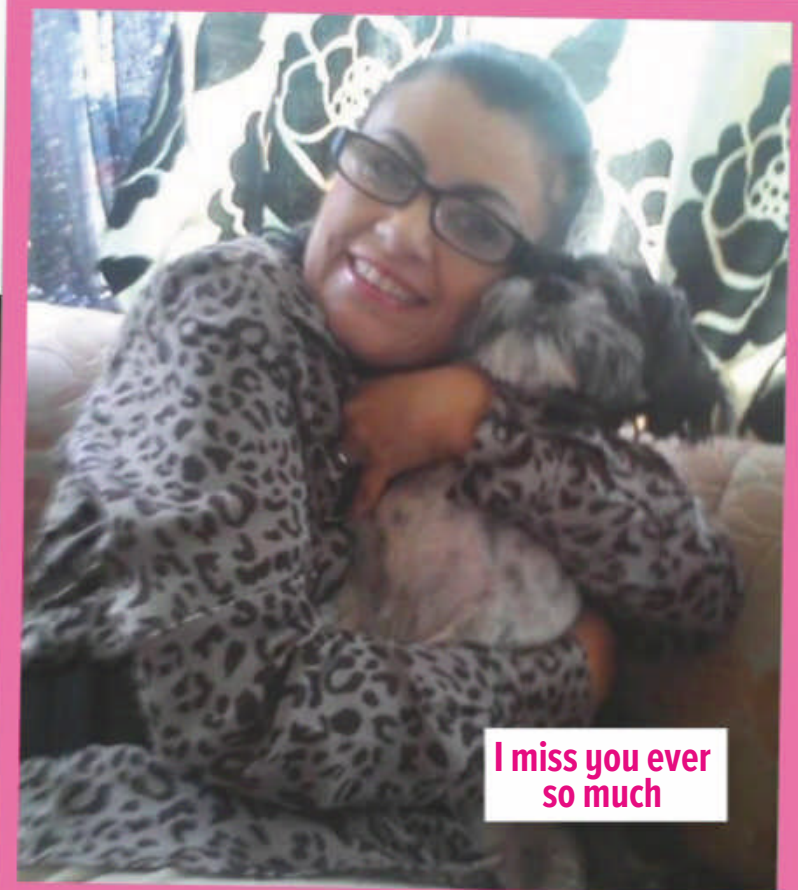
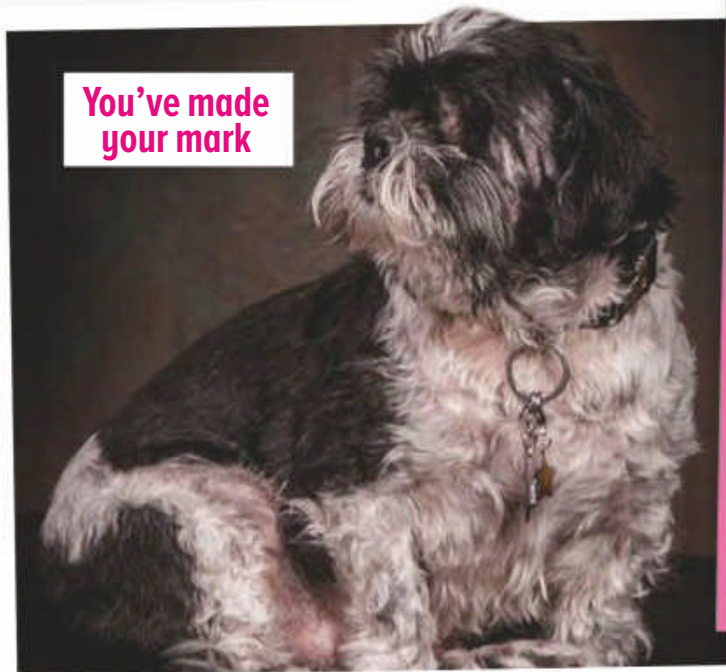
The vet found a nasal tumour that was untreatable and terminal.

I wasn't prepared for the decision I had to make – to put you to sleep.

'It's best to do it now, whilst he's still groggy from the anaesthetic,' the vet said.

I held you close as you let out

**You've made your mark**

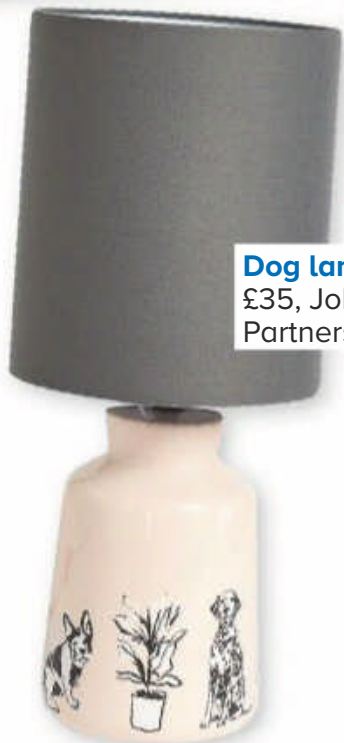


**I miss you ever so much**



# At home

What's hot  
this issue



Dog lamp,  
£35, John Lewis &  
Partners



Bowl,  
£7, Wilko



Cheetah mug,  
£5, Tesco



Cushions,  
from £14, Next



Velvet pouffe,  
£35, Sainsbury's Home



Pink tumbler,  
£4, Sainsbury's Home

## TIME TO

## get cosy

Fill your home with warmth  
this season

Polka dot rug,  
£40, George Home

Add a  
statement  
piece to  
stand out



Retreat candle,  
£5, Primark



Embroidered cushion,  
£12, Matalan



Succulents in a tray,  
£40, Next



**24-piece dinner set,**  
£44.99, Studio.co.uk



**Throw,**  
£17, George Home



**Pheasant tealight holder,**  
£24, Sainsbury's Home



**Bull dog,**  
£10, George Home



**Photo frame,**  
£8, Tesco



Pops of  
colour add  
a creative  
flair

**Oil wax burner,**  
£4.50, Primark



**Cadoc concrete  
table lamp, £35,  
Glass embossed  
bud vase, £4.50,  
Dunelm**



**Jackson Velvet  
cuddle chair, £449.99,  
Ribbon shade, £10,  
Argos Home**



**3x felt storage,**  
£17.99, Studio.co.uk



**Peacock bedding set,**  
£21, Sainsbury's Home





# Days out

Always  
drink  
responsibly

## Quirky boozers!

It's no secret us Brits love the pub and we have our fair share of them across the country. Here are some of our quirkiest!

Extensive  
drinks menu

### Cahoots – LONDON

Inspired from the era that saw Londoners take refuge underground, Cahoots replicates the wartime British spirit with drinks and sing-alongs around the piano.

This former bunker has been transformed into a 1940s themed underground station bar. Sip on your favourite drink from their extensive menu as you soak up the atmosphere of post-war Britain.

Look out for the underground sign on the ground floor of Kingly Court by the Beak Street entrance, where old-fashioned wooden escalators lead you downstairs to the stationmaster who will issue you your day ticket to this exceptionally rare boozer.

Skeletons  
were found

### The Marsden Grotto – SOUTH SHIELDS

Famous for being the only pub in a sea cave, this particular boozer has a fascinating past. Stories suggest that the original cave was used by smugglers for storing illicit goods. It was further inhabited by 'Jack the Blaster' and his wife Jessie who later sold food and drink to curious visitors.

When Peter Alan and his family were given a license to sell beer, 18 skeletons were discovered and are believed to be those of smugglers and potentially Jack the Blaster himself. Since those days, the pub has been under various ownership, but its history remains at the core of its charm.



## Bag of Nails – BRISTOL

If you're looking for a pub that will leave you *feline* good, then this is one for you. Not only home to alcohol and pork pies, but this cosy little pub plays host to a number of cats!

After taking over in 2011, landlord Luke Daniels was determined to give the pub his own stamp, and he certainly achieved that. Allowing the cats to freely roam, you can enjoy your pint, whilst stroking an adorable kitten. And don't worry, these elegant creatures won't knock over your drink, although they may sleep on your lap!

With real ales, music from a traditional record player, as well as some furry friends, what's not to love?



Cosy cat pub

They're friendly

## The Crooked House – DUDLEY WEST MIDLANDS

Also known as the drunkenest pub in the country, the Crooked House is full of optical illusions. Originally built in 1765, the building was set to be a farmhouse, but after a coal mine caused it to subside by 1.2 metres, it has since been transformed into a renowned pub.

With visitors flocking every year from all over the globe to witness the spectacle, it's no surprise many come out feeling a little wobbly. Famous for its upward rolling marbles, there are no questions of doubt that this is one lopsided building!

This Dudley boozier will certainly leave you feeling like you've had one too many.



One too many

## Days out news



Family fun

### Best theme park

Paultons Park, the home of Peppa Pig World, has been named by Tripadvisor as the 10th best-rated amusement park in the world, and the fourth best in Europe.

The family theme park has also retained its title for an unbeaten fifth year in a row as the UK's best-rated amusement park in the Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Awards.

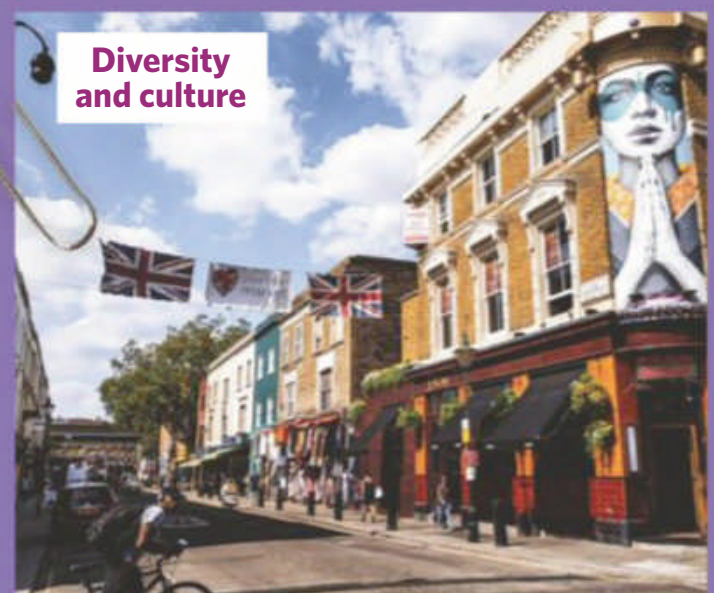
Richard Mancey, Paultons Park managing director, said; 'We are proud to have ranked in the top ten amusement parks worldwide. We are focused on improvement and investment in order to excel at everything we offer.'

● [paultonspark.co.uk](http://paultonspark.co.uk)



The very best!

### Diversity and culture



### History and culture

Love podcasts? You'll love this immersive walking tour of Notting Hill! Discover one of London's most iconic neighbourhoods and learn about the influence and origin of Black British culture. This experience will take you to some of the most well-known spots and off the beaten track.

You'll learn about some of the most bizarre, quirky and tragic stories of the area. From an attempt to build a racecourse to compete with Royal Ascot, to the bomb damage of WWII and the tragedy of Grenfell Tower.

The tour will also explore the impact of multiculturalism, class inequality and the impact of the Windrush generation in giving this part of London a truly unparalleled richness of diversity.

Hosted by local resident Carl and journalist Emma, this tour gives you a real taste of what it's like to grow up in Notting Hill.

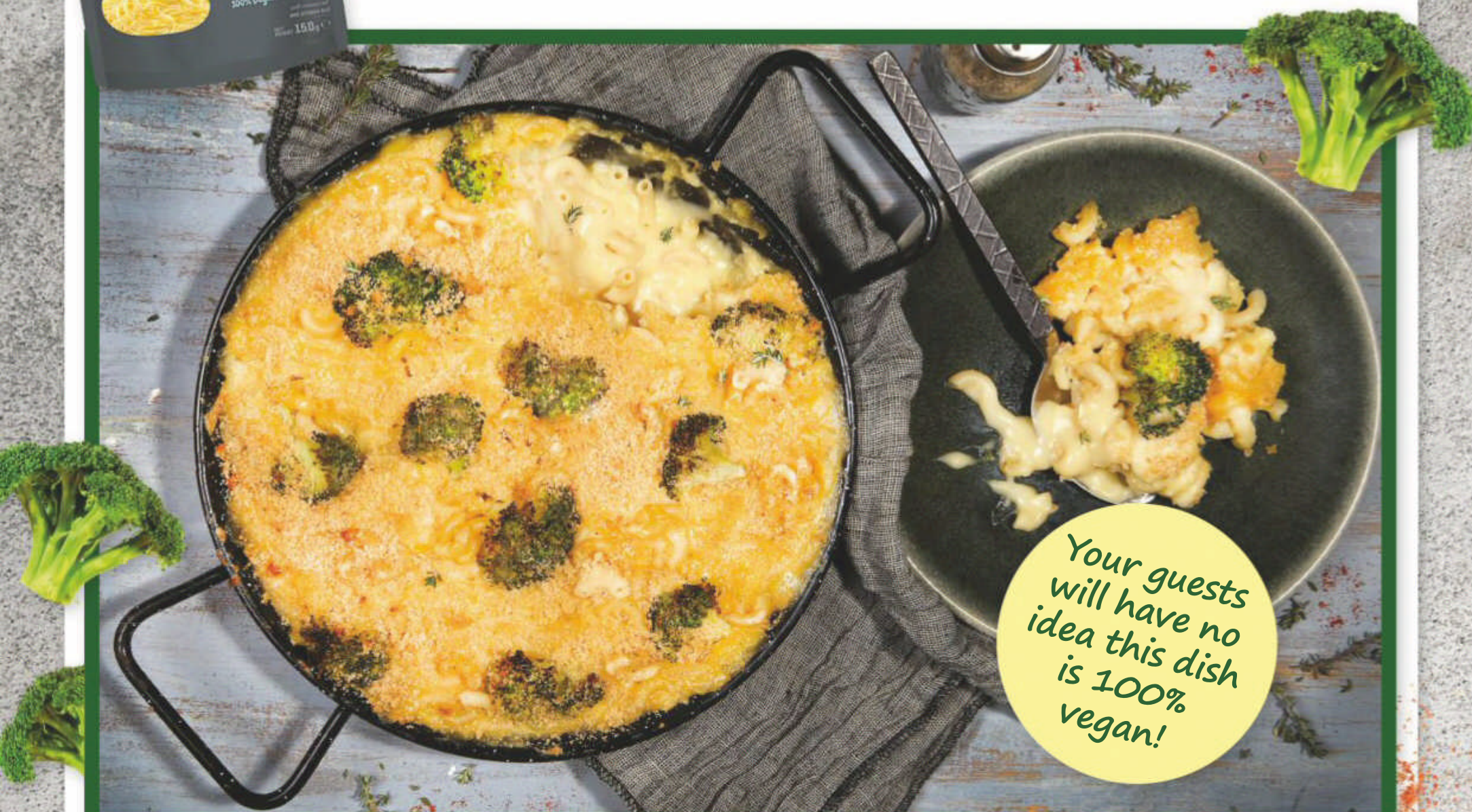
Download the Vidi Guides from the Apple Store or Google Play.



# Cooking



**H**ailed as the closest thing to mature cheddar ever made, Violife has launched the EPIC Mature Cheddar Flavour Grated! The dairy-free alternative to cheese is a fridge essential that quickly transforms your favourite dishes. Violife's range of dairy-free alternatives to cheese are fortified with vitamin B12, free from preservatives and GMOs as well as all common allergens, including dairy, lactose, gluten, soy and nuts, meaning they can be enjoyed by everyone regardless of their dietary requirements.



## MAC & CHEESE SERVES 6

### YOU'LL NEED...

- 1 pack Violife Epic Mature Cheddar Flavour Grated
- 1 pack Violife Prosociano, grated
- 300g macaroni
- 1 large broccoli crown, chopped
- 625ml almond milk
- 35g plain flour
- 3 Tbsp dry breadcrumbs
- 3/4 tsp paprika
- 1/4 tsp garlic powder
- 2 tsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp white pepper
- Fresh thyme

### HOW TO DO IT...

- 1.** Cook the macaroni in boiling water until 3 minutes undercooked. Add the broccoli. Continue cooking for 2 minutes longer until the pasta is slightly undercooked. Drain and return to the pot.
- 2.** To prepare the sauce, heat 500ml of the almond milk in a medium pot, stirring often until steaming hot.
- 3.** Whisk together the remaining milk, flour, 3/4 tsp salt, until completely smooth. Whisk the flour mixture into the milk and bring to a simmer whisking until thickened.
- 4.** Remove from the heat and stir in the Violife Epic Mature Cheddar Flavour Grated and half of the grated Violife Prosociano. Pour sauce into the cooked pasta and stir until coated. Transfer the pasta mixture into the prepared baking dish.
- 5.** In a small bowl stir together breadcrumbs, paprika, 1/4 tsp salt, garlic powder, fresh thyme and the rest of the grated Violife Prosociano. Drizzle in olive oil and stir until completely combined. Sprinkle with the crumbs and transfer to the oven.
- 6.** Bake for 15 mins at 160°C until the pasta is bubbling and the topping is golden.



## FONDUE SERVES 4

### YOU'LL NEED...

- 200g Violife Epic Mature Cheddar Flavour Grated
- 5 tbsp olive oil
- 4 tbsp all purpose flour
- 400ml coconut milk
- 1 tsp yellow mustard
- Sea salt (to taste)
- Black pepper (to taste)
- Carrot sticks, celery sticks, breadsticks to serve

### HOW TO DO IT...

1. Heat the olive oil in a pot, add the sifted flour and oil whilst whisking.
2. Add in the coconut milk, stirring until the sauce thickens. Then add the Violife Epic Mature Cheddar Flavour Grated.
3. Stir in the mustard and add sea salt and black pepper to taste.
4. Serve the fondue in a fondue pot to keep warm and side with breadsticks and vegetable sticks.



Great for weekend treats or dinner parties with friends!

## PARSNIP AND CARROT FRIES SERVES 4

### YOU'LL NEED...

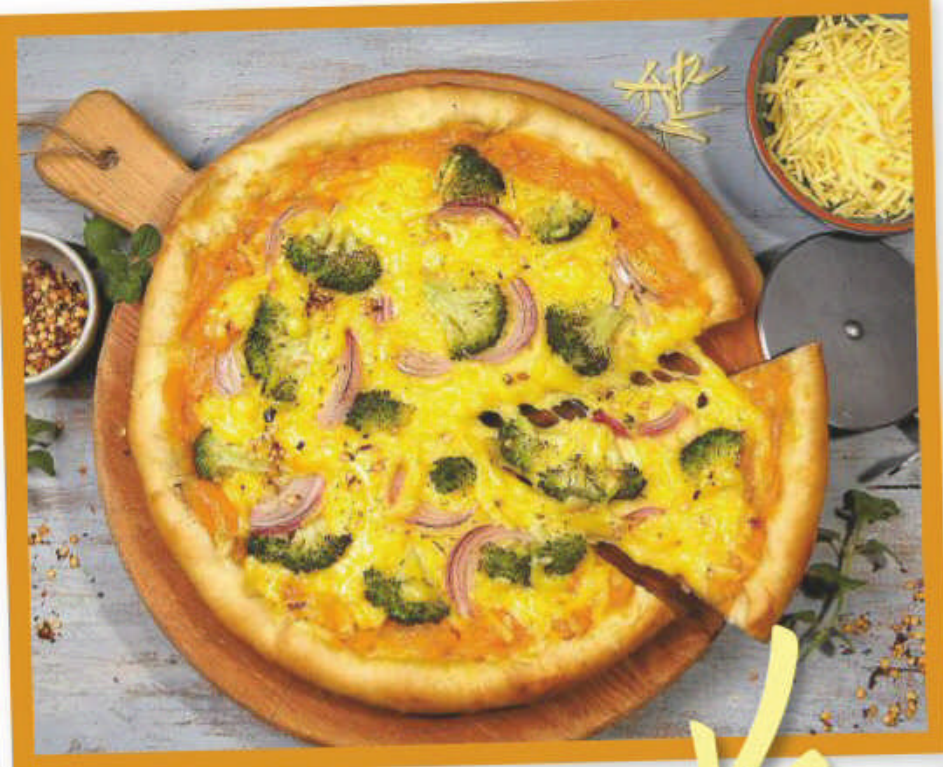
- 1 pack Violife Epic Mature Cheddar Flavour Grated
- 2 medium carrots
- 1 medium parsnip
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp paprika
- 2 garlic cloves, diced
- Rosemary sprigs
- Thyme sprigs
- Parsley, to serve
- Black pepper, to serve

### HOW TO DO IT...

1. Preheat the oven to 180° C. Peel and cut the carrots and parsnip into fries.
2. In a bowl combine the olive oil, paprika, herbs and garlic. Add the Violife Epic Mature Cheddar Flavour Grated, the fries and mix well.
3. Transfer to a lined baking tray and bake in the oven for 20 minutes. To serve, garnish with chopped parsley and black pepper.



The delicious new EPIC Mature Cheddar Flavour Grated is available at Sainsburys (RRP £2.20) [violifefoods.com](http://violifefoods.com)



## PUMPKIN PIZZA SERVES 4

### YOU'LL NEED...

- 1 pack Violife Epic Mature Cheddar Flavour Grated
- 300g pizza dough
- ½ broccoli, chopped
- ½ red onion, sliced
- 1 tsp fresh oregano
- red pepper flakes
- 1 pinch sea salt & black pepper

### FOR THE SAUCE

- 420g pumpkin, cubed
- 3 cloves garlic
- 15ml olive oil
- 1 pinch sea salt & black pepper

### HOW TO DO IT...

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C. Add the cubed pumpkin and peeled garlic to a baking sheet and drizzle with half of the olive oil and season. Bake for 15-20 minutes.
2. Transfer the pumpkin and garlic to a blender with olive oil and blend until creamy.
3. Roll out pizza dough into an even circle and transfer to a parchment-lined round baking sheet.
4. Top with the pumpkin sauce, the Violife Epic Mature Cheddar Flavour Grated, the broccoli and the onion.
5. Transfer pizza to the oven and bake for 13-18 minutes, or until crust edges are golden brown. Slice and serve with fresh oregano and red pepper flakes.







**Captain Morgan Tiki**, £16.50, Tesco, Asda, Morrisons and Co-op



**Turkey Twizzlers**, £3.00, Iceland



**WKD MIXD**, £1.69, Londis and Budgens



**Gianni's Mini Viennese Ice Cream Bars**, £1.49, Aldi



**Pink Gin Cheesecake Duo**, £2, Asda



**Jack Link's Beef Bar**, £3 for a pack of 3 bars, ASDA



**Free-From Iced Desserts**, £3, Asda



**Passion Fruit Martini Gourmet Marshmallows**, £2, Asda



**Grilling Cheese Skewers (4 pack)**, £1.79, Aldi



**Nutella + Cocoa**, £2.89 (350g), Tesco



**Pukka's Vegan Chicken & Mushroom and Vegan Minced Steak & Onion**, £1.89, Supermarkets nationwide



**Galaxy Gluten Free Celebration Cake**, £11, Sainsbury's



**Henry Westons Vintage Rosé**, £2.10 per 500ml bottle, Tesco and Morrisons

Stock image: Getty



# TRUE STRENGTH

**Carla was murdered by the man who betrayed her in the worst possible way...**

**W**hen Carla met Jacob Pearman at the local athletic club in 2011, she was a single mum and fitness trainer.

Jacob seemed a strong man to complete their family.

After a year they were engaged and living together in Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

Carla told friends that they were getting married in 2013 and everyone would be invited – but in November 2012, they brought the date forward and scaled the wedding to just close family and Carla's seven-year-old son.

It sent alarm bells ringing for friends who thought that Jacob was too controlling.

They also worried he was being too strict with her boy.

On the morning of 14 December 2012, Carla's son was found wearing his pyjamas hiding in his school.

He'd run away from home and he said he was scared of Jacob.

The police found injuries on the seven-year-old's body.

The youngster was visibly shaking as he described how Jacob had yanked him out of bed



**He was controlling**



**JACOB PEARMAN**

that morning, kicking and choking him.

Terrified, he'd run to the safety of his school.

Distraught Carla raced to the police station with Jacob.

She was videoed begging her husband to swear the accusations weren't true.

'I didn't do anything,' Jacob said.

But Carla had seen the injuries.

Her son was put into the custody of his biological dad and Carla's world fell apart.

'All I wanted was a family,' she was recorded sobbing.

Jacob was charged with child abuse and Carla was left without her only child.

Carla admitted to a friend that Jacob had bought a gun and had threatened to kill her if she didn't testify in his favour at the upcoming court case on 14 February 2013.

But Carla had made a decision to stand by the true love of her life – her little boy.

She was going to testify against Jacob, get a divorce and get her son.

Carla wanted to make everything right again...

The day before the court date, Carla and Jacob

argued and Jacob stormed off.

When he returned, he found his bags packed and Carla said their three-month marriage was over.

The argument escalated and continued into the early hours of 14 February – Valentine's Day.

In just a few hours, Carla was due to testify against him.

Did she tell him what she was planning to do?

Whoever started the argument, Jacob ended it.

On their first Valentine's Day as a married couple, Jacob beat his wife and strangled her to death.

She fiercely fought back but Carla didn't stand a chance.

After the attack, Jacob placed his wife's body into their bed and called his parents to tell them.

They called police who then arrested Jacob at a petrol station.

He had Carla's blood on his shorts and her DNA under his nails.

At the police station Jacob admitted to killing his wife.

He said she'd been 'upset about the court date' and they'd argued.

'We continued to argue until I am,' Jacob said in a sworn statement. 'At that time I was suicidal not homicidal.'

Something changed because he violently beat Carla to death.

Afterwards Jacob said he'd tried to find his gun so he could kill

himself, and claimed he put a bag over his head.

But the police never heard him say the most important thing – that he was sorry.

In January 2015, Jacob admitted killing his wife but his lawyer argued that it was not premeditated.

Jacob claimed that he'd been so remorseful that he'd put a plastic bag over his head in an attempt to kill himself.

But his fingerprints were barely on the bag.

The prosecution claimed that Jacob had killed his wife because she'd refused to testify in his favour in the trial.

'Carla Pearman fought to live,' they said. 'It was a struggle she could not win.'

Carla's friends testified that she was scared of her husband and her son was afraid of Jacob.

Carla's son, then ten, described the day he ran away: 'I didn't want to get hurt anymore.'

Jacob, 32, was convicted of the first-degree murder of his wife and also found guilty of child abuse and aggravated assault on Carla's son.

Jacob was sentenced to life with an extra five years for child abuse.

He will be eligible for parole in 53 years.

Carla was determined to protect her son, even if that meant sacrificing her own life.

**All Carla wanted was a family**



**Carla stood by her son**



**Married for one year**



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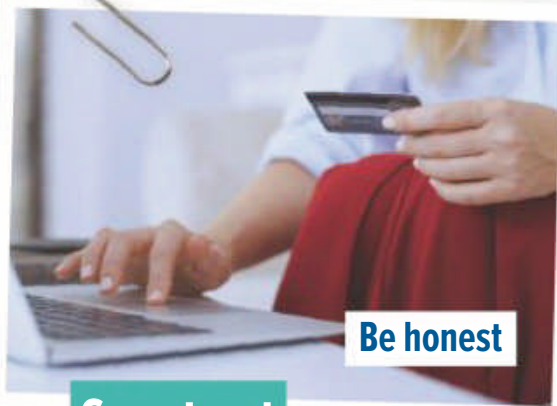




# Confidential



**Katharine Hill, the UK Director of the national charity Care For The Family ([cff.org.uk](http://cff.org.uk)) answers your questions.**



**Be honest**

## Spent out

**Q** During lockdown, I have spent so much money online shopping. I was anxious, and bored, but now I can't pay it back and I can't face telling my husband. What if he's so angry, he leaves? *Joanna, Surrey*

**A** A healthy marriage is based on trust, and so it is important that you have an honest conversation with your husband before your worries snowball.

Choose a time when he is not distracted, when the two of you can talk without interruption. Prepare beforehand by making sure you know the exact amount you owe and the specifics of how you spent it (is it credit card debt, for example). This will help you make a plan as to how to repay the debt. Consider putting together a spreadsheet.

As well as preparing the facts, prepare emotionally for his reaction, too. He will most likely be shocked and angry, but give him time to process the information. Let him know you're sorry, and that you want him to help you work out a plan of action for repayment.

## How can we connect?

**Q** I'm dating a man who has a teenage daughter and she's made it very clear she dislikes me. I don't want to replace her mum – who sadly died. But I don't know where I fit in and rightfully, my boyfriend's priority is her.

*Molly, Sussex*

**A** It sounds like you're already sensitive about trying to replace her mum – and that's great. Letting her know that in words is important. Trying something like; 'I know I will never replace your mother, and I'm not trying to. But I love your dad, and I'd like it if we could be friends,' is probably a good starting point for you.

Allow her plenty of one-on-one time with her dad, so that she sees you're not trying to

replace her. Don't be overly keen to please either – be kind and patient with her, not pushy or desperate.

Try to discuss your boyfriend's priorities with him as well. His daughter is important to him, but so are you – and that there does not have to be a hierarchy of loves for him. Persevere, and gradually the hope is that you begin to see her attitude change.



**Persevere**

## Help her see the light

**Q** One of my friends is in a terrible marriage, but she doesn't see it. Because he's not violent, she can't see how controlling he is. I hardly see her anymore. What can I do?

*Emma, Gloucester*

**A** Manipulative, controlling, or gaslighting behaviour is so easy to spot when we're not the ones it's happening to. A good way to start would be to make contact with your friend and suggest a shared activity, like shopping or a coffee, giving you the opportunity to talk. You can

raise your concerns in a non-judgmental way, such as gently asking her if she has any worries about her relationship.

By giving her the opportunity to talk rather than telling her what to do, you will come across as sympathetic, rather than critical of her husband.

Don't shut her down if she expresses a range of contradictory feelings about him or makes excuses for his behaviour. And if she does express negativity towards him, don't then pile on criticism – this may cause her to feel disloyal which could have the opposite effect.

If she is receptive, you might suggest they seek counselling. The most important thing is to stay in touch and be there for her.



**Be there**

## Have faith



## History repeating itself

**Q** My mum and I have never been close. I spent a lot of time in the care of other relatives and it's really sent me off the rails a few times. Now I'm pregnant. I'm terrified that I'll be a bad mum – I've never known a good one.

*Naomi, Bristol*

**A** Plenty of people who haven't had good role models have gone on to be wonderful parents themselves. Your fear that you may not be adequate is, ironically, a good indicator that you will be, because you already care so much.

If you don't know where to start, your health visitor or an NCT class may be of some assistance. You could

also consider signing up to some online parenting events, such as Care for the Family's Primary Parenting event, to prepare you for what's to come.

If you have friends who are parents, talk to them about their experience, and find some good role models. There is no such thing as a perfect parent! Take all the advice you can, but no one will know your child or love your child like you – so have confidence in being a mum!

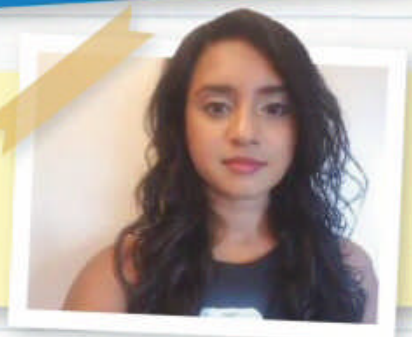


# Health

## The advice you need

### Ask our doc

with LloydsPharmacy pharmacist Pareena Patel.



#### Missing her meds

**Q** My elderly mother keeps forgetting to take her meds. Could skipping the odd day have a detrimental effect on her health?  
**Ann, Durham**

**A** It's important that all patients develop a good medication management routine, as in some cases, skipping medicines can make them less effective.

Equally, missing a dose and subsequently taking meds too close together can leave you at an increased risk of side effects. Every

medication is different and it is hard to know what the effects of missed medication will be without knowing the exact medication.

However, patients should try and read the patient information leaflet which comes with medication to understand what to do if a medication dose is missed.

Pill boxes or 'dosette boxes' are one effective way to ensure medication is taken on the dates they are due.

You can place your medication in the relevant day, and some boxes even have slots for morning, noon and night each day.



**Don't forget!**

#### Reason to worry?

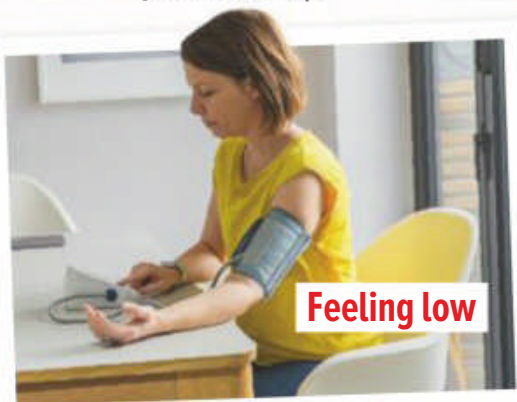
**Q** My blood pressure has always been on the low side but it seems to be getting lower as time goes on. Should I be worried?  
**Tina, Norfolk**

**A** Low blood pressure can often be asymptomatic, however if you are experiencing symptoms like dizziness, nausea, or dehydration, it could be dangerous.

The good news is that you can usually treat low blood pressure without the need for medication.

Increase your fluid intake, adjust your diet and wear compression stockings if you can.

Speak to your GP or pharmacist as they will be able to provide advice on how to increase and stabilise your blood pressure.



**Feeling low**

#### Serious side effects

**Q** I've recently changed my medication for high blood pressure and I've had nothing but trouble. Are these side effects temporary as my body adjusts?  
**Jane, London**

**A** Like all medication, some high blood pressure medication can leave you with side effects.

In some cases, side effects are not caused by the medication itself, but rather an interaction with the medication caused by other lifestyle factors.

You should also check that you are taking your medication at the advised time of day.

Taking your medication at the wrong time of the day can sometimes cause side effects too.

There are many medications for high blood pressure available, and what works for one individual may not work so well for another.

If you are experiencing side effects there is likely another medication which may work more harmoniously with your body.

Speak to your pharmacist to check you are taking your medication correctly and about the other options available.

### Ask the expert

#### Hangover cure

**S**cientists claim to have found a pill that can cure your hangovers – and it can be bought for as little as 15p!

It contains a chemical called L-cysteine, one of many amino acids already present in the body and also used to extend the shelf life of bread.

Researchers tested the tablet on a group of men who were ordered to drink for several hours on six different occasions.

Men given the pill were thought to have suffered fewer hangover symptoms of nausea, headache, stress and anxiety compared to those given a placebo tablet.

Researchers believe that if the pill helps to reduce anxiety and stress, people are much less likely to reach for a 'hair of the dog' and drink again to rid their hangover!



**About time!**

#### A spoonful of honey

**Y**our grandmother might have told you to have a spoon of honey when you suffered with a cough or sore throat, but did you actually think it worked?

Well, according to scientists at Oxford University, honey is more effective at treating those ailments than antibiotics or any over the counter medication.

In a study, experts found honey to be 'superior' when it came to relieving coughs, sore throats and congestion.

The experts even went as far as saying doctors should tell patients to have a spoonful of honey rather than prescribing antibiotics which can end up fuelling antimicrobial resistance.



**Sweet!**

#### Winning website

**A**round 1 in 4 people in the UK experience a mental health problem each year, and drinking too much can increase our risk.

But many of us are unaware of the link between alcohol and poor mental health, and it's often the first thing we turn to when we're feeling low.

16 to 22 November marks Alcohol Awareness Week, and the charity Alcohol Change UK are trying to raise awareness and get the nation thinking about their drinking.

To find out more visit: [alcoholchange.org.uk](http://alcoholchange.org.uk)



# GET BACK UP

# AGAIN

**I believe a positive attitude can change everything – even cancer...**

**Jane Mann, 59, Chester**

**C**alculating dates in my head, I worked out that my next period was only due in two weeks.

But, staring down at my pants while sat in the office bathroom, there was no mistaking it – there were spots of blood.

It was 1991, and at 30, my periods had always been regular.

But lately, I'd been bleeding in between.

A single mum to Jessica, then six, and working full time at an accounting firm, I was rushed off my feet.

*Perhaps it's stress,* I thought.

When the bleeding continued, I went to my GP for tests.

'I'm sorry, but you have cervical cancer,' he told me.

I was devastated, and my only option was drastic.

I had no choice but to have a hysterectomy.

I was only 30.

While I wasn't with anyone, I'd hoped to have more children one day – but that was snatched away in an instant.

Still, Jessica needed me, so in September that year, I had my op at Chester Royal Infirmary.

Thankfully, doctors were able to remove all of the cancer.

While in recovery, a neighbour came to visit me.

'I brought this for you,' he smiled, handing me a piece of paper. It was an application form

for the London Marathon.

I burst out laughing – I'd never run a day in my life!

A while later, after he'd left, I found myself alone on the ward, feeling sorry for myself.

Looking at the form again, I had a change of heart.

*I'll give it a go!* I thought.

So I started running right after I got out of hospital, and four months later in April 1992, I completed the marathon!

After that, I was hooked, competing in 10k races, half marathons and Race For Life runs.

I even did the London Marathon twice more.

Cancer had taken something away from me, but now I was fighting back.

In 2000, I met my husband David, now 71.

He had two girls – Cordelia, then 22, and Davinia, 19.

I'd always dreamed of having more kids – so they were a dream come true.

By 2013, I'd decided to leave the world of accounting and become a fitness instructor, encouraging other women to take part in Race for Life.

Life was pretty good, and in



**I won't let it beat me**



**A long road ahead**

**2018, we decided to travel around Europe in our motorhome.**

But in Portugal, I noticed that my swallowing was different.

Food and drink would go past my throat, but then would get stuck in my oesophagus.

It would eventually go down if I squiggled my abdomen a bit, but I knew this wasn't normal.

We got back in May 2019, and I went straight to my GP, who referred me for an endoscopy, which I had in July 2019 at the Countess of Chester Hospital.

It showed that I had a 10cm tumour in my oesophagus.

'This is so unfair,' I cried.

'I've already had cancer!'

Facing cancer again, in September, I started chemo.

The side effects were awful – I was exhausted, my hair was falling out, I was sick all the time and had diarrhoea.

Finally, on 16 December, at Royal Liverpool University Hospital, surgeons operated to remove my tumour.

I was so grateful to be alive.

I'm now on another round of

chemo just in case.

I've been told there is a 50% chance of my cancer coming back, but I try to stay positive.

I've gone from being a fitness instructor who ran marathons to being a feeble woman, and I hardly recognise myself.

But I'm very grateful for what I do have – a loving husband and three gorgeous daughters.

I've even come up with five ways to help other people cope with cancer – embrace the love and support of family and friends, eat only the best food, exercise as much as possible, do what your doctors say, and make gratitude your attitude.

## Fact file

**M**ost cases of oesophageal cancer occur in people aged 55 or over, although younger people can be affected. Early symptoms include difficulty swallowing, known as dysphagia. Jane is supporting Cancer Research UK's Race for Life at Home, in partnership with Tesco. Sign up at [www.raceforlife.org](http://www.raceforlife.org) to get active, join the online Race for Life community, and help beat cancer.



# Health

Monday 21  
December is  
the first day  
of winter



## WINTER-PROOF YOUR BODY

As the days get shorter and temperatures start to drop, our bodies are about to suffer the onslaught of winter. Experts at Nuffield Health ([nuffieldhealth.com](http://nuffieldhealth.com)) share their guide to winter-proofing your body against the big freeze.

### Throat

**S**ore throats are more common in winter and are almost always caused by viral infections. There is also some evidence that changes in temperature, such as going from a warm, centrally heated room to the icy outdoors, can affect the throat.

This is because our immune systems adapt to indoor conditions in winter and struggle to keep viruses at bay when we go outside.

**ACTION:** There is little you can do to stop getting sore throats. However, if you notice discomfort, gargle with warm, salty water before going to bed.

Although it won't stop the infection, it does have anti-inflammatory properties and can soothe the pain.



Soothing

### Lips

**T**he lips lose more moisture than any other part of the face or body.

As they dry out, the skin becomes tight and is more likely to split.

In harsh winter weather or in dry, centrally heated houses, the chance of cracked, sore lips increases.

**ACTION:** Use a lip balm that contains petroleum or beeswax.

It will provide a barrier and help seal in moisture.

Don't share your lip balm with anyone, and avoid lip salves in pots, as repeatedly dipping

your finger in them can transmit germs.

As hard as it may be, don't be tempted to pick at the dried skin on your lips, as this will only raise the risk of bleeding and can slow down the healing process.

### Barrier





## Skin

**O**ften exposed, the skin bears the brunt of winter's harsh weather.

Cold conditions can strip away the skin's moisture, and constantly moving from the freezing outdoors to a snug indoor environment can worsen things.

It can also lead to blood vessels in the skin changing size to account for the fluctuating temperature, leaving you looking flushed.

**ACTION:** The best weapon is to moisturise your skin every day. This helps to



Moisture is key

keep the outer layer working as a barrier to the harsh elements.

Avoid clothes that are likely to irritate dry skin, such as woolly tops, and try not to exfoliate too much, as it can damage the skin's protective properties.

## Heart

**W**hen temperatures fall, blood thickens, blood pressure goes up, and our heart rate increases.

This means the risk of a heart attack or chest pain among those who already have cardiovascular disease increases significantly. In addition, the heart has to work harder than normal to maintain body heat. Heart problems are more likely to occur in winter because people over-exert themselves at a time when their cardiac system is already under strain.

**ACTION:** If you are usually physically active, then you should be fine. If you're not, then don't feel the need to shovel the snow off your drive.

It's activities like that, which people don't do throughout the rest of the year, that cause problems.

Wrap up warm so you retain body heat, as this might take some of the pressure off your heart.



Wrap up!

## Hands

**T**housands of people in Britain suffer with Raynaud's syndrome, a condition that makes the fingers and toes go white and very painful in cold weather.

Experts think Raynaud's may be connected to hormonal changes, as many women find their symptoms ease during their menstrual cycle and when they are pregnant.

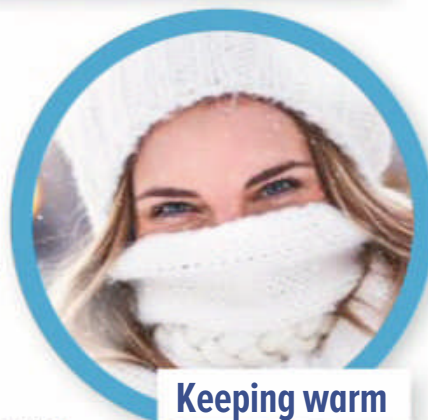
**ACTION:** Don't drink caffeine or smoke, as they can make the symptoms worse. Always wear warm gloves, socks and shoes when going out in cold weather.

Regular exercise improves blood flow, and keeping active on a cold day will help you to stay warm.



## Lungs

**A**sthma sufferers face a double whammy in winter. If they go outside, the cold can trigger their symptoms by irritating the lining of the airways. If they stay indoors, the mould that tends to thrive when windows are shut tight can also start them wheezing.



Keeping warm

**ACTION:** Wear a scarf over your face while outdoors to warm the air you inhale and keep your house ventilated. Also, treat damp or mould before winter sets in. The charity Asthma UK urges everyone with asthma to have the flu jab, and those on oral steroids to talk to their doctor about having the pneumococcal vaccination, which protects against bacteria that can cause pneumonia.

## Joints

**M**any people with arthritis complain of more painful joints in winter, though it is not clear why this is.

There is no evidence that joints are any more damaged by the cold. In fact, according to the charity Arthritis Research UK, the greatest danger is the risk of falling in poor conditions.

Arthritis weakens the muscles and causes pain when people walk. This makes people with arthritis much more likely to fall and damage their bones and joints.

**ACTION:** Wearing the right footwear and using a stick or other support can help.

It is also important to eat foods rich in vitamin D such as oily fish. The lack of exposure to sunshine in winter leads to a fall in the body's own vitamin D levels.

## STRENGTHEN YOUR DEFENCES

**T**he immune system is the body's main defence mechanism. It is primed to fight bacteria and viruses that threaten to invade vital organs and tissues, so it is important to keep it in good working order, particularly during winter when many people are more susceptible to attack.

There is no one pill, foodstuff or supplement that can do this. The key is to maintain strong defences through a healthy lifestyle.

### ● DIET

Eat as many fruits and vegetables as possible.

They are a powerful source of antioxidants, which help to ward off infection.

Homemade chicken soup is a winner. Studies show it can reduce the inflammation seen in colds and flu.

### ● EXERCISE

Physical activity is one of the best ways to maintain a healthy immune system.

Try to do a fast-paced walk at least three or four times a week over winter.

### ● SLEEP

Lack of sleep can leave you vulnerable to colds, flu and other infections.

Keep your immune system in good shape by having seven to eight hours a night.

### ● DRINK LESS ALCOHOL

The party season may be approaching, but don't overdo it. Excess alcohol can inhibit the function of white blood cells and lower resistance to infection.



Good balance



# Snap happy



## Happy wedding

My brother and his fiancé got married during lockdown in Japan! **Vic, Bristol**



## Fish 'n' chips

Takeaway date in the park. **Daisy, Lincolnshire**



## Beach walk

Twinning in Cornwall with my friends! **Wendy, Slapton**

## Postcard picture

It almost felt like we were on holiday in Greece! **Lauren, Aberystwyth**



## Pasta night

The most delicious carbonara on a date night with my cousins. **C. West, Manchester**



## Baby shower

My friend baked these amazing cupcakes for a special baby shower! **Julie, Rochester**



## Pizza picnic

Dominoes with my boyfriend on a lovely day! *Hollie, Plymouth*



## Fizz and pop

Bucks Fizz and cards with my hubby on our weekend away. *Shirley, Cheddar*

## Beautiful boy

Sammy always has to sit near me. My shadow! *Rosabella, Liverpool*



## Snuggle buddy

My pup takes up all the room in my bed! *Helena, Bristol*



# Pet Crackers

## Little lizard

Simon my bearded dragon getting up to mischief! *D. Roshdale, Weston*



## Meet the family

Here's my little cousin meeting our pet hamster Hammy for the first time.

*Jemma, Chester*

# THAT'S SO BRITISH

## FOOD

ARGUING: 'IS A JAFFA CAKE A BISCUIT OR A CAKE?'

NOT KNOWING IF THE JAM OR CREAM GOES FIRST WHEN LOADING UP A SCONE.

REFUSING TO HAVE A ROAST DINNER WITHOUT YORKSHIRE PUDDINGS.





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# Beauty

All things  
hair

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### 1. AMPLIFY FEATHERWEIGHT STYLING CREAM, £10.99, BOOTS

Transform fine, flat hair so it never looks dull again!

With specifically chosen natural ingredients to repel grime and let hair shine through. This hair-boosting product will also stimulate growth and thicken hair.

### 2. SMOOTH AND CURL MIRACLE LOTION, £12.99, BOOTS

True to its name, this really is a miracle product. This leave-in conditioning styler was specifically created for complete frizz and curl control. With a curly memory ingredient, this product gives your curls definition and ensures they stay that way throughout the day, even in the most humid of weathers.

### 3. RESCUE & REPAIR REVOLUTIONARY INTENSE MASK, £10.99, BOOTS

With a powerful secret ingredient, this mask naturally nourishes and seals cuticles whilst also repairing split ends and individually smoothing hair fibres. With built-in UV and pollution barriers, this mask will help your hair stay protected long after styling.

Restore your hair's ultimate condition to reveal

bouncy, weightless and smooth locks. With a coconut and yuzu scent, not only will your hair look great, but it will smell it, too!

## BE FLAWLESS

### FINISHING TOUCH FLAWLESS DERMAPLANE GLOW, £19.99, WILKO

Dead skin and peach fuzz are often the hidden culprits when it comes to a dull complexion. They can unknowingly stop you from achieving that perfect makeup application you've been striving for, and even hinder the absorption of your favourite skincare products.

Here to banish these worries, the Dermaplaning Glow is an ingenious at-home professional tool which helps you to achieve a radiant complexion. Light and easy to use, it gently removes the top layer of dead, dry skin and peach fuzz to instantly reveal a brighter, younger-looking face after just one use.

### How to use

- Hold your cleansed skin taut
- Place the Finishing Touch Flawless Dermaplane Glow at a 45 degree angle to your skin
- Use light, short strokes in a downward motion to exfoliate
- Once finished, apply your favourite skincare or hydrating mask.

## Boost your brows

### EYLURE DYBROW, £7.50, SUPERDRUG

Introducing your brow's new bestie. This permanent tint for brows will give you salon quality results within minutes. The proven formula will darken your hairs to ensure an even colour and leave you with beautifully defined brows. With a super easy and under 15 minutes application, you will be rockin' your fabulous looking brows in no time! Available in both dark brown and black, this tint will darken your brows for up to six weeks.

### SLEEK NANO BROW DISC, £7.99, BOOTS

Up your brow game with this new brow disc. The unique tip provides ultimate precision, perfect for building the appearance of fuller brows. The long-lasting formula is waterproof and smudge proof so brows will stay in place all day and night.

Create  
salon quality  
brows at  
home



# I just want people to accept me...

Ellie Coneley, 18, Leeds

## Not understanding

**W**hen I was born, I was diagnosed with a bilateral Tessier cleft. It meant that not only did I have facial deformities from my lip up, but I was blind in my left eye as it hadn't developed properly.

My mum, Levi, now 38, had no idea I'd be born like it.

Nothing had shown up in any of my scans!

I think it was really hard for her.

After all, my mouth was split from my lips to my eyes, meaning there was a gaping hole in my face.

Although she loves me now, I think she struggled to bond when I was a baby.

At the time she was a first-time mum and I don't imagine it was quite the experience she was expecting to have.

When I was just eight months old, in April 2003, I underwent major reconstruction surgery to close up one side of my face and adjust my eyelids.

Then, a few months later, the second side was done.

From my very start in life, all this meant was I bound to be treated differently.

Although my mouth had now been shut, I hardly looked like every other little girl.

And when I started pre-school, kids would stare and make

comments towards me.

As a toddler, I couldn't understand why.

'When you were in my stomach, your face didn't grow properly,' Mum told me.

She was very honest with me from the get-go, but as an innocent child, I just wanted to make friends and play.

Although I made friends, a lot of the kids stayed away from me or would make comments about my face.

Looking back now, I know it was never meant to be cruel.

They'd never seen someone with facial deformities, and so they were confused.

At the time however, I just couldn't understand and would often go home to cry to my mum.

However, when I was two-years-old, my brother Jack, now 15, was born and I think that's the moment it truly hit me.

Whilst I don't really remember what happened, I do remember wondering why he looked so different to me.

'What's wrong with his face?' I asked my mum.

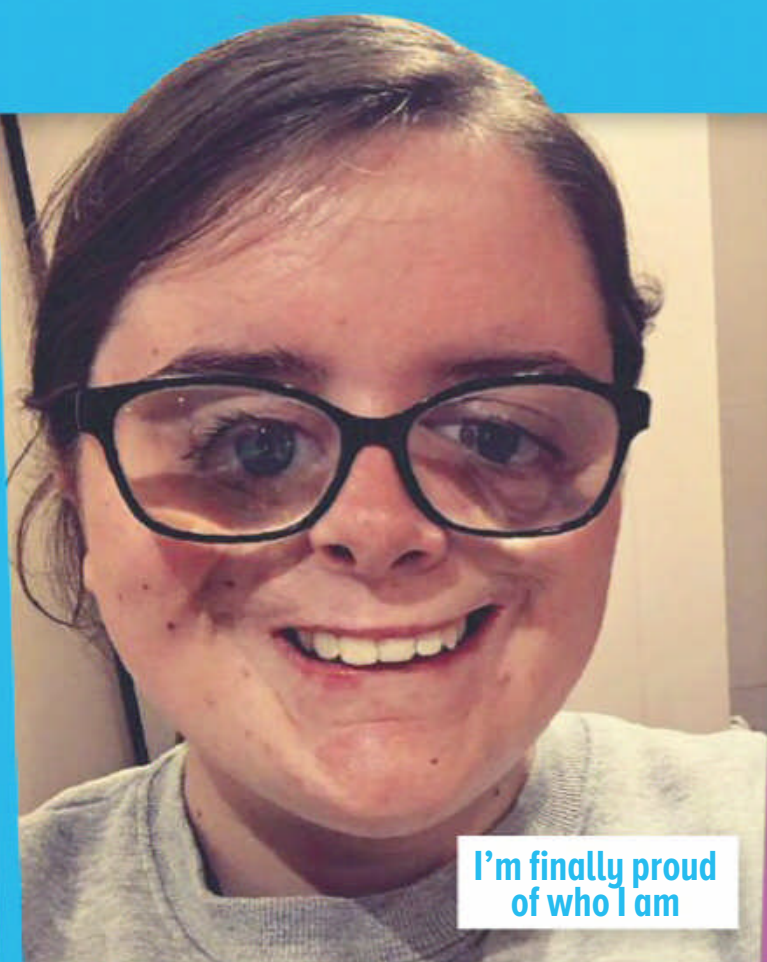
It was only then that she decided to show me pictures from when I was born.

'You know I said you didn't grow properly in my tummy?' she said to me, holding up a picture.

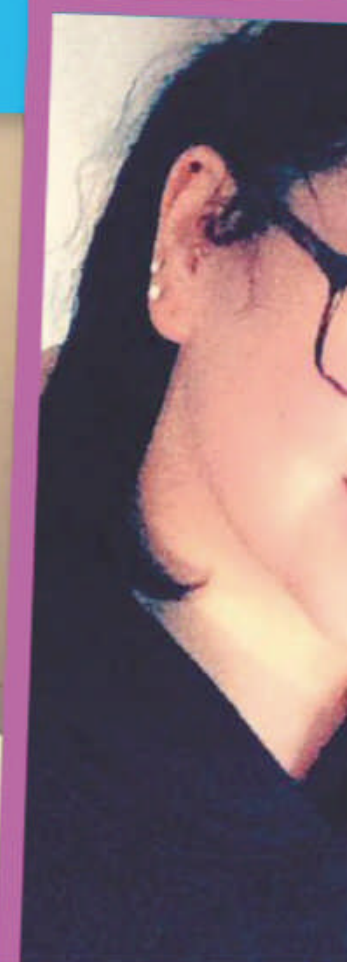
'You looked like this.'

At such a young age, I think I just ran off to play with my toys, but as I got older, I soon had to face facts about my condition.

I wondered why I didn't look like my brother



I'm finally proud of who I am



## MY JOURNEY

### Facing torment

**B**y the time I started secondary school, I'd already developed quite a thick skin.

Not only had I faced negativity, but I'd been through a lot already.

I'd had countless operations and had been through various disruptions in my home life.

And on top of that, I was used to kids making nasty comments, so I'd learnt to block it out.

That's why I forced myself into uncomfortable situations, in the hopes that people would get to know the real me.

I joined every club and sports activity I could so I could mingle with my peers.

I guess I wanted my classmates to see past the scars and deformities.

Wanting them to get to know me, I made myself talk to people.

Overtime, I realised I didn't quite need to join every single club in school, but it helped people



I have a great support system

understand me.

Unfortunately however, it didn't stop the cruel jibes.

Boys were awful.

They'd say anything with no filter, just to get a laugh from their mates.

'Hey sexy, what's your number?' they'd chuckle, howling down the corridor.

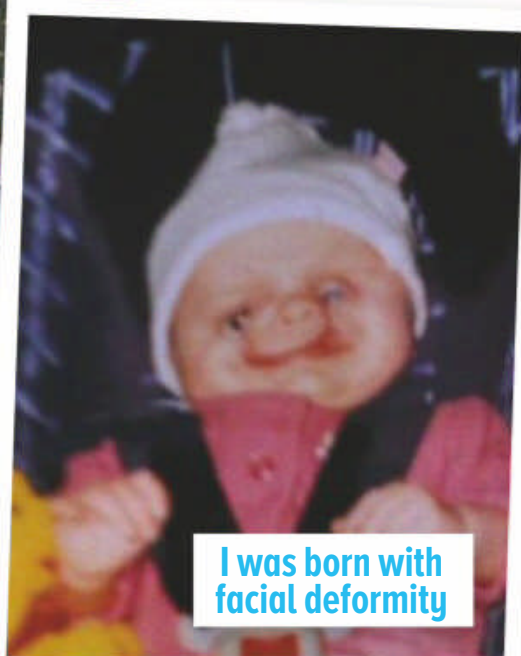
Whilst I'd already learnt to ignore the comments, I knew if I was going to make it through secondary school, I'd have to fight back.

Learning the art of sarcasm, I'd throw a comment back when the boys made a joke.

I never let anyone see they got to me, but every comment



I had surgery at eight months old



I was born with facial deformity





Mum always has my back

# JOURNEY



killed me inside. I just wanted people to see past the face – to give me a chance in life.

I was a normal kid, with normal dreams and aspirations.

Why couldn't they accept that?

I think Mum definitely knew when I'd had a bad day and she always tried to cheer me up.

'Just ignore them,' she'd say, but it wasn't that easy.

Thankfully, between her and my three siblings, Jack, 16, Tj, 14, and Frankie-Leigh, nine, I had a strong support system.

I got through secondary school with flying colours and proved to myself more than anyone, that there was more to me than my deformity.

Starting college, I was ready for the fresh start.

Every time I'd started a new school, I was anxious that I'd get bullied, however this time, I hoped it would be different.

Everyone was older and I hoped more mature. Only, as

I learnt very early on, that wasn't the case.

On the bus home, I had to sit separately from my friends and was forced next to a group of lads.

'Are you that guy from the Goonies?' they started shouting. 'Oi, ugly!'

Although I'd been used to this abuse for years now, that time really got me.

I thought that finally I'd be free of it, but I wasn't, and I don't think I ever will.

That day, I got off the bus early and walked the rest of the way home, trying not to cry.

Mum knew instantly that something had happened.

'What's wrong?' she asked, rushing over to check I was OK.

I love my mum and she's been my greatest protector, but I don't like to worry her.

Whenever someone makes a comment, she goes into full mum-mode and sometimes I think she'd march right around to their house if I let her!

Instead, I told her I was OK and went upstairs to cry.

It's not like it hadn't happened before.

## Celebrating the future

I'm finally 18!

As of August, I'm officially an adult.

It's been one heck of a journey to get here, but I think I'm finally at peace with myself.

I've lost count at how many operations and procedures I've had, it must be over a dozen.

My last operation was in 2013 where I had bone from my hip put into my face to make it look fuller.

After that, my surgeon told me that we'd now wait until I stop growing before they make any decisions.

For the moment, nothing has been said, but I'm still under various departments at Leeds Infirmary.

I've now had an artificial eye fitted in my left socket, which will require life-long observation.

My condition will be with me for the rest of my life and I don't know how many more operations I'll have to come.

Although many negative things come from my condition, it's taught me that it's OK to be different.

I may not look like everyone else, but that doesn't make me any less of a person.

Today, I'm trying to help people overcome negativity in their life.

I've connected with a lot of people online and I give them advice on how to deal with bullying and nasty comments.

'It gets better as you get older,' I tell them. 'You'll find friends who will support you and people do become more accepting.'

Whilst I do talk to a lot of people with cleft like me, I also help anyone who needs it. Mostly,

I may not look like you, but I'm still a person

people have found me through social media posts or their parents are friends with my mum.

No matter how they find me, I'm a shoulder to lean on.

I think it's just nice to talk to people who really understand.

I've even set up a TikTok profile to encourage people to love themselves a bit more.

As with every aspect of my life, it's received negative trolling, but I just laugh it off.

I'm not quite too sure yet what I want to do when I'm older, but I know I want to make a difference in the world.

I want to teach people to accept those who are different.

I've faced negativity since I was just two-years-old and that comes from parents not teaching their children about diversity.

It's up to parents to raise their children with love and empathy for everyone they meet.

So, I want to teach parents to do just that.

In September of this year, I'll be going to Chester University to do religious studies.

I've always had a passion for it and I'm ready to take my knowledge to the next level.

Although I'll be moving nearly three hours away from home, I'm so excited.

I know it will be a new environment where I'll have to explain my scars over again, but I know how to do so now.

I'll tell people the facts and if they don't like it, then tough.

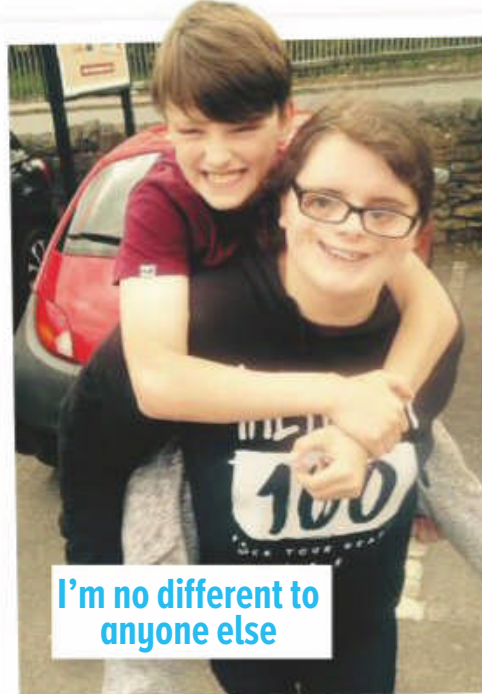
Mum's definitely nervous, but I'm ready for this.

My whole life, I've put on this front, but now, I'm ready to discover who I am and make the world a better place.

Check out Ellie's TikTok profile: @Elzycon



My family get me through it all



I'm no different to anyone else



# SMALL PRI

## I knew something was wrong with me, so why wouldn't anyone listen?

**Dinara Farina, 43, Maidenhead**

**W**alking out of Heathrow Airport with my suitcase in tow, I looked at the grey London sky. It was 2009, I was 32, and I'd just moved from my home in Russia to the UK.

I'd come over for a better life, but moving to a new country is always scary.

Just a few weeks later, though, when I landed a great job in IT, I knew I'd made the right choice.

It felt like destiny.

I settled in right away, improved my English and got used to British culture, and two years later, in 2011, I met Nicholas, now 48, at a speed dating evening.

He also worked in IT, and we had so much in common.

Sweeping me off my feet, we were married just a few months later, in February 2012.

I'd spent my 20's building a career for myself, and now that I'd landed the perfect man, too, it seemed the next step was natural.

'I've always wanted to be a mum,' I smiled to Nicholas. My

wish came true a lot sooner than I thought, too – we fell pregnant on our honeymoon!

The pregnancy went smoothly, and when I found out I was having a little girl, I spent all my time shopping for pretty pink dresses and decorating her nursery.

Everything was going smoothly, but on 9 October 2012, at 37 weeks, my baby's kidneys were in distress, so doctors decided to induce me.

Admitted to Wexham Park Hospital, what followed was four days of torture.

In pain and worried about my unborn baby, I was eventually given a thoracic epidural.

As a large needle was inserted near my shoulder blade, I screamed out in pain, clutching Nicholas' hand.

It didn't numb me right away, and for hours, no one came to check on me.

Four days later, on 13 October, I'd only dilated by half a centimetre, and doctors agreed that something was wrong.

'We're going to take you in for a C-section,' I was told.

I was wheeled into theatre, and as Nicholas held my hand, our daughter Olivia was born, and thankfully, she was perfectly healthy.

'She's so beautiful,' I cried.

We were allowed home four days later, and I was so glad to have my horrible hospital ordeal finally behind me.

'Now I can



**I want to spread the message**

focus on you,' I smiled to Olivia as I cradled her gently.

A week later, though, I developed a pain in my chest, a constant dull ache, as if someone had punched me.

Worried, I went back to the hospital, but after blood tests came back normal, I was sent home.

Afterwards, though, the pain got worse.

'I feel like I can't breathe,' I said to Nicholas, clutching my chest.

But over the next few months, it seemed no one would listen to me.

The dull pain continued to get worse, and a while later, I developed pins and needles in my arms and legs.

It felt as if my body was on fire, like I was in a torture chamber.

When I went to bed at night, it felt like I was laying down on a

blanket made from cactus needles.

In constant pain, I felt as if I was missing out on being a mum – it just felt so unfair.

But doctors couldn't figure it out, said I was perfectly healthy.

They even recommended I see a therapist, suggesting that this was all in my head.

'It's just the stress of being a new mum,' they reasoned.

And after a while, I figured they were right.

'All my tests have come back normal,' I said to Nicholas.

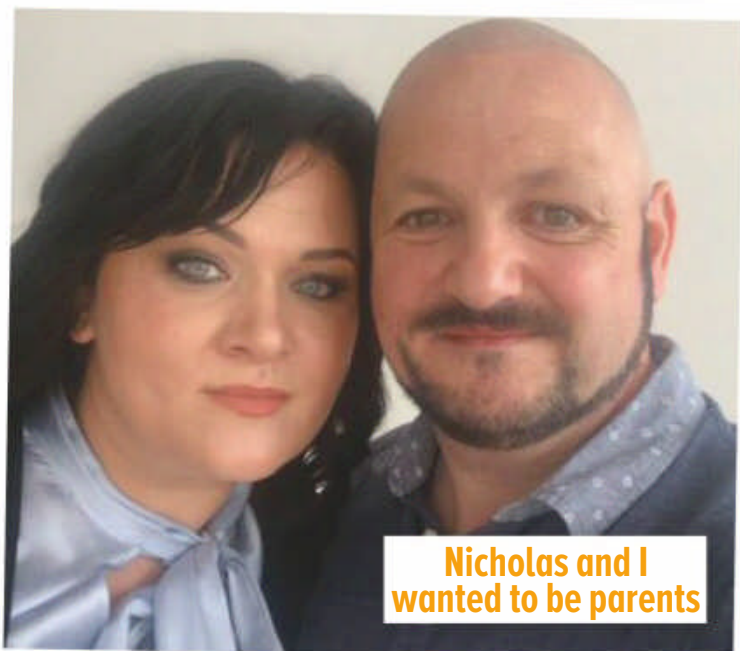
'Perhaps I just need to get on with it.'

And besides, we were already thinking of having a second child.

I'd always dreamed of having two kids, and now at 38, there was no time to waste.

Putting my pain to the back of my head as best I could, by November 2014, I was pregnant again. And despite being in

**Doctors told me it was all in my head**



**Nicholas and I wanted to be parents**



# NT



**I'm fighting this for my family**

I found.

Arachnoiditis was a pain disorder caused by the inflammation of the arachnoid, one of the membranes that surrounds the nerves of the spinal cord.

It caused aching, pins and needles, and a burning sensation – and was often caused by having an epidural or spinal block.

'Oh my God!' I cried to Nicholas. 'This is what I have!'

Ever since Olivia was born, I'd been suffering with all these horrible symptoms, and no one would listen to me.

It had all been caused by the epidural I'd had days before she was born.

'Why did no one tell me this before?' I cried.

I was so angry.

If I'd been warned about this condition before, I never would have agreed to an epidural.

But no one told me, and instead my symptoms were swept under the carpet, making me think that I was crazy.

For now, though, I had to focus on delivering my baby.

Our son Leonardo was born a few hours later, and like his sister, was perfectly healthy.

As for me, though, I had an uphill battle to face.

It took around 10 months for my doctor to finally agree that I had arachnoiditis – but he also confirmed that there was no cure

for the condition.

And ever since Leonardo was born, my entire body has been burning and aching.

The condition means that my nervous system is inflamed, so I'm in chronic pain.

It feels as if I'm either being squeezed from the inside, or suffering from sudden jolts of pain, like a lightning bolt racing through my body.

I've been trying Ayurvedic medicines and meditation, which help to calm me down somewhat.

Nicholas is also a huge help.

But on some days, when I'm crippled with pain, I'm unable to be the mum I'd always dreamed

of being.

Olivia, now seven, and Leonardo, five, are my world, and it breaks my heart that I can't run around and play with them.

It just feels so unfair.

This cruel condition has taken away the joy of motherhood, and the worst thing about it is that it could have been avoided.

Last year, I joined an online forum, where I met other women around the world who were also suffering with arachnoiditis.

They'd all had epidurals.

That's when I came up with the idea of writing a book.

'I want to help other women,' I said to Nicholas.

The effects of my condition were too much to hold inside, and I didn't want to hide anymore.

I didn't want my story to be lost in medical notes.

*Stabbed in the Back:*

*Arachnoiditis* was released a few months later, and it's all about what I've been through, as well as advice to new mums facing the same risks.

I never thought I'd end up being an advocate for this, but now I'm committed to educating others about this condition.

Both mums and doctors need to be aware that this is a serious thing, and when an epidural is offered to someone, it needs to be explained to them properly.

But I've also put a positive spin on my story.

I'm a strong woman who moved to a brand new country on her own.

I met and married a wonderful man and the love of my life.

I may have a painful condition, but I've also got two beautiful children out of it.

When they smile, it lights up my world, and what mum could ask for anything else?

*Stabbed in the Back:*

*Arachnoiditis* is available on Amazon.

**I'm so grateful for their support**

constant pain, thankfully, the pregnancy went smoothly.

Desperate to give birth naturally this time, I held on for as long as I could, but it seemed this baby didn't want to make an entrance.

Finally, at 42 weeks, doctors stepped in and insisted on performing a C-section.

This time I checked into Reading Hospital, and on 3 August, I was suffering with terrible back pain, so I was given a spinal block injection.

Afterwards, as I waited for it to kick in, I was given a sheet of paper – a long list of epidural and spinal block side effects.

I hadn't been given this before, but I didn't think much of it.

*Different hospital, different rules,* I thought.

Just then, a word caught my eye.

'What's this?' I asked a nurse, pointing to the form.

'Arachnoiditis,' she replied.

'But don't worry, it's a very rare side effect.'

Curious, I looked it up on my phone. And I was horrified by what



**Women need to be aware of this**





# THIS MONTH'S ANSWERS

# JUST FOR FUN



## Code cracker Page 22



## Hide and seek page 3

Answer: PAGE 64

## Strike it page 22

Answer: FORBIDDEN

(Cross out: 3, 12, 28, 30, 73, 78, 86)

## Brick trick page 10



Answer: HEDGEHOG

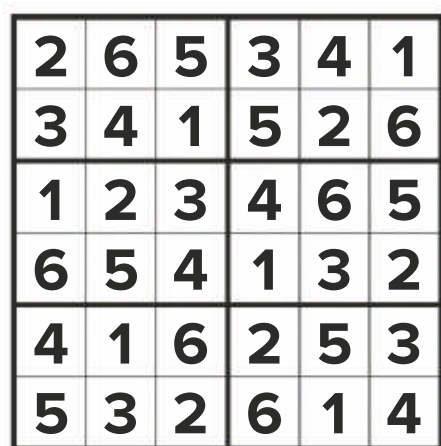


Answer: USING TWITTER

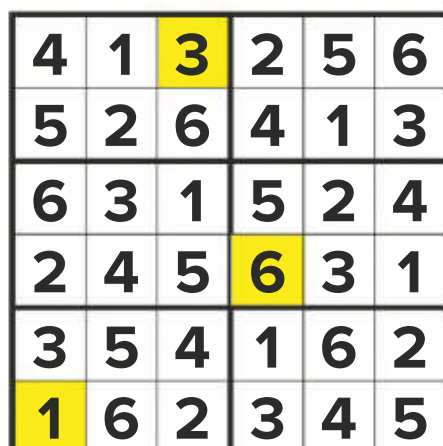
## Movie links page 30

Answer: Anne Hathaway - LES MISÉRABLES - Helena Bonham Carter - ALICE IN WONDERLAND - Stephen Fry - THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY - Bill Nighy - THE BEST EXOTIC MARIGOLD HOTEL - Maggie Smith

## Sudoku page 10



## Sudoku page 30



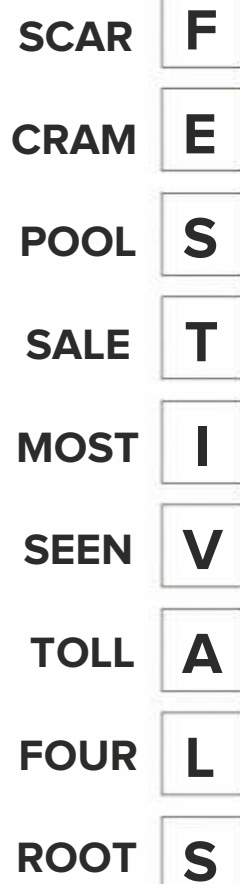
Answer: 361

## Word jumble page 30



Answer: COFFEE

## The skinny one Page 22



Answer: FESTIVALS

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**Some stories may have appeared in other magazines.**



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# WINTER gardens

Get your garden ready  
for the season...

Make the  
most of your  
outdoor  
space



**M**ost of us give our lawns a final mow during October, then leave our gardens to fend for themselves over the bitter winter months. But spending a little longer preparing your outside space for the colder weather will help it look its best come spring. Garden designer Julian Gardner ([gardnerdesigns.co.uk](http://gardnerdesigns.co.uk)) shares his tips...

## Tidy paths and paving

Clear up all the leaves and debris once the trees are bare (it's much easier while everything is still crisp and dry).

It's also worth giving your paving a thorough clean with a stiff brush and some soapy water before the frost arrives so it will be less slippery and safer during the wet winter months.

Alternatively, if you have one, just give it a blast with a pressure washer.

## Maintain borders

Cut back the herbaceous perennials in your borders close to the ground as they begin to die down, and remove annuals that have finished their show.

It's also well worth generally tidying up your borders by removing any dead foliage, leaves and weeds.

Clear spent stems from perennials, but save anything with attractive seed heads – these look magical when frosted.

## Pay attention to shrubs

Prune any wayward branches on your structural shrubs to improve the overall shape and, if they need it, give your hedges a final trim before the frosts hit.

Remove any dead, diseased or damaged branches, particularly with your trees, to prevent the stems from rubbing together and creating wounds or deformities.

## Add colour

To add some winter interest to your garden, look for trees and shrubs with brilliantly coloured bark. They are at their best now, and ideal in smaller gardens.

The Burgundy Tibetan cherry, chalk-white paper birch, striped snakebark maples, and the cinnamon paperbark maple are favourites. Dogwoods are striking, too, and come in flame-orange, scarlet and yellow.

## Prepare the lawn

Go over your lawn with a springtime rake to remove thatch and moss to allow it to breathe and grow freely.

If you have a large amount of moss invading your green space, there's a good chance that you have drainage issues – a session with a lawn spike aerator or even just a standard garden fork will help considerably.

Combine with specially produced autumn lawn feed and moss killer products to give your lawn all the help you can during the season.

## Plant spring bulbs

Plant out your spring bulbs before the winter kicks in. From snowdrops to crocus and daffodils, they all like well-fertilised, free-draining soil, so dig in lots of sharp sand and some bone meal for a slow release of nutrients that will feed the bulbs over a long period.

When planting bulbs, the general rule of thumb is to plant at two or three times the depth of the bulb itself. Spacing also works well at two or three times the width of the bulb, and for the most natural and dramatic effect, plant the same variety of bulb in large drifts.

## Make a to-do list

The garden is relatively quiet in winter in terms of day-to-day tasks, so it is the ideal time to tackle any garden jobs that you may have put off doing.

Experienced gardeners also know that, even though the growing season has finished, there's always work to do, and spring isn't that far off.

For new garden design ideas, put your ideas down on paper, ideally to scale, before you invest in anything new. Whether you are creating a new bed entirely or just giving a facelift to existing borders, it's always best to design the area first before undertaking the work.

Be prepared



# The Chat qu

21. Which racehorse is the only three-time winner of the Grand National?

10 What *Strictly* professional dancer left the show earlier this year?

- a Kevin Clifton
- b Anton Du Beke
- c Dianne Buswell

11 What *Chase* star's nickname is 'The Beast'?

- a Mark Labbett
- b Shaun Wallace
- c Paul Sinha

12 Who recently named their son X Æ A-12?

- a Elon Musk
- b Kanye West
- c Johnny Depp

13 Who was Tom Cruise's second wife?

- a Katie Holmes
- b Nicole Kidman
- c Penélope Cruz

## SPORT

19 What is Usain Bolt's 100m world record time?

- a 9.68 seconds
- b 9.58 seconds
- c 9.98 seconds

20 What colour medal did diver Tom Daley win at London 2012?

- a Silver
- b Gold
- c Bronze

21 Which racehorse is the only three-time winner of the Grand National?

- a Tiger Roll
- b Red Rum
- c Rule The World

22 How many clubs did David Beckham play for during his career?

- a 4
- b 5
- c 6

23 Who won the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2019?

- a France
- b USA
- c England

27. What type of beans are used to make baked beans?

17 Will.i.am is best known for performing with which group?

- a No Doubt
- b Black Eyed Peas
- c Maroon 5

18 Over the years, how many Sugababes have there been?

- a 3
- b 5
- c 6

## MUSIC

14 Which English Sir has had No. 1's in the 50's, 60's, 70's, 80's and 90's?

- a Elton John
- b Paul McCartney
- c Cliff Richard

15 Which girl group had hits including *Pure Shores* and *Never Ever*?

- a Girls Aloud
- b All Saints
- c Spice Girls

16 What was the name of Madonna's first studio album, released in 1983?

- a Madonna
- b Music
- c Like a Prayer

## FILM AND TV

1 What's the pub called in ITV soap *Emmerdale*?

- a The Rovers Return
- b The Woolpack
- c The Queen Vic

2 Which series from the 2000s featured the characters Sheldon and Leonard?

- a *The Big Bang Theory*
- b *Desperate Housewives*
- c *Mad Men*

3 In the movie *Frozen*, which song does Elsa sing as she builds the castle?

- a For the First Time in Forever
- b Do You Want to Build a Snowman?
- c Let It Go

4 Which comedian wrote and stars in *After Life* on Netflix?

- a Russell Howard
- b Ricky Gervais
- c Jimmy Carr

5 Which character in Netflix series *The Crown* has been played by both Claire Foy and Olivia Colman?

- a Princess Margaret
- b The Queen
- c Princess Diana

6 The 2010 film *The Social Network* was about the creation of which social media platform?

- a Facebook
- b Myspace
- c Twitter

7 What is the highest-grossing box office film of all time?

- a *Titanic*
- b *Avengers: Endgame*
- c *Avatar*

## SHOWBIZ

8 What *Celebrity* announced they would be leaving *Celebrity Juice* earlier this month?

- a Fearne Cotton
- b Keith Lemon
- c Holly Willoughby

9 Which One Direction star announced he was going to be a father this year?

- a Niall Horan
- b Zayn Malik
- c Harry Styles

26. Which country is the origin of the Mojito cocktail?



# Quiz!

Fancy yourself as a bit of a brainbox?  
Test just how smart you are with  
these tough teasers...



19. What is Usain Bolt's  
100m world record time?



17. Will.i.am is  
best known for  
performing with  
which group?



23. Who won the  
FIFA Women's  
World Cup in 2019?

## FOOD AND DRINK

24 Lady Finger is a  
variety of which  
fruit?

- a Apple
- b Pear
- c Banana

25 How many cups of  
tea are drunk in the  
UK on average every day?

- a 100 million
- b 140 million
- c 165 million

26 Which country is the  
origin of the Mojito  
cocktail?

- a Cuba
- b Mexico
- c Thailand

27 What type of beans  
are used to make  
baked beans?

- a Kidney beans
- b Haricot beans
- c Black beans

32. What is  
the hottest  
continent  
on Earth?



Just for  
fun

## GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

28 How many of Henry  
VII's wives were  
called Catherine?

- a 3
- b 2
- c 4

29 In what part of the  
body would you find  
the fibula?

- a Brain
- b Leg
- c Arm

30 What is the highest  
mountain in Britain?

- a Ben Nevis
- b Snowdon
- c Scafell Pike

31 How many Members  
of Parliament (MPs)  
are there?

- a 600
- b 650
- c 700

32 What is the hottest  
continent on Earth?

- a Africa
- b Asia
- c America

Answers  
1B, 2A, 3C, 4B, 5B, 6A, 7B, 8C, 9B, 10A, 11A, 12A,  
13B, 14C, 15B, 16A, 17B, 18C, 19C, 20C, 21B, 22C,  
23B, 24C, 25C, 26B, 27B, 28A, 29B, 30A, 31B, 32A

On sale 29 October

# chat

December Special

SCAMMED  
OUT OF £200k

BY A MAN  
WHO  
SAID HE  
LOVED ME



Our little girl was  
THE SMALLEST  
BABY IN THE UK



A stranger  
showed me



HOW SPECIAL  
MY PUP WAS

Images: SWNS



# WEIRD WORLD

## NO LAUGHING MATTER

**L**aughter is said to be the best medicine, but too much of it can be dangerous. For most people, the most significant side effect of laughing is a pain in the ribs and perhaps some damp underwear, but for a few, there is a real risk of overdose...

### RIDICULOUS ROYALS

**K**ing Martin of Aragon is believed to be the only king ever to have laughed himself to death.

After eating an entire goose, he was understandably suffering from indigestion.

He retired to his bedroom, and in order to distract himself from his discomfort, he called for his jester.

To this day, we don't know what entertainment the jester offered, but it seemed he knew his audience.

The king found him so funny that he laughed uncontrollably for three hours.

Eventually he fell out of his bed laughing, and by the time he hit the floor, he was dead.



Silly goose



That's comedy!

### A TRIP TO THE MOVIES

**I**n 1989, Ole Bentzen, a Danish doctor, went to the movies to see *A Fish Called Wanda*, a surreal comedy starring Jamie Lee Curtis.

During a scene where Kevin Kline shoves French fries up Michael Palin's nose, he began to laugh.

Apparently, it reminded him of the time his family stuck cauliflower up their noses while sitting around the dinner table. Doesn't every family do that?

His pulse is claimed to have risen to between 250 and 500 beats per minute, and Bentzen suffered a fatal heart attack.



### A NIGHT AT THE OPERA

**I**n 1782, a certain Mrs. Fitzherbert went to Drury Lane to see a performance of *The Beggar's Opera*.

It's possible that, being the widow of a clergyman, the lady had lived a sheltered life. Or perhaps she had never seen a pantomime. Whatever the reason, the appearance onstage of a man in drag caused Mrs. Fitzherbert to break out into an uncontrollable fit of hysterical laughter.

Such behaviour being discouraged at the opera, she hastily left her seat and went outside, where the fit of hysterics continued.

According to newspapers, Mrs. Fitzherbert was 'unable to banish the figure from her memory, was thrown into a fit of hysterics, which continued without intermission until Friday morning, when she expired.'



## READ ALL ABOUT IT

**T**hey say inflation is a killer. It certainly was for Arthur Cobcroft of Sydney. The 54-year-old dog trainer came across a five-year-old newspaper in 1920 and was comparing the prices of goods in the paper with current prices, when he suddenly broke into fits of laughter.

He made a remark to his wife about the ridiculous prices, and his laughter became more uncontrolled.

He soon found that he was unable to stop himself and eventually collapsed and died.

The cause of death was recorded as heart failure caused by excessive laughter.



**Funny money**



**Sleep easy**

## SWEET DREAMS

**D**reaming isn't normally a dangerous pastime. Even nightmares can't actually hurt us.

But for Damnoen Saen-um of Thailand, his dreams were the death of him.

According to his wife, the ice cream truck driver suddenly began to laugh in his sleep one night in 2003.

The laughter carried on for two minutes, and he was laughing so hard that his wife tried to wake him.

But Damnoen did not wake, and laughed even harder until he suddenly just stopped breathing.

Although the cause of death is not clear, it is thought that the laughing may have brought on a heart seizure.

## BEASTS OF BURDEN

**D**onkeys aren't normally considered particularly funny, but the Greek philosopher Chrysippus might disagree.

Chrysippus was normally a serious kind of man, concerned with subjects such as metaphysical theory, materialist ontology, freedom, and determinism, which all sounds rather heavy.

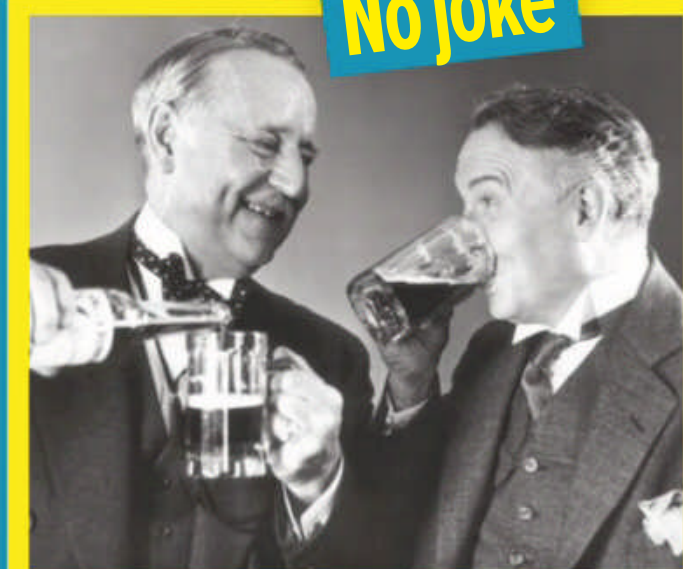
Perhaps he'd had a hard day's thinking when he spotted a donkey eating his figs.

The scene entertained him so much that he fell to the ground laughing and was soon foaming at the mouth.

It's believed that he died from laughter-induced syncope, which can cause tissue death in the brain.



**What did I do?!**



**No joke**

## THE COMPANY OF FRIENDS

**I**n 1893, Wesley Parsons was enjoying dinner with friends. The elderly farmer from Indiana shared a meal, a drink, and a joke.

While attempting to amuse his guests, Wesley laughed at his own joke.

According to reports, he was 'seized with a spell of laughing, being unable to stop, and two hours later, he died from exhaustion.'

Though the death was recorded, the joke was not. Perhaps it's just as well.

A joke that powerful could be dangerous in the wrong hands.

**BIT ON THE SIDE!**

## EVER GREEN

These faux plants will brighten up your home no matter the weather!



Small succulent, £5.99, Homesense

Artificial orchid in gem pot, £20, Next

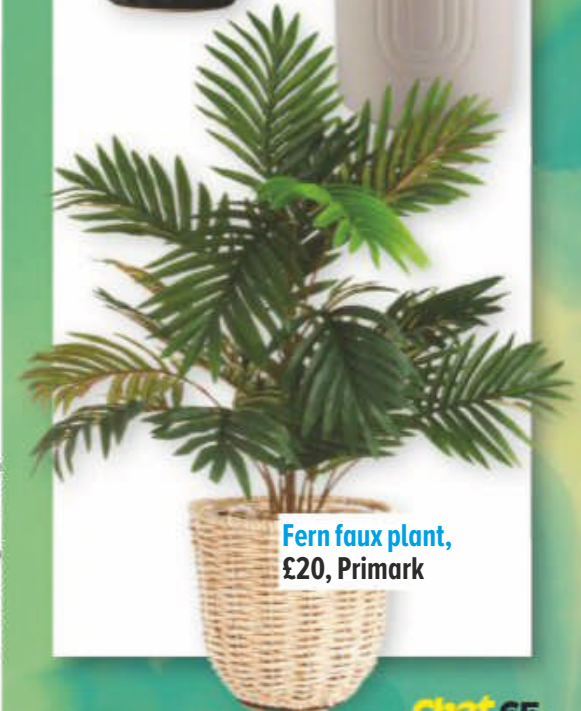


Faux cheese plant, £10, Matalan



Artificial succulents in pot, £12, Next

Sahara potted faux cactus, £24, Argos



Fern faux plant, £20, Primark



# Chit chat

What you  
need to know  
this month...

## SWEET TREAT

With the winter months fast approaching, we've got the perfect thing to get you through the cold weather – a bottle of Hotel Chocolat Salted Caramel Vodka.

This single distilled creamy East Anglian sugar beet vodka is blended with gorgeous natural caramels, with a pinch of Maldon sea salt for extra flavour.

This world class small batch vodka is known for its sumptuous smoothness of the sip, as well as the cream soda undertones. Simply delicious!

Serve neat, over ice, or chilled from the fridge. You can also drizzle it over anything from ice cream to a sticky toffee pudding for that extra indulgence. Enjoy!

● Available for £25 from John Lewis & Partners and from [www.hotelchocolat.com](http://www.hotelchocolat.com)



Time to  
indulge

## THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GROWING

Every year the UK spends nearly £2 billion on cards, with most ending up in the bin. Cards are wonderful to receive, but we've found a way to make them even more thoughtful and kinder to the planet.

Handmade in the UK, these gorgeous greeting cards by Ruby&Bo aren't just beautifully designed, but instead of creating waste, they can be easily planted to grow into lovely flowers!

The cards feature hand drawn illustrations and are made of an exclusive

seed-mix paper embedded with 24 native and non-invasive wildflowers to support the local bee and butterfly population.

The range is completely plastic free, all packaging is fully biodegradable and compostable, and Ruby&Bo plant a tree for every order.

It's the gift that keeps on giving – and growing!

● Ruby&Bo collections are available to purchase at [www.rubyandbo.com](http://www.rubyandbo.com) or selected products can be found in 160 National Trust shops nationwide.



## MUSIC AND LYRICS

It's happened to all of us – you've been singing along to a song in front of your mates when suddenly everyone puts down their pints, looks at you funny and shakes their heads at you in dismay. Yep, you've only gone and got the words wrong – again.

A recent poll by Starkey Hearing Technologies has revealed the most common misheard song lyrics, and it turns out our brains work in some seriously strange ways. Sure, it's possible that

'Sweet dreams are made of cheese', but that's definitely not what Annie Lennox was singing about.

Here are the top misheard lyrics to popular songs – how many have you been singing wrong?

● **Money for nothin' and chips for free.** Correct lyric: *Money for nothin' and your chicks for free* from Dire Straits' *Money For Nothing*.

● **We built this city on sausage rolls.** Correct lyric: *We built this city on rock 'n' roll* from Starship's *We Built This City*.

● **Should I give up, or should I just keep chasing penguins?** Correct lyric: *Should I give up, or should I just keep chasing pavements?* from Adele's *Chasing Pavements*.

● **All the lonely Starbucks lovers.** Correct lyric: *Got a long list of ex-lovers* from Taylor Swift's *Blank Space*.

● **I'm farting carrots.** Correct lyric: *I'm 14 carat* from Selena Gomez's *Good for you*.

● **I'm Terry Wogan.** Correct lyric: *I'm every woman* from Chaka Khan's *I'm Every Woman*



Familiar  
tunes

## HELPFUL READ

It's often hard to explain to children why grown-ups sometimes feel sad.

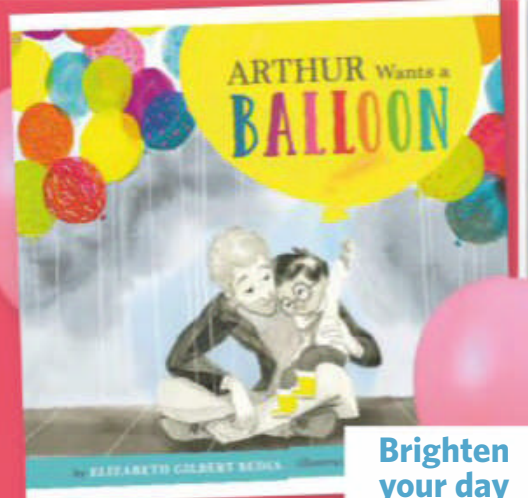
In her new book, author Elizabeth Gilbert Bedia helps children understand the wonderful difference a loving gesture can make in the midst of the greyest times.

In *Arthur Wants a Balloon*, Arthur's gloomy dad rushes him through the park every morning, through grey and rainy weather.

Arthur just wants a balloon from the park's vendor, but Dad always says no.

One rainy morning, the balloons magically appear at their doorstep, and Arthur figures out the perfect way to bring the sunshine out, even if only for a few moments. This heartfelt story is about a parent's depression and a young child's uncanny ability to empathise and offer support.

● Get *Arthur Wants a Balloon* for £6.99 on Amazon.



Brighten  
your day



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