OURPLACENews

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

JULY 2021

Inside this issue...

Zoe Ball

I caught the gardening bug and now I'm desperate to help the bees

Happy snapping

Fun photography projects that you can start today

Pothole Picasso

The undercover artist who fills potholes across Europe with colourful mosaics

"A career change saved my life"

The people who built better lives after burnout

Our love affair with ice cream

but where did it all begin?

PLUS.

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

CONTENTS

What's On	3
Health & Environment News	4-5
Health & Lifestyle 'A career change saved my life'	6-9
Special Feature Undercover artist fills potholes with mosaics	10-11
Leisure & Travel Feature Fun photography projects you can start today .	12-15
Leisure & Travel News	16-17
Food & Drink Feature Our love affair with ice cream	
Food & Drink News	20-21
Home & Garden Feature Presenter Zoe Ball on helping bees	
Our Charity of the Month	24

ata Privacy

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Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do Stay at home

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (where this absolutely cannot be done from home)
- Stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Anyone can spread the virus

Full guidance on staying at home and away from others

The single most important action we can all take, in fighting coronavirus, is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives.

Details

When we reduce our day-to-day contact with other people, we will reduce the spread of the infection. That is why the government is now (23rd March 2020) introducing three new measures.

- Requiring people to stay at home, except for very limited purposes
- 2. Closing non-essential shops and community spaces
- 3. Stopping all gatherings of more than two people in public

Every citizen must comply with these new measures. The relevant authorities, including the police, will be given the powers to enforce them - including through fines and dispersing gatherings.

These measures are effective immediately. The Government will look again at these measures in three weeks, and relax them if the evidence shows this is possible.

Symptoms and what to do

Do not leave your home if you have coronavirus symptoms

Do not leave your home if you have either:

- a high temperature this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

To protect others, do not go to places like a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Stay at home.

Use the 111 online coronavirus service to find out what to do.

Advice for people at high risk

Who's at high risk from coronavirus

Coronavirus can make anyone seriously ill, but there are some people who are at a higher risk.

For example, you may be at high risk from coronavirus if you:

- have had an organ transplant
- · are having certain types of cancer treatment
- have blood or bone marrow cancer, such as leukaemia
- have a severe lung condition, such as cystic fibrosis or severe
- have a condition that makes you much more likely to get infections
- are taking medicine that weakens your immune system
- · are pregnant and have a serious heart condition

Who's at high risk from coronavirus

If you're at high risk of getting seriously ill from coronavirus, there are extra things you should do to avoid catching it.
These include:

- not leaving your home you should not go out to do shopping, pick up medicine or exercise
- stay at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people in your home as much as possible

Ask friends, family or neighbours to pick up shopping and medicines for you. They should leave them outside your door.

Self-isolation helps stop coronavirus spreading

Do not leave your home if you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or live with someone who does. This is called self-isolation.

If you are self-isolating, you must:

- not leave your home for any reason, other than to exercise once a day - but stay at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people
- not go out to buy food or collect medicine order them by phone or online, or ask someone else to drop them off at your home
- not have visitors, such as friends and family, in your home

You can use your garden, if you have one.

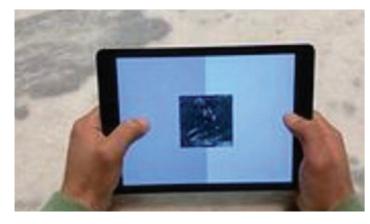
STAY AT HOME!



Health & Environment News

Five minute AI test could diagnose Alzheimer's up to 15 years early

Medics say the app could soon be used as the basis for a nationwide dementia screening programme.



Inews reports that the NHS has introduced a revolutionary new app to help diagnose Alzheimer's Disease.

It takes only five minutes to complete and is more accurate than established pen-and-paper tests.

The test is currently done on iPads at a general practice or hospital ward but it could soon be conducted at home on a smart phone - paving the way for the nation's first widespread screening programme for Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia within the next few years.

It is hoped it will identify people at high-risk of developing the disease up to 15 years before symptoms appear, so that steps can be taken to slow its progression.

The test uses artificial intelligence to assess a person's brain function by showing them large numbers of black and white photographs and asking them to identify which ones contain an animal.

The images appear for a split second - some obviously show an animal, while in other cases its presence is less obvious or there is no creature there at all.

Animals are used because they elicit strong reactions in people giving a greater insight into brain activity.

The test can identify differences in reaction speed and accuracy that become evident long before the memory loss that current tests focus on.

It was created by two Cambridge University PhD graduates, through their company, Cognetivity, and has been approved by the UK's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

"The test provides a unique way of screening for cognitive impairment which can be used across the population. In a best case scenario, I think we could see population-wide screening within the next year - and in a worst case, five years," Cognetivity co-founder Seyed-Mahdi Khaligh-Razavi, told i.

"And with a variety of promising new drugs to treat early stage Alzheimer's in advanced clinical trials, a screening programme to identify those at high risk is especially timely. The disease can't be reversed but if you detect it early you have more chance to stop it," he said.

Nearly a million people in the UK have dementia, costing the NHS, social care services and households an estimated £26 billion a year in care - meaning that early detection and treatment could save billions of pounds a year, experts say.

The North Staffordshire NHS trust and the Sunderland GP alliance of 35 practices have just started using the app to help monitor and diagnose patients with suspected dementia.

These trusts represent a population of about 750,000 between them while several other NHS trusts are in discussions about using the app with Cognetivity, which appointed former NHS England deputy chairman to help expand the business last week.

The Sussex Partnership NHS Trust has started a remote trial of the app at people's homes that is backed by the government and involves Alzheimer's Research UK.

A scientific paper that has just been finished and is going through the peer review process ahead of publication finds that the app is 84.2 per cent accurate at identifying people who are cognitively impaired - compared to 81.6 per cent for the standard MoCA test. It is expected to become even more effective as the Al programme processes more data.

Because the test involves images rather than language, it is not subject to the linguistic or cultural biases of existing tests - and can use different images each time.

This means it can used over and over again to monitor development over time - whereas existing tests can be learned, so become less effective, advocates argue.

The images are all black and white for two reasons so there is no disadvantage with people who are colour blind and to remove the clues found in colour, such as the orangey-red colour of a fox.

Reaction to the new app

The medical community has strongly welcomed a new AI test for dementia that could soon be used to screen the nation - something that is not possible now because it would be far too expensive.

"This test offers an, until-now, unavailable opportunity to detect cognitive change in ageing adults remotely and at scale - opening the possibility for screening programmes," said Oxford University's Ivan Koychev, who is a senior adviser to Dementias Platform UK, a Medical Research Council project to speed up detection of the disease



Health & Environment News

Dr Susan Michell, head of policy at Alzheimer's Research UK, added: "For decades, doctors have had to rely heavily on pen-and-paper assessments and brain scans to support a dementia diagnosis. This test is accessible, simple to do, and can identify people at an earlier stage than current techniques."

"Current diagnostic approaches can be expensive and invasive, and we urgently need new tools that can identify these diseases early, accurately and cost-effectively," she said.

"Identifying Alzheimer's early will allow people to access support and current treatments sooner, get involved in research and help trial emerging new treatments at a stage when they're likely to have the greatest benefit," Dr Mitchell added.

Dr Rebecca Chubb, who is in charge of older people's services at the North Staffordshire NHS Trust and has just started using the app, said: "We're very excited by the potential of the test to drive improvements in how we assess our patients in the dementia pathway. This is a fantastic piece of innovation that could one day be used in clinics up and down the country."

Jon Twelves, Chief Executive of the Sunderland GP Alliance, which is also using the app, added: "We see huge potential for this to improve clinical outcomes for patients experiencing cognitive decline. Desirable as monitoring patients with mild cognitive impairment may be, it has simply not been practical without the efficiency and objectivity of this test which could have a massive benefit in tackling a major global healthcare problem like dementia."

Dr Zahra Vahabi, head of the geriatric ward at the Tehran University of Medical Sciences, has been piloting the test in Iran for the past year. He said: "This is a simple, yet accurate, tapping test, which makes it easy for various groups (such as poorly educated people) to understand. And it is very quick and easy to administer. These characteristics make it an ideal candidate for population wide screening of cognitive function."

How early detection can help manage the disease

There is no cure for Alzheimer's but there are things that can be done to slow progression of the disease - and the sooner this begins the more successfully symptoms can be managed.

At the moment, the steps that can be taken are much more to do with lifestyle than drugs, with plenty of exercise, a good diet and lots of sleep at regular times.

But hopes are mounting that very soon, the first drugs that can slow, or even halt, progression of the disease could become available on the NHS. These drugs would be a gamechanger - especially if cases of dementia were picked up very early, giving the drugs plenty of time to work.

The US Food and Drugs Administration is expected to due to rule by June 7th on whether the most advanced of these drugs can be used in clinical practice - with the UK and Europe expected to follow suit shortly afterwards.

The drug, known as aducanumab, works by helping to untangle clumps of plaque in the brain and could be the first to slow, or even halt, disease progression.

Trials have found that patients given the drug saw improvements in their language skills and ability to keep track of time and place, with a slower loss of memory.

Currently, drugs to help those with dementia can only mask symptoms and it is almost two decades since these sorts of medicines have been approved.

Dr Susan Mitchell, Head of Policy, at Alzheimer's Research UK said: "We need the tools to identify diseases like Alzheimer's years before symptoms start and people's lives become severely affected."

"When symptoms like memory loss become apparent, diseases like Alzheimer's can have already taken hold and have potentially been developing in the brain for up to two decades," she said.

The app could also be used to identify multiple sclerosis years early

The app test that has been developed for dementia could also be used to detect signs of multiple sclerosis (MS) years before symptoms begin to appear, researchers claim.

Uses of the test for MS are not as far advanced as they are for dementia but the app offers considerable potential for both types of disease, they say.

Cognitive impairment is common in MS patients meaning that signs of the condition can be detected by the test in a similar way to Alzheimer's, according to Dr Masood Nabavi, of the Royal Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Technology in Iran.

He conducted a study, published in the journal BMC Neurology, which found the test could distinguish between 'cognitively normal' and 'cognitively impaired' patients with 95 per cent accuracy.

"The test has the potential to be used as a marker of cognitive impairment in multiple sclerosis and to monitor response to therapy. In comparison to currently standard cognitive tools for MS, this is easier to adopt in clinical practice given that it doesn't need a clinician to administer the test, it takes only a few minutes to complete and can be engaging for patients given it is 'gamified'," Dr Nabavi said.

Dr Sina Habibi, chief executive of Cognetivity, which makes the tests, said: "Our technology is capable of revealing underlying physical damage to brain cells without the need for any invasive measurement such as blood or spinal fluid sampling. It represents a major development for clinicians tasked with reliably detecting and regularly monitoring cognitive ability in MS patients in order to direct the most effective treatment to sufferers."

"Cognitive impairment is increasingly recognised to be an important feature of MS. We have the potential to bring about a new paradigm in monitoring the progression and treatment of MS in clinical care, and the development of novel drugs through clinical trials. We encourage physicians and researchers to come forward and partner with us to make the most of this powerful tool," he said.

(Story source: Inews)

4



'A career change saved my life': The people who built better lives after burnout

Chronic stress at work can lead to listlessness, fatigue - and a much higher risk of stroke and heart disease. But there are ways to save yourself before it's too late.

Spencer Carter had been signed off work for three months with stress. Before that time was up, his employers "encouraged" him back early, then doubled the size of the team he managed - and his responsibility. "In the last couple of years, everything got worse," he says, with a degree of understatement. In fact, his GP warned him the stress was going to kill him, thanks to his astronomically high blood pressure. He took, he says, "voluntary redundancy to save my life".

Although he had tried counselling in the run-up to his redundancy, it hadn't helped with his overly demanding working environment as a business operations manager for a global company - endless data and spreadsheets, running teams across different time zones, and being responsible for huge budgets in a highly competitive culture.





Health & Lifestyle Feature

"I was drinking heavily," he says. "I could feel my relationship falling apart. My behaviour became erratic. And you can't turn off. You take a holiday, but you don't switch off."

Carter agonised over abandoning a well-paid career he had spent decades building, but in the end he thought, "What am I doing to myself?"

A recent study by the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization found that working at least 55 hours a week was causing hundreds of thousands of premature deaths and was linked to a higher risk of stroke and heart disease. Long hours were described as "a serious health hazard".

Burnout is the name given to the host of symptoms caused by an overwhelming, stressful environment - including fatigue, muscle aches, headaches and stomach issues, as well as psychological effects such as listlessness and loss of motivation.

Numerous surveys have found burnout has increased among workers in the past year, as work-life boundaries have become blurred by people working from home and anxiety over job security has increased. And, for those in jobs directly dealing with the Covid crisis, exhaustion has long since set in.

"Burnout is the cumulative result of unresolved and chronic stress," says the clinical psychologist Dr Roberta Babb. Generally, there are three main types, she says.

You can be burned out by being overworked and overloaded ("frenetic" burnout), but also by its opposite, "boreout", where you may feel "consistently underchallenged or underworked". "It may seem counterintuitive but we need a certain amount of stimulation in our daily work and lives in order to perform and feel satisfied," says Babb.

And then there is "worn-out burnout" - just being ground down: "People have low amounts of energy, and feel exhausted on an emotional, physical and social level."

Although many people, with supportive employers, can return to their job after burnout, for Carter, this was no longer an option. He was lucky to have a good redundancy package and he turned to his passion (and degree subject), archaeology. He went from a job earning £100,000 to a sector where salaries begin at £19,000, but he loved it. "I got excited again about something that's a little bit academic, brain-challenging - it took me out of the house. It was frightening, exciting, enjoyable. There was a shift into feeling self-empowered."

That was in 2011, but his recovery has not been straightforward. In 2017, he had what he describes as "the second round of burnout, what I would call PTSD. Everything hits you, no matter how happy you have been for a couple of years."

Still, Carter has become a specialist in his field, published papers and successfully changed career, although the pandemic has affected his job and health. "Sometimes," he says, "I think (changing career) actually saved my life."

An emotionally rewarding job you love is also not necessarily a shield against burning out, as Tara Lewis discovered after working as a paramedic for 16 years, before leaving in 2015.

A year earlier, Lewis was signed off work for six months. She adored being a paramedic. "You go into it with that whole thing of, 'I want to do the trauma, the proper emergencies, and make a difference."

But over the years, it was becoming too difficult. The number of callouts soared and increasingly they were to deal with social issues, rather than medical emergencies - such as people who were having difficulty accessing healthcare, and were using 999 to get help.

She thinks it took her "a good three years to really feel properly well again" with the help of counselling and antidepressants, although in the first couple of months after leaving her job there was "a massive improvement".

While she was off work, Lewis decided to start training as a beauty therapist and the next year, when she was offered a job in a salon, she resigned from the NHS.



"It was still working with people, although it's completely different. I really enjoyed it. It gave me a different focus. I was self-employed, so I could have control over it, which helped. I worked with a lovely bunch of people and had a good laugh. I just found my sense of humour again, and had the time to be able to enjoy life, spend time with my kids, with my husband."

Burnout, says Mel MacIntyre, a business coach, can make people "call everything into question". This was her own experience.

"My life looked perfect on the outside," she says, but her corporate job was taking an excessive toll.

It came to a head on the day she took her father to hospital for a big operation, then went into work where she had to make several people redundant. "I woke up one day, and there was nothing left to draw on."

Continued on pages 8-9...

6



She had depression, anxiety and irritable bowel syndrome, was being investigated for a possible stomach ulcer and was using alcohol to cope. Her GP said it was pointless just signing her off for a couple of weeks, and advised her to make a serious change.

So, in her mid-30s, MacIntyre quit her job, spent a year travelling and tried "to learn how to relax. I realised I couldn't keep living my life the way I had been." She trained as a business coach and set up her own company to help others to avoid burnout.

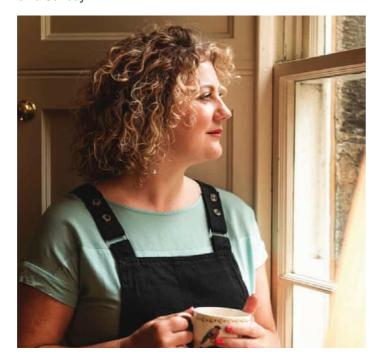
Then she moved from Edinburgh to the Outer Hebrides, started a family and now lives on a tiny, remote island. "It's so beautiful. It's got 140 people, lots of wild horses and sheep. There are eagles that live at the back of my house."

Among her clients, burnout is common. "We're at a tipping point, I think, where the old world is not fit for purpose any more," she says. "There's this narrative in society which is that in order to be successful, you've got to sacrifice your health or your relationships, or things that are important to you. You've got to hustle. And I really don't agree with that."

Others, too, have seen the light. Mays Al-Ali has gone from a successful job in advertising to living in Ibiza and working as a yoga teacher and nutritionist. She had burned out twice - the first time 10 years ago; her hair began falling out and she was suffering from fatigue as well as gut and skin issues. In 2019, she decided to quit completely and start a master's degree in nutrition.

"It was hard to let go of the security of a career - it becomes part of your identity," Al-Ali says. "I'm a lot poorer, but happier. A big part of my life now, that was hugely missing in advertising, is helping people. It's so much more rewarding." Although it was a little daunting to make the change, she says it never felt frightening. "It was more like saving myself."

As an executive director at an investment bank, Shivraj Bassi was working such long hours that he was experiencing mood swings, sleep issues, skin problems and weight loss. "Each week, this feeling of dread would manifest itself consistently around 3pm on a Sunday."





Health & Lifestyle Feature

Leaving a successful career seemed like a difficult decision, although he says now "staying and continuing to suffer is also a decision". He resigned in 2011, but took at least a couple of years to feel better. "It takes a long time, and I didn't realise that. I think if I had left sooner, maybe that recovery period would have been shorter." Since then, he has created a wellbeing and nutrition brand, Innermost. It has been daunting but "it's a healthier kind of fear, it's not dread. I feel much happier now."

Roles based on nurturing others: carers, nurses and teachers, all have high risks of burnout. Overwork among doctors has increased since the pandemic. A British Medical Association survey found that more than a third of GPs who responded were considering taking early retirement in the coming year, and a fifth were planning to leave the NHS or take a career break.

Until the end of 2019, Scott Robinson worked for the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, dealing with complaints about the NHS in England.

It was emotional work -he was dealing with people whose lives had been affected by what they believed were failures of care. "Different people [at work] manage it in different ways," he says. "Some become really aloof and detached." He was the opposite.

"I would get outraged on behalf of people," Robinson says. He would worry about them outside of working hours. "You think: 'Am I actually helping them?'" He had noticed he wasn't able to manage his stress in the ways he used to, and was becoming much less social. "I didn't want to deal with people, because I'd been basically dealing with people all day."

Eventually he left, and decided to train as a massage therapist. "It felt like a good idea to do something that would be focused on people's wellbeing, and help them relax or heal and those sorts of things.

Fortunately, my partner was able to support me in that shift. I was lucky - I wouldn't have been able to do it the same way had I not had that support, and that's not the case for everybody."

One of the characteristics of burnout, says Babb, "is the gradual onset. This, coupled with our ability to either ignore symptoms of stress, or quickly habituate to increasingly high levels of stress, means it can be difficult to identify and address the symptoms."

For Melike Hussein, burnout was "a slow-burning process". As an accountant and finance director for an international company, she loved her job. "This is the strange thing. I had a massive aptitude for it - I was the person that got the toughest jobs because I had this mental resilience to deal with it."

One morning, however, when she thought about the prospect of going into the office, "I started to lose control of my body. I started to shake, couldn't move, couldn't speak, I was temporarily paralysed."

Looking back, she could see how stress had accumulated during her 15 years in finance. "I lived with insomnia, I had panic attacks, chest pains, muscular pains. It was highly competitive, working in a tough environment but I never really had the tools to stop stress becoming chronic." She experienced "brain fog", and tasks that she had once done in 10 minutes ended up taking hours, "which added to my workload".

Hussein was signed off from work, and, although she was recommended antidepressants and therapy, found that what really helped her was breathwork - breathing exercises that it is claimed can transform mental and physical health.

She ended up leaving her job in 2016 and retraining as a breathwork and meditation teacher to help others. "Within six months, I had almost none of the previous issues that I had dealt with."

The good news, says Babb, is that there are "effective ways to manage and reduce the impact of burnout. They focus on developing your stress awareness, and resilience and coping strategies."

Techniques include mindfulness, self-compassion and setting boundaries (the usual things of exercise, good diet, rest and sleep are all crucial). At work, she advises regular breaks, delegating tasks and reviewing your workload and responsibilities with a manager.

And your GP can help. Leaving your job isn't necessarily an immediate cure, she says. "We tend to underestimate the time it takes to recover. As soon as we start to feel better, we often return to the same environment and use the same coping strategies that triggered the burnout." And so the cycle starts again

If you make enough changes, however, you can transform your life for the better. When the coronavirus hit, Lewis decided to use her paramedic training to help out and went on the temporary register for healthcare professionals who had recently left.

When a paramedic position came up in a minor injuries unit last summer, she took it. It's a different type of job - although she is now on the way to becoming a paramedic practitioner, with additional medical training – but it has all the features of the ambulance service she initially loved.

"I don't know who's going to walk through the door, I don't know what they're going to have wrong with them. But it's less stressful, it's a lovely place to work and I'm able to get my teeth stuck in and learn new stuff, which I was missing," she says.

Lewis is proof that there is life after burnout - perhaps even when returning to a similar job (with critical adjustments). "So far," she says, "it's all been really good."

(Article source: The Guardian)

8



Pothole Picasso: The undercover artist who fills potholes across Europe with colourful mosaics

It is difficult not to compare him to Banksy, who also adds life to downtrodden city corners and remains unknown.

It is not just Britain that has a problem with potholes. All over Europe there are cracks in roads and pavements uprooted by sprawling trees.

Ememem, an anonymous artist based in France, has a solution. Since 2016, he has been fixing broken asphalt not by filling in holes with tar and concrete, but by laying down colourful mosaics in cement. Each pattern and design is different.

The young artist works throughout Europe, but mostly in France, Spain, Italy and Norway. He calls his practice "flacking", now the given term for setting beautiful tiles in broken streets. Some local councils remove the work.

Many allow it to stay there. Some authorities, Ememem says, have started inviting him to flack in their towns: he is finding fame by way of muddled mosaics.





"When I discovered flacking, it didn't have a name. In fact, it didn't exist, and neither did I," he tells i. "Flacking comes from a whole series of experiences I have had with ceramic materials, but above all from an old holey road that accompanied me to work every morning. One day I decided to repair it."

arry out his covert artistry under the cover of darkness. The term flacking, meanwhile, "jumped out of a bottle of champagne on an evening with friends", he explains. It was derived from the French word "flaque", or "puddle".

Though shrouded in secrecy, it is known that Ememem began flacking in Lyon, France. It was there he first became "obsessed with pouring light into dusty old concrete holes".

"I love working on all aspects of flacking. Walking around the town, listening to the potholes that speak to me, letting myself become carried away by poetry and the smell of wet bitumen. I work in the middle of the night and experience improbable encounters. I love it all".



The legality of Ememem's flacking is a grey area. Buildings, he says, are a little harder, but few are likely to complain upon finding a gap in a run-down walkway has been transformed by bright, intricate tiling.

The artist explains: "It depends on where you make them. Many times it has been complicated, but personally I never have the feeling of doing something bad.

Special Feature - Pothole Picasso

"I have never had problems with the police - they often greet me and compliment me and stay to see how it turns out." He continues: "People tend to be enthused by flacking. The choice of place is mainly dictated by the poetic potential released by different elements: the shape of the hole, its surroundings, its aura, what it has to tell me.



"Potholes tell stories. One in Barcelona told me of a day of clashes between the police and Catalan separatists. Another in Paris told me of an accident between a cyclist and a truck carrying flowers to the market. "Each hole has its own story and I am there to take note, suspend space and time and transform the city into an intimate diary. It is life that draws me to certain areas."

In February, the Chancellor Rishi Sunak promised a fund of £2.5bn to have Britain's 10 million potholes repaired. Some might hope Ememem gets there first. "I can't say much, but very soon the first UK flacking will arrive. And then the Moon, maybe," he says. Ememem's ambition is endless.

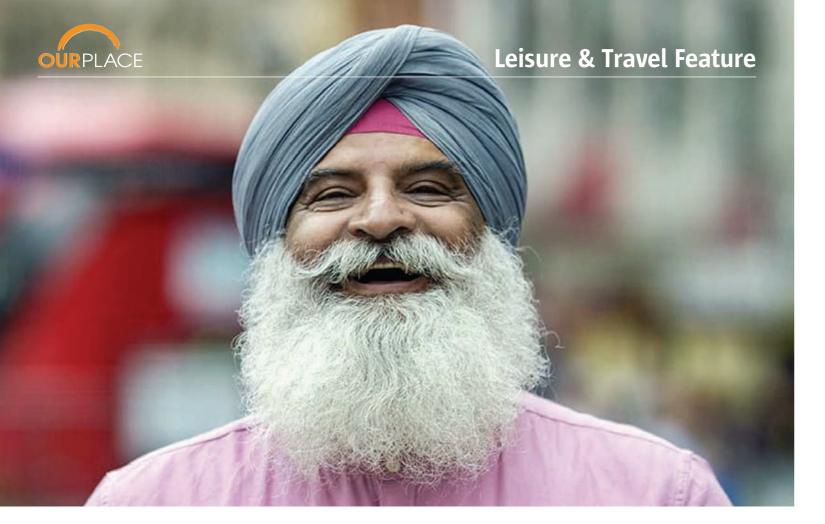
It is also difficult not to compare him to Banksy, an artist who also adds life to downtrodden city corners, and remains unknown, despite continued speculation. There is also the issue of pretenders - or, more kindly, those who wish to spread flacking further afield.

"I'm someone discreet. I like to stay in the shadows and I don't say a lot about my future projects. I love to be anonymous. "I don't know if I started an art or underground movement. Maybe it will take years to tell, but if others start doing it, it would be an honour for a son of bitumen like me. "I have seen some repeat flacking around the world."

Few flacks, if any, will look as mesmerising as those by Ememem, which spiral from the obscurest of pavement edges. He is, after all, a skilled ceramicist who shows his work in Paris galleries. But he is also willing to teach others to help rid Europe of its potholes.

"Many ask me how to do it. Soon I will make a video where I will reveal the whole recipe. My advice above all is to bring many beers with you because the drying phase can be very long."

(Article source: Inews)



Happy snapping! Fun photography projects that you can start today

Many enjoy picking up our cameras and smartphones to explore our world through a different lens. It's amazing how our perspectives on everyday objects and scenes can change when we just look a little closer.

With this shift in perspective often comes a new found appreciation for things we might have otherwise taken for granted; such as a sunrise, the finer details of some of our favourite foods, or the sight of a happy dog fetching his stick in the park.

While our world might seem somewhat duller than it was prepandemic, getting involved in photography can help to shine a light on the beauty of our daily surroundings, and identify the positives. It can also allow us to explore our creativity, and produce images that might evoke a range of different emotions. For many people this can be incredibly cathartic, and can have many of the same benefits as keeping a written journal.

Getting involved with a range of different projects can also provide a great opportunity to try some new techniques, engage in something rewarding, and produce some work that you feel proud of.

With that said, here are 8 fun photography projects that will hopefully get you inspired.

365-day project

"There are no ordinary moments" DAN MILLEN

Starting a 365-day project (sometimes called Project 365) can be a fun and creative way to add structure to your photography journey, especially if you're looking to make it a regular, long-term hobby. The Project 365 idea has been adopted by people all over the world, and involves taking a photograph on your smartphone or camera everyday for a year, so that you'll have a photo journal to look back on when the year has passed.



Leisure & Travel Feature

Some people choose to turn their photos into a video at the end of the 365 days and watch it like a mini-movie, while others might decide to print out their photos, and arrange them in an album. Looking back on a year of our life in photos can remind us of little things we might have forgotten - while encouraging us to practice gratitude, and to check-in with ourselves so we can see how far we've come. With modern life moving at an increasingly fast pace, sometimes it can be useful to stop and enjoy some deeper reflection, and remember some of the smaller moments that helped to shape your year, and lead you to where you are today.

Your photograph choices will be very personal, and will likely be entirely different from someone else's, which only adds to the beauty of the project. Your photos can be as adventurous or as simple as you like, but should be things that help to tell the story of your life over the course of the year. Examples could include a snowy scene from your bedroom window, a photo of a dinner you've cooked that you're really proud of, or perhaps a self-portrait.

If you feel ready to get started, then it's worth heading over to the Project 365 website where you can upload a photo to your calendar each day. You can access enough basic features to run your project all year-round for free - but if you want to benefit from additional features like being able to replace photos and have multiple albums, then you can take out a premium membership for a fee.

You could also consider using social media sites like Instagram (free), or Flickr (free up to 1000 photos) to store your photos, while sharing them with friends and family at the same time. Or, if you'd prefer to record a short video each day instead of taking photos, then why not consider downloading the free app; 1 second everyday?

Self-portrait photo series (pictured left)

"I knew who I was this morning but I've changed a few times since then" **ALICE IN WONDERLAND**

While taking self-portraits might not initially feel like the most comfortable thing in the world to do; it comes with some big rewards. Self-portraits can be used as a means of self-exploration and expression; and can help us learn to accept ourselves exactly as we are. Being in front of the camera, rather than behind it, can also help you to gain a great understanding of poses, angles and lighting; so you'll be better equipped to direct your subjects in future.

How often you decide to take a self-portrait is completely up to you, but many people opt for one photo or video clip a week. You might decide to take a self-portrait in the same spot, posed in the same way, every week for a year or more, and to then collate the results and turn them into a time lapse video. Often changes to our hair, skin and general appearance happen gradually, and we might not even notice them; but time lapse videos can allow us to document and celebrate these subtle changes, while reflecting on our character development during this time too.

You might also choose to create a self-portrait series that portrays the many different roles you play in life. For instance, a portrait of you in your workwear, a photo which shows you as a parent, a photo of you bare-faced and natural, another of you dressed up as you would be if you were heading out to meet friends, and so on. Taking photos of the 'many sides' of ourselves can be a useful way to explore our identity, to realise our accomplishments, and to understand how many different layers we all have beyond the surface.

Before you start taking self-portraits you might benefit from buying yourself a tripod to hold your camera, so that you can step out from behind it. You can pick one up for a reasonable price on Amazon*. It's also a good idea to get familiar with the 'self-timer' and 'burst mode' features on your digital camera or smartphone. The self timer function will allow you a few seconds to get into position before the photo is taken, while the burst mode feature will enable you to take several different shots in succession, while trying out a variety of different angles and poses.

A-Z photo project

"Creativity involves breaking out of expected patterns in order to look at things in a different way" **EDWARD DE BONO**

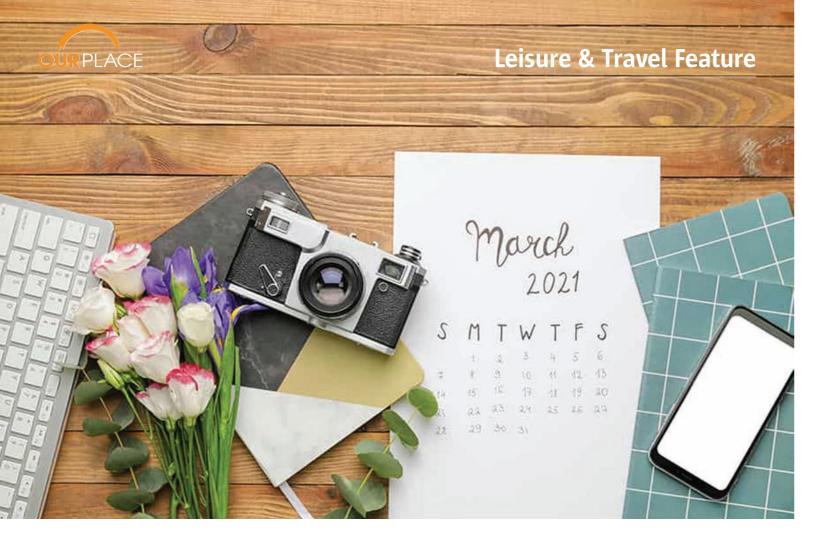
Wanting to get stuck into some photography is one thing, but working out what to start taking photos of first can be another. If this sounds familiar, then you might want to consider starting an A-Z photo project, where you capture images of objects or scenes beginning with each letter of the alphabet.

This can be a fun and challenging way to explore and discover new perspectives on your surroundings - and some letters really will leave you scouring the house, or the streets on your next walk, looking for your next snap!

The majority of people prefer to work on a letter a day, so that they can give their full attention to that letter and get as creative as possible. It's also a great way to take on an almost monthlong project - and can give you something to focus on and look forward to each day. When you've collected your 26 images, there's no reason why you can't start again, and find 26 completely new images, or spend some time editing the ones you've collected.

Comparing one A-Z project to the last can also be an interesting way to see how your photography skills are progressing; not just technically, but also creatively. Often the more we look, the more we see, and once we have a few ideas, we tend to have many more. Have a watch of the video below to see an example of an A-Z challenge from 2016, or check out this one which is based entirely on objects in the home.

Continued on pages 14-15...



30-day photo challenge (pictured above)

A 30 day photo challenge can give you a chance to experiment with new ideas, and explore your creativity. Each day you will have a new photography task to complete; some (or many) of which will push you outside of your comfort zone, and encourage you to try something new.

You might decide you want to create your own challenge, by setting out a plan for which tasks you'll complete each day for 30 days - or you could try a ready-made 30 day challenge instead. Many people find a ready-made plan to be more fun, as it contains more of the element of surprise - and also means you won't be tempted to stick only with things you're familiar with or good at.

For example, you could try this free 30 day photo challenge from Expert Photography. On day one of this challenge you'll be asked to take a self-portrait, on day two you'll grasp the rule of thirds, on day three, you'll be taking an image in black and white, and so on.

Or with this free 30-day challenge from Click It Up A Notch, you'll be learning how to create a frame within a frame on day one, how to take long exposure photos on day two, how to capture still life on day three - and so on. Each challenge also comes with helpful explanatory articles, to help guide you on your journey.

These challenges are a bit like intensive courses, where you'll be able to push yourself to try a range of different techniques and ideas in a short space of time. This will help to lay the foundations for you to revisit certain techniques and ideas later, and delve deeper.

'A day in the life' photo project

"Life isn't a matter of milestones, but of moments" **ROSE KENNEDY**

The reason that many of us enjoy social media, and autobiographical books and documentaries is because we're curious about the lives of others - and because we, as a human race, often seek to feel more connected to others too. So, it's perhaps no surprise that photo projects that provide insight into 'A day in the life' of a person or animal, are incredibly popular.

'A day in the life' project involves capturing a range of different images (or video clips) that depict a typical day in your life - or in the life of someone else. You could start by doing a project that focuses on you, on someone you live with - or even your pet! Alternatively, you might decide you want to create "A day in the life" series for a range of different people, or even different locations; depicting how places change from morning to night.

If you're starting with your own life, then you might think that images of your morning coffee and your daily walk are mundane; but to someone else, these snapshots provide a window of insight into a life that could be so vastly different from their own. What seems ordinary to us, might seem completely extraordinary to someone else; which is why our diverse world is so fascinating. Documenting your days can also be a great legacy to leave for your grandchildren; and might inspire them to do something similar one day.



Leisure & Travel Feature

Step outside of your comfort zone, and learn a new technique

Like many things in life, when we find something we like and feel comfortable with, we tend to stick with it, and may not feel compelled to try something new. However, if you really want to hone your talent when it comes to photography, then it's important to step outside of your comfort zone every now and again; and try a new lens, a new way of editing, or even a new setting on your smartphone camera. The reason that people don't tend to do this is because they're afraid of taking a bad photo; but the beauty of digital cameras or smartphones is that photos can be deleted; and there's plenty of room for trial and error.

One of the best things about photography is that it can be about so much more than simply pointing and clicking. There's always new things to learn; and new ways to see beyond the ordinary.

A helpful way to decide what new techniques you want to focus your time on, can be to start with something completely unfamiliar to you. For instance, do you have a camera lens that you simply never use? Or are there aperture or super macro settings on your smartphone camera that you've never thought to try? Or perhaps you've always wondered how light painting works, or how to take a really good photo with a flash?

You could also choose to photograph different subjects. Perhaps if you usually photograph inanimate objects, you could choose to take some wildlife action shots, or some landscape shots.

If you can't think of any specific photography skills or techniques that you'd like to focus on, then you could consider working your way through a course or a book - and spending at least a couple of weeks, if not longer, trying to master each new technique that's introduced to you, before moving on to the next one. Books like Experimental Photography: A Handbook of Techniques and Photography Masterclass: Creative Techniques of 100 Great Photographers could be helpful places to start; or you could try a course; such as Udemy's Animating Photographs with Cinema 4D or Photo Restoration: Bring Old Photos Back to Life.

Use your smartphone only

While there's no denying that digital (or DSLR) cameras are amazing tools to have if you take regular photos, these days, smartphone cameras can also be incredibly powerful. They're also much easier to carry around, and can be useful tools to turn to if you don't have your digital camera with you one day.

If you're keen to start a photography project, then you could try using only your smartphone, to see what you can do with composition and light. This will require you to really explore the settings on your smartphone's camera and see what works well and what doesn't. Many of us avoid using settings on your phone like night mode, flash and panorama; simply because we find it hard to take decent photos with these settings. But with practice, we can unlock a whole new aspect of photography from our phones.

If you really want to challenge yourself, then you could also try experimenting with different high-quality photo editing apps, which can be downloaded to your smartphone; such as Snapseed, Adobe Lightroom (Android / iOS) and VSCO. All of these can be downloaded to iOS and Android for free, and will allow you to make quick and easy adjustments to your photos from your smartphone. Adobe Lightroom and VSCO offer the opportunity to upgrade to a premium membership if you want to gain access to additional features.

Gratitude photo project

"Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things" **ROBERT BRAULT**

Taking on a photography project can not only be a fun way to develop some new skills, it can also be an effective way to practice gratitude - something which many of us have been doing more since the pandemic started.

An effective and uplifting way to remind yourself of what you're most grateful for in life could be to embark on a gratitude photo project; where you take daily or weekly photos of the things you love or appreciate most. These things could include anything from your scrambled egg on toast in the morning, to your family, through to your favourite cosy jumper or the roof over your head. As well as reminding us what we're most grateful for; think how fulfilling it will be to look back on your project after a few weeks or a year, and see all the things you love most looking right back at you. A project like this also encourages us to look for the good in everyday; which can be a particularly helpful coping mechanism when times get tough.

To make sure that you stay motivated to complete the challenge, you could consider signing up to the 100HappyDays challenge, where you upload a photo of something that made you happy each day for 100 days. The majority of people share their images to their preferred social media platform with the public hashtag #100HappyDays - however, if you want your images to remain private, then you can also email them in. You can visit the 100HappyDays website to find out more about what the project involves and how to apply. Once you've completed the challenge, you'll receive a 100HappyDays certificate, which will feature the complete collection of all your happy images.

Final thoughts...

Photography can open up our world in many different ways. Not only can it engage us in the act of learning some new skills, and progressing our self-development; but it can help us to look a little closer at the world around us, and see some of the beauty we might otherwise overlook. It can also help us to preserve memories; both new and old; and to leave a legacy for future generations.

(Article source: Rest Less)

G7 Cornwall: It's little wonder the locals are talking of a Covid cover-up

If the Government continues to refuse to make the G7 risk dossier public and it harms trust.



Inews reports that what were the conclusions of the Government's risk assessment for the G7 summit in Cornwall? That's the question many on the South West Peninsular are asking, but Downing Street is refusing to tell.

Of course, the modelling may have told Boris Johnson that the meeting of global leaders would not impact Covid rates around towns like St Ives and Falmouth, and that provided the green light he needed to push ahead.

However, post-G7 Cornwall now holds the unenviable title of having the fastest rising rates of any county in the UK. In St Ives and Falmouth, where the G7 events and delegates were based, residents are facing increases in infections of more than 4,000 per cent since the weekend before the summit took place.

For Cornwall Council's political and public health officials to blame this incredible surge in infections on the half term holidays, students and the more transmissible Delta variant is, let's be honest, looking more and more ludicrous by the day.

You only have to look at other popular UK holiday destinations - such as those in Devon, Dorset, Norfolk, and Blackpool in the Covidhit north even - to see that. None has suffered a rise in infections even close to that of St Ives and Falmouth.

All these places opened up to tourism on 17 May, as Cornwall did. All had very busy half terms. What they did not have was around 20,000 international visitors descend upon them on top of the thousands of staycationers.

The longer the Government refuses to make the findings of its risk assessment for G7 public, the more likely it is the locals will believe the Prime Minister cares less for their health than he does playing host to the likes of President Biden.

(Story source: Inews)



'Enough is enough': Tourism bosses call for green list expansion after Boris Johnson warns of 'difficult year'

Boris Johnson is facing a fierce backlash from travel industry chiefs after his gloomy warning that this year would be a 'difficult year for travel'.

Inews reports that tourism bosses have told the Government "enough is enough" and that the travel industry is being "destroyed" because there are so few countries on the green list.

Boris Johnson is facing a fierce backlash from travel industry chiefs after his gloomy warning that this year would be a "difficult year for travel". In a further blow to summer holidays, the Prime Minister said: "There will be hassle, there will be delays I am afraid, because the priority has got to be to keep the country safe and stop the virus coming back in."

Noel Josephides, chairman of travel agency Sunvil and former chairman of the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) said: "Our partners don't trust anything the UK government says because it changes all the time. "Europe's moving ahead of us. We're being left behind and our whole industry is being destroyed."

And Chris Rowles, chairman of the Association of Independent Tour Operators, said: "They need to open up travel, and quickly. Enough is enough, especially with the successful vaccination programme and the fact that we are all well used to measures such as mask wearing, social distancing and hand sanitising."

Their remarks also come after new figures showed that fewer than one in 200 amber list arrivals are testing positive for coronavirus. Eighty-nine out of 23,465 people - or 0.4 per cent of travellers - tested positive for the virus on their return from 167 amber list countries, NHS Test and Trace figures for 20 May to 9 June show.



Reacting to the new data, Mr Rowles said: "It proves that there is no need to have so many countries barred from the green list, and that there is no need for quarantine or self-isolation on return from the vast majority of short-haul holiday destinations. "Why are we being barred from travel to so many countries? The Government claims to be watching the much-discussed 'data' closely, but this data is certainly not supporting their actions."

The figures, first reported in The Times, show there were no positive cases from 151 of the countries on the amber list and that no "variants of concern" were found, although the Government said it was yet to sequence all the cases and variants could be detected at a later date. No travellers from the 11 countries on the green travel list tested positive for Covid during the same timeframe, while 435 of the 24,511 people arriving from red list countries had the virus, working out at 1.8 per cent. Meanwhile, Office of National Statistics (ONS) figures showed one in 520 people in England tested positive for Covid-19 in the week ending 12 June.

Mr Josephides said he hoped the data would pressure the Government to reopen soon. He told i: "The Government should wake up and understand what their policies have so far done to this industry. "This data shows how safe it is. It doesn't surprise me at all. They certainly can't hide behind coronavirus as a reason not to reopen travel but no doubt they'll find some excuse. "I'm not confident as our hopes have been dashed so often. All the figures are there now, I don't think they can deny them."

Last week i reported that the four-week delay to domestic unlocking meant overseas holidays to European and US hotspots were likely not to be allowed until August. On Monday Paul Charles, founder of travel consultancy the PC Agency, said on Twitter that ministers are "still briefing August for opening up further", adding: "It is clear they want 70 per cent double-jab immunity. Even though the US and EU are letting their citizens travel."Mr Charles claimed "in-fighting among cabinet ministers" over reopening travel is threatening thousands of travel sector jobs. On Sunday he told Sky News: "(It) would be fantastic if the Government stuck to the data but it clearly isn't. All of our analysis and all of the data is showing that there are many more countries that could be added to the green list, and in fact the Government's own data is showing that there are few if any variants of concern now being found in tests on those people coming back from over 150 amber countries."

(Story source: Inews)

Chalke Valley History Festival 2021: Travel back in time at this outdoor event the whole family can enjoy

Bring Britain's colourful past to life at this outdoor celebration of all things historical, set in the Wiltshire countryside.



Inews reports that weddings, festivals, parties - we're all itching to get back to normal, and the wait is almost over. Set to be one of the first festivals going ahead this summer, the Chalke Valley History Festival will be packed full of historical activities, treats and tales for all the family.

Taking place later this week, the Chalke Valley History Festival (CVHF) has heaps on offer, including demonstrations from a Tudor kitchen, Stone Age flintknapping, a Cold War-era brigade headquarters to explore, and live history reenactments - and it's all set in the heart of the British countryside. Visitors will also be able to learn about the dark art of 19th century body-snatching, and aspiring knights can even attend sword school.

As the sun goes down, some of the county's greatest historians will be telling stories around the fire, including Dan Snow and Michael Wood. Once you've had your fill of history, there will be food stalls, drinks, glamping, live music - from 1920s flapper tunes to ancient ballads of English folk music - and vintage fairground rides to keep you entertained, whatever your age.

Festival chairman James Holland said: "I'm really very excited about this year's festival. Despite the challenges of the past year, we've been able to produce a really inclusive and very wide-ranging programme that feels fresh, vibrant and fun. "It will be midsummer, lockdown will almost be over, and I can't wait to unleash this historical pageant."

After the festival was cancelled last year because of the pandemic, the stellar list of historians and speakers at this year's event is bigger and better than ever, including former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, Britain's greatest living playwright Sir Tom Stoppard, MI6 chief Sir Richard Dearlove, author Kate Mosse, and Christian Lamb - the centenarian who worked on the top secret D-Day invasion maps with Winston Churchill.

The events will be spread across two marquees with socially-distanced seating and two new amphitheatre-style outdoor stages at the site, which is nestled in the stunning ancient downland of Chalke Valley in Wiltshire. Tickets are still available for the festival, which runs from Wednesday until next Sunday, and all profits are ploughed back into the Chalke Valley History Trust, which operates to promote the enjoyment and better understanding of history for all ages, but especially for school children.

CVHF will be adhering to Covid-19 guidelines to help keep visitors safe. For the full line-up of events or to book tickets, visit cvhf.org.uk or phone 01722 781133.

(Story source: Inews)





Our love affair with ice cream - but where did it all begin?

Soft scoop, hard scoop, in a cone, with a flake, in the shape of a Knickerbocker Glory or even as a layered Vienetta, ice cream has had its place in British life going back generations. In all its many variants, ice cream forms the base of some of our fondest childhood memories, but where did it all begin?

The beginning

It is thought that ice cream was first seen in Britain at Windsor Castle in 1671 served at a banquet for the Feast of St George. It was so rare that it was exclusively for the royal table of King Charles II and the remaining guests had to watch and be amazed at what the royals were eating.

Eager to follow the king, the rich of the country cut ice from rivers and lakes on their estates and stored it in purpose built ice-houses. The ice was stored under straw and bark until the summer when it was used for cooling drinks, making water ices and 'iced creams'.



The first recipe for ice cream was published in English in 1718 and a custard based ice cream was developed in France around 1750

Ice cream manufacture was also simplified in 1843 with the introduction of the ice cream machine. This consisted of a wooden bucket that was filled with ice and salt and had a handle which rotated. The central metal container, containing the ice cream was surrounded by the salt and ice mixture. This churning produced ice cream with an even, smooth texture.

By this time ice was also being imported from Norway to London and it was here that a Swiss entrepreneur called Carlo Gatti made his name. He was the biggest importer of ice in London and went on to make ice cream readily available to the British public by launching several of the first ice cream restaurants.

Huge ice house pits built near Kings Cross, London by Carlo Gatti in the 1850's, where he stored the ice he shipped to England from Norway, are still there and are open to the public at The London Canal Museum.

When ice cream became popular

London's working class quickly took to this new treat and ice cream became so popular carts were set up selling 'penny licks' in reusable glass dishes, the forerunner to wafer cones.



This growing ice cream industry, run mainly by Italians, started the influx of workers from southern Italy and the Ticino area of Switzerland to Britain. In places like Glasgow, Swansea and London, big, famous names survive to this day - Morelli (arrived 1907), Minghella (1890), Nardini (1890), Cascarini (1898), Crolla (1895). Every city soon had a family-run ice cream restaurant with the rich, creamy vanilla ice cream being the most popular with the British.

With the advent of mechanical refrigeration, either through electricity or gas, came more versatility. Vast quantities of ice were no longer necessary and ice cream could then be transported and stored. It quickly became a mass market product.

Knickerbocker Glory and 99 Flake

The knickerbocker glory, thought to be a British invention, first appeared on the menu of a Lyon's Corner House in the 1920's. It has stood the test of time and can still be found today, usually served in a tall fluted glass and enjoyed with an extra long spoon.



Cadbury was shipping boxes of chocolate flakes to ice cream sellers from the 1930's, although there is much debate as to the origins of the 99. Some say it was coined by Stefano Arcari who sold ice cream from his shop at 99 Portobello High Street in Scotland after he started breaking Flakes in half and naming them for his address, the idea was - apparently - taken back to the Cadbury factory. Others say it was named for the Boys of 99 - honoured Italian heroes of the First World War who had been born in 1899 and the suggestion that something really special or first class was known as '99'.

The cone or cornet?

Most people think of the cone or cornet as the traditional way of eating ice cream and it can indeed be traced back hundreds of years. It is believed to be an English invention and is first recorded in Mrs Marshall's Cooker Book in 1888 as a cone used for serving ice cream.

A long lasting affair

Today, as British food innovation surges relentlessly ahead, there's no noticeable cooling of our national love affair with ice cream. With seemingly endless choice and continual development of new flavours we Brits have truly embraced this frozen treat and continue to enjoy it long past those lazy days of summer

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

What's your favourite ice cream?
Tell us by emailing: www.ourplace.co



Hard Rock Cafe marks 50th anniversary by turning back clock to 1971

The decor, menu and prices rolled back 50 years with some of the original staff serving customers.



Silver Surfers reports that diners were served a classic menu of burgers, ribs and cola floats at 1971 prices as London's Hard Rock Cafe marked its 50th birthday.

Some of the original waitresses returned for the special occasion while blue-checked tablecloths and a jukebox restored the restaurant's original look. The special menu boasted a burger for 50p, roadhouse ribs for 80p and a hot fudge sundae for 40p.

The 'Hard Rock Harley', the original motorcycle which was behind the bar when it first opened, will also be in the restaurant's Rock Shop for the next month.

Katrina Clarke, who has worked at the Hard Rock for 36 years, said: "It's really amazing to see the decor restored, and the menu with its 1970s prices is just great. We've had an hour-and-a-half-long queue all day.

"Back when I started in 1985 this place was really a home from home for Americans visiting the UK, now we are one of the top tourist destinations but it's still a friendly, welcoming place and people feel at home here."

The 60-year-old veteran waitress, who continues to work there four days a week, added: "People come here for the food but also to have a picture with Eric Clapton's guitar or go into the vaults and see their favourite rock memorabilia. "It really is a special place which is why many of us have worked here for so long."

(Story source: Silver Surfers)



India's Covid outbreak hits tea industry that supplies world's cuppas

Production is expected to be hit by 20-25 per cent, with drought-like conditions adding to the problems for this year's crop.

Inews reports that a devastating Covid-19 outbreak coupled with changing climatic conditions has torn through India's tea industry, with exports of our beloved brews expected to take a 25 per cent hit

In 2019, India produced around 1.34 million tonnes of tea, second only to China, and exported £587m-worth of a wide variety of tea including green tea, organic tea and high-quality speciality blends from Darjeeling and Assam.

Around 3.5 million people in India work in tea gardens, mostly in Assam, West Bengal, Tamilnadu and Karnataka, as well as other states on a smaller scale.

Assam tops the list, producing around half of India's tea at 725,000 tonnes in 2019, with 18 per cent of its population employed in the 800 tea estates across the state.

While India's second wave of coronavirus started to decline late last month in most of the country, there was no respite in Assam's tea gardens, which recorded a 300 per cent spike in cases in just 10 days to 28 May.

Around 6,146 tea garden workers tested positive and 43 died during this period, with the virus sweeping through around 403 of the 800 gardens in Assam.

"There were not many infections among the workers during the first wave last year but the second wave has taken a toll on the lives and health of the workers," Bidyananda Barkakoty, adviser at the North Eastern Tea Association (NETA), told i.

Production is expected to be hit by 20-25 per cent, with drought-like conditions adding to the problems for this year's crop. "It has been an unusual year for the Assam tea industry," added Mr Barkakoty, noting that the average rainfall has been down by 45 per cent. The "first flush" (harvesting season) saw a deficit of 60,000 tonnes, he said.



Those within the industry claim that the situation may be improving, with cases trending downwards in recent days and the positivity rate (percentage of tests that are positive) falling from eight per cent to five per cent. "The production is certainly hit but it would be too early to predict anything about exports," Ranjan Paul, secretary of Tea Association of India, told i.

But unions are sceptical of this claim, saying there is very little testing. They believe workers may be concealing sickness so they do not lose their meagre wages, with Assam now in the middle of its "second flush", when premium tea for export is harvested.

"We cannot say that cases are really coming down because there are hardly any testing," said Abhijit Mazumdar, a senior tea garden union leader. "The workers who earn paltry wages often hide their symptoms in the fear of job loss.

He said workers often live in single rooms with their families, making isolation almost impossible. "The larger tea gardens have ambulances and other health facilities like Covid care centres, but what about the smaller ones located in remote areas?" he asked.

"The vaccination process has also been very slow as tea garden managers are often reluctant to give workers leave as it would be a loss for them. Tea gardens are also located far away from main cities, which makes vaccinations challenging."

Assam's government says that only 46,874 of its 1 million tea pickers have had a first dose of the coronavirus vaccine and just 3,604 were fully vaccinated as of 31 May.

The tea workers receive paltry wages ranging between 183 and 205 rupees (less than £2) per day, leaving them with few alternatives except to keep working and risk their lives.

"We (India) have suffered substantially in the pandemic hit-2020 and faced major loss in the international market," said Sumon Majumder, general manager (marketing and exports) at Kolkata based HMP Group. "The loss by India was a gain for smaller countries like Kenya that captured a substantial market because of its low cost of production.

"Moreover, international buyers like UK and other countries are not placing many orders because they are also having cash crunch due to the lockdown last year."

He said unfavourable climatic conditions were also making things difficult for Indian tea, leading to declining production and quality. "The Indian government must come forward and provide traders relief by defraying taxes, levies, etc," he added. "Indian sellers should also look at countries that are still untapped and can be potential markets."

The upheaval could mean a huge change for India's tea industry, as well as the cuppa we drink each day in Britain.

(Story source: Inews)

'Sustainable' but 'affordable' Dutch restaurant The Seafood Bar to launch first restaurant in UK

'We fell in love with London a long time ago, and we're very excited we've finally arrived'.



Inews reports that a family run fishmongers and restaurant group from The Netherlands famous for its "sustainable" ethos and long waiting lines will launch its first UK site in August.

The Seafood Bar, which was founded by the De Visscher family in 1984, has long promised to put ethics first, only buying fish from trusted sources in the hope of maintaining healthy ocean stocks.

The group's four existing restaurants split between Amsterdam and Utrecht also only run on wind energy and operate with a strict zero waste policy.

Now, The Seafood Bar will launch in London, taking on a Grade II-listed property on Dean Street in Soho, one of the country's most lauded dining locations.

The De Visscher family said they will bring "only the freshest" seafood to the UK, including Nordic Blu salmon, which claims to be the "world's most sustainably farmed".

"It's our dream to bring our guests incredible seafood, and we are living that dream," the family said.

"We fell in love with London a long time ago, and we're very excited we've finally arrived."

The restaurant will serve classic dishes such as fish and chips, vongole (pasta with clams), Irish oysters, and fruits de mer platters with the likes of crab from the North Sea, Dutch shrimps, langoustines, and prawns.

(Story source: Inews)





Zoe Ball: I caught the gardening bug and now I'm desperate to help the bees

The presenter has found out just how important it is to make sure we take some time understanding the wildlife and ecosystems all around us.

The past 18 months have seen so many changes in our lives, but I think we all now have a renewed appreciation for our beautiful outside spaces.

Never has going for a walk and getting out in the fresh air been so important to us all. I've been lucky enough to spend some quality time in my garden; planting veggie patches, pottering around in the potting shed and even becoming quite the twitcher, bird-watching from my bedroom.

It's been a joy to be able to see the changing of the seasons, especially as summer seems to have kicked in for most of us. I've found wonder in seeing how the garden evolves throughout the year.

I've had the legend that is Monty Don on the Radio 2 Breakfast Show a couple of times and I've quizzed him for gardening tips (not just for myself, I promise). I'm still learning and it's been fabulous to hear from our listeners and their secrets to success. Radio: it's the best kind of Google.

There's nothing more relaxing than putting on my overalls, heading to the garden and learning about new blooms, buds and vegetables, in the hope of capturing the spirit of Tom and Barbara from The Good Life.

My friend and Radio 2 colleague Jo Whiley bought me a gardening knife for Christmas and it's now one of my favourite things. It means serious business and hangs proudly in a prominent place in my shed.



Home & Garden Feature

I'm attempting to grow my own broccoli, kale, beetroot and potatoes in raised beds, and the knife has even proved handy when I'm constructing bean frames. What have I become?

Since my love for my garden has taken off, I've become involved in Radio 2's Big Bee Challenge and started to learn just how important it is to make sure we take some time understanding the wildlife and ecosystems all around us. Globally (including the 270 species of bees found in the UK) bees and other wild insects are in decline, with some in danger of extinction due to reductions in the flower-rich habitats they love, loss of food sources and exposure to pesticides.

The bees and their pollination process is vital to our ecosystems, so we must support the bees and other pollinating insects (including butterflies and important-but-slightly-less-sexy hoverflies) to help sustain a healthy environment. The insects also provide the pollination of nearly three-quarters of the plants that produce so much of the world's food. It truly helps us all. We need them

From seeing the first of my crocuses and snowdrops flower a few months ago, followed by magnolias and camellias, it's been so rewarding to plant bee-friendly flowers such as lavender and honeysuckle for summer scents and ice plants or Michaelmas daisies for autumn flowers, to ensure my garden is as welcoming as it can be to bees and their brethren all year round.



I've made sure to let some of the lawn grow wild, as there's nothing better than blooming wild flowers and plants to encourage the bees into our gardens. There's a special patch of wild daisies in particular that has proved popular with insects, which is lovely to see.

Whether you've got a garden, small backyard, tree surround, balcony, window ledge or even a doorstep, nowhere is too small to grow some plants and flowers that will entice bees and plant-loving insects. From planting a herb or flower-pot, to providing water for them, leaving the lawn unmown, creating a bee hotel or taking part in local gardening initiatives, there is something for everyone of all ages and experience levels to try. We had such a rainy May that there's naturally been containers of water in my garden, but I make sure my bird baths are full in summer and don't ice over in winter. Even if it's just a makeshift bee bath with a shallow dish, pebbles and water in - they will love it!

Give bees a chance

Radio 2's Big Bee Challenge is a brand new, three-year project to shine a light on the plight of our bee population. It aims to raise awareness and encourage listeners to help create a better environment to support our bees and other pollinating insects wherever they can.



We're asking children aged six to 12 years to design a fabulous bee-friendly garden and the winner's design will be built by RHS experts at an NHS Trust site which is used by children and young people with mental health needs, giving patients, staff and visitors a peaceful and wildlife-friendly space to reflect.

During the Big Bee Challenge Weekend - 31 July and 1 August - Radio 2 will be encouraging everyone to get involved and do just one thing in their garden, window box or outdoor space to help pollinating insects to thrive. And, as well as lots of programming on-air, you can find out more about bees in a brand new podcast - Bees in a Pod - launching on BBC Sounds, weekly in July.

I know I still have a long way to go, compared to the brilliant horticulturist Elizabeth Lawrence, but I certainly echo her words that: "The hum of bees is the voice of the garden." Let's raise that voice, together!

Entries are now open for the children's Big Bee Challenge design-a-garden competition, closing 6pm on Monday 5 July. The Big Bee Challenge Weekend is on Saturday 31 July and Sunday 1 August.

(Article source: Inews)



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 <u>HALVED</u> 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 <u>HALVED</u> 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-Wve HR9 5NB

