

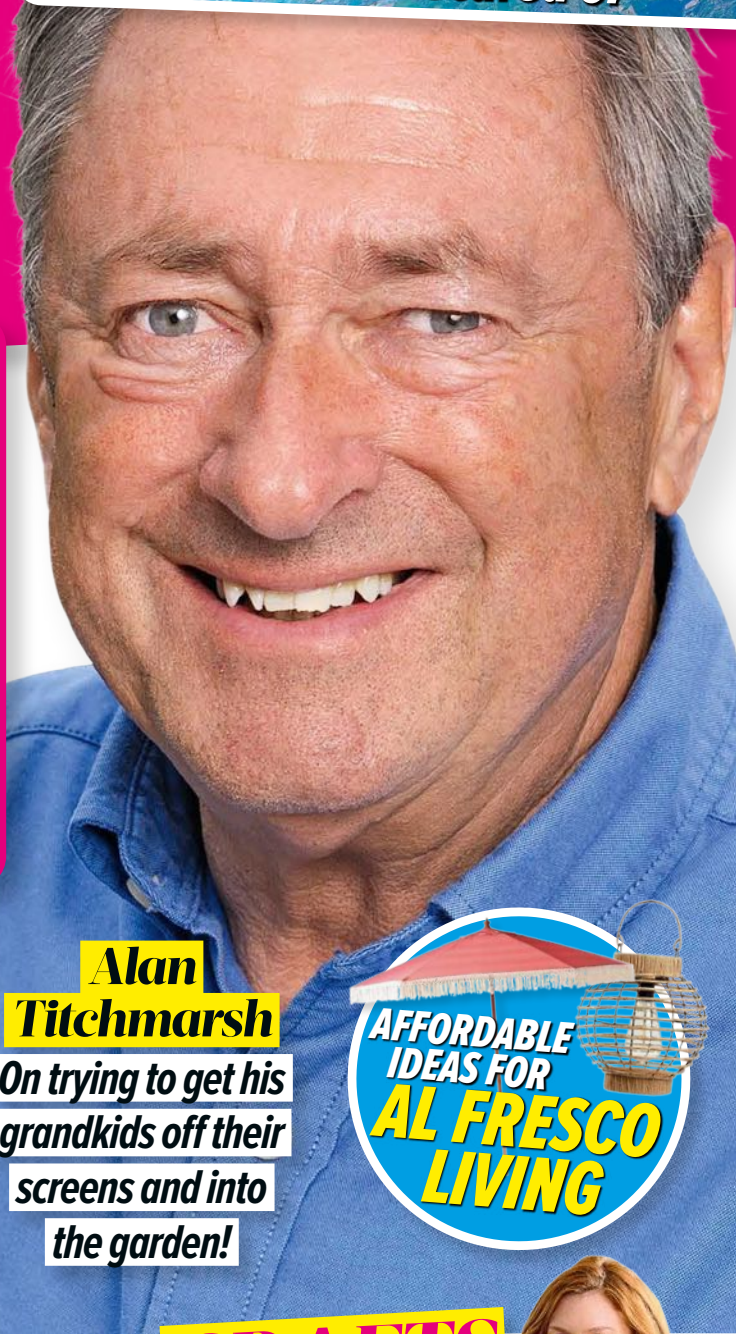
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Woman's Weekly

26 May 2026 £1.99



MIDLIFE THRILL SEEKERS!
'I love doing things I'm scared of'



Alan Titchmarsh
On trying to get his grandkids off their screens and into the garden!

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Hello!

All work and no play...

“ At this time of year, those of us lucky enough to have a garden find we’re lured outside by some invisible force at any opportunity to dig this, weed that, plant those. I’ve written before about our current garden, which has been long overgrown, like some tiny Lost Garden of Heligan. And every month we seemingly reveal some new mature plant, put there long ago by a past custodian now enjoying the eternal garden in the sky, as we hack through undergrowth thicker than a Peruvian rainforest. But enjoyable as that is, we would all do well to occasionally sit back and enjoy our plots, and not just toil in them. ”
See page 32.

Geoff
EDITOR

geoffrey.palmer@futurenet.com



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FROM US TO YOU

Good to SHARE

A baby monkey, La Voix onstage, and plants to help our moths survive



ANNIE ON TOUR

Drag performer La Voix won many fans while competing in the 2025 series of *Strictly Come Dancing*, and now plays child-hating orphanage matron Miss Hannigan in a new UK and Ireland touring production of the hit musical *Annie*. La Voix performs from 23 May to 4 July, after which Claire Sweeney takes over.
* anniethemusicaltour.uk

Wild about gardens

Moths are beautiful creatures and excellent pollinators – and need our support. A joint campaign by the Royal Horticultural Society and Wildlife Trusts aims to boost opportunities for moths to thrive, especially as their numbers have declined by a third since the 1960s. So if you have a garden, support moth caterpillars by planting native flowers and shrubs like honeysuckle, sweet william, verbascum, foxgloves, comfrey, marjoram and bedstraw. Night-flying moths will love sweet-smelling tobacco plants and jasmine.
* wildlifetrusts.org

Did you know?

A new arrival Lagertha, a baby rolaway monkey, has stolen the hearts of staff and visitors alike at Chester Zoo. Her mother Masaya had only recently recovered from pioneering surgery to save her damaged foot, so the baby's safe delivery was especially heart-warming; chesterzoo.org.



On this day in history

21 May 1966 American boxer Muhammad Ali defeated Britain's Henry Cooper to retain his world heavyweight title. The match, staged at Arsenal FC's Highbury stadium in London, was stopped in the sixth round when Cooper needed 12 stitches to a gash on his forehead, with critics saying the bout should have been halted earlier.



SAFE REFUGE

Decommissioned flat-bottomed barges known as lighters are being given new life as bird sanctuaries in Essex's Blackwater Estuary. Three of the vessels were sunk to create an 'island' that offers shelter for birds, even at high tide, helping to combat the threats to habitat caused by rising sea levels.

* nationaltrust.org.uk



NATURE NOTES

From Louise Midgley



May bugs are on the wing. I know this because a welcoming committee of three greeted me late last night, when I returned from a night out with friends. These scarab beetles are a tad clumsy in flight and the thought crossed my mind that they too were on their way home after a nightcap at their local watering hole. They buzzed and bumped around my head, and very nearly came into the porch when I put the light on. Knowing the males have delicate, antler-like antennae that look like false eyelashes, I very gently pushed them away.

My garden week

Last year, I fell in love with the newly introduced King's Rose from David Austin – named after Charles III – so I've just planted one where it can be seen from the kitchen window.



SPRING CERTAINTY

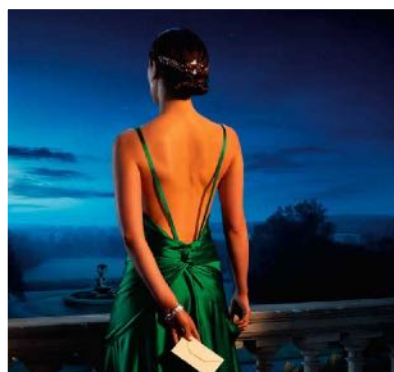
Our spring bank holiday was originally on Whit Monday, the day after Pentecost, linked to the church's Easter calendar, and so the date could vary. Although people still sometimes call it the 'Whitsun' holiday, in 1971, it was fixed by law to always fall on the last Monday of May.



MAKING AMENDS

A young girl's accusation leads to lifelong consequences in Ian McEwan's classic novel *Atonement*. Set in the summer of 1935, it was made into a 2007 film starring Keira Knightley and James McAvoy. Now, the world premiere of a new stage adaptation by Christopher Hampton will be part of this year's Chichester Festival, from 29 May to 20 June.

* cft.org.uk



Money-saving tip

Ace idea With Wimbledon just weeks away, you may fancy a game of tennis. Local

courts can be booked online for a fee. But with Barclays Free Park Tennis you can enjoy an hour's completely free tennis and coaching at 10am on Saturday mornings; lta.org.uk.

FROM YOU TO US

Good to SHARE

We love to hear what you've been up to, so do get in touch!



Welcome to the club!

I am writing to say what a great edition of *Woman's Weekly* magazine you had on 17 March. It has everything in this issue – health advice, recipes I want to cook, walking articles, stories, puzzles I can complete – everything is so good. I'm very glad I am now a subscriber – thank you.
Jennifer Viner, Ware

Letter of the week



PAWS FOR THOUGHT

Here is a typically laid-back fitness demonstration by Gatsby the cat.
Sue Dickie, Hawkinge

* Got a pet pic that makes you smile? We can give it a good home



LOOK WHAT I MADE

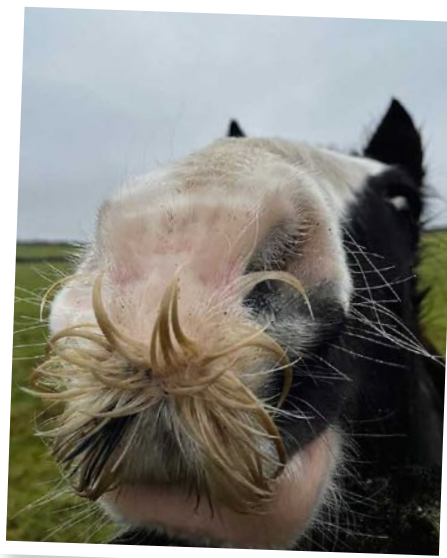
I recently knitted myself this cardigan from oddments of wool and a pattern from your 14 January 2025 issue. There was enough left to knit one for my granddaughter too.
Christine Crozier, Doncaster

GET IN TOUCH

WE LOVE LETTERS
Woman's Weekly, Future plc, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR.
P.S. It really helps when you put your details in capitals.
* We do not return photos (apart from You Wore It Well) so please do not send originals.
EMAIL US
womansweeklypostbag@futurenet.com
Tell us your full name, address and daytime phone number, please.

HORSE PLAY

On my morning walk I came across this gorgeous friendly pony, who trotted over to the wall to say hello. Just look at his beautiful whiskers!
Maz Bradley, Halifax



Important! All contributions to *Woman's Weekly* must be original and NOT duplicated to other publications. £25 will be paid to the writer of the 'Letter of the week' for all rights in each letter printed. The Editor reserves the right to modify any letter. Future plc reserves the right to reuse any submission to *Woman's Weekly* in any format or medium, including social networking sites. We regret that we cannot enter into personal correspondence. Photos of children under 18 must be accompanied by written permission of a parent/legal guardian. All details correct at time of going to press.

WHAT YOU'RE WEARING COMPILED BY ANNE HARTNETT

What you're WEARING



Pam King, 66

Tell us about your look

My soft cotton dress is by Crew Clothing. I love the blue floral print and it's so easy to wear. I've had my Levi's denim jacket a while but it just gets better with age. My bag is from FatFace and the trainers are Skechers. I love a relaxed, casual look, and if I'm not wearing a dress, I'll go for cropped jeans and a top.

What's your favourite thing about yourself?

My family and my positivity. I also love travelling.



Emma Collins, 59

Tell us about your look

I like an easy, relaxed look with a modern vibe. Whistles, Jigsaw and M&S are my favourite places to shop – although I'll often wait for the sales! My cotton jacket is Whistles (I'm really into jackets at the moment), the top is from Wyse and my jeans are Uniqlo. I've had my belt for ages, and my bag and trainers are both M&S.

What's your favourite thing about yourself?

My naturally curly hair.



Natalie Seago, 48

Tell us about your look

I love a denim dress – it's versatile, timeless and you can wear it all year round. This one is from Sosandar, bought online. I've added a Coach belt, which I found online at Vinted. My tan boots are Next and my bag is Radley. I always like to add nice accessories – they can really lift an outfit.

What's your favourite thing about yourself?

My new-found confidence!



Lisa Hardman, 55

Tell us about your look

I bought this dress from Anthropologie. It's not a look I'd normally go for, but I thought I'd try something new! It's such a romantic, feminine style, so I've added my charity-shop jacket for a slightly edgier look. My boots are Penelope Chilvers and my bag is by Mulberry.

What's your favourite thing about yourself?

My friends and family. I also love to give back, and enjoy volunteering at the Hospice of St Francis charity shop in Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire.

YOU WORE IT WELL

Annie Shave, 1930, sent in by her granddaughter, Ann Dunsten

This photo was taken at my christening. I think my grandmother is very smartly dressed in the fashion of the time. Also pictured is my late brother, then aged two.

* We'd love to see how great you looked in any era up to and including the 1980s. Please send a good-quality photo with your name, address and daytime phone number clearly written on the back, to: Fashion Dept, *Woman's Weekly*, Future plc, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR. Photos will be returned.

'We are a part OF NATURE'

Alan Titchmarsh on a huge house move, keeping flexible and trying to slow down

Gardening legend Alan Titchmarsh CBE, 77, has vowed in the past to slow down and have more time off, but the self-confessed 'stimulation-aholic' is as busy as ever. As well as hosting ITV's *Love Your Weekend with Alan Titchmarsh* for a good chunk of the year, he is enjoying huge success on YouTube with *Gardening with Alan Titchmarsh*. 'There's a great intimacy to YouTube... you can take longer over something, and the response has been amazing. We haven't been doing it for a year yet, but we've got over 100,000 subscribers. I'm really chuffed. I love doing it,' Alan tells us.

But despite launching on the platform he insists, 'I am working at getting the schedule

eased – a little,' explaining, 'I am getting there! I can do a day a month of YouTube – I do about five films a day – with really good production value.'

Away from filming, he has another new venture, revealing to *Woman's Weekly*, 'I've got a novel being published next spring – my first murder mystery. I've never done one before!'

Last year, Alan and his wife Alison made a house move after more than two decades in the same home, on the advice of their daughters. 'We moved before Christmas so that meant new year, new house, new garden. We had been in the old place 23 years, so it was a big move,' he admits.

'It did feel like home almost straightaway. When you move out of a home, it stops being a home, suddenly it becomes

a house. You've gone – the beating heart has moved elsewhere. The trees went up in the new house, and it was celebratory... It's a lovely fresh start – the chance to do it all again.'

Remaining close to family – they have two daughters and four grandchildren – was important. 'We are seeing a lot more of them,' says Alan.

Despite regular television commitments, he still finds time to be in the garden for pleasure as well as work. 'Whenever I've got an hour, I'm out there. There's

lots to do and think about. I'm not rushing it, but I keep eyeing things up, thinking, "What am I going to do there?" It's a pleasure. I am a stimulation-aholic; I love challenges – the chance to improve the view.'

While gardening provides Alan's greatest 'escape to reality', he also does Pilates once a week to keep flexible. 'I've been doing that for a couple of years. Just stretches – I am not a gym buddy! It is so boring, but I like to keep flexible.' He explains, 'As you get older, you're grateful that you've lasted as long as you

have. You find yourself just trying to keep flexible because you start to hurt a bit more in various places. And it's wonderful that – touch wood – I haven't got any aches and pains at the moment.

'When you kneel down, it can be a bit tricky. At my ripe age, you'd expect that. The most important thing is – not being able to run a marathon – but on a daily basis, getting through the day adequately and reasonably flexibly.'

As for *Love Your Garden with Alan Titchmarsh*, Alan says, 'It's lovely stuff, so enjoyable – people think it's such a calming programme... It's not the usual four-minute bish, bash, bosh you get with telly. There's a pressure with certain chat shows – you've got to be funny. We do have laughs. But also, interesting conversation. So it's goats one minute and television stars the next!' And



With wife Alison, receiving his CBE last year



At the Royal Windsor Flower Show with the King, and celebrating the success of his YouTube channel



while Alan has a break during the summer, during production his schedule is demanding. 'I film three programmes in two days every three weeks, so it's intense,' he confesses. 'It can be about 30 different interviews!'

So has Alan had any luck getting his four grandkids – some now entering their early teens – outside and off their screens? 'They have phases of it... The main thing is, they enjoy being out there. They feel comfortable in it and that's my aim – to make them understand it a bit and not be intimidated,' he tells *Woman's Weekly*.

The star explains, 'You've got to hook them in – show them how interesting gardening is. Instead of worrying about global warming and climate change, they can make a difference. They can get involved and do something rather than feeling powerless that it's too big an issue. It isn't. It's a small issue on your local scale at home. Do something there and you're doing your bit, it joins together.'

After attending the premiere of King Charles' documentary, *Finding Harmony*, Alan is also backing the monarch's message. 'I love that we were shown how much of a difference can be made. The underlying message is that we are a part of nature. It's not nature "and us", we are involved. The important thing is, we utilise our time and efforts well. We can make it better.'

'With gardening, you're connecting with nature and that's the ultimate reality. An escape to reality. It is real. I'll look out of my window tomorrow morning – it'll still be there. Isn't that worth investing in and worth celebrating? I regard myself as redressing the balance...'

*** Love Your Weekend with Alan Titchmarsh** airs Sundays at 9.30am on ITV1 and IT VX.

*** Gardening with Alan Titchmarsh** is on YouTube.

'With
gardening,
it's an escape
to reality'



Our little buzzing beauties

The nation's favourite pollinator is much more than a honey-maker

We all know what a bee looks like – don't we? Yet bees aren't always easy to identify. They are a diverse family; some bee species closely resemble wasps, while to further complicate things, there are several hoverflies and wasps that closely mimic the appearance of bees.

The UK is home to around 276 species of bees – which seems

like a large number until you consider that there are more than 20,000 species worldwide. Surprisingly, Britain has only one type of honeybee, but there are 25 species of bumblebee, with the rest solitary bees: some of which are common, while others are in serious decline. One thing is for sure, a garden that buzzes with the gentle hum of bees is a good indicator of a healthy, balanced ecosystem.



ASHY MINING BEE

Andrena cineraria

With its distinctive, monochrome colours of soft black, grey and white hairs, it's easy to see why this little ball of fluff is commonly referred to as the 'Panda bee'. Look for these solitary bees from March onwards while they forage for food on wildflowers and the

blossom of blackthorn, hawthorn and fruit trees. Having said that, the easiest way to spot them is to look out for their nests on the ground. These are constructed by the females, more often than not in sandy soil, and resemble mini, dome-shaped volcanoes.



IS IT A BEE?

- * Bees have four wings; one small pair and one large.
- * They have eyes on the side of their heads and their bodies are usually covered in hair.
- * Bees feed on nectar for sugar and pollen for protein.

Honeybee

Apis mellifera

Humble and hard-working is the perfect way to describe our native honeybee. In contrast to some of their more flamboyant cousins, these bees have streamlined, striped, golden brown bodies that are covered in a mass of fine hairs. In the UK, honeybees typically live in hives managed by beekeepers, but there are also wild colonies in pockets of the countryside.

They work collectively to gather food, predominantly from March to September, by communicating the location of high-quality floral sources. This is done via a distinctive 'waggle dance', which is a sequence of circular movements resembling a figure of eight. Honeybees' importance extends beyond producing honey, beeswax, propolis and royal jelly, as they play a crucial role in pollination.





Bees are good:
Huge impact,
small size



RED-TAILED BUMBLEBEE

Bombus lapidarius

Larger than average and easily identified by their plump, fuzzy bodies and trademark hum, bumblebees epitomise the sound of summer. The red-tailed bumblebee is widespread across the UK from early spring to late autumn, and is identifiable by its fluffy, brick-red tail. Queens and female workers are considerably larger than males of the species. These bees nest underground, in discarded rodent holes or under rocks, with the size of the nest varying from around 300 bees to less than 100.

WORDS: LOUISE MIDGLEY. PHOTOS: GETTY



GOODEN'S NOMAD BEE

Nomada goodeniana

The yellow-and-black striped abdomen, orange legs and antennae of this bee gives it a wasp-like appearance. Nomad bees are the cuckoos of the insect world: their strategy is similar to the birds that lay their eggs in other nests, and once hatched, they eject the host bird's eggs in order to be fed by the parent. The Gooden's Nomad bee mainly targets the nests of the solitary Buffish mining bees to lay its eggs. Upon hatching, the larva destroys the host bee's eggs, consumes the host's store of pollen and completes its life cycle.

Patchwork leaf-cutter bee

Megachile centuncularis

As one of the most commonly seen solitary bees in our gardens, leaf-cutter bees are the most fascinating ones to observe. If you have roses, lilac, honeysuckle and a bee hotel in a sunny spot, they will almost certainly be

present in your plot. Look out for the females cutting semi-circular discs from leaves, which are used to build nest cells for their young. You may also see them flying around the vegetation, transporting the leaf sections to their nests.



Relight your FIRE!

Tired of feeling tired? Turbocharge your energy levels with these simple, expert-backed tricks

With busy lives and a seemingly endless to-do list, it's no wonder we often feel washed-out. Add fluctuating hormones to the mix and the knock-on effects of disrupted sleep, and not fuelling ourselves properly can leave us feeling even more exhausted.

'On top of that, women often carry a heavier cognitive and emotional load – balancing work, caring responsibilities and mental admin – which drives ongoing fatigue,' says nutritionist Rob Hobson. 'Diet culture and busy routines can also lead to skipped meals or a reliance on low-calorie but sugar-filled snacks, making it even harder to maintain stable energy.'

But there are plenty of things we can do to help. And it doesn't take a stack of time or money to make a difference. Here's what you need to know.

Start the day right

'If you skip breakfast or grab something sugary on the go, you're much more likely to spend the day playing catch-up with snacks and caffeine,' warns Rob. 'You don't need anything fancy – Greek yogurt with berries and nuts, eggs on toast or oats with nut butter are all simple ways to start well.'



MANAGE MENTAL LOAD AND RECOVERY

'Build in breaks, pace demanding tasks and prioritise quality sleep where possible,' says Rob. 'Small pauses, mindfulness or even short walks can help maintain focus and alertness, and reduce the cumulative impact of stress and mental fatigue.'

Check iron levels

Being low on iron can cause fatigue – as well as pale skin and breathlessness. 'Include iron-rich foods like lean red meat, lentils, beans and spinach, paired with vitamin C (citrus fruits, peppers) to support absorption,' advises Rob.

Be caffeine smart

'People don't realise they're stacking caffeine – morning coffee, another at lunch, then a pick-me-up later – which can leave you wired at night and exhausted the next day,' says Rob. 'I'd keep caffeine to earlier in the day, keep it measured and pair it with food, so the lift feels steadier.'



STILL EXHAUSTED?

If persistent tiredness continues despite these changes, talk to your GP or pharmacist.



Get good sleep

It seems obvious, but so many of us sabotage our chance of a good night with our lifestyle habits. Avoid caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, phone scrolling and late meals before bed. Manage stress levels, make sure you exercise during the day, and have a regular going-to-bed and getting-up time. And ensure your environment is conducive to sleep – think about keeping your bedroom quiet and dark, with a comfy bed and bedding, and minus disruptive pets.

Need a boost?



Have a banana instead of a sugary snack. Bananas are rich in potassium and carbohydrates for quick energy. Sugary snacks and refined carbs can give you a quick energy rush, but it's followed by a swift crash that leaves you feeling worse in the long run, so avoid them as much as possible.

Upgrade cravings

Don't ban snacks completely because you'll crave them more. 'The goal isn't restriction; it's avoiding a spike-and-crash,' says Rob. 'Pair chocolate with nuts, yogurt with fruit, or salty snacks with houmous or cheese. You'll get satisfaction without destabilising energy.'



Move more

A sedentary lifestyle is a sure-fire way to feel tired. 'Sitting for long stretches can slow blood flow and increase blood pressure, which is why breaking up sedentary time with regular movement is so important,' says Dr Yvonne Umebuani Beresford, commercial medical director at Vitality. Build five-minute walks into your day to re-energise you. 'Short bursts of movement like this act like a restart button for your cardiovascular system, increasing blood flow and oxygen,' adds Dr Umebuani Beresford.

Choose supplements wisely

'Stimulants can be used as short-term, situational support for alertness, rather than a fix for chronic fatigue,' says Rob. If you feel you need an extra lift, try something like Pro Plus Fizz, £6 for 20 tablets, Tesco. It offers a measured dose of caffeine while the effervescent format helps build hydration into your routine.



FIVE UPLIFTER FOODS

1 Eggs They're an excellent source of sustained energy. 'Eggs are a nutritional powerhouse,' says Melissa Jaeger, head of nutrition at MyFitnessPal. 'They're a complete protein, meaning they contain all nine essential amino acids the body can't produce on its own.' Their high-quality protein and healthy fats provide your body with a steady release of fuel. Serve on wholewheat toast for a fibre boost and to help stabilise blood sugar for ongoing energy.



2 Oily fish Try salmon and mackerel for energy-boosting fatty acids and sustaining protein, plus essential nutrients like vitamin D and B vitamins, which support metabolism and help convert fuel into energy.

3 Sweet potatoes They are rich in complex carbs and high in fibre, which helps to slow digestion and keep blood sugar stable. Essential nutrients such as magnesium, potassium and iron also support energy metabolism and muscle function.

4 Berries An excellent energy source, as they provide a steady release of natural sugars alongside soluble fibre. Their high antioxidant content (polyphenols) boosts energy function to reduce fatigue, and nutrients such as manganese support energy production.

5 Walnuts Nutrient-dense, with energy-giving protein, fibre and healthy fats, they keep brain energy high, as well as physical energy. 'They're the only tree nut rich in the plant-based omega 3,' says dietician Nichola Ludlam-Raine. 'Adding a daily handful of California walnuts to your diet is an easy habit that can make a big difference over time.'



WORDS: TANYA PEAREY. PHOTOS (POSED BY MODELS): GETTY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP. CONSULT YOUR GP OR MEDICAL EXPERT BEFORE TAKING NEW SUPPLEMENTS

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IT'S A FUNNY OLD WORLD

'I eat meat, but always respectfully'

THIS WEEK'S COLUMNIST Food writer Tom Parker Bowles

“If you're going to eat meat, as I do, it's our responsibility to ensure animals are raised, fed and slaughtered as humanely as possible. Sheep and cows can't be intensively farmed like pigs and chickens. Cheap pork and chicken often come from animals confined in cages, quickly fattened, slaughtered and sold cheaply. They become mere money-making machines, living miserable lives so we can pay as little as possible.

At the other end of the scale is organic, free-range and regenerative farming. Animals should eat what they're meant to, roam freely and live decent lives. It's easy to say 'buy expensive meat' and I understand not everyone can. But the difference isn't just taste – it's about respect for the animal.

Because cheap meat is everywhere, we've come to assume chicken should appear on our plates daily. I think meat should feel like a luxury again. Buy the best you can afford, and think twice about chicken imported from unknown sources, raised in squalid

conditions. Intensive farming is cruel, unnatural and harmful – to the animals, the environment and our health. Compare that with a properly reared £20 chicken that's lived a good life. Roast it on Sunday, make sandwiches from it the next day, then use the bones to make stock. That's three or four meals from one bird, and the experience of cooking and eating feels meaningful.

Buying British is another important consideration; our welfare standards are higher. Don't just stick to breasts or sirloin steaks. Some of the best cuts are cheaper ones – breast of lamb, shin of beef, oxtail. These muscles have worked hard, so slow cooking brings out deep flavour.

I'm also obsessed with beans. Start with garlic, chilli and onion, add tomatoes and perhaps a little chorizo, pancetta or British smoked streaky bacon. You don't need much meat. Beans are affordable, filling and nourishing – you don't have to spend a fortune to eat well.

Supporting our farmers is vital. They're often ignored but are the backbone of the country. Supermarkets have their place, but go to a butcher if you can. They know the source, the breed and how to cook it.

Ask for advice if you have a budget; trust their expertise. If you don't have a butcher, supermarkets sell stewing steak, chuck and offal – liver, kidneys, even brain – which are inexpensive and full of flavour.

We're omnivores. I enjoy a cheeseburger as much as anyone, but I naturally eat less meat now, with vegetarian meals a few days a week. When I do eat meat, I want the animal to have lived well, been treated with respect and made its life count. That's what matters.”

'You don't have to spend a fortune to eat well'

* *Let's Eat Meat* by Tom Parker Bowles (£26, HB, HarperCollins) is out this week.

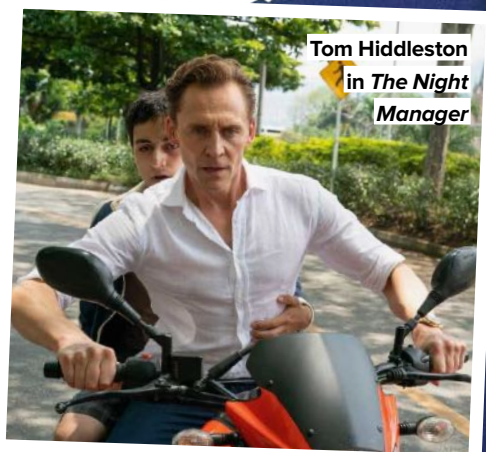
'My funny old week'

WHERE I'VE BEEN Antigua! My dad takes us on holiday every year, and we went with my 18-year-old daughter and 16-year-old son. It was all about pools, sunshine and family time – a really relaxing and memorable trip.

WHAT I'VE SEEN The second series of *The Night Manager*. It shows how good the BBC can be.

WHO I'VE MET My friend Henry Jeffreys. He is my co-host on our podcast, *Intoxicating History*. We went to Faversham Literary Festival, sat down in a beautiful church, and had a chat and a lovely lunch.

WHAT I'VE BOUGHT A whole lot of chilli seeds, as it's time to start planting. I am obsessed with them. Chillies and tomatoes are so easy to grow.



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and INDEPENDENCE
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**YOURSTRIDE ALARM
WATCH**

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of the home**

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4. We will keep your contacts up to date with information as required.

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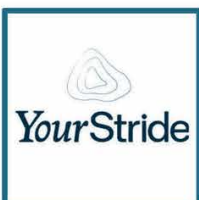
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10 OF THE BEST

Multitasking HEROES

Smart buys that will really earn their spot in your beauty bag

1 BUZZ OFF

Avin Skin So Soft Original Dry Oil, £6, avon.uk.com, will leave your body feeling silky smooth while helping to prevent bug bites. It's blended with citronellol from the citronella plant, which has been proven to keep insects at bay. Just a couple of mists, and mosquitoes and midges will stay well away.

2 BETTER BASE

Summer calls for a lighter, more breathable product, and **Catrice Skin Like Tinted Moisturiser SPF 30, £5.99, Boots**, will do the job beautifully. It hydrates and provides a natural-looking veil of coverage with a 'your skin, but better' finish, and it also contains SPF 30 for extra protection.

3 LASH AND BROW LIFT

Not only is **Ruby Hammer Mascara & Brow Duo, £28, rubyhammer.com**, one of the best mascaras that we've tried – the tiny brush lets you grab every lash for perfect definition – but on the other side is a handy clear gel, to help keep your brows in place all day. Great for an easy way to look perfectly groomed.

4 SMARTER SUNCARE

It's important to wear sun protection every day, even if it's cloudy, and picking formulas with bonus skin benefits makes them doubly useful. **Clarins UV Plus Skin Barrier SPF 50+, £38, clarins.co.uk**, protects from UV rays and pollution, while hydrating and restoring the skin barrier, for a healthier-looking complexion.

From only £5.99



10 MATCHY MAKE-UP

You can use **TIRTIR Mood Glider Lip and Blush Stick, £15, tirtir.global**, on both your face and mouth. The stick makes it quick and easy to apply – sweep on to the apples of your cheeks and blend with your fingertips, then swipe on to your lips. Available in six flattering shades, from pale peach to bright red.

9 SET THE TONE

You can keep your grey hair looking vivid and bright with **L'Oréal Paris Cool Silver Enhancing Silver Treatment, £11.99, Superdrug**. It will counteract any brassy yellow tones, while also working to strengthen and soften your hair, leaving it with a mirror-like shine. It's better hair in a tube, with easy one-step application.

8 SKIN SOOTHER

SBC Oats & Shea Shower Oil, £36, sbcskincare.co.uk, cleans skin while moisturising it – you could even get away with skipping your body cream. It uses a blend of natural oils to soften and soothe your limbs. While it's on the pricier side, a little goes a long way, and this large 500ml bottle will last for months of use.

7 ESPECIALLY FOR YOU

Renew + Me, £34.99 a month, renewandme.com, will tackle a whole host of skin issues, from hyperpigmentation to wrinkles, and what's even better is that the formula is bespoke to your complexion's needs. Upload pictures of your skin, fill in the questionnaire, and every month, a prescription will arrive on your doorstep.

6 HAIR HERO

Beauty Works 10 in 1 Miracle Spray, £12.99, Boots, has a whopping 10 benefits. To name a few, it hydrates, detangles, repairs damage, improves shine and protects from heat styling – all in just one spritz. All hair types would benefit from a misting before blow-drying or using straighteners and curlers.

5 CULT CLASSIC

There's a reason why **Elizabeth Arden Eight Hour Cream, £31, John Lewis**, is such a beauty classic – even Queen Elizabeth II was a fan! It can be used almost everywhere – to nourish chapped lips, to soothe soreness, and to help dry patches of skin. It's one of those products you're always happy to have in the bathroom.



£10, sizes 6-24,
M&S

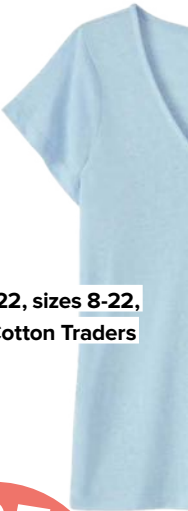


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£12, sizes xs-xxl,
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COMPILED BY: LAUREN GOODWIN-GRAFTON



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£8, sizes s-xl,
Matalan



£12, sizes 6-24,
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£9, sizes xs-xxl,
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Dash at Bonmarché



Great buy

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Primark



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IN 10
COLOURS

Daring TO DO

Three women tell us about the physical activities that leave them buzzing

'I love doing things I'm a little bit scared of'

Caroline Keylock, 48, is a business consultant. She lives in Worthing, West Sussex, with her husband Ben, 47, and their children Otis, nine, and Betty, six.

'Mum, try it!' my son Otis, then six, said. He held out his scooter, wanting to see if I could ride it down the skateboard ramp at our local park. My husband Ben had already given it a go, but for some reason I was frozen. Later I admonished myself – I've always been quite sporty and usually love joining in.

So a few weeks later, in October 2023, when Otis asked me if he could do skateboarding lessons at a centre in Brighton, I decided to join him. While I'd done a bit of surfing and snowboarding before, I was very much a novice. The thought of falling on concrete

made me pause, but something in me wanted to give it a go.

I was terrible in that first session, but loved it immediately. I was only really pushing around, but I was so proud that I bought myself a skateboard the same day.

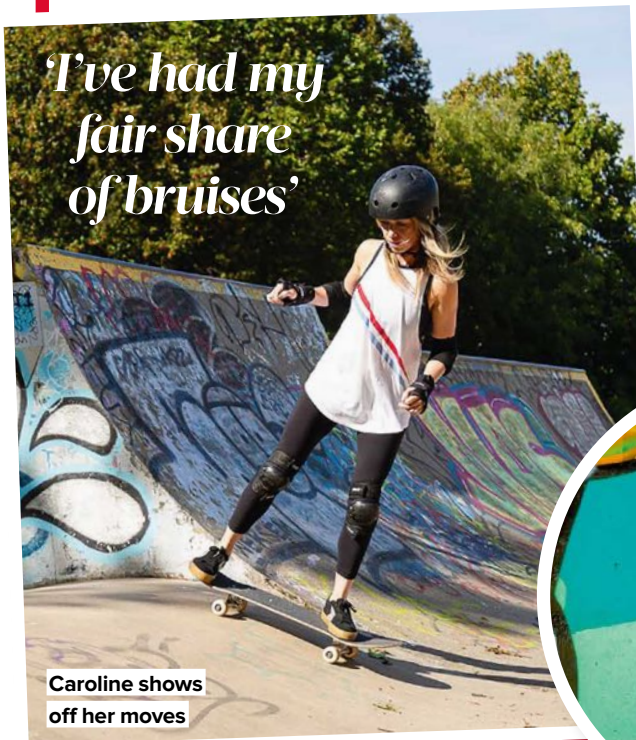
As well as being a skill and great exercise, skateboarding is playful.

I soon began to master new skills and, wanting to connect with others, in 2023, I formed a community, Board Women, for women like me who skateboard, surf or snowboard. There's a podcast at the heart of it, featuring women from around the world.

I still go to weekly lessons, and skateboard on the ramps at least twice a week. I'm really religious about keeping it up, as it brings me so much joy. While people might be surprised to see me with a board, on the whole people are very positive and the community is welcoming of midlife women (30+). I've had my fair share of bruises and even got a concussion on one occasion a couple of years ago, but the highs definitely outweigh the lows.

I love challenging myself to do things I'm a little bit scared of. And because when you're skateboarding it's impossible to think about anything else, it's one of the few times when my brain feels genuinely quiet.

* boardwomen.co



'I've had my fair share of bruises'

Caroline shows off her moves



Yolande takes
the plunge in a
tandem skydive

'Everything about skydiving is just thrilling'

Yolande Lee, 54, lives in Doddington, Cambridgeshire, with her partner.

I looked down at the ground, 2,200 feet below, then stepped into the open air – and I've never looked back. My journey to becoming a skydiver started with scuba in my late teens. Many of my diving friends also skydived, and when they told me how much fun it was, I desperately wanted to try.

In 1990, a few university friends and I clubbed together for a charity skydive. We were amateurs so booked a training day. I jumped three times that day! The club was a community. I got a job in the cafe and the centre became my second home. We'd jump from as high as 13,000ft, then go to the bar together. It felt like family.

In the early 90s, I began seeing an instructor at the centre, who then moved to a job in Northern Ireland. So when I qualified as a teacher in 1992, I found a job nearby to his work in Garvagh. Two years later, I moved to Billericay, Essex, and worked as a primary school teacher. I coached skydiving in my spare time and in 1999, as my skill increased, I was offered the chance to train as an instructor. I loved teaching, and



Enjoying a more grounded moment!

this was a chance to teach my passion.

The following year, I moved to Peterborough and continued working as a school teacher. Then, in 2003, I competed in the FAI World Parachuting

Championships in France, as part of a team doing four-way canopy formation rotations – an incredible experience. Finally, in 2012, I became a full-time skydiving instructor at a centre in Peterborough, where I've been ever since.

Some centres have a cut-off age for learners at 50, but I think it's more down to the person; my oldest pupil to date was 67. After all, I'm 54 now and my skills are in high demand. I even body-doubled for Cameron Diaz in the opening scene of 2025's *Back in Action* and have more film work in the pipeline.

I find all aspects of skydiving thrilling – I get the same rush when I successfully train a pupil as I do when I dive. And I've no intention of slowing down.

* ukparachuting.co.uk

My skills
are in high
demand'

Marcella (right)
and Helen
celebrate after
a rally stage

'Life always has surprises in store'

Marcella Kirk, 55, is director of a bar and restaurant. She lives between Dartmouth and Derbyshire with her partner Scott, 62, and daughter Darcie, 17.

Helen and I looked at each other. 'Wow,' we said in unison. It was September 2022 and we were travelling at speed across the Sahara desert, as part of Rallye des Aventurières Solidaires, an all-female or mixed car rally that takes place each year in Morocco. It was my first-ever rally and, at the age of 50, it wasn't something I'd ever thought I'd do. But there I was, navigating with just a compass and road book while my best friend drove.

Helen, now 56, and I met when we both lived in France in 2005, and while I returned to the UK in 2010, we've remained close. She has always been into her cars, and someone persuaded her to try her hand at rally driving. She drove her first in 2019, and when I visited her in summer 2021, she was looking for a new navigator and struggling to find someone suitable.

I'd come over to relax, after an awful bout of ill health in 2020. But I suddenly found myself volunteering. It was a real carpe diem

moment that surprised us both. Not least because I have a terrible sense of direction.

The following day, she took me off-roading at a local quarry and gave me some lessons in driving off-piste; over time I began to learn how to navigate and became adept. The rally in September the following year took eight consecutive days, and the stress and proximity proved the strength of our friendship. We came through closer than ever.

We went on to complete another endurance rally in October 2023, climbing sand dunes, going over rocks and driving alongside sheer drops. Both of us cried when we finished – the combination of achieving things together and being so exhausted all at once.

Our biggest challenge yet was in January 2026 when we became the first British all-women team to complete the Dakar Classic, a rally that covers a staggering 7,300km. The feeling of achievement at making it through was almost overwhelming.

It goes to show that life always has surprises in store – and I'm so grateful to Helen for taking me on such an adventure.

* [Instagram @gazellesoffroadteam](https://www.instagram.com/gazellesoffroadteam)

Both of us
cried when
we finished'

Eat the RAINBOW

Delicious and nutritious suppers,
packed full of veggies

**PER
SERVING**
695 cal, 29g
fat, 15g sat fat,
56g carbs

COOK'S TIP

Bulk this up with wholegrain rice or toss through straight-to-wok noodles.

Steak and Thai-style curried veg

Combining a shop-bought curry paste with plenty of fresh veg and a good-quality steak makes this dish a winner.

SERVES 2 READY IN 40 mins

- * 2tbsp Thai red curry paste
- * 1tbsp freshly grated ginger
- * 2 garlic cloves, grated
- * Small handful Thai basil, leaves picked, stalks finely chopped
- * 1tbsp fish sauce
- * 400ml tin light coconut milk
- * Juice 1 lime, plus wedges to serve
- * 300g butternut squash, peeled and cut into chunks
- * 1 carrot, scrubbed, cut into chunks
- * 1tbsp peanut oil or other cooking oil

- * 100g green beans, chopped
- * 100g Tenderstem broccoli, chopped
- * 350g sirloin steak
- * 1 red chilli, seeds removed and sliced (optional)

1 Heat a large pan or wok over a medium heat. Mix together the curry paste, ginger, garlic and chopped basil stalks. Sizzle for 2 mins, then gradually mix in the fish sauce, coconut milk and lime juice. Add the squash and carrot and bring to a boil, then simmer for 30 mins.

2 Meanwhile, heat a splash of the oil in a frying pan and sauté the beans and broccoli until starting to char. Set aside.

3 Blot the steak dry with kitchen paper, rub with the remaining oil and season. Sear in the pan for 5 mins each side, or until cooked to your liking. Rest the meat for 5 mins, then slice against the grain.

4 Mix the sautéed veg and basil leaves into the sauce. Divide between plates and top with the steak and chilli, if using. Serve with lime wedges.

Spiced bean and tomato stew with halloumi

A one-pan dish that's bursting with flavour and hearty, nutritious beans.

PER SERVING
300 cal, 20g fat, 8g sat fat, 15g carbs

SERVES 6 READY IN 30 mins

- * 3tbsp olive oil
- * 1 onion, sliced
- * 1 red pepper, sliced
- * 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- * 3tbsp sun-dried tomato pesto
- * 1tsp ground coriander
- * 1tsp smoked paprika
- * 400g tin butter beans or chickpeas (or use a mix), rinsed
- * 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- * 250g block halloumi, cut into 1-2cm-thick slices
- * Handful coriander, roughly chopped, to garnish

1 Heat 2tbsp olive oil in a non-stick pan over medium heat. Add the onion and red pepper, plus a pinch of salt, and fry for 10 mins until softened. Then add the garlic, tomato pesto, ground coriander and smoked paprika. Fry for 1 min until fragrant.

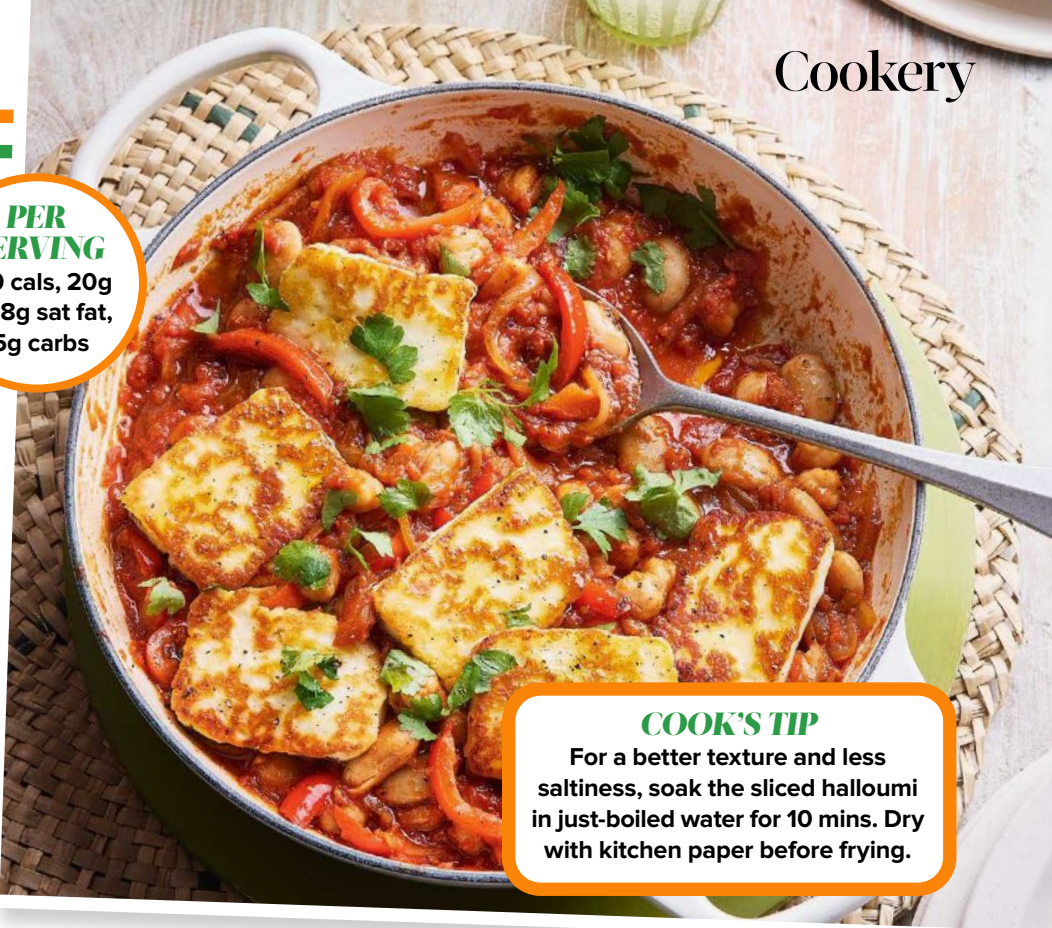
2 Add the butter beans/chickpeas and tomatoes to the pan. Bring to a simmer and cook for 10 mins.

3 Meanwhile, heat 1tbsp olive oil in a separate frying pan over a medium

heat and fry the halloumi for 2 mins on each side, until golden.

4 Serve the halloumi on top of the stew, then garnish with the chopped coriander.

COOK'S TIP
For a better texture and less saltiness, soak the sliced halloumi in just-boiled water for 10 mins. Dry with kitchen paper before frying.



Spicy prawn udon noodles

Inspired by your favourite takeaway, this fresh recipe has a zippy chilli kick.

SERVES 4 PREP 10 mins COOK 15 mins

- * Oil, for frying
- * 1 brown onion, sliced
- * 1 red chilli, deseeded, finely sliced

- * 2 garlic cloves, grated
- * 40g fresh ginger, grated
- * 1 bunch spring onions, half cut into 3cm batons, half finely sliced
- * 500g frozen cooked king prawns
- * 30ml soy sauce
- * 30ml mirin rice wine
- * 20ml sriracha
- * 20ml sesame oil
- * 4tsp cornflour
- * 2 carrots, peeled and cut into ribbons
- * 400g straight-to-wok udon noodles
- * 1tsp shichimi togarashi (or sesame seeds and a pinch of chilli/red pepper flakes), to serve
- * 1 small pack coriander, leaves torn
- * Lime wedges, to serve

1 Heat a large frying pan with a drizzle of oil over a high heat.

Add the onion with a pinch of salt and fry for 4-5 mins or until softened.

2 Add the red chilli, garlic and ginger to the pan, and cook for a further 1-2 mins until fragrant.

3 Add the spring onion batons and the prawns to the pan, stirring regularly until the prawns are almost defrosted. Meanwhile, mix together the soy sauce, mirin rice wine, sriracha, sesame oil, cornflour and 5tbsp water.

4 Add the sauce to the pan, along with the carrot ribbons and udon noodles. Cook for 2-3 mins until everything is cooked through and coated in the sauce.

5 Serve, scattered with the shichimi togarashi, coriander leaves and sliced spring onions, alongside lime wedges for squeezing.

COOK'S TIP
Prawns defrost so rapidly that you can add them to this dish still frozen.

PER SERVING
372 cal, 7g fat, 1g sat fat, 46g carbs



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Points for PERKS

When does it pay to be a loyal customer – and when should you go elsewhere?



DID YOU KNOW?

Tesco was a digital loyalty pioneer – its Clubcard, which was launched in 1995, celebrated its 31st birthday earlier this year.

Airlines and hotels are another place where sticking with the same chain or group of companies can pay dividends. Reward thresholds for free flights, room upgrades or complimentary stays are harder to reach, so choose one for all your travel needs. Check out the Hilton Honors and ALL Accor (which includes Novotel, Ibis and Mercure) schemes, as well as The British Airways Club and Virgin Atlantic's Flying Club.

Boost your offers

Being loyal isn't always enough to receive the best rewards or be rewarded quickly, so look out for ways to boost payback.

With supermarket apps, you can often increase the value of your points by exchanging them for experiences or restaurant vouchers, rather than spending them in-store. Keep an eye out too for double- or triple-point promotions to build rewards faster. There can also be discounts on certain days, such as Superdrug's Treat Thursdays for Health & Beautycard holders.

Even if you don't shop somewhere regularly, it's worth signing up for schemes that offer benefits on your birthday.

Costa Club members can claim a free cake and M&S Sparks offers a tasty birthday treat, while the Hobbycraft Club gives £5 off. With Boots, you can receive double Advantage Card points for your entire birthday month. You'll need to register your date of birth and possibly tick a box to activate the offer, often at least a month before your birthday.

Remember that in return for discounts and offers, companies may collect information about your shopping habits or also share your details with other companies. Check privacy policies and account settings.

When it's best to shop around

Sometimes, loyalty can cost you. Companies often reserve the best deals for new customers, so if you allow contracts – such as insurance, broadband, mobile, subscriptions, breakdown cover and gym memberships – to renew automatically, the price tends to creep up. Keep track of renewal dates and check these yearly to ensure you get the best deal.

When prices do go up, ask the company if they can offer a better contract, especially when compared with what their competitors are offering.

Businesses love loyal customers, so it's no surprise that everyone from your hairdresser to your supermarket has a scheme. Being a repeat consumer can bring benefits, but there are also times when sticking with a company can mean paying more. How do you know whether to stay put or switch?

The bonuses

Supermarket schemes are the obvious ones where loyalty works in your favour, as are the high street shops that offer similar set-ups of collecting points each time you spend. It's also worth checking out schemes offered by restaurants, such as Toby Carvery and Pizza Express, plus cafes. Caffè Nero and Costa, for example, offer stamp cards or digital rewards where you earn a point for each drink you buy, and can then claim a free one. They may offer points for buying certain foods too, or reward you when you bring a reusable cup, getting you to your free drink faster.



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3 WAYS TO...

Ease stress

1 JOURNALING BEFORE BED 'Jot down what's on your mind, what's worrying you and what you're grateful for,' says stress management coach Dr Sonia Russell*. Naming it can often free your mind enough for a restful night's sleep, crucial for managing stress.



2 MOVE THE WAY YOU WANT Forget about gym membership or 10,000 steps; find a way to keep active that you enjoy. Take a stroll around the block, potter in the garden for 20 minutes or put music on and move around the kitchen.

3 ASK FOR HELP – AND TAKE IT 'You might reach out for support, but not let yourself hear what the other person is saying,' warns Dr Russell. 'Accepting support is its own skill.' Whether it's a GP appointment or a chat with a friend, a listening ear is essential for stress management.

THE SUPPORT THAT HELPS US COPE WITH MUM'S DEMENTIA



Jenine Kendall, 43, is from Bristol.

We started noticing something wasn't right with our mum, Rose, about four years ago. Dad was diagnosed with cancer in 2020 and died in 2021, and while Mum was upset, she didn't really seem to grasp what was happening. She was absent-minded, and while she worried about Alzheimer's because there's a history of the disease in the family, we thought perhaps it was depression or anxiety. Then we noticed she was struggling to read and write. We took her to the GP, and she was diagnosed with Logopenic Progressive Aphasia, a rare form of dementia that primarily affects language.

She's 73 now, and things have progressed quickly. My youngest sister Adele lives with Mum, while my elder sister Syreeta and I give support where we can. Mum has become doubly incontinent, is often confused and can't communicate like she used to. That has been one of the hardest things – watching my bright and sociable mum unable to really talk to us.

Alzheimer's Society has



Jenine and sisters with mum Rose (top), who has a rare form of dementia

been fantastic. Not just in helping steer us to support – we've just been approved for respite care – but also through its various groups every Friday. The Memory Cafe invites guest speakers to talk about subjects as diverse as fraud and nutrition, while the activities group covers things like creative crafts and singing. At first, I was a bit cynical in that I thought, 'I'll just let Mum do all that stuff.' But I've found it so therapeutic. It helps Mum, but it also helps families to be among people who understand what you're going through.

*** June is Alzheimer's Society's Forget Me Not campaign, helping people living with dementia and their families access the support they need. Find out more at alzheimers.org.uk/forgetmenotappeal**

WHAT'S THAT?

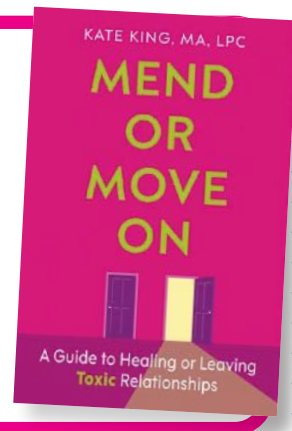
Elevate bath time with the new aromatherapy range of Westlab Bath Salts. **Westlab Muscle Melt and Perfect Pamper Bath Salt** combine mineral-rich salts with essential oils. Muscle Melt blends eucalyptus, cedarwood and black pepper to soothe muscles, while Perfect Pamper's lemongrass, lime oil and juniper berry calm the mind.

**£1.99
Morrisons**



New read

MEND OR MOVE ON (£19, PB, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS) Relationships should nourish, not harm us. In this compassionate guide, licensed counsellor and therapist Kate King leads us through the process of deciding whether to stay or walk away, with practical, psychology-informed tools that support both paths. She shows how to break free from toxic dynamics, and reclaim a life rooted in self-respect and happiness.



WORDS: TANYA PEAREY. PHOTO (POSED BY MODEL): GETTY. *FROM HEALTH COACHES ACADEMY. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR HEALTH, SEE YOUR GP



Doctor Gill

ADVICE FROM OUR WOMAN'S WEEKLY DOCTOR

Morning or evening coffee?

A report from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 1999-2018 looks at the timing of drinking coffee, comparing in the morning to evening. Among more than 40,000 participants, those who drank coffee in the morning had substantially lower all-cause and cardiovascular mortality rates compared with non-coffee drinkers. Furthermore – and surprising the researchers – drinking coffee later in the day had no health benefits. More research is needed to find out why this is the case.

Coping with...

AMD

Age-related macular degeneration is common in the over 50s and affects the middle part of your vision

The eye condition doesn't usually cause total blindness, but without treatment, your vision may worsen, gradually over several years, or quickly over weeks or months. The cause is unknown, but may be due to ageing, smoking, high blood pressure, obesity and family history.

AMD affects the middle part of your vision, not the periphery, involving one eye or both, initially blurring/distorting images, progressing to problems seeing anything centrally, making reading, watching TV, driving or recognising faces difficult. Straight lines may appear wavy or crooked, you might be sensitive to bright light, see flickering or flashing, or even things that aren't there (hallucinations). AMD isn't painful and doesn't affect your eyes' appearance. Sometimes it's found during routine eye tests, before symptoms develop, but see an optician if you're worried, because early diagnosis and treatment may help prevent worsening.

'Eating a good diet can help'

Get an urgent optician appointment or call NHS 111 if your vision suddenly deteriorates, a dark shadow appears across your sight, or your eye is red and painful. These symptoms may be signs of other eye problems that need immediate treatment.

At the opticians, the optometrist will look at the back of your eyes, checking your vision. They may put in eye drops, making things look

Possible treatments

*** DRY OR WET AMD?** Treatment depends on which type of AMD you have. There's no treatment for dry AMD, but support can help you with low vision and lifestyle changes.

*** WET AMD** Treatments include injections of anti-VEGF medication, given directly into the eyes and light treatments – both destroy the blood vessels that cause wet AMD.

*** LOW-VISION SERVICES REFERRAL** If you have difficulty with daily activities, ask about practical devices such as magnifying lenses, brighter lighting or software/mobile apps to make phones/laptops easier to use.

*** ECCENTRIC VIEWING TRAINING** If you've poor vision in both eyes, you may be referred for this type of training, which involves learning techniques to make the most of your remaining vision.

blurry for a while – don't drive until your sight is normal. You'll be referred to a specialist (ophthalmologist) for more tests, including different eye scans. If diagnosed with AMD, the doctor will discuss with you what stage it's at, and treatment options. There are two types of AMD. Dry AMD is common, caused by a build-up of a fatty deposit (drusen) at the back of the eyes, which worsens gradually, but there's no



MS UPDATE

A case-control study from Germany of 1,000 young people diagnosed with multiple sclerosis identified several problems present more often in the five years before diagnosis than in controls. Some factors, including obesity, abnormalities of visual refraction and gastritis, were too common and too weakly associated to be useful as warning signs. On the other hand, reports about disturbance of peripheral sensation should be considered a red flag by patients and their doctors.



True or false?

Peanut particles are transmitted through aircraft ventilation systems

False. Peanut/tree nut particles do not pose a significant risk to passengers with food allergies.

Research studies show no evidence to support airborne allergen transmission. Food-induced allergic reactions are 10–100 times less common during flights than on the ground. The most effective preventive measure is for passengers to wipe down surfaces around their seats. Food proteins adhere to these areas and can be ingested inadvertently after contact.

4 FIXES FOR...

Loss of taste or smell

1 CONSIDER HABITS AND MEDICATIONS Smoking affects smell and taste.

Your GP practice's smoking cessation nurse will help you quit. Certain medications, such as beta blockers and angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, can cause it too.

2 BEAT NASAL/SINUS PROBLEMS Allergies like hay fever, chronic rhinitis or nasal polyps all affect your sense of smell. Talk to your pharmacist

about decongestants, nasal sprays and antihistamines.

3 GO TO THE DENTIST Most of taste is smell, and both can be affected by poor dental hygiene or mouth diseases. Get a check-up and see a hygienist too.

4 TALK TO YOUR GP Loss of smell occurs with ageing, but other factors can contribute, including viral infections such as Covid, head/ facial injuries, or central nervous system disorders like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

treatment. Wet AMD is caused by abnormal blood vessels growing at the back of the eyes and may worsen quickly, sometimes in days or weeks, but treatment is available.

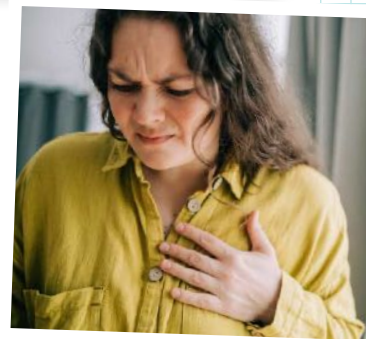
There's no cure for AMD, but treatments and support can help as you're regularly monitored. AMD is often linked to lifestyle, so eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, stopping smoking and losing weight may all help. There's some evidence to suggest that certain health supplements might help stop it worsening – speak to your specialist.

AMD can make it unsafe for you to drive – ask your doctor about this and registering your sight loss, to make it easier to claim financial benefits. More advice and support is available from the Macular Society (macularsociety.org; helpline, 0300 3030 111), and the Royal National Institute of Blind People (rnib.org.uk; helpline, 0303 123 9999).

Q I'm often breathless. Should I worry?

A Feeling out of breath, a tightness in the chest or having trouble getting enough air is more common as you age, but having trouble breathing shouldn't be dismissed as just part of getting older. Shortness of breath isn't a disease itself, but can be a symptom of many health disorders. Heart and lung functions both contribute to breathing, working together to move oxygen to your organs and remove carbon dioxide. If either one can't keep up, the level of blood oxygen drops, and you'll feel like you have to work harder to breathe. It can be normal to have brief shortness of breath during intense exercise, in extreme temperatures, at high altitudes or while congested. However,

breathlessness that lasts several weeks or keeps coming back could be a sign of a heart condition such as angina, heart failure and atrial fibrillation, or lung conditions such as COPD, bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia and pulmonary embolism. Other causes include anaemia, mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression and panic attacks, obesity and being unfit. See your healthcare team if you have trouble breathing when at rest or if breathlessness becomes much worse.



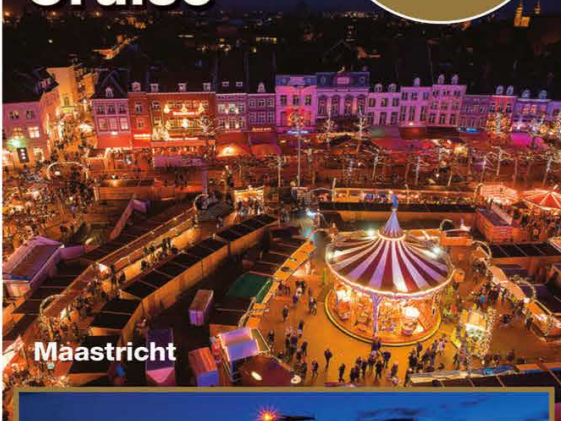
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Here to help

LET COUNSELLOR KEREN LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD

Anxious about my actions

Q I saw a therapist through my GP, and she's been very helpful. We had our last session recently, and I hugged her when I went to say goodbye. She went stiff as a rod and said, 'You don't hug therapists; it's a professional role.' I said sorry and left. I feel terrible now, and it has set me right back. What should I do?

Name and address withheld

A I'm not surprised that you felt bad as she told you off. I also don't expect that was her intention. It sounds as though she was surprised and reacted without thinking it through. If you could see this as her responding poorly in a situation she found difficult, and that it had nothing to do with you, it will help you to distance yourself and let it go. If you can't, you could drop her a line explaining how it has left you feeling. Maybe she'll write back and help you feel at ease.

She's getting on my nerves

Q I have an attention-seeking friend who is really beginning to annoy me. She makes herself noticeable on every occasion, whether we are out with a group for coffee or at an exercise class. I expect she feels insecure, although I don't know why. I like her when we meet one-to-one, but I no longer want to go to group events with her. How do I tell her this? *Jacqueline, West Sussex*

A I'm wondering why you think you need to tell her. If there are group events that you don't want to go to with her, just say you're not going – you don't need a reason. If you continue to foster your personal relationship, she

Stuck in a bad job

Q I'm in a job that drains me. I no longer like the work or the people. I am 57 and too young to retire, but too old to find a new job. I can't do this for another 10 years. My friends tell me to just leave and something will turn up, but I'm scared that it would be my fault if I end up on benefits. I don't want to apply for other roles either, because I live in a small town and my boss might get to hear about it and possibly dismiss me.

Joanna, address withheld

A Your friends are right: you can't stay in a job that drains you for another 10 years. It sounds to me that your fears are stories you're telling yourself, rather than facts. Neither you nor I know whether they're true. First, 57 is no longer considered old in the workplace, so getting another job at your age is quite possible. Second, your boss can't



fire you because you've applied for other roles. I suggest you start to look at what positions are being advertised and apply for something that appeals more to you. Going straight from one role to another is easier and less anxiety-inducing. Good luck!

Our relationship expert Keren Smedley has over 20 years' experience. Keren welcomes your letters, emails and texts, but she cannot reply to individual cases and will select correspondence at random for publication.

won't be offended that you've decided to change your pattern of activities.

But, if her behaviour is something others have mentioned, it may be possible – and fair – to gently share this with her. This way, she won't lose other friends.

Did I overreact?

Q My husband and I had a huge row, as he said my anxiety traumatised our eight-year-old granddaughter. She decided to suck the nectar from a plant in our garden and got her two younger siblings to do the same. I looked it up, and at first, I found something saying it was dangerous. Investigating further, I saw that it wasn't edible but also wouldn't kill them. Either way, I was worried and gave her a stern talking-to. She said the same plants were in the school garden and that children ate them

all the time. She was worried she'd made the others ill. I still think I was right to make her concerned, as she's unlikely to do it again.

Grace, Bristol

A You were right to make sure she understands that eating plants is not a good idea, as they can be poisonous. However, from what you've said, it sounds as though you may have overreacted, given how frightened you were. Your granddaughter picked up on your fear and assumed she'd done something terrible, and became anxious. It can be hard to temper our emotions, but often this is better for those around us. From what you say, your husband also overreacted – in his reaction to you – as he didn't want his granddaughter to be scared. I'd simply put it all down to experience, and you should both plan to manage things differently next time.

Refresh your GARDEN

Make the most of your outdoor space with these easy ideas and buys



1 CREATE A NOOK

Transform a tired corner of your garden into a seating haven with a cocooning egg or hanging chair. Pile it high with cushions for the ultimate place to sit back and relax with a good book.

* **Icaria single hanging chair**, £495, Cox & Cox



Alma rattan love seat egg chair, £299, Very



2 STYLE UP SEATING

Seat pads and cushions are a must for making outdoor furniture comfortable. They don't have to be expensive and can jazz up furniture instantly. Choose a mix of cushions in showerproof fabrics to inject some colour and personality into your outdoor space.

* **Outdoor cushions**, from £25 each, Cox & Cox

Floral outdoor cushions, £25 for two, M&S



COMPILED BY: ESMÉ CLEMO



4 DINE AL FRESCO

A two-seater table set can be squeezed into the smallest of garden spaces and will make such a difference on summer nights when it's warm enough to eat outside. Opt for a colourful set in wipe-clean or showerproof fabrics for easy maintenance.

* Dali bistro set, £399, Next



Garden Stories striped bistro set in Terracotta, £130, QVC

3 FILL THE FLOOR

Zhuzh up a plain patio with a stylish rug that's suitable for the outdoors. It's a great way to zone seating and dining areas from the rest of your garden, and feels lovely underfoot.

* Anywhere Panama carpet rug in Syrup with Red Baron border, from £195, Alternative Flooring

Leafy outdoor rug, from £29.99, Dobbies



* Lucena tassel solar lanterns, £29.99 for three, lights4fun.co.uk

Maris solar garden lantern, £17.99, Dobbies



5 SHADE YOUR SPACE

Place a parasol over your seating to dial down the scorching midday sun and make your outdoor space all the more comfortable.

Pick a pretty style in a vibrant shade with a fringed edge, or try a practical, contemporary look in natural greens, greys or creams.

* Keldervig parasol, £40, Jysk



Garden Stories x Anouska Drift fringe parasol in Terracotta, £62, QVC

6 LET THERE BE LIGHT

To enjoy your garden well into the evening, add lanterns in overhanging greenery, solar stakes along pathways and festoon lights to boundaries.

Nostalgic BAKES

Impressive, but simple-to-make cakes



**PER
SERVING**

(for 20)

312 cal, 19g fat,
11g sat fat,
31g carbs

Mocha millionaire's shortbread

With a walnut biscuit base and coffee caramel centre, this easy slice is perfect with an afternoon cuppa.

SERVES 15-20

PREP 30 mins, plus chilling

COOK 35 mins

FOR THE BASE

- * 150g plain flour
- * 50g walnuts
- * 60g golden caster sugar
- * 150g cold butter

FOR THE CARAMEL

- * 150g salted butter
- * 150g light muscovado sugar
- * 2tsp instant coffee, mixed with 1tbsp water
- * 397g tin condensed milk

FOR THE TOPPING

- * 150g milk chocolate
- * 25g blonde chocolate
- * 2tsp vegetable oil

YOU WILL NEED

- * 20cm square cake tin, base and sides lined (leaving an overhang for easy removal), plus a digital food thermometer

- 1** Heat the oven to 160C Fan/Gas 4. For the base, whizz the flour and walnuts in a food processor until the nuts are finely chopped. Add the sugar and butter, then whizz again until the mixture comes together into a crumbly dough.
- 2** Press the dough into the lined tin, then bake for 35 mins, until golden.
- 3** Meanwhile, put all the caramel ingredients in a saucepan. Stir over a low heat until the butter melts and sugar dissolves, then simmer, stirring constantly,

for 10-15 mins, until thickened. Use a digital thermometer. It should be between 104-107C for a soft yet sliceable set.

4 Pour the caramel over the cooked base and spread to an even layer, then chill for 1 hr until firm.

5 Melt both chocolates separately. Stir the oil into the milk chocolate and pour over the set caramel, tilting the tin gently to spread evenly. Drizzle the blonde chocolate on top in thin lines, then use a skewer to create a feather effect. Chill for at least 4 hrs, then remove from the tin and cut into bars or squares.



**PER
SERVING**

270 cal, 12g
fat, 6g sat fat,
38g carbs

Apricot flapjacks

The jam filling gives these a gorgeous caramel flavour and colour.

MAKES 10

PREP 15 mins, plus cooling

COOK 25-30 mins

- * 125g unsalted butter
- * 50g light brown soft sugar
- * 150g golden syrup
- * 250g oats (we used 150g whole jumbo oats and 100g porridge oats)
- * 150g apricot jam
- * 40g dried apricots, quartered

YOU WILL NEED

- * 20cm square cake tin, the base and sides lined

- 1** Heat the oven to 180C Fan/Gas 6. Put the butter, sugar and syrup in a pan, and warm gently, on a low heat, until melted. Off the heat, mix in the oats.

2 Tip half of the mixture into the tin, and press down with the back of a spoon to fill the tin.

3 Warm the apricot jam and apricots in a small saucepan. Spoon on to the layer of oats, spreading it to the edges, then add the remaining oats on top, lightly pressing them down with the back of a spoon. Don't worry if there are gaps.

4 Bake for 25-30 mins. Score into 10 bars, then cool in the tin for 1 hr to firm up.

COOK'S TIP

You can swap the apricot jam and apricots for a berry compote.

PER SERVING

(for 12)

700 cal, 41g fat,
12g sat fat,
73g carbs

Hummingbird coconut slice

A tropical, fruity cake that will keep you coming back for more.

SERVES 10-12

PREP 25 mins, plus cooling

COOK 1 hr-1 hr 20 mins

- * 150g pecans
- * 375g plain flour
- * 2tsp baking powder
- * 1tsp mixed spice
- * ½tsp fine sea salt
- * 275ml vegetable oil
- * 300g light brown soft sugar
- * 3 medium free-range eggs
- * 2 ripe bananas, mashed
- * 432g tin of pineapple slices, drained and finely chopped

FOR THE ICING

- * 100g unsalted butter, softened
- * 200g soft cheese
- * 200g icing sugar

- * 60g desiccated coconut
- * Cocktail cherries and pineapple flowers to decorate (optional)

YOU WILL NEED

- * 20cm square loose-bottom cake tin, base and sides lined

1 Heat the oven to 180C Fan/Gas 6. Roast the pecans for 6-8 mins. Cool, then finely chop.

2 Meanwhile, mix together the flour, baking powder, mixed spice and salt. In a separate mixing bowl, use an electric mixer to whisk the oil and sugar for 2 mins until slightly thickened. Beat in the eggs one by one. Fold in the bananas, dry ingredients, pecans and pineapple, until just combined. Spoon into the tin and bake

for 1 hr-1 hr 20 mins, or until an inserted skewer comes out clean. Cool fully in the tin, before moving to a serving plate.

3 For the icing, put the butter in a mixing bowl. Beat for 2 mins until creamy. Add the soft cheese and beat for a further 2 mins, until smooth. Sift over the icing sugar and beat until combined. Spread the icing over the top and sides of the cake. Sprinkle over the desiccated coconut, and finish with cocktail cherries and pineapple flowers to decorate.

COOK'S TIP

To make pineapple flowers, cut 12 very thin rounds of pineapple, dry well with kitchen paper and bake for 1 hr at 120C Fan/Gas 1. Press into a muffin tin to cool and set the shape.

Every DOG

Beth's hubby was popular – even though he was the retiring type

It was one of those holidays where you get to know other people. Mike and I had saved up for it, a touch of luxury now our children had flown the nest for good. Mike found the place online, a collection of white-walled apartments in the Portuguese hills. A couple, both architects, had done an exquisite conversion job on abandoned village properties, and the place was wonderful. The weather was lovely for early spring, and we looked forward to our week.

It was mostly couples in their 50s, like us, around the pool when I went down to check it out. I was introduced to Ollie and his elegant, golden-haired wife, Kim.

Mike came out shortly afterwards, looking the tiniest bit embarrassed in his trunks. He's not a natural swimmer, the trunks were new, and I could tell he was feeling awkward from the way he held his beach towel in front of him.

I should say here that my husband is kind, gentle and brilliant, an expert with money and a wonderful dad. But he is not cool, not in any way, shape or form. He knows that, and he knows I don't care and never have. He asks me whether to

wear his shirt tucked in or hanging out. He wears a strange canvas Aussie hat to avoid burning the top of his head, and he is never fully relaxed in company.

Mike perched on the side of a lounge next to me.

'His name's Ollie,' I said, noting that he was looking at a tall, tanned, loose-limbed guy with his arm draped on the back of his wife's chair.

I saw what Mike saw – a man fully at ease with himself and with everyone he met – the centre of the conversation, making everyone laugh but giving way to others. I heard Ollie ask one of the women if she'd spotted any good restaurants.

'I talked a lot of rubbish today'

'I bet *he* doesn't need restaurant recommendations,' Mike whispered as he carefully manoeuvred himself on to the lounge, wobbling. 'I bet he knows just by

looking at the exterior that it's got the best seafood in town.'

Over the next couple of days, the other holidaymakers began to cluster round Ollie like moths to a flame. It was as though they believed they could catch his charm and his easy way of being, through proximity alone.

Mike and I were no different. We'd wander over, glass in

hand, and start chattering.

On the second evening, when we went back to our apartment to change, Mike said, 'I talked a lot of rubbish today, didn't I, Beth?'

'Not at all,' I said.

'I'd give anything to be comfortable in my skin.'

He didn't say 'like Ollie' but I knew that's what he was thinking.

On day three, one of the men asked Mike what he did for a living.

'Nothing exciting,' Mike said. 'I bet it's more exciting than my job – HR manager.'

'I'm a pensions adviser,' Mike said.

The man – his name was Sanjeev – turned his deckchair through 90 degrees to face my husband.

'I can't make head nor tail of the pension rules. I stare at this spreadsheet I've made and only get more indecisive.'

Mike put down his mug of coffee. 'If you're willing to give me a quick sketch of what you have, I can at least give you pointers.'

There was hardly a person in the place under 50. Most of them had begun to think about

retirement, and they all seemed to be bewildered about their finances. They had a bob or two – otherwise they would not have been there – and they were hungry for Mike's words of wisdom. He is the most generous of men and, being a self-confessed geek, will cheerfully share his vast knowledge and experience.

By day four, Mike was surrounded at the poolside by seven eager men and women pulling their chairs closer, fighting to be the one to buy him a lager or bring him a bowl of crisps.

I caught sight of Ollie, silent and a little bit grumpy beside his beautiful wife, and I considered the different stages of life. Mike's audience were at a very particular stage, and they wanted to be with Mike more than they wanted to absorb Ollie's cool.

As I told my husband that night, while he made notes for a woman who had foolishly been about to cash in a final salary scheme... 'Every dog has his day.'

Mike nodded and beamed at me. 'His day in the sun.'

THE END
Alison Carter





Life in Richmond unfolds on the waterfront, with its elegant restaurants and bars



Thames-side TREAT

A quiet corner of London, Richmond has UNESCO World Heritage Sites, great shops and river walks

Whether you've spotted it on screen in the likes of *Ted Lasso* and *Bridgerton*, or just fancy a London escape that

moves at a more tranquil pace, Richmond is worthy of your time. Set on the River Thames on the border with Surrey, it is just about within the capital's confines, but feels more like a separate town, with its broad green spaces, attractive high street and atmospheric inns. Come for a couple of days of history, walking and dining.

Riverside strolls

Life in Richmond unfolds on the River Thames. Elegant restaurants, such as Tower House (thisistowerhouse.com) and Scott's Richmond

(scotts-richmond.com), line the waterfront, where locals and visitors often hire stand-up paddleboards or kayaks. Dog walkers, families and couples meander the riverside stretch between central Richmond Bridge and Teddington Lock, perhaps popping over to bohemian Eel Pie Island (the Rolling Stones played here in a now-closed hotel ballroom). You can choose to scale Richmond Hill for sweeping views to Hampton Court Palace and beyond, or take the low-lying path that skirts Petersham Meadows and leads to plant

heaven at Petersham Nurseries (petershamnurseries.com).

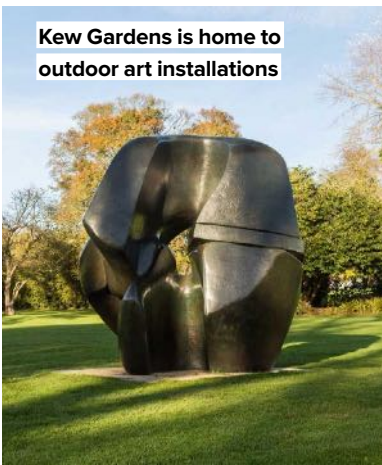
Gardens and green space

This borough is carpeted in leafy corners, from manicured Richmond Green to the nature reserve at Ham, crowned by regal mansion Ham House. It's essential to visit Kew Gardens (entry £25, kew.org), a UNESCO World Heritage Site that's home to Victorian palm houses, rambling borders in seasonal hues, and art installations such as this year's outdoor Henry Moore exhibition. There's also a vibrant summer calendar of events that includes concerts, film screenings and yoga sessions soundtracked by live violinists. But Richmond's most epic green space of all is Richmond Park, sprawling over



Kew Palace, the former home of King George III

Kew Gardens is home to outdoor art installations





Take a stroll along the River Thames to Richmond Bridge

2,500 acres, and home to wild deer, lakes, historic trees and walking trails galore. Spend a sunny afternoon on a stroll around its wild-feeling corners.

Arts and history

Richmond was the centre of royal life for 900 years, and a few remnants of Tudor Richmond Palace, where both Henry VII and Elizabeth I died, can still be seen in the western reaches of Richmond Green. For a more complete palatial pile, you can enter Kew Palace, home of King George III and Queen Charlotte (included in garden entry fee), or check out one of the many other local stately homes, including Marble Hill House (entry free, english-heritage.org.uk) or Strawberry Hill House (entry £16.50, strawberryhillhouse.org.uk).

History abounds in other ways too. The Poppy Factory, where royal regimental wreaths are still made by veterans, has been in Richmond for 100 years and can be visited on a 90-minute tour (entry £15, poppyfactory.org). The National Archives (entry free, nationalarchives.gov.uk) houses documents such as the Magna Carta and the 1086 Domesday Book. Just a short walk from Kew Gardens Tube station, it has free themed exhibitions that change by the season.

Arts enthusiasts will be happy to explore Sandycombe Lodge (entry £12, turnershouse.org), J.M.W Turner's rural retreat over the bridge in Twickenham. Nearby Orleans House Gallery (entry free, orleanshousegallery.org) hosts contemporary and family-friendly art exhibitions,

while inside Kew Gardens, the Marianne North Gallery (free with garden entry) showcases the Victorian painter's botanical renderings from her travels around the world.

Shopping and dining

The high street blends familiar names with boutique stops. Brewer's Lane is cluttered with antique and jewellery shops, while Hill Rise has a lovely bookshop, cheese shop and other spots. The weekend Duck Pond Market in Heron Square brims with high-quality crafts.

When you're feeling hungry, visit Knoops (knoops.com) for gourmet hot chocolate, Napoli on the Road (napoliontheroad.com) for pizzas, and Cinnamon Bazaar (cinammon-bazaar.com) for curries. Stein's (stein-s.com) is for great German cuisine and beers by the river. Meanwhile, The Lass O'Richmond Hill (lassorichmondhill.co.uk) offers superb pub grub by Richmond Park, and The Marlborough (themarlbroughrichmond.co.uk) has a sprawling beer garden if you want to sit outside. If you've been exploring Kew Gardens, Ma Cuisine (macuisinekew.co.uk) in nearby Kew Village does nostalgic French dishes, such as onion soup or cheese soufflé.

BOOK IT

* Richmond is served by South Western Railway, the London Underground District Line and the London Overground Mildmay Line.

* The Harbour Hotel Richmond is a few steps from the entrance to Richmond Park, and contains an excellent spa and atmospheric restaurant. Double rooms from £132, excluding breakfast; harbourhotels.co.uk

Tips,
tricks
& buys

GARDEN notes

Wisteria walk and elegant irises

BALCONY BRIGHTS

For a rainbow-like balcony, sow half-hardy plants, such as cosmos, nasturtium and zinnia, now. To avoid lugging a heavy bag of compost up several flights of stairs, use an expandable coco-coir block, like the one from Kings Seeds. The size of a cereal packet, it comes in a resealable plastic bag and swells to 15 litres of fluffy compost once water is added.

* **Seed & Cutting Compost**, £6.95, kingsseeds.com



SUMMER CARE

Switch up your houseplant routine this season by watering more frequently and feeding every two to four weeks. For an extra boost, shift plants outdoors. Higher light levels spur on growth and refreshing showers wash dust from leaves. Be sure to acclimatise plants gradually. Keep in shade at first and bring in at night until it's always above 10-15C (check your plant's needs).

GARDEN TO VISIT

It's wisteria heaven at RHS Wisley in Surrey, where a 75m-long arch shimmers with scented white and purple flowers, and a further 16 wisterias mingle with topiary.

* rhs.org.uk



3 OF THE BEST...

Bearded irises



'CHERRY GARDEN'
The near-black buds open to an opulent claret-purple. A top choice for pots. H30cm.



'BENTON PEARL'
A slender, luminous variety with white flowers, offset by lemon yellow throats. H1m.



'BURGERMEISTER'
Sword-shaped grey-green leaves contrast with two-tone blooms in pink and purple. H75cm.



Seaside SHOPPER



Stitch a pretty tote bag with these colourful patchwork fish

SIZE 40.5x30cm excluding handle

YOU WILL NEED

- * Access to a photocopier
- * Tracing paper and pencil
- * 1m of 110cm-wide cream cotton fabric
- * 10x20cm rectangles of four shades each of green, pink and blue cotton fabrics
- * Matching sewing thread
- * Three black 1cm buttons

MAKING PATTERNS & CUTTING OUT

On a photocopier, enlarge the patterns by 200%. Trace the patterns on to tracing paper. Then cut them out and mark the broken lines, arrows, notches and dot and label alphabetically.

NOTE Cut the alphabetically labelled pieces with right sides facing up, except those cut as pairs. From cream fabric, cut three each of pieces A, D, E, F, H, L, N and R, and three pairs of J and K, six 10.5x6cm rectangles for the end bands, two 32x7cm rectangles for the base band and top band, two 32x4.5cm rectangles for the narrow bands, three 42.5x32cm rectangles for the back and lining, and two 47x10cm rectangles for the handles. From shade 1 of coloured fabrics, cut one each of pieces B, C, G, M and Q. From shade 2 of coloured fabrics, cut one pair of I. From shade 3 of coloured fabrics, cut one piece O. From shade 4 of coloured fabrics, cut one piece P. To help identification, keep pieces right-side up until you use them.

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Making the patchwork fish blocks

NOTE Take 6mm seam allowance to join the patchwork pieces, the outer edge of the patchwork block has a 1cm seam allowance for making the bag. Join pieces with right sides together and edges level, matching notches. Check the seams are accurately stitched against the broken seam lines on the patterns and the diagram to position the patchwork pieces.

1 Stitch A to the upper curved edge of B. Snip the curves, press the seam toward B. Stitch C to D, press the seam toward C. Stitch C and D to E, press the seam toward C and D. Stitch E, C and D to the lower curved edge of B. Snip the curves,

press the seam toward B. Stitch F to G and G to H, press seams toward G. Stitch I to J, press seam toward I. Stitch J and I to K, press the seams toward I and J.

2 Stitch one set of I and J to H and the other set to L. Press seams toward I and J. Stitch F, G, H and I to O. Snip curves and press the seam toward O.

3 Stitch L to M and M to N, press seams toward M. Stitch I, L, M and N to P. Snip curves, press seam toward P.

4 Stitch Q to R, press seam toward Q. Stitch P and N to Q, press seam toward Q.

5 Stitch K, I and O to K, I and P, press seam open.

6 Stitch A, B and D to F, O, P, Q and R. Press seam toward A, B and D. Sew a button at the eye positions.

Making the tote bag

NOTE Take 1cm seam allowance. Join pieces with right sides together and edges level.

1 Stitch the end bands to the short edges of the patchwork fish, press the seams toward the end bands.

2 Stitch the base band to the lower edge of the blue patchwork fish and end bands. Stitch the top band to the upper edge of the green patchwork fish and end bands. Press the seams toward the base and top band. Stitch a narrow band to the long edges of the pink patchwork fish and short edges of the end bands, press seams

toward the narrow bands.
3 Refer to the photo to arrange the fish in rows. Stitch the rows together, press seams toward the narrow bands. This is the front.

4 Fold the handles lengthwise in half. Stitch the long edges. Turn right side out and press flat. Topstitch 6mm inside the pressed edges. Tack the end of each handle to the upper edge of the top band and short upper edge of the back 6cm in from the side edges.

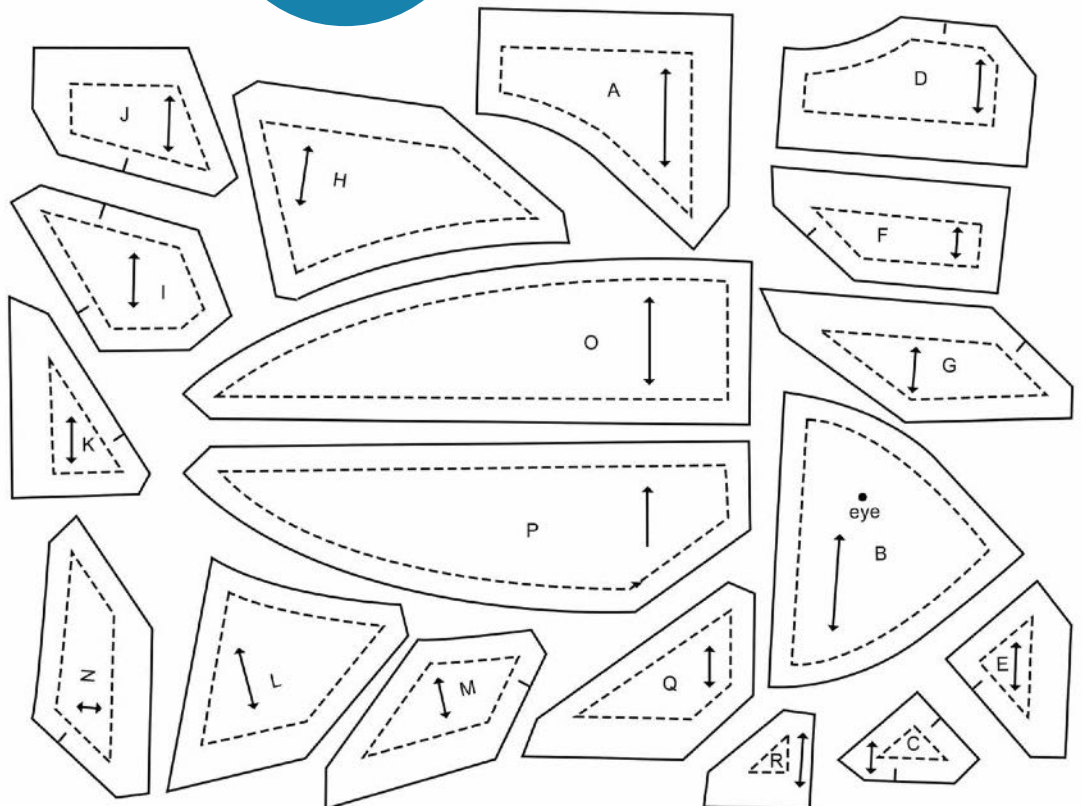
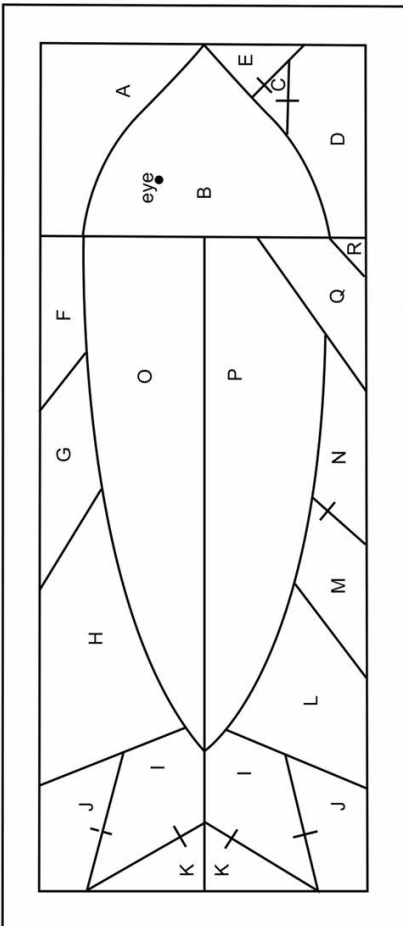
5 Stitch the front to the back along the long side and lower edges. Clip the corners, press seams open. Turn right side out. Stitch the linings together along the long side and short lower edge, leaving a 20cm gap in one side edge. Clip the corners, press seams open.

6 Slip the bag into the lining. Pin and stitch the upper edges together, matching side seams. Turn right side out through the gap. Slipstitch the gap closed. Push the lining into the bag. Press the upper edge. Topstitch 6mm below the upper edge.

TIP
Use the fish block to create any number of projects, such as cushions and quilts.

WORDS AND MAKE: CHERYL OWEN. PHOTOS: RICHARD BUTCHER

ENLARGE BY 200%



Sweet and SOUR

So much had changed in
Maggie's childhood town
– but not everything



Maggie wasn't entirely sure what had brought her here to the suburban town of her childhood this late spring afternoon. Perhaps she'd just wanted to remember how she felt when she'd been on the cusp of life. Waiting for it all to happen.

The train station where she alighted had changed beyond all recognition, and was now all metal and pointy edges. A glazed passage took Maggie to the other side of the A-road on to the high street.

She stood for a while outside a Domino's, attempting to get her bearings. Surely the pizza takeaway had once been Randalls, the shoe shop where she and her younger brother Jim would get their feet measured at the beginning of every school year for a new pair of shoes?

She smiled, recalling the time when Jim, aged six, had had a tantrum because their mum had refused to buy him the pink shoes with red gingham piping and ladybird charms on the toes. He'd cried bitterly all the way home.

Maggie set off down the street, still smiling at the memory. The area had fallen victim to an

influx of the usual high-street suspects. As well as Domino's, there was a Tesco Express, a Boots and a Costa Coffee. However, Maggie was happy to see the little chippy was still there, though the name had been changed from Hutton's to Chip Ahoy!

An office block had now replaced the old dairy, where the milkmen had collected milk for delivery around the neighbourhood. Maggie could still recall those defining sounds of the morning – the familiar rhythm of the electric milk float, the clinking of the bottles. Her mother used to leave a note in an empty bottle on a Friday, asking for a Farmer's Wife loaf and a bottle of gold top for the weekend.

Eddie. That had been their milkman's name. The pillar of their community. Knew everyone's business – who had just had an operation, got married or had a divorce. It had been Eddie who had discovered old Mrs Jaggard lying on her driveway with a broken hip. She'd come out early one morning to look for her cat and tripped over the

uneven paving. Eddie had rung for an ambulance, wrapped her in a blanket and kept her mind off things by telling her how he'd seen Mrs Harris at number 65 doing the twist in her living room with Mr Bishop from number 51 – at seven o'clock in the morning!

Directly across the street from the dairy had been the library. The old red-brick building had been knocked down 40 years ago and replaced with a new modern version, with recessed lighting and landscape-curve shelving.

Maggie had been a lover of reading from early childhood. She had spent many an hour in the children's section of the library, head buried in books, relishing the smells of old paper and wood polish. She could still recall the excitement she'd felt when, with her father's permission, she'd been issued with her first adult library ticket at the age of 15. She could

barely conceive that the whole adult world, contained within those books, was now at her disposal. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* had been her first acquisition. She'd read it in the privacy of her bedroom in one long exquisite sitting.

Reaching the end of the parade of shops, Maggie stopped at the corner of Sweetbriar Avenue, the road she'd lived in until her 18th year. And there, where it had always been, was the little confectioner's shop. Maggie could hardly believe her eyes.

The old wooden door, which had always needed a shove to open, had been replaced with something more modern. However, jars of sweets and chocolate boxes were still displayed behind lead-framed bay windows, and the original sign in gold above the window still read *Wright's Old-Fashioned Sweets*.

Maggie peered through the window, wondering who was running the shop now. Not

**She could
hardly
believe
her eyes**

Mr and Mrs Wright, that was for sure. They were well into their 50s back then.

The door jingled when Maggie walked into the shop, and the woman behind the counter looked up.

'A quarter of pear drops, please,' Maggie said, fishing in her bag for her purse. She'd had a sudden hankering for her favourite childhood sweet treat.

'You can't beat a pear drop, can you?' the woman said, fetching a jar down from the shelf. 'My grandson favours those sour things called Toxic Waste. Just the name makes me shudder.'

The woman behind the counter looked to be in her 70s, like Maggie. There was something familiar about her voice.

'Pear drops have always been my favourites,' Maggie said. 'I grew up here. I used to come to this shop after school with my friend. They sold flying saucers and liquorice sticks back then too.'

The woman was looking closely at Maggie now.

'Maggie Pierce! Is that you?'

Maggie returned the woman's gaze, feeling momentarily bemused.

'It's me... Trisha.'

Maggie could see her now. Trisha Brown, her old childhood friend and neighbour. Beneath a mass of curly hair, her toothy smile, emphasised by pink lipstick, was the same as it had always been.

'Trisha! I don't believe it.'

Trisha laughed, a familiar bubbling sound, which took Maggie right back to their youth. She stepped out from behind the counter and gave Maggie a hug, and the two women stood chuckling and observing each other for a while.

'What are you doing here?' Trisha finally said.

Maggie told Trisha how she'd suddenly felt nostalgic for her youth. For all the places and people she'd known back then.

'I thought I'd come and visit this place. See if it had changed much. I haven't been back in 30 years. I was about to walk down Sweetbriar to look at my old house.'

'I was about to pop home for some lunch,' Trisha said. 'I'll walk with you.'

Maggie's childhood home was at the top of Sweetbriar, a long road lined with trees. On the way, the two women busily reminisced.

Maggie and her husband had both retired six years ago, in their late 60s, from their respective teaching jobs, and were relishing the extra time with their four grandchildren.

Trisha had moved back into her childhood home after buying it from her parents when they'd moved to the Cotswolds. She'd brought up two

daughters there, and had three grandchildren. She helped out in the sweet shop on a Friday for the owners, who lived next-door-but-one. She enjoyed the interaction with the customers, especially since losing her husband two years ago.

Maggie paused for a while, before asking, 'Did you marry Harry Suckley?'

'No way!' Trisha scoffed. 'Harry turned out to be a right waster. We'd not been dating three months when he cheated on me with Cheryl Egleton.'

Maggie raised an eyebrow. 'How unoriginal of him.'

Cheryl had been the popular girl at their sixth-form college. Glossy-haired and pouty-lipped, with legs up to her armpits. All the boys had been after her.

Trisha nodded, grinned impishly and replied, 'I heard he ditched Cheryl a year later and went off with her mum.'

Maggie laughed and Trisha gave her a sheepish look.

'You know, I was really sorry about all that stuff... With you

and me and Harry... I always regretted it. Our friendship was so much more important.'

Maggie shook her head and smiled.

'Water under the bridge. Anyway, it sounds like I had a lucky escape.'

'I still can't believe we let a boy like Harry Suckley come between us,' Trisha sighed.

They'd reached the end of the road and Maggie stopped outside her old house. It too had changed considerably over the years. The house occupied the corner of the street, and at some stage its owners had made use of the extra bit of land this afforded to build an ugly extension. Her mother's wildflower garden had long been replaced with a more manicured alternative.

Maggie touched the trunk of the old sycamore tree and looked up into the green umbrella of leaves that she'd so often gazed at through her bedroom window.

'I think that tree has got to come down,' Trisha said. 'Its roots are growing under the foundations of some of the houses.'

'Really? That's so sad,' Maggie observed. 'Everything's changed. So much.'

'The Red Lion is still there, next to the roundabout,' Trisha said, cheerfully. 'And the 207 bus.'

Maggie smiled wistfully.

'That's reassuring.' 'Do you remember how we'd catch that bus every Sunday and go to the Blue Moon on Church Road?'

'How could I forget?' Maggie laughed. 'We'd drink lemonade and dance all evening. Be home by 10pm.'

'Do Wah Diddy Diddy and the Hippy Hippy Shake,' Trisha giggled and swivelled her hips.

Maggie recalled, 'You, in that crocheted mini and cowboy boots.'

'And you, with your pink hair and psychedelic hot pants.'

Trisha now looked thoughtful. 'Listen, let me show you something else that will bring back memories.'

She led Maggie around the corner on to Beech Drive and pointed.

'Do you remember how we used to pinch cherries from that tree in old Mr Barnaby's garden?'

Maggie looked up into the gnarly branches of the tree. It was laden with plump, bright-red fruits, many of which were dangling over the top of a picket fence.

'Oh my goodness! It's still here. And just take a look at those cherries!'

Trisha nodded. 'It was always an early fruiter.'

'Do you remember how Mr Barnaby would run out of his house yelling, 'You girls! Hands off me cherries!'

They both giggled and Trisha stretched up and plucked two cherries from the nearest branch. She passed one to Maggie and they popped the fruits into their mouths.

Maggie smiled delightedly at Trisha. 'Incredible! They taste just like they always did. A tantalising mix of sweet and sour.'

'I pick some every year,' Trisha said. 'The new neighbours told me to help myself.' She reached up and plucked another handful. 'Although, I do miss old Mr Barnaby.'

Maggie chuckled.

Trisha slipped her arm through Maggie's.

'Why don't you come back to mine and I'll make us a cheese and pickle sandwich and a cuppa. We can catch up some more.'

'Do you still like cheese and pickle?'

Trisha cocked an eyebrow at her friend.

'Too right, I do! You can't beat a cheese and pickle sandwich.'

Maggie grinned and gave a contented sigh.

'It's certainly good to know that some things don't change.'

THE END

Amanda Batham

*'You girls!
Hands off
me cherries!'*

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MEASUREMENTS

To fit bust 82-86 (92-97) (102-107) (112-117)
cm/32-34 (36-38) (40-42) (44-46)in.

Actual measurements 97 (107) (117) (127)
cm/38¼ (42) (46) (50)in.

Length to shoulder (including edging)
48 (50) (52)cm/19 (19¾) (19¾) (20½)in.

Sleeve length All sizes 28cm/11in.

MATERIALS

5 (6) (6) (7) x 100g (250m) balls of Stylecraft
Naturals Bamboo Cotton DK (60% bamboo,
40% cotton) in Natural (7146)*. Sizes 3mm,
3.5mm and 4mm crochet hooks. Yarn is
available from theknittingnetwork.co.uk.

TENSION

20 stitches and 22 rows to 10x10cm, over
base pattern, using 3.5mm hook.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ch, chain; **ch-sp**, chain space; **dc**, double
crochet; **dc2tog**, double crochet 2 sts
together (to decrease 1 st) thus: [insert
hook into next st, yrh and pull loop through]
twice, yrh and pull through all 3 loops; **patt**,
pattern; **RS**, right side; **slst**, slip st; **st(s)**,
stitch(es); **tr**, treble crochet; **WS**, wrong side;
yrh, yarn round hook.

NOTES

Yarn amounts are based on average
requirements and are approximate.
Instructions are given for small size. Where
they vary, work figures in round brackets
for larger sizes. Figures in square brackets
are worked as stated after 2nd bracket.

BACK AND FRONTS (WORKED IN ONE PIECE TO ARMHOLES)

With 3.5mm hook, make 192 (212) (232)
(252) ch.

Base patt foundation row (WS): 1dc in 2nd
ch from hook, 1dc in each ch to end, turn –
191 (211) (231) (251) sts.

1st row: 1ch, 1dc in each st to end, turn.

2nd to 4th rows: As 1st row.

5th row: 4ch, miss 2 sts, 1tr in next st, [1ch,
miss 1 st, 1tr in next st] to end, turn.

6th row: 1ch, [1dc in next st, 1dc in next
ch-sp] to end, 1dc in 3rd of 4ch, turn.

These 6 rows form Base Patt. Patt 16 rows
more, ending with a 4th row.

Block patt foundation row (RS): 3ch, miss

Crochet

first st, 1tr in next 2 sts, *[1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next st] twice, 1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next 5 sts; repeat from * to last 8 sts, [1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next st] twice, 1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next 3 sts, turn.

1st row: 3ch, miss first st, 1tr in next 2 sts, [1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next st] twice, 1ch, miss 1 st, *1tr in next 5 sts, [1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next st] twice, 1ch, miss 1 st; repeat from * to last 3 sts, 1tr in next 2 sts, 1tr in 3rd of 3ch, turn.

2nd row: 3ch, miss first st, 1tr in next st, 1ch, miss next st, *1tr in next ch-sp, 1tr in next st] twice, 1tr in next ch-sp, [1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next st] twice, 1ch, miss 1 st; repeat from * to last 8 sts, [1tr in next ch-sp, 1tr in next st] twice, 1tr in next ch-sp, 1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next st, 1tr in 3rd of 3ch, turn.

3rd row: 3ch, miss first st, 1tr in next st, 1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next 5 sts, *[1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next st] twice, 1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next 3 sts, 1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next st, 1tr in 3rd of 3ch, turn.

4th row: 3ch, miss first st, 1tr in next st, 1tr in next ch-sp, *[1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next st] twice, 1ch, [1tr in next ch-sp, 1tr in next st] twice, 1tr in next ch-sp; repeat from * to last 8 sts, [1ch, miss 1 st, 1tr in next ch-sp, 1tr in next st, 1tr in 3rd of 3ch, turn.

These 4 rows form Block Patt. Patt 7 rows more, ending with a 3rd row.

Yoke patt foundation row (RS):

1ch, 1dc in first st, 1dc in next st, 1dc in next ch-sp, 1dc in next 5 sts, *[1dc in next ch-sp, 1dc in next st] twice, 1dc in next ch-sp, 1dc in next 5 sts; repeat from * to last 3 sts, 1dc in next ch-sp, 1dc in next st, 1dc in 3rd of 3ch, turn.

1st and 2nd rows: 1ch, 1dc in each st to end, turn.

3rd row: 4ch, miss 2 sts, 1tr in next st, [miss 1 st, 1tr in next st] to end, turn.

4th row: 1ch, [1dc in next st, 1dc in next ch-sp] to end, 1dc in 3rd of 4ch, turn.

These 4 rows form Yoke Patt. Continue in Yoke Patt until piece measures 27cm from beginning, ending with a 4th row.

Continue in Yoke Patt, dividing for back and fronts thus:

Right front: Next row: 1ch, 1dc in first st, 1dc in next 43 (48) (53) (58) sts, 1 (2) (1) (2) dc in next st, turn – 45 (51) (55) (61) sts.

Dc2tog at neck edge on every following right side row until 30 (34) (38) (42) sts remain.

Patt straight until Front measures 43 (45) (45) (47)cm from beginning, ending with a 4th row.

Next row: 1ch, 1dc in each st to end, turn.

Repeat last row until Front measures 47 (49) (49) (51)cm from beginning, ending at front edge.

Shape shoulder: 1st row: 1ch, 1dc in each st to last 10 (11) (12) (13) sts, turn.

2nd row: 1ch, 1dc in each st to end, turn.

Repeat last 2 rows, once more. Fasten off.

Back: Miss first 45 (50) (55) (60) sts, join yarn to next st, 1ch, 1dc in same place as join, 1dc in next 100 (110) (120) (130) sts, turn – 101 (111) (121) (131) sts. Continue in Yoke Patt, until Back measures 43 (45) (45) (47) cm from beginning, ending with a 4th row.

Next row: 1ch, 1dc in each st to end, turn.

Repeat last row until Back measures 47 (49) (49) (51)cm from beginning.

Shape shoulders: Next row: 1ch, 1dc in each st to last 10 (11) (12) (13) sts, turn.

Repeat last row, 3 times more.

Next row: 1ch, 1dc in each st to last 10 (12) (14) (16) sts, turn.

Repeat last row, once more.

Fasten off. Centre 41 (43) (45) (47) sts are back neck.

Left front: With right side facing, join yarn to next st after Back, 1ch, 1 (2) (1) (2) dc in next st, 1dc in each st to end – 45 (51) (55) (61) sts.

Dc2tog at neck edge on every following right side row until 30 (34) (38) (42) sts remain.

Patt straight until Front measures 43 (45) (45) (47)cm from beginning, ending with a 4th row.

Next row: 1ch, 1dc in each st to end, turn.

Repeat last row until Front measures 47 (49) (49) (51)cm from beginning, ending at front edge.

Shape shoulder: Work as for right front and fasten off.

SLEEVES (BOTH ALIKE)

With 3mm hook, make 82 (92) (92) (102) ch.

Base patt foundation row (RS): 1dc in 2nd ch from hook, 1dc in each ch to end, turn – 81 (91) (91) (101) sts.

Work 16 rows in Base Patt as for Back and Fronts, ending with a 4th row.

Change to 3.5mm hook.

Patt 6 rows more, ending with a 4th row.

Change to 4mm hook.

Work in Block Patt as given for Back and Fronts until Sleeve measures approximately 22cm from beginning, ending with a 3rd row.

Change to 3.5mm hook. Starting with Yoke patt foundation row, work in Yoke Patt as given for Back and Fronts until Sleeve measures 27cm from beginning, ending with a 4th row.

Shape top: Next row: 1ch, 1dc in each st to last 5 sts, turn. Repeat last row 11 (13) (13) (14) times.

Fasten off.

SHELL EDGING

Join shoulder seams together.

1st round: With 3mm hook and RS facing, join yarn to first st at Right Back Neck, 1ch, 37 (37) (43) (43) dc evenly across Back neck, 48 (54) (54) (60) dc down Left Front slope, 60dc down Left Front edge to Lower edge, 186 (210) (228) (246) dc evenly along lower edge to corner of Right Front edge, 60dc up Right Front edge to Right Front slope, 47 (53) (53) (59) dc up Right Front slope, slst into first dc of round.

2nd round: 1ch, 1dc in same place as 1ch, *miss 2 sts, 5tr in next st, miss 2 sts, 1dc in next st; repeat from * to end, slst into first dc of round. Fasten off.

CUFF SHELL EDGINGS (BOTH ALIKE)

Join Sleeve seams.

1st round: With 3mm hook and RS facing, join yarn to chain edge side seam, 1ch, 78 (90) (90) (96) dc evenly around cuff edge, slst in first dc of round.

2nd round: 1ch, 1dc in same place as dc, *miss 2 sts, 5tr in next st, miss 2 sts, 1dc in next st; repeat from * to end, slst into first dc of round. Fasten off.

TO MAKE UP

Sew in sleeves. Make two 25cm long twisted cords. Attach one to each front, level with neck shaping.

*** If you have any queries about this pattern, please contact knitting and crochet editor Sarah at sarah.neal@futurenet.com**




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Never TO BE TOLD

Acting on a hunch, was Carol putting herself in terrible danger?

THE STORY SO FAR

Carol Lyons gets a letter from old friend Sadie, who now lives on the Caribbean island of St Adina with husband Brad. Sadie's been accused of killing her housekeeper, Isobel. The letter contains a necklace with a magpie charm, a reminder of the years-old secret shared by Carol and Sadie – they were both present when Sadie's bullying dad Mike fell to his death. Carol flies to St Adina. Police think Sadie killed Isobel because she found Isobel stealing. Sadie has had mood swings since a head injury a year earlier. Money, Sadie's jewellery and camera were stolen. All were recovered by the police at Isobel's house, except the camera. After visiting Sadie in prison, Carol visits Brad, thinking she spots someone fleeing his house. Back at her hotel, Carol meets a policewoman, Marigold. Later, she sees Marigold boarding a ferry, looking furtive. Intrigued, Carol follows her.

Carol had barely glanced at her return ticket when she bought it just before departure. But now, standing at a deck rail and camouflaged by day trippers, she discovered that the ferry was heading from St Adina to the nearby, larger island of Aire Dulce – Spanish for 'sweet air'.

Carol knew from her guidebook that the harbour in the main port of the neighbouring island hosted a daily market, visited by tourists and locals from St Adina.

Skulking behind the day trippers, she glimpsed off-duty policewoman Marigold. It was easy to spot the pink rucksack over her shoulders.

At least Carol assumed Marigold was off-duty, wearing a sundress instead of her uniform – maybe she was working undercover.

Would that account for the fact that Marigold seemed agitated and distracted? Now and then, she took her phone from her pocket, consulted it, then slipped it back again. Was she waiting for a call or considering making one?

Carol had little to go on, beyond her suspicion that Officer Marigold Sterling was up to something.



A champagne cork popped near Carol, showering her in bubbles. A woman turned and beamed, 'Oops! Sorry about that, we're celebrating.'

Carol nodded, moving to lurk behind a stairwell to the upper deck.

Just in time too. The popping cork made Marigold whirl round, scanning the passengers.

As Carol watched, Marigold slipped the rucksack off her shoulders, checked its contents, then slipped it back on to her shoulders again.

That rucksack seemed to contain precious cargo.

Half an hour later, the ferry docked at Aire Dulce, frigate birds circling the harbour in search of scraps from the fishing boats.

Carol crept off the ferry behind Marigold. Along with many other passengers, Marigold was heading for the market, its close-packed stalls lining both sides of the harbour wall.

Hurrying after her quarry, Carol turned a corner, only to be caught up in a surging crowd.

The aroma of roadside vendors filled the air, while stalls offered everything from jewel-coloured spices to neon-bright fabrics.

Carol panicked, realising she'd lost sight of Marigold.

Someone thrust a delicious slice of grilled pineapple under her nose. 'Try before you buy!' a stallholder urged.

'No thanks,' she replied, standing on tiptoe to get her bearings.

She'd never find Marigold again in this melee – wait! She glimpsed the pink rucksack.

Carol weaved towards it.

Marigold stopped at a stall selling phone-case covers. She took out her phone and showed it to the stallholder. He tilted his head towards a space behind a pulled-back curtain. Marigold nodded and dipped behind the curtain, slipping off her rucksack.

Carol crept closer. She was just able to glimpse both the stallholder and Marigold behind the folded-back curtain. It was dim inside and they clearly thought they couldn't be seen.

Marigold drew an object from the rucksack and handed



it over to the man.

Carol gasped. Realising she needed proof of what she was seeing, she drew out her own phone and started filming, aware that if Marigold or her contact turned at that moment, they'd catch her in the act.

Her heart beat raggedly and her phone slipped with sweat in her hands.

This had to be something that could help Sadie.

On the other hand, it could be a sting operation. Perhaps Marigold was lulling the man into a false sense of security, waiting for her colleagues to arrive to arrest him for selling counterfeit goods.

Suddenly, a stallholder near Carol's vantage point threw a bucket of water over paving stones nearby. Instinctively, both Marigold and her contact glanced up.

Carol ducked down.

She'd got what she wanted. Now she just had to hope she hadn't been spotted!

Carol sped back to the harbour and darted on to the ferry,

taking refuge again behind the stairwell.

If she had been detected, including boarding the ferry, she could be in terrible danger.

It was another 20 minutes before the ferry left port. Carol used the time to review her footage, pleased to see she'd got a clear recording.

Should she send it straight to Sadie's lawyer, Rachel, in case anything happened to her – or her phone was snatched from her and thrown overboard?

But peeking around the stairwell as the ferry left port, she saw no sign of Marigold.

As Aire Dulce receded from view, Carol rang Rachel, praying she'd answer.

When she did, Carol said urgently, 'I need to meet at your office when I get back to St Adina, Rachel. I'm on the ferry returning from Aire Dulce. Can I have your address?'

'You've found something out?' surmised Rachel.

'I think so,' replied Carol. 'I'm sending you video footage now. I'll hang up from this call to send it, in case I hit the wrong link or

something. The video is self-explanatory, but ring me back the second you see it. No, wait – you might want to act on it before you do anything else. It features a policewoman called Marigold Sterling.'

'All right,' said Rachel, adding, 'Have you put yourself in danger, Carol? I did tell you to be careful...'

'I took a risk getting the video I'm about to send,' admitted Carol. 'But once I've sent it from my phone, doing anything to me won't matter. That's why I need to send it this second.'

She rang off, her fingers shaking as she uploaded the video to a messaging app and sent it to Rachel. She also added a note to say, of course, there's an outside chance it has nothing to do with Sadie's case.

A few minutes later, Rachel texted her... *Got the video! It's dynamite when it comes to Sadie's case, Carol. I'm sending you my office address. Come straight here when you dock.*

For the rest of the journey, Carol stayed crouched behind the stairwell, despite being fairly certain that Marigold wasn't on board.

Once back on St Adina, Carol took a taxi to Rachel's office and ran straight in.

Rachel rose from her desk, flushed. 'I've forwarded the footage you took to the DI in charge of Sadie's case,' she explained. 'I'm waiting for the police to ring me back. I didn't want to contact you again before I had news. How did you come to follow this woman?'

Explaining how she'd met Marigold previously at her hotel, then noticed her boarding the ferry looking furtive, Carol peered at Rachel's laptop. The footage from her phone had been enlarged on the screen.

They watched as Marigold took a camera from her rucksack and handed it over

to the stallholder.

'As soon as I saw Marigold holding a camera, I figured it could be the one missing from Sadie and Brad's house,' said Carol. 'Supposedly stolen by Isobel. But there was also an outside chance it was a different camera altogether.'

Rachel nodded. 'I've compared your video with photos of the make and model of the camera stolen from Sadie and Brad's. It looks identical. The police may even find a serial number on the footage you sent. The stallholder is Wayne McCoy, a known fence. It seems...'

The phone rang on her desk. She snatched it up, listening intently, Carol waiting in an agony of suspense.

'Yes, Detective Inspector, I see... I'll do as you wish.'

'What did he say?' demanded

Carol, almost bursting with impatience as Rachel rang off.

'He's sending officers to Aire Dulce now to interview McCoy.

And intercept Marigold on her way back to St Adina.' Rachel gave Carol a cautious grin. 'This could be the smoking gun we need!'

'So you were acting on a hunch?' gasped Sadie.

Released from prison pending 'ongoing enquiries', she was on her way to the home of Rachel's grandmother, on the far side of the island.

The press had merely been told that she was heading for an undisclosed location.

Gripping her friend's hand in the back of Rachel's car, Carol nodded, her throat tight.

'Something about Marigold looked off... the same way Brad seemed off when I met him.'

Sadie turned to gaze out of the window. 'So Brad was having an affair with Marigold,' she said.

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

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'Something about Marigold looked off... the same way Brad seemed off when I met him.'

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CONTINUED OVERLEAF

Carol nodded. 'Marigold crumbled as soon as the police caught up with her and confronted her about fencing your camera. Acting on Brad's instructions, she killed Isobel, then stole cash and items from your house, and snuck over to plant them in Isobel's. She wore gloves, naturally.'

'All Brad's idea,' added Rachel from the driving seat. 'He'd wanted rid of you since your accident, Sadie. Your headaches and mood swings weren't what he'd "signed up for", apparently. A divorce would be too costly for him under our legal system. If he was the one cheating or simply wanted out, he'd have to give you half of everything. But you wouldn't get a penny if he divorced you as a criminal!'

'Why not just bump me off, then?' murmured Sadie her shrug nearly breaking Carol's heart.

Rachel replied calmly, 'He got the idea to frame you when he saw you row with Isobel about cash gone missing from your handbag, in the days before her death. Isobel was no thief. You misplaced that money, probably. But it gave Brad an idea and he roped in Marigold to carry it out. On the morning of the murder, he'd be at work as usual to ensure an alibi, while Marigold snuck in and out of the house. She pushed Isobel off the balcony, took more cash, jewels – and the camera – then hurried off to plant them at Isobel's before you returned from your morning walk, Sadie.'

'She was in the house that time I visited Brad,' Carol realised. 'I thought I glimpsed someone sneaking out.'

'Her mistake was to keep the camera,' realised Sadie.

'Yep,' said Rachel. 'Once she'd checked it didn't contain film, she figured she might as well fence it and get a few quid. She told Brad she'd chucked it in the sea, after reflecting that Isobel might not have coveted a camera the same way she would have wanted the money

and jewellery, and that it could have raised a red flag. Brad believed her.'

Sadie winced. 'Marigold's greed was her downfall. Brad's too,' she snorted. 'Though I feel sorry for Marigold, in a way. I doubt Brad ever intended to marry her. He just used her as a pawn.'

Rachel said, 'From what I've learned, Marigold was infatuated with Brad – and the lifestyle he could offer. In her role as a police officer, she came to see that crime did pay, if you knew how to get away with it.'

'Yes,' Sadie sighed. 'I know all about Brad's charisma. I fell under his spell myself! Now Marigold is life's ruined because of meeting him, the way mine nearly was. And poor Isobel is dead.'

A lump rose in Carol's throat.

With the ordeal finally over, it was time to remember that Sadie was alone in the world, an only child, both of her parents dead. How would she cope?

Now Carol said firmly, 'No matter how persuasive Brad might be, Marigold didn't have to go along with his plan!'

Rachel agreed. 'She had a burning desire for the better things in life, and getting them any way she could. Even keeping the camera was a sign of that.'

'Never mind her,' Sadie said croakily, 'I want to visit Izzy's grave, discreetly, and lay flowers. I want to tell her I'm sorry for the part I played in all this, by losing my temper with her in the first place. And then...' She squeezed Carol's fingers. 'As soon as my passport's returned, I want to go home.'

On the flight home a week later, Sadie fell into a deep sleep. Carol wanted to sleep too, but couldn't stop brooding on how close Brad and Marigold had come to achieving their wicked goal.

She and Sadie had so much to be grateful for, not least the support of Rachel.

But there was still that secret binding Carol and Sadie together. Now that the two women had been reunited, would they remain friends or go their separate ways again?

Carol shut her eyes and saw herself back on that cliff path in coastal Kent, rushing towards Sadie's dad, Mike. She'd had one thought in her head – to protect Sadie as Mike shouted and loomed over her.

She had shoved him away from Sadie instinctively, never realising he would slip, reject their outstretched, helping hands – and fall to his death.

Suddenly, a different scene leapt into her mind. Mike was in it again, but this time, Carol was peeking through banisters, a child unnoticed but observing, as Mike shouted at her trembling mother June...

'I'll never admit that she's mine!' Mike yelled. 'You hunted me down because you think I'm made of money, is that it? You won't get a penny, you

grasping witch!'

Carol had fled to her room, wondering why Sadie's dad was being mean to her mother.

June was a single mum who'd raised Carol alone. When Carol was nine, June had moved to the same town in Kent where Sadie and her parents lived.

Now the truth dropped on Carol like a stone. Mike must have been her father.

If June had settled in Kent to be near him, she wouldn't have been motivated by money. She must have hoped that Mike, regularly seeing Carol in the town where he lived, would one day acknowledge her as his.

Perhaps he hadn't known the truth until June told him. It was certain she'd never told anyone



else. June would have shied away from hurting Sadie or Sadie's mum that way. She'd have hoped for the best – perhaps the gradual revelation of Carol's identity to Mike's family – but said nothing when it failed to materialise.

Then, when Mike died, it would have been impossible for June to come forward and compound the anguish of his widow and his little girl, Sadie.

So again, June had said nothing, including to Carol.

Carol glanced at Sadie's sleeping form. Her friend was once again wearing the gold necklace with its magpie charm. It was a talisman, she'd said to Carol, not of a corrosive secret, but of their bond. The bond of sisters, realised Carol.

She would have to ask June, discreetly and gently, if her suspicion about Mike was true. Then work out what to tell Sadie, who'd had enough upheaval to last a lifetime.

Yet Sadie wasn't alone in the world now. She had a sister. Would she welcome that?

Carol turned to gaze out at clouds above the plane wing.

Sisters. A bond of blood to trump all others. If she and Sadie truly were, perhaps the explosive secret they shared never was meant to be told.

THE END

Gabrielle Mullarkey

* *The Ones Who Never Left* by Gabrielle Mullarkey is out now on eBook (£2.99, Spiral Books).



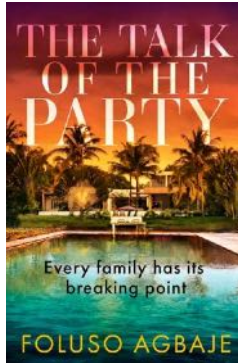
Great reads

Zoe West shares her picks for the week

The Talk of the Party

by **Foluso Agbaje (£9.99, PB, HarperCollins)**

In Lagos, Nigeria, the scene is set for Bukola Obanile's extravagant 60th birthday, where each of her children arrives burdened by secrets – financial scandal, strained relationships and private failures that threaten the family's elite status. These tensions create a slow-burning countdown, culminating in a party where even the most carefully maintained appearances begin to fracture. As truths surface, the celebration becomes a public unravelling threatening to endanger everything the Obaniles have built.



Five

by **Ilona Bannister (£16.99, HB, HarperCollins)**

Propulsive from the start, this gripping drama proves almost impossible to put down. We are quickly invested in five vividly drawn strangers gathered on a suburban rail platform at 7.01am, with just minutes until the 7.06 to London Victoria train arrives – and the chilling promise that one of them will die. As a child, a mother, a businessman, an elderly woman and a gambler reveal their tangled histories, tension mounts. More character study than straight thriller, it's an original, conversation-starting choice that's perfect for book clubs.

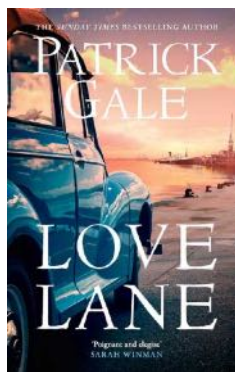
Woman's Weekly **LOVES**



Love Lane

by **Patrick Gale (£20, HB, Headline)**

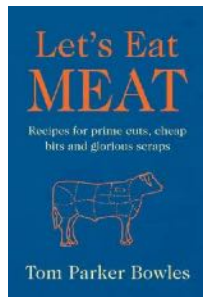
Continuing the story that began in *A Place Called Winter*, Harry Cane, now an ageing Canadian farmer, returns to post-war England after decades away. His arrival unsettles the family he left behind, particularly the daughter who barely knows him. As past choices resurface, his presence shapes the next generation in unexpected ways, guiding his granddaughter to confront buried trauma. This is a moving and deeply affecting exploration of estrangement, reckoning, home and the complexities of family bonds.



Let's Eat Meat

by **Tom Parker Bowles (£26, HB, HarperCollins)**

Beautifully designed and heartily practical, this cookery book champions a thoughtful approach to meat: eat less, but eat better. Its recipes are simple yet full of flavour, often using meat as a garnish or seasoning rather than the centrepiece, which feels both creative and sustainable. From hearty classics to lighter, ingredient-led dishes, it encourages mindful cooking without sacrifice. With its focus on quality and waste reduction, it's an appealing, modern guide to more balanced eating.



Over & Over

by **Becky Hunter (£9.99, HB, Atlantic)**

Ever feel like you've met someone before? When Lissa meets Ash, their piercing blue eyes spark an instant, unforgettable connection. Flashbacks reveal memories of past lives – always love, always heartbreak. As Lissa wrestles with guilt over her sister's death, health anxiety and a job she's deeply dissatisfied in, she hopes to break the cycle. Can the pair of them learn from the past and finally find their happy ending? A sweet, speculative romance for those open to the idea of past lives and an interest in tarot.



PHOTO OF ZOE: ELISABETH HOFF

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Jumbo puzzle

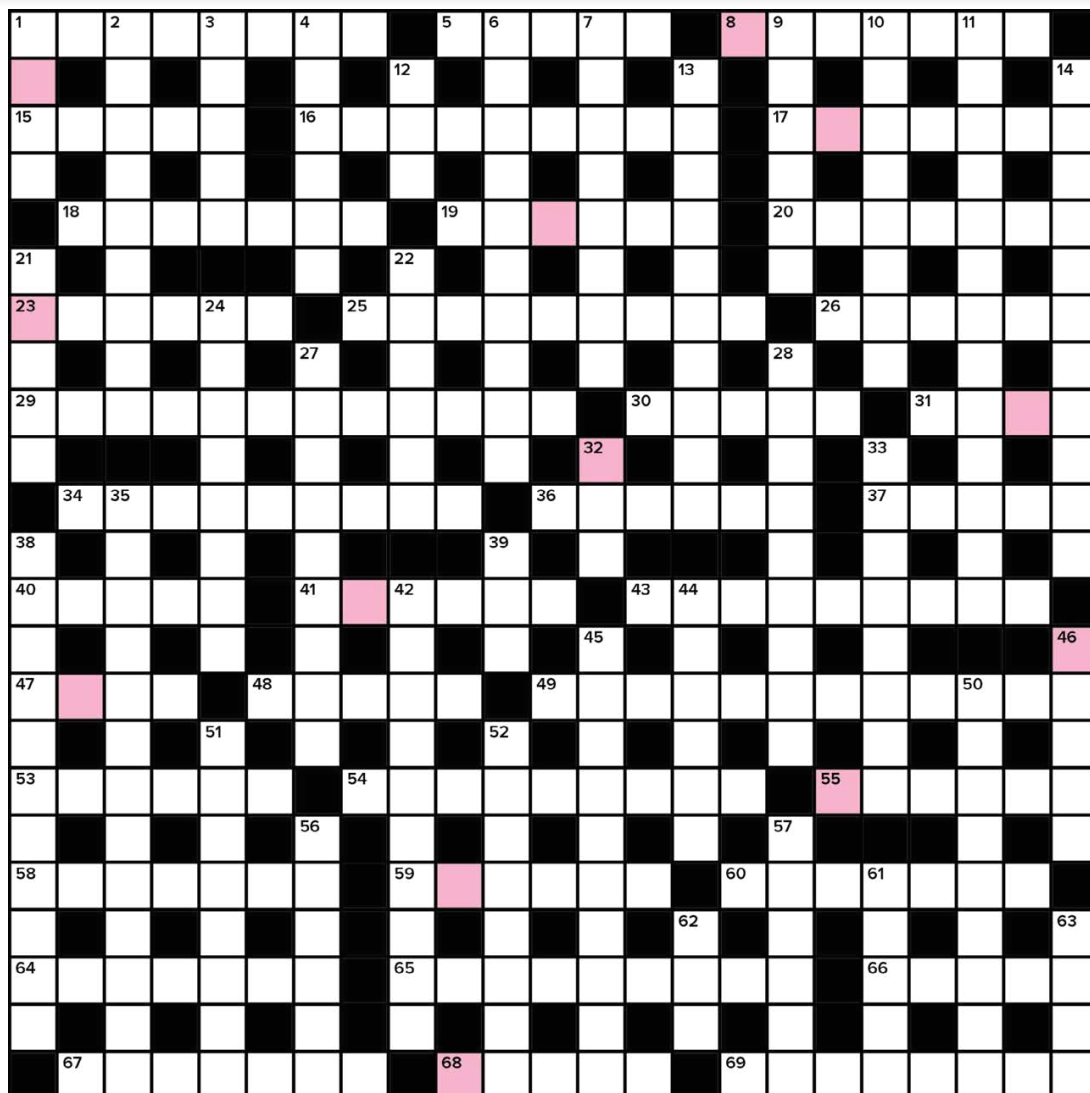
Read down the letters in the shaded squares to spell out a **type of cloud (13)**.

ACROSS

- 1 Unofficial (8)
- 5 Explosive devices (5)
- 8 Red colour (7)
- 15 Premature (5)
- 16 Instruction (9)
- 17 Committed to paper (7)
- 18 Liquid measurements (7)
- 19 Library user (6)
- 20 Football official (7)
- 23 Desire to drink (6)
- 25 Previous day (9)
- 26 Gratify (6)
- 29 Ordinary (12)
- 30 Bishop's headwear (5)
- 31 Tangle (4)
- 34 Exhibited (9)
- 36 Area of dense vegetation (6)
- 37 Free from dirt (5)
- 40 Lucky number? (5)
- 41 Keeps watch over (6)
- 43 Quarrels (9)
- 47 Hurry (4)
- 48 Nationality of a Dublin native (5)
- 49 Praise (12)
- 53 Tacked (6)
- 54 Co-worker (9)
- 55 Smaller in size (6)
- 58 Ascertain the size of (7)
- 59 Female relative (6)
- 60 Pudding (7)
- 64 Dried grapes (7)
- 65 Thus (9)
- 66 Book of maps (5)
- 67 Loosening a shoelace (7)
- 68 Remains (5)
- 69 Benchmark (8)

DOWN

- 1 Article (4)
- 2 Structure (9)
- 3 Regal (5)
- 4 Combining (6)
- 6 Groups of musicians (10)



- 7 Construction workers (8)
- 9 Yellow-belly (6)
- 10 Wet weather (8)
- 11 Amusement (13)
- 12 Skill (3)
- 13 Growing in size (10)
- 14 Absorbing (11)
- 21 Adhere (5)
- 22 Take away (6)
- 24 Using a broom (8)
- 27 Unfamiliar people (9)
- 28 Abnormal (9)
- 32 Young fox (3)
- 33 Timetable (8)
- 35 Inquiry (13)
- 38 Scientists (11)
- 39 Peculiar (3)
- 42 Helpers (10)
- 44 Entitlements (6)

YOU CAN WORK IT OUT...

- 45 Definitely (10)
 - 46 Jocund (5)
 - 50 Country (9)
 - 51 Safety (8)
 - 52 Least senior (8)
 - 56 Tutorial (6)
 - 57 Concrete component (6)
 - 61 European country (5)
 - 62 German shepherd, for example (3)
 - 63 Second-hand (4)
- * Find the puzzle answers on the horoscopes page.

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Puzzle TIME

Arrow word

About which Shakespearean heroine are these lines spoken, 'Her bed is India; there she lies, a pearl'? Solve the puzzle by following the arrows and writing in your answers. Then, read down the letters in the shaded squares to find the answer.

Belonging to that man	Ship's load	Get married	Increased in size	Positive answer	Function	Distant	Part of the mouth	Very wicked	Look at
US rapper, _ Cube		At this moment	A bird, Small ocean			Beers, Hire car			
Misery		N		Struggle, Mai _ cocktail					
Public transport vehicle	Be in debt	O	W	E	Hot drink, Aromas		Baked pastry dish		
Noise made by a wolf	To place	W	_ Butterfield, actor		Leg bone	Snake-like fish	Travels by boat	Homes for birds	
		Close by	Loyal, faithful	Urban areas				Hide and _ a game	
Retail store	Loosen a knot, Tot up				Boat built by Noah	Relieve			
Clear liquid				Seize, snatch		Tells fibs			
		Country, capital Vienna					Beatles song, _ It Be		
Elderly	Challenge			Jamaican music genre			Poses a question		

YOUR ANSWER:

WORDSEARCH

Which of these species of frog belong to the genus *Dyscophus*, from the Greek for 'deaf'? The answer is the one missing from the grid.

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

YOUR ANSWER:

- | | | |
|---------|--------|--------|
| AGILE | HORNED | SUNSET |
| FLYING | MARSH | TOMATO |
| GLASS | MINK | TREE |
| GOLIATH | POOL | TURTLE |
| HAIRY | PURPLE | WOOD |

Mini crossword

1		2		3
4				
		5		

The shaded boxes spell out a word.

ACROSS

- 1 Sweeping utensil (5)
- 4 Move quickly on foot (3)
- 5 Small feline (3)

DOWN

- 1 Farm building (4)
- 2 Unit of weight (5)
- 3 European island nation (5)

Charity for DUMMIES

In which a customer brings an unusual gift to the shop



“A man came into the shop the other day and asked a question it was almost impossible to answer.

‘Who’s in charge here?’ he demanded.

‘That’s a very interesting point,’ I said.

You might remember that we are currently between managers. Mrs Protheroe has gone off to help her son set up a business, but the committee has forgotten to let us know who will be taking over. Mind you, we’ve not exactly been chasing them.

You’re probably thinking that my reply wasn’t what you might call helpful. *The Charity Shop Customer Service Manual* clearly states: *Remember, nobody likes a smarty-pants.*

So I quickly added, ‘I suppose I’ll do for the moment. How can I help you?’

He was in his 50s, and built on the large side. What’s more, he was wearing a yellow sweatshirt that fashion experts would not have recommended to a gentleman of his physique who did not particularly wish to look like SpongeBob SquarePants.

He was carrying a large cardboard box, which he put on the counter.

‘I’ve got something rather unusual that I wish to get rid of,’ he said. ‘And I wondered if you might be interested.’

This is normally a bit of a red flag, but it’d been a dull old day so I gave him a smile of encouragement. He opened the top of the box, reached inside, and with a flourish that would do credit to Paul Daniels he produced... a ventriloquist’s dummy.

‘Goodness me,’ I said.

‘This is Eric,’ said SpongeBob.

I could have done with the services of a ventriloquist at that moment because, quite frankly, I was speechless.

‘What do you think?’ said Mr S.

The dummy looked like a schoolboy in a cloth cap. Or perhaps a cheery Cockney from some 1950s film who had been shrunk in the wash.

‘Goodness me,’ I said again, which I think you’ll agree wasn’t particularly helpful. ‘Are you sure you want to get rid of him?’

Mr SpongeBob drew up the high stool on his side of the counter and sat down. ‘He belonged to my late father,’ he said quietly. ‘My brother, my sister and I have been

clearing out his house and none of us wanted Eric. We all agreed that he should be donated to a good cause.’

‘Oh, we’re a good cause all right, but why did nobody want the poor little chap?’

‘It’s complicated,’ said Mr S.

‘Would you like some tea or coffee?’ I said.

Now, don’t get the wrong idea. We don’t normally hand out mugs of tea and coffee to everybody who donates even the largest of items. But Mr S looked as if he wanted to get something off his very square chest. So tea seemed a kind offer, and it *had* been a quiet day.

He laid Eric on the counter in a reverent sort of a way, picked up his mug of coffee, and began to tell his story.

Apparently, his father was a vicar who had dreamed since childhood of a career in showbusiness. ‘Unfortunately, he had

no particular talent apart from being a bit of a show-off,’ said Mr S. ‘Going into the church was one way of getting an audience, I suppose.

‘One day he came home with Eric and he taught himself to be a ventriloquist. He performed at church events and children’s parties, and Eric even opened the village fete one year. I say, this is very good coffee.’

Mr S drained his mug, and looked around him as if to see if we were alone. I realised as he did this that we were coming to the heart of the matter.

‘The thing is,’ he sighed, ‘and my brother and sister both feel the same way, that my father treated Eric as his favourite child. We all came to hate Eric.’

He gave the dummy a very dirty look, and I must say we certainly don’t get this sort of excitement and drama with people who donate old clothes. But it was about to become odder.

Mr S picked up Eric, and sat the dummy on his knee. Then Eric looked around, and said, ‘I think I’ll be very happy here.’

‘No,’ sighed Mr S, addressing the puppet. ‘I don’t think I can do it. It’d be like giving away one of the family.’

With that, he put Eric back in the box, thanked me for listening, and left.

Which all goes to prove that, even on quiet days, life is never dull in the fast-moving world of the charity shop.

It’d be like giving away one of the family’

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