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I hunt down paedophiles

Our baby is a TV FIRST!



# Pick Me Up!

ISSUE 5 • MAY 2018

I forgot GIVING BIRTH



YOUR BUMPER MONTHLY MAG



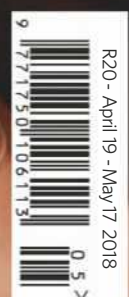
We were made to lick FEET



The bride who FOOLED her guests



# I found my soulmate DEAD IN OUR BED



R20 - April 19 - May 17 2018

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Welcome to  
**YOUR**  
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monthly  
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THIS MONTH IN YOUR

**Pick Me Up!**

May special

On the cover

- 6 I found my soulmate dead in our bed
- 8 I hunt down paedophiles
- 16 I forgot giving birth
- 18 We were made to lick feet
- 32 The bride who fooled her guests
- 40 Our baby is a TV first!

More real life

- 10 Pick me ups
- 12 From the heart
- 24 It's not what you think
- 26 Brave but fragile
- 31 Soft spot
- 34 Baby moon disaster
- 36 I won't give up
- 38 Hope for Jacob
- 44 Tan-tastic!
- 47 Piece of cake
- 52 Robbed of life
- 55 Surf's up!
- 62 Little Pick Me Ups
- 64 Bear hugs from beyond

Fun features

- 20 Days out
- 22 Don't stress!
- 28 Eat me up
- 42 Travel - Eat your heart out
- 50 The super 7
- 54 Home - Jolly good
- 56 Style me up
- 60 Make me up
- 66 To have and to hold

Your favourites

- 4 Your letters
- 14 We love your tips
- 45 Health and happiness
- 48 Your dilemmas

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and Emily Kelford

**H**ope is such a powerful emotion. It can give us strength even in the darkest of times. When Beth (pg36) was told that the future was uncertain, she refused to give up hope, and that powers her through every battle she's had to face – along with her humour! Krystina (pg26) had already beaten the odds to bring her twins home, so when her daughter fell ill again, she had to believe it wasn't the end. And little Ava would amaze them all.

When you lose a loved one, it can be hard to see any positive light. Patty (pg38) spent almost three decades trying to find her son Jacob, 11. Tragically, his fate had been sealed the moment he was snatched on a dark road. But Jacob's legacy changed thousands of lives. When Paula lost her dad (pg64) the grief was overwhelming. But through her loss, she's found a way to help others in their time of sadness.

As our thoughts turn to holidays, we are so pleased that Charlotte is finally home safe with her baby (pg34). Her trip to the sun turned into a three-month fight for life. And if you're thinking about digging out the fake tan ready for the better weather, then make sure you read Ebony's tale first! (pg44)

We have budget fashion for any occasion (pg56) and delicious store cupboard recipes (pg28). Look out for a proposal that could have sunk like a stone! (pg55) and don't forget to grab your Best of Pick Me Up! special, on sale May 17.

Gail x

PLUS!



# Your pick me ups



## Proud big brother alert

We welcomed baby Alice into the world last month, and our son Tyler is over the moon to be a big brother. He adores his baby sister and is already so protective of her.  
*Alison, Bath*



"Mummy's tummy is soft like a pillow."  
*Jess, 4, Leeds*

## Beautiful Britain

I had to take a picture of this stunning view of Kilve beach in Somerset. It's one of my favourite places to go walking.  
*Michelle, Bristol*

**How funny!**  
What kind of lion never roars?  
A dandelion

## Enjoying Irish delights

I went to Ireland last month and just had to try this lamb stew - one of the country's most famous dishes. It was out of this world...  
*Andrea, Maidstone*



## Where are we going?!

My girl Abigail loves her car seat, but seems a bit stunned by the camera in her face!  
*Tina, Bristol*



"My mouth doesn't want to be quiet."  
*Ella, 6, Poole*

## Do you need insurance?

My kids love visiting these meerkats at the local zoo. They're so adorable (the meerkats and the kids!)  
*Debbie, Suffolk*



## Moustache madness!

Just me and my mates enjoying some downtime!  
*Annette, Nottingham*



**How funny!**  
When is the best time to go to the dentist?  
At tooth-hurty

# PETS CORNER

Our readers have captured their adorable animals on camera...

## Tiny tasty treats

I decided to get creative with some leftover puff pastry - I spread over some Nutella and made these cute little mini croissants!  
Jenny, Derby

How funny!

What did O say to 8?  
Nice belt!

## Time for Fiesta fun!

My friends and I spent a week in Spain recently, and this is one of my favourite pictures from the trip. It was such a fun time and I can't wait till the next time!  
Jodie, Plymouth

## Best friends for life

My two-year-old Mayah loves walking our dog. They are the best of friends and go everywhere together.  
Kathy, Kent

"This broccoli tastes like hair."  
Finn, 5, Weymouth



## Snuggly creature

My mate's hedgehog Cassius is so adorable. I always go over to give him a snuggle.  
Jess, Cambridge



## I'm ready to go!

Benji is so excited that it's spring and is all ready for a long walk!  
Megan, Cheshire



## Attention seeker

Rocco hates it when I don't pay attention to him. Here he is giving me sad eyes while I work on my laptop...  
Julie, Wakefield

# Legacy of LOVE



**We thought we had a lifetime together**

- Stephanie tragically lost her soulmate
- Eight months later he sent her a gift



**Stephanie Thompson, 24, Plymouth**

**A**s I sat at a table, taking a break from my job as a barmaid at my local pub, I spotted a new face ordering a round of drinks.

My sister, Danni, 25, had popped in to keep me company and caught me glancing at the handsome man.

'I think he likes you,' she teased. 'What?' I stuttered, embarrassed. 'He keeps looking at you,' she said.

Danni encouraged me to talk to him.

But when I plucked up the courage, all I could splutter was 'You're new' before I scurried back to the kitchen to hide.

A few minutes later, he appeared at the kitchen window.

'I'm Dan,' he smiled and we got chatting right away.

Dan Muirhead, then 23, added me on Facebook and we arranged to meet up. He was funny and

absolutely charming.

Instantly smitten, we quickly became a couple.

A true romantic, Dan would often arrive with a bouquet of flowers in his hand for me.

In time, we moved into his mum Tracy's house before we got our own flat in Plymouth, Devon.

I soon knew that Dan was 'the one' and we often spoke about our future together.

'I would love to have kids,' Dan told me one day.

'Me too,' I smiled.

I knew that he wanted to become a dad by the time he was 30.

We decided to have my contraceptive implant removed, but two years passed and I wasn't pregnant.

'Maybe it's just not meant to be,' I sighed, but Dan encouraged me to go along to the GP.

They encouraged me to lose weight and try and get healthier, so I cut down on junk food and started preparing homemade meals.

But Dan and I were in no rush.

'We've got our whole lives ahead

of us,' he assured me.

But on Monday 23 May 2016, I woke up at 6am as my alarm sounded as usual.

I was working in a care home, while Dan had to get ready to go to his job as a scaffolder.

'Come on, time to get up,' I whispered, giving Dan a nudge.

But he didn't move a muscle.

He was useless at getting up—definitely not a morning person.

I nipped to the bathroom to go to the loo, but when I came back, Dan was still asleep.

'Dan!' I scolded.

'You're going to be late!'

Marching over to the bed, I picked up his arm to pull him, but it dropped straight back down.

He felt lifeless.

Shaking him, screaming, I became desperate.

'Dan! Can you hear me?' I cried. 'Wake up!'

I prayed he was playing a joke on me, but he was deathly still and silent.

Panicking, I dialled 999 and the operator sent an ambulance and instructed me to perform CPR.

I called Dan's mum,

who raced over, and we cried as paramedics took over.

I could tell by the look on their faces, when they came downstairs, that Dan was gone.

'We're so sorry, there's nothing we could do,' they said.

Sobbing, I ran to Dan's side and cried: 'No, no, no!'

It wasn't fair.

We'd been planning our future and it'd been so cruelly snatched away from us. Refusing to accept it,

**We talked about having a baby**



**Jesse is just like his dad**

**In the depths of my grief I was delivered a part of Dan back to me**



**Dan was a true romantic**

I begged and pleaded with Dan to wake up.

Dan's heartbroken mum crouched by my side and we both sobbed.

We quietly said our goodbyes before Dan was taken away in a private ambulance.

We were told that the pathologist would perform a post-mortem to identify Dan's cause of death.

Weeks passed and I felt like an empty shell.

I didn't know how to continue without Dan by my side.

Completely devastated, I was signed off work for



six months. Dan's heart was sent to a lab for testing, so we had to wait a few weeks to hold his funeral.

We eventually discovered that he suffered from two undiagnosed heart conditions called Brugada syndrome, which disturbed the rhythm of his heart, and hypertrophy, which is an enlarged heart muscle.

Dan had peacefully slipped away in his sleep.

There was no way of telling that he was so unwell as he hadn't noticed any symptoms like palpitations or blackouts.

Nine weeks after he passed away, we held Dan's funeral. The day passed in a blur.

By January last year, I felt bloated and uncomfortable, but I just thought I'd put on a few pounds.

But one day, when I nipped around to see Tracy, I started getting sharp pains in my stomach.

'Let me take a look at you,' she said.

She felt my tummy and

told me: 'It's either gallstones, or you're pregnant.'

'Pregnant?' I stuttered.

I went to my GP to find out what was wrong with me.

The doctor confirmed I was heavily pregnant – eight months gone in fact!

I totted up the dates in my head.

I must have conceived a month before Dan passed away.

I wasn't sure how to react.

I knew I still had a part of Dan which was amazing, but it broke my heart that he wouldn't be by my side as I gave birth to our baby.

With so little warning, I had no time to prepare for bringing a baby up.

I told Dan's best friend and former colleague the sudden news and help flooded in as word spread.

Within two weeks I had enough of everything I needed – a pushchair, cot, toys and clothes – to look after my baby for months ahead.

On 11 February last year, I gave birth to a little boy.

I named him Jesse Daniel Lee – after his daddy. Dan and I had talked

about baby names before, and he had always liked the name Jesse.

Weighing 7lb 10oz, Jesse was the spitting image of Dan – with his button nose and rosebud lips.

Jesse felt like a gift from Dan. He's now a year old and as happy as Larry – just like his dad.

Jesse has helped me to piece my life back together and has given me a reason to get out of bed in the mornings.

It breaks my heart that Dan never knew that we were expecting and that he will never meet his son.

He would have been so ecstatic.

Dan's ashes were put in a special vault that we often visit.

I know a part of Dan will always live on in Jesse.

He's the greatest gift Dan could have ever given me.

It is still very painful not having Dan around anymore, but I will tell Jesse all about the wonderful man who was his daddy.

**Neither of us had a clue he was unwell**

# Mum on a

# MISSION

I pretend to be a child to catch them out

I'm on a quest to stop sick men from grooming kids



Cheyenne O'Connor, 24, Jersey

As another message pinged up in my inbox, I hastily opened it. *I really want to kiss you*, the message read.

My heart raced as I typed back. *I'd like to kiss you, too*, I wrote. I'd been messaging Alecsandru, 19, on an online chatroom. He'd flooded me with compliments over the past few days and told me how pretty I was.

Now he was keen to meet up, and I couldn't wait. But not because I fancied Alecsandru or wanted a relationship with him.

In fact, he sickened me. And I couldn't wait to report him to the police.

You see, Alecsandru thought I was a 14-year-old girl.

He'd started messaging a friend's teenage daughter in March 2017, after meeting in a chatroom.

At first, the messages were innocent, just a bit of chitchat. But then he'd started making sexual remarks.

My friend's daughter told her mum while I was at their house having a cup of tea.

'He keeps asking me about sex,' she said, embarrassed.

I was horrified. *I'm horny*, one

of them read.

Bile rose in my throat.

'Does he know you're only 14?' I asked.

'Yes, it was the first thing I told him,' she replied.

I couldn't believe this man was sending such grotesque and explicit messages to a child.

'He's a pervert!' I raged.

It made my blood boil that there were people like this targeting innocent children.

Thankfully, my friend's daughter had alerted us to him before anything had happened.

'But what about those children who get drawn in and actually meet up with these twisted men?' I said.

It just didn't bear thinking about.

I had two kids of my own, aged four and one.

The thought of anyone harming them made me feel physically sick.

In that moment, I had an idea.

'Would you mind if I carried on speaking to him?' I asked my friend.

I explained that I wanted to catch him out and report him to the police.

'OK, but be careful,' she said. So,



and after 20 minutes, a man in a black hoodie appeared. 'That's him,' I hissed, recognising him from a photo he had sent.

My heart hammered in my chest as I snapped away on my camera phone, zooming in on his face.

I went straight to the police station with my evidence.

'He's a paedophile,' I said, showing them all the messages and photos.

They were stunned, and took it all as evidence.

Alecsandru-Moise Buta, then 19, of Saint Saviour, Jersey, was arrested – and, in September 2017, he appeared at Jersey Magistrates Court.

He admitted one count of attempted sexual grooming and was sentenced to 180 hours of community service.

He was also placed on the sex offenders register for three years.

Although I was disappointed with the sentence, it seemed to ignite something in me.

'I can't let people like Buta get away with their sick crimes,' I said to my partner.

I wanted to hunt down more paedophiles out there and bring them to justice.

I'd heard about other vigilante groups online who regularly catch sick paedophiles.

I wanted to do the same.

'If it makes the streets safer for children, it's worth it,' I said. My





partner agreed, and even offered to help me out.

So, I joined a few chatroom sites and dating apps.

I posed as 14 and 15-year-old girls and boys.

Friends let me use old photos of them as teenagers to help me.

Most people I chatted to on the sites blocked me when I said I was just 14.

Before long, though, a man on a dating app wasn't put off by my age.

He told me his name was Jason and he was 48.

He believed I was a 15-year-old schoolboy who'd recently come out as gay.

He began sending sexual messages, then a photo of himself with no shirt on.

*Do you like what you see?* he wrote.

I wanted to be sick.

I sent back a photo of one of my pals as a teenager.

Nothing seedy, just a normal smiley selfie.

*Very cute,* he wrote. *Do you want to meet for a kiss and a feel?*

I was disgusted.

It took all of my strength to bite my tongue and play along.

'I just want to tell him what a dirty perv he is!' I raged to my partner.

But to snare this man, I had to keep up the pretence.

I agreed to meet him at the public toilets in a local car park. *Wear*

*jogging bottoms,* he wrote.

My skin crawled, realising it was for easy sexual access.

The following day, in October 2017, me and my partner pulled up opposite the toilets.

With my phone in my hand, I pressed it up against the car window, ready to snap the sicko.

A few moments later, he arrived.

Standing by the doors, he looked around shiftily.

Meanwhile, I took photos, zooming in on his face.

'Gotcha!' I said.

But just then, his eye caught mine and he froze.

He'd spotted me taking photos.

Suddenly, he put his head down and scurried off.

It was too late, though—I had the evidence I needed.

Again, I went straight to the police with my evidence.

'I've caught another,' I told them.

They took the evidence and arrested him straight away.

The following month, Jason Bushell Sutton, then 48, of Grouville, Jersey, appeared at Jersey Magistrates Court and pleaded guilty to attempted sexual

**Richard Wavell**



**So far I've helped put away four sex offenders and I won't stop**

**Jason Bushell Sutton**



grooming.

Sutton, a married man, was jailed for

10 months, and banned from being alone with any boy aged under 16 for five years and placed on the sex offenders register.

'Justice,' I said to my partner, relieved that I'd pulled it off.

Afterwards, so many people got in touch on Facebook.

*What you're doing is really brave,* one mum wrote.

*You deserve a medal for catching these sick people,* another woman had messaged.

In March this year, Richard Wavell, 32, was jailed for 11 months and given a five year restraining order preventing him from having any unsupervised

contact with boys under the age of 16.

I posed as a gay schoolboy on the dating app Grindr to catch him.

He agreed to meet me and I took his photo as proof.

He's the fourth paedophile convicted because of my actions.

As a paedophile hunter, I've got my work cut out.

It can be dangerous, and I know I am putting myself at risk.

But every pervert I catch is one less who can groom an innocent child, and, to me, that's what makes it all worth it.

People like that need to be locked away, and I'm determined to help do that.

I've got one message for the paedophiles I hunt...

I'm coming for you!

**I made plans to meet him for a 'kiss'**

## Police response

A spokesperson for Jersey Police said: 'We do understand the public's desire to keep children safe and protect them from harm, and we also understand the temptation to take matters into their own hands, but vigilante activity in this area carries a high risk. We don't condone this activity or work with vigilante groups, but if evidence is handed to us, we will act on that. Members of the community who have any concerns about child protection can access a range of services including Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH), the NSPCC, or States of Jersey Police on 01534 612 612. Any suspected criminality can also be reported to Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111.'

**Little  
Pick Me  
Ups!**

# BIGGER IS BETTER!



**Now I'm  
pure muscle**

**Stronger than ever**



**Andrea  
Thompson, 34,  
Woodbridge**

## Andrea's found her calling...

**W**hen my sister Kelly asked me to be her bridesmaid, I knew that it was time for me to do something about my weight.

At 14st and a size 20, I'd always been the biggest of my friends. But as a mum of two, it was hard to find time to exercise. Now, picturing myself squeezing into a bridesmaid dress, I knew I'd

have to try. 'It's time to step up my game,' I said to my hubby Stephen, 40. Signing up for CrossFit classes, I took part in circuits made up of different workouts, but the one I excelled in was weight training. After three months, I was lifting heavier weights than the other men and women in the class. A year later, I'd lost 3st, and was able to deadlift a whopping 150kg! 'You should look into weightlifting competitions,' my CrossFit trainer suggested. I was intrigued. I found a competition called Britain's Strongest Woman and signed up.

When I told my coach, Ben Gray, 34, he couldn't believe it. 'Do you know what you've done?' he gasped. 'Women train for years for this event, and we've got six weeks!'

'Better get cracking then, I suppose!' I grinned. Training three times a week, I threw myself into preparing for the competition.

On 20 June, Stephen, Ben and my mum Gritel, 54, accompanied me to Britain's Strongest Woman. Looking at my competitors, the nerves really set in, but somehow I defied all odds and finished third out of seven! Overwhelmed, I

# THAT'S QUACKERS!

## Ay up, me duck!

**Heidi Hargreaves, 34,  
Nottingham**

**P**eering into the judges' eyes, I tried to spot a flicker of approval. The city council was holding a *Dragons' Den*-style competition for a year's free use of an empty shop.

'Do you think they liked the name?' I asked my partner, Ian, 35, as we left. 'Dukki' was what I'd called my new business - a store selling anything duck-related.

Maybe it was a little quackers, but the quirky idea was inspired by everyone in Nottingham calling each other 'Duck'.

We found it great fun, but in the end it was up to the judges whether our duck emporium

would sink or swim.

Two days later, an email popped up in my inbox.

'Go, Dukki!' I yelled to Ian.

It was full paddle ahead.

It seemed like fate that we'd run such a shop, given that we'd met on the dating website Plenty of Fish when Ian was working as a fishmonger!

We stocked our little retail space with duck oven gloves, cushions, doormats, cufflinks

- anything we could think of.

Our best-seller was anything with 'Ay up, me duck' emblazoned on it, or 'Mash the tea' - which means to

'make the tea'.

We moved into a shop near the market square, so business was good, but something niggled.

We weren't hitting the duck big-time.

We were Ian and Heidi of the Lace Market, Nottingham - hardly

the international tycoons of novelty giftware!

But given the size of our competitors, we needed a miracle...

Then, in October last year, Ian was on his knees in the potato patch of our garden.

'Have a look at this!' he cried, holding up a spud to the light like it was a diamond.

It had a head, a foot, and a beak... It was unmistakably a duck!

Pound signs immediately flashed in Ian's eyes.

'We can display her in the shop. It will be great publicity,' he said.

Posting a picture on Facebook was a good start, drumming up over 400 likes.

With Dukki, as we called her, in her glass cabinet, customers couldn't get enough of her!

'Where's this duck I've been hearing about?' one asked, wanting to take a photo. 'Dukki's

**A spud we like!**

quite the celebrity,' I smiled. The story made the local press, then the nationals.

Anyone would think we had a statue of the Virgin Mary weeping tears of milk!

It was only a potato.

But Dukki's 15 minutes of fame look to be up.

After all, no one wants a selfie with a withered, spud, duck or no duck!

couldn't help but cry.

'You did it!' Stephen shouted proudly.

By the time my sister's wedding rolled around in July, my body had changed dramatically.

For my training regime, I needed to eat around 3,000 calories a day, so I quickly regained weight, hitting 18st at a size 18.

But was pure muscle! And, by the end of the year, I'd won four competitions.

I returned to Britain's Strongest Woman the next year and finished third. Stephen was over the moon and laughed as the reality hit me on our way home. 'I'm Britain's strongest woman!' I proclaimed with a grin.

My victory earned me a place in Europe's Strongest Woman in December, and I'm determined to finish in the top three.

My training has changed my life for the better.

No matter how much I ache during a session, I know I'll feel great for the rest of the day.

As they say, no pain, no gain!

Words and Photos: SWNS



So blessed

# Royal coincidence

## Monika beat the odds - twice!

Monika Tano, 35, Birmingham

I've always considered myself to be fairly normal. Aged 32, I was living in Birmingham and working in admin, when someone compared me to our future queen.

Like everyone, I'd been glued to my TV screen when Prince William and Kate Middleton got married in April 2011.

My husband Alain, then 35, had watched it with our little boy, Fralek, then two, and we'd loved every minute.

The next year, when the Palace announced that Kate was pregnant, I couldn't believe it.

I was, too! It was all anyone in the antenatal class could talk about, and when the Duchess of Cambridge battled morning sickness, my pregnancy also had setbacks. In my final

month, we were told that our baby wasn't growing anymore and I needed to be induced.

Thankfully, on 22 July 2013, at Birmingham Women's Hospital, our daughter Liliana was born - healthy and beautiful.

As we celebrated, staff mentioned that a TV crew was coming to the hospital and asked if we wanted to be interviewed.

The Duchess had gone into labour and there was a good chance she could deliver on the same day.

I had just enough time to brush my teeth and hair before they recorded me with Liliana.

The film would be shown on the news that evening if Kate gave birth.

Sure enough, Prince George was born that afternoon!

From then on, I couldn't help comparing Prince George's milestones with Liliana's.

While there was no global fanfare for her first steps or words, to me, she was still our little princess.

Two years later, I found out that I was

pregnant again.

And I was stunned when it was announced that Kate was, too.

People asked how I'd feel if we gave birth on the same day again, but I just laughed it off.

The odds of that happening were 1.8 million to one.

But in the early hours of 2 May 2015, I woke up feeling unwell.

I went downstairs to call the midwife, and my waters broke.

After three contractions - before I could even call anyone - Aurelia was born.

It was 1am, and Alain was in shock when he found me with our daughter in his arms.

When we arrived at the hospital, Aurelia was weighed, and we called friends and family to tell them the news.

A short while later, I got a text from a friend saying *You won't believe who else is in labour!*

I checked the news and saw that the Duchess had been admitted to hospital!

Princess Charlotte was born a few hours later.

Alain and I laughed at how different the deliveries had been - mine, alone, on the living room floor, and Kate's surrounded by doctors.

I have my TV appearance recorded so the girls can watch it when they're older.

But, while Kate and William go on to have more children, I know my family is complete.

Then it happened again!



Just what we needed



Our shop



Our princess Liliana



Regal Aurelia

Words and Photos: SWNS

# From the

# HEART

## My husband lives everyday honouring a man he never met



**Jo Mashford, 37, Backwell, Bristol**

**M**y husband Kevin, 38, was born with severe heart problems: congenitally corrected transposition of the greater arteries (CCTGA) with pulmonary stenosis and ventricular septal defect (VSD).

Aged eight, he'd had heart surgery to insert valves to keep his blood pumping.

So poorly at one point, he was given the last rites.

Miraculously, Kev had survived. He'd got used to being in and out of hospital, prone to infections.

Unable to exercise as a child, he had to sit and watch his classmates during PE lessons.

But he didn't let his condition hold him back.

He went on to start his own commercial interiors business at age 28.

And...he found me! We met at a mutual friend's barbeque in July 1998, while I was studying Economics at Bristol University.

I knew his condition was serious, but it didn't put me off.

We were married in August 2003, and we honeymooned in Thailand.

But, arriving home three

weeks later, Kev was feeling extremely tired.

'You have a leaky tricuspid valve. It needs replacing urgently,' the doctor explained.

Kev was admitted straight to Bristol Royal Infirmary.

I kissed him as he was taken down for the 11-hour procedure that night.

Passing me his wedding ring, I wore it on my necklace.

I'd only been a wife for three weeks.

In that moment, I prayed I wasn't about to become a widow.

Kev recovered, but a year on, in August 2004, I heard a sudden thud in the bedroom...

He'd suffered a mini stroke. Thankfully, he got help in time.

Later that month, we spoke about



**He rides his bike in tribute to John**

**We couldn't be more grateful**

causing his kidneys and liver to show early signs of failure. And his heart had enlarged.

Soon, walking just 50 yards was a struggle for him.

Often out of breath, he couldn't eat much and had zero energy.

In December 2011, we consulted Kev's cardiologist.

'Your heart's very weak,' he said. 'You may need a transplant.'

We were sent to Newcastle's Freeman Hospital, 342 miles away, in January 2012.

There, specialists placed Kev straight on the emergency transplant list.

'Someone else has to die so I can live,'

Kev said, realising the enormity of the situation we were in.

One kind person who'd be prepared to give the greatest gift.

'Daddy's heart's sick and he needs a new one,' we explained to the boys. 'Like recycling.'

Kev was getting weaker by the

our future.

'I want a family,' Kev said.

I agreed.

Life was too short and too precious to waste.

Our son Josh arrived in July 2005, followed by Liam in October 2008.

Josh's heart is fine, but Liam has arrhythmia, an

irregular heartbeat, easily controlled with tablets.

A fantastic dad, Kevin wished he could be

more active with the boys – kick a football around, go swimming together.

Instead, he was getting progressively worse, and every couple of months, he'd be in hospital.

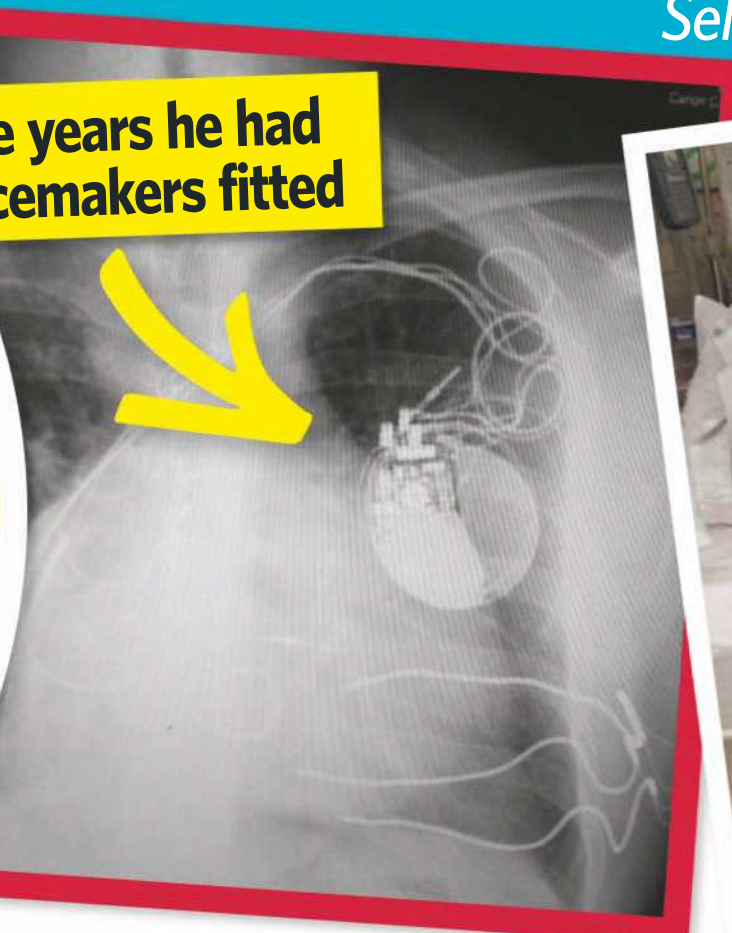
Heavy medication was

**He cycled seven minutes in his honour**



**Kev was getting weaker by the day**

Over the years he had three pacemakers fitted



It was a 13 hour operation

day, so in March 2013, he was admitted to the Freeman, while I stayed behind in Bristol with the boys.

**A crushing decision.**

For six weeks, every other weekend, I'd drive myself and the boys to Newcastle to see him.

Then on Friday 3 May, at 5.30pm, I got a call.

'It's time,' Kev gushed to me.

My sister Janella, 33, travelled to babysit the boys.

They couldn't come along.

Transplant patients can't be exposed to germs, so only I was allowed to go.

Kevin's friend Barry, 40, showed up to drive me from Bristol to Newcastle by 10pm.

I got there in time to walk Kevin down to the operating theatre.

Just as I'd done before, I took his wedding ring and put it on my necklace.

'See you in the morning!' I said, trying to sound chirpy.

The 13-hour wait through the operation was agonising.

I didn't sleep a wink, and called the hospital at 6am for an update.

They told me Kev's heart was so enlarged, it had started to

grow around his sternum.

Surgeons had had to remove it very carefully.

At last, at 2pm, I was told to scrub up so I could go in to see Kev.

Despite lots of tubes and a life-support machine beeping, he had a rosy colour in his cheeks.

I realised then how yellow his skin had been before.

'It was a good match. We're optimistic,' the surgeon said.

Three hours on, Kev, though still unconscious, was trying to pull the tube out.

'We'll ease off sedation,' the

doctor said. 'He's trying to wake up.'

Finally opening

**It's changed our lives**



The gift has blessed my whole family

his eyes at 6pm, Kev looked at me.

'Feeling good,' he croaked. I felt elated.

Next, we had a 10-second FaceTime with the boys.

They'd thought Kev would change due to the transplant.

'You sound just the same, Daddy!' Josh beamed.

Turned out the boys weren't too far off about him changing, though.

Three days on, Kev learned more about his donor.

'His name was John, and he was killed in a cycling accident,' the doctor explained to us.

Four days later and feeling better, Kev asked the physiotherapist for an exercise bike in his room.

On the seventh day after his op, he cycled for seven minutes in John's memory. Then he did it every day after that.

He left hospital in June 2013 and bought a bike immediately.

'I want to cycle for John,' he insisted.

After 19 weeks, he completed a 30-mile charity in John's memory. A year

later, he rode 54 miles from London to Brighton.

'I'm so proud of you,' I beamed.

Since then, he's completed a four-day ride from Bristol to the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle to raise as much money as possible for his new charity, The Transplant Association, which supports donors as well as people in need of organs.

Thanks to John's generous gift, we are all facing a much happier future together.

Visit Kev's website to find out more and donate to his cause at [www.team-mash.co.uk](http://www.team-mash.co.uk)

**Grateful for life**

Kevin says: 'When I found out that my donor had died in a cycling accident, I was determined to carry on his memory. The moment I woke up, I felt stronger. I sent a card telling John's family how grateful we all were.'

I got a letter back from John's mum which I cherish. And I have RIP John on my cycling helmet so he's with me when I'm on the bike.

Thanks to him signing the organ-donor list, I've a new, active life. I've a sense of responsibility to John and his family for that, and I'm never going to waste it.'

# We ♥ your tips!

Check out this amazing advice from our readers...

## Water tight fix

New shoes too small? Fill up a ziploc bag with water, freeze it, and place it in each shoe for an hour or so until they stretch out.

Sandra Hale, Bath

## Welcome scents

By boiling a pot of water and adding vanilla essence and a sprinkle of cinnamon, your house will smell amazing in no time. It's perfect for when you're expecting guests.

Joan Reynolds, Dorset

## Cool and stealthy

If you keep an envelope in the fridge for an hour, the seal will loosen and you'll be able to open it easily. Great if you've forgotten something (or for snooping!)

Jamie Curry, Nottingham

## Sugar-free alternative

I added a sprinkle of cinnamon to my hot chocolate and it made such a difference! It's a wonderful, zero-fat alternative to sugar.

Toni Holland, Suffolk

## Count your eggs

To find out if a boiled egg is cooked through, spin the egg. If it keeps spinning, it's cooked; if it wobbles, it's raw.

Leigh Harmon, Cardiff

## Some herbal help

Drinking five cups of green tea a day helps a great deal in losing belly fat. I swear by it!

Celia Cross, Weymouth

## Natural headache cure

A mixture of water, cucumber, lemon and bay leaves is a wonderful, easy cure for a headache.

Stacey Griffin, Wiltshire

## Warm your eyes

My son hates it when I have to put eyedrops in his eyes, so I run them under warm water before hand. That way I wasn't pouring cold drops into his eyes, making it a bit more comfortable.

Martha Walton, Leicester

## Mix it up a bit

Whenever our family goes on holiday, we mix up our belongings between bags. That way, if any of the bags go missing, no one is left losing all their things!

Sara Foster, Kent

# Tea time!

Dainty and delicious!



For more recipes using Trex visit [www.familybaking.co.uk](http://www.familybaking.co.uk)

## STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKES

**Makes: 20**

- 1 medium egg
- 75g caster sugar
- 100g Trex, at room temperature
- 200g plain flour & a pinch of salt
- 50g polenta or semolina
- Clotted cream, strawberries and icing sugar

1. Position the oven shelves at the top of oven and preheat to 200°C. Lightly grease two baking trays with Trex.
2. Beat the egg and sugar together. Put

- the Trex into a mixing bowl with 150g flour and the salt. Beat until smooth.
3. Beat in the egg and sugar mixture. Add the remaining flour and polenta/semolina and mix to make a dough.
4. Turn out onto a lightly floured work top and roll out with a rolling pin until 5mm thick. Stamp into rounds with a 6cm cutter and transfer to baking trays.
5. Bake for 16-18mins. Cool briefly then then transfer to a wire rack.
6. Top with a dollop of clotted cream and strawberries, and sprinkle with icing sugar.

### Keeping records

I always keep my receipt wrapped around my gift card after I use it, that way I can always keep track of how much money I have left on it.  
**Elizabeth Thomas, Reading**

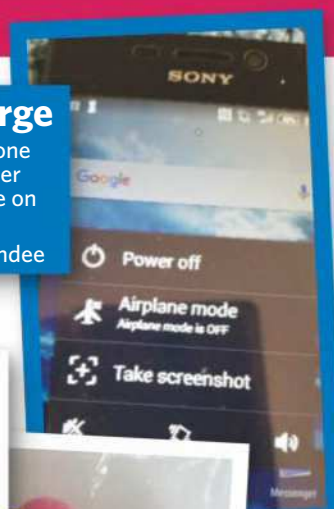
### Quick charge

I find that my phone charges a lot faster if I charge it while on airplane mode.  
**Isobel Webb, Dundee**

### Tasty cure

I always keep a bag of candy-coated nuts in my handbag. They're amazing for curing nausea and dizziness.

**Amy Haynes, Derby**



## OUR TOP 10

# SUPER EASY TIPS



This month...

## PREPARING FOR A JOB INTERVIEW

### 1 Be prepared

Practise makes perfect. Take time to look up typical interview questions and prepare your answers for them.

### 2 Know the facts

Study up beforehand. Learn about the company and the job you're applying for. The more informed you are, the easier it will be to handle interview questions.

### 3 Get connected

It's who you know. If you know someone at the company you are interviewing with, your connections can provide inside information and tell you what to expect.

### 4 Dress for success

First impressions go a long way, so make sure you dress appropriately. Pick an outfit suitable for the job.

### 5 Be on time

On time means ten minutes early. Drive to the interview location ahead of time so you know exactly where you're going and how long it takes to get there.

### 6 Just smile

A smile goes a long way. It can be a powerful tool at a first meeting, so even if you feel nervous, make sure to smile through it.

### 7 Mind your body language

Simple gestures make lasting impressions. During the interview, lean forward, avoid crossing your arms, make eye contact, and don't fidget.

### 8 Write it down

Make notes during the interview. Making notes creates the impression that you're paying full attention and will help you come across as conscientious.

### 9 Prepare a question

Ask something. Never say you have nothing to ask during the interview, as it makes you seem disinterested. Prepare at least one question beforehand.

### 10 Be appreciative

Say thank you after the interview. It reinforces your interest in the position and shows your excellent follow-up skills.

Remember these are YOUR tips - we haven't tried them ourselves

# I FORGOT I gave BIRTH



## Six months of Tina's pregnancy remain a complete blank to her

Tina Tappenden, 23, Canterbury

**S**taring at the positive pregnancy test, I felt a rush of emotions.

In shock, I told my mum Corrina, 49, first.

'Everything will be OK,' she promised, hugging me.

It was July 2015, and I was just

21 when I realised that I had missed my period.

My boyfriend was shocked, too, but once the news sank in, I started to get excited – planning the future, picking names.

'I like the name Ava, if it's a girl,' I told my family.

I'd always loved that name.

Only, a few weeks into my pregnancy, I noticed I was getting forgetful.

I'd forget what I'd had for lunch, which way I drove home from work.

'It's baby brain,' my sister Stacey, 25, teased.

I had thought so, too.

But I was also struggling to sleep, having headaches.

Then, one Saturday that September, when I was 10 weeks pregnant, I went to watch my nephew play football.

I remember feeling really

cross at the referee, running onto the pitch and screaming at him.

But that was it.

The following six months are a complete blank.

The next thing I remember is holding a tiny newborn baby in my arms.

It was my little baby Ava!

I remember the incredible rush of love, but also feeling very confused, scared, and upset.

I'd no recollection of having a scan, or even hearing her heartbeat for the first time.

Or of my bump blossoming, feeling her move inside me.

I couldn't even remember being in labour or even giving birth.

'What happened?' I asked Mum. 'You've been very poorly,' she explained to me.

My memories were still hazy, but gradually, Mum, my dad Andrew, 53, Stacey and my oldest sister

My pregnancy was a wonderful surprise



The last thing I remember is being 10 weeks pregnant





**Our bond is unbreakable**

**I WAS ROBBED OF MY PREGNANCY**



**Ava is my world**

puncture, MRI scan, and was seen by a neurologist.

But I'd deteriorated rapidly, and my family were warned I might not last the night.

Doctors still didn't know what was wrong, why my body was shutting down.

Yet I pulled through.

And, eventually, I was diagnosed with encephalitis. It's a neurological condition caused by an infection or virus, and it triggers sudden inflammation in the brain.

Transferred to the Kent and Canterbury Hospital, I'd been put into an induced coma, while the condition was treated with two plasma exchanges, antibiotics and anti-seizure medication.

'It could've been fatal,' Mum explained to me gently.

'Was Ava OK?' I gasped.

I was told she'd been absolutely fine, monitored closely, and safe in my womb.

Yet, when I was brought out of the coma, my growing bump had frightened me.

I couldn't retain memories, so I couldn't understand why my belly was so big.

I'd refused to even acknowledge

my pregnancy.

The doctors and nurses had kept daily diaries for me.

But, when I'd read them, it was like reading about a completely different person.

My boyfriend and I had split up, so I could focus on recovering.

Eventually, I'd been discharged, and my family had cared for me.

I'd slept in Mum's bed, and Michelle and Dad had taken shifts watching me.

Then, that February, I'd gone into labour, although I've no memory of any pain, contractions, or even of my waters breaking.

'A nurse tried to put Ava on your chest,' Mum said.

Only, I'd freaked out and screamed at her to take her away.

I'd even questioned if she was mine at all, as I just couldn't remember giving birth.

All this was just so horrifying to hear...

My family had been beside themselves, worried about little

Ava and me, desperate for us to bond.

And then, that evening, I'd turned a corner...

'Please can you take me to see Ava?' I had asked Mum.

Everyone was so relieved.

Seeing my little baby girl in her incubator and having a good cuddle must've triggered something, as that's the first clear

memory I have now.

Ava was seven weeks premature but, thankfully, apart from a bit of jaundice, she was healthy.

But she was kept in the Neonatal ward for a month until she was big enough to come home.

I visited Ava every day.

And, gradually, my memory returned, and I started to feel more like a mother.

Last September, a scan showed an ovarian cyst - measuring 16cm - had triggered the encephalitis.

I had an op to remove it, and surgeons discovered it was a clump of hair, teeth and tissue.

They'd had to remove my right ovary and Fallopian tube, too.

Hopefully, I'll be able to have another baby one day, so I can experience the miracle of childbirth.

Encephalitis robbed me of my pregnancy. I never had the excitement of the first scan, never got to go out and buy baby clothes.

But Ava, now one, is thriving, and that, of course, is the most important thing.

Her dad visits often, and she's so full of character.

I take lots of photos of her and cherish every moment.

I may not remember Ava being born, but I'm determined I'll remember every single second from now on.

**SYMPTOMS**

**E**ncephalitis occurs when an infection - sometimes originating elsewhere in the body - spreads to the brain, or when the immune system mistakenly attacks the brain. This causes inflammation, and, if left untreated, can be life-threatening. Symptoms include confusion, disorientation, seizures, drowsiness, changes in personality or seeing or hearing things that aren't there. For more info, go to [www.encephalitis.info](http://www.encephalitis.info).

**It was all horrifying to hear**

# Tricked and HUMILIATED

## We were tricked into being ridden like horses



**Pamela Desmond, 55, Barnstaple**

**P**opping in to see my daughter Naomi, 24, at the café where she worked, she offered to make me a drink.

'Oh, go on then, I'll have a latté please,' I said.

Her manager caught sight of me. 'It's quiet,' she said, to Naomi with a wink.

'You can shoot off early if you like and sit with your mum.'

'Thank you!' she said, making us both a hot coffee and settling down in the chair beside me.

Once we'd had a catch up and finished our drinks, we wandered into Barnstaple town centre to have a nose around the shops.

'I just need to pop into Poundworld quickly,' Naomi said.

Her friend had asked her to pick up some party straws with flamingos and Naomi needed toiletries for her upcoming holiday.

'OK, I need to grab some cat treats while we're in there as well,' I told her.

It was 4.30pm and the aisles in the shop were quieter than usual. We'd

only been in there for a few minutes, when the staff started to pull the shutters down.

'Are you closing?' I asked one of the till assistants.

Checking my watch, it seemed a little too early to be shutting shop on a Saturday...

'We've got a team training exercise,' they told me.

We hurried on to get what we needed, but then the till assistant called us back.

'Actually, would you like to take part?' they said. 'We have to find two customers to enter into it – it's some sort of competition.'

Naomi and I looked at each other and shrugged.

'It won't take long and there's the chance to win cash and prizes,' they said.

'Why not then?'

I smiled. We weren't in any rush to get home.

The store manager and the till assistant led us to the back store room.

The store was empty and all the doors locked.

'Head office have already called and told us to close early. Now

we've just got to wait for another phone call,' they said.

Within a few minutes, it rang and they answered.

A man with an Irish accent explained he was from a charity and that he'd been instructed by head office to call and set a series of challenges for us to complete.

They passed the phone to Naomi and asked her for her name and thanked us both for taking part.

She then passed the handset back to the manager for more instructions.

Naomi and I were told to stand outside the store room in a hallway.

When we re-entered, the staff told us they'd been told we

**We thought we would win cash**

**'Head office' gave orders**

**They made us lick their feet**

**We crawled as they threw water**

had to address the manager as 'Beautiful lady' every time we spoke to her.

They said that each time we did, we'd receive £50.

The caller told the staff to refer to Naomi and I as 'Ugly' and 'Beast'.

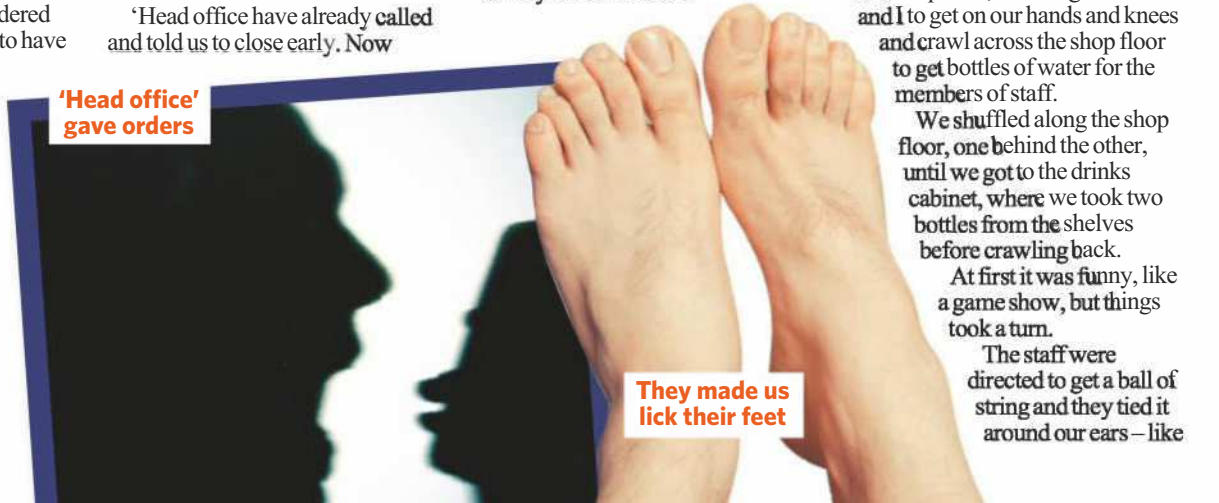
There was up to £3,000 to win each, as well as vouchers for expensive high street stores.

The caller started barking orders over the phone, directing Naomi and I to get on our hands and knees and crawl across the shop floor to get bottles of water for the members of staff.

We shuffled along the shop floor, one behind the other, until we got to the drinks cabinet, where we took two bottles from the shelves before crawling back.

At first it was funny, like a game show, but things took a turn.

The staff were directed to get a ball of string and they tied it around our ears – like





## They strung us up and rode us like horses

### riding reigns.

I shot Naomi a worried glance. As a disabled woman, with a prosthetic arm, the crawling left me huffing and puffing. Now the caller ordered the staff to ride us down the aisles in a human horse race – with the till assistant and store manager on our backs. ‘This is humiliating,’ I groaned. They were also told to throw water over us and draw on our faces. ‘This feels wrong,’ I whispered. ‘I don’t like it either,’ Naomi said under her breath. The worst was when we were told to lick the manager and till assistant’s feet. I almost threw up doing it. After completing all challenges, we were finally allowed to leave the shop. Naomi and I were now becoming increasingly suspicious of the whole thing. The manager took our details so they could inform us about collecting our prizes. ‘That was so weird,’ Naomi said as we started to walk home. ‘At least

we’ve won some money,’ I said. But just as we had left the shopping centre, Naomi’s mobile began to buzz.

It was the Irish caller who was setting the tasks – asking us to go back to the shop, as the training wasn’t yet over.

The manager must have passed on Naomi’s number.

The caller had said we had ten minutes to get back to the store to win more cash.

Getting fed up, we trudged back to Poundworld to continue with the strange exercise.

The store was closed, but we had to crawl around outside on our hands and knees again and bang on the shutters.

After half an hour, the staff who were still inside finally saw us and told us to stop.

They’d called their head office and realised we had all been duped. ‘If this is a scam, we’re going to the police!’ I said, furious.

When we got back to my house and told my husband Lawrence, we

**I almost threw up in disgust**



**We returned a second time**

realised just how awful the whole incident had been. Explaining it to him made it seem more real, and more bizarre...

‘I think we should report it to the police,’ Lawrence said. So, the next day, we went to

the police station.

Officers took our statements and began investigating the bizarre two-and-a-half hour prank.

But finding the culprit caller seemed near impossible.

We were both left exhausted and distressed by it all.

It was humiliating.

Poundworld has apologised to us both and offered us a £200 Poundworld voucher.

We were verbally told by the area manager that two Poundworld employees had been temporarily suspended, pending further enquiries into the incident.

Poundworld refused to comment on our suspicions about their staff being involved in the prank.

We’re still coming to terms with what happened but we’re speaking out so that no one is taken in by this cruel, humiliating scam again.

Naomi says: ‘We are both too scared to go into Poundworld now.

I had to go in again to get these special straws for the holiday because it was the only place where I could get them, and I had to go in accompanied by other people

because I was scared.

I sustained injuries, my knees were red raw and I had marks on my wrists, arms and back. We want to sue, but we can’t because the police don’t know who it is.’

### Poundworld said:

**W**e apologise unreservedly to our customers for their experience at our Barnstaple store, which our team also fell victim of.

The incident has been referred to the police and we are assisting them with their enquiries.

We have conducted our own investigation and re-issued guidance to our stores around the verification of phone calls to help ensure something such as this does not happen again in the future.’

### Police said:

**P**olice are looking into an incident that was reported to them on 15 May 2017 which allegedly took place in Poundworld in Barnstaple on Saturday at around 4.30pm. ‘It appears that staff received a call, purporting to be from head office asking staff to get customers to carry out certain acts in exchange for prizes. It appears this was a hoax call. Police are working with the company, carrying out an investigation in an effort to identify and locate whoever made this call.

# DAYS OUT

# AHOY MATEY!

Ships always have a female name!

Climb aboard these historical ships to discover adventure at sea...

## ROYAL ADVENTURES

The Royal Yacht Britannia was home to the royal family for over 40 years, sailing over 1 million miles around the world. Now berthed in Edinburgh, you can follow in the footsteps of royalty to discover the heart and soul of this magnificent ship. Explore the fabulous state apartments and royal bedrooms, relax in the royal sun lounge, and even discover life below deck in the sick bay and laundry room. While grown-ups can enjoy the stunning Royal Deck Tea Room and sample homemade fudge, kids can wonder at the 11-foot Lego model of the ship!

- Tickets from £8.50
- [www.royalyachtbritannia.co.uk](http://www.royalyachtbritannia.co.uk)



## BRAVE NEW WORLDS

Visit Dundee's Discovery Point, an award-winning visitor attraction and home to the RRS Discovery, the first ship to successfully travel to the Antarctic. Follow in the footsteps of Captain Robert Falcon Scott and his heroic team and find out about the heroes who braved the ice and harsh conditions of this far-out land. As you explore the museum, you'll learn more about this epic Discovery Expedition and have the opportunity to climb aboard one of the most incredible ships ever built.

- Tickets from £5.50
- [www.rrsdiscovery.com](http://www.rrsdiscovery.com)

Be intrepid



## ICONIC DISCOVERY

There's so much to see and explore above and below the five decks of the Golden Hind Museum Ship in Brixham, Devon, a full-sized replica of Sir Francis Drake's iconic ship. Go back 135 years to when Drake became the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe in an epic expedition of discovery. Climb on board to see the cramped conditions the crew endured, the Great Cabin, where the officers lived, and even discover the lower gun deck. There's something for everyone!

- Tickets from £5
- [www.goldenhind.co.uk](http://www.goldenhind.co.uk)

Get hands on

## SAIL THE WATERS

Head to Whitby in North Yorkshire to sail on the Bark Endeavour, an authentic replica of the HMS Endeavour, sailed by Captain James Cook during his scientific expedition of 1768. Go on a voyage around Whitby Harbour and along the coast to Sandsend, while you can follow in Cook's path and re-live his exciting life at sea. While enjoying this historic journey, take in views of Yorkshire's Jurassic coastline and spot a variety of wildlife, including seals, dolphins and even whales.

- Go to [www.endeavourwhitby.com](http://www.endeavourwhitby.com) to make a booking.



Shiver me timbers

## VOYAGE BACK IN TIME

Designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel in 1843, Bristol's SS Great Britain changed maritime history, and there's so much to see on board one of the most important historical ships in the world. First, head beneath the glass sea and the Dockyard Museum to discover the ship's history, then step onto the ship itself - alive with sights, sounds, and even smells. Prepare to step back in time through the dining saloon, steerage, galley and even the engine room, and on weekends, step into the shoes of a Victorian sailor and climb the ship's mainmast!

- Tickets from £9.50 ▪ [www.ssgreatbritain.org](http://www.ssgreatbritain.org)

Swashbuckling adventure



## HISTORIC EXPLORATION

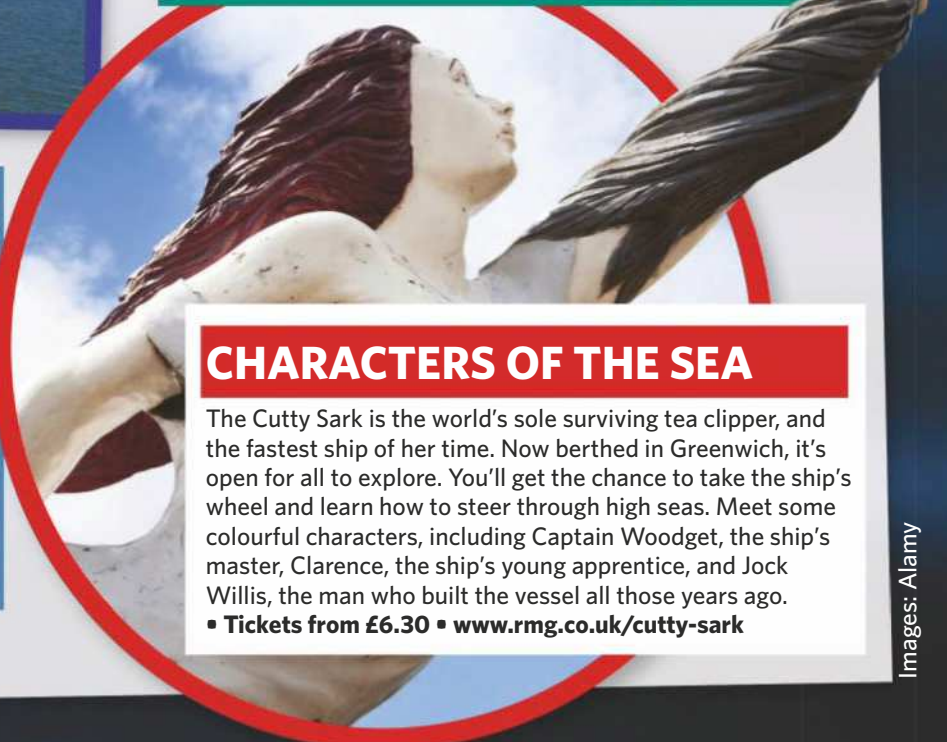
A visit to Chatham's Historic Dockyard, one of the UK's leading maritime heritage destinations, will prove to be quite an adventure. Step aboard three historic warships and discover 100 years of life at sea, explore Steam Steel and Submarines, which tells the powerful story of the 19th and 20th Century dockyard, and find yourself at the heart of this incredible ship-building heritage. Don't miss the Age of Sail Galleries, where you'll learn how ships were designed and built!

- Tickets from £14
- [www.thedockyard.co.uk](http://www.thedockyard.co.uk)

## CHARACTERS OF THE SEA

The Cutty Sark is the world's sole surviving tea clipper, and the fastest ship of her time. Now berthed in Greenwich, it's open for all to explore. You'll get the chance to take the ship's wheel and learn how to steer through high seas. Meet some colourful characters, including Captain Woodget, the ship's master, Clarence, the ship's young apprentice, and Jock Willis, the man who built the vessel all those years ago.

- Tickets from £6.30 ▪ [www.rmg.co.uk/cutty-sark](http://www.rmg.co.uk/cutty-sark)



Images: Alamy

Chill out

It affects  
12 million  
UK adults

# DON'T STRESS!



**S**tress and anxiety are the most common mental disorders in the UK. When stressed, our brain can become foggy, leaving us feeling tired and drained. Anxiety can also leave many with a feeling of 'What if?' accompanied by panic, fear, poor concentration, loss of appetite, sweats, aches and pains and can even be the root cause of migraines and IBS. April is Stress Awareness Month and nutritionist Sarah Flower shares her advice.

## Up your magnesium intake

Many people who suffer from anxiety, depression and migraines will usually also have a magnesium deficiency. Try magnesium citrate, known as an anti-stress mineral due to its effects on the nervous system. It also helps relax muscles, improve flexibility and tone blood vessels - vital to protect you from heart disease. Eat foods such as kelp, wheat bran, almonds, buckwheat, Brazil nuts and molasses. And try New Era 8, a melt-in-the-mouth tissue salt made from magnesium phosphate, which can help keep you calm.

## Take deep breaths

As soon as a feeling of anxiety or stress comes on, the first thing you should take note of is your breathing. Deep breathing is a powerful anxiety-reducing technique because it activates the body's relaxation response. For even more effective results, try rubbing some lavender oil on your pillow or directly to your body and breathing in for a great boost.



Fragrant

## Relax with Epsom salts

Another great way to relax and alleviate anxiety is by taking an Epsom salt bath. When Epsom salts are dissolved in warm water, their magnesium content is released into the water and absorbed into your skin to help replenish magnesium levels and ease muscles. These salts can also help to promote calmness and relaxation as well as reduce irritability levels.

## The power of ginseng

**Panax** Korean ginseng is an adaptogen. It can also help clear your mind, enhance memory and improve mood; all of which can be affected during times of stress. Opt for a high quality ginseng, such as Power Health's Power Ginseng herbal remedy, (£7.90, [www.powerhealth.co.uk](http://www.powerhealth.co.uk)), which contains the highest quality four to six-year-old Panax Korean ginseng roots, regarded as the most potent ginseng in the world.



## Blissful soaks



## Boost your mind with meditation

Meditation is a great way to unwind in the evening before bed or to energise you first thing in the morning. Mindfulness meditation in particular can not only help with anxiety and stress, but can actually change the structure and function of your brain. Mindfulness trains you to view your thoughts differently and works to make your brain less anxious by not worrying about the future and ruminating on the past.



## Fish power

## Substitute with oils

Omega 3 fish oils are known to relieve stress and anxiety, as well as regulate inflammation. Fish oils can also help to reduce the production of adrenal hormones. The adrenals release cortisol as part of your stress response, which is

involved in blood sugar regulation, blood pressure regulation, immune responses and inflammation processes. Over stimulation of the adrenals can lead to chronic fatigue.



## Losing Snooze

Late nights and poor sleep lead to the build-up of cortisol – which should be low at night time to give you quality kip. Aim to be asleep at midnight so your cortisol levels can dip to their lowest between midnight and 4am. Avoid electronic devices in bed, as the artificial light stops the production of melatonin – leaving you awake for hours.

## Sleep better

Medical Herbalist and Ayurvedic Practitioner Katie Pande says that stress is commonly linked to a bad night's sleep and vice versa. 'Poor sleep can lead to an unwanted lack of energy and increased stress levels, initiating a vicious cycle of stress and fatigue,' Katie explains. 'After a busy day, take a moment to prepare yourself a soothing cup of Relax tea and take Pukka's Wholistic Ashwagandha supplements from the Relax 7 Day Kit.'

Pukka's Relax tea has been blended with organic chamomile, fennel and marshmallow root to calm you down and relax the digestive system. Ashwagandha is a strengthening adaptogenic tonic that nourishes the adrenal glands and central nervous system to moderate the release of stress hormones, calm a busy mind and encourage an undisturbed and restful night's sleep to restore energy and vitality. 'Pukka's 7 Day kit also contains complimentary relaxation tips, developed by Pukka's in-house herbal team,' Katie adds. Get

Pukka's Relax 7 Day Kit for £9.99 at [www.pukkaherbs.com](http://www.pukkaherbs.com).



## Shut eye



# Take time out

## Try these simple relaxation techniques

### Read to relax

Reading is one of the best ways to relax – even just six minutes can be enough to reduce stress levels by more than two thirds. If you'd like to read more, download the Bookchoice app, which supplies you with a curated selection of eight e-books and audiobooks each month, hand-picked to your tastes. For £3.99 a month, the app supplies you with the selection, which you can download onto any device. With a range of titles each month, Bookchoice takes the hard work out of finding a good read, so all you have to do is open the app, pick a title, and relax!



### Puppy love



### Unconditional

You can't help but de-stress when you're around a pet. A pet loves you no matter what, making you feel valued. If you don't have a pet of your own, you could always become a 'borrower' with BorrowMyDoggy. The organisation connects you with dog owners so you can take their furry friends on walks and play dates when their owners need a break. It's the perfect way to spend some time with friendly pups and reduce your stress levels! Go to [www.borrowmydoggy.com](http://www.borrowmydoggy.com).

## Food for thought

Foods we eat can have a huge impact on our mood. Nutritionist Cassandra Barns outlines the top 5 stress-busting foods:

**Chocolate:** Cocoa is high in magnesium, which helps to calm the nervous system, and contains a natural chemical that's associated with good mood. So, for the best stress-busting effects, go for a high-cacao, lower-sugar dark chocolate, like Ombar's 72% Cacao Bar (£1.99, Ocado).

**Oats:** Oats provide slow-releasing carbs that help keep our blood sugar on an even keel, preventing peaks and dips that can actually trigger more stress hormones to be released. Try Nairn's Gluten-Free Scottish Porridge Oats (£2, Sainsbury's).

**Green tea:** Green tea provides a small amount of caffeine. It also contains L-theanine, which has been

found to have a relaxing effect on the mind, reduce anxiety, and help with focus and concentration.

**Pumpkin seeds:** These super-seeds are a fantastic source of both magnesium and zinc. A lack of zinc in our diets may contribute to stress-related problems such as anxiety and depression. They're a great source of protein and fibre that help keep blood sugar stable. Try Clearspring's Pumpkin Seed Protein powder (£9.89, Revital, As Nature Intended & Independent Health Food Stores).



# It's **NOT** what you think

**I kept telling people I wasn't pregnant, so why did I look like this?**



**Sarah Upton, 29, Derby**

**T**he waistband of my jeans was digging painfully into my tummy.

Not a feeling I was particularly used to.

Weighing 8st 7lb and wearing a size-10, I'd always been slim.

Until lately.

It was April 2016, and while I can't say I'd got fat, exactly, I'd definitely piled on the weight.

A good stone at least.

And the weird thing was, most of it seemed to have gone onto my tummy.

'It's huge!' I complained to my sister Lucy.

She just rolled her eyes.

'As if!' she said.

'There's nothing to you.'

'Look!' I said, lifting up my top.

My pale tummy bulged over the top of my jeans.

'Oh!' Lucy said, surprised.

'Well, I guess you do look a bit bigger than normal, but not much.'

You know, I wouldn't have minded so much if I'd actually

been stuffing myself with chocolate, crisps and pizza.

But I was quite a healthy eater and went to the gym at least three times a week.

But over the past couple of weeks, I'd been feeling really bloated for some reason.

'Maybe I've developed a food intolerance,' I said to my partner Daisy, then 21.

After all, lots of people suffer from gluten-related problems.

A swollen belly could be a symptom of that.

'Or maybe it's irritable bowel syndrome,' Daisy suggested.

But whatever was making my tummy so tender and swollen, I wanted to get to the bottom of it.

So I got some over-the-counter tablets for IBS and started

eliminating different foods, like bread and dairy, to see if they were the problem.

But, although I was hardly eating anything, I still felt bloated the whole time.

And my tummy was huge.

Then, in July 2016, I was at a gym class when the instructor came to talk to me afterwards. 'I need to ask

**I was so frightened as my stomach continued to grow**

you something,' he said sheepishly. 'You're either going to hit me, or I'll be right.'

'What?' I replied.

'You're pregnant, aren't you?' he said, embarrassed.

'Definitely not!' I gasped, absolutely mortified.

I was upset that people were thinking that I was expecting, but I was worried, too.

What was causing my lookalike baby bump?

So, the next day, I went straight to the doctor's.

He asked me loads of questions, including whether I was sure that I wasn't pregnant.

'No way!' I insisted again.

'I'm definitely not.'

He then referred me for an urgent ultrasound scan.

'The first available appointment is in two weeks,' he said.

'Go to the hospital if you have any other symptoms in the meantime.'

In those 14 days leading up to my scan, my belly went bonkers.

It was growing and growing... It

got so big I couldn't fit into any of my size-10 clothes, so I lived in my stretchy gym bottoms.

My other sister Katy, 33, was nearly five months pregnant and when we compared our 'bumps', I got a shock.

'Mine's bigger than yours!' I gasped, horrified.

I won't lie, I was frightened.

I had no idea what was happening inside my body.

I couldn't help thinking the worst. One evening, I Googled my symptoms and tried to find out what on earth could be happening.

But the internet always tells you the worst possible scenarios.

Daisy was worried, too.

Then, one morning, three days before my scan, I woke up in agony and couldn't move.

I was being sick, too, so I went to Royal Derby Hospital.

They did an ultrasound and tests.

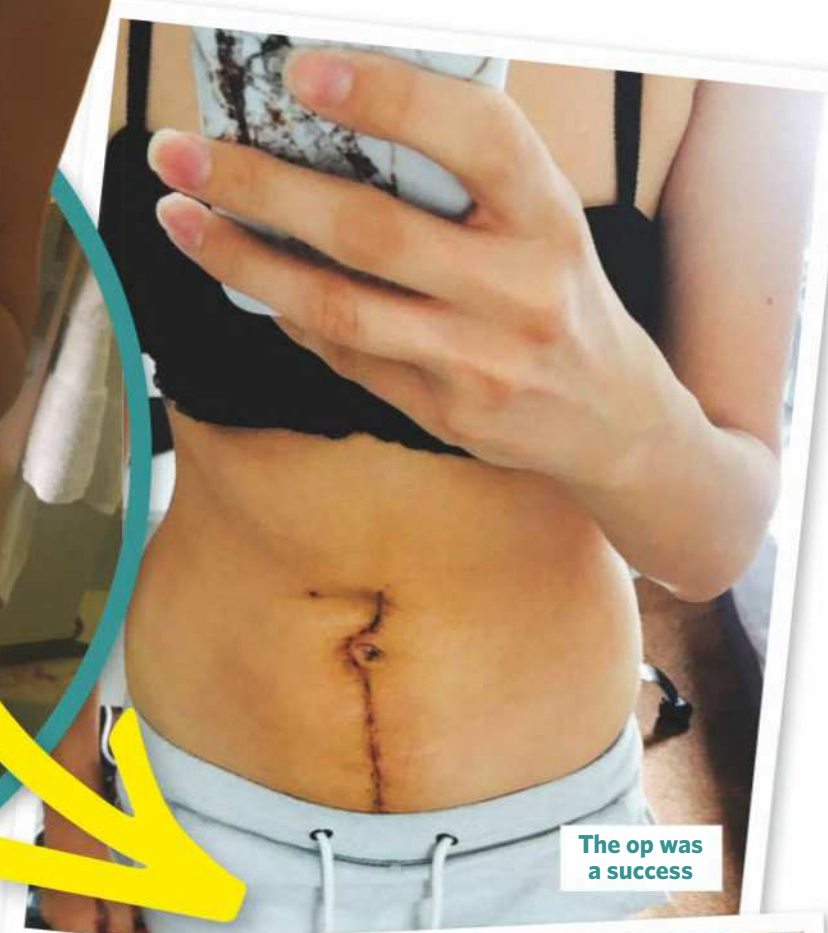
I waited for what felt like forever for the consultant to tell me what they had found. 'You've got a cyst







People thought I was pregnant



The op was a success

on your left ovary,' he explained to me eventually.

'It's 27cm long – about this big.' As he held out his hands to show me the size, I couldn't believe it.

It was as big as a baby!

The consultant said the pain and vomiting could have been because the cyst had ruptured and that I'd need an operation to remove it.

'Because of how big it is, we'll have to cut you open rather than use keyhole surgery,' he explained.

'Is it cancerous?' I asked.

'We'll have to test your blood to see,' he warned.

Those next nine days were agonising.

'I'm so scared,' I told Daisy. 'What if it's cancer?'

'We have to be positive,' she reassured me. 'We'll cross that bridge if we come to it. But I know you'll be fine.'

I felt sick with nerves as I went back to hospital for the test results.

'We'll have to test the cyst itself to know for sure,' the consultant explained to me.

Although I tried to be calm, I was out of my mind with worry until I went in for the operation just over a week later.

When I got to the hospital, two

separate nurses did a double-take.

'You look like you've got a baby in there,' they both told me.

And I really did.

The surgeon had a chat with me before I was taken down to theatre.

'If it's attached to any other organs, we might not be able to remove it,' he warned.

I nodded, so scared.

So the first thing I did when I woke up from the three-hour op was look down my hospital gown.

I could see my toes.

'It's gone!' I beamed.

My stomach was flat again and I didn't feel like my insides were all squashed anymore.

The surgeon explained the operation had gone well, but they'd had to remove my left ovary and Fallopian tube, too.

I didn't care, I was just so relieved that the op had been a success.

Daisy and I had talked about having kids one day.

Having a family together is important to us, and it was still possible for me to conceive.

And at least I was healthy again, free of my baby-sized cyst.

Doctors sent the cyst off to test for cancer – and, four days on, I was

It was as big as a baby

discharged.

Back home, I felt so much smaller and my size-10 clothes fit me perfectly again.

And when I stepped onto the scales, I couldn't believe it.

Before the op, I'd gone up to 10st.

Now I was back to a healthy 8st 7lb.

'My cyst must have weighed a stone and a half!' I gasped to Daisy.

Finally, two weeks later, I got the result of my biopsy.

'The cyst wasn't cancerous,' the doctor said.

I sagged with relief.

'Thank God,' I said.

The doctors still weren't sure why the cyst developed, so they need to monitor me every six months as I'll be prone to developing one on the other side.

But I'm just relieved that it wasn't cancer.

After a six-week recovery, I was back at work in an estate agents and it was only then that my colleagues admitted that they'd noticed my 'baby' bump!

I never got to see a picture of the cyst, but I still can't believe I was



A stone and a half lighter

carrying something so huge inside me.

But thankfully, I'm back to normal now.

As for my sister Katy, she later gave birth to a 7lb 11oz baby boy.

And we still laugh about the fact that my bump was bigger than hers!

# BRAVE but fragile

Little Ava spent the first three months of her life in intensive care...



**Krystina Lake, 29,**  
Stevenage

**W**hen my husband Luke, 33, and I found out that we were expecting a baby, we were simply over the moon.

We'd been married in a fairy-tale ceremony just months before and calculated that we must have conceived very early on in our two-week Cancun honeymoon.

Working at a maternity unit, I knew how hard it was for some women to fall pregnant.

'We're so lucky,' I said, gratefully.

Luke and I couldn't wait to start our little family together.

At just six weeks pregnant, I'd just finished a shift and I was on my way home when I started to bleed.

Turning straight around, I went straight back to the hospital for an emergency scan.

Thankfully, it turned out that it was just a small bleed and that everything was fine... in fact it was

more than fine.

Luke arrived in time to hear some amazing news.

'It's twins!' the doctor said.

We both cried with happiness as we took in the news.

We felt so blessed.

As the pregnancy progressed, I had awful morning sickness, but everything else was perfectly normal, and the girls at work were always keeping a close eye on me.

I just couldn't wait to finally meet my little babies.

At 27 weeks, I woke in the night and went to get a glass of water. I felt a

trickling sensation between my legs and froze.

It was 3am and I called my colleagues with

**I told Luke how sorry I was**

trembling hands.

'Get here immediately,' they said to me.

Arriving in a panic, Luke and I were told that my waters had broken

and that I was in labour.

I looked at Luke with tears in my eyes.

'I'm so sorry,' I cried. 'But babies born this young don't make it.'

He squeezed my hand.

'It's not your fault,' he insisted. I was 5cm dilated and needed an emergency caesarean.

My best friend and colleague Holly, 27, was my midwife.

Less than an hour later, our two tiny babies were born by caesarean. A boy and a girl.

Holly and I were both crying as they were whisked away to a neonatal intensive care ward.

We named them Ava and Austin. Ava means 'life', and no matter how tenuous, it gave us all a glimmer of hope.

Austin was very sick, but he

**I willed my girl to stay with us**

was relatively stable, whereas Ava was born not breathing and the medical team battled to get her to take in air.

Once I'd recovered and the twins were stable enough, Luke and I went to see them.

The premature baby ward was surreal with its spaceship-blue lighting, but our two babies looked so adorable, even though they were so tiny.

It was agony not being able to touch or hold them.

We could only stare through the glass of their incubators.

'Mummy's here,' I whispered, desperate to comfort them and breathe in their baby smell.

I was so worried about



**Incredible bond**



**The twins were a wonderful surprise**



**Ava was kept alive by 19 machines in intensive care**



them, but they were such fighters and despite a few tricky moments here and there, they never gave in.

Thirteen long weeks later, we brought them home.

They continued to develop well and although a little late for some milestones, they were both healthy and happy.

While Ava was cheeky and outgoing, her brother was sensitive and a bit more shy.

While Austin was addicted to his bunny comfort blanket, Ava was dummy obsessed!

Luke and I quickly adjusted to the whirlwind and chaos of life as a family of four.

But in summer 2016, Ava began to refuse food and water and seemed increasingly lethargic.

Mother's instinct took over and I rushed her straight to our local hospital. She couldn't even hold her

own head up by that point.

Staff there had no idea what was wrong with Ava, so we were rushed to Addenbrooks Hospital, Cambridgeshire, where, with more sophisticated equipment, they quickly realised that Ava had a problem with her heart.

She was diagnosed with Dilated Cardiomyopathy, a rare but serious condition which affects the heart's ability to pump blood.

Unable to deal with the severity of her condition, we were transferred once again, this time to Royal Brompton in Chelsea, which specialises in heart conditions.

Ava was in intensive care and put on life support.

At one point I counted 19 machines she was wired up to, keeping her alive.

It was a nightmare. Luckily, my

mum and dad, Alison, 58, and Paul, 61, had Austin, and Luke's family had rented us a flat, at huge cost, near the hospital, so that we could be with Ava full time.

But on day three at the Brompton, Ava's heart function dipped as low as five per cent and the poor thing suffered a cardiac arrest.

It was one of the worst moments of my whole life.

I was losing my precious girl.

The doctors there sat us down and told us that Ava was unable to sustain life and that her only

chance was to be put on to an ECMO machine.

The ECMO provides a heart and lung bypass, which lets the organs rest – it's used only in the rarest circumstances as it has lots of risks.

We agreed.

And, when she stabilised, our

**I knew something was very wrong**



**My brave girl I never gave up on**

hopes began to rise again.

But the machine shouldn't be used for more than a week, and by day nine, we had to take her off.

It was an unbelievably stressful time made worse by the fact that she had a one in three chance of dying after the ECMO was removed.

I held my breath waiting for Ava to take her first breaths...

And she did.

'That's my girl,' I cried.

Ava needed 11 blood transfusions, but to our total delight, she coped really well and her incredible doctors and nurses hailed her a 'miracle'.

It was a blow to discover that while on the ECMO, she'd suffered a stroke, which is one of the common side effects.

The stroke affected her left-hand side and had also given her a mild form of cerebral palsy.

But Ava was still growing stronger every day and it was a huge relief to finally bring her home in November 2016.

Luke and I did lots of exercises with her and did research online to make sure we had everything she needed in order to get better as fast as she could.

She's exceeded all expectations, and by March 2017, she was walking again!

Ava's doctor's still can't believe how well she's done and she continues to amaze us all.

The twins are so close.

They play and bicker away in their own toddler babble and it's just so adorable.

Of course Ava needs lots of tests still and we have to keep a close eye on her, but our family is whole again and that's what counts.

# Eat me up



Whip up simple and delicious food for your family with the help of ingredients by Princes



## Baked potatoes with corned beef ragu

Serves 4

- 4 large baking potatoes
  - 1 tsp olive oil
  - 2 cherry tomatoes, chopped
  - 1 sliced red pepper
  - ½ tsp dried chillis (optional)
  - 1 can chopped tomatoes
  - 340g can Princes corned beef - diced
  - Sour cream and chives to serve
- For the corned beef ragu**
- 1 tbsp olive oil
  - 1 small chopped onion
  - 2 cloves chopped garlic

1. Wash the potatoes and prick them four or five times with a fork.
2. Pour a little oil into the centre of a square of foil, roll each potato in it, sprinkle on some salt then wrap the potato in the foil.
3. Place the potatoes in the slow cooker and cook for 4-5 hours on high, or 8-10 hours on low.
4. Pour the olive oil into a large frying pan, add the onion and garlic and fry until golden. Season with pepper and salt and fry until soft.
5. Add the canned tomatoes, the chilli and cook for about 5 minutes.
6. Once the sauce has thickened, add the Princes Corned Beef, stir and cook for another few minutes until you have a rich thick corned beef ragu. Top with sour cream and chives.



## Peach and vanilla yoghurt pops

- 1 x 410g can of Princes Peach Slices with Juice
- 450g pot of vanilla yoghurt
- Muffin cases, lollipop sticks and tumbler glasses

1. Drain half the juice from the peaches then blend the peaches with the remaining juice until it's a smooth consistency.
2. Pour into the bottom half of 6 tumbler glasses and freeze for an hour or until just set.
3. Remove from freezer and spoon in the vanilla yoghurt and set again in the freezer for another

- hour until half frozen before placing sticks into the middle.
4. Freeze again until completely set and for a cute flourish, make a small incision in the middle of colourful paper muffin cases and slide over the sticks to collect the drips.



Serves 6

## Spicy tomato mackerel pizza

Serves  
2

- 1 x 125g can Princes Spicy Tomato Mackerel
- 1 x 25cm (10") pizza base
- 1 tsp Italian mixed dried herbs
- 50g grated mozzarella cheese
- 1 small pepper, deseeded and thinly sliced
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Basil leaves to garnish

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C, fan oven 180°C, Gas Mark 6.
2. Tip the can of mackerel onto a plate. Spoon some of the spicy tomato sauce over the pizza base, spreading it out thinly.
3. Sprinkle the herbs and grated cheese over the pizza base and top with the sliced peppers and onion. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 10-12 minutes.
4. Break the mackerel into chunks and scatter them over the top of the pizza. Sprinkle with black pepper and serve, garnished with basil leaves.



Serves  
4

## Breakfast banana split

- 432g can Princes Mango in Juice
- 432g can Princes Pineapple Chunks in Juice
- 350g Greek yogurt
- 100g granola, plus extra for sprinkling
- 4 bananas
- Honey

1. Drain the cans of fruit thoroughly and chop into pieces.
2. Mix together the Greek yogurt and granola.
3. Split the bananas lengthways and arrange each one on separate plates, filling the centre with the yogurt mixture.
4. Spoon the pineapple and mango pieces on top, sprinkle with a little extra granola, then serve drizzled with honey.

FOR MORE TASTY RECIPES,  
VISIT [WWW.PRINCES.CO.UK](http://WWW.PRINCES.CO.UK)

## Tuna and quinoa superfood salad

Serves  
2

- 1 x 110g can Princes Ventresca Tuna Fillets in Olive Oil, drained
- 300g prepared butternut squash, cut into chunks
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 100g red and white quinoa (or just use white)
- 1 cooked beetroot drained and chopped
- 1/2 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 5 cherry tomatoes, halved
- Handful of young spinach leaves
- A little chopped fresh parsley
- 2tsp lemon juice or red wine vinegar
- Salt and pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C. Put the butternut squash into a roasting tin, drizzle with the olive oil and toss to coat. Roast for 20-25 minutes, until tender.
2. Meanwhile, cook the quinoa in lightly salted simmering water for 12-15 minutes, until tender. Rinse with cold water to cool quickly, and drain well.

3. Mix together the quinoa, butternut squash, beetroot, red onion and cherry tomatoes.
4. Add the spinach leaves, parsley, lemon juice or vinegar, then season with salt and pepper. Share between two plates or bowls.
5. Top the salads with the drained tuna slices, then serve.



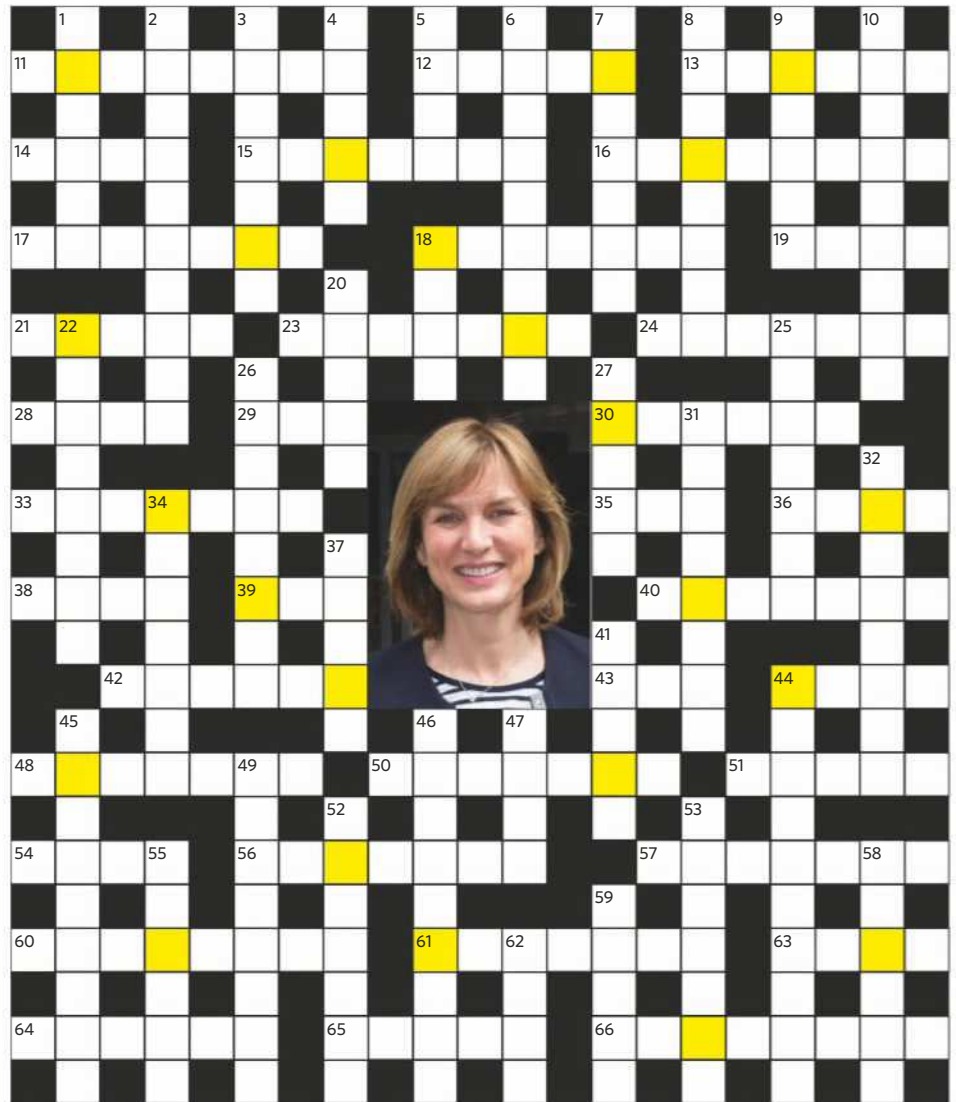
# Big crossword

**When she was in the Sixth Form at school, for what did BBC presenter and newsreader Fiona Bruce act as a model?**

To find out, solve the crossword then read down the shaded squares to find the five-word answer.

## ACROSS

- 11 Strong type of coffee (8)
- 12 Compact middle of a cabbage or lettuce (5)
- 13 Intense and often irrational fear (6)
- 14 Depend upon (4)
- 15 Small peach-like fruit (7)
- 16 Royal female, Charlotte Elizabeth Diana being the latest (8)
- 17 Indications displayed by a student driver (1,6)
- 18 Operating-theatre doctor (7)
- 19 Lupine animal (4)
- 21 Years in a golden wedding (5)
- 23 Nunnery (7)
- 24 'Sunshine' state of America (7)
- 28 --- The Engine, children's story character (4)
- 29 Chest bone (3)
- 30 Sharp-witted (6)
- 33 Jumbled-up letters puzzle (7)
- 35 Automobile (3)
- 36 Wicked, bad (4)
- 38 Tolling item (4)
- 39 Navy drink (3)
- 40 High flat area of ground (7)
- 42 Wimbledon game (6)
- 43 About to arrive (3)
- 44 Fermented honey drink (4)
- 48 Nail polish (7)
- 50 Bravery (7)
- 51 Pointing finger or alphabetical contents (5)
- 54 Somerset city (4)
- 56 Force that keeps your feet on the ground (7)
- 57 Place for rearing plants (7)
- 60 Almond paste used in cake decoration (8)
- 61 Bill for goods or services (7)
- 63 Lease, hire out (4)
- 64 Zodiac bull (6)
- 65 Gradually wear away (5)
- 66 Canine helper with the flock (8)



## DOWN

- 1 In the Land of Nod (6)
- 2 Brains, colloquially (4,6)
- 3 Got away, ran off (7)
- 4 Be anxious, fret (5)
- 5 Fashionably elegant (4)
- 6 Becoming an expert at (9)
- 7 Bottle bung (7)
- 8 Non-compulsory (8)
- 9 Russian capital (6)
- 10 Male president's wife (5,4)
- 18 Rescue (4)
- 20 Pastime, leisure interest (5)
- 22 Created, devised (8)
- 25 Tactical withdrawal (7)
- 26 Test period in real conditions (5,3)
- 27 Spring month (5)
- 31 Edge-of-the-seat movie (8)
- 32 Parish cleric's residence (8)
- 34 Old sea-going sailing vessel (7)
- 37 Break to bits (5)
- 41 Saying, motto (5)
- 44 Written document (10)
- 45 Boat with two hulls (9)
- 46 Lawyer (9)
- 47 Radiographer's photograph (1-3)
- 49 Route indicator (8)
- 52 Stroll idly (7)
- 53 Hush, make less noisy (7)
- 55 Danger (6)
- 58 In no particular order (6)
- 59 Slightly drunk (5)
- 62 Opinion (4)

# Soft spot

Raising a wild cat in our bathroom was grrr-eat!

Nimbus had been rejected so we welcomed her into our home

Jamie  
Craig, 43,  
Oxfordshire



**N**ever work with animals or children, they say. And I happen to have my hands full with both!

By day, I'm a curator for the Cotswold Wildlife Park.

I feed and care for the big cats, zebras, and giraffes.

Back home, I have two little monkeys of my own – my son and daughter, Jai and Niemi!

They're animal mad, and love hearing about my job.

So, after an eventful day one July, I couldn't wait to tell them my big news.

'We're going to have a leopard cub living with us,' I told them.

I told them I'd been in the leopard enclosure and heard whimpering.

I'd moved a bush and

found two cubs shivering.

Their mum, Moro, had sadly rejected her babies.

They looked so helpless. So I'd put them in an incubator and fed them milk from a bottle.

'They need constant care,' I told my wife, Nicolette, 42.

'I think they should live with us for a little while.'

In the past, we'd shared our home with lemurs and birds.

But this was different.

These little leopard cubs were so weak.

So I took them home.

Sadly, one died just a few days later.

The other was a little fighter, though.

'What shall we call her, then?' I asked my kids.

'What about Nimbus?' 10-year-old Niemi suggested.

It was after a type of cloud.

Nimbus wasn't out of the woods yet, though. She was a

baby and needed lots of TLC.

'Can she stay in my room?' Jai, 13, asked.

'She's going in the bathroom,' I said, popping some comfy towels in the bottom of a pet carrier, to make a bed for her.

'She's so cute,' Niemi grinned excitedly.

From then on, we took turns to give the cub a bottle.

As she grew, we began feeding her cat food.

And shower time for us became playtime for her.

Nimbus waited for us to grab a towel, then pounced.

'Get down!' Nicolette would cry.

When Nimbus got bigger, she bounded after us.

She climbed on the sofa and wrestled with cuddly toys.

She even became friends with our two dogs, Boo and Bugsy.

Of course, Jai and Niemi wanted to show Nimbus off to their friends.

'Remember she's a wild animal,



We took turns with feeding

not a pet,' I replied.

Nimbus wasn't going to stay with us forever.

One day she'd return to the enclosure and learn how to behave like a wild animal.

Then, when she was two months old, it was time to say goodbye.

She was getting too big, and it was too dangerous to keep her in the house any longer.

'See you soon,' Jai and Niemi said, sadly.

I took Nimbus back to the leopard enclosure at the wildlife park.

At first she was fed separately to the other cats, and exercised at different times.

But the following March, she was able to be reunited with her sister Djinn.

'They're getting on so well,' I told Jai and Niemi later.

Now I love to watch Nimbus prowling around.

Each morning I go over and say hello to her in her enclosure.

I know she's feline purr-fectly happy in her new home!

We had a leopard living in our bathroom



She was the purrfect pet

# Honey, I SHRUNK the bride



## I lost so much weight, my wedding dress didn't fit!



**Alex Hill, 28, Stockport**

years, while I recovered from a serious back injury, I ballooned.

But I knew my fiancé, Kev, 34, loved me no matter what.

I was a size 16-18 and 15st when we first met.

Over the course of our 11-year relationship, I'd gained a whopping 8st.

Grabbing my mobile, I found a number for Cambridge Weight Plan online and sent a text to a consultant from my hospital bed to arrange an appointment for the first week of the following January.

The Cambridge Weight Plan was overwhelming at first, but I soon got used to it.

I swapped my usual pizzas, garlic bread and cans of full-fat

**S**at propped up in the hospital bed, I groaned in agony. It was December 2014 and I'd been admitted after suffering from kidney stones.

'I've just got a few routine questions,' the nurse said, as she pulled the curtain around me.

'What do you weigh?' I hesitated. I hadn't weighed myself in years.

'I guess I'm around 19st.' Days later, I climbed on the scales for an accurate reading.

'OK, so you're actually 23st 2lbs,' the nurse told me.

Mortified, my cheeks flushed. I'd always been on the larger side, but after being caught up in a serious car accident and losing my dad, Leslie, 59, to heart failure, I sought comfort in food.

Unable to exercise for two

**Kev was so proud of me**

**My last minute outfit change**

venue—Chester Zoo!

With only six months until the wedding, I knew I had to try on dresses, so I plucked up the courage to make an appointment.

My sister, Stephanie, 29, called the shop beforehand to check they had plus size gowns for me to try.

Rummaging through the rails inside, I groaned.

'I'm not sure any of these will fit,' I muttered under my breath.

'Don't worry, they will,' Stephanie assured me.

I picked up a handful of gowns and headed to the changing room.

The first one I stepped into wouldn't do up.

And the second one wouldn't do

Coke for meal-replacement shakes and bars.

There were no more greasy takeaways or crisps, sweets or chocolate, but I had chicken with vegetables instead.

In my first week, I lost 9.5lbs.

The next week I'd shed 7.5lbs, and by the time I'd been on the plan for six

weeks, I was two stone down.

Determined not to walk down the aisle a huge bride, I'd delayed booking a wedding since our engagement three years earlier.

But now, I felt ready to start organising our big day.

I even booked our dream

**Finally I was ready for a wedding**

**Our day was perfect**







I hadn't a clue how big I'd got

**I'd given up all hope of finding a dream dress**

up properly, either.

'It's no good,' I sighed. 'You'll find one, just be patient,' my mum, Lynn, 54, called through the curtain.

After trying a few on, I finally managed to get into a huge princess dress in a size 26.

It was tight and didn't quite do up.

Fed up, I said I'd go for it – in the hope the poufy material would disguise my flabby figure.

*It's not 'the one', but it's the only one that fits,* I thought to myself, giving up on ever finding my dream dress.

'You would be better off ordering it two sizes bigger in a size 30,' the shop assistant smiled.

'But I plan on losing weight,' I told her. 'If anything, I want to get it

a few sizes too small.'

'We hear that all the time. Most brides plan to slim down,' she smiled. 'But many end up putting on weight due to the stress of wedding planning.'

'We can take a dress in, but we can't make one bigger. It's safer to order a size up,' she assured me.

I aimed to lose 4st in time for my big day and as the months passed, the pounds fell off me.

I couldn't even run to the end of the road when I started, but before long, I could do 3.5 miles without

stopping. I even did the Manchester Colour Run 5k in 32 minutes and was so proud. I went hula hoping

every Monday and walked the dog every day for an hour.

The weight was falling off me, so I phoned the wedding dress shop to warn them.

'It will be fine,' the manager assured me. 'We can alter your dress to make it fit.'

Three weeks before the big day, I went for my fitting.

'I can't believe how well you've done,' the shop assistant gasped.

In 197 days, I lost a whopping 8st 7lbs, and as the shop assistant slipped the dress on me, it fell straight off again.

'It's way too big!' I cried. I was

**The diet worked perfectly for me**



swamped in material.

The assistant looked at me with a nervous expression.

It was seven sizes too big. 'There's too much material. We won't be able to alter it,' she admitted, embarrassed.

I had no choice but to swap my dress – just 21 days before the wedding.

Frantically flicking through the dresses on the rails, I pulled one out and dashed into the changing room to try it on.

Whipping back the curtain, I felt every inch the blushing bride in the slinky size 12 fishtail number I had on.

'You look beautiful, Alex,' Mum croaked.

'This is 'the one', I sighed.

On the morning of the wedding, as guests gathered at the venue, a few of them walked past without recognising me – as I wasn't in my wedding dress.

My hard work had clearly paid off.

Later that day, when I walked down the aisle towards Kev, his face was a picture.

'You look incredible,' he whispered, before we each said our vows.

After getting married, I continued to lose weight.

Now I can slip into a slender size 10 with ease after shedding more than 10st.

I now weigh a healthy 12st 10lbs.

Visit Alex's blog at [www.happyhungryhuman.co.uk](http://www.happyhungryhuman.co.uk)

## Alex's Diet

### Before

- Breakfast** - Skipped
- Lunch** - Ham and cheese panini and a chocolate bar
- Dinner** - Pizza, garlic bread and Coke, or a large meal from McDonald's.
- Snacks** - Cookies and chocolate bars

### Now

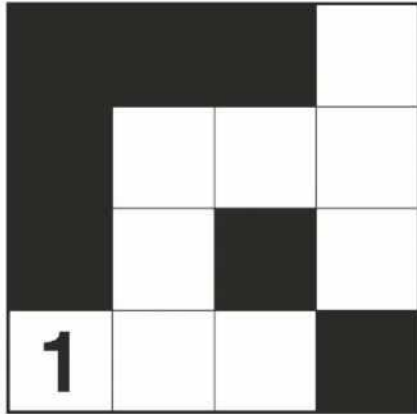
- Breakfast** Cambridge Weight Plan shake
- Lunch** - Cambridge Weight Plan shake
- Dinner** - A 200 calorie meal such as chicken breast, poached eggs, and lettuce

**Guests didn't recognise me**

# Number fit



Which one of the listed numbers won't fit in this mini grid?



102

136

620

601

216

Your answer:

# Word search

Of what does One Direction star Liam Payne admit to having an irrational fear? The answer is the one missing from the grid.



ART DECO  
MOTORWAYS  
ASPIRIN  
DARKNESS  
FLYING  
FOG  
IRON  
LIFTS

MUSHROOMS  
OXYGEN  
POPCORN  
SPOONS  
RADAR  
SEAGULLS  
SINGING

Your answer:

# Baby disas

## Charlotte and her premature boy were stranded in Majorca



Charlotte Taylor, 23, Doncaster

Lounging on a sunbed with a blossoming bump, I soaked up some rays.

'The baby enjoys the sunshine,' I smiled at my boyfriend, Luke, 20.

It was last September, and I was 27 weeks pregnant with my first baby – a boy.

Luke and I had joined my family for a holiday in Majorca.

'It'll be our baby moon,' I joked.

Our last chance to relax before sleepless nights.

I'd suffered with hyperemesis gravidarum for the first six months – severe morning sickness.

Thankfully, I'd just started feeling better when we jetted off for our two-week holiday.

But the day before we were due to leave, I got backache.

'I think the baby's moved,' I moaned to my mum, Annette, 47.

Uncomfortable, I headed for an early night.

But, at 11.30pm, I awoke with a start. I felt intense pressure. Only,

reaching down between my legs, I felt the baby's head!

'Luke!' I screeched.

'I'm having the baby!'

The colour drained from Luke's face and he raced to get Mum.

'It's too early,' Mum cried.

Someone from the hotel staff called an ambulance.

'I can't have my baby here,' I cried, panicking.

He was three months premature – I knew that his chances of survival were slim.

The ambulance arrived, but we were 45 minutes from the nearest medical centre.

There was only room for one

more in the ambulance

– and I was so scared,

I wanted my mum.

So Luke stayed

behind, anxiously

waiting for news.

'Call when you

arrive,' he said.

After a hellishly

long journey, we

reached the hospital and I had a

strong, painful contraction.

The worst yet!

'The baby's coming,' I gasped.

I was bundled into a wheelchair

and taken to a hastily-made bed.

Everyone was speaking to each

other in Spanish and I had no idea

what was happening.

'Don't push!' a nurse said. But

I knew it was dangerously early

# moon ster!



**Our holiday turned into a three month fight for life**

my body had taken over and the urge was too great.

'I have to,' I cried. Just 10 minutes after arriving at the hospital, Zeke was born.

Doctors whisked him away. 'Is he OK?' I sobbed. For the next four hours, doctors battled so save him.

No one could tell me anything. I couldn't bear to call Luke, not when I didn't know if it was bad news or not.

Finally, at 6am, Zeke was wheeled in, in an incubator. He was alive! 'But he's so tiny,' I sobbed,

touching his little fingers.

He weighed just 2lb 2oz, had an oxygen mask on, and his skin was translucent.

Minutes later, he was taken to a larger hospital. Finally, I called Luke.

'Zeke pulled through,' I wept. Overwhelmed with relief, Luke headed to see him.

Then I was transferred, too. 'Doctors say we have to take it one day at a time,' Luke explained. Zeke was too small and poorly to fly home.

We were stranded. Our insurance paid

**My bump and I soaked up the sun**

for me and Luke to stay in a hotel, but the rest of my family had to fly home.

'I'll call every day,' I told Mum.

At three months premature, Zeke was in Intensive Care, suffering with under-developed lungs and a hole in his heart.

Doctors needed his weight to double before they'd consider sending him back to the UK.

Luke and I caught the bus to the hospital every day.

But paying for food and travel drained our savings, so we set up a GoFundMe page and raised over £2,000. After two weeks, I held my

baby for the first time.

'I don't want to let him go,' I sobbed to Luke.

Weeks passed, Zeke's organs finally stabilised, and he was taken off oxygen – but he was still extremely underweight.

'Just need to fatten you up now,' I smiled at him.

Finally, last December, we were flown home, and Zeke, who'd reached 4lb 4oz, was admitted to Doncaster Royal Infirmary.

Being stranded in Majorca with a poorly baby had been too stressful for our relationship, so Luke and I split to focus totally on Zeke.

It was sad, but amicable.

Just before Christmas, I was allowed to take my baby home.

'I can't believe we're home,' I sobbed to Mum, as she finally cuddled her grandson.

My siblings Abigail, 22, Rebekah, 19, and Caleb, 19, enjoyed cuddles, too.

Zeke is now thriving and has come on leaps and bounds.

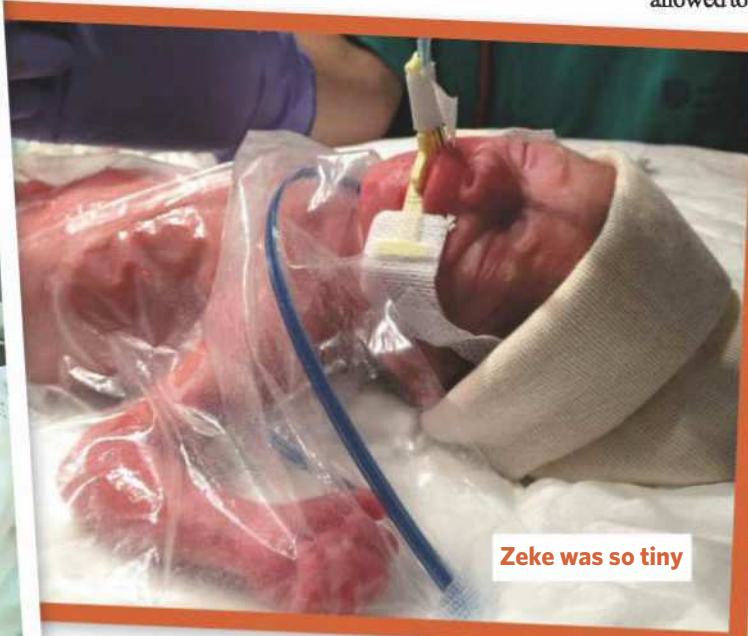
Everyone spoils him, and Luke visits regularly.

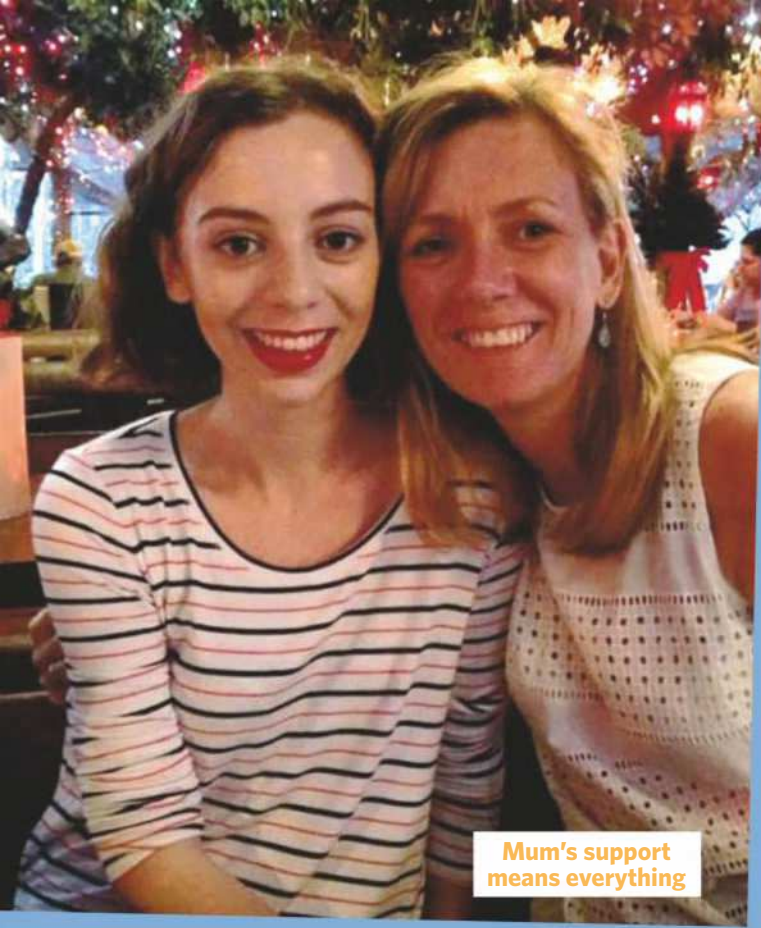
Usually people come home from their holidays with a tan, but we came home with a baby!

**Luke and I focused on our son**



**Zeke was so tiny**





Mum's support means everything

# I TWO

# GIVE

## I had a 25% chance of survival, but I beat the odds



Beth Semikin, 24, London

**J**umping as my morning alarm woke me from my deep sleep, I hit the off switch and swung myself out of bed.

No sooner had I stood up than I came crashing back down again. My legs turned to jelly as I collapsed and smacked my back against my chest of drawers on the way down.

'Ouch!' I shrieked.

Only the week before I'd had a small owl tattooed on my lower back. Now the freshly-inked area was more tender than ever.

A few weeks later, the pain got so bad that I had to call in sick from my uni lectures and spent the entire day in bed.

As I lay under the duvet feeling sorry for myself, I noticed a tingling sensation spreading

through my right leg.

The pins and needles continued non-stop for the next few weeks, so I went to see my GP.

'Come back if the pain hasn't improved in few weeks,' he said, sending me home with painkillers.

I took them as recommended, but a month later the pain was still there.

After my follow up appointment, I was referred to an orthopaedic surgeon, who ordered an MRI scan of my back.

The results came in and he assured me there was nothing abnormal about my scan at all.

But to be safe, the consultant recommended I take a five-week course of osteopathy to help soothe my aching muscles and joints.

After that failed to help, I began to fear that I would be in pain forever.

It was affecting my whole life.

I had to postpone my end-of-year exams and stop cycling to uni.

It got so bad that I could barely walk anymore.

I had no interest in eating and dropped a stone in weight.

While all of my friends were out celebrating the end of uni, I

telephoned my mum Allison in Surrey to ask her to come and pick me up early.

'I'm exhausted and just want to be at home,' I moaned to her.

I didn't feel like myself anymore.

Not knowing what was wrong with me, the doctors sent me for a second MRI scan.

When the results were ready, they called Mum and I in for a meeting at the hospital.

But this time the news was not what we'd been expecting.

They had discovered a soft tissue sarcoma.

'That's a cancerous tumour in between your spine and pelvis,' the doctor explained.

They went on to say sarcoma was incredibly rare and made up just 1% of cancers.

Strangely, I felt a sense of relief rather than fear.

*Now they finally know what's wrong, they can fix it and I won't have to live with this chronic pain for the rest of my life,* I thought.

Mum and I were told that the tumour was growing near the nerves on the right side of my body, which explained why I'd been in such enormous agony.

But the doctors assured me that although it was a tumour, they were sure it was benign, and I could have surgery to remove it.

Following the op, Mum and I travelled all the way to

Florida so I could undergo proton therapy to irradiate the damaged tissue, as the treatment wasn't available in the UK yet.

We'd only been there one night when the symptoms I had before the operation started to come back.

My right leg was achy and I could only manage to walk with a limp.

I had an emergency MRI scan in Florida and the radiographer told me that some cancerous cells were still in my body.

It turned out that the first operation I had to remove the tumour backfired as they had interfered with it in such a way that they actually increased the chances of it spreading – and the tumour regrew to double the size.

I was told I now had just a 25% chance of survival. Mum and I flew

The pain was spreading through me fast

I'm too young to die



# N'T UP



**I was taken apart and put back together again**



**I've taken control back**

back to England on the next available flight.

We tried our best to stay upbeat as I underwent full body scans to check for signs of the cancer spreading, but it was a worrying time for us.

When the results came in, the consultants sat us down and said my cancer had returned.

It hit me then that I might actually die from this.

I was only 21 years old.

It's not something I'd

ever considered.

It felt like the walls were closing in on me.

I didn't know who to turn to because I was scared of upsetting my family, so I text a friend to tell her the news. *I don't want to die*, I typed. Seeing the words made it seem even more real.

That night I jumped in the shower and sobbed hysterically as the water ran over me.

I didn't know what would happen next and I was

**I'm fighting this everyday**



terrified. Weeks later, I was finally ready to have a second operation that lasted 11 hours. Surgeons opened me up and detached my spine from my pelvis, removed the tumour, and then reattached it using titanium screws.

'I'll be taken apart and put back together,' I joked to Mum before it was time to go to theatre.

When I finally came round, I felt like I'd been hit by a bus.

The surgical team came to visit me and told me that in their eyes, the operation couldn't have gone any better.

I crossed my fingers and hoped that finally everything was going to be alright.

After the operation, I spent eight long nights in intensive care.

My body went through stages of being completely numb or extremely sensitive.

When I was eventually moved to a ward, I was still in a lot of pain.

But with the help of a frame, I could slowly learn to walk again.

One afternoon I plucked up the courage to look in the mirror and I barely recognised myself.

A big unsightly scar stretched all the way along my stomach and

down my back.

There was no denying it was ugly, but I felt oddly proud of it.

It was a permanent reminder of everything I'd been through to get to this point.

After three weeks recovering in the hospital, Mum and I went back to the States where I finally had the proton therapy.

We joked that with all the metal in my back, I'd set off the security scanners at the airport, but luckily we went through without a hitch.

Returning home in March 2016, I underwent five rounds of chemo.

But soon, my bowel perforated against the metal screws, forming a pelvic abscess.

As a result, I battled with a terrible infection until September last year.

In the end, most of the metal work had to be surgically removed.

I ended up suffering a slipped disc, and I am still on a course of antibiotics to fight my infection.

Throughout the whole journey, I've kept a blog to keep me going through the ups and downs and to document what I've been through.

It's had over 5,000 views and I've met fantastic people through it.

A cancer diagnosis takes so much from you, so trying to put humour into it lets me take control back.

**Visit Beth's blog at [www.tumourhasit.co.uk](http://www.tumourhasit.co.uk)**

**The tumour grew back twice the size**

# HOPE FOR JACOB

## A family waited 27 years for answers on their missing son

Three young boys rode their bikes down a remote country road in rural Minnesota on their way back from a video store.

It was October 1989 and the road was dark as 11-year-old Jacob Wetterling, his younger brother Trevor and best friend Aaron Larson used flashlights to see their way.

Out of the dark jumped a masked man with a gun.

Trevor and Aaron escaped, but Jacob was taken.

The impact of Jacob's abduction was felt across America, bringing 'stranger danger'

to every parent's attention.

Decades rolled by with no trace of Jacob, but his parents never gave up searching.

Sandy-haired Jacob lived with his brother Trevor, 10, his two sisters, Carmen and Amy, and parents Patty and Jerry.

Their home was in St Joseph, Minnesota, a rural town of just 3,000 people.

Jacob was a kind, popular boy who loved spending time

with his best friend, 11-year-old Aaron.

Mum Patty treasures the video of Jacob and Aaron laughing in a swimming pool on Jacob's 11th birthday, eight months before being taken.

The sun was setting on October 22, 1989, when Jacob, Trevor and Aaron cycled to the video store.

Patty and Jerry were out with friends that night and had given the boys permission to go.

Back then, no one thought twice about letting their kids roam free.

Bad things just didn't happen in St Joseph.

At around 9pm, a masked man stopped the boys with a gun. He made them throw their bikes in a ditch and lay face down.

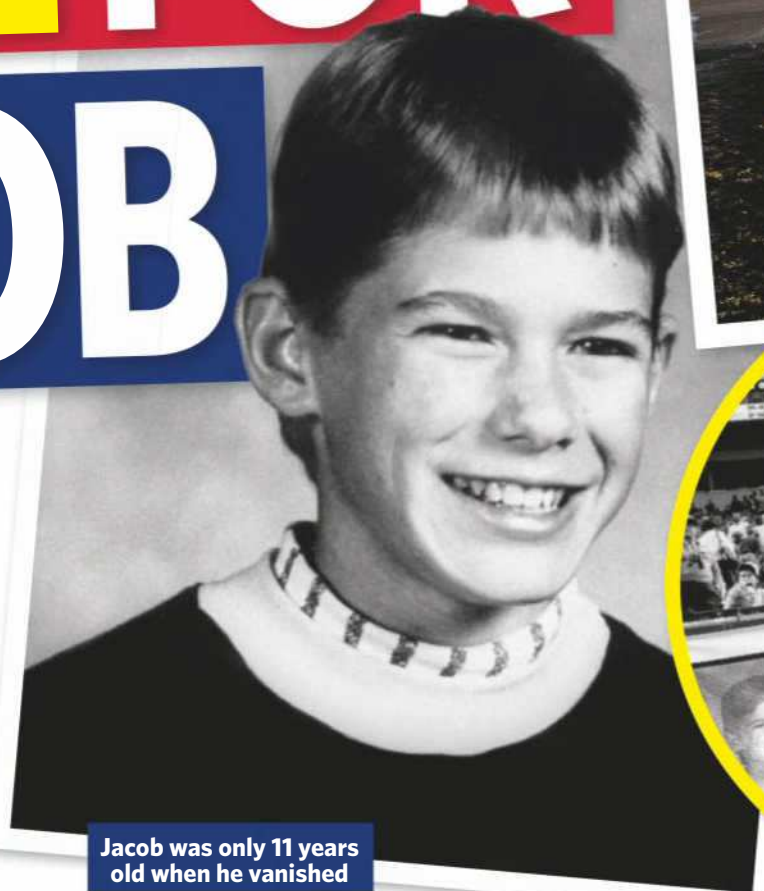
After asking their ages, he told Trevor to run as fast as he could into the woods.

'If you look back, I'll shoot you,' he threatened.

The man told Aaron to run, too, and Jacob disappeared.

Back at the house, Trevor and Aaron called 911.

Jacob's distraught parents returned home to a nightmare. Local



Jacob was only 11 years old when he vanished

search parties scoured the area along with over 200 National Guards. Nothing.

Jacob's abduction changed a generation of childhoods and his smiling photo was a symbol of broken innocence.

With no trace of a body, there was always the chance that Jacob was still alive, and for 27 years, there was hope.

Patty and Jerry set up the Jacob Wetterling Foundation to raise awareness of child safety.

The Jacob Wetterling Act passed in 1994 was the first law to start a ground-breaking state sex-offender registry.

But behind it all was a family desperate to have their boy home.

They kept his name in the headlines through their 'Jacob's Hope' campaign and Patty wrote open letters to his abductor, pleading for answers.

Every year, they celebrated Jacob's

birthday – right up to when he would have been 38.

In October 2015, Danny Heinrich had been arrested on charges of child pornography. Police suspected he was involved with Jacob's disappearance, but lacked evidence.

Investigators believed he'd also abducted a 12-year-old boy called Jared Scheierl as he walked home from a café, just nine months before

Jacob went missing. Jared



Jacob's mum never gave up

Jared was a victim too

The road the boys were ambushed on

# Making of a MONSTER

## Heinrich's crime destroyed a generation of childhoods

When the answers came, they were heartbreaking

### Three decades of campaigns

had been set free. Police used DNA from Jared's sweatshirt and matched it to Heinrich using updated technology.

The statute of limitations had expired for charging him for assaulting Jared, so they'd searched his home and charged him with counts of child pornography.

But what about Jacob?

After a year in prison, Heinrich made a deal. He confessed to Jacob's abduction and in return for taking them to his body, he'd avoid charges in

Best friend Aaron

connection to the crime.

It was a deal approved by Jacob's grieving parents.

On September 1, the FBI recovered bones and clothing buried in a field near Paynesville, 30 miles from where Jacob was taken.

Dental records confirmed it was the missing boy.

There was also his hockey jacket and a t-shirt labelled 'Wetterling'.

'Our hearts are broken,' said Jacob's mum.

Heinrich pleaded guilty to just one count of 25 child pornography charges and gave an excruciating testimony.

Heinrich admitted he'd lay in wait for the boys and confronted them with a revolver.

He'd handcuffed Jacob and had driven him away.

'What did I do wrong?' Jacob had asked him.

Heinrich had once been in the National Guard and had used a police scanner to avoid capture.

He drove Jacob to a gravel pit

near Paynesville where he sexually assaulted him.

Jacob begged to go home.

Heinrich said he couldn't, and Jacob started to cry.

Then a police car drove by.

'I panicked and pulled the revolver out of my pocket,' he said.

'I told the victim to turn around because I had to go to the bathroom.'

He shot Jacob dead.

He would return later to bury Jacob's body in a shallow grave.

A year later, he'd returned to the site and saw Jacob's red hockey jacket exposed,

so he moved the remains across the highway.

Heinrich, now 53, also admitted kidnapping and sexually assaulting Jared Scheierl. The

judge recommended a sentence of 20 years.

He faced no charges over Jacob's death.

Patty spoke to reporters: 'It's incredibly painful to know his last day, last hours, last minutes,' she said.

'For us, Jacob was

alive until we found him.'

She spoke of the importance of protecting every child.

'Jacob taught us all how to live, how to love, how to be fair, how to be kind,' she said.

Patty continues to work on behalf of missing children. Tragically, her own son would never come home.

Jacob's family asked their community to honour the number 11 in his memory - it was Jacob's soccer team number and the age he died. To continue Jacob's legacy, they also shared 11 of his compassionate traits to inspire others to follow in his name.

1. Be fair
2. Be kind
3. Be understanding
4. Be honest
5. Be thankful
6. Be a good sport
7. Be a good friend
8. Be joyful
9. Be generous
10. Be gentle with others
11. Be positive



# BEST of the

# BUNCH



## This newborn really is one of a kind!



**Jemma Simpson Rodgers, 33, Birmingham**

**A**s the cameras rolled, another mystery hunk appeared as TV show host, Paddy McGuinness, said:

'Let the egg see the soldier!'

As the music sounded, the handsome fella emerged from the lift and strolled in front of me and the panel of ladies lined up in the hope of bagging a date.

I'd applied to go on the dating show *Take Me Out* for a laugh.

When I got a call to say I'd been chosen, I was so excited.

But I wasn't successful in bagging a date with any of the chaps I liked the look of and I ended up pressing my buzzer on most who tried to woo me.

By the end of the series, I still hadn't found romance.

But it didn't put me off.

As I was scrolling through Facebook, I spotted an advert for another TV dating programme.

*Are you single? Do you love*

*food?* the post read.

*Yes and yes*, I thought to myself.

On a whim, I decided to fill out the application form.

As the show was in its first series, I didn't know much about it.

But when producers called and did an interview, they filled me in.

It was called *Dinner Dates* and would be shown on ITV.

The idea was a singleton like me would pick three blind dates based purely on the menus put together by hopeful chaps who would then cook for me in their own home.

The interviewer asked me to describe my dream date and my nightmare date.

After a few weeks, I received a phone call to say I'd been chosen to **appear on the programme.**

Filming took place in March 2010, and as I sat in the restaurant – the cameras on me – I mullered over the menus in front of me. Sweet-

**Our Ember**



## We met on the dating show *Dinner Date*

toothed, I went for the ones with the most impressive puddings.

On the night of my first date, I applied another lick of lip gloss and did one last twirl in front of the mirror before heading downstairs and hopping into a taxi.

I had no idea where I was going or who I was meeting.

I knocked on date number one's door and waited to see who the mystery man was.

'Hi, I'm James,' the chap said as he showed me in and took my coat.

'Jemma,' I smiled. James was a

medium build and height with ginger hair.

As we tucked into his three courses, we made small talk, but it was slightly awkward.

Although James did win brownie points for giving me a slice of the cheesecake he'd made to take home with me.

Even though he was nice enough, I didn't feel a spark, and as I left at the end of the night, I had a feeling we probably wouldn't see each other again.

The next night, I got ready for date number two.

The cameras rolled as I turned up at a doorstep in Leicester – 50 miles away from where I lived.

A guy called Edd answered. He was tall and bald – just my type.

As we sat down and tucked into his first course of figs in parma ham, the conversation flowed naturally.

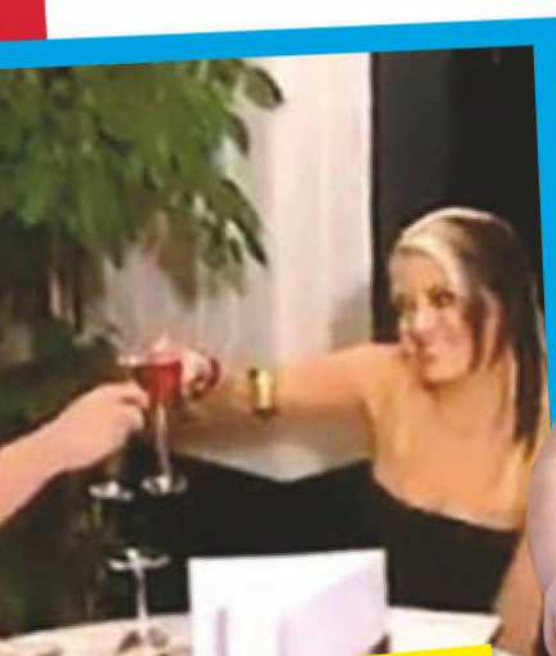
Edd was funny, confident and charming.

As he cleared away our plates, I had a confession to

**The crew told me to stop singing**

**Edd proposed during another TV performance**





Now we have a baby girl!

**I chose him because of his pudding, but I hated his curry!**



We fought hard to be a family

make: 'I don't really like curry,' I said. 'Why did you pick my menu then?' he laughed, dishing up a bowl of Thai curry.

'It was the dessert,' I giggled.

After devouring Edd's fried chocolate wrapped in filo pastry pudding, he picked up his guitar.

'Play me a song!' I said. So Edd strummed away to Take That's *Back For Good*.

I sang along, before the production crew asked me to stop, as I was so out of tune.

When it was time to say goodbye, I gave Edd a peck on the cheek and thanked him for a lovely evening.

I didn't expect to see him again – especially as he lived so far away.

But the third and final date – the following day – was a disaster.

He got a little too tipsy over dinner and we didn't gel.

The show saw the 'winner' asked on a second date at a restaurant – while the two losers get a ready meal delivered to their door.

I knew who I was going to pick to go on another date with: Edd.

I got glammed up, and as the taxi

pulled up outside, I suddenly felt a wave of nerves. As Edd answered the door, a big smile spread across his face.

We went for dinner at a posh restaurant down the road and after an hour or so, the camera crew left us to it.

At the end of the night, Edd and I shared a cheeky kiss and swapped numbers before we added each other on Facebook.

Edd and I kept messaging and meeting up, but I didn't think it

would go anywhere as we lived so far apart.

When my dad asked me how the filming and my date went, I laughed: 'I picked the best of a bad bunch.'

But Edd and I continued to get to know each other, and by the time our episode of *Dinner Dates* aired on TV six months later, we'd become a couple.

When I introduced Edd to my family and friends, they told me: 'He's a keeper.'

A year flew by and soon we bought our first house together in Alvechurch,

and I got married the following June in front of 120 friends and family.

My dad's speech cracked our guests up when he recounted how I'd told him that I'd 'picked the best of a bad bunch'.

Dad said: 'So congratulations, Jemma, on marrying the best of a bad bunch.'

Soon after becoming husband and wife, Edd and I decided we wanted to start a family, but we struggled to conceive.

After three years of trying to fall pregnant naturally, we had IVF privately, paying £7,000.

After undergoing two rounds of treatment, I finally fell pregnant in February 2016.

My pregnancy was anything but smooth and I suffered with horrendous morning sickness, heartburn, aches and pains and even developed gestational diabetes.

But when our daughter, Ember, arrived on 3 November 2016, weighing 5lbs 8oz, we realised it was all worthwhile.

We called her Ember because of Edd's job as a firefighter and because she was born so close to Bonfire Night.

Now almost 18 months old, she's full of mischief – just like her dad.

All proud new parents think their newborns are one of a kind, but our Ember really is – she's the very first baby to ever come from the TV show *Dinner Dates*.

I never thought that I would pick my future husband – and the father of my daughter – from a menu, but I'm so glad I did.

Worcestershire. After his TV debut,

Edd thought

it would be fun to apply for the game show *Deal or No Deal*.

He was eventually chosen to go on the programme and won a whopping £18,000.

The day before his episode was aired in August 2012, Edd sent a bouquet of flowers to my office with a card which read: *Will you marry me? Deal or No Deal?*

Stunned, my hands were shaking as I called him and said 'yes'.

We went ring shopping together and I chose a platinum sparkler. Edd

## Edd added:

**Y**ou never go on one of those TV shows thinking 'oh I'm going to find someone for forever', let alone your wife – and the mother of your child. I didn't think that for a second.

If it wasn't for being randomly matched on a TV dating show, then we never would have met.

If it wasn't for *Dinner Dates*, we would never have our lovely little daughter and we can't imagine life without her now.

You don't imagine that meeting someone random on a TV show will plan the rest of your life out.

I had spent all those years trying to find a partner for myself and failing. And it turns out ITV did it for me.

It seems they are a better judge of people – and of me – than I am.'

# EAT YOUR HEART OUT

Take a culinary tour of some of Europe's top foodie destinations...

## Macedonia

Chances are, you know very little about this country, let alone its cuisine, but with its delicious mix of Balkan, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean dishes, Macedonian food is certainly something to behold. Think an abundance of cheese, pastry and meat, alongside a wide selection of fresh veggies and an always-appreciated helping of local wine. Most local dishes have been passed from generation to generation, and because tourists are so rare here, you're sure to be served with warming hospitality. As you explore the country's clear lakes and charming riverside villages, you'll find a wealth of foodie wonders worth bragging about.

### National dish:

Pogacha: a traditional round loaf made with white cheese, yoghurt and eggs.

### Getting there:

Fly to Macedonia from £113 with EasyJet.

Delicious warm

## Montenegro

With deep blue Mediterranean waters and charming small towns, Montenegro's landscapes speak for themselves. Discover an array of restaurants serving Turkish snacks, Italian staples and a ton of quality local beer and wine. And if that doesn't whet your appetite, the coffee culture will. Visit the town of

### Eat local



Kotor, where stunning alleyways offer up culinary diversity – here you'll find grilled kebabs, goulash, traditional bean soups, and enough seafood to keep you happy for life.

### National dish:

Kacamak: a mushy, strong meal made from buckwheat, barley, and corn flour, and served with cheese and sour milk.

### Getting there:

Fly to Montenegro from £200 with Turkish Airlines.

# Greece

With healthy, fresh staples of olive oil, feta cheese, fresh fish and filo pastry, it's hard to fault Greek cuisine. The country's culinary culture is considered to be over 4,000 years old, and its rustic simplicity combined with plentiful herbs and tender meats are what food dreams are made of. You'll find quality meals anywhere you go, but be sure to visit the olive groves of the Saronic Islands and the fish markets of Aegina for a truly local and delicious culinary experience.



### National dish:

Baklava: filo pastry layered with honey and ground nuts.

### Getting there:

Fly to Athens from £34 with Ryanair.



Rich and sweet

### Loved by fishermen



# Croatia

Home to over 1,000 islands, sun, sea, and water-fall-filled national parks, Croatia is really hard not to love. Travel to the culinary capital of Istria, a peninsula jutting into the Adriatic Sea. It's a dream for foodies, thanks to its truffles, olive oil, steak and prosciutto. After gorging yourself here, head to the walled city of Zadar, a food lover's haven known for its fresh seafood and locally-grown cherry liqueur that's simply a must-try.



### National dish:

Brodetto: a fish stew cooked over an open fire, made with a tomato base and ample amounts of vinegar.

### Getting there:

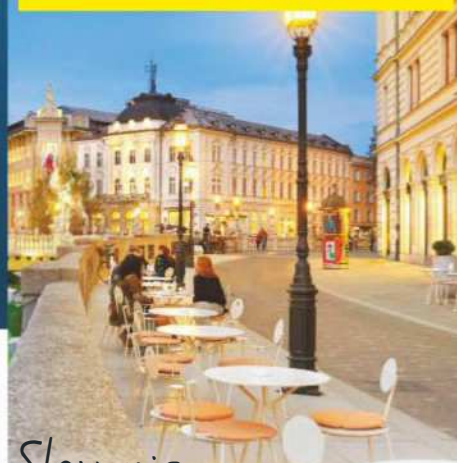
Fly to Croatia from £120 with British Airways.

### National dish:

Žlikrofi: small dumplings cooked in hot water and filled with potato, onion, and smoked bacon.

### Getting there:

Fly to Ljubljana from £101 with EasyJet.

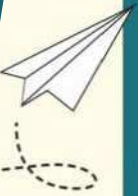


# Slovenia

This country has something for everyone, from soaring mountain ranges to quaint towns by the sea. And the cuisine is equally diverse - boasting everything from alpine stews and psrut (dried ham) to some sensational strudels. Start your culinary tour in the capital city of Ljubljana, where there is a host of riverside cafés all serving schnapps, a fruity liqueur that doubles as the country's national drink. Journey on to Piran, a town near the border of Italy and Croatia, known for its olive oils and local wines.



# Travel NEWS



## Happy birthday!

A German tourist has set the record for the longest birthday ever. Sven Hagemeyer spent his 26th birthday in style - all 46 hours of it! Sven managed to stretch his birthday to almost two days by flying from Auckland, New Zealand, to Brisbane, Australia, and on to Hawaii. The trip crossed the International Date Line, giving him a super long celebration. The downside? Eating airplane food the whole time!



## Hotel hacks

If you're flexible, opting for a weekend flight gives you a greater chance of being bumped up to business class on short-haul flights. This is according to travel experts at airFair, who also suggest booking a seat directly behind the business class section, as you're more likely to be offered a seat in that area without causing a fuss. Not in a rush? Volunteer to be bumped. You'll miss your flight, but the airline will probably put you up in a hotel for the night and offer you an upgrade on a flight the next day.



## Why aye pet!

Newcastle Upon Tyne has been crowned by Rough Guides as the top place to visit in 2018. The northern town even beat the likes of Cuba, Chile, South Africa, Sicily and Belize to take the top spot. The Rough Guides team hailed the city's famous Geordie geniality, fantastic museums, great nightlife, and up-and-coming restaurant scene among the best attractions.

# TAN-TASTIC!

All I wanted was to be a stunning, bronzed beauty...



**Ebony Foley,**  
20, Burnley

Prepping for the weekend, I had a fun Saturday night ahead of me.

Me and my mates had organised a girlie night out in Manchester to celebrate a friend's 21st birthday.

The outfits had been bought and exciting plans made.

All that was left to do was to make sure I was bronzed.

Three days before our night out, I ran to the shops in search of my favourite fake bake.

I always make sure I'm glowing, but I wanted a top-up before the weekend. Only, I found my



I'm obsessed with being tanned

Instead of a golden glow I looked absolutely ridiculous!

favourite brand was out of stock! 'I want to be nice and brown,' I told the sales assistant.

'Try this one instead. The colour comes out so well,' she suggested, handing me a can marked 'darker than dark'.

'Is that the one you've got on? Your skin looks amazing!' I said.

'Yep, I love it,' she smiled. Without hesitation, I bought a can and headed straight home.

Spreading the tanning mousse on my legs, I saw them turn a gorgeous golden colour.

So I covered the rest of my body in the stuff, and then my face.

Afterwards, I looked in the mirror.

Only, in seconds, my skin turned several shades darker.

'What on earth have I done?' I yelled, panicking.

Filling the sink, I desperately started trying to scrub it off.

But it was too late.

Looking at my reflection, I

burst out laughing.

Luckily, I have a sense of humour and don't take myself too seriously – which is just as well, as I looked absolutely ridiculous.

Creeping downstairs, I went to show my boyfriend, Dean, 29.

'Dean,' I said. 'You'll never guess what happened...'

But before I could explain, he took one look at me and doubled over in hysterics.

'Ebony, what are you like?' he laughed, struggling to speak as tears streamed down his face.

'You have to help me get it off!' I begged, still laughing.

When he finally composed himself, Dean helped me scrub my face with a sponge.

But it wouldn't come off.

'This isn't working, babe,' he said. 'But it's so funny, the mistake was worth it!'

Dean's son, seven, was staying with us that night.

When he saw my face, he burst into tears.

'I don't like it!' he cried. His

reaction was priceless, and it made us laugh even more.

By now, Dean was howling with laughter, collapsed on the sofa.

So was I.

I knew my mates wouldn't let me live it down.

I had to make fun of myself before they had a chance to.

I video-called a friend to show her. As soon as my face appeared, she looked terrified!

'What have you done?' she cried.

Then I took a screenshot and uploaded it on Facebook.

All my friends and family had a good laugh at my expense.

I really didn't want to leave the house.

But I had work the next day, so I didn't have much of a choice.

When I turned

up at my office job in the morning, feeling sheepish, they'd all already seen the picture I'd posted online.

Everyone started cracking up, including me!

I didn't go to my mate's 21st party, though, and spent weeks hiding at home until it faded.

I'm still obsessed with being tanned, I'm just more careful about which one I buy.

I simply couldn't face another fake-bake fail.

I desperately tried to scrub it off

We were all in hysterics

# + Health and happiness

Real-life plus trends, info and advice

## INSTANT APPOINTMENT

With Dr Adam Friedmann



Dr Adam Friedmann is a consultant dermatologist at The Harley Street Dermatology Clinic ([www.theharleystreetdermatologyclinic.co.uk](http://www.theharleystreetdermatologyclinic.co.uk))



Hard time

### Spot check

**Q** My teenage son has acne. My doctor says there's nothing we can do. Can that really be true?

Emily, Hull

**A** Although avoidance of acne can be tricky, as often acne is down to genetics or hormones, please be reassured that acne can be very easily treated by a dermatologist. The most important thing is to treat swiftly to prevent the risk of permanent scars. Acne can be cured completely with the right treatment. Antibiotics can suppress the condition, however if your son's acne is severe or long-standing, he may require a stronger treatment in the form of isotretinoin. This drug offers a good chance of a cure, but there are side effects to consider.

### Don't ignore

**Q** How do I know when to worry about a mole? One has started to itch recently but I feel silly going to a doctor.

Deb, Plymouth

**A** We should all regularly check our own moles. If you've noticed a mole has started to itch please visit your GP and they'll refer you to a specialist if they're concerned. There are 5 tips on what to look for in moles that might be becoming melanoma: 1) Rapidly growing or enlarging moles, 2) Moles that change shape and become irregular, 3) Blurring of the borders of a mole, 4) Changing colour, and 5) ulceration or bleeding. If you're ever in doubt, get yourself checked. Catching a mole before it turns malignant is the best possible treatment.



Any change?

### The sting

**Q** The top of my cheeks get so red and sore. Sometimes it gets so bad they sting. What is it and will it ever go?

Helen, Glasgow



Can't face it

**A** Redness on the face is commonly caused by one of two conditions: seborrhoeic dermatitis or acne rosacea. Seborrhoeic dermatitis is a skin condition that causes redness, inflammation and scaling. It will often respond to treatment by a GP. Acne Rosacea is a combination of genetics. The redness can be treated with creams such as Mirvaso or with laser therapy. If you are also suffering with acne, switch off the acne component first, otherwise redness will recur.

### Feeling betrayed



What's on your mind?

## Handling an affair

**I recently discovered that my husband has been having an affair. I'm completely devastated. Is there any way we can fix our relationship?**

The pain and shock of discovering a partner's infidelity can be very traumatic, so it should come as no surprise that it can often take several years for couples to effectively repair their relationship after an affair comes to light. Remember that every relationship is different, so there is no right or wrong way to recover from it.

### Trauma of discovery

Discovering your partner has been unfaithful can bring up feelings of depression, anger, and shame. The best way to deal with these initial feelings is to discuss them in a supportive, non-judgmental environment, where someone will simply listen without offering knee-jerk advice. You might want to join a support group or try individual counselling.

### Assess the relationship

After the initial shock has passed, it helps to make an assessment of how you and your partner want to resolve the problem. Do you both genuinely want to try and save the relationship, or is one of you confused about how you feel? To make any progress, you both need to be working towards the same goal.

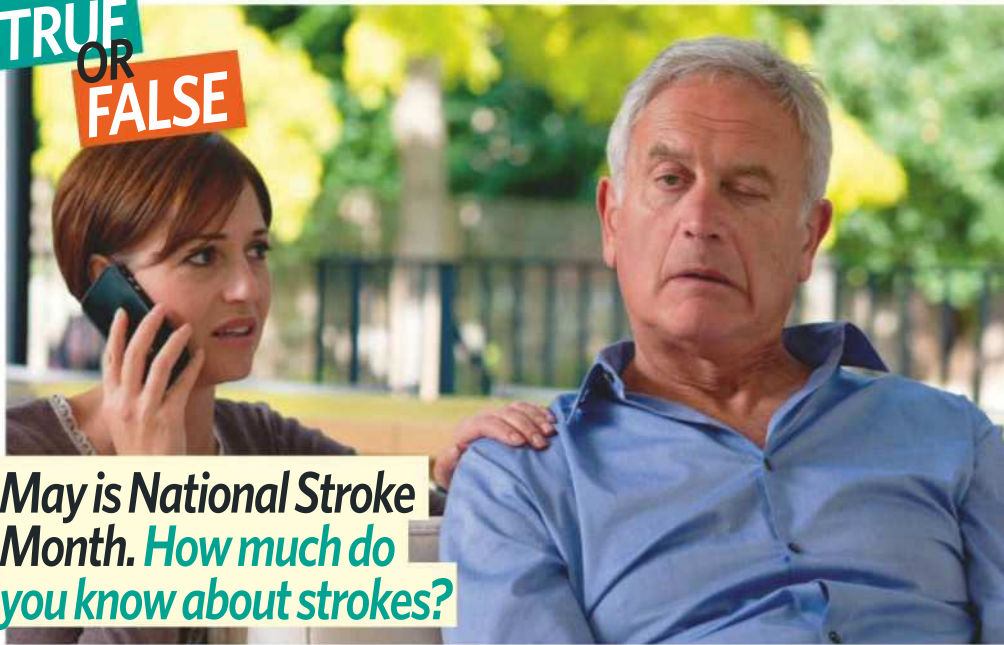
### Restoring trust

If you decide that you want to save your relationship, the next step is to try and understand the underlying motivation behind the affair, and take steps to change the factors which led your partner to cheat. This process will give you a sense of control, and working together will bring back a sense of reassurance, leading to restoring trust.

Medical advice provided is for guidance only and does not substitute seeing a doctor. If you have concerns a face-to-face appointment with a doctor is recommended.

Images: Alamy

TRUE  
OR  
FALSE



May is National Stroke Month. How much do you know about strokes?

**1** Anyone can have a stroke.  
True  False

**2** Race is a risk factor for stroke.  
 True  False

**3** More women die from breast cancer than stroke.  
 True  False

**4** Smoking doubles your risk of stroke.  
 True  False

**5** Only people with high blood pressure have strokes.  
 True  False

**6** All strokes are the same.  
 True  False

**1. TRUE** Even children can have a stroke. They are the result of low oxygen to the brain. Depending on your risk factors, such as high blood pressure, smoking, and diabetes, you may be at higher risk for stroke than most people.

**2. TRUE** According to the National Institute of Health, strokes are more common in people of colour. While race is obviously a risk factor you can't change, knowing you are at a greater risk is a good reason to find out what you can change - get help for diabetes, high blood pressure, and quit smoking.

**3. FALSE** According to the National Stroke Association, while most women believe they are more at risk of dying from breast cancer, stroke kills twice as many women as breast cancer every year.

**4. TRUE** If you smoke, you are twice more likely to have a stroke than someone who has never smoked. The good news is it's never too late to stop. Quitting or cutting back now will significantly reduce your risk of having a stroke.

**5. FALSE** A recent study showed that middle-aged people with blood pressure only slightly above normal are 68 percent more likely to have a stroke than people with normal blood pressure. Even if your blood pressure is not high enough for your GP to prescribe medication, you can be at risk, and should focus on losing weight, exercising, and watching your salt intake.

**6. FALSE** There are three main types of stroke. A thrombotic stroke is caused by fatty deposits building up in the arteries, blocking oxygen from the brain. An embolic stroke is caused by a blood clot forming in another part of the body which then travels to the brain. A haemorrhagic stroke is caused when an artery breaks and bleeds into the brain.

# Pie CA

## A quick thinking niece saved Jemma's life



Jemma Landels, 38, Eyemouth, Berwickshire

It was a feast for the eyes and my niece, Beth, 15, and I had a prime spot to watch it all.

Women in smart dresses, high heels and fancy hats all wandered past the window.

'That's one of our fascinators!' I cried, pointing to a lady with one of my lime-green creations on her head.

It was June 2016, and Ladies' Day at the local racecourse.

I ran my own shop, selling everything from flowers to bespoke fascinators and we loved to watch the parade of race goers walking by in my creations.

'She nearly lost it then,' Beth laughed, as the winds started to pick up. It was a

Words by Hattie Bishop Photos: SWNS and Alamy

## + Health news

# Every day is a Sun-day

Skin cancer is now the most common cancer in the UK, with more people dying from it in Britain than in Australia. Dr Shilesh Iyer of the New York Dermatology Group explains that ultraviolet rays are always present. 'They are independent

of cold or hot weather and are not blocked by clouds,' he says. And according to the Karen Clifford Skin Cancer Charity (skcin.org), over 80% of skin cancers are caused by over-exposure to UV radiation. But despite these facts, the British public seem to be more

at risk than ever, with more sufferers here than in countries with more sun. So, while you may not think of using sun cream on a cloudy British day, think again. We should all be applying sun cream as part of a daily routine, no matter the weather, or the time of year.



# ce of KE

typical Scottish summer's day – raining and blustery.

But we were in the warm, and even better, had fairy cakes to munch on.

As the crowds walked by and the rain came down, I took a bite of one of the cakes.

Just then, one of the hundreds and thousands that topped it caught in the back of my throat.

Shocked by the sensation, I gasped suddenly.

As I inhaled quickly, the whole cake slammed into the back of my throat.

I tried to cough to clear it,

We were watching from my shop



So grateful to Beth



but I couldn't even breathe.

Usually I'm a really calm person, but the feeling of the cake lodged in my throat and the lack of air made me panic.

*I'm going to die!* I thought.

Beth looked over to me, confused at the look on my face. Then she suddenly twigged what was going on.

Rushing over, she got behind me and bent me over.

Thinking quickly, she slapped me firmly on the back with her palm, over and over.

It wasn't working, though. The lack of air was making my vision blurry and I felt faint.

*I don't want to die,* I thought, tears in my eyes.

Finally, on the fifth blow to the back, the fairy cake

came flying up out of my mouth.

In relief, I stood there, sucking in lungs full of air.

Beth stood there, stunned.

We were in silence, looking at each other and taking in the enormity of what had just happened.

'You saved my life,' I stammered. 'It was the first aid,' she said.

Beth wanted to be a paramedic and just weeks before, I'd signed her up for a two-hour first aid course with the volunteer first-response unit I co-ordinate in my spare time.

We were amazed when we realised that that decision had saved my life.

The next two days, I suffered from a migraine because of the loss of oxygen, and a sore back from Beth's pummelling, but I was totally fine.

I even finished the cake! Beth's

JUST WEEKS EARLIER BETH HAD DONE A FIRST AID COURSE

Beth slapped me over and over

mum – my sister Claire Cromarty – was as proud of her as I was.

She was even shortlisted for a Young First Aid Hero of the Year at the Scottish First Aid awards in Glasgow recently.

She didn't win but she's a true hero nonetheless.

Beth is humble and says that any one would have done the same thing.

But I know how special Beth is. She'll go on to save more lives one day. And I couldn't be prouder.

## SAVE A LIFE

The British Red Cross offers a range of first aid courses for people over the age of 16 who want to learn first aid. For details of courses near you, visit [www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk](http://www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk). You'll also find guides to finding the right course for you.

## Does it work?

New Era Q and J Mineral Tissue Salts, £8.79 each, [www.powerhealth.co.uk](http://www.powerhealth.co.uk)



**THEY SAY:** These supplements are designed to deliver targeted micro nutrients and minerals that the body needs to maintain optimum health and wellbeing.

**YOU SAY:** 'The tablets are simple to take, and work straight away. They also have no side effects, so are great to take at any time of the day.'

*Lynn, Cheltenham*

**WE SAY:** We love anything that has natural ingredients. New Era Q clears a blocked nose, while New Era J eases symptoms of colds. Win-win!

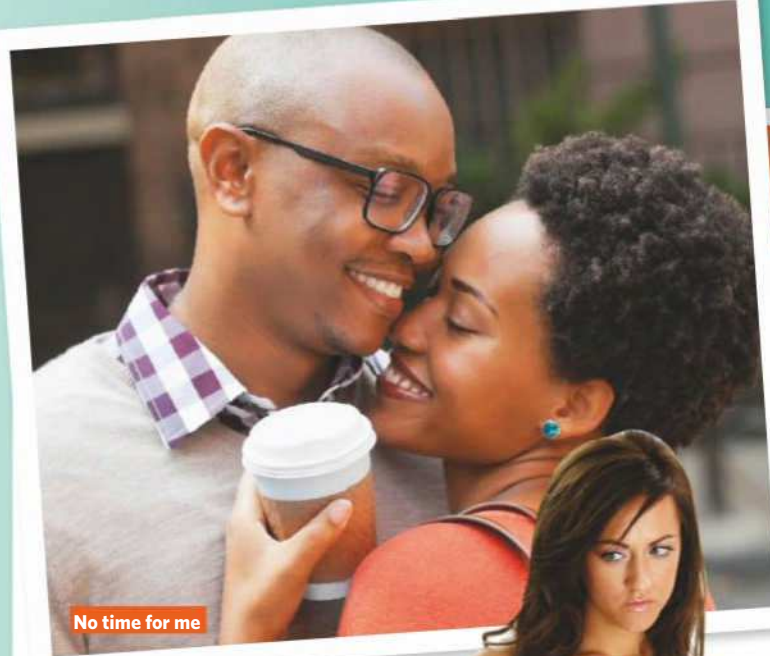
Just for  
**FUN**

# Spot it

Find the ten differences  
on this beach



Answer on page 61



## Too late to save our friendship?

Tracy, Plymouth

Feeling left out

I feel like my best friend has dumped me now she's got a boyfriend. Suddenly, she's not interested planning holidays or calling for a catch up. I feel like I was only good enough for her when she was single. Shall I tell her how hurt I am?

**YES** *Pick Me Up!*  
reader Grace from  
Kent says

It's really unfair of her to drop you when she's found a bloke! I bet she'll expect you to pick up the pieces, too, if it all falls apart. Sit your friend down and tell her how much your relationship means to you and say you don't feel like she makes the same effort. If she knows how upset you feel about it, she might actually wake up to her neglect.

**NO** *Pick Me Up!*  
reader Jen from  
Norwich says

You don't have to be in each other's pockets all the time to have a fulfilling friendship. Your mate is excited to be in love and she hasn't deliberately shunned you - she's just busy in the new relationship bubble. Keep in touch with a few messages and tell her you're pleased for her. If she means that much to you, don't you want her to be happy?

**Expert Jo says:**

I think you need to have a good long think about what you want to achieve by talking to her. If you want things to go back to how they were before she fell in love, you'll be sorely disappointed because this guy clearly means a lot to her and he is now a part of her life. In short, you are going to have to accept that things have changed if you want to keep her friendship. As her best friend, your job is to be happy for her and I suspect part of the reason she doesn't want to see you at the moment is that she senses your resentment. So, get busy with your own life, be pleased for her and remember that when the honeymoon phase is over, she'll be ready to spend a bit less time with her new beau and more time with her friends again.



# Your dilemmas

## Is it time for me to be tough?

Helen, Dorset

**M**y teenage daughter has started to get really funny about eating lately and I'm so worried. She's become obsessed with calories and I can sometimes hear her working out in her bedroom, often late into the night. I'm thinking about tricking her to come to the doctors so I can confront her. She won't be able to back out of it if a doctor is present. Is that the right way to go about it? I don't think she'd go along with it otherwise.



Weighing in my mind

### EXPERT ADVICE



**Leading UK Confidence Coach & Human Behaviour Expert and author of *Flying For Beginners: A Proven System for Lasting Self-Confidence* (Amazon) Jo Emerson (www.jo-emerson.com) says:**

**You absolutely do need to act now because** the eating disorder recovery rate is vastly better with early intervention. You are her mum and completely entitled to drag her to the doctors if needs be! She needs help and she needs it now before her eating disorder takes over, so do whatever you need to do to get her some treatment. Own your power as her mum and don't take no for an answer! Please be aware that mental health provision for kids in our country is poorly funded at the moment, but there are eating disorder charities that can support you or private healthcare options if you can afford it. BEAT (www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk) would be a great place for you to start getting advice. Good luck!

**YES** *Pick Me Up! reader Lisa from Cardiff says*

If your daughter is already deep in her obsession, then she's going to need outside help and it's your job to step in. She is clearly being secretive about her eating and weight goals, so you can't expect her to see the danger she's in. Book an appointment and take control of the situation, and do it fast.

**NO** *Pick Me Up! reader Sarah from London says*

I agree you need to get your daughter help, but ambushing her isn't the answer. You might lose her trust and then you'll find it harder to get through to her. Find a charity, or a doctor who will be willing to help and then gently persuade her by giving her the information she needs. If that doesn't work, then it will be time to act with a more heavy hand.

## Why won't he put a ring on it?

Elle, Blackpool

**M**y fiancé and I have been engaged for five years now and there's still no sign of a wedding. When I bring the subject up, he says we can't afford it or it's not the right time. Is it time to admit to myself that he just doesn't want to be with me?

**YES** *Pick Me Up! reader Dawn from Birmingham says*

I'm sorry, but I think if he really wanted to marry you, he would have agreed to it by now. He's just making excuses and it's time to ask him right out. Tell him if he can't see a future for the two of you, like he did when he proposed five years ago, then it's time that you both stopped wasting time with each other.

**NO** *Pick Me Up! Ruth from Derby says*

Are you sure his reasons for holding off the wedding aren't genuine? Perhaps you have been talking about your dream day and he's worried he can't afford to give you everything he wants you to have. Sit down and be honest. Say you'd marry him just the two of you - minimal costs. His reaction will tell you either way.

### Expert Jo says:

I think it's ultimatum time! For you, not him! While you keep waiting and hoping, you are giving him a clear message that you will keep waiting and hoping. So, my question to you is, 'how long are you going to wait and hope?' Is this wishy-washy-lack-of-any-real-commitment all you think you are worth? Let me tell you about what love can be... A man who is madly in love with you will not be able to wait to marry you! He will be beating you down for a date because he'll want the world to know you are his. Your fiancé is clearly not giving you this, so it's high time for you to admit that you have short-changed yourself and move on. Don't blame him - you



Tired of waiting

have chosen to stay this long, so in the end, you are both responsible for the state of your relationship. But it's your choice now, though, to bring this relationship to an end and move on.

# The super 7

Follow these unique health tips to give yourself a boost...

## Wash your hands after getting cash

Cleanliness tests have revealed that cash machines are just as dirty as public toilets, and some are even contaminated by the same bacteria known to cause vomiting. All sorts of organisms make their way onto cash machines. So, just as it's important to wash your hands after using the loo, it's just as important to do so after getting money out.



Keep it clean

## Use soap, not handwash

While increasingly popular, expensive antibacterial handwashes are no better than using an ordinary bar of soap. In fact, they may even encourage superbugs. Triclosan, the main ingredient found in handwash, can actually cause bacteria to become resistant to common antibiotics. But there's no triclosan in your ordinary bar of soap, so rather be safe than sorry!



Mucky money

## Chocolate milk works!

There are two things you need to do after a workout: recover and encourage the muscles to become stronger. A bit of protein goes a long way in doing this. By drinking milk, you get a source of protein, while the chocolate provides useful carbohydrates and a high sugar content to restore lost energy.



Delicious!



Keeps the doctor away

## Sniff an apple

An apple a day keeps the doctor away, but it turns out they have specific health benefits beyond that. The odour of green apples can actually reduce the severity of migraines. While scientists are not sure why, some believe that it has something to do with the pleasant fragrance relaxing us and reducing tension.

Happy associations with the odour may also distract us from thinking about the pain of a migraine.

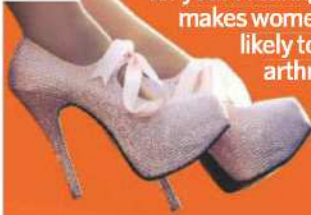
## Heels save knees

High heels are actually good for you! Wearing heels makes women less likely to develop arthritic

changes in their knee joints as

they age. Wearing heels, in fact, exercises the leg muscles, building up better support in the knees, especially if we regularly hit the dance floor. Italian urologist De Maria Cerruto also suggests that by toning your calves and pelvic muscles, wearing heels can even improve your sex life.

Style it out



## Pick Me Up! EXPRESS

Most of us keep our tablets in the bathroom, where they're exposed to humidity, reducing their efficiency. Keep them in the dry linen closet instead!

## Flush with the lid down

Always flush the toilet with the lid down. If you don't, polluted water particles can float for a few hours around your bathroom before they all land, some even on your toothbrush. Bacteria such as E. coli can make you very ill, so unless you want to brush your teeth with what was in the toilet, close the lid!



Contain the germs

## Retune the radio

Doing something different every day – even just switching radio stations – shakes us out of our routine and can help us kick bad habits. While deeply engrained habits of thinking keep us doing things that are bad for us, like smoking or drinking too much, we can greatly improve our mindsets by making very small changes.



Just for  
**FUN**

# Crack it!

Work out which letter each number represents. We've given you some letters to start, so you can instantly put in the letter **A** wherever there is a 15. Do this for all the starter letters. When you've filled the grid, put the correct letters into the answer boxes at the bottom to spell out a word.

14	8	25	13	8	6	11	8	22
----	---	----	----	---	---	----	---	----

	11	9	18	4	26	26	8	22		7		2		
26		8		24		19		16	18	4	14	16	6	
13	8	15	20	13	8	11		12		16		3		
16		17				11	15	13	8	14	11	8	22	
2	9	8	8	11		8		4		8		15		
2				9	15	18	8	23		18	19	26	5	
20	8	22		8		6		15		5		13		
19		4	22	16	4	19	2		21		2	8	15	
13	8	25		18		12	13	19	14	25	8		19	
	10		25		11		15		8		24	8	22	
13	19	18	8		15	14	14	19	13				16	
	16		15		12		22		11	4	15	A	2	11
15	12	12	18	15	16	2	8				11	T		16
	12		26		4		18	16	2	4	11	T	11	4
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Answer on page 61.

NEXT  
ISSUE  
**Pick Me Up!**  
BEST OF  
Special

From  
**THIS**



**TO THIS**  
THANKS TO MUM



I thought I was  
pregnant  
now I'm having  
**CHEMO**

A stroke left me with a  
**JAMAICAN  
ACCENT!**



Real life, puzzles, fashion,  
beauty, recipes, home, health...

ON SALE 17 MAY

## Time Inc.

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# ROBBED

# OF LIFE

Travion Smith



## Melissa's new start was actually the end

**T**he luxury apartment in a leafy area of Raleigh, North Carolina, was supposed to be a fresh start for Melissa Huggins-Jones and her daughter Hannah.

Melissa, 30, was newly divorced and adjusting to life as a single mum.

She'd chosen the flat as a sanctuary to start again and was comforted knowing it was in a good part of town.

Church-going Melissa had moved from Tennessee with Hannah in 2013 after her recent divorce. Her older son had stayed behind with his dad so that he could finish his school year – their education was important to Melissa.

A good school was one of the reasons she'd chosen a second-floor apartment in a complex in the North Hills area.

It was an area with a good reputation and a peaceful place for Melissa to raise her daughter.

She was due to take up a job as bank manager, but being a mum was always her priority.

But after just two weeks, on 14 May 2013, eight-year-old Hannah ran out onto the street, crying.

'My mum's hurt,' she told a concerned construction worker. She told him her mum was

covered in blood and wouldn't wake up.

When the construction worker walked into the flat, he came across a scene of horror.

Melissa was on her blood-soaked bed where she'd been repeatedly stabbed and beaten to death.

The worker checked her pulse, but Melissa was cold to the touch. He dialled 911.

'There's blood everywhere,' he stammered to the operator.

Emergency services rushed to the scene, but there was nothing they

could do.

**A stunned Hannah**



Melissa was starting over

The trio all played their part in the murder of an innocent single mum

sat with paramedics, shaping a heart out of paper for her mummy.

An autopsy revealed that Melissa had received 18 blows to the face, neck and body with a knife and a blunt object.

Somebody had killed the young mum as her daughter slept in the next room. Melissa must have feared for Hannah's safety as she fought off her attacker.

**Experts couldn't say**

whether it had taken her several minutes to bleed to death, or several hours.

Melissa's iPhone was missing. Was that really the reason she'd been killed?

The attacker had managed to get in through an unlocked sliding door on the second floor balcony.

Investigators discovered footprints, and a stolen laptop from an apartment below was traced to a nearby district of the city where Ronald Lee Anthony, 25, Travion Smith, 22, and Sarah Redden, 20, were all arrested.

Quickly, they all turned on each other.

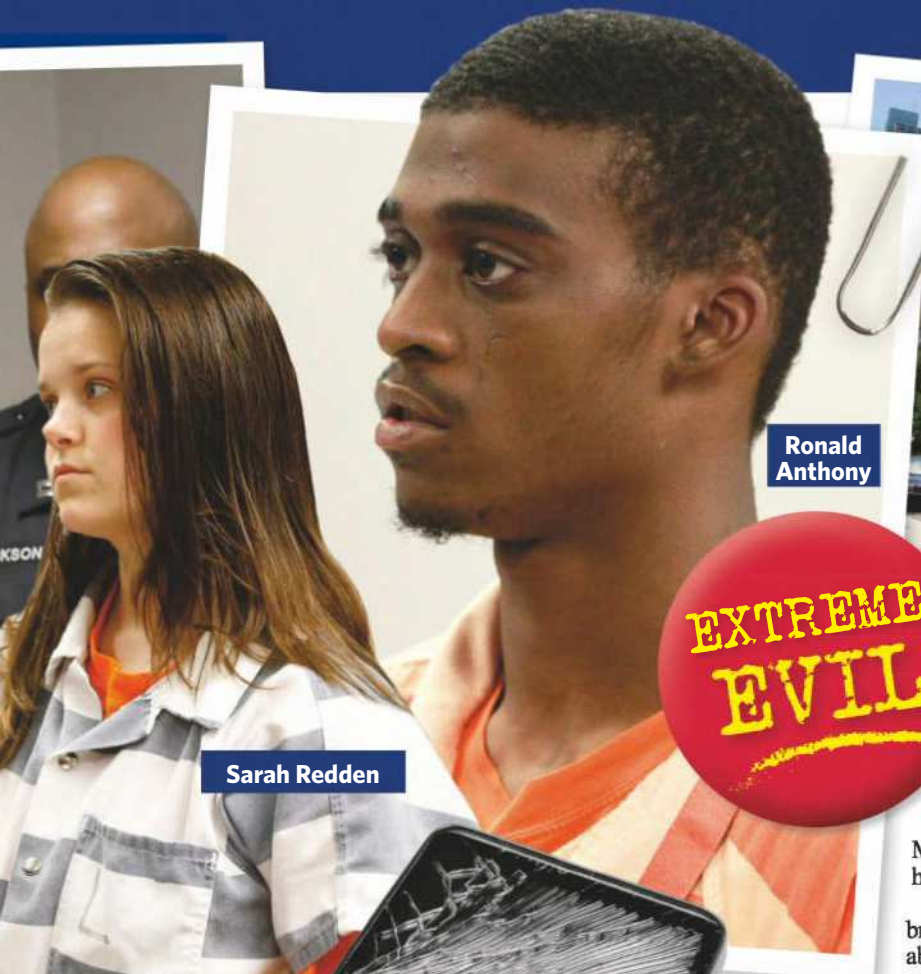
On the night Melissa was killed, best mates Travion and Ronald had been out together breaking into cars, but their crimes escalated after they stopped at a restaurant for dinner.

Sarah, who had dated Ronald, was the getaway driver waiting outside while the pair broke into Melissa's home.

Melissa had woken up and screamed – so Ronald and Travion had silenced her.

Sarah watched them wash blood off their hands with water bottles.

'Travion said the woman



Ronald Anthony



Sarah Redden



Raleigh was a peaceful place

**EXTREME EVIL**



Murdered for a mobile phone

shouldn't have screamed,' Sarah told police. Melissa could identify them and she'd died because of it.

In late 2015, Ronald Anthony pleaded guilty to first degree murder in order to avoid a possible death penalty and was sentenced to life in prison without the chance of parole. Former girlfriend Sarah testified against Ronald, saying he was the ring leader and that she had loved him until he'd 'turned nasty'.

At Travion's trial in February 2016, a medical expert described Melissa's horrific injuries.

'Not counting the bruises on her extremities, she suffered at least 18 different blows,' they said. 'Most of them were concentrated on the face, neck and upper chest.'

Sarah testified against Travion and confirmed he'd broken in to rob the apartment, but said Ronald was the ring leader who had manipulated them both. Travion claimed that he

wasn't in the room when Ronald attacked Melissa, but the prosecution argued that he had in fact delivered one of the fatal blows.

The prosecution were damning at the senseless crime. 'She went to bed with her daughter down the hall and these guys came in and did this! Why? For an iPhone,' they said in

disbelief. She talked about the murder and explained that she slept with a loud fan on so was confused about the sounds that night.

'I heard a screaming noise and went back to sleep,' she said. 'It didn't sound like it was in our apartment.'

Hannah said when she woke the next morning, she went into her mum's bedroom.

'I walked into the room and saw that she wasn't alive,' she said.

Lawyers showed the jury the paper heart that Hannah had made in the ambulance after finding her mum's body. When Hannah was

disbelief. The jury found Travion guilty of first degree murder. At the sentencing, Melissa's loved ones had their say.

Hannah, now 10, bravely spoke to the jury about her 'loving' mum who always had a smile on her face.

asked when she'd miss her mum the most, she replied: 'I'm not going to be able to have her at my wedding. For the important times.'

It requires a unanimous decision by all 12 jurors to get a death penalty in Wake County. There hadn't been one since 2007 – and there wasn't to be again. The jury recommended a life sentence without parole.

That April, Sarah Redden, 21, pleaded guilty to accessory after the fact to first degree murder.

**Her daughter heard screams**

She was the lookout and as part of the plea deal, she also pleaded guilty to breaking and entering.

She got 54-77 months and was given credit for time served.

The crime against Melissa was utterly senseless.

That fateful night, they thought they were robbing Melissa of an iPhone, but instead they stole her whole future.

## Another Raleigh home invasion

In March 2010, state education board member Kathy Taft, 68, was recovering from a face lift at her boyfriend's home in Raleigh, North Carolina. Jason Williford, 32, broke into the home while she was sleeping. He brutally beat her around the head with a heavy object, then raped her. When Kathy was found covered in blood, it was thought she'd suffered

complications with her surgery, but doctors discovered her skull was shattered into pieces. The mum-of-four died three days later in hospital. Married Williford was found guilty of first degree rape and murder and was sentenced to life in prison.



# JOLLY GOOD

Bring some fun into your home...



Flamingo Wine Glasses  
£4 Matalan



Faux Plants  
£8 Debenhams



Calypso Felt Place Mats x2  
£4 Dunelm



Herb Tower  
£8 Tiger Stores



Door Mat  
£25 Amara



Marble Effect Cutlery  
£25 M&Co



Single Stem Test Tube Vase  
£10 Matalan



Pineapple Soap Dispenser  
£8 New Look



Rainbow Paper Straws  
£1 Tiger Stores



Owl Mug  
£6 M&Co



Bath Mat  
£22 Debenhams



Giraffe Hooks  
£20 Next



Metallic Cushion  
£7 Primark



Dinosaur Gnome  
£6 George Home



Aloha Bedding  
From £15 JD Williams Home



Pepper and Salt  
£10 Next

Elephant Planter  
£12 George Home



Bird Wallpaper  
£8 Wilko

Stack image: Alamy

# Surf's up!

## I was left on the crest of a wave after popping the question



Peter Abell, 32, Cornwall

**T**he alarm clock blared loudly in the morning. Time to get up! 'Come on, Ange,' I whispered to my girlfriend.

'It's time to get going now.'

I could see in her eyes that she was tired after a long week at work, and would probably have preferred to stay in bed.

But I was counting on surfing the Severn Bore with her that day.

It would probably be our last chance to surf there before winter, and I had a big surprise for her up my sleeve!

We got together on those very waters three years before.

I'd spotted the fit girl I had fancied at university and had to make a move.

We'd met for the first time at Swansea University 10 years before, but it wasn't until I bumped into her surfing the Bore that we started dating.

So when I decided to ask Angie to marry me, I couldn't think of a more fitting location to get down on one knee.

My dad, Nigel, was delighted at the news, too.

After all, it was on the banks of the same river that he made an honest woman of my mum, Tracey,

many years before.

He even gave me his mother's beautiful antique ring for me to give to Angie.

I had initially planned to pop the question the previous September, but that all went out the window when Dad was diagnosed with cancer.

I decided to hold off. But when Dad passed away shortly after, proposing to Angie gave me something positive to focus on.

When the next Bore rolled around on October 15, I knew I had to take my chance.

The memory of how excited Dad had been at the thought of me

getting married really spurred me on.

I knew there were so many things that could go wrong with my plan – the weather, or if the waves weren't high enough – but I decided to take my chances.

When we got out onto the water, we missed the wave the first time round and hopped into our van to chase it further up the river.

'Don't face plant!' I shouted to Angie, as we got back in the water for a second shot.

I knew this was my one and only chance of pulling off the perfect proposal.

My heart was in my mouth as the wave approached.

Just as the wave hit, the sun appeared out of nowhere and beamed through the clouds.

It was as if Dad was

The timing had to be perfect

So many things could have gone wrong but it was swell!

She said 'yes!'



Our perfect day followed

looking down on us.

As Angie got to grips with her board, I took the opportunity to get down on one knee, being extra careful not to lose my balance.

'What are you doing?!' Angie screamed as she turned to face me.

She thought I was joking at first, but she didn't keep me waiting too long before shouting 'yes!'

We rode the wave for about a mile before we were able to clamber out onto the river bank, pop open the champagne I'd brought with us, and celebrate with a kiss.

Once we were on dry land, I handed over the real ring – rather than the plastic one I'd strapped to my board for the proposal!

After losing my dad so suddenly, our engagement was a happy distraction for my family.

We were married in May last year and everyone was so pleased for us.

I couldn't be happier to call Angie my beautiful wife.

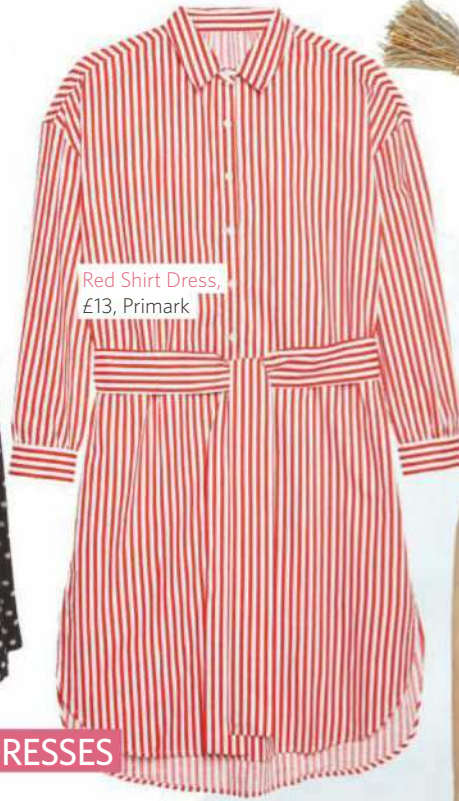
I wanted to make it extra special



Printed Maxi dress,  
£29, JD Williams



Spotty Dress,  
£16, George at ASDA



Red Shirt Dress,  
£13, Primark



Set of Three Bracelets,  
£12.99, Bon Prix

**DRESSES**

# Style me up

COMFORTABLE CASUALS



Sport Tube Dress,  
£30, Oasis

Nothing  
over  
£36!



White and Red Skirt,  
£26, M&Co



Navy Stripe Tracksuit Trousers,  
£24, Dorothy Perkins



Tie Waist Stripe Skirt,  
£11, JD Williams

**BOTTOMS**



ACCESSORIES



Wicker Circle Bag, £22, Miss Selfridge



Pink Woven Mule Slippers, £10, Tu Clothing



Gingham Pyjamas, £16, Tu Clothing



Satchel Bag, £32, Monsoon



Pineapple Earrings, £3.99, New Look

SHOES



Grey Pumps, £14.99, New Look



Flower Detail Trainer, £24.99, Deichmann

Loose fitting for comfort



Blue Tie Front Blouse, £19.99, New Look



Green Slogan T-shirt, £7.99, New Look



White and Black Bib Top, £36 JD Williams

TOPS



Red Stripe Top, £16 Dorothy Perkins



Utility Shirt, £26, JD Williams



Blue Floral Heeled Sandals,  
£16, F&F

Gold Heels,  
£29, Debenhams



Silver Bow Clutch Bag,  
£24, Wallis

ACCESSORIES



Flower Stud Earrings,  
£2, Primark



Red and Orange Sandals,  
£39.50, Marks & Spencer



Pink Feathered Fascinator  
£18, M&Co

# Style me up

RISE TO THE OCCASION



Floral Maxi Dress,  
£39, Miss Selfridge



Green Frill Dress,  
£28, Girls on film



Lilac Strapless Midi Dress,  
£35, Dorothy Perkins

DRESSES



Floral Dress,  
£45, M&CO

BOTTOMS



Ruffle Wrap Skirt, £12.50, George at ASDA



Pink Wide Leg Trousers, £30, Miss Selfridge



Red Stripe High Waisted Skirt, £35, JD Williams



Floral Print Trousers, £26, M&Co

Flattering floral print



Purple Bardot dress £32 Apricot

Everything under £40!

TOPS



Embroidered Halter Neck Top, £38, V by Very



White Bow Front Top, £39.50, Marks & Spencer



Green Floral Blouse, £30, Wallis



Red Frill Top, £12, Matalan

# Make me up



## STAR BUYS

### 1. Bio-Oil, £8.99, Boots

This Bio-Oil formula is enriched with Vitamin E to protect against dehydration and Vitamin A to keep skin smooth. Kim Kardashian swears by it. The chamomile and rosemary soaks into your skin and strengthens while it protects.

### 2. Solait Tan Prolonger, £4.99, Superdrug

This lotion builds a sun-kissed look. Grape seed oil and almond oil combat dehydration and Vitamin E helps with long lasting effects. Works on the face and the body, and its cruelty-free, so gets our vote.

### 3. Bloom Eau de Toilette, £6, Superdrug

This trio of fragrances will take you through the summer. With Mandarin & Lime Basil, Berry Cassis & Fig, and Bergamot & Cucumber, you'll be spoiled for choice. They smell way more expensive than they are.

### 4. Satin lipstick in Muse, £3, George at ASDA

If you haven't checked out the range of George cosmetics on your weekly Asda shop, you really should. This budget lipstick goes on a treat and is the perfect shade for every day wear. It's a must have.

## POLISH UP

The high street has a colour to suit every nail

Ruby Red, £4, Rituals

Nude, £1.50, Primark

Plush, £7.50, M&S

Milan, £5, Next

Vitamin Sea, £2, George ASDA

Dark Purple, £3.99, New Look

## EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT...

### Vitamin C:

From makeup artists to skincare experts, everyone is hailing the benefits of Vitamin C. It's an antioxidant that boosts collagen while helping to treat damage done by sun exposure. Just as we reach for vitamin C when we feel run down, use it as effective protection against dull skin.

**Hemp:** Believe it or not, cannabis is the next big thing in the beauty world! Hemp oil, made from the seeds, and cannabidiol, which is extracted from the flowers and leaves, is legal and won't get you high. It's powerful against tackling acne, eczema and wrinkles. Products have been launching all year and it's certainly causing a buzz.

**Retinol:** Retinol is the buzz ingredient when it comes to flawless skin. It's clinically proven to help reduce lines and wrinkles because of the clever way our skin converts retinol into retinoid acid - an active form of vitamin A. It can even out your tone, treat pigmentation and even tackle acne.

Just for **FUN**

# Movie links!

Name the film in which these stars appeared together to link Colin Firth to Sandra Bullock.



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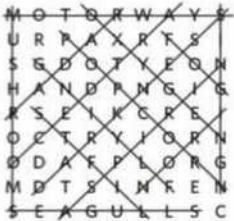


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Answers below

## JUST FOR FUN: THIS MONTH'S ANSWERS

### Word search page 34



Answer: Spoons

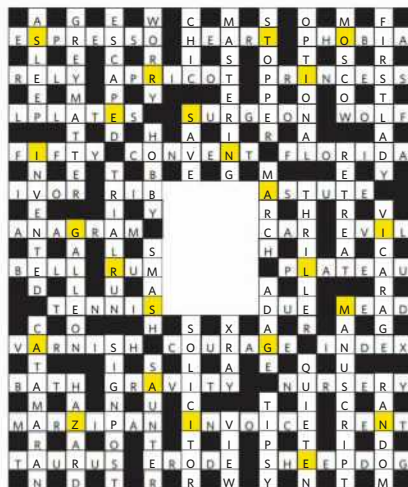
### Spot it page 48



### Movie Links Page 51

Colin Firth - The King's Speech - Helena Bonham Carter - Cinderella - Lily James - Baby Driver - Jon Hamm - Minions - Sandra Bullock

### Big crossword page 30



Answer: Stories in a girls magazine

### Crack it page 51



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

Answer: Neglected

### Number fit page 34

Answer: 136

### Sudoku page 64

1

2	6	5	4	3	1
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2

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2	4	3	1	6	5

3

1	2	6	4	5	3
5	3	4	1	2	6
6	1	2	5	3	4
4	5	3	6	1	2
2	6	1	3	4	5
3	4	5	2	6	1

# Little Pick Me Ups!

# Miniature MODELS

The next big thing in fashion turns out to be really small...

Last month Hamleys toy store on Regent Street, London, hosted the world's smallest fashion show to celebrate the launch of the new Sylvanian Families Town range. The coveted front row was reserved for the VIP guests who attended to check out the miniature designs showcased by the 9.5cm tall model.

Rufus Rumford, aged eight, dressed as Karl Lagerfeld, Connie



Top guests



# Saved by SIRI

And my sons' quick thinking

Claudia Sharma, 35, Croydon, South London

Clutching my toddler's hand in mine, we hurried to our local school. 'Come on Luca,' I said. 'Let's go pick up your brothers.' It was March 2017, and Luca, two, and I were looking forward to seeing my four-year-old twin boys, Samuel and Roman.

And as they ran out of school, their faces lit up when they saw us.

'Hey!' I beamed. 'How was your day?' As they

told me about their fun day, I started to feel weak and tired.

My husband Aman, 35, wasn't due home from work for a few hours, so I knew that putting my feet up wasn't an option.

At home, I got the boys a snack. I lay out some apples on the kitchen table then headed towards the living room for a sit down. But suddenly, I felt the blood draining from my face... Then, slam!

My head hit the door frame near the kitchen as I collapsed to the floor.

The next thing I remember was

being flat on my back in the back of an ambulance wearing a neck brace.

'Was there an accident?!' I stammered, confused.

The paramedic explained that after I'd passed out, my clever twin boys had contacted the emergency services.

As I was out cold, they'd pressed my finger on the

button of my phone to unlock it, then they asked the phone's voice-activated assistant to call for help.

'Siri, call 999,' they asked.

And she did! When they got through to the operator, Roman stepped in: 'Mummy's closing her eyes and not breathing,' he said. 'She's dead.'

My heart ached at the



They used my finger



They thought I was dead!

I'd passed out

So very proud



Davies, aged 10, dressed as Anna Wintour and nine-year-old Chloe Sweeting, dressed as The Queen, had a prime view of the exquisite couture work that glided by them on the automated catwalk.

The debut Spring Summer Collection is being hailed as the work of the Town's main character, Stella the fashion designer, and was a runway triumph with its tiny workmanship.

First created in 1985, Sylvania Families is an adorable range of animal characters that live in the idyllic land of Sylvania.

It was first created in Japan, and to date, more than 100 million figures had been sold worldwide.

Photos: Matt Alexander/PA Wire



# Curtain call

Inspired by Audrey Hepburn

## Was it my time to shine?

Ayshea Ahern, 25, Canterbury

I'd always fancied competing in a beauty pageant, and now I had my chance.

'I'm entering Miss Kent 2016!' I announced to my mum Funda, 53, and nan Priscilla, 71.

I was thrilled when I made it into the final five for the semi-finals, but I had my work cut out.

There was an 'Eco-Wear' category where you had to make an entire outfit out of recycled materials.

Nan had an idea.

'I have some old curtains you could use,' she offered. I

grimaced, imagining moth-eaten cloth, but to my surprise, they were lovely lace nets.

The theme was 'English fashion through the ages' and I took my inspiration from Audrey Hepburn in *My Fair Lady*.

I wrapped Nan's curtains around an old white dress and the lace looked stunning.

Next, I scoured the charity

Could I pull it off?

shops and found lace gloves for just 50p and a vintage parasol for £15.

I already had a white hat and I added a mophead as a finishing touch!

I managed to keep the outfit a secret from Mum and Nan until the semi-final event in Kelham Hall, Nottingham.

'Are those my curtains?' Nan gasped, taken aback.

She was even more impressed when they announced the winner.

Ayshea Ahern!

I was over the moon.

I qualified for the Miss England final, too, and came 22nd out of 50.

'Not bad for a first attempt,' I grinned.

Last year, I entered Miss Essex and came first runner up!

I was so proud to 'net' another title!



All thanks to Nan



Crowning glory

thought of how scared they must have been.

Amazingly, Roman described our road and the police managed to figure out where we were.

They arrived in 15 minutes. But Roman refused to let them in!

We'd taught them never to let strangers into the house.

They had to kick the door down in the end!

At Croydon University Hospital, doctors ran tests and revealed I had extremely low iron levels.

The next morning I was discharged, with a big bruise on my face from my fall. Getting back to my boys was an incredible feeling.

'Give Mummy a huge hug,' I insisted.

And it was all thanks to my smart boys.

Roman said they'd watched me call their dad using Siri before and he'd remembered how to do it.

My husband and I are so proud of our sons. They stayed calm in a crisis and got the help I needed.

They are my heroes.

Words and Photos: SWNS

# Sudoku

Just for  
**FUN**

Test your mind to the max  
with this trio of tricky sudoku puzzles

1

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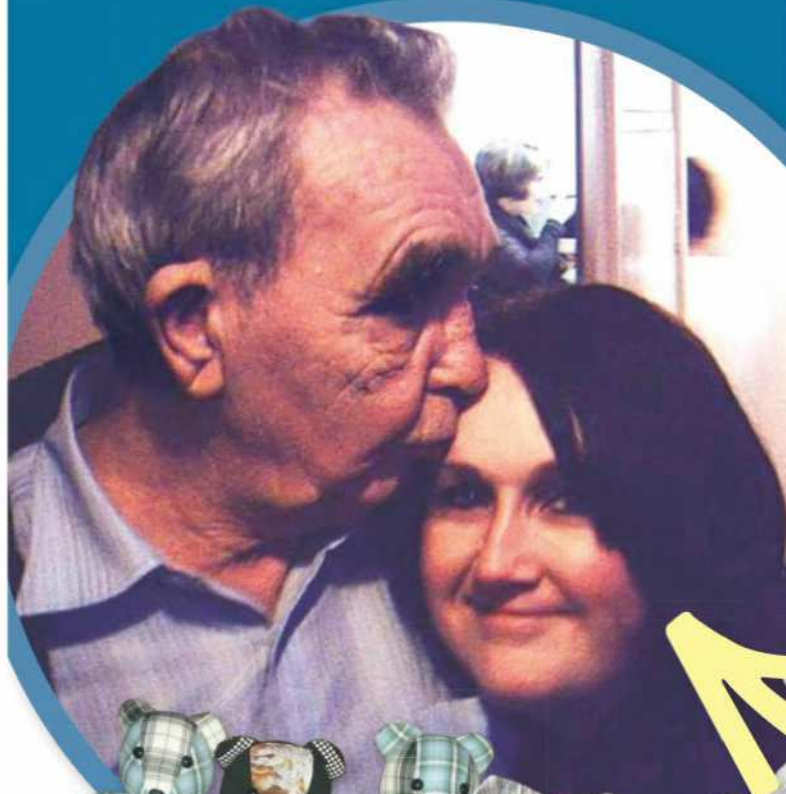
2

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3

	2			5	3
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6					4
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					5
3	4			6	

Answers on page 61



## I found a wonderful way to stay close to lost loved ones



Paula Steele,  
47, Plymouth

My first creation was  
Daddy Allan's shirt

There's a little blue lion sitting on my living room shelf, and it's wearing my stepdad Allan's check shirt. It watches over me. I snuggle it when I'm sad. I made it after Allan, 83, passed away in June 2014.

I was only 13 when my mum Esther, now 74, first introduced me to Allan.

I hated him at first, this strange new man in our lives.

But he never gave up on me, and was always kind and loving.

'Come see your Daddy Allan!' he'd say when I was upset, and he'd give me a big hug.

He won me round, and all my worries disappeared with him around. We went on to form a bond

that lasted long after my childhood had ended.

I visited him nearly every week. We'd always laugh and watch telly together.

I was a right daddy's girl! Then, in April 2014, Daddy Allan was given a bombshell.

'I'm afraid you have oesophageal cancer,' doctors at the hospital told him, after a checkup when he turned ill.

It was terminal. Our world fell apart and we struggled to cope.

Especially when Mum was diagnosed with cancer of the bottom the next month.

'Why us?' I wept. Every day was this hospital



# Bear hugs from beyond

**Through my grief, I found a way to help others**

appointment or that clinic visit.

While getting treatment, Daddy Allan's hospital bed was mobbed with visitors. A fighter, he'd laugh and smile. And, when it was just us, I never missed a chance to tell him how much I loved him.

In June 2014, Daddy Allan, 83, passed away.

I was distraught.

But there wasn't much time to mourn properly.

The day after his funeral, Mum had to start her own cancer

treatment. It was torture.

Me, my two sisters and brother were there for her at every step.

I was in Plymouth, just a phone call away.

But it was so hard without Daddy Allan around.

Somehow, Mum got through it.

And, a year later, she was given the all clear.

Then, about eight months after Daddy Allan's death, I realised I didn't have any possessions to remember him by.

I had lots of amazing memories, but yearned for something to cherish, to hold on to.

'I've put ashes aside to make some jewellery one day,' Mum told me.

She loved the idea of having part of him made into a ring or necklace.

*Maybe I could do something similar, I thought.*

I'd been a seamstress for 20 years.

*What about a teddy bear?* I thought.

Daddy Allan had always dressed smartly and really loved his shirts.

Mum had kept them

all – and they would be perfect for the teddy's body.

It was very hard cutting them up, though.

They smelled of him.

After crying a river of tears, I had my template cut.

Then I spent hours at the sewing machine – it needed to be perfect.

Finally, it was complete.

My little blue lion.

Eventually, I put a sachet of

Daddy Allan's ashes inside, where its heart would be.

Holding the teddy, I somehow felt close to him again.

I made my siblings and some of their kids teddies, too.

They all adored their memory bears.

Along the way, I posted pictures on Facebook.

'You should start selling them,' a friend suggested.

*Why not?* I thought.

So I set up a business, Memory Bears from the Heart.

At first, I just had a couple of commissions from friends.

Then, six months later, orders suddenly started flooding in.

People from as far

away as Australia and America got in touch.

But it was mainly locals or friends of friends.

Bereaved family members sent me their teddy's material – and ashes, if they wished.

In about four hours, their teddy could be made.

Now I've made nearly 800 memory bears.

I charge £25 to £35 for my labour, but it's never about the money.

I do it to offer comfort to the bereaved, like Daddy Allan's teddy had for me.

Bear hugs from beyond.

I don't ask how people find me, or what happened to their loved one.

Sometimes, it's too raw for them.

But often they share fond thoughts with me, or photos.

Sometimes, I print pictures on the bear, or embroider verses onto one of the paws.

Recently, I was contacted by a grief-stricken man who'd just lost his baby son, aged just one.

He took time to choose one of his boy's T-shirts to be used on a monkey for him.

That's when it really makes my heart ache.

It's hard when a parent passes away, too.

But it helps people to know that a bit of their loved one is always with them, just like Daddy Allan is with me. Always.

This is a shirt  
I used to wear  
whenever you  
hold it know  
I am there

**I cried a river of tears**

**Touching tribute**

If you'd like to find out more about Paula's memory bears, visit [facebook.com/memorybearsbypaula](https://facebook.com/memorybearsbypaula), or [www.memorybearsfromtheheartbypaula.co.uk](http://www.memorybearsfromtheheartbypaula.co.uk)



**Mum with a Daddy Allan memory blanket**

**Tassel Bunting**  
£7 Paperchase

**Indian Summer Gold String Lights**  
£17 Sainsbury's Home

**Light Up Arrow**  
£16 Sainsbury's Home

**Happily Ever After Plaque**  
£4 Sainsbury's Home

**White Solar Lantern**  
£12 Next

**Bride Shopper Bag**  
£10 Paperchase

**Bride Tribe T-Shirt**  
£4 Primark

**Silver Pearl Earrings**  
£35 Beaverbrooks

# To have and to hold

## When it comes to a memorable wedding, it's all in the detail

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