

Kempsey Times

A free monthly newspaper for Kempsey, Norton, Severn Stoke and surrounding village.



Issue 28

August 2026

FREE



Wonderful Waters of Kempsey Common

The month of July seems to have been dominated by sport and politics! Wimbledon, FiFA World Cup Football Test, Cricket v New Zealand and the Open Golf Championship! We had outstanding performances at Wimbledon and Football reaching the semi finals in each of these events. We also did very well at the Open! We will have to wait and see how we get on at Cricket with lots of radical changes being made.

The political news is a new Prime Minister. Unelected by the electorate, voted for by Labour Parliamentary members only. This after a contrived local election. The fifth Prime Minister in four years. This continual lack of loyalty and regular change of leader, with the

differing ideologies that seems to go with it, is good for the country. To change the direction of any organisation takes time and parliament sits for five short years.

Every change is a setback and therefore change never gets finished. People don't like

change; make a plan, get on with it, monitor carefully as you go, produce the goods, and move on. We will have to see what happens.

We have had some incredible weather, breaking all sorts of records for hottest days etc. Trying to keep cool has been a major problem. We have an interesting article on how to keep cool, and also how to avoid some of the air conditioning systems on the market. Sometimes the cheapest models are the most inefficient

and yet the most expensive to use. We remain very busy and thank all our customers, readers, advertisers and contributors. We are very grateful and we look forward to the rest of the summer with great enthusiasm.

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County and District Report

Councillor Martin Allen



Did you know that the Sunshine Festival returns on Thursday 27th August? I really hope it brings another welcome boost for our local businesses, many of whom have had a challenging time. Last year, I made a point of seeing whether festival visitors were making their way into Upton, and it was lovely to see that so many of them were. I do understand that the extra traffic, delays and noise can be frustrating for

residents, but the festival is with us for only a few days. If we can welcome visitors warmly and encourage them to spend time in the town, it could make a real difference to our traders, who need and deserve all the support we can give them.

New Police Speed Gun For Baughton



(L-R) Mike Brooks, Parish Clerk; Marc Baylis, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner; Simon Campbell, Road Safety Ops Manager, West Mercia Police; and local County Councillor Martin Allen

For years, both Hill Croome Parish Councillors, residents and I have asked police to enforce the speed limit through Baughton. We were getting nowhere. As a last-ditch effort, I contacted Marc Baylis, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, for support. Marc was very supportive and visited the area to assess whether there was a safe place for an officer

to stand and use the new speed gun. This equipment is a real step forward, making it much easier to identify speeding motorists, including motorcyclists. The camera is kept at Malvern Police Station and can be deployed when needed. As awareness grows, I'm hoping speeding will reduce and residents will feel safer walking along the A4104.

Jazz Hits The Right Note



As usual, the Jazz Festival hit the right notes and in the right order! Jon Parsons and his fellow team members pulled out all the stops and surpassed themselves again. It was a great shame that

Upton's school children were unable to attend due to the forecast heat. However, a few brave souls arrived with decorative umbrellas, and I thought you would like to see them.

WCC Pavement Works Continue



There is more good news for our local area, with pavement improvements now being completed on Greenfields Road and Packers Hill following my long-standing request to the County Council. I know the works may have caused some short-term disruption, and I am

grateful to residents for their patience. It has been lovely to hear from local people who are pleased to see this work finally happening, and I will keep pressing for more pavement improvements, especially parts of Gardens Walk in Upton and Old Vicarage Close in Kempsey.

MHDC Lose Control of Planning

The government has decided that MHDC has not performed well enough in the matter of planning applications. On 27th March 2026, the Chief Planner wrote to MHDC confirming that the Council was at risk of designation for quality of decision-making for applications for major development, based on data for local planning appeals for the two years up to the end of March 2025 and appeal decisions to the end of

December 2025. For this period, the performance of the Council was 12%. This exceeds the threshold of less than 10% of an authority's decisions being overturned at appeal. Now developers apply to build over ten houses or more can request that their planning application bypasses MHDC and goes straight to the Planning Inspectorate. I understand MHDC are objecting; let's hope they are successful.

And finally ...

This year, I had the privilege of opening the Jazz Festival. It never ceases to amaze me how so many kind-hearted people step forward, when called, and get stuck in. Talking of getting stuck in, or rather talking about

not getting stuck in, it's been a bit hot. Is anyone else's veg plot a disaster? Oh well, there is always next year, and I have plans! As ever, I'm here if you need me..

Martin Allen

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A few words from... Dame Harriett Baldwin MP



Walking Path Shortlisted; Best in the Country

Dame Harriett Baldwin MP has highlighted the county's world class walks which draw tourism to the area and power the local rural economy. It comes as a scenic path on the Malvern Hills has been shortlisted for a national award. The 1,100-foot Pinnacle Hill, which overlooks Malvern Wells, was chosen as the Midlands entry for Britain's Favourite Path. The winner is selected by public vote, with Pinnacle Hill going up against renowned trails as far away as Wales and Northumberland. Ramblers' Britain's Favourite Path 2026 is open to votes until 31st July.

The full shortlist and link to vote can be found at:
<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/britains-favourite-path-2026-shortlist>

Dame Harriett said:
"It is exciting that one of our treasured Malvern Hills is nominated for this national award and local people can have their say. I regularly enjoy going for a walk on the Malverns and on Bredon Hill. People come from all over the world to experience them and they're a huge driver for our local tourism and hospitality businesses, supporting jobs and prosperity. It is essential these magnificent rural leisure spaces continue to be protected, so future generations can enjoy them and our local economy continues to benefit. I encourage local people to support our area's heritage and vote for the Pinnacle path to be named Britain's Favourite Path. Our marvellous landscape deserves to be celebrated."

St Mary's, Kempsey, Grand Fete



The Grand fete was blessed with glorious weather as the village came together to celebrate, meet old friends and make new connections.

We thank all who supported, through sales of Grand Draw tickets, even if you weren't able to join in on the day. Thank you for the support of our community who have helped us raise a fabulous total of £6,500 towards work among our toddlers, parents, teenagers and older residents as well as maintaining the fabric of the church and churchyard.

We are grateful to our many sponsors;
- Pollyphil Family Stores,

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- Bedwardine Funeral services
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- Tesco Store, St Peter's
- Worcestershire County Council, Martin Allen
- Councillor David Harrison
- Gandies, Draycott Eco Park
- Mill Lane Nurseries
- Edward's motors, Baynall

Thank you especially to all stallholders, set up and take down teams who worked tirelessly to make the afternoon such a success. The afternoon was accompanied by great musical entertainment from John & Miriam and 'Wool'

Rev Kat and Joy
(Churchwarden)

For care homes Help us recycle community equipment

When residents no longer need their community equipment, returning it promptly means another patient can benefit sooner.

What You Can Do

- Notify the equipment service when a resident is discharged or passes away
- Designate a Recycling Champion in your home
 - Store equipment safely for collection
 - Keep equipment labels and ID tags intact

To arrange a collection, contact the Community Equipment Service

WHCNHS.CommunityEquipmentService@nhs.net
01905 520832

www.hacw.nhs.uk/services/service/worcestershire-community-equipment-service-44/#service-how-to-arrange-a-collection-tab



The following equipment can be provided to care homes, anything else would need to be provided by the care home:

Walking stick; walking frames/crutches; syringe pumps
Bespoke Slings; mattresses and cushions medium to high risk - following assessment
Alternating Dynamic (and pump); overlays/mattresses/cushions, medium to high risk - following assessment

Different rules apply to Nursing Homes, please contact the service if you require clarification.

Guarlford & Madresfield encouraged to have their say

Residents in Guarlford and Madresfield are being encouraged to share their views on proposals to merge the two parishes.

The first stage of consultation, held as part of Malvern Hills District Council's Community Governance Review, found that most respondents were in favour of Guarlford and Madresfield forming one parish council. The second stage of the consultation is now live and asks residents, councillors, businesses and local organisations for their views on the following recommendations:

- Merge Guarlford Parish Council and Madresfield Parish Council to create a new single parish for the area.
- Name the new parish Guarlford and Madresfield Parish Council.
- Set the number of councillors at seven.
- Hold the first election on

Thursday 6 May 2027.

The second stage of consultation will run from 29th June 2026 until midnight on 10th August 2026.

The review was requested by Guarlford and Madresfield Parish Councils and will consider whether current arrangements reflect the identities and interests of the community.

Visit www.malvernhillsgov.uk/consultations for more information and to have your say.



How to make sure toys you buy online are safe

The British Toy and Hobby Association (BTHA) tests toys sold by online marketplaces every year. Testing is against UK toy safety standards at a certified laboratory.

Their latest findings tested 89 toys from third-party sellers on seven online marketplaces:

- Sadly 90% failed - 86% failed testing to a safety standard and 4% failed on legal labelling requirements only

- 10 failures seemed identical to toys recalled or on the UK Product Safety Database in the last year

BTHA advises people to:

- Be careful buying from online marketplaces - don't assume a toy meets UK toy safety standards
- Check who the marketplace seller is - see what country they're based in and if they list a UK address
- Research the company or brand that makes the toy and include it in your search - look for sellers you recognise and trust
- Compare branded toys for sale on an online marketplace

against the brand's own website

- Be careful going for the cheapest price
- Check the marketing and product listing of the toy - are the description, images, and warning labels consistent. For example, a toy labelled for over three years but pictured with a baby is a sign it could be unsafe.

For further information and advice, please contact your local Citizens Advice South Worcestershire office on 01684 563611 or visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk

If you think you have bought a toy online and it is unsafe you can talk to the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133. Lines are open Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.



Tales from my travels

Lucy Clayton-Smith



People were always surprised when I told them I was beginning my solo travels in Africa. Most expected me to start somewhere like Asia or Australia, where the backpacker trail is well established. Instead, I chose Zambia. It wasn't the obvious choice for a first-time traveller, not least for someone who couldn't even place it on a map (it's nestled between eight countries, including Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Namibia). I'd been drawn to Africa ever since I watched *Out of Africa* during the pandemic. Perhaps it was the haunting soundtrack, the endless golden plains or the incredible wildlife, but I felt a calling to Africa that I couldn't ignore. When it came to booking my one-way ticket, I stopped overthinking and trusted my instincts.

Volunteering at a popular backpackers in Livingstone gave me the perfect place to begin. Life revolved around daily power cuts, hot, dusty days and mosquito bites that even made the locals wince. Yet it quickly became more than somewhere to stay; it became

home. I met kind, welcoming locals and had countless inspiring conversations with fellow travellers. I still remember my first afternoon. Jake, a young Brit who'd grown up in South Africa, whisked me off in an open-sided Jeep to Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, a stone's throw from the small Edwardian town. Monkeys and baboons lined the roadside, while elephants bathed in the Zambezi River as we shared a drink at the local watering hole. During that first month, I watched hippos topple into the river, crocodiles bask on the banks, and came face to face with rhinos, zebras, warthogs, impala and wildebeest. I even hung over the edge of the mighty Victoria Falls at Devil's Pool (yes, tourists really do pay to do it), and conquered Grade five rapids on the Zambezi, blissfully unaware that the scale only goes up to Grade six!

The rains finally arrived on the morning I left.

By then, I was ready for whatever came next.

From the Parish Council

New IT & Youth Hub Coming This Summer.

Kempsey Parish Council is pleased to share an update on an exciting project that will bring new opportunities and modern facilities to our community. Later this summer, work will begin on installing our new IT & Youth Hub — a stand alone modular building positioned next to the Youth Centre. The Hub will provide a dedicated space for computer gaming events and digital activities for young people, offering a safe and social environment right here in the Parish. It will also host digital support sessions for residents who may need a help navigating internet technology, from getting online to managing everyday digital tasks. In addition, the building will offer additional functional meeting space, creating a flexible facility that can serve a wide range of community needs. This project, which falls within KPC's permitted development rights, is funded almost entirely by the Malvern Hills District Council's Community Facility Legacy Grant Scheme. Their investment represents a significant commitment to Kempsey's future, supporting digital inclusion, youth engagement, and local enterprise. The Parish Council is extremely grateful for this support, which will allow us to deliver a high quality facility that would otherwise have been unaffordable — a real win for the whole community. Construction is scheduled to begin in late summer. During the works, a small section of the playing fields will be fenced off for safety reasons and we kindly ask all visitors to follow any guidance on notices displayed by the contractor. Importantly, there will be no impact on football pitches, training sessions, or matches, which will continue as normal throughout the installation period. The IT & Youth Hub marks a positive step forward for Kempsey, strengthening opportunities for young people, boosting digital confidence and providing a new space for

community connections. We look forward to welcoming residents into the new facility when completed.

Housing development at Napleton Lane.

As reported in the previous issue, Hallam Land has appealed against the refusal of planning permission for 99 dwellings off Napleton Lane with access from Bannut Hill. The closing date for representations was 16th July 2026 and the Parish Council lodged objections in time, expanding on both those made at the time of the application and the reasons for refusal given by Malvern Hills councillors. Local councillors, the South Kempsey Action Group and residents also made further representations. Since the decision to refuse permission in December, as recently as March this year the brand-new Development Plan Review was adopted, which says where development should and shouldn't go. A report was also published in June showing that there is sufficient housing land to meet the government's 5-year requirement. We knew that Malvern Hills officers were considering if all of the refusal reasons could be defended. However, since this greenfield site, outside the development boundary, is in conflict with the newly adopted 'Plan', we anticipated that MHDC would defend its policies to safeguard its integrity.

Not so. The officers have notified the Inspectorate that, 'on balance' the Council now considers the appeal proposal is acceptable. What now for the appeal? It still has to be decided one way or the other so it is assumed that the Hearing set for 8th September 2026 will go ahead. The Parish Council and residents should be heard but with little hope of the appeal now being dismissed. What now for the Development Plan? There is nothing special about this proposal. It is no different to any application for new houses on any field around any



village. It is concerning that the long-awaited Development Plan, years in the making, could be pushed aside so soon and so easily. What now for democracy? Should the decision-makers not be councillors representing local people, not officers?

Unitary Authority.

The Government has announced that local councils in Worcestershire will be reorganised into two new unitary councils. The decision means that from 1st April 2028, the seven existing county, city, borough and district councils will be abolished and replaced by:

- North Worcestershire Council: covering the areas currently served by Bromsgrove District, Redditch Borough and Wyre Forest District Councils.

- South Worcestershire Council: covering Malvern Hills District, Worcester City and Wychavon District Councils.

More information about what this means for residents in Malvern Hills District can be found at MHDC's website .

<https://www.malvern hills.gov.uk/about-your-council/local-government-reorganisation> This page will be updated as the reorganisation process proceed.

The Rocky

Parishioners will notice the recent clearance works at the Rocky. All brash has now been removed, creating a cleaner and more accessible space. The trunks within the clearing have been intentionally left in place to enhance the natural environment and provide an informal seating area for visitors to enjoy.

A Blooming Thank You to Nuyard Garden Centre & Susan Bott!

If you've wandered through the village recently, you may have noticed our planters showing off like they're auditioning for

Kempsey in Bloom. The burst of colour isn't just down to good weather — it's thanks to a wonderful collaboration with Nuyard Garden Centre, located on the A38 just south of Kempsey, who have generously sponsored our planters this season. Their support means our village is looking brighter than ever, and we're delighted to partner with a local business that shares our love for community and a welcome splash of colour. And of course... we can't talk planters without celebrating the plantswomen in charge, Susan Bott. For many years, Susan has lovingly tended, planted, watered, nurtured (and occasionally had stern words with) our village planter displays. She has done a bloomin' marvellous job! We also want to give a huge shoutout to our lengthsmen, maintenance technician, and the wonderful volunteers who have kept the planters watered during the recent extreme heat. It has been a mammoth task, and their dedication has kept everything looking vibrant rather than wilted. Kempsey is blooming!

For more information regarding the activities of the Parish Council, please refer to our website www.kempseyhub.co.uk

*For all enquiries, please contact Sharon Dunn, Parish Council Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
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Alfred Lord Tennyson

Orchards

Tim Hickson



Ordnance Survey map of Evesham and surrounding areas

Old Ordnance Survey maps of this area show seas of fruit orchards.

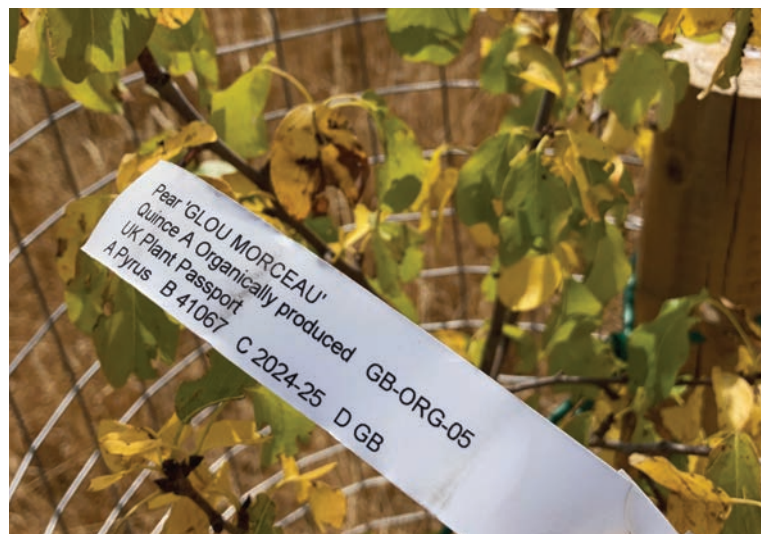
The Vale of Evesham had become one of the major fruit-growing regions in Britain. As a local example of its importance, in 1890, the 9th Earl of Coventry had a jam and pickle factory built near to Pershore railway station so those growing fruit on the Croome estates could sell it there. (This saved them the cost of sending fresh fruit to London and also avoided the risk of these perishable items not arriving in good condition.) Different parts of England tended to specialise.

Our neighbours in Gloucestershire and Herefordshire grew cider apples and perry pears whereas

Worcestershire tended to produce eating apples and pears as well as plums. Orchards started to decline after WW2 as cheap, out-of-season imports were favoured by supermarkets. Consequently, the demand on British orchards fell, and many went out of business.

Houses were built on what had been orchards, for example, in Pershore, in the angle between Three Springs Road and the Worcester Road, behind the old Police Station.

Some counties have lost over 90% of their orchards. One consequence of this is that some unique local varieties were lost as well as habitats for the vital pollinating insects. However, independent greengrocers still support local



Glou Morceau Quince

growers. For example *Fruit Salad* in Pershore, *Revill's Farm Shop* near Defford *Clive's Farmshops* near Upton and Cropthorne, will provide a range of different local plums in the late summer season. Apples, pears and quince will usually be local too.

There is further good news. People are increasingly aware of the value of locally produced fruit and vegetables. Knowing the places where what we eat comes from is reassuring, and the food usually has a better taste.

Furthermore, many organisations are setting out to start fresh orchards. On the edge of Tiddesley Wood is Stocken Orchard. This is a ten-acre ciderapple orchard, purchased

by Vale Landscape Heritage Trust in 2013.

Part of the reason is to manage its wildlife and landscape value. There is a board outside that gives detailed information. Also, there is a Community Orchard in the Abbey grounds and another off The Holloway on the edge of Pershore.

These grow local varieties. A team of volunteers from Pershore High School and Pershore College planted this in 2025.

In normal years these trees are designed to fruit from late July to late September when you are allowed to pick some fruit to try. Go and have a look. No doubt readers can tell us of other such initiatives elsewhere in Worcestershire.



Community Orchard Project information board



Stocken Orchard information board

Harriett shocked at planning meeting refusal

Dame Harriett Baldwin MP has expressed her shock that Government Ministers have refused to meet after they removed the rights of local councillors to have their say on major housing developments. The MP wrote to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government asking for an urgent meeting to discuss the decision which was based on outdated information and could be subject to legal challenges. The Government had written to both Malvern

Hills and Wychavon District Councils saying that major planning applications will be decided by the Planning Inspectorate, removing the voices of local councillors to comment on housing development. The MP then called for an urgent meeting with Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook MP to highlight the outdated information used.

Dame Harriett said: "I was appalled at the initial decision

which came out of the blue and I am told is based on outdated and inaccurate information. This is a Government in stasis as it changes Prime Minister, but I am shocked that it has taken a month to reply refusing a meeting to discuss this vital issue. Usually Ministers have the courtesy to take meetings with MPs whose areas are affected by their decisions. I have always felt that the best planning decisions are made by local people and their local representatives and I am extremely concerned that the



Labour administration will use this as an opportunity to impose major housing developments on us and our lovely rural area."

Romy joins newspaper group

Romy Kemp joins Hughes & Company as Editorial Assistant.

Taking over the role from Gregory Sideway, Romy will be working with Editor Alan Hughes. Educated at Hanley Castle High School and Liverpool University, where Romy obtained a 2:1 Degree in English. These academic qualifications

together with excellent computer skills made her a first class candidate for this important position in our company.

Romy has been associated with our newspapers for nearly five years. Beginning as a Work Experience student and then writing her monthly column *Teenage Focus*, later *Romy's Uni Life*, and now *Roaming with Romy*



Stan's cafe river tours: The Avon

Midlands-based theatre company Stan's Cafe have announced the dates for their latest production, River Tours: The Avon - with performances across Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Birmingham (1-16 Aug 2026), including a visit to the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-upon-Avon. The poetic production floats visitors through centuries of history, folklore and wildlife,

from the River Avon's source in Northamptonshire to its union with the River Severn at Tewksbury, and features a remarkable collection of characters and unexpected stories, as well as moments of everyday life, past and present. Lively, witty and fascinating stories - which range from historical facts to personal anecdotes - are recounted by actor/storyteller Kathryn Hanke

beside a specially commissioned three-metre-long textile map tracing the course of the great river. Created by Warwickshire-based Studio Mead (aka Ellie Carr-Smith and Molly Acacia Hughes) using screen printing and tufting techniques, the colourful, detailed tapestry is filled with illustrations. These have been inspired by the stories collected by the Stan's Cafe project team, who worked closely with communities and groups across Warwickshire and Worcestershire to bring together a rich archive of tales. Opening on Saturday 1 August 2026, in Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire, River Tours: The Avon then travels just over the Worcestershire border to Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire (Sun 2 Aug), before returning to Warwickshire for stop-offs in Willoughby (Wed 5 Aug), Luddington (Fri 7 Aug), Shotton (Sat 8 Aug) and Hampton Lucy (Sun 9 Aug). The tour then continues to Pershore, Worcestershire (Tue 11 Aug AM)

as well as Bidford on Avon, Warwickshire (Tue 11 Aug PM), before concluding with five performances at The Royal Shakespeare Company, in Stratford-upon-Avon (Fri 14-Sun 16 Aug).

In addition, the production also winds into Birmingham for two performances (Thu 6 Aug, Stan's Cafe's Our Facility; Thu 13 Aug, Edgbaston Reservoir).

River Tours: The Avon is the sixth instalment of Stan's Cafe's ongoing River Tours project, which has previously visited The Thames, The Lune, The Indus, The Severn and the Volga. Supporting the Avon project are the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and the community groups they work with, along with Live & Local.

Tickets to all performances of River Tours: The Avon are 'pay what you can'. Tickets bookable via Stan's Cafe's website: stans.cafe



Coastal inspired plants for your summer garden

There's something magical about the British seaside in summer. The salty air, the soft dunes, the wind-tousled grasses, and that unmistakable feeling of calm the moment you arrive at the coast. But if you're not heading away this August - or you simply want to bring a little holiday atmosphere home - you can create a seaside-inspired garden right here in Worcestershire. Coastal planting isn't just beautiful; it's practical, drought-tolerant, and surprisingly easy to recreate inland. With the right mix of plants, textures, and colours, you can turn a corner of your garden into a breezy, beach-themed escape that looks good all summer long.

Here are my Top 6 plants:

Stipa tenuissima (Mexican Feather Grass) Soft, flowing, and endlessly elegant. It moves beautifully in the wind and looks just like dune grass. Perfect for adding movement and a relaxed feel.

Festuca glauca (Blue Fescue) Compact, tidy clumps of blue-grey grass. The colour alone evokes "seaside morning mist." Great for edging, pots, and adding contrast.

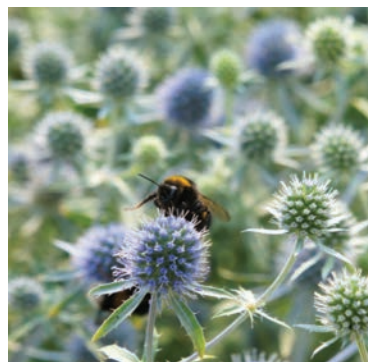
Santolina (Cotton Lavender) Silvery foliage and bright

yellow button flowers. Mediterranean, drought-tolerant, and ideal for sunny borders. The scent is gorgeous too.

Lavender The ultimate holiday plant. Whether you're thinking of Cornwall or the South of France, lavender brings instant summer vibes. Bees adore it, and it thrives in poor soil.

Echinops (Globe Thistle) Blue globe flowers that look like sea urchins. Architectural, tough, and brilliant for wildlife. *Verbena bonariensis* Tall, airy stems with purple flowers that float above the border. It adds height without heaviness and creates that breezy, relaxed coastal feel.

Mixing these plants creates a palette of silvers, blues, purples, and soft greens - exactly the colours you see on a coastal walk.



Seaside-Inspired Design Tips

You don't need to overhaul your whole garden. A few clever touches can transform a single border or corner into a coastal escape.

-Use gravel mulch - it instantly gives a beachy feel, helps with drainage, reduces watering, and keeps weeds down. A win-win. It also makes silvery foliage and blue grasses pop.

-Choose silvery and blue-grey foliage these colours mimic coastal plants and reflect sunlight beautifully.

-Add natural textures think driftwood-style branches, pebbles, or even a simple wooden bench. You don't need actual driftwood; anything rustic works.

Final Thoughts

Whether you're heading to the coast this summer or staying put, a seaside-inspired garden is



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a beautiful way to bring that breezy, relaxed holiday feeling home. With the right mix of plants and textures, you can create a space that feels calm, sun-kissed, and wonderfully low-maintenance - perfect for August days in the garden. And the best part?

Every time you step outside, you'll get a little taste of summer holiday magic - a perfect pick-me-up for the post-holiday blues.



August gardening tips

Reg Moule BBC Hereford & Worcester

Early in the month.

Keep dead-heading flowering plants and picking beans to maintain production. Liquid feed bedding plants in tubs and baskets, but switch to a high-nitrogen feed which stimulates new growth for flowering later. If carrot fly bothers you, grow the crop under garden fleece or insect barrier mesh for excellent control. Thin out overcrowded water lily foliage on ponds. Start preparing the soil for laying new lawns next month. Vine Weevils will be laying eggs in tubs and containers now. One sure remedy is to water the compost with Bug Clear Ultra Vine Weevil Killer which makes the compost vine weevil-proof for two months. For natural control, use nematodes or put a half-inch-deep layer of horticultural grit on the surface of the compost to deter

successful egg-laying and larvae development

Mid August.

Take cuttings from Geraniums, Fuchsias, Penstemons, and other semi-hardy plants. Keep Camellias, Hydrangeas, Magnolias, Pieris, Rhododendrons and Azaleas well watered to prevent bud drop later. Semi-ripe cuttings can be taken from a wide range of shrubs. These are short side shoots which have slightly woody bases. Pot some strawberry runners into eighteen cm (seven inch) pots. Leave them outside until January then put them in the greenhouse for an early crop. Trim over lavender, Santolina (cotton lavender), Helichrysum (curry plant) lightly after flowering. Sow last outdoor carrots, lettuce, radish, spinach, and beet in the vegetable garden. Sow Japanese onion

seeds soon or buy autumn-planting onion sets next month. Summer prune Wisteria - cut back all new growth to five leaves up from where it arises from main branch, unless it is required to extend the plant. Sow Browallia, Schizanthus and Calceolaria in the greenhouse for winter pot plants. Plant young strawberry runners for cropping next year. Take Hydrangea cuttings - they could make a flowering pot plant for next year. Try collecting some seed from your own garden plants - you could get a new variety. Take cuttings from heathers. Use two point five cm (one inch) long shoot tips. Root in gritty compost. Look out for specially stored early seed potatoes, plant soon for new potatoes for Christmas dinner.

Late August

Spring-flowering bulbs will be



around now. Buy Colchicums, Madonna lilies, and Autumn-flowering crocus soon. Gather up and dispose of diseased rose leaves as they fall. Prune rambler roses. Summer prune trained forms of fruit trees. Clean and check over greenhouse heaters. Pot up some herbs dug from the garden, ready to bring indoors in October for winter use. Sow a final batch of parsley seed outdoors and some spring cabbage. Check over any bulbs, e.g. tulips, that you have in store to ensure that they are fit to re-plant.

The music of four Cotswald composers for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

Allan Ledger

As a boy choister of St George's Chapel, Windsor, 1952-1957, I was honoured to be a member of a 400-choir at the coronation service of 1953 in Westminster Abbey. Our choir master and organist, Sir William Harris, composed the gradual 'Let my prayer come up into thy presence' (Psalm CXLIV2). This gradual had been in abeyance since the sixteenth century. As a boy choister, I have always enjoyed Handel's Zadok 'the Priest', which has been sung at every coronation since King George II in 1727, and it was also sung at King Charles III coronation. It is the author's favourite coronation piece of music. Hubert Perry's anthem 'I was glad' was sung at the 1953 coronation of the late Majesty's entrance into Westminster Abbey. It has been sung at five successive coronations and within it, incorporates the traditional shouts of vivats from the Westminster scholars.

In 1953, it had been revised to accommodate the appropriate salutation to Queen Elizabeth II:

'vivat regina! Vivat Regina Elizabeth! vivat, vivat, vivat!'
Dr Vaughan Williams' special arrangement of the old hundredth psalm tune for the singing of
'All people that on earth do dwell

was specially chosen. The melody for the old hundredth is probably the work of Clavis collaborator Lois Bourgeois. It was borrowed by Ravenscroft for his psalter of 1621, in which it appeared to be harmonised by John Dowland. In his new arrangement, Vaughan Williams used Dowland's harmony for the third verse. The first and later verses were in unison with full accompaniments for organ, the orchestra and the Kneller Hall trumpeters, who also played a descant to the choir's unaccompanied harmony in the second verse. The Sanctus by Vaughan Williams was from his



Coronation choir of 1953

Mass in G Minor. Dr Williams also composed a new, short and exquisitely simple setting of 'O taste and see', which was sung during the communion. Edward Elgar's Pomp and circumstance march, 1901, is famously intertwined with British coronations. Its middle trio section was adapted by A.C. Benson into the patriotic hymn

'Land of Hope and Glory', which was first sung during Edward VII's 1902 coronation and sung by Clara Butt. Elgar also composed his Coronation March, Opus 65, for the 1911 Coronation of King George VI for its grand procession. Gustav Holst's music featured pre-service orchestral music for the coronation of King George VI and of Queen Elizabeth II

Is your family's vaccination record up to date?



With busy lives, work, school runs and family commitments, it's easy for vaccinations to slip down the priority list. Some people may also have questions or concerns about vaccines and aren't sure where to find trustworthy information. The good news is that it's never too late to check whether you or your children are up to date. Many diseases that used to make children and adults seriously ill—such as measles, whooping cough, and meningitis—are now much less common because Vaccination has helped

protect generations of families. However, these illnesses haven't disappeared, and when fewer people are vaccinated, outbreaks can occur. Vaccination isn't just about protecting yourself. Some people, including newborn babies, cancer patients, and those with weakened immune systems, rely on the people around them to help stop infections spreading. Vaccines are offered throughout life to provide protection when it's needed most:
Babies (8, 12 and 16 weeks)

Vaccines protect against serious illnesses such as whooping cough, meningitis, polio, and hepatitis B

At 1 year

Children receive their first MMR vaccine (measles, mumps, and rubella), as well as protection against meningitis and pneumococcal infections.

Pre-school (around age 3)

Booster vaccines are given, along with the second MMR dose.

Teenagers (12–14 years)

HPV vaccine and boosters against meningitis and tetanus.

Adults

On going protection includes flu and COVID-19 vaccines for eligible groups, as well as shingles and pneumonia vaccines for older adults. If you've missed a vaccination, or you're unsure what's due for you or your children, your GP practice can help. They can talk through any concerns and help you make an informed decision. Catch-up appointments are available, and vaccinations are provided free



through the NHS. A few minutes spent checking your vaccination record today could help protect your family for years to come.

Lisa Smedley, Primary Care Network Manager for Abbottswood Medical Centre, Pershore Medical Practice and Upton Surgery



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Ailsa's Kitchen *Ailsa Craddock*

When I was little, I used to go blackberry picking with my mum - and I, in turn, took my own children with my friends, Claire and Beryl, and their children. Our babies have got babies of their own now and we hope to all go picking again this week - trying to persuade little fingers to put as many of the berries they put in their mouths into their baskets! There are so many things you can do with blackberries - apart from sweet things, you can make cordials, savoury sauces -and, of course, you can just freeze them as I do (just lay them out onto a tray until frozen and bag!) and eat every morning with porridge or yoghurt for a dose of vitamin C throughout the winter.

Blackberry Cordial

- 750g ripe blackberries
- 2 limes, zest and juice of 1, plus slices to serve
- 350g granulated sugar
Place the blackberries and lime zest in a medium saucepan with 100ml water and cook over a very low heat for 10-12 minutes, stirring regularly, until the fruit collapses. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a jug, pushing gently to extract all the juice. Transfer the juice to a medium saucepan and add the sugar - you should have about 500ml juice, but if you have significantly more or less, bear in mind that you'll need 350g sugar for every 500ml of juice, so just adjust the quantities accordingly. Discard any seedy pulp left in the sieve (or keep it and sweeten it up with a little honey before stirring through a bowl of yoghurt for breakfast). Gently stir the blackberry juice and sugar mixture over a low heat until the sugar has completely dissolved, then increase the heat and bring just to the boil.

Once it boils, immediately remove from the heat, then stir in the lime juice and pour the cordial into sterilised bottles. Dilute 1 part cordial with 5 parts chilled water.

Blackberry Fridge Jam

(as the name implies, you keep this in the fridge once made. It has half the amount of sugar normally used, so better for you. I put it into small jars so that I am opening and using it quickly - you can also put the whole jar of jam into the freezer) Weigh however many blackberries you have and put in a bowl. Weigh out half that weight in preserving sugar and add to the bowl. Mash the fruit up slightly and leave aside for no less than an hour. Put into a saucepan, bring to the boil and stir at a rolling boil for exactly 5 minutes. Allow to cool and put into sterilised jars. You can make this type of jam with any fruit - just stick to the ratio of one part fruit to half of sugar.

Blackberry, Elderflower and Mint Fool

- 200g ripe blackberries
- 1 - 2 tbsp elderflower cordial



Blackberry Salad

- 60g caster sugar - a few fresh mint sprigs

- 150ml double cream

- 125ml full-fat Greek yogurt

Put the blackberries in a saucepan with the elderflower cordial, caster sugar and fresh mint sprigs.

Set the pan over a medium heat and gently bubble the mixture for 10-15 minutes until the berries soften and release their juices, then reduce to a thick coulis.

Remove from the heat and let it cool a little, then taste, adding more sugar or a dash more cordial if needed.

Remove the mint sprigs. Allow the mixture to cool completely (it will become more like jam in consistency).

Pour the double cream into a large bowl, then, using an electric mixer, whisk to soft-medium peaks.

Stir in the Greek yogurt, then fold in the cooled blackberry

coulis, creating a swirled effect. Spoon the fool into a dish and serve straight away, or cover and chill for up to 6 hours.

Blackberry Salad

- baby spinach/ watercress/ rocket leaves

(or a mixture if you have it!)

- fresh blackberries

- crumbled gorgonzola or blue cheese

- 1/3 cup good-quality olive oil

- 1/4 cup freshly-squeezed orange, lemon, or lime juice

- 1 tsp. salt

- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

- Walnut pieces

Whisk together all the vinaigrette ingredients. Toss the leaves and blackberries together with the vinaigrette and serve topped with crumbled cheese and walnuts for crunch. It will look so beautiful with the light green leaves and purple blackberries; you will be loath to eat it - but do!

Going a little batty!

Are you a bat lover, or do they give you the creeps? Books, films and folklore are not always kind to bats, often linking them with vampires, hauntings and bad luck. Yet seen up close, many are surprisingly charming—and they play an important role in our natural world. The UK is home to 18 breeding species of bat, all of them protected by law. The smallest and most widespread is the common pipistrelle, which weighs around 8 grams—about the weight of a few paperclips. The largest is the greater horseshoe bat, with a seriously large wingspan of up to 40 cm. August is one of the best months for bat watching. Bat pups born earlier in summer are now large enough to fly and

forage for themselves, while adults are busy feeding and building fat reserves for autumn and winter, when hibernation approaches. So look out for bats at dusk around ponds, rivers, hedgerows and woodland edges, where they hunt flying insects. The old saying 'blind as a bat' is misleading; they are definitely not blind, but many bats rely on their superpower of echolocation: rapid, high-frequency sound pulses that bounce back as echoes from prey and obstacles. So, whether you find bats spooky or sweet, August is a perfect time to appreciate these remarkable night-time hunters.

Karen Rose is a biodiversity officer at Wychavon District Council

Karen Rose



Farming

Mike Page

I spoke in last Month's Pershore Times of optimism in farming life.

One of the more important inputs into success in agricultural production is the weather, but that is one element in the production process over which we have no control. At the time of writing the last article we were coming towards the end of the June heatwave, with every reason to believe weather would revert to 'normal' and a good storm of rain (or even a succession of storms?) would bring soil moisture levels back up to the point which would enable arable crops and grassland to surge back into really active growth, even if only for a relatively short time, giving top level production; in some areas of the UK that did happen, but not here in the SW Midlands. With hindsight, I think I had fallen into the old trap of expecting the better (or perhaps even the best!) of weather options to occur. If the weathermen are telling me

weather stories, I want to believe they must have got it right.

I have not as yet seen too many signs of livestock getting short of grazing, and tractors & trailers with loads of harvested grass (sometimes other crops) are to be seen passing by on their way to storage for future use as fodder, or processing for energy production, on a regular basis; all grassland here has been cleared of this season's growth so far, safely stored away for the coming winter season. But strong and more or less instant regrowth in grass fields, growing on to be available for later grazing, or perhaps even a second crop to be harvested for fodder or energy production, is not much in evidence; many grass fields are just looking a bit 'tired' – in desperate need of a drink! Arable crops are changing colour early as they enter their final ripening phase, and at the time of writing these words, combine harvesters are to be seen on the road already,



proceeding to harvesting work, as much as two weeks ahead of more usual annual timing. Crops gathered in early and in hot, dry conditions do make the business of harvest easy for the farmer, but at the likely penalty of yields and financial returns being down. Is being an optimist, at least weather-wise, a certain road to disappointment? The weather experts are predicting that, as a result of human-induced climate change

- which continues - seasons like this are going to become the 'norm' within many countries; present heatwave conditions in the UK are nothing like as severe as in, say, parts of continental Europe such as France and Spain. But it is always worth remembering that the worst hot and dry conditions on record in the UK (the year of 1976) ended with buckets of rainfall in the autumn of that year.

On The Grasshopper and Cricket

The Poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown
mead;

That is the Grasshopper's - he takes the lead
In summer luxury, - he has never done
With his delights; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there
shrills

The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

John Keats 1795-1821

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Roaming with Romy

My graduation day started early. The gown is not all that matters on graduation day; you must look presentable and confident. Once I arrived at the university, it was already bustling with graduates and their families. The first stop was to go and get the gown fitted. The staff also handed you a tote bag with the ceremony tickets, little gifts, and most importantly, your degree certificate. The professional photo booths were upstairs, so an easy journey to make in

heels. After that, the day is yours to walk around and find friends. Walking across the stage was a huge part of the day, something I wasn't really looking forward to, but honestly you're on and off stage before you know it. What helps is that all graduates are in the same boat and everyone claps pretty much constantly, so no one is left out or has time to hear their own nerve wracking thoughts. Honestly, I'm shocked at how well I managed to walk across the stage! My ceremony,

at the Philharmonic Hall, was at 4pm so you only have a couple of hours before gown return, which is just enough time to take some more photos. The university hall had drinks and cool lighting, so it was a perfect end to the day! Thankfully the university gift shop was selling flip-flops so I was able to get out of my heels - the relief! After I returned my gown, dinner time followed. Unfortunately, the place I was looking forward to going to was closed, but we



landed somewhere across the street, which was still a great graduation meal. My article is not the longest this month, as I wanted to attach a few photos: my parents, my boyfriend, and my uni bestie.



A Place to Meet

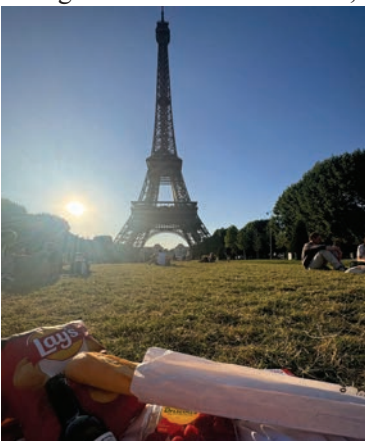
Does being alone equal being lonely? After what felt like 15,000 steps from my hotel, I finally arrived. The crowds are over-whelming, and the heat is almost suffocating, but I sit on a bench and watch the setting sun illuminate the breathtaking monument that is Notre Dame. I'm in Paris! With the rush of getting from the airport, navigating the Metro and speed-walking across the city to squeeze in my itinerary, I had almost forgotten that I was travelling alone. And here I am, sitting across from Notre Dame,

all alone. Well, apart from the thousands of people around me. I must have sat on that bench for at least an hour; I think even the gargoyles perched on the edges of the towers were staring back at me, wondering if I was going to leave soon. I didn't need to rush or wait on anyone. I could just take as long as I wanted. I took in every ornate detail of the architecture, but also the people who surrounded it: couples taking selfies, street performers and tour groups huddled around a guide holding a red flag. There was movement everywhere. On my way back to the hotel, I take a leisurely walk along the Seine. I sit by the river and let my feet dangle across the edge, swaying to the music I can hear on a nearby bridge. I smell the damp river air of the Seine, and I can hear people speaking in French all around me. I have no idea what they're saying, of course, but I like listening in on the conversation. Boats pass by with music, and cheers as people

embrace the view of the Eiffel Tower. Children laugh as they attempt to get me to do the 6-7 sign. I shamefully give in and laugh along with them. Two different languages and cultures, and yet somehow, that silly joke felt universal. As the sun sets, it creates a golden light on the rooftops of the city, and you can literally see a shadow lining the buildings like artwork. I think Paris helped me slow down. I'm always in a rush, worried that if I stop for a moment, I'll miss something. At first, the slower Parisian pace frustrated me, especially when people stopped midstreet to have a conversation. However, after my stroll along the Seine, I realised I had the whole evening with nowhere to go and no one to see. So why was I rushing it? Why couldn't I just slow down and take in my surroundings? When I did, I noticed the little details more. By the end of the trip, I had started to match the flow of the city. I took more time to eat,



watch passers by and enjoy each conversation as I attempt my best French. As much as I enjoyed my own company, I still found myself sending voice notes to friends back home and sharing photos with my family. I think being alone is not the same as being lonely, but it is human nature to want to share our experiences. My solo trip to Paris did not teach me that I never need other people. It taught me that I am capable of enjoying my own company, navigating an unfamiliar city by myself, and slowing down long enough to notice the world around me. So, I'd love to ask my readers: where has been your favourite place to travel, and what did it teach you about yourself?



Gregory's World!

Art of the Deal

Hey, steady on there, fellow reader. You're a little giddy. Come out of the sun, have a sip of my water. It feels like we're trapped inside my air fryer. Back at home, a breeze on a hot day provides a cool respite. Here in Marrakesh, the winds are dry and beating. They cook you in half the time, and I prefer my fellow readers not to be rotisserie'd, so come on inside with Natdog and Big Man Sam. Welcome to Jemaa el-Fnaa, a souk (marketplace) in central Marrakesh. Enter a network of passages, a treasure trove of stalls. Listen to the hubbub of Arabic, French and English voices, people selling, haggling, exchanging. Smell the flavoured air, the tang of olive brine, spices piled high in molehills of yellow, orange and red; cumin, paprika, hibiscus, rosemary, saffron, cinnamon, chamomile. Kebabs sizzle, prunes glisten, and – woah, watch out – motorbikes sputter round the sharp bends and rumble past us. Pay attention, too. These caverns of leather sandals, samosas and gold genie lamps can become battle-grounds of mind games. Any travel guide

will tell you that the prices here are negotiable. Haggling is a crucial part of navigating the souk. The vendors often start high with the prices. They must catch out a lot of unwitting tourists. One Moroccan Dirham is equal to 0.079 Pound Sterling. I struggled with converting prices on the spot and fully understand why other people must get bamboozled in the heat of the moment. Thankfully I had Natdog and Big Man Sam to prepare me, though I still have much to learn. Half an hour ago, I was the first in our group to haggle. A stall selling carved wooden items – turtles, hedgehogs, camels, footballs, Tintin characters – drew me in. A small chess set in particular caught my eye. *"This was 650,"* explained the stallholder. *"For you, I give you 420."* (Roughly £33.) *"Hmm. Would you take 150?"* (Roughly £12.) A sharp intake of breath. *"Is not profitable. No. No."* *"150?"* Digging my heels in doesn't come naturally to me. I didn't really enjoy this pressure. *"Mmm, no. I give you 380."* *"150?"* *"300. I give you 300. My final offer."* He bagged the

chess set. In the end, I gave in and paid 300 (roughly £24). He shook my hand with a smile that said I hadn't been tough enough. Now's our chance to watch and learn, fellow reader. Look, Natdog is haggling for a conical tagine dish. First, he refuses to say how much he's willing to pay. The stallholder reluctantly sets a price of 200 Dirhams. Natdog stands his ground at 90. He is one tough cookie. He refuses to crumble. Three times, the stallholder repeats 200. Three times, he stares him down. Three times, Natdog resists the pressure. For a moment, they are locked in a tense face-off, two players in a showdown of tough negotiation. Then, as Natdog makes to leave, the stallholder gives in. 90 it is! Impressive. Okay, my turn. I'm drawn to another alcove of wooden items, this time to a model rowing boat. I genuinely have only 120 Dirhams left in my wallet. The stallholder insists on 300 – okay, 200 – 170, final offer! He lets me hold the boat and sniff the authentic Juniper wood. But I can't afford it; I have to walk away. *"La shukran. No, thank you."* I move



on. The thing is, I really want that boat. I try a few different stalls who are also selling boats. No luck. 120 isn't enough. Eventually, I find my way back to the stallholder who sold me the chess set. Will he be in a generous mood? After a team talk, we decide to deploy the feminine touch: Natdog's sister comes with me. *"I have 120,"* I explain to the stallholder. *"For you, 420."* Ouch. We're in for a difficult game. Proposal by proposal, smile by smile, we chip 420 down to 150. Without Natdog's sister, I wouldn't stand a chance. Her presence does indeed make him more generous. Nearly there ... nearly there ... At long last, he agrees. Yippee! I buy the boat for 120 Dirhams, we shake on it, and this time, the smile is mine. Now then, anything that catches your eye?

Evie's Adventures

Evie Aubin Oxford Brookes University



I genuinely have no idea where the summer has gone. One minute I was stressing over deadlines and convincing myself that one more coffee would somehow write my assignments for me, and now I'm somehow halfway through the summer holidays. It's a slightly terrifying thought, but luckily the summer has been busy enough to stop me thinking that I'll soon have to be a responsible student again. You will all be pleased to know that after many sleepless nights and countless clothes, hurt and crumpled after being thrown

around my room, I finally decided on my outfit for Harry Styles. I saw Harry on his 11th night at Wembley, and it was even better than I'd ever imagined. The atmosphere was unreal; he was incredible running around on stage, everyone was singing every word, tears were plentiful, but smiles more so. Our opener was Shania Twain, and when she sang *'Man I Feel Like a Woman'*, I swear I could feel the whole stadium jumping up and down. The vibes were immaculate; by morning my voice was completely gone, but

the memories of stopping my crying and having the time of my life, singing and dancing, were definitely still there. A few days later, we (Daisy) (...best friend, not cat) were at it again, and on our way to Finsbury Park to see Wolf Alice. Whilst I've wanted to see them for ages, I was even more excited as The Last Dinner Party was opening for them. They're one of my favourite bands, so getting to see them live again was something I'm very grateful for. We arrived during the last half of Florence Roads' set (They were also amazing) and somehow ended up right on the barricade. The view was incredible, and getting to see some of my favourite bands and artists that close was a blessing. The only downside was the weather deciding to remind everyone that Britain is capable of producing a heatwave every now and then. By the end of the day, I had consumed what felt like my entire body weight in water and cherry Pepsi, and was silently questioning every choice that had led me to stand in a park in



the middle of London for an entire afternoon. Would I do it again? Absolutely. Now I'm looking forward to my next adventure before summer disappears completely. In a few days, a group of my friends from university and I are going camping in Derby, and I can't wait. Hike during the day, get drunk and stargaze in the evening, and spend the rest of the time laughing and catching up with each other. I've really missed seeing everyone since we've all gone home for the summer, so it'll be nice to get everyone back together before we head into third year. If the trip is anything like our uni so far, we'll still be laughing about it by graduation. I'll make sure to tell you all about it next month, but for now, toodles!

Teenage Focus

I'm sure most of you have heard about the social media ban announced recently, coming into effect in the Spring 2027. It will ban apps like Instagram and Snapchat for children under 16. Many people see this law as a success because they believe it will reduce cyberbullying, insomnia, mental health issues, and, sadly, suicide caused by increasing social media use in teens. Statistics from the UK shows 70% of teens have experienced cyberbullying, and that the average screen time for children aged 13-14 is 4 hours. This is worrying. Lots of people think the only way to stop this is with the ban. However, it's had mixed views from young people. Although some think it's a partially good idea, they also think it's unlikely to make much practical difference' and

that a better solution would be to teach teens how to use social media 'positively' (teach them to avoid negativity online and only use it for things like positive messaging). I agree with this more balanced view. Although banning social media may be an easy way to stop addiction within teens, it doesn't hold tech companies responsible for the harm they inflict on young people. Rather than a complete ban, limits on time spent on social media and content posted would be better, as otherwise, future young people won't have techniques to deal with addiction and harmful content, which they will eventually come across. Enforcing curfews, compulsory apps showing daily screen time, time limits on social media, etc. would create healthy balance in

Sophie Faulkner (15)



teenagers' of social media, as without it, some teens may not have anyone to talk to. In summary, although the ban may do some good, it's not the best way of tackling addiction and the government should focus on increasing offline activities and support for young adults.



Pershore Flower Club

On the very hot evening of Wednesday, the 15th July, members of Pershore Flower Club and their guests, welcomed Jayne Morriss of Stroud, who is an Area demonstrator and a flower demonstrator at Malmesbury Abbey, Gloucester Cathedral and at Chelsea Flower Show. She called her demonstration "Bits and Bobs", and she had placed icepacks among the flowers hoping they would survive the journey in a heatwave! Most of the foliage that she used during the evening came from her garden, which was fortunately north-facing. We could only imagine how wonderful her garden must be. And nearly all the flowers were from her local supermarket! For her first design, she used a simple black plant pot around which she had arranged upright twigs of silver birch using rubber bands dropped by the postman to hold them in place! This she sat on a circular tray to hold water. She used purple dahlias with white roses and small purple carnations, which were inserted within the twigs. Then she tied a wide green ribbon round the pot to cover the rubber bands. Next, she produced a "twiggy wreath" made up of twisted stems on a flat wooden base to which she added varied ferns, some upright, and fatsia leaves,

burgundy-coloured Physocarpus, apricot roses, apricot spray chrysanthemums and peach spray carnations and soft peach antirrhinums. As a focal point, she added pale peach gerberas and filled in with small sprigs of sedum with no flowers. For her third design, Jayne used a blue bowl to resemble a large mixing bowl, and to this she added plants that would grow in a walled vegetable garden – sprigs of rosemary, bay, artemisia also known as lad's love, and then stems of marjoram. To this she added tall stems of hypericum with coral berries, stems of love-in-the-mist and finally yellow roses. Next, Jayne brought out a cast-iron frame to resemble a church window with a trough holding jam jars. Into these she inserted stems of viburnum, Rubus tricolour, pinky red persicaria, lavender-coloured alstroemeria, white antirrhinums, two stems of agapanthus, lilac-coloured stocks, white roses, cerise roses and pink gerberas. For her final arrangement, Jayne used a tall garden urn, and she began by forming a triangle with the foliage of weigelia, beech, fern leaves, golden privet, stems of itea, rhombus, spotted laurel and hosta leaves. All remember from her garden! The flowers she used in this design were tall



white gladioli, white lisianthus, white spray carnations and white roses, lilies and hydrangea oak leaf quercifolia – hence she called it her white arrangement! To this beautiful design, she added a slightly smaller but similar one. Jayne kept us fully entertained with stories of her achievements at Gloucester Cathedral and at Chelsea Flower Show together with the work she does for her local flower club and for the Area. How she had enough hours in the day, we did not

know! Many happy people left holding a raffle winning arrangement!

We do not meet in August, we next reconvene on the 16th September at 7.30 p.m at Bishampton Village Hall when Mark Entwistle from Cheshire will give his demonstration entitled "This, that and a bit of the other" for further details ring 01905 840024. Visitors are always welcome

What did you say?

Angela Johns

When we don't quite catch what the other has said, my partner and I tend to repeat back what it sounded like just for the giggles, even if we could use context and reality to decipher it. So, 'tickly mice ear' was really 'it's particularly nice here', just like 'what did they say about the bubble and squeak?' was really, 'what did they say about the weather next week?'

It's a reminder that either I'm mumbling or he is trying to talk to me from another room. Or do we just hear what we want to hear? None of it bodes well for accurate communication. We are both learning a bit of French at the moment and are experiencing the truth that learning another language goes in this order: written words, hearing words, speaking words.

We marvel at non-English speakers trying to pick up English when we speak with the slang, abbreviations and the tendency to slur our words together. So we don't berate ourselves when we are struggling with the listening exercises and have to switch to slow mode. Gleaning meaning from the two words we might recognise out of a whole sentence would be foolish. Context is key. Focus, attention and a real desire to understand is required. If you want a quality conversation in English, you need the same focus, attention and real desire to understand.

Hearing someone is not the same as listening. How many misunderstandings are there due to the meaning being lost or missed without those three essentials? You hear, "You didn't tell me you were going to be late again", but if you listen, you can understand it as, "I don't feel important to you". Of course, the other part of the story are



the words we choose to use. Do you want them to hear your voice or do you want them to know how much it means to you? If it is the latter, it requires a focus on the real issue, to pay attention to what you say and have a real desire to help them understand. You say, "You never think ahead!", but if you want them to understand, you could say, "It feels like I have all the responsibility here and it's a lot to manage." It can be complicated trying to properly communicate what we really mean. But before moving into defence mode (well you should've.../I was only trying to...), a "thank you" and "sorry" before anything else can go such a long way: thanks for being patient/for waiting/for telling me, sorry I could've tried/done it sooner/told you.

In the words of Guan Yin: When you want to judge, be love When you want to fight, be love When you want to be right, be love.

Angela is a qualified Emotional Therapeutic Counsellor registered with the FETC and NCPS.

Also a Reflexologist and Reiki Practitioner, she is passionate about her therapies and spends quality time with her clients to facilitate their wellbeing.

You can find her at angelajohns.co.uk

Allowance for working from home

Carol Draper



Since COVID, increasing numbers of companies have requested employees work from home and increasing numbers of employees have requested Flexible working where jobs are split between the office and home. It used to be that employees could claim an allowance against tax for working from home, but in the last year HMRC have tightened the rules and have raised investigations into claims made. If you are an employee, eligible claims for the allowance can only be made if it is written into your contract that you are required to work from home and there is no option for you to be able to work from the employer's office premises. HMRC will not actually pay the expenses but will allow the claim to be set against tax. The maximum that can be claimed, without proof of expenditure, is £6 per week, which, for most, is an equivalent tax saving of £62.40 per year. Where working from home is an option, HMRC will not accept claims for expenses incurred. While HMRC will not accept expense claims from employees who choose to work from home, if you are an employer of staff who, on occasions, opt to work from home, you can pay them £6 per week as a working from home

allowance without the employee having to provide proof of the expenditure being made. This payment is tax-deductible for the employer but is not taxable for the employee, so in effect gives employees an extra £312 per annum. While the working from home allowance is not huge, it is one way for an employer to reflect and show appreciation for what an employee is doing. The working from home allowance is just one of 38 non-taxable payments or benefits for employees listed on the HMRC website. The benefits vary in size, significance and relevance, but for an employer looking for ways to improve employee morale it is worth looking to see if there is anything that could be used. For more information, search *HS207 non-taxable payments or benefits for employees (2025)*.

Carol Draper FCCA
Clifton-Crick Sharp & Co Ltd

100 years ago ...

August 6th 1926, American Olympic gold medalist Gertrude Ederle swam across the English Channel? Following the successful crossings of five male swimmers, Ederle plunged into the freezing water off France's Cap Gris-Nez, becoming the first woman to accomplish the feat

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