

OUR PLACE *News*

The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life!



NOVEMBER 2022

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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Our Place - The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life!

Every month, we bring you news and features on; Health & Beauty, Money & Work, Leisure & Travel, Food & Drink, Arts, Crafts & Hobbies, Home & Garden, plus... our Charity of the Month!

Our Place was founded with a mission to connect the mature online community to a world of news, features, offers and life changing products they may have missed out on. Bring them all into one place, Our Place.

What makes us special is that we are a vibrant team of all ages, from 21 to 65 who are all passionate about living life to the fullest irrespective of age. We have built strong relationships with some of the best UK age related businesses with the aim of brokering discounted rates for our Over-50s community.

Become a Friend of Our Place and receive our exclusive newsletters. They are a great way of keeping updated with the latest news and promotions. We aim to bring a smile to your face every time you open your inbox by selecting exclusive vouchers and discounts just for you.

We welcome you and hope you enjoy Our Place.

The Editor - Our Place

PS. Do you have an interesting story or article? If so, send us an email by visiting: www.ourplace.co

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Rugby League World Cup 2022

Until 19th November 2022

See the peak of the Rugby League calendar as the world's best teams battle it out to be winners of the Rugby League World Cup 2022.

For the first time in Rugby League history, the men's, women's and wheelchair competitions will be played together in one unmissable event on the sport's biggest stage.

Join the excitement as more teams than ever compete to be crowned Rugby League World Cup Champions, with 32 teams from 21 nations competing in 21 stadiums across England - many of them in London.

Head over to London's Copper Box Arena to watch the opening clash between England and Australia that kickstarts the wheelchair games. The venue will host the England group in the wheelchair tournament and be the team base for four of the eight wheelchair teams: England, Australia, Norway and Spain.

The games that are being played in London are Spain versus Norway and England versus Australia on 3 November, England versus Spain and Australia versus Norway on 6 November, and Australia versus Spain and England versus Norway on 9 November.

In addition, competition in the men's tournament will be fierce with four groups fighting for the trophy. Catch the action at the Emirates Stadium in north London, which will host the men's semi-finals on 12 November.

RLWC2022 will conclude in an epic Finals Weekend with the wheelchair championships final happening in Liverpool and the men's and women's taking place in Manchester.

TINA - The Tina Turner Musical

Aldwych Theatre, London

Discover the untold story of the legendary singer during TINA - The Tina Turner Musical at the Aldwych Theatre.

See how the multi-award-winning musician rose from humble beginnings in Tennessee, to become one of the most famous artists of all time. Find out how some of the most recognisable songs of our time came to life.

Nominated for three Olivier awards, including winner of Best Actor in a Musical, you won't be able to resist getting on your feet to sing along with the incredible cast during the finale. Brought to the stage by Tina Turner and the director of Mamma Mia!, be sure to catch one of the most highly anticipated West End musicals in London.

WINTER CAT WARNING

At this time of year please check under your car and wheel arches for cats trying to keep warm, before you set off on your journey!



During the cold winter months cats will often seek out any warm space they can find. One particularly irresistible lure seems to be the cosy confines of a warm car engine. Unfortunately, cats that seek shelter under the bonnets of cars can then be injured or killed when that car is started. Help keep your own and your neighbourhood cats safe this winter by tapping the bonnet of your car before you start the engine.

HEDGEHOG WARNING

At this time of year please check for these prickly creatures before lighting your bonfire.



Bonfires are perfect sleeping areas for hedgehogs and every year many get burnt alive. If you are having a bonfire, just make sure you check inside before lighting it. If you do find a hedgehog, move it to a safe place. This year second litters have been born later than usual. This means that there may still be young and underweight hedgehogs around. Remember if they are under 600gr they will not survive hibernation and need to be taken to a local animal rescue centre.



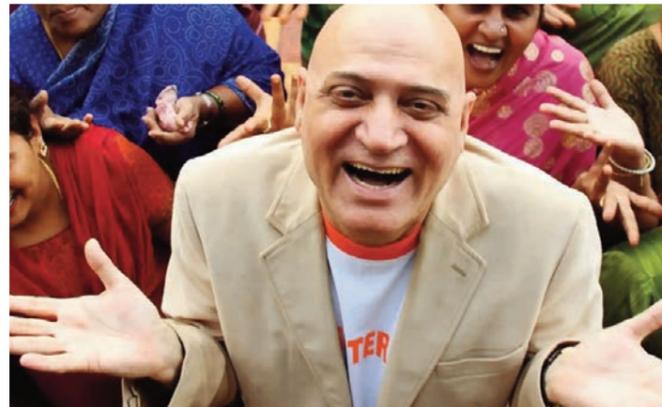


A belly full of laughs! Why the health benefits of laughter yoga will make you smile

We all know that nothing beats a good giggle, and research shows its physical and mental health benefits are huge, too. Dr Madan Kataria reveals how his ‘laughter yoga’ clubs are giving the world something to feel joyful about.

Friends, I must tell you, laughter yoga is not a comedy.” Dr Madan Kataria, a former GP and the creator of laughter yoga, an exercise programme involving prolonged laughter, is talking to more than 100 participants on one of his daily Zoom sessions. “We don’t need to rely on jokes or humour to laugh. We initiate laughter as a form of exercise - and it turns into a form of genuine laughter when you practise.”

I soon find this out for myself. As my screen lights up with workshop participants from all over the world, a mosaic of raucous giggles, my forced chuckle swiftly becomes a belly laugh.



“It’s a simple laughing and breathing exercise,” Kataria says, while leading playful exercise routines. “We can do laughter yoga when times are good and even when we are going through bad times.” Inhale. Hold it. Hold it. And laugh it out, he instructs.

A chorus of hysterical guffaws arises, some more contrived than others; but several of my fellow participants’ giggles and funny faces, plus the general hilarity of the activities, elicits real, profound laughter from within me. “It reduces stress,” Kataria goes on, following some yogic postures. “It makes your immune system stronger and keeps your mind positive!”

Laughter yoga, a combination of breathing exercises and deliberate laughter, came from humble beginnings, but has mushroomed into a global movement. Hundreds of clubs, usually free to attend, have now been established across Asia, Europe and North America.

Five people attended Kataria’s first meet-up in Mumbai in 1995. “I’d read so much about the benefits of laughter, and how acting out emotions, especially through facial expressions, can create them,” he tells me. He realised then that he wouldn’t often see people laughing in Mumbai. “The idea struck me: why not start a laughter club?”



He went to the park near his house and asked people if they wanted to join a new tribe. “People started laughing at me,” he recalls. “They said, ‘Are you OK?’ And I replied, ‘Yes, why don’t you give it a go?’” That first meeting was a hit and he continued to hold daily sessions - as he still does today, 27 years later, sometimes twice a day.

He initially asked participants to tell jokes to spark a chorus of infectious chortles, but as attendances grew Kataria learned that laughing for no reason at all was the simplest and least controversial method to trigger the ecstasy. He also soon decided he preferred prescribing laughter to drugs.

“We started just faking laughter,” he says. Ha ha ha ha ha. “And then people started laughing for real. It was contagious; we couldn’t stop.” Soon he blended in some basic stretches and pranayama Indian breathing exercises to complement the laughter, which in itself oxidises the body and expels carbon dioxide - thus increasing energy levels.

As regular participants’ lung capacity increased, so too did the longevity of their laughs. News of his events spread like wildfire. The US granted him a genius visa, allowing him to visit the country and spread the message, as well as address a 2010 senate committee. There are now clubs in 116 countries and counting.

Laughter yoga taps into a deep-seated need to laugh that, for one reason or another, is being stifled. Young children can laugh hundreds of times a day. But as we get older, the fun begins to stop - our brains learn how to temper our emotions in tune with the needs of others.



We develop empathy. But so, too, are we told to stop laughing and be serious about life. Perhaps you can remember being told off by your parents or schoolteachers for giggling inappropriately. There’s often a sense that if you’re laughing, you’re not properly learning, or working, or focusing, or paying respect. Sometimes this is justified, but not always.

Kataria, whose 1999 book, *Laugh for No Reason*, has been translated into Italian, French, German, Farsi, Indonesian and Korean, is of the view that laughter is central to our lived experience, and beneficial to our health. Why then would we rely on external influences, forever tempered by the trials and tribulations of life, to make us laugh?

Laughter is a primal part of what it means to be a social animal (rats, chimps and bonobos laugh, too). It is fundamental to the health of our mind and body and our relationships, and may have been crucial to evolution, enabling our ancestors to form larger tribes than the neanderthals that lived alongside them, according to one theory. It could even have evolved to enable us to be healthy.

Laughing causes the body to release endorphins that act as a natural painkiller. A recent study published in the journal *Preventive Medicine* suggests that older people who laugh regularly with friends and family could be significantly less likely to develop health problems than those who do not.

Further research, in *Nursing & Health Sciences*, indicates that laughter dramatically suppresses stress hormones, such as cortisol, reduces anxiety through lowering adrenaline levels and activates the body’s natural relaxation system.

Continued on pages 6-7...



Does forced laughter create the same effects? Kataria, who is 66, is bullish on the benefits of his practice, which he has taught at maximum security prisons and schools for blind children.

But research isn't conclusive and only low-quality pilot studies have been undertaken. That said, if real laughter is beneficial, then laughter yoga might also offer the same benefits. After all, the fake laughter generally becomes sincere.

"Laughter leads to increased heart rate and reduced heart-rate variability, which is similar to the effects of exercise," a 2018 paper from New Zealand following an experiment with 72 participants states.

In 2005, a Scientific American article reported: "As research on the subject grows, it is becoming more evident that laughing can make us healthier physically as well as mentally."

The first meta-analysis of available studies, published in 2019, suggested that laughter-inducing therapies improve depression. But it acknowledged a lack of academic rigour in the research, and called for better investigations.

"With rising healthcare costs and the increasing elderly population, there is a potential for low-cost, simple interventions that can be administered by staff with minimal training," it concluded.

Laughing therapy has been used for decades. Kataria's practice essentially simplified prior incarnations after laughter first became a field of scientific study in the 1960s.

In 1964, Stanford psychology professor Dr William Fry published a series of landmark studies on the physiology of laughter, becoming the first gelotologist (an expert in the science of laughter - from the Greek root gelos, to laugh) in the process. His research suggested that laughter could improve the efficacy of immune cells that kill infectious pathogens after he studied blood samples of people watching comedy films.

Norman Cousins, peace campaigner and editor of the American literature weekly the Saturday Review, propelled the healing power of laughter into the mainstream with his claims that it may have saved his life.



He was diagnosed in 1964 with a fatal form of autoimmune arthritic disease, and his bestselling 1979 book, Anatomy of an Illness, advanced his hypothesis that the attitude of a patient can impact on their illness. He had begun 10 minutes of belly laughter each day 15 years earlier, which provided him with two hours of pain-free sleep after all other treatments failed.

Cousins suggested the practice, along with huge intravenous doses of vitamin C, prolonged his life. He died in 1990, aged 75.

However he did it, Cousins lived much longer than his doctors had predicted. "I made the joyous discovery that 10 minutes of genuine belly laughter had an anaesthetic effect," he wrote. In 1989, he wrote Head First: The Biology of Hope, another best seller, in which he explored the effect of emotions on bodily resistance to disease.

Cousins, who primarily used comedy films to stimulate laughter, acknowledged that "it is quite possible that this treatment - like everything else I did - was a demonstration of the placebo effect" - but even so it appeared powerful.

His "anti-scientific, irrational approach to medicine" was criticised by a later editor of the New England Journal of Medicine, Dr Arnold Relman, who took umbrage at the suggestion that "an upbeat attitude will cure a dread disease".

However, Relman admitted he did agree with "the basic verities" that had been articulated: "There is no doubt that an optimistic and determined patient handles the vicissitudes of illness better than one who is depressed, negative and unhappy and defeatist about his illness," he said.

Kataria, who admits to not having a good sense of humour, concurs. "During difficult times, laughter gives you a coping mechanism," he says. "It is a great exercise to elevate your mood, whatever the weather."

Studies have proven it secretes mood elevators such as endorphins, dopamine and serotonin. Antibody levels rise, immune cell production increases and the body's natural anti-carcinogenic response is accelerated.

Laughter's benefits are increasingly being recognised. During the first Covid lockdown, Care UK, one of the largest care providers in the UK, began offering laughter sessions for its carers.

The NHS has recently begun offering laughter yoga to patients through GPs as part of a social-prescribing pilot in Bristol. Professional comedians will help patients suffering with mental health issues to not just explore the nature of their issues, but look for the humour within them.

Workshops were presented at a number of music and cultural festivals this summer and western yogis are increasingly offering sessions. Many yoga classes in India now conclude with a round of laughter, according to Kataria. It does seem that yoga classes in the US and Europe could sometimes do with a dose of lightheartedness, like activities in wider life.

"It's about time we let go and laugh more," laughter yoga teacher Lilita deLeo said in a Ted Talk in Montreal in 2016. "There was a time I looked for something, or someone, to make me laugh. But when I depended on those external factors, I went days without laughing."

The former fitness instructor, certified by Kataria as a laughter yoga teacher, recommends incorporating deliberate laughter into daily life. "I love funny movies, but we can't always be behind our screens," she tells me. "I would like people to have the power to choose to laugh, regardless of the circumstances.

If you're at home, and you're doing some chores, think about it: inhale and exhale with the sound of laughter. Do it like an exercise with intervals." She tells me to put my shoulders back, clap my hands and "engage in song and play".

We sing and giggle through a number of exercises, though it's more her infectious sense of fun that makes me laugh than pretending to wave to adoring crowds.

On my own, I have begun to tease myself into a chuckle several times a day, including when I feel stressed. It certainly seems to cause me to relax, and see the funny side of things more.

YouTuber Craig Benzine, AKA WheezyWaiter, recently laughed every day for five minutes over the course of a month. "I actually feel more tired now because it relaxed me so much," he said on day one.



By day 30 he concluded that laughter is always better with company, and "makes your entire body feel good, and it lasts for several hours". Humour is what you make it, he proclaims. "Nothing is really funny, or not funny. It's more a question of whether you can find the humour in it in yourself. Now I've learned another tool for when I want to, legally, feel good."

Benzine is just the latest example of how the presence of laughter yoga online has grown massively due to the pandemic as people were forced to become more self-sufficient. Kataria, who earns his living from certifying teachers and hosting events, says interest has increased amid Covid, but large numbers of people around the world could still go days without a single laugh.

"The next pandemic is going to be around mental health," he says. "And while there are many techniques for stress management, there is nothing like laughter. Now is the time to take laughing seriously."

(Article source: The Guardian)

Calling all over 55s to fulfil their bucket list wishes with help from Wiltshire Farm Foods

An adrenaline loving ninety-year-old who believes that life begins at 60 has encouraged others to not see age as an obstacle for going out of their comfort zone, as part of a campaign.



Silver Surfers reports that Mercy Baggs, who is based in Wiltshire, has teamed up with food delivery service Wiltshire Farm Foods and Dame Arlene Phillips to offer thrill-seeking over 55s the chance to tick off things on their bucket lists as part of its Wishlist Fund.

Following a surgery which was needed to remove two tumours in her spine in 2007 and left her struggling to walk, the determined former police officer went on to complete two skydives at the ages of 77 and 89.

When she first found out about the chance to skydive she said, "I thought - I'd love to try it".

"My husband wasn't too keen, but the point is that I was 77 and I thought that my life was beginning to stagnate - nothing very exciting was happening - and I wanted to do something different."

The fact it was for charity added to her enthusiasm for the activity. She also said the experience was "absolutely fantastic".

"At first when the door opens, it is very cold - the wind was blowing us from side to side - but gradually you start to enjoy it.

"You're literally skydiving and suddenly the parachute opens and you see everything below you and it's an exhilarating experience like no other."

She hopes that her adventurous nature will rub off on other over 55s to encourage them to not give up on certain things just because of their age.

"I don't know why people just give up at a certain age. "Life begins at 60 I believe and age is just a number. "Never let anyone make you feel like you cannot do something because of your age because I don't."

For her 95th birthday, she hopes to prove the saying 'third time lucky' by taking on another skydive.

Dame Arlene Phillips said: "I'd love to see more people live out their lifelong dreams in their mature years and embrace the freedom that older age brings, and that's why I'm working with Wiltshire Farm Foods to launch the Wishlist Fund. Life is for living, so live it!"

A Wiltshire Farm Foods spokesperson added that by stepping in to help get items ticked off people's wish lists, the food company hope to "[facilitate] the older generation's most cherished desires."

Anyone who is interested in nominating themselves or someone else over the age of 55 for the fund can find more details at: <https://www.wiltshirefarmfoods.com/wishlist-fund>

(Story source: Silver Surfers)

Why DIY is good for your emotional health: Carrying out mundane tasks helps relieve stress and anxiety, survey shows

Watching paint dry used to be a synonym for the most boring activity imaginable.

The Daily Mail reports that now, it has been suggested, doing just that can be good for you because carrying out 'dull' DIY tasks - or even simply observing them - are an excellent way to relieve everyday stress and anxiety.

The finding comes in the wake of a survey which found that 51 per cent of those questioned felt that DIY or making home improvements were the best way of boosting wellbeing. That compared to 30 per cent who chose yoga and 39 per cent who contacted friends and family.

The survey of more than 1,600 people by home retailer Wickes led neuroscientist Dr Jack Lewis to create a 20-minute 'meditation' video featuring DIY tasks.

It includes more than two minutes of paint being poured, three minutes of it being rolled on to a wall, around a minute of wallpaper being stripped and a minute and a half of grouting being applied to bathroom tiles.

Qatar: FIFA World Cup fans will not need Covid tests

A Wales fan said he is glad Qatar scrapped mandatory Covid-19 tests ahead of the FIFA World Cup next month.



The YouTube film of 'satisfying DIY sequences' ends with a pressure washer cleaning a dirty patio and gravel being poured and raked across the ground.

Dr Lewis said: 'Meditation and mindfulness are good for mental health and wellbeing. That requires staying absolutely in the present, rather than worrying about past and future events.

'DIY requires you to do just that, and stay in the moment to complete the task. 'The brain activity involved in painting a room is actually quite primal. A disproportionately large area of the motor cortex is dedicated to our hands and fingers, which suggests we actually evolved to do manual tasks.'

The idea of a DIY video follows the rise of 'slow TV' which was pioneered in Norway, and showed simple, unhurried scenes like a long train journey in full.

Similar British programmes have included the making of a wooden chair, or a glass jug, and a two-hour canal trip.

YouTube is full of videos showing paint drying, which might have been assumed to be ironic.

But 58 per cent of those in the Wickes survey said they find watching paint dry and checking on it satisfying. Dr Lewis said: 'If you're watching paint dry, it may well signal that you're done for the day. It comes after a good session of work, the resolution of which feels pleasurable.'

The majority of those polled, some 86 per cent, said doing some form of DIY has been previously beneficial to their wellbeing and eased anxiety. Saving money by doing the job themselves was an important factor.

Almost half of those who watched Dr Lewis's video said it made them feel more relaxed, while one in ten said that sounds including mixing the paste and cutting the wallpaper helped them unwind.

Dr Lewis said: 'It's important that whenever any tasks are undertaken, enough time is allowed to complete them without feeling rushed. Whether watching or doing DIY, make sure it's in a place where you're able to focus on the task at hand and not be distracted by external pressures.'

(Story source: Daily Mail)



BBC News reports that visitors to the Gulf state will still have to follow local restrictions, including proof of vaccination.

But from 1 November it will drop a requirement for a PCR test 48 hours before arrival, or a lateral flow test a day before.

"It makes life so much easier and less stressful for everyone in the end," said Gerwyn Jones.

The Wales supporter from Gaerwen, Anglesey had already booked and paid £75 for a test that is no longer necessary. "I decided to order the tests in case there were more postal strikes," he said. "Obviously I'm not happy that I had to pay, now it's clear they won't be needed."

Like many fans, he will stay in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates for the tournament, travelling into Qatar for each Wales match. It would have meant testing before each trip.

Gerwyn said dropping the need for Covid-19 tests would make life easier for fans. "I'm happy the rules have changed," he said.

Wales men return to the biggest stage in world football for the first time in 64 years after eliminating Ukraine in a playoff in June.

The selection of Qatar as the tournament's host has been controversial because of its record on human rights. Homosexual acts are illegal, causing groups representing gay football fans to asked the Qatar government to "guarantee their safety".

Some Wales fans said they will boycott the tournament despite their team's qualification. The decision to drop testing for visitor is due to "the number of Covid-19 cases continuing to fall," the country's health ministry said.

Officials added that maintaining regular hand hygiene, getting tested if experiencing Covid symptoms, and following a healthy lifestyle were still "needs" for visitors.

(Story source: BBC News)



Grey gap year: The over-60s with a taste for travel on a budget

Boomers are eschewing the traditional cruise holiday in favour of exploring the world with a backpack or in a camper van.

David and Viv Boardman have just arrived in Germany after a long bus-ride between Lille and Dusseldorf.

They're in the middle of a five-month stint backpacking around Europe, America and Australia, deciding where to go a week in advance, and they'll return home when their money runs out. They haven't recently finished school or university - they're both 66 and on a "grey gap year".

The pair are spending several months exploring the world for the first time in their lives after growing up in a time when extended travel was not the norm. Retirement has given them newfound freedom, and they want to enjoy it.

"One of the reasons we've said let's do it now is while we're healthy enough, we're at that age where you don't know what's round the corner. We're having a great time, we're really enjoying it," says Dave.



The main challenge the pair have encountered with travelling is technology - especially QR codes, which have led Viv to worry: "Is that it, £50 worth of tickets, that black square?"

The Boardmans are part of a growing movement of people aged over 60 who are choosing to take a gap year after retirement - a desire that has been fuelled further by the enforced isolation of the pandemic.

While the stereotype of the boomer traveller is a luxury cruise trip funded by housing market gains, people aged over 60 who spoke to the Guardian felt privileged to be able to take the shoestring approach usually associated with younger people.

The opportunity means a lot: recent research by Skyscanner found that over 65s, who grew up in an era in which travel was more expensive and less accessible, valued travel more than any other age group.

Debbie Marshall, a specialist in mature travellers and managing director of the Silver Marketing Association, says that while interest in the grey gap year has been building for a few years, "the pandemic has definitely played a part" in an explosion of bookings for 2023.

"Suddenly that window of opportunity feels a whole lot shorter. There's definitely a pent-up demand for big breaks," she says.

Popular choices for the gap year include voluntourism, with older people wanting to contribute skills from decades in the labour market; camper van trips; learning-based trips such as yoga or painting; and even ski seasons, with some chalet companies preferring to hire retirees because they work harder than young people.

Older people are not exempt from the growing popularity of solo travel, Marshall added, with "silver splitters" challenging the stigma attached to travelling alone in the past.

Kate Harrison spent her first grey gap year aged 60 backpacking solo around Canada and the US for three months, where she volunteered at folk music festivals. Now 65, she's planning a big trip around Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.



To cut costs, she usually stays in hostels. For one stay in Nashville she shared a dorm with several twentysomethings: "They would all fall through the door between 3 and 6am, and I would be getting up at six in the morning leaving them in pitch darkness. I'd come back in the early evening and they'd be getting up like caterpillars turning into butterflies."

She feels more confident travelling alone as an older person, and benefited from the respect shown to older people, as well as the "invisibility" that means you don't attract the wrong kind of attention. "People say to me, 'aren't you brave going off now', but to me no - it's far less scary."

The main drawback is that aches and pains take longer to go away after overnight coach trips or uncomfortable beds, she says.

Ian and Fiona Shaw, both about to turn 60, are on a year-long camper van trip - which their daughter and her friends are avidly following on their Instagram account.



The pair appreciate how longer breaks give them more time to get to know new people, as well as to spend quality time with each other after decades of marriage.

Ian said friends had asked: "How are you going to cope with a year with each other, because you don't do it now? It's been no problem at all, we're having a great time. We're really able to connect with each other again."

Mark Hainge, 65, completed his first grey gap year recently with his wife, Kate after joining the army aged 18. "There's a sense of catching up on something we possibly missed out on earlier in our lives. It's much better doing it now, we've got more time, money, experience and knowledge," he said.

While he acknowledges that being part of the boomer generation means he is "luckier than most", he thinks the trip is comparatively accessible. The main expense is the motorhome, funded with lifetime savings, and £40 a day, which he considers comparable to their day-to-day expenses in the UK.



It's been worth it, he adds: "I've always been slightly alarmed about the prospect of retiring to a little place in the country and sitting back growing roses and waiting to die. That doesn't suit me at all. To have the chance to do something completely different is just so refreshing, I absolutely love it."

(Article source: The Guardian)

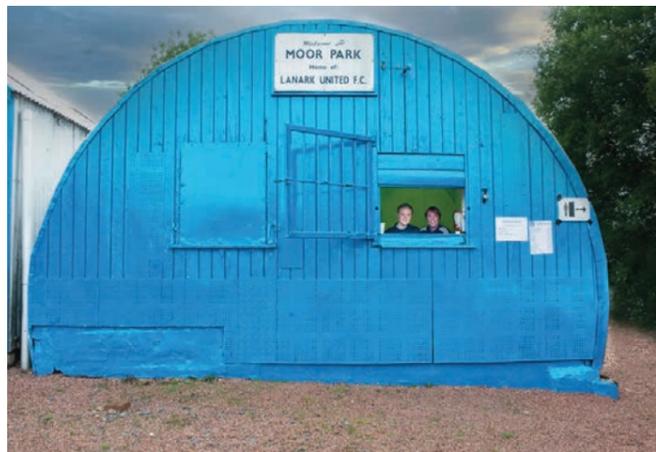


Who ate all the pies? Snack bars galore and the wonder of football food

From hatches to huts, sheds to retooled vehicles, let's hear it for our terrace tuckshops and their indomitable staff.

A Thursday morning in July and tourists gather outside the birthplace of the Patron Saint of Football Snack Bars. There are seven such visitors in all - a family of four, a pair of bronzed pensioners and a lone lady in a floral bucket hat. She ponders a segment of paper, the family point at phone screens and bicker like starved hens, and the couple battle to open an umbrella as if calculating how to assemble an AK-47 rifle for the first time. It is gently thrilling to find these disciples of our game's culture here, outside 29 Main Street, Roslin, in Midlothian. They too must have come to see where John Lawson Johnston, genius inventor of Bovril, was born.

Except, they don't look very interested in the plaque that boasts his name. Then all seven drift away distractedly, and I realise they are looking for the chapel: Tom Hanks, The Da Vinci Code, Knights Templar and all that. Theirs is the wrong kind of holy grail.



Number 29 is a quietly handsome sandstone cottage with dormer windows protruding from its roof like frog eyes. That plaque - above and to the right of the front door, this house's beauty spot - proclaims Johnston's birth here, in 1839, and offers the simple epithet: "Founder of Bovril Beef Tea."

The young Johnston apprenticed in his uncle's butcher's shop on Canongate in Edinburgh, while also studying chemistry and focusing on the science of food preservation. Continuing the family business into adulthood, in 1874 Johnston won a contract to supply rations of canned beef to the French army.

While visiting Canada to source supplies, he founded a tomato-canning firm that quickly began manufacturing an invention he had conceived: Johnston's Fluid Beef. The entrepreneur sold it as a hot drink at Montreal ice carnivals and born was a tradition of outdoor imbibing that would one day stray to Montrose and beyond.

By the early 1880s, Johnston's invention was being made and slickly marketed in London. It was rebranded Bovril, a name, he said, that "came to me over a cigar". Its two halves sprang from dual origins: bos, the Latin for ox, and Vrilya, a vigorous, life-force character in a Bulwer Lytton novel, The Coming Race. Advertised as an alternative to booze, it thrived during the late Victorian and early Edwardian era of Temperance, gratifying the teetotal Johnston. Bovril was also pushed as a patriotic choice, a cure for medical ills and a sporting fillip - liquid snuff for the moustachioed Victorian all-rounder.

In 1900, Johnston died while aboard his yacht, in Cannes, a millionaire. Later, his invention would become a culinary and then cultural staple of football. Now, though, it seems as if references to Bovril far outweigh matchday sales. This is a symbolic totem of our game: something we say rather than do. And yet, a tuckshop of the terrace whose menu does not offer Bovril is seldom encountered. That would be like an art gallery without paintings.

Always the tabards and always the Styrofoam cups. Beyond Bovril, these are the vitals, the prerequisites, the circumstances. These are the components of the very best snack bars. A working-class tunic otherwise confined to the church hall or the ancient parochial hair salon; and a springy chalice in snow white made with materials from yesterday's future. Encountering this duo is a homecoming no matter where you are.

There are kindred elements that can also spark this glow. A pie cabinet in the chrome grey of scratchcard foil, its contents queued like an army about to charge; colossal squeeze sauce bottles with congealing ketchup lava at the rim; fluorescent stars slapped on walls offering "Mars 70p" or "Monster Munch 50p" in marker pen letters; tea urns that look like space rockets in a child's imagination; a beige Formica tray smothered by orderly rows of Kwenchy Kups or Topics or other lesser-spotted trimmings of delight. They are the kind of places where "Multipack: not to be sold separately" is not a warning but a badge of honour.

The catering hatch at Lochee United's ground Thomson Park in north Dundee meets most of these heavenly criteria. "Shall we put up the shutter?" ask the kindly committee men standing at the gates as we arrive and explain ourselves an hour-and-a-half before kick-off. In their impeccable shirts and ties and with their thermal grins, they immediately summon affectionate thoughts of long-departed grandads. It is agreed with nods towards the hatch that "they" will be prepped by now and so one of the men taps the shutter's metal folds: "Moira, could you roll up for these two gentlemen, please?"

The shutter hurtles open, a guillotine reversed. Behind the counter, Moira and Jeanette are wearing tabards. Pies huddle and stay warm in the silver cabinet. Bovril is £1.20. Moira has worked here for 32 years, Jeanette just over a decade. They never see any of the game; once the public is served, it is time to make the players their off-menu post-match meal of chips in curry sauce. There is never any trouble at the hatch, apart from rightful grief meted out to children who drop their manners. Reprimands are given, magic words requested and Haribo or Irn Bru duly delivered.



Moira and Jeanette are witnesses to routine, that linchpin of supporters. They see their Lochee versions of the typecast fans sprinkled across every ground in the land. There are early arrivals trotting up, same time, same pie. Then come those cantering in just prior to kick-off, when anything will do to sponge up the lager.

Half-time begins with the gallopers, racing away before the whistle to beat the queue and in dread of the words: "We've run out of those." When that scenario unfolds and their usual refreshment cannot be ingested, any defeat in an hour's time is blamed on this catastrophe. The Scotch Pie or the Twix are a superstition.

To the hatches and the sheds, to the huts and the repurposed vehicles we go. For fans, visiting is another ritual, another staging post of matchday. For clubs, here is another room in the house, its Moiras and Jeanettes another part of the family.

(Article source: The Guardian)



Green 'healthy' fingers: How gardening can save your life - from cutting isolation to mental health benefits

It's amazing the calm that can descend when you are surrounded by greenery.

All those problems suddenly seem manageable and your brain quiets right down. And actually putting your hands in the soil, can be life-changing.

According to mental health charity Mind, more than 7 million Brits say that since the pandemic their mental health has benefited from taking up gardening, while nearly two-thirds say gardening and nature help slash their stress levels.

It's no surprise to Sarah Bowers, Birmingham regional centre manager at Thrive, a charity that uses social and therapeutic horticulture to help people in need.

"People's appreciation of gardening and access to green space has gone through the roof," she says.

You can see why. "The effect of being personally invested in growing something is phenomenal," says Sarah. "You experience a sense of achievement, responsibility, the joy of watching a seed germinate, knowing you've cared for that plant. And then, all being well, you're able to harvest it a few months later."

But there are many other health benefits lying just underneath the soil. Ready, steady, dig!

Mental health benefits

Struggling to get out of bed or lacking motivation?

"Regular gardening can bring purpose and structure. Attending a community gardening programme or working on an allotment or just caring for something at home can give you that routine you need to get up in the morning," explains Sarah.

"Being able to say: 'I'm going to achieve something today,' is a reason people enjoy gardening." And that's whether you have outdoor space or not. "That sense of achievement is still there even indoors," says Sarah.

Mind's research backs this up - 43% of people said looking after houseplants or window boxes boosted their wellbeing. Sarah recommends spider plants for indoor growing.

"It's an easy plant to care for and they self-propagate. If you support it, before long, you can start planting on its baby spider plants and then share them with family and friends."

She adds: "Gardening can also build confidence and self-esteem. We've had people who have been unemployed for 20 years, and after coming to one of our gardening programmes, have gone back into work. It's amazing. It can help them realise their potential."

Cutting isolation

Social interaction with fellow green-fingered people is one of the main joys of gardening, says Sarah, especially if you volunteer at a community garden. "Sharing experiences with like-minded people and having that sense of something in common improves wellbeing and confidence."

It could also help reduce loneliness - which can increase your risk of death by 26% and is linked to conditions including heart disease, obesity, depression and Alzheimer's disease.

Stress-busting

Nature has the ability to make your cares fade away - and there is a scientific reason behind it. "Researchers have found that even looking at images of plants can help you feel better on a psychological level," says Sarah.

"Biophilia is where connecting to nature can help us regain clarity, empathy, hope, composure, calmness and appreciation of life." So if you're stuck indoors or flagging at work, pull up an image of a tree for a quick, feel-good hit.

Improving mood

Gardening counts as exercise, which is a surefire way to release endorphins - happy hormones. Doctors are increasingly trying to harness the mood-boosting benefits of the great outdoors via "green social prescribing".

Instead of just prescribing pills and talking therapies for mental health conditions, many GPs are now also referring people to grow-your-own schemes and community gardening projects.

Physical health benefits

The gardening world may have discovered the ultimate form of working out, the kind where you don't even know you're exercising.

"Mow the lawn, fill the watering can, move pots, scatter compost - before you know it, you've done two hours of continuous exercise," says Sarah. Your garden can basically become a home gym! And it's accessible regardless of ability or mobility.

"Even light table-top gardening (sowing seeds, watering, harvesting seeds) while sitting down will help keep upper-body muscle groups active," explains Sarah. And thanks to all that fresh air and gentle exercise, it's likely you'll sleep more soundly, too.

Fine tuning

If your hands aren't as nimble as they used to be or you've experienced a brain injury, gardening can help hone dexterity. "Some small, detailed activities, such as picking up a tiny seed, can help redevelop manual dexterity skills, and strengthen hands and fingers, as well as improve hand-eye coordination," says Sarah.

Nutritional value

Eating home-grown produce adds to your five-a-day, increases your vitamin and fibre intake and will be tastier than the plastic-wrapped alternative from the supermarket.

"There's nothing better than eating a tomato you've grown, or snipping off some herbs that you've cultivated yourself in a window box to add to your dinner," says Sarah.

No garden? no problem

"Anybody can garden," says Sarah. "You just need a bit of soil." A windowsill or balcony can be just as effective as a garden.

You don't need to buy seeds or plants - harvest seeds from a shop-bought chilli or tomato. Instead of buying plant pots, use cut-off bottles or yoghurt pots. And instead of a watering can, use an old plastic milk bottle with holes punched in the lid.

Visit Thrive.org.uk for more green-fingered tips.

(Article source: *The Sun*)

Do you have an interesting story or article about your home or garden? If so, send us an email by visiting: www.ourplace.co

Please help us rescue and care for vulnerable hedgehogs - **Britain's favourite mammal**

A shocking study has revealed that hedgehogs are rapidly vanishing from our countryside, with numbers HALVED in the last 20 years.

I am delighted to tell you that Britain's hedgehog has won favourite mammal in a UK poll.

The UK's only spiny mammal won with 35.9% of the 5,000 votes, more than double that of the Red Fox, who came in second place with 15.4%. The Red Squirrel came third with 11.4%, out of a shortlist of 10 charismatic UK mammals.

Unfortunately, hedgehogs are rapidly vanishing from our countryside as numbers have HALVED in the last 20 years, a shocking study has revealed.

Henry Johnson, hedgehog officer, People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) said:

"We Brits seem to love hedgehogs for a whole range of reasons, including their cute appearance, their role as slug controllers and the way they have colonised our gardens with such aplomb. This is why it is so sad to see them decline, with one in three lost since the millennium."

Threats to hedgehogs come mostly from us. In rural areas, our farmland increasingly lacks the diversity of habitats hedgehogs need and the invertebrates they feed on. In towns and cities green spaces are lost to development, paved over or increasingly fragmented. Hedgehogs are also very prone to road traffic accidents.

This is why we have launched this special Annual Appeal to protect Britain's favourite mammal.

At Hedgehog Rescue Rehabilitation and Care Centre we respond immediately to rescue injured hedgehogs. A vet is called in straight away and the hedgehogs are monitored and cared for. Once fit and well they are released back into the wild.

Hedgehog Rescue is now conducting its Annual Appeal. Only by continuing our huge effort and long-life commitment can we give these wonderful animals a safe, happy and contented life.



We care for many hedgehogs here at our rehabilitation centre. Hedgehogs just like these:

'Julie'



'Julie' (pictured left) came in last Autumn, quite small, out in daylight and had ticks. She stayed a few weeks, put on enough weight, and made a full recovery. She was released back to her own territory by the finder.

Baby Hedgehogs

These 2 hedgehogs came in as very small babies and had stayed with us a few weeks, gaining weight and giving us a chance to sort out their health issues. They had several ticks and needed worming. When they were 100% ready, we released them close to where they were found.



These hedgehogs are some of the lucky ones. Others are less fortunate.

As a friend who knows what a wonder animals can be, I hope you will support our Annual Appeal. Your kind gift will help us rescue and care for many more vulnerable hedgehogs - Britain's favourite mammal.

To donate to Hedgehog Rescue, go to:
<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hedgehogrescue>
or write to: Raisemore, Unit 1, Alton Road Industrial Estate, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5NB



HEDGEHOG RESCUE
 REHABILITATION AND CARE CENTRE

Registered Charity No: 1126812 (England & Wales)
 Registered Charity No: SCO47720 (Scotland)