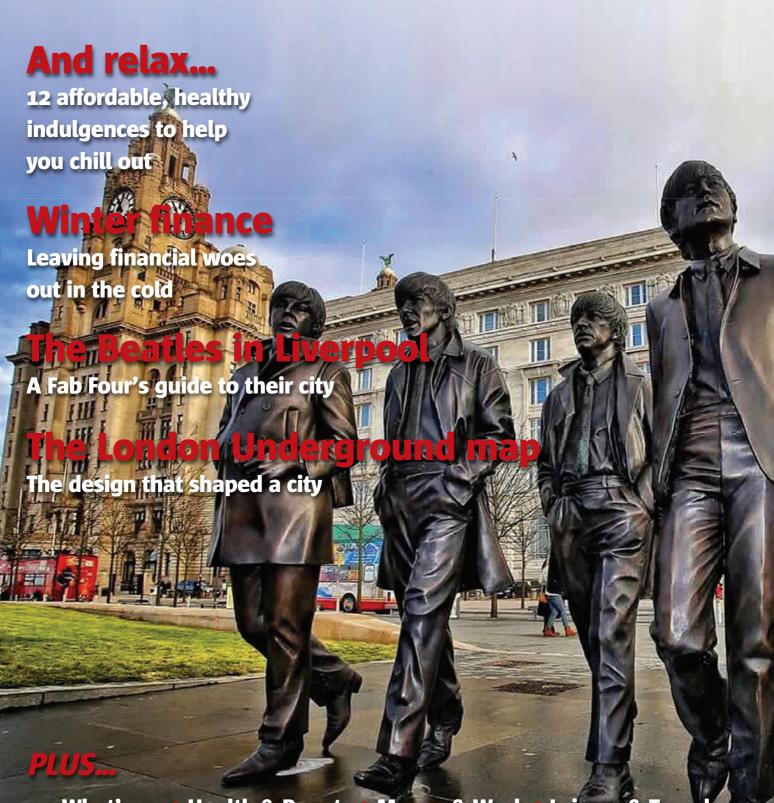
OURPLACENews

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

MARCH 2020

Inside this issue...



What's on • Health & Beauty • Money & Work • Leisure & Travel Food & Drink • Arts, Crafts & Hobbies • Home & Garden

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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St Patrick's Day in London Tuesday 17th March 2020 London

Join in the lively Irish celebrations with St Patrick's Day events and activities in London.

Every 17 March, Ireland celebrates one of its patron saints, St Patrick, with a national holiday and a traditional feast. Although it is not a public holiday in England, London marks St Patrick's Day with fun and spectacular events every year, usually on the weekend closest to 17 March.

St Patrick's Day Parade in London

Be amazed by flamboyant pageantry, elaborate floats, marching bands from across the UK, sports clubs and Irish dancing schools in the annual London St Patrick's Day Parade. The procession sets off at midday from Piccadilly and makes its way along a 1.5-mile (2.4km) route, passing some of London's most iconic landmarks, including The Ritz, Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square and onto Whitehall.

St Patrick's Day Festival in Trafalgar Square

Join the St Patrick's Day Festival, which takes place in Trafalgar Square between 12pm and 6pm.

Watch St Patrick's Day performances by well-known Irish acts, rising stars and special guests. Then, browse craft stalls, and tuck into traditional and modern Irish food from the market. There is also usually a family zone on Pall Mall East, hosting an array of free child-friendly entertainment, workshops and activities.

You can also celebrate St Paddy's Day with parties and Guinness in London's Irish pubs and bars, many of which are decorated in green for the occasion.

Do you have an Event near you? Let us know by visiting: www.ourplace.co

The Grand National 2020

Saturday April 4th, 2020 at 5.15pm Aintree Racecourse, near Liverpool.

The greatest steeplechase in the world.

No other race arouses so much interest worldwide. At least 600 million people are said to watch on TV. And in England, people who never bet on anything have "a flutter" on the Grand National. Plan ahead and you could be one of almost 200,000 who attend the three-day race meet. Friday is Ladies Day, a great social event with smart attire and big hats.

The Grand National itself is run on Saturday and, after the buildup, the four and a half mile race, over 30 fences, is finished in minutes. Seventy thousand are there on the day and the atmosphere is electric.

The Oxford Cambridge Boat Race 2019 Sunday 29th March, 2020 at 15.44 From Dythou to Marthale on the Divers

From Putney to Mortlake on the River Thames in London



A single crew from Oxford and a single crew from Cambridge have raced each other on this London stretch of the Thames for more than 150 years. It's a grueling race. The 4.25 mile distance is three times the length of an Olympic course and the Thames is not a placid stretch of water.

The whole event goes back to a challenge between two school friends in 1829. The date varies from year to year, depending upon the Oxford and Cambridge terms, and the needs of television schedulers (the race is watched by about 8 million worldwide). Tides determine the starting pistol; the race sets off an hour before high water so that the crews are always racing with the tide rather than against it. Even if you've never watched a crew race in your life, make your way to one of the bridges or pubs along the route if you are in London on race day. You may only see the boats race by in seconds (the whole race takes about twenty minutes), but the crowds and the festival atmosphere make this a great day out.

Best apps to promote a healthy mind

The benefits of therapy are powerful. Promoting time for reflection and self-care, taking the time to analyse our thoughts and behaviour positively impacts our ability to live better and feel stronger.



Over 50s.com reports that in today's world, life is fast-paced and busy, society scrutinises itself, constantly critiquing the way we all look, act and earn. Finding the time to appreciate self and establish solace, away from the background noise is essential to good mental health. Not everyone has time in their schedule to visit a therapist, so apps are quickly becoming the number one way to practise techniques to promote happiness.

Harnessing the effectiveness of self-regulation using cognitive behaviour therapies, anxiety management, mood trackers, thought journals and meditation, the vast array of apps available online are widely comprehensive. Discreetly stored on your smartphone, apps can remind you to recentre and focus throughout the working day, encouraging positive habits to become second nature behaviour.

Here's our selection of the top apps to promote better well-being.

Worry watch

Taking the format of a journal, Worry Watch encourages users to become more self-aware of the anxieties and worries they experience on the daily. When a plaguing thought occurs, this is then entered into the app journal, along with the wider context in which the worry was first formed. There is then space after the anxiety has occurred to reflect on these patterns of behaviours and understand your triggers. A useful tool for taking responsibility for understanding yourself and developing empathy for oneself, this app is easy to use and doesn't take up too much time.

Headspace

Conceptualised by former Buddhist monk turned app developer Andy Puddicombe, Headspace is frequently regarded as the Gandhi of mindfulness software.

Featuring guided meditation, anger management and mindfulness tutorials, Headspace is used by mental health professionals and championed by psychologists alike. Engaging users is cyclical sessions, the beauty of Headspace lies in its relevance to everyone's experiences, from problem eating to stress and obsessive-compulsive disorders. Calmly delivering, life lessons Andy's voice is engaging and genuine. Award-winning and chart-topping Headspace offers premium therapy at a cut-price.

Happify

Extremely effective at helping users cope with life and react more positively to challenging situations, Happify is intelligently formatted. Setting activities designed to achieve specific goals, such as 'Conquer Negative thoughts' and 'Cope Better With Stress' user friendly games are devised to phase out unnecessary negativity, focussing on positive affirmations. This app feels very organic and authentic. For the more cynical users amongst us, this is the perfect solution to those dark cloud days.

(Story source: Over 50s.com)

5 self improvement life hacks

Modern life is busy and stressful. There is so much we need to get done in one day, the pressure to please everyone and perform can feel unrealistic and downright unachievable.



Over 50s.com reports that simplifying, planning and prioritising the tasks you have to complete in your life can increase productivity and limit time wasted.

If only it were that simple, right? Well, it can be.

Shortcuts or life hacks are genius ideas, designed to help you reduce stress and save time. Here are our top 5 life hacks to keep you smiling, help you save money and be smarter:

1. We all hate putting out the bins. The juice at the bottom of the bin is one of life's worst and unavoidable daily evils. Protect yourself from the rotten stench dripping from your bin liner by layering newspaper at the bottom of your bin! Absorbing the slime and neutralising smells, this life hack is a no brainer for anyone and everyone.



2. Work your brain like a memory athlete. Do you find yourself struggling to remember names, items on the grocery list and directions? If your short term memory isn't brilliant, educational psychologists suggest creating 'a memory palace'.

By envisioning a 'memory palace', you are more likely to increase recall and improve your ability to imprint information in the short or long term. This technique works by visualising a specific, familiar place when storing information. You should try to see yourself walking down a street, such as your home town and attributing one article to a building, tree or point of interest. So church = orange juice, woods = milk, village hall = potatoes. Try this one today.

- 3. Whether you are training for your next marathon or simply struggling to cope in the humid summer heat, skin chafing can cause serious problems. While many cosmetic companies out there claim to retail the perfect product to save you from sore skin, the best solution is often simply deodorant. While Vaseline and talcum powder offer a short term fix, deodorant works for longer on the skin. Deodorant reduces the friction which causes sweat and irritates the skin surface, thereby creating an uncomfortable rash.
- 4. End your shower with a two-minute burst of cold water. Subjecting the body to a cold, sharp shock after a nice warm relaxing shower to start your day has multiple benefits. A rush of cold water will trigger vasoconstriction, immediately metabolising and neutralising the lactic acid in your body which causes generalised soreness and stiffness. Reducing inflammation, waking you up, increasing your heart rate and burning fat, the benefits of a cold shower outweigh the momentary discomfort the water will provoke.
- **5. Wash fine, dull hair with Coca-Cola.** Big event coming up that you want to look your best at? The acidic qualities of Coca-Cola coat the hair and swell the follicles to create a beautiful shine. The liquids high fructose content will add texture, allowing styles to hold for longer with an effortless bounce. Although this life hack isn't advisable in the long run because it causes the build-up of residues, in the short term it's a cheap and effective way to keep you looking salon fresh!

(Story source: Over 50s.com)

Nifty at fifty: Top doctors tell over-50s they should be gardening or swimming twice a week

Older Brits should be gardening or swimming at least twice a week to stay in peak fitness, top doctors say.

The Sun reports that Government medical advisers also said new mums should aim for 2½ hours' exercise a week.



They recommend that over-50s do strength-based exercise which included climbing stairs and carrying shopping. In a new report they also suggest that pensioners take up dancing, bowls or tai chi to help prevent falls, injury and illness.

Doctors claim Brits who meet the guidelines will sharply cut their risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and depression. They also say sitting down for long periods is harmful - even if people hit their exercise targets.

In the world's first guidance on post-pregnancy activity, new mums are advised to do pelvic floor exercises immediately after birth.

Exercise eases back pain, improves sleep and helps shed flab. England's chief medical officer Prof Dame Sally Davies said: "I want to reassure women it's safe to be active during pregnancy and to build up slowly after birth. There's no negative effect on breastfeeding."

(Story source: The Sun)

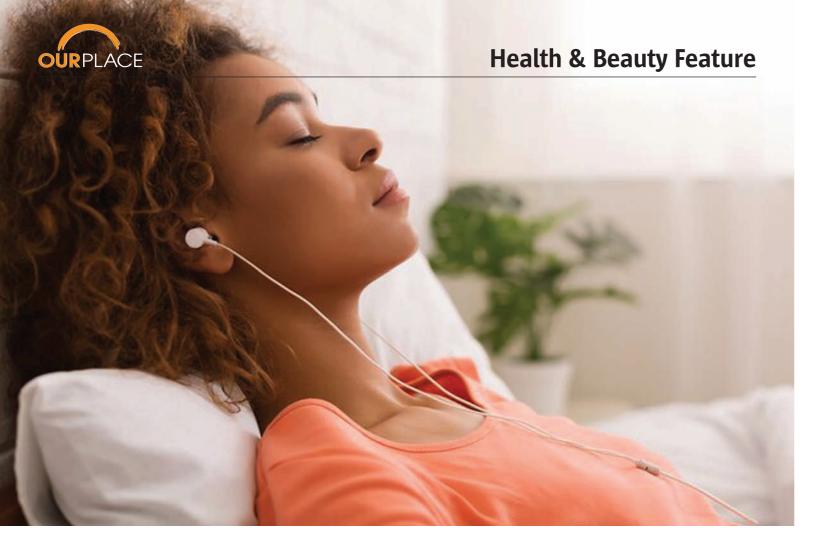
Brain-training game that reduces dementia risk by 29% is the first to prevent the condition

A computer game that reduces peoples' dementia risk by 29 percent is the first to prevent the condition, new research has revealed.

The Daily Mail reports that individuals who completed as little as 15 sessions over 10 years were found to have just a 5.9 percent chance of developing a form of the disorder, a study found. And the more a person plays the game, the lower their risk becomes, the research adds.

Lead author Dr Jerri Edwards from the University of South Florida, said: 'Speed of processing training resulted in decreased risk of dementia across the 10-year period of, on average, 29 percent as compared to the control. 'We need to investigate what is the appropriate amount of training to get the best results. The timing of intervention is also important.'





And relax... 12 affordable, healthy indulgences to help you chill out

If you've had a bad day at work, a horrendous journey home stuck in traffic or received a bill you weren't expecting - these indulgences might just help? We give you 12 ways to escape the stresses of everyday life.

Try your hand at massage

A quick self-massage can take your stress down a notch or two. (It may also give your immune system a boost.) Stand against a wall and place a tennis ball between your shoulder blades. Gently bend your knees to give yourself a back rub. For a neck massage, clasp your hands behind your head and make small, deep circles with your thumbs. To release tension in your face, try rubbing your forehead and jaw with your fingers.

Go for flower power

Fresh-cut blooms, whether from the store or your yard, can instantly put you at ease. This may be because of their beauty or because flowers often share a strong link with happy events. Choose flowers that are a colour and scent you enjoy, and place them somewhere in your home where you'll see them often.



Get your hands dirty

If you feel tense, it might be time to invest in a houseplant. When you plant and take care of one, you'll probably feel more relaxed than if you spent the same time on your computer or phone. Houseplants offer a calming connection that even has the power to soothe your nervous system and help lower your blood pressure.

Take a tech time-out

It's great to connect to others, but smartphones, tablets, and laptops make it hard to ever get a break. If you find yourself online a lot, you may start to feel stressed and like you don't have enough time. To relax and recharge, unplug, even for a short while. Put all screens away, even for an hour. Use that time to be present IRL instead.

Tap into tea

Sip a cup of black or green tea to relax. It sounds too simple to be true, but studies show that doing so can help reduce tension and improve your outlook. Exactly why isn't clear, although tea's smell, taste, warmth, and active ingredients seem to play a part. Some herb teas, like chamomile, can also help reduce your anxiety.



Dip into a warm bath

The warmth of the water gently widens your blood vessels and improves blood flow throughout your body, which helps you relax. One study found that people who bathe on a regular basis feel less stressed and tired and even smile more. Tip: Bathe right before bed and the rise and fall of your body temperature can also help you fall asleep. Moisturize when you get out of the tub.

Focus on what matters most

Sometimes, you don't need to do more to relax; you need to do less. If you feel pushed and pulled many different ways, make a list of the things you care about the most. Then, simply say "No, thanks" to events and activities you don't have time or interest in. If you're not used to turning down requests, this may feel hard at first. But you'll likely find that you can unwind in the extra time and mental space it gives you.

Get outside

It's one of the fastest ways to start to unwind. As little as 20 minutes in nature (even your yard or a city park) can help distract you from negative thoughts. The calming sounds you hear may also lower your blood pressure. You don't need to climb a mountain to feel more relaxed. Sit or stroll in any outdoor setting you enjoy. If that can't happen right now, look at nature photos you love.



De-stress with music

Relaxing music has a direct effect on your nervous system. It slows your heart rate and breathing, lowers your blood pressure, and signals your muscles to soften. When you need to mentally let go, your best bet is to choose music you love. Can't decide? Opt for classical, folk, or jazz songs. They have a rhythm between 60 to 80 beats per minute that helps your body calm down.

Soothe yourself with scent

Lavender, vanilla, and jasmine are a few options to send a smell-based "Chill out" message to your body's nervous system. Put a few drops of a scented oil into a diffuser or a spray bottle filled with water. (If you have pets, check with your vet first, since some oils are toxic to animals.) You can also look for lotions and candles made with a scent you like.

Connect with your people

A support system of friends and family is proven to help you better handle stress and lift your mood. Make time to call, text, or email someone who makes you feel good. You can fill them in on how you're doing and also get out of your head by listening to what's going on in their life.

Indulge in a nap

A short midday snooze can help lower tension and boost your mood. If you often sleep less than 7 hours at night or your energy lags right after lunch, a good nap may be just what you need. Find a quiet, dark place to close your eyes for 20 minutes and you'll wake refreshed and more alert. (Nap longer than that and you may wake up groggy.)

(Article source: Web MD)

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Lending to over-50s is becoming the 'new normal' says building society

Obtaining a mortgage beyond the age of 50 might seem hopeless to many but new research revealed more than 60 lenders offer products to older borrowers.



What Mortgage reports that in the last four years there has been significant increase in 'later life' products, which allow people in their 50s and beyond to secure a loan for a property, according to Ipswich Building Society.

Products which allow people to borrow beyond retirement age or retirement interest-only (RIO) mortgages are becoming more widely available.

But, it would appear, the borrowers who could potentially take advantage of this boom are not aware of what's on offer.

In fact Ipswich said its research found more than half of over 50s it quizzed said they thought they had fewer mortgage providers available to them than younger applicants.

As many as 60% said they felt there were fewer actual mortgage products available to them and just under half said they were offered less favourable rates.

Richard Norrington, CEO at Ipswich Building Society, said: "The mortgage landscape for over 50s looks entirely different now compared to just a few years ago but as our research shows, that doesn't necessarily mean people's perceptions have kept up.

"Too many borrowers are still pleasantly surprised that they can get a mortgage after a certain age, rather than expecting this to be the norm."

A 'good risk'

Going forward, a range of factors means the age at which people need to borrow money to purchase a property is getting higher.

A recent report from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suggested the number of older people in rented accommodation would rise as people struggled to get onto the property ladder in their 30s and 40s.

What's more, many older people - even into their eighth decade - were choosing to continue to work.

Ipswich said, whether the older generations were working or retired, they would be likely to have steady income which meant they could represent a 'good risk' for lenders.

Suitability

Norrington emphasised that borrowing into later life was not suitable for everyone but with more lenders offering products in this market the impact of these mortgages could be 'profound'.

He added: "Older borrowers have complex needs, and are not all simply 'downsizers'.

"Although some are looking for smaller, easy-to-manage properties near to amenities now their children have flown the nest, being older doesn't mean they stop striving for more, which could mean retiring to an idyllic country cottage, buying a second property, or even remortgaging to help a younger member of the family take their first step onto the property ladder themselves.

"Ipswich Building Society believes that the growth in both choice and access for older borrowers shows lending to over 50s is becoming the new normal."

(Story source: What Mortgage)

The 10 most valuable and rare 50p and £2 coins in circulation - and how much they're worth

Check your change for these 50p and £2 coins.

Inews reports that with so many commemorative coins released each year, it stands to reason that some become more rare than others, going on to fetch more than a pretty penny at auction.

50p pieces that many would just assume were loose change can be worth hundreds their legal value, and £2 coins are no different.

Coin collecting site Change Checker has updated its mintage figures, which has revealed a few interesting shifts at the top of the rarest coins table.





With accurate figures on how many of a particular type of coin were produced, here are the Top 10 (five 50p coins and five £2 coins) rarest coins to be looking out for this year.

2009 Kew Gardens 50p

No change at the top, as the Kew Gardens 50p remains the rarest coin in circulation, with just 210,000 of them created a decade ago. Released to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Gardens, the coins can sell for up to £160 on eBay.

They feature feature the famous Chinese Pagoda encircled by a decorative vine, accompanied by the dates 1759 and 2009, and the word 'Kew' at the base.

Those dates are important, because with the Royal Mint reissuing a number of famous commemorative coins to celebrate 50 years of the 50p, newer - and much less rare - versions are now out there.

2002 N. Ireland Commonwealth Games £2

Just under half a million (485,500 to be precise) of these $\mathfrak{L}2$ coins celebrating Northern Ireland's participation in the Commonwealth Games of 2002 were minted, making them the rarest variant of the $\mathfrak{L}2$ coin around.

Part of a set depicting the four home nations - Wales, England and Scotland versions of the same coin are also highly sought after - if you have one in your possession, an asking price of £30 is not unreasonable to collectors.

2002 Wales Commonwealth Games £2

Only a few more of the Welsh variation of the Commonwealth Games coin were produced (to a total of 588,500), meaning if you have this coin in your possession, you're also in luck.

It depicts the same design as the above NI version, but switches in the Welsh flag, and collectors are likely to pay anything up to about $\mathfrak{E}20$ to get their hands on one.

2015 Navy £2

The standard collector's price for this coin - released to commemorate the Royal Navy's efforts in World War One - is about £10, however some are selling for as much as £100 on eBay.

It features a battleship design by military artist David Rowlands and the fifth portrait of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to appear on UK coinage. Only 650,000 of them were ever produced.

2015 Britannia £2

You'd expect the introduction of a new standard design of coin to come with high mintage figures, but in the year that the Britannia £2 design was brought in (replacing the old 'Technology' design which had featured on the coin since 1997), only 650,000 of them produced. This makes a 2015 dated £2 coin the joint third rarest £2 coin in circulation.

2002 England Commonwealth Games £2

With just 650,500 produced, England's entrant to the Commonwealth Games set is the third rarest of the four (Scotland's is 'least' rare, though is still fairly scarce with only 771,750 ever made). Again, it follows the usual Commonwealth Games £2 coin design, but feature the cross of St. George, and sells for similar prices to the Scotlish coin - about £10.

2017 Shield 50p

These 50 pence pieces bearing the royal coat of arms are one of the most common varieties of the silver coin, but those minted in 2017 are even rarer than some of the sought-after collectable coins from the same year.

The Royal Mint created 1.8 million of the coins, and while that may sound like a lot, it's actually a small percentage of the overall total. You likely won't be making your fortune from a sale of one of these coins just yet, but it is predicted they may go up in value for collectors as time passes on. At the time of writing, there are a number advertised for sale on eBay, with the most expensive seemingly this listing for £34.95.

2017 Sir Isaac Newton 50p

Once thought to be the second rarest UK 50p in circulation after the Kew Gardens coin, Sir Isaac's 50 pence piece now falls to third in the rankings, with only 1,500 fewer 2017 Shield 50ps being minted.

2016 Jemima Puddleduck 50p

The Beatrix Potter commemorative coin - part of a collectors set of five - has been dubbed "rare" and "valuable" since the Royal Mint announced that only 2.1 million went into circulation when the collection was released in 2016. That figure still holds true today, and compared to the 9.6 million Peter Rabbit coins made for the collection, that makes them much harder to get hold of.

2013 Suffragettes 50p

This coin, which celebrates the hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Women's Social and Political Union, features the figure of a suffragette chained to railings and holding a banner. Only 3,124,030 were ever produced, which has seen them sell for up to £14 on eBay.

(Story source: Inews)





Winter finance: Leaving financial woes out in the cold

Nine tips to help older people overcome financial challenges during a particularly vulnerable time of year.

The winter poses a number of challenges for older people. Severe weather conditions can pose a serious health risk but many older people struggle to heat their homes and stay healthy because of costly energy bills. As a result, during the winter many older people have to make the choice between eating and putting their heating on.

Whether you're an older person facing that decision yourself or you know someone that might be faced with that decision this winter, these important checks can help you or someone you know make sure they're not missing out on any extra support. We've put together some important checks that can help you or someone you know afford to stay well this winter.

Benefits and entitlements

Get a benefits check. Whether you already claim benefits or it's something you've not really considered, it's worth knowing exactly what you're entitled to. Each year up to £3.5bn of Pension Credit and Housing Benefit goes unclaimed by older people.

Age UK's free online Benefits Calculator helps make it easy to get an estimate of the benefits you could be entitled to. All you need is certain information, such as your savings information, income, pensions and any existing benefits (for you and, if applicable, your partner).

Additional help with heating costs

If you are 65 or over you could be entitled to a one-off Winter Fuel Payment from the Government of around £100-£300. These payments are made during November and December, so set a reminder for the end of 2020. To find out if you might meet the eligibility criteria, call the Government helpline on 0800 731 0160.

Cold weather payment when temperatures drop

When it's particularly cold out (the temperature drops to zero for seven consecutive days), you could be entitled to an extra bit of money to help with the cost of heating your home.



Money & Work Feature

A Cold Weather Payment of £25 for each seven-day spell can help those who are eligible to help with energy bills. To claim, you already need to be in receipt of certain benefits such as pension credit, income support, and universal credit (among others). This is payable by the Government and is only applicable between the months of November and March.

Warm home discount from suppliers

If you are with one of the larger energy providers and receive pension credit you could be entitled to a discount on your energy bills. The Government, provides certain large energy providers with a rebate, and the company then passes on a £140 reduction to their customers. This is available to certain customer groups, including older people, and is available from October to March. To receive this discount it is essential that older people apply. It's certainly worth checking if you're eligible as receiving this discount does not affect any other benefits or allowances such as Winter Fuel Allowance, cold weather payments or any other winter payments.

Check you are getting the best deal from your energy supplier

Energy companies have more than one tariff so it is important that to check that you aren't paying too much for your energy. Many people are on a standard tariff, which is unlikely to be the best or cheapest deal, meaning you could be over paying by hundreds of pounds a year. Sometimes an energy provider's bills or statements will highlight some possible cheaper options, or you can call your supplier to ask directly. It is also possible that some companies will offer a cheaper tariff if you change the way you pay for your energy, such as paying online or via direct debit straight from your bank. You may be able to save money by switching to a different supplier. Switching supplier doesn't change the energy you receive at all, just who you pay for it, so there's no need to change any pipes or cables. This also means you don't need to worry about an interruption to your energy supply when switching.

Free insulation or heating improvements

If you receive certain benefits, including Pension Credit or Attendance Allowance, or live in social housing with a low energy efficiency rating, you may be able to get help under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme. You may be able get insulation installed, or central heating if you don't currently have it. If you own your home, you may be able to get a broken boiler repaired or replaced. Larger energy suppliers have to participate in ECO, but it doesn't matter whether your supplier participates. You can apply to any supplier that takes part.

Free winter car check

Our general advice if there is a period of severe cold, snowy or icy conditions on the way is not to travel by car. But if you must travel by car, you may want to get a free winter car check before you go. Halfords offers this service. It takes 15 minutes and there is no need to book. They will check your car's battery, headlight, brakes, wind screen wipers and tell you when your MOT is due. If you don't have a car and are feeling like braving the weather by bicycle, then they offer a similar service for your bike too.

Simple ways to save energy and cut costs

- Run the washing machine at a lower temperature you can
 often do everyday washes at 30°C. Washing clothes at 30°C
 uses around 40% less electricity over a year than washing at
 higher temperatures.
- Use your heating controls, such as thermostats and timers, to heat your home without wasting energy.
- Make sure you keep your living room (or the room you use most) warm during the day while you're at home at 21°C (70°F) and heat your bedroom to 18°C (64°F) before you go to bed. If there are rooms you don't use, like a spare bedroom, turn off the radiators in them and close the doors.
- Keep radiators and heaters clear so hot air can circulate.
 Don't forget to draw your curtains and tuck them behind radiators to minimise heat loss.
- Make sure doors and windows are draught-proofed to avoid loss of heat. Fit draught-proofing strips and draught excluders around doors, sealing gaps around window frames and fitting covers to letterboxes and keyholes. This can save you around £25 a year.
- Double glazing reduces heat loss as well as noise from outside. You could save up to £80 per year in heating bills if you install it throughout your home. You can choose to double glaze the rooms you use and heat most often to keep installation costs down.

Grants from Energy supplier fund schemes and charitable trusts

Some energy suppliers have charitable trusts or funding schemes to help people in a time of crisis. Some are restricted to helping the supplier's customers, while others are open to everyone. The specific eligibility criteria and the help that is available varies from scheme to scheme, but you may get a boiler repair or replacement, help with energy debts or help to buy essential household items such as washing machines and cookers. The main schemes are:

- British Gas Energy Trust
- EDF Energy Trust
- npower Energy Fund
- npower Health Through Warmth Scheme
- E.ON Energy Fund

It is essential to speak to your supplier as soon as you can if you're having difficulty paying your bills at any time of year, not just winter time. They'll let you know how they can help you avoid getting further into debt.

(Article source: Age UK)

Leisure & Travel Feature



The Beatles in Liverpool: A Fab Four fan's guide to their city

The Beatles were four young lads from Liverpool who revolutionised pop music and changed the world. Fans can explore their roots on a visit to the city, discovering the houses, parks and streets that inspired the band.

Here, we take you through the must-see sights, from John Lennon's bedroom and Penny Lane to museums and tribute bands.

Lennon and McCartney's childhood homes

The National Trust, the caretaker of palaces and royal estates across the UK, also owns two seemingly nondescript houses in the suburbs of south Liverpool where John and Paul grew up. And if you only have time for one Beatles experience in Liverpool, make it the trust's tour of the two. Yoko Ono bought Mendips, the elegant 1930s house at 251 Menlove Ave where John Lennon grew up, in 2002 and donated it to the trust. Stepping inside means entering a time capsule, painstakingly recreated from accounts of lodgers who used to live with the family.





Leisure & Travel Feature

You're transported back to John's childhood with his Aunt Mimi and Uncle George. The tour guides passionately detail his tumultuous family and school life, after walking you through the back garden door, which is the only way Aunt Mimi allowed scruffy Paul McCartney in.

Don't miss climbing up the creaking stairs to John's cramped bedroom where he wrote his first songs or singing at the top of your lungs in the closed off front porch, where Mimi would relegate the boys to practice.

Paul McCartney's childhood home is not far away, but is a world apart from Mendips. 20 Forthlin Rd is an austere brick-fronted house that was one of hundreds the local council built after World War II. John and Paul would often end up in the cosy living room when they skipped school to write and rehearse some of their earliest songs.

Taking the 2½-hour National Trust tour is the only way to see inside the two Beatles' homes, and you must be picked up and dropped off at Jurys Inn at Albert Dock or at Speke Hall.

Beatles Story Museum

Spread across two sites near the River Mersey, the Beatles Story indulges visitors with a full-on history lesson. John Lennon's sister Julia narrates the audio guide as you wander through a full-size recreation of the Cavern Club and the Abbey Road studio where the Beatles' first singles were recorded. The bounty of Beatles memorabilia includes John's famous round spectacles and George's first guitar. Above the Beatles Story's Pier Head location, grab a quick drink and relax on the sunny roof terrace at Matou (matou.co.uk), overlooking the river.

Find Ringo Starr in Welsh Streets

Liverpool almost lost a piece of Beatles history forever when the local council decided to demolish and redevelop an area called Welsh Streets, 2 miles southeast of Albert Dock. After public protest, Ringo's childhood home at 9 Madryn St was spared, but walking through these eerily quiet streets still feels post-apocalyptic. Almost all of the houses are abandoned and covered over with daunting metal grates. Beatles fans and the graffiti they leave behind are the only signs of life.

On the outside, Ringo's house looks similar to Paul's, but today it's worth only a measly £525. The whole derelict Welsh Streets area sits in stark contrast to the more genteel neighbourhoods you're escorted through with the National Trust.

Penny Lane and George Harrison

All these years later, 'the shelter in the middle of the roundabout' on Penny Lane is still there, and you can catch a bus here from the city centre 3.5 miles away, just as the Beatles did when Penny Lane was a major terminus. Snap a picture of the famous street sign before walking to George Harrison's childhood home a mile away. You can wind your way down the narrow side streets, barely big enough for two cars, to see where George lived until age 6. This homely, bright red 'two-up two-down' terraced house at 12 Arnold Grove is still a private residence.

Make a quick stop at Strawberry Field, an old Salvation Army children's home about 6 miles southeast of central Liverpool, to see the bright red, graffiti-covered gates. It's surreal to imagine a young John Lennon playing in the woods behind these gates, as we're just around the corner from Aunt Mimi's house at Mendips. Although Strawberry Field is currently inaccessible beyond the gate, there are plans to develop the site as a museum.

Continue on Menlove Ave and stroll by Mendips or remember the Quarrymen, the band that evolved into the Beatles, on Quarry St, heading for St Peter's Church. The most important meeting in pop music happened in these pristinely kept church grounds, when John first met Paul at a school fete. But the churchyard has even more Beatles connections: a woman named Eleanor Rigby is buried here, as well as John's uncle George, who he lived with at Mendips.

Pub crawl Mathew St and catch a band at the Cavern Club



Mathew St, one of the most famous streets in pop music, is the spine of the Cavern Quarter, a small district filled with shops, bars and pubs that really gets going after dark. A statue of John Lennon casually leans against a wall outside the reconstructed Cavern Club. The Beatles played the original venue nearly 300 times, but that wasn't enough to save it from demolition in the 1970s to make way for a railway ventilation shaft that was ultimately never built. In addition to a range of local talent, the still dark and intimate Cavern Club hosts a Beatles tribute band that dons their mop-tops and rocks out every Saturday night.

For a quieter drink, stop off at Bar Four, the lounge at the Hard Days Night Hotel just off Mathew St, to sup some Beatles-themed cocktails, such as Daq in the USSR and Honey Can't Buy Me Love

Getting around

To tackle all these sights, set aside a couple of days. John and Paul's childhood homes and the Beatles Story are the most obvious attractions and could be done in a day. The Beatles grew up outside the city centre: if you don't have a car, hire a bike from Liverpool's CityBike scheme (citybikeliverpool.co.uk) or use local bus 76, which runs from Albert Dock past Penny Lane, Mendips and St Peter's Church.

(Article source: Lonely Planet)

Food & Drink News

Eating a big breakfast will 'burn more calories'

New research is adding to what we already know: you should eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince and dinner like a pauper.



Silver Surfers reports that Scientists have found that people who eat a big breakfast compared to a large dinner may burn twice as many calories throughout the day.

The research - published in the Endocrine Society's Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism - looked into diet-induced thermogenesis (DIT), which is the process our body goes through when digesting food and the energy it expends.

The study's corresponding author, Juliane Richter of University of Lübeck in Germany, says: "Our results show that a meal eaten for breakfast, regardless of the amount of calories it contains, creates twice as high diet-induced thermogenesis as the same meal consumed for dinner. This finding is significant for all people as it underlines the value of eating enough at breakfast."

The way the research was conducted is simple: in the first round, 16 men consumed a low-calorie breakfast and a high-calorie dinner, and then did the opposite and compared the results.

The participants had 2.5 times higher DIT in the morning than in the evening, if they started the day with a high-calorie meal.

The research also found eating a low-calorie breakfast can increase your appetite for the rest of the day, specifically for sweets. This makes perfect sense - if you haven't started your day with plenty of nutrients and you don't feel satiated, you're far more likely to graze and snack as the day goes on, ultimately consuming more calories than if you'd just had a hearty breakfast.

This isn't the first time scientists have looked into the benefits of consuming more calories at breakfast compared to dinner, but it does go against social norms - as we're far more likely to grab a quick brekkie on the go and then sit down to a big dinner at night. After all, society is largely geared towards working in the morning and doing our socialising in the evening.

A 2013 study from Tel Aviv University found eating a high-calorie breakfast can help protect you against diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular problems.

It also showed how important a big breakfast can be for weightloss – obese women were the subject of the study, and those who had a big breakfast lost an average of 17.8 pounds (8.1kg) compared to 7.3 pounds (3.3kg) for the group who had a big dinner.

While these studies specifically focus on eating a higher calorie breakfast instead of dinner, it's an important reminder to actually eat something to kick off your day - something so many of us skip. In fact, research by The Grocer found that "44% regularly refrain from eating in the morning" in the UK.

Growing up, your parents probably drilled it into you to have breakfast, and science backs them up. Another study found eating first thing improved cognitive function and academic performance in children, and it's likely it would also help you focus better through adulthood.

Breakfast can also help boost your mental health. A 2019 study published by the Cambridge University Press found those who skipped breakfast or even delayed it had a higher prevalence of mood disorders, compared to those who ate breakfast at a normal time. So maybe it's time we start taking the morning meal a little more seriously.

(Story source: Silver Surfers)

Pub of the Year 2020: Berkshire 'gem' The Bell Inn with 'great beer' and outdoor loo scoops title

The Bell Inn in Aldworth, Berkshire, has been in the same family for 250 years.



Inews reports that a "perennial gem" with "great beer" and an outdoor loo that has been run by the same family for 250 years has been crowned the UK's best pub.



The Bell Inn in Aldworth, Berkshire, has won the 2020 Pub of the Year title after impressing judges with its welcoming environment, strong community focus and impressive selection of beer.

This is not the first time the heritage pub has scooped the top prize - the Campaign for Real Ale (Camra), which runs the competition, also awarded it Pub of the Year status back in 1990, when it was run by the current owner's parents. Heather and Ian Macaulay.

Hugh Macaulay, the couple's son, said he was delighted to receive the accolade himself three decades later.

Outdoor loo

The only pub in Berkshire with a Grade-II listed interior, The Bell Inn has been in the hands of the Hunt and McQuhae family since the 18th century. The men's toilet is situated outside and punters jokingly refer to it as "the Planetarium". It was built in 1933 when mains water was installed at the premises.

Ben Wilkinson, Camra's national director, praised the pub for treating newcomers like regulars and making customers feel "right at home".

"The judges were impressed with how a stranger entering the pub was treated like a regular straight away," Mr Wilkinson said.

"It's clear that the local customers use the pub as a community centre as well as a place to drink, and the warm welcome and knowledgeable staff made us feel right at home. Nothing can beat the combination of good beer, great food and warm heritage pub."

'Unspoilt'

Manager Mr Macaulay said: "The Bell Inn has been in my family for 250 years and my mother and father were running it when we last won the award.

"It's a wonderful thing to be recognised for driving quality year after year. Not much has changed because we have kept our interior unspoilt all this time, and intend to keep it that way for years to come." he added.

On 19 September 1978, 100 Bell Inn regulars paid £100 a head to charter a British Airways Concorde to take them on an annual pub outing. Concorde flew from London Heathrow over the bay of Biscay down to Spain and back.

Pubs in the competition are rated by Camra on their atmosphere, decor, welcome, service, community focus and the quality of the beer. This year's runners-up include the Swan With Two Necks in Pendleton, Lancashire, the George & Dragon in Hudswell, North Yorkshire, and the Red Lion in Preston, Hertfordshire.

(Story source: Inews)

Have you been to The Bell Inn? Or maybe you're a regular? Tell us all about it by visiting: www.ourplace.co

'We drink too much', say millions of over-50s

In the UK, harmful drinking is declining among every age group except the over-50s who continue to drink at hazardous levels.



Inews reports that more than four million Britons aged over 50 think they should cut back on the amount of alcohol they drink, according to new research.

A national survey of 2120 older people by the campaign group Drink Wise, Age Well, found 24 per cent of 50 to 54-year-old drinkers sometimes think they should cut down, compared with 20 per cent of 60 to 64-year-olds and 10 per cent of over 75s. Overall, 17 per cent think they should drink less.

In the UK, harmful drinking is declining among every age group except the over-50s. Asked which age group is most likely to experience the negative consequences of drinking too much alcohol, 36 per cent said 18 to 29-year-olds, while just 22 per cent said 50 to 69-year-olds.

The findings coincide with the publication of Calling Time for Change, a charter for politicians and policy makers about how to reduce alcohol harm among people over 50.

Data from the Office for National Statistics shows people over 45 are most likely to drink at hazardous levels, while younger generations are drinking less.

The number of alcohol related deaths for over-50s has risen 45 per cent since 2001 and Public Health data shows that alcohol is now the sixth biggest cause of disability among people in their 50s and 60s, up from 16th in 1990.

Drink Wise, Age Well is calling for targeted campaigns to help older adults and their families to understand how life events like bereavement or retirement can lead to increased alcohol use, and how alcohol can affect healthy ageing.

(Story source: Inews)





The London Underground map: The design that shaped a city

It looks like a cross between an electric circuit diagram and a Mondrian painting - but the London Underground map also revolutionised design. We take a journey back in time.

The first section of the London Underground opened in 1863. Over the following decades, a number of Tube maps - showing an uncoordinated network of lines owned by different companies - were published in increasing, unwieldy profusion. None looked like the iconic map so beloved by visitors and locals today.

The fact that there were so many Underground maps before Harry Beck's famous 'diagram' of 1931 - the blueprint of today's maps - was proof of a problem that took many years and a great deal of ingenuity to solve.

After all, how could a designer fully represent lines that crisscrossed a few squares miles of central London yet also stretched across what, until as late as 1900, had been farmlands, markets gardens and remarkably remote Middlesex villages? And how could it all fit onto a single map -one that could be folded neatly into a coat pocket?

Size matters

The sheer spread of the Underground network made mapping it problematic. Even in central London, there were stations like Covent Garden and Leicester Square just 200m from each other, while others like Kings Cross and Farringdon were 1.15 miles (1.85km) apart. Outside the centre, the Underground stretched as far as Verney Junction and Brill in Buckinghamshire, rural outposts 50 miles from Baker Street. As maps of the time took their cue from historical precedent, it was thought that these geographic distances had to be represented to scale.

But by 1930, it was clear that any map trying to plot the entire Underground network geographically was going to be too big to handle - especially in the busy confines of a Tube station, where shoulder room was precious. So Underground maps of the time tended to concentrate on lines in central London.

They allowed lines farther afield to drop off the edge of the city, as if they were ships sailing through the mermaid- and monster-populated seas of an unenlightened, flat world.

Many of these early, artist-designed maps are utterly charming and, rightfully, collector's items today. They were, however, neither comprehensive nor even particularly useful.

Map or Mondrian?

In 1931, Harry Beck, a young engineering draughtsman who had joined the Underground Group's Signal Engineer's Office in 1925, came up with a solution. It was to become not just a useful tool for Londoners and visitors to the capital, but a much-loved design in its own right. It remains the basis for the maps used today.

And yet, when Beck first presented his 'diagram' to Underground management, they were unsure. Lines running horizontally, vertically or at 45-degree angles were plotted on a grid. Eschewing geography, it looked like a cross between an electric circuit diagram and a Mondrian painting.

While it was no longer possible to tell the distance or precise geographic location of stations at a glance, Beck reasoned that this was unimportant. What passengers needed to know was how to get from one station to another as efficiently as possible and where to change between lines.

In 1933, the Underground, city buses, trams, trolleybuses, river buses and Green Line coaches were brought together under the umbrella of a new public corporation: the London Passenger Transport Board. With a spirit of modernisation in the air, the time was right to see how the public would respond to Beck's radical 'diagram'. After a test run of 500 copies were distributed from a select few stations in 1932, 700,000 copies of the map were printed in 1933. It proved an instant success - a reprint had to be ordered within a month.

Yet the map wasn't perfect. Beck had been unable to include the western extremities of the District Line or the rural adventures of the Metropolitan (magenta) beyond Rickmansworth. These design puzzles were solved over many years as Beck improved his map. His last version was printed in 1960 when he fell out with London Transport. Its publicity officer, Harold Hutchinson, took over the design task.

Feeling a sense of ownership and averse to seeing his design changed by third parties, Beck fought a long legal battle with London Transport. He abandoned this in 1965 but worked on the map privately, along with designs for the Paris Metro he had begun decades earlier, until his death in 1974.

Since 1986, the design has been a corporate task, with names of individual designers - aside from Beck, who remains credited as the originator - subsumed in this never-ending enterprise. The map has long gone global, too. Not only has it inspired countless Metro maps across continents, but it is also a staple of t-shirts, coffee mugs and countless other souvenirs.

Cry me a river

That means that, when big changes are made, everyone notices. Over the years, lines have been added including the Docklands Light Railway, the Overground network, Crossrail and the Emirates Air Line cable-car linking Greenwich Peninsula with Royal Docks. Then, in 2009, the River Thames was removed from the map. This had long been its one defining geographic element. When it went, there was a public outcry and negative media attention from around the world.

The Thames was back on the map within months, although collectors of Underground maps - of whom there are many - will prize the Thames-less map, much as stamp collectors treasure Edward VIII postage stamps among other design rarities.

In 2006, Beck's map came second in BBC2's Great British Design Quest, when more than 200,000 viewers chose between such compelling designs as the Mini, E-Type Jaguar and the album sleeve of Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Beck's map came second, beaten to the number-one slot only by Concorde, perhaps the most beautiful aircraft of all time.

Beck's map and its successors have inspired artists, too. David Booth's The Tate Gallery by Tube (1986), a poster for London Underground stations, showed Tube lines squeezed from tubes of paint; since 1992, the Tate Modern has displayed The Great Bear by Simon Patterson, with station names replaced by a plethora of artists, explorers, scientists, actors and writers.



It isn't only artists who have been inspired by the map. For generations, London schoolchildren, trying to relieve the monotony of their daily commute, have translated station names into foreign alternatives - with Kings Cross, for example, becoming 'Koenigkreutz'. And many have been able, thanks to the graphic clarity of the Underground map, its bright colours and peerless Johnston typeface, to memorise every station on the Underground network.

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Arts & Crafts Feature

BANK

GOODGE STREET

GOODGE STREET

From games and memory feats to artworks and souvenirs, Beck's diagram imprinted a very particular map of London on the minds of millions. More than 80 years on, it remains the gold standard by which new Metro maps are judged.

The history of the tube map

The tube map is a London icon. Technically it's not really a map but a diagram, as it doesn't reflect the real geography of London at all accurately - but its clear, colour-coded lines and friendly curves shape the way most of us visualise the capital. The map wasn't always so accessible. As the independent railways of the 1800s merged into a single system, the first map, published in 1908, looked like this:



It was, self-evidently, a mess. The map showed all the important central stations (including several that have since closed down or changed names), but it didn't make it easy to find your way around. Station names had to be written in small text, often at odd angles so they could be crammed in between awkwardly twisting lines.

The map also omitted stations further out from the centre, for reasons which become obvious when you look at a later map that tried to show more of the network:



As you 'zoom out' from the centre of London, you end up with a huge amount of wasted space toward the edges, and an illegible crush in the middle.

In 1926, a map-maker named Fred Stingemore set out to improve matters by regularising the spacing between stations, and allowing himself some artistic licence with the routes of the various lines. The result was a map that no longer represented the true shape of London - and thus couldn't be superimposed on a street map, as earlier attempts had been - but did allow more stations to be represented with larger text:



Not only was the new map neater, it arguably had a social function. It showed outlying stations such as Edgware and Richmond appearing to be only a short distance from the centre of town, promoting a sense of community between inner London and the suburbs.

Even then, Stingemore wasn't able to fit in the furthest reaches of the tube system: the Bakerloo, Metropolitan and District lines are all cut off at the edges of the map.

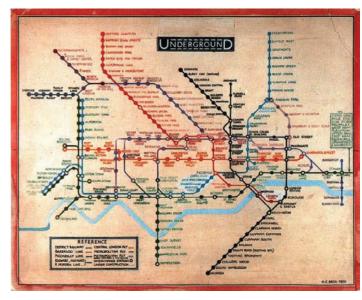
The modern tube diagram

Stingemore's work was clever, but its impact was far from earth-shattering: the Underground Electric Railways Company of London (UERL), which operated the tube, continued to publish large geographical maps alongside handy pocket-sized copies of his diagram.

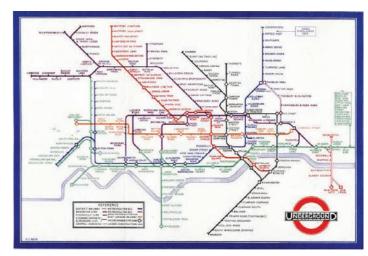
The man who created the tube map we know today was Harry Beck. Formerly an engineering draughtsman for UERL, he lost his job with the Underground in the late 1920s as a result of funding cuts.

But he retained an interest in London's transport system, and with time on his hands, set about on a project to "tidy up" the tube map by - as he would later recall - "straightening the lines, experimenting with diagonals and evening out the distance between stations".

In 1931, he finished drawing his first tube map based on these principles:

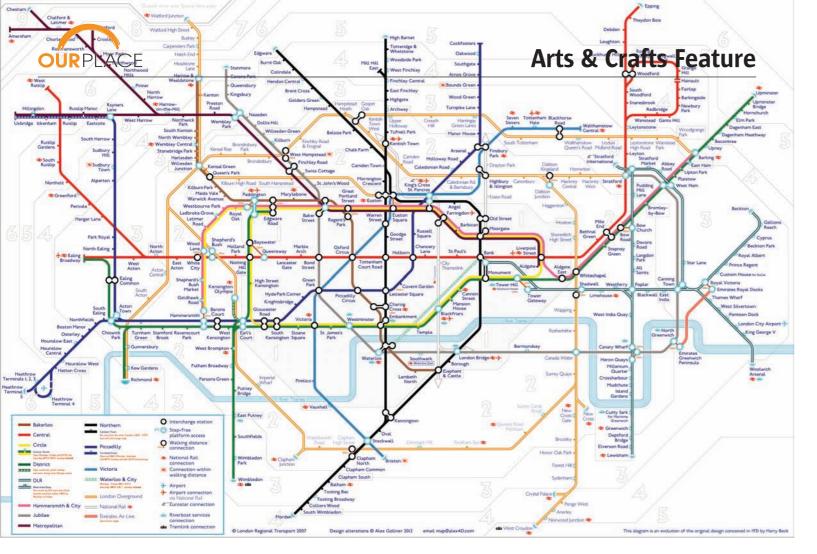


There are plenty of differences between Beck's first effort and the map we know today. Station names are all in capitals, as was customary at the time, every station is marked with a 'blob', and interchanges are shown with multiple circles. All the same, much more of the network is represented, and the spirit of the modern map is detectable. Although Beck's map had been entirely a personal endeavour, he was encouraged by friends to send it in to UERL for consideration. The company, in its wisdom, promptly returned it, explaining that it was not interested in such a "revolutionary" map. But Beck didn't give up: the following year he tried again, and this time the company agreed to buy the design off him for just over £10 - equivalent to around £600 today. In the process of preparing the map for publication, a few adjustments were made: stations without interchanges were now shown with 'ticks' instead of blobs, and the handwritten type evolved to something very similar to the font used today. Interchanges, for some reason, became diamond-shaped. The result, published in 1933, is instantly familiar:



Originally distributed as a folding pocket-card, the first Beck map came with a slightly cautious explanation on the front: "A new design for an old map. We should welcome your comments." In the event, Beck's map was a clear hit: the original print run of 750,000 was snapped up in a month, requiring a further 100,000 to be printed almost immediately.

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Tweaks and interference

As it stood, Beck's tube map needed no improvement, but refinements were continually being worked in, many of them still with us today. By August 1933, the diamond-shaped interchanges were back to the neater rings of Beck's original design (though they were still coloured rather than black). The following year, the colour scheme was updated, giving the Bakerloo and Central lines their now-standard red and brown hues. There were also plenty of missteps along the way, most of them not Beck's fault. For example, in 1935, the UERL board demanded an update to the map that would use bold lines for stations within the central area, and much larger symbols for interchanges. Beck did his best to comply, but the result was not a thing of beauty:



The experiment was fairly short-lived, and the diamonds were ditched in 1937. But this wasn't the end of the board's meddling. In 1940, Beck was asked to create a version of the map with linked rings for interchanges - an idea that someone presumably thought would be a strong symbol, without considering how it would actually look on the page:



This version of the map also has an uncomfortably slanted feel, arising from the need to squeeze in a lengthy eastward extension to the Central line.

Beck didn't love this: subsequent maps returned to 45° angles, and made much greater use of verticals. His own vision can be seen in this map from 1949, which he later identified as one of his favourite iterations of the diagram:



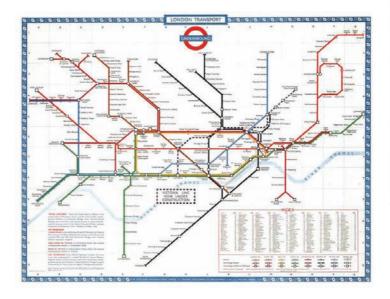
Arts & Crafts Feature



After Beck

Probably the biggest misstep in the history of the tube map came in 1960. For the first time in nearly 30 years, London Transport (as UERL had by now become) created a new version of Beck's map, updated to show the new Victoria line, without consulting him.

Credited to publicity officer Harold Hutchison, the map didn't just add a new line but also introduced ugly sharp angles and square interchanges:



Beck was understandably disappointed by what had become of his design - and angered at the infringement of his copyright.

He wrote numerous letters to the management, but was repeatedly fobbed off. "I am not aware of any undertaking by my predecessors," insisted Hutchison. Eventually Beck gave up and abandoned his relationship with London Transport, although not before submitting his own idea of how the Victoria line might be represented:



Beck might take some satisfaction from the fact that Hutchison's map was not widely admired, and in 1962 another London Transport employee named Paul Garbutt stepped in to fix it. He brought back the feel of Beck's work, but kept some of the positive aspects of Hutchison's map, including black rings for interchanges and lower-case text for non-interchange stations. Garbutt can also be credited with the familiar 'bottle' shape of the Circle line:



Almost all the features of the modern map can be see here, and a short process of evolution leads to the diagram we know today. In 1981, the tube switched from per-station pricing to the simpler system of zones, and most maps now show the zonal boundaries. Dark blue "wheelchair" circles have been added to show stations with step-free access. Perhaps the biggest change has been the addition of extra services. The Jubilee line opened in 1979, with a major extension completed in 1999, bringing the map towards its current total of 270 tube stations. 112 London Overground stations are shown too, along with 45 DLR stations. Add in tram and riverboat services, along with the forthcoming Elizabeth line and that's around twice as many stations and connections as Harry Beck tried to cram into his first tube map. So if you're ever bamboozled by the complexity of today's map, remember that it presents a phenomenal amount of information - and think how utterly incomprehensible it would all be in the hands of one of the network's early map designers. Harry Beck died in 1974, but his pioneering work in making sense of our city lives on.

(Article source: Londonist)

Chris Packham calls on families to create wildlife sanctuaries in their gardens and on their windowsills

The TV presenter is fronting a campaign by RSPB, The Wildlife Trust and The Woodland Trust.



Inews reports that UK households could give nature a massive boost by seeing their gardens, balconies, patios and windowsills as potential wildlife sanctuaries, according to the television presenter Chris Packham.

Planting trees, installing ponds - however small - and building 'bug hotels' from leaves and wood are among 10 measures people can take that would work wonders for biodiversity, he said.

A major study published last month revealed that 41 per cent of UK species have declined since the 1970s as the expansion of farming has sharply reduced the amount of suitable habitats and climate change has made conditions tougher.

And new government figures, released today, showed birds which breed and feed on the 75 per cent of UK land which is farmed have seen declines of 55 per cent since 1970s.

24 million gardens in UK

But with an estimated 24 million gardens covering an area the size of Suffolk, households can make a significant contribution to restoring the country's depleted nature, according to a new campaign, led by Mr Packham, in conjunction with the RSPB, the Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust.

"There is always a perception that wildlife prospers more profitably outside of suburban and urban areas. But we know in fact that it can do very well inside these areas and that people can make a real difference," said Mr Packham.

"At the same time, the countryside is an increasingly difficult place to look after wildlife because of intensive agriculture, ongoing development, climate change and loss of habitat. As we continue to grow our population, build more houses and hopefully create more gardens, they could become a significant new source of wildlife," he

Houses without gardens, meanwhile, can do their bit by loading their balconies and windowsills with wildlife as every little bit helps.

Wildlife thrive in connected habitats

That said, the bigger the area given over to wildlife the better - and where possible, people should encourage their neighbours to follow suit as nature prospers more when it has more 'connected' space to roam, according to the campaign.

If households only do one thing, where possible they should create a pond, Mr Packham suggests.

"There's very often a misconception with ponds. People think a pond very often has to be a lake. But if you stick a bucket into your garden, or a baby's bath, or a bowl and keep it topped up with water it will make a difference."

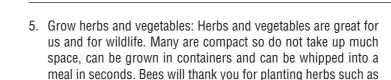
A pond doesn't have to be big

"I remember we had a baby's bath sunk into our garden, which filled with tadpoles, rat tailed maggots and mosquito larvae. I was always at its edge with a bowl and spoon teasing those things out, trying to work out what they were and what they were doing and generally marvelling at them. It doesn't have to be big to be beautiful when it's a pond."

Mr Packham's call is made to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the National Lottery, which has invested more than £800 million in wildlife projects, such as the Woodbury Wetlands in Hackney, since it began. He said that investment had played a key role in the battle to preserve biodiversity in the UK.

Chris Packham's ten tips for turning your garden into a wildlife sanctuary

- 1. Grow your plants in containers to maximise space: If you only have a small outdoor space, growing plants in containers and hanging baskets is a great solution for a balcony or windowsill.
- 2. Choose the perfect plants for urban gardening: Climbers, like ivy, make the most of the space in a small garden and are a great source of habitat. Or if you want some colour, Sedum plants have flowers, are hardy and bees love them.
- 3. Build a bug hotel: Create a multi-storey wildlife hotel from natural materials like twigs, leaves and wood - providing safe hidey-holes for anything from ladybirds, to solitary bees, to bumblebees and more.
- 4. Reach for the skies: Make the most of the space you have by taking your urban gardening vertical. Stack planters and hanging baskets or use a wall pocket which can incorporate a range of plants of all shapes and sizes.



mint and thyme.

- 6. Join a community group in your area: If you live in an urban area, volunteer in a local community project to improve and enhance wildlife in your public spaces. National Lottery funded projects such as Keeping It Wild run a number of activities across the capital to empower and inspire young people to conserve and enjoy the city's wild spaces.
- 7. Open your outdoor space as a bird café: Kick off by making your own bird cake or feeders and don't forget to provide water in a shallow container for drinking and bathing - then sit back and enjoy their antics. Clean your bird feeders regularly to help keep your garden birds safe from disease.
- 8. Don't hurt the wider world with your gardening: Choose peatfree compost or make your own, limit your carbon footprint and water use, and keep plastic use to a minimum so that your garden benefits the planet as a whole.
- 9. Fill your outdoor space with plants: And then more plants: Climbers, flowers, bushes, trees - the more you can fill any space you have - whether it's a window box or a garden - the better. Plants offer shelter and food and are the foundation for every wildlife-friendly space.
- 10. Pledge to plant: Woods, hedges and green spaces buffer existing habitats, tackle climate change and reverse wildlife decline. So why not join The Woodland Trust's Big Climate Fightback and be one of a million people pledging to plant a tree on 30th November 2019.

(Story source: Inews)

Big Garden Birdwatch: Warmer weather has boosted tiny birds' survival chances

Warmer winter weather may have boosted the survival chances for smaller birds such as wrens and long-tailed tits, wildlife experts said after an annual bird survey.

Silver Surfers reports that people who took part in the Big Garden Birdwatch, the biggest wildlife survey in the world, saw the tiny garden visitors, organisers the RSPB said.

Species such as wrens and long-tailed tits suffer during long, cold winters, but the milder winter weather may have proved a boon to them this year.



The charity has also had reports of early nesting activity in some species, which is likely to be linked to the higher temperatures.

But warmer weather can also mean fewer birds seek out food and shelter in gardens as conditions are good in the countryside - so wildlife watchers may have spotted fewer of their usual garden visitors in the survey.

The Big Garden Birdwatch has been running for the past 41 years, with almost 140 million birds counted over that time - helping conservationists identify dramatic declines and increases in garden birds, the RSPB said.

For example, it was one of the first surveys to alert the conservation group to the declines in numbers of song thrushes, which have declined by 76% over the four decades of the survey.

To take part, people just need to watch the birds in the garden or local park for one hour over the three days of the survey, taking place every January, recording the highest number of each species they see at any one time.

With the exception of red kites, which people can record if they see them flying over, only birds that land in the garden or park should be counted.

Beccy Speight, the RSPB's chief executive, said: "The data gathered by Big Garden Birdwatchers over the last 40 years has helped chart the decline and rise of numerous species since the 1970s.

"And contributing to that important piece of citizen science is for many thousands of people a first step in becoming champions for nature.

"More than ever we need everyone to be interested in the wildlife immediately around them - it's endlessly fascinating.

"And at the RSPB, we're confident that the more time we all spend in nature, the more we will be passionate about protecting and restoring it."

Close to half a million people took part in the Big Garden Birdwatch, and the RSPB is asking households to share their stories of how they took part.

(Story source: Silver Surfers)





Cat Hospice - Giving palliative care to sick cats

Cat Hospice is a small charity dedicated to cats living with FIV and is named after one of it's first residents, 'Strompus' - a pretty little long-haired feral cat, who sadly died on Christmas Eve in 2011.





Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) is similar to HIV / Aids in humans, in that it effects the immune system. With careful healthcare, these cats can live happy and healthy lives, so we feel that it should not automatically result in a death sentence. Most of our FIV cats are feral but some, like Tom, pictured above, are friendly pets who have just got into a bit of bother. Domestic cats with FIV can be rehomed in some circumstances. Tom (who came from Watford) went to live as a companion to another FIV positive cat in the North East. All our FIV cats are neutered, microchipped, wormed and vaccinated.

There are many cats in our care who live in our Cat Hospice who are very sick. Cats just like these...

'Tiger'



Tiger was abandoned on the street of a busy market town when his owners moved house. Frightened and hungry, he found his way to the home of a lady who fed him until we were able to take him in. Tiger was terribly matted and extremely thin, and he had to be fully shaved because of how matted his coat was

After some time and a lot of love, we got him well and happy and a lovely coat. His health wasn't to last however, as some time later he developed lymph cancer, and needed a course of Chemotherapy. It was a difficult time for him, as the chemotherapy did take it out of him and make him sleep a lot. After two weeks of treatment, when he stopped taking them, his condition improved drastically, and he was in remission. This was 3 years ago now. Tiger's health will always be a problem, as he is a fragile boy, but he fought cancer and won. He has to remain at the rescue in a flat on site because of his sensitive nature and possible future vet costs. He loves relaxing on a comfy bed and still plays with toys even at his advanced age.

Cat Hospice needs help to care for all these other cats:

'Kiska'. This little FIV positive girl came from the same feral colony as Strompus.

'Wilton'. This rather handsome young chap came from a factory site in the North East, thanks to the Cat Orphanage. As he is FIV positive, we were happy to care for him at our Cat Hospice.

'Gillan'. Long haired tabby female Gillan is a feral cat living with FIV.

'Secret'. Secret is about 3 years old and is one of our domestic FIV boys.

'Whiskers'. Whiskers is a friendly boy who is living with FIV.

As you can see, all of these beautiful cats have their own unique character. They all need looking after so Cat Hospice can give them the best possible care through their final years of life.











Kiska

Wilton

Gillan

Secret

Whiskers

To donate to Cat Hospice, please write to: Raisemore, Unit 1, Alton Road Industrial Estate, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5NB

Not yet made your Will? Already have a Will, but is it enough? Get yours checked now. FARPLACE ANIMAL RESCUE have arranged a free Will making service at no cost to you or the charity.

Just call McClure Solicitors on Freephone 0800 852 1999 and mention Farplace Animal Rescue.

